

2021/2022

**Excellence in  
First Year  
Writing**

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The English Department Writing Program &  
The Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing

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**The Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing**

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# **Excellence in First-Year Writing**

## **EDWP Writing Prize Chairs**

Megan Behrend

Kelly Wheeler

## **EDWP Writing Prize Committee**

Ani Bezirdzhyan

Ryan McCarty

Matthew Del Busto

Caroline New

Jason Godfrey

Sydney Owada

Lauren Gwin

Michelle Sprouse

Kelly Hartwell

Robyn Thum-O'Brien

Margo Kolenda-Mason

## **Sweetland Writing Prize Chair**

Gina Brandolino

## **Sweetland Writing Prize Judges**

Scott Beal

Shuwen Li

Angela Berkley

Raymond McDaniel

Jimmy Branch

Simone Sessolo

Cat Cassel

Naomi Silver

Louis Ciccirelli

Carol Tell

April Conway

## **Administrative Support**

Laura Schulyer

Aaron Valdez

## Winners List

### Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

**Elizabeth Bernardini**, “We Need to Make Waves”: Tackling Systemic Issues Affecting Athlete Mental Health in Sports

*Nominated by Jonathan Holland, ENG 125*

**Qingyang (Dora) Hu**, LOL Girl Ur Talking Funny

*Nominated by Kendon Smith, ENG 125*

**Annick Gardon**, An Open Letter to the College Board

*Nominated by Lauren Gwin, ENG 125*

### Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

**Georgie Correa**, Hating Being a Girl

*Nominated by Ali Shapiro, ARTDES 129*

**Dane Wilson Page**, “Captive Audiences: The Effects of Performance on the Institutionalized”

*Nominated by Mari (Mariane) Stanev, COMPLIT 141*

### Excellence in Multilingual Writing

**Muhammad Arif Bin Mohamad Ghazaly**, Wristwatch in Modern Society: how this timepiece travels back through time, masking a problem of inequality

*Nominated by Scott Beal, WRITING 120*

**An Hoang Nguyen**, “The Visits”

*Nominated by Scott Beal, WRITING 120*

### Excellence in the Practice of Writing

**Colin Hunter**, Remediation Project

*Nominated by Allie Pioppio, WRITING 100*

**Ngoc Nguyen**, More Than Words Instagram Challenge

*Nominated by Raymond McDaniel, WRITING 100*

## **Nominees List**

### **Feinberg Family Prize Nominees**

Clare Adams	Lauren Oskuie
Zade Al-Shinnawi	Leah Palladino
Adriana Annoni	Sebin Park
Zoe Bernardi	Misha Patel
Elizabeth Bernardini	Akash Patney
Alyssa Caldito	Laurel Petrides
Madeline Carroll	Chloe Pfeifer
Mahmuda Chowdhury	Vimukthi Rupasinghe
Annick Gardon	Alaina Schreiner
Maxwell Gonzalez	Gabriel Schwartz
Qingyang (Dora) Hu	Grace Sielinski
Grace Kellermann	Lindsey Spencer
Nishka Khimasia	Arya Sunil
Daphne LaBarge	Hannah Tiller
Sunidhi Majalikar	Stephanie Tolly
Lexie Meltzer	Lynne Walenjus
Devarshi Mukherji	Jacquelynn Wealer
Lilly Najor	Katherine Zhao

### **Feinberg Family Prize Nominating Instructors**

Chandrica Barua	Jonathan Holland
Andrew Bernard	Ryan McCarty
Catherine Brist	Caroline New
Camille Brown	Kendon Smith
Matthew Del Busto	Laurie Thomas
Lauren Gwin	Field Watts
Ariel Hahn	Qingyi Zeng

## **Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing Nominees**

Lucy Aley

Jacqueline Anthenien

Shreya Barlinge

Coby Christoph

Rhegan Clemons

Ciarán Conlin

Georgie Correa

Isabella Crow

Padmalekha Danturty

Samanatha Dell'Imperio

Katja Foreman-Braunschweig

Amer Karan Goel

Erin Knappe

Kyla Kralapp

Maeve Larco

Sophie Larsen

Stephanie Lyon

Lucy Mao

Rafee Mirza

Dane Wilson Page

Jiayou Shen

So Jung Shin

Timothy Wacnik

Sarika Waikar

Hayden Lea Weber

## **Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing Nominating Instructors**

Imani Barnes

Scott Beal

Audrey Becker

Ali Bolcakan

Darcy Brandel

Cat Cassel

Jennifer Goltz-Taylor

Evan Klasky

Nora Krinitsky

Chao Ren

Susan Rosegrant

Ali Shapiro

Leslie Stainton

Mari (Mariane) Stanev

Carissa Villanueva

## **Excellence in the Practice of Writing Nominees**

Colin Hunter

Frances Rossiter

Courtney McLeod

Anthony Sanchez

Ngoc Nguyen

Yiduo Wang

Brynn Paccione

Elisa Wilcox

## **Excellence in the Practice of Writing Nominating Instructors**

Cat Cassel

Raymond McDaniel

April Conway

Allie Piipo

T Hetzel

## **Excellence in Multilingual Writing Nominees**

Siyu Chen

Muhammad Arif Bin Mohamad Ghazaly

Akin Coffy

An Hoang Nguyen

Paul Kim

Jinghan (Effy) Tang

## **Excellence in Multilingual Writing Nominating Instructors**

Scott Beal

Shuwen Li

# Introduction

All LSA undergraduates and students from several other colleges take at least one first-year writing-intensive course. These courses are offered in several departments and colleges: English Language and Literature, Comparative Literature, Classics, History, Biology, Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts, the Honors Program, Stamps School of Art and Design, and the Residential College. Those of us who teach these courses discover anew each term how a focus on writing improves students' thinking, learning, and rhetorical creativity. At the end of each term, we applaud our students' various achievements and the ways they have grown by applying themselves seriously to the hard work of structuring their ideas, understanding readers' expectations with particular genres, addressing an academic audience effectively, inventing strategies for revision, crafting a multimedia essay, refining their prose style, reading and giving feedback on peers' drafts, and engaging with a range of texts in a variety of genres. These are rewarding courses to teach, for students' growth as writers is readily apparent at the end of a term—to themselves as well as to their instructors. Each year, faculty and graduate student instructors encourage undergraduates to submit their very best work for First-Year Writing Prizes. All of the essays submitted are outstanding, and all of the students nominated should feel very proud of what they accomplished.

This volume showcases the prize-winning essays, which are truly impressive. They witness to the robust intellectual life of the university, and to the splendid courses and instructors who inspired and supported the writers' accomplishments. They witness as well to the students' commitments to their own intellectual development, their growing capacities as writers, the care with which they craft their prose, and the attention to detail they show in revising their work. Each student's project demonstrates thoughtfulness, originality, creativity, and resourcefulness. Congratulations to each writer—and to the instructors who supported and challenged them to do their very best work! I hope that their work inspires other

first-year students to stretch their ideas of what is possible, and to reach beyond what they think they can achieve.

Thanks are due to the many people who made this volume possible: Aaron Valdez, who designed this volume; Laura Schuyler, who coordinated the submission and judging process; and Gina Brandolino, who chaired the Sweetland Prize Committee and edited the volume. I am grateful to the Sweetland faculty who read and judged the submissions. Finally, thank you to the students and instructors who strive for—and achieve— excellence in writing and writing pedagogy.

*Theresa Tinkle*

Director, Sweetland Center for Writing

Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Professor of English

# Introduction to the Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

The Feinberg Prize competition marks a perennially exciting event in the English Department Writing Program (EDWP). It is a chance for instructors to recognize outstanding work by their students and, in turn, for student work to find broader audiences. It is an occasion to build community in the EDWP, as new and veteran instructors come together to read and celebrate the nominated work. Finally, it is an opportunity for the EDWP to check in about what we collectively value in academic writing.

This year, one example of such checking in happened before we even solicited nominations for the prize. In consultation with EDWP Director Laura Aull, we made the small, but possibly significant decision to shift our description of the three award categories—narrative, analytic, and research-based—from kinds of “argument” to kinds of “composition.” When instructors and writers refer to academic writing as argument, they typically mean something more nuanced, and often more collaborative, than a confrontational rhetorical posture that strives above all to persuade the reader of something. Yet this is not necessarily the view that students come in with, particularly in a culture of secondary standardized tests with either/or essay prompts and given common metaphors of argument as a battle or something to “win.” Thus, giving the name “argument” to all academic writing by default might constrain ideas of what a contribution to an academic conversation should look like or accomplish and what rhetorical or linguistic features it should exhibit. “Composition” also points beyond the linguistic to encompass the varied genres, including multimodal ones, that can matter in academic contexts. In making this shift, we hope that the Feinberg competition might embody the ways that the kinds of writing we count as academic are, like all genres, “dynamic” and only “stabilized-for-now.”<sup>1</sup> We also hope, to this end, that this is far from the last time the categories or rubrics for the Feinberg Prize might be reimagined.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Bazerman. *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*. U of Wisconsin P, 1988, p. 61.  
Catherine F. Schryer. “The Lab vs. the Clinic: Sites of Competing Genres.” *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, edited by Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway, Taylor & Francis, 1994, p. 108.

This year's nominated compositions likewise evince an inclusive and ever-changing definition of excellence in first-year writing. These student writers accomplished remarkable, recognizably academic things in their work. They investigated questions arising from rigorous engagement with their objects of study; they supported their analysis with specific evidence from texts, cultural objects in other media, and/or personal experience; and they positioned their contributions within existing critical conversations. At the same time, the nominated compositions exhibited creativity and playfulness within the genre expectations articulated in their assignment prompts. All three of the winning compositions balance these moves in different ways. In "We Need to Make Waves': Tackling Systemic Issues Affecting Athlete Mental Health in Sports," Elizabeth Bernardini brings a journalistic sensibility to her research-based composition. Intertwining several first-hand interviews with academic sources, her piece offers a nuanced and personal illumination of the delicate balance between an ethos of mental grit and the fragility of mental health in sports. Similarly, Qingyang (Dora) Hu's "LOL Girl Ur Talking Funny" masterfully integrates academic theory into her narrative composition, drawing on secondary sources to elucidate the challenges she faced as a multilingual student straddling the discourse norms of a classroom that embraced a standard language ideology and those in play with her friends. Meanwhile, Annick Gardon negotiates both public and academic audiences simultaneously in "An Open Letter to The College Board." Repurposing her insights from earlier writing assignments, Gardon's composition makes the case for (and is itself a model of) an approach to academic writing that embraces diversity of language and voice and a nonlinear process of writing and revision.

There is much to celebrate in this year's nominated and prize-winning student writing. At the same time, we also want to acknowledge the graduate student instructors and lecturers who created the learning conditions for their students to excel and to thank them for taking the time to shine a light on their students' work beyond their own classrooms. Many of us know first-hand the difference one teacher believing in us can make, and the responses we have seen from those nominated and those who won demonstrate that instructors have brought joy and confidence to these student

writers. This process would also not have been successful without the instructors who so carefully read the nominated compositions and engaged in thoughtful, energizing discourse to determine the winners of these awards. Finally, we would like to thank the EDWP proper, the Sweetland Center for Writing, and the Feinberg Family for their support of this prize and of student writing at the University of Michigan.

We close, then, with an invitation. We hope that you will see possibilities within these winning compositions and ask you to consider these questions: How do these texts propel us to reimagine composition or to think about it more expansively? How might instructors accentuate their practices and engage students in the writing process in ways that keep academic writing, and its genres, dynamic? And finally, how might students approach the essays collected here as springboards for their own engagement in composition, both linguistically and in more than words?

*Megan Behrend and Kelly Wheeler*

Graduate Student Mentors, English Department Writing Program

# Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

## **“We Need to Make Waves”: Tackling Systemic Issues Affecting Athlete Mental Health in Sports**

by Elizabeth Bernardini

*From ENG 125: Writing and Academic Inquiry*

With the relentless drive of an investigative journalist, the curiosity of a seasoned scholar, and the empathy and imagery of a poet, Elizabeth Bernardini explores the ever so prevalent issue of mental health in sports. Through extensive interviews with current elite athletes, Olympic coaches, and sports psychologists, Elizabeth uncovers the effects of coaching on the past, present, and future self, not only for Olympic caliber aesthetic athletes, but anyone who's had an overbearing, unsympathetic coach who still echoes from their high school years. I'm flabbergasted at Elizabeth's ability to balance library research, personal stakes and experience, a plethora of fieldwork, and creative writing techniques to illuminate a coach's role in the mental health of an athlete and to seek tangible solutions to the problem. No one is a machine, and it's impossible to separate the person from the profession or the athlete. While reading this essay, you'll forget that the voice comes from an undergraduate writer balancing her own elite training schedule with a rigorous academic course load. As you wade through the turbulent waters of her extended metaphor, gaining footing on her concrete research and experiences, you'll forget that this was an eight-page English class assignment with one required interview.

*-- Jonathan Holland*

## **“We Need to Make Waves”: Tackling Systemic Issues Affecting Athlete Mental Health in Sports**

She glides effortlessly onto the mirrored ice, a smile plastered onto her makeup-strewn face. Frills and lace hug her sinewy limbs in a shiny embrace as she floats through her routine. As she takes her ending pose, joy erupts in a raucous rapture from the arena’s stands and roses are tossed onto the ice, nearly turning the white sheet fully crimson. She is the hero, she’s done it— she *won*. She has achieved the highest success. She is perfect...right? This little girl projects everything that is glitter and grace and glory. But glitter is reflective; it is bright for a moment, and then, just like that—the sparkle which is one performance, one victory, one medal is all gone. The shadow behind the glitter represents all that it took to get to the win. The spectator cannot see the blood and the unsteadiness and the hurt on her journey to where she stands right now on the podium. Instead, all that is visible is a saccharine smile draped in sparkle and shine.

This is where the first problem arises. I would like to argue that no human being on this earth can live up to that level of perfection. We all know and feel the realities of the world. There is messiness, darkness, failure, and all the muddiness of the in-between. We are allowed to have off-days, to not feel our best; we don’t have to put on a smile all of the time because the world is not so cheery and we are just somewhat-evolved mammals learning to cope.

Journalist Leher Kala’s op-ed on athletes argues otherwise, as she writes that “the Olympics is the ultimate test of the survival of the fittest.” And Kala certainly is not alone in reducing athletes from human beings to animals fighting for “survival.” This highlights the underlying assumption that many have about sports that “fitness” is above all else including wellbeing. So what happens when people are put into this world where mistakes are not allowed? Where perfection is expected in order to pass “the ultimate test”? When young athletes in the world of sports must fill an impossible space of smiling while performing superhuman feats surrounded by other *perfect* people? When everyone around them, authority figures such as coaches, media

personnel and administrative figures add to the cacophony of unrealistic expectations?

This dissonance is likely, even *bound* to create tension. Tension between the self and the expected self. Tension between the ridiculous norms and the realistic. And without a doubt this identity crisis leads to a whole host of mental health struggles. Thus it is not necessarily surprising that according to an International Olympic Committee report, at least 35% of elite athletes experience mental health struggles including anxiety disorders, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders, burnout, substance abuse, etc. (“Tackling Mental Health in Olympic Sport”). Of these elite athletes, aesthetic sports (including but not limited to gymnastics and figure skating) consistently display the highest rates of mental health struggles. A study exploring Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) in sports displayed that GAD was significantly more prevalent in aesthetic sports compared to their non-aesthetic sports. In men, GAD was found to affect 16.7% of men in aesthetic sports compared to 6.8% of the men in non-aesthetic sports. A similar yet heightened finding was present among women, with 38.9% of aesthetic athletes with GAD compared to 10.3% of non-aesthetic women athletes (Schaal).

This perfectionistic, superhuman expectation is upheld through several systemic pathogens that infect the culture of aesthetic sports. And the sports themselves are not to blame. As American ice dancer Charlie White aptly mentioned to me in an interview, these issues are “not somehow [due to] zambonis, ice rinks, and guards [plastic skate covers]...this is a people problem.” As with many problems in our self-created and simultaneously self-destroying world, people generate these antiquated norms and problematic practices that eat away at the athlete’s mental health.

So the question is: how do we extract these parasites and what is the antidote to the issues in sports? While sexual and physical abuse is absolutely pervasive in the sports world, these topics will be intentionally omitted from this argument as they deserve their own examination and excavation. Let us take a look at the wide plethora of problems that negatively impact the athletes’ mental health: including but not limited to the standard use of psychological abuse in coaching, the prevalence of eating disorders, the lack of resources and education around GAD and depression,

gender discrimination/biases, and the lack of accountability of anyone surrounding the athlete. This is certainly an intimidating list. So perhaps one sweeping fix of the aforementioned infections might take the form of a bandaid over a gushing bullet wound. It will make more sense to examine a series of concrete and multifaceted approaches at the micro and macro level in order to start to mend the gaping holes in the support system of an athlete.

In order to define even what these tangible steps are or how they would look, I interviewed different professionals who generously lent their time, wisdom and expertise during our FaceTime/Zoom conversations. I spoke with 3 retired elite athletes including Charlie White, 2014 Olympic Champion in ice dance, Kaitlyn Weaver, World Championship Medalist and two-time Olympic ice dancer from Canada, and Yura Min, a South Korean ice dancer who competed in the 2018 Olympic Games (“Charlie White”; “Kaitlyn Weaver”; Abdelkader and Stoneham). With these athletes having just retired, they have a very recent sense of being an athlete as well as some distance in evaluating their experiences. I also interviewed Junior World silver medalist and ice dancer on Team USA Christina Carreira, who is a current elite competitor (“2021-22 Figure Skating Roster: Christina Carreira and Anthony Ponomarenko”).

I was lucky enough to also be able to talk with professionals in the field such as Dr. Alan Goldberg and Kristen Schuyten. Goldberg is a world-renowned sports performance coach who has over 30 years working with athletes from the recreational all the way up to the Olympic level (“About: Dr. Alan Goldberg”). Schuyten is a physical therapist in the Michigan Medicine system and works on U.S. Figure Skating committees and their Medical Team (“Kristen Schuyten”). They were able to provide the unique lens of being a part of the athlete’s support team, and therefore have incredible insight into the causes and possible solutions of an athlete’s struggle with mental health.

With all of these experienced and bright voices, I was able to catch the many trickling conversations and suggestions about how to improve the mental health of the athlete beneath a couple of defining categories, the first of which would be to

implement positive psychological approaches among coaches through education and administrative oversight. Other strategies in better supporting athletes include employing sports psychologists and nutritionists on staff at training centers as well as hosting athlete support groups and communication workshops on a regular/semi-regular basis.

Most training centers are like islands: nearly all of the sustenance, shelter, and interaction for the athlete happen there. Athletes spend the majority of their time in the center's facilities, typically around 5 days a week for 5+ hours a day (some even live on-site). The head coach(es) serve as the governors of the island and are responsible for making sure that athletes have all of the resources they need. They not only provide technical information for their athletes, but their attitudes and interactions set the tone for the daily atmosphere. Assistant coaches and instructors serve as reinforcement to the authoritative fabric of the base.

Sometimes, the head coaches are left to their own devices by the overarching governing body. However, this independence does not necessarily mean distance, as coaches can be extremely involved in the sports federations. In certain cases, they serve as active members within the federations themselves. Even if coaches don't have administrative positions, they might receive graded paychecks based on their athlete's results directly from the national federations. Oftentimes, this interaction does not lead to oversight; instead governing bodies tend to turn a blind eye to any indication of coaches mistreating their athletes which effectively cuts off bridges to the training base islands, leaving them largely left to self-rule in order to achieve a singular goal: success. Success is the sun overhead, the brightness (or shadow) that guides every decision, and each avenue to success creates different effects on the athlete.

One pathway to success that a coach can institute on their island is that of positive psychology. A recent buzzword of late, positive psychology is a concept that has been further investigated recently and shown to be extremely effective in cultivating physically and mentally sound athletes. In a literature review published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* just last year, 24 different peer-reviewed articles relating to positive psychology were examined to create a working definition of what

this phrase actually means in practice. Researchers Llewellyn van Zyl and his associates determined that positive psychology encapsulates a “professional, collaborative relationship between a client and coach, aimed at the...development of personal/psychological strengths...in order to enhance positive states, traits and behaviours” (van Zyl 11). They also found consistency among the many studies that through the coach-athlete relationship, methods such as “strength profiling and feedback...realistic goal setting, strategizing, and execution centered around strengths...[and] empowerment” work together to “facilitate personal/professional growth, optimal functioning, [and an] enhanced wellbeing” (van Zyl 7, 11). With this definition in mind, another study published this year in the same journal was done in order to test this positive psychology-based teaching in the corporate world. Researcher Alina Corbu placed experimental participants into a 6 week long “Strengths-based micro-coaching program,” which encompassed a two-hour group session and three individual sessions incorporating the aforementioned positive psychology methods. Psychological Capacity (PsychCap) which researchers defined as “a positive interpretation of events that stimulates flourishing and success based on effort and constancy” was looked at specifically to determine the experimental effects. The participants in the micro-coaching group experienced “significant increases in PsyCap” after the course, “and that these effects remained high across time” (Corbu 9, 8). While this study is in the corporate realm, the effects of positive psychology are no doubt applicable across different fields, including athletics. To elite athletes, sports is their job and their PsychCap must be high in order to absorb information, make changes in order to improve, and to perform under stress on a regular basis. Thus, if coaches can integrate these communicative techniques into their teaching, the results will help their athletes achieve their goals with a driven mindset and also this strategy will promote longevity in its impact.

Another facet in the positive psychology model involves an autonomy-support type of relationship between the athlete and the coach. Hunhyuk Choi published a recent study investigating autonomy-support coaching versus controlling coaching in relation to athlete burnout. Autonomy-support coaching is centered

around the freedom of the athlete in their decision making, backed up by a strong and supportive mentorship from their coach. In contrast, controlling coaching is a more authoritarian, oppressive model that gives athletes little to no choices in their training. Burnout as a condition is typically due to a perfectly morbid storm of chronic stress, physical fatigue and the ensuing inability to cope psychologically that can occur in athletes who experience difficulties over a long period of time with little to no intervention. This can take a significant toll on the individual's mental health as well as cause them to potentially drop out of their sport. While not a necessarily surprising finding, autonomy-support coaching was found to be extremely positively correlated with a strong coach-athlete relationship and was negatively correlated with athlete burnout while controlling coaching displayed directly opposite results (Choi 8). These findings are not necessarily shocking; we as humans yearn for freedom and autonomy. Athletes absolutely desire feedback; this data by no means is meant to downplay the importance of criticism. Rather, the way that the criticism is *displayed* is vital here: athletes have demonstrated statistically time and time again that criticism given out in a constructive, cooperative manner is much more effective and healthy for the mind of the aesthetic athlete. In this cooperative model, the individual then has space to have a sense of control over their training and lives. And it is when this control has been taken away that one can easily free-fall into the chasms of hopelessness, the feeling of which serves as a basis for anxiety and/or depression ("Sense of Control").

Supporting the individuals so that they flourish athletically and mentally seems like the obvious choice here. But unfortunately, this is not the standard coaching model. Instead, punitive coaching methods indicative of athlete abuse are fairly prevalent across aesthetic sports. In a recent and comprehensive investigation, researcher Anne Stafford and her team analyzed online surveys completed by over 6,000 youth elite athletes across the United Kingdom. A staggering 75% of the athletes reported experiences that fall into the realm of sustained and repetitive emotional abuse, including physical reports of "throwing objects either at, or in the presence of, an athlete, punching walls and breaking training equipment when frustrated with an athlete's performance" as well as verbal methods such as "yelling,

shouting, belittling, name-calling, humiliation and degrading comments, including inappropriate comments about weight and physical appearance” (Stafford).

This type of emotionally abusive coaching has been done over and over because it has “worked.” Have these champions necessarily had long careers following their victories? Not always. Have these champions left their sports as whole, healthy beings? Chances are, probably not. We as people must reckon with what “working” means. An athlete is strong: physically, mentally and emotionally. And above all, an athlete is human. A human being with flaws and weaknesses but also incredible strengths and talents. Why does the only way to build a champion involve breaking down the person first? Then what happens after sports? The athlete is gone and retired, but there is no person to take their place because they’ve been broken and discarded long ago on the pathway to “success” in this definition of it. It is possible to work hard and push oneself without daily abuse. It is possible to achieve high results while also maintaining a flourishing soul, one that all people have somewhere inside of them. Goldberg, who has had three decades of experience in working with athletes mentioned in our interview that he has “talked to many Olympic athletes that have since retired who can’t function because of their training.” Goldberg also detailed how nearly every performance problem he has worked with athletes on such as “choking” or repetitive mistakes in competition has been traced back to coaching methods. He stated that when coaches ignore the “important fact that [they are] dealing with living, breathing, feeling organisms,” that they only communicate when the athletes perform well. If the athlete is not performing, however, Goldberg described the reaction as a “trauma response” to the ensuing punitive coaching. This trauma response drives the athlete into a freeze mode which is our modern day alternative to the evolutionary fight-or-flight response. Goldberg asserted that this can cause a “shut-down as well as performance problems and sometimes even Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.” In addition to Post-traumatic stress disorder, a recent assessment of depression in elite athletes which was published in *The Psychiatric Clinics of North America* detailed that “athletes have self-reported anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and poor body image after a history of psychological abuse” (Edwards 383).

Emotional abuse is also linked to the susceptibility of developing eating disorders, as studied by Anna Biesecker. 110 university students served as participants, each imagining themselves as athletes and then hearing different vignettes which are recorded messages from coaches surrounding the weight of the imagined athlete. One group heard positive vignettes detailing how the coach is concerned about the athlete's view on their weight thus pointing to the fact that the coach cares about them as a human, a pillar of the positive psychological approach. The negative vignette alternatively focuses on performance, relating weight back to how the athlete will swim thus ignoring them as a person. After hearing the vignettes, the students took various tests including The Physical Appearance State And Trait Anxiety Scale (PASTAS), The Cognitive Behavioral Dieting Scale (CBDS), the Goldfarb Fear of Fat Scale (GFFS), and The Profile of Mood States (POMS). The results demonstrated greater risks measured by all of the tests (lower body image, food anxiety, increased dieting, fear of fat, increased depression signs) when exposed to the negative vignette which was reminiscent of a controlling and abusive coaching method (Biesecker and Martz).

Thus what happens in the training center rarely, if ever, stays in the training center. Emotional abuse follows the athlete around like a shadow, trailing negativity in its darkened wake. It swallows light, eating away at their self-esteem, autonomy, and mental health. Can coaches themselves change their own behavior? White analyzed some reasons why so often, coaches cannot or will not self-reflect. He mentioned that a change in one's behavior "unfortunately requires a certain amount of awareness and further, what is more difficult to attain is self-awareness." He described a haunting scenario that if all the coaches in the world were privy to our conversation around coaching abuse in sports and wanted to change their behaviors, they would then "have to leave the room, go to the bathroom and look in the mirror." He stated that "there is objectively one right and humane way to interact with young people," and that coaches would have to look at themselves in the mirror and reckon with the fact that they have made "serious and grievous errors...harming people for a long time." And this certainly is a big ask. It is rare that a person changes their ways, changes the way that they have always done their job. Changes their coaching opposite to how *they*

*themselves* were coached as an athlete, even how their coaches were coached. There is a sort of generational trauma that involves accepting responsibility for the psychological damage of many young athletes. This is inherently uncomfortable for the coaches: they would take a risk by changing the way they communicate with their athletes for what White describes as “an intangible result,” (i.e. not a medal). But this “intangible result” happens to be the psychological wellbeing which is arguably of the highest importance. White adds that the goal of a coach is to push an athlete outside of their comfort zone, “to be uncomfortable,” but that “no one ever asks the coaches to be uncomfortable for the sake of the skater.”

So how can we ask, or perhaps force coaches to become accountable even if they are uncomfortable by this notion? How can we ensure the wellness of young athletes and end the systematically ignored emotional abuse? The answer to this brings us back to our island model. Somehow, the islands need to be united by the governing bodies who can serve as the sea within which they float. The waves of oversight must be long-reaching and steady, crashing in to amend wrongdoings when the timing is necessary. I did some investigating on U.S. Figure Skating’s website to locate nets of oversight that might already be in place. A lot of information and hyperlinks require a member login which might suggest a lack of transparency. The one oversight position I did find after a painstakingly-long search is a “Club SafeSkate Compliance Chair,” a position that is supposedly active at each club (clubs are regional bodies that are separate entities from a training center: skaters train at a center to be with a certain coach while each skater must join a club in order to compete). This Chairperson is there to receive grievances against coaches and work with the club to determine a course of action (“SkateSafe”). Personally, I was with one figure skating club for about 8 years and it was one of the largest, most integrative ones in the Northeast. In all of my time skating for this club, I have witnessed and experienced many report-worthy wrongdoings. And yet I have never heard of a SafeSkate Compliance Chair. If this position is active, then U.S. Figure Skating and/or the clubs need to make it clear to the athletes that this even *exists*. Because without this knowledge, the reporting of abuse cannot even be done let alone the process of correcting it.

Besides oversight, education is desperately needed among coaches. The depression assessment in the Psychiatric Clinics of North America described that if there is mental health screening of athletes, which are rare themselves, it is typical that the screeners “do not have the background skills or training to identify or respond to mental illness indicators” (Edwards 388). One area in particular which is severely lacking is knowledge surrounding eating disorders. Unfortunately, aesthetic sports are notorious for their abundance of eating disorders, disordered eating patterns and a poor body image—and this notoriety is certainly founded. One key study spearheaded by Jorunn Sundgot-Bergen among Norwegian athletes found that among the 1,620 athletes questioned and interviewed, diagnosable eating disorders were prevalent in at least 42% of the female aesthetic athletes (Sundgot-Borgen et al). Of all mental illnesses, Anorexia Nervosa is the most deadly (DeNoon). From the more “mild” (mild is in quotes so as not to minimize anyone’s experience) cases to the extremely lethal ones, athletes might suffer from eating disorders long after their time in sports has concluded. Therefore, it is paramount that coaches are taught about prevention and detection. In a recent study, researcher Joanna C. Turk examined the literacy of eating disorder knowledge amongst collegiate coaches from Division 1-A sports. Of the 138 participants, she found that only 27% of coaches attended an educational seminar in the last year surrounding eating disorders, and 16.7% of those coaches went due to mandatory attendance (Turk et al 21). If a coach goes through a mandatory training process to learn about eating disorders, then they might be less likely to make hurtful comments or give harmful dieting advice which as evidenced in Anna Biesekcer’s vignette study could lead an athlete down the lethal path to a negative relationship with food and their bodies and a possible eating disorder. Also, with sufficient education, a coach who is around the athlete every day might be able to spot early red flags in order to address unhealthy behavior before it escalates.

Schuyten serves on the U.S. Figure Skating Medical Team and sees firsthand the gaping holes in coach/provider education especially in the event of an emergency. She poignantly mentioned in her interview that because there are no required courses, “some coaches don’t know how to do CPR or [use an] AED” and that they “don’t

have first aid or know where in the rink.” Thus, she added that unfortunately with these basics not being taught, she is “not surprised when mental health takes the back seat.” I teach Learn to Skate through U.S. Figure Skating and I had a couple of required courses to take in order to get certification. One was about sexual assault, and the other included modules on basic skating moves. That was it. The specific rink I teach at which is owned by the local township additionally requires concussion and harassment/bullying courses. Though I am technically certified to work with minors in a physically active, high-liability environment, I am not required nor trained in CPR, first aid, non-sexual abuse, etc. This clearly is quite egregious; coaching requirements must be amended on the most basic level to include the most basic safety principles. To address some of these issues, Schuyten has been working hard to put together educational symposiums, present new approaches and research, as well as work with athletes one on one to help them find the treatment they need. She compiled referral resources so as to communicate the importance of mental health first aid in order to spread awareness surrounding the ways to respond to mental health crises safely and effectively. She is doing extremely admirable and at times frustratingly halting work, and it is people such as herself that will enact lasting change in the sports world.

Even before oversight or education can be implemented, there is an initial required step in stirring up the stagnant current of governing body action which is an intimidating one: the federations must first accept that there are problems. This acceptance is a necessary vulnerability, as change cannot happen unless past wrongdoings are dredged up, harshly exposed, and responsibility is taken. Granted, this is much easier said than done. But some small steps have been made. In the Netherlands, a study was done in order to investigate emotional abuse of the elite gymnasts on the national team and researchers interviewed directors and board members of the NGA, or National Gymnastics Association (the country’s gymnastics federation). One director admitted in an interview that they “have had situations of total control, intimidation, name calling such as: ‘fat swine’ or ‘pig’ and yelling and embarrassing these kids” and researchers found the NGA’s prevailing attitude toward these “situations” being that “emotional abuse was constructed as an inevitable part

of elite youth sport” (Jacobs et al 132). Why is this inevitable? Why is this blindly accepted as the only way to “success” (in quotations because this negatively affects the human at the end of the day)? At the very least, the directors did accept that this type of abuse did exist, though they didn’t see much reason to change this. But by acknowledging the presence of problematic behavior towards youths and elite sportsmen, this is a glance in a positive direction.

A more promising stride towards change is evidenced through a recent consensus statement that was published directly from the International Olympic Committee (or the IOC). If a federation encompasses one ocean with all of the training islands, the IOC is all of the water on this sports world. The IOC is the ultimate oversight, the overall law of the land. Their consensus statement was published in 2016 as an update to their 2007 consensus and examined athlete abuse in sport by defining relevant terms, describing the manifestations of abuse, detailing the possible effects, as well as an overview of prevention methods. In describing the federation’s inaction, the IOC consensus states that governing bodies “may be reluctant to acknowledge that harassment and abuse occur in their organizations... denial allows the underlying causes of harassment and abuse to persist” but that this acknowledgement is “vital prerequisite” for change (Mountjoy et al 1024). While this consensus statement technically is a piece of paper that is published online and extremely difficult to implement, it should not be completely downplayed in its importance. The sheer fact that this comes directly from the IOC shows immense progress and hope that this progressive sentiment might prevail. If all of the water attempts to warm to a temperature viable for life to flourish, hopefully over time each ocean and subsequently each island will follow suit and this positive change will trickle down to the athlete.

Unfortunately, as with any bureaucratic change, this trickle is often slow and takes a while to reach the necessary recipients. Luckily, there are a few options that can be done at the micro level. By addressing the day-to-day training environment, this might have the most direct, most immediate impact on the athlete and their mental health. One way to identify what type of support the athlete is missing in

their training is to ask the athlete directly. Though I am an athlete myself, my own subjective experience is too close and too singular to examine. Therefore, I wanted to get the point of view of other elite athletes through a survey that I sent out to an elite/Olympic level training center for figure skating. The survey inquired about any positive or negative experiences the athlete might have had and was completely anonymous so that respondents would hopefully feel safe to be honest and open.

A major suggestion at the micro level that came out of the survey and achieved confirmation through many interviews was the want for providers at the training center. In asking largely unprompted, open-ended questions, many athletes from the survey shared introspective and pointed feedback. For example, in answering “What are some changes that might make things better?”, two athletes suggested having a sports psychologist on staff. Weaver attributed the emotional wellbeing during her own career to her work with a sports psychologist and therapist on a regular basis and Carreira takes a similar approach in her current competitive journey, stating that “working with sport psych is one of most important things” in her training. An argument against having a sports psychologist or performance coach on staff could be the cost. Each day, one athlete is already spending an exorbitant amount of money on the lessons/classes with 3-7 different coaches and instructors. It would not be that difficult to make a schedule so that at least every once in a while, one of those lessons would be substituted by a session to address the emotional needs of the athlete (which should be the first priority but unfortunately is not always), but also to improve their performance.

In response to this same survey question, two athletes indicated a desire for an on-site nutritionist. Throughout the survey, there were three different responses that referenced “body-image,” “body-dysmorphia,” “expectations from others,” and other key phrases linked to weight and body image. The most immediate avenue to tackling this major systemic and life-threatening epidemic of eating disorders is prevention and support in the form of an on-staff nutritionist at the training center. Or if this is not possible, the training center directors (this might be a head coach) must be responsible in providing the information of a nearby licensed nutritionist and/or dietician who

can be available for the athlete. Min highlighted this as a major hole in her training especially during her teenage years. She mentioned that from 16 to about 21 years old, she experienced body-image issues and felt the pressure of having to fit a certain aesthetic. Min remembered as a teenager going online and finding different fad diets that she threw herself into that in hindsight, were completely unfit to serve any person let alone someone burning through an immense amount of calories and energy stores. Reflecting back, she noted that had she been exposed to a nutritionist early on, she might not have had to struggle with body image issues and unhealthy dieting. She added that “the training camp should be able handle it [nutritionists]--they have everything else physically besides that.” Like the sports psychologist, money is not quite an issue at this elite level—it is more of a matter of moving schedules around to fit in this extremely necessary aspect of training.

Another missing piece in the athlete’s training experience is the lack of connection and emotional support which was cited in nearly every interview as well as many survey responses. White referenced the loneliness that can encompass the athlete’s experience, and that it would have been helpful to have “other skaters who were at the same level that could understand more thoroughly some of my inner experiences so that it would be easier to freely talk about them.” One skater wrote in the free comments section that they “think we should really do a group girl/boy talk. I [they] think it would be so helpful and fun to talk to everyone together!” Additionally, there were 3 other survey responses indicating a desire for peer communication and open discourse. This desire for connection among the athlete’s peers is not just a wish, but a human necessity. Stanford Medicine’s Center for Compassion and Altruism Research Center published an online article written by the director of the department Dr. Emma Seppälä detailing the necessity of social connection for overall well being. In citing various literature on the subject, Seppälä writes that close social connectedness is associated with a stronger physical immune system, less vulnerability to anxiety and depression, and an overall higher sense of fulfillment (Seppälä). She also describes studies that have demonstrated that lacking a strong social support “predicts vulnerability to disease and death beyond traditional risk factors such as...

blood pressure, and physical activity” and has harsher effects on health than those of “obesity, [and] smoking.” In sports, this emotional well being, which the neglect of has been clearly demonstrated to have detriments even beyond the common killers, is vastly ignored. One way to instill this connectedness would be through formal/informal support groups at the training center. Support groups have long been used in treatment situations in regards to mental health, and the efficacy of these groups have been confirmed in various studies which have been effectively summed up in a recent 2018 literature review by Hugh Worrall and his associates. Support groups were found to produce “significant improvement in the quality of life and related factors of members who have serious mental illness” as well as cause “improvements to self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, spiritual wellbeing and psychiatric symptoms” (Worrall et al 87). At her rink, Carreira has seen the effects of a support group in real time when her training center held one with all the athletes. She mentioned meeting to talk opened her eyes to the fact that she and her peers all have largely unspoken yet “very similar issues.” She felt that after this, she could more deeply bond with others around her over their shared experiences. These support groups are more than just talking: they encapsulate the human essence of connectedness, bonding, and togetherness that so often is lacking at the elite level. Through a group-sharing format, athletes are able to work through training stress and gain necessary coping skills that are typically omitted from the typical curriculum of the day.

Particularly in team or partnered aesthetic sports, an additional skill that is missing is one of communication. In spaces such as the team event in gymnastics, pairs figure skating, and ice dance, interpersonal skills are paramount. In ice dance, skaters are with their partner sometimes from childhood and are left to their own faculties, which are largely overestimated, in order to work with another person day in and day out in a high-stress environment. Weaver described this overestimation poignantly, mentioning that “we are expected at the age of 12 to be able to work through emotional issues and to be able to communicate in a productive way with another 12 year old.” While coaches sometimes intervene if necessary, Weaver confirmed that conflict-resolution is usually left up to the athletes, regardless if they

are children or adults. Oftentimes when communicating with a partner, gender biases can permeate complications with a murky undertone (keep in mind that in terms of partners, I am referring to the standard female-male heteronormative model of ice dance which should also be questioned and excavated in its limiting and exclusive nature). To be a female ice dancer is to be in a precarious position: a constant message of dispensability is drilled into her from the youngest of ages. Carreira detailed this phenomenon, sharing that she has felt disposable as a female regardless of her physical ability. This is due to the very real fact that male ice dancers are simply less common in numbers than their female counterparts as well as the poisonous and antiquated messages surrounding gender that have permeated the sport. The woman is expected to embody wild dichotomies: she is to be docile, but also fiercely independent. She is to appear fragile, but also unbreakable. She is hyper-feminine, she is subservient, she is competitive, she is overly-sexualized, she is unbothered by anything less than positive. The man, on the other hand, is expected to epitomize masculinity and strength devoid of emotion. Keep in mind that these are vast generalizations of gendered expectations-I do not by any means attempt to describe any individual ice dancers. Instead, my hope is to display the ridiculousness of the ideal stereotypes that two twelve year olds might have to try and fit into. And when one receives these messages as young children, it can sometimes become their future. If someone tries to fit into a certain box for a long enough period of time, then one day, they might realize that there is no box anymore. It is just them.

A survey respondent cited that years of feeling the effects of this gender dissonance in which “boys have a lot of control...and they are not always respectful of the girl” has “mental health effects” that can make one “feel alone.” In 2018, a study was published by author Jan H. Rosenvinge and her associates used a variety of questionnaires to assess the psychological distress of adolescent elite athletes. In analyzing the composite data, it was determined that in comparing non athletes with athletes and males with females, “being a female athlete almost tripled the odds ratio for belonging to the high scoring distress group” (Rosenvinge). This data is corroborated by the aforementioned finding that the GAD rates for women in aesthetic sports

(38.9%) are more than double than their male counterparts (16/7%) (Schaal). While surely many factors bleed into the negatives in the experience of a female athlete, it is not unreasonable to assume that in ice dance, gendered complications within a partnership contribute to psychological distress and the breakdown of one's mental health especially in women.

Given that these gender constructs are so deeply woven into the fabric of the sport, fully ripping out the seams is difficult and will take time. Just as the world is slowly attempting to eradicate sexist and misogynist threads, the realm of sports will follow suit as a changing society will put pressure on change. But how can we help athletes, specifically female ones avoid mental health crises stemming from gender issues in a partnership? One immediate way to alleviate this is through communication. As Weaver mentioned earlier, that 12 year old is barely in eighth grade and doesn't have sophisticated communication skills. And let's face it: in looking at the violence and turmoil constantly staining our news on the daily, it isn't likely that many adults have evolved interpersonal skills. Communication workshops, or regular meetings that highlight effective methods of conversing as well as conflict-resolution with all of the teams at the given training base could vastly help improve this necessary skill. Weaver reinforced the idea that had she been able to learn better methods as a female of standing up for herself as well as working through difficulties within her partnership, she would have been able to "save a lot of time and frustration."

These workshops could also be held with just the female athletes of the training center. A step towards breaking out of the harmful gender box could be for the woman to stick up for herself, but this is a daunting task that is not innate, especially given the docile and subservient values in place. So perhaps with the space to learn communication strategies, each female would be equipped with concrete tools that would arm them to be able to fight against these biases and embrace their unique identities. They also might be less susceptible to falling victim to toxic and imbalanced partnership in which chronic negativity can have a detrimental impact on the athlete's mental health, one which is possibly avoidable or at least amenable through learning

effective self-advocacy and communication tools.

Do communication workshops and support groups read as unnecessary and unrelated to sports? Should the athletes just figure it out and perform physically? Personally I don't think so. If athletes meet on a Friday afternoon at the end of their training day to vent amongst themselves, and this in turn creates such necessary camaraderie, chipping away at loneliness, then why not? Why not try, when these formal or informal meetings could give each individual not only a voice which is so often stifled in sports, but also a community in which they would thrive? We all need to be heard; we all strive for our experiences, positive or negative, to be validated and we feel close to others when some experiences align. Hearing what others have gone through also allows us to parse through our own thoughts and work toward solutions.

Humans are feeling beings. And in so many of the sports environments where feelings are labeled as unimportant or even weak, it is not just emotions but the core of *humanity* that is ignored and put down. Mental illness, sexism, the stifling of emotions, loneliness; these are not unique to ice skating or gymnastics. These issues are everywhere, buried in the shadowy nooks and corners of our lives each day. As we ignore these shadows, we allow them to grow in size. The only way to one day erode the darkness is to illuminate these darkened masses and force ourselves to look at them. Thus it has been extremely hopeful to witness top athletes coming forward with their struggles with mental health. U.S. figure skater and Olympic competitor Gracie Gold shared her own struggles with depression and an eating disorder on social media and in a recent documentary called "The Weight of Gold" alongside Michael Phelps which attempted to address the stigma of mental health in sports (McCarvel). Simone Biles' withdrawal from the Tokyo Olympics due to her mental health sparked harsh criticism but also started a major conversation surrounding mental health which was filled with immense support (Yohannes). Schuyten confirmed this, as she has seen a large uptake in athletes more openly discussing mental illness especially over social media. While she pointed out that social media can be a tricky platform for honesty and vulnerability as it is commonly used "to put up a false image of perfection," her hope is that more and more platforms will be used to "normalize struggles rather than

trivialize them.” Goldberg has also observed significant shifts as well related to the stigma surrounding mental health professionals. When he first started working with athletes 30 years ago, he recalled how he was literally snuck in after-hours through the backdoor in order to work with professional teams. When he used to give talks, he would have to spend half the time breaking down the fallacy that because “psychologists work with ‘crazy’ people, sports psychologists work with crazy athletes,” just so that he didn’t lose the audience from the start. Now, he thankfully does not have to sneak in at midnight, or climb an uphill battle against an audience’s preconceived notions. While this is extremely hopeful, there is still a long way to go. Goldberg calls for us to push, to fight, to actively work to break the stigmas surrounding mental health in order to bring about change. “These things won’t go away by themselves,” he affirms. “We must speak up and then speak up again. We absolutely must ‘rock the boat’; we need to make waves.”

And so we shall make waves, and keep making waves until the entire sea of what always has been and the long-ignored issues are violently stirred up. These “people problems” have subsequent “people solutions.” We must talk about them in order to come to a solution. We need to revisit what success means. There is no amount of achievement that can make up for true well being and a sound mind. That girl in the shiny dress does not have to smile and hold her breath and sacrifice herself under the facade of perfection. We can celebrate sports and expect toughness out of athletes on the world stage. But with this expectation must come the realization of humanity and the battle to keep the wild imperfections alive. Because without our mistakes and misgivings, we are reduced to mere shells of people that can never be filled with sparkling achievements or glittering medals.

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# Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

## **LOL Girl Ur Talking Funny**

by Qingyang (Dora) Hu

*From ENG 125: Writing and Academic Inquiry: Learning to Write: Pasts, Presents, and Futures*

*Nominated by Kendon Smith*

Dora wrote this essay for a course titled “Learning to Write: Pasts, Presents, and Futures.” The unit on our pasts culminated in a literacy narrative. To learn more about the genre, our class read several examples and worked to uncover the moves writers made when crafting effective narratives. As I reread Dora’s literacy narrative now, I see these moves replicated with care and finesse. Our class appreciated literacy narratives that begin with anecdotes giving readers a reason to stick around. Dora begins with a bit of dialogue that seems familiar but that also has an uncanny artificiality to it. To discover how this exchange can feel both right and wrong at the same time, the reader must continue. Our class appreciated literacy narratives that could move from descriptions of the external world to the internal world of the writer trying to make sense of the experience. Dora moves from a description of how she used language in classrooms and with friends to a thoughtful consideration of what work in sociolinguistics and composition theory can tell us about both her experiences and how the world could be made a better place.

On my first reading of this essay, I became especially aware of what my body was doing as I read. I chuckled when a dependent clause at the start of one paragraph not only functioned as a transition from one idea to the next but also served as

humorous commentary on the previous paragraph. I found myself smiling when Dora illustrated the nature of a friendship by considering interactions about a cafeteria's menu. And I could not help but nod my head as Dora reached her conclusion: Yes, Standard English and school Discourse can grant access to money and prestige, but students—everyone really—should be careful not to let this come at the expense of other Discourses and language varieties.

-- *Kendon Smith*

## LOL Girl Ur Talking Funny

“How are you?”

“I’m fine. Thank you, and you?”

Ask any Chinese primary school student, and this is the answer you get. In my primary and middle school years, the kind of English education I had was confined to a standard structure and vocabulary. There was only one type of English textbook where one type of English was taught, and I was expected to write and speak as officially as possible. While I was aware of the existence of different accents in English, I expected there to only be one form of English that everybody used all the time.

When I packed my suitcases to start high school in the United States as a thirteen-year-old, I knew I would be joining a different kind of discourse community while also needing to use a different language. I expected it to be hard, but there were still difficulties that I did not prepare myself for. When school started, I got placed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom with Ms. McCabe. Ms. McCabe was the strictest teacher I had ever met, and she was there to correct every grammar mistake I made. Every time I opened my mouth, there was a mistake to be made. I remember vividly the way she said, “This is not English” if I said something wrong. Simply asking for permission to use the bathroom became a maze to pass through. “Can I use the restroom, Ms. McCabe” will get a “I am sure you CAN use the bathroom, but MAY is used to get permission” in return.

While I could avoid using the bathroom during her class, the essays were inevitable. She checked the essays line-by-line, and I needed permission from her to write another sentence. When we learned about placing a preposition before *which*, she claimed, “This is how people talk at Harvard,” while pointing at *in which* on the whiteboard. Though my time in ESL seemed like a nightmare, Ms. McCabe’s rigorous approach to Standard American English, a variety of English favored by dominant institutions in the U.S., allowed me to learn how to speak and write in “proper” English.

Outside of the classroom, I soon befriended local students, one of them being my roommate Mia. We exchanged numbers, in case I locked myself out of our room

or there were chicken fingers in the cafeteria that needed immediate attention. After a while, I began to notice how differently we text. For example, she sent “LOL i’m gonna head to dinner,” and I replied, “I am going there too. May I join you?” 99% of the time, she didn’t use punctuations, and 100% of the time, I did. In her texts, “you” became “u,” “I will” read “ill,” and something funny was just “hahahahaha.” All of Ms. McCabe’s forbidden words were used all the time: *let’s, gonna, tmr*.

The ways we talked were also different. Ms. McCabe had drilled into my head that “let’s” is never used, and “we’re” should always be written as “we are.” “You want latte?” or “we’re going to get sushi?” are things that I heard, but they became “do you want a latte?” and “are we going to get sushi?” when I spoke. I never realized how differently we spoke until Mia casually pointed it out: “dude, you talk so formally. I feel like I’m in freaking English class all over again.” At that moment, I suddenly noticed that there were different kinds of Englishes: the formal English that people use in classrooms and the informal one they use when around friends. As an eloquent writer, Mia wrote papers in “proper” English, yet she still used informal English when she was around her friends. My previous belief—that I only had to master one kind of English when coming to the U.S.—was shattered.

This experience is similar to what James Paul Gee calls Discourses, the “saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations” (6). According to Gee, it is not only important to speak the right Discourse given the correct social context, but to act a certain way that conforms with what people normally, in that situation, will behave. For me, I was speaking the wrong Discourse when conversing with friends. The formal Discourse I learned in Ms. McCabe’s classroom is what Gee calls a dominant Discourse, which means that I can obtain additional physical benefits like money and prestige if I speak it. Using this Discourse, I can impress college admission officers and HRs to get into a prestigious college or get a high-paying job. The informal Discourse that I use with my friends is an example of a nondominant Discourse. Even though it does not give me prestige, money, or status, it brings my friends and me closer together and strengthens the unity between us (Gee 8).

A Discourse is more than the language, it also reveals how people view the world. According to Tony Scott, “an ideology is a system of ideas and beliefs that together constitute a comprehensive worldview” (48). One of the ideologies that has shaped my Discourses and view of the world is standard language ideology. Rosina Lippi-Green, in her book *English with an Accent*, defines standard language ideology as a bias towards an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institution and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class. (67-68)

In my case, the standard language ideology is controlled by my school and its choice of curriculum. In order to master the nondominant Discourse used by my friends, I had to work against the assumptions of the dominant school Discourse and standard language ideology, especially the idea that there is only one “right way” to use English. Similarly, people may have to give up parts of their identity if they want to master the dominant Discourse, like how my roommate Mia had to change the way she speaks to be successful in school.

Standard language ideologies promote the idea that Standard English and school Discourse are the only “correct” way of communicating in order to gain status and prestige. However, these Discourses are not as useful in social situations, like in my experience with Mia. In fact, mastering the Discourse used with my friends required me to reject standard language ideology and accept many Englishes. As a result, students should master the school Discourse but be open to the idea that other forms of Englishes are still valid.

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# Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

## **An Open Letter to the College Board**

by Annick Gardon

*From ENG 125: Writing and Academic Inquiry*

*Nominated by Lauren Gwin*

Annick Gardon wrote “An Open Letter to the College Board” as her culminating final project for my English 125 course (“Writing and Academic Inquiry”). In this assignment, students were tasked with taking one of their previous projects—an analysis of their own writing, an analysis of someone else’s writing, or a writing guide geared toward first-year students—and reimagining it for a different audience. Rather than revise or repurpose any single one of these, Annick decided to write an open letter focusing on what she had learned with each, and how these skills are woefully underemphasized in high school courses meant to prepare students for college. In detailing the knowledge she gained over the course of our semester together, Annick makes an important claim about the benefits of first-year writing courses and their emphasis on process, audience, and purpose. What’s particularly lovely about Annick’s letter is that it enacts the very content she details: as a repurposing of her previous work, it shows that effective academic writing is a process of repeated revision and rethinking.

*-- Lauren Gwin*

## An Open Letter to the College Board

Dear David Coleman (and associates),

As you sit on your throne built upon the robust, systematic exploitation of desperate high school students, I invite you to take a moment to seriously examine the effectiveness of your AP English courses, and whether they are truly in the best interest of students. I am urging you to consider student experiences and perspectives and genuinely reflect on the motives behind your money-making machine of an organization. You claim to offer courses and exams that prepare students for post-secondary education. You claim that your AP English language and literature courses are designed to get students ready for the demands of academic, upper-level writing. You even claim that your AP English courses are considered to be equivalent to a first-year college-level writing course. Yet, the whole premise of the current format of these English exams is to write essays that are graded entirely based on an extremely restrictive rubric. Students spend their entire school year training themselves to write based on a formula. In my experience, writing essays for these courses was essentially a very wordy and rather dry game of mad libs. There was no room for style, no room for creative interpretation, and certainly no room for dialogical space. So, Mr. Coleman, I ask of you: do you have any idea what academic, college-level writing looks like? Because I will be frank with you-- AP English courses do absolutely nothing to prepare students for academic writing. In fact, they teach students to do the exact opposite of what effective academic writing entails. How can a student possibly be expected to critically analyze various viewpoints and thoughtfully craft a nuanced, stylistically strategic essay in 40 minutes? Are you truly testing students' ability to engage with sources meaningfully and compose well-written responses, or are you testing students' ability to adhere to a rubric and quickly churn predictable and surface-level responses?

According to the AP English rubrics, having “stylistic maturity” means “having a large vocabulary, ability to vary sentence structure, having logical organization, keeping a balance between generalizations and illustrative details, and having a clear and appropriate tone and consistent voice” ([Fleitz](#)). While these are wonderful qualities

to have in a piece of writing, this list completely ignores the idea of the intended audience, purpose, genre, etc. I understand that this is done so as to make the rubric more uniform and able to be applied to a myriad of different prompts and essays, but in doing so, you reduce the imperative skill of writing with intention. In addition, the restrictive nature of this rubric fully ignores the reality of different dialects of English and continues to perpetuate the idea that there is only one correct model of what “proper English” looks like, which is simply ignorant and [inhibits critical thinking of language use](#).

Let me illustrate my frustrations with a personal story. In my freshman year of college, I entered my first-year writing class feeling, admittedly, quite irritated. I felt that my two years of AP-level English courses in high school should have counted towards my first-year writing requirement, and was displeased that I had to fill up one of my precious course slots with English. I felt that I was ready for college-level writing, given how much work I had done with AP in high school. I could not have been [more wrong](#). I quickly realized that writing at a higher level means the exact opposite of what I learned in high school. As it turns out, writing a formulaic and dry rhetorical analysis on the effectiveness of Senator George Norris’s speech to Congress in 1945 (my AP essay prompt junior year) isn’t exactly equivalent to the rigors and expectations of what it means to write at a college level. I learned in my first-year English course that writing effectively means a lot more than having a claim and three pieces of supporting evidence (as your essay rubrics would have one believe). Academic writing should explore nuances, engage readers meaningfully, fill a gap in the academic discourse, and allow room for other interpretations and viewpoints. Academic writing varies, and there is no one set standard or scale on which we can judge different academic works. Academic writing can (and should) not be drier than my knuckles during Michigan winters. Academic writing should have style. Academic writing should allow readers to question, consider, and collaborate. And frankly, Mr. Coleman, your courses just miss the mark.

Additionally, the format of these exams completely disregards a crucial step in the writing process: revision. According to Nancy Sommers, the Sosland Director

of Expository Writing at Harvard, writing and revising is [not a linear process](#). Good writing is not crafted by following a step-by-step checklist, as AP English courses may lead one to believe. Instead, the writing process is more of a circle. You write, then you rethink and revise, then you write some more, erase one paragraph, write another, revise it all again, and repeat that over and over again. You take the time to explore alternate views, get the whole picture, and make intentional choices depending on your purpose and your audience. A student's writing ability should not come down to one single score that is based on an arbitrary essay written in 40 minutes. In 40 minutes, there is simply not enough time to refocus, reshape, or reconsider one's argument. Doing so is undermining the art of writing and compositional theory, and taking away students' opportunity to truly develop as writers. The development comes in the form of revision, rethinking, and reflection. In these courses, "product is placed ahead of process" (Fleitz). In reality, it should most definitely be the other way around.

That being said, I will make a concession to you: the grading system is indeed consistent, and I will admit that it is reliable and predictable. I clearly remember that one of the exercises we completed on multiple occasions in my AP English classes was to analyze essay samples from past years' exams and try to predict which score they received. We were explicitly taught what a 6-point essay looks like, what a 5-point essay looks like, etc., etc. It is predictable. It is formulaic. So, sure- the grading may be less subjective, and the scoring process will go quicker. But what does that really say about the quality of the tests? You seem to really emphasize test scores over everything else, so much so that student learning and development of writing skills are reduced in value, thus reducing what you claim to be equivalent to a college education to a single test score (Fleitz). In other words, students train themselves to write very dull essays filled with shallow ideas. No wonder the academy claims that "[Johnny can't write](#)" (Aull).

All grievances aside, I would like to propose what may be some improvements to these courses. There is already an [ongoing discussion](#) about changes that should be made within the academic community, and the recurring theme is that AP English classes need to teach students what it means to do academic writing. That is, teach them how to consider the purpose, audience, and genre of their writing and how they

affect the rhetorical and stylistic choices they make. The importance of allowing for dialogical space and engaging with the audience and with alternate viewpoints should also be included in the curriculum. Students should be taught how to go about the revision process and should be able to do peer review sessions. Thus, instead of taking a 4-hour exam in May, students should have some time (i.e. a few months) to craft 1 or 2 substantial essays. They can be given the prompts in advance so that they can go through the entire writing cycle, and have the time to do proper research, consider all viewpoints, make thoughtful stylistic choices in their writing, and go through the revision process. I understand that a rubric of some kind must still be used so as to somewhat standardize grading, but this rubric could be remodeled so as to grade students on some of the concepts that I have addressed in this letter: things like stylistic choices, awareness of audience/purpose, evidence of thoughtful revision, etc. If these changes are made, the student's grades will be more reflective of their understanding of what academic, college-level writing entails, and the course will actually improve students' writing and rhetorical skills.

In short, the structure of these courses must be drastically altered in order to actually provide students with a college-level writing course experience. If you are going to market these courses as college-level, make them college-level- or at the very least, have them prepare students for college-level courses. Who knows- maybe if these courses actually encourage students to consider alternate viewpoints and engage meaningfully with them, this upcoming generation of Americans will be able to find a middle ground with one another. Maybe instead of encouraging conformity (as the current exams do), we can encourage open-minded discourse, acceptance, and respect. You charge an arm and a leg for the exams, so at least make them worth our time. Do better.

Warmest regards,  
A reformed writer

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# **Introduction to the Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing, Excellence in Multilingual Writing Prize, and the Excellence in the Practice of Writing Prize**

Students at the University of Michigan tend to remember their first-year writing course long after it's over, and the essays in this collection are themselves a memorable testament to the transformative experience of learning to write differently. The step up from high school writing to college mirrors many of the transitions our first-year students experience. It can be an intimidating challenge, but it's also a moment of major growth. Whether they enroll in the Practice of Writing, College Writing for International & Multilingual Students (both Sweetland's own courses), or one of the many other first-year writing courses offered by other departments, students take a bold step into their new academic contexts. The essays written by this year's winners show the incredible potential of our first-year students and make us excited to see more of their work in the years to come.

On behalf of the Sweetland Center for Writing, it's my pleasure to congratulate this year's winners: Georgie Correa and Dane Wilson Page, recipients of the Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing Prize; Muhammad Arif Bin Mohamad Ghazaly and An Hoang Nguyen, recipients of the Prize for Excellence in Multilingual Writing Prize; and Colin Hunter and Ngoc Nguyen, recipients of the Prize for Excellence in the Practice of Writing Prize.

The Writing Prizes are a labor of love at Sweetland; many of us work together to select and honor our Prize winners. Scott Beal, Catherine Cassel, Louis Cicciarelli, April Conway, Shuwen Li, Simone Sessolo, and Naomi Silver read and judged this year's essays. Jimmy Brancho, Angela Berkley, Raymond McDaniel, and Carol Tell also judged essays and, in addition, served on Sweetland's Writing Prize Committee. Last and most crucially, Laura Schuyler and Aaron Valdez provided essential support; awarding these prizes and honoring our winners wouldn't be possible without them.

The pieces you're about to read showcase the intelligence, creativity, and hard work of first-year writers at the University of Michigan. The work assembled here represents not only the agency, aptitude, and inventiveness of the writers themselves, but also the breadth and depth of thought, learning, and creativity that characterizes our undergraduate writers. We welcome your engagement with this excellent work and hope you find it as rewarding as we have.

*Gina Brandolino*

Chair, Writing Prize Committee

Sweetland Center for Writing

# Matt Kelly Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

## **Hating Being a Girl**

by Georgie Correa

*From ARTDES 129*

*Nominated by Ali Shapiro*

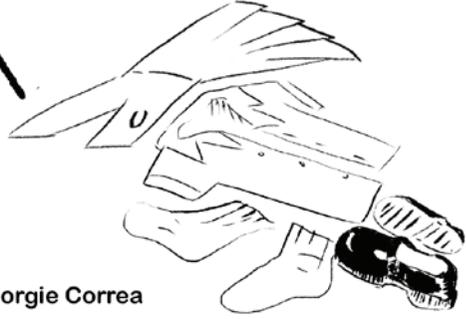
Georgie's multimodal personal narrative uses her school uniform as a "text" to investigate her struggles with the contradictions of gendered expectations in her family and at her all-girls school in Puerto Rico. It's illustrated with comic-style images that help bring Georgie's voice onto the page. Like her ultimate discovery about her own gender, the form of her essay resists easy binaries, allowing her to explore a complex subject from multiple angles and to capture both the humor and the pain of her story.

*-- Ali Shapiro*

## Hating Being a Girl

# HATING BEING A GIRL

By Georgie Correa



The first thing I would do every morning was shuffle to the corner of my closet that holds my uniforms: six white button-down short-sleeved polo shirts, two jump skirts, an infinite pool of socks and my pair of off-brand MaryJane's. I would skim through my very limited options to amuse myself:



They're all the same, but since I've been doing the same routine for thirteen years, I pretended to notice a difference between each one. Thirteen years of wearing the same uncomfortable, thick, jump skirt on a daily basis.



Colegio Puertorriqueño de Niñas (Puerto Rican School for Girls), also known as CPN, is a “private, nonprofit institution whose mission is the comprehensive training of women through the development of academic knowledge, intellectual skills, attitudes and values that enable them to fully develop their potential and contribute responsibly and productively to a changing society.”



Well, there's actually more to it.

Situated in Guaynabo, CPN is notoriously known as the epicenter of the guaynabichas; preppy girls with American accents. I can't really escape from being labeled this way - I've lived in Guaynabo and have been consuming media in English my entire life.



Friends from other cities like Caguas or Bayamon would mock my Guaynabo accent and my Spanglish, or they would simply mock the fact that I attended CPN. I would be at the receiving end of jokes about my school, many of which were directed at my gender identity at the time. I hated the attachment of my school's name to my identity, but it's not like I had any other choice.



My grandmother, my mother, and all her sisters attended CPN. Knowing this, it's not surprising that I was destined to attend as well. From the moment I was enrolled, I knew that it was just a part of my identity that I couldn't deny or avoid. I felt like I was supposed to follow their footsteps, but it was as if I immediately lost sense of direction. I felt like I was expected to know who I was from an early age.



I was a confused kid. Despite my confusion, I had strong opinions, especially when it came to CPN. I hated a lot of things about that school, but this hate was internalized after being constantly reminded to be thankful for my education, not because I deserved it, but because women didn't have it a couple hundred years ago. To be honest, I think that some of those women would have the same complaints as I did if they were my classmates.

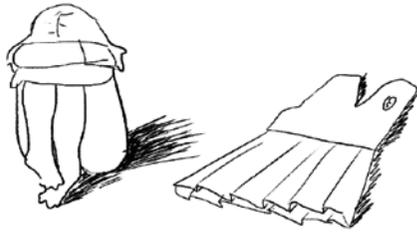
It starts with the school uniform that I wore from kindergarten to 12th grade. It consists of a dark blue polyester jump skirt with the school's logo, a white short-sleeved polo shirt underneath, accompanied by white socks and black MaryJane's. The uniform code was strict, which wouldn't really matter if the clothes weren't so unappealing and uncomfortable.



For being manufactured to fit a young woman's developing body, the uniform is inadequately designed. The jump skirt's polyester material doesn't stretch at all, leaving no extra room for the students' developing chests. In my experience, after reaching puberty, I had to unzip the back of my jumper in order to breathe. Because having an unzipped jumper was prohibited, I would wear the school's jacket over it, preferring to melt in the Puerto Rican heat than to die of asphyxiation. Sometimes I would walk through the halls without my trusty jacket and the school director would pop out of nowhere, grab me, and zip my jumper back up, ignoring the few tugs it took for the zipper to move.



This uniform made me hate the way I looked in dresses. I wasn't a fan of dresses in the first place because I considered myself to be a 'tomboy.' However, I noticed how a lot of my classmates had altered their uniforms; their waists were more defined, and their skirts were shorter. I was also bigger than a lot of girls growing up, so seeing myself in the mirror as a chubby ten-year-old with an oversized jump skirt really damaged my self-esteem. I never felt comfortable wearing dresses until my senior year of high school.



Speaking of comfort, another thing I hated was the mother-daughter dynamic that the school required every student to have. It was an unspoken requirement. In elementary school, many of the events like recitals, projects, presentations, or even being in the class directive always included the students' mothers into the equation. Though my mother was always there for me, she had other things to worry about. She worked nine to five, or even more than that; she didn't have the time to attend these events or to help me with my homework. I don't blame her; she didn't really have a choice. So, I performed for myself in my dance recitals and Christmas shows, I ate by myself in my special homeroom breakfasts, and did extra work for the class directive by myself. I never had the comfort of receiving help from my mother in these cases.



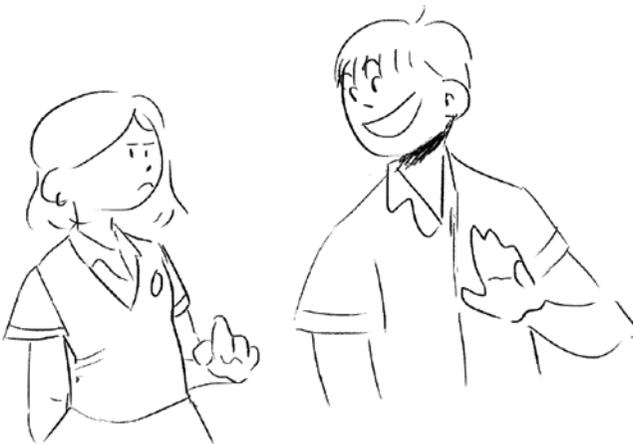
When I attended these events alone, I was met with concerned stares from stay-at-home moms. They would joke about taking me under their wing, point out how hard working I am, and then proceed to tell me that I am a replica of my mother. I would always thank them and laugh, but in the back of my head, something itched me. The way these moms talked about my mother working hard made me uneasy. They were looking down on me, but it was as if they were looking at someone else.



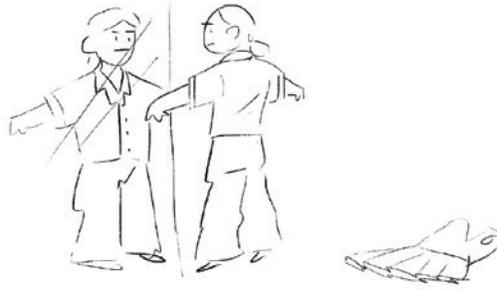
I could only sit there alone, surrounded by these moms and their daughters, trying to think what made me feel this way. Seeing women three times my age criticizing another woman for working felt ... old fashioned. It was a weird sight for the setting I was in. The school allegedly teaches us to “contribute responsibly and productively to a changing society,” but then I would experience alienation if I put in twice the effort as others. Because of this, I began to put less and less effort into my work; I began to feel burnt out. I didn’t see the point in working hard if I was going to be talked down to for it.



My efforts, however, were put into a different aspect of myself. During my CPN career, I rebelled against the concept of femininity, or at least the concept that the school trained us to follow, by imitating my brother. Having him in my life exposed me to his interests and what he got to do as a boy. He was in the boy scouts, he got to wear pants or shorts to school every day, and he got to do boy stuff that I couldn't do because, well, I was a girl in an all-girl school. I grew extremely jealous of him. I hated being a girl.



That was what I hated the most.



Because I was a girl, I was in CPN. Because I was a girl, I couldn't do the things I wanted to do. Because I was a girl, I was in a position of disadvantage in our society.

Being told as a child that because of my gender I was at a disadvantage was infuriating. In school, we were constantly reminded about women's place in society through time-how they have been silenced, undermined and pushed down by the patriarchy. I witnessed this treatment throughout my childhood. We were taught how to avoid predators by dressing modestly. We were required to receive lectures about domestic violence and violence towards women. We were reminded of the wage gap and discrimination against women in the workplace. We learned everything there was to learn about women's place in society in a patriarchal Puerto Rico. It was maddening. They instilled fear in us in order to empower us. This may all be the reality we live in, but as a kid, I didn't have the power to fix that, so the only thing I knew I could do was wish I wasn't in this position.



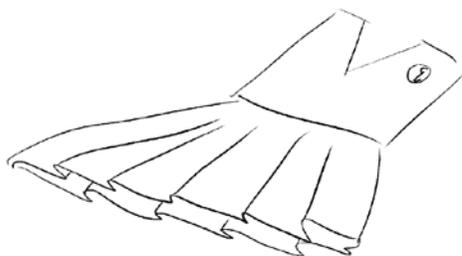
After graduating, I began to attend art school. I felt a weight lift off my shoulders after leaving CPN. For a long time, I paid no mind to it and just enjoyed the feeling. But then, I looked back to my years in that school. And everything about how I feel now made sense.



I realized that now that I'm here, I don't have to be a girl anymore. I don't have to be in one of the sides of this binary I was raised in. My hatred and anger came from this restriction. The uncomfortable jumper that now collects dust in my closet was the one thing that connected my identity to that institution. Now, I can wear what I want and be who I've wanted to be all my life.



Exploring my gender identity has been the one of the most freeing experiences of my life. I finally feel like I unzipped the back of my boob -hurting jumper and took my first real breath. I'm not being held down anymore. I'm not angry anymore. For the first time, I'm comfortable with who I am. And my journey of self-discovery has just begun.



# **Matt Kelly Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing**

## **Captive Audiences: The Effects of Performance on the Institutionalized**

by Dane Wilson Page

*From CL141: Great Performances*

*Nominated by Mari (Mariane) Stanev*

Dane's podcast combines incredible production value with excellent academic and pop culture research. It analyzes different perspectives from which to understand the question of who deserves live performances and how that question becomes even more important when we consider mental institutions and prisons.

-- *Mari Stanev*

# Captive Audiences: The Effects of Performance on the Institutionalized

Podcast available at  
[https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/sweetland-assets/sweetland-documents/  
Prizebooks/CaptiveAudiences.mp3](https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/sweetland-assets/sweetland-documents/Prizebooks/CaptiveAudiences.mp3)

## TRANSCRIPT

Lux Interior (concert audio): We're The Cramps and we're from New York City. And we drove three thousand miles to play for you people.

Audience: F\*\*\* you!

Lux: And somebody told me you people are crazy but I'm not so sure about that. You seem to be alright to me.

[Fade in "Human Fly" by The Cramps]

On June 13th 1978, The Cramps played a free concert for the patients at the California State Mental Hospital in Napa California. According to Joe Rees, the cameraman, there weren't any clearances or screenings, and the hospital was starved for entertainment of any kind, so when The Cramps were swapped in at the last minute, they didn't ask many questions. But The Cramps were radically different from the new wave group that was scheduled. They are what's called Psychobilly: the genre where the distortion, amplitude and defiant attitude of punk meets the classically fun twang of rockabilly, which in itself is an energetic intersection of rock and country. By pure coincidence this name was coined by Johnny Cash who's the star of probably the most famous prison show I can think of.

[Fade in "One Piece at a Time" by Johnny Cash]

Cash: "Uh yeah, red rider. This is the cottonmouth in the psychobilly Cadillac come on."

While that genre sounds like fun, the important distinction is that it was loud, rough,

and really weird for many people in 1978. The Cramps emptied plenty of venues who weren't ready for the sound. But the patients were literally a captive audience, and about as outcast from society as The Cramps were from mainstream music. So, what you get when you watch the 20 minutes of grainy black and white footage with blown out audio is an absurd situation where the chaos is what makes it beautiful. Imagine it:

[Fade in concert audio]

The Cramps, true oddballs in punk outfits, on a stage that's barely raised above the audience floor, no barrier, no upfront security. Then there's the patients, some in normal dress, some in the classic white scrubs. Many motionless and in awe, but an undeniable majority having the time of their lives. The audio consists of shouts, screams and cheers from patients who took the mic for themselves as much as it consists of music from the band. The footage is focused on the stage as often as it pans through the crowd.

Joe Rees called it magical. He said "the patients were having a hell of a good time, and the band acted as crazy as anybody else."

I don't think it gets more punk than this. One part being the unapologetic vulgarity and wild irresponsibility, since twelve patients did in fact escape during the ruckus, but they returned on their own by dinnertime. The other part being that Punk is hard hitting music for hard hit people. It's always been simply made music to express the troubles of the artist and to for the audience to feel their troubles recognized. And this outsider-to-outsider relationship is epitomized in this show. It seemed like it could be really meaningful and cathartic to dance so wildly with your cohorts. Or for the more passive in attendance, what an eye-opening thing to see. Despite the mess of a show this was, I think it was good for the patients. I think experiencing music like this could be good for inmates too. But did The Cramps inspire anything with this boldness? Clinically speaking is it even a good idea?

Performances at mental hospitals and prisons are nothing new. From way back in 1924, the book, *The Utilization of Music in Prisons and Mental Hospitals* describes

how several little performances throughout the week brightened a patient with manic depression, rekindled the memories of a patient with dementia and more. But now that doctors have a much better understanding of mental health, and these institutions have changed quite a bit. So who's performing today and what can we say about it after decades of study? Here is Molly Mulcahy, founder of Arts Capacity, an organization that brings culture to prison environments.

Molly Mulcahy: "Using music and art, it goes to your core as a human. It's human nature to either want to either create art or take it in. And often prisons are devoid of art or encouraging creation of art and we wanted to bring in this as a platform to see if it could offer up a place for people to put their feelings or just think..."

And she definitely embodies some punk ideals:

Mulcahy: "We don't just bring music in and play and say here's how to enjoy this. There are no rules. There is no right way or wrong way to interpret it. You can feel whatever you want, you can think whatever you want..."

Even though they play modern classical, it holds a similar tone and purpose:

Mulcahy: "Some are really difficult for the average listener to listen to. But from what they have requested this is what they want. Some of it can be really challenging to listen to and it can bring up some really interesting emotions."

She says the meaning they derive is complex and like nothing you could expect, and because the musicians will improvise pieces with suggestions from the inmates, this creates a unique outcome everywhere it's done. I think there are two things here that make these performances effective, and that's the collective and interactive aspects. The meaning of music is amplified when it's shared. And a crowd with a collective focus such as music can have a unified dynamic – a humanizing experience that's like practice for the outside world. A wonderful example being the series of BB King performances through the 60's and 70s, which took place between violent prison riots, described here by Les Back, professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths, London.

Back: “Music became kind of a form of soft power. There were a whole series of concerts, forms of associations. This music - this articulate message - comes to life in the prison and is resonant there, not in words, but in sound. In a way almost all those forces that coalesce around a prison, the history of racism in the US, the intensifications that’s happening around divisions in a prison. What’s really important is that these were live events and that sense of association.”

And then there’s the second thing, interaction. When the audience has some kind of influence on the music, it is a demonstration of their potential. It happened with The Cramps for sure. And it happened with Johnny Cash too. He stayed up the night before the show learning “Greystone Chapel” as a surprise for the inmate who wrote it.

Cash: “This next song was written by a man right here in Folsom prison.

This song was written by our friend Glen Sherley.

Um, hope we do your song justice Glen, we’re going to do our best.”

I think that must’ve been pretty inspiring to the crowd, to see one of their own succeed. Sherley even played his own show at Vacaville Prison in 1971.

And sometimes the audience participation can be subtle, but absolutely beautiful, like the call and response singing at Black Uhuru’s show at the Soledad prison in 1982.

[Fade in: “Love (live)” by Black Uhuru]

There’s just something about those times when the audience took part in the art. During concerts, people open themselves up, and when they see that their collective action makes something beautiful like that last one, they must leave the concert with a special kind of self-esteem. Although maybe in The Cramps, those guest singers weren’t as beautiful, but it was creative expression that’s validated by it being a part of the ongoing performance. That’s one thing that isn’t lost in the roughness of psychobilly. But what is?

There’s been an ongoing debate about the violence in music and teenage delinquency since the dawn of rock and roll, but any music enthusiast will tell you how music

helped them through a rough time, and chances are something hard-hitting was on that savior playlist. The scientific discourse on this is complex, but it breaks down in ways that better explain the ethics of The Cramps' show. Research published in *The Psychology of Music* found that preferences for more intense music are attributed to mental health risk factors, and intense music can increase negative mood and decrease positive mood by a cumulative process of affirming and perpetuating negative ideas expressed in the lyrics. But what works well with The Cramps is that the lyrics are not lamenting, hating, or violent like some hardcore rock, metal, or punk. They're a fun old time with songs like "My daddy drives a UFO."

So, when it comes to the instrumentation's effect on mental health, a study in France by Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry found that heavy metal listeners showed no different, if not lower, levels of anxiety and depression. And taking the songs as a whole, research published in *Frontiers In Human Neuroscience* found that depending on personality traits, music listening can improve emotional regulation by way of discharge – that is, listening to simulate a negative mood in order to feel better after. I'd say The Cramps slip past the definition of harmful, and much of punk does too. Although it's too complex to make a catch-all, "if this then that" statement, I think it's very clear that the rehabilitating effects of music are undoubtable and hard-hitting music shouldn't be avoided. Someone might say that they don't deserve this luxury, but I think it's a necessity. Even with the extra security to assure a safe show. And if there's anyone who needs music, especially live music, it's the imprisoned and institutionalized because an easy life doesn't land a person in there. Now, a performance probably shouldn't be as unruly as The Cramps show was, but a performance doesn't have to be pacifying and quaint either. As unpredictable as it was, The Cramps ended up creating a truly wonderful and kick-ass experience for those patients in Napa.

[Fade out with "Mad Daddy" by The Cramps]

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# Excellence in Multilingual Writing

## **Wristwatch in Modern Society: how this timepiece travels back through time, masking a problem of inequality**

by Muhammad Arif Bin Mohamad Ghazaly

*From WRITING 120*

*Nominated by Scott Beal*

Arif's essay about wristwatches demonstrates how their changing function in the age of cell phones and Apple watches (from functional timepiece to luxury showpiece) is a symptom of the growing wealth gap between rich and poor. By identifying an important contradiction (that revenues from watch sales are increasing even as their function grows obsolete) and then explaining it, Arif builds a surprising and compelling thesis, well-supported by both historical and statistical data.

*-- Scott Beal*

## **Wristwatch in Modern Society: how this timepiece travels back through time, masking a problem of inequality**



For high school, I went to a fully residential school. All the students lived in the dormitory, and the daily schedule was very tiring and demanding: new work would come flooding in non-stop and you barely got any time to rest. Thus, it became very important for me to manage my time well if I wanted my high school life to pass by without any problem. Because of this, I asked my parents to buy me a watch --as smartphones were prohibited in my school-- and they bought me a Swiss watch. This may be seen as a stretch, but the watch helped me undergo my high school life quite smoothly: I never came in late to any classes, nor did I fail to complete any of my school work. And this was still true when I came here to Ann Arbor. I still wear my watches all the time even though I have my smartphone to tell the time.

Unfortunately, a small incident happened, and I broke my watch. It was not that bad that the watch was unrepairable, but it is a Swiss Watch; if I want to repair it, I need to go to a Swatch store and unfortunately, there is none near Ann Arbor and Detroit. At first, it made me feel devastated and so down that I barely hung on, but as time passed, even though I was still quite upset about the watch being broken, I

realized that I can still do fine without it. I have my smartphone with me if I ever need to know the time, and, while the assignments were taking a lot of my time, the class schedule was not as demanding as it was during my high school.

This event made me wonder about the attachment I have towards my watch. Truthfully, my watch is not serving an irreplaceable function as it once did during my high school time, and at times, taking care of it could be a hassle. Still, if I get the chance to go to any Swatch store, I will, without any hesitation, go there to repair my watch. This kind of strong attachment that I have made me wonder about the role of these watches in the status quo. They have basically lost their purpose because of smartwatches, laptops, and smartphones but somehow the watch industry keeps growing (Besler) without showing any sign of slowing down, and I want to know why.

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Based on a New York Times article written by Victoria Gomelsky, the origin of the wristwatch could be traced back to the latter half of the 19th century. Then, a wristwatch was meant for women: it came to be from what the article quoted as women's desire for "a strange, expensive bracelet". And if we looked at the record of the earliest wristwatch, this statement was a rather accurate one. That wristwatch was described as a "gold bangle bracelet centered on a functioning clock" and was made in 1868 by a watchmaking company called Patek Philippe for a Hungarian noblewoman. It was not until the 1920s that wristwatches were popularized among men by soldiers returning from World War I. Before that, the only masculine watch choice was a pocket watch, but soldiers started to transition to wristwatches because of necessity; using a pocket watch in the middle of a war was practically suicide. This trend of soldiers wearing wristwatches has transformed people's perception of wristwatches as it started to become a sign of manliness and people started to forget that they were initially invented for women (Gomelsky).

But it was not until Rolex Oyster (world first-ever water-resistant watch) was introduced in 1926 that wristwatches become more relevant to the masses as the wristwatch transformed into an everyday object (Gomelsky). Before this, watches, which usually came in the form of pocket watches, only were used during relaxing

activities --tea parties, classes, and casual meetings--and depending on the clothing you are wearing and whether they have a place for a pocket watch. But with this innovation, you could wear it through more extreme and physical activities, and the clothes you are wearing do not matter. Plus, Rolex later improved the Oyster design by inventing a system called Perpetual Movement, the world's first self-winding mechanism (winding is what gives mechanical watch power to keep working (Chabrat)) (Gomelsky). These two innovative characteristics (water resistance and self-winding) have since then become a blueprint for future watches (Gomelsky) and they are still incorporated in today's watch.

However, wristwatches at that time were expensive, and it was not until the first battery-powered watch was created in 1957 (Gomelsky) that wristwatches became more affordable. And the price kept dropping even more when quartz-powered watches was developed in 1969 by Seiko, a Japanese watch brand (Gomelsky). These quartz-powered watches are cheaper because their production processes are simpler and require less labor compared to those of mechanical watches (Arthur). Moreover, quartz-powered watches also are more accurate (Watch Education -Watch Movement) than mechanical watches as they have a consistent energy source (battery) that helps them function for a long time without requiring any winding. These two perks of quartz watch nearly caused the mechanical watch to disappear from the wristwatch scene (Gomelsky) as people stopped buying mechanical watches that were seen as "fragile, not particularly precise, very expensive and very complicated to repair" (Gomelsky) and changed to quartz watches. Yet, mechanical watches never really died down because, back then, mechanical watches has just started to be seen as an art form (Gomelsky). An example of this is the establishment of an academy "dedicated to perpetuating the art of independent watch- and clockmaking" in Zurich, Switzerland (Gomelsky) which shows that people started to appreciate mechanical watches as an art form. This means that people still bought these expensive, inaccurate mechanical watches because of their artistic values.

After that, mechanical watches' journey as an art form continued to flourish when horology (art of watch and clock making) collectors started to buy and collect

wristwatches for their personal collections, specifically starting in 1989 (Gomelsky). Before 1989, horology collectors only focused on pocket watches and clocks, but this has changed thanks to an auction held by a watch company, Patek Philippe in April 1989 (Gomelsky). This auction was so influential that immediately after the auction, Patek Philippe saw a drastic increase in their production: they used to produce only 9000 watches per year prior to the auction but they had managed to increase their production into 14000 watches per year after the auction, and the numbers continued to increase (Gomelsky).

Finally, as we entered the era of wearable techs, Apple Watch was introduced into the watch industry in 2014. Apple Watch was not the first smartwatch in the industry as many 'smart' watches were invented even in the late 20th century, such as Calcron, the calculator watch created in 1975, and RC-1000, a watch that could be connected to a personal computer created in 1984 (Gregersen). But none of them managed to survive and break through the watch market until Apple introduced the Apple Watch. Apple Watch was so dominant that, in 2019, Apple managed to sell more Apple Watches than the entire Swiss watch industry (Gomelsky), which has always been regarded as one of the leading players in the watch market. This situation raised concerns about the future of mechanical watches, but some say that the worries were misplaced as 2019 also marked a 2.4 percent increase in exports for the Swiss watch industry (Gomelsky) which shows that mechanical watches are not going anywhere anytime soon. Furthermore, some mechanical watch lovers even say that mechanical watches are better than Apple Watch because they never become obsolete (Gomelsky) --they can even increase in value-- contrary to Apple Watches that lose their value whenever a new version is introduced into the market. But, despite all of that, I personally believe that both watches have their own benefits and are essential for the watch industry as it moves forward.

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If we look at the earliest version of wristwatches, we could clearly see that they were designed as accessories for women (Gomelsky), not as the timekeeping devices we knew today. But since then, wristwatches have undergone multiple major

innovations, and changes that lead them to be the time-telling device they are today. Some of these changes may potentially be attributed to the rise of capitalistic society, which emphasizes the efficient management of time, or even the emergence of quartz-powered wristwatches that made them a lot cheaper and more affordable for the masses. But these changes are not what we will focus on in this essay. What we want to look at is how the **role of a wristwatch**, which has been synonymized with timekeeping, has changed as smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, and other advanced gadgets become the mainstream way of telling time.

The effect of these gadgets on wristwatches can be seen in the article written by Nick Bilton, a special correspondent of Vanity Fair (Nick Bilton), about the early emergence of smartwatches. In his article, Bilton mentioned that university freshmen nowadays (2011, if we refer to the article's published date) do not use wristwatches anymore as they have their mobile phones and laptops that can be used to tell the time. He then continues to explain that the "action of pointing to a wrist" which was once a universal way of asking someone about time is now "akin to speaking an unfamiliar foreign language" to highlight just how foreign wristwatches were to this batch of freshmen (Bilton). This situation shows how badly wristwatches' influence was affected because of technology. But, if we look at the sales data of watch companies, we will realize that contrary to Bilton's observation, the sales of wristwatches are progressing forward steadily. For example, the exports value of Swatch (a leading watch-making company) to the US in 2019 was 8.6% percent higher than the exports in 2018 (Besler). This means that there is a contradiction between Bilton's observation and wristwatch sales' data which raises a question: how does the watch industry continue to thrive although younger generations seemingly have forgotten about traditional watches?

One of the reasons this happen is that, while watches are not used to tell the time anymore, some people still collected and bought watches because of their artistic values. An explanation of this can be found in an article in The Wall Street Journal. In the article, the writer interviewed and talked about some men, mostly watches collectors, who wear watches not to tell the time, but for their look and their history, such as Andy Warhol who often wore a Cartier Tank watch that is not set, just because

“it’s the watch to wear” (Gallagher). The article also argued that, just like other men’s accessories (e.g., ties), wristwatches do not necessarily need any other function than to complement one’s look (Gallagher). Therefore, the fact that some people still buy wristwatches is not something surprising as these watches, which seems to have lost their relevance, are actually carrying a bigger purpose other than timekeeping.

Still, the fact that watches are bought for their artistic values does not fully answer the question that we have. It explains why some people still buy watches even though there are more convenient ways to tell the time, but it does not explain why the sales of watches are **increasing** despite being ‘neglected’ by younger generations that, as time moves forward, should make up most of the market. I think the answer to this question lies deeper and we should look at the watch market’s progress more closely to determine the factors that lead to this mysterious increase. And, surprisingly, what we notice when examining the watch market’s progress throughout the years is that this **increase** pattern was somewhat an illusion. According to Carol Besler (who wrote an article about Apple Watch outselling Swiss Watches), traditional watch sales only see an increase in the sales value, but a decline in terms of units sold. This means that fewer people are buying these watches, and it is just that the people who still buy watches are buying more expensive watches. Besler illustrated this issue in his article by including the sales data for Great Britain watches. Based on the data, the values of sub-£500 watches in Great Britain has decreased from £500 million in 2013 to £332 million in 2019, but the sales for over-£1000 watches double from £538 million to £1.1 billion in the same time frame (Besler).

One reason this happened is because, according to Reginald Black, a watch industry analyst for NPD Group (a market research company (Homepage), “the rich are getting richer” (Besler) and, probably, the poor are also getting poorer. This means that behind the ‘resilience’ of the watch industry, there lays quite a dark truth; the fact that the watch industry manages to stay strong all this year was thanks to these rich people who keep getting richer and keep buying more watches for their personal collections. However, contrary to their rich counterpart, normal people that used to buy watches have started to lose interest in watches (illustrated in the data about Great

Britain watches' sales), perhaps because they do not have any extra money to spend on purely aesthetic accessories like mechanical watches. This shows how skewed the wealth distribution is and how the gap between the rich and the poor is growing day by day.

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In conclusion, if we combine all our findings to try to make sense of the role of watches in today's society, one conclusion that I think is clear is that watches have now become something similar to artworks that the rich buy to showcase their wealth. This is supported by the fact that these rich people bought these watches because of their aesthetic values, not their function (as we have discussed above), and the fact that only rich people are seemingly interested in buying new watches. Of course, there will be normal watch lovers that bought watches as a hobby or for personal use, but based on the data that we have found, I will say that these people are the minority.

Moreover, as we analyze the transformation of watches' role in society, we will realize that this 'new role' is not something new. For instance, the first wristwatch ever created was meant as an accessory for a noblewoman (Gomelsky). This ironically means that wristwatches are not undergoing any transformation in terms of their role, but they are returning to be the symbol they once were a sign of wealth and nobility. This situation creates a conflicting feeling inside me as I realize that the success of the watch industry, which I am fond of, was masking a bigger issue of the ridiculous wealth distribution in the status quo. On one hand, I was happy to see the watch industry thriving, but on the other hand, I feel like this was not something I should be proud of because it was the fruit of the inequality that is plaguing our world. It could be said that I wrote this essay to find out about the strength of wristwatches that help them survive the trial of time, but I came back with knowledge of the world's inequality. It makes me ponder just how distorted the world is and if there are other things that I love that thrive at the expense of other people.

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# Excellence in Multilingual Writing

## **The Visits**

by An Hoang Nyugen,

*From WRITING 120*

*Nominated by Scott Beal*

An's moving and effective essay begins with a vivid encounter with a messy apartment which serves as a compelling frame for the rest of the essay. In this narrative exploration, An questions his relationship with his brother as well as both their proximity to adulthood (embodied by the ideals of responsibility, empathy, and independence). His self-deprecating honesty toward the end of the essay -- confessing his embarrassment and sentimentality -- strengthens the connection of trust he has built up with the reader.

*-- Scott Beal*

## The Visits

(This essay is written taking into consideration the fact that it would invade the privacy of a character described. In fact, I texted my older brother and asked “Hey, my university requires me to write an essay, a personal narrative essay. Can I write about you?” He answered: “Whatever, they won’t care anyway.”)

When we opened the door, an unpleasant odor came out. Everything was “trash.” On the floor lay water bottle caps, quarter-dollar coins, pens, pistachio shells, pistachios, cashews, and another kind of nut, very large books, notebooks, papers, calculators, and some toys. On the window and on his table were razors, air fresheners, spray deodorants, and dental floss. Cords, earphones, iPhone chargers, a hairdryer tangled under the table. We looked under his bed and found plenty of bottles, potato crisps chips, Chinese food boxes, Lego pieces, packages, and boxes, some of which he hadn’t opened yet. Even worse, there were blackened decomposed banana peels (according to his explanation) on his desk, some sticky liquids, probably peanut butter stuck everywhere, and many marks of mold on the floor, which looked like hair to me. Almost every described item in plural form could be seen at least four times. Everything just combined into a unified block, like a sea of trash flooded around us. “What’s wrong with you!? It looks like you are trying to make the whole world fit in your room,” my mother said. Maybe she was trying to hide the disappointment.

We then checked out the bathroom and the kitchen. The bathroom was also a collection of air fresheners, hand soaps, spray deodorants, razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoos, shower gels, water flossers. Full, half, standing, lying, packed, unpacked, opened, and closed toiletries were all over the bathroom window and took all spaces on the side of the sink. The sink was covered by some kind of brown dirt. There was something on the toilet that was supposed to be inside of it, and a mark of these was on the bathtub side too. On the floor of the bathroom and the kitchen, there was plenty of dirt and cotton balls or hair or something. In the kitchen, there were oil marks everywhere: the fridge, the burner, the tray, the kitchen sink.

“How to be a grown-up?” That was the question I used to ask myself a lot when I was young. At times, I have been satisfied with the answer: “Time will grow you up.” I will accumulate large chunks of knowledge by then that would be helpful in many situations. By then, I will be able to take care of myself. I will know how to behave with other people. And now comes the time when I need to live “alone”: I go to the United States to study. However, I am far from ready.

I somehow tried to convince my mother to let me book a plane ticket for myself, chose a hotel to stay before moving in, figure out the way to get in with campus life as my brother and some of my friends did. But my mother was stubborn: she’s going to go with me to the US.

Apart from the fact that my mother was worrying for me, another reason for this trip, according to her, was that my brother, who also got admission to a good public university in the US, had been staying in the US for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sometimes I heard that my brother was taking a course in the summer, and he’d been having some minor illnesses like diarrhea, I guessed. But I didn’t think they were any big deals for him.

My brother is 3 years older than me. In his first year at his university, he couldn’t stand his roommate who always brought his girlfriend to sleep in his room. So, in his second year, my brother told my parents that he would move out off-campus to a rented apartment with a Vietnamese friend.

We first met my brother again at my cousin’s house. He helped us a lot with navigating through roads and services in the United States. He would call Ubers to bring us around the city, lead us to the bank to open an account, and lead us to the mobile branch to get a sim card.

However, although my brother was still tall and thin, his belly started to get a little bit bigger. In addition, he got quite more reserved than he used to, and his roommate did almost all the talking for my brother. In fact, I always have had the impression that

my brother liked to talk. He used to talk about everything, from sports and movies to psychology, physics, and law. People that have talked with him also said that he was really good at keeping a conversation going. However, at that time, these areas were uninteresting to me, and now I hardly remember what he used to talk about. Now, he doesn't talk much, and only talks when asked to.

When visiting him, my mother and I stayed at a motel near his university. Right after we arrived, my brother insisted that he take us around to see what university life looked like. But my mother knew something was up. She was adamant, regardless of my brother's discomfort, to go to his apartment with some items sent from Vietnam. We eventually did go to his apartment, and we opened the door to his room.

What we saw was a complete disaster.

I can say that I was mad at him. He lived a very extravagant life, but extravagant in a wasteful, messy, damaging, and crazy way. He probably just went to the internet and thoughtlessly ordered stuff one thing after another. Maybe just because he couldn't find his earphones in the trash, or his earphones got dirty from the peanut butter did he order a new one. Was he so busy he couldn't leave his room to even throw the bottle into the bin? Keeping the room like that was also very harmful to his health; he experienced all the odor and bacteria every day.

Did he know that a cake he eats here can be equal to a whole meal back in Vietnam? Did he feel any sense of responsibility when spending the money that he doesn't make? Haven't years of studying abroad taught him anything? Did he know that mother and father had been working night and day to get us there? Tests, covid, homesickness, could never make up an excuse. We started cleaning his room right away.

In Vietnam, I think we have some expected qualities for a man to be considered a grown-up. In my eyes, those qualities include independence, empathy, and responsibility. Now, comparing my brother with that man, I somehow think he really falls short of these expectations.

He is becoming more careless. He usually looks at his phone and pays little attention to people around him. I usually need to ask him twice to get an answer. He can forget little things like bringing his apartment key, our plan for the day, etc.

Only now do I notice that my mother always keeps reminding us to get to work and help my cousin with cooking the dishes, doing the laundry, preparing the table, etc., rather than studying or looking at our phones. But none of us could take the initiative to do that. I don't know what about him, but I really have little idea how to do such things, especially cooking.

My brother and I grew up having my parents do almost all the household works for us.

Sometimes, we watched cartoons on the television all day. Sometimes, we loudly played soccer with the kids in the neighborhood on the street. We could make up some imaginary games to play with each other or make up a storyline and play together with our toys.

I have always considered my brother a leader, and I'm a follower. I remember once my parents bought me an assembly toy, I cried because I couldn't find the instruction sheet anywhere. My brother imagined and built the toy himself. He finished it, although it didn't look exactly like in the package, I felt quite satisfied. Many times, he helped me with my schoolwork, solving mathematical problems, or just finding ideas for my primary grade essays. I had always been admiring him for his academic achievements at school and wanted to surpass him one day.

However, I think sometimes I have kind of a childish competitive relationship with him. We even scrambled the meal with each other a lot, arguing for the lion's share. Once he learned a very long line of digits of the number pi 3.141592653589793 or some magic tricks, I also tried to learn them too with my best efforts. We competed in some make-up games, soccer with the kids in the neighborhood, chess, numbers of shuttlecock lifts.

Little did we know about cooking, washing clothes by hand, or properly cleaning our room. Comparing our childhoods with that of our parents, I think we lived a happier and much more content life. But that life doesn't prepare us well to live independently.

But I think growing up is also about growing mentally.

The distance between me and my brother appeared when he became an adolescent, and I was still a boy. He seemed to lose interest in what we both used to enjoy. He spent more time on his phone or with his friends, and he didn't want to be seen with me or my parents.

The more extroverted he became, the more introverted I was. When he went out to hang out with his friends, I stayed at home to study. Many times, I even envied him because he had a lot of friends and a lot of freedom that I never got when I was the same as his age. However, in fact, I considered him a bad model to follow. He didn't do well with his studies in high school and then in his university, which was, as my parents said, due to his negligence and laziness. He spread his focus too much on a lot of things outside studying like music, his appearance, video games, ... Nearly every meal back then I would hear him and my mother yelling at each other. My mother had given him very heavy words, hoping to "turn him around."

I thought he was strong and independent; he didn't want anyone to interfere with his social life or study. That's why I had kind of a "leave him alone" mindset. In fact, I almost forgot that I have a brother; hardly had I talked with him in the two years period of Covid-19. Now, something suddenly reminds me that I miss having a brother like him. We had a long period of good time together. He has somehow been always helping me, and I feel like a part of his personality shapes a large part of mine.

When I was in grade 6 and he was in grade 9, my parents were interested in a program that basically gave school students a week in the summer at a military school in Vietnam, where we were kind of taught some military manners by military officers as instructors. I got on quite well with the students there. My brother, however, was the

odd one out. He was mocked and scorned by nearly all the students in the program, and even by the instructors. Up until the end of class, I, worrying about the chance of my own “survival,” hadn’t said “hello” or talked with him for any single time.

Now, thinking back, I really want to ask myself: “What kind of person am I?”

I should have helped him if I had had the chance, although, I didn’t know how. Also, I was smaller than him. Maybe if only when the instructor told him to wear his wet pants (which had just been washed and hadn’t dried yet) to practice, I could lend him one of mine (maybe too short for him). If only when the instructor told him to do 100 push-ups, I could raise my hand to take half of that. If only when students in the class told each other, “That guy looks so dumb, what’s wrong with him?”, I would at least answer: “That’s my brother, jerks!” I remembered when I was in grade 1, I was scratched by a girl next to me and started bleeding. My brother said to her: “If you ever touch my brother again, I won’t leave you alone.”

If only when my parents scolded him, I would speak to ease them, or somehow encourage my brother. Maybe I could try to learn his books, which now seem to me not that hard after all, and discuss with him. If only I could do a little google about what he was bragging about (sports, physics, philosophy ...) or just listen and try to contribute to what he said.

Throughout our trip, I noticed my mother checked her computer regularly and made a lot of Zalo phone calls about the Covid-19 condition in Vietnam. Now, I am in the United States and the pandemic condition is getting much better, so I think about my own problems such as getting to my university, preparing stuff, instead of thinking about many of the Vietnamese people dying in the hospital, and many of my friends staying indoor all day as their study was postponed until the end of the year.

Attention is very important, especially for those who you easily take for granted. Sometimes I think I’ve finished my role, and I haven’t done anything wrong, but that apathy, not paying attention even a little bit to the feeling and conditions of others,

really makes me an “immature” person. It is the emotion for my family that actually accounted for the reason why I’m here. It always makes me strong and proud and have the motivation to keep going.

We cleaned his apartment 4 days straight, from about 10 am every day up to 2 am the following day without resting. Eventually, we returned him to quite a normal room. We needed to move on to my university, so we said goodbye to him, hoping that he will focus on cleaning his room more. I don’t know how I can keep in touch with him again, maybe just occasionally texting a message, because now I have got his contact information. Or maybe we could plan on a trip to hang out together.

In my first days in the United States, I wrote about many things that I’m embarrassed about, hoping one day I could be able to look back to this essay and evaluate how I have changed as a human being. Some parts of the essay are just childish memories that I really want to keep, but some parts of the essay are rigid reminders of the goals for a man that I really want to become.

Lately, I’ve done the most sentimental action ever. I texted both my parents and asked: “Do you still keep any pictures of me and my brother when we were kids?”

# Excellence in the Practice of Writing

## Remediation Project

by Colin Hunter

*From WRITING 100: The Practice of Writing*

*Nominated by Allie Piippo*

For the remediation project, Colin reimagined the Digital Literacy Narrative assignment, in which he wrote about technology's relationship to his occupation as a visual artist. He created a professional-quality video showing how he uses various technological tools to create engaging, intricate art through paper cutting and folding techniques. The result was a documentary that walked the viewer through the creation process from conceptualization to finalizing the piece. I was thoroughly impressed by the video and by the artistry in the work that was produced. Colin is a talented artist and I feel grateful that he chose to share his work with us in this way.

*-- Allie Piippo*

## Remediation Reflection

I think that finding ways to be creative and incorporate my interests into writing is one of the largest motivating factors I've discovered this semester and with the remediation process. I've never been a huge fan of writing so finding a creative way to express the ideas I wanted to cover was easy, especially being an artist. The content of the video I did is so ingrained into my life that presenting it visually was only a matter of setting up the camera. My original digital literacy narrative focused on how social media and technology played a role in developing my artistic career. I touched briefly on how technology is incorporated into my creative process but I didn't go into immense detail. I wanted my remediation to show how much I rely on the support of technology to execute my creative process. When viewing other remediation/creative projects that had a clear passion or interest, that the subject is inherently more interesting. My creative process is something that has been developed over time with hard work and dedication. I think that the evidence of that is clear in my video and it serves to keep the viewer engaged with the content. I also think the editing style and narration help to provide context to the overall message as well as to move the story along in a timely manner. I found that having questions from the audience helped to reinforce my assumption that people were genuinely interested in what I did and wanted to know more. I think this project was an opportunity to understand just how interesting an individual is when they open up about something personal. I think that incorporating that into future writing will serve to make the work more compelling and keep the reader interested in what I have to say.

## Remediation Project

Watch the video at <https://youtu.be/BbfgLdmodV4>

Transcript:

I'm Colin Hunter and I'm going to be telling you about how I make my artwork.

[Music]

My artwork begins and finishes with Technology. I like to design both using 3D design software as well as drawing out ideas and sketching things out. I like to use design software as kind of like a digital playground in order to iterate and come up with new things. All of the models that I make exist in a computer in some form before they come into the world and they become a real object.

I like to design generatively, so I come up with multiple iterations of something before I end up with the final design. Once I have the final design for an object I then take it and put it into multiple softwares in order to unfold this object to be made out of paper. So that means adding glue tabs in and telling each line whether it's going to be a score line or a cut line.

The machine that I use to make my work is a Graphtec plotter cutter. This is a machine that uses a knife to cut and score the paper in a certain direction depending on the blade depth and the force which it pushes on the paper.

I chose paper as a material just because it's the fastest way for me to to make an idea into an object. I think that paper presents a design challenge in the fact that it's paper; you know there's only so much you can do with it. I think that making artwork within limitations presents more interesting artwork.

Once the information is sent to the machine, it does this dance of sorts. It decides by itself what path it wants to take and how it wants to cut something out. I always think

it's very interesting to watch this thing have a mind of its own while it helps me in my creative process.

Once the sheet has been cut out I can then go ahead and pop this out from its nest and then fold the creases which the machine has gone and scored. I always find this process to be really meditative. It's a way of sitting back and working with your hands while you make something interesting.

After everything's been pre-creased, you can then go ahead and glue everything together. I use a syringe dispenser for my glue as a way to accurately apply glue.

And that's the finished object; that's how I begin from start to end for most of my pieces. Everything that I do is made in this same fashion.

Thank you for watching.

# Excellence in the Practice of Writing

## More Than Words Instagram Challenge

by Ngoc Nguyen

*From WRITING 100: The Practice of Writing*

*Nominated by Raymond McDaniel*

Writing can help us understand things that might otherwise prove opaque or obscure, but once we have this understanding, what are we supposed to do with it? In this remediation sample, Ngoc begins where her previous work on a literacy narrative left off: with an understanding that the ubiquity of the phrase “I love you” is hardly universal, and may pose particular challenges for those from multilingual and multigenerational environments who hear it cavalierly deployed by English speakers when there’s no direct analogue in the language spoken at home. Having written her way to the truth that actions speak louder than words in ways that pull the cliché inside out, Ngoc’s design template for an Instagram challenge - familiar, accessible, actionable, and widely shared by definition - establishes a more generous register for how we can show what we mean in lieu of simply saying it.

*-- Raymond McDaniel*

## Literacy narrative: The language of love

In most Asian languages, the phrase, “I love you,” does not exist in the vocabulary, or at least not in Asian parents’. In my mother tongue Vietnamese, the most closely translated version is “Anh yeu em,” or “Em yeu anh,” (depends on the genders of the speaker and listener) but it usually denotes romantic love. For many Asian-Americans such as myself, we did not grow up on an ample supply of “I love you’s”; those words seem to only exist in the world of white people. I hear them being said effortlessly between a parent and a child, even when the children become grown adults (imagine my surprise at that) and friends. I hear them being thrown around in movies and tv shows, sometimes almost carelessly. I see them inked on the pages of the books I read.

But they were just words to my ears, an empty phrase I could not add meaning to; a complex concept I cannot grasp. I had so many questions: Who can you say it to? Only your family and friends, or just anyone? How do you when it is appropriate to say it? At what point of the relationship is it appropriate to say it? Why don’t my parents ever say “I love you” to me?

Growing up, I have never heard those three words being uttered by my parents, and I cannot expect to ever to. And likewise, I don’t think I can ever say them to my parents, not without some degree of awkwardness and discomfort from both parties.

Does that mean they do not love me? Or that I do not love them?

The first time I ever heard the “I love you” in real life was in seventh grade when I came over to my friend Juliana’s house to pass the time before our volleyball practice. The moment we walked through the door, my friend was immediately greeted by her mother, who was in the kitchen fixing up some snacks for us, with a hug and a kiss on the cheek. I could only watch in amazement as her mother addressed her as “sweetie” and “dear”. Such visible actions and words of affection were a strange sight for me. We just do not do that in my family; such were only reserved for the little kids. And as we were leaving for practice, I could hear them exchanged “I love you’s.” Those words sounded foreign to me, a new concept that I could not understand.

I went home that night and waited for my parents to say it too. They were just three simple words that you can just easily roll down your tongue, but they never came. And I have been waiting for them since.

On the last day of middle school, the school announced a field day. The 8th graders were instructed to pack their own lunch and to picnic in the field behind the school. The night before, I had insisted on buying some fast food or on-the-go lunch, but, against my protest, my mother decided to make nui xao, a Vietnamese stir-fry pasta dish with beef and different kinds of colorful vegetables in a savory, sweet, and tangy stir-fry sauce, almost in the middle of the night.

“Mom, it’s okay. I can just bring a Lunchable; an apple if you want it to be healthy,” I told her as I started to pack a ham-and-cheddar Lunchable box and an apple into my lunchbox. “Besides, that’s what everyone will be bringing anyway.”

“Choi oi (my goodness), those things aren’t good for you. They can cause cancer and God knows what,” my mom argued as I rolled my eyes. One of Asian moms’ biggest enemies are processed foods, which they swore to be cancerous (in a poor attempt to discourage us from eating them). “Now go away, I need to make this before it gets too late.”

I tried to protest again, but it was futile. I later learned it the hard way that you can never win against an Asian mom once she has already made up her mind. And so, despite the fact that she just got back from work, and her legs and arms must be aching from a long day of work, she still cooked me nui xao, which must have taken hours to make. It was not until midnight that she finished.

The next day, as we took out our lunches, I noticed that most of my friends only brought simple sandwiches and sandwiches, or just fast food takeout. When I brought out my nui xao, which my mom had put into a pretty glass container, one of my friends joked that I brought a full-course meal with me. At first, I was embarrassed; but a great sense of appreciation soon overcame me. I could feel my mom’s love radiating from the nui xao. She cared enough, or perhaps too much, to cook me a whole meal because she wanted to make sure I had something healthy and delicious to eat. I eagerly finished the whole thing.

An unforgettable memory comes to mind whenever I think of my parents. It really was just another day, and for dinner, my mom made a special soup with razor clams (my family is all about trying out different kinds of seafood). That night, I began to develop a stomachache. I had told my parents not to worry about me and to go to bed while I laid in bed, trying to sleep and hoping that the pain would go away. But it did not. It seemed to have spread everywhere on my body.

Every once in a while, I would see my mom out of the corner of my eyes appearing at my door.

“I’m fine, Mom,” I tried to reassure her. “The stomachache is getting better. I promise.”

But she was not convinced.

The last time that she checked on me, she noticed how my face had changed, specifically how it seemed to have become swollen. She woke my dad up and they decided to take me to the emergency room in the middle of the night.

At that point, I had no more energy to fight back. I could barely stand or breathe. My mom pulled me into her arms and gently helped me to the car, with all of us still in our sleepwear. By the time we arrived, it was already past midnight. Turns out it was just a case of anaphylaxis, an extreme allergic reaction to the razor clams that we had that night. Once they were told that all I needed was epinephrine and I would be fine, I could hear them let out a sigh of relief as they held my hands.

There were no more rooms available that night, so I was given just a bed in the middle of a hallway to lie down as I waited for my allergy symptoms to go away. I could not remember much of anything after I was injected with a sedative, but I could strongly feel my parents’ presence by my bedside that night. My mom was sitting at the foot of the bed, gently pulling my hair out of my face, while my dad was standing at the head of the bed, keeping vigilance. In that moment, I knew I was safe.

By the time that I was discharged from the hospital, it was nearly five in the morning. It was only then that I realized that my parents had work that day and knew that no doubt that they had not been able to sleep that night. I felt guilty that I had troubled them all night.

“Don’t you worry a thing about us. We will just have to take the day off and make sure you are okay,” my dad told me. When we got home, my dad tucked me into bed and my mom immediately set out to cook for me.

Hours later, when I got up again, the first thing that greeted me was my mom with a tray with a steaming bowl of rice porridge, filled to the brim, a plate of my favorite food, summer rolls, and a colorful plate of exotic Vietnamese food that I knew my mom had to have gotten from the Vietnamese store (almost an hour from our house) earlier that morning.

Even though nothing made much sense for me at the time—still feeling the after-effects of the sedative drugs—one thing was sure: I have the best parents and that I was so grateful to have them.

And growing up, I was spoiled by my parents, specifically my dad. My hobbies change as fast as my mood swings, but my dad always obliged. Whether it was a month-long enthusiasm to learn Korean (I got all the textbooks and workbooks that are now collecting dust in the back of my bookshelf) or a week-long obsession with watercolor (how I learned that I have absolutely no aptitude for the arts), he has never denied me anything. And when it comes to my love for books, he happily bought me all the books that I ever asked for and more. I still fondly remember our weekly trips to Barnes and Noble every Saturday to pick out a new book or two (and sometimes I splurged). My mom would admonish my dad’s spendings on my books at times, but he never minded.

Looking back, I could not help but feel guilty. Growing up, my dad has never had much, and he has never bought anything for himself. He is still wearing his worn-out shoes that he has been wearing for as long as I could remember and some of his pants and shirts have holes in them. Even when I give him gifts, he would just say that it is just a waste of money to spend on him.

And so, it’s common to hear Asian parents say “I love you”, but they must be translated.

My parents articulate their love to me through the questions they bombard me with at any chance they get: “Have you eaten yet?”; “What did you eat?”; “Does

your arm still ache? Do you want me to send you something?”; “How was school? Is it hard? Do you want to come home?”; “Do you need anything?” Their love radiates every time they say: “Eat! Eat! You need to eat more!”; “I will make rice porridge for you, it will soothe your upset stomach”; “Have some nuoc yen ngan nhi (roughly translated to bird’s nest drink) so you will live a long life”.

They express their love through the foods they painstakingly cook for me. They poured their love in every colorful roll of banh trang (summer rolls), every savory noodle strand of bun bo hue (a soup with rice vermicelli and beef), and in every sweet scoop of chao com (rice porridge).

They show their love for me by the way they threw their entire lives away and moved to America just to give me a better future. By the way they always give me and my sister the biggest and best pieces of food, and sometimes all of it, leaving none for themselves. By the way they continue to wear broken-down shoes so they can buy me pretty shoes (at prices that they would never buy for themselves). By the way they silently sit by me when I’m down because they don’t need to say anything. By the way their faces light up when I make them proud; and even though they do not directly praise me, they would brag to their friends about me. By the way they always go out of their way to get the littlest things that make me happy. By the way they worked until their hands are rough and ached to give me a comfortable life.

And sometimes, they openly express their love when introducing me to relatives and friends. They say, “She is my daughter,” but the pride in their voices say, “I love them so much. They are my life; I live for them.”

They told me they love me in ways that resonate louder than the words themselves.

There is an old Vietnamese proverb that goes: “Công cha như núi Thái Sơn/ Nghĩa mẹ như nước trong nguồn chảy ra/Một lòng thờ mẹ kính cha/Cho tròn chữ hiếu mới là đạo con,” which roughly translates to, “Father’s labor is as big as the Thai Son Mountain/Mom’s love is like water flowing from the source/With all my heart I respect and honor my parents/To uphold the filial piety is my duty as a son/daughter.”

We do not necessarily need to say “I love you”; those unspoken words manifest themselves. My parents say “I love you” to me through the ways they silently take care of me (and my sister), through the struggles they have faced and the sacrifices they made, and through the little things that I do not always notice.

And I can express my love for them through filial piety and by repaying their sacrifices. By making them proud. By making it to the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and working hard to build a better future for me so that one day I can take care of them in return. I know I can do that, knowing that they will always stand behind me, forever supporting me. And I know that I am constantly being surrounded by their love.

That is our language of love.

## Reflection Statement

This remediation sample was a companion piece to another writing assignment, a literacy narrative in which I shared about the unspoken language of love between my parents and me that transcends the phrase “I love you”. Growing up, my parents have never said, “I love you,” to me, and I to them. It is not because we don’t love each other, but it is because such a phrase does not exist in our vocabulary. In my literacy narrative, I focused on my growing understanding that my parents just show their love in a different way, one which you must feel with your heart and translate with an understanding of the many sacrifices they have made for you. It is our language of love.

With that in mind, when I started out with the remediation and the remediation sample, I wanted a way to show how love is a universal language in that it needs neither to be spoken nor heard, yet its presence could still be felt. And so, rather than telling others that love can be expressed through their actions, I wanted to show them: by having them actually do the things that can express their love for their loved ones. I wanted to share with everybody this unspoken language of love that I was grateful to have with my parents.

My initial audience was fellow Asian-Americans, many of whom I know have the same experience as me growing up (because saying and showing such physical affection are not all too common in most Asian cultures), with an intention of enlightening them on the little ways that our parents convey their love for us (because sometimes we take them for granted), and I wanted to show them how we can reciprocate that love through ways that we often overlook (because we do love them, but we just don’t know how to show it) and normalize such displays of affection. However, I soon find it hypocritical to say that love is universal when I am limiting my audience to just Asian-Americans. And thus, I expanded my targeted audience to include essentially everyone, with a focus on teenagers like myself (although the language I used in the remediation sample itself included family and friends, to be more inclusive). Adolescence is a stage where we don’t feel like little kids anymore, and

I do find myself start drifting away from my parents physically (with living in a dorm and miles and miles away from home) and at times, emotionally. But that does not mean that we are not our parents' little girls and boys anymore. What I hope for this remediation is to reconnect young adults and their parents together through a series of guided action prompts that are relatively easy to do. It's easy to say, "I love you," but to show it is an entirely different experience.

For the new medium and platform for the remediation, I decided on creating a 30-day challenge on Instagram. The concept of a 30-day-challenge is a relatively popular trend on all platforms of social media in which one attempts to incorporate a change into one's life for the next 30 days until it becomes a habit. My goal is that after 30 days of doing these simple actions, they can somehow find a way to incorporate some of the prompts that they completed into their life. And the obvious platform of choice was Instagram, one of the most popular social networks among young adults.

When I first started out with this project, I was hesitant. To me, writing has always been purely putting words onto paper, because that is only what I have ever been asked to do in all the English classes I have ever taken; and I was taught to perfect the five-paragraph argumentation essays throughout my high school career. So, when I was tasked with recreating my literacy narrative but in a new medium, I was uncertain and doubtful. The project only got more unusual for me as I thought was about incorporating graphics into my writing and using social media as a tool to share my story. Even now, I am still hesitant to call what I have created writing. It goes against everything I thought I know about writing.

Looking back now, I asked myself: Why do I write? I write to share my stories with others. I write in hope of finding myself. I love to write, but I have always struggled to find the right words to express my thoughts. But writing isn't just limited to written words. Like me, writing comes in many different forms. The purpose of writing is to share a piece of yourself with others, that can be achieved through any tool you can possibly think of. After all, you just have to use your imagination.

February 1 - 28  
2022

No.01

*More than Words*  
**2022 LOVE  
CHALLENGE**

There may be roughly 7000 known languages out there, thus about 7000 ways to say, "I love you," but there are infinite ways to show it.

#morethanwords #mtwlovechallenge #love

Instagram @morethanwords

Love isn't just limited to saying, "I love you." As a matter of the state, when it comes to expressing love, up to 90% of the communication is nonverbal, and it is the most sincere and typically requires little work.

And so, to celebrate February, the month of love, once again, we will be hosting our annual Love Challenge. It is a daily challenge that will help you enhance, nurture, grow, and improve the love between you and your loved ones, whether it is a significant other, parent, or close friend.

For the month of February, there will be a daily challenge prompt posted. All you have to do is comment on your commitment below and on each day that you complete the challenge prompt, take a photo of yourself, your loved one, and proof of completion and post it on your story. Don't forget to tag us at @mtwlovechallenge and a special hashtag for each daily challenge in each post for the challenge!

#morethanwords #mtwlovechallenge #love

Instagram @morethanwords

February 1 - 28  
2022

No.02

*2022 Love challenge*  
**STARTS IN 3 DAYS!**

Don't forget, our 2022 Love Challenge starts in 3 DAYS!  
Check our page on February 1st for the first challenge prompt.

#morethanwords #mtwlovechallenge #love

Instagram @morethanwords

February 1 - 28  
2022

No.03

*2022 Love challenge*  
**STARTS TOMORROW!**

The 2022 Love Challenge starts TOMORROW! Are you ready for it? If so, comment "Yes" in the comment section and share who will be the recipient of your love this Valentine's Day, whether it is a significant other, parent, or close friend.

#morethanwords #mtwlovechallenge #love

Instagram @morethanwords

**DAY 1: POWER HUGS**

**GIVE THEM A BIG  
HUG AND TELL THEM  
3 REASONS WHY YOU  
LOVE THEM**

TRUE  
LOVE

BE  
MINE

CHARM  
ME

YOU &  
ME

KISS  
ME

**#MTV\_POWERHUGS**

**DAY 2: DANCE-OFF**

**PUT ON THEIR  
(AND YOUR)  
FAVORITE  
SONGS AND  
HAVE A DANCE-  
OFF**

**#MTV\_DANCEOFF**

DAY 3: CONVERSATION STARTER

**Take them on a walk  
in the park, and ask  
them about their day  
and listen without  
interrupting**

#MTV\_CONVERSATIONSTARTER

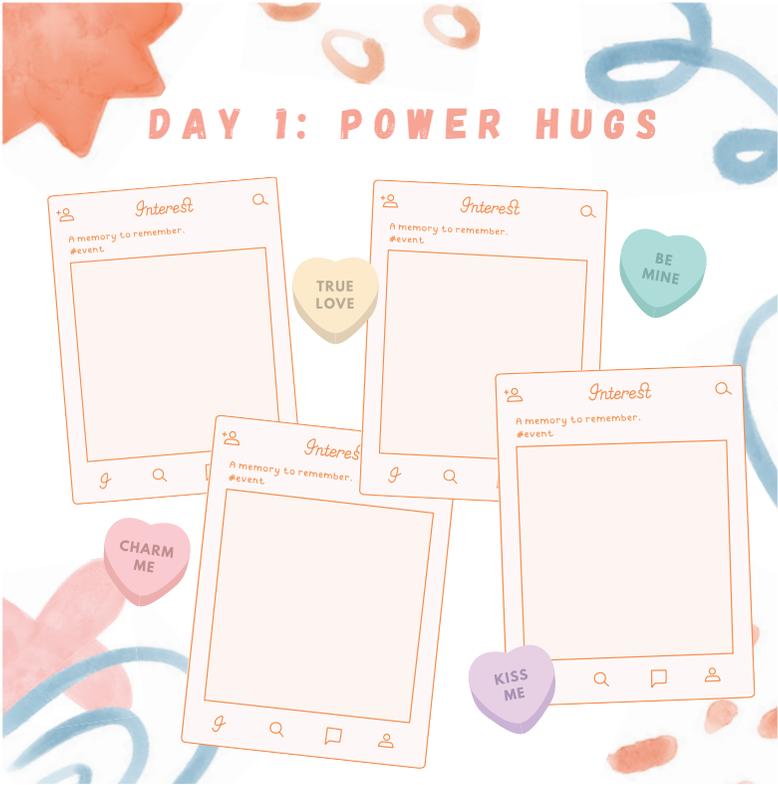


*2020 Love Challenge Wrap-Up*

Thank you to all of those who participated in our 2022  
Love Challenge!

And just because the month of love is over, it doesn't  
mean that you can't show your love anymore. Follow our  
Insta page for daily ideas and prompts on how to express  
your love in simple and subtle ways every day.

Now let's look back on all the memories you've made  
during the last 28 days!



### DAY 3: CONVERSATION STARTER





**ESSAYS BY**

Elizabeth Bernardini

Georgie Correa

Annick Gardon

Muhammad Arif Bin Mohamad Ghazaly

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