

LINCOLN LAND **review**



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L I N C O L N   L A N D **review**

*A collection of visual  
and written work  
by students of  
Lincoln Land  
Community College*

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#### **Submission Information:**

We are looking for high quality writing, digital media, and fine art submissions from students of Lincoln Land Community College for next year's edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*. We will accept work between May 15, 2020 and January 15, 2021. Instructors or students may submit students' best artwork, fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, academic non-fiction (properly formatted, cited, and scrupulously proofread) via electronic attachment to lincolnlandreview@llcc.edu.

For each work that is submitted, be sure to fill out and send an information and permission to publish form. Forms are found at our website: lincolnlandreview.wordpress.com. Editors reserve the right to make corrections or slight changes in written works accepted. Preference is given to essays, stories, research papers, etc. that are under 20 pages long. Please contact one of the editors at the review email address if you have questions.

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#### **Editors' Note**

For the 11th edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*, we proudly present a collection of academic and imaginative work we believe best represents the diversity of our students at Lincoln Land Community College. Our newest edition includes an array of critical writing, memoir, literary and film analysis, fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry. Also featured, as always, are exemplary artistic expressions in painting, digital media, sculpture, and graphic design, chosen by our new editor of visual media, Laura Anderson. Welcome, Laura! We also wish to offer an immense thanks to our parting editor, Thom Whalen, for showcasing the talent among the students in the Art program over the last 10 years. Thank you, Thom!

As we begin a new decade for this publication, we hope the spirit of the first 10 years lives on in the body of work you will find here. And with this in mind, we present the winners of our annual "best of" contest in the following categories:

Fine Art — E. Vern Taylor, "A Dream Stolen"  
Digital Media — Rollie Dennison, "Inferno" (*Review Cover*)  
Academic Nonfiction — Anna Crumbaugh, "Just Black and White?"  
Short Fiction — Noah Romer, "The Prisoner"  
Poetry — Paul Watson, "A Rope or a Thread"

This edition can also be found online at our website, lincolnlandreview.wordpress.com. You can also watch short interviews with local authors, musicians, poets, and others interested in keeping the arts and humanities a vital and present force here in central Illinois. You can also find our digital edition on our Lincoln Land Press webpage, www.llcc.edu/llcc-press and on our *Lincoln Land Review* Facebook site.

The magazine is only possible with the support of the LLCC community, most specifically, The Lincoln Land Press. Thank you, Press founders Ryan Roberts and John Paul Jaramillo. We are so grateful for the production expertise of Graphic Design Specialist Misty Hagstrom and for the promotion assistance of Lynn Whalen, Executive Director of Public Relations. Dr. Vern Lindquist, Vice President, Academic Services, and Dr. Jason Dockter, Assistant Vice President of Academic Services and Interim Dean of the Department of English and Humanities support us behind the scenes as well, and kudos to all faculty and support staff who guide students in their continuing academic and creative experiences.

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## Student Cover Art

Rollie Dennison, *Inferno*

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MAKAEN SERR

## The Great Escape

My entire life I have been trying to find ways and means to escape. When I was three, I taught myself to read by memorizing the books my mother read to me. At first she thought it was just a cute little trick I had done, but then realized that my memorization had actually given me enough tools to begin reading books that were unfamiliar to me. I was lavished with praise because I knew how to read. I even started school a year early. I can faintly remember kindergarten; I was allowed to sit on my own and read while the other kids were engaged in learning together. It was the first time I can remember being separated from the other kids, knowing that I was different than them. To avoid feeling like a weird loner, I just read every day in class.

When I was seven, we moved from Hawaii to Alaska, and my troubles in school began. I had a strong Hawaiian accent and none of the kids would talk to me. My cousins that we moved in with were all boys and wanted nothing to do with me. I had no real friends, and I was extremely lonely. I felt lost going from being an only child to now living in a house with six other people. In those days my nose was constantly in a book. I found being in a fantasy world so much more comfortable. The lands of Narnia or the world Madelin L'engle made for Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace were much better than my gigantic family all piled on top of each other in Alaska. It was always cold, and playing outside meant possibly confronting a bear, or worse, a moose. Reading was a good way for people to leave you alone, be it parents or cousins.

Moving to a different school also meant taking placement tests. It turns out that the public education that I received in Hawaii was not great. I had taught myself how to read, so they never figured out that I didn't know how to spell or sound out words. I can remember sitting in a room with a teacher at age 7, and being given a book about a French bakery. The baker was making a dessert, and since I couldn't sound out the word, I would stumble over it every time. The teacher told me to "just sound it out sweetie" like that was some easy task. Unfortunately, this book was about an over-abundance of this dessert, and thusly the damned word was on every page. I had always prided myself on being an advanced reader, even at that young age. I loved reading books that were meant for much older kids. Being told that I wasn't good at reading was a huge blow to my ego. It didn't matter much to me that I was terrible at other subjects, but being told that I wasn't good at reading was heartbreaking. There is a scene in Harry Potter that particularly resonated with me, a kid who felt like an outsider. Hagrid tells Harry, who has been treated like dirt his whole life, that he is a wizard. Being told I was a bad reader

was the opposite of that. The one thing that I believed made me special and worthy of love was tainted. I felt shame over reading now instead of feeling special. I was placed into extra classes to help me get caught up academically with the Alaskan kids.

Despite having new shameful feelings about reading, I still was a voracious reader. I hated organized sports, preferring baseball and football in our backyard with my cousins, so, at nine years old I joined Battle of the Books. It was a team sport; each team had four or five kids, and about 15-20 books to split between the team members. Kids would answer questions, game-show style- the fastest answer wins. I read all the books on the list. My team won first place both years I competed. Battle of the Books was important because I was a chubby kid and this was a game that I excelled in. I didn't have to feel inadequate; I felt successful. But most importantly I didn't have to do real sports. Before I may have escaped into fantasy worlds through reading because I was bored. Living in Alaska was the point when I began to escape into fantasy because I hated my reality.

As I got older, my problems in school increased. I would frequently struggle with homework and never turn it in because I knew I was going to get a bad grade. My spelling skills relied only on my memory of how to spell something, and despite having extra work to get me caught up in math, my teachers only ever succeeded in getting me to about a third-grade math level. It felt like I had a mental block—that I was incapable of learning. I was constantly told that my writing was bad. I used too many run-on sentences and had too many spelling errors. Reading and writing are two sides of the same coin, but to me it felt like I could never flip the coin over and succeed in writing.

In high school I altered my preferred method of escape slightly. The books I was reading switched from fantasy and sci-fi, to drugalogues, stories written by Hunter S. Thompson, or Tom Wolfe writing about Ken Kesey. These books showed anti-heroes. People who thrived outside of society, people who were regarded by the straight-laced people of their times as losers or criminals, but who I thought of as geniuses. I idolized these people. In my mind, they didn't need to be good in school (although ironically both Hunter S. Thompson and Ken Kesey were very well educated.) I thought that the entry fee for success was simply doing whatever you wanted to do at all times. The idea that being outlandish and wild was honorable spoke to a higher intelligence that normal people couldn't comprehend. That cavalier attitude affected the decisions that I made in high school. I stopped caring entirely about homework or class attendance. I started to seek out dangerous experiences, and for me, the most dangerous but inherently rewarding experience one could have was drugs. I seemed not to have that common sense understanding of a proper fear of drugs. I wanted to try everything. I didn't care about the

stigma of certain drugs, and I didn't care that people thought I was a loser or a junkie. In my mind, they were unappreciative of the true art of completely losing your shit "artistically," although there was truly nothing artistic about it. I didn't write poetry; I didn't write a great novel. I just got high and hung out in sketchy situations. Eventually, I started doing heroin, but unlike my opiate-addicted heroes, I didn't write the next *Naked Lunch*, I just dropped out of high school and wasted 10 years. Trading a book for a needle, I sought to escape my life even if it killed me. Reflecting back on my childhood, I can see why I used reading books to escape my life. I was abused by my aunt who we lived with for many years after we moved to Alaska, I was bad at school, and I never had any kind of body confidence until I was an adult. I could go into a book where a girl escaped her evil stepmother and got to marry a super-hot prince. But using heroin to escape meant that I now had so many more problems to run from, so I did more heroin, and then had more problems. It was a never-ending and always escalating cycle.

When I finally got clean, it was by force. I was arrested. I was puking and sweating through seizures in a disgusting jail cell here in Illinois. There was only one distraction from the hell I found myself in. Books, a grace that I didn't deserve, were there for me once again. I read an entire book almost every day. The books we had were all varied from romance, adventure, classics, or popular contemporary books. Books were the only way I felt better while I was sick, and after I felt better, they were the only thing that allowed me to live temporarily outside the concrete walls I was trapped behind. Some books even offered the experience of breaking out of a prison! While I couldn't do what the Count of Monte Cristo did, I could really appreciate how he must have felt waking up on that beach after escaping prison, seeing the sky and knowing that he won. The magic of books elevated me at the time to feel a bit of the joy Edmond Dantès felt lying on that sand.

When I finally got out, I decided to attempt to get my GED. I really didn't think it was possible, but I had started to feel increasingly embarrassed about not having an education. I think one of my own downfalls of being relatively well-read was that I liked to put on airs of intellectualism, and my pride and ego would be hurt every time I was reminded that I was uneducated. Reading gave me one more escape: my reading comprehension allowed me to compensate for never participating in school. Because I loved reading everything, even science textbooks, I was able to pass my GED tests, albeit narrowly passing on the math test. Reading allowed me to escape dead-end jobs. Another downfall that has proven time and time again to be my undoing is my lack of self-esteem. Before I took the GED test, I was slowly beginning to lose self-esteem. I felt stupid and useless. I could feel the impending doom of working service industry jobs my entire life, unable to retire until I dropped dead of a probably preventable illness

because I would be an uninsured waitress forever. Reading saved me once again. I escaped the ramifications of resting on my laurels because I had gained enough competency from reading alone to help me further my education in areas that I was uncomfortable.

I can confidently say that reading is the great love of my life. It has fueled my interest and passion in so many things. I can be having a terrible day, with everything in the world adding weight to an already unbearable load, and I can open a book and have some old friends help lighten the load. I even re-read specific books to curate the exact escape I need at the moment. Sometimes everything is bullshit, and I need Kurt Vonnegut or Douglas Adams to remind me that everything is bullshit, but it's also hilarious, and I would be amiss to not fully appreciate it. Sometimes I need to read Tina Fey's autobiography to realize that my problems can be managed like a Boss Lady. I now have hope that I can get a better education and a better job. Today, I much prefer to escape into a good book while sitting in a comfy chair in my living room than losing my mind to a needle while living in my car.

MAKAEN SERR

## Checking Boxes Behind Bars

The process of not allowing felons or prisoners to vote is referred to as felony disenfranchisement. The idea that felons, who are considered to be of low moral quality, should not be able to vote comes from the ancient Rome practice of "civic death," which mandated that people convicted of crimes were no longer allowed to participate in politics or own property. That Roman standard was practiced in the British Empire, which was then adapted in our new government as felony disenfranchisement. When our country was founded as a representative democracy, we only endowed white property-owning individuals the right to vote. Slowly, over a long period of time, federal amendments were added to make voting accessible to more people. The United States federal government gave state legislatures power over who could vote beyond what was mandated in amendments to the Constitution. Today, suffrage has been granted via the Bill of Rights to almost every citizen over the age of eighteen, with the last exception of people who have committed crimes. Many people might argue that only morally upstanding members of our society should be allowed to have an input on our society, that people who are convicted of a crime should be punished with the loss of their voting rights. But every member of our society, including criminals, adds value to our democracy. To deny someone the right to vote is less of a punishment today and more of an attempt to shame and silence the part of our society that we have deemed unfit to participate in our democracy. Voting rights should be an unalienable right of every person who resides under the United States Government's jurisdiction and who pays taxes, both of which prisoners do. Voting not only installs elected officials but also encourages those officials to act in a way that their constituents approve of, which is a crucial tenant of our representative democracy. In a bulletin for the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, statisticians Jennifer Bronson, Ph.D. and Ann Carson, Ph.D., estimated that in 2016, we had 1.4 million incarcerated people in the United States. By ignoring the votes and needs of those 1.4 million people, we do not have a true representation of the needs of our entire country and therefore have a failed democracy. Prisoners in America should retain their right to vote while incarcerated.

Very few of our prisoners are allowed by their state government to have an active role in our democracy. Prisoners in America are only given the right to vote unequivocally in two states at the time of this writing, Maine and Vermont. ProCon. Org, a website that offers scholarly debate on controversial issues published an article which helps to explain the complicated breakdown of felon voter laws by

state. ProCon states that as of June 2nd, 2019 Kentucky and Iowa have a lifetime ban on voting for anyone who has ever been incarcerated, and in Florida ex-convicts must appeal to the government for a reinstatement of their voting rights after they have successfully completed court supervision (parole or probation) for at least seven years. In Mississippi, Alaska, and Alabama, some people still under supervision may vote, but it depends on the specific crime they have committed. Thirteen states do allow voting for formerly incarcerated people while under court supervision. If you were to combine all those people together, Danielle Kaeble and Mary Cowhig of the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics estimate that the number would equate to over 5.85 million people who are unable to practice their right to vote—1.4 million of whom are incarcerated. By federally mandating that all legal citizens of the United States should have the right to vote regardless of incarceration status, individual states that have not restored voting rights to people who have been released would be forced to allow those people to vote.

In America you are considered innocent until proven guilty, but under our current system, even those awaiting trial who have not been proven guilty suffer a loss of their right to vote. Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner of the Prison Policy Initiative, an organization dedicated to end overpopulation by changing prison policy, estimate that 462,000 people are currently held in jails awaiting sentencing as of March 2019. Outside of those in Maine and Vermont, all of those citizens who are “innocent” are not allowed to vote. This is an absolute miscarriage of justice that undermines our entire justice system. The Fifth Amendment of our Bill of Rights should guarantee that no one should be “... deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.” By not allowing people who have not been convicted to participate in our democracy, we are allowing them to be deprived of their liberty.

Many people argue that prisoners live outside of society and should not be allowed the same rights as free people. Prisoners do live outside of the rights we have granted to us by the constitution, and for good reason. You cannot give liberty or the ability to pursue happiness to a murderer. A murderer's happiness might include murdering people, and we cannot give them the liberty to do so. We have agreed as a society to keep criminals away from our general population, and this has been the status quo for centuries. We need to remove a criminal from our environment to keep other people from harm, and, ideally, to allow that criminal the opportunity to rehabilitate. But physical removal from our society does not include absolute separation. Prisoners are still affected by policies and politics, perhaps more so than the average person, and they deserve representation because

they are taxpayers just like the rest of us.

The best argument that prisoners are still a part of our society that deserves representation is the fact that prisoners pay taxes. Most prisoners fall into the tax income bracket that is required to pay 15% of their wages in taxes, despite Wendy Sawyer's estimate that prisoners only earn thirteen cents an hour on average. Prisoners cannot directly benefit from the roads, schools, or public services that their taxes pay for, but they are directly affected by the election of all public offices and the passage of laws. The vast majority of the voting public has never had any contact or relationship with judges running for re-election, but all prisoners have had experiences with judges. While I'm sure sheriffs and judges would prefer for prisoners to not have a choice on who is elected to those positions, we are ignoring a resource that we could use to better our legal system. Prisoners and felons have a unique insight into the ways that the system is working for them or failing them and the rest of America. By involving prisoners into our voting process, our country will be more evenly represented and therefore be a more accurate democracy.

A group of people who are affected by felony disenfranchisement at a greater percentage are underrepresented minority groups, and among these, the most affected are black Americans. According to the NAACP, black people accounted for 34% of our prison population in 2014. Our total population in the US for black people by percentage is 13.4%, as calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2014. In a perfect system, if black people are only 13.4% of our population, they would only make up 13.4% of our prison population. It is widely understood that the discrepancies in the numbers signify a problem with systemic racism in our country. If we have recognized that people of color have been arrested and sentenced unfairly—and at a higher rate than white people—why would we continue the suffering of those people by not allowing them to vote? It is unrealistic to say that we will ever be able to correct the wrongs done by our justice system to people of color, but by allowing prisoners to vote, we can formally recognize the value of their voices. This would be a great start to bridging the gap between the represented and the under-represented groups in America. It may seem like a vast overcorrection at this point to give all prisoners voting rights because of a small group of affected people, but sometimes a complete overhaul is needed to reset a failed system, and our system has been failing people of color for far too long.

We owe it to our democracy to allow prisoners to vote. As a society we are only as strong as our weakest link, and our weakest link is the part of the population that was failed by our social systems and has committed crimes. By not allowing prisoners to vote we are silencing their cries for help. We are saying to these prisoners that they don't get to ask for the things that they need from their



representatives and government. Our social programs are accomplishing a fraction of what they could, simply because the people who are most directly affected by policy relating to drugs or poverty are not allowed to tell us how we can help them. This is truly dangerous when talking about our social services for children, and the desperate need to change them. The Juvenile Law Center, a non-profit that advocates for foster children in the US, has said that 25% of children aging out of foster care will go to prison within two years of leaving the foster system. If those former foster children were incarcerated in states which ban their voting rights, they would not have a means to change whatever is broken in these systems that have failed them horribly.

In order for ours to be true representative democracy, all voices should be heard. This is why voting is a right: we need voting to ensure representation. America was literally founded on our need to be heard and counted. We went to war with Great Britain over taxation without representation. Images of suffragettes and Uncle Sam conjure up feelings of justification. We fought for the right to vote because it was fair and just, and we won. I was taught at a very young age that the reason we call America a “free country” is because we can make choices that prevent us from being held under tyrannical rule. Voting is not a privilege; it is necessary to sustain our democracy and to keep us free, and voting is as American as apple pie.

Not allowing prisoners to vote is an outdated way to separate prisoners from the rest of our population by more than just bars. By allowing prisoners to vote we would be giving a voice to all members of our society, and we would be allowing for discourse between elected officials and underrepresented groups. This discourse can allow us to fix some of the old and broken systems that are doing harm to our people and our country as a whole. By not allowing prisoners to vote, we are saying that they do not get to participate in America while being punished by it. Taxation without representation drove us to founding this great nation and we should strive to be the best we can be. We are a just and fair nation and our voting rights should reflect that.

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JENNIFER HAGGERTY

## Universal Basic Income May Be the Lifeline for American Poverty

It is reported by CareerBuilder.com that 78% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck. For those Americans who do live paycheck to paycheck, they are in constant fear of lacking enough funds to survive. They exist in a fight or flight mode. Rutger Bregman, historian and author, talks about the idea of “scarcity mentality.” The idea is that people behave differently when they are in fear of going without. We can see it in a parent’s plea for the medical procedure that will help their child get out of pain despite the lack of funds to pay. It could also be seen in the single mother who works two jobs to put a roof over her child’s head but maxes out her credit card to pay for gas to get her to those jobs. These people can’t even see a better future or plan for one in their current status, thus creating a society of poverty and mental health issues. Would \$1,000 extra dollars a month make a difference for these Americans? Universal Basic Income presents the idea that every adult American would receive a monthly benefit to cover the cost of basic necessities. Universal basic income would help to alleviate the stress poverty places on Americans.

As an office manager for a pediatric dental practice, one of the major issues that affects our patients is lack of care due to finances. Our office receives no less than 10 phone calls a day from parents asking for help for their child who is in terrible pain. One parent stands out in my memory as she called in crying, angry and upset because she felt hopeless that she couldn’t get her child to a dentist who would take her insurance. In between her sobbing, she reported that she had been up all night with her child who was crying in pain; over-the-counter medication was not helping, and his face was swollen. I too felt helpless as I knew there were no great resources for her in this situation. To better inform you of the issue, the practice I work for is a specialty office and, like most others in the state, does not participate in the Medicaid program. In fact, there are only three specialty offices in the state of Illinois that do, and of those offices, there is either a two year wait list for new patients, or they are not accepting new patients at all. This is creating a real problem that limits patients’ access to the care they need. Since Medicaid only reimburses its doctors around 1/3 of their fees, most offices choose not to participate in the program. Not only does Medicaid limit its reimbursements, but

it also puts a lot of restrictions on the care that the doctor can give the patient. So, who is determining the right care for the patient? The doctors who have studied dentistry for 10 years and put themselves in hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt to do so, or the law makers who have no medical degree? In 2017, *JADA*, the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, reported on a cross sectional study that assessed the impact of untreated dental caries on the overall oral health-related quality of life in children ages 1-3:

The consequences of undiagnosed caries most commonly reported by the mothers were toddlers being irritable or frustrated (30%), oral and dental pain (20%), parents being upset (16%), parents feeling guilty (16%), and children having difficulty sleeping (16%). The mothers of children with more advanced stages of undiagnosed caries reported, on average, issues that reflected worse oral health related quality of life. Children with oral health issues that are left untreated can upset the family’s quality of life. (Brignardello-Petersen 9)

Universal basic income would allow parents to use their money to see their doctor of choice versus allowing a state or federal system to dictate their standard of care.

Medical costs are not the only hardship affecting American parents. The cost of childcare can easily eat up a parent’s take-home pay. Childcare, on average, costs roughly \$250 a week per child. To put that into perspective, a parent would need to work a 40-hour week at \$6.25 an hour to afford childcare for one child. So, the cost of childcare can easily put a family below the poverty level. The need for outside childcare also presents the moral case that the family unit could be compromised. Having both parents or single-parent families working full-time often requires parents to place their child(ren) in the care of strangers. As a result, families are forced to rely on daycare centers to raise their children. After a long day’s work, there is very little mental or physical energy to spend on quality family time. With universal basic income available, parents could have more freedom during these formidable years of a child’s growth to choose to stay home without the burden of working to provide for their basic needs to survive.

Another consideration is families of children with special needs. Some children are diagnosed with a condition that requires one-on-one care 24 hours a day. The cost of this type of care will far outreach any take-home pay of low-income parents. This then requires one parent to stay home to care for the needs of the child, thus limiting that family’s income to one income in a two-parent household or no income for a single mother. Many government welfare plans limit how much assistance can be given to these families based on the parents’ income. Social

Security will pay monthly benefits to parents who have less than \$2,000 in total personal wealth. This then requires the family to always stay in a low economic status with no way to rise or grow out of it. Giving everyone a basic income would allow parents to properly care for these children without the burden of being stuck in poverty.

A universal basic income would come with some potential issues to consider. Will this system cause Americans to become lazy, undriven and unmotivated? How will UBI affect the cost of goods and services? Where will the money come from? All great questions; however, if the government would re-evaluate the cost of the mismanaged use of our current welfare system and reallocate these funds to a UBI system and place taxes on technology that takes jobs away from Americans, it could be done. Prices of goods and services would need to stay the same and not over-inflate. In a capitalist society, that may be hard to dictate, so this would need further investigation on how it would affect a UBI system. The matter of work ethic is simple. Due to mental illness there will always be a select population of people who will ride the system, but with a level playing field of everyone receiving their basic necessities, what does this matter? George Zarkadakis, an AI engineer and author examines in his article, "The Case Against Universal Basic Income" that the arguments against UBI are categorized by economic, political and ethical concerns. However, with the fear of poverty gone, Americans can then begin to rebuild the American dream of being whatever they want to be. Indeed, when he states that "[m]ost people need to feel valued and productive to live meaningful lives, to support and nourish loving families, to be creative and develop their full potential," Zarkadkis admits that people have an inner need to be productive. With that drive plus a UBI system, the possibilities would be endless for this new healthier society.

As Rutger Bregman states, poverty is not a personality defect. The cost of living is putting a heavy mental stress on Americans. This stress is creating unhealthy people and poor family units. Children are affected by the lack of presence of their parents both mentally and physically. Let universal basic income show you a new America full of stability for the younger generation. With the lack of stress, families have a stronger chance at success, and when Americans are successful, so is America!

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JALEN PING

## Why Free College Is Unrealistic

Debt in America is something that has become normal. With credit card debt and car loan payments, our culture has become accustomed to paying off debt. However, college debt is a bigger problem that exists in America because the combined student loan debt exceeds the average household debt. Thousands of students go to college to seek higher education and help them establish a stable career. Yet, going to college is not cheap by any means, and the costs of going to college continue to rise dramatically. Many people are opting not to go to college, while those who do are often saddled with student loan debt that follows them through life. In an article from *Issues and Controversies*, it states that “roughly 66% of students who earned their bachelor’s degree in 2008 graduated with outstanding student loan debt.” This current crisis in America has started the debate, which is led by presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, on whether college should be free for all students. While this could have some benefits, making college free for everyone is unrealistic and many other solutions exist that can solve this issue.

Supporters of free college would argue that making education free would open up colleges and universities to a greater number of students. A wider audience of people would want to attend college because they wouldn’t have to worry about finances. As of 2016, American students have accrued a massive 1.3 trillion dollars in student loan debt (Price). This financial burden has caused many graduates to delay important life events such as marriage, homeownership and children because of this substantial encumbrance. The argument for making education free is that it would solve this problem and help our economy. As stated in *What is the Future for Higher Education*, “Higher income for individuals equates to higher spending, and therefore to economic growth” (Eskow). Getting college degrees typically allows people to obtain higher paying jobs, and free tuition will provide opportunities for those who struggle to afford it. However, making college free would attract more young people to seek higher education, and some of these students may not be suited for college or the degrees they want. Also, more students attending college will lower the standard of college education and cause it to not be appreciated as much. This is because if anyone can go with no requirements, then the value of college decreases.

Attending college is a privilege, not a right. Making college free for everyone will change this aspect because people will be able to go to college wherever they want with no consequences. Education and one’s efforts before college needs to be valued, and it wouldn’t be if anyone can continue to college. Once in college, their

motivation will decrease because some students will not study hard or make the most of their education since there is no money to lose. The incentive won’t be the same, and students would just put in the bare minimum amount of effort. People appreciate things they must pay for and work for, but not something that’s free. It’s important to make students understand they have responsibilities, and it’s wrong to place the burdens of others onto taxpayers.

Another reason why college shouldn’t be free is that someone has to pay for their education. It’s physically impossible to deliver quality education while charging students nothing. Someone has to pay for it, and that someone is taxpayers. Colleges are a business and need money to operate. If college were to be free, the colleges would lose out on the money brought in from tuition. If it isn’t the students taking care of their responsibilities, it’s taxpayers who already pay for the substantial grants and scholarships awarded to students every year. It’s wrong to place this problem on the citizens for a decision that rests entirely on the individual’s shoulders. Making education free would mean the money has to be found from other sources. The only options available to the government that would fulfill this need would be to raise taxes or cut services. It simply wouldn’t solve the problem; it only shifts the problem onto another part of the population.

Free college won’t solve the problem of student debt as it intends to. Free tuition aims to provide opportunities for students whose families will struggle paying for college. However, many students from low-income families are already offered grants that help pay for the majority of their education. It will only provide free education for students who don’t necessarily need it. In a *Chronicle of Higher Education* newspaper article the author states:

Currently the United States provides billions in student need-based financial aid to eligible low- and middle-income students. The administration’s free college proposal would not only reduce the costs of education for many who already qualify for a free or lower-cost education, it would also provide free education for students whose families have the means to pay for part or all of a college education. In part, working-class families will be forced to subsidize college degrees for rich kids (Mangan).

Providing free education will use tax dollars inefficiently because it will provide students free education who can already afford it. Also, tuition isn’t the only reason students go into debt. An article from *Third Way* states “tuition and fees make up only 48% of the total costs a student pays to attend a four-year public institution” (Whistle). Students would have their tuition covered through the free college programs, but many will continue to struggle to pay for other costs, like housing

and books, that come with college. Therefore, the wealthier students would benefit more and this could lead to an increase in social inequality. Because many issues exist with making college free for everyone, coming up with other solutions to help the student debt problem is essential.

A solution to help with the student debt problem would include making students more aware of scholarships. Many scholarships are already granted out to students, but many students don't know about available scholarships that can pay for their education. This will help the student debt, while also rewarding deserving and motivated students. In an article from the *Harvard Business Review*, it states that "If a student genuinely desires to attend college, he or she will put in whatever it takes to make it happen. Schools recognize this initiative, for scholarships are earned and not handed out. Many scholarships require students to continually earn their privilege to be granted this money they are being rewarded with" (Johnson). Scholarships are a great way to offer free college because the student has to earn it. There is an incentive, and students will be determined to exceed in school. Handing out free college to everyone won't have the same effect, and students won't get the most out of their education.

Other simple solutions exist that can help cut tuition costs or make college a little more affordable. The tuition money brought in by colleges can be budgeted better. In the article "What Will it Take to Solve the Student Loan Crisis," it states that colleges are "rapidly increasing [the] number of million-dollar-plus salaries for presidents and many senior administrators" (Johnson). He later adds that "High-cost, non-academic campus amenities such as free movie theaters, climbing walls, swimming pools in residence halls, bowling alleys, hot tubs and more, [are] designed to attract student enrollments..." These unnecessary expenses can be limited, and as a result, will help reduce tuition costs. In addition to this, increasing Pell grants can be part of another solution to the student debt problem. In the past, Pell grants used to cover 80% of college costs at a four-year public college. Now, they only cover a third of the costs (Whistle). Increasing these grants will provide more opportunities for students and will help lower the debt they carry. This would be an effective use of government money, and it is a much better alternative and inexpensive method when compared to making college free for everyone.

The debt from loans that college students graduate with continues to accumulate year after year. There becomes a point when the nation needs to take action to solve this crisis. However, the idea of making college tuition free for everyone is an unrealistic solution to the problem. It could potentially offer some benefits, but there are many more problems and reasons that explain why other solutions should be considered. Going to college is important and opportunities should be available, but making college free for everyone is simply not the solution.

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CHASE RATH

## Shutter Island and Point of View

The story of *Shutter Island* starts with a man named Teddy Daniels, a United States marshal who is sent to the island to investigate a missing patient. Shutter Island houses a mental hospital called Ashecliffe. Teddy is joined by his new partner named Chuck. Teddy and Chuck make it to the hospital where they have to hand over their weapons. From the start, things don't seem right as the guards are on edge around Teddy but don't seem to care about the missing patient. Teddy and Chuck meet Dr. Crawley and Dr. Naehring, both of whom Teddy is very critical towards. Dr. Naehring is German, which reminds Teddy of fighting in WWII. During his stay on the island, Teddy has dreams and hallucinations of his dead wife. He also takes medicine provided by the hospital for his migraines. A storm hits the Island and Teddy and Chuck now have to stay until the weather clears up.

While interviewing employees and patients, Teddy inquires about the location of Andrew Laeddis, the man who Teddy says burned his apartment down and killed his wife. According to Teddy he is somewhere on the island. One night the missing patient Rachel Solando ends up being found, yet things still seem suspicious for Teddy. Now only Laeddis remains to be found. In the chaos of the storm Teddy and Chuck sneak into ward C, the ward that houses the most dangerous prisoners. Teddy finds a man named George who claims to know about everything that's going on in the hospital. Teddy thinks there is a conspiracy going on, and that the hospital takes certain patients and turns them into trained killers. Chuck goes missing and Teddy searches for him in a cave. In the cave he meets the real Rachel Solando,

who is apparently a doctor who is being hunted down for knowing too much about these secret experiments. Teddy heads for the lighthouse to check for Chuck. Inside he finds nothing but Dr. Crawley who tells him that he is actually a patient at Ashecliffe, and the whole mystery was a setup. Everything about the conspiracy

is a delusion created by Teddy, even the "real" Rachel Solando. Teddy's real name is Andrew Laeddis, and he was the one who killed his wife after she killed their kids. Teddy is a fake personality invented by Andrew to live as the hero of his own story. If Andrew can't accept reality then he will be lobotomized. Time passes and Andrew seems to have regressed back into being Teddy, and so he is taken to the Lighthouse to be lobotomized. *Shutter Island* combines elements of horror and film noir in order to show Teddy's delusional point of view.



### Mise En Scene:

Teddy sees himself as the hero of his own story, as a protagonist trying to solve a mystery and live in his own fantasy world. One way this is shown is in the mise en scene. While uncovering this mystery, Teddy sees himself as trapped on the Island. In one scene at (38:00) Teddy and Chuck are discussing Andrew Laeddis, and

there is a fence in the foreground of this scene. Since it is in the foreground Teddy is behind it in the midground. This makes Teddy look trapped in a cage, and the same thing happens again in a different scene at (48:56) where Teddy and Chuck return from the cemetery, and also



(1:11:46) Where Teddy is in ward C. The jail cell is in the foreground which makes Teddy look like he is behind bars. Part of the noir genre is the use of vertical lines to show how the characters are trapped. Teddy is literally "trapped" in the midground by the jail bars, and it shows him internally framed within them. This goes hand in hand with horror as feeling trapped is part of the horror genre, too. Teddy sees himself as trapped on the island since there are many shots with this "jail cell" foreground. Mise en scene is used to convey the horror of Teddy's situation as well. At (1:10:16) Teddy is on guard as he navigates ward C, the ward with the most dangerous inmates. This entire scene gives us an intimate full frontal shot of Teddy. This shows us his tension and fear as he slowly navigates the dark hallway with his matches out. Mise en scene shows us the entrapment and tension from Teddy's point of view.

### Photography:

Photography shows us the genre elements from Teddy's point of view as well. Teddy and the other characters are backlit throughout most scenes in the whole movie, making them seem like characters in a noir movie, which is what they are to Teddy. At (1:07:26) Teddy has a bright backlight that is so bright it covers Chuck's face behind him. Teddy sees himself as a hero trying to survive a terrifying conspiracy he's created in his head. At (1:10:27) Teddy is walking down a dark hallway that he needs to light a match in just to see, yet he still has his noir backlight to emphasize his role as a character in his own story. During



this same scene Teddy uses a match as source lighting; to him this is horrifying as he can only see what this tiny match reveals as he walks through the dark hallway, yet at the same time it makes his backlighting really stand out. Through this scene we mostly see Teddy in a close-up, which is very intimate and helps add tension to the scene. The close-up also represents what Teddy can see, since it's so dark he can't see very far in front of him; therefore the camera can't see very far either since it's from his point of view. Elements of horror and noir are represented through the photography of the film.

### Sound:

The score plays an important role in showing Teddy's mental state. The music in this film is both diegetic and nondiegetic. The nondiegetic music is still coming from Teddy's point of view and how he views his situation. An example is the music that plays around (5:38) when Teddy and Chuck are arriving at the hospital. The situation itself isn't very scary, but the music playing makes the hospital seem ominous. The music is very over-the-top and stands out as being almost overdramatic. The ominous music is how Teddy views the hospital, as the setting to his own horror story. The same song also plays at (43:48) when Teddy has a flashback to his WWII days. This tells us that Ashecliffe and the concentration camp are no different to Teddy. There are even images of barbed wire in both sequences. Music is also used to push the conspiracy that the hospital is running experiments. At (12:02) Teddy walks into the room and hears music that gives him flashbacks to a Nazi office in WWII. When Dr. Naehring introduces himself Teddy picks up on the fact that he's German. Teddy also hears this same song play during one of his dream sequences in which he meets the fake Andrew Laeddis. This plays into the mystery and Teddy's imagination. Teddy thinks the hospital and Andrew are part of some crazy conspiracy and that is reflected with the repeated song. The only flashback with no music is the one where Teddy relives what actually happened to his wife; it breaks the way flashbacks work and comes off as the realest thing we have seen in the whole movie. Music plays a large part in combining the genres and giving us Teddy's point of view.

### Story:

Story is very important to showing us Teddy's point of view. Teddy is the "sender" telling us his story where he is against the evil doctors and part of some grand mystery. In a way, Teddy is also the "receiver" along with the audience, as he is trying to buy into his own delusions to escape from the reality of what he did to his

wife. The story starts in World War II, and then Teddy kills his wife and ends up at the hospital. Then the events of the film happen and Teddy is a part of the roleplay. The plot, however, shows the audience these things out of order in order for us to see the film from Teddy's point of view. Showing us events through flashbacks comes from the noir genre and combines with the horror storytelling from being trapped on an island and uncovering a mystery.

### Conclusion:

Elements of the horror and noir genre are used to tell us Teddy's story from his point of view. This shows the audience his side of things and tries to justify his actions. The audience gets to understand Teddy's mental illness and learn how he got wrapped up in his own story. The film ends up subverting our expectations by having the climax at the lighthouse be more of a tragic realization than a heroic confrontation.

The way the story comes together at the end of the movie gives a brand new context to the rest of the film. On a repeat viewing it changes from a horror film about missing patients and secret experiments into a film about a man who is being treated for his mental illness. *Shutter Island* ends up being a revisionist film that subverts our expectations for a horror movie and grounds it in reality. Horror and noir movies can be overdramatic and stylized, and that is the effect the film achieves until the big reveal of Teddy's condition, and then the film changes to be more realistic for the conclusion. Overall, the horror and noir genre were used creatively to tell us the point of view of a delusional patient in a mental hospital.

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ALLY LISNEK

## The Honest Truth of Being Honest

Life, for all that it is worth, is not a free-ticketed ride to happiness. Of course, there are those who are guaranteed more success than others via fate, family or fortune, but that is not entirely what a happy life is about. As the saying goes, “money can’t buy happiness,” and no amount of success can equate to the satisfaction that a truly, fulfilling lifestyle can supply.

People who are, for lack of better wording, not fortunate enough to have a straight-shot to the top might have to work harder, starting from a young age, than those who are. In elementary school, there are always the kids who fit along with other students more than others, which can carry on throughout the rest of their lives and into occupational habitats of a working adult.

I know that when I was a child, I didn’t fit in as naturally as my friends. My personality and physical appearance separated me from others—not so much because I was different, but because I felt I was different. This, for its own reasons, set me off to a slower start in the climb of social identity. As I got older, however, I realized what I thought was the key to a successful social lifestyle; I would just have to fake it until I made it. After elementary school, I started changing my interests to match my new peers in middle school and then changed again in high school. Through these means of creating my own likable identity, I found temporary happiness, but never felt truly satisfied with my relationships I had faked. In my senior year of high school I fully realized what I was doing wrong, changed my ways, and reevaluated what my relationships with others and myself needed.

What is the key to a happy life?

Despite the fact that it took me until I was practically out of school, I finally found out what made me the happiest--being true to myself. I believe sincerity is the foundation of a strong, healthy, happy lifestyle for not only a person, but those close to that person. It wasn’t until I came to understand and love myself that I found it easier to carry myself with more stride. All in all, the basis of a jovial lifestyle is sincerity, especially starting from a young age. In order to be sincere, people must: (1), never pretend to be anything less than who they are; (2), never be afraid or ashamed of who they are; and (3), treat everyone with equal respect. With these steps, someone will not only be honest and accountable, but will also help his or herself to become the best individual he or she can be.

To be sincere, a person should be honest, and to not pretend to be something he or she is not. No one person is like another and because of this, there is no

reason to try and match someone else. People come from all different types of backgrounds depending on their genetic makeup and the nature of how they were raised, amongst other variables. Despite that, there are people who will try to change who they are in order to fit in or be more likeable. Some people, as they grow, begin to morph their interests and sense of self to seem more appealing to peers, coworkers, and friends. During my childhood, I found friendships were difficult to make. Not because of how I was raised, but because of how I perceived myself. Unlike most of the other students my age, I did not excel in athletics, nor had a specific interest that motivated me into a career choice. Because of this, I felt as if my social climb was stunted by my low self-esteem that kept me grounded, far behind my peers. Over time, I found the desire for validation only came to me when I indulged myself in things that made others happy, thus forming friendships upon this façade I had fabricated over time. While that might have given some momentary happiness, it was not fulfilling enough, and I realized that by not being sincere to who I was, I was not being sincere to other people.

However, low self-esteem is a struggle that many can relate to. Hollywood cinema uses this fact to sell movies that a younger audience understands, whether they are fully aware of the implications or not. For example, the 2004 movie *Mean Girls* uses this ploy as its basis for a plot. When a high school student who comes from a different country tries to fit in with her peers, she deems it better to instead fabricate her personality in order to obtain friendships with others, even if it is an empty relationship. Lindsey Lohan’s character comes to realize throughout the course of the film that her way of blending in and not being sincere is not doing her any favors, nor that of any of her new friends. A similar movie, *Heathers*, acts upon the same theme of a high school girl only pretending to fit in with the popular clique, although the latter has a more sinister ending to its tale. Nevertheless, the struggle that many youths face of feeling the need to build up a likable persona is common enough to be viewed in movies and television alike, no matter how destructive it is.

Another definitive quality of being sincere is to never have to feel uncomfortable in one’s own skin. From the little girls who can go to the store and see dolls that actually look like them to children and adults, alike, that can see a movie or show with people they can relate to, people can feel more comfortable in their own skin and not feel the need to change in order to feel more accepted. Unfortunately, not everyone is graced with high self-esteem. Due to this, many might feel embarrassed about who they are and even feel the need to hide what makes them unique. Things have changed within recent years, but diversity was not something commonly found in as many places as it is today. It was not until 2009 when Mattel began producing Barbie dolls with dark skin tones. The *So in*



*Style* series featured a primarily black cast of Barbie dolls, thus beginning a trend of dolls with different skin tones. This movement later shifted towards creating different body shapes, beginning in 2016. Up until that point, many little girls could not relate to these popular toys they saw in stores due to their color or shape. If anything, Barbie dolls gave a lot of adolescent girls anxiety that they would never have the famous hourglass shape or perfect porcelain skin that Barbie had, therefore, giving many low self-esteem and hate towards their appearance.

Television shows and movies also began to take on a more diverse cast of different sexualities, genders, colors and abilities. *Forrest Gump*, the 1994 award winning Tom Hanks movie, featured a main character with heavily-implied autism, giving a more center-staged light on people with autism. A more recent movie, *The Master*, features a World War II veteran who suffers greatly from post-traumatic stress disorder. This portrayal by Joaquin Phoenix is not as happy-go-lucky as Tom Hanks, but rather shows a more realistic sense of people that experience PTSD. Major companies and mainstream media beginning to normalize the differences in humans will help boost the confidence some people need in order to not feel alienated in their own bodies.

People who are truly honest with themselves are also honest to one another. No matter the sex, race, age or any other factor, no two people are truly alike. Much like a snowflake, one might look like the same as one another, but when analyzed, they are completely different creations. The genetic makeup of people that creates their different physical appearances does not need to influence how they get along with others. When people learn to appreciate who they are with what they were given and not what they've applied to themselves, they won't have the need to shape their ideals around popular trends, celebrities or models because they feel inferior. People who have a strong sense of self-love and respect are much more likely to be leaders because of their confident nature, even if those people may need to put on a brave face in order to sell their confidence. For example, Oprah Winfrey battled a lot through her childhood with abuse and harassment from family and peers alike. Despite her tough upbringing, she became a confident woman and celebrity by never succumbing to the need to falsify her identity in order to be more liked. Her story inspires many into staying true to who they are.

In elementary school, we had signs around the building that said, "Treat others the way you want to be treated." As a child, I did not realize how crucial that was to teach children. A person who does not respect nor is completely honest with who they are will not live a happy life. Even the people who have a large group of friends are not truly happy if their relationships are built upon a facade they have created over time. To treat others the way we would want to be treated means extending the love and admiration that we have for ourselves and to teach others

how to respect themselves.

I only wish I kept that mindset when I was young into my adult life. Growing up, I had a hard time understanding and appreciating who I was, and thus never got along because I was unable to distribute the one-sided trust that favored those who were nice to me. Despite the years I spent in an unhealthy relationship with myself, I realized that I was never going to be happy treating myself the way I was. One cannot learn to love others if they cannot love who they are.

PAUL WATSON

## Farmer Beck

"Has Farmer Beck been seen around?  
His six small boys are not in school."  
"Perhaps the weather's snowed them in."  
"Perhaps his truck is out of fuel."

"I don't like this. It's been five days,  
and everybody knows the rules."  
"Let's get a posse right away:  
good men, a doctor, spades and tools."

The cars were left beside the ditch  
because the drifts were deep and cold.  
They plodded straight across the field.  
Their doubts made their resolve unfold.

Gunshots explode above their heads,  
Beck shouts to them to keep away.  
"If any man comes near my home,  
I promise there'll be hell to pay!"

"Hey, Farmer Beck, we're here to check  
to see if ev'ryone's alright!"  
"I said, ya'll keep away or else!"  
He slammed the door with all his might.

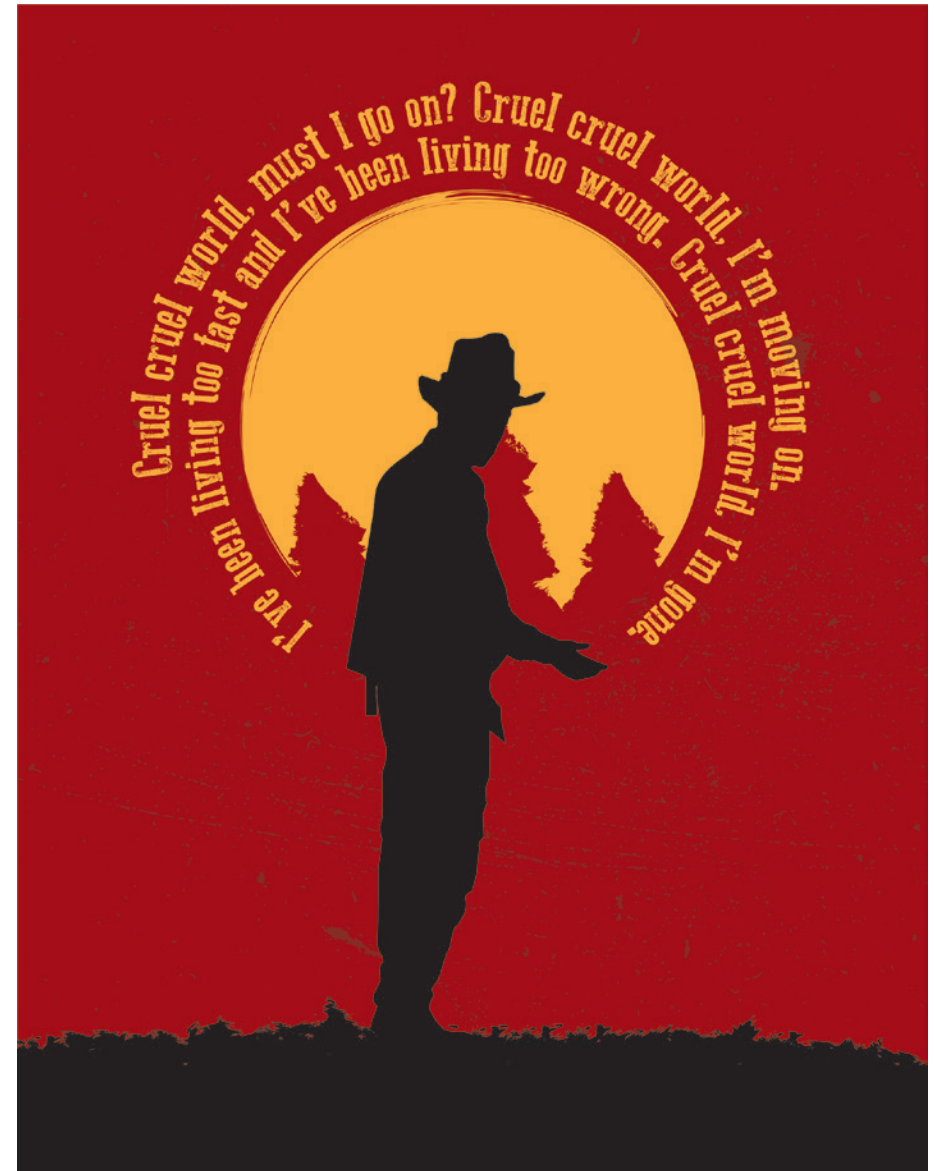
One shot, then silence, nothing more.  
It's said his farm was on the skids.  
The posse stormed the house and found  
that Beck had slayed his wife and kids.



**Rollie Dennison**  
*I Have an Idea*  
silkscreen



**Grace Underfanger**  
*Sleeping Beauty*  
 illustrated handmade book  
 acrylic



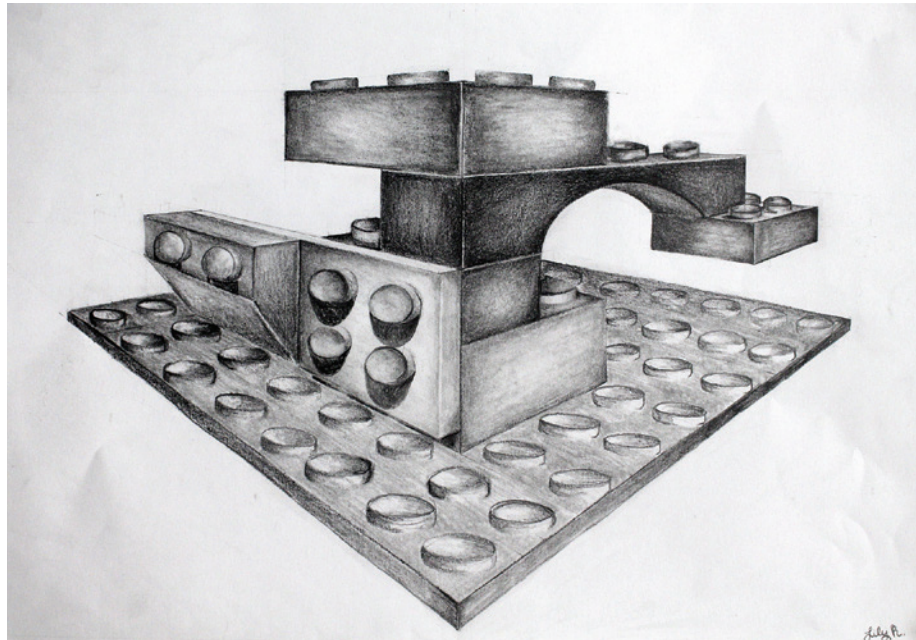
**Nicholas Paul**  
*Cruel Cruel World*  
 digital



**Charissa Fox**  
*Ochigwe*  
 mixed media



**Christina Pierson**  
*50s Design 1*  
 acrylic



**Lily Rodgers**  
*Lots of Legos*  
 acrylic



**Blake Paige**  
*A Common View*  
 acrylic



**Yvonne Oliea**  
*They Were Her Property*  
 graphite



**Don Ramsey**  
*Fall Storm Coming*  
 oil



Alexa Bartlett  
*Save The Tigers*  
 digital print



Abbey Knoles  
*Typography Brochure Design*  
 digital



**Maria Kelarestaghi**  
*Hang Loose*  
 charcoal



**Ashley Bonnett**  
*On an Empty Morning*  
 acrylic





**Ashley Bonnett**  
*Kowloon #3*  
 silkscreen



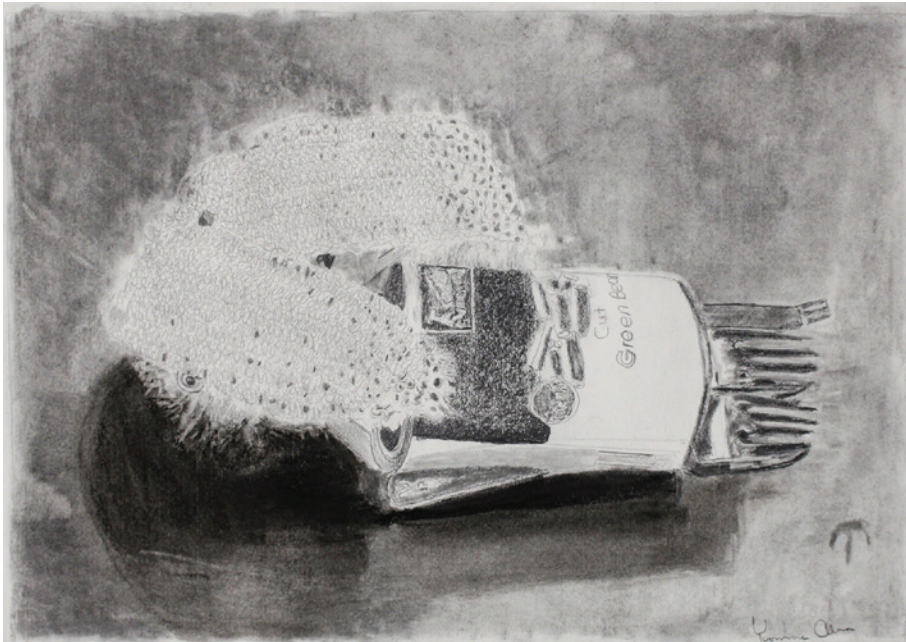
**Brinton Johnson**  
*Triadic Still Life*  
 acrylic



**Sharon Carter**  
*Disturbing the Peace*  
 silk screen



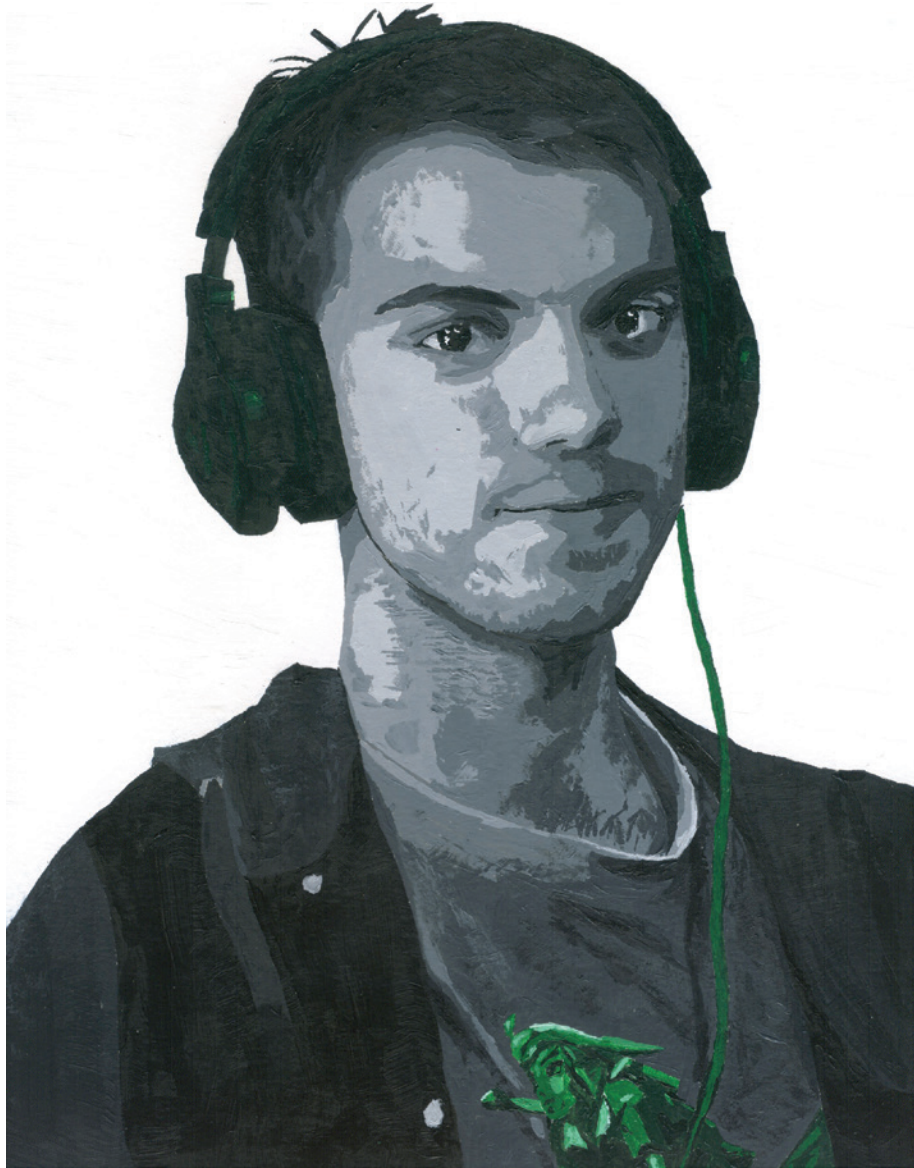
**Allona Beasley Mitchell**  
*Spring*  
 oil



**Yvonne Oliea**  
*Aries*  
 graphite



**E. Vern Taylor**  
*A Dream Stolen*  
 acrylic on canvas



**Blake Paige**  
*Self Portrait*  
acrylic



**Jenna McCarty**  
*Leap of Faith*  
acrylic



**John Malan**  
*Turtle Island Aflame*  
 ceramic



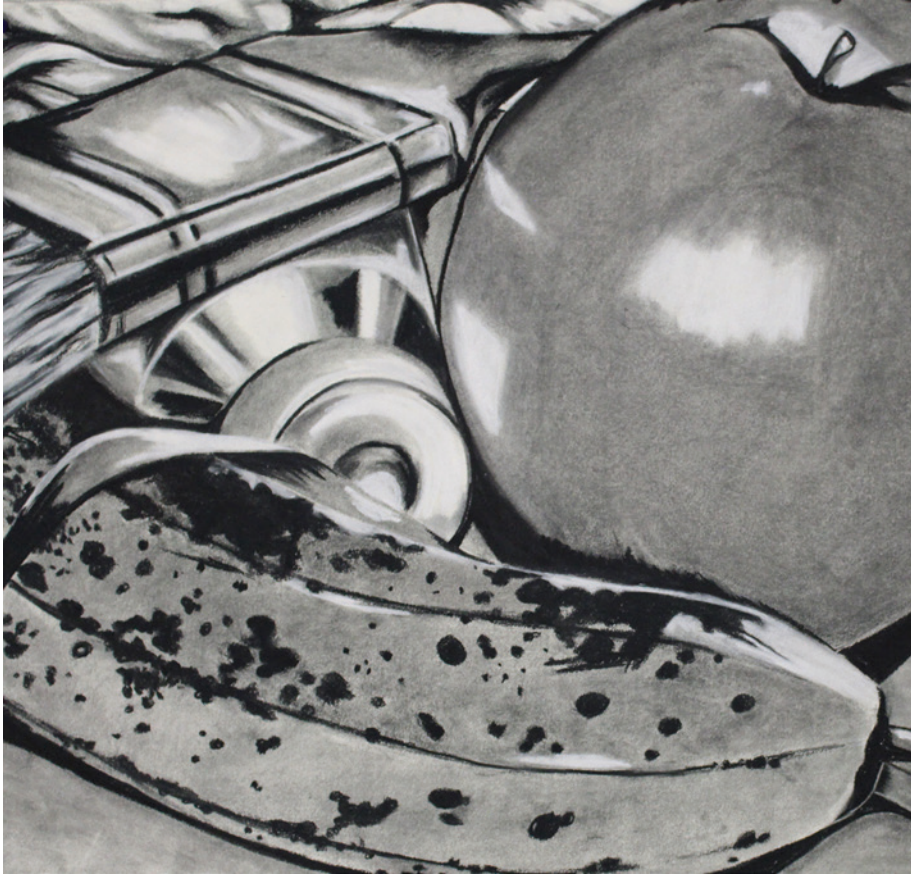
**Sharon Carter**  
*Right to Roam*  
 silkscreen



**Grace Jaderholm**  
*Dinner is Served*  
charcoal



**Megan Rhodes**  
*Radioactive Future*  
clay and mixed media



**Maria Kelarestaghi**  
*3 Tone Still Life*  
charcoal



**Jenna McCarty**  
*Untitled*  
acrylic



**Kaylee Winterbottom**  
*Veteran's Pride*  
 acrylic



**Ashley Bonnett**  
*Home*  
 acrylic





**Rollie Dennison**  
*Stranger than Fiction*  
 digital illustration



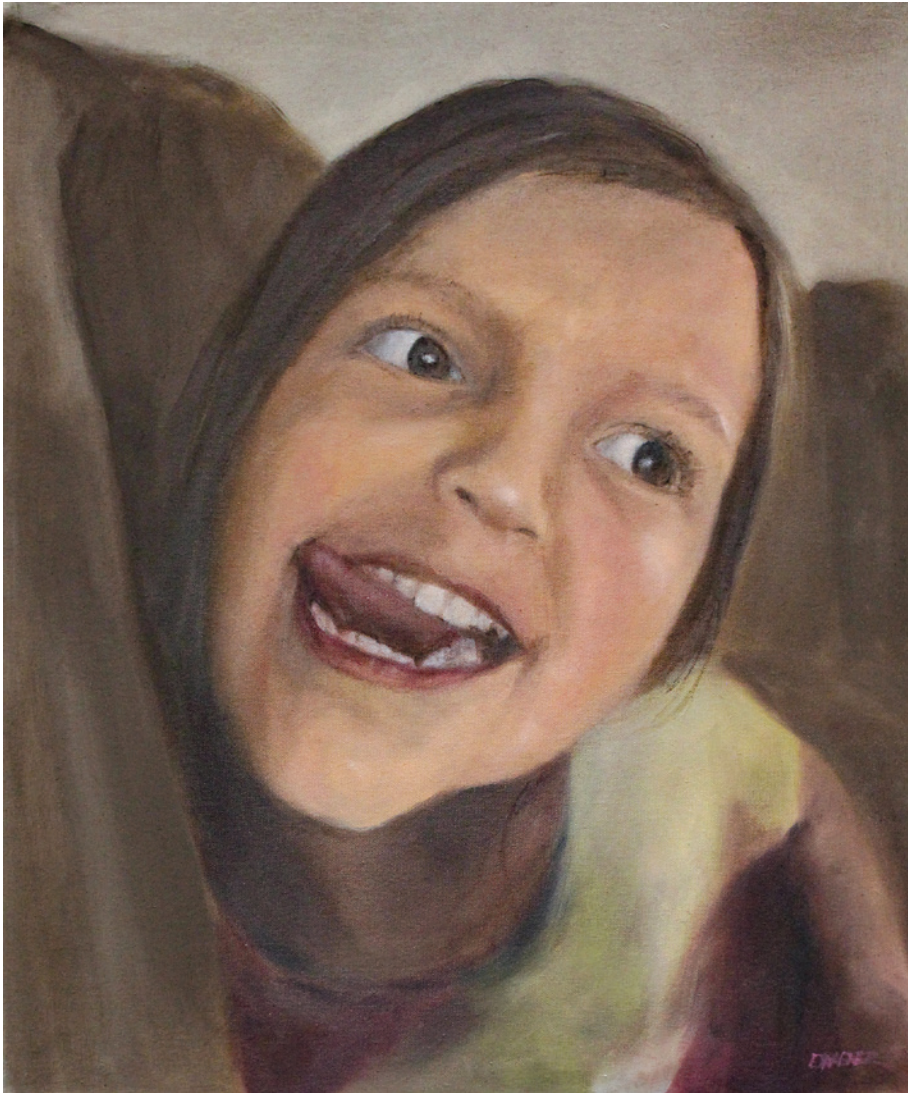
**Jenna McCarty**  
*Yellow*  
 acrylic



**Katerina Rhodes**  
*Bright Eyes*  
 silkscreen



**Alexa Bartlett**  
*Illustrated Handmade Book*



**Doug Wagner**  
*Aves*  
oil



**Art Silver**  
*Sunshine Travelers*  
acrylic



**Jon Hurt**  
*Killer Klowns from Outer Space logo*  
 digital print



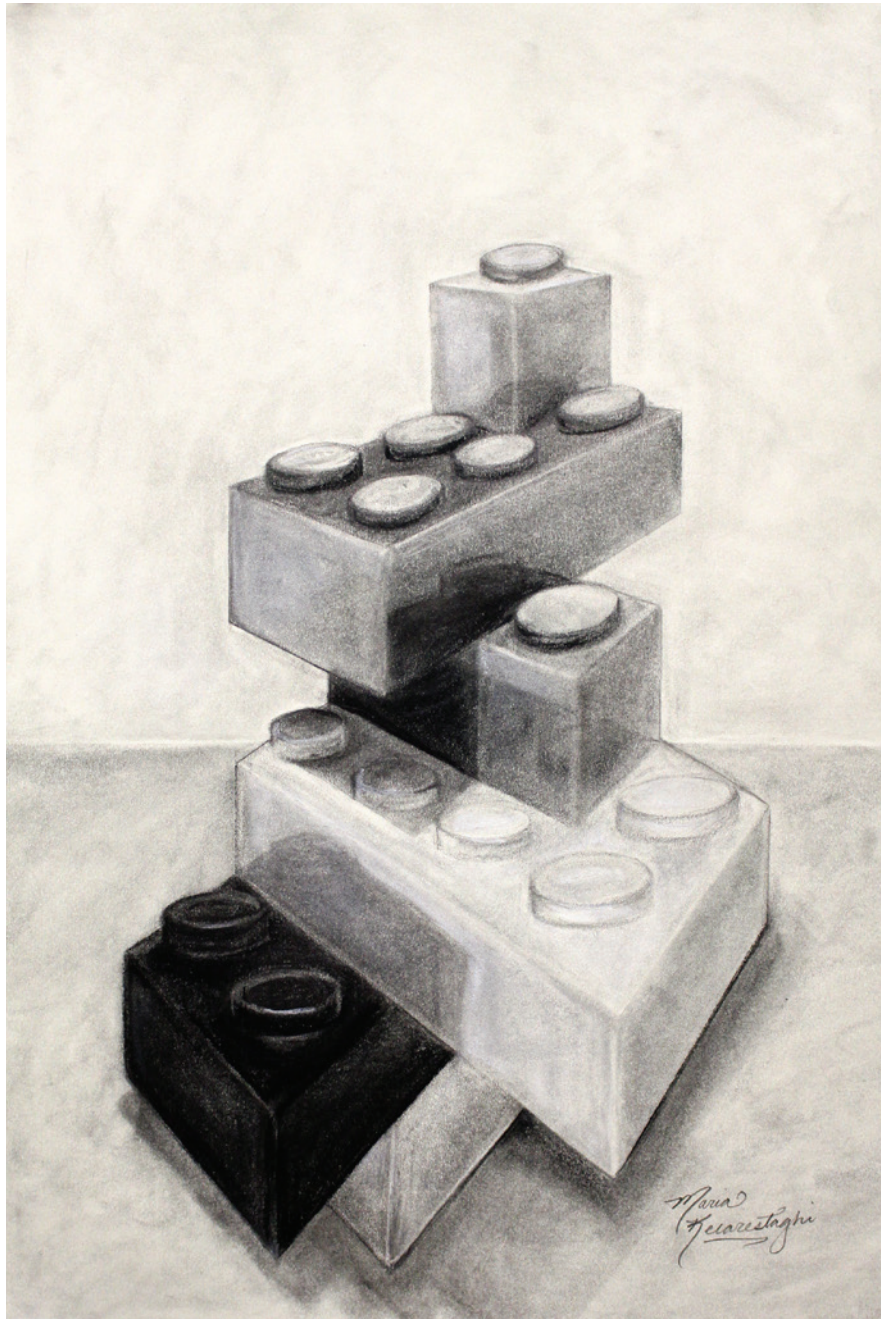
**Tim Graves**  
*Coco Krabby's Coconut Bites*  
 digital/package design



**Jazmine Foster**  
*Self Portrait*  
charcoal



**Payton Knapp**  
*Self Portrait*  
graphite



**Maria Kelarestaghi**  
*Legos*  
 charcoal



**Madisyn Monical**  
*Self Portrait*  
 charcoal



**Julia Whitnall**  
*Head Study*  
 graphite



**Charissa Fox**  
*Foxy Flake Brown*  
 silkscreen



**Dennis Stahlberg**  
*Lava Flow*  
acrylic



**Rollie Dennison**  
*Inferno*  
digital



PAUL WATSON

## There Is Nothing Like a Hole

For there is nothing like a hole.  
 Below, inside, there is, like, naught,  
 with nothing solid, nothing wet,  
 just enough open space for aught.

What shall I do with this raw hole?  
 Shall I fill it with treasures dear,  
 with baubles gold and trinkets old  
 beyond the value we revere?

Shall I proclaim this hole a home  
 for something supple, small and green?  
 Perhaps a sapling that will make  
 the air we breathe stay clear and clean.

PAUL WATSON

## A Rope Or A Thread

You try your best, but you can't get ahead.  
 A life of hopes and dreams begin to fade.  
 Are you hanging by a rope or a thread?

Exhausted, you feel like the walking dead.  
 Your paycheck is spent before you get paid.  
 You try your best, but you can't get ahead.

Only bad news when the tea leaves are read.  
 You face the future alone and afraid.  
 Are you hanging by a rope or a thread?

You look down the rough road and where it's led.  
 There's nothing left for you to buy or trade.  
 You tried your best, but you can't get ahead.

After everything is done and said,  
 You're haunted by the choices you have made.  
 Are you hanging by a rope or a thread?

You face your bad fortune with grief and dread.  
 Nobody you love can come to your aide.  
 You try your best, but you can't get ahead.  
 Are you hanging by a rope or a thread?

ADAM COUGHLIN

## Thai Fighter: Mekong Café Reigns Supreme

A Springfield, Illinois resident is acutely aware of the 15+ Asian restaurants that operate within city limits, so how does a consumer possibly choose which is worth both his or her time and money? A quick Google search leaves a hungry, prospective customer overwhelmed instead of providing the patron with an answer as to where they should spend their precious lunch break or family dinner. As one passes through Springfield, just how many culture-specific Asian options are available for a potential customer is readily apparent. When it comes to Thai restaurants alone, Springfield possesses over ten, which leads to a surprisingly difficult decision for a purchaser who simply craves authentic Thai cuisine. Fortunately, I have eaten at every Thai restaurant on numerous occasions and can provide some clarity as to which restaurant provides the best, most authentic food experience. Mekong Café dominates the competition due to its service, the quantity of food for the price paid, and the authenticity of its food.

In terms of service, Mekong Cafe outperforms all other Thai restaurants in Sangamon County. A major reason why Mekong Cafés service trumps all its competitors is because only the owner, Ikaika, along with his wife and daughter, operate the dining room of the restaurant. The customer enters Mekong and is immediately greeted with a smile by one of the three family members who own as well as operate the restaurant. The Mekong Café is unlike all other Thai establishments, where being greeted, escorted to your table, and waited on by an owner is routine as opposed to a complete surprise, or simply unimaginable. A business owner has a vested interest in the experience of their customers which, consequently, affects the success of their business. The Mekong Café's service is in stark contrast to the staff at establishments like Thai Basil, where lethargic, socially awkward teenagers cannot wait to get off their shift, or Little Saigon, which employs bashful immigrants who are not fully confident or proficient in speaking English yet. The owner-customer relationship at Mekong Café is second to none because the restaurant is the family's life and not just a weekly paycheck. As a result of the previously discussed factors, Mekong Café happens to have the most efficient service. There have been numerous occasions where acquaintances, despite having a 45-minute lunch break, were served their order within 15 minutes of arrival and were out of the restaurant before 30 minutes had passed, which is impressive by most standards. Every meal at Mekong is served steaming hot due to the quantity of people who are constantly filtering through, which pressures the

kitchen staff to continue to churn out food. Since all dishes are made to order, all food is fresh and arrives steaming hot. A benefit of the owners working the dining room is that a customer never has to deal with a new server's learning curve of not knowing the menu. The family-team's familiarity with everything about the restaurant allows Mekong to skip any type of error or confusion when ordering. This is a major issue in most Thai restaurants because oftentimes many employees are new residents of the United States, so they do not understand much English, which impedes service tremendously.

Another criterion where Mekong Café distances itself from competitors is the value offered via serving the best cost to portion ratio. When comparing the lunch portion of Magic Kitchen's Pad Thai, which is a famous Thai dish consisting of noodles, bean sprouts, egg, green onions, ground peanuts and lime juice, to that of Mekong Café's rendition of the dish, the cost is the same at \$9.75. However, firsthand experience of having ordered each of these business's rendition of the dish yielded at least a 33% larger portion of meat in Mekong's version. On the other hand, Taste of Thai's Massaman Curry, a dish that consists of the choice of meat, carrots, onions, potatoes and curry sauce, costs \$8.45 compared to Mekong's, which is \$8.99. Despite Taste of Thai being cheaper, the amount of food served is vastly inferior to Mekong's dish, especially when it comes to the amount of protein per entree. The Taste of Thai dish is disappointing while the Mekong rendition will have you asking for a leftover box. When one visits Mekong, he or she will realize that the dish was not an especially, or accidentally, large portion, but merely part of a purposeful emphasis on making the customer happy. Almost every table is occupied by a customer who is requesting a carryout box so that he or she can finish the meal later. Satisfied customers regularly discuss in Mekong Café's Yelp and Google reviews the generous portions and that they frequent the establishment because they feel as if they are buying two meals for the price of one.

Furthermore, Mekong Café has the strictest adherence to both quality standards as well as traditional Thai recipes in Springfield. Po, the owner of Mekong Cafe, was born in Laos, but grew up in Thailand, where he then fled to the United States. Ikaika brought his traditional recipes with him to the United States and eventually started a restaurant. Consequently, sourcing native ingredients became a challenge, but he refused to make any concessions for what his recipes called for, so he decided to close his restaurant down every weekend so that he could personally go to St. Louis, which has one of the biggest authentic Southeast Asian food markets. Po hand picks the freshest herbs and spices, plus ingredients from Thailand and Laos that are not commercially available in the United States, so the ingredients are identical in the ones that his recipes call for. This adherence to quality or authenticity has no equal amongst Thai restaurants in Springfield.

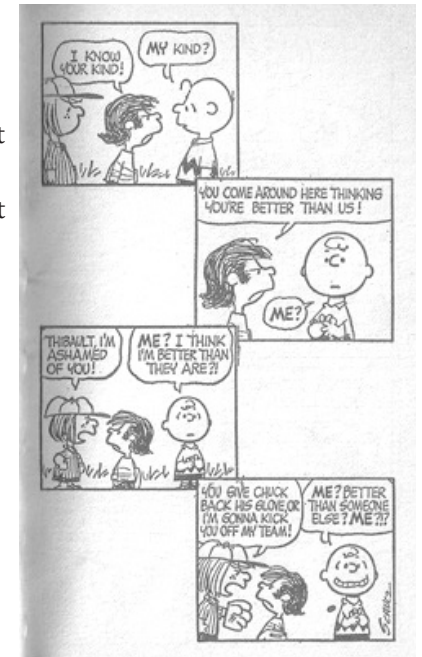
In addition to Mekong Café only being open Monday through Friday for quality control purposes, the menu consists of recipes that have been passed down for generations in Ikaika's family. Unlike Asian-Fusion restaurants like Pao or Mimosa, which offer French fries and even chocolate mousse cake, one will find neither of these items offered at Mekong Café. With the first spoonful of lemongrass soup, the consumer shares in the same culinary experience as Po by tasting the same exact recipe that his grandma fed him when he grew up in Thailand years ago. The first bite into any Mekong Café dish sends the guest into a culinary journey into Southeast Asia.

Unsurprisingly, sifting through the copious amounts of Thai restaurant options in Springfield can seem overwhelming, especially when one realizes that the menus are the same and that the prices are nearly identical too. Although these restaurants may be similar, know that there is only one restaurant that happens to be family-owned, devotes itself to quality, uses the freshest, native ingredients and serves the biggest portions in town. After countless dollars spent and numerous meals consumed, I have found the best Thai restaurant in town. Mekong Café is a hidden treasure that combines dedicated service, value, quality and authenticity for a consumer-centric experience that is unrivaled in the city of Springfield. There is no better time than now to go and experience what makes Mekong Café the most satisfying and authentic restaurant in town.

ANNA CRUMBAUGH

## Just Black and White?

Do you think of stereotyping when you think of *Peanuts*? Probably that isn't the first thing that comes to mind. However, Charles Schulz did create a comic which spoke to this issue. It first appeared on June 8, 1970 in the funnies pages of newspapers across the nation. Next it was published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston in *You've Come a Long Way Charlie Brown*, and finally by Fawcett Crest in *It's All Your's Snoopy*. Incorporating a subtle reference to the troublemaker Tybalt from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Schulz pits Good ol' Charlie Brown against a self-assured accuser, and the result is a powerful visual. Through this short, black and white comic, Schulz uses even the simplest visual details to demonstrate the difference between the assumptions we make about people and the often-unpredictable reality.



Since *Peanuts* gained such a large and diverse audience, it is hard to determine who Schulz originally intended that audience to be. On one hand, Nicole Rudick of *The New Yorker* claims that “[Schulz] did not consider ‘Peanuts’ a children’s comic,” citing the unchildlike characters and Schulz’s desire to deal with “hard truths.” On the other hand, Bruce Handy of *The Atlantic* points out that, “it is kids who have been among his most avid readers.” *Peanuts* as a whole can be assumed to target middle-class whites who read the newspaper since the majority of the characters seem pretty well off and only one, Franklin, is black. However, the blunt honesty of the *Peanuts* gang have overcome socioeconomic barriers so well that Jacob Murel in his “Review of *The Comics of Charles Schulz: The Good Grief of Modern Life*” commented, “Indeed, one question concerning *Peanuts*’ success is how a strip so apparently white and middle-class—I daresay, bourgeois—can appeal to such a diverse array of readers.” Because of the wide audience, Charles Schulz was able to include characters who might not have been in the same social circle and through this diversity, confront some of the stereotypes that encumber our society even today.

Though the actions and words of the *Peanuts* gang probably provide

the most insight into their characters, Schulz also put great thought into the appearance of each character. The characters' clothes help to give readers a general idea of their backgrounds. Since each character wears their own trademark outfit, it is easy to overlook the importance of this. Although it is wrong and cruel to act on the assumptions we make about others based on the way they are dressed, people's clothing choices often reveal much about their personality and socioeconomic status. As a result, it is valuable to analyze the characters' clothing. Charlie Brown wears what looks like a polo, black shorts, and brown shoes. It is a nice outfit and generally fits in well with the kids he hangs around with. On the other hand, when Charlie interacts with Thibault, his clothing is probably one of the factors which causes Thibault to treat him the way he does. Peppermint Patty's clothes stick out when she is hanging out with Charlie's crowd. The rest of the girls usually wear dresses and even if they don't, they wear pants and nice shoes. Peppermint Patty, on the other hand, perpetually wears athletic shorts and slides. She is a rough-around-the-edges tomboy, but one wonders if that is the only reason she doesn't have as nice clothes. Thibault's shirt is perpetually wrinkled just as his face perpetually carries a frown. His shirt lacks a collar. It's also interesting to note that earlier in the story Charlie Brown had to walk across town to give his baseball mitt to Peppermint Patty's team. Taking all this into account, there is a distinct possibility that Peppermint Patty and Thibault live on the wrong side of the tracks.

Another facet of the characters' appearance is the contrast of black and white which Schulz employs to cut through the outer trappings of his characters and delve into their true natures. Although avid fans of *Peanuts* are accustomed to Charlie Brown's wishy-washiness and Peppermint Patty's unrefined forcefulness, not everyone is so familiar with them. Schulz needs all his readers to instantly recognize and understand his characters, since so much of the strip's humor is based on who they are. In his designs, he ensures that certain attributes are visually apparent in his characters' respective images. Charlie Brown's big, round, blank head catches the reader's eye. It is not symbolic of stupidity, for often Charlie surprises the audience with his intelligence. Rather, the pervasive white of Charlie's appearance creates a lack of emphasis and imposingness, just as the character who carries it. Thin stripes, black shorts, chin-length hair, and freckles all darken Peppermint Patty's presentation, symbolizing her more commanding presence. Thibault is one of Schulz's minor characters. Very few of the readers know him and he needs to emanate a strong persona to pull off the parts he does play. There is nothing wishy-washy about Thibault. His dark hair is not quietly slicked down into a normal haircut, but grabs the reader with its distinctive style. By dressing him in pants rather than shorts and wrinkling up his shirt, Schulz further darkens the image. Thibault is solid. He is not wishy-washy or unsure of himself, but confident enough to challenge others.

Even more than the design of each character, their body language illuminates the attitudes they entertain toward each other. The way Schulz groups his characters is vastly important. In the first two images, Thibault engages with Charlie, verbally attacking him. Meanwhile, Peppermint Patty stands passively by, and in the second scene disappears altogether. One begins to wonder why she makes no attempt to stop Thibault. Suddenly, in the third frame, she jumps back in yelling at Thibault. Although in one sense one could argue that she is now defending Charlie, her words do not fit that assessment. Rather, Schulz brings her back simply to occupy Thibault so Charlie can be off in his own world for the last two frames. Schulz has to isolate Charlie by engaging Thibault with Peppermint Patty so that the reader takes time to properly observe this wishy-washy, round-headed kid. All attention must center on this middle-class less-than, as he becomes weak-kneed with the impact of someone even supposing, that he, Charlie Brown, would dare to think himself in any way better than another person.

The characters' actions and facial expressions clearly demonstrate their opinions about each other. Even without words someone could gain a general idea of what was happening to the characters. In the first scene, Peppermint Patty doesn't exactly have a facial expression but seems passively upset. Thibault is obviously angrily accusing or threatening Charlie Brown, who looks like he's a page or two behind. By scene two Charlie is more confused than ever. Peppermint Patty returns in scene three yelling at Thibault with her hands on her hips. He looks over his shoulder at her, surprised and questioning but still frowning. Charlie still has his hands on his chest with the gesture that cries, "Me? You sure you mean me?". His eyes are bulging and his mind is spinning. In the final scene, Peppermint Patty is still berating Thibault, but he has now turned to face her defiantly. Meanwhile, Charlie, with his eyes wide and hands still on his chest, looks about as surprised as if he had been punched in the chest. Charlie's expression is far from hurt though. He's grinning from ear to ear in the same crazy way he does when thinking the Little Red-haired Girl loves him. If the characters' expressions mean anything, Thibault's accusation didn't have the effect he intended.

What the characters say and leave unsaid reveals the truth about their opinions of themselves and others. As in most comic strips, the words explain and add humor to the pictures. Thibault's first accusation, "I know your kind!" cuts to the heart of the matter. He has already classified Charlie based on his clothes, the fact that Charlie lives across town, and possibly past experiences with others similar to him. Charlie Brown is clueless to this whole idea. "My kind?" he asks, wondering if Thibault means wishy-washy nobodies, the only group he considers himself a part of. The next words are priceless, "You come around here thinking you're better than us!" Anyone who has ever read *Peanuts* knows Charlie's been laughed in the face a few to many times to go around thinking he is better than

anyone, and his disbelieving “**ME?**” is just there to make sure one gets the joke. At first glance Peppermint Patty’s lines seem rather unimportant. She’s just worried about Charlie, or “Chuck,” getting his mitt back, but this creates some interesting implications about how she views Thibault’s statement. One could argue that her remark “I’m ashamed of you!” to Thibault refers to his accusation against Charlie, but from the context it seems to refer to the withholding of the mitt. Why doesn’t Patty comment on Thibault’s assessment of Charlie Brown? Either she is too dense to understand the weight of the charge, or she agrees with Thibault.

The most fascinating insight comes from Charlie’s words. Far from fitting the conception Thibault holds about him, Charlie is accustomed to view everyone as better than himself. In fact, Thibault can hardly have chosen an accusation which is farther from the truth. Charlie’s childishness undercuts the absurdity of Thibault’s accusation and of his own reaction to it. His words in the last scene, “**Me?** Better than someone else? **Me?!?**” reveal just how surprised and elated he is that someone would even think that he thought he was better than them.

In an article for *ImageText*, Stephen J. Lind says, “Schulz’s use of children is similar to a common literary technique that dulls the impact that any particularly heavy statement may hold.” Schulz tackled plenty of issues over the years, from riots to commercialism. This specific comic makes the unjustness of stereotypes very relatable. Although we cannot necessarily stop ourselves from classifying others based on their clothes, skin color, and other outward presentation, it is important not to judge someone’s beliefs or motivations without interacting with them on a deeper level. In Schulz’s comic, Thibault’s prejudice ends up encouraging Charlie Brown, but this is an exception. For just about any other character, those words would hurt.

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ANDRES RODRIGUEZ

## F.E.A.R. (Freedom Exploring All Religions)

*“Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide.”*

~ Napoleon Bonaparte ~

Religion. The word itself may just be one of, if not the most, misunderstood and abused words in the history of humankind. Being asked “What is your religion?” Provokes an almost irresistible urge in people of all faiths, to spew out like a volcano, their own denomination and at least a few bullet points about it just for good measure. It’s the type of question that demands a response from almost anyone with an opinion, a question that makes even the tightest lipped, passive, and conservative person find themselves hard pressed to contain their need to, at the very least, mention what it is they believe in and most importantly why. It’s a question that to me, in my own life, was possibly one of the hardest questions I ever wanted to answer.

Not because I was unsure if I believed that God truly existed, but because, as I grew up, I realized that there were more religions than the handful of ones I was born shackled to, and all of them were equally worthy of my curiosity, attention, and possibly even devotion. But as we all know, being brought up in a family that’s devout to a certain denomination is a 100% guarantee that we will be raised by its rules, and beliefs. However, I want all of those who take the time to read this to know that, regardless of the religious constraints that surround your birth, when capable, you absolutely have a choice!



My family was divided: on my father’s side, Roman Catholicism mixed with a shot of Native American tradition and a Santería chaser, and on my mother’s side a Christian and Native American screwdriver. As a child these things had very little, if any, real meaning, at least in the literal sense of their definitions. As an adult though, it was much like taking my first shot of alcohol. Initially it seemed easy, almost as if I already knew what to expect, only to find out, abruptly, that other than my own pre-conceived notions, I had absolutely no idea what to expect, followed by a slow burn that makes most people question, for an instant, what kind of sick, sadistic asshole thought drinking liquid fire was a good idea.

Now, I knew that Sundays were for church, which almost always meant

going with my mother to a Christian church where I, like so many other children, would get ushered into a separate part of the church specifically for kids.

This was more like a Jesus themed daycare than an actual place of study and worship. Nonetheless, it was there that I got my first dose of what would become many different, religious “do’s” and “don’ts.”

On my father’s side of the family we did occasionally go to Catholic church as well; however, it was far more random, and almost always based on a specific holiday or family event, i.e. someone got married or there was a baptism or quinceañera, but even still, the sermons delivered the same “rights” and “wrongs.”

As I grew into young adulthood, or “teenage years” as they’re referred to by every parent that has had to endure the roller coaster of emotions that accompanies their offspring through this time of self-discovery, I found myself drifting further and further away from the constraints of my parents and, in turn from the church and religion. During my teens I have no recollection of any significant spiritual event that occurred in my life that I could justify dulling your mind with. However, those years were filled with questions, and there is one instance in particular that I believe is worth noting if for nothing else than to paint my picture in as much detail as I can for all who may stumble across these writings and wonder, why?

I remember asking my father once about Santeria and our family’s native traditions and roots. As I recall, it was an abnormally hot summer day in Chicago, and my father was in the driveway working on some family member’s car. My father was an exceptionally gifted mechanic who was unofficially dubbed the “family mechanic,” a moniker I believe he was proud to have.

Most of my memories of my dad consisted of being under the hood or body of a car, where we would talk about everything from school, to work, to the news of the day, and on this day Santeria. If memory serves, I believe getting the “birds and bees” talk from him took place while changing the ball joints on my mom’s station wagon. And it was for these reasons I felt he was the best candidate for questioning. I can think back to that day with a great amount of detail.

Stepping out of the door that morning I recall thinking to myself, “It must’ve rained last night,” owing to the fact that the minute the door opened and that gust of wind hit my face, it was like walking into a door you thought led to a cool basement only to find out instantly that you were walking into a sauna. The heat and mugginess immediately made my clothes stick to my body as if I had been covered in sweat. The enticing aroma of the Mexican food my Tío Antonio was cooking on the grill in the back yard being the only reason, on any other day, that I would purposely choose to subject myself to this type of grueling summer heat. At that moment, a new thought ran through my head, “Okay, let’s make this quick Joe.”

As I approached the grease monkey I’d grown to call dad, again, my inner voice spoke to me saying, “Maybe this isn’t the best time, Joe.” But I had a question, and I wanted an answer!

Reluctantly, I trudged down the driveway towards my father. He must’ve heard me come out of the house or down the porch stairs because as soon as I was in proximity to his toolbox he quipped,

“Mijo, hand me that 11mm socket.”

To which I replied, “Sure thing pops.”

After handing him his tool, he continued under the hood, working as if I were nothing more than a random customer watching him. Realizing that I could possibly be standing there until the amount of heat from the mixture of sun and humidity materialized into a real person and killed me, I spoke up and asked him very casually, “Dad what is Santería? Is it voodoo? And what kind of Native American are we? Like what tribe do we belong to? And are my tías witches?”

My barrage of questions, resembling a two year old asking “why” repeatedly, must have been too much for the old man to process all at once because he instantly stopped what he was doing, and I could no longer hear the sick cricket sound of his ratchet performing its intended duty. With a deep breath of hesitation, like he had been expecting my inquiry for years but dreading the moment it would actually happen, he emerged from under the hood and, looking very much like a stereotypical “Indian” with grease marks for war paint complimenting his jet black hair and brown skin that somehow seemed to glow red without the slightest presence of a sunburn he bellowed, “C’mon Mijo, lets get a drink!” As we headed up the drive, there was a moment I contemplated making a run for it and hurdling the neighbor’s fence if only to avoid what I now convinced myself would be an awkward conversation at best.

Once again back in the comfort of the air-conditioned house, I took a seat at the kitchen table watching him as he shifted things around in the fridge. After he found what he was looking for, he turned towards me with a beer in one hand and a soda in the other. I remember thinking to myself, ‘that’s an odd combination of beverages for a grown man’. Then he joined me at the table and slid the ice-cold Dr. Pepper to me as he began his cross examination of my previous questions with,

“What have your tías been telling you?”

“Not much. Just that we have magic in our blood from our ancestors. Is that true?”

And taking another drink of his beer but never taking his eyes off me, he swallowed hard and asserted,

“Yeah that’s what they say.”

My rebuttal was almost instantaneous,

"Is it true?"

Then, taking what would become his last drink in one final gulp, he stood up as if to say to me, 'I've got to get back to work now son'. Then he put his hand on my shoulder and professed,

"No sé, Mijo, I've always stayed away from it because it scares me."

The tone in his voice signified to me a sincere uneasiness about the topic.

After seeing my face in response to his declaration, he paused for a moment, then, realizing the impact his words may have just had on the youngest of his offspring, he turned around and without ever making actual eye contact he added, "We are Apache on my parent's side and Cherokee on your mom's side."

I sat in momentary silence in the attempt to soak in all the information I had just attained. I took a deep breath preparing for one more question, but before I could say another word, and just as he was walking out of the door, he turned his head slightly and reluctantly uttered, "If you really want to know about that stuff ask your Tía Christina."

And with that final statement he went back to his work. It would be years before I ever actually asked my tía anything regarding Santería. I walked away from that conversation with my healthy curiosity, justifiably converted to fear.

When I was 21, and until I turned 23, I had nothing to do with religion and held no opinion on the matter. I look at this span of time as a "Time of Blissful Ignorance." Although I never gave up on the idea of God, instead, I adopted my Native American belief in the Great Creator and simply left it at that. Unfortunately for me, fate would intervene with the loss of my mother in late November of 2001. It would be mid-December when I would embark on a journey to find a religion that I could personally feel connected to or one that I felt was me.

The next six years of my life were dedicated to researching the values, tenets, and practices of several religions from all around the world from the Zen and



Buddhist teachings of China, to the Shinto beliefs of Japan, Judaism in Israel and even Hinduism from India. In the end, however, I found myself back at the beginning researching different variations of Catholicism and Christianity. And after what felt like a lifetime of hopelessness, I awoke one day to find myself with no urge at all to continue my fruitless endeavor, and for a split second I felt free.

This feeling of liberation, too, would be short lived. But in comparison to the three years I had prior, it was but a blink of an eye before I once again found myself yearning for a sense of religious belonging. This next year of my life is what I've come to call, "My Awakening."

There I was, wandering aimlessly with my oldest brother Mario through the wide opened aisles of the Elgin Mall, which was more like a flea market placed

inside the shell of an abandoned mall with no actual stores, only small kiosk like booths which were predominately Hispanic owned. Then I heard it, my name, "Andres." In my ear, it sounded like somebody calling my name from a hidden location nearby; it was kind of muffled, like someone calling out to me from behind a closed door. As I turned towards where I thought the sound originated, I could see no people but instead, found myself looking upon a little shop.

The shop was adorned with several religious statues and candles. Some were immediately familiar to me as they showed pictures of Catholic Saints that I knew, while others consisted of images I had only ever seen in faded memories as a child or perhaps in a dream. As my eyes conveyed the rest of the quaint stand, I noticed all manner of strange apparatuses that, at the time, I could only explain as 'tools for practicing magic'. I caught my brother in my peripheral vision with almost the same look of wonder on his face as mine as we stared in amazement at what, in my imagination, was the equivalent of a magic store from Harry Potter. Suddenly, another person appeared in my periphery.



A man dressed in all white from head to toe with several beaded necklaces containing all the colors of the rainbow, and a few more around his neck, stepped to the counter adjacent to my brother and me and casually asked in Spanish, "Estas en la religion?"

I answered the question before the thought of the question could even fully register in my brain. And without even thinking I vomited out, "This is a religion?"

My inflection was filled with all the excitement of a child on Christmas morning. In retrospect, the question may have been a bit offensive, but luckily for me the Santero must've sensed my enthusiasm because he just smiled and replied, "Sí mijo, Me llamo Javier." My brother looked at me, and with a face that mimicked someone who knew they had just won the lottery he rejoiced, "This is Santería! We should get a reading." And with no hesitation, I looked at Javier and inquired, "Podemos tener una consulta?"

"Sí, mijos, sígueme," he replied, confident in his retort and nodding towards a doorway in the back of his Botánica.

As we entered a small room with a colorful blanket for a door, I was taken aback by all the instruments of his craft that lay about, signifying that he had been working recently. In the corner, there was a small plate, and on it sat what resembled a head, but made from stone with cowrie shells for eyes and a mouth



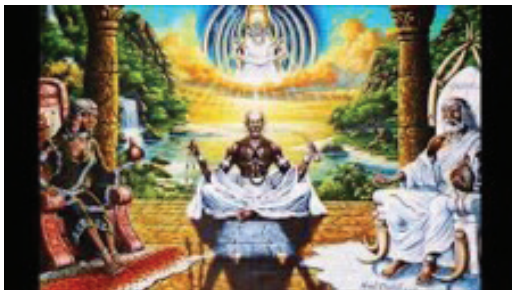
and a nail sticking out the top. Javier sat down next to it on a mat he had laid out that looked like a hula skirt cut up to fashion a rug. He looked up at me inquisitively and instructed me to sit down. He then presented a hollowed-out gourd to me, which was where I was instructed to put my derecho to the Orishás for this service.

As soon as my reading began, he told me what the Orishás were saying to him, "They know you have been searching for them, and they have been waiting for you for a very long time."

Upon receiving this declaration from the Orishás, I began to feel that familiar feeling from behind my eyes that can only mean one thing, and before I realized, warm tears were streaming down my face. He picked up on this and ensured me there was nothing to fear from the Orishás as they are but extensions, or messengers, of Olodumare's word to us. It was then that I informed him, "Some of my family believes in and practices Santería, and others say it's Voodoo, and Voodoo is witchcraft, and that it's all evil, and not of God."

His response to the close minded and borderline offensive views of my kin would change my life forever, as it revealed to me all the answers I had been seeking for so many years. His response was this, "Mijo, what do you believe? That's what matters! Santería is not Voodoo or witchcraft; although they may share some similarities, nothing about it is evil in the slightest. For example, we have no need for demons or devils in Santería because the duality of man is both good and evil. All religions and faiths are the same worldwide, Christianity, Voodoo, Catholicism, Santería, they are all the same. Same, in that they are both good and bad; it all comes down to how one practices and applies what they've learned that makes any given belief system 'good or bad'."

"The fact that we call God Olodumare is nothing more than our language's interpretation of the English word "God." What we do as far as the magic of it is concerned can be done, and is done, in all religions. What separates us in that



aspect is we address specific issues to specific Orishás, and some of our ashe is given to our faith in their abilities to take care of what God has commanded they do for us as his children. Whereas other religions simply leave it all to faith, which includes a wide

array of things, but ultimately, it's faith in God's plan, where all the hopes and prayers of all people of all faiths lie. And that includes Santería."

Then, suddenly, he just stopped talking, like someone who had been awaiting an important phone call or someone who thought they heard a knock at the door. Then he looked down at the arrangement of shells he had just thrown to the floor, grabbed his book, and scribbled something down. When finished, he redirected his attention to me and proclaimed, "To address the question the Orishás are telling me you want most to ask, the answer is yes. What we do and what Santería is, it is all of God. Petition the Orishás all you want but kneel only in the presence of God. Also, the Orishás wanted you to know that even though you have been misled in your beliefs they welcome you with open arms."

"FINALLY, I am home," I whispered under my breath, or better yet shouted in my head.

And as is custom in what is now my beautiful religion, Santería, he gave thanks to the Orishás for their aid and asked permission to close our session. With satisfaction in his voice, he informed me he is now my Padrino in the religion and I his ajado. After a brief embrace that contained all the happiness in the universe, he taught me how we are to greet each other. Happily, and proudly I said, "Bendición Padrino," and in turn, he replied, "Santo Mijo."

When reminiscing on my journey, I wish I could tell you I wouldn't change a thing, but that would be a lie. Having a fear of eternal damnation, regardless of which religious variation it may consist of, is a healthy fear. It is possibly religion's number one selling point to those who are undecided in their belief. However, when that fear is transfigured and then used to also include other faiths as part of the "check list of the damned" of one sect or another, it instills a sense of disorientation in those aforementioned, making it seem, at times, utterly hopeless. Nevertheless, I am here today to make the proclamation: although it may seem hopeless, face that fear head on! By converting hopelessness into optimism, I not only overcame my fear, but I was able to be the best practitioner I could be because I made a conscience choic,; a choice that was my God given right to make!

**Religious tenets are the shackles by which those born into them are often enslaved. Where the key to their freedom lies deeply hidden in a room guarded by fear.**



PAUL DUARTE-NOE

## Death, Transformation, and *The Fountain*

To me, a great movie is a transformative and lasting experience. Any movie that is powerful enough to shift my perspective will be valued and therefore remembered. Darren Aronofsky's *The Fountain* is one such movie. It tells a surreal story of a man's enduring obsession over the passing of his wife and his disturbing journey into the nature of death. The story flows through constantly shifting perspectives on a massive timescale, spanning a thousand years with each story focusing on a different version of the same man. In 1500, a Spanish conquistador named Tomas Verde is on a quest to discover the fountain of youth to save his Queen. In 2006, Dr. Tom Creo desperately attempts to extract a cure from a Central American tree species to save his wife, Izzy, from dying of a brain tumor. In 2500, Tom is immortal, having cured death, and is traveling through space to enter a nebula that he believes to be the world of the dead. With him he carries the death-cure, the tree of life, that is itself dying. Unable to accept his wife's death 500 years prior, Tom relives the events of their final moments through visions, like a perpetual nightmare, as he sacrifices himself by plunging into a dying star. The Fountain is a great movie that has remained with me because it is challenging, visually complex, and intensely emotional.

With its unconventional narrative, *The Fountain* is a challenge, but one that is well worth the effort. The story unfolds on multiple dimensions simultaneously in a world where time and reality are malleable. The various layers of story and meaning unravel gradually and in subtle ways, allowing for detailed analysis over multiple viewings. What at first appears to be three parallel stories of past, present, and future is revealed to be a bizarre reality in which future events affect the past. For example, the sacrifice of Future Tom retroactively alters the past lives of Tomas and Dr. Creo. After each story is concluded, there is a merging of all three in which the characters and events overlap. In 1500, the conquistador reaches the Mayan temple that contains the fountain of youth (a tree that produces live-giving sap), yet fails to retrieve it and save the Queen. Tomas is killed at the entrance by a Mayan priest wielding a flaming sword. In 2006, Dr. Creo has squandered the precious moments he had left with Izzy trying to find a cure for her cancer. Driven by his desire to extend Izzy's life, Tom fails to care for her in the way she needs. In a crucial moment, Izzy asks Tom to go on a walk with her and he rejects her request in order to stay in his lab and continue his work. Izzy dies soon after.

At the moment of Tom's self-transcendence in 2500, each story is

reinterpreted to represent his new holistic perspective. However, this process was not instantaneous. Instead, the Tom of the future repeatedly enters states in which he is able to project himself into the past and draw elements of the past into his present. Unfortunately, these actions come at a cost. Entering the timeless state requires Tom to tear off and consume pieces of the tree of life, gradually killing it. Tom's fixation on the quantity of Izzy's life at the expense of quality slowly deteriorates the tree just as it does to Izzy herself. This idea is further reinforced by tree motifs surrounding Izzy's character, including a tree design on the dress of the Queen, Izzy's 1500 counterpart. After her death, Dr. Creo plants a seed on her grave which grows into the tree that accompanies Tom to the world of the dead in 2500. Much of the film is highly symbolic which calls into question the reliability of everything that is presented to the viewer. In *The Fountain*, determining cause-and-effect as well as reality and fantasy can be difficult as the timelines tangle and narrative is subjective. The mental effort invested in deciphering these complex elements makes *The Fountain* a satisfying and memorable experience. The endeavor is enhanced further through the use of imagery that is both mesmerizing and meaningful.

*The Fountain* is exceptional in the presentation of its visual elements. The film is a collection of powerful images that contribute to the story and amplify the overall effect. There are many encoded messages in the form of visual symbolism, derived from various wisdom traditions. Many Christian motifs are repeated throughout the film. Crosses appear frequently, most notably when Izzy passes through a pair of doors in the shape of a cross of white light. Also, the Christian symbol, the Eye of Providence, appears in different forms as an iris-like sphere enclosed in a triangle. The star constellation representing the Mayan world of the dead is shown as three stars in the shape of a triangle with the nebula, Xibulba, at its center. However, the symbol most central to the story is the tree of life, a concept spanning across Western and Eastern philosophy. The tree of life, described in the Hebrew bible, is said to grant immortality to those who eat from it. The Central American tree in *The Fountain* serves the same purpose both as the proverbial fountain of youth in Tomas' time and as the ethnobotanical source of the medicine in Dr. Creo's time. The Genesis story of the garden of Eden mentions a flaming sword that was placed at the entrance to the garden to protect the tree of life, following the expulsion of Adam and Eve. When Tomas reaches the temple of the Fountain of Youth, a Mayan priest holding a flaming sword stands in his path, like a defending cherub of Genesis. The icon of the tree doubles as a symbol of enlightenment. In Buddhist mythology, Prince Siddhartha, seeking a way to escape sickness and death, meditated under a fig tree. This tree was renamed the bodhi tree (tree of awakening) and became an important symbol representing

enlightenment. The Tom of the future is shown wearing robes and sitting in lotus position under a tree at the moment of his own enlightenment, just as the Buddha is traditionally depicted. These visual elements and the elaborate narrative work together effectively to make the film an intensely emotional experience.

*The Fountain* is profoundly moving. On one level, it is a story about the struggle between approaching death as a disease from one perspective, and as an act of creation, from another. Though, on a deeper level, it is an allegory about the shift from the selfish view of love as a form of possession into a less self-centered interpretation. For Tom, this evolution into selflessness becomes the catalyst for his enlightenment. The fear, loss, anxiety, and eventual liberation that he goes through are felt rather than merely witnessed. This transformation evokes emotions that are not only intense, but also complex. These emotions exist on a spectrum, making one feel overwhelming horror and transcendent euphoria, even in the same moment. During the climax of the film, the audience is presented with an alternating view between two representations of death, one beautiful and one disturbing. Upon discovering the tree of life, the conquistador gulps down its sap expecting to receive his concept of immortality from a personal perspective, surviving forever in human form. However, what he actually receives is immortality from the broader perspective of nature, the recycling of his body to perpetuate life in a different form. After drinking the sap, his skin begins to bubble and undulate. Small white flowers tear through his flesh. Tomas screams in terror as the plants burst from his eyes and mouth, expanding until he is fully consumed. He writhes in pain as his body is violently transformed into new life. This scene is interspersed with another, more pleasant scene in which Tom attains enlightenment. In this sequence, Tom is carried into the sky on a beam of light, apparently in a state of bliss. The light seems to purify him, erasing his self-inflicted scars and releasing him from the pain he has felt until this moment. By quickly alternating between these two scenes, Tomas' gruesome lifegiving act of self-sacrifice is juxtaposed against the joy of Tom's triumph over suffering. Whether the feelings are painful or pleasant, the emotional experience of *The Fountain* is consistently exhilarating.

A movie like *The Fountain* is great because it changes those who experience it. Most would agree that good movies have the ability to transport the viewer to a new place. However, great movies cause viewers to take the experience back with them into their lives. When I experienced *The Fountain* for the first time, I woke up to a world that was more vivid and real than the one I had left behind. To me, it was a *momento mori*, a meditation on death that would possess my mind for years to come with its insights, beauty, and emotion.

TREVOR SLOVICK

## Silver Lake

Before me was a fenced-off beach on the eastern shore of Lake Springfield. Dotted the beach were hundreds of ring-billed gulls and Caspian terns. The sky was overcast and steely, mirrored by the calm, rippling silver lake. The dagger-like, coral red bills of the terns contrasted with the cool gray backs of the gulls. A metal wall jutted up from the water, completely enclosing the beach and creating somewhat of a sheltered bay. In the water of the bay, several blue buoys resided, upon which gulls perched. Grasses and weeds grew along the water's edge, and the sand looked strangely desert-like for a beach. Two pavilions stood, one on each end of the beach, and birds would regularly rest under their shade on hot days when I visited. The white sign reading "NO TRESPASSING" rattled against the barbed wire-topped fence as a light breeze rolled through. The shrill cries of the gulls rang out accompanied by the raucous, squawking screams of the terns. Birds zipped around left and right, their flight purposeful and elegant. Occasionally a tern plunged head-first into the water, emerging with the silver glint of a fish in its bill, only to be harassed by another bird looking to steal the catch.

I sat on a blue lawn chair under a boxelder in Lake Park. Set up on my left side was my Vortex spotting scope on its comparatively old tripod, one that was used for photography, then left unused for years. The silver legs of the device showed that it was not initially meant for rugged outdoor purposes, but it worked well enough. It felt equivalent to eating caviar off of a paper plate. A camera in its case hung off the right armrest of the chair, anchored by the water bottle that sat in the cupholder. Around my neck were my black Nikon binoculars, and a sketchbook sat in my lap.

Looming across the lake to my right was the power plant, two smokestacks pouring smoke into the sky. To my left was Lindsay Bridge, its stone arches and black light posts giving it a quaint, welcoming appearance. Running parallel to the bridge were large metal towers with power lines strung between them, their intimidating size starkly contrasting the friendly old bridge.

Out on the open water of the lake, small white buoys were scattered as far as I could see. A small sailboat with a blue sail cruised by leisurely. Here and there speedboats roared through carelessly, flushing most of the birds and causing me to curse under my breath until they returned. I searched among the flying birds for outliers such as black terns or Bonaparte's gulls. Two turkey vultures circled in the distance above one of the far metal towers. A great blue heron stood on the metal barrier and watched the water intently. Behind me in the oak-filled park I heard the buzzy call of a chickadee and the rattling queerp of a red-headed woodpecker.

I noticed that the terns seemed to prefer standing together at the edge of the water while the gulls were content with staying on dry land.

The sky opened up to reveal a brilliant blue above. Paradoxically, it began raining lightly. The fine, cool raindrops were welcome visitors. The rain ceased within a couple minutes. It left the fresh smell that everyone is familiar with, the kind so subtle yet so potent you could almost taste it. A white boat with the motor turned off drifted by the metal ledge, and the heron flew off with a low grunting squawk, as if to protest. The two passengers aboard the boat held fishing rods and were likely searching for a spot to cast their lines. A mourning dove rocketed over the beach, its short wings propelling it forward at breakneck speed.

I was getting rather bored. The scene was objectively interesting, sure, but mundane nonetheless. I had been here many times, and not much was different. There was nothing to sketch or take photos of, nothing to make the day significantly different from the last time I had been there. I scanned the tops of the trees lining the far shore to no avail. I was wrestling with the idea of packing up when something appeared in the distance. Where the turkey vultures had been earlier appeared a new shape. At first I thought it was a red-tailed hawk and thought nothing of it. I lifted my binoculars to identify the shape. The bird circled upward in the manner of a red-tail, and it had the approximate shape, but something was off. I noticed it had dark wing feathers, and a whitish breast, something I had not expected. I did not recognize it until it reached the apex of its circling flight and sailed east, right over me. I recognized the long crooked wings and the short fan-like tail as those of an osprey. I unlatched the camera case and brandished my weapon. I snapped a couple photos, dropped the camera in my lap, then lifted the binoculars again. The osprey was nearly out of sight, and I watched it disappear behind the tall trees standing behind me.

I checked the photos, and I was pleased to see a couple decent images on the screen. I realized my boredom had melted away in all the mild excitement. An osprey was no big deal, especially at this time of year, but I had yet to get any good photos. The only photos I had ever gotten were from September of the previous year, but the late afternoon lighting had been so poor and the angle so bad, you wouldn't even know you were looking at an osprey. I picked up my chair in one hand and my scope in the other. I walked back to my car, a blue, decade-old Chevy Malibu I shared with my brother, which was parked in a parking lot behind me in the park. I threw my chair in the trunk and my equipment in the backseat. I sat in the driver's seat and slipped the key into the ignition. It was a good day.

NOAH ROMER

## The Prisoner

Darkness, no matter what, it was always dark. Every time he looked out of what he presumed was a window, that was all he could see. Nothing moving, nothing shining, only the stark infinity of darkness. Always were its depths unfathomable, always was its malice unsettling, and never did it change. He had been there all his life, though he didn't remember ever being small. He had no parents, no siblings, no friends, and no colleagues—no one with whom to share his silent vigil. He had always been here; after all, what opportunities had he been given? He walked the hushed corridors, lit by the lifeless glow of fluorescence. He watched the same shadows run over the same walls and completed the same tasks that had been asked of him.

He didn't know why he still completed the tasks he had been given, day in and day out. Who was he doing them for? No one had ever been there to tell him why. The computer that taught him everything from writing and history to advanced algebra, one day simply stopped teaching him. Whether he was sufficiently educated or deemed unfit for further instruction, he never could tell. On the day this happened, two new doors were revealed. One labeled A, and one B, behind which were many corridors and small rooms. The rooms had central control stations, and a series of pressure gauges, temperature readouts, and data streams along all four walls. All that appeared onscreen from that day onwards were instructions, so he followed them, mindlessly, hopelessly, sluggishly wandering from room to room, reading dials and adjusting pressures and temperatures accordingly, all the while recording the data in the single notepad that was dispensed to him once a day.

He had thought of simply refusing the instructions once, but fear of that baleful abyss outside of his window kept him from it. Oh how he longed for something, anything, to break this monotony, to save him from this place, to give meaning to the drudgery of the past fifteen years, even if only to let him know it was all for something. Yet despite his unwavering hatred for his assigned tasks, he never once faltered in their completion. No matter how he justified or reasoned away, he couldn't shake the feeling that the abyss was kept at bay by his actions. So he continued on, week after week, month after month, year after year.

This morning, however, was the morning of his thirtieth "birthday." He didn't actually know when he was born, but he had celebrated this day every year he could remember. A strange message was displayed where his instructions normally awaited him. It read "Hallway 12b, door 21, prepare for assessment" in green, slightly flickering letters.

He stared at it for a long time, because what it said made no sense. The installation, as he had come to realize, was organized into two blocks, A and B. Each block had twelve hallways, with connecting hallways at both ends, and living quarters sandwiched between them. Each hallway had twenty rooms. This prompt told him to go to the twelfth hallway in block b, to a door that didn't exist, door 21. His mind raced. What was behind it? Was he dreaming? Had he finally gone mad? He hoped with every shred of his being that he had not.

He ran, faster than he'd ever run in his life, the familiar hallways and corridors whipping past him as he sprinted desperately towards the glimmer of hope in his heart. Then he saw it, the door, sitting perpendicular to all the others at the far end of hallway 12b. A smile crept across his face for the first time in a decade as he stood and stared at the door from the other end of the hall. Tears began to slide down his cheeks as he slowly, as if in a dream, advanced on this wonderful respite from the unbearable tedium that dominated his life. He traced the outline of the numbers printed on the door as if a man in love, and ran his hand over the handle. The tears flowed freely now. He pulled the latch towards himself, away from the door, and there was a sound of thunder.

The rush of air that blasted past him was so powerful it knocked him flat on his back, and the heat carried by this great gust was like nothing he had ever felt before. He felt as if it were searing his skin, yet when he looked down at his arms, there was not a blemish. Then his eyes were drawn towards the door, now blasted open by the sudden influx of calescent air. It was bright, brighter than anything he'd ever seen, brighter than anything he'd ever imagined. He pulled his now aching form up off the tiled floor and, shielding his eyes, again advanced towards the door.

He passed through the now open doorway and noticed the floor inclined up sharply. He continued as his eyes adjusted to the blinding glare, and he began to make out the opening he was hastening towards. It appeared to be much like the hallways he'd known his whole life, except the end seemed to have been broken, and appeared worn, as if weathered by innumerable ages. As he crested the top of the incline, he caught his first glimpse.

There was sand everywhere, huge rolling dunes as far as the eye could see. Here and there shattered concrete jutted from the sea of sand and rose high above the dunes, and he could make out the shapes of what had once been windows cut from their scorched spires. Any feelings of hope and happiness that had welled up inside him were now replaced with a grim reality. It was gone, all he had learned of. The trees and the grass, the birds and insects, the cities and wonders of the races of humankind. He looked back for a moment at his prison, but even this was better than eternal torture. So he walked on past the remains of the building that had once contained his home of thirty years, slowly realizing the darkness he had been afraid of all his life was but an illusion of the impenetrable sand.

He strode past the outer walls of the once great construction, onwards into the desert. As he walked on, the wind revealed something in the sand behind him, and one last powerful gust laid it bare. Though he himself didn't see it, there was something printed on its surface. Almost burned away by the relentless sun was a sign that read:

Androtech Engineering, Est. 2059

"America's leading authority on human-like androids!

You won't be able to tell the difference, we guarantee it!"

Sapient android mental endurance testing division

New York branch, Laboratory D

325 87th St, New York, NY 11209-5105

# Student Contributor Notes

## W R I T T E N   W O R K

### **Adam Coughlin**

Adam has transferred from LLCC to Illinois State University where he majors in Finance and Financial Planning. He tells us that asset management has always been fascinating to him as it “requires a lot of strategy and analysis, which I feel I am well-suited for.” He also enjoys reading, fishing, and weight-lifting. He has a girlfriend who lives in Washington. Adam wrote “Thai Fighter: Mekong Café Reigns Supreme” for Professor Liesl Smith’s fall 2019 English 101, Composition course.

### **Anna Crumbaugh**

Anna wrote “Just Black and White?” for Tiffany Elliott’s fall 2019 English 101, Composition course. She is working on a bachelor’s degree in Music Education and considering a minor in English. Anna tells us, “Throughout my life, I have received valuable instruction and support from my wonderful parents and lovely elder sister. Some activities I enjoy include swimming, reading, writing, embroidering, and making music.” “Just Black and White?” is the winner of our 2020 Academic Non-Fiction Contest!

### **Paul Duarte-Noe**

Paul is pursuing an Associate in Arts degree in World Languages and plans to transfer to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to earn a bachelor’s degree in Media and Cinema Studies with a minor in East Asian Languages and Cultures. He wrote “Death, Transformation, and *The Fountain*” for Professor Liesl Smith’s fall 2019 English 101, Composition course. Paul recently studied at Saitama University in Japan while interning at an international NPO in Tokyo. He also did volunteer work there, such as a community development project in Ishinomaki that provided aid for the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. He filmed a video to promote the project and would like to return to Japan to continue work as a video journalist and documentary filmmaker.

### **Jennifer Haggerty**

Jenny wrote “Universal Basic Income May Be the Lifeline for American Poverty” in Dr. Alison Stachera’s fall 2019 English 101 class. She has returned to college after a 17-year career in the dental field to pursue a degree in Nursing. She is the mother of three children: 13-year-old Ethan, 10-year-old Hailey, and one-year-old Lucy. She has been married to her best friend Tommy for 15 years. She and her family are advocates for the autism community. She likes to teach faith and fitness classes at

her church and take care of her children. Jenny says, “I have always enjoyed being a student and have loved my classes here at LLCC. While my initial career goal was a degree in Nursing, my love of learning is leading me in a more educational direction. I love that my experiences here at LLCC are opening up new ideas and prospects that I may never have known I had potential for.”

### **Ally Lisnek**

Ally wrote “The Honest Truth of Being Honest” for Professor George Vaughn’s spring 2019 EGL 101 class.

### **Jalen Ping**

Jalen wrote “Why Free College Is Unrealistic” for Professor Eric Stachera’s fall 2019 EGL 101 class.

### **Chase Rath**

Chase plans to finish his bachelor’s degree in History and become a History teacher or work for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. He enjoys reading history books and watching movies. Chase wrote “Shutter Island and Point of View” for Dr. Gillian Bauer’s fall 2019 Film 101, Introduction to Film as Art course.

### **Andres Rodriguez**

Andres wrote “F.E.A.R. (Freedom Exploring All Religions)” for Tiffany Elliott’s EGL 101 class. He lives in Springfield.

### **Noah Romer**

Noah’s short story, “The Prisoner,” is the winner of our 2020 Short Fiction Contest. He wrote the story in Dan Lesko’s English 101, Composition class. Noah is currently pursuing an Associate in Arts degree in History at LLCC and would like to work at a museum or university someday.

### **Makaen Serr**

Makaen has two essays appearing in this 2020 edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “The Great Escape” and “Checking Boxes Behind Bars.” She wrote both of these pieces for Professor Eric Stachera’s fall 2019 English 101 course. She is engaged to LeeRoy, and they share two cats. She likes listening to podcasts, reading, and watching TV. Makaen tells us, “the best part of modern technology is that I can enjoy all of these pursuits outdoors, which is my favorite place to be. I love camping, hiking, and being on any body of water. Floating in a body of water and staring at the sky is a singularly gratifying experience to me that I don’t get to experience as often as I should.”

**Trevor Slovick**

Trevor wrote “Silver Lake,” for Dan Lesko’s English 101, Composition course. Given the subject matter of this descriptive piece, it is no surprise that Trevor’s hobbies include birding, field sketching, and “casual study of native plants, animals, and natural history,” and that he plans to pursue a career in ornithology!

**Paul Watson**

Three of Paul’s poems appear in this 2020 edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Farmer Beck,” “There is Nothing Like a Hole,” and “A Rope or a Thread.” Paul wrote these for Professor Eric Stachera’s English 151, Creative Writing: Poetry course. Paul was born and raised in Champaign in another century. He has an Associate in Science degree in Data Processing from Parkland College and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Management and post-graduate studies in Public Administration from Sangamon State University. After a 30-year career as a computer programmer and systems analyst for the state of Illinois, he returned to LLCC, where he completed prerequisites for acceptance to SSU to study music as a nontraditional student. Listening to music has been a life-long enjoyment. Paul has learned to play the piano and play the guitar better at LLCC. He also writes for *The Lamp*, LLCC’s student newspaper. He graduated in spring 2020 with an Associate in Art degree in Music and a certificate in Audio Production. He spent part of his last academic year studying acting, creative poetry, and short story writing. His plans include studying acting and creating content. Paul lives in Springfield. “A Rope or a Thread” is the winner of our 2020 Poetry Contest!

**V I S U A L   W O R K****Alexa Bartlett**

Alexa has two pieces featured in the edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Save the Tigers,” which she created in Professor Laura Anderson’s fall 2019 Art 106: Introduction to Computer Graphics class, and “Illustrated Handmade Book,” which she designed for Professor Anderson’s fall 2019 Art 102: Two Dimensional Design course. Alexa is pursuing a degree in Digital Media and Art at LLCC.

**Allona Beasley Mitchell**

Alona painted “Spring” for Professor Al Shull’s Art 212: Painting II class in fall 2019.

**Ashley Bonnett**

Ashley is working on her associate's degree in Art at LLCC. She created “On an Empty Morning” and “Home” for Professor Al Schull’s fall 2019 Art 212: Painting II class and “Kowloon #3” for Professor Leslie Stalter’s fall 2019 Art 111: Silkscreen I course.

**Sharon Carter**

Two of Sharon’s silkscreen pieces are featured in this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Right to Roam” and “Disturbing the Peace.” Both pieces were created in Professor Leslie Stalter’s fall 2019 Silkscreen II class.

**Rollie Dennison**

Rollie’s piece, “Inferno,” is our 2020 Digital Art Award winner and is featured on the cover of this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*. Rollie created the work for Professor Thom Whalen’s fall 2019 Art 116: Introduction to Graphic Design course. Rollie is studying graphic design at LLCC. Two more of Rollie’s pieces are featured in this edition: “Stranger than Fiction,” a digital illustration also produced for Professor Thom Whalen’s fall 2019 Art 116 class, and “I Have an Idea,” created for Professor Leslie Stalter’s fall 2019 Art 111: Silkscreen I class.

**Jazmine Foster**

Jazmine is majoring in Biology at LLCC. Her charcoal “Self Portrait” was created for Ashley Dickey’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class.

**Charissa Fox**

Charissa has two pieces featured in this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Foxy Flake Brown,” a silkscreen produced in Professor Leslie Stalter’s fall 2019 Art 111: Silkscreen I class and “Ochigwe,” a mixed media piece created in Professor Stalter’s fall 2019 Art 115: Three Dimensional Design course. Charissa is pursuing an associate's degree in Fine Arts at LLCC.

**Tim Graves**

Tim created “Coko Krabby’s Coconut Bites” in Professor Laura Anderson’s fall 2019 Art 106: Introduction to Computer Graphics course.

**Jon Hurt**

Jon is studying animation at LLCC. He produced the “Killer Klowns from Outer Space” logo in Professor Laura Anderson’s fall 2019 Art 106: Introduction to Computer Graphics course.

**Grace Jaderholm**

Grace created her charcoal drawing “Dinner is Served” in Ashley Dickey’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class. She is working on her associate's degree in Art at LLCC.

**Brinton Johnson**

Brinton is pursuing a degree in Digital Media and Art at LLCC. “Triadic Still Life” was painted in Professor Al Shull’s Art 212: Painting II class in fall 2019.

**Maria Kelarestaghi:**

Maria created three charcoal drawings featured in this edition for the *Lincoln Land Review*. She created these in Ashley Dickey’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class: “3 Tone Still Life,” “Hang Loose,” and “Legos.” She is majoring in Business at LLCC.

**Payton Knapp**

Payton’s graphite drawing “Self Portrait” was created for Professor Thom Whalen’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class. Payton is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts.

**Abbey Knoles**

Few students on campus at LLCC in the past year have immersed themselves in the process of graphic design as much as Abbey Knoles has! As a graphic design intern for LLCC Student Life, Abbey has created a wide range of design communications including flyers, logos and T-shirt designs to support LLCC clubs and promote events on campus and via social media. Abbey’s achievements also include being awarded "Best in Show" for design work exhibited at the LLCC Student Show in 2019. Abbey's "Typography Brochure Design" was created for Professor Laura Anderson’s fall 2019 Art 116: Intro to Graphic Design class.

**John Malan**

John created “Turtle Island Aflame” in Adam Dupuis’s Art 118: Ceramics I class.

**Jenna McCarty**

Jenna is studying History at LLCC. Three of her pieces are featured in this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Leap of Faith,” “Yellow,” and “Untitled.”

**Madisyn Monical**

Madisyn’s charcoal “Self Portrait” was created in Ashley Dickey’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class.

**Yvonee Oliea**

Yvonne produced “Aries” and “They Were Her Property” for Professor Thom Whalen’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class.

**Blake Paige**

Blake is studying Digital Media and Art at LLCC. He painted his “Self Portrait” and “A Common View” in Ashley Dickey’s fall 2019 Art 102: Two-Dimensional Design class.

**Nicholas Paul**

Nicholas created “Cruel Cruel World” in Professor Laura Anderson’s fall 2019 Art 116: Introduction to Graphic Design class. He is majoring in Art.

**Christina Pierson**

Christina is studying Art at LLCC. She painted “50s Design I” in Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 103: Drawing I class.

**Don Ramsey**

Don painted “Fall Storm Coming” in Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 212: Painting II class.

**Katerina Rhodes**

Katerina is pursuing an associate's degree in Graphic Design Technology at LLCC. She created “Bright Eyes” for Professor Leslie Stalter.

**Megan Rhodes**

Megan is studying Art at LLCC. She created “Radioactive Future” in Adam Dupuis’s fall 2019 Art 218: Ceramics II course.

**Lily Rodgers**

Lily painted “Lots of Legos” for Ashley Dickey’s fall 2019 Art 102: Two-Dimensional Design class. She is majoring in Primary Education.

**Art Silver**

Art painted “Sunshine Travelers” for Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 212: Painting II class.

***Dennis Stahlberg***

Dennis painted “Lava Flow” for Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 212: Painting II class.

***E. Vern Taylor***

Vern is a regular contributor to the *Lincoln Land Review*. Not only has his work appeared in several past editions, but he was the featured cover artist for the 2017 edition. Vern’s acrylic painting “A Dream Stolen” is our 2020 Award Winner for Fine Arts. He painted it in Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 212: Painting II class.

***Grace Underfanger***

Grace created her “Sleeping Beauty Illustrated Handmade Book” for Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 102: Two-Dimensional Design class.

***Doug Wagner***

Doug painted “Aves” for Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 212: Painting II class.

***Julia Whitnall***

Julia created “Head Study” for Professor Laura Anderson’s spring 2020 Art 103: Drawing I class.

***Kaylee Winterbottom***

Kaylee painted “Veteran’s Pride” for Professor Al Shull’s fall 2019 Art 211: Painting I class.



