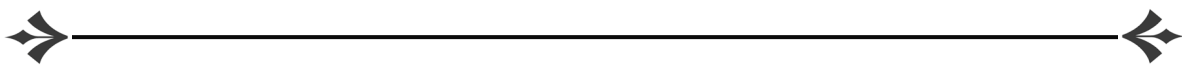


Sigma Kappa Delta

Upsilon Alpha Chapter presents:



*A Literary and Art Journal of
Seminole State College*



2008-2009 Edition

The Muse

The Muse



***A Literary and Art Journal of
Seminole State College
Students, Faculty, & Staff***

Volume 2

2008-09 Edition

General Editors

Kelli McBride & RayShell Palmer

Faculty Co-Sponsors

Sigma Kappa Delta English Honor Society



Publication Statement for

The Muse

Volume 2 – 2008-09 Edition

Seminole State College's Upsilon Alpha Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society for Community Colleges, annually publishes *The Muse* literary and art anthology under the direction of faculty sponsors Kelli McBride and Rayshell Palmer. The purpose of the anthology is to not only encourage expression in the literary and fine arts, but to also encourage students, faculty, and staff to publish their works.

Upsilon Alpha reserves the right to edit submitted material for spelling and style. The chapter considers all submitted material, but submission does not ensure publication. We do not accept anonymous material. All views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Seminole State College or Sigma Kappa Delta. *The Muse* is distributed on the SSC campus and the surrounding area.

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2008-09

Now Accepting Submissions for the 2009-10 edition of *The Muse*. Contact Kelli McBride (k.mcbride@sscok.edu, 382-9274) or Rayshell Palmer (r.palmer@sscok.edu, 382-9563) for rules and entry forms. Deadline for submission to the 2009-10 anthology is 26 October 2009. All submissions must be in electronic form and accompanied by a signed entry form.

The Muse

Literary and Fine Arts Contest

Sigma Kappa Delta, Upsilon Alpha Chapter, sponsors a contest for authors and artists submitting their works to the anthology. We send all submissions to qualified judges in the specific areas (poetry, prose, and art). Cash prizes go to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each category. Judges may also award Honorable Mentions (certificate only). Only students of Seminole State College are eligible for prize money. Should a judge award 1st, 2nd, or 3rd to work by faculty or staff, Sigma Kappa Delta acknowledges their achievement with a certificate, and the next ranked student will take the cash prize.

The winners for the 2008-09 edition of *The Muse* are listed below by category. We thank our judges and all contestants for their hard work.

Poetry:

1st: Ronald A. Given, "Casualties of Addiction (Friends I Have Lost)"

2nd: Brian Mitchell, "Me"

3rd: Brenna Recipko, "Dinner Dating"

HM: Jayson Kendrick, "Corinthians"; Brenna Recipko, "Crushed"

Prose:

1st: Johnnie Wingo, "Learning the Language"

2nd: Julie McPhail, "The Potato Summer"

3rd: Trace Lenaburg, "South Park – A Work of Genius"

HM: Thea Dean, "The Fragile Lily"; NOT Stewart McCain, "Black Well"; Julie McPhail, "A Memoir from My Closet"

Fine Art:

1st: JanaRae Boren, "The Honest Truth"

2nd: Ruth Kinsey, "Waterfall: High Hampton"

3rd: Jayson Kendrick, "Waiting"

HM: Linda Qualls, "Sun God"; Holly Fipps, "Sakuma"; Ruth Kinsey, "Solitude" and "Wild River Canyon"

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Short Story

1ST PLACE

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

JOHNNIE WINGO

SHORT STORY

I was settin under the Chinaberry tree playin house with a corn-husk doll named Martha Jane and a one-eyed porcelain headed doll named Josephine. The dolls was named after my mother and her half-sister, and the dolls didn't get along a blamed bit better than the women did.

Martha Jane was too stiff to set down, and Josephine was too limber to set up at the table I had made out of an apple crate. Martha Jane's arm flew right off when I shook her, and Josephine's eye rolled back in her head when I slapped her. Mama always scolded me bad when that happened, so I turned the apple crate over and put Martha Jane to bed. I picked up Josephine meaning to go ask Pa could he put her eye to rights before Mama got wind of what had happened.

I got to the barnyard just in time to see Pa go out the south gate, driving the mules hitched to the breaking plow.

"Well, you're in trouble now," I said to Josephine. "He'll not have time to fix your eye today, and Mama will fasten you back up in the dresser drawer for no telling how long. It'll be a mighty long time before you get invited to another tea party, young lady."

I thought about going back to the Chinaberry tree and turning the play house into a hospital, but Mama said I did more harm than good when I tried to mend the dolls myself, so I laid Josephine in the feed trough.

"You just stay right there and behave yourself for a change. I'll go to the field and ask Pa to see about you when he comes in for supper."

I snagged my dress tail crawling under the bobwire fence and knew I was in trouble again. That was forever happening to me, and near about every dress I owned had been mended several times, which was mainly Mama's fault to my way of thinking. There was half a dozen pairs of blue overalls that my brothers had outgrown just laying around the house going to waste. I'd tried every way under the sun to get Mama to let me

wear them, but she wouldn't hear of it on account of it wasn't ladylike. Just thinking about it got me aggravated, and I decided to take off my shoes and go barefooted.

I'd meant to catch up to Pa before he got started in on the plowing, but by the time I got there I could see that he wasn't in any mood to be interfered with, so I hid behind a persimmon tree to take a lesson in breaking ground. I meant to be a farmer myself someday, even if I was a girl. I'd been sizing up the local boys to see which ones might settle down someday and make good farmers. It seemed likely that I would need a husband to help out around the place, to do the heavy lifting and such. I'd already passed over Willie Ron Atwood, he started running away from home when he was eleven, and couldn't wait to leave the farm for good. I admired Willie Ron a lot though, he always had funny stories to tell. He ran off once to join the circus and came back home when they wouldn't let him be on the flying trapeze, or get in the cage with the lions and tigers. They put him to work cleaning up after the animals, and he said that anybody that thought cleaning up after a team of mules was a chore ought to try tending elephants for a change.

Pa was too busy to take any notice of me, which was just as well, for I was under stern instructions from Mama not to ever stray one step out of the front yard. It galled me something fierce to be held back so strict while my brothers was free to roam wherever they pleased, and go barefooted year round if they was so a mind to. It's no fault of my own that I was borned a girl and came along years after the boys.

It seemed like it was taking Pa an awful long time to get started breaking ground. First he sighted over his thumb at a pecan tree at the far end of the field, then aimed the plow square in that direction. He tied the ends of the reins together, swung one side over his right shoulder and the other under his left arm. Then he took hold of the plow handles, tipped the plow share down just a little bit, and in the nicest way said "Git up." The mules heads was hanging down like they was studying the ground for news, and they didn't appear to hear, so Pa said it again, louder and not as nice. Tom switched his tail at a horsefly and Tobe shifted from one foot to the other, but neither one moved a step.

Pa turned loose of one plow handle, flapped the reins hard and yelled "Git up Tom, Git up Tobe," which done

the trick as far as getting the mules into action, but turning loose of the plow handle appeared to be a wrong move. The plow gouged a deep hole, then turned on its side and slid along the top of the ground for a good ten feet, with Pa jumping along behind, holding on to the plow with one hand and pulling back on the reins with the other. "Whoa Tom! Whoa Tobe! Hold up there you infernal jackasses."

Well, I'm here to tell you, it was the most exciting thing I'd ever seen. Some of my brothers had been to a circus once, and bragged of it often, but I couldn't imagine that it was any more fun than what I was seeing.

It had come to me one time that mayhap Pa wasn't what you'd call a natural born farmer. Once he mended the harness so good that it took him most of the day to get the mules untangled. Another time he fixed the front gate so well that we've never been able to open it again.

I asked him one time if he'd ever thought about being something different, maybe a teacher or a lawyer. How did he come to be a farmer anyhow?

He pondered over the matter for a spell, then said he believed it was a matter of mistaken identity. Some city fellers went out duck hunting and mistook the stork that was carrying Pa to his natural home for a duck, and shot the stork down. Otherwise he might have become a river boat gambler on the Mississippi, or a gold miner in California, or a badge-carrying sheriff in the Wild West.

I remembered that talk whilst I was watching Pa struggle with the mules, and I thought it was a sad thing that some folks ended up in a place where they wasn't meant to be.

Pa had pulled the mules to a stop, lined up the plow with the pecan tree yet again, and said "Git up" in the meanest voice I'd ever heard him use. Tobe paid heed and set right off at a steady pace, but Tom was skittish. He's lag behind a while, then run forward to overtake Tobe and try to pass him up, which he couldn't do on account of being in double harness.

Pa's language was a wonder to hear. "Move out there, you dang-blasted buzzard bait. Pick up them feet Tom, you blue-bellied son of a bottom land whore. Slow down Tobe, you sorry son of a low-bred bastard." Pa wasn't much of a talker, at least around the house, and I hadn't

suspected that he knew such a vast number of words.

I looked back toward the house to see if Mama was in earshot. She was Pentecostal and once washed Jimmy's mouth out with soap for saying nothing stronger than "Dadbern it" when the cat carried a dead snake in and laid it on the foot of his bed. The worrisome thing about dead snakes is they won't quit wiggling til the sun goes down, and I could see how Jimmy let a bad word slip out without meaning to.

The mules finally settled down to their jobs and Pa left off cussing them and spent some time rebuking the Republicans, the president, the WPA and the fate that had make him a farmer in the first place.

I fell in behind them, trying to stretch my legs long enough to walk in Pa's footsteps. The ground rolled out from under the plow, damp and fresh smelling and so soft it felt like walking on pillows. I saw a goodly number of red worms and grubs turned up by the plow, but I neglected to pick them up. Going fishing alone was another thing I was forbidden to do and the boys would seldom take me along no matter how much I whined. The worms wasn't wasted though, for a flock of black birds was soon hopping along behind us, making out a fine meal.

We was coming up to the end of the row, and Pa seemed to be getting mighty agitated about something, shifting his hands from the plow handles to the reins and back again, and muttering under his breath. The mules didn't appear to notice til the last minute that there was a bobwire fence in front of them. Tom swung left and Tobe pulled to the right, then they switched directions and swung back to the middle. Pa was yelling all the time "Whoa Tom! Gee Tobe! Move over there Tom, Haw! Gee! Haw! Tom grew stiff legged and Tobe's knees turned to rubber and the plow dipped in and out of the ground, digging ankle deep holes that Pa kept falling in.

It was the liveliest thing I'd ever seen, and I had to jump behind a clump of jimson weed to keep out of harm's way, and out of Pa's sight as well, for I'd never seen him in such a temper. By the time he finished the turn around and got the mules headed back down the field the end of the row looked like a hog waller.

When I allowed it was safe to come out of hiding I had to run to catch up with them for the mules was stepping

out fast now that the barn was before them. Pa kept up a steady stream of cuss words and I listened close so as not to miss a single one.

The mules put on another good show at the next turn-around for they could see the barn and the feed trough and meant to go there in spite of Pa. I slid under the fence til Pa got them headed out again, then I drifted on back toward the house, reciting to myself all the best cuss words Pa had used.

I knew I wouldn't be allowed to use them for a good many years, but it give me a lot of satisfaction to have them. I expect it was much like the way Mama must have felt when she went down in the cellar and counted the jars of food she had stored up for the future.

2ND PLACE

THE POTATO SUMMERS

JULIE MCPHAIL

ESSAY

When I was young, I spent many summers in the hills of the Ozarks visiting my father and his side of the family. I spent almost every night at my granny's house surrounded by the mindless tall tales of my uncles and the laughter chiming of cousins reunited. One of my fondest memories came every year around potato harvest time. After a hard, hot summer day, we indulged in the treat of swimming under the bridge with a handful of cousins and a few snakes to boot.

Summer's treat often came after a long day of harvesting potatoes from the three different fields my family farmed each year. They gathered all of us cousins and we spent the day going from one field to the next where we followed, some-what willingly, behind the old, red Ford tractor. It plunged away at the earth, pulling up in its wrath a summer's harvest of fresh, white potatoes. Five of us cousins followed the path laid by the old toothed plow, picked up its unearthed treasures and stored them in the five gallon buckets that we drug along. Once the buckets were full, we then dumped them into old red milk crates that had been set on the outer edges of the field. After a productive day of gathering, each crate was carefully hidden away on the

shelves of Granny's basement. With each child encrusted from toes to knees in the rich potato soil, our fathers then loaded us up in the back of their Fords and off we went, headed to our secret little hide-a-away under the bridge.

Tucked under a Madison county bridge was a swimming hole that was ripe with all nature's goodness. While en route to our hidden gem, we spent the time in the bed of the Ford laughing and singing as loudly as we possibly could. As we wound around the mountain's curvy way, we thrust our voices into the wind that streamed against our bodies, trying to defy the simple laws of physics with the power of children's voices. I remember singing at the top of my lungs trying to overpower the mighty force and provoke a few laughs from my fellow passengers. Once we arrived (it wasn't that far away) Daddy and Uncle Sam pulled their old Fords up under the bridge for safe camouflaging. Then all of us cousins jumped out of the pickup beds, and anxiously awaited the embracing treasure of the pure mountain spring. Of course, we never dared indulge in the refreshing stream until several shots had been fired into the waters to make sure any inhabitant thereof was shooed away by the boisterous booms of a .22 caliber rifle.

Once we had the all-clear, we dove into the fresh, untouched waters. For hours we pounced and played, laughed and splashed the potato dust and all its tiredness away. We explored the uncharted waters with all the enthusiasm of Columbus himself. While in our sacred hide-a-way, we hunted for the tadpoles that tootled along and compared their size with amazement's song. We also stirred up the minnows that managed to find refuge hiding around the thick, statuesque pillars of the old bridge. We found prize of the rocks amongst the stream's pebbles and old fish hooks and lures left by some rebels. As we embraced our secret mountain joy, nature played us a symphony of sounds and we made our own verse right there in that spring, a family brought together by the dust of a potato's harvest.

WON'T YOU BE MY VALENTINE?

THEA DEAN

A Play in One Act

Cast of Characters

SHARON: Early twenties, average size, short brown hair, works in a department store.

BRYAN: Mid-twenties, tall, well built, handsome, cocky, construction worker.

SCENE: Seminole, Oklahoma.

TIME: Valentine's Day.

SETTING

The room is clean but the furniture is worn and scarred. The left side of the room is a small dining table and two chairs set up for a romantic meal with a large red paper heart centerpiece flanked by two candles. The right side of the room has a couch and chair, coffee table with a heart shaped box of Valentine candy on it, entertainment center with TV, stereo, and candles spread throughout the room.

Act I

Scene 1

SHARON and BRYAN'S living/dining room.

SHARON is standing by the entertainment center holding up & looking at a baby outfit. There is a noise at the door

SHARON quickly tosses the baby outfit into a small wicker basket on the top of the entertainment center.

The door opens and BRYAN swaggers in, SHARON runs over and grabs HIM and clings tightly, HE has to peel HER away from HIM.

BRYAN: You cooked? I told you not to cook nothing, I had to talk to you.

SHARON: Well today's special....after all it's Valentine's Day.

BRYAN: Yeah, well, sit down. I have something to talk to you about.

SHARON: Let me check the stove, I don't want dinner to burn.

(SHE leaves the room.)

BRYAN: *(Yells.)* Well hurry up. I want to get this over with.

(HE looks at the Valentine candy on the coffee table and looks away. SHARON comes back in the room.)

SHARON: *(Quietly)* I have something to tell you, too.

BRYAN: Sharon, come sit down.

(SHE runs to and clings to HIM and again he has to peel HER off and push HER away.)

SHARON: Oh, I never said Happy Valentine's Day! Or even kissed you!

(SHE moves toward HIM lips puckering up. HE grabs HER by the forearms stopping HER.)

BRYAN: *(Exasperated.)* Sharon, sit down and let me say what I have to say.

SHARON: *(Quietly, fearfully.)* Okay, what's so important? *(Then speaking faster and faster.)* You tell me first, then I'll tell you my news!

BRYAN: Look Sharon, I told you when we moved in together I didn't know how long it would last....well this is it, I'm out 'a here.

SHARON: *(In shock and disbelief.)* Wha...what?

BRYAN: I'm leavin', Rick knows this guy in Texas that's lookin' for hands so we're gonna go check it out.

SHARON: *(Dumbfounded.)* Leaving? When will you be back?

BRYAN: Sharon I won't be back. It's over.

SHARON: *(SHE grabs him, clings to HIM sobbing.)* No! No! I love you! You can't leave, not now! I love you!

BRYAN: *(Trying to pull her off and losing patience.)* Calm down! Look Sharon you knew it was only temporary, I told you that when I moved in here. You knew I wasn't stayin'. I told ya that.

(Hysterical, the pain of HER heart breaking doubles HER over as if SHE was punched in the stomach, SHE shakes HER head vigorously.)

SHARON: No! No! It's not true, last night, *(Sobbing.)* just last night you said I love you, while we were making love. *(Yells.)* Making love! You said I love you!

BRYAN: *(Wipes upper lip, eyes dart back and forth looks guilty.)* Yeah, well that was sex, just something you say when you're doin' it.

(SHARON falls to her knees in front of BRYAN and grabs HIM around the waist and buries HER face in HIS

abdomen, SHE sobs and begs.)

SHARON: Please baby, I love you, *(Sobbing.)* I love you, you can't leave, you're my world, my life, *(Sob.)* please, promise you won't leave meeee. *(Sobs.)* It's Valentine's Day! You can't leave on Valentine's Day not today!!

BRYAN: Sharon, stop it, don't do this to yourself. *(Sharply.)* Get up!

(Shocked and embarrassed HE pulls on HER arms and struggling wrenches HER arms from around HIS waist and drags HER onto the couch. SHE grabs HIS hands and pulls HIM down next to HER. SHE buries HER face in HIS chest, HE sits there quietly, arms at HIS sides letting HER cry, slowly HER sobs weaken.)

BRYAN: Are you okay? You done now?

SHARON: *(SHE pulls back shaking HER head and shrilly says.)* No, I'm not alright! Last night you make love to me and tell me you love me and then walk in here today saying you're leaving! No, I'm not alright!

BRYAN: Is something burning?

(SHARON jumps up and runs into the kitchen.)

SHARON: My dinner!

(As SHARON goes into the kitchen BRYAN goes into the bedroom. SHARON walks back in and slams a pan with a hunk of burnt black, meat onto the table. SHE yells toward the bedroom just as BRYAN walks back in carrying a small bag.)

SHARON: *(Sarcastically.)* It's ruined. My perfect dinner, ruined. *(SHE looks at the bag and spits at HIM.)* What's in the bag?

BRYAN: Just a few things to get me through the night.

SHARON: *(Loud, shrilly.)* Who is it?

BRYAN: Who's who?

SHARON: The woman.

BRYAN: What woman?

SHARON: The woman you're leaving me for.

BRYAN: *(HE shakes HIS head with exasperation.)* Sharon there is no woman. I'm just ready to move on that's all, you've got to accept it.

SHARON: There's something, there's gotta be something I can do to make you stay.

(HE shakes HIS head no. SHE puts HER hand on HIS face, strokes HIS cheek while licking HER lips suggestively.)

SHARON: Come on Bry isn't there some way....something? Anything I can do to change your mind?

BRYAN: *(In a begging tone.)* Sharon please, just let me go.

(HE steps back and starts toward the bedroom again.)

BRYAN: My razor, I almost forgot.

(While HE'S out of the room SHARON pulls the basket SHE put the baby outfit in down from the top of the entertainment center, SHE digs in it, hearing a noise from the bedroom swings around jerking HER right hand behind HER back, HER left hand starts rubbing circles on HER stomach. BRYAN walks back in carrying a shaving kit.)

BRYAN: Man, am I glad I remembered this, I hate not gettin' a shave or to brush my teeth in the mornin'.

SHARON: Are you sure? Absolutely positive there's nothing, not anything I can do or say to change your mind and get you to stay?

BRYAN: *(HE looks at the floor and shakes HIS head.)* Come on Shar don't make this any harder than it has to be.

(As HE looks up from the floor HE is surprised to see SHARON pull HER hand around and point a large pistol at HIM.)

SHARON: Happy Valentine's Day baby.

BRYAN: What the hel....

(SHARON shoots the gun: BANG! SHE drops HER arm down and the gun drops to the floor. HE'S cut off in mid word as the bullets hit and falls to the floor. SHARON stands in a trance for a moment, then seeming to come out of it sees HIM on the floor, SHE runs to HIM and cradles HIS head in her lap, kisses HIS forehead, and rocks back and forth stroking HIS head and chest. The dim sound of sirens begins.)

SHARON: *(SHE stops rocking, hugs HIS head to HER and calmly says.)* We knew you'd change your mind, you couldn't leave us. You'll see we'll be so happy, a happy family... together....forever.

(The siren grows louder as the curtain comes down.)

HONORABLE MENTION

BLACK WELL

NOT STEWART MCCOIN

SHORT STORY

He was careful at first, only taking the ones that no one would miss. If you asked him, he was helping the town, getting rid of the homeless and other unwanted vagrants. This night was no different. A steady downpour of rain poured from the dark sky, soaking the ground with a heavy burden. The windshield wipers flailed violently back and forth, trying to keep up with the downpour. Lightning struck far away, momentarily illuminating the bleak country road. Allan headed to the old abandoned farm, some twenty miles southeast of town. That's where Allan found it, thinking back maybe it found him; living, waiting, biding time until it became whole.

Halfway there; Allan drove slowly down the twisting road, as the conditions worsened. From the back of the van, a low groan broke the steady rhythmic patter of raindrops falling on the window and the valiant effort of the wipers to displace the unwanted nuisance. Allan heard the noise, but was not concerned. He took the necessary precautions and had securely restrained the old man; he would not put up a fight. Allan did this many times before, and had learned from his past mistakes. The stench of bourbon and filth cut through the air within the van. The old man, wet, tired, and homeless, had seen better days in his weary life.

"We're almost there," Allan muttered to himself as he let off the gas to round a sharp corner. He continued driving until he soon saw the broken sign. Over the years the sign grew closer to the ground and the ground closer to it. What could be seen of the sign, the part not blocked by overgrown weeds, was difficult to make out; it was hard to tell its original purpose. The majority of the sign was now overrun with rust that climbed from side to side and a thick layer of grime blocked out most of the words. Now the sign was used for nothing more than to identify where to turn. As the van passed the sign a lightning bolt struck much closer than last time. Allan turned off the seldom used dirt road onto a long forgotten path, and headed deeper into the storm.

The path, in poor shape from years of neglect, housed

many obstacles; bumps and holes protecting what lay beyond. Allan knew the way well, from the many trips he made, but did not care to avoid the mess; the closer he moved to it the more he changed. A strong gust of wind rocked the van back and forth. Allan glanced to the right of the path; for miles the former lush fields now laid overgrown and untidy from years of neglect. People say that the area is cursed; strange things happen there, unaccountable things, so people tended to stay away, until the place was forgotten all together. Many years ago things were different; the land was rich and fertile, and the owner, an old farmer, held a place in high standards. But with time everything changes. Ever since the owner went mad and disappeared no one ever dared to venture back to the farm; people say being away from society for long periods does strange things to a man's mind. The farm stayed that way until Allan stumbled upon it several months ago.

Three miles removed from the dirt road, the old farm house stood mere remnants of its former glory. The house, a two story behemoth, weathered poorly over the years; the vast majority of windows were broken, the frame rotten in more places than not, the wood, inside and outside, weather stripped to a dull grey, and altogether the structure quit caring long ago and now swayed back and forth with the breeze. From north of the house to the southwest end, tall oak and pine trees surrounded the house acting as a windbreak. A small pond settled between the house and the windbreak; some time, long ago, nature reclaimed the pond as her own. The pond, expanding its reach with the new rain, was overrun with weeds and with other more terrible things, acting as protection to the pond and what lurked beneath. Two hundred yards to the east a large barn stood; deteriorated but mostly intact and altogether in much better shape than the house. In between the house and the barn stood a stone well. The well had a simple design and looked completely normal, except for one feature that made it appear out of place; it looked in near perfect condition.

Allan drove closer to the barn, and stopped the van; the headlights fell just to the edge of the well where even the light dared to go no farther. He said several words quietly to himself, and then headed into the barn. He returned a short time later, pushing a wheel barrel through the soggy ground. He opened the back of the van; the man lying on the floor, hands and feet clasped

together with rope, completely unaware of what happened. Allan loaded the old man into the wheel barrel and then pushed him, through the rain and mud, towards the barn. The wind picked up from when the night started, slamming the barn doors turbulently about. Allan pushed the barrel inside; "Pieces...Pieces...It only wants...Pieces," he mumbled to himself and then went looking for his instruments.

The old man, jarred to conscious from the wheel barrel ride, looked around the barn. "What happened? Where Am I?" the old man thought out loud. He noticed a shadowed figure in the distance, moving closer. "Help me!" cried the old man, still not fully aware of his situation. As the figure moved closer, the old man regained his senses; he violently rumbled back and forth, fighting against his restraints, trying to escape his inescapable fate. The figure moved through the shadows, slowly making his way closer to the old man. A gust of wind ran through the barn, shaking the doors and picking up everything not tied down. The old man strained his eyes to see through the darkness. A series of lightning bolts cut across the sky every few seconds. Fear entered the old man's eyes, and terror coursed through his body at the visions that entered him. The figure was not alone; he had something in his hands. The shadowed figure moved closer, dragging a rusted axe through the ground. The old man kicked and shook the best he could, but it was no use. A glint from the axe blade caught his eye. As the figure edged closer he heard a voice repeated again and again, but could not make out the words. Soon the figure was only feet away; the man's eyes opened wide when he realized what the figure said, "Pieces" over and over, unrelenting and unceasing. The figure stood above the man, looking down, and then lifted the ax above his head.

Lighting struck nearby as Allan pushed the wheel barrel towards the well. Blood splashed over the sides of the wheel barrel, momentarily mixing with the mud before washing away. The lights of the van added an eerie glow to the well. Allan approached the well, in a daze; he did not say a word or even think a thought, his mind completely blank. Allan's eyes were glazed over, in a sort of trance, as rain poured on him and dripped from his brow. When he reached the well, he emptied the contents of the barrel one section at a time. After each section he paused and waited; on its descent each piece bounced off the sides of the well, until a faint splash

resonated from the bottom. Several seconds later he heard a familiar sound; one that brought him back to his senses. A gurgling sound echoed from the depths of the well, a sound he heard many times before, but a sound that still unnerved him to his core.

It had only been a few days since the last time; a feeding as Allan liked to call it. The name seemed appropriate to him; fulfilling the empty void with a meaning, stopping the hunger, quenching the drive that urged him to satisfy the need. Allan was on his way to work when he felt something calling to him; it spread from his mind then throughout his entire body, beckoning him. He knew that it needed more. The time always seemed to grow less and less between the feedings. He could not risk becoming suspicious, but the urge, never letting go, always growing, tearing at his mind; he had to or it would consume him.

Allan looked at the town through his window, taking time to carefully study each person he passed; who would be the easiest to prepare, how would he take them unnoticed? He knew it would be difficult to capture someone without drawing much attention, which was exactly what he wanted to avoid. Allan had to be careful, if somehow he were ever found out, it would ruin everything. Allan pulled into a vacant parking lot, and put the van into park. Suddenly his hands began to tremble and he broke out in a heavy sweat. His eyes shook rapidly and then rolled into the back of his head. He doubled over in an unbearable pain, while an unseen horror washed over him. He felt like his head would explode at any second; his brain felt like it was growing larger with each beat of his racing heart. Each moment pressing closer to the limits his skull could withstand. He held tightly onto the steering wheel; like if he let go he may never be able to find his way back again. Then as quickly as the attack came to him it vanished. These attacks were happening more and more frequently, and he did not know how much longer he could take it. Allan paused a second, trying to regain his composure, then turned his car around and headed to the farm, he would find someone on the way.

On the way to the farm, Allan thought of all the things he had done, and all the things he needed to do. He noticed how the area looked different in daylight. The land looked friendlier, almost inviting; a stark contrast to how it was at night. The different scenery made him

contemplate his own fate. Why did he do such things? How did he end up like this? Where did his life go wrong? Did he have to do this? He was close to just going home for the day when suddenly the van's right front tire exploded.

Allan stood on the side of the road looking down at the place a tire should have been. Allan had to fix his car if he wanted to complete his task, but the accident may be a blessing in disguise. A car drove by, not hesitating as it continued past. Allan took out the jack and tire iron along with the spare tire. Another car approached. Allan tried to wave the driver down. The driver, an older woman on a cell phone, sped past nearly hitting Allan, not knowing how close she came to ending it all. Allan gave up hope of stopping someone and went to fix his car when in the distance a set of flashing lights grew closer.

The officer opened his door and walked towards Allan carefully assessing the situation as he approached. Not sensing anything out of the ordinary, the officer found out the problem. The officer helped Allan change the tire, offering some small talk to pass the tiresome task. But Allan just stood there, his face a blank slate; going through the motions while his mind was on other things. Soon they were finished and the officer walked back to his car, thinking he had done his good deed for the day. Suddenly Allan felt the urge twisting his thoughts, tearing his mind apart. "No time to prepare. It had to be done now!" Allan thought, as he tightly gripped the tire iron in his hands. Allan quickly walked behind the officer and buried the blunt end of the tire iron deep in his skull. Sensing something was out of the ordinary the officer had reached for his gun but not in time. The officer fell to the ground limp, his gun resting in his hand. Alan dragged the officer towards the van as the gun slowly trickled away from the injured man's grasp and took off for the farm.

As they moved closer to the farm, the officer began to regain consciousness. The back of the van was completely dark. "Where am I? What happened? "My head?" he wondered. A throbbing pain shot from the base of his skull. He reached back and touched his bloody scalp. A small pool of blood gathered at the spot where his head rested. Suddenly the van stopped moving. The officer heard someone exit the van. Outside silence, then suddenly the back door opened. Light cut

through the dark van, momentarily blinding him. The light bounced off the officer's name tag, revealing his name to be Steve. Steve looked up at the blurred face, and vaguely remembered what happened, I stopped to help someone. I changed a tire, and then, I woke up here. The man reached into the van and dragged him outside. Steve wanted to fight back but was too weak. That was the last thing he remembered before blacking out. Allan loaded Steve into a wheel barrel and pushed the groggy officer into the barn.

When Steve woke up he was lying on the rough ground of an unfamiliar place. Steve looked around. Where was he? Where was the man that brought him here? Now was his chance. Steve struggled to get up, back to his feet, in order to make an escape. Most of his senses were still intact, but he felt woozy. He stumbled to his feet, swaying from side to side, trying to keep his balance. A heavy daze gripped his thoughts, but with each passing moment its hold weakened. He had to escape before that man came back. Steve felt strange, the world spun around him, and his eyes blurred for a second. Steve heard from behind him, a rustling movement coming closer. He reached for his gun, only to find it missing. From out of the shadows the man lunged at the officer with a rusted ax, barley missing Steve's head. The ax lodged deep within the door of the barn. The man tried to retrieve the ax from the door while Steve made his way away from the barn; he needed time to think, when he noticed an old house. Steve ran for the house, but in his haste his leg planted and stuck into a track, left behind by the wheel barrel, and lost his balance. While his body fell to the ground, his leg remained in place; twisting his lower right leg to an unnatural state. Steve laid on the ground, in an incredible amount of pain. He needed some place to hide. He looked all around and then saw the well; he could hide behind it. Steve crawled toward the well, taking as much pressure off his leg as possible. After what seemed like hours, he finally made it to the well, when the man came out of the barn. The man looked around, the ax in his hands, until he noticed the officer.

Steve rested his back against the well, and tried to remain calm. The man moved closer. Steve thought back to his training; what to do in emergencies, when he suddenly remembered his back up gun. He quickly reached for his pistol; his eyes still blurring images. The man continued to move forward, only 100 yards away.

Steve raised his gun and fired once. The bullet whizzed by the man's head, nearly ending this confrontation. Steve took aim again; the second bullet landed in the man's left leg. The man stumbled from the shock, but still moved forward at a slower pace. The third and fourth bullet both missed. The man edged forward repeating the word "Pieces," over and over again, growing louder with each step. Now down to two bullets and the man only twenty yards away. "Damn it, I have to focus," thought Steve, knowing he had to make his last two chances count. He fired again, the fifth bullet landed in the middle of the man's stomach. The man still moved forward. Steve rested against the wall and carefully took aim; he knew this was his last chance. He blinked several times to clear his vision, took a deep breath and slowly squeezed the trigger. The sixth and final bullet leaped from the end of the barrel, striking the man in the chest. The axe fell to the ground. By this time the man was only feet away. The man staggered forward, blood splattering out of his mouth, muting his words. The man slowly crept forward, his hands outstretched. He was nearly to Steve when the effects of the final bullet took hold. The man stumbled out of control, blood pouring out of his wounds; his stomach hit the side of the wall and he tumbled over the top, into the well.

Steve looked up, "Finally this ordeal was over," he thought to himself. His leg was badly damaged. He tore a piece of his shirt off and wrapped it around his leg. He used the wall to get to his feet and then he limped towards the van; "With any luck the keys would still be in it," he hoped. As he made his way to the van he heard a strange sound, a sound he had never heard before; a gurgling noise. Steve looked around and the noise suddenly stopped. He turned around and started walking towards the van. The noise started again, but this time it was much louder. Steve did not recognize the noise, but he knew it was not good. Steve picked up his pace, moving as quickly as he possibly could. He looked around for the cause of the noise, but this time the noise did not subside, it moved closer. Steve hobbled next to the van; the noise overwhelming his thoughts. He struggled to quickly open the van's door. The noise was right behind him. He turned around but it was too late.

HONORABLE MENTION

THE FRAGILE LILY

THEA DEAN

SHORT STORY

The sun was warm and bright coming through the window beside my chair, the news was on and the pretty, smiling anchor woman suddenly became somber as she related the newest information in the ongoing investigation of the neglect and rape of a five year old girl. I sat looking through the window, watching my precious little four year old granddaughter, Tessa, playing in the yard. She favors me when I was her age except my hair couldn't have been any straighter, and the color was a little darker shade of brown, where hers is all bouncing curls with red highlights, we both have brown eyes but hers looks black unless a bright light is shining directly into them. She is very close to the same average size as I was, neither skinny nor fat, and a couple of inches shy of being tall; however, we are mostly alike on the inside, same temperament, we think and feel a lot alike and she is ever bit as inquisitive as I was, always questioning, "Why? Why does it do that? What makes it do that?" and such. Tessa was digging in the dirt while her grandpa was working on the lawn mower nearby. I was overwhelmed with love and an all consuming need to keep her safe, anything, I would do absolutely anything to protect her, but if a pervert, or anyone, did hurt her I would kill them, preferably as painfully as possible. Flooding tears sting, the sunlight grows brighter distorting the transient Norman Rockwellesque view. The scene outside of my window blurs, melting the years into a puddle forty-four years wide and just as deep. I'm no longer in my chair by the window; the droning voice coming from the television fades as I fall deeper and deeper into the past.

I blink my eyes against the blinding light and pull my shirt off, and throw it to the side, I hate shirts! You can't move in 'em and they choke and scratch you, it ain't fair Jimmy don't have to wear one, why should I have to? I reach over and pick-up the sardine can and start to drag it through the dirt past a rock, around a clump of grass, beside the tree root, and circle back to where I started. I pick up an old bent table spoon and start digging a hole in the middle of the road, then fill the hole with water from an old tin can, and build a bridge with a few small

sticks. I like it here this is the best place in the world, no monsters, and it's quiet, not loud.

I dump my cars out of the coffee can I keep them in and pick up a little green one and push it along the road.

"Putt, putt, putt," by the time I get it back around where I started all the water is gone. "Where did it go?" But there's no one near enough to hear except the mulberry tree and it only fluttered its leaves. Why won't the water stay in the hole? Water don't go out of ponds, so why does it keep going out of my hole?

The sunshine is so bright I have to blink and rub my eyes when I try to see past the shade of the mulberry tree. There, a long, long way away, almost to the other end of the garden, is Molly and Joseph Andrews, but to me Big Mama and Pa; the only mom and dad I have ever known, they're my mom's mom and dad. Right after I was born she left dad, and dumped me and my big brother, Jimmy, whose six, with Big Mama and Pa, and moved to the City to work.

Big Mama is bigger than other women; she's big like men, and her hands and feet are big like Pa's, she's strong too, she can put a sack of feed on each shoulder and throw them in the back of the pick-up. Her hair is black streaked with silver, and so long it almost goes to her waist when she combs it, but the rest of the time she keeps it twisted up in a granny knot on the back of her head. Mama didn't get to go to school much, and because she was so big, strong, talks loud and likes to dip Levi Garrett's snuff some people think she's rough, but to me she's the sweetest, softest Mom, and has the best lap and hugs, in the world. I wouldn't trade her for nothin' or nobody in the whole wide world! When she was a kid she had to look after her brothers and sisters, then she had her own kids, and now she has us. She don't spend a lot of time cleanin' house, she's always in the garden, cannin', cookin', fixin' clothes, makin' rugs outta rags, or washin' and ironin'; and she has some old, sick neighbors she looks in on. And, even though she don't go to church she believes in the Lord. Everybody likes, or downright loves her, me and Jimmy most of all.

Pa, some of his friends call him Red cause they say when he was younger his hair was fiery red, but I don't know it's always been gray to me. He's, a little shorter than Mama, skinny and real strong. He's had to work hard all his life, when he was only twelve he ran away from

home in Louisiana, and come to Oklahoma to work in the oil patch, that's when he met Mama. He ain't been to school hardly at all and can't hardly read or sign his name, but he works hard, and takes good care of us. He says I'm the most precious thing in the world to him, but he don't like it that Little Mom dumped us on them. He don't talk much 'til he drinks his nasty wine, which he does most nights, for a little while he's funny, but then he starts getting' mean and won't stop cussin', gripin', and hollarin'. Sometimes, him and Mama would fight, not just yell at each other but hit each other too. But even though he scares me sometimes, he's my Pa, he takes care of me, he won't let nothin' hurt me, he loves me.

I jumped up and ran down the garden row toward them. Pa was wearing his old, dirty, straw cowboy hat that had a flat wide brim, overalls, and a long sleeve shirt that was wet with sweat; he was pushing the hand plow through the hard packed red clay.

Big Mama was bent over planting seeds in the fresh plowed dirt, she was wearing a bonnet of bright blue with tiny red flowers printed on it, and an old thin, cotton dress, faded from hundreds of washings,. She stands up and rubs her aching back, "What? What you hollerin' about?"

Pa stops plowing and asks, "What? Where's your shirt girl? You can't go runnin' around without a shirt on."

Quickly and out of breath, "Mama, Pa why won't the water stay in my hole? I made me a pond but the water won't stay in it, why?"

"The dirt's sucking it up, it's thirsty, ain't rained in over a month," while wiping the sweat off his forehead with his shirtsleeve "I'm thirsty too. Girl, where's your shirt?"

Pointing toward the tree, "It's over there, I don't like wearin' shirts they choke and scratch me. Jimmy don't have to wear 'em, why do I have to?"

He pulls a block of Days Work chewing tobacco out of the pocket of his bib, and a pocket knife out of his lower pocket, opens it and carefully cuts a slice off and sticks it in his mouth and starts chewing, then closes the knife and puts it and the tobacco back in his pockets, "Cause you're a girl that's why and you're old enough now you gotta wear a shirt. Now go put it on and go in the house

and get me a drink of water.”

“Get me one too and put a squirt of lemon juice in it.”
Big Mom added.

Kicking the dirt and grumbling to myself, “It ain’t fair, not right, he don’t have to wear one, I shouldn’t have to either. I hate bein’ a girl!” I pull on my shirt, and head for the house grumbling all the way, Just as I step up on the porch, Jimmy bursts out the door carrying his Johnny West doll in one hand and a plastic horse in the other yelling, “Outta the way Lilly Pad, the Cong’s have got GI Joe trapped in a bunker and we gotta get him out!” he ran off around the corner toward the front of the house, boy sometimes he’s so dopey. I go in the house, and have to stop to let my eyes adjust from the bright sunshine to the dim light inside. Coming in the back door I walk into Big Mom’s small bedroom; there’s a door to the right leading into Pa’s room, to the left of it a vanity with an ornate mirror, its grandeur long faded, and next to it was the door into the kitchen. To my left is an old scarred chest of drawers then the wall. The bed sits along this wall with just enough room between it and the chest to get the drawers out. Between the head of the bed and the kitchen door is a door leading into a bedroom with a bed piled high with old clothes, toys and pillows. The whole room is a massive pile of junk except for the spot right behind the door, that’s where the slop jar sits; an enamel pail with a lid, inside a chair frame without a seat and raised up on a few wooden blocks. I hate the pot, it stinks to high heaven, but it’s better than going to the outhouse, specially at night and when it’s cold.

My favorite, and the biggest room is Pa’s, it’s got a trail down the middle, and all the walls are lined with furniture. It has a bed, dresser, two chest of drawers, some drawers so full or pawed through they can’t be closed all the way and have stuff hanging out of them. There’s a big thing Big Mom calls an armoire, and a great big wood box Mom keeps quilts in. And my very most favorite thing in the world, a large trunk that’s lid is round, not flat, and I would put an old soft rug on it climb up on it and grab the two cloth belts, that came off Big Mom’s old dresses, and were tied to the handle on the end of the trunk and away I would go, “Giddy up Blackie! Giddy up!” I would ride that old trunk over hill and dale, through forests and rivers and always keeping just ahead of the bad guys.

When I get to the kitchen door I have to step up because it and the front room are a step higher than the bedrooms. The kitchen is the smallest room in the house, the center is dominated by a large square with rounded off corners, wooden table, with chairs on three sides, and clearance of two feet or less around it. To the right is an aluminum cart with two shelves stacked with a mixer, blender, mixing bowls, and glass cake pans. Next to it is the fourth chair and a step stool. The wall to its left is the ice box, left of it the cabinets begin running a few feet then turn along the other wall, run a few feet then a single, shallow, stained and chipped sink with cold water only. The hot water tank is in wash house out back, where Big Mama does her washing with a wringer washing machine and two number three wash tubs, and a small shower room added on the side. Sometimes, baths were only a pan of water and a wash rag, and then sometimes for us kids Pa would bring in one of the number three wash tubs to wash in. The cabinet runs a few feet past the sink, then the stove. Just in front of the stove is Big Mama’s prized china cabinet and between it and the bedroom door is the door into the front room. Right inside the front room door is a daybed, right of it is a treadle sewing machine sitting in front of a window, then sitting on a small table in a the corner is a black and white television set you had to hit on the side sometimes to make it stop rolling. The far wall has a desk setting under two windows, a small end table holding the phone and phonebooks, and the door to the front porch. On the wall right of the door was a large open flame gas stove, a small bookcase with a set of outdated encyclopedias. In the middle of the room is Pa’s wood rocking chair with a pillow in the seat, and beside of it a coffee can he spits his chewing tobacco in. Between it and the phone table is Big Mama’s chair, it has a brown leather seat and back that has a large horse head embroidered on the back, and wooden arms that look like half of a wagon wheel, and on the right side of it is her spit can.

As I step into the kitchen I looked in at the T.V. to see what’s on, yuk, it’s the news, I hate the news, I don’t really understand it, and it scares me, specially when it shows the Army guys with guns carrying each other and running and their hurt, bleedin’ and bandaged, sometimes they don’t have arms or legs. Pa and man on T.V. called it war, I don’t know why but it makes my tummy feel sick it just scares me. I go on in the kitchen and get Pa’s glass off the cabinet and hold it under the

spigot of the big metal water can that always sits next to the sink, it's always full of cold water cause Pa takes the empty milk cartons, fills 'em up with water and puts 'em in the deep freeze in the wash house so there's always ice. After filling up Pa's glass I got to look around for Mom's before I find in the front room on the phone table. After I fill it and give it a squirt of juice out of the plastic lemon in the ice box, I have to squirt a little in my mouth, and head back outside. With a glass in each hand I have to use my back to push the door open, and my head is down watching my feet so I won't trip over the sill, I look up just as the door slams and jumps, right in front of me is Earl, I jerk my head around looking, hoping, praying, to see someone close by, but no one's there. Fear and repulsion sweeps through me like the electrical shock I got when I touched the deep freeze handle and my hand was wet. Earl is Pa's friend who lives down the road, right over the hill, way too close for my liking. He's fat, bald, and very dirty, and he stinks like the slop jar, he doesn't have any front teeth and when he smiles a cold shiver would runs down my back. But the worst thing of all is his left hand it only has two fingers, the little one and the one beside it. The other two and thumb had been cut-off in an accident at work Pa said. It wasn't because his fingers was gone that bothered me, gee Mr. Hawkins' next door, his whole hand was gone, sometimes he just had what looked like a can on the end of his arm, but sometimes he wore a hook, a big sharp, shiny hook, just like Captain Hook's on *Peter Pan*, but he didn't scare me at all. But, Earl always wanted to pick me up and hold me, but I don't like it when he does, and not just cause he's dirty and stinks, but it's not right the way he touches me. He don't hold me with his arm under my bottom like everyone else does; he puts "that hand" between my legs and holds me that way. It's not right, he doesn't just hold me, he touches me, I don't know why it's wrong, I just know it's not right. And, I don't know why, but I'm sure glad now that Pa made me put my shirt on.

Panic and tears start welling up in me as he starts to step toward me, when, it seems like out of nowhere, Jimmy jumps between us, "Lil you go ahead take Ma and Pa their water."

Almost crying with relief, I run as fast as I can to the garden splashing water all the way. When I get to them panting, and out of breath, "P...P...Pa, you got company."

Pa turns and sees Earl and Jimmy walking towards the garden; he takes his glass, looks in it and laughs, "Well, I did say a drink of water, not a glass."

"I was hurryin' Pa."

He drinks what's in the glass and hands it back, "Tell Earl I'll be there as soon as I finish this row," he turns and starts pushing the plow.

Big Mama gives him an irritated look, she wanted to get the planting finished today, but now it doesn't look like it's going to get done, she takes her glass and drinks what's left in it and gives it back, "Here, go put these up."

"Okay Mama." I run over to Earl making sure to stay far enough away he can't touch me. "Pa'll be here soon as he finishes his row."

Jimmy steps between us again, and grabs my hand, "Come on Lil, after you put those glasses in the house you can play GI Joe with me," we run to, and through the house; I put the glasses on the kitchen cabinet, then we head out to the front yard, where he was playing under the big, old cedar tree. Once we got around the house and out of sight I grab and squeeze him as tight as I can, "Oh, Jimmy I love you, thanks for savin' me!"

He hugs me back, then pushes me back, "Ah now, don't be so sappy."

I look at him as serious as I can hoping to make him understand just how bad he scares me, "He scares me Jimmy," I look at the ground I couldn't look him in the face, "he touches me wrong."

"I know, he's a creep, when he's around you stick close to me, if I ain't around you stay close to Big Ma, alright? Now come on let's play."

Almost an hour later, Johnny West had rescued GI Joe from the bunker, killed all the Cong and won the war; when we hear the loud, slurred voices of Pa and Earl in the drive-way, then Earl's beat-up old rattletrap blasts off. We look at each other with relief just as Big Mom sticks her head out the door yelling, "Ya'll kids get in here and wash up it's time to eat."

We gathered up the toys and go in the front door just in time to hear Pa, "What'd ya burn for supper tonight?"

“Pa, don’t be mean to Ma she’s the best cook in the world.”

“There’s my pride in joy, where you been?”

“In the front playin’, you drinkin’ that nasty wine Pa?”

“Now don’t you worry your pretty little head about what I been doin’.”

Big Mama yells from the kitchen, “You kids better get in here and wash up and fix your plate now.”

After supper I was so full of fried potatoes my most favorite food in the world, salt pork, and black eye peas, I thought my tummy was going to pop. And even though Pa complained the whole time he was eating, he ate two platefuls. After supper I went into Pa’s room looking for Blue Jeans my bear, he was named after Mr. Green Jeans on the Captain Kangaroo show, but blues my favorite color so I named him Blue Jeans instead of Green Jeans. Just as I went in Pa was pouring what looked like grape juice out of a big green bottle into a small juice glass. I wrinkled me nose, ooh I hate it when Pa drinks that stuff, he’s different and gets mean to Ma; sometimes, he can’t walk good and he falls down, that scares me too, “Pa don’t drink that nasty stuff, it stinks, it’s nasty.”

“Now what do you want little ‘un.”

“I’m lookin’ for Blue Jeans, have you seen him?”

“Look over on the trunk.”

I run over to the trunk, and sure enough, there he is over the hump almost between the trunk and wall, “He’s here!” I grab him and run back to Pa, “Thanks Pa, I love you.”

“I love you to precious, you go play now.”

I go back to the front room where Jimmy’s playing with his Hot Wheels, and Big Mom’s sewing a patch on one of Pa’s shirts. Pa follows me in just as *The Flintstones* was coming on, so we settled down to watch it, but when a commercial came on Pa would go take a drink of wine, when the phone rang, Big Mom like always waited until it rang two short rings, we was on a party line and she had to make sure it was our ring before she picked it up.

“Hello,” she listens a minute, “if you say you’re going to you better show up.”

Pa slurs, “Is that Joan? You tell her she better not lie to these kids!”

Surprised and excited I jump up, “Is that Little Mom?”

Jimmy looks up hopefully, “Is she comin’ to see us?”

“Ya’ll hush up I can’t hear her. What did you say?”
Mumbling from the phone, “Ya know what time? You know they’ll be watchin’ for you.”

I was so excited I couldn’t stop jumping up and down, “She’s comin’, she’s comin’! When? When is she comin’? Let me talk, can I talk?”

“Hush, I can’t hear.”

Always mad at Little Mom for the way she treated us when Pa was drinking his anger against her would boil over, “You tell her she better get her lazy ass out of bed and show up tomorrow, or I’m libel to come up there and drag her ass out myself!”

Big Mom spits at him, “You hush,” then back into the phone, “you know they’re gonna be waitin’ and watchin’ for ya,” more mumbling from the phone.

Still jumping up and down, “Let me talk, pleaseee!”

Jimmy asks, “Can I talk too?”

“No, she’s gotta hang up now, it’s long distance, it’s costin’ money,” back into the phone, “you better if you can’t at least call and let us know, bye,” and she hangs up.

Pa starts in about Little Mom, “She better show up, it ain’t right her callin’ sayin’ she’s comin’ then not showin’ up cause she’s laid up with some old boy.”

“Shut up old man, you quit talkin’ like that in front of them kids.”

“Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and the way she lays up with ever Tom, Dick, and Harry is wrong!” Going to get another drink, “She ain’t nothin’ but a whore, she’d rather lay up in bed with some old boy than come see these kids.”

“You shut that filth up. Them kids don’t need to hear that kind of nasty talk.” She follows him into the other part of the house trying to keep him away from us.

We could still hear them fighting but couldn't tell what they were saying. I was dancing around the room singing, "Little Mom's comin', Little Mom's comin'!"

Quietly, from a heart not completely broken yet, but severely chipped and bleeding, from many such promises not kept before, "Lil don't count on her showin' up, she's promised before, and then never showed up."

I was too young to understand, all I knew was she was our mother, and you was supposed to love your mother, and they was supposed to love you back, that's how it was in other families, and on TV, "Yes she will, you watch and see, she'll be here!"

In a voice filled with sorrow beyond a six year old, "I hope so Lilly Pad, for you, I really hope so."

We played and watched TV for awhile, trying not to hear the banging and yelling coming from the back of the house. Just as the news is coming on there is a loud crash, we run into Big Mom's room, and find her in the floor at the foot of the bed, Pa was stumbling into his room. Both of us at the same time ask, "Mama, Mama you alright?"

"Yeah, I'll be alright, ya'll kids get back in the front room."

Jimmy, scared too now says in a worried voice, "Come with us Ma."

"No, I'm gonna lay down here, then maybe he'll settle down and pass out. Ya'll grab that quilt there and both of you go sleep on the daybed tonight, and be quiet maybe he'll pass out."

"Okay Ma, come on Lilly Pad."

Boy, I was scared now, so scared I was shaking, and my throat was squeezing tight, I managed to squeak out, "Goodnight Mama," I hugged her real tight around the neck, and kissed one cheek, and lying my hand on the other one said, "I love you Mama."

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she chokes out, "I love you too both of you, now go on."

Jimmy was trying to be strong, and not show how scared he was as he wiped the tears out of his eyes, grabbed

the quilt and one of my hands, he pulled me toward the front room, "Come on Lilly Pad before Pa comes back."

We turn off the TV and get on the daybed, his head on one end and mine on the other. After much struggling, twisting, and kicking, we get situated, I asked, "Jimmy why does Pa drink that nasty stuff?"

In a sad, tired voice he answered, "I don't know Lilly Pad."

"Well, I wish he wouldn't!"

"Me too Lil, me too, goodnight sleep tight don't let the bed bugs bite."

I giggle, he knows that always makes me laugh, "I love you Jimmy, night."

"Love you too."

I was so scared, I lay there worrying, tossing, and turning in the dark for almost two hours until finally exhausted enough I fall into a nightmare filled sleep. I wake up in the morning screaming, everyone else's already awake, and come running.

Pa, "What is it?"

Jimmy asks, "Are you alright?"

Big Mama asks, "What was you dreamin' about?"

Confused, like so many times before, I can't remember the dream, but even though I'm awake, surrounded by the ones I love most in the world, and room is flooded with bright sunshine, I feel smothered, overwhelmed by a fear; a fear of what I don't know. It seems like this unknown fear is creeping into every part of my world. I'm scared most all the time, even when Pa's not drinking, or Earl's not around, but I don't know what I'm scared of. I have that funny feeling in my stomach it feels like something flying around in there. I shake the confused sleep off and answer, "I don't remember what it was about, just it scared me."

Big Mom, "Well, get-up and get in here and get you something to eat."

"I gotta go pee first," I jump and run into the back room and gingerly lift the lid, "Yipee! Pa's emptied the pot!" It's always best in a freshly cleaned pot, I do my business

and go into the kitchen, Big Mom fixes me a scrambled egg sandwich, and with my mouth full of eggs and bread, "Are's Immy?"

"Don't talk with your mouth full. He's outside somewhere. You hurry finish up, and go find him."

"Okay, I'm gonna go sit out front and watch for Little Mom!"

Big Mom frowns, "Now you don't need to go out there yet, she won't be here for hours yet, that's if she comes at all."

"Oh, she's comin', you wait and see," I jump up and head into the front room, "Me and Blue Jeans is going out front."

"Baby, you don't need to go out there for a while, you just stay right here by the house or go play with Jimmy for awhile."

"But I can't see all the way up the road from there."

"That's okay you can see far enough to see her before she gets here."

Thinking I can just wait a few minutes, then slip farther out front, I finally say okay. Then when I go to get Blue Jeans I see Jimmy's Hot Wheels and remember I left my cars under the mulberry tree the day before, so I get them and go play under the cedar tree, but quickly loses interest in my cars, I'm just too excited, Little Mom's coming! She doesn't come very much, and when she does she doesn't stay very long cause her and Pa usually end up mad and yellin' at each other, so she leaves. I leave my cars and slip out to the little rise, we call the hill, out front, it wasn't four feet high, about a dozen feet from the road, Ma and Pa called a highway. I sat on the edge of the rise in the shade of a mimosa tree, and looked west up the road. About an eighth of a mile down the road was a small hill dropping the road out of sight, not far past the bottom of the hill was a dirt road cutting off each side of the highway. About a mile from there it rose up into a small hill which dipped and rose up again as high and half that much again. From my perch I could see the glint of metal when a car topped the hill, with each new glint joy would well up in me as the car drew nearer, sometimes, while out of sight it would turn off leaving me anxiously waiting until I would realize it wasn't going to come, my joy would rush out like the air

out of a balloon. After I had been out there about an hour, Jimmy came out, "Lil come play, if she's comin' it'll be awhile, I'll push you in the wagon."

"No, I want to watch."

He shakes his head sadly, and walks off, "Okay, but if you change your mind I'll be out by the cellar."

"Okay." I sit switching between watching the traffic and the shade of the mimosa move. A little past noon Pa comes out, "Your Ma's got something fixed to eat, come on."

"I'm not hungry, I'll just wait."

Pa loved me more than anything else in the world, and was pained by the hopeful, expectant look in my eyes; anger against Joan exploded inside of him, he just couldn't understand why she didn't want to take care of her kids. Although he was filled with anger at Joan, as well as most everyone else too, when he looked at me love flooded through him melting his hardened heart, and filling him with a joy nothing else in the world had ever given him. "No you ain't, get in here right now and eat, you can come back out here later if you want."

"Oh, please Pa, pleaseee."

"No, come on now."

Unhappy about it, but knowing better than to push, even though I was Pa's favorite and he spoiled me rotten, he still made me mind, so I got up and followed him in. When I was through eating Big Mom said, "Lilly you need to go play with Jimmy, there ain't no tellin' when your Mom's gonna get here, or if she's even comin'."

"She'll be here soon, I'm gonna wait for her."

"Baby you need to play, you don't need to spend all day just sittin' there waitin' for her."

"I won't, she'll be here soon."

"Go on, go play."

I went straight back out to the hill, and when I got there the shade had moved to the other side of the tree, so I had to sit in the sun now. I sat there squinting westward against the bright sunshine, waiting and hoping to catch a glimpse of Mom's car as it came over the farthest hill;

the sun was getting warmer, and with my belly full of lunch I was getting so sleepy, my eyes start fluttering, my heads bobbing up and down, and just as I slip into sleep, a large semi-truck goes roaring by. I jerk awake, my eyes fly open and I look around trying to figure out what's going on. My hearts pounding like it might burst, and those wings start going crazy fluttering in my tummy was again. Awake now I start watching for cars again, and since the shade had moved I started watching the sun arc over the sky too. Car after car goes by, way too many for me to keep count of, but never the one I was watching for.

Late in the afternoon Jimmy came back out, "Come on Lilly Pad come play with me, I'll let you be GI Joe."

Wow, he never lets me be Joe, but I just know if I quit watching now then sure enough she won't come. All day long sitting here watching, waiting, thinking, wondering, why don't Mom and Dad want me and Jimmy? Everybody else we know has a mom and dad. Did we do something wrong? What? Did we make them mad? What did we do? If they'd just tell us what we did, we wouldn't do it anymore. Dad might come by on one of our birthday's, the rest of the time Mom said he was too busy getting drunk to bother with us. And Mom, even when she did come, she never stayed long, and she never hugged or kissed me. Why don't she love me?

The shadows are growing longer; the sun is sinking faster and faster toward the horizon. My eyes sting, but not from the sun, it's the tears of pain from a broken heart, and wounded soul. The light is growing dimmer, and I know I'll have to go in soon, but not yet, she still might....is that a car? Yes! There's another car coming. "I bet that's her! Please God, please let it be her." I wring my hands, hoping, and dreading, eyes locked on the hill, waiting, waiting....



Poetry

1ST PLACE

CASUALTIES OF ADDICTION (FRIENDS I LOST)

RONALD GIVEN

All my friends are falling dropping and distorting
They bid me to come with them
I will not follow for I am not so hollow
To lose myself to become one of the herd
I must stand aside perhaps even run and hide
To keep from joining their downward slide
Like dominos they file and crash into piles
Leaving me in denial about their worth

2ND PLACE

ME

BRIAN MITCHELL

I do not hold prejudice, I try to avoid hate.
I am a free thinker, therefore, I try to avoid fate.
Society bothers me, with its prying eye mentality.
No matter how much money or power, no escaping mortality.

3RD PLACE

DINNER DATING

BRENNA RECIPO

Thunder roars
I think of your goofy smile
My black sundress teasing you
The enticing smallness of my breasts
So exposed, so modest

A black medallion shines between them
Calling your attention
Like a gentlemen you take my hands instead
"How do you like the chicken?" you ask
"It's spicy like your humor." I reply

My hips start to sway as music gets louder
You push the food back and take my hand
Your dirty skin reflects mine like a prism
Lips caress against my back
Courtship has begun

HONORABLE MENTION

CORINTHIANS

JAYSON KENDRICK

dregs chasing
yield to desire
flight of passion
licking fire
missing pieces
charred remains
bending truth
who's to blame
burning burning
who are we
turning turning
duplicity

NATURE

BRIAN MITCHELL

The snow falls gently,
covering the dark, cold ground.
No trace to be found.

REJECTION

BRIAN MITCHELL

Outside the window, a sad bird sings, songs filled of
sorrow.
Thinking of dismal days, shadows or gray, thinking of
tomorrow.
The lonely frog, sits all alone, listening to every chirp.
Through the air, without despair, feeling every word.
No way to meet, no way to greet, failure in every move.
Another frog, another jump, with nothing else to lose.

HONORABLE MENTION

CRUSHED

BRENNA RECIJKO

Racing hearts and formal dances
Oh what it's like to have a crush
Dancing side to side with sweaty palms
Trying hard to form intelligence in your mouth
Friends running between sides reporting the news
He likes you back
Running time: 2 weeks

The high school heart throb
Just got his license
Who's going to be the lucky girl by his side in that old
Chevy Lumina?
You fight the crowd so he'll notice you, this older boy
with the tight abs
He decides to take you out
You don't know what went wrong but, next week it's a
cheerleader
Quick profile: easy drunk

Finally, a boy with some substance
Not quite of age, but he puts up a good front
He buries himself deep in your heart, you don't mind
As your fears turns to love, his love turns to fear
You try to pry his meaningless fingers away, but he's
clung tight like a parasite
A burning so intense releases him as part of your survival
The reason: corrupting youth

There has been someone who always picked up the
pieces
Of your constantly breaking heart
In the shadows he has been watching, waiting to
audition
He reads for a cliché role
The Director casts him finally, after he's well rehearsed
You sit, take a pencil, and begin to write the script
The title: Best Days.

MORTALITY

BRIAN MITCHELL

From the ashes rises hate from me.
 I can't remember what it is like to see.
 Pride built on mortal skin,
 while the soul sinks deeper within.
 Eyes burning from smoke rising,
 filth building on dreams tearing,
 fate swearing for the lost child
 You're my lust in these times.
 It's easy for those that have the gift,
 I have to work four times as hard.
 Falling from a weak place,
 feeling hate inside the space,
 looking for answers on a shallow plane,
 you see yourself, but not the same.
 I see inside your worthless soul,
 My lust now begins to control.
 Fangs of the viper bite me hard,
 as I hold it against the wall.
 In her eyes I see the ground,
 with nothing to be found at all.
 Bleak feeling as numbness consumes,
 I see black as I face my doom.
 Reaching and falling I cry out to no one around.
 The lust has led to my death

FIGHTING ADVERSITY

RONALD GIVEN

Reaching and pulling and climbing away
 Clawing and swinging and fighting all day
 I need to find a way to break free from all that surrounds
 me

Waiting and watching and finding a way
 Stumbling and falling and going astray
 Feeling the unbearable pressure building inside
 The threats of old come back to life
 Demons raging and screaming my name
 All this time I feed on the pain
 I fight hard so I may stay sane

I HATE YOU FOR LIKING ME

BRENNA RECIPO

I still hate you for liking me
 Your teasing charm
 And your blue eyes
 The way I hold your gaze for more than a few seconds
 I remind myself not to get too carried away

You're so serious, full of logic
 I want to loosen you
 You're still so innocent, don't break the rules
 I want to have you

We know that it's way past over
 And we remain friends
 Lately as our relationship grows closer
 I find you pulling me back in again

At times it's hard to resist
 But when we sit in silence I remember
 Why we don't further a hand brush
 Or a quiet laugh

I don't want to run to you when I have no other
 But I know you won't let me hurt myself
 Still, I want to be a better friend without crossing the line
 And I know I can achieve this when you start
 condescending
 If I can recall the hurt I can resist a future
 If I find a glimmer of hope I instantly forget who you are
 But while you find me attractive
 And we give each other attention
 I hate you for liking me

I'M TIRED

NATIKA MILES

I'm tired of all the lies.
 I'm tired of the tears.
 I'm so tired of wishing you were here.
 I want you to love me,
 I want to be with you forever.
 You said that you would give me a chance,
 but you didn't and you wont.
 Not now, not ever.
 I'm tired of sitting here,
 crying over you.
 So I'm going to dry my eyes,
 and tell you what I'll do.
 I'll go find someone else,
 who loves me deep and true.
 I'll find someone else,
 that doesn't remind me of you.
 So how do you like that?
 My dear old friend.
 My pain from you is over.
 No more, the end.

FIELD DREAMS

BRENNA RECIPKO

You have walked me home many times before
 But never like this
 The directions you gave me led me nowhere
 I was left standing in a field of wheat
 The wind kicked up my dress
 My hair, soft waves finally freed
 I twirled and twirled until vertigo caught me
 Softly collapsing into a dream

By directions I was lost
 But by spirit I am home

NO NAME

MEREDITH GIERHART

She was a small baby, says the 5 pounds 2 ounces she weighs on the scale by the incubator.
 She was short too, says the 17 inches of tape measurer.
 And a content little girl says the hours she slept quiet as a mouse
 But not a healthy girl, says the oxygen machine and the sound of her faint heart going pitter pat.
 Her parents waited anxiously for her arrival, says the newly done nursery, with the teddy bear wall paper and toy shelves
 She would be daddy's little princess, says the ornate canopy bed.
 Money was no object, says the room full of toys, and walk-in closet full of clothes.
 She would never be lonely, says the friends who came calling.
 Something went wrong, says the empty cradle in the nursery. The toys remain untouched and the never worn clothes still in the closet in the nursery.
 And the family? The bible remains open on the floor by the window- dry and faded.
 Tears flow on the mother's pillow as the angels rejoice in her homecoming.

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

JAYSON KENDRICK

Sunflowers on blue,
 Still mourning,
 To crumble a stoic heart.
 Shot to space
 Sanguine safe
 Never no never to part.

REVITALIZATION

BRENNA RECIPKO

Who knew we'd see this place again
Abandoned long ago by hopes and dreams
Times are changing
People made mistakes
Minds are made up
"Never" no longer offers permanence

I see right through you
I'm no stranger to your ways
But you are a stranger to mine
I've got all this figured out
How to expose you
And prove you weak

If this doesn't work, so be it
We will still have each other
In a sense
To talk to
To laugh with
To reminisce

For now let yourself go
I'll accompany you while I make a shield
While I try my hardest to retract
As we are again like we never thought we'd be
Exposing ourselves with vulnerabilities in our selfish
ways
Under the stars

SCARED

NATIKA MILES

You hurt me,
without even knowing.
You have my heart and soul.
And this isn't the first time.
I loved you once,
and you threw me away.
You broke my heart,
and I still wanted to stay.
I was with you through everything,
and you know it all to well.
I was with you,
through your living h***.
Now I'm back,
and you've changed so little.
I'm so scared to get hurt.
I can't do it again.
I love you,
but you have to realize it.
Even though I love you,
I'm not going to be treated like this.

THE FADED FFA JACKET

EVAN LEE

I'm a member of a proud tradition – the FFA you see,
I wear a faded FFA jacket, that was grandpa's and
daddy's before me.

My grandpa bought it brand new back in the fall of '63,
My daddy wore it his four years, then passed it on to me.
I wore it my Greenhand year and I still wear it today,
I always hear folks whisper, "he needs a new jacket" I
hear them say.

If they only knew the history of this weathered coat of
blue,
They would understand why I wear it, instead of buying
new.

My grandpa worked hard all summer, hauling hay and
plowing fields,
Trying to make some money for this blue coat with
golden shields.
He graduated high school, got married and had a son,
Then they sent him to Vietnam...a war we never won.
He went to war without his wife and child – just a kid
himself,
He was killed there in that jungle – he died for someone
else.

He wrote letters back home to grandma, asking about
the farm,
She always wrote him back – begging him home without
harm.
In one of his letters – I think it was his last one,
He talked about being homesick, how he missed his wife
and son.

The soldiers came to see grandma, you know...the
bearers of bad news,
They told grandma her husband was dead, and then
gave her this old coat of blue.
"Make sure this coat gets home!" he told a soldier
before he died,
"My boy is gonna be in FFA – he'll wear this coat with
pride!"
He died there in that soldier's arms, with old blue in his
blood stained hands,
The soldier fulfilled grandpa's wish, even though he
didn't understand.

In the Fall of '81, my dad was a Greenhand too,

Everybody had a new FFA jacket, but daddy wore old
blue.

The other guys all laughed at him, "get a new coat" they
all would say,

My daddy told them all the story about how this coat
was grandpa's back in the day.

He told them all about grandpa and the places he and
this coat had been,

How grandpa took it with him to Vietnam, just like an old
friend.

Daddy talked about how this jacket survived gunfire,
bombs and strife,

They all hung their heads and cried when they heard
how grandpa lost his life.

When the coat came home, in the pocket was a letter to
my dad,

Grandpa wrote one last letter, and told daddy and
grandma not to be sad.

The letter said "give this coat to junior, and I'll see you in
a while."

As grandma and daddy read that letter, through the
teardrops came a smile.

So now I'm in FFA, and old blue belongs to me,
Sure, I could buy a brand new jacket, but they don't
have any stories, you see.

This coat may look worn out, all faded and coming apart,
But it was loved by three generations and it won a
Purple Heart!

Just like grandpa took old blue to Vietnam, humid, hot
and warm,

Daddy took it with him to war in Operation Desert
Storm.

My daddy made it home safe and sound, and gave old
blue to me,

He also had the Purple Heart that he won for bravery.

So now old blue is mine and he still gets worn today,
I'm easy to spot there in the crowd, and when you see
me I'm sure you'll say...

"Get a new FFA jacket kid! That one's much too old to
wear!"

But if you have a few minutes, this old faded FFA jacket
has some stories he would like to share.



Essay

3RD PLACE

SOUTH PARK—A WORK OF GENIUS

TRACE LENABURG

As the normal television viewer reflects on the great television shows of recent history, it is hard not to include the show that broke the barriers of political correctness and soared into uncharted waters of outrageous, rude and crude comedy. This show, which goes by the name of South Park is a work that pushes every limit of public television and leaves its audience with jaw-dropping enlightenment of the present American culture. Never before has a television show challenged so strongly the principles, ideas, and morals of everyday life in the United States. The show has accumulated a loyal, mammoth-sized audience, which continues to grow each day, and its potential possibilities are endless. South Park, without a doubt, is the greatest television show of all time due to its ability to apply humor to every aspect, custom, and thought of common society.

South Park, which first aired in August of 1997, features a small, imaginary town in Colorado that is home to four foul-mouthed eight-year old boys, surrounded by a stereotypical society (Nixon 12). The boys face many problems and challenges that often parallel issues faced in the American culture. Unlike many television shows, which directors, writers, and producers commonly base around a family such as the Simpsons, Family Guy, and The King of Queens, South Park takes a new angle that includes a variety of different families and multiple guest stars. This allows South Park to remain fresh and new, and enables the show to keep its audience guessing. Along with original entertainment, the show always contains a hidden lesson and inspires thought about the ignorance of society that is relevant on a daily basis. Issues that are commonly used include politics, society, church, and people in general.

Furthermore, South Park is a show that contains a natural appeal to its audience. No other show has ever brought to its audience's consciousness the stupidity and wacky behavior of American culture. Humor such as this has previously been considered too corrupt or derogatory to air on public television. Katherine Bruna, a reporter from Reading Online states, "South Park is all about the ranting and raving. The creators of the show use the context of the community of South Park to direct attention to the

fundamental inconsistencies and hypocrisies of life in the U.S." (Bruna 9-54).

Apart from providing its viewers with the most hilarious content ever experienced, South Park also has a strong educational purpose. For example, in the episode entitled "Two Days Before the Day After Tomorrow," two of the boys steal a boat and accidentally crash it into a nearby dam, which in turn floods a neighboring town. The ignorant townspeople of South Park immediately jump to the conclusion that global warming was to blame for the town's destruction and go into extreme panic and chaos ("Two Days Before the Day After Tomorrow"). This episode, within itself, portrays how the news and media of American society can disfigure everyday events, cause unnecessary panic, and teaches its viewers to become better informed about issues such as these before jumping to conclusions. It also encourages people to develop their own thoughts and ideas and not accept as fact information conveyed by the media.

In addition, South Park is unique in that it attracts a diverse audience that comes from all walks of life. For example, it pokes fun at both sides of the political spectrum and provides a humbling experience to both political parties. However, members from both parties remain devoted fans. It is with a mocking fashion that South Park educates its audience, and its lessons are not easily forgotten.

The success of South Park as a television show is one that is not easily rivaled. "Since its launch in August 1997, South Park emerged as a pop-culture sensation that practically put Comedy Central on the map" (Wallenstein). Helen Nixon of the Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy says, "It has been an outstanding ratings success, regularly producing viewing figures of up to triple the previous record set by such programs as "Absolutely Fabulous (from Britain)" (Nixon 12). So why should television watchers make South Park part of their nightly schedule? Because no other television show offers comedy, entertainment, and educational ideas in such a balanced, unique fashion as South Park. This show presents a style never before used, which can appeal to the shallow and uneducated, as well as upper class, well-read citizens of the American society. South Park is a masterpiece that we cannot ignore, and no American is complete without experiencing it. So tune into Comedy Central and become a part of South Park's genius.

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BREAKING THE CHAINS OF JUDGMENT**HEATHER IBARRA**

People cannot control the thoughts, feelings, emotions, and opinions of someone else. How others view the world depicts their own sense of individualism, but opinions become threatening when expressed in judgmental language. In order to prevent opinions that lead to judgmental language, people should gain an understanding of those they judge, have a strong sense of their own unique identity, and accept the social differences found within their environment.

A person looks on someone with judgment due to lack of specific understanding. This lack of understanding cultivates early in young children when they hear their parents using judgmental language. A little boy might call a little girl, "nigger" because he heard the word at home in a derogatory way aimed to a person of color. The little boy has no knowledge of the word he uses, only that it pertains to a specific person for whom he lacks complete understanding. Gloria Naylor illustrates perfectly what lasting effects the word nigger can have on both the child saying it and the child receiving it when she wrote, "But I

didn't 'hear' it until it was said by a small pair of lips that had already learned it could be a way to humiliate me"(217). Positive parental involvement contributes immensely to the fundamental foundation with which children relate to each other and establishes lasting connections between the children and the parents. Judgmental chains will break once parents teach their children to show respect through understanding the unique diversity of the world around them. Children who have a strong understanding of diversity grow into adults who teach their children the same respect their parents taught them thus forming a healthy cycle free from judgmental language.

Those who choose to inflict harm with words do not have a strong sense of their own identity and so aim to bring others down. Bullies become bullies because at some point in their lives, someone bullied them and now they have fear. Theodore Roethke talks about his abusive alcoholic father in his poem that reads, "You beat time on my head / With a palm caked by dirt, / Then waltzed me off to bed / Still clinging to your shirt"(307). People act in rage out of fear to protect themselves. A father who becomes so completely inebriated he can no longer stand up straight and abuses his innocent children shouting in slurred unintelligible bursts, "worthless heathens," suffers from his own lack of self worth. Deep down he may feel unworthy to provide, losing himself to his vices and giving into his own resentment while his children suffer indescribable pain for his insufficiencies. A person who does not accept himself or herself refuses to see their full potential out of fear of failure, thereby denying opportunity because they feel inadequate or incapable of achievement. Realizing they have as much ability for success as they permit themselves to have relinquishes the chains of doubt, abuse, or addiction leading up to judgmental language, enabling them to reach their goals more effectively while creating strong bonds with those who endured their sufferings.

Perhaps the judgmental chains that remain the hardest to correct, involve those of impressions. People frequently observe others different from themselves and automatically cast judgment based on their first initial impression. This first impression, however, proves incorrect when compared to the essential need for diversity within social environment. A woman dressed in an executive suit casually drinking tea with her girlfriend might lean across the table to whisper a degrading

comment about a man passing by on a skateboard wearing dark gothic clothing, displaying multiple arm tattoos, and hair spiked into a neon purple mohawk. The fundamental gap between the woman and the man exists because of judgmental perception of image. The woman does not consider how her display of conservative attire portrays the same crucial role in the diversity of social image as the man with tattoos and gothic apparel. Both express nonverbal language through image. Both seek to make a statement based on how they present themselves and require neither improvement nor revision in either case. No two people act or dress exactly the same way. Diversity of personal character and image makes the world an interesting place to live. Understanding and accepting the need for diversity breaks the chains of judgmental language, allowing women and men to express themselves freely through social image.

A sad realization exists in the world today that judgmental chains break whenever tragedy pulls people together. A perfect example of this occurred during the attacks on American soil September 11, 2001. Thousands of people came to the aid of each other regardless of race, fear, or image. Each person involved in the devastating tragedy only focused on the same need for survival and momentarily forgot about personal differences. Tragedy causes people to dismiss judgment because people understand and relate to feeling pain or sorrow. Some people affected by tragedy might lock themselves in their homes out of fear while others might heed the call to action as so many did the day America experienced the greatest terrorist attack in history. Emotions either bind people together or rip them apart. Strengthening the human race begins when fear and judgment no longer hinder the need to understand and respect individual diversity. Replacing the need to cast judgment with the need to understand and accept each other on a daily basis might enable humanity to conquer inconsequential differences by providing a way to begin living together peaceably.

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DÉJÀ VU

APRIL LYNNE PUTMAN

What is life? Are we certain that we actually exist here on Earth as alert beings? What if the life we thought existed, didn't exist at all? What if our minds are nothing but institutions, keeping us trapped from our true selves? I'm not sure that I'm really here. My mind and body go numb as I try to keep myself alert and awake. I feel as if someone has drugged me as my eyes grow heavier and my body falls weaker. I've been here before, haven't I? I've seen these faces, but I don't know these people. I know outcomes before they happen, so why can't I prevent them? My déjà vu grows stronger as my body falls weaker still. When will I wake up from this nightmare they call life.

HONORABLE MENTION

A MEMOIR FROM MY CLOSET

JULIE MCPHAIL

I remember when she came into my life—I didn't even recognize her at first. She snuck in like a bad cold, barely there at first, and then—BAM! There she was—taking over things like a winter hail-storm, pounding and pounding until she left dents in my soul. I remember not knowing what to do with her, trying to figure out her out.

I wondered where she came from, how she got in, and how was I going to get rid of her. It was a long winter and while visiting, she managed to wreck everything in my life. She destroyed my home, wounded my children, and left a hole in my heart and scars on my mind. She meant nothing, yet was everything. The worst thing was—she rubbed off on me. The one thing I feared I had become—her. She came in gently, yet left a tornado's destruction path four souls long. In fact-- I'm still picking up the debris from her stay. She was a whore, a temptress, a devil. What was her name you might ask? Her name was modern, well known, a household legend—her name was Abuse and she is out for a kill, so watch out—don't let her creep up on you too.

WAYS TO AVOID PITFALLS IN COMMUNICATION

RONALD GIVEN

People use judgmental language for several reasons. Perhaps something as simple as a man or woman speaking before they think may cause pain to another. Another factor could be the environment in which a person is raised. With the diversity of this country's population no one can expect everything to run perfectly smooth. Perhaps the world has become so engrossed with drama that people have an inherent need for strife. Whatever the case may be for the use of this kind of language, it is inappropriate. In order to stop the continuation of this cycle, certain strategies must be adopted. First, parents need to teach their children not only to be cautious, but considerate as well when choosing their words. Next, society should encourage the people to look for what binds them instead of focusing on what divides. The third strategy has to be for everyone to stop playing the victim of some unseen hand and take some personal accountability for their part in why things are the way they are.

The wide spread condition of thoughtlessness plagues the United States down to the individual level. The problem with whether this condition marks a deliberate migration toward a malicious and uncaring population or merely the breakdown in communication remains unclear. The need to prevent this thoughtlessness from infecting the next generation's pattern of thinking becomes obvious. Parents need to take the time to prepare their children for the realities of the world that lies out before them. Parents can educate their children about the damaging effects that certain language can have on individuals, along with other negative consequences which occur from using inappropriate language.

Since the beginning of the human race, people have had problems with each other. War is not a new concept the oldest human skeletons found had spear heads lodged in them, so maybe conflict is just part of human nature. If the concept of humans having a natural inclination toward destruction proves true, then the arduous task of unity has just begun. In that case, the road ahead will consist of a long and treacherous journey stretching out for many years to come. To venture forward means that people must defy the odds, unless society encourages its people to find some common ground for everyone to stand on. For this to be done society will have to

convince people to look at the individual in each situation and handle each case on the individual basis instead of by stereotyping, or grouping by looking at the person not the; social status, financial wealth, color, or sex. More can be accomplished from a moment of understanding than years of fighting. Searching what bind the people and not focusing on all that divides them is the key for helping one another.

Everyone has heard someone angrily ranting on about whatever craziness bothers them. People have embraced the act of blaming others for their misfortune, so it seems to be the common practice in these contemporary times. This behavior shifts the blame from the person in question and opens the door for using labels, stereotyping, racial slurs, sexist terms, judgmental language, and overtones. Gordon Allport, who was a psychologist in the first half of the 1900's, had this to say about labels: "To have enemies we need labels" (16). People that shift the blame walk around feeling sorry for themselves. They play the victim so they can victimize others without regret. So if this were indeed the fact that everybody is the victim, then nobody would be at fault. Of course that is not the case; everyone is not being victimized by the invisible hand. People need to take responsibility for themselves and accountability for their actions.

This nation was built with a diversity never seen before, so naturally there is going to be problems with its infrastructure. After all, people have problems it just seems that people can not cooperate with one another. When people try shifting the blame to justify themselves, the problem with judgmental language will arise.

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FINANCIAL AID: WHY IS GETTING HELP SO HARD?

REECE C. MELTON

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act (HEA) of November 8, 1965 as part of his Great Society domestic agenda; a bill that "...provided scholarships for more than 140,000 needy students and authorized a National Teachers Corps" ("United States"). It was fair and provided help to those who needed it, yet much has changed in the 53 years since the bill was set in place. The price of books has more than quadrupled, and the price of college tuition has inflated to roughly about \$6,185 per year for a public four year college ("2007-2008 College Costs"). That is compared to \$255 per year in 1964 (Rockler-Gladen). The financial aid process has evolved some over the past 53 years, yet a rebuild or revolution would be sufficient. The financial aid process wrongfully relies on income and uncontrollable circumstances, such as race, instead of being directly linked to personal merit; payment procedures are also overdue for improvement.

Today's process of receiving financial aid relies on the student's racial background and parent(s) income as the main factors. Making everyone equal and providing aid to those who are unable to pay for the price of college are the strong points of this process. In 2003 the Alliance, an assembly of minority groups, pushed to establish a bill that would reenact and amend the HEA to allow racial minorities equality when searching for financial aid (Burd 49). The Alliance did not succeed in having the HEA re-enacted but some changes took place. The Alliance also achieved their goal to get scholarship committees to recognize minorities in the selection process (Burd 49). Yet, instead of establishing a racial equilibrium, the Alliance caused a bias for selection of financial aid. This means that in most cases a scholarship selection committee will choose a student that is from a minority over that of an equally or more deserving Caucasian student. The Alliance has made the Caucasian ethnicity seem like a plague for those hoping to attend college. I have applied to many scholarships and have outstanding credentials. The selection committees of many scholarships passed over me, only to reward the scholarship to a minority with lesser credentials. This has caused me to wonder if the Alliance is to blame for this simply because I checked "Caucasian" on the application.

The financial aid process is also deficient in the way the federal government selects the amount of money allotted to each student. The FAFSA process requires students to turn in their parent(s) tax information from the previous year and a questionnaire. Then a government official reviews all the information and the questionnaire. The questionnaire asks about family and household information such as "How many people live in your household" and "How many people in your household are currently employed." This type of information is taken into account when the government officials are determining something as significant as how much money the student needs to attend college. If a student says that they have six family members in their house and the two parents work full-time jobs, then that student would be more likely to receive an Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) rating that would qualify them for Pell grants and scholarships available to students with low EFC ratings (United States).

Nevertheless, in a ninety-eight question eight page questionnaire everything affecting the student's household and standard of living cannot possibly be asked (United States). For example, I am a Type 1 Insulin Dependent Diabetic; my diagnosis came at the age of three. This disease requires specified doctors and medications that cost upwards of \$1000 a month for supplies needed to live. FAFSA's questionnaire never once asked me a question regarding my ailment's expenses. This resulted in my EFC rating being \$10,427. My family does not have \$10,427 to give me to go to college because my diabetes costs about \$12,000 yearly. This would lead one to think there must be other financial obligations or situations the questionnaire is missing. As it is now the questionnaire is an inefficient process. But with more in depth questions about the people's background information and perhaps an interview with all applicants, the process could strengthen financial aid. The application for federal financial aid is not the only aspect of the collegiate atmosphere that requires review and revision.

The payment process of college is overly deserving of attentive revision. Students first apply to colleges, and once accepted, the student is responsible for paying for all classes and the additional fees or dues. Then students usually apply for scholarships from the school and other sources to try to help. As it is right now, this process is set up similar to very few if any other forms of professional

services. In most professional settings people complete a task then are rewarded for it, not given a reward then complete the task. The payment process is setup so that the full compensation comes first, then the education services come following the payment. It is sufficient in theory, but is there a better way? The answer is yes. The students could apply to college and receive acceptance based on ACT/SAT test scores as it is now, but instead of paying all costs up front, have it set up as a down payment up front of about 25% of the entire costs. Then require the payment of the remaining 75% after the semester. Then the scholarship committees can see the student's scores of that class and compensate them accordingly. This would allow students to earn their scholarships and put an end to scholarship committees giving money to students who end up dropping out and taking money away from students who are worthy and needing of that financial aid. College dropout rates for 1997 were an alarming 46% ("U.S. College Drop-Out"). That 46% of students consisted of many students that were relying on scholarships to cover the expenses of college. This means the money rewarded to the 46% via financial aid essentially did nothing.

The Federal Financial Aid solution would require the government's approval and resources, and government officials might say "If it's not broke don't fix it." Undoubtedly, something must be broken if an Honor Roll student with a 4.1 GPA and a disease as financially burdening as diabetes is deserving of no more than \$2,147 of financial aid. Traditionalists might feel that the down-payment solution would have a negative effect on the professors and their amount of pay. The 25% down payment could allow more students to apply and begin taking classes they would have never been able to afford otherwise, which would in turn mean more people passing the class, and relatively more money for the professors. The solutions given above are not simple solutions, and would even require revision once they are set in place, but the rewards and benefits would be most beneficial to America and its students.

The governmental financial aid system and the general payment process of college are processes or ideas that are in dire needs of a make-over. The education of students in America is extremely important not only to those thinkers and leaders that attend college but also to the Americans who choose not to attend college because the collegians are the people who usually attain positions

of power. It is a duty of America, as a country, to help its citizens achieve their goals or at least make their goals more reachable, and these solutions will definitely help everyone whose goal requires college or secondary schooling.

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PICKING UP THE PIECES

JULIE MCPHAIL

For two years I watched as my brother, my only brother, was eaten away by cancer. Leukemia, that's what he had. He was only 19 when he got it His name was Buster, actually, his given name was Steve Allen Smith but Buster to me and to everyone else who knew him. He was my dad's only son and my only brother and this is our story.

I remember his first injection of chemo. All of the family was there. We had waited for over a week just for a diagnosis and they immediately started the medicine. They warned us that they thought that's what it was, but said they wouldn't know for sure until the results came back. I remember being in the room, they gave him a big room because we had a lot of family there. Dad was there, two or three of my close cousins, several aunts and uncles, me, my mom and step dad, and my sisters. The room was filled with get well balloons, flowers (not too many, seeing how that's not real manly), and a giant fish

pillow that my daughter had picked out to keep him company. My brother lied there in the sterile, cold hospital bed that had now been his home for over a week. He had grown accustomed to the general hospital attire and actually was making it look pretty good. There were all kinds of tubes running from his pale, slender body into an IV machine that housed his entire hope for life. Each tube was filled with a different odd-colored liquid that was meant to sustain him through his upcoming round against the one they called "Death Angel." This wasn't a real death angel, or anything superstitious to the disease, it was, however, the most vile, deadly, strange neon medicine that his body would ever know. The staff had wheeled him in a T.V. cart with a Nintendo hooked up to it; they knew he'd be there for a while. They really took to him. Then one of his nurses, one I had not seen before, came in and started hooking up this bright, orange bag of fluids to his IV (I swear it looked nuclear). This medicine was so potent that the nurses wouldn't handle the fluid bags without gloves in fear that it might come in contact with their own skin.

"We call this the Death Angel" were the nurse's words, words that I will never forget. What a *stupid* thing to say! She went on to explain why they nick-named it that, but I still thought that was a really ignorant thing to say to people who had a dying son laying there in that bed. She must've been a moron! As I watched her carefully hook up the bag to a current IV, she of course was still rambling, the realization of what was happening took me over. My baby brother has cancer! I was screaming on the inside, but I was trying to be strong on the outside just for Buster. As I watched the florescent, orange fluid begin to creep in and fill up the tube running into a direct line to his main artery, I couldn't take it anymore. I ran out of the room crying. That's when I first realized that my life was changing its course forever. Something inside was happening to me, something that I could not explain. It was like someone had a key that unlocked my very being. They had taken the key, unlocked my soul and began ripping out pieces of my very core. At this time I definitely began to fall apart. I was not only losing him, but with every drip of the nuclear, orange fluid that fell into my brother's tired, limp body I was losing a part of myself.

Several weeks later remember driving him home from University Hospital in Fayetteville, Arkansas. He had just been released and had specifically requested that I

chauffer his hour and a half drive home. He'd been in there for about 2 weeks and was itching to get back home. Those were just first of many weeks that he had spent in that very hospital, that very room. We got to Dad's and Buster was really tired. The drive alone had totally exhausted him. I could tell that he wanted to talk and try to go one as normal, but I knew he was beat and so did he. He had just finished his first round of chemo and the doctors had forewarned us that the chemo would break him down.

He said "Sis, would you scratch my head? It itches." We knew this would happen. I knew that as I sat there, the chemo was eating away at my brother's hair follicles and they would fall out sooner or later. Of course, I was willing to do anything he asked, so I laid a pillow in my lap and he laid his head down and I started rubbing his head. He had cut his hair short, it was always short, but he had buzzed it pretty good this time. As I ran my fingers across his scalp I realized these tiny pieces of short, blond hair were coming out in my hand. It was happening, we knew it would. Wow, but it happened fast.

"Buster, it's coming out." I said. I said it in a goofy way, not shocked, not sad, just like-whoa-guess what, you're hair's falling out-way. I'm such a dork. Did I do anything right? He probably thought I was freaked out by it, I guess I kind of was, but we knew it was coming. It was ok, just part of the process.

"Welp, guess it's time to bic-it. You gonna help me? I don't think I can get the back" and he slowly started getting up. I knew what he meant; we had already talked about it. He told me that when it started coming out he wanted to "bic-it" which meant-lay the bic razor to his head and don't stop until all we see is his shiny bald scalp.

I followed him in the bathroom and watched him lather up his head and start shaving away, my poor brother, my baby brother. No one should have to go through this. I wonder if he knew then that the roughest parts were still to come, that this would actually be the easiest part of his journey. That losing his hair was actually nothing compared to spinal taps with no pain meds and a mouth so full of sores that he couldn't eat for weeks before his death. I wonder if he knew. When he got to the back of his head, I took over and finished it up. Then he rinsed his head in the sink and voila! Buster resurrected in the mirror a changed man. He looked in the mirror. We both just stood there for a second looking at our reflections in

the mirror. There was his new do just shining. He did have a pretty smooth head; it actually didn't look half bad, not lumpy like some people's heads. It was now official in his mind. He was ready to face the world, bald head and all, as a cancer fighter

There were many more tears and triumphs along this journey, too many for me to write about, each one carried its own joys and sorrows. Each small adventure along this cancer train brought with it growth and pain. Why did this happen? I don't know—all I do know is that my life has been forever altered by watching the selfless acts of someone much stronger than I. We shared so many good times throughout those 21 years. How is it that I've been able to make it this long without him? Here I am sitting in my kitchen with this box full of memories. Here I am a mess, a total wreck, every time I force myself to relive this. Here I am eight years later, still picking up the pieces.

IS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IMPORTANT TO OVERCOMING INJUSTICE?

JAYSON KENDRICK

When the rights of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness are extorted there are varied routes to reconciliation. An intractable government that unjustly persecutes a minority must be rectified by the ideology of civil disobedience. America was founded by courageous men and women who were passionate for winning their rightful freedom. Similarly, there were patriots like, Martin Luther King Jr., Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who championed the will of equality and justice through organized non-violent assertion, otherwise known as civil disobedience.

One of the most renowned opponents of civil disobedience was Lewis H. Van Dusen Jr. Van Dusen was very conservative in his translation of the Declaration of Independence with regard to civil disobedience. Van Dusen's main fears were the possible dissenters that may attempt to destroy a society of law under the guise of civil disobedience (Van Dusen 587). One might expect that the documented writings of our nation's founding fathers' could have quelled Van Dusen's anxiety. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson states, "a government's existence should not be refuted upon 'light and transient causes'" (Jefferson 451). Van Dusen's

framework for civil disobedience leaves no room for reform outside of democratic processes. He was very concerned about those who would willingly break the law to achieve their ends, but more so for opportunists who may stray from the right for their own evil purposes (Van Dusen 587). He often delineates King's approach to civil disobedience and his own, explaining that King had no moral grounds for breaking the law (Van Dusen 586). Conversely, Van Dusen, subscribed to Thoreau's point of view, and suggested civil disobedience allows for citizens refusal to pay their taxes (Van Dusen 586). Is not refusal to pay taxes breaking the law as well? King described his and his followers' inconsistencies in approaching the law:

Now the question comes into being, what is the difference, and who determines the difference, what is the difference between a just and an unjust law? Well, a just law is one that squares with a moral law. It is a law that squares with that which is right, so that any law that uplifts human personality is a just law. Whereas that law which is out of harmony with the moral law is a law which does not square the moral law of the universe. It does not square with the moral law of God, so for that reason it is unjust and any law which degrades the human personality is unjust (King 477).

One can look at the ideology of civil disobedience through the lens of philosophy. King's view was that man is neither innately good nor bad, but that we have "an amazing potential for goodness" (King 476). King's process for the resurrection of "positive peace" for suffering Negroes of the south hinged on this one idea (King, 476). King was approached by a well-meaning man in Alabama while on a march who was compelled to tell King how before he had started to rally marches and boycotts the white's and Negro's got along well, but King had destroyed the "harmony" they once enjoyed (King 479). King responded with a profound truth:

We have had a negative peace which is merely the absence of tension; we've had a negative peace, in which the Negro patiently accepted his situation and his plight, but we've never had true peace, we've never had positive peace. For we must come to see that peace is not merely the absence of some negative force, it is the presence of a positive force. True peace is not merely the absence of tension, but it is the presence of justice and brotherhood. I think this is what Jesus meant when he said I come not to

bring peace but a sword. Now Jesus didn't mean he came to start war, to bring a physical sword, and he didn't mean, I come not to make positive peace. But I think what Jesus was saying in substance was this, that I come not to bring an old negative peace, which makes for stagnant passivity and deadening complacency, I come to bring something different, and whenever I come a conflict is precipitated, between the old and the new, whenever I come a struggle takes place between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. I come not to bring a negative peace, but a positive peace, which is brotherhood, which is the Kingdom of God (King 479).

Van Dusen's views of man's inherent self-seeking behavior may have stemmed from his personal struggle with Nazism as an Assistant Chief of Staff to the Allied Forces during World War II. His experience probably led to his conviction that civil disobedience could open the door for destructive factions (Van Dusen 587). King makes a profound comparison of law and injustice in his *Love Law and Disobedience*, stating, "We must never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was 'legal'" (478).

Van Dusen suggests that King was not effective in his struggle for reform through civil disobedience, that it was essentially the courts that decided the outcome (Van Dusen 586). He attempts to nullify the effectiveness of King's movement, stating, "Since Supreme Court decisions in the end generally upheld his many actions, he should not be considered a true civil disobedient" (Van Dusen 586).

Van Dusen believed that democratic means alone are sufficient in confronting tyranny (Van Dusen 586). He, states that "While it is true that there is no more sacred document than our Declaration of Independence, Jefferson's "inherent right of rebellion" was predicated on the tyrannical denial of democratic means" (Van Dusen 586) Van Dusen's suggesting the Declaration of Independence was predicated on rebellion and that one should not protest as long as there is a democratic means to dispute tyranny is absurd. Jefferson clearly states the terms by which he felt a people should revolt against or alter a government. Furthermore, The Declaration of Independence has no reference to rebellion being an inherent right, but *it does* mention God given rights that

one should be ready to defend (Jefferson 451). Jefferson states, "But when a long rain of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security" (Jefferson 451). He also stipulates, should any government be destructive to the citizens' pursuit of happiness or impedes the rights given by their Creator, they should alter or abolish such a government (Jefferson 451).

Henry David Thoreau was influential in forming Martin Luther King's doctrine for civil disobedience that eventually delivered Black American's from an abhorrent oppression. It is plain from Thoreau's writing that he vehemently opposed most forms of government and believed man could essentially govern himself if left alone (Thoreau 573). He has even theorized that a government often instigates problems, stating "Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice" (Thoreau 574). Thoreau's ideas bordered on anarchy, but King believed that laws were to support citizens' moral values, and that civil disobedience must be practiced exclusively as a virtuous calling. King differed with Thoreau realizing a person must be pure of heart to enact change; whenever King described his precepts on civil disobedience he emphasized the importance of self-control and forgiveness (King 461). King stated this succinctly in his, *Love Law and Civil Disobedience*, while describing the individuals who were involved in organized protests:

Now, they are not anarchists. They believe that there are laws that must be followed; they do not seek to defy the law, they do not seek to evade the law. For many individuals who would call themselves segregationists, and would hold onto segregation at any cost seek to defy the law, they seek to evade the law, and their process can lead on into anarchy. They seek in the final analysis to follow a way of uncivil disobedience, not civil disobedience (478).

Gandhi led the nation of India in a civil revolt against their British oppressors. Their stance against British tyranny was to become humble, to disregard their selfish nature, and to become the change that they wanted to see in the world. The Indian people, led by Gandhi, submitted their very bodies before the firing lines and club wielding of

British soldiers, effectively defeating their opponent without firing a shot. Similarly, King employed a process of purification to ensure participants in his organized protests were prepared to refrain from retaliating against police brutality and all manner of strife (King 461). Gandhi described the force of non-violence as a *truth force*. In his Letter to Lord Irwin, he explains that he has seen the power of non-violence and believes it is the only way for India to gain true independence from Great Britain (Gandhi 443). When expounding upon the great upheaval among the violent factions of India and Britain, Gandhi, emphasizes the moral and social implications of not responding with a non-violent agenda: “To sit still would be to give reign to both forces above mentioned. Having an unquestionable and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer” (Gandhi 443).

In addition to Gandhi and King, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a champion for equality through petitioning the rights of women. Women were once denied basic rights granted to citizens by the Declaration of Independence. Women could not own property, or even the wages they earned. Women could not vote. Women could not get a college education. Women could not even participate in most church affairs. Reading the Declaration of Sentiments, by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, must have been alarming to prudent Americans of the mid nineteenth century. Declaration of Sentiments was a manifesto for women’s rights based on the Declaration of Independence. She appealed to the government with a disturbing appraisal of American society, and the affects of a non-inclusive policy for women as “the entire disenfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation” (Stanton 562). Stanton called on the government to alleviate the laws which “aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived” them of “their most sacred rights” (Stanton 562). After appealing to the opposition, Stanton continues to inform the government of her plans to rally support (Stanton 563). She defines her strategy in the final paragraph of Declaration of Sentiments:

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and National legislatures and

endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country (Stanton 563).

Finally, in 1920, over seventy years after the signing of the Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls, New York, the 19th Amendment was passed allowing women the right to vote. Stanton died in 1902.

Civil disobedience is crucial in stemming injustice and sustaining liberty. The rule of law is not an exclusive approach by which a democratic society enforces its values. As Thoreau would remind us, law alone may do little to benefit a man, and even less to uphold a moral code, unless those laws are challenged by truth (Thoreau 574). King would also remind us, there is more historical evidence to support rampant despotism running over the bewildered and downtrodden without the moral law of truth and civil disobedience to place it in check (King 473). There is an enduring legacy of hope among the voices of the many patriots who have challenged tyranny, that is, each felt it was an absolute moral obligation to do so. The “truth force” of Mahatma Gandhi, the “positive peace” of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the “God conscience” of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were victorious in the merciless face of tyranny, the blind eyes of hatred, and the narcissistic minds of indulgence, and they forever will be (King 479, Stanton 522).

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VISION BEHIND ROSE-COLORED GLASSES

MARY HOOGERHYDE

Imagine a world filled with love for one another where one can actually savor a peaceful life, and harmony really does exist. How beautifully perfect and what a wonderful place to live! My vision is a euphoric utopia where compassion and mercy is one's natural state of being. A place where the stronger one willingly aids the weaker one. A world where all can find justice and truth in all that is good; a certainty that will always hold true. No doubts remain, for betrayal does not exist in this honorable world. This is the vision behind my rose-colored glasses. Fortunately, at the age of 53 years, I have not chosen to let go of this pleasant and desired dream even though life repeatedly shows me the ugly reality of mankind. I do not desire to be desensitized to the plights of others, nor do I have the ability to change what my shattered heart and my burning soul holds near and dear. My God created me to love and sacrifice for my fellow man without seeking restitution. My reward is in the joy and contentment that I have discovered in doing these rightful deeds.

Perhaps therapists may call someone similar to me as being co-dependent, but truly, who do therapists think they are? These so-called normal individuals have lost sight of what all humanity had been expected to be for each other. I hope I never become as callus and blind-sighted as society believes one should. Then I would become as corrupt and deceitful, a deliberate liar to save-face, as I often view most of our society. This is a snake, one who has no spine and has forgotten, if one ever knew, what integrity means. In this present world, nearly every type of perverse life-style is acceptable including neglectful and abusive living conditions for helpless victims. Where is liberty? Has individual liberty really ever rang equally for all? I must scream loudly "NO!" Who really cares as long as hideous circumstances have no effect in people's precious lives? I care! Shall one change and betray one's self to fit outside of one's personal philosophical vision? I find myself pondering over and over with what type of insanity shall I become solaced to swallow such absurdity. I find no easy answer, no comforting excuse to permit such atrocities to become tolerable. Am I truly dysfunctional because I feel another's pain or acknowledge one's pain? God help me! I cannot understand how my actions are so despicable and loathsome. Am I blind to other's perception of my

self-worth? Better yet, of one's apparent destruction of delivering judgment in regards to my character and the humiliating label placed in black and white for all to exam until one becomes free from this hellish-prison called Earth? My soul cries for deliverance, yet no one hears! At least no one within the judicial system holding the position sworn by oath to take a stand for fairness; as long as one protects one's chain of command. I feel so defiled and thoroughly insulted with this sickening reality. I dare not release my pain for fear that rage shall follow my tears. I have always believed in truth, justice, and the American way, but more often than not, I question why and what for? My perception of truth, justice, and the American way only remains behind my vision in rose-colored glasses.

In reality, I must attempt to decipher clues and merely catch shadowed glimpses of my rose-colored vision. Usually I see all too clearly disturbing proof that my perfect world does not exist here on Earth, and this unpleasant existence lacks all I seek to fulfill whatever journey my creator has destined for me. Even though I have no clear discernment of what HE wills of me, my soul is willing, but my spirit is becoming weak from the piercing arrows of my enemies. Please grant me the strength and grace of perseverance necessary to sustain my state of life. I must accept that which I cannot and be willing to find forgiveness for my offenders. Will I be strong and humble enough to grant and forget these many offenses? One's hope and faith in a power greater than all men promises that in time this quest will be rendered. So be it! I lack the power to change anyone's thought process unless one is honest and open to digest another's philosophy freely. The power I possess must be adherent to the will of my God, not that of my limited human understanding. The bitter truth remains that I am not fond of, nor do I cherish, the chastisement bestowed upon me by others, who falsely state partial truths to cover their many lies.

I yearn for the freedom to thoroughly break the bondage from the deteriorating society in which I unwillingly must exist. Why should this freedom come after my demise? Why cannot one remain behind one's rose-colored glasses and live happily? Reality is often so unfair and painful for one to perceive. Whatever happened to goodwill and brotherhood for all? This too has vanished. Stop the madness! Wake-up and see the bureaucratic nightmare to which many fall prey daily. At what price

must one pay for justice to really be justice. One can perjure and intentionally deceive others and many consider this performance believable. Moreover the one who honestly swears to tell the whole truth is ruled as a liar beyond a reasonable doubt. Heaven help me to understand these twisted judges holding my fate within their all too human frailties. Why does one continue to look for the good in others? One's imperfections are only visible on one's outside appearance; this conceals all that is horrid and evil within one's shell. I have no reason to trust others, but repeatedly I do trust. How many times does it take before one no longer searches another's heart? Are there an exact number of interior scars and wounds for one to collect before one's search ends? I do not have the answers, but I do bare the wounds and scars.

All I know, beyond a shadow of doubt, is the true price of love is pain. Disillusionment follows this painful reality, but do I change and become hardened from life's disappointment? Unfortunately, no, but I find consolation with the awareness that wisdom has been acquired from the ugly and mean world in which I must remain until I reach my journey's end. Still one has little knowledge of one's sentenced term. Be assured the rewards for helping the least of humanity within this undeserving planet is in my perfect world. Mercy and kindness will conquer over evil, and love will conquer and mend all broken hearts. For now I will keep dreaming and longing for that joyous and harmonious utopia behind my rose-colored glasses.

The Muse is seeking submissions for its 2009-10 anthology. We accept works in the following categories:

Art, Poetry, Prose, and Essay

We may award cash prizes* to the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place winners in poetry, prose, & art.

Official Guidelines:

- SSC students, faculty, and employees may enter original works for publication; however, only students are eligible for cash prizes.
- No entry fee required.
- All written works submitted must be in Microsoft Word and transmitted via email or labeled disk/CD.
- Artwork should be submitted on disk as a jpeg (journal printed in b/w only).
- Those submitting works must fill out a permission of publication form for each entry. You will find these forms outside Kelli McBride's office (Scott #109-8), RayShell Palmer's office (Scott #109-6), and by the Sigma Kappa Delta bulletin board in the Scott Building.
- Deadline for entry is **October 26, 2009**

**The amount of cash prizes depends directly upon the availability of funds raised by members of SSC's chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society for Two-year Colleges. We accept and appreciate donations. Please contact faculty sponsors Rayshell Palmer (382-9563 or r.palmer@sscok.edu) and Jason Garrison (382-9289 or j.garrison@sscok.edu) if you'd like to make a donation.*



Art

1ST PLACE

THE HONEST TRUTH

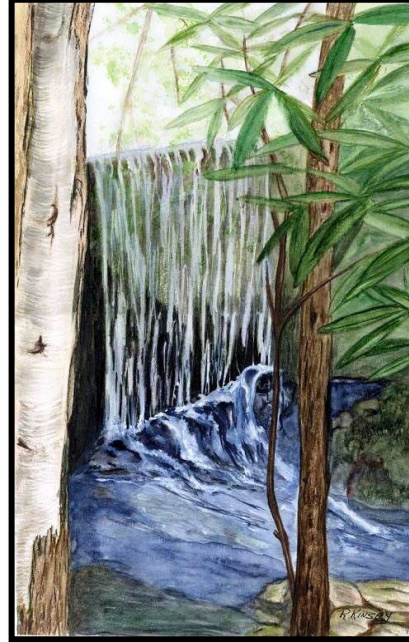
JANARAE BOREN



2ND PLACE

WATERFALL: HIGH HAMPTON

RUTH KINSEY



3RD PLACE

WAITING

JAYSON KENDRICK



HONORABLE MENTION

WILD RIVER CANYON

RUTH KINSEY



PROLONGING THE INEVITABLE

JANARAE BOREN



HONORABLE MENTION

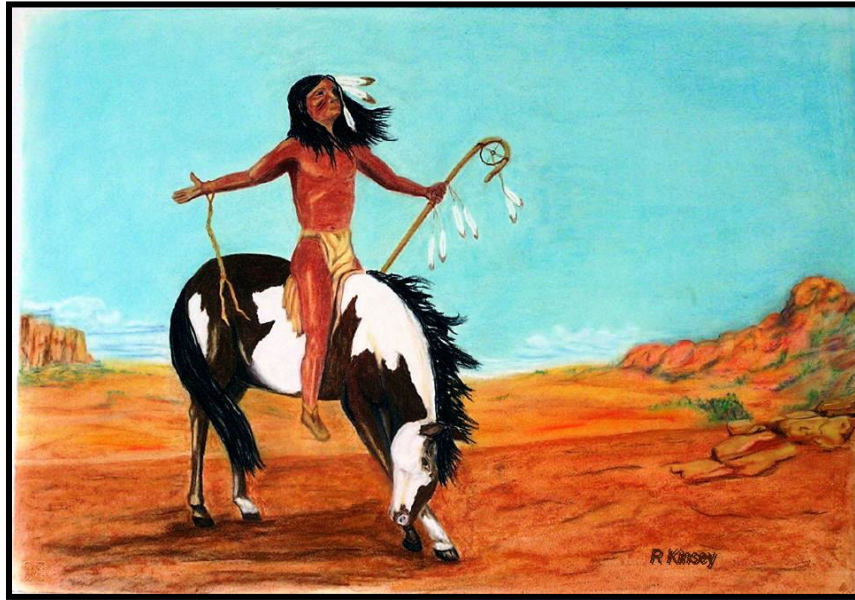
SAKUMA
HOLLY FIPPS



THE REFORMATION
JAYSON KENDRICK



INDIAN PAINT
RUTH KINSEY

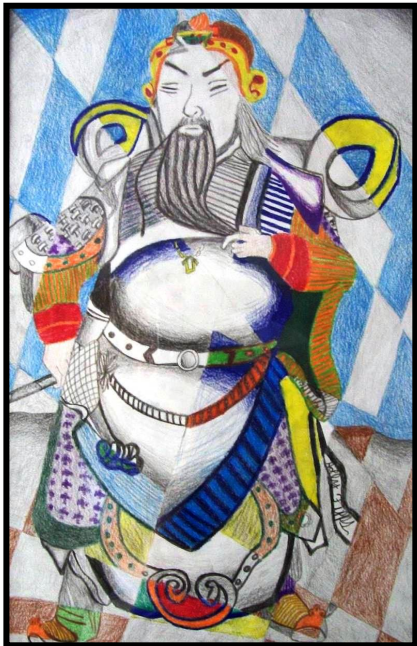


SIRIUS
JAYSON KENDRICK



HONORABLE MENTION

ABSTRACT WARRIOR
HOLLY FIPPS



LEN ITSUMA
HOLLY FIPPS



HAWAII
RUTH KINSEY



TUFFY
RUTH KINSEY



ANONYMOUS MODEL
HOLLY FIPPS



HONORABLE MENTION

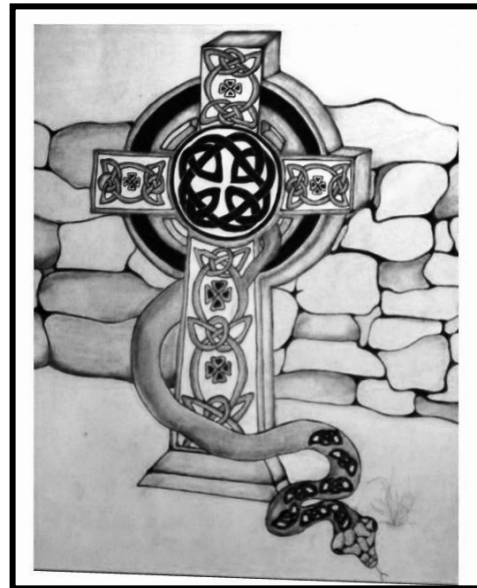
SUN GOD
LINDA QUALLS



THE OLD VIC
JAYSON KENDRICK



CELTIC CROSS
LINDA QUALLS



HONORABLE MENTION

SOLITUDE
RUTH KINSEY



OKLAHOMA SUNRISE
RUTH KINSEY

