

# VOICES



Volume XVII  
2020-2021

# VOICES

## **The Creative Arts Magazine of West Georgia Technical College**

2020-2021  
Volume XVII

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Cover Art: "Radio Sheep" by Lydia Robida  
Drawing 1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner in the 2019-2010 Art Exhibit.

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## 2020-2021 Winners

### Poetry

1<sup>st</sup> Place

Lauren Stuart-Doig: “Porcelain Doll”

2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Heather Oglesby: “Footprints”

3<sup>rd</sup> Place

E'naid Moye: “Pain Within”

### Prose: Fiction

1<sup>st</sup> Place

Susan Trejo: “Idle Town”

2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Sobenna Onwumelu: “Leaving”

3<sup>rd</sup> Place

Remiah Jones: “A Mysterious Girl, Who Wants a Normal Life”

### Prose: Nonfiction

1<sup>st</sup> Place

Alea Cox: “Pica in Children”

2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Hector Sanchez: “An Autobiography with a Slight Twist”

3<sup>rd</sup> Place

Samuel Fambrough: “The Effects of Excessive Cellphone Use in Relation to Teenager Sleep Deprivation”

## Poetry

### “I Am Daisy,” Natalie Brown and Amaya Smith

I was born and raised from money and power  
And my parents named me after a flower  
The riches consumed me and told me who to be  
I followed this until I met Gatsby  
I had fallen in love  
But our love was so grim  
As to be with the poor  
Is nothing but sin  
So, I married another  
With diamonds and gold  
And though I tried  
The relationship felt so cold  
Oh, how I miss my poor fellow  
Who became a distant rainbow  
He was referred to as great  
But for him and I  
It was too late  
I tried to be with him  
In the dark of the night  
Then secretly held each other  
Until the morning light  
But then my true love faded  
When he was found in a pool breathless  
Oh, how could this be  
This misfortune was not anticipated  
Now I must move on  
To the life I had once had  
With a man who is drab  
I have killed my true love in more ways that can be counted  
For this I must suffer a lifetime of forever being doubted.

### “Corona/Covid-19,” Moninuolaoluwa Fagbamiyw

Pandemic, we were unprepared  
Pandemic, you quickly spread through the air  
Pandemic, we acted too slow  
Pandemic, and allowed you to grow  
Pandemic, for some you caught them at the right time  
Pandemic, for most you caught them while they were blind  
Pandemic, for some it is too late  
Pandemic, for most we underestimate  
Pandemic, many are grieving their loved ones  
Pandemic, this is not fun  
Pandemic, the world never expected this time of crisis

Pandemic, we all want to go back to a time of bliss  
Pandemic, our head officials are not on the same page  
Pandemic, many might begin to rage  
Pandemic, this could have all been foreseen  
Pandemic, may we never repeat this time of history

### “Cancer Stick?” Jalen French

I’m a Cigarette  
You can smoke me when your down  
You can have me when you first wake up  
And before you go to sleep  
I don’t care if I smell like trash

Commercials makes me look bad  
They say I cause cancer but who cares  
It’s worth the buzz you get  
The government taxes you for getting me  
But that’s nothing to you

Who said you need clean lungs?  
Once you’re hooked  
It’s hard for you to leave me  
You don’t need to leave anyway  
I’m like your favorite ex

Just light me  
And let me take over  
Your favorite celebrity does it  
Don’t feel left out  
Join the crew

### “A Long Way Gone,” Henry Phan

Back in his home country of Sierra Leone  
In a flash everything went wrong  
He was just on his way to his grandmothers  
House  
That’s when everything came tumbling down

His parents got a divorce but now  
This event had left a bigger scar  
In order to cope he listened to rap  
Just to get his happiness back

It was hard to live like this

Running and running  
Never knowing what your next meal is

Or even if you'll to see the next day  
It was all just so hard to say  
Traveling through the forest  
Night after night  
Hardly getting any food  
Not even a bite

Village to village  
Day after Day  
Nothing would ever be the same  
Losing his family in the war was  
Rough  
Joining the war was rough and tough

But after all of the hardships there was a ray  
Of hope  
Meeting ester  
The nurse who was supposed to help him cope  
And understand him as a bigger sister

Going through another journey  
Traveling to France and led through the  
Rough times he made it.  
Lauren adopted him and he was  
Moving to America

His life was looking a little less grim  
But exciting  
He'll never forget the pain or the  
Hardships but now he lives the better life  
When a new family.

### “The Pandemic,” Sean Sprinkle

I awoke to a feeling of solitude and dread,  
there a zombie lying alone upon his bed,  
for the bees no longer buzz nor do the birds sing,  
it feels as though I have no motive to do anything,  
the streets are stranded and markets a hollow shell,  
seems like the world has gone to hell,  
disease steals the lives of the short-winded,  
like a thief in the night,  
In this time of darkness, I can hardly see the light

“He Watches,” Ruth-Ann Clark

Alone as I am, independent.  
The world at my fingertips, like heavy rain.  
Such a weight of responsibility, I will take it.  
I will run, to live is to love.  
Loving can't live, until we make a choice.  
A step into the puddles of love, immersed in care and joy.

The leaves move, with the wind.  
How it soothes, through the light of the sun.  
They cut, their branches run.  
When the sun rose that morning, I knew.  
That a struggle was nothing, compared to my awe in you.  
My lord as he watches I pray quietly.  
That he keeps me safe, and warm, under his wings.

“A Brand New Day,” Molly Roberts

A brand new day. The memories

We made shall always stay. We dive deep down

In search of a place to lay. Our dreary heads where all the

past days play. Some we wish would just stay at bay. Let

My path follow the right way. Life would be better if we could

Get rid of all the grey. Line the skies with an array of red and orange.

Let the sea be drowned by the deepest of blues. In the middle where they meet make it clash

with                    pea                    ce                    My days

Are not

numbered                    instead                    chosen                    not

by                    me                    but                    by

H                    a p p e n s                    ta                    nce.

“Pain Within,” E’naid Moye

Pain run deep in the veins of most  
You can’t see it but you can most definitely feel it  
Heart, body, soul  
To much pain to hold.....  
Inside.....

We hurt one another with words  
We kill one another with weapons  
The after affect of our actions, we never know what happens.  
Pain is never just in that one person, it is passed along.  
That person become a conversion  
Transforming from strong to weak  
we break them down with the weapons we use or the words we speak.

Tears on the pillow at night  
Blood from that deadly fight  
Pain in so many ways to where there is no light  
Lift up our brothers and sisters  
Love ourselves from within  
The only way we stop the pain and suffering is if we all win  
We have too much to gain  
Please, I can’t handle no more pain

“Nature’s Glass Image,” Elizabeth Simonenko

The tree’s leaves began to bloom again  
the birds began to chirp their sweet tunes.  
The afternoon sun rays reflected off the broad lake.  
It made the water sparkle, and twinkle  
like stars in the sky.

Grass was greener  
All the weeds were plucked  
and the smell of dewdrops filled the air.  
Spring has officially sprung.

With the lake’s warm waters and  
the beautiful late sunset. The clocks were  
now turned back. Golden hour lasted longer,  
the breeze at night felt fresher.

The cotton candy clouds smiled back at us;  
the sky was so blue. The chirping of crickets  
filled the air, this sound is so beautiful to fall  
asleep to. You can finally open your windows

again, and smell the fresh air.  
Morning light shines through the kitchen.  
You can see and hear the bumblebees buzz outside  
your window. You can see the bird's shadows on  
your kitchen floor as they fly by.

Look at the bark, all the different patterns  
with no specific order. Wandering through the  
woods is like going into a neverland, but this neverland  
is real. The trees stand 20 feet high, the blue sky  
tries to poke through them. Dead leaves  
crunch beneath your feet and you're surrounded only  
by sounds of nature.

It's like the trees are fishing for compliments.  
The way their leaves dance for everyone  
to see. Or the way they stood tall and surrounded  
the everything on the Earth. They were nature's  
best friend. The outside image was beginning  
to change, somewhat like glass.

#### ["Rise Like a Phoenix," Hayley Timmons](#)

I will rise like a phoenix  
Bursting through the flames  
I'll fight through the pain  
Until you all know my name

I'll rise like a phoenix  
From my path I won't stray  
I'll choose to move forward  
Through storms raging gray

I'll rise like a phoenix  
My feet will leave the ground  
I'll leave this world of mine  
Better than I found

I'll rise like a phoenix  
Can you hear my war cry?  
I won't ever stop trying  
Until the day that I die.

I'll rise like a phoenix  
One whose brave and wise  
Even If you don't believe

I still will rise.

“When I Write,” Hayley Timmons

When I write my mind is quiet  
The only words flow through my pen.  
Thoughts knock upon the door  
But I do not have to let them in

My mind can be so defiant  
The fear walks on my skin  
But when I write my mind is quiet  
The only words flow through my pen.

“Kite Runner,” Hayley Timmons

Life is like a kite  
Soaring high above the trees  
It might fly out of sight  
But it will never really be free

Its tail is bound with twine  
Its bones are wrapped in silk  
Weighing down its brittle spine  
Through others pain and guilt

But let a runner grab her wing  
And watch as she begins to fly  
She will forget about her string  
And again, she will touch the sky

For this kite knows no bounds  
Even though she is tethered  
With help she will rise from the ground  
And they will both be free together.

“Unfading Love,” Heather Oglesby

I never knew how much I would love you,  
Those first few months worrying,  
Worrying if something would happen,  
Could not wait to meet you,  
Meet you with love, happiness, and nerves,  
That sixth month got here,  
Here to tell us that you were coming,

Coming to meet your parents,  
Laying there in the hospital waiting,  
Waiting for the doctors to tell us what is going on,  
They rushed me into surgery,  
Surgery that we did not know the outcome,  
An outcome we did not expect,  
As I had you,  
I loved you from the start,  
As your daddy held you in his arms,  
Rushing you away,  
Away to save you,  
Then as you pass in your father's arms,  
He looks and tells you he loves you,  
We both do not know what happened,  
One thing we do know is,  
Is that we will love you forever and always!

“Footprints,” Heather Oglesby

As I held you for the first time,  
Seeing your beautiful face,  
Seeing how perfect you were,  
Your hands and feet so tiny,  
As your daddy held you,  
I could see the love he has for you,  
Also sorrow,  
Because this would be the only time,  
We got to spend it with you,  
Having to let you go,  
Not being able to bring you home,  
To never seeing you again,  
But only in our memories,  
You may have been small,  
But you left something big in our hearts,  
Your tiny footprints will forever be with us.

“Playful Triplets,” Heather Oglesby

As I sit in my chair,  
I see a great big ball of fur,  
Not just one or two, but three,  
Running around,  
Knocking things over,  
Having fun,  
The triplet kittens,  
As one jumps in the air,

The other slides across the floor,  
The third laying in the sun,  
Always happy and energetic,  
They snuggle between your legs at night,  
Keeping warm and building energy,  
Never knowing what's going to happen,  
So loving and soft,  
The triplet kittens are always there,  
Running around.

**“So We Worked,” Beatriz Rega**

With our hopes we left all we had known at our backs  
So our children could know chances we never had  
We used hands, not our words, in a language unknown  
And worked double the shifts before going home  
Decades passed as we learned the term “payment-in-lieu”  
A “vacation” nothing more than a word that we knew  
As our children slept safely we counted our blessings  
Knowing hard work pays off, sacrifices are worth making  
Then the Covid-19 Pandemic surfaced  
Our new country was in need of our essential service  
So we worked and we prayed until one day it came  
And our lives were the prices we paid for our way

**“Porcelain Doll,” Lauren Stuart-Doig**

She sits alone upon a shelf  
She's so special it can't be helped  
Lips made of rose porcelain eyes made of glass  
The face of “perfect” angel like lass  
So afraid of a rip or a crack or a tear  
that to take her down and love her would be unfair  
She knows being loved requires some risk  
The risk of getting broken beyond what can be fixed  
She'd rather be broken and know a true love  
Then be handled with unbreakable special kid gloves  
She wants to be hugged and loved right the way other less special less breakable ones might  
Yes being loved can be messy and tough but a doll being loved from a shelf's not enough  
So love me till I'm tattered, scuffed, dirty and worn  
Because being loved on a shelf is not what I was made for  
Take me down from the shelf  
my heart and arms are wide open  
But What do you do when the doll's the one not afraid to be broken?

### “Piano,” Micah Johnson

It looks like the keys are calling,  
Beggin' me to play a tune.  
I love the sound, can't read the notes,  
And the keys are white as the moon.  
The sound so smooth and strong  
Yet oh so calm and deep,  
With every note and every sound,  
Can lull me right to sleep.  
I'm not very good at much,  
But these songs I am given,  
As a gift, I'll ever clutch,  
Til' the day I reach Heaven.  
When I gave my life to him  
It seems my gift has grown.  
God gave this gift for me to reach.  
The lost and the alone.  
The notes I play, the songs I write,  
Give glory to God on high.  
He gave this gift to be a light,  
For He knows where my heart lies.

### “Writing My Heart,” Micah Johnson

If I could write a song  
To change someone's mind.  
If I could write a poem  
Or try to be kind.  
If I could pick out the music  
To all the songs I know  
If I could write my own music  
Who would I show?  
These words come from my heart,  
To lift people up  
Though it can tear apart,  
I don't know when it's enough.  
    If I could write the best song in the world  
    I don't want you to think that I'm just some little girl.  
    A song to change your heart and mind at the same time.  
    This song is mine.  
If I could play  
A song everyone loves.  
Play something beautiful,  
As peaceful as a dove.  
Or tell them, there is a God above.  
Who shows His love...

I don't want you to think I'm just some little girl.  
I'm writing my heart, so I can show the world.

“Shadows,” Chianti Nelson

Shadows, overtaking me,  
keeping me hostage,  
don't want to let me go.  
The fear, the pain,  
feeling like I'm going insane.  
Darkness, no longer seems the light, inviting it in,  
no longer putting up a fight.  
No longer care, no longer afraid,  
feeling calm, everything's numb.  
I close my eyes and let it take over me,  
as it claims my soul, and my heart grows hard and cold.  
Feeling like this is where I belong,  
how I should be, no more emotions, no one can ever hurt me.  
Built up a wall, won't ever let it fall.  
Nothing can touch me,  
no one can ever again hurt me, finally free,  
trapped inside my own mind,  
I see you reaching out for me but I continue to decline.  
I'm finally safe and secure, no more pain to endure.  
But will I ever let you back in,  
will the shadows continue to take over or will I let the light back in again.  
I don't know, I can't say, but the shadows continue to grow each day.  
I like how it makes me feel,  
no more getting taken for granted,  
no more hurt, no more lies, no more tears left to cry.  
You can't take my meekness for weakness,  
can no longer let me down,  
can't break my heart into,  
this darkness is the best thing I ever found.  
So I embrace it, continue to let it in my life,  
maybe some day someone will finally be able to bring back the light.  
But these shadows, overtaking me, keeping me hostage, continuing to grow,  
and until I'm able to fight them, I'll never let them go.

“My Mother,” Bevin Mulkey

My mother is like a Meadow of Dandelions and wildflowers.

Her beauty is wild and natural like the flowers, and the dandelions are all of her wishes that she  
has made for me and my siblings.

In the middle of this meadow is a beautiful weeping willow, filled with love, laughter, and memories.

Sometimes I walk through the meadow, beneath the weeping willow, and it picks me up as if I was a child and kisses and tickles me until I am filled with its love and laughter. It gently sits me down underneath its shade.....and I feel so protected.....and so safe, that I lay there for hours watching the trees tentacles dance in the wind and soak up the warm spring sun. I eventually have to leave this meadow, but I know it's a safe place I can count on to shield me and protect me when I need it.

It's beauty is unforgettable and it's love is endless.

### **“Heaven,” Ashlyn Oxford**

When you closed your eyes for a final time,  
A golden heart stopped beating but left a hole in mine.  
The hurt and pain never really goes away;  
Just makes me miss you every single day.  
There is something about walking through life without you here  
That helps me cherish the memories of you  
That I hold so dear.  
When you arrived at the gates of Heaven above;  
I just Jesus opened his arms and wrapped you in love.  
Even though I know without you here our lives must go on,  
It filled my heart when God called you home.  
For where you are now you'll never feel sadness and pain,  
But I'll long for the day that I see you again.  
Grandmama is now an Angel in my heart;  
Because she lives there, we're never apart.

### **“Pass Me By,” Chianti Nelson**

Maybe I should take a chance,  
I'll never know until I try,  
before this opportunity passes me by.  
Maybe you are the one,  
I finally have my true love,  
the one sent from above.  
Maybe I should toss away all my fear, and doubt,  
and have faith that this will work out.  
Maybe I have experienced enough heartache and pain,  
and now there will finally be sunshine and no rain.  
Maybe God sees that I'm ready,  
that I deserve to be truly happy.  
Maybe all the hurt from my past had to happen for me to get to this moment,  
and for me to see, this is exactly what I need.

Maybe I should take this chance,  
I'll never know until I truly try,  
don't want this opportunity to pass me by.

## Prose: Fiction

### "Idle Town," Susan Trejo

She woke up at exactly 7 AM, as usual. It was something her body naturally did for as long as she remembered. She got out of her white bed covers and walked over to her closet. She opened it, revealing a series of the same color school uniform: black.

After she changed, she brushed her teeth in her monochrome bathroom. It was just pure black and white. There were no colors in sight. Nothing was colorful in her life. She was just bland.

She walked downstairs, the walls painted white and the photos that hung on the side of the staircase all in black and white. There was no color in their house. It was just emotionless.

She greeted her parents, who were both busy multi-tasking eating and working. She got the usual no answer response she's been getting for the past 15 years of her life. She's 15.

She drank some orange juice and had some toast. Food was the only color in their house. You couldn't change the color of the food. It was just like that naturally. Food, in her opinion, was something magically. It was the only thing that was extraordinary in her life. The colors appeal her and the explosion of different tastes once you ate it just blows her mind. She wishes her life was like that. She wishes her life was an explosion.

She left her home, staring at all houses in her neighborhood. All the houses were built the same. They were all in the same color. Every house had the same front yard, back yard, decor, etc. They were all simple.

When she left her house, so did every other child in the neighborhood at the same time. It was creepy at first, but she got used to it. Everyone did. That was just a part of their routine.

Everyone walked to school. There was no need for transportation in their world. You could just walk everyone and stay in shape. There were no predators because no one has the mindset to do something bizarre like that.

No one.

The teachers stood outside, greeting and smiling at the children as they walked inside. All the students wore the same uniform. All the students had the same bookbag and each grade level carried the same necessary supplies. The teachers all wore the same hairstyles and wore the same smile on their faces. Nothing was out of the ordinary.

She sat in her same seat along with everyone else in her grade. They all sat with their hands together and feet on the floor. No one taught them proper manners. They were just like that naturally. It was almost like they were programmed.

The teacher arrived with a student in her hand. They looked upset, almost frustrated. Everyone's eyes widen at the sight of the boy. He didn't have the same haircut as all the other boys or wore his school uniform the way it should be. He wasn't normal.

"Class, greet a foreign exchange student from the 002 district," the teacher said cheerily. Her voice was so bubbly and happy that it sounded fake. "He will be with us permanently if all goes well."

"What is this place?" he asked out loud. The class all remained silent but their eyes all shouted the same emotion. He spoke without permission. "Every single one of you guys is dressed like y'all are about to go into a funeral. And, y'all all look the same. It's so creepy!"

"That is enough," spoke the teacher, almost gritting her teeth. Take a seat."

"Do y'all even have names?" He questioned, ignoring the command. When silence continued to ring around the classroom, he raised his eyebrows. "Geez, what they say about this place is right. You guys are just boring."

"Boring?" she asked, making the entire class turn to her with an emotionless expression. It was almost scary. The boy up front shuddered. "We are boring?"

"Do not speak without permission!" The teacher ordered, making the girl zip her mouth tight. She felt her face go red, which was something she's never experienced before. It was a strange, but pleasant feeling.

The boy then sat down, leaning in his seat instead of straight up like everyone else. He lazily threw his bookbag underneath his desk instead of putting it to the side of his seat. Not a single textbook or pencil was seen on his desk.

The teacher then spent the majority of class time trying to get the boy to follow the class rules. The class sat the same though. No one budged, no one yawned, no one wiggled. They were all just robots, sitting up tall and staring at the wall.

The end of the day came and everyone walked out in an orderly fashion to their houses. The boy, on the other hand, stood with the principal, staring in confusion at all kids leaving. The girl made eye contact when she arrived at her doorstep. He waved at her to only have his arm slammed down to his side by the principal, making him yelp in pain. She quickly unlocked her house and entered.

She walked upstairs to her room and closed her door. She sat on her desk and began to study. Her mind then started to sidetrack to the new student. She's never been distracted before in her life. She couldn't stop thinking about what the boy said.

She then reached over to her bookshelf and began reading everything about the different districts. Well, she tried at least. All she found was the names of the districts and the approximate population of each was. It was just the history of district 001, her district.

She needed to know more.

There was a library right behind her house. She always wanted to go in there, but it was strictly for adults on Sundays. No human being under the age of 21 was allowed to enter. It was an unspoken rule that everyone knew.

She sighed, something she's never done before. She's never grieved or felt disappointed. She's only felt one emotion: fine. She felt fine all the time. There was no need to feel anything else.

At 7 PM, she felt tired. She got into her pajamas and went to sleep. For the first time ever, she saw something while she slept. She had a dream.

She was in the library. There were colors everywhere. All the books had different covers and different pictures. There were people who were smiling and reading. She has seen people smile, yes, but this was a different type of smile. It was a real smile. It was a smile out of happiness.

People had different haircuts and wore different clothes with different styles and colors. Everyone was unique in their own way. They were like food. They had that explosion.

She ran outside, seeing even more people feeling emotions and being an explosion. There were people walking animals and talking to one another. There were angry people and happy people. There were sad people and confused people. There were bored people and funny people.

In that world, the people were themselves.

She saw the boy. She saw two versions of him. One in school clothes and one in spontaneous colored clothing with crazy color socks and shoes. They both lift up their hands as if they were making a deal with her. It was like the universe was asking her which life she wanted.

She ran over and reached for explosion boy. She touched his hand and then everything turned black. She floated in the abyss of her mind.

The girl woke up, breathing heavily. She looked over at her clock. It was 7:01. She woke up a minute late. She was a minute behind schedule.

She quickly dressed and brushed her teeth. She brushed her hair, feeling anxious. She's never felt anxious. It wasn't a very good emotion, but it felt nice to feel it.

She walked downstairs and greeted her parents frantically. They notice the strange behavior of their daughter.

"What is wrong with you? Are you sick?" the father asked. "Is it from that new student in your school. There is a chance he gave you something since he's from a different land."

"No, I'm fine," she answered, drinking her juice. "He's very strange, father."

"He's from a different land with a different culture. He is not used to our routines. Give it time." He then went back to work, taking a bite of his french toast.

The girl then stared at the toast she had in her hand. She then remembered the dream she had. A smile unconsciously spread on her face as she ate the food. The explosion was bigger.

She walked to school, noticing the boy standing up front with the principal. He had a bruise on her face. No one asked. No one could. She wanted to ask though. They made eye contact once again and he smiled. It wasn't a fake smile or a happy smile. It was a sad smile.

Everyone sat in their seats. Before the teacher walked into the room, the boy quickly ran into the room and over to the girl's desk.

"You had a dream, right?" he asked, making the girl stare at him confused. "You know, those little crazy events you have when you sleep?"

The girl nodded, scared that the teacher would come into the room any moment. Another emotion: fear.

"I saw you in my dream!" he exclaimed. "You reached for my hand. I saw no one from here in my dream except you."

"We don't dream here," she whispered, trying to keep her mouth down low. "That was my first time..."

"Meet me by that library behind your house," he whispered. The teacher entered the room, walking quickly to the boy. "I have something to-"

"Sit in your assigned seat," she ordered, her fake smile on her face. The girl could tell whether a smile was fake or not. She felt like she had a special power.

The school day went on and everyone went back home. She met eyes with the boy again and he waved again. He dodged the arm of the principal and beamed. She smiled and then entered her home.

She studied until night when everyone was asleep. A rock was thrown through her window and she quickly ran towards the window, looking down at who threw it.

"Come down!" he whispered. "I got a surprise!"

She walked downstairs quietly to only realize her parents are still awake, sitting at the table. They were in the same position as they were in the morning and every other hour of the day. She quickly walked upstairs and peeped over her window.

"My parents are down!" she whispered.

"Jump down! I'll catch you!"

"No way!" she laughed. She laughed. That was the first time she ever laughed.

"You won't know the surprise then!"

"Fine." The girl climbed over the window and counted to three. She jumped and fell into the boy's arms.

"That still hurt!" Hurt. She never felt pain before. She never fell down the stairs or stubbed her toe. You didn't experience pain in her district because it wasn't part of your routine.

The boy dragged the girl into the library. They carefully snuck inside. The lights were still on for some reason.

"Shouldn't it be closed?" She whispered. "It's past seven."

"Past seven?" he asked. "What does that mean?"

"At seven, we all sleep," the girl explained. "It's something we just all do."

He cocked an eyebrow. "Then, why aren't you sleeping? You don't look tired at all."

That's when she realized that she didn't feel the usual exhaustion she felt. Usually, she would feel this heavy wave of exhaustion and she would go to sleep almost immediately. Right now, she had as much, or even more, energy as she would have during the day.

"That's strange..."

"That's exactly why I called you over here. I want to test a theory of mine of this place." He pulled the girl over to a section way back in the library. It almost seemed endless of the library. This was her dream place.

"What's your theory?"

"Everyone in this place is like mind-controlled," he stated, making the girl quickly turned to him. "Think about it. Y'all do the exact same stuff every day at the same time and y'all have the same old routines and same old haircuts. Plus, that principal is something else."

"What do you mean?"

"See this bruise? Every time I did something wrong, he would slap me across the face until I got it right. I never wanted to fall into this little creepy satanic cult y'all got going on here so I never gave in and did things right."

"And?"

"Alright, so I live at the school with the teachers for the time being. Yesterday, I went through all the files of the students and I found out that most of these people are from the other districts."

The girl scoffed. "No way. We're all from the same district. How else are we all the same?"

"Mind control!" He exclaimed. "Everyone here except for the principal did something really bad in their district and was sent here as a punishment."

"And the children?"

"Most of these people had families so they also punished the children as well. The mind control part is like torture. They whip you into doing things perfectly and it haunts you so much that it gives you PTSD, which could suppress the horrid memories. Then, they use some memory-erasing machine to make sure you don't remember anything."

The girl stood there, pondering. "Would that explain why we are so afraid to do something that's not normal."

"Your brain doesn't remember why, but your body does. Everything you do is instinct. Your body is too scared to do anything other than what they have to do so you continuously do this for the rest of your life. You then become brain dead because you know nothing else except for this routine you've been doing for as long as you can remember."

The girl gaped, standing as still as possible. Everything made sense. It explained why there was no colors in the neighborhood and why everyone dressed the same and why everyone felt the same emotions all the time.

It was to distract them from everything else.

"What's your name?" she asked.

The boy grinned, "I'm Conan."

"Did you see what my name was? Did you find my file?" The girl frantically asked. She wanted to know who she was, who she truly was. She always knew that somewhere deep inside her was a huge gap missing.

"I couldn't find yours, strange enough. Either you had a completely different look and I couldn't recognize you or they have your file locked up."

"Let's find it." She grabbed his arm and pull him towards the exit. He pulled back.

"No way. If the two of us go in there, we'll get caught for sure. Only one of us has to go and since I couldn't find it the first time, you're going."

"Me?"

"Yes. I'll tell you where to go and hopefully, you can find it. If anything goes wrong, I'll be a decoy." The girl was about to protest when she realized this was the only way they could do this. She nodded and they both left the library.

She entered the school, running quietly through the hallways. She looked around for a "large, wooden door with a goblin as a knocker." When she found the door, she quickly opened it.

No one was inside.

She looked through the file cabinets. She searched through every piece of paper. She observed every photo. She stopped when she found her mother's photo.

Apparently, her mom and dad robbed a bank years ago when they were young adults. She continued to read the file when she came across her actual name.

**Daughter:** Gray Ashton.

"Gray Ashton." The words rolled so smoothly out of her mouth that she forgot where she was. The cabinet suddenly shut closed and the doors and windows locked. She wasn't supposed to talk. The room had so many alarms that even if you breathed too loud, it would automatically get into lockdown mode.

*"If you accidentally sound the alarm, go under his desk and punch the top. It's like a secret escape thing."*

She quickly slid underneath the table, hurting herself in the process. Her head slammed the top of the desk, making her yelp in pain. The floor underneath her disappeared and she fell down into a tunnel. It was like a slide. She grips the file in her hand tightly as she fell out onto the ground outside. She looked around and found Conan a few feet away.

"Conan!" she shouted. He turned to her and ran over. "I got my mom's files!"

"We came for your file though."

"Yeah, but now I know my name!" She beamed. "My mom's from your district! 002!"

Conan gasped. "Woah, for real? That must mean you're from there too!"

"What's it like?"

Before Conan could answer, the sirens grew louder and many footsteps were heard. They quickly began running in a random direction and didn't stop. There were noises of shots, gunshots. Both of them never heard gunshots, but they knew they weren't a good thing.

They ran through the cracks of houses and through bushes. They ran through the forest and jumped over the rivers. Where were they going? Gray didn't know.

But Conan did.

"Where are we running to?" Gray gasped. She wasn't used to this much exercise. No one would be.

"Home!" He shouted, pushing through some branches. "There's this weird border that separates all the districts. It's kind of like a bubble. Since we're from this district, I'm pretty sure we can go through the bubble easily."

"You mean the force field?" Gray asked. "They said that you need like authorization to get pass it. Like, a badge or a key or something."

They made it to the bubble. There, Gray could see all the bright buildings and vehicles in the city. It was huge. There were coffee shops, schools, banks, parks. People walked with their pets and children roamed the streets. It truly was home.

Conan jumped through easily. He gave her the thumbs-up and she ran straight towards the bubble. It bounced her back a couple of meters.

"Why isn't it letting me go through?!"

The sirens then got louder and louder until that was the only noise in Gray's ears. Bright lights beamed onto the girl, making her squint. She quickly got up and ran towards the field, hoping this time it'll work. She was pushed back, slamming onto a person.

"It won't work because you are officially a 001 district civilian," a raspy voice spoke. Conan shuddered. Gray turned around. It was the principal. It was the first time she's ever heard him speak. He was usually quiet and gave small smiles to the students. Right now, he was smirking at her.

"Isn't he supposed to be a citizen too?"

"We didn't have enough time to fill out the paperwork. Unfortunately, we can't go inside to get him, but now, we got you." The principal stretched his arms out to grab the girl but she dodged, walking as close as she can to force field.

"Run, Gray!"

"You've got nowhere to go. You can only stay here and live the same life over and over again until you die to old age. You are stuck here forever."

"And if I refuse?"

"You can't."

The security behind him pointed their weapons at Gray. Conan turned away, closing his eyes tightly. The girl put her arms in a defensive position. There was a bright flash of different color lights. Shots were fired and it felt like an explosion hitting her body.

When she said she wanted her life to be an explosion, this wasn't what she meant.

She woke up at exactly 7 AM, as usual. It was something her body naturally did for as long as she remembered. She got out of her white bed covers and walked over to her closet. She opened it, revealing a series of the same color school uniform: black.

After she changed, she brushed her teeth in her monochrome bathroom. It was just pure black and white. There were no colors in sight. Nothing was colorful in her life. She was just bland.

She walked downstairs, the walls painted white and the photos that hung on the side of the staircase all in black and white. There was no color in their house. It was just emotionless.

She greeted her parents, who were both busy multi-tasking eating and working. She got the usual no answer response she's been getting for the past 15 years of her life. She's 15.

She drank some orange juice and had some toast. Food was the only color in their house. You couldn't change the color of the food. It was just like that naturally. Food, in her opinion, was something strange. It was the only thing that was extraordinary in her life. The colors bothered her and the explosion of different tastes once you ate it just ruins her appetite. She wishes food would be black and white. She didn't like the craziness.

She left her home, staring at all houses in her neighborhood. All the houses were built the same. They were all in the same color. Every house had the same front yard, back yard, decor, etc. They were all simple.

When she left her house, so did every other child in the neighborhood at the same time. It was creepy at first, but she got used to it. Everyone did. That was just a part of their routine.

Everyone walked to school. There was no need for transportation in their world. You could just walk everyone and stay in shape. There were no predators because no one has the mindset to do something bizarre like that.

**No one.**

### **“Mysterious Girl, Who Wants a Normal Life,” Remiah Jones**

I sprinted out of the castle and somewhere into the village with a bag over my shoulder. It was a bag full of the items I could grab out of the princess's room, and was now the only thing I had.

“Stop her! We will not rest until we find her!” I heard the king say from his carriage. They started riding through the village looking everywhere they could for me, while I stuck to the alleyways. I wasn't very familiar with alleyways, but I did know people tried to avoid them, especially royals. Well, royals barely came to the village anyway, so I didn't think they would check here. Until I heard a guard scream, “She's over here!” as he pointed to me, blocking the way I came from. I heard horses and more footsteps approaching as I didn't hesitate to start running again. The alleyways weren't big enough for them to ride their horses, so they had to chase me on foot. I was always fast since childhood and could outrun most of the guards, so I wasn't worried. Not until my dress got stuck on some random branches, stopping me from moving. I start tugging on my dress, really hoping it will break free, and it wouldn't budge. They started approaching and I decided to accept my fate. I sighed and closed my eyes, ready to accept my punishment from the king. I waited with anticipation but that didn't come, because I was dragged into a building. The room was pitch black, and it struck me with fear. I had no idea where I was, or who even helped me out.

“Hello? Is anyone there? Thank you by the way!” I said as I started walking around, hands out in front of me looking for a light switch. No one answered me still, and it made me want to groan out in irritation. I was never truly ignored, so this would be something I had to get used to, not that I wouldn't mind it. I always wanted peace and quiet, and to not be bothered.

Overall, I just wanted privacy and freedom to do whatever. I didn't want to live by the king's laws either, I always found them absurd.

This is why I need to leave this village, and this kingdom. They'll be looking for me, and who knows how long they'll search for me. I wouldn't be at peace living in this kingdom, and I would have to get as far away as possible. I found my way to the light switch, which was on the wall right above the staircase. The light-filled the once empty room, showing all the antics on the shelf. I found a chair and decided to sit in it, hoping the mysterious person who saved my life was.

To my surprise, I was greeted by an old lady as she slowly walked down the stairs. She was a petite lady with long grey hair that stopped at her waist, She had clothes in her hand, but she just studied me for a second.

"Here, child. You will need these clothes if you want to leave the village," She said, raising a suspecting eyebrow. She radiated so much power and energy that it was slightly unnerving. She looked like she was a witch and that she lived for over 100 years. Also, I wasn't even close to being considered a child. Well, most people wouldn't consider me to be an adult either. I was nineteen, now living by myself, but I didn't know a whole lot about survival. The lady disrupted me from my thoughts as she sat the clothes on my lap.

"Well, sweetheart, you need some new clothes," She said, eyeing my clothes, and I couldn't agree more. Running in a dress was not that easy, and it slowed me down. I would have gotten caught if it was not for this lady dragging me into her home.

"Oh, well, I wanted to say thank you! For both the foods and clothes." I said shyly. I haven't talked to a lot of people, and I was usually alone.

"Tip one, to blend in, wear these clothes, and put on the scarf. Tip two, village people aren't friendly, so be careful. Also, there's something different about you, and you need to be careful. Don't let people be easily trusted," she said, grabbing things off the shelf.

"I know you don't want to stay here, here are some items, and you will know their use eventually, please stay safe, and don't use them all right away, " She said very seriously before she flashed me a small smile. She didn't even ask the things I took as she piled the antiques into my bag. I also gave her a small smile, then the lady turned around and poked her head out the window, surveilling the area.

"Anastasia, the cost is clear, please stay safe, and just know, I'm not too far away." She said with a wink. She started walking back up the stairs, but I stood there, stunned. How did she know who I am? I don't want to overthink this when I can escape freely. I quickly put on the clothes that she gave me, and put the scarf on, covering half my face. I slowly opened the door and crept around the corner, looking both ways before I made a run for it. I started running, not before I decided to look at the house I just came from one last time to see the women waving. That woman was honestly a mystery to me, but little did I know, this was just the beginning.

I ran through the village, avoiding its people for as long as I could, and I saw the exit to the kingdom in the distance. The once crowded paths of the village were now vacant with people going to their houses. The sun was starting to set. The sky was a beautiful pink with orange hues, that worked beautifully together like a piece of artwork. I never got to the sunset, and I know that it seems crazy, but it was true. I never had time to see the sunset or even the stars in the beautiful midnight black sky. I ran through the entrance of the kingdom, and I've never felt so free. I felt the light breeze on such a pleasant spring day. It was so peaceful, and I felt like I could stay out and watch the sky forever. I never had a childhood and missed out on so much in my life. I was stressed about other things, that some other people deemed as necessary. I never had time for

friends, so I was always lonely. Being by myself now, I didn't feel the need to have friends when I saw the nature around me. The light breeze going through my hair put me at ease as I kept running in the direction of the wind. I decided I would go where the wind would take me, and I hoped it was far away from here.

I had to admit, though, I missed my family, I missed my mom and dad, but not as much as I missed my mother. I stopped running for a while and ended up in a beautiful meadow. The sun hit the field, making it look like it was a meadow in heaven, the golden rays of the sun shining down on the meadow. I sat down and laid down, watching as the clouds slowly disappeared as night slowly crept up. A part of me felt homesick, but the rest of me didn't want to go back. I closed my eyes, taking in the peaceful surroundings. I hoped I didn't have to be on the run for the rest of my life and hoped to settle down. I wanted to find someone who I truly loved, married, and have children with, and hoped to forget who I use to be.

I looked back up at the sky and saw that it was now black, every last shade of pink and orange was now gone. Those colors consumed by darkness, and I couldn't help but wonder. Would darkness consume me? This world was far from normal, full of fairies, witches, wizards, demons, angels, dragons, pegasus, and many other entities. You could guess that I haven't met any of these things based on my lack of social interactions. I watched the moon rise, but I felt pain all over my body. I felt like I was changing.

I felt so different that it was unsettling. I grabbed my things and ran to a stream I heard in the distance. How was I able to listen to this stream? It was tranquil a few minutes ago, and now the flow of the water was loud and clear. I ran over two miles, finally reaching the stream, and I wasn't an ounce tired. I looked in the stream at my reflection, and I dropped my bag in shock. I would say that I'm beautiful, but the way I am looking now was an understatement. I looked ethereal as if I was a goddess.

My eyes were as bright as the moon, and my long silky black hair was a beautiful silver that did not make me look old. I looked powerful, but that wasn't all. What shocked me the most was the writing that covered parts of my arms and my visible collarbone. On the right side of my collarbone, I had a moon, while the left side of my collarbone had a sun. The writings on my arms were beautiful as if it was professionally done. I couldn't help but stare until I heard something that struck chills down my body.

"Anastasia," it said in a tone close to whispering. I didn't feel like it was a voice speaking out loud, but if it was somewhere in my mind. It didn't say anything else, almost as if it just wanted me to know that it was there, and not to talk. I couldn't help but feel anxious, because I didn't understand what was happening.

"All answers come in due time, dear." The voice said, now taking on a female tone that sounded like my mom. What if this was her talking to me? I looked up at the stars, looking at the brightest one. I feel like after we leave this world, we become stars, and I always felt like my mom was the brightest one. I couldn't help but feel tears panging at my eyes. I didn't want to cry now, because I haven't cried in years, and I didn't want this one thing to ruin my streak. The old lady said not to trust people easily, and regardless of my heart, I have to follow my mind first.

I decided to smile instead, as I watched the stars decorate the midnight sky. I lost track of time, all in this one moment, and I felt like I didn't want to leave either. I felt like I finally saw my mom again, but it also made me wonder. What am I? What is wrong with me? What caused me to be like this? I knew that I wasn't normal and that I never was, but why has my father been hiding this from me? Wait, will I stay like this? Fear sunk in, and I started panicking. I would never be considered normal if I walked around like this. People would think I'm a goddess and

ask me for things, and I would never live like how I wanted. I never asked to be born this way, and I never asked to be born at all.

Things like this never made me feel like I was normal, and I hated it. Oh, how I wanted to be considered normal. I felt like I was shining brighter, and pointed my hand at an old willow tree. I concentrated on it, just waiting to see if something would happen. Something did happen, the tree blew up, and I couldn't help but stare at it. What if my powers are based on emotion and feeling? I wanted to test my theory and decided to calm down. Letting the feelings that I felt a minute ago, subside.

I thought happy thoughts, like being happy, finding the love of my life, having a happy ending, and finally being normal. I was jealous of ordinary people, but I would have to get over it and live my life to the fullest. I now felt like I was radiating positive energy, and I eyed the blown-up tree, which was now a stump. I breathed in and sighed as I went over and placed my hand on the stump, feeling the positive energy that seemed to be coursing through my veins. I hope it works as I squeeze my eyes closed. I saw the light and felt the power leave my fingertips, bringing the tree back to life, but it turned into a large beautiful cherry blossom tree.

I knew that I would now have to leave earlier than I expected. I never lived outside of the kingdom's walls, but I knew there were rarely any more cherry blossoms in the world. The only reason I knew that was because if I wasn't doing anything else, I was learning. I learned that cherry blossom trees were scarce, and I never spotted one. They drew what it looked like in the book, and I knew immediately that's what I turned the tree into. It was so beautiful, and most words couldn't describe it. I knew that now, those trees had to be her favorite things, another reason why she should keep on living, and keep moving forward.

I sat, looking at the tree, longer than I should have because I heard something I didn't want to hear, it was the king and his men. It made me groan out because I found this irritable. They saw a random rare cherry blossom tree that was colossal show up right outside their kingdom, but why would they link this to me? I remembered that I didn't look normal at all, and that most likely if they saw me, they would have me lock in the dungeon, or hung. I would look like a threat, and I did not want to stick around to find out. What worried me was this time, they had horses, and could probably outrun me unless I could use these powers and do something. I didn't know what I was hoping for, but the thing that happened next was something I never expected.

"She's right here-" a guard said right before I disappeared. I didn't disappear, but I teleported and had no idea where I was, but I landed outside of another village. I had no idea how far this could be from Sephadonia, the kingdom I came from. It was night time, but I still saw merchants out and about, and I didn't realize that I was starving. I took out a ring from the princess's room and sat it on the counter of an open merchant. His mouth went wide, and his eyes looked at me and then on the ring. He eyed it suspiciously and pulled out a magnifying glass. To my surprise, his mouth dropped even further, and a small smile stretched across his once cold expression.

"I don't know how you got this, girl, but I'm not going to ask." He said as he handed me bags full of food. This took me a moment to realize how much everything is worth in the castle, and a greedy part of me wished I took more.

"Are you some type of thief, girl? Are you apart of the biggest group of them? Only thieves like that would be able to get into the castle." He eyed me wearily. All I did was nod my head, agreeing to his statement. I knew I was in a new kingdom with new rules, and I just hoped they could be something I could live by. I found a random small shed I could sleep in for the rest

of the night. Little did I know, the sun was rising once again, and it made me groan out. I haven't slept yet and lost all concept of time.

I honestly wanted to cry, because who knows how long it was since the last I slept. One thing about me was, I can't sleep at all when the sun was out, and it pained me that I could not. I felt so fatigued, but yet, I could not even sleep. I sat down and watched the sunrise, and it was so beautiful. It wasn't as lovely as the cherry blossom tree I somehow made, but it was indeed something.

I sat there for what seemed like hours until the sun fully rose into the now bright blue sky. I watched from a hill, the streets of the village now being lively with people roaming around.

I wanted to get a better feel of the town as I walk around. I had a sharp pain in my headache and figured it was a headache, my head was pounding, and it was almost unbearable. I wanted to see if I could find some medicine or some type of potion to calm it down. I was holding my head as I walked down one of the alleys, my face still covered. The pain kept getting worse, and I stopped so I could catch a break. All of a sudden, I was almost face first with the floor as I groan out in pain. The headache was gone somehow, which is weird because the pain would usually be worse.

"Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to do any of the sorts." I heard a male voice say. He sounded young, and when I looked up at him, he held out his hand, and I eyed it before I allowed him to pull me up. He wore a cloak as if he was hiding, and I decided this was the time to take in his features.

"I guess you now know who I am, huh." He said, almost cocky.

"No," I simply replied, and his face contorted in confusion.

"You don't know who I am?" He asked, and I just shook my head no. A warm smile crept across his face, and it had to be one of the prettiest smiles I have ever seen, a beautiful face too.

"You must be new to the kingdom?" He asked I could tell he was amused. I could tell he was fascinated by me, and I felt at ease with him, but it left me confused. He bent down to pick up my bag I dropped when we collided, and I let him. I eyes open wide with shock when I saw a pendant necklace with the two exact symbols I had on my collarbones, but that wasn't all. I saw his collarbones, and he had the same symbols I had too, but they were the opposite of mine. Where the sun was on my collarbone, his symbols were in the same place, but on the other collarbone, and vice versa. I felt like I could have almost fainted because I know for a fact that it wasn't normal.

"What are those symbols on your collarbones?" I decided to ask. He looked down at his collar and then looked back up at me.

"Oh, a wizard said it was something to represent powers, and my soul mate supposedly has them. " He said casually. I felt my breathing hitch as I eyed him. I didn't know what to say.

"I-" is all I managed to get out when I see the king of Sephadonia show up. I groaned way too loudly, and the guy looked at me, confused.

"My daughter is here. Anastasia, I'm here to take you home." I heard my dad call out. He somehow knew I was here, and I could already tell how. The merchant I gave my ring to, he sold me out to my father. I got so far, but now I might be going back if he finds me. I also wasn't too happy.

## “Leaving,” Sobenna Onwumelu

This world truly offers infinite possibilities as long as you're willing to work towards them. All the long nights and headaches finally paid off. The time I could've spent hanging out with my friends - all the laughs, positive experiences, and bad food at the mall. These were a couple thoughts racing through my head as I woke up that morning to an ear-jarring beeping. Repetitive, high pitched shrills. That same alarm clock - the old digital one that never displayed the line for the 0 correctly, and was always set to military time. The amount of times I thought it was six instead of ten, and jumped out of my bed in a panic, thinking I slept through the day. I couldn't help but chuckle as I turned it off. That annoying beeping wasn't so annoying anymore, as I began to look around the room. There was the minecraft poster my friend gave me for my birthday years back, the stress balls and pokemon cards I won at arcades, and the pile of books I poured hours into. There were also the two suitcases. The indicators that my time here was up. As I slipped out of my covers a feeling welled up inside of me. Deep inside me something was sad, but I was also happy. I was unsure if I could've done things better, and this was a bittersweet moment. My deep red sheets, the familiar dents and indentations in the wall. My eyes started watering up before I knew it, but I wasn't crying. I was happy. This was what I had worked for. I put on a jacket, as I went to sleep clothed out of nervousness, and held a suitcase in each hand, opening my room's door for the last time as a resident of my house. Or that's what a stronger man would've done. Something didn't feel right about leaving things like this.

“Ready?” Mom yelled. “We don't have all day!”

“Coming!” I responded.

So many feelings assaulted me, looking around at the artifacts, posters, toys. I couldn't leave it like this. I loved everything I had, but more than that, I was anxious. Scared. Scared of what the future would bring, and scared of leaving my daily routine behind. I approached my bedside nightstand and unplugged the old, little alarm clock - or tried to. The plug didn't budge. I tugged again, and the alarm's plug came loose with a satisfying *thnk*. I wrapped the cord around the alarm, and stuffed it into my pocket, feeling a lot more relieved. Just then, my father entered the room greeting me with a wide smile, and a noogie. “Ready for your debut day, champ?”

“College isn't going to learn itself, right” I responded sarcastically.”

Hearing us talk, my mom's patience was running short. “Son, if you don't get on do-”

“Coming. For real this time.”

There were so many negative feelings associated with that clock: waking up early for school, staring at those times I was on punishment as a kid, but somehow that made me feel better. Like I was carrying a piece of my childhood with me. Over all, I was stepping into the world as an adult that day. Or college, anyway.

## “Nightmare,” Amirikah Johnson

It was a Friday evening, and I was walking home from the movie theater, and I kept getting this feeling I was being watched. I kept looking back, but nothing was there, so I continue walking. After 5 minutes of walking, the feeling never went away, and I decided to take the shortcut through the schoolyard. Once I got home, my mind was swirling with so many thoughts, and I decided to just forget about it. I changed into my pajamas and drifted off into a deep slumber. I was at home on a Saturday afternoon watching the television when the doorbell rang. I answered it thinking it is the pizza man with the pizza I ordered 20 minutes ago. As I open the door, I see a man in a black hoodie and a mask. Before I could react, he slammed me into a wall

and covered my mouth with a rag with a mysterious substance. I try to hold my breath for as long as I could, but my lungs were starting to burn. So, I had no choice but to take in a deep breath to stop the burning and began to fall into an abyss of darkness as I inhaled the fumes.

As I regain consciousness, I realize I was tied up to a chair by my wrists and ankles.

"Help! Help! Someone, please help me!" I scream until my lungs burned

"Shut up! No one can hear you, and you're only giving me a headache!" shouted an unknown man.

"Who are you, and what do you want from me?" I asked, desperate and confused.

"You will know all in good time, but until then let's have a little fun." he smirks as he brings out a cart with different sharp tools on it.

"What is that?" I whimpered scared for what he had planned for me

"They're what I'm going to use to torture you," he whispers, coming closer to my defenseless figure. He takes the dagger and stabs me in the stomach I scream in pain, and he laughs. I wake up screaming and panting like I just ran a marathon. I roll over and see if it is three in the morning but won't be able to go back to sleep. So, I get up and go take a shower, after my shower I decided that to get ready for the day. I then go downstairs and see my grandmother sleep on the couch with her neck in an unusual position. "Grandma wake up you're going to hurt your neck, go lay down in the bed," I said in a soft voice.

"Okay, honey, I will, but help me up," she says, not moving a muscle.

"Also, you need to go visit your mama, she says sternly, rolling over and putting her arms up. Giggling a little, I pulled her up and help her to her bed. As I leave her room, she yells to make sure I go to see your mom.

"Yes, ma'am!" I yelled back. I do not understand why she wants me to go see my mom so bad. It is not like she wanted anything to do with me. Still, I know that she's going to call and confirm that I went, so I decided that I will go later in the morning to visit my mom at the hospital. I sit on the couch and watch TV and drift off to sleep.

A couple of hours later I wake up to the sound of my alarm on my phone. It is eight o'clock, so I decide to make breakfast and clean the kitchen. After I was finished, I decided that I will head to the hospital since it's an hour's drive from my house. After the long drive, I get to the hospital and check-in. I head up to my mom's room and knock on the door. "Hello," I say awkwardly, opening the door, not knowing how to approach her.

"Hi," she says, she grunts blankly and returns her attention back to the television. Awkward silence settles over us. Minutes later, she turns around slowly in her seat and says to me in a low tone, "You need to leave and don't come back; they'll be coming for you, and you will only bring danger to those you love." Before I could respond she pushes the button on the wall that contacts the nurse.

The nurse comes into the room and asks, "what's the problem, miss?"

"This girl needs to leave, she is stressing me out," my human incubator says. Before I could even interject, the nurse turns to me and says in a harsh tongue, "Would you please leave you're stressing out my patient!" I turn around slowly and without another word and leave the hospital.

As I get into my car and drive off, I cannot help but wonder what she was saying, "How could I bring danger to those I love, and who is coming for me?" Then suddenly last night dreams come to mind. I was snapped out of my daydreaming by the honk of a car horn, and I look to see that I had stopped in the middle of the road. Stressed and overwhelmed I put the car in reverse and decide to go to my secret place. Soon I arrived at my favorite spot in the woods it

was beautiful, it was deep in the woods, there was a small pond, ravishing red lilies, and a magnificent cherry blossom tree. The roots of the trees so big that I could sit on it like a bench, as if it were made just for me. I could even hear the winds and it was so beautiful and relaxing that I rested my head on the tree trunk and drifted off into a deep slumber. I was walking down the hall and it was a beautiful field with so many colors you can practically smell the happiness. Then, I came to a turn and it became gloomier till it was dark almost frightening, and then I began to fall and land on the cold ground. It looked as if I was at my secret meadow, but it wasn't. This place was frightening and not peaceful. I continue to walk down the creepy passageway, and as I get closer to the tree it felt as if the path was getting longer. And I could hear the not so peaceful whistling of the wind.

As I got closer to the tree I saw a group of people standing around it. One of the people surrounding it looked at me with the most captivating eye, one was green and the other was red. He turned around and started chanting with the others soon following. I tried to get closer, but it felt as if my feet were glued to the ground.

"Hello, can you guys see me? I screamed, "Can you guys hear me?" I screamed out hoping they would turn their attention to me. They turned around and faced me, but soon went back to chanting. I listen closely, trying to hear what they're saying it sounds as if though they were speaking another language, but I cannot decipher which one. Just then the trees catch fire and I stared at the tree with wide eyes, and my mouth gaping.

"Please, help me!" I whimper. Begging them, desperate. Just then the fire goes out, but the trees are not ash as I suspected. They are covered in carvings and symbols, and the next thing I know, I'm falling into another darkness, scared, and wondering what is waits for me next.

### "God Wins," Dylan Bates

"3..2..1.. HAPPY NEW YEAR!" everyone yelled at the drop of the ball.

"I can't believe it's actually 2020! This will be my year for sure!" yelled Dylan as he watched the fireworks go off during the New Year's party. "Man, oh man, I'm going to change everything about me, I'm going to pray more, read the Bible more, and-" Dylan paused, as he feels a presence he has never felt before,

"That won't happen as long as I am here." whispered a mysterious man into Dylan's ear, Dylan looks over his shoulder to see a man standing over him.

"I'm six-one, and he is towering over me like I am a child." Dylan thought to himself,

"Oh yes, I know I am tall but it's not in my genetics," the man said.

"Did you just read my-"

"Mind yes, yes, I did. I find it very comical that you seem to not know who I am" the man started to pace around the room. "We were the best of friends, I mean, I have been there with you every step of the way, yet you never acknowledged me, never even took the time to say hey, never once spoke to me, then this Jesus came into your life, now we don't even look at each other. Now, that changes, you're all mine this year, oh yes." the man begins to seep into Dylan's skin with a sinister laugh. Dylan collapses to the floor.

"Dylan are you okay?" asked a girl across the room.

"I'm not sure, I feel...different, I want to go home now," Dylan responded.

Dylan gets in his car and starts to drive home from the party when he hears somebody talking in the backseat of his car, he looked in the mirror but, nobody was there.

"I see you're looking for me aren't you, remember where I am now." the voice said.

“Look I don’t know what you are or who you are, but you better leave me alone!” Dylan yelled in response. “I am tired of you playing mind games with me, it’s a New Year, let me live my life in peace.”

“Oh, there will be no peace this year, try to remember what happened last year friend, remember all the pain and suffering you dealt with, all the things you endured, you’ll never recover with me around.” the voice replied. Dylan began to have flashbacks play through his thoughts; bad memories began to fill his mind as he slowly drifted into the oncoming lane, cars swerving to get around him, then he crashed into a barricade, snapping him out of his trance. Police flooded the area and ambulances came to his aid, nobody was hurt, Dylan was surprisingly in perfect condition, and unphased.

“Sir, what were you doing driving in the wrong lane like that! You could have killed yourself or somebody else!” an officer yelled.

“What part of town am I in?” Dylan asked

“You’re in Lithia Springs but, we are about to take you to Douglasville and put you in jail for the night, how much have you had to drink!” the officer replied

“I don’t drink officer, I was put into some kind of trans-state of mind, I couldn’t control myself, please get me, home officer,” Dylan begged and pleaded with the officer for minutes. After about 10 minutes of sobriety tests, they deemed Dylan to be sober and started to drive him home.

Dylan arrives home about 30 minutes later, his grandma ran out of the house to greet him and make sure he was okay.

“Oh my gosh Dylan, I am so glad you are okay, please don’t ever scare me like that again!” yelled his grandmother.

“We found him on the other side of the road crashed into a barricade, however, he isn’t drunk, in fact, he is the soberest person we have ever tested.” the officer stated.

“I’m going to bed,” Dylan said. Dylan walks past his grandmother and into the house, straight to his room where he collapses in his bed and falls asleep. He opens his eyes and sees himself in a place he’s never been in, he looks around for any sign of something familiar but, nothing was there, the place was empty and white.

“Am I dead? No, I can’t be dead, this must be a dream.”

“Welcome to my world Dylan” the mysterious man from before teleports in through a cloud of smoke, “I hope you like it here, I just finished cleaning up for you, now allow me to formally introduce myself.” Screens start to turn on in the room, almost like a theater. Words of despair start appearing on the screens; depression, anxiety, paranoia, suicidal thoughts, and sadness.

“I am all of these things, I am the bane of all people, I am what they fear, and I know what they fear, they are all feeble-minded and lack true faith, so I take them with ease. Dylan, I have been working to break you down for so long, I have been by your side waiting for the day you would let me in, and finally, you let me in, you were my strongest opponent yet, but even the leaders backslide for a beautiful girl with amazing features.” The screens start playing back a video of Dylan taking a girl out on dates, spending money, and doing everything for her love, then it starts replaying her leaving him.

“Where...I don’t understand...how.” Dylan is in shock at the knowledge the man possesses, it was like the man knew everything about Dylan. Dylan starts to hide his face, but the screen continued to follow him, no matter where he looked it continued to follow him.

“WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME!” Dylan screamed, “I DON’T WANT TO LOOK AT THIS ANYMORE! SHE NEVER LOVED ME I GET IT!”

“Yet, you continued to try to impress her, you were obsessed with her, she only acted obsessed with you, but I have another video I want to show you.” the man began to change the screen’s video. Dylan is shown teasing a kid about an incident that happened. Dylan starts to get angry

“You listen to me, I don’t know who you are, or what you want from me, but you’ve gone too far, I don’t know where you got all this stuff, but you do not want these problems from me.”

"Oh, what are you going to do? Hit me? YOU'RE IN MY WORLD KID! WELCOME TO TARTARUS! I AM YOUR DEPRESSION!" Suddenly the man charges at Dylan and before hitting him, he phases through and blows into smoke, Dylan fully wakes up, Dylan is sweating and sees that his heart rate is abnormally high, he forgets it and grabs his phone and starts to call his pastor for help.

“Pastor Steve here!” the pastor answered

“Pastor Steve! I need your help! I think I have been taken over by a demon, it is starting to control my life, and showing me things of my past!” Dylan exclaimed

“I’ll be over in 10 minutes and we can talk about then.” Pastor Steve ended with. Pastor Steve arrives at Dylan’s house and begins asking him questions about his faith and what some of his fears are.

“How is your daily Bible time?” asked the pastor

“Well, since the New Year began, I haven’t been able to open my Bible or any book come to think of it, this man has stopped me since I got here.” Dylan replied, “I have tried, I even made it my goal to fully rededicate my life to Christ but that is when this all started.”

“What exactly happened?” asked the Pastor, Dylan went on to recap what happened, the pastor was in shock, but had an idea of what happened.

"Depressions and anxiety are normal in people's lives nowadays, however, this is something far beyond a simple broken heart or illness. I know that demons exist, and I believe that Satan is targeting you with one of his strongest ones, Dylan you need to get back on your faith and keep it steady and strong. Satan wants the weak but doesn't think he doesn't attack the strong, if he can take down the leaders then he feels powerful and will start his full attack. Dylan, you must fight back and fight back now." the pastor stated.

"Well, what do you suggest I do about this, clearly my Bible knowledge is well above the average male, I know how to use scripture, and I definitely put" God before any and everything," Dylan responded.

“There must be something that you have yet to let go of, anything and everything must be let go of for God to take full control, is there something still bothering you from your past?” the pastor asked.

“Yes, two things.”

"What are those two things, Dylan?" Dylan begins to elaborate on his past doings and obsessions. Drug abuse in the family, chasing the wrong crowd, fights, bullying, many things came up, but it slowly dimmed down to the two things Dylan had mentioned earlier.

“This girl, I loved her so much, I took her out, I did everything for her, she left me to get back with her ex-boyfriend, it hurts me deeply, and I once messed with a kid that I had no business messing with, I embarrassed him, and he ended up fighting me, nothing actually

happened at the end of this one but it still was embarrassing for me," said Dylan as he started to hide his face.

"Dylan, you've let the devil take you over, you've let him take control, however, it's not too late to save you. Let us pray." the pastor and Dylan begin to pray; Dylan is once again taken into the world from before and is facing the demon, this time Dylan was not alone, another man stood before Dylan facing the demon.

"So, you think that you can come in here and rule over everyone again?! This is my realm, this is my body for the taking now, he doesn't love you anymore, just think about what he has done to dishonor your name and glory, he's mine now!" the demon screamed at the new man. 7ft maybe 7ft and a half, this new man was huge, he made the demon look puny and weak, maybe the demon had lost some power.

"This young soul has done many bad deeds, but I look in the good of the hearts, and his heart is pure and white as snow, for he does not ask for grievous things, he asks for forgiveness and I forgive all who ask and look upon the cross, those who believe will live for an eternity, those who do not believe shall be cast into the lake of fire for I never knew them." said the new man, "Dylan believes and shows his heart on his sleeve, all have sinned all fallen short of the glory of my father, but he believes and trusts in me, and with that, I shall take you out and cast you away to a punishment for eternity, you shall be banned from ever touching one of my sheep evermore." the demon begins to charge at this new man, the demon starts to fight with Him, and a fight breaks out, however, it was lopsided, this man completely took out the demon in one fellow swoop.

"Thou shall not try the one true God, begone demon, depart from me for I never knew you!" the demon began to fade away in a dark scream, the man proclaimed as God walked towards Dylan, "Dylan, thou must show great faith with works because faith without works is a dead faith, your faith was dead Dylan but, your trust in me never left, I let this demon in to test you and see what you would do, I wanted to see if you would turn away from me, you did not forsake me nor deny me but, you stood steadfast in your faith, and for that, your blessings shall be in a multitude, you are a great servant Dylan." the room started to fade, Dylan opened his eyes.

"Did you win?" the pastor asked.

"No, God did," Dylan replied.

THE END

### ["Biohazard," Arianna Dominello](#)

I've never held a gun before. The weight of it in my hand scared and excited me at the same time. I never imagined myself in a situation where I would even need one. But in today's world it's almost necessary to protect yourself in any way you can. Our world has been deteriorating every day since the virus was released. The virus was created unintentionally by Marcus P. Stanley, biochemical scientist. He was trying to create a permanent cure for Leukemia for his wife but as you can guess it backfired and instead of creating a cure he created something much more dangerous. The virus did work for a couple of months, but soon he noticed changes in his wife. It started with her changes in body temperature, chilly and shivering one day and sweating the next. Next the hallucinations and irrational anger then the blisters and rotting skin and finally the craving for raw flesh.

Now how do I know all of this, because professor Stanley and his wife are my parents. That's right my name is Dana Stanley. I had to sit and watch my mother slowly die, then get better just for her to get ten times worse and die with a knife in her skull. My father shot himself three days later in our backyard. I hate him for literally leaving me alone in this wasteland of a state, Cheshire, Montana. This is where we had to evacuate to shortly after the "incident".

Before the virus I'm sure this was a cute little town filled with good honest people who never had a bad word to say about anyone, needless to say that changed once the good people started turning into Rotters and just straight up eating anyone with a beating heart. As I walked down Old Berry road I noticed this pale yellow house with a purple roof; purple used to be my favorite color, so I figured this was a good sign to check it out for any supplies. The back gate wasn't locked and neither was the sliding glass door I also took that as a sign that no one had claimed it for their shelter. I stood in what looked like an empty living room with my switchblade tight in my fist, ready to strike just incase a rotter popped out. So far I didn't smell any deathly odor usually in a house if you go in and smell death it means a rotter isn't too far behind. I started to look in the cabinets and drawers for anything edible, I honestly didn't care what it was as long as it could fill me up. I hadn't eaten in a few days due to my rations running low. I remember being a picky eater as a kid; no pickles on my burgers, less sauce in my spaghetti but now I eat just about anything I can get my hands on. Money and jewels used to be the most valuable thing in the world now it's food. As I began to give up on my kitchen search I noticed a pantry closet next to the back door, again being cautious I slowly opened the door and I swear I heard the Hallelujah chorus. The shelves were lined up to the brim with cans and cans of food; corn, yams green beans, and even peaches I quickly filled my bag and proceeded to walk down the hall to the other rooms to see what else this treasure chest of a home offered me.

## Prose: Nonfiction

### "Hard Work Pays Off," Chandler Johnson

There was a boy that was good at everything and his name was Chase. He had no problem excelling at everything he did. Chase was an A and B student and was an All-state player for basketball, football, and track at his high school. Chase was just naturally good at everything during his high school career. He never even practiced anything, but when it was time to perform he was outstanding at everything he did. However, his best friend Tyler was not as good at everything like Chase, but he was actually a hard worker. Tyler was an all-county player for basketball, football, and track and was straight A student.

Tyler worked hard everyday like it was his last day on Earth and gave 100 percent every time he stepped on the court, field, track and classroom. Chase on the other hand would just go to practice and class, give it 50 percent every time and still perform better than others. Tyler and Chase's basketball coach Mr. Brown loved Chase's play in sports and loved his grades in the classroom, but disliked his efforts towards everything he did. Mr Brown loved Tyler's play in sports and his grades as well as his efforts towards everything he did.

Tyler and Chase's senior year was coming to an end. Chase was getting offered scholarships from colleges around the entire United States. Tyler was getting offered scholarships as well just not as many as Chase. When it came down to choosing which school they wanted to attend, the two of them both chose University of Georgia. In the first semester

Tyler did well with his grades and football, but Chase did not do well in either the classroom or the football field. He did not do well because he still never practiced.

Chase decided he was going to do better in the second semester, but he still did very poorly and was put on academic suspension and benched for the team. Chase called his old coach and asked why he's not excelling like he used to in high school and why is Tyler doing better than him. Mr. Brown responded by saying "You have always wanted the easy way out not by not doing work, but getting good results". Chase responded by saying, "when I get back I promise I'm going to do my work and work hard to get back how I used to be." Coach Brown finished the conversation with saying, "it's too late to start working hard now, because you're lazy and want everything handed to you and Tyler is now better than you."

### **“Hurry It Up Already!” Kobe Fowler**

Procrastination is both a bad habit and a hard one to break. It is excruciatingly difficult to deal with, especially when it comes to completing the countless assignments given to you while doing so in a timely manner. I have been in too many close calls to count when it comes to submitting assignments before its due date resulting in possible issues that could affect my grades and my future. There are moments where instead of attempting my assignment during afternoon hours, I somehow decide it's best to start work at three in the morning on the assignment's due date. I even manage to hold off on doing assignments with exceptionally long due dates, such as my, 3-month long, science fair projects. My lust for entertainment in a world where I have to stay 8 hours in a place that I'm not interested in, has caused me to avoid doing what is much more important. The cause of this was the complete lack of passion for school during my middle school years.

Up until I made it to the 6th grade, I had a passion for school; However, It quickly diminished with each passing day as a sixth-grader. This is due to the work becoming exponentially bigger and more rigorous than in the grade prior. My goal was to get all "A" honor roll for the year; However, rather than battling the work given to me I had to battle with myself. My craving to have a break from working every time I get home led me to become increasingly lazy as the days passed by; As a result, my grades began to suffer as I continued to forget or set aside an assignment. With my goal in mind, I refused to see anything lower than an A on my report card, so using what little passion, energy, and motivation I had left I strive, and succeeded in getting my grades up throughout 6th grade. This left me with little to nothing to keep me going, causing me to be lazier than before.

Things have yet to get better as my procrastination is now worse than ever before. As the years have passed, so has the workload, rigor, and expectations of school require. Each arduous task after another has made me less inclined to do them; As a result, I have reached the point where I wake up after midnight the day the assignment is due and I wonder if I should start it later. It has become ever more difficult to even procrastinate as I sometimes lose the will to working on the assignment. Many times I have ever strived to achieve an early working habit, but the thought of sitting at a desk for hours exerting my mind until a thought can be produced with little to no entertainment keeps me from doing so.

### **“An Autobiography with a Slight Twist,” Hector Sanchez**

#### **Chapter 1**

## The Start of a Long Journey

I was born at a very young age in the city of Houston, Texas. The details are still as clear as a night in the woods far from civilization (I remember it like it was 16 years ago). Apparently, I was born in the evening at around 7 p.m. I was given the name Hector after another Hector, who my parents thought had a nice name, so they decided to give it to me. I quite enjoy the name that I was given because it's not too long or short. I don't know why a large number of people complain about their names; I don't understand why you wouldn't like something that you've had from the very start of your life. Not to mention, your name is an essential part of who you are, at least that's what I think. Even if there are a hundred other people with the same name as you, the name you were given should be special. Oh, my bad. I'm starting to get off topic where was I again? Eh, I lost my train of thought. Anyways, the day I was born on was relatively normal for everyone else in the world. Nothing too interesting was happening except Hey Ya! by OutKast was the number one song on the Billboard Hot 100 (I thought that was kind of neat).

## Chapter 2

### 16, Almost 16 and a Half, Years Later

Right now, as we speak, I'm typing words on this computer. I think that clears up this chapter pertaining to me now.

(I'm kidding by the way.) I think I've changed a little bit since the day I was born. I've definitely grown a few inches in height, but more specifically, it doesn't feel like I've changed much since I've started high school. I think my sense of humor has slightly shifted from what it was in middle school, and I've definitely learned how to be more mature in the right situation. Describing my personality is difficult without consulting others because one's own ego will fog the reality of themselves. With that being said, I'd like to think of myself as observant and calm. I'm also the best person alive right now (that's the ego speaking not me!).

I'm really interested in a lot of things because I always have a lot of free time on my hands. These things include gardening, skating, programming, photoshop, drawing, gaming, and playing the guitar/learning music theory. Eventually, I think I'll just focus on maybe 3-5 of these hobbies in the future, but a few of these interests go together with each other, so I might just focus on the general concept that each one entitles. I find a lot of support through these hobbies because they challenge me, while also providing me with some skills that I can use in potential jobs.

## Chapter 3

### "Preferred Before All Others of The Same Kind"

I've been through a reasonable amount of experiences in my short life here on this planet to develop a preference for certain things. Among these preferences is a favoritism for the color cyan. I always liked blue and green as a little kid, but when I found out blue-green was a real color it took precedence over everything else.

Another item on this list, would be chicken wings. Who would've thought that chicken wings could be so delicious cause I definitely didn't? When I first discovered wings, I kid you not, a confetti canon and fireworks went off in the background. Out of all the possible sauces for

wings, my top two are always buffalo and lemon pepper with half of my order usually consisting of buffalo and the other half being lemon pepper.

A quick rundown of some other things I like are Winter, chocolate chip cookies, hoodies, slightly rainy days, and uh sleeping in a bed with warm blankets and a nice comforter. These are most of the things that are “preferred before all others of the same kind”, or in other words, my favorite things.

## Chapter 4 An Outside Perspective

January 29, 2020 approximately 11:49 in the morning. An interview with [Redacted]\* is being conducted to describe the subject Hector Sanchez.

Hector: What’s up [Redacted]? If you wouldn’t mind, I need a quick interview from you basically describing me is that cool?

[Redacted]: Um sure.

Hector: Yeah sooo basically how would you describe me? I could ask you some questions to narrow this down, but I want to keep this open for you to answer as you feel.

[Redacted]: Well, an obvious one is that your smart, but you probably already knew that. Otherwise, I’d say you’re somewhat open minded.

Hector: Open minded!? I wasn’t expecting that one. That’s good. Anything else?

[Redacted]: Um, you can act completely different from one second to another.

Hector: You mean I can be sporadic?

[Redacted]: Yeah, sure.

Hector: Alright, that’s pretty good. Appreciate the help, I’ll talk to you later

End of transcript

\*The name of the interviewee has been removed to preserve anonymity. Thank you for understanding.

## Chapter 5 Flying Cars and Hyperspace

The future is something that I look forward to but fear at the same time. Not in the sense that I’m scared of what will happen, but the future depends entirely on the decisions that I make right now. I’ve definitely made plans on how I can achieve the goals that I’ve set, but for all I know, which isn’t very much, an undetected meteor could just shred straight through the Earth like a bullet.

I plan on getting two degrees when I go to college: one degree in aerospace engineering and the other in computer science. (If you notice, these two subjects are key in making the future what most envision it to be.) Oh, curiously enough, I haven’t made a decision on what colleges I will try to attend, but that’ll hopefully clear up by the end of my junior year in high school. Once, I start “earning that bread”, as the youngins say, I want to move out of state, preferably, somewhere in the North-West of the United States, like Washington.

Besides that, my plans don’t go any further. I might even go completely off script and try to climb the corporate ladder of McDonald’s, who really knows? Oh wait, I do want to visit

France and Japan before I croak though. Hopefully, this short collection of chapters gives you, the reader, some insight on who I am. If not, I will add this failure to a list of things that I never achieved (not that I keep track of my failures or anything like that).

### “Building Cultural Competency,” Vasthi Saintil

The key to living in our diverse world is to build cultured competence. We see the world through the prism of culture. Cultural competence is the willingness ability to effectively interact with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. We need to understand how we interact with others. First impressions are often snap judgements for us and others. We should not judge a book by its cover. Everyone has a life story that may not be what you initially think it is. For example, many people place the assumption that most Latinos/Latinas who are living in the United States do not know Spanish, which is not true at all. As human beings, we often look at an individual's appearance and become biased as we perceive people. This is called a snap judgement. Snap judgements are predictions about how we believe others will think and act. Another part of cultural competency is religion. It is important that we respect all religions. Many religions have specific clothing that they wear. For example, many Muslims wear hijabs. It is not a “typical” head covering, but it is a part of their religion. We have to be very cognizant of the values, our attitudes, and what we bring to the table. We often tend to address and perceive situations through culture and stereotypes. Stereotyping can lower our expectations of people. We all have predetermined notions of people. They can be positive or negative. When diversity is talked about, many factors need to be included. Some factors are race and ethnicity, age, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, regional variables, socioeconomic status, and the presence of a disability. In every culture there are internal variations based on a variety of factors. It is important to ask yourself “What are my values,” and “What are my biases?” At least address these two factors. Culture has been compared to an iceberg. At the tip of the iceberg are visible cultural characteristics, such as language, dress, music, cooking, and the arts. These are aspects that we may be attending to when we make snap judgements. Overall, it is important that we do not judge others but get to know every person for who they are.

### “A Mission to Mars,” Michael Conley

The 1969 Apollo moon landing shook the very foundation of life in the United States and was an early steppingstone into space exploration; however, just two weeks after the moon launch, NASA was prepared to send a dozen men to Mars. Mars is the fourth planet from the sun and has similar features like Earth. These similarities have made Mars an area of interest by NASA since the early 1960s. Though in recent times there has been an overall increase in the amount of people wanting to go to Mars, including Elon Musk the CEO of SpaceX who wants to send a manned mission to Mars. The idea of a manned mission to Mars will create new economic support for states within the United States. As well it will cause innovations and creation of new technologies that can be prosperous to the people in the United States. From these possible advantages of a manned mission to Mars, it can cause a new generation of people to be inspired. The United States should send a manned mission to Mars as it will benefit the U.S. economy, create advancements in new technologies, and inspire national pride for the people in the United States.

There are many economic benefits for sending a manned mission to Mars for the United States. NASA contributes to a large part of the U.S. economy, even though it only gets around 1% of the governmental budget, it still supports over 10 different space agencies around the country. These space agencies also allow the creation jobs and in the Moon to Mars program, or M2M, it has produced over 69,000 jobs with a total economic output of over 14 billion dollars. Though the money needed to get from Earth to Mars will be a substantial amount for the United States as shown in the book “The Future of Humanity” by Michio Kaku where he states, “Calculations of the price of a Mars mission usually range between \$400 to \$500 billion” (Kaku 64). This would be an exuberant amount of money for the United States to put into a manned mission to Mars, however the cost could be lowered as Space X owner Elon Musk states that he could produce a rocket system that would reduce the price to only 10 billion. The prospect of Mars not only interested SpaceX but also inspired the creation of the company Mars One, who wished to establish a human settlement on Mars with support from aerospace companies and independent funding as stated on the Mars One about page. Even though eventually in 2019 the Mars One company become dissolved due to lack in funding and investors, it provided an inspiration for more companies to work on different ideas on how to go to Mars which in turn supported the United States economy.

A manned mission to Mars would not only create economic benefits from new jobs and companies, but it will also allow for the creation of new technologies as well. During the Apollo era scientist had to figure out how astronauts would survive outside in the vacuum of space and or on the surface of the moon. These challenges allowed for the creation of many different technologies which eventually went on to benefit society in the products that we use every day. According to the “[spinoff.nasa.gov](http://spinoff.nasa.gov)” examples of some of these products would include infrared ear thermometers, firefighter equipment, the portable cordless vacuum, and freeze dry technology. With these technologies created from the technology of the Apollo missions it changed how people live their lives every day in the United States and for a manned mission to Mars it can cause even more new technologies to be created. In the book “The Future of Humanity” by Michio Kaku he describes the use of carbon nano tubes and graphene which is a carbon-based material that is more durable than steel while also being less than an atom thick. Another innovation that is being made for a mission to Mars is the creation of advanced robotic for building different structures on the surface of Mars. Though most of these technologies are not able to be mass produced now, when these technologies become available it will not only allow for people to go to Mars, but also benefit the United States.

The technology created from a manned mission to Mars would not only benefit a person’s quality of life; it would also cause a boost to moral for all people in the United States and inspire a new generation with national pride. According to a recent article from Gallup.com titled “For the first time, majority in U.S. backs human mission to Mars” a Gallup poll in 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the moon landing found that over 53% favor and 46% oppose to land an astronaut on Mars which shows that support for a Mars mission is up from previous decades. There have also been numerous books, movies, and TV shows about Mars that have exited the human imagination like the recent movie *The Martian* and *The Space Between Us*. A mission to Mars would also inspire students to become interested in STEAM education and create a new generation of scientists, and engineers to create new and innovative technologies stated in the article “Six essential reasons why we need to send humans to Mars” from foxnews.com. The thought of exploration excites the human imagination and attracts young people toward a

technical education that serves as a source of national pride making Americans more willing to support going to Mars.

A manned mission to Mars has many benefits as it can allow for the U.S. economy to improve, create new technologies to improve the quality of life, and inspire the people in the United States with new national pride. The economy has been positively affected by the effects of both new companies working to get a man to Mars like SpaceX and from NASA by providing jobs as well as creating economic output. This also has caused more new innovations to be created for a manned mission to Mars which can provide not just the people on Mars new technology, but also the people in the United States. These effects will also cause a new wave of national pride for space exploration and create a new generation of engineers. A manned mission to Mars is an achievement which can be done by almost a country, but the United States is the one country most equipped to do so today.

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#### “The Effects of Excessive Cellphone Use in Relation to Teenager Sleep Deprivation,” Samuel Fambrough

Diabetes, heart attacks, and even strokes are potential problems that come from a lack of sleep or sleep deprivation is when a person is not getting enough rest that can cause long-term effects on their health and a higher risk for premature death. Therefore, average recommended hours of sleep for an adult are seven to nine hours, compared to the average recommended hours of sleep for children, ranging from nine to fourteen hours, depending on the child's age. The recommended hours of sleep for teenagers ages thirteen to nineteen are around nine to ten hours a night. However, according to the Journal of Chronical Sleep Medicine article "An Exploratory Cross-Sectional Study in Teenagers," When studying teenagers' sleep patterns, 7.4 hours of total sleep were recorded amongst teenagers in North America on weekdays. Which brings the question of what is preventing teenagers from getting the suggested hours of sleep every night? “research shows that nearly two thirds (62%) of children aged 12–15 are granted permission by their caretakers to take their mobile phone to bed” (Orben 1). This allows opportunities for teenagers to neglect the responsibility of acquiring the proper amount of sleep they need while causing long-term effects from late-night technology use. This essay will prove excessive cellphone uses amongst teenagers at night leads to sleep deprivation. Research and studies have

proven sleep deprivation to cause health concerns involving the brain, and multiple functions of the human body. Discovering better alternatives from excessive cell phone use is why teenagers should decrease the amount of cellphone use at night to prevent sleep deprivation.

The definition of sleep is a condition of body and mind that typically recurs for several hours every night, in which the nervous system is relatively inactive, the eyes closed, the postural muscles relaxed, and consciousness practically suspended. Sleep benefits the body in many ways and even strengthens a person's physical and mental health. Although, the term sleep is constantly questioned daily, the outcomes of the event benefit the body. "it has been hypothesized that, among other things, sleep allows both our brain and body to replenish and restore, as well as consolidating memory and strengthening the immune system" ( Lederle 12). A person's memory functions by encoding, storing, and retrieving information necessary for everyday tasks and interactions, and the immune system protects the body against infection and is beneficial during the pandemic of the coronavirus outbreak. Knowing that information, what happens if someone is not meeting the recommended hours of sleep? "Lack of sleep, by contrast, has detrimental effects on many areas such as our physical health, cognitive abilities like memory and alertness, and emotional wellbeing" ( Lederle 13) . The constant misery from lack of sleep could classify someone to be susceptible to sleep deprivation. Which, if not prevented, can cause long-term medical problems and issues that are irreversible. That is why children and teenagers must obtain enough sleep at night, significantly since their bodies are continually growing and changing. "Lack of sleep has been associated with an increased risk for injuries, hypertension, obesity and depression" (JACKSON 1). Those are some effects teens in America face that are caused by sleep deprivation.

As children develop and mature into teenage years, biological changes alter circadian rhythms and the urge to fall asleep decreases, resulting in later sleep onsets" (JACKSON 1). Even though the urge to fall asleep is biological and decreases in teenagers over the years, other factors affect teens from getting enough sleep. "Practical factors of teenage sleep deprivation include school responsibilities, family commitments, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, and social media." Uncontrollable factors such as school responsibilities, family commitments, and after-school jobs affect teenage sleep schedules, and are limited ways around those factors. However, controllable factors like extracurricular activities and particularly social media and cellphone use depend on the teenager themselves and if they can manage those factors and maintain their responsibilities while still meeting the suggested hours of sleep. That management is unlikely as most teenagers in America suffer from not obtaining enough sleep at night, and excessive use of cellphones does not make that management any easier.

By the age of eleven, eighty-four percent of American teenagers have their own cellphones. Cell phones and other smart devices are a wonderful invention and a standard part of today's society. As of January seventh, 2019, ninety-six percent of America's population owned cell phones, and eighty-one percent of those Americans own smartphones. Compared to the world today, now five billion people own smartphones, and graph trends continue to increase as more people frequently buy and own cell phones. Smartphones today allow infinite possibilities with access to the internet, with applications for productivity, entertainment, even ones that can monitor a person's health. With so many technological advantages smartphones can offer, there are prone to be disadvantaged from this invention. Amongst teenager's cell phones have become an everyday distraction in any environment, including sleep. Apps such as Tik Tok, Instagram, and Snapchat are top-rated amongst teenagers, where users on the app can spend hours at a time on these social media platforms. According to Waroomedia, users usually log on to the app every

eight minutes throughout the day. Tik Tok has officially brought in 100 million users by August twenty-fifth, 2020, and with thirty-five percent of users aging from ten to nineteen means that teenagers are using this app. Teenagers use smartphones most of the time during the day and using them at night not only delay teens from sleep but harms their eyes and brain as well. The American Macular Degeneration Foundation warns that blue light retinal damage could lead to macular degeneration, a condition that causes the loss of central vision. Blue light is more visible than any other light when it comes to technology with screens, and why most smartphones use these blue light-emitting diodes (LEDs). It is becoming a more popular fact that staring at cellphones for long periods causes digital eye strain. "On the other hand, some studies have also reported negative effects on the Energies of eye retina, most of which are based on the analysis of cells that were irradiated with blue light. Detectable oxidative cellular damage on cultivated cells of bovine retinas were found when exposed to blue (470 nm) LED light with a high irradiance of  $48 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$ " (David 2). Blue (470 nm) LED lights are the same lights that your phone displays throughout the day and becomes more damaging at night as people are in darker settings. Multiple studies have the same result of late-night cellphone uses, causing eye damage. Companies like Apple have suggestive features that can alter the bright light from cellphones for nighttime use. However, continuously practicing those habits still causes damage to a person's eyes. The brain is the most complex part of the human body as it continually performs every day. Continuous cellphone uses many detrimental effects on a person's brain, causing teens to deal with issues involving anxiety, depression, impulse control problems, and sleep disorders. Studies have shown that the movement of biochemicals in the teens' brains like gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) that affects a person's motor control and vision leads to anxiety, resulting from a cellphone addiction within teenagers. "The human brain is not fully developed until the age of twenty-five, regardless of gender" (Sapolsky 1). With teenagers experiencing significant growth and development in the brain during adolescent years, it is beneficial that teens do not interfere with the development by acquiring an addiction to late-night cellphone use.

There are countless research studies conducted further to explain the topic of sleep deprivation amongst teenagers. With cellphones playing a significant part in preventing sleep among teenagers, it is essential to consider why teenagers use phones at bedtime? One explanation may simply be to relax and unwind for the day. Teenagers face possible life-changing obstacles every day that are uncontrollable to specific circumstances. School, family, and personal responsibilities are all part of an average teenager's life. Also, depending on the person, teenagers may have other obligations that affect their daily schedule. However, cellphones that affect the amount of sleep a teenager gets at night is substandard because those years are a crucial time in their life as they can never get them back if wasted on an unhealthy practice. Alternatives such as reading, light exercise, and even brain puzzles are great activities to do before bed to improve mental and physical health and make a person tired and ready for bed.

Overall, teenager sleep deprivation affects sixty to seventy percent of American teenagers every day, which is 12,630,000 teens across the nation. With numbers constantly increasing, making smart decisions involving cellphone use and teenager sleep may help someone maintain a healthier lifestyle and live longer.

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## “Leonardo da Vinci,” Alea Cox

### **Biography**

Leonardo da Vinci was born on April 15, 1452, and he died on May 2, 1519, in Vinci State, Tuscan hill Town. Leonardo da Vinci died at the age of 67 years-old. Leonardo da Vinci was born in Italy in a place known as Florence. In essence, Leonardo da Vinci pursues a course in painting at a studio of one of the renowned artists in Italy, known as Andrea del Verrocchio. In addition to this, Leonardo da Vinci worked in Milan in a place known as Ludovico il Moro.

However, he later moved to Rome and worked in Bologna. Considerably, Leonardo da Vinci moved to Venice, where he spent the rest of his life working till the time of his death in 1519 (Magazù et al., 2019). Leonardo da Vinci engaged in three fundamental techniques to attain its primary artwork types, and this included Mona Lisa, the Last Supper, and Vitruvian Man (Józsa, 2009). Preferably, Vitruvian Man was a drawing that Leonardo da Vinci did in 1490. This illustrated a nude male figure who was superimposed in two positions with legs and arms apart as they were placed inside a circle and square. Another painting that Leonardo da Vinci drew was "The Last Supper," which was painted in 1495.

The artist used different media, such as Oil, wood, and Tempera. The writer preferred a different period of art and style (Magazù et al., 2019). In essence, Leonardo mostly used high

Renaissance and aesthetic art. This included all the arts that evolved from the overall early Renaissance descents like linear perspective, naturalism, chiaroscuro, and emotional expressionism. Renaissance is defined as a period that commenced in the Middle Ages and ended in modernity. It is primarily described as a transition period in Europe and played a crucial role in its history, which existed between the 15th and 16th centuries. Leonardo is considered a brilliant intellect and he studied nature and law of science, which helped enhance Leonardo's work. Leonardo's favorite quote states that "*Art is never finished, only abandoned* (Józsa, 2009)."

### **Artist Comparison/Contrast**

The other two artists who worked on a similar style include Michelangelo and Raphael. Most of the artists' works are profoundly similar because they created their work at the same time. Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo are considered the best artists, and their artworks were similar because they depicted and elaborated the human body is giving its message (Magazù et al., 2019). The artists' work also differed immensely even though they were created at the same time and using the same Renaissance style. Michelangelo focused on sculpting, whereas the artworks of Leonardo da Vinci focused on drawing and painting artworks to send the message to the overall world. This was quite different from what Michelangelo depicted, which majored in giving the author a better understanding of the artwork for himself.

The artists influenced my artist greatly in deepening the message that the artwork should portray. In essence, the artists used the human body and showed that every part was important in understanding the message (Remund et al., 2017). This is significant as it will focus on sending the message and not focus on the image and proportionally of the artwork alone.

### **Contextual Understanding**

The two artworks created by Leonardo da Vinci include "the Last Supper" and "Vitruvian Man (Józsa, 2009)." The two artworks are explained in terms of each artwork's context by researching one of the contextual categories as below.

## **Historical Context**

The Last Supper painting was painted between 1496 and 1498. The paint is used to depict and illustrate the Holy Thursday famous scene. It gives the message of sharing as Jesus, and his Apostles showed by sharing the final meal before Christ died and resurrected. On the other hand, Vitruvian Man painting was made in the fifth century BCE (Józsa, 2009). It is used to describe the Roman Vitruvius, which depicts the Canon.

## **Social Context**

The Last Supper painting brings a social aspect of sharing the Eucharist or Holy Communion by most Christians. Vitruvian Man painting depicts a social context that fosters both sustainability and welfare. It should that balance and compendium symmetries in societies can only be achieved by harmonizing humanist dimensions.

## **Creative Context**

There is the use of creative context in the Last Supper painting, and in this case, Leonardo used landscape to enhance the viability of the art. In this case, there are terminations used in art to enhance grayish and misty kind. However, Vitruvian Man painting was done using the proportionality concept. This was a creative that intended to show that the human body and the crucial roles played by each part using "perfect proportions."

## **Political Context**

Last Supper painting and Vitruvian Man painting have played an essential role in the political context (Remund et al., 2017). Both have helped in transforming society. For example, the Last Supper painting helped in enhancing the narrative power.

## **Scientific Context**

Leonardo da Vinci also used "the Last Supper" and "Vitruvian Man" to explore the scientific context. The use of scientific and artistic technique has helped in depicting the world framework, which is considered splitting asunder.

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## **“Pica in Children,” Alea Cox**

### **Abstract.**

This paper explores Pica, which is a common disorder in many children. I will review five journal articles with adequate information concerning the causes, symptoms, prevention measures, and treatment in children diagnosed with Pica. Joseph (2020) highlights the common

signs and symptoms that may be visible in Children suffering from Pica and the leading causes of the disorder in young children. Holm (2019) explains the process in which the diagnosis of Pica occurs and the complications that children suffering from Pica may fall. Mrunal (2019) brings forward the different methods health care providers use to ensure effective treatment of Pica. The journal article also highlights the different preventive measures that can be in place to ensure that children do not suffer from Pica and the person to seek help from if a parent notes the different symptoms of Pica in their children. Necessary measures have to be in place to ensure that children avoid the habit of consuming objects.

*Keywords:* Pica, causes, prevention measures, treatment, signs, and symptoms.

### **Pica in Children.**

Children suffering from Pica tend to develop a habit of putting non-food items such as papers, dust, stones, and other objects in their mouths. Children in the developed stage of Pica can even put things in their mouths, causing significant health complications. According to Joseph (2020), children suffering from Pica have the tendency to eat non-food items regularly. Children with Pica put everything that falls into their hands to the mouth, unknowing of the complications the objects can bring about. According to Joseph (2020), health complications in children with Pica vary according to the items different children eat. The primary health complications from Pica include; anemia from iron deficiency, poisoning from objects containing lead, diarrhea or constipation from indigestible foods, infections in the intestines, and injuries in the mouth from eating sharp or hard objects (Joseph, 2020). For a child to be diagnosed with Pica, the habit of consuming non-food items must persist for one month.

Pica has no common cause, but a deficiency in iron, zinc, and other nutrients can result in the diagnosis of Pica in children. Anemia that results from a shortage of iron in children can lead to a diagnosis of Pica. The disorder is also common in children who have low levels of some of the crucial nutrients for body functioning. According to UPMC (2015), children who suffer from certain health complications such as schizophrenia tend to develop Pica as a coping mechanism. Pica is also common in children having developmental problems like autism. Children from families experiencing poverty and the neglected ones tend to develop the disorder as a means of providing fullness for themselves. The condition is also common in abused children as a means of beating the stress that originates from the action. The disorder is mainly available in children below the age of two years (UPMC, 2015). Children can also develop this disorder to attract the attention of their parents, which, when consistently done, leads to Pica.

Pica has no standard method in which the diagnosis can happen. During the process of Pica diagnosis, a medical practitioner can examine by carrying out a blood test to check for anemia and other nutritional deficiencies (Holm, 2019). It is also necessary for a child suffering from Pica to seek the help of a specialist in mental health to get proper guidance on how to manage and prevent the disorder. However, Pica resolves as a child continues to grow, but, in other cases, it can lead to medical complications. It is also necessary for children suffering from Pica to attend regular health checkups to check for a possibility of malnutrition (Mrunal, 2019). During the diagnosis process, parents should be honest with the doctors on the different objects the child has ingested to make it easier for the doctor to know the type of examination to perform.

In some cases, a health care provider can observe the physical symptoms visible in a child, including experiencing problems in the bowel, to diagnose Pica. According to Holm (2019), in some cases, a doctor can advise the performance of x-rays on children to check for

blockages in the intestines, which is enough evidence for Pica. Tests that reveal a deficiency in zinc, iron, and other nutrients prove the deficiency to be a trigger to consume non-food items in children (NEDA, 2018). The doctor can also perform a test on the stool to check the presence of parasites ingested. For children with developmental disabilities, the doctor must ask the objects that the child regularly eats to choose the best diagnosis method to apply.

When treating a child suffering from Pica, the doctor can consider treating the complications acquired from consuming non-food items such as injuries in the mouth. According to Holm (2019), children with severe lead poisoning as a result of consuming objects containing lead can have a referral for chelation therapy whereby the children receive a medication that binds with lead for its excretion through the urine. If the disorder results from a deficiency in some of the minerals, the doctor can prescribe regular taking of mineral supplements to the child. For children having mental health conditions that lead to Pica, a doctor can recommend medication or therapy and, in other cases, both to manage their behavioral problems. Doctors also provide adequate information on the different measures necessary to curb the disorder (NEDA, 2018).

As the deficiencies leading to the consumption of non-food objects undergo a correction, the behavior of regular consumption of the objects fades away with time. It is also necessary to help children develop habits that keep away from eating non-food items by redirecting their attention to the activities. Parents also play a significant role in ensuring that the children diagnosed with Pica stay away from the habit by keeping any objects the children can consume out of their reach. For children suffering from Pica due to neglect by parents or guardians, a health practitioner can help the child develop necessary communication skills while growing the interaction with the child. According to Mrunal (2019), parents should also create a habit of correcting the children calmly when they consume the objects rather than applying strict punishment and offer rewards when the child avoids the behavior.

Different prevention measures should be put in place to eradicate the possibility of children suffering from the disorder. Various health care stakeholders should spread awareness about Pica to parents and the necessity of observing healthy eating habits in children. Parents who note the habit of eating non-food items in their children should pay close attention and discourage them from developing the practice (Mrunal, 2019). Parents should develop good communication habits between them and their children to prevent them from feeling that the parents have neglected them. It is also necessary for children to have regular health checkups to identify any conditions that can fuel Pica. For parents who note the habit of eating non-food items in their children, they must seek medical help before further development of the disorder. For children diagnosed with Pica, parents or guardians must ensure that any objects the children might put into their mouths are not within their reach.

In conclusion, Pica is common in children who have developmental and mental health problems. They develop the habit of consuming non-food items as a means of distracting themselves from the issues. Development of the disorder to severe stages can lead to medical complications like a blockage in the intestines, bowel problems, and anemia. A deficiency in some of the essential minerals like iron and zinc can also fuel Pica. The disorder is also common in neglected children in society and those who experience abuse. It is necessary for parents or guardians who identify the habit in their children to seek medical help to avoid the practice from bringing complications at a later date. Parents have a significant role in ensuring that their children do not develop the habit of consuming non-food items by helping them develop other positive habits. Parents should also ensure that children consume healthy foods that supplement

the nutrients in their bodies. Parents whose children suffer from Pica should pay close attention to ensure that the children do not consume non-food objects and can develop a habit of rewarding them if they quit the habit. Regular health checks on children are necessary to check any conditions that can fuel the disorder.

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### “The cause of Divorce,” Ayana Wilson

The following essay takes a look at both sides on why many people go through a divorce and how it can affect the one's they love the most. To start with, some marriages can be unstable and the partners in the relationship can simply grow apart from each other. In Mesopotamia, the first known evidence of marriage ceremonies uniting one woman and man dates around 2350 B.C. There's a lot of causes and effects on divorce some may have a good effect, and some may have a bad one. A divorce can strongly affect the children in the future or even while they're still young and can affect their relationship with their parent(s). Parents should stop to think at some point about how it's going to affect their children or their loved ones. When it comes too divorcing there can be many causes such as financial problems, having little trust in their partner and infidelity. According to <https://www.today.com/health/why-couples-get-divorced-t117476> Infidelity is a major reason for divorce it states ‘ and it is not only physical affairs that happen today linked world but also emotional affairs. “ Which is saying you don't have to cheat in person there are many ways to contact people other than just face to face there are social media apps that seem to be a major cause with divorces in today's society. Another major reason for divorces is money problems but money itself doesn't cause a divorce. It is unbelievably difficult to live in poverty, and financial stressors can lead to war, which can lead to divorce. According to <https://www.today.com/health/why-couples-get-divorced-t117476> ‘ Another money-related issue with rise of successful women is that they are out earning their spouses in increasing numbers. Meaning the women can be making more money than her spouse and this can hurt his ego so he would take on another job to bring more income. Taking everything into consideration these problems weighs a lot on a marriage.

The children also exhibit differences in their behavior after the separation of their parents. problems with their mom and dad may last in the future if there isn't any communication. This

causes the children to lash out in school they can show their anger out on other students even the teacher or some might even stay to their self and not open up to anybody about how they're feeling. This can also be very confusing for children when holidays and birthdays come around and the parents can't co-parent and have one party this can be difficult on the child. There are going to be changes in the child's routine and possibly new relationships with stepfamily and even new roles and responsibilities. Most children stay with their mother after a divorce so they may perceive their mother as being hostile and less caring. According to <https://www.today.com/health/why-couples-get-divorced-t117476> the major problem after a divorce is destructive behavior "Unresolved conflict can lead to potential unexpected risk as children go through a divorce." Research has found that children who have undergone a divorce have become more engaged in crime and use of drugs. On top of that, they can feel unwanted by their parents. They feel ashamed because they feel as they did something wrong. Meaning they are hurt by the divorce, but many children cope different ways some may have relief, and some may be hurt. According <https://quizlet.com/56426413/chapter-9-the-impact-divorce-on-children> "Divorce has a stronger effect on children now than in the past. " Dr. Afifi argue that children are closer to their parents than they have ever been before. Meaning after some marriages it can be good for the children probably because the parents were toxic to one another. To sum up, there can be good thing and bad thing divorces because studies show that every child can take a positive or negative effect on a divorce. It shows how children are not the cause of a divorce and how things can affect the children in the future and it's not always bad, but some can be bad.

In conclusion, as shown in the text the causes and effects on divorce. When people feel chemistry between each other, one of the key things is to get married. Some spouses are unable to sustain their partnership and get a divorce, which is one of the alternatives to fixing husband wife issues. Many individuals think carefully before they get married, but divorce rates are constantly rising. Before making the choice to divorce, if they have children, they need to put their children first because it's not fair to them, especially when thinking about long term effects. As a result, they should consider counseling not only for them but as well as their children. Even as you try to sort out the mental, physical and finical legalities that sometimes surround a divorce, a divorce counselor will show you and your partner how to interact effectively and act civilly. Counseling will show you how to co-parent as much as you don't like it, it will teach you to always put your children first. Also, counseling will help you to cope and restore your life with the trauma of divorce. Going to counseling will really help talk about your feelings and express how you feel to one another and where things went wrong. It helps with the changes that are going to happen and how everything is going different and reinsure that you guys didn't make a mistake. It will open your eyes about spending more time with your children and getting close to them and making them feel more loved by each parent and telling them they're not the reason for the divorce. Finally, counseling can help you cope with all the emotions you're feeling and even bringing your children in can play a major role and help a lot in the future.

### **“Dear Absent Father,” Leah Pablos**

You decided you didn't want me when I was a baby, you left me and my 19 year old mom behind because you believed you were not ready for a child, even though you already had one, my older brother Elijah who I have never met. When I was a small child I saw you a couple of times each month but suddenly, that stopped once my little sister Emma was born. No, I do not hold the blame on her but I hold it on the man who is supposed to protect his little girl, you. I

had to experience everything a dad is supposed to teach his daughter without you. Throughout the years you started reaching out less and less until a month turned into a couple of months then a couple of months turned into a year. Because of you, father, I have abandonment issues, I self sabotage because I do not think I am good enough to feel happy, I feel awkward around people with functional families because I have never experienced that, but yet, I still strive for your approval, I still hunger for your acceptance, even though you do not deserve any of my attention. I still remember the day you showed up to my moms house, drunk, screaming that I belong with you and that you will take me. Seeing the police drag your father away isn't a great thing for 6 year old to see. Because of you not acting like a father I have no relationship with my younger brother, Tristan and because of his down syndrome, he has no idea that I am his sister let alone his family, so thanks dad, for leaving me and Elijah behind.

Sincerely, the daughter you've forgotten

### ["American Dream from a Lifter," Jackson Yearta](#)

It's 1977 you're just learning to crawl your small 20-pound body across the floor your soft hands barely make traction with the floor. It's 2009 your walking back with 1000 pounds on your back as sturdily as possible feet gripping into the floor like truck tires on new hot asphalt. Now back to the 90's you're just sprouting hairs out of your chin for the first time laying in bed staring straight up at the ceiling in a lower-income home not dreaming but planning and vouching to make your world what you wish. Now all the way to 2017 your hopping in your 6 figure Cadillac on the way to your multi-million dollar business, your living the American dream. flashback once more, you are a teenager flipping through magazines seeing your hero and idol Ed Coan every other page just thinking about how cool it must be to even see him. now modern-day you're talking to him on a regular basis like a brother who has earned his older brother's respect. Okay so now we have some loose context now you're probably wondering who this is or how they got here or even both. well in your favor your here to find the answer to all of those questions. This is a story about how a simple combination of lifting weight, invention, selfless ambition, and capitalism can create a wholesome company representing the true spirit of powerlifting despite the negative influences within the sport.

What do you think of when you think of world-class athletes? Most people would imagine great tall outlandish looking people that are recognized on a huge scale for who they are. Athletes such as Tom Brady a future legend in football, or athletes who are not on teams but still leave their mark like Michael Phelps. Most likely these are recognizable names but even if they are not one google search will show thousands of results. So now I challenge you to think of a powerlifter. No bodybuilders do not count neither does anyone else who lifts weights. An actual powerlifter someone who competes through the truest testament of pure strength. Well these athletes are not as well known for some reason the only people that care are fellow lifters. This is what makes mark bell's success so much more unique. There is no money in powerlifting athletes pay to compete instead of the other way around. The only money in powerlifting is from federations running the competitions. So mark did what game-changers did and made a situation of his own. He found his success in powerlifting was the root of the tree he was about to put together. The branches to this tree were using the crazy weights he was moving to gain a social media following. This following allowed him more connections to companies and more well-known people. He had a burning ambition originating from a mixture of the success of his better-known brother mike bell an American wrestler as well as his death.

Mark understood he was one person just a single person with an idea and a following like a powerlifting Jesus[satire]. He had already proven himself as a lifter, but as all aged lifters know injuries happen. The most common injury found within men would be the shoulder issue usually found if you draw a line from your ear lobe until you make contact with your shoulder also known as the bursa. Bursa might sound like your mother in law and with that, I say your totally on the right track because the bursa usually nags middle-aged men to the point they give up. The actual use of this is to keep the rotator cuff working correctly with the chest and arm. Long story short as Uncle Ben once said "with great power comes great responsibility". Keeping all of this in mind Mark invented a wearable device he named the slingshot. The slingshot is a device that wraps around each arm while having an elastic fabric coming across the chest to give a rubber band effect off the chest during a bench press to protect where the bursa would normally engage while still allowing everything else to work. Many lifters attacked the slingshot as a gimmick saying the device simply was to lift more for the sake of one's ego or a false sense of strength. To refute these ignorant accusations let's look into the science and real-life results. The slingshot after the release was found to not only be a way to work around injury but to be used as a tool. The tool aspect is in an exercise slang term known as overloading. When an athlete bench pressing overloads he uses the slingshot to complete the entire movement while as he lifts the weight higher the difficulty increases. The result of overloading is an explosive power built within the fast-twitch fibers of the muscle and a shock to the nervous system. Soon enough after being endorsed and used by some of the top bench pressers in the world, the slingshot became one of the most well-known products within powerlifting.

Capitalism the word triggers differentiating thoughts in and out of every ear it enters. Some see capitalism as a winner takes all as if it's some sort of economic battle royal while the one percent stand on the backs of the bottom ninety-nine percent. On the other side of the aisle, some see capitalism as a system of checks and balances between the business the employee and the consumer. One ear hears greed and selfishness while the other ear hears ambition and selflessness. The ongoing battle between the IPF(International Powerlifting Federation) and the company Slingshot has been all of the above. Not long after the slingshot's success the slingshot company started releasing more products such as knee sleeves and wrist wraps. Both of these have been made for years in an attempt to protect an athlete during heavy lifts in competition except of course once again the slingshot company had the lifter in mind creating superior products. Competing companies producing products for IPF lifters felt in danger. This resulting in politics playing down behind closed walls and Slingshot's products no longer being IPF approved, not to mention no refund for the two hundred fifty-three thousand dollar investment to be approved. The greedy larger companies had just won the battle that cost them the war. Slingshot not only made up for but capitalized on the situation. Slingshot responded by creating a new improved product that indeed was now IPF certified again without room for complaints from competing companies. Once this step was completed They then proceeded to send the new version to every single consumer who had purchased the original product entirely free. This resulting in exposure and complete embarrassment for rivaling producers while making slingshot grow immensely in popularity. This was where everyone was checked then balanced.

Mark Bell undoubtedly had made his mark (no pun intended) within the sport. Powerlifting was the tree Mark was the roots and his actions were the blossoming branches. Mark managed to take an unrealistic dream in a sport he loved more than anyone and make it work as he had once imagined. Just as how little Mark went from crawling to squatting his ambition with character made him go further than any amount of weight ever could. Slingshot to

this day remains the same company it has always been now running the largest gym in the west entirely free for anyone to use for the sake of will power being the investment all one would need to take. Mark lived the American dream as a powerlifter rarely to ever be seen as possible. No matter how you hear American or capitalism or powerlifter one thing stayed consistent through thick and thin with mark and slingshot not how they were but who they were.

### “Religious controversies of the 16th and 17th century of Europe,” Celeste Smalls

For over fifteen decades the Catholic church stood strong as a symbol of peace and unity for all of Europe. Even before the reign of Constantine the great, when it was decreed the orthodox church would be the national religion of the Roman empire, The Church stayed unified during their countless decades of persecution. However, it wasn't outside force that would later split apart the great catholic church during the 16th and 17th centuries, that later would be known as the Protestant Reformation. During the 16th and 17th century, tensions arose inside the church well before the Protestant Reformation begun and Europe desperately struggled to keep the peace between those who opposed the church and the church. What exactly is the protestant reformation, how did it begin and what affects did the split of the church leave on Europe.

Historians agree that the split of the church is one of the most influential moments in all of Europe's history. Although it being one of the most influential events for the most part people know little information about the Protestant reformation and what happened. The Protestant Reformation is the time when more and more people started questioning the church also known as reformers. One of the most well know reformers is Martin Luther who wrote 95 theses explaining what was wrong with the church. Many other reformers rallied around Martin Luther after publishing his 95 theses. Also, it wasn't just other citizen's kings of other nations started to question the church and joined the Protestant Reformation. History.com states that the Protestant Reformation belief was “a call to purify the church and a belief that the Bible, not tradition, should be the sole source of spiritual authority” (par 2). The Protestant Reformation gathered around this belief and moved forward to get change in the church.

The 95 theses of Marin Luther played one of if not the biggest roles in the start of the Protestant Reformation. Also, the invention of the print and press greatly helped spread the word of Martin Luther's 95 thesis and word of other people questioning the church. HistoryGuide.org, states that “the merchants, bankers and artisans of Europe's largest cities and towns who resented the fact that local bishops of the Church controlled all of their commercial and economic activities” (par. 3) helped the cause of the reformers rally for change. Also, the reformers weren't the only influence that put pressure on the Catholic church, King Henry VIII played a key role in the instability of the church. Local Histories.org researched and found that King Henry VIII had “separated from the Roman church only so he could get a divorce from his wife Catherine” (par 4). But because of this King Henry VIII had created a system where the current ruler would also be the head of the church, which put the church in a downward spiral for many decades.

For almost a whole century there was religious civil war as well as political tension that all can be led back to decision of King Henry VIII to split from the church. After King Henry VIII split from the catholic church he ordered and issue that copies of the bible be issued out. Even though it was unstable religious tensions during this time it did help the first mass production of any book. Up until the reign of Queen Elizabeth there were multiple events that affected all of Europe. During this time the Catholic made a counter reformation that created the Roman inquisition whose job was to examine any heretics and there was no boundary to their

jurisdiction. But this was a cruel time for any reformers or anybody who the church thought was a heretic because if the church thought you was a heretic or spreading “blasphemy”, the person was publicly executed and named a witch. But History.com stated that right when “Northern Europe’s new religious and political freedoms came at a great cost, with decades of rebellions, wars and bloody persecutions. The Thirty Years’ War alone may have cost Germany 40 percent of its population” (par 10). Although most of these events happened before Queen Elizabeth reign and her early years when she rose in power was a signal for peace.

It took all of Queen Elizabeth reign until her last 2 decades to successfully solve some type of religious peace in England. Almost it took almost another century after Queen Elizabeth reign for peace to achieve between the Protestant union and the Catholic league. It was King James I reign were peace was actually resolved after all of the events such as Martin Luther 95 thesis to the church counter reformation.

### “Dress for Success,” [Kassandra Gallegos](#)

As young people enter society they often hear adults advise them, “dress for success.” Whether young people realize it or not, the way they dress not only has an impact on the way others perceive them, it also has an impact on their self-esteem. The way we dress can help ourselves to express our creativity and even our personalities. Over time, the ways people dress has changed drastically. Today, in an internet obsessed century, young women have grown notorious for expressing themselves through their fashion unlike anything ever seen in previous generations. By describing the current state of fashion it is evident that girls’ choice of style, most commonly Retro, Gothic, and Boho, is driven by the desire to express their personalities.

One popular category is Retro, which is a style of fashion inspired by trends from the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. During these years, a boom in pop culture and a shift in beauty standards gave birth to new pop artists as well as new fashion trends. This nostalgia influences girls who dress Retro to often take inspiration from the early 2000’s fashion trends and imitate styles from movie characters from *Clueless*, *Mean Girls*, and *Legally Blonde*. They imitate iconic figures such as Paris Hilton, Britney Spears, and Lindsey Lohan. Many brands that were more popular in the early 2000’s are becoming increasingly popular today, such as Dior, Coach, and Louis Vuitton. These girls wear soft pastel feminine colors such as pink, red, purple, and baby blue. They often wear cropped tops with rhinestones, colorful cami shirts, low-rise jeans, mini dresses, pleated skirts, and colorful socks. Their accessories include small shoulder bags, glittery silver jewelry, butterfly hair clips, and small sunglasses, usually pink or brown in color. They adorn their feet with chunky platform sandals, strappy kitten heels, and Nike Air Force Ones. These girls frequently buy clothing items from thrift and craft stores such as Depop and Etsy, both online stores. Often girls opt for more natural makeup looks by utilizing lipgloss, colored eyeshadow, and bright pink blush. Girls utilizing this style are viewed as confident, feminine, and fashionable.

Many girls all over the country choose a Gothic type of style, they are known as “e-girls.” These girls commonly project their personalities online through their intricate social media profiles. The style can be described as edgy, alternative, and sleek. Many take inspiration from music icons such as Tyler the Creator, Travis Scott, Billie Eilish, and popular Asian anime characters. They are often reserved people who enjoy skateboarding and listening to music such as rock, indie, and alternative. Some defining fashion characteristics are long sleeve shirts layered under short sleeves, dark colored clothing, fishnet tights, and baggy pants. They

accessorize with overlapped thick chains, long colored nails, and black jewelry. Shoe choice includes Dr. Marten boots, black Vans, and chunky tennis shoes. Makeup is usually applied with an emphasis on winged liner and blush as well as a signature black heart drawn using eyeliner on the cheek. Hair is usually dyed in one or two colors and their nails are often painted black. Common stores displaying e-girl styles are Princess Polly, Hot Topic, and Dolls Kill. E-girls are known for making bold fashion decisions, sporting intricate fashion looks, and displaying conviction.

Another common fashion style is Boho. Girls who have a Boho style are known for having cheerful outgoing personalities and enjoying displaying their passions on social media sites such as Instagram, VSCO, and Snapchat. These girls often gather inspiration from influencers such as Emma Chamberlain, Haley Pham, and Summer Mckeen. They enjoy the beach and marine life, which inspires their fashion. They tend to have lighter colored hair, enjoy tanning, and wear little to no makeup. They are known for commonly sporting an oversized t-shirt and Nike shorts as well as colorful crop tops and ripped denim jeans. They often wear summer shoes such as Birkenstock sandals, Crocs, checkered Vans and white Nike Air Force Ones. Accessories include Pura Vida bracelets and anklets, shell necklaces, hair scrunchies, Fjallraven Kanken backpacks and Hydroflasks water bottles. These girls frequently customize items such as Hydroflasks and Macbooks using colorful nautical and beach themed stickers. Commonly visited stores for this style include Brandy Melville, Lululemon, and Urban Outfitters. Many associate the look with the latest fashion trends, comfort, and summer. Girls who dress Boho are considered lighthearted, relaxed, and passionate about topics such as the environment.

Fashion has always been a very important aspect of a young girls' life. Fashion choice expresses personality and serves as a way to decorate one's self. It also allows people to predict what others' personalities and interests are. Girls who have a gothic style may be interested in specific styles of music such as indie, whereas a girl with a Boho style may be interested more in environmental topics. Likewise, a girl with a Retro style may enjoy watching movies from the early two thousands. These different styles help us understand girls' specific personalities and interests. But regardless of which style girls choose to wear, their fashion choices express their passion, confidence, and attitudes in their own special way.

### “Maria De La Luz,” *Kassandra Gallegos*

I opened my eyes at the sound of pots clashing in the kitchen. The sound of running water escorted soft voices working tirelessly to remain as quiet as possible. I sat up on the bed and reached for my glasses placed on my nightstand. The morning was sunny, but still a frigid January morning. The surrounding concrete walls only magnified my shivers. I got up from bed walking slowly and dragging my feet slightly, until I arrived at the kitchen. As soon as I entered the kitchen, I could tell they were surprised.

“Ay, good morning mama, how did you sleep?”, asked Lucha, my daughter.

“Good, good. But I heard the noises in here so I wanted to see if you guys needed help.” I said.

“We’re sorry to have woken you up grandma. But I was so excited to come since last night you didn’t get to tell me the story you promised...”, said Malu.

“Don’t worry Malu, I am used to waking up early anyways. Besides, I really want some hot coffee.” I said, apologetically.

“Okay ma, please sit down, I can handle some cafe de olla. Meanwhile you can keep telling Malu that story you didn’t get to finish last night. As soon as she woke up she was ready to come see you.” said Lucha.

“Wow Malu, I didn’t know you would be so interested in my story.” I sighed.

A couple months after Malu was born, Geronimo, my husband, died. Malu grew up with one mom and one grandma, her only relatives. So she often wondered what had happened to her grandpa, and why she was never able to meet him. Now, she was 12 years old and still as eager as ever to know about her grandpa. The night before I had promised to tell her exactly how her grandpa and I met. So I began to think, trying to recall the very beginning of everything, a place where I could start. So now, I finally begin.

“I was born in March of 1933 in Tlaxcala, Mexico, where I lived with my parents and my younger brother. When I was only 8 years old, my mom died giving birth to my younger sister. From then on, I was responsible for caring for my younger siblings, almost acting as a mother figure to them. This was not an easy task, since life in the pueblo required arduous work, such as hauling water from the well, washing clothes by hand in the river, and cooking for the family. At the age of 15 my father decided it would be in my best interests to move to Mexico City along with one of my cousins, so I agreed. But moving to the city was no easy task. Coming from a small pueblo where everything was underdeveloped and pure, the city seemed menacing. Lots of people immigrated to Mexico City in the search for a better life, jobs and opportunities. When I left my pueblo with my cousin Marta, I was more frightened than I had ever been in my entire life. I was only 18 years old and I had never been outside of my small town. I knew how to do manual labor but I had never been to school, so I didn’t know how to read or write. Marta and I arrived in Mexico City by train. Then we walked to my cousin’s great-aunt’s house, her name was Loretta. Loretta was a kind hospitable woman. She convinced her boss to let us start working with her and he agreed. Loretta was a custodian at the largest building in Mexico City.

Inside the building were many business offices and very wealthy business people. Loretta helped clean every floor along with about 10 other women. On our first day of work, we took a taxi to the building. When we walked into the lobby a receptionist greeted us. ‘Good morning girls.’ said the receptionist, ‘You all can start on the first floor and end on the 5th.’ ‘Got it.’ said Loretta. We waited for the elevator doors to open and soon enough we were traveling to the first floor. Loretta began telling Marta and I what our cleaning duties entailed, but all I could think about was how marvelous the elevator was. In the pueblo, there was no such thing as a building 800 feet tall. Much less a machine that transports you up into the sky at such a fast rate. The walls were all seemingly made of gold and the floor was so white and shiny it seemed as if it had never even been stepped on. I didn’t pay any attention to what Loretta said because I was starting to feel dizzy. The movement of the elevator was so unfamiliar, and the combined insecurity of what lay ahead did not help either. Finally, we arrived at the 1st floor. As soon as the elevator doors opened I saw a man. He was a doll. Very tall, light brown eyes, thick dark wavy hair, and strong hands. That day he was dressed in a dark brown suit. He had me head over heels from the day I met him.”

“And that was grandpa?”, Malu asked.

“That was grandpa,” I answered, “He was waiting to catch the elevator we had stepped out of. Immediately, we locked eyes, but only for mere seconds as we walked by. I continued

working at the building with Loretta and Marta, and occasionally, I would see the handsome man I met on the first day of work. One day I had to work a shift alone, without Loretta and Marta. I was assigned to the 6th floor. After my long day of work I hopped on the elevator, but just as the doors were closing, the handsome mystery man ran in.

“I’m sorry. These elevators take a long time to come around, I didn’t want to miss this.” he said. The doors closed behind him and he stood right beside me.

“So you must be new here, correct? I had never seen you until recently.” he inquired. My heart skipped a beat. In the pueblo, I never had any friends besides those in my family, much less any love interests.

“Yeah, just started working here a couple weeks ago.” immediately he answered, “How old are you? You look really young.”

“18” I answered.

“Oh. I’m 22. I’m sorry, what was your name?” he asked.

“Maria Luz Juarez.”, I answer.

“You have a beautiful name Maria Luz. My name is Geronimo Orozco.”

“After we met, we would often speak to each other, and talk about our long days at work on the elevator. Soon enough, Geronimo began to ask me if I wanted to go out to eat or go downtown to see the mariachis play. And, happily, I agreed. Over time, we fell in love. And finally, Geronimo asked me if I would like to live with him. When he asked me, I was delightfully surprised. And I agreed to live together.”

“Geronimo bought a small piece of land in a developing town called “El Sol” on the outskirts of the city, where we began our family. I’ll be honest, it was not a pretty place, it was not nearly as developed as it is today. At the time there were no general services and all the streets were dirt. The land we bought had no house, so grandpa and I had to build one ourselves. Despite this, I was not one to complain because I was living with the man I loved.” Everything went well at first, we built our home and I birthed our first two baby girls. Geronimo began his glass business and opened his own shop in the town center. But along with his business, he began making friendships with the infamous town alcoholics. And slowly but surely he was hooked on alcohol. Despite Geronimo still living with me in our house, he was as absent as if he lived in a different country. He no longer seemed to care about me or his children and he would often only come home at night, drunk, but only to sleep. In the mornings, he would leave for his business and then after working, he would drink with his friends.

With time, Geronimo began to transform into a completely different man than the one I had originally met. This vicious cycle devoured all of his time and sobriety. He no longer felt the need to provide money for his family. When Geronimo would come home drunk, he could barely stand up straight. Sometimes, hundreds of pesos would fall out of his pockets while he would walk to his room. Despite Geronimo making good money with his business, he would never give us any money- not even for food. Ultimately, the one once loving father of my children was no longer present. Geronimo would spend his day at his glass shop and his nights with his friends out getting drunk. When he would come home he would often beat me or verbally abuse me.”

“Grandma, I don’t want you to have to remember these bad memories. It’s okay.” Malu said. “Yes Malu. These are sad memories. But you need to know this story because this has made me who I am.” I continued, “Geronimo and I now had 13 children. Seven girls and six boys.

And he was still absent as a father. He occasionally ate with us, but he did not have a relationship with any of his family members. Over time, I forgave Geronimo. And I do not think Geronimo, your grandfather, was a bad person. I think he made bad decisions. When most of my kids were adults, I saved enough money to buy my own house in Santa Rosa, a different town. All of my children and I moved out of the house and moved to Santa Rosa. Geronimo decided to stay in El Sol, and we respected his decision. Later on, at the age of 60, your grandfather's liver was almost completely dissolved from the immense amount of alcohol he drank. He was sick and alone in our first house. The little house which was once full of life had become almost completely silent. And so when I heard news of his bad health, I returned. Geronimo was completely alone, no friends or family willing to care for him-except me. And so for his last few weeks of life, I cared for him. I cooked him his favorite enchiladas, and I would make him his special coffee that he loved. He was now forcefully sober, and it was almost as if a little piece of the Geronimo I had fallen in love with was still alive. But now, that handsome Geronimo, was ghost and looked weaker than I had ever seen him before. Geronimo and I used our last few days together to remember our good times. We talked about when we would go out to eat street tacos, or the memories we made when we were building our house. Geronimo asked me if I could ever forgive him for all of his mistakes. He apologized for his inability to be part of our family, and for not being a good husband. I assured him that he was forgiven. And I truly did forgive him. Thanks to your grandfather, I lived a life full of hardship, but I also lived a life surrounded by thirteen amazing children. As a girl, I never imagined having a family. But now I have thirteen children, thirty grandchildren, twenty five great grandchildren, and four great great grandchildren. I am constantly surrounded by an enormous family who loves me and continues to care for me in my old age. And for that, I thank your grandfather.”

“Ay grandma. You are so strong. I love you, my mom loves you and all our family too!” said Malu.

“I love you too Malu.” I said, reaching over and giving her a tight hug.

Lucha placed a cup of warm coffee in my hand. And smiled. Today, I am 87 years old.

### “Effects of a Gender Concentrated Society on Women,” [Kassandra Gallegos](#)

“Stop acting like a girl! She is such a dumb blonde! Always a bridesmaid, never a bride.” Seemingly innocent remarks often reinforce sexist stereotypes. In modern day United States, comments such as the aforementioned are used much too often. American children internalize gender stereotypes and gender roles by means of what the media dictates or what is taught to them by their parents. Children begin to realize which actions are considered appropriate for their respective gender at an early age. For example, young females are expected to be nurturing, submissive, and delicate--all characteristics from which young boys steer clear. Today, women live in a predominantly patriarchal, male-dominated culture, and gender stereotypes result in devastating effects on women's everyday lives by impacting their well being, careers, and relationships.

The gender stereotype that women are weak affects women's physical and mental well being. Women are viewed as subservient to the male gender solely because physically, women are not equally as strong as men. This sometimes leads men to commit horrible acts against women including rape, domestic violence, mental abuse, physical abuse, and sexual harassment, which makes them targets for exploitation and abuse. Women are victims of domestic violence because, not only do men see them as weak, but they also believe they are too weak to defend

themselves. In some cases, women decide not to defend themselves against abuse for various reasons. For example, they fear being severely punished by their offenders, not being heard by the justice system, or most importantly, fear for their lives. Other times when women try to defend themselves against offenders in court, they are accused of “asking for it” or of “not doing enough” to protect themselves. Seeing other women go through these situations causes many women to be stuck in abusive relationships, unable to escape the hands of their spouses. Women also feel constantly unsafe, fearing they may be kidnapped, assaulted, sex trafficked, or worst of all, murdered. Women have to take extra safety precautions to protect themselves and follow certain unwritten rules, such as not walking alone at night, to remain safe.

Gender roles also severely affect women's careers. Women are viewed as unintelligent and are underestimated in terms of competence in jobs. Women have trouble feeling confident in their learned abilities because of this stereotype. Many doubt whether they are good enough to compete against men in jobs involving STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), so they avoid jobs that are in male-dominated careers. This causes women to become marginalized in certain fields, fearing to pursue a career in engineering, construction work, or high risk jobs such as firefighting. Some women are hesitant to run for jobs in politics, a mainly male-dominated area. When women do run in politics, many times they are undervalued and rarely achieve a higher position, such as being a presidential candidate. This leaves women underrepresented in important issues such as abortion, divorce, abuse, and women's healthcare, among other female related topics. In most jobs, women are paid less than men even when they are working the same job with the same educational backgrounds. This causes women to feel that no matter how qualified they are for a job, they may not be as valued as a male would be in the same position. Unequal pay also severely impacts single-parent families who depend on only one income, most commonly the mother figure, to provide for their needs.

Another dominant stereotype is that women need to be married in order to be happy. It implies a woman's ultimate life goal should be marriage and that a woman who is not married is not living her life to the fullest. Since women are expected to marry, many young girls begin to place immense value on their looks, convinced that their appearances increase their opportunity to marry. This results in many women never feeling good enough about themselves because they may not be able to fit into current beauty standards. Because marriage is “the ultimate life goal” set for women, those who do not marry are often marginalized or felt sorry for. Also, young girls feel pressured to rush into marriage, resulting in early marriages for which many youth are often unprepared. Often there are future consequences for women. For example, marriages initiated too early often result in unhappy marriages, stress, and many times abuse. Another result is a halt to women's education. Because married women are usually under their husbands monetary care, many do not feel encouraged to continue their education or may not have support from their spouse to do so. Therefore, many give up dreams of having a career, becoming entrepreneurs, or simply furthering their education. These untruths cause females' full potential to be halted, affecting women's relationships, family life, and even the economy.

Gender role stereotypes severely affect women's lives all over the United States. Whether it be mentally, professionally, or personally, all women are impacted. Women are viewed as weak even though women endure constant emotional pressure. Women are viewed as dumb even though they are as equally intelligent as men. Additionally, women are considered useless without a partner despite many women being successful and happy without a spouse. Women are constantly underestimated as a gender daily. As a nation, Americans should aspire to become an ever-evolving society that becomes inclusive and equal to all people, particularly related to

gender. Hopefully one day, young girls can be raised without stereotypes that diminish their capabilities and society no longer underestimates women, but empowers them instead.

### “Becoming a Mother,” Jessica Knight

Becoming a mother may or may not be in the plans for your life. I may want to question everything about motherhood and I even may overthink everything. Motherhood is about finding out the biggest news and making the biggest decision of a woman's life. Now I have to know when and how to start telling the people that matter and who are the people that need to know. My biggest changes start to happen, starting with my body and my emotions. As each day goes on when the baby has finally arrived I now have someone else to take care of and the biggest responsible you have ever had. With all that being said becoming a mother is the change that changes everything in my life just by that one test.

Finding out the biggest news and making the biggest decision of a woman's life all starts when you take that first test. Many thoughts go through your head, do I cry because I am happy or upset. I start to ask these questions to myself but I don't know all the answers. I know I have to take it one step at a time. The next step would be doing I keep the baby or do I do the unthinkable and not keep the baby. Knowing my options is a major part of becoming a mother. I can find help and resources at my local health department and online. Now that I know I am having a baby, it's time to tell my big secret.

I am having baby and now I have to tell the world. I really don't have to tell the world that I am having a baby but telling the people you care about is a big deal. You start asking the same questions will they be happy? Who should I tell first? What will their reaction be? If I am in a relationship and we are happy the baby's father he should always be first to know. He will be my support system and help me make the decisions that I don't have answers to. Telling the father, he is going to tell he is a dad, his reaction is a big part of my emotions. I start asking myself how do you do it to you just tell him, do you show him the test, do you go all out and make it a big surprise because this is something we have been waiting for. After knowing the way to tell him I now finally get his reaction. We are going to say he was happy and now we get to be happy for the little bundle of joy that will be arriving in nine short months. Now we both get to start making decisions like when should we tell our family, job, friends people who are just see use at the store or at other events. Telling these people on my own time frame and at any pace I seem fit. There is no time frame it is my child and now I am charge of making that decision on my own terms. As I start the challenge of telling the world I start to go through the change of being pregnant.

The changes start to happen, from my body to my emotions. My body is changing, I feel sick, tired and you may start to grow in places that haven't grown in years. Every week it's something different. My boobs hurt and I can't keep anything down. To awesome I can eat again but I feel so fat and nothing fits "We will always be marked by motherhood." Everything starts to hurt even places you never thought that could hurt. I talk to my doctor and they say "that's normal in pregnancy". My emotions are all over the place and I cannot control them. One second you are happy the next I am crying because I can't fit my favor pants. Everything is changing and I cannot stop it. I start to feel like you have no control. My body and emotions are changing but will it every be normal again. My body changes forever "We will never be the same" there will always be some part of you that you feel will never be normal again but then I find the new normal as years go by. Things are just starting to change but the biggest change has yet to come.

The baby has arrived and everyone is so overjoyed to meet the little one. Everyone wants to see pictures and come over and hold the new born baby. My mind starts to think about all the germs, what if they hurt the baby what if they don't hold it right. All the what if's. The hardest part is telling my loved one know and them getting mad at me. At the end of the day it is my baby and I have to do what you think is right for your new growing family. When I get home and all settled in. Family members have left and the father goes back to work I then realize that I now have a baby at home to take care of by myself.

My normal day isn't so normal anymore I do not have to just worry about myself but for another living person. I cannot just get up and go I have to feed and change a baby make sure the baby is well taken care of before I even get a chance to eat. I can't just get up and head to the store when I need to I now have to pack a diaper bag and make sure I have everything the baby needs from bottles, diapers, wipes, the babies favorite toy and blanket if it gets cold. I have to prepare for everything I do now. Even my bed time changes I have to feed the baby and I am use to going to bed early I have to be back up before the next day to feed the baby again and then again every three hours at the least so the only time I get to sleep is truly when the baby is sleeping even if you feel like I have a hundred other things to do and get done. Remember everyone feels defeated at first.

Just take it one day at a time. Each day you may feel like it gets easier and other days I may feel defeated. Just know I am new at this and it takes time to adjust. Everyone makes mistakes but it's how I learn from them mistakes is how you becomes a better mother. People may judge you but they don't know what I have been through and what works for me and my child just keep my head held high and ask for help when I need it.

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#### "Diversity in Marketing," Janet Smith

Diversity in marketing has become a big deal in the marketing world dating back to the 1980's. The importance of diverse marketing has become so great that it is almost imperative that it is implemented to create creativity and personality in the marketing world. The reasons I feel that the role of diverse marketing is so important is because it allows companies to market to more than one demographic and it allows for companies to be more competitive and profitable.

Marketing to more than one demographic allow companies to see their profitability margins sooner rather than later. Being able to sell products to various demographics exposes the products and services in a manner that help companies to view what works and what does not immediately. For example, a company like Neiman Marcus would usually market to high end segments, however if there was a Neiman Marcus in the middle of a low income and high-income earning market they would immediately see that those high-end earners would be the ones that can afford their items which rules out low income earning potential. Doing this not only saves time, but it also saves money that would have otherwise been spent on extra marketing.

Diverse marketing allows companies to be more competitive with their pricing. Companies can freely set their price margins and offer high end or low-end products and services without the worry of whether it is priced too high or too low. Competitive pricing helps to keep products and services offered in their correct market and minimize the forcing of a market that is clearly not there. With competition, companies are more motivated to cater to and provide the best quality products and services in these types of instances because they know that for one the consumer can go elsewhere and that there is almost a guarantee that they will get a return on their investment. A great example of this would be shoe brands like Christian Louboutin and Prada. These brands are marketed in the high earning markets, but not so much in low earning markets because the affordability would be too expensive, and the risks associated with this could hurt business revenue resulting in profit loss. However, with Adidas and Nike brands the affordability is the opposite resulting in revenue gain. The reason why is because these brands make more than one type of shoe. The pricing ranges from \$35.00 to \$500.00 plus for a pair of shoes which creates a market for the low-income people and although they may not be able to afford that \$500.00 pair of shoes, \$35.00 is still more realistic in this market versus the shoe starting at a price of \$500.00 and going up from there.

I feel that the diversity in marketing is one of the best situations that could have been created from a business standpoint. It provides products and services for everyone not just one demographic of individuals. It also gives everyone the opportunity to shop in their market without the pressure of trying to keep up with a market that is way out their league.

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#### “Overcome,” Hailey Hogan

It took forever. Honestly I never thought I would do it, and still to this day, I stress over something that is so far in the past, that at this point, it shouldn't even be so much as a memory now. When most of your life is either struggling to get stuff done on time, or, worrying about how your mind works, although it makes no sense at all, it's hard to really do anything. I was stressed, terrified, worried, and most of all confused as to why I felt any of these things. My anxiety, to most people, sounded like an excuse for why I never got things done, or why I was too “lazy” for any activity. Only recently, was I able to get it across to people, that it was and is, a very real thing. It caused nerve induced procrastination, worry induced night terrors, and constant paranoia of the everyday little thing. Take for example, a big project due with plenty of time. That shouldn't be such a problem, but for one like me, I began to immediately tell myself why I would do an awful job, and fail. Because of this, I would put it off, and instead, complete smaller assignments, because they didn't seem as menacing. As another example, I would be terrified of people, or any kind of crowd. It seems normal that you would be slightly nervous of public speaking, but I was at the extent of being terrified even in front of my own family. I was scared of judgement and the feeling of any sort of attention or eyes on me. It would scare me so much that even at family events, I would retreat to the smallest, most remote place in the vicinity where I could be completely and totally alone. I still struggle with the social anxiety to this day. But, there is good news. Although it feels that you are being controlled, you have power over it.

Anxiety does not define you, or control you, and you can and will one day overcome it, just like I did. You are stronger than you think, and know that you are not alone. You will overcome this, along with anything that ever gets in your way.