Acknowledgements

We are pleased to present the Best Essays Anthology 2016-2017. It is through such an anthology that we are able to honor our finest writers. These pages are the work of students enrolled in the West Valley College English department’s English Literature and Composition courses. The focus of these courses is mastering several varieties of essays. The WVC privileges and supports good writing; that is why this collection of student essays is so vital. Taken together, they illustrate that students work diligently to understand, master, and hone the skills that enable them to write perceptively and creatively. The panel of judges comprised three English faculty and two students who read and rated the works anonymously.

NOTE: The essays in this eAnthology are in MLA 7th edition

You may access this anthology, as well as the honorable mention essays, at www.westvalley.edu/academics/language_arts/english/
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Emerging Writers

First Place

I came to West Valley to become a dance major aiming to transfer to San Jose State. In dance, I let my personality show in every move I make. I create a character for any piece of choreography given to me. I wanted to do the same for my writing. My papers always have my voice behind them to become interesting for anyone who reads it. This makes me feel more comfortable when writing. I always hated in high school having to write a certain way and being limited in what I could say. When I had to opportunity to write this essay, I dove right in. It was such a fun way to let out my frustration about Internet bullshit that I see on a daily basis! It was incredibly entertaining for me and I hope readers can get that feeling as they read it.

World Wide Web of Bullshit

By Marina Bargas

The Internet is a wide, magical world to find anything you want to know about anything. It's also a magical world of bullshit. As defined by Nathaniel Barr, bullshitting is “speech that is designed to impress but lacks a direct concern for the truth.” It’s easy to get bullshit online. Yet, most of the time, people don’t realize it. It’s hard to tell who is the one behind the computer screen posting who-knows-what, but knowing how to spot bullshit makes surfing the web smoother sailing.
One of the most dangerous forms of bullshit people can fall for is scams. Scammers pretend to be an important person or corporation to trick others into giving them something, usually money or personal information. In an instance I’ve seen, someone was pretending to be one of my favorite people to watch on YouTube.com. The scammer made a fake profile to look very similar to the YouTuber’s own profile and username. They were commenting on the YouTuber’s videos and telling fans to click a link to go get free gifts signed by them. They asked followers to give them credit card or personal information, claiming it was needed in order to enter the “giveaway.” This could be very dangerous as people could lose money or get their identities stolen. I find that it’s best to investigate the person before choosing a link. This bullshit can be avoided by clicking on the username and seeing how many videos this so called “YouTuber” has and what their activity is. If anything or anyone unofficial asks for money or personal information, it’s bullshit.

Another form of online bullshit is people who talk about things they have no idea about. This drives me crazy because it sometimes deals with subjects that I really care about, enjoy, or am interested in. I’ve found that people get upset over the smallest things on almost any post. I can’t watch a simple cat video without people ranting about some sort of problem. I saw a cute video of a cat owner coming home after a few days, and his cat greeted him very excitedly and seemed very happy. Well, I guess no one likes happiness in cat videos. So many people were saying, “how culd U leave a cat alone for 2 days thats abusee!” Now, I’m an extreme cat lover and I know cats can last days alone as long as there’s plenty of food and water out for them. But no. No one wants to know these things and my fact was drowned in a sea of animal abuse bullshit. In an article, “Defining Bullshit,” people who create this kind of bullshit, “speak extensively about matters of which they are
to some degree ignorant” (Noah). It can easily be avoided by learning up on facts or simply ignore it all. Dumb people who think they know everything, know nothing but bullshit.

Posts that get passed along through different users to build up more views is another form of online bull. Most times, the creators of the posts connect to people’s emotions to get them to buy into their bull. In the article, “Most of the Information We Spread Online is Quantifiably Bullshit,” Barr says, “people who were more religious, more likely to believe in the paranormal,” tend to buy into online bullshit. My first instance in seeing this type of bull was a post that showed a picture of a baby in a hospital’s intensive care with a caption saying, “1 like = 1 prayer. Ignore = You have no heart!!” I don’t see how liking a picture will help anything but spread bullshit. Go ahead and say I have no heart, but at least I don’t buy into that bull. One like equals one new bullshitee.

Probably the king of all Internet bullshit is the infamous “clickbait.” Clickbait is another way to get high page views. I saw an ad that said, “You won’t believe this list of easy weight loss tricks! You won’t believe #7! It’s such a surprise!!” I’m not saying I need to lose weight, but goddamn it, I wanted to know what number seven was and why it was so surprising. Shamefully, I fell into the bullshit. It was constant ads between every slide and the page kept refreshing itself as if to gain more page views on its own. Each “trick” was as pathetic as the last. Number seven was a no brainer – cut out fast foods. I could’ve told you that, but I was lured to the bullshit by my own curiosity. I’ve learned the best way to avoid that type of bullshit is to ignore it, no matter what celebrity number 18 looked like as a kid.

Internet bullshit spreads like wildfire. It can be easy to get caught in it once it comes your way, but there are ways to avoid it. Don’t buy into any fakers asking for money, be educated on what others think they know and post about, a like does not equate to a
prayer, and anything giving you a list of shocking images is total bullshit. Barr wrote, “A large portion of what we read online today is likely to be bullshit.” Falling for different types of online bullshit can be frustrating, but it’s knowing how to avoid getting caught up in them that can help make your Internet life easy and simple.
Works Cited


Emerging Writers

Second Place

My name is Nikita Lukyanenko. I’m twenty years old and it’s my last year at West Valley. Less than three years ago I emigrated from cold Russia to sunny California. When I came to the U.S. I didn’t know almost any English. It was a huge barrier that I had to overcome. I was spending twice as much time on school than anyone else. But after two years and almost 20 units of ESL classes I overcame this language challenge. The second place in 905 category was a pleasant surprise for me, just as a proof to myself and to everyone else that no challenges are impossible to overcome.

I’m majoring in Computer Science and have been working hard. I’m ready to transfer next spring. All my life I was in love with computers and was sure what I wanted to do. I’m very interested in Silicon Valley, so of course, Google was something I had to look into. The more I looked into Google, the more I realized there is something bigger behind it. Eventually I came to notice that the private corporation Google has an amazing amount of power and control of information in it hands. In my paper I tried to explore and explain why Google has too much influence on our society and can even elect our next president.
Power of Google

By Nikita Lukyanenko

In our days every person has heard of and most likely used services of Google Corporation, it’s hard to even imagine today’s world without it. The meteoric rise of Google in just 15 years has revolutionized the Internet. We used to think of it as an innocent corporation of happiness famous for its “Don't Be Evil” motto, but there is something else behind it. Many people all over world start seeing danger in strength of this company. First of all most people don’t even realize how big Google Inc. is. Android with all its mobile software, Youtube, Gmail, Nest Labs, Google Maps, many Shopping tools, Google pay services, Google+, the search engine itself and tens of other brands—all giant and popular brands are owned by one company. Google is so pervasive that consumers cannot escape its reach even if they do not use its services. Google knows everything it has become some kind of “absolute truth” for our generation, and it’s hard to imagine how much power it has. This absolute control of information on the internet and its users, with all its resources give small groups of people opportunity to influence whole American society. Google has too much power for a private corporation and there is real danger in it.

Google became something more than just a company in our days, and way more than a searching engine. It’s already part of our everyday life, part of our culture not only in America but all the world. Google has become an everyday term not only of English vocabulary, as both a noun and a verb. Many times in our conversation, Google is synonymous with “search the web”. For example, you may say to your friend, “I’m googling how to write an essay,” instead of, “I’m searching the Internet about how to write an essay.”
That's a good example that Google has become a part of modern culture. What is more, Google's search engine accounts for nearly 80 percent of all Web searches in the United States — and a remarkable 98 percent of searches from mobile devices (Hatch). Google is not just a new verb but perhaps the most popular source of information in the United States and on the whole planet. It's almost a Monopoly, no other search engines and companies come close to this results.

“You are what you click” (Auerbach 179) and there is a lot of meaning in these words. Because the internet and Google particularly knows us in the 21st century better than our own families. Google knows our friends through phones and Google+, it knows our music preferences because it owns Youtube, it knows our hobbies, desires and interests through search research, it knows us and all our secrets. Today's Google's policy is just an “unstoppable process of profiling who we are and what we do”(Jurgenson 195). This corporation already has the biggest database in the world and it’s a very scary tendency, when you start thinking about the security and privacy of this information.

Anonymously doesn’t exist anymore if it ever even has existed. “Any promises of anonymity are far misleading and far from absolute”(Auerbach 185). Big corporations and Google in particular can use many techniques to identify us from simple logins on different networks, to cookies and more complicated ETAG techniques. Some people can try to argue that all this data is still anonymous, but probably everyone right now should realize that it’s complete bullshit, if not just GOOGLE who Edward Snowden is and what he was charged for. When the question of should government spy on us for our own protection or not is still under discussion, when matter the fact we don’t ask the same question about such
corporation as Google but we should. It’s not so obvious, but big corporations also spy on us. They collect our personal information and save it, not only for government but also for their personal use. This information can be used to spy on people, help selling stuff to consumers, and just to better understand how to get more money from us. Overall Google is not our government; it’s just a huge private corporation. We should ask ourselves if this private organization should have such an informational domination on us or no, and what it can do with it.

Another scary fact and proof of Google’s power is the fact that America’s next president could be eased into office not just by TV ads or speeches, but by Google’s secret decisions. It’s not a conspiracy theory and there are not so many people who realize this power of Google and how it can be accomplished. Researches made by the Director of American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology Ronald E. Robertson shows us that Google Inc. has way more power to control elections, to control a wide variety of opinions and beliefs in all areas of life, than any other company or even government in history has ever had. Research shows that Google’s search algorithm can easily shift the voting preferences of undecided voters by 20 percent or even by 80 percent in some demographic groups. All what they need to do is just simply manipulate the searches results, not even touching the news articles. Because people usually make all decision based on the research, and Google search is one of the fastest and most reliable sources for our generation. But what if somebody can manipulate this information that we will get back and the most surprising is that no one will know they are being manipulated. Google who constantly adjusts the search algorithms are manipulating people every minute of every day. The adjustments they make can increasingly influence our thinking including
our voting preferences. What Ronald Robertson call in his research the Search Engine Manipulation Effect (SEME) turns out to be one of the largest behavioral effects ever discovered. (Epstin) SEME is so dangerous because it is invisible form of social influence, and the effect of its influence is extremely large, and there are currently no specific regulations anywhere in the world that would prevent Google from using this technique. SEME is a serious threat to the democratic system of government and give Google's head too much power for controlling us.

Google knows everything, it knows us better than we know ourselves, it knows what we do and where we go, we don't even realize how much power it has to manipulate our society. Google can become our god, the god of the 21st century from the machine. Everyone should realize that power and danger of such monopoly is enormous. Government and other anti-monopoly organizations should not ignore this problem anymore. Many European countries are already seriously concerned about this problem and trying to change such situation. Even Washington was already concerned and accepted this problem, FTC in 2011 required Google to improved privacy protections and stop selling private information and also it began a comprehensive antitrust investigation of Google's business practices that is still in process. (Claudia) But representative of The Federal Communications Commission-John M. Simpson states that “Strict application of antitrust law is not going to be enough to thwart Google’s most flagrant anticompetitive practices and privacy violations” (Hatch) and many other independent politics and researches support his point of view. As we can see this corporation is still completely independent and doesn't have any real limits for its influence. Such a huge concentration of power should be restricted and controlled.


Cell Phone Babysitters

By Christen Sanchez

I am so in love with the new and improved iPhone 6s. It is very common for someone at my age to actually have love for a phone. I use it for almost everything: navigation, looking up things I don’t know, music, capturing special moments, and much more. There is one thing I try not to use it for, and that is to babysit my three year old daughter. When she turned two, she started having temper tantrums and going out to places began to get a little rough. Almost everywhere I went, I have seen parents giving their kids their phones, iPads, and handheld tablets. I didn’t think anything of it at first; I thought, “Well hey, if my daughter is able to hold my phone and be distracted at the same time, why not put on a show that she enjoys, so I can take care of things?” I was amazed at how fast she started learning the phone within a few weeks after being introduced to it. She knew how to open the phone, get to the children’s app, turn up the volume, and she also knew how to navigate through the apps she used. Shortly after being introduced to the cell phone, she began to get very attached to it, and that is when my concerns started. I didn’t like the fact that she wanted to play on the phone all the time instead of running around or just simply scribbling on a piece of paper. If she didn’t get the phone, her tantrums
went from a normal five to a screaming ten really quick. Once I started hearing the same concerns from both of her grandmother’s after Sanchez 2 they would watch her, I decided to take the phone away from her and stick to toys and coloring books. The things that many parents either don’t see or pay attention to is what these handheld technologies can actually do to our children, or how it can affect their child development.

Is it even possible for a cell phone to affect a child’s development? This question was certainly on my mind for my daughter’s next checkup appointment with her doctor. When we went to her appointment, I wanted to wait until the end to ask the doctor any miscellaneous questions; however, I didn't even have to wait because she made sure to remind me how important it is for her to NOT use the phone at all. I was amazed at how the doctor reminded me as if she makes it a point to remind every parent that she sees. I then started asking her questions, and she said depending on how much a child uses a phone on a daily basis, it can definitely affect their eyes. This made sense to me because when I had an appointment to get my glasses fixed a while back, I remembered letting my daughter use my phone as I was getting refitted. As my daughter was still getting up and running around with the phone in her hand, the eye doctor informed me that I shouldn’t let her use it. She said the cell phones and iPad’s bright screens are why a lot of young children have to wear glasses nowadays.

A report also pointed out that “children may be more vulnerable to adverse risks because they have thinner skulls, smaller heads, and their nervous systems are still developing” (Glazer). If this is the truth, then why are children apps or children tablets available so easily? If a “cell phone radiation can affect a child more than an adult,” why have so many available technologies for children (Glazer)? I think these questions start Sanchez 3 with the parent, and what the parent wants for their child. Of course a brand that is advertising for children is going to come after the
parent first when selling a product. I've experienced this because I used to get free apps for my daughter on my phone, and she would always come up to me and tell me the screen changed to something else. When I would grab the phone to fix it, the things that were always popping up were kids advertisements. My daughter would always ask me to get the advertised app that she accidentally tapped. And that is what advertisers do; reel in the child so they can entreat their parents until they have to say yes. Advertisers make it so easy to go from one app to another that it becomes a never-ending cycle of child attractions. It comes to be so easy for the parent to say yes and just hand the phone right back to their child so they can stop begging for it.

Maybe it's my fault that my daughter would want to use the cell phone so badly. I mean, I do love my cell phone and the accessibility it allows me to have. I have it on me all the time for emergencies and much more, so that can be another reason why my daughter loves the idea of being on the phone. She does have a pretend phone that she holds to her ear as she has long conversations with Elsa and Anna all day. Could she have learned those gestures from watching me on the phone? I believe so because I found that “toddlers want to be a part of the world that everyone they know lives in, and that's an often thing they are so excited about” (Belot). So as the new generation goes on, it can possibly affect my daughter if I don't allow her to use a cell phone. If everyone around her is using all these “must have technotoys,” she may feel left out and sad that her parents don't allow her to do the things her friends are doing (Uhls) (Sanchez 4).

Not allowing your child to use a cell phone can still affect them because of the generation they live in is filled with technology. I believe cell phones “offer an escape and distraction” to a child's mind (Kubey 267). Whether it be a good distraction or a bad one, is all in the parent hands. There has to be some kind of good that comes out of these cell phones when parents give them to their kids. I have found a lot of very educational apps that have benefited my daughters
thinking. I surely tried to stick with the more educational side so that my daughter could gain off of it. When my daughter was about six months old, I started playing Baby Einstein for her off of my phone and that benefited her tremendously. She became more aware of things and started to respond at such an early age. I think this is a part of the reason why I wouldn’t completely take the cell phone away from my daughter.

So maybe the new generation that my daughter is growing up in is something I have to learn with her. There will always be some type of new technology as my daughter grows, and I wouldn't want to take that away from her. When looking at what is best for my child, I have learned that completely shutting her out from this technology world can negatively affect her development. As much as I would want my daughter to grow up the way I did, I still have to consider many new and modernized ways of living. I’ve learned that it's all about finding a balance between what I grew up with and what my daughter will grow up with. I’ll always have playtime and fun in my household, but depending on a cell phone to babysit my daughter is something I will still use very rarely and cautiously (Sanchez 5).
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Girls are the Joke of the Gaming Community

By Marina Bargas

When talking about the video game *Tomb Raider*, gamers usually first think of the main character, Lara Croft, and her famous large pixelated breasts. When the game was being developed, one of the graphic artists created Lara’s unbalanced proportions as a joke. But the head of development decided to keep the design so male players can have something interesting to look at when playing the game. This is an example of how video games have become unfair for females, especially those in the gaming community. Many games have taken on female characters that have unrealistic body proportions and extremely revealing outfits. This can cause a great gender inequality within the gaming community because it gives the idea that women have to look a certain way to be found interesting. They are “reinvigorating the interest of men and women alike in leggy crime fighting” (Levy 129). Creators of *Tomb Raider* were worried the game wouldn’t sell well to a male audience because the main character was female. This is where the “joke” came in to save the game. This is also where the world of video games had changed for women.

Lara Croft has always been a badass in my book, with the way she can handle guns and how stealthy she is. But she’s just like any other female video game character out there. Female characters in video games generally have similar statistics and abilities. They tend to be equipped
with small, light-weight weapons, have great speed due to being small in size, and excel in acrobatics/gymnastics which aid in stealth missions. Lara has gone through some changes with each *Tomb Raider* sequel and remake. In the 2013 version of this game, Lara has been modernized. She’s finally realistically proportioned and is no longer sporting short-shorts that protected virtually nothing, but now her main weapon is a bow and arrow. Lara herself may have changed, but the inequality still lingers in her design. I went to a video game convention dressed as the original Lara Croft, minus the over-grown, gravity-defying breasts. Convention goers had asked for pictures with me and I felt so cool, until someone asked why my cosplay wasn’t complete. They felt it would’ve been funny to include the large bust, but I didn’t want to embrace a terrible joke.

While female gamers are considered jokes, males who play as female characters aren’t as funny. There are guys who choose their characters based on stats and weapon use, which is a positive thing for the women looking for equality in the gaming world, but that gets taken away by the guys who choose their characters purely based on looks. In the newer versions of the *Pokemon* games, new main characters are made for players to choose from to go on their adventures. Players can choose either a boy or girl avatar, which get new designs in each game. My boyfriend and I got one of the games that allows players to customize their characters by purchasing clothes and hairstyles. My boyfriend went with the female character, which he’s never done before, and I asked why. He said it was because she looked cute in that game. I was upset by this for two reasons: my boyfriend was checking out an animated character, and he picked this character by her looks. In *Pokemon*, it doesn’t matter because the male and female characters are equal and have no stats in the games, but what if every guy chose characters like this? Some men choose female fighters in combat games, such as *Street Fighter*, based on how
attractive they find them, then make them battle another attractive girl. This makes girl fights yet another lame joke to gamers.

Embracing the girl-on-girl combat style is the game *Dead or Alive*. It features female battlers who wear skimpy battle outfits and have ridiculous body proportions. This game already ridicules women in an embarrassing way, but its sequel takes it to a new low. The sequel is no longer a combat game but now a volleyball game. *Dead or Alive Extreme Volleyball* “featured those same characters in a volleyball game with a group of men whose eyes are glued to the game, purportedly watching the bodies of the game characters” (Dickerman *et al* 23). This game took away the power the characters originally had, and tossed them away to make way for volleyball so they can capture the attention of men. This game is a complete joke because powerful women were considered better off being eye candy volleyball babes.

There’s a new joke going around online that if girls claim to play video games, “they want to be ‘one of the guys’; they hope to be experienced like a man” (Levy 103). I try to break this new joke by engaging people in lengthy conversation about games, but then guys really do see me as “one of them” and start calling me “dude” or “bro.” Why can’t I be a girl who plays games, who is also viewed as a girl? There are females in the gaming community who are professional gamers, but since they’re females, not everyone takes them seriously and they aren’t as famous as most male gamers are. They are still seen as girls who just crave attention from men, which is worrisome because “female players, especially those of games perceived as masculine, are reported to encounter harassments as a result of their mismatch with socially acceptable feminine roles” (Vermeulen *et al* 303). Professional female gamers get judged by which games they play, which is really unfair. It’s gotten to the point where I get embarrassed to talk about certain games I play because I feel like I will get judged on how un-intense some of
them are. I don’t like most of the popular first-person-shooter games such as *Call of Duty* or *Halo* because they don’t interest me, but I feel like guys think I don’t play them because I’m a girl and can’t handle them. Being a female in the gaming world is more stressful than fun, especially when you’re seen as something to laugh at.

Female gamers can go through constant struggles just to be taken seriously in a community we love. We can find empowerment from the males who choose the women in games with the best stats, yet we feel judged by the guys who pick by looks. We question how looks and body proportions play into combat and strength. It’s at the point where I can’t fully enjoy a game because I’m always analyzing and judging the thought process behind character designs. Women are even “more likely to view themselves as a sexual object, which in turn increased their acceptance of rape myths” (Gabbiadini *et al.* 2). Most female characters in games help embrace sexual fantasizes and create body image expectations that cannot be fulfilled. I don’t understand how it’s funny that girls aren’t equal in the gaming world and have to live with the humility in reality. I guess this is a joke I’ll never get.
Works Cited


Researched Arguments

First Place

Sarah Butterworth is, and has always been, quite the geeky woman. Her interests in comic books, fantasy stories, and video games have led her towards both creative and scientific skill sets, where critical and creative thinking shine. Sarah is planning to transfer for a Bachelor’s degree in Chemistry, and later undertake a Master’s program in Food Science, where the science of chemistry and the art of cooking overlap. This essay was inspired by personal knowledge of women’s experiences in both the scientific fields, and the subcultures stereotypically linked to STEM students.

Geek and Gamer Girls: They’re Undeniable

By Sarah Butterworth

“Hey, I just wanted to apologize for the other day.”

“What?”

“You know, that Skype call...”

David (not his real name) had called me on video chat to talk about his new Dungeons and Dragons campaign and to also show me some of the new miniature figurines he had recently painted. “...It was inappropriate and I’m sorry...” He had also seemed to forget that he was not wearing any pants at the time... or boxers.

“It’s fine, man. Just keep it in your pants next time.”

“I just assumed, I mean, you always joke about that kind of shit.”

Honestly, I am inclined to forgive David for letting it hang out on camera, but only
because he actually apologized for it. Most of the time when I get unsolicited nude photographs or sexual advances, it is from men who immediately turn around and call me a “feminazi cunt” when I tell them off for it. This is common when it comes to online gaming; most women do not even go on voice chat because of the attention it draws. And God forbid if you are not the best player in the group, suddenly you are assigned the role of group slut who is only there because she puts out. This example is just in online gaming, but it permeates throughout other nerdy interests. In his article “Troublemakers,” Malcolm Gladwell describes these assumptions as generalizations, or stereotypes (2). The generalizations for these women include: women do not play video games; women do not like comic books; women do not understand science fiction; girls are bad at math; women can only be biologists; female engineers are not as clever as male engineers; women cannot be nerds, or geeks, or scientists, or smart. Because of the traditionally male dominated atmosphere of the geek and nerd communities, women face criticism, social backlash, and reprimand simply for being female. With geek culture becoming pop culture, and the science and engineering fields becoming the go-to career path in America, bias against women effectively silences half of the potential population and their voice in these areas.

Defining what separates geeks from the rest of us can be hard to do these days, especially in places like the Silicon Valley, where not being one can make a person feel like a social pariah. Geeks have always been associated with more unusual interests: tabletop or video games, comic books, and Japanese animation or anime to name a few. Nerds, on the other hand, are known to be bookworms, math-whizzes, and science enthusiasts. Neither geeks nor nerds were known for their interests in things like movies or sports, interests that would be considered mainstream decades ago. These were the people who went off to
college, not to become a lawyer or the next great American author, but who instead wanted to study the physics of the atom, or to become the next great innovator in computer engineering. They were, and in some places still are, outsiders of the norm who banded together around their unusual common interests to form a community of their own that would support and protect them. Most of all, these communities were comprised almost entirely of other men. For most of history the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math) have been considered male subjects. It was not appropriate for women to study them, or if some of the women in the upper echelons of society did, it was considered nothing more than a passing hobby. In recent decades, that has slowly been changing; women are more interested in geek and nerd interests than ever before, and a call has gone out to women to encourage them into the STEM fields. This has been a direct result of this geek and nerd culture becoming the new mainstream. Comic books are now in our highest grossing movie lists. Football jocks play video games like Halo and Call of Duty. America’s biggest business celebrities are no longer the Rockefellers, but have become the Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and Mark Zuckerberg. With this dramatic change in America’s overall social structure, more women find themselves encouraged to pursue these interests. But with such a strong male dominance present, many of these women have faced harsh stereotyping from their male peers for being “outsiders.”

With the growing number of women showing up in their communities, there has been a large outcry from the male geeks and nerds who feel they are being ousted from their own groups. These communities originate with the nerds in school who faced daily bullying, like being called poindexter as a derogatory term or being physically assaulted in the hallways. These boys found relief by banding together through hobbies and pursuits,
such as video games and comics, to escape the realities of being different. Although society has been changing to become more inclusive of these groups, and celebrates their interests with them, the feelings associated with the stigma of being generalized against have not fully fallen away. Because of this, any changes that are noticed have been met with strong resistance. If a movie gets a character trait wrong, it must be terrible; if a video game sequel becomes mainstream, the developers have sold out; if women start to ask for stronger female characters in comic books, they do not understand what it is that makes those comics great. The rationale is that, “If it isn't broken, don’t fix it.” This resistance to change continues to build within the community as more outside voices impact it, and women in particular felt seen the brunt of it.

Not only do male geeks feel as though they are having their culture invaded with women entering it, but there is also a disconnect between male and female geeks in terms of the changes in the conversations being presented. With more women expressing their interest in the geek community, they are bringing with them new thoughts to the table such as calls for stronger female leads in geek-based movies, or for women not to be limited to two-dimensional sexual objects in video games and comics. A lot of this vocalization on the part of women comes from a desire to feel equal to their male peers; however, many men do not understand why these stereotypes in their media are a problem, and instead feel that these calls for action are a direct attack on their culture. When these geeks felt bullied in the past, or saw how bullying affected their peers, they took that negative reinforcement and applied it to women. They felt that because they were social outcasts, they could never talk to girls or get a date, something that is often reinforced through bullying. In Arthur Chu’s article, “The plight of the bitter nerd: Why so many awkward, shy guys end up hating
feminism,” he describes a talk given by MIT professor Scott Anderson where he describes the fear he felt after reading feminist writings, thinking that a woman might consider him a sexual harasser. Chu says, “And he concludes as a result of this that feminism is a destructive force for men like him, that the bias of the world is tilted in favor of women and women’s issues because everyone is talking about how to help victims of harassment and sexual assault and no one is talking about how to help him” (Chu). With women trying to impact the one area of control that these men had in their lives, they now feel that feminism is the enemy, and that they are once again the underdog in a world that refuses to acknowledge their plight. Many of these men feel unjustly attacked because they have not personally done anything to harm women, and so resist the needs of their female peers as a result. They do not see why women deserve any more than they do, or why their culture should turn on a dime to support them. For many male geeks, these women become the enemy of an endless assault on their personal space, and they resort to their own attacks in what they consider self-defense.

The easiest, and perhaps more juvenile, assault on women in these communities is the use of their appearance against them. Female geeks are judged harshly on the internet based on their appearance. If a girl is too pretty in a picture, or in a video, the calls to see her without clothing becomes endless. She becomes a sex icon for men, not because of her mind or their shared interests, but simply because she is a pretty face who understands what the men are talking about. This form of sexism works in reverse as well. If a geek is not attractive enough, she is shamed for that as well, and is called things like “fat cow,” “whale,” and much, much worse. Many of these women are told to “go kill [themselves]” for not being attractive enough because it is assumed that they will never be able to enter a
relationship. Even females who were once held up as the pinnacle of the pretty geek girl can immediately be thrown to the wolves if she says or does anything the males in the community disapprove of. Should she try to defend other women in the field, she may find herself at the mercy of critical nitpicking of her appearance, something that has almost become a sport on the internet. Female geeks disproportionately see this form of criticism from their peers because of their influence on the community, whereas non-geeks have little impact, and thus are mostly ignored. However, this attack based on appearance is by no means the only, or greatest, issue these female geeks face.

The perceived notion that women must be sexual creatures for men to have power over is a more extreme realization of this form of sexism. These women face some of the most overt harassment in community, which shows itself through slut-shaming, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. One of the most heavily reported cases of this is the case of Zoë Quinn, a video game programmer who went through nearly two years of harassment and threats from male geeks on the internet. In 2014, Simon Parker reported in his article “Zoe Quinn’s Depression Quest” that Quinn found herself falsely accused by her ex-boyfriend of receiving special privileges from her current relationship to a game reviewer in exchange for sexual favors. Overnight, Quinn received such vitriol for this accusation, that she felt it necessary not only to file a lawsuit against her accuser, but also had to flee her home out of fear for her safety (Parkin). And while this may be an extreme case of slut-shaming in the community, it only received special recognition because of how willing Quinn and other women in the community were to speak out against it. In addition to Quinn, many women who participate in online gaming are assumed to be pandering for male attention, receiving unsolicited lewd photos from their male peers or being labeled as
the “guild slut,” which implies the woman is open to giving sexual favors. This has caused many women to hide their gender in online gaming, simply to avoid the harassment and sexual advances they might otherwise face. These fans also find themselves at the center of attention in places like comic conventions, where wearing any sort of costume, or “cosplaying,” is incorrectly assumed to be a call for attention and molestation. The argument is that these women wouldn't dress in the types of skin-tight and revealing costumes the characters wear if they weren't “asking for it.” In these cases, the single continuous element is that these geeks are female, and thus, are to be treated differently at the will and desire of the male base of the community.

This sexual sexism has led many, both male and female, to feel that women need to prove themselves in order to truly be welcomed into the community and respected within it. Women are often faced with criticisms that they are not as smart, nor as dedicated as the men they work with. British knight, Nobel laureate and biochemist Tim Hunt had this to say of women: “...three things happen when they are in the lab ... You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you and when you criticize them, they cry” (Greenberg). His implication is that women, or “girls” as he referred to them, need to work in gender-segregated laboratories because they cannot control their own emotions. Needless to say, Sir Hunt’s career has taken a nosedive since he voiced his opinions on the matter, despite the many honors he has received for his work. These sorts of generalizations lead some organizations to try and encourage women to show off their talents in the science and engineering fields. Unfortunately, this runs into a two-fold problem of it being deemed necessary for women to prove that they are equally talented to men in their field, and as a result, many of the projects promoted are subtly patronizing in their own right. CNN writer
Hope King presented an example of this, when many women were left shaking their heads after IBM launched an ad-campaign aimed at women to “Hack a Hair Dryer,” which showed girls using hair dryers in school science fair projects with a voice-over of bad puns to encourage girls to, “Blow away the misperceptions” (King). Though perhaps a cute attempt to attract younger girls to the field, the campaign ultimately left women who were in fields like bioengineering or rocket science feeling as if they weren’t considered real scientists. Luckily for women, these sorts of problems are being addressed more openly with productive criticisms taking place.

Although these stigmas are slowly beginning to dissolve as more women vocalize their frustrations, there still exists a vocal male population who would rather attack than discuss these concerns. When Zoë Quinn tried to stand up against her attacker in her lawsuit, she was immediately demonized on social media websites for the audacity of trying to defend herself. Sean T. Collins reported on these attacks when speaking with Anita Sarkeesian, a Youtube Feminist who discusses misogyny and sexist stereotypes in modern media, who also found herself under attack after addressing the underlying issues of Quinn’s situation in her series “Tropes vs. Women.” With many men in the community wanting to protect their status quo, Sarkeesian was perceived as another target who was launching her own biased assault on gaming. Not only is the verbal abuse on her social media account constant, but she has also been faced with numerous death threats, and even had to cancel a lecture at a university after credible threats of a mass shooting were issued to the school (Collins). It seems like any time women begin to ask for better representation in their own community, they are labeled as “anti-men,” and treated with such disrespect that the conversation is often overlooked in favor of the dramatics of it all.
These women are treated as if they are not truly fans of the subject material, or are labeled “feminazis” who are only in their careers due to affirmative action, and not their accomplishments. These women are not asking for special favors, but only to be treated as equals by their peers. With such a venomous audience facing anyone who makes this claim, it is hardly a wonder than so many women walk the easier path and try to avoid the backlash at any cost.

When women actively try to avoid negative attention from their peers, they essentially are being censored from having their opinions and voices heard in society. Pop culture loses the female perspective in movies with characters like Black Widow in The Avengers and Princess Leia from Star Wars being shoehorned into supportive roles, despite the power the characters have to bring to their own stories. Even Wonder Woman had previously been blacklisted from her own movie in large part because she was considered to be a “non-traditional,” meaning non-male, character who would be too challenging for the audience to relate to. Because the only people who were allowed to have a voice on these subjects were men, all of the geek culture that bled into pop culture remained male dominated. And even though this has been changing in recent years, shows driven by strong female characters like “Firefly” and “Jessica Jones” are often either canceled early or are hidden behind subscription services. When these women are hidden away from the public the generalizations assumed of women continue to perpetuate, and women continue to be forced into positions of disrespect and are ignored.

This disrespect also appears in the STEM fields where women are disproportionately underrepresented in education, careers, and acknowledgments of achievement. Because it is a general misconception that boys are better at math and
science, girls are often not encouraged at young ages to pursue those fields, or they are mocked by the young boys for not being feminine enough. This continues on through higher education where men are more likely to receive mentorship and recognition over women. In the article “Many Women Leave Engineering, Blame the Work Culture,” Nicholas St. Fleur writes that according to Heather Sarsons, who recently published a study for her dissertation at Harvard, men and women who publish their work individually receive equal recognition in their field; however, when women publish in a team with their peers, the men on the team are four times more likely to be given the recognition than the women involved (St. Fleur). This limit of achievement and education disproportionately stems the flow of women into the science and engineering fields, where St. Fleur gives the statistic that recently women have been reported to only make up 11% of working engineers (St. Fleur). Contrast that number to the fact that the general population is closer to 50-50 male to female, and it is evident that there is a large disparity between what is and what could be. When women like Ada Lovelace, a gifted mathematician and computer programmer, and noted chemist and physicist Marie Curie prove that women have always been capable of equaling their male counterparts, it becomes evident that it is long past due for society to stand up and recognize that it should support women entering these fields.

Geek and nerd women are not asking for special treatment, nor are they seeking to destroy the history and culture of men and their influence on their community. What we are asking for is for people to be more conscious of the choices that they make, and how those decisions can affect the communities they are a part of. When women are no longer seen as separate in the sciences, or outcasts in fan communities, the conversation can progress and change in a way that is inclusive of all opinions. Technology can continue to
be improved and innovated upon with women like Limor Fried running the arduino microcomputing company Adafruit. Support of women who like fantasy and comic stories can help them continue to expand within their genres through characters like Buffy the Vampire Slayer. We can show support for these women by speaking up against both intentional and unintentional misogyny with rational discourse. And ultimately, isn’t rationality a standard that nerds have always held themselves to?
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Researched Arguments

Second Place

I came to West Valley in 2015 after taking a year off after graduating high school. I wanted to start my GED and in hopes to find a major of interest. I’m still figuring out my best interest, but so far I have nursing in mind. I enjoy helping others as much as I can. It really puts a smile on my face in being able to help others emotionally and mentally. Throughout most of my life I struggled with myself mentally. I went through a lot of difficult times having to do with being in very toxic relationships. When I came into English 1A, I was currently going through a very unhealthy relationship. The professor had assigned a research paper to the class. I found that talking about domestic violence would be a great option for me at the time, so I went for it and I am proud of my grade, and entering it into the contest. Thanks to Professor Nils for encouraging me too. The research I did also taught me a lot of information I didn't know about domestic violence and I encourage anyone who had went through a familiar situation like I did to know you’re not alone. You are never alone.

He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not

By Brittney Leha

Once in a while I find myself thinking about how much I regret staying in the relationships that once took over my life. That ‘once in a while’ was about 40 minutes ago while I was driving home in the rain on 280. I was thinking about how much I could’ve
succeeded, experienced, and how happy I would be in my life. I started to feel irritable at myself that I didn’t respect myself enough to walk away. Thinking about it made me start to speed up, and I was already going 80 on the freeway. I wish I was able go back and leave before they all slowly destroyed me. All the books, food, furniture, sweat, and spit that flew past my face wasn’t enough to leave. I guess the fists that went right past my face into the thin walls wasn’t, or being thrown down and choked never seemed enough. All the fighting, hostages, threats, manipulations, blaming, cheating and lying didn’t seem to be enough. One relationship I was in wasn’t physical but became verbally abusive. I remember being told “I want to hit you right now but I’m not going to…” In my head I kept telling myself everything would get better and I could be happy again once we ‘get over it,’ because he obviously loves me if he’s still with me right? Eventually, it kept getting worse and worse. I also was mentally getting worse. I felt like I was losing my memory, and all I could remember were my scars. My depression got worse and my self-esteem plunged to the ground where I slowly started to feel numb. It probably took me more than ten tries to get out of a couple of the relationships I was in. Getting out of an abusive relationship is one of the best feelings in the world. It makes you feel invincible, alive and free. It makes you smile so hard that your face feels like it’s going to fall off. After getting out I still have side effects, but I try to move on without any regrets. Slowly, I am starting to understand and accept why I stayed, and it helps to not feel so bad for myself. Many women who are in abusive relationships are tremendously traumatized and afraid to leave their spouse with many psychological reasons. The abuse done on women psychologically imbalances their mentality, believing it’s best for them to stay, and most people think it’s such a shame. It’s easy for them to say “just leave,” but it’s not so easy to be done.
Women who are in abusive relationships tend to become very dependent on their partner so they don’t feel isolated. Abused women may leave one time but many seem to always come back. Verbal and emotional abuse can put a huge charge on us especially being in an intimate relationship with a man who swore he loved us in the beginning. It seems to deform our mentality, killing us slowly with confusion while plucking each petal from a once beautiful flower, “he loves me, he loves me not...” and finally the flower is killed. Ginny Graves, a freelance writer who specializes in health, psychology and more, informs in her article “When Love Turns to Fear” that, “...emotional abuse can take an even greater toll than hitting or pushing...emotional violence causes severe PTSD and depression above and beyond that caused by physical violence. Some women’s self-esteem becomes so severely eroded that they no longer trust themselves to be able to function outside the abusive relationship” (Graves 72-75). This can play a huge factor as to why abused women become so dependent on their abuser. An abuser can chip away our self-esteem with constant criticism or insults, which can lead to questioning our sense of self in relation to the world. Domestic violence can also take away our sense of safety and security, which destroys our trust for anyone else. When we can’t function outside of the abusive relationship, we find ourselves unable to do simple tasks without feeling useless, depressed or alone, so we find ourselves running back for the comfort we know. I know I stayed up many nights and missed many days of school because I couldn’t stop thinking about what I did to deserve all the abuse and hate. Sometimes I would think to myself that maybe I did deserve all of it, because I was worthless anyways. Maybe it’s just karma for all the times I did something wrong, but every time I came back to my abuser it felt like I became alive again. We become brainwashed, that leaving them sounds like we would die
without them. Women are so hopeless that they’re drawn back in too easily, and most psychologists call this the “honeymoon phase.” In the article, “Stay With or Leave the Abuser? The Effects of Domestic Violence Victim’s Decision on Attributions Made by Young Adults,” Megan McPherson Halket and other authors of the article explain that many are drawn back to “the abuse cycle when the abuser tries to minimize the episode of violence by apologizing, promising to never do it again, buying gifts, etc. (Walker 2009). This learned hopefulness (LaViolette and Barnett 2000), or hope that the situation will improve given their partner’s promises, often keep women in relationships” (Halket et al 35-49). I stayed with my abusers because I thought we would make it. Hearing the apologies, promises, and begging for me not to leave always drew me back. After the abuse we experience the apologies, gifts, or kindness are comforting and soothe our hurt soul. When fear takes their turn in domestic violence, it can becomes reasons why leaving is difficult to leave. Ph. D. Craig Malkin explains very clearly in his article, “Why Do People Stay in Abusive Relationships?” on Psychology Today that victims are “…often afraid to leave, and with good reason (more than 70 percent of domestic violence injuries and murders happen after the victim has left). One can’t escape a dangerous situation if it feels safer to stay. But perhaps one of the most formidable and dangerous obstacles abuse victims face is their own searing guilt and shame; they’re incredibly adept at blaming themselves for the abuse…” (Malkin). Malkin is absolutely correct when he says it feels safer to stay. I can’t recall clearly what happened, but I remember calling the cops on my ex because he wouldn’t let me leave his house. I hung up the phone as it went through because I hesitated with fear, and he threatened to kill my family if he got arrested (the cops never showed up). I thought to myself if I leave him then I wouldn’t know what he’s up to anymore, and what if
he shows up at my house and hurts my family. Most women find it hard to leave the second time because the first time they tried they were physically harmed, or threatened. Domestic violence becomes worse each time it occurs.

Not only that I found myself unable to leave but I also noticed that I kept interacting myself with abusive relationships one after another. It’s not like I knew they would be, until I got myself attached to living demons. I grew up with my parents fighting too often. I witnessed and heard many fights that became physical. Hearing my mom screaming, “Don’t hit me!” over and over again was traumatizing. I grew up wanting to believe my dad was a good man, even though he had abused my siblings and I. Growing older and experiencing my own abusive relationships gave me the missing puzzles pieces as to why I surrounded myself with abusive partners, and why I couldn’t get out of them. I used to tell myself, “I’m used to it anyways,” just to cope with the reason why I am in these situations. Graves voices again in her article, that many women who fall into intimate partner violence, “…are victims of violence or who witness it in the home as children are more likely to experience intimate-partner violence as adults, whether as victims or as perpetrators, say experts.

Role modeling likely plays a part, but brain development may, too” (72-75). She also proceeds her claim by quoting Kibby McMahon of Duke Universiy that "There's evidence that children raised in abusive households have a difficult time dealing with stress..." (72-75). Many victims of abuse find their abuser as a safety net. Women who find a hard time leaving seek the comfort of their partner to feel better when under stress. Role modeling plays a huge part in our life and when we are exposed to violent acts we may feel as if it is something that just happens sometimes in relationships. It becomes just an excuse for the abuser or a reason to be abused. In the article “Intimate Partner Violence: Relationships
Between Alexithymia, Depression, Attachment Styles, and Coping Strategies of Battered Women” written by many Ph D’s including Giuseppe Crapo from Kore University of Enne, Italy, they explain that, “Women who have witnessed interparental violence may perceive violence as a normal part of intimate relationships” (Crapo et al 3). For an example, a girl may blame herself for the abuse she is in because is convinced by her abuser that her mother or father is responsible for the violence. The violence that is put on women who experience it too often psychologically deforms their mentality causing them to feel that domestic violence is normal. Domestic violence is clearly not ok, and it seems to be a vicious cycle. My father was abusive, multiple relationships I had been in were abusive, and it would tear me apart to see my future child, boy or girl, be in the same position I was in.

Words and bruises can cut as sharply as any blade, and those cuts leave scars upon our souls. Sometimes we cope with our broken souls by hurting ourselves just to make ourselves feel better or numb. It sounds strange, but it’s not any different from trying to make ourselves feel numb by listening to music about getting your heartbroken. Most people think about cutting when they hear self-harm. Self-harm can be many coping strategies such as drinking/drugs, scratching, hitting/punching, starving/over eating, hair pulling and more. In the article, “The Association Between Domestic Violence and Self Harm in Emergency Medicine Patients” by A Boyle and two others who did a study on many cases of domestic violence victims determined that, “The results prove that medically recorded domestic violence is significantly associated with an increased risk of self harm, as nearly 25% of domestic assault victims self harmed in the study period” (Boyle et al). Self-harm can become another strategy victim’s use for their abuser to feel bad for them, for they’re hoping that it could change them. Domestic violence deforms our mentality
causing is to become mentally ill. Abuse is dangerous itself but it can be more dangerous when suicide becomes a choice.

It’s difficult for others who have never experienced domestic violence to understand why we stay, because who in the right mind would come back to someone who punched their eye out? It may not make any sense to someone who’s never experienced it so they blame us for the danger we are in. We aren’t weak, we are powerful women, we are strong, we aren’t ignorant or dumb, we are thoughtful, and bright. Though, people aren’t able to reconcile us as strong individuals because we are unable to leave the first time. I know it’s difficult for my friends or family to see what I go through but all I ever need is for them to not give up on me. Victims of abuse don’t need someone to tell us to “just leave,” we need them more than just words. We need people in our lives to make us feel like we aren’t alone. We don't want to be given up on because we already gave up on ourselves. Blaming us for our pain only causes us to want to hide, and it gives us no hope. That being said, domestic violence is a dangerous cycle, and society has yet to come to terms of it.
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Lost Community

By Karl Owen

Modern-day America has been in constant conflict for over a decade, and with those protracted conflicts comes an unusually large veteran population. Unfortunately Americans don't understand their military service members. As a consequence many people inadvertently marginalize and discriminate against veterans. You can't make a first impression, or any impression, if people are convinced they already know "what you are". The most harmful form of discrimination that veterans face is generalizations and stereotypes. This happens largely because society accepts very inaccurate generalizations about veterans portrayed by the media. While this discrimination is not necessarily as damaging to veterans as other forms of discrimination, it does cause veterans to socially isolate themselves from the rest of the population. This prevents them from communicating their many unique experiences and rare life-skills to their fellow citizens which prevents society from growing to its full potential.

Veterans face unfair generalizations and stereotypes. Thankfully pro-veteran organizations and political activists and leadership have been able to establish laws and create private and government funded support organizations to offset the many challenges that they face; however, there is still the problem of generalization. This has far reaching consequences because it can make it difficult for them to obtain meaningful jobs. Employers assume that
veterans are mentally unstable, or they think that the veteran’s personality won't be a good "match" for the workplace's culture. This situation is paralleled in the article “Attitudes Towards the Homeless Affect Us All” by Hailey Yook when she gives this example, “Fear of the homeless is common, but it is just as common that that fear is unfairly rooted in presumptions that they are beggars, addicts, mentally ill or violent and selectively remembered instances of ‘homeless gone wild’” (1). Just as the homeless are unfairly judged based on biased presumptions, so too are veterans. Then there are also the day-to-day interactions that veterans face. Most people don't intend to be obstinate. Most problems are actually caused by misplaced assumptions. Contrary to this there are a few individuals who are overtly rude and directly opposed to the military and its soldiers (as if soldiers were responsible for wars). Their behavior can range from difficult to work with, to them spitting on you, or to them loudly accusing you of murdering children and physically assaulting you. A few examples of things I've heard from people are, "So you couldn't get into college?", in response to them finding out I was in the military (people seem to have the impression that most soldiers are idiots), or "How many people have you killed?" Then there are always people who like to tell me how great my benefits were while I was in the military, and how lucky I was (There’s nothing restricting most people from joining the military. They could just as easily have the exact same benefits). In addition, the actual benefits soldiers receive and what's advertised are two very different things. I might have had health care and housing (a small room to sleep in), because I was in the military, but being in the military also destroyed my body and left my mind in some profoundly dark places for what felt like forever. Also, most of the health care I received involved getting prescriptions for ibuprofen (anti-inflammatories that you can cheaply buy almost anywhere, including gas-stations) and being told to rest (which is easier said than done in the military profession). Largely
these problems come from people not understanding veterans and the military, which is primarily due to there not being many reliable sources to learn it from. In fact many sources are actually counterproductive.

This problem is heavily influenced by veteran's reservations about sharing details of their military experience, and also the media, which is by far the largest aggravator. A lot of veterans have had agonizing experiences and prefer not to tell most people who can't relate to those experiences, or who may react in a way that can be thoroughly upsetting to the veteran. One of the guys I was in charge of (we called him VJ) once told me that he saw one of his best friends get hit by a recoilless rocket in front of him. The only reason VJ survived was because the rocket had buried itself into his friend before it detonated, and his friend's body absorbed most of the blast. After that firefight (that's what we call a fight where both sides have guns and/or other weapons) was over (which can sometimes take hours or occasionally days), he had to literally wash the chunks and blood of his friend off of himself (there wasn't a shower there either). I think you can imagine how traumatic being reminded of that could be for him. This problem is further compounded by the way the media portrays the military. Since most people have never directly or even indirectly experienced the military life, they base their perceptions on mostly fictional and dramatized movies and TV series or news reports of war atrocities instead. You'd be surprised how uncommon it is to actually kill an insurgent during routine peacekeeping missions or operations; I was in Afghanistan for 22 months, and I was only directly involved in killing during a one night mission. Knowing all this it should be pretty easy to imagine how problematic this can be. Can you imagine how misunderstood humans would be if all an alien species knew about us was from watching "Jersey Shore", "16 and Pregnant", or "The Jerry
Springer Show”? All these misperceptions take their toll and noticeably alter people’s behaviors, creating a schism between people.

This divide can be very unfortunate because it often causes veterans to disengage from the rest of society (I spent the better part of the first 8 months after I got out of the military avoiding people whenever reasonably able and barely even spoke with my friends.), or to keep their veteran-status secret. This can be detrimental to the veteran because they often battle depression, hopelessness, suicidal ideation (I know two of my coworkers have killed themselves, and I wouldn't be surprised if there were more I didn't know about), insomnia, pathological anger, and substance abuse problems (usually a crude method of self-medicating), and other various mental illnesses. One of the guys I worked with began to have trouble sleeping and exhibited signs of PTSD after he provided support onbase for a returning MEDIVAC (medical evacuation) helicopter that had a young girl and boy from the local area who had been mortally wounded by insurgent mortar fire. There was a drastic change in his personality after that. He was always happy, cheerful, and talkative before that experience. I don't think I saw him joke around after that. He didn't talk much unless he was required to. It is much easier to lose these battles when you feel all alone and have nothing to live for. But the veteran is not the only one who suffers from this.

This isolation is also bad for the rest of society because people are unable to learn some of the valuable skills that veterans have learned. A few examples of these (possible) skills are: being able to quickly recover from stressful situations, how to worry less about the future and instead directly focus all your attention on planning to succeed in the future, getting used to failure (an important skill to have if you want to succeed regularly), how to disassociate from unmanageable emotions until after a crisis is resolved (usually a lot of guys will cry after their
first firefight. I remember watching a guy hyperventilating and crying after our first firefight while shaking and trying to smoke a cigarette), time management and prioritization, how to be assertive but not abrasive, dealing with or working for a narcissistic individual, how to work well in a team, how to avoid getting offended over small things, and a strong work ethic: for example, my buddy Ma used to get kicked out of work and was forced to take days off while the rest of his unit was working because he would work from 17 to 30 hours straight fairly regularly before his unit deployed to Iraq. Luckily, I believe the solution to this divide between the civilian and veteran population is fairly simple.

All in all my life isn't terrible, but it can be hard to connect with people when there always seems to be that invisible barrier there: when such a large portion of your life was dominated by something most people can’t relate to. It’s a weird balance because you want to share your experiences with other people, but you also don’t want to drive them away with the many negative feelings and experiences you’ve had. You also don’t want to seem conceited or full of yourself by talking about yourself too much. Usually I think veterans worry and then don’t bother trying to share. “If someone wants to know, they’ll ask” is a thought that comes up often for me. So to summarize: veterans do face some discriminations, and it makes life harder for them, but really all of society suffers from this issue because veterans have a lot to offer the rest of the world and if we could all open up more and connect on more personal levels we’d all be better because of it. Fortunately, with the ever increasing number of veterans in the population and more and more veterans becoming better adjusted to regular life, and connecting with normal people, I believe that in the near future this divide will eventually be closed and we will feel at peace again.
Would you like to have someone who cooks for you, does your chores, carries you to your car and drives you to your appointments? In addition to this service, you wouldn’t have any responsibilities like school, job, family, or shopping. Maybe you think it sounds like a privilege. However, it depends on the conditions in which you live. Locked-in in a one-room apartment for almost thirty years, a woman has been seeing the world outside only while being brought to the car and back home. She never attended school or had a job, and she never met with her friends because she has no friends. Moreover, she never went for a walk because she has been paralyzed since her birth. Instead of walking, she crawls in her apartment. She lives with her parents and two siblings in one room, and her mother takes care of her. This woman is my cousin Olga, who lives in Russia. She has cerebral palsy. Olga is a wonderful, warm-hearted person, and she has good humor. More than twenty years ago, I first recognized that she would never come out of her stroller and play with me, and that for the rest of her life she would speak unclearly and be limited in her movements; it was one of the saddest days in my life. When we met each other in her grandma’s house, I drove her in her stroller around the courtyard. As Olga grew out of her stroller, she stood most of the time in her apartment. Even when equipped with a wheelchair, she is not able to go outside because she feels insecure and not welcome. Like Olga, people with disabilities experience discrimination around the world because of their appearance. They are also discriminated against because the environment isn’t designed for them, and we don’t make
much effort to improve the situation. Moreover, many people believe that a disability is a
deficiency. They generalize that people with disabilities can’t live a full-fledged life, and they are
troublesome to other people in the society. Discrimination against disabled people causes
isolation and limits their quality of life, which may lead to unemployment and poverty. This has
a negative impact on our society because people become more ignorant to those who need
support. Instead of improving our environment to include more people that do not fit our norms,
we categorize and separate them only because of their unique differences.

People with disabilities often face discrimination in their daily life because of their
appearance and an inaccessible environment. Discrimination is the process or act in which
people exclude other people or groups who don’t fit in their perception of “normal” and because
of their differences. People ignore, insult or threaten them. Although many countries have anti-
discrimination laws, which demand that everyone should be treated equally, no matter what race,
sex, age, gender or disability they have, people with disabilities still face many obstacles. For
example, parents of children with special needs have difficulties integrating their children into
our society. While working in an integrative kindergarten in Germany, we often took trips to the
neighborhood playground. I sometimes noticed that parents tried to keep their own children away
from our children with autism and Down syndrome. These kids didn’t injure or threaten anyone,
but they looked different. Another example is my cousin Olga. She never went outside the
apartment for a walk because she never wanted to hear all the insults, laughter, pity and see
fingers pointed at her. She told me that it has been more bearable to stay at home for 30 years
than to go outside. She is mentally fit, but she is paralyzed in some areas of her body. Even when
we bought her a wheelchair, she didn’t dare to go outside because there are many obstacles that
the walk outside could become an nightmare. Roads and sidewalks have potholes, doors to
grocery shops are too narrow for wheelchairs, and everywhere there are stairs that she can’t
climb. In addition to all these problems, there are all the people who let her believe that she is
unhappy, inferior and stupid. She isn’t stupid at all. However, she would be happier, if the local
government would enable her to receive an education and work on more opportunities for people
like my cousin. Not only their daily life is very difficult to maintain, but also opportunities to
find and keep a job are rare.

An applicant who has body parts missing, in a wheelchair or with another disorder has
fewer chances of getting a job than a person without disabilities. Even if in some countries
people with special needs do receive financial support, they would like to be more independent
and earn money on their own; however, they have fewer chances. Even if they get a job, they
often lose it again because they are too slow, speak unclearly to the customer, or can’t
understand and fulfill all the requirements at work. My cousin would never try to get a job
because she knows that she has no chance; she speaks slowly, and her hands are bent which does
not look esthetically pleasant and convincing to some people. Nevertheless, she cares for her
little brother while her mom is at work. Olga learned to sew, to cook and to fold clothes. She is
not as fast as a person without disabilities, but she does it perfectly. However, in many places
employers believe that they need fast working people in order to be productive. Because Olga
can’t fulfill these expectations, she is excluded. Another example is a sheltered workshop for
people with disabilities where I had my internship. It was a nice place because people could
work in various areas like assembling toys, sewing towels, making candles or carving wood
figures. There was also a nursery garden, where only people with disabilities worked. They did
an incredible job with the assistance of social workers. I was happy to see that these people had a
job, and they were so proud of it. What bothered me was the fact that it was completely separated
from “normal” factories; it was “the factory for disabled people”. What these people did in their job showed me that under the same assistance they could do the same work in a factory or a nursery garden together with non-disabled people. Our society separates and gives fewer chances only because of a diagnosis. Moreover, many people think that disabled people are distracting, and our society doesn’t really care how to improve their quality of life.

People believe that disabled people can’t live a full-fledged life and may be dangerous. For example, last summer I read the article “Russian model Natalia Vodianova rebukes cafe for forcing out autistic sister” in The Guardian where AFP Moscow reported that Russian model Natalia Vodianova went public with a story about her 27-year-old sister Oksana who has cerebral palsy and autism. Oksana went for a walk with her nanny and took a rest at a cafe to drink some water. The owner of the cafe wanted to kick them out of the cafe because her sister was said to be dangerous and scaring the costumers. He also called the militia to take the girl, who hadn’t harmed anyone, out of the cafe. Another example is an autistic boy from a preschool where I used to work for two years. He was an integrative child in our preschool. While playing with other children in a sandbox, he had a conflict and hurt another boy with a toy car. Situations like these happen a lot in preschools. Small children have conflicts and often try to solve them the way that the autistic boy did. Children this age learn to communicate with each other and solve their conflicts verbally, but sometimes they can’t control their emotions. However, after the incident, the injured boy told his parents who was responsible for the bruise on his arm, and we had a big argument with them. They demanded that the “madman” should be isolated from normal children and closed in an institution for the mentally ill. They also threatened us with legal consequences. If a child without disabilities would have been involved instead of the autistic one, the parents would have better understood the situation. The parents did not blame
People discriminate against others through generalizations only because of their differences. For example, the man in the cafe made a generalization that the autistic girl was dangerous and couldn’t stay there only because of her appearance that seemingly didn’t fit in his conception of normal and beautiful. The situation with the autistic boy in preschool was similar. His parents made generalizations that the boy was dangerous and should be separated from the other kids because of his disability. The parents’ behavior on the playground as they saw children with special needs was similar to the parents in preschool. Employers often don’t give a disabled person a chance because they think that a disabled person cannot work productively. Even though most disabled people aren’t dangerous, people make this generalization about them. According to Malcolm Gladwell’s article “Troublemakers”, people use generalizations a lot. He explains that, “[…] insurance companies use generalizations when they charge young men more car insurance than the rest of us (even though many young men are perfectly good drivers), and doctors use generalizations when they tell overweight middle-aged men to get their cholesterol checked (even though many overweight middle-aged men won’t experience heart trouble)” (2). His example shows that people make generalizations everywhere in order to protect themselves or to prevent trouble. This also happens in the case with disabled people. Many of us think that someone who acts or looks inappropriate to our social idea of “normal” must be dangerous. It is a lack of information, acceptance, tolerance and patience with each other. Because people can’t accept difference, they are scared and try to separate themselves from disabled people, and this
leads to the current isolation. There are big obstacles on the way to integrating people with
disabilities. Ultimately, discrimination can lead to poverty and exclusion.

Assumptions about disabled people make us skeptical about providing them chances for
education, work and a meaningful life. People with special needs require support at the
workplace. For instance, they need someone, who can drive them to work and help them leave
the car. They also need an accessible workplace, with ramps for their wheelchairs and doors that
can be opened automatically. But in many places, there is none of that. Moreover, many disabled
people need more time to complete their work, which requires a patient employer. Nevertheless,
many workplaces are inaccessible, and assistance for these people is not provided; it makes their
integration impossible. There are countries where disabled people do not receive enough
financial support. It makes it hard to survive not only for themselves, but also for their families.
Often, in order to support their disabled child, parents struggle to work and care for the child at
the same time. In many cases they can’t afford to work all day; therefore there is not enough
money to survive for the whole family. For example, my cousin’s mother tries to sell vegetables
that she plants in grandmother’s garden and milk from her cow. Her father travels to Moscow
and works there as a construction worker; he is absent for more than four months a year. They
live in permanent stress and poverty. It becomes even worse when the caring person gets sick. To
all these struggles, Olga’s mother was now diagnosed with brain cancer and also needs help. My
cousin often thought about suicide. She told me, she thinks that she is guilty for their poverty and
her mom’s depressions and illness. Without support from the government, it is impossible for
disabled people and their families to come out of poverty. It is like a vicious circle. Instead of
providing support and help, our society sweeps these problems under the rug.
People like my cousin are like ghosts in our society. They are there, but no one pays attention to them. They are completely abandoned to their misery. Many of us don’t want to believe that someone lives isolated from us in poor conditions as long as we don’t experience it ourselves. Some of us think that it is better not to be confronted with problems like these. In fear of being in contact with these people and believing that they are dangerous and incapable, we are ignorant of the support that they need. We think, we can’t help them, so we also don’t make an attempt to change it. We don’t try to come in touch with them, or to educate others about disabilities and change their attitude. Instead of giving disabled people a chance to work and trying to figure out where we can integrate them, we still separate them. Even though they are different, they are part of our society and make it more social, open-minded and versatile.

Our society makes generalizations, assumptions and discriminates against people with disability. We call them dangerous, aggressive and ill. Instead of integrating we separate them. We must change our attitude. Paul Moor, a special needs educator from Switzerland says that we have to work not against error, but for the missing. It means that we should not see a disability as a disease which we have to cure in order to adapt a person to our norms. We should think how we can change our society and our environment to enable people with disabilities to have a fulfilling life. We need to make our environment accessible. The difference and care for each other makes our world a better place. We should go public and tell stories about discrimination as Mrs. Vodianova did. We must end our fear of disabled people and get in touch with them. All governments should give them a chance to receive an education, a job and support. Workplace situations can be improved through social workers or other professionals, who can accompany the disabled person and support them. The government needs to fund such support. Paying disabled people to stay at home is easier, but doesn’t make them a part of our society. The people
with special needs whom I worked with, are people from whom I learned to accept everyone without assumptions, because the inner value of a person is more important than his or her outer appearance. Everybody has to regard difference not as something that should be adjusted or changed, but something that we can learn from. We should never think that disability isn’t related to us because it can happen to everyone.
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AFP Moscow. “Russian model Natalia Vodianova rebukes cafe for forcing out autistic sister.” 


Literary Analysis

First Place

Allison is currently working toward her AA degrees in English and Women and Gender Studies. Her work in the interdisciplinary field of gender studies allowed her to present at The Fourth Annual Gender Symposium, in the spring of 2016, where she spoke about the lives of LGBTQ individuals in Iran. Her involvement in the Women and Gender Studies department has enriched her passion for writing and reading diversely. In this literary analysis of Tony Morrison’s *Sula*, she explores black feminism, queer relationships, and colorism, illuminating the way Morrison has fluidly integrated these ideas in a symbolic, narrative form.

Representations of Black Feminism in *Sula*

By Allison Hashemi

The second wave of feminism is often associated with the plight of the white middle class housewife, but during this same timeframe queer black feminists were starting a dialogue to address the issues of intersecting marginalized identities. However, even within this pursuit many of these intersectional activists often restricted themselves to the use of heteronormative language in their academic discourse. It is then remarkable and relevant that Toni Morrison’s literary works serve and satisfy the pursuit of black feminism through her symbolism and poignant storytelling. In *Sula* specifically, Morrison depicts and illuminates queer friendships, addresses the systematic demonization of sexually fulfilled
black women, and acknowledges the intertwining hierarchies within the black community such as colorism.

This novel subtly addresses the significance of queer experience and young queer friendships. Nel and Sula’s close relationship through childhood and adolescence suggests a spectacularly powerful bond. One moment in particular symbolically conveys the significance and freedom they have with each other: after Nel and Sula have spent a summer morning exploring, they relax in a meadow. Even before the bulk of the action begins, Morrison creates a context for the scene by alluding to Sula and Nel entering sexual maturity by writing, “Underneath their dresses flesh tightened and shivered in the high coolness, their small breasts just now beginning to create some pleasant discomfort when they were laying on their stomachs” (Morrison 58). This introduction suggests, in particular because of the words “pleasant discomfort” a coming of age, as this is a phrase often used when referring to a woman making a sexual debut. The scene continues with them playing in the grass and Morrison writes, “In concert without even meeting each other’s eyes, they stroked the blades up and down, up and down. Nel found a thick twig and, with her thumbnail, pulled away its bark until it was stripped to a smooth, creamy innocence” (Morrison 58). The idea that during this intimate encounter the these two friends do not make eye contact, is also reminiscent of sexual experience between young people, in that there is a reluctance to acknowledge what is happening because of its shameful stigma. If the reader ignores the symbolic and sensual nature in this section, the language is devoid of meaning and the actions of the characters seem quite bizarre. The language in this excerpt seems quite suggestive and evokes images of young sensuality. The words stripped and stroked, often given a sexual
connotation, highlight the absolute openness and venerability of this scene. The image of Nel exposing the bark surely parallels the way Sula and Nel continue to reveal themselves to each other in their spirit of closeness. Sula and Nel move from unearthing the grass to using sticks to enhance their play, Morrison writes, “Sula traced intricate patterns with her twig. At first Nel was content to do the same. But soon she grew impatient and poked her twig rhythmically and intensely into the earth, making a small neat hole that grew deeper and wider with the least manipulation of her twig” (Morrison 58). These lines display the deep sense of connection that these young girls feel. The imagery of lightly tracing patterns in the dirt is definitely reflexive of the way one would gently caress a partner in an intimate gesture, and Nel rigorously poking at the ground suggests sexual foreplay at the very least. The encounter finishes with the two of them carefully covering the hole, not speaking to what has transpired between them. This also conveys to the reader that what they have experienced together is somehow taboo, and mirrors the secrecy surrounding Chicken Little’s subsequent death.

In addition Morrison’s writing gives insight into the too frequent demonization of black women on the basis of sexuality. The characters of Hannah and Sula in particular are very open about their sexual encounters and are disliked and even ostracized for their engaging in this behavior. Hannah is consistently described as having sweet nature while also exuding sex. Hannah while being flirtatious and friendly is not naive and is selective about who she fully trusts. Hannah’s healthy mentality about sexual relationships certainly had an impact on Sula as a young girl. Morrison describes an incident where Sula covertly discovers her mother, Hannah, in the midst of a sexual encounter, she writes, “Seeing her step so easily into the pantry and emerge looking precisely as she did when she entered,
only happier, taught Sula that sex was pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable” (Morrison 44). This is a very empowering sentiment to convey to someone most especially a daughter. Though Sula adopted this sexually positive attitude as she reached adulthood, it was not shared by the rest of the community. Morrison writes the women of their neighborhood as thinking, "One thing I can’t stand is a nasty woman" (Morrison 44). This intolerance and discrimination from the people of the town is also aimed toward Sula, once she matures. Sula faces a much more extreme version of the prejudice with which Hannah's sexual behavior was met. Toward end of the novel, the community increasingly views Sula with intense malice and hatred, as a ‘whore’. Morrison writes, “She was a pariah, then, and knew it. Knew that they despised her and believed that they framed their hatred as disgust for the easy way she lay with men” (Morrison 122).

This phenomenon presented in Sula directly correlates with some discrepancies in black feminism. Morrison is effectively able to raise our consciousness about the way that black women are admonished and demonized for their sexuality. In the article “Why We Get Off: Moving Towards a Black Feminist Politics of Pleasure”, Joan Morgan describes the way that often within the movement certain individuals feel that pleasure politics are not a priority and that the focus should be more geared to addressing the various atrocities faced by women of color. Morgan writes, “Iterations of certain black feminists need to stop talking about twerking and pleasure and turn their attention back to structural inequalities have grown common in feminist digital terrains” (Morgan 38). The author is attempting to call attention to the fact that ignoring the importance of pleasure politics, ignoring the subjects of healthy sexuality and obtaining agency, inevitably leads to the continuation of atrocities
as these demonized images of sexually fulfilled black women are often at the root of violence.

This writing especially paves the way for the frank discussion and analysis of intra-community prejudices such as colorism. In *Sula* the reader can observe an almost obsession with skin tone both from and toward Nel’s mother, Helene. The duality of this phenomenon is well displayed in the train scene and it’s aftermath, where the conductor confronts Nel and Helene after they have mistakenly entered the white car. Morrison writes, “Behind Nel was the bright and blazing light of her mother’s smile; before her the midnight eyes of the soldiers. She saw the muscles of their faces tighten, a movement under the skin from blood to marble. No change in the expression of the eyes, but a hard wetness that veiled them as they looked at the stretch of her mother’s foolish smile” (Morrison 21-22). After a tension filled encounter where it’s clear the conductor’s feelings of superiority were threatened, Helene attempts to placate his anger by smiling. She, perhaps unknowing, further alienates the black, presumably darker men in the train car, who may see this display as Helene further aligning herself with white people. The reality here is that because Helene is lighter skinned she is actively ostracized from both white and black folks despite the privileges that may be afforded her. While whites tend to view her with concern, as though she may forget her rightful, lowly place as a black woman, black people see her as conceited and suspect that she thinks herself better than them. Perhaps these ideas are valid, as lighter skinned black people are often given the advantage in education and employment, and Helene, as stated by her daughter, indeed has the tendency to be superficial. While still on the train Nel observes, “If this tall, proud woman, this woman who was so very particular about her friends, who slipped into church with unequaled elegance,
who could quell a roustabout with a look, if she were really custard, then there was a chance that Nel was too” (Morrison 22). Historically speaking, as this phenomenon developed post slavery, darker skinned individuals were systematically overlooked for opportunities. In an article in Social Forces, an academic journal, Ellis Monk says, “Blacks of lighter complexions were more likely to be skilled workers, professionals, and even own their own farms (Gatewood 2000; Bodenhorn and Ruebeck 2007). These advantages, notably their much greater wealth in comparison to all other blacks and their heightened status, were passed down selectively over generations, as many lighter-skinned blacks practiced homogamy (Bodenhorn 2006)” (Monk 1316). However these advantages do not excuse the certain forms of alienation that are common upon mixed race and light skinned individuals.

This novel so pertinently displays the many themes in black feminism and continues to exemplify the need for the integration of pleasure politics in the movement. Morrison's ideas and characters have remained living and relevant in the sustained struggle for equality. She integrates and conveys the struggles of colorism within the black community in a way that is both illuminating and confrontational. Beyond anything else, this novel seems to be an illumination of love. It recognizes a queer friendship, a relationship that if nothing else transcends the physical world. The souls of Nel and Sula are stitched together in a way that mirrors a kind of soul stitching the feminist community can aspire to. Sula is call to love and thus a call to strive for equality.

Literary Analysis

Second Place

I am a full time student at West Valley College and have been so for three semesters. I am majoring in Computer Science and plan to transfer to San Jose State in a couple of years. There I hope to earn a Bachelors in CS. After completing my formal education, I aspire to work as a programmer in the industry. Although English is not my major, I have gained a new appreciation for it as a result of the composition courses that I have taken at West Valley. My abilities as a writer have been greatly enhanced and I am no longer intimidated by writing assignments in the way I once was. For that I cannot thank my English teachers enough.

How to Deal with Aging

By Josh Vandewalle

We are all getting older, but how do we respond to that uncomfortable fact? In her poem “Age” Kay Ryan contrasts two different ways people react to the aging process in their lives. The poem’s speaker praises those individuals who become more kind and open-minded as they age. The speaker then positively contrasts these kinder people against others who are afraid of growing older. The driving idea behind “Age” is that with the proper outlook on life, the aging process is not necessarily a negative experience. The speaker espouses an accepting attitude towards aging and denounces the fearful attitudes and negative ideas many people have about it.
The poem's first lines serve to introduce those people who become more kind with age. From the beginning the idea that not everyone becomes more amiable with age can be clearly seen through the speaker's assertion that as “some people” age they “kinden” (Ryan line 1). The use of the invented word “kinden” brings to mind the German word kinder, or children. On the surface it may seem odd that Ryan would invent a word evocative of youth and childhood in a poem about growing older; however, the choice of this word is meant to show that childlike happiness comes to those who are willing to accept their age. The speaker then proceeds to connect this newfound kindness to a broader, more open-minded perspective on life that develops with age. The speaker’s statement that the “apertures / of their eyes widen” points to a more complete outlook on life which comes about with age (lines 3-4). The specific verbiage employed in these lines is significant. The mention of widening apertures suggests that the more open-minded individuals’ better perspective on life allows them a more complete enjoyment of it. Those people who hold the attitude which the speaker endorses are thus portrayed as becoming simultaneously kinder and more open-minded with age.

After introducing the people who hold the kinder view of aging advocated by the speaker, the focus of the poem shifts to addressing the issues of weakness and strength in the aging process. The line “I do not think they weaken” is part of the speaker’s response to the widely held antagonistic view of aging (line 5). The inclusion of this line is also an acknowledgement by the speaker of the existence of this negative view. The next line of the poem is one of its most fascinating. Not only does the speaker refute the concept of weakening that is commonly associated with aging, but they go on to make the audacious claim that instead of elderly people becoming weaker, “something weak strengthens” (line
Here the speaker references the inevitability of aging. The sooner a person is able to make peace with the fact that they are getting older, the better off they are, and the stronger they become, or so the speaker would have us believe. In the poem’s eighth line the speaker indicates that the kinder people’s acceptance of aging is like “letting in heaven” (line 8). The choice to use “letting in” here points to both the openness of the kinder people and to the voluntary nature of that openness. Heaven is a word of strong positive connotations. The speaker provides every reason to adhere to the view they support.

“Age” concludes by finally showing the other, more fearful, response to aging. The reaction which the speaker opposes is shown in a very negative light. The clear distinction being drawn between the people who fear aging and the individuals who take the accepting view of it is evident in the speaker’s statement that “other people” are living in fear (line 9). These individuals are described in unflattering terms such as “mussels” and “clams” (line 10). It is also made clear that these people are “frightened” (line 10). Like mollusks, these people are portrayed as being shut tight because of their fear. They have chosen not to open their eyes in the way that those who hold to the speaker's position have. But they cannot remain shut. Life will not allow it. In the penultimate line the speaker asserts that “Steam or knife blades mean open” (line 11). If some people are unwilling to open their eyes and accept their age, then their eyes will be forced open. Just as mollusks’ shells are opened with knives or steam, so too the knife of the mirror and the steam of declining mobility will open the shell of those unwilling to accept their age. In the final line the speaker claims that when these people “hear heaven” they “think boiled or broken” (line 12). Instead of making the best of their later years, those people who do not see aging the speaker’s way can only live in fear of the clam knives and boiling pots in their lives.
“Age” presents its reader with a choice. One can take the speakers’ view of aging, an outlook of acceptance and of making peace, or alternatively one may choose to live in fear. But the speaker warns that the “wrong” choice can leave a person under the blade of a metaphorical clam knife. Instead, the speaker extols us to accept, to make peace, and to make the best of aging. So, yes, we are all getting older, but that is true regardless of whether or not we accept it. Consequently “Age” encourages making peace and enjoying life before it becomes too late.
Works Cited

Literary Analysis

Third Place

*Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, written by Anna Deavere Smith, is comprised of monologues that Smith gathered from conducting interviews from a wide variety of people who were affected by the 1992 Los Angeles riots. I wasn’t sure on what to write about until I looked closely at the table of contents after reading the play. I noticed that the Korean voices in the play seemed to be only placed in certain parts of the acts, since they only had a voice before and after the riots, not during. I also thought it was interesting how they had more to say in the second act compared to the first, which led me to come up with a thesis and then the essay itself.

I went to West Valley last year as a senior and graduated from Leigh High that year. I’m planning on transferring as an accounting major, but I haven’t decided on what school to attend yet. I plan on taking the CPA exam in the future, and hopefully, I won’t sell my soul to the IRS. Other than going to school, I like watching movies and reviewing them on YouTube. I don’t make videos as often as I would like, but I discovered that I liked writing reviews when I wrote for my high school newspaper during my junior year. If I had to pick one film to watch for the rest of my life, it would be *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. 
The Community Shift of Koreans After the L.A. Riots

By Brenna Uyeda

On April 29, 1992, the lives of Los Angeles residents changed dramatically for better and for worse in the six days of rioting and unrest. Anna Deavere Smith took on a project, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, to document the lives affected by this volatile event. Black people were tired of police brutality inflicted by the LAPD, and they also could no longer stand the Koreans’ treatment of black customers. After the officers involved with the Rodney King beating were acquitted, they rioted, they took out their anger on Korean store owners, and Los Angeles was in flames. While the main focus of the L.A. Riots tend to be on the blacks, the Koreans were silent victims during the mayhem. Although the Koreans are absent for most of Act One, Smith suggests that they emerged as an outspoken identity in the aftermath of the riots during Act Two of *Twilight*.

In Act One, Jay Woong Yahng is the only Korean voice, and he explains the Korean side of racial tensions during the Latasha Harlins’ case. Yahng’s second monologue contains suspicions about black customers, and he says, black people "wear the big backpack and they put inside something, a soda, whatever" which is indicative of his contemptuous tone towards them (Smith 47). It leads to him saying, “After that I really hate this country. I really hate” (Smith 47). Yahng’s hatred for how things are in South Central Los Angeles reflects his resentment towards the black community that’s not found during the riots portion of *Twilight* due to their lack of any appearance in that section. Because Latasha Harlins’s assailant, Soon Ja Du, was Korean, Yahng’s monologues in this act are obligatory. It’s a defensive and aggressive monologue that uses racist stereotypes against the blacks,
such as assuming that they have intentions to steal, to justify Soon Ja Du’s involvement with Harlins’s death. When he declares that blacks and Koreans are “not like customer and owner but just like enemy,” he concludes that blacks and Koreans could never reconcile, due to the Harlins incident and his notions that blacks steal from Korean store-owners (Smith 47).

While Jay Woong Yahng provides the Korean perspective of “No Justice, No Peace,” Queen Malkah contrasts as a loud, accusatory voice for the black community’s anger towards the death of Latasha Harlins. She makes stereotypic assumptions of the Korean identity, since they haven’t visibly claimed their identity yet. Before Yahng’s second monologue, she says, “Those Koreans all look alike, little bitty short women, with little round faces and little short haircuts. Soon Ja Du coulda went and got on a plane anywhere any day, and nobody, ever know the difference” (Smith 46). Malkah speaks harshly about the Koreans by commenting about their appearance. Because she believes in the stereotype that all Asians look alike, she’s trying to paint all of them as the same person. They don’t stick out from their community, and she thinks all of them are prejudiced against the blacks. If a Korean lady disappeared from the face of the Earth, Malkah believes that no one would know because they’re insignificant, and her sentiment against the store-owning Koreans was that they didn’t care to strike up friendly relationships with black customers.

Although the Koreans were involved in the L.A. Riots, the depiction of the riots in “Rocked” lacks the Korean voice. In the actual events of the riots, the Koreans had to either let their stores endure the possible wrath of the rioters or defend their livelihoods, but they do not have representation in these events during “Rocked.” For example, Theresa Walker interviewed Ellis Yunseong Cha, a Korean store owner who returned to his store after the
riots died down and he saw that his friend’s hamburger stand was burned down. He was fortunate that his store hadn’t been damaged by the rioters. His friend’s hamburger stand was one of the “90% of Korean-owned stores in South Central [that] were destroyed” (“Twilight: Los Angeles”). Due to the large amount of businesses being damaged, the Koreans’ absence during the play’s depiction of the riots is noticeable. The Korean stores were targeted because Soon Ja Du, a Korean, shot and killed Latasha Harlins. Also, there’s video footage of Koreans shooting pistols to scare away looters, and Koreans standing together with guns and their cars in front of a store to deter looters (Tucker). Some Korean store owners played an active role in protecting their stores, but for others, it was too late to save their livelihoods. Despite these visible actions, their exclusion from “Rocked” indicates that they did not play a vital role in the Los Angeles community before the riots. They were ignored by the LAPD, so they had no choice other than to fend for themselves. This lack of police protection exemplifies their invisibility in matters of race prior to the riots.

In contrast, Act Two is where the Koreans emerge in “Losses” because Mrs. June Park delivers an emotionally charged monologue after her husband was shot during the riots, which was their breaking point. She says, “So he work very hard. And he so hard and he also, donated a lot of money to the Compton area, and he knows the City Council the policemen they knows him. Then why why, he had to get shot?” (Smith 124). Her monologue represents a shift from a silent minority to an outspoken one because her family speaks out about Mr. Park’s head injury, instead of maintaining the silent Asian stereotype. The destruction of Koreatown, as well as the physical and emotional distress that the Park family faced, encouraged Koreans to speak out because Park was involved
with the South Central community. Mrs. Park’s monologue shows signs of distress and anger towards the police and the community, and her question spurs an evaluation of injustice on how his actions weren’t enough to prompt action from the LAPD who were pre-occupied with protecting Beverly Hills and the predominantly white areas of Los Angeles. Although Park and many other store owning Koreans were law-abiding citizens who pursued success, they didn’t get priority protection despite being in the middle of the war zone.

After Mrs. Park’s emotional outcry of injustice for her husband, Mrs. Young-Soon Han’s monologue is the final statement of the Koreans’ emerging outspoken identity because she declares that Koreans are victims of these riots due to not receiving the same justice as the blacks. Han reacts to the guilty verdicts from the federal trial of the Rodney King beating, and she states, “I really realized that Korean immigrants were left out from this society and we were nothing” (Smith 166). When the 1992 riots are explained generally, the focus tends to be on the blacks because they suffered from racism and police brutality in Los Angeles. Han asserts that Korean immigrants are virtually invisible in the Los Angeles community. They haven’t been part of the American fabric for long, and their suffering isn’t in the minds of mainstream America. Han continues, “where is the victims’ rights? They got their rights by destroying innocent Korean merchants” (Smith 168). Her outspoken voice asks a rhetorical question about how the black victims receive justice, and she answers it by stating that the black community lashed out against the Koreans. Victimization usually involves a sense of helplessness, but the blacks victimized the Korean store owners. It’s a cycle of unrest in which Han’s monologue displays the hidden
frustrations that the Korean community hardly talks about. The victimization of the Koreans leads to them speaking out and becoming more involved with society.

Because of how damaging the L.A. Riots were to Korean businesses and their emotional state, they began to take charge of their identity in Los Angeles. Peaceful protests and community involvement became a staple of the Korean identity after the riots. In a dissertation, Rose M. Kim writes, “On May 2nd, nearly a week after the violence erupted, about 30,000 mostly Korean and Korean American marchers walked the streets of L.A.’s Koreatown, calling for peace and denouncing police violence” (145). The Koreans’ more prominent voice in Act Two displays their willingness to protest and make a stand in real life. They were tired of being invisible to the L.A. community, so a movement emerged to ensure that they wouldn't be ignored anymore. The catastrophic L.A. Riots encouraged the Koreans to march through their neighborhood in a large gathering to take ownership of their identity and protest for justice and their rights. Because the black community rioted to achieve “peace” and stop police brutality, the Koreans aspired to achieve the same goals after being victimized by the riots. In an article, Ellis Yunseong Cha says, “‘Just working hard and pursuing a career is not everything,’ Cha says. ‘You have to participate, politically and in local activities’” (qtd. in Walker). This call for activism empowers the Korean community, more so than focusing on individual careers and success. Although Walter Park from Twilight participated in his community, not enough Koreans did so to enrich South Central Los Angeles.

The progression of the Korean voice in Twilight exemplifies a cultural shift in openly talking about the injustices that they faced during the riots. Due to the cataclysmic effects that the L.A. Riots had on the Koreans, it created a positive movement and identity for the
betterment of the Korean community instead of continuing racial tensions. As a result, The Koreans organized marches and began to take part in political and local affairs to assert their now visible identity.
Works Cited


Literary Analysis

Fourth Place

My name is Olivia Montgomery, I'm from South San Jose, and I will be graduating this semester with an AA in Liberal Arts. I hope to major in the Public Relations field when transferring this spring and I am currently the Director of Communications at a non-profit organization called Project Consent. I spent my free time dabbling in photography, watching copious amounts of films, hanging with dogs, and working at the best, little pizza place in town. I chose to do my research paper on Shakespeare's Macbeth, but I wanted to take a different approach when analyzing it. After a lot of thought, I knew I wanted to explore a feminist view to the story. Lady Macbeth has always been a favorite literature character of mine and I wanted to tackle the idea of celebrating her power while analyzing the fact that strong and powerful woman were viewed as evil during the Shakespearean era.

The Powerful Woman vs. The Monster Stereotype

By Olivia Montgomery

For years, literature used the role of a woman in order to further the main character’s actions, choices, and emotions. For just as many years, a man played the role of the protagonist or antagonist while the woman, again, stayed on the sidelines. However, there are multiple cases in past literature where the woman does play a stronger role beside a man, but these women are often described as power hungry, evil, and a word commonly used to merge them all together: monstrous. Shakespeare's Macbeth questions
the role of gender and whether or not a woman depicted in the same light as a man [brave and noble] is possible. Lady Macbeth presents herself as the center of this hypothesis and, despite her ambitions and attempts to remove her femininity, she still falls victim to the 16th century stereotype that a woman of power is a monster. Today, the monstrous woman stereotype is obsolete and Lady Macbeth's true nature can be questioned to determine whether or not she was really evil, or was just disregarding the role a woman was supposed to play.

In order to examine the role of Lady Macbeth, readers must first understand why past literature represented powerful women in such a light that forever negatively cast a shadow on certain characters. From the earliest point of history, women were always viewed as lesser than men. Today's societies still struggle to agree on a woman's role despite Susan B. Anthony's work towards equality during the women's suffrage movement. *Macbeth* was written during the Elizabethan era which, despite the irony of a woman as ruler, held a particular view of women and their role in an incredibly patriarchal society. An electronic journal appropriately titled "Revisiting Shakespeare and Gender" defines the most common and stereotypical roles of a female during that era. The authors state, "For Shakespeare, as well as for most of Renaissance society, women as the feminine represented the following virtues which, importantly, have their meaning in relationship to the male; obedience, silence, sexual chastity, piety, humility, constancy, and patience" (Gerlach, Almasy, and Daniel). The authors intentionally add in that these traits "have their meaning in relationship to the male" which clearly represents a patriarchal society: a man rules and a woman’s place in society only pertains to a male. Women in this era did not
have their own choices, accomplishments, or even personalities, which is why Lady Macbeth's role seems so outlandish for the time it was written.

Shakespeare did not write Lady Macbeth as a character to inspire women everywhere to revolt against society, but instead, he uses her as a representation of what women of the time were not like. *Macbeth* provides more insight into women in the era as we read and see certain characters and their reactions to Lady Macbeth. For example, Lady Macbeth awakens and questions Macduff on the reason for trumpets blaring in the middle of the night. However, Macduff refuses to let her hear about it [murder and treason] saying instead “O gentle lady, 'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak. The repetition in a woman’s ear Would murder as it fell” (Shakespeare, 2.3. 96-99), therefore exemplifying how men saw women of the time: gentle and incapable of hearing anything more than what comes with being a wife. Taking this all into consideration, how does a society go from viewing women as gentle housewives to deeming many of them evil and monstrous?

In the case of the 16th and 17th century, an outspoken, ambitious, and powerful woman was not natural, and it is the unnatural that forms the idea of monsters and how to determine what is and what is not one. Once able to understand this, it becomes quite apparent that most writers of this century purposefully created “evil” women, rather than strong women for female readers to idolize and use as incitement for their own rise in power. Alletta Brenner’s article, "'The Good and Bad of that Sexe': Monstrosity and Womanhood in Early Modern England," touches on a 1558 misogynistic book by John Knox that was the potential catalyst for the idea that women who yearn for power are evil. Brenner says that, "Its primary theme, that women were created by God to be subservient to men and were thus unfit to rule over them, set the premise for a whole litany of writings
to come, as authors would continue to emphasize the ‘unnaturalness’ of powerful females” (167). With this in mind, Lady Macbeth poses as a prime example of an unnatural woman as she holds power over her husband, Macbeth, and also puts together the plan to have him kill King Duncan. It is her ambition and power that make her the exact type of woman that Knox believes to be a monster, not necessarily the acts she helps commit. In this point of view, a woman is a monster purely because she does not follow the traits an Elizabethan woman should follow, regardless if she performs the exact acts a man of valor might execute.

Just as Brenner described in her article, a woman of ambition or of a mind of her own would not have the type of introduction that Shakespeare granted Macbeth. After all, it is Macbeth that the Captain goes on about, saying “For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name), Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution” (1.2.18-20) and discussing a gruesome death that Macbeth could carry out. So how is Macbeth and the countless amount of murders he committed considered brave or valiant, but Lady Macbeth’s plot to kill King Duncan and have her husband take the throne considered wretched or evil? This obvious hypocrisy highlights the main issue of Elizabethan literature and how not only were ambitious women considered monsters, but also how much men were worshiped for committing terrible acts. Another explanation of this viewpoint comes from a book called The Madwoman in the Attic:

Similarly, our great paradigmatic tragedies, from Oedipus to Faust, tend to focus on a male "overreacher" whose virile will to dominate or rebel (or both) makes him simultaneously noble and vulnerable...while the grim exorcism from society of such a female "overreacher" as "Snow White’s" Queen has always been a source of
anxiety to literary women rather than the inspiration for a tale of tragic grandeur. It is Macbeth, after all, who is noble; Lady Macbeth is a monster. Similarly, Oedipus is a heroic figure while Medea is merely a witch, and Lear's madness is gloriously universal while Ophelia's is just pathetic. (Gilbert and Gubar, 67-68)

Gilbert and Gubar even mention Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the quote, which only further raises the point that the role of gender has a huge impact on the way a character is perceived. Regardless of similarities, the Elizabethan era always viewed the woman as worse than a man and the man's acts were always seen in either a positive light, or merely misunderstood. Shakespeare does make an attempt in Macbeth to rival this misconceived idea of women and men in literature, but fails to articulate a way to prove it wrong.

Instead, the play falls into the same trap and Shakespeare depicts a deep, ingrained misogyny in Macbeth which ultimately results in the misjudgement of Lady Macbeth's character. At first, it is easy to believe that Shakespeare actually wanted readers to see how different Lady Macbeth was from other women of that century, which would explain why he made her capable of reading and competent enough to assert herself. Macbeth even refers to her in his letter as “my dearest partner of greatness” (1.5.11), suggesting that Shakespeare also wanted readers to know that Lady Macbeth was equal to her husband, rather than merely his wife that stayed at home. However, all of these traits are not used to illustrate the woman in a positive light, but instead they are evidence that Lady Macbeth is powerful, and possibly capable of taking over her husband's role. Shakespeare creates a woman that yearns for the power that a male possesses, so much so that she begins to wish her femininity away and take on a male role. Shakespeare clearly did not support women
and their strive for power if he so blatantly refused to allow Lady Macbeth to feel pride in her womanhood while following her ambitions.

The role of gender in *Macbeth* takes precedent in one of the most infamous Lady Macbeth quotes, where she asks the witches to rid her of any female qualities in order to carry out the rest of the plan to have Macbeth kill King Duncan. In turn, the gentleness that Shakespeare so stereotypically places in the female role would not stray her from her course of action. Lady Macbeth shouts “Come, you spirits That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full Of direst cruelty!” (1.5.48-50), and Shakespeare instantly creates a woman for men to hate and society to fear. Is it possible for a woman to hold power and ambition, but still feminine qualities? According to *Macbeth*, it is merely impossible because a woman must always remain virtuous and a man is only capable of carrying out anything of strength.

If one is to look deeper and offer a reasoning as to why Lady Macbeth desperately seeks masculinity, it might help to decipher whether or not her intentions are truly evil. An article in the book *Critical Insights: Gender, Sex & Sexuality* offers an idea as to why she feels she must “unsex” herself, saying that "it is because she is so self-conscious about her own gender identity—plagued, that is, by how poorly her desires match cultural definitions of proper femininity—that she is also so skillful manipulating the sexual anxieties of a husband whose masculinity seems unquestionable" (Semenza). However, this idea still supports Shakespeare’s innate desire to hold onto the stereotype of a monstrous woman, rather than a misunderstood one. Lady Macbeth is simply a woman so bound by the strict views of a patriarchal society that even her own intelligence makes her question whether or not she should be a woman.
It is Shakespeare’s monstrous view of Lady Macbeth that eventually kills her, not the madness that overcomes her from the guilt of King Duncan’s murder. Shakespeare turned the strong, ambitious, and cunning woman that is Lady Macbeth into a woman who could not longer bear the thought of the murder she helped commit. He took her strength and made it obsolete, reducing her to a feminine cliché that insinuated that she could not handle what she had done, and therefore died by her own hand. Shakespeare ultimately never meant to write a strong woman that opposed societal views. Instead, his sexist characterization of Lady Macbeth fed into the monstrosity that many believed were women. The book *Feminisms and Womanisms: A Women’s Studies Reader*, contains a chapter by Simone de Beauvoir that discusses the myth of women in literature, stating that "But if woman is depicted as the Praying Mantis, the Mandrake, the Demon, then it is most confusing to find in woman also the Muse, the Goddess Mother, Beatrice" (60) and essentially posing the question that nobody in the 16th and 17th century wondered: Why must a woman be perceived in such a black and white manner without the ability to have a three dimensional personality? The answer is manifested in the deep rooted misogyny that many male authors continue to use and allude to in their work. Fortunately, there are literary sources that have become aware of these depictions of women like Lady Macbeth and seek to end it. In the book *Reading and Writing about Literature*, Janet E. Gardner states that “Some feminist critics sought to reveal how literary texts demonstrated the repression and powerlessness of women in different periods and cultures” (168), and this provides a sense of hope for literary women in the future. Unfortunately, Lady Macbeth still struggles to find acceptance as a complex woman with internal struggles that make her human, rather than a monster in the Elizabethan era.
For centuries, monsters in literature have taken shape in many different forms. Commonly, they are known to have abnormal physicalities and supposedly an evil ingrained in their being. Over time, readers have have disputed some of the old meanings in monster stories and discovered that some monsters are merely misunderstood, and other times that the heroes are the real villains. In the case of Lady Macbeth, it is the patriarchy that her character was created during which harnesses the true monstrosity that others believed she possessed. Shakespeare created a strong woman character that was central to the story of *Macbeth*, and turned her strength into a negative quality that would entice readers to hate her. The patriarchy that Shakespeare’s writing revolved around reduced women to weak and useless aspects of society, and shunned any woman that thought outside of the box, or celebrated in her individuality and strength. The real monster of the 16th and 17th century was not Lady Macbeth and her counterparts, but instead the acceptance of gender roles and the patriarchy's insistence that women were excluded from all types of power. *Macbeth* is merely another story to prove the existence of the misogynist and monstrous society that still finds a way to prosper in the 21st century.
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During the 1960s, America was undergoing tumultuous social and cultural changes that promoted racial and gender equality as well as the rise of the Black Power movement. Nikki Giovanni captures the anger of the era from the black woman’s perspective in the 1968 poem, “A Historical Footnote to Consider Only When All Else Fails.” Despite the passage of civil rights legislation that ended segregation in the private sector, disenfranchisement, and housing discrimination, there was more that needed to be done to elevate black people’s status in America. In her poem, Giovanni emphasizes historical allusions from the 1960s to establish growing disillusionment between black people and American society.

In the first stanza, the speaker is established as a woman who acknowledges that second wave feminism has made strides to help women achieve equality in the workplace. In the 1960s, women wanted equal pay and fairness in the workplace, and these demands were one of the factors that started second-wave feminism. The poem starts off with establishing the speaker as a second wave feminist with “That in the wake of a / Her-I-Can comes a / Shower” (Giovanni lines 3-5). The origin of second wave feminism began with women working in manufacturing jobs while men were at war during WWII. After the war, women went back to tending the homes while men worked, but during the 1960s, women began to reject their domesticity in the household. “Her-I-Can” refers to a woman’s ability to work in some of the same occupations as men, and this storm of capable women entering the workforce leads to a “shower” (Giovanni line
4-5). The speaker emphasizes “I” in applying word play to “hurricane” to indicate that she’s a woman that’s part of this changing movement. A “shower” of rain is often seen as a positive effect due to its usefulness to maintain plants and gardens, and this type of nurturing growth is seen in a feminine light (Giovanni line 5). The increased amount of women in the workforce may lead to new perspectives to certain types of work that might result in more productivity or ideas. However, men might see the feminist hurricane as a threat, since hurricanes literally cause costly property damage and deaths due to their strong winds and possible flooding. If women go into the workforce, there are less jobs for men to occupy. Second wave feminism increased women’s power in the work environment and it led to a stronger voice in politics.

Despite the progress of women during second wave feminism, the speaker believes that there’s a disconnect between the political influence of black women and black men. After the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement emerged to help improve black people’s lives. She continues saying, “Surely I am not / The gravitating force / that keeps this house / full of panthers” (Giovanni lines 6-9). Due to the use of “Her-I-Can” and “panthers,” it’s apparent that the speaker is a young black woman who’s involved with feminism and black power (Giovanni lines 4, 9). There’s a contrast between the rising and enriching feminist movement and her saying that her femininity might not be drawing the Black Panther Party in this home. When she says “surely” to convince herself that her womanly qualities aren’t the only factors luring the Panthers in her home, she doesn’t sound so certain (Giovanni line 6). The word is used to show some doubt, since certainty would have emanated from the statement without “surely” (Giovanni line 6). She would want her ideas alone to be considered and taken into account rather than be written off due to being a black woman. Despite the push for equality in the feminist movement,
the speaker has doubts about the political influence of black women within the male-dominated
Black Panther Party.

While there’s a detachment in the political power between black men and black women, the speaker broadens the disillusionment to involve the political influence of white men and black women. The speaker alludes to President Lyndon Johnson, and she holds him in contempt, even though he ended segregation. Giovanni writes with disdain, “Why, LBJ has made it / quite clear to me / He doesn’t give a / Good goddamn what I think” (Giovanni lines 10-13). The speaker believes that it’s obvious that LBJ doesn’t care for how she feels as a black woman in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. Even though his actions were symbolic steps to end de jure discrimination, she seems to disregard these actions as wholehearted decisions.

She emphasizes her belief with “good goddamn” which is harsh language to use towards a president who championed for civil rights legislation (Giovanni line 13). She says “me” and “I” to make LBJ’s supposed inconsiderate behavior affect the speaker personally as a black woman (Giovanni lines 11, 13). To continue her disdain for him, she says, “(else why would he continue to masterbate in public?)” (Giovanni line 14). His white male arrogance ridicules the plight of the African-American woman because his comfort with his “body” means that he doesn’t care if it harasses anybody. Literally, the speaker believes that LBJ completely disregards her as a woman who happens to be black, since his proud use of his “body” is harassment that’s unaccounted for. Metaphorically in regards to the Civil Rights Movement, the speaker believes that it’s like having a proud white man doing a favor for an oppressed black woman out of pride and pity, which aren’t commendable reasons. It reflects the paternalistic attitude of the white male to the ‘colored or brown people’ that was around during the imperialization of Africa. The accusatory sentiment towards his apathy to black people, especially black women, indicates LBJ
gets a lot of credit for signing legislation, even though it was the black activism along with mainstream support that convinced Congress to pass these laws. It’s also critical of the president, since this implicates that he signs these important pieces of legislation while acting like an arrogant and philandering fool. The contemptuous diction and tone she holds exemplifies the divide between black women and the white man.

To continue the speaker’s belief that the black women are alienated from politics, she believes that black women are disconnected from a “white woman” aspect of second wave feminism. The feminist movement wasn’t exclusively about equal pay and fairness in the workplace because there were other subdivisions of women’s equality that came into fruition, such as how a woman dresses. Giovanni writes, “We must move on to / the true issues of / Our time / like the mini-skirt / Rebellion” (Giovanni lines 22-26). She phrases an aspect of the feminist movement as the “mini-skirt / Rebellion” because it’s frivolous to fight the societal norm of the domestic woman by wearing more revealing clothing (Giovanni lines 25-26). Giovanni writes “the true issues of / Our time” in a sarcastic tone, since the more important issues regarding women are their place in the work environment and wage equality (Giovanni lines 23-24). This is a middle class white woman’s issue, since it doesn’t relate with what black women had to deal with, such as finding employment and getting an education.

While some aspects of the feminist movement were led by white middle class women, the speaker also asserts that the Flower Power anti-war protests apply only to white middle class people. The speaker alludes to Flower Power, which was an anti-war movement that was a reaction to an increased police presence on college campuses due to student protests getting out of hand. She says, “And perhaps take a / Closer look at / Flour power” (Giovanni lines 27-29). “Flour” is a processed bleached white grain product that’s the base for baking recipes such as
bread, and replacing the word, flower, with “flour” indicates that these protests were led by a white majority (Giovanni line 29). White people made up the base of the U.S. at that time, and they had the most influence on these affairs due to being a majority in most colleges. Black people weren’t in the equation, since they were just trying to put their foot in the door for college admissions. The students who were protesting the Vietnam War were protected from the draft, due to having a privilege that delays their eligibility until they finish school. Since there were more pressing issues, such as getting a white majority to become more accepting of a post-segregation America, the Vietnam War wasn’t necessarily the main focus in the black community. Adjusting to a post-segregated nation was a challenge that set black people back socioeconomically, which was more important compared to well-adjusted white students objecting to war.

Because black women and black people are shut out from male dominated or white dominated political activism, the speaker endorses Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism to unite black people to advance forward in a predominantly white America. Out of the prominent civil rights leaders in 1968, she chooses Stokely Carmichael to invoke quicker societal changes for black people. Giovanni writes, “When Stokely is in / The Black House / And all will be right with / Our World” to indicate that Black Power needs to spread to the top tier of government to make a positive impact on black people’s lives (Giovanni lines 43-46) . However, Stokely Carmichael wasn’t born as a U.S. citizen, so he would be ineligible to become president since the White House is the president’s residence (Wepman). As a result, the “Black House” is another institution altogether, since Carmichael was involved with the Black Power movement after the Civil Rights legislation passed (Giovanni line 44). Black Nationalism was on the rise during the Black Power and Pan-African Movements, and Stokely was a key figure in both of them.
(Wepman). At the time, some people believed that black people needed separate leadership to gain progress in a post-segregated society. The laws that ended segregation within private and public sectors, didn’t necessarily help with the political and social integration of black people in American society. Black people can’t rely on white people to make progress for them, since some believed only black leadership can bring black people up in society.

Despite the passage of civil rights legislation, Giovanni establishes the political activist separation between black women and black men, and she broadens the dividing line from gender to only race. The racial separation is eventually embraced, since historically, black people looked to Black Power, Black Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism to improve their condition. Ending legal segregation did not integrate society as was intended; instead it led to societal and political separation at the gender and racial lines.
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