



Hilltopics



*Where we go
from here*

**FEATURING ART AND
POETRY BY SMU STUDENTS**

TRUTH

The truth that counts

BY KENNY MARTIN

So there is no longer any truth. The Oxford Dictionary has declared “post-truth” its 2016 word of the year. A prominent political commentator recently declared in a serious way that “there are no such things as facts” (*The Atlantic*). Bob Dylan won the Nobel Prize in Literature, then proceeded to not respond to the Swedish Academy, and has now sent a speech to be read at the awards ceremony which he says he cannot attend. In the meantime, Leonard Cohen died. And, of course, in a thoroughly unexpected and seemingly epochal turn of events, Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States of America.

Election day—despite what Uncle Gary might have told you at Thanksgiving dinner, and will probably tell you again at Christmas—was a surprise for a lot of people. For a lot of people, including me, it was also difficult. It was hard talking to my sister, and hearing how worried she was for the future of women in our society. Hearing that my good friend was spat on three times, just off of SMU’s campus. Walking by the MCG house and seeing their banner and filling with pride and love for my school and my friends—and then

seeing that same banner trampled not a day later. Whatever people chalk it up to, however quick people are to dismiss such things as “only a few bad eggs” or “only affecting a few people” or “only temporary” or “not so bad,” they affected my friends and family and me, and—make no mistake—they were realer than the blood on split knuckles when you punch a brick wall, realer than the numbness in your ears when you walk in the cold without a hat. My sense of things, my sense of the truth (whatever that was ever supposed to mean), was challenged. I was not so sure of the world and of my fellow people as I once was.

What I thought about on election day was this: what can I do? What must I do? In response to a post-truth era, how can we not ask ourselves: where do we go from here, where can we go, where must we go?

I turned, on election night, to poetry, to Keats’s great poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” I thought about the power of the imagination to render the chaos of our world intelligible, of its power to resist and stand up and change things. I thought of the yearning Keats expresses for something more

than what we already have, more than we logically know we can ever have: “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on.” I knew, that night, that Keats probably won’t ever change the world in the way we usually think of “effecting change”—creating concrete, large-scale political change. But he changed my world when I needed it, and there’s a lot of power in that.

More recently, I continue to find solace in art. SMUST’s fabled production *10 Bitches and a Stage*, which took a more serious and somber tone this year (while still remaining uproariously funny and consistently well-acted) reminded me of the power of coming together in a tightly-packed room full of strangers to laugh, to be moved, to experience the ultimate vulnerability of performance and thus become more vulnerable ourselves. The recent Meadows symphony performance reminded me of the power of experiencing music—ranging from the joyous to the sobering—surrounded by other listeners who are all moved together, in the same directions.

I think of the things we make, the things we create to share with others. For me, this past year and a half, *Hilltopics* has been at the top of my list of “things I make.” As I look back on that time, I’m filled with a joy and pride that I know will stay with me for the rest of my life. I undertook the editorship with a mission, to make *Hilltopics* a real force in the campus discussion, to make it something real, something with purpose and strength and style, something to be proud of. With the help of an amazing team and the trust and support of too many to name, it’s become more than I ever dreamed it would.

I’m studying abroad at Cambridge in the spring, so I’ll be stepping away from *Hilltopics* for some time. As I reflect on going away, I’m reminded, particularly at this time of year, of Wallace Stevens’s great, late poem, in which he says this: “After the leaves have fallen / We return to a plain sense of things.” My hope is

that I, and all of us, can return to some “plain sense of things” following the turmoil of recent events, and in spite of the turmoil that persists on a daily basis. The holiday is always a good time for this, and it’s my sincere hope that this issue of *Hilltopics*, too, might help us to see things in a clearer and plainer light. If nothing else, I hope the inaugural art insert changes your world today, even in the smallest of ways, and I’m sure it will.

I have to give special thanks to Dr. Doyle and Ms. Spaniolo, who’ve given me a long leash with this project from the get-go, despite my naiveté and occasional over-ambition, and to Dr. Harris, who has given crucial support to *Hilltopics* and gotten the word out to alumni. To Camille, you are a saint and a savior. Thanks for putting up with my shenanigans with grace and humor, and for holding me to the highest standard of excellence. I’ll miss working with you tremendously. To the staff: I love you all, for your dedication to good writing and to the

causes you believe in so profoundly, and for having the courage to share that dedication. Never let anyone, including yourself, belittle the importance of what you do here, in these pages. It matters more than you know.

Finally, in the post-truth era, I would suggest that there might yet be truth to be salvaged. Truth we tend to overlook, undervalue, take for granted. Truth that, if polished up, might become a beacon for something new. Truth that isn’t authoritarian, or manipulative, or dogmatic, or traditional.

I’m thinking of the meaning and pleasure of simply being and sharing and living with other people. Of the redemptive quality of being with other human bodies, of touching them, talking to them, loving them. A year ago, I was preparing to travel to Poland on the Holocaust Pilgrimage. At Treblinka, where some 800,000 people were

systematically murdered, faced with the most unfaceable darkness I have ever encountered, I began to cry. It was the most alone I have ever felt. And yet I was embraced—saved—by a friend of mine, who gave me one of the most important hugs of my life, who reminded me that despite the loneliness and emptiness of human existence, we are here, after all of it, with other people.

That’s what I feel most in the theatre and the concert hall, while reading a poem or writing an article. The feeling of whispering into the void, *Is anybody there?* and not expecting an answer. The truth, then, in being surprised, in our moments of greatest solitude, to find that someone, somewhere, *will* answer us in return, in unexpected ways and places. The truth, “after the leaves have fallen,” in being grateful that we are still, after all, in this world together.

- *Kenny Martin*

From his beginnings as a staff writer specializing in Meadows reviews in 2014 to his assuming the position of Editor in Chief in 2015 to his departure, if only temporary, from our staff in December 2016, Kenny has been an integral part of *Hilltopics* for over two years.

He became Editor in Chief of *Hilltopics* during a time of questions about the future of this publication, and in a blazing fire he has brought about its rise from the ashes. He has approached leading *Hilltopics* with passion, humanity, humor, and determination.

The entire *Hilltopics* staff extends its most sincere thanks to Kenny for his courage, enthusiasm, and fearless leadership during his tenure as Editor in Chief. His vision for this publication has transformed the heart of *Hilltopics* and has inspired the entire staff to produce meaningful work that none of us will ever forget.

HILLTOPICS WILL RETURN



Finals Freak Out

BY DESTINY ROSE MURPHY

Finals are approaching (essentially-here-right-on-top-of-you-oh-God), so many of our readers are undoubtedly getting a bit nervous. That's understandable! These things have a significant impact on your grade, and you shouldn't think you're the odd one out if you're sitting at your desk in a cold sweat reevaluating your life choices and considering exit strategies. Don't worry though, I've weathered the finals storms before, and I'm here to offer you some tried and true advice to get you through this terror.

- Finals are only like, most of your grade, which means if you have been slacking off in class all semester this is a great way to bump that baby up! Of course, if you've been doing your best all semester and your grade is hanging in the balance, this test could very easily be enough to throw you over the F line, so there's that. But if you've got a solid B in the class you probably can't fail yourself with the final, so you don't really even need to study at all.

- Speaking of studying: you've totally got a study group, or you can at least

Facebook message some people to make one, so even if you missed some notes in class it's ok because your bros have your back. Be careful though, because if one of you gives notes or an opinion that is wrong, and does so convincingly, that person could easily make the entire group agree on information that is completely wrong. Oh well, right? Best to blindly accept everything that everyone says when studying with other people. They know what they're doing.

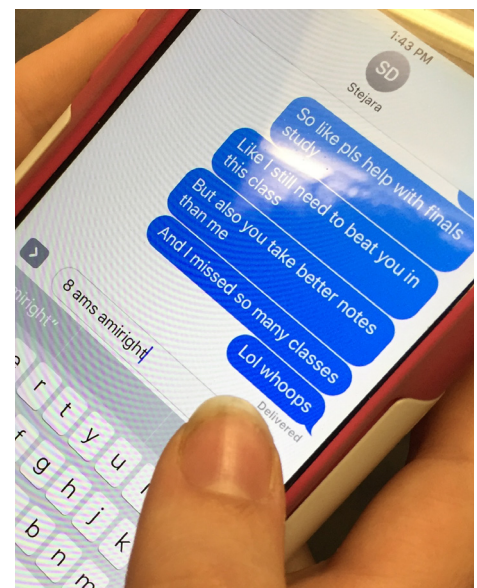
- Some professors grade on a curve! Man is that so helpful. Hey did you know that on a real curve, not the ten point bump that your high school teachers gave everyone, but a real curve, there are a set number of A's and B's that can be distributed in the class? That's right, your classmates are now your competition, not your friends. I'm not saying that using that thing about misleading information to sabotage your study group would help you, I'm only insinuating it.

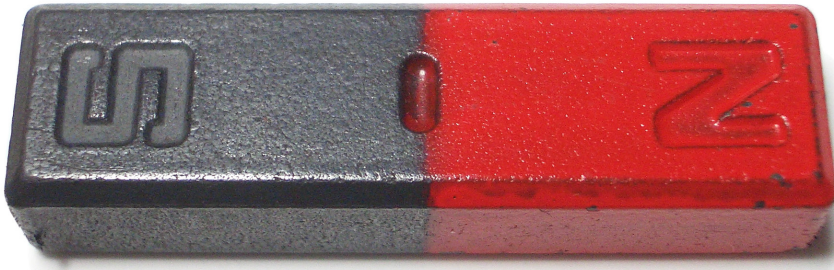
- Ok, so maybe trash the study group idea. You've got all the energy drinks, coffee, and soda to keep yourself up to study on your own. Did you know

that according to basically every study that has ever been produced by someone who has already passed their finals and gotten a degree, sleep deprivation results in lower grades? That's right; staying up and cramming that psychology textbook down your throat won't help, according to psychologists. But what do they know? They've forgotten what it's like to be in the trenches. Throw some 8 Hour Energy in your coffee and get to it.

- Well, if nothing else, your trusty pint of ice cream is still in the mini fridge and that will make you feel better. Of course, it will also go straight to your hips, or worse, your arteries, but the momentary pleasure that you derive from shoveling sugar-packed and hyper-processed carbs down your throat is bound to make up for the freshman every-year fifteen that your family is going to comment on during winter break. Crack out that last pack of girl scout cookies and eat your feelings.

Are you panicking? Have I successfully induced a mild anxiety-driven asthma attack? Good. Now remember that these tests affect your life in such an infinitesimally small amount that you will most likely forget them within a calendar year. Drink water, eat protein, get sleep, and knock those babies outa the park. From all of us at *Hilltopics*, we wish you a merry finals season, and a happy holiday.





The Hidden Merit of Polarization

BY ALEX MCNAMARA

There has been much talk lately about the perils of polarization. If you were to turn on the television, read the paper, or innocently eavesdrop at a coffee shop, you'd inevitably hear of "the deep divide," "hyper-partisanship," and the like. I do think that, in these valuable discussions concerning the status of our country, there remains an important distinction to be made. It would seem that far too often polarization is confused with incivility. The former is an inevitable and essential component of our political process. The latter is every bit the dangerous and disturbing force that many Americans condemn.

Surely diversity is celebrated in our country, and rightly so. Racial, religious, and myriad other forms of variety are often touted as the hallmark of our great democracy. But intellectual diversity can come with various "hiccups" that make some uncomfortable. Ideas are so potent and so personal that there is a compulsion, especially in the arena of politics, to resist and avoid dissent. Worse still, in an effort to circumvent ideological argumentation, some engage in ad hominem, preferring an attack on character to substantive

discussion. A concerted effort must be made to dispel the myth that if you disagree with a person you must hate them, or that if you agree with them you must love them. If we are to oust incivility from our discourse, we must abstain from making normative judgements about people, and instead reserve our contempt or praise for the *ideas themselves*. One might adopt the approach of the late Justice Scalia, who once remarked in an interview, "I attack ideas, I don't attack people."¹ The supposed ills of polarization seem to evaporate when members of a discussion can adeptly separate character from politics, and refrain from an "us vs. them" mentality.²

Now that we have exposed that what is frequently meant by polarization is just incivility in disguise, I can offer my opinion on why the polarization of political inclinations occurs. It would seem that most political questions, though not specific implementations of policy, boil down to fundamental questions which often merely require a yes or no answer. Should the government directly intervene in times of dire economic crisis, or patiently wait out the storm? Should private businesses

be forced to provide their services to all customers, regardless of the institution's values and beliefs about a demographic? May a woman make that contentious decision of her own accord, and if so, at what stage? These topics necessarily generate conflict of such intensity³ that many are inclined to precisely the sort of incivility that I have already described. But the controversy surrounding these issues does more than engender incivility, it necessitates two (or more) clearly defined ideologies, which must then be discussed openly and unabashedly so that one can prevail and its corresponding policies be implemented. Does this sound familiar? This system⁴ the Framers so wisely designed allows for an intense, all-out warfare of ideas, which helps to prevent a similar battle of men.

Polarization, then, is not to be feared but to be expected. Cohesive ideologies must by their very nature come into conflict with one another, and there is no shame in feeling strongly about ideas. An ideological gap, and subsequent debate, is what helps to define the common values of America and to clarify how they change over time. It would seem, ironically, that our fierce divisions elucidate that which binds us together. So the next time you hear an omen from a close friend about the danger of the ideologically charged voter, you might suggest that we are *supposed* to be ideologically charged, so long as we remain polite.

1-This remark was made in his 2016 60 Minutes interview, which readers can access on CBS's website.

2- Diana Mutz discusses this danger at great length in her piece How the Mass Media Divides Us.

3-The preceding clause draws heavily from E.E. Schattschneider's The Semi-Sovereign People, and his 4 dimensions of conflict.

4-This is referred to as the Responsible Party Model, of which Schattschneider was a leading advocate.



The Cost of College Sports

BY A.J. JEFFRIES

Disclaimer

Let me preface this piece by saying that for the past three and a half years I have been a member of the SMU men's soccer team, and it has been a wonderful experience. This is not in any way a specific criticism of the SMU athletic department, but as SMU is more understandable to SMU students, it will be used as an example of the profoundly flawed college sports system.

Costs for Academics

There are 128 schools in the football bowl subdivision (FBS), the premier division for college football. Of those 128 football programs, 24 were self-sufficient in 2014. 81% of programs in the FBS—a subdivision that, as I understand it, generates more money for college athletics than any other—cannot support themselves without being subsidized by their universities.ⁱ Unsurprisingly, SMU is part of that 81%. Setting aside athletic scholarships, which would increase the athletic department's expenses by \$19.7 million, SMU needs a \$10.1 million subsidy from the university's \$462 million operating budget to stay afloat. Rick Hart, SMU's athletic director, explains the deficit by saying, "The university doesn't view [athletic spending] as a deficit. A lot of people

like to use that term. There's funding that's allocated toward athletics, just as there's funding allocated toward other institutional endeavors."ⁱⁱ Let us take a moment to examine that defense.

As I understand it, the purpose of a university is to provide education. Allocating funding toward items like professors, classrooms, and research clearly enhances the provision of education. Spending money to ensure that every student-athlete feels valued on National Student-Athlete day (second in the rankings of American holy days only to National Coloring Book Day) with a free water bottle or portable phone charger, on the other hand, does not seem to enhance the academic environment at SMU. There are 424 student athletes at SMU, so if we go with a conservative estimate of \$20 per customized charger, this token of appreciation cost SMU \$8,480 last year. A largely inconsequential sum in the grand scheme of things, certainly, but when one of my professors told me her department's requests for a color printer have been denied for the past decade, the token of SMU's appreciation that was charging my phone in my backpack began to feel a bit ridiculous. This example is a microcosm of the larger

problem—so much money is spent on ensuring that top student-athletes are available and able to play that our academic departments suffer.

Of course, there are counter-arguments. There are schools whose athletic success can dramatically increase their prestige and boost their application rate. For example, there are presumably many people who choose to attend Alabama in part because of its football success. Stories like Alabama's inspire other schools to pour money into their athletic programs to tap the same pool of applicants for whom quality athletics are a significant draw. Across town in Fort Worth, our rival attempted this process, and it seems to have worked. After a stellar college football and baseball season, TCU saw a huge increase in its application rate. Correlation does not equal causation, though. According to Ray Brown, a dean of admission at TCU, "When we were 0-0, our applications were 60 percent ahead."ⁱⁱⁱ A study by Harvard professor Doug Chung found that when a school significantly improves its football program, its applications increase by 18.7%. This makes sense—there are so many schools out there that many are unknown to prospective out-of-state students, so sports success helps increase awareness of a school's existence. Its value in terms of academics, however, is less certain. While Chung did find that even students with high SAT scores were affected by athletic success—largely because of this branding effect, he believed—it was students with lower-than-average scores who tended to have a stronger preference for athletically successful schools.^{iv} So even though schools' application rates may increase dramatically, the quality of their student bodies will not see a comparable improvement.

Other defenses of athletics include the notion that they help with campus diversity goals, increase the quality of the student experience, and provide students a sense of pride in their school. These are indisputable, but are they worth \$10 million a year?^v

COLLEGE ATHLETICS

There are many ways to increase diversity without athletics, and they could probably be implemented with even a portion of that \$10 million. Similarly, the student experience is made up of a variety of factors, the most important of which should be academics. If SMU were to move up ten spots in the Princeton Review ranking of schools, I for one would be a lot prouder of my university than if we were to move up fifteen spots in the AP's college football rankings.

If my thesis—that schools subsidizing athletics is an inefficient use of resources—is correct, there are two directions these institutions can go. They can either cut their athletic programs altogether or they can balance the budgets. Given the wonderful experiences I have had as an SMU student-athlete, I hope they can find a way to make the latter work. It may mean giving out less gear and fewer gifts, only paying our football coach \$1 million, or even cutting some non-revenue earning sports (only men's basketball and football really earn money at most schools, the rest of us just live off them), but it is certainly better than giving up on the experiences sports provide altogether.

Costs to Athletes

College sports aren't just a drain on schools, however; they can harm the athletes as well. Before Super Bowl XLIX, Richard Sherman made headlines with his statements about his experiences as a student-athlete, saying, "Coaches tell them every day: 'You're not on scholarship for school.'"^{vi} Although athletes fortunate enough to receive scholarships do get a free education, their experience is far more difficult than most. Grueling practices and team meetings fill

athlete's days, limiting the time and energy they are allotted to fit in all the studying and papers other students have all day for. Expectations for athletes impose a significant burden on their capacity to get the free education the NCAA provides in exchange for their blood, sweat, and tears. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to this dilemma, as imposing heavier limits on the obligations schools can impose on "student-athletes" (athlete-students, really) would exacerbate the other grand flaw in the NCAA system.

As anyone who has ever watched March Madness knows, from the innumerable commercials telling us most NCAA student-athletes "will go pro in something other than sports," a very small percentage of student-athletes will ever actually play professional sports. Those who do, however, are sent to the next level after one to four years of thoroughly inadequate preparation. Take soccer, for example. We play a four-month season during which we average approximately one and a half games per week, spending the vast majority of our time either preparing to play a game or recovering from the game. In the interim, coaches spend many of the practice sessions that are not prohibitively close to games focusing on improving team shape. It makes sense—our coaching staff is paid to win, not to send athletes to Major League Soccer. Then, during the offseason, the NCAA imposes strict limitations on our capacity to train to preserve the "student" portion of "student-athlete." Which makes perfect sense, as it can only preserve the amateurism model that brings in awe-inspiring quantities of cash in exchange for very small payments to athletes if it can continue to convince judges it is providing those athletes

with something of true value: an education. But it is an incredible disservice to those gifted athletes who have the potential for a professional career.

On both sides of the college sports equation, then, the participants lose. Colleges lose a great deal of money in exchange for dubious rewards, and athletes lose the opportunity to develop fully in their sport. The only real winners are professional leagues like the NBA and the NFL, who receive reasonably polished products who will make them millions of dollars without ever having to pay a dime to train them. This system simply does not work, and as near and dear to every American's heart as college sports are, they need an upgrade. Or an elimination.

i Brian Burnsed, "Athletic Departments that Make More than They Spend Still a Minority." NCAA Database, September 18, 2015.

ii Chris Warley, "SMU Athletics: The Business of Sports." *The Daily Campus*, May 16, 2016.

iii Diane Smith, "TCU Sees Rising Interest from Out-of-State Students." *Star Telegram*, June 24, 2011.

iv HBS Working Knowledge, "The Flutie Effect: How Athletic Success Boosts College Applications." *Forbes*, April 29, 2013.

v Warley, "The Business of Sports."

vi Pete Volk, "Richard Sherman on the NCAA: 'You're Not on Scholarship for School.'" *SB Nation*, January 30, 2015.

It's a Friday Night

BY ANONYMOUS

It's a Friday night. I'm doing my best to relax, have some fun with friends. I've worn my good socks and I've got a solo cup of punch. My shoes are off and I'm settling into the vibes of the party. Maybe finals aren't so bad after all. The sound of laughter and throwbacks always gives me hope.

There is a sudden sense of slipping when I hear the name of my rapist. I'm perched on the arm of a couch near a conversation about clowns, I think, but everything is going really surreal and I'm swimming in colors because fight or flight has seized my muscles and even if I focus really hard, I can't tell if I'm shaking somewhere or if the walls are threatening to explode.

I try to take a deep breath like the air is not poisoned with my rapist's name; a gulp of punch calms me

better. I'm mapping escape routes (door, bathroom with lock, balcony) all the while listening to the conversation with my rapist's name. It lasts probably three minutes but it seems like an internalized, agonizing decade. I learn that my rapist can't make it and I'm trying to find the relief in that through frayed nerves and fire ants.

Time passes, I suppose, as people move about the room and the punch has been remade and the general party rumble has gotten louder. I chat casually to those around me and try to smile when someone makes a joke. I can't quite. I've been jostled out of the party and I don't know how to get back. My rapist's name a scratched record on repeat. I'm trying to remember to breathe and I start typing a poem into my phone when

a friend taps me on the shoulder and says "I heard you."

"What?"

"I heard you."

They'd seen me speak in a place where I could speak about my sexual assault, and gently reminded me with a smile. Finding an ally in the collegiate trenches of violence and silence lifts my burden and brings bliss. We toast to survival. The walls still their tremors and my lungs feel full of life.

After a long, well earned party, I find myself still smiling in bed. I really can't get past it. To think that all that screaming and pleading into the void made its way back to me, here, in my time of need.

There is a wholeness in being heard.

THERE IS A **WHOLENESS** IN BEING HEARD



On the Importance of the Arts

BY ABBY HAWTHORNE

“Art is our one true global language. It knows no nation, it favors no race, and it acknowledges no class. It speaks to our need to reveal, heal, and transform. It transcends our ordinary lives and lets us imagine and create what is possible.”

– Richard Kamler

I am accustomed to participating in *Hilltopics* as a copy-editor, protected behind the comfort of my computer screen and armed with an oft-annoying attitude of grammatical righteousness. However, the events of these past few weeks—especially regarding the sociocultural issues recently brought to an even deeper clarity by the election and its aftermath—are too important for me to passively sit by without offering my own social commentary.

I study music at Meadows, and the school firmly believes that one of the key components of a successful twenty-first century life in the arts centers around finding a way to get one’s art “out there” into the world—not only as a career-oriented mission, but also as one of social change. A fervent advocate of this mission, my oboe professor Erin Hannigan co-founded the non-profit event Artists for Animals, which combines music, photography, and studio art to raise money for the no-kill animal shelter Operation Kindness. A wall in her studio on campus also reads, “Art for Life’s Sake,” reminding us every day that we must use our talents to effect

lasting change in the world around us.

I am often confronted (by myself, but also by others) with the question: What is the point of a career in the arts? Perhaps art can only be experienced for pleasure—which is not necessarily a negative thing in and of itself—but it provides absolutely no solution for battling oppression and subjection in the world. If I want to dedicate my life to such a mission, then a course of study in human rights or a career in social work might be a more suitable choice. However, I can’t allow myself to be so cynical. Sure, pleasure is good. But that’s not the only reason artists do what they do. Art is necessary because really good art gets us closer, in bits and pieces, to a Truth that we can’t otherwise express. Great art reaches toward the heart of our collective experience as humans from every angle, in every language—especially those languages not expressible by mankind. For how else can we make sense of the world, if not through sensory experiences?

Why do we create art? Because we must. Because sometimes it is the only response we have to violence, to tragedy, to despair, to injustice. Art matters. Art is powerful. Just as hospitals heal broken bodies, so too can orchestras, art galleries, or poetry readings heal broken spirits. Before a youth orchestra performance of mine in high school a few years ago, the

conductor expressed to my colleagues and me his mission during each performance: one day, some poor soul might stumble into the concert hall, and we have to be prepared every night to reach out and touch that person, to change his or her life for the better.

For how else can we see the clear moon on a cloudless night, or bask in the glow of the setting sun sending bouncing shadows through the leaves above us, or truly engage with a text, work of art, or piece of music in a deep way and not realize that it is our very humanity that binds us together? I encourage you to allow yourself to feel deeply—to appreciate the beauty in our shared world—and then to DO something about it. Use your passion to effect lasting change in the world around you. Think extremely deeply, work incredibly hard, discover what makes you tick—and then find a way to bring it into the community at large. Use your work as a rallying cry, as an expression of deep grief or intense elation; use your art to move people—all people—as creatures who are one and the same on this earth.

The Meadows Symphony Orchestra was challenged at the beginning of this semester by Maestro Paul Phillips to live artistic lives, every day. And I would like to extend this same challenge to all readers. Even if your profession is not one within the “traditional art” field, I encourage you to approach everyone you encounter—friends, peers, colleagues, mentors, and especially people with whom you disagree—with the same sort of awe and respect with which you would approach a famous work of art or highly-acclaimed piece of music. Look deeply within each other to find the beautiful aspects of humanity we all carry inside of us.

My friends—I challenge you to lead artistic lives. In everything that you do, for as long as you live. For in so doing, you will discover an internal sense of tolerance, a deeper appreciation of beauty, and an unconditional love for all—things this world needs now more than ever.



Why You Attend a Liberal Arts University

BY CAMILLE AUCOIN

I'm an engineering student. Every time I pick up a paintbrush, disaster strikes. If somebody asked me to touch up a painting, it would definitely turn out like the twentieth century fresco of Jesus in Spain. Many of my engineering friends share similar artistic skills. However, one thing I've noticed despite this is that many of us are outstandingly creative.

I have one close engineering friend who has taken several design-centered classes, and the pieces she produces are spectacular. Two weeks ago she designed and built a lamp. When most people think of "engineers designing lamps" they probably think of a light bulb hanging from a cord. This, however, was a designer lamp: something I'd expect to see in Meadows, not Lyle.

Engineers and other math-minded people often possess very unique abilities to turn math and technology into art. Measurements, symmetry, and equations are the tools of choice rather than paintbrushes, pencils, and easels.

My argument here is not that engineers as a whole are unrecognized artists who deserve galleries and art expos (keep in mind that image of the ruined twentieth century Jesus fresco). My question, rather, is why are we not fostering and promoting these skills more in our society?

On a large, nationwide scale, a sort of dichotomy has emerged between STEM fields and liberal arts fields. In short summary: STEM jobs make the money. Efforts to increase enrollment and interest in STEM majors have been in full force throughout my lifetime. Texas A&M University, located in my hometown, has a goal of enrolling 25,000 engineering students by the year 2525.

Just considering A&M's case: what's the use of rolling out 25,000 engineering grunts by 2529? The engineering job market quickly becomes saturated; the value of the degree is lessened; as an engineer, you're suddenly very replaceable because there are 24,999 people who received an education identical to yours.

This is my pitch for a liberal arts education. Educating yourself in the arts and humanities makes you a human engineer, mathematician, statistician, etc., not just a blunt mathematical instrument. Uncovering those hidden creative skills within you makes you unique and extremely hireable. That's what engineers are all about, right?

Perhaps more important than getting you hired, having a liberal arts education trains you in humanity. How can an audio engineer design a sound system for a symphony hall without ever appreciating the sounds of an orchestra? How can the power engineer plan transmission lines without understanding the towns they run through? How can a statistician compile data about a demographic without being aware of the social, political, historical, and ethical issues surrounding the area of their study? Numbers and equations make an engineer, but liberal arts make an engineer human.

Therefore, you attend a liberal arts university. The engineering classes are better, perhaps, at other schools, but the training in being human, empathetic, analytical, critical, and questioning is priceless.

No matter your major, strive to educate yourself in humanity. These lessons don't always come from classes; they come from interacting with the world around us as well. Surrounding yourself with one-sided viewpoints is fatal in any field. In engineering, it can be literally fatal. The inventions, products, and technological revolutions we design must be functional, ethical, and effective. That in itself, in my opinion, makes the marriage between engineering and liberal arts a work of art.

MIND INTO MATTER

A collection of work
by SMU students

Wedding Soup

Gabrielle Ferrari

I am often told
I look like my father's
mother, to my resentment.
My own mother's green
eyes taunt me, my inheritance
denied. My father's mother
was never very pretty or
glamorous. I blamed her
for that.

In the old photographs,
my grandmother looks
exhausted. I know that
look. It is the feeling
of eating weariness
When I am so
tired that my eyes
bruise, I am my grandmother
in her wedding portrait.

Her mother made her watch
the younger children at her own
wedding. She was one of eight,
all bundled from Italy in cheap
wool coats. Her smile is
mine but only when I
force back tears

I imagine it was a
relief to grow fat with
my grandfather, picking
dandelions on the road
side for wedding soup,
only her own five children
to watch.

Once, a long time ago,
she said you don't like me
very much do you?
I can't remember my reply.



Mark Maxey

A Study in Entropy

Polystyrene, hardboard, monofilament, acrylic
4' x 4' x 4'



Stejara Dinulescu

*Mountains and
Valleys*

Oil Paint
12" x 16"

we just decided to

Emilee Throne

when we started our journey together
wobbly knees and razor sharp knuckles

you pursued me with enthusiasm
a disjointed cigarette on the bench outside

we referred to ourselves as complicated
the pillow smelling of sleepiness

that was what I signed up for after all
toasted bread at five in the afternoon

there's always going to be obstacles
a late night swim in someone else's pool

your past refused to leave you behind
axes grinding amongst short fuses

I chose happiness with you
extra blankets with the tags left on

Meredith Burke

Gargoyle teapot

Ceramics

10" x 9" x 14"



River Ribas

Within grasp

Ceramics

2 feet x 1 foot



one day when we really have enough
time id like to sit down with you and confess that
one time in the crowded bar
when i followed the wizened wood nymph on
two twisting stumps towards the
exit but it took
for fucking ever
because my burden belayed
the passage through the sea
of waxing gibbouses peeling a cloudy night
sky like smooth sherbet
to track the verdant voyage
of a fine ship, origin unknown, momentum a
captain the woman strapped to a mast
can't fathom

and on the day when the lip of
your clinking glass coaxes me with
the comfort of knowing im not crazy
through the haze of maybe
then ill tell you
the words the wood nymph whispered
on the picnic table
as my toes twisted in the soon-to-be glass and
my eyes undilated in the once-was wood
and should we ever get there
to the shore
past the forest of poems
they're always chopping for words
we'll twinkle like soda pop
hitched to the back of Apollo's chariot

River Ribas

Please, Please, It Hurts, Space

Sydney Forbis

On loving Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, and the way 4 A.M. feels infinite and green when I listen to Gregory Alan Isakov sing Iron & Wine's "The Trapeze Swinger."

Sing to me gospel:

Jesus to earlobe lush,
and bite thorough.

Strip from me gossamer.

Give to me cherry stem toe-curls
in red knots

with brave teeth up silk dress.

Ruin bare choirs here,

here, in the hollow,

graceless, yet-aged,

darling,

oh—

I must drink the bluegreen

God gave your iris

to go on,

please, please, it hurts,

space 'twixt tumid ribcage

and iron spine, please

stay

and sing to me *baby*

before death comes humming.



Stejara Dinulescu

Clarity

Oil Paint

9" x 9"



Mark Maxey

Selective Reproduction

Porcelain, plaster,

acrylic

4" x 7" x 5"



Angie Reisch

Name and Number Please, Part II (Imperfect)

Coffee, tea, mouthwash, vegetable oil, shaving cream, toothpaste, pink lemonade mix, honey, pepto bismol, salt and pepper, medicine, cumin, cocoa, mustard, foundation, metal, soap, febreze, body spray, water, sugar, mascara, lipstick, lotion, hand sanitizer, chocolate, condom, tampon, floss, cotton thread
36" x 36"

Calm Things

Mac McClaran

A boy is from a family
who strings alfalfa,
sheers lambs the old old way,
takes money from factory
farms at a decent profit

The boy learns to tie cherry
stems with his tongue and
catch snakes by the head
under the cold, glass moon
with the orange mist
spraying him at midnight

The boy is fifteen, is grown and
baptized in the greenish river
with black-scaled snakes licking
the shore and toes of onlookers,
like calm things

The boy is roof-hopping and fighting
and sleeping in delicious abandon,
letting his sweet breath
turn sour with the night,
on the steamy wooded ground,
lidded eyes heavenward—
breath steady.

The boy is more grown—fathered,
weary like a bled lamb,
stringing alfalfa with bee-
stung, black-scaled palms,
for a decent profit.



Angie Reisch

Name and Number, Please

30 laser etched birchwood boxes, wire, motor
Dimensions variable

Laser etched lines created from data taken
from 30 individuals including: zip codes, year
of birth, height, phone number



and my personal favorite: a woman looking out onto the River Seine. However, something completely shocked me about the exhibition: the compositions were free from Monet's signature Impressionistic flair. Instead, the bucolic scenes were almost realistic. The lack of his signature aesthetic made me realize that the changes in Monet's art style detail a certain shift in how he perceived the world; his later paintings analyze the effect of light upon different subjects and utilize a more vibrant color palette. As Monet became part of the Impressionist movement, he caused a paradigm shift in the art world and in his own way of perceiving the world. The shift in Monet's way of thought is directly mirrored in his work and caused me to realize the different perceptions of the world that can be conveyed through art. This change in Monet's art style signifies a break with his past and in turn, a rebirth of a new ideology—one we are lucky to have on display so close to SMU, and one that isn't to be missed.

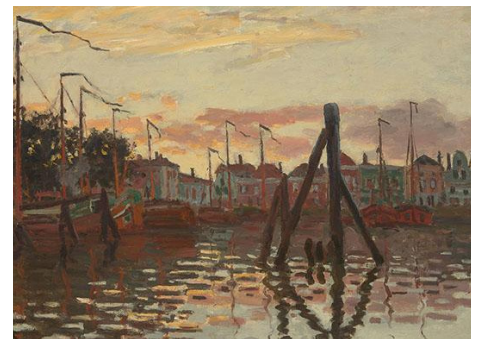
A Meditation on Monet

BY ANDREA DEL ANGEL

Art museums have felt like home ever since I was a child. When I was little, my parents would take my sister and me along with them to experience grand sweeping galleries with seemingly endless rows of golden, gilded frames. Galleries were something almost magical for me: carnivorous plain spaces bathed in natural light, whilst pieces of art hung on the blank canvas that was the museum. Looking back, growing up going to galleries made me really appreciate art as a vital part of humanity, even if sometimes I didn't really understand what the artist was trying to convey. For example, I remember being about nine years old and looking at a piece by Wassily Kandinsky. As a child, I really loved all of the bright colors dancing across the canvas, but I didn't really understand what the composition meant. I grew a bit frustrated, but then I remembered the initial feeling

that the painting had given me: a feeling of wonder and giddiness. Maybe I didn't understand what the painter was contemplating as he made the piece, but it made me feel something. Ever since that moment, I've been fascinated by the power that art has to connect two individuals, who are unlike one another, by way of their shared humanity.

Light filtered through the glass windows that lined a wall of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, as I wandered aimlessly from painting to painting in the new Monet exhibition, which details his early work. I listened to Bombay Bicycle Club's "How Can You Swallow So Much Sleep" (a must listen-to in art museums) about 98 times as my shoes click-clacked on the light wooden floors. Each gilded frame that I came across detailed an idyllic and tranquil scene. I saw meadows, boats, trees,





Why Americans Elected Donald Trump

BY ARIANNA SANTIAGO

On David Leonhardt's SMU Tate Lecture, Delivered at McFarlin Auditorium on November 29th, 2016

David Leonhardt, Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times opinion writer, opened his Tate lecture last Tuesday with a quote from David Brooks:

"This is a time for listening to other people."

Almost 62 million people out of the 318-some million people who live in the United States voted for President-elect Donald Trump. If you oppose Trump, it is worth thinking about the reasons why he was elected. It is worth thinking about why your neighbors, peers, and fellow citizens voted for his win.

A common theme in the U.S. is progress. Progress gives us optimism. It tells us that we are living better lives than our parents, than our parents' parents, and that one day, our children will be better off than we are. Progress results in optimism and a deeper connection to culture. It keeps our country driving, maintains

our status as a world power, and supports that ever-evolving "American Dream."

"The American Stagnation" was coined as a phrase to describe the one-third to one-half of Americans who are no better off than their parents were. They don't tell their children about 'progress.' They're worried about the future. These are the people who never recovered from the 2008 Economic Crisis—heck, some of them never recovered from the Great Depression. While many of us are experiencing the benefits of progress, some Americans are even worse off than in years past.

For the bottom 40% of Americans, the average household income is actually 14% lower than in the recent past. In this demographic, the number of children with one parent or no parents is up and incarceration numbers are up. Leaving college without a four-year degree is normal. In contrast, the 90th percentile of Americans has seen its average household income increase by 40%. The 99th percentile, 50%. The lack of progress is not universal and the

people experiencing it know that it is not. In large sections of the country there is, perhaps understandably, great frustration and anger.

Many people truly feel that globalization causes this problem. However, trade agreements are usually good and are not the main reason the U.S. faces competition. Increased competition in the U.S. is caused by the rising globalization of other countries. 42% of the world used to live on less than \$1 a day, but now that number has dropped to 14%. As other countries' economies grow and improve it causes increased competition across the world.

Technology is also replacing workers. Workers with less-advanced skills are easily replaced and lose their old jobs over time—this is a part of history. Progress can thus be thought of as a race between technology and education. If technology gets ahead of education, it's bad for the nation. Education is one of the most important catalysts to progress. Countries that are more educated are more advanced and have better living conditions. Education results in healthier, happier, positive relationships. Going to college, completing something, and living independently gives confidence and makes people better at navigating society and living fulfilling, productive lives. 65-year-old Americans are the most intelligent of all 65-year-olds worldwide. This comparative statistic is no longer true for younger American generations.

The American Stagnation is not all about an oppressive or intrusive government, because cutting taxes and regulations has historically shown no signs of solving all our problems. In the Bush administration taxes dropped, but the economy declined. In Bill Clinton's administration taxes rose, but the economy improved. Significant progress has lately occurred in the U.S.—wages even rose for the first time in several years—but we should be deeply concerned that people don't feel that progress. It's unusual for America to go decades

and decades without progress for a large portion of the country. Trump tapped into this—the voices that people didn't hear—and even though Trump does not yet have a clear plan to address these issues, the American Stagnation is the problem that Trump was elected to solve, and it is key to understanding why and how he won in the first place.

To get educated on this problem—'cause it's big:

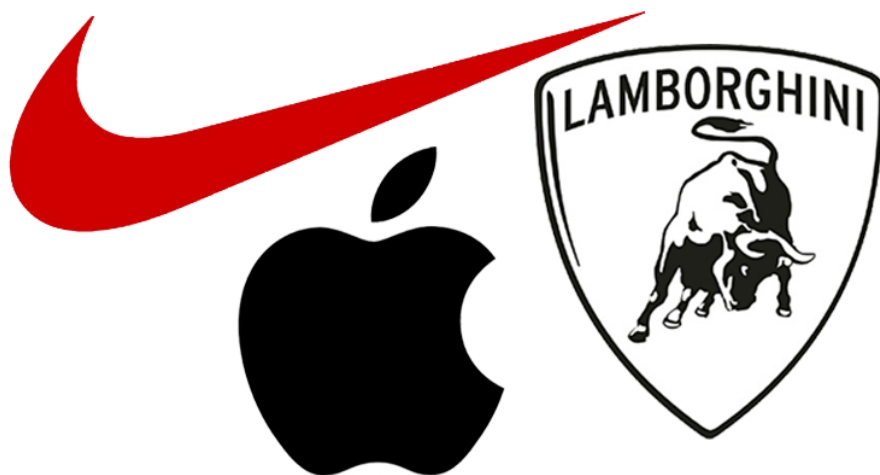
- On Netflix: "Inequality for All" and "Requiem for the American Dream." Both are documentaries with 8/10 IMDb ratings.

- If you want this from someone besides me: Leonhardt's original Times article, "The Great American

Stagnation" (11 October 2016)

- To read: *Our Kids* by Robert D. Putnam, *Getting Better* by Charles Kennedy, or *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance. There's a tldr article of each of these in the New York Times.

- If you can read about economics: *The Great Stagnation* by Tyler Cowen



Branding and You

BY ALEX GURASICH

There are some brands that we all just know. Whenever I see the Nike swoosh, I instantly think of the slogan "Just Do It," and I immediately remember what I like about the brand. Others are less concrete. I can look at the Apple logo and think of not only words like "different," "sleek," and "innovative," but also words such as "repetitive," "annoying," "overpriced," and "overrated." A consumer's perception of a company is not only based on the slogans and marketing techniques used to tell buyers why they should like the brand, but also by their own personal experience with the brand and the positive and negative aspects that come with that experience. This idea of brand perception goes beyond just recognition and can affect the products we buy, the clothes we wear, and the people we hang out

with. When a 50-year old dad goes out to buy a Lamborghini because he's having a midlife crisis, it's not the car he wants, but the brand image. He wants to be perceived in a different way, and has convinced himself that he can accomplish his goal by showing off his fancy new car brand. The problem is that buying items just for the brand can backfire. Spend five minutes with my car-loving roommate and he'll tell you that Lamborghinis are trash and that anyone who buys one obviously didn't do their homework. My roommate and the 50-year old dad have completely different ideas about a brand, just through personal experience. So is it even surprising that the same idea of branding is applied to people?

I'm not going to get too political because I know everyone is sick of

talking about the election, but it did get me thinking of how powerful branding has become. I can walk past someone wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat or an "I'm With Her" shirt and instantly think I have an idea of what that person is like based on their branded attire, but I don't and neither do you. Humans are more complex than brands. Brands do not have feelings, families, or lives of their own, and yet people are so easily branded by others. It goes back to the classic saying, "don't judge a book by its cover," which has become so oversaid (and thus overheard) that it bears repeating. It has become so easy for us to brand someone as "republican" or "liberal" or whatever and instantly know whether or not we will get along with them without even a word spoken. I know some very amazing and smart people who voted on both sides of the election who can still get along, mostly because they realize that just because someone has a differing opinion does not mean they're not worth knowing.

This idea goes beyond political parties as well. Branding is done based on the way a person walks, talks, and tells a joke. Or, on what they wear, who they hang out with, how well they do in school, the color of their skin, and who they checked on a ballot. People do not get to choose the way they are branded, just as companies do not get to choose how their consumers see them. It's about going out and experiencing things for yourself to choose your own opinions, and not simply taking things at face value.



Perspectives on Failed Free Speech Legislation

BY KENNY MARTIN

On October 25th, Fairouz Adams, Dedman Senator, introduced a resolution to the Student Senate “on expanding viewpoint diversity and free expression.” The legislation was co-sponsored by SMU College Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom, and several student senators, including Adams, who is also President of SMU College Democrats (and a writer for *Hilltopics*). The vote took place November 15th, shortly after the election and the resulting campus and national turmoil, and the resolution failed to pass, facing what Adams called an “overwhelmingly” oppositional response.

I talked with Adams, as well as Grant Wolf, Chairman of YAF, and José Manuel Santoyo, Hispanic-American Senator, in an effort to gather their thoughts on the legislation and the result of the vote. Here are some highlights from their responses along with some selections from the resolution itself, as well as my ‘final thoughts’ (to appropriate a phrase from Tomi Lahren) on the issue.

The Resolution

The resolution made two main points: it called for SMU “to adopt the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression” and requested “the implementation of a non-obstruction policy for protests.” It asserted that freedom of speech is vital to “the cultivation of mature university graduates capable of critical evaluation of ideas and worldviews,” and that

“when everyone thinks alike, there is a danger of groupthink, prejudice, dogmatism, and orthodoxy.”

Notably, the resolution acknowledged that SMU “generally has a good tradition of respecting viewpoint diversity and freedom of speech,” and that exceptions from protection are necessary for speech that “attempts to incite physical harm on others [or threatens] students’ lives, liberties, and property.” It also requested that all members of the faculty include the following statement in course syllabi: “This classroom supports viewpoint diversity and a free exchange of ideas. Differences in political ideology or religious viewpoint between the professor or instructor and the student cannot and should not adversely affect the grade of a student.”

The legislation prominently featured the conviction that students should be able to “express their ideas, perspectives, and opinions freely and without fear of retaliation,” and that “it is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments [about appropriate speech] for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose.”

Grant Wolf, YAF Chairman:

“We mutually believe that a

university, as an institution of higher learning, has an obligation to present students with a robust and diverse palette of ideas and arguments to interact with, consider, and challenge, in order to ascertain truth. This is vital to the development of students able to think critically, make wise and informed decisions, and contribute to a civil democratic society.”

“A distinction must be made between ideas students disagree with and universally objectionable speech such as racial slurs. Too often these are conflated; such conflation is categorically false, intellectually ignorant, and dishonest. This legislation protected the right of students and the University to oppose and apply pressure of social convention against individuals spouting racial slurs and the like. However, it also recognized the need for a clear definition of such speech, else risking the prevention of legitimate speech that simply doesn’t conform to mainstream political or moral thought. Such non-conformity does not in and of itself constitute hate speech.”

“Our nation is a republic for a reason—democracy can easily devolve into mobocracy. Popular sentiment has no right to dictate freedom.”

José Manuel Santoyo, Hispanic-American Senator

“I cannot speak to whether the resolution was a result of recent events on campus [the racist flyers and other discriminatory happenings], but what I can say is that it was promoted and supported by Young Americans for Freedom. And one of the main arguments used to defend the resolution was [related to] when we tried to defund Rafael Cruz’s speaking fee because of his homophobic slurs. They claim we were trying to take away their freedom of speech. People need to make the distinction between ‘speech’ and ‘hate speech.’ When your speech degrades, insults, or attempts to harm another group, it becomes ‘hate speech.’”

“If your ideas are ‘offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed,’ there are policies in place already to handle this situation. If this was truly about



‘robust debate’ with people outside of their groups, these organizations [like YAF and the other co-sponsors] would actually attend ‘Real Talks,’ which are hosted regularly, or multicultural events on campus.”

Fairooz Adams, Dedman Senator

“The concern stemmed from two places. First, a series of universities across the country have disinvited speakers and cancelled events because speakers had unpopular views. Second, something like that came very close to happening at SMU. Rafael Cruz, Senator Ted Cruz’s father, was nearly disinvited for having made homophobic remarks in the past. YAF Chairman Grant Wolf, President of College Republicans Drew Wicker, and I felt that this is unacceptable and inappropriate. If there is any place on Earth where unpopular ideas are exchanged, it is the university. The purpose of the university is to promote discourse, discussion, debate. Should a university fall short of that then it has forfeited its right to call itself a university and is merely a very expensive, four year long feel good camp.”

“Hate speech should be challenged. It ought to be ridiculed and diminished. My big fear is that allowing those ideas to go unchallenged merely allows them to fester and manifest themselves later on. Censorship has a very poor track record...Bad speech

will exist. Sweeping problems under the rug won’t destroy them. Bad ideas must be brought out into the open and destroyed.”

“Identity politics is a bad thing, especially racial identity politics. The alt-right, I suspect, is partially a backlash against regressive leftism. Nations and democracies succeed when there is internal cohesion within a country. When that cohesion doesn’t exist, when people prioritize their small group identities over their larger national identity, that is bad for national unity.”

“SMU does a very good job [protecting free speech]. Even so we must be vigilant and preempt attempts to subvert the freedom of expression. In terms of marginalization, I’m a racial minority and I’ve never felt marginalized here. Honestly, an attitude of colorblindness and assimilation will probably be the best antidote to marginalization.”

My Final Thoughts

Speech, it seems to me, is much more complex, slippery, and multivalent than it appears on its face. It’s easy to blindly get on the free speech bandwagon, taking the First Amendment as one’s sacred gospel; it’s also easy to condemn or censor certain types of speech without properly considering the larger implications of one’s actions.

In this case, it seems worthwhile to start with a question, which will inevitably lead to other questions: what qualifies, and what doesn’t qualify, as ‘speech?’ In the play of discourses, the field of competing speech acts—even in so small and contained an environment as a college campus—is all speech treated equally from the beginning, or is speech from certain people or types of people inherently disadvantaged? Does everyone have equal access to discursive space? Finally, what is the proper role of speech in the first place, and how can we go about creating conditions in which speech might be better deployed in that role?

To be more specific: if a student group protests an event and is deemed ‘obstructive,’ this amounts, in no uncertain terms, to a curtailing of speech. If a group can muster up the support—the resources, the bodies, the mouths, the quantity and quality of speech—to significantly ‘obstruct’ another act of speech, does this not amount to the fair and square rejection, or ‘destruction,’ of that speech? How, exactly, is a person or group of people who disagrees with certain types of speech to counter that speech, if not by methods that might be construed as ‘obstructive?’ Is there, buried somewhere in Student Senate resolution S-103, a fear of being destroyed, of being beaten—or

worse, of not being listened to in the first place?

To use the free market ideology so often pronounced by conservative thinkers, shouldn't speech, and the actors who create that speech, be allowed to simply 'fight it out,' without undue restrictions on methodology of protest and counter-protest? Who gets to decide what is and isn't 'obstructive?' I think of the scene, as related in the film *Matthew Shepard is a Friend of Mine*, in which friends of Matthew block Westboro Baptist Church demonstrators from the view of Matthew's funeral procession. Would this 'obstructive' speech have been unacceptable, and even demanding of university intervention, had the legislation passed? Why would the anti-faggers have been given priority to that physical and discursive and visual space? Because they were there first?

Who gets to decide what counts as what, who gets to say when enough is enough, how is it permissible to challenge speech we disagree with? Do the rules apply to everyone equally?

Such questions, and their hazy and often disturbing answers, reveal that speech isn't some neutral, straightforward thing: speech (and its play) is unwieldy, manipulatory, and inflected with power. Speech is a means of creating and maintaining and growing power, and of taking power away from other people. The foremost danger, then, of calls for 'free speech' is that they often fail to properly account for underlying discrepancies of power, for definitional ambiguities that conceal fundamental inequities, even in systems where the apparently freest of speech reigns.

Let's consider hate speech. Hate speech is never "universally objectionable." There is no such thing as clearly 'good' and 'bad' speech. Not so long ago, "racial slurs" formed not only an acceptable part of everyday speech; they were also defended (and still are today) as 'part of our way of life' or 'just parts of tradition' or 'just talk.' And though racial slurs have today been embraced by many as "universally objectionable," speech

that is violent to queer people, sexual assault survivors, women who have had abortions, and many other groups has not yet been assimilated into the fold of "universally objectionable" speech. In a word, perception and definition of speech is fluid, and it has taken a long time and a lot of radical activism even to get to a point where using explicit racial slurs is generally frowned upon—and even then only generally. If activists had heeded racist defenses of 'free speech' and just played nicely, we might be living in a very different world today.

A central problem here is the refusal of the proponents of this legislation (and many others) to recognize that "free and open debate" about economic policy and the like is very different from debate about structural racism, civil rights for queer people, abortion, sexual assault policy, and more. This is to say nothing of so-called 'debate' about the morality or ethical permissibility or even existence of analogous topics: the particularities of racial and ethnic experience, queer desire and gender expression, the complexities of a woman's choice, the psychology of sexual assault. I'm talking here about bodies, desires, and autonomy, and the sort of scenario in which a speech act levels an attack not on the ideas or beliefs or policy practices of a group but on their social identities, desires, psyches, and bodies. Speech acts that are caught up in spirals of violence, acts that are complicit in the destruction of black and brown bodies, in the self-destruction of trans and queer bodies, in the ostracization faced by sexual assault survivors (and the legislation has the nerve to talk of exceptions for speech that threatens the lives of students...). When faced with such acts, it is hard to respond in a civil or collegial way, and to expect such a response is nothing but absurd.

This is not to say that free speech is bad. On many levels, I can get behind the idea of this legislation. But I cannot get behind a proposal that is so transparently motivated by an ideology of assimilationism, erasure of minority identity, and denial of discriminatory social practices, as well as a clear conservative Christian persecution complex. We

need rigorous and robust debate now more than ever, but this was a screen put up by people who have found their views unpopular in an effort to shield themselves from legitimate challenges and to pass their speech off as intellectually sound when it is so evidently not. Consider, also, the fact that the legislation was unneeded: all involved parties freely acknowledged that SMU does a good job of protecting free speech, a notion evidenced by the fact that though there was controversy, Rafael Cruz was funded and allowed to speak on campus, and he would be again. That's exactly how 'free speech' is supposed to work, isn't it? This campus knows the stakes of speech and is committed to protecting it; we don't need self-interested legislation that will only serve to hinder the full expression of conflicting speech with anti-obstructionist measures.

My biggest and final problem with the situation is this idea that all debate is good debate, that dissenting speech is automatically to be treated not only with respect, but given first priority in the discursive hierarchy. There is nothing truthful, or honorable, or inherently good in disagreement, no more than there is in agreement. The play of speech (or lack thereof) within a discourse doesn't determine its worth—its content does. If the goal here is to have robust debate that moves toward the truth, then we should all focus on directing our speech in ways that engender and participate in that debate, not in ones that seek to enshrine our right to say things "without fear of retaliation."

I mentioned earlier that speech is inflected with power. This goes both ways. Speech, and particularly notions of 'free speech,' often run contrary to the truth, and contrary to good. They don't have to. So please, find a place and a way and the will to *speak*, and do it loudly, and everywhere you can, and for good.



A Moral Disaster

BY CARSON WRIGHT

We've made a fatal mistake.

The election of Donald J. Trump is a moral disaster. We were faced with two unpopular candidates. We had a remarkably qualified, experienced woman whose perceived scandals were either blown out of proportion or straight-up invented by a decades-long Republican witch hunt. She wasn't flawless, but her pros infinitely outweighed her cons, especially when compared to her opponent. Against her, we had an unqualified, inexperienced man who cheated his employees, refused to lease apartments to black people, avoided paying taxes, used donations to his foundation to buy a massive painting of himself, bragged and outright lied to us every chance he got, mocked the physically disabled, made bigoted generalizations about Mexicans and Muslims, derided a Gold Star family, said he could grope and kiss women whenever he wanted because he's famous...his list of offenses is not only staggering and egregious, but too damn long to put in a 700-word article.

Comedian Louis C.K. said it best: "If you vote for Hillary, you're a grown-up; if you vote for Trump, you're a sucker; if you don't vote for anyone, you're an asshole."

The choice was painfully clear, and

we made the wrong choice. Instead of electing the first female president, we elected a man who's likely sexually assaulted multiple women—and possibly a child. Instead of furthering the progress we've made under our first black president, we opted for a bigot who's stocking his cabinet with fellow billionaires and white nationalists (and so the weak arguments of "let's wait and see" and "give him a chance" fall flat on their faces).

Most upsetting in the wake of this electoral disgrace is Hillary Clinton's crushing popular vote victory over Donald. A stunning margin of over 2.2 million votes indicates that the People's will is the election of Hillary Clinton. But because the Electoral College sees it fit to bow to the will of only 25.5% of the electorate*—the fraction of registered voters that actually voted red—the American People are being handed a President-elect they did not ask for.

Now, it's a hell of a long shot, but there's technically still time. The presidential electors of the College can still make the right choice. That, according to constitutional framer Alexander Hamilton, is what the College is meant to do: stop demagogues. This choice would not only be legal and constitutional, but totally just in its reflection of the

popular vote.

The American system fails us if it does not bend to the will of the People. And the People's will, inarguably, is a Clinton presidency.

While we're on the topic of Hamilton, let's address one last thing—something that I'd like to speak to specifically as an actor and an artist.

Mike Pence recently saw the hit Broadway show *Hamilton*. Afterwards, the cast delivered a civil and straightforward plea to the Vice President-elect, asking for the respect and protection of his administration. Pence said he wasn't offended by this. However, a certain thin-skinned President-elect was. Trump launched a childish tweet storm in which he railed against the cast of *Hamilton*, claiming that they were "very rude" and that "the Theater must always be a safe and special place."

"A safe and special place."

I'll ignore the hypocrisy, the laughable irony of how "crybaby" liberals are constantly attacked by conservatives for supposedly wanting "safe spaces" (as well as how the cringe-worthy tweet storm effectively distracted us from Trump's \$25 million fraud lawsuit settlement). Let's cut to why Mr. Trump is sorely mistaken about what the arts "must always be." Apparently, he thinks that the theatre is a place where no one should be offended, where nothing should be questioned.

He has it dead wrong. The theatre isn't some sort of liberal safe space. It's entertaining, yes, but if it's truly good theatre—if we theatremakers are doing our jobs—it also shakes you, rattles you. Wakes you up. In some cases, disturbs you.

As author Cesar A. Cruz put it, "art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable."

But I wouldn't expect a man like Mr. Trump to seek that sort of thing out.

*The U.S. Elections Project



The Future of Work

BY FAIROOZ ADAMS

Paul Krugman raised an intriguing point some time ago: the jobs that will disappear due to mechanization are not necessarily jobs that require a low skill level, but jobs that require repetition.

He is probably right, but perhaps only in the short term. Even in the next few decades, banks could conceivably design algorithms to calculate the best investments, cutting out humans and human error in the process. Machines could be devised that compare a list of symptoms against a database in order to prescribe treatments, and should this technology be linked to an online database (which is likely) then it would have instant access to information on rare diseases, which could cut down on false diagnoses and, again, human error. Such a technology would effectively eliminate most doctors' jobs.

Aircraft pilots, taxi drivers, and many other career paths may be eliminated. Then the question becomes: how does the population train people for the future? What jobs will we require? Will we need any jobs at all?

It is perfectly conceivable that once artificial intelligence is sophisticated enough and robotics are advanced enough, the entire production line—from the extraction and transport of minerals and resources to the manufacturing of parts and their assembly, sale, and delivery—may

be completely automated, as well as the capture of energy required to run the necessary machines. Even service sector jobs such as banking or software development could be eliminated. Given sufficient progress, it may be perfectly possible to create a socialist utopia, where the means of production are publicly owned, and because machines would have the capability to self-replicate in order to boost productivity (a process that doesn't require paying them wages, like we do to workers today), a society of plenty and abundance could be created.

Should such a future be possible in the next couple of centuries, two factors would constrain its progress: technological limitations and potential political backlash. I doubt the former will be a barrier so much as the latter. There is much more that can be done in terms of increasing machine intelligence, and the processes of extraction, transportation, assembly, and delivery may not require an extraordinary amount of machine intelligence to begin with. Even if those processes do require an extraordinary amount of intelligence, then it is perfectly imaginable that a supercomputer at a distance could remotely direct robots onsite. We already control robots on Mars from Earth; such a leap would not be that great a challenge. Certain tasks such as identifying mineral reserves could be difficult, but even then it is easy

to imagine that computer technology could eliminate the need for human workers in that area as well.

There is, of course, the question of whether such a society is worth it. What will be the cost on humanity to have so many idle people? What will be the corrosive effect on humanity? And should a terrorist group launch a successful cyberattack, it could cripple an entire society. On the other hand, of course, people would have seemingly unlimited time for the arts, exploration, and scientific inquiry.

No, the real roadblock to a machine-run socialist society will be political. The transition to such a system will be painful and brutal. The loss of blue collar work through mechanization (though outsourcing will continue to serve as a scapegoat for some time) has already led to a substantial backlash in the form of President-elect Donald Trump, and is perhaps partially responsible for the populist resurgence among Europe's far right. When machine intelligence begins to threaten white collar workers, those with substantially more economic and political influence, it is conceivable that a lobby or anti-technology voting bloc may arise.

To be absolutely clear: technological progress is a net positive. Technology has limitless possibilities to improve human lives and push the boundaries of science and discovery. What is necessary is its responsible use. Regulations may be necessary so that technology works in conjunction with people, enabling them to be more productive without eliminating their use entirely.

In the near term, the focus has to shift away from an emphasis on college education. As discussed earlier, even doctors and investment bankers are not safe. The focus ought to be on training students to be ready for careers that require critical thinking and creativity. Or rather, it's possible that the idea of teaching specific skills will become an outdated concept, one that will leave generations woefully unprepared for the global economy if it continues to reign in the academy and in society at large.

A better method may be continuing education and state-sponsored worker retraining programs as the global economy evolves.

Perhaps humanity may never arrive at this point. Or perhaps humanity will destroy itself before machinery can run the world. Whatever the case, I suspect that should humanity survive climate disruption and the limitless ways in which our species may destroy itself, then eventually

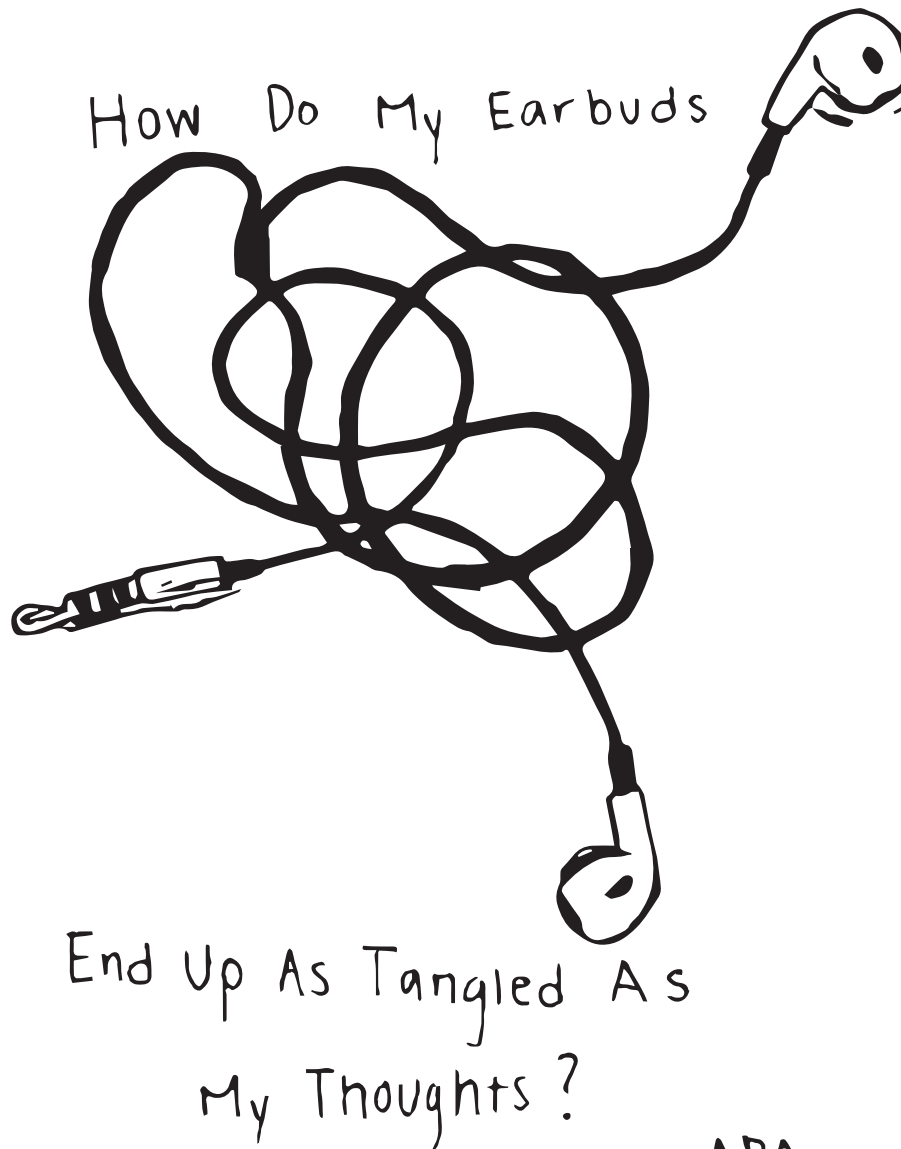
societies will arise that are run almost entirely by computers.

When such a thing will happen is of course unknowable, but given the tremendous impact that technology has had on the labor market in only the past decade, it is worth considering how our world may transform itself farther down the line. Such an exercise may seem futile to some, and to an extent that may certainly be the case, but advocates

for globalization—of which I am one—completely underestimated the negative backlash that a technologically sophisticated and interconnected world would engender, a backlash embodied in the election of Donald Trump. Let us not be caught so unprepared in the future, but instead anticipate the challenges and the opportunities to come. And let us be ready to capitalize on those opportunities, to the greatest extent that we can.

Worth a Thousand Words

BY ANDREA DEL ANGEL





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