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An Interview with Dr. Uhuru Hotep, Managing Editor, Gussin Spiritan Chronicle
by J. Lewis

How long have you been writing?

Long before I picked up a pen or fingered a keyboard, I was an avid reader, a habit which persists until this day. My parents couldn’t afford a TV until I was 11-years-old. This was back in the 1950s when tell-lie-vision was brand-new technology and most Black families couldn’t afford one. So recreation time during my formative years were spent not in front of a TV set or computer screen, but in the Altamont Branch of the Spokane Public Library reading books.

I start with this history because I doubt I would have attempted to write or edit anything if I first hadn’t been an inveterate reader. I find that most serious writers and editors are also serious readers. You can’t separate the two – reading and writing – they’re opposite sides of the same coin. I published my first article in 1967.

How long have you been editing?

While in high school back in 1963, I wrote and edited articles for The Tiger, Lewis & Clark’s Black student literary journal. As an undergraduate student at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1972, I served as co-editor of the Black Student Union newsletter, Right On! And I edited my first national publication – DRUM 75 –while in graduate school at Clark Atlanta University in 1974-1975. DRUM 75 was an anthology of essays, short stories, poetry, and plays written by Atlanta-based African American writers, most of whom were friends and colleagues teaching or studying at Morehouse, Spelman or Clark Atlanta. It eventual received distribution throughout the Pan African world.

I began editing The Achiever, Duquesne’s ACT 101 newsletter in 1990. I was asked to assume managing editor responsibilities for the Chronicle. So I’ve been editing journals and newsletters for maybe 50 years.

What is the Chronicle’s purpose and who is your audience?

The Chronicle’s raison de existence is to showcase our Gussin Spiritan students who have developed solid writing skills and wish to add a journal publication to this lists of college attainments. Our audience is the entire Duquesne University family of parents, students, faculty, administrators, and staff.

How are Spiritan student writers selected for Chronicle inclusion?

Our GSD UCOR 102 faculty identify, groom and then select freshmen students who wish to have an essay written in their UCOR 102 class considered for publication in the Chronicle. Sixteen to 18 essays are submitted every December before the end of the fall semester and if they are deemed appropriate and are well-written, we publish them in the Chronicle.

How often is the Chronicle published?

The Chronicle is published biennially by the Robert and Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division of Academic Programs. Previous editions are online at duq.edu/Spiritan-division.
Fall 2015 Essays
ENDING THE GLAMORIZATION OF MURDERERS

Isaiah Denard

America’s news and entertainment media glorify murder, operating according to the slogan, “If it bleeds, it leads.” Allowing this slogan to direct news articles leaves the wrong impression in our society by encouraging violence as a means of gaining fame. In order to reduce violence in the United States, the news media must change its representation of violent criminals. Decreasing the glamorization of murderers can be accomplished by reducing media coverage and by shifting the focus from the criminal to the victim, thereby limiting the amount of interaction between criminals and the public.

Numerous murderers have become famous through mass media exposure, which demonstrates that part of the problem is the amount of media coverage they receive. For instance, Ted Bundy, one of the most famous serial killers of all time, was presented in a glamorous manner to the public, influencing women to “fall in love” with him. There was more media focus on his marriage proposals than the punishment he deserved. If the media would have shown him as the monster he was, his sex appeal would not have been so prevalent.

When murders are committed, the focal point of the story is generally the offender, not the victim. The average American knows the names of famous killers, but rarely recalls the names of their victims (Schmid). Many murderers are idolized for their horrific crimes, potentially leading to imitation. One study shows that “children could learn to be aggressive, especially if they saw the person being rewarded for the aggressive act” (“Copycat Crimes: Why Do They Happen?”). Rewarding criminals with media attention gives children and adults a reason to admire the killer, and it even drives some to become copycat killers. One way to stop the creation of copycat killers is to cease publicizing murderers and start focusing on the families of the victims. If the media emphasized the victim’s lives, there would be more focus on finding justice rather than imitating the crime.

Glamorizing criminals can lead to an increase in related crimes. People looking for attention sometimes take desperate measures to gain the same popularity as the murderer they admire. For instance, Dennis Nilsen, a British serial killer who raped, murdered and dismembered 15 men in his home, was influenced by the coverage of Jeffrey Dahmer in movies, articles, and books. Dahmer was “an American serial killer and sex offender, who raped, murdered and dismembered 17 men and boys between 1978 and 1991” (Castillo). Cancelling out Dahmer’s primetime fame would have saved 15 lives.

The media has a responsibility to inform the public, but it should not rely on sensationalism for ratings. Those who take innocent lives should not be rewarded with fame and glory.
SEXUAL ASSAULT ON CAMPUSES
Hassan Mohamed

University and college campuses constantly seek ways to address the serious issue of sexual assault. Sexual assault is the most common violent crime on university campuses today. Several ways to reduce this heinous crime include: requiring universities to increase campus surveillance. Another would be to include rape prevention courses in the academic curricula, and running background checks on incoming students.

Unsupervised areas are prime places for sexual assault to take place, so increased surveillance in these areas would reduce the risk of assault. For example, in August 2003, Chicago authorities installed cameras in Humboldt Park and West Garfield Park in highly conspicuous areas, with flashing blue lights mounted on top. Prior to the installation of cameras, Humboldt Park had experienced a brief spike in crime, with nearly 500 reported incidents in a single month. After the cameras were installed, crime dropped 20 percent the following month and stayed low (“Study Shows…”). While it helps deter all types of crime, enhanced surveillance would definitely deter sexual assault and thereby increase the safety of students.

Sexual assault and rape prevention classes should be mandatory for all students. Generally speaking, mandatory classes are taken seriously, while electives are not. These classes would benefit students on and off campus. Most students are not aware of the things that may make them vulnerable. Classes can provide both mental and physical strategies to prevent sexual assault. Another successful step is educating students about date rape drugs. These drugs are powerful and dangerous, and are often without color, taste, and smell (Maltz 2001). Proper education can help would-be victims to avoid being drugged.

Background checks are valuable in many professions. In fact, schools frequently background check staff to ensure the safety of students. Running background checks on students would ensure the safety of both the university and the students. A background check enables the university to better select students for admission. These checks reveal criminal records, driving records, and also violent histories (“Violence Prevention HRO”), resulting in better safety for everyone on campus.

The steps taken by government and university officials have not been completely successful in resolving all sexual
assaults. Other reforms and solutions are needed to support the goal of security from sexual assault for all students on college campuses.

**Works Cited**


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**BETTER DRUG LAWS**

Seth Stelma

Law enforcement has failed to keep drugs off the streets, suggesting that new laws and new methods may be needed. European countries have more lenient drug and alcohol laws, but they tend to have fewer drug-related problems. For instance, Portugal has benefited from decriminalizing most drugs. European countries overall seem to have more logical drug laws than the United States.

European countries were allowed to make their own drug policies according to the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotics in 1961. At that time, they chose what would decrease drug use the best, according to Christopher Gatto. Then came the Frankfurt Resolution, which “decriminalized the purchase, possession, and consumption of cannabis (marijuana) and supported the controlled legal trade of cannabis and cannabis products” (Gatto). Giving offenders small fines similar to a parking ticket kept the European prison population down, leading to many social benefits (Gatto).

In Europe, most countries distinguish between hard and soft drugs. For example, The Netherlands have left “hard” drugs as a criminalized form of drug possession; this includes cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and other highly addictive substances (Gatto). “Hard” drugs are dangerous chemicals that have the potential to ruin lives. “Soft” drugs are non-addictive, psychoactive substances that are not physically addicting. Most European countries have decriminalized soft drugs. According to Tony O’Neil, the drug laws in Europe actually led to a long-term decrease in overall drug use.

Another reason why America needs to consider decriminalizing drugs is the failure of the “War on Drugs.” This war was launched by President Nixon in 1971 to end drug abuse among young people (“A Brief History of the Drug War”). Many people have been jailed due to the “War on Drugs,” and according to Matt Winterbourne, “…the U.S. currently holds one-quarter of the world’s incarcerated population, largely due to arrests for nonviolent, drug-related offenses.”
The War on Drugs is using vast amounts of tax dollars with little to no positive effect, and incarcerates harmless offenders for victimless crimes. European governments have effective laws for drug possession offenses. They attack problems at the root instead of exacerbating them. Portugal has experienced positive results from decriminalizing all drugs, and it is saving the country from addiction and disease.

The “War on Drugs” has been a complete failure and a waste of money. Changes in drug laws must become a reality in the United States before any real progress can be made.

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THE HUNGER FOR A BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Zowie Walsh

The American education system ignores students who live in poverty, instead giving money to schools that earn the highest test scores. This is unfair because poor students do not get the same opportunities as others. Schools in upper-income areas normally receive money from the government for their high test scores. These schools have more resources, so (unsurprisingly) they also get the majority of the funding. School funding should not be based on highest test scores; it should be allotted to schools in impoverished areas for better services, including more counselors and teachers.

Children who live in poverty generally deal with more problems outside of school than children from families with higher incomes. Mental health problems and physical disabilities are common among children in poverty. According to Shannon Stagman, “Fifty-seven percent of…children and youth with mental health problems come from households living at or below the federal poverty level” (Stagman).

Making things worse, they may have to deal with an untreated mental disability while trying to practice for standardized tests. This is why schools that serve the poor need more counselors trained to work with disabled children. Having more and better
counselors improves children’s chances for success.

It is very important that poorer schools receive more funding so they can help kids gain the opportunity to build relationships and gain self-confidence. At home, some of these children do not always learn positive values, self-confidence, and how to have healthy relationships. When this happens, schools might be the only place where they can learn these vital skills.

Even when these students graduates, they will need these abilities in order to make good choices, get jobs, and live successful lives. Learning these skills in school will make them more self-confident and better able to make the right choices, so that they can eventually break of the cycle of poverty (Strauss).

Children in poverty need teachers who understand that they are intelligent. Unfortunately, impoverished schools often have teachers who are less qualified than instructors in wealthy areas. Johnson agrees, “When we as educators understand and embrace this truth, outcomes for children who live in poverty will change” (Johnson). Kids need highly-qualified teachers who respect their potential, and who are willing and able to give them the extra attention they need.

Every child should have an opportunity to get an education and succeed. Educational researchers generally agree that, “children growing up in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty and unemployment are much less likely to graduate from high school” (Burns). With more resources, experienced counselors, and caring teachers, these students would have a better chance to get a quality education and live a better life.

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A THORN IN THE SIDE OF CHINA

Ean Wise

Human trafficking is one of the oldest and most prevalent crimes in human history. The People’s Republic of China is no exception to this rule. The influx of immigrants and the economic downturn has not helped the current situation in most parts of southern China (“UNIAP China”). China, however, has not turned “a blind eye” to the crime of human trafficking. The State Council of China issued a Plan of Action on December 13, 2007: “…to effectively prevent and severely combat … trafficking in women and children… and give appropriate aftercare to rescued women and children… (“China”).” While China has
paid closer attention to human trafficking over the past few years, its progress is slow and ineffective. To make the Chinese government’s fight against human trafficking more effective, China and other countries should utilize third party private military contractors.

Military contractors have become more common in international conflicts since the end of the Cold War (Stanger and Williams, 4). These third parties are known as PMCs (private military contractor). For the U.S., PMCs were extremely effective during the early phases of the “War on Terror” (Stanger and Williams, 8). Most PMCs have world-class personnel and equipment. In the *Yale Journal of International Affairs: Private Military Corporations: Benefits and Costs of Outsourcing Security*, two points supporting PMCs were emphasized: policy flexibility and greater military agility.

The majority of private military companies lack national allegiance; this aids policy flexibility. Being the cornerstone of Asia, with multiple island and landlocked nations surrounding it, China experiences tense political situations. Having a third party in these tense areas would be operationally sound, increase arrests, and create greater enforcement presence in the less patrolled areas of China and Indochina. Time is a factor in many trafficking cases, so being able to efficiently and quickly deploy individuals to areas to make large scale arrests is a priority for many contractors. PMC’s take pride in their quick deployment speed and skill sets (“Protect”). Utilizing a private company would increase the ability of the Chinese people to win the war on human trafficking in China.

China has a long and proud history. Their unique way of life should not be impeded by a crime that takes the helpless and turns them into profit. Stopping human trafficking in this region of the world will not be an easy task. However, the rest of the world is willing to see this trade stopped on all fronts. With the aid of PMCs, China could be the first nation to completely eradicate human trafficking.

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EFFECTS OF SUICIDE AMONGST FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Matthew Kajfez

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education” reports that depression impacts 20-25 percent of the U.S. population. Sadly, medication cannot permanently cure people suffering from depression. Those who suffer from severe depression often believe that suicide is a solution to their problems. Suicidal depression is one of the most devastating problems in American society because it can lead to an increased risk of death, and the tragic loss of human potential.

In “The Impact of Suicide on Family and Friends,” Julie Cerel, John Jordan, and Paul Duberstein mentioned a study that compares widows who commit suicide to those who die in car accidents. They claim that “women whose husbands had died by suicide experienced more guilt and blaming in their families than widows who lost a husband in an accident” (38). Often, people who feel responsible for another’s death struggle with their own pain and depression.

“Other Factors Contributing to Suicide Risk” discusses how grief from witnessing depression leads quickly to suicide: “People who've undergone significant loss may feel emotionally devastated and completely alone in the world” (Reiss and Dombeck). It is a vicious cycle because the bereaved struggle with depression and may consider suicide also.

Aside from the devastating effects suicide has on a victims’ loved ones, suicide ends the life of a person who has the potential to contribute to society. The most recent high profile suicide was that of comedian Robin Williams. People were shocked at William’s death. While he made people laugh throughout his career, Williams suffered from severe depression and substance abuse (Heine). In an interview, Williams discussed his perception of life, “It's the same voice thought that ... you're standing at a precipice and you look down, there's a voice and it's a little quiet voice that goes, ‘Jump’” (Heine). William’s decision to take his own life left many people devastated. It also deprived the world of his creativity and talent. Each time a person takes his or her life, the world is robbed of that person’s potential contributions.

Suicide has a tremendous impact on the people close to the victim, and on the world at large. Fortunately, there are many ways to reduce the number of suicides. The first step is to develop awareness, paying attention to words and actions of loved ones. Secondly, family and friends must use all available resources to help those suffering with depression, including a variety of medical facilities, psychological methods, and support groups. Finally, those who would help loved ones with depression must learn to help themselves, using all available resources to maintain their own mental health and well-being.

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REPARATIONS: AN UNDYING STRUGGLE
Marcelius Lewis II

In many ways, slavery defines “The Land of the Free.” Slavery was a staple in American society, and a major tool in its foundation. After the 13th Amendment ended slavery, those who suffered from it and their descendants never received compensation.

This dilemma has led to discussion surrounding slave reparations. Other minorities who have faced genocide and inequalities such as the Jews, and Japanese Americans have received reparations, leaving many to question when will Blacks receive theirs. As these other ethnic groups have received compensations, Black Americans should receive reparations based upon the destruction of their culture, and hundreds of years of violent abuses.

The destruction of culture and its lasting effects includes denying education for African slaves. Africans brought to America, immediately experienced the destruction of their culture. Africans were purposefully separated from people from their ethnic group, thereby destroying their languages and traditions.

“There was a conscious effort by the slave owners to remove the identity of the slaves. Often Africans went on board a slave ship naked, with no belongings from their previous life” (PortCitiesBristol). The elimination of African culture and African education created African dependency on a system meant to fail them.

Slavery put Blacks at a disadvantage from birth by eliminating their right to learn. The effects can still be seen in the Black community. With the end of slavery, Black people received inadequate teaching and resources. Holzman, a writer for the Washington Post wrote, “Similarly, a black student in a segregated, under-resourced, urban school, even a black student from a middle-class family, is unlikely to receive an education that will graduate him from high school on-time and college- or career ready” (The Washington Post). Blacks inevitably failed in low-income communities with poor school systems as a result of slavery. This has had a lasting effect on their communities. Reparations could be used to fund schools in Black communities.

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CHANGE IS BREWING

Carly Malezi

In the United States today, coffee plays a big role in the food industry, making it the second most traded item. The U.S. purchases coffee from Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, Vietnam, and Columbia. The estimated income of the Global Coffee Industry is roughly $60 billion a year; although, less than 10% of those earnings go to countries where it is produced; the wages of the laborers end up being less than 0.5%.

Ending these inequalities are where Fair Trade plays a major role. All coffee should be Fair Trade because it benefits the farmers, improves community development and environmental conservancy.

Walking through the supermarket you can see many coffee brands. The main thing you notice is the price, who would not pick the cheaper price? Fair Trade coffee is more expensive than regular coffee. However, could you imagine not being able to adequately provide for your family by not being able to feed or shelter them? Fearing that your children may not have the opportunity to receive an education? Without Fair Trade, coffee farmers in Columbia face these challenges.

In 1989, the International Coffee Agreement broke down; this was an agreement on quotas. In result, the coffee industry entered the free market, governed by supply and demand. The big coffee roasters control around 50% of the world’s coffee market. These roasters have been able to force down the prices that they are paying mainly to small farmers. This price reduction has caused small farm producers, specifically in Colombia, to be unable to support their families, unable to supply their children with education and health care, and finally unable to lift their communities from poverty.

Fair Trade in Colombia has made a dramatic impact on many farmers’ lives. The amount that the grower received before Fair Trade was three cents; it is now increased to eight cents. The Fair Trade premium price goes to the farming communities to invest in education, clean water, health care, job training, and other services not provided by the government. This extra income opens the door to many opportunities for the farmer and their families.

In the end, is that extra three dollars you spend on your “caffeine fix” to help a farmer’s life worth it? Next time you’re strolling down the aisle of your local supermarket and sigh at the price difference between regular coffee and Fair Trade certified coffee; remember the grin on the farmer’s face who was able to provide for their family. Remember the child who was able to receive the gift of education or health...
care. That extra three dollars contributed to an effort to end poverty. Fair Trade coffee is just a little way we can give back to the farmers financially, for community development, and environmental conservancy. As Americans, we rely on coffee for energy; these Colombian producers rely on coffee to live.

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WHY GET HIGH?
Tom Peltekis

Most Americans do not recognize how the medical benefits of marijuana could help our country. In fact, we sell millions of dollars’ worth of prescription drugs that cause thousands of deaths each year, yet marijuana is illegal and it has not caused a single death. The United States of America should federally legalize marijuana because there are numerous medical benefits.

Marijuana’s main campaign for legalization is backed up by its incredible medical benefits. For example, “scientific study of the chemicals in marijuana, called cannabinoids, has led to two FDA-approved medications that contain cannabinoid chemicals in pill form. Continued research may lead to more medications.” One of the most intriguing and important medical benefits from marijuana is its ability to help chemotherapy patients. The two main cannabinoids, THC and CBD found in medical marijuana are being used for medical purposes. “THC increases appetite and reduces nausea. The FDC-approved THC-based medications are used for these purposes. THC may also decrease pain, inflammation (swelling and redness), and muscle control problems.”

Meanwhile, “CBD is a cannabinoid that does not affect the mind or behavior. It may be useful in reducing pain and inflammation, controlling epileptic seizures, and possibly even treating mental illness and addictions” (National Institute of Drug Abuse). Cancer patients often say that the chemotherapy is the worst thing about cancer. Finding a way to ease the pain for these patients is very challenging. Medical marijuana can relieve symptoms of pain and nausea, and increase appetite.

Colorado started selling recreational marijuana and millions of dollars have been made in tax revenue. In fact, “on January 1, 2015, when recreational weed became legally available to Colorado consumers, 24 pot shop owners across the state believe they collectively made more than one million dollars in a single day of business” (Miles). Estimates say that the U.S. government
could make anywhere from ten billion to $120 billion in taxes. In addition, marijuana could become the largest cash crop in America by far, passing corn and wheat.

The United States now has four states that have legalized marijuana, and each state is effectively bringing in millions of dollars in revenue. Meanwhile, with legalization we can assure that the consumers are getting the best quality and safest forms of marijuana possible from dispensaries. Dispensaries are comfortable environments where consumers can buy their product, which is one hundred percent safe and legal.

The United States has legalized prescription drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, which leads to hundreds of thousands of deaths each year. Marijuana can possibly replace hundreds of prescription pills that cause so many deaths. The legalization of this cash crop can turn our country around in the right direction both socially and economically.

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"DrugFacts: Is Marijuana Medicine?"


DEFORESTATION NATION
Camri Vrabel

Communities that live close to the boreal forest take the resources it provides and use them to their advantage. This becomes a problem when large companies take their forest resources without permission, and turns the area that was once hearty with trees into a flat, dirt lot.

A great deal of the deforestation problem we have in the world today is in the boreal forest in Canada. Deforestation needs fixing and can be reduced by ending illegal forest logging, which not only affect the forest itself but also the people living near the forest.

An article in The Wall Street Journal called, “The Cry in Canada's Boreal Forest: Logger, Spare That Tree—As Cutting Moves Deeper Into Unharvested Areas, Critics Push for Rules,” discusses how people are pressing provincial governments in Canada to end illegal logging. In addition to irresponsible logging, there are issues with replanting after deforestation.
Replacing trees is something illegal loggers refuse to do, and without that essential practice, they really are making the boreal forest extinct. When the boreal forest is degraded through logging, large amounts of greenhouse gas are causing other environmental problems.

“The burning of fossil fuels,” according to Christy Ferguson, one of the authors of *Turning up the Heat: Global Warming and the Degradation of Canada’s Boreal Forest* “is the number one contributor to greenhouse gas emission, accounting for 75 percent of emission worldwide” (Ferguson 43). This puts the boreal forest in a more vulnerable position to global warming.

The only way to resolve this problem is by letting trees in the boreal forest do their job. With the ability to measure GHG emissions from deforestation, scientist find that, “forest cover can be measured at the global, national and regional levels using satellite mapping technologies together with information from on-the-ground surveys.”

This shows the actual cause and effect relationships with deforestation particularly in the boreal forest. This way of preservation is different; it is not directly saving the forest, but ultimately saving the forest to save us humans. It is not hard to understand what the actions to take. Degrading the forest will only harm us, so this issue needs to be taken seriously so that the boreal forest is not put at risk.

The deforestation of the boreal forest has been escalating over the years through illegal logging and greenhouse gas emissions. There are organizations and scientists trying to prevent these things from happening by making sure that the trees that are being cut are under strict rule and regulation, preserving enough trees so global warming does not become a bigger problem, and ideally informing every one of the problem at hand. There are ways to decrease deforestation in the boreal forest, but it requires participation from everyone.

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**PREVENTING OBESITY**

Jayna Antoine

Grade school children consume sizeable amounts of unhealthy, processed foods that are provided daily by their school cafeterias. The unhealthy campus environment and poor quality of school lunches are contributing to the problem of childhood obesity. One out of every three American children is currently overweight or obese (“Overweight...
and Obesity”). Jamie Oliver, a famous chef who fights against unhealthy school lunches, says, "What we eat affects everything: our mood, behavior, health, growth, even our ability to concentrate." Child obesity can lead to immediate and negative long-term health effects. With the addition of healthy food options, regulated portion sizes, and education on healthy living, obesity rates among elementary school students can decrease.

The first solution to tackle obesity in elementary schools is to incorporate healthy food options into lunch menus. School lunches play a big role in a child’s nutritional life. An article entitled, “Lessons from the Lunchroom” by Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, says, “Children consume about half of their daily calories at school; for low-income children, school lunch may be their only real meal of the day and the foods kids eat at school influence their lifelong eating habits” (Haynes-Maslow). The processed food items in their lunch menus should be replaced with natural and locally grown produce. Processed foods lack fiber content, and this can lead to the consumption of more calories in a short amount of time (Gunnars).

A second solution to prevent obesity is to regulate portion sizes, which play a huge role and is linked to increased energy intake. Children will consume large amounts of food because more is available to them. In The Journal of Nutrition, Hook shows the correlation between portion size and food consumption. In this study, 180 adults were given either a 9-ounce or 13-ounce portion of macaroni and cheese, and to their surprise, the adults with the 13-ounce portions consumed 43% more of their food than the other participants. This research showed that the people would consume more if they were provided larger portions. If schools provide kids with larger servings of food, they’ll be prone to overeat, which contributes to unhealthy weight gain.

A third solution to prevent obesity is to educate young people how to live a healthy lifestyle by allowing them to grow their own produce. In these classes, children learn to improve their diet and stay active. This experience will not only teach students about agriculture, it will also help them gain knowledge of the importance of including fruits, vegetables, and grains in their diet. The healthy choices that children learn in school can make an impact on their lives at home. There are programs operating all over the world such as, “The Edible Schoolyard Project” and, “School Gardening,” which work to educate children about gardening. If all schools could begin programs similar to these, it would make a difference.

Obesity is a growing problem in our country that needs to be solved. The implementation of a better lunch menu, regulated portion sizes, and nutrition courses will help to slow down obesity rates and help children feel comfortable in their own skins. Classrooms that were once filled with sluggish, zombie-like children would soon be filled with alert and healthy learners, who will perform better academically and who will live longer and healthier lives.

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FOLLOW, EMBRACE, UNDERSTAND: GRAFFITI IS ART

Joseph Cohen

Art is the expression of human creative skill and imagination, but vandalism is the deliberate destruction or damage to public or private property—where does graffiti stand between the two, is it vandalism or is it art? Graffiti has a very ancient past, it has been found on Roman ruins and even on prehistoric caves. Graffiti artists, then as now, write on walls to express emotion, skill, and also, unfortunately, gang relations. However, despite its drawbacks, I would argue that graffiti should be considered art, and we should appreciate the graffiti artist’s passion, expressiveness, and creativity.

The biggest problem with graffiti as art arise from its perceived link to gangs. The Los Angeles Police Department states “gang members use graffiti to mark their territory or turf, declare their allegiance to their gang, advertise a gang’s status or power, and to challenge rivals” (LAPD). Gang tags are not perceived as art, but this gives true graffiti artists their undeserved bad reputation.

Heather MacDonald wrote in The New York Times that “there is nothing ‘progressive’ about allowing public amenities to be defaced by graffiti; anyone who can avoid a graffiti-bombed park or commercial thoroughfare will do so, since tagging shows that an area is dominated by vandals who may be involved in other crimes as well” (MacDonald). She argues that graffiti defines and even claims an area for a particular gang, but she only sees graffiti in a purely negative light, as a crime and not a means of personal expression – as art. However, Carla Krueger, author of Tales from a Twisted Home, agrees with the fact that graffiti is art, as she states, “Blank walls are a shared canvas and we're all artists.” (Krueger).

Graffiti is art in its rawest form. It is the language of the streets, the language of those trying to make sense out of the harsh realities of their world. Banksy, the most influential graffiti artist of them all, emphasizes this very point when he says: “Graffiti is one of the few tools you have if you have almost nothing. And even if you don't come up with a picture to cure world poverty you can make someone smile while they're having a piss” (Banksy). It seems that more people are starting to understand that graffiti shouldn’t be viewed as vandalism. Nothing can be done to stop the graffiti movement; all one can do is follow, embrace, and understand it as an art form.

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DIVERSION PROGRAMS FOR MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS

Nahdiya Oliver

According to many sources, the United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. However, according to a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than half of U.S. prisoners have a mental health problem; with 56% in State prisons, 45% in Federal prisons, and 64% within jails (BJS). According to the Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC), by the 1970s, “it was becoming evident that the emptying of the state mental hospitals had resulted in a marked increase in the number of mentally-ill individuals in jails and prisons” (Jails and Prisons). There are now ten times more individuals with mental illnesses in prisons and jails than in state mental hospitals. To solve the problem, state and local governments should invest in jail diversion programs to give mentally-ill offenders a safer environment to receive treatment for their illnesses.

Many American prisons lack the treatment facilities needed by mentally-ill prisoners. A 1992 study found that the majority of U.S. jails do not provide adequate psychiatric services to inmates with serious brain disorders. According to the TAC, “more than one in five jails have no access to mental health services of any kind” (Jails and Prisons).

When prisoners are lacking treatment for their mental illness, their condition starts to worsen and intensify by their incarceration. Also, without treatment for their illnesses, mentally-ill prisoners “[are at] higher risk for correctional rehabilitation treatment failure and future recidivism after release from prison”, says Hannah Rhodes Division of Epidemiology, University of Texas. Prisons lack trained personnel needed to provide the necessary service for mental patients.

Jail diversion programs provide proper treatment to mentally-ill offenders. They also create a safer environment for mentally-ill offenders. Rich Holloway of Colorado Technical University writes that “[on] average, mentally-ill inmates…are more likely to be victimized by other inmates, [and] are more likely to be involved in violence while incarcerated” (Holloway). This makes life in jail a dangerous experience for the mentally ill.

With mentally-ill inmates being separated from the non-mentally-ill inmates in a jail diversion program, they are less likely to be associated with violence that may put them in harm's way. Providing mentally-ill individuals with diversion programs will provide them with effective mental health care and enhance public safety by making jail space available for violent offenders (Jail Diversion).
Jail diversion programs should be created for mentally-ill offenders so they can be treated for their disorders in a safe environment and prepared for the real world after release. No one should ever be shut off from resources that can improve them as individuals, especially those with mental disorders. Jail diversion programs give mentally-ill offenders a chance to better their conditions and to live life on their own upon release.

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**THE SOLUTION TO POLLUTION IS DILUTION**

Angelica Pokora

About ten million pounds of plastic is produced each year, and ten percent of it ends up in our oceans. Its impact on water pollution and wildlife is immense. More than a million sea birds and mammals are killed each year by ingesting plastic waste (National Geographic).

The biggest human health risk is dirty water (Water). Water pollution is the greatest threat to the environment, but it can be prevented by disposing toxic chemicals properly, avoiding plastic when possible, and cleaning beaches and waterways.

When thinking about harmful chemicals, you would be surprised at how many are in your everyday life. These chemicals are bad for you, and they can
bring destruction to waterways and landfills when they are not disposed of properly. Containing harmful chemicals and traces of birth control, sunscreen, pesticides, and petroleum, our planet’s waterways are becoming a chemical cocktail (Marine Pollution). However, the weak laws do not give people the right to be careless with our waterways. When disposing of chemicals and their containers, find a chemical recycling resource around your community. If you’re unsure about a local facility, you can learn more about disposal requirements through the EPA.

The consumption of plastic by humans each year peaks between 250 and 300 million tons. About 80 percent of plastics in the ocean came from the land (LoveToKnow). Using alternatives to plastic like paper products, or using less disposable plastics whenever possible would have an astonishing impact on waterway pollution (LoveToKnow). For storage, instead of using plastics, switch to glass. Glass is a smarter choice because it does not retain food smells and is much easier to clean than plastic.

Whenever you visit a popular beach, you will almost always see trash left behind by beachgoers. Bottles, wrappers, and other trash are common at many well-known beaches around the world. Plastics are a notably big issue when it comes to contamination around waterways, beaches, and rivers (LoveToKnow). To stop water pollution, take part and clean up litter while enjoying the beach. To really help the environment, organize cleaning parties. If finding people to get involved is tough, get businesses as sponsors who are willing to donate prizes to whoever collects the most trash; make an exciting game out of it.

Water pollution is a global problem that requires evaluation and revisions of water source policy at all levels. The effect of water pollution is not only damaging to the plants and animals, but also harmful to humans. Water pollution is one of the leading causes for death, killing about 14,000 people per day. In order to keep people, animals, and plants out of harm’s way, let’s clean up pollution.

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FROM CHAMPIONS TO CHEATERS: HOW THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS MADE IT TO SUPER BOWL XLIX

Alexander Taylor

In the National Football League there have been many scandals, but nothing more notable than the incident in the 2015 AFC Championship game between the New England Patriots and the
Indianapolis Colts. The Patriots would end up winning the game 45-7, but the turning point came in the second quarter when Patriots quarterback, Tom Brady, threw an interception. The Colts defender noticed that the ball felt deflated and brought it to the public’s attention.

This incident became better known as “Deflategate,” which has been an ongoing investigation since mid-January. The NFL hired Ted Wells, a criminal attorney, to investigate the New England Patriots, and determine if they cheated by having the footballs under the legal air pressure regulations. Wells’ report successfully argues that the Patriots cheated during the AFC Championship game based on the video footage of Jim McNally and the use of statistics in the report.

Wells’ report is effective because it references the video that captured McNally’s actions before the game. McNally is a former locker room attendant for the New England Patriots. Wells’ stated there was video evidence released showing McNally carrying two bags of footballs in the stadium and taking them in the bathroom before the game (Wells et al.). He did this without permission from the referees and the League. Walt Anderson, one of the AFC Championship referees, states this “had never happened before in his career.”

He was interviewed by NFL security after the game and never mentioned anything about bringing the balls to the bathroom. McNally states he “went directly to the field,” lying to security (“Key Takeaways from Ted Wells Report”). As the evidence shows, McNally took the bags with the footballs in them without permission, and lied about the incident. Wells strengthens his arguments by using reliable visual evidence of the incidence. Since the investigation, McNally has been fired from the Patriots’ organization.

Wells’ report is strong because it used statistical evidence obtained from NFL officials. During the second quarter, when Brady threw an interception, the Colts defender noticed that the ball felt deflated, and brought that to public attention after the game. During half time, officials went to the Patriots locker room without either team knowing. They took eleven Patriots footballs to measure the psi (pounds per square inch) level in each. All eleven were under the standard 12.5 psi level, making them ineligible (Cantu).

This piece of evidence recorded in Wells’ report insinuates the Patriots tried to gain an advantage during the game to ensure they would make it to the Super Bowl. By Wells’ showing McNally’s actions before the game and the psi statistics, it confirms his argument that the Patriots cheated to get an advantage. The NFL now has statistical proof that the Patriots footballs were not filled to the correct psi level.

The Patriots have been punished; they were fined one million dollars, lost several draft picks, and Brady was suspended for the first four games of the upcoming season, which was ultimately upheld (“Tom Brady Appeal of Suspension Concludes in New York”). The use of evidence strengthens Wells’ arguments in the report and therefore helps prove that the Patriots cheated during the AFC championship game.

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STOP CORRUPTING AMERICAN STUDENTS

Matt Waggoner

We have all gone through it before; sitting in a classroom that feels more like a jail, and not realizing that the test you are taking will impact your future. Standardized testing has been a staple of the American education system for decades; however, there are many educators who find them a hindrance to a student’s learning career.

Standardized tests unfairly assess students’ knowledge; create rifts in teacher’s curriculum and cause unnecessary stress for students. Standardized testing should be eliminated altogether in order to make way for alternate methods of assessing students’ knowledge, which would allow teachers to teach more freely and to reduce unnecessary stress upon students.

The SAT, for example, is conducted in classroom on a Saturday morning. Students sit for hours writing and answering questions. For some, like myself, this can be very difficult. Concentrating for that length of time is hard, and with all the pressure of what is at stake, the mind can begin to lose focus, resulting in missing questions one may already know. This is an unfair assessment of what they have learned.

There is so much pressure riding on this test and it should not have the big impact on college admissions as it does. It is not a fair to have students attend school for twelve years, just to have it all comes down to one test. Testing begins as early as third grade in some states, but preparation starts well before that.

The Alliance for Childhood conducted a study in 2009 in which “time for play in most public kindergartens has dwindled to the vanishing point, replaced by lengthy lessons and standardized testing.” (Procon) It has been found that younger students often suffer severe stress when it comes to taking standardized tests. The Stanford-9 Exam has gone so far as to give instructions to the teachers in case students vomits on their test booklet (Procon).

Eliminating standardized testing would not only benefit students, but teachers as well. Standardized testing has forced teachers to change their curriculum to fit the content of the test. They cannot be creative or innovative; instead they have to teach in a way that reflects well on tests. A 2007 study from the University of Maryland revealed the pressure that teachers were feeling to “teach to the test” was leading to “declines in teaching higher-order thinking, in the
amount of time spent on complex assignments and in the actual amount of high cognitive content in the curriculum.” (Procon).

Standardized tests cause schools to narrow their curriculum. The Center on Education Policy conducted a study and found that 44% of schools have cut time spent on social studies, science and the arts by 145 minutes per week. (Procon) Students then are held back from a full education, because they are just learning what they need to know in order to perform well on tests. These tests have not improved student achievement at all. Since the No Child Left Behind act was passed in 2002, the U.S has fallen from 18th to 31st in the world in education. (Procon)

With such a tight curriculum, teachers cannot teach students the important lessons of life. Standardized testing does not teach students about the real world. In fact it gives them a false image of life. Most of the test questions are multiple choice, which gives students the idea that there are only right or wrong answers, and that is not the case in the real world (Procon).

While getting good grades is important, standardize testing does not help students prepare to become successful. It teaches them to be good test takers, but not to be productive. China is known to have very smart people, but one thing they do is teach for the test. They teach their students to do well on tests, but fail them in preparing them for a higher education. Chinese educators have admitted that this way of teaching has led to “competent mediocrity” among Chinese adults (Procon).

Standardized testing should be eliminated in order to make way for alternate methods to assess student intelligence, as well as to allow teachers to teach freely and reduce stress upon students.

If colleges stop requiring standardized testing as a prerequisite for admission, and school boards stop making teachers “teach to the test” our next generation will be a lot more successful, and not at “competent mediocrity” like China. My proposal is to get rid of standardized testing completely. Let students use the four years of high school to prove themselves, not four hours.

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Spring 2016 Essays
Welcoming Language
Nichole Brash

Willkommen! This is the German word for “welcome!“ More Americans should start welcoming people from other nations in their native tongue. Even though learning a new language can be time-consuming and difficult, the benefits of being multilingual far outweigh the challenges. The long-term outcome of learning a language strengthens the brain, makes other languages learnable, creates cultural understanding, and makes people more employable.

“Learning a language means brain power,” notes Christine Dell’Amore. She argues that learning a language can help prevent Alzheimer’s disease and improve cognitive function. Citing a study from York University that discusses that children tend to be more creative, are better problem solvers, and score higher on literacy tests after they have learned a second language. Dell’Amore further argues that elderly people who had spoken two languages concurrently their whole lives also performed better on tests that measure cognitive function.

Furthermore, she notes, when the brain is kept active, the chance of Alzheimer’s disease decreases. This is based on a study by Bialystok, who discovered that bilingual patients are diagnosed with the Alzheimer's about four years later, on average, than monolinguals. Despite when languages are learned, learners can only improve themselves.

In addition to improving one’s cognitive abilities, McArthur notes, learning an additional language also makes learning other languages easier to learn because of cognates, similar vocabulary, and grammar rules in language groups such as Romance, Germanic, Chinese, and Arabic. If improving cognitive ability and strengthening a skill set is not enough reason to become multilingual, learning additional languages also enhances one’s understanding and awareness of other cultures.

One comes to learn what is and is not socially appropriate. Sie is the formal form of you, not the familiar du, as my German teacher Mr. Donahue learned the hard way as a student after insulting German women. Cultural understanding is important because what is expected can dramatically change from one culture to another culture, but through awareness, language learners gain more knowledge about other cultures and hence gain respect for the lives of others.

Finally, multilingual skills make one more employable. A background in a foreign language will provide more opportunities. Carlotta Stephens, a Cert RP Commercial Director for Rosetta Stone, explains, “Having an additional language can make a huge difference to a candidate when it comes to employability” (qtd. In Shacklock). Shacklock notes that this skill shows that a person is teachable, and besides being a translator, multilingual people can be a marketing manager, financial consultant or controller, and recruitment consultant. There are even unique jobs like video game tester, which involves translating content
and scripts into other languages. Hence, learning a second language may not only make one’s job applications look better, it can also provide a wide variety of career options.

Multilingual employees are valued assets. No matter what age monolinguals learn another language, they will greatly benefit. Language acquisition beyond one’s native tongue highlights one’s adaptability, creativity, understanding of diversity, and provides an economic edge.

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Drunk Driving: A Reconsideration of Our Preventive Strategies

Amanda Buckley

On December 22, 2013, Pittsburgh’s WTAE Action News, broadcasted a story entitled “Driver Sentenced in Fatal DUI Crash on Route 51.” It recounted the tragedy of James Posey, his young daughter, and his two nieces, who were struck by a speeding vehicle that crossed the centerline of Saw Mill Run Boulevard. The girls survived, but Mr. Posey was not so fortunate. The driver of the opposing vehicle’s blood alcohol content was .0264%, which happens to be three times greater than the legal driving limit. These stories are all too common in Pittsburgh. Drunk driving is a real threat in our local community.

Something needs to change. Drunk driving, which is defined as “operating a motor vehicle while drunk,” (“Drunk Driving”) causes numerous fatalities each year, despite countless legal consequences. Driving under the influence puts the driver’s life and many others’ lives at risk, and people are too often faced with the guilt of taking another’s life through tragedy. Legal threats do not seem to be solving the problem. H. Laurence Ross argues that drunk driving is not prevented by punishments administered through our criminal justice system, which leads one to ask this question: How can the city of
Pittsburgh reduce the number of drunk-driving-related crashes?

I propose that Pittsburgh reduce drunk driving by offering breathalyzers in bars, setting up a “call an Uber” program, and in time install breathalyzers in all new vehicles. People may be less likely to drive drunk if these preventative measures were taken.

Bars could have a large impact on drunk driving if they made it their obligation to find their drunk customers a ride home. If bars simply took the responsibility to call their intoxicated customers an Uber or Lyft, these accidents could be prevented. An even simpler solution would be for the bars to install breathalyzers to check their customer’s BAC. This would allow people to know if they are capable of operating a vehicle.

Lastly, and most challenging, if Pittsburgh were to lead a call to the nation to push for legislation that requires all new vehicles to install breathalyzers, things might change. McCurley notes that many states already require drivers convicted of drinking and driving to install ignition interlock devices (IIDs) in their vehicles and has dramatically reduced the number of repeat offenders. Why are we not using this technology in all our vehicles? This would prevent people from even having a chance to start their cars if their BAC were at .08 or higher.

To put it simply, Americans need to look at the bigger picture and realize drunk driving is something that is preventable. With the right mentality, everyone can change the dramatic outcome of drunk driving. Although these proposed solutions may not have an immediate impact, I am hopeful that over time they will reduce the number of lives negatively impacted by drunk driving and protect people from a vicious cycle of tragedy.

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The Value of College Athletes

Brandon Scott

College athletes have entertained fans for decades. Sporting events attract fans from all across the country, bringing in large sums of money for college athletic programs. "In 1952 the
NCAA legalized the use of athletic scholarships for the purpose of attracting qualified student-athletes to their sports programs” (History of Sports Scholarships). Ever since, there has been a huge debate around whether or not college student athletes should be paid. I argue that they should.

College athletic programs offer scholarships to athletes, but do not allow them to receive outside money, college athletes are part of a multimillion-dollar industry full of televised athletic events. Many athletes come from low-income homes, and other than having school paid for, they do not have enough money to handle day-to-day expenses. There is also a large sum of money made from student athletes, who may or may not end up becoming a professional athlete.

Finally, because collegiate athletes consume so much time, student athletes may not get the education they were promised. Maurice Peebles notes that paying student athletes could help solve these problems and ease their financial strain.

If student athletes were paid to play while in college, they would have enough money to pay for their day-to-day expenses. Most students offered a scholarship do not receive other monetary stipends from outside sources. Hayes notes, “86 percent of college athletes live below the poverty line. Other than the money they receive from the scholarship, many student athletes have no source of income. The average out-of-pocket expenses for each full scholarship athlete was approximately $3,222 per year during the 2010 school year” (1). Nocera argues that a free-market system is the solution (2). In this system, student-athletes would reap whatever the market would bear.

Others believe it is best to implement an Olympic model where athletes would generate income by endorsements, autographs, and control of their image. A big part of college sports is the televising of games. In the world of college division athletics, there are many conferences such as Big 12 and ACC that make agreements with television networks to broadcast college games. Athletes are the employees, yet Nocera notes, “the workers are supposed to be content with a scholarship that does not even cover the full cost of attending college. Any student-athlete who accepts an unapproved free hamburger from a coach, or even a fan, is in violation of NCAA rules” (2). A free market approach will fix this problem because college coaches will be able to offer athletes contracts. College athletic programs along with the NCAA have more than enough money to pay student athletes, and with this system, they will still be successful while doing what is right.

As a college athlete, how you perform determines if you have a chance of going pro or not. Scholarships give players a chance to earn a degree, but playing sports in college is a full-time job with far greater costs than tuition. A free market approach to paying college athletes can solve the dilemma.

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The Democratic-Republican Verses the Federalist

Caroline Springob

The play, *Hamilton*, is about the life of Alexander Hamilton, how he became one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, and the “man on the ten-dollar” bill. In the opening scene, the audience is introduced to Hamilton seeking advice from Aaron Burr, who Hamilton aspired to be. Instead of getting a worthy piece of advice Burr tells Hamilton to “talk less, smile more” which caught Hamilton off guard because he expected the scholar, Aaron Burr, to give better advice.

During this meeting with Burr, Hamilton meets three American revolutionists—John Laurens, Marquis de Lafayette, and Hercules Mulligan—who he joins forces with. The audience then is taken to an American Revolutionary War scene where they see Hamilton asking Washington to make him a commander in the army, which he refuses to do until he realizes that he needs Hamilton to manage a section of the continental army so they can win the war.

After the war scenes, the audience is taken back to Hamilton and Burr now studying to become lawyers, but the roles are reversed. The war changed Hamilton for the better; his work ethic improved, and Burr becomes jealous of his educational success. Burr is also jealous of Hamilton’s influence in the government and wants that same power for himself. Shortly after, Burr’s jealousy gets to be too much when Hamilton gets a spot in President Washington’s Cabinet. Jefferson and Hamilton battle, “Cabinet Battle #2” over whether the United States should help the French in their revolution.

During “Cabinet Battle #2,” Hamilton and Jefferson try to convince Washington to see that their view of the French Revolution is the correct one. The reason Hamilton and Jefferson are on opposites sides is because “Jefferson became the leader of the pro-French Democratic-Republican party that celebrated the republican ideals of the French Revolution”, while “Hamilton led the Federalist Party, which viewed the Revolution with skepticism and wanted to preserve existing commercial ties with Great Britain.” President Washington knew that the “war would lead to economic disaster”, and if that happened, America would be viewed as weak, which could lead to an invasion, so he decided America would stay neutral. Both England and France were annoyed with the choice Washington made, so England “harassed neutral American merchant ships” and the French “dispatched a controversial Minister to the United States” (“The United States and the French Revolution, 1789-1799”).

Overall the play, *Hamilton*, uses a historical event to educate both young and old about the “man on the ten-dollar bill.” Even though some historical information is
missing, the audience can still gather that America was split into two sides, one seeking to help the French Revolutionist, the other not.

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Why Colonize the Moon?
Jason Baumgartner

There are many reasons why humans should colonize the Moon, such as, expansion, exploration, and energy production and resources. The Moon is a valuable resource, and if used and colonized correctly, it has the ability to improve the human understanding of the universe and our way of life.

It is a fact of life that species die, and at some point, humanity on Earth may cease to exist. As observed by NASA technologist Pat Troutman, “History has shown that extinction events happen on Earth,” and therefore “We need to establish a second independent biosphere for the future of humanity” (qtd. in Semuels).

Humans on Earth may die off; however, if a human colony was established somewhere in space, ideally on the Moon, there would be humans left to revive the species. And since the moon is only three days away, it would be a perfect starting point for future human expansion in outer space (Rinaldi).

A colonized Moon could also serve as a perfect location for examining the solar system as well as provide a springboard for solar system exploration. “The Moon, with one-sixth of Earth’s gravity” requires significantly less effort for launch (Rinaldi). Rinaldi, author of the article Colonizing the Moon, also goes on to quote Paul Spudis, a Houston-based lunar scientist, stating that “People will see that what’s holding [humanity] back is this model of having to launch everything from the bottom of the deepest gravity well in the solar system” (qtd. in Rinaldi). Due to the low gravity of the Moon compared to Earth, it will take a significantly smaller amount of fuel and power to propel objects through space.

Many members of the space community also agree that solar power collected via the Moon may alleviate problems for lunar colonists and citizens of Earth alike. As explained by director of the Institute for Space Systems Operations at the University of Houston, David Criswell, “Solar-power stations constructed on the moon from common lunar materials could provide the clean, safe, low-cost commercial electric energy needed on Earth.” This energy has the potential to cause significant positive effects here on Earth.

In agreement with this statement, David Smitherman, Technical Manager at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, suggests that, “space solar power beamed at [E]arth could supplement terrestrial power
sources and help produce abundant energy globally with insignificant impact to the [E]arth’s environment.” With this kind of cheap energy, the need to use resources from Earth as a source of energy would be significantly reduced, and as a result, conflicts over these resources would likely be reduce as well.

Colonizing the Moon would not only expand and secure our race, provide endless potential for exploration of outer space, and provide large amounts of clean energy, it would also transform human civilization to a point of unimaginable possibilities.

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The World Should Go Vegan

Blair Krah

Vegans get a bad rap because many people write vegans off as pretentious or overly emotional. Often times, meat-eaters find abstinence from consuming meat or any other animal product for religious, moral, or health purposes odd or unhealthy. However, most U.S citizens are unaware of the advantages of a vegan diet. Veganism is healthy, eco-friendly, and a large public shift to veganism could help to mitigate world hunger. Therefore, it is imperative to educate the planet about the advantages of veganism.

Scientific evidence regarding veganism is accumulating rapidly, and the benefits associated with it are multitudinous. As mentioned by Dyett et al., experts in nutrition and dietetics, “Reported health benefits include reduction of various chronic disease-related risks and mortality, and increase in overall health and longevity” (119). Additionally, research shows that vegans, motivated either by health or other concerns, practice behaviors that result in positive health outcomes and general well-being (Dyett et al.).

Another major advantage of veganism is the positive impact it has on the environment. One of the benefits is that veganism helps limit water pollution. According to Givens et al.’s study of livestock farms in Iowa, “The occurrence of numerous [bacterial gene markers] and significantly-increased frequency and concentration of [hepatitis E virus] in stream water after swine-manure application and runoff generating rain indicates a link between swine manure management and zoonotic pathogens to the environment” (1049).

Additionally, the waste running into rivers contributes to the contamination of drinking water, both for humans and wildlife. The common practice of livestock manure use “can result in dramatic increases in water quality impairments” (Givens et al. 1049). However, if livestock farms became less prevalent, this practice would also see less use. The planet would be much cleaner, and humans and wildlife much healthier, if the world shifted toward veganism.

Another major benefit, veganism can help solve one of humanity’s greatest obstacles: hunger. Around the world, approximately one billion people, or one sixth of the world’s population, is suffering from hunger (Freston 159). As stated by vegan health researcher Kathy Freston, “When you eat meat, it is like you are taking food right out of the mouths of the poor. The grain that could have fed hungry people instead is shipped to factory farms to feed the 10 billion animals (in the U.S alone) who are being fattened up for profitable slaughter” (160). Hence, there would be enough food to feed four billion more people, let alone the billion who are suffering, if humans ate those grains. It would only take one in every ten people to convert to veganism to feed the one billion suffering people.

If the human population truly realized the benefits of veganism, and adopted the practice, there would be enough
food for every man, woman, and child on the planet (Freston).

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Paycheck or Inmate?

Caiden Robinson

The number of inmates in federal prisons has increased for decades. In the mid-1990’s several prisons were 48 percent over their maximum occupancy (Knafo). Most states could not afford to build more prisons to house the excessive number of inmates, so the solution was to outsource the jobs to other companies.

In 1997 Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which is now the largest privately-owned prison system, opened its first facility in California (Knafo). Soon after the first private prison was opened, the focus began to shift from the inmates to the money. Private prisons are a problem because they specifically target a particular demographic, namely African American men.

Many argue for private prisons because they are said to be significantly cheaper to operate than their federal counterparts. However, there is no actual evidence that private prisons cost less money to run. In fact, the government signs the contracts and pays them without information on comparable federal facilities. It is hard to compare the cost of these prisons as a number of determining factors such as the types of inmates housed and the levels of security must be taken into consideration.

As a result of these difficulties, there is no way to know if private prisons cost less to run than public prisons (Volokh). There is also evidence to suggest that privatized prisons have many other hidden, non monetary costs associated with them. Evidence suggests that making incarceration a for-profit business has come at a great cost to justice. Monetization of the prison system creates an incentive to keep costs and overheads as low as possible in order to maximize profits by keeping prisons as full as possible.

A recent study conducted by a UCLA graduate student found that the majority of prison inmates are young, African-American males (Palta).
Under the current laws, prisons are responsible for medical care for their inmates. When medical care is needed for a prisoner, this decreases the prisoner owners’ profit. Thus, private prisons only want young prisoners and, as they are at a lower risk for illness and disease and come without the healthcare costs associated with older inmates. Therefore, the ideal prisoner tends to be young, black, healthy males and females. When inmates are monetized, it is easy to forget that they are people and have rights.

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The United States is faced with issues that cause suffering. Child obesity is one issue that continues to get worse as the years go by. People try and fail year after year to come up with a real solution, one that will lower the number of children who become obese before the age of five. The Obesity Society states that, “Before they reach the age of five, 40 million of the world’s children will have become obese.”

Potential solutions have come and gone, but none have seemed to work. Obesity is a significant issue in the United States, and will continue to be until companies start lowering the price of healthy foods making them more accessible.

Obesity leads to a variety of health problems. Some states have laws in place to reduce obesity, and the number of obese people in those states is lower than in the states that ignore the issue. Sports medicine news writer Nathan Seppa states in the article, “Get the Facts About the Obesity Epidemic,” “West Virginia and Mississippi fare the worst, with obesity prevalence now at 35.1 percent; Colorado gets a gold star for coming in at only 21.3 percent.”

McHugh explains that, “Obesity is about much more than just being fat. It is a global epidemic with serious health, social and economic consequences.” If something
is not done about this issue, life expectancy will decline as more children become obese.

One way to help solve the problem of obesity would be to lower the price of healthy foods, making them accessible for everyone. Fruits and vegetables are comparatively expensive and many parents cannot afford to buy them. However, they can afford a double cheeseburger from McDonalds for just a dollar.

As Roland Sturum states, “The least healthy foods are usually the cheapest, the most advertised in poor neighborhoods, and the most available in inner cities—making it far harder to make healthy food choices” (Sturum). Reducing the price of fruits and vegetables would make a huge impact, and giving poor neighborhoods better access to them would be very beneficial.

In order for this to happen, supermarkets would have to lower their prices and expand into impoverished neighborhoods. Although food companies may hesitate at first, they would eventually benefit from the expanded customer base and the positive publicity.

Obesity is a problem in the United States that will grow worse unless people with power start to make a difference. Food companies need to start lowering the price of fruits and vegetables and make them accessible in impoverished neighborhoods. These two things alone would make a huge impact on the number of children who face obesity before the age of five.

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The Power of Will
Joshua Baumgartner

Throughout life, we come across sayings that convey wisdom. Perhaps a parent or grandparent says, “People who try to whittle a person down are only trying to reduce that person to their own size,” or a fortune cookie states that “the mighty oak was once a little acorn that stood its ground.”

Wise sayings are important to virtually every culture because they encapsulate the values of the people. One wise saying that remains relevant today is, “Many a good man has failed because he had his wishbone where his backbone should have been.” This saying is relevant today for many successful people because it notes the importance of willful action, determination, and hard work.

Simply wishing does not get a person anywhere. If people want something, they
must take the necessary steps and work towards their goals.

Wishing and desiring are the first steps in moving towards a goal, but they are not enough. Hypothetically, a man could wish that he had the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger in his prime. However, without actually putting in the work and training like Schwarzenegger, it will never happen. As Schwarzenegger himself once said, “Almost anything difficult, any challenge, takes time, patience, and hard work.” That is where the difference lies between wishing something and willing something.

Most people probably never really give it much thought, but there is a huge difference between wishing for something and willing it into being. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a wish is “a feeling in the mind directed towards something which one believes would give satisfaction if attained, possessed, or realized.” This definition makes no mention of how this satisfaction is attained. Wishing is “a feeling in the mind.” Without action, wishing has no relevance in the real world. As stated by an old Arabian proverb, “Wishing does not make a poor man rich” (Wishing).

To will something, on the other hand, is “to determine by the will; to attempt to cause, aim at effecting by exercise of will; to set the mind with conscious intention to the performance or occurrence of something…” (Oxford English Dictionary. Will.) This definition, which differs greatly from the definition of a wish, focuses on the idea that a goal starts in the mind, much like a wish, but then is fulfilled through action, declaring that “something shall be done.”

One example of this willingness to fulfill one’s goals through action can be clearly seen in the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, who saw a vision of a better trade route through Panama and made it a reality through his efforts to secure the rights for the project (Miller Center of Public Affairs). Without willful actions and determination, like Roosevelt’s, all great ideas would forever remain just great ideas rather than monumental moments in human history.

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It’s easy to miss the mark when making a sports movie; some succeed and some fail. However, the first *Rocky* film hit all the right notes. It is widely recognized as one of the best boxing films ever because of the intense action and its romantic plot.

This film captured the hearts of millions, and it was nominated for ten Oscars, winning three. Although *Rocky* is considered a low budget movie, it quickly became a box office success due to its unforgettable characters, paving the way for other boxing films.

Great sports movies need background to explain why individuals develop the grit needed to achieve their goals. Grit is, “courage and resolve; strength of character” (OED). Duckworth states that “Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress” (1988).

This statement is important because the hero, Rocky Balboa, faces adversity throughout the film. No one believed he is capable of going fifteen rounds with heavy-weight champion Apollo Creed. However, Rocky makes up in his mind that success is for anyone to achieve. Because of this mindset, he has become a national symbol of hope and determination. Rocky Balboa is determined in every aspect of his life, including his romantic life; he does not give up on to winning his lady Adrien’s heart.

He sees through her shyness and values her gentle spirit, eventually winning her over and helping her to overcome her own struggle with a crippling lack of confidence. The final scene, he calls for her and embraces her after he goes the distance with the World Champion is widely considered one of the most iconic moments in boxing movie history.

Not only did Rocky Balboa achieve his goals in the film, but he also struck gold in the box office. The film made over $400,000,000 worldwide (Box Office Mojo) and Tim Dirks considered this film to be “one of the best films of 1976” (13).

Because of the acting, writing, and an unforgettable storyline, *Rocky* was nominated for ten academy awards, including best picture, best director, best film editing, best actor in a leading role, best actress in a leading role, best actor in supporting roles, best writing, best sound, and best music (IMDb).

*Rocky* won three out of the possible ten and received high praise for the actors’ performances. The three Academy awards did not make this movie great, but they reflect its greatness. *Rocky* is great because the film brilliantly dramatizes the challenges that Rocky Balboa had to go through in order to realize his dreams. It shows the audience that there is a triumphant underdog in all of us.
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The Five Stages of Grief and Acceptance

Gabrielle Solarczyk-Wallace

In Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour,” Mrs. Mallard discovers that her husband is dead. She goes through a range of emotions, but after contemplating her situation, it becomes clear that his absence may lead to the life she has secretly dreamed of.

Mrs. Mallard becomes enthusiastic about being free from the constraints of marriage. However, her husband later comes walking through the door, having no clue as to the rumors of his demise. At the sight of her husband, Mrs. Mallard drops dead. Her unexpected reaction seems to indicate the depth of her marital unhappiness.

When it comes to emotions, Mrs. Mallard experiences many types in just an hour. When one spouse loses another, it is natural to assume the spouse left will go through the Five Stages of Grief. Kubler-Ross states that “…your relief is the recognition that the suffering has ended…” (31).

Mrs. Mallard’s denial stage is not so much about the denial of losing her husband but her lack of remorse for him. Mrs. Mallard knows she should feel terrible about the news of her husband’s death, but she has not fully come to terms with the fact that her dreams are coming into reality. Mrs. Mallard grieves for Mr. Mallard but only briefly. Then she truly accepts Mr. Mallard’s death and becomes overjoyed with the thought of having a free life.

Unlike Mrs. Mallard, a devoted spouse typically goes through the first four of the five Stages of Grief before coming to acceptance. The story tells us that Mrs. Mallard was unhappy with life before her husband’s death, but does nothing about it. Like others, she “…persist[s] because [she] feel[s] [she] cannot leave…” while married (Frye, 1). She grieves for him but only briefly. Then she quickly accepts her husband’s death and becomes overjoyed with the thought of being “Free, free, free!” (Chopin, 3).
According to Kubler-Ross, there are Five Stages of Grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. However, a reader might question if Mrs. Mallard is grieving at all because she skips almost directly to acceptance, and even joy. As Ha explains, “Widowhood is considered one of the most stressful of all life events” (2). However, it is not widowhood but her husband’s unexpected return that leads to Mrs. Mallard’s stress-induced heart failure.

As Berkove states, Mrs. Mallard is out of options “…there is no other option for Mrs. Mallard except death” (158). Mayer described her “heart trouble” (Chopin, 2) as a “physical problem but also, perhaps, a less-than-perfect marriage” (95). It appears as though she is unconscious of the depth of her own happiness until she perceives a new life of freedom “…she would live for herself” (Chopin, 3).

Through this story, Chopin opens up a range of important questions about the nature of marriage, traditional gender expectations, and the mysteries of the unconscious mind.

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A New Age for Video Games

Caleb Abrams

Video games have been loved for many generations. In the past decade, video game have become popular among several demographics. In recent years, the video game industry gained a lot of attention. Film critic Mark J. P. Wolf makes reference to gaming when he states that “video games have a lot more in common with film and television than merely characters and plotlines.

Video games compete for audiences at the very same sites as film and TV” (Wolf, 11). The industry is evolving, and in time, it may catch up to or surpass the popularity of the film industry because of
similarities in technology, story and production value.

Both the video game and film industries use the same technologies. Actors and actresses in the video game Until Dawn used facial and body technology called cubic motion to make characters seem more realistic (Admin.). This same technique is used in modern filmmaking along with computer generated imagery (CGI). Based on an article by Ian Failes, body tracking was used for the character Colossus (Failes) in the movie Deadpool.

Many storylines in the video game are similar to those in movies as well. Movie directors, writers, and producers find video game plots to be intriguing, and adapt them to film, such as Mortal Kombat and the Assassin’s Creed series. Some film-makers make movies based on video games because they know they will sell.

Wolf also mentions this when he says, “at present film and television are best equipped for dealing with the medium of video games, which clearly overlaps them in places and extends many of their ideas, such as an active spectator, suture, first-person narrative, and spatial orientation” (Wolf 11).

The video game industry is also similar to the film industry in production value. According to Emanuel Maiberg, the video game Destiny took over $500 million dollars to develop; however, there is no movie on its own that has cost $500 million dollars to produce.

Both industries—film and video—cost a hefty amount of money to make their products. Knowing that both industries have an enormous fan base, it is understandable that to keep fans coming back developers and directors must invest large amounts of money to please their customers.

Some people regard the video game industry as something silly, and at times childish, while many others find film to be something for all ages. In actuality, both the video game industry and film industry produce content for all ages.

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No Means No: Eliminating Sexual Assault on College Campuses

Rebecca D’Amico

Sexual assault is a major problem on college campuses. Hundreds of young women are sexually assaulted on or around college campuses every year.
According to a study by Mary Koss in Arthur S. Chancellor’s book *Investigating Sexual Assault Cases*, one quarter of college women are victims of rape or attempted rape; this does not include the women who do not report (Chancellor 32).

These statistics do not hinge on whether or not the victim is wearing something revealing or is under the influence of alcohol. Although the idea of “no means no” may seem obvious to most, there are many people who do not see it this way. A woman should never feel as if sexual assault is her fault, women still need to learn to protect themselves by being aware of what attackers look for in their victims. Sexual assault on college campuses can be reduced if women learn self-defense and equipped themselves with protective materials.

Audra Roslani notes from interviews of rapists what they looked for in their victims. The study concluded that hairstyles that can be easily grabbed, wearing easily removable clothing, being distracted by their cell phones, and walking by themselves at night make women targets for potential attackers. It is essential for women to know these facts so as to protect themselves (Roslani).

In an interview with Dr. Sean Martin, an expert in training women in self-defense, he states that “the majority of assaults are single, unarmed attackers who know their victims. With proper education and training, a woman’s chance of avoiding or escaping an attack of this nature is approximately 95%” (Martin). The education and training Martin is talking about are self-defense classes.

In addition to self-defense training, items such as the Athena necklace, a coin-sized clip-on button that alerts authorities when pressed, are helping women everywhere prevent sexual assault. Another anti-rape tool, the Rape Axe, has been deemed medieval for its use of a teeth-like structure that attaches onto the perpetrator’s penis when unwanted vaginal penetration occurs. The creator of the Rape Axe notes that “Traditional tools are not working. I have been accused of all things; my all-time favorite though is that I am the inventor of the most medieval device…my response, quite frankly is that a medieval deed deserves a medieval consequence” (“Anti Rape - Home”).

Sexual assault on college campuses can be reduced by educating women about crime prevention, self-defense skills, and the protective gear that can prevent sexual assault.

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Turning the “Safety On” Gun Control

Jeremiah Lyons

May 4, 1970, at Kent State University—four killed. June 18, 1990, in Jacksonville, Florida—nine killed. December 14, 2012, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut—27 killed. June 12, 2016, in Orlando, Florida—49 killed (LA Times Staff). All these mass killings have something in common, and it is not just that multiple people were killed—it is that guns were used.

Guns have been around since the late 1300s, and continue to become more powerful, accurate, and efficient. In the United States, on December 15, 1791, the Second Amendment was passed, giving Americans the right to bear arms (Robin).

Today, guns are the quickest and easiest way to kill another human being, and because of this, it is the weapon of choice for those wanting to kill. Given recent events and major advancements in gun technology over the past 200 years, it is clear that the Second Amendment needs to be updated. The goal of this update is to make people safer without eliminating guns. To achieve this, the country needs tougher and more stringent criteria to own and carry a gun.

The most important thing that needs to change is to require background checks for all gun purchases. This would mean that all gun sellers would need to perform background checks before they could sell a gun to anyone, even at gun shows. An estimated 40 percent of all firearms transferred in the U.S. are by unlicensed individuals, meaning that they did not undergo background checks (Smith). Most of these transactions are performed at gun shows by private sellers.

Only California, Colorado, Illinois, New York, Oregon, and Rhode Island require background checks at gun shows, but it should be mandatory everywhere in the United States (Taylor). The states that require background checks have seen a decrease in gun violence, which could be greater if gun owners could not cross state borders.

Being a U.S. citizen gives most people a sense of pride and safety. For many, it is because of the ability to be free. We are free because our ancestors fought to give us inalienable rights, rights that have been the backbone of the country since the 1700s (Taylor). These rights not only grant freedom of speech, religion, and self-defense, but they also give us the right to make things better. This is not only a right but an obligation as citizens of this country.

Gun violence is one of the most pressing issues in this United States right now. Gun violence affects all of us, regardless of color, religion, income, or social status. The people of this great country need to come together and take a stand on this issue.

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Raise the Minimum Wage; Improve People’s Lives

Jonathan Ratchkauskas

The federal minimum wage in the United States has been $7.25 an hour since 2009. Sixty percent of the American people have wages higher than the federal minimum. Research has shown that raising the minimum wage will have positive effects on families. By using strategies found in this research and increasing the federal minimum wage, people in the United States could secure a livable income.

Income inequality is a fact that leads many Americans to believe that the next generation will be worse off than the last. JPMorgan Chase has been attempting to remove low wages over the years. Their minimum wage is $10.15 an hour, almost three dollars above the federal minimum wage. Over the next few years, the company will raise the pay for 18,000 employees to $16.50 an hour (Dorn 1). This pay increase applies to full- and part-time employees. The raise is also good for JPMorgan Chase because it allows them to recruit skilled individuals in a more competitive setting.

The Economic Policy Institute states that an increase in the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour would add $22.1 billion to the economy and create 85,000 jobs over the course of three years. A Congressional Budget Office report notes that increasing the minimum wage to $9.00 an hour would bring 300,000 people out of poverty; $10.00 an hour would affect 900,000 (1).

The National Low Income Housing Coalition states that a worker must earn $15.50 an hour to be able to rent a “modest” one-bedroom apartment, and $19.35 for a two bedroom apartment. The report also claims that “in no state can an individual working a typical 40-hour week at the federal minimum wage afford a one or two-bedroom apartment for his family” (Belman 4). According to Oxfam America, 66 percent of workers “just meet,” or “do not have enough to meet,” basic living needs (4). Among the 34 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States has one of the largest income inequality gaps.

In 2012, the richest one percent of the population earned 22.83 percent of the country’s pre-tax income, which was the largest gap between the rich and poor since 1920 (Neumark). As it appears, raising the minimum wage provides all employees with a fair wage, allowing people to consume more thereby putting more money into the economy.
Overall, higher wages benefit the entire country in many ways. Opportunities become more abundant, quality of life improves, and society collectively improves. Struggling families have the chance to improve their lives. Whether it is teenagers working their first job or middle-aged men with steady jobs, raising the minimum wage will positively impact American society.

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