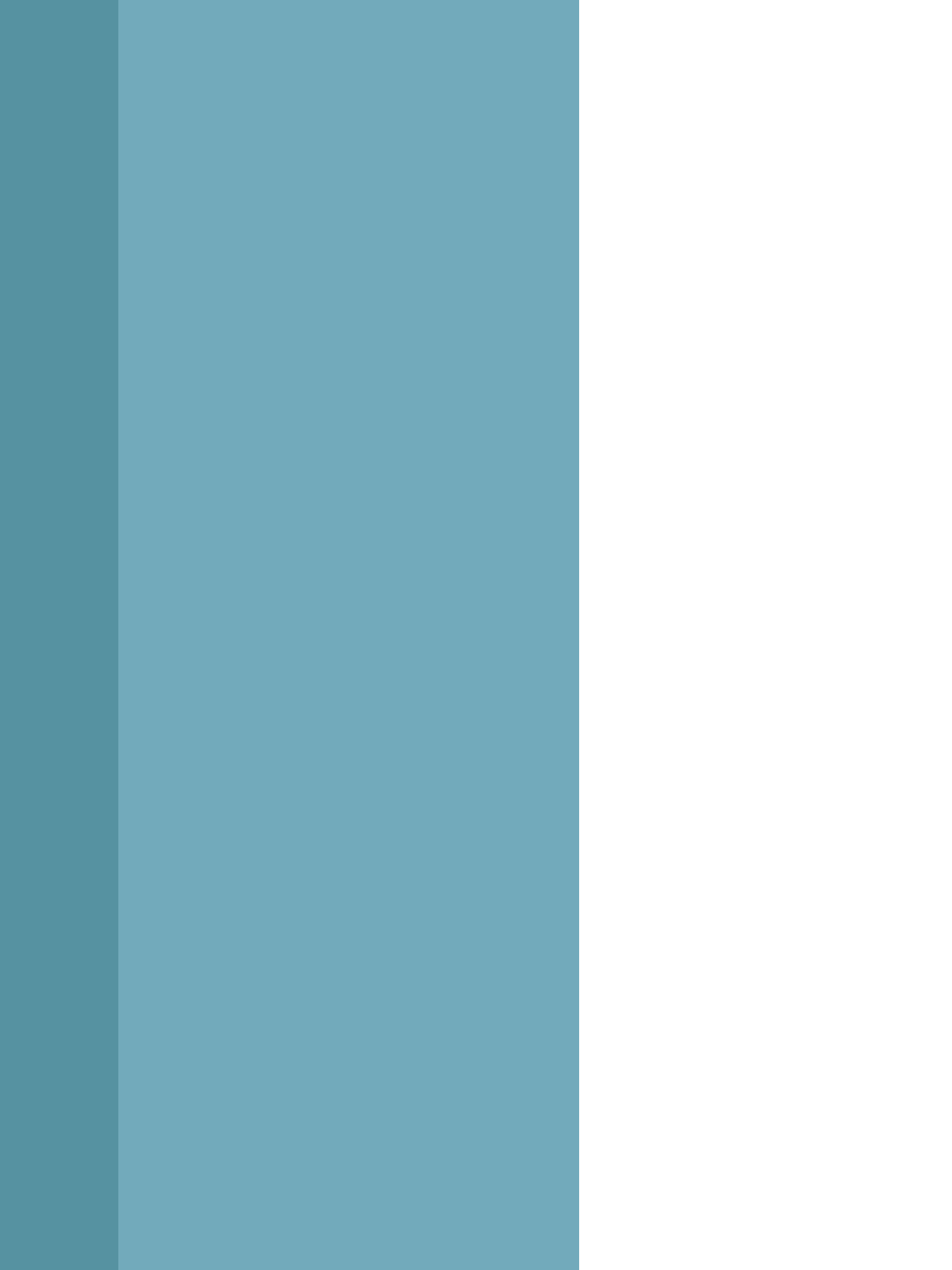


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Letter from the EDITOR

DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to our latest volume of Forbes and Fifth.

This volume marks the end of my time with this journal. While I am saddened to be leaving something that has been such a steady and affecting part of my life, I am comforted by the knowledge that Forbes and Fifth, like all good things, is a torch to be passed.

This torch has the remarkable luck of being carried forward by an incredible team of insightful minds, led by one of the most impressive individuals I have ever met.

I have found that each evolution of this work improves upon itself. (High praise, stemming from high standards, like the backhanded compliment of a doting relative.) The writings get more perceptive, the art more dazzling, the emotional themes—those painstakingly laced threads of truth—pulled more tightly in their weaves.

Forbes and Fifth has always tried to make one thing abundantly clear: you are important. You have something to say. If I can leave you with an imposition, it would be to say it. There are people here to listen. There is a printer waiting for your copy. There is a table of contents waiting to know your name.

How exciting, to have to sit with my anticipation at what this publication does next. How lovely, to have been so close to something so beautiful.

MOST SINCERELY,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Sarah Devan Tomko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sarah" being more prominent and the last name "Tomko" following in a similar style.

Sarah Devan Tomko

DEAR READER,

Whether this is your first or 18th time picking up Forbes & Fifth, thank you so much for joining us. This issue is a culmination of numerous talents, dedication to the craft of writing and boundless creativity. I am extremely proud and honored to be given the chance to work with an amazing team of editors and advisors, and hold the responsibility of bringing these works to you.

Volume 18 has been carried through many months of uncertainty, but ultimately shines as a unique time capsule, both celebrating cultural experiences and capturing the global similarities of human life. Upon further reading, you'll find pieces of writing and art that are linked by the ideas of home, identity and family. Our contributors bravely and honestly shared their visions with us through their extensive research, artistic skill and poignant storytelling. I am in awe of the breadth and depth of their inspirations and ability to evoke beautiful messages from difficult ordeals.

From the magnificent cover to the final page, please submerge yourself fully in the expressions of this volume. These pieces will shock you, provoke contemplation and inspire you to tell your life's story. I truly hope you enjoy.

ALL MY BEST,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erica Barnes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Above the signature is a thin horizontal line.

Erica Barnes

A QUICK NOTE FROM THE DESIGNER:

I sincerely hope that you all enjoy the time and effort put into this issue, and that I did the pieces in here justice by framing them in such beauty.

I am someone who, growing up, was actively discouraged from pursuing any sort of career in art and design. For a while, I was even banned from doing it as a hobby—forced to dedicate all of my time to STEM. Nonetheless, my innate talent in it was often noticed: it seemed to be something that was inherently a part of me, a part of who I am. Without it, I felt as though I had lost a crucial piece of myself, one that, in my deepest, darkest thoughts, I feared would never return.

I cautiously began to pick it up again. To my surprise and joy, I found that my abilities had never left, despite such a long period of disuse. Through my hard work, I was invited to apply for this position: I am lucky to have been found and allowed to work on such an esteemed publication. I am a firm believer that traits central to who you are will always remain a part of you, and that if you are meant for something, it will eventually find you again.

Upon regaining that lost piece of myself, my desire to improve life as is by making this world a bit more beautiful has been successfully reignited. Everything gorgeous that I bring into existence is one step closer to that goal. Oh, I finally feel so much happier—a true gift that I can only hope to repay through my work.

Also, a few words on the theme of this issue's cover art, "Black is Beautiful." Although I am not Black, I *am* Asian, and I have been told before that I am not beautiful "enough" because of it. I am here to tell you that beauty can be found in all races, and that, regardless of your race, you *are* beautiful. If others disagree, then it is their fault for being too closed-minded to see it.

I WISH YOU THE BEST,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan Ye', with a stylized, flowing script.

Megan Ye

The
DESIGNER'S
Statement

SPINE

Kelly Zhou

Spine, and what it means to have it, or not.

Yale University, Junior



3 PIECES *by*

Wendy Luna

Garcia

"I am a third-year student at the University of Wyoming. I am majoring in International Studies with Latin America and Governance and Conflict Resolution concentrations. Additionally, I am minoring in Honors, Latinx Studies, and Creative Writing. My inspirations stem from the matriarch in my family, music, and films. I have no previous publications, and I'm so proud that Forbes and Fifth is the first platform where my work will be among such ingenious creative work. Besides writing, I love reading, cooking, and dancing to Shakira at full volume."

A Portrait of Mama and Papa

At 32, Mama would have to stretch \$20 to last for a week in the city of sinful heatwaves and superfluous neon lights across the never-ending black strip of entertainment and intoxication.

At 30, on some days, Papa would leave at 7 a.m., returning with a \$100 check, wondering how the amount would last two weeks for his two daughters and wife.

(Two girls groggily wake up to place their clammy hands on their parents cheeks.)

Mama became a businesswomen-stay-at-home mom, stocking up on Pampers, Ziploc bags, Fabuloso®, necessities consumed by the ethnic enclave of Boricuas, Guatemalans, and Mexicanas in the apartment complex.

Her business resided in her youngest's stroller basket on the way to drop her eldest at first grade, expanding her clientele through the parents of her daughter's friends, making a hundred dollars stretch to multiple hundreds.

(The daughters made friends through talk of Disney TV shows and babbles of strung-together-constant-vowels bursts.)

Papa became a salesman of pirated DVDs-not advised for anyone, much less for an *inmigrante*. From seeing his wife's efforts, he contributed by making a profit off movies his roofing co-workers raved about--black and white films from Mexico's Golden Age of cinema, Inárritu's *Amores Perros*," and Disney's animated films for their children.

His side hustle placed him under the shade. His day job placed him under the scorching sun, darkening his light olive complexion by three shades, the temperature above 15 feet increasing from the sun ray's reflection off tar-colored shingles.

(The imagination of worlds, creation of words, and finding roly-pollies were priority to the little ones. In the afternoons, the Franklin's and worry were unknown. With Gerber's Strawberry Apple flavored Puffs scattered across the high chair of the infant, and the 6-year-old playing "hot tortilla" with her teething sister's bursts of contagious chuckles echoing across the living room, Mama and Papa watched their girls who did not know of currency.)

Bilingual Baby

To have two languages in your mind,
is to live in two worlds

To sit in front of a speech therapist, having them eradicate your stutter and practicing the “-gh” in tough

To no longer taking naps in the day because of my native-English speaking friends inviting me to play where I submerged myself in the hard consonants and non-visual pronunciations

To speaking strictly English at school, slowly ingesting the world of continuous assessment and grammar corrections and earning a gold star as my reward when excelling at spelling tests

To being a kindergartener, using my \$1 that Mama gave to exchange into quarters to buy stickers during lunch, leaving my greasy, American cheese pizza to gaze over the bookfair

To watching baby Looney Tunes at 7 a.m. with Mama as bowls of Cheerios lay in our laps, understanding the toddlers through their expressions like Tom and Jerry

To have Mama look at me with an astonished countenance 14 years later saying that I sounded like a parrot, speaking Arabic

To have Wernicke’s area in the temporal lobe of the left hemisphere, interpreting the meaning of English then shifting to Broca’s area in the frontal lobe where the words are verbalized

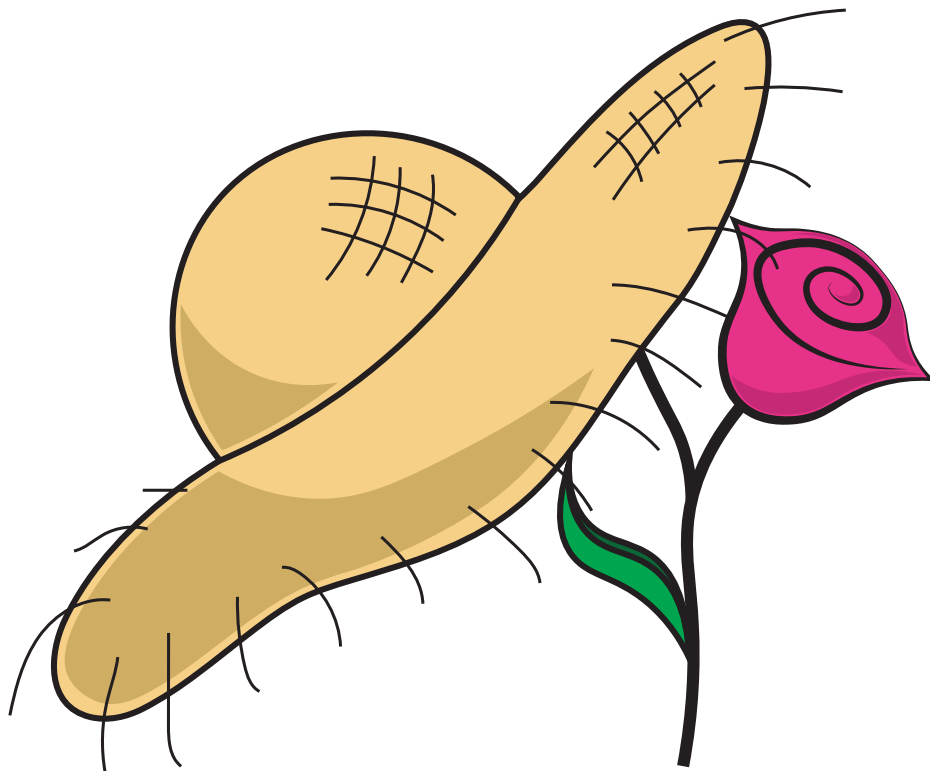
To have Mama ask, “Que dice?” when my friend came running up the concrete stairs, breathlessly asking if I wanted to play

To spending my four quarters on SkippyJon Jones to later practice reading the sentences with Mama after my bath and translating the sentences for her

To practicing rolling my rrrrrr’s in carro with Mama at the dining table and seeing her berry-stained lips curve into a smile as my reward

To watch El Chavo del Ocho on Sunday mornings eating toasted oil-drizzled tortilla triangles dressed in slightly-piquant tomato salsa and queso fresco

To joyfully asking Mama what words meant in Spanish, sitting stomach down with my arms supporting my chin, distantly listening to Papa singing along to his beloved Argentinian rock ballads in the kitchen. To hours later, hearing Mama’s fairytales flow into my ears before resting my eyes, leaving my brain to process my newly learned words



Two Years Into Teenagehood

Poofy, exaggerated, frilly dresses were what I swore I'd never have and I didn't.

Long-sleeves, dance practice bruises, Angela Davis essays, and an overloaded backpack was what I experienced two years into teenagehood.

Fully fluent in Ingles y Español, yet fully capable of being forgetful in both.

My birthday wishes went beyond a new car: attending my father's naturalization Oath ceremony;

mastering the art of not staining my jeans of menstrual blood; accepting the hundreds of thin, dark hairs that covered my limbs; hoping I could provide more for my family, rather than performing pirouettes in front of technologically obsessed teens with popcorn butter staining their black mirrors in the gym, while my parents spend hours with bent backs repairing wooden fence posts and scrubbing day-old milk stains on marble countertops to support their children's wishes.


None of my wishes came true.

Ghanan Tea Time

University of Wyoming, Junior

Anna Naig





If we want artists to tell a complete story of migration in their work, we need to start embracing and examining the more “nostalgic” side of this process.

MIGRATION:

AS A NOSTALGIC FORM OF ART

Elvianna De Jesus

Elvianna De Jesus is a sophomore at Boston University’s Department of Political Science and Romance Studies. She is a second-generation Dominican-American and her inspiration for this piece comes from the experiences of her father and mother, as well as artist Bruno Catalano’s “Les Voyageurs” collection. One day she hopes to become an Immigration lawyer, so that she can help transform the lives of those that aspire, those that are the most vulnerable, those that dare to dream.



The Immigration is Beautiful Mural

Located near 21st Street on Park Place Wichita, Kansas is the Immigration is Beautiful mural. This historical painting is a pivotal symbol of hope and perseverance for the Mexican American, Chicano, and Hispanic communities within the city. This mural has become a political statement that advocates for the justice and equity of Latinos, particularly women and children.

According to artist Armando Minjarez and the Latin Leaders (LL), which was a group of high school students, this mural was supposed to bring unity to the community and pay homage to the many contributions made by immigrants in the city since the 1910s. Yet, in many ways, especially under the Trump Administration, it seems this superb mural has been ineffective at conveying an all-encompassing idea of migration.

The mural portrays merry images of the Statue of Liberty and two people wrapped in the US and Mexican Flags, while a hand is desperately trying to cross the border to get to join smiling

children in graduation caps.

However, on the night of Wednesday, February 12th, 2014, the mural was cruelly vandalized by a group of high school students. Spray-painted in angry black letters were words like “welfare,” “wetback” and “KKK”. Interestingly, Minjarez and his team restored the mural, never once alluding in their artwork to the racism, harassment, and hatred that Wichita’s immigrants were clearly facing at the time.

The Horizontes Project, which was another Minjarez-directed enterprise, had also missed opportunities to represent migration in ways that can be helpful to the migrant community in the US today.

Horizontes, a beautiful campaign, aims to bring together the Hispanic and African American communities within Northern Wichita.

This project includes the largest mural painted by a single artist in the United States. In 2017, it was awarded \$100,000 by the Knight Foundation for its contribution to community



engagement. Nevertheless, despite its intentions to realistically portray the migrant experience, a handful of its murals turned out to be extremely cheerful and lack the sadness that is also ingrained in the journey of the migrant.

On 13th street, Stronger Together shows two little girls, one of Hispanic descent and the other African American, holding each other's hands in a symbol of love and true sisterhood. Many people expected the mural to inspire conversations on the representation and empowerment of marginalized groups. Yet, the reality is that the mural has caused more feelings of skepticism and doubt than initially anticipated.

"The mural on 13th street was particularly difficult to get approved," said Minjarez to the *Chung Re-port*. "The neighborhood association felt the message of the mural was too political and aggressive."

This is not a new occurrence. In recent times, many murals that are created and geared towards people of color tend to be labeled as hostile and overly political. So, it is not exactly the initial response that the mural gets that we should pay attention to, but the story it tells and what it leaves out.

These murals do not portray the struggles of the migrant. Or display how difficult it is for migrants to be accepted in communities that have long histories of racism and bigotry. Or show how these communities have made it

incredibly hard for them to get jobs. Or even imply how troublesome it is for some migrants to express themselves artistically without being criticized. Contrarily, they unintentionally create baseless stereotypes and an unfortunate dearth of sympathy towards the migrant.

On the other hand, murals that show a darker and more nostalgic side of migration have continuously incited discourse on how we can prevent misconceptions and prejudices. They look at issues like unemployment, violence, poor housing conditions, sacrifice, lament, and success to bring these ideas together into one piece that tells a complete story. This style of mural, thus evokes emotions from both migrants and non-migrants about what we can do to change the system

A curiosity and fervent desire to understand why artists idealize migration and positively personify the feelings of the migrant are what interests me, even though the latter is exposed to situations so painful and vicious as the one in Wichita. Scholars in the arts and humanities like Jutta Lorensen express that the popularization of art exhibits like the Wichita mural can be mostly attributed to the public's interest and comfort in consuming a rose-colored idea of migration. Yet, no attention has been paid to the importance of more nostalgic and gloomy depictions of such a process in popular media. More specifically, in my opinion, there has been minimal effort to

understand how these nostalgic pieces can have positive effects on the migrant being represented and hence humanize and empower them.

It is worthwhile to consider that positive “Migration Art” is unable to appeal to the migrants’ sense of individuality and tends to universalize their sentiments into one category. This type of art tells their stories as ones that are not distinct but a common narrative among all migrants. The Immigration is Beautiful mural, and the 13th Street piece are clear examples of how the migrants’ pain is dismissed, and their perspective is annihilated in the name of preserving the ideals of the American Dream.

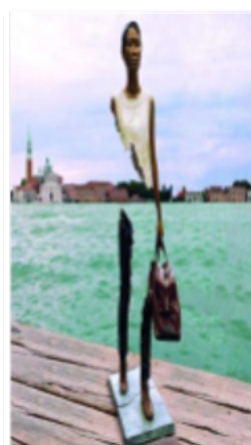
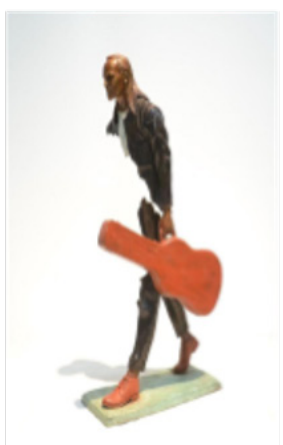
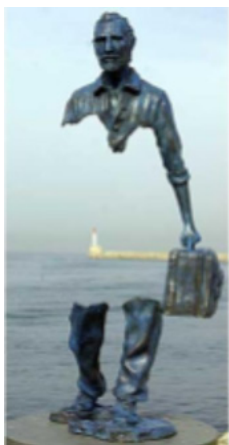
“I develop strategies to highlight the work and narratives of POC, queer, undocumented, immigrant and women,” expressed Minjarez in an interview with Kansas Humanities. “Artists are truth tellers, exploring and translating the human condition.”

Yet, many of Wichita’s migrants have historically felt invisible and overlooked by a system and country they have otherwise immensely fallen in love with. And two of Wichita’s most popular murals completely ignore this reality by immortalizing a one-sided story that, unfortunately, widens an already apparent gap between what the migrant has endured and what the artist

illustrates.

Conversely, some migrants will consider that Bruno Catalano’s “Les Voyageurs” collection shows a more realistic, negative, and meaningful understanding of migration. It characterizes migration through a new lens that appreciates how intimate the journey of the migrant truly is. This collection consists of several sculptures that range in gender, age, race, and location. Catalano shows the migrant as an individual with different backgrounds that uniquely add to the migration experience. Moreover, each sculpture shows a different level of emptiness or “incompleteness,” which suggests that migrants’ feelings towards migration are both subjective and individual in nature. In that sense, these sculptures appreciate the migrant in their essence and recognize that behind every piece; there is a meaningful and important story to tell.

However, the problem is that most of these sculptures are practically unknown to Americans and the migrant community at large. Therefore, scholars have assumed that these are of no importance to the migrant enterprise in the US. Emine Yeter, a MSc at Oxford University’s Migration Studies Department, says that this mainly occurs because artists that tend to focus on the negative aspects of migration “were educated abroad,



and are at the whim of a hierarchy that perhaps does not recognize their qualifications or deem their work relevant; particularly in a capitalist (art) market.” As a result, in the “Migration Art” genre, we see two categories between “them” and “us”, “them” being the migrants that are alienated and excluded from the community, and “us” the white Americans.

The role Catalano’s sculptures play in dismantling these stereotypes are consequential because they show the migrant as a human being that shares similar religions, like Islam, or passions, like playing the guitar with others. They demonstrate that there is resemblance and potential affinity between migrants and non-migrants, and in this way unveil that instead of a “them” and “us” there could be a “we”. They also commemorate the migrant’s resilience and ability to stand even through adversity, and promote feelings of solidarity and empathy towards migrants that due to necessity, may have abandoned their family, friends, and lost material goods.

Yes, nostalgic “Migration Art” exhibits can seem sad and tragic, but underneath there is hope; the reality of the migrant’s journey is empowering. Being a migrant myself, I look at positive pieces and see nothing more than what Americans want to believe our experiences are. Pessimistic murals have allowed me to see my struggles and embrace what I have lost. They have shown me that I do not only belong here, but that I am worthy of it. I believe that these pieces acknowledge our pain, but do not dismiss the good things about our “travels.”

Truthfully, it is hard to talk about the many problems faced by migrants if all we are shown in art is the pleasing and heartened perspective of migration. We need to break away from these

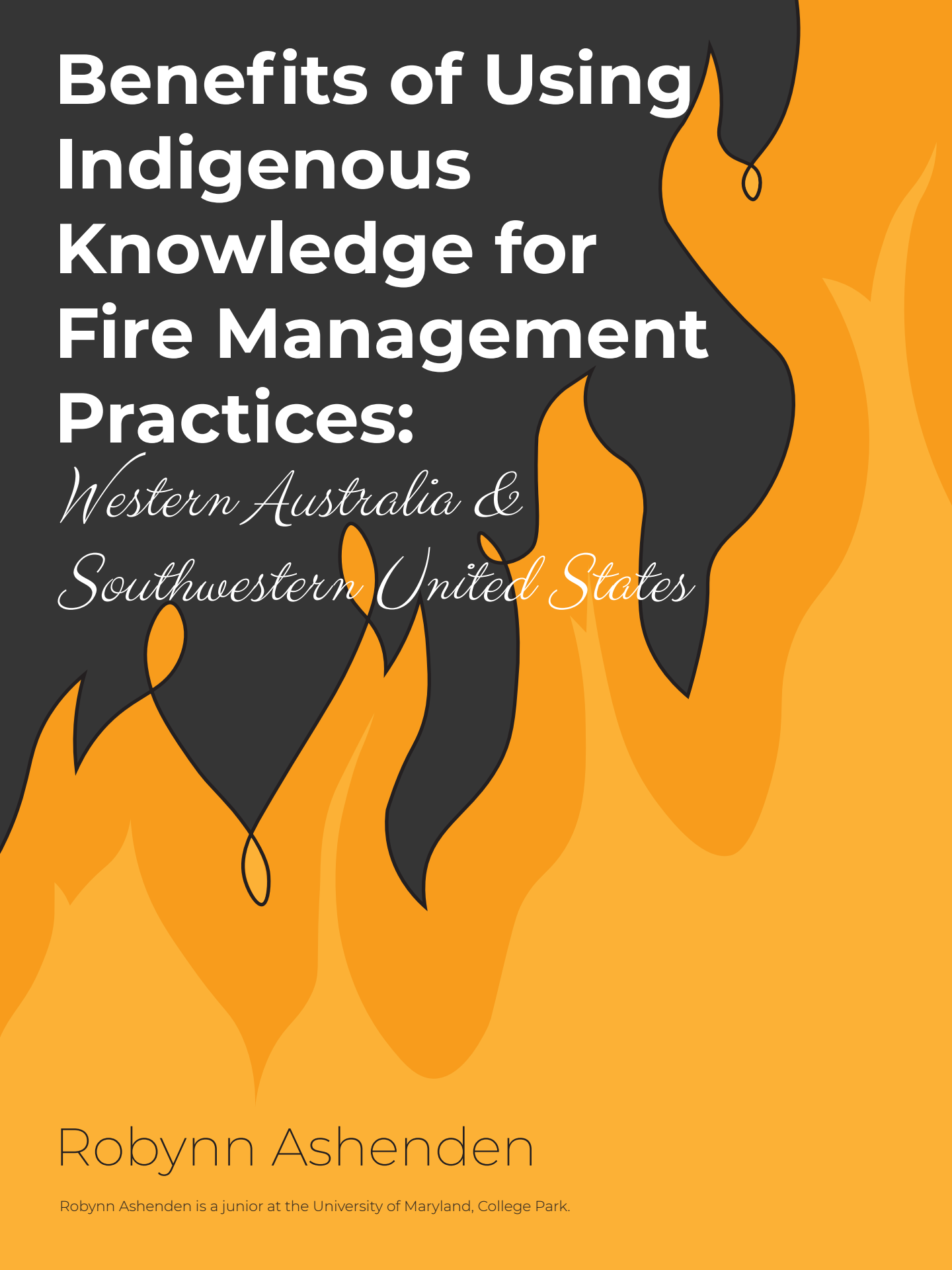
pieces that are optimistic and elaborate more on cheerless and cloudy depictions that convey a holistic understanding of migration.

While Minjarez’s work is amazing and necessary to study, it lacks aspects of the migration process that are too critical to leave out. Nonetheless, the Horizontes Project has recently introduced the Color Line Exhibition. As described on their website, this piece “will feature thirty (30) photo portraits, audio and video interviews of North Wichita neighborhood residents...[which are] living examples of a historic and systemic lack of access to resources necessary to grow.” I believe this exhibition will produce a variety of emotions from the viewers. Some might be negative, others more positive, but they should illustrate Wichita’s migrants’ shared grievance, which can help us initiate the conversations we so desperately need to have.

With the help of nostalgic art pieces, Wichitans and Americans all-around can view how hard the reality of the migrant is and how much they have fought to be here. Or in the words of Ban Ki-Moon, they can comprehend that “migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. And it is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family.” •

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Benefits of Using Indigenous Knowledge for Fire Management Practices:

*Western Australia &
Southwestern United States*

Robynn Ashenden

Robynn Ashenden is a junior at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Introduction

Throughout last year, extremely destructive fires raged throughout Australia and the Western United States. Great monetary and human resources have been diverted to fighting these fires, but to lead to a more sustainable future there must be an emphasis on fire prevention instead. This is especially crucial in areas currently suffering from intense and frequent fires, as climate change will only continue to worsen the consequences. To develop the best fire management strategies, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) should be considered. By living off the land for centuries, Indigenous peoples were able to pass down knowledge about their environments to each subsequent generation. This IK contains strategies as to how to best maintain sustainable fire regimes that they have developed over centuries. In order to demonstrate this, two case studies will be presented: one of the Martu in Western Australia, and one of the Native Americans in the Southwestern United States. The fire regimes of the two groups will be explored using a historical ecology framework, showing how both construct niches through burning, which increases which increases biodiversity and the productivity of the land. While it is clear through these case studies that fire thus can be beneficial when applied appropriately, fire suppression still remains the customary practice in modern culture and IK is often ignored. This is explored using a political ecology framework, which looks at the social, economic, and political issues that still exist when attempting to implement IK. Furthermore, it is also important to discuss how IK and prescribed burning cannot be applied to every situation, but management must be adaptive to location and current climate change. Overall, this paper argues that IK must be consulted for adaptive fire management to be effective and sustainable.

Background on Fire Regimes

Natural fires have existed for at least 400 million years, shaping biomes and affecting plant and animal evolution (Bowman et al. 2011). The majority of these fires are started by lightning, which require dehydrated or dry vegetation that burns at 325°C (Scott 2000). If lightning strikes this vegetation, it will heat it above this threshold and ignite. From here, oxygen is needed for the fire to continue. While natural fires do continue today, human-set or anthropogenic fires emerged at least by the last Ice Age during the Middle Pleistocene, affecting the environment around them in a dynamic way. To best understand the relationship between humans and their environment in regard to fire use, historical ecology can be used as a framework. To reconstruct historic fire regimes, palaeoecological proxies and historic sources are used, such as: remote sensing, tree rings, micro- and macro-charcoal, isotope chemicals, and written sources. As shown in Figure 1, each of these sources have differing benefits depending on the timescale and location of study. For example, looking one thousand years ago, using tree rings would be appropriate to reconstruct a local fire regime, but micro-charcoal would be better suited for regional fire regimes. Natural and human fires are distinguished from one another by looking for a change in fire activity over space or time that is not predicted by the climate-fuel-fire relationship. For example, if it is known that a particular location in a point of time was warm and dry, but there was very little vegetation and fuel there would be an expected low prevalence of fires in

the area. If the reconstructed fire regime instead shows a high prevalence of fires, this does not align with predictions and suggests human alteration of the fire regime. For a fire to be determined as anthropogenic, the change in fire regime must be accounted for by coinciding with a temporal or spatial change in human history – whether this be changes in demography, humans arriving in the area, development of new technology, etc. These data sets are synthesized to demonstrate the relative dominance of

natural vs. anthropogenic fire over time. In the last 2000 years, charcoal analysis demonstrates that human fire activity had a more dominant effect on the environment than natural fires, as global charcoal levels changed primarily based on human burning of forests in the Americas, Europe, and Australia. Especially with the last 300 years of industrialization, human fires undoubtedly are a driving force in altering the environment with the burning of forests and fossil fuels (Bowman et al. 2011).

Once anthropogenic fire is introduced, it can be used as a tool for niche construction and managing land over periods of time. Fire depends on three vital ingredients: oxygen, heat, and fuel (Bowman et al. 2011). Humans can alter different aspects of these ingredients, resulting in different fire regimes. As shown in Figure 2, the effect of these changes can be visualized in triangular schematic models called pyric phases. This model illustrates how changes to the three ingredients of fire can create new fire regimes. This transition from one regime to another is called a pyric transition. The main way in which humans can alter the fire regime is by altering fire intensity. Fire intensity is a measure of the amount of heat (measured in Watts) released per meter of the fire front. Low to moderate fires have

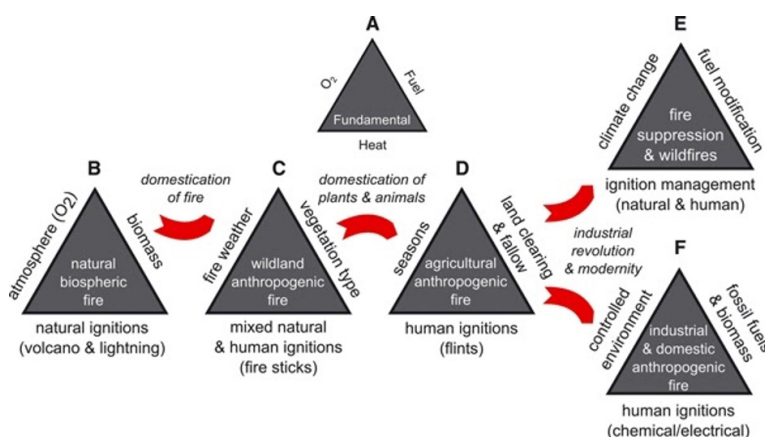


Figure 2: Visual representation of pyric phases, demonstrating how changing oxygen, fuel and/or heat can lead to a pyric transition (Bowman et al. 2011).

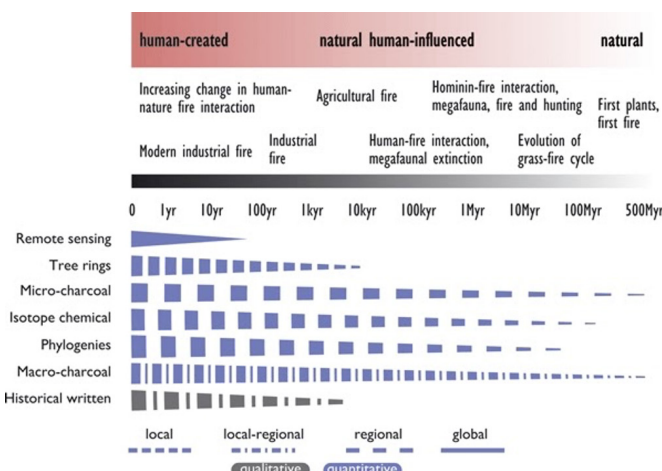


Figure 1: Summary of historical sources and palaeoecological proxies for reconstructing historic fire regimes (Bowman et al. 2011).

an intensity of less than 3000 kW/m, whereas high intensity fires are any values above 3000 kW/m (Alexander and Cruz 2018). As this value is calculated from the heat of combustion, amount of fuel consumed, and rate of fire spread, the alteration of fuel and heat by humans alters the fire intensity.

The ecosystem in which humans burn becomes adapted

to the new anthropogenic fire regimes. This leads to co-evolution, which alters the prevalence and distribution of plant and animal species in the area. This is done as a form of intensification, which can be defined as the increasing of resource productivity and efficacy (Bird et al. 2016). Disturbances such as fire or predation may at first appear to have negative consequences on an ecosystem, when in reality they can intensify short- and long-term returns. The collective impacts of fire regimes are encompassed by Bowman and Legge's interpretation of Martin and Sapsis' term "pyrodiversity", looking especially at food webs and biodiversity (Bowman and Legge 2016). In terms of food webs, fire affects all trophic levels differently and allows for dynamic interactions as fire regimes are changed. For example, the sudden introduction of high intensity fires can affect predation practices. Burning reduces the amount of vegetation available as a primary food source, and thus larger mammals will begin to hunt more small/medium sized mammals. The use of fire for intensification and niche construction also affects biodiversity, which is the variety of species in a particular ecosystem. With the same example, the presence of high intensity fires decreases biodiversity as diverse plant mosaics are burnt off and the numbers of small/medium mammals decline (Bowman and Legge 2016). Low intensity burning patterns, on the other hand, have been found to lead to a heterogeneous mosaic of vegetation, supporting a wider diversity of species (Bird et al. 2016). Since each species has an important role to play, maintaining biodiversity is crucial for a stable, healthy ecosystem. Throughout the following two case studies, niche construction and intensification will be used as a way to assess and understand the effects of different fire management techniques.

Martu in Western Australia

Human foraging has been an important practice for at least 36,000 years in Australia. Many Aboriginal foragers were forcibly relocated by the government in the 1950s-1970s out of the desert to missions and reserves, but in the 1980s some groups returned (Bird et al. 2013). The Martu are a group of Aboriginal peoples that returned to the deserts in 1984 after a 20-year absence, with the main communities today being a part of a 13.6-hectare determination in Western Australia (Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa n.d.). Once arriving back on their land, the Martu re-established their traditional burning practices for the purpose of hunting. Because the desert does not easily provide many resources for the Martu, they must intensify their land in some way to support their population. They utilize a low-intensity mosaic patch burning technique that serves to effectively burn off hummock grass to aid in tracking small animals. Prey is "hunted with fire in the winter and tracked in recently burned ground in the summer" (Bird et al. 2016). Since burns are completed during the winter and dry season, these fires are much cooler and easier to control. While the fires are contained by natural barriers such as trails or desert areas where there is no fuel, the Martu continue to carefully monitor the low flames and are prepared to extinguish them. This technique of burning leads to a finer-grained successional mosaic, with each patch in a different stage of regrowth, as seen in Figure 3 and 4 (Bird et al. 2013).

The emergent constructed ecosystem is beneficial both to the Martu and other species. Habitat quality and diversity increases in anthropogenic constructed areas, with highly heterogeneous patches

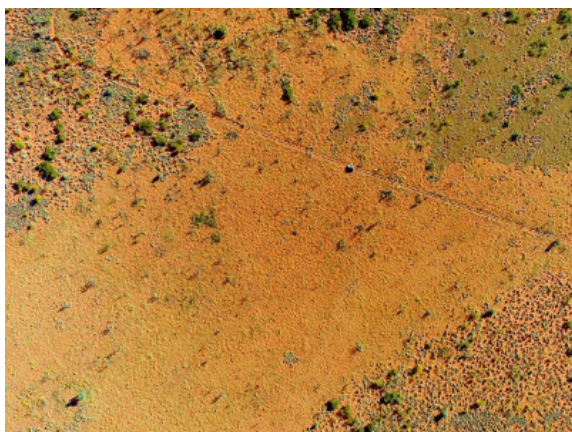


Figure 3: Land in Western Australia after the Martu resumed controlled burning, creating a patchy mosaic of vegetation (Gattuso 2020).



Figure 4: Land in Western Australia without controlled burning where lightning fires have cleared the land (Gattuso 2020).

being created. Many species prefer this patchy landscape; for example, kangaroos and wallabies have increased access to high-quality successional forage and sand monitor lizards prefer habitat edges readily found between patches (Bird et al. 2016; Bird et al. 2013). Because of the increased biodiversity and prey density in anthropogenically modified regions, the Martu are more efficient in their hunting as they spend approximately 10% less time searching for prey (Bird et al. 2016). While at first it may appear as though increased hunting would be detrimental to biodiversity, this is not the case. Rather, the Martu achieved higher kcal per hour return rates in regions of intermediate hunting intensity (Bird et al. 2016). Increasing hunting in a certain location leads to the introduction of anthropogenic fire, creating favorable environments for prey. In the case of the sand monitor lizard, there is little difference in population density when comparing burned plots with heavy hunting and burned plots with no hunting. This suggests that for the lizards, the negative effects of hunting are offset by the net positive effects of the human constructed niche (Bird et al. 2013). Thus, low-intensity mosaic burning leads to a beneficial positive

feedback loop for both predator (humans) and prey. Furthermore, low intensity anthropogenic burning reduces the frequency and size of fires. The finer-grained successional mosaic created by the Martu prevents the spread of large fires as fuel is less consistent.

The Martu and other Aboriginal peoples hold this knowledge about human-environment relations in what is called the Dreaming or *Jukurrpa*. This body of knowledge is understood as ‘Law’ and passed down between generations. It emphasizes that in order for life to continue, fire must be used to manage the country as the plants and animals that are hunted and gathered “depend on their actions” (Bird et al. 2013). *Jukurrpa* demonstrates that conservation is conceived as a two-way interaction between humans and the environment to the Aboriginal peoples. In this way, it can be understood that humans are a keystone species, having a disproportionately important role in managing the environment for other species. Just during the 20-years the Martu were not in the desert, mean fire size increased by over 800% to 52000 hectares, approximately 15 species went extinct, and 43 species severely declined (Bird et al. 2013). It is evident that the Martu’s practice of mosaic burning is crucial

to sustaining the environment in Western Australia as it intensifies ecosystem productivity, increases biodiversity, and reduces the intensity of potentially destructive fires.

Native Americans in the Southwestern US

The Yurok, Karuk, Hupa, Miwok, Chumash and hundreds of other tribes in the Southwest of the United States also used fire as an intensification tool for 13,000 years prior to European colonization (Cagle 2019). In the past, colonial-centric ideas shaped the belief that these fires did not have a great impact on the environment. However, information today suggests otherwise. Lightning-ignited fires were relatively infrequent in the area and could not account for the amount of burning seen in the palaeoecological record. This increase in fire prevalence coincides with the pre-Columbian increased density of Native Americans in the South when compared to other areas in the West, with only 5% of land being unused (Keeley 2002). High density populations put pressure on the natural environment which was dominated by shrublands and pines. Shrublands do not provide many easily accessible resources and are weakly resilient to fire. Thus, without agriculture, the burning of shrublands and forests was the best method to intensify the land. In order to control burns in both the shrublands and the forest, conditions had to be met including low wind, dry vegetation, and little humidity. Boundaries were also set beforehand by clearing paths of at least three feet around the area to be burned so the fire would not spread (Cagle 2019). The fires are set along one edge of the patch, and move across as shown in Figure 5.

In the shrublands, the low-intensity surface burning carried out by Native Americans created a

Figure 5: Crissy Robbins and son Kenneth Koy-o-woh of the Yurok tribe in front of a controlled burn moving across a designated patch in the California forest (Cagle 2019).



grassland/shrubland mosaic. Burning created a much more efficient ecosystem, allowing for greater access to deer, hares, quail, and mourning doves who prefer grasslands. Additionally, low intensity burning served to reduce the foliage surrounding seeds and bulbs, making these resources easier to access (Keeley, 2002). On the other hand, burning aided in eliminating species more dangerous to humans since bears and rattlesnakes prefer lush shrubland. Furthermore, because shrublands consume more water than grasslands, reducing the amount of shrubland through burning increased flow from watersheds, with a 475% increase in summer flow in areas that had been converted to grassland (Keeley 2002). Thus, grassland and burnt shrubland mosaics maximized heterogeneity, biodiversity, and access to water resources. This was an intensification process, since Native Americans constructed a more productive niche suited to their needs. Relying on natural fires would not be enough to maintain these environments, and instead repeated seasonal burning was required. With the increase of fire suppression in these mosaic regions, shrub ‘invasion’ has been observed, correlating with a decrease in biodiversity (Keeley 2002).

In the forests, Native Americans also used low intensity surface fires as a land intensification tool to maintain a more efficient ecosystem. Burning decreased fuel loads and tree densities, and increased numbers of fire-resistant trees. This served to reduce the risk of high-intensity crown fires, which are fires that burn from treetop to treetop rather than on the ground. Crown fires are extremely dangerous as they spread more quickly and are harder to control and extinguish. Similar to the other environments mentioned, burning increased biodiversity as different types of surface vegetation, such as the water chestnut and huckleberries, were able to grow with higher access to sunlight and nutrients in the ashes. More heterogeneous vegetation and forage supported a wider variety of wildlife as well, attracting important game species such as deer back into these areas (Armatas et al. 2016). Selective burning over millennia led to a more productive environment with increased fire resistance. With the increase of fire suppression, biodiversity has decreased, and natural fires have increased in intensity and frequency (Armatas et al. 2016).

Native American tribes in the Southwest--and throughout the United States--hold cultural knowledge about this burning. Low-intensity surface fires are known as ‘good fire’ and ‘medicine’ that are “not just healing [their] lands, it’s healing [their] people” (Cagle 2019). These tribes in general view fire as an essential management technique when they tend to their land, something they made an agreement with their Creator to do. The burn itself has cultural value, as exemplified by the Yurok tribe in California, where a tribe member speaks to the Creator while igniting: “Creator, we are here today to do work for the land, for the people. Give us guidance, clarity of mind, purity, and we may carry this out with the best intentions” (Cagle 2019). While this is only one example, cultural practices such as these are utilized by tribes throughout the Southwestern United States. Much like the Martu, burning is seen as a two-way interaction between humans and the environment. Therefore to maintain these more productive ecosystems, some form of low intensity burning is required.

Current Management Strategies

Current strategies of fire management do not take IK into account, meaning that many of these low-intensity fires throughout Western Australia and the Southwestern United States stopped with European colonization. Fire suppression by European colonists was based on ethnocentrism and differing perceptions of fire. European colonizers believed Indigenous peoples to be ‘primitive’ and ‘pre-civilized’, and thus believed it was their right to ‘help’ them modernize. At the time of colonization, Europeans also believed that it was the right of humans to be in control of nature, including fire. Since they saw fire only as a destructive tool, they implemented suppression of Indigenous burning; however, this has had detrimental consequences. This rapid switch of pyric phases led to increased flammable vegetation and fuel loads where there are higher densities of humans. This led to more intense and destructive natural fires, rather than low-intensity surface fires that were set by Indigenous peoples (Bowman et al. 2011). As climates continue to get warmer and drier in many areas, it is predicted that fires will only get more frequent, intense, and widespread. This leads to a feedback loop where fires continue to worsen along with public conception of them. Consequently, most funds are allocated to firefighting technologies, rather than fire prevention (Helvarg 2019). For example, state and federal agencies spent more than \$3 billion on firefighting in California in 2020, whereas \$165 million designed to be allocated to protection and prevention fell to less than \$10 million (Boxall 2020). As a result, political control and social conceptions of fire allow for current fire suppression strategies to maintain support.

Looking into the future, fire management strategies should turn to IK to create more sustainable, biodiverse and stable environments. In many cases, fire suppression has failed because it has been a top-down conservationist approach where IK was not considered. In Australia, Aboriginals inhabit 20% of Australian land mass and have accumulated knowledge about how to sustain these ecosystems over hundreds of generations (Ens et al. 2012). As shown in the case studies above, anthropogenic burning is beneficial to environments where coevolution with humans has occurred. In these areas, humans are in essence a keystone species that are required to maintain an efficient ecosystem. Some groups, such as Audubon Canyon Ranch’s Fire Forward program in California, have begun to apply “prescribed fires”, mimicking Indigenous fire regimes with low-intensity anthropogenic burning (Helvarg 2019). This program has gained broad based support, with more than 100 local volunteers having signed up to be trained in basic controlled burning techniques alongside local law enforcement and firefighters. The Fire Forward program has partnered with private landowners to burn on their lands as well (Helvarg 2019). In areas where anthropogenic fire has been reintroduced, fire intensity and frequency has reduced, with biodiversity increasing (Stan et al. 2014). As Western Australia, the Southwestern US, and other areas around the globe continue to be more vulnerable to destructive wildfires, using IK to implement low-intensity anthropogenic burning is more pertinent than ever.

However, there are still many obstacles encountered when trying to implement IK. These issues can best be understood through a political ecology framework, looking at political, economic and social factors. Socially, attitudes towards anthropogenic burning are mixed. As fires get more intense and disastrous, this creates “negative public attitudes towards landscape fires, despite the need for burning

to sustain some ecosystems” (Bowman et al. 2011). On the other hand, Helge Eng from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE) has noted that in regard to preventing fires through low intensity burning “people are looking to their own backyards, and so we’re seeing broad-based support from the public” (Helvarg 2019). Moreover, IK and non-IK have different philosophies regarding conservation. For example, Ens et al. (2012) and Cagle (2019) demonstrate western scholars view conservation as a one-way interaction where humans induce changes in the environment, whereas Aboriginals and Native Americans view conservation as a two-way interaction between people and the environment. This combination of mixed attitudes and difference in philosophies leads to tension or misunderstanding and makes it more difficult to reach a consensus on future management strategies.

Use of IK can also be hampered economically as there often is not enough funding for fire prevention services. For example, CAL FIRE hoped to treat all forests in the state with prescribed fires but estimate with their current funding and manpower they would only be able to complete 1 out of the 33 million acres by 2025 (Helvarg 2019). The average cost to implement prescribed burns in this area is \$86 per acre, or \$2.8 billion to treat all 33 million acres; they are allocated \$10 million (Donovan 2004; Boxall 2020). Without appropriate funds, prescribed burning guided by IK cannot be implemented. In the case that there is funding allocated to Indigenous burning efforts, a top-down approach is used where Indigenous peoples have very few opportunities to provide input. In these cases, Indigenous peoples may have a lack of control, leading them to feel disempowered (Ens et al. 2012).

There are also numerous political issues. For example, misunderstandings within the Australian government itself have led to lack of implementation of controlled burns. The Australian Greens advocate for more action on climate change, whereas other parties contest that the Greens were not in favor of prescribed burns. The Greens deny this statement, yet tensions made it less likely controlled burns would be considered (Reality Check Team 2020). Even when IK is included, such as through the Caring for Our Country Program and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, Indigenous peoples are still not always consulted or supported at all stages (Ens et al. 2012). Thus, numerous social, economic and political issues have hampered the use of IK and implementation of anthropogenic burns.

Future Management Strategies

In order to combat these issues and implement IK, cross cultural exchanges must be encouraged to allow both sides to understand the point of view of the other. Because they are all experts in their own regard, Indigenous peoples need to be involved with all stages of conservation, as their knowledge is critical in developing the best strategies that will work in each environment. The general public can be educated using IK about the benefits of using fire as not a tool for destruction, but land management. Additionally, they can be educated about the Indigenous peoples that cared for these lands before them and carried out these practices. Due to the historic mistreatment of Indigenous peoples, they note how being treated with respect and dignity today, as well as honoring promises of being

involved, is of utmost importance in building trust and strong relationships (The Red Road n.d.). Without the input of Indigenous leaders throughout the process of controlled burning, they will not be successful. Indigenous peoples also need to be empowered on all levels, allowing them to lead burns and be supported economically and politically. As a result, these strategies could allow IK to be better utilized to develop the best fire management strategies.

It is also important to note these management strategies must be adaptive. While IK about historical fire regimes is crucial, in order for them to be effective today they must be adapted to each environment and with regard to climate change. This means that over time, anthropogenic fires may need to be modified in terms of how or when they are practiced. Since prescribed burns require cooler and drier weather, the time of year in which a burn is practiced may have to change over time to match optimal conditions. For example, in the Californian forests current Native American burning occurs at the same frequency and intervals as historic anthropogenic regimes but are different in that they occur later in the year. This is because warming climates have meant that it is only cool enough for fires to be safe later in the year. Adaptive management is more effective in this way since historical practices were changed to fit current conditions with climate change (Stan et al. 2014; Reality Check Team 2020). This also means adapting to different locations to create the lowest carbon dioxide output possible by limiting high intensity fires that release the most carbon dioxide. For example, fires in rainforests are primarily anthropogenic so they could be suppressed, but high intensity fires in Australia can be reduced with controlled burning (Bowman et al. 2011). Others such as Keeley and Fortheringham (2002) have shown that fire suppression would not lead to increased fires in moderate weather conditions. Thus, to lead to a future where biodiversity and sustainability are maximized, low-intensity fires should not just be the blanket solution. Rather, IK should be used to inform which practices are most effective for each environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fire management of the future will be most effective if IK is used to inform practices. This is especially important in areas in which Indigenous peoples traditionally would start low-intensity surface fires, constructing a more productive and biodiverse ecosystem. Both of the case studies provided are from such areas. The fires in these areas today have proven to be extremely destructive and require immediate attention, especially as they will only become more frequent and intense with climate change. Fire suppression in these areas is ineffective as a fire management strategy as these environments require human intervention to maintain the healthiest biosphere. Therefore, prescribed burning should be applied, as guided by Indigenous peoples. These peoples must be involved throughout the conservation process, acting in key leadership roles. However, it is also important to note that prescribed burning in these environments is not a general solution to fire management everywhere. Management must adapt historical IK to location and current climates--placing prescribed burning and fire suppression strategically. In the future, if fire management is to be effective, sustainable, and promote biodiversity, IK should be consulted. •

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Will-o'-the- Wisps

I was frustrated that I could not complete my sketchbook the night before my final critique, so I took a lighter to the many remaining blank pages. It was raining the night these creatures came to be.

Corey Dunn

Yale University, Sophomore



Returning to Windy Gap Island

Siddhi Shockey



"I am a fourth-year student at the University of Pittsburgh from Valhalla, New York. I am pursuing a major in English Writing, a minor in Chemistry,

and a certificate in Conceptual Foundations of Medicine. This short story, while not a personal narrative, was inspired by my life and experiences growing up as a daughter of an immigrant. Generational trauma is a force that can impact families in many ways, and this short story is my way of exploring my own perceptions and

misconceptions about how generational trauma is experienced."

I leaned over the side of the rowboat and vomited as a speed boat full of drunk college kids sped by. I wiped my mouth on my sleeve, careful to hold my windswept hair back so it wouldn't get knotted and tangled in the corners of my mouth. The weight of my body and my backpack pulled the small vessel down, so it sat low in the choppy water. I trusted the waters of Windy Gap, allowing them another moment of rest and calm before continuing.

My episode of seasickness, combined with the wake of the speedboat, had sent my small craft rocking. I quickly secured my backpack and scrambled to check on its contents. The urn containing my mother sat snugly at the bottom of my bag next to her favorite silk dupatta that she wore to my college graduation. It had been eight years since I'd last been to the lake, let alone Windy Gap, and unlike my previous trips — filled with perfectly roasted marshmallows and board games in the sun-room — this visit was strictly business. I had been given exactly three weeks leave from the hospital to fly from New York to Minnesota and complete my tasks: sort my mother's affairs, sell the lake house, and finally deliver my mother's ashes to Windy Gap.

A slow burn spread through my muscle fibers as I resumed pushing the oars. I looked up to distract myself from the pain and examined the expanse of sky and water stretching out before me, blending in a dusty haze on the horizon just above the pines. It was early fall, and red-orange flecks were beginning to speckle the trees that lined the shore. Families that travelled to the lake for the summer were packing up their vans and heading back to whatever quaint Minnesotan suburb from which they came. The sweet notes of the goldfinches were only soured by the lingering taste of bile and the banana I had eaten for lunch. Their melody wrapped around me like a familiar memory of better times at the lake.

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In my childhood, whenever we visited the lake, my mother would rise early and drink her chai on the porch, listening to the birds call out to one another in the misty morning. My mother's favorite time of the day was 5:30am. It was the only time when the house was totally quiet and she couldn't be bothered by me or my father, who usually got up around 7:30. She'd mop the kitchen while listening to Asha Bhosle, her hips bopping as she dusted the living room to Bollywood showtunes. Sometimes she'd even cook breakfast: eggs, bacon, and toast with a side of freshly squeezed orange juice.

My Naani hated that she cooked American food, angry that my mother abandoned her traditional Sindhi breakfast of koki and dal pakwan for sausage and grits. My mother was always in a bad mood when her mother visited. Before she moved to Minnesota, Naani would visit us for a few weeks at a time, constantly trying to fix what she perceived to be broken in my mother's home or life. As soon as my mother put her earbuds in and started a track on her iPod, Naani would already be in the kitchen, putting the finishing touches on an Indian breakfast of loli or idli sambar, slapping the little lolis between the palms of her hands and rolling them out before letting them sizzle in the pan to fry. My mother would slink off to the den and spend her usually peaceful hours of the morning behind the computer, slapping it every time the internet stalled. Most of Naani's visits consisted of her hovering over my mother, waiting for her to forget to pay a bill or feed me lunch. And when it happened

— which it inevitably did — she would scold my mother and never let her forget it.

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What I would give to have a loli right now, I thought as my vessel rocked in the wake of yet another speedboat, the oar locks clicking in time. Lake Vermillion had changed a lot since the last time I was there. The once quiet and peaceful waters were now polluted and full of college kids partying on gas-guzzling speedboats. During my time in college, it became popular for students in Minnesota to rent lake houses and party in them during long weekends or for spring break.

Luckily, my family's lake house was farther down the shore, so I experienced few symptoms of the co-ed invasion. Instead, with the influx of families from the Duluth suburbs, development companies were beginning to swarm Lake Vermillion, snatching up properties for renovation like vultures.

Still, I hoped that they could take the lake house off of my hands and rid me of its burden.

I stretched my sore muscles and grasped the oars, lowering them into the water, and began to row again. As I pushed the rowboat along, I listened to the laughter of children splashing along the banks and the revving of a speedboat engine as it drew closer to my vessel. The bass from the speakers made the boat look like it was vibrating. Bikini clad girls and shirtless boys lifted solo cups of jungle juice and beer in the air, their "Saturdays are for the Boys" flag billowing in the breeze. The driver slowed the boat down and began to pull closer to me, the waves violently rocking my craft. I thought of how Marisol, my girlfriend of the past four years, would've made a snarky remark about how he looked like a privileged Vineyard-Vines-wearing trust fund baby.

"Hey!" A guy, who looked no more than twenty-one — with teeth as straight and white as he was — called out to me.

"Hello?" I shot back, irritated by his overconfidence in his looks.

"We're all heading to the Phi Kapp house down the shore for a party later," he said. His lips drew into a smirk as he leaned his forearms on the railing of the boat. "You should come!" A girl not three feet away was shot gunning a beer, the frothy mist spraying into my boat as she pierced the can.

"I think I'll pass," I said through a forced smile, "thanks for the invite though."

"C'mon, it'll be fun! Nothing crazy, just a celebration of the three-day weekend," He shifted his weight uncomfortably, clearly thrown off by my glare. "Plus, I mean... I'll be there, so —"

"Look kid, I'm twenty-five. I graduated college like three years ago, so my days of throwing back shots and rallying for darters are over. I'm just here on business, so if you don't mind, leave me the hell alone."

"Bitch." he mumbled under his breath as I lifted the oars again and resumed my journey, leaving pretty-boy and the Pi Phi sisters to their quest for cheap beer and Jager bombs. As they continued, the din of the motor blended with the rustling of leaves and the wind, making the lake anew. Their noises made me long for the days when the lake was quiet, except for the sound of the waves lapping the sandy shore.

• • • • •

Growing up, most of our time spent on the lake made for fond memories. For my tenth birth-

day, my parents decided we would hold a small picnic on Windy Gap and play in the water until sunset. But when the morning of my birthday arrived, a storm that ravaged the was passing through, making it impossible to row out to the island. I cried and cried as my mother tried to console me, her frustration with my endless wailing becoming visible.

“Okay, okay sweetheart if you stop crying, we can drive into town, go to Target and pick out anything you want for your birthday. How does that sound?” I slowly calmed down and a smile spread across my puffy face. “But you have to promise me and dad you’ll stop crying.”

My father drove as carefully as he could through the precarious weather to the nearest Target. Inside, I ran through the toy isles picking out Barbies and My Little Pony dolls.

“How about, instead we pick up something we can all work on together?” My father said as he knelt down in the board game aisle. “Maybe Monopoly? Or Clue?” We picked out a Harry Potter themed Clue set and Star Wars Legos. My mother was off grabbing ingredients for a box cake and canned frosting which she would whip into a simple dessert with “Happy Birthday!” written in sprinkles. My father and I spent the rest of the day building a Lego replica of the Millennium Falcon and eating cake as my mother smiled as she watched us, before joining in.

I think Lake Vermillion was the only thing my mother liked about moving all the way from Ujjain to Minnesota. When she was twenty-three, she arrived in New York with her best friend Harsha and started writing for a small paper in the Village. The two started as rivals, competing for a coveted spot at the opinions desk before realizing their strength while working together. In New York, my mother shifted to writing mostly culture pieces: profiles about local LGBTQ activists, reviews of obscure foreign films, and event coverages of the happenings in Washington Square Park.

When I was seven, I secretly climbed into the attic of the lake house where I found a shoebox full of Polaroids of my mother and Harsha out at bars in tweed skirts and oversized cotton turtlenecks, drinking coffee on the steps of the New York Public Library, and making funny faces at the lion statues out front. They searched for a taste of New York’s glamour on a writer’s budget by modeling elegant dresses that they thrifted and wore to pricey restaurants once a month. There were shots of them in facemasks, drinking what I thought at the time was juice but must’ve been cheap wine. Buried underneath her many Polaroids from New York sat a small envelope. Amid various photographs was a worn portrait of my mother and Naani staring stoically at the camera, Naani’s hand resting cold and detached on my mother’s shoulder. I had so many questions about the photos at the time, but I was always too afraid to ask her.

After about a year in New York, she met my father, a business consultant from Akron, at a small club downtown. They weren’t dating for long before she got pregnant and he convinced her to marry him, to which she said yes, in all of her naivete. Naani was most disapproving of the match. After her husband died — my Naana, who I never met, was a severe man with a horrific smoking habit that inevitably led to lung cancer — she made a plan for my mother’s future that was sure would benefit them both. My mother was to remain in India after completing her degree in journalism, move to Mumbai, and find a nice Hindu man in the finance world who could support the two of them;

whether they loved each other or not was beside the point. But much to Naani's disappointment, my mother had other plans. First there was moving to New York, then getting pregnant out of wedlock — a major taboo — and the final nail in the coffin, marrying a "good Catholic boy". Their wedding was a small and fast affair with no reception, only a dinner between embittered in-laws and eager soon-to-be parents. Despite resenting my mother for the small wedding, and making this disappointment known regularly, Naani held onto her hopes of living in the Big Apple. Despite their deep-seated differences, their family back in India would have considered it disdainful if my mother abandoned Naani and forced her to live alone so far away. But after I was born, and my father lost his first job, they moved to Duluth — me and Naani in tow — and his alcoholic tendencies began unraveling their marriage into a thankless mess.

I think Lake Vermillion was the only place my parents really knew peace. During the drives up to the lake, my mother would wipe the corner of my father's mouth when he sloppily ate a bagel while driving, getting cream cheese all over his face. When he had a bad day at work and shut himself in their room, she would cook lasagna and put on *The Godfather*, his favorite movie, to help him calm down. Yet these small acts of patience couldn't mask the smell of booze on my father's breath when he sauntered out the door for work or when he passed out after his fourth beer of the evening as I played with my Barbies at his feet. They couldn't make up for my mother spending hours on end behind the computer and snapping at me when I asked her to play. While he was at work, she'd cook us dinner in silence, leaving a cold plate of leftovers on the dining table for my father, and I think they called that love.

Though she had always been Hindu, after I was born, my mother became devout in her religious practices — apart from her habit of eating meat, an Americanism that stuck with her from her time in New York. We lit candles around the house and cooked vats of dal and bhindi aloo for Diwali and ate mountains of rice and laddoo for Ganesh Chaturthi. I participated in her elaborate nightly pooja's, but I never understood a word because my mother neglected to teach me Sanskrit and Hindi. Nevertheless, she saddled me with the name Lakshmi. But since white people couldn't pronounce it, and I didn't know what it meant, I started to go by Lucky, much to her disappointment.

Before he left us, my father began teaching me how to row. When we travelled out to Windy Gap, he showed me how to generate strength from my lower instead of my upper body to prevent straining my back and arms. He showed me how to control the power of the oar while still allowing the blade to cut gracefully through the murky water in one swift motion. After he began to teach me, my mother signed me up for the crew team at school, thinking that if I could excel, it could be my ticket to Columbia University. But I quickly discovered just how untalented I was at sports. I could work out and get stronger, but whatever talent and drive one needs to be an athlete, I lacked it. She also signed me up for the debate team and model UN, two things I hated perhaps more than being bad at crew. When she wasn't hunched over the keyboard writing an article or paying bills, she was yelling at me to get ready for practice or club meetings. All of it was in the name of getting into Columbia; or Harvard or Yale if that didn't work out.

Much like Naani, my mother had a plan for how my life would unfold after Columbia. There would be grad school — preferably at another Ivy — marriage to a doctor or a lawyer (someone who could support her in her old age) and kids. Lots of kids; and of course, moving to New York with me to babysit all these children that I was supposedly going to have. I didn't want the house and kids and grad school, but of course it didn't really matter to her what I wanted. Part of me believes she wanted me to succeed and be happy, of course. With that thought in mind, I also think she wanted an excuse to go back to New York, even if it meant following me, like Naani.

It was safe to say I was underqualified for any Ivy League school, so rejections came pouring in. But instead of screaming at me or comparing me to my friends — who got acceptances to Vassar, Hopkins, and Brown — she quietly paid for my enrollment at the University of Minnesota's main campus in Minneapolis.

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The sun was on its arc down toward the horizon, but I wanted to make it back to the lake house before sunset. The lake house had finally been revived from its state of disarray after years of being uninhabited, and I was tired of sleeping on an air mattress. I longed to be back in my cramped apartment, among the dozens of plants I bought in desperate attempts to produce more serotonin. I missed my Pomeranian, Mogu, and the feeling of his cold, wet nose on my cheek in the morning. It wasn't enough to see his little face on my daily Facetime calls with Marisol. I think I missed Marisol the most. I missed the way her tongue poked out between her lips when she was concentrating, like when she cooked or when she read a good book. She wanted to come with me, but between her law school exams and struggling to find a dog sitter for Mogu, it was decided that she would stay behind. But in that moment, I would've given anything to have her there with me, to wrap my arms around her and cry.

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Marisol loved my mother, and my mother loved her. Even though my mother grew up in a conservative Indian household, she left behind many of their "traditional family values", only bringing with her a slight accent. She first met Marisol when I was a junior in college, only three months after we had started dating, at a small Italian restaurant in Minneapolis.

"Mom, this is my girlfriend, Marisol," I could tell she would be critical of my relationship choices, wanting me to find a person who would support not just me, but a whole family — including her. I worried too that she would judge me for falling in love with a girl, though I had come out to her years before and she was more or less accepting of it. Someone who was smart and witty, but not overly ambitious. "She's studying economics and literature, but she's actually planning to go to law school after graduation," the tension in my mother's face seemed to dissolve as I told her this news.

"Good, good," she said with a soft smile.

"Lucky tells me you're a big fan of Patti Smith," Marisol chimed in. "She actually came to speak on campus about M Train about a month ago. My mom used to play her music around the house when I was little, so I was quite starstruck when I met her," she laughed.

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I recalled the way Marisol made my mother laugh over glasses of pinot noir and warm ciabatta rolls as I continued to push the bow of the boat through the dark waters of the lake. The college kids seemed to have passed and were off drinking somewhere. I deserved a drink after all I went through getting the lake house ready for sale. But the thought of drinking alone just reminded me of my father and the alcoholism that consumed our final summer together.

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The spring semester of my junior year of high school, before my many college rejection letters came in, my mother found out my father was having an affair; a shock to no one. In addition to his continued infidelity, my father's alcoholic tendencies had worsened; and though he never tried my mother made sure he never laid a hand on her or me. He started seeking treatment, though it was seventeen years too late, and the toll on their marriage was wearing away at my mother.

She stopped holding pooja at night. By Diwali, the kitchen no longer smelled of cardamom and my mother's hands were no longer stained with turmeric the way they always were. Instead, the freezer was piled high with frozen meals and pizza. Second notices on gas and electric bills started coming in, and 5:30am was filled with silence in the absence of my mother's morning routine.

"Mom, I'm driving to crew practice, okay?" I'd say, leaning into the den, talking to her backside as she sat silently, not typing, behind her computer.

"Hm," she'd grunt back.

"Do you need me to get anything from the store on my way back?" No response. "Okay. Well, you can call if you need anything." No response again. I would lean on the door frame just a second longer until she snapped out of her trance.

"Wait, wait... umm milk I think." I reminded her that we already had two full gallon bottles from my last trip. "Oh yes... well, maybe grab some dinner for yourself, Lakshmi. I'll be going to bed early tonight." Sure, enough by the time I returned at 7:30, her bedroom door would be shut.

My father's therapist recommended that we take a trip up to the lake as a family and get a break from our lives in Duluth. We were instructed to be there for two weeks and spend some time on Windy Gap or playing board games in the sunroom of the lake house. But my mother spent her time behind the closed door of her bedroom, and my father would sleep on the couch well into the afternoon. Most mornings I would wake up to find whiskey shooters or a flask poking out from underneath the pullout bed, careful to nudge them away so my mother wouldn't see on her brief walks from the bedroom to the bathroom. My father became aware he had two crutches: me, to cover up his messes, and alcohol, to make him forget his pain. Then I'd quietly grab a Pop Tart and a book, and head down to the dock until my father called me in for lunch.

One morning, about a week into our trip, I woke up to the smell of bacon frying and the ding of the old toaster oven. It was just after 7:00am and the smell of bacon and eggs, and the sound of Bollywood showtunes wafted in from the kitchen. My mother was up and preparing breakfast. My father was still out cold, a small bottle of whiskey peeking out from underneath the mattress. She was

humming, hips swaying in a cotton dress that spilled down her figure. I tried to quickly kick the bottle under the couch, but my mother turned around to face me before I could.

“Take a seat, beta,” my mother said, a small smile on her lips. I cautiously woke my father and sat down at the dining table as she began to dole out the food. My father attempted to look sober as he sat across from her, his bleary eyes trying to disguise themselves as sleep. The meal continued in silence until we were all done, and my mother looked up from her plate.

An awkward dance ensued between the three of us as my father tried to pick up all of our plates, his uncoordinated movements giving him away. My mother exuded a false cheeriness as she picked up the plate of bacon and pan of eggs off the table and began to carry them back to the sink. But just as he turned to follow her, the plates slipped through my father’s fingers and shattered on the kitchen floor.

What happened after that was a blur. My mother found the exposed whiskey bottle and began wielding it like a club. She threw the bottle and shards of the plates at his head.

“I’m so, fucking tired of this life,” She wailed. “You ungrateful, useless, drunk, son of a bitch! You’re drinking AGAIN? After three weeks of sobriety? After all of the work Lakshmi, your sponsor, and I have put in?? After everything you’ve already put me through? What you’ve put Lakshmi through? I was something before I met you, and you’ve taken everything from me. My love, my time, my energy, wasted on you!”

She wilted to the floor in sobs while my father yelled at her, calling her a crazy bitch before she pulled a knife off the kitchen counter and held it to her wrist. My father was in a blind range and only went silent when he saw the drops of blood blossom on my mother’s white dress, her wrist bleeding profusely. The sound of her sobs filled the room. He tried to rush to her side, but before he could touch her, she pointed the bloodied knife at him and began to shriek for him to get out of the house.

I can still see the back of my father’s head through the rear window of his car as he zigzagged down the path back to the main road, and I called 911 to come collect my mother.

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I had stopped rowing once more and let the oars rest in their locks. The onslaught of memories released a flood of guilt, and I felt as though I would be sick again. I felt guilty for covering up for my dad, for not realizing the hurt my mother felt. Perhaps it was a sense of duty as a daughter, or my own fucked up sense of love, but I thought I was protecting her, protecting them both. Now here I was, on my way to deliver my mother’s ashes, eager to get the hell out of here and back to New York.

New York. The place my mother wanted so much to return to, yet when I left Minnesota to move there, I never once thought about bringing my mother along; not to mention the fact that her job kept her there. I felt sick with selfishness for resenting my mother.

I hadn’t given my mother the help she needed nor the respect she deserved, and I felt as though I was failing her again in death. I steadied my stomach before grabbing the oars, determined to finish this God forsaken mission, and wash my hands of this misery.

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Soon after the incident, my father collected his things and rid himself of us. He moved to Palm Beach with his mistress and sent holiday cards to me when he remembered. After my mother died, he met me at the hospital where he held my hand as we said our goodbyes. We got takeout from the Chinese restaurant around the corner from my old apartment and ate quietly in my hotel room, only breaking the silence to discuss plans to take care of my mother's assets. As we rummaged through storage boxes in the attic of the lake house, my father found our dusty replica of the Millennium Falcon shoved in a box of blankets. That was the only time I ever saw him cry.

"I'm sorry, Lucky. I... I just can't do this," and with that he packed his things and left me to fend for myself once again.

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I lived with my Naani after my mother's suicide attempt. The years of absentee parenting, alcohol induced couch-naps, and his new life with his mistress had put enough between us that we both didn't want each other. I drove alone to visit her in the hospital until she was allowed to leave. Once she returned home, my mother remained a recluse. She spent most of her days holed up in the den, only leaving to produce hot plates of food just before I returned from practice. She turned away phone calls from family and friends, only accepting mail in the form of bills, divorce documents, and child support checks. She stepped back from reporting and found a smaller gig copyediting pieces for a local food blog which she seemed to enjoy, so I was happy for her. I quickly picked up an afterschool job, grateful to have an excuse to quit model UN, and we pooled our paychecks together so that we could stay afloat until I moved into my dorm and she could move to a smaller apartment in Duluth.

When I moved to Minneapolis, our contact began to wear thin. I had decided to get my bachelor's in nursing, and, amid late night cram sessions, term papers, working at the bookstore to make rent, and trying to maintain a semblance of a social life, I had meager moments to call my mother. With both of our lives hurtling in completely opposite directions, we seemed to have a mutual understanding that this is just how things would be. I spent summers doing my clinical rotations and taking classes, so the only time I went home for an extended period was after Naani passed and my mother needed help sorting her affairs. As she organized photo albums and hand-stitched sarees, my mother began to weep. Her tears turned into heaving sobs as I knelt beside her. I placed my hand on her back, and for a moment it felt as though we were learning to carry our burden together.

I soon returned to campus and was once again preoccupied with studying, leaving me with no time to mourn my loss. Constant and relentless studying. In the fall of my junior year, I decided to take microeconomics to fulfill a gen-ed requirement, not realizing how much I would struggle with game theory and marginal utility. During a late-night study session in the library, amid textbooks and crumpled granola bar wrappers, I buried my head in my hands and let out a groan.

"Hey, are you in Johnson's microeconomics class?" A gentle voice greeted me. I looked up at Marisol's kind and gentle face.

"Hi, uh, yeah... yes I am... unfortunately," I chuckled as I scratched my temple with the back of my pencil.

“I could tell by the little performance you put on there. I threw a similar fit last year when I was in his class, though there were more tears involved,” We laughed in agreement. “My name is Marisol,” She said as I reached over to shake her outstretched hand. “I can help you out if you want. I ended the semester with an A- after bombing his first test, so I think I know a thing or two.”

We stayed in the library for most of the night studying market revenue and short run production amid conversations about *The Bachelorette* and *Grey’s Anatomy*. Study sessions turned into coffee dates which turned into dinners where she would tell me about her passion for immigration law, inspired by her experiences watching her parents struggle to gain citizenship for most of her life. Since she was born in the U.S., she was spared from this struggle, but felt a calling to help others — including children at the border — find protection in the immigration system. After graduation, Marisol started law school at NYU and I managed to land a job in the city as well, so we decided to move in together and adopt our first child, Mogu. Working in the ICU was grueling. The hours ran long at times and holding patient’s hands through their suffering was emotionally draining. I found comfort in Mogu, biking around the city, and befriending the other nurses on the floor. When Marisol came home from the library, we would slip into our pajamas and drink margaritas while we mocked stupid TV shows. Yet, when I thought our life had finally settled into a routine – a year after my move – I got a call saying there had been an accident and that my mother was in the hospital. I scraped together my vacation and sick days to get just three weeks off, booked flights, and called my dad who promised to meet me at the hospital the next day before I headed back to Minneapolis, my heart walking on a wire.

I walked the hallways of the same hospital where I did my clinical training as a nursing student, but this time it just felt wrong. All of the things people hate about the hospital — the smell of antiseptic, the glare of fluorescent lights, and the ugly linoleum floors — overwhelmed my senses. I was used to navigating the labyrinth of stairwells that led from the locker room down to the ICU. I had never entered through the ER before. That entrance was reserved for the crying parents, numb spouses, and wailing children that came to see their family members die. But now I was walking their path. A young nurse at the front desk quickly guided me back toward my mother’s room where the doctors explained that she had been passing through an intersection when a tired truck driver ran a red light, the impact leaving her body close to death. No amount of training or clinical rotations or exams could prepare me to see her. I looked at her body, tubes and life support wires sprouting out of her like she was an alien. The mechanical breath of the vent still rang in my ears.

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I paddled up to the small dock on Windy Gap and moored the boat to a post. The waves lapped against the shore as birds flitted between the tall pine trees. A small frog jumped across the pebbles that littered the beach. The cool air caressed my cheek as I opened my bag in the boat to retrieve the urn and my mother’s dupatta. I swaddled her in the dupatta and gathered her into the crux of my elbow as I descended from the dock, the sun bleached, wooden boards creaking under my feet. I found a small grove of weeping willows under which my mother used to sit and, on the rare occasion, laugh

as I played in the water. I remembered our picnics from long ago, splashing in the water to relieve the heat of the dog days of summer, and my mother fanning herself as my father and I jumped off the end of the dock. I felt hot tears roll down my face as I unscrewed the urn and reached in to feel the ashes of my mother encase my hand in a haunting embrace.

“I’m so sorry, mommy,” I whispered to the ashes as the wind carried them over the sand and into the water. With each handful, a new tear fell and with it a piece of my burden. After spreading her ashes, I settled at the edge of the dock and played an old message of hers that I had saved.

“Hey, beta. I hope everything is going well with work. I just wanted to call you because I found this old picture of you at the lake house from that summer when we made the pies with Naani and lit fireworks for the Fourth of July,” her chuckle drifted through the speaker. I smiled. “You’re holding one of those sparklers and, oh my, do you look terrified!” She laughed harder this time. “I remember your father tried to take it from you and you said, ‘Daddy, daddy! Be careful, it’s going to burn your hand!’ but he was okay, and you were okay, and I just laughed and laughed. Do you remember?” She sighed. “Well anyways, I’ll talk to you soon I hope.”

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I untied the boat and began to row back to shore. Dusk began to paint the sky a hazy purple. The trees stood tall like dark soldiers guarding the setting sun, their figures flickering on the surface of the lake, the sound of party music drifting out of a small cabin down the shore. And for what would be the last time, Windy Gap slowly dissolved into the landscape, returning my mother to the earth. •

A Girl and her Rabbit

Inspired by several of William Adolph Bouguereau's paintings, my piece approaches the classic portraiture style with a modern twist. Both Bouguereau's attention to detail and his careful application of color were deeply inspiring for this self-portrait.

Natalie Stitt

Baylor University, Sophomore





Bianca Gonzales

Bianca Gonzales (she/they) is a junior at the University of Pittsburgh majoring in U.S. History and Sociology.

Originally from Philadelphia, Bianca grew up in the Catholic school system for over a decade and eventually developed a complicated relationship with her faith and the church. These experiences inspire her creative work, this piece included. When not consumed with overwhelming Catholic guilt, you can find Bianca making earrings (which you can find on Instagram or Depop @shopbonks) while listening to Sledgehammer by Peter Gabriel on a ten-hour loop.

first period theology

please raise your hand,
whomever else of you
has been a child,
unaware that you are
not, bearing 185 pounds
of another's strain,
torn flesh & broken bones
hidden behind porcelain veneer,
thinking your temple is yours,
a vessel of chastity, a home
shielded by god's name,
but then you call him,
screaming for help,
throat now sandpaper,
so painfully coarse,
only to hear the locusts
hum & gates close,
a 911 call left on hold,
the loudest of silences,
you are utterly alone,
porcelain now cracked,
looted.

lucifer was once
god's favorite after all.



Liberationist Discourse in THE WAR ON TERROR: A **Misogynist** *Facade*

Rami Suleiman

Rami Suleiman is a junior business student at the American University of Beirut, concentrating in the study of business analytics and seeking to enter the field of management consulting. A self-described digital native, he is interested in numerous areas of thought that interpret present phenomena in unique perspectives, such as history, ideology and the philosophy of consumerism. As such, he finds inspiration in the philosophical works of various provocative thinkers including Slavoj Žižek, Nick Land and Ayn Rand.

Following the Cold War and with the rise of new forms of mass media, the United States was equipped with a new weapon: soft power. The US used various forms of soft power as a justificatory tool to legitimize the wars and foreign intervention it engaged in. This is most notably the case in the Bush Administration's War on Terror, in which the industrial-military-media complex shaped a stereotypical image of Muslim society. To shape such a narrative, the United States painted the now-famous archetype of the oppressed Muslim woman, who is chained by her country's backwards, oppressive patriarchal system. Thus, one may argue that the United States justifies the War on Terror through an imperialist gender rhetoric by constructing the trope of the oppressed Muslim woman; and contrasting it with the "liberated" Western woman, with the latter's narrative shaped under a martial post-feminist lens. The construction of this justificatory narrative is not limited to the Bush Administration's public discursive strategies but also encompasses narratives presented by Hollywood, human rights discourses, and the rest of the state-influenced US media complex. This one-sided portrayal of Muslim society helped engrain an image of Western liberationism in mass media, drawing eyes away from the objective US-Muslim violence at play. Hence, it is essential to examine how such a narrative emerged, its role in the grander scheme of the patriarchal status quo, and its function in justifying the War on Terror.

To comprehend the mechanics of the United States' gender rhetoric, one must preliminarily examine the more abstract interaction between gendered narratives and war, which is observed by analyzing the impact of the image. Given the military superiority of the United States and

the major Arab civilian casualties suffered in the War on Terror, the Bush Administration had to foster a pro-war sentiment within the country. In tandem with the post-9/11 First Worldist rationale of avenging US lives, other more gendered narratives were introduced. These narratives were portrayed not only as conditions but also as causes for the War, going by Judith Butler's delineation between the two, defining causes as "active" reasons; this produces the implication that they were one of the United States' primary objectives when going to war, as opposed to secondary justificatory tools (11). Thus, with such active causes triggering the US to go to war, the prevalence of these narratives in the media was heightened, breeding stereotypes and societal images to arise. From this, the US military-industrial-media complex framed Arab society through a gendered lens, depicting the bearded, dangerously masculine Muslim man and his binary opposite, the oppressed, veiled Muslim woman. In turn, this image can be witnessed in numerous areas: public opinion, popular culture, state-influenced media such as Hollywood, human rights discourses, and even reaching erotic films. As such, images and films play a major role in maintaining this narrative, taking from Wendy Hesford's critique of Amnesty International's "Imagine" campaign which constructs an archetypal image of the suffering Muslim woman, saying:

The neutral background and closely cropped portrait aid the image's iconic function by isolating the girl from her material circumstances and constructing her (part for whole)

as the archetypal Afghan refugee (Hesford 1).

This construction goes hand-in-hand with the isolationist nature of the image, as this archetype first emerges in what Susan Sontag terms the “image-world,” then the image lives on perpetually since “in the image-world, it has happened, and it will forever happen that way” (Sontag 131). Thus, this grants the US media complex the power to cement its gendered narrative in such perpetuity as to justify the war in its whole.

Digging more concretely, one must also examine the symbols and spectacles used to reinforce this trope of the oppressed, veiled Muslim woman. By constantly portraying veiled women in images and scenes where they are disadvantaged and suffering, the veil is established as a symbol of oppression; it becomes seen as the cause of their suffering. Consequentially, this depersonalizes the Muslim woman, who is regarded by the Western public as only what Bush terms “women of cover” (Stabile and Kumar 1). This archetypal frame of the Muslim woman who is oppressed by her veil not only shapes popular culture but spectacularly occupies public discourse by storm – as seen in *TIME*’s December 2001 issue, which features a hijab-donning woman with the bold, yellow tagline reading “Lifting the Veil” (*TIME*). An elaborate example that features the veil as a symbol of oppression and restraint is the famous 2012 American novel, *A Hologram for the King* by Dave Eggers, which was adapted into an award-winning movie featuring Tom Hanks. Within the novel, Eggers builds Alan, a run-of-the-mill American businessman who is attempting to settle a monumental business deal in Saudi Arabia. Through his journey,

Alan encounters Zahra, his doctor, and Alan’s first observation fixated on her veil, saying, “her hijab was worn tight, obscuring her hair but for one strand that had escaped and was flowing recklessly down her cheek” (Eggers 150). This immediate focus on Zahra’s hijab highlights the Western depersonalization of the Muslim woman. To add to this, Zahra’s “tight” hijab seems to loosen as the story continues and the two characters’ relationship evolves. When the two meet together in secret, away from the oppressive structures that prevent her from being alone with Alan, she “[wears] a loose scarf over her neck” (285). Thus, Zahra’s hijab throughout the novel loosens along with what Dr. Selena Rathwell describes as the “loosening of [Zahra’s] morals” (Rathwell). Ultimately, this work of popular culture illustrates the Western image of the Muslim veil, portraying it as a tool of oppressing women, while the woman donning it has no agency over her tribal, patriarchal society’s bidding. Not only does this villainize Muslim society, but it also strips the woman of her complex character traits, which, in Zahra’s case, were only revealed in the novel after her unveiling.

The archetypal frame of Muslim women is only one side of the United States’ gendered narrative, for the veiled woman is portrayed *vis-à-vis* the “emancipated” Western woman. This contrast was pursued by the military-industrial-media complex to paint the West’s superiority on gender issues, providing a cause for the US invasions to take place during the War on Terror. As such, the construction of this narrative had two sides: US gender inclusivity and the supposed inessentiality of Western feminism. First, the United States shapes itself to be what Bonnie Man describes as “bastions of tolerance when

it comes to gender” (9). This sets the premise for the United States’ progressivist projection, which goes even further by not only displaying public tolerance, but also engaging the military in gender non-conforming acts. In an inexplicable deployment of soft power, American male soldiers engaged in feminized and, at times, eroticized viral dances that concealed the inherent patriarchy (Pramaggiore 93). A contrasting example of such gender non-conformity within the US military are the torture scandals involving female soldiers such as Lyndie England’s involvement in the Abu Ghraib torture violations, placing females in a place of masculine violence (Howard III and Prividera 292). In addition to the gender-inclusive image that the US displays, the Bush Administration constructs a post-feminist narrative, in an attempt to further differentiate its society from that of the Muslim countries it is invading. As opposed to rejecting feminism and adopting a purely “anti-feminist” stance, the United States appears to embrace and publicize the successes of first-wave and second-wave feminism – all while simultaneously casting out third-wave feminist critiques of the war (Vavrus 14). In turn, these post-feminist discourses ostracize current feminists and “depoliticize the subjects and subject matters they construct,” in an attempt to project the United States’ image as a society that has already “achieved” gender equality (Vavrus 14). Furthermore, this discourse roots the “achievement” of equality to the United States’ military power, birthing the archetypal army wives that occupied much of the early 21st century American popular culture scene (Vavrus 30). Subsequently, this brings rise to martial post-feminist discourse – termed by Mary Douglas Vavrus – which rejects critiques of the

US military power, as portrayed by the Security Mom characterization (Vavrus 68). Much like how the martial post-feminist Security Mom casts out feminist discourse in trust of the military, the United States projects an image of US society where feminism is no longer necessary, juxtaposing with the image of a barbaric patriarchal Muslim society.

Within this vivid contrast posed by the US media complex, one may explore how it interacts with the notion of gender, particularly given the connotations associated with the veil. A strong binarism can be noted between the Muslim woman and the Western woman, causing further archetypal characterization of the female gender. Between the two stereotypes stands the veil as a symbol of the oppression that the Muslim woman is faced with. With the woman stripped of all agency, the veil becomes an object whose removal is a “project of imagining [the] girl with rights and dignity” (Hesford 3). This binarism between the emancipated Western woman and the veiled Muslim woman can be witnessed in many Hollywood movies, most notably of which is *Sex and the City 2*. In *Sex and the City 2*, American women travel to “Abu Dhabi” (filmed in Morocco) and are threatened by dangerous bearded Arab men for not wearing the Niqab. Subsequently, they go into hiding and are faced with menacing, veiled ladies. However, the terror washes away from the Western women’s faces once the Niqabis unveil, revealing their obsession with New York and the United States. The premise of the scene implies that their Niqab is but a façade that is enforced upon them by society. Hence, this reinforces the archetypal construct of the veiled woman only covering herself out of oppression, in fear of the barbarically masculine males. Addi-

tionally, the Muslim women in the movie appear to be secretly liberated by the foreign fashion brought by New York, casting the West once more as the savior – with the American women standing heroically in contrast to their flatterers. In fact, this scene in the movie is a perfect manifestation of the US gender rhetoric, where unveiling is a spectacle of gratitude towards Western liberationism. Maria Pramaggiore ideally summarizes the polarity described above, stating:

... a starkly drawn dualism pitting a secular, enlightened, and egalitarian West against a patriarchal Islam whose oppressed women are in desperate need of rescue (Pramaggiore 95).

As such, this dichotomy contrasts with the more complex reality of Islamic life while simultaneously whitewashing the oppression that women and minorities face within the United States. Ultimately, this symbolization of the veil not only makes the act of unveiling a spectacle, but through that, it also dehumanizes the veiled woman into only a shadow of the Western woman.

Nevertheless, unveiling does not only take the form of a transformative spectacle, but it is taken even further through the media's fetishization of the veil. The rise of veil fetishism was led by the controversial popular icon, Mia Khalifa, driving hijab scenes from a fringe interest to an entire pornographic subcategory "within a matter of months" (Gareth 4). Though this peculiar acceleration in the Hijab as an object of sexual interest can be attributed to the hyper-

sexualization of women in the internet age, it also perfectly captures the Western fantasy of unveiling Muslim women. With the act of unveiling pornographically played out, this Western fantasy is escalated. While the cross-cultural interaction in the pornographic scenes may imply racial open-mindedness, the performative nature of sexual acts displays the veiled woman in a position of vulnerability and the Western male in a position of control. Thus, this bears a stark similarity to the narrative promoted by the US media complex, only further escalated, as the act of assertive sexual intercourse itself bears a power dynamic: penetration being an act of asserting masculinity, as opposed to the feminization and humiliation of being at the receiving end. Hence, with unveiling becoming an act of asserting dominance, the veil is depicted as a symbol of passive submissiveness. This scenario of Muslim women becoming sexually active with white men following their unveiling is found in the mainstream as well. Tracing back to the example of Dave Eggers' *A Hologram for the King*, Zahra's unveiling is soon followed by descriptions of her sexual promiscuity, with her unveiling being climactically equivalent to the act of sexual intercourse (Eggers 293). This ultimately feeds into the trope of veiled women being helpless due to their tribal society and displays the extent to which the Western fantasy of unveiling the Muslim woman is prevalent.

With the trope of the veiled woman established, its extents discussed, and its binary opposite – the Western woman – identified, one must deduce how this narrative plays on the dynamics of the War on Terror and fosters a pro-war sentiment. When the veiled woman is depicted as oppressed and in need of rescue, a form

of – what Slavoj Žižek describes as – subjective violence is established, drawing eyes away from the objective violence at play; one must concretely identify both the subjective and objective violence shaping the narrative. With the martial post-feminist discourse depicting the Western woman as safe in her home, the imaginary, veiled, Muslim woman becomes a public object of suffering in need of rescue. This narrative is enabled by the striking images that are employed by human rights discourses. Suddenly fixating on Afghan women, the US military-industrial-media complex displays them as figures of no agency, stripped of all human rights (Stabile and Kumar 769). However, this liberationist plea for women's rights is but a facade to justify the United States' invasion, casting the US military as an exemplary hero and playing on the white savior complex that is predominant in the West. The US employment of post-political bio-politics presents a "depoliticized, socially objective" justification to the War on Terror, detracting from the underlying objective violence (Žižek 40). Ironically, the objective violence is the power of the US military-industrial-media complex and its ability to disseminate such images for the sake of military objectives. The US Department of State that now publicly condemns the Taliban's abuses of women was once a primary support for the Islamic Fundamentalist group (Stabile and Kumar 767). The military's liberationist bio-political façade is, in turn, enabled by the media complex, whose ownership is in the hands of the transnational conglomerates, establishing an evident influence and cooperation with US military agencies such as the CIA and The Pentagon (Castonguay 103). This media functions, by all means, as propaganda, generating the archetypes

of the army wives, security wives, and other military-tied forms of citizenship. In particular, the role of the Security Mom is prevalent in this dynamic, as their objection towards any critique of the military prevents intersectional feminist solidarity, making the Muslim losses endured in the war "become unthinkable and ungrievable" (Butler XIV). Thus, the compassion to grieve Muslim suffering is lost due to the American public's perception of Muslim society as radical and oppressive, in spite of the objective violence that initially brought rise to such oppression.

In conclusion, by examining the imaginary archetypal construct of the oppressed, veiled Muslim woman, one understands the psychological operations that swayed public opinion on the War on Terror. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag says, "reality has come to seem more and more like what we are shown by cameras" (Sontag 126). Thus, the images generated by popular culture and human rights discourses have come to realize the imaginary stereotypical gender tropes. By integrating the veil as a symbol of oppression into various Western mediums of expression – from novels and Hollywood movies to pornographic films – the spectacle of unveiling is perceived as a fantasy of liberation. The extreme connotations associated with the veil binarily contrast with the picture-perfect image of the liberated Western woman, who's supposed post-feminist society renders her in a state of complete equality. In turn, this leads to the condemnation of Muslim society as a whole and its perception as a backwards patriarchal society, with its women in need of rescue. Hence, because of the bio-political nature of the 21st century, such an image of barbarism is enough to provide a justificatory tool for the United States' invasion, becoming a

function of the US soft power. The military-industrial-media complex wraps this narrative in a martial postfeminist lens, posing the US military as the core reason behind the Western woman's privilege over the lesser, Muslim woman. With this ingrained, there is no space for a feminist critique of the military institutions and their influence over all aspects of the media. Thus, one finds that Muslim woman-fixated human rights

discourses in the early 21st century are the same as the victimizing gender rhetoric that renders the veiled Muslim woman helpless, in need of rescue – all enabled by martial post-feminism and ultimately villainizing Muslim societies and justifying the War on Terror, to the advantage of the Bush Administration. •

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Black is Beautiful

So often, black people, especially women, are unfairly portrayed in the media. Such negative stereotypes are destructive to us in various aspects of life, including our mental and physical well being. I created this artwork to show that Black is Beautiful. The muse in my portrait is just one of many beautiful black faces I came across that inspired me to create artwork. I just want to show everyone how amazing and unique we are.

University of Pittsburgh, Sophomore

Amarachi Onwuka



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Crown UNDER SIEGE:

The **Policing** of

Black Girls' Hair

in **Schools**

Pharren Miller

Abstract

The conversation surrounding the policing of the Black male body has once again gained relevance in 2020 with the killings of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, two Black men who died at the hands of racially motivated violence. Contrastingly, we have not seen this same degree of conversation involving the policing of the Black female body, specifically towards Black girls. When we focus our attention on Black girls, we see that educational settings serve as the venue for such policing against Black girls, especially in regards to their hair. This study continues the work for contextualizing the treatment of Black girls and their hair in school, with their attempt to define themselves. This research study looks to examine the implications of the policing of Black girls' hair. This is done by reviewing the existing literature focused on the ways in which body policing, stereotypes, and hair politics interlock with how Black girls identify themselves. Secondly, using oral history interviews, I discuss the experiences of 15 Black women with their hair journey primarily during middle and high school. My findings conclude that the policing of Black girls' hair in school leaves them mentally strained, verbally and non-verbally assaulted, and wounded while trying to self-define their evolving identities as young women. It is worth indicating that this report is not a call for natural hair and protective styling. This is merely an attempt to show the multifariousness of Black girls and a call to let them revel in this diversity. We must push for education spaces that are “. . . of love. Not just a love for the Harlem Renaissance or the civil rights movement but love for loud colors and loud voices.”¹ In letting Black women tell their stories from girlhood, hopefully, we will allow a Black girl to be a little freer in her existence and add another voice to the call to end the policing of Black girls in school.

Introduction

“Fix your hair or you won’t walk.” This was the last thing I heard before my teacher forcibly positioned my graduation cap over my hair. To my teacher, my hairstyle was in violation of our high school’s graduation dress code. My bangs were inappropriate, yet my white peers’ bangs were deemed acceptable. My natural hair was considered a problem that needed to be fixed, and that fixing required someone to invade my space, not only via touching my hair, but also my culture, and my identity. For many Black women and girls, this invasion is not foreign. For me, my natural hairstyle became an avenue for control and punishment. For Black women in Louisiana in 1786, it was simply the act of having hair that differed from the white norm would force them to wear headwraps in public, mandated by ‘tignon laws’². The policing of Black bodies is not only a modern issue in this country. We have seen it during enslavement, Reconstruction, in Jim Crow laws, and even still today in the recurring instances of police brutality. The subject is typically centered around Black men, but it is

¹ kihana miraya ross, “Funneling Our Children From Classrooms to Cages Ends Now,” Medium, accessed October 22, 2020, <https://level.medium.com/funneling-our-children-from-classrooms-to-cages-ends-now-1b22669c9dd7>.

² “NPS Ethnography: African American Heritage & Ethnography,” National Parks Service, accessed July 20, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/ethnography/aah/aaheritage/FrenchAmA.htm>.

happening to our girls as well.

In order to advance the discussion of the policing of Black girls' hair, stereotypes, hair politics and identity must be present. We must refocus our attention on the experiences of Black girls and body policing in schools, as they are often overlooked. We must then look at the role that stereotypes play in shaping our thoughts and interactions with Black girls. Until we recognize the significance of stereotypes in relation to biases, we cannot begin to contextualize how body policing is experienced by Black girls in educational settings. Furthermore, time needs to be taken to extrapolate how negative images of Black women are intertwined in our understanding of Black hair. This also obliges that we juxtapose how the world views Black hair against how Black women and girls view Black hair. In this conversation, we will get to the heart of how these all influence Black girl's self-definition of identity. One of the principal questions of this research is: What are the impacts of the policing of Black girls' bodies, specifically their hair, in school settings? It would not be fair to have such a robust conversation on Black girls' experiences, without talking to Black women about their experiences as girls in United States educational environments. Therefore, this paper will include oral history interviews of Black women from ages 18-55 discussing their experiences with hair, especially in schools, during their adolescent years.

Girlhood is a privilege that many Black girls are not afforded. For Black girls, their experiences are too often only real to them. If there truly is power behind telling your story, many Black girls have been left powerless. As a young Black woman, who still feels very much connected to the Black girl within, I understand the importance of making sure she is heard. This thesis is written in hopes of being a microphone for Black girls. This is for all the Black girls in the world young and old—ages 2 to 92. May your story never cease to be told.

Literature Reviews

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the conversations involving the policing of Black girls' hair. Certainly, there is no one body of literature, research, or canon that summarizes the dynamic relationship between body policing and Black women and girls, especially about their hair. In fact, a major impetus for this study is the great void and level of misinformation on the role of policing on Black girls experiences and self-definition during adolescence. To achieve this objective, this literature review is divided into four areas. To familiarize the reader with the subject matter under consideration, section one (I) examines body policing. Section two (II) broadly reviews the literature that examines stereotypes. Furthermore, section three (III) examines the topic of hair politics. Lastly, section four (IV) reviews concepts surrounding identity and self-definition.

I. Body Policing

To begin the conversation on body policing, it is necessary to define policing. For this project, I call upon Monique Morris' Pushout and my own experiences to define policing as "verbal and nonverbal cues" that signal towards and enforce a certain behavior.³ Before we can get to such a discussion, we

must first understand why this conversation is germane to the topic of policing Black girls' hair in school. As Morris asserts, "schools are . . . one of the largest influences on life and trajectory of Black girls."⁴ This assertion implies the relevance of school on Black girls' future and those behaviors, like body policing, whether it be from other students or staff, poorly influence Black girls. According to Marquis Bey, "the body in effect is a text onto which scripts and meanings are inscribed."⁵ Meaning, how we define a body dictates how we treat that body. Bey then goes on to explain how the Black body, specifically, is "marred to its perceptions, interpretations, and actions based on interpretations."⁶ Thus, the radical othering of the Black body through the

white gaze has created a lack of understanding of the Black body itself. This lack of "Black epistemology" of its body has created ideas of the Black body rooted in "sexual rapacity, thugness", etc. This is seen in the case of Mike Brown. His body represented the potential to confirm these stereotypes placed on the Black body as menace, thieves, murderers, and rapists.⁷ Bey then adds,

. . . the Negro's place' is within the restrictive confines of the White imaginary, existing precisely as the White gaze has constructed the ontological essence of the Black body, then to step outside of the limits of that imaginary is fatal.⁸

The case of Trayvon Martin embodies this quote. He represented a Black body that stepped outside of the white gaze's stereotypical views of the Black body as a medium for robbery; his punishment was fatal. Bey also reminds us that these unjust killings of Black people serve as confirmation of the very false perceptions placed on Black individuals through the "white imaginary". Meaning, they theorized falsehood about the Black body and confirmed such theories while simultaneously justifying Black people's killing based on these untruthful biases.⁹ In Bey's work this conversation is centered around the Black male body, but I argue that his ideas can and must be extended to the body of Black women and girls.

It is worth emphasizing that this process of inscribing meaning to Black bodies and acting on these inscribed meanings is happening to Black girls as well, but they remain overlooked in this conversation of body policing. Morris notes in *Pushout* that the policing of Black girls has taken place historically, with the first juvenile center of Black youth opening in 1835, and typically such facilities

³ Monique W. Morris, *Pushout*, (New York ; London: New Press, 2018), p. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵ Marquis Bey, "'Bring Out Your Dead': Understanding the Historical Persistence of the Criminalization of Black

Bodies," (*Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 16, no. 3 (2016): 271–77): p.272.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 273–274.

⁹ *Ibid.*

and the general policing of Black girls overlook the intersectional troubles Black girls face.¹⁰ Presently, despite being a low percentage of the population, “Black girls are 4 times as likely to be arrested in school compared to their white counterparts in the US.”¹¹ We also know that Black girls tend to stay in juvenile justice facilities longer and experience fewer positive outcomes, than their white counterparts.¹²

A key facet that affects the policing of Black girls is the intersectionality of their identity. This is evident when, in Evans-Winter’s research, “Flipping the Script”, Black girls admit to feeling disciplined as “girls, non-white girls, and poor girls.”¹³ The girls in her study expressed feeling targeted because “of their style of dress, their hair, their attitude or character.” They felt as though they are viewed by others as a “dangerous”, “threat to society”.¹⁴ In Morris’ work we see Black girls say they feel “pushed out” of school for simply wearing natural hair and other harmless behaviors.¹⁵ Evans-Winter provides us with an example of gender-specific racial policing in school. Roxanne’s (a Black student) hair was weaponized by school officials when she was asked to take her hair down after the bobby pins in her hair set off the metal detector. The school official who forced her to take down her hair wrap failed to understand the meaning of hair and Black culture and in effect attacked Roxanne’s identity as a woman and as a Black person.¹⁶ Morris asserts in her work:

According to criminologist Venetta Young, “Black women in American Society have been victimized by their status as Blacks and as women . . . knowledge about [Black] women is based on images that are distorted and falsified. In turn, these images have influenced the way in which black female victims and offenders are treated by the justice system.”¹⁷

These incidents that have left Black girls and women feeling policed show that many schools lack a cultural understanding of what it means to be Black and a female.

It is understood that there is a phenomenon where Black people, specifically Black girls in schools, are being policed; however, this conversation cannot stop there. There needs to be theorization as to why this phenomenon is happening. For this question, I can call upon reports from the

10 Monique W. Morris, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* (New York ; London: New Press, 2018), p. 140.

11 Ibid, p.68.

12 Ibid, p.141.

13 Venus Evans-Winter, “Flipping the Script: The Dangerous Bodies of Girls of Color,” (Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies 17, no. 5 (2017): 415–23), p. 418.

14 Ibid.

15 Morris, *Pushout*, p. 57.

16 Evans-Winter, *Flipping the Script*, p 419-420.

17 Morris, *Pushout*, p. 144.

United States Department of Justice (DOJ). In 2014, following the death of Mike Brown, the DOJ launched their investigation into the Ferguson Police Department. Their findings were that police in Ferguson, Missouri target or over-police Black people in the city, due in part to “unlawful biases against and stereotypes about African Americans”.¹⁸ This unlawful bias towards Black people does not begin, nor does it end with the Ferguson police department. We see it in our schools as well. According to Morris:

Since the elimination of de jure segregation, Black girls have been subjected to harmful stereotypes about Black femininity that have at least shaped, at worst defined their experiences in classrooms in schools around the country.¹⁹

The stereotypes that we enact on Black girls, such as being “loud, ghetto, or ratchet,” are used as justification for the mistreatment of Black girls in schools.²⁰ This is in part why we see Black girls having to play “identity politics” to be seen as good versus bad based on these stereotypes we have of Black women and girls.²¹ These stereotypes we have of Black womanhood are what society uses as instructions and justification for the policing of Black bodies.

II. Stereotypes

It is inadvertently evident that stereotypes play a role in shaping our understanding of others starting from a young age. In this section, I choose to evaluate stereotypes about Black women and apply them to Black girls. This decision is based on Morris’ notion of age compression on Black girls. She notes that age compression is “the assignment of adult-like characteristics to the expression of Black girls.”²² Meaning, these biases that we have placed on Black women can accurately be placed on Black girls because as a society we view Black girls not as girls, but as women. These learned biases guide our attitudes and actions as we grow older.²³ These stereotypes can sometimes stem from the media. Bell hooks claim that “specific images” of how blackness is represented in the media strengthens and controls the oppression of Black people. These images reinforce white supremacy.²⁴ These negative images create a stereotype threat. Tatum describes this as, “a threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype.” This usually causes anxiety that can lead an individual to perform negatively.²⁵ Black girls are judged in

¹⁸ Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), p. 31-32.

¹⁹ Morris, *Pushout*, p.8.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 12-13.

²¹ Ibid, p. 11.

²² Ibid, p. 34.

²³ Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 84.

²⁴ Bell hooks, *Black Looks* (Boston, Mass: South End Press, 1992), p. 2.

schools based on stereotypes dated back to enslavement, which ultimately shapes the mistreatment of Black girls.²⁶

Patricia Hill Collins argues that there are 4 major stereotypes that are placed onto Black women that are juxtaposed with the “cult of true womanhood: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.” These stereotypes are the mammy, the Black matriarch, the welfare mother, and the jezebel.²⁷ I argue that these stereotypes, while they may have evolved, are still seen today. They are still being used as a tool to subjugate Black women. Melissa Harris-Perry states, the “mammy stereotype became popularized after the end of enslavement, where the ‘breeding’ of Black women was no longer financially/economically incentivizing.”²⁸ The mammy caricature was needed for Black women to be a non-threat to white families (as opposed to the threat that the over-sexualized image of Black women posed) while she worked as a maternal figure in white homes.²⁹ Harris also mentions how some stereotypes have become so entrenched in society that we do not even recognize nor study them. This is seen with the angry Black woman stereotypes that have been placed on many Black women such as Maxine Waters or Michelle Obama.³⁰ She states,

The stereotype of the angry, mean Black woman goes unnamed not because it is insignificant, but because it is considered an essential characteristic of Black femininity regardless of the other stereotypical roles a Black woman may be accused of occupying. These stereotypes are more than representations; they are representations that shape realities. In other words, it is not studied because many researchers accept the stereotype.³¹

Angela Davis speaks to how she was stereotyped because of her afro. In Davis’ article, she claims the afro represented the stereotype of the “Black militant or revolutionary”. While she was wanted by the FBI, other Black women who wore their hair naturally were harassed and questioned even though they looked nothing like her.³²

This stereotyping continues today when we see Black girls who are victims of sexual assault

²⁵ Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 159

²⁶ Evans-Winter, *Flipping the Script*, p. 418.

²⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, (Routledge Classics, London: Routledge, 2000), p. ?

²⁸ Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 77

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 92.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Angela Y Davis. “Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia,” (Critical inquiry 21, 21, no. 1 (October 1, 1994): 37-45.), p.42.

labeled as “fast”. This is evident in conversations surrounding the 2008 case against R. Kelly.³³ kihana miraya ross explains that “blackness is equated with crime, incarceration, prostitution, promiscuity, and so forth.”³⁴ Black girls are never able to escape the archetypes of blackness and therefore, are always treated as such in schools. Monique Morris sets to point out that many of these perceived negative characteristics placed on Black women and girls (eg. attitude) are really coping/survival mechanisms learned throughout time for their status in society; however, too often it is painted in a negative light because of lack of “cultural competency.”³⁵ Tatum tells us that Black girls have to combat false “hypersexualized and . . . negative representation seen in popular culture” in order to “affirm” positive self-image of themselves.³⁶ ross’ work reveals that Black girls feel they are viewed as a certain stereotype regardless of how they act, and other non-black students are not judged in this same way.³⁷

We know that historical stereotypes have evolved through time to fit modern-day negative images of Black women.³⁸ My next question is how does hair play a role in these images? What hairstyles are associated with certain controlling images? How does this impact the way we treat Black girls with these hairstyles?

III. Hair Politics

The politicizing of hair is unique to Black women. According to Althea Prince, white women do not experience this same level of ridicule when it comes to hair.³⁹ She states: “These judgments about what is beautiful have a large impact on young Black women’s self-esteem, their choices, and ultimately their lives.”⁴⁰ This is why it is important to discuss what it means to have Black hair. This question is two-fold, as how Black women and girls define their hair may be different than how the world defines it. Noliwe Rooks declares that,

Indeed, the representation of hair and the discussion of the meaning of African American women’s relationships with their hair illustrates the extent to which hair become synonymous with politics and the construction of a group identity.⁴¹

³³ Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, p. 59-61.

³⁴ ross, kihana miraya, “Black Girls Speak: Struggling, Reimagining, and Becoming in Schools,” (eScholarship, University of California, January 1, 2016), p. 133.

³⁵ Morris, *Pushout*, p.20.

³⁶ Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 137.

³⁷ kihana miraya ross, “Black Girls Speak” (eScholarship, University of California, January 1, 2016), p. 124.

³⁸ Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 138.

³⁹ Althea Prince, *The Politics of Black Women’s Hair*, (London, CA: Insomniac Press, 2009), p. 68.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.133.

⁴¹ Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1996), p.16.

In this section, I plan to discuss the ways in which Black women and girls view their hair, the ways outsiders view Black hair, and the consequences of politicizing and policing Black hair on Black girls.

Black hair did not become relevant during enslavement; hair as a significant marker dates back to pre-enslavement on the continent. Ayana Byrd explains, in African civilization, hair was a way to communicate: “marital status, age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth and rank.”⁴² During the 19th century, we see Africans on the continent view hair and hairdressing as a part of the social, spiritual, and ritualistic culture. Some Yoruba civilizations viewed hair as a way to communicate with their gods and goddesses. In the Mende culture, hairdressing was a form of camaraderie.⁴³ This tradition is still carried out with Africans in The United States today. In *The Politics of Black Hair*, Prince asserts “I have always thought of Black women’s hair-grooming as a ritual--a spiritual happening that loosens Black women’s emotions and their tongues”.⁴⁴ Rooks explains how for many Black girls the process of going to the hair salon was a cultural experience. The sights, the smells, and conversations were all a part of the process of getting your hair done.⁴⁵ For Black women and girls, their hair can be a tool for the expression of emotions. A short hairstyle can be a way to express they are feeling “fun, carefree, and embracing change.”⁴⁶ While hair for some Black women is much more than hair, acting as a subset of their identity, for others hair is simply just hair.⁴⁷ I believe when we lump all Black women and girls into a single category based on their hairstyle, we fail to acknowledge the multiplicity of Black women and girls. Black women view their hair in many different ways, but these views do not become negative until they take into account how others view them and their hair, which is why discussing how the world views Black girls’ hair is paramount.

As maintained by Byrd, during enslavement, Black people’s hair was described as wool as a means to dehumanize them and say they were incapable of growing “real” hair.⁴⁸ This degradation of Black life reinforces Bey’s theory of how meaning is placed on the Black body, but more specifically this time, Black hair. Black women’s hair was “appropriated and used as a terrain upon which meaning was inscribed and ideologies illustrated.”⁴⁹ An example of these meanings is seen when Morris states there has been a “politicization” and “vilification” of Black hair and it portrays kinky hair as “unmanageable and wild.” These cues bear the message that Black girls are less than.⁵⁰ There are other messages that are sent to Black girls about particular hairstyles. Black hair can send signals about Black women’s identity based on assumptions and prejudices society has gathered about specific hairstyles. For example, natural hair can be viewed as “radical” and those who wear this style are “pushy and

42 Ayana Byrd, and Lori Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America*, (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2014), p.2.

43 Ibid, p. 6-9.

44 Prince, *The Politics of Black Women’s Hair*, p.29.

45 Rooks, *Hair Raising*, p. 20.

46 Prince, *The Politics of Black Women’s Hair*, p. 51.

47 Ibid, p.16

48 Byrd, *Hair Story*, p. 21.

49 Rooks, *Hair Raising*, p. 15.

50 Morris, *Pushout*, p.92.

tough”, while straight hair is “conservative”.⁵¹ For Angela Davis, she believes the FBI aided in creating this image of the afro through her wanted picture. She argues that the way the afro represents the stereotypical Black militant is due in part to her being labeled as such while wearing the hairstyle.⁵²

We can continue this examination of how the world views Black hair through the courts. In the case of *EEOC v. Catastrophe Management Solutions* (2014), we see verbiage that suggests that Black hair is unprofessional.⁵³ They even go as far, in the cases of *Rogers v. American Airlines* (1981) and *Pitts v. Wild Adventures, Inc.* (2008), to say that you cannot racially discriminate based on hairstyles (e.g. braids) citing the “mutability of hair” and white people being able to wear the same style.⁵⁴ The courts then try to categorize Black hair to understand when actions should be deemed racial discrimination and when they should not. In 2014, they state the afro is a racial hairstyle because it is “immutable” and locs are cultural hairstyles because they are styled through “manipulation of the hair.”⁵⁵ Their meaning-making of Black hair lacks cultural and racial competency on Black hair. Meaning, the courts proved itself to be ignorant to hairstyles such as freeform locs which requires no manipulation.⁵⁶ It is clear that the courts do not understand Black hair.

All of these meanings placed on Black women and girls’ hair have real-life consequences for them. In January 1999, Venus Williams lost at the Australian Open after being penalized when her beads fell off of her braids.⁵⁷ As for schools, this is the first site where Black children are forced to “explain, defend, and make excuses” for their hair.⁵⁸ Morris shares that, “hairstyles such as dreadlocks, afros, and mohawks, and other faddish hairstyles are unacceptable in school in Tulsa, Oklahoma.”⁵⁹ To remedy this, schools must understand the purpose and impact of dress code and eliminate any reference to “hairstyles that are historically associated with Black cultural traditions.”⁶⁰ Microaggressions, like only complimenting Black girls’ hair when straight, send messages about what is deemed beautiful.⁶¹ This pressures individuals to style their hair a certain way to be accepted. The politics of Black hair have created an external battle for Black women and girls, but it is also causing an internal battle that is reflected in their self-definition and identity.

IV. Self-Definition and Identity

Self-definition, as Patricia Hills Collins illustrates, is a means to resist controlling images.⁶² This fight to define oneself is a universal and collective fight for all Black women according to bell hooks.⁶³ Self-definition is immensely linked, if not synonymous with identity given the ties between who some-

⁵¹ Prince, *The Politics of Black Women’s Hair*, p. 16 and 61.

⁵² Davis, “Afro Images”, p.43.

⁵³ Saran Donahood and Asia D. Smith, “Controlling the Crown: Legal Efforts to Professionalize Black Hair,” (Race and Justice, 2019), p. 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.6-7.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.9.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Byrd, *Hair Story*, p. 295.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 231.

⁵⁹ Morris, *Pushout*, p.92.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.185.

one is and how they view themselves. Before getting into a deeper conversation of identity, though, we must recognize that individuals begin their identity during adolescence with the journey continuing well within adulthood.⁶⁴ Identity is a question of “Who am I”? However, this question cannot be answered without evaluating how the world views you. Who am I is really a question of who am I to “my parents, peers, teachers, neighbors, my community, and the media”.⁶⁵ As attested by Tatum, “for Black youth asking ‘Who am I?’ usually includes thinking about ‘who am I ethnically and/ or racially? What does it mean to be Black?’”⁶⁶ Usually, due to an experience/event with race or racism, Black children begin to think about their identity or fate and its connection to race. They question, “Who am I?” in tangent with a specific racial group? This can start as early as middle school and is seen more significantly with Black children, specifically Black girls.⁶⁷ This question of identity is intertwined with hair for Black girls. Prince explains that they begin understanding that their hair isn’t beautiful naturally starting during adolescence.⁶⁸ This also where Tatum states individuals begin to form an identity, as previously mentioned. If identity is rooted in how others see you, what does this mean for Black girls who are told their hair is not beautiful? How does this impact how they self-define or identify themselves?

Furthermore, how are self-definition and identity affected by educational settings? Monique Morris reveals to us that schools play a big role in the self-definition of Black girls. Black women during enslavement have been dehumanized and as a result today, this “castigated identity” of Black womanhood is forcing Black girls to struggle being seen as good girls.⁶⁹ These negative images are impacting Black girls’ “ability to shape their identity.” They do not see themselves as worthy of things such as: “dignity, respect, and opportunity.”⁷⁰ Tatum defines the action of someone taking in a stereotype about a group they are a part of as internalized oppression.⁷¹ kihana miraya ross contends that the way the world views Black girls impacts the way Black girls view other Black girls and, in effect, impacts the way Black girls view themselves.⁷² ross’ study on Black sovereign education spaces unveils that Black girls believed that an all-Black girl space would be harmful because they viewed Black girls as ratchet and other negative images placed on Black women and girls. The other Black girls in the class represented the negative stereotypes they dealt with internally.⁷³

Consequently, the actions of Black girls in school are correlated with how internalized racism

61 Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 124.

62 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, (Routledge Classics, London: Routledge, 2000), p. ?

63 hooks, *Black Looks*, (Boston, Mass: South End Press, 1992), p. 48.

64 Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 101.

65 Ibid, p.99.

66 Ibid, p.132.

67 Ibid, p. 135.

68 Prince, *The Politics of Black Women’s Hair*, p. 132.

69 Ibid, p.19.

70 Ibid, p.13.

71 Tatum, *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together?*, p. 101.

72 ross, “Black Girls Speak: Struggling, Reimagining, and Becoming in Schools,” p. 85.

73 Ibid, p.84.

shapes identity. Due to the “bastardization of Black girl’s culture, Black girls are left fighting to defy stereotypes placed on them, leading to judgment on their cultural decisions such as hair and its styling.”⁷⁴ Schools’ lack of cultural competency causes Black girls to feel as though their identity as Black girls are not accepted, and they combat this through resistance. This resistance often looks like “fighting back with words, resisting school rules, and officials, or shutting down emotionally, and psychologically.”⁷⁵ In spite of battling race and gender-specific racism, Black girls remain self-determined. Through their resilience, they self-define themselves as having emotions, while also having agency.⁷⁶ Black girls’ bodies, specifically their hair, are policed, stereotyped, politicized. All of these factors culminate to impact the way they view themselves as Black girls and as individuals. While this conversation has been robust in examining how the way we treat Black girls’ in schools is impacting them, it would be a disservice to Black girls to not let them speak for themselves.

Methods

The research approach constructed for this study uses qualitative methods to explore several avenues to examine the impact of the policing of Black girls’ bodies, specifically their hair, in school settings. In-depth oral interviews were conducted with 15 self-identified Black women over the age of 18 about their childhood experiences with their hair in schools. The sampling and data collection process was divided into two stages:

(1) a convenience sample established through word of mouth and social media flyer distribution; and (2) transcription and coding. Sample participants were selected or recommended through social media and personal networks looking for individuals who identify as a Black woman and have experiences with their hair being policed in primary and secondary school. Interviews were conducted over the phone, recorded and later transcribed. Gaining insight into girls’ experiences in the past is relevant to Black girls’ holistic school experiences throughout space and time. Although the women interviewed are no longer girls, they once were and their experiences in girlhood are still valid and aid in answering the research question at hand. After going through the 15 interviews, I found that Black girls are being impacted by the policing of their hair in specific ways.

Over a one month period in the Summer and Fall of 2020, I conducted in-depth interviews and audio observations. The 15 Black women sampled ages ranged from 18 to 50, geographically located from the South, East, and Midwest. The interview questions were divided into 7 categories covering the individuals’ background, hair background, girlhood and primary education, teen-hood and secondary education, womanhood, motherhood, and Black women today. Policing of Black girls is seen explicitly through policies enacted at school and inexplicitly through compliments, insults, and physical touching. Black girls also acknowledge the culture behind their hair and how attacks on their hair also attack their culture. Participants were given pseudonyms to hide their identity. Interviews lasted about 45 - 60 minutes each and were recorded using an audio recorder. Additional follow-up in-

⁷⁴ Evans-Winter, “Flipping the Script: The Dangerous Bodies of Girls of Color,” p.418.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.420.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

interviews were taken with each participant within 2 months of the original interview. Participants were informed in advance of the voluntary nature of the study. Upon agreement to be interviewed, consent was established for the adults.

Findings

This study sought to answer the question of what is the impact of policing Black girls' bodies, specifically, their hair in school, using in-depth interviews. Thus, while others may overlook the issue of hair policing in school all of the participants expressed having dealt with hair policing impacting them emotionally, socially, mentally and a few times physically. The in-depth analysis revealed three common impacts: a mental strain, verbal and non-verbal assault, and wounds as they try to self-define.

Mentally Strained

Black girls are charged with navigating antiblack stereotypes about their hair. These stereotypes are putting Black girls through a mental strain that is unparalleled. This emotional stress is directly linked to the controlling images placed onto Black hairstyles and what these stereotypes imply about Black girls themselves. Such experiences are comparable to the mental strain of body shaming or colorism. When we attack Black girls for their hair, we coerce them through emotional distress to contemplate concepts involving their hair, policing, racism, and sexism. Black women grow up feeling like Black hair is grouped with terms such as unprofessional, unruly, and ghetto. Tabitha, a Black girl who identifies as Afro-Latina describes how these stereotypes carried over in how she was viewed as a student. She believed that since she had "nappy" hair she would be stereotyped according to her hair. She confessed:

And so it also made me just feel like well, are people going to automatically kind of stereotype me and say, "This is bad hair and so obviously she's one of those like people and therefore she's not, she can't possibly be professional or intelligent." I thought that people were going to judge me both physically like that I was not physically up to the job and that also that like mentally they might associate me having quote-unquote bad hair with me being stupid, almost like literally being stupid or acting a certain way that society has said that girls with hair like mine, typically acted like.

This same participant shared that when she started wearing long and straight extensions, the phenomenon reversed. The mental strain of her experience fluctuated more when her teachers contin-

ually pointed out when she wore her hair straight and long. Tabitha's teachers were more likely to have confidence in her answers and she was overall taken more seriously as a student simply because her hair was not "nappy". From her academic transcript it was clear she was a smart student, yet her intelligence came into question when authorities delegitimize her intellectual capabilities with her hair in its natural state.

This same mental strain was experienced by Aya in high school who tells of when she was discouraged from wearing braids because when she did she was called "ghetto." Contrastly, when she wore weave, she was told she was trying to be white. Other students, primarily Black boys, believed she was attempting to be someone she was not when she wore weaves and braids. This categorizing of her as either being too ghetto or too white when she wore braids and weave, respectively, boxed her in with the types of hairstyles she could wear and be accepted. Furthermore, this example of stereotyping highlights how Black girls' identity is under attack through ideas placed on them about their hair. How do braids make you ghetto and what does it mean to be ghetto? Likewise, what makes straight hair "white" and what does it mean to act "white"? These questions open up a conversation on how the mental strain of grappling what it means to have Black hair impacts Black girls. Such mental strain that Black girls are having in relation to their hair, should not be happening.

The root of the mental strain is ingrained in school policies as well. Multiple participants cited policies that restrict Black girls from wearing hair that is not natural to them. Schools would go as far as to remove Black girls from the classroom and place them in in-school suspension until they changed their hair as one participant recalls. For Alicia, such policies were frustrating because they were based on the school's false view of blackness and what is possible from Black hair. She noted that her hair naturally had blonde highlights, and she knew of other Black girls who did have natural blonde hair. Much like the court cases discussed earlier in this paper, schools tried to define Black hair for themselves and form policies from their definitions; however, their definitions were not factual to Black people and their hair.⁷⁷ Much like Marquis Bey's discussion on false meanings being inscribed on the Black body, and then justified through the harm placed on the Black body, school policies perpetuate false meanings about Black hair and justify these meanings through these very policies.⁷⁸ Stereotyping through school policies is uniquely harmful because it is given validity by the parents, students, teachers, staff, administrators, and school board officials who accept and enforce such policies. These hair stereotypes place a unique strain on the cognitive processes of Black girls grappling with the question of "who am I?"

Assaulted

Throughout the interviews, aside from the mental strain, about 87 percent of participants also discussed the harsh levels of assault they experienced at a young age, which translated into a form of

77 Donahoo, Saran, and Asia D. Smith, "Controlling the Crown: Legal Efforts to Professionalize Black Hair," (Race and Justice, 2019).

78 Marquis Bey, "'Bring Out Your Dead': Understanding the Historical Persistence of the Criminalization of Black Bodies," (*Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 16, no. 3 (2016): 271–77).

policing of their hair. This assault was enacted through various means. I divide their experiences of being assaulted into two categories: verbal and non-verbal.

Verbal Assault

One of the first verbal attacks that stood out in an interview, revolved around simple but interestingly complex compliments. Compliments matter. Depending on when and how often a Black girl receives compliments on her hair, it sends a signal about what hairstyles are deemed acceptable and impacts how they view themselves regarding their hair. Olivia, who felt that her hair was not long or straight enough during middle school, revealed that she did not receive many compliments on her hair. Boys would tell her they did not like her because of her hair, and other students would make negative comments about her hair, calling it “nappy.” Because of this ridicule and lack of compliments, she experienced low self-esteem. Another example of verbal cues influencing Black girls’ hairstyles in middle school is when Samantha described being discouraged from wearing braids because of the number of questions she received. The series of questions about her braids having extensions made her feel wearing braids and extensions was “cheating.” In another scenario, being complimented on having “good hair” made Tammy feel as though she had to continue to wear her hair straight to avoid her hair falling out of good grace with her classmates. These compliments made Tabitha feel as though no one could see her as the beautiful and intelligent young woman she was unless she wore extensions. We see her perception of these compliments when she explains:

I couldn’t meet society’s expectations without my hair looking like that. And so I think they offered the compliment, because it was almost like a finally she has heard our requests. And she has finally gotten it together. And so now that she is meeting our demands, then we do have to compliment, like, we have to reinforce like, yes, this is what we want. And so I think that’s where the compliments came from, because they saw a difference in what I was doing, and they liked the difference, because they forced the difference and the chains upon me. So I think the compliments just came almost as a them reinforcing like yeah, keep doing this. We like that, we like this direction you’re heading in.

Compliments are not just compliments for Black girls. They are pathways in understanding your value, methods of determining behavior and markers of understanding standards of beauty. For this participant, the tactic worked. The verbal abuse she endured forced her to wear the hair that she felt

her teachers and peers wanted to see.

Insults are another form of verbal assault that Black girls are subjected to in school. Anne vowed to never wear her natural hair out in public again after her Spanish teacher called her out in front of the class for having a “bad hair day” when she wore her afro (fro) outside for the first time. A similar encounter happened with Christina who wore her fro in public before she had her hair straightened for prom. A friend of hers ridiculed her fro and asked her with a look of disgust, “are you going to wear your hair like that to prom?” Samantha noted a comparative incident when her drama teacher drew attention to her hair in the middle of class when discussing upcoming productions’ uniformity. She disclosed that she felt like her hair was a stressor for her teacher. In return, it made her feel like her hair was a distraction and that she needed to assimilate. All of these instances discouraged Black girls from styling their hair in specific ways.

As mentioned earlier, school policies leave Black girls under mental strain because of their hair. These same policies about hair color contribute to the attack on Black girls too. Aya who had the same policy of forbidding “unnatural” hairstyles in place at her school expressed her discontentment with such policies as:

It made me angry because whenever white girls wore their hair in different colors, that wasn’t their natural color, they weren’t asked to remove their hair color or they weren’t asked to change it or go back to a more natural color. But whenever Black girls wore their hair in the same colors, it was seen as distracting and it was loud and it was asked to change.

This blatant hair discrimination is a means to control Black girls’ hair specifically. These same policies are not enforced equally, making such policies a deliberate act against Black girls. They understand the rules in place are enacted to police them and result in their abuse. Outside of the fact that all rules should be enforced equally, such policies should not exist.

Non-Verbal Assault

In addition to the verbal attacks on Black girls, non-verbal assaults emerged in the interviews as having a strong impact on the women’s lives. Eleven (73 percent) of the participants expressed having issues with people touching their hair in middle school and a majority of those described mainly white teachers and students being the ones who touched their hair. Michelle recalls when her white peers touched her hair without her consent, they would always pat down her fro. This was an issue for her because she wanted her hair to be as big as possible, and they would invade her space without asking permission and ruin her hairstyle. Her peers deliberately patting down her fro was an assault against Black

hair. White students saw her large afro, and their instinct was to tame it by making it smaller. However, this Black girl wanted the exact opposite. These involuntary invasions of Black girls' hair resulted in a consistent response from Black girls that Carly describes as such:

.. .it made me feel like a fish in a fishbowl. It made me feel like an animal in a petting zoo. It made me feel uncomfortable and made me feel like I was being invaded. But in the moment, I just felt like squirmish like, I was like, Why? Why is this happening?

Many of the study respondents echoed this response, likening themselves to animals being petted when others would touch their hair. They often cited white people not touching each other's hair for their reasoning behind their feelings. If they are not touching each other's hair, why are they invading Black girls' space to touch theirs? Many of the Black girls who participated in the interview did not have the answer to this question. Still, they were aware that such a question is valid in understanding this phenomenon that they believed were unique to them. For Megan, her peers went as far as to throw objects in her fro. She confesses:

I remember one time I was walking down a hallway, and I got to my next period class, sat down. And I was like, just touching my hair and I had found like, one of those attachable pencil erasers in it, just I guess somebody had thrown in it while I was walking down the hallway. So that I still did not appreciate.

This physical assault (the act of unwanted **physical** contact upon a person's body) of her hair is a means to control her. These types of actions make Black girls feel attacked simply for wearing their hair in a particular style. It was her natural hair for some students, but there is not a clear indicator that one style is favored across the board for all the participants. Black girls should be able to adorn any hair color and hairstyle that they choose. As the participants have shown us, Black hair can be a cultural expression. What does it imply when we tell Black girls that their hair is bad, ghetto, or a stressor? What does it mean when we invade their space and assault their hair? Luckily, this student, who is in high school at the time, notes that although her hair was physically invaded, she still felt comfortable with her natural hair, and this did not stop her from wearing her hair in her preferred style. We see this transformation of Black girls developing a sense of agency regarding their hair as they get older. I must stress that Black girls should not have to experience any pressure regarding their

hairstyle choice. Other girls do not experience verbal and nonverbal abuse meant to control their hair in school, and these abuses have the potential to mandate the decisions of Black girls' in the future.

Wounded While Self-Defining

The abuse and mental strain Black girls endure in school ultimately leads to a struggle to self-define themselves and their culture. When examining Black girls responses to verbal and non-verbal abuse in middle school versus high school, we notice when older, some Black girls were more socially aware; therefore, they were more likely to stop someone from touching their hair, and they were equally as likely to disregard the attacks on their hair. They had a better sense of their identity, so these attacks were unsuccessful. Anne described her school district as one that regularly policed students down to the inches of their shorts, and she respected students who did not comply with the anti-black policies used to police hair. Although she was not as rebellious towards school policy when it came to her hair, she recognized how Black girl's hair is linked to their culture and self-expression. They should have the freedom to display their culture and express themselves however they choose.

Another example of a similar recognition of Black girls' hair as culture is when Kim discussed her middle school policing how big a Black student's hair could be. This issue forced her to reflect on such policies and who they intended to restrict. She noted, "I don't believe like, our hair should be policed at all, especially African Americans' hair because there is so much that we do with it. And there's such a culture behind it." This experience speaks to the lack of cultural competency that Morris discusses that schools display when creating and enacting policies⁷⁹. When they tell Black girls that their hair-style is unacceptable, they tell them that their culture is unacceptable. These experiences only leave Black girls feeling attacked for being Black girls. Still, some of the Black girls in this study are standing firm in their culture and not allowing others to distort their definitions of it.

We continue to see this struggle of self-determination from Black girls looking to define their hair for themselves. This is evident when Linda describes why she went natural as:

I think I wanted to have curly hair because I just started seeing how beautiful it is and I started learning more about assimilation, a lot about internalized racism, and just how brainwashed we are to see that our natural hair is ugly. And so I didn't want to be a part of that. And I wanted to start wearing my hair natural.

For this Black woman, she made a conscious decision to go natural to reject the concept that her hair is ugly. Other Black women cite they just wanted to see their curly hair like other Black girls they saw on social media. This cultural struggle self-determination where Black girls are consciously choosing to

⁷⁹ Morris, *Pushout*, (New York ; London: New Press, 2018).

embrace their hair culture and reject other attempts to police it. The wounds of the struggle are many times overlooked in considering the amount of time and development it takes to persevere to a point of healthy self-definition. Black girls are deciding to define their hair as they look for inspiration from other Black celebrities like Beyonce and Solange. They are inspired by Nicki Minaj and are experimenting with what they call a “bayang.”

Sofia, who grew up in the early 1990s, cites women in hip-hop being a big influence on how she styled her hair.

She described her experience as:

It was kind of the start of hip hop, you know, so, some of the female rappers, I mean, like, this is going way back, but Roxanne Shantae like, everybody, she was so pretty. Yo-yo, you know, these were the ones that okay, they, Yo Yo had braids, and, you know, Roxanne Shantae, I think her hair was kind of had that low Salt n Peppa, kinda lil hairstyle, lil bob like, you know, so it was just, they, it was you were getting your hair done at that time, you know, you had a transition from those plats to, like a cut and a style.

Black girls' hair is a part of Black culture as a whole. Regardless of whether they choose to wear their hair natural, straight, or in protective styles, Black girls see their hair as a means for expression. When these Black girls that I interviewed decide to give themselves agency over their hair, they are reaffirming Black girl power that Evans-Winter speaks of in her study, through their self-determination to acknowledge their culture⁸⁰.

Some participants' ability to reject the emotional stress and assault from school settings is remarkable and would suggest to some that policing in school in the end has no harmful impact. However, this sense of agency to self-define that we see from some of the participants is not seen by all. Carly disclosed:

So I have a white boyfriend and a lot of times if I'm going to like a family function that's outside of his immediate family. . . I will kind of, I guess, like polish my hair or make my hair look a certain way to go see those individuals because I don't know how they're gonna perceive me and I

⁸⁰ Evans-Winter, “Flipping the Script: The Dangerous Bodies of Girls of Color,” (Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies 17, no. 5 (2017): 415–23).

think I want to be perceived in I don't know, I want to be perceived as like the token Black girl, I guess you could say. . . . So I'd rather just kind of be as polished as possible. And I don't know, in that, that, in turn, goes back to my hair. So I'll style it to the side or not wear it super big, or, you know, I just kind of catered towards, I guess to the audience I'm gonna go see.

The mental trauma that dates back to her experiences in school, stayed with her and determines her decision making process regarding her hair. She feared being placed with negative images of Black women and girls, and made a deliberate act to "polish" her hair and in effect, polish her blackness. Carly's inability to self-define for herself is the disheartening reality for many Black women and girls. She faced emotional stress, verbal assault, and non-verbal assault that ultimately won in the end. While we see those who are able to survive their trauma from school, there are still those who cannot. Their reality is the reason that we must take their policing seriously and create a safe environment for Black girls in school.

Conclusion

A specific form of body policing, hair policing, is plaguing Black girls' experiences in schools. They are being sent messages that communicate to them that their hair is unacceptable, and they must work to tame it for society's digestion. These cues are shaping their past, their present, and how they view their future. This can no longer be the typical reality for Black girls. The politics of Black hair is a politic that predates education as we know it in this country. As a Black community, we have confronted the fatal reality of body policing in this country throughout time. We acknowledge that these fatalities are linked to the negative stereotypes society has of blackness. These stereotypes extend in primary and secondary education, and they manifest in how we view Black girls and their hair. The hair politics that Black girls are subjected to through anti-black stereotypes impact their ability to self define.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the canons dedicated to extrapolating the ways in which Black girls are policed in school settings. My finding concludes that Black girls are mentally strained, verbally and non-verbally assaulted, and that ultimately leaves them wounded as they try to self-define. While the resilience of some can be admired, it is not a quality that should be required of Black girlhood. Black girls deserve to enter school and not combat restraints placed on their beauty and academic ability because of how they style their hair in the morning. Black girls expressed that their hair is a part of their identity for some, but it is not the only makeup of it. Braids, weaves, and afros are not indicators of intelligence. They are, however, indicators of a rich culture within the Black community. When we call Black girls' hair ghetto, it is bigger than just calling that one person ghetto. By default, you are calling her mother, aunts, cousin, and others in her community, who wear the

same styles, ghetto. You are telling her that her culture is subpar. When you tell her that her hair is wild and unprofessional, you communicate that her blackness is wild and unprofessional. This attack on Black girls' hair must end. Black women in my study recognize that this change is necessary. They expressed how they seek to create this change through rejecting cues enforced on them and encouraging Black girls who come after them to do the same. I want to stress this change is not the burden of Black girls or even Black people in the community.

Further research needs to be taken up to understand school policies and culture to develop procedures to dismantle hair discrimination against Black girls. Schools must do the work necessary to end the sieging of Black girls' hair. •

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3 POEMS by RILEY Spieler

Riley Spieler is a fourth year at the University of Chicago pursuing a degree in Fundamentals: Issues and Texts. Across English, French, and German, he studies connections between literature, philosophy, religion, and politics. His poems are inspired by, amongst many other things, modernism and contemporary life, the transcendent, and distillations of the mundane. Next year, he will begin graduate studies, though he is still deciding which program to commit to! You can find more about him and his writing at <https://rileyspieler.carrd.co>.

“Space changes and children do not”

Then: space cried bellows of shining rain
 Nursed dreams
 Never reached

Now: space was
 never out of reach
 always-already taken

Tired mechanical ecstasies churn time's three directions
 Re-sew truth
 Human skin onto plastic skeletons

Faceless children cannot die
 They have no selves to kill
 Are not seen by people
 Nor starstuff

Starstuff, *noun*, /stärstəf/:
 (1) All the precious stuff
 Reality hides in its pockets

(2) Dreams of space that
 Still dance
 Across the sky
 Like old flame

“Eight in-stances of interiority”

Consecrate yourself in the rhythm of the abyss
Those slip drop slight gaps where memory lies in suspense
Where even those most divinely mired
Can seed their proven myths

For the first time since the last time you can
Hold someone in the way
That bridges the pit
Without forgetting it
Wind, heart, chasm recalled by Sisyphus
In the amnesia that only memory is

Who carries the weight in tight ballet:
Bodies, anguish, surpassed by ribbon from ankle to thigh
Wavering in grace, chains that have died
Give us life they never quite had

But in renewal, must flight desist?

I’ve made enough spreadsheets to know
The soul no longer exists
It perished not, but it diffused
Decades before I wept on borrowed pointe shoes

So I’ll take true love and skin it
Leave its peelings on the parlor floor
God, it must be so damn lonely to be a piece of cold metal
In interstellar space

“Anxiety through unions, apart”

In the story that therefore I am
The highest flower must be passed by
In the technic corpse of greasegrime sky
There is no room for you or I
Because it scares me to let death die

Give me the right sight of blindness
To see the hatred of expectation, to be
The son who walks taller mountains
The maid who hears warmer rivers

I seek the strength to take it
In my hand, and, like the moon
Skip the stone through anxious night
Become so blind to laugh at the sight
Of that highest flower

With a clear evening and the right stream of tears
You can see the deep purple from the shoreline for years in
 either direction chaos turns to constellation
 opacity lends rhythm to the seasons
Holding hands defends us from the current
Of the present
Do you hear it diffuse darling?
The sky murmurs that we are starlings

Indestructible

For Breast Cancer Awareness.

Glory

Baylor University, Senior

Marcie Reed



*“Father, have
you really
come home?”:*





Family and Homecoming in Sixties Movement Literature

Gunsu Erdogan

Gunsu Erdogan is a senior student majoring in English Literature at Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey. She also holds a certificate in Film Studies and is currently applying for graduate programs in history. Her research is situated in the intersection of literary theory, film, and comparative history, with particular interest in the Mediterranean region. Her main influence is the joyous diversity she encounters in her familial and friendly circles, which is why she seeks life stories embedded in a variety of cultural and historical contexts. She aims to pursue an academic career and forever continue to learn new languages.

The 1960s marked a moment of eruption in the self-expression of socially oppressed and traumatized groups in America. Influenced by mass decolonization on a global scale and by the civil rights movement on a national scale, the Black Arts Movement became the arena of expression for the African American community. Another prolific community to contribute to the cultural transformation of the '60s was formed of women who led second-wave feminism under the auspices of such thinkers as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. The continuous line of trauma and oppression embedded in these groups' generations-long existential agony experienced a rupture as marginalized subjectivities were being emphasized and gaining visibility, despite the white-centric, patriarchal dominant culture. In other words, the long 1960s provided the means of expression and transformation of consciousness to stop the inheritance of internalized racial and gendered angst through generations. Instead, past traumas, emotions, and relationships were being negotiated in a new light, to carve an alternative, emotionally healthy present out of these groups' past and out of the dominant discourse.

In the literary expression of these emerging subjectivities, family and homecoming appear as common themes through which the legacy of trauma is negotiated. Similarly, confessional mode of expression is found frequently as the means to explore one's identity and discern the "residual" and the "emergent" in their consciousness. According to Raymond Williams's cultural theory, the residual "has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process", while the emergent stands for "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships ... continually being created" and is "active and

pressing, but not yet fully articulated" (122-6). Thus, '60s movements are an attempt at accommodating not only the emergent consciousness of new historical agents within the dominant discourse, but also the residual, with its legacy of inward conflict.

Among the emergent voices of the period are James Baldwin, Diane Wakoski, and Robin Morgan. James Baldwin's 1955 essay, "Notes of a Native Son", is a race-centered introspection over his father's death. Morgan's 1972 poem, "Matrilinial Descent," is a similar attempt at compromise with the oppressed mother figure. Wakoski's 1966 poem, "The Father of My Country", is a female reconciliation with the absent father figure, made possible by the patriarchal father-of-the-country personage. These texts, written in a confessional style aligning the speaker with the author, question the past and origin of trauma (the residual) through the family theme, in order to eventually accommodate these in their present consciousness (the emergent), through the homecoming theme.

The family theme in Baldwin, Morgan, and Wakoski's works questions the internalized residual factors that prevent these authors from leading socially and emotionally healthy lives. The most conspicuous component of the familial legacy is the race and gender consciousness, which have been instilled in the minds of generations of African Americans and women by the hegemonic oppression. James Baldwin, upon the death of his father, recalls the "intolerable bitterness of spirit" that marked his father's personality and gets frightened "to see how powerful and overflowing this bitterness could be and to realize that this bitterness was now [his]" (7). This bitterness, which he articulates in a confessional manner, represents the race consciousness

that characterizes the Black mode of existence, and it is further elaborated as a “poison” passed on from one generation to another (21). Baldwin even questions the ways to transmit to the next generations his community’s methods of fighting against it: “how to *create* in the child ... a stronger antidote to this poison than one had found for oneself” (21). Thus, the residual for Baldwin is an inherited paranoia due to lifetime exposure to racism, which he now sees consciously contrary to his father’s surrender to it.

Robin Morgan’s poem, “Matrilineal Descent”, is similar to Baldwin’s self-exploration in the sense that it investigates the residue of the mother-daughter relationship in Morgan’s present identity. The poem opens as a confession to the addressee, the mother, that this is an attempt at remembrance and reconciliation. Morgan seems to be criticizing her mother for her traditionalism, which caused a generational rupture among them: “I know you claim exile from my consciousness” (2). Although the mother-daughter hostility is evident, Morgan points to a common enemy, a “phantom,” that grieved both herself and her mother (16). However, Morgan quickly dismisses the phantom, which stands for the absent father figure, as well as patrilineal descent, and focuses on her failed relationship with her mother; that is, the matrilineal descent. Given the consciousness-raising efforts of the ‘60s movements, Morgan is prepared to call “a ragged truce” with her mother (24). She is now aware of the collective tragedy behind her mother’s defense mechanisms and her emergent consciousness is ready to make peace with it: “your strength, your pushiness, your sharp love, / your embroidery of lies—all, all were survival tools” (25-26). These lines indicate a settlement reached in accordance with the awareness that

“the personal is political.” Realizing that the most disturbing aspects of her mother’s personality were survival tools under patriarchy, Morgan prevents her mother from sinking into oblivion and comes to term with the matrilineal legacy in her identity. In this way, she peacefully integrates the residual into the emergent, with the awareness that both suffer from the same oppressor in distinct ways.

In the case of Diane Wakoski, there is not a common oppression that agitates her lineage and herself, but her father, the akin representative of patriarchy, appears as the oppressor and the origin of trauma. Therefore, instead of coming to terms with the father himself, Wakoski tries to understand her father’s legacy in her consciousness and derides the power structures behind her personal tragedy. Similar to Baldwin and Morgan, the personal is made public in the confessional style and in line with its political undercurrent: “A woodpecker with fresh bloody crest / knocks / at my mouth” (31-33). In these lines, Wakoski declares that she is numbed by the experience of fatherlessness and it is difficult—almost fierce—for her to embark upon this journey. However, once Wakoski gets comfortable with the confessional mode, she pinpoints, in direct speech, her absent father as the origin of her current angst:

my father made me what I am,
a lonely woman,
without a purpose, just as I was
a lonely child
without any father. (139-143)

In these lines, loneliness is traced back from womanhood to childhood, while its origin, the father, remains intact in this journey. For Wakoski, her immediate exposure to patriarchy via her father is a residual source of trauma that leaks

through her present struggle to situate herself socially and emotionally. Nevertheless, she is aware of both sides of this conflicted legacy:

Father who makes me know all men will
leave me
if I love them,
Father who made me a maverick,
a writer,
a namer (98-102)

Wakoski is aware that the absence of her father triggered her to become a unique poet, as well as a traumatized woman. Regardless of this awareness, she is dealing with an oppressor, rather than a fellow oppressed person, as Baldwin and Morgan tackle, which prevents her from reaching a full reconciliation. Instead, she ends up sarcastically seeking a father figure in George Washington, paralleling the father of the nation with her absent father.

In all three texts, family theme, the residual, is offset by the homecoming theme which welcomes the emergent. In "Notes of a Native Son," homecoming is poetically portrayed by the approaching birth of Baldwin's sibling on the same day as his father's decease: "Death ... sat as purposefully at my father's bedside as life stirred within my mother's womb and it was harder to understand why he so lingered in that long shadow" (15). The simultaneity appears as a poeticized, yet literal depiction of the past yielding to a conscious and hopeful present, although its vestiges persist. In other words, the residual gradually leaves the home while the emergent is coming home. In addition, the dialectic between Black and beautiful represents the negotiation between the residual and the emergent. Baldwin, embodying the reconciliation between the past and present, knows that Black is beautiful. However, his father only knew that he was Black: "...

he knew that he was black but did not know that he was beautiful" (6). With the introduction of beauty and pride into the racial sensibility, a new perspective arises that transforms the residual to fit the emergent.

In Robin Morgan's "Matrilineal Descent," homecoming marks the climactic ending: "Mother, in ways neither of us can ever understand, / I have come home" (34-35). These lines encapsulate the spirit of the '60s through the achieved reconciliation with the mother as a fellow oppressed woman. Consciousness-raising endeavors and the idea of "personal is political" implanted in the '60s ethos provided the necessary tools for oppressed groups to sympathize with and embrace each other. The orbit of experience enlarged to include more people from all generations and walks of life. As a result of this inclusivity, Morgan, whose previous hostility suggests a desire to escape her mother, has come back home, embracing a maternal identification. The incomprehensible ways that made this possible suggest the transformation of consciousness which Morgan previously mentioned: "Meanwhile, my theories rearrange themselves" (18). Thus, the deconstruction of the truth about power that took place in '60s helped accommodating the emergent (the "I") in the residual (the "home").

The homecoming theme in Wakoski's "The Father of My Country" is a sarcastic expression of relief upon the replacement of one toxic father figure with another. Although Wakoski intersperses the theme throughout the poem, it is most discernible at the end, as with Morgan's poem. Towards the end of the work, George Washington is presented as the father of the country to replace the absent father. There is a caricaturized festivity in the language of this introduction: "George, I want to call you Father,

Father, my Father / ... / And I say the name to chant it. To sing it" (149-152). At the climactic moment of this festivity, which corresponds to the end of the poem, Wakoski asks, "Father / have you really come home?" (159-160). Waking up from the ecstatic moment of finally enjoying paternal identification, this question conveys the dismal end of a dream state. The emphasis on "really" implies that she is disheartened by waking up from a dream of completeness and facing the reality of fatherlessness, which patriarchy supplants with larger figures like George Washington. There is a sense of disillusionment over perceiving the false narrative of the patrilineal structure of social identity. Thus, the homecoming theme in Wakoski's poem contributes to the bleak mood, while asserting a full grasp of power structures underlying her oppression. The intense level of realization and self-consciousness that Wakoski displays in an introspective, yet cynical tone, is the product of the '60s code "personal is political", which is channeled into poetic expression to negotiate the past through a contemporary angle.

The movement literature of the 1960s functioned as a realm to negotiate the inherited traumas of oppressed groups with the emerging consciousness. In that sense, literature acted as a means to come to terms with trauma and act against its recurrence under the dominant culture. Along the lines of "the personal is political," the residual race and gender consciousness was deconstructed to adapt it to the emergent cultural forms. James Baldwin, Robin Morgan, and Diane Wakoski were literary agents in this process of adaptation, whose works featured the common themes of family and homecoming as representative of the reconciliation between the residual and the emergent. Their works show

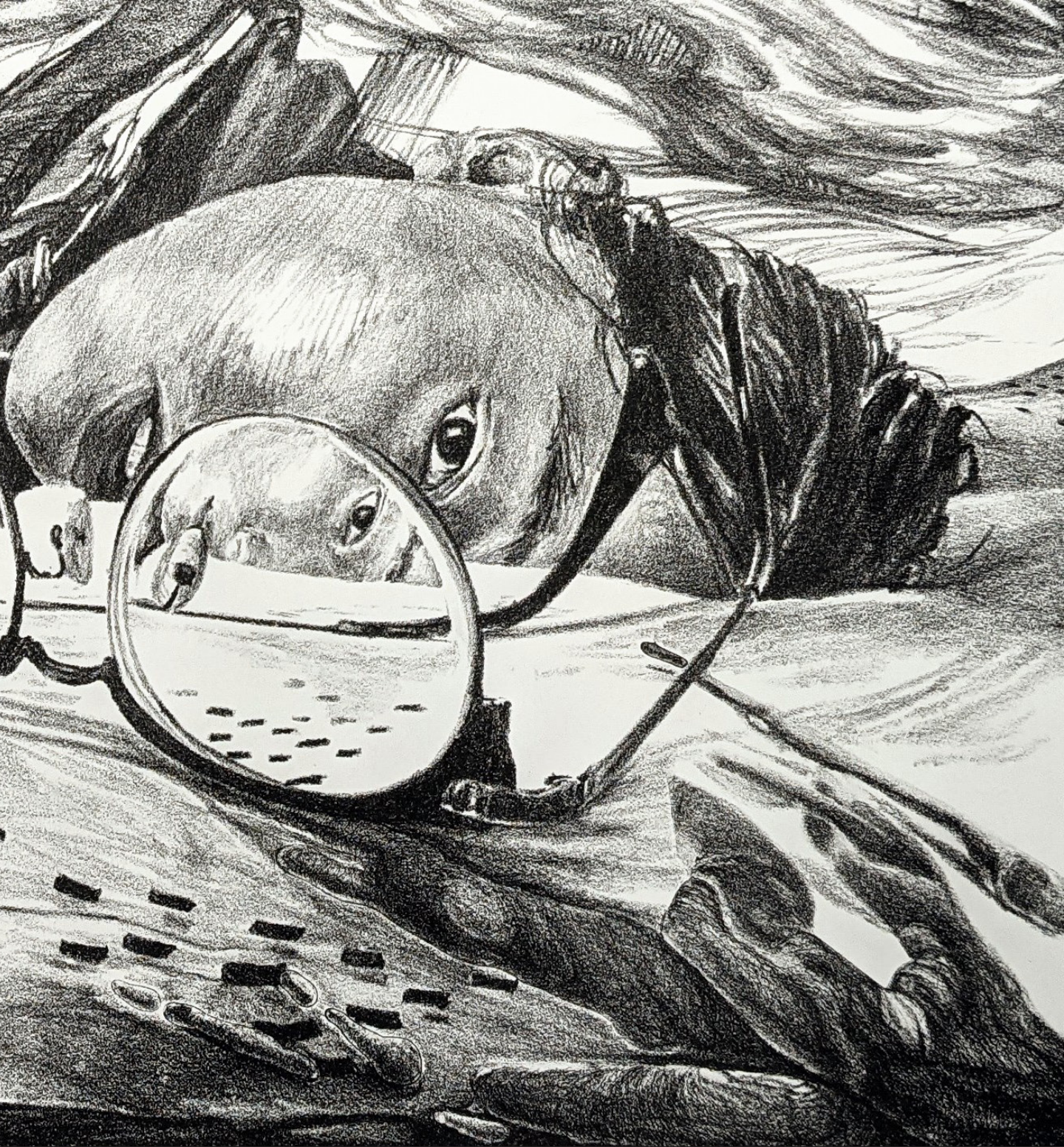
that the 1960s served, through cultural expression, as a rupture in the passing on of collective tragedies among generations of oppressed groups. As Mary Carruthers wrote in "Notes towards a Feminist Poetic,"; "A woman who is a poet must write with the constant, conscious sense of her position 'backward against the wind / on the wrong side of the mirror,' and in that consciousness begin to form a living, female poet-self" (307). The vast realm of expression found in '60s movement literature helped reveal the internalized angst which could not be completely removed, but transformed into a consciousness serving artistic expression. •

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Lost



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The **Silencing** of **Accented Bodies** in **Healthcare**

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Sydney is a junior at Amherst College taking an interdisciplinary approach to the field of Anthropology. Born in England, she has spent the past decade living in Miami, India, Denver, Western Massachusetts, Santa Cruz, and Asheville. Her work has been varied including nonprofits, trauma care, equestrian, food security, marketing, writing, and creating. But, at the core of it all is a deep passion in health, happiness, and reflexivity.

The life expectancy in South Dakota's Oglala Lakota County, which includes the Native American reservation, is 66.8 years, while the life expectancy in wealthier regions of Colorado, which include Vail and Breckenridge, is 86 years.¹ This 20-year difference is deeply unsettling and representative of deep-rooted issues of inaccessibility and inequality. Health is a basic human right for all. It is a resource which enables individuals to live productive and happy lives. And yet, research has shown huge health disparities.² The uneven distribution of resources and care is directly related to the sociological conditions of racism, nationalism, and bias. In recent years, necessary increased attention has been paid to health inequities and disparities, especially in regard to race and wealth.³ Simultaneously, there has been dialogue on accent discrimination in health care.⁴ Most often, with the prevalence of organizations like Doctors Without Borders and the import and export of health professionals, this dialogue focuses

on discrimination against nurses and doctors. But less has been done on reverse accent discrimination of the patient. Perception on the part of the healthcare provider is detrimental to the health of the patient. These ideological assumptions create and perpetuate health disparities. The inherent power dynamic of medicine--the knowledgeable doctor and layman patient--provides ample opportunity and space for even negligible prejudices to have drastic health effects. Healthcare providers' perceptions of these underlying identities directly affect care. But, I argue, the health outcomes of those who are perceived as accented pay an undetected price in their health and well-being. Those who are perceived as accented, visually and aurally, are effectively silenced by the medical field. Through my work, I will explain how mainstream and marginalized identities receive different care. I will go into the baselessness of this bias and provide recommendations to counteract accent bias in healthcare.

The human body is a noisy and expressive thing. A rumbling stomach is a sign that we are hungry, while a burp implies that we are satisfied. Cracking your knuckles might be innocuous, while cracking your back could be relieving or even painful. A regular check up with a doctor will contain a number of aural tests such as a stethoscope to the heart to test for heart murmurs or other abnormalities. They will listen to lungs for the sound of liquid or ask patients to cough to check for hernias. Sound is an important diagnostic tool. As Shannon Mattern notes in an article on auscultation, "the human body is a resonance chamber whose particular sonic qualities can reveal its condition of well-being."⁵ The way a body sounds can indicate how healthy it is. The ancient Greeks would press their ears to

¹ Jack Queen, "Study: Eagle County Has Third-Highest Life Expectancy in Nation; Summit First," accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.vaildaily.com/news/summit-county-has-the-highest-life-expectancy-in-the-nation-according-to-new-study/>.

² Kendal Orgera, Olivia Pham Published: Mar 04, and 2020, "Disparities in Health and Health Care: Five Key Questions and Answers," *KFF* (blog), March 4, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-five-key-questions-and-answers/>.

³ Orgera, Mar 04, and 2020.

⁴ Yulong Gu and Amee P. Shah, "A Systematic Review of Interventions to Address Accent-Related Communication Problems in Healthcare," *The Ochsner Journal* 19, no. 4 (2019): 378–96, <https://doi.org/10.31486/toj.19.0028>.

⁵ Shannon Mattern, "Urban Auscultation; or, Perceiving the Action of the Heart," *Places Journal*, April 28, 2020, <https://placesjournal.org/article/urban-auscultation-or-perceiving-the-action-of-the-heart/>.

the chest of an individual to listen to his lungs, a technique which prevailed for centuries, while Leonard Auenbrugger pioneered tapping the thorax with the finger, called percussion, to listen for changes in density and thus air-filled, solid, and fluid filled body parts.^{6,7} But I would argue that the inseparable intersection of sound and health really came to fruition with the creation of the stethoscope in 1816 by René Laënnec. Laënnec was a French physician working in the early 19th century. While he was examining a particularly corpulent woman, the inconvenience and modesty of the time made it unsuitable for him to press his ear to her chest as would have been the usual practice. So, instead, he rolled up paper to make a narrow tube and listened through the other end. He described the experience here:

*"I then tightly rolled a sheet of paper, one end of which I placed over the precordium (chest) and my ear to the other. I was surprised and elated to be able to hear the beating of her heart with far greater clearness than I ever had with direct application of my ear. I immediately saw that this might become an indispensable method for studying, not only the beating of the heart, but all movements able of producing sound in the chest cavity."*⁸

Many advancements have been made to the elementary stethoscope Laënnec invented. But more important was his invention of the connection between the sounds of the body and its health leading to research delving into the specific sound of health and deviations of health.⁹ He created auscultation as a technique that necessitated an instrument. The integration of listening to the body and medicine have since become so intertwined that the stethoscope has become the de facto symbol of medicine. And in many ways,

that has been good. Internal organs like the heart, lungs, and bowels can be heard without much intrusion or time investment. With minimal invasion, a trained doctor can tease out minor and serious health issues. The stethoscope amplifies the sounds of the internal body.

The process of listening is most effective when it is isolated from the other sensations.¹⁰ Discomfort on the part of the patient or physician in position will distract their ability to listen only to the stethoscope. Doctors shifted from listening to the patient to listening to their apparatus. "Mediate auscultation," as Jonathan Sterne observes in his book on auscultation and the stethoscope, "was an artifact of a new approach to reason and the senses, in which listening moved away from the ideal of spoken exchanges between doctor and patient into the quiet, rhythmic, sonorous clarity of rationality."¹¹ Doctors shifted from listening to the vocalization of the patient to listening to the body and, through this act of listening to the body and not the patient, the stethoscope effectively pits the patient's body against itself.¹²

When Laënnec invented the stethoscope, he not only found an instrument to listen but also

6 "Sounds of the Body | Encyclopedia.Com," accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/medicine/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/sounds-body>.

7 Ariel Roguin, "Rene Theophile Hyacinthe Laënnec (1781–1826): The Man Behind the Stethoscope," *Clinical Medicine and Research* 4, no. 3 (September 2006): 230–35.

8 Roguin.

9 Jonathan Sterne, "Mediate Auscultation, the Stethoscope, and the 'Autopsy of the Living': Medicine's Acoustic Culture," *Journal of Medical Humanities* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 115–36, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009067628620>.

10 Sterne.

11 Sterne.

provided an opportunity for physical distance between the patient and the doctor.¹³ The stethoscope creates a “private auditory space.”¹⁴ “The technique requires doctor and patient to get close to one another, but also ensures a degree of physical separation and diagnostic detachment.”¹⁵ Doctors were moving away from a preoccupation with the interpretation of symptoms as related by patients. They were instead becoming increasingly concerned with anatomy and pathology.”¹⁶

Laënnec said that a disease should be assessed through the rational consideration of empirically valid signs. Patients may lie but the sounds of the body could not. The doctor could listen and form an ‘objective’ opinion separated from the possible deceit of the patient.¹⁷ Therefore, the stethoscope pits the subject against itself. This can be seen in Egophony, which is when the patient is asked to say the letter “e” while the doctor listens to the lungs with a stethoscope. Clear lungs will sound like “ee,” while lungs that are filled with fluid or have a tumor will sound more like “ay.” The “e” sound is transmuted to an “a” sound through the body.”¹⁸ What the patient says and what the doctor hears are in contrast. And in this contrast, the doctor relies on what they hear more than what the patient says.

One patient in Tom Rice’s book, *Hearing and the Hospital: Sound, Listening, Knowledge and Experience*, said “they’re just part of what they [the doctors] do in here, which is basically turn you inside out.”¹⁹ The stethoscope blurs the line between public and private by putting the inner life of the patient on display. The inner folds of the human body are broadcasted as sound, publicizing the private life, and thus removing boundaries.²⁰ The patient’s self and subjectivity are seen

as inconvenient and untrustworthy obstacles to be overcome by the stethoscope.

Michel Foucault in his book, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, coined the term “medical gaze.”²¹ According to Foucault, the medical gaze is comprised of a “sensorial triangulation” of hearing, touch, and sight.²² The medical gaze touches, listens, and sees. So, by listening to the body the doctors are also exerting power over the patient. Understanding this concept becomes integral to understanding the inherent power dynamic in health. Foucault argues that hospitals, like prisons, are institutions of surveillance and control.²³ Even though there is a dimension of healing, the reliance on and gratitude to doctors for health can further exacerbate feelings of obligation which hinder patient autonomy. Rice speaks to this in

12 Lawrence Abu Hamdan, “Aural Contract: Forensic Listening and the Reorganization of the Speaking Subject,” in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, 65–82 (Sternberg Press and Forensic Architecture, 2014), 74.,” *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, no. 74 (2014): 65–82.

13 Sterne, “Mediate Auscultation, the Stethoscope, and the ‘Autopsy of the Living.’”

14 David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, *Keywords in Sound* (Duke University Press, 2015), 106.

15 Novak and Sakakeeny, 107.

16 Tom Rice, *Hearing and the Hospital: Sound, Listening, Knowledge and Experience* (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2013), 55.

17 Rice, 65.

18 Hamdan, “Aural Contract: Forensic Listening and the Reorganization of the Speaking Subject,” in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, 65–82 (Sternberg Press and Forensic Architecture, 2014), 74.”

19 Rice, *Hearing and the Hospital*, 49.

20 Rice, 40.

21 Michel Foucault and Alan Sheridan, *The Birth of the Clinic an Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 16.

22 Foucault and Sheridan, 163.

23 Foucault and Sheridan, 38.

regard to patients consenting to being displayed and physically listened to by medical students. The patient's debt from care means that even willing participation can really only be viewed as "quasi-voluntary."²⁴

The medical reliance on the Foucauldian gaze of seeing and listening to the body leads to a segmentation and dehumanizing of patients. It leads to thinking of patients as just bodies. By viewing patients anatomically, the emotional and intimate aspects of human existence are lost. One medical student said:

"Sometimes I become really conscious that all we do is reduce people to two heart sounds and a murmur.' He pointed out that just as the stethoscope was in essence a small amplifier, it had the effect of amplifying the heart sounds in such a way that they came to drown out other considerations, eventually eclipsing 'the patient' altogether."²⁵

The gaze becomes anatomical. But medical professionals are not just listening to heartbeats, but the health of a patient, family member, or their own heart. And the sound of something healthy or nonnormative can be a question of life and death. It establishes sound as a source of medical data and places a physical distance between the doctor and patient, especially in regard to training and authority.^{26,27} It creates a power dynamic between a patient and his or her doctor where the doctor is a trained expert at listening, while the patient cannot hear that sort of intimate

knowledge about their inner body. This cements the power dynamic of the expert. The stethoscope is a symbol of power and in Rice's book, medical students speak to the sense of elation and almost superiority they feel with a stethoscope draped across their shoulders, even when they have not yet mastered how to use one.²⁸ It is a performance of authority complete with props.

This acceptance of doctor driven data over patient's accounts is expressed in one anecdote where a patient had been complaining of chest pain for several months. However, despite her confidence that something was wrong, and since the doctors could not find anything with which to diagnose her, there was effectively nothing wrong with her. Finally, a doctor detected an aortic aneurysm. The doctor offered for to let the patient hear for herself what was wrong as the evidence of what the patient felt the whole time but did not really exist until it was 'discovered' by the doctor.²⁹

With the creation and implementation of the stethoscope came the use of instruments to "mediate" the physician's attention to audible movements inside the body to the effect that a doctor must rely on an instrument at the consequence of not listening to a patient. This shift in listening may seem innocuous or even beneficial, but its effect can be incredibly disastrous, par-

²⁴ Rice, *Hearing and the Hospital*, 123.

²⁵ Rice, 130.

²⁶ Mattern, "Urban Auscultation; or, Perceiving the Action of the Heart."

²⁷ Sterne, "Mediate Auscultation, the Stethoscope, and the 'Autopsy of the Living.'"

²⁸ Rice, *Hearing and the Hospital*, 78–82.

²⁹ Rice, 126–28.

³⁰ Hamdan, "Aural Contract: Forensic Listening and the Reorganization of the Speaking Subject," in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, 65–82 (Sternberg Press and Forensic Architecture, 2014), 74."

ticularly for accented bodies.³⁰ It creates a sense of wariness of patients' accounts in lieu of what the doctor perceives and creates distance between patient and physician. This distance is particularly detrimental to those who are perceived as accented who are already made silent and invisible in healthcare.

The importance of sound in medicine, and considering the patient's feelings as less important than what the doctor hears, therefore, establishes the move into a study of accented patients in the medical field. And because all accents are not created equal, there are power dynamics therein. Patsy Rodenburg, a renowned voice teacher, coined this prejudice "vocal imperialism." Her exposure to acting has created an awareness of people's aural preferences. She rails against the shockingly pervasive underlying belief that there is "one right voice." The "white, well-educated, middle to upper class, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied and most likely male"³¹ has benefited from centuries of maintaining their way of speaking as correct and deeming all other forms as wrong. She correctly opines that English has been "enriched"³² by different groups. The fact is, just like racial judgments drawn from perceiving skin color, vocal imperialism is founded on nothing and yet accepted as the truth. "The biology, mechanics and hydraulics of the human voice are the same everywhere," but the moment someone speaks, they are judged.³³ Assumptions are made about "intelligence, our background, class, race, our education, abilities and ultimate-

ly our power,"³⁴ even though the voice is not a passport revealing the resume of the speaker. As listeners, we act like we can place the speaker and judge their worthiness. The speaker, not surprisingly, is incredibly aware of how they are perceived. The internal dissonance alone is enough to damage one's self-image. "Whenever I work in the American South," Rodenburg notes, "I get telephone calls from businessmen and women who 'want to sound more northern' and not so rural. They believe they will earn more respect with a quick change of vocal identity." Rodenburg's wide-ranging examples from Businessmen in Birmingham to Japanese film directors to Canadian actors suggest that no one with a perceived accent feels not judged. She continues, "We are instantly known to others by our voice and dialect, and we are actually censored from having the right to speak certain things. You may not believe it is true but there is such a thing as 'vocal imperialism'."³⁵ It is not only wrong and problematic, but also criminal to determine a voice is not good enough.

English speakers perceived as accented receive differential treatment. Amy Tan in her essay, "Mother Tongue" touches on these themes of perception and bias. The way she speaks with her mother is their "language of intimacy," but their conversations have been described by friends as "broken" or "fractured." This unfairly implies that her mother's voice needs to be changed and fixed. But beyond surface level ideas, the consequences of this thinking can be dangerous. With a view of "limited English" comes the belief that the speaker is "limited," as in the "English reflects the quality of what [they] have to say." If people hear an accent and use it as evidence of the speaker's incapability, the

31 Patsy Rodenburg, *The Right to Speak: Working with the Voice*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1993). (page 105)

32 Rodenburg. 107

33 Rodenburg. 107

34 Rodenburg. 4

35 Rodenburg. 4-5

speaker is made lesser than and voiceless. Tan tells a story of her mother going to the hospital excerpted here:

“My mother had gone to the hospital for an appointment, to find out about a benign brain tumor a CAT scan had revealed a month ago. She said she had spoken very good English, her best English, no mistakes. Still, she said, the hospital did not apologize when they said they had lost the CAT scan and she had come for nothing. She said they did not seem to have any sympathy when she told them she was anxious to know the exact diagnosis, since her husband and son had both died of brain tumors. She said they would not give her any more information until the next time, and she would have to make another appointment for that. So, she said she would not leave until the doctor called her daughter. She wouldn’t budge. And when the doctor finally called her daughter, me, who spoke in perfect English — lo and behold — we had assurances the CAT scan would be found, promises that a conference call on Monday would be held, and

apologies for any suffering my mother had gone through for a most regrettable mistake.”

The right accent becomes directly synonymous with respect and attention. If the mother had not been persistent, she would have been made voiceless by the medical system purely due to her accent influencing healthcare workers’ perception of her as unworthy.

The perception of accent and difference leads to detrimentally different healthcare and health outcomes. One study conducted at the University of Nova Scotia collected qualitative data from 32 immigrant women from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle east, and Europe. The findings revealed that markers of accent and difference such as skin color, aural sound, and weight, led to “unfavorable interpersonal dynamics. Fundamental causes of diseases and clinical discourses are embedded in ethno-cultural realities of gender, ethno-racial identity, English communication styles and immigration related economic downturns.”³⁶ That is to say, perceptions of accent and health professionals’ personal views on immigration are compounded to create underwhelming and insufficient health resources for the women.

Two other studies conducted in Canada by two researchers in 2008 and 2009 looked at immigrants’ experiences with mental and maternal health, respectively. In both studies, the women reported poor healthcare experiences. While income and employment were determinants of health, a higher percentage of immigrant women in the study had professional degrees and many were economically well off. However, despite their socioeconomic status, the study found that

the visually accented women's health experiences were negatively affected by discrimination and racism. The author of these studies notes:

“Primary healthcare services in Canada are considered Eurocentric and exclusive to many visible minority women (and men) since they rarely accommodate immigrants’ culturally and linguistically underpinned health and social needs...The cultural and linguistic backgrounds of immigrant women and their healthcare providers sometimes led to difficulties in diagnosis and treatment. Many diagnostic tools and therapeutic approaches are based on research driven by and embedded in Western cultural values and norms...Participants in this study welcomed the idea of having a healthcare system with providers with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They believed that this may free them from the need to justify their values and behaviours.”³⁷

The health care system relies on Western approaches to medicine, and thus, subverts potential cultural and linguistic needs of the women. This interpretation led to discomfort and frustration among health professionals and the silencing

of the patients.

With miscomprehension, comes apathy. A recently completed doctoral thesis by Brian Ray Snider looks at the varying prognosis of 110 participants and drew comparisons between the prognosis and the perception of racial identity. “The results suggest,” Snider writes, “that the subjects actually displayed a reverse bias in that they viewed the client who spoke non-standard American English as having a significantly better prognosis, and the client who spoke standard American English as in more urgent need of mental health treatment.”³⁸ As the health professionals struggled to sympathize and empathize with their patients, they undermined their health needs and made them nonexistent in the system.

So, what is the solution? First and foremost, a counterintuitive shift in thinking is necessary in order for us to understand the predicament of the person who is rendered as an unspeaking thing to be made sense of. Thomas Nagels’ “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” provides a good framework for such a revolutionary new way of thought. Nagel asks, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” and decides that when something alien is

36 Weerasinghe Swarna, “Inequities in Visible Minority Immigrant Women’s Healthcare Accessibility,” *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care* 5, no. 1 (2013): 18–28.

37 Sylvia Reitmanova and Diana L. Gustafson, “Health and Social Inequities of Visible Minority Immigrant Women in St. John’s: A Critical Population Health Perspective,” in *Canadian Perspectives on Immigration in Small Cities*, ed. Glenda Tibe Bonifacio and Julie L. Drolet, International Perspectives on Migration (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 173–94, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40424-0_9.

38 Brian Ray Snider, “Bias in Psychotherapy as It Relates to the Client’s Accent and Counselors’ Racial Identity Development and Universality -Diversity Orientation” (Oklahoma State University, 2020).

encountered, we can only imagine from our own experiences. We are “restricted to the resources” of our own minds which are inherently inadequate.³⁹ Upon reflection, we realize that there are aspects of being a bat which cannot and will never be comprehended. The facts are too alien from our own experience to be fathomable. But “we can be compelled to recognize the existence of such facts without being able to state or comprehend them.”⁴⁰ If “consciousness is what makes the mind-body problem really intractable” and consciousness takes two forms: subjective and objective. This perception is forever intertwined with the body.⁴¹ Medical professionals, therefore, must recognize the facts of their own perceptions and must try to take up the point of view and experience of their patient. And, with this adoption of another experience, the view left behind remains unreduced. And if “the more different from oneself the other experiencer is, the less success one can expect with this enterprise,” then the health professional must see the limitation of their imagining and do extra work to make space for the voices of the accented.⁴² However much we want to empathize with others, our physiology, ideology, and culture limit us. We are perceived by the limitations of our bodies and limited by the way we are perceived. Medical training should include implicit bias and judgment training to integrate the awareness into care.

Much like the stethoscope, which shifted the attention of doctors from listening to their patients to listening to the bodies of their patients, language as it pertains to health and the way an individual’s health is categorized has been used historically to usurp the patient’s voice. For linguistic dominance to end in health,

the field should be opened to a population more representative of the patient population. With multiculturalism comes the expectation to ask more questions and listen more. All this is to facilitate healthcare accessibility. “When a person walks into a physician’s office, the physician becomes one of the players in the story.”⁴³ This gives power to a physician to disenfranchise or believe and contextualize the patient’s illness. As health professionals struggle to sympathize and empathize with their patients, they undermine their health needs and silence them, making them nonexistent in the healthcare system. •

39 Nagel, 439.

40 Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” 441

41 Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1974): 435–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914>. 435

42 Nagel. 442

43 Nili Kaplan-Myrth, “Interpreting People as They Interpret Themselves,” *Canadian Family Physician* 53, no. 8 (August 2007): 1268–69.

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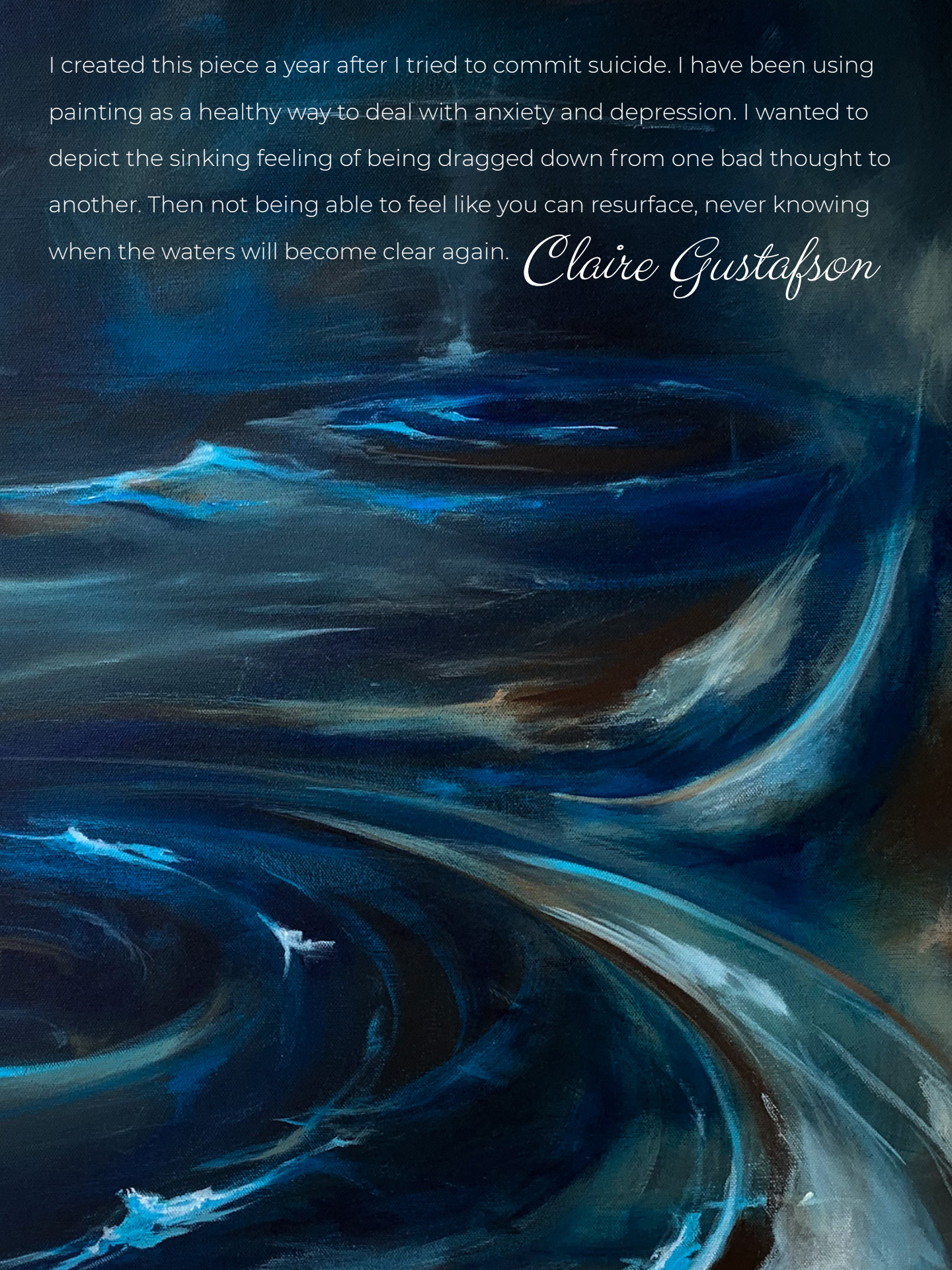
Spiral

Baylor University, Senior



I created this piece a year after I tried to commit suicide. I have been using painting as a healthy way to deal with anxiety and depression. I wanted to depict the sinking feeling of being dragged down from one bad thought to another. Then not being able to feel like you can resurface, never knowing when the waters will become clear again.

Claire Gustafson



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