A Letter From Our Editor(s)

Dear Reader,

If we spoke in person, I would doubtlessly tell you that I’m in “prison.” Due to my speech impediment, I often mispronounce “Prism” as “prison,” giving everyone the wrong connotation about my extracurricular activities.

Despite this pervasive verbal misstep, I must emphasize that being an editor of Prism has far from imprisoned me. In fact, my position has liberated me to pursue new dreams and goals.

My goal with Prism is to push boundaries. I want every staff member to give their all — not only their whole mind, but also their whole heart. Prism, as a magazine, should always aim to be an enlightening product, something very smart, socially conscious, and, well, a little eccentric. The Honors Program is the first to admit the unconventionality (some would say “peculiarity”) of its students.

Ultimately, however, I seek with Prism to empower my staff. I striving to be there, both personally and professionally. I want to use what writing, photography, and design talents I have to teach, and to give my wonderful, talented staffers the tools to follow their hearts. The quality of this final product will indicate whether or not I have succeeded.

At the risk of this becoming an Oscar speech, I must give my thank-you's. First, to Dalal, my design editor. This magazine exists because of you. Second, to Melissa Johnson and the rest of the Honors program. You're the gasoline in our Prism-mobile (I'll think of a better metaphor for the Spring issue). Third, once again, to the entire staff. Thank you for being my pals.

Polite Valediction,
Caroline Nickerson
Prism Editor-in-Chief

Hello Reader!

If I were to make a venn diagram where one category was “Students in the UF Honors Program” and the other was “Students Working Toward Or Having Earned a BFA Degree,” there would be a small handful of names in the middle, one of which would be mine. However, if I expanded the second category to include all students interested in the fine arts, the middle section would grow to include a much larger population, many members of which are involved in Prism.

I have held design workshops for our staff who have been incredibly responsive and excited to learn. I have found working for this magazine to be an incredibly exciting experience in which I can build something new and share my passion with an eager team. I am ever so excited to produce content that speaks to our audience not only through the words on our pages but through our visual language.

I, like Caroline, would like to give a few thank you’s so I apologize if this does in fact feel like the Oscars (sans Ellen DeGeneres ordering us all pizza). Caroline, thank you for answering my dozens of questions, for encouraging us all to learn and grow; and for always putting so much of yourself into this. This magazine would not exist without you, either. To my wonderful design staff, thank you for being so excited, energetic, and easy-going. Thirdly and finally, I’d like to thank you, the reader, for being our muse. I hope what you like what we’ve created!

Cheers!
Dalal Semprun
Prism Design Editor
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The exact origin of the term has been widely contested, but most credit comedian Lil Duval’s parodic anthem “Basic Bitch” and YouTube celebrity Spoken Reasons with its popularization in 2009. It became an increasingly prevalent trope in rap shortly afterwards, mentioned by Nicki Minaj, Juicy J, and Lil Wayne, among others—all with a negative connotation that signifies inherent superiority over said “bitch.” Artists like The Game, Domon Genesis, and Meek Mill dedicated entire tracks to lyrically destroying the titular “Basic Bitch.” Music made it clear—the basic bitch is worthless.

Since then, it’s been mocked incessantly via social media, making it a nearly inescapable concept. Mainstream media took note, and major publications such as The American Reader, New York Magazine, and Time all devoted articles to dissecting and analyzing the term, broadening the audience to include both millennials and their parents.

Now, “basic” is less of a derogatory term than it is a blanket statement about a person’s depth. Basics are vapid and narcissistic, so desperate to be liked that they worship at the cult of materialism. They lack substance and any semblance of self. Or so their multitude of critics think.

Who is Basic?

Merriam-Webster defines “basic” as “forming or relating to the most important part of something.” An elemental foundation. An object or relating to the most important part of something. Basics are never in full possession of their own identity because they rely so heavily on physical materials to shape their outward—and thus, inward—appearance. When asked to describe the quintessential “basic bitch,” the answers were unanimous: Uggs. Starbucks. Chipotle. Most, however, reflected on the outward perception of these women.

“A follower is really what I would say,” said freshman Mitchell Licht. “Someone who goes along with trends instead of being her own person.”

“I think it’d be like they wear whatever everybody else is wearing, whatever’s popular and whatever is the same, I guess,” freshman Nicholas Lopez offered. “Whatever everybody else is doing.”

“[Enjoying] anything pumpkin-spice related deems you as basic,” said freshman Danielle Manley.

On a large Southern campus with a strong Greek presence, the movement finds its mascot: the sorority girl. Targeted for her uniform of oversized tees, Nike shorts (or “Norts,” as they’re affectionately nicknamed), and the divisive Jack Rogers sandal, she receives the brunt of the criticism and often unfounded hatred.

I hate it that I have to feel ashamed that I’m in a sorority or that I enjoy Starbucks coffee or that I wear leggings most days of the week,” said freshman Tori Paylock. “People will instantly point and say, ‘Oh, she’s so basic,’ when they don’t even know the real me.

Women that fit the recognizable “basic” mold are locked into an impression that more often than not fails to the depth of their character.

Habits of Consumption

While there are some regional disparities among basics’ tendencies and dress, they share a commonality: consumerism. They’re completely defined by material things. But do basics like the things they do because they’re trying to meet a standard? Or do they genuinely enjoy Longchamp bags and Lokai bracelets?

It’s hard to say. When such a broad range of products are deemed “mainstream,” it’s nearly impossible not to like something within the group (example: name someone who doesn’t find David Beckham’s piercing blue eyes swoon-worthy). But not all the consumers of mainstream culture fall into the “basic” archetype: Pinterest is most commonly used by women 18-44. Men can enjoy Chipotle just as intensely as women (and suffer the same post-burrito bowel boast). Sorority gals and frat guys, alike, are united in their love (however embarrassed they might be) for the newest Bieber banger, “Sorry.” Yet for some reason, whenever a girl between the ages of 15 and 24 enjoys a popular product, she becomes less herself—and more a player in the game of popular culture.

Most assume that there’s no real connection between owner and product, since said owner is typically just following the majority rather than her own interests. But is it possible to genuinely like something that coincidentally happens to fall into the “basic” category?

Freshman and recently initiated sorority sister Nicole Archer thinks so. “Can we please address how big T-shirts are comfortable?” This love (or at least consumption) is harmless. Does one girl’s obsession with Taylor Swift really hurt her classmate? How much can leggings, Grey’s Anatomy, and scented candles really affect a person that doesn’t even like them?

Why Do We Hate Her?

If rap, College Humor, and countless Twitter handles (hello, @CommonWhiteGirl) are to be believed, basics are unequivocally despised by all those outside the bubble. The girls who deny their devotion to materialism, vowing that “they’re not like other girls,” are chided for being blind to their own contrivance. And if girls choose to “celebrate” their basic, they, too, are mocked for bearing pride in such a shallow character. It’s a lose-lose situation: by striving to conform and fit in with what they perceive to be the majority, they’re judged and loathed by the rest of the population for her obsessive compulsion to consume.

Yet as much as we’d hate to believe, she’s not alone. It can be argued that we all sort of indulge in a material conformity in the age of iPhones and reliance on digital personae for professional and personal advancement. Society has made it so that only those who adapt can thrive, and it’s no different in the female hierarchy.

Does adhering to the basic formula spell death for the individual? Perhaps not. Perhaps some can find that balance of liking a thing for its own sake, rather than the sake of pleasing others.

But is there anything inherently wrong with embracing the basic? Fully owning who you are, regardless of whether if this identity is your own creation or one you’ve copied, is something our society ultimately encourages.

The all-American basic bitch: a term so uniquely millennial it probably went to Coachella last year. Eventually, it’ll be replaced by another ubiquitous phrase in the millennial lexicon that will confound parents and inspire needlessly deep analyses. But for now, the basic craze is here to stay—and so are pumpkin spice lattes.
“Can I get a Grande, Iced, Sugar-Free, Vanilla Latte With Soy Milk?”

BASIC AS A STEREOTYPE
We all know not to leave for classes without an umbrella or rain coat during the first month of school. If you do, you are sure to get soaked in the afternoon downpour. That's just “Rainesville.” Because of this abundance of rain, many students are unaware of a growing threat of water scarcity. There is a reason UF implores students to take five minute showers — they are trying to encourage students to be more conscious of water sustainability.

The Oxford Dictionary defines sustainable as “able to be maintained at a certain rate or level; conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources.” It is important to remember that we must be sustainable in our consumption of water. In Florida, we see water surrounding us in the springs, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Yet, this illusion of water abundance belies the problem of global water scarcity. 1.2 billion people in the world do not have access to clean drinking water, and in many developing countries, girls drop out of school when they hit puberty because they do not have access to water for sanitation. Additionally, people are fighting over the rights to water, spending millions of dollars in legal struggles for water control, when they could use that money for restoration projects that would help replenish the clean water supply. In Florida, most of our water comes from underground aquifers, although these water sources are quickly drying up. We are surrounded by vast oceans, so many people hope to turn to these sources for water. However, large-scale desalination plants actually require two gallons of water to desalinate one gallon of water, so they are largely unsustainable as well.

Part of the water scarcity problem stems from the misconception that tap water is not safe to drink. In reality, most tap water has less chemicals than bottled water. Additionally, bottled water is incredibly unsustainable. The energy required to manufacture the plastic bottles and transport bottled water to retailers throughout the country is detrimental to the environment. All of the plastic from these bottles then either ends up in landfills, or gets recycled. Recycling plastic bottles may make people think they are reducing the environmental impact of plastic water bottles, but recycling requires a great deal of energy, which in turn contributes to environmental waste. If you are worried about the cleanliness of the tap water, simply purchase a water filter. In the long run, it will save a lot of money and reduce environmental impact.

Some gators lead this trend! “I fill up my water bottle at water fountains because I think they taste better than water from the sinks, but I’m not worried that the water isn’t clean or safe to drink,” said sophomore Becca Fleeman, an applied physiology and kinesiology major.

Although the water scarcity problem can seem terrifying, we are not without hope. Cynthia Barnett teaches environmental journalism at UF and has written several books about the water shortage. She hopes to appeal to “the caring middle,” people who would change their water usage if they were aware of the problem.

Therefore, she hopes to educate the population about ways to conserve water. Australia serves as an excellent example. Several years ago, they faced an alarming rate of water consumption, and feared they would soon run out of water. As a result, they changed their practices to keep as much water in nature as possible. They initiated efforts to restore wetlands and protect forests, and they encouraged citizens to reduce their water usage. They also employed other practices such as using waterless toilets and rain barrels, and now Australians live in a way that water will be sustainable for many years to come.

Barnett encourages people to live with a water ethic, making sure the way we live with water today doesn’t jeopardize fresh, clean water for our children, business, and ecosystems tomorrow. Changing the water ethic cannot come simply from governmental regulation. As citizens, we must work to create a more sustainable society and reduce our unnecessarily excessive water usage. Water is not an infinite resource, nor is it a guarantee, so we must conserve water.
Joyful chanting, warm smiles, a cool morning breeze, and good food. These are just some of the many beautiful things that have had UF students coming back to the Plaza of the Americas every weekday for generations to enjoy a wholesome lunch happily served by members of the local Krishna House, located at 214 NW 14th St.

Patrick O’Hearn, a Krishna Lunch frequenter and junior geomatics major, said, “I really love the community. To me what’s good about Krishna is the people.” O’Hearn also said that he had made some of his best college friends as a result of attending Krishna Lunch, and he valued the connective atmosphere promoted by the servers.

Another Krishna regular, sophomore biochemistry major Frances Brown, said she loved having such a tasty vegetarian option available and “that the people are really nice, they know me by name, they’re friendly and helpful.”

The Krishna House donates all of their leftovers to Grace Market Place, which provides assistance with food for the students of the University of Florida.

The Krishna Lunch staple on campus boasts a proud 44-year history, with founding members first taking advantage of the free-speech areas at UF in the early 1970s during the height of the Vietnam War. At the time, student protests at universities across the country were being met with violent and sometimes lethal force, such as the Kent State University massacre where Ohio national guardsmen murdered four students and maimed another nine. UF was no exception, with founding Krishna member and anti-war activist David Lieberman being arrested when he refused to stop serving food to students on moral grounds. The case went to court for disturbing the peace, but was thrown out due to the lawsuit’s absurdity with the acting judge saying, “Let the Krishnas have their picnic.”

Since its picnic-like inception though, when the Krishnas were practically giving food out for free, the price of Krishna Lunch has steadily increased over the years. In the last seven years alone, the price of the Krishna Lunch “donation” has increased twice: from $3 to $4 in 2008, and from $4 to $5 in more recent years. One might be inclined to raise an eyebrow at this fact, considering that the Krishna House is a non-profit organization that already charges $500 per month to students who want to live there and attend the Bhakti Academy. But when asked about these recent price hikes, Krishna House representatives have stated that they were a necessity resulting from the economic recession, highlighting that the prices of the fresh produce for the salads and the biodegradable utensils they purchase in bulk had increased significantly. Prices have also been raised to pay minimum wage to a few of the long-time servers and cooks that live at the Krishna House, some of whom start preparing the food at 5 a.m. after quick meditation sessions.

This is a unique expression of faith,” Woodham said. “It’s not in other traditions to share food, sacred food, or sanctified food, and since we started that practice before the university contracted with food suppliers, we were kind of grandfathered in.” Woodham concluded by saying that the lunch had grown far beyond the founders’ wildest expectations, sharing that Krishna Lunch serves about 800 students every day, and roughly 25,000 meals to homeless men and women every year. The Krishna House donates all of their leftovers to Grace Market Place and the St. Francis House homeless shelter in downtown every afternoon free of charge. “If people come and they haven’t got their cards or they haven’t got money, we never turn anyone away; we always feed people,” Woodham said.

It gives me peace of mind and body to know that there are still truly genuine and good people left in this world, and to have learned that as long as they have breath in their lungs and two legs to stand on, the Hare Krishnas of the ISKCON of Gainesville will continue to engage in what they believe to be the highest spiritual privilege of serving blessed food to the students of the University of Florida.
I remember walking into a store one day and seeing the cashier flagging down these three African-American boys and asking them to show her their pockets to make sure they hadn’t stolen anything. That was the first experience I had with discrimination.

What I struggle with personally is having an identity in black culture. When I was 12, I moved here from Nigeria, and all I wanted was to find friends that looked like me and reminded me of home. However, when I got here, I wasn’t accepted by the African-American community. I saw that there was an apparent divide between Africans and African-Americans. I remember one specific incident when two African-American boys ran up to me, picked me up, and put me in the trash can after school hours. Right before running away, they told me to go back to where I came from. That was my first personal experience with black culture in the United States and eventually it stuck with me that maybe I didn’t belong in the black community here and maybe all I am is African. I carried this mentality with me throughout high school and even though I was never bullied during those years, I was often told that I was an “oreo” or that I wasn’t “black enough.” Sometimes I think that those comments are even worse than experiencing discrimination from another race, because it comes from people who look like you and people who are in your race.

Coming to UF has opened my eyes and showed me that what I have experienced in the past doesn’t exist everywhere. I have been welcomed into the Black community on campus and have had the opportunity to get involved with the Black Student Union, which is so important to me because it has been something that I have wanted for myself for so long. I think it is so important to embrace your culture and who you are, but I always keep in mind that to a stranger, I may just be another black girl, not a Nigerian black girl or anything that is different from just black.

OPEYEMI LOIS

When I think of everyday racism, I can’t help but think of dating and the way it has affected my sexuality. Growing up, you always hear of women lightening their skin. However, when I was in high school, a predominantly white anglo American high school, I developed so many internalized feelings of wanting to fit a certain beauty standard, that I tried bleaching creams to make myself seem attractive to other men. It was difficult because I was one of the only queer men at my high school and probably one of the only queer men of color. Then came my first year of college, a time that I spent obsessing over finding a partner. Thinking back at it, I can’t even remember why I was so obsessed with the idea, but I do remember that when I was in high school, all I looked forward to was the idea of dating in college. When I finally entered University, I found myself dating white men. It was different. We lacked common ground and I was constantly faced with microaggressions. An experience I remember most strongly was when I was in an intimate relationship with my partner and right after, he exclaimed, “You’re so dark.” I brushed it off in the moment but for days after, I kept thinking to myself, “How did I get so dark? You used to be so much lighter in high school! What happened?” Eventually, it got to the point where I had to end the relationship because I began to equate his words to who he was.

It’s hard, you know, to be at a school, where there are already few queer people to date and then to have to be further marginalized by your color. Even amongst the queer community, you can see how individuals marginalize each other by saying that they don’t want Asians or Blacks or Latinos or anything that isn’t white. It’s not easy to see that or to hear those things. It’s because of these things that I now tend to be attracted to men of color because I feel like there is less of a chance that they will say something about my skin color or make fun of me ethnically or culturally. More specifically, there is an even stronger trend of dating latino men because of relatability. It’s hard because I try to be as open and inclusive as possible but those unconscious thoughts still impact me and it all stems from that one interaction. The words he spoke only lasted 5 seconds but have followed me throughout these past four years, into my senior year of University.

Expectations. Asian Americans.

Model minority. Although it seems as if Asians are excelling in almost every field they set foot in, success does not always mean happiness. Being an Asian American, I can attest to the pressures and high expectations on us to do well in school and extracurricular activities. I am not saying that is completely a bad thing. It’s good to have the drive to do well and achieve anything we put our minds to. But where do we draw the line between success or happiness? The problem is that there is not always a clear line between success and happiness, as both can coexist or both do not coexist. Being branded with stereotypes like the “model minority” often times discourages feelings of adequateness and self esteem. It can be overwhelming with the societal pressures, and you may end up lost in your own journey of life. Inspired by a friend, far, yet so close to my heart, who suffered from the mental illness of depression, I wish to take the time now to say don’t hesitate to ask for help. Mental illness is REAL. Do not ignore it. It doesn’t matter what race, gender, social status -- every human counts.

MANASH RAM
Going through life experiencing white privilege, you never really realize what other races go through. Nobody considers you different because you are the average in American society. When you're white, you don't see the obstacles other races have to experience. Like when you go into a store, you never have to worry about being followed around for shoplifting...you never have to live with the effects of a stereotype.

I personally never even considered white privilege or how it played a role in my life until I attended Gatorship. You rarely realize what advantage you have, which I suppose is true for all privilege.

For me, it's been one thing to read and hear about injustices due to race through media, but it's been another to see the effects in my friendships. The majority of my friends aren't white. Having these diverse relationships and hearing stories from my friends and the struggles they face on a daily basis, I have been able to define my privilege. Recognizing white privilege is important and something I hope to see with more individuals, especially students, because by acknowledging its existence, we begin to be part of the solution to resolve injustices.

ANONYMOUS

My grandfather was born and raised in Jamaica and first came to America in his 20s to further his education. When he arrived in Alabama, there was a clear divide between colored and white people in terms of bathrooms, water fountains, and every other public facet. On his first day in America, my grandfather, who is Jamaican-Chinese, went to drink some water and went to the colored fountain because that's what he thought he was. A police officer immediately came from behind him and told him that he was to use the white one because from behind, my grandfather passed as a white man. Once he saw his face, he told him to stay at the colored fountain and to continue to use the colored fountain while he was on American soil. The police officer then demanded his passport and bombarded my grandfather with questions of where he was from and why he was here. The respect the officer had for my grandfather as a human was lost in an instant. My grandfather told me this story when I was a little girl, but after all of these years, it is still something that has stuck with me and a part of my family and history that I carry.

Last year, my two roommates, who didn't know I was home, were talking about the Mike Brown incident. They were saying that he should have died, and that the police officer's acts were justified and if it were them in the officer's shoes, they would've done the same exact thing. The comments and conversation I overheard were some of the worst things I have ever heard come from someone. I remember calling my parents angered and repeating, "racism is real. I live with these people. They live right next to me.'

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A NOTE FROM KRISHNA NAIK, THE INTERVIEWER

Often, racism and discrimination are expressed and experienced blatantly. The words and/or actions are purposeful and sting.

Other times, we experience the effects through stories shared and passed amongst family, friends and perhaps strangers.

This photographic journey, which captures the first and secondhand experiences of students, is an attempt to expose the harsh realities that can accompany one’s race in hopes of promoting awareness throughout fellow students and faculty members’ lives.

Although stories of the individual are powerful...it is when we share these stories and recognize their significance to all individuals that we, a society, become impactful towards change.

Article by Krishna Naik
Photography by Ceci Mazanec
Design by Caroline Nickerson
Perhaps you’ve seen the phrase, “stressed, depressed, but well-dressed,” printed upon a hipster sweater or bro tank. While casually written with a clever rhyme, the phrase has a much deeper implication: on the outside, you appear presentable, but on the inside, it might be the complete opposite. It’s difficult to admit to yourself that sometimes you are not even remotely okay. It can be even harder to admit that you need help from others.

In college, there is immense pressure to perform well academically, find meaningful connections, and decide what you want to do for the rest of your life. This places incomprehensible amount of stress on which adversely impacts both mental and physical health. Negative thinking twists your self-esteem into statements like “I’m not good enough” or “I am so alone.” So what do we do with that? As college students, how do we cope with depression on top of all our other responsibilities? Have no fear. The University of Florida offers countless resources to students to improve their situations and battle depression.

One of the most prominent resources is UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center. Simply call 352-392-1575, and they will set up a 20-minute triage appointment to decide which options are best for you. These options include individualized and group therapy at two on-campus locations, but they can also refer you to other Gainesville-based services. These workshops range in subject and frequency. Conquering Public Speaking Anxiety meets weekly to help build the skills one needs to be confident in front of an audience. Another option, Habits of Happy People, helps participants identify their sources of happiness for meaningful lives.

You might think that to participate in the CWC’s activities, you should have a diagnosed mental illness, but this far from the truth. Any distress students experience, whether stress from schoolwork or general depression, can be addressed and helped by the CWC. The structured topics for group therapy for currently offered include, among others; Coping with Medical Challenges, Sexual Assault Survivors Support, Invincible Black Women, LGBTQ Empowerment, and You are Enough. This is only a small portion of the different support groups the CWC offers. UF is dedicated to helping provide safe spaces for its students. On the CWC website, a tab called “Self-Help Resources” lists many online resources and referrals. One of these is a list of iPhone apps, such as HeadSpace, that can help with stress management, anxiety reduction, mindfulness meditation, sleep, mood trackers, and general wellness.

To cope with depression, the CWC recommends talking to others, taking care of your body, and practicing gratitude. The CWC also suggests reading self-help books such as Happy for No Reason by Marci Shimoff and Zen and the Art of Happiness by Chris Prentiss. Sometimes the hardest times are outside of class, so the CWC offers an after-hours crisis hotline. A great way to help reinvigorate yourself when you’re feeling stressed is to exercise. The Student Rec Center and Southwest Recreation offer group fitness classes throughout the year, some of which are focused on stress management. Exercise releases endorphins to decrease stress levels and increase energy and clear thinking.

It’s easy to tell yourself to go to the gym, but somehow end up staying in bed watching a new Netflix series instead. However, the group fitness classes offered by UF require registration and penalize students who blow off more than two classes. Attending a group fitness class regularly will improve your mental and physical health. If you seek a peaceful and meditative form of exercise, vinyasa yoga is a perfect fit. For a more upbeat and entertaining form of exercise, the hip-hop fitness classes could be an excellent choice. There are plenty of other classes available—try out different ones until you find the one that’s best for you.

Most importantly, the key to minimizing stress is to prioritize yourself. It’s easy to place the importance of your grades above your well-being and shut yourself away from friends and family, but in the long-run, this behavior will only hurt you and your relationships. It’s crucial to set time aside for your mental and physical health. Reach out to others, and spend a little time every day doing something that makes you happy. While college can be extremely stressful at times, you can minimize this burden by using the CWC’s resources, attending group fitness classes, and connecting with other people. Remember: you are always worthy, just as you are. Pencil in some time to achieve wellness.
“I think weed out classes have a lot to do with it or at least a significant amount,” says UF senior Rebecca Renelus, a health sciences major. “It is sometimes because of those weed out classes that people switch their major or realize that they do not really desire a career in STEM because it is not something exciting for them.” On some levels, it may appear that weed out classes hinder advancement in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. CNN reports that less than half of students entering college as STEM majors actually “graduate from those programs within six years.”

Some believe weed out courses are intended to select students who do well, while failing those who don’t quite hit the mark. In an interview with CNN, UCLA professor Mitchell Chang suggested his research supports this view. “It’s about weed out the unqualified and letting the qualified rise to the top,” Chang explained. Some, such as Mary Fox of Georgia Tech, go even further and claim that universities sometimes foster a “weed-them-out orientation,” as she explained in an interview with the US News and World Report.

Others, however, suggest that weed out courses are not intended to weed out students, but rather to expose them to the inherently challenging nature of these classes. They are difficult classes, requiring not only a significant investment of time on a daily basis, but also a level and type of study new for many students.

Sylvia Hurtado, a partner of the Higher Education Research Institute, told CNN that the issue lies in inadequate preparation for students coming into college. Yet, even well prepared students may face difficulties. For many students, general chemistry, commonly heralded as a major weed out course, is one of the first courses they take at the university. This first exposure to a college science course may be perceived as difficult not because the class is intended to weed out students, but because the class requires study skills some students did not fully cultivate in high school.

“Maybe when they went to high school, it was all a breeze,” explains Dr. Maria Korolev, a professor of general chemistry at UF. “Then they come to UF. I think just because of the fact that it requires work partially leads to its perception of being a weed out course, where you cannot pass without trying.” In this way, a “weed-them-out orientation” is not the cause of the difficulty. Rather, the nature of course material at the collegiate level causes students to reexamine the approach they take to their studies.

Dr. Korolev also suggests that students view general chemistry as a weed out course not because the majority of students perform poorly, but because students have varying perceptions about the class. Part of this perception, she explains, arises from the influence of other students. “I think they view it as a weed out course because they’ve had some other friends that maybe didn’t do well in the class, or they have heard that, ‘You’re going to get a D in this class, or you know, the average is a D.’”

For this reason, Dr. Korolev believes “the perception of a weed out course,” rather than the course itself, may cause students to be less interested in a career in a STEM discipline. Students may want to avoid classes that have the potential to lower their GPA, particularly if they think their GPA will be a major factor in getting into graduate school or getting a job. “Once you’re done, then you’ll be like, ‘Oh why did I stress about that A minus or, you know, that B plus; it actually didn’t matter,’” says Dr. Korolev. “And it’s hard to know until you’ve made it through whether it actually mattered or not.”

Yet according to Washington University in St. Louis, weed out classes can, to an extent, help students to learn whether their interest lies in a certain field, and it exposes them to the measures necessary to attain the associated degrees. “Sometimes students change their minds about their educational directions as they learn more about what preparation to enter these professions really involves,” they state on their undergraduate admissions website.

Based on her experience, Renelus, who plans on attending dental school, holds a similar view. “The purpose of a weed out class is to get students thinking if they want to actually pursue that STEM career choice,” explains Renelus. “It is not so much to discourage but [to] provide some exploration and help students learn what they really want and what they value.”

Dr. Korolev addresses the issue from a different standpoint: she suggests that a student’s response to a weed out course may be indicative of their true interests. “I’m sure there are plenty of students who do not pick certain majors because of their grades, but I don’t think that’s because they were actually interested in that major to begin with,” she says. “I feel like if you really were interested in chemistry, you wouldn’t ditch it just because you got an A minus. I don’t know. I’ve never met that person.”

Though grades seem to be a major issue in classes labeled as weed out courses, Dr. Korolev suggests that this belief may not have a legitimate basis. She estimates that the semester-to-semester average is a B minus. “Our overall passing rate is actually totally fine. It’s in line with the national average for chemistry,” Dr. Korolev notes. Furthermore, the “grading scheme” is based on a point scale rather than a curve so that one student’s grade does not influence another’s. “We don’t make it so anybody has to fail in this course. We would be happy if everybody was able to pass our exams and pass the course,” says Dr. Korolev. “We would have no issue letting everybody pass.”

Renelus agrees that the goal is not necessarily to weed out students. “I feel like UF has a great balance in teaching students how to manage with classes and encouraging students to explore what they want, if it is taking or not taking a weed out class,” she says. “There are so many advisers here at UF that are here to help and just talk with students about their classes and what they want to pursue and whether or not taking a weed out class is worth it.”

Nevertheless, the concept of weed out classes endures and continues to influence students’ perceptions about certain courses, particularly general chemistry. “I wish that students wouldn’t necessarily say that classes like chemistry were impossible. I think it gives students the wrong idea when they start the course,” Dr. Korolev says. “A label such as a weed out course makes it sound like it’s impossible, and why would somebody try if they think it’s impossible? So I feel like if the perception were more positive, then maybe students would feel like they could do it when they were entering the course.”
Elizabeth Holmes

Medical Information to the People: on Theranos’ mission to bridge the gap between people and healthcare

“I believe that the individual is the answer to the challenges of healthcare.” With these words, Elizabeth Holmes, CEO of Theranos, opened the 2014 TEDMED conference in San Francisco, California—a spinoff featuring TED Talks focused on medicine and healthcare. Theranos, the company Holmes founded as a 19 year-old Stanford dropout, seeks to address the deficiencies of our current model of healthcare. Presently, a diagnosis made by a physician is contingent upon traditional lab tests that are often excruciatingly painful and vastly unaffordable for many.

To avoid understating the importance of these lab tests, in her talk, Holmes cites the statistic that information from the lab drives “70 to 80 percent of clinical decisions.” Holmes’ basic philosophy is that health information is a basic human right, and that individuals have the right to “engage” with information about their health. Her vision is to employ Theranos’ innovative blood-testing technology (which uses the blood from the pinprick of a finger) in easy-to-access drugstores and lab facilities across the country, and to make those blood tests more affordable than, say, lunch at a café (according to the Theranos website, a test for insulin costs only $7.86), so that individuals will take the initiative to have these blood tests done sooner rather than later.

Despite the recent issues that have cropped up regarding the accuracy and transparency of Theranos’ own blood testing technology, the basic problems in healthcare that Theranos tries to address are still relevant, given that the United States spent $3.8 trillion on healthcare in 2014. Lab tests, important as they are, are a pain, and far too expensive for the average American (they can range from a couple hundred to thousands of dollars). Let’s not forget that needles are also pretty scary for most patients. However, if a lab test is done too late (or not at all), the delayed diagnosis can make all the difference in prognosis. It can make the difference between having a plethora of treatment choices and a good chance of recovery, to having few choices or none at all, along with little hope of getting better. A key buzzword from Holmes’ talk at TEDMED was “actionable healthcare information”—information that, given at the right time and place, can potentially save someone’s life.

This past summer, when I was getting the requisite vaccines for my summer study abroad trip to Mexico, my pediatrician also ordered me to get a blood test to check my cholesterol level. Knowing that the test would cost a hefty amount out-of-pocket and that I would have to make a separate trek out to the diagnostic center, I deferred the blood test. For someone who is young and in good health, such as myself, the decision was easy; I didn’t lose any sleep by choosing to delay the test. For someone has a history of risk factors associated with high cholesterol, delaying such a blood test may very well have serious consequences down the line.

At its core, Theranos is trying to streamline the laborious and stressful lab testing model, while simultaneously connecting people to information about their own health, which will ideally lead to better health outcomes. Only time will tell whether Theranos is able to live up to its goal of bringing people closer to their healthcare.

Article by Ziqi Wang  Design by Rachel Gordon

[ARTICLE CUT FOR LENGTH; FULL VERSION AVAILABLE ONLINE]
Kelena Klippel: I spoke with Dream Team Programming Director, Mackenzie Geiger, about one of the most highly acclaimed UF Health volunteering programs available in Gainesville. Geiger is a senior majoring in health science, and has been with the program since the summer of 2014.

KK: What is Dream team?
MG: Dream Team is a volunteer organization that works with children in cardiac care at UF Health Shands Hospital. We work one-on-one with the children every week to improve their stay. We also host special events including movie nights, holiday parties, and Superhero Sundays.

KK: How did the organization begin?
MG: The organization began in the Spring of 2014. The founder, Alex Breslin, loved volunteering in the pediatric unit at UF Health Shands and felt that the children in the newly finished Pediatric Cardiac ICU were not getting the attention that they needed. Thus, Dream Team was created. We have 62 volunteers who attend three hour shifts each week in the Pediatric Cardiac ICU and the PICU where they spend one-on-one time with patients brightening their days. In the Fall of 2014, we began to host special events and now hold about 15 events each semester.

KK: What are some of the most memorable moments you have been a part of with the organization?
MG: Some of my most memorable moments have been collaborating on the Capes for Kids project during Superhero Sundays. One patient wanted a Batgirl cape and we were able to specially create the emblem for her. Seeing her eyes light up at how awesome and soft the cape was made my day and she proceeded to take a nap using the cape as a blanket. One boy received a black cape and decided he was Darth Vader. We spent the afternoon pretending pool cues were lightsabers and dueling all
The Dangers of Selfies

Dangerous selfies are becoming so common that even governments are having to step in. A Telegraph report from September noted that, at Yellowstone National Park, there have been five instances when selfie-takers were impaled by bison. The incidents have prompted Yellowstone officials to issue warnings to parkgoers to beware of taking selfies with the bison. Russia has even released a campaign to warn of the dangers of selfies after a series of incidents.

Most common incidents have been children being electrocuted when taking selfies from the roof of train cars. The campaign slogan urges Russian youngsters that, “Even a million ‘likes’ on social media are not worth your life and well-being.” The campaign booklet warns of the dangers of taking selfies with loaded weapons, on moving surfaces and near dangerous animals. Furthermore, the interior ministry of Russia has stated that the campaign will also include selfie-safety lessons at schools taught by Police officers.

Be careful when taking selfies! Always be aware of your surroundings and use common sense.

The perfect selfie is not worth serious injury or death.

TEAM

around the playroom. When those children put on the capes they actually transform into superheroes and, as corny as it sounds, seeing them happy is an amazing thing. Another memorable moment was hearing that a child, who had his own team of volunteers, received his heart transplant and was able to go home. Many of our volunteers had become close to this patient and he constantly had volunteers in his room playing videogames, watching tv, or just hanging out. Seeing him leave was a bittersweet thing because of the attachment that the volunteers had made.

KK: Is Dream Team strictly for students on the pre-health track?
MG: No, it’s definitely not! Dream Team is specifically helpful for students who are on a pre-health track and want to get involved in the hospital, but we are made up of extremely dedicated volunteers that care about children and want to make their stay in the hospital a little better. We have many different directorship positions, including public relations and finance.

KK: What makes Dream Team different than all the other health-related volunteer opportunities available in Gainesville?
MG: Dream Team is different from other health-related volunteer opportunities, because we are given the special opportunity to make connections with these amazing children. I can’t speak for other volunteering opportunities, but I believe that Dream Team is life changing. I believe that our volunteers are overly dedicated because most have a hard time leaving their shift; leaving late because they’re having so much fun with a kid.

Article by Hope Basille  Photography by Ceci Mazanec, featuring Joy Kuykendall  Design by Rachel Gordon

Article by Kelena Klippel  Design by Dalal Semprun
Six Minutes to Destroy
An Eternity to Forget

When my father ran through the house in a panic, yelling for us to take the most valuable and needed things in the suitcase and leave the house, he thought of medicines, blankets, food, documents, and money. I took only my four albums with 200 printed photos in each and put them in the black Kappa suitcase I bought when I first left to the U.S.A. to go to the university.

“Water can take everything, but not my memories,” I thought to myself.

I looked at my room desperately, hardly believing that I had to leave the very little 80 by 90-inch room with tons of folders, books, and hand-crafted memory boxes on the shelves. The light-peach orange walls, decorated with pictures and frames, complement a beige couch full of colorful, plush toys, two giant flower-patterned pillows, and a blanket that read “Milka,” the name and pattern of our best chocolate.

The current hurricane season and flood warnings in Florida remind me of a similar experience back home. May 15, 2014, is a date I will never forget. A severe flood hit my hometown, Doboj, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was a historic, one-time natural disaster. Yet, this one was the second occurrence. It came almost the same day 49 years after the first one hit the city on May 16, 1965. A year after the dreadful event, I’ve finally gathered the ever-painful and vivid memories into words.

When I finished my second college year at the University of Florida, I flew back home as usual for the summer break. I arrived on May 6 and spent a few days with my parents and brother at our vacation house, making barbeque and remembering the good old days when we would gather like that every Sunday. Though it was raining most of the days throughout the country, the gloomy weather had no chance of ruining my time with my loved ones.

The night before the flood, I was preparing to go to Novi Sad, Serbia, where my boyfriend is studying. I really wanted to see him after four months of waiting, skyping, messaging, and constantly missing him. The news at 7 p.m. was filled with bad weather forecasts across the country and region, and severe rain was predicted for the next day. Everyone was skeptical about my trip, including my boyfriend.

“The stones can fall from the sky, but I am going to Novi Sad. What could rain possibly do to me sitting in the bus?” I retorted.

Despite my family marring my excitement with anxiety, I held up to my decision.

Just like any other Thursday, everyone was at work or in school the next day. An unpleasant and confusing call from my mom at work woke me up at 7:30 a.m.

“Veco, where is your dad? Did you already leave the house?” she asked frantically, one question after another. “I don’t know, Mom. I’m sleeping. My bus is in an hour,” I replied, uneasy, but still half asleep.

“Good, don’t go anywhere! The exit of the city is blocked. Bosnian River overflowed.”

She raised the volume of her voice as she said it, drawing it out to “N-o-o-o-w.” I jumped out of the bed and told my father to go get her. Standing by the window motionless, I waited for them to come back. The cars lined up in front of our house, jostling desperately to leave the street. The uncomfortable silence emphasized the clock ticking on the wall.

Water was coming from the right side, slowly reaching our house.

In a few minutes that felt like an eternity, my father’s car emerged from the left side of the street, and he miraculously managed to park in the garage. As soon as he closed the door and he and Mother entered the house, the water was all around the house. It was a matter of seconds. The entire city flooded in six minutes.

At the time, neither my parents nor I could imagine how severe the damage would get. My mom’s chin and cheeks were shaking from the stress and panic as she explained how stressful it was at work that morning. Her glazed-over and fearful blue eyes convinced me of the seriousness of the situation.
We watched the news on TV, with all the reporters saying the same announcements:

“The level of water is rising --- Maglaj and other cities were hit by the waves during the night --- Rural areas are getting flooded --- People are trapped by water in their houses.”

Unease in our house rose with every minute, and the minutes became hours. It was the longest day of my life. My parents and I sat in the living room, frantically taking turns at the window to check the water level. Not knowing how high the water would rise, we thought it safest to stay in our home. Luckily, the living area of our house is on the second floor, so if the water were to come in, it would be in the business space. Our stairs became a unit of measurement, and we gauged the danger by counting each of the four front steps under water.

“It covered the first one,” I reported two hours after the flood started.

“Now it’s over the second one,” my dad said, checking the stairs after three hours, lighting his thirtieth cigarette or so from the second pack — age that day.

Nothing implied the water would withdraw soon. We lost electricity and water by the time the flood reached the third stair at about 7 p.m. Later that evening, the three of us huddled around a candle, unsuccessfully pretending we were free from worry. Our predicament reminded my father of the civil war we had from 1992 to 1995, an event still fairly recent in his memory.

“This is how we would sit in the bunker in the war zones, lighting only a candle and making jokes while trying to overcome the panic.”

“If it’s true, then we’re all gone in one minute,” shrieked back a widowed neighbor.

People started packing and driving the children up the hills to friends’ houses. My father said we needed to do the same.

“Everyone is saying it’s false, but they’re all leaving,” he said in exasperation. “This is what they did in the war: saved their families and left us on the front lines. Go to the house and pack the most valuable and needed things!”

I knew he wanted to protect Mom and me, so I had to do what he said. I grabbed my photo albums first, and then some medicines and packed the rest of my suitcase. My stomach was giving me a huge pain and a severe headache.

Mom’s blood pressure was really high, and I worried she would faint. I waded through the horror of mud and dirt, with my mom and dad following behind. The city felt like an underwater industrial graveyard, enveloped in mud and smelling of sewage. It appeared a haphazard version of its former self, the pipes lying above ground and every plant uprooted. We heard a sad cacophony of sound from each home, with families hurling destroyed furniture and memories out the door.

Soon after, we came back to our house because the friend’s house where we were supposed to stay was empty and locked. He had moved out somewhere. On my way home, I was horrified by the view of the ruined houses, the dirt and mud on the street, as well as the polluted air. It was very hard to breathe.

The following days and months of recovery are a separate story. The flood took some lives that the media was hesitant to publically display, destroyed homes, and left a thick brown stamp of mess and sludge in every little corner of the city.

A couple of days after cleaning, I went to the graduation of my UWC friends in Mostar. The bus was again leaving early in the morning. I fell asleep as soon as I took my seat. The sun shining through the window woke me up. I was shocked when I saw the clean road, green bushes on the sides, and the bright, sunny sky. As I gazed into the sunlight, I was struck with the powerful feeling of hope: for my country, for my town and for my family.
Slavery (n) – a person entirely under the domination of some influence or person

Alachua County is the home of the University of Florida, the institution we know and love. However, here, in Alachua, is where a group of both Haitian-born American citizens and Haitian guest workers were essentially enslaved to labor for Steven Davis Farms, LLC. According to the final 2014 court ruling against Steven Davis, the court found no past record “in which a grower’s violations of farmworkers’ fundamental rights…have persisted for as many years [three and half] as have been shown in this case.”

How on Earth did this happen? What exactly happened? Why? Steven Davis operates a farm out of the Lacrosse area in northern Alachua County. Since the early 2000s, Davis acquired his workforce through an intermediary, Haitian-American Eugene Regis, who recruited Haitian-born US citizens, typically in their 50s or 60s, well below the poverty line and severely limited in employment options. Then, in 2007, with an expansion of the farm and need for more workers, Davis’ new intermediary Cabioch Bontemps, Regis’ stepson, along with his sister and another associate, traveled back to Haiti to seek a new workforce group.

Presenting the opportunity as a path to US citizenship and a stable, steady source of work – both very appealing selling points considering the disorder of post-earthquake Haiti – Bontemps and crew recruited about 34 Haitians. The 34 Haitians were to pay a small travel fee up-front and allow the remaining sum to be redacted from their income, and Bontemps and crew brought them to the states under the guise of guest worker status.

With two groups of workers on the farm, these being over 80 Haitian-born US citizens and 34 Haitian guest workers, Steven Davis and Bontemps proceeded to commit a myriad of labor violations. The 1982 Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) ensures “employment-related protections to migrant and seasonal agricultural workers,”[1] including provisions demanding accurate record keeping and timely, complete wage payments. Davis and Bontemps complied with no such provisions.

Inconsistent and disproportionately low payments (often provided in cash envelopes), uninspected and underdeveloped housing, no social security or income tax payments, constant threats of deporting the guest workers: Davis and Bontemps did it all. In fact, whenever federal inspectors visited the farm and pre-informed Davis of their inspection—as required by law—Bontemps usually moved the group of 34 workers away from the farm while those left behind were made to appear happy and content during the inspection. In one case, Bontemps moved the guest workers to a nearby Wal-Mart.

Finally, in July 2014, a court ruling found Steven Davis Farms, LLC guilty and fined Davis with $112,500. Prosecuting attorney (against Davis) Greg Schell arrived at this settlement, within the provisions of the MSPA, by charging Davis with $2,000 for each category of labor violation against each of 24 workers (only these 24 had enough of a record to build a case).

Unfortunately, and heartbreakingly, the story did not end there. Originally, attorney Greg Schell was to oversee the reallocation of $112,500 back to the workers; however, due to the complaint of a particularly vocal worker, the court revised the case summary conclusion by specifying the workers themselves will collect the $112,500 from Steven Davis. Given Davis’ history of withholding wages and illegally omitting records, I think it’s safe to say these workers will be hard-pressed, at best, to get the money they deserve. And now that Greg Schell no longer oversees the reallocation of Davis’ fee, Schell contends, “I haven’t been up there in a while, but it’s likely that Davis is still operating…it [the court ruling] basically means nothing.”
How could something like this happen? According to Mr. Schell, we simply have a convoluted, growing problem and a “lack of resources.”

On the lack of resources, we students constantly hear of how it is supposedly a bad time to pursue law school. “The legal market is oversaturated,” many experts argue, yet according to a 2014 study by the National Center for Education Statistics,[2] the number of completed law degrees is increasing. So, how can we have, simultaneously, a plethora of young, anxious law-school graduates ready to hit the field and a “lack of resources” to effectively handle cases like that of Steven Davis. Two words: student debt.

The average debt of law students in America is over $100,000 and on the rise. As UF professor of history and criminology Dr. Jeffrey Adler illustrates, law students can walk into school with the most noble intentions of civil service, but when they come out with such crippling primary concern becomes pulling themselves out of debt. Their original intent of direct civil service for the underprivileged is, all too often, postponed or unrecognized.

Another important factor complicating the Davis case is the issue of property and land. In Florida, if you owe money to the state, as Davis does—a lot of money, in fact—your personal property can be seized, but according to the Florida Bar, “your home is protected from all creditors except those holding a mortgage or lien on your residence.”[3] In essence, the courts and state are limited in forcing Davis to pay his dues - as if Davis’ aloof attitude were not enough to prolong his debt payments.

Adding to Davis’ ability to evade the law and hide in the shadows is the general public apathy or unawareness of these kinds of migrant farmworker justice issues. Dr. Erin Conlin, professor of history at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, contends, “we as a general public are not aware of where our food comes from.” Public attention rises when individual stories like the Davis case break out every now and then, “but eventually, the outrage fades away, and the farmers just get a slap on the wrist.”

In spite of all this legal backlogging, the winner was none other than Steven Davis, for he continued to operate the farm and mistreat his workers as usual.

To tie this Steven Davis to a broader context, this Davis case is clear example of how rampant labor abuses are within the guest worker program. The guest worker program provides a network for foreign workers to come work domestic jobs, often lower skilled, when there is a shortage of domestic workers for those jobs. These foreign workers gain legal status through the H-2 visa program. Each visa lasts for about three years, and the program is divided into two types of visas: H-2A for agricultural workers and H-2B for non-agricultural workers. A very similar H-1 visa program exists for more specialized, high-skilled work, often in technology fields.

Well, in writing, this system seems solid and fruitful, but in practice, acts of malpractice and abuse arise. Labor writer and author Laura Apgar aptly points out how H-2 visa holders, “are tied to [individuals’] employers, therefore they cannot change employers or jobs while working in the U.S.”[4] Dr. Erin Conlin argues, “most historians were weary of this program from the start...guest workers are much more dependent than are domestic workers,” by virtue of being tied to often one contract of one employer. Thus, labor malpractices become, “almost inherent nature.” And we see in the Davis case, these workers are often threatened with inconsistent pay, substandard living conditions, and not receiving visas, or for those finally who obtained them, having their visas revoked.

So even though these H-2 workers, in Florida, account for more than ½ of strawberry picking and nearly ½ of tomato picking, they are grossly underrepresented in the courts and mistreated on the farms. And such malpractice trickles up the economic ladder into the H-1 program.

Microsoft, Google, Facebook, and Intel: these big tech companies bring in 10,000s of H-1 visa workers annually, and in 2013, they lobbied Congress with about $14 million to raise the cap of disburseable H-1 visas, currently at $5,000. To justify the use of foreign guest workers, Microsoft points to the lack of STEM education in American workers. Yet, just last year, Microsoft announced the company’s biggest layoffs in history: 18,000 jobs to be cut throughout 2014 and 2015.

Why cut so many domestic workers to then import guest workers? Sure, we lag desperately behind in STEM at the primary and secondary school level, but seeing that Microsoft and Google recruit workers straight out of universities like Carnegie Mellon, ranked as the 4th best computer science program in the world,[5] it seems contradictory to toss aside such a stark number of domestic workers. So, why? Well, H visa workers are often beholden to their first employers and, consequently, can be paid less than a US worker.

So, this guest worker issue, from Steven Davis Farms all the way to Microsoft, is pretty significant. As Greg Schell argues, “this [H visa program] is where the citizens of tomorrow are coming from. Everyone’s focused on the 11 million undocumented workers,” but these guest workers arrive here completely legally. “They can march right through Donald Trump’s big fat wall.”

In light of all this depressing news and insight, what can we do? Take the case of Gabriel Perez, a Palm Beach, FL busboy, who just this past March, won a lawsuit against the Department of Labor. Based on a 2008 ruling that made it easier for employers in the non-agricultural, minimum wage job market to hire H-2B workers,[6] employers in the palm-beach area were particularly liberal with hiring H-2B workers in an attempt to fill staff during the fall, when college students leave town and return to their campuses. Perez argued this bias disenfranchised him and decreased his prospects of getting hired. Consequently, the Department of Labor was forced to halt disbursement of H-2B visas for two whole weeks before settling Perez’s case.

Obviously, most of us do not share Gabriel Perez’s circumstances. But Perez’s activism shows us that we the people can successfully lobby Congress and the Department of Labor to ensure domestic jobs are prioritized over an employer’s desire to frivolously obtain H-2B workers.

Back on home-turf, with the Steven Davis case in Alachua County, in spite of the history of attempts at punishing Davis, he is still likely operating as usual. The simple solutions, such as working to get Davis arrested on certain charges or encouraging local businesses to boycott Steven Davis Farms, would in the end, not likely bode well for the 130+ Haitian workers under Davis’ jurisdiction. So what’s left?

Well, as a community, as Gainesvillians, we can be more vigilant in spreading awareness for this nearly forgotten tragedy and encourage our leadership to do something about not only Davis, but also about the many other farmers just like him across Northern-Central Florida, Georgia and the Midwest.

And the next time you, personally, encounter the argument that the 11 million undocumented workers are, “hurting the U.S. by taking American jobs,” take the conversation to the next level and explain how it’s American corporations and selfish, mal-intentioned farmers who are hurting American jobs by abusing the H-1 and H-2 visa programs and exploiting workers.
What do you do, and what are usually your subjects?
“I usually like taking pictures of nature such as animals or landscape. I like taking pictures of nature more than people, because it is harder to get a candid picture of a person.”

What camera and lens do you use?
“I shoot anything from families to weddings to stylized shoots. My personal favorite, of course, being the latter.”

What drew you to photography?
“It’s funny, actually. My dad was an avid photographer, but the hobby wasn’t something he passed down to me. I was just always very aware of it. Then, two years ago, I volunteered at a studio as someone who just did paperwork. Whenever I had free time, though, they would let me play around with the studio for fun. One day the manager stopped by and told me I had an eye for it.”

Why is this stress-relieving for you?
“I would say that photography is stress relieving because I get to interact with people and make them laugh and smile. And if it’s a styled shoot, I’m not just relieving stress, but being pumped full of creative juices and ideas, and I feel like I’m on a happy high.”

Where can your work be viewed?
“I have a photography page on Facebook, Naba Zabih Photography, and I also use my Instagram to showcase my work, @nabazabih. However, I do have a website in the works! I am super excited about that. It’s just bones right now, but in case you wanna check it out it’s nabazabihphotography.com.”
With the recent NASA discovery of the existence of liquid water flowing on Mars, many students at UF are starting to question things. Is there enough water to quench the thirst of Yik Yak on late and lonely nights? What does it mean when that hotline bling? Are we alone in the universe? Because the first two questions are obvious, I will answer the last question. Aliens are real, and they are climbing in your windows, snatching your homework up, so you better hide your TI-calculator, hide your bike, because they are abducting everybody out there.

Remember the Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 that went missing over the Indian Ocean in 2014? That, my friend, is the work of aliens. How else could an airplane go missing in the middle of a giant ocean? We cannot possibility attribute the disappearance to the fact that the plane was over a giant ocean. Nothing has ever gone wrong over giant oceans except when aliens are involved.

We, UF students, are no strangers to extraterrestrial encounters. Remember that fire that took place over in the Keys Residential Complex? That too, my friend, is the work of aliens. Why else would the police prevent people from entering Keys? It was so they could hog all the Yik Yak karma by posting sweet Yik Yak pictures of the crashed alien UFO that bursted into flames. It was definitely not to protect students. That’s not their job! Seriously, wake up, people!

There are even aliens that go to college in Florida. Which college in particular? Florida State University. If you follow my lead, the perchlorate salts in the Mars water, which lower its freezing point to the point that water does not freeze, explain why FSU is so salty. We at UF can enjoy the luxury of salt-free water, and that is why FSU has a deep-seated hatred for UF. The fact that FSU is an alien school makes sense.

Keep your eyes open for any paranormal activity. Aliens will abduct you if you are not careful. We at Prism advise that you wear cargo shorts at all times. The more pockets, the more alien-fighting weapons you can carry. For those who are really worried, get yourself a pair of those toe shoes. Not only are they super charming, but aliens find them to be really ugly. Strange, right?

**Article by Aaron Sager**

Illustration by Ziqi Wang

Design by Meryl Kornfield
A Day in their Shoes

I have a confession to make: I don’t actually like feet. There’s just something strange about them to me—maybe the strange shape, or the funky toes, or the weird smells. Before I embarked on this journey, I thought that it would be interesting to capture how people choose to display their personalities through what I thought was the weirdest, dirtiest part of their body. As I talked to my fellow students (some peers, some strangers), I began to see something more than merely a pair of shoes on a pair of feet.

My feet are extremely flat and have strangely broken and shaped toenails, results of years of sports and overly tight cleats. My feet are marked with an array of tan lines from random sandals I wear throughout the year in rain or shine because native Floridians don’t really own other shoes. Growing up, my Taiwanese mother always insisted on everybody being barefoot inside the house. Therefore, the only way for me to be comfortable is to be barefoot. I tell others that I “enjoy randomness,” which is basically an excuse to avoid saying that I am too lazy to find the matching sock. Chances are that you will find me at home, barefoot or wearing outlandishly mismatched socks, trying a new recipe in the kitchen or rolling on the floor watching Netflix.

The more I got to know people and their choices in footwear, the more I realized that feet, as well as the shoes and socks that mask them, represent who you are. Your quirks, traits, past, and passions are carried with you wherever you go on your feet, leading you and guiding you on the daily adventures of life. So I encourage you to ask this question—what do you wear on your feet?

Alexandria Ng: Journalism, Freshman

Why are you asking to photograph my feet when I’m wearing the most beat up shoes I own?! I had a pair of these in middle school—I wanted them because everyone else wanted them. They’re plain and simple and match everything, and they last a long time. These are actually my sister’s that I stole from her because I wanted them back. I’m a very go-with-the-flow, very laid back, and very simple-minded person. I’m really easily influenced by other people, even on simple things like shoes. Even though it’s been so long, these are still one of my favorite and go-to shoes.

Ronit Dastidar: Microbiology, Sophomore

I’m a simple guy who just wanted a bold statement. I promise I’m not usually wearing this much red! But I liked how they looked and how simple yet bold they were. No, I don’t drive a BMW, but I wish I did. I just thought it was nice to have a simple shoe with such a unique and bold statement—I guess you could say I have some unique parts of me that stand out too.

Article and Photography by Grace Chen
Design by Emily Crowell
Grace Chen: Psychology, Junior

The funny thing about these socks is that I have a matching pairs of each pattern with two different friends, both of whom are no longer in Florida. We wore them underneath our boots when we went snowboarding, hoping that it would grant us good luck, good slopes, and less falls. Somehow I managed to lose one of each at around the same time they moved, so the partner-less socks now come together as a nostalgic, Christmas-animal themed statement to brighten up my days, even when nobody can see them.

Sally Grieder: English and Public

I wore these shoes a lot during my freshman year, and I figured, “why not bring them back?” There are a lot of memories involved with these shoes. I know my feet look scary—they’re actually because of the mosquitos at H-Camp, and my toes are from years of ballet. These scratches kind of make me remember how much fun all of that was.

Parker Novak: Microbiology, Junior

Let me tell you a secret: I’m wearing Sperrys because I don’t have any socks left. I’m a chill guy— I don’t need socks! But thanks for reminding me that I need to do my laundry.

Derek Ng: Psychology, Junior

Well, I picked these shoes because they were really vibrant and out-there...I’m the kind of person who really likes to put themselves out there, so I guess you could say I have a colorful personality.

The first thing that stuck out to me was how many colors there were. When you look at it from afar, it just looks pink, but up close there’s so much detail and more to it...ya know? That was really cool for me to see. I guess in a way I’m kind of like that too…
Seeing my flower every day in my room makes me feel at peace. I have to help it stay alive every day because the sun doesn’t come into my room, and it’s really nice to have a small responsibility that isn’t related to anything academic or extracurricular. It’s also nice to have something natural in contrast to all the other synthetic items in my life.

I keep this book of thank-you notes from former students in my office. In a profession like this one, it can be easy to feel unappreciated. It’s encouraging, for me, that I can look in this box and see physical evidence that I’ve made an impact. It means a lot for a student to write a thank-you note.

When I was studying abroad in Ireland, I want to a flea market. I didn’t have a small bag, and I was worried that people would steal a lot of my stuff if I kept on carrying my big bag. I saw a man making leather bags, and he told me that a bag would be 100 pounds sterling. For some reason, I thought 100 pounds sterling was $100 (US). He already stretched it when I realized, suddenly, the true exchange rate. I ended up spending 160-170 US dollars, but he was already working so hard that I felt obligated to buy the bag. At least it’s cute.

On a rainy day in Trier, Germany, I was without protection and relief from the elements. I only had the jacket on my back and the hood on my head. After spending half the day wandering around Trier in my wet clothes, I stumbled upon a very chic retailer in the heart of city, where I decided to buy this umbrella. It’s been a most faithful companion since that purchase, which was over a year ago now. Thank you, black umbrella, for keeping me protected and relieved when the weather sees it fit to do otherwise.

This project was inspired by a Humans of New York post in which the man interviewed said something that really struck us: “Our culture is called ‘materialistic,’ but that’s not even correct, because ‘materialism’ implies that we value our possessions.” We decided to ask people on campus to think about the most important things in their lives, keeping in mind that consumption does not have to be mindless, and as we acquire things beyond our basic needs, we often create meaningful social relationships with them.
Graffiti

Taylor Mott-Smith

Did the aerosol in your lungs burn as much as your bravado?

You, who moves and works by the night.

Were your hands cold? Did they sting?

Some of it leaves in the air like thick smoke but the rest is on that brick, still wet, still glistening in the droning streetlamp light and dripping at the edges like melting ice.

Look behind you. Did anyone see?

You can’t exist here.

This art can’t have an artist because it never knew creation.

It was there when the world opened its eyes and gone when it closed them.

Photography by Caroline Nickerson
Design by Gloria Li

Initials

Taylor Mott-Smith

She was watching him, his movements, his concentration — collecting in his smallest eyelashes, his knotted jaw, the redness in his knuckles.

“What are you doing?”

“Carving our initials into this bench.”

Slowly and methodically he dug his room key into the dark wood, guiding it against the grain and along curved edges and straight lines.

She thought to ask him why, but she already knew. Instead she asked

“Why here?”

He paused his work and gazed upon the building beside them. Carved stone arches balanced on layers of deep red brick and braced rooflines sloping into dappled oak shade. He smiled, just barely, and returned to his work.

“This is a beautiful building, isn’t it? But I don’t know the name of its architect or its builders or the person who commissioned its creation. Almost no one does.”

He scooped away the last few splinters from her surname’s first letter and set down the key.

“Maybe, if someone looks closely enough, they might know our initials instead.”
i. Father’s Return

Well rested, the child awakens to trumpets blaring outside his head (for once) and he spies in the sea a pale white speck bearing unsaid abundances of gifts for the children of sailors and adventurers such as he.

The ship is larger than life, yet when it draws close, the boy can see that the men upon its wooden deck are large as well. His father’s eyes meet his when he leans forward to survey the harbor the ocean bears him towards on a blue swell.

Though the reunion does not surpass the countless daydreams of the little boy, he is glad to see that his father had brought him back a little toy. With its intricacies of design he did not yet decide to bother.

They walk together in the green shade and his father tells him about his travels in this strange new world of wonders where the fabric of understanding unravels to illuminate as if across a stark backdrop the previous society’s ignorant blunders.

Noble savages, he calls them with eyes as misty as the morning in the park and they keep walking, hand in hand, until the monochromatic dark had swept into the world and his father ceased his whisperings alluring and grand.

When the child lays his head down upon the pillow later that night he sees his father’s silhouette and then he sees a beautiful light that gives way to foreign and unfamiliar beasts dancing in a goldenrod sunset.

ii. Child’s Desire

Hours spin into days, days spin into weeks for the little bright-eyed boy who sits at home turning the toy in his hands and occasionally throwing fits of naïve jealousy for being left at home whilst his father ventured to new lands.

What good is this little block if I cannot witness the image of the savage who carved it with sweat dripping down his face while nearby on several small stones sit his multiplicity of offspring with eyes darker and as inquisitive as those of my race?

What interest should these carvings and human-starved illustrations bring to my mind besides the aching curiosity of one who can only sit here and sigh that he has not beheld them in real life nor displayed to them his outsider’s love?

What use does a toy have when it can no longer bring delight to me, a child, because it only reminds me that I have not run through the forests naked and wild like the other children who in their native habitat play with this trinket my father bought?

Listening with increasing concern, the child’s father steps out from behind the door and sweeps his son up in his strong arms, Ah, do bright-eyed children too quickly bore of little toys from unknown lands that carry with them their ephemeral charms?

Papa, forgive me, Shame is written all over his rosy face, but in this vital moment with his father trying to read the closing book that was his face—his father, his idol—the child forgot the question he had planned to ask him, seeing the obvious problem it was posing.

iii. Wish Granted

After the question was finally asked and the child’s innocent dreams thrown on the stage like ill-suited actors stumbling along with no reason but ambition past their age he gazes hopefully into his father’s eyes. Papa, to ask you this, I’ve waited so long.

The father pauses, steps out of the room and returns with a rolled up sheet of paper that unravels to reveal a map so detailed that it seems the child can see into a cape or a coast as clearly as if he were seeing firsthand the places to which his father had sailed.

Your father is not an adventurer alone nor is he a sailor for the sole sake of sailing, my dear son, your father is a cartographer and he voyages to new places tracing the unseen coastlines of the New World and sketching them, he is a risk-taker and you must understand that if you truly wish to accompany him on his next journey, you will become one of his risks as well—though this experience is necessary if you are to succeed me as this country’s foremost mapmaker for you will need your own skills to sell!

Of course, the child had made up his mind before his father had told him about his job but as his eyes hungrily devoured the map and its meticulous beauty, instantly the kid nodded and threw his arms around his father’s neck while sitting contentedly on his lap.

Oh take me with you! I see there is conflict in your soul but there is only conviction in mine as I am certain that I want to accompany you on your next journey and no longer have to pine about the places I have only heard of and smelled though the toys you bring back for me.
iv. Set Sail

The ship feels just like the boy imagined with the wood under his feet smooth and worn by the passing tread of so many before him; he takes a seat atop the railing and dangles his legs over it, counting head upon head.

He imagines that he must have looked quite similar to his father as he was returning to port—a small head in a crowd with a crown of golden fuzz eagerly searching for the man on the ship who always stood tall and proud.

And now he was the one standing proud or rather, swaying proud on the top deck with the gentle bobbing motion of the waves causing him to strain his eyes and neck to see the harbor disappear into a sea spray road that the great blue ocean paves.

And that’s where his father finds him, and it seems to him as if his son is about to topple over the railing into the ocean. He rushes over with a worried shout, grabs his son, and drags him below deck in order to avoid making a commotion.

This is our quarters and this is where you will stay while we are at sea, and no complaining! his father tells him in a scolding tone and when the son is through with feigning apology, he’s called away by one of the other sailors and he leaves with an exasperated groan.

The child can feel it in his stomach as surely as the ship was moving forward, away and away from his home of so many years. He could feel it in the falling burnt orange of the sun’s last ray as it grasped fingerlike the cloudless sky; he wonders what lands morning would reveal!

[To be Continued]
At a titanic university like UF situated in a small city like Gainesville, it can often feel from the inside as if the whole town is swallowed up by the school. Indeed, the weight of the university draws in excellent arts and culture, but this is not where the soul of Gainesville begins and ends. Outside the literal and metaphorical walls of the university resides a quietly buzzing cultural scene rife with creative minds and grand visions.

Elestial Sound is a co-operatively owned record label focusing on experimental indie and electronic music, and in recent years has evolved into what director Davis Hart calls “an all-around media company, doing a lot of live shows with art installations.” In line with this development, the owners realized they wanted to provide more events to meet the demand coming from concertgoers and touring artists alike. Elestial takes pride in its large showcases, usually staged several times per year, which call for extensive planning and energy. This high level of production is difficult to sustain with frequent events, and as a happy middle ground the board envisioned a series of smaller, more collaborative shows. So it was born in July of this year: the Prototypes series, a more-or-less monthly string of art-meets-music shows staged by Elestial at Gallery Protocol.

Evan Galbicka, who works on installation design and fabrication, recalls how the first installation unfolded in the warehouse shop the label inhabits. “Our first Prototypes had Pariah from Miami; they wanted to do a show so we invited them to do the visual aspect of it. It worked out perfectly: they went down to Repurpose Project and then came here and used the space and our tools and made an outstanding installation for their show. It was a wild experiment, but that’s what we’re going for.”

As technical director Charles Rye described, “We wanted to maintain a high level of quality without doing a big show. With a smaller scale we can have high quality but not as much intense work.” With this freedom, an experimental quality emerges in the staging process. “Prototypes is our way of working with other people in the art realm and throwing shows that are a little more fast and loose rather than really planned or intricate,” Hart explained. Musically, they also recognize the importance of small D.I.Y spaces in contributing to a quality music scene. The Prototypes series certainly fills this niche, giving a home to conceptual music and art that otherwise might not see an audience in Gainesville.

That the shows take place at a gallery is pertinent: one of the core tenets of the Prototypes series is the innovative blending of visual arts and music. Each event contains an installation element, which may be provided by the musicians or an outside artist or a member of the Elestial crew. Through this combination, Elestial hopes to challenge current notions about how viewers engage with art, both visual and audial. Rye said one of his goals with the project is “to put on a show that takes art into consideration just as much as music. I hope it pushes more people to do more artful music shows.”

Out and About:
Arts and Culture in Gainesville

Benji Haselhurst, a visual artist and designer with Elestial, explained their approach to visual arts and music with a metaphor: “I think they’re part of one body, maybe music is the feet and art is the hands. It all lends itself to the experience. That’s what we’re driving at here: we’re looking to curate experiences. At the end of the day, it tells stories and stories are what connect human beings. Stories are what people take with them, and that’s what we want to do to make a deeper impact.”

The most recent iteration, Prototypes Version IV, was held in early November. On an unseasonably warm evening, three musical acts and a slew of curious listeners converged on a hollowed-out backhouse on the Gallery Protocol lot. White metal tubes hung by threes and arced in a semi-circle swayed gently in the center of the room, illuminated spottily by multicolored lights. This installation was the vision of Haselhurst, who has been involved with Elestial from its earliest stages. “I wanted to poke at this notion of engaging with a musical experience on a ritualistic level,” he said. “The installation builds up the band but also mimics the people watching the music and engaging with it.” Indeed, the piece gave the impression of a solemn neon church procession or a minimalist altarpiece. There was no light in the room except the stage effects: part underground, part art school, an approach which encapsulates the event itself quite wholly.

The musical lineup featured therearenotheives and Cuddle Formation, touring together from New York City, followed by Orlando psych-rockers Moon Jelly. The opener began with a droning, wistful storm of looped synths and guitar, morphing into a warm and touching weave of strums and effects. The colored stage lights pulsed and flickered, adding a cinematic quality to the performance. Cuddle Formation picked right up, creating escapist and hopeful electronic music with looped samples. Combined, they forged a meditative and dreamy atmosphere. After a flurry of setting up in a race to beat the noise curfew, Moon Jelly provided the psych-delic sounds fully-fledged. Well-engineered soundscapes melded electropysch-rock into a swirling, pulsing whole. The performance was captivating, transporting the room to another dimension.

Overall, Elestial Sound feels a deep connection to the Gainesville community. As Galbicka put it, “The conversation I would like to stir up is that Gainesville has a vibrant arts and music scene. It’s happening monthly and these are amazing shows. I feel good about what’s happening in Gainesville; it’s obvious that there’s a lot of interesting talent and quality art experiences to be had in this town.”

Of course, a city is nothing without the creative, driven citizens who make it breathe. As Hart concluded, “It’s more about the people than the place, always.”

Article by Michael Holcomb
Design by Dalal Semprun
Book Review:
Do Not Enter My Soul in Your Shoes by Natasha Kanape Fointaine

“Flee nothing if you don’t know exactly where to go.”
This quote starts off the first page and first line of the newly published collection of poems by Natasha Kanape Fontaine, from Mawenzi House Publishing.

On my first read, the above quote was confusing. In my own personal experience of fleeing from an encounter or feeling, it is always a mad, blind dash towards the unknown, far less concerned with the end result and more eager to simply escape.

However, if Fontaine’s intention was to make her reader second-guess their very own escapism into her collection of poems, she certainly succeeded with me. This idea of fleeing toward a direct and certain outcome originally reads as a something not quite like an oxymoron, but develops into a fully formed idea throughout the sparse and stark imagery conjured up in Fontaine’s poetry, as she takes her reader through an escape, a diaspora, a journey, and a rebirth.

I’ve reviewed books for Mawenzi House before, but this was my first time digging into Fontaine’s work, and it did not disappoint. Fontaine’s words are brief, but caustic. With only a few lines on every page, she nonetheless paints a very vivid picture; one that takes her reader into the environmental, physical, and emotional turmoil of her life and people.

With extremely short poems, usually between only six and ten lines, Fontaine has limited herself in space to draw the reader into her world, but her descriptions do make it possible for me to feel her pain, joy, and sorrow as she navigates carefully through the countryside of her people, the Innu.

Fontaine is a slam poet and environmental activist, an Aboriginal Canadian who has gained considerable prominence in the slam poetry community of Montreal, where she lives and works. Her collection of poetry “Do Not Enter My Soul In Your Shoes” won a prize from the Society of Francophone Writers of America in 2013, before it was recently translated to English by Howard Scott and reissued by Mawenzi House Publishing.

Mawenzi House describes Fontaine as being part of a new generation of people rising from the ashes who intend to take the place they deserve. The poetry in her collection sings this powerful song that rallies all who read it to her cause; to reclaim and reinvigorate the stunning natural environment around us.

However, this call to action is subtle, hidden behind the more surreal passages of Fontaine’s words which flow easily down the paper when reading, lulling the reader into the security and safety of the deep tundra, the grand scope of the earth, sky, and wildlife offered up by the world around us, that Fontaine reminds us we must work to protect.

The layers of Fontaine’s poetry can be quite confusing. They need to be digested slowly, with a careful eye for messages lurking below the surface of Fontaine’s Innu phrases, which are tucked carefully into nearly every poem.

Picking apart her work to search for a nugget of concrete reason or form is not an easy task. It can be easy to start glossing Fontaine’s poems into long sentences spiritedly running down the pages one after another in a smooth lyrical tone. Though it may because I rarely read more surreal-styled poetry, I found her collection to be more difficult to fully engage in at first.

However, when reading it a few times over and investing the time to start picking apart the wordings, I realized that this smooth and musical quality of Fontaine’s poetry is one of the best parts. Slipping into the dream-like state of contemplation helps the magic and underlying emotion in Fontaine’s work to come alive. Like the sharp peaks of mountain-tops between rolling valleys of consciousness, poems in Fontaine’s collection have the potential to jolt the reader with their emotional intensity and deeper message.

From Poem #3:
“An autumn bed, I joined our two bodies/Our peoples in discord Fettered/In the same pleasure.”

From Poem #32:
“First glow, I don’t know/Where I’m going/The sun sits/Right over the sea
The irises/Burned with light/I get drunk/On recklessness.”

The above excerpts are a few of my personal favorite passages.

Despite its root as a collection of poetry claiming and calling for something -- whether it’s peace with the environment or oneself -- Fontaine’s poems possess a quiet subtlety that more effectively draws the reader into its message than a glaring declaration would ever have managed.

The collection’s title is a warning to all who pick it up; to understand Fontaine’s motives and more deeply appreciate her lyrical phrasing, a reader must step away from his or her own way of thinking and viewing the world around them in favor of Fontaine’s own singular perspective.

However, I imagine that this is to be expected. After all, the collection names itself from the very beginning as something precious and distinctly unique: a piece of the author’s soul.

Article by Sally Greider
Design by Dalal Semprun
NATIONAL “SEMI-DOMESTICATED” CAT DAY

‘domesticated’ when a semi-mutual relationship of sorts developed in ancient farming villages where cats helped catch rodents. But the question remains, are they really domesticated? Unlike a dog, cats are often ambivalent towards their owners. Example: when you are trying to work, they may decided to climb onto your computer keyboard and meow at you.

Cats have been by our sides for a long time now. It has been said that the ancient Egyptians were the first people to develop a relationship with cats as they helped protect grains from rodents when agriculture became prevalent among ancient civilizations. As people tolerated the wild cats, the cats themselves slowly became more attuned to being around humans.

Curious scientists have recently revealed that through comparative analysis of the domestic cat genome that cats are ‘semi-domesticated,’ as opposed to dogs, which are considered fully domesticated. According to one of the authors, Wes Warren, cats have only recently split off from wild cats and because they can still breed with wild cats, it is surprising to have found DNA evidence of domestication.

You may wonder, what sort of evidence has DNA presented? Researchers have found a relationship between the genome of a domesticated cat and those of gene knockout models “affecting memory, fear-conditioning behavior, and stimulus-reward learning.” The genomic studies have proved that there are “genomic differences between domestic cats and wildcats.” Sadly, although cats are considered semi-domesticated, it is still difficult for them to survive on the streets and there are currently seventy million stray cats without homes.

That is why Colleen Paige, an animal welfare advocate, established National Cat Day. It takes place on October 29 every year in the United States. The goal behind this celebration is to raise awareness of the number of cats that need to be rescued each year, as well as to encourage adoption. Moreover, the holiday serves as a reminder to appreciate the unconditional love and companionship that cats offer us. This day is supported by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

The ASPCA was the first humane society to be established in North America. It was founded by Henry Bergh in 1866, who believed that “animals are entitled to kind and respectful treatment at the hands of humans, and must be protected under law.” Similar to our country’s founding fathers, Bergh convinced many dignitaries to sign his ‘Declaration of the Rights of Animals.’ ASPCA aims to enforce anti-cruelty towards animals, cats included. This national organization has developed many policies in regards to the appropriate treatment of animals such as pet-keeping policies, service animal policies, and policies on pet overpopulation issues.

The process to adopt a cat is relatively simple.
Step 1: There are several online adoption listing databases online to choose from.
Step 2: Once you have chosen a cat that you are interested in, you should contact the staff at the shelter and visit the cat in person. This is just to ensure that the cat is compatible with everyone in the family.
Step 3: Then there is an interview process to ensure that the cat is going to a good and compatible home. This is where fees and the medical history of the cat are presented. The staff can also recommend potential products that your cat may need if you are new to owning a cat.
Step 4: Congratulations! You can now bring your cat home. The shelters should offer online services that teach you how to train your cat and other events with other cat owners.

Therefore, in remembrance of National Cat day, you should always try to adopt a cat and aid in efforts towards reducing the number of destitute cats living on the streets. Some tips on being a good cat owner include: feeding, grooming, handling, housing, identification, litter box, scratching, medications, neutering, and vaccinations. It is recommended that cat owners purchase high-quality, brand-name kitten or cat food. The exact amount of food to feed your cat may vary depending on the age, activity level, and health of your cat. You should prove fresh water at all times, brush your cat regularly to cut down on hairballs, provide a soft blanket indoors for your cat, place a safety collar on your cat, change the litter box daily, and provide a sturdy scratching post for your cat. These are just the essentials but now you are one step closer to acquiring a furry companion of your own.

Interview with Abby Stewart, senior math major
Do you think the stereotype of cat lovers has changed?
I think a lot of the personality traits associated with being a cat lover have stayed the same over the years, but that type of personality is more accepted than it used to be. I know a lot of the stereotypes are true of me. A little introverted, a little weird, probably an old person (at least on the inside), but I embrace it and most people accept me for it.

I heard that each cat has his/her own personality. If you could choose a TV character whose personality best emulates your cat, who would it be?
Mr. Fredericksen from Up Because [my cat] she’s introverted and kind of a grump, but once she finally decides she likes you she’s really sweet.

What is the cutest quirk your cat has?
Her tail has a mind of its own. If you pet her, it will just curl and go all over the place, and sometimes she chases it like a dog.

Interview with Marybeth Hampe, senior microbiology and cell science major
Do you think the stereotype of cat lovers has changed?
Yes, because of the boom of cat videos on the internet, it’s more normal to be a cat lover. It’s still generally considered weird though.

When did you realize you were a cat person?
Since before I can remember. My mom played an old VHS where I saw myself when I was three or four coming [into the living room] to see my presents on Christmas day and [when I opened my presents] I cried, and said, “I didn’t get a real kitty.”

Cutest quirk your cat has?
She plays fetch. Her favorite game is using my hand as a chew toy.
Once upon a time, someone had the idea to tattoo the iconic lines to Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” on their arm. They chose the words “take the road less traveled,” accompanied by little footprints, stretched down the body in delicate script. At the time, the person probably thought this was a great idea. It was a great idea to forge their own path, to “take the road less traveled,” and to immortalize these words in their skin.

But the owner of this tattoo had committed one of the cardinal sins of literature: misquoting. However, misquoting Romeo and Juliet’s “star-crossed lovers” is far less common than this epitaph. “The Road not Taken” is one of the most misunderstood poems of 20th century, and so, the tattoo owner is not alone in their error. Ford and Monster.com have both created advertisements encouraging people to take the road less traveled and strive for individuality (paying for their service or product, of course). It’s not a poem about forging your own destiny and being unique. It’s not a poem about walking against the status quo. No, “The Road Not Taken” is a statement about choice and indecision.

Right before World War I, Frost traveled to England. There he met Edward Thomas, a writer who would become his close friend. They took many walks together, but it was Thomas’s indecisive nature that made these walks difficult. Frost once even said that “no matter which road you take, you’ll always sigh and wish you’d taken another.” Logically, Thomas was the inspiration for the poem. Hence, the “sigh” in the fourth stanza.

After Frost returned to America, he sent his old friend a copy of his future poem. Why? It was because this poem, to some extent, was meant to gently mock Thomas’s indecision. It was meant to be a joke, but Frost later found that people took this poem far more seriously than he intended. In fact, the poem caused Thomas to enlist for the Great War, a decision that eventually caused him his life.

The owner of the tattoo, however, could argue that without contextual knowledge of Frost, the poem true meaning is up to interpretation. And yes, it is true that poems have many different interpretations. However, a formal analysis of the poem leads to the same conclusion. The narrator admits that both paths were “really about the same” and “equally lay in leaves.” Despite this fact, the narrator tries to gauge with path will be the better choice. He tries to look to where the path is “bent in the undergrowth,” but alas, he cannot determine which “way leads on to way.” The narrator may have taken the road less traveled, but the poem is entitled “The Road Not Taken.” The narrator is reflecting on that road that he did not take that day. He is “telling this with a sigh.” It is regret that Frost capitalizes on. Indecision, and the finality of choice. To Frost, both choices are equally as good, but you just have to make one. So to Frost, the owner of the tattoo did one thing correctly. They weren’t indecisive about getting his poem put permanently on their body, and they made a choice. According to Frost, “that has made all the difference.”

Article by JW Glass
Photography by Padmini Muraletharen
Design by Caroline Nickerson
Black magic has been at work in the Burger King kitchens. Entering America for the first time during the fall of 2015, the seasonal A.1. Halloween Whopper may initially inspire some apprehension in the casual diner with its ominously black-hued bun, but customers should have no beef with this burger if they considering taste alone. Without allowing the black shade of the bun to color the eating experience, eating the Halloween Whopper is a surprisingly enjoyable experience, though admittedly one rarely approached not to be approached by the conventional eater.

While many might be shocked at the radically different appearance of such an unusual bun, it's not the first time a black bun burger has been sold in Burger King restaurants. Japanese Burger Kings have served [CK1] black-bun burgers as promotions in the past, advertised as the Samurai burger and the Kuru burger. Even other branches of the Burger King franchise have jumped aboard the midnight bun express with burger specials including the Chinese Yin Yang burger and the French Darth Vader [CK2] burger (both limited time specials during 2012).

Entering Burger King with some trepidation, yet reassured that no reports of some poor Chinese, French, or Japanese BK customers dropping dead have surfaced, I ordered the dubious creation and found myself seated with the pitch-black burger in what seemed like a matter of seconds. Filled with the traditional accoutrements of a Whopper, the burger had tomato, lettuce, onion, pickles, American cheese, mayo, and A.1 sauce. But what really set it apart from other Whoppers (besides appearance alone) was the advertised A.1 black pepper flavor baked directly into the bun, perhaps BK's attempt to convince customers of the unconventional bun's edibility.

Muster up the courage to expose my taste buds to the possibly toxic creation, my teeth dug into the inky, yet fluffy surface of the burger. Much to my surprise, the bun's texture was not impacted by its sketchy pigmentation; in fact, the bread itself was very fluffy [CK3] and contained a veritable explosion of flavor, with black pepper jumping off its surface and complementing the smoky taste of the flame-grilled burger. This black pepper impression soon gave way to the other characters of the burger - the tangy A.1. sauce [CK4] oozing out of the bun's black embrace, the leafy lettuce, onions, and tomato adding a subtle crunch at the end of a bite, the American cheese contributing, well, a hint of processed flavor. All in all, while very tasty, the A.1 Halloween burger had a very similar taste to the generic whopper; its sales seem to run more on the novelty of its unusual and festively gruesome appearance.

Brave consumers, however, should be wary of their burger experience extending beyond initial consumption. Widespread accounts have reported seeing unwanted... evidence of their adventurous eating as it exited their body in the form of green fecal matter. While experts have assured customers of the burger's safety (the excrement's residue is the result of the stomach lining's inability to absorb blue dyes from the bun, which then mix with yellow intestinal bile to produce a florid green), such an unnatural side effect has left many with a very different kind of Halloween Horror than usual tricks and treats.

Clocking in at 710 calories (60 more calories than a regular whopper) and about 60 more cents than its less adventurous counterpart, the A.1. Halloween Whopper costs slightly more both to the waistband and the wallet, yet many would argue that the experience itself is worth the additional costs. Though the Halloween Whopper didn't ensnare me with its black magic, I enjoyed the novelty of the experience. For those who aren't bothered by the possibility of delayed colorful side effects of their adventure, this seasonal entree is an experience worth having.
Most of us will pride ourselves on knowing exactly what each letter in LGBTQIA means. In reality, the acronym is much longer than this, but most people can identify the basic LGBTQIA. Many pride organizations advertise that the A is for “Allies,” but such a misconception ironically erases the sexuality (or nonsexuality) of which you’ve never even heard. The A actually stands for Asexuality.

Asexuality is defined as either the lack of sexual attraction to anyone or the low or absent interest in sexual activity. Asexuality is NOT a synonym for celibacy because celibacy is a lifestyle choice and not something as inherent as sexuality. There is disagreement on whether asexuality is a lack of a sexual orientation or an orientation in itself. Many researches argue as to whether asexuality even exists. In fact, many people have never even heard of asexuality as an orientation.

According to a Journal of Sex Research study by Anthony Bogaert, approximately 1 in 100 adults can be classified as asexual due to their lack of sexual attraction and desire. Since asexuality is widely left unacknowledged, many people fail to see the prejudice that asexuals experience from not only the straight community, but also the queer communities. Discrimination against asexuals was examined at Brock University in Canada, and the results were quite disheartening. Socially, asexuals were, “viewed as less human, and less valued as contact partners, relative to heterosexuals and other sexual minorities.” Asexuals were viewed more negatively than homosexuals, and even bisexuals (who are often considered to compose the most discriminated-against sexual orientation group). Such discrimination comes in many forms, but the most blatant is total erasure. People do not understand, nor do they want to understand, why someone does not experience sexual attraction. Asexuals are told on a daily basis that they just haven’t found the right person, that they are lying about experiencing sexual attraction and about their sexuality, or that they must be broken.

We learn from a young age that the purpose of our lives is to procreate. For this reason, asexuals are seen as “damaged” individuals. This is perhaps the most damaging stereotype asexuals can experience because it makes them feel worthless. Teenage asexuals are more likely to have low self-esteem and strong feelings of self-hatred because they are stigmatized by the social misconception that one has to be sexual in order to be socially valuable. Researchers may be inflicting further harm on asexuals by arguing that they are not experiencing a sexual orientation, but rather a disorder such as “hypoactive sexual desire disorder.” There is continuous debate as to whether asexuality is “pathogenic” or a normal variant. Such arguments only contribute to a feeling of brokenness and displacement from society. Asexuals also experience erasure as human beings because they receive absolutely no representation in the media.

Can you name a major motion picture in which there is not even a hint of a sexual relationship? Children’s movies will not fit this criterion because there is always a love interest, whether blatant or subtle. Nor are there movies that solely focus on platonic relationships because these relationships are considered commercially boring. If there isn’t sexual tension, audiences lose interest. Modern day TV shows focus primarily on sexual relationships. Try to find one character in Scandal, Orange is the New Black, Modern Family, The Walking Dead, or any of your favorite shows, that experiences absolutely no romantic-physical relationships. And no, Godzilla does not count.

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) was only founded in 2001, and despite efforts to lobby for representation, their site can only list 6 movies since 1960 that feature a main character without sexual interest. Such depictions do not even make reference to the term “asexual” leaving the characters up to interpretation, rather than definitively representing asexual interests. The asexual community remains invisible, and the A in LGBTQIA remains the letter for “Allies,” instead of rightly signifying “Asexual.”
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