

LOCAL AND GLOBAL IN PIMA COUNTY



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Pima Community College

Pima County

Local and Global in

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This project, created by student writers at Pima Community College, comes out of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Open Pedagogy Fellowship](#), sponsored by Montgomery College, with participants from higher education institutions across North America.

The team that developed the renewable assignments that students created for this LibreText consisted of an international social work professor from [Thompson Rivers University](#), a women's and gender studies professor from [Montgomery College](#), and a writing instructor from [Pima Community College](#). Together, we crafted relevant assignments that our students feel inspired to share, and that we, as readers, can feel inspired by when we read them.

We hope you enjoy looking at local and global issues, as we experience them in Pima County, Arizona, and finding connections with the ways that you experience them, wherever you are in the world. And most of all, we hope we all carry forward the inspiration to bring about change.

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Throughout my life, I have been interested in science. When I was a child, math and science were the only subjects I enjoyed studying. However, my fascination with STEM topics also meant I learned about the inherent dangers of the universe at a young age. For about a year, I was terrified of the inevitable expansion of the sun; it kept me awake at night. As I grew older I realized worrying about an event five billion years into the future was silly. The fear did not go away though; it transferred to issues we face now in our generation, the most dire being climate change.

Over the course of the last few decades, global warming has become one of, if not the greatest, threat to human wellbeing. The increase in heat globally has meant flooding and other dramatic weather events threaten millions of people's lives and livelihoods. Global warming's effects also have more noticeable effects on the people living in Southern Arizona. As a very dry region already, Tucson is threatened with increased energy costs, health risks, and maintenance issues more than the average United States city. Tucson needs to start mitigating climate change in an effort to curb these harmful effects on our communities.

Nine years ago I moved from Upstate New York to Arizona. Unlike in Arizona, where the lack of water is always an issue, the opposite was true in New York. Two floods that occurred not far apart were said to be so extreme they were only supposed to happen once within a hundred years. The intense weather points to climate change influencing where I lived. In recent years, it would be a difficult task to find a country or region that has not been affected by pollution, global warming, and climate change.

For Tucsonans, air conditioning is not a luxury, but a necessity. As temperatures rise from global warming, so too does the need for adequate cooling and the cost of electricity. Adding to this is the fact that Arizona's energy comes mainly from fossil fuels which means that solving the immediate problem of cooling our indoor environment is self perpetuating worse climate change

effects that will make our environments hotter. The solution to this issue would be to rely less on fossil fuels and more on green energy such as solar. If the trend of increasing temperatures continues there will eventually be no way to supply enough energy to our cities, towns, and homes.

Heat and the effects thereof, such as drought and violent weather, has increased in the nine years I have lived here, and is only a trend from a much longer history. For a long time I immensely enjoyed playing outside at parks and swimming at local pools. The increase in heat, however, has made me stay inside more frequently in the past few years. Even pools, which have a cooling effect, can be made negative if sunscreen is not properly applied. The monsoon seasons that are supposed to cool things down have shown a clear trend in producing quicker and more violent storms rather than longer, peaceful rains.

The changes in our local and global environments beg the question then, how should we respond to the issue on a personal level? Rising temperatures in Southern Arizona present a harsh and difficult situation for residents moving forward. Would it be better to move somewhere else entirely? Speaking personally, the danger to my health and happiness from living in Tucson during the worsening effects of climate change is less than ideal. I do not want to spend the rest of my life continuously worrying about the next big heat wave melting the tires of cars or causing a power usage spike from an increase in cooling needs.

At the center of the issue is uncertainty. Climate change is one of if not the most dangerous threat to humans. However, it wasn't always like this. Only since the industrial revolution has climate change been an issue beyond the ice ages every hundred thousand years. The question remains, however: why hasn't anyone fixed climate change in the decades since it has been known about, and what could be done?

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When it comes to the climate crisis most people do not think much of it and many think it is something that affects our weather and nothing more. But the climate crisis is bigger than we think it is and affects a lot more than just the weather. This issue goes beyond weather as I have stated and can lead to long-lasting devastating effects on our Earth. The climate crisis is used as a term to describe climate change and global warming and the long-lasting impact they will have on the earth.

I used to be one of the people who did not take something like the climate crisis seriously and was not educated on the matter either. I decided to look more into this issue when I started taking more of an interest in things such as politics and things of that nature. My interest was sparked when I saw a young girl getting attention from people all over the world talking about climate change and how she wanted world leaders to act on this issue. Her name is Greta Thunberg and at the time when everyone started talking about her, she was only 15 it was interesting to see someone this young take a stand for what they believe in and stand up to her government. I decided to look more into her and what she was taking a stand for, and it helped open my eyes to climate change and global warming and I got a better understanding of what exactly it was. This was the first time I grasped what exactly climate change was and made me want to act on the matter to see what I could do to help our earth.

Upon realizing what the climate crisis was and just how many things it could affect I decided to ask about how it affected the people around me. I started with my mom and her point of view to see in what ways the climate crisis has affected her life. What opened her eyes to the climate crisis was the issue of global warming. With global warming, she started to realize that the winters were starting to become colder, and the summers were becoming hotter. She then had to start adjusting her thermostat to keep her house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. This caused her to start paying more attention because her electric bill started to go up. After all, the cost of energy was going up.

Another person who tells their story of how climate change has affected them is Alexandria Abuzanuq Ivanoff a young woman who is a communications intern at WWF and is from Unalakleet, Alaska, a small hunting and fishing community on the northwest coast. She grew up in Alaska hunting and fishing living off the land with her family and others in the community, so she has had the chance to see how the climate crisis has affected her home firsthand. Alexandria says that there has been a significant decrease in certain salmon species such as dog salmon, king salmon, and silver salmon. It is due to “the rapid

temperature increase in oceans and headwaters where they spawn” (Ivanoff). She goes on to talk about how the work that took her grandmother only a few days, such as fishing, now takes twice as long just to bring in the same number of fish.

While we know that the climate crisis affects weather patterns. These have a big impact on wildlife and human life. In a way, the climate crisis is a ripple effect because it could first affect the weather patterns such as causing a drought where people live this drought could then lead to little or no food production which puts the people at risk of starving. The article “Climate Impacts on Agriculture and Food Supply” talks about how climate change can affect crops. It says between 2010 and 2012 cornfields across the U.S. Corn Belt experienced high nighttime temperatures which lead to premature budding. This caused \$220 million in losses for Michigan cherries in 2012.

Now knowing all that climate change affects it is important to ask yourself what you could do to help the climate crisis and reduce your carbon footprint. A small change you could make is recycling if you do not already. With reducing your carbon footprint, you could try alternative methods as opposed to driving such as walking, biking, or public transportation. Another way to help is by spreading your knowledge about climate change with others around you so you can make a bigger impact.

After doing all this research on the climate crisis it is rather shocking how it ties into everything and should be looked at as one of the most important issues facing us today. The climate crisis is more important than people think, and it is better we start paying attention now rather than later before the damage that is done to our earth is irreversible.

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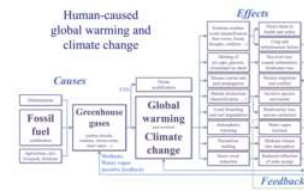


Take a stance!
 What do you do,
 When the place that was once green
 is now brown and gloom,
 the sky that was once clear and bright
 is now fogged off with smoke,
 glaciers are melting
 and sea levels are rising,
 summers are hotter
 and winters are colder,
 droughts are becoming more intense
 and storms more severe,
 our planet is screaming for help
 and we are choosing to ignore it?



Our climate crisis is real
 and it is human caused
 Greenhouse gases have to be controlled!
 We can't stop or reverse the damage
 but we can slow the rate
 Take a stance

and make a change
 be the change
 you want to see



Join forces
 and share information
 Reduce, reuse, and recycle
 Place pressure
 and speak up
 Urge government to take climate action now
 Take a stance!



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This Tumblr presents current barriers to accessibility for disabled individuals, as well as proposing some solutions. View this entry at <https://barrierstoaccess.tumblr.com/>.

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Darkness. Absolute darkness. Not a sound except the humming of the engine filled her ears. In the forty years of Evelyn Smith's life, she had never driven on such a tortuous, deserted road nor known the feeling of such fear.

Zoom. Another sound cut through the humming. Evelyn's fear now bloomed into sheer terror. Out of the corner of her eye, a flicker of light rushed toward her. A shiver of panic ran down her spine as she tried to react, but it was too late. Screech! Within a millisecond, a driver high on meth rammed into her. Everything spun around and blurred before going pitch black.

Beep, tick, tick. Evelyn slowly aroused to the faint sound of machinery. Brightness. Absolute brightness. She struggled to open her eyes as the light forced her eyelids back down. The stench of cleaning products saturated the air.

"Where am I?" she asked herself.

She nudged her eyes open and glanced around to find a man in a white coat scribbling on a clipboard. The man looked up from his papers and locked eyes with her for a moment. She no longer felt fear, but those fatigued eyes did not fill her with comfort.

"Ah, good to see that you're finally awake. My name is Dr. Wiley."

"What's happening? The last thing I remember was driving and hearing a loud sound," she interrupted.

The doctor looked over at his notes before replying, "Yes, you were in a bad car accident. When you arrived here, your right leg was severely injured."

Just as he said that Evelyn felt something strange about her right leg. She tore away her sheets to find that her right foot and most of her lower leg were missing; the remaining part of her right leg was sealed with staples. As her eyes turned to the doctor, a sense of horror overtook her. Noticing this, the physician quickly started to discuss her current condition.

"The injury caused severe loss of blood flow to your leg. We tried very hard but couldn't save it. If we hadn't amputated it, you would have died," explained the doctor while struggling with his discomfort.

Babble, babble. She watched his mouth move, but the words no longer made sense. Her mind went numb. Evelyn felt her stomach do cartwheels as she stared at her leg in dismay. Her heart began to race while her body bathed in sweat. Her mind languished in a state between disbelief and despair. Hyperventilating, Evelyn frantically asked the doctor, "What's going to happen to me?"

The doctor paused, put aside his clipboard and his discomfort. Gently, he sat beside her, and locked eyes with her once again.

"You're going to be ok," he consoled. His words started to make sense again. "This kind of injury takes time to recover. While you're in the hospital, we'll help with healing your wound and

treating any pain. Then, you'll be transferred to a rehabilitation hospital where the therapists will teach you how to become independent by taking care of yourself and ambulating. We have better technologies now to help achieve this. Ultimately, we will get you a prosthetic limb."

At the utterance of these words, Evelyn's ears perked up with a faint sliver of hope.

"Prosthetic? So, that means I could walk on my own again and go back to my old life?"

"Yes," the doctor replied. "It might take some time and adjustment, but that is possible."

She gained her courage, took a deep breath, and proclaimed, "I plan to work very hard to recover and get my life back."

"I know you will," smiled Dr. Wiley.

After about a few days at the hospital, Evelyn was transferred to a rehabilitation hospital. Her favorite place by far was the rooftop, where she would watch the birds fly around whenever she felt homesick. Her townhome was small, but comfortable given her modest salary as a lab technician. In her back patio resided a bird feeder frequently visited by a family of cardinals. Every morning, her avian friends with their royal rouge coats would greet her with a fanfare of whistles. During these times, her mind would fall into a spiral of sadness while remembering her life before the injury.

"If only I could go back in time," she thought to herself. Most agonizing of her sorrows was her longing for her right leg. Taking a simple stroll around the park, going to the bathroom without assistance, or even shaving her right leg, were all distant memories that she yearned to get back. She eventually brought back her courage. "Just hold on," she said to herself, "Once I get better, all will be ok."

She eagerly attended her therapy sessions putting in full effort. Finally, her hard work was starting to pay off. Within a month she was able to hop around with a walker for balance. Shortly after, she was ambulating with crutches. Evelyn believed that she would soon qualify for a prosthetic leg.

"Great job Evelyn! You've made a lot of improvement and progress!", the physical therapist beamed.

"Thank you! Do you know how much longer until I get my prosthetic leg?" Evelyn inquired.

"I believe you are ready for one now, but your insurance is causing a delay." Not fully registering what the therapist just said, Evelyn stared at her blankly.

"What do you mean?" Evelyn asked.

"Well, your insurance company has been giving us a hard time on approving the prosthetic, but don't worry we'll be on their backs until they approve it."

Evelyn forced a smile, but feelings of surprise and fury swirled inside her.

"All these years I've been paying health insurance premiums that I never really used," she thought to herself. "Now the *one* time I actually need help, they're giving me a hassle instead of paying their part."

The next day, while blissfully watching some birds glide around, Evelyn's therapist rushed over to her.

"Hey, what's going on?" Evelyn asked.

"Hi, something urgent regarding your situation has come up. Could you come with me to discuss it?"

"Um, sure," Evelyn replied, concerned.

As they walked down to the meeting room, an unsettling aura of tension surrounded Evelyn. The therapist then turned to her and spoke.

"Evelyn, as you know, you have been making excellent progress. Unfortunately, your insurance company feels that you no longer qualify to stay at our rehab facility. As a result, we will be forced to discharge you to your house in a few days."

Crack. Just like that, Evelyn's entire recovery plan shattered before her. All the worries that she had buried underneath her thoughts once again rose to the surface. Her breath became heavy as she tried to process what she was just told. After some time, Evelyn finally found her voice.

"What's going to happen next? What about my prosthetic leg?"

Understanding Evelyn's distress, the therapist explained, "We'll be taking you with us for a visit to your house tomorrow. Once there, we'll evaluate to make sure you have everything you need to manage at home, especially since you live by yourself. Your prosthetic leg, unfortunately, will not arrive until later. I know this is not ideal, but we can still make it work by having you continue with therapy as an outpatient. We can have you fitted and trained on the prosthetic leg once it arrives. Your insurance will cover all this."

"Wait a minute," Evelyn interjected, "how will I get there? I don't have anyone to drive me."

"We do have services that can drive you to your appointments and therapies, but you will have to pay for those out of pocket since insurance does not cover them."

"I'm not sure if I have enough money to afford that. Are there any free options?"

After thinking for a minute, the therapist replied, "Not to my knowledge."

Since she was so focused on her recovery, Evelyn completely forgot that she should have been receiving disability pay from her company. Although she felt relief at this thought, she also felt sadness for others that were not as fortunate as her and didn't have the money to continue with their recovery.

"Actually, now that I think about it, I should be able to handle that until I can get my prosthetic leg and get back to work."

Her therapist smiled. "Glad to hear that."

That night, as Evelyn stared at the ceiling, she decided that maybe returning home wouldn't be so terrible. After all, she could manage to move around on her crutches, and she truly did miss the comfort of her home. A lullaby of sounds from the birds in her yard played in her mind as she drifted off to sleep.

The day of Evelyn's discharge finally arrived. A blend of apprehension and excitement weaved inside her. She thanked her therapists that were part of her care.

Once she reached home, she was greeted by the familiar face of her blue townhouse. Beyond its brown fence, her small yard was slightly overgrown with weeds popping out in some spots. Her bird feeder was completely bare, and the flowers on her front deck looked a bit parched. The house itself was small. Evelyn had lived here since she got out of college, so the blue paint now had some splotches of brown, and her rusty gutters had bits of leaves and branches resting in them. One may say that it's far from perfect and appears unruly from the lack of constant care. Nevertheless, the sight of her home, no matter how raggedy, melted Evelyn's worries away.

Cheep, chirp. When Evelyn opened the door, the serenade of the cardinals outside and the aroma of a faint vanilla candle that would constantly burn in her house greeted her. She noticed all her equipment such as the walker, wheelchair, and shower safety gear were already set up as promised during her home visit with the therapists. As she hobbled over to the bathroom, she realized how lucky she was to have a full bathroom downstairs. In fact, she recalled her therapist saying how some patients were forced to move out of their homes if they couldn't access their bathrooms on the second floor. Even though she could use her downstairs bathroom, all of her bedrooms were located on the second floor. During the home visit, her therapist concluded that the first floor had enough room to add a hospital bed until she could use the stairs.

On her kitchen table laid a mountain of mail that accumulated during Evelyn's absence. Sighing, she slowly started sorting through the pile.

"Junk mail, bill, junk mail, bill, bill, bill."

Evelyn was taken aback by the amount of bills she received from the hospitals, doctors, and others involved in her care. Although her insurance did cover a portion, she still owed quite a bit. On top of that, she still needed enough money to pay for her transport for appointments and therapy sessions. Not to mention, the payments necessary for food and food delivery. Originally, she was supposed to get her food through a community service called Meal-on-Wheels. However, due to understaffing and underfunding issues, she was placed on a waiting list.

"Great! Now I get to be on a *hunger* waiting list." Evelyn sarcastically remarked to herself. "How does that even make any sense?"

With all these aspects combined, the amount of money she owed fell far out of her measly budget. Evelyn propped open her laptop to check her bank statements. As she stared at the screen, she deeply sighed. Even in conjunction with the money she got from her company's disability program, the bills and expenditures would send her straight into debt.

"Oh my God!", she blurted, "Am I going to have to sell my house?"

A thought that would have never crossed her mind, but now may become her unavoidable reality. She started to breathe heavily as she stared at her amputated leg. A pit of sorrow engulfed her while nausea emerged from her stomach. Her mind began to wonder.

"What might have happened if my insurance let me stay at the hospital longer? Would I have been able to get my prosthetic and not be in this predicament? What if there were more groups

like Meals-on-Wheels, but focused mainly on food for the disabled? What if there were agencies that could provide caregiving at home for the disabled at no cost?"

Evelyn's head pounded with these questions. Thoughts of her home being forcefully stripped away caused a wave of doom to crash upon her. For the first time since the accident, the reality of losing her leg punched her. Even the melody of her feathery friends could not ease her pain this time. Suddenly, an avalanche of tears gushed forth. She had no one to turn to. No one to understand what she was going through. That light of optimism that once kept her going against all odds had now finally extinguished. All that remained inside was darkness. Absolute darkness.

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There are some in the United States today, who believe that we live in a modern, and progressive society. One where the civil rights struggles of the past have been won, and reactionary prejudice is on its way out of the societal mainstream. While this mindset is certainly comforting and palatable to the majority, it is unfortunately far removed from the pragmatic reality of our country today.

Racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and many other breeds of foul prejudice run rampant in society today, both subtly and out in the open. As a transgender person, and member of the broader LGBT+ Umbrella, I go through every day knowing that there is a dedicated movement against people like me. Because of this, I have had a vested interest in keeping track of the various trends and positions on transgender rights within the state of Arizona. Unfortunately, the current outlook is far from ideal. Not only are transgender individuals at risk of their rights being violated by transphobic individuals, but in the state legislature by mainstream political politicians as well.

Individual prejudice, by its very nature, is hard to measure in concrete terms. Sure, there are indicators, red flags, and dog whistles to look out for. But for every individual who is mask-off in their hatred, there are many more who practice it subtly.

Individual transphobia can come in many different forms. Sometimes, it comes in the form of derogatory comments and targeted harassment. Other times, it comes in the form of slashed car tires and physical assault. Maybe your boss writes you up for uniform noncompliance, or a police officer decides that your safety isn't worth his time.

Ask anyone in the transgender community, and you will find countless stories of how they have personally been impacted by this, especially within the realms of economic and employment equity. It is a generally accepted reality that one must conceal their true gender identity from their employer and coworkers until they are absolutely certain that they won't react negatively. And even then, the tolerance of an environment can change almost at a moment's notice.

And when that happens, the process of inevitable termination is almost inevitable. As mentioned previously, the process is rarely direct. Now, most prejudiced people are aware that they can only be so direct in their hatred. The more blatant one is, the better of a case they are handing to the opposing lawyer in the inevitable wrongful termination suit. So, they try to craft the ideal set of termination circumstances. Sometimes, it comes in the form of weaponized allocation of hours; cutting someone's hours to nonviable levels, or scheduling them to work beyond their availability. Other times, as alluded to previously they face unwarranted or harsher write-ups over infractions than their cis-normative peers. The end goal is always to create enough plausible deniability over the termination so that the person being fired doesn't have any recourse.

All these actions, both big and small, foster an atmosphere of normalized trans-phobia. To put it simply, it turns transgender individuals into an "other"; a deviation from the norm. Human beings have a nasty tendency to do horrible things once they think another person is an "other". As this process continues, and more and more people adopt these attitudes, it can inevitably lead to increased attempts to implement transphobic policy at the state level.

It is no secret, that the conservative political bloc in Arizona has rarely been an ally of the LGBT community. However, starting in the latter half of the 2010s, more and more emphasis has been placed on targeting the transgender community. Whether it be the hysteria over allowing transgender people to use their preferred bathrooms, the belief that teaching the concept of gender identity is a form of grooming, or the calls to ban all forms of transgender healthcare, it has become more and more apparent that the community has become one of their main targets.

When gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake decided to change her platform to appeal to the radical far-right demographic in Arizona, one of the first things she did was to distance herself from her previous support of transgender individuals. She went from supporting transgender youth to stating that their existence is a calculated attempt to mess with god's creation. She is running on the promise that, as governor, she would do everything within her power to crack down on the transgender population (Kaczynski and Steck).

Kari Lake's platform as governor is merely a continuation of the precedent set by other elected officials aligned with the Arizona Republican Party. Doug Ducey, who is still the current governor at the time of writing, has a mixed, but transphobic-leaning record on signing anti-LGBT bills into law (Levesque, "Arizona governor Doug Ducey"). Two of this year's major anti-transgender pieces of legislation, Senate Bill 1045 and Senate Bill 1046, were both authored by state representative and paragon of the Arizona far-right Wendy Rogers (Levesque, "Arizona lawmaker"). Unfortunately, both of the bills were signed into law, setting a dangerous precedent going into the next half of the midterms and beyond ("Legislature passes 2 bills").

I will admit, it can be hard to write about issues like this sometimes. As someone who is trans myself, I have a well-versed understanding of the prejudice that exists towards individuals like me within society. However, at the same time, there is part of me that doesn't want to dwell on it too much. It is really hard to sleep easy at night knowing that the belief that you are inherently invalid and a harmful scourge that needs to be wiped out is a politically viable position of political standing. I think a lot of cis-normative people don't really want to think about it either. However, the only way to solve a problem is to recognize how severe of a situation it is. When lives, rights, and quality of existence are on the line, freezing like a deer in the

headlights will lead to nothing but sorrow and suffering in the long run.

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A Helping Meal - by Alivea Addleman

Ana shoved a packaged sandwich into her backpack, ignoring the growling in her stomach as she looked at it.

Around her, her teammates slipped on their practice jerseys. The basketball team's first game was in two days, which means all of them would really have to buckle down today to memorize the defense.

Ana twisted her fingers around her own jersey and pulled it down over her head. An anxious bubble was swelling in her chest, and she had a bad feeling that today's practice would be a difficult one. Not only because Coach would push her and her teammates hard, but because she had hardly eaten anything all day.

"Ana, come on!" One of her teammates shouted as she left the locker room, leaving the door open so Ana could follow her out.

To Ana's disdain, she had been vague about how hard today's practice would really be. While Coach promised that tomorrow's practice would be easy, today was hardcore conditioning and even harder defense drills.

Her leg muscles throbbed as she did defensive slides up and down the court, and soon it wasn't just her legs, but her head too. The headache started out small and manageable, but the more Ana pushed herself—the harder she tried to keep up with everyone—the more her head screamed at her and she gasped for breath.

It wasn't soon enough that Coach called for a water break. All the team was panting for air from the workout, but Ana was the worst. To her panic, she began to see small, white stars appear in the corner of her vision, and before she knew it, she was on the ground, cheek pressed to the hardwood floor.

"Oh my gosh! Ana, are you ok?" A teammate said, who rushed over to her and put a hand on Ana's shoulder.

"I'm fine," Ana said, pushing herself up and trying to blink away the stars. Her teammate helped her up, and Ana's eyes met Coach Harrison's, who looked concerned.

Ana's cheeks flushed with embarrassment, and she quickly turned away, scolding herself for being so weak.

The rest of the practice went by quickly to Ana, who couldn't remember a thing she had learned about defense. She was too busy remembering to breathe and blinking away the small white stars that kept flicking in and out of her vision so she wouldn't pass out again.

When practice was over, and Ana was removing her court shoes, Coach Harrison approached her.

At first, Ana ignored him, but then he squatted down to speak to her at her level on the floor.

"Hey, Ana." He said. "Do you have time to talk?"

"Yeah, I guess," Ana said.

"Are you feeling ok for practice tomorrow? You seem a little under the weather." He said with kind concern.

"I'm fine. Just tired." Ana said. Her stomach was twisting, half with hunger, and half with unease. She didn't want to admit that she hadn't eaten hardly anything all day. She knew she should, but she hated to admit that she hadn't brought any food from home. And Ana didn't want her classmates to know that the only thing she could eat in a day was what the school provided.

"Do you know why you are tired?" Coach Harrison asked. As if he read her mind, he followed up with,

"Did you eat anything today?"

"Yeah," Ana fibbed quickly, guilt tugging at her core for lying to her coach. "I'm just tired."

Coach Harrison looked at her for a moment, trying to decide if she was telling the truth. "Ok. Just remember that if you need anything you can talk to me. I am here if you ever need help."

"Thanks, Coach," Ana said.

Ana got home that evening with a slight frown plastered on her face. She was deep in thought, and she almost didn't see her younger sister Sage sitting at the table and mulling over a book.

"Hey!" Sage called to her as Ana locked the door behind her. Sage was thirteen years old and sweet, not to mention Ana's best friend. The sisters did everything together when they could, but recently Ana had been so bogged down with school and sports that the two sisters had hardly been able to talk to each other.

"Hey," Ana said, placing her backpack down and unzipping it. She grabbed the sandwich she brought from school and went over to the table where Sage sat. During lunch, she had made sure to grab the sandwich when no one was looking, so the kids in the cafeteria wouldn't make fun of her. Unpacking it, she then handed it to Sage.

"Awesome," Sage said, grabbing the sandwich and taking a big bite of it. Ana watched her sister devour the sandwich thoughtfully. She noticed that Sage was getting so skinny.

While Sage was mid-chew, she looked up at Ana. "How was practice?"

Ana shrugged, going to the nearby refrigerator and mulling through the few condiments the side shelf held, and grabbing a ketchup packet.

"Don't you have a game in a couple of days?" Sage asked, licking her fingers as she finished the sandwich.

"Yeah. On Thursday. Day after tomorrow." Ana replied. She opened the ketchup packet and downed it whole.

Sage made a disgusted face, and then a wave of realization came over her. "Ana, did you eat at school?"

"No," Ana said casually, tossing the empty ketchup packet into the trash can.

"Are you serious?" Sage said, appalled at her own short-sightedness. "You let me eat this whole sandwich and you haven't eaten?"

"I don't mind," Ana said, and on cue, her stomach growled loudly.

Sage crossed her arms and raised her eyebrow at her sister. "Seriously, Ana. They offer free meals at school. Why don't you just suck up your pride and take enough for *both* of us? Talk to your Coach! He'll totally understand!"

"No, Sage it's—" Ana started.

"Too embarrassing?" Sage interrupted, putting her hand on her head. "Ana, sucking during practice is embarrassing. Not being able to keep up with your team is embarrassing."

Ana frowned at her sister. "It is! But it's also embarrassing to admit that we don't have enough money to bring our own food to school! It's like I'm the only one who doesn't have enough money for stuff I like. And all the kids watch when you go up to grab food. And no one *ever* grabs more than one serving. I'd look stupid."

Sage rubbed her forehead and sighed, and Ana crossed her arms around her stomach. There was a silence that settled between the two of them.

"Where is mom?" Ana asked finally, looking around.

"Working."

"Did she mention the next time she's going to go grocery shopping?"

"Nope."

Ana stood, "I'm going to do my homework."

Gathering her backpack, Ana headed to the bedroom that she and Sage shared. But before she closed the door behind her, Sage called out.

"Hey, Ana. Please just think about what I said."

"I will," Ana replied softly as she glanced back at her sister.

The next day, Ana swallowed her self-induced shame and took Sage's advice, and grabbed a breakfast bar that the school was providing. Her cheeks were hot as she walked to her next class, but to her surprise, no one paid her any mind as she consumed the bar. It was the same at lunch, and Ana found that she was not the only one who accepted the free lunch that the school provided. In honesty, as Ana ate, she found herself embarrassed that she punished herself for so long by being too scared to accept the food. The other kids didn't seem to care.

To Ana's excitement, though her headache was still present, practice went so much better than the day before, and she felt as if she was better prepared for the game tomorrow. The drills

went smoothly, and Ana was able to focus better on what Coach Harrison taught.

The outcome of her practice prompted Ana to reconsider her previous standpoint about asking for extra food.

Taking a deep breath to calm her nerves, Ana flagged Coach Harrison down after practice. He was pumping up deflated basketballs in the storage room. Ana stepped in timidly, trying to encourage herself to be honest.

"Coach, I just wanted to say thanks for talking with me yesterday," Ana said. "I really appreciate your concern."

"For sure. If you ever need anything, I will do my best to help you out." He replied.

"Thanks," Ana said. And then she hesitated. She didn't have any food to bring home to Sage, and she wondered if her Coach would help her with that. "Actually, I had a question."

"What's up?" Coach Harrison asked, checking the air pressure of a ball.

"My mom has been low on funds recently and..." Ana bit her lip. But Coach Harrison paused his chore and waited for her to finish. "And, well, I was wondering if there is something I can take home for my sister Sage to eat until my mom can get back on her feet."

Without missing a beat, Coach Harrison hopped up. "Of course! There is actually an after-school program that serves meals for the kids who stay at school and study. I usually take a couple of meals home for my kids after practice."

"You...do?" Ana asked, surprised that her Coach would so readily admit that.

"For sure! The food's not bad, either. Lots of fruit and protein. Here, let's go grab some together. They usually have it up in the admin building."

Together, Ana and Coach Harrison walked to the administration building. Ana's excitement was building at the prospect of being able to finally eat dinner with Sage again, and more importantly, Sage being proud of her older sister.

As Coach Harrison had said, the meals were packaged and ready to be taken. A lunch lady, one that Ana recognized from the cafeteria, was packing it up. When the lunch lady saw Ana and Coach Harrison approach, she smiled.

"Well, hello!" She exclaimed. "Are you here for a meal? I was about to pack 'em up. You're just in time."

"That sounds great. Thanks, Dina." Coach Harrison replied and grabbed three meals for himself and his sons. Dina smiled and returned to packing up the meals.

Ana followed suit of her coach, grateful to duplicate the actions of someone she trusted. Ana grabbed two; one for her and one for Sage.

"You can take a couple more if you want." Coach suggested.

Ana paused, considering. “Are you sure?”

“Of course!” He said, reaching to grab three more meals and handing them to her. “For the weekend.”

Ana looked at the lunch lady for approval, and she too smiled. “It’s for the students to eat. You may as well.”

“Well, okay then,” Ana said, putting the meals in her backpack.

As Coach Harrison and Ana left the building, he turned to her. “Whenever you are hungry, feel free to grab as many of those meals as you need. The school always has something for the kids who stay after school.”

“Thanks, Coach,” Ana said. “And thank you for helping me. I’ll admit, I was a bit embarrassed to ask.”

Coach Harrison smiled, “I know exactly how you feel. But you will feel so much better now that you have food to eat! I know my boys and I enjoy it. And you’ll be ready for our game tomorrow, too.”

Ana just smiled.

With one more thank you and goodbye, Ana headed home. For once, she was excited to walk into the old apartment building and have something to eat.

As Ana opened the door, Sage was again sitting at the table with her homework.

“Is mom working again?” Ana asked, throwing her backpack on the ground and approaching the table.

“Yeah. She won’t be back till tonight.” Sage said.

Ana placed the multiple meals down on the table, letting the sound of the packaged plates do the talking for her.

Sage lifted her head from her book, and her expression lit up. “Oh gosh, Ana.”

“It’s from school, like you suggested,” Ana said a bit sheepishly, her stomach rumbling with the prospect of food. “I took your advice and asked Coach Harrison if he had any thoughts on our situation, and it turns out there is an after-school free meal for students who stay to do sports or study. I had no idea.”

Sage laughed, “That is so awesome! And no one minds if you take all this? There have to be five or six meals here!”

“Nope! Coach *wanted* me to take more!” Ana said. With that, the two sisters opened their lunches, and each bit into an apple.

“Ana,” Sage addressed her sister. “Thanks for asking for the food. I know it was hard, but look how it turned out!”

Ana just smiled back at her little sister, silently agreeing with her, and the two finished their meals together. Both of them happy at being in the company of the other, they relished the food they had been given and enjoyed feeling full for the first time in days.

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Dear Adam,

As you look back to everything you learned about previously about human rights, ask yourself, “Why is this still a problem today?” You can tell yourself that human rights are the foundation for all humans to be treated with respect and dignity, and nobody, no matter the color, gender, religion, or race should be defined by. As we look to a more recent human rights issue, the Black Lives Matter movement, it truly is disheartening that to this day, we as humans are unable to treat each other like a human being.

I wonder why people think they have superiority over other people, when you think about it truly, we are all going to die and after that we really will not matter to the face of the Earth, so why someone you should not and start being the person you are supposed to be. The issue of human rights can be seen as a global issue because every day people are being racially discriminated and injustice against, whether it be because of your skin color or even your beliefs. Something that I often think about is why there is a group called the LGBTQ+ community, there are all the same person and you and I, so why should we put them in a group, they are also what makes us united as a nation and they should also be treated with the same respect that they should.

Mother Theresa once said, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” And in this saying, we have yet to find our world peace that we so eagerly look for, it is something that many people pray and hope for would one day come to our world. This issue all begins with you, and you are the problem, but you are also the solution to it. So, Adam tell yourself, “How can I change the world? How can I prove to others that we are all created equally?” I think that once we start to love and support each other, not just those you know, but everyone else included, that is when I think that we can truly be at peace. Sometimes I will often think about being in other people’s shoes, you never know what other people are going through so why put them through more difficulties when you can be the one to help them make sure everything is okay. Everyone has the power and right to be a human being, not treated unfair and unjust, these rights were given to use at birth,

and we should use them to show how each of us is unique and not the same. As you write this letter to yourself, think about how you can change and help fight for human rights. Think about what you can change and what you cannot because it all begins with you.

No one deserves to be treated less than the person next to you, and we all should be able to do things that we want to and not be held back, not even from ourselves. Everyone has the power to freely choose what they want and what they will become, and nobody should take that right from them.

We can connect this issue all the way back to slavery because the African Americans were treated as things and not people, those who owned them did not give them any rights that they had and continued to have while they were slaves. Slavery had started sometime around 3500 BCE and to see it continue to this day, even as forms of human trafficking, we need find a solution because sometimes I wonder if we will ever see the day where everyone is seen as equally important.

Something that I have witnessed in my own personal life that is a reason that I want to address this issue is seeing so many people who are begging on the side of streets or in front of stores because they are struggling. Most people think these types of people use the money they are given for drugs and alcohol, when reality is that many of these people genuinely need food and water to survive. We automatically assume they need it for their own personal use when it is a human right to have access to food and water. This letter to yourself should set a reminder that we should always help those who are in need because they are humans too and not just things that live off the side of the road, we must treat them with the same respect that they give to us.

Please always give to those who are in need because you never know that it could be your family so it would be best to help everyone out as much as we can, then I feel like we will be in the right direction of equal human rights and a step closer to the world peace we all so hopefully want to achieve.

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Dear Christopher,

I hope this letter finds you well. I know you have been through a lot in your short sixteen years, but I want to tell you that things do get better. Life is full of surprises, fun-filled times, and things to look forward to.

I know you just graduated high school and started college. I wanted to give you some advice. Please stick it out. I know you may think you don't want to go to more school because you have already been going to school for so long, but I'm here to let you know it is in your best interest. It will be hard. It will be challenging at times, but if you stick through those difficult times, you will be better for it.

I have found throughout my life that life is not as easy as I thought it was when I was your age. Things are not necessarily just black and white, but there are some grey areas. One area that is black and white, though, is college. You need to go to college. It will make your professional life much easier. I am 34 years old now and am finally starting college again. I am going for a business degree. I have owned and managed many businesses over the years, and each has failed, not for lack of trying, but because I didn't have the foreknowledge to run the business correctly.

Stay positive and persistent no matter what situation you are presented with. College can be confusing, and you will change your major a few times, but you are trying to figure out who you are and what you want to do with the rest of your life. It is a huge decision to make, and It's okay to be indecisive. You will find your passion and what you will enjoy doing for the foreseeable future. Keep on dreaming. Never lose that twinkle in your eye, nor the willingness to step out and make things happen.

Don't quit. This is one of the most essential tips that I will tell you. You will set your mind on many things, and you will feel like maybe a college degree is not for you. You will change your major and be indecisive. You will often want to give up, and you will pretty much quit college three times. You are not a quitter, so I am here to tell you not to do that. There may be times that you feel like the classes are basic review for you or that college is a waste of time. Stick to your guns and follow through. It will help you in the end. You need to take all of the classes in your degree plan to graduate, so it doesn't matter if it's review or not; you still have to take them. Too bad you cannot get a degree on experience alone, right?

I have spoken to many different people over the years, and many of them have a common, resounding regret. They wish they either had gone to college, not quit college, or when life got

in the way, and they had no choice but to put it on the back burner, they would have gone back to college. They believe that economically speaking, they would be better off. Nowadays, if you want a decent-paying job that more than pays the bills, you need a degree. Many employers will not even look at your resumé unless it says you have a bachelor's degree. Many people who do not have a degree have to go through life barely scraping by, living life paycheck to paycheck, hoping that they have enough to buy food to put on the table for their families to eat. Neither your father nor your mother went to college. Your mother is now 61 years old and is still working her butt off instead of enjoying her latter years in retirement. If she had gone to college, maybe she would be in a better place in life to be able to live a retirement lifestyle. Your father is also working like a dog and barely getting anywhere. It is sad, and I never want you to go through this. You do not want to wake up one day and realize that you could have done better or that you could have gone further, if only. Please take heed and get that degree!

As for running your own business, as I have done for the last 14 years, it would be best done with a degree. It may inhibit some of the bad choices made in business and allow you to succeed in business rather than continue to fail. You will push through to the finish line, and you are not a quitter.

Failing is a part of life, but never give up. Success only comes by failure. Fail often but fail forward.

Once you graduate with your degree, join clubs and associations that pertain to what you studied. It is always best to do life with others. Never do life alone. With the help and guidance of others, their ideas, and input, you can glean from them and succeed in any endeavor you set out to do.

I guess that is all for now.

Until next time,

Yourself,

Christopher Hughes

P.S. In February 2011, someone will come up to you and tell you about bitcoin. You will think he is crazy and not understand what he is talking about. Do not be dismissive. Listen to what he has to say and buy some. I know you will have some money at that moment. Buy 2000 of them and do not sell them until November of 2021. Trust me on this.

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Thailand is in Southeast Asia. The country is surrounded by mountains, there are many temples, wildlife, and beautiful islands. People on the surface seem to be happy and enjoy living a simple life. However, in Thailand the majority of the population is poor, and they tend to idolize the rich. The materialistic value becomes essential to Thai society. It has been so ingrained into Thai culture. People are worried about their possessions even though they are struggling to survive. A huge level of inequality influences the urge to flaunt. The minimum wage in Thailand is \$8 per day or \$450 per month which makes it very easy to impress someone with simple things such as drinking Starbucks or using iPhone. Many people want to become rich or want to have an image of success even though it may be fake. In Thailand, social acceptance and avoiding face-shame are more important than self-worth. The role of materialistic tendencies in Thailand doesn't seem to end anytime soon.

Societal Pressures

There are many examples of how society is supportive of a materialistic lifestyle. I also have a few examples from my own experiences related to that. One time, my friend asked me if she could borrow my credit card to buy an iPhone (I declined) because she didn't have a credit card, but she was always following up a new trend. For example, she would change to the new iPhone every time it comes out.

When Apple launched the new iPhone14, Thailand's largest phone operations partnered with a financial institute and offered their customers that they can buy a new iPhone 14 with 0% interest for 60 months. Now, anyone can have an iPhone 14 even though they don't have enough money to buy it. This zero percent interest is the big thing in Thailand. People have been using this benefit to buy brand-name, expensive phones, or gadgets. Recently, the central bank of Thailand announced that they will take control of the zero percent interest campaign from the bank because it induces people to buy non-essential items and increase household debt.

Social Acceptance

Brand name is the most common thing in Thailand. When my sister got into university, she started to buy brand-name items which is strange because we were poor and still needed loans to pay for tuition. Her behavior didn't last long because later my sister decided to move to a new university because she couldn't fit in as most students were from wealthy families. Many Thai people love brand names but with the low minimum wage, some people cannot afford to buy them, so they buy fake brand names. There are many fake brand-name shops online these days. Surprisingly, this is not only popular for poor people but also for wealthy people who don't want to pay for expensive brand names but want to have them so that they can fit into their society.

Luxury Car = Successful

When I was in Thailand, I help my family business. We own an air-conditioner business which we have to offer various deals to win customers versus our competitors. When my brother-in-law goes to meet with customers, he will drive his Mercedes. He usually wins the job even though our price is higher than our competitors. It is because people like to do business with people who has successful image. They think that rich people are more trustworthy.

The most common "wealthy" brands are Mercedes-Benz or BMW. In Thailand, it could be very expensive because the import tax on cars is 200%. If the car is \$30,000 here in the US, it will be \$90,000 in Thailand. Having a nice expensive car gives you more power or job opportunities. People are likely to get away and don't get harassed by police when they pass the checkpoint. Thai people recognize certain brands. It doesn't matter how much you paid for your car. If it is Mercedes-Benzenes, BMW, or Volvo, people will consider you a wealthy person. Some people would choose to buy second-hand high-end brands instead of a brand-new car. Some people may have a car that is more expensive than a house because they can show off their car to everyone. With their house, they can only show off to the people within their circle. Also, an expensive car can help increase business liability.

Marriage

When my mom got married to my dad, my dad was supposed to give my mother's family money as a dowry. But my father was poor, so my mother's family use their own money for a dowry. This also happened to me when I got married. My boyfriend is from the US, and I didn't want to scare him with this tradition. I decided to use my own saving to show it to the guest as a dowry from my boyfriend. I did not tell my family that it was my money.

When it comes to marriage, there is an old tradition where the bride's parents get a dowry from the groom. Money is used as proof that the groom has enough money to take care of the bride. But these days, a wedding is just another platform to exhibit wealth. There is a business for renting actual money, gold, and a car to present to the guests. This way the bride's family or the groom's family doesn't lose face. This tradition sometimes results in a breakup. The bride's family sometimes asked for too much money from the groom. If the groom doesn't have it, they may have to break up, or the groom doesn't show up on the wedding day.

Pyramid Scheme

I have an artist friend who has hippy-looking. One day his photo on Facebook turned into a businessman-looking shortly after he joined a business scheme. On his Facebook, it looks like he's living in a dream, but the truth is, he's struggling with money

and his friends (myself included) gave him money to support himself and his family.

Thai people are sometimes so desperate to be seen as rich that they fall victim to scams. That's why pyramid schemes are rising in Thailand. The way they promote their business is that everyone can become rich. They offer training courses to members where they teach how to post on social media, how to make yourself look wealthy, and how to dress. Some brands may hire a professional photographer to take a photo of you. The head of each group member will have various techniques on how to help their team member sell the products. They will create a new you, offering brand names for members to take a photo with, visit expensive car showrooms and take a photo with a car, pretending they bought them, and rent actual money to take a photo and post it on social media. Sometimes they take the team members on a nice trip. Create an image of living in a dream and lure more people to join them.

Social Activities

I am a cyclist and the cyclist community in Thailand is very different from the US. In the US, nobody cares what brand is your bicycle or how much it cost. In Thailand, people like to see what brand you have, how expensive it is, or how heavy it is.

Some certain sports in Thailand are for wealthy people such as golf. People who earn minimum wage or middle class are not able to afford the price of the golf set and the course fee. So, it is automatically limited to wealthy people. Many cyclists in Thailand are also wealthy. It is very easy to spend a lot of money on one bike just to make it lighter. An expensive bicycle can cost as same as a car. If you go visit the capital of Thailand, there is one place near the airport called sky lane. At sky lane, you will see many internet celebrities and famous people. It is like a platform to show off their bikes and clothes. There are more sports that are famous among wealthy people such as wakeboarding, skiing, hockey, and ice skating.

Losing Face

For Thai people, it is important for us to continue studying at the University. Most Thai people have bachelor's degrees. I also have a bachelor's degree in Tourism Management, but I did not like it. I chose this major because it is the easiest to get in. My friend is a very successful business owner. She applied for a

business course (certificate) at a university. She later told me that people in this class mostly are wealthy people. They just want to look for a connection.

Gaining a certificate or a degree is the big thing in Thailand. Many Thai people graduated from the university with a degree they aren't interested in. Many students choose an easy major because they want to earn a degree to show people that they're successful with their education and the family doesn't lose face. It is embarrassing for the family if you don't continue in the university. It is also very difficult to get a job without a bachelor's degree. And if people have more money or businesses, they are likely to continue to a higher degree. It is to help them find a connection.

Materialism is a crisis in Thailand. Lacking education, being afraid of losing face in society, and wanting to have a fake successful image or status; all lead to a culture that gives rise to materialism. The value that society gives to materialism urges a desire for possession. Some university students became prostitutes even though they have good family support. Some teenagers get depressed or commit suicide due to this matter. Many people get themselves into big debt and many people fall into pyramid schemes or scams because they think it's a shortcut to accumulating wealth.

Materialism affects a person's well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, and health. It also affects the people surrounding you. It is a thrill when you own something or buy something. Possession could make you feel complete, but it is temporary. The pursuit and purchase of possessions will never fully satisfy the desire for happiness. Moreover, it leads to more consumption, more energy consumed, and more waste in landfills. The solution to this problem is to educate people. The government could help so much but they are corrupt. The nonprofit organization could play a role in improving the Thai perspective on the material such as promoting a sustainable lifestyle or educating people on how to deal with this compulsive need. The institute should bring awareness to people. It may be difficult to erase this problem from Thai society but with the help of everyone, Thai people could find true meaning in life and have real happiness.

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How would I describe my relationship with reading and writing? That is a complicated question, and to begin to answer it, I first need to tell you a bit about my background. I grew up in the small town of Storrs, Connecticut as the child of two Brazilian immigrants. My father worked as a professor at the local university (UConn), and my mother stayed home to take care of me. Since she was my only caretaker, I grew up speaking and hearing only Portuguese for the first few years of my life. My first real exposure to English came when I was enrolled in a preschool program at my local Montessori School at the age of four. There, I was able to learn the English language relatively quickly through immersion; however, this natural language ability did not translate to the written word, and when we were learning our letters the following year in kindergarten, it was clear that I was falling behind my peers. To remedy this problem, I had to take informal supplementary classes during lunch up through the fourth grade. These additional classes, and the insights I gained during them, led me to develop two very different relationships with reading and writing, respectively, a relationship that somehow regards reading as a source of inspiration and fulfillment, yet sees writing as a source of pain and frustration. However, a series of recent realizations has caused me to reevaluate my experiences with writing and see it in a new, positive light.

To further explain how my mindset has changed, I first need to better explain my relationship to reading to better express why it has had a lasting, positive expression. In the beginning, I had a lot of difficulties learning how to read, and by the first grade, I was taking supplementary classes and was given additional work to do at home. These supplemental classes were not provided by the regular school staff; instead, they were held during part of recess by the mother of one of my classmates, who worked part-time as a substitute teacher in the district. Furthermore, these additional classes were held in the school's supply room, a small space filled with standing projectors and TVs-on-Wheels, which created a sense of isolation in the experience. So, twice a week, while my classmates were playing in the jungle gym, I would spend my time at a tiny desk reviewing vocab words from that day's class. If I couldn't learn them in that time, they would be assigned as additional homework. This process was lengthy and brutal. I have distinct memories of sitting at the dinner table crying because it was late, and my mother was still quizzing me with flashcards of the different words I had to be able to read for class. However, the hard work paid off, and by the second grade, I was reading at the same level as my classmates and no longer had to have reading lessons. I saw this additional social time as a reward for my hard work, and I relished the extra time I could spend with my friends during recess. Still, an even better prize was that through being forced to learn how to read, I had also discovered a "loophole" in the school system, one that expanded my relationship with reading and solidified it as a consistent source of pleasure in my life.

That loophole, of course, was that if you kept quiet and gave off the illusion of productivity by reading, teachers would never really question *what* you were reading. So, while many of my peers would horse around during class to avoid schoolwork, I would go on epic adventures with the various characters in the fantasy books I took everywhere. And, since I was not being disruptive, my teachers, for the most part, would let me read as much as I wanted to. So, from the moment of that realization to the end of my high school career, I always had a book on me and would devour them as if my life depended on them. This love of books was expanded on my twelfth birthday when my parents got me a Kindle. So instead of having just one book on me, I would always carry a veritable library in my pocket. Meaning that whenever I was bored or overwhelmed, I could slip away into whatever fantasy world I wanted to. This escapism became my primary form of entertainment for most of my childhood and is still one of my favorite pastimes.

Additionally, this voracious reading had the unintended consequence of teaching me vocabulary and reading comprehension, and in high school, I started reading a lot more nonfiction which allowed me to learn a lot about other cultures and helped me see more of the world outside of my small town of 5000 people. I firmly believe that this intense relationship with reading was critical to my academic success up to college, and I don't think I would be where I am today if that relationship had not been cultivated at an early age. So, despite a rough start, I was able to overcome the challenges of learning how to read and have been able to find joy and satisfaction through reading.

Conversely, and because of just two slight differences in the process, I developed a strikingly different relationship with writing from the one I have with reading. Similarly to when I was learning how to read, I had supplementary spelling lessons during recess twice a week and extra spelling homework to do with my mom at home; however, in this case, there were two key differences: first, I was older when I started to learn how to spell, and second, I just could not wrap my head around spelling no matter how hard I tried. The first difference affected me socially because when I started spelling classes in the third grade, my classmates were older and meaner. So, from then through the fourth grade, I became one of two kids who missed lunch to take "special" classes and ended up feeling isolated because of that label. This feeling diminished as I got older and the supplementary classes were behind me. However, subconsciously, I still had a strong negative connotation associated with writing that followed me throughout the rest of my school years.

The second major issue I had when learning how to write was the flat-out difficulty I had with learning how to spell. I would make silly mistakes like adding an "e" to the end of words, swapping vowels in the middle of words, and using the wrong letter out of "p, d, b, and q." In the end, I never actually learned how to spell before I stopped getting the supplementary lessons when I moved to middle school in the fifth grade. Luckily, soon

thereafter, the school got new computers, and we were expected to type everything we turned in, and since there was autocorrect, I was able to get by without knowing how to spell for the rest of my school years. Unfortunately, even though I managed good grades in my English classes thanks to autocorrect, the frustration and anger I developed in response to my early difficulties with spelling never faded, resulting in feelings of dread whenever I was assigned a writing assignment.

I still experience this dread when faced with an assignment, but thanks to some recent experiences, my views on writing have started to change. The first step in this process happened in high school when I decided to branch out from my beloved fantasy and science fiction into other genres of literature. Before then, I had exclusively read books for escapism and was always amazed by the abilities of authors to create these amazingly complicated worlds that dealt with some interesting philosophical issues, and I subconsciously associated being a "writer" with developing these epic stories. When I finally branched out into other genres, I understood that fantasy and science fiction is but a tiny section of literature. By only reading these two genres, I had deceived myself into believing that all authors were crazy creative powerhouses who built entire galaxies from the ground up. This assertion is simply not true, and as I began to diversify the genres I read, I was amazed by what I saw.

I first started with different genres under the fictional umbrella, like historical fiction and magical realism, before moving on to dramatic nonfiction. These books blew my mind. One particular moment that really opened my eyes was when I was reading *Lost City of the Monkey God* by Douglas Preston, which is a nonfiction book about an expedition to Honduras that took place in 2012, and I realized that I was on the edge of my seat waiting to find out what was next. Just like when I read fantasy! It opened my eyes to the realization that, no, you did not have to be able to come up with entire galaxies to be an author; all you really need is a story to tell.

It was not until much later, during a conversation with a friend about the social media platform Reddit, that I finally applied my new understanding of authors to myself. I was explaining that I appreciated that Reddit still allows the user to remain anonymous on their site because I was uncomfortable with the lack of privacy on other social media platforms. When my friend brought up the point that this anonymity was also the reason that the most radical people chose Reddit to voice their opinions. It protected them from repercussions in their real lives. This simple concept that anonymity encouraged people to express their views allowed me to finally understand the second aspect of writing- that people write because they have a *reason* to. This realization of what a writer truly was- someone with something to say and someone to say it made me realize that I had been a "writer" for a long time. Once I had adopted this mindset, it was not long until I realized that the only real difference between my arguments on Reddit and someone's argument in an opinion piece to be published in a newspaper is that the author of a published article has the confidence to put their name on their ideas and that I could take active steps to build that confidence.

Which brings me back to the original question: how would I describe my relationship with reading and writing? If you had asked me that question a few years ago, I would have probably described it as joyous yet painful, liberating yet suffocating, and most of all, confusing. However, thanks to my new mindset, I can honestly say my relationship is a hopeful one. Hopeful because by enrolling in this class, I have decided to actively attempt to become a better writer. Optimistic because I finally understand why people write- because they have something to say and someone they want to say it to. And I have a lot to say.

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When did America turn?
When did America turn its back
on the homeless veteran,
Whose government left on the streets,
Because they couldn't afford to keep him
When did America turn its back
On the starving families
Living off of the charitable donations of others,
and food stamps the government makes so hard to get
When did America turn its back
On the young married couple,
Who live in the roughest part of town,
Because despite their hard work it's all they can afford.
When did America turn its back
On all the starry-eyed boys and girls

Who dream to better the world
But are impoverished by just trying to live
When did America turn its back
On all the people who are less fortunate,
On all the people who beg for scraps,
On all the people who are ripped from their homes,
Or denied the chance to have a home?
When did "We the people"
Take the idea of "The Golden Dream
And make it into "The Golden Nightmare"?
When did we turn, America?

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We all have seen the crazy price tags on houses that only seem to be getting bigger and bigger and for those of us that don't already own property, it can be scary. With a house being one of the biggest purchases of someone's life, it's getting to a point where most people can't make that purchase at all even with a stable career. In this article I will talk about how the housing market got to this point, what future predictions can tell us and how it will affect your future.

The Cost of Housing Today VS. Yesterday

Way back in 1970 a regular family could get an average sized house for about 30,000 US dollars ("Average Sales"). At the same time average salaries in the US were roughly 10,000 US dollars ("US Average"), so at this time a house for your family would cost roughly 3 years of your annual income. Today in 2022, it would cost the average person almost 8 years of their annual income which is almost triple what it would have taken 50 years ago. Other than a housing market crash in 2007 that went through to 2012, the incline on the pricing of houses has been steep, especially in 2020 where in just 2 years the average cost of a house in the US went up \$150,000 ("Average Sales"). Between those dates in 1995, the average cost of housing was at \$158,000 while average income was at \$34,000 making it take 4 and a half years of your annual income to pay off a house, almost half of what it would take today.



FRED, 26 July 2022 <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ASPUS#>

How Did it Get This Far?

I am first going to explain the big jump we had in 2020 that continues to get higher and higher. Back at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, interest rates were reduced to boost economic health and help those struggling during the hard times. Because of this a lot of people left their apartments and rentals and bought property causing demand to shoot up while supply went down. While this was happening, political decisions changed trade agreements and import costs making the cost for supplies needed to build new homes increase. These combined with some other minor influences has caused the prices to skyrocket (Team).

Since the 1940's housing prices have always steadily increased with bumps here and there but the problem is that annual income for the average American has not reflected the increase in housing. While housing increased at random annual intervals ranging from 8% upwards of 40% and sometimes even

decreasing ("Average Sales"), the average household income only went up 2% to 3% ("US Average"). The government has tried to subsidize costs of housing but ultimately it has only ended with housing costing more through supply and demand.

What Should We Expect?

I am going to start by saying, don't get your hopes up. Although some housing experts think that a crash or decline is on the way, a lot more experts think the opposite. The problem that we are facing is with supply and demand. Millennials have hiked up the demand for housing to the point that it's at and it is expected that Gen Z will do the same afterwards. In February the construction of new homes was at a rate of 6.8% which was the highest since 2006 but it still can't keep up with demand as demand doesn't stop while supply is wavering (Campisi).

Suggestions

I would tell you to move to a less expensive state but if everyone did that then it would become just as expensive as the others. The only thing I can say for certain is that you should start saving as soon as you can because you never know what it will look like when the time comes for you to buy your own house. With the outlook on the future of the housing market, the best time to buy would be as soon as you can. With the way things look, in 5 years housing could cost millions while we are still getting paid the same. Another thing to think about is that if you are planning on buying a "forever home" then the worry of the housing market crashing should be gone as you wouldn't sell whether it goes up or down. When the time comes for you to buy a house of your own there are many companies that are willing to assist you with the financing, some even going as far as giving you free money towards your home. If you search for the keywords, "home buying assistance" or "financial aid", you will get tons of results of offers for grants, help with your down payment, or even if you just need a little more time to make some payments. There are so many options available and I personally have never bought a home so I am not in a position to recommend any particular one but do your research and find what is best for you. Everyone wants their dream home, but in the end it comes down to how hard you work for it.

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Mental Health and Wellness

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This text was compiled on 06/07/2025

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Licensing

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Dear Annalia,

Look at you..so young and full of life despite everything. I wish I could just give you a big hug and let you know how unstoppable you are. You can truly do anything you want with your life. This life is yours and yours only. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. I am writing to you because I know how hard things can be for you sometimes and I would like to provide some ways to alleviate your stressors and stay focused on how to give yourself the best life. I know there have been times where you felt like the world around you was collapsing, like a tornado ripping up everything good in your life. There have been times where you just want everything to stop and all you want is complete silence and stillness. Unfortunately that is not attainable but what you can do is find little ways to limit your hard times and change your mentality.

The first step in leading a greater life is to remove people, places, and ideas in your mind that no longer fit the life you wish to fulfill. Anyone who brings you down has got to go. People are going to try and nit pick even the smallest things about you; don't let them have that power. Let go of friendships that aren't 50/50. Hold onto those genuine people who fill you with joy and keep them close. Find a good support system and maintain those relationships with all your might. Let go of friends who just take and take without offering anything in return. Look for people who show they love you because anyone can just throw those words to you, but actions speak louder than words. Trust your instincts with this one. If it doesn't seem right then it probably isn't.

Leave and do not return to places that cause you more harm than pleasure. Not everywhere has to feel like home but there are only so many bad feelings one place can cause before turning sour. It's better to not let it get to that point and just listen to how you're feeling in certain places. Work spaces, school, homes of acquaintances, anywhere you go. Listen to how you're feeling.

Let go of ideas that don't allow you to be open and confident. This goes hand in hand with caring how others view you. You will live such a different life once you decide to care what you think about yourself and not let that be affected by outside opinions. You are truly the only one who has to live with yourself so you determine your worth. You determine what makes you a good or bad person; you decide to carry positive qualities or negative ones. You and you alone possess that power.

Another thing that could really help you out is trying to shift from a pessimistic view to a more optimistic one. Easier said than done I know but it is so important. In trying to accomplish a more positive mindset you are challenging yourself to be more open minded about possibilities. Specifically focusing on the efficacious outcomes rather than the negatives. Narrowing in on the positives keeps your mind forward-looking. Why be negative when you can be positive? You are making it harder on yourself, try not to let circumstances determine everything. Use the power of your mind; it is so much stronger than you think.

The biggest piece I have to mention is choosing to live. Get up everyday with an intention to feel alive. Do something with your day, even if it is small, anything that makes you happy or creative. It can be progressive, exciting, relaxing, just something to get a good emotion flowing. Get out of bed and into something beneficial. Move your body, whether that is dancing, yoga, gym, swimming, or even something smaller like stretching. You are the only one who can make your life worth living; this can definitely be a hard achievement but start small. It's all you can do. When you get older it is going to feel like everything is speeding up; before you can even catch your breath, this ride we call life will be coming to a stop. Take it all in and live to the fullest. I have to mention there are many things you are already doing to improve your mental quality. Listening to music is a big one. Using music to feel and work through your own emotions is such a powerful tool. You are pretty intune with your body and emotions but there is always room for improvement. Spending time and being a friend to yourself can boost how harmonious you are within.

These are just a few things that can truly help better your peace of mind. None of these are a one and done type of situation either. Maintaining a peaceful headspace and surrounding atmosphere takes work and constant keep up. Just be attentive. It is a lot of work but I know you can do it; it will be so worth it in the end. There's only so much you have to actually go through, the rest is just extra we throw onto ourselves. It doesn't have to be that way. Keep going please and be as clear minded as possible. Have fun and live your life to your fullest capabilities. Help yourself out; life doesn't have to be so hard all the time.

Love you

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Dear Ash,

Please know that I write this with blood on my pen. I was 8 when I was red in the face for a boy and 9 when I realized I couldn't trust him because I was terrified he might turn out like dad. I don't remember you much from elementary years, only fragments of when I was in a new state again and I couldn't figure out why I was afraid of a room full of people. 13 when I finally figured out why.

I couldn't stand looking in the mirror, afraid I'd see their words written in my reflection as if they're not already engraved in my mind. I blamed you for being unable to speak up, for cowering away, for being afraid. So I played with fire so often that I started building a house of ice. A sublime change occurred then and I'm not talking about the color of my hair. I became someone I do not recognize. The girl I used to be was crushed by the woman I am now.

I was in high school when I started realizing you and I were no longer one. A painful process, our flesh ripping at the seams and I couldn't feel anything anymore, not even the sweet resonate of an ache. I became cruel. I resented you, the little girl with pink ribbons in her hair. I did not move freely anymore, rather I had delicate threads kneaded into my skin, roughly pulling me away from you. I used to cry out in pain each time. Cries turned into screams turned into whimpers and are now nothing but soft whispers in my head. I was in a constant battle with you, people around me no longer wore faces. That's how I lived from then on. A blade lodged in my heart each time someone tried to get close to me.

I was 18 in a different state when I started licking my wounds. I began missing you. I didn't want the last memories of us to be tainted with the malicious colors of my pride. I reminisced about the beautiful memories of who I used to be, but they are starting to decay at the corners. I am 20 now, and I am still feeling the ripples of what was done to me years ago. Don't get

me wrong, I still laugh and I indulge as if the color of my mistakes isn't staining the future. I ignore my hands trembling as I try to reach out to you. I'll find you again, little Ash. I'll find you in the swirling summer air, in the sound of rushing cars, in the crevices of my scars, I promise I'll get to you one day.

Until then,

Ashley

- Mental Health has been on a decline and has been called a "silent epidemic" since.
- In 2021, 60% of college students suffered from mental health issues.
- There has been a 40% increase in students seeking help and is still increasing since the pandemic.
- Since there was a spike in caseloads, there is no funding to cover it.

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Author's Note:

I want other people to be able to express themselves through short letters like these. As I mentioned previously, mental health is an extremely personal topic for me and I wish I can do more to help others.

My initial purpose for this letter is to inspire others to do the same and learn from their past. My goal is to acknowledge what has happened because it is a great way to start the journey of self-healing and inner peace.

Dear Ash - by Ashley Partida is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Ashley Partida at Pima Community College.

Dear Sommer,

I hope this letter finds you well. So many things have happened to you in the life you have lived. I would like you to know that you were never alone and that many of people have experienced the depression you have experienced. I would like for you to know that we found a way to wake up in the morning even when we didn't want to, we figured out that eating more than a meal a day is more beneficial than not, and we found out ways to cope with these feelings positively instead of acting on negative impulses. Most importantly, we figured out that there is more to life than feeling like we were almost stuck in this life with no way out.

What was hard to us in the beginning was not knowing what was so different about our brain. I like to think it all started for us when our parents got divorced. I remember how it felt when we would see them arguing and how it was confusing seeing them the next day cuddling on the couch. I also think that's what I thought love was, arguing horrendously and then acting as if nothing happened. What we later found out is that this is toxicity and not healthy. After this it all seemed to go downhill. Once our mother found a new husband, we were left to fend for ourselves because she didn't seem to care anymore. This made us independent at a very young age. There would be days when all we ate were 99 cent store whale crackers, we were only 13.

Once we got into high school, we tried to be better. We got into cross country, soccer, track and tried to get better grades than we did in middle school. Who would've known that high school would be worse than middle school. The only interaction with our mom we ever had was horrific arguing. Our father was a control freak and a master manipulator; no where we would go ever felt safe. We looked up to our best friend's mother as our own mother because even they knew your home life wasn't great. At 15 and 16 years old we were never home. Although our father had some negative traits, he was the only parent who would provide for you.

When we turned 17 you know everything changed. Our father left and moved to a different state for a job leaving you with just your mother. I know he was reluctant to leave you here in Tucson and begged you to move with him but starting over in another state sounded scarier than living with your mother, so you stayed. At this point in our lives our mother let us do whatever we wanted and just stopped caring all together. This is when we were introduced to drugs and a boy who would leave

you with emptiness and relationship PTSD. From 17 to 19 years old life was all about going through the motions. We started failing school, failing college, failed friendships, and failing overall as a person. We didn't know how far in life we were going to make it.

Finally, after all the hardships in life, we decided to finally turn ourselves around. We started making healthier choices and not acting on impulse, for example instead of turning to drugs when something triggering happens, we talk about what is bothering us. We got rid of the people who were in our lives that had a negative impact on us. We got our first apartment after being in plenty of homes that never really felt like homes, we met a man who we are in love with and we just celebrated our two years together, we now have two cats finally after begging for that companionship since I was 8 years old, and we finally have a stable job and are excelling in college. Look at us! Who would've thought.

The main reason why I am writing this to you, is to tell you I am so proud of YOU. You wanted better for yourself, and I am so happy you put in the effort and admitted you needed help when you did. I know admitting you needed help was the toughest thing you ever had to do, but I'm glad you did because I am not sure if we would even be here now if you didn't. This is all we ever wanted for ourselves, is to feel ok. Never forget how you got here, by going to therapy, by working through our issues, by realizing and understanding what we are going through, by forgiving by never forgetting, and by knowing that there is so much more to life than depression and mental illness. If we had never used these tools; life could have very well ended, if not that you would be here today stuck in the same cycle. YOU are more than your illness. If we can help others who are going through what we are with the same tools you used to help you get through this, then it's a life worth living. I am glad we never gave up, and I want you to share your story, even if it only helps one person. You are strong, you are in control of YOUR life, and most of all, you deserve to be happy regardless of the circumstances you have been given.

Be easy on yourself. Continue to do great things.

With so much love,

Yourself, Sommer Quezada

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Dear Steph,

I remember senior year when you stopped going to school, when you quit your job, and stopped talking to us. I remember the days you would come to school, you left early because you weren't feeling good, or when you would sit in your car instead of going to class. No one took these changes into consideration.

I'm sorry that it took us so long to notice that you weren't okay, that we didn't put everything together sooner. I'm sorry you had to lose nearly everything for us to notice. There was no help provided for you, no counselors, no family, or friends. You were on your own for nearly 6 months, and your attempt was what made everyone finally notice.

Being emotionally unavailable wasn't something we saw a lot or were aware about, it's not that we didn't want to help you it's just we didn't know the signs. We all figured it was just "senioritus." I'm sorry that while you were at home contemplating everything, we were at senior ditch days, or we were eating at your favorite restaurants.

I now realize how many of us are affected, we seem to brush everything off. Brushing everything off will never help us get out of this stage. We can all help each other; we can come together and make it known that not being okay is okay. That seeking help is okay and so is needing each other. So many have been on the same boat as you, and no help has ever been provided.

You were so afraid to be seen as "weak" for having the mindset you did. Mental health is no joke. When we express it, we are seen as vulnerable. Nobody is taught enough. How should we know that staying in bed all day was a sign? Or being tired all the time is also a sign? We have regulated everything that we

have no idea what to look for. Everyone also jokes about "im gonna kms" but how are we supposed to know that they're being serious when it's being said all the time.

Our generation seems to be seen as "weak" since many seek the help they need while older generations always portray themselves as stronger, as if they were never had a weak mind. They compare themselves to our generation because when have we ever seen them at therapist appointments or when have we ever seen them in physic wards, majority of our parents taught us to keep our feelings to ourselves, but we are slowly undoing what they have taught us.

You're much stronger than who your parents are. You're much stronger than your traumas growing up. Accepting that you're not okay is the biggest step through the process. Thank you for making me realize that this is all okay, for making me aware of all the signs and what I could do to help. If it weren't for you I would be clueless of what mental health is. Thank you Steph, not only for helping me but for staying here and trying your best. We're all very proud of you for working to get everything you lost back, were proud of you for getting yourself back. I'm proud of you for going back to school, for getting your own business, going to therapy, and being able express yourself. Thank you for everything.

Stay safe and well,

Leslie Loera

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Dear younger self,

I want to start off by saying I'm proud of you. Your 20's were rough, and you had to face many challenges. During these challenges you were faced with a lot of depression, and still until this day you struggle with anxiety. Depression runs in your family. You will see your mom and your sister go through rough times. All three of you will seek help and will be put on medication and that is ok! Events that happen in your life will put you in a dark place. The best way to describe it is like you're in quicksand and can't get out of it. But you end up coming out of that dark place. Through medication and counseling you were able to beat depression. I want to say that I am proud of you for seeking help and realizing that mental illness is a serious medical condition that cannot be overlooked, but please do not give up.

I know at times it seems so far from your reach and that it may feel like you are going to feel depressed and anxious forever, but you will overcome it. Mental illness is an everyday battle; it's not something that goes away from one day to the next. Mental illness runs in your family. Mental health will be talked about more as you get older. The anxiety seems to never really go away it's a challenge you will be faced with every day. The more that you are open about your mental health and the struggles you face other people will come forth and talk to you about their struggles as well. This makes it easier to know that you are not alone.

You'll go through your 20's learning a lot about yourself. When you hit your 30's you will feel like you can conquer anything.

You will have your first baby. Something you've been wanting for so long. You will experience postpartum depression. That's a type of depression I don't think you were prepared for. People will tell you "You just had a baby how could you be so sad?" Its really something you can't control and that will be the biggest hurdle you will have to jump. Post- partum depression is hard to deal with because you just had a baby, you feel alone, your body just went through so many changes, and you become extremely anxious. A first-time mom and suddenly you are faced with so many challenges that you were not prepared for. This is going to be the hardest most rewarding time in your life. Thank goodness you have the best support system in the world. This depression and anxiety that you feel will soon turn into bliss and happiness. Just be patient with yourself and live in the moment.

So, I say this to you my younger self. Be gentle with yourself don't be so hard on yourself and don't worry through all the pain, anxiety, and hurt. You will flourish. You will learn to love yourself so much. With all the resources out there and all the love and support that you receive you will come out of your depression. Here are my words of advice to you. Surround yourself with family and friends, exercise, go to counseling, learn to love yourself, and learn to accept what you are going through. You are not alone. I am so proud of you.

Love,

your older self

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Dear younger self,

Hey, how are you feeling? From what I remember not too well huh? I wish I could tell your life is great and you have become so happy. Do not give up, you do find different kinds of happiness. I do not remember when we started feeling like this. I remember all our days spent in bed, not eating, watching the same movie repeatedly. We would spend hours feeling the water of the shower head hit our body. Feeling so empty and lonely, wanting someone by our side so badly but too afraid to tell anyone. The feeling that anything we did was a huge task, took all our energy to get out of bed. I wish you did not have to go through this alone.

During this difficult time our grandmother just died and that hit us extremely hard. I remember feeling sad beforehand, but I do believe that it pushed us over the edge. Covid started a couple months after we started having these intense emotions of sadness. When covid started, it was comforting to have an excuse to stay home and not see people. Laying in the house sounded like the only option we had. I could not have imagined leaving the house. Laughing, smiling, and making conversation sounded like a nightmare. We were relieved not to go to school or get out of bed. Our mom worked overnight so we were all alone at night and during the day while she slept. I understand that is what she had to do to support us, however it left us feeling completely alone at the house. Now, our depression was not her fault or our grandmothers passing, it just made everything feel lonely.

I am happy to tell you that it does get easier. Do not give up on yourself, you will come a long way. This life is crazy and messy, but it can be beautiful. There will always be ups and downs in your life. Try to focus on the ups and don't let the downs eat you up. There are going to be more challenges that you will face. More people will walk out of your life, and it will feel lonely. You need to focus on the person that does come into your life, show them so much love. Both them and you do not know how much you guys will help each other. You will start

going to the gym and that will help your mind. Going on car rides feels peaceful when your mind feels like it is suffocating.

I want to leave you with some things that helped us get to the place we are at. I know we are not perfect now and probably will never be. You will find out that no one is. We start making it a point to get out of bed every morning. It is important for us to start our morning off with getting up. If we do not, they we will not get out of bed that day. I mentioned the gym and going on drives helps us clear our mind. It does, cleaning oddly does too. I wish I could tell you what changed in our mind to jump start our way back out. It gradually got better for us, there are days where we are knocked back down. We still have days were all we want to do is lay in bed and do not feel like putting on a smile. The good will always way out the bad.

There are people to help you that you do not even notice. School is not our favorite place, it does get better, but the counselors do have resources. I know we are scared to go to them, and we did not. However, it probably would have been useful for us. Knowing your options gives you more peace of mind. The job we have now even helps with therapy. You feel that you will not make it and that your life won't turn out good. I am here to tell you hold on; our life gets easier. You will have a stable home and people that care for you. You are not alone in this world. Life won't always be like this, life is rewarding. Everyone says that you are so young and so much life to live. Knowing us we probably would just roll our eyes at them, but it is true we have so much life to live. I wish you could love yourself the way you love other people. You know how it feels to be at your lowest and you never know when somebody is at theirs. Be kind to yourself and to others.

Keep your head up,

Your future self

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This Instagram covers specific and practical approaches to health and well-being. You can view it here, https://www.instagram.com/global_health_project/.

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Have you ever wondered what would happen if you didn't go outside often? Or if being inside all day affects your mental health? As a person who doesn't go outside often, I can say these questions have been rambling around in my mind. I never thought much about going outside until I read about a boy who gave up everything to live in the woods for two years. Yeah, I know! Crazy!

At first, I thought, "I would never go live in the woods and give up everything I have." I have come to reconsider my thoughts. No, I still wouldn't give up all my belongings and shelter to live in the woods, but why would someone want to do such a thing? I began to research. "Is not going outside bad for you?" and "What would happen if humans never went outside?" Well, it cannot be suitable for us to stay inside all the time!

Studies show that some effects of not going outside include anxiety and depression. "Anxiety and depression, both of those things go up when you're stuck inside. Even if you're choosing to be stuck inside" (Dabney as qtd. By Taylor). Us humans need shelter, but we also need exposure to sunlight. We are supposed to go outside.

According to the director of the Sleep and Chronobiology Laboratory at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Kenneth Wright, "exposure to sun-strength rays helps calibrate your body's circadian "clock" (as ctd. By Heid). "Your circadian rhythm regulates everything from appetite and sleep schedules to mood and energy levels" (Wright as qtd. By Heid). That is a lot of things! Electric lighting, such as phones, computers, TVs, and lights in our houses, is not the best for humans. "An absence of natural light can throw off your sleep schedule leading to increased risk of obesity, diabetes, depression, and other diseases" (Wright as qtd. By Heid). Richard Ryan, a professor of psychology, says, "Green nature" in particular—forests and parks, as opposed to beaches or deserts—seems to provide the most benefit" (as qtd. by Heid). Nature is known to improve your mood and mental health. Getting outside also helps us stay more active. "We tend to be less active indoors. When we're outside, we're more likely to walk and use our muscles, even if it's just walking to the grocery store" (Shah as qtd. by Taylor). Spending time in nature seems to relax people. It clears your mind's workload. Sadly, our generation is so attached to our phones, computers, and TVs. It prevents people from getting outside as much as they did when they were kids.

Summer is one of my favorite seasons! In the summer, people typically go outside more than they do any other time of the year. Most families will go on vacation somewhere, but if not, they stay home and spend more time at the pool or a lake. I have noticed that in the summer, I am much calmer and more relaxed. I wonder, is it because I am getting so much sun exposure? I'm starting to think it is! I get a lot more vitamin D in the summer than in winter. I have less anxiety, my stress levels are low, and mentally I am happier. I can also sleep better. Some people say,

"the sun drains me." I can relate to that! After a long day in the sun, I know I will sleep like a baby!

While enjoying the benefits of outside time in the summer, be sure to protect yourself with sunscreen and hydration. The cool thing is that even if we wear clothes and sunscreen, we still get plenty of sunshine and vitamin D.

One of the best times of the year is autumn. The air is fresh and crisp. It is the perfect temperature for a lovely evening walk or bike ride. I love autumn because it is still pretty warm, but there is a cool breeze. Unfortunately, last fall, I did not get outside very often. I am going to try and change that this year. Although I live in the burning heat of Arizona, anytime it is colder out, it's refreshing!

Since it is so hot in Arizona, sometimes I don't even want to leave my house! "You miss a lot when you surround yourself with walls, and sunlight tops the list" (Wright as ctd. by Heid).

I plan to do something outside when I get a day off from work. Doing something outside helps me refresh my mind and get some sun. Recently I have tried to go on a walk or a hike at least once a week. Everyone can struggle with getting outside, especially with a demanding school and work schedule. Even one day a week of ensuring I get outside significantly impacts me. I get very stressed out and have anxiety about minor things. By making an effort to go out more, I have been more relaxed and not as tense. Going out and doing something outside will become a part of my weekly schedule.

An issue that I have identified today is that people do not go outside as much as they used to. Remember when you were young and played all the time outdoors? Kids love going outside. When I was little, I would wake up and want to go to the park. In the summer, I wanted to swim all day. In the Fall, I wanted to go to the park outside and run around with my friends. In the winter, I wanted to sit by the fire with a blanket and drink hot cocoa. In the spring, I wanted to sit on a bench and color pages in my coloring book. Yes, people still do these things, but I know I don't do them as much as I used to. In elementary school, everyone has a recess. As we get older and start high school, typically, you only get outside if you play a sport that practices outside. People don't realize the impact that this has on many people in our world. Most kids don't have bad mental health or depression.

Mental health is one of the most popular topics in today's society. Why? Because it affects so many people. Every individual has struggles. Some are worse than others. If getting outside has so many benefits, why wouldn't we try and make a better effort to spend more time outdoors? Being in the sun could help those who struggle with anxiety, high stress, depression, insomnia, etc. The only solution to fix this is getting outside. Even just 20-45 minutes a day will be so beneficial.

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Hello my friend,

First off, I just wanted to see how you have been recently. I know that you don't have the best support around you, but you have people here for you. I want to let you know that you matter, and nothing can change that. I can't say that I have dealt with what you have gone through, but I'm here for you if you need anything. Even if you just need someone to vent to, I can be that person. You will never be a burden to me no matter the circumstances. No matter what happens, I believe you. I know others say this is for attention, but I know that is not true. It can be hard sometimes when it feels like nobody is listening to you, so I want to reiterate that I am here for you at any time.

Mental health issues are a growing problem today and must be taken more seriously. Just because it is an issue that cannot physically be seen does not mean that it is not urgent. The statistics back this up. 1 in 5 adults in the U.S have experienced mental health issues. While this statistic may show that mental health issues have been getting worse over the years, I view this as a good thing because more people are being diagnosed. Many years ago, there were probably people with mental health issue, but because society deemed it as taboo, many people refused to get diagnosed. This is why I view it a good thing because people are recognizing they have an issue and trying to fix it.

A problematic mental space is an issue in itself, but it could also lead to other issues. I'm not saying that it will be easy, in fact, it will be difficult. You will have to make some decisions that others do not necessarily agree with, but you need to focus on what will help you. Unfortunately, some relationships may

deteriorate, but those people are not your true friends. You have had to start this journey on healing by yourself with no support and I don't think I could do that with a smile on my face like you have.

Many people are affected by mental health issues whether it is someone they know or themselves, so it is not just a trend that will go away. There are many different ways to help combat this. One way is to focus on your physical health. I know that there are times when I have felt down and when I start to improve my physical health, my mental health also improves. It doesn't have to be much, but just something to take your mind off things for a bit. Another strategy is to talk to a professional. I know sometimes it is looked down upon as if you are weak for doing this, but I think this is a sign of a strong person. You recognize that something is off, so you go talk to someone that knows how to deal with it. As much as I can help, I am not a professional in this subject. If you need to seek professional help, I will gladly help you find someone.

I will keep you in my thoughts and want you to know that I am there for you as well as many others. You are not alone.

Sincerely,

Your friend Joshua

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Metabolic health can be overlooked by many people in the world, especially in the West. Obesity is not only bad for your health in general, for example, but you might also have an increased chance of diabetes and various cardiovascular diseases. However, I believe there is a silent killer that can be overlooked. I believe that for some people, metabolic health is correlated to mental health.

When you are obese or overweight, I think naturally you lose self-esteem. This would be obvious for some people, however, I believe that when you consume a bad diet, for some people it negatively impacts your mental health, such as having anxiety or depression. Anecdotally, I have seen people and myself with prominent conditions, which I will not name for personal reasons. Moreover, I also believe that it is vague on what is healthy and what is not. I find it odd that people and society will demonize fats when it is important for us to have and live because it is one of the building blocks of our body, but they will promote an excessive amount of carbs. Obesity in America, to me, is very common, and obviously fat free foods are not helping at all.

Furthermore, what I have seen in my own experience, is that an excessive amount of sugar or carbs does not sit well with some people. Many people do not know this, but in your abdominal region which covers your stomach, is a nerve called the vagus nerve. This nerve connects to your stomach and goes to the central nervous system and into the brain. This is important

because if your stomach or body does not respond well to certain foods hypothetically speaking, then it might cause some repercussions such as conditions like anxiety or depression.

Furthermore, I earlier stated that it was with some people. I believe that in general there should be more research on added sugars and man-made fats, which most likely impacts anyone negatively, however, I believe for certain, that some people do not respond to sugar or carbs well and it might be one of the reasons for your condition. For example, it is like a person who is lactose intolerant. He cannot drink milk because he does not have the necessary enzyme to break it down. So, like sugar, when people eat sugar or carbs it results in those conditions.

Lastly, I would recommend with people who have an uncontrollable condition, to try to eat low carbs and make protein and maybe fat your priority to see if it helps you. I can say it has helped me tremendously, however, I also do not think that this condition is solely just metabolic health as I think it is a combination of different things that accumulate and lead to the same results. For example, having low vitamin d. Hoped this helped and would also recommend everyone try a low-carb diet to see if it makes you feel better.

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Dear younger self,

It is now September 2022. I have taken some time to reflect on the events that we have been through together and I have since realized a few things. You are 18 now; by this time you already have met someone who you *thought* was going to be around for a while. And, while you are sort of right about that, the relationship doesn't last as long as you think. For some people 3 years is not a long time, but it is when you lose yourself within those years. I am sickened by what I let slide, and sickened by knowing I was a doormat to someone who I thought loved me. You must be confused at this part of the letter, and you will be until he finally shows his true colors, and it won't take long.

My one message to you, if anything, is to not let him or anyone else control you because they don't know how to control their emotions/feelings. The arguments that turned into lies and betrayal, name calling, purposeful disrespect, you deserved none of it. Nothing you can do is ever worth that type of reaction from someone, especially when that person claims to love you. I also want to let you know, that I do forgive you. You let a lot happen to you that you knew were not right, and you stayed for the sake of trying to fix that person, and that is not a way for you or anyone to live.. it isn't living.

It's hard knowing now that you will hit rock bottom and there will be absolutely nothing left for you, within this relationship. It will take you spiraling and not being able to recognize yourself anymore, to realize this is not how you want your life to continue. Another thing to keep in mind is that jealousy is the worst trait anyone can ever have. I'm sure you have fresh arguments that have stemmed from jealousy on your partner's part, and know that again, it is not your fault. Some men choose to internalize their issues, and it comes out as disrespect to those they hold close, and overall ruins relationships with

family/friends. I realize you probably don't understand this concept because you think the issue is just you, but look at how he treats his mother... She didn't deserve any of those hateful words/actions either.

Parents are partly to blame when their sons are not capable of treating women/people with respect. In your partners case his dad was not around, his mom is an active alcoholic, and a lot of things that wouldn't be allowed in your home, were allowed in this place that you called your second home. I know you enjoy the freedom you feel when you come to this home, but you will realize that structure is important. If your partner had more structure growing up, was taught how to communicate effectively, and overall just learned emotional maturity you might've been golden. The connection will always be there, but the treatment you received was and will never be okay.

Don't be afraid to leave this chapter behind us, there is better coming and I know that it may not seem this way now, but you will love yourself in the future for it. I am here to tell you that you will find someone that does not see you as a burden and treats you with the amount of respect you give and deserve. It is possible to find a man who is not jealous of every little thing you do, you just have to allow yourself to accept the good coming, and DO NOT overlook those red flags because I know you see them. Anyway, I hope this letter finds you well and gives you the strength to know that your life isn't over because of this failed relationship, and you will eventually heal. I love you!

Love,

The older me.

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My Boys,

I cannot express the love I have for you enough. To watch you all grow individually into your own personalities makes me smile. I'm writing this to you to better explain an issue I not only struggle with, but many moms do, and I'll try my best. There's an inner illness a lot of people struggle with and sometimes it is hard to see, but doesn't mean it's not there, and it's called depression. It means that someone is very sad, or they are not motivated to do the things they enjoy anymore.

This doesn't mean I love you boys or love spending time with you any less, it means I feel I must work harder at staying happy. It is a constant battle in my own head and heart to be genuinely happy majority of the time. When I was 15, I started the war I continue now with depression and anxiety. It quickly turned into postpartum depression when Julian was born. That does not make it your fault at all, it is an unfortunate event that about 600,000 women per year get after having a baby. This type of depression is very hormonal based rather than chemical and can eventually go away. When the twins came along, I went through it again, which was not easy and as someone who already had depression this was something I knew I could and still can overcome. The great thing is that there are medications that can help ease depression and help increase this chemical in your brain, called serotonin, which helps uplift your mood and suppress the depression or anxiety.

This illness is something that can be passed on, if it is something common with family, it can happen to you too. That does not mean any of you will feel this way as well, but it means if you do, don't let it bring you down. Always understand there are resources, not just medication but professionals to talk to. Remembering that you are not alone and that the many

people suffering from the same issues are feeling almost the same way you are. It's a problem some more than others, must face in our world, but there are so many options to help overcome it.

There are so many avenues to take to overcoming these dark thoughts or alone feelings. I'm not sure what you will grow up to be interested in quite yet but if I were to guess now, for you Julian, helping you out of a depression would be to read a book, play with your little brothers, or cuddle. Roman, I can only imagine you'll have an interest in anything that is loud since you are the loudest little screecher we have in the house. As for you Atti, it would probably be just hanging out with your mom or dad that would make you feel better. What helps me is to either take a bath, nap, or watch funny movies. These are huge things that help my mind stop dwelling in the bad, and take it to a nicer, calmer place to relax me.

I work hard every day at making sure I can be the best and most loving mother to you three. Not every day is a success story, but nothing brings me more joy than seeing you, Julian, Roman, and Atticus grow into the amazing men you'll be one day. If you find yourselves falling into the same dark minded state I have, just know you are not alone and I will always be here to guide you and help you back to your motivation in life. I love you boys with every fiber in my body, and depression could never change that.

Love,

Mom

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Women's health care is considered a joke to a lot of women because of the way their complaints and symptoms are ignored. Most women have had a bad experience first hand or know someone who has. Women's complaints are often taken very lightly when it comes to health care. If we state we are in pain and are not screaming and crying we are not believed; however, if we are screaming and crying we are being dramatic. I personally have spent 18 hours in the ER only to find out I actually had an ectopic pregnancy and my fallopian tube had ruptured.

That day another hospital had been shut down and there was an overload of people in the ER. People were being brought in on gurneys from ambulances and were left in the hallways. I had been waiting for hours in the back area trying to sit on a chair, but I could not sit directly on my rear because of the intense pain and pressure. I wasn't talking much because I was using all my energy to handle the pain.

I noticed that other people in beds and in gurneys seemed to be somewhat comfortable and some even laughing. No one seemed to be in excruciating pain like I was. I saw that someone had asked for a bed and they were given one. I finally gathered enough strength to get up and ask a nurse for a bed. I was hunched over and my face was clammy. I was denied a bed so I asked for a pillow. The nurse looked at me like I was a junky. I don't remember who or when, but sometime after this I ended up getting a wheelchair. I was in incredible pain for hours and hours. I was 20 years-old and was just following ER protocol; patiently waiting my turn.

I kept feeling an urge to use the restroom. I tried to wheel myself to the restroom. The bathroom was of course occupied. There was a trash can outside the bathroom and I asked someone to hand it to me. I threw up. A nurse saw me and quickly got me a gurney and some morphine. She instantly saw that I needed help immediately. She yelled at some people to get me what I needed, and it wasn't long before I was actually seen.

They had me take a urine test, which was very difficult for me. I could hardly walk and I kept feeling this pressure like I needed to use the restroom, but I couldn't. They took my blood pressure and it was very low and they seemed highly concerned. I finally heard someone say from another room, "She's pregnant!!!" At this point I was thinking I was really pregnant like it was a viable pregnancy. They took me to get a sonogram. I saw the "baby." It looked like a starfish. Its limbs were spread out and there were no hands or feet. They quickly turned the screen. I was young and I was still thinking this was a viable pregnancy. No one had told me anything. I was just going off of what I overheard and accidentally saw. Well, the doctor came back and finally told me what happened. I had to sign paperwork right away to get emergency surgery.

I was told if I waited any longer to come to the hospital I would have died. That "pressure" I kept feeling, like I needed to pee,

was actually me bleeding internally. I had about a baseball's size of blood inside my body from the rupture.

If they would have taken me seriously to begin with I could have been treated sooner. Maybe if they would have given a urine test sooner...

About a year later I was pregnant again. I started bleeding at 12 weeks. I went to the hospital. They did a doppler to hear the heartbeat. There was no heartbeat. The doctor said, "Well, there is no heartbeat so you know what that means." I did not know what that meant. I was given paperwork that said "miscarriage" on it. I was not given a sonogram or anything. I was told it would pass on its own. It did not pass on its own. A couple of weeks later I started having cramps (now I know it was more like contractions). I was bleeding very heavily and ended up taking an ambulance because of how heavy the bleeding was. I needed to get a D&C because my body was not passing the fetus or embryo (I still don't know how far along I was before it stopped growing). For those of you who do not know what a D&C is, it is very invasive. They literally go inside of you and suck the fetus out. Medication is a much better option as it lets your body naturally release the fetus, but it was never given to me as an option.

I feel like the first doctor could have actually treated me. He could have ordered an ultrasound to see how far along the fetus was and to see how long it had been since it stopped growing. He could have treated me for a missed-miscarriage instead of sending me on my way. And definitely better bedside manners.

Fast forward to a little over a decade later. I was pregnant again, about six weeks. I started bleeding and went to the hospital. There was no heartbeat and it measured at 5 weeks. It was another possible missed-miscarriage, but they could not be certain so I would have to follow-up with a sonogram a week later. I went and paid \$150 out-of-pocket for the follow-up sonogram. Still measuring 5 weeks and no heartbeat. So I can get treated for missed-miscarriage now right? Nope! I had to follow-up again another week. I did this for 4 weeks and it was the same each time. No growth. No heartbeat. \$150 each time. I was a struggling single mother at that time and the costs were killing me. I had been cramping on and off the entire month while starting a new job. I just wanted to get on with my life. I wanted to feel normal again. I finally was able to get treatment for the missed-miscarriage, which was what people call "the abortion pill". I was happy I was finally going to get treatment. I planned it so I can get the medication on my day off because I knew it was going to be very painful and a long process to pass the unviable embryo. I went to the pharmacy and I was embarrassed because the pharmacist denied my prescription because of his beliefs. I tried to explain my situation while other customers were waiting behind me, but they would not give me my prescription. It was embarrassing and I was in tears. I waited a whole month to finally get treatment and this man would not give me the medication I needed. I ended up going to another

pharmacy and finally was given my medication. Everyone was so scared to treat me because they didn't want to be part of an "abortion."

These are just a couple of my experiences with women's healthcare. There are so many more stories out there. We are not taken seriously when it comes to our complaints and we are not given appropriate treatment because of it.

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They sit at a table with a hollowed and empty chair
Each heart wishing they still had the one who used to sit there
The house feels so empty without the sound of her laughter
No way they knew that something like this would happen after
There is nothing that could replace her presence for them all
Never to be the same, and no one to answer that call
She took her own life at only seventeen years of age
The book of her life would never turn to another page

-Please do not take your life-

Picture for a moment a scene that you might know
In our own city with the heartache it might show
A school gym and a stadium full of mourners
Of grief-stricken parents standing in the corners
The principal addressing the agonized crowd
The silence more deafening than anything loud
They all had just seen her kindly face yesterday
None could ever believe that she would go away
Hundreds of people grieving a single passing
If only the hopeless could see them all massing

-Please do not take your life-

And I know it's a hard topic to bring up in public these days
An uncomfortable subject as your sudden squirming betrays
But it is happening far too much for us to simply not care
We cannot ignore the plight of human suffering found out there
And I know that some people feel like there's no hope for their futures

In a world with so many wounds unhealed by balms or by sutures

They see all the good things come crashing down in a sorrowful end
And they feel like they cannot go on without breaking from that bend

-Please do not take your life-

I apologize if I sound overly dramatic

But I simply refuse to ignore something this tragic

These broken souls need someone who's trying to bring them aid

This cost of depression is a price too many have paid

There are so many who are drowning in worlds without hope

Seeing such a bleak future, how can any of them cope?

If we have a chance to tell these youth how precious they are,

Would we attempt to step out of our comfort zone that far?

We must do something, anything, and not sit idly by

In the midst of a generation that's wondering why

They should even be trying to get up out of their beds

I assure you that this issue isn't just in our heads

-Please do not take your life-

We are facing a health crisis in the U.S.

Of adults dealing with heavy mental distress

We see it in the year 2020 alone,

Tragedies the CDC statistics have shown.

Twelve point two million considered suicide

And the forty-six thousand people who have died

One point two million tried to take their own life

How can we be so blind to so much inner strife?

This is an issue that I can't idly pass by

And if you knew my story you'd understand why

I've been in those same shoes; I've walked that story out

Those steps are agony and make you want to shout

Rage against the grief, the unfairness of it all

If only we were glad and didn't always fall

-Please do not take your life-

I've been lucky enough to have someone help me through

I hope beyond reason that we'd help others out too

Because this is an issue affecting millions out there

All it takes to start helping is for someone to care

To rise to the occasion and show others their worth

Through our kindness and care, a new movement we can birth

A world that cares deeply for all states of mental health

Listening to others, growing knowledge in its wealth

-Please do not take your life-

If you're reading this in a crisis of your own

Dear reader, please just know that you are not alone

Don't take your life because you feel forgotten there

Because even if it's just me, someone **will care**

You matter, you're worthy of some kindness and love.

There's hope for your future, learning to rise above

Notes: Statistics cited come from

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. *Suicide Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022
<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/in...ages%2010%2D64>.

This page titled [Please Do Not Take Your Life - by Christian Anderson](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Christian Anderson at Pima Community College](#).

Mental health services benefit your quality of life, yet they are often inaccessible and stigmatized. As a result, many people can go unnoticed or untreated, with chronic mental conditions affecting how they feel, think, or behave. Moreover, mental health is so critical to your well-being and survival that it can chemically imprint on your DNA, allowing psychological issues, such as traumas, to carry through generations. Such trauma(s) passed down through generations is known as generational trauma (also referred to as intergenerational trauma). Generational trauma occurs when years of unresolved mental issues are overlooked, creating an endless cycle of unhealthy cognitive behaviors and illness in one's family history.

As a daughter of Mexican parents who migrated to the United States, my family struggled through years of poverty and displacement before they arrived here. My father, in particular, was orphaned and raised by his great-grandmother. As a result, he often spent his childhood walking to school without shoes and offering to carry strangers' grocery bags for some change. Poverty can have a significant influence on one's mental state, leading to extreme levels of stress, depression, and anxiety. Yet, when you don't have the luxury of seeking mental health services, people are often left to live in a constant state of survival that involves suppressing their emotions and memories. Physical abuse was another factor that played into my parents' childhoods. In the Mexican culture, because mental health is stigmatized, parents often don't know how to regulate their frustration when parenting their children, so they turn to unhealthy disciplinary actions that involve corporal punishment.

This type of punishment was equally damaging and scarring to both my parents. When my parents arrived in the United States with nothing but the clothes on their backs in their young adulthoods, they faced language, financial, and cultural barriers that often left them displaced.

Now, how may this have impacted my life? My parents raised my siblings and me around the fears and traumas they faced throughout their childhoods and young adulthoods. When I decided early in my youth to seek mental health services, I realized I was diagnosed with high depression and anxiety and had difficulty communicating my emotions. Therapy helped me notice that all the issues that stemmed from my childhood came from how my parents raised me. For example, I realized my fear of finances stemmed from witnessing my parents struggle with money. However, one advantage I had that my parents and grandparents didn't have was the accessibility to resources like therapy and an education system emphasizing mental health and its importance. Specifically, I took a psychology class in high school and learned about generational trauma. In this course, I acknowledged how unresolved mental issues could affect your body and be carried down to your loved ones. It was eye-opening when I witnessed the effects of generational trauma throughout my family history. Now, I can educate my parents on mental health, and my siblings and I can break the cycle of these traumas.

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The Mental Struggle With My Body - By Belen Torres

Ever since I was about five years old, I can remember always being the “gordita,” meaning “chubby girl” in Spanish. I started ballet classes at that age, and I was soon removed by my mom and placed into a different type of dance class. Not too long after the switch, I heard my mom telling a friend of hers she had taken me out of ballet classes because in her opinion, I was too heavy for that genre of dance. Although I didn’t think much about it at the time, I now realize that experience, along with many others, had a major impact on my relationship with myself today.

All through elementary school and middle school, I was bullied for being fat. The most challenging school year was my 7th grade year. Jackie, a girl in my band class, who I never even had a full conversation with, would come up to me daily, to tell me how disgusting I was for being so fat. On one occasion, our school band was invited to join one of the high school bands during a football game. While the high school band was warming up, my friends and I were just having fun and dancing to the music. Jackie walked up to us and said, “Belen, you really should stop dancing, all I see is your fat hanging out everywhere.” Sadly, it was not just at school that I would be body-shamed.

My mom most likely felt she was being helpful with the comments she would constantly make; however, she unintentionally taught me, my worth was defined by my appearance. I would constantly be told not to wear certain clothing because I did not have the body type for it. On many occasions even more recently, she would say, “Since you and I don’t have nice bodies we cannot wear...” and would proceed to say whatever she had to say in that moment. Good or bad, my mom and the rest of my family have made several comments regarding my body. I was constantly compared to my sister and cousins who were all thin. When I was only eleven years old, I began taking weight loss pills and would try different ones since that time, all through high school. My four years of high school I was no longer chubby but I was still extremely insecure and constantly wondering how big or small I looked to others. A year after graduating high school, and exactly one month before my 19th birthday, I had my first born, a precious baby boy.

My body changed a lot after having my son and I had a hard time “snapping back” to my pre-pregnancy size. Not long after giving birth, my son’s dad and I met my family at the movie theater. The first thing my mom said to me when she saw me was, “I have told you so many times not to wear that shirt. It is very unflattering on you.” Any time my mom would make those types of hurtful comments and I got upset, her response was always, “I tell you these things for your own good.” Right before my son’s third birthday, his dad and I broke up and I started engaging in restrictive dieting and intense exercise for over two hours, five to six days a week. I was determined to get my “revenge body”.

It had finally happened, I was the smallest size I had ever been, but the number on the scale just did not meet my expectations and that was my hyper fixation, the number. I guess it didn’t help that when I would get complimented for my transformation and would share that excitement with my mom, she would respond with, “Yes, you have lost lots of weight, and you could still lose more.” Oh how I lived for those compliments and the attention I would receive. Any time I knew a man found me attractive, I would feel like I was finally accomplishing something major in life. Even with all these compliments and attention however, I was still very insecure with myself and constantly worried about how I looked. I started restrictive dieting again and decided to hire a personal trainer.

Working out has always been a hobby for me. I genuinely enjoy working out and feeling my body getting stronger and building endurance. I went to the academy in Tucson, Az to become a correctional officer where I ended up receiving an award for the female top achiever in physical fitness. While working with my trainer, I learned so much and built a lot of muscle yet I was still unsatisfied with that number on the scale. I would take tons of pictures and compare them to old photos of me. I would zoom in on every picture and if I saw any kind of flaw I would tell myself I needed to work harder and lose more weight. At one point, I posted before and after photos and one particular post I now regret, was a comparison of my toned body at that time, and a picture of chubby nine year old me. The caption I had written said, “I hate the word fat, but who is the fat kid now?” I always considered myself to be someone who was against bullying and I would never make comments or jokes about anyone’s appearance, except for when it came to me of course. I would always say I did not want to get pregnant again for fear of gaining weight and not being able to lose it.

In 2019 I found out I was pregnant with my second child. During this time, COVID-19 had come and everything changed. The gym having to close was a bit saddening but I was not about to let that get in the way of my fitness goals. Every morning before work I would go to a nearby park to run and do some workouts with the equipment I had. I worked out my entire pregnancy expecting it to help me lose the baby weight faster. Friends and family would say that I was going to be back to my pre-pregnancy size in six months tops, with how much exercise I had been doing all nine months. In August of 2020, I gave birth to my precious baby girl.

Only three weeks postpartum, I was getting impatient with the way my body looked and frustrated that none of my clothes fit. I decided to go to the gym which caused me some complications so I had no choice but to wait for my checkup and approval from my doctor to be able to workout again. Months went by, I was working out every morning and no matter how many hours of sleep I got, whether it was four hours or seven, I would get up and go. I became a stay at home mom and would wait to eat until my spouse got home. Before I knew it, I was heavier than I

had ever been in my life. One day, I came across a post on Instagram regarding intuitive eating, intuitive exercise, and body positivity. I began following other influencers, dietitians, and trainers promoting that same mindset and lifestyle. I read books, would listen to audiobooks, and I would share on social media what I was learning, in hopes that others would find it helpful.

Intuitive eating and exercise is basically about learning to listen to your body and its hunger cues, along with learning how to let your body rest or take it easy during workouts. I would share several posts discussing this and the benefits of this lifestyle. Some of the things the posts said were along the lines of allowing yourself unconditional permission to eat the foods you want and enjoy in order for it to lose its power over you in a sense, so eventually you no longer feel out of control around those foods. Some other posts talked about weight loss not being truly beneficial and I started to build a narrow mindset around weight loss. I wanted everyone to agree with me and no longer feel the need to lose weight. Although I never argued or said anything to anyone directly, I would get so upset when people shared before and after photos thinking of it as a bad thing and feeling like they did not listen to what I shared. I began telling myself I still wanted to workout but did not desire to lose weight or shrink my body. Deep down I knew I was lying to myself but I thought if I just continued telling myself the same thing repeatedly, I would eventually truly feel that way. There was so much criticism within the body positivity community when singer Adele and actress Rebel Wilson had major body transformations. So many got angry at them for losing weight and getting thinner, as if they were responsible for our insecurities and healing. This is a community that constantly preaches no one owes and explanation for their weight gain. That is when I began questioning what it is I was really advocating for. If I want to influence others to be body positive, shouldn't that mean everyone should be allowed to do what they wish with their bodies without having to explain themselves? If no one owes and explanation for their weight gain, shouldn't that apply for those who lose weight as well? I began to realize, I went from one tunnel vision to another and I needed to find a balance for myself.

Friends would reach out to me and tell me how much they appreciated my posts. A lot of them would share with me some of their experiences with body dissatisfaction, or body dysmorphia and some would even open up to me about eating disorders they struggled with. It is important to point out the stigma with eating disorders. A close friend of mine struggled with an eating disorder known as, bulimia nervosa. Unfortunately, because of his larger body size and simply for being a male, he would get invalidated by the people he reached out to for help. Thankfully my friend was able to overcome his struggle with the eating disorder itself, but the body insecurities are still a struggle for him. Even though I was reading, learning, and sharing all about body positivity, I still felt like I did not recognize the person I saw when I looked in the mirror. There

were so many days that I would just cry because I would see old photos of myself where I was much smaller, yet I never saw myself that way in that time. I could not stand the way I looked. I knew I did not want my kids to feel the way I did so I decided to seek help and started seeing a psychologist as well as a psychiatrist.

I was diagnosed with depression, anxiety, ADHD (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), and was prescribed medications for all three. The medication has definitely helped me however, I don't think I could have gotten as far as I have without my counselor. Through my therapy sessions I have learned, my entire life I was seeking approval from others, especially approval from my mom. I always considered myself as someone who isn't a bully, someone who does not judge or make fun of others for the way that they look, I never realized I was in fact being a bully all this time. I was so hateful and mean to myself. I spoke to myself in ways I would never speak to anyone, especially not the people I love and care about. I have learned that it's great to have health and fitness goals, but I am so much more than my body. I have learned that there is a middle ground, if people do not wish to change their bodies that is perfectly okay and up to them, but I am not a hypocrite or a bad person for wanting to lose weight and change the way my body looks. I cannot say I never struggle with my self confidence anymore because I still do. It has been years and years of me struggling to accept myself, feeling so much shame I avoid socializing, miss out on making memories with my loved ones, and avoid going to the doctor for fear of judgment. I go to doctor's appointments and because of my BMI (Body Mass Index), they tell me all my problems can be solved through weight loss. They do not believe me when I say I strive to live a balanced lifestyle. Because of my struggles through all these years, it will take lots of work but it is not impossible and it will get easier as I continue to work on it. I recently started consultations with a RDN (Registered Dietician Nutritionist), who is amazing and has taught me slow weight loss is much more sustainable and healthy than fast weight loss and it does not have to be a miserable journey of restriction.

My RDN has advised me to add certain habits into my daily life that will help me but also reminds me at every appointment, not to hyperfixate on anything. Stress can really play a role in weight and obsessing over numbers and trying to be perfect every single day can be counterproductive. Rest is extremely important so I have really been prioritizing sleep, rest days from the gym, and just working on balancing everything out without beating myself up on the days when things don't go as planned. I have learned all foods can be a part of a balanced diet and I do not have to restrict myself from anything to make progress. In just the short time I have been working on all of this, I already feel and see a difference. People still make comments that trigger me at times but I remind myself that we have been raised to think our bodies have to look a certain way and to moralize food. I remind myself of these things because there will always be people who disagree with me and no one is responsible for

my healing but me. It is up to me to learn to love myself and break that cycle for my kids. It is up to me to stop living for approval of my size from others and learn to work toward my own goals and be happy with myself regardless of what others think or say.

I hope my story can bring awareness and help anyone facing similar struggles. I hope anyone who recently gave birth can enjoy their precious baby instead of giving into the pressures of “getting their body back”. I hope we can all just let others exist in whatever size they are and know that it is okay to want to lose weight and set goals to look a certain way but it is also okay if

people do not have a desire to change and are comfortable as they are. Bodies come in many different shapes and sizes. The health and fitness world is full of people in bodies of different shapes and sizes, we just do not see very much body diversity on those types of ads. “I chose to be fit, I did not choose to be obese” (Anonymous). Remember, you are so much more than your appearance or a number on the scale.

[The Mental Struggle With My Body - By Belen Torres](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Belen Torres at Pima Community College.

To self,

I love you. It may feel like you are alone or that no one wants you around, but I am here with you always. I see what you do to cope with tough times, and I am proud of you. We all need reminders that we are doing well, and I am here to tell you just that.

Mental health is something that many people struggle from. Although it is not ideal, it is okay. I am here with you now to let you know that these hard times are only for a little while longer. You will get the life you desire and deserve. Your hardships will not go unrecognized. Only when we get to the root of your triggers, then we can decide how best to resolve them. I say “we” to remind you that I am here with you.

You are continuously doing the inner work. When you read about self-care, it should feel personal for you. I do not think your mental health triggers were created overnight, so as you process your feelings of forgiveness to those who may have hurt you in the past just remind yourself that once you let go it will get easier. Once you let go, you can move forward.

Healing takes time, but time heals all wounds. It is easier said than done. My heart is always open for you. You are meant to be a source of love and compassion. You already know that there is either love or the absence of love. Love is the only emotion. When you love yourself, you trust yourself. You trust yourself enough to say to yourself that you will not put yourself through what you do not have to. You have choices.

Happiness is a choice, and I am proud when you choose to base your happiness off your blessings. I know most of your anxiety stems from control. It is freeing when you focus on the positivity in your life and what you can control. You are on the right path. I know you know this because I send you signs. Listen to your intuition and I promise to speak to you softly. I am here to give you all the reassurance you need. Remember that you are light, you are love. Everything you need is within you.

I promise you.

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What is mental health? Is it waking up every day optimistic for the day ahead? Or is it crying yourself to sleep at night because you get overwhelmed with your own emotions? Well ladies and gentlemen it is actually both of them. It is the pretty and the ugly that we experience throughout our lifetime. Without the ugly we can't appreciate the pretty, but sometimes the ugly tends to stay a lot longer than we hope for. That is when our brains tend to play tricks on us and life doesn't seem as great as it used to be.

When I got into high school, the topic of mental health was a huge one. You would hear students around you joke about "You're always quiet, you must be depressed." Or "Stop being sad, you're going to end up kill yourself." I didn't find any of these jokes funny since a friend of mine committed suicide just two years into high school. It's sad how people don't realize the internal battles that everyone must fight just to make it through the day.

It all started when I was a little girl. I never understood why I was so angry all the time or why I felt this deep, lonely feeling in my chest. It was constant arguing and disappointment when no one, not even my own family, would understand what was going on with me. That was something I found quite ironic since I was told later on that my father had suffered the same feelings throughout his life and how depression can be hereditary as well. That just added to my anger because how could they not understand? It was literally in front of their face all along! It was honestly something I thought everyone felt and that those nasty feelings would pass, until I got older and noticed everyone around me grew out of that "phase" and I didn't. It was many, many, MANY years of confusion until I finally got an idea of what was going on with me. Things started to make sense a little, but it still didn't give me the answer I wanted. What was that ugly feeling in my chest and why didn't it go away?

That ugly feeling happened to be called depression and the fact that it didn't go away was my anxiety. In my culture, those two things are seen as a sign of weakness and it is always about "just

thinking more positively". Little do they know it is much more than that. That is when I realized why my father never spoke up about his mental health growing up. I feel like I would've been able to get help sooner if he talked about it to someone. Nonetheless, It wasn't until I reached my breaking point that my parents actually paid attention to what was going on with me and finally decided to take my mental health seriously. I could not believe that it took me talking about suicide for someone I love to notice something was going on.

We looked into many different psychologists and psychiatrists until we found one that was the perfect one for me. Someone that listened and didn't just want to shove pills down my throat before figuring out the issue. If you're looking into getting help for yourself or someone you love, most ways to be able to find someone is by calling your insurance and asking them for a list of providers. You can also talk to your primary doctor to see your different options and what kind of therapist is best for you. There are also websites like "betterhelp.com" or "psychologytoday.com" that can help you out with that as well. Luckily there are many different options for you to explore now than there was before.

Every year 850,000 people die from suicide due to severe depression. If mental health was taken more seriously and talked about more, then maybe people wouldn't be so afraid to speak out on the topic. There are many therapists that are willing to help at a very low cost or no cost at all. My advice for everyone going through it is to not give up. Even though it may seem like a long road ahead, there is always light at the end of the tunnel and when you least expect it, you'll be feeling like yourself again. I'm still on the road to a better mentality but like everything, you have your good and bad days. The secret is to never lose faith and to always believe in yourself, even when others don't. If my blog helps at least one person out, that is already taking a foot in the right direction.

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[They Say--I Am - by Kaylee McClure](#)

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“I’m so OCD”

They say while color coding their notes
With perfectly aligned picture frames
And full of “funny” perfectionist quotes

“I’m so OCD”

They say while scrubbing their hands raw
For the tenth time in a row all because they touched their phone
And no matter just how clean it was the germs may leave them dead

“I’m so OCD”

They say, one honest as they spoke
The rest, unknowing of that plight, only took that lightly
For them, it’s just a common saying or something of a joke

“I have crippling depression.”

They say, quoting a comedic video from Vine
The phrase became a “meme”
A joke with merchandise online

“I have crippling depression”

Some say with dull and tired eyes
Exhausted from just waking up
Missing out on their lives

“I have crippling depression”

Some say, wearing “okay” as a mask
Going about their days, though numb,
Enjoyment but a task

For many, it is easier to make light of their unknown
We follow cues from those around afraid to act alone.
Ignorance, no matter the intent, is where prejudice is grown.

Everybody’s mental health, at times, has highs and lows
We all have spells of anxiety, depression, and mental foes.
Intrusive thoughts, insecurities, and fears that make their blows

A mental illness weighs down like a wet coat made of lead
A constant feeling, thought, compulsion, or fear that looms from
wake through bed.
It stings to hear it joked about while stuck inside your head

Disorders used as insults or jokes should not be a lingual habit.
The thought that simply being “neat” means OCD has no merit.
Learn that these are not a joke. Don’t make us grin and bear it.

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To The Little Girl Who Chased Butterflies,

I know how you struggle. I know how you try. You're told to do something, asked to help in some small way, but no matter what you do it never gets done. Or, if it does, it's after many attempts to do it. Small steps of the task intertwined with moments of what you are told are weakness. Moments where you forget what you are doing right in the middle of doing it, where something else grabs you and pulls you on an unexpected adventure that leads away from your task.

You're sent outside to unload groceries from the car. On the way out, you spot a yellow butterfly fluttering around the orange tree. There is no moment of "Wait, I have something I am supposed to be doing," no moment of "I can watch it after I unload the groceries." No, the instant you see that beautiful butterfly your whole being focuses in on it. It has captured your attention like unloading the groceries never would. Without a backward glance, you walk toward it, following it on its path through the yard. Where will it go next? It flutters to the towering lime tree, to the bougainvillea, the tea roses, and the Mexican bird of paradise. What must it be like to be that butterfly, following the currents of the air, nothing but the sweet smell of nectar and the breeze? Its life must be blissful. You imagine your life as that carefree butterfly, living freely in the sunshine.

Suddenly your father calls your name, asking where you went. You turn to see him standing next to the silver SUV, gesturing to the still-open trunk. Right. You had a task to do, one that did not involve following a golden butterfly on its journey through your front yard. A practical task, to unload the groceries. A parting glance at the butterfly, and you walk to the car and grab the bags to bring inside. Your father will tell this story for years. The story of the girl who forgot what she was doing to follow a butterfly. The story of the moment he suspected you had inherited his neurodivergent traits. He found it endearing, he said. All you could feel was shame. How were you so stupid that you couldn't complete a simple task without getting distracted? It was only a butterfly in the spring, common enough to be seen any day of the week. And yet you couldn't stop yourself from following it, leaving the car full of groceries open.

You will have other, less beautiful moments. You will stand in the living room, sucked into the TV show you don't even care about. If the TV is on, something about it will grab your focus, regardless of what is playing on it. Your best friend and her mother make a running joke about it when you are in middle school. "You can't talk to her when the TV is on" they laugh, "or she won't hear a word you say." They're right. They could say the sky was falling, and if the TV was on, you would continue to stare at it. Completely zoned into the glowing screen, unable to notice whatever else is happening.

It will get harder. The moments that used to be endearing become problematic. You're older now, no longer an eight-year-old or eleven-year-old girl. Now your distractions keep you

from doing homework. Your heart and your mind at war. You will come home from school and spot a book you desperately want to read. You'll glance toward your backpack and think of your homework. "I'll just read one chapter to unwind a bit, then I'll start my homework." But you never start that homework. Instead, you will be pulled into the world of your book. Your whole being becomes the characters, the story enthralling you as it unwinds. Nothing else matters. You are sucked in so completely that you barely hear your mother calling for dinner. "Just a minute, let me finish this chapter," you call to her. But as soon as you turn back to the page, you are gone again. Hours pass. You look at the clock and realize you missed dinner. Now it's midnight, and you have school in the morning. You glance at your backpack, remembering at that moment that you never started your homework. But now exhaustion weighs upon you, and you decide that you'll do your homework at lunch. But you don't. You talk to your friends and play, and enjoy the sunshine, forgetting about the homework completely until it's time for class. Your teacher asks everyone to take their homework to the basket in the front, and your face grows red as everyone else gets up and takes their homework to the front of the room, while you stay in your seat with nothing to turn in. Your friends roll their eyes and chuckle, because they already know what happened. Embarrassment burns deep, and you chide yourself the rest of the day.

Senior year rolls around and you've somehow managed to barely scrape by. An abysmal GPA for a girl at a school for the gifted, but a passing one. You and your friends will talk about college and plans for next year. "I'm going to take a gap year" you say, "to figure out what I want to do." Your friends already know, though. They know what you don't. It won't just be one year. It will be many. As those friends go off to college and get degrees, you work entry level jobs and wonder about what you could possibly even do with your life.

It will get easier. You will marry your high school sweetheart, and your son will be born the following January. Two years later, your daughter will come. As a stay-at-home-mom, you do well. Not perfect by any means, but you are happy with your little family in your little apartment. You still dream of bigger things, but now you want them to give your kids a better life, not just yourself. Your father offers to sell you your childhood home, the one where you chased butterflies. Now your children chase them in the same yard, with the same flowers attracting the same type of yellow butterflies. You decide to go to school. Finally. And in the first class you take, you discover your path. But focusing on school work is as hard as it used to be, harder now that you have two young children. You realize that these are the same struggles you've always had, the same ones explained by a diagnosis you received as a child but were never treated for. So, you make a phone call and finally ask for help. Because, while there is no harm in chasing butterflies, you want to build a better life for your kids. You know that in order to succeed this time— in order to accomplish your goals— you need

to accept the assistance that was available all along. And the assistance you receive helps.

With Love,

The Woman Who Asked For Help

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[A Blog on Immigration in the United States - by Humberto Hernandez](#)

[Experiences that Come with Being Mexican American - by Jacqueline Portugal](#)

All of us have met an immigrant at some point in our lives. Although, have you ever asked yourself, how did they come to our country? What is their story? Why did they decide to leave everything behind to immigrate to America? Who is considered an immigrant? Well, if you ever wondered about these questions, you came to the right blog.

The reason why I am writing this blog

My name is Humberto Hernandez. I am the son of two Mexican nationals who raised me in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Even though I was born in Nogales, Arizona, I never spent a single day in an American school. Instead, my parents enrolled me in several Mexican schools throughout my entire childhood. “Why?”, you might ask. Well, my parents were not Americans. Certainly, they did not want to immigrate to America since they had a decent upper-middle-class life in Mexico. They didn’t even need to think about leaving home, much less stressing about finding jobs.

Everything must be “cool” up to this point, right? Not really... I have always been a curious person. I always wondered how I ended up being an American citizen when both of my parents and three siblings were all Mexican nationals. “HOW, WHY!?”, I asked my parents multiple times... I just couldn’t understand. My goodness, I even thought I was adopted at some point.

Back in 1998, my mother was pregnant, and I was about to be born. My father was working for Chamberlain Group in Nogales, Sonora, and they offered him a great insurance plan. Basically, my mom and dad could give birth to a baby in America along with a very cheap co-payment. My dad once told me that he paid like \$50 USD for everything. Indeed, it was a nice plan, and I am glad they took that opportunity.

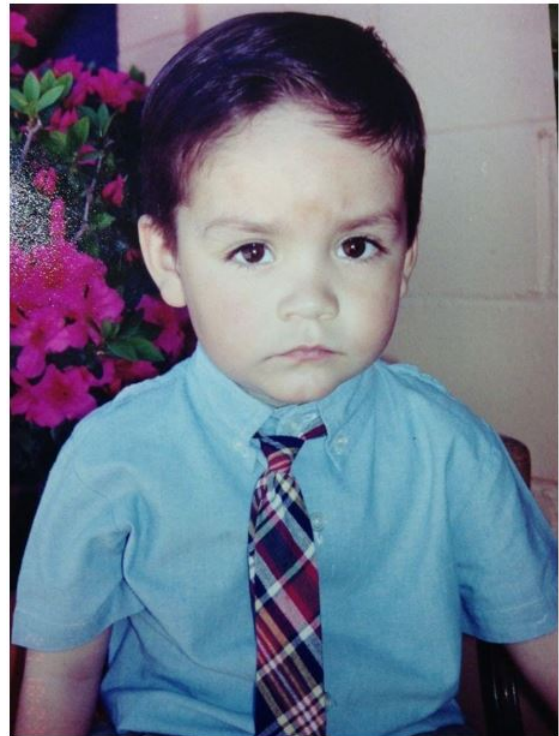
At this point, this is when I ask myself, “am I really an American?”. Legally, yes, of course. The thing is, I don’t really feel like one. I identify myself as a Mexican, even though I was not born in Mexico. Moreover, I feel identified as an immigrant; however, I am not even one at all. Isn’t that crazy? I am sure this affirmation may be causing a little bit of friction in your mind, and I understand. It is also hard for me to understand this concept, as I know I am neither a Mexican citizen nor an immigrant.

Long story short, I spent 18 years in Mexico before graduating from high school and joining the Marine Corps to become independent. When I was shipped to boot camp in March 2020, everything I experienced in the military was a cultural shock for me. I learned; however, how great the American culture is. Now I am starting to feel like a real American.

I described this little life story to you so that you can get a glimpse of what immigrants feel when they come to the United States. Most of the time, people do not immigrate to the United States because they love the country itself, yet they immigrate to provide for their families with a decent future in a potentially safe environment. Even though I was born in America, I never

spent time here, so I did not know anything about “being an American”. I learned everything from zero, just like any other immigrant would. This is why it is so important to talk about immigration in the United States so that other Americans understand what really is behind the mind of an immigrant; moreover, how their lives are affected by laws, ideology, racism, mental health, and prosperity. In the end, we all pursue happiness, and we need to understand that concept as humans first, before even considering nationalities.

Figure 1: “*Ni de aquí, ni de allá*”



Note: I was three years old in this photograph and it was taken in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. “*Ni de aquí, ni de allá*” literally translates to “Neither from here nor from there” which expresses the feeling of not belonging anywhere.

Why do people immigrate?

Immigrating to the United States is complicated and hard to understand for many people. It is based mainly on prerequisites such as reuniting families, improving the economy with licensed professionals, as well as helping refugees in need. In order to successfully immigrate to America, the desired expectations must be met. According to National Geographic (n.d.), “people may choose to immigrate for a variety of reasons, such as employment opportunities, to escape a violent conflict, environmental factors, educational purposes, or to reunite with family”.

The path to success

According to Budiman (2020) as of 2018, almost half of the immigrants in the U.S. are not English proficient. Many immigrants come to the United States without ever being able to

hold a professional job. Nevertheless, those who pursue higher education tend to succeed in many aspects. For instance, “in 2018, immigrants made up 13.7% of the overall population in the United States, a slight decrease from 14% in 2016. That year, 12.6 million U.S. adults aged 25 and older with a bachelor’s degree or higher were born abroad, comprising 17% of all U.S. adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher. College attainment rates for immigrants in the U.S. increased 38% between 2010 and 2018, while the attainment rates for U.S.-born citizens increased by only 24%” (Factsheets, 2021). Indeed, this shows us that immigrants are hungry to succeed, and accomplish their goals. In contrast, regarding Americans born in the U.S., the percentage of citizens with a bachelor’s degree has decreased in comparison to Americans born abroad. I can testify to this fact. For example, I joined the military because of the educational benefits involved in its service; however, you would be surprised by the alarming number of service members that do not want to use the “Tuition Assistance Program” while on active-duty status, or that do not use their GI BILL once they become veterans. It’s insane! Education is a great way to open doors in your life, why wouldn’t people want to pursue it? Especially when it’s free, as it is for veterans!

Does Immigration Benefit America?

Many Americans wonder if immigration is bad for their job advancement and opportunities, as well as the overall economy. According to Rouse et al. (2021), immigrants significantly boost the economy of the United States. By expanding the workforce, immigration most immediately boosts potential economic production. Additionally, immigrants raise productivity. In fact, “according to an analysis of 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data by the New American Economy, immigrants (14 percent of the U.S. population) wield \$1.3 trillion in spending power” (Beyer, n.d.). Finally, we need to realize that the United States of America was built based on immigration, it is an immigrant nation. The majority of today’s Americans come from immigrants. Originally, only Native Americans belonged to our country. These varieties of cultures have impacted America in significant ways. For instance, we have a variety of music, food, holidays, arts, traditions, etcetera.

Indeed, immigration helps to build better economies. In my case, I was able to join the military so that I could afford college once my enlistment is up. I am planning to become an RN. Once I achieve that, I will get a job, and pay more in taxes as part of a significant salary increase. Immigrants come to America because they have a dream, the American dream, and they will work hard to accomplish that life.

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Being a Mexican American can be quite different for everybody but some of my personal experiences consist of experiencing scary situations you read about in books and racism firsthand, your world changes in an instant and your view of life changes and not for the better, being told to speak English right when you have an accent can be quite traumatizing well at least for me it was when I was 12 years old. Language has a double standard to where in America you have to speak proper English and proper Spanish in Mexico, believe it or not people judge you for that. Traveling to Mexico every other weekend to see your family also puts you in a higher percentage to experience certain situations, for example being searched by the U.S. customs for hours and being sat inside almost like a little jail cell inside the building between Mexico and The United States of America can make you feel quite uncomfortable. Another situation that can make you feel like never going back is being stopped by gangs or sicarios in Mexico because they do not recognize you or your vehicle in their small town, can make you paranoid and think about a thousand things that can go wrong, that is why people say go with someone that lives there or go during the daytime. People like to say that sicarios see us Mexican Americans or Americans with a money sign on our heads for them to kidnap us to get money from the family for their return, which there has been a few cases about this happening in real life.

The reason that people have to force themselves to migrate across the border or to another country that I personally know about is because of gangs, sicarios (hit men), and the government and to also give the future generations a better chance at life. The war between the sicarios and the government is a never-ending fight in Mexico that affects thousands of people no matter who you are. The parents that leave their home country to give their children a better life are the parents that will do anything for their children and sacrifice their whole life for them, are people that I admire for their bravery to start a new life in an unknown country. Another situation that I have heard about why people leave their homes is for the reason of not wanting to be dragged into gangs or become a hit man for a cartel leader. For example, if you have a family friend that you and your family have known for years and they get into a gang, but you do not, they can and will kill you and your entire family because you know so much about that specific person, that they think you might snitch or betray them one day. Just thinking about that makes me afraid to hang out with the wrong people over there. When I think about situations like that I think about all of those young boys that are taught and influenced into joining gangs and that they are taught that, that is the only way out of poverty in Mexico is quite upsetting to think about because they do not have a lot of help to help them avoid that and I am sure they are surrounded by that on such a daily basis that for them it seems totally normal.

A story told to me by an immigrant that crossed the border trying to escape the war between the gangs and the Mexican

government. His first option did not work which was him trying to seek aid from another country legally which makes him a refugee. His plan b was to cross the desert and come to the United States of America by foot. His first steps to be able to be successful on this trip was for him to save up thousands of pesos (Mexican Currency) to be able to pay someone, a person that they refer to as (A Coyote) to do this as a job or a hobby that might be able to guide him from Mexico into The United States of America with a better success rate.

Imagine paying someone so much money that you have never met in your life, but for the reason that they are experts in this and because without someone that knows the routes like they do, you are most likely to die out in the desert so the only option was to pay and trust a stranger and hope they did not leave him there in any given moment without help of any kind. He also described how harsh the desert was to him and the others he was with on this journey and how he ran out of food and water after a couple of days and knowing you have no resources, and you are dying of thirst was a wariness feeling. He said that running and hiding from border patrol really does make you anxious and paranoid and that he barely slept a few hours a night when he was out there, every night all the guys would rotate one by one about every 20 minutes to keep a lookout while everyone else tried to get rest. The one thing he said he will never forget was the feeling that he wanted to give up and die but because of his wife and children he had to push through for them. After a week he was finally successful on his journey here even though it did take a few weeks for him to recover from such an experience he is now thriving here with his family working for that American dream he once dreamed of. After being told all this by a person that survived such a horrific experience it really does change your perspective on life and makes you feel grateful for the life you have.

Three places that I looked up here in Arizona that I know about that aid refugees and immigrants here in Tucson specifically are the IRC, and their website is <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/tucson-az>, Arizona AllNation refugee resource center (AARRC) and their website is <https://aarrc.org/> and Arizona Immigrant Relief Center. These places help and are non-judgmental places that aid and help you move forward to give you hope in this country, and I am glad refugees and immigrants have centers like this to go to for help or advice to get any survival necessities they might need.

My life has taken a turn for the better you can say since the pandemic started in 2019. I stopped traveling with family and friends to Mexico and by doing that I have not been in any more dreadful situations relating to border patrol or gangs in Mexico. Now I just ask my aunts to bring me the things I need or want from Mexico when they come to visit such as Mexican food, snacks, and even some cultural clothes like boots or sombreros.

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The Dilemma of the Anthropocene as a Time-Defined Disaster: Scott Gabriel Knowles on the Past, Present, and Future of Climate Change

Climate change is the hallmark of society's rapid ingenuity and consequential decay of modern civilization. A disaster that is inching to the extremes slowly and surely. And whenever this increasing disaster is examined, there is a vague, agreed-upon statement of facts that obscure a larger understanding of how this disaster came to be. On the spectrum of disaster in the age of the Anthropocene, where catastrophic events aren't in the advent of breaking points, the global threat of climate change becomes the unconventional definition of every time-defined disaster. This is the impetus of Scott Gabriel Knowles' essay "Slow Disaster in the Anthropocene."

In its syntactical architecture, the essay strives to dissect the social, political, and temporally difficult navigations of climate change on the scale of disaster. Knowles uses rhetoric through academically informed narratives on relevant historical periods, with the imperative of a historian's responsibility and professional ethical approach, and by citing of relevant texts supporting logical arguments, to create a stream of coherent arguments that support a solution on the climate disaster. Altogether, 'Slow Disaster in the Anthropocene' is a careful piecing of important ideas and factual considerations to propose a methodical approach on accounting for the temporally ambiguous history of climate change, to better understand the entirety of its mechanisms.

One of Knowles' main arguments is that a historian can offer something to the table in the conversations on climate change. He tackles this with an in-depth look into how disasters are defined in such a way that is antithetical to the disaster of climate change. To establish this, he brings forth his experience as a historian with a specialization in technology and modern disasters. With his work on fires destroying American cities, a book about the many factors that played a role in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the much more recent focus on climate change, Knowles establishes his credibility through his experience as a historian. He informs the readers of the importance of a historian's perspective on analyzing the entirety of climate change. He writes, "disasters aren't events that float freely in history, unmoored from politics. They are processes, playing out in uneven temporalities, and always with deep histories. Understanding the everyday politics of the Anthropocene requires the work of historians" (Knowles).

In his time in South Korea, Knowles reflects on the historical context of the East-Asian peninsula while narrating on the present condition of the country with the threat of war and climate change radiating through the heat wave. This anecdote becomes an interesting case study on how climate change is very much an existing disaster. He cites the recent spike in heat wave related deaths, and the increasing temperatures in Seoul that is set to rise to 32.3 days per year by the end of the century

(Knowles). He also sets a more personal perspective in this part, which creates a dynamic read of history, scientific facts, and a layer of humanity in the writing that ultimately gives the readers a three-dimensional experience on the matter of climate change. With his two kids in a park in Seoul, Knowles gets an alert from his phone written in Korean, he deduces that it might be a nuclear emergency, with the heightened friction between North Korea and the US. But soon after, he learns that the message is a warning on the heat wave they're experiencing. Through this, he attempts to make the Anthropocene's presence as physical as the political tensions between nuclear-warhead states. "The reality of climate change is every bit as ominous as the threat of war, it's just unfolding at a pace that makes it harder for us to keep it in the front of our minds" (Knowles).

On the scene of North and South Korea's Demilitarized Zone, Knowles juxtaposes the pristine wildlife of land separating both countries. He creates an example of how it can be foretelling of a future more active on the climate crisis, or one set in the perils of political achievement. Though both countries envision reunification, divided by their means, the breathing nature of the four hundred square mile border is a peaceful scene that is a symbol for a nonviolent reunification of both countries. But Knowles describes the border as a symbol of the history that can be excavated from its layers, uncovering the temporal markings of the Anthropocene. In its entirety, he tells the history of the land as a mark of human progress, industrialization, war, nuclear advancement, and the ultimate actor in the Anthropocene, human agency. And it seems the outcome of this climate-critical epoch will be defined by the social and political forces of our present. But a peaceful accord between the North and South does not necessarily promise the DMZ to be an oasis of peaceful nature, Knowles warns. From the history of the North and South in terms of their unification, intensified industrialization has been the strategy. Knowles quotes sociologist Ulrich Beck, "industrialization can be authoritarian, or it can be democratic; pollution is pollution, and it doesn't respect boundaries" (Knowles). This is then outlook Knowles gives in his essay. It poses the existential threat of climate change as the main determinant of our future. Dynamically, he uses the DMZ to create a history of the Anthropocene and its adverse implications on the climate crisis.

The important decisions will depend on the roles of world leaders and adaptive lifestyles we implement as a society to reduce carbon emissions. This solution to climate change is predisposed to our fixed understanding of what a disaster is. Ultimately, Knowles attributes perspective as a main factor to a solution in this crisis. And his prelude to a solution are the difficulties of understanding climate change with a definition of disaster devoid of the sociological and temporally ambiguous characteristics that the Anthropocene should naturally be regarded with. He writes that the social scientific definitions of disaster, framed in the early years of the Cold War, were modeled for the societal impacts of nuclear war. But how can

the Anthropocene be defined as such, Knowles emphasizes. “The traditional definition of disaster describes an overwhelming event delimited by spatiotemporal limits that are tightly bounded with clear cause-and-effect relationships” (Knowles). By setting this predicament through logical reasoning, Knowles gives the audience the setting stones on how the Anthropocene should be seen: as an anomaly that is defined by its unconventional temporal logic. Seen as such, it becomes clearer, “disaster history is a useful tool in filling the erased moments in the record, slowing down the disaster and analyzing its complete temporality (Knowles).

Knowles states that every climate change summit going back into the 1990’s frame climate change as a forward-looking problem. And in these discussions, the past is almost silenced (Knowles). Through a historian’s perspective, there is a deep, detailed history of climate change. And diving into these roots might uncover an understanding that can help the world move towards a solution. In this dynamic essay involving Knowles’

activist stance on climate change, while expounding on scientific facts and logical reasoning, he writes to an audience that acknowledges the reality of our present. And gives deep insight into the many factors that need considering when tackling the climate crisis. “Slow Disaster in the Anthropocene” is a persuasion on the active threat of human-induced warming, and Knowles’ rhetorical techniques give readers a fresh perspective on the discussion of climate change.

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Elie Wiesel is known for his many works of literature and experiences with the holocaust. This essay is an analysis of his speech, "The Perils of Indifference". This essay will take apart everything that went into his speech and analyze them.

Elie Wiesel uses many great techniques in his address, Perils of Indifference. His use of pathos, appeal to the emotions, technique is incredibly strong. The way he is dressed is clean, put together, and serious which creates a draw to listen. The light then sets the mood and give the air a serious tone of importance. But, above all, the way he talks is so powerful. He speaks slow and solemnly, giving pause for the listener to fully take in what his points are. All in all he uses emotion to create a tone of seriousness.

Additionally he uses logos, appeal to logic or use of facts, as well. His use of logos isn't a statistic or a fact, but rather human nature. Elie Wiesel points to the indifference in people of all sorts of problems. Personally I feel he does this to create guilt and build empathy. As guilt is a powerful motivator I feel as if this is intended to build off the feeling of empathy. It might not

be a great thing to feel empathetic because of guilt but it's what a person does with this feeling that makes the difference.

As Elie Wiesel is a survivor of the holocaust I believe he does this not so we can pity him, not so we can just feel bad for him, but so we go out and help others, to help encourage us to go and make the world a better place. Elie Wiesel is a truly inspiring person.

All in all, Elie Wiesel's speech is a powerful motivator full of inspiration. The way he appeals to our emotions and gets the audience to connect and reflect with him is astonishing. His use of common knowledge of mankind draws a listener into self reflection. It's important to note that while Elie Wiesel is a survivor of the holocaust, he doesn't harp on the subject but rather tries to use his experiences to better all of us.

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Once, when I was playing in a jazz band, I overheard the saxophonists talking to each other about the double bass, my instrument. They had a question about its tuning. Guess who they decided to ask - the drummer! Despite the fact that I'm the bassist and standing right next to them, they didn't seem to think that I could answer their question. The drummer, like them, was a guy. I was, in fact, the only female in that jazz ensemble. Ask any women today if she has experienced some form of gender discrimination, and chances are she'll say yes. Women's rights is an issue that still persists to this day. However, this issue has made great progress partly due to a revolutionary speech made by the forty-second First Lady of the United States. In 1995, Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered a speech entitled "Women's Rights are Human Rights" at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. This speech addressed the worldwide issue of the violation of women and their rights. She stated in her speech that there were many who were skeptical as to why women's rights were so important. Even in Beijing, China, the place where this conference was held, her speech was censored to the people in that country because of their one-child policy. Since there were so many people who didn't fully agree with these statements, it was even more necessary that those who did listen to the speech would understand its relevance. In order to get her message across and persuade her audience, Clinton used various elements of persuasion, such as ethos, logos, and pathos, to clearly emphasize the importance of women's rights as human rights.

Hillary Clinton established herself as a credible speaker for women's rights despite having an audience of 1,500 delegates from different countries and cultures (Clinton, "Power Shortage"). One of the ways she related to such a diverse audience was by listing some of the various roles all women, including herself, have in common, such as being "mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, learners, workers, citizens and leaders" (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). She also tied in the various activities that women from different parts of the world are engaged in, such as "washing clothes in a river, or taking a break at the office water cooler" (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). She further elaborated, "... we come together and talk about our aspirations and concerns. And time and again, our talk turns to our children and our families" (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). Clinton connected and related with the diverse group of delegates by emphasizing that although the women in the audience were from a vast spectrum of cultures, their common focus on children and families was a unifying thread. This unity led into her reiterating the purpose of the conference: to advocate for women's rights. Fundamentally, the greatest uniting factor among the delegates was the desire to change the way women were treated in society worldwide. As Clinton stated, "we are here to find common ground so that we may help bring new dignity and respect to women and girls all over the world" (Clinton, "Women's Rights").

In today's world, the topic of women's rights is hardly controversial. Sadly, however, it was a different story back in 1995. During that time period, the idea of a conference on women's rights was viewed with skepticism. In her article reflecting about this speech, Clinton stated that many in America questioned the importance of the UN conference and believed it to be pointless. She mentioned that even Congress at the time had looked down on the idea of an international meeting to address women's rights (Clinton, "Power Shortage"). Furthermore, she explained that US Senator Phil Gramm had stated that the conference was "shaping up as an unsanctioned festival of anti-family, anti-American sentiment" (Clinton, "Power Shortage"). The strong negative sentiment on her role in this conference made Clinton question it herself. In her reflection, she wrote that she was worried about the consequences if things went wrong. Nevertheless, she kept pushing forward to be a speaker at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. At the conference, she acknowledged that although people may be skeptical, there are still problems women suffer worldwide. To emphasize the importance of such conferences, she mentioned, "Wasn't it after the women's conference in Nairobi ten years ago that the world focused for the first time on the crisis of domestic violence?" (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). She then listed various organizations in which she had participated to improve the lives of women worldwide, such as the WHO forum. In addition to the forums, Clinton had spoken to women citizens around the world and learned about their struggles such as the new mothers in Indonesia discussing family planning and baby care or the women in South Africa struggling to end apartheid (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). These facts supported her point on the importance of women's issues being pushed to the forefront and established her as someone knowledgeable and active with women's rights issues.

Throughout her speech, Clinton presented logical arguments regarding the importance of women's role in society as a concrete way to persuade the audience, both men and women. Most women can understand the importance of women's rights mainly because they go through some form of gender discrimination in their lives. However, because they don't directly experience these injustices, some men don't understand the reason why they should take part in the fight for women's rights. For this reason, especially during the time of this speech, most male politicians didn't actively make laws or put policies in place that benefited women. Understanding this sentiment, she stated in her speech that, "if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish...when families flourish, communities, and nations will flourish" (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). Following the same logic, she later explained, "If we take bold steps to better the lives of women, [then] we will be taking bold steps to better the lives of children and families too" (Clinton, "Women's Rights"). By connecting how the advancement of women rights also advances society, she

showed the audience that not only women, but every person is a stakeholder in this mission.

To illustrate how severely the rights of women were violated, Clinton provided statistics to raise awareness of these injustices. For example, she stated that, “Women comprise more than half the world's population. Women are 70 percent of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write” (Clinton, “Women's Rights”). Continuing, she explained that even though women are the main caretakers for children and seniors, this important role is not valued by economists, historians, or politicians (Clinton, “Women's Rights”). Furthermore, she listed the various types of mistreatment women experience: “[Women] are dying from diseases that should have been prevented or treated; they are watching their children succumb to malnutrition caused by poverty and economic deprivation; they are being denied the right to go to school by their own fathers and brothers; they are being forced into prostitution, and they are being barred from the ballot box and the bank lending office”(Clinton, “Women's Rights”). Once again, she used evidence from around the globe to not only demonstrate the violation of rights suffered by them, but to unify the diverse group of women.

Ultimately, speeches that have the most impact on audience members are the ones that appeal to their emotions. Clinton did an impressive job of accomplishing this feat, starting when she first said, “It is a violation of human rights...” (Clinton, “Women's Rights”). Those who have watched Clinton give speeches know that her delivery of this speech was different. In previous speeches, she spoke calmly and naturally. In this speech, however, she seemed nervous and tense. In her reflection, Clinton addressed this issue and recalled that although she is normally comfortable giving speeches, “a lot was riding on this one, and I had a genuine case of nerves as I took the stage” (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). Furthermore, she stated that she didn't want to present herself as overly passionate, as “Women are often criticized if we show too much emotion in public” (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). Ironically, this bias sentiment is an example of women inequality, as well as limiting Clinton's ability to persuade her audience. In a speech, a speaker can add certain elements that appeal to people's emotions, such as enunciation, intonation, and pauses. Doing this emphasizes certain words or sentences that help strengthen the main message. Since Clinton was so tense at the beginning of her speech, she didn't use any of these elements at the start. As a result, her audience simply stared back at her with blank expressions (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). However, this all changed when she began the section with, “It is a violation of human rights...” Here, she finally began to appear more comfortable and express some emotion. As she repeated this phrase over and over again, the audience responded with profuse applause after every new line (Clintonlibrary42). Clinton's now visible passion was what invoked the audience to become more attentive to her speech.

From here, Clinton continued to appeal to the audience's emotions with the most successful line in her speech: “If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, it is that human rights are women's rights.... And women's rights are human rights” (Clinton, “Women's Rights”). This one line received a tremendous applause from the audience after being spoken (Clintonlibrary42). After she had finished her speech, the delegates cheered and gave a standing ovation, which was considered “a rarity at buttoned-up UN gatherings” (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). Clinton recalled that after she had walked out of the hall, the women outside were tearfully finding ways to shake her hand (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). She attributed this behavior as a result of that line, which despite being a simple truth created “shock waves” (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). Ever since that quote first made its debut, it has repeatedly appeared on various items such as shirts, posters, and pillows. In addition, the quote was the inspiration for an organization called *The Platform of Action* where delegates from 189 nations reinforced, “the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social, and cultural life” (Clinton, “Power Shortage”). The impact this one quote had worldwide on the path for women's rights is incredible and galvanizing. Clinton's spectacular and moving delivery of this message was what transformed the audience's apathy into empathy.

An experienced speaker or writer understands the pertinence and value of ethos, logos, and pathos to produce a compelling argument. As First Lady, Hillary Clinton's speech at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women illustrated the power and effectiveness of these rhetorical elements. Her persuasion was not only accomplished by the words she read, but also by the way she delivered her speech. Unfortunately, the bias and patronization of women by their male colleagues is still a persistent issue today. Nevertheless, this moving speech finally pushed the issue of women's rights to the forefront globally. By masterfully fusing ethos, logos, and pathos, Clinton created a speech effective in reaching her ultimate goal: exposing the importance of women's rights as human rights.

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“Nations United: Urgent Solutions For Urgent Times” bestowed by Thandie Newton, a video on youtube made to speak out the goals of the United Nations and bring awareness to citizens about growing issues in our world. It includes some ways we can move forward to better our Earth instead of continuing to cause more harm-not only our Earth but our human community as a whole. It is important to unify to solve this, it cannot be done without a majority's help.

I started by introducing what the video was going to be about and I asked my two coworkers to each write down a personal goal they had for 2023 that will better either the Earth or their community. Their goals were different yet so similar, both said something along the lines of wanting to be more positive heading into the next year. Helping out more around them, being more conscious of their output into the world, and just being more responsible. Also before starting the video I asked if they believe the issues brought up are still prevalent in today's world. Climate change, gender inequalities, discrimination, poverty, wage gap, etc... both coworkers said yes they believe all of these issues are current.

We then started the video and after each chapter I would pause and we would discuss the solutions the video brought up for each matter just to recap. After the video finished I had some follow up questions for them, I began by asking them how they felt after watching. My younger coworker Emma who is 19 stated she felt more “awakened” and this is a movement she wants to be closely a part of. Sergio, my older coworker, at 29 said he feels “hopeful” for the future and believes the human race will find the solutions.

My second question was if their views had been changed in any way. Neither of their views were changed, just more informed on what's going on and feelings of eagerness to get out and take action.

The third question I asked is if they personally feel affected by any of these affairs. Both felt they experience some of these

issues and at the very least know people who do. Emma as a female definitely goes through some of the troubles discussed and is personally affected by laws and such that dictate women's anatomy, leaving men untouched. As do I share these same troubles with her. Sergio mentioned how he sees the women in his life be affected by some of these issues as well. He also brought up how the wage gap is huge in Mexico and how he sees the negative outcomes that follow. We all brought up how climate change has impacted our lives; how it is continuing to get worse even in our everyday lives.

My last question centered around asking them what they can do to help out. Anything they can do to alleviate stressors of the topics instead of adding to them. Sergio expressed a want to be more conscientious and less wasteful. Throw more effort into being less wasteful and more helpful. Emma wanted to educate herself more and bring awareness to the issues taking place. She found herself to be very envious of the women narrator walking us through the video and would like to be able to do something like she is. Get into an organization and be active in the cause.

In conclusion I found Emma to be a lot more willing and with the video than Sergio. I think a lot of this has to do with the age difference and personal experiences. My male co worker was a little more standoffish with the video and wasn't as easily jumping into all the solutions being discussed. He conveyed to me having previous knowledge of some solutions to these issues. Specifically mentioning a Danish author known as Bjorn Lomborg, who mainly speaks on climate change and solutions to. He felt this should have been brought up. Overall the three of us enjoyed the video and saw the logic behind every thought. Though not all of us agree on everything we can all conclude change is necessary and prominent. Everyone needs to stand up and do their part in making our Earth whole again before it is too late.

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Have you ever wondered why you feel a certain way towards different graphics? Creators are able to induce this reaction with how they display their design. United Nations has created a YouTube video; “Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times”, within the 34:10 minutes of this video, United Nations demonstrates the universal problems that are currently occurring. As this video spreads awareness, it provides different reactions and feelings for each viewer. I was able to capture the reaction of 4 friends as they viewed this video, I noticed the differences and similarities in each of their reactions and the responses they provided. The way a video or an advertisement is demonstrated can provoke different emotions towards people. As “Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times” was able to create 5 distinctive reactions.

I chose 4 of my friends to present this short video to. As they were watching the video, I took notes of their reactions as well as asking them 7 questions about how they felt towards the video.

While I was analyzing my friend’s reactions, I noticed that two of the four were quite similar, they seemed to be very sympathetic, and their answers seemed vulnerable as well as their reactions. They shared almost the same answers but with different attitudes. Nyssa seemed to be touched by this video. It appears as if Nyssa was afraid and was slightly unhappy about the video. Sophia recognized the issues and was slightly down

but was able to manage herself. Sophia, and Nyssa seemed impacted by “Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times”. While Cami and Steph had nearly no reaction. They both seemed aware of the issue but not phased nor surprised. As I was asking Steph questions she was answering as if she cared, but throughout the video she seemed extremely distracted and uninterested. While Cami answered as she didn’t care, it was because she genuinely didn’t care.

As Cami and Steph had almost the same reaction, they had nowhere near the same reaction that Nyssa and Sophia had. You can most definitely see the difference in their responses and reactions. For example, when I asked question number four to Cami, she answered, “Because everyone is so stuck to the idea that if it doesn’t affect them it doesn’t matter.” While Nyssa responded, “I’m not sure, I believe were just too afraid.” Cami accepts the issues and the reason on why we haven’t changed our ways of living, while Nyssa is in denial that were doing this.

Although all four of my friends watched the same video, they had very different reactions, not only does it matter how videos, pictures, etc. are presented but their audience matters as well. “Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times” can create many different reactions as well as thoughts.

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For my second project I chose to host a watch party for the “Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times” video. Once again, I decided to present my project in a format that’s new to me. For this party I decided to invited some college friends, as well as members of my immediate family (parents, siblings). In regards to introducing them to the video, I didn’t tell them anything except for the title and length of the video. I wanted them to go into this project with as little expectation as possible in order to get a genuine, real-time reaction. After playing them the video, I asked them not to discuss any of their thoughts just yet, but instead, handed them a paper with the following questions:

- 1) With what emotions has the video as a whole left you with?
- 2) Do you believe the issues being brought up in this video are in fact real/valid issues our society should be concerned with? If not, which issues do you believe to not be an issue, and why?
- 3) Which chapter/issues did you relate with the most and why?
- 4) What piece of information brought up in this video was new to you, or the most shocking for you?
- 5) What changes in yourself and in our society would you like to see, to help change or solve some of these issues?

After they answered these questions individually, I gathered their papers and only then let them discuss the video/questions together as a group. The reason took these steps was because I wanted to see how the answers on their individual paper’s differs from the ones, they shared in a group setting. The topics in this video can be viewed as controversial and when addressed as a group between people of different generations, upbringings, beliefs, etc., indeed lead to new discussions, some disagreement, and even new persuasions and convictions.

The watch party was held on October 28th, 2022, with a group of 8 people from ages 19 to 54. Here were the results:

Generally, everyone had an opinion regarding one or more of the topics brought up in the video. The most controversial amongst this particular group being the chapter on climate change. When discussing this specific chapter, the conversation got a bit heated and almost escalated into a fight between two persons within the group that came from very different backgrounds. I can’t say this debate was unexpected, and the main point I drew from their argument was – it’s easy to dismiss climate change, when the climate disasters aren’t happening to you. Or to quote directly: “you live safely in your home in your perfect world where nothing bad is happening outside, of course you’re not concerned with floods and fires!”

Other then the above topic, everyone agreed with each other’s opinions and when discussing the questions out-loud as a group they, for the most part, didn’t not stray from their written down answers, which for me, shows that everyone was comfortable enough to share and stick to their opinions during this watch party.

Here, I would like to share what I believe to be the best answers from the group participants to the questions I’ve presented at the watch party.

- 1) With what emotions has the video as a whole left you with?

“As much as it feels right to say that the video plucked a “guilt” heartstring within me and made me feel sad for the world we live in, the fact that this video exists, and that the United Nations are addressing these problems (a.k.a. acknowledge them to be problems) already shows that not all is lost. They say the beginning to solving a problem is acknowledging you have a problem, which this video represents. It almost in a weird way gives me hope.”

- 2) Do you believe the issues being brought up in this video are in fact real/valid issues our society should be concerned with? If not, which issues do you believe to not be an issue, and why?

“The issues in the video are indeed valid and anyone in this group that denies even one of them is absolutely wrong. How are you going to go against United Nations? And furthermore, I feel like there are other issues in our world that were not addressed in this video that society needs to also take accountability for.” This answer when read out-loud, lead the group discussion into topics of healthcare, sexual harassment and other heavy subjects. Even though the group derailed from the initial subject matter, it was an important conversation.

- 3) Which chapter/issues did you relate with the most and why?

“I can’t say that I related with every topic, specifically, in fact, I probably only relate with one of the chapters - gender inequality. But that chapter alone was enough to make me realize how horrible my existence as a woman can/could be. It awoke a sort of fear but at the same time empowerment within me that I never had. Like, yes, I am a woman and that comes with a lot of hardships and dangers, but it’s because of them and through overcoming them, that makes me kind of amazing.” I’d like to note her that the majority of the watch party group were women, and this subject was talked about the longest and in the most positive/encouraging manner.

- 4) What piece of information brought up in this video was new to you, or the most shocking for you?

“The fact that over 1 billion people lifted out of extreme poverty in the span of 30 years is insane. How do you even do that, and how can we keep at it!”

- 5) What changes in yourself and in our society would you like to see, to help change or solve some of these issues?

“It’s like the great Mike Jackson one said ‘I’m starting with the man in the mirror, I’m asking him to change his ways’...But as much as I’d like to solve world hunger, I’m merely a simple man and if billionaires like Elon Musk aren’t solving these problems with all their money, that means it’s not as easy as it sounds.”

I then decided to ask a final question that wasn't written out on the paper I handed out. I asked them to tell me what they expected going into this watch party, and whether or not those expectations were met? The best answers I received were: "Whatever I was expecting, it definitely wasn't that!" with an added group laughter, and "As much as I wasn't prepared to argument the existence of our global issues today, I'm glad this video was share and this discussion was held."

I'd say this watch party was a success and defiantly opened the door for some to have better discussions regarding the state of our one and only world.

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The atmosphere that the wildfire had brought was not what I had expected. As I exited my car and my shoes touched the soil of my friend's property, the first things I noticed were tiny, black flakes that drifted overhead. My brother and I had driven to our friend's ranch in Oracle; a small town about an hour's drive from Tucson and tucked away behind Mount Lemmon. The fire on the mountain was still raging, and everyone in the small town was being ordered to evacuate, as the wind was blowing the wildfire straight toward the town. We piled the family into our van, all of them excluding the father, who had to stay to pack up as many animals as possible into their trailer. The air was thick with smoke, and the smell of burnt grass was inescapable. But despite all of this, the most prominent thing to me was the conversation I had with my friend as we drove away from her home. She turned to me and said, "It's strange, leaving everything we've built, not knowing if it will be there when we get back."

This memory was foremost in my mind when I watched the video the United Nations released. Chapter One, titled "Climate and Our Planet" begins immediately with a striking introduction of a young woman escaping the Australian wildfires. This scene hits home for me and so many others' experiences. For this project, I decided to send the video presented by the United Nations to a variety of family members and friends. After having them watch the video, I asked them three questions. These questions were meant to determine the effect that the video had on their perception of the video and whether or not they believed the video to be effective in its ability to shift their mindset on the topic. First, I asked the interviewees if they were aware of the climate issue before watching the video. Second, I asked if my viewers had personally experienced or noticed any of what they have watched. Third, I asked if they would recommend this video to others to watch.

When it came to the viewer's awareness, almost everyone I talked to mentioned that they were aware of the rising climate issues growing throughout the world. The lockdown during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic brought about the clearing of the canals in Venice, better air quality in many different areas, and an improvement in energy consumption as well, and two of my friends mentioned that they could physically feel that the air was cleaner during the lockdown. One friend recalled, "One thing that I have experienced firsthand was the wildfires on Mount Lemmon caused by lack of rain from climate change" (Anonymous, 2022). The Mount

Lemmon wildfire burned down roughly 120,000 acres of land. This led to high levels of carbon dioxide in the air because of the smoke and burned down a beloved town in the mountain.

However, this brought me to my next question. Though some of my friends may have been aware of these issues, I found that a large amount of the people I interviewed stated that they had not noticed the negative effect that climate change has in their day-to-day lives. I was a bit surprised by this response, but it does encourage me to try and become more intentional and aware of the world around me and how my actions affect it. The video is also a great reminder of this, and after watching it, many of my friends said they were more thoughtful about how their actions affected the climate around us. One friend stated, "...the video provided a bigger picture of what we, as humans, can do to slow down climate change" (Anonymous, 2022).

In concern to my next question, which asked whether or not my friends would ever consider sharing the video presented by the United Nations, I received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback. Many of those that I interviewed said that the imagery was compelling and stirring, urging them to reconsider their stance on our planet's worsening climate. One family member responded, "Many people are aware of global warming and climate change, but many do not consider the extent or realize how much it actually affects the environment and cities" (Anonymous, 2022). This video is an inspiring and effective way to help spread awareness of the true effect of our worsening environment.

In conclusion, I was glad to receive so much feedback from people I respect and love and was overall happy to see the conclusions they came to while watching the video. I believe that it is important to support one another through trying times such as that the video presents, and in sharing the video, I believe that my friends are more aware of the change of climate in our world.

Works Cited

United Nations. "Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times | Presented by Thandie Newton." *YouTube*, YouTube, 19 Sept. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVWHuJOmaEk. Accessed 25 October 2022.

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For my project, I posted the "Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times" video on my Facebook page. I chose the chapter titled "Climate and Our Planet". I asked my followers and friends to watch this chapter specifically and leave a comment on any feelings, thoughts, or reactions they may have had to the video. Initially, I was concerned that I would not get enough feedback to generate content for a complete project. I did not get as much feedback as I would've preferred, but I got some, and the lack of feedback is a point I will be able to touch on as well.

I posted the article one week ago, and I wanted to give it enough time to hopefully get more reactions and comments on it. The comments stopped coming in around four days after I posted the video, but I thought there may be some "stragglers"! Most of the interactions with the post were in the form of reactions to the post itself. I got mostly "care" reactions, some likes, and some "sad" reactions. If I saw the video on my timeline and watched it, I would probably leave a care reaction as well. The tactics used in the video definitely get you to feel emotional about the issues in our world. Although there isn't a way to see how many people saw the post and scrolled past without reading or interacting, I would guess that most of my followers did that. I feel that most people generally wouldn't take the time to watch an informative video, especially not to leave a comment about it. I got seven comments under the video. Three of those comments were very generic, such as, "Interesting video." While I appreciated the engagement, these types of comments did not give me much to report on.

The other comments were a bit more in-depth, but still not very long. One of the most interesting comments was from a family friend who also grew up in Tucson. They commented that they felt Tucson had been "getting hotter every summer!" as well as feeling like the number of big rains we got for each monsoon decreased. I would agree with these statements, and I believe climate change becomes more impactful as a concern when we feel its effects seeping into our own lives. When I look back to my childhood, it seemed as though the monsoon brought big, sweeping storms every afternoon. I remember splashing in the puddles, digging moats in the dirt of our yard, and creating boats to flow down the streams created on the roads. Everything seems bigger and better in childhood, but I feel as though those storms come only once or twice a year now. It is a lot easier to notice these patterns when you look back cumulatively rather than day by day, but it also makes it easier to fall into a false narrative.

Another comment I received, this time from a family member, talked about how the video made them think of the number of

forest fires we have each summer. They mentioned the biggest forest fire in the summer of 2020 that burned down the north side of Mt Lemmon. While our fires are nothing at the level of the Australian bushfires that were featured in the video I shared, they can still feel just as scary. The forest fires we experience in Tucson can creep close to our homes and seem as though they can't be stopped. The fact that forest fires are becoming more common in places where they didn't use to be, such as Oregon and Washington, is a wake-up call. On the same platform on which I shared the video, I remember my friends and family posting images of the forest fires each summer, with the red-hot flickers against the dark and smoky summer sky. Although beautiful, they are destroying habitats and ruining the homes of humans and animals alike.

I wish I had received more insightful comments to talk about, however, I understand. The world is paced so fast nowadays, and people want to scroll and get instant gratification. Even stopping to watch five or six minutes of an impactful video can feel like too much of a commitment. I can't judge, I can be that way as well. Learning about something like climate change is probably not why people go to Facebook. Instead, they would rather see some family photos, learn about the latest Kardashian drama, and log off in order to get back to a busy life. My project may have gone better if I selected a different website to post to, however, I would have lost the personal aspect of it. I considered posting the video to Reddit, as I feel that people would be more engaged there due to it being more of a forum and less of a typical social media site. The only issue with that is most people tend to be anonymous, and I was looking forward to seeing how people I knew personally connected with the video as part of the project.

Overall I am happy I received some comments, and I hope that more of my followers watched the video than it appeared. The video truly impacted me, with its emotional tone and sensitive subjects, so I wanted more people to be moved by it. It made me want to be the change in the world, even if there is not much that one individual like me could do. Being made aware of other people's hardships and perspectives through these times can push others from complacency to advocacy, and I believe that is the main tactic of persuasion the video employed.

This page titled [From Complacency to Advocacy](#) - by Sarah Foreman is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Sarah Foreman at Pima Community College](#).

As an environmentalist and a humanities student, I am no stranger to the UN's endeavors in promoting sustainability. In fact, I would go so far as to say that my understanding of the subject matter extends beyond the scope presented within the "Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times" short film. Because the short film is structured more like an introductory piece to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, I decided to screen the film for my parents and have them fill out a questionnaire to gather their feedback.

I introduced the film to my parents in minimalist terms, as I wanted to minimize my influence on them before the screening. I stated that it was produced by the United Nations to describe the desire to fulfill the sustainable development goals in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire form that I gave them was comprised of four questions: "How did this short film impact you on an emotional level?", "Celebrity Ambassadors were heavily utilized during this film. Did their inclusion have a positive or negative impact on the presentation of the film's message?", "After viewing, how well do you understand the UN Sustainable Development Goals?", "This film was released in September of 2020; Do you think the meaning of the film has changed two years down the line?"

My father summarized his feelings after watching the film in one word: frustration. He said that he expected more from the United Nations than platitudes, and yearned for them to present solutions to the issues mentioned. He viewed the use of celebrity ambassadors to be highly hypocritical, and detrimental to the film's overall message. Furthermore, he believed that the film could have done a much better job representing what the sustainable development goals were in the first place. Except for the carbon reduction goal, he felt that the rest of the issues were presented in terms that were too generic. Finally, he found it interesting how the film's message of pursuing change has been sidelined by the societal rush to return to normalcy.

My mother's response to the short film was both similar and different from my father's. While my father was left feeling frustrated after watching the film, my mother was angered and displeased. She felt that the lack of sources/citations was, in her own words, "insulting and irresponsible"; Going so far as to say that "any teacher would give (the film) an F for weakly supported arguments". In regards to the celebrity ambassadors, my mother felt like they would have been much more credible if their credentials as activists were listed. Furthermore, she felt like it would have been much better if scientists and dedicated activists were utilized instead. After watching the film, she felt like the film did a mediocre job presenting the sustainability goals; Going so far as to say that they were presented in too vague of a manner to be considered credible. Finally, she felt that the passage of time is "just as meaningless now as it was then" to the message.

While I certainly don't entirely agree with their sentiments surrounding the film, I feel like it's fascinating to see how individuals react to this type of messaging outside of the vacuum of academia. While I believe that acquiring knowledge breeds broader awareness, I think it can cause one to lose sight of the outsider's perspective; Especially when it comes to analyzing the quality of how something is explained. When watching the film, I rationalized the representation of the sustainable development goals as being simplified for a general audience, because I understand them at a higher level. However, the general audience that screened the film felt that it was too vague. I think one of the many lessons to be taken away from this experiment is that the best way to truly gauge how an audience will react to a piece of media, is to show it to them.

This page titled [Frustration and Displeasure: Watching "Urgent Solutions" with my Father and Mother](#) - by Kira McClure is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Kira McClure at Pima Community College](#).

Gender equality is a human right that has been the topic of copious discourse for centuries. Women, in particular, have fought for over 200 years to have the same rights as their male counterparts. Yet, today, as women progress toward a promising future for themselves, robust systems in our society insist on deciding for our minds and bodies by upholding outdated and unjust laws against us; and, in turn, oppress and diminish our voices—making it difficult to achieve equality. Moreover, gender discrimination impacts girls and women worldwide, denying them fundamental human rights such as proper education, equal pay, accessible health, a life free of violence, political representation in law-making, and so much more.

Growing up in a misogynist culture, I wanted to analyze the potential prejudice that exists within or affects my inner circle regarding women's inequality by observing their reactions and responses to watching a video called "United Nations: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times, Chapter 4, Gender Equality". To do this, I created a google form with questions to ask before and after they individually watched the video while observing their reactions. Before they started the video, I had them answer three questions: (1) What are your views on gender equality?; (2) Do you see gender equality as an issue today?; (3) Have you or someone you know experienced gender inequality? Everyone responded that they saw gender equality as an issue today, and some have been affected or know of someone who has been affected by it.

During the video, I watched how they reacted to the content. I noticed that the men seemed less interested—looking around or constantly checking the remaining time of the video. As for the

woman, they remain engaged throughout the whole video. Then, I had them answer three more questions: (1) How did you feel after watching the video?; (2) What were your thoughts after hearing the statistics that 75% of Parliamentarians are men, 87% of the people at the peace table are men, 73% of managers are men, and 67% of climate negotiators are men?; (3) Do you think the system is still working against women today? Many responded with shock to learning about the facts shown in the video. One individual, in particular, felt it was eye-opening. Another individual felt desensitized to gender-discriminatory matters. However, they were surprised to hear about the statistics stating that more men have held positions in power for extended periods in various areas. One individual felt men might predominate specific fields because they may not be preferable to women. Almost all participants believed that the system is often against women today. Still, one person felt gender equality wasn't an issue in America but could see it being a problem within countries like the Middle East.

Overall, I am grateful for this experience because it allowed me and others to expand our knowledge and awareness about gender equality. This experience also allowed me to discuss gender equality while respecting the differences of opinions openly. Doing so helped me understand the scope of views on gender equality within my inner circle. With all this in mind, gender equality is essential for women because we should be entitled to the same opportunities and freedom as our male counterparts. Our voices matter, after all.

This page titled [Gender Equality Watch Party](#) - by [Marlene Perez](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Marlene Perez at Pima Community College](#).

The climate crisis is happening right now in front of our eyes. Change must happen now. Change is possible. We are all in this together, and the climate crisis is an opportunity for change. We can make this a safe and sustainable world. Can we work together to solve this crisis? The clock is ticking. The United Nations, in their video "Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times," devoted a chapter to the climate crisis and the need for action.

Chapter One stood out to me when watching this video. Chapter one discussed the climate and the planet. Climate change is a significant issue, and this video truly brought it to my attention. Throughout this chapter, they mentioned several issues that need to be resolved and resolved soon. Most people have either been affected by climate change or know someone that has been affected. This video was created to inform and motivate viewers to start the change. To establish credibility, you must provide proof, and this video did just that. For every natural disaster, they provided videos showing the devastation that comes with natural disasters. This does not only include the planet, but the stress it causes to humans and animals.

Fear appeal played a large part in this chapter. And it is an effective way to get people to take action. Viewers are more likely to act sooner if they are exposed to the repercussions of not taking action. When I watched this video, my heart dropped. It made me feel that we all need to do everything we can to help our planet. Editing was crucial to making this video spread awareness. The footage in this chapter played a massive part in understanding this chapter. For example, watching a video of a young woman evacuating from a fire and putting out a fire in her yard, then continuing to drive through the heavy smoke. That crushed me. I cannot imagine being in that situation, and I hope I will never run into that situation.

I will share a few jarring moments from this chapter that brought climate change to my attention. First, a fact discussed in this video talked about how one football stadium's worth of rainforest is destroyed every six seconds. By 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. And about 1 million animal species are on the brink of extinction. This is sad, and we cannot continue treating our planet like this.

A couple of charts were shown in this video, which put into perspective how climate change is getting worse each year. One chart showed the temperature rise from 1880-2020. There was a major increase. The second chart showed the global co2 emissions from fossil fuels from 1960-2019, yet another

significant addition. The main driver for c02 pollution is burning fossil fuels. What we do in the next 8-10 years determines how the next 100-200 years will go.

A phrase that had been repeated multiple times was that climate change needed attention. A significant point in this video was talking about bringing awareness to climate change and how we can help. In a few clips within this chapter, there were marches to get attention to climate change. This is a big step to take and brings me to the next part of the discussion.

On the 25th of September in 2015, all United Nations member states signed up for the sustainable development goals. These are solutions to the most significant problems the world faces. Near the end of this chapter, the narrator discussed what plans the United Nations Global Solutions Act had. These include reducing global emissions by half by 2030, stopping subsidizing fossil fuels, taxing carbon, not people, providing more green jobs, preventing deforestation, respecting and protecting the planet, consuming responsibly, and farming sustainably. These stood out to me. Change is purely man-made, and we must team together to tackle climate change. This information is accurate as it is listed on the United Nations website.

Climate change dramatically affects humans just as much as it involves animals. During the Australian wildfires, nearly 3 billion animals were killed or displaced. A clip showed humans and horses finding shelter on a beach to avoid wildfires. This extreme weather displaces 20 million people (about the population of New York) annually. It is a significant issue whether it is a hurricane, wildfire, flood, or bug swarm. This last decade was the hottest on record. In December 2019, Australia recorded temperatures above 47 degrees Celsius, which is 117 degrees Fahrenheit.

Climate change is an emergency and needs attention. During the Covid lockdown, the planet started healing when residents were stuck in isolation. The Himalayas were becoming visible again, Venice canals were clear again, and dolphins had returned across Italy. This information shows that change is possible. We can save this planet before the damage becomes irreversible. Can we work together to solve this crisis? I guess we will find out.

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As my project I chose to host a watch party. I decided to show it to my best friend, my parents, and my sister. They will be shown at different times since I didn't want any opinions to affect the others decision or thoughts. I told them this was an assignment for my Writing 102 class and the video had a very moving message. I told them to pay attention to the persuasive message.

Questions asked:

How did you feel while watching this video?

Did you get the persuasive message? What is it?

Did you find any connection with you and any of the topics? If so, which one?

Was there any words that repeated? If so, did they make you think anything different about the topic being shown?

What emotional appeals does the video use?

My best friend Eva watched it and while the video was going you can tell the concern on her face. She also started crying and felt overwhelmed. This was her response:

"The video is emotional and eye opening. It shows the problems but also hope to a better future. It gives us answers to the problems that are in this world. We need to see the ugly, the harsh, to wake us up and to realize things aren't right but we also need a solution and a way of getting out of these problems. We are all humans, we are all on this planet. We need to love each other! Together we are a lot stronger. The youth is standing up now more than ever. We need to listen! We have lost way too many lives from our own actions and if that doesn't change, more will parish. I loved this video! It definitely opened by eyes to what is going on."

Then came my parents. As I observed them watching the video I could tell the concern in their face. I also saw a hint of sadness when they realized where the world could be heading if there is no change. This were their response to the questions above.

Mom: "I feel like we were in big trouble, especially if nothing is done now."

Dad: "I am concerned for the future, we need to do more on the giving than receiving."

Mom: "The message behind the video is that we have to pay more attention on how we do things because we don't know the outcome of it. It could be good or bad, but now I'm seeing a lot of it is bad."

Dad: "I think the message is to pay more attention to the planet for the future of the next generation and the world to come."

Mom: "The part I felt most connected to was the equality of women and how we don't have a voice. Growing up I was always silenced when I tried speaking out on any matter."

Dad: "I felt most connected to the kids growing up in poverty. I didn't have the resources I needed like them but a lot of smart kids come out of places like that."

Mom and Dad: "The charts and numbers helped shape our idea of the video as well as letting us know how bad it is in the world through cause and effect and their topics"

Mom: "The emotional appeal I found most interesting was Malala's story because I couldn't resist but to feel empathetic to the whole situation. Also, seeing the younger generation suffer so much and wanting to do something about it."

Dad: "Floyd's death was huge on visuals as well as Malala's story on women's rights. When I saw the kids suffer, it was another eye opener and seeing the hole in the wall project was huge for me. It was an amazing project and so sweet of the man to do it!"

The last person on my list was my sister, Ilse. As she watched the video, she cried. She shook her head and looked in awe of the whole situation especially with the kids and poverty. This was her response to the questions.

1. "I wish I could sum up the video and the way it made me feel in one word, but I couldn't just say one word and be done with it. It makes you feel like you are not doing enough. Powerless and brave at the same time. Upset, worried, and sad would be some other words to describe it."

2. "The message that was the most persuasive I would say would be the "let's get it done" attitude, we must act but act soon. Whether it be climate change, women's rights, or poverty. The change must be done now instead of just looking through the glass door."

3. "I did find a connection with the gender inequality topic because I lived through it. Nonetheless, it did not stop me from achieving what I wanted. I used that negativity as fuel to make sure other woman knew their voice mattered and that they were valuable."

4. "One word that was repeated was "change" and the word change is insignificant unless we are willing to do and act on it. It makes you wonder if we are ever going to understand to do something!"

5. "The emotional appeal I recognized was fear, guilt, sadness, compassion, and willingness. Seeing the kids live in such poverty triggered those emotions since I'm a mom and I couldn't imagine having kids in that state. The other one was climate change because it's scary to think the world can turn into that."

After reading everyone's response I realized they had a lot of similarities. It made everyone realize that we need to do something in today's world or else things will just keep going downhill. They also realized they had no idea these situations were as bad as they are. I didn't really notice any differences, they were all in sync with their thoughts. I believe the message

was definitely delivered and the producers did an excellent job at making known the issues we have going on right now.

This page titled [In Sync With Their Thoughts - by Karla Silva](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Karla Silva at Pima Community College](#).

After watching "Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times" several times, I feel as if more people need to be exposed to it. I think when more people are educated and when they see the facts, statistics and the solutions that need to be made I think it will influence a lot more people. I think exposing these issues to the younger generation in schools would be a good start or if people share it on social media. Justice and equality for all and for our planet needs to be done. The only way that will be done is if we come together to tackle each issue.

The first issue being climate change. The immediate reaction I had to this video is when they stated the fact: "climate is man-made. The main driver is CO2 pollution from burning fossil fuels." They quickly go into the actions that need to be made. Reducing food waste, renewable energy, carbon neutral, planting trees instead of chopping them down are all resolutions to ending the biggest issues in our world. The biggest question is if we can come together and find urgency to resolve this issue together quickly before it's too late.

Poverty and Inequality is also immediately described as a man-made issue. The portion of the video quickly goes into the statistics and how the world has made huge progress in the last few decades. The hole in the wall experiment was the biggest thing that stuck out to me. During this section of the video the way that the children were able to quickly learn how to use the computer and even more impressively is when they said they learned English, and they were teaching each other is amazing. The video then goes through the actions that need to be made to end poverty and inequality. Healthcare, safety, protection, living wage, education, and internet for all. Equality is also man-made.

The actions that need to be made all depend on how we treat each other. Breaking the cycle of corruption and offering peace and respect to all will help this issue immensely. Injustice is the scariest issue of all to me personally. The story of George Floyd has been the biggest movement around the world and has sent out one of the biggest messages that Inequality needs to end immediately.

Gender equality is especially important to me because I am raising my two daughters. Teaching your daughters that they have the right to speak up, work, have an education are all important when raising young women. The positive solutions states that we need to make our law equal so that women have the same opportunities as men do. Living free from violence and being able to make decisions about their own bodies is a topic that weighs heavy on me. Being a woman, we should not have men making laws about what we decide to do with our bodies. I think that having access to healthcare for sexual reproduction is especially important. Women are half of the population, and we need to do better at being equal.

This video does an excellent job at introducing the audience to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The video carefully goes through all the world's biggest problems. It explains the actions that we need to go through to make the world a safe place to live in. This video was beautifully made and very powerful in the message that it sends out.

This page titled [Make the World a Safer Place - by Ashley Rascon](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Ashley Rascon at Pima Community College](#).

I had initially planned for a group of my friends and family to sit down and watch Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times. However, scheduling problems ended up arising, so I ultimately decided to have them read a brief introduction that I sent, read through my questions, and then watch the video and respond to my questions. In total, I had six people watch the video and respond. Here is the introduction I sent to everyone to read before watching:

Today we are going to watch a video released by the United Nations in September of 2020 as a statement to promote what they believe are sustainable goals for the future. As we watch the video, I want you to think about what changes you believe are possible, what you may disagree with, and if anything makes you uncomfortable or confused. I'd like to concentrate on the climate change portion with my questions, but I may have some things to discuss about other areas of the video as well. Feel free to take notes on the video as you watch to help you keep track of how you want to respond to the questions.

Questions for after the video:

1. What stood out to you the most?
2. Did anything in particular in the video make you feel motivated to make changes in your own life?
3. What are changes you think can be made in your life, pertaining to climate change, that you think would be sustainable for you?
4. Was there anything you disagreed with?
5. Was there anything that confused you?
6. How did the video make you feel?
7. Was there anything that made you uncomfortable?
8. Now that 2 years have passed since the release of this video, what kind of progress do you think has (or hasn't) been made?
9. Was there any information in the video that surprised you?
10. Do you think the makers of the video were biased?
11. Do you trust the information provided in the video?
12. Is there anything else you wish to discuss?

I got a large range of responses from the six people who watched the video and answered my questions. For the most part, this video actually had the opposite intended effect. Instead of empowering them, it made them feel sad and disheartened. Two years have passed since this video was released, and yet, if anything, humanity has regressed. Instead of making strides in the right direction, the world has taken steps backward in women's rights, and next to nothing has been done about climate change. While they all individually felt motivated to make small changes in their own lives, they feel like some of these goals are unachievable as the world continues to bend to the will of large corporations and the wealthy.

So, without further ado, here are the responses I received to my questionnaire. I am replacing names with initials so as to maintain the privacy of the individuals who responded, and I also have not included everyone's answers to every question in

the interest of brevity. For most questions I kept at least three responses, but there are a couple where I felt it was important to keep most of them. I selected answers that I felt best addressed my questions, as well as those that elaborated well on their answers.

1. What stood out to you the most?

AR: The overall tone of optimism for our chances of change.

TV: The hole in the wall was my favorite part. Kids really do love learning and soaking in all the knowledge they can "if we let them."

AJ: The video contained a sense of urgency that really exemplified the message of immediate action.

TA: The facts about climate change's effects and displacements over the last few years.

TG: The comment about "the worst thing we could do is go back to normal," when that's exactly what we have done in my opinion.

2. Did anything in particular in the video make you feel motivated to make changes in your own life?

TV: All of it motivates me. There are things that I can do personally to help fight against injustice and inequality. Educating the youth in these things is a big step in the right direction.

AJ: Watching Malala's story was moving and honestly enraging. I already care deeply about women's rights, but perhaps I could be doing more.

TA: There was a clip where someone stated the next 10 years will determine our next 100-200 years.

3. What are changes you think can be made in your life, pertaining to climate change, that you think would be sustainable for you?

AR: Trying to reduce plastic waste and contribution to meat-based emissions by purchasing more locally produced goods.

TV: I definitely feel more motivated to move to eco-friendly products and purchasing less plastic waste. Moving towards glass and plant-based items.

RJ: Stop buying goods from systemic industrial processes, or services that are harmful to ecological stability both locally and globally.

AJ: I can recycle more and use public transportation, but in honesty not much I do can make a difference, as individual consumers are only small fraction of carbon emissions and pollution, whereas large corporations without oversight are the primary contributors.

TG: Growing most of my own food and composting potentially. Reducing plastic use.

4. Was there anything you disagreed with?

TV: I'm dismayed with how little the UN is able to achieve its goals. We want to dismantle corruption but they still let money and big industry sway making things better.

RJ: Not necessarily disagreed, but looking back on when things were happening at that point vs. now leaves me with disappointment and disgust that even if this video was made with good intent, now optically appears performative and produced for Public Relations more than inspiring problem solving.

AJ: No, it was all agreeable and on point.

5. Was there anything that confused you?

AR: What the actual plan was to set in motion legally to instigate actual change.

RJ: At first, I thought it meant that the 16% wage gap for women was that globally there were women still being paid 16 cents to a man's dollar, but after looking it up it meant the difference was 83 to 100. Which is still unacceptable but was unclear in the way it was presented

AJ: I think the video could have been more clear on what actions private individuals could do to help make change a reality.

6. How did the video make you feel?

AR: Given the video came out several years ago, and looking at what has happened since, I felt disheartened.

RJ: Melancholic and Skeptical of every public and private entity that endorsed this video.

TA: I felt empowered to take actions and do more for change.

7. Was there anything that made you uncomfortable?

AR: The use of celebrity presence to try and add something beyond the facts and plans to the video.

TV: I was angry in chapter 3 when we see the protests, they show pictures of protesters hugging police. You only see the face of the officer. We know many of those pictures were essentially opportunistic photo ops. For the U.N to talk about dismantling the racial brutality that's happening systematically while using black voices but still showing the propaganda of the officers that uphold that oppression is disgusting and is one of the reasons that make me feel less inclined to trust them.

RJ: The entire video felt like grandstanding and the message felt dissonant to the general issues and solutions were reduced/simplified to their most distilled form, while they may even be factual and realistic, felt twisted, incredulous, and untrustworthy.

TG: All of it. Since I don't believe we've made any progress.

8. Now that two years have passed since the release of this video, what kind of progress do you think has (or hasn't) been made?

AR: I think the largest change has been the back-step of rights for women both here and in some international areas.

TV: We know unfortunately that big steps have been taken backwards for rights for women and not much has changed in injustice or global warming

RJ: It feels like a regression rather than progression. Little to no change has occurred, and timelines have been projected back further decades than what is stated in the video. Which is basically spelling our doom in my eyes, keep kicking the can down the road until the next natural disaster takes it, and you with it.

AJ: A dialogue for equal rights has certainly been opened, but the institutions in power have made a concerted effort to push back, and not much has changed.

TA: Climate change and women's rights have not made much progress since the video

9. Was there any information in the video that surprised you?

AR: I was honestly surprised that there was a list of hopeful changes at all.

TV: I didn't know how many people have been pulled out of extreme poverty. I think that's fantastic but I do wonder what's defined as poverty or extreme.

TA: The amount of displacement due to natural disasters.

10. Do you think the makers of the video were biased?

AR: I believe it is difficult to be biased when presenting facts, but their ideas for social change at least were more geared towards what I would call Progressive views.

TV: Yes, highlighted in pictures chosen for protests with the police.

RJ: Absolutely, but that is near impossible to remove, and acknowledging where the bias is has never been the MO of this kind of "edutainment"

AJ: Absolutely, but that isn't a problem. There is always a bias, regardless of the intent. But bias is the driving force of change.

11. Do you trust the information provided in the video?

TV: I think the numbers are pretty trustworthy. It's hard to lie about those, but you can skew context, I guess.

RJ: The facts, data, and numbers stated I do trust, but the solutions and "calls to action" alongside appeals to inspiration, activism, and hope leave a bad taste in my mouth.

AJ: Yes, it all seemed legitimate.

12. Is there anything else you wish to discuss or any additional comments you'd like to make regarding the video?

AR: The video has reinforced to some degree, along with the actions and changes since, that while there are small things individuals can do to try and induce positive change, the real struggle will be having anyone with the actual power to make influential change act.

TV: It makes me pray and wish that these solutions could be made. I want to try my hardest to leave the world a better place so I want to make the changes I know that I can do and control.

RJ: Sometimes, produced and artistic content with this kind of agenda leaves people more critical of its propagandizing rather than the urgency of the problems it presents, and can be harmful to the things it is advocating for. I can't help but suspect or wonder if sometimes these are made intentionally so.

It seems as though the general consensus is for viewers to be disheartened by what they saw in the video. That being said, I want to talk about some of the responses that really got me thinking, though there will be some questions I am skipping that I don't feel need further discussion or elaboration. I'll begin with question one. The answer here that stood out to me the most was that of TG. He said the part that stood out to him the most was "The comment about 'the worst thing we could do is go back to normal,' when that's exactly what we have done in my opinion." This response resonated with me, because I completely agree. For the most part, nothing has truly changed since the beginning of the pandemic. Everyone is just acting like nothing life-altering happened. Moving on to question two, the reply I wish discuss is TA's response, where she says what she found most motivating was the "...clip where someone stated the next 10 years will determine our next 100-200 years." I feel as though this was the whole reason the quote was included in the video, to motivate people to make changes. It stresses how dire the situation is, as well as how limited the time to fix it is.

The answer I'd like to highlight for question four is TV's. When asked if there was anything she disagreed with, she replied "I'm dismayed with how little the UN is able to achieve its goals. We want to dismantle corruption but they still let money and big industry sway making things better." She makes a fair point, with how influential corporations are when it comes to big changes, it seems like the goals the UN is setting are, at their very core, unachievable without radical social changes. My favorite response for question five was when AR said he was most confused by "What the actual plan was to set in motion legally to instigate actual change." The video does a great job to get you riled up to make changes, but gives very few options as to what the actual plan is to get a lot of the parties responsible

for global problems to change. Things are the way that they are because a lot of forces that can produce change don't actually want to change.

There was one response to question seven that stood out to me above all others, and that was TV's. She was able to pinpoint something that I had not considered or noticed, but that made me agree with her completely when I went back to watch it again. She said "I was angry in chapter 3 when we see the protests, they show pictures of protesters hugging police. You only see the face of the officer. We know many of those pictures were essentially opportunistic photo ops. For the UN to talk about dismantling the racial brutality that's happening systematically while using black voices but still showing the propaganda of the officers that uphold that oppression is disgusting and is one of the reasons that make me feel less inclined to trust them." She is completely and totally right here, in my opinion. This section of the video enforces the idea of trusting the police and other institutions that are in place to "protect" people. However, it has been historically clear that oftentimes, change occurs most rapidly and effectively during revolutions, revolts, and forced upholding of justice. The video clearly shows photos of people hugging police, with none of the photos of police brutality people are experiencing. This leads me to her response to question ten, which ties into her response to question seven. The bias of the United Nations in this instance is toward change within the institutions that are currently in place, rather than overthrowing those institutions in favor of greater restructuring.

I think the general opinion of my friends and family was that a lot of portions of this video were very idealistic rather than realistic. There seemed to be a lot of use of celebrities to discuss problems rather than people who can actually make a real and dramatic change in the world. Especially given the steps backwards that the world has taken since the release of this video, I think its important to note that while individuals can make a change, institutions and corporations need to also change if we are going to make a difference in the world. Things like lifetime appointments to the Supreme Court and career politicians who hold office for decades detract from the voices of those who wish to change the world. Radical social change needs to happen to make progress on the United Nations' goals, both domestically and globally. It is not enough to say that we can do these things, we need to actually make them happen. We need to do whatever it takes to make our voices heard.

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I hosted a watch party for the “Nation United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times” chapter two poverty and inequality. Well, not technique hosted a watch party, but I did have friends and family watch the video. My sister Kirstyn, my boyfriend Elijah, and my friend Katherine all took part of this project. I had them sit down watch the video and answer a couple of questions related to the video. The main goal for this project is to see how the video effects people differently.

The whole United Nations video is good at spreading awareness for important problems that need solutions. I am focusing on the second chapter poverty and inequality. This chapter spreads awareness on the inequality of people in poverty around the world. The first question I asked them is “What is the point of the video?” Both Kirstyn and Katherine agreed that the point was to spread awareness on how poverty effects families. Katherine added that “this is an ongoing issue that has been normalized”. Everyone mentions how it is shocking to that the amount people living in extreme poverty were reduced. The video stated that over few decades over a billion people were lifted out of poverty.

The next question I asked was “Do you think the experiment was interesting?”. The Hole in The Wall Experiment, it consists of putting a computer in a “hole” and letting children come and mess with it. In the video the kids learn computer terms like keyboard, the doctor asked how they knew those words. The children learned the words since the computer only used English, so they were forced to learn English. Kirstyn thought that the experiment was interesting but not surprising that the children learned about technology given the resources. She also mentioned that it makes the video creditable, since it was firsthand experience. Elijah thought that the experiment shows

that inequality does start when they are born. He said that the experiment showed that if everyone had the same resources the playing field would be fair. Katherine said she thought the experiment was interesting because it demonstrated how important access to technology and education is.

How does the music and visuals effect the feel of the video? Kirstyn responded by saying the music made it feel hopeful while the visuals were sad. Elijah said that the music was hopeful as well, and the visuals were sad but also brought understanding. When he said that it made me think of the saying, out of sight out of mind. If it is not brought to our attention, often we do not know what is going on in the world. The visuals did a good job with showing the reality, the need of solutions, and bring hope to those watching it.

The last question is “how did the video overall make you feel?”. Kirstyn said that the video moved her, that it gives her hope for our overall future as a world. Elijah felt the video gave him a sense of hope toward future generations. He thought the video spread positivity that the poverty crisis can get better if we continue to work at it. Katherine said she felt she could be doing more to make things change and fight for those who do not have the same privileges that I have. I thought this project was interesting to see how everyone thought of the video, it was very similar but different response from everyone.

“Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times | Presented by Thandie Newton.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 19 Sept. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVWHuJOmaEk&t=675s>.

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There are a lot of things to say about this video. The UN's "Urgent Solutions For Urgent Times" was professionally orchestrated and put together beautifully, it was an amazing experience from beginning to end. The work that went into editing everything together and timing all the cutaways with important dialogue was amazing. There were amazing looking graphics and animations throughout the entire video. The music used played perfectly with each scene and changed according to the emotions meant to be portrayed. Most importantly though, the video touched on many sensitive topics and issues that we as humans are struggling with today and spoke on ways to mitigate these problems.

The organization of the video started with telling what we as humans are capable of and how much we can accomplish and rolled into talking about the most recent tragedies of covid-19 and the horror it brought. The video stemmed off of that and talked about how because of the pandemic, we adapted and made the best of it and what we had. This first chapter sets the pace for the rest of the video with each consecutive chapter starting off with the issue and either people speaking about their experiences with it first hand or videos of people going through it. In chapter one it showed horrible moments when people were going through natural disasters and possibly losing everything they had. In chapter two it shows the lives of those living in extreme poverty and what they are doing to survive. In chapters three and four, it shows the fights that people are committed to, the rallies and protests that they are organizing to fight for what they believe in. After the video shows these scenes it talks about what happened and what these people are doing or did to help themselves and others. Lastly the chapters end with talking about what we can do to help around the world and protect the future of our planet and society.

Consistently in the video, you can see when it cuts away from the speaker to video, graphics, or animations of what they are talking about. This makes viewers understand exactly what they are talking about and the message they are trying to convey. It is much easier to understand what someone is saying when seeing exactly what they are talking about. The graphics and animations used with the speakers were very detailed but also eye catching. They all used a black background but implemented many different colors into the main image to get them to pop and push your attention to specific elements. To tie

all of these together, the music that plays on top of it all supports the overall tone of the current speaker.

The music might not seem important, but it is the one thing that is helping the emotion get through to the viewer. It uses louder and faster beat music during moments of high stress or fear and lower beats and volume while speaking on helping and what we can do.

Most of the speakers in the video were recognizable people with extensive backgrounds and very large reputations. When watching it I felt like the problem was more serious due to the amount of very influential people. I instinctively trusted what they were telling me, especially when they were being backed with graphs, statistics and history like when the video talks about how fast the rainforests are being destroyed, how fast animals and plants are going extinct, how many people have been lifted out of poverty in 25 years and much more. On top of this the video made me feel like there are millions of people fighting for all of this and yet it is still not enough and they need everyone's help to make a difference.

Lastly, the video's main message is to help those around you and the world. There are people fighting for what's right all around the globe and they need help. The video portrays this message clearly and helps to understand the severity of everything going on in the world. We will never stop fighting to make the world a better place for everyone. Whether it be to reduce your carbon footprint, stand up for people's rights, help others where you can or just fight for what you believe in.

The video comes together beautifully with all the aspects of a perfect video. It has everything it needs and not too much. Just by watching the video, you can see the amount of effort put into it and how many people support this message. How can you say no to making the world a better place? I honestly can't find flaws in the video. Maybe it's because I'm influenced by the message and the tone of the video but it definitely gets a perfect score from me. I cannot imagine a better way to get this message across to people and I hope that the world can watch this and take it to heart.

This page titled [Review of "Nations United"](#) - by Zachary Boyce is shared under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Zachary Boyce at Pima Community College](#).

The United Nations released a video titled “Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times”. This video touches on several topics that are negatively affecting people all around the world. They point out the problems and then provide solutions based on research they have conducted. It is a very informative video that does a great job of showcasing how people can use our voices united and take action. The video is separated into 4 chapters making it easy to follow along and letting the primary focus be on a single issue for each chapter.;

Chapter 1: Climate and Our Planet

When the first chapter of the video is introduced, it is a video of a woman recording herself in South Wales, Australia on New Year's 2019. Currently, Australia's recorded temperatures were above 117°F and these temperatures paired with being in a drought for months caused these wildfires to break out. We can see this woman leaving out her house to hurriedly get into her car to seek shelter away from the fires as they are growing closer to her. The tone of her voice is one of urgency and fright because of the current situation she is in. The background music used at this point is like intense orchestral music setting the scene to give it an intense and frightful tone. After showing the Australian wildfires they move on to showing other disasters that are happening such as the Jakarta Floods, Locust Swarms in East Africa, and California Wildfires. While they are showing these other disasters happening, they are giving facts about what happened because of them for example since there were Locust Swarms in East Africa up to 25 million East Africans were threatened by food shortages due to the swarm.

The next part of the chapter is a 180 from the first part. The music has changed to an uplifting and inspiring tone. It shows videos of people on the streets protesting in the name of making the climate crisis a bigger issue and wanting to bring more attention to it. The people who are protesting are from all over the world and not just one place showing this is a worldwide issue. A man Don Cheadle who is a UNFP Goodwill Ambassador comes to talk about the climate crisis and the negative effects that are happening right now. They do a good job of not just showing what the problem is but by giving solutions to these problems. This shows that the United Nations has plans to help build our planet back up from these disasters and not just point out the problems. This section did use logical reasoning such as charts showing how temperatures have risen and the increase in CO2 emissions. Ethos was present from the start by starting the video with a woman living right next to the wildfires and actively trying to escape. With the information presented in this chapter, I was able to gain a better understanding of just how important the climate crisis is. This chapter makes me want to start to change aspects of my life to help the planet no matter how small I think it might be.

Chapter 2: Poverty and Inequality

The first thing we see as an introduction to chapter 2 is pictures of people in poverty, specifically children. A woman Michelle Yeoh is the first speaker in this chapter she talks about how poverty is universal, but it is manmade meaning that poverty is not inevitable. Michelle gives data about poverty about how in 1990 1.9 billion people were living in extreme poverty but in 2015 the number drops to 735 billion people. This data shows the audience that it is possible to decrease the number of people living in poverty and can give a message of hope.

The music present throughout this chapter has an uplifting tone to it and a hopeful one. There is a man Sugata Mitra who conducted an experiment in the slums of India across from where he worked. He puts a computer in a wall with a touchpad next to it to see what the people will do. With this experiment, Sugata can see how these young kids teach themselves without any formal teaching about computers. These kids teach themselves and they can teach the kids around them as well. There are pictures shown throughout the video so when talking about poverty they are showing pictures of kids living in harsh conditions appealing to the audience's emotions. When the video shifts to the subject of inequality it shows pictures of people protesting in the streets and making their voices heard.

Chapter 2 did a good job of playing into the viewer's more emotional side. As a viewer, it hurt to see these people, especially the children living in poverty and not having their basic needs fulfilled. As I previously stated the music throughout this chapter has a hopeful sound to it the pictures and topic still present feelings of sadness to its viewers.

Chapter 3: Justice and Human Rights

At the start of this chapter, we see a portrait of George Floyd which is a recent case that took over the media and nation. His brother is the one narrating and talking about George's death and how he must be the one to step up and take care of his family and George's as well. The background music is minimal this is done on purpose so that your focus is on what George's brother is saying. While he is talking, we see more portraits of George done in different ways and people protesting in the streets. You then hear a crowd of people chanting “Black Lives Matter” it is so powerful and overwhelming hearing these many people coming together for this issue. Seeing these photographs and hearing this chant makes it known that there is power in the people and when the people all band together they can make their voices heard and spark a change.

Next is another powerful display of people using their voices with a performance by Burna Boy. In his song, the message is feeling like you can never go on or make it to the next level. But when you feel like this you must keep on pushing and continuing to persevere no matter what. The words never and stop are constantly repeated making the message come across as clear that you must never stop.

This chapter was powerful and did a wonderful job of showcasing just how powerful people can be. We see numerous photos and videos of people protesting from everywhere in the world which made me feel a sense of pride because I can see and know that there are people out there who use their voices for those who cannot speak up and for things, they believe in themselves. The part where you hear the crowd chanting “black lives matter” over and over caused me to get goosebumps because I could feel the power of the crowd throughout the video. Overall, this was a powerful chapter that made me realize the power is truly in the people.

Chapter 4: Gender Equality

This chapter starts with statistics about gender inequality. 75% of parliament is men, 73% of managerial decision makers are men, 67% of climate negotiators are men, and 87% of the people at the peace table are men. These numbers show just how big the gap is between men and women when it comes to holding positions of power. Malala Yousafzai is the credible speaker used in this chapter. We learn that it was the closing of her father’s school by the Taliban that made her want to campaign for the right of young girls across the country to go to school. We see Malala talk about these rights she has but then are shown videos of men holding guns and that even though she has these rights there are men who want to silence her. The tone of the video changes when the screen goes black, and a gunshot is heard. The music turns into a dramatic tone after it was said she had been shot in the head grasping the audience’s attention further. We see Malala triumph and overcome this obstacle by

walking out of the hospital and continuing to use her voice with no fear. A quote that stood out to me was “women are half of the population, but society does not treat them as equals”. This lets it be known that the creators of this video understand the inequality women face and how little representation women get.

As a woman, I knew there was a gender gap when it came to people in power, but this chapter opened my eyes, even more, to realize just how big the gap is. It was heartbreaking to see how in society women are almost always seen as less even though some of the strongest people I know are women. This chapter appeals to both men and women because just how it was eye-opening for me it could do the same for a man. I believe the people who created this section wanted to show how little representation women got even though they make up half the population. It showcases women must try twice as hard as a man because they will continue to be seen as less or weaker.

This United Nations video was informative on a variety of different topics that are affecting our world right now. I could tell from watching the video that a lot of thought and research was put into this video to leave a lasting impression on its viewers. It left a lasting impression on me and hope it will do the same for others who watch. The overall message I received is we need to band together as the people and demand change now before it becomes too late.

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When hosting the watch party, I started by questioning my guests about climate change aka global warming, in other words what they already know? If they fail to have knowledge on the subject what is the reason behind it?

As I moved forward 6 out of the 8 views were very limited on the information, they knew about climate change. They were aware about it but didn't feel like anything they do has a great impact. They say that those that really affect our planet and the climate crisis are big factories or anything that produces a large amount of greenhouse gases. 2 out of the 8 did admit to having more knowledge and state that they do recycle and have power efficient lights bulb/appliances around their home. They have also taken classes with TEP and Tucson Water on how to be more cost effect while also helping the environment.

Then we proceeded to watching the 5-6 min video. Once the video was completed, I handed them a paper with 5 questions:

1. What did you learn from the video?
2. What created an impact in you?
3. How are we affecting the planet?
4. What changes can you make?
5. How can you promote a change in your home, work, or community?

We spoke about these questions openly and about 5 of the 8 had a different perspective by the end of the night. I had them pick a change they can make and try to incorporate it into their daily life for a week. We didn't do anything to extreme just small changed to start with such as trying to reduce the water bottles used, recycling when possible, turning off the faucet water when brushing teeth, minimizing the waste produced at home and finding alternative methods of transportation.

I met with them one week later and they were astonished by how often we waste more water than necessary, the amount of plastic we dispose of the large number of groceries that go unused and discarded and the high intake of protein they have. They admitted they never really cared for the high amount of trash they were discarding or their high use of water because they never really had a real talk about global warming/climate change and never felt it was such an important issue until they watched the video. It just goes to show that many people are lacking knowledge on global warming, and we are failing to create a change due to the ignorance of so many.

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Today's society is overworked, overstressed and lacking love and compassion. A regular work week is 40 hours per week; 8 hours per day, 5 days a week. However, add in the unpaid lunch hour and the commute and you can easily spend 10 or more hours dedicated to your work day.

I work a regular 40 hour a week job. My kids are at daycare for at least 10 hours a day. They are 3 and 1. By the time we get home my kids are tired and hungry, sometimes my baby is so tired he does not want to eat dinner. There is a good amount of whining and crying when we get home. I don't have much time to cook a decent meal. Oftentimes I rely on frozen food or fast food. My baby likes to nurse as soon as we get home and cries if I try to do anything else. However, my 3 year-old sometimes cries because I'm nursing the baby instead of getting his dinner. I get them fed and then we spend about 30 minutes together before I start to get them ready for bed.

A 30 hour work week would be so much more beneficial to families. If I could work 9am-3pm with no lunch, that would give me enough time to make breakfast AND dinner. The kids would have adequate sleep. I would have enough time to actually take and pick up my 15 year-old from school. There would be less crying and screaming. Everyone would be well rested and well fed. My family would be healthier and happier. I know there are part-time jobs available, but the problem is there are few jobs under 35 hours per week that provide benefits such as PTO, holiday pay, and insurance. There are also very few professional part-time jobs, which results in lower pay.

Studies have shown increased happiness for employees and their families by reducing the work day. Productivity is not lost with a shorter work day, in fact it may even increase. People are less

stressed and more motivated to work efficiently. Most who work 8 hour days are not fully productive for the whole day. There is a lot of time wasted talking to coworkers, taking breaks, checking emails, and using cell phones.

Our current structure for our working society is putting a strain on not just the parents, but the children as well. I don't believe the effect on children is talked about enough. Children are directly affected by lack of sleep and nutrition. Behavior can change and more tantrums may appear. They are also indirectly affected by their parents' stress. Parents may yell more and have less patience for their children. Some parents may even use alcohol and/or drugs to cope with their stressful life. All of this could lead to more trauma for the children. This, of course, is not the situation for all working families, but it is the reality for many.

Working less will allow families to spend more time together at home. A child or baby being able to be with their parents instead of in a daycare. Home cooked meals instead of canned or frozen foods. Smiles and laughter instead of yelling and crying.

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Sometimes we might think of suicide as a distant event, or something that we see statistics about, but never really factor into our daily lives. For others, suicide may be a reality that is far too close to home for comfort, bringing untold grief to countless individuals. Regardless of our individual experiences with suicide, the fact remains that it is an issue that can no longer be ignored. According to the CDC, “Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, with 45,979 deaths in 2020” (Center for Disease Control). That’s a heartbreaking number, but it doesn’t even scratch the surface of the tragedy because the CDC also reports that, “In 2020, an estimated 12.2 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million planned a suicide attempt, and 1.2 million attempted suicide” (Center for Disease Control). The amount of people struggling with suicidal thoughts in America alone constitutes a staggering number of individuals.

Moreover, suicide has become a global concern. As one study for the Australian Research Council explained “Suicide is one of the biggest killers globally. Over 700,000 people die of suicide every year, and it is the fourth leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 29 [1]. 77% of suicides occur in low to middle-income countries, making it a global issue to be tackled” (Worsterling and Keating). Suicide is such a prevalent crisis that if we calculate the number of minutes in a year, we will find that there are more deaths by suicide happening annually than the number of minutes that pass in that same time frame (525,600 minutes in a non-leap year). The numbers clearly illustrate that suicide is a subject that unites individuals around the world and one that requires our collective action globally.

During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of suicides committed by firearm outstripped the number of homicides committed with the same weapon by a factor of thousands (Simon et al.). Not only that, but the same study also reported that this number increased in the following year, “26,320 firearm suicides occurred in the United States during 2021” (Simon et al.). Where is the media coverage on those deaths? Why is this being ignored in the news? As a society, we seem to care an awful lot about mass shootings, with these events often making headlines and our collective mourning constantly trending on social media. Yet we don’t see anywhere near the same coverage on the *more* numerous suicides that are carried out with the same type of weapon every day. If more suicides occur from firearms than public shootings, shouldn’t we at least give them equal treatment as an issue to address? If suicide is that large of a crisis, why are we not putting forward a concerted effort to address it in the public consciousness?

The unfortunate reality is that our own societal taboos often block attempts for us to create mass awareness. For some reason our society does not know how to handle suicide information. One study at the Queensland University of Technology described the problem this way, “Another barrier to preventing

suicide is that, as mentioned above, most at-risk individuals will communicate warning signs to peers but not medical professionals. However, the public is *underprepared for this role as most people are not able to identify warning signs, and few know what to do when given knowledge of a potential suicide*” (Worsterling and Keating, *italics mine*). This is a rather uncomfortable reality, but one that we must address if we are going to make an impact on the issue in our lifetimes. What’s even more concerning is the fact that, despite our knowledge of these issues, suicide is also a crisis that is often mishandled or ignored. According to this same study, the bystander effect is one of the most prominent reasons for inaction. This phenomenon describes a situation where individuals do not act to prevent a suicide because they assume that someone *else* will (Worsterling and Keating). This kind of accidental negligence could be avoided if the proper steps were taken to prepare and train the public.

So where do we start? How do we overcome problems like the bystander effect, or our general unpreparedness? We can learn to act individually using federally supported resources such as those found at the Suicide Prevention Resource Center website: <https://www.sprc.org> (Suicide Prevention Resource Center). Some of their methods include researching our local healthcare providers in case of emergency, learning to recognize at-risk individuals, taking the responsibility of action, connecting individuals with professional health-care providers, and following up with them during any treatment they may receive. Overall, if you think someone you know is at-risk for suicide, *it is crucial to seek professional intervention immediately* as that individual’s life may be on the line (Suicide Prevention Resource Center). However, even in the face of our own individual readiness, the question of suicide’s global impact remains. How do we address suicide on such a large, worldwide scale?

We address it in the same way that we address every other issue facing us globally. We begin by raising public awareness so that we can start looking at the issue the *right* way. The world must first change its perception of suicide, especially in the public consciousness, before working together to enact change. Asha Worsterling and Byron Keating, researchers at the Queensland University of Technology, address some of the problems associated with the current perception of suicide. They write:

The World Health Organisation [1] acknowledges that one of the most significant obstacles to reducing the rates of suicide is the stigma associated with suicide and mental illness as a whole as it deters people who need help from seeking it. It is possible that such stigma may also deter people from acting when confronted by an at-risk person. As such, improving attitudes towards suicide and increasing awareness of mental illness should be one of the first steps to engaging the community in preventing suicide. (Worsterling and Keating)

The way we perceive suicide, and mental health in general, needs to improve. We don't treat this issue with the respect and care that it deserves. Right now, the way we view suicide and mental health is often unhelpful. It's quite clear that the first action we should take in this situation is working together, training a new generation to recognize the importance of helping those who need intervention.

Unfortunately, this change won't be accomplished overnight. It will take serious effort to create community-wide support and education programs across the world. Still, large-scale community support and awareness programs have been shown to be possible. For instance, in a study of one such community-wide intervention program at the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, suicide rates were illustrated to have declined, even while the *national* rates simultaneously increased (Allen). Using similar programs that defy national trends and prove effective at minimizing risk, we can begin to take action. We can learn a lot from what has already proven to be effective in the communities around us. We can use these programs as an excellent starting point for the race of raising awareness, saving lives all the way to the finish line.

Together, we can help the hundreds of thousands of individuals who die by suicide annually. If we rise to the occasion, we can help end this tragedy. The first step to overcoming the problem is acknowledging that one exists. Once we have addressed suicide for the global health crisis that it truly is, we can attempt to connect those who are struggling with the resources they need to *overcome* their struggle. If we learn to help these individuals as a global team, then suicide won't be such an insurmountable problem anymore. We must connect with this crisis on an empathic level to understand those who are suffering and apply aid towards their specific needs. By opening that dialogue, we can start to acknowledge their situation, and begin to

comprehend the magnitude of their pain. We can help walk alongside them through whatever trial they might face and assist them in forging a stronger, brighter future together.

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As a twenty one year old Mexican American, I have a few experiences and stories to tell that might change the way you see and treat immigrants. This essay hopefully might influence the younger generations the same way I was influenced with my great grandparent's stories and their life experiences. A phrase that always comes out of the older generations is "Times have really changed". I do not doubt one bit that times have changed from when they were kids to now.

Comparing the stories they told us and the experiences I am now experiencing are different in many perspectives. For example, one of my great great grandparents from my mother's side of the family was born and raised in the area that is now Bisbee, Arizona. When he was a young boy they moved to the south less than a hundred miles away to what is now Agua Prieta, Sonora. And if you were born in that little town of Bisbee, Arizona in the 1800's like my great great grandparent did, you would be a Mexican citizen and not a United States of America citizen like how you would be today! A little insight is that Arizona did not become a state until the year 1912. Taking that example and comparing it, it does make sense and makes you realize how much things can change over the years pretty quickly.

A few reasons people all over the world decide to move and migrate to other cities, states and even other countries are due to the inhuman situations their country are in and how badly their government treats their own people, the war between narcs and the government, the poverty state some people live in, and lastly they even migrate to reunite with a family member that maybe chose to have a better life a few years back. I can relate to a few of these reasons and have experienced having family members go through these situations on a daily basis. Mexico is really known for the wars that break out with the Mexican government and the drug cartel every few years when there is conflict within them, and for those violent reasons people sometimes to bring themselves or their family to safety across the border, to the United States of America for the American dream.

There are multiple options people have, to be able to come to the U.S. some being legal and other options not so legally. The

requirements and the wait time people have to wait for just a result and the amount of papers and evidence they have to submit to the U.S. custom and border protection for them to wait and see if they get approved or denied makes people impatient and sometimes it is not worth the wait for some, and those people decide to cross the border illegally, another really known cause on why people decide to cross by foot or any other way illegally and do not apply for Visa is sometimes people do not have the money to submit the application needed and the only option is saving enough money to have someone help them cross the border to the U.S., and nowadays there is a known gossip that goes around that people say, sometimes a couple agrees to marry each other for the reason that the one of them is a citizen of the United States of America and they are getting paid a lot of money to marry the other person with no papers and that way the process is way faster and more likely to get approved.

Once people get here from Mexico no matter how they get here exactly, they are more probable to face discrimination from others in a unknown country they are unfamiliar with. As someone who was born and raised here in the U.S. you can still experience discrimination, and your world changes in an instant and your view of life changes and not for the better, being told to speak English right when you have an accent can be quite traumatizing, well at least for me it was when I was 12 years old. A few discrimination categories that awful people like to target other people are for their ethnicity, sex, and religious beliefs. The world would be such a better and happier place if we all just got along and helped one another. My suggestion to everyone is to be a little more respectful and kind to others. You never know what they have gone through and what they are going through, maybe one day you will need the kindness of a stranger. Like they say you will get back, what one day you put out into the universe.

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The United States of America is known worldwide as the Oasis in the Desert, the place where all of your dreams will become a reality. The land where freedom is the foundation of people's rights, and where you will be greeted with joy by your cheerful neighbors. Is it, though? Why do people want to immigrate to the United States at the rate we have experienced? Does immigration help the American economy? Do immigrants take all the jobs that belong to the American people? Indeed, America was built on immigration, but does the government support immigration? What about those professional immigrants that end up working a minimum-wage job? Skillful immigrants that had respectful jobs are ending up working for McDonald's or have been mistreated by employers. This essay will discuss the importance of paying attention to immigration in general, the lack of public attention, and the effects of politics on people's lives.

Residents living in border towns and border states are familiarized with immigration policies, illegal immigration, the variety of languages spoken in certain regions, foreign traditions, culture, and the good and bad things that come along with immigrants. The main claim that Americans against immigration discuss is that immigrants will take all the jobs, hurt the poor by taking advantage of welfare, and lower everyone's wages. Although, according to Nowrasteh (2018) "this claim has the greatest amount of evidence rebutting it. First, the displacement effect is small if it even affects natives at all. Immigrants are typically attracted to growing regions and they increase the supply and demand sides of the economy once they are there, expanding employment opportunities". Essentially, immigration boosts economic production by expanding the workforce while also raising productivity. Sadly, ignorance and prejudice prevail most of the time because people are not informed before starting accusations.

Immigrants tend to seek a better life for various reasons, such as better jobs, to escape crime, negligence, corruption, lack of human rights, starvation, decent educational opportunities, or to reunite with loved ones. In order to be considered a legal immigrant in the United States, green cards are issued when they have been cleared to stay in the country as lawful permanent residents. There are different types of green cards including longtime-resident green cards, diversity green cards, humanitarian green cards, employment-based green cards, and family-based green cards. Lawful permanent residents qualify for American citizenship after five years of continuous stay. According to Micu (2020) "All in all, Hispanic immigrants had the highest overall levels of life satisfaction compared to any other racial group, the team reports. This finding meshed well with previous research of its kind, which found something researchers call the Hispanic paradox. It would be an awesome superhero name, but it's actually the observation that older Hispanic immigrants in the United States tend to have better health outcomes than non-Hispanic whites — despite more limited socioeconomic resources".

However, immigrating to America is not a garden of roses, as immigrants face constant discrimination. For instance, "immigrant workers and their families face major hurdles in obtaining jobs according to research published by the International Labour Office" (ILO, 2000).

I have experienced mixed sentiments and emotions of Mexican green card holders that work and live in both Tucson and Phoenix, and they dream to retire back in Sonora, Mexico. Why is this? If you ask this question to multiple immigrants, regardless of nationality, they want to retire back to their countries because they feel welcomed there. They do not have to face unnecessary racial comments, ignorance, racial jokes, staring when speaking their native language, and most importantly, discrimination. This makes me wonder if they were ever happy in America. Why would they want to go back to the country where they decided to immigrate to America?

The government's stance on immigration is silent, it neither condemns it nor supports it. Sadly, people that do immigrate to the United States have a hard time translating credentials or degrees. There are not enough sources to help people transfer equivalency of college credits to get American licenses or degrees, which; eventually, makes it difficult for immigrants to find good jobs. "Depending on your field and the US state you are applying in, there might be additional requirements that US employers will look for. For example, in fields such as nursing and education, you might need to take a state examination and obtain licensure to practice in your field" (Feeback, 2020). I argue that the government should provide professionals and skillful technicians with all the necessary resources to translate and transfer credentials from foreign countries. Essentially, this could give lawful permanent residents the chance to start on the right foot, start paying more taxes, and overall, improve their lives, and the United States of America. It has been proven by both research and statistics that immigrants who get a higher education degree thrive in their professional careers, most of them just need that "stepping-stone" to start higher education in the United States.

People can help undocumented immigrants to thrive in our educational system. Currently, undocumented Arizona immigrants have to pay 50% more tuition than regular Arizona residents, which makes it really hard for them to pursue higher education. However, Proposition 308 would allow undocumented students eligible for regular in-state tuition in our state universities. Literally, people can help undocumented immigrants directly by voting "yes" on Proposition 308. Arizona's residents argue that by accepting this proposition, the state is not directly preventing illegal immigration; moreover, many argue that this proposition would increase illegal immigration in Arizona. Although, according to AIC (2022), "more than 3,600 Arizona students would benefit from an in-state tuition policy every year; hence, boosting earnings of Arizona's Dreamers by more than \$28 million annually, increasing spending power by more than \$23 million annually.

Eventually, in-state tuition access could raise an additional \$4.9 million per year in federal income taxes, state, and local taxes”. Essentially, we have the power to help undocumented immigrants to make their lives better while also boosting our economy.

We need to understand that supporting each other as a community will make things better in our country. It is always good to see both sides of the same coin in all the situations presented to us as a society. It is never good to stick with just one version of the facts. Critical thinking, facts, statistics, research, and overall knowledge are very important before we even take a stance. The purpose of this essay was to invite you to reflect on immigration, to make you think and decide your own stance on an issue that has prevailed in the United States for a while, and to make you understand what these people feel as immigrants and naturalized U.S. citizens.

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By what terminology should a pet-owner use to refer to their animal companions? While the action of naming creatures and utilizing titles such as “man’s best friend” is not new, a recent trend in pet nicknames provides an alternative perspective on the bonds between animals and humans. Over the years, titles such as “fur-baby,” “fur child,” and “fur parent” have risen in popularity amongst the increasing pet-owner community members. Although these names are used as an expression of love and care, this humanization of animals can present obstacles to animal welfare. Since being introduced to this concept in college-level Animal Science courses, I’ve been fascinated by what my instructors referred to as the “over-anthropomorphizing” of companion animals and pets. Gaining an understanding of animal behavior versus human behavior can be a key component for promoting animal welfare.

Briefly, anthropomorphism about animals refers to the perception and projection of human emotion onto creatures that are not of human origin. The National Library of Medicine article titled “Anthropomorphism and Its Adverse Effects on the Distress and Welfare of Companion Animals,” cites the startling connection between over-anthropomorphizing and “thermoregulation interference, dehydration, malnutrition, obesity, behavioral issues, and the spread of zoonotic disease” (Mota-Rojas et al)... the topic of animal obesity and anthropomorphism is prevalent in both viral and “comedic” media, with viewers coining descriptive nicknames such as “chonker” and. While the image of a cherubic, chubby cat throwing itself into a food bowl may seem amusing and “relatable,” the overfeeding and obesity of animals has become a veterinary epidemic. In an article titled “U.S. pet obesity rate continues to rise” CBS News reports that “According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, roughly 53 percent of dogs and 58 percent of cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. The group’s research shows that that rate continues to rise” (Kraft). Like obesity in humans, obesity in companion animals increases both the severity and risk of contracting and succumbing to ailments. After observing animals afflicted with asthma, fatigue, oily coats, flaking skin, and arthritis along with early debts caused by excess weight, it’s critical to speak out against this overlooked category of animal cruelty.

Beyond physical appearance, anthropomorphizing pets directly impacts the perception of “personality” versus behavior. Pets worm their way into the hearts of their human companions, providing a powerful bond of loyalty, warmth, and understanding. Although associating positive emotional “Traits” poses little risk, assigning negative personality “flaws” can permanently haunt the life of a pet. As a cat-care volunteer, I’ve unfortunately encountered many cats deemed “mean,” “unadoptable,” or “sassy” by prior owners, labels that indefinitely chain them to a shelter until someone hopefully sees through their “mask.” To illustrate, my shelter once took in a cat

named “Crabcake.” Crabcake was a senior cat, relinquished by her family for “behavioral issues.” Although she was named for appearing behind a crab shack rather than her “personality,” her “attitude” and name intimidated others for her entire stay. Crabcake hissed, growled, and slapped those who attempted to pet her, and she was tense around the other cats. Her “reputation” was further cemented in her biography, stating “I only have myself to blame for being here” as if Crabcake herself was speaking and made that decision. What many volunteers forgot to read was that Crabcake was relinquished for “acting out” after her twenty-year-old cat companion died. Crabcake wasn’t being “mean,” she was expressing her fear. Not only was her lifelong companion torn away from her, but she was whisked away to a bustling, unfamiliar environment. For over a year, Crabcake sat in the shelter, treated well but misunderstood. While she was recently adopted to an understanding home, Crabcake never should have been blamed and labeled as a “bully” for her species-appropriate way of handling both grief and fear.

Undoubtedly, applying human thoughts, behavior, and emotions to companion animals encourages behavior and actions that pose risk to both the physical and mental well-being of pets. Although, most pet owners anthropomorphize their pets as a harmless show of endearment and gratitude, associating personality traits with animals can eventually read as negative. However, avoiding excess humanization does not imply minimizing or invalidating love and loyalty. It’s critical to note that one can still love and appreciate their pets while acknowledging that the human brain processes differently than that of an animal. Further, the term “animal” doesn’t imply something is unfeeling of care or lacking in intelligence. Humans and pets are all unique forms of animals and welfare for all lies in the fact that each unique group of animals thinks, acts, and feels in special, unique ways.

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To my Fellow Women,

Growing up in the Philippines as a little girl, I did not have many role models. My parents were busy working. So, we can make ends meet. They had to. We lived in a third world country. Life was tough. As the oldest, I had to grow up fast. I must be independent and responsible. Looking back, what does an 8-year-old girl really know? In my culture, it is a taboo to question things. It was not a "thing". As a female, we are meant to be quiet and just accept the things that happen to us whether it is unfair. As I grew up to become a young adult, that silence followed me. I grew up with it. This is what I was accustomed to. I was told to follow and obey. No questions asked. I was okay with it because this is something that I am used to. It was something that I never questioned. As a little girl growing up in the Philippines, I cannot have an opinion. If I do have one, I must keep it to myself. If I have an idea, I will need to keep it to my imagination. I will not lie, I had so many questions. I sometimes would look at the ceiling of our home and wonder. There was that spark in my eyes that always wanted to ask and speak up.

After so many years, we made it as a family. We immigrated to New York City. We were leaving everything behind to start a new life in the land of opportunity. I remember arriving at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City and all I see are different diversities. It was spring season when we arrived in the Big Apple. I remembered the smell of rain mixed with the air of the city. I can hear the hustle and the bustle from the baggage claim. I was a teenager when I migrated to New York City. I was happy. I had different emotions running through my mind. A change waiting for me.

A new start. A new chapter in my life as a woman. Here we are the land of the free. The opportunity to finally ask some questions. I found New York City to be the place where I can speak up and give out my opinions. But it was easier said than done. Silence and fear overcame me. High School in New York City was tough. I did not speak English very well. I can comprehend but I am unable to explain myself. I was scared. I felt like I was back where I came from. Unable to speak up. Unable to ask questions. It was so bad that I did not speak to anyone in my sophomore English class for 4 months. The teacher had to talk to my mother and informed her about her concern with me not talking. I remembered that night when my mother scolded me for not talking. The irony of that conversation still stuck in my head.

Then, I finally started U.S History. It was very foreign to me. But it educated me. It informed me about equality. I learned about women and the fight that they must go through just to be able to vote. The fight that women had to endure. It made me realize that I do not have to live in silence. I learned that my opinions matter. I found out that I can express my ideas and have a respectful argument. It gave me the courage to speak up. I will not lie; it did not work in our household. When I come

home, I must keep it to myself. It was a battle inside of me. It was rough and tough especially for a teenager who just moved to a new country.

Years passed, I got married and I had a daughter of my own. I was 21 years old when I had my daughter. I was 21 years old when I married the love of my life and high school sweetheart. I promised myself that I would raise my little girl with a voice. I promised myself that my little girl will be able to ask questions. I wanted her to grow up in a household where she could respectfully ask questions. I did not want her to be afraid to explore her imagination. It was tough. But I know I had to be an example. I wanted her to have someone to look up to. I did not have anyone growing up as a role model. Instead, I was told to keep it to yourself. I knew how that felt as a little girl. I knew how it felt when I became a teenager that it resonated all the way when I became an adult. I wanted that change. This change needs to come from me. I have this little girl relying on me to be her voice. I cannot be the voice if I cannot speak up and express myself.

All these memories and emotions came flooding back again when I read Hilary Clinton's speech at the UN Fourth World Conference in Beijing titled "Women's Rights are Human Rights". Reading it made me think about all the women in the world. There was this part of her speech that resonated with me. She stated, "Our goals for this conference, to strengthen families and societies by empowering women to take greater control over their own destinies". As women, we should not be afraid to take over our future. Do not let anyone tell you cannot do what you aspire for. As women, we were trained to be the one taking care of our family. We should be the nurturer. We should sacrifice our own needs because this is what society expects us to do. But this is not right. Hilary Clinton made a valid point on her speech, and I quote "What we are learning around the world is that, if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations will flourish".

To my fellow women, I admire you, I believe in you. I am proud of you and the things you have and will accomplish. Do not let anyone silenced you. Do not be afraid to share your voice. Be brave and courageous. Women should be able to thrive in a society where they are given a chance. Women plays a big part in the society. When we are healthy and supported, we will be able to be a good role model for the younger female. We will be able to give them the support that they need for higher education. If women are given a chance, we can excel in everything we do and aspire for. As women, let us work together for a common goal. We may be different in skin color, or we come from different backgrounds. But we still have the same common goal. Instead of tearing each other, help each other. We all have something to offer. As women, let us work together for a better future for the next generation. This is what I

aspire for my daughter. I want her to always remember that she can be whatever she aspires to be. As Hilary Clinton quoted in her speech, “We need to understand that there is no formula for how women should lead their lives. That is why we must respect the choices that each woman makes for herself and her family.

Every woman deserves the chance to realize her God-given potential”.

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There are many treatments for mental illness. Now that society has activists to spread awareness on multiple platforms, it has completely changed the way mental health is discussed. It is because of this, that a person in America has access to information about mental health that is specific to them.

I find that speaking with a therapist is beneficial for me because my mental health disorders are anxiety and depression. I understand that not everyone is comfortable with this out of fear that their therapist might judge them. There are also some mental disorders that require medicine. For example, my uncle is schizophrenic, and he needs to be on medicine. An article on Merck Manual suggests there are three types of effective treatments for those with mental health issues. Those three types of treatments are drug therapy, psychotherapy, and electroconvulsive therapy. I have always been too afraid to try drug and electroconvulsive therapy. It is best to speak with a healthcare professional to find out which treatment works best for you. I have always been hesitant to try out any drug therapy or electroconvulsive therapy, but I feel relieved knowing I am able to speak with someone to seek efficient help.

Unfortunately, many people assume there is no treatment for their type of mental illness, so they ignore what is going on. Now we have treatments that are supported by evidence. Mental

illness is complex, but not difficult. So, when it comes to treatment, there is no general way of going about it. Once a person decides to manage their symptoms with treatment they can go on and live healthy, meaningful lives.

Mental health is not something to be ashamed of. Many people struggle with it at some point in their lives, and some more than others. Mental health is not something that has just occurred, but it is something that is now being put into the spotlight.

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Throughout my life, I have struggled with mental illness. Since I was a young, I have struggled with anxiety and depression and sought help with therapy on and off. I have tried taking and not taking medicine for my mental health. In my earliest recollections, I remember worrying that there was something fundamentally flawed with me. My heart would pound, and I would feel like I was suffocating during these panic episodes brought on by my worry. During my depressive episodes, I felt utterly helpless and hopeless. I was confused about what was happening to me and lacked coping mechanisms. My coping mechanisms included self-injury and substance abuse. Mental illness is a topic that is often stigmatized and misunderstood. Mental illness is quite common, affecting millions of people worldwide. There are many types of mental disorders, ranging from anxiety and depression to more severe conditions like schizophrenia. Regardless of the type of mental illness, there are ways to get help and treatment. In this essay, I will be discussing mental illness in general, common mental disorders, and different ways to get help for those who struggle with mental illness. I hope to understand mental illness better and dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding this topic.

Mental illness is a general term that is used to describe a variety of mental disorders. These disorders are medical conditions characterized by changes in thinking, emotion, or behavior (Stein et al., 2019). They may disturb a person and make it difficult for them to go about their regular lives. There are many different types of mental disorders, and they can range in severity from mild to severe. Mental illnesses are common and often occur along with other physical health conditions.

Anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder are all examples of widely-spread mental health issues (PTSD). Anxiety disorders are the most frequent kind of mental illness, affecting 40 million adults (18.1% of the population) in the United States (Davis et al., 2017). Anxiety disorders are characterized by persistent and excessive levels of anxiety, concern, and tension in affected individuals. Physical manifestations, including a beating heart or profuse sweating, may also be present. A further widely-spread mental illness, depression, affects 16.1 million American adults (6.7% of the total population) today (Stanley, 2019). Depression can cause many symptoms, including sadness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, anger, and difficulty concentrating. People with depression may also have physical symptoms such as fatigue or sleep problems. PTSD is a less common but significant mental disorder affecting 7.7 million adults in the United States (Stanley, 2019). PTSD can develop after a person experiences or

witnesses a traumatic event, such as a natural disaster, a car accident, or a violent crime

There are many different ways to get help for mental illness. If one struggles with a mental disorder, it is essential to seek professional help. Many mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists, can provide treatment through medication and support therapy. In addition, there are also many hotlines and resources available, as well as many online resources and support groups available (Lipson et al., 2018). I was fortunate enough to receive treatment for my mental disorder. I started working with a therapist and taking some pills. I have found success in treating my mental condition with this approach. I have become an advocate for mental health and offer support to those who are also experiencing mental health issues. Mental illness is not fatal; I am proof of that. People with mental illness can recover and lead fulfilling lives if given the proper care.

In conclusion, if you or someone you know is struggling with mental illness, please reach out for help. There are many resources available to those in need.

If you need to reach out:

- 988 suicide hotline
- Substance abuse national hotline:
- 1-800-662-4357

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Everywhere I go I tend to always look to the people around me and notice that they are not just fillers in our world, but they are people with goals and dreams. Human rights are a topic that has been talked about for a long time in our world and we sometimes ask ourselves if we are ever going to find some answers to them. There are plenty of human rights that we can talk about like the freedom of education or the right to work, although I will not be talking about each one, I will keep it simple and talk about, what I think is the foundation for all of them, which is the right to equality.

When we talk about equality, we should never see someone who is rich and wealthy to someone who is struggling and being homeless because at the end of the day, they are both human beings. An article that I recently read about said that many African American physicians were being pushed out of their hospital because of discrimination in the workforce, this was about 12 hours from writing this paper (Su). This shows us that discrimination and equality are still ongoing issues that have yet to be resolved, and sometimes wonder if anyone is doing anything to try and stop this, because if no one takes a stand, no one will see it as a problem, and that can be upsetting since as a nation, we are one. Knowing that we may never find a solution to equality sort of makes you want to be involved and help towards a solution, as I looked around there was not many forms of research, I could find that deal in finding solutions to these types of problems. To add to that, I do not think you can also find answers online because to go in the right direction, it starts with you and with myself, I always try to help others that need it no matter who they look like or their gender.

Equality is something we are given at birth, and although it gets taken from some people, it will always stay with you because it is a gift that cannot be truly taken from us. Being equal is not about being nice or being a friendly person, it is about showing the same respect that you want to be given, it shows how you are as a character and believe me, something that also makes you feel good and want to continue doing. It is sometimes sad when people mistreat others or make them feel less that what they are, like bullying or another form or harassment, this is something that will not help us in our world, it will only make it worse. Our feelings can also lead to the decisions that we make, so we must think logical about what we do or say before it happens because it can negatively impact to those around you.

When we consider these things in different people, we then can realize how similar we are to each other. So, it really does not make any sense to think of someone or yourself as superior to another because at then end of the day we all have the same basic needs to live and that is really all that we need. Another article I read about explained that when we show empathy, we can respond to others and think about each other's feelings

(Zaki). Empathy is something that does not just show we care about someone or their feelings, but also it creates connections with each other that will last and be able to see those as "outsiders" as humans like you and me.

Another specific example of human equality is for those who are disabled, whether they have a mental health issue or being disabled because of one of their body parts they should not be looked at or talked about in any other way. My grandfather is disabled and must walk with a cane, and wherever we go, there are many people who often open a door for him or help him get out of the couch, it does not sound like much, but to him, even the small things make the bigger difference. This is one of the positive examples that can help ultimately feel like people belong and that they share the same equal benefits that we all have.

The audience for this primarily set for younger adults and older children because they are the next generation when it comes to taking care of our Earth and its people so this paper should be able to give those people some clarity about a basic human right that should not be misused. The information used was able to also help myself find where I fit into a solution for this issue, and I hope that it also did the same for all of you as well. When we stop to think about why we are on the Earth, we should see our purpose for ourselves but also what can be done for others, we must show each other the same dignity and respect that we all long for and when this happens, then we can see the start to Peace on Earth. In an article by Pope Francis, he says, Peace can only be achieved by moving beyond past conflicts and joining forces to promote the common good". This shows that the start is something we can do if it is done right and done together!

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Photo By National Oceanic
and Atmospheric
Administration



**The Bleaching Of Corals, The
Alteration Of The Food Chain,
And The Reduction Of Small**

Sewage Flow

Sewage contamination in the ocean
causes harmful algae blooms.



**It Affects The Biodiversity Of
The Ocean And Poses A Risk To
The Health Of The Public.**

Not A Minute To Waste

- By 2050 , it's estimated that the amount of plastic wastewill outweigh all of the fish in the ocean.
- "Since the industrial revolution, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has increased from 280 to over 400 parts per nullion."
- An estimated 80 percent of untreated sewage is discharged into the ocean.



**Everything We Do Always Comes
Back To Us.**

Pollution Of The Soul

Plastic Waste

"It is estimated that up to 13 million metric tons of plastic ends up in the ocean each year ." - Simon Reddy



Photo By National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration

**Plastic Waste Affects All Of Marine
Life, Large And Small.**

Ocean Acidification

An increase in carbon dioxide has caused the PH levels of the ocean to become increasingly acidic.



From Pollution To Solution

"It is the worst of times but it is the best of times because we still have a chance." -



Sylvia Earle



- Implement Coastal Zone Improvements.
- Improvement To Our Waste Management Systems.
- Participate Or Organize An Ocean Cleanup.
- Reduce Your Carbon Footprint.
- Reduce Your Use Of Single-Use Plastics.
- Support Legislation That Will Help Reduce Marine Pollution.

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Make A Notion, Save The Ocean



Photo By Boyce Duprey

Think Blue. Go Green. Stop
Marine Pollution.



"The ocean stirs the heart, inspires the imagination and brings eternal joy to the soul." - Robert Wyland

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Homelessness and the indifference shown to the homeless are significant issues in the world and our community today. We as a society face indifference every day, even if we do not realize it. What does it mean? According to *dictionary.com*, it is “lack of interest or concern; unimportance; little or no concern” (Random House, INC). People can come to the point of being indifferent to the plight of others through varying factors. It is essential to recognize and find the causation of this feeling and then work on changing it.

The negativity of mainstream media, television, print, or online, could be a cause of the feeling of indifference. In Steven Pinker’s book “*Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*” he states:

Consumers of negative news, not surprisingly, become glum: a recent literature review cited “misperception of risk, anxiety, lower mood levels, learned helplessness, contempt and hostility towards others, desensitization, and in some cases, ... complete avoidance of the news” (Pinker). And they become fatalistic, saying things like, ‘Why should I vote? It’s not gonna help,’ or ‘I could donate money, but there’s just gonna be another kid who’s starving next week.’

With so much negativity in national and local news, there needs to be a shift in viewership to more positive news versus negative news. Media outlets tend to show negativity more because it is what society tends to crave. The correlation between negative news and the number of views it receives is undeniable. Seeing so much negativity desensitizes the population to the plight of others.

Another reason for indifference may be the overwhelming difficulties in our lives, families, communities, nations, or world that make us feel powerless to bring about change. This means that even though we are aware of something happening around us, we feel powerless to change it. As a result, we simply shrug it off and carry on. In reality, even the smallest acts of kindness and compassion could have a lasting impact on someone’s life. For the homeless population, it does not always have to be monetary. It could mean even just a conversation with someone, showing them that you see them and that you actually care.

Homelessness is an issue our cities, nation, and the world face. The world today seems to treat the homeless differently than the non-homeless population. This shows the indifference many individuals have toward the plight of people on the streets. Many times, we, as a society, look at the homeless population as less than human. We treat them a certain way and avoid interaction with them or make it the least amount possible. We see them and think, “Get a job!” or “Do something to change your situation,” but in reality, there are many reasons for someone to be homeless, and some are out of their control. Some of these reasons are as follows:

1. Lack of safe, affordable housing.

2. Loss of employment and inability to find another stable job that can pay the bills.
3. Medical issues and the inability to pay for treatment.
4. Mental health problems.
5. Addiction.

In the post-covid world, we are seeing many people that were never homeless before are now homeless. This is due to a few factors. When the world shut down due to COVID-19, many people lost their jobs, and those who did not have an economic cushion were forced onto food stamps and other government financial help programs. Those programs helped with sustenance issues but did nothing to help with the overwhelming lack of resources to pay rent, mortgages, and car payments, amongst other things. Policies were implemented so that nobody could be evicted as long as the Federal Government had declared a national emergency. Each company had the policy to stay payments until the end of the pandemic. Some had policies that would move the missed payments to the end of the installment loan; others had a policy in effect that at the time payments would be required to resume, there would need to be a balloon payment made to make up for the missed payments. While COVID is still an existential threat, many governments and societies treat it as if it’s over, and in effect, the side effects are overlooked. This stay of payments helped while COVID was still treated as a significant threat, but once governments stopped helping out with many of the problems caused by the pandemic, it proved to be a big issue. When that happened, banks and institutions started calling in the missed payments, leaving many people unable to pay those payments due to a lack of gainful employment. Many wound up in foreclosure or were evicted from their apartments for missing so many payments.

I interviewed Angela Murphy, an expert that has worked with the homeless for eight years and was previously homeless herself, Peer Support Coordinator for El Rio Health, and Director/Cofounder of TCIT (Tucson Community Impact Team).

She had this to say about the issue:

Rents have risen 25% over the last year and are expected to rise another \$1,000 in the next five years. This is a leading cause of homelessness right now. The dynamic has shifted. Where in previous years, the average homeless person was between the ages of 30 and 50 years of age and predominately male, now has shifted to much younger and much older that have now become homeless. Many of the older population, ages 60 years to 80 years old, had never before been homeless. Because of the rising cost of living and rents and many of these vulnerable people being on social security or pensions, they are found without enough to pay for their housing and wind up out on the streets.

Corporations have come into town and started buying up many properties that used to accept Section 8, housing

vouchers, and other programs that help people out with housing. They have renovated these properties and raised the rent. This has left many in this vulnerable population with no choice but to become homeless, as they can no longer afford to stay. When they search for another place, they cannot find any other affordable homes. The younger population has also felt the effects of the rising housing rates. Many times, even with two jobs, they still cannot cover everything. Some are without higher education, but some have degrees. (Murphy)

With the disparity between the rise in the cost of living and the increase of wages in our nation and community, it has left so many more people in our community with the inability to pay their bills, causing many to be on the brink of homelessness or cross the line and fall into this sad way of life.

COVID also caused a significant problem in access to gainful employment. Many people lost their jobs because of shutdowns. Without jobs, people could not pay their bills, and as a result, many found themselves out on the streets. We are still feeling the effects of COVID on employment. The unemployment rate is still high. Without access to jobs, the homeless population cannot supersede the predicament they find themselves in.

A large portion of the homeless population is mentally ill. According to PBS.org, 39 percent of the homeless report some form of mental health problems, with 20-25 percent meeting the criteria for serious mental illness (PBS.org). With the lack of stability, healthcare access, and proper transportation, the assumption that this part of the population does not have appropriate access to mental health services is correct.

A few non-profit organizations are here to help with the homelessness issue and the major contributing factors. There is the Gospel Rescue Mission (GRM) and Tucson Community Impact Team (TCIT), amongst others. There is also a program the City of Tucson is trying to implement that is supposed to help with the increasing number of homeless in our population.

Gospel Rescue Mission is a “shelter” here in Tucson, AZ, but it is more than that. On the ‘About Us’ section of their website, they state, “We welcome the hungry and hurting; we address their immediate needs; we build authentic relationships; and we share the Gospel so that total transformation happens” (Gospel Rescue Mission).

I had the opportunity to tour their facility on Palo Verde Rd this past week. GRM is partnered with the Department of Economic Security (DES), El Rio Health, and Pima Community College. Pastor Juan Peralta gave me the tour. He stated that one of the main issues and why they have partnered with these organizations is that when people are homeless, they have no access to transportation, or it is tough to get from one place to another using public transport. Now they have access to all of the essential services, all in one place; DES for food stamps and AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System), El Rio Health for physical and dental needs, and Pima for job

training. They have partnered with Pima for CDL training, Information Technology (IT) training, and Culinary Arts Training. GRM also offers Recovery Support Specialist (RSS) Training. With these programs, they can meet the homeless people where they are to provide them with help for their basic needs to be successful in life.

This addresses the physical needs of healthcare, sustenance, and job security, but they do more than that. They also provide for the mental and spiritual aspects. They have counselors onsite to assess the mental health of each person that comes into the center. Once evaluated, they can create a plan to get them on track to optimal mental health. They also utilize a spiritual approach to help create a strong foundation, and many patients report getting off of mental health drugs, which is the goal.

I spoke with Mary Barreras, Manager of Women's Recovery at GRM. She had this to say about what they do there to help stem the tide of homelessness:

At GRM, we have a year-long recovery program called the Genesis Process, where we help get to the root cause of the addictions of many of the individuals that come in. What were the traumas that they experienced that made them use drugs the first time? We then provide them with tools to use when they get the urge to use drugs. For the last six months of the Process, they enter what we call the Transformation phase, where they go through the work program where they can try to get a job, or if they do not have skills, then they participate in one of the training programs they provide. We let them stay long enough to save up enough income (85 percent per pay period), so they can pay for their deposit and rent for a new apartment or place to live. We also provide them with furniture and housing supplies from our donations warehouse, so they do not have to spend any of their saved income on furnishing their new home.

We provide support to them after they leave GRM also. We help them create a support system around themselves so that if they ever encounter an issue they do not know how to deal with, they have the support they need to solve it. Yes, some use the center as a revolving door. There are times that the first, second, or even third time through the program isn't enough. Sometimes there are underlying addiction or mental issues that need to be worked through to help them get into their right mind to be productive members of society. (Barreras)

They provide a great way to help address the issues of addiction and mental health concerning homelessness. They help them to heal and get better and provide them with support and ways to again become productive members of society through their educational programs and job training, both important ways to encourage growth in individuals, stemming the tide of homelessness.

I learned that the City of Tucson is creating a program called the “Housing First” program. Alyssa Giroux, Children’s Services Manager at GRM, is starting an internship with them this coming week and told me a little about it:

What the “Housing First” program is, is basically the City of Tucson rounding up people who are living on the streets and placing them in hotels that have been converted into apartments. The heart is right, and the idea is right, but the implementation is not there because most of the people we serve are not needing housing first; they are needing treatment first. So, Housing First’s...vision, I guess...is to get people off the streets, thinking that it is going to solve everyone’s problems. For some families, absolutely, all they need is just a roof over their heads, but for most of the people that we serve, we know that they need treatment, and then once they get ‘better,’ housing is what can come next. So actually, I’m starting an internship with them next week to see how we can work together to get that treatment in there as well. But I think the City...the heart is there. The implementation is not super great; I don’t think. That is how people become homeless again. Because if you get them into housing first but do not take care of their treatment, then they can’t keep the housing. At GRM, our model is treatment first, then housing. (Giroux)

The model of housing first is just a Band-Aid on the issue. It does not treat the underlying causes of homelessness in our city. Without treating the root of the issue, we cannot hope to solve the problem facing the city, let alone the nation.

According to Angela Murphy, a stigma is put on the homeless population. People look at these individuals not as people, not as fathers, mothers, sons, or daughters, but as bad people in society who made bad decisions of their choosing, or even if not intentionally, they see them as animals. She says that most homeless people do not fall into this category. Most are good people who want to be seen. The indifference society shows the homeless population, though, over time, is what causes some of these individuals to act in other than savory ways. They feel ignored, misunderstood, and many times, not even human (Murphy). They are disrespected and many times treated as less than others. All of this indifference to their plight causes them to try to be seen, even if the way they try seems rude.

As Angela is an expert in the field, I asked her how we, as a society, can combat the indifference shown to the homeless and

change how people view them. This is what she had to say.

Get involved. Start a conversation with someone who is out there. Ask them, ‘How are you? You look like you are having a hard time.’ I have had some great conversations with people just because of that statement. They feel unseen. Unheard. Unhuman. Forgotten. We have to be a changemaker ourselves. We have to lead by example. (Murphy)

Treating the homeless as the people they are will effect change in the way they are perceived by society. It will also show them that they are not forgotten and they are not unheard. They are human, and they are seen.

A smile. A hello. A conversation that lets them know you care. Whatever you can do, do it. We don’t have to try to save the whole world all at once; we just need to do our part. Don’t hold off, waiting for someone else to do the work. We must have the conviction that aiding the homeless, the poor, the sick, and the disenfranchised is crucial. Let’s do it with passion. Let’s do it with purpose. Let’s do it for humanity, please.

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Learning how to manage your emotions in a healthy way is an important aspect of living a happy life. No one is perfect and we all have our flaws, but realizing where our flaws lie and being able to take initiative to change bad habits does all the wonders. Some people go about their days treating people terribly and they just want others to suffer just as much as they do internally, and it shows loud and clear. I will be digging into mens' mental health specifically, and go through some experiences that I have had with men that struggle with emotional maturity. I will also be explaining how these bad practices can hurt those around the men that struggle with this issue, and of course hurting themselves along the way as well.

"Young men were never taught about their emotions and society continues to provide negative reinforcement for men that do share their feelings openly." (Galla, 2020) Many times boys are afraid to express their feelings because someone made them feel bad about it before, or it was looked at as weak or not a big deal to be taken seriously. It saddens me to see this because what people don't understand is they are setting these boys up for failure emotionally, and in return raising less confident men. Now, these men may like to think that they have everything under control, but once one thing doesn't go their way it's immediately someone's fault; surely not theirs. Although, this is not true, the problem lies within men knowing they are sensitive and choosing to turn that sensitivity into anger and jealousy because that is all they know. If you let your men get away with things that are not okay, they will continue to make those same mistakes and know that they will be forgiven right away.

Personally, my father is a victim of emotional immaturity and it has caused me to grow up a certain way. I always had to walk on egg shells when he was at home because you never knew what mood dad was going to be in that day. It's upsetting that this was part of my childhood, but me being aware and letting him know as an adult that those things were wrong is the best way for him to be aware. Just to make matters a bit worse, my dad is also an alcoholic. He has had a lot of issues with his childhood and his parents so I completely understand why he is the way he is, but at some point you have to face reality and help yourself for you and those around you. You have to help yourself to fix your inner child, and this process is not as easy as it sounds, but being aware is the first step.

This brings me to talk about my past relationship. It's kind of ironic but he reminded me of my dad the way that he would lash out over things that could've been solved quickly through calm communication. Everything just HAD to be an issue, and it made no sense to me. If there was something he didn't like that I did there could never just be a regular conversation about it, there had to be name calling, yelling, the whole 9 yards to get his point across. This led me to resent him over time, because

who wants to be with someone that constantly puts you down over the silliest things? Not me that's for sure. I dealt with this behavior for a total of 3 years before I lost myself completely.

The way that he would bring me down affected my mental health a great deal, and that resulted in me losing about 35 pounds, losing my mind, and most of all losing my confidence. The thing is that I knew it wasn't okay I just kept hoping that the person I thought he was would show up at some point, but he never did. I watched him treat his mother poorly; shouting, calling her names that would truly disgust anyone that heard it. I felt helpless for her because I knew that she felt she raised a monster, and I know that she felt sad for me too as I got the bad end of the stick as well. He didn't have his father around growing up to help him navigate the world and I know that not having your dad as a man is a hard step to go through. But, being able to take your sadness from your childhood and turning your life around to become positive is something men are capable of.

My boyfriend now, he has shown me that change is possible. He grew up around his mom and maybe saw his dad here and there up until they stopped talking when he was 13. His mom and his dad are active drug addicts and I know that this was and is very hard on him growing up and to this day. He also had the issue of getting so upset over things that were minuscule and could be fixed and easily at that! Although it isn't my place to teach people how to treat me, I only had to go through that experience once with him and his outlook changed. He doesn't dare to do those things now because he realizes the pain it brings to others.

The concept of communication is simple, we just need to teach our men that feelings are OK, and they are apart of life for everyone. It is just how you choose to deal with those feelings that are important. Lashing out at the ones that you love because YOU are hurting, is never the answer. The answer is looking within yourself and really digging into what needs to be fixed in your life. Once you are happy with yourself, then you can share that happiness with others instead of hating on everyone else's happiness. Apologies without change is just manipulation and that is what you need to stay clear of. Take the steps to better yourself for you and those around you.

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Metabolic health can be overlooked by many people in the world, especially in the west. Obesity is not only bad for your health in general, for example, but you might also have an increased chance of diabetes and various cardiovascular diseases. However, I believe there is a silent killer that can be overlooked. I believe that for some people, metabolic health is correlated to mental health.

Metabolic health relates to the overall state of condition of your body that has to do with what you are metabolizing. For example, eating anything that would get you having a blood sugar, waist circumference, blood pressure, cholesterol. In contrast, if you were to be metabolically unhealthy, then all the examples I mentioned, would be unstable. Furthermore, typically when you are metabolic unhealthy, it is most common that one would be obese. When you are obese or overweight, I think naturally you lose self-esteem. This would be obvious for some people, however, I believe that when you consume a bad diet, for some people it negatively impacts your mental health, such as having anxiety or depression. Anecdotally, I have seen people and myself with prominent conditions, which I will not name for personal reasons. Moreover, I also believe that it is vague on what is healthy and what is not. I find it odd that people and society will demonize fats when it is important for us to have and live because it is one of the building blocks of our body, but they will promote an excessive amount of carbs. Obesity in America, to me, is very common, and obviously fat free foods are not helping at all.

Furthermore, What I have seen in my own experience, is that an excessive amount of sugar or carbs does not sit well with some people. Many people do not know this, but in your abdominal region which covers your stomach, is a nerve called the vagus nerve. This nerve connects to your stomach and goes to the central nervous system and into the brain. This is important because if your stomach or body does not respond well to certain foods hypothetically speaking, then it might cause some repercussions such as conditions like anxiety or depression.

Furthermore, I earlier stated that it was with some people. I believe that in general there should be more research on added sugars and man-made fats, which most likely impacts anyone negatively, however, I believe for certain, that some people do

not respond to sugar or carbs well and it might be one of the reasons for your condition. For example, it is like a person who is lactose intolerant. He cannot drink milk because he does not have the necessary enzyme to break it down. So, like sugar, when people eat sugar or carbs it results in those conditions. If you want to test to see if there might be something in your diet that your nervous system does not respond well to, then I would either do an elimination diet and slowly start to add food and see which one does not respond well with your body. For example, keto and carnivore would be good options as both eliminate a substantial amount of food and it is easy to look up the rules for the diet. However, most importantly, you should check in with your doctor to see if you are deficient in anything or if there is something wrong with you in general.

Lastly, I would recommend with people who have an uncontrollable condition, to try to eat low carbs and make protein and maybe fat your priority to see if it helps you. I can say it has helped me tremendously, however, I also do not think that this condition is solely just metabolic health as I think it is a combination of different things that accumulate and lead to the same results. For example, having low vitamin d. Hoped this helped and would also recommend everyone try a low-carb diet to see if it makes you feel better.

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The Power of the News - By Maria (Mia) Lysfjord

The news plays a vital role in keeping us informed about events in our communities, countries, and the world. It offers awareness about what's happening beyond our immediate surroundings, which would be difficult to obtain otherwise. As someone who regularly watches the news, I strongly believe in the importance of staying informed and I deeply respect the journalists who sometimes risk their lives to raise awareness and keep us updated. Often, the news affects me so profoundly and makes me so upset that I question why I subject myself to such emotional distress. It frequently includes distressing images and stories about child fatalities, terrorism, war, and tragic accidents. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that ignoring suffering is worse than experiencing the discomfort of witnessing it. In these moments though, when I take in the tragedies that I am watching, I sometimes question the accuracy and impartiality of the news. I wonder if it is presented from all perspectives or if there is a subtle form of propaganda or bias aimed at manipulating our opinions. Are the news channels presenting theories as facts before they have been properly researched? Can we trust that we are getting the most accurate information possible when it is presented? It is crucial for us to be aware of what we consume and to conduct thorough research to truly understand the conflicts or events being reported, in order to avoid jumping to conclusions right away. Despite these considerations, the power of the news cannot be underestimated, as it significantly shapes our understanding of the world and influences the decisions we make.

If I were to define humanity, it would mean caring about people whom we don't know and recognizing that the individuals we see on the news are someone's mother, father, or child. They were once innocent babies, just like our own children, nieces, and nephews, and they are most likely loved by someone. These are people whose lives started with the same innocence as ours, unaware that tragedy would strike. Humanity is really feeling and understanding that the mothers and fathers who lost their children in school shootings dressed them up that morning and sent their precious little ones to school, kissed them good-bye at the door, and never imagined that they would never see them again. humanity is realizing that innocent people in a region of the world wake up one morning to find themselves in a war, and suddenly their entire existence changes. These emotions, individuals, and events should not compel us to take sides based on how the news of these events is presented to us. Tragedies should not be exploited as a means to further divide our opinions.

It was not long ago while watching a news story about a tragic event, that I realized how subtly the narrative was attempting to influence my opinion on the event. An incident that really stuck with me was the school shooting in Nashville. It deeply affected me as I tried to comprehend the enormity of the tragedy and make sense of it all. However, of course, there was no logical explanation to be found in something so devastating. In

response, I posted a comment on Facebook, urging everyone to hug their children a little tighter when tucking them into bed that night. Almost immediately, my comment section was flooded with responses. Some simply agreed, probably experiencing similar emotions to what I was feeling. But a significant portion assigned blame to politicians, gun laws, mental health care, and even entertained conspiracy theories. It was overwhelming and disheartening to witness the lack of empathy in such heartbreaking circumstances and I wondered how we had gotten here. While some parents were unable to retrieve their children from school that day and would never have the opportunity to drive them to school again, we were caught up in assigning blame, fueling division, and engaging in heated arguments in the media on the eve of this tragedy. The very next day, as I flipped through different news channels, I noticed the subtle digs, underlying insinuations, and anger directed at people who had no direct involvement in the tragedy. It was a realization of how easily one could be swayed by the media. If I had chosen to exclusively watch one news channel, my opinions on what should or shouldn't have been done would have been influenced accordingly. On the other hand, had I focused solely on another channel, my perspective might have been entirely different. This phenomenon occurs so subtly that one often remains unaware of its impact. It is presented so logically that if I hadn't been someone who consciously switches news channels when tragic events occur, I know my opinions would have been influenced and I understood how we were all so deeply divided.

Furthermore, I am extremely troubled by the selective prioritization of specific tragedies by news organizations, as they often opt for stories that they know will attract the highest viewership. While I understand the constraints of limited airtime and the inability to cover everything, there are cases where one story dominates the majority of the coverage. Although I could give numerous examples, I will focus on recent news. It is important to note that all the tragedies that I am about to mention deeply affected me, as they involved the loss of human lives, which is always my main concern.

Several months ago, a submarine that was descending to explore the remains of the Titanic vanished. The entire world held its breath as rescue efforts raced against time to locate the submarine before the air supply of the submarine ran out. We were exposed to the challenges they might have been facing, saw their faces, and listened to their stories. Every day, tears welled up in my eyes as I imagined the difficulties they were enduring in that exact moment if they were still alive and trapped at the bottom of the Atlantic. Each morning, I woke up with the hope that the day would bring news of their successful rescue. Unfortunately, this hope was never realized and we were eventually informed that the submarine had imploded during its descent to the wreck. Meanwhile, as news outlets focused on the rescue mission for these five individuals, a migrant ship

carrying approximately 750 people embarked on a journey from Libya to Italy. Tragically, the ship capsized, resulting in the deaths of over 600 people. Sadly, I was unaware of this event at the time it occurred as it received minimal coverage, overshadowed by news channels captivated by the suspense of locating the submarine. While we knew the names and stories of these five men, I never heard a single name of any of the 600 who perished that week, nor do I know what compelled them to embark on such a dangerous journey.

I have often wondered why these individuals received less airtime on the news channels I was watching compared to the coverage of the men in the submarine. I had friends who were completely unaware of the tragedy until I informed them about it due to the limited news coverage. Tears streamed down my face for the men in the submarine, a profound sadness weighing heavily upon me. Similarly, when I finally heard about the people aboard the fishing boat, I wept for them as well. It is because of events like these that I strongly believe in taking the initiative to research stories beyond what is offered by mainstream news, as failure to do so perpetuates ignorance of the suffering endured by many people around the world.

Presently, an ongoing genocide has been plaguing Sudan for decades, resulting in more than 3 million victims. While the awareness of war and unrest in various African countries exists, it seems that the attention given to these conflicts is less than that given to countries closer to home, such as Ukraine. War, irrespective of its geographical location, remains one of the most abhorrent things we are exposed to. However, it appears that when the conflict is situated in a region where we have become accustomed to unrest or in a place that feels more foreign, there is a lack of emphasis on discussing resolutions or finding ways to aid these countries, in contrast to other discussions that feel more personally relevant. Has our exposure to images of starving children in Africa and the constant stream of information made us desensitized? Could it be that this is why the majority of news outlets are now focusing on different areas of turmoil instead of providing comprehensive coverage of all ongoing conflicts? Personally, I believe that I have the capacity to engage and care about all these conflicts, although I acknowledge that this may not be the case for everyone. Nevertheless, I don't think we can ignore ongoing unrest simply because it has been previously reported on.

Finally, I would like to discuss the impact of news and media in the past and how it has in fact influenced public opinion. During the 1920s and 1930s, the eugenics movement in the United States was a widespread and influential social movement that aimed to enhance the genetic composition of the population through selective breeding and forced sterilization. This movement was greatly influenced by scientific theories and beliefs regarding heredity, evolution, and race. It received significant support from prominent figures, academic institutions, and government policies during that time. The media played a crucial role in shaping the eugenics movement

in America. The representation of eugenics in newspapers, magazines, and films helped to popularize the concept and gain public approval. It is essential to acknowledge that the media's portrayal of eugenics was often biased and relied on sensationalism rather than scientific accuracy. Nevertheless, it gained momentum and garnered widespread acceptance, and the American eugenics movement was a huge influence on Nazi Germany's Holocaust. I often pondered how such circumstances could occur and how individuals could be so indifferent to the suffering and hardships of others. The more research I conduct on these subjects, the more I comprehend that the masses have been heavily influenced by the news they have consumed, leading them to support something as inhumane as eugenics, which was normalized and accepted at that time. I understand and acknowledge that this is an extreme example, however, I believe that it is important that we remind ourselves that this happened not that long ago in the grand scheme of things and the influence the news has on normalizing things over time.

This essay initially highlighted my commitment to staying informed through news consumption and following current events. I stressed the significance of news channels in providing access to unfolding tragedies and preventing individuals from being confined within their own bubbles of information. I want to reiterate that I deeply cherish the freedom to watch the news without any restrictions and to form and express my own opinions. However, in moments like the recent incidents in Israel and Palestine, which unfolded right as I started writing this essay, factual accuracy becomes my primary concern, rather than being influenced by the political biases that different news channels may exhibit. While I reserve the right to explore and engage in political discussions during my leisure time, moments of tragedy require a nuanced understanding of the events, free from partisan narratives. It is important to comprehend how we can contribute to aiding those affected rather than allowing our opinions and emotions to be clouded by unrelated matters or unverified information. In matters of humanity, diverse opinions may exist, but we must never devalue another person's life based on our individual beliefs or the beliefs of the person or company presenting the news to us.

Although I hold my own political perspectives on how certain matters should be handled, I did not wish to delve into them in this essay. This is because there are appropriate and inappropriate times to engage in political discussions, and human lives should not be politicized. During times of extreme tragedy, such as the loss of innocent lives or mass displacement, the media should refrain from manipulating these incidents to influence our political preferences, loyalties, or views of entire nations and populations. Moreover, when ordinary individuals face the threat of losing their lives and families, our loyalty should lie with humanity itself, rather than seeking justification to support a particular side, whether it pertains to politics or any other matter.

Imagine a world where tragic events unite us in bringing about change for those in need and suffering, rather than dividing us based on differing opinions. It is crucial to recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to every problem. While I may not have all the answers or solutions to achieve world peace, one thing is clear: ceaseless quarreling and subtly biased news coverage of tragic events are ineffective means of taking action. During these challenging times, when our hearts ache for the loss of innocent lives, we must not allow ourselves to be further divided by news reports that seek to manipulate our opinions by including irrelevant details or subject the viewer to possible

false information. Regardless of the topic at hand, whether it be immigration or war, we must remember that many of the individuals affected by these events do not care about our political party affiliation or where we stand on a particular nation. What they truly require is immediate assistance and the acknowledgment that they are human beings and not numbers or pawns. This is the path through which we can genuinely bring about change in the world. This is the path towards peace.

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Many people today struggle with ways to pay for college and have to take out loans to help them pay. Many jobs do not make enough money once they are out of college to pay for these loans that they are required to take out. Due to the amount of money they have to pay off, they are barely getting by. In many cases, they are not even able to save any money up because they have to pay off their college debts first. In this essay I will be examining the cost of 4-year public universities specifically.

In today's society getting a bachelor's degree seems to be necessary to progress in your career. There is nothing wrong with pursuing higher education, in fact it is a fantastic thing to want to further your education and career. The problem with this is the cost of getting a bachelor's degree. I know from experience how much a public 4-year university costs as I attended Purdue University for 2 years. In my 2 years there, I had one year fully paid for through scholarships, but for my second year, I had to take out loans. In the first semester alone, I had to take out a loan of a little over \$10,000 just to pay for tuition and fees because I was not living in a college residency. For the students living on campus, I know it is almost double the amount. Another issue with my school in particular and one that I have hear from others is that they are not quick to give out scholarships. I was not necessarily the best high school student, but I did fairly well. I took multiple AP classes, was involved in many extracurricular activities, and ended with a 3.8 GPA, yet I was denied from over half of the scholarships that I applied for. If colleges and universities are going to charge these ridiculous amounts, then they need to be more willing to give aid to the students that need it.

Obtaining a bachelor's degree still has benefits, and in most cases, it will land you a higher paying job, but in today's era, the wages that one makes are simply not enough to pay off college debt in a timely manner. For public universities, the price of tuition from the 1980's has risen 213% while the average wages have only risen 67% (Business Insider, 2022). One of the main reasons that college tuition has increased so much is there is more of a demand to get a degree, hence universities are able to charge more, knowing that people will still attend. Although, there has been a decrease in attendance of 4-year universities since the onset of COVID-19. With COVID-19, more people realized that they could land sufficient jobs without having to attend a 4-year university.

One piece of good news is the new student loan forgiveness program that has just been passed. With this new program, you are eligible for up to \$20,000 in student loan forgiveness. This does exclude some people though as if you made more than \$125,000 as an individual or \$250,000 as a household in 2021 or 2021, you are not eligible for this. Overall, I think this is a great program, but one issue that I see is specifically for young graduates in the medical field. I bring this up because I work in the medical field and have heard the doctors talking about how much it will take them to pay off their student debt. The lowest

paid doctor, pediatrician, on average makes \$219,000 per year so they would obviously be excluded from this relief program. The problem is that doctors usually have about \$320,000 in student loans after they graduate, and that number only increases with interest. This means that even with an aggressive approach to paying off their student loans, it will still take about 10 years to fully pay them off (Bertman, 2021).

With how expensive it is to attend a university, many students end up having to take out loans, but then realize that the job that they have to get a degree for does not pay enough to be able to pay off these loans. In fact, "The average student loan debt growth rate outpaces rising tuition costs by 166.9%" (Hanson, 2022) That brings us to another issue which is that there are many jobs that simply do not earn enough money to support a family and pay off student loans. I think there should be more programs in which you can get student loan forgiveness. I know that for teachers, if they work at a qualifying school for a certain amount of time, they get some student loan forgiveness. This is an example of the type of programs that should be more widely available.

Another option would be to promote community colleges, apprenticeships, or vocational schools more. As much as we have progressed, I still feel like there are many people that look down on community colleges when they are a very viable option, especially for people who come from low income households. When I got my first bill for Pima, I was astonished at how low the cost was. I was taking 15 credit hours for just over \$1,300 total. This absolutely blew me away because if I were to take 15 credit hours at Purdue or any 4-year public university, my tuition would be close to \$10,000. Another thing that is great is that at many community colleges, you can pay off your tuition and fees just through FAFSA, so many people will have no debt when graduating. This is something that I think should be talked about with high school students. After taking some classes at community college, I will always be a big advocate for them because they are very accessible, affordable, and educating. From my personal experience, I feel like I learn more at a community college because the professors seem to care more rather than being in that position as a status symbol.

There are many different options that people can take to achieve success in a career field, and there is not always a need for a bachelor's degree. This is not to say that some careers should require higher education because there are many jobs that the education received is necessary. Another issue is that student debt has been rising rapidly and many people are not able to secure a job that pays enough to support themselves and pay off student loans. The new student debt forgiveness program is helping multiple former students to pay off their student loans, although it does exclude some people. There are also other paths to be taken rather than obtaining a 4-year degree where you can make good money. The student debt crisis is something that needs to be more heavily addressed if it is every going to be solved.

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The proliferation of hate crimes in the United States in the past years is evidence that people still lack education on social tolerance. In today's world, we are promoting so much on equality and justice. Surprisingly, despite the promotion of equality, we are experiencing an increase in hate crimes. Education is very important in every aspect of our life. It improves people's chances for better lives. It helps decrease poverty and hunger. Moreover, education helps people become good members of society. The best method for combating racism and discrimination is education where people learn about equality, humanity, privilege, diversity, and race.

A hate crime is a crime motivated by prejudice. The offender targets the victims by their ethnicity, disability, language, nationality, physical appearance, age, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation (Wikipedia contributors). The FBI's statistic shows that the victims of hate crime incidents were mostly targeted by race and ancestry. The number has raised 11% from 7,103 cases in 2019 to 8,052 cases in 2020, which impacted 11,126 victims. The percentage of each bias motivation category is 61.8 percent by race/ethnicity/ancestry, 20 percent by sexual orientation, 13.3 percent by religion, 2.7 percent by gender identity, 1.4 percent by disability, and 0.7 percent by gender. Most hate crimes are against the person (69.6%) as well as against the property (28.2%) ("Hate Crime Statistics"). That said, there are many hate crimes that are not reported and very few hate crimes result in an arrest.

The shooting that left 49 people dead at a gay Latino nightclub in Orlando, Florida in 2016 (Stein) and the beating of a Black man by White nationalists at a public rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2018 (Domonoske) are examples of what has grown into a national trend of hate violence against minority groups in our society that are perceived by some people as different. Asians and Asian Americans also have historically been excluded from society in the US since the late 1700s, but the COVID-19 pandemic has enabled the spread of racism and fear of foreigners (Gover et al.). The propaganda blaming Asians for the origin of COVID-19 appeared to have spread throughout the United States. Racial harassment, discrimination, and physical violence against Asians and Asian Americans increased after the outbreak. Bias is cultivated by fear which frequently leads to a risk of people blaming someone outside their own country or social network. Minority groups are frequently wrongly accused of spreading viruses. Insecurity and fear of immigrants have all increased as a result of the pandemic.

I personally experienced racism when I travel to the United Kingdom in 2015. I was queuing in line to purchase a ticket from Bath to London. An elderly woman approached me from behind and asked if I know what time the next train leaves. I turned around and before I begin to talk, she suddenly said "Oh, you can't speak English" and turned away from me. My friend in Australia also got harassed by children near her place. The

kids threw eggs at her while she was walking to school. Racisms are everywhere not only in the US. Hate crime is like a disease that is spreading everywhere, and we urgently need to find a cure to treat it.

Hate crime results in a wide range of psychological consequences for the victims and others. In general, victims experience poor mental health, which includes depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicidal thoughts and actions. The negative effects on health include physical damage, stress, and trouble getting medical care. Victimization is linked to harmful coping mechanisms like emotion suppression as well as unhealthy health habits like alcohol and drug usage. Those witnessing these hate crimes from afar can potentially fall into victim blaming and a decrease in empathy for other victims (Cramer et al.). There is a long list of the effect of hate crimes on victims such as feeling isolated, vulnerable, hated by others, or loss of faith which many times lead to long-term mental and physical health problems.

In elementary school, middle school, and high school, students have four common core courses which are math, science, social studies, and language. The coursework within the social studies core includes geography, anthropology, economics, history, sociology, politics, and civics. Race and ethnicity tolerance need to be added to the coursework. Children begin to notice the difference in physical characteristics at the age of three. They become aware of the social construct of race by the age of four and start to distinguish between members of their own race. At nine years old, children begin to understand how their racial group status exists within a greater society (Roth). This is the reason why it is important to start teaching tolerance at a very young age because children develop views on race when they are young.

Education has a positive impact on dismissing inequality and rejecting discrimination. It is a powerful tool to counter all crimes. A good education helps people become more civilized. Studying the concept of tolerance will help students succeed in this increasingly global, multilingual, and multicultural world. Teaching tolerance will reduce any crime that has bias or prejudice as a driving factor. It is very important that students learn about tolerance, equality, and social justice to have a better understanding of diversity and incorporate different social norms they encounter in their daily lives. Teaching about tolerance is essential for a healthy society. It is a key to unlocking the diverse world and helping people become free from bias.

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For centuries women have been suppressed in many ways. It has been a constant battle to gain basic rights for women and create an equal world between men and women. Is there someone in your life you would put up this fight for? It is time that women be understood and cared for the way anyone else would.

I'd like to start by taking you down a journey that I know all too well, motherhood. When I was 21 I found out I was pregnant with my first son, Julian. His father and I weren't together, so I was left to figure it out by myself, of course with the support of my family and friends. At the time I only had a high school degree, a 9-5 job, and lived with my mom. I knew I needed to step up and do something to better my life, so I switched jobs and began serving at night and attended esthetician school during the day. That was a challenging time in my life, working 6 days a week to save up to take time off for maternity leave, and attending school 5 days a week.

Eventually I graduated, still while pregnant, and worked as much as I could to save as much as possible since it was only my income that was going to support us. During my pregnancy I felt like I had absolutely no help or guidance from the medical team. One day, I had an appointment at my doctor's office to check in on my pregnancy. I was obviously alone, and looked younger than my actual age, all the other women were there with their partners, some who came in after me, called back before me. It felt as if I was being judged for not having a man by my side, or anyone there with me. Finally, I was called back and I waited 2 hours in the room before the doctor made her way to visit me. I was furious, I felt as if I wasn't as important as the other women, I felt completely uncared for.

With my second pregnancy I was carrying twins and it was harder than the first. This time around I had my boyfriend by my side, but it didn't seem to make a difference. Many times did I tell my doctor I was in excruciating pain and I was told I would be referred to a physical therapist but nothing more. I even visited the hospital a few times and wasn't listened to, they never once did an ultrasound to check on the babies, just told me, "you're dehydrated that's what's causing the pain." I explained it was horrible, aching pain, I couldn't lay down, stand up, sit up, anything and everything hurt. At one hospital visit no one even came to ask me my symptoms and I was there for a few hours without being seen by just a nurse, so I got up and walked out as it was obvious no one was going to listen. At a routine ultrasound weeks later, they found the twins were in trouble, one was taking all the amniotic fluid from the other, sending him into heart failure and the other dying from no nutrients. It was such a serious complication I had to be flown to Colorado that night for emergency surgery and thankfully that corrected the issue. If only ONE person had listened to what I was saying about my own body, my boys wouldn't have been put in the position of almost dying, just one person had to stop and take me seriously.

The number of pregnant women who die due to complications with their pregnancies or during childbirth is 700-900 a year. (Ellison, 2017) How is this overlooked, how is this not something that is taken more seriously. Not only were my twins at risk but the surgery to help them survive sent my body into such shock I needed two blood transfusions, I had amniotic fluid leak into my lungs and around my heart, two valves in my heart stopped working correctly, and my blood pressure dropped so low they had to ask my boyfriend who he would want them to save if needed, the twins or myself. Is it because I am young that I was unheard? Or is it simply the fact because I am a woman, that instead of getting the medical attention that I needed I should "lay down and have my husband rub my back." As one male doctor told me to do, bold of him to assume I was married by the way.

Following pregnancy is obviously birth, which can bring on postpartum issues. Postpartum can be present in 1 out of 10 women and estimated about 50% of those women are not diagnosed by a medical professional, meaning many women are not getting the help they need. (Carberg, 2021) From my experience with both pregnancies, after giving birth, the baby must have an appointment with a pediatrician before they are allowed to leave the hospital. They are seen within 2 days of being born at the pediatrician's office, then a few times over the course of two months. A mother who just gives birth, whether it be through c-section or vaginally is seen ONCE at a 6 week check up appointment. Someone who just experiences either a serious abdominal surgery or possible tearing during childbirth, who experiences a huge drop in hormones and roller coaster road of emotions, or someone who is a single mother and has no idea how to care for a child and take care of themselves, is checked up on only once after.

According to the 2021 Census, 11,016,000 families were recorded as a single parent household and out of the total number 80% of those families were single mother households. ("Single Parent Statistics," 2022) This can be greatly affected because of another equality issue women face which is the gender pay gap. In 1973 it was recorded by the Bureau of Labor Statistics Data that women's earnings were 57% of men's, it took 47 years and was recorded that in 2020 the number raised to 82.3%. (Jones, 2021) Why is it that men and women are not being paid fairly, even to this day. If the majority of single parent families are being ran by women, this can cause poverty issues, financial struggles, and keep a woman from achieving the type of salary relief that a single father can receive. This website, Employment and Earnings by Occupation | U.S. Department of Labor (dol.gov), allows you to choose a profession and see the amount of men and women that consist of jobs in that field and the average pay for both genders. For example, the average amount of full-time human resource managers includes 59,647 men and 180,262 women. The median pay for a man with this profession is \$95,120 and yet for women it is only \$80,175. ("Earnings by Occupation," 2022)

This is the same qualifications, same responsibilities, same effort required, just different genders, that should not be a reason someone gets paid less.

I want people to be angry and passionate, to help bring an end to these problems we face. Women's rights is such a meaningful topic, even as a man you were given life from a woman, you were able to thrive and grow from the help of a woman and her abilities to move mountains. There has never been a movement called men's rights, because it has never been an issue, but if there were and tables were turned, people would be fighting with the same rage. These statistics discussed are solely based in the USA, but that doesn't mean the problems girls and women face stop at the border. Stand up for your mother, sister, daughter, or the little girl you pass by on the street, and realize the amount of potential they could have.

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Nearly all mental health providers deal with suicidal individuals. In hospitalized psychiatry facilities, clinical and psychiatric personnel regularly interact with patients who are at risk of suicide. Despite the fact that numerous organizations have made it plain that suicides in a hospital setting are not appropriate, they do happen occasionally. In fact, over the past few years, suicide has consistently ranked among the top five most commonly reported occurrences. Over 80 percent of the total suicide cases in these incidents are attributed to insufficient or nonexistent patient assessment. This article will discuss the American Association of Suicidology and analyze how the organization came by, whom they assist in the community, the strengths and improvements of the organization while and how the organization works.

Clinical psychologist Ph.D. Shneidman S. Edwin established AS in the year 1968. Dr. Edwin was named founder of The Suicide Prevention Centre at the National Mental Health Institute in Bethesda, MD, after establishing the Suicide Prevention Los Angeles Center in 1958. He had the chance to carefully observe the scant amount of suicide knowledge that was available there. AAS has provided major research conferences comprising panels and representations, workshops, pieces of training, and annual discussion interactives since its inaugural meetings (Parrott 624). In addition, the meetings produced major papers that independently submitted case and research studies in the organization peer journal reviewed Life and Suicide Threatening Behavior.

AAS is a based membership organization that aims to assist its members in the prevention of suicide. It facilitates and supports its members through availing of best practices and knowledge in the field of suicide prevention. The organization implements, develop, and facilitates accreditation of professional certifications and training programs. Further, ASS develops and implements accreditation and training programs, including responding and recognizing suicide risk, accreditation of suicide prevention, individual specialist crisis certification, Psychology certification on Autopsy, and university and college suicide prevention accreditation.

AAS's strength has been through the creation of a platform for handling life and suicide-threatening behavior that aims at handling and providing a space for empirical and other public suicide health advancement prevention. This platform demonstrates, articulates, and tests approaches to suicide public health prevention. Some of the topics in the platform focus on the evaluation of multiple suicide levels prevention approaches, examining prevention programs for suicide in vulnerable populations such as immigrants and school-aged youth, and the evaluation of public health suicide prevention measurements (Battin 774). Population assessment level approaches in identifying people at risk in all settings are also considered in

the platform. Some major areas in which the organization is supposed to improve are increasing the usage awareness and understanding of the applications and approaches for mitigating suicide and prevention of suicide. In addition, the organization should increase the research and further study in building a theoretical and empirical robust approach base for suicide prevention.

AAS has helped various groups in the community, including immigrants, the disabled, and youth. The most common group that AAS has really assisted is the depressed individuals in society. Depression and suicide highly relate as most individuals, before they think or conduct a suicidal act previously, have suffered and passed through depression. AAS has also helped the autism community (Kalashnikova 672). The suicide committee and autism group have continued to link and support by providing autism-specific resources and space through their websites.

In conclusion, there is a need to develop practices and policies to advance the competence of mental health quality and professionals of care given to suicidal patients. I feel people could help out by donating to their project, because they are a nonprofit organization. The American Association of Suicidology taskforce strongly been endorsing recommendations that have been facilitating mentally competent professionals effectively trained to assist suicidal patients.

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Cope Community Services is an organization designed to help everyone in the community, located in Tucson, Arizona. Cope helps with physical and mental health for all ages. They help make appointments, find specialist, and help with financial aspects (Cope). They provide many resources including housing for those in need. Cope is a nonprofit organization that makes a difference in each life they touch. No matter what someone is going through Cope is there to help in any way that they can.

Mental health challenges can take over anybody, it affects all ages. It can affect everything in their life, school, work, social activities, and family. As teenagers start to be affected by mental health it is important to get the conversation going. Mental health can be sensitive for a lot of people, therefore, it is often not talked about. I asked my friend Brian if in school anyone has ever talked to the students about mental health. His response was, "No, I never been talked to about mental health". Schools in New York, Virginia, Florida, and New Jersey all started to create mental health into their health classes (Elliott). These states are doing more for the mental health of their students. The schools doing this intend to improve the mental health of their students.

How does the mental health in student relate to Cope? Well, Cope is not just for adults, they also offer youth services. The youth service at Cope is called Thrive (Cope). Thrive offers a safe, supportive place for youth and families through difficult times. It could be from helping understand themselves to case management. Thrive helps the public with anger management, family support, parenting, friendship and more. They offer in person groups and zoom calls for some. For most of the groups they start after 3, therefore it is accessible for teenagers in school. The groups are Monday through Friday all at their Alvernon location. Cope has another youth program for ages 13-17 for opioid dependency treatment called Lift. Lift and the other youth services are useful resources teenagers can take advantage of.

The issue is that students do not know this organization is available to them. To fix this issue Cope's resources need to be talked about more. Like the states that started incorporating mental health with their health lessons, Cope could start to be incorporated in schools. Even just having somebody that came to schools to talk about their available resources would help. My friend Brian said, "If I had someone tell me about these

resources or someone to help me understand my emotions would be better off now". I think that many students feel this way but may be too afraid to reach out and find help. In my high school health class, we had someone come talk about sex ed, I imagine Cope could do a similar approach. One day a week a lady came in and taught us about sex ed, the difference Cope can talk about what it means to be mentally healthy and resources available.

Cope is great organization with what they do; one down fall is many do not know about the great work they do. Incorporating Cope into schools can improve mental health tremendously in youth becoming adults. It also can help get the word out about Cope; they do not do a lot of advertising therefore their main way of delivering awareness is person to person communication. However, knowing that if Cope gains more awareness, they might not be able to financially help everyone in need. They have a couple options; they can go to government for grants, or they couple go to larger companies for ownerships.

Cope Community Services Organization is available for all ages, providing mental and physical health benefits. They offer help with finding and making appointments with specialist and connecting someone to groups. Cope has a ton of groups for the youth to help with anything they need. However, Cope is not well enough known, if they partner with schools both Cope and the students will benefit.

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Pathways of Arizona is a mental health clinic. This organization is committed to making sure that all their patients receive professional community-based care. They value compassion, inclusion, integrity, commitment, accountability, and collaboration.

Pathways of Arizona offers many types of behavioral health services including therapeutic foster care, substance abuse, youth and family, psychiatric, and adult. Their services cater to the needs of children, youth, adults, and families. These services are offered by school-based services, substance use services, home-based and intensive home-based counseling, and mental health assessments and treatments.

Pathways of Arizona has many success stories from previous and current clients. One thing all clients have said is that they

have learned a lot about their illness. One specific client encouraged those who may need help to seek it here. This client goes on to say that Pathways of Arizona is a wonderful place to start because it is in our local community and the number of resources this center has to offer are incredibly helpful.

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Her parents were in the midst of a divorce. She had moved from Arkansas to Arizona with only her car and backpack packed with various necessities she had gathered at the last minute. She had no job, hardly any contacts, and no money. My friend, Amanda, felt hopelessly lost in the midst of her troublesome circumstances. However, throughout trying times, the community of Arizona offered an array of different civic outreach programs for her to get connected to, with people who were willing to lend a hand in hopes of getting her back up on her own two feet. A specific organization that had a large impact on my friend's life was The 3000 Club.

The 3000 Club is a non-profit organization in Tucson and Phoenix that focuses on providing food, produce, and necessities to underprivileged and impoverished families. The organization is most famous for its "Market on the Move" operation, which supplies produce at a low cost to those in need. In addition to this, The 3000 Club also offers community outreach, volunteering opportunities, and ecological benefits through its recycling and waste reduction efforts. In an interview with *The Arizona Daily Star*, Ethel Luzario, the president and CEO of The 3000 Club, said "In a nutshell, it's like whatever donations we get, we will restore it to reuse, and if it can't be reused, we will recycle" (qtd. by Pittenger). In this essay, I will focus on three aspects of The 3000 Club that stood out to me: community outreach, the ability to volunteer, and the ecological benefits the club has in Arizona.

One of the most notable aspects of The 3000 Club is its focus on community outreach. Through programs like "Market on the Move," the organization provides affordable produce to those in need, offering a crucial resource for lower-class families who may struggle to afford groceries. My personal acquaintance with Amanda allowed me to gain insight into the positive impact Market On the Move really has for people in our community. "It is such an awesome resource," Amanda said, "When I first moved [to Arizona], it was a much needed clutch when I couldn't afford normal groceries." This not only helps to address food insecurity in the community, but it also brings members of the community together to volunteer and work towards a common goal of helping those in need. In May 2014, there were over 50 distribution sites in Phoenix and Tucson, and the organization had redistributed over 30 million pounds of produce. This shows the significant impact that The 3000 Club is having on the lives of those in need in Arizona.

In addition to providing food and produce to those in need, The 3000 Club also offers opportunities for members of the community to volunteer and get involved in the organization's efforts. This not only allows individuals to help others, but it also encourages them to think about their own food waste and how it can be put to better use. Many volunteers have reported feeling grateful for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those in need. Another person I interviewed, a volunteer

for Market On the Move, remarked on how grateful those who benefit from MOM are. "Sometimes people ask for specific foods, like peanut butter, and we try our best to get it to them. I think most people appreciate that there are people out there that care about their needs." By providing these opportunities, The 3000 Club is not only addressing food insecurity, but it is also fostering a sense of community and solidarity among its members.

In addition to its focus on community outreach and volunteering, The 3000 Club also strives to reduce waste and promote recycling. According to the organization's website, they have diverted over 10 million pounds of food waste from landfills and have recycled over 4 million pounds of cardboard. By reducing waste and promoting recycling, The 3000 Club is not only helping those in need, but it is also contributing to the environmental health of Arizona. This is an important aspect of the organization's work, as it highlights the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues. By addressing food insecurity and promoting recycling, The 3000 Club is working towards a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Overall, The 3000 Club is an inspiring organization that is making a positive impact in the lives of those in need in Arizona. Through its community outreach programs, volunteering opportunities, and commitment to reducing waste, the organization is providing essential resources and support to those who need it most. Its work is a reminder of the power of community and the importance of addressing social and environmental issues together. The work of The 3000 Club is truly inspiring, and it serves as a model for other organizations and individuals who want to make a positive impact in their communities. The organization's commitment to collaboration, inclusivity, and sustainability sets it apart and makes it a leader in the field. Its dedication to its mission and its impact on the lives of those in need are truly admirable and deserve recognition and support.

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Suicide is a national crisis. As the CDC states “Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States,³ with 45,979 deaths in 2020” (Center of Disease Control and Prevention). This is something that we cannot afford to ignore. The plight of those who struggle with their mental health is too important a topic to overlook. With thousands of deaths to account for in the United States alone, it is only natural that we should strongly desire to help alleviate this crisis in some way. There is no denying that *something* must be done to counteract this rising epidemic. So, the question remains, what can be done?

We could help those who are struggling with their mental health on a case-by-case basis, connecting them to professional resources or providing them with one-on-one support. It can be helpful to connect individuals with therapists and counselors through resources like the federally funded Suicide Prevention Resource Center website (www.sprc.org), and individuals that may be facing internal mental struggles would benefit greatly from this professional help (Suicide Prevention Resource Center). However, despite the importance of this method, it is impossible for a single individual to help everyone, especially those who are outside of their direct sphere of influence. In addition, we can only reach out to the people we *know* are struggling, potentially missing out on those who show no outward signs of their internal battle.

That is where awareness programs and community-wide organizations, such as Tucson Student Ministries (TSM), come into play. One of the most effective methods in suicide prevention is combatting the stigma around mental health through education and awareness programs. As Asha Worsterling and Byron Keating, researchers for the Queensland University of Technology, have observed, “improving attitudes towards suicide and increasing awareness of mental illness should be one of the first steps to engaging the community in preventing suicide” (Worsterling and Keating). Getting the message out into the world is a huge part of the battle in fighting any mental health crisis. The resources that we develop can only help our society if we manage to get them in the hands of the people who need them, and we may not be able to do that on our own. We need larger groups to help us reach more people. By this logic, developing comprehensive mental health awareness programs is crucial to helping us counteract the rising suicide crisis that we are currently facing.

It is also important to create a wide array of awareness programs because there is no single approach that covers all aspects of society or all states of mental health. Important matters are rarely simple, and no perfect program exists for addressing all the potential points in a single clean sweep. Looking at different aspects of the community and tailoring different programs and organizations to address their individual needs is a crucial step for building awareness. I want to explore this idea by taking a closer look at one such organization in our local community, how it fills a specific mental health awareness niche in Tucson,

and how it relates to the larger whole of such programs in society.

Tucson Student Ministries (TSM) is a local nonprofit organization devoted to promoting mental health awareness in the community by using art as a communication vessel. Their specific focus is on the performing arts, including video, dance, music, and live performance theater. This approach is relatively unique, specifically appealing to the artistic community of Tucson and filling a distinctive niche in that demographic. It stands to reason that artists struggling with their mental health would receive messages better if they were conveyed through their chosen means of expression. Essentially, art relates to artists, and in that spirit, Erin Anderson founded TSM in 2021, tailoring her approach to members of the artistic community. A University of Arizona graduate with a degree in psychology and theater, Erin desired to create an organization where her passion for art and the need for mental health awareness in the community intersected (Anderson).

Evidence supports the effectiveness of this artistic approach with the right kind of demographic. For instance, opera singer and art-therapy advocate Awet Andemicael states that,

Although artistic activity cannot substitute for psychiatric therapy and care, participating in such activity – whether private or public, formal or informal – can help provide a means to express both painful and pleasant emotions, to confront difficult memories and sometimes to find an escape from burdens. (Andemicael)

This is an incredibly important and foundational principle for TSM’s existence, and one of TSM’s core ideals. After all, Erin was especially impacted by the idea of using art as a coping mechanism, receiving relief for her own trauma through artistic expression (Anderson). In this way, Erin was able to take something that had helped her cope in the past and turn it into a force to help the people around her, using her passion for artistic expression as a tool to assist her community.

While there may be other more effective approaches to awareness, the arts specifically deal with mental health on a personal *and* collective level. In a study for The UN Refugee Agency, Awet Andemicael emphasizes this point directly saying, “Moreover, artistic activity addresses psychosocial wellness not only in ways that can treat each individual not only as an individual but also as an integral participant in a larger cultural context” (Andemicael). Art can help an individual relate to the world around them and connect with groups that share similar interests to their own. Art deals with the inspirational and motivational aspects of mental health awareness, helping individuals rediscover how they relate to their own community. It is a perspective that can be invaluable in the hands of the right individual.

In addition, TSM endeavors to create a comprehensive approach, employing as many artistic methods as possible, because covering multiple mediums is more effective than

focusing on a single mode of delivery. As a study led by Mathur Shivani Gaiha for BMC Psychiatry states, “Interventions that employ multiple art forms together compared to studies employing film, theatre or role play are likely more effective in reducing mental-health-related stigma” (Gaiha, et al.). This is mirrored in TSM’s approach to coupling music with visuals, dancing with acting, and design with performance. The more tools that TSM has at their disposal, the more subjects they can cover with them. TSM wants to create art using a variety of mediums at same time, creating a more holistic experience, and impacting a wider range of emotions in the viewer.

Erin, the acting director of TSM and current member of the board, says that TSM prefers letting young adults and teenagers perform in their art because of the special connection it creates with the target audience of youth in Tucson. Seeing performers in their demographic helps the audience relate to the message on a more personal level. Erin says they were influenced in this decision by the Social Norm Theory (Anderson). One study for the Journal of Family Violence summarizes the Social Norm theory with the following sequence of events,

Norms influence behavior yet norms are often misperceived (over or under estimated); Misperceptions lead people to conform to a false norm (attitudes and behaviors are adjusted to conform to what is incorrectly perceived to be true); Correcting misperceptions allows individuals to act in accordance with their actual beliefs, which are most often positive. (Rogers, et al.)

This theory led Erin to construct an awareness organization where correcting misperceptions about teenage social norms through the positive action of peers was crucial. She believes that giving students a picture of the constructive actions they can take is better than condemning them for what they might do wrong (Anderson). To this day, TSM crafts their art through the lens of a positive behavior to emulate, rather than the negative narrative espoused by mainstream media.

Of course, TSM cannot cover everything, and although their methods may prove successful for certain demographics, they may not be as effective in other situations. As a study led by Urszula Tymoszuk for the Royal College of Music in London states, “We conclude that arts engagement in the population forms specific profiles with distinct characteristics and that arts engagement is positively associated with better social wellbeing in most but not all cases” (Tymoszuk, et al.). Art only works for the specific people who are receptive to that style of communication, and although it is certainly a helpful method, it may not be for everyone. Even Erin herself admits this saying,

We also know that not all students will connect through the arts, and that just seeing a piece of art typically doesn’t just change someone’s life. Our goal is to start that conversation. To break that stigma. To show that we are a loving and caring organization who wants to be there and wants to connect with students. (Anderson)

This means that different types of organizations are needed to tackle different types of demographics in the community, especially those outside TSM’s normal sphere of influence. TSM is a caring organization, and a great starting point for these important conversations. However, a variety of perspectives helps us see the full picture of a situation, and it is no different in awareness programs.

TSM’s reach can certainly be expanded through the use of more programs and mediums, such as social media campaigns, games, and books. However, that route can only go so far. The only way to truly expand the work they are doing in the community is for them to partner with other organizations, especially those that reach out to niches of the community that they are not as equipped to deal with. Luckily, TSM is already starting to work on this, creating volunteer commissions for other organizations in Tucson as part of their program. Still, potential exists for them to work in different ways with even more organizations, something that I would be excited to see them explore in the future. This reinforces the need for *more* organizations like TSM, each with diverse perspectives covering a wide range of audience demographics. Together, a collection of such organizations can accomplish what TSM never could on its own, reaching the entire community, one demographic at a time.

When we are armed with the proper knowledge to tackle the suicide crisis, and approach the issue with our collective voice, we can change the narrative and take back hope for those who are struggling. No one should have to fight this battle alone and awareness programs provide a valuable weapon for securing our collective future. With more programs addressing individual communities, we can gain ground on the information front, one group at a time. Suicide may be a national crisis, but it is one that we have the power to conquer together.

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To help combat repetitive calls into the 911 system of Tucson, AZ a unique program was developed and is known as the Tucson Collaborative Community Care (TC3) program. The TC3 program has many partnerships and expansion in the near future is almost a certainty. Clients that are eligible for the program will be monitored by a group of professionals for a minimum period of three months. During this monitoring period clients are offered services that are not available to the general public. Their mission is to provide quality community-based care and life-changing impacts on individual needs.

Initiated by the Tucson Fire Department (TFD), the program began in 2016 with only two fire personnel visiting the homes of individuals that frequently called into 911 (City of Tucson). After partnering with Tucson Medical Center (TMC) in 2018 they have expanded to “one commissioned paramedic, four civilian EMT’s, two behavioral health specialists, one manager with TFD, and one manager with TMC” (Knowlton). Federal grants were also approved which allows TC3 to partner with businesses such as PetSmart and give care to the pets of clients. Many clients are elderly and do not have any family or friends to rely on, so their pets are treated as their family.

In addition to, TC3 collaborates with other departments such as The Tucson Police Department to help reduce the number of homeless in Tucson. During the pandemic, these agencies distributed COVID19 supply kits that helped those in need when they had nowhere else to go. Those efforts continue long after the panic of the pandemic but “It’s a complex issue. Not an easy quick fix, solve. It requires several different resources collaborating together” (Vernachio). Both departments also continue to receive grants that allow them to work together and find the solution to the homelessness problem.

Currently, the only way to become a client of the TC3 program is to get a referral by someone employed with the Tucson Fire Department. When an employee recognizes the need, a team is sent to do an evaluation of the patient and determine if extra care is needed and if they will benefit from becoming a client. Once care is established “the patient will be monitored for a minimum period of three months, although most patients remain in the program for a longer period” (Knowlton). The patient will receive services during their participation of the program such as rides to and from doctors’ appointments, pick up of needed prescriptions, substance and behavioral counselling, and any other care that will help stabilize the patient’s quality of life. This comprehensive approach helps to alleviate the patient’s reliance on the 911 system.

At the start of the program anyone that utilized 911 would be placed into a low, medium, and high category based solely on the number of times they called into 911. Those placed in the “high” category are the ones that would get referrals into the program. While it is not known exactly how many calls were prevented into the 911 system because of the TC3 program, statistics do show a dramatic decrease when compared to years before the program existed. “In fiscal year 2019, the Tucson Fire Department responded to just under 76,000 calls for EMS, a significant drop from our 2017 numbers of 83,000. For several years prior TFD had seen an average 6% increase in EMS call-load per year, a climb that was quickly becoming unsustainable” (McDonough). As a result, the program continues to receive funding and grow along with the needs of the citizens of Tucson.

The Tucson Collaborative Community Care program is one of the best examples of community-based care. They recognized a problem within the community and took action by connecting individuals to the resources they need and offer a way to improve their health and well-being. Hopefully, with expansion of the program, other communities facing similar problems will view TC3 as a shining example and implement a similar program within their own community.

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Water harvesting is not a new practice. In fact, it is an ancient concept dating back as early as 5,000 BC, which played a crucial role in the success and development of civilizations in the regions of modern-day India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (The History of Rainwater). Traditionally, water harvesting has referred to the collection of rainstorm runoff in various catchments, such as cisterns or shallow aquifers, for immediate use or storage. This stored water is then utilized for irrigating crops and supplying animals and people (Hillel). With modern plumbing and readily available water, the need to practice water harvesting has decreased and is now infrequently used.

In Tucson, when driving around while it's raining, you may notice that the water is rushing into dry riverbeds, with the intent of draining away instead of being captured. Although this may have been a good idea at the time, it no longer is. Currently, the infrastructure for rainwater in Tucson is inadequate and may lead to flooding (Ghasemi Tousi et al). Tucson primarily relies on water from either the Colorado River or underground aquifers, both of which are being overused. Most of its water from either the Colorado river or underground aquifers; both are being overused. In addition to the river being over utilized, climate change is also altering the weather patterns and rainfall in Tucson (Pour et al).

Anecdotally, Tucson is experiencing fewer, but more intense monsoon storms. When looking at climate data from 1991 through 2020, there is evidence that indicates that, on average, Tucson receives one inch less of rainfall annually (Madison). With our rainfall decreasing and our sources of water decreasing, we need to be wise about our water. Compared to other states like Colorado and Utah, Tucson is more proactive in water harvesting, with efforts to promote and encourage its practice (Cummings). This is great, but further action is required, and we need to go back to our roots and expand our water harvesting practices.

Today, water harvesting encompasses more than just rainwater. It includes grey water, which refers to water generated from your washing machine or shower, that does not contain waste products. By utilizing both grey water and storm water, this is one way we can conserve water. But this does not come without work and money; fortunately, in Tucson there is an organization that is working with residents on water harvesting. Watershed Management is a local organization that has various levels of water harvesting solutions for homes. They provide options such as where they will come consult with you and help design your yard, they offer classes to build your own water basin, which is a large ditch filled with organic material to hold water until it can absorb into the ground, they collaborate with homeowners to install grey water harvesting from your washing machine. Moreover, they offer a "co-op" option. As a unique opportunity, participating in the co-op involves visiting someone else's home to help with their water harvesting and landscaping, and in return when you are ready for your yard, you will receive

aa discounted rate on the services, and a different "co-op" member will come to assist, providing them with valuable learning experience so they can learn. Given the complexity and significance of water harvesting practices, this paper will delve deeper into a couple of different personal experiences with Watershed Management.

In 2010, Mara started her journey with Watershed Management. Recognizing the value of water as a precious resource, she was determined to play her part in water conservation and hoped it would lead to reduced water bills. In one sense this did decrease her water bill, but because this allowed her to plant more plants, her water bill stayed the same. Leading up to her yard project, Mara volunteered 60 hours of her time with Watershed Management, assisting in installing various water harvesting techniques at different homes. Through this experience, she learned how to divert her washing machine water to her yard instead of the sewage system. She took a class for this as well, which earned her a certification and a slight discount on her water/sewage bill.

Upon completing her volunteer hours, Mara collaborated with the organization's landscape designers to create a personalized backyard design. She provided input on her preferences, such as room for her dogs to still run in the backyard while keeping the cistern out of sight. With this input, the design team sketched her eco-friendly backyard.

After Mara approved the design, the construction phase commenced with the assistance of a project manager assigned by Watershed Management. First the gutters were installed by a recommended outside company. For the first day of construction, an excavator was rented for most of the heavy digging. This allowed PVC pipes to be buried, enabling the placement of her 1,000-gallon water cistern behind her shed, approximately 30 feet away from her house. Watershed Management directed the project manager and other volunteers at Mara's house for three days, during which they handled much of the planting and helped construct the water basins. Although Mara had her fair share of work to finish, the major construction tasks were completed with their support.

As the final product, Mara had her washing machine grey water irrigating a newly planted tree, two rain basins in her front yard, three rain basins in her backyard, a cistern capable of holding 1,000 gallons of roof water runoff, and appropriate drainage should her backyard flood and it need to go to the street. The total cost for this project ranged between four and five thousand dollars. She does not remember the rebate amounts, but she knows she received rebates from the city of Tucson for her water management practices. Additionally, she received a discount on her construction because she gave 60 hours of her time to help others. When asked if she would do it again, she said she would, but she would rather hire someone to help with the build. She felt as if the project manager knew what to do on paper, but when it came to implementing the design, there were

minor issues, such as lack of organization (Jameson). As mentioned, this is just one route that could be taken with Watershed Management, and there are more.

A different approach would be what CM and his husband George did for their yard. They enrolled in a couple of courses offered, including *Build Your Own Basin* and *Water Harvesting Rebate Class*. They had a good idea what they wanted their yard to look like, but just needed the tools to do so. After completing the classes, they felt confident in their ability to handle the yard work themselves, essentially acting as their own project manager. Although they opted against grey water usage from the washing machine, they did install water basins and cisterns to harvest rainfall (Peterson).

In total, they possess 3,000 gallons of cisterns which they utilize whenever water is available, along with 3 rain basins. They have several mature trees in their yard making these rain basins a great and efficient way to water them. The rain basins are designed so that they fill first, and then if any extra water runs off into the street (Peterson). Personally, witnessing their practices in action, I can attest that their efforts have proven effective. On Monday, July 17, 2023, during a severe monsoon storm, I was at their house and observed how each rain basin efficiently filled and then redirected any additional water away from their home and into the street. Not only are their rain basins effective, but they have also shared with me that they did observe a decrease in their water bill after they completed their water harvesting (Peterson).

Regarding the cisterns, they had a clear plan in mind as to their designated location and function, leading them to hire a professional to install them. They spent roughly \$3,000 on their cisterns and gutters and received a rebate of roughly \$1,000 for taking the classes and installing the cisterns.

The experiences of Mara and CM and George working with Watershed Management showcase the positive impact of water harvesting practices on both water conservation and financial savings. Through their commitment in the organization's classes and initiatives, they transformed their yards into eco-friendly landscapes that efficiently utilize rainwater and other water sources.

Mara's commitment to water harvesting not only allowed her to create a lush garden without raising her water bill, she was able to contribute to her community by volunteering with Watershed Management. Similarly, CM and George took it upon themselves to create their backyard oasis. They successfully used the knowledge gained from the courses to act as their project managers to install cisterns and rain basins, thus demonstrating the versatility of water harvesting methods.

In this era of increasing water scarcity and environmental concerns, the desert oases created by Mara and CM and George

serve as models for sustainable and responsible water management. Their journeys with Watershed Management showcase the different possibilities of water harvesting, and they demonstrate the importance of education and community involvement to foster a culture of conservation.

As Watershed Management continues to engage with residents and offer valuable resources, more individuals will likely be inspired to adopt water harvesting practices. Watershed Management could reach a larger audience if they worked with the water companies in Tucson to spread information on ways customers can save money through water harvesting, while also striving to be eco-friendly. Often, these water harvesting practices do increase the value of your home, but more importantly, they contribute to a more sustainable future for our planet. Through this, we can work together to secure a greener, water-wise world, where every drop is cherished.

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Licensing

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Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist for Novaya Gazeta, was the epitome of bravery and determination and a seeker of truth in the world, the Russian Federation, and the surrounding areas. She wrote stories about atrocities conducted by the Russian government and military, bringing light to the treatment of civilians by the government. Could she have been killed for what she had said or what she was about to say? To this day, no one has been held ultimately responsible for her death. She was harshly against the Kremlin and Vladimir Putin, which could point to a cover-up to prevent the real perpetrators from being brought to justice.

Politkovskaya was born and raised in New York and was the daughter of Ukrainian UN Diplomats. She had two children, a daughter Vera and a son Ilya. They were both grown at the time of her murder. She wrote six books and was the bravest of Russian journalists who presented a harrowing vision of a nation in chaos and the leader in charge of it. Anna Politkovskaya gained notoriety for her daring coverage of the Chechnya conflict as a lone voice screaming out in a moral wilderness. She then focused her steely gaze on the dangers to Russian stability, including Vladimir Putin. She presented a pervasive condition of degradation, and much of her writings are filled with compelling personalities and stories. An excerpt from her book *Putin's Russia*:

“ALL the murders of children that have taken place during shelling and moping-ups since 1999 have remained unsolved, uninvestigated by law enforcement agencies, child killers have not found themselves on the dock. And Putin never demanded this – although he is known as a great friend of all children. Why do I have it in for Putin? That's why I have it in for Putin. Because of his crudeness which is worse than thieving. Because of his cynicism. Because of racism. Because of endless war. Because of lies. Because of the gas at Nord-Ost. Because of corpses of the innocently killed, accompanying his entire first term as a president. Corpses that might have been avoided.” (Politkovskaya)

She describes an army where recruits are even farmed out as slaves, parents must offer money to retrieve their deceased sons' remains, and troops perish from starvation (Hearst).

She reveals widespread corruption in businesses, government, and the law, in which everything from business licenses to bus lines to judicial appointments is for sale. She also harshly criticizes the conflict in Chechnya, where rapes, torture, illegal assassinations, and abductions breed terrorism instead of putting an end to it. Furthermore, Politkovskaya criticized the West for its complete support of the Russian president as well as Putin for suppressing civil freedoms and pushing the nation back toward a dictatorship à la the Soviet Union.

In 2004, the Beslan school hostage crisis happened. Armed militants entered a school capturing about 1,100 people hostage. Anna tried to help. She used to work a lot in Chechnya and

thought that if she convinced Maskhadov, the Chechen President at the time, to come to Beslan to negotiate with the armed militants, the hostages would be released. Politkovskaya attempted to fly there to act as a mediator between authorities and the gunmen. On the plane there, she was poisoned and fell into a coma for two days. Thankfully she recovered, but unfortunately never made it to Beslan (Anna Politkovskaya Interview After Beslan 2004). There were 330 people killed in the Beslan school attack, most of whom were children in primary and secondary grades (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

In an interview done right after the Beslan incident, she recounts the dangers of being a journalist in Russia and what happened. She said, “If you work as a journalist in Russia, you understand that it is a risky profession. When a miner goes down a mineshaft, he also knows that he might die. And it's the same for us.” She said that every week she received threats on her life. No one supported her nor the newspaper as it was against Putin. She said that they might have in words but not in actions. Journalistic solidarity in Russia did not exist, according to Politkovskaya (Anna Politkovskaya Interview After Beslan 2004).

She argues in the interview that the government has created a situation in Chechnya that is ripe for the production of terrorism. The government pushed people into corners with “completely stupid and pointless policies including – not only including – but principally those of Putin” (Anna Politkovskaya Interview After Beslan 2004). She says that that is what turned these men into beasts that would take children hostage and ultimately cause the death of 330 of those hostages.

In the interview, she talks about how dangerous her job is. She says that her children wanted her to stop, but she refused. They said it was too risky. What she was reporting on could get her killed. She said that that is all part of the job. She drew up a will and testament just in case something did happen to her (Anna Politkovskaya Interview After Beslan 2004). Anna chose to continue fighting for the people of both Chechnya and Russia, fighting for the truth and denouncing the government's actions and policies.

I believe that for this reason, on October 7th, 2006, outside her apartment building's elevator, Politkovskaya was shot four times at close range. She was constantly against the government and its policy and was a very harsh critic of Putin. She was a notorious Journalist that people read and listened to. At the time of her murder, she was completing a story on the probe into torture in Chechnya (Kaskinen). More than likely, the powers that be did not want that information to get out to the public, so they hired someone to assassinate her.

Anna Politkovskaya was a journalist who believed that not hatred but a love of humanity would save Russia and the world as a whole. Her exposé of Putin, I believe was cause for fear in the Kremlin, and it let the Russian people and the world know

just how corrupt and inhuman he is. What she stood for and what she went through was not lost to time. It still reverberates throughout the years. She was a shining beacon of truth in an otherwise dark pit of lies. Everything she wrote and all she did proves how brave she was in getting the truth out there about the corruption in the highest forms of government. She did not look at the risk as a block to the truth, only as a challenge to overcome. We could all learn from the bravery of this amazing journalist that put her own life on the line daily for the truth. The truth is worth fighting for, no matter the cost.

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David Beriain was a Spanish journalist who specialized in armed conflicts, violence, and immersion journalism. He was also a well known producer and documentary anchor. Beriain became known for presenting and directing the television show *Clandestino*, which primarily aired on Discovery Max (Wikipedia). To start off his career, David graduated from the University of Navarra with a degree in information sciences (Wikipedia). The University is located in Spain where he was also born and raised.

Beriain also worked for La Voz de Galicia in the international section from March 2001 to July 2007. He played an important part for this newspaper “during the second war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, where he covered the Spanish contingent in the city of Herat and the town of Qala e Naw” (Wikipedia). Later in 2012, he founded 93 Metros which is an audiovisual production company. This company specializes in “data journalism, audiovisual formats, and design of advertising content” (Wikipedia). David was able to create documentary films and a TV series that were successful and had to do with combat poaching.

His career ended up being the main reason behind his death unfortunately. As a journalist, he was aware that he was a large target, and that many people wanted to silence him. Approaching his death, he was working on a documentary about

efforts to combat wildlife poaching near the Arli National Park in southeastern Burkina Faso (Committee to Protect Journalists). David was working on this project with his camera operator, Roberto Fraile, when they were kidnapped and attacked. Later the next day it was reported that these attackers had taken the lives of Fraile and Beriain.

There is not much information on the actual work that Robert and David were able to accomplish during their last excursion, but it’s clear that the message must’ve been important enough for others to try and silence them. Beriain was a role model to many others in his company 93 Metros, and they all had good things to say about him. Adriano Moran, the cofounder of 93 Metros, was quoted in those reports describing Beriain as “one of Spain’s and the world’s great journalists”(Committee to Protect Journalists).

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Jeffrey Michael German was born on August 23, 1953, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He graduated from Marquette University and started as an intern for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Mamnani 2022). Shortly after, German began building himself a very successful career with a podcast named "Mobbed Up: The Fight for Las Vegas," and an author known for his publications "Murder in Sin City: The Death of a Las Vegas Casino Boss" (Levenson 2022). Most of German's career included making impactful reports through headline-catching stories exposing mobsters and murderers, as well as corrupt officials and government agencies, for 20 years (Levenson 2022).

Jeff German reported on the death of 31-year-old Roberto Arce after North Las Vegas police officers restrained him. Joana, Arce's wife, was the one who called the police to the couple's home to seek medical attention for Arce due to strange behavior while under the influence of cocaine; she was also concerned for her three children, who were also present at the time. Arce was restrained due to his hostile behavior. It was stated that the officers shoved a dirty rag into his mouth, used excessive force to stop his breathing while he was on his stomach, placed a "bee mask" over his head, and ignored his complaints of difficulty breathing. Arce's death resulted from the officers' lack of training, and due to their wrongdoing, Arce's family filed a civil lawsuit against the North Las Vegas police department, which they fought for seven years (German 2009).

He was a passionate journalist who used his work to take down many powerful and dangerous people—ultimately making him a public target. Unfortunately, doing this type of work ended up costing him his life. On Saturday morning, September 3, Jeff German was found dead outside his home with multiple stab wounds. German published an article prior to his death regarding Robert Telles, a Clark County Public Administrator, and his mistreatment and inappropriate behavior toward his employees. This piece deteriorated Telles' re-election chances as Clark County Public Administrator, leaving him enraged with German. As a result, Telles was looked at as a prime suspect in

his murder, and later DNA found under Mr. German's fingernails confirmed this to be true (Las Vegas Review-Journal 2022).

Jeff German was not only a fearless reporter who always strived for justice and the truth, but he was also a man full of laughter and a loving and caring person to his family and friends. They say not all heroes wear capes, and Jeffrey Micheal German was a hero, taking on many powerful villains in an unjust world through his writing. Journalism is about seeking truth and voicing the injustice in society, but often at the expense of your own life. Jeff German will forever be honored for the courage and time he contributed to the community as a voice of truth and justice and an example to future journalists.

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We have learned from so many different types of journalists that have been killed or imprisoned for no wrongdoings, but on different topics they covered and the information they had held them accountable for these types of things. Many of their stories were just part of their job, however having such valuable information made them high value targets and consequences that included death, imprisonment, and even torture. Being an investigative journalist comes with many risks, but people who like this work, they love to be involved and place their own opinions on different things and people. While we usually think of journalists' killings and imprisonments happening in China, Russia, or the Middle East, they can happen right here in the United States. Although we already heard about several different journalists, this one will primarily focus on Jeff German, who was an American investigative journalist, he lived in Las Vegas and wrote for the Las Vegas Review-Journal, and the Las Vegas Sun.

Although Jeff German was born in Milwaukee but began his journalist career in Las Vegas and spanned over 40 years. Because Las Vegas is known as "Sin City" German thought that there would be plenty to cover and look for, and he started off his career by writing about casinos and gambling problems. "A Las Vegas betting expert was sentenced Thursday to 18 months in federal prison for running an illegal gambling operation and hiding money from the IRS. Tony Chau, 32, a Vietnamese immigrant who marketed an online wagering system to customers across the country, also was ordered to pay \$567,571 in restitution to the IRS and forfeit another \$1.4 million to the government." (German). As his reputation grew, he would start writing and investigative Las Vegas mobsters who found his work extremely corrupt and would often send threats to him about the "false information" that he was writing about.

The stories he wrote about, and the cases investigated on from the start of his career to about 2010 had been pretty minor, however after, his career took off and he became one of the most well-known journalists in Nevada. He would shift from his low-end writings to bigger things like failures in city inspections before a deadly hotel fire, alleged mismanagement by government officials, and local extremist groups. He then began writing plenty of articles about Robert Telles, who is the man responsible killing Jeff German. German would write articles about Telles, from his sexual assault and misconduct in his workplace, public relationships with coworkers and more. One included: "The re-election of embattled Clark County Public Administrator Robert Telles is in jeopardy after a lackluster showing in his primary battle with two Democratic challengers, including his top assistant." (German). This was because

German had written about Telles having an inappropriate relationship with his assistant.

Primarily, because of all these allegations against Telles, he lost a re-election bid in June 2022, and because of this, Telles' reputation had gone down significantly, and his work had also faltered. Because of this, Telles had showed up to German's house, "German was fatally stabbed on September 2, sustaining seven sharp force injuries, including four to his neck and one that cut his carotid artery." Telles was found guilty, although pleaded not guilty, he was charged for murder and his trial is set to begin in April 2023. Jeff German is a journalist that is not only important to investigative journalism, but to the City of Las Vegas because he was the most respected and well-known journalist there at the time. The stories he covered still are being discussed to this day and will be for the years to come because he never got to finish some of his investigations that left everyone involved with their head scratching what will come next. To me, I think that coming with this career has lots of risk factors that could potentially include death but is not worth it to me because a story to me is not worth a life and although some may disagree, it's really your choice how you use your voice and if you truly want to be heard enough.

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For as long as humanity has lived on this earth, there has been war and bloodshed. Peace is a localized phenomenon that can vanish just as quickly as it can appear. Before February 2022, most of the international community thought little of the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict. While many were sympathetic during the initial incursions in 2014, most chalked it up as some damned foolish event in the Donbas that would blow over eventually. However, some weren't willing to let this conflict fade into the background. Maks Levin was one of many journalists who risked their lives to keep the realities of war in the world's consciousness.

Levin, a Kyiv native, yearned to be a photographer from a very young age. However, it wasn't till after he graduated from university that he decided to pursue the profession full-time (Левин, 2016). According to Maks, he never set out to become a war photographer. When the Donbas conflict started in 2015, Levin immediately rushed to the Luhansk region, to cover the real situation along the front lines. There, he felt as if he finally found the stories that he was meant to cover all along (Akage).

Over the next eight years, he worked tirelessly to document how normal soldiers and everyday people dealt with the toll of trench warfare and routine conflict. He faced numerous close calls and was even awarded the Order of Merit for his daring escape from the Ilovaisk Pocket (Ukrayinska Pravda, 2022). However, like many other photojournalists, his luck ran out eventually.

The days leading up to Levin's death were not too dissimilar from many of his other days covering the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict. Practically hugging the front line, Levin was using a camera drone to gather footage of Russian maneuvers in the region near the village of Moshchun when he captured something important. We may never know what he saw that day, but Levin believed that the footage was so important that it was worth entering Russian-controlled territory to retrieve (the drone having been downed on March 10th). On the 13th of March, he jumped in his car and raced to the forests of Moschun, hell-bent on recovering the footage. He never made it home (RSF, 2022).

From this point on, we can only glean details from the surviving evidence on the scene of his execution. His car, charred and shot up, right next to a Russian trench position. His corpse, with two shots to the head and one to the chest, was found looted of all its valuable items. His phone, his press body armor, his shoes...all taken by his executioners. While the exact unit is still being determined, it is theorized that he was killed either by members of the Russian 106th Guards Airborne Division or deployed elements of the 64th Motorized Rifle Brigade of the Russian Army. Given the presence of DNA evidence at the scene, one can hope that one day, the perpetrators of this crime will be brought to justice (Froger & Chauvel, 2022).

The biggest tragedy of any wartime casualty is the people and ideals that the fallen leave behind. Levin was a husband and father of four sons. He valued freedom of information and freedom of the press and was a leading figure in the Ukrainian journalism community (Froger & Chauvel, 2022). He was also a major player in the Ukrainian fatherhood movement, believing that every father should play an active and nurturing role in their child's life; Something the war has taken away from his children forever (Ukrayinska Pravda, 2022).

Levin hoped that his work would lead to a peaceful world. One where everyone lives decently and honestly... that he would want his children to live in. There will come a time, hopefully soon, when this war will be over. The rubble will be cleared, the air-raid sirens will be silent, and children will live without the threat of death looming over them. Maybe then, will his hopes become a reality (Левин, 2016).

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Maria Elena Ferral Hernandez was a very well-known Mexican woman reporter. Maria lived in Papantla a region of the state of Veracruz. Maria was well known for her passion and commitment to end violence. She believed it was her duty to serve the community and try to make it a safer place to live. Maria understood that due to her job she was putting her life on the line, but that didn't stop her.

Maria Elena had a new column that she would post weekly, and it was named Polaca Totonaca (translated as the 'Politics of Totonaca'), Maria wrote about the politicians who had been murdered. A week before she was murdered, she put out an article recounting the incidents that happened to the four politicians that were murdered in Gutiérrez Zamora a small town in the state of Veracruz. In that article Maria blamed them for the murder and with that she had a big target on her back. She knew before posting this article she would be in trouble, but she did not care she wanted the article out there. Gutiérrez Zamora was known for its drug trafficking, transportation of legal products, and exploited women and immigrants. Gutierrez Zamora is the most dangerous place in Latin America for a reporter to cover (Carmona, 2020).

Before Maria was murdered there were three prior attempts on her on her life that she survived. Maria was well aware that they wanted her dead, but she wasn't afraid, and she was determined. Maria was a woman of intelligence, commitment, and passion. She was not afraid, and her main goal was to protect the

innocent while putting her life on the line at the same time. Maria Elena Ferral Hernandez was the 24th journalist to be murdered in Veracruz in the last eight years.

Maria was a woman who wanted to make change happen. Maria wasn't scared, she was determined to make Veracruz a safer place to live comfortably. In 2021 Maria was given the Courage in Journalism award in which her daughter accepted on her behalf. Her daughter talks about how proud she was of her mother. She talked so highly about her mother's commitment that she is now walking in her footsteps and is working towards being a journalist because she feels like her mother's work is not done. Maria Elena Ferral Hernandez was courageous and determined. She died fighting for something she was very passionate about and I hope her story makes an impact.

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In the Arab world, the state or the military controls the traditional media of tv and newspapers. Social networking on the Internet has made it possible for people to express themselves freely, voice their opinions, and communicate with others without restriction. However, people get monitored by what gets posted on the internet and social media. In Syria, there is extensive internet restriction. Syria blocks websites with political content and imprisons people who visited them. All chat forum comments are required to be recorded in Internet cafés (Wikipedia contributors).

Tal Al-Mallouhi is a Syrian student, poet, and blogger. She was only 19 years old when she was arrested in 2009 by Syrian authorities. It is unclear why the Syrian government has detained Al-Mallouhi. The court did not mention any detail or any supporting evidence in her case. Some Syrian activists are concerned that she might have been detained because of a poem she wrote about political and social topics on her online blog. Her writings also criticized some limitations on freedom of expression in Syria (Zackheim).

Tal Al-Mallouhi was detained after being called for questioning on December 27, 2009. State Security officials paid a visit two days later and seized her computer, several computer disks, notebooks, and a cell phone. No one from her family has been able to visit her after that date. Her mother issued an open letter to the Syrian president on September 2, 2010, requesting updates on her daughter's welfare and pleading for her quick release. Her mother said in the letter about the great pain her entire family had as a result of her daughter's arrest without a valid reason.

"I cannot describe to you the disaster that has befallen our family and what we're suffering. She is young and does not understand anything about politics ... One security branch promised me that my daughter would be set free before the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan. But Ramadan is almost over" (qtd. in Oweis).

Her family was finally permitted to see her for the first time at Doma Prison in Damascus on September 30, 2010; however, they have not been allowed to see her since. On February 12, 2011, the United States called for the immediate release of Tal Al-Mallouhi due to basic human rights of association and expression without worrying about retaliation from their own government.

"The United States strongly condemns Syria's secret trial of blogger Tal Al-Mallouhi, calls for her immediate release, and rejects as baseless allegations of American connections that have resulted in a spurious accusation of espionage. We call on the Syrian government to immediately release all its prisoners of conscience; and allow its citizens freedom to exercise their universal rights of expression and association without fear of retribution from their own government" (Crowley).

According to the Syrian regime's account, which Bushra Kanafani, Director of Foreign Media at the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented on February 23, 2011, Tal was recruited by an Austrian officer whom she met in Quneitra and got to know when she was 15 years old. She would later engage in espionage activities for the benefit of the United States (SHRC). Kanafani's account alleges that she later engaged in espionage activities for the benefit of the United States.

The State Security Court's ruling was final, and an appeal was not permitted. She was given a five-year jail term in 2011 for leaking national secrets. She was supposed to be released before the end of 2014, but she was not. Instead, she was found guilty of a fresh narcotics possession charge and given a three-year prison term. According to sources, she was transferred from Doma Prison to Damascus' State Security Division in 2016. As of the end of 2021, she was still being held (Amnesty International).

On her blog, Al-Mallouhi advocated for Palestinian rights and criticized Israeli government actions. It also covered Arab citizens' discontent with their rulers and what she saw as the Arab world's stagnation. She received a lot of attention from human rights advocates throughout the world as well as from the Arab blogosphere and social media platforms (CPJ). In some of Tal Al-Mallouhi's writing, she wrote poems that emphasized her hope for peace in the Middle East, limitations on free speech, and the suffering of the Palestinian people.

"You will remain an example [in reference to Gandhi]
I will walk with all the walking people
And no, I will not stand still just to watch the passers-by
This is my Homeland
I have a palm tree, a drop in a cloud, and a grave to
protect me
This is more beautiful than all cities of fog
And cities that do not recognize me
My master, I would like to have the power
Even for one day, to build the republic of feelings" (Al-Mallouhi).

Social media has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the development of politics and society. Citizens can now evaluate, balance, and exchange viewpoints. Youth who have been denied opportunities at every step now utilize social media as their main outlet to vent their rage and frustration in creative ways.

The idea of free speech in Muslim law is not explicitly defined. The opportunity of expressing one's own perspective was permitted but at the same time, a restriction was added, and it was very broadly and subjectively construed, requiring one to engage the conversation "in the best way." This commitment gives contemporary Arab politicians the power to severely restrict the right to free expression, demanding adherence to moral and ethical standards (Shishkina et al). One of the most common ways of governmental control of the media is internet censorship. Cyberspace is filtered for a variety of reasons,

including protecting societal religious, and moral ideals, preserving the security of the current regime, and attempting to restrict all forms of opposition movements. A censorial political culture, one that emerges in an environment often dominated by a single political party, continues to pose a danger to press freedom in Arab nations and the effectiveness of Arab journalists (Soengas). In the Arab news media of today and in journalism education programs, overt censorship and self-censorship are common, and the media has really been recruited into a national business for the manufacture of propaganda. As journalists find channels for reporting across transnational media through social media innovation, it will raise the demand for change and make concerns about censorship irrelevant.

The arrest of Tal Al-Mallouhi sparked a global outcry and condemnation from bloggers and human rights activists. Protesters begged for information regarding her whereabouts, but the Syrian government has a policy of keeping silent on political arrests. Amnesty has stated that there are health issues for Al-Mallouhi due to her frailty and tachycardia, which is an unusually rapid heartbeat that can cause a drop in blood pressure and deplete oxygen from tissues and organs. According to reports, she was being held without medical care for her condition. Amnesty discovered 38 different types of torture and mistreatment of detainees in Syria. There are growing concerns that she may be tortured in various ways (Amnesty International). The Syrian government has been urged to release Tal Al-Mallouhi by many organizations such as Reporters without Borders, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, and Human Rights Watch.

In Syria, freedom of expression is consistently violated by the government. It demonstrates that Syria has no intention of improving its freedoms. Tal al-Mallouhi is believed to be the youngest female prisoner of conscience in the Arab world. Al-Mallouhi's case raises great concern not only in Syria but around the world. This will result in people rising up against their governments and religious authorities to put these nations back on the proper path of Islam and to move them toward the future rather than sticking to a hateful and unfortunate past.

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How can someone come to their death within their country's consulate? Although it may be hard to believe that became the fate of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi on October 2, 2018. As he entered the consulate in Turkey to collect paperwork that stated his separation from his previous spouse he never walked out again.

Jamal Khashoggi was born on October 13, 1958, to a wealthy well-connected family in Saudi Arabia with ties to the royals. He lived and studied there until he moved to the United States to attend Indiana State University where he obtained a degree in business administration in 1982. He then launched his career in Journalism and became a correspondent for several different English and Arab language papers, including the *Saudi Gazette*, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, *Al-Majalla*, and *Al-Muslimoon*. (Dawn, 2021) Saudi Arabia is one of the most restrictive countries in the world. Although Khashoggi was a loyalist he was not afraid to voice his opinion which led to his dismissal on more than one occasion.

On May 21, 2018, Khashoggi publishes a column about the arrest of activist which stated "The message is clear to all: Activism of any sort has to be within the government, and no independent voice or counter-opinion will be allowed. Everyone must stick to the party line" (Pen, 2022). Could this have been what led to his demise? In 2017 A year before his murder, Khashoggi went into self-imposed exile in the United States but a few months after started writing for the Washington Post. "In the United States, Khashoggi took full advantage of his new freedom. He wrote and spoke boldly, advocating for freedom of speech and democracy. He criticized the Saudi regime's imprisonment of political activists, and the Saudi's conduct in the war with Yemen, calling for a ceasefire and peace talks" (Dawn, 2021).

As this continued to develop Saudi rulers followed Khashoggi's activities closely because they were disturbed by the constant criticism of Saudi policies. They began to pressure Khashoggi to remain silent and when they saw that he was not defied they decided to escalate but were hesitant to do so as Khashoggi remained in the United States. When they obtained information that he would be traveling abroad they seized the opportunity. "By the time Khashoggi entered the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in the early afternoon of October 2, 2018, the Saudis had flow in

a special operations team to murder the defiant dissident". (Dawn, 2021) Leading to the investigation upon the crowned Prince of Saudi Arabia and the contradicting information on how the death of Jamal Khashoggi unfolded.

Is this what comes with advocating freedom of speech and democracy? Journalism can become a very dangerous career if you offend, uncover, or contradict someone with power. How is that far? We are supposed to be aware of what is happening in this world and unfortunately those with power/dictation want to hide it. Journalists are only reporting what they find is important for people to know and feel like it is being hidden from the public eye. They voice their opinion because they know that there are millions of people that have the same perspective as they do, and they want to make a change. Silencing them will only infuriate those seeking the change and they will begin to retaliate. The worst thing is that the people responsible for these acts go unprosecuted. I can only imagine the mixed emotions those close to Mr. Khashoggi felt when they couldn't find a concrete answer as to what had transpired behind those closed embassy doors back on October 2nd, 2018. The fate of Jamal Khashoggi is one that no one wishes to come across.

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Daphne Caruana Galizia. Does this name ring a bell to anyone? It should. She was the first prominent female journalist in Malta. At the time, “[newspaper] articles either did not carry bylines or were published under a pseudonym [in Malta]” (The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation). Instead, Daphne Caruana Galizia chose to publish her journalistic work under her own name. Before we continue on, let’s start from the beginning of her life.

Daphne Caruana Galizia was born on August 26, 1964 in Sliema, Malta to Michael And Rose Vella. She was educated at St. Dorothy’s Convent School and St. Aloysius College. Her first exposure to Malta’s political system occurred at the age of eighteen, when she was arrested for participating in anti-government protests. As a result, Daphne Caruana Galizia “never lost her outrage against [the] authoritarian government” (Borg). Later on in life, Daphne Caruana Galizia reflected that “What happened in the 1970s and 1980s was possible because people gave in”. She continued on to say that “They complied, they lowered lowered their heads below the parapet, and they worked with corrupt and abusive scum to ensure their own survival rather than defying them, [all] for the sake of a quiet life” (Daphne Caruana Galizia Quotes). This situation was one of the first steps toward her future journalistic career.

In 1988, Daphne Caruana Galizia began writing a column for “The Sunday Times of Malta”. “Her column was unusual for its time — [it was] a mix[tur]e of commentary, opinion, reportage and analysis” (The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation). Later on, Daphne Caruana Galizia helped establish the “The Malta Independent”. She became the associate editor of it. Her colleagues “remember her as [a] meticulous and hard-working [woman], [who was] not always easy to get along with” (Borg). Daphne Caruana Galizia began to branch out her journalistic career through a different avenue.

In March of 2008, Daphne Caruana Galizia began a blog called “Running Commentary”. The first post published was titled “Zero Tolerance For Corruption”. Daphne Caruana Galizia ran her blog “Running Commentary” independently. She once stated that “It’s true that life is unfair and that much of it can’t be helped, but where I can do anything to avoid unfairness or to set it straight, then I will” (Daphne Caruana Galizia Quotes). Her blog became an avenue for her to report on the corruption, sleaze, and crime in Malta. Not to mention, “it quickly became [one of] Malta’s most popular independent news website” (Borg). “Running Commentary” attracted “a daily readership that averaged [about] 400,000 and sometimes up to a million” (The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation).

Daphne Caruana Galizia reached the pentacle of her journalistic influence in 2016. She posted a story “about [the] secret Panamanian companies that two top government politicians had set up just days after getting into power” (Borg). Her news story then continued on, Michelle Muscat —the wife of Malta’s Then Prime Minister Joseph Muscat — also owned a secret company in Panama. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat claimed that these

allegations against him were unfounded. And it led him to called Malta’s 2017 General Election a year earlier than it was scheduled. This resulted in a victory for the Labor Party (of which he’s a member of). Daphne Caruana Galizia stated that the Labor Party’s victory was pre-planned ahead of the time. But her report was met with skepticism. As she stated “I don’t think standards can fall any further, really, unless we catch [the Prime Minister] Joseph Muscat fornicating with a sheep on a bed of hard cash”. She continued on with “And even then, thousands of people will say “It’s [his] private life.” [or] “Where’s the proof.”” (Daphne Caruana Galizia Quotes). This was not the first time that Daphne Caruana Galizia had challenged someone in power. But this time was a little different.

On October 16, 2017 Daphne Caruana Galizia was driving near her home in Bidnija, when her car suddenly exploded. She was killed instantly. Her remains were later found by a family member. At the time, this was the sixth car bombing attack to occur in Malta since 2016. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat did not immediately arrange a public inquiry into the death of Daphne Caruana Galizia. Corinne Vella, Daphne Caruana Galizia’s sister, stated that Prime Minister Joseph Muscat downplayed her death and “[is] working to[ward] transform[ing] her into a martyr for [the Labor Party’s] cause” (The Malta Independent).

In conclusion, the nature of Daphne Caruana Galizia’s journalistic work was controversial in Maltese society. As a result, numerous threats of violence were made against her. Despite these risks, she continued to uncover corruption in Malta until her death. She once stated that “All others have the law on their side and all they need is the tenacious personality to withstand constant harassment that is the fruit of corruption and abuse of power” (Daphne Caruana Galizia Quotes). Her very own words are a reflection of the type of person that she was. Daphne Caruana Galizia was a fearless woman, who was a true advocate for the freedom of speech even when in the face of adversity.

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PM Noticias was founded by Pablo Morrugares, who was the main editor of the website. This website was generally known for covering local news, politics, and crime around the city/state of Guerrero (CPJ. 2020). In the beginning of 2020, he covered a lot about the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the state of Guerrero, which some people did not agree on. His success came from his news reports since he had a background in the Mexican government that allowed him to dig deeper into the news he was publishing. Pablo was also not scared of the trouble he could be facing by reporting these kinds of events in Guerrero's most dangerous and controversial city. Little did he know, though, he was digging up his own grave by doing so.

Before opening up his own website, Pablo was under the administration of Jose Luis Abarca, who was involved in the Mexican government, working as a spokesman for him. On November 4, 2014, Jose Luis was in a huge controversy when he was arrested for being involved in the abduction and assassination of 43 college students on September of the same year. That caused many riots and threats to anyone that was close to the mayor, including Pablo Morrugares. "Local media reported that threats against Morrugares had been displayed on banners hung by roadsides, a tactic frequently used by drug gangs in Mexico" (AP, 2020). Morrugares was given police protection in 2016, after he and his wife escaped gunmen shooting at their car one night as they were heading home. They were placed in a safe house from 2018 to the end of 2019. When 2020 came, he decided to leave the safe house on his own, but was given two bodyguards in case there was another threat against him.

On August 2, 2020, right before 1AM, two heavily armed men walked into a restaurant firing more than 50 shots at Pablo, who died instantly. A police officer, who was his bodyguard as well, also died in the attack (CPJ, 2020). The media had a lot to say about this occurrence but the main question was, what drove those men to do this? Two months before this happened, "Pablo was threatened in a facebook video by a criminal gang from Iguala, according to journalist Omar Bello Pineda that is part of the Mexican Association of Displaced and Attacked journalists" (CPJ, 2020). Before his assassination, Morrugares was also reporting about some crime activity outside of a supermarket that involved two criminal gangs fighting for territory. This was

another reason to think that all of these events tie back to the reason for his death.

Sadly, none of this has stopped the killings of journalists around the globe. "In 2019, 10 journalists were murdered in Mexico, according to the NGO Reporters Without Borders. More than 100 journalists have been killed in Mexico since 2000, with only a fraction of those crimes resulting in convictions" (MP, 2020). Most of these numbers have doubled since organized crime gangs have increased in the Mexico region. The sheer thought of this happening and nothing big being done about it is absolutely heartbreaking, especially for the family of the victims. In Pablo's case, 8 suspects were arrested for having connections to his murder. The Guerrero's state prosecutor's office announced that the guys connected to Pablo's murder were in Iguala, hiding in a safe house. At that location, they saw a burning car that could have possibly been used in his killing. To this day, they still don't know who the main killer is.

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In August of 2019, a journalist living in the small town of Actopán, Mexico was murdered. His name was Jorge Celestino Ruiz Vazquez and he was journalist for a newspaper called El Gráfico. At the time of his death, he was supposed to be under security protocols, but never received them and it resulted in his death. This led to speculation as to what else was at play.

Jorge was a journalist in his local area. He had reported previous death threats and one time his house was even shot at. The night of his murder, he was granted protective custody, but it was never given to him. The governor of Veracruz launched an investigation because of this. As it turns out, the man that he was killed by was hired by the mayor of his town. He was working on a story talking about how critical he was of the mayor and because of this, the mayor had him killed. The man that killed him was sentenced to 32 years in prison and the mayor that orchestrated the killing was placed under investigation. I was not able to find out what happened to the mayor, but the governor of Veracruz said that he would find out who killed Jorge and they would take responsibility for their actions. Because of all this evidence, it seems that the mayor was the one that prevented the security from being with Jorge and thus led to his death (Sentenciaron, 2022).

It is difficult to find detailed information about the death circumstances of Jorge, but after his murder, the death toll for journalists in 2019 was up to 10 by August. Mexico has continually had a problem with journalists facing threats of violence and death threats. This is usually because of the cartels and other organized crime and that they are usually linked to political powers. This is another theory about the mayor that hired someone to kill Jorge. I think it is extremely possible that he could have been working with the cartel before. I could not find any specific articles, but I know that Jorge was critical of the mayor and that could have been one of the reasons. He might have begun to realize that the mayor was working with organized crime leaders and the mayor needed to silence them. Another reason that it is so dangerous to be a journalist is because many of the murders go unsolved, so the killers are never prosecuted. Usually, the government says they will do something about it, but nothing ever happens, and the families are left with no answers as to what happened (Deutsche, 2019).

This case should be talked about more because we need to show that just because someone is in a position of power, they cannot and should not get away with whatever they want. There are many cases in which politicians or other powerful people seem to be able to get away with something in which they have

irrefutable evidence stacked against them. While legally they are not prosecuted, the citizens still lose their trust in that person. Although this is smaller scale, it still cost someone their life and I am unable to tell whether the right people got what they deserved. There should never be a fear for journalists to lose their life for reporting on a story, especially if it is on the government. The government needs to be transparent for the citizens to trust them and journalism is an easy way to make the government transparent. The case of Jorge Celestino Ruiz Vazquez perfectly exemplifies this. It was well known that he did not like the policies of the mayor in his town and he was not able to report on it without facing adversity and eventually being killed. I hope for the future that we are able to mitigate this issue so that journalism can be practiced freely.⁵

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In the year 2020, there were a recorded 32 journalists that had been killed with a confirmed motive. Amongst these 32 journalists was a woman who went by the name of Malalai Maiwand; she was only 25 years old when she was murdered.

On December 10, 2020, in Jalalabad city in Afghanistan, Malalai was on her way to work with her driver Mohammad Tahir, when their car was opened, fired upon and they were both killed. The Islamic State came out and claimed responsibility for the shooting and called Malalai a pro-regime journalist. This attack may not have come as a surprise as Malalai had stated before she was killed that she was receiving death threats from the Islamic State and the Taliban. It was said that they wanted her to stop reporting.

Malalai was a new presenter for Enikass Radio and TV and she had worked there for five years. She had spoken out against injustices, the ongoing war and violence, and the challenges of being a female journalist in Afghanistan. Since she was a journalist and a woman, she was given unique access to stories and was able to talk to widows and orphans. Malalai would often report on human rights issues and government corruption. She was described by her colleagues as “strong and compassionate”, “a brave, top-notch journalist with open eyes” (Razdan), and “a woman that gave confidence to other women” (Glinski).

Malalai was inspired by her mother as her mother was also a women’s rights activist. But her mother was killed five years before Malalai by an unidentified gunman. Also, Malalai was not the first Enikas employee to be a target of an attack, in 2018 the station’s owner, Engineer Zalmay, was kidnapped and held for ransom (Janjua). This truly shows that Malalai was a brave woman to continue to speak out for what she believed in despite the violence going on around her and the threats she received.

Now being a young woman that was a journalist in conservative Afghanistan gave her a good amount of attention. Aziz Tassal who is a director of the Kabul Press Club said that Malalai “rose to prominence three years ago after delivering a fiery speech in front of the president on rising corruption in her native Nangarhar province” (Razdan). During her speech, she said to the president “you are surrounded by corrupt people” showing that she was not scared nor was she going to let anyone stop her from speaking the truth.

What is so terrible about all of this is Malalai is not the first journalist to be targeted simply because she was a journalist.

Just 24 hours after Malalai’s death a television presenter, Fardin Amini, was found dead under mysterious circumstances (Razdan). Malalai was the fourth journalist to be killed in Afghanistan in 2020. The three journalists Elias Daei, Yama Siawash, and Zamir Amiri were all targeted and killed in explosions (“Afghanistan”). It is truly sad to see these journalists get killed because they want to use their voices and speak out. No one should have the fear of being killed just trying to deliver stories and do their jobs.

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Between the years of 2019 and 2020, 100 journalists died and among them was Nabil Hasan Al-Quaety, a married father of four, who was murdered outside his home in Aden in a planned assassination on June 2nd, 2020 (CPJ). He was only 34 years old and worked as a freelance journalist and photographer and was working with the French public broadcaster Agence France-Presse or AFP. During his time in Yemen, the capital city Sana'a was under control of Houthi Rebels who are allied with Iran. Both the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) are fighting against the Houthi Rebels (Yemeni Journalist). In August of 2019 the STC turned on the Yemeni government and Seized the city of Aden where Al-Quaety lived (CPJ). Al-Quaety had supported the STC and was criticized by the members of Islah, a bloc of the Yemeni Government, who also accused him of being funded by the United Arab Emirates who was working with the STC (Yemeni Journalist). His assassination was the first targeted killing of any media worker since 2015 when al-Qaida killed a journalist in Sana'a (Yemeni Journalist).

Before Al-Quaety had been murdered he had traveled to Yemen in 2015 to cover the Civil War that started in 2014 between the Yemeni Government and the Houthi Armed Movement as well as the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict of the war (JPost). He had been awarded for his reports on the civil war in 2016 by Britain's Rory Peck Awards so he was a notable figure when it came to reporting on the civil war in Yemen. Unfortunately his killers escaped and have not been found to this day even with Yemen's Government calling for an investigation (Al-Monitor). The first group who is suspicious of the crime would be the Houthi Rebels who are against the STC and Yemen Government although it is also possible, albeit unlikely, Yemen's Government themselves are behind it due to the group Islah, who is a part of the Yemeni Government, disliking Al-Quaety's support for STC who had control over the city he lived in.

Following his death the Global News Director Phil Chetwynd of the news agency AFP who Al-Quaety was working for said, "We are shocked by the senseless killing of a courageous journalist doing his job despite threats and intimidation. Through his work with AFP over the past five years Nabil had helped to show a global audience the full horror of the conflict in Yemen. The quality of his work had been widely recognised. The thoughts of everybody at AFP are with his wife and children today" (AFP). His wife has not spoken in public or to any reporters about her husband. The undersecretary at Yemen's

information ministry, Najib Ghallab, stated, "We condemn this crime against Quaety, whose work was to cover events and facts in pictures. It seems that his work has caused outrage among some extremist parties" (AFP). Lastly the STC, who Al-Quaety supported, has this to say, "It is with great sadness and pain that the STC mourns the martyrdom of the war photographer Quaety in a treacherous terrorist operation" (AFP).

The death of Nabil Hasan Al-Quaety was tragic and a severe loss for many. The pain that his wife and children must feel is unimaginable. Al-Quaety was an amazing journalist and put his life on the line to report on the civil war in Yemen. He knew the dangers of his job and even after a brush with death in 2019 when he survived a deadly Houthi drone attack on al-Anadair base while he was covering a military parade he still continued to report on the war and stand up to the ones who cowardly killed him (Al-Mashareq). We need more journalists like Al-Quaety and the loss of any of them is tragic. His reports on the war for nearly 5 years were crucial in spreading awareness about the war and supporting the people of Yemen through the tough times. He will be missed.

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Mexico has a history of murder, imprisonment, and disappearances of journalists. According to Reporters Without Borders, “More than 150 journalists have been murdered in Mexico since 2000.” Unfortunately, many government officials have a history of undermining investigations due to collusion with cartels, and the disappearance of journalist María Esther Aguilar Cansimbe is no different (“Mexico”). Aguilar left her house in Zamora on November 11th of 2009 and was never seen again (“Crime Reporter Missing”).

María Esther Aguilar Cansimbe wrote for two different dailies, *El Diario de Zamora* and *Cambio de Michoacán*. She was a mother of two, and was married to police chief David Silva. Aguilar frequently wrote about cartels and corruption in the government. She often had to omit her name from the byline of the articles that she wrote because of the risks posed to the well-being of herself and her family if she was associated with the stories. She had recently published both a story about abuse of authority by a local police official and a story about two top members of a local crime organization called The Family. It is suspected that she disappeared as a result of these articles (“María”).

In the weeks and months following the disappearance of María Esther Aguilar Cansimbe, the investigation had gone nowhere. The Committee to Protect Journalists had contacted local authorities to try to encourage the investigation, but nothing ever came from it. According to the Michoacán State Justice Attorney General’s Office, there were numerous reports written, but Aguilar’s family insists that no one got in touch with them, and they claim that her case file was just being passed from office to office (“One Month”). Since 2009, there haven’t been any updates on the investigation. It’s nearly impossible to find unique information about her case, with a multitude of websites repeating the same information about the mystery of her disappearance, with nothing to add since she first vanished. Her articles that were most likely the cause of her disappearance are nowhere to be found on the internet today, or, if they are

available, are untranslated from Spanish. Aguilar was included in Time Magazine’s “10 'Most Urgent' Cases of Threats to Press Freedom” in September of 2020 in order to bring attention to journalists throughout the world who are still missing (TIME).

As a woman who risked her personal well-being to report on corrupt government and high-profile crime organizations, María Esther Aguilar Cansimbe should be remembered. She saw the need to share information with the world, doing what it takes to bring the corrupt to justice. Unfortunately, even though she took steps to protect herself, she still wasn’t able to avoid the consequences that many journalists throughout the world have faced for their bravery. We can only hope that one day something will come of the investigation into her disappearance, so that her family can have the peace of mind in knowing what happened to her.

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On May 4, 2019, Ukrainian journalist Vadym Komarov was attacked. He was found on a central street unconscious with a broken head by a passerby walking in the morning at about 9.30 a.m..(Institute of Mass Information) Vadym Komarov was only 57-years-old when he was brutally assaulted by an unidentified individual in his hometown of Cherkasy, a city in central Ukraine. After being found he was hospitalized and medically induced into a coma for six weeks. Despite this, the injuries were too severe and Vadym passed away in the hospital June 20, 2019 (Martinovic). These, however, are only the circumstantial, undeniable, basic facts of Vadym's untimely death. I would like to shine some more light on this journalist's death, or rather more appropriately said, murder. For Vadym was not simply attacked, and didn't simply die due to "circumstance". He was targeted, deliberately killed, and, like many truth-bearing, outspoken, and honest journalists of the world – silenced.

Vadym was like any man, living his ordinary life with his beloved wife, making money with freelance work on his social media, as well as writing and reporting for the local daily *Dzvin*. Denys Kolesnyk, a colleague of Komarov, spoke about him as being a very kind and loving person. But at work his personality was more fearless and daring, as Kolesnyk stated, he was not afraid to name people in his stories (ctd. in Melkozerova). Another acquaintance of Vadym's, Borysiuk, told the Kyiv Post: "What I liked in him as a journalist was his bite. If he took a topic, he would get to the bottom of it. He was like a track hound when it came to digging and reporting," (qtd. in Melkozerova). Komarov's bravery and brutal honesty were rare attributes for Ukrainian journalism, and as admirable as that may be, they were also a leading cause to his murder. In digging into the truths for his reports, he posed as an inconvenience for those who were in control of local Cherkasy politics. "He raised annoying questions about corruption in Cherkasy, raised important topics that resonated in the society," Tomilenko, head of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, told CPJ. In trying to find a voice of truth for his community and the people of Cherkasy, he "poked his nose" too much into corrupted politicians' scandalous behavior. He became a problem that needed to be "taken care of".

However, being the local "mafia" main pain in the neck was no surprise for Komarov. The Ukrainian journalist had received multiple threats throughout his career, and even survived other attempts on his life in the past. Vitaly Chernukha, chief architect of the Cherkasy city council and one of Komarov's close friends, recalled one of these attempts. "Somebody rang the door, Vadym went to open it. He stuck his head out of the door and saw a man pointing a gun at him. He managed to hide and the bullet hit the wall where his head was a moment earlier" (qtd. in Melkozerova). Another assault the architect shared happened in 2017, when Komarov was shot at in the hall of a residential building. This attack left him with a wounded leg. "The police even gave Vadym a bulletproof vest that time" Chernukha later added (qtd. in Melkozerova). But it's that last

statement that reveals one of the biggest issues in this whole story. Even with these multiple attacks on Komarov's life and open evidence of direct threats, the local authorities did close to nothing in ensuring the journalist's safety. And this negligent behavior has likewise transitioned into the actual investigation of Vadym's death.

In doing my own research, I attempted to find Vadym's Facebook page to inspect his previous works, and get a clearer picture about what he was fighting against. However, according to authority's report, Komarov's family had deleted the journalist's electronic files before police could examine them, on the grounds that they could contain personal images and documents, and other reliable sources of information about what the journalist was working on (CPJ). This only made me more suspicious of the circumstance of this particular murder case and the Ukrainian officials' involvement in it all.

It's been over a year later and authorities still have not claimed and persecuted anyone for the murder of Vadym Komarov. Moreover, they have made little to no progress in bringing justice to the case. [Investigations](#) have stalled and no new suspects have been publicly identified (Martinovic). Worst of all, officials to this day don't confirm or acknowledge that this murder was the result of Komarov's bold journalism. They proceed to entertain different theories, such as unresolved arguments, a robbery, and etc. Yet everyone who was close to Vadym and knew his work unanimously agree, that "the only reason for an assault and subsequent death of Komarov was his journalism." (Tomilenko qtd. in CPJ). Colleges and a number of national organizations have even signed an open letter on May 4, 2020 urging for regional authorities to be more transparent about the investigation. The [letter](#) said it "would allow all of us to believe that the death of our colleague is not another unpunished crime and that the perpetrators will be found and brought to justice" (Martinovic). Even outside of the journalist's home country, this murder story and lack of resolution has raised concerns. European co-rapporteurs and Ukraine monitors Dzhenia Grozdanova (Bulgaria) and Alfred Heer (Switzerland), have requested that local Ukrainian powers ensure that an effective investigation take place. They emphasized that Vadym's professional activity as an investigative journalist reporting on corruption and abuse of power in Cherkassy being directly linked to his [murder](#), makes the case all the more concerning. (Belgium).

But have any of these attempts from both local and abroad journalist associations lead to any progress in bringing justice to Komarov's death? No. Since it's the very same corruption driven authorities that are in play, who are most likely working with those that Vadym was speaking out against. It is suspected that local ties between law enforcement and powerful individuals are involved and makes keeping this case unsolved within their best interests. Unsurprisingly, impunity for the murder of journalists is common in Ukraine. According to IPI's [Death Watch](#), Komarov was one out of eleven victims in

Ukraine killed for their journalism in the last six years (Martinovic). And such a negligent response on authority's part sends out a concerning message to local journalists throughout the country. According to Tomilenko, Ukrainian journalists previously killed have been for the most part all well-known public figures, whereas, "The murder of Komarov was alarming for regional journalists. They realized that living in small communities means that they are even more unprotected than their nationally well-known colleagues...they were afraid of becoming the next victims" (qtd. in Martinovic). In such circumstances and cases, a lack of a response tends to be the loudest response.

Again, I can't say any of this surprises me. Growing up with two Ukrainian parents, my family made regular trips to their home town of Kharkov. As a little kid my entire summers were spent living in small Ukraine towns, playing with local children, shopping at bazars, and experiencing what most Slavic children grow up with. This includes seeing parents and surrounding adults participate in casual bribery with local authorities. This practice being so common and socially accepted that it was only after learning about it in American schools did I realize how immoral it was. I have vivid memories of daycares collecting money from our parents to pay off the 'cop tax' so that the local mafia won't 'touch' the schools. Or how my father, after getting pulled over in traffic, a normal weekly occurrence, would simply open his wallet so that the officer could choose how much hryvna (Ukrainian currency) to take. If this is the kind of behavior even little children as myself were exposed to, I can only imagine what goes down on local political levels.

Corruption in Slavic countries such as Ukraine has become as normalized and accepted as traffic laws or common courtesy. And speaking out against them or pointing out authority's involvement in it all is considered socially wrong and dangerous. Everyone is aware that in doing so, you're putting an unwanted target on your back. Truth seeking journalists get called insane or even stupid for their work, strives, and efforts in

anti-corruption. However, the only words I can find to describe these journalists, such as Vadym Komarov, are "selfless" and "brave". Even though they knew the risks of putting themselves in such a spotlight, they willingly choose to speak for the truth and what's right. And it was this kind of selfless decision in his career that led bold journalist Komarov to his untimely death. I now only hope that the murderer and perpetrator of this awful crime is found, prosecuted, and that justice will be served. But that, unfortunately, is only a small and unrealistic hope.

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For most of us, the sounds of a camera taking pictures evokes memories of family gatherings, graduation, smiling with friends, and other fond events. But for one woman, Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi, the click of the camera was a prelude to her death. In June 2003, while taking pictures related to the student protests in Iran, Kazemi was arrested on a false accusation. While in custody, she was tortured and eventually brutally murdered. Her story is intricate with elements of Iranian government coverup, eventual revelation of the truth with the help of eyewitnesses, and the heartbreaking aftermath of her loss. The more one learns of her and her story, the more anger is felt. Unlike most photojournalists, Kazemi's focus was mainly on the humanitarian effects caused by political world events, especially on women and children. So, what was done in response to her wrongful killing? Sadly, it appears that almost twenty years later, there has been no justice for Zahra Kazemi's death. Both the governments of Iran and Canada have failed to bring the villains who committed this heinous crime to justice.

Zahra Kazemi, who was born in Shiraz, Iran, was often referred to as "Ziba" by her family and close friends ("Kazemi's Mother"). According to an interview with Kazemi's mother, the aspiring photojournalist studied at a Television University after graduating from high school ("Kazemi's Mother"). While there, she married her husband and moved to France with him in 1974 (CJFE). She studied cinema and literature in college (Stylianou), and eventually got her Ph.D. at Sorbonne University ("Kazemi's Mother"). In 1993, Kazemi and her son, Stephan Hachemi, moved to Canada where she worked as a freelance photojournalist (CPJ).

Although she never worked for any specific press company, Kazemi was a contributor to the Montreal magazine *Recto Verso* and the London photo agency *Camera Press* (CPJ). She would travel around to visit poor countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Central America and take photos (Schmidt). Unlike most photojournalists who take pictures of important people and events, Kazemi's work focused on the daily lives of ordinary citizens in these countries, mainly women and children. This was to emphasize how the policies of the repressive regimes affected the citizens' standard of life and to show how it violated their human rights (Schmidt). In 2013, the 10-year anniversary of his mother's death, Stephan Hachemi compiled a collection of Kazemi's work to honor her memory (Talaga). He stated, "She would go and get to know people, get close to them, get intimate access, to try to show people are just like us" (Talaga).

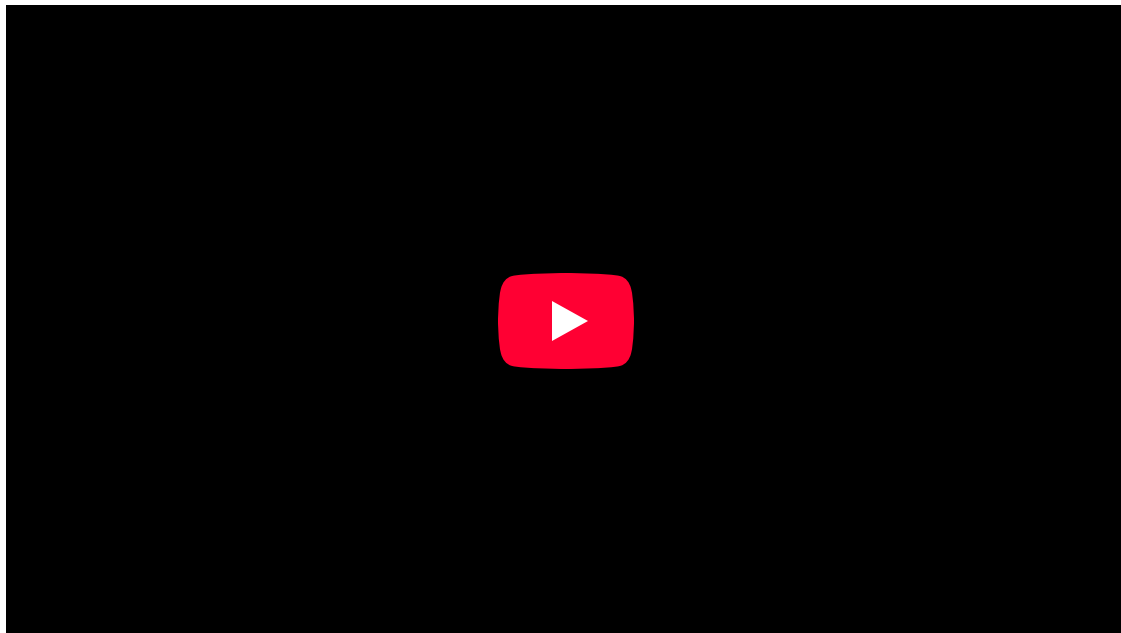
Kazemi's work eventually led her to travel back to her homeland of Iran. In the summer of 2003, the entire country was swamped by student demonstrations (Savyon). These demonstrations were originally peaceful protests opposing the Iranian government's plan to privatize their universities, which would increase tuition fees significantly. However, things soon escalated as the students began expressing their dissatisfaction

with the regime and wanted a more democratic system. This led to them demanding the resignation of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami. As these students were directly and openly opposing a major political figure, the Iranian forces of Basij and Ansar-E Hezbollah started to take action (Savyon). Basij is the paramilitary arm of the Iranian regime, and Ansar-E Hezbollah is an organized group of loyalists to the regime. Both of these groups would break into the university dorms at night to attack students while they were sleeping. They even arrested drivers who honked to show support for the demonstrations (Savyon). Although the regime initially emphasized that the students would not be arrested, Iranian Prosecutor-General Ayatollah Abd Al-Nabi Namazi later came out and stated that over 4000 people had been detained (Savyon).

Since these demonstrations were actively opposing the Iranian regime, the individuals who participated in them were imprisoned in Evin prison, a jail in Tehran notorious for detaining political prisoners. On June 23, Kazemi made her way to the prison to take pictures and interview some of the imprisoned student's families, who were standing outside of the prison (Schmidt). True to her cause, she was more interested in the humanitarian side by showing how the arrests affected the families of the prisoners rather than the purely political side. While photographing the families, security agents from the prison falsely accused her of taking pictures of the prison walls, an action that is considered illegal in Iran. She denied the accusation, however the guards still demanded that she hand over her camera. Since she had been photographing family members of the student prisoners, she was afraid for their fates should the photos fall into the possession of Iranian intelligence (Schmidt). In order to protect those families, she refused to give the agents her camera. This resulted in her arrest (Schmidt).

The guards had approached Kazemi with the claim that she was illegally photographing the Evin Prison walls. Of course, if she had been doing so, the purpose of her arrest would have been legally valid in Iran. But was she actually taking photos as accused? In Kazemi's case, this possibility is not likely for a few different reasons. The first reason centers on her photography work. Please take a look at her photography work in these links and youtube video.

<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/stephan-hachemi-the-son-of-the-late-zahra-kazemi-a-montreal-news-photo/2722096?phrase=stephan%20hachemi&adppopup=true>
<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/ne...&adppopup=true>



back. Infuriated, the woman was transferred to the Evin prison. For a short time, the treatment would be different. Commonly known as the Evin prison, where many human rights activists and journalists in the past have been held. However, as Kazemi was a woman, the prison doctor knew this could be used to justify her abuse, and she was not allowed to take pictures. The National Center for Human Rights (NCHRI) continued to torture the woman for her confession. However, she refused demands, and instead continued her interrogation with the

and abused by the Evin



After viewing, it becomes obvious her work has certain characteristics. Just as an artist has a certain style of painting, Kazemi's pictures all have a common theme: they revolve around ordinary citizens. None of her photos have ever starred a building, landscape, or something mainstream political. Her focus in all the pictures are everyday citizens, especially women and children. It would have been extremely out of character for her to be taking pictures of a prison building. Additionally, the prison guards eventually did gain possession of her camera and the film by the time of her death. If there had been any inkling that she took pictures of the prison wall, the Iranian government would have surely pounced on the fact that she committed a crime in order to justify their actions. Since this topic has never been mentioned by the regime, it's impossible that Kazemi could have photographed the prison walls. The most likely reason the agents arrested her was that they didn't like that a reporter empathized with political prisoners or their families, coupled with the desire to get ahold of the pictures which would reveal the identities of the family members.

As the guards dragged Kazemi inside the prison, they once again demanded she hand over her camera. Once again, she refused. The agent attempted to take it from her by force, a task

prison security guards. What happened to her during this time is a bit unclear. Fortunately, Evin prisoner Behnam Vafaseresht met with the Canadian Embassy to give his account (Petrou). He was imprisoned in January of that year because of his blog posts in support of democracy. He recalls that five months into his imprisonment, while on a hunger strike, he heard the voice of a woman and a man; the woman was screaming, and the man was swearing back at her (Petrou). For two nights, this scene repeated itself, with the woman yelling, "Don't push me! What have I done?" (Petrou) The woman's screaming had transformed into begging and pleading by the third night. Around this time, Vafaseresht was in the hospital ward as his hunger strike had caused him extreme physical harm. While a prison doctor was taking his blood pressure, Vafaseresht saw four men, two of whom held batons, enter the room next door. Vafaseresht recognized one of them to be Mortazavi. The group carried a woman wrapped in a blanket with them (Petrou). When the doctor left for the other room, Vafaseresht overheard an argument among the four men: "Why did you do it?"

"I didn't do anything."

"I didn't hit her that hard." (Petrou)

At some point, Mortazavi became aware of Vafaseresht's presence in the room next door (Petrou). He along with another official began to punch and kick Vafaseresht until he was ordered back to his cell. They then blindfolded him during transit to make sure he didn't see the affair occurring in the other room. However, Vafaseresht could peek out from underneath the blindfold to see a little. He managed to sneak a glance at the blanket-covered woman's files. They were labeled as "Zahra Ziba Kazemi" (Petrou).

On June 27, Kazemi was transferred to the Baghiatollah Hospital under the care of military doctor Shahram Aazam. She lay unconscious on a stretcher and under the guard of an armed soldier (Schmidt). The blanket-covered woman Vafaseresht saw in the prison was now uncovered to be examined by the

horrified doctor. According to Aazam, Kazemi's nose was crushed and surrounded by dried blood, and a large bruise extended from her head to her right ear. The ear itself was swollen and her eardrum had been broken as well (Schmidt). This was most likely the result of the initial strike from the security agent when she first got arrested.

Unfortunately, the signs of torture don't just end there. Kazemi's big toe on her right foot was badly broken, and her feet were bruised with the skin peeling off (Schmidt). Her little and ring finger had been smashed in two separate places. All her fingernails and toenails had been torn off, almost certainly a result from her interrogation torture. Three scratch marks were found on the back of her neck, and yet another bruise extended from her navel to her right thigh (Schmidt). A nurse examined Kazemi's genital area discovered it to be savagely mutilated, which was deduced to be the aftermath of a brutal rape. Furthermore, when Aazam had done a CAT scan, he saw that Kazemi's skull had been fractured twice, which resulted in internal bleeding (Schmidt).

Considering all of the physical harm she had endured, it was sadly no surprise when Kazemi was pronounced braindead the following day (Schmidt). Yet, the hospital had still received orders to keep her on life support. Why? Aazam found the answer to that question when he went to her ward a few days later: her body was looking better. The previously terrible bruises slowly started to heal up (Schmidt). This was Iran's plan of a coverup first came into action. As Aazam stated, "The reason they were keeping her on life support was to reduce the signs of bruising, so that when she went for forensic tests and when the family saw her, she wouldn't look so bad" (Schmidt). On July 3, The Iranian government finally alerted Kazemi's mother, who lived in Shiraz, about the incident. After she had traveled to Tehran to see her daughter, she contacted her grandson Stephan Hachemi, who then notified the Canadian embassy. The Canadian officials were only permitted to see Kazemi through a glass window (Schmidt).

On August 3, 2003, the Toronto Star published an interview with Kazemi's mother, Ezzet. Although the original interview, published in Iranian magazine Yas-e-Nou, was in Farsi, it was translated into English for Canadian readers to understand. According to Kazemi's mother, a woman called to inform her that her daughter was arrested and they wanted her (Ezzet's) house ownership as compensation ("Kazemi's Mother"). When she arrived at Evin Prison, the guards gave her a chador, an open cloak for women, and instructed her to come inside. The guards then gave Ezzet her daughter's purse and camera and told her that she had a brain stroke. Heartbroken, Ezzet asked the guard to give her child's clothing: "I want the dress my child was wearing! She had brown shoes and an Indian dress, a green scarf, black pants, and a brown overcoat. I want everything she was wearing" ("Kazemi's Mother"). The reason she asked for this is unclear; perhaps it's in accord with their culture or religion, or maybe she simply wanted a memory of her daughter.

She then had a back-and-forth with one of the prison guards, with her asking to see her daughter and the guard prohibiting it. The guards brought Ezzet lunch and continued interrogating her ("Kazemi's Mother"), thankfully in a far less violent manner than they did with her daughter.

Half an hour later, the guards finally allowed Ezzet to see her daughter. What she saw before her eyes was any mother's greatest nightmare. Ezzet saw her daughter's eyes shut and her feet wrapped in bandages. A portion of her head was shaved off, and wounds laid underneath her eyes. Just like Dr. Aazam, Kazemi's mother also noticed the large, black bruise on her daughter's thigh and forearm ("Kazemi's Mother"). As she examined her, the guards informed Ezzet that Kazemi was in a coma. In comparison, Kazemi looked slightly better now than initially when Dr. Aazam first saw her. Nevertheless, for a mother to behold the sight of her daughter's beaten body must have been remembered as a mother's greatest terror. Ezzet wanted to know why her daughter's arm was bruised ("Kazemi's Mother"). The prison guard claimed that it was from an injection, but Ezzet retorted back. "Are you kidding me? The injection was on the inside of her elbow. Why is her upper arm bruised?" ("Kazemi's Mother") In the days following, Ezzet would come to the hospital to visit her daughter ("Kazemi's Mother"), until July 11, when Kazemi was taken off life support and died at age 54 (Schmidt).

Now that Kazemi was officially pronounced dead, the Iranian government would have to account for her death. As Aazam stated, "She's a reporter; she was arrested healthy and now she's here smashed and injured all over" (Schmidt). If the true story of her death ever got exposed, the regime would be the center of an international incident. As a result, they desperately tried to cover up her death, starting out by falsely claiming a natural stroke as the cause of her death. In fact, Saeed Mortazavi was quoted stating that Kazemi died due to a stroke (Lancaster). Although it is technically true that she died from internal brain bleeding, her body showed signs of torture leading to a skull fracture. Any third-party that examined Kazemi's body would be able to deduce that her brain hemorrhage was caused by abuse and beatings. In an attempt of preventing that scenario, the Iranian officials forced her mother to agree to have Kazemi's body buried in Iran (Schmidt). This way, the Canadian Embassy wouldn't be able to perform an autopsy on the deceased photojournalist.

Ezzet was initially reluctant and allowed the Canadian officials to have Kazemi be returned to Canada ("Kazemi's Mother"). She later was forced by the Iranian officials into having her daughter's burial in Iran (NCRI). When asked about it in an interview, Ezzet recalls that while she stayed over at a friend's house in Tehran, Iranian agents would come over daily and harass her host in order to persuade her ("Kazemi's Mother"). "I was forced to agree. I was alone with no money and nowhere to go," she said during the interview ("Kazemi's Mother"). Naturally, Kazemi's son strongly disagreed with the burial and

demanding that his mother be returned to Canada. He was well aware of the situation that his grandmother was placed in. The two had regular conversations over the phone, but Hachemi knew that the Iranian government was listening into their conversations (Sallot and Peritz). He was quoted saying, "It has been clear between us, and all the members of the family, that [Ms. Kazemi] won't be buried in the land of the people who murdered her. (Sallot and Peritz)" However, despite his objections, Kazemi's body was still buried on July 23, 2003, in her hometown of Shiraz (NCRI). Ezzet said that the Iranian doctors had performed an autopsy on her daughter's body, without permission. While her body was being washed for the funeral, it apparently bled as a result of the autopsy ("Kazemi's Mother").

The topic of Kazemi's death had inevitably become an international matter of interest. The director of foreign press and media, Mohammad Hoseyn Khoshvaqt, followed Mortazavi's lead and stated that Kazemi died of a stroke to the reporters (Schmidt). He later testified that Mortazavi had threatened him to make that claim (NCRI). Four days later, however, President Khatami contradicted Khoshvaqt's statement by affirming that the photojournalist died from "a brain hemorrhage resulting from beatings (Schmidt)." He most likely caved and told the truth because of the pressure placed on him by the rest of the world, as Kazemi's death became known around the world. On July 13, President Khatami held an inquiry discussing the circumstances of Kazemi's death (Schmidt). Ironically, Mortazavi, the very man who ordered her torture, was also the person put in charge of Kazemi's investigation (Gatehouse). Unfortunately, the inquiry ended less than a week later with no one being held accountable, as the ministry decided that Kazemi had died due to a "fractured skull, brain hemorrhage, and its consequences resulting from a hard object hitting her head or her head hitting a hard object (Schmidt)."

After this pathetic and compromised investigation, Iran went silent in regard to Kazemi's case. It wasn't until July 28, 2003, an entire year later, that this topic was brought back into light. This time, low-level intelligence Reza Aghdam Ahmadi was charged with beating Kazemi to death (Lancaster). After his trial was concluded, the judiciary cleared him of any charges and officially decided that "the death of the late Kazemi was an accident due to a fall in blood pressure resulting from a hunger strike and her fall on the ground while standing" (Schmidt). Just like the investigation conducted a year before, this pathetic trial ended without any justice, and Iran went silent once again. Fortunately, in July of 2005, Nobel Peace Prize-winning lawyer Shirin Ebadi, the head of team representing Kazemi's family, asked to have Kazemi's case reopened as one of first-degree murder (Schmidt). Nevertheless, the judge rejected Ebadi's appeal, and thus officially concluded Iran's investigation into Kazemi's death.

One would expect that since Kazemi was a Canadian citizen, the Canadian government would take action to discover the truth

about her death. In fact, Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada at the time, was quoted saying, "If crimes have been committed, we are demanding of the Iranian government to punish those who committed the crime, and we will push that case" (Sallot and Peritz). In the beginning, the Canadian Embassy tried to get involved with Iran's investigation of Kazemi's death. Unsurprisingly, the Iranian government tried to block them at every turn, despite claiming they would inform the Canadians of any new developments. The regime denied in allowing the Canadian Embassy to assist with Kazemi's forensics, claiming they were, "competent to conduct their own criminal investigation" (Sallot and Peritz).

Naturally, the Iranians conviction to exclude the Canadians from participating in the forensics would pose a challenge to the Canadian government helping bring justice to Kazemi and her family. However, there are other ways besides taking part of the investigation that would provide proof against the Iranian regime. For one, it seemed painfully obvious that Mortazavi was responsible for Kazemi's murder. After all, he was already infamous in Iran for imprisoning, torturing, and oftentimes ordering the murder of reporters (Gatehouse). The fact that he was also the one who ordered Kazemi's arrest and torture, as well as overseeing her death investigation, should have been a red flag that Mortazavi has Kazemi's blood on his hands. There were a couple whistleblowers who could testify to Mortazavi's involvement in Kazemi's murder. Vafaseresht, the person who was in Evin prison at the time of Kazemi's arrest and recognized Mortazavi among the men who orchestrated her death, would be an invaluable witness in a legal case against the Iranian regime. However, other than meeting with him once for his account, the Canadian Embassy has yet to contact him again (Petrou). Dr. Aazam, who has moved to Canada with his family, is openly willing to testify against Mortazavi. Once again, the Canadian government never reached out to him to ask about the Kazemi case since he left Iran (Petrou).

Mortazavi did eventually get placed in prison, but it wasn't by the push of the Canadian government. As a matter of fact, his arrest had nothing to do with Kazemi's case at all. On November 26, 2016, the Iranian government decided he had to spend two years in prison for the death of Mohsen Rouhnamini. Mohsen was arrested in a 2009 demonstration and died from beatings in a detention center ("Butcher"). Was Mohsen Rouhnamini also a journalist? Actually, the answer is no. Unlike Kazemi's death, the Iranian regime took action for Mohsen's death because his father, Abdolhossein Rouhnamini, was an important Iranian politician. Although it took almost eight years for any results, Mortazavi was finally, with much effort from Rouhnamini, sentenced to serve only two years in prison ("Butcher"). Interestingly, even in that case, the Iranian government tried to let Mortazavi off the hook by claiming he was "missing" and couldn't be found after his sentencing. When the Iranian citizens heard this news, they began taping up "wanted posters" of Mortazavi, clearly wanting him to be found and imprisoned. Rouhnamini most likely also wanted the

former chief prosecutor to be sent to jail, as he was found two years later and began serving his sentence in prison on April 21, 2021 ("Butcher").

If even the corrupt Iranian regime could finally bring some form of justice for one of their own men, the Canadian government could surely do more and at the very least hold the Iranians responsible for Kazemi's death. However, instead of pursuing it, the Canadian government had silently dropped Kazemi's case and turned a blind eye. Despite their earlier claims that they would serve justice at any cost, results have yet to be seen. On the 10-year anniversary of her death, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said that Canada has not forgotten about Zahra Kazemi, and stated, "Her memory strengthens our resolve to seek long-awaited justice in her case. It reminds us of all those still languishing as political prisoners in Iranian jails and compels us to keep exerting pressure on the regime in Tehran to take concrete steps to address the egregious state of human rights in Iran and to face the Iranian people's desire for change. (Talaga)" Yet, what actions have the Canadian government taken to seek justice? Earlier this year, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that 10,000 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps would be forever banned from entering Canada (Robertson). Among these individuals are Mortazavi and 20 other Iranian officials. This ban has so far been the most action the Canadian government has taken against Iran, and it still doesn't hold anyone accountable for Kazemi's death. As Stephan Hachemi stated in 2013, "The Iranian government did what they did because they could. They knew the Canadian government would let them do whatever they want. They knew very well they'd still be able to sell their gas and make deals with Canadian companies. They didn't hesitate and they weren't wrong. There were no real consequences" (Talaga). Sadly, this statement has so far remained true.

Today the year is 2022. Almost twenty years have passed since Zahra Kazemi was arrested for a crime she never committed. She was beaten, raped, and murdered for doing nothing other than dare defy an Iranian agent in order to protect innocent families. For twenty years, a mother has been wrongfully robbed of her daughter. For twenty years, a son has been tragically torn from his mother. Most tragically, no one has ever been held accountable for this crime against humanity. Those who orchestrated Kazemi's death have never been convicted of her murder, and the country she had lived in for almost 30 years has done nothing to fight for her justice. It's time for Canada to answer for their lack of action. When will Kazemi's body be returned to Canada in line with the wishes of her family? When will Kazemi's murders finally be prosecuted for her death? Canada, when will justice for Zahra Kazemi finally be served?

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What does real risk look like? Is risk just getting out of your comfort zone, is it putting your life in danger for others, or is it somewhere in between? For the Mexican reporter Julio Valdivia, real risk was giving your life to help inform others. Julio Valdivia gave his life in the line of duty as a reporter for the Mexican news company, El Mundo. Valdivia joined El Mundo in 2014. There he, "was the regional correspondent for the newspaper in Tezonapa" (The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Press, 2021). Julio Valdivia is known today for his heroic reports on crime and safety in Tezonapa and his tragic death at the hands of gang violence.

Julio Valdivia joined as a simple reporter who reported on many things in his life, but what he will be remembered for are his reports on the crime and safety (or lack thereof) in Tezonapa. A report on the area of Tezonapa recently states that, "Tezonapa has seen a significant spike in deadly violence this year," (The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Press, 2021). This spike in violence is what brings Valdivia to this area, as he is sent to report on the gang clashes and oil theft. Additionally this violence is what causes the death of many local sugar cane farmers, which also make their way into reports. Julio Valdivia, "specialized in 'nota roja' journalism, focusing on grisly stories in a state plagued by gang violence" (Woods, 2020). Once again, this demonstrates the risk Julio Valdivia faced to share the story.

Unfortunately this coverage of gangs and violence is what would lead him to his death.

Julio Valdivia was "found murdered and decapitated close to train tracks on Wednesday, September 9," (Ghose, 2020). Reports also suggest that Valdivia had been run over by the train, as his company provided motorcycle that he left on that morning, was found nearby. After the local government took to Twitter about the murder they disprove any theories of the train, as well as no mention of his head being found. Horrified social media users left several comments, one of which being, "If you want to hurt someone you hurt what they love if you want to

send a message you hurt that person if you want to send a warning, you mutilate that person" and "He must have known too much. So sad. The assault (sic) on journalists needs to stop!" (Ghose, 2020)

Unfortunately, there is not much information about Julio Valdivia's death other than what has already been mentioned. There is much mystery still surrounding this case. Things such as, "What gang is responsible for this heinous act?" and "What did he know to make him a target?" still have yet to be answered. Valdivia will be known for his courageous reports on gang violence and their crimes, his drive to risk it all for the story and will be forever mourned. However, to some of us now, Julio Valdivia will be remembered as a man who knew what real risk is.

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00: Front Matter

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One out of three women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime; domestic violence is a topic that should be talked about more often to inform others on how they should proceed when coming in contact with a situation regarding domestic violence. Domestic violence comes in many forms: it can be verbal, emotional, sexual, and financially abusive ("Is yelling at someone domestic violence"). Tucson's police department gets about fifteen thousand calls a year regarding domestic violence, and forty-six deaths a year are related to domestic violence (Schmidt). I myself have witnessed a domestic violence situation with a young couple in their twenties in a local grocery store in my neighborhood, a few years back. The feeling of seeing someone try to take involuntary control of someone vulnerable is definitely a feeling that makes you think about everything that goes on behind their doors at home because he did not feel embarrassed or frightened that people were seeing what he was doing, and during those seconds of it happening in front of your eyes, it is very hard to process what is exactly happening.

If you are ever in a situation where someone, it doesn't matter who it is, or see others in a situation that involves violence do not hesitate to call 911 or the domestic violence hotline. They are available 24 hours 7 days a week @ 800-799-7233. Maybe you are the voice they need to get out of that abusive situation. The benefits of you calling 911 for any related situation will help the person in need but also make you feel like you did something for them, and did not pretend you didn't see anything when you clearly did, and if you do not call you might feel guilty later on and regret you did not call it in. Imagine if you did not try to help that person and the next morning you saw a news report about a death relating to domestic violence. You are going to feel horrible knowing you were able to save someone's life and you did not. It is better to be safe than sorry, in my opinion.

There are books, support groups, and community services locally in almost every neighborhood that will help anyone in need. There are great books that can help anyone in need of insight, and certain books have a great way of describing another person's point of view that will make you think about you or other's situation. Around Tucson there are a few community service centers to help victims of domestic violence get therapy or counseling to help them heal and move on from such a horrific phase in their lives. Emerge-center against domestic violence and our family services are great places to get resources from. Google also has a great number of credible websites dedicated to domestic violence victims all over the nation.

The consequences of having an offense of domestic violence are not taken lightly here in Arizona; violence is not necessarily the

only reason to get an offense. Domestic violence can happen in any of these relationships (marriage or prior marriage, currently or prior dating relationship, lived together now or in the past, child in common, or pregnant, related by blood to defendant or defendant's spouse, related as in-law (e.g., parent in-law, brother/sister in-law), and stepparent or stepchild). There are three types of charges for having an offense of domestic violence: misdemeanor domestic violence charges, felony domestic violence charges, and aggravated domestic violence, which can go up to fifteen years in state prison if convicted more than once. Domestic violence is no joke and should not be taken lightly by anyone. Once again if you are in a situation or see someone being abused, please speak up and call 911 or the emergency hotline for D.V. @ 800-799-7233.

Resources

Domestic violence hotline number available 24 hours 7 days a week that serves as a support group as well @ 800-799-7233.

Resource Book for Domestic Violence victim (Domestic violence: MegaSearch - ebscohost.com)

Scholarly Resource Article for Domestic violence Patriarchy, transgenerational trauma, and passion for change: Vicarious exp...: MegaSearch (ebscohost.com)

A couple of community service centers located in Tucson, Arizona are Home * Emerge(emergecenter.org) and Home - Our Family Services.

These two community centers will have the resource for any D.V. victim to have access to therapy and support groups for domestic violence.

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When you wake up in the morning and look at yourself in the mirror, what do you think of yourself? Is it positive, negative, or somewhere in between? For me, it is usually somewhere in the middle. For over three decades, speaking daily, self-affirmations have become a massive part of people's lives. Have you ever tried it? Affirmations are positive statements you speak to yourself to help you eliminate the negative thoughts that keep coming back. Affirmations are similar to meditating. When I used to think of meditation, I thought of Buddhist meditation. I have learned that you can meditate about anything from self-love to confidence and peace. Any person can try saying affirmations and meditation for different reasons.

I like saying affirmations to myself. "They are positive phrases or statements used to challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts. You may use positive affirmations to motivate yourself, encourage positive changes in your life, or boost your self-esteem."(Moore). I think saying affirmations can be a great way to start your day. It can help you have a positive mindset for the rest of the day. That is only one benefit of saying self-affirmations.

Some affirmations I like to say are "I am confident," "I am enough," "I am strong," "I am kind," and "I am successful." Here are some everyday affirmations that you could try saying to yourself: "Today is a good day," "I am happy," "I am positive and powerful," "I can accomplish all things," "I am growing and becoming better every day."

Many have done research and found that there is science behind saying affirmations. "One of the key psychological theories behind positive affirmations is self-affirmation theory (Steele as qtd. By Moore). So, yes, there are empirical studies based on the idea that we can maintain our sense of self-integrity by telling ourselves (or affirming) what we believe in positive ways " (Moore). Some say that when you say something repeatedly, you start to believe it, and it will eventually become your reality. We all can control our actions and how we react in certain situations. Saying affirmations can help us maintain ourselves and respond in a better, more positive way.

According to the M&L Paper, here are some benefits of saying these positive words to yourself:

- Reduced negative thoughts
- Reduced health-deteriorating stress
- Increased happiness
- Increased gratefulness
- Enhanced physical activity
- Reinforced positive thinking
- Reduced resistance

Affirmations are nothing more than words. If you say positive affirmations often, it will rewire your brain. It can create an image in your brain of what you want to achieve. I love saying positive words to myself. I can project that positivity onto other people, which makes me happier. Everyone is different, but

there is nothing wrong with boosting your and others' confidence and happiness.

Now we know the benefits of affirmations, so let's talk about meditating. I've never tried meditating. It has always seemed strange to me. But, after reading up on some studies, I might consider being more open to it.

"The study, published last month in the journal *Psychiatry Research:Neuroimaging*, suggests that meditating for just 30 minutes a day for eight weeks can increase the density of gray matter in brain regions associated with memory, stress, and empathy" (Marsh). Can meditation increase gray matter in your brain? I guess so. "The gray matter of the hippocampus is often reduced in people who suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder" (Marsh). The hippocampus is located deep in the temporal lobe. The primary role of the hippocampus is associated with learning and memory. If we meditate, we can increase the function of that region in our brains.

Many people meditate for the inner peace and self-awareness it brings them. "Meditation takes you within yourself. It allows you to spend some time with yourself.

When you see life from a bigger perspective, you will craft better plans for a life that is best for you." (Joshi). In addition, it can help you become closer to yourself and create a calming environment for your mental health.

The benefits of meditating are very similar to saying affirmations. Joshi says,

- It increases concentration.
- You learn to live in the present moment, which is often referred to as "mindfulness."
- It reduces stress.
- It can help you fight depression.
- It leads to numerous health benefits.
- Meditation gives you peace and bliss within your own existence.
- It makes you more creative.
- Introspection becomes a habit.

Meditation can allow you to enjoy time with yourself. It is known to clear the mind and free stress. With both saying affirmations and meditation, there is no right or wrong.

That is amazing. It is you by yourself, with no judgment. When we are more confident and happy, we tend to project that onto others, leading to more love and positivity.

I encourage readers to try saying an affirmation a day or meditation for positivity and peace. We can always make a difference. Both meditation and affirmations reduce stress and can improve your mental health tremendously. It results in huge benefits leading to a happier, balanced, and better life.

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Information Guide

Down below I have listed some Tik Tok videos. If you're ready to get started with affirmations and meditation, check out these great Tik Toks!

<https://www.tiktok.com/@iamdougjoine...35421307322942>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@sassyhealthy...14567132152783>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@ainaraalmeid...88111729329104>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@innercrystal...53250417478955>

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Dreamers and DACA - by Humberto Hernandez

America has been referred to as the nation of opportunity since its very beginning, or at least that is what has been tried to be sold to us. Many Americans are not aware of this, but there is a huge problem with 3% of the United States residents, which by the way, is about four times bigger than our military. This 3% are our undocumented citizens, rudely known as “illegal aliens”. Most of these undocumented immigrants brought foreign-born children and toddlers with them; moreover, these children grew up in the United States just like any other American kid with the difference of being undocumented. These children are known as the “DREAMers”. This essay will argue in the defense of DREAMers and DACA and analyze what can be done by the government and its people to protect them.

In 2012, former President Barack Obama created a program that could administratively protect eligible undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States at an early age against deportation and would, essentially, provide work permits and a social security number to pay taxes to the government. This program was named “DACA”, which means “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals”. According to USCIS (n.d.), “on June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of 2 years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible to request work authorization. Deferred action is an exercise of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal action against an individual for a certain period of time. Deferred action does not provide lawful status”. Approximately, around 800,000 DREAMers are protected through DACA.

There is an issue though, not all undocumented immigrants are eligible to receive DACA, furthermore, former DACA recipients could not renew their status because their renewal applications got stuck or lost in the process. According to Rose (2017), “thousands of Dreamers thought they had met the final deadline to renew their DACA status last month. But some of those applications got stuck in the mail”. Many people’s lives rely on DACA, literally. DACA recipients grew up in the United States, most of them barely speak their parent’s native language, and do not know anything about their parents’ home country. As you may know, undocumented immigrants cannot leave the United States because if they do, they will not be able to come back to America. The lack of passports makes it impossible for them to travel outside the United States. DACA provides driver’s licenses to the respective recipients, allowing access to higher education, work, and social activities just like any other citizen. Obviously, they are limited to scholarships and government grants.

For people that do not agree with DACA and DREAMers, these two programs have a strong impact on our economy. An

economy that both Americans and DREAMers build and support. According to Svajlenka & Truong (2021), “nationally, DACA recipients and their households make major economic and fiscal contributions each year. CAP analysis finds that DACA recipient households pay \$6.2 billion in federal taxes and \$3.3 billion in state and local taxes each year. DACA recipients and their households are critical, too, in local economies. After taxes, these households hold \$25.3 billion in spending power. They own 68,000 homes, making \$760 million in mortgage payments and \$2.5 billion in rental payments annually, money that could be in jeopardy if DACA goes away”. When it comes to debating about if preserving DACA is worth the fight, Americans should analyze how the economy would get affected by revoking DACA.

If DACA gets revoked, many Americans will suffer from it. For example, the University of Nebraska Omaha offers “The Dreamer’s Pathway Scholarship” for students pursuing higher education there. Many of the students that are awarded such scholarship study for a degree in education. Therefore, many DREAMers work in many districts across the United States. According to Toppo (2017), “Nationwide, an estimated 20,000 DACA-eligible teachers, many of them possessing key Spanish-language skills that are in high demand, could be plucked from the classroom if the program is phased out”. Clearly, losing teachers could hugely impact American children, and we cannot afford that. Actually, as of right now public schools are short by about 327,000 educators by Gould (2017). If the government stops supporting DACA and DREAMers, our country will feel this tremendous gap right away. The public needs to be informed about this issue, and many fellow citizens have started creating websites and social media in support of DACA to inform the public. For instance, “UnitedWeDream” provides DACA resources to renew petitions.

On September 5, 2017, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program termination was officially announced by the Trump administration. According to Romo (2017), White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said that Trump “wants DACA made permanent as part of comprehensive immigration legislation that would end illegal immigration, prevent visa overstays and create a merit-based system of immigration”. Primarily, what this administration tried to do was to stop potential illegal immigrants, and their children, from coming to the United States with the aspiration of taking advantage of DACA. The Trump administration’s argument was based on the fact that the Obama administration created DACA without any Presidential ability to do so. Basically, immigration laws passed by congress did not give any President the ability to do such a thing, which former President Barack Obama later recognized. Although, according to the National Immigration Law Center (2020), “on June 18, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court

issued a 5-4 decision finding that the Trump administration's termination of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was judicially reviewable, and done in an arbitrary and capricious manner, in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA)". Not all DACA critics are opposed to the program's core principles. Instead, they disagree that Obama unilaterally implemented the program through executive order after becoming irritated with Congress' delay.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that not all illegal immigrants are able to get accepted into DACA. There are certain parameters that have to be met in order to apply, such as "being under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012, having entered the U.S. before turning 16, having continuously resided in the U.S. since June 15, 2017, and have been physically present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012, and at the time of applying to DACA" (Immigrants Rising, n.d.). People that want to help can sign up for updates on the following website: <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/steps-to-apply-for-daca-for-the-first-time/>.

Improving things in our nation will depend on how people support one another. In all the scenarios that are put before us as a community, it is always beneficial to analyze both sides of the same coin. It is never a good idea to cling to a single version of the truth. This paper was written with the intention of getting you to think about undocumented immigrants, their children, and how the government views them, with the purpose of getting you to consider both sides on a topic that has been hotly debated in America for some time. The legal battles have shown the American people that Congress must act right away. Nationwide, immigrants are pushing to establish a route to citizenship for everyone, including DACA recipients and their families.

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There is no denying that there is a drug epidemic in America. Here in Pima County, most of us know someone who is currently using and may even have experienced losing a loved one to an overdose. It hurts to know that someone's life was unnecessarily cut short to drugs. Knowing that they will never live the full life that you thought they would. Knowing that they were struggling with addiction. Knowing that you couldn't help them.

In 2016 there were only 16 Fentanyl deaths in Pima County, by 2020 that number jumped to 207 (PCHD Surveillance Report). Since the Pandemic started in March 2020, there has been an increase in drug overdose across the country. There is not enough data to pinpoint exactly what the cause to that increase is because of many variables, but one correlation is that Local Health Departments had to reallocate resources towards the pandemic. CDC restrictions for Covid-19 also may have played a part by reducing the amount of clients allowed into a treatment or resource center. "Evidenced-based prevention and treatment services are known to improve outcomes for people with substance use disorder, so any changes to their provision could contribute to the worsening outcomes reported since the onset of COVID-19" (Hall).

"Once you feel that rush and high from drugs, all you want to do is get it back. From then on you are just chasing that first high" (Anonymous). Most users will tell you something similar to this. They are "chasing the high". On the journey to chasing that high, real life begins to crumble. Friends and family may even be affected.

I work at the Pima County Public Defender's Office and I have heard friends and families of defendants say how much drugs has changed their loved ones. I have also seen a lot of cases where drugs had influenced other bad behaviors such as burglary, robbery, aggravated assault, and child endangerment and/or abuse. Cases where small children/babies have almost died because they accidentally ingested fentanyl.

The impact of drug addiction is detrimental to our society. We should all be fighting to save our loved ones who are struggling with addiction.

According to a news article, Pima County has been awarded \$48.5 million in settlement from pharmaceutical companies. The money will be paid out over the next 18 years (Potter). Hopefully, this money will help combat the drug epidemic that we are plagued with today.

I would like to see that money go to preventive measures such as youth outreach services and family counseling. According to Howard Samuels, PSY. D., founder of The Hills Treatment Center, treatment should be for the family of an addict not just the addict. Treating someone with a substance abuse problem and then sending them back to the same dysfunctional family that may have enabled or provoked the situation to begin with would most likely set them up for failure. Treating the family as a whole would be ideal for success (Marano).

Rehabs and Treatment Centers

CODAC Health, Recovery and Wellness

380 E. Ft. Lowell Road, Tucson, AZ 85705 | Phone: (520) 202-1786

Buena Vista Drug & Alcohol Recovery Center of Tucson

5151 E Pima St, Tucson, AZ 85712 | Phone: (520) 436-7860

The Haven

107 E Adelaide Dr, Tucson, AZ 85719 | Phone: (520) 623-4590

America's Rehab Campuses Tucson

6944 E Tanque Verde Rd | Phone: (833) 272-7342

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The first step in fixing your diet is to start from scratch. There are many ways to do this but the best way and easiest is to start from zero and work your way up until it fits you. As everyone is genetically different, some subtle diet changes may make a big difference. To do this, you must first do an elimination diet and remove most of your diet.

For the first step protein and fat will be your main source of food and carbs will be your least amount of food. There are many sources of the optimal amount of food should be you should consume in this first step diet, however, Carnivoremd is a credible doctor who has steps on what you should do in detail, and I would personally recommend at least checking his website for the first steps in what would technically be a temporary or non-temporary carnivore/keto diet.

Once you have done that, all there is to do is to wait and see how you feel. Everyone is different and everyone also individually has different goals. Some might be doing this for weight, or autoimmune and a general increase in mood and life. So, it is important to see and analyze how you feel and what is working for you. For example, you can add or remove depending on your activity status or if you are in some sort of sport or activity that requires energy. YOU will have to see what works best for you!

For carbs, make sure you eat non-refined carbs, or you can eat regular carbs if you want. The most important part is to see what works for you! Carbs and sugar can be tricky; however, I would personally recommend not eating added sugar or trans-fat. Anything that is artificially created should not be consumed in my opinion. Sugar from fruits I believe is fine and studies have shown that if you are metabolically healthy it should not be a problem. Metabolically healthy people and unhealthy people are vastly different in data and if you are healthy, you should not extrapolate metabolically unhealthy people to yourself.

Lastly, make sure to add not only nutrients but micronutrients. They are extremely important like most things; however, these always get missed. I would go and get blood work or download an app like chronometer and see if you are getting all your micronutrients. This can make a big impact on mood and energy levels so this would be a vital step to do. Lastly, enjoy your journey, and good luck!

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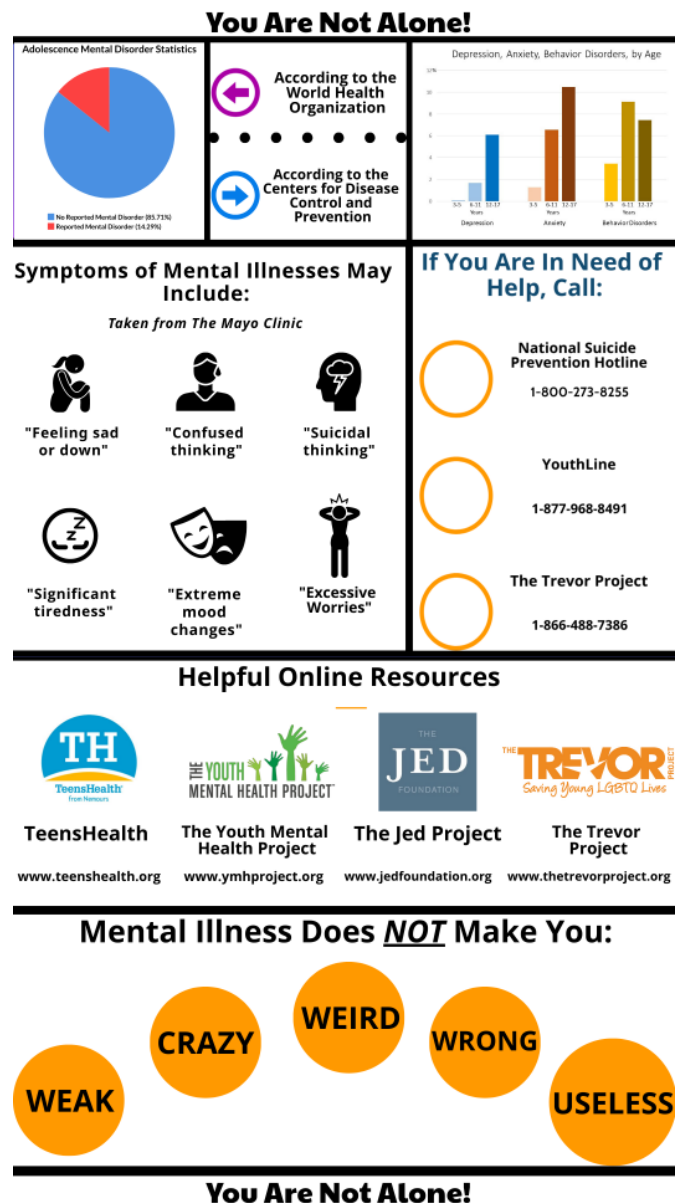
The process of growing up is brimming with twists, turns, bumps, highs, and lows. Throughout your journey from adolescence to young adulthood, it's only natural to feel overwhelmed with stress and intimidation. Although you might feel isolated and filled with doubt, it's critical to understand that **YOU ARE NOT GOING THIS ALONE!**

The National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that “16.5% of U.S. youth aged 6-17 experienced a mental health disorder in 2016 (7.7 million people)” (“Mental Health by the Numbers”), while a 2021 World Health Organization article states the following. “Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 7 (14%) 10-19 year-olds experience mental health conditions” (“Adolescent Mental Health”). Factors such as your developing brain, the increasing difficulty of schoolwork, and the prevalence of social media are the most common sources of stress for young minds. Notable examples include increasing nerves surrounding college acceptance, forming a sense of self-identity, and handling cyberbullying. Regardless of the magnitude or type of issue at hand, it's critical to reach out for help.

Finding the best help resources for mental health issues can be intimidating but choosing the correct form of help can make a world of difference. Popular options include the following.

- Therapy and Counseling
- In-person and Online Support Groups
- Mental Health Crises Hotlines
- Foundations for Vulnerable Communities
- Psychological and Mental Health Organizations

Remember That You Are Never in This Alone



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Behavioral health was the leading cause of death in 2020 specifically for Pima County. This includes death by suicide and self-harm. 225 suicide deaths that same year, ("2021 Pima County"). I know we can change this. Many factors play into this, for example, lack of professional care, substance abuse, and just overall bad mental health.

In 2018, 12.8% and 13% of Arizona and US adults reported having 14 or more days of inferior mental health. Compared to Pima reporting 13.6%. Mental health issues skyrocketed along with physical issues during and after the COVID-19 lockdowns. This was due to the decrease in access to care and help, along with the increase in solitude, loneliness, and substance use. Also in 2018, residents of Pima County had an average of 4.5 mentally unhealthy days per month. Compare this to the United States as a whole reporting at 3.8 days. Lack of services, resources, affordability, and transportation are all huge problems Pima faces. Just over 34% of residents live in rural areas which puts them at a greater risk for overall poor health, geographic isolation, lowered socioeconomic status, and higher rates of health risk behaviors ("2021 Pima County").

Health care workers are spread thin nowadays and can be scarce which is why not only Pima County struggles with access to care but many other places in the world as well. This is very unfortunate and a difficult issue to fix. We need more encouragement to join careers in the health field in addition to better circumstances and wages. The county has also put in place bus systems and trams open to the public to try and help with the transportation issue. Substance abuse was issued as the second most prioritized health concern next to behavioral health. In the year 2020, there were 446 overdose caused deaths, a 32% increase from 2019 in Pima County, which is double the overdose deaths in 2011. Fentanyl and methamphetamines were the most common drugs found in the deceased ("2021 Pima County").

Substance use disorder, (SUD), greatly worsened during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and is directly connected to the decrease in mental health and lack of care available. Help

centers were shut down and are still slowly reopening, this caused a lot of people to be at risk to use and abuse substances. Arizona has pretty high drug using rates and Pima County is no exception. There are too many ways to buy drugs and not enough ways to get the help you need. Pima provides services like rehabilitation centers, homeless shelters, community food banks, prevention coalitions, community centers, and more. Unfortunately the number of drug users greatly outweighs the help that is available. Something needs to be done about drug access in Pima County; more prevention is needed to stop the start of using and abusing substances.

Help can just be one click away. In today's time the internet has to be everyone's best friend because that is where we get most of our information. If you do not have internet access Pima County has a couple of libraries where you can access online and search your needs. There was a ton of good information and resources on the Pima County website itself. The County seems to have worked hard to provide sources and grant access to them but there is always more that could be done. For example we could have more billboards, posters, flyers, and open information to the public. Commercials, radio informationals, just more ways to be aware of the help that is out there without needing to do an internet search. The stigma around mental health needs to end as well. Getting help is nothing to feel embarrassed about and our society shouldn't make people feel that way. Talking about mental health should be more common and less shied away from. It does not have to be so taboo when it could be a daily discussion that possibly saves lives.

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Having a baby can be one of the most important or scariest moments of someone's life. It can cause a lot of happiness, but it can be very tough. A mother or father should be looked after as much as a newborn is, a new phase in someone's life can have an absolute impact on them. If you are not taking care of yourself properly Postpartum depression and The Baby Blues can sneak up on you, both mothers and father can develop these mental illnesses. Postpartum depression can prevent parents from taking care of their children properly. Being aware of depression can help parents receive the treatment that is needed.

There are three different types of postpartum, one being Postpartum depression. Postpartum depression is a mix of physical, emotional, and behavioral changes that happen in some parents. It happens to 15% of parents after childbirth. It can occur a few days to months after baby is born. It can last up to months or even years ("postpartum depression"). There is no cause for PPD, but many things can contribute. For example, hormone's, lack of sleep, anxiety, limited social support, marital conflict, etc. ("dads experience"). PPD can interfere with the ability to take care of your child, it's difficult to take care of yourself when a little human needs everything you can offer, but if a parent does not receive the proper treatment, symptoms can worsen.

The symptoms of postpartum depression include:

- Feeling sad, worried, overwhelmed
- Difficulty with sleeping
- Hard time with sleeping
- Social isolation
- Feeling moody and angry
- Poor eating habits
- Trouble focusing
- Little or no energy

Another type of postpartum is the baby blues. It's considered a mild depression. The baby blues can start immediately after childbirth and can last up from 3-5 days. About 70%-80% of mothers develop the baby blues after childbirth ("baby-blues"). The baby blues usually don't require medical attention unless it develops into PPD.

Symptoms of baby blues include:

- Sudden mood swings
- Crying an unusual amount
- Impatient, rage
- Sad, anxious, lonely

Postpartum Psychosis is the third postpartum, it's much rarer. It affects mothers and can happen within the first six weeks after delivery. It can happen to 1 in 500 to 1,000 new mothers. It may

cause the mother to completely lose touch with reality, have thoughts of harming herself or her child ("facts about postpartum"). The mother experiencing psychosis is experiencing a break from reality, while the mother is experiencing these symptoms everything makes sense to her as in delusions and beliefs. Postpartum psychosis is temporary and is treatable with professional help.

Symptoms of postpartum psychosis include:

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Decreased need to sleep
- Paranoia and suspiciousness
- Rapid mood swings

Taking care of yourself is the best way to prevent PPD. There is no absolute cause for it. There are several different ways that you can take care of yourself as a new parent, many resources are available but very complicated to find. There're many different forms of help available. There're hotlines (moms that have gone through PPD answer the line), support groups, zoom meetings, therapy, etc. It can also be treated with medication and counseling. Although searching for help can be scary, it is worth it. Fear of looking for help can prevent a lot of individuals to seek for the help they're looking for. It is important to remember that you are not alone in your feelings.

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Day cares for children have been a controversial topic for years. For most parents it is a crucial part of the way they can achieve goals, work hard, or simply complete a small task at home. Some opinions state that a parent must choose between not going to work or only working to pay for such a high cost (Rhodes and Lukas, 2016.) In 2020, it was recorded that there were about 23.6 million children between the ages of 0-5 (Duffin, 2022.) With so many families being part of that number with children under the kindergarten age, what options do they have to continue working to provide for their family?

In 2019 I gave birth to my first son, was a single mom, and had just received my esthetician license. I worked very hard to go to class while pregnant and rush to work immediately after and do it all over again the next day. I knew I wanted a better career than serving so I was able to spend time with my son, stay financially stable, and just to have more of a scheduled routine. I lived within walking distance from a daycare in Oregon that I was interested in taking Julian to. It was important to me that I found a job with my new certificate, as I didn't want all the money I spent on student loans, and am still paying off, to have been for nothing. I was given a tour and fell in love and was extremely confident with this establishment. The woman who gave me the tour sat me down and went over pricing and I was blown away.

It would've been \$2,000 a month for Julian to attend 5 full days a week. In the year 2019, I only made \$26,395, take away the \$24,000 it would be just to send my son to daycare so I am able to work, and I would've been left with \$2,395 a year! Trust me, I have gotten the "well why did you have a kid if you can't afford one" judgments over and over but I am hoping to explain it. It is not that I couldn't afford my child, children are quite cheap in my opinion, it is the things they require the most that has been marked up to a price that becomes a dream to reach. Reports show that in 2019 the average cost of daycare across the country was \$9,687 (Vega, 2022.) In all honesty, have you ever been able to save \$9,687 in one year? If so, then a huge congratulations to you, but the majority of people most likely haven't so if it's hard to imagine putting away that kind of money in only a year, can you imagine spending that kind of money on one thing in only a year?

When I was younger my mother was also a single parent. She started with having our roommate, Peggy, watch me during the day, then eventually moved me into daycare. It was such an important thing for her that I was being cared for during the time she needed to work, because not working was absolutely no choice for her. In 2000, we lived in San Diego, my mother made \$2400 a month working for a bank, and paid \$425 monthly for me to attend at the facility I went to. It created a struggle for her but in her own words, "I had no other option, and I needed to work." Once in I was able to attend kindergarten and there was no more fees involved my mom found herself facing another bump in the road. At this time we had moved to

Arizona and she had switched jobs, but this came with a start time of 6:00 am and with school not starting until around 8:00 am what was she to do? Luckily the school I attended had an early morning program called LEAP. It allowed parents to drop their kids off to the school early so they were able to get to work on time.

Due to the price I couldn't afford, I stuck with my serving job and worked nights while I stayed at home with my son during the day. When I moved back to Arizona, in 2020, I didn't have my mom with me and I needed to find daycare to be able to work during the day and be at home at night. Without daycare services I couldn't work what I needed to, and without working I couldn't afford daycare. Being a single mom I didn't have a choice, I needed a job and so I began looking for programs to help. The one I was told about the most was DES, a program through the state to help ease the amount I needed to pay. The way it works is you must provide your gross yearly income and they will determine the amount you pay based off what you make. As COVID restrictions were starting to lift, I finally found a job with my esthetician license. I was able to get the aid I needed and only needed to pay \$140 a month for daycare as the government assistance took care of the rest.

I now have two more kids and am still on the same program. I do have to pay more than the initial \$140 because of the obvious reason I have more children in the daycare, but without it, I wouldn't be able to have gone back to college, or work the amount of shifts I need to provide for my family. Another program I recently learned about is through Pima Community College. I received an email shortly after starting my first semester's classes about a new program that can help with childcare costs and if I didn't qualify for theirs, they could direct me to a list of other programs to help with cost. This specific assistance you do need to be DES certified already, but the copay is either paid for or they provide help with paying for the full amount. There are also scholarships available, that are run by local non-profit organizations and even some state funded pre-kindergartens that can give you a low fee or no fee at all.

Applying for DES daycare assistance can be done in a few ways, online, in person, or over the phone. An application will need to be completed and turned in, personally, I printed it from the website (<https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/dl/CCA-0001A.pdf?time=1670436536629>) and I mailed it in. There are specific locations around Tucson that the application can be taken to as well. It is also an option to call 1-800-867-5808 and speak with someone over the phone to answer the application questions. This way can be extremely time consuming as there have been times I have been on hold for an hour to two hours so make sure you have enough time to complete it this way. Overall I have always felt speaking with someone on the phone is the most productive since you are able to answer any questions that might come up or provide further information if needed and it speeds up the process. To apply through Pima's program, counselors and advisors can assist with providing the

application and answer any questions with what documents need to be given to complete the process for getting approved.

Not only do daycare and preschool programs allow parents the opportunity of going to work, but it helps the children as well. Since my kids have been enrolled in daycare, I have noticed the amount of new knowledge they obtain and things I didn't know they knew. Although it is not completely true that children who attend these programs have a better outcome than the ones who don't (Lowry, n.d.) However, personally, I have noticed that my oldest is very outgoing, polite, smart, and overall has developed skills very early and quickly. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that children who attended a daycare facility showed better cognitive and language development, fewer behavioral problems at the ages of 2-3, and a better understanding of numbers and letters (Lowry, n.d.)

Daycare programs are a great way to help parents carry on with their normal work life or daily tasks. It relieves stress off of us parents and doesn't keep raising the questions in our minds of where will my children go today? Without daycare I wouldn't be at the point in my life of working at my degree and achieving my goal of becoming a nurse so I can better provide for my children. Without the government assistance or the application I sent in through Pima to additionally help with costs, I wouldn't have had the chance to achieve any of this. The best part about sending my sons to daycare, is that they love it, and hearing about their day and what they've learned, seeing the new skills they've gained, is an amazing feeling.

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Nearly all adult citizens in America have their own civic duty to vote, whether that is in presidential, congressional, state, or local elections. Some citizens pick a party and vote for only members of that party, others vote based on ads and campaign information on television or online, and some do not vote. The number of choices in each election can be vast, often leaving voters feeling like it is better not to vote than to sift through all of the information required to make a wise decision. I have interviewed a few different people with different levels of political involvement to understand the challenges they face with voting, and what has helped them, or would help them.

One of my friends is involved with a political activism club at the University of Arizona. This group helps encourage other young people to have an active part in voting. Their main tactics consist of sharing resources on social media that remind students when to vote, where to vote, and important things they need to know. While they do not tell you how to vote, they are Democratic/progressive aligned and inform students about which selections on the ballot would encourage progression in our society. My friend has said that most of the students at the school are interested in politics, but often forget to stay involved. This is why their activism group focuses on pushing students and reminding them to be a part of the political climate because most of the 18-24 demographic at a university would further liberal values if they showed up in higher numbers.

Another friend I spoke to is a voter registration ambassador, and most of the people she interacts with are in an older generation. She says that “the most common problem I run into is stubbornness and unwillingness to listen”. This stubbornness seems to stem from ignorance and lack of education. She has stated that many of those she talks to about receiving at-home ballots are resistant to the idea, simply because of outdated information concerning voter fraud or votes not being counted. Some people in this group also identify strongly with their political party, and may even unknowingly vote against their own personal values just because they want to stay loyal to the party. The ability to open yourself to new information is one of the most important parts of staying educated, and it can be hard to present information to those who do not seek to have a new perspective. This is why a careful approach must be made, in order to have both sides feel that they have an opportunity to open their world view, instead of feeling like they are being persuaded.

Finally, I was able to ask my own mom some questions about this project. She is in her mid-50s and has seen a lot of different political climates throughout her years. She used to be only a Republican voter but recently changed to agreeing almost fully with the Democratic party. I was curious about what education she received that caused her to shift her viewpoint drastically. She told me that when she was younger, her family and almost everyone she knew personally in Arizona were Republican, and it was just the way to be if you wanted to support our country.

She told me, “in the 70s, the man was typically the leader of the household. If he decided we would be raised with those views, there was no getting around it.” She did not really look into it, but blindly chose a party because of peer influence. As she got older and became a mother, she became more interested in politics, knowing that she could make influences that would positively impact my (her child’s) life. These feelings grew stronger during the Trump campaign and presidency, and she felt this party start to shift away from her values of kindness and respect. In her words, she “didn’t want to support a party of bullies” anymore. She is still not overly involved in politics but as the parties had a stronger divide in the mid-2010s, she began to become more inquisitive, and more active in smaller elections, voting on Tucson’s propositions and realizing there was more to voting than the presidency and two parties.

After conducting these interviews, I believe all voters could benefit from more education. “Voter guides can help to reduce inequalities in political knowledge,” (Munzert) which allows more groups to become politically active. I believe your age group has a strong sway on which type of education best suits you. For younger adults and teens, social media posts in quick bites are the best way. This generation is busy and wants to know what they NEED to know, right away. For middle-aged folks, I believe the best form of education is either non-biased shows, documentaries, or internet articles. The education needs to be facts only so that these (usually) level-headed groups can be trusted to use their own judgment. For the elderly, I believe the best way to get them more education is by having in-person conversations. Those who did not grow up with technology can be uncomfortable with it and can fall for propaganda and slander, which can push them further into an extreme viewpoint. Having an in-person talk with a loved one is the best way for this generation to trust new information, and an open discussion can combat the likelihood of stubbornness or doubt.

Information Guide Link - <https://linktr.ee/votered>

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