

What is Hilltopics?

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

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

The number one goal of *Hilltopics* is to publish good writing and let it speak for itself. Exclusive online *Hilltopics* content can be found on our website, hilltopicssmu.wordpress.com.

How to contribute:

Though *Hilltopics* is published by the SMU Honors Program, any student is free to contribute. We encourage discussion and creativity in our publication, so if you disagree with one of our articles, we urge you to write a rebuttal. If you have a strong opinion, a literary masterpiece, a cute cartoon, or anything else you've created and want to share, please contact our editor-in-chief for instructions on how to contribute:

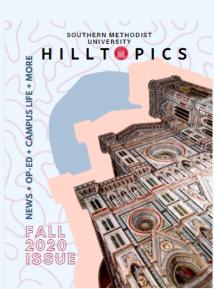
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Also connect with us online to ask questions and keep up with everything Hilltopics:

Facebook: SMU Hilltopics Twitter: @SMU_Hilltopics Instagram: @smuhilltopics

hilltopicssmu.wordpress.com







America Has Failed Student Journalists

SYDNEY SAGEHORN

It In the spring of 2017, high school journalists in the small town of Pittsburgh, Kansas forced their principal into resignation determining that she faked her credentials and received degrees from a diploma mill. Their work was recognized at both the White House Correspondents Dinner and 2017's Jayhawk Media Workshop, a yearly journalism camp at the University of Kansas that primarily hosts student journalists from Kansas and Missouri. That year, the Pittsburgh students were celebrated alongside the 25th anniversary of the Kansas Student Publications Act, which protects Kansas student journalists from prior restraint. The Missouri students could not celebrate with

That is because Missouri is one of 36 states without a "New Voices" law, a law championed by state-based activists that seeks to counteract the Supreme Court's 1988 decision in Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, which gave public school administrators the right to review and censor the publication of school-sponsored student media outlets if their content was "inconsistent with its basic educational mission."

The Hazelwood decision represents a significant blow to the First Amendment, and while Missouri currently has a New Voices law scheduled for a vote, 36 states still operate under the Hazelwood standard with regard to student publications.

Without a New Voices law, student journalism advisers are left to teach children about the beauty and importance of using one's First Amendment right to criticise public officials as established in New York Times v. Sullivan while also explaining that a certain caveat does not guarantee them those same rights. It can foster a generation of journalists who report scores of JV volleyball games for class credit instead of pursuing stories that interest and challenge both the writers and their peers.

States with a New Voices law consistently provide some of the strongest student journalism in the nation. Two of the top five awards from the National Scholastic Press Association for the best high school news stories in 2019 were from Kansas high schools. A year earlier, two of the top five digital stories of the year were from California high schools, a state with one of the oldest New Voices laws.

Christina Levinson, a high school journalism adviser from Sacramento, California, says that the law teaches students confidence when talking to authority figures, and students learn that they "have the right to point out problems even if it's inconvenient or embarrassing to schools."

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Additionally, student journalists are vital members of the press. Their proximity to the community on which they report gives them the highest level of access to youth issues and movements. While the Hazelwood decision is typically applied at the high school level, a federal appeals court ruled that it could be applied at the collegiate level as well. This is especially harmful to free speech rights, because the Hazelwood decision's loose wording and weak justification regarding the protection of an educational environment should not apply when the writers and members of the community are all adults. In understanding that college is an elective post-secondary education path, access to information about administrative decisions and campus activities is vital for students who are investing tens of thousands of dollars into their futures.

"When schools across the country shut down in response to the coronavirus pandemic, student journalists used their platforms to voice informed and deeply personal responses to school, district, and state policies."

As media conglomeration continues to force local news organizations to close or merge, campus newspapers are especially important in reporting on community stories. When schools across the country shut down in response to the coronavirus pandemic, student journalists used their platforms to voice informed and deeply personal responses to school, district, and state policies. They also used their proximity to break local news stories before major outlets.

Oftentimes, school administrators found themselves as the subject of criticism from student publications. For instance, Eli Hoff, the managing editor of the University of Missouri's campus publication, reported on a positive COVID-19 case in the university's Greek life community before classes even began. He also confirmed two student hospital admissions that the university denied. While Hoff's findings were published, his status as a student in Missouri meant that the story could have just as easily been shut down before it was ever seen.

The Hazelwood decision allows for administrators to be shielded from criticism in what is typically the only form of media in which students have the opportunity to publish. Full access to information is more critical to community safety than the public image of school districts or college campuses during a time when a school's policy decisions will directly impact students' and their family members' lives.

Now more than ever, a federal New Voices law is needed to protect the First Amendment rights of student journalists. If the Hazelwood decision is addressed on a national scale, student journalists will finally be able to celebrate free speech not as Kansans or Californians, but as Americans.

Photo: Amber Bormann



Little Things

AMBER BORMANN SONG LYRICS

Versel:

It's in the warmth against my palms as I take a sip of coffee
It's in the morning rays that dance through the clouds
It's in the way that smile curls on your lips and tastes so sweet
Oh, anywhere you look a little joy can be found

Chorus:

So just sit back
Take a look around
Deep breath, Another step
Swim and you won't drown
I don't know
where to go from here
But have no fear, if it isn't clear
Just find the little joys when they're
near

Verse 2:

It's in your newfound luck from the penny on the ground
It's in the diamonds on the road after a rain
It's in a warm embrace and the way your heart pounds
Oh, little joys are found in the little things.

Chorus:

So just sit back
Take a look around
Deep breath, Another step
Swim and you won't drown
I don't know
where to go from here
But have no fear, if it isn't clear
Just find the little joys when they're
near

Bridge/closing:
It's in the highs, the lows, everywhere you go
It's in the little things
Oh, the days you like and the nights passed by
It's in the little things
It's in the highs, the lows, everywhere you go
It's in the little things
Oh, the days you like and the nights passed by
It's in the little things



Walk these halls most everyday Same people in every place Filled with the hustle and bustle Counting sheep, not getting sleep

Same feelings in every way
Same smiles on every face
And I know I never try to be anybody but myself
But I just can't keep on

Watching and waiting, oh talk is fading
Surrounded by souls but all alone
Falling apart all by myself but you'll never know
cause my smile sells my story
And you know the worst part about being lonely
Is being lonely
When you're not alone

Well you never really know People and their souls Till you try to hold on and you know It always goes like

Watching and waiting, oh talk is fading
Surrounded by souls but all alone
Falling apart all by myself but you'll never know
cause my smile sells my story
And you know the worst part about being lonely
Is being lonely
When you're not alone



Seams-Begg ABBY PEZZOLO

She was always
under the impression
that she preferred
the cold.
But a trip to Miami
was now fastened
in her mind like a button,
although she never thought
she'd be the traveler type.

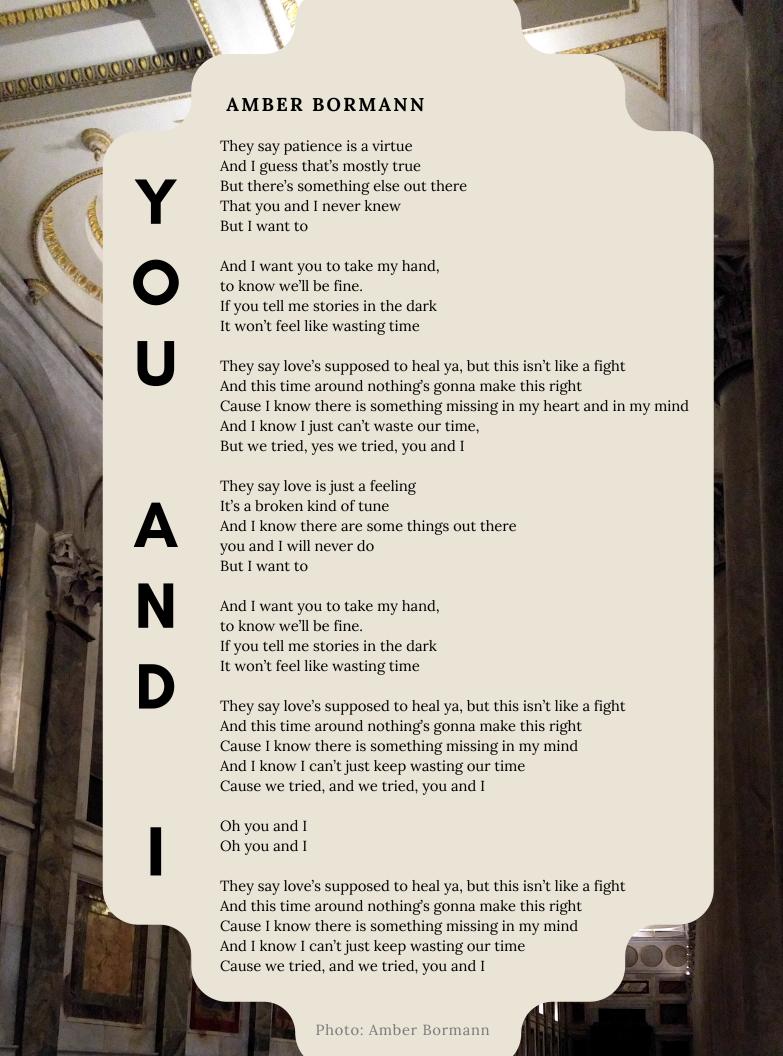
She resolved
to get a tattoo,
albeit after months
of debating,
and ultimately
chose to mend
her indecisive personality
with fixity.

She began to make affirmative decisions, despite it once being out of the question to say yes.

A mentality once too tightly secured.

Cross stitched.

But now,
she's a perpetually
loosening seam
not confined
to one shape, one purpose.
Available to evolve,
she constantly begins
anew.



Greens and browns now shades of white
Dusted with diamonds, the world seems bright
Again, take it in

Breathe crisp air, walking the streets Nothing's touched in the quiet and the peace Within, but you can see where I've been

Oh these steps in the snow
Wherever they go
Oh they wont stay forever, but now I know that
These footprints will grow as more go with the flow and
Soon my steps won't show in the snow

Coming back to where I began
I see that now, someone's stood where I stand
Alone, with steps unknown

Oh these steps in the snow
Where ever they go
Oh they won't stay forever, but now I know that
These footprints will grow as more go with the flow and
Soon my steps won't show in the snow

As fast as it comes, it all melts away
There's just not enough to cause it to stay
But I know all this won't outweigh
These footprints that lead me astray

Oh these steps in the snow
Where ever they go
Oh they won't stay forever, but now I know that
These footprints will grow as more go with the flow and
Soon my steps won't show in the snow

AMBER BORMANN



MELISSA WHITLER

Dancing Under the Stars

I.

I walk to your favorite spot on campus as if your essence somehow persists in this space Read the writing on the benches like they will gift me the key to your heart We were here more moments ago

It was raining then

I did not tell you how I wanted to abandon caution and umbrellas to spin around in the downpour And finish off this dance with a kiss

On your lips

Life with you is so precious, I savor the few graces I receive

And spend the rest of my days wishing you knew, I want to give you the romance you deserve, suppeam

I did not tell you then

So I write it down now

You have expanded my heart, silly star,

To care not about the love, the attention I crave, the void I always want filled

Now I am preoccupied with thoughts

Of how to add flame to your brightness, support your smile and soul

I see you, and want to be the deliverer of love worthy of you

The wind here spurs me forward, is this some sign, soft salamander?

I write these words here, in the hopes that the next time you visit this place

My essence will be present for you

II.

Come kiss me like it will save me

Like you could shower the world with the brightness captured behind your lips

Like you never felt the rushing wave of affection until you met me

Please allow me the pleasure of raising your hand to the light

For you have already bathed me in your beams

I wish for you to receive the night sky in all its glory

Stars trying to outshine you against the black backdrop of my soul

Come dance with me under the soft moon, little frog,

So your heartbeat will slowly sync with mine

And you can finally feel the full force of my undoing

As the moonrays slowly float us higher, until our dance no longer reaches the earth

III.

This, my darling, is love

To be so cared for you do not know

How you managed to survive on nothing but breadcrumbs before

To learn the true meaning of yearning

A longing so intense I can dream about nothing but you

The feel of your hand grasped in mine

Your soft short green locks between my fingers

The soft drum of your voice planning out the future

I slowly sing the song of you

You are the rainbow over my cloudy skies

You paint my life in color

I have been tasked with putting the greatest works of art

Into words

But how could I possibly focus on that

With the most magnificent masterpiece

Beaming up at me

I lose myself in your rich brown eyes

And float on the buoyancy of our romance

I do not know how I earned the gift of your affections

But I will write the story of us for the rest of my days











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