TEMPO is a student-produced publication that embodies the culture that is Coastal Carolina University through each page.
A note to our readers,

It’s easy to get wrapped up in a title or a role and deceive ourselves about a grande, critical purpose in life, or within a company, a university, a magazine. It’s real easy. It’s also easy to act as if everything that happens is meant to happen and therefore leaves you either completely immobile or dangerously complacent.

However, there’s one remedy for this crippling malaise: the word.

I’ve realized that humanity wouldn’t be anything without our compulsion for recording, for our need to make sure that our voices are heard or amplified. Writing an editor’s note, writing a poem, curating an entire magazine—none of this would be possible if people way before my time decided that speaking truth and bringing forth an idea—no matter how abstract—wasn’t important for our culture’s evolution. Having a tool to communicate trans-generationally is arguably the most valuable asset we have. It’s why I’ve pushed people to open about themselves, about their environment—about their legacy.

I’ve never understood the closeted artist; you’re not an artist until you have an audience. It sounds rough, but we can’t allow people to think that staying in your comfortable boundaries will help anyone—let alone the artist—grow and produce a positive impact. No priority or project is more important that the anthropological process of human development. We need people to be able to look beyond themselves (and not for themselves), so it helps the rest of us realize what we’re all capable of. Being an artist is not just another role, it is the role. And that is why no amount of privileged nihilism will breach these pages, no corruption will dwell within our language, and no flaw will be too great to fix.

That is my word.

– PARAG DESAI
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Haley Ensor is many things: a student, a warrior, a friend, but more importantly she’s a mother. Tempo’s Editor-In-Chief, Parag Desai, sat down with Maryland native, 21-year-old Haley Ensor to shed light and converse on the dichotomies of student-motherhood. Here we talk about driving, socializing our children in public and online, Life’s divisive curveball, and figuring it all out.
WE’RE STUDENTS, RIGHT?

Right.

I THINK THERE’S A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PRESSURE THAT COMES WITH BEING “THE STUDENT” BECAUSE WE’RE AT THIS PIVOTAL STAGE, TRYING TO DEFINE OURSELVES, WHILE WORKING OUR WAY THROUGH THE SYSTEM, BUT OBVIOUSLY IT’S A BIT DIFFERENT FOR YOU.

**She chuckles in agreement.**

Yeah.

COULD YOU EXPLAIN THE PROCESS OF YOUR DAY? DO YOU WAKE UP MAKING SURE YOU HAVE YOUR SCHOOL WORK PREPARED FIRST?

My daughter comes first. I wake up, I get breakfast ready, I get ready for school because I have 8 A.M. classes every day, I go to work after class—like today I get out at 9:50 A.M.—by noon, until close. So, I get home around 10, 10:30 P.M.—sometimes later. Then I do my homework, go to sleep, and do it all over again.

DRIVING, IN MYRTLE BEACH ESPECIALLY, IS SUCH AN ACTIVITY. AS A MOTHER, YOU MUST FIND YOURSELF TRYING TO BE EVERYWHERE AT ALL TIMES?

Luckily, we have a baby-sitter and her Dad stays home, so we don’t have to worry about daycare. It’s a life-saver.

WHAT’S YOUR CHILD’S NAME? I REMEMBER SEEING HER IN CLASS, SHE’S CUTE.

Thank you. It’s Everleigh, she’s two. She goes to a lot of classes with me.

DO YOU THINK SHE’S LEARNING?

I think so! I mean, her speaking skills are above average, so I wonder if it’s because she’s sits in college classes. One day she’ll wake up reciting Shakespeare—and I’ll be like “okay”.

I THINK THERE’S SOMETHING TO BE SAID ABOUT BEING IN A SOCIAL SPACE THAT HELPS CHILDREN A LOT MORE, BECAUSE WHEN SEEING THE FACES OF PEOPLE WHO AREN’T YOUR PARENTS MORE OFTEN THEY DEVELOP AN OVERALL BETTER ATTITUDE.

I agree.

DO YOU GUYS HAVE TIME TO GO OUT?

**She hesitates for a moment to answer.**

Sometimes. On the weekends I take her to the park or the aquarium, but most of the time she’s with her dad. I’ve had to pick up a lot of hours at work lately. My only day off, I think, was Sunday—and I got sick.

So, no.

WHAT MAJOR ARE YOU?

I’m an English major—now.
NOW? WHAT HAPPENED?

I came to school as a Political Science major, but when I found out I was having Evie I switched to something I could do more immediately after school, so teaching—you do the 14-month program and you can teach with a Masters. My plan before was to go straight into law school. So, I kept Political Science as a minor.

DO YOU GET SCARED THAT YOUR PUSHING YOUR DREAMS ASIDE FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR KID? HAVE YOU GOTTEN TO THAT POINT?

No, I would say my dreams have changed. Right now, I don’t have the same dreams I did when I was a freshman. To do what’s best for her is my dream. I don’t think there was ever a moment where I was scared, even when I found out I was having her—it’s the next thing.

THE NEXT THING.

Yeah, the next thing—figure it out from here.

IS ANTICIPATING ‘THE NEXT THING’ SOMETHING YOU WANT TO CONTINUE, OR HAVE YOU JUST GOTTEN USED TO IT?

I think—I think, growing up, most of my life was spent preparing. I took I.B., I took all the advanced courses, I was preparing for college. I hadn’t really thought of anything beyond it—go to grad school, become a lawyer, I work. This is what you do. Life’s kind of shown me that it doesn’t go that way, that’s not how it works.

NOTHING IS SO PICTURESQUE.

There’s a curveball every time.

I THINK ONE THING MY PARENTS PRIORITIZED WAS VIDEO-TAPING AND TAKING PICTURES OF ME WHEN I WAS YOUNG. WE DIDN’T HAVE FACEBOOK BACK THEN, BUT WHEN I SEE PEOPLE I WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL WITH WHO HAVE KIDS NOW, THEY’RE SETTING UP A DIGITAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THEIR LIVES, ARE YOU THE TYPE OF PERSON TO DO THAT?

Oh my god, yes. I take so many videos and pictures, but I’m not a social media person. I always feel weird about who exactly is looking at my pictures. I think I’ve posted one or two pictures in the last year.

DO YOU THINK IT’S BETTER LIKE THAT?

Facebook is great in that the family I don’t see often can see photos of her, but it’s dangerous in the very same way. People can see what you’re doing, what your kid looks like, where you are—tagging your location—it’s just weird to me.

IT REALLY PUTS THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE BECAUSE IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT SAFETY AS FAR AS PROXIMITY; BEING SAFE ON THE INTERNET AND MAKING SURE YOUR CHILD IS PROTECTED IN ALL FACETS OF CONNECTIVITY. IT’S WHAT WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH.

It’s such a jaded perspective of the world. I’m so glad Aunt Susie can see it, but I don’t want Mr. Dude looking at my daughter.
I DON’T FEEL LIKE I’M HAVING KIDS ANY TIME SOON.

Good plan.

IT’S TERRIFYING. IF I HAD A KID RIGHT NOW—IN MY POSITION—I’D BE SCREWED!

Before I found out I was having her I never thought much about having kids. It’s not that I didn’t like them, I just worked with them a lot before I worked at a camp for people with special needs, and I saw how much energy it took—just being on top of people. As soon as I found out I was having her there wasn’t a question in my mind, there was no moment of fear—which I think isn’t completely normal considering I was, what, eighteen? Something within me was like, “Okay, this is fine. We’ll figure it out.” If things go a little bit left of center, you find a new way to make it. And so, I took a year off from school when I found out. I lived up in Maryland—for a combination of things—because I was pregnant, and I was, still am, dealing with some health issues.

**Haley suffers from Long QT syndrome (LQTS), a heart condition that locks the repolarization of the heart after a heartbeat, causing irregularity in the beat and the flow of blood. Complications from the syndrome can result in fainting, hearing loss, and sudden death. LQTS can be inherent at birth or developed later in life. As it is a genetic disorder, Haley worries that she has passed on the condition to her daughter.**

IT SEEMS LIKE THE LAST TWO OR THREE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE YOU’VE DONE SO MUCH CONSIDERING AND THINKING, EVEN AT 21. THE AMOUNT OF CRITICAL THINKING ONE HAS TO DO IN ORDER TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ANOTHER LIFE—IT’S COMMENDABLE.

Well, thank you. It doesn’t feel like that much, honestly. Yes, having a child is more work, but I wouldn’t say—I wouldn’t use the word “hard” or “difficult” or anything like that, it’s just different. There hasn’t been a moment in class where I thought this would be so much easier if I didn’t have a kid, it’s—well—if you look it like that—

IT’S F*CKED UP.

**We laugh in agreement.**

HOW MUCH HAS YOUR STUDENT LIFE HELPED YOU TRANSITION INTO MOTHERHOOD? IS IT TWO SEPARATE WORLDS?

It’s more so two separate worlds. I’m taking an African-American English Language class with Dr. Childs, and we’re studying preconceived notions of the way someone talks. For example, when people say ‘axe’ instead of ‘ask’, it made so much sense. It really made me think about the judgements you make about people. That part will make me a better mom later on whenever Everleigh grows up because I’ll think more critically before making judgements.

She loves books now, she loves letters.
SHE’S A BRIGHT KID.
Yes—but then again—she jumped off her play table and hit her head so—
SHE’S SMART AND SHE’S RAMBUNCTIOUS—PERFECT QUALITIES TO HAVE!
Exactly!
WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE FOOD?
I have no idea.
WHAT’S YOUR DAUGHTER’S FAVORITE FOOD?
Eggs. And gummies.
SO, AT THIS POINT, YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT EVERLEIGH THEN YOU KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF?
Can I say a seasoning? I like Old Bay.
A SEASONING? I GUESS THAT WORKS.
I then proceeded with the final question of the interview.
WHAT IS THE ONE THING THE YOU WANT OTHER STUDENTS TO RECOGNIZE ABOUT BEING A STUDENT MOTHER? ANY ADVICE?
If it’s someone who is just finding out they’re having a kid, I say it’s possible. If it’s just a regular class of kids I say—
**She pauses to think.**
I’m going to sound like a grandmother—I know it. Honestly, think about what you’re doing. Being a parent makes you grow up a lot faster, just be mindful of your actions. I was in a different mental state than all of my peers who were my same age, and it makes me see all the stupid things they do. It’s dangerous, it makes me afraid for them. Be mindful. You’re not indestructible.
CHINA

YINGLIZE SUN    :    LIAONING
春节是我国民间最隆重的传统节日，因为它是正月初一，所以它是农历中一年的开始。每到这时，家人团聚，热烈庆祝，称为“过年”。过年时，家家户户都喜欢写春联，贴春联，用吉祥的语句表达对新的一年的祝愿与期盼，因此，春联就成为了我国节日传统文化的一部分了。早在秦汉以前，中国民间过年就有悬挂桃符的习俗。喜庆的大红春联是对联的一种，在春节时张贴，故名春联。春联的来源其一是桃符。最初人们用以避邪，画门神像木刻成人形挂在门旁桃木上，再简化为在桃木板上题写门神名字。春联的另一来源是春贴，古人立春日多贴“宜春”二字，后渐渐发展为春联，表达了中国劳动人民一种辟邪除灾，迎祥纳福的美好愿望。
FEMINIST GRAFFITI

BASIC
HUMAN
RIGHTS

UNITED
UNITED
FROM THE WINDOWS, TO THE WALLS:

FEMINIST GRAFFITI

BY BRITTANY ALFORD

I can feel tiny beads of sweat congregating around the knuckles of my left hand under the lone, black, cotton-knit glove I wear. My right hand tugs at my hoodie sleeve in an attempt to cover the lonesome mitten, but also to distract myself from the faint ringing in my ears. My backpack bounces against my back to match my brisk stride—we’re in-sync in either one of two emotions; a sheer excitement for the thrill of the night, or more akin to the way my anxious fingers violently rap against the surface of a desk in protest of the test I’m about to be forced into taking. With every step I take, I come closer to my intended canvas, the pea-sized marble cuts through the mixture of paint and propellant, and clangs against the metal chamber, ratting me out at every chance it gets. Or, at least, that’s how it sounds when it’s the only constant noise I have to distract me from my heartbeat echoing in my eardrums. We’re on the same side.

3:28 AM.

I throw my book bag onto the ground, and fumble with the drawstring that my cloth-hand seems to fall short of knowing how to grip. Take a slow breath, you’ve got this. This time isn’t going to be any different from the last, I remind myself as a sort of mantra to calm my nerves, as I scan the surrounding airspace for mechanical spies, just waiting for the moment it can capture my facial features, and plaster a ‘WANTED’ poster across my forehead... face down in the pavement, metallic cuffs locking around my hands, the blue and red lights intermingling with the newly-installed aerosol colors on the building, and the promise of frozen time waiting for me on the other side of wrought iron bars. The message is worth the risk... Focus. Hurry up, the chill of a breeze whispers into my ear, and breathes down my neck.

I position my glove hand flat on the surface, holding my stencil in place.

I shake the can and aim.

* * *
Over thirty-thousand years ago in the French Alps, one of the first cries demanding a way out of the existential dread that accompanies human existence was tattooed on the walls of a cave. The outline of a hand, haloed with a mixture of water and deep crimson ochre (natural clay earth pigment consisting of mostly iron oxide, hematite, and varying amounts of clay and sand) was marked on stone canvas in the Chauvet Cave, serving as one of the earliest existences of graffiti. It is this urge to communicate to future generations in a time before language; the urge to put a lasting message on something permanent, and scream, “Remember I was here.” Even in the ancient Roman Empire we saw this primal need to transcend the thousands of voices clamoring for attention, and carve single individual testimonies into the coliseum walls. Only this time, we saw a new political element being portrayed, suggesting that these beings took stances and sides, and challenged each other, just as rival street-art gangs will claim their turf and dare any passersby-ers to oppose them. The same way that people in modern civilizations will advertise which sports team they live and die for, or which presidential candidate they swear by.

Fast forward to the early 1970s, when the hub of graffiti underwent a shift from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and parts of Boston, to the nearly-bankrupt New York City—where streets became increasingly littered with garbage and crime. However, ‘crime’ is only given its meaning by a society trying to silence its revolutionaries. What makes elaborately soulful street murals, and a simple splash of lettering on the side of a building a crime? Art in any form is seen as a misdemeanor against the law in a society that prides itself on the pristine, white-washed walls void of any actual human expression—a society bent on hiding the voices of individuals, and only posting advertisements in public places for capitalistic gain, even though the majority of all corporate ads we see play off of that same society’s skewed views of beauty standards for women, Euro-centricity, and hyper-masculine preferences.

Thanks to the invention of the spray-paint aerosol can in 1949, these revolutionaries were well-equipped to reclaim their voices from captivity. During this artistic movement, graffiti was a method that demanded attention from politicians, and endorsed the public to engage in provocative thought. Graffiti is—in itself—implicitly political, as it revolts against the gentrification of natural, human urge to defy the blank walls of a city under control. It is a form of artistic action interjecting into a tense political climate by a percentage of people who care enough about a just society enough to risk time in prison or their entire livelihood, all for the slight possibility of opening the eyes of the rest of the population around them.
In our post-postmodern society, there are momentous forces driving the political culture of the graffiti world. The most recent example to look to is the Charleston-native street-artist, Shepard Fairey. His work during Barack Obama’s presidential campaign showcased a crucial grassroots pocket that could only be reached by artistic engagement. Fairey took a picture from one of the presidential candidate’s speeches, transformed it, as well as added a one-word slogan, then plastered posters all around the most influential cities in the country. It was one of the first times Fairey had felt the immediate call to action that he knew he needed to answer. A call for hope. This lone artist’s “vandalism” became the official basis for Obama’s campaign. Some argue that it was this element of design that credited him his victory by way of visual appeal, proving that guerrilla art-fare was the key to breaking down social barriers of power, and the hierarchies standing in the way of his election. Because we saw this positively patriotic image of Obama in the streets, it got more voters talking about the impact he was making on the younger generations, therefore, defeating the power dynamic and advantage that (generally) white republicans are automatically given in media coverage.

Although Fairey is probably one of the most politically influential street artists who actually incited a change several times in elections, he is not the only one spreading political awareness. What had been missing in this previously male-dominated war of words was the historically stunted voice and power of the female. But that’s all about to change. Post-modernist graffiti was a current for second-wave feminism to surf, though there still aren’t as many feminist artists breaking through the male-dominated scene yet. Leading the pack of these taggers are influential women such as Barbara Kruger, who hit the scenes during the 1973 case of Roe v. Wade, protesting anti-abortion laws with a close-up black and white headshot of a woman, half-edited to the negatives, with bold red words reading “Your body is a battleground.” Other trailblazers in feminist graffiti include MissMe, Lady Pink, Shamsia Hassani, and Jilly Ballistic. Graffitiists of the feminist persuasion are tackling the corporate graffiti (of billboards and sales advertisements) aimed at women, telling them who they are, and who they need to be to be considered a woman, and subverting these messages with their posters, spray cans, and everything they can get their hands on. One of Jilly Ballistic’s most recent pieces is the ‘Poon Hawk’ coming to life as a vagina painted over a Game of Thrones promo-ad poster of a hawk in the subway of Manhattan, with the phrase “ALL MEN MUST DIE” across it. Tags and murals, and bombings in every style with one thing in common: a message to the patriarchy. Feminist-graffiti artists are passionately, and actively, expressing the ideas that women are in charge of their bodies, sexualities, rights, and art. These alternations of the corporate world show the true, natural strength of women persisting through the years.
Just as the “#MeToo” and “#TimesUp” movements are providing a bright reckoning for men the workplace, feminist graffiti artists are creating a platform for audiences to witness the deconstruction of the patriarchal, capitalistic, corporate—but very much public—world. Paintings in alleys, street signs, and even in the gutters of cities are popping up, giving messages of equality to every group of marginalized and objectified peoples, and retaliation to systems of society that would elect a leader who openly admits to grabbing women “by the pussy,” and has been proven guilty of sexual assault multiple times. Women have had enough. Since the government won’t help the progress of women’s rights, we have to fight this sociopolitical war ourselves—in the streets of the nation—and demand justice on every blank wall we can find.

* * *

In the nanoseconds between the last shakes of the spray can, when my eyes lock onto the target, my finger rallies all of the nerves from seconds before, then converts them into excitement and precision—right before the ink stains the illegal canvas, all of those thoughts and historical cries for equality, every celebration for the mere blip of human existence echoes in my brain, along with the voices of millions of objectified women throughout the globe screaming at me to pull the valve.

From the windows, to the walls, and the bases of lampposts shining a light on domestic violence, sociopolitical inequality, calling out rape culture, and working to end the feminine stigma as a whole, we can see that these seemingly minor acts of vandalism give way to a social movement that has the potential to change the world around us, or at the least, shift one individual’s way of perceiving. Graffiti unites us, that’s enough of a purpose or reasoning I need.

A thick, red mist mingles with the breeze of the night, and a silhouette of a cat holding a mouse by the tail is tattooed onto the side of a loading dock. ‘DON’T CALL ME’ in bold font painted under it—demanding to be understood.
SPAIN

MIGUEL GUTIERREZ : SEVILLE
Sevilla es la capital de la comunidad autónoma de Andalucía localizada al sur de España. Sevilla destaca por la mezcla de la pintura de Diego Velázquez con sus meninas y la poesía de Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer junto con la literatura de Vicente Aleixandre. Es gastronomía como el salmorejo y belleza como el puente de Triana. Es el olor azahar en primavera paseando por la plaza de España y la Giralda mora con más de 800 años de existencia. Es clima, colorido, su gente y sus festejos como la Feria de Abril que derrocha arte y salero.

En España, se desayuna a las 9 de la mañana, se come a las 3 de la tarde y se cena a las 10 de la noche. A las cuatro de la tarde es la hora de la siesta y a las 6 es la del café. España es historia viva.
I cry in my shower because this is how grief works:
dump gallons of water over my head
then sprinkle in my own salty droplets
all washed down the drain with everyone else’s ennui.
I’m drenched in melting ice caps, empty aquifers,
and fishless seas. They bore hot into my back
and linger in my hair. Puddled at my feet I find:
the US military industrial complex,
every drowned refugee, and bloody oil.
I towel off the local homeless population,
my best friend’s dying father, and the opioid epidemic.
I keep crying long after I am dry. My cat died.
This is private sorrow painted on my cheeks
but I toss it in with the rest of the world’s.
It pours like an avalanche,
I’d be content to live numb.
Why choose a man so tall and strong?
I don’t care much for looking up.
But we praise looking up, thankful for the blessings,
blessings from a man.
Maybe I prefer to praise mother nature,
her tangled flowers hold me with tender vines.
She blooms although men stampede over her
trample her dead.
She blossoms although her flowers are a farm-
surface beauty, that’s what meets the eye.
Mother nature- she is more but no man dares see it.
She is the grit of the sand
and the soul in the clay mud.
She is the air of purity
and the storm of his reckoning.
Somehow I still look up
this man he has a hold on me.
Me, I am more thankful for a woman looking up.
I have the spirit of Mother Nature.
Everybody in the world seems to be talking about Millennials. We seem to be the bottom of the barrel when it comes to everything, these days. We have always heard from the perspective of the big news outlets and our older family members, but what about people like us? I’ve found the voices of actual Millennials so start leveling the world stage. I’ve asked people our age how they feel about being constantly berated and blamed for killing industries and not buying what we are expected to. What They Have To Say Will (probably not) Shock You!

Samantha, a Junior: “Okay, here’s the thing. We aren’t killing any industries. Like this is not on us. We were dealt a shit hand and we are doing the best we can.”

Steven, a Junior: “It’s like borderline racism at this point, old people hate Millennials simply for being Millennials. Even the word has gained a negative connotation.”

Casey, a Senior: “It’s about time we stop feeding big business. Trickledown economics only works when they spend too, but they don’t.”

Sam, a Junior: “Businesses run their course. Everything is temporary. In a society that continues to progress, you can only expect industries to die out. Industries died out in previous generations just like they are in ours. This is not a new concept and not something that only applies to Millennials. It is possible that it is more intensive with Millennials due to us growing up in an even worse economy, and being more cautious about what we can spend our money on in this failing economy. I think people tend to blame Millennials because they think we are these narcissistic elites that think we are too good for everything. The truth is we just don’t have the money to spend on these industries that are no longer of use to us.”

Alex, a Sophomore: “Maybe if we could afford college we could get Applebee’s.”

Alice, a Junior: “I think it’s a classic misdirection tactic. In my opinion, the Millennial generation finds itself with some of the worst options available to any generation with living memory. We were raised under the guise of the American Dream. We were told we could be anything we wanted, but now, due to rampant greed of the Baby Boomers and corruption in politics, many of us are struggling to even do something as simple as buy a house. To complain that we aren’t going to chain restaurants and then to turn around and complain that we’re spending our money on frivolous luxuries is a dichotomy that is created and cultivated for the sole purpose of demoralizing us. I have a dream job that I’d love to pursue, but I feel as if pursuing it would be a waste of time, so instead I’m racking up massive amounts of student debt to do a job that I’m not passionate about but that I feel will allow me to live with a modicum of comfort. Being blamed for killing industries when those industries prey on the lower classes is a disgusting tactic trying to guilt us into buying diamonds or going out to eat at Applebee’s six nights a week is a level of abuse and toxic behavior that I won’t accept from anybody. If the older generations want us to spend money on these ‘dying’ industries, they need to either raise the quality of these items or PAY US MORE, so we don’t feel like it’s a choice between paying our rent or indulging on mid-level restaurant food.”
Juliet, a Junior: “I think that’s ridiculous! It’s societal change, not ruining industry. I hardly see what napkins have to do with that.”

Lamis, a Sophomore: “I’ve only been in America for four years and I already have a lot to say. I mean all the prices of college, houses, cars, food, basic needs have gone up and teenagers can barely afford to breathe. It puts us Millennials in situations where you have to work and study full time and still be drowning. We don’t really have the time or money to be supplying other industries. I’m working and studying full time and I’m still drowning.”

John, a Senior: “Personally I kind of like the blaming, it gives us a sense of power even when we have basically none. We have just started being introduced to politics and Millennials are still blamed. We have basically no real influence but they give the influence to us. We are starting to get jobs and go out into the world. We can’t even hardly contribute to the economy but when we do, we make smarter choices. Big businesses are only getting bigger without increasing their pay or giving back to the workers. There’s a huge distance between 80% of the lower class and the obscenely rich. If we can somehow take anything away from them then that would a step closer to economic equality.”

Sarah, one year graduated with a career: “I don’t look at it as if we’re ruining an industry because that’s the industry’s fault for not appealing to the upcoming generation. I’m sure the generations before us have killed other parts of industries before too.”

Alison, a high school Senior: “I don’t like how they use the term ‘kill’. I believe Millennials have different values than past generations and look past some normal material items. I don’t speak for everyone, but I know and am one who is concerned more with the future of the planet and environment than Applebee’s. Millennials hold different things to importance and shouldn’t be forced onto holding the same things to par as past generations. I mean, past generations are a big part of why so many things are messed up and it’ll be hard to find a job or how much later in life we’ll have to retire. How can we be blamed for petty problems when we want to work to solve the big ones? I know that if my current senior class was old enough to vote in this past election (not that the electoral was even held to any importance) maybe it would’ve been different.”

Athens, a college Senior: “It’s a complicated question and it’s got a complicated answer. It’s a yes and no. The Millennials are more inclined to buy a product that has a story or gives us an experience. Millennials are less likely to go to work and get money to buy basic products that are cookie cutter. We look for adventure and the ‘new’ unique designs and aspects of retail. It’s a combination of retailers not evolving or adapting to the new philosophies of the generation. We also strive for convenience so online shopping is a vastly superior method of shopping.”

Alania, a Junior: “Millennials are the hardest working people I know because we have to be. You can’t be lazy and survive in this fast-paced world. I’ve heard of the avocado toast argument so many times it makes my head spin. That if I as a Millennial stopped eating avocado on my toast all my problems would be solved and I would be able to pay off my student loans. Either the previous generation doesn’t understand simple math or someone has grossly misinformed them about the price of toast. I was in Walmart the other day when I ran into an old family friend. She asked me how college was going and I told her I wanted to study abroad but couldn’t rationalize taking out another loan. She sneered and started on a rant that started with ‘back in my day we paid for college with hard work and didn’t feed off the government.’ She proceeded to tell me how she worked part time and borrowed family money to pay off her $5,000 needed to go to her college in upstate New York. She said ‘students these days just don’t apply themselves’ and I balked at that. The average price for one semester of college today is $33,000. I told her this and she just ignored me. All I do is apply myself to everything. All my friends are working part-time jobs with busy school schedules. The older generational people like this are unfair and cruel. I wish they would just stop it.”

At the end of it all, the people who have been vastly controlling the market are blaming us for failing businesses that are far out of our control. We know this is the case but as much as we want to ignore it or change it, changing the minds of people so set on striking down an entire generation is farfetched. What we can focus our efforts on instead is being ourselves, buying the things we can, and spending money on what we want versus what anyone expects of us.
WE ARE NOT MURDERERS
HUNGARY

SARA BONDAR : BUDAPEST
Budapest mindig az egyik legkedvesebb város lesz számomra. A város nagyon különleges, és kultúrával teli. A Duna folyó választja el a pesti és budai oldalt, különlegesség, hogy a budai oldal dombos, a pesti oldal pedig teljesen sík. Rengeteg történelmi emlékmű található a központban melyeket helyiként is szívesen látogatók, mert sosem lehet meggunni. Nyáron a rengeteg rendezvény zajlik, többek között koncertek, kiállítások, és fesztiválok. Magyarország híres a bor választékáról, minden generáció szívesen látogatja a híres borpincéket, melyek rengeteg helyi borász választékával kínálnak. Számos család saját bort készít – a nagypapám is foglalkozik ezzel és nagyon ügyes benne. A fiatalok nyáron a szép belvárosi parkokban vagy a folyóparton töltik a szabadidejüket. Sok hajó kínál városnéző tűrákat, esténként partikkal és nagyon finom Magyar hagyományos ételválasztékkal – senki sem hagyni ki egy jó gulyást vagy halászlevest. A város talán Karácsonykor a legszebb, a városközpontban Karácsonyi vásár várja a látogatókat forralt borral és kurtóskaláccsal. Budapest híres a történelmi fürdőiről, melyek közül pár egészen 1913-ig megy vissza. Az egyik kedvencem a Rudas gyógyfürdő, ahol egy medence a tetőn található, a városra és a hidakra néző kilátással. Mindenkinek ajánlom, hogy látogassa meg a várost ha teheti. Bárhol lehetek a világon, Budapest mindig is az egyik kedvenc helyem lesz.
TWENTY
VOLUMES
My mother never taught me to accept love
The way you give it.
As candy floss, melting on my tongue
Soft and sweet.
I was taught to accept love
like hand grenades,
quick destruction to all I cherish.
To accept love
Like a hurricane,
Always watching for the eye of the storm.
I was taught that my lips would
one day have a body count,
That my heart would be a cemetery;
A family plot, where I would lay to rest
all the versions of myself
that were never good enough.
The love I was taught to accept is
Always conditional, never wasted
On myself (or my children, apparently)
Her endless mistakes were my textbooks
The bruises on her face
were the history I was doomed to repeat
This is the legacy of love
I was taught to accept.
But we deserve better lessons,
Not shallow graves.
I can still coax flowers to grow
in the cracks of my twisted education.
With your teachings
I can learn to harvest
Love instead of
tragedy.
He goes to the cinema,  
watches two movies  
back to back.  
I figure he’s  
alone.  
Nobody would go with him,  
not even me.  
When I go,  
my boyfriend buys the tickets,  
I buy the Buncha Crunch,  
the popcorn,  
and a coke for us to share.  
We only need one straw.  
And,  
because I’m messy lots of napkins.  
We giggle at the people waiting in  
lines.  
A pinch on my butt,  
leads to a slap on his arm,  
and a kiss  
to let him know, I liked it.  
In my comfort, I  
acknowledge  
the fact is everyone’s alone.  
Even us, with his hand on my back.
A CULT-LIKE PHENOMENON: WHAT THE F*CK IS GOING ON HERE?

BY SIERRA WINDHAM
A CULT-LIKE PHENOMENON:

WHAT THE F*CK IS GOING ON HERE?

BY SIERRA WINDHAM

When we hear the term “cult,” we tend to immediately envision the more extreme examples such as the Mason Family or Jim Jones’ Peoples Temple. Due to these violent and highly publicized cases, cults have become a nationwide source of dark intrigue. However, in attempt to provide a clear definition for cults—once we apply the term to real-world groups—proves quite difficult. When it comes to group ideology, where do we draw the line between contemporary and perverse?

One group that has come under scrutiny for being a “cult” is Gratitude Training, an experimental program founded by Jo Englesson. According to their official site, the goal of Gratitude is to help inspire people to unlock a new appreciation for life and contribute positively to society, while exploring the individual’s values, aspirations, and reactions to certain triggers. These triggers take the form of rhetorical practices, partnered activities, group discussions, personal questioning, and more. The website hints vaguely at what to expect from the training, but no specifics are given; this is the infamous secrecy of Gratitude, and one of the most debated issues concerning the program. A friend of mine, who had completed the training and began volunteering as a Gratitude mentor, constantly badgered me about the program and eventually offered to give to me a free pass that he obtained (the program relies on word-of-mouth sponsorship in order to build its membership). I finally relented in the summer of 2017 and promised to participate in the first installment of the program.

That July, I stayed in an Airbnb in Mooresville, North Carolina, located about ten minutes from one of Gratitude Training stations. What virtually looked like a small, abandoned warehouse on the exterior, the inside consisted of a room with four columns of folding chairs that faced a small stage podium with a microphone. Music blared as members took their seats, it was too loud to speak over, but it continued to blast from dual speakers—the only objects of relative value in the building—until our trainer, Chris, took the mic.

Chris was charismatic and cool, even when lecturing. On that first day, we were encouraged to consider our “Z’s” (Gratitude lingo for “your most fantastic life dream”), and taught that any Z’s will come into fruition if we absolutely commit to those goals. This idea of commitment being the ultimate factor in our personal life outcomes defines much of Gratitude Training’s philosophy: if you didn’t achieve something, you didn’t really want
it in the first place, or weren’t totally committed. Chris used an example from his own past in which he’d refused to take “no” for an answer at a busy airport, and—desperate to get himself and his wife to their designated location—managed to talk, persuade, and work his way into a plane on the verge of taking off. The majority of our group murmured in awe at this show of defiance to Fate.

Tardiness, among other forms of insubordinate acts (such as drinking alcohol after sessions, bringing water into the training room, etc.) was used to demonstrate important moral lessons. One young woman was late to our session. She smiled breathlessly and explained that she’d been held up at her workplace, but Chris did not let her take a seat. He asked if she had any children. She did—a little girl. “If you could ensure that your daughter would have the most amazing life,” he said, “have everything she could ever need, everything laid out for her, and all you had to do for her to have that perfect life is to make it to the sessions on time... you would be on time, wouldn’t you?” When the woman nodded, he again launched into the now-familiar ideology of total commitment. If you could guarantee this for your daughter—if the stakes were raised, if you had to—if, if, if. The implication was clear. Listen to us, for we hold the source of your happiness.

On the second day, we performed our first dyad, which the Gratitude Training website describes as a “one-on-one interaction with another participant.” Because the program discourages revealing information about any of the activities beforehand, I had no idea what to expect; and so, when a man named John turned and asked me to be his partner, I accepted.

Each couple was instructed to face one another. John, a war veteran likely in his early fifties, slid his chair closer until my knees were engulfed by his legs. He sat leaning forward, letting the backs of his knuckles brush my thighs as he talked about his relationship with his parents, his loneliness, his longing for a companion—“ Doesn’t matter what color,” eyes glinting, “or age.” The state of his pants reflected his mood as he came even closer, his face near my collarbone, whispering that I was beautiful; my back arched like an angry cat’s as I shrank away from him, trying to hide my tremor better than his pants hid his bulge.

Despite getting little sleep—training ended after midnight, and I was still shaken when I’d returned to the Airbnb—I arrived early the next day to speak to Chris about my experience with John. My intention was to ensure I wasn’t partnered with John again, and to make an authority figure aware of the incident in case John made any further pursuits. When I described what had happened to me to a volunteer, his eyes widened in shock; he looked genuinely taken aback and assured me that Chris would be out soon to talk to me himself. I waited for a while in the main lobby for Chris to appear, but he never did—instead, the same volunteer emerged from the employee doors and asked me, suddenly professional, to go outside with him once more. The young man then asked if I was sure I had interpreted the situation correctly. He—through Chris’s directions, likely—encouraged me to try to handle the issue myself, as this could potentially be a chance to grow.
Needless to say, I felt completely discouraged from speaking to anyone else about the incident and took it upon myself to avoid John at every cost—though this was easier said than done. During an exercise in which we were to pick “the most attractive person in the room,” John cornered another young woman, and then me, to describe our beauty and innocence and to suggest what we might wear to better ourselves. On another occasion, in the middle of an exercise that required hugging the person before us (or respecting their boundaries, as we each held up a number indicating our willingness to be touched), Chris instructed us to give our partner the same number we’d give our father. At this point, John and I had come face to face; we were almost positioned directly in front of where Chris sat, commanding the room. Before I could move, John had wrapped his arms tightly around me, and the ceremony continued uninterrupted.

* * *

On the morning of the fourth and final day, I was already packed and ready to go home. I hadn’t entirely hated my time in the Gratitude Training—I’d met some truly inspirational people, and had thoroughly enjoyed at least one of the intensive exercises—but between the leaders’ lack of concern for the young women in their program, as well as their methods of execution (yelling, shaming, answering members’ questions with questions pointed back at them), I’d had enough. I missed my family and loved ones, who I’d had no time to talk to in between sessions. I was drained from lack of sleep and staying up late. By this point, I’d finally grown cynical; the only real source of warmth came from the best of the other trainees, whereas the Gratitude employees seemed cold and calculating, only interacting with us to rehearse Gratitude-approved lines of thought—never just to let us speak to one another. The leaders never attempted to relate to us as human beings but instead as herders, steering our small groups through all the steps of a successful “Gratitude conversation” which consisted of the same generic questions: How did you feel after today’s training? What do you want to improve on? At times, members from our small group would begin to bond; we would smile at each other, or engage in conversation, but the leaders would immediately take control of the discussion once more and exhaust their dull questions. We would repeat the process the next day with the same questions, and the sensation resembled sitting in a clinical office rather than having a genuine heart-to-heart. Even as we were encouraged to delve into our emotions, the leaders ensured we stayed on the narrow path they themselves had carved out for these interactions.

Before our graduation, every member was given a paper and clipboard detailing the cost for the next section of the training. Our leaders loomed overhead as people filled their papers out, signing on to Part Two at a discounted rate—just a little less than $1,000. I sat and stared down at my clipboard, uncertain of what to do; everyone around me seemed confident about their desire to move onto the next training session, but I shared no such desire. I decided to simply wait out the process until I could return my paper untouched. Saying “I can’t take any more days off work, and I can’t spring a surprise disappearance on my boyfriend yet again, and I certainly don’t have one thousand dollars to slap down for Part
Two” will get you nowhere in the Gratitude center because if you are completely committed to something, those obstacles will no longer be obstacles. “If you really wanted that money and were committed to getting it and going to Part Two, then you could get it, easily, in say—an hour,” Chris said, snapping his fingers for emphasis; my small-group leaders, unable to sway my mind, had sent me to speak to Chris directly. I’d been protesting signing up for maybe half an hour by this point, and I was frustrated. “I wouldn’t feel comfortable moving on with this group, anyway,” I told him. “Not with that man preying on me and the other younger women in here.”

Chris looked up at me sharply; then, he asked, “What areas of your life do you think are holding you back?”

* * *

A few hours later, at a gas station halfway in-between Mooresville and Conway, I was reunited with my boyfriend. As we climbed into the car, he took my hand and smiled at me. “You seem different,” he said. “More confident.” When I recounted my experience with the training and told him about that last, final test with the clipboards—for that had indeed been a monumental test for me—he squeezed my hand, beaming. I stood up for myself and continued to stand my ground against all of the adults who sought to coerce me, despite being in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people. In the past, I might have played along, acted interested, and written some basic information down so that they could have hounded me later about the money—later, when it would be easier to avoid them. But I didn’t. Instead, I held my resolve.

The Gratitude Training helped me reclaim some of the fire and surety I thought I’d lost, and I returned home feeling like a stronger, renewed version of myself. Still, I refuse to go back. I consider this an act of empowerment, as I’m taking my life back into my hands and unapologetically standing by what I believe. Does that mean the training worked? Maybe to an extent. Anyone considering entering a personal development program like Gratitude should always remember that there is a distinction between encouraging open-mindedness and forcing others to conform to a particular belief, especially when someone in a leadership position indicates that they hold each individual’s future and happiness in their hands. This is where the lines between support groups and cults blur; this is when things start to feel a little sinister.
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

SAIF HAMELI : ABU DHABI
في دولتي العزيزة الإمارات العربية المتحدة هي حسن ال
الأطفال يمارسونها بالفطرة بلا من العادات الأصيلة والتقليدية
القادم ضيافة. الشعب الإماراتي باكمله منشأهنا، إلى الأهلية
الضيافة غرست في دمائنا من أجدادنا، حتى جيلنا الحالي والأجيال
ها منذ بداية الترحيب بدفس وكرم الضيافة. اشيء في المقابل.
فبالعقلية وبقدرته. الضيف في مجتمعنا يتعرف بالتقاليد ويقدر
عزة ومخلصة. عادةً الضيافة تبدأ. الضيف في مجتمعنا يتعر
الخلوى وان كان غريب أو معرفة طويلة، فسنتم ضيافتهم بكل
التعريف، إلى تقديم الوجهة والفوالة، ووجهة تقليدية، و من ثم الشاي و
الخطة أو نصيحة مهما كانت سيتم إرضاءه وإسعاده و بالسلام و
إرشاده. ليشعر. وان كان الضيف بحاجة

ARABIC

TRANSATION IN THE BACK
Your shadow lies across my life.  
Please take it back. It blocks my sun,  
Perhaps because it is stronger.  

The shade of your shadow burns me.  
It blinds me to other beauty.  
I languish in inner darkness.  

Your shadow lies to me, woos me.  
“Come, come,” it sweetly intones, but  
This song is false. It is not yours.  

Sweet, seething sun star, hear my plea.  
The man will not move, but will you?  
Cast his shadow away from me  

And fling my shadow across his path.  
Let him share in my affliction.  
Grant me one gild-edged day. Please, just one.
In Russia, beautiful eyes are said to glisten like coal, 
but I suppose that’s not the same as having charcoal skin.

America places a price on beauty, 
and if you can’t afford it—you’re value is seen as darkened, like coal.

A sixth-grade boy told Nyla 
that she looked like charcoal.

My student cried because she could not see the value 
of her bright, white pearls surrounding, dark chocolate coal.

I am afraid Nyla is sinking 
into an almond sea as a lump of coal.

A girl who is not allowed to rise, to surface, 
limited to be nothing more than what they shape her as—coal.
AN INTERVIEW WITH

EMMA LAQUIDARA

BY KAYLA JESSOP-JACOBY

Emma Laquidara is a 27-year old student-mother with a husband, two kids, and pregnant with one more on the way. Kayla Jessop-Jacoby interviews Emma about the grueling process of waking up and going to sleep on a turbulent schedule. She’s set to graduate in Spring 2019.
HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE? WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES AND AGES?

I am expecting one May 5th, 2018. I have Remy who is five, Fischer will be one in one week, and I am seven and a half- eight months pregnant.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A STUDENT HERE AT COASTAL OR IN GENERAL?

**She laughs.**

A really long time—since 2011. I postponed school for a few years after adopting Remy so that I could work, came back to school in 2015, and then found out I was pregnant, so I only came back for one semester in Fall 2016. Then, I took Spring 2017 off and came back in Fall 2017, found out I was pregnant again, but here I am trekking along for graduation.

WHAT IS YOUR MORNING ROUTINE LIKE WITH GETTING YOUR CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL AND DAYCARE AS WELL AS GETTING YOURSELF READY?

Hell—I wake up around 6:15. Remy is special-needs so he cannot dress himself, so he will need physical help or a lot of verbal cues. He has to be told directions like, “put your arm in,” “put your head in,” “one layer at a time,” or “come back” because he runs away—he’s pretty hyper. So, I have to dress him first, which takes all morning or about 15 minutes maybe 20 if I do it for him because I’m running late—which is often. Then, I’ll probably fix Fischer a bottle—sometimes I’ll fix the bottle first and get him situated and let Remy watch cartoons or something. I have to situate one kid before the other or nothing will get done. Remy gets breakfast first, then I fix Fischer a diaper bag and make sure he has everything he needs for the day, then fix Remy’s lunch and make sure he has everything he needs for the day. Once Remy is done with breakfast and Fischer is ready to go, I send Remy downstairs to get in the car around 7:15 a.m. Sometimes he will stop on the way to play with toys which makes the morning routine even longer. First of all, Remy has to take medicine before doing all that, he gets medicine right before or after breakfast. He goes down with his book-bag and hopefully he is in the car, and I’ll go through and make sure the milk isn’t left out on the counter, the lights are off, and Fischer is set. Remy also goes to both occupational and physical therapy on both Tuesdays and Thursdays so as soon as I get out of class, I’m running back to Garden City, picking him up from school, and running to Socastee to where his therapy.

WHAT OTHER KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU HAVE GETTING THEM TO AND FROM SCHOOL, READY IN THE MORNINGS, AND TAKEN CARE OF IN THE EVENINGS?

**Emma yawns and then follows it with a sigh. She’s drained.**

My husband helps on Tuesdays and Thursdays—sort of. He helps make sure things are done and he will help dress Remy so I don’t have to, but usually it is just me. On Monday, Wednesday, Friday I don’t have to leave until 9:00am so I get up, get Remy dressed, and we will stay at home as late as possible because we don’t have to get up so early those days so probably like 7:00 a.m. unless they wake up early which also happens. On those days, I’ll take Remy to school and then come back to the house (husband stays home with baby) and I’ll get myself ready and drop Fischer off to my Mom’s around 9:00- 9:15 a.m. and then come to class. Then, I get out at 1:50 p.m. and leave straight to pick Remy up from school on time.
SO, IN YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE, WHEN DO YOU FIND TIME TO DO YOUR OWN STUDIES AND PREPARE FOR YOUR DAILY CLASSES?

Usually at night after everyone goes to bed around 9:00 p.m. It is exhausting, but that’s it. Maybe occasionally I can work on something around dinner time, usually it’s too much because my husband gets home late after 12-hour work days, cooks dinner, and then it’s late. Both kids have baths, we both do it together because he will do one kid and I’ll do the other. After that, Remy gets more medicine and vitamins and allergy medicine. Fischer gets antibiotics because he’s been sick for two months. After the bath, Remy goes to bed around 8:00 and then Fischer goes down depending on the day. Sometimes he will go down at 7:30 other times around 8:30. It’s a struggle getting him to sleep - needs bottle, rocking, cuddling.

YOU ARE CURRENTLY PREGNANT, TELL ME ABOUT THE TOLL IT TAKES ON YOU WHEN YOU’RE RUNNING FROM DOCTOR’S APPOINTMENTS IN BETWEEN YOUR CLASS BREAKS, TAKING CARE OF THE CHILDREN, PLUS THE ONE YOU’RE CARRYING, AND THEN TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF IN THE MIX AS WELL.

I feel like I don’t take care of myself. I feel like I hardly ever get to fix my hair or do anything about that because it’s always messy which is fine. I don’t have the time to do it even if I wanted to but it’s exhausting because being pregnant, it’s a long time to shower, be on my feet, style it, and fix it or whatever. If I decided to do makeup, that’s a whole hour on my feet and that’s exhausting. As far as doctor appointments, my doctor is in Conway so it’s a little easier to go in between classes on Tuesday/Thursday because I have such a long break but sometimes I need to go Monday, Wednesday, Friday as well because now I need to go every two weeks since I’m so far along in my pregnancy.

DO YOU FIND YOURSELF MISSING A LOT OF CLASSES OR HAVING ISSUES MAKING THEM ON TIME ON A REGULAR BASIS?

Oh yeah, I struggle the most with the 8:00 am a lot which I thought would be easier but it’s exhausting because there’s so much going on in the morning.

HOW DO PROFESSORS HANDLE YOUR ABSENCES AND TARDIES?

I think to a certain point everyone is very understanding and want to be helpful but there’s also a certain point where they’ve had enough because you’re constantly late. Some are easier than others while some are not.

HAVE YOU FAILED A CLASS DUE TO YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE AS A MOM? OR GOTTEN SO FAR BEHIND THAT YOU THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FAIL?

Yes, I’m very, very behind in my Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes because I’ve only been to one of the 10:00 a.m. classes. But teacher seems lenient and helpful. Professors who are parents tend to be more lenient and understanding.
SO, A LOT OF THE FOCUS OF THIS PIECE IS DEALING WITH THE MENTAL HEALTH ASPECTS OF THIS, WHAT ABOUT MOTHERHOOD AND BEING A FULL-TIME STUDENT SHAKES YOUR CONFIDENCE/MENTAL HEALTH STABILITY?

Well, being pregnant is an obvious struggle and it’s not common either around campus. Being that I’m older already, that’s something that I’m already kind of self-conscious about. Like, why didn’t I do this in the beginning? Here I am married with three kids while everyone else is partying, hanging out, and doing fun things so I that’s something I struggle with but then being obviously pregnant and uncomfortable in desks to the point where I have to stand up because I just can’t sit there anymore because I have to sit in a certain position because the seats are hard and that’s a major struggle for me—just sitting or fitting. Not only that, but campus is massive and parking stinks, so my doctor gave me a handicap pass which is really great—

**She laughs.**

—but currently we’re on the third floor, you know? If I had to walk up the steps, I wouldn’t make it. There are elevators but that’s just one more thing to make me stand out and separates you from the rest. Knowing that my life is so different from other students on campus, it affects me and my mental health because I am so exhausted. I have children and I have had jobs and that’s normal and people understand that and the excuses, but with school there is no excuse or accommodations. You have to prepare for classes on your time and having to find time to do that is beyond overwhelming and teachers don’t want to hear it. Even though teachers have kids, they’re in a different position. I’m sick, I’m pregnant, and I’m exhausted and being pregnant is a whole different level of exhaustion on top of being a parent.

**Emma has been put on antidepressants to help her low mental health and help her deal with the overwhelming day to day activities/stresses.**
Over the last decade, it seems that we are getting hit with a revival wave of fantasy in our 80s and 90s-obsessed world. From The Hobbit to Game of Thrones, and most favorably, Dungeons & Dragons—fantasy is coming into our world in the best ways it can. Dungeons & Dragons, the vivid and classic role playing game is jumping out of every pop-culture outlet you can think of from television, movies, music, charity organizations, celebrities, and even corporate geniuses.

You can catch D&D in E.T., The Simpsons, Futurama, Community, That 70’s Show, Gravity Falls, and of course Stranger Things, who names their villains after famed D&D monsters. Geek & Sundry, the creators of Critical Role on YouTube, film themselves playing their campaigns and have over 1.7 million followers. 826LA is a non-profit organization that gives students ages 6 to 18 the chance to let their writing skills and creativity blossom through activities like D&D.

It appears that more and more people are realizing that playing D&D is an amazing creative outlet, and if you start looking for it, D&D is influencing our culture, and the people who play it might even be sitting next to you in class. As our generation exits grade school and enters the real-world, we are stepping into a realm filled with endless decisions and tough tasks that sometimes seem impossible to overcome. D&D is the mirror that presents a fantastical, magical representation of our own world. Similar to real life, this game is built through personal choices that culminates in the details and decisions in your own narrative. Take risks to build yourself up as the hero or the villain, and you sometimes succeed or sometimes fail, but you always push forward because you have to continue the story.

There is always more than one solution to a problem, and in role playing you learn this very quickly. This subsequently allows your actual skills to sharpen—or at least are brought to mind in your everyday life. Based on your directive and your character’s alignment, your journey will be molded to your choices. The things you can accomplish in this game are infinite. If you can think of it, you can do it. If you are in a fight with a half-demon and want to spit on his face after you miss your punch, please do. Are you interested in saving a princess from a cluster of cultists? Ever wanted to fight a Demogorgan? Now’s your chance. If you’re fighting a giant spider and want to do a backflip off a wall before stabbing it in the back, all you have to do is say that’s what’s going down, make the acrobatics roll, and hope for the best.
Together you guide your heroes through quests, battles, and so much more in order to further the plot of the campaign. From slaying dragons, saving towns, participating in wars, hunting for treasure, and anything you can think of accomplishing, Dungeons & Dragons is a game for everyone. People our age have found a connection here, in the ability to temporarily trade a banal life for a more exciting one.

Instinctively, many think only the nerdiest play it, and while that might be true to an extent, the player base comes down to people who like adventure, immersive gameplay like video games or choose-your-own stories, the creative crowd, and fantasy lovers. I, alone, know upward of thirty people on campus who play Dungeons & Dragons. The people I play with are nerds, yes, we like comics, reading, video games, superhero movies, and have an unrealistic knowledge of a lot of fandoms, but most of all we are creative. We are the thinkers, the adventurers, the ones who want to do some good, or bad, in the world without actually having our head lopped off. The people who make up this campaign are Forbes, the DM (Dungeon Master); me who plays Kára, Greg who plays Parthün, Athens who plays as Aldera, Kyle as Wildhammer and Panther, and Bridget who plays Arthana.

“Roll for initiative,” Forbes says. The sound of six 20-sided die clanking on my kitchen table echo almost in unison. Everyone is on edge as this decides who gets to make the first move in our final boss fight. It’s tense, the fate of the universe rests in our hands.

This is our story.

* * *

Five people stand on the edge of an ash carpet that leads into a room that is emitting an ungodly heat. Kára, the bear-woman barbarian; Parthün, the white dragonborn paladin; Aldera, the amputee high elf sorcerer; Wildhammer, the ranger with a pet panther; and Arthana, the neutral evil elf druid. They have survived through two battles that have now led them here, at the basement level of a mountain hideout inside the Realm of Dragons. They have been faced with stopping the rise of Tiamat, the evil goddess queen of dragons, who partially broke out of her hellish prison to destroy one plane of existence. Now, she and her disciple Cyanwrath plan to officially release her from the prison plane and it has come down to these six adventurers to stop them.

Kára and Parthün kick open the double doors and the ash carpet flies up, hindering everyone’s field of vision. As the dust settles and the gigantic room comes into view, hundreds of cloaked figures all turn toward the group of adventurers, and they see that it is all the same person, the blue dragonborn, Cyanwrath. Then, they blink away in droves until the only figure that remains is the original Cyanwrath. He stands under a massive swirling portal that is absorbing light as a ring of blue lightning encircles it from the four rune inscribed orbs perched atop pillars. He slowly turns around to face the heroes with a wicked grin on his face. “You are too late,” he shouts, “the ritual to summon my dragon queen is already completed.”
The party steps into the room, everyone readied with weapons and shields. Wildhammer shoots an arrow across the hundreds of feet distance between them, by it stops mid-air and shatters before coming close to its target. The rest of party stands with shock, fear, and adrenaline coursing through their veins. Cyanwrath raises a gnarled, clawed finger at Kára and she is lifted off her feet and restrained by an invisible force.

In an instant too quick for Aldera to hold onto her or for Arthana to pull her back, Kára is pulled hundreds of feet away from her friends to hover at the base of the portal’s stage. Wildhammer and Parthün yell after her as the party tries to treadge after her but the room seems endless, their feet not taking them anywhere. Cyanwrath stares at her, his eyes swirling with darkness as the black ooze from the Orcusword he holds crawls up his arm and buries itself under his skin. Kára begins swearing at him and threatening to stop Tiamat from destroying another plane of existence, but as Cyanwrath snaps his fingers, her voice disappears. “I know what you need, Kára,” he hums. “You need retribution.”

From either side of the room the lids of two caskets that nobody saw before fall to the ground and from both tombs rise the mutilated and rotting bodies of fallen companions to the party. Kára is dropped from Cyanwrath’s magical hold and the zombie-like warlocks approach her. Arthana and Wildhammer ready their longbows as Aldera and Parthün run toward the end of the room.

We’ve re-grouped. Now, we’re prepared to fight to the death.

* * *

It’s not as daunting or as gaudy as it may sound. I had always been drawn to the idea of playing D&D because it calls to me, a creative soul who likes fictional worlds and wants to be someone I’m not in order to solve a dilemma. It’s a fun, escapist way to hang out with friends and go on adventures without having to worry about bugs and broken arms. I could never settle with just playing video games because there is always more I want to do, there is always an off-the-wall idea I think will save the day. In D&D, I can do everything I can think of, I can go headfirst into battle without thinking, I can be physically strong and great at lying. It’s a nice break from real-world consequences, though consequences still exist in D&D, they’re just stuck in a fictional world. Being able to be the adventurer of my own story and interact with an exciting realm will forever remain my top interest. If it sounds interesting enough to you, don’t be afraid to find the fantastic hero in you, just as my friends and I have.
GUINEA

THIERNODIALLO : CONARKY
Pour moi la culture Guinéen peut être caractérisée en trois choses la famille, le football, et le bonheur. Être Guinéenne ces trois choses ont eu un effet profond sur ma vie. La Famille est tout. C’est quelque chose que les gens ne tiennent pas pour acquis. Les gens se soutiennent les uns des autres. La famille ne s’arrête pas avec tes frères et sœurs, ça va au-delà de ça. Il ya un proverbe africain qui dit : “il faut un village entier pour élever un enfant” ça pour moi est l’épidémie de la culture Guinéen. Grandir en Guinée comme un enfant nous étions libres, nous n’avions pas de limites en termes d’où nous pouvions aller dans notre quartier. Chaque adulte prenez soin de nous et nous a crié dessus quand on avait besoin d’être crié dessus. Il y a beaucoup de choses qui rassemblent les gens dans ce pays, mais rien de tel que le foot. Dans tous les coins où vous regardez, vous verrez des enfants jouer au foot avec le plus grand sourire sur leur visage. Pendant la coupe d’Afrique de nation chaque soir est remplie avec les gens ayant leurs yeux collés à la télé pour attendre que le Silly National (équipe nationale de foot) leur rendre fiers. Peu importe le résultat d’un match, ils regardent toujours la prochaine parce que c’est le sport qui a apporté le bonheur au pays pendant de nombreuses années. Vive les rough, jaune, vert.
IT'S A MUSIC THING:

PUNK GOES BLACK

BY JAMMIE GRAHAM
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The Ramones, Sex Pistols, Blink-182, Fall Out Boy.

These bands have revolutionized rock music and pop culture to the zenith of the art form, and because of these artists the punk scene is acknowledged and respected. But ask yourself, what do you imagine when punk-rock comes to mind? I think of the stereotypical white guy, wearing all black, or wearing nothing but the sweat dripping down his shirtless back, jumping around in a loud, crowded concert hall screaming obscenities about spaghetti incidents and holidays in Cambodia.

The punk music scene originally was birthed in New York during the 70s. Teens used punk music to express their discomforiting roots and their strong political standpoints going at the time, like the anti-war movements during the Vietnam conflict.

Punk is music that aims to push the boundaries of social norms and focus on emphasizing subjects that many people turn their head to (politics, individualism, fashion, etc.). Through music, they embraced this rage and rebelliousness; speaking against authority while developing a voice for the youth.

The Punk scene had a vast following of white people and were looked at as anarchist in the punk community, since they were so focused on battling the system. The down-side of punk: there was no diversity. While the whole idea of Punk was mainly political, they weren’t making statements for other diversities; such as people of color. This doesn’t mean they were “pro-white”, but they weren’t focused on topics outside of what was affecting them & spoke from different subcultural lives/upbringing than blacks.

Although the punk scene has its proclivities in the freedom of expression and disengaging from the norm, there are people out there—people of color—that don’t inhabit the same facets of despair and anger or rambunctiousness as the lower east-side New Yorkers once did. The Afro Punk scene is one that strives to be heard too. Afro-Punk, an almost unrecognizable platform to the white gaze, provides testimony for the strong rift between punk-rock music and race.

Afro-Punk is what many consider a “DIY scene”, since it was separated from regular punk to a more nuanced movement that could be more fitting for black people. They embraced their ethnicity, different upbringing/styles, and historicized backgrounds, all while expressing their rebellious political and social inspirations through music. The goal was to get down to the roots.

Renegade collations of subversive African-American artists and cultural curators have taken control at the helm and forged a path towards black liberation by adding an ethnic twist to the punk scene. Due to the melanin enriched atmosphere that is infused in the crowds and the art, people of color are taking the
opportunity to amplify their proximate cultures and traditions to run counter to the counter-cultures that are home to predominantly white spaces. The punk aesthetic isn’t just about mosh pits and chain smoking and reading Nietzsche anymore; the nuances that are inherent to the African-American lifestyle establishes obvious cultural significance in world that is becoming increasingly in-tuned to hip-hop, to R&B, to neo-soul, to #BlackLivesMatter.

It is the afro-punk aesthetic—a total embracement of what it means to be black—that bonds music, lifestyle, and social justice together. It’s a culture that isn’t meant to be understood by those that aren’t black or those who can’t get away with tribal print, dreadlocks, and cornrows. Just as much as Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance artists made it their mission to distinguish themselves in literature and poetry, Afro-Punk propagates the same identity-building needed in order to create conversations and build confidence on topics like self-love and the Black consciousness in the 21-st century.

Currently, there are Afro-Punk festivals being celebrated all over the world, yearly. The most recent/popular is called Afro Punk Fest. At Afro-Punk Fest, they handpick artists from diverse locations around the globe (Paris, London, Brooklyn, Johannesburg) to participate in activities and competitions such as the Battle of the Bands, where they are prompted to play against each other for the fans and for fun. The great part about the festivals is that they do exactly what Afro-Punk has been doing for decades: maintaining the cycle of promoting black art. Artists in the Afro-Punk scene that were well known back in the day were experimental and provocative, in the same light that the. The Ramones were, like Bad Brains, National Wake, and Poly Styrene, contributing a lot to the current discourse in Afro-Punk scene. Today, bands like Death Grips showcase the extensive range black artists can achieve in landmark cultural shifts.

Afro-Punk Fest has even gotten so much exposure over the years that other artists, outside of the Afro-Punk scene, have performed in the lineups (SZA, Willow Smith, Dizzee Rascal, etc). Thousands of black people gather together and celebrate their love of the punk music, all while still embracing their ethnic side.

It goes to show, all it takes is for people to go against the grain and do something outside of the nomenclature in order to spark the next quintessential pop culture phenomenon.
NOT WAR
People having their eyes glued to the TV and waiting for their Silly National (Country's soccer team) to make them proud. No matter the outcome of a game they always watch the next one because it's the sport that has brought the country happiness for many years. "Long live the Red, Yellow, and Green."

Guinean culture can be characterized in three things: family, soccer, and happiness. Being from Guinea those three things have had a profound effect on my life. Family is everything. It is something that people do not take for granted. People care for each other and always look out for one another. Family doesn’t just stop with your siblings; it goes beyond that. There are many things that bring people together in this country but nothing like soccer. In every corner you will see kids kicking around a soccer ball with the biggest smile on their face. During the African cup of nation every evening is filled with summer events in the city, including concerts, exhibitions, and festivals. Hungary is very well known for its wine selection, every generation enjoys visiting the wineries that offer numerous local specialties. Many families keep the tradition of making their own wine - my grandpa is actually really good at it. During the summer time people usually spend their free time in the beautiful parks or by the river. There are many river cruises with parties and great traditional Hungarian food selection – no one would want to miss out on the delicious Goulash or the Fisherman's soup. During the Christmas holidays there are Christmas markets in the city center with great mulled wine selection and chimney cake. Budapest is very famous for its historical baths that go back to 1913. One of my favorites is the Rudas Bath, which has a hot tub on the top of the roof with a great view of the river and the unique bridges of the city. If you have the opportunity definitely visit the city, it will always be on of my favorites no matter where I go.

For me Guinean culture can be characterized in three things: family, soccer, and happiness. Being from Guinea those three things have had a profound effect on my life. Family is everything. It is something that people do not take for granted. People care for each other and always look out for one another. Family doesn’t just stop with your siblings; it goes beyond that. There’s an African proverb that says “it takes a whole village to raise a child” that to me is the epidemic of Guinean culture. In my early years growing up in Guinea as a kid we were free, we had no boundaries in terms where we could go in the neighborhood. Every adult took care of us and yelled at us when we needed to be yelled at. There are many things that bring people together in this country but nothing like soccer. In every corner you will see kids kicking around a soccer ball with the biggest smile on their face. During the African cup of nation every evening is filled with people having their eyes glued to the TV and waiting for their Silly National (Country’s soccer team) to make them proud. No matter the outcome of a game they always watch the next one because it’s the sport that has brought the country happiness for many years. "Long live the Red, Yellow, and Green."
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