



StoryLine: Coastline College's "Arts and Letters" Magazine

Issue 4 Fall 2022

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Call for Submissions

- Are you an aspiring visual artist? A potential photographer? A possible poet? Send us your best work for Coastline's literary magazine, due out each fall. Emerging essayists, sagacious short story writers, and daring digital storytellers are also encouraged to submit. (Examples of digital stories can be found at [Storycenter](#).)
- Please send your submission, along with the genre in which you are submitting, to [Oceana Callum](#) by July 1 for consideration in that year's issue.

Guidelines:

- **Art** (drawings, paintings, graphic designs): scan images and send in high-res .jpg format
- **Photography**: send up to 5 images in high-res .jpg format
- **Poetry**: send up to 5 poems in one or multiple Word documents (.docx or .doc) or PDFs
- **Essays**: 2,500 words maximum as a Word document (.docx or .doc) or PDF
- **Short stories**: 2,500 words maximum as a Word document (.docx or .doc) or PDF
- **Digital stories**: send a link to a YouTube video (must be correctly captioned)

Contributor Bios

Gregory Esters

Well, hello there. I'm Gregory (not Greg) and I write on occasion, when I encounter inspiration. I'm a Leo and a green if you're into that sort of thing. Though ruled by the sun, I serve the night as I find the dark and moon light to give the best insight. I'm glad to be a part of StoryLine as I got introduced to Coastline, in my soon to be coming to an end, 10 yrs. active-duty military time. My academic career currently consists of a couple AA degrees and aspiring for a couple bachelors in biology and psychology.

Eduardo Guzman

I am a first generation college student from Costa Mesa, CA. I have transferred to CSU Stanislaus where I am majoring in Business Administration with an emphasis in Accounting. Prior to taking the course for which this essay was written I had dropped out of another university due to economic and academic hardships; Coastline helped me reinvent myself as a student, and I am forever grateful for the hard work of our professors and counselors here at Coastline. The topics discussed in the courses I have taken here have varied greatly - how to legally avoid taxes, poverty in the U.S., how to calculate earnings per share, and how to write a captivating introduction - topics that have all been touched on in my essay about Universal Basic Income. My ideal career involves growing businesses that give equal consideration to their shareholders and stakeholders.

Jaiden Huang, Guest Editor

Jaiden Huang is a recent high school graduate who will attend UCLA in the fall of 2022. Outside of school, she plays soccer for the Rebels SC ECNL team, runs a bullet journaling Instagram account (@jaidenbujos), and plays the piano. She loves reading and learning random facts about anything and everything.

Devan Jones

Currently I am an online student at Coastline, before I took any of the mainstream classes at Coastline I was enrolled in the Acquired Brain Injury Program at the Newport Beach Campus. The ABI Program is a one to two year program for individuals that have a traumatic brain injury,

which is from an external force or an anoxic and hypoxic brain injury that are caused internally. I am a traumatic brain injury survivor as of May 30th, 2016 and started taking Cognitive Retraining in 2017 at Coastline that year. The story I am submitting is a nonfiction story that talks about me prior to my accident, the end of my past schooling in culinary arts, my life on the streets of Santa Ana, my accident as well as the depths of my injuries. Followed by St. Jude's outpatient rehabilitation of and how my Coastline adventure all began.

Ana Maria Macra

Ana Maria Macra was born and raised in Romania. She attended Babes-Bolyai University and later moved to the United States, where she lives with her husband and two children. She is a bilingual writer, writing in English and Romanian, and author of *Soul Whispers*, A Collection of Spiritual Poems.

Minh Nguyen

I'd like to first thank the donors of Coastline College. Without their contributions, this scholarship would not have been possible. A little bit about myself: I'm currently in my first year of studying English at Coastline. I plan to transfer to either a CSU or UC to pursue a degree in English Education with a minor in Vietnamese. I'd like to become an English educator because I want to share my love of language and literature with future students. I hope that you'll enjoy reading my essay and give the topic I selected some thought.

Amy Blakemore Peters

Amy Blakemore Peters, an artist residing in Orange County, has been honing her skills as an all-around artist. Amy blends her keen sense of detail with her natural creative ability, making painting a therapeutic love of inner peace. Amy is in her second year of a BA in Studio Art at Coastline University. She begins her journey with basic and life drawing, eventually developing a passion for painting.

Katie Pitchford

Katie draws her inspiration from objects that inspire fear, love, life, and death. Her art instructor at Orange Coast College taught her how to use colors in her art to communicate emotion. She is currently working on painting her two adorable kittens, Damien and Buttercup. Katie is majoring in Biology and is working towards a career in Lepidoptera and the environment. She has been raising monarch butterflies for four years. Katie also enjoys playing the harp and guitar, making music, and art which will always be present in her life. Her other hobbies include collecting skulls and taxidermy, gardening, mycology, and collecting antique European and Japanese porcelain.

Lynn Resnick

Lynn Resnick grew up in Southern California in a quiet house that was filled with books. As a child she was often spotted with her nose in a book. When she grew older, her love of reading drew her to CSU Fullerton, where she earned a degree in English. While she enjoyed analyzing the work of other authors, she felt insecure about her own writing. In a moment of courage, she enrolled in her first creative writing class. Her teacher was kind and gave her the encouragement that she needed to share her work. Lynn currently resides in Orange County with her husband, two daughters and their beloved dog, Ruckus. Her days are filled caring for her elderly parents and working in the family business. She is an avid reader and is currently

studying yoga, writing and art journaling. She considers herself a work-in-progress and attempts to approach each day practicing kindness and gratitude.

Amy Sanchez

Hello, I'm Amy Sanchez! I was born and raised in California, where I still reside. My major is psychology, and I am waiting to apply for the psychology program at Sacramento State in the fall. Since my first year of high school, I have been an online student and will be able to graduate from Coastline because of their distance learner program. Drawing and listening to music are two of my favorite ways to pass the time (BTS and Alec Benjamin are my current favorite). I also enjoy writing stories, poetry and spending time with my family, friends, and cats.

Kayla Searcy

I grew up in Anaheim, Ca. Books were my passion, like so many others. The tough part is continuing my dream as an adult. The best advice I've gotten is from Professor Obstfeld at Orange Coast College. The only difference between published writers and those who are not, is perseverance. If my heroes can write for a living, there isn't any reason I can't as well. That is my greatest realization, to keep doing what I love while making each page better than the one before it.

Hayley Shucker

I am a writer living in Orange County, CA. Previous writing credits include a Mother's Day card published with Tree-Free Greetings and a creative non-fiction essay "Advice for Life" published in Adanna literary journal.

Katie Pitchford, Two Paintings





Minh Nguyen, "Unjust Deserts"

What does it mean to live in a developed country? For many people who are fortunate enough to live in the US, which common knowledge tells us is a “first-world” or “developed” country, there are certain expectations of living. From properly maintained infrastructure, heating and cooling, clean water, and safe living environments, the expectations are numerous. Although it is also known that many of these aspects are lacking, perhaps the most surprising deficiency is that of the availability of fresh and wholesome foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables, along with fish, poultry, and red meats, are largely lacking from what are known as food deserts which impact about 23 million Americans (11 Facts, 2). The apparent abundance in American life as many understand it through consumer goods and cultural production has only covered up the underlying issue of food deserts in the United States, caused by a combination of social and economic factors, and which lead to a whole host of wide-reaching health problems due to many communities being effectively denied access to nutritious diets.

Although the economy, hailed for its ability to produce an abundance of goods and services, including the fresh foods lacking from food deserts, it has failed to push this abundance into low-income areas. This deprivation has marked social health effects. The CDC puts it bluntly: no matter where someone lives, eating “a healthy diet [allows adults] to live longer” and may prevent diseases and conditions such as “obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers” (Poor Nutrition, 1). However, the magnitude of negative effects is variable when other compounding factors that accompany the presence of food deserts are considered. Since food deserts are more often than not within lower-income neighborhoods, access to services such as affordable healthcare and necessary diet counselling are lacking. When conditions such as obesity and heart disease occur at higher rates within food deserts, costs associated with poor health accumulate within households and keep families in poverty, further leading to the perception of these areas as unprofitable dumps in the eyes of produce suppliers who have the potential to liberate such regions from sustained nutritional deficiency. Some onlookers may sympathize with the grocers who are reluctant to do business in such regions. Why should someone who is likely a small business owner risk their livelihood and invest millions in order to make a small dent in the nationwide issue of nutritional insecurity? It would simply be inefficient. In fact, many cities, such as Dallas, offer incentives for prospective businesses, such as “a \$3 million incentive and tax abatements” (Rincon). The lack of branching out into food deserts is therefore more precisely because neighborhoods contained within food deserts do not jump out to produce suppliers. For the crime of not appearing as a prime market for

supermarkets and other business owners, residents of food deserts are deprived of access to such real food which contains the vitamins and nutrients that humans need to maintain good health, and which humans, for the first time in millennia, have been able to consistently produce on a large scale.

So, if wholesome foods are not readily available to residents of food deserts, what kind of foods are available? Unfortunately, the substitutes are nothing to get excited about. Fast foods, packaged corner store foods, as well as cheap alcoholic beverages and nicotine products, are aggressively marketed to those living in food deserts. In fact, "People living in the poorest [...] areas have 2.5 times the exposure to fast-food restaurants as those [in wealthier] areas" (11 Facts, 9). Considering how often fast food advertising appears in the life of the average American, as well as how advertising departments of companies are tasked with targeting specific demographics and markets, the inflated rate of advertising in food deserts seems at best predatory. And over the course of years of living inside a food desert, such advertising, subtle and unabashed, can acclimate minds and palates to the experience of stopping by drive-thru windows every day. When this phenomenon is coupled with the relative absence of healthy foods, such healthy food can become something of a luxury. This is not to say that a red apple is a completely foreign concept to food deserts, but it may push people away from fresh produce when the opportunity presents itself. From my experience speaking with friends who live in areas considered rural food deserts, buying groceries at a local grocer or having a large home-cooked dinner with family is equated with a shopping spree at a large department store. It is a special occasion; in other words, it is "rich people behavior." As a result, even when fresh foods become more available to purchase, some people still stick to what they know - fast food. Despite knowledge of all of the negative health effects and the accompanying healthcare costs that eating fast food can bring, a Big Mac is still preferred over fresh foods in the name of familiarity and saving money. An attitude of viewing many healthier foods as "other" pushes residents of food deserts away. The psychological conditioning of advertising therefore acts as a catalyst which perpetuates the existence of food deserts. Critics of this idea may argue that advertising is only the presence of images, and the imperative to act and purchase fast food really falls on the consumer, not the companies or advertisers behind the product. It's not the fault of the advertisers that people care less about their health than about saving money in the short run on food. However, this argument is short-sighted. It ignores the existence of marketing as a field of study, the hundreds of billions spent each year on advertising and anonymous consumer surveys each year, and the extensive laws regulating false advertising and advertising toward minors. When advertising is channeled toward one of the most basic human needs, that of sustenance, it is no longer simply the presence of images, and the choice to buy or abstain from food products is longer completely on the part of the autonomous and objective consumer. Advertising works, and in food deserts, it works incredibly well. Continuing to investigate the reasons why food deserts exist along the lines of mindsets reveals one particularly American mindset: the idea that people can get ahead in life simply by putting in hard work and pulling themselves up by the bootstraps. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2011 found that along metrics of personal perception of well-being, most people felt that "whether or not a person gets ahead economically in this country is mostly up to them" despite also thinking that external conditions had a great impact on economic

conditions and that the 2008 recession had greatly impacted their household's well-being (Pew 2011, 5-8). This seems contradictory. How did, through unfavorable economic conditions, did American adults still feel hopeful about the economy and their potential to improve? Put shortly, America's specific brand of individualism is responsible for this mindset. Although good at creating entrepreneurs and maintaining optimism, it may have unintended consequences. As a result, people who may be in need of assistance via food banks and government programs may be denied access. People who believe that economic conditions are in the hands of individuals will be less likely to see the need for government assistance, instead viewing it as a handout that will not help anyone, and thereby voting against such proposals. In 2018, plans had been made to cut food assistance "by more than \$213 billion" as well as increasing the limits on employment in order to receive benefits (Rosenbaum, 1-4). As a result, many people will still remain in food deserts due to not being able to afford the more expensive healthy foods. All the while, observers and fellow voters are mostly confident that those in food deserts will, through sheer hard work and determination, simply lift themselves out of this deprived state. But do these government programs really work? Many would read this and shake their heads; of course not. It's possible for people to just sit back and mooch off social benefits in order to buy restaurant meals off of the taxpayer's dime, since there's basically no oversight as to how the money is spent, right? Although technically possible, it's important to take into account that "food stamps benefit amount at, on average, roughly \$4 a day per person" (Truth, 1). In fact, spending on funding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, as it's more widely known, is actually more beneficial to national economic health than "than any other stimulus spending", according to a report by the federal government that shows that such spending "results in \$1.5 billion in economic activity and creates 13,560 jobs" (Truth, 3). These figures don't even take into account the improvement in health metrics as a result of access to proper nutrition that is provided by government programs to food deserts, thereby creating much more in widespread social benefits than are put in. In other words, there is almost no downside to ensuring that one's fellow citizens are able to receive sustenance through healthy diets.

When the full picture is considered, the causes of food deserts, as well as their effects, are multi-faceted, drawing upon and impacting the material and psychological conditions of Americans. From the absence of businesses that provide fresh produce to low-income areas to the mindsets held by those inside food deserts and voters on the outside, many obstacles prevent families from accessing proper diets each year. In order to solve this problem, Americans must be committed to looking past personal biases in order to solutions that have been proven to work.

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Jaiden Huang, "Crows at Sunrise" and "Six Eyes"



Kayla Searcy, "Reptile"

Her eyes were so beautiful they were almost, other-worldly. Jackson pulled the love of his life closer to him over the dinner table. He needed to see the sparkles in her hazel eyes up close. They were sitting under the dim lights of her favorite restaurant, Le Petit Araignée. The hole-in-

the-wall French cuisine was their go to date night location. Jackson found it fitting to propose in the place they'd spent every anniversary for the last five years. He could feel the rounded, felt box that held his grandmother's ring shift in his pocket as he kissed her. The allure of a new ring was nice, but he knew she'd appreciate a family heirloom more.

Jackson had met Cherise six years earlier when they had both just graduated college. For some reason they had never ran into each other, even though they had both been Biology majors on the same campus. The night they met Jackson had just gotten news that he would be an intern for Bio Corps Technology. He was out celebrating the next step to his dream job at the bio engineering lab when he stumbled into Le Petit Araignée's bar. Already tipsy, he messily plopped down on a red velvet bar stool running a hand through his messy black hair. A waft of cigarette smoke met his nose and he turned to his left. At the end of the bar sat Cherise, long cigarette in her left hand.

"Hello petit soldier," she said in her thick French accent.

"Me?" Jackson asked over the upbeat jazz band playing at the front of the restaurant.

"Are you going to shout from across the bar?" she asked taking a sip from her martini glass.

"Well, no." He stumbled off his stool and made his way to her corner of the bar.

"I'm Jackson Martineti, nice to meet you," he said after making himself comfortable on the stool next to her. He exuded a confidence one could only acquire from liquid courage.

"It's a pleasure, the name's Cherise Serce," she said before taking a long drag from her cigarette.

"Are cigarettes even allowed inside anymore?" he asked.

"It doesn't matter to me, the bartender and I have an understanding." She flicked her cigarette on the side of an emerald green ash tray.

"Oh, I see, so you come here often enough to have an understanding with the bartender," he laughed.

"Yes, I live just down the street. I come here when I need to think," she replied running her hand over her red dress to smooth a wrinkle.

"What do you think about?" Jackson took the drink he ordered from the bartender.

"My work. Changing the world I guess," Cherise said as she pushed her strawberry blond hair behind her ear. She brought her martini to her mouth and looked at him over the rim. The lights from behind the bar reflected off the drink and lit up her eyes. He was taken aback, speechless. They sat there, together, until the bartender brought Cherise her check. As she got up to leave, Jackson struggled for words to keep her there. She started to saunter away and just as she was at the door he called out,

"I want to change the world too!"

Cherise took her hand off the door, turned back to him, and blew a kiss. With that, she left him to the jazz band and the ashes from her cigarettes. After their first encounter, he came to the bar almost every night hoping to run into her again. It only took a week for him to find her, at her corner of the bar, like a dream. They exchanged information and agreed to meet again. They found out that they only lived one block away from each other and their whirlwind romance ensued.

The waiter bumped Jackson's glass as he filled it with more champagne, bringing him back to the present. He took Cherise in as she sat in the glow of the candlelight. Her strawberry blond

hair was pulled up into a beautiful, green clip adorned with rubies. He tugged at his velvet green suit. She had insisted they coordinate, and the suit was the perfect match to her skintight velvet gown. The emerald green brought out her hazel eyes and reminded Jackson of the ash tray at their first meeting.

“Stop tugging at your suit, you look divine,” she said softly picking up his left hand. Her thumb drew little circles on his palm to calm his nerves. He wondered if she could tell what he was nervous about. He always felt like she could read his mind, she always knew exactly the right thing to say.

“So, Cherise, I just want to thank you for these last five years,” Jackson started as he picked up his champagne and took a hearty swig. “Without you I don’t know how I would have gotten through the transition into working at Bio Corps. The job takes so much out of me, but you always understand and somehow still support me. You know how much it means to me to make a difference because you are going to make one too.” Cherise squeezed his hand lovingly as he continued. “With you finally getting a position as a researcher, we can share our work and make a difference together. I couldn’t be more grateful that I get to do what I love with the love of my life. With things finally falling into place I figured it was as good time as any to really make it all official,”

Jackson coughed with nervousness and realized he was out of champagne.

“Mon Cheri, please drink some of mine.” Cherise said handing him her glass.

After finishing the glass off he continued,

“Thank you, darling. As I was saying. It should all be official, seeing as we love each other.” He pushed his chair out and stood. “You take my breath away and each day is a new mystery for me to unpack.” His hand reached into his pocket for the ring. Jackson knelt in front of her, and Cherise’s hazel eyes seemed to sparkle even more.

“I want to make every day a mysterious adventure in changing the world with you,” he said placing his left hand on her cheek, the right holding the now open ring box. “The rest of our lives filled with the unknown but facing it together.” He pulled her forehead to his and they paused there. It seemed like hours passed with their heads together, eyes closed. Finally, he pulled away. His bright blue eyes looked down nervously at the ring box. He found his courage and looked back up into her eyes as he asked, “Cherise Amalie Serce, will you marry me?”

“Oui Oui, yes. A million times yes!” She had tears in her eyes.

Jackson placed the antique ring on her finger and her arms engulfed him. He stood bringing her with him and they spun until he got dizzy. As he placed Cherise back down on her bright red heels, she looked up at him.

“How lucky I am to have your trust mi amour. Enough trust to last a lifetime,” she gleamed as she leaned in to kiss him. They embraced in another hug, and she looked over his shoulder seeming to be somewhere else. As the restaurant looked on and applauded, a little boy across the room noticed something odd. It was only a split-second slip, but in the excitement, he could have sworn he saw a bright pink, forked appendage creep from her beautiful red lips. His mouth fell open and he rubbed his eyes. After he blinked aggressively a few times he noticed that Cherise was looking directly at him. She smiled to reveal pointed teeth. As the boy wondered if anyone else could see what was happening, she slowly raised her right pointer

finger to her lips. Her green acrylic nail glistened in the candlelight as she made it clear this was a secret they'd have to take to the grave.

Amy Blakemore Peters, "Syntonic Path"



Lynn Resnick, "Superhero"

Home fires caused by cooking peak during the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, although this was not true for our Superhero. It was just after New Year's Day when the kitchen was illuminated by a burst of flames.

It's a fact that households with electric ranges are involved in seventy-eight percent of fire injuries. Isn't that funny? Surprisingly, with only a twenty-two percent chance, it was on a gas range where, with great gusto, the pan of oil erupted into flames licking the ceiling and lighting up the kitchen.

Furthermore, more than half of non-fatal injuries occur when people try to control fire themselves. This is where it gets fun for our Superhero. Stumbling from slumber, She smells oil. She sees a saucepan, a soup pan, a much too small pan with bright yellow flames shooting up and out at an unimaginable height.

Interestingly, burns in the kitchen are very common and occur when the cook attempts to move a pan with burning cooking oil and inadvertently spills the oil on the hand holding the pan. Our Superhero does not know this information, so this is where things get interesting.

She sees fire. She sees her two children. They are teenagers, but still children.

She yells, "Get over there! Now!" and waves them to the other end of the house. Her children, with eyes wide, scurry from the kitchen.

With abundant confidence, She grabs the flaming pan and like a superhero She runs. She runs fast. Breeze-whipping-back-her-hair fast. She runs across the hardwood floor to the patio door. In her mind, She shall run like the wind. She shall hurl the pan outside into the cool, night air and the crisis will be averted. She imagines that after She *Has Saved the World*, She will laugh with her children and they will feel relieved.

Only this doesn't happen. As She runs the flames shoot back toward her. She is two feet from the doorway. She can nearly taste victory, but the flames are so hot and so close that She cannot hold onto the pan any longer. She drops the pan, and the flaming oil splatters across the hardwood floor. Flames explode at a great height into the air creating a wall of fire. Her children, who are watching awestruck, begin to scream. The air is full and heavy with the calamitous chorus of screaming and crying. The oil on the floor is slippery and her feet flail like She's walking on marbles, (She thinks this must look hilarious). She slips in the oil and finds She cannot stand. She cannot pull herself up, so She drags the lower part of her body out of the oil. This takes years. The cacophony of screaming continues, but She is not screaming, She is as cool as a cucumber because She doesn't want her kids to know that She is hurt.

Fact:

People die from burns every day. The most common ways to die from a kitchen fire are the effects from burns (i.e. fluid loss, electrolyte imbalance), infection and abnormal clotting.

Riding with the sirens on:

Several strangers appear in her house and take her away with sirens on, flying through red lights. She meets more strangers, who are nice, and they pump her full of so many drugs that She is chatting and laughing, but her kids are still crying. They use scissors to snip off skin that hangs from her legs like curtains and pop dozens of blisters that are scattered across her thighs like leopard print. In about seven days, She will develop an infection that will put her in the hospital for seven more days. It's the first time She has ever been away from her family. She feels like she is going to die every morning when the nurse debrides her burns, but She doesn't die. Her electrolytes are kept in check and they give her shots in her stomach each day to prevent blood clots. It takes months for her body to recover and years for her mind to heal.

Fact:

Studies have shown that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been reported in one-third of burn patients. Sometimes it can develop up to a year or more after the injury.

Five years have passed and our Superhero's burns have healed. She has survived, but her burn areas have nerve damage. There are no hair follicles or oil glands. Her legs are a kaleidoscope of muted colors; large leathery white scars of stretched-too-tight skin, mixed with dozens of shiny, raised purple and red spots. During the day She is confident and strong. Our Superhero takes charge. She puts on heavy moisturizers and protects the new skin from sunlight. The challenge comes at night when She has vivid dreams that wake her up with her heart racing. She wonders if the dreams will always haunt her or if She can smother them like embers in a fire.

Tonight, She is at her Mother-in-laws house. On this night, latkes are fried to celebrate the miracle of oil. Everyone is festive, but distracted. To be a Superhero one must possess a

desire to help others, courage, and a unique ability. Our Superhero's senses are keen. She finds that most people cannot detect the subtle, heavy scent of hot oil as it wafts through the air, but She catches an aroma that She recognizes as too-hot oil and heads straightaway to the kitchen. Without saying a word, She checks the flame beneath pots and pans and makes adjustments. She averts disaster, but continues to keep a watchful eye on the kitchen until the dinner is served. She lives out the rest of her days, in this way, with courage and in service to others; a steady guardian of the kitchen.

[Amy Sanchez, "The Many Ways of Education": How Online Learning is as Effective as Traditional Learning](#)

School is challenging, but it is especially tough when no one is prepared. A school is a place where people go to learn new things. Between kindergarten and 12th grade, children must attend school, though some drop out beforehand. College is optional depending on a person's situation. There are many different ways and places that one can go to school. Traditional learning, or in-person learning, is where the teacher and the students are on the same campus and classroom. Online learning is where all the lectures and most of the materials used for the course are online. Most of the time, teachers and students do not see each other aside from their profile pictures. With the COVID-19 pandemic, students who were learning traditionally have had to switch to remote learning. Remote learning is where teachers continue teaching as if in a traditional setting but from behind a computer. With the new learning environment comes many mental and academic challenges for teachers and students alike. Although studies during quarantine have shown that students' performance during remote learning has decreased, online learning can be as effective as in-person learning when teachers and students are prepared for the environment.

Online learning and remote learning may be similar in some ways, but they are two different approaches to teaching and learning. Online courses have materials and assignments that are designed to be online. There are lectures within modules for students to access that contain assignment instructions. Online courses are made with students who work at different paces and times in mind. According to an article published by the American Psychological Association, "Online learning facilitates different types of learning preferences, provides learner flexibility and uses online quality metrics" (Foster qtd. in Weir). In other words, students who study online have various options on how to study and how long to study. What many students and teachers who transitioned from traditional education are now doing is remote learning. Remote learning is where teachers give lectures that all students must attend at the same time. They assign homework as they usually would, but it is now electronically submitted. In other words, they teach and give work as they were doing in a traditional setting. Students and teachers must adjust to the new schedules and programs they are given to attend classes and submit their work. Online and remote learning allows students more flexibility and the ability to work outside the classroom.

Additionally, online courses can usually fit into any schedule at any time. Many online classes are filled with working adults or stay-at-home parents because they lead busy lives. Online courses allow them to study any time they can. The students do not have to worry about leaving work on time or having a babysitter because everything is on their phones or computers. As an article published by the University of Illinois, Springfield states, "There is no

question about doing the work; just do it at the times that are more convenient" ("Strengths and Differences"). Students can work in small increments throughout the day if needed. They can work on tasks when they are the most motivated to do so. Some students may perform better in the morning, while others may work better in the evening or at night. Students are not limited to working within a particular time frame. With traditional learning, the student must attend class to learn new material and receive assignments. Many students have to get up early to arrive in time for lectures. With online learning, lessons are there for when they need them and can be rewound and replayed. Therefore, students can get the most out of each lecture without worrying about asking the teacher to repeat something. In addition to studying at any time, students can learn anywhere. This feature of online schooling may be the "main advantage of asynchronous online learning" when students live too far or do not have enough time to go to a traditional school ("Strengths and Weaknesses"). Students can study at home, in transportation, at a library, or even at work. They can lie in bed and learn without worrying about what they look like, as long as the work gets done.

However, people who debate the effectiveness of online learning may take the current situation of remote education due to the pandemic as an example. An article titled, "How online learning can affect student health," published by the John Hopkins News-Letter, speaks on student health. With the pandemic forcing school doors to close, students need to stay up for long nights. Since students are "in different time zones than their institutions," they have to stay up or wake up earlier to attend live sessions (Balram). It is unhealthy to go without enough sleep for so long. In addition, electronic devices emit blue light, which makes it harder to go to sleep at night. Students stay up too late, and then when they finally go to bed, they cannot sleep because they had been looking at a screen for too long. Students cannot learn anything if they do not have enough sleep, which is anywhere from seven to ten hours a night. The APA shared the research that "online math coursework decreased by 64.2%" in May, which was after the shutdown (Weir). Online learning has affected student performance through lack of sleep, which in turn affected their overall health.

Furthermore, those who disagree that online learning may bring up the topic of distractions. They may say that there are too many distractions outside a traditional class to concentrate fully. Possible distractions in classrooms include other students, phones, and outside noise. Studying online presents unique distractions. According to "Distracted students: A comparison of multiple types of distractions on learning in online lectures," a journal article published by the Educational Publishing Foundation focuses on the unique distractions online students go through. Some distractions are folding laundry, playing a game, engaging in a conversation, and texting. All the distractions impaired the students in various degrees—about 10% to 15% worse than students who were not distracted (Blasiman et al.). They may claim that there are too many distractions outside of a classroom for online learning to be effective.

While it is true that students who switched learning environments are having a tough time with their new routine, that is not online learning. Synchronized lectures are part of remote learning, though many students are losing sleep. The schools can resolve students lack of sleep by recording the lecture and then providing a link for students to watch later. It could even be more effective because they will be more focused once they have had enough sleep. The solution would be to encourage students to use a blue light filter at night to increase their

chances of falling asleep when they go to bed. For many students, better sleep will bring better mental and physical health. However, not all schools make their students stay up. The article, "First few weeks of remote teaching is learning experience for teachers and students," published by EdSource, shares that a teacher was more concerned about her students being "mentally, physically and emotionally safe" and listed resources for the students to use (Minugh qtd. in Lambert). Many teachers prioritize their students by simultaneously figuring out a schedule that will help their students mentally. Distractions come in many forms, both traditionally and online. Some distractions common to both learning environments are texting, talking, noise, and social media. The different distractions tested in the research journal concluded that distracted students performed worse than students who were not distracted. However, the research was not against people who were distracted in a traditional setting, so students who study traditionally can also be just as distracted. While it can be more challenging for students to keep themselves concentrated, the teacher allows them to replay the lecture if they miss something. As long as students have the necessary tools and set up to study online, "research generally shows that online learning can be as effective as in-person instruction" (Gill qtd. in Weir). Most students try to limit distractions, regardless of the academic setting, because they know any distractions can hinder their learning. Teachers are trained to teach an online course, and students are aware of how much work goes into online learning. Teachers receive training for the type of teaching they do. The pandemic forced teachers to teach using a method they have perhaps never used before. Teachers had to figure out how to set up meetings, discussions, and assignments for everyone. They suddenly could not interact with their students as much as they used to. Teachers have been adapting to remote learning reasonably well. The most notable change is their use of Zoom, but they are now also using resources like Khan Academy, XtraMath, Epic, and Class Dojo to further help students understand the lessons (Lambert). Teachers are constantly adjusting and adding to their lessons so that students stay engaged. Some students have never taken an online class, which makes it hard to learn from at first. They must adapt to logging into school and reading more things. While it may be convenient to learn from home or anywhere else, it can be tough to manage all the assignments. Online students are usually aware of when everything is due and how much time they have to do it. Many make their schedules and know how to do things and when to do them. It can be difficult for remote learners to adopt a new routine and become more self-disciplined.

School is difficult, but not impossible. Students' performance may have declined while in the pandemic, but they will adjust to remote learning with time and practice. In-person learning may have many similarities to online learning, but they are two different types of teaching. Resources such as Zoom and Khan Academy have been helping both teachers and students grow. While hands-on learning can be more important in some fields, online learning can still be as effective as in-person learning. Most students can succeed as long as the teachers and students are prepared or can adjust to an online learning environment.

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Miranda Reynolds, "Until It Rains Again"

wait until it rains again
before you pick apart the petals
and rip the leaves away

scorch the barren soil
starve each baby flowerbud,
leave it to rot and ruin.

when it blossoms,
cut the flower from its stem
and tear the roots apart.

wait until it rains again
to kill my lovely flowers
and hurt me all anew

turn my smile into a frown
mirror and mock my scornful heart,
my every careless move.

but in the midst of your disaster
you'll find i've bloomed for you
so wait until it rains again
to destroy me like you do.

Gregory Esters, "(We) cLUb tripPin'" and "(We're) Fall-ing"

(We)
cLUb tripPin'

eye
Spy

the Stars are, out-of my Mind
the Freaks said its Time
full Moon, Tonight is crazy
Damn, they looking Sexy
damn, it's getting Hectic
Its Walls to wall Sweating
feel the Spot Electric

Head Hella hazy, heart Heavy
with each beat hard Hitting
Gazing up Sublime is the figure
as my World is Gyrating

Circus, Eccentric
Mermaids, they be Kissing
making out to the Music
take a Second and Listen

bartender is Wet
another keg, Party set
Cats and Dogs are out,
yeah, even your Pets

sipping drinks, Toasted
Glasses clink, Hostess
I mean waitress
Hold on, let me take this
hope you, don't take this
the Wrong way, let me say
The way your Hips Sway
you were Killing it on the dancefloor
random, but...where'd your Bra Go?

I heard Love the other day, Drunken and Sluurred!
I saw Love the other day, slightly Blurred
I pass out! Spazzing as My imagination
takes a Detour
Dreaming beneath a Hangover

(We're)
Fall-ing

Autumn appears, with a chill
Honey crisp, amber eyes

Reds and golds, a sight to behold
in the beauty that they reside

Winds whisper and speak from the heart
Stoke her warmth, ignore the butterflies

De-cide-her, harvest bears fruit
For each other, I am hers, she is mines

Feast and make marry
Drink, no drown in two seas of spiced wine

Mysterious abundance overflows
dive deep into her depth to find

Hayley Shucker, "Cognizance"

My last glimpse of life is my mother in her beat-up Honda, flying down the street, burning rubber.

I'm not sure how long I've been in a coma. When you're in that constant slumber, you don't have a great sense of the passing of time—no clocks, no phones, no sunsets. Just this constant beeping, which is slowly driving me crazy.

I can't quite describe my impression. It doesn't feel like sleeping. I know because I don't dream anymore, and I miss dreaming. If I look around, I'm in a grayish room with no walls, floor, or ceiling—so I guess I can't really call it a room. But I can walk around. That's something, I guess. I know I'm wearing clothes, but if I look down, I can't see my body. It's weird. I mostly walk to pass the time, not that I know where I'm going or there's any *where* to go, just a gray abyss. It's a pull, a yank, I feel, encouraging me to traverse here or there.

It's dull. To satisfy the blasé, I float through the archives of my pop culture memories and replay my favorite songs, mostly Spice Girls; movies, but not *Titanic*; and television shows, *Full House* and *Fresh Prince* totally should have done a cross over. Sometimes, I forget the lines, and everything goes dark resembling a void, a blank spot—like like like like when a CD skips.

Memories of my real life are harder to reach. I stroll towards some semblance of an authentic recollection, but it's fuzzy, static on a television. Then it's gone. All I know are the basics that would fill up a dating profile: Natalie Valdoné or N.V., twenty-four, history major, captain of my high school swim team, loves Cinnabons and pizza and sunsets.

I settle for the mainstream mementos I can manifest. I finally get sick of replaying *Serendipity*—ironic that that's my favorite movie, right?—so I invent my own stuff. My imagination splices together every two-animal combination I can think of, sometimes three. My favorite is an aquatic bear cub. Imagine a fish-like torso with gills and patches of fur, claws at the end of its flippers. The head is more bear than fish with sharp teeth, and it's the size of a salmon. It can't swim fast, which is a shame, but it is deadly. I'm verging on bored.

Then my mother comes.

In movies, they say that the person in a coma can hear people talking to them, and I can attest this is true. I never paid any attention to the sullen whispers shared between nurses and doctors; not like it was good news anyway, but my mother's voice shatters the dense fog. She fills me in on everything fun I'm missing because I'm indisposed.

Indisposed. As if she'd caught me wrapped in a terrycloth towel just after a shower, and not like I'm unconscious in a sterile room wearing what I imagine is an unflattering nightgown, needles jabbed in my arm, pumping me with life, and tubes shoved up my nose and down my throat, forcing me to accept oxygen and sustenance. I wish I could roll my eyes.

Her tiny white poodle Miss Kitty—both a joke (poor dog) and a reference to *Gunsmoke*—had a birthday party with the Rottweiler across the street last week.

Last week...when is that mutt's birthday, and *when* do I last remember. There's a clue here. Has it been weeks, month, or longer? How much time do I get before she pulls the plug? Can she do that, would they stop her?

Her voice snaps me back. My father, she muses, is too busy working and can't bother to visit. When I wake up, I will tell her that he can't drive anymore because his eyesight has gotten worse, which she wouldn't know because they haven't spoken since the divorce. I'll tell her I don't hold it against him. I'm hundreds of miles away, and he's supposed to take a cab?

Then she breaks down, cries, and tells me I'm the best kid ever. That I'm smart and beautiful (because *that* matters) and destined for greatness. I bet the nurse came in to check my vitals or run some tests. She's probably caressing my hair, too. I hate that.

As this machine breathes for me, I think about how she has three other children. Two of them she abandoned with their father. I didn't even know about them until a few years ago. We speak on the phone, but none of us expect a budding relationship to grow out of awkward long-distance phone calls. No one in the family talks about the third one—my twin sister—because she died when we were two. She wasn't a strong swimmer yet.

I'd like to tell my mother she can't definitively say I'm the best kid ever. She can't even say I'm the best of four. Or three. I'd like to ask her if she still counts my dead twin.

My mother moans. Even with Miss Kitty, she's lonely. She longs for a man; no one she has dated since the divorce is husband material. Whatever that means.

And that's how my comatose body became a stand-in therapist. Listening is exhausting. I promise, when I wake up, I'm going on a silent retreat. The more time she spends in my room, the more I yearn for deafness. Maybe it isn't such a bad thing if I never wake up.

Here's what I wish happened:

My dead twin sister comes to me, from whatever ethereal realm she is hanging out in, and blows away all the fog. I can see my body again, and I can see hers, too. She is all grown up now, just like me, but still has the notch in her left ear from when the seagulls nipped us at the beach while we played in the ocean. It bled a lot. My memories are clearer now, and I recall that day at the beach. My mother enrolled me in swim lessons after that.

My dead twin sister tells me it is time to wake up, but I need convincing. Before I agree to leave, we spend the day in our version of paradise—shopping in a mall filled with Furbies and Tamagotchis, splitting a Cinnabon, and jumping on the display beds in Macy's—then I stroll over to the magical Rainbow Bridge (kidding, it's a plain hallway), which will take me back to the

hospital room my body lays in. And as I saunter, my twin calls out to me, teasing, that if I'm ever in the neighborhood again, she knows a good pizza place.

Oh, how I wish that's what happened.

Instead, it's the familiar perfume of Jim Beam strangling my nose that rouses me.

Erin N., "The Promise of a Gun"

"He turned over, thinking how he had fired the gun. He had an itch to fire it again."

- Richard Wright

Is a gun a reasonable pathway to respect and freedom after a lifetime of abuse and exploitation? In Richard Wright's "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (1939), the young protagonist, Dave Saunders, seems to think so. Dave is a boy desperately aching to be grown and respected. He is overworked and picked on, constantly emasculated by the world around him. Dave wants power. Dave wants to be taken seriously. For him, power and violence go hand-in-hand. The author forgoes pretty prose to write a story that showcases the coming-of-age struggle of a black youth trying to claim his space in a world that doesn't value him. As a Modernist text, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man," shows us how the main character struggles and seeks to break free of the life and burdens he has been raised with.

The story begins with the 17-year-old desperately wanting a gun for himself. Although he is made to work the fields every day, he has no control over his wages. Dave may not have the title of "slave" but he is still worked harder than a child should have to endure, and is still treated without any respect. His employer, Mr. Hawkins, pays Dave's mother instead of paying Dave himself. As a result, the young man must make a case anytime he wants to purchase something with his earnings. As Dave pleads with his mother to give him two dollars to buy a gun from Joe at the store, she belittles him, treating him like a small child having a tantrum over not being allowed a piece of candy. When she at last relents, she insists the gun is to be for his father and not for him, again reminding him of his place as a foolish child. Dave agrees to her terms, but as soon as the money is in his hands, he runs off, eager to break that agreement.

Wright wrote this short story in such a way that the reader is invited into the mind of the main character. We are given a view of his thoughts and internal struggle without the author trying to endear him to us. One example of this is when Dave's first urge upon waking, is to take hold of his new weapon. "The first movement he made the following morning was to reach under his pillow for the gun. In the gray light of dawn, he held it loosely, feeling a sense of power. Could kill a man with a gun like this. Kill anybody, black or white. And if he were holding his gun in his hand, nobody could run over him; they would have to respect him." Dave becomes obsessed with the gun. To him, it is a symbol of strength and offers an end to the powerlessness he has faced his entire life. Although it is not a toy, he plays pretend with it, aiming it at enemies he conjures in his mind. The trigger is a temptation that he does not resist for long.

Jenny was a simple old mule with no interest in guns or killing. Jenny worked hard and didn't do Dave any harm, but she became his victim all the same. Dave hadn't meant to kill her, but the urge to discharge his firearm proved a more powerful force than using good sense. She was an innocent bystander struck by his bullet, and his lack of self-control cost Jenny her life. We witness Dave's terror and panic at realizing what he has done. It is obvious that he feels terrible as he tries to stop the bleeding and whispers her name, but he knows what he did was

wrong and does not go to get help. He buries the gun and the reader might think that will be the end of it. Perhaps the tragic incident will change Dave's view of the gun and end his obsession. Unfortunately, that isn't the case.

Confessing to the killing of Jenny would prove Dave's mother right. She had called him a fool and told him that he was still a boy. Additionally, she had predicted the outcome would be bad when she stated, "Yuh don need no gun. Yuh'll git in trouble." The discovery of what he had done not even a full day after buying the gun, would not only earn him punishment, but would also guarantee that he'd still be treated as an irresponsible child. He would have even less respect than before. That would be unbearable, so he concocted a lie. The lie, however, was easily seen through and Dave was forced to tell the truth. Making the situation worse was that a crowd had gathered and Dave cried. He was humiliated and emasculated in front of everyone, leaving him even more powerless than before. His embarrassment transformed into anger and that anger brought the gun and all of its promises of power back into his mind.

The need to hold the gun again and feel that sense of power made it impossible for him to sleep. Dave ran out into the night to where he had buried it, and "Like a hungry dog, scratching for a bone, he pawed it up". He fired it until the cartridge was empty. He refused to close his eyes or be seized by fear. For the first time in the story, Dave stood proud. It is chilling to see how much validation pulling a trigger rewarded him with. It becomes even moreso, when his next thought is how much he wishes he had one more bullet to fire at Mr. Hawkins' house. Dave Saunders truly believes that the ability to shoot a gun can turn a boy into a man.

Richard Wright shows readers how a gun can be an appealing thing to a black youth trying to carve out an identity for himself. He never asks the readers to like Dave or the choices that Dave makes. What he does instead, is help readers to build an understanding. All of us have choices to make in life that will lead us down one path or another. Dave was done making the choices that kept him in the unhappy life he was living. It was time for him to make a different choice and go down a path that was more modern. It was a a sign of the growing discontent not just within Dave, but also among other young men like him. Instead of having Dave find peace within himself or riding off into the sunset with a love interest, Wright had Dave choose the gun above family, love, and responsibility. Dave chose freedom, and with the gun at his side, he appeared ready to kill for it.

Wright did not shy away from presenting the reader with the real dangers we face when we treat others as if they have no value as human beings. The author provides a realistic look at how manhood was viewed by a youth in that time, and it bears a striking resemblance to how many still see it today. In following along with Dave's quest to possess a gun, we see how he equates manhood with being able to cause harm. This is a social issue that still exists in modern day, and is evident in recent news of mass shootings and gang violence carried out by young men. Richard Wright did a remarkable job of laying out the journey of a poorly treated youth developing into an impulsive man, seeking solace in the hold of a dangerous weapon. In conclusion, this is both an honest tale and a cautionary one.

[Eduardo Guzman, "Universal Basic Income: Universally Relevant"](#)

"No matter how dynamically the economy develops and expands it does not eliminate all poverty... We must create full employment or we must create incomes."

-Martin Luther King JR

Dr. King is best known for being the spokesperson for the civil rights movement starting in the mid fifties up until his assassination in 1968. His progressive ideas extended beyond seeking equality for all people regardless of their complexion; he championed for more equity across the lower and middle class. Just ten years after Dr. King's assassination British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher went on record with the Catholic Herald stating that she believes that poverty in Western countries is due to a "personality defect." Imagine being relatively poor in the United States, making minimum wage in an area where working full time earning minimum wage isn't enough to rent an apartment, pay utilities, and put enough money away for retirement, only to be told that the hardship you endure due to your unfortunate financial situation is the result of a personality defect. Something about that is intrinsically wrong; the changing economy and advent of advanced technologies that displace workers is ultimately out of any individual's control. University of Oxford Professor Ian Goldin wrote an article titled "Five reasons why universal basic income is a bad idea" for the *Financial Times* in which he states, "one in three jobs is vulnerable to AI and robotics." He cites the repetitive nature of the tasks that these newer advances in technology are taking over; however, it's the main argument of his article that poses an issue. As the title of his article states, he believes that Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a bad idea. Although Professor Goldin notes that "recognising[sic] the threat posed by these dislocations is welcome and timely, but seeking solace in UBI is a bad idea," there is ample evidence to support that UBI will be the next step forward in transforming our service-based economy.

The idea of UBI is nothing new and is an important part of our history. One of our founding fathers, Andrew Paine, wrote on the matter in his book *Agrarian Justice*. His book argues that humans are inherently owed a minimum standard of living that we have done away with as we have shifted from agrarian to urban ways of living, and one way to offset the inequality in people who "own" disproportionately more land than others is by creating a "National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person, when arrived at the age of twentyone[sic] years, the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property." Today, the system of landed property has become more complex with legal entities such as corporations which individuals can own shares of, and the effect of increasing shareholder demand on the companies they're invested in. Goldin's article argues that for us to address the cost of implementing UBI we would need "much higher taxes or reallocation of resources from other areas such as health and education." It is worth exploring the former, as it can be structured in such a way that wage earners will not have to deal with the "ballooning deficits" Goldin admonishes against.

Andrew Yang is an American businessman and politician who ran for president in 2020 whose campaign brought UBI to the forefront of political discussion during the primaries. Journalist Matt Stevens authored a blog post on the New York Times website that states Andrew Yang intends on financing a UBI of \$12000 per eligible American by imposing a "value added tax of ten percent." The value added tax, sometimes referred to as VAT, that Yang is referring to would be structured in such a way that Americans would "get a tiny sliver from the transactions of the big winners from the 21st century economy, the trillion dollar tech

companies.” When analyzing the last part of this quote from Yang’s presidential campaign website, it is apparent that this proposed VAT which he calls the Freedom Dividend would be funded by transactions on all transactions; the rate would be capped “at 10%, half the European level. Over time, the VAT will become more and more important to capture the value generated by automation in a way that income taxes would not.” This is key, because our current tax code allows for businesses to deduct expenses incurred for the purposes of expanding the business from their tax liability bill in the form of tax credits.

Our tax system does all it can to incentivize spending in order to increase the velocity or liquidity of every dollar. Suppose a bank were to print one dollar. That dollar is loaned to the federal reserve, who then loans it to a bank, who can then lend it to a consumer. If I borrow some money in the form of credit to purchase an item, I will pay a sales tax on the item. The gross profit a business generates from selling that one item to me will be used to cover business expenses, which includes buying more inventory and paying employee wages. Buying more inventory incurs more sales tax, and paying an employee incurs payroll taxes. The consumer cannot write off the expense associated with their retail purchase to recoup sales tax; however, the business and its owner can deduct costs such as new inventory, salaries, wages, bonuses, rent, etc. Anything that is deemed “ordinary and necessary” per IRS guidelines. Looking further into the IRS website, a full breakdown is provided for items such as Cost of Goods Sold and Capital Expenses. This is key because the aforementioned “trillion dollar tech companies” (2020 Friends of Andrew Yang) have capitalized on the tax code to reduce their tax liabilities to miniscule amounts- in fact, Amazon’s 10-K filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission reveal that they did in fact pay \$0 in income taxes in 2018 despite nearly tripling their net income from the year prior.¹

While it may be easy to point the finger at Amazon and other tech giants, it is important to remember that these same deductions are available to anyone who incorporates a business. In fact, smaller businesses will get extra flexibilities such as choosing which accounting methods to use for inventories (Service). This means that if one were to open a business tomorrow and incur business related expenses by purchasing heavy machinery and inventory, the costs plus depreciation of these items can be front-loaded in order to offset any money made while growing this business that is barely in its infancy. The proposed VAT would get past this by taxing transactions made by both the consumer and the businesses- by doing this businesses and wealthy individuals wouldn’t be able to “move assets around to avoid taxes” (2020 Friends of Andrew Yang). When looking back at Ian Goldin’s *Five Reasons Why Universal Basic Income is a Bad Idea*, it becomes evident that his observation that “the amount that goes to the most deserving is lower. Billionaires get a little more” does not stand. If everyone were to get the proposed Freedom Dividend, the wealthy individuals and big businesses would subsidize all outgoing UBI payments by many orders of magnitude; billionaires receiving a freedom dividend of \$12,000 in a year will pay many times more into the system through their controlled assets and any transactions that go into managing them.

¹ Refer to the consolidated Statements of Cash Flows to see net income figures, refer to consolidated statement of operations to see per-share performance.

Critics like Goldin will often cite cases in which a Universal Basic Income initiative has failed without giving thought to why it failed. A study authored by Drew Riedl of UC Berkeley looked at the different financing models for UBI, and concluded that the biggest hurdle to widespread acceptance of the idea is the cost. This is important because, as Riedl points out, “how a UBI program is funded is so critical to its overall impact.” Overall, case studies with UBI are very limited in quantity; moreover, instances like Finland and Alaska don’t fit very well with a UBI program like the one proposed by Yang due to the fact that the former is too targeted and the latter “varies too much to be considered a guaranteed income” (Riedl). Goldin’s fourth argument against UBI that argues “UBI undermines incentives to participate” is actually supported if a UBI program is in fact targeted to a specific population; however, this brings into question whether or not the basic income program in question truly is universal. At the end of his fourth argument Goldin states that “wherever possible, safety nets should be a lifeline towards meaningful work and participation in society, not a guarantee of a lifetime of dependence.”

If it is the case that “safety nets should be a lifeline towards meaningful work” (Goldin), UBI should definitely be a consideration. Unemployed individuals searching for work will have the opportunity to pursue better paying jobs, or jobs that these individuals feel is a better fit, if their basic needs are met regardless of their employment status. As Riedl points out on their study, UBI “offers a choice especially to those in duress (e.g. to negotiate or refuse low-paying “bad jobs”, return to school, etc.).” The author’s use of the word “duress” emphasizes how lower wage workers aren’t offered much of a choice in the way of compensation; the logistics of taking time off work to prepare for a better paying and higher quality job is incredibly difficult for someone working minimum wage. Especially if the individual in question has financial obligations that must be met -things like rent, health insurance, debt, utilities, etc.

Another of Goldin’s arguments against UBI is that such a program “will undermine social cohesion.” When his argument that “safety nets should be a lifeline towards meaningful work” is taken into consideration, it brings into question whether the jobs that are being automated away and shipped overseas truly provide the “meaning, status, skills, networks and friendships” that work is meant to provide. Individuals caring for aging parents, bonding with newborn children, or broadening their skillset by participating in higher education all provide a level of cohesion and value to society that isn’t directly quantifiable; in fact, the GDP metric entirely ignores this source of value because there isn’t a dollar amount tied to these activities. An unconditional guarantee of income that can cover basic necessities such as food and shelter will provide a stable foundation from which individuals will not have to make the difficult choice between taking debt or risk homelessness just to be present for life’s critical moments.

Perhaps the biggest cultural hurdle standing in the way of UBI is our understanding of what welfare is meant to be at a societal level. As the current welfare system is set up in our country, individuals must first experience unemployment, housing instability, a debilitating accident, or reach a certain age before they can make use of the welfare benefits they have been paying into throughout their time as a participating member of the labor force. Metaphorically speaking, our welfare system truly acts like a net; it can save you from a sharp drop, but it’s difficult to stand on and build from. When the fact that many of these welfare benefits have a hard income cutoff, it becomes clear that the current welfare system is set up in

such a manner that an artificial income ceiling almost incentivizes people to make just enough to still be considered poor enough to qualify for welfare benefits. A study authored by Raj Chetty, John Friedman, and Emmanuel Saez in the American Economic Review acknowledges that in their study, self-employed individuals “report earnings exactly at the refund-maximizing level” (Raj Chetty) in regards to the Earned Income Tax Credit(EITC); this is a negative tax credit that tapers off based on one’s income, tax filing status, and number of child dependents. The levels at which the EITC maximizes its refund to taxpayers is at a poverty level of income. As of 2021, an individual reporting just over fifteen-thousand dollars of income would be eligible for the maximum EITC refund, therefore making them eligible for a plethora of other welfare benefits. While the intentions of these welfare programs and tax credits are well placed, they don’t constructively solve the issue of poverty in a developed nation. This underreporting of income by self-employed individuals at “refund maximizing levels” (Raj Chetty) is not fair for wage earners who must work long hours to make ends meet, and subsequently don’t get to make use of the EITC benefits because their cumulative wages were too high to qualify for refunds, but too low to adequately meet their immediate housing, food, or emergency needs. By reframing welfare to be synonymous with “strong foundation” rather than “safety net,” our society can benefit from the immense technological advances seen in our production pipelines without condemning newly displaced workers to a cycle of poverty and welfare traps.

Universal Basic Income is the next step in the evolution of our economy, and the fourth ongoing industrial revolution is the catalyst that will catapult our welfare system into the 21st century. It would be financially irresponsible to cut the cost of production on our products if we wipe out the consumer class in the process of achieving maximum price efficiency. UBI will be the great equalizer that allows entrepreneurs to take more risks, and wage earners to make plans that extend beyond their next paycheck. With a guaranteed minimum income that can satisfy one’s basic needs social cohesion will increase as the workforce rotates to more meaningful, better fitting, and higher paying jobs; many will go back to school and broaden their skillset, while others will transition out of work and care for family. By adopting UBI and building a strong foundation to build upon there will be no incentive for self-employed individuals to fabricate lower taxes, nor will wage earners be punished for working longer hours to make ends meet. Lastly, UBI will transform the way society views work. By occupying artificial intelligence and robots with repetitive day-to-day tasks, our society as a whole will experience a liberation of untapped mental bandwidth that can bring forth the next generation of innovations that could potentially address looming existential threats like climate change and resource exhaustion.

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Ana Maria Macra, "Blue Tiny House on a Hill"

My ancestors plague my daydreams
with visions of a tiny house on a hill,
showing me trees, showing me streams
behind a home with a wooden deck trim.
They painted it blue to match the remnants
of memories, and ruins
of their forgotten homes,
they placed in it a white clay furnace,
and stacked the logs under the porch of my home.

They left the door open, the fire slowly burning,
and by the window, they left an old book,
on the table, fresh sweet bread,
a cup of fresh expressed milk.

A red flower sewn on the tablecloth popping
to remind me of youth, and the power within me,
surrounded by green leaves, a symbol of renewal,
to assure me the dream can become true.

Devan Jones, "On My Road to Recovery"

During my last two years while attending Foothill high school I was on the honor roll. For my honors, I received a small scholarship for college. Because I liked the culinary arts field so much, I enrolled in Johnson & Wales University, in Providence Rhode Island, for their Culinary Arts program. While attending college, I also worked for Brown University at their café doing food prep. In my third year at Johnson & Wales, I was invited to a party and was introduced to a drug called, "Spice", which was legally sold at the time. After I completed my fourth year, I was only one year away from my bachelor's degree. On the following summer break, I was notified that I had lost all of my financial aid and was not able to return unless I was able to pay a large amount in full. Looking back at this, I can attribute my troubles to the drug.

That's when I realized that my dream to be a chef may have been over. My best friend and I ended up living for four years on the streets. I don't remember most of my time on the streets or any of my time in college. I know about these things through hearing my mother talk about them to my doctors. Furthermore, I had numerous accidents and injuries occur during my time on the streets. Not only that, but I was hit in the head a few times and I had been stabbed in the head. But in May 2016, I was hit by a car while riding my bike. I sustained a broken neck, multiple cervical spinal injuries, my lungs collapsed, broken ribs 4-8, a broken fibula, a broken ankle, and a traumatic brain injury. I was in a coma for several days, and my mom was told that my entire left side was paralyzed. When you have a brain injury, you find yourself often getting tired. I have trouble remembering things sometimes. I have roughly an 8-year memory loss.

The surgeon said that my esophagus should have collapsed when my neck was broken. The trauma doctor had told my mom that I would spend the rest of my life on a ventilator and feeding tube in a nursing home. Through much prayer by many people, I am here today as a walking miracle. I spent 4 months in 2 different hospitals. I had to relearn everything all over again; from swallowing, eating, drinking, talking, sitting up, and even walking. Once I was released from St. Jude's hospital, I went to St. Jude's Rehabilitation Center. Around the same time, I attended the R.I.O. Rehabilitation Center, a day program for 4 or more hours a day, four days a week. I also received physical, occupational, and speech therapy here. At this time I only attend the R.I.O. one day a week since starting the ABI Program at Coastline.

My physical therapist, Lori, recommended that I come to Coastline Community College for the acquired brain injury program once I completed all the therapies. After my first quarter here at Coastline (Team Jen), I was moved to a more advanced program (Team Becki) and I am in Psychosocial (with Kim Peterson). I feel good about going to the ABI program. I learned how to use Google Apps, and make a presentation that I have used outside the ABI program. Also, I have learned to speak in front of an audience, and how to use the apps Google Drive, Google Sheets, Google Slides, and Google Docs. The teachers work with me and make it easier to understand the way my mind works, as well as teach me to see things in a way I didn't see before. My teachers in the ABI Program were encouraging. I was taught how to do research and look up things I didn't understand.

For my 27th birthday, I was given my therapy dog, Ella, who was trained to be a psychiatric therapy dog to look after me. Ella is now a trained service dog that goes everywhere I go. Except for places where other people happen to have an allergy to dogs, like at my allergist appointments. I am very happy for every opportunity I have been given, and thank God every day for giving me this second chance at life. I hope to help others one day by giving them hope for a better future.