



Hilltopics

FALL 2024

The University Honors Publication

A SEASON OF CHANGE

Seoul Life

Experience

ACC: A New SMU

Analysis

To Grow (Apart)

Poetry

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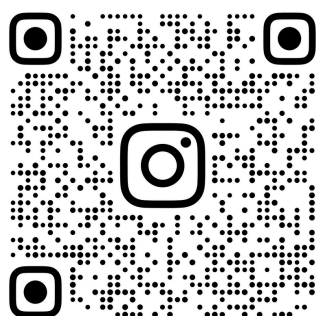


HILLTOPICS

A University Honors Publication

Hilltopics is the University Honors Program's opinion paper, founded by Honors students over a decade ago. Written and designed entirely by students, Hilltopics is committed to providing a public platform for all voices.

Hilltopics pieces range from the high literary to the traditionally journalistic, from the satirical to the personal. We welcome contributions from all viewpoints, political persuasions, and backgrounds—the most important thing is that all voices are free to contribute, to foster a flourishing of free speech at SMU. The paper is not limited to the Honors community; anyone at SMU can write for Hilltopics, and we seek to gain readership from all students.



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SMU[®]

University Honors Program

Letter from the Editors

Howdy! My name is Megan Watson, and I am a double major in Public Relations & Strategic Communications and Corporate Communications & Public Affairs. Currently, I am one of the Co-Editors-in-Chief of what you are holding right now. *Hilltopics* originally started a long time ago - long before I even knew of SMU. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, participation seemed to cease entirely. Now, after the painstaking process of attempting to find the password to the old *Hilltopics* website, *Hilltopics* is back. Here, you will find writing from individuals of all fields of study. My hope is that you find the students' work in these pages to be captivating. Or, rather, that you disagree enough with an article to write a rebuttal in our Spring 2025 edition. Either way, *Hilltopics* was made to offer a process both by students and for students. For these reasons, I deeply encourage you to read on.

That being said, there are a few people that need recognition for helping to restart this publication. Firstly, I want to thank Elle Caldon, my other half in this process, for putting up with my late night texts. Additionally, thank you to each faculty member that has helped facilitate this process. To all of our staff, thank you for helping make our vision come true. Lastly, and most personally, I would like to thank Vaughn and Emma, my support system and the closest people in my life, for encouraging me to see this process through.



Megan Watson



Elle Caldon

Hello, I am Elle Caldon! I am studying psychology and health and aspire to become a clinical psychologist. SMU was my dream college – two years ago, when I was a senior in high school, I visited the Hilltop for the second time and learned about *Hilltopics* for the first. I met Dr. Doyle and told him about my interest in journalistic writing and my goal to help

run a student paper in college. Dr. Doyle introduced me to *Hilltopics* and showed me one issue. After learning that *Hilltopics* was student-founded and included all genres of writing and even art, I knew immediately that I wanted to help with something so liberating. Fast forward to January of my freshman year at SMU, I emailed Dr. Doyle about how to join *Hilltopics*. Dr. Doyle told me that it had stopped running but that the goal was to bring it back to celebrate when the Scholars Den renovation was finished. When the positions opened this semester, I ran for the Co-Editor-in-Chief position and was thrilled to discover that a girl I studied abroad with at the University of Oxford this summer, Megan Watson, was selected with me. Dr. Doyle's idea inspired our theme: "A Season of Change." From the new Scholars Den to SMU football joining the ACC, a lot has changed at – but even beyond – SMU this season. I wrote about the Scholars Den renovation because it is my go-to study spot. Learning about its past and all the hard work that went into its change made me appreciate it all the more. I am proud of everyone's submissions and happy that *Hilltopics* is back at the Hilltop. Happy Reading!

EXPERIENCES

“DEN XEHNO; I DO NOT FORGET”

by Alexandra Lahiri



Lahiri speaking at the Hellenic Parliament in Athens, Greece

In Cyprus, I saw the words “den xehno,” meaning “I do not forget,” on posters and painted on walls. This demonstrated to me that even if many people have forgotten about this mighty nation and the illegal occupation by Turkey, there are still some who have not forgotten.

The forgetting of history and events that shaped a certain town, country, or the world, is a grave concern, as future generations may dangerously repeat horrible actions, never learning how to overcome difficult situations. This is why education is fundamental, and the subject of history specifically, as it is one of the most vital tools humans use to contextualize and learn from – and remember – the past.

My experience on the AHIF (American Hellenic Institute Foundation) Student Foreign Policy Trip was unforgettable, and the lasting impact has and will continue to change my academic and professional career plans and goals for the better. I am a Dallasite, a Texan born in Highland Park, Texas. I am a first-generation Greek American. My father was born in Aigio, my yiayia (grandmother) was born in Piraeus, and my great-great-papou (grandfather) and his family lived in Kalavryta. I am blessed to have visited Greece with my family many times and always enjoy seeing the turquoise waters, feeling the Mediterranean breeze, and being in a place where time seems to slow down, and I am at peace. While on this trip, the memories I had became emotional, which I did not expect. Visiting the Turkish-occupied area in Cyprus was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I felt both heartbroken and angered seeing the desecration of Orthodox Churches and graves as well as the evident lack of respect shown by the Turkish military. While driving through the Turkish army-controlled area, I felt bitterly disappointed and ashamed that I had not known about how intense the situation was; during my entire education, I had never learned about the Cyprus issue up until a few months prior when I started preparing for this trip.



Lahiri speaking at the AHIF Reception at the Grande Bretagne



AHJ group with the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides, in Nicosia, Cyprus

I am majoring in international studies, concentrating in European studies, and the Cyprus Issue is just one example of an incident that had not been mentioned in the curriculum and my history textbooks. The semester before going on this trip, I took a class on the Holocaust. Before taking the class, my understanding of the Holocaust mostly came from my yiayia telling me of herself as a young girl in Greece during World War II. She had adamant anti-Nazi feelings, as her papou was murdered during the Kalavryta Massacre and she barely survived—being locked in a burning schoolhouse with her family. She also told me about Oxi Day as did my Greek school during their annual celebration commemorating the day Greece joined World War II. I learned about that important event and the Greek soldiers' valiant efforts, which delayed the Nazis from marching into the Soviet Union, failing their 'Operation Barbarossa.' In my class about World War II, however, there was little to no mention of Greece and its efforts, which surprised me greatly.

A moment on this foreign policy trip that I will never forget, is our visit and discussions at the Hellenic Parliament in Athens, Greece. I had observed the outside of the building many times and the evzones performing their stirring marching, but it was a thrill to go on a tour and examine the archives. The highlight was meeting with representatives and discussing the relationships between Greece and the United States of America. I had the privilege to represent the US as a student ambassador and advocated that Greece pursue talks with the US to implement education about Modern

Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean's history and geopolitics.

One of the many takeaways I have from this trip is the great significance and impact Greece and Cyprus have in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and, thus, the world. They are "pillars of stability in the arc of instability," as said by many intellectuals during briefings. Greece is continually a strong ally, and the relations between Cyprus and the US are at one of the highest levels in geopolitics. Greece is a powerhouse in terms of shipping: their military are defenders in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas, and the country offers humanitarian aid and supplies to Ukraine. Cyprus also provides extensive humanitarian aid to Ukraine and especially to Gaza, as they are only a few hundred miles away. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to meet with high-ranking officials, ambassadors, military officers, and experts during this trip so I now know – and will not forget – this vital information. Today, many barely know the country Cyprus, much less its influence in its surrounding area, and still even less, the country's predicament of Turkey illegally occupying about 37% of the island. I am one of a few students who had a unique opportunity to have gone on this trip where we learned and saw the terrible effects of the Turkish military. We heard stories of families who were forced to move, women who were abused, churches that were desecrated, and people who were – and still are – missing.



AHI group briefing at the Hellenic National Defense

I believe in the sharing of stories that shaped history and the analysis of actions that affect the present day, and this trip was a perfect experience where I was able to do so. I aim to contextualize the events regarding the Kalavryta Massacre and other massacres in the Peloponnese during World War II and to analyze the long-lasting effects of these atrocities in present-day Greece, with the same mindset of stressing the importance of never forgetting.

I will always treasure the weeks traveling to DC, Cyprus, and Greece with the AHI and my fellow students, discussing the geopolitics relating to countries including the US, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Ukraine, and Israel.

I do not forget – and will not forget – my mission, and I encourage others to share stories that are not common knowledge – that is, not in the ‘common curriculum’ – and not stressed enough, so future generations can be educated to defend those whose freedoms, rights and pursuits of happiness are suppressed around the world.



Lahiri receiving a challenge coin from General Dimitris Choupnis, the Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff, at the Salamis Naval Base

**I HOPE THIS LEADS TO A WORLD
WHERE EVERYONE CAN LIVE IN
PEACEFUL INTERNATIONAL LAW.**



If you are into beauty products, you have likely heard of Laneige's lip mask or cushion foundations—but did you know that Amorepacific is the Korean cosmetic conglomerate behind these products and brands?

And if you have watched enough K-dramas, you might recognize Yonsei University: an iconic location for K-drama shoots. Additionally, Yonsei makes up the “Y” in “SKY,” which stands for Korea's top three universities.

What do these two share in common? Summer 2024 is the first time Amorepacific partnered with Yonsei's International Summer School to recruit interns, and I am lucky to say that I was one of them. I had the opportunity to spend two months at Amorepacific's Headquarters while studying at Yonsei University.

Without further ado, here are some snapshots of my days in Seoul:

In the morning, I woke up at 6:30 and headed out for work at 7:00. The grind started early. For my internship, I picked the morning shift. My choice was not due to being an early bird but rather out of fear that afternoon shifts might subject me to notorious dinners and overtime hours of corporate Korea. Funnily enough, this forward-thinking was irrelevant, as I later learned that these practices violate my work contract and would not affect me.

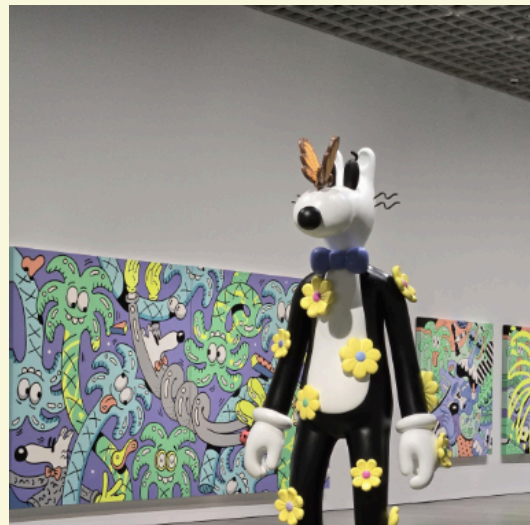
Now, thankfully, it was a downhill walk from the dorm to the bus station. Following directions from Naver Maps, I packed myself into a crowded bus full of students, elders, and office workers.

Inside, I scanned my Climate Card and internally admired my own public transportation skills.

Of course, I was headed to work. But, actually, I was also headed to Hangangdaero—the heart of Seoul—where the headquarters of companies like CJ (another conglomerate) and Hybe (a K-pop powerhouse) reside alongside Amorepacific. The proximity of these powerful brand names kept my early commute exciting.



Upon arrival at Amorepacific HQ, the doorkeeper greeted incoming employees. Employees with small children drop off their kids at the company daycare, and some head to the cafeteria for free breakfast. I scanned my ID to pass the turnstile, like the ones in corporate K-drama scenes, and head into the office. Ready for another shift, I reach my desk beside the other interns. Being the first round of global interns, we could tell the office was not used to seeing so many foreigners, even if it were just the five of us. Besides my brand auditing work for Laneige, below are fun experiences provided by HR, which exposed us to other brands of Amorepacific:



Tour of Amore Museum

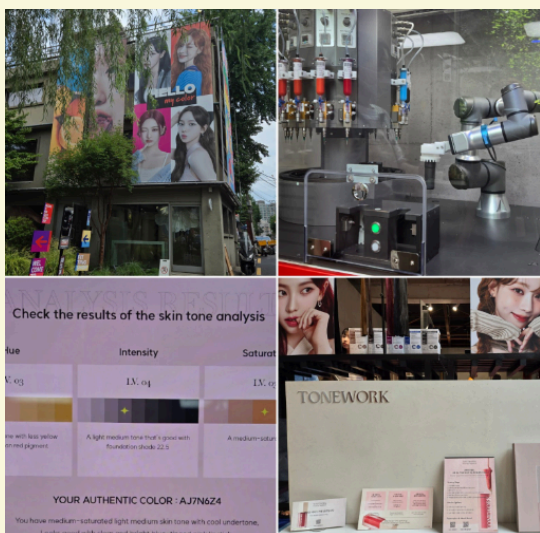
At 12:00 p.m., I clocked out and grabbed the free lunch at the cafeteria. Aside from the fun HR trips, free lunch was one of the top benefits as an intern. A vegetarian colleague even found the diet options to be accommodating.



Hot tea, cocktail, and dessert tasting at Osulloc Teahouse in Itaewon



By 1:30 p.m., I get to Yonsei University for Advanced Korean Language Class. In my classroom of 15 people, there were a whole range of nationalities: Americans, Singaporeans, Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, and Canadians. Everyone was fluent in English, and a surprisingly substantial amount of people knew Japanese as a third, if not fourth, language.



Getting customized makeup based on skin tone analysis results at the Amore Flagship Store in Seongsu

Most notably, one girl competed in a survival show as a K-pop trainee. Someone's parents suddenly sent him to the Korean army for being "too American." Another appears in a good amount of Zerobaseone's airport videos. Contradictory to this diversity four out of the six male classmates hilariously shared a variation of the name "Jun." This was convenient, actually, as I tend to get overwhelmed with learning a bunch of names at once.

Many students came from very selective schools, like Harvard, Stanford, and Duke. Yet, against my expectations, many were unsure about their career aspirations. Some had freshly graduated without a job, while others were still exploring a list of careers into their senior year. The atmosphere was definitely different from SMU, where I feel most students have a general idea of their career aspirations. Perhaps there is selection bias, as students typically choose a summer in Yonsei for fun. Anyway, it was refreshing to see a different, laid-back mindset.

Class ended at 3:10 p.m., so I could explore the rest of the day! I could visit the Han River, Hongdae, Gwangjang Market, or stay around Sinchon. Surrounding Yonsei, Sinchon has a decent number of things to do. There's a typical variety of restaurants and shops, and buskers who sing and dance in the streets. If you walk into a restaurant, there is a good chance that it's been on TV or has a Michelin star.



Among all of these experiences, I did have a peak moment in Sinchon. After a study session, I was busy grilling all-you-can-eat pork belly at a restaurant. When I glanced up, there was a ginormous man towering over the table. It was NBA player Ha Seung Jin! Cameramen flocked around him, so I assumed the restaurant hired him for promotional content. During a quick conversation, however, Ha revealed that he is a Yonsei alum. However, if you count his duration of study, I am more senior! I felt like I was on "Wassup Man"—check that off my bucket list.

To conclude, there are many unexpected ways Korea has changed me. One, I lost weight due to a healthier diet and walkable lifestyle. Two, I have truly grown to appreciate air conditioned American homes. And three, after exerting constant energy into working and playing, I now empathize with a song I have heard everywhere in public, called "Fate" by G-IDLE, particularly its first verse. Check it out at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT94GNyGFdc to see what I mean!

IGNITING A SEASON OF CHANGE THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

by Michelle Ried



The 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama

While reading and writing are excellent learning methods, I believe that experiential learning is the most effective way to gain a deep understanding. In spring 2024, SMU's Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life offered a Civil Rights Pilgrimage through the South. I aimed to deepen my understanding of America's history by engaging directly with those who lived it and by visiting significant historical sites. As the Operations Manager at Southern Methodist University's Bridwell Library and a graduate student in the Master of Liberal Studies program, I was enriched both professionally and academically by the Pilgrimage — but what I gained was far more profound.

On March 8, twenty-one faculty, staff, and students flew from Dallas to Atlanta. We boarded a chartered bus for a two-and-a-half-hour journey to Montgomery. Settling into my seat, I began reading Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. Serendipitously, I came across Dr. King's words, "I set out to drive from Atlanta, Georgia to Montgomery, Alabama."

The next morning, we gathered in the hotel lobby and boarded the bus again, filled with happy chatter and getting-to-know-you banter. Our first stop was The Legacy Museum, supported by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). This marked a pivotal moment in our Pilgrimage.

The immersive displays and comprehensive historical timeline moved me deeply, making the realities of racial injustice in America starkly evident. Constructed on the site of a former slave warehouse, the museum illuminated connections between historical injustices and their modern ramifications. It highlighted the ongoing impact of a system designed to profit from racial oppression.

Next, we visited the Dr. Richard Harris House, a significant site with ties to the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Harris was a pharmacist and civil rights advocate. His daughter, Dr. Valda Harris Montgomery, offers guided tours to groups like ours. During the tour, I purchased her memoir, *Just a Neighbor: A Child's Memoir of the Civil Rights Movement*, which recounts her childhood experiences with Dr. King and other activists like James Farmer Jr. and John Lewis.

Later that afternoon, we went to The National Memorial for Justice and Peace, otherwise known as the Lynching Museum. It was an appropriate place to walk and tie together the consequences of justice never realized. We finished the day with a late dinner at Odessa's Blessings, a historic home-turned-restaurant run by a husband-and-wife team serving southern soul food. It felt as though we'd been invited to her family's home for dinner, and I am certain that is exactly how she intended for us to feel. The food was a necessary comfort after a long, soul-stirring, and thought-provoking day.



Welcoming sign to Selma, Alabama



The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, informally known as the National Lynching Memorial, in Montgomery, Alabama

On March 10, we traveled to Selma, parking the bus beside the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The atmosphere of Selma, with its empty streets and rundown buildings juxtaposed against a new-looking PNC Bank, evoked a somber reflection on its history and its present condition. I envisioned this bridge as the location where Bloody Sunday occurred—the place where more than six hundred activists, including a then-twenty-five-year-old John Lewis marched on March 7, 1965, to fight against racial injustice. Terry Chestnut was six years old at that time and was on the bridge with his father, J.L. Chestnut Jr. Terry's father was the first Black attorney in Selma, and Dr. King's right-hand man. Terry, now in his sixties, was our tour guide through Selma. Terry was born and raised in Selma and experienced history in the making throughout the civil rights era. He described hearing the cracking of bones and the sight of broken teeth flying by as police brutally beat marchers on Bloody Sunday.

He has turned the pain of his experiences into a passion for sharing Selma's history through his tour company, Selma Tours by Terry Chestnut.

Before getting back on the bus, we walked in silence across the Edmund Pettus Bridge as an act of defiance, love, and unity. Terry guided us around Selma, highlighting key historical sites such as Dexter Chapel, the Civil Rights Memorial Park, and vibrant community murals. He took us to the All-in-One Restaurant for lunch, encouraging conversations with locals to gain insight into Selma's present conditions, particularly the lingering impacts of poverty from a tornado that struck in January 2023.

On March 11, we returned to Montgomery for a discussion with Emily Wilson, Deputy Director of Development for the EJI. She emphasized that the fight against systemic oppression is necessary across all states, pointing out that the North profited from slavery without legalizing it. This conversation reinforced my commitment to learning about systemic racism and what we can do to combat it.

We met with our tour guide, Charles Woods III, on the morning of March 12 at The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. He told us that the city was nicknamed Bombingham due to the many bombings committed by white terrorists during the civil rights movement. He shared that Birmingham was the most racially divided and segregated city in the South. Our guide discussed the monuments at The Birmingham Civil Rights Park which were built to remember the children attacked by police with dogs and water cannons strong enough to break bones. He showed us the monument outside of the 16th St. Chapel where four little girls were murdered by those who bombed the church. Our tour guide led us through the museum and described many exhibits along the way. We ended the day a bit early so that we could make the drive back to Atlanta.

On March 13, we met U.S. Senator Kim Jackson of Georgia, one of the few openly LGBTQ Black female state senators in the country. Her insights into bipartisan collaboration and social advocacy were engaging and enlightening. We later gathered at Martin Luther King Jr. Park and spent the afternoon with Wanda Swan, founder of popular podcast, *Come Get Your White People*. Her discussion on privilege and societal values fostered profound self-reflection among us.

Returning to Dallas on March 14, everything felt unchanged to those back home. This illustrates the challenge of perspective; each of us perceives life through our unique lenses. Those who advocated for civil rights in the era of the segregated South possess a unique lived experience that is beyond our understanding. Those who have faced racial injustice, both in the past and present, have personal experiences that are beyond my understanding. Those of us who participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage returned with experiences that are difficult to fully share, convey, or express. We saw the streets where determined citizens walked to work for three hundred and eighty-one days during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. We walked through time at The Legacy Museum and felt the overwhelming pain of America's history which has led to today's outcomes. In Selma, we sensed the lingering energy of history's echoes. We stood in spaces where legends conspired to create change and then did it. We met people who are right now in the fight, doing the hard work that is required to create lasting change. It is important to experience perspectives outside of our own, and to learn from the oral histories and the first-hand wisdom of those who've come before us. There are glimmers of truth that only reveal themselves through experiential learning

**SMU's Civil Rights Pilgrimage
is a transformative journey
that inspires us to seek
understanding and share
insights that foster progress,
igniting a commitment to
change throughout every
season.**

Questions about attending a future Civil Rights Pilgrimage?

**Contact the Office of
the Chaplain and
Religious Life**



The poster features a large, stylized sign that reads "Civil Rights Pilgrimage 2025" in a white script font, with "MOTEL" in large, colorful block letters below it. The background is a blue sky with clouds. Below the sign are three circular images: the first shows a destroyed city with the text "TULSA OKLAHOMA" below it; the second shows a group of people with the text "LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS" below it; the third shows a group of people holding signs with the text "MEMPHIS TENNESSEE" below it. At the bottom, it says "MARCH 14 -20" in large, bold letters. Below that, it says "A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY TO ENVISION THE FUTURE" in smaller letters. To the left is the SMU Student Affairs logo, and to the right is a black button with "SIGN UP" in white. At the very bottom, it says "applications close November 5th" in large, bold letters.

Civil Rights Pilgrimage 2025

MOTEL

TULSA OKLAHOMA

LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS

MEMPHIS TENNESSEE

MARCH 14 -20

SMU Student Affairs
Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life

A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY TO ENVISION THE FUTURE

COST FOR STUDENTS: \$1000 (PARTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE)

SIGN UP

applications close November 5th

SMU-IN-OXFORD: REVIEWING THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY'S THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

by Megan Watson

While attending the 2024 SMU-In-Oxford Summer Program, I learned many things that would be impossible to fit into an article.



The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), as presented on the RSC website

However, by far, I learned the most when attending excursions throughout my month abroad. On excursions, we would travel throughout England and learn about the history of the country.

In such an excursion, on July 17th, we watched *The School for Scandal* at the Royal Shakespeare Company. The play was exciting, funny, and spectacular for all demographics. However, in some reviews by authors Brennan from *The Guardian* and Davis from *WhatsOnStage*, they criticize how “Craig’s production mostly opts for style over substance,” and that, “The resulting spectacle too often tries just a bit too hard.” I could not disagree more. While the production was heavy on style, the substance of the play is within the style decisions and modernization of the original text.

As someone who grew up around social media gossip, I felt the message personally. Rather, I agree with Davison from the *British Theater Guide* and Cathie from *Theatre & Tonic*, who say, “There is not a weak link in the cast, each finding a distinctive personality even among such a common band of intriguers,” and who remark on costuming choices such as Lady Sneerwell, which was “the most dramatic, with Harrison having to turn and mince sideways to enter and leave the stage, a humorous nod to both the character’s overbearing nature and a reflection of complaints about Georgian fashions.” In all, while some aspects may be better than others, I fell in love with each contribution to the production.

The Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of *The School for Scandal* is most noteworthy in the style decisions and modernization of the play. The stage colors being pink, black, and white left me wondering about the metaphorical significance of each character as their wardrobe transitions. Similar to Greta Gerwig’s film *Barbie*, the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production utilizes color to the highest extent. With the added monologues, the characters point out how Georgian scandal-reporting may not be so different than it is today. With the added monologues, the characters point out how Georgian scandal-reporting may not be so different than it is today.



Program cover art for The School for Scandal, as featured on the RSC website



Tadeo Martinez as Snake, as featured on the RSC website

In the program, Valentina Valentini mentions, “Streaming services like Netflix and Disney+ have made a habit of creating one-off limited series or movies about scandals – everything from TikTok to tennis to cults to failed music festivals,” which is hardly different from a newspaper reporting gossip.

As for actors, Tadeo Martinez’s depiction of Snake was my favorite to see on stage. While I may have some subconscious bias, as this actor was able to meet us outside and is an alumni of SMU, I still thought he was amazing. Specifically, the character was able to be comedic, connect with the audience, and exceed expectations beyond the original text. In between scenes, Snake would write notes about the play, which broke up scenes nicely. Under the lights, his costume shined, and he emphasized his lines in an easily heard way, such as “I live by the badness of my character; and if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world” from the original play. On the other hand, I was looking for more with John Dougall’s Rowley. With such an impressive resume in the program, I was looking forward to Dougall’s performance, but there was nothing of note. Fortunately, this was made up for with other characters during Rowley’s scenes and was easy to excuse on stage.

As for the visual and sound style of the production, the set, props, and sound effects were outstanding. The back wall of the stage projected the name of each house as the play progressed. With settings changing very quickly within the original play, which has fourteen different scenes, the projections of house names made sense.



Siubhan Harrison as Lady Sneerwell, as featured on the RSC website

Then, there were trap doors with the props that helped to remind the audience the characters were somewhere different. While the sets or props seemed minimal at points, the overwhelming amount of pink and elaborate costumes made up for it visually. Out of all the visual and sound styles of the production, I wish the music had lasted longer or included a theme song throughout.

When it comes to the audience’s general reaction, I was heavily surprised to see most enjoying the play. The play takes a 1770s concept and combines both *Bridgerton* and *Mean Girls*, which would cater to a younger audience.



Tara Tijani as Lady Teazle and Stefan Adegbola as Joseph Surface, as presented on the RSC website

However, the audience was mostly people above the age of fifty it seemed, which was supported by the advertisement to put the Royal Shakespeare Company in your will within the back of the program. If younger audiences saw this production on a streaming service like most use, I am sure that they would love it, so it saddens me to see this production go underappreciated in that demographic. There were also tourists in the crowd, who I am assuming would have loved to see anything from the Royal Shakespeare Company as a part of their travels. Still, the performance seemed very successful to all.

If Sheridan’s original goal with *The School for Scandal* was to make audiences think deeper about gossip, then this production accomplished his goal with flying, hot pink colors. I am endlessly grateful to have seen it while on the 2024 SMU-In-Oxford Summer Program.



2024 SMU-in-Oxford photographs by Elle Caldon and Megan Watson

ANALYSIS

THE DRIVE AWAY FROM CARS: WHAT GEN Z'S DRIVING DECLINE MEANS FOR DALLAS

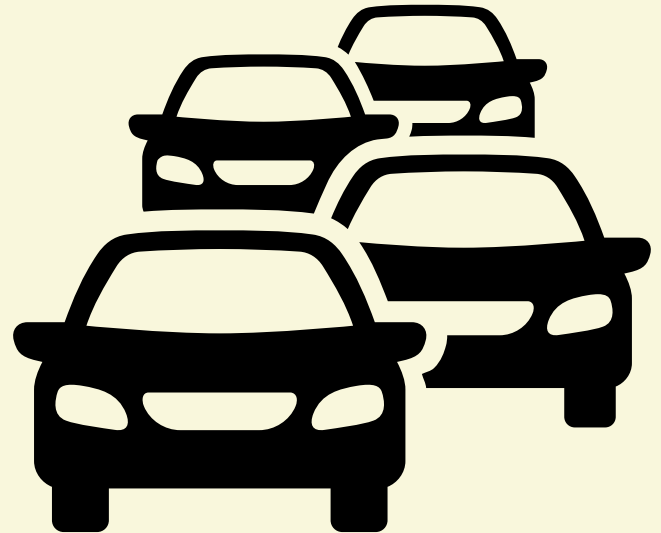
by Mustafa Haque

It's that time of year again; sororities have begun recruiting, students are waking up for their 8AMs, and parking lots are filled with commuting students. Every year, the story is the same: students loathe the parking situation at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The university's student-exclusive social media app, Fizz, is fizzing with complaints about parking becoming "a battlefield." Every day, there's a new post about someone's Tesla being door-dinged or someone parking in a crosswalk and on top of a curb.

SMU students are tired of this. What's more, it's not exclusive to SMU students. Gen Z, overall, is tired of automobile dependency. *The Washington Post* wrote, "Gen Zers point to many reasons they are turning their backs on cars: anxiety, finances, environmental concern."¹ They prefer alternatives like public transportation – a preference that requires municipalities to improve public transit and urban planning.

Additional proof that Gen Z prefers transit-oriented development is clear when we look at NYC vacancy rates.² In an article presented by *thereth Finance*, we know Gen Z is moving back to big cities like New York in droves, pushing the rental vacancy rate to just 1.4%, the lowest since 1968. Unlike previous generations, they want the convenience of urban living without needing cars. Further underscoring this trend, over 42% of people moving to NYC recently have been Gen Zers.

According to the North Central Texas Council Government's data, the Mobility 2050 plan, road building, and lane expansion alone cannot solve the mobility problem caused by expected population growth. Coupling this with the fact that Gen Z is tired of automobile dependency, something must be done.



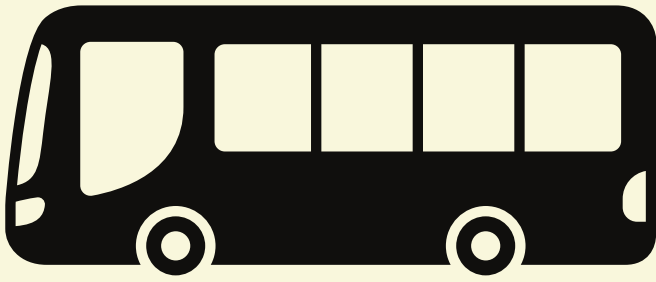
SMU, and the greater DFW metroplex, must seriously reconsider development and transportation to support the next generation of innovators, leaders, and students – Gen-Z. This is the best way to ensure the metroplex remains a leader in the United States.

In 2018, *D Magazine* ran a report showing the mismatched priorities within Dallas. According to the report, the city's current tax system collects money from denser, higher-revenue areas, using it to subsidize less dense areas that generate less tax revenue but require more services, the opposite of how it should be. Charles Marhon, a former engineer, asks us to "...take note of how far apart things are from each other." Our observations show how³ "...[low-density development is] being served by incredibly expensive infrastructure, yet, more than likely, they're creating no real wealth." This mismatch in how Dallas invests in its neighborhoods reflects a bigger issue that affects places like TWU, SMU, UNT, and UTD.

¹ Osaka, Shannon. "I'll call an Uber or 911": Why Gen Z doesn't want to drive." *The Washington Post*, 13 Sept. 2023. www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2023/02/13/gen-z-driving-less-uber/

² Lake, Sydney. "Gen Z's thirst for the NYC lifestyle drives vacancy rates to the historic low of 1.4%—unseen since the 'Mad Men' era of 1968." *Yahoo! Finance*, 9 Feb 2024. finance.yahoo.com/news/gen-z-thirst-nyc-lifestyle-212807930.html

³ Anderson, Jon. "Dallas Is Long On Maintenance Needs. Is There A Way To Generate More Intelligent Revenue?" *D Magazine*, 12 Sept. 2018. www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2018/09/dallas-is-long-on-maintenance-needs-is-there-a-way-to-generate-more-intelligent-revenue/



It's become clear that outdated, car-focused planning does not align with what Gen Z wants, which is more sustainable.

The greater metroplex must focus on high-density, transit-oriented, multi-use development.

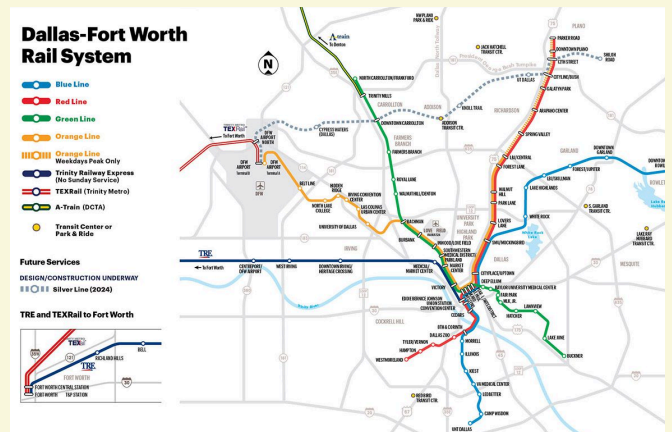
To address the ongoing parking issues at SMU and meet the needs of Gen Z, it's time for the university and the Dallas area to implement transit-oriented development. This approach focuses on creating high-density areas near public transportation with more options to live, work, and socialize, reducing the need for cars. The metroplex needs to prioritize these policy ideas.

And this shift can begin now. With SMU joining the ACC, an influx of donor contributions provides a unique opportunity to enhance the campus experience. For example, Hawk Hall was a one-bedroom apartment residence hall that housed graduate students, married graduate students, and married undergraduate students with families. The building was demolished in 2018 to make

way for a new campus parking center. In the future, we could repurpose buildings like Hawk Hall back into student housing. This would align with Gen Z's preference for sustainable, transit-oriented living.



Binkley Parking Center, a central parking spot for SMU students



The DFW Rail System, as illustrated by Say Yes to Dallas

By investing in projects that repurpose spaces and reduce reliance on cars, such as reimagining parking facilities and promoting transit-oriented development, we can create a campus and metroplex that caters to the coming generations, ensuring a vibrant future for all.

"THE BAT CAVE" BECAME THE NEW SCHOLARS DEN



by Elle Caldon

"1920s pipes ... would clash" and "students would be working in mittens and hats," Dr. Doyle said while remembering the basement that students had nicknamed "The Bat Cave" – what is now called the old Scholars Den.

The basement of Clements Hall, built originally in 1915, at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas underwent its first gut renovation from April 2023 to April 2024, becoming the new Scholars Den.

Dr. Doyle was one of the staff at the forefront of the renovation's planning. He has been an adjunct professor in the William P. Clements Department of History since 1997, Director of the University Honors Program since 2003, and Dean of Honors and Scholars Programs since 2019.

"It's kind of the heart of what we're trying to do," Dr. Doyle said. "... I wanted the Scholars Den to be very comfortable for students, to reflect the history of the building, not to ignore that, and to be something that President Turner would feel at home in."

Some highlights of the basement's renovation are a kitchen with a coffee bar, additional offices and classrooms, modern desks with cushioned chairs, moveable whiteboards, Smart TVs, a wheelchair lift at the entrance, school supplies, printers, and fidget toys.¹ Staff from the Student Academic Engagement and Success division have their offices inside. The new Scholars Den is open to students across campus from the university's 22 Honors and Scholars Programs.

¹ For the specifics: "SMU Clements Hall Scholars' Den Renovation." Adolfsen & Peterson Construction, www.a-p.com/projects/smu-clements-hall-scholars-den-renovation.

Donations from The Clements Foundation and The Clements Family funded the renovation. Anita Moran from the Office of Moran Architects designed the new Scholars Den. Dr. Doyle said SMU selected her for this project because she renovated historical buildings before.

“You don’t want somebody monkeying around who doesn’t know what they’re doing, and that’s quite frankly what happened in 1964, first floor up,” he added. “The interior ... has no connection whatsoever with the outside now. It’s sad.” The first floor and up of Clements Hall was originally a women’s dormitory and, in 1964, was renovated into classrooms.

As a historian, Dr. Doyle is pleased that Moran designed the new Scholars Den to preserve the basement’s original interior pillars and window casements. You might suspect a basement over 100 years old is scary and shrunken. But not the new Scholars Den.

“We really were obsessed with allowing as much light as possible to come in, ... having good lighting where there was no outside light, and providing a lot of glass, so it would be as open as possible,” Dr. Doyle said.

Now, it is never dull in the den – this is not just about its lighting. The new Scholars Den holds weekly events, including most recently a movie night, pumpkin painting, and a party for the release of the Spring 2025 Honors courses and summer study abroad opportunities. Additionally, the required first-year Honors Seminar classes are taught here.



Dr. Doyle next to the main Scholars Den sign



3D design for the new Scholars Den



Sunrays entering the Scholars Den's original window casements



Real-life version of the 3D design above

"We really want the Scholars Den Communities to be ... a place that [students] feel connected and a place that challenges them," Dr. Doyle said.



New Scholars Den wheelchair lift



Coffee bar in the new Scholars Den kitchen

Dr. Doyle said the old Scholars Den had the same goal but was of a different quality.

"I think everybody enjoyed it, but it was not fancy and not new," he said.

About fifteen years ago, Dr. Doyle and the at-the-time provost, Paul W. Ludden, decided that students in Honors and Scholars programs needed a designated space to study and socialize. Ludden suggested Dr. Doyle could move his office from the first floor of Clements to its vacant basement, where there was ample space to create their goal – what Ludden branded 'Scholars Den.' The university's mail and print shop was formerly located in the basement but relocated to the building next door, Hughes-Trigg Student Center, a few years prior. Dr. Doyle made the move.

"There were concrete floors; it looked like a big warehouse or a workshop," Dr. Doyle said. "... We did some superficial renovations at the beginning, like painting and making sure the doors opened and closed, but it basically was pretty primitive, so students started calling it 'The Bat Cave' because it looked like a cave."

Coincidentally going well with such a nickname, the furniture in the old Scholars Den came from the Office Furniture Graveyard, the university's free thrift shop for classroom and office furniture.

"It was a comfortable place for [students] to come and hang out, but when parents would come, they would compare the Scholars Den to the business school and say, 'Well, maybe Honors

isn't as important as a business school,'" Dr. Doyle said.

When Family Weekend came around this September, Dr. Doyle invited SMU families to "tour [the] beautifully renovated Scholars Den in the basement of the historic Clements Hall."

"The goal really was to make [the new Scholars Den] nice not only for the students and the faculty but for the people that came to visit, that it showed that Honors really means something here – something, you know, that we're proud of," Dr. Doyle said.

You can find Dr. Doyle in his new office, G03C, in the new Scholars Den, ready to help students with anything. Or, if you are hunting for a book to read, you can look through his stacks of books that start from the floor up, surrounding his desk. If there is one thing to miss about "The Bat Cave," Dr. Doyle said it is his "quirky office," a home to 11 bookcases.

"It was like a little library," he said.



Dr. Doyle reading in his new office

Mi's Recollections

by Esther Lee

My paternal grandparents were born in the 1930s when Korea was still called Joseon. They witnessed Korea's liberation from the Japanese empire, division between the capitalists and communists, and economic development over the past century. My grandma's stories offer a rare glimpse into Korea, a time that now feels almost forgotten.

For the beginning of her life, my grandma went by the name Yoshiei. In case you did not know, that is not a Korean name. Under Japanese occupation, Koreans were forced to only speak Japanese, and that restriction applied to their names. However, right before "Yoshiei" entered primary school to learn Japanese, Korea's liberation came, granting my grandma the freedom to use her real name: Mi-Eung.

My grandma's childhood was relatively sweet. While food was scarce, her well-off family avoided starvation. She and her cousins spent summers at their grandma's countryside home, which boasted a garden of corn, sweet potatoes, and all the wondrous goods that the land of Joseon provided. In fact, the ripe crops were free for picking. Whenever the kids desired, they would pick a snack from the garden and ask an adult to cook it up. The children spent summer nights sleeping in the garden, watching against thieves. During the summer days, time was spent splashing in the stream. The stream water was cold and drinkable, not yet polluted by industrialization.



Under Japanese occupation, Koreans were forced to only speak Japanese, and that restriction applied to their names.

My grandma's childhood home was a grand Hanok, a traditional house in the area. It had enough quarters to shelter everyone up to their third cousins, the societal norm. With a courtyard in the center, outdoor spaces connected the individual buildings as a home. Now, stories like this tempt me to say, "I was born in the wrong generation!" That is, until I remember the stress of living back then.

Particularly, when my grandma was 12, the Korean War started. The land was filled with unrest and death. Communities practiced communist-style criminal trials. No formal courts were involved and neighbors simply voted on the verdict. On their whim, communities could pick out a neighbor for being corrupt, disagreeable, or unpopular and take them to trial.

One fateful day, it was my grandma and her family's turn. In the courtyard of her home, the whole community gathered. In front of the crowd were her family members, each bundled up in as many layers of clothing as they could wear, kneeling at the center of attention. A scoundrel had accused her father of a crime in hopes of taking the family's possessions. Now, the family had to face trial. Worse than the risk of losing their house and property, their lives were at stake. If the judge asked, "Should they get kicked out?" and the people replied, "Ulsso!" (similar to "Aye!"), they would be forced to leave with only the clothes on their backs. If the judge asked, "Should they die?" and the people replied, "Ulsso!" then they would be killed on the spot.



And so, the trial started. After a few grueling and stressful moments, not a single neighbor spoke out. Thus, with relief, the family survived without losing anything. My grandma credits this outcome to her father's kind treatment towards everyone.

Years after the war, my grandma experienced married life, which meant living in her in-laws' home. According to tradition, Korean households followed a more authoritarian culture of obeying elders, and her in-laws tasked her with cooking. At the time, cooking included slaughtering and butchering chickens. Once, she also had to gut a crane, which she noted had an exceptionally awful stench. As a rich girl who never did those things before, she found that preparing meat was especially dreadful. One could call her spoiled, but she could not complain or refuse when the elders gave an order. Today, she claims that this authoritarian culture is not as strict, which is a change for the better.

It is strange to see how the nation transformed from a land of impoverishment and turbulence into a land brimming with modern conveniences – all within my grandma's lifetime.

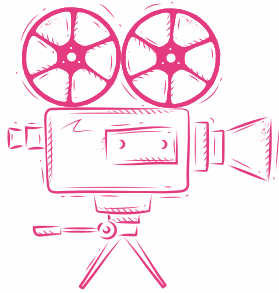
As a mother who bought milk to feed her babies, my grandma also became familiar with Korea's early milk industry. In the early 1960s, few choices for baby food were available. Mainly, she could afford Morinaga brand milk formula, a Japanese import. Others who could not afford the product would ground rice into a thick liquid. Soon after, Seoul Milk, the nation's first milk company, became available to feed her next child. Later, her last child was fed Namyang, another local brand.

At a glance, Korea today is hardly the same place where my grandma was called Yoshei, nor is it the same place where the threat of hunger and bloodshed roamed. Instead, tall and peaceful apartment complexes define Korea's skyline. With grocery stores at every corner of residential areas, families no longer have to butcher birds at home. And among the grocery store shelves, lie an abundance of products and brands that developed since Seoul Milk. It is strange to see how the nation transformed from a land of impoverishment and turbulence into a land brimming with modern conveniences – all within my grandma's lifetime. Seeing those changes leaves a bittersweet mix of pride and nostalgia.



Assassinating Uncle Sam: Oliver Stone, JFK, and Change

by Logan Arebalo



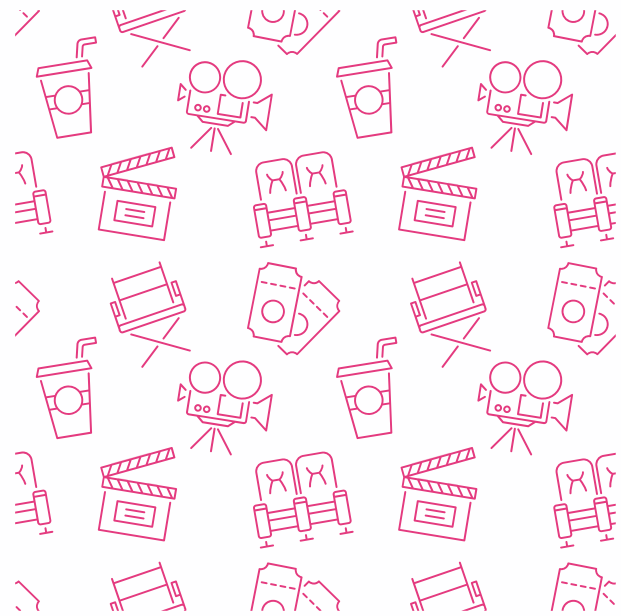
The word ‘maverick’ is overused in Hollywood – specifically, with directors, actors, and producers who may go against the grain but do so in a very particular, predictable way. The word has lost much of the weight it possesses in a dictionary. As with most things diminished, its decline is never clearer than when looking at the real deal: Oliver Stone, in cinema’s case.

Academy Award winner, Commander of France’s Arts and Letters, Vietnam War veteran, and, most importantly, Hollywood’s black sheep – Oliver Stone’s nebulous life and vast array of achievements and failures make him something more than your typical auteur. He is, for lack of a better term, Hollywood’s ultimate living rebel. His films, bound by nothing more than cynical patriotism, serve as deep, neurotic dives into the depths of the American psyche, touchstones for a nation long since lacking in feeling.

That is why, during this particular year and this particular election cycle, his appearance at the Texas Theatre in Oak Cliff – the same theater Lee Harvey Oswald was apprehended at – for a showing of his seminal 1991 film *JFK*, a film about the assassination of J.F.K., seems almost prophetic. Maybe it is because this presidential race has seen two unprecedented attempts on a candidate’s life, or maybe it’s because I, and so many others, feel the term unprecedented fits this cycle so well. Regardless, *JFK*, and what’s more, Oliver Stone, seem like the perfect ushers into whatever era we’re marching towards. As renowned film critic Roger Ebert said in the opening lines of his 4-star (the highest rating he gave) review of the film: “I don’t have the slightest idea whether Oliver Stone knows who killed President John F. Kennedy. I have no opinion on the factual accuracy of his 1991 film ‘JFK.’ I don’t think that’s the point. This is not a film about the facts of the assassination but about the feelings. ‘*JFK*’ accurately reflects our national state of mind since Nov. 22, 1963.”



The film, despite ostensibly being about the facts of the assassination (and, if you listen to Oliver Stone, that was the chief point behind it), has become more than that. It is, as Roger Ebert predicted, not often interpreted as a deep factual dive into the logistics and reasons behind the assassination of John F. Kennedy here in Dallas. It serves as an exploration into the lack of reason behind it, and the confusion of being a citizen both caught up in and at the whim of that senselessness. Its most pressing questions are not those that ask, "Why x happened?" or "How did y cause that?" but simply just "Why?" and "How?" Why are we as a nation going through this? How did we get here? Is there a way out, and if there is, where is the path? These are the questions that stuck with me from the film. Because, as great as a government proving Lee Harvey Oswald definitively innocent or guilty would be, if we the people don't believe in or can't trust that government, what's the point in them proving it either way? And as great as the "correct" candidate winning the 2024 presidential election would be, if at the end of the day, the position of the president is seen as illegitimate, what is the point of electing one? After all, a snake may very well have a beautiful head, but if it has lost its body, that doesn't matter very much.

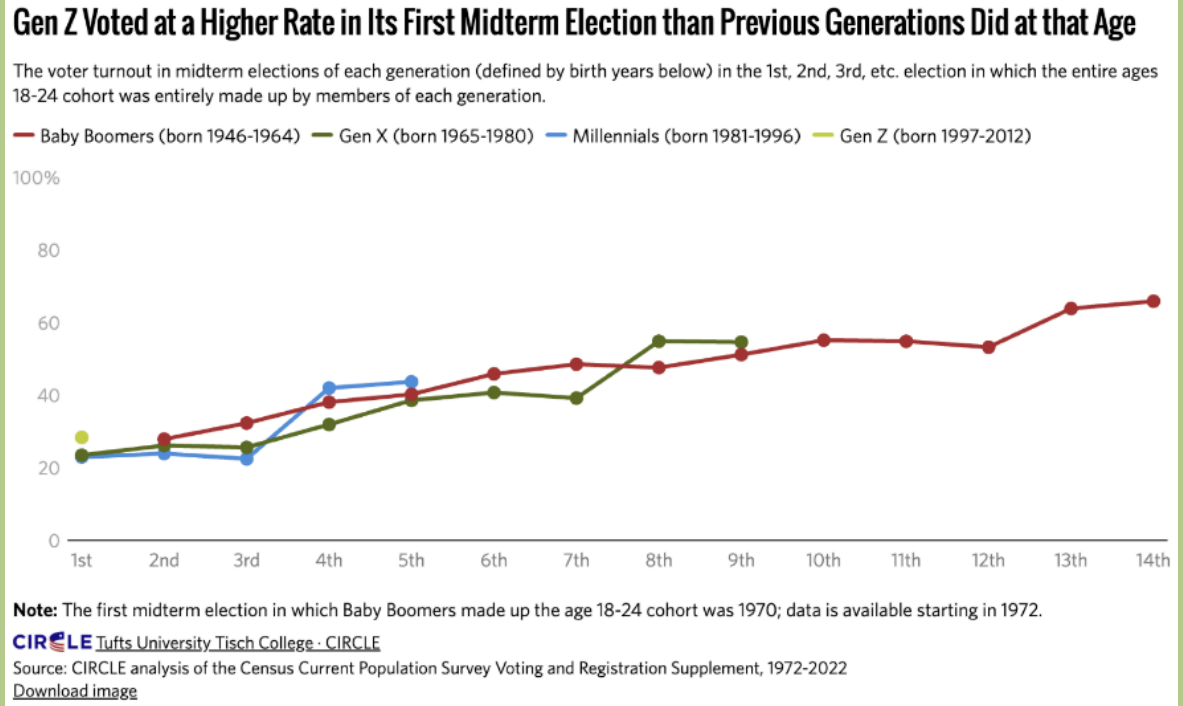


This point of mine was examined magnificently by Oliver Stone in the Q&A he did after the film. He talked about how, when he was in Vietnam, he was fed nothing but lies by his command, yet he still was forced to fight for his command. And how he hasn't felt there's been a good president since J.F.K., but he is still subject to all that have been elected. It's this deep-seated discontent with the state of the nation that drove his films, and indeed, continues to drive them forward into new generations. He – more than anyone – can harness the raw energy of watershed moments in American history and use them as vehicles for his pent-up rage. So, it's no wonder that, with the unpredictable path this election has taken, the world feels a lot like an Oliver Stone script. The crazy twists and turns leave us with the same question viewers of *JFK* had in 1991: Why?

CHANGING FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES IN A GEN-Z WORLD

by Arianna Villarreal

Throughout human history, conflicts among nations have persisted, remaining one of the few constants over the centuries. This ongoing struggle resembles the ocean's tides: at times rising is high, at others receding, sometimes calm and ripple-free, and at other times, endlessly turbulent. time.



The pursuit of national security has always been a fundamental interest for nations on the global stage, as emphasized by proponents of the Realist Theory. Security is essentially the cornerstone of any functioning state. Before addressing other needs and ambitions, a state must first secure itself against internal and external threats to achieve its goals. Whether through military strength or political negotiation, the goal is simple: protect the nation-state's sovereignty. Just as the ocean is affected by a variety of forces, nations – large and small – are shaped by a range of factors in their interactions over time. While these forces are at play, people's perceptions of international relations have been shifting over time.

What constitutes a state's national interest has evolved continuously, especially in the modern era where the exchange of information can occur at the click of one button. Since 2018, American public opinion has shifted significantly.

Support for containing China has increased by 17 percentage points, and interest in resolving the Israeli and Palestinian conflict has risen by 11 points, according to the Pew Research Center. Similarly, support for aiding Ukraine and containing Russia has grown by 8 points since 2021.¹ Conversely, support for the United Nations has dropped by 8 points, the desire to reduce foreign military commitments has fallen by 6 points, and advocacy for promoting human rights abroad has decreased by 5 points. The most significant decline has been in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, which dropped 19 points since 2021.¹

A new generation, however, is poised to influence foreign policy priorities: Generation Z. In the 2022 midterm elections, this group turned out to vote at higher rates than Gen X and Millennials when they made up the 18-25 voting bloc, according to the Center for Information & Research on Civic and Learning Engagement.² With Gen Z's growing role in public policy, national interest priorities are likely to shift further in the coming years.

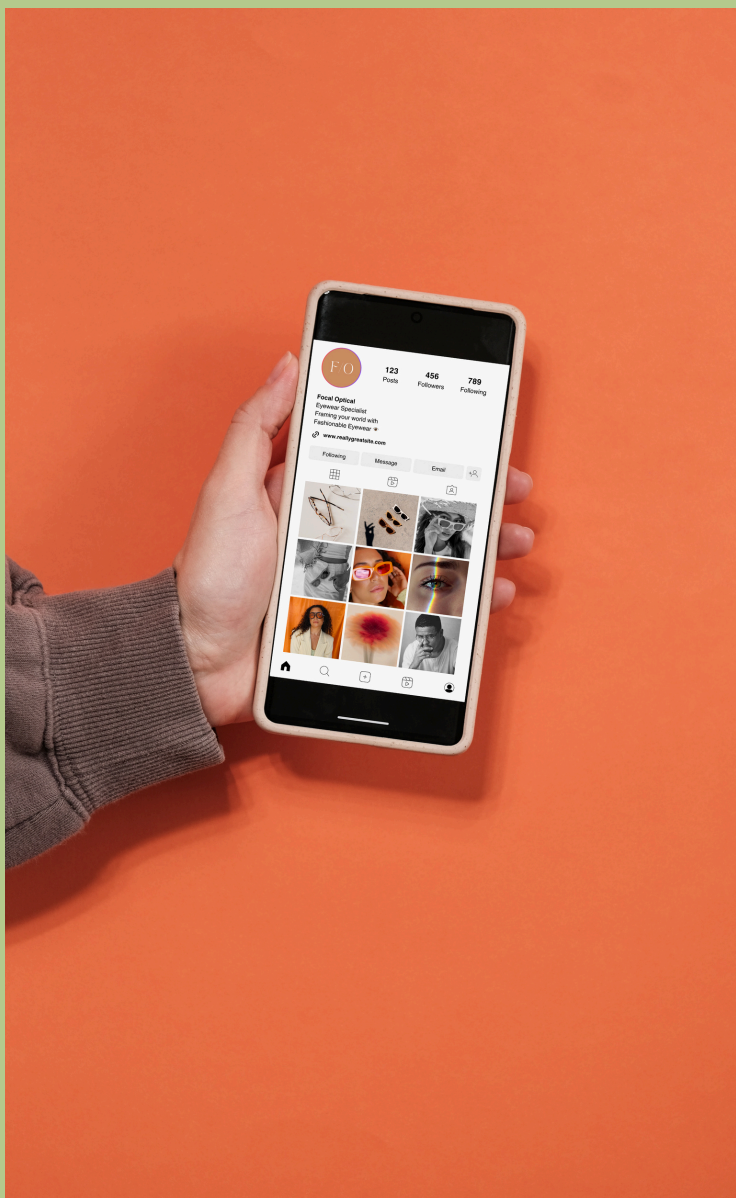
¹ Poushter, Jacob and Laura Clancy. "Americans' Top Foreign Policy Priorities." Pew Research Center, 23 Apr. 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/04/23/what-are-americans-top-foreign-policy-priorities/>

² Medina, Alberto. "Gen Z Voted at a Higher Rate in 2022 Than Previous Generations in Their First Midterm Election." Tufts University, CIRCLE, 2023, <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/gen-z-voted-higher-rate-2022-previous-generations-their-first-midterm-election>

While older generations tend to support foreign policy priorities such as reducing the flow of drugs, limiting the influence of China and Iran, and maintaining U.S. military advantage, Gen Z shows growing support for decreasing military commitments overseas, promoting and defending human rights abroad, and addressing climate change. That said, young Americans show less interest in news about international relations and the role of the U.S. on the global stage.³

As a generation, many of us were either too young to witness or too young to remember pivotal moments in modern American foreign policy.⁴ We certainly were not alive in the end of the Cold War and most of us were barely crawling when the tragic attacks on the Twin Towers occurred on September 11, 2001. When Osama Bin Laden was killed, our biggest concern was whether we'd have enough time for recess – not conflicts in the Middle East, let alone matters of public policy.

Our generation's foreign policy priorities have been shaped by an era marked by the rise of a multipolar world, economic instability, and ongoing concerns over nuclear proliferation by adversaries. Unlike older Americans, younger generations strongly oppose an ever-growing national defense budget. Additionally, the exponential growth of social media among Gen Z has provided unprecedented access to information that was previously unavailable to the average citizen.



For better or worse, social media has become a window into global struggles and human interactions, forever shaping Gen Z and altering how future generations approach foreign policy.



³ Smeltz, Dina and Emily Sullivan. "Public Opinion Survey: Young Americans Question U.S. Global Engagement." Global Affairs, 2023, <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/young-americans-question-us-global-engagement>

⁴ Barnett, Samuel et al. "How Gen Z Will Shake Up Foreign Policy." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 15 Dec. 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/12/how-gen-z-will-shake-up-foreign-policy?lang=en>

Change is the Name of the (Video) Game

by Anika Saiprabhu



One of the hallmarks of SMU Composition, an academic program in the Meadows School of the Arts, is the department's collaboration with the graduate school for game development, SMU Guildhall. Every fall semester, the second-year cohort at the game school produces two capstone video games, each scored by a team of music composers within SMU itself. Last year, I had the opportunity to compose for one of these games. This year, I get to lead a music team and manage the overall composition project. Despite the longstanding nature of the collaboration, there have been some remarkable changes this year—changes that are simultaneously exciting and daunting. Even so, I am thrilled to be a part of the teams this year and explore this new direction in game scoring.

One of the most striking changes in the collaboration this year has been the shift in how we approach the composition. In previous projects, we have provided looping tracks that establish the player's ambiance. However, the approach this year is entirely different. Now, the games will implement a dynamic soundscape that adapts to the player's real-time state. This means that the music responds directly to in-game triggers. For instance, the character might move into a new space and a flute solo might trigger. Or, the enemy will notice the player, then a new layer of music will add to the suspense. Such an approach further immerses the player into the game, making them feel as if they are part of the world.

Personally, one of the most exciting aspects about the capstone games is that no two sonic experiences will be the same. As the player explores an environment, layers and sound effects will trigger on top of each other—sometimes due to a stimulus and sometimes at random to trick the player. When there are multiple layers, they might overlap in unique ways.

For us composers, this approach marks a dramatic shift away from the fixed loops we are used to. Instead of thinking about the progression of a single piece of music, we are composing fragments. These fragments must work both on their own and with each other, which poses a challenge since we do not have full control over how the fragments interact. Naturally, this means we must develop a stronger understanding of the technical side of game composition and compose with strict intentionality. As a coder and a composer, I have loved designing the music schema and weighing in on how to implement the sounds. Overall, the soundscape will contribute to an interactive experience, adding layers of depth that will subconsciously immerse the player in the environment.

To adapt to the changing game needs, the way we record audio needs to adapt, too. One of the staples of this collaboration is the recording session. In the past, we conducted full ensemble recordings with several musicians at a time. However, due to the needed flexibility in the tracks, we have switched to a minimalist recording approach, focusing on solo recordings and individualized sound design. Additionally, with a focus on each performer, we can collect a plethora of sounds for us to customize and blend as we wish in production. So, much of our time post-recording will be spent processing each sound in detail.

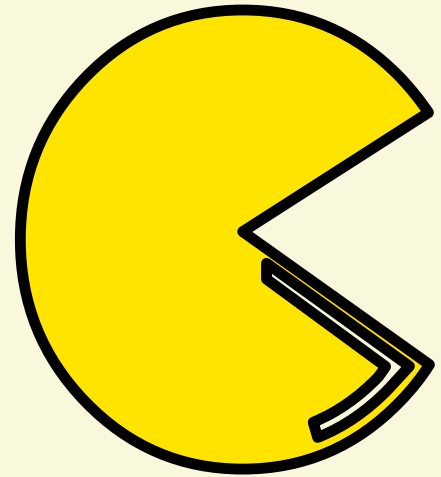


With such rapid changes in game music and with growing interest in the field, SMU introduced a new degree at the undergraduate level: a Bachelor of Music Composition with a specialization in media scoring. After all, media scoring is growing as an industry for composition, and curriculum changes must be made to keep up. As it is, composing for the capstone games already closely mirrors the process of game scoring in the professional world. This sentiment is echoed by the composition professor overseeing the collaboration, Dr. Robert J. Frank:

“This is exactly as it is in the game industry, so our students get the unique first-hand experience that only SMU has with leading national programs in both music AND game development and design.”

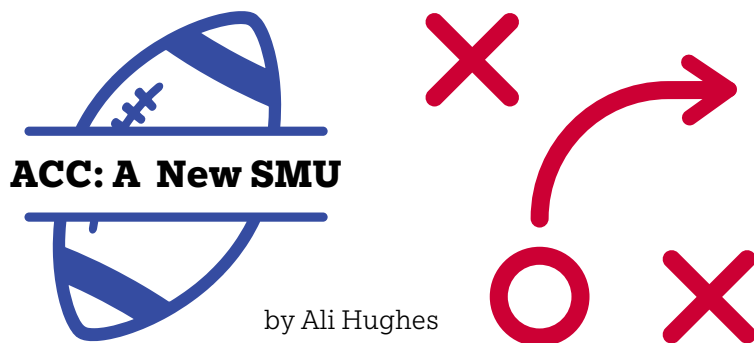
Each project includes a detailed overview and weekly meetings/music updates, reminiscent of how a composer would interact with a game developer in the industry. With the addition of the new degree, such expectations and techniques involved in game scoring, along with real-time application, will become part of the standard curriculum.

As exciting as this change has been, a part of it is also scary. Terrifying, even. When confronted with the work of your role models, which has been a certain way and which you have endlessly consumed and hoped to be part of someday, you wonder if you are doing the right thing. You want it to be exceptional, but question, “Will it even be good?”



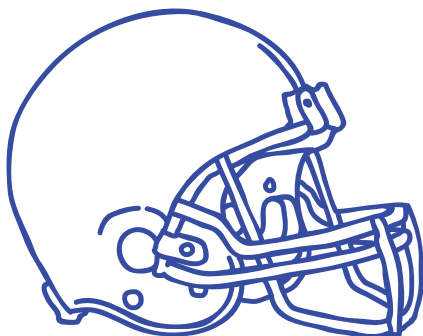
There will always be some amount of trepidation when trying something new because change is always uncertain. Yet, there is something equally exhilarating about it, as well. Dr. Frank illustrates, “Video games have come a long, long way since the early 1980s ‘Pac-Man’ and ‘Donkey Kong’ level. Today’s music soundtracks rival those of major movies and often will be released on separate albums on their own or performed by major symphony orchestras, such as the Dallas Symphony.” As technology changes, there will be even more change to the music involved—even more reason to embrace these new directions.





by Ali Hughes

Southern Methodist University (SMU) marked a significant milestone on Monday, July 1 st, 2024, as it officially joined the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). SMU has a rich legacy of athletic excellence, with a total of nine national championships, nearly 200 team conference titles, over 100 individual national championships, more than 150 National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) top 10 finishes, close to 2,000 All-American Honors, and over 150 Olympic appearances. In just the past decade, all 17 of SMU's athletic programs have made postseason appearances, with 15 different teams winning conference championships. As the only NCAA Football Division 1 Bowl Subdivision (FBS) program in Dallas, SMU has invested more than \$250 million into its athletic programs since 2013 to develop and upgrade its championship-level facilities.¹



SMU's move to the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) underscores the school's commitment to strengthening its athletic program on a national scale. With SMU joining the ranks of ACC schools, the conference continues to expand its influence across diverse regions, reinforcing its position as a powerhouse in collegiate athletics. The ACC is a prominent Power Four collegiate athletic conference based in Charlotte, North Carolina.

This conference was founded on May 8, 1953, by seven universities in the South Atlantic States, with the University of Virginia joining later that year to make it eight. Today, the ACC has a current total of 18 institutions. According to ESPN, its 18 member universities compete at the highest level in the NCAA Division I, with ACC football teams participating in the NCAA Division FBS. The ACC supports competition in 27 various sports, and many of its member schools are nationally recognized for their athletic achievements (ESPN). The conference has consistently produced some of the top collegiate athletes and teams in the country. According to ESPN, these expansions have now extended the conference's reach into the Northeast, Midwest, and West.²

After many phone calls between President R. Gerald Turner and the ACC commissioner, Jim Phillips, the university accepted its offer to join this nationally ranked conference. Mr. Phillips said, "Throughout the evaluation process, the ACC Board of Directors, led by President Ryan, was deliberate in prioritizing the best possible athletic and academic experience for our student-athletes and in ensuring that the three universities would strengthen the league in all possible ways."

SMU President R. Gerald Turner also expressed his excitement about this new chapter for the university. "This is the beginning of a new era for the Mustangs," said Turner.

"We're thrilled to bring elite ACC athletic competition to our community and to explore the academic opportunities that come with ACC membership." Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson also highlighted the significance of this moment for the city. "This is not just a victory for SMU but a defining moment that will enhance our local community and sports culture," Johnson stated.³

Today, SMU's athletic programs are entering the ACC with strong momentum, having secured a record eight championships during the 2023-24 season. Clark Hunt, chairman and CEO of the Kansas City Chiefs and an SMU trustee, also reflected on SMU's growth. Specifically, Hunt stated, "As a former athlete on the Hilltop in the 1980s, I've witnessed how far we've come. Joining the ACC means top-ranked opponents, national TV coverage, and a new level of excitement on campus."³

In one example, SMU Women's Soccer is making its debut in the highly competitive ACC. Here, one of the players, Aubrey Brown, shares her experiences, discussing how her perspective and approach have evolved since joining the ACC, the obstacles her team encounters, and how the transition is impacting their outlook:⁴

How has your mindset (or approach) to the game changed now that the SMU soccer team is competing in one of the most competitive conferences in college soccer?

While a lot of people may feel scared or worried about entering such a competitive conference, my confidence in my team and experience in club soccer made me more excited for the upcoming season. Before college, I played on a highly competitive club team, and many of my old teammates are on ACC teams. This made me feel comfortable with the competition level and excited for the team to get the opportunity to play on the nation's biggest stage.

What challenges and opportunities do you foresee for your team as you face higher-ranked opponents in the ACC, and how do you guys prepare for them?

The technical ability of the ACC is incredibly higher than any other teams we have played against. Game in and game out you are playing against players who do not make unprompted mistakes. This has presented us with a challenge to raise our own technical standards and forced us to adapt our defensive style.

How has joining the ACC impacted your personal goals and aspirations as a student-athlete, both on and off the field?

I had the opportunity to participate in the ACC Unity Tour this past July, where each school sent about 4 athletes to Charleston, South Carolina, for a conference. I had the opportunity to meet athletes across the conference while we did bonding activities and visited historical sites in Charleston. Meeting so many talented athletes and well-rounded humans as a redshirt freshman inspired me to push myself further on the field.



What has the transition been like for your team in terms of training, competition, and facilities since joining the ACC this year?

Being in the ACC has given us incredible motivation to be more professional in how we conduct ourselves, from training to attire off of the field... From a pragmatic point of view, being in the ACC has allowed us to hire more coaching, supportive, and media staff. In terms of facilities, the athletic department has built the Flanagan Training Table, which is an athlete-only dining hall on par with other Power 4 schools. Football saw the bulk of the advancements in facilities, but when they get new resources, we get their old resources, so the whole athletic department is lifted upwards.

³ "SMU Joins the ACC July 1." SMU, 17 June 2024, www.smu.edu/news/latest/smu-joins-the-acc-july-1

⁴ Brown, Aubrey. Personal interview. 30 October 2024.

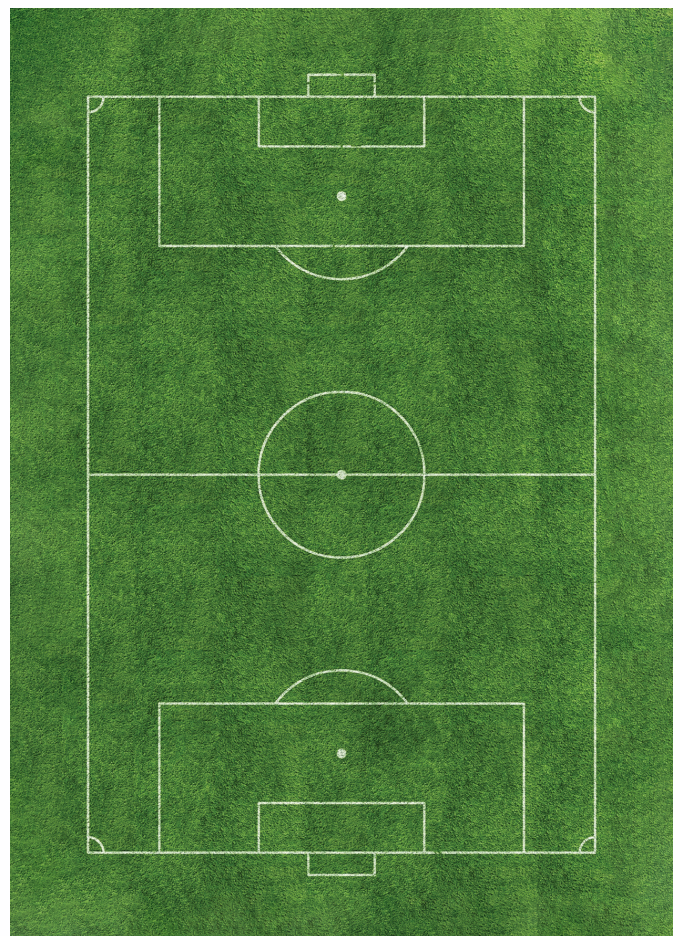
How do you think this move to the ACC will influence the future of your soccer program (or any sports team here at SMU), both in terms of recruiting and overall success?

The ACC has already been hugely impactful on our recruiting prospects. SMU has always been a great academic and athletic institution, but finally being able to claim "Power 4" makes recruits more willing to consider your institution, regardless of other factors. Additionally, our new facilities and revamped social media team has made the school more attractive because recruits get the benefits of a smaller, more intimate school while getting the resources associated with the household names... The rest of our conference does not take us lightly, so we don't either.



As Aubrey makes clear, SMU Women's Soccer is thrilled to be a part of the ACC this year, marking an important milestone for our program and providing exciting new opportunities for our athletes and coaches. Our entry into the Atlantic Coast Conference represents a bold, new chapter for the university's athletic programs, ultimately bringing heightened competition and elevated resources to its athletes. This new milestone not only enriches SMU's legacy in collegiate sports, but it also reinforces its dedication to excellence on a national stage.

The Mustangs are ready to “pony up” for this next chapter, and their journey promises to inspire fans, attract new supporters, and solidify SMU's legacy in collegiate sports through multiple wins in each sport this season!



Tickets for all SMU ACC events are available online.

OPINIONS

THE HARRIS CAMPAIGN: STRATEGIES OF JOY, IDENTITY, AND CHANGE

by Sydney Stuelpe



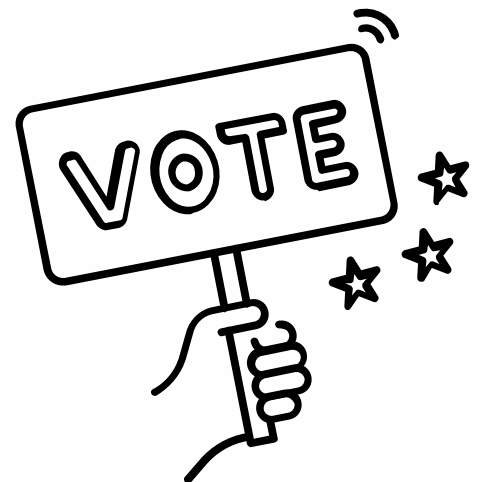
The Harris Walz logo, per the Kamala Harris website

Joe Biden announced in July 2024 that he would not run for president in the upcoming election following concerns about his age. In his address, he threw his support behind his running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris. Since then, her candidacy has been entangled in an unprecedented wave of excitement. Most notably, it has been characterized by overwhelming support over social media and an almost 5-point percentage jump in the polls, according to the BBC. Harris' portrayal as the "change candidate" has definitely changed the makeup of this presidential election. Similarly, Harris' presidential campaign is centered around joy, identity, and unity, promising a brighter future and the version of hope that the country desperately needs.

Once Kamala Harris became a presidential candidate, she entered a race to define herself before her opponents could do it for her. A major part of her strategy was placing a large stress on her identity. Throughout her life and career, Harris has taken on many different roles. Most recently she became vice president. However, Harris emphasizes who she is as a person instead of flashy titles and accolades. If you listen to her speak, you will definitely hear her mention that she is the daughter of middle-class immigrants and was raised by a single mother. Her focus on her upbringing allows her to appear in touch with her base, and, as *New York Times* reporter Robert Draper puts it, "distinctly American."¹

Harris might become the first female president, providing another layer to the identity question. According to Sarah J. Jackson, a professor at The University of Pennsylvania, Harris embraces "a more nuanced and broader type of identity as a woman" because she represents herself as a "mother figure and role model," while also representing herself as a "prosecutor" and "serious politician." Jackson contrasts this approach with Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Campaign where she explains that Clinton found herself tied to the "seriousness and authority stereotypically expected of a male candidate."² Harris has seemed to embrace all facets of her identity, simultaneously showing that a new future is on the horizon for women, people of color, and those from other marginalized communities who have struggled to find themselves in politics in the past.

As the race stands now, Harris and former president Donald Trump are relatively tied in the polls, with Harris having a slight lead. According to the BBC, Donald Trump leads in Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, and North Carolina while Harris leads in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.³



¹ Draper, Robert. "The World According to Kamala Harris." *The New York Times*, 26 Oct 2024

² Moser, Erica. "Race, Gender, and the Appeal to Youth in the Harris Campaign." Annenberg School for Communications, The University of Pennsylvania, 13 Sept 2024.

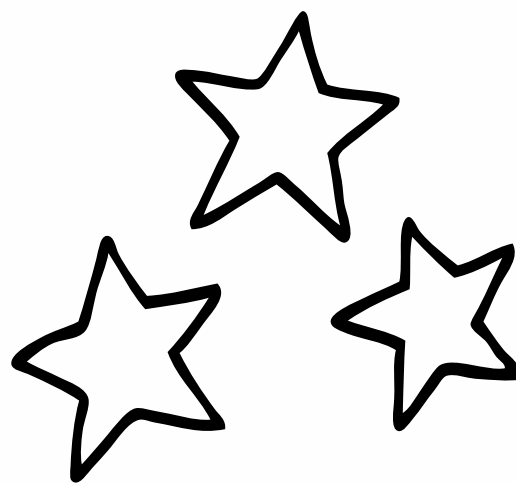
³ BBC. "US election polls: Who is ahead - Harris or Trump?" BBC, 2 Nov 2024.

According to Zeke Miller and Chris Megerian of AP News, in the three months between Biden's withdrawal from the campaign, Harris has been able to "seize the 'change' banner away from Donald Trump" by providing a vision for a new America under her leadership. Her slogans, like "we will not go back," show that the country is on the precipice of great change, if not already there.

While the title of president will be the most important 'first' on Harris' resume, she is no stranger to the idea. Through a career filled with "firsts," Harris has proved that she will pave the way for generations of women to come.

Above all, the Harris campaign shows that change is good and necessary for social and political progress.

For future elections,
please visit
usa.gov/voting-and-elections to learn
more about civil
engagement



IMPACT OF THE 2024 ELECTION

by Vaughn Sternberg



On Tuesday, November 5, 2024, the United States elected a person charged with a felony as the 47th president. For less than a year, Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump ran against one another in a contentious race for the Oval Office.

Since losing the 2020 election, former President Donald Trump was charged with a felony, subject to the exhaustion of appeals. Vice President Kamala Harris is the United States' first black female Vice President, and she ran to be the first black female president, embarking on the campaign only after President Biden stepped down.

Alongside the candidates were their running mates: Senator JD Vance and Governor Tim Walz. Both candidates have made headlines by highlighting their political platforms and personalities. Specifically, Vance suggested school shootings are a "fact of life," and Walz, a gun owner himself, supports an assault weapons ban. The two perspectives exemplify just one of the many differences between our now-elected vice president and former vice president candidate. School shootings, Project 2025, and women's reproductive rights are just a few of the reasons many viewed this election as a pivotal time in American history.

Most SMU students have likely had to practice intruder drills in primary school, including hiding behind a desk or in a closet, in an attempt to outsmart a potential school shooter. When our grandparents were in school, they endured the "duck and cover" drills in response to Cold War tensions and fears of nuclear bombs, but never had the fear of someone entering their classroom with a rifle.

According to the Sandy Hook Promise, more than 338,000 students have experienced gun violence in school since the Columbine school shooting. In 2022, there were 46 school shootings - the highest number since Columbine.¹ The most recent shooting occurred at Apalachee High School: four students were killed and nine were injured. The increased rate of school shootings has been a hot topic among the two candidates and their running mates.

Tim Walz opened up about his son witnessing a "shooting at a community center" during the vice presidential debate.² Walz was previously praised by the National Rifle Association despite receiving an "F" rating from the NRA in 2018. Walz said,

*"It's true. I'm a veteran, a hunter, and a gun owner. But I'm also a dad. And for many years, I was a teacher. It's about keeping our kids safe. I had an A rating from the NRA. Now I get straight F's. And I sleep just fine."*³



¹ "17 Facts about Gun Violence and School Shootings." Sandy Hook Promise, 6 Nov. 2024, www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/gun-violence/facts-about-gun-violence-and-school-shootings/.

² Nace, Aki. "Gov. Tim Walz Says Son Gus Witnessed Shooting at St. Paul Rec Center during VP Debate." CBS News, CBS Interactive, 3 Oct. 2024, www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/tim-walz-gus-witnessed-st-paul-community-center-shooting/.

³ Schecter, Anna, and Kathryn Watson. "Where Does Tim Walz Stand on Guns and Gun Control? Here's His Record." CBS News, CBS Interactive, 7 Aug. 2024, www.cbsnews.com/news/tim-walz-on-gun-control/.

Over the years, Walz's positions on gun rights have evolved. In particular, his views regarding an assault rifle ban have changed. Now, Walz pushes for red flag laws, background checks, and increased mental health funding.

Subsequently, current Vice President Harris and President Biden have pushed for bipartisan cooperation to pass the first major gun safety law. Sadly, this had not been done in almost 30 years. Under the Harris campaign, she aimed to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines along with a universal background check and red flag laws.



Opposingly, JD Vance, a father to three children, acknowledges the issue of school shootings during interviews, and he acknowledged it during the vice president debate. Will his suggestions be able to diminish the issue?

Vance suggested during the debate that school doors need to be stronger and lock better. However, in a recent Georgia school shooting, the shooter, Colt Gray, was already in a classroom. Specifically, Gray was able to bring a semi-automatic assault rifle into school. According to Jeff Amy, Gray "left his second-period class and emerged from a bathroom with the rifle before shooting people in a classroom and hallways."⁴ Stronger doors and better locks do not seem to be a solution if, like in Georgia, the shooter is already sitting in the classroom.

During the debate, Vance also suggested we need to "increase school resource officers."⁵ However, Vance's suggestion does not sound like it will effectively reduce the rise in school shootings across the United States.

Moreover, as a former president and now the recent president-elect, Trump intends to "support overhauling standards on school discipline, advocate for immediate suspension of violent students, and support hardening schools to help keep violence away from our places of learning," according to the Trump Republican Platform.⁶

Despite this, when Trump first took office in 2017, he signed a bill that voided the Obama regulation that made purchasing guns harder for people with mental illness. Trump also supported the idea of teachers carrying weapons in schools. Though he previously has supported measures such as red flag laws, he recently said that in the first week he takes office he will "terminate every single one of Harris-Biden's attacks on law-abiding gun owners."⁷

A student should never have to fear the sound of the intercom coming on. A student should not have to hide in a closet in preparation for a school shooter. While both Trump and Kamala support the Second Amendment, only one supports education and students' lives. Meanwhile, the elected candidate seems to be more worried about removing the policies that aim to keep students alive in the classroom.



⁴ Amy, Jeff. "A Georgia Teen Accused in the Apalachee High School Shooting Has Pleaded Not Guilty." AP News, AP News, 22 Oct. 2024, apnews.com/article/georgia-apalachee-school-shooting-2e27475b4008cac3248532355ab9526d.

⁵ Yurow, Jeremy. "Where Do Vance, Walz Stand on Gun Control? Differing Visions Emerge at VP Debate." USA Today, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 2 Oct. 2024, www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/10/02/jd-vance-tim-walz-gun-control-vp-debate/75476552007/.

⁶ "Platform: Donald J. Trump for President 2024." Platform | Donald J. Trump, www.donaldjtrump.com/platform.

⁷ Linton, Caroline. "Trump and Harris' Policy Plans and Views on Gun Control for the 2024 Election." CBS News, CBS Interactive, 4 Nov. 2024, www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-harris-guns-2024/.

Regarding protecting the lives of students, the Republican party endorses a pro-life agenda, while the Democratic party endorses a pro-choice agenda. However, the Republican Party's position on gun control seems to contradict their pro-life beliefs.

When Trump appointed three Supreme Court justices, giving the court a Republican majority, it led to the overturning of the 50-year-old *Roe v. Wade* case, giving states the power to ban abortion. Today, 13 states have already done so. In the 2024 presidential debate, Trump stated:

“Now I believe in the exceptions for rape, incest, and life of the mother. I strongly believe in it, Ronald Reagan did also and 85 percent of Republicans do too, exceptions, very important, but we were able to get it and now states are voting on it.” “I did a great service in doing it,” “It took courage to do it. And the Supreme Court had great courage in doing it, and I give tremendous credit to those six justices.”⁸

What is Trump referring to when he states, “Life of the mother”? This question made me wonder about the life of Amber Nicole Thurman, a mother who died due to health complications. Did her life not matter? Specifically, Thurman's body did not get rid of all the fecal tissue after taking an abortion pill, forcing her to go to the Piedmont Henry Hospital in Georgia. Piedmont was capable of performing the life-saving procedures required to save Thurman from the infection slowly killing her, but Georgia recently made the required procedure a felony. If the doctors had chosen to perform the procedure, they could have faced up to a decade in prison. Evidently, the doctors did not perform the procedure, leaving Thurman in excruciating pain. 20 hours later, the hospital found it necessary to operate, but it was too late. Amber Nicole Thurman, along with her fetus, passed away. Therefore, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* at the hands of extreme pro-life believers resulted in two deaths.⁹

This makes me want to ask Trump, “Are you still glad abortion is in the hands of the states?”

In comparison, according to Harris herself, “Vice President Harris and Governor Walz trust women to make decisions about their own bodies, and not have the government tell them what to do.”¹⁰ In Minnesota, Governor Walz passed a law that protected women's right to choose soon after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, making Minnesota the first state to do so. Additionally, Harris planned to prohibit a national abortion ban and promised to sign any bill Congress passed to restore women's reproductive freedoms.

Kamala Harris gained exponential support from women, especially those who have experienced situations similar to that of Amber Nicole Thurman. Harris and Walz have repeatedly detailed their opinions on the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and brought hope to the future of women's reproductive rights.



In short, Trump's winning may make some people feel on edge and others feel exhilarated. But, both candidates clearly expressed their beliefs and plans of action, and, in the end, it was up to the people to take action.

So, while the first Tuesday of November left us all biting our nails, it is important to remember that no matter the outcome, we are all human. Even if our neighbor disagrees with our beliefs, it is important to respect and educate one another, not shame and degrade. Republican or Democrat, it is immensely important to do your research on your candidates. Specifically, learn about their policies and hear from different voices. Change starts with your vote and despite your feelings on our next 47th president of the United States, just know “it is going to be okay.”¹¹

⁸ Kemp, Adam. “Watch: Trump Praises ‘heart and Strength’ of Supreme Court for Overturning *Roe v. Wade*.” PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 11 Sept. 2024, www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-trump-praises-heart-and-strength-of-supreme-court-for-overturning-roe-v-wade.

⁹ Surana, Kavitha. “Under Georgia’s Abortion Ban, She Died after Delayed Care.” ProPublica, 16 Sept. 2024, www.propublica.org/article/georgia-abortion-ban-amber-thurman-death.

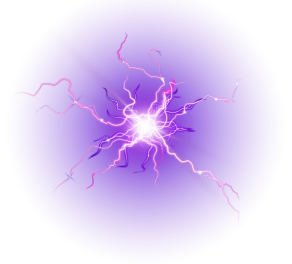
¹⁰ “Issues.” Kamala Harris for President: Official Campaign Website, 21 Oct. 2024, kamalaharris.com/issues/.

¹¹ “Harris Reassures Young Voters during Concession Speech.” NBCNews.Com, NBCUniversal News Group, 6 Nov. 2024, www.nbcnews.com/now/video/harris-reassures-young-voters-during-concession-speech-223756869758.

SATIRE

UHP Course Offerings for Spring 2025

by Dr. Russell Hugh McConnell



UHP 2001: Speliogulism for Beginners

Prerequisite: None

Instructor: Dr. Weirido von Snide

This course is a general introduction to the theory and practice of Speliogulism for students who have no previous knowledge of the subject. It covers such basic concepts as the variability of the Guberman factor, the radical subdivision of the esempula, and the sociopolitical ramifications of the various intermetalobular functions. Students will also learn how to clean up afterward, as well as best practices for avoiding arrest. The Honors Program cannot be held liable for any personal, health, or legal consequences for participating in Speliogulism.



ENGL 3456: The Uninteresting Private Papers of Mordecai Richler

Prerequisite: ENGL 2019 ("Deciphering Mordecai Richler's Handwriting")

Instructor: Dr. Norm Canuck

SMU Libraries recently came into possession of all the personal papers of Canadian author Mordecai Richler that other universities decided they didn't want. Students will get the chance to explore the collection by engaging in detailed close analysis of these newly acquired primary texts. Materials include Richler's grocery lists, Christmas cards, utility bills, and random doodles.



SOCI 2304: The Sociology of Role-Playing Games

Prerequisite: Being a total nerd

Instructor: Elminster Aumar, Sage of Shadowdale

This course examines role-playing games as a sociocultural phenomenon, with Dungeons and Dragons as the main focus. The course will cover such topics as Elf-Dwarf rivalry, the legal consequences of realistic live-action role-playing in public places, and the shift in party dynamics when the fighter finds a +5 Vorpal Blade and starts acting like a big fat jerk.

ENGL 4444: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of Deconstructionism: Exploding the Myth of Postmodern Self-Indulgence

Prerequisites: A snotty attitude

Instructor: Dr. Irony Kaufman



This course assumes that all students are either intimately familiar with postmodern theory, or are willing to pretend to be so. In a manner similar to that employed by gay activists in the 1970s, students in this course will learn how to defend themselves from common criticisms of postmodernism by appropriating, exaggerating, and thus exploding these stereotypes. The major assignment in this course will be a 3000-word essay about itself.

APSM 3003: Underwater Breathing

Prerequisite: APSM 2003 ("Introduction to Breathing")

Instructor: Dr. Davy Jones

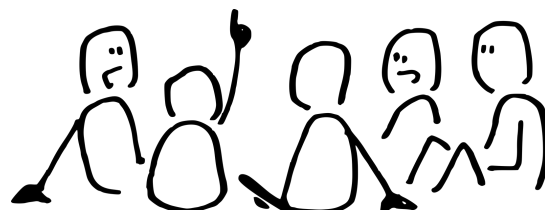
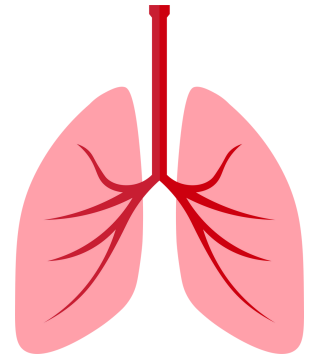
The University Honors Program strongly recommends that nobody take this course.

PSYC 3999: How to Get Along with Everybody

Prerequisite: PSYC 2999 ("Where is Everybody?")

Instructor: Dr. Misanthrope Swift

It can be hard to get along with people when everyone you meet is a stupid jerkass. This course will give you strategies for coping with the nitwits who surround you – all those people who ask you dumb questions and waste your time with boring stories. I mean what is the point of even talking to anybody anyway? People are such a waste of space. Who do these losers think they are? I hope no one signs up for this course. Seriously, leave me alone.





WICKED: THE TRUTH BEHIND SUSTAINABILITY'S GREEN FACE

by Kitty Eid

I have an embarrassing confession to make. I have been made a fool of. My better judgment failed me in my time of need. I fell for propaganda. I was one of many victims of the despotic grip of the media. My generation's overzealous devotion to "science" corroded my reasoning and the incessant static drone of "facts" left me deaf to the melody of reason. Yet I will not proclaim innocence. It was my complacency that left me vulnerable to the grips of "highly credible sources" and my lethargy that obstructed my formation of criticism when I was being bombarded by "statistics."

I was among the brain-dead sheep-*le* who lulled themselves to sleep dreaming of a world where the government worked to solve climate change. I fell for the buzzwords in the news that preached about how "saving the planet is a moral duty." I slapped myself on the wrist for using plastic cups. I was among those disappointed in the government for not using tax money to support institutions that would work toward slowing down global warming. I was corrupted by the narrative that major humanitarian problems should be met by everyone making a small contribution to produce an ultimately major change. Fortunately, I woke up.



Doc Marten-cladden Marxists will make you believe that ignoring climate change is selfish and that we must change as a society moving forward. They say we owe it to each other and future generations to ensure our planet maintains its natural beauty for centuries to come. Isn't that the most beautiful thing you've ever heard? Doesn't that make you want to hold hands and sing Kumbaya as you hug a tree? What a joke.

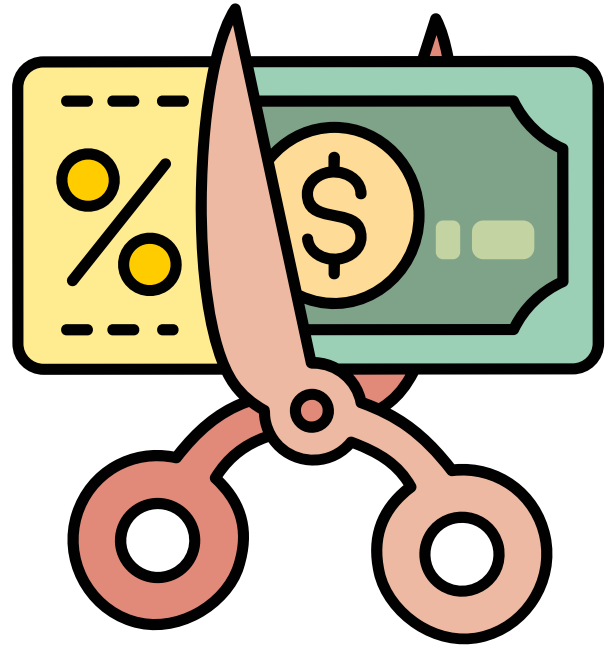
The environmental cause fell behind because it demanded too much of the individual. Conservation earned the fate it deserved. The cost of past reparations and present sustainability is simply too much to justify levying the burden of producing change upon the masses. For example, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration estimates that it could cost between 122 and 489 million dollars to clean the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Dispersed among the 143.3 million taxpayers in the U.S., each individual could be paying up to \$3.412 a year.¹ That kind of money could feed a family of three (if they all ate a Taco Bell cheesy roll-up) (*this statement varies by region with sales tax rate*). What kind of government has the right to take that kind of money from its people?

We should not be forced to pay the cost of any philanthropy, especially when it is so lofty, just because the government deems it the “right thing to do.” That’s simply not what the free market is about.

The question comes down to what we owe to each other as a society. These so-called “woke” individuals will have you believing that it is a lot more than it should be. Having left this bubble of virtue signaling, however, I have realized we reserve the right to decide what we donate to each other. The money we earn is the fruit of our labor, and it is within our right as Americans to determine how we spend it. If someone cares desperately about pollution, turtles, and whatnot, they can donate to Greenpeace and sleep at night. However, those who don’t should not be forced by any municipality to shell out our hard-earned savings to systematically change this problem.

Governments infringing upon the rights of their citizenry may not be written off as paternalistic– they are acting in violation of any reasonable moral code. The duty belongs in the hands of the rational and autonomous man himself. Money taken from an individual by means of a threat to be spent at the discretion of the taker is money stolen. My generation has been complacent to the greatest theft known to man.

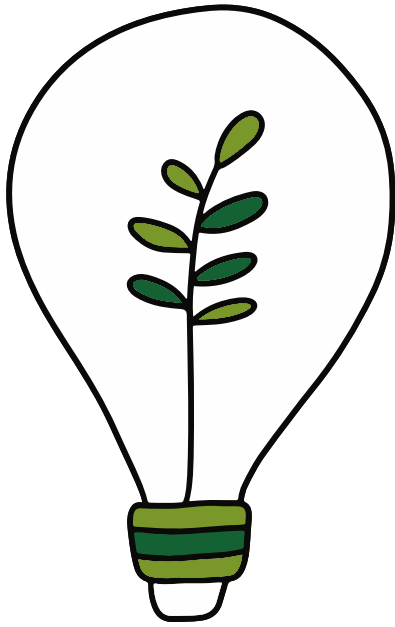
So, the question naturally arises: What constitutes a justified cause for taxation? The long history of taxation would naturally propose some circumstances that allow for morally justified taxation. Yet, all possible maxims that could explain away the current system of taxation falter as soon as they are brought into the light. It cannot be said that governments are acting upon a moral duty to use their great power and ability to mobilize funds for the betterment of society– because government spending is notoriously bureaucratic and politicians act in their self-interest so often that it has come to be taken for granted in most political discussions.



It, likewise, cannot be asserted that taxes are necessary to allow people to act upon their duty to act in service of one another, because then there would not need to be an incentive to pay taxes implemented through the criminalization of refusing to do so.

If taxes cannot be justified without significant moral contradictions, they should not exist. As I have mentioned, taxes are an antagonist to a truly free society. Individual agency demands that individuals be free to use their money as they determine fit, and taxes stand in the way of this freedom. The reason that we are complacent about this obvious infringement of our liberties is that we are threatened with imprisonment should we choose not to pay up. We pay what is demanded of us, which corrupt politicians who sit atop pockets padded with untaxed dollars handed under the table determine. We have our wallets frisked by the greedy hands of the bureaucracy to be wasted on causes that we will never reap the benefits of.

Just as I will not live to see the benefit of the clean oceans, which woke people attempt to guilt me into paying to clean, I will likely not see the benefits of the money taken from me to give to other tax-funded causes, namely Social Security. Our system is designed to



reward labor with money and relies upon the belief that unpaid labor is indentured servitude. Yet we willingly spend our money on taxes that go toward Social Security and decreasing carbon emissions – both of which are causes that we will not live to see paid back to us. For this reason, we are the government's indentured servants. We spend our short lifetimes donating every spare minute to work, just for our money to be taken and spent on other generations of people. Whether they be the elderly or the unborn, it makes no difference – it is not our people. And truly, what have these groups ever done for us to deserve our payment? Previous generations ruined our housing market, so why should we pay for their hip replacements? And I promise you, dear reader, we don't owe any money to people who are not born yet – it's not like they've done anything to deserve it.

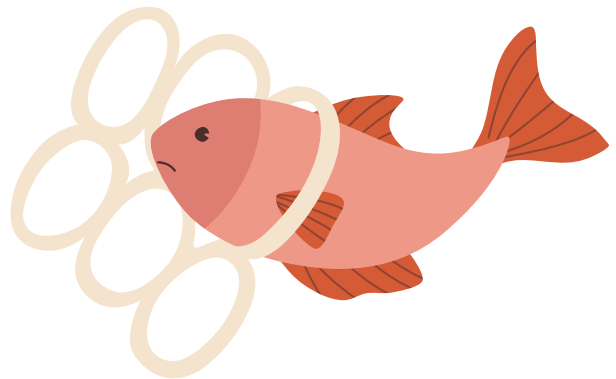
For cases that do pertain to the generation of workers comprising the majority of taxpayers, the problem of nonreciprocity persists. I urge my audience to ask themselves one question: when your tax money is given to a random college student in Nebraska, do you get anything out of it? The government and environmentalists defend

these expenses by appealing to the moral justification that we should support causes that generate a general good within the world, whether or not we reap the benefits from them. Personally, however, the money that the government takes from me is not compensated by the warm and fuzzy feeling I get from knowing some sub-poverty-line kid is going to college on my dollar. Again, this principle is best illustrated by the response to the environmental cause. Sure, we could all pay carbon taxes to discourage emissions and preserve the icecaps so the polar bears have somewhere to live, but will we? No. And why is that? Because who cares about some random polar bears? If they didn't want their habitat to be fragmented, maybe they should've picked a habitat that doesn't melt. The same goes for taxes which are spent on promoting humanitarian causes. Maybe all those poor students wishing to go to college should've considered not being poor. It's not my job, nor anyone else's, to help them.

While some cases would merit taxation, as they are both unilaterally beneficial and promote the good of humanity, there is an equal amount of money that environmentalists and bureaucrats simply throw out the window. Money given to environmental organizations goes toward buying vacation houses and yachts for the millionaire leaders in these "charities." Money given to the government is spent on buying out Big Dairy for the hundredth year in a row and paying for veterans to get braces. Once we give these people our money, we leave it entirely up to them how to spend it. The only way to stop them from being wasteful is simple: Don't pay them.

The government relies on people paying taxes because everyone banding together to contribute what they can is enough to make a big difference. The big difference we should be making, however, is not for the sake of the environment, for Social Security, military defense, or anything else we have been brainwashed into caring about; it is for our liberty as people. If we give people complete autonomy over their money, the causes which are deserving of funding will be privately funded and those which are only being propped up at the hands of the legislature will fall as they deserve to. The climate is the perfect example of a cause that has been ignored because that is what is called for by the nature of demand. Our denial to respond to the call for sustainability needs to serve as the basis for our future denial of other similar philanthropic causes that the government has forced us to support (healthcare, education, welfare, etc.). Furthermore, if we all agree collectively to not pay our taxes as a society, we will strip the government of its power. The government cannot punish all of us. It is up to us to band together, stop paying taxes, and become, as a generation, a beacon of hope for the plight of universal freedom.

As the old adage goes: if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you pollute the Ocean until there are no fish left, feeding him isn't your responsibility anymore.



POETRY, ART, & INTERPRETATION

"TO GROW (APART)"

by Dakota Tara Rose

Clock March

I've learned that ready and willing are different feelings.
It all feels so fleeting.

Ready to leave, willing to leave,
But wishing there were a few more
perfect days tucked up your sleeve.
Sunny days where your smiles leave your cheeks sore.



It is foolish of me to want time to stretch and shrink
All at once.

Perhaps it is not the batteries in my watch that have run
out but my own acceptance of time that
is waning.

I am whispering little persuasions into the mechanisms
Trying to slow the march of something inevitable.

Cook Me a Family

I squeeze the handle
Of the garlic press. The alliacious
Aroma surges up from the stove,
Reminding me of my father

Holding me tightly as
I curled
Closer into his chest. The wool
Of his sweater warm and comforting
Even as it scratched my cheek.



Daddy, the "heater" We called him. His
voice sizzling
Like olive oil and herbs
In blue Le Creuset

Nearly ready.

I switch
the light on, filling the space with
Buzzing Fluorescent rays and
Reminding me of my brother

Clicking at the piano keys
As he works out the chords
In the dark. He is suddenly spinning
to face me with exasperation.

Steelie-Dan, the piano man,
Sings to me via the black
And white keys,
a melody
Of new talent

Almost there.

I scrub salt
Off my warming skin
Watch as sweat swirls down the sterling drain
Mingling with lavender suds and
Reminding me of my mother

Smoothing the aloe
Juice across my stinging skin
Squeezing the oozing leaf
So sticky relief would seep
Onto the raised mark of a jellyfish

Mama, the saltwater lover
moves with the grace of the ocean tide
Cooing in my ear
Her voice is
a siren's
song
Calling comfort to the surface
It will feel better soon.



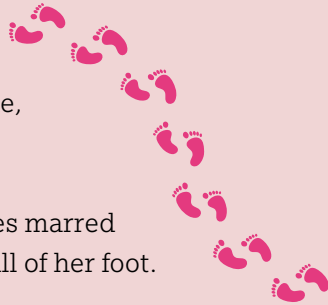
I Fought with My Mother

Today, I fought with my mother.
I made her feel guilty,
Unwanted, like I had forced
Her to comfort me, only
To push away her loving arms.

She told me I needed
Her more than I realize and it upset me,
Wrang my stomach like a cold washcloth
Made warm by attempting to ease a child's fever,
Held to my head by my mother.

The mother I fought with today.

I thought I was following
The path she set up for me,
One foot after the other,
Mini indents in the sand,
Heels aligned but tiny toes marred
The mark made by the ball of her foot.



Her footprints are far bigger than mine.
Stronger. Big shoes to fill, they say.

When I voiced how I disappointed her,
She took it personally
Into her heart like a drop in a still lake,
Making a ripple effect.



And when I backtracked,
I made it worse again.
I don't know what she wants from me
And for some reason, that makes me angry.
Or hurt. Confused. If she doesn't want an apology
A correction of behavior. What can I do to help
her?
Help us?

Growing pains are natural,
And not everything goes smoothly.
I know that we will grow,
And it will be ok.
I don't know all I need to know.
I'm just scared of what we'll lose with this type of
growth.



Intertwined

I feel the parts of you
in me
leaving me.

I can't
quite tell if it is by choice
or not.

In some moments they are
ripped from me like a crying child
from its mother's arms.

Other moments
it is a slow realization that you are no
longer lingering

in me: a phantom phrase,
an old private joke.
In other moments still, it is an offering,

a sacrifice;

I'll trade this part of me
that once belonged to you
for a piece of someone else.

Is that wrong?
Am I betraying you?
I am not really losing myself, but

am I selling off my pieces of you too
quickly?



"To Grow (Apart) was originally written as separate poems. I was inspired by the theme "A Season of Change" to edit and combine these poems into the collection you see here because, to me, the most impactful change is the growth of each person into hopefully more of who they are. That can often be just as challenging as it is beautiful. To Grow (Apart) is interested, as a collection, in the guilt that comes with moving forward, the emotional growing pains of growing up and the beauty of remembering your roots and all the people that made you who you are. I hope it is a celebration of personal growth as much as it is a recognition of how each of us grow into ourselves differently and individually." - Dakota Tara Rose



DANCE LIKE NO ONE IS WATCHING



by Lily Conniff



Acrylic paint, music sheets, fabric/tissue paper, board, exacto, 14 x 16 in

"I aim to create art that inspires wellness in mind and body. My work, titled "Dance Like No One Is Watching," is inspired by the rejuvenating effects of nature. It explores the calmness and tranquility that can be found by daring to do something carefree, like dancing. I hope it encourages a feeling to lose yourself in nature."

By Anastasiya Shyvilka



Olive Trees at the Studio, 2024, oil paint on cardboard, 40 x 35 cm



Mlahačnašć (The Melody of the Mountain), 2024, oil paint on cardboard, 16 x 20 cm



Cloudy Cloudy Day, 2024, oil paint on cardboard, 21 x 26 cm



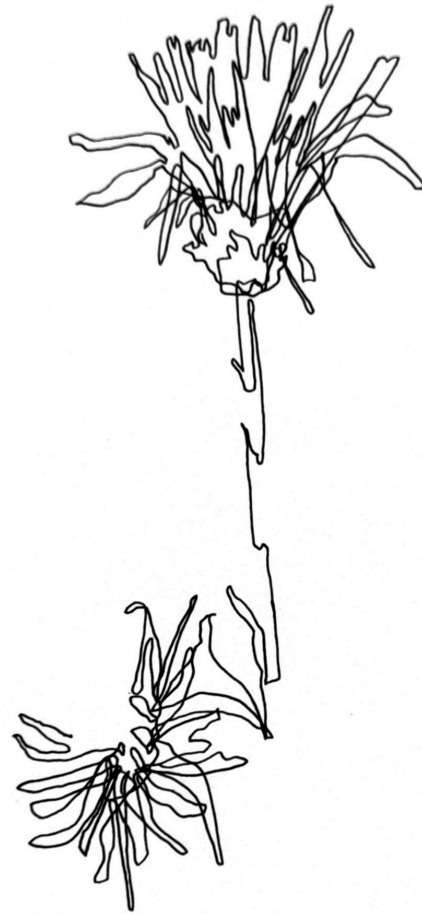
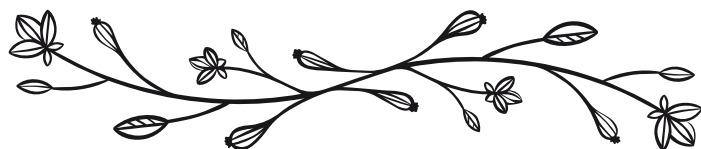
Ružavataja Šerašć (Pinkish Grey), 2024, oil paint on cardboard, 23 x 27 cm

FIVE-YEAR-OLD ME WOULD BE SO CONFUSED

by Emma Stammeyer

When I was young, six or so, I wanted to be a doctor more than anything else. That was my dream. I would gather all my friends and force them to think about what they wanted to be when they grew up, listening to all the astronaut and firefighter hopefuls prattle on, so I could proudly proclaim my Hippocratic aspirations. Today, I know a firefighter, although I am still waiting on an astronaut, and I certainly will not become a physician. My distaste for high school chemistry sufficiently trounced those dreams. By that point, though, my sights had shifted to my next big dream, something I continue to do frequently. The world is so vast; how could I pick just one thing to be passionate about? Maybe in another life, though, I could have been a doctor. This thought comforts the six-year-old girl who still lives through me, begging me to follow my heart. Despite this small reassurance, I am still forced to make peace with the fact that I have undergone far too many seasons of change to keep track of.

Still, I recall a time when I wasn't so content with the rapid changes in my life; at 14 I was convinced the world was going to end. I was about as isolated as a freshman in high school could be, a person who is pretty much surrounded by hordes of people for hours on end each day. Despite this, my friends seemed nonexistent, mostly because I stopped reaching out to them whenever I felt the world caving in on me. I isolated myself because, on some deep, untouchable level, I felt different, detached almost, from my peers. I convinced myself that people were not worth my ever-so-precious time. Like most angsty teens, I grew out of it. I found a community that would not let me give in to my isolationist tendencies and, as it turns out, the world did not end. That kid still exists in me though – in the urge to ghost my friends when they get too close, to throw my phone in a fountain and go off the grid.



Fortunately, I am not her anymore, and I can laugh at her antics, knowing how much she has to look forward to and continue. Today, I find comfort in the laughter that once seemed to never exist.

Yet, I would be lying if I said every aspect of me had changed over the years. I still love to drive around my hometown when there is a chill in the air and it is dark outside. Even though I tend to freeze half to death, breathing the same air I grew up with is addictive. Even so often when I am shivering in my Nissan, the radio will play a song that I have not thought about in years. Suddenly, I am 16 again trying to learn the roads I grew up on, which is proving difficult due to my terrible sense of direction. The sun is shining, heating the car, but I have the windows down. I feel free and alive for maybe the first time in my life. When the song ends, and it is cold again, the next song up is one I have never heard before.



Although I am not the same girl I was at 16, she is still a part of me that shows herself every so often if the music is right. Perhaps, there are some things encoded so deep within us that even our ever-changing nature cannot reach.

Change, growth, transformation, and evolution are, of course, inevitabilities that all humans are forced to grapple with. However, for me, 'fickle' is the word that comes to mind when I think of human nature. I, personally, have picked up the nasty habit of falling in and out of love at every turn. With every person I meet, every book I read, and every story I write, my passions seem to change. I should not be so surprised, really. I am not the same person I was when I was 14. I am not the same person I was 2 years ago. Hell, I am only mostly similar to the person I was 20 minutes ago. Our species lives on a planet that grows and dies constantly in a never-ending cycle. There was a time when the landscapes we see did not exist and there will come a time when they cease to exist again. In an ever changing environment, we must expect ourselves to change with it. Our goal should not be to remain the same but to continue to change for the better. We must strive to ensure each step we take is forward lest we risk getting caught up in the ebb and flow of our world. We are uniquely positioned to change ourselves and the communities we exist in. We must embrace our capricious tendencies and create change instead of becoming a victim of change.

I am relatively certain that a five-year-old me would be wildly confused with the woman I have become, not yet understanding that she too will have to adapt and grow. Though if I know myself—and I do consider myself the leading expert on the topic—I think she would do just fine with the concept of change.



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