

Fresh Perspectives

Department of English

Tom Olsen, Chair

Nancy Johnson, Deputy Chair

Pauline Uchmanowicz, Coordinator, Composition Program

Educational Opportunity Program

Lisa Chase, Director

Antonio Bonilla, Assistant Director

Rita Celariste, Senior EOP Advisor & Faculty Liaison

Faculty

Patricia Corbett

Landan Gross

Penny Freel

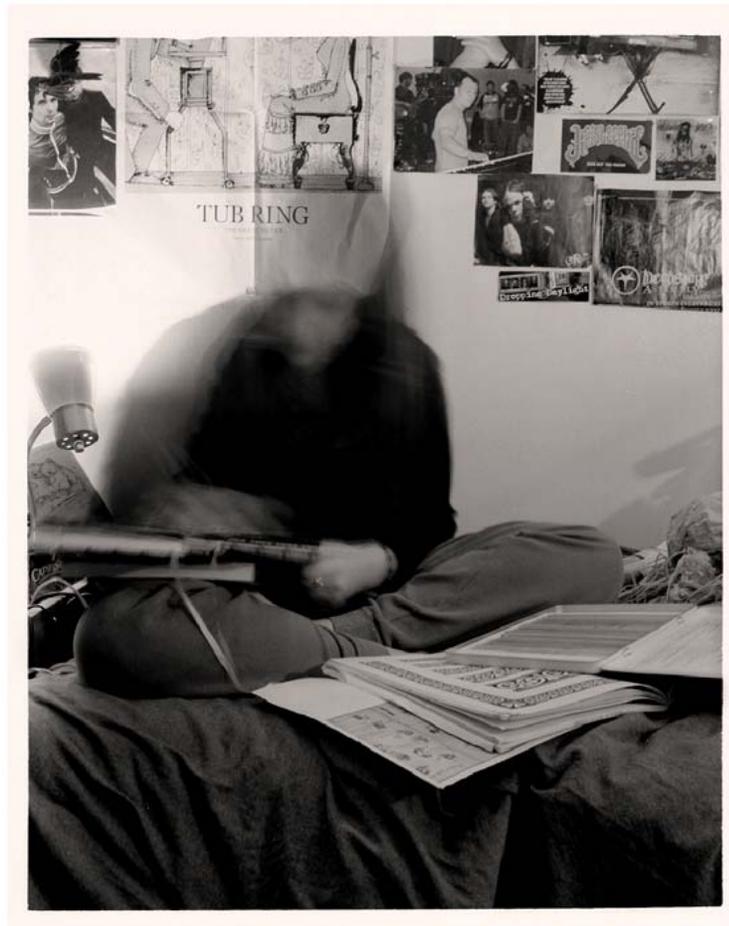
Rachel Rigolino

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Freewrite by Victoria Haralam	5
2 Years Later by Cassandra Roberts	6
Freewrite by Diones Adorno	7
Poem by Amadu Barrie	8
Your Workshop (freewrite) by Krystyna Bermudez	9
Truth by Jonathan Wang	10
Freewrite by Adiron Corichi	11
Just Because by Nekisha Walters	12
Freewrite by Sasha Santiago	13
A Friendly Betrayal by Valerie Sainvil	14
Freewrites by Shana Brown & Dan Teitelbaum	15
Freewrites by Ali C. Celik, Inieka Cooper, & Joseph Gentsch	16
Freewrites by Christina Chamorro & Kimberly Rivas-Adames	18
As I Sit Here (a freewrite) by Keila Vargas	19
A Story of Success by Fred Apple	20
The Ride by Brian Cyriac	21
Journal 3 by Kevin Ryan	23
Understanding the Pain by Gikelly Tejada	24
The Love from My Food by Ling Zhao	25
Letter by Christie Mo	26
Welcome To the Good Life by Linda Lee	27
Cotton Cap and Driftwood by Jeanne Edwards	28
Train Ride by Giselle Martinez	29
Finding Where you Fit In (in-class interview) by Elizabeth Batista & Giselle Martinez	30
Relationships with Food by Tsering Dolma	31

Photographs in this issue by Victoria Haralam and Krystyna Bermudez

Freewrite by Vicky Haralam



as the weight on my shoulders begins to come down,
i am crushed. defeated.

breathe in. breathe out.

"it will all be over soon."

2 Years Later

2 yrs later and I
 Can't stop thinking
 About your lips against mine
 And our very first time
 I can't understand
 Why
 I
 Left my husband
 For my side-line
 So afraid of love that
 I was blind
 Unaware that the paradise
 I was looking for was
 In your eyes
 Every time I hear your voice
 My heart starts to cry
 Cuz I'm afraid that it
 Is going to be your last
 Good-bye
 I miss you so much
 That I would die
 Just to see if our love
 Would prosper
 In the next life-time
 God bless me with you
 I regret that I left
 You
 I never should have left you
 This is the first poem I wrote you
 That's why my flow I so
 Steadily

2 Years Later by Cassandra Roberts

Cuz my heart is so heavy
 Cuz your love was heavenly
 Now my soul is empty
 Me filling this void with
 Someone else
 Can't be
 I know these words
 Coming from me are rare
 But I guess you can
 Call it a "player prayer"
 So before I lay me down
 To sleep
 I pray to god that again
 Our souls will meet
 And if this prayer isn't
 Answered then my
 Heart will cease to beat
 No more blood would flow
 In me
 I wouldn't even be able
 To
 Write my poetry
 There will be no more of me
 The fact that I left you
 Leaves a scorn in me
 2 years
 Later
 I sit...
 And wonder
 Maybe...

2 Duane

Freewrite by Diones Adorno



Loving those special moments with friends.

After dark it's time to party.

My friends are my life,

Please don't ever let these moments end with my friends.

Amadu Barrie

Where there is a missing piece in my life

You complete it.

In the grey sky.

There is your beautiful smile.

Radiant like the shining sun.

Where there is rain.

The only moisture I feel.

Is that of your moist lips.

Where there is drifting cold.

You coat me with your warm skin.

Where there is a gloomy night.

You illuminate the heavens.

With your beautiful and

Bright green stars.

Where there is a shut of an eye.

It is of you, Only you

I wander about

dreaming of

Your Workshop (freenwrite) by Krystyna Bermudez



I stand in your workshop
Trying to understand
Why you broke my heart
Why you left this land

I stand in your workshop
Your face is now a blur
I hope I don't forget you
I know that sounds absurd

But now I'm not afraid
To cry because I know
I'm standing in your workshop
But I am not alone

Truth by Jonathan Wang

It hurts to know the truth
Truth is like an open field where no secrets are kept
Truth exposes what lies within you
But truth also releases your burden
It cleans the soul of everything
Everyone has common secrets
The truth makes sure the secrets are shared among people
People should not hide their secrets from others
They should not even lie to others
Truth helps form relationships with others
A truthful relationship creates a better world

Freewrite by Adiron Corichi

The aesthetics of religion. The aesthetics of self mutilation.

A religion that seeks the elimination of self. A self that seeks aesthetics.

In seeking someone seems to say, something other than what one had said

Something in which would not seem at all like something that someone had read

A would've, a should've, a could've resounds, feeling out each word like beads,

But ungracefully graceful, I gave you the point, you missed it by sitting to read.

Just Because by Nekisha Walters

Slipping on the moss covered stones I slide into your awaiting arms.

We both smile shyly as our skin touches,

I feel the bristles of your erect hairs and a breath escapes my lips.

Our bodies are saying much more than our words ever could.

The cool smooth surface of the sand conforms to my feet as I step gingerly on the shore.

Basking in the hot suns rays I let go of all my inhibitions.

Your arm hangs on my waist your pinky hooked in one belt loop of my jean skirt.

Suddenly you drop your arms and rush into the warm ocean waters...disappearing from sight.

Smiling I stride close to the rolling tide and

nothing exists in my world now...only you.

Slowly I take off my clothes and stand naked on the beach.

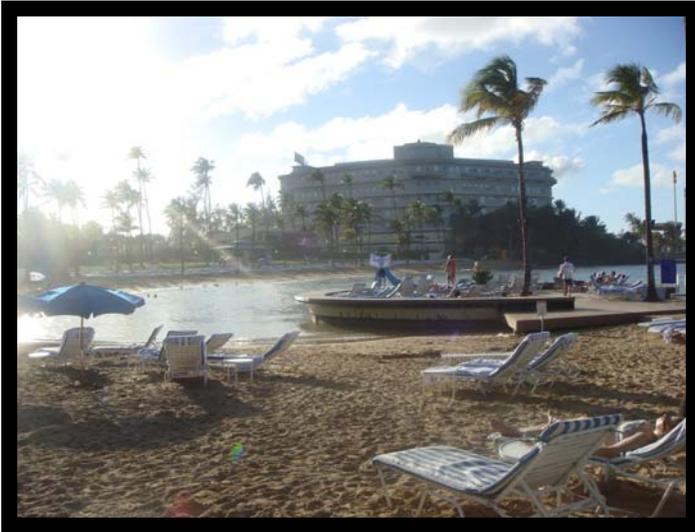
I see the top of your head poke out of the water and a burst of laughter escapes me as I see the expression on your face.

Prepare for the unexpected is what I told you before.

I walk into the pristine water and begin to swim towards you.

Outreaching your arms I gently take your hands in mine enlacing our fingers.

Our smiles remain and just because...I kiss your lips tenderly because for the next few moments of our lives nothing else matters.

Freewrite by Sasha Santiago

I remember it like my first time
Same place, location, date and time
All that I saw around me made me feel alive
On the first time I cried
Felt so surreal to see this land
A piece of me came together and brought it in
The wind was like the warm summer breeze
The trees were so tall that only when I looked down I was able to see
It was the perfect place
I left the heavy snow for some shiny summer days
Put on the bathing suit, sun block and started to tan that same day
My already caramel complexion needed light
My pale cheeks glistening like gold
My legs sparkly as I felt the sun on my toes
The water right in front of me then I closed my eyes
I was in peace and serenity leaving all the stress behind
This was my vacation and my time to shine
I was in Puerto Rico and everything felt right
We stood at the Caribe Hilton with wonderful sights of the blue sky
My vacation had just officially started

Photograph by Krystyna Bermudez

A Friendly Betrayal by Valerie Sainvil

Finally, I reunited with all of my friends from high school.
I ask one, who I was on bad terms with until this day,
if she was still intact.

A grimace comes on her face, a grimace full of guilt
“With who?” I say
She doesn’t say much, only that she once “loved”
someone who loved me.

“Damn, out of all the men in the world,
you chose his dumb ass to take it.” I say to myself.

I put on a friendly face, disguising my anger.
I shouldn’t care,

I want to reunite with her
But deep inside, I feel betrayed.

I encourage her to take action with this “new” person,
But I wouldn’t want that.
She changes the subject, now saying that she misses me.

I miss her too
and I still want to be her friend.



Freenwrite by Shana Brown

As I look into this beautiful scenery, I see an amazing view of this island, this island that is so bright with its magnificent array of colors. The clear blue ocean is so captivating and makes me want to jump right in and enjoy its warmth. The buildings separate the sky and the ocean from each other. The sky is a reflection of the amazing ocean; both the sky and the ocean are blue, bright, and bountiful. The green palm trees stand out; they sway back and forth as the strong wind tries to blow them down, but the trees stand straight and tall. What a beautiful scene, wish I could never leave, but for now I have to close my eyes and face the reality that it was only a dream of what can never be.

Freenwrite by Dan Teitelbaum

This photo was taken in Puerto Rico off a hotel balcony. This shows the calm sea in the distance and the beautiful clouds to the right. In plain sight there are hotels and a view of the city behind it. There is also a castle towards the bottom of the photo with a pool and beautiful palm trees surrounding it. There are also people at the beach right in front of the hotel and a boardwalk leading up to the hotel to the right.

Freewrite by Ali C. Celik

The sun in its almighty form is looking down on us as though an angry god. The sun is so angry that it takes away our right to see, our vision... Its long arms stretching all the way down to the surface of our planet heating it up, cooking us as though we are just a piece of meat. I sit here waiting for the next set of clouds to set in front of the sun just so I can surface again to take a breath.

Reborn (a freewrite) by Inieka Cooper

This photograph reminds me of the time over the summer when I had to think about my life and the direction it was going in. A friend in my neighborhood who was well-known got stabbed it was a tragedy in the neighborhood. Then my girl cousin got shot after the club and that experience told me how much that I needed to leave Troy and start a new path that would lead me to success... This photo jogs my memory me when I was reborn into a new DIRECTION... I thank GOD because he has led me into a good direction.

Freewrite by Joseph Gentsch

This photograph was taken on some beach in Puerto Rico. The sun is just barely in sight as a cloud moves away or moves toward the sun—you can not really tell from one picture. Off in the distance there are three people playing in the water (if you examine the photography really closely), and they are the only people on this deserted beach. The water is calm with barely any waves; the scene is peaceful. The sun is gleaming brightly off one section of the water and in the top of the picture there are multi-colored light rays flowing down to the land.



Photograph by Krystyna Bermudez

Blur (a freewrite) by Christina Chamorro

Heart broken, words unspoken,
Stuck in this world with no right focus.
As I sit here thinking about what you did,
I can't help but feel this pain from within.
I am frozen in the middle watching things pass.
When is everything going to be my way at last?
Nothing is clear, nothing is right, hopefully one day
It will be all right.

Missing Souls (a freewrite) by Kimberly Rivas-Adames

Blank faces
Blank souls
Shattered hearts
Shattered goals
The walls close in
Sucking our spirits
Making our visions blurry
Slowly disappearing
Our skin turns cold
Invisible to the world
I am a broken soul.



Photographs by Victoria Haralam

As I Sit Here (a freewrite) by Keila Vargas

As I sit here, I lie. I lie about the truth. Was it real, was it not? I lie about what he did. He killed me and turned my lights off. He walked and when I walked after him he continued his path, not caring that I stood behind him. And so when the time came he finally looked back. The only problem was that I no longer was there. I lie. As I sit here, I scream. I scream what I once thought was. I scream what I wanted once to be. I scream when I finally realized that my dreams were crashed and I would never be what I thought I would. But though I lost them, I received something better, something that I can actually say that I appreciate. As I sit here, I sing. I sing about the moments that I spend with him. I sing about the time that I lost because of him, time that I owed to someone else. I sing and I sing and I sing some more. As I sit here I cry. I cry about the time when I lost him. In reality I lost him twice, so the second time around I cry harder. I cry about the time when I jumped off the bridge and leaped toward the deep blue ocean not knowing how to swim, but then I remember that it was a dream. As I sit here, I'm stuck. I can't move, I can't feel, I can't think. I then realize that I don't have to do anything because I'm doing the most important thing of all, breathing. As I sit here I breathe.

A Story of Success by Fred Apple

Many people in the United States share the same life-threatening conditions. In some people it's easy to see and with others it's not so easy. Many of these people are people you know very well like friends and others are just people you pass by as you walk down the street. These conditions threaten men and women no matter their age, race, weight and height. It's hard to tell if somebody has these problems because people can hide them so well. This makes the conditions even worse and this just means that the people plagued by these diseases need more help.

My best and closest friend shared these conditions with most of the people in the world. She had a serious problem in her life and she came to me for help and she made me promise I could not tell anyone especially her parents. She told me she was a cutter and she had two eating disorders, called anorexia and bulimia.

When she told me this, I was so shocked because she did not seem like the type of person who would do such things, and I was so mad at myself for not realizing it. My friend is a very well-liked girl with a lot of friends, and she is always smiling and always having fun. But I guess that was just a cover in front of all her friends. This scared me so much because I took health class. I know how serious just one of these problems are but she had all three problems. [...] I realized I had a lot of work ahead of me if I wanted to help her because I was the only one who knew and the only one she went to for help. This was such a big step for a person in her shoes that I vowed to help her and made it my sole priority to do every thing I could possibly do to help.

The first thing I did was ask her why she did these things and how long ago she had started. She told me that she had started when she was about fifteen because of her parents and the fact that she hated her life. I found out that when ever she got into a really bad fight with her mom and she would start to cry, she ran to the bathroom and cut herself because it made her feel better and because she wanted attention. I always knew she was bad at handling her emotions but I had never suspected she went so overboard. [...] When eating less and less food did not work, she turned to throwing up after almost every meal. I could not believe what I was hearing because I would have never imagined any of this.

My first solution was to attack the easiest problem first, which to me was the bulimia and anorexia. The way I attacked this problem was I would always tell her how pretty and thin she was to get her self-esteem up. At first she did not believe me but then I asked her to be my girlfriend because I had feelings for her and then she started to believe me. As time went by she realized she was not fat and stopped starving herself and throwing up after meals. She had her relapses form time to time. I made her promise me that when ever she slipped up she would tell me and we would talk about it and try to find out why she had vomited again. Finally, after another couple of months, she stopped completely and now she is confident about the way she looks. Today she is about a year and a half "clean" of her eating disorders.

I knew that the self mutilation issue was going to be a difficult challenge. However, I cared enough to help her through this difficult time in her life. But I did not know were to start. After a while, I came up with an idea. I told her that every time she got into a fight with her mom and thought about cutting to imagine my face and how upset it would make me. I also told her to call me and talk to me about her problems, so she would not keep them inside. At first, this idea worked and she stopped cutting herself for a while. At least that's what I thought until one day she told me she had done it twice in the last two weeks and she had hid it from me. I was so scared that she was still cutting herself but at the same time angry that she had lied to me. I finally realized that professional help was needed because I couldn't help her alone. I started paying for therapy sessions and we went together. She would talk about her problems and learn how to express her emotions and get her anger out in different ways. I learned how to better understand her and help her more. After three months of therapy, she stopped cutting herself all together and now she is about a year "clean" of this compulsion. Now that we have broken up and remained friends, she does not need me anymore to help her through things. She stays "clean" because she handles things differently and her life is better now. But on a very tiny occasion I get a phone call when she is about to cut herself and we talk and I help her through her problem. But besides those little times she is on her own dealing with her issues.

The day I found out that my best friend was endangering her life by cutting her-self and not eating properly, I had a huge knot in my stomach. I was so shocked because she did not seem like the type of person who would do these things. But when you think about it most people who participate in those activities never really seem like that "type" of person because they have learned how to hide it so their addictions so well. Now that I know what a person acts like when they try to hide their conditions, I realized that when I walk down the halls of my school I maybe seeing many more people who are sick with the same conditions. I have learned to keep a close eye on the people I care about. No matter what, never turn your back on them and always try to help.

The Ride by Brian Cyriac

The ride was smooth, but then it shifted
Was going calm, but then it got rough
The man who was driving was definitely killed
The hit was way too hard

It was hit by the baseball
The kids came running
Running fast
Yet not faster than the ball

The ball was speeding
Speeding through the field
Alex hit it way too hard

Alex Grendal was up at bat
His mom told him to stay home
but he didn't listen

Marissa Grendal just got into a fight with her ex-husband
She was so mad that she told everyone at her house not to leave the house
She had a feeling that something bad was going to happen.....

So the man in the car was dead
Alex was the quickest to run to the car
What he saw in the car was shocking

They pronounced his father dead.....

Excerpt from “Men of Color to Arms” by Frederick Douglass
March 21, 1863

Men of Color, To Arms!

When first the rebel cannon shattered the walls of Sumter and drove away its starving garrison, I predicted that the war then and there inaugurated would not be fought out entirely by white men. Every month's experience during these dreary years has confirmed that opinion. A war undertaken and brazenly carried on for the perpetual enslavement of colored men, calls logically and loudly for colored men to help suppress it. Only a moderate share of sagacity was needed to see that the arm of the slave was the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder. Hence with every reverse to the national arms, with every exulting shout of victory raised by the slaveholding rebels, I have implored the imperiled nation to unchain against her foes, her powerful black hand. Slowly and reluctantly that appeal is beginning to be heeded. Stop not now to complain that it was not heeded sooner. It may or it may not have been best that it should not. This is not the time to discuss that question. Leave it to the future. When the war is over, the country is saved, peace is established, and the black man's rights are secured, as they will be, history with an impartial hand will dispose of that and sundry other questions. Action! Action! not criticism, is the plain duty of this hour. Words are now useful only as they stimulate to blows. The office of speech now is only to point out when, where, and how to strike to the best advantage. There is no time to delay. The tide is at its flood that leads on to fortune. From East to West, from North to South, the sky is written all over, "Now or never." Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster. "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow." "Better even die free, than to live slaves." This is the sentiment of every brave colored man amongst us. There are weak and cowardly men in all nations. We have them amongst us. They tell you this is the "white man's war"; and you will be "no better off after than before the war"; that the getting of you into the army is to "sacrifice you on the first opportunity." Believe them not; cowards themselves, they do not wish to have their cowardice shamed by your brave example. Leave them to their timidity, or to whatever motive may hold them back. I have not thought lightly of the words I am now addressing you. The counsel I give comes of close observation of the great struggle now in progress, and of the deep conviction that this is your hour and mine. In good earnest then, and after the best deliberation, I now for the first time during this war feel at liberty to call and counsel you to arms. By every consideration which binds you to your enslaved fellow-countrymen, and the peace and welfare of your country; by every aspiration which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children; by all the ties of blood and identity which make us one with the brave black men now fighting our battles in Louisiana and in South Carolina, I urge you to fly to arms, and smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave. I wish I could tell you that the State of New York calls you to this high honor. For the moment her constituted authorities are silent on the subject. They will speak by and by, and doubtless on the right side; but we are not compelled to wait for her. We can get at the throat of treason and slavery through the State of Massachusetts. She was the first in the War of Independence; first to break the chains of her slaves; first to make the black man equal before the law; first to admit colored children to her common schools, and she was first to answer with her blood the alarm cry of the nation, when its capital was menaced by rebels. You know her patriotic governor, and you know Charles Sumner. I need not add more.

Journal 3 by Kevin Ryan

Frederick Douglas's "Men of Color, To Arms!" is one of the most famous speeches ever composed, and its power is still felt today. It is a passionate call out to black slaves to come and join the war. He says that it is the black man's job to fight in this war, if the white man who fights this war, he believes, "Liberty will lose half its luster." What better person to oppress the slave owners than a slave.

He believes that it is better for them to die as free men fighting than to die as captured slaves, which is a very noble point. Also, all black men owe it to Massachusetts to go fight and help defend it. They have been the first state to give equality to the black man and it is only right that they go and defend Boston and Fort Sumter. They will receive the same pay and treatment as the white man. This is a time of action and a time of change, that if acted on will change the black man's way of life.

Frederick Douglas also sternly addresses the black men who do not want to take part in this war. He starts off by addressing that there are weak and cowardly men in all places and that is no different among the black race. He directly confronts this topic in the middle of his opening paragraph, after he exclaims his view on dying free as far superior to living out life as a slave. He basically calls them cowards and chastises them for thinking that this is the "white man's war". Never the less he pushes them aside by praising those willing to fight and ignoring those cowards who will not fight for their own freedom and their brother's freedom.

At one point in his speech Frederick Douglas exclaims, "Action! Action! not criticism, is the plain duty of this hour. Words are now useful only as they stimulate to blows. The office of speech now is only to point out when, where, and how to strike to the best advantage." I personally think this is a very powerful and moving statement. He is calling to arms all the black man and trying to rally them to fight for their independence. It has been a long time coming for the day when the black race was able to rise up and make a difference. I think any slave or free black man for that fact would be driven by this statement to go out and seek rebel blood.

I personally believe that in this case violence is justified. The black race had been oppressed for centuries and now they have the chance to rise up; they cannot let this opportunity go. The violence they would be giving out is only repayment for the years of beatings and work that they had to endure for little or no pay at all. Violence is only justified when a person is standing up to his or her oppressor and fighting to give themselves and others safety and freedom.

John Brown was a very noble man who dedicated his life to the struggle of the slaves. He was a white man who basically tried to form an uprising against the confederacy and died because he was convicted of treason. He was very compassionate toward the black man's cause and in a way he made it his own.

Understanding the Pain by Gikelly Tejada

I can't stand the pain,
Of these past months—of what I have gained.

Haunting me to face the truth,

Stuck in a booth.

No where to escape.

From my true self,

Damaging my health,

To gain back my better wealth.

But it's too late,

Having so much hate,

everything was all fate,

Things that have an open gate.

Waiting for me—to be their mate.

It was all lies of greatness,

Left me there headless.

Things that should have never been ignored,

making it harder to try to adore.

To show my true feelings,

which led me to greater pain?

That has been trying to heal,

-for years.

I made it seem-

That it was all a phase,

trying to hide my face.

Of all my true traits,

Years—willing to wait.

Observing people—to see if they could understand.

Sometimes—thinking that I should take a stand.

The hardest thing—is trying to be brave.

That hopefully—won't lead me to the grave.

The Love from My Food by Ling Zhao

Sometimes I feel like food is one of the most important things I have in my life. There is no one reason that makes me feel this way, but I seem to have grown into it. Food is one of my best friends, a friend who I meet with every day for a dose of love and care. [...] I love to eat, because it satisfies my hunger. Food is my best friend, reminds me of the best cook in my family—my Mama.

In the introduction of “Pleasures of Eating” by Wendell Berry, Molly O’Neill realizes that “a good meal [is] an expression of a good life” (1). I strongly agree with her opinion of relating food and life together. When I was young, my Mama always taught me that farmers worked hard to grow food, so we must appreciate them and not waste the food they worked so hard to grow. She also taught me how to be good friends with my food. When I feel sad, food can make me feel better. I know that food can comfort me when I am depressed, sad and unhappy. I believe since food is one of my best friends, it will bring me happiness. The better the food, the better my life will be. For me, the best food I could possibly eat would have to be the dish that my Mama cooks best: fried egg pie with oysters.

I still remember that both my father and brother loved the dish. Every time when egg pie with oysters was made, they would eat more than usual; I would too. I remember the way it looked, the smell it gave off, and the wonderful taste it had. It is almost hard to describe it.

It is made with eggs, oysters, onions, oil, salt, sugar, chicken bouillon and cooking wine. Once it is cooked, it has a golden color with some green and gray in it, which are the onions and the oysters. The smell of the food is a mixture of eggs and the cooking wine. The taste is fresh, hot and a little bit salty. [...] I always liked to eat some before my family sat down for the meal. The three of us would always have seconds if there was enough to go around. We would always do our best to show my Mama appreciation for the dish she worked so hard to make. She would smile and her eyes were full of love. She always liked to tell us how she liked to see us “fight” for her dishes.

My Mama did not come to America with us, but we still remember the dishes she cooks, especially fried egg pie with oysters. When I first tried to cook in America, I cooked this dish. We all missed the egg pie with oysters, so I tried to make it by myself. I asked my Mama for the recipe. She explained the whole thing over the phone. The next day, when I tried to cook it, I failed. It tasted fine, but there was something missing. I know it was my Mama’s love.

As time passed by, I could not forget about the last time I ate my Mama’s cooking. Everyone in the family would sit around the table. Foods were set on the table: chicken with broccoli, Hunan pork, steamed fish, shrimps, vegetables, and others. Those were all made by my Mama. Among those dishes, the most important one was the egg pie with oysters. It is the one I hold in my memory.

The table was silent; no one moved the chopsticks. We were not happy. We were sad and depressed about the moment the family would be separated into two parts, one would be in America, and the other one would be in China. Suddenly, I began to cry. I saw there were tears in my Mama, Dad and brother’s eyes.

Then, Mama said: “Don’t be sad. You should be happy, because you are going to America to have a better life. Let’s eat. I cooked so long for the last dinner. You should eat everything; otherwise, you will miss my cooking in America.”

“Yes. Your mom is right. Look, there are so many of your favorite foods in front of you. You should thank your mom and bless her kindness for cooking this wonderful dinner for us. Let’s pick up our chopsticks and eat.” My Dad continued.

Then, we ate. I kept my head bowed over the bowl, because I did not want to show them my sad face. I was eating the egg pie with oysters. Then, I heard my Mama crying. My tears came again. I bit into the egg pie. Suddenly, I felt that was the best food I had ever eaten. I ate very slowly, because I wanted to remember the taste forever.

Letter by Christie Mo

Dear Mrs. Freel,

I am sure that food is an essential part of everyone's daily life. Generally, we think of food as something which functions to satisfy our physical needs. But we may not notice that food is an indispensable factor to pull people closer to each other and emotionally we rely on it more than we expect.

During my childhood, it was such an important thing to have lunch and dinner with my family everyday. We discussed every little thing and made fun of each other the dinner table. Elders always complained that I didn't eat enough food and forced me to have more. There were different snacks for me to take along to school. When I think about these now, it was such a blessing. When I arrived in this country, the U.S. was such a new and strange environment to me. Families are busy about working and there is less and less time we can spend on meals together. We happen to have fewer requirements about food and having it at random.

I am the kind of person who constantly feels lonely. Food became the easiest thing that I could acquire comfort and warmth from. White chocolate mocha wakes me up; English milk tea calms me down; cheesecake and chocolate cheer me up. They drive away those annoyances, depression, and madness from my life for a moment. I can enjoy the sweets intently without thinking of anything else. But after that moment, the worry of weight pulls me away from the content. In front of my favorite food, I cannot control my mouth and having another and another. They tasted too good that I needed to keep a distance from them.

Food is a drug and I am addicted to it!

Sincerely,

Christie Mo

Welcome To the Good Life by Linda Lee

When we are feeling down, whether from a breakup or a fight with our parents, we can always run to food to make us feel better. Food has this magical power where it can take away our problems for a good thirty minutes. Food has a way of comforting us, like an angel from above, saying everything will be okay. It is the taste of the food, when we let it melt in our mouth, that satisfies our needs, and how it allows us to spend some alone time for ourselves and think. For me, food helps to bring my family closer, helps to establish new relationships and is “an expression of a good life” (O’Neill 551).

Every year, we have a huge family gathering for our grandmother in a restaurant. As my grandma turns older and wiser, her birthday surprise gets more elaborate and more memorable. I have relatives from North Carolina who will gladly close the restaurant for three days just to celebrate this amazing night. Many people do not understand why my grandma’s birthday is something that cannot be missed. If one of the family members does not show up to her birthday, it is a sign of disrespect because she will only turn eighty-one once. My parents will even close their Chinese restaurant and drive to New York City at night. Throughout the years, the routines have not changed but remain the same. We hold a huge family banquet at one of our favorite restaurants. Once my grandma enters the VIP room we have booked for her birthday, she will see balloons and her grandchildren singing the birthday song. Every year, my grandma has the same smile on her face and a glow in her eyes that tells us how blessed and thankful we are for this family gathering.

The best part of our birthday is when the family sits together and starts eating. Usually, we will have about ten dishes of various foods that everyone will love and enjoy. We will have flounder with scallions, soy sauce with a dash of sesame oil to make the taste sweeter. We also have a big plate of lobster with garlic, scallions, ginger, and king crab all cooked together in a brown sauce. My grandma’s favorite dish is fried tofu with stuffed oysters. This has a tender, yet juicy taste that leaves your mouth watery and craving for more. A lot of my relatives’ favorite dish and also mine is the Peking duck that is cut in a perfect shape. We will then put the Peking duck inside the pancakes with some spring onion and hoisin sauce. With every bite we take, we can hear the crispy skin crunching throughout our mouths. The most important of all is to make my grandma content and allow her to remember every birthday that she has spent with her loved ones.

Not only does food help me establish long lasting relationships with my family, it also helps my parents and I build better relationships with our customers in our Chinese restaurant. When people order food in our tasty, delicious, and cheerful restaurant, a lot of customers tell us how much they enjoy our food. There is one specific customer who usually orders Chinese food on Fridays after his long day of work. He will come in around seven at night and will order two shrimp rolls, boneless ribs with pork fried rice, house special mei fun, wonton soup, and shrimp with bean sprouts. I remember his order clearly because of his jolly spirits and silly jokes that make us laugh. Before leaving our restaurant, he will say the same thing every time, “You guys have the best food, and I only order from this store. Not only is the food fantastic, your parents put a lot of love and care into the food that they cook for their customers. Keep up the good work and do not go anywhere.” Because my mother has a difficult time understanding what he is saying, I will translate to her in Fujianese. When I finish translating, she keeps on smiling and tells me that this is her goal when she cooks food for her customers. She not only wants her customers to enjoy the food because of its taste but also to actually reminisce about the moment.

At first, I did not understand what my mother was trying to say until I remembered my grandma’s birthday. It was not only the food that I enjoyed; it was that the food brought the whole family together. The food we serve in our Chinese restaurant, allows us to have an astounding bond with our customers as if they are our second family. That is the surprising fact about food; it can never fail us nor disappoint us but can definitely bring people closer.

I believe that food has this strong effect where it can bring everyone a good life. A good life does not need to involve money, the latest cars, expensive clothing, or even a brand new house. Having a good life can be something as simple as food. When we taste a bite of our mother’s best dish, we tend to smile and reminisce about the time we spent with her. When we eat in the restaurant and celebrate our grandma’s birthday, it gives us butterflies in our stomachs to see our relatives that we have not seen for so long. When customers give us such thoughtful compliments on the food we cook, it makes us feel like our job is accomplished. I agree with Molly O’Neill that having a great meal can create a good life. With every bite that we have from our favorite food, it is the memory, the thought, the moment we share with people which makes food more enjoyable.

Cotton Cap and Driftwood by Jeanne Edwards

When I close my eyes, I drift into darkness. In the loneliness of nothing, I see color, life, and happiness. I view my dreams in color with surround sound, as if watching a movie. Every night I lie in my bed waiting for it to start. Tonight it will be the one about the little boy named Cody who lives on a ship that sails the skies. Cody has not yet hit puberty and is always trying to prove himself as a valuable member of his crew. He is the character everyone falls in love with because you know that by the end of the film he will transform from a clueless little boy to a man.

My dreams of his stories start with his waking. I watch as if standing above him as he struggles with his blankets and pillows, trying all his might not to wake up before his alarm clock. Like me he has this problem; we both wake up five to ten minutes before we have to, this does not leave enough time to get back to sleep but is frustrating because that is five to ten minutes we are not sleeping. This particular time, he looked at his clock, then hid his head under his pillow. His door opened, the red light from the hall giving his room a strange glow. Gazelle the top private, second in command, stood in the doorway, surveying Cody's head under the pillow and feet sticking out of the blankets. "I have five more minutes!" Cody whined, turning to the wall.

"Not anymore, were going groundsides today." Gazelle said smoothly

Cody sprang up, gaping at her, "Groundside? You want me to go with you groundside?"

She smirked, "I need a lifter. You have five minutes." With that she turned and let the door closed behind her. With the click of the door Cody sprang up and grabbed at his trousers, shirt, socks, hat, and wait what was missing? Cody scrounged his shoes, hat, jacket, socks, and his pocket knife. Once all together he ran down the hall and up the ladder, topside.

It was a bright morning, cloudy but bright. The cabins were always dark, and cramped. Stepping on deck was like walking into another world, one of space, work and activity. Gazelle stood in the stern by the wingdingy. She was inspecting the sides, making sure no cracks were in the bottom, because today she might actually land in water instead of air. Cookie stood next to her, reviewing his list, and making comments to Gazelle as he looked it over one last time. He saw Cody emerge from the port side, giving him a nod of approval to approach. "Now I'm going to tell you what I told Ms. Gazelle here," Cookie said glaring at the boy, "This may seem bright, but there are clouds on the horizon so watch your back."

"Yes sir," replied Cody trying to look the large man in the eye.

"You best watch your mouth on this one too." He grilled learning over him, "With a mouth like yours it would actually be better if you did not say anything at all, just let Ms. Gazelle work all her magic." Cody shook his head yes making an effort to at least close his mouth for the moment. "You are just going to help carry stuff around, no talking, remember to close your mouth, don't be provoking trouble."

Cookie turns to Gazelle, "Are you sure you want to take the boy? He is such an arrogant loud mouth."

Train Ride by Giselle Martinez

I rode the train to work everyday. I never missed this train I calculated exactly the time it took for me to leave my house and walk to the train station at a normal pace to get the 7:44 am train. My rides were always the usual. I would never get a seat because so many people rushed in and pushed you out the way to get one. I always was able to stand in front of the doors of the train. I got the perfect glance of a woman that always was on the train when I got on it. She always had a seat, and I was able to see here even through everyone stood in front of me. I would look at her through the open spaces that people left. She always looked so well dressed and she sat straight never slouching or half asleep like the rest of the people on the train. She looked clean I could almost smell her every morning wet hair. I bet she used Pantene Pro-v. All the women who were smart used Pantene Pro-v. She was always polished. Everyday she had different clothing on and the color she wore always looked like the day whether it was grey, black, or sunny.

One day I got into the train same train I always got on and this time I was able to get a seat. I was so happy that for once I would get to ride downtown seated and able to rest my legs for the day ahead. Same cart, same woman. She sat across from me. I now had a better view to see her. This morning she wore bright red lipstick and her hair was down in soft roller curls that looked so soft. I wanted to touch her hair and smell it. She had on a tight black skirt on that made her legs look extremely sexy. I couldn't stop looking but she didn't notice, I was invisible to her. I had seen on the train for months on end, everyday looking at her in hope that one day she would make eye contact with me but she never did. The train goddess was out of reach. I imagined she had a thousand guys after her and this is why she didn't look around her. She didn't need too, I bet she was used to men staring. She knows she is beautiful; it is written all over.

I wish she would speak to me. I want to know how she sounds. I bet her voice is like a melody to any man's ears. The simplest words like "hello" or "I'm leaving" coming out of her made you shiver.

The next day I get on the train and once again get a seat. I guess it's my lucky week, things couldn't get any better than this. I look around for my train Goddess but she is nowhere to be seen. A few minutes later I feel a rugged push and just as I am going to turn my head to give the person a bad look for pushing me, I hear a "Sorry" from her. She spoke to me.

Finding Where You Fit In (in-class interview) by Elizabeth Batista & Giselle Martinez

The idea of leaving your comfort zone and entering the next chapter to your life unaware of what to expect can be nerve wrecking. College is an experience that most people believe to be the time when they can express their individuality, have the time of their lives while attempting to become more mature, and go through some life changing experiences. Aside from all the pressure of having to pass your classes, the social aspect of a student's life can become just as stressful.

SUNY New Paltz offers many clubs, sports and activities to help incoming students adjust to the social part of their college lives. Many programs are held throughout campus by different organizations to help educate students about current affairs, leadership opportunities, and to help students socialize with other students on campus. Within the residence halls alone, the residents are presented with many opportunities to mingle and have a chance to have frequently asked questions answered.

Within each hall, hall government provides students with fun and informative programs that help students attain leadership roles, meet people they will be living with, and have an opportunity to express themselves in creative ways. A second-semester freshman, Lisa Batista, strongly advises freshmen to take advantage of the many things that hall government has to offer. Lisa states, "As new freshman, I was eager to meet new people and also to have my questions answered. My college experience has been great, and it is because of hall government that I began to attend many programs, I became informed about serious issues and also had the chance to meet my future best friends."

Lisa, who is happy to have been given the opportunity to help raise awareness about the many different things she has experienced during her first year, has recently been appointed vice-president within her hall government and continues to stay active on campus.

Relationships with Food by Tsering Dolma

Many people do not realize that they have a relationship with their food; this lack of knowledge may cause them to not appreciate either the food's value or origin. Because these people think of food as only a form of substance and not a necessity of their social lives they can not appreciate its value. I think food helps to create many valuable relationships, such as a friendship with a person, mother and daughter, family and so on. Having a good meal is receiving a blessing from an elder. When I eat my grandmother's food, the taste of her food, which nobody else can make allows me to feel blessed. Food carries with it more than smell and taste. It carries memories to transforms people's mood. Food also has the power to bring families together.

Food is like a human friend; it is always there for a person, as it brings the person happiness when she is in a sad and broken situation. It also makes a person strong and encourages her when she fails to do something. For example, when I want to complete my work or go for an interview, I do not succeed due to nervousness or frustration. Food relaxes me and gives me strength to try again. When I am cold, food can warm me up, and when I feel hot, it cools me down. Food is a big part of our lives. I believe that food influences how well we live our lives because it can make us happy and it strengthens our bodies. Because I understand the influences of food, I am able to live well and enjoy my life.

Food gathers families together. When someone makes a delicious meal, it pulls all the family members together and makes the house very different from before. In my country, Tibet, food brings the house joy. Everyone would sit together and share the wonderful things they did in a day and everyone would laugh. I still remember how delightful it used to be; as all the women sung while cooking, men played cards and children ran around playing. Besides families, neighbors would also join the supper and they would bring their food with them. During the meal, everyone would pass the food around and mothers would ask if anybody needed anything more. When I ate that homemade food, it was the best food I have ever tasted in my life. When I tasted the food, it made me feel like everything would be all right and I would forget all the stress. Everyone left their tiredness and pain behind. When I looked at everyone in the house, all I saw were happy faces. It was a house full of love and happiness. I did not want the happiness to end.

In my culture, most good food comes from mothers or someone older. Therefore, having good food is like receiving a blessing and pleasure from an elder. My grandmother's handmade food is the best food I have ever tasted in my life. The best food she makes is Tibetan dumpling; which we call momo. Whenever my grandmother tells me she is going to make the dumplings, my mouth waters. When I eat dumplings in a restaurant, it never tastes like my grandmother's. I always try to cook like her, ask her questions while she is cooking, and observe what ingredients she is

using that make the food so delicious. One time she challenged me to cook and told me to buy everything that was needed. The most necessary was fresh ground meat, scallions, onions, garlic, and ginger. She told me to cut all the vegetables into small pieces and mix them. I seasoned the meat and the vegetables and mixed them. After everything was done, the dumpling did not taste like my grandmother's. Even though she was next to me while I was cooking and I used all the ingredients she suggested, still the taste of the dumplings were bland. That moment I realized that my grandmother's homemade food contained love and blessing that I would not be able to possess in my food. I also learned that in the future my food would taste the same as my grandmother's to my children.

Everyone has different ways of eating and living. A person's behavior can be judged by what she has been eating. If a person always has good food, her life would be more relaxed, patient, and simple. In Tibet, people who live in villages always eat homemade and organic food. Moreover, they like cooking and whenever they cook their passion and love are always in the food. Consequently, their lives are more enjoyable, less stressful, more relaxed and active. This is the opposite of people who are live and work in the city, for most of them eat fast food or frozen food and spend less time cooking at home. They seem to be always busy, full of stress, less patient and lazy. I grew up in a place where we cooked everyday at home. We never heard of or saw frozen food. These rituals of cooking made me cook with love and devotion. I feel this is my fortune.

It is unbelievable how many people do not understand the significant role that food plays in their lives. They do not appreciate food or realize its influence over their lives. Food and I are friends, and I believe that this is the best sort of relationship to have with food. Food brings happiness into my home and brings my family closer together. The home becomes livelier and the whole atmosphere is different. Food creates many opportunities for relationships to flourish.

Food helps to create a good life.