

University of Miami  
English Composition Program  
Fourteenth Annual Audley Webster  
Essay Contest Award Ceremony

March 26, 2008



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Dear friends and colleagues,

Each year, the English composition program recognizes outstanding undergraduate writing in the name of one of the English department's most honored former members, Dr. Audley Webster. An exemplar of intellectual generosity, Dr. Webster sought to instill his students with a love of literature, of the academic life, and of writing. It is with pleasure that I congratulate this year's winners of the Audley Webster Award. They, and the faculty members who teach them, carry on in his spirit.

With best wishes,

*Patrick A. McCarthy*  
Patrick A. McCarthy  
Chair, Department of English

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**Winners:**

Title: *A View from the Streets*  
Student: Luke Beekman  
Teacher: Judy Hood

Title: *(De)humanization*  
Student: Héctor Cardiel Sam  
Teacher: James Britton

Title: *How John Lennon altered modern politics*  
Student: Adam Flomenbaum  
Teacher: James Britton

**Honorable Mention:**

Title: *Souvenirs: A Window to Ethnicity*  
Student: Kiara Wesley  
Teacher: Catalina Ramirez

Title: *Primitive male competition: The quest to become the dominant male at the gun range*  
Student: Kyle Amber  
Teacher: Ben Alsup



Office of English Composition  
P.O. Box 248145  
Coral Gables, Florida 33124

26 March 2008

Dear Students and Colleagues,

It is with some anticipation that our faculty sit down each year to read and discuss the dozens of essays submitted for the Audley Webster Award. While we often chat in the hallways or in meetings with one another about what's happening in our classes, we look upon this contest as a chance to step back from the daily whirl and savor the fruits of our students' labors—and our own. The essays here represent some of the most compelling writing, thinking, and original investigation by UM undergraduates, and we extend our kudos to each of the winners and their instructors.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina Maranto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gina Maranto  
Director

**Judy Hood's comments about Luke Beekman's writing and inquiry project:**

"Luke Beekman's innovative perspective and skillful application of inquiry methods matched his remarkable ability to gather and organize data, apply criteria and analyze texts, evaluate evidence and synthesize an angle of vision. The projects he designed took him beyond the classroom to write with clarity and conviction about subjects of substance and significance.

His photographic essay investigating the homeless situation in Miami delivered a compassionate as well as objective look at Camillus House clients and counselors. Through interviews and photographs, Luke captured the pathos and the courage that an observer outside the inner courtyard is rarely privileged to see and hear".

**Writing Prompt:** ENG 105, Visual Rhetoric  
Assignment 3: Eye Spy: Look and Listen

Judy Hood

"Spying on an Eyesore: Space, Place and Urban Decay," Paul Draus

"The Sociology of Suds," Rebecca Wakefield

"Strategies for Reading Images," Judy Hood

"Observing," Margaret Marshall

"The Inquisitive Interview," Isis Artze-Vega

"Reading an Image," Donald McQuade; "Reading Text," Lester Faigley

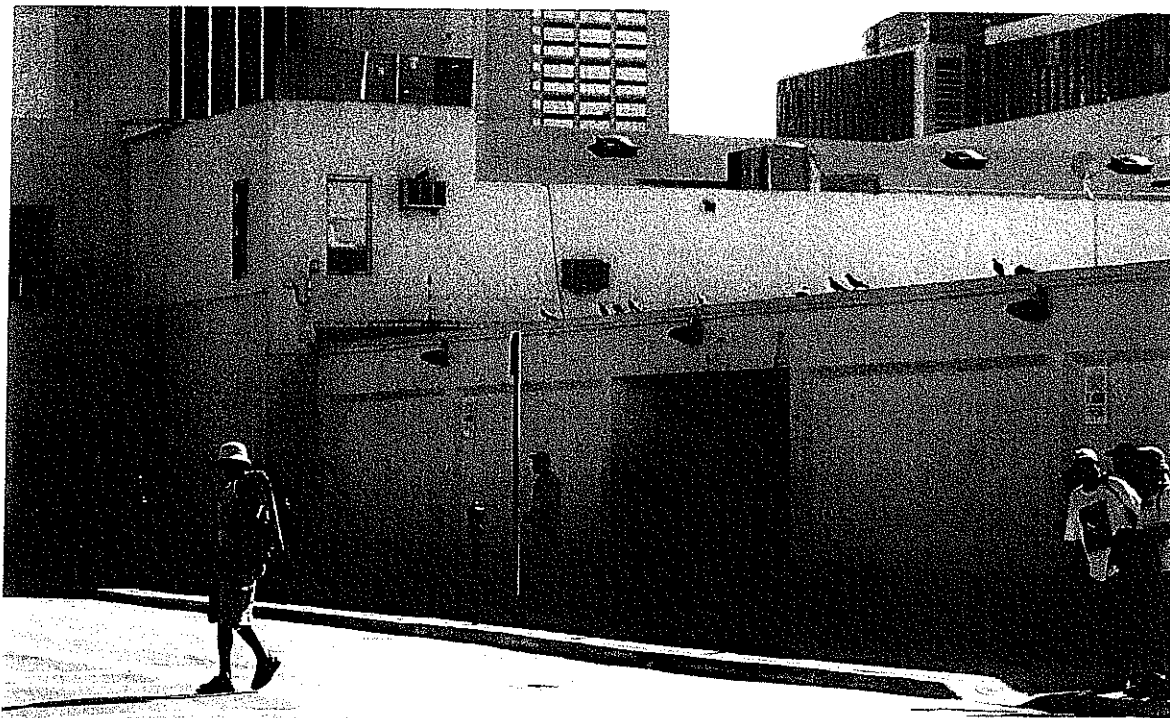
For Paul Draus, photographs of an "empty" space provide the starting point for an inquiry into its meaning to the people and the community interactive with and dependent upon it. Although Draus focuses on a place, his story reveals the personal and social histories intimately connected to that place. He does not rely on images alone, but accumulates data through field notes, observations, and interviews which he compiles in the form of a photographic essay.

Take responsibility for representing a subject in the form of a documentary photographic essay. You may choose a person or a group, a place or a space, an activity or a recurring event. With permission of the subject or group of people, take photographs and make observations. Formulate questions, interview a subject, and report responses.

Choose a project which engages your curiosity and intellectual energy. Consider what aspects of the subject you want to make available and for which audience. Determine how you will be able to accomplish that goal, which modes or combinations of images and words will be most effective. Integrate what you have learned about reading images and text. Apply what you have determined from your reading of picture theorists creates an effective "dialectic of exchange and/or resistance." Interpret what you have observed, questioned, and "taken." Comment on its value or significance through any combination of photos, captions, and verbal text including evidence from interview and observation.

Luke Beekman  
English 105, D1  
W A #3  
10/5/07

### A View from the Streets



I met with my tour guide on the sidewalk of the Miami homeless shelter and prepared myself for the raw experience ahead. I couldn't help but be consumed by the aura in and around the shelter as I visited from room to room. We were heading back inside after getting a view from the street, when a young, black homeless man approached us. He started questioning my escort as to why he was suspended from the rehab program; all the while cracking a beer he held in a small paper bag. "I can't wake up without one," he said to us in between gulps. "I'm an alcoholic." The distraught man told us the truth of his hardships, but his future was something that neither of us could decide. We proceeded to cross the street after the brief encounter, passing by a scattered assembly of homeless

people; all of them dealing with their own inner crisis. This is the landscape at Camillus House, Miami's most outreaching homeless shelter to those who live on the streets. The average person may turn a blind eye to this part of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, but this place and these people exist. Indeed there is turmoil, but within the walls of Camillus, there also resides an unseen sense of triumph.

According to the Camillus website, well over four-thousand people spend their nights on the streets of Miami. Of that population, 22% have mental illnesses and the majority of the rest suffer from crippling addictions. However, the people in Camillus's ISPA rehab program (Institute for Social and Personal Advancement), can easily be approached. They seem far from the desperation seen coming off the streets into the outer Camillus courtyard. The outer courtyard is a hive of commotion; people seeking shelter from the sun, sleeping on the concrete, mumbling, and observing what appears to be a subtle madness surrounding them. Beyond them is the inner courtyard, which is open to ISPA rehab members only and separated by a seemingly invisible line. The inner courtyard is calm and unpopulated in comparison, or at least at this time of day. In the kitchen, ISPA members are preparing mass amounts of food, enough to feed themselves and all of the homeless people coming off the street. I watch as a man with a graying beard fills a water cooler with ice. A strong but simple act that demonstrates the normalcy developing among these homeless people. With Camillus ID cards hanging around their necks, there is a sense of reclaimed identity within the group. They are no longer the nameless statistic of people they belonged to on the street not too long ago. ISPA members progress by meeting with counselors and attending group sessions to help get over their addictions. They are also provided with hospital care if their recovery involves a physical illness. Not everyone stays committed to the healing process, but the ones who do

can walk away with control over their own lives. From what I've witnessed, Camillus House isn't a place the rehab members take for granted.

I sat down with a client, who I will refer to as John, to better understand his perspective of homelessness. He was an articulate and revealing voice of a life from the streets, and a story worth telling. The following is an excerpt of our conversation.

*Luke: Before you became involved in the ISPA program, how long did you live on the streets?*

*John: Well over the last 20 years, I would give it maybe 3 and a half years. You know what I mean? Off and on, off and on. Yeah. And on top of that being expensive, it was horrific for me. You know, because at that time my mindset was not at all productive. I encountered things I should not have encountered, but by my choice that I encountered them... I've seen a lot of things on the streets take place that would make your stomach turn. But overall, like I said, this [Camillus House] is light in a dark tunnel. A place where a man can go and regenerate.*

*L: When you were actually living on the streets, what was a good day like?*

*J: Well, to be honest with you, you want me to answer that question honest?*

*L: Yeah.*

*J: In my mindset a good day, if I had a drug addiction? Getting my drugs was a good day. Getting money to buy my drugs was a good day. Cause that was my whole purpose of being there. I'm not gonna give you this moral thing about having food or having a place to live; we don't think about that kinda stuff. We think about our habits. It's the addiction. So for me, being out there and I score a 100 dollar bill or 50 dollar bill, that was a good day.*



*L: So a bad day would be not scoring that 50 dollar bill?*

*J: Cause you're not feeding your habits. Somebody could help you or play the fool, but if you're addicted, you don't wanna play the fool. You want the drug.*

*L: How did you get by on those bad days?*

*J: Well you really don't have a choice. Unless you go to a life of crime. You know what I mean? Um, Florida's different than other places out there. Cause I mean, you can tend to come up in Florida pretty easy. Cause you do have a lot of people that'll give you, if it ain't but a couple bucks. You know, you might not get the 50 or the hundred but the couple bucks thing goes over and over. So you may not get as much, but you can score one on a daily basis if you choose to.*

*L: Is it more or less every man for himself, or do people come together...?*

*J: There ain't no togetherness on the street. Now you might have certain guys that you consider your friends, but you have to be on guard at all times. Now, let me explain something to you about the streets in Florida. There's all kinds of things that take place. You got homosexuality out there, you got drug users out there, you got high crime out there, so you kind of intertwine with a lot of things that the normal person wouldn't believe, but it's there. ...Um, there was a time that you could get prostitution and it was kind of governed by a pimp. But it ain't like that now. It's governed by crack cocaine. You know, everyone's on an independent scale just to feed their habit. So when you deal with that on that scale, that's basically what you get. You get all kinds of people out there. All kinds of ethnic cultures out there. There's no favoritism when it comes to homelessness or drugs. There's no particular person, it's just up to the individual. So I would actually say that you would be astounded by some of the things you see. And some of the people you see come to the streets.*

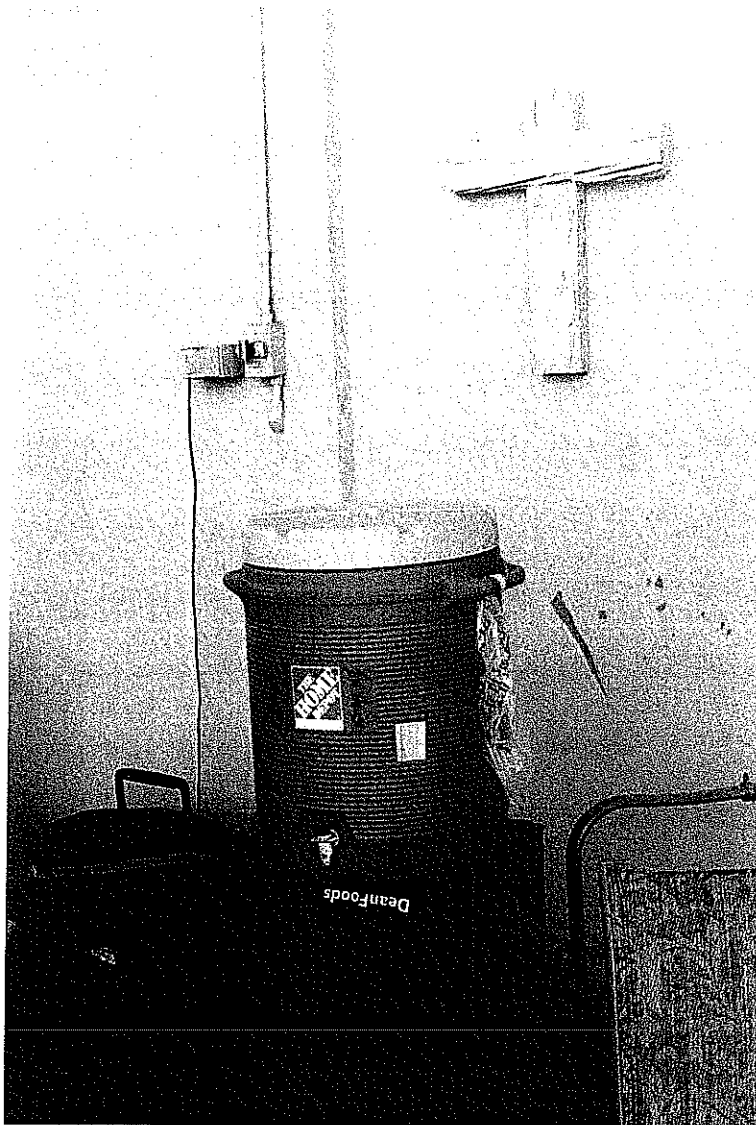
John's insight and experience on the streets brings to life an unfamiliar world to most people. The homeless life is one of drugs and desperation. Every man for himself. Where things take place that would make your stomach turn. I could read this display of torment on the faces I saw coming off the streets. Such deep troubles are hard to mask, even for the ISPA patients. As if a shadow of their memories and addictions were cast upon them. John states, *"I encountered things I should not have encountered, but by my choice that I encountered them..."* and it is a reminder of what separates ISPA patients from the rest of the homeless. The line between the inner and outer courtyard is defined by one word. Choice. When someone chooses to leave their addictions, and to leave the instability of their own lives behind, they cross that invisible line into the inner Camillus courtyard. John told me why he decided to enter the rehab program, saying *"I think God had something to do with that too. I think He had a great deal to do with it. Because you can hide the hurt for so long... And when you come to that place where the hurt is like overbearing, you need a place to go."* That place is Camillus. And there's a reason why.

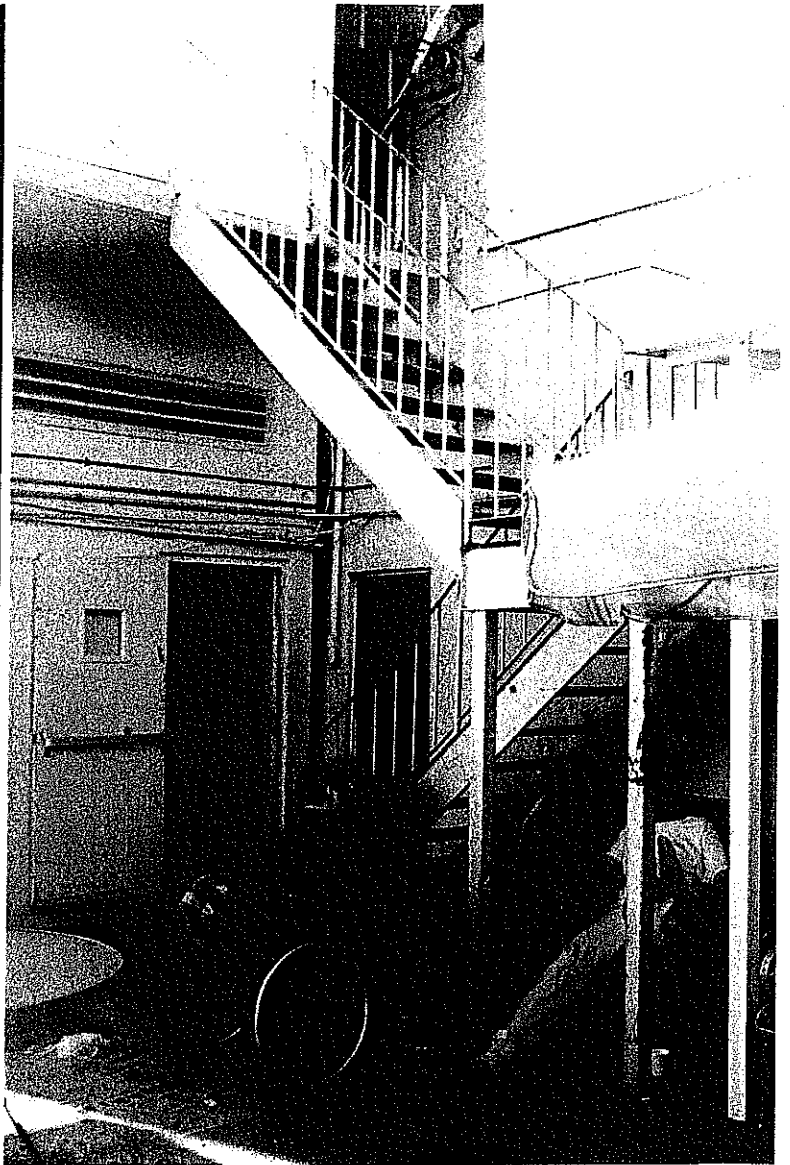
Elizabeth Rodriguez is the lead counselor clinician at Camillus. She meets in group sessions three times a week, and does a lot of one-on-one counseling with her clients. I met with her just as she was finishing up a counseling session with an ISPA patient. Elizabeth is one of many reasons that the homeless people of Miami have a shot at recovering, and she has a real passion for helping people. "I know a lot of people say the relationship should be professional, and it is, the relationship is professional, but I think there's got to be a human touch. If you're not genuine to that person, they're going to pick it up." Elizabeth told me she never really thought she would end up in this field of work, being a sort of vigilante for the homeless. She used to have the same detached feelings about encountering bums and beggars on the street as most people do, but now after being

with Camillus House since 2002, the experience has really changed her perspective. "I can say that before, I used to see it as: 'They're bums. They're lazy. They're taking advantage of the system.' But coming here and working and learning to work with the population and realizing that they are people, and looking at the fact that they can have some serious addiction problems, serious mental health problems... I'm aware of the other avenues that these people could be going through. These inner struggles that they may be going through that I would never think of, had I not been in this field." Elizabeth, along with her fellow counselors and volunteers are the reason why the Camillus ISPA program has a 95% success rate with its patients. Even the ones who make her doubt their commitment have pulled through in the end. A particular success story gives light to why these counselors find so much value in their work. "Yeah, there's actually, there's a client that I never thought he would actually complete the program. Because he was, and to this day he still is really stubborn... And, you know, he was really defensive when he came in, and to this day he's going to be about 17-18 months clean and sober. And to this day, everyday, he passes by and sees me. Even if it's for about 5 or 10 minutes he says, 'Okay I'm coming in. It's too hot outside.' ...But slowly he's opening up. And it just makes your day. It really does make your day." Not only does Camillus provide a home for its rehab members, but stories like this show that it's so much more than food and shelter. A lot of these homeless people have to, no family to turn to, and in a sense, Camillus has provided that too. John can bear witness to that. *"I have a great, great passion for Camillus House. Cause they really do care. It ain't some place that's doing it because of the money. Every counselor, every employee from my understanding, they care about what they do."*

Its dinner time at Camillus and the ISPA members are serving food to their fellow homeless, I am told that the cafeteria room, which is filling with people, will be emptied

of its tables tonight to be replaced by beds for the homeless on the streets. Outside now, the courtyards are emptying. The water cooler which I watched being filled with ice had been placed next to a cross on the courtyard wall. By nature, a place like Camillus puts itself in the midst of a chaos. But people like John are surviving. *"It's a one day at a time situation. And if I do it one day at a time, I can accumulate months and years. But I can honestly say I'm gonna have to deal with it one day at a time. That's a goal for me."*





**James Britton's comments about Hector Cardiel Sam's essay and assignment guidelines:**

Hector's essay reveals a writer willing to take chances. As he developed the ideas for "De-humanization," he realized that a conventional essay structure wouldn't adequately represent those ideas. As he wrote, he struggled to craft a non-linear essay that would carry a powerful argument and make readers both think hard and feel deeply about how we live our lives today. That struggle paid off. The result is this exceptional work.

**Paper 4 Proposal**

At this point, you may have chosen a topic, and although you probably have some ideas about your subject matter, you probably have not established a clear point of view on it. If you have, there is a good chance that it will evolve as your work progresses, especially as you continue your research. That you do not know exactly what you will say at this point is fine; this allows room for your ideas to grow and it does not predetermine the analysis you will offer.

In your proposal, you should begin to explain what you plan to do in Paper 4. What do you plan to examine? Why are you interested in it? In the research you have done so far, what about the topic has stood out for you? Do you have a preliminary thesis? What is it that you want to understand and explain?

With these questions in mind, write **one page** (or more if you choose) laying out your tentative plans for Paper 4. This is a proposal in the broadest sense, so you should establish why this topic is worth examining and what direction you plan to take. Do you foresee your topic becoming narrower in some specific way? Are you beginning to focus on some particular aspect or do you have a number of things that interest you?

As you develop your ideas, please remember that you will not be writing a position paper in which you take one side on an issue. Instead, your goal should be to offer an analysis in which you attempt to understand and explain the complexities of the topic you have developed.

Hector Cardiel Sam

## (De)humanization

Eleven years later. Numbers have dehumanized us. Over breakfast coffee we read of 40,000 American dead in Vietnam. Instead of vomiting, we reach for the toast. Our morning rush through crowded streets is not to cry murder but to hit that through before somebody else gobbles our share.

An equation: 40,000 dead young men= 3,000 tons of bone and flesh, 124,000 pounds of brain matter, 50,000 gallons of blood, 1,840,000 years of life that will never be lived, 100,000 children who will never be born.

*Dalton Trumbo*

Johnny Got His Gun

On December 2003, forty year old Joyce Vincent died of natural causes and a world collapsed with a deafening and decisive thud. No one heard. The galaxies and stars and sun within her imploded, but still no one felt it. For two years she lay in her London apartment, dead. Friends, family, neighbors: no one noticed her absence for two full years. Her body was only found in 2006 when significant enough arrears built up on her apartment, prompting her landlord to drill open her door and demand debt payment from a corpse that was found surrounded by unopened Christmas presents. Her remains

were found so decomposed that the coroners resorted to a study of her dental records to establish her identity (Woman's body in bedsit for years, BBC News).

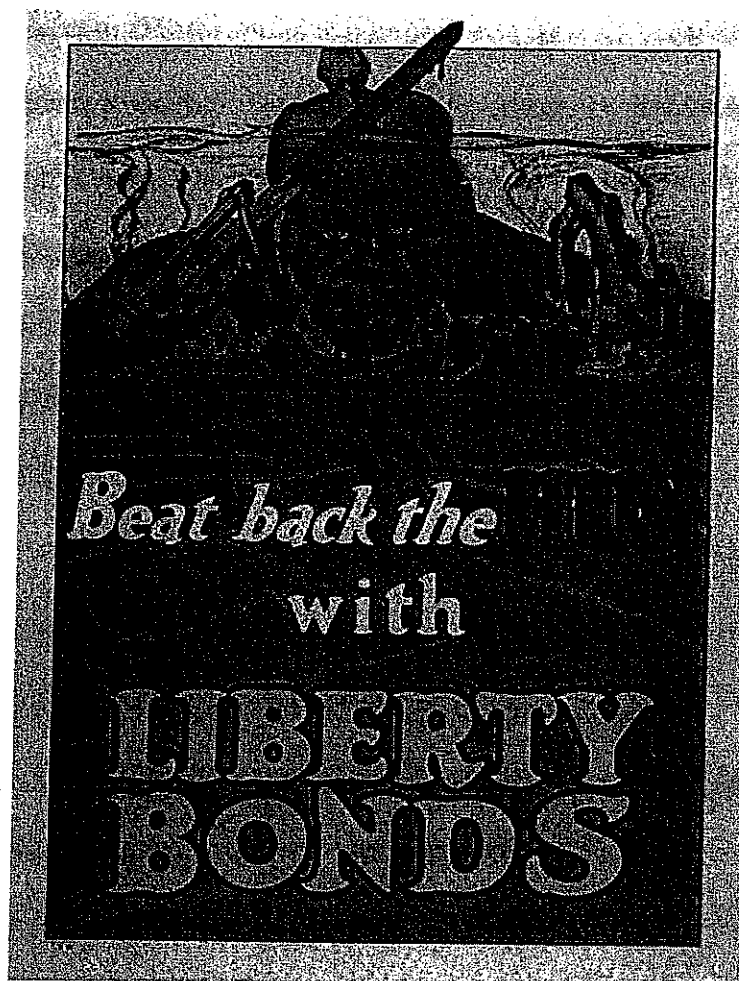
I want to tell you something, and if Joyce Vincent were still alive I'd tell her as well: you are amazing. I also wanted to apologize. I want to say I'm sorry for how often I've walked to class, and have been completely oblivious to everyone around me, wrapped up and enthralled in absolutely nothing. I wanted to apologize for how often I drift about vapidly, listening to music or talking on my phone, ignoring everyone and everything. In my defense, it is exceedingly easy to see something or someone without truly looking at them, and there are those who would argue that it's human nature to simplify an overly complex surrounding. Regardless, I've never had the time or patience to stop and consider for instance that the person sitting next to me reading the paper at the dining hall has approximately 75 to 100 trillion (that's trillion with twelve zeros) human cells in his body at any given time. That he has 30 trillion red blood cells and loses and remakes about 3 million of these cells every second of every day for his entire existence ("How many Cells does a human lose every second"). That his skin spans an average of 21 square feet, weighs nine pounds and contains more than eleven miles of blood vessels (Sean Markey p80). Too often I've taken all this for granted. But the question is why? Why do we not realize that the person sitting next to us is easily one of the most magnificently complex, interesting and amazing beings to walk this earth simply on the basis of their humanity?

Why did nobody notice Joyce Vincent's death for two whole years? How could her existence have been so miniscule, when she was anything but? Remarkable simply based on her humanity and her existence, Joyce Vincent died entirely unnoticed and



unacknowledged for what she was, punctuating one of our world's most ordinary tragedies: dehumanization. We are so often shut in our little spheres, concerned with all our problems and our stresses, that we never seem to stop and consider that at the most basic biological level without taking into account human moral structures like honor, courage or integrity, without taking into account our genius, and ingenuity that you are still left with something truly remarkable. Three major interrelated contributors (although in reality there are far too many to fully enumerate and explore here) muddle this simple truth. They are racism, war and technology.

Nigger, spic, wop, cracker, cunt, fag, gook, trailer- trash, dyke: the great erasers of identity, of humanity. They're pretty easy to say and use, and they also obliterate any sense of guilt we might feel when we do people harm. A study done by the University of Kent at Canterbury found that these dehumanizing epithets were a necessary and subconscious process that allowed violence towards one group. As an account, from a Vietnam War Veteran cited within this study states: "You are trained 'gook, gook, gook' and once the military has got the idea implanted in your mind that these people are not humans, they are subhuman, it makes it a little bit easier to kill 'em" (qtd. in Castano and Giner-Sorolla 812). One need look no further than war time propaganda which often depicts the enemy as less than human.



(World War I Propaganda [1918])

Furthermore, psychological theory has suggested that “perceiving another person as human activates empathetic reactions that would make it difficult to mistreat him or her without risking personal distress. Once the other is dehumanized, however, such self sanctions for mistreatment can be disengaged” (qtd. in Castano and Giner-Sorolla 813).

These processes of dehumanization and subsequent mistreatment continue into present day, startlingly unchanged. Prisoner abuses in Abu Ghraib during our War on Terror range from humiliating to sadistic. Included among the mistreatments of prisoners according to a paper by Gregory Hooks and Clayton Mosher of Washington State University, was a “contest between two army dog handlers to see who could make the

detainees urinate or defecate [first] in the presence of dogs;..the rape of a female detainee;....a detainee being forced to bark like a dog and crawl on his stomach while [Military Police] spat and urinated on him;....and a detainee who was beaten with a broom and had a chemical light broken and poured over his body...while..[Military Police] then used the broom to sodomize the detainee while two female [Military police] hit him, threw a ball at his penis and took photographs” (Hooks and Mosher 1629). Furthermore, “...this type of violence arises from structures that cut off the possibility of personal empathy” (Hooks and Mosher 1636). These structures in turn are the racist slurs that always seem to arise during war time, our newest of course being “sand niggers, and towel heads.” In this way a prison guard can put out the sun with his thumb, so to speak, and ignore the fact that the man he is currently beating within an inch of his life may have a home, a wife, children, a job, a car, and hopes and dreams, much like himself. In this way, a human being whose DNA, if unwound, could span the distance from the earth to the sun four hundred times ([www.angelfire.com](http://www.angelfire.com)), is reduced to nothing.

Racism is only part of the equation that fits into the larger process of dehumanization. Further facilitating dehumanization are our astounding leaps and bounds in the arena of technology, more specifically war time technology. Although a perverse proclivity for aggression has remained constant throughout human history, war was once much different on an emotional level. In the good ol’ days; the sword-swinging-battle-ax-wielding days, you had to get up close to the enemy, smell his sweat and fear and stab him in the stomach then watch him bleed and squirm and writhe in pain. You had to watch him die. At the end of a major confrontation, it is likely that you would’ve finished drenched in blood with images of severed limbs and appendages flying through

the air followed by crimson tails of blood and the shrieks of their previous owners, replaying vividly in your memory.

Although these experiences did not dampen enthusiasm for war, by comparison war is less traumatizing today with our myriads of technological advances. According to New York Times Columnist Steven Lee Myers, "technology has depersonalized modern warfare." Battle cruisers and submarines can launch missiles with the help of satellites anywhere in the world at a moments notice. Nuclear missiles and atom bombs truly seem benign hunks of metal sleeping in their silos and in the bellies of airplanes. Instead of having to fight on the ground and stab someone with a sword, a soldier simply need push a button and he may kill tens, hundreds, thousands or even millions of little moving dots on a screen. Hidden snugly inside hi-tech tanks and airplanes, armed forces are then spared the discomfort of watching their enemies die. They may suspend moral consequence as they never witness the repercussions of their actions. In this way it is almost unnecessary to reduce and dehumanize the enemy when all a soldier sees is a spot on a map to bomb, or a spec on a computer screen to gun down. 60,470 Iraqi civilian deaths (<http://www.iraqbodycount.org>), 6,047,000,000,000,000 cells snuffed out.

Outside of dehumanizing war, our wartime technologies have had some interesting side effects as well. Chief among them is how these technologies find their way into the every day lives of civilians. Space exploration and eventually satellites, brought about by United States and Soviet Union Cold War competition, have now become instrumental in our knowledge of the biosphere and of climate changes. Our knowledge gleaned from these initial war time forays has been vast and staggeringly practical. Walkie-talkies, birthed by a military need to communicate on the battlefield

effectively have evolved and found their way, ringing, beeping, and vibrating into our pockets as cell phones. The list goes on: guns, four wheel drive, emergency medical services, blimps, GPS (<http://www.tv.com>). Topping all of this however has been our generation's great new technological leap forward, the internet. Birthed by the Pentagon, again in an effort to facilitate communication between armed forces, the internet has had enormous and far ranging impacts into civilian lives. Long lost friends and relatives are now simply a click away, entertainment, media, and all the knowledge in our world are now contained within websites ready for our perusal. Everything however has it's dark side and the internet is no exception.

The internet, as much of a boon as it has been a curse, has ushered our generation into a brave new world increasingly dominated by chat rooms, instant messaging, and personal websites. I have literally spoken to my roommate through instant messaging while he sat less than four feet behind with his back turned (we were both listening to music on headphones, and talking was too much work). I had friends back home who lived in my neighborhood yet I never saw because getting away from the computer and outside the house required a personal and relational commitment which neither of us were willing to make. It is not uncommon to spend hours on end, alone plugged into a computer living a social life that a few generations ago existed wholly in real life. Instead of seeing faces, we see obfuscations, outright lies and alter egos on computer screens. Paradoxically, our new fangled ability to connect to one another has been equally adept at separating us and firmly placing write encrypted firewalls between our personal relationships. With all the information in the world at our fingertips, many of us encounter information overload, or what has recently been identified as NEDS (New

Economy Depression Syndrome) by Tim Sanders, the chief solutions officer at Yahoo!

This syndrome is then defined as “a form of self-reinforcing depression, which is caused by information overload, constant interruption and a reduction in relationship quality. The victim feels a sense of being over-whelmed, helpless, and ultimately alone” (T+ D 13). A study done by HeartMath found that “of those who spend more than 30 hours a week on the Internet, 45 percent often feel exhausted and 37 percent report sleep problems. Of those who reported information overload three or more times a week, 41 percent feel tense and 43 percent often have trouble remembering things” (Dempsey 5).

Regardless, we’re social animals hooked up to machines. These machines are fast becoming the interface of almost all our interactions, and our social relationships are languishing spectacularly as a result. According to Time magazine writer Robert Putnam, “Americans are more socially isolated today than [they] were barely two decades ago. The latest evidence of that comes from a topflight team of sociologists who, after comparing national surveys in 1985 and 2004, report a one-third drop in the number of people with whom the average American can discuss ‘important matters’”(Robert Putnam 36). This isolation that has such a subtle yet powerful tug within most of modern America as manifested itself outwardly in increased crime rates, the coarsening of our political system and increased death rates (“social isolation is as big a risk factor for premature death as is smoking”) (Putnam 36). Our world now exists as one where people are uncomfortably close and yet maddeningly far away. In my early teens, dinners which consisted of the family coming together to eat, evolved into TV dinners where we came together to not talk about our days and to instead watch irrelevant and meaningless shows and movies. Quietly, a once tight-knit family drifted apart. Then

one day I got too busy for the TV dinners, and stopped eating with my family altogether. Slowly and insidiously, I lost something precious, and I haven't ever been the same man. But this is the life I live. One exceedingly isolated from everything that matters, wrapped up in my little bubble, wafting rapidly through the world and ignoring that the human brain has 100 billion nerve cells; that our hearts will beat 3,000 million times in our lifetimes and pump 48 million gallons of blood through our bodies.

This modern age of technology subtly insulated me and delicately strangled my later years at home before college. The time, friends and moments I lost however are miniscule in comparison to what Joyce Vincent lost. Technology was one of the major role players in her years of isolation. When she died, her rent and electricity were in part paid by a computer system. She never had to see the landlord face to face to make her payments for the two full years that her body lay undiscovered. Deep seeded dehumanization also played a major role in her isolation. Brutally disregarding her humanity, Joyce Vincent's spouse beat her and forced her to flee into a witness protection program for battered women. To this end she underwent a voluntary isolation in which she severed all ties to existing acquaintances and probably had to change her identity. The apartment complex to which she was relocated however was an execrable place to live. As people noted, junkies were often found lying unconscious in the hallways. Garbage outside was piled in such copious amounts that the smell of rotting food would eventually serve to mask the smell of the rotting corpse inhabiting the apartment above. When she would leave and enter her apartment, no one noticed. No one was supposed to. When she stopped leaving, not surprisingly, no one noticed either. The strain from this lack of personal contact became readily apparent upon inspection of Joyce's apartment.

The television was still on when investigators entered her apartment, the endless chatter of friendly voices offering you goods and equivocally wishing you well continuing ceaselessly in a carousel of flashing lights and music for two full years. Joyce was also found surrounded by unopened Christmas presents, possibly in an attempt to remind herself that once upon a time people cared for her enough to go to a store and buy her a gift. That one time in her life, people cared enough to be in the same room as her and deliver these small tokens of affection because. Finally safe, but completely alone, the fairest appraisal to be made is that Joyce Vincent foundered. Her prison bars were not ones made up solely of unfeeling computer screens or the TV. The lines were drawn when her husband beat her. When people stopped caring about themselves and shot up in the hallways of her apartment. When people stopped caring enough to clean the garbage outside. When I stopped caring enough to actually talk to my roommate or to see that friend in my old neighborhood. When people stopped caring enough to uphold Geneva Conventions during wartime. When I stopped caring enough to hold the door for people or look them in the eye or smile. When the military stopped seeing people, and started seeing insignificant specs on a map. For all these reasons, I would like to say I'm sorry.

A warning: in Alaska, to kill wolves, some hunters take sharp blades and place them outside in the ice. Beforehand, these blades are coated with blood, the blood is frozen and then the blade is coated again and again with blood forming a kind of morbid Popsicle. In the wild a wolf will smell the blood on the blade and attempt to lick the blood off. It will lick all the blood off and eventually cut it's tongue on the blade, but by this time it is already too late and the wolf's tongue is so numb that it doesn't realize that it is licking and eating it's own blood. Without realizing it, the wolf literally eats/drinks



itself to death. May we not cut off the ties that bind us all together, may we not become numb to what keeps us alive, our humanity; lest we live and die like animals.

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Special thanks to Anton Luckhoff for the wolf story.

**James Britton's comments about Adam Flomenbaum's essay and assignment guidelines:**

It isn't unusual to encounter a student who works very hard, or one who is intellectually ambitious, or one who writes wonderfully. It isn't *that* unusual for a student with any two of these qualities to pass through a classroom. A student who combines all three—that *is* unusual. Adam is one of those students, as this paper demonstrates. Seamlessly integrating a wide range of sources into a clearly original argument, his analysis of John Lennon as a sort of prototype for the contemporary celebrity activist is persuasive, interesting, and complex.

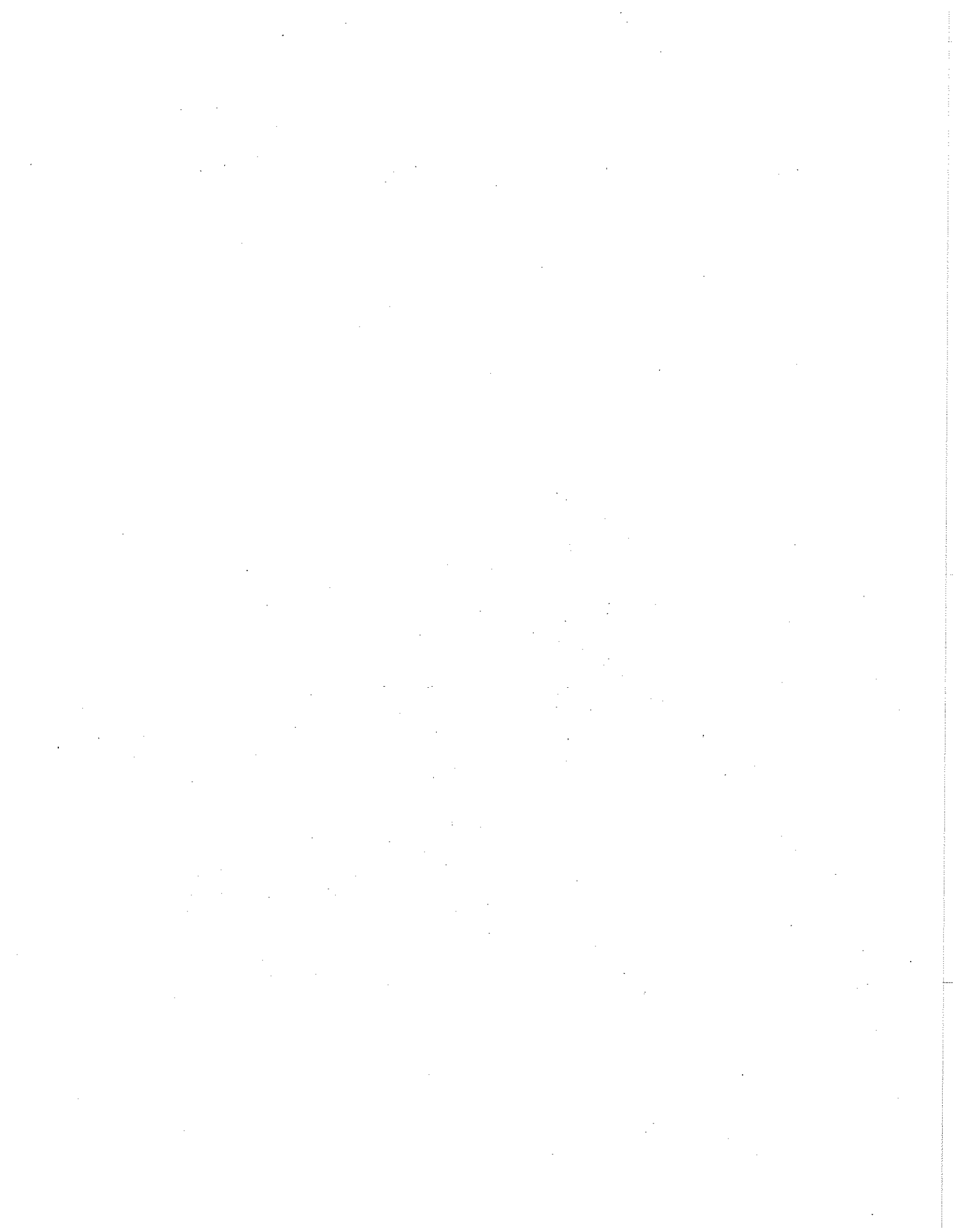
**Paper 4 Proposal**

At this point, you may have chosen a topic, and although you probably have some ideas about your subject matter, you probably have not established a clear point of view on it. If you have, there is a good chance that it will evolve as your work progresses, especially as you continue your research. That you do not know exactly what you will say at this point is fine; this allows room for your ideas to grow and it does not predetermine the analysis you will offer.

In your proposal, you should begin to explain what you plan to do in Paper 4. What do you plan to examine? Why are you interested in it? In the research you have done so far, what about the topic has stood out for you? Do you have a preliminary thesis? What is it that you want to understand and explain?

With these questions in mind, write **one page** (or more if you choose) laying out your tentative plans for Paper 4. This is a proposal in the broadest sense, so you should establish why this topic is worth examining and what direction you plan to take. Do you foresee your topic becoming narrower in some specific way? Are you beginning to focus on some particular aspect or do you have a number of things that interest you?

As you develop your ideas, please remember that you will not be writing a position paper in which you take one side on an issue. Instead, your goal should be to offer an analysis in which you attempt to understand and explain the complexities of the topic you have developed.



Revolution #4;  
How John Lennon altered modern politics

Once asked how concerned the Beatles were about being viewed by posterity, Paul McCartney recalled “being shocked one day when John started worrying how people would remember him when he was gone. It was an incredibly vulnerable thing for him to come out with” (Miller 251). Towards the final years of the Beatles, John Lennon wanted to be remembered as more than a rock star. When the Beatles came to the United States in 1966, at their first press conference, Lennon began his transition from musical icon to political leader. The Beatles, against the advice of their management, told the media “We hate war. War is wrong. We think about it every day” (John Lennon 1940-1980). Though Lennon said that he had “never not been political,” the image that the Beatles had to maintain to become as popular as they did and then sustain that popularity, forced him to repress his political actions. (Ali and Blackburn). To Lennon, the press conference “was the first opportunity [he] personally took to wave the flag a bit” (Ali and Blackburn). From that point on, Lennon became less concerned with his image as a rock star, choosing to instead focus on how he could use his popularity to represent the political reality of the time, which was in a transition of its own; by the 1970’s, the politics of “flower power” began to lose momentum, while the youth counterculture revolution and the ever-escalating war in Vietnam became of foremost concern. In the years immediately preceding the Beatles’ demise, Lennon became increasingly political and in doing so, “he fought the usual meanings of pop stardom, because he resisted the usual easy manipulations, and in the newspaper articles, the radio interviews...the struggle continued – everyone was still claiming John Lennon as their friend, their

cultural symbol" (Frith 223). Lennon used both his status as the people's friend and cultural symbol, and his uniquely diverse artistic ability to alter the once narrow definition of politics. In examining Lennon as more than a rock star, although it is important to look at why and how Lennon evolved as an artist and politician, it is just as important to examine how his contributions to politics, and more specifically, celebrity politics, are prevalent in society today.

In a recent CNN poll, 47% of Americans believe that celebrities are able to offer new political insights, and support their involvement. When the poll considered the political party affiliation of the responders, the numbers varied greatly. While 67% of Republicans who were asked "Should Hollywood celebrities get involved in politics?" answered "No," 61% of Democrats answered "Yes." Another striking variation in response was by age: 61% of those polled between the ages of 18-30 answered "Yes" to the same question, compared to 45% from the next closest age bracket, (ages 30-44) (Poll). Why are these numbers relevant, though, especially in relation to John Lennon? If not for Lennon's political involvement, it is highly unlikely that even a small number of Americans would now be so supportive celebrity involvement in politics, and when the numbers recorded were divided by political party and age, they corresponded closely with those whom Lennon effected in the 1960's and 1970's. As Lennon began to make his mark as a political figure, the White House was controlled by Richard Nixon, a staunch Republican, who attempted to have Lennon deported because he was deemed a threat to Nixon's 1972 presidential campaign and was an anti-war activist. Though he has generally been classified as a communist, Lennon shared a common goal with the entire



left at the time: Nixon must not be reelected, and the troops in Vietnam must come back to America.

While the poll numbers may only appear to coincidentally correspond to the demographics that Lennon reached out to, young people and the left, it seems more likely that the numbers reflect Lennon's true lasting influence. If anything, the combination of the Beatles breakup, Lennon's political ambitions, fears, and hopes, and the Vietnam War coincidentally occurred almost concurrently.

Although Lennon's greatest political accomplishments came after the breakup of the Beatles, the three versions of the song "Revolution #1," two of which were included on the Beatles' 1968 *White Album*, were a preview of Lennon's politics that would follow. In May 1968, as the student uprising in Paris was in full force, and the student protests in America were gaining steam, Lennon paid careful attention to the events. Also at this time, Lennon met Yoko Ono, who he told reporters was "[him] in drag," and on May 30<sup>th</sup>, the first version of "Revolution #1" was recorded, with Ono joining the Beatles in the studio. Social theorist Anthony Elliot describes "Revolution #1" as "intensely political and aesthetic at once. It assumes that at the center of politics there lies a ruthless, destructive compulsion for self-preservation and self-aggrandizement" (Elliot 100).

The New Left, a group of Democrats who believed that violence was the necessary means for political change, a principal Marxist theory, rejected the song vehemently. The Berkley *Barb* wrote that the song "sounds like the hawk plank adopted in the Chicago convention of the Democratic Death Party," while the *New Left Review* labeled the song "a lamentable petty bourgeois cry of fear." The newspaper *Ramparts* wrote that the Beatles have "gotten so far from thinking of 'contribution' to a political

cause as meaning what they can do as artists that they conceive of their role essentially as that of millionaires.” Though this statement was perhaps true at the time, as Lennon’s political involvement increased, along with Ono’s influence, Lennon soon found a way to combine his celebrity, wealth, and artistry, to ‘contribute’ to his respective causes (Wiener 60).

Though Lennon did sing “when you talk about destruction/ don’t you know that you can count me out” in the album version of the song, in the other version of “Revolution #1,” Lennon included “in” after the word “out” choosing to “put both in because [he] wasn’t sure” (Wiener 61). Despite Lennon’s ambivalence in his message and about the criticism that came with the “Revolution” releases, the song was ‘revolutionary’ not because it was political, as artists before Lennon had included political messages, and more specific to the time, anti-war messages, but because Lennon, in responding to criticism and defending his politics, took upon himself political responsibilities from that point on. Conversely, Jon Wiener notes that fans of Bob Dylan, whose songs were often political, “made him too important a symbol and he didn’t like it.” Whereas Dylan refused to partake in celebrity politics, which would have required his public discussion and propelling of his songs’ politics, Lennon embraced the responsibility wholeheartedly.

The other version of “Revolution,” titled “Revolution #9,” was a different mode by which Lennon transmitted his politics. “Revolution #1” was able to command mass response because it was a song, a Beatles song, and it was explicitly political. “Revolution #9,” though, contains no lyrics and no Beatles playing music. Lennon had been introduced to avant-garde art by Yoko Ono and had finished an avant-garde

collaboration with her before the releases of "Revolution" (Elliot 104). Author Ian MacDonald argues that "Revolution #9" was "Lennon's sortie into sonic chance...packaged for a mainstream audience which had never heard of its progenitors, let alone been confronted by their work" (MacDonald 231). In this sense, Lennon was able to "deliver the revolutionary avant-garde up to the mass market" (Elliot 105). It was Lennon's celebrity status, not the brilliance of his work, that allowed him and his non-Beatle wife to introduce avant-garde work to his large following, who had once admired him for his catchy love songs and personable character. Still using his personable character, he began to talk about personal and political "reality" and everyone listened. In introducing three versions of "Revolution," recording solo songs such as "Give Peace a Chance," and "Power to the People," having political arguments with the media, staging "bed-ins" with Yoko, and associating himself with leading anti-war activists Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, Lennon effectively began to change politics using his celebrity and different forms of art and expression.

Tariq Ali, who edited an underground communist magazine called the *Red Mole*, and provided one of the most engaging interviews of any journalist with Lennon, remembers first making contact with Lennon in 1969, when Ali wrote an open letter harshly criticizing the song "Revolution." Expecting that Lennon would ignore the criticism, Ali was surprised when Lennon replied with a strong letter defending his political message. Although there was no contact between the two for some time afterwards, Lennon unexpectedly called Ali to discuss political issues such as the student movement transpiring in Japan. In their discussion, Lennon also mentioned that he had wanted to join the protests against the war in Vietnam, like Mick Jagger, but that the

Beatles manager would not allow it. Ali recalls that "John always regretted having obeyed his manager, but that was in the past. The biggest influence in his life was now Yoko Ono. I was in no doubt that Yoko had radicalized him further on the artistic and the political front" (Ono 3-5).

In March, 1969, soon after they were wed, Lennon and Ono began to plan their honeymoon. Realizing, though, that as powerful celebrities, wherever they would go, the media would follow, "instead of having a private honeymoon," Lennon said, they were going to have a "private protest," staying in bed for seven days at the Amsterdam Hilton. Ono stated to the media, who were invited for all seven days, that the protest was for "the violence that's going in the world." Adorned above the bed, were posters that read "Hair Peace" and "Bed Peace," which symbolized their reasons for the protest – they were going to grow their hair and stay in bed until peace came. David Fenton, a photographer and activist said of the protest, "it was completely original. The conscious use of one's myth to project a political and social poetic goal. It had never happened before" (*The U.S. vs. John Lennon*). Although they tried to stage this type of protest again in New York, they were not granted permission to do so, and instead they had to do it in Montreal, broadcasting it over the border. Of course both "bed-ins," as they were called, were mocked and criticized by numerous media outlets, but this was what Lennon and Ono knew would happen and they embraced it. As it is true of all celebrities, they choose how to handle the inevitable media attention, but no celebrity before Lennon had redirected the spotlight towards a prominent political cause in such an original and meaningful way.

In comparison to the political causes that celebrities promote today, causes that are already widespread but greatly benefit from celebrity support, Lennon was able to

“create an illusion that the ‘subject of peace’ was something really new, that there were urgent political developments and fresh information relating to the peaceful ordering of human affairs” (Elliot 125). Interestingly, while Lennon displayed ambivalence towards violence during the Beatles’ second release of “Revolution,” peace soon became his sole message with the “bed-ins” and the songs “Give Peace a Chance” and later, “Imagine.” This distinction is crucial because it represents how Lennon’s ideals transitioned from pseudo-Marxist to wholly utopian. Lennon once told his assistant, Dan Richter, that “when I sing ‘I Want to Hold Your Hand’ hundreds of millions of people hear that. Why don’t I sing ‘Give Peace a Chance,’ because hundreds of millions of people would hear that as well” (*The U.S. vs. John Lennon*). Lennon recognized the power that he had to profess utopian and idealistic messages that everyone would hear and those who believed in peace and protested the Vietnam War sang “Give Peace a Chance” endlessly at the demonstrations.

As the 1972 presidential election approached, Jon Wiener, a Lennon historian, notes that, “Lennon tried to figure out ways that he could use his power as a celebrity to help end the war” (John Lennon 1940-1980). In order to do so, Lennon, with anti-war activists Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, thought a Lennon national concert tour would help end the war and Nixon’s presidency. The 1972 election became of even greater significance, as it was the first year that 18-year-olds could vote. Thus, Lennon “wanted to combine rock music with radical politics and use the tour to urge young people to register to vote.”

Though the tour never happened because of Lennon’s fear of Nixon and the FBI, Lennon’s efforts pointed the way for tours of similar nature, such as MTV’s “Rock the

Vote,” a series of musical performances that encourage eligible voters to vote.

Nonetheless, Lennon was able to reach young voters through different means besides a national tour, and as his fans were Beatles fans, the age group he influenced the most would be the same age group, 18-30, that the CNN poll showed most favor celebrity involvement in politics. Historian Gore Vidal, remarking on Lennon singing about peace instead of war, said, “why not go the other way? Sing about human community, sing about love sing about peace. And suddenly that is a frightening voice for people who want to hear ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic’ over and over again” (*The U.S. vs. John Lennon*).

Lennon’s voice was “frightening” to Richard Nixon and the Republican Party, who thought that Lennon’s influence was too widespread and had the ability to deter their political goals, especially in Vietnam. Strom Thurmond, a Republican Senator from South Carolina, sent a letter to Nixon in 1972, which mentioned Lennon’s planned national concert tour, and also said that “deportation would be a strategic counter-measure” (*Lennon and the Politics of Deportation*). Even before Nixon attempted to have Lennon deported in 1972, the FBI was monitoring Lennon. Although the concert tour did not happen because of the deportation trials and because Lennon and Ono were suspicious that they were being followed by the FBI (which they were), they were able to perform in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1971 at the “Free John Sinclair” concert. It is believed that Lennon’s performance of the song he wrote for the concert, “John Sinclair,” was the main reason that Sinclair, sentenced to ten years in jail for his possession of two marijuana joints, was acquitted of all charges only three days later. At the concert, though, was an FBI agent who was sent to write down every lyric Lennon sang that night,

which became part of the 281 pages of files that the FBI would keep on Lennon.

Ultimately, Lennon was able to remain in the U.S, but the trials had a deep effect on him (Lennon and Politics of Deportation).

It seems apparent that Nixon's attempt to use immigration laws to prevent Lennon from remaining in the U.S was motivated by his fear of Lennon's politics. There have been cases in American history when the government felt that denying or restricting citizenship and rights of those deemed threats to the country was necessary in order to maximize security, but the circumstances of the Government's fight against Lennon were different. In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee, or HUAC, was created to prevent communism from rising in America. While HUAC did not formally pursue Lennon before its demise in the late 1960's, Nixon's case against Lennon is less justifiable than HUAC's cause. Perhaps HUAC was justified in pursuing people who they thought threatened the foundation of U.S principles, but Lennon's message of peace, as utopian and maybe even unrealistic as it was, did not threaten the U.S as an institution but did threaten Nixon's legacy.

More than 30 years later, the current Bush administration has taken similar, if not more extreme, steps in limiting the rights of artists with conflicting politics from entering the country. While Nixon was afraid of Lennon, a celebrity whose politics threatened his war time efforts, Bush's measures are more radical in that they allow for action to be taken against a celebrity not based on the celebrity's own politics, but based on the politics of the celebrity's country. In 2002, because of the "Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2002," 22 Cubans who were supposed to attend the Latin Grammy Awards were denied visas, including that year's winner of Best Pop

Instrumental Album, Chucho Valdes. According to Jon Wiener, who makes the parallel between Nixon and Bush, the reason these artists were denied visas was because "Cuba has been described by the Bush administration as a nation that has assisted Al Qaeda – an absurd argument" (Lennon and Politics of Deportation). Another example is Abbas Kiarostami, an Iranian director, whose film "A Taste of Cherry" won the Palm d'Or, the highest award given at the Cannes film festival in 1997. But in 2002, he was not able to obtain a visa to come to the United States even though he had visited seven times before, missing the premiere of his film at the New York Film Festival.

Although it seems that foreign celebrities have reason to worry about the preventative measures that the U.S can take against both their politics and their country's politics, it is much more difficult to use immigration laws to prevent American celebrities from expressing their political views. When Natalie Maines, the lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, a female country band recognized for their music and politics, said that they were ashamed that President Bush was also a Texan, they had to face reaction from the American people rather than the government. Reviewing the documentary made about the Dixie Chicks following the remark, Christy Lemire wrote: "It's not that the remark itself was shocking or even terribly provocative. But the backlash from the country music industry, from the South, from the core of the Chicks' fan base was just stunning in its vitriol and hypocrisy. The same people who are so proud to live in a country where freedom of speech is an inalienable right wanted to silence these women - and worse" (Lemire). This example is very similar to John Lennon's remark that the Beatles were becoming more popular than Jesus, and the backlash that the Beatles received because of it. Ultimately, the response was overwhelming enough to lead the Beatles to retire from



touring (*The U.S vs. John Lennon*). Just as Lennon's music *and* politics were closely followed and criticized, celebrities involved in politics today are subjected to the same dual criticism.

John Lennon differs profoundly, though, from the celebrity politicians for whom he has pointed the way. His need and his desire to expose reality, whether through his art, his politics, or both, became his ultimate concern as he progressed as a musician and a person. By the end of his life, the celebrity status that had driven him since childhood simply became unimportant to him. Still, knowing that he could not wish it away, he took full advantage of it. Before Lennon altered the nature of politics, it followed that only politicians handled politics, but today, according to the aforementioned CNN poll, a staggering 57% of Americans believe that celebrities should get involved in politics. Although Lennon will probably be remembered mainly as the intellectual rhythm guitarist for the all-time greatest band, or, as a rock star instead of something more, his political involvement may have a greater lasting influence than his music, which at this point in time, seems hard to believe. The strong correlation between the CNN poll numbers and the people that Lennon influenced, and the situations that Lennon was the first to encounter but that many celebrities have since also encountered, show that celebrities today have the unique ability to use the fame they obtained through apolitical means to truly alter the state of modern politics; for better or for worse, the foundation of that ability was created by John Lennon.

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**Ben Alsup's comments about Kyle Amber's writing and assignment guidelines:**

I like Kyle Amber's paper because it's ambitious. There's a level of intellectual activity present in these pages that is rarely found in homework. I like the paper because it's funny and astute and unafraid to make bold declarations. I like it because it's longer than it had to be, and better than necessary.

Too often we think of academic papers as existing somehow outside of the world we inhabit. Kyle's paper shows us that this needn't be the case. Kyle shows us that in Miami people like to shoot guns. He shows us that the reasons they like to shoot guns are varied and complex. Kyle looks close, thinks hard, and writes well. What else can you ask for?

**Writing Assignment #2**

For our Geertz paper, the assignment is fairly straightforward. I'd like you to undertake an analysis of some kind of social activity that takes place somewhere in or around Miami. Borrow Geertz's anthropological techniques in order to closely observe and analyze some event or "happening" that seems to have multiple levels of significance. In order to succeed in this project you will have to observe closely and analyze with both critical clarity and intellectual audacity. To borrow Geertz's terms, I'm interested in both the *real* and the *really real*. You might also borrow Geertz's organizational approach in this paper, making use of multiple sections, multiple voices, and multiple perspectives in order to get a fuller understanding of your subject. The best papers look closely in order to expand our view.

Length:

No less than five double spaced, typed pages.



Kyle Amber -

Ben Alsup

ENG105

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007

*Primitive male competition: The quest to become the dominant male at the gun range*

**The inspiration to shoot**

“Jewish boys don’t shoot guns” my mother told me when I was a 15 year old boy obsessed with SWAT team. When I turned 18, however, my mother was forced to recognize the fact that I could shoot guns regardless of whether she approved or not. To avoid the scenario of me lying, she simply told me the magic words “if you can pay for it, you can go.” I did just that.

**The store**

I walked into Arizona Gun Range in Lauderdale Lakes and was greeted by a beautiful collection of weapons. As I entered the store/showroom there were 3 large rifles placed above the first floor of the two floor showroom, each of which had looked as if used in battle. In fact, they were. These were the sniper rifles used by the US marine corp, one of which included a rusty bayonet which probably had been used to kill someone. These were classic weapons, ones that all the customers in the store would look up and aspire to use after further target practice. When walking in the store, to the left, the wall was decorated with handguns available for rent, targets for sale, and other “wall decorations.” The guns were organized in a methodical fashion, lower caliber at top, higher caliber towards the bottom. The brands were in order from left to right, in seemingly no particular order, though the more famous/popular brands (S&W, Beretta, Glock, etc.) were towards the left, and the lesser known/popular brands such as (Taurus, Star) were located towards the right. Above these handguns lay the “decorations.” Large semi-automatic and automatic weapons graced the available wall space. These were not guns for the typical sportsman, but guns intended for tactical and military use. The following weapons were available, the semi-automatic Berreta cx4 storm available in 3 hand gun calibers (ranging from 9mm to 45 caliber S&w), the fully automatic P-90 (an odd looking prototype gun used by many military forces), the MP-5 airforce edition (a fully automatic gun used by most paramilitary units and SWAT teams around the world), the Israeli made automatic Uzi, a fully automatic Uzi rifle (the Uzi with an added shoulder stock), a semiautomatic tactical shotgun, and a modified P-90 rifle that was much larger than its derivative. Of these, the Uzi rifle and MP5 were available for rent for \$35, a price far above the other rentals. Because these weapons are fully automatic, they

require a member of the range staff to accompany the person firing. The range must also acquire a government license to allow for the shooting of automatic guns. The Beretta cx4 was also available, and only cost the same as all the other handgun and shotgun rentals, eight dollars.

Next to these displayed weapons lay a rack of other guns. These were the enormous rifles seen in movies: M-16s, M-4s, and even the large sniper rifles made illegal by the US government years ago, but still available through some loopholes and placed on these racks. While these guns all graced the wall behind the counter, in the counter itself (a large glass display case) laid handguns for sale.

The targets on the corner of the wall were all moderately priced, between one and four dollars. The simplest target was simply a large piece of paper with grey and black outlines of the human body, so that the person shooting could aim for certain areas of a pretend body. There were other targets with actual people on them, for example a large redneck, Osama Bin Laden or a man holding a woman hostage. During the day I observed, not a single person purchased one of these. The other targets, the most popular, were very small, less than two by two feet, generally in bright colors. These are considered to be the most challenging targets, used only by people who have fairly good accuracy and want to work on their grouping (making impact regions very close to each other).

The men working behind the counter wore jeans and safari like T-shirts with the gun store's logo embroidered on their right breast pocket. The most notable thing about these men was the large gun holster on their hip, as well as on their ankle. This most likely served to deter armed robbers. The rest of the store consisted of large racks and shelves of mainly rifles for sale. Because the remainder of the store, as well as the second story was more like a store, separate from the range, they will be ignored.

I rented the Beretta cx4 storm in the smallest caliber, 9mm, as I only recently have picked up target practicing. The men at the counter seemed to snicker at me, and treat me as if I knew nothing about weapons - which was possibly true. I was accompanied by a man who I met through doing community service who was the talkative NRA instructor; thus we received reduced rates. I purchased the largest of the targets not because I am a bad shot, but I like to practice firing at multiple targets. For example, I like to practice my head shot grouping, then switch to pectoral, then to shoulders and so on.

### **The right to bear arms: Arming bears**

The process of entering the range was very simple. A prospective customer would have to select the gun of his or her choice, the ammo, and the target, and then give over a state issued driver's license to be allowed to rent the weapon. After this, the customer would take the weapon, ammo, and target from the salesperson working behind the counter, and then go to a separate section of the store containing eye-protection and soundproof headphones. The customer would take one of each and then proceed to the

double doors of the range, and enter. Once done firing, the customer would exit the range, return the weapons, and then pay for everything that he had purchased.

A variation of this procedure occurs when a customer brings his own rented firearm. The patron must pay before firing and only pays for the cost of using the lane (range), as well as the targets that he chooses to purchase. Then when done firing, he simply leaves the premises after holstering or packaging the weapon.

### **Law abiding citizens**

The following individuals entered the Arizona Gun range on the day of observation. They, however, do also represent a generalization of the type of customers who entered gun ranges during previous observations:

A Large man, most likely of Hispanic descent with a tattoo on his neck: This man was firing his own Glock at the range and returned another handgun that he was firing. The man wore baggy jeans and a large white T-shirt. When walking out of the store, he wore his gun holster outside of his shirt until reminded by a worker that his gun was showing. As opposed to boxing the gun up as is proper legal procedure, the man simply put his large, most likely XXXL Tshirt over the holster. He walked out of the store, apparently not to a car; thus it can be assumed that he walked home with a concealed weapon.

A group of three very large men of African American descent: These men refused to show United States documentation (which is required) when trying to rent a weapon. They instead continued to show Bahamian documentation as they claimed they were not US citizens. They eventually received proper paperwork per the request of the man working behind the counter at the gun range. These men brought weapons with them as well as accessories. The largest of the men (approximately 6'3") carried a tactical flashlight the costs above \$100. Another of the men carried what appeared to be a tactical rifle, yet it was in its case, thus the identity of the weapon could not be determined. The other member of the group rented a Glock.

A Hispanic or possibly Caucasian man with his wife: The man brought a 12 gauge shotgun, 2 handguns, and a rifle to the range. He did not rent any weapons. His wife did not wear closed toed shoes, claiming that her husband had not told her that they were required, and thus had to find special safety covers for her feet.

A Caucasian man in a jean shirt: He rented an S&W handgun of an unknown caliber, yet on the larger side.

A darker possibly Hispanic man: This man rented a 45 caliber handgun that was known to have a very large kick and make a loud noise. He purchased the smallest of the targets.

A man of unknown origin with his girlfriend: the man rented the Uzi rifle which required a worker at the range to go in the lane with him. His girlfriend had no intention of firing weapons and thus did not rent any guns. The man purchased a medium size target, slightly larger than the smallest.

A group of 4 African American men: One of the men rented a Glock of a relatively large caliber. The group intended on switching off on the weapon. One of the members of the group insisted on continuously taking pictures on his cell phone despite the workers' warnings that he was not allowed to.

A talkative Caucasian who was the son of a Marine Corp sniper: The man continuously talked to the workers about his father and his shooting achievements. The man asked many questions about the decorative Marine Corps snipers. This man was a qualified NRA instructor and thus received reduced rates.

### **Out on the range**

The range is divided into 8 lanes, with a door and wall between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Thus in each room, there are 4 lanes total. The shooting lane is approximately 240 feet in length (80 yards). Goggles and large soundproof headphones or earplugs are required inside the range as well as closed toe shoes. There are no workers present in this area, just large (hopefully) bullet proof panels separating each lane at the area from which people shoot.

A darker Hispanic man who had rented the 45 caliber weapon blasted off loud shots on a 45 caliber weapon. The weapon would send out large pressure waves that slightly jolted anyone in the adjacent lanes. The man's accuracy was terrible. He was firing at a small target which is generally reserved for professionals, yet could not hit the main area of the target and was lucky to hit any of the paper at all. Eventually after overcoming the distractions caused by the man, the other shooters began firing, ignoring his cacophony. After a shooter had shot with amazing grouping from a far distance, the rest of the shooters stopped and became onlookers. Thus the performance of each shooter would be judged by the adjacent shooters.

### **A matter of etiquette**

It is common at the range for individuals to walk over to other lanes to talk to the person shooting. The man that was firing the 45 caliber obnoxiously had come over to look at another shooter's firing. He commented on one shooter's accuracy, how well the grouping was and told the shooter that he wished he could fire like he did. A worker from the range, who had come in to assist another customer with his automatic weapon, simply said "goddamn" when viewing the shooter's target. He became much friendlier to the shooter, and seemed to remove his condescending attitude toward the seemingly novice shooter. The darker Hispanic man then left and came back with a smaller gun and a larger target; he seemingly was inspired to now focus on his shooting instead of using a big gun that he could not control. Such acts of switching in a big gun for a small gun after being "defeated" were common at the range.



The customer who was being helped by the worker then took the attention away from the novice shooter. He had rented the Uzi rifle and began firing. The machine gun bursts made everyone turn their heads to look at him fire. The problem was, however, his accuracy was quite poor. After a few bursts on his machine gun, he began firing a handgun. As attention would once again refocus on the novice shooter, he would grab his machine gun just to make more noise to recapture his audience.

Then came the man with his wife. The man began firing a handgun showing his wife how to aim. The man used decent firing technique though his accuracy was mediocre. He would comment on how good his shots were and try to teach his wife how to fire. Yet, he did not mention many techniques that would help her have good form. He would always fire first and have her fire second, telling her what she did wrong and how to improve. Yet, sometimes some of her shots were better than his were, yet, he never acknowledged this. The man then took out his shotgun. This shotgun had a large kick and made an extremely loud noise. The man used a horrible and improper technique for shooting the weapon that is mildly unsafe, yet avoids the kick that the shotgun is renowned for. This therefore would not make him look weak if the shotgun were to kick him back. Because of the nature of the shotgun bullet, the bullet hole ends up very large. Thus even if someone aiming at it is slightly off target, it will appear as if he or she hit it dead on, yet for this man, this did not happen. He then instructed his wife on how to fire, not admitting to the fact that his technique was unorthodox. His wife fired and appeared surprised as to the kick the gun displayed. The man laughed and acted as if he did not even feel the kick when firing the shotgun. This, however, was untrue as the triceps of his arm were stressed and contracted when the man attempted to counter the recoil. In summary, this man attempted to act as if he was the master of weaponry and instruct his wife, yet he would give her improper techniques so that he could make himself the better of the two in terms of accuracy.

The group of 4 African American men came in and began firing their Glock. None of them knew how to properly fire, yet they seemed to be having a great time learning, taking cell phone pictures, laughing and smiling. They continued to comment on how cool the member of their group who was firing the gun looked. They then saw a shooter with a machine gun and yelled out "oh sh\*t" in amazement, once again displaying the cross-lane behavior common in a range. They asked the shooter about the weapon, asked how it fired, and then began to focus on it instead of their friend firing the handgun.

### **Paying for a little bit of masculinity**

The store did not simply sell weapons for target practicing, but sold feelings of masculinity to the men who entered. The large rifles near the ceiling of the store made the men entering the range/store feel as if one day they would perhaps be good enough to kill an enemy combatant. In fact, the mere thought of using a gun to kill an enemy would excite the clientele to such a high degree, that they would rent more weapons in an attempt to master the skill of shooting. The automatic weapons decorating the store were hardly practical either. They also made the men feel masculine. While the men looked at these, they made references to their favorite action films or shooting video games. Thus

regardless of whether the men could shoot these guns, they imagined being the stars of the action film and therefore felt strong rushes of masculinity when entering the store. The novelty targets such as those of Osama Bin Laden and the man holding the woman hostage also brought out similar masculinity. Men looking at these would comment on how they would "kill that f\*cker." Yet, they did not buy these targets; they just served as means of charging the shooters up, getting them to purchase more of the expensive targets which would better improve their accuracy. Thus the store knew that by inspiring the clientele to want to eliminate an enemy, they could sell more expensive targets instead. The men working behind the counter even dressed the part to stimulate the male ego. Their holsters were reminiscent of cowboy movies, simply making the male clientele think back to their favorite cowboy movies with such masculine heroes such as John Wayne. In doing so, the shooters would consider buying antique handguns reminiscent of that period, once again nourishing their hunger for masculinity. Thus in a seemingly simple store arrangement, the store was actually marketing a product that could never lose demand: masculinity. This desire for more masculinity caused males to compete to become the dominant male of the range, similar to a tribe member attempting to become the master of the tribe.

### Self Vs. Other

Two forms of competition exist amongst the men at the gun range, a competition with self and a competition with other. While choosing a fire-arm, the man must make a tough decision: whether to choose a quieter gun with less kick, or a louder one with more kick, the quieter gun referring to a rifle, low caliber weapon or small handgun and the louder weapon referring to an assault rifle, high caliber weapon or big handgun. Clearly the loud gun is used for this effect, as a man firing such a large weapon often looks to see if others are looking at him. Thus he is competing with the other men in the range. Likewise using an automatic weapon which has its characteristic machine gun burst sound attracts much attention, and thus is used for a male to compete with another. Such competition with others can be compared to street drag racing. Like a man who tries to fire a louder gun to appear more dominant, a man who revs a much louder engine, for example, an American muscle car engine, attempts to intimidate and dominate his opponent. After hearing the loud and powerful sound of the engine, the opponent might no longer wish to race as he will feel unable to compete, solely based on his assumptions due to the sound.

Shooters who attempt to use the sound of their weapon to intimidate others generally lack the accuracy associated with mature shooters; thus they are using weapons above their level. When these competitors, however, lose attention brought on to them due to a better shooter (in terms of accuracy), they quickly exchange their weapons for a smaller one, thus acknowledging their defeat, as was the case with the darker Hispanic male. Therefore, although the sound of the weapon plays a large effect, the size of the target plays a larger role in the competition with others. This only occurs, however, with large targets, as smaller targets will be discussed in more detail later. On large targets, bullet groupings are much more visible, and thus the shooter's level of accuracy is extremely visible to the rest of the "competitors." From anywhere in the particular room of the range, onlookers can either envy or mock the accuracy of a shooter using a large

target. Those shooters who truly want to impress others use a loud weapon and a large target to show their ability to handle a large weapon, and use it correctly (accurately).

In contrast with those shooters who attempt to impress others, there exists a breed of shooters who compete with themselves, attempting to prove that they are knowledgeable as well as are improving in their accuracy each time that they go to the range. These shooters generally use quieter weapons, opting to not be as showy as their counterparts. These shooters will typically use rifles and low caliber handguns for the sake of legitimately improving their accuracy. These shooters will use small targets so that they can closely analyze their grouping. Any hit on the target can be used to quickly identify grouping errors. These targets, however, are typically not large enough for other observers in the range to see and judge.

Sometimes, however, this competition with self can go beyond the scope of simple self-improvement. Those trying to prove to themselves that they have superior accuracy shoot at a target less than five yards away which shows very little skill and is generally frowned upon by those in the range. Nevertheless, they show their friends their groupings and generally tell them that they shot from farther away than they actually did. These types of men also are the types who bring along a wife or girl friend to the range attempting to instruct them in the art of marksmanship. However, as opposed to teaching their female company how to properly fire, the men will give incorrect information on firing. For example, the man who brought his wife showed her an incorrect and even possibly dangerous shotgun technique, so that her accuracy would be inferior to his. He also neglected to tell her some breathing techniques that yield better accuracy which he was practicing, simply so that her accuracy would decrease. The most notable aspect of this need for self-flattery is the man's self-compliments throughout his lesson with his wife. Regardless of the man's level of firing, he would refer to it as excellent, telling the woman that she should fire more like he did. In reality, however, the woman at times shot more accurately than her husband. Thus, he would feed himself self-compliments and lies as a defense mechanism to avoid admitting to himself that a woman had beaten him. After all, in the extremely competitive nature of the gun range, losing to a man warranted switching in a larger weapon for a small one which was a resignation of defeat; losing to a woman was worthy of a metaphorical hari kari: the man could not return to the range and might no longer shoot, for he had been humiliated and could no longer redeem himself. Therefore by verbally belittling his wife's accuracy, the man could always consider himself to be a better shot, regardless of the visual truth.

The gun range is a highly competitive environment amongst males where the primitive warrior-like characteristics of the male comes out. Whether the man competes by making louder noises, typical of agonistic behavior in animals, or defeats another in the form of competition, the highly competitive spirit of the primitive man is released at the gun range. While subtleties of this behavior can be noted in American society as seen in the shift from small cars to large SUVs, where the bigger the SUV, the more manly the man, the American gun range truly exemplifies the ancient struggle for male dominance in a form showing barely any evolution from its original state. As a man would fight to be the head of his tribe by appearing to be the strongest warrior, the modern day American man who goes to a gun range attempts to dominate his peers.

### **Catalina Ramiez's comments about Kiara Wesley's essay and assignment guidelines:**

Kiara Wesley's work throughout the Fall Semester of 2008 in English 105 was consistently impressive. In this particular essay titled "Souvenirs: A Window to Ethnicity," Kiara explores ethnic perceptions of African Americans in the United States using Leah Dilworth's essay, "Handmade by an American Indian": Souvenirs and the Cultural Economy of Southwestern Tourism," as lens for her descriptive analysis of a souvenir collector's spoon. Kiara impressively informs her analysis with historical research and connects the past with the present as she artfully weaves together the themes of the making of the city of Miami, minstrelsy, slavery, segregation, the entertainment industry, as well as negative stereotypes that silently persist in the contemporary moment through the consumption of antique collector's spoons depicting blacks. Through these themes, Kiara eloquently charts the existence of race and class prejudices that led to persistent African Americans stereotypes. Despite gloomy findings, Kiara expresses optimism in her belief that from negative circumstances, there arose opportunities for the advancement of blacks in America and subtly suggests that through knowledge disparaging perceptions can be acknowledged, understood and eventually overcome. This essay is worthy of honorable mention, not only for the skill with which it is written but also for the sophistication of thought and maturity which Kiara brings as an individual to such a significant topic. I proudly congratulate her!

### **Paper #1**

We all know that America is made up of different ethnic groups, that its image is of a melting pot of diverse cultures and that this simplistic image is often undercut by a harsher reality of clashes in culture and stereotypes about ethnic identity. This paper will allow you to consider ethnicity in American culture. Your work should lead you to say something complex and original about ethnicity.

### **Relics of Identity Leah Dilworth, "Handmade by an American Indian": Souvenirs and the Cultural Economy of Southwestern Tourism"**

Dilworth's investigation of an artifact representing American Indians of the southwest raises questions about the nature of identity and how some ethnic identities are transformed to become souvenirs of particular regions. Souvenirs don't always represent ethnic groups; in fact, lots of souvenirs are replicas of buildings (the Empire State Building, for example) or of geographical features (Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon might be examples). For this assignment you need to consider the relationship between the souvenirs that represent your region and the issues of identity and representation raised by Dilworth. You can proceed in two ways:

1. Begin by visiting a store that sells souvenirs to tourists. Take notes on the various souvenirs available, paying attention especially to the reoccurring images marketed as being representative of the region or some aspect of the locale. Select one of the souvenirs that seems typical and write an essay in which you describe and investigate the meaning of this souvenir in relation to the region. Does your souvenir function in the same way as the ones Dilworth describes? How is the region or one of its ethnic groups being marketed through this souvenir?
2. Consider the ethnic groups in your area and how they are represented to tourists of your region. Collect examples of this representation in souvenirs, postcards, travel promotions, and other artifacts of marketing. Once you have collected several examples, write an essay to present and investigate the relationship between the marketing of ethnicity and the region being represented. What's honored in these representations and what's ignored? You should consider your work an extension and challenge to Dilworth so you needn't agree with her, but you should aim for the same level of examination of these artifacts and their meaning.

Kiara Wesley

Instructor Catalina Ramirez

7 December 2007

### **Souvenirs: A Window to Ethnicity**

A souvenir generally evokes little thought beyond a nostalgic memory or two. People rarely think of the ethnic group it may represent or what kind of identity the item promotes. In "Handmade by an American Indian": Souvenirs and the Cultural Economy of Southwestern Tourism" author Leah Dilworth states that ethnicity illustrates a connection to the region it represents, depicting the views and values of the people who live there (180). Miami represents a multitude of various ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture. In researching various souvenirs from the Florida area, collector spoons represent one of the popular items found. These antique spoons, illustrate common views of people during the time period they were made and their cultural values. Many of these spoons are still popular today because of their rarity and unique detail. Robert Wilhelm, editor of the *Spooners Forum*, states that "the current 'craze' among spoon collectors is for souvenir spoons depicting blacks." One spoon in particular, made in the 1890s tells an intriguing story of the perceptions of African Americans, not only during the late 1800s and into the 1900s, but in modern times as well.

Made of silver and intricate detail, the handle carries the depiction of a black man's head, which connects into green leaves. These green leaves swirl into a colorless vine that connects to the scoop of the spoon, where a brightly colored watermelon lies. Made out of enamel, the watermelon makes the spoon a prized commodity because it illustrates the technical craftsmanship of the person who made it. Ironically, besides the man's white collar, the watermelon offers the only dash of color on the spoon. This conveys a very solemn impression which magnifies in intensity as one takes in the forlorn features of the man carved on the handle (Wilhelm). On the surface, this spoon might appear as just a man and a watermelon, but this general description skims over the bigger picture, which illustrates how the view of blacks in the 1900s permeates society today.

According to Wilhelm, "the 'hay-day' of spoon collecting began when Henry Flagler began building his railroad and luxury hotels along Miami and Palm Beach." In these hotels, which sprang up in the 1920s, Flagler included shops, which sold souvenir spoons such as the collector's spoon mentioned earlier (Wilhelm). In order to understand why these spoons depicting blacks were so popular, one must first understand the type of people that frequented Flagler's luxury hotels. Flagler and other entrepreneurs like him created these hotels exclusively for the rich, white upper class. Flagler used blacks and other minorities to build his railroad as well as work in his hotels, but they were not allowed to stay at any of the hotels. These luxury

hotels openly advertised that minorities, including not only blacks but Jews as well, were not wanted. The spoons sold illustrating the stereotypes of blacks thrived, not only in the south, but in the northern cities as well, where many of the tourists that came to Flagler's hotels were from (Portes and Stepick 72-73).

Knowing why people purchased these spoons does not explain exactly how these stereotypes began in the first place. It should come as no surprise that America experienced tense racial relations, especially before the Civil Rights movement reformed governmental policies and laws. Blacks in America experienced a strictly controlled existence during the period when slavery, as well as violence and extreme bigotry, existed as a norm in American culture. However, despite the oppression, slaves would sing, dance and play instruments on southern plantations, entertaining not only other slaves but their owners as well. In the late 1820s and into the 1830s white entertainers adapt these slave performances, creating a form of entertainment known as minstrelsy. Using cork to blacken their faces, the performers would imitate blacks through the use of song and dance (Mabunda 806). Thomas Dartmouth Rice, also known as Daddy Rice, a successful white minstrel performer during the 1820s and 30s, used exaggerated postures and facial expressions in conjunction with tattered clothing to embody what he and many whites considered "black mannerisms." These "black mannerisms" became known as "to jump Jim Crow" (Stewart 249). The over-the-top nature of these performances provided entertainment for the audience but consequently created negative stereotypes that soon many believed illustrated a representation of all blacks. Unfortunately minstrelsy formed the only entertainment outlet for blacks, so much so that even black performers applied the burnt cork to their faces, and closely followed the routine their white predecessors designed, otherwise risking violence (Stewart 250). These rules forced blacks to buy into stereotypes and perceptions of their own culture as dictated by whites.

Although the collector spoon may not illustrate a specific minstrel character, it implies obvious connections in the design of the spoon. For example, the painted watermelon endures as a stereotype in relation to black culture. This stereotype began with black slaves who grew watermelons on plantations. Watermelons also represented a cheap food source during the times slavery, and many slaves would sell watermelons as well (Mabunda). This stereotype not only mocks slaves and their position in society, but also ridicules slaves as the lowest economic class in American society. Blacks maintained their role as second class citizens long after the abolishment of slavery, as segregation remained a part of everyday life up until the 1960s. Many states, specifically in the south imposed laws allowing and promoting segregation, including Florida. In 1887 Florida passes the first segregation statute in America which put in place segregated railroad cars (Stewart 122). Eventually the term "Jim Crow" once again comes into play, this time as a phrase representing segregation laws in the south.

Florida led the way for Jim Crow laws in the south, so one can see how the collector's spoon relates directly to the time period and the region that sells it. Although the spoon illustrates a part of American history, it also provides a glimpse into perceptions that for many years dominated the view of blacks in society. As Dilworth states, this "illicit transaction" of tourists purchasing souvenirs most often blindly hides the true representation of a culture and its people (176). Through awareness the negative stereotypes that these items perpetuate can disappear, but this involves also taking into consideration the positive aspects as a result of minstrelsy. Although offensive, without minstrel shows creating performance opportunities for blacks, the

integration of the entertainment industry could not occur, at least not as early as it did. Taking the negative aspects of minstrelsy and the resulting misconceptions illustrates a necessary evil that had to happen in order for the advancement of blacks in America. In her article, Dilworth states how even today Native Americans are objectified by the Indian arts and crafts market, further fostering stereotypes regarding Native American traditions and culture (181). Although many of the stereotypes regarding black culture have lost their luster, one wonders why collector spoons depicting blacks are still such a commodity in the collectors' market. Perceptions can represent positive or negative aspects of a group of people; however knowledge creates the means for knowing the difference. Unfortunately, the history of the collector's spoon and the negative perceptions that it carries are overshadowed by ignorance and the continuing thirst for the 'rare, authentic, and timeless' souvenir.



(Wilhelm)

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