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Fresh Perspectives

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My Escape By DaShawn Wilson



As I slouched in the back seat of the car, whining like a two year old baby, my sister was whispering to me to shut up. I didn't understand why I had to leave. I had only two more years of high school. I know I heard her, but I just tuned her out and imagined myself opening the car door, magically floating in mid air, and flying back to the place I called home. I closed my eyes and wished that all this nonsense was a dream, and I would suddenly crash into another vehicle and wake up to realize it was just another nightmare. I would rather

skateboard into a fish tank of killer whales than move to a place where I had to start over. Change was not my forte; I despise that word with a passion.

As I was reading the "Welcome to Long Beach" sign, I suddenly smelled something salty but refreshing. I rolled down the window, and a gust of salty air surrounded my nostrils. It was the beach. Like the gigantic Christmas tree in NYC, my eyes lit up, and my smile was brighter than ever. When we arrived at our new house, all I could do was think about the beach. The sun beaming, the ocean glistening, the waves splashing, and the seagulls screeching, it all seemed so tempting that after I brought all my boxes to my plain, empty room, I headed for the water.

That day was a perfect day to get some fresh air. I saw beautiful young women lying on their beach chairs, catching their daily tan; men who looked so muscular that you could see their veins throbbing from their necks, spiking the volleyball into the sand; innocent children running and swimming; and dogs barking and catching tennis balls with their mouths. I took off my shoes, walked towards the ocean, and I stood there admiring the view. The warm sand gracefully danced around my feet like school children playing "Ring Around the Rosie."

"It's over!" yelled my girlfriend.

She frantically ran out of my house as if it were on fire. I stood in my room feeling nothing.

I felt empty and numb; I could feel no pain.

High school relationships don't last forever I thought to myself. I slowly walked down the stairs, and rode my blue-and-black mountain bike to the beach. As I slowly walked towards the ocean, I heard the waves viciously roar and the wind howl.

"DO NOT ENTER," the sign said.

I looked at the sign thinking to myself, should I go or just turn around and walk home?

I shrugged nonchalantly and continued my path of escape. I sank down into the sand. I could feel every inch my body relaxing. My toes began to curl; my arms started to loosen up, feeling as if they were made of jelly. I closed my eyes and imagined being on a boat sailing into the clear blue sea, not knowing where I was headed, only knowing that I was going on a journey.

The summers at the beach were the best times of my life. Monday through Friday I would go to work cleaning an elementary school that was the size of a high school. The bathrooms were always dirty from the summer camp children. Every morning I would start off with putting on my latex gloves, which left a powdery substance on my hands, and get a huge trash can with white wheels that made a squeaky sound every time it was being pushed. Picking up Double Bubble gum wrappers, Sprite soda cans, and swatting away the angry bees were the highlights of my day. Every time I would clock out, I smiled as if I had won the lottery because I was heading towards my sweet escape that I loved. I grabbed my Yankees duffle bag and rode my bike straight to the beach. I would take off my shoes and socks, leaving my feet bare, and run towards the ocean, feeling like a golden retriever chasing a Frisbee with its tongue hanging out. At the end of the day, the beach was the place where I felt free.

A few days before my high school graduation, my sister told us that we were moving again. I felt as if I were losing a best friend.

Now, every time I go back home, I take the N15 bus to Long Beach, an hour-long ride of screaming toddlers, whose mothers try to rock them back and forth to comfort them. At least three times a week, I make the trip. I return not only to get away from my problems, but also to find my little piece of heaven. I love to hear the sounds of the waves and inhale that salty sea air, which brings back memories. As I feel that beam of sunlight, I flex both ends of my mouth and form a smile that expresses the joy of life. The beach will always be my friend, my paradise, and of course, my escape.

Txt Me L8tr By Genesis Maria Reyes



Every day I get a text message from my best friend that asks *wat u doin?* It's spelled completely wrong, has a few grammatical errors, and is missing one or two words to help it make sense. If I answer back, she'll respond with a *lol* or *omg*, commonly used acronyms. *Lol* means "laughing out loud" and *omg* stands for "oh my god," or for the religious texters, "oh my gosh." If I log on to my computer, I'll immediately get instant messaged with the same text message lingo. Day after day, I read these messages and realize that I understand every word of it. I can text my boyfriend the same exact thing,

and he'll understand it the same way that I do. And I'm willing to bet my favorite Yankee Jersey that the college students I see every morning, speedily texting on their cell phones, understand the messaging lingo as well. Technology has opened up the doors to a faster and more liberal form of social interaction. However, in doing so, technology has tampered with the value of communication by creating a new language through instant messaging and text messaging. This new and abbreviated language is situational and should only be used under certain circumstances

The messaging lingo, better known as Short Messaging Service (SMS), was created gradually as the demand for cell phones and the internet increased. As cell phones evolved into pocket-sized technology with mini keyboards and internet connections, a new dialect of the English language was formed. The progression of technology advanced messaging as the new "phone call." SMS developed into its own language filled with informal variations of the English language, abbreviated words, acronyms, and trendy emoticons of different expressions. The need to alter the way we communicate via messaging systems became crucial as the original messaging boxes were far too small to type unnecessary words or phrases (McGrath 474). However, as technology continued to develop and the character limit increased, the messaging lingo expanded and gave room for personality. Short Messaging Service was well known to be used amongst friends and family for communication filled with entertainment. As the language spread through different age groups and generations, it became a habit for the younger generation to introduce shorthand messaging to other aspects of their lives outside of the texting world, such as using it in formal e-mails.

In the event of a formal affair, however, it is ill-advised to use such dialect to interact with others. For example, students sometimes e-mail their teachers using SMS. To engage in such an action is disrespectful because the student is disregarding the etiquette of a professional setting. He or she has not taken into account that shorthand messaging is a form of slang in technology and might cause offense to the instructor as its use essentially places him or her on the same level as a friend.

In certain limited situations, it can be acceptable to use SMS to communicate with professors. In April of 2005, students from the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand were introduced to a system call TXT-2-LRN, where students were allowed to text any questions they had about the previous lesson to their instructors (Scornavacca 4). In this setting, it is appropriate for a student to use SMS to exchange ideas with a teacher because shorthand messaging is build into the course and lessons [. . .]

Social interactions are complex and can sometimes lead to confusion. [. . .] One generation is more likely to communicate better within itself than with another generation because the vernacular is different. The same can be said for shorthand messaging. Because the language of SMS is constantly changing within the cyber world, it's reasonable to say that interactions between people can become confusing because the language is easily misinterpreted. It's an exclusive language, and if one is not part of the messaging world, then the dialect will appear to be in code.

SMS is puzzling to read, so imagine when it is spoken. It's easier to figure out SMS phrases when the text is in front of you by using context clues or simply just making assumptions based on how the terms appear. The largest defect that has come from shorthand messaging is the way the written shorthand has been adapted to spoken word. [. . .] People sometimes spell out acronyms in their speech. The commonly used acronym for "Be right back," B-RB, consists of three syllables, the same amount of syllables it takes to say "be right back." Instead of spelling out letters, people should just say the entire words. The words sound better than the shorthand and make one seem more intelligent. [. . .]

Technology has changed the way members of society communicate with one another. Whether it's through an instant message on a computer or a text message on a mobile phone, a new language has been created for those who prefer to interact through written word. Instead of engaging in traditional practices such as letter writing or even a simple phone call, people have opted for a simpler, less stressful way of life. They turn to technology and SMS to express themselves and hopefully build a personality through messaging. However, this new language should not be abused. The Short Messaging Service was fashioned from the cyber world to entertain friends and family. Let it stay in the cyber world and be used for the purposes for which it was created.

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A Beloved Black Sheep By Monica Argentina



Recently while I was home, I went through my jewelry box and found my discoveries to be rather enlightening. The purpose of a jewelry box is to hold some of the most precious gems and charms that a person can own. Most jewelry boxes have a variety of different necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and rings. All are beautiful, with their own unique style and personality. I like to think that a jewelry box is like a family; every piece or person is different but together they make a great collection. My curious behavior brought me to a special necklace. Upon first glance, it appeared old and worn. But after careful examination, I realized its value and beauty. This necklace reminds me of my cousin Keith.

Keith Love. This 33-year old man lives a laid-back lifestyle that is accompanied by a smooth swagger of laughter. When he enters a room, most people notice the prickly, porcupine quills of hair that seem glued to his face, along with the slight droop in his eyes that call for another 8-hours of sleep. The fluff on his head (which some people might call hair) defies gravity with its pointy strands as if they have a mind of their own. What I see is a grown man who marches to the beat of his own drum. What I love most is his half-cocked contagious smile that he always sports. Not only does his hair defy gravity, he defies the Argentina family expectations. I love that.

Granted I see my cousin Keith only once in a while for birthdays and holiday celebrations. But during these times, Keith turns dreaded and stressful family gatherings into fun-filled experiences. For example, one of his most memorable, witty remarks was about my grandmother's hosting of a Christmas party. He announced, "You would have thought the Pope was coming to dinner with all of her stress." My grandmother's face was the image of both embarrassment and laughter as she quickly flustered her way back to the kitchen. That moment lightened the mood and made dinner even more memorable. Even when I was little I could remember always finding myself hanging out with Keith and finding him to be very amusing. Keith makes things more relaxed, in a family of strict rules, morals, and expectations.

Because Keith has not met some of the Argentina family's expectations, he is sometimes shunned and looked down upon. Yes, maybe it would have been better if he had gone to college and completed a degree. And yes, maybe people do frown upon the fact that a 33-year old grown man still lives with his parents, but Keith is certainly different from most men his age. He finds immense amusement from *Call of Duty* video games,

collecting Matchbox cars, and sleeping in until 1pm on a Tuesday. His fashion sense is a joke when I sit next to him. His baggy sweat pants, 3XL shirts and moccasins announce to everyone: “I’m comfy.” His leisurely wardrobe may seem odd whereas my clean-cut looks could label me as coming straight out of a J Crew catalog. Our differences are so apparent, yet I also feel that we have a lot in common.

My grandmother gives Keith the most criticism. She tends to rank her four grandchildren on a system of success and achievements. Right now, I believe that it is my cousin Kristin, Keith’s sister, who would be ranked #1 because she is a full-time English teacher and currently engaged. Next would be my sister Marissa because she will soon be receiving her Masters in Social Work and decided to spend six years of her life in college and post-college education. I would follow in the #3 spot just because I am in college, and I cause no trouble. Then there is Keith. With only a high school diploma, he now serves as a plumber’s assistant, which is a temporary job. In fact, he is called in for work only when needed. Because of Keith’s minimal list of accomplishments, my grandmother has made it clear that the #4 spot is written in stone with his name on it.

I always try to stick up for Keith. He is such a great cousin, and he keeps being put down for his lack of achievements. This past winter break, I helped out with his family, and I was able to see him more often. I frequently visited my aunt’s house to help out with holiday preparation, such as baking festive cookies, sautéing the spinach and other glorious foods whose aroma filled the air with holiday cheer. It was a great experience, and it helped me realize the importance of family and how special everyone is to me. While helping out, my aunt said to me, “It is almost as if you and Keith have switched the roles: You are the adult and he is the kid!” Although I knew that the statement was meant as a compliment, it did not sit well in my mind. Just because Keith might have a low-paying job and still live with his parents, he is my favorite cousin because of his spontaneity and ability to step out of our family norm. He is a courageous person.

As expected, I will probably have to attend graduate school not only for my education, but also to please my family members and give them assurance as to my receiving a well-paying job. However, Keith has inspired me to follow my interests, and has been the perfect example of doing what is pleasing and being happy. Keith has helped me gain the courage in exploring new fields of interest. I am now looking into creating different mixes of music and hopefully, in the near future, becoming an amateur DJ. I told him that it might seem silly and very unlikely, but he simply replied with, “Do what makes you happy; you have all of the ambition in the world and nothing can stop you.” This is just one of the many lessons that I have learned from my cousin. I hope Keith can learn some things from me as well, such as responsibility and taking his career and education more seriously.

I have also learned that I do not have to be like the diamond-studded necklace from Tiffany’s—flawless and impeccable. My imperfections make me distinctive and interesting. Keith represents this piece of jewelry that I found in my jewelry box. Once you take the time to analyze it and appreciate it, you can truly understand its value.

To Mikey . . . Not Long Enough By Marissa Ender

I thought it was long enough to say I don't know you,
that I don't remember your voice,
and the way you looked in bed.
I thought it was long enough to say it doesn't hurt,
when I think of sitting on the floor together,
and hearing your past,
and dreaming of the future,
but I see you here before me in that stupid hat you used
to wear,
and I feel the air on my face,
a sensation you never have again...
I remember it all
RIP boy, your journey is done and mine has just begun.



My Time By Omar EL Jamal

Looks like I got it easy but it's hard for me, lemme tell you a quick story,
of how I'm trying to be Mr. big shot like Robert Horry,
but as of late for myself I've been feeling sorry,
In school I'm slacking, trying hard to maintain B's and C's
and fairly good I try to stay away from the drinks and trees,
joke around a lot, comedy relief for this pain I'm trying to ease.
try to pray try to stay on my knees,
but I feel like I'm not doing good enough, god help me please,
and oh god do I miss my sister Tasneem
at sometimes I feel down and others I feel like I'm powerful and mean,
but I always feel like my group of friends are the dream team,
I know I'm jumping around but there is a lot of things on my mind,
I grew up thinking I got it like that so I felt like I didn't have to grind,
now I'm thinking how I can make an extra dime
at the same time as thinking of dime puffing on this black and mild edition of wine.
I got to hustle man it's crunch time, it's my time, this is my shine.

Blessed Be By Jacqueline Schiehl

My own experiences with prejudice have validated the misconceptions many carry concerning the Wiccan way of life. First I was never formally given a religion by my parents. By the age of twelve I had found Wicca all on my own. I was drawn to the maternal power and freedom-loving nature of the religion; I wanted to experience my own connection to the divine. So I became a solitary practitioner, but I had to keep this secret from everyone in my life. My father would have grounded me indefinitely and the other children would label me as a weirdo forever. One day I brought my book to school accidentally, the *Book of Shadows*, the equivalent to the Bible. I returned late from lunch to see a group of girls from my class reading it, I was horrified. The taunting and teasing began from there on. One girl noticed that her name was included in a small ritual that I performed to have her stop picking on me. She immediately went to the teacher and expressed that I was trying to kill her, which was a complete exaggeration. The spell involved chalk, a piece of construction paper, and my freezer; it was far from life threatening. The teacher pulled me aside and insisted that I stop practicing witchcraft and that it was a phase that I was experiencing. She held up a cross and told me that the Lord will show me the way. I will never forget this moment, and many years later I am still a Wiccan and proud despite her attempt to dissuade me.

A person often fears ideas that are different from popular trends or traditional ways, but this fear is irrational and has no place in a society that claims to believe in religious freedom without persecution. It is clear that the Wiccan way of life, although different, is still a beautiful religion rooted in mother earth. Through my own experiences I have been effected by others judgments and assumptions negatively. Wiccan's have the right to practice their religion just as any other belief system. Feeding into the media interpretation is just enabling the misconceptions to grow, perpetuating lies and out-dated superstitions.

Dom-In-A-Can By Andreina Cruz



I am a Dominicana. The people, the lifestyle, the poverty and morals are what make me proud to be Dominican. My country is one of many Spanish-speaking and Caribbean island cultures, yet the most distinctive. The food, family, lifestyle, and survival techniques of the Dominican culture are the reasons why it is such a unique culture as a whole.

The Dominican Republic is most known for its hearty and appetizing food. Unlike many other countries, the Dominican Republic has not gone through a drastic industrial change, and, therefore, the island still has many farms. The majority of market owners grow their own produce such as platanos (plantains), aguacate (avocado), arroz (rice), caña (sugar cane; raw sugar), café (coffee), and tobacco. The most often-cooked Dominican meal is called “La Bandera” (The Flag) and that consists of white rice, red beans, and stewed meat. It is usually served with fried green and/or sweet plantains and avocado on the side. Another popular dish that is usually cooked on Sundays when the entire family is together is called “Sancocho” which is a meat, plantain, and vegetable stew. It is really rich and hearty, and there probably isn’t anything better to eat on a Sunday night or even Monday morning.

Praying before eating every meal or even before eating a snack has been a tradition and part of the religion in the Dominican family since my grandmother can remember (I asked her). The prayers never need to be long; we usually leave the longer prayers for when we go to bed. A short prayer for us would be something like, “God, thank you for this food and wonderful family. Bless us all. Amen.” Catholicism is what runs in the Dominican blood. We feel that the closer we are to God the more we are forgiven and willing to forgive. We feel He brings happiness and family together. Many of the Roman Catholics in the Dominican Republic are conservative. Girls and women wear dresses and long skirts.

Although the majority of Dominicans are Catholics and worship God, the Dominican Republic is also well known for the voodoo. Women who practice it are referred to as witches. They worship the devil and believe in reincarnation and ghosts. These witches are known to bring harm and chaos into other people’s lives. Dominican Republic has a history of stories about witches and their voodoo.

The Dominican family is well recognized for being humble, helpful and collective. Dominicans love to invite friends and family over to their houses to cook and gossip and enjoy their presence and companionship. I know because I enjoy those times very much

as well and have grown to be really family-oriented. The average number of people living in a Dominican household is 5-8, and that is excluding aunts, uncles, and cousins. Many make fun of Mexicans who are known to have many relatives living in a 1-2 bedroom apartment, but Dominicans are the same. All poor tribes are the same. We never grow up having our own rooms, and the average Dominican house is pure chaos 24/7. Let me give you an example of my house at seven in the morning when I was a little girl: I'd be taking a bath with my little sister, my older sister would be using the toilet, one brother would be brushing his teeth and the other brother would be yelling for us to hurry up. While one brother would still be asleep refusing to go to school, Mom fried up some plantains and salami. During all this, my Dad would have already left for work. Yes, chaos! If there is one thing I can say about the Dominican family, it would be that in spite of all the arguments, fist fights, and stealing, at the end of the day, we swallow our pride and love each other even more. [. . .]

Nowadays Dominicans are not the way they used to be; the way they are known to be. The Dominican culture has drastically evolved throughout the years in America. People who have come to the United States from the Dominican Republic adapt to the fast and "wanna be" life and take these attitudes back to our country. Dominicans who come to America forget about their morals and values such as family, self-respect, pride, and even God. We've been slowly losing our Dominican roots.

My culture is strong. We are raised with proper manners and strong beliefs. We are very opinionated and grow to stand on our own. The Dominican culture has its numerous amounts of imperfections, yet these same flaws are what make us Dominican, loud and beautiful.

Two As One By Keishla Feliciano



Trying to adapt in a dominant culture that is not my own can be overpowering. Ultimately, I have found that this other culture can become a part of me and my culture. I am a full-blooded Puerto Rican who lives in a Dominican neighborhood, Washington Heights. Even though I grew up in a Puerto Rican household, when I started middle school I became part of the Dominican culture through the people I surrounded myself with. I started speaking the way they did, cooking the way they did, listening to the music they listened to, believing in what they believe in and dressing the way they dress. I was worried that I would lose some of my own culture by trying to fit in with the dominant one, but I have grown to learn that making a new culture a part of your own can be a beautiful thing.



While Dominicans and Puerto Ricans do have similarities, these two cultures have a lot of differences. I remember when I moved to The Heights from Puerto Rico and started communicating with new Dominican friends in Spanish. I had to change the words I would normally use. For example, in Puerto Rico “pen” in Spanish is “boligrafo” but for Dominicans it’s “lapicero.” The way I speak now started by changing a couple words from “Puerto Rican words” to “Dominican words.” As time passed, I started speaking full sentences in “Dominican Spanish.” One day I called my grandmother, who lives in Puerto Rico, in order to send her money, and when I asked her to grab a pen I said, “Grandma, can you go grab a lapicero?” She laughed and said, “It’s boligrafo not lapicero!” She joked about how I was starting to become Dominican and that I needed to go back to Puerto Rico. Little things such as changing my “Puerto Rican words” to “Dominican words” made me feel that if I continued to change the way I spoke, I was sure to lose some of my own Puerto Rican culture. There was a point in my life where I was “acting” Dominican, and even though I knew I was just pretending to be someone I was not, that didn’t matter as I wanted to be accepted among my friends. My Puerto Rican accent changed to a Dominican one, and strangers automatically assumed that I was Dominican, and I accepted it. Ultimately, however, I learned to never change the way I am to please others, and instead, I now try to take elements of Dominican culture and make them a part of my own culture.

Throughout my nine years living in The Heights, I have met wonderful people and learned amazing things. I have been taught how to dance merengue, how to cook with sugar, how to make “mangu con salami,” how to hit a home run, how to say the same sentence in a million different words, and most important, how to become part of a new culture and appreciate all it has got to offer while still remaining Puerto Rican. When I am asked where I’m from and I answer “Puerto Rico,” I love watching the surprised reactions. I used to get offended when people would assume I was Dominican, but now I calmly laugh and simply reply, “No, I am full blood-Boricua...with platano on the side.”

The Jewish Identity By Scott Rubin (Excerpt)

According to Stone, a race is a group of people that is suited to their environment for overcoming anthropological issues (134). This means that they all have similar adaptations for surviving in their environment. Different races in different environments will have different adaptations. This creates and defines different races.

The Diaspora itself is evidence that Jews are not a race according to Stone's definition. Since Jews scattered to vastly different locations and are not in one specific area, they cannot be said to have adapted to one single environment. They ended up adapting to multiple environments, creating a "mixed race." Jews who belong to other races that are not Caucasian, such as Africans or Asians, do not belong to a Jewish race but to an Asian or African race.

A religion, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is defined as: "[a] particular system of faith and worship." A person who is labeled by a religion usually practices it. There are many different religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Atheism, Hedonism, and many more. It is possible for one to convert from religion to religion. However, once one is born into a race, one stays in that race for the rest of his life because he cannot change his physical traits or phenotypes. Plastic surgery is the only exception, but the gene for the original phenotype is still present. One may belong to the Spanish race but to a Catholic or Jewish religion. For example, if we were to take a Spanish Jew and a European Jew, they both belong to the same religion but are of different races. Many Arabs practice Islam but not every Arab is Muslim. Islam is not a race; it is a religion.

This logic supports the claim that Judaism is a religion more than a race. While the Jews are certainly not a "race," they often share cultural and religious practices that they hold in common with each other.

The Fear of Crime By Jaleesa Balkman



Every few weeks, there is a prominent news story that is sensationalized enough to captivate viewers and intrigue readers into watching a news station's broadcast or reading a newspaper. These crime stories, whether they are about a school massacre or about a missing college student, all have the same affect on the public; they all produce and spread fear. While our increasing fear of crime does demonstrate awareness, it can also breed more crime.

The culture of fear, which is perpetuated by the media, distracts people from the foundational issues that are threatening our society.

The media contributes a lot to the fear of crime with its startling stories and exaggerated details. In media, an ideal news story about crime is one that will help their newspapers sell and is sure to hold readers' attention. The media's motive is to increase ratings and demand. In today's society, the media has a lot of power; someone with power has the ability to define a situation (Altheide 1355). The media is everywhere, and it is easily attainable. People find out what is going on in the world by just by clicking the remote or buying a newspaper from a local store than by doing their own investigation of a current event. The media takes advantage of their power; they take current events and situations, manipulate the details of those incidents, and then present the story to the public. Most newspaper readers are easily influenced by the person who wrote the news article. Many people unknowingly give consent to the media to shape their view of the world. If people did not rely heavily on media, and defined current events and situations on their own, then the public would have more power over the media, and this would probably thwart the spread of the culture of fear or, more specifically, the fear of crime.

There appears to be no correlation between the public's increasing fear of crime and actual crime rates. According to David Drehl's *Time* magazine article, the murder rates in the United States reached its peak in 1991 with 9.8 per 100,000 people. After 1993, crimes rates started falling drastically. Drehl states that the preliminary statistics of crime rates released by the Department of Justice shows that the crime rate may be the lowest since the 1960's. Ironically, as the crime rates dropped, the public's fear of crime has increased. This means that the public's fear of crime has been manipulated by the media.

February 5, 2010

Dear Mrs. Freel,

Hello, how have you been? I have missed you. It has been almost two months since the last time I wrote to you. How was your holiday break? Mrs. Freel, during my holiday break, all that I did was eat. I ate almost everything, but the food that I especially remember eating was Attiéké Poisson. You might be wondering what type of food this is, so let me explain. Have you ever had a food that you just could not get enough, a food that you want to eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? A food that makes your taste buds sing? Well as for me, there is no such thing as too much Attiéké Poisson.

Attiéké Poisson is French for braised fish with cassava. This food originated from Ivory Coast. As you may know my friend, Youssouf is from this country. Right next to Ivory Coast, there is Guinea. I fell in love with this food when I was growing up in the capital of Guinea, Conakry. There were always local vendors selling Attiéké Poisson across the road from where I lived. Every day I used to buy this food for 500 Francs Guinean. With a spoon of it in my mouth, I could feel my legs step into heaven. I could see and smell everything that made up this fine delicacy. I saw the ground cassava, with slices of tomatoes, onions, a special green sauce made up of scallions, parsley, and green peppers sprinkled on top of the fish. This was as fine as it can be. I wanted to eat this food every day and every second of my life. It just made me happy, energetic, and full. It is now a part of me, and it has a simple history with me.

When I was in Africa, I was always able to find Attiéké Poisson everywhere. Now that I am in the United States, there are only a few places I know where I can get my favorite food. These restaurants each with their own flavor of Attiéké Poisson make the trip worth it. I would go to these restaurants every day and spend at least \$15 on a plate of Attiéké Poisson. Sometimes, I would have to walk more than 40 blocks to a restaurant to get it. I did not mind the distance, as long as I got a plate of Attiéké Poisson at the end. Since I definitely could not get enough of this food, I always visited these places. I found that there is a difference in the taste of Attiéké Poisson from Guinea and America.

At home, my mom and my sisters try to make the food for me, as they know I can never get enough of it. I try to see how they make the food, but still to this day, I cannot make it by myself. No matter what, I always find something wrong with my Attiéké Poisson when I make it. This is a problem now that I am away at college. There is no one here at New Paltz that can make the food that I want. Hasbrouck Dining Hall does not serve this food, and I have to stay without this food until I go back home again. Right now, I am forced to eat other types of food, but soon my taste buds shall sing again. Mrs. Freel, maybe someday, I can show you Attiéké Poisson, and then you will see why I can never get enough of Attiéké Poisson.

Sincerely,

Umaru Barrie

February 19, 2010

Dear Mrs. Freel,

Have you ever realized that certain types of food can change ones mood/tone? Food is an important part of our daily consumption as we need and want it every day. Certain foods can express what region and class ones from. But, it can also make us happy, excited, or even sad, especially when discussing the process in which the food was made or how it makes one feel. Fredrick Douglass's "My Bondage and My Freedom" expresses the previous statements more in-depth as the essay explains how a specific food establishes, develops, and supports a certain mood/tone.

In Fredrick Douglass' "My Bondage and My Freedom," one is able to understand how "ash cake" establishes, develops, and supports his mood/tone in his story. "Ash Cake" was the primary food made and eaten by slaves, such like Douglass himself, as they could not afford the luxury of their master's food. One can analyze through the word "ash cake" that it expresses an unhappy individual as "ash" resembles darkness and "cake" resembles happiness. Therefore, Douglass explains to the reader the type of food the slaves consume in order to establish the mood and tone he feels as he describes the process of the "ash cake's" creation. However, the tone is expressed even more as he transitions from the poor "ash cake" into his master's rich-quality and quantity of foods. One can analyze the development of Douglass' tone as he was much more enthusiastic describing the numerous foods, such as poultry, dairy, seafood, and beverages that the master's home contained, compared to the simple cake topped with dry ashes that the slaves were able to make. In addition, in the end the "ash cake" supports his mood/tone through the words resemblances and the comparison of the master's quality and quantity of food that the slaves are unable to eat.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Matos



March 5, 2010

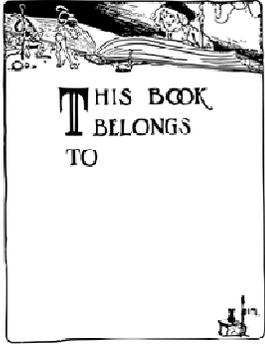
Dear Mrs. Freel,

Three letters down and three more letters to go until the semester comes to a rapid end. The last letter we were assigned was a little more complex than the past letters you have given us. It made me think a bit more, which is not a bad thing, but talking about how I prefer sweet with a hint of sour is much more interesting. To many people, once they hear the words “sweet” and “sour,” they automatically assume that food is the main focus. When I hear “sweet” and “sour” I think about my personality because those two words are what best describes me. As you may know Mrs. Freel, I am a charming young lady, who is very talkative and will gladly accept a new friend. That is the sweet side of me; the Drewnesha that everyone yearns to know. The Drewnesha that will lend a helping hand if she is able to. The Drewnesha that will cheer a fellow classmate up if they are feeling bad; but then there is always the “sour” side that very few people have a chance to witness. Many people have no idea that there can be such a side to this lovely young lady, but there is. I hardly unleash this “sour” person, but when I do there is a big problem. When she comes out, she comes out hard and ready to brawl. She is mainly furious and very often inconsiderate of other people’s feelings. She has a stare so cold that she can freeze someone by simply glancing at them. I am not going to try and defend her, but someone must truly do something wrong in order for this “sour” side to surface. I know what you are thinking Mrs. Freel, how can two completely different sides of me be so contained? Well, that is quite simple because I know how to make them go together fairly well. You see Mrs. Freel, I am kind, but my “sour” side will never let any one mistake my kindness for weakness. I am generous and of course friendly, but my “sour” side will never let anyone take advantage of my generosity. Well Mrs. Freel, now you know more about the wonderful split personality of Drewnesha Thompson, which indeed blend together very well.

Sincerely,

Drewnesha Thompson

Childhood Reading and Writing By Ceasar Sanchez



I learned how to read with Dr. Seuss books at the age four. I will never forget my first book—*The Cat in the Hat*. It took me a while to understand the words, but I soon grasped their meaning and began to read and enjoy them. As a young kid I always would read Dr. Seuss in my grandmother's rocking chair, and, by age five, I had a collection of Dr. Seuss books. A few years later, I began reading scary stories. My favorite was the collection of *Goosebumps* books by R.L. Stine, which I always purchased at my elementary school book fairs. My favorite *Goosebumps* book of all time is *The Night of the Living Dummy*.

Recently, my favorite book has been *Gates of Fire*. This book is a historical novel by Steven Pressfield that recounts the Battle of Thermopylae through the voice of Xeones, a Spartan Helot and the sole Greek survivor of the battle. The book is very intense and gives a better understanding of who the great Spartans were. Much of the narrative explores Spartan society, especially the agoge, which is the military training program that all Spartan boys completed to become citizens. This novel also details the heroics of several dozen Spartans, including their king, Leonidas, the Olympic champion Polynikes, a young Spartan warrior named Alexandros, and the Spartan officer Dienekes. The novel gives detailed information about the Spartan phalanx in battle, as well as the superior training and discipline of the Spartan warriors. *Gates of Fire* is a favorite book because it provides so much description of the great battle of 300 warriors, and it goes further into detail about what type of people they were and how they trained.

The most interesting writing assignment that I ever received was a research/presentation paper on Brazil, which I had to write for an English course. The paper required me to find out background information about Brazil, such as information on Economics and Business, Language, Culture, History, etc. I picked Brazil as a topic because it is a place that I've always wanted to visit and learn more about. The project challenged me to do some real research and learn more about a country other than my own.

When I was younger, I used to keep a personal journal. I did it because I wanted to express myself through writing and try to recap my daily occurrences by writing them out. It was way for me to express myself and see my thoughts on paper. My journal experiment did not last very long because I grew tired of it after a certain time.

The kinds of writing that I enjoy in life include texting, writing e-mails, chatting with friends and writing proper notes in class so I will not be lost and will have a better understanding of what is going on in my course. This type of writing has shaped me into a more precise writer.

Heart of Your Sins By Erica Pena

Please forgive me
I've been cursed by you
Aren't thy souls not good enough for thee?
Is being a burka, my cue?

I've been cursed by you
Am I so insignificant?
Aren't thy souls not good enough for thee?
Questioning your actions, but, Oh, you are so brilliant

Am I so insignificant?
Long lost words whisper to me
Questioning your actions, but, Oh, you are so brilliant
Swallowed up in the sound of my screaming, Amy

Long lost words whisper to me
There's no one here and I fall into my self
Questioning your actions, but, Oh, you are so brilliant
And I've completely lost my self

There's no one here and I fall into my self
This man you call my husband held me down
And I've completely lost my self
Women are tied down by burkas and trapped in this ghost town

This man you call my husband held me down
Immobilized by my fears and blinded by my tears
Women are tied down by burkas and trapped in this ghost town
But no one see me, let alone hears

Immobilized by my fear and blinded by my tears
Give up my way, and I could be anything
But no one can see me, let along hears
Watching me become another burka, who's to blame?

Give up my way, and I could be anything
The nightmares, I build my own world to escape
Watching me become a burka, who's to blame?
I pray for my freedom, are you listening? Reshape!

Give up my way and I could be anything
Holding my last breath and recalling
Watching me become a burka who's to blame?
But I guess that in the end I had to fall

Manners and Etiquette in the 21st Century By Rejoyce Afram



Manners are necessary in every setting of life. When individuals refuse to use manners and etiquette during a social event, it shows a lack of dignity. Manners are actions as simple as saying “please” and “thank you” to others or wishing someone a “good day” when leaving the elevator. A person who does not use manners and etiquette does not value the quality of order in life. This brings in the concept of following rules, the law, and tradition for the new generation to follow and continue.

We need to use manners and etiquette in the office, in dating situations, and in social environments.

Some forms of manners and etiquette originated in earlier times. When George Washington was “a boy of 10 or 12 in the 1740s, he was required by his tutor to copy *110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior In Company and Conversation*” (Bushman 2). These rules were meant to teach him how to approach and speak to the elderly. He had to copy the rules because in that way he would be able to recognize and remember them. These rules are similar to the same rules that we use today. Some of them include our table etiquette because “when eating in common became the vogue, table manners made their appearance” (Post 1). Eating together became more common in families, so people became conscious of the way they appeared. Until fairly recently, members of the lower class showed that knew their place in the society by following such manners as taking their hats off when greeting someone from a higher class. [. . .] The higher class also tilted their hats to one another.

Of course, etiquette has changed. For example, the tilting of hats does not take part in modern, 21st century etiquette, and what may have been relevant in the 18th century is no longer significant. Today, many of our rules of etiquette concern the work place. [. . .] In an office, no matter the type of job an individual has, it is proper etiquette for the employee to dress formal or business casual to show respect for the company he/she works for. When people arrive for work, they should greet everyone whether they like them or not to create a comfortable environment. During breaks, gossip is not appropriate because people have to be courteous of each other’s feelings. Gossip creates tension, and it is bad for the community. Being respectful to each other in and outside the office is required from employees and employers. In addition, office etiquette often requires that employees invite their co-workers to special events such as weddings. Employees often invite people who have the power to fire them to secure their job (Em 4).

Dating is a very large topic within etiquette and manners because these are rules that we

as a society have set up. When a man asks a woman out on a date, he is automatically expected to pay for the date, since he is the one who did the asking. In a world where men dominate, some people feel uncomfortable when a woman offers to pay for the date. The perception of men paying for the date is what society has created, so when women offer to pay, it is seen as taboo. If a person does not want to keep seeing the other, then it is proper etiquette for them to call the other and tell them. It is rude to just not pick up the other person's phone calls just to avoid them (Em 2). If a woman ends a relationship in a destructive way, she will say "I hate men," but ending a relationship in an amicable way may initiate positive communication and avoid grudges. [. . .]

The 21st century has changed many things around concerning manners and etiquette. We live in a world now where we are supposed to learn how to mind our own business. When a person does not greet someone, it is not always seen as being rude. Instead, it is understood that the person is having a bad day and should be left alone. Young people are not expected to stand up for the elderly on the bus anymore because some of the old people do not like to be treated as weak or vulnerable. In the dating world, women are expected to contribute to paying the bill because some are the head of the household; also some women want to feel independent.

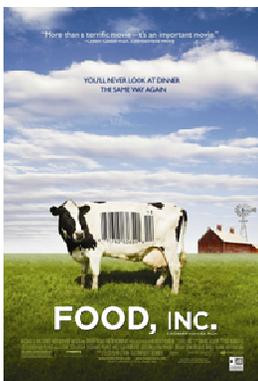
Manners and etiquette appeared when civilizations emerged, for a reason. Often, we do not follow anything that sounds like rules in our society. However, we should follow rules of etiquette because they will help improve the communities we live in.

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Analysis of “The Pleasure of Eating” and *Food, Inc.*

By Junya Okazaki



Many industries exist in this world. The development of those industries has been significant. The food industry is one of them. Thanks to it, our lives became more convenient. However, there are warnings against this development. An article written by Wendell Berry and a movie, *Food, Inc.*, are some of them. I would like to compare and contrast the article with the movie in terms of stance, tone, and point-of-view.

First, in terms of stance, both the article, “The Pleasure of Eating” by Wendell Berry, and the movie, *Food, Inc.*, criticize the food industry. Berry says that the food industry puts importance on “volume and price” to reduce costs and this causes the ignorance of the politics, aesthetics, and ethics of food among people (555). Now we live in a democratic society. The key word of this society is freedom. We all have the right of freedom. Although we have the right, Berry says we ignore the right because we are passive consumers of food. We usually consume prepared food. Similarly, the movie *Food, Inc.* focuses on the detailed processes of production in the food industry. These processes aren’t known by most people. The visuals were surprising because no one can imagine these cruel and impure situations. Both stories suggest that we should learn more about the process of food production.

Second, both the article and the movie warn against the food industry so their tones are negative. In “The Pleasure of Eating,” Berry’s feelings such as resentment, satire, and nervousness are represented. For example, he states that “this is certainly also true of patrons of the food industry who have tended more and more to be mere consumers—passive, uncritical, and dependent” (552-553) and “the industrial eater is, in fact, one who does not know that eating is and agricultural act, who no longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land, and who is therefore necessarily passive and uncritical— in short, a victim” (553). In these sentences, he repeats the words “passive” and “uncritical.” He wants readers to know how dangerous their lives are.

In *Food, Inc.* the tone is also negative, and the visuals and music leave a deep impression on the minds of the audience. For example, the music used at the beginning consists of monotone and lingering sounds. It sounds mysterious and the audience feels something bad will be in this movie. The scene of cutting chickens’ necks also has deeply negative impact. It shows us how cruel the food industry is. People who watch the movie, of course, eat chickens, which are processed in such a cruel way. The purpose of this negative tone is to have the audience think about their food. Thus, both the article and the movie share a negative tone. [. . .]

To sum up, the stance of both the article and the movie is critical of the food industry, the tones of both are negative, and the points of view of both are different. We are now involved in the food industry. Almost all of us eat food of mass production. Both the article and the movie suggest that we have to think about our food more seriously. How is food produced? What will happen if we keep eating food of mass production? These questions are not easy to answer. Left unanswered are many questions. As they indicate, to consider our food is valuable, essential, and necessary.

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The Periodic Table of Food By David Manis



By law the ingredients used to make a food product are listed on the packaging. They are listed in order from most used to least. Unless searching for food with a specific ingredient, most people do not look at this list. This may be because the average person will not be able to pronounce a majority of the ingredients listed. Food is no longer grown over time on a farm. Instead, it is scientifically created in a chemistry lab under a microscope. By using similar points of view, stances, and tones, the documentary *Food, Inc.* and the essay by Wendell Berry, “The Pleasures of Eating,” both examine the topic of careless humans who do not mind eating from a periodic table of food.

Food Inc. is a documentary that forces viewers to question their next meals. Director Robert Kenner stirs the pot with his eye-opening investigation into how companies, such as Purdue Chicken raise chickens until they can no longer stand on their own two legs and then slaughter them at unbelievable rates (*Food Inc.*). The documentary unveils for us the modern chain of food production: from corporate farm to slaughter house to packaging to the customer.

“The Pleasures of Eating” has a similar theme to *Food Inc.* American consumers do not know what they are eating. While Berry does not go into as much detail or depth as Kenner and *Food Inc.*, his point is still clear, and his voice stands out. The reader can tell that Berry has a point to make and that he wants to be heard. Berry writes directly about the American consumer and in the end, directly to them.

The only major decision someone used to have at a supermarket was whether to have their groceries put into a paper or plastic bag. Now, it is whether to buy organic food or factory produced food. *Food, Inc.* reveals the dark and secretive tricks that many internationally known companies use to keep production high and expenses low. While it may seem like there is a fair amount of competition in the food market, most companies trace back to the same giant corporation and its factories (*Food, Inc.*).

Food, Inc. is filmed from a concerned consumer’s point of view. Kenner sets out to have various questions answered and reveals information previously unknown to the common person. Kenner takes customer safety into his own hands as he and his production crew interviewed various farmers, politicians, and others who are connected to the sickening truth of the food industry. Some farmers risked their contract rights with the companies that employ them by revealing certain information to Kenner. Others refused to provide details because they feared a lawsuit from their employer. One farmer had

her contract terminated after she allowed the camera crew inside her chicken farm to reveal the horrible treatment of the chickens. Almost all of the companies that were asked for an interview declined (*Food, Inc.*). Through the use of the interviews, Kenner emphasizes his stance that the companies in the food industry prefer that their customers care more about how the food tastes, rather than how it was raised and produced. [. . .]

Unlike *Food, Inc.*, Wendell Berry writes from his point of view as he looks at the American consumer. In his short essay, “The Pleasures of Eating,” Berry’s voice sounds like he is secretly watching the American consumer as they grocery shop. The reader can imagine Berry sitting behind multiple security televisions yelling at each shopper as they purchase processed food. “The passive American consumer, sitting down to a meal of pre-prepared or fast food, confronts a platter covered with inert, anonymous substances that have been processed, dyed...and sanitized beyond resemblance to any creature that ever lived” (Berry 554). By writing like a spy, Berry strengthens his writing which makes his stance even more significant.

While the stances presented in *Food, Inc.* and “The Pleasures of Eating” are very similar, they are presented in two different ways. Both believe that Americans need to learn more about where their food is coming from, how it is grown or raised, and that they should demand more answers about this topic. The difference between the two, is that Berry does not write much about the queasy details; instead, he focuses on the current state of the common person’s understanding of the food industry, and then serves the truth. “Most urban shoppers would tell you that food is produced on farms. But most of them do not know on what farms, or what kinds of farms, or where the farms are, or what knowledge or skills are involved in farming” (Berry 552). [. . .]

Whether the American consumer knows it or not, they have been eating in the dark. They were told a lie and have digested it for many generations. The food we eat today, if one wants to call it food, is not raised and grown the way we think it is. Kenner and Berry are two examples of people who have tried to turn the lights on for us by explaining the truth of the American food industry. It is time for the lights to be turned on, and the lie to be sent back to the kitchen. American consumers need to learn what they are eating and demand change, even if it means starting from scratch.

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Gluttony and Sloth By Won Seok Jang



Gluttony and Sloth by James Todd

In past societies, food was directly related to human survival because the food production in those days was not enough to feed all people. Societies focused on finding food resources for tomorrow and creating an even distribution of food. As a result, we made some rigid rules about food and its distribution. For example, “gluttony,” which means “excess in eating or drinking” (“Gluttony”), and “sloth,” which means “Aversion to work or exertion; laziness; indolence” (“Sloth”), are two of the seven deadly sins in Christianity. Why are these deadly sins? All creatures on the earth perform production and consumption throughout their whole lives, and

our environment is maintained by the balance between production and consumption. So, if the equilibrium breaks, our environment will be destroyed. Therefore, gluttony, which means eating more than you are producing, and sloth, which means eating without producing, has a possibility to fundamentally threaten our environment and human society. For this reason, we defined gluttony and sloth as deadly sins to prevent “Gotterdammerung” from occurring. However, after we are able to be totally self-sufficient, it seems that gluttony and sloth cannot be deadly sins anymore. We enjoy abundant food as much as we want now, and our society is not completely threatened by a scarcity of food anymore. So, many Americans think the concepts of gluttony and sloth are too old to apply to our current society, but I believe Americans still commit gluttony and sloth.

Every country in the world has its own culinary culture. Italy has pizza, Japan has sushi, and Korea has BBQ and Bi-Bim-Bob. So, what is a representative food of America? Perhaps, fast food comes to the minds of many people. Fast food, as such, has many benefits. It is delicious, cost-effective, and convenient. In our busy lives, fast food is literally the ideal food. Thanks to these benefits, fast food rapidly became one of the most popular foods and also the most influential trend in American culture. However, I think Americans are penny-wise and pound-foolish now.

Many Americans like to eat fast food. I think the main reason why they choose it is its convenience. They need less money and waiting time to get this food and they eat it within just three minutes or while walking. So, I would like to define fast food as a literally faster and easier food. The impact of fast food affects how we live, how we work, and everything in our lives in this way. Suddenly we consider speed and convenience as the most valuable

things and change our lifestyles to be faster. Some big fast food companies like McDonalds and Burger King have steadily enjoyed and sustained growth during the last decades based on the explosive increase in consumer demand. As a result, few big food companies dominate the American food market and these deformed production structures brought another food problem. If so, what problem do we have?

I think Americans have enjoyed their rights as consumers, but they have ignored their duty as consumers. For example, when we go to any mart, we try to make the best choice among a lot of options to choose our food because the food companies offer a lot of products for us. We spend much time comparing their prices and qualities among the options and it is, of course, a good way to choose our food. I believe, however, it is an attitude of a passive consumer because our choice is made only within the options given by the companies. I think we have to be proactive consumers. [. . .]

We like the “faster” and “easier” of fast food, but if we ignore our duties as consumers, then it will be another version of “gluttony” and “sloth.” Now, many civic groups try to reacquire our rights for healthy food through many types of consumer protection movements. What are you going to do from now on?

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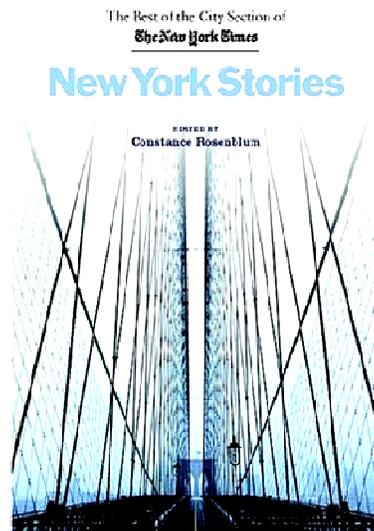
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Untitled Poem By Yaritza Diaz

How dare you try to bring us down?
My culture is alive and yet you keep us drowned
With these negative consultations
You all might call this progression,
But I call it Oppression
Hatred and depression
We try to move forward
And progress in society
But they keep us tamed
Like a lion without its wilderness
Like bees stuck in their hives
We can't continue producing our lives
And then our beautiful culture dies
That's how you keep us down
Like Martin Luther said
"I have a dream"
Don't we all? Until we wake up
Then it all seems impossible to reach
The way you make us seem
Less and less, a minority in society
I am continuously judged
By those with power
You can lie to us
And tell us nothing is wrong
But in reality, we are seen as the problem
I am not a killer
I am not a drug dealer
I do not commit crimes
Like stealing and homicide
I do not stand by these stereotypes
I refuse to be called
These negative connotations
How dare you! We stay strong.

Journal By Brenden Kassel

“Marriage of Inconvenience” is an article that shows how one’s views and opinions of a place can change rapidly. The author starts off the story as loving the city and feeling great about herself. Then her apartment is robbed and this is when her views change. She realizes that she is alone and is in need of husband or male figure in her life. She seems to have lost everything, creating a miserable and lonely place. This article clearly shows that over time the writer developed a negative attitude about the city. The author of “Wild Masonry” recognizes that New York has changed to a place of mourning since 9/11. We are caught up with all the bad things that happen to us, and don’t enjoy the good. “On the Run” is the most compelling article because the writer’s voice is strong He vows to never give up smoking. The author feels that a cigarette is his true friend. He thinks that when he’s alone he can always count on a cigarette. With the rise of the price, to \$8 a pack, the author still feels no reason to quit. It is a part of society, a way to start conversation. The author hasn’t changed his feeling about smoking and probably never will.



Journal By Eric Feldman

As time passes, there are certain objects and places that undergo change and some that do not. Three articles: “Memory Curveball,” “My Friend Lodavico,” and “My Neighborhood” all similarly explore the theme of past vs. present. “Memory Curveball” explores how a piece of memorabilia such as a baseball with autographs has value despite its age and forgotten significance. “My Friend Lodavico” suggests that although a portrait of a man drawn in the 1500s is very old, it is the people who view the man in the painting who age while the man in the portrait never does. “My Neighborhood” discusses how a neighborhood in the Bronx became a neighborhood of devastation and desolation. It is interesting to see that as time changes, so do numerous things. People get older, and places begin to look different, whether for the better or worse. These changes are inevitable. But time does not have the ability to change everything. Lodavico, a painting, along with an autographed baseball, can become more faded throughout time, but their meanings stay the same. For the authors of these pieces, time has had a big impact on them, especially in “My Neighborhood.” The author was overwhelmed by the changes, and she describes her visit to her old neighborhood as surreal. The overall perception from these articles that the reader gets is that time may have the ability to change a person’s or a place’s appearance, but it cannot take away the significance, the memories of a place or object.

The Boy Who Never Gives Up By N'dambe & Danielle Huslinger

Editor's Note: This was an in-class assignment based on a reading about the New York City "rule" of always ignoring strangers.

Scene 1 (DANIELLE has gone visit her friend N'DAMBE in Harlem. DANIELLE comes from a small town called Stony Point, and she is startled by the things she sees and hears. In this scene, DANIELLE and N'DAMBE are walking along when a BOY begins to talk to them.)

BOY

Excuse me miss?

BOY

Miss I'm talking to you!

DANIELLE

Um, N'dambe I think he's talking to you.

N'DAMBE

I know, just ignore him. I go through this every day.

BOY

How about you stop talking to her and come over here and give me your number?

DANIELLE

OMG that's so rude!

N'DAMBE

I know right (shaking her head).

(DANIELLE and N'DAMBE continue to walk and ignore the young man.)

Scene 2 The following day, they are going to the store, and they happen to see the BOY again

N'DAMBE

Oh no don't look but there goes that annoying boy again.

BOY

Ayo miss!.....Miss!

DANIELLE

Don't you see she doesn't want to talk to you? I mean like don't you get tired of trying to talk to someone and they keep ignoring you, huh? (She screams with anger)

BOY

Dang, you ain't have to scream. I just wanted to tell her, her money fell out of her pocket. That's what I get for being nice. I should've kept it for myself!

DANIELLE

Oh my god I'm so sorry.

BOY

Yea 'ight whatever. Here goes your money. (He gives the money to N'DAMBE)

N'DAMBE

Thank you!

BOY

No problem but it would be nice if you gave me your number as a reward! (Smiling)

N'DAMBE

Oh god, come on Danielle let's go.

DANIELLE

JERK!!!! (Screaming at the boy)

(DANIELLE and N'DAMBE run off and leave the boy standing looking stupid.)

Untitled Poem By Tarina Bradshaw

We live in a fish bowl
but the more they observe, the less they actually know
being out looking in they can't help but wonder
WHY ME?...WHY NOW?
eyes full envy because they couldn't taste cherry
or land this beautiful butterfly
lost in our own world sporadically abandoning it
because others want to explore our fields
what may seem apparent actually isn't..or is it?
oblivious to the whispers? I think not
but I'm brave enough—are you?

Coming Semester By Lena Cooley

Don't leave me like my last one,
Go slow; Let me take time to get used to you.
I said I was going to start this one different.
I wanted to go easy with you, yet it ended like the last one.
Yes, I procrastinated, I overslept often, but I took care of business.
Next time I start over it definitely will be different. Studious, prompt,
ready for any task/test. Two down and six more to go
Sophomore year here I come...

Untitled Poem By Shantel Mayris

Never knowing what life has in store for u, u can usually assume what is to happen next. The if's and but's
and consequences of your every movement has yet reveled what is the inevitable truth of tomorrow.
Becoming a skeptic of bonds that are unexplainable will tend to leave you illiterate to what is there to come.
Never having the chance to fix what has already gone and making abstract notions to things to come usually
leave you without the chance to make life better. Being hopeless, clueless, and negative to the idea that all
things aren't the same, why even try to move forward? Wallowing in your self-pity hasn't gotten you nowhere
but in the same cycle as if you have your period. Carelessly you say a woman has nothing to offer u but how
can u possibly know if u don't take that chance. The chance to show ur true love n the chance to want some-
thing new, the chance of actually wanting to donate her heart so you can feel every beat that skips when she
talks to you, every acceleration when she's around, and every coherence when you touch her. Yet it seems so
simple, but accepting it is thus the hardest part, can you take on the task?

A Hidden Beauty By Londa Brooks



The memory of the natural beauty of my hometown, Puerto Cabezas, situated on the East Coast of Nicaragua, conjures up all kinds of feelings. In spite of the fact that Puerto Cabezas has cried over her sufferings from poverty and war, she has kept a unique beauty that shines in the hearts of all who know her. Puerto Cabezas is a town that may not have modern facilities and technology, but she believes in the love of people and keeps her dusty, traditional look. When I explore the town of Puerto Cabezas in my mind, I am filled with so many warm memories of her natural beauty, her people, food, and night life.

As I explore the past, it brings me a magic sense of satisfaction to have been born in a place where you can smell the fresh odor of the blooming flowers. When I grew up in Puerto Cabezas, I heard the anomalous screech of roosters at 5:00 in the morning; I felt the fresh breeze run across my entire body, and the burning sun smiled at me when it warmed my brown skin. In the quietness of the morning, I heard the birds singing with a soft melody that echoed in my ears. As I opened the window, I saw chickens, roosters, horses and other animals searching for food. Then I looked in another direction and saw both the pretty and ugly faces of neighbors and friends walking through those dusty streets, going about their daily chores. Some of them had light skin, some brown like cinnamon, and others were dark like a cool night. In Puerto Cabezas there are several types of people. They are classified according to their ethnic group: Mestizos (a mixture of Spaniards and native Indians); Creoles (a mixture of African with native Indians and Europeans); Miskitos (native Indians); Mayagnas (another branch of native Indians); the Garifunas (A mixture of African slaves with native Indians); and the Ramas (native indigenous that are descendants from the Nahuatl Indians). Even though the main language is Spanish, each native group has its own dialect and traditions.

The ocean is a natural beauty that the residents of Puerto Cabezas enjoy and cherish. The Atlantic Ocean runs its deep water near this town. Sometimes the water looks gray and dirty and sometimes it has that perfect blue-sea look. Residents walk to the ocean to feel that delicious water on their bodies. Tourists also enjoy the provocative Atlantic sea water. During the Holy Week that is observed every year between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, most families go to church while others celebrate a festive mood. Every year the mayor of the town organizes the Plan Playa event at Bocana (the beach festival). During this event that lasts almost seven days, people will party from night to day and will dance to the rhythms of Indian music, merengue, salsa, reggae, soca, calypso and that nice soft romantic music to which lovers dance. They dance to “La negra tiene tumbao y no camina de lado” (The black

girl has an attraction and she doesn't walk on the side), sung by the famous salsa singer, Celia Cruz. The men will just stop and admire the beautiful girls and say, "Adios morenita, adios chulita dulce" (Goodbye brown and sugar girl). Some people will even swim in the ocean that looks beautiful when the moonlight reflects on the water. Some older couples sing, "Me and my girl friend sitting on the beach watching the rolling of the sea breaking." Puerto Cabezas is very busy during this time of the year, and a lot of friends and family from overseas come home to visit.

Along with family and friends who visit the town, some time tourists tag along. I remember speaking with one who said his name was Matias and that he was visiting from Germany.

"What made you come to this town?" I asked.

"The warm weather and the warmth of the people," he replied.

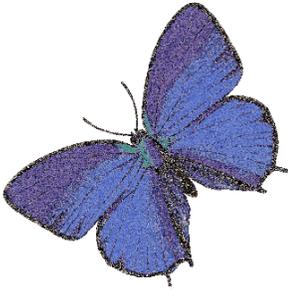
"What impresses you most about this town?"

"Las mujeres bonitas, (the pretty women) the flor de caña (liquor), and the cerveza Victoria (beer)," he smiled.

[. . .]

I feel blessed by God that I was able to experience life in Puerto Cabezas. When I remember Puerto Cabezas, I can see the faces of my mother and father. Also it brings me memories of family and friends. I miss the friendly people. When relatives and friends inform me about the various activities and events of the town, I feel that I have missed out. When I remember my hometown, I think of the warmth of the blazing sun, freshness of the food, and the ocean breeze that cooled my body. I also remember the natural beauty of the town, the ocean, the trees, and the animals. Many visitors have grown to love this place like their own towns. Even though I am not living there any more, I am still in love with this place, the people, its food and its music. It is a small town where people have big dreams.

Found Soul By Anairis Gomez



She walks swiftly up and down the block wearing a jean mini-skirt and an orange tube top in search of the unknown variable, greeting people with grace, expecting something in return. However, unconsciously expecting the unexpected, she finds her expectations disappointing. She's a lost soul struggling to be found. Putting up a wall as thick as rich man's wallet to cover her wrong doings, she does not show pain. Walking into my rugged, tilted, nauseating building, I see Lisa coming from

the back alley; she is pulling down her skirt and fixing her hair. The man behind her is adjusting his belt. Lisa sees me and smiles, "Hey darling.... How you doing... how is your mom doing?"

"I'm good, she is good too."

"Okay sweetie, take care."

As I walk up the stairs the man is looking at me with unpleasant look. I walk a little faster.

In the vast island of Manhattan, there are people who are carrying suit cases, dressed in black and coming out of brownstones and sky scrapers. On the Upper West Side, there are people wearing uniforms, name tags, and nice shoes, who are coming out of projects going to their jobs. I reside in a small section at 140st between Broadway and Hamilton, which is the part of the island called Harlem. My family chooses to live here, and it's an interesting place to live to say the least. The summers are filled with wet bodies of smiling children running around with plastic guns. There are block fights, ice cream and friendly people (sometimes). The winters are when the block looks lonely, and I hear mostly the wind in the air and the sounds of people's televisions blasting through their closed windows, seeing the same faces on the corner. One face in particular stands out to me. I see a face with empty eyes, and soulless depths. The face seems confused and hurt. As I squint to see who it is; I discover its Lisa, the block's crack head.

Another day, another day of this nonsense. I have to wake up to waterless faucets and heatless vents. I'm tired of sleeping on this dirty mattress with the springs poking at me. Well at least I have light today. Okay I have thirty bucks on me, and I need to pay rent before I get evicted. Okay I'm gonna pay my rent today but I don't have enough; I have to ask someone to lend me money. On the bright side; the sky is light blue and the air is warm. Walking slowly as I approach the play ground, I stumble upon a parade of bright colors surrounding the soothing ring of the ice cream truck. Oh, there go Sandra, poor girl gets beat by her boy friend, and I don't ever want to go through that again. Let me say Hi.

"Hi darling how you doing? ...Okay sweetie, have a nice day and take care."

There goes the “Frio Frio” man selling all types of flavored liquids; it’s like a rainbow on his chart that he sells for just a dollar; I want some of the rainbow. I want the pot of gold at the end of it. That’s exactly what I’m gonna get.

Hey, who is that guy wearing the white fitted T- shirt, fitted denim jeans, leather shoes that look like they have a duck beak and Dolce & Gabbana shades? His eyes don’t make any contact with mine. This isn’t Jose my dealer.

“Ey papi, where’s Jose?”

“He no hear right now, I’m da wone you lukiing foa, follow me.”

“Okay pap.”

His mood seems uneasy like this is his first time doing this. As I walk behind him, we come within reach of the abandoned building on the corner of 140th and Amsterdam, a place where as soon as you walk in, your nostrils are embedded with the stench of urine and feces. The place is rat-infested, and the walls are covered in mold. The floors are dirty with strange foot prints, and there are needles everywhere. The room is dark and cold; the door has a huge hole in the middle, like a person could fit through. This is worse than my place.

“20 dalas.”

Dang I have to pay the rent and I don’t even have enough for that, but I need to get my pot of gold.

“Listen papi, I don’t have enough but I do something else to pay for it.”

“No, no. No money, no powder.”

He has an apprehensive look on his face, the type of look that if he does something wrong, he’ll lose his life.

“Com’n papi what do you want? I’ll do anything.”

The guy pauses for a minute, leans back with his right hand on his belt and gropes me with his eyes. He stares at me up and down, I feel like I am being scanned. His face goes from worried to devilish. He then cups his hands wearing a smirk on his face and with the simple gesture of looking down at his pants. I know I am gonna get my gold. As I am in the process of kneeling down, I think about my bare skin touching the bacteria-infested ground; I don’t want to feel my legs getting covered by rats. In a sudden move, I feel the guy’s cold stale hand push me down by my shoulder. The floor feels filthy, just like I feel right now. “God forgive me for I have sinned.....”

I see Lisa wearing glasses and a long skirt with a white, button-up shirt, holding a square-shaped object between her right arm and her side. She has a sliver crescent around her neck with the symbol of a man on it. Still walking as swiftly as she can, she approaches the old lady who is sitting on her building’s stoop with rollers in her hair. Lisa holds the old lady’s hands and from my perspective it seems like Lisa’s eyes are drowned with tears. The old lady averts her head, get up slowly, and walks away. Lisa drops on her knees and begins to yell, “Please forgive me mother, please I changed.” [. . .]

So who is Lisa the crack head today? Lisa the crack head is a recovered addict, who converted into a serious Christian, went back to school, got her degree and now runs a recreational program for those who are in the situation she used to be in. Lisa is a friend, a daughter, a mother, and a savior to many people. You would never think that she had been a crack head, but if you look a little deeper, you will see that Lisa, the former crack head, is, and always has been, simply Lisa.

A Delicious, Yet Deadly Future By Matthew Weitz



The future of our eating habits might be the death of us. As the population grows, food industries will keep finding ways to produce food faster. Industries feed certain foods to certain animals or use antibiotics to grow them faster, but how safe are these procedures for us? The future looks grim and deadly, and what can be done about it? Industry owners and employees care more about filling their wallets than how they fill their customers. Growing our own food could save our lives, but how many people are willing to do this, and if they have a surplus and decide to sell some of their organic edibles, why must they sell it for a higher price than junk food?

To create a juicier chicken or cow, antibiotics are introduced into their diet to create more meat and to grow at a faster rate. Antibiotics, have some pros and cons: pesticides keep bugs from crawling around the animals we eat an antifreeze gene in cold water fish creates a high cold tolerance in potatoes and tobacco, and “golden” rice, which has an unusual amount of beta-carotene, helps people who have a vitamin A deficiency (“Genetically Modified”). As helpful as antibiotics can be, ingesting them could lead to serious health issues, and in some cases, death: “Human health effects can include higher risks of toxicity, allergenicity, antibiotic resistance, immune-suppression and cancer” (“Genetically Engineered Food”). Instead of solving this issue by removing these antibiotics completely, more antibiotics are introduced to destroy the old ones, because food makers care only about producing foods quickly, rather than the lives of people (*Food, Inc.*).

It seems that industries do not consider these dangerous foods to be classified as “dangerous” until a physical issue has risen, such as the death of a human. When E. coli was found in lettuce, spinach, and beef in supermarkets and Taco Bell, the media did not tell us about this issue until people started to die. A similar case occurred when peanut butter was recalled for giving people salmonella. When it comes to genetically modified foods, or GMOs, industries do not need to label the package that contains them. If one decides to look at a pack of chicken nuggets from Tyson, one of the largest chicken producers, he or she will notice that it does not say something like, “This food has been genetically altered.” We are forced to live in constant fear, for our next meal may be our last.

Usually the farms for food industries feed their livestock corn, since there is a large surplus, but since the corn is genetically modified, this may lead to serious issues (“Genetically Engineered Food”). For example, corn is not typically eaten by a cow, so

force-feeding corn to a cow could sicken it and create bacteria, such as *E. coli*, within its stomach (*Food Inc.*). Food producers are not being smart with the food they feed their livestock, but they do not seem to care. When one is in a position of high power, such as a manager or C.E.O., he or she can be overwhelmed by this power and not care about the rest of society. Industries do not care about the health of a human; they only care about profits. To an employee or an employer making a gross amount of money, it is “survival of the fittest,” and anyone who says otherwise is a liar. People do not trust the food that industries produce, so they think about growing their own food. [. . .]

Let us say one walks into Stop & Shop to buy groceries. He or she wishes to keep to a healthy diet and decides to buy organic chips, instead of Doritos. Hold on, there is an issue: that fresh, natural bag of chips, has a higher price than the Doritos. It is difficult to maintain a healthy diet when everything good for us is costly. Just to see how expensive organic foods are compared to non-organic, I decided to walk into a Stop & Shop and write down the prices of junk food compared to their alternatives. The first example is Skippy’s not-so-organic peanut butter for \$2.45, in a 16.3 oz. container. Found near this is Nature’s Promise Peanut Butter, a healthy choice, but it is \$3.59 and it is put in a 16 oz. container. Another example is Liberté Yogurt, priced at \$1.25 per cup. Placed exactly next to this brand is the healthier, organic brand of Siggi’s yogurt, but Siggi’s is priced at a whopping \$2.29 per cup. The prices for these organic alternatives are insane and unfair, so who can afford these besides people with high-paying jobs? [. . .]

Food industries and the future of our eating habits can only go downhill. At this moment, there is no hope for a healthy society, free of antibiotics and money-obsessed food processors. No one knows how life is going to change once our main food sources are extinct, but it will definitely not end well. It is hard to make a change in the food department of society when we all rely on someone else to do it, but that someone else relies on another, and it is a never ending cycle of laziness and unreliability. Already happening and continuing by the second, food industries will continue to become more technologically advanced, and the healthy, clean food we once know years ago, will never be the same again.

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You Are What You Eat By Deanna Baker



My mother always used to say, “You are what you eat.” When I would eat nuts, she would look at me, smile and say, “You are what you eat!” This same joke would happen with other foods like chicken, Sweet Tarts, and any other food that could be used as a double-entendre. My mother loved this little pun of hers, but this little pun means so much more. Are we what we eat? It could possibly make sense. When I think of a person eating an ice cream cone, I do not think of a mean person with a frown on her face. I also do not think of a smiling, happy person eating raw asparagus. The phrase “you are what you eat” may hold more truth than we think.

It is impossible to eat sweet food and not feel happy and childlike. Even if we are upset before our first bite of sweets, we will feel comforted afterwards, hence the term “comfort food.” The feelings we get when we eat sweet foods are the closest feelings we get to our childhood. Ice cream brings us back to those hot July afternoons when our parents would surprise us with a trip to the ice cream shop. Warm, fresh-baked cookies bring us back to those cold winter snow days when mom would let us stir the cookie batter so we felt like we were helping. Pies, cakes, and candies all bring us back to those holidays that we celebrated with our families. The first thing that comes to mind when someone says “sweet person” is a small child with a smile on her face. Even when adults are being described as sweet, they have an innocent, childlike quality about them. Everyone can have sweet moments. Our moods and personalities change just as much as our appetites do.

As we mature, so do our taste buds. A child and his or her parents have very different ideas of what the perfect meal is. As we grow up, the sweet child becomes a bitter adult. Not bitter in a negative way, but bitter as in we are growing up, and the innocent child world we lived in has become the reality that exists. The sweet children put out cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve, while their bitter parents enjoy a bitter martini as they wait for the little ones to go to sleep. Then they put the presents under the tree, and think about the days when they were the ones so excited for the following morning. There is nothing wrong with growing up. Children rarely enjoy the foods their parents enjoy so much, so life becomes much more peaceful when we are no longer stubborn children waiting for dessert. Our taste buds grow; we grow; and our relationships grow as we get older. The look in our grandmothers’ eyes when we finally taste and enjoy an old, bitter family recipe, or the realization that vegetables are actually delicious, show that we are becoming bitter adults. None of this is to say that children hate foods that are not sweet, or that all adults are bitter, but we rarely see a bitter child or an adult so sweet. Our personalities change as we grow up; it is only natural. Some people keep their childlike innocence, and those are the people that we imagine enjoying an ice cream cone on a warm July day. As we grow, we change, and so do our taste buds.

When we are children, Santa is real; vegetables are yucky; and everything is possible. As we grow up, reality sinks in. Santa is mom; asparagus is delicious when you steam it with butter; and only half of everything is possible if we try our hardest and put in a lot of time and effort. We really are what we eat. Some are sweet, some sour, some salty, and some bitter, but like our appetites and our personalities, we change and grow every day. So the next time I am eating sweet tarts and my mom uses her most famous one liner, I will smile and understand that she does not even know how right and wrong she is. I might be sweet, but now I am more of an adult than a child, and I grow more and more bitter every day.

I live for no one. By Sharely Then

I've paid in full, for my mistakes
But the pain gets stronger, every time it breaks
Pieces of me have been slowly dying
Secrets so deep and I'm tired of lying
So substance I seek, and I'm often flying
Flying away, so let my mind decay
Let it all be done, to forget that day
My life is filled with complication
All stemming from fleeting stimulation
Frustrated expectation
Holding enlightened realization
That you should keep your observation
to yourself.

Growing Pains By Danielle Gray

A stroll down a Brooklyn street can change your assumed role, which you may have adapted in your younger years. When stepping into a park, my life was at stake. Tomorrow was not always promised to me. Growing up in Brooklyn, has changed my perspective of people. Being Brooklyn's bully was not the easiest job to keep nor to have. However, due to my environment I had to keep it for multiple years of watching the drug hustling, children raping, and gun battles. "Things have to change" is what I usually say. This way of life cannot be the only option, and my relief about getting out of Brooklyn is what has allowed me to be the independent, intellectual, and strong young woman I have grown to be. Proper guidance and understanding of multiple backgrounds and personalities will help me break the Brooklyn barrier.

This Brooklyn barrier was even hard to shake when it came to friendships. "Why do you think I have not called you lately. I cannot stand you, and you need to keep your nose out of other people's business," said by Sister, a friend for three years. We were almost inseparable, like twins conjoined at the hip. The day sits in my mind like someone prank-calling me. Occurrences like these allowed me to realize that even when I am trying to shake off that image of being "Brooklyn's bully," people still may feel the need to take advantage of you. At school it was a harder to play this role because people still have that image of me instilled in them; that first impression. It has been a hard scenario to deal with, but the realization I came to was that people would rather take advantage than be true friends.

General change is like an open outlet for future generations, to be able to express their feelings without being categorized by their first impression. Change can come about if it is wanted. Change is necessary whether it is good or bad. "Brooklyn may not be the best but I want to be the best from Brooklyn."

Lilacs By Mayet Gebereyohannes



Late winter. Cold, dense air whistles through the lonely fragile trees, which are emptier than ever. The cloud of snow softens as the bright morning shines upon it. The water tinkling silently moves from the Highland Reservoir to the zigzagging pathway down by the pale, white lilac trees and approaches Highland Avenue, no wheezing, chattering, just pure silence; confused, the water races down the street to the corner of South Avenue and escapes down the drain. What once was dark seems real now. The dull dead leaf odor lingering welcomes the anticipated Rochester lilac festival approaching in the narrow future.

Early spring. Lime green leaves, purple, white, pink and reddish flowers everywhere, greenness arises peacefully in Highland Park. A man, breathing gently, adjusts and sits on his bulky green lawnmower and drives out from the back of the park office on South Goodman Street. He makes his way to Highland Avenue and starts mowing the flimsy, lifeless grass. Helpless it flops to the right as he mows whatever is left. The lilac bushes don't seem to pay attention. The fresh-cut grass smell is swept with the lilacs. The air whistles endlessly, but everything looks a little brighter, little greener.

Late spring. The sun is possessed by its highest power; the air is warm. People arrive at the park with their umbrellas, climbing up the hill to the east, first to the lilacs, ignoring the festival. Carved into a round, gray stone in italics are words that read: "Christina Blackwell, 1930 Lilac Queen." Behind the rock is a light-pink lilac tree surrounded by a circle of red fertilizer. There are fresh cuts all around, trimmed into an oval. Many branches have grown right from its root but have failed the struggle that was made to mirror an image of this tree. One of the lilac branches brushes the gray rock, rests and bends into the center and twines with the others, locking, pushing and dancing with the air. The flowers pose for the viewer, smiling, turning left and right, feeling ageless. Every other minute, viewers come, chattering, shuffling and laughing. "Picture time," says a girl hugging her friend. Swinging the camera, she gazes around for someone to take their picture, "Do you need some to take your picture?" asks a woman, loosening her arms and opening them towards the girl. "Could you please?" she cries. The girl starts whispering how to use the camera. The woman slowly nods. The girl jumps with excitement as she goes back to the lilac tree. She leans on her friend's shoulder and smiles; the lilacs are ready, waiting, and they pose for the camera.

Sneezing, shouting and giggling, rushing in groups of twos and fours, a good number of people walk down the hill to the west side of Highland Avenue. Short, tall, tiny, all walking in along a narrow walkway filled with gay colors to the right and left. The vendors' stands seem endless, jewelry crafts, sweet bells, and recycled art, on the right; fake tattoos, face painting and sample ice cream stands to the left. [. . .] Tackling and mingling with the charming breeze, people push and brush their way in and out of the deafening Teddy Geiger concert in the middle of the park. The field is covered in green grass, and tilts south down toward the concert stand. [. . .]

Memories are made on the south side of Rochester. The beautiful lilac festival flourishes each year in the spring. The remnants of the festival, the colors of the emerald grass into the silence and dullness of autumn. The dazzled participants of the lilac festival must wait until next spring to experience this glee again. But for now, the lilacs rest optimistically, while crickets are awake and vibrant.

Only Weight? By Cinthia Pimentel

America is known for bigger and greasier foods. Our food is served in big portions. We do not play any games when it comes to eating. There are many restaurants that have huge burgers and towers of French fries. We have oversize donuts and layers of cakes. We have buffets with different kinds of rice, flavors of chicken, vegetables, fruits, and much more. Because of this, America is known for its high obesity rates and its unhealthy ways of producing foods ("Obesity Statistics"). Even though we have many artificial products and very dangerous chemicals in our food, it's not all bad. America is also known for our mixed cultures, which cause us to have different and unique foods available to everyone. This allows us to have a diverse country that opens up different cultures to each other. America does have a problem with food. We love to make a lot of a "good" thing. It's true that we do have an obesity problem.

America's children are becoming overweight because of the bad choices that they are making. Yes, the food is bad, but it does not have to be consumed all the time. Ice cream is great once in a while. El Niño (a pizza pie folding up like a taco shell stuffed with three pounds beef, onions, sour cream, lettuce, tomato and topped with cheddar cheese) should only be eaten once in your life time. [. . .]

In New York City, there are many kinds of restaurants that cater to different people who live and travel there every day. There are Japanese restaurants that sell sushi and different kinds of noodle soups. Sushi contains many different kinds of sea food, such as crab, salmon, eel and even tuna. The possibilities are truly endless. [. . .] We all are able to try new things from different cultures. Since there are so many different foods options, there are also so many cultures that come together. We all know that food brings people together no matter what. America has opened its minds to different foods. We can understand a culture by trying its foods. Everyone learns from the tradition of a new culture.

The way families have passed down their recipes through generations, lets us learn about where our meals are coming from. Learning the history of other cultures will enhance our understanding of the different nationalities. Everyone can become a bit more open-minded.

Other nations see us as overweight people with our infamous fast food places. Sometimes, other nations must try to look closer at us and see more than just greasy plates. America is the 7th happiest nation in the world ("Happiness Level"). That's a pretty big deal. America is also called a melting pot. This is the best part of America because everyone is different and unique. While we do have a problem with greasy, fattening meals, America also has different cultures and traditions that help us understand each other. The best way to start learning from each other is by sharing our food.

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American Food Industry Will Need to Change in the Future

By Tomomi Susa



We all live our lives in a rush and try to cope with our hunger using fast food restaurants, while using time saved to do work or some other activity we deem productive. Therefore, we should not be surprised when health problems start popping up, as we all have to pay a price for convenience. In the food industry of the United States, they produce food which can be deemed unhealthy and use ingredients that are created with genetic engineering. However, the people who know this, such as the food industry executives or politicians, pretend as if there is no issue, ignoring the effect it has on consumers.

Because they act this way, contaminated food made their way into the food supply, and a little boy died in 2001 due to an E-coli contaminated burger. Truthfully, people know in their minds that what they are eating is unhealthy, but they do not stop eating it or care about how it is made until something happens to them, and that is because convenience or price comes first. The food industry is not only hiding that they are using genetically-modified products to make their products, but also they are trying to hide that they spend so much money on advertising products, which cannot even be called products, because they have no nutritional value and cause health problems.

If these problems were made public, either by a movie or an article, I am sure that people would stop buying and eating unhealthy food in the near future and start using organic products even though they are more expensive. If a great number of people became like that, the food industry and the government would need to change their business approach because they would not make any profits if they didn't care about what their customers wanted. When the food industry and politicians changed, farmers would receive monetary support from the government, and we would be able to get organic food safer and cheaper. It is said that things will not change until some people are faced with health problems or possible death; however, I believe that the change is not too far from today.

[. . .]To make a large amount of meat, large amounts of cows, pigs or chickens are needed, but housing all of them in a clean environment can be expensive for the farmers; therefore, many of them are put in places where sanitary conditions are not the best. The animals cannot even move in a crowd, and just wait to be killed. Some chickens cannot stand up and move because they are made to grow so fast and so fat by hormonal agents in a short period. Cows usually feed on green grass and crops as their main source of food, but they become weak and made easily sick because they are forced to eat the cheap corn as their feed. On top of that, when their meat is packed at a meat packing plant, it is usually done in such a sloppy way, that some meats become contami-

nated (*Food, Inc.*). [. . .]

No one ever imagines that the food they are currently eating may be their last, due to un-cleanliness, and no one can blame those parents who eat and give junk food to their children because this society's norm allows them to live unhealthy and not get scrutinized. Many people cannot use organic food to make their meals because of the price and convenience even if they wanted to. The situation with the 2-year old child is really unfortunate because if it were an adult, his immune system would have a better chance of fighting off the bacterial infection (Blake). [. . .]

Although it is obvious that junk food is not healthy, the media does not care about that fact and it broadcasts them on TV and newspapers. For example, PepsiCo only promotes Smart Spot products to children who are younger than twelve. [. . .] Some people have started to realize that we need to think about food more seriously today. Even if it is expensive, eating organic food is worth the price for our health. [. . .]

To conclude, the food industry will need to change, and they will sooner or later. They have caused many problems which have influenced people's health and lives. People used to think that they would not be able to change the way it was, but now they have noticed that they can, and if more movies like *Food, Inc.*, are made, a change will eventually have to be made.

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The Foods That We Eat By Umaru Barrie



The way our food is made and how we eat it has changed greatly over time. Food is abundant; it is everywhere and corporations try to make it available for everyone at cheaper prices. In supermarkets or grocery stores, we see all different products such as frozen foods, meats, fresh produce, dairy products, canned and packaged goods. Fast food restaurants such as McDonalds or Burger King serve us meals on the go. These services allow us access to quicker, cheaper, and large quantities of food. We receive all this food, but where does it come from? How is it produced? At what expense?

In addition, who actually produces it? When we ask these questions, we realize that we are simply consumers. We are merely people with no knowledge of the foods that we buy, and consume. We never stop to wonder how it came to our super markets, fast food restaurants, or our dinner tables. The essay “The Pleasures of Eating” and the documentary *Food, Inc.* examine our nation’s food industry and the problems with the way we eat today.

In “The Pleasures of Eating” Wendell Berry explains the importance of good food, and he speaks about the food industry. In the article, he comes across as a teacher who tells people about the way they eat. His tone engages the readers and reveals the bad eating habits of people today without pointing fingers at anyone. He points that people do not know where their food comes from and who makes it or produces it. The general knowledge of food is that it comes from farms, but not many people truly know on which farms or what companies manage our food. People do not think of the land as the way to get food anymore; rather, they look at companies to produce food. For example, when they see bananas, pineapples or strawberries they think of Dole Company. Berry compares our lack of knowledge of our food to our freedom. He states, “We have neglected to understand that can [not] we be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else” (553). We must know who controls our food, and what they are doing to it.

Wendell Berry’s tone becomes a warning to people as he exposes the truth behind the food industry. He paints a horrible picture of the food industry, and the quality of our foods. His tone becomes disgusted as he illustrates an image of “the hamburger [which] came from a steer that spent much of its life standing deep in its own excrement in a feed lot [or the veal cutlet which came from a calf that] spent its life in a box which it did not have room to turn around” (554). The images give readers a wakeup call. At the end, Wendell Berry does not leave the readers feeling pessimistic, his tone changes to a more optimistic view as he advises the readers what he could do to change the way the industry runs, and their eating habit. His tone starts to echo a father teaching his children. He even uses religious ideas to suggest that god gave everyone the ability to harness food, not only companies. This relates to Thomas Jefferson who stated, “Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of god” (Jefferson). We need our freedom from the food industry, and it occurs when people realize how bad they are to not only our food, but also the planet, and to us.

[. . . .] Wendell Berry's "The Pleasures of Eating" and Robert Kenner's *Food, Inc.* are different ways that people try to educate us about our foods. They both expose the food industry, and tell us of the problems that we are facing today with food. They also provide us with the knowledge of what we could do to help ease our problem. From the start, we could learn by asking ourselves basic questions such as who produced our food? Where was it produced? How was it produced? [. . . .]

We live in a world where the knowledge of our food remains a mystery. The corporations focus primarily on producing foods in large quantities rather than foods that will be beneficial to the people and the planet. The people are depending more on these companies to provide their foods than on themselves. We have stepped far away from the food ethics, and we lack respect for the animals and plants that we consume. Wendell Berry and Robert Kenner have shown us our problems with the way we eat and how our food industry operates. We can help change, and make them not only sufficient, but also healthy and ethical. We can have companies that lets animals wander in the open field, or companies that do not use chemicals or drugs on plants and animals in order to grow more food. If we do not act now, we will remain nothing but consumers.

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Stony Point Elementary School: A Place of Memories

By Danielle Huslinger



To most adults who grew up in Stony Point, New York, Stony Point Elementary school is just the place they went to school. However, to me, it is a place where so many of my memories were made. I went to school there from kindergarten through fourth grade, and the memories from those years last to this day. Stony Point Elementary is more than just a school; it is a place where my thoughts became a dream and where my dream, I hope, will one day become reality.

My first memory of the elementary school was stepping off the bright-yellow school bus into the September sunlight, a five-year-old ready to start her first day of school. My older brother Kevin had started school when he was my age, and now it was my turn. My new dress ruffled in the wind as I ran over to my parents on the sidewalk near the entrance. As we made our way into the school and down the hallway, I kept turning my head looking at all the boards and posters on the walls that we passed. We finally got to Ms. Lepore's room when my parents left and went to work. I ran over to the school yard eager to join the class and make new friends. Later that day, I saw my grandmother. She worked as a lunch monitor for the school.

Every day I remember thinking that my life could not be better. Seeing my grandmother was the best part of my day. I used to visit with her during my lunch time. While playing on the playground, I could see her talking to the other monitors. However, one of my most vivid memories was the day she asked me to get her neck brace from the lunch room during recess. This was before she was diagnosed with cancer. All of the doctors thought that she just had something wrong with her neck. That was true until they went to do the surgery and found the cancer. It was also in her lungs, and it was spreading. She only got worse through the coming months, while it spread from her neck and lungs to her brain. Whenever I saw her in the hospital bed, I would always picture her as she had been at the school; always just a couple feet away from me with a smile on her face, talking to her friends.

May of third grade was one of the hardest months of my young life. I had to return to school after burying my grandmother. She had just passed away from lung cancer that had spread to her neck and brain. Everywhere I turned, I was bombarded with memories of walking the halls with her. Going onto the playground was by far the hardest part of my days. It was like seeing her ghost standing on the blacktop just past the basketball hoop. Of course, all the teachers knew what had happened. Every teacher I passed gave me "the look." My classroom teacher treated me like I was going to start to cry at any

minute. I missed my grandmother's presence in my life. Every day I had an aching feeling in my gut. I thought that the school I loved would never be the same without my grandmother there to guide me.

However, when the next year came, I was used to her not being there. The school went back to being a happy place for me. I went back to excelling in my classes and enjoying myself. As my older brother Kevin would say, I went back to being a nerd. That very same year around the anniversary of my grandmother's death, my grandpa had a tree planted in her honor. I was in chorus, and during the ceremony we sang "Amazing Grace." I looked out at all my family members and friends in the crowd and every one of them had tears running down their faces. It was then that I realized that my grandmother had such a profound impact on so many people, including myself. The tree still stands today and sometimes I go up to the school and visit it.

During seventh grade, I sometimes returned with my friends to the school to play on the two different playgrounds. Doing so made us feel younger. My younger brother still attended Stony Point Elementary School, so some days I picked him up after school. One day I was walking through the school, and I realized I wanted to be a teacher there who inspires her students to be great people. I wanted one day to walk through the halls, not as a student, but as a teacher. I looked into Ms. Lepore's classroom and dreamed about standing in that very classroom. That year when my former teachers asked me if I knew what I wanted to do when I grew up, I looked at them and said that I wanted to teach.

By high school, however, my elementary school had become a distant memory. Then as I neared graduation, I once again began to think about Stony Point Elementary. One day I walked up the hill to look at the small pine tree near the side entrance of the school. The sign underneath the tree said, In memory of Eileen Huslinger. I looked at the tree and said, "I wish you were here to see me grandma. I'm going to graduate soon with honors. I also made a final decision on what college I am going to. I really miss you." The wind blew around me, and I knew that she had heard me and was proud of me. I walked around the playgrounds where I remembered running around playing tag and playing on the tires swings. Life was so simple back then; at that moment, I wished I could go back to the simple days.

Stony Point Elementary School was the first place I felt at home. I still day dream sometimes about standing up in the classroom full of eager students, willing to learn. I hope that years from now I can look back and laugh at the silly child I that was. Someday I hope to make more happy memories in the school that changed the course of my life forever.

The Life and Time of a Journey By Kimberlyn Blake



Can one really put into words how s/he feels about a place? When your heart is tied to a place that describes you in every way, to show others how you feel is to bring them into your world. I am truly ready to show why I feel strongly about a place I call home Jamaica.

My mom and I are on vacation in Jamaica; it is also home. The sun is shining brightly; fleets of mesmerizing butterflies fly past me. On the other side of the street, there are small and large groups of people, old and young, all gathered outside of a fuchsia-orange canteen. I hear the Jamaican language in the air. The smell of the freshly-baked beef patty and coco bread lingers. The aroma hits my nose like a long-awaited hug from a friend. My stomach begins to talk to me in an extreme tone. I walk eagerly towards the canteen and order a patty and coco bread and a pineapple box juice. After I receive my order, I walk joyfully to the parking lot, where my mom is waiting. She has a “Where have you been look?” on her face. I get in the back seat of the bright-red van. On the way home, I can see all the different types of street vendors selling goods, from clothing to fruit that is in season. The fruit all looks so appetizing. The vendors have different varieties of fruits from mangos and pineapples, to oranges and passion fruits. The vendors all have warm and inviting smiles on their faces.

The street is full of people. The street lights up with all the different colors of the clothing people are wearing. The mesmerizing colors of all the people walking, standing and passing by in cars are somewhat surreal. They all have welcoming smiles that give me a sense of warmth. A man sitting in a small, gray rusted truck smiles when both of our eyes meet; I blush and look away shyly. The van I am riding in gets closer and closer to the commotion. There is a carnival in the street. Traffic comes to a standstill.

I love all the colors of the streets and of the clothing worn by the people in the parade. People stand on verandas and on the roofs of houses, listening to the big black speakers, which are bursting with fast, hypnotizing music. The crowd of people in the colorful costumes are dancing and singing. The DJ gyrates to the music. The crowd agrees and copies his dance moves. On the other side of the street, a cloud of smoke emerges from the jerk chicken and pork stations. I can smell the different varieties of spices. To the left of the jerk station are little green gift shops. My mom wants to get out of the van and go inside; I refuse because the shop keeper looks like the elf Dobby from the *Harry Potter* movies.

After we slowly drive past the carnival, we arrive at one of our houses. The house’s color is different from how I remember it. The roof that was once vibrant red is now sea foam green. The outside walls are the color of wheat. The windows have crisp white trim around them. When I enter the yard, I see many more gardens than before. The

smell of freshly-cut lawn lingers in the air. The veranda is covered with eager family members and childhood friends. A rush of joy runs across my body like a kiss from a lover. I am home.

I slowly emerge from the van; a cinnamon color dog runs up to me. He sniffs me and then around the van. As he senses no danger, he proceeds to leap up at me. My uncle and aunt run to me, throwing up their arms in the air as they get closer. My uncle picks me up and swings me around in the air. I immediately flash back to when I was a child. After that warm welcome from my family, I enter the house. It feels so different. The chocolate carpet that once covered the living room is now gone. I feel like my entire childhood is now gone. Then I slowly enter my bedroom, and to my surprise, everything is the same. My bed, dresser and chair are still in the same spot. The bed is by the window while the dresser is by the entrance of the door. I stand for a moment to let all the memories sink in.

People always say, "Home is where the heart is." I can agree in many ways. The pride one feels when s/he is a part of something is the greatest feeling to experience. It is not the path you take in life; it is the journey. When a journey consists of pride and belonging, one can truly call a place home. That feeling will never leave me, no matter how far my journey takes me.