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A Semester of Diversity

In our society, we deal with many forms of oppression in our daily lives. Unfortunately, different groups of people are more oppressed than others. Many of the stories that I read this semester relate to oppression because it maps out the long history of the issue at hand. It also illustrates that old habits die hard as we can see many years later viewing the same racial inequalities that so many fought for repeat themselves right in front of our very eyes. It seems that every day our society is confronted with another story regarding a similar situation about police officers killing or severely injuring young black males with little to no explanation as to why. Or, even basic women rights now starting to be taken away. Oppression of women is something that has been around for years. Although we have made strides in the advancement of gender equality the facts remain. Women do not make as much money as men for the same position as well as men are more likely to receive a position over a woman with the same credentials. Our society continues to read, see, and hear about the events but many choose to turn away. Others have taken matters into their own hands and became violent as a result. Our society should realize that violence leads to more violence and by refusing to step in and hold people accountable for these actions we are breeding hatred and violence into our society.

To capture just some of the literature that I had the privilege to not only read but experience this semester is overwhelming but an honor. *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates was how the semester was opened. Coates openly talks about the world he has lived, spilling it into ink for all of us to experience. This book is a letter to his son as a way of reaching out to him after yet another unarmed black man is killed while in custody. In doing so, he offers an intimate, bare-bones explanation into what it's like to be a black man in America - the fear, the discrimination, the struggle. James Baldwin in *A Letter to My Nephew* highlights the dynamics of race relations in the United States. He had the courage to speak up on the racism and prejudice that was occurring. Robert Hass poem *A Story about the Body*, and Adrienne Rich poem *Planetarium* write about the stereotypes about gender can cause unequal and unfair treatment because of a person's gender. Later on in the semester, I read *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahim where she speaks for Afghan women who have been silenced and negated by religion and men. These are only a few of the books that hit on the topic of oppression.

This semester taught me how hard people must work if they are out to change what is expected of them. If they have such a goal, the world is usually not expecting much and has probably planted some roadblocks in their way. One way or another they are on their way to breaking the stereotypes. Each book demonstrated the power and the strength that it must take to live in a society in which you feel stuck and lost.

As a first-generation Dominican American, I am the artifact of two cultures joined into one. I have lived in Washington Heights all my life. A neighborhood that majority of the students will be a first-generation college student, that will be applying to college as the first person in their family despite all confusion. Many of the students in Washington Heights are immigrants, sports enthusiasts, band geeks, dancers, leaders, photographers, rappers, poets and so much more. These students are powerful and strong. If you know one thing about Washington Heights and it's youth is that most students aren't expected to go to college especially not a four-year college. From a young age, I believed the same words that were repeatedly told to me. I was convinced that college wasn't for me until the moment that I was accepted into the NYU SPS ACCESS program. Being in the ACCESS program taught me that I am not defined by my shortcomings. I survived, I completed the first year of the ACCESS program and ended up transferring to NYU SPS as an undergrad. I am a Latina who was given the chance to be in college by the sacrifices of my family.

I want to remind every student that is within my reach that it is possible. That there are options out there for you. I know it will be difficult, I know what it is like to have to work possibly two jobs to help your parents with cost and to pay for school. I know what it's like to leave your house at 4:40 am to go to work and not get home till 10 pm to at least 2 to 3 hours of homework. I know what those long days feel like. I need to share this story as a first generation student myself because it is not easy but I promise that it is possible. I know that when all first-generation college student graduate from college, we won't be walking that stage alone. What we will have accomplished isn't what demands a celebration; what our family will have done for us to finally take that walk together, is nothing short of grit and dedication. Underneath every single one of my identifiers that I am so proud of I cannot let the world say that any part of who I am limits me; I cannot say it for myself or for all my family that inspired me to fulfill my dreams

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates is essentially a long letter to his son about what it means to be a black man in America. He does this by sharing his observation, experiences, and research. The history of Americans is what has enforced and taught the oppression of black people within the United States. Police brutality is one of the main reasons that Coates uses. Another reason that Coates uses is that White people have been raised to believe that they are white and that the race in that race is the child of racism and not the father, which is saying that race was made up by people who decided to place a hierarchy on the physical feature of people. Without race, there would be no way to differentiate people because we are humans made up of bones.

Coates in the letter to his son writes "And you know now if you did not know before, that the police department of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body. It does not matter if the destruction is the result of an unfortunate overreaction. It does not

matter if it originates in a misunderstanding.” (9) Race has often been used to organize a society by singling out a group of races and making one group of a race feel like the most powerful. If you think of what a cop is supposed to do you automatically think that it’s about protecting human rights. Except that when it came down towards African American, it did not have any correlation to them. For people who are white, they feel comfortable walking down the streets and knowing that everything would be fine. However, for someone who is black, we have seen in the media how cops would stop them not because they have committed a crime but because they are black. America is not living up to founding ideals of the constitution, and it is contemptible because the Constitution is supposed to make up for what America represents. We, as a country, do not live up to the ideals of "All men are created equal." The U.S disregard this statement, or we would not have the troubles between blacks and whites, whites and Mexicans, whites and, well everyone else. If you are born into a higher-class family, your prospects are far greater than those of one who is born into a lower-class family and statistics have shown this tend to be true. More poor people are found in prisons than those in the middle class or the upper class. They are treated unequally with respect to the laws. The government is corrupt because the law enforcement in America are hurting anyone and everyone who they don’t like which are mostly the minority. It's ridiculous when so many videos have been posted on social media about the brutal beating, and unlawful acts and nothing is being done.

Coates also assures his son that there is hope and life, after all, does not revolve around one thing. While growing up, we are set to believe that school, the streets or even a sport is the magic tool to figure life out. Coates tells his son “There was more out there than I had ever hoped for, and I wanted you to have it. I wanted you to know that the world in its entirety could never be found in the schools, alone, nor on the streets, alone, nor in the trophy” (68). This quote shows how minorities must work hard if they are out to change what is expected of them. If they have such a goal, the world is usually not expecting much and has probably planted some roadblocks in their way.

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Dear Sherley Paulino

When I was born you were there beside me and you have been ever since. I never knew that this relationship would never have an expiration. Growing up we never felt alone, we were with each other during the best memories and the saddest and everything we did, we went through it together. We always said to other people, yes, you can grow up having other siblings, but without having a twin, you can’t even imagine the bond you have with another person. I would love to say that my first memory is having your fetus crush me in the womb for nine months and nab most of the nutrients. I guess dad's saying that "all humans are inherently selfish," must be true. I would also like to say that one of my earliest memories is watching you crawl, walk, speak months before me. It is how you

were able to count to 10 and sing your A, B, C's while I was the quiet one who avoided speaking or walking at all cost. We were putting on a display for the world to see how the Paulino twins had been decided already. You were the dominant twin as I sat back and let you do all the work. These memories though aren't actually my own. These are stories that have been repeatedly told to us by many family members. As I sit here and write this letter to you, I am having a hard time finding my first memory. I am looking at pictures of us together and a lot of these moments that are captured in these pictures I can't remember. As I keep going through these pictures it comes to mind, my first memory was simply being called "la Mellisa, the twins." It was something so simple that sometimes it is easy to overlook it. This is the nearest approximation I can muster of my very first memory. "Mellisa it's time for bed," "Melissa your food is ready," "The twins are here," "Melissa stop fighting." It's kind of peculiar that for a long time we were never acknowledged by our names. Everyone knew us by the tall one or the short one. No one really tried to learn our names. Which is often the first thing people would learn about an individual. Being "short" or "tall" and having a twin sister is more than just a part of who I am or who you are. Having a twin made it harder for us to figure out who we were because everyone compared us. Who's the smartest one? Who's the prettier one? Who gets all the attention in school? We were even asked questions such as who's going to have their first kiss first? It was awkward and I don't think people fully recognized how uncomfortable we always felt. Or maybe they knew that we would never make each other feel bad by responding to those questions. I do believe that since we were always together it did bring out the competitive side out of each other. We pushed each other in the best way I believe. Being a twin has been the impetus to explore our identity and find out who we really are. The best part is always having someone who understands how I feel, how I think and even shares my thoughts and feelings.

Today, I would not be where I am if it wasn't for you. If you didn't tell mom and dad that I wasn't eating for days straight and when I did, I made sure to get those calories burned. If you didn't stand up for me when my eating disorder was killing me, I would be long gone. I've always had the hardest time accepting myself for who I am. In the past, I've tried so hard to change myself, to be someone that naturally I am not. You always asked, "why don't you just eat?", I never gave you the answer though. It was a lot easier said than done especially when you have a voice inside your head keeping you from living. It is a monster that lives inside you but waits to attack you until it finds the right moment: when you are at your weakest. I hated how skinny I was, but I loved the way it made me feel. I loved being numbed and far away with my mind. I loved feeling fragile because I was fragile in the inside. Anorexia represented the way I felt inside. If it

wasn't for you, I would've forgotten how to live in the moment, how to breathe, how to think. I fought my hardest for months, my very hardest not only for me but for all the people around me who love me and who fought with me.

Throughout our twenty years, we have spent most of our time with each other. Those years I've been able to find who I am and what are my interests and yet you happen to know how confused I am with what exactly is it that I want to be. You have been my biggest supporter throughout everything. Being a twin is complex, but I wouldn't change it for the world. We both know that we will have to go our own separate ways and learn how to navigate this world by not having each other by our sides. And finding our own voice instead of two voices as one. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Remember always that you not only have the right to be an individual, you have an obligation to be one." We are a pair of twins and an individual and that is how I always hope to be. We are the antithesis of each other.

James Baldwin used his fame to become one of the most influential leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. He was the voice that was calling America's attention to the racism and prejudice that was in society. In the texts *A Letter to My Nephew* and *A Talk to Teachers*, Baldwin uses his story to call out white people for refusing to acknowledge and recognize the influence of the oppression in America's past. *A Letter to My Nephew* by James Baldwin is a heartfelt letter to his nephew, James. A letter that was full of compassion, love and advises. *A Talk to Teachers*, was a speech given by James Baldwin calling out the teacher of America and the education system as they provide false hope to minorities. Both documents reveal about the American paradox and unveil how America has set up African Americans to fail in this country.

James Baldwin writes a persuasive letter to his nephew. In this letter, Baldwin explains to his nephew that he understands the pain that he has experience as a black man because he has also lived through it. Baldwin has had to learn to accept the reality of America. The most prominent example of an American paradox is the Declaration of Independence which reads "all men are created equal," which was written by Thomas Jefferson, someone who owned slaves. So, the paradox is; how can a person write a document that says everyone is free and yet treat others differently because of their skin color. Baldwin uses perception as a creative way to bring attention to a country that is living a lie. Baldwin writes what he has seen and explains that African Americans have been caught up in a system that is meant to destroy them.

Baldwin advises straight forward; he writes "the really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them, and I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love, for these innocent people have no other hope. They are in effect still trapped in a history which they do not understand, and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it." For so long white people have lived in a world where black people have been considered at

the bottom and to change this ideology is threatening who they are suddenly. This ideology is not something that can be changed overnight and to change somebody ideology like that is an enormous thing. When White people begin to understand this ideology, they will be losing a part of who they are. White people see themselves in opposition to black people, and it is only by seeing black people as lesser being that white people can love themselves. Baldwin writes “You don't be afraid. I said it was intended that you should perish, in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go beyond and behind the white man's definition, by never being allowed to spell your proper name” Baldwin is making sure that his nephew understands that he has to work extraordinarily hard if he is out to change what is expected of them. If he has such a goal, the world is usually not expecting much and has probably planted some roadblocks in his way. Baldwin key idea is about self-worth. He advised his nephew to value himself because while everyone else is knocking him down, he will remember that he is just as human as any other white person.

In *A Talk to Teachers*, James Baldwin is giving a speech in hopes of reaching out to teachers and expressing his concern on the education system for future African American students. Racism at the moment was still a relevant issue in the 1960s, and he is cautiously asking for teachers to give African Americans a better education, as they are taking a big part in the prejudice that is going on. Baldwin starts by talking about how the purpose of a school is to assist these students and help them with the ability to observe the world on their own and allow them to identify options for themselves genuinely. Although, in reality, that is not the truth. It is a conspiracy against minorities as it has been taken away from them. The education system is in fact false hope for minorities. Through this essay, Baldwin addresses the importance of education.

James Baldwin mentions that the education system is a system that contradicts itself. Baldwin writes “The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” He goes on to explain that when we as humans begin to understand the world around us, we begin to know what we are being taught and how we are being taught. Society does not want these students to ask questions, to fully understand the world that they live in. Instead, when they show, they know they have power over them. They choose and pick what should be taught and what point of view and role these students should have in society. Baldwin does not want this for future students. He’s asking teachers with complete empathy to give each student the education that they deserve and allow them to determine the world around them for themselves.

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Patterns

It is 2019 now,
Yet my nephew still faces
White boys mocking the color of his skin

It is 2019 now,
Yet my nephew must work
10 times harder to be seen as equal
I write this to remind him that,
He is a king who
Will go farther than this
Small-minded town filled with
Small-minded people

Robert Hass poem *A Story about the Body*, and Adrienne Rich poem *Planetarium*, reveal how women have always been viewed and stereotyped because of their gender. Although both these poems were short, they were each extremely powerful. The way that each writer wrote their poem was completely different. It was almost as if there was this freedom from grammar and proper writing. The poem *A Story about the Body* by Robert Haas is a poem about a composer who claims he has fallen in love with a painter but later decides he cannot love her because of her physical imperfections. The poem *Planetarium* by Adrienne Rich is dedicated to all women who have been manipulated to think that they cannot do something simply because they are women. *A Story about the Body* by Robert Haas and *Planetarium* by Adrienne Rich portrayed and enabled women to understand the struggle which plagues the female gender in finding their true identity and purpose in a male-dominated society. *A Story about the Body* by Robert Haas is an example of a prose poem. Robert Haas tells a story about a young composer who is captivated by a Japanese painter. In this poem, narrative writing is used to convey the story to the audience. With a narrator voice being used it allows the reader to look at the situation from their viewpoint. In the start of the poem, there is a use of romantic language. “He loved her work, and her work was like the way she moves her body, used her hands, looked at him directly when she made amused or considered answers to his questions” (Hass). At first, the composer comes across as genuine but shows his true intentions when the woman reveals that she doesn't have breast. This young composer may be a little bit too shallow to follow through with his apparent lust or love for the Japanese painter because she had had a double mastectomy. Symbolism was used twice to demonstrate how the composer viewed her body and once again by how disappointed he was when he found out the truth about her physical appearance. He wasn't able to get over this fact and therefore at the end; she gives him an unusual gift. The composer loved her only for her body; he loved her for things that he could see and observe in the outside. The tone of this poem shifts from romantic to emotional and unsettling. The gift to the composer by the Japanese painter is a bowl which was placed on his porch that was full of rose petal, but underneath the rose petals, it's was full of bees. The end of this poem opens up to many possible interpretations of what it may symbolize. The bowl, the petals, and the bees have a great significance and message. The bowl represents the body, while the petals represent

external beauty, the bees represent the internal ugliness, the pain, the truth of a person, the agony, the highs, and the lows. This sends out a message that a woman is more than a body. Women have more to offer than just their skin. They have a story, a history that makes them more than surface. Beauty is not what you see as there is a lot more when it comes to being beautiful. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote *Planetarium* a poem that addresses where females stand through the lens of astronomy. This poem is free verse. It had no apparent structure or rhythm. Apart from the obvious allusions to myths and the comparisons between the speaker, the astronomer, and pretty much all women, the spacing should also be acknowledged as it illustrates a dramatic pause in thought, hesitations, or quick decisions. This is to demonstrate to people that a human being wrote it. Rich is writing this poem with the notion of Caroline Herschel in her mind. She was someone who discovered eight comets. But Herschel is also someone who wasn't fully recognized for the work and the discoveries that she has done. Rich starts her poem by saying 'A woman in the shape of a monster' and 'a monster in the shape of a woman.' Women have constantly been oppressed not only by men but by society. Women have been kept from reaching their fullest potential because it is not the norm for women to be intellectuals. Women are often expected to stay home and take care of the family. Rich ends her poem by saying 'I am an instrument in shape, of a woman trying to translate pulsations, into images for the relief of the body, and the reconstruction of the mind.'" Rich is saying that a woman's body is like an instrument. Instruments can all have different purposes as women each have their purpose in life. Women should have the freedom to decide for themselves what they want to do and be supported by all means. The mindset of women being labeled merely because they are women has to change. *Planetarium* brings consciousness to the attempts of women in fields of study that are commonly influenced by men. Rich wants people to have an open mind to the idea that women can have a dominant role in society. Adrienne Rich uses this poem to reveal to people her perspective on the "glass ceiling" that has kept multiple women from succeeding in fields like astronomy. Adrienne Rich hopes to inspire more women to disregard men and to follow their dreams because that can do everything, and more than men can do. In conclusion, Robert Hass poem *A Story about the Body*, and Adrienne Rich poem *Planetarium* has influence females to stand up for who they are despite what others may think of them. *A Story about the Body*, by Robert Hass delivers a powerful message through the story of a composer who had falsely fallen in love with a Japanese painter. We do not read a poem about love and growth. Instead, we read a poem about a strong female who is proving that although she is judged by the way she looks she is more than her looks. On the other hand, *Planetarium*, by Adrienne Rich is a poem about empowering females to go out and achieve what they desire.

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Ineffable

This pain isn't one single moment that begins and then passes. This pain is perpetual and as fluid as an ocean's waves. It comes and goes without indication,

crashing down without warning, leaving me empty questioning when the following wave will strike. The waves are random: a certain song, the positioning of the moon, a picture of you, anything could trigger my eyes to widen with sadness and fill with tears. There's something in my gut that strains toward you every time I see a picture of you. But lately, instead of finding a place in your arms, I am smashed against glass trying to hug you. The slivers of my pain stick to the scars on my skin. Ever since that day, colors and sounds have become dull and waking up without the sun is miserable. It has been four months and three days since the passing of my mother, but my pain is still the same as the day my father said "Se no fue, Shabelly," with tears in his eyes.

Nawal El Saadawi is a leading Egyptian feminist, doctor and an activist writer on Arab women's problems, however, *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* is not a novel about her life. It's a novel about a woman who was forced to grow up in a conformist Egyptian family, raised to identify subordinate to all males. The protagonist detects and perceives discrimination as a woman in Egypt from a very young age. Although, she was not one to accept authority without question. She endeavors to confront the standard society she has been imposed to grow up in. Through the field of medicine, she strives to search for equality for herself and fight against oppression. She faces discrimination in school but still becomes a doctor. However, she discovers that being a doctor is not everything she wanted.

El Saadawi's literature is authentic and inspiring and gives an insight into the lives of women in other cultures and the various adversities they face. Nawal El Saadawi, in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, tells a story about the upbringing of women in Egypt who were taught to feel ashamed and inferior. El Saadawi writes "I hated being a female. I felt as if I was in chains -- chains forged from my own blood tying me to the bed so that I couldn't run and jump, chains produced by the cells of my own body, chains of shame and humiliation" (12) Women have always been compared to men. There have been certain stereotypes, and there still are certain stereotypes that constrain women. It is something that has been socially constructed throughout history. Being born a man will automatically give a person more chances in life than being a woman. *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* is the story of an Egyptian girl planning to become a doctor. Although, there is a different perception that she must be married and be a mother. The protagonist believed differently. If a woman or anyone alone doesn't work or doesn't have some education or abilities, they would continue to feel inferior to men, and that's exactly why they have been taken away from power-playing. Women are seen to be fragile, as well as docile so they weren't seen strong enough to go to work. Women themselves oppressed themselves because they knew nothing else. Women are conditioned to accept that they are physically weaker and therefore fall victim to the reliance of the stronger opposite sex. There is still a lack of advocacy for the females in Egypt. By telling this story, El Saadawi is bringing light to the power women have been forced to deem their light on. There is a great misrepresentation of

women in general. Even in the Western, females are told they have to act a certain way or dress a certain way. It's baffling how women are still closed out of making decisions for themselves.

Nawal El Saadawi in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* demonstrates the damage social norms can do to someone's confidence. Growing up, she didn't love herself for who she was. By becoming a doctor, it gave her the opportunity to find the confidence that she needed as a woman in a society that is continuously knocking her down. She was proving that women can do whatever they want if they have the determination and grit to go after what they want. El Saadawi later talks about how they taught females to believe that humans were just bones. El Saadawi writes, "How had my teachers led me to believe that a sick person was nothing more than liver, a spleen or a collection of guts and entrails? How had they made me look into people's eyes, shine my light into them, turn up the lids with my fingers, without noticing their freshness and innocence? How had they made me look down people's throats without hearing their cries of pain?" (45). She wanted to demonstrate to her mother that she was just as smart as her brother, then the man who she constantly had to greet with a dress on. She had a goal to prove that what a man can do she can do too. She realized along the way that becoming a doctor isn't what she truly wanted deep down. She says "Isn't a woman just like a man, doctor? Have you forgotten your science? Arrogance turns a man into a stupid, feeble-minded creature." (78) She feels that men are not the "Gods" that she was taught to believe while growing up. She tries to rationalize humanity, by saying that they are nothing special. Nawal El Saadawi, wants her audience to realize that gender does not identify someone's strength and weakness. What determines that person is the choices that they decide to make.

Nawal El Saadawi has led the path for woman's voice to be heard all around the world. El Saadawi has motivated and given hope to other female activists to push the envelope and reveal injustice. Nawal El Saadawi took this opportunity to write the story *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* because it is a topic that can often be shoved down the carpet. El Saadawi realized the power of writing and literature could be used as her weapon in the fight against discrimination. Through this story, she has reached millions of people and proved that a woman is just as powerful as men.

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There is no decoration in the room. In most places, there is often an indication of family and love, but this room is empty which shows a lot about the type of family. Atiq Rahim in the novel *The Patience Stone* speaks for Afghan women who have been silenced and negated by religion and men. The Afghan woman in this story uses her unconscious husband as her patience stone. She looks after him and prays for his recovery. Although, deep down she finds comfort with the opportunity to open up about all the suffering and damage she has endured in one confession which leads to many other revelations. Throughout the ten years of marriage, she never had the opportunity to speak openly or share who she was with her husband. So she

discovered that she finds him to be more valuable when he is unconscious than when he was conscious and responding. The woman's confession is generally heart-rending, it is told in an honest and barbaric language which expresses her anger for being refused the right of self-expression.

The monologue in *The Patience Stone* is an opportunity for Rahimi to remove the mask over Afghan women's lives. This monologue is an interrupted speech made by one character speaking her mind or thoughts. The Afghan woman in this story becomes courageous, and she begins to use this opportunity of his silence as a confessional. Rather than just praying, she can lighten all that she has carried throughout the years. He becomes the metaphor she has told about the patience stone which listens to someone's confession until it breaks, "talk to him about it all, without being interrupted, without being berated." The man, who just lies there mute but still breathing, is more to her than "a living corpse" whose return to life seems more than doubtful; he is transformed for her into a kind of sacred talisman, into the "patience stone" in whom she confides everything, which absorbs all her pain, unhappiness and misery, "until one fine day it explodes." She rails passionately against the daily horrors of hiding her truth. Her language is straightforward, but it contains a heavy emotional load. Her confession started painlessly, "your father read me poems, and told me stories. He encouraged me to read, and write, and think. He loved me. Because he loved you." Her confession here seems like something that would generally be easy to communicate with your partner. Later on, she begins to pour her heart out to his silent body. Towards the end of *The Patience Stone*, the narrator speaks about her limited sexual wants and then starts to perform those actions. She talked in detail about being raped by her husband. Now that he is unconscious and powerless, she does the same. She is surprised by her actions and the way that she is treating him. For years, she has treated him like he is a God, but for the first time, he is being treated as an object. From the small details to the huge shocking information that the Afghan woman shares for the first time it is a weight that is being lifted off of her shoulder because, for the first time, she is being allowed to speak.

The more that she confides with her husband, the more woeful that it gets. Her prayer began to become shorter, and her confessions were longer. In *The Patience Stone*, Rahimi's use of a unique narrative device is interesting as the perspective was very limited in one enclosed space. The view of the story remained within the same room where the man is lying in bed unable to speak. This limited perspective reveals the same horrible state that Muslim women are treated. Women are often expected to have a closed mind and minimal options in every way possible. While listening to her truth and her secrets, it is revealed more about the Afghanistan way of life, specifically for women. She spoke a lot about the difference between female and male. She subjects all men into one category; she mentions "why, for you men, pride is so much linked to blood," or the myriad hypocrisies of virginity and virility, virtue and honor, pure and impure blood. Singled out for scorn is the new-found religious zealotry, commanded by mullahs she considers cowardly and hypocritical. The husband she now tends was wont to order her to cover up by shouting, "hide your meat." She reveals how men in society often control women.

These men take a lot of pride by taking away a women's virginity. It gives them the power that they already believe they are entitled to. She openly expresses the emotional effect that she has endured throughout her life in silence.

This compelling story gives voice to thousands of women who have none. It is, after all, a tragic story of how women are treated in Afghan. This is a story about a woman who is taking care of what looks like the death of her husband. Instead, of feeling sad that her husband is unconscious, she used this opportunity to express herself in a way that she was never allowed. This gave her the freedom of speech that is not often seen where she lives. In this one enclosed room, she opened about all the deep secrets that she had carried with her for so long. It revealed that she is someone who is not innocent herself but who she is also someone who has suffered through the hands of her husband and her religion.

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Damaged

I've spent so many years trying to heal the pain
the damaged caused that day in my own bed
pushed me down, to the bed as I suffocate
you stole the innocence from that young girl
Didn't spare a thought for the damage that you'd do
no flicker of emotion in your eyes
An uncle I thought would shield me
Broke me
I still remember the look you gave
it was as if you had triumphed in what you took away
you are disgusting and sometimes I hope
that you would see me again, to see how I coped
and the blank stare in my eyes but I know you wouldn't care
just like you didn't there.

The Other Wes Moore is a narrative non-fiction story that annals the lives of two young African- American men that share the same name and similar situations: Wes Moore. The author was inspired to write this story on the other Wes Moore due their similarities of where they both started; Baltimore, Maryland. The idea of "One Name, Two Fates" is strictly vital to the essential approach to this book. While one Wes Moore was sentenced to life in prison, the author Wes Moore became a best-selling author with significant achievements like becoming a Rhodes Scholar. At a very young age, both Wes' lost their fathers due to tragedies and personal issues.

Nevertheless, they were both very fortunate of having their mothers to protect them and support them. The sole idea of Moore writing this story was to evaluate how two individuals with such similar backgrounds can grow up with opposing lives. The support one has from one's family is indescribable, and without it, life would be difficult to go through it alone. Through the drugs, the fights, the disobedience, and altercations, both Wes Moore's had their family by their

side. Their family was not only there to protect them but to advise them and guide them, to show them they are not alone. Family determines one's destiny and identity because in the end when everything seems upside down, one's family is the only thing that will be there to guide them.

When the other Wes was growing up, he began to realize the difficulties of living in a neighborhood where one must fight to get what you want. Instead of sticking to his education and getting his priorities straight, he began to get into fights and sell drugs. He decided to take the easy way out. Risking his life and risking his family, he not only started dealing, but he kept it from his mother. In the book, it speaks about Mary, the other Wes's mother, looking through Wes' mattress and under his bed, she found empty shoe boxes. These empty shoe boxes contained marijuana, pills, and cocaine. (Moore 73). As a mother, these kinds of things is devastating to see.

Mary was seeing how her little son was becoming like her oldest son. Continuing, it says "She watched every ounce, every rock, every leaf, every crystal float to the bottom of the toilet bowl until the water was cloudy white... She closed her eyes; her mind raced: Who is it to blame for this?" (Moore 73-74). Wes wasn't able to understand what she was doing, but Mary was protecting him in her way. She was overwhelmed with everything, and she didn't know who to blame. Mary didn't have the money to send him to a good discipline school, Wes' father figure was gone, and she was completely alone. She sacrificed enough for Wes to understand that she only wanted the best for him. However, she can only do so much. Wes began dealing somewhere else where he knew he wouldn't get caught. Two boys who grew up in such similar places, with the same names and the same situation ended up so differently. Mary was all he had, and in the end, he took her kindness for granted. Unlike, Wes, the author, he had support from both his grandparents and mother. Wes didn't understand that Mary was doing everything in her power to make sure he is successful in life. Wes, the author, also grew up in a troublesome neighborhood. He moved to the Bronx once his father passed away. He was going to a private school that made his life perplexed. Due to the fact he was black, going to a school with white kids made him not only confused but an outcast. He says, "I was becoming too 'rich' for the kids from the neighborhood and too 'poor' for the kids at school. I had forgotten how to act naturally, thinking way too much in each situation and getting tangled in the contradictions between my two worlds," (Moore 53-54). The fact that he was in between two worlds full of confusion and contradiction just made it worse for him. He lacked confidence when reality performed through his grades. His mother, Joy, tried her best to make sure Wes never experienced anything that occurred in his neighborhood. However, hiding their neighborhood behind a facade made it difficult for him to fit in a white school. Wes, just like the other Wes began to get into trouble. He lost interest in school, and due to the circumstances of his neighborhood, he was not influenced well. Both his grandparents and his mom knew that he was in a severe crisis and if they didn't react, they would lose him forever. Wes' mom and grandparents enrolled him in military school. As any regular kid, he was furious and wanted to be out. It wasn't until later; he realized what his grandparents gave up. He says, "As I sat on the other end of the line, listening

to my mother talks about 'sacrifice,' I had no idea what my grandparents had given up... 'I love you, and I am proud of you. And Wes' it's time to stop running,' my mother said as I hung up" (Moore 96). He began to realize that they were doing this for the best of him, and all they wanted him to do was to succeed and become better than they ever were. Although both Wes' had different family support and mixed results, their family was always there.

Some people might disagree and say the individual will is the most significant factor that determines our future. However, to make those strong wills, the family helped him. For both Wes', the motivation to succeed and get better was family. When Wes went into a military school, he had realized the effort for him and grandparents had done for him. His motivation to continue in military school and do good was the sacrifice they had made.

As of the other Wes Moore, he was tired of the drug game. He was stuck in the neighborhood watching the drugs he sold destroy families. When he heard about Job Corps, he wanted to join with his friend Levy and take on an initiative. As the days went by at Job Corps, As Wes began experimenting, he noticed he enjoyed his stay. He had received his GED within a month and helped others with the different tasks. While Wes was training, all he could do was think about his daughter. His job that day was to construct something, and when his teacher had asked him what he wanted to build, he said he wanted to create a house. Everyone in the room was shocked, and the teacher asked if he was going to make a small house, Wes responded, "No, a house big enough for her to get in. A house to protect her" (Moore 143). Everyone giggled, but he was unrelenting. The next seven months were spent on building his daughter a house from scratch. When he finished, the house was five feet tall. In the book, it says "These past few months had been the most important and enjoyable for Wes... He stayed at the Job Corps Center so that he could provide a better life for his kids. He stayed for his mother..." (Moore 144). His family was his motivation to become successful. He had seen the world differently and noticed that it was time to change and work for what is needed; his family needed him more than ever. Wes realized all of these mistakes, and during his time in Jobs Corps, he recognized that family was all he had and without it, he had nothing.

As for both Wes', it was difficult to grow up in a neighborhood where drugs were involved and where fights couldn't be resisted. They were always struggling to fit in and be like the rest to appear "cool." Similarly, for me, living in Washington Heights has taught many things. Always remember to do things under your influence, not anybody else's. For some teenagers, fighting is the way to be considered "cool" because if you don't, then you're a wuss. If you don't have a new pair of jeans or the new pair of Jordans, you can't dress, and you don't have money. Instead, they become scammers and take someone else's money and spend it on mundane things like clothes and sneakers. Drug dealing is the new hobby because standing in the corner with your "bros" is more important than going home to your family and cleaning your room. Teenagers are stuck between reality and temporary things. What they don't realize now is what they'll recognize when it's too late. Life is not about going on with the new trends and having money where you're thirteen or even sixteen. It's about becoming someone, having a

goal and achieving it; going to school and only worrying about your grades. It becomes difficult when one is stuck with drama and relationships, but it doesn't have to drive you to arrogance. In *The Other Wes Moore*, Wes gets so caught up with the drugs, the money and the girls he forgets how he was raised and how not to end up. He realizes how his life could've and should've been when he was sentenced to life in prison.

To conclude, the purpose of Wes Moore writing this novel was not only to show the irony of "One Name, Two Fates," but to inspire young boys and girls to acknowledge the freedom they have. The freedom of the path one desires to take. To be aware that everything one does in their life will matter in the future. It was unfortunate how the other Wes Moore lead his life, but it is a perfect representation of how materialistic things aren't necessary, the only thing that stood by his side while he was getting himself into altercations was his family. When Wes was becoming careless and disobedient, his mom and grandparents took action into sending him into military school. However, no one ever knows what the future holds. This book takes the reader into a powerful state of mind that hits home. Within a couple of chapters, Wes Moore told a story that will stick to one forever. The sad truth is that this book is a reality; the tragedy is that many are aware, but none take the initiative. In the end, when you are stuck in a situation, at least you'll know where to go. So, when nothing is right, don't go left, go to your family where all the support, advice, and love is waiting for you.

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The American Dystopia Dystopias have been found to plague the world as their governments exert their ferocious power over its people. The main features of dystopias include the restriction of independence or freedom and the encouragement of conformity alongside the banishment of eccentricity. The novel *1984* written by George Orwell serves the American society as a classic that illustrates a dystopia with specific features that American citizens must prevent from happening in their community. The story follows the life of Winston, a 39-year-old male, living under the constant surveillance and superiority of Big Brother and The Party. Big Brother is the head of the government who serves as the representative for The Party, the government as a whole. Winston describes his society to be a dark one, one where The Party controls every soul, every thought, and every action. He explains the importance of telescreens, The Party's method of monitoring its citizens, and the relevance of Newspeak, the language enforced by The Party explicitly so that rebellion did not occur. Sadly, America falls under all the wrong categories. The United States watches all of its citizens through technology, limits language, and expression through the destruction of the Arts and linguistic diversity, and uses fear to dominate people's free will. America is a dystopia, and *1984* helps confirm such a claim.

In the novel *1984*, Orwell portrays a dystopian society to be one that limits liberty and independence through the constant scrutiny of its people. Orwell establishes that The Party regularly watches Winston through the use of a "telescreen." The telescreen is a television

capable of tracking any audio signals from Winston's home and recording everything he does. It was the way for the government to monitor its citizens and they did so openly (Orwell 3).

Winston understood he was watched which forced him to behave appropriately. For example, he was obliged to look happy or satisfied with his life, because for him to act suspicious, he would be arrested, and then killed. Orwell introduces the consequences when Winston reveals the diary he has in his drawer. He explains how merely having the journal is an open criminal offense and can be punished with death (Orwell 6). Orwell uses this as an example to illustrate how constant surveillance incites fear of rebellion. Winston can not own a private diary because the government deems any idea of privacy as an act of defiance. By eliminating all privacy, the government in 1984 holds power over its citizens and forces them to comply with their rules. This binding of energy destroys the person's ability to be independent because they would face death.

Sadly, America is exemplary in its monitoring of its citizens. The surveillance of the citizens in 1984 led the government to destroy all privacy forcing the people to face a severe punishment when not complying with state expectations. This was for greater government control. According to Trevor Timm in "The Government, Just Admitted It Will Use Smart Home Devices For Spying" published by Theguardian.com, the US government will begin to use mobile devices to track everyday actions and record information usually spoken in private. The article cited James Clapper, director of national intelligence, who proposed to the Senate that, "intelligence services might use the [internet of things] for identification, surveillance, monitoring... or to gain access to networks or user credentials," (Clapper). The U.S. government is openly stating that they will peer into our personal lives to track information. America's government will have such a thirst for power; it will monitor our attitudes towards the country and see if we are a threat. Regardless, the US will be using our technology to control our lives, each of us afraid of not complying with state law. The event with Edward Snowden is a clear example of the American government's power over us. Although Snowden broke the law by releasing classified information, he helped American citizens understand that the government can surveil their lives at any time. Through the publication of this information, Snowden was forced to retreat to Russia and threatened to be arrested if found on American soil (Trevor Timm). These sort of events are what lead American citizens into submission against the government. They fear to break the law due to being under constant surveillance. This fear destroys their independence as they are forced to comply with the law and government expectations.

In the novel 1984, Orwell portrays a dystopian society to be one that limits the liberty and independence of its people through cutting down on creativity. To transmit this message, he uses the idea of Newspeak to represent the government's will to inhibit expression. Orwell introduces the notion of Newspeak early on in the book, however, leaves a footnote to refer to the back of the novel for an in-depth explanation on Newspeak. In this appendix, Orwell explains how Newspeak is a language constructed so that thoughts or statements meant to refrain from loyalty to the government were impossible. In this explanation, Orwell uses the word free as an example

stating, “it could not be used in its old sense of politically free or intellectually free since [they] no longer existed even as concepts,” (Orwell 300). Through the implementation of Newspeak, the government is destroying in entirety the idea of freedom. This destruction illustrates the greed for power and controls the government has over its citizens as they kill the concept of liberty and expression. Therefore, by destroying the concepts of speech and freedom, the government forces everyone to abide by their rules creating the dystopian society Orwell wished for us to see. It was certainly not a coincidence that Orwell chose to use the word free as his example. This idea of Newspeak in 1984 being a cause for the dystopian society is only a signal from Orwell to his audience. He believes creativity and expression should not be limited, and freedom must be encouraged because if not the citizens of society become puppets; creatures bred to serve the government an endless supply of power.

1984 has repeatedly alerted its audience to the dangers of limited expression. The Party in 1984 uses Newspeak to limit creativity and America falls into the same boat. American schools have been destroying children’s creativity since middle school, ranging from methods of the mandated 5 paragraph essay outline to the lack of an official art class. According to an article on Forbes titled “How America's Education Model Kills Creativity and Entrepreneurship” written by Raul O. Chao and Christina L. Gottardi, America is legitimately destroying children's’ creative capacities. The data presented from the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking shows that American schools limit out-of-the-box thinking, emotional expression, the ability to see through other perspectives, and even being able to think abstractly. American schools force students to conform to schools rules and certain standards of learning. This conformity destroys their courage to take risks and be different(Raul O. Chao). Schools teach their students to fear to be wrong and fear to be different, an act creating mindless, emotionless people. Schools end up creating conformists who lack an open mind and lack independence. With no creativity, humans submit to the ideas of others, therefore, rendering themselves and their service.

American schools limiting creativity and expression is not the only resemblance the place had with the dystopia in 1984. The idea behind Newspeak in the novel is not only to restrict creativity but limit the freedom to choose one’s way of expression. The deletion of the variety in verbs, nouns, and adjectives in Newspeak forced everyone to use one word for every idea and destroy the natural diversity in the way people speak. The United States of America has its version of Newspeak: its “official” language, the English language. There have been countless racist events across the country where languages like Spanish, Chinese, and tongues native to African nations, are disrespected and unwelcomed.

A prime example is an altercation with a nativist white woman who rudely spoke to another, Latina woman who stated: “Speak English; You’re in America” (Elizabeth Chuck). These events go noticed on social media, and perhaps even argued about yet no one takes action. Furthermore, according to “Effective Language Education Practices” written by John Rehyner and published by North Arizona University, 16 American states believe to be Official English states, and there are modern movements and acts in government to make the English language

the official language of the US. These actions include articles such as “Why English should be the official language of the United States” on TheWashingtonTimes.com or Carly Fiorina, a former Presidential candidate, proposing English to be the official language of the US. Through the limiting of linguistic diversity, the American government would be destroying creative expression since other words serve better at expressing specific ideas than others like the romance languages, Spanish and Italian. The limiting of language choice also allows the government to destroy a person’s culture and background, creating conformist populations. The destruction of freedom in dystopian 1984 is what led the government to power, and is also what builds America's strength.

Besides keeping watch of every citizen at every moment of their day, and stripping them of the freedom to express themselves through language, The Party’s strongest controlling factor is fear; fear of change. In the novel, Orwell writes about fear not being caught by the police but fear used as a torture device in Room 101. Room 101 is the government’s torture room where they put all of their captive ‘criminals’ against their greatest fear with the hope of destroying their resistance. In Winston’s case, he was against a cage of gluttonous rats and his only hope was to surrender his emotions to be released from the torture. Winston was still in love with Julia, the woman who also helped him develop his passion for rebellion against the government. Therefore, The Party used his fear to force him to give up his love for Julia who was the last connection he had to any thoughts on rebellion. As the cage of rats came centimeters away from his face, Winston frantically decided to submit to The Party’s game. He screamed for the torture to be done to Julia, for her to receive death. At that moment, Winston experienced sensations as if he had, “fallen through the floor, through the walls of the buildings, through the earth, through the oceans... He was light years distant,” (Orwell 287). Here, Orwell illustrates the disconnection that happened between Winston and rebellion. By giving up his true love, he found himself disconnected from anything, he found himself on a clean platter where The Party then shaped him into their puppet. The government used fear to destroy who Winston was and used fear to suppress his freedom to be himself. From that moment on, Winston learned to love and support the Party representing the effect fear could do to us.

Similarly, the US government harnesses the fear in its citizens to change their wills and dominate theirs to gain support. Just as The Party in 1984 manipulated Winston’s aversion to turning him from hate to love, America uses the fear harbored from racists against immigrants to change the country. For instance, Donald Trump uses his manipulation of fear among white Americans. According to “Donald Trump’s Campaign of Fear,” published by The New York Times, Donald Trump uses immigrants to incite fear into his potential supporters by falsely stigmatizing them of causing violence and chaos in all neighborhoods. He manipulates the emotions of nativists to multiply his followers (David Brooks). By tapping into their collection of fear, Trump has the potential to change their minds completely by saying the right words. He knew American citizens were afraid of immigrants and therefore when campaigning for the presidency, declared he would fight to eliminate the “drug dealing, raping, criminal, Mexicans”

or the “terrorist Muslims.” He uses the citizens’ fear to get what he wants just as The Party in 1984 used their people's fear to get what they wanted. Unfortunately, just as Winston sacrificed Julia to overcome his fear, Trump is sacrificing immigrants and the free will of the citizens to gain power and control. By manipulating fear, Trump creates a racist society that destroys what it means to be independent. As it says in the article “Fear” written by Catherine Meeks fuels racism, racism is fueled by fear and this fear is what causes racists to say and do certain things. This fear forces people to act negatively and sometimes violently, represented by police officers who brutalize African American males (Meeks). Police brutality and racism are both fueled by fear, and when Donald Trump taps into the fear that builds up into people over time, he can control them. By saying he will get rid of their fear, Donald Trump destroys their free will to choose who they want to support. The salvation Donald Trump proposes entices many many people to support his racist beliefs just because of their fear. Unfortunately, instead of the American government helping to diminish this fear, the American government uses it towards its benefit: a clear symptom of dystopian societies.

In conclusion, America represents a dystopian society due to the extreme similarities the country has with the dystopian society in the novel 1984. Orwell wrote 1984 to alert his audience to the symptoms and dangers of dystopian societies. As a writer who focuses mainly on revealing political corruption, he wanted to portray a dystopia that would convey to us audience members that if we saw those same signs in our world to advocate against them. As presented throughout this essay, America exhibits all the signs of a dystopia. Just as 1984 used constant surveillance to destroy privacy, America is hijacking our technology to peer into our private lives and force us into submitting to its laws. Just as 1984 used Newspeak to dominate creativity and expression, America teaches rigidity in schools and encourages the use of one particular language. Finally, just as 1984 used fear to change Winston from rebellious to submissive, America uses the fear from its citizens to change them from independent to Ironbound preachers of government practices. Therefore, just as 1984 destroyed the liberties and independence of its citizens, America does the same. The United States government slowly breeds power as it kills our freedom, something vowed upon by our founding fathers and the Constitution. The United States government has the country a dystopia and has no motive to let go, which is why it is for us to spread awareness and educate ourselves. Through novels like 1984, Brave New World, Proxy, etc. we are trained on what dystopias look like and are then able to identify methods of fighting against totalitarian governments. America is a dystopia, and therefore we must stop it from completely controlling us and stealing our well-deserved independence. We will not become puppets, we will not become mindless supporters, but we will become private, creative, eccentric, and fearless citizens. We will be free.

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Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is about this person named Okonkwo. Okonkwo had a father that he considered a failure in his life. His father would scavenge off other people for money and then spend it right away, and this is why Okwonkwo had a fear of failure. Okwonkwo was well known for being a goof wrestle due to the fight he had with CAT which he was able to beat CAT who was known as the best wrestler at the moment. The fight lasted for 7 days and 7 nights and was said to be the greatest fight in history. Once Okwonkwo starts getting older he began to become more violent. He and his family get exiled for one of his actions. Once he returns to his village he gets a big surprise, one that he is not too happy about. The plot revolves around the tradition of the tribe until Okwonkwo accidentally killed someone. He was exiled from his tribe for seven years and while the seven years Christianity had influenced the tribe. When he returned back to his tribe he noticed how Christianity has invaded and the people did not fight back. So he then made the decision to commit suicide due to that reason. Okwonkwo due to his past come off across as someone who is very cold and emotionless. He is called the "Roaring Fire" because he does not hold back and to him, it is a quick way of dealing with things. He is an unchanged character because, throughout the story, his characteristics never change.

There is clearly cultural change that affects Okwonkwo. In my class cross-cultural psychology class, we are learning about how cultural studies focus on understanding the way people live, and why they do what they do through analyzing the symbols in culture and the meanings people attach to them. For Okwonkwo there was a clear struggle between traditional religion and Christianity. What I was thinking was how should the tribe deal with the intruders? Do the Africans need new technology integrated into their lifestyle? Which culture is supreme? The religion to him was what made the society and what gave it order. Culture determines many things about you such as what you eat, how you speak, what your beliefs are, what clothing you were, and what you do for recreation. So in a way understanding, your culture is understanding yourself and how you live. When Okwonkwo felt that his culture was being threatened he took his own life because that was not who he was or what his people represent.

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America is a place of work and opportunities. Whether it be North American or the Central, South, and Caribbean countries. America is a bustling place of people who work day and night to thrive in a place of harmony. To Walt Whitman, a famous American poet, this harmony often sounds like singing. Whitman describes this singing, in his poem "I Hear America Singing", as individual voices coming together in America. America, a place full of work and self-centered lives, in his opinion is really a place of these self-centered lives in unison. This view Whitman has, has a very joyful approach. He conveys his tone of merriment of such unique people uniting through their voice in society. However, Langston Hughes has a different approach to this singing. Langston Hughes is an African American poet who uses a rather

powerful tone to portray the power of his race. In his eyes, America is not in full harmony. The constant collisions of vulgar words and sometimes even fists between the whites and the blacks do not create a melodious song. Hughes is using his individual voice to empower African Americans of having the hope of singing alongside whites. Walt Whitman and Langston Hughes dramatically differ in their perspectives on America singing; Whitman perceives the harmony of the American voices unison and Hughes perceives the lack of harmony between Americans.

In Walt Whitman's poem, *I Hear America Singing* he uses a tone of admiration when referring to the unity of America. Walt Whitman admires the flow of voices coming together in a place where everyone is so different. In his poem, Whitman says, "I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear," (Whitman 1). Whitman is trying to convey him hearing America's harmony. America is singing with "varied carols". The word varied portrays the idea of each and every distinct person in America. Varied is not even chained to the English Language. Imaginably, America singing could be the union of all the cultures in this very, very multicultural country. Next, Whitman uses the word carols to describe its beauty. A carol is never referred to an atrocious song, a cacophony. America is singing a carol, a song beautifully melded together as if candy to the ears. As such the word carols present Whitman's admiration for America. He considers it beautiful, something to leave you awestruck. Each person giving in their own voice, a voice that only belongs to them (Whitman 15). Every single American is uniting with others who are very much different. In Whitman's eyes, it is honorable to be a part of this country's society.

On the other hand, Langston Hughes differs from Whitman because he believes there is actually a lack of harmony in America. Hughes conveys this idea with a rather powerful tone. Hughes perceives the racial inequality in America which is causing more of the cacophony America shouldn't have. In his poem, "I Too," Hughes states, "Nobody'll Dare/ Say to me/ 'Eat in the kitchen'," (Hughes 11-13). Hughes cleverly uses the powerful word of dare to express his tone. To dare is to challenge someone, often a weak person. Hughes uses the meaning of the word to show how no one will be able to challenge him because he is definitely not a weak person. He is not inferior simply because he is African American. Others will learn to look at his race as equals. This struggle Hughes shows in his poem that America is not so melodious and harmonious as Whitman says it is. Hughes understands that America is not perfect, but he is using his own, unique and powerful voice to be a part of the song Whitman mentioned. Hughes will use his voice to unite the African Americans and have their race sing their song of power and perseverance.

In conclusion, Whitman and Hughes poetically write about very similar topics but in different perspectives and tones. Whitman believes in an America with an already stable harmony in which people come together to sing beautiful carols with their unique lives. Hughes believes in an America where race inequality holds chains against the could-be harmony. Both these writers use the tone of their voice to speak about what they are passionate about. In the end, though, both these poems are real-world examples of these Americans using their voice to unite

others. Their voice shines through the paper, to sing the song of America. This voice shines through the paper to sing the song of America.

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The corruption of innocence can leave a lasting impact on some while others just let it go by. The Vietnam War had lasting effects on the soldiers who participated in it. Besides the obvious physical effects of participating in the Vietnam War, most of the characters in *The Things They Carried* portrayed how exposure to the war left lasting psychological effects in most of the soldiers. Many factors during the Vietnam War combined to affect the soldiers physical, emotional, and mentally. In *The Things They Carried*, O'Brien reveals through imagery, metaphor, symbolism, and personification how Norman Bowker is traumatized by the battle experiences which changed his sense of identity and interest in life, causing him to lose his innocence and eventually kill himself.

In the story "Speaking of Courage" we meet Norman Bowker who before the war was an ordinary teenager. He speaks of his friends Max Arnold and Sally Kramer. Tim O'Brien says "Back in high school, at night, he had driven around and around it with Sally Kramer, wondering if she'd want to pull into the shelter of sunset park, or other times with his friends, talking about other urgent" (132). O'Brien uses imagery to demonstrate how Norman Bowker recalls Sally Kramer, the girlfriend whose picture he had carried during the war, and who is now married. He represents the desire to remember things as they once existed, before the war. Someone who was able to have a relationship with others, have a conversation with others, and enjoy life. Bowker mentions, "Now in the late afternoon, it lay calm and smooth, a good audience for silence, a seven-mile circumference that could be traveled by slow car in twenty-five minutes" (133) which serves as a metaphor because he's comparing the lake to an audience. Before war Bowker used to enjoy the lake and to go hang out with friends but now he circles around the lake repeatedly and is lost in his own thoughts. The lake is an audience to his depression and confusion that he has after the war. The lake becomes a symbol of his loss of innocence because Bowker used to socialize with others and now has lost the skill to communicate with others because of war.

Norman Bowker was deeply transformed after the war, Bowker had a hard time adjusting to life after the war. Norman Bowker grieves over how he did not win the silver star medal, which symbolizes what Bowker failed to do, save Kiowa. It deteriorates Norman in a way that he can't express or tell anyone. Norman Bowker explains "That night when Kiowa got wasted, I sort of sank down into the sewage with him...Feels like I'm still in deep shit" (156). This metaphor compares his feeling to "deep shit" although he's not really in deep shit his feelings are sinking him down because he cannot escape the thought of war. Norman's war is in silence, unlike the actual war that he fought in. He does not have the liberty to just walk away from war. When

Norman Bowker goes home he does not know how to react, how to think, or how to feel. It traumatized Bowker that he failed to save Kiowa over something “small and stupid.” Not knowing who to blame for the sorrows, he blames himself and feels like he has failed as a soldier and as his father’s son. When Bowker continues what seems to be a trip back to what is reality he circles the town’s lake over and over again. Norman struggles with deciding if his actions during the war were courageous or cowardly. These thoughts ended up affecting his life in more ways than he could possibly think of. Tim O’Brien mentions “Turning on his headlights, driving slow, Norman Bowker remembered how he had taken hold of Kiowa’s boot and pulled hard, but how the smell was simply too much, and how he’d backed off and in that way had lost the Silver Star.” (147) Through imagery O’Brien is describing how the smell of the boot was a major reason to why he couldn’t save Kiowa. And at that moment he lost his love for life because he failed to do the hardest part of his job, which was to save Kiowa. Imagery allows the audience to get a sense of feeling of what it was like at that moment. Bowker drove around looking for a purpose in life. Norman Bowker says “A guy that can't get his act together and just drives around town all day and can't think of any damn place to go and doesn't know how to get there anyway. This guy wants to talk about it, but he can't... I can't ever find any words” (151). Tim O’Brien creates a mental picture of how tough he was on himself. Here we realize that Norman Bowker died the second he left war because he was haunted by his own memories. The psychological burdens that Norman Bowker had after the war continue to define him. The guilt, grief, and confusion grew too much for Norman Bowker to handle. Bowker himself could not find words to describe his feelings and it all ended up eating him alive.

In the end, Tim O’Brien demonstrates both the emotional weight that the war puts on Norman Bowker and his inability to accept the past when he decides to take his life. Norman Bowker says “The lake had divided into two halves. One half still glistened, the other was caught in the shadow” (144) Tim O’Brien is speaking metaphorically because the lake isn’t actually divided. However, we can use this comparison to describe an association of how Norman Bowker life has turned out to be. A life that went from positive to negative. Bowker says “ The thing is there’s no place to go. Not just in this lousy little town. In general. My life I mean. It almost like I got killed over in Nam” (150). Bowker can't relate to anything or find meaning in anything. The isolation is a symbol of his desire to not live any longer. It overwhelms him and Norman cannot restart his life because he cannot accept the past. O’Brien is revealing how profound and powerful his thoughts where he could not manage living with all of this burden on him and decides to kill himself.

In *The Things They Carried*, O’Brien demonstrates through imagery, metaphor, and personification how veterans struggle to forget the painful memories and traumatic experiences of war. The Vietnam War altered the soldiers' views and perspectives in a way that only other veterans could relate to. In *The Things They Carried*, O’Brien demonstrates through Norman Bowker how the experience of war can define who you are. War leaves many mental scars such

as regret, depression, anxiety and some things in life become part of you and sometimes, these things can consume you; swallow you if you do not talk about it.

~

Life always throws curveballs when you least expect them. It can knock you down and leaves you completely hopeless that things won't get better. The ego likes to take over and confuse you with the negative chatter in the mind. It takes a tight hold on you and doesn't want to release the grip. Surrendering to the emotions that come and turn inwardly, allows a deeper understanding of why this particular thing is happening. So when you feel like giving up and lost all hope, keep exploring. Realize that hardships aren't entirely your fault, it won't affect every aspect of your life, and won't follow you everywhere forever. Life gives you lessons to make you a better version of yourself. I, for sure, am going to keep my head held high and I know that this difficult time I'm going through will pass in time. I will keep on moving forward.

“There is a local 1 train two stations away. Please stand away from the platform edge, especially when trains are entering and leaving the station.” I sighed as the people began to push. When the train arrived and the doors open, they immediately swarmed inside, I got caught amidst them. I was lucky enough to get a seat on the crowded train. The noise of the train going by interrupts my thought but I picked up the book that I am currently reading and read like every day until I got to my destination.

I was reading *Open City* by Teju Cole and it had my wheels spinning. It is a non-fiction novel about Julius, a Nigerian doctor who pretty much just walks around the cities Brussel and New York and tells us his thoughts on race, politics, music, and life while showing us the way the world comes together. Julius was constantly observing life and interactions happening around him but he never seems to really feel involved or a part of the human race; he's totally distant and detached from the world.

From the get-go, I knew I was not going to be very avid about the book. Cole facility with the written word is, to put it simply, jumble. *Open City* by Teju Cole, hinted at many different things on living in a multicultural city but didn't discuss or explore anything; It is completely contained within those few pages and you never really hear back. For instance, Cole writes “I want to talk about persecution if you will permit a poet this license. What can we understand about the roots of persecution, particularly when the target of this persecution is a tribe or race or cultural group?” (43) This seems like a very interesting topic about the roots of persecution, which focuses on a particular race, tribe, or group. However, Cole did not build on that or further explore it. Some other interesting events that are mentioned but Cole does not expand is the genocide of the native Americans, the colonization of Nigeria, and immigration. Interestingly, these ideas are also presented with no sympathy. As a reader, the use of pathos is

something that I look forward to, but while reading this book there was no emotional effect. What really kept me in a constant battle while reading *Open City* By Teju Cole was that the way the book progressed was very disengaging and sometimes the language and references overrode the intention of the book.

I thought to myself, I've always had an intuitive ability to recognize which moments, as I'm living them, I will look back on and remember as being wonderful or significant in some way or another. There are times that I walk down certain streets or sit in the outside stairs of certain buildings, and, lost in my own mind, I think back to these memories as if I were a bystander; just someone that happened to be there watching me. Today was different though, I was overwhelmed with a strange feeling; it was a longing feeling tinged with humiliation and fear.

"Are you okay? You seem weird today." Nimco asked me.

"I don't seem weird. I am weird. My general level of constant anxiety was all just wrecking me." I responded.

I was meeting up with my group of friends. We are on the roof of one of the many buildings in Washington Heights. The decay, representative of the level of poverty at this time, is everywhere. It shows itself atop the abandoned buildings, it dances around unrepentant at the boarded up drug and youth centers, and where it exists, most shamelessly, is in the minds of the thousands of gang members who have swallowed the "ugly" of that decay whole.

"They're opening 16 Handles in Fort Washington, but of course they are, all the white people are moving over there" Nimco mentions.

As my heart begins to beat faster with every breath that I take, I wipe my sweaty palms off onto my blue jeans. My breathing becomes shallow and the details fade into a color blur. I stare blankly ahead trying not to show any emotion but the tears that were building up in my eyes were not helping.

I couldn't help but feel baffled. Recently, prices are changing and things are slowly starting to change as more white people are moving into the neighborhood and more trendy stores are being brought to Washington Heights. People who have lived in this area for decades are being edged out by the only people who can afford it. Gentrification is happening in neighborhoods such as Washington Heights and across the country as we speak. It is displacing and ripping apart many of these communities that have been together for generations. Everything that makes up this community our churches, our shops, our community organizations and programs, our schools, our neighbors, our friends, our family, our community centers, and our culture are being removed for the will of the market and for the tastes of the upper classes. In Washington Heights, it has been very common to see a beauty salons such as hair salon, barbershop, a nail salon in every other block but slowly we are seeing these places disappear and being replaced by different aesthetic restaurants.

Seeing gentrification happening in my neighborhood is agonizing. The issue on gentrification isn't diversity, it is not that white people are moving into Washington Heights. The

real conflict is that people who have lived in Washington Heights are being thrown out in a blind way. Gentrification is literally so terrifying and heartbreaking because it is literally destroying decades of a culture built by people of color. They walk in with money, landlords raise the rent, evict the people, and make new housing only affordable for some people. This is our culture, our home, our community, our voice.

~

A rebellion's purpose is to escape from cruel ways, but can the animals survive the death-grip of their kind? In the novel *Animal Farm*, animals rebel against humans and take control of the farm they live on. *Animal Farm* adopts the idea of Animalism, which has seven basic commandments that show the importance of equality for every animal at Animal Farm. However, animalism fails, and the animals break down because of two main reasons: Napoleon's desire for absolute power and his exploitation of the animals. In the novel *Animal Farm*, George Orwell shows that those who enable themselves to be blinded by the power of language inevitable allow others to take advantage of them.

In Old Major's speech, he uses persuasive techniques to express to the animals that a rebellion is the best solution to get what they deserve which is freedom. Old Major, a wise old pig, gathers all the animals in Manor Farm, to express to them his dream and desire for the rest of the animals. Old Major tells them of his dream where, and they would be able to manage their own lives. Old Major concludes and says every animal in the farm "No animal in England is free and the life of an animal is misery and slavery." (pg 28) Through the impressive propaganda skills, Old Major demonstrates how easily swayed the animals of the farm are by a powerful speech or strong words. Old Major identifies humans as the enemy and attempts to unite them all against this common enemy. He promises that their lives will be better and easier if they do what he suggests and overthrow the humans. Old Major urges everyone to help overthrow man through a rebellion. Old Major blames a man for all they have suffered. Old Major says, "And even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their natural span." (pg8) Old Major tries to convince the animals that humans are dominating them and that is one of the main reasons why they cannot be free, happy, and well fed. Humans overwork animals only to steal what they consume, and treat them only well enough to survive and provide more food. According to Old Major, rebellion is the path to freedom. Getting the human race out of the farm would make the animals rich and free instantly. Old Major starts convincing them through the power of words without them understanding the deeper meanings behind it. Old Major also say's, "All men are enemies. All animals are comrades." (pg 31) Old Major is persuading the animals to believe how his dream has to do with improving the lives of each animal. His vision was about the happiness that will exist once all man is gone. The pig is explaining how man is a threat, not just for the benefit of the animals but to their own very lives as no animal escapes the cruel knife at the end. The hens' eggs do not hatch into chickens, and all the animals aren't able to appreciate what they produce because all man destroy what they consume. This idea is threatening towards

the animals; which gives them one more reason to agree to the revolution as they would feel threatened if they did nothing to prevent their fate that Old Major described. Old Major was a dying pig who inspires animals on a farm to plot a rebellion against the cruel owner of the farm.

Old Major introduces the animals with this new way of thinking; he reveals that Animalism is shown through the song lyrics of *Beast of England*. The anthem originated from Old Major's dream of a world where animals live without the cruelty of humans. This song causes the animals to start a rebellion and take over the farm because the song painted a picture in their mind on how the farm will be. All animals sang "Now the day of beasts is coming. Tyrant man shall lose his throne. And the shining fields of England. Shall be trod by beasts alone." (Pg 12) The language is hopeful because the song shows the animals hope for a better future. This shows that the animal's goal is to overthrow all man, and have control over their own lives. This part of the song shows how the animals expect their lives to be like after they are set free from humans. Old Major teaches them the song, *Beasts of England* as a symbol of Animalism. He teaches that all animals are equal. The "*Beast of England*" song is important because it is what unites the animals at the beginning of the book it is a form of change for the animals. "Bright will shine the fields of England; purer shall its waters be, sweeter yet shall blow breezes on the day that sets us free." The animals are singing a song of freedom; the animals are expecting their desire to leave the dictatorship of Mr. Jones and start a democracy. The lyrics of the song connected with them and empowered them to believe that they were the hardworking ones, not the farmer. The fact that the animals sang the song after the Battle of Cowshed is an example of how it was a symbol of freedom because they were finally free from the social rule the animals could now rule themselves.

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example of how it was a symbol of freedom because they were finally free from the social rule the animals could now rule themselves.

Napoleon and Squealer being manipulative is the primary source of power throughout the novel that results from language. Napoleon was a pig who can manipulate well; therefore, he gets what he wanted. Napoleon uses fear and manipulation to obtain power over other animals. He uses Squealer as his mouthpiece, to make something positive out of his actions so that the animals follow him rather than Snowball. He allows the animals to believe that pigs are smarter than others and must be treated with more respect. Napoleon and Squealer were secretly taking milk and apples from the animals. The animals were starting to notice that the pigs are taking it and Squealer in a speech says, "Comrades!" he cried. "You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself." Squealer lies to all the animal knowing that all he said was false the animals are being blinded by what Squealer says just because he sounds smart. Squealer supports everything that Napoleon says or does. By doing this Squealer knows that Napoleon will protect him. He sees that if he shows strong support for Napoleon and encourages the other animals to support him too, then Napoleon will protect him and give him perks such as sleeping in beds and drinking alcohol...

When taking actions against something whether it's a speech or rebellion you can't allow yourself to be manipulated by what others say or do. Old Major had a vision that never came true. After his death, things got out of control by those animals that were able to get a taste of power and could not let it go. Instead of equality in the farm being shown there were animals such as Napoleon that turned the farm back into a dictatorship which was precisely what all the animals were trying to avoid coming into this new idea called Animalism.

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