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Dear Friends,

I struggled for a long time on how to open this issue. Usually, I’m downright jovial in these letters, because a copy of *Forbes and Fifth* is the culmination and celebration of hours upon hours of work—good work—by our contributors, by our designers, and by our editorial staff, all of whom are undergraduate students. Students whose lives, educations, and routines, have been totally upended in the last few months. Before I go any further, I must first extend my most sincere respect and gratitude to the *Forbes and Fifth* team, for their dedication and stunning professionalism in a time of great crises. About two weeks before our campus shuttered, they were offered the option to scrap this issue or postpone production until we returned in the fall. It was laughed out of the meeting.

We take great pride in our work, but we remember that our contribution is limited. It is *your* participation that gives this publication its unique voice. Without you, *Forbes and Fifth* is an empty mouth. Your submissions enable this journal for stand for the things that it does: dignity, equity, curiosity, honesty, empathy, and more than all other things, vision. You are no less than visionary. And we need your perspective, now more than ever.

*Forbes and Fifth* is about thought. It’s about taking people seriously. It’s about listening. It’s about using a platform to amplify voices that should be heard. From any continent, from any college or university, from any person with the boldness and clarity to speak up. We are honored by that commitment. And we are waiting patiently to hear from you.

Keep going and be well,

Sarah Devan Tomko
Dear Reader,

I think it’s fair to say 2020 didn’t exactly turn out as we all expected. Among other things, I certainly didn’t expect to see myself working as the summer designer for *Forbes & Fifth* these past months. Artist, designer—are titles I would never have used to describe myself. But over the last weeks and months I have learned so much, and for this I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to grow through this latest issue of *F&F*.

Before I started any design work, I read through all of the submissions for this issue. I was blown away by the creativity, talent, and voice of each piece. At times, they made me baffled; they made me sad; they made me smile. They kept me thinking, long after I’d closed the pages. To the members of the *F&F* community, thank you for sharing your stories. In this age of social isolation, you brought me to the classrooms of Brazil, to the muddy banks of Woodstock, all without taking a step out of my room. For anyone who picks up a copy of this magazine, I wish the same journey for you. They say the best design is invisible design—it is my sincere hope that the design of this issue serves to amplify the voices of each author and artist.

Lastly, to the design team: Many thanks to Blya, for her gorgeous artwork and always responding with thoughtful feedback, and to Alisa, for her vision. A big thank you also to Patrick and Sarah for your continued support and patience through the design process.

I don’t know what situation we’ll all find ourselves in by the time this magazine makes its way into your hands. But no matter where you are, what you’re doing, I hope this publication gives you as much enjoyment as working on its design has given me.

All my best,

Esther Lui
The Importance of Maintaining Native Language

by Cara Triebold
Cara is a senior at Olivet Nazarene University.
Abstract

This article focuses on the implications of native language loss as well as the benefits of maintaining native language. Due to the focus on assimilation in the United States’ bilingual education, immigrant children face native language loss at alarming rates. Although assimilation into our country’s English-speaking culture is beneficial to children’s educational and professional futures, native language loss has a negative effect on familial relationships, sense of identity, and social interactions. Maintaining native language thus negates these negative impacts while benefiting the economy as a whole. Language-minority individuals who maintain their native language are benefited from a broader scope of career opportunities, increased cognitive abilities, and higher academic success.

Keywords: subtractive bilingualism, native language, heritage language, native language loss, bilingual education

The Importance of Maintaining Native Language

The United States is often proudly referred to as the “melting pot.” Cultural diversity has become a part of our country’s identity. However, as American linguist, Lilly Wong Fillmore, pointed out in her language loss study, minority languages remain surprisingly unsupported in our education system. Although her research was conducted more than twenty years ago, this fact still rings true. Many non-minority Americans are not aware of the native language loss that has become prevalent in children of immigrant parents. While parents can maintain native language, children educated in U.S. schools quickly lose touch with their language heritage. This phenomenon, called subtractive bilingualism, was first discovered by psychologist Wallace Lambert, in his study of the language acquisition of French-Canadian children. The term refers to the fact that learning a second language directly affects primary language, caus-

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ing loss of native language fluency. This kind of language erosion has been integral to the narrative of this country for some time. Many non-minority Americans can trace their family tree back to a time when their ancestors lost fluency in a language that was not English. Today, due to the great emphasis on assimilation into the United States’ English-speaking culture, children of various minorities are not only losing fluency, but also their ability to speak in their native language, at all. The misconceptions surrounding bilingual education has done much to increase the educational system’s negative outlook on minority languages. In Lynn Malarz’s bilingual curriculum handbook, she states that “the main purpose of the bilingual program is to teach English as soon as possible and integrate the children into the mainstream of education.” This handbook, although written in 1998, still gives valuable insight into how the goals of bilingual education were viewed. Since English has become a global language, this focus of bilingual education, which leads immigrant children to a future of English monolingualism, seems valid to many educators and policymakers. Why support minority languages in a country where English is the language of the prosperous? Shouldn’t we assimilate children to English as soon as possible, so that they can succeed in the mainstream, English-speaking culture? This leads us to consider an essential question: does language loss matter? Through the research of many linguists, psychologists, and language educators, it has been shown that the effect of native language loss reaches far. It impacts familial and social relationships, personal identity, the socio-economic world, as well as cognitive abilities and academic success. This paper aims to examine the various benefits of maintaining one’s native language, and through this examination, reveal the negative effects of language loss.

Familial Implications
The impact of native language loss in the familial sphere spans parent-child and grandparent-grandchild relationships, as well as cultur-

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2 Ibid, 323.
3 Ibid, 324.
al respects. Psychologists Boutakidis, Chao, and Rodríguez, conducted a study of Chinese and Korean immigrant families to see how the relationships between the 9th-grade adolescences and their parents were impacted by native language loss. They found that, because the adolescents had limited understanding and communicative abilities in the parental language, there were key cultural values that could not be understood. They also discovered there was a direct correlation between respect for parents and native language fluency. For example, honorific titles, a central component of respect unique to Chinese and Korean culture, have no English alternatives. They sum up their research pertaining to this idea by stating that “children’s fluency in the parental heritage language is integral to fully understanding and comprehending the parental culture.” Not only is language integral to maintaining parental respect, but also cultural identity.

In her research regarding parental perceptions of maintaining native language, Ruth Lingxin Yan found that immigrant parents not only agree on the importance of maintaining native language, but have similar reasoning for their views. She discovered that maintaining native language was important to parents, because of its impact on heritage culture, religion, moral values, community connections, and broader career opportunities.

Melec Rodriguez, whose parents immigrated to the United States before he was born, finds that his native language loss directly impacts his relationship with his grandparents. Rodriguez experienced his language loss in high school. He stated that due to his changing social group and the fact that he began interacting with his family less, he found himself forgetting “uncommon words in the language.” His “struggle to process information” causes him to “take a

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
moment” to “form sentences in [his] mind during conversations.” Of his interactions with his grandparents, who have a limited understanding of English, he stated:

“I find very often that I simply cannot think of a way to reply while conveying genuine emotion, and I know they feel I am detached at times because of that. I also struggle to tell exciting stories about my experiences and find it hard to create meaningful conversations with family.”

Rodriguez’s native language loss creates a distinct communicative barrier between him and his grandparents, causing him difficulty in genuine connection building. Although this is a relatively obvious implication of native language loss, it is nonetheless a concerning effect.

Personal Implications

Native language, as an integral part of the familial sphere, also has strong connections on a personal level. The degree of proficiency in one’s heritage language is intrinsically connected to self-identity. The Intercultural Development Research Association noted this connection, stating that “the child’s first language is critical to his or her identity. Maintaining this language helps the child value his or her culture and heritage, which contributes to a positive self-concept.” Grace Cho, professor and researcher at California State University, concluded “that [heritage language] development can be an important part of identity formation and can help one retain a strong sense of identity to one’s own ethnic group.” In her research paper, she discussed the “identity crisis” many Korean American students face, due to the lack of proficiency they have in their heritage language. Cho found that students with higher levels of fluency could engage in key aspects of their cultural commu-

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10 Ibid.
nity, which contributed greatly to overcoming identity crises and establishing their sense of self.\textsuperscript{14}

### Social Implications

Native language loss’ connections to family relationships and personal identity broaden to the social sphere, as well. Not only can native language loss benefit social interactions and one’s sense of cultural community, it has large-scale socioeconomic implication. In Cho’s study she found that college-aged participants with Korean ancestry were faced with many social challenges due to limited fluency in Korean. Participants labeled with poor proficiency remarked on the embarrassment they endured, leading them to withdraw from social situations that involved their own ethnic group.\textsuperscript{15} These students thus felt isolated and excluded from the heritage culture their parents actively participated in. Native language loss also caused students to face rejection from their own ethnic communities, resulting in conflicts and frustration.\textsuperscript{16} Participants that did not complain of any conflict actively avoided their Korean community due to their lack of proficiency.\textsuperscript{17} Participants who were labeled as highly proficient in Korean told of the benefits this had, allowing them to “participate freely in cultural events or activities.”\textsuperscript{18} Students who were able to maintain their native language were able to facilitate meaningful and beneficial interactions within their cultural community.

Melec Rodriguez made similar comments in his experience as a Spanish and English-speaking individual. Although his native language loss has negatively affected his familial relationships, he has found that, in the past, his Spanish fluency “allowed for a greater social network in [his] local community (school, church, events) as [he] was able to more easily understand and converse with others.”\textsuperscript{19} As this research suggests, native language fluency has a considerable influence on social interac-

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 376.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 377.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 378.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 374.
\textsuperscript{19} Melec Rodriguez, in personal interview with the author, 2019.
tions. Essentially, a lack of fluency in one’s native language creates a social barrier; confident proficiency increases social benefits and allows genuine connections to form in one’s cultural community.

Benefits to the Economy
Maintaining native language not only benefits personal social spheres, but also personal career opportunities, and thereby the economy at large. Peeter Mehisto and David Marsh, educators central to the Content and Language Integrated Learning educational approach, conducted research into the economic implications of bilingualism. Central to their discussion was the idea that “monolingualism acts as a barrier to trade and communication.” Thus, bilingualism holds an intrinsic communicative value that benefits the economy. Although they discovered that the profits of bilingualism can change depending on the region, they referred to the Fradd/Bo- swell 1999 report, that showed Spanish and English-speaking Hispanics living in the United States earned more than Hispanics who had lost their Spanish fluency. Mehisto and Marsh also found that bilingualism makes many contributions to economic growth, specifically “education, government, [and] culture…” Bilingualism is valuable in a society in which numerous services are demanded by speakers of non-English languages. The United States is a prime example of a country in which this is the case.

Increased Job Opportunities
Melec Rodriguez, although he has experienced native language loss, explained that he experienced increased job opportunities due to his Spanish language background. He stated:

“Living in south Texas, it is very common for people to struggle with either English or Spanish, or even be completely unable to speak one of the languages. There are many restaurants or businesses which

21 Ibid, 22.
22 Ibid, 25.
practice primarily in one language or the other. Being bilingual greatly increased the opportunity to get a job at many locations and could make or break being considered as a candidate.”

Rodriguez went on to explain that if he were more confident in his native language, he would have been able to gain even more job opportunities. However, as his language loss has increased through the years, Spanish has become harder to utilize in work environments. Thus, maintaining one’s native language while assimilating to English is incredibly valuable, not only to the economy but also to one’s own occupational potential.

Cognitive and Academic Implications

Those who are losing native language fluency due to English assimilation are missing out on the cognitive and academic benefits of bilingualism. The Intercultural Development Research Association addresses an important issue in relation to immigrant children and academic success. When immigrant children begin at U. S. schools, most of their education is conducted in English. However, since these students are not yet fluent in English, they must switch to a language in which they function “at an intellectual level below their age.” Thus, it is important that educational systems understand the importance of maintaining native language. It is also important for them to understand the misconceptions this situation poses for the academic assessments of such students.

In Enedina Garcia-Vazquez and her colleague’s study of language proficiency’s connection to academic success, evidence was found that contradicted previous ideas about the correlation. The previous understanding of bilingualism in children was that it caused “mental confusion,” however, this was accounted for by the problematic methodologies used.” In fact, Garcia-Vazquez et al. discuss how bilingual-

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ism increases “reasoning abilities” which influence “nonverbal problem-solving skills, divergent thinking skills, and field independence.”

Their study of English and Spanish speaking students revealed that proficiency in both languages leads to better scores on standardized tests.

The study agreed with previous research that showed bilingual children to exceed their monolingual peers when it came to situations involving “high level…cognitive control.” Bilingualism thus proves to have a distinct influence on cognitive abilities.

Mehisto and Marsh discuss similar implications, citing research that reveals neurological differences in bilingual versus monolingual brains. This research indicates that the “corpus callosum in the brain of bilingual individuals is larger in area than is the case for monolinguals.” This proves to be an important difference that reveals the bilingual individual’s superiority in many cognitive functions. When it comes to cognitive ability, Mehisto and Marsh discuss how bilinguals are able to draw on both languages, and thus “bring extra cognitive capacity” to problem-solving. Not only can bilingualism increase cognitive abilities, but it is also revealed to increase the “cognitive load” that they are able to manage at once.

Many of the academic benefits of bilingualism focus on reading and writing skills. Garcia-Vazquez’s study focuses on how students who were fluent in both Spanish and English had superior verbal skills in both writing and reading, as well as oral communication. However, research indicates that benefits are not confined to this area of academics. Due to increased cognition and problem-solving skills, research indicates that bilingual individuals who are fluent in both languages achieved better in mathematics than monolinguals, as well as less proficient bilinguals. Philip Clarkson, a mathematics education scholar, conducted one of many studies with students in Papua New Guinea.

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26 Ibid, 396.
27 Ibid, 404.
28 Ibid, 396.
30 Ibid.
factor that Clarkson discovered was the importance of fluency level.\textsuperscript{32} For example, if a student had experienced language loss in one of their languages, this loss directly impacted their mathematical competence. Not only does Clarkson’s research dissuade the preconceived notions that bilingualism gets in the way of mathematical learning, it actually proves to contribute “a clear advantage” for fluent bilingual students.\textsuperscript{33} Clarkson goes on to suggest that this research disproves “the simplistic argument that has held sway for so long for not using languages other than English in Papua New Guinea schools.”\textsuperscript{34} He thus implies the importance of maintaining the native language of the students in Papua New Guinea since this bilingual fluency directly impacts mathematical competency. Both Garcia-Vazquez et al. and Mehisto and Marsh reveal how proficiency in two languages directly benefits a brain’s functions. Their research thus illustrates how maintaining one’s native language will lead to cognitive and academic benefits. Clarkson expands on the range of academic benefits a bilingual student might expect to have. It is important to note that, as Clarkson’s research showed, the fluency of a bilingual student has much influence on their mathematical abilities. Thus, maintaining a solid fluency in one’s native language is an important aspect of mathematical success.

**Suggested Educational Approach**

The acculturation that occurs when immigrants move to the United States is the main force causing language loss. Because of the misconceptions of bilingual education, this language loss is not fully counteracted. Policymakers and educators have long held the belief that bilingual education is essentially a “cop-out” for immigrants who do not wish to assimilate to the United States’ English-speaking culture.\textsuperscript{35} However, bilingual education is central to the maintenance of native language. Due to the misconceptions and varied views on this con-

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 420.
\textsuperscript{35} Lily Wong Fillmore, “When Learning a Second Language Means Losing the First,” 325.
troversial subject, there are two extremes of bilingual education in the United States. In Malarz’s curriculum handbook, she explains the two different viewpoints of these approaches. The first pedological style’s goal is to fully assimilate language-minority students to English as quickly and directly as possible. Its mindset is based on the idea that English is the language of the successful, and that by teaching this language as early as possible, language-minority children will have the best chance of prospering in mainstream society. However, this mindset is ignorant of the concept of subtractive bilingualism, and thus is not aware that its approach is causing native language loss. The second approach Malarz discusses is the bilingual education that places primary importance on retaining the student’s heritage culture, and thereby, their native language. This approach faces much criticism, since it seems to lack the appropriate focus of a country that revolves around its English-speaking culture. Neither of these approaches poses a suitable solution to the issue at hand. Maintaining native language, as we have discussed, is extremely valuable. However, learning English is also an important goal for the future of language-minority students. Thus, the most appropriate bilingual educational approach is one of careful balance. Native language, although important, should not be the goal, just as English assimilation should not be the central focus. Instead, the goal of bilingual education should be to combine the two former goals and consider them as mutually inclusive. This kind of balanced education is certainly not mainstream, although clearly needed. In Yan’s research regarding parental perceptions of maintaining native language, she found that parents sought after “bilingual schools or those that provided instruction with extra heritage language teaching.”36 Parents of language-minority students recognize the importance of this kind of education and educators and policymakers need to, as well.

Conclusion

The ramifications of native language loss should not be disregarded. Unless bilingual children are actively encouraged and assisted by parents and teachers to maintain their native language, these children will lose their bilingualism. They will not only lose their native fluency and the related benefits, but they will also experience the drawbacks associated with language loss. As the research presented in this article illustrates, there are several specific advantages to maintaining native language. The familial implications reveal that native language loss is detrimental to close relationships with parents and grandparents. Maintaining native language allows for more meaningful communication that can facilitate respect for these relationships as well as heritage culture as a whole. Native language maintenance is also an important factor in the retainment of personal identity. In regard to the social sphere, isolation and a feeling of rejection can occur if native language is not maintained. Additionally, it was found that maintaining native language allows for greater involvement in one’s cultural community. Other social factors included the benefits of bilingualism to the economy as well as the greater scope of job opportunities for bilingual individuals. A variety of studies concluded that there are many cognitive and academic benefits of retaining bilingualism. Due to the many effects of native language loss and the variety of benefits caused by maintaining native language, it can be determined that native language retainment is incredibly important.

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Clarkson, Philip. “Language and Mathematics: A Comparison of Bilingual and Monolingual Students of Mathematics.” Educational
More Than “Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll?”: Woodstock’s Political and Cultural Elements

by Peter Kropf
Peter is a senior at Queens College, City University of New York.
The 1960s counterculture—and perhaps an entire generation—was defined by one historic summer weekend, fifty years ago. About half-a-million people, most under the age of thirty, swarmed Max Yasgur’s farm in Bethel, New York, from August 15th to 17th to be a part of the 1969 Woodstock Festival. Concertgoers listened to rock music performed by famous acts, experimented with drugs, and abandoned most traditional societal norms while there. Woodstock was preceded by the “Summer of Love” in 1967, the Monterey International Pop Music Festival, and the Atlantic City Pop Music Festival. Yet, it would come to overshadow them all. Why? Woodstock was the culmination of a decade of unrest and marked the awakening of America’s youth. The 1960s featured the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War controversy, the 1968 Chicago Riots at the Democratic National Convention, and several high-profile assassinations. Most notably, the latter half of the decade was characterized by a battle of values and a rise in anti-establishment feelings among the nation’s younger citizens. The Woodstock Festival showed that the counterculture was alive and thriving, and that its members were more aware than ever. However, many view that famous (or infamous, depending on perspective) weekend as an overblown, disorganized, and immoral “hippie fest.” This paper will examine the dismissals of the festival’s significance and then challenge them by exploring the political and cultural—mainly the social/utopian, spiritual, and artistic—components of this transformative event.

The Inaccurate Minimization of Woodstock

During the Woodstock Festival and immediately afterward, the media devalued or ignored its greater significance. Most press releases chose to focus on the logistical and public safety issues that Woodstock presented, instead of the potential historic impact of the weekend. In fact, no major newspapers made Woodstock, as unique and strange as it was, the lead story. This may have been due to bias; some editors may not have wanted to glorify and make newsworthy the actions of hippies. However, even liberal newspapers missed the main point of Woodstock. During the Woodstock Festival and immediately afterward, the media devalued or ignored its greater significance. Most press releases chose to focus on the logistical and public safety issues that Woodstock present
ed, instead of the potential historic impact of the weekend. In fact, no major newspapers made Woodstock, as unique and strange as it was, the lead story. This may have been due to bias; some editors may not have wanted to glorify and make newsworthy the actions of hippies. However, even liberal newspapers missed the main point of Woodstock. The *New York Times* often only emphasized the shortcomings and negatives of the festival. An August 18th story declared, “Waves of weary youngsters streamed away from the Woodstock Music and Art Fair last night and early today, as security officials reported at least two deaths and 4,000 people treated for injuries, illness, and adverse drug reactions over the concert’s three-day period.”

*New York Times* opinion pieces deplored the illegal drug use and lack of security, while highlighting the discontent among the local residents, and the festival’s financial problems. Overall, newspaper articles were condescending, joking that it was surprising that there had not been violence. An editorial titled “Nightmare in the Catskills” and an article stating that Jimi Hendrix had played among a “sea of refuse” demonstrate the dismissive attitude of many in the media regarding Woodstock.

Reliance on specific and minute details by the *New York Times* and other papers may have been because of a dearth of substantive reporting and quality journalistic practice. Reporters sent to Bethel lacked interviews from concertgoers, and therefore came to their own conclusions about the weekend. Most interviews they did conduct were with apprehensive teens, who did not have the maturity or cultural awareness of the twenty-something attendees. As a result, rich commentary about the concert’s connection to the counterculture was nearly nonexistent in those press pieces.

Many residents in the surrounding area of Bethel were equally unimpressed with the participants, and failed to recognize the importance of the Woodstock Festival. During on-camera interviews, local citizens complained about the noise and disturbance, but were most perturbed at what they deemed to be the “inauthenticity of [the]

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3 Sheehy, 241-242.
revelers.”

The locals believed that the politics of Woodstock was not tied to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and that the concertgoers were all druggies with no concept of fundamental cultural values.

Those residents’ sentiments still exist to this day; even some current authorities on music and culture share these feelings. For example, *The Faber Book of Pop and Rock* (edited by Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage) only mentions the Woodstock Festival once, and in a highly critical manner. It refers to it as a “festival fantasy,” one that was “weak and stupid.” Scholar Jonathan Green asserts that positive assessments of Woodstock only serve to “fuel hippy ‘fantasies of an alternative culture.’” Author George McKay labeled Woodstock a mere “potentiality,” while identifying the more violent and darker-themed Altamont Concert held later in 1969 as the “reality.” Many other historical narratives omit Woodstock altogether.

Today, some Americans share those negative interpretations of the Woodstock Festival. Ironically, many consider it “an accurate symbol of the 1960s, not because it was so innocent and harmonious and peaceful, but rather because it showcased spectacularly self-indulgent, childish, and irresponsible behavior.” These people would argue that Woodstock, and the counterculture in general, severely degraded the country’s morals.

In fact, some festival participants are also critical of the event and its legacy. Newsweek journalist Mark Hosenball was there, but did not enjoy the experience, describing the weekend as “a massive, teeming, squalid mess.” He also questions its cultural importance: “What was Woodstock’s bottom line? Is the fact that such a large crowd didn’t become violent and start killing each other…Woodstock’s principal legacy? What’s the big deal?” The journalist lists the Clinton/Lewinksy affair, the death of Princess Diana, and the election of Barack Obama as moments of more significance. To explain

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5 John Street, “‘This is Your Woodstock’: Popular Memories and Political Myths,” in *Remembering Woodstock*, ed. Andy Bennett (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 34-35.

why the concert became a symbol in American culture, Hosenball cites an “artificially sweetened nostalgia” that is “supplemented by entertainment-industry efforts to exploit the occasion.” This media exploitation may be the reason why Woodstock’s greater impact remains ignored, even when the event is viewed positively. As a result of the bombardment of stereotypes from television and other sources, many today see Woodstock, and the 1960s, in a “tongue-in-cheek” manner. They may only associate the weekend and era with colorful fashion, “drugs, free love,” and so on. This phenomenon showcases the danger of public knowledge relying on “inadequate and manipulated media representations.”

**Woodstock’s Political Atmosphere**

Despite the contentions already described, the Woodstock Festival was an incredibly political phenomenon. Many people, even some of the concertgoers, do not realize that much of the music played over those three memorable days was politically charged. Artists in the 1960s often spoke through their music, providing commentary on the social ills of the day. Woodstock was no different.

The most famous and, arguably, the most political performance of the weekend was Jimi Hendrix’s rendition of the national anthem on the morning of Monday, August 18th (the festival had bled into Monday due to delays and rain—only 25,000 concertgoers remained). Before dissecting the actual performance, it is necessary to understand its background. By 1969, many citizens—especially African Americans—had begun to wonder whom the national flag represented and if the country had lived up to its promises and ideals. Additionally, the Vietnam War was in full swing and protest against it had reached a fever pitch. Hendrix himself had traveled

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to Europe in the late 1960s and gained more of an awareness of his own country; he would become more critical of America’s foreign policy and its domestic race relations. Although it is widely forgotten, the legendary guitarist had played the “Star-Spangled Banner” publicly dozens of times before his Woodstock rendition. This, most likely, debunks the myth that his Woodstock version was improvised, and his decision to play it had occurred spontaneously. Lastly, it is important to note that Hendrix had served in the U.S. military as a member of the heralded 101st Airborne Division. This explains his fascination with patriotism and military matters, as well as his empathy for soldiers deployed in Vietnam.¹⁰

Now, to the details of the performance; dressed in red, white, and blue, Hendrix flashed the peace sign to the crowd, after playing the introductory notes that correspond to the lyrics “O, say can you see?” The consensus is that this, most likely, symbolized his general optimism regarding the country’s future. Hendrix then continued to play the anthem, using its traditional notes, but did so unconventionally, to create “crackling feedback” to show that he believed American society was “static” at the time.¹¹ At the “and the rocket’s red glare, the bombs bursting in air” portion, the guitarist suddenly created dramatic sounds of planes, bombing, crying/screams, and other “onomatopoeic evocations of the sounds of jungle warfare.”¹² This, as can be inferred, was Hendrix protesting America’s involvement in Vietnam. Another way he condemned the war was by playing “Taps,” the U.S. military funeral staple. By so doing he connected the anthem and the death of soldiers abroad. Some have also interpreted it as honoring all those who died in the Civil Rights Movement. When Hendrix reached the “broad stripes and bright stars” line, he intentionally allowed the sound to plummet and waiver, which evoked the fluttering of the flag. Through volume distortion, the musician conjured a “mood of devastation” that contrasts with the anthem’s traditional uplifting “connotations of heroism.”¹³

¹⁰ Mark Clague, “‘This is America’: Jimi Hendrix’s Star Spangled Banner Journey as Psychedelic Citizenship,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 8, no. 4 (2014): 440, 443.
¹¹ Whitely, 25.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Whitely, 26.
By playing the anthem in a unique fashion, Hendrix commented on the Vietnam War and American society without uttering a word. The rendition is “considered by so many to be the most complex and powerful work of American art to deal with the Vietnam War….” Since he performed his hit “Purple Haze” directly after the “Star-Spangled Banner,” the juxtaposition between the mainstream and the counterculture was made clear. Others have interpreted his performance as a call to action—Hendrix was vocal about how America’s youth must become socially and politically active. In contrast with the eerie, violent tone of the guitar, the overall rendition expressed optimism about the future of the counterculture in America. Popular opinion depicts Hendrix’s cover as unpatriotic. In reality, it carried several “patriotic trappings” and a “significant amount of respect” for both flag and nation.

While not as iconic as Hendrix’s anthem, Country Joe’s performance of “Fixin’-to-Die” was more blatantly political. The song’s lyrics, while basic, are powerful, and denounce U.S. involvement in Vietnam. For instance, one line is a straightforward, desperate question: “What are we fighting for?” What separates Country Joe’s act from the rest of the sets that weekend was that audience participation was encouraged. He asked the crowd to sing along, helping to form a “common cultural and political bond” between him and the audience. The “we” in his song refers to everyone impacted by the Vietnam War, even American citizens not present at the festival. This naturally drew attention to a “national identity” and a sense of unity within the counterculture. The performance contained an ironic element, too; the “light nature of the rag-time tune” was used to discuss dark subject matter and alleviate the anxiety surrounding the threat of being drafted. As a Vietnam veteran and son of Communist parents, it is not surprising that Country Joe incorporated political protest in his Woodstock set. Joan Baez’s set was one of the most inspiring and politically charged of the Woodstock Festival, but it is oddly often overlooked. As the

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14 Whitely, 24.
15 Clague, 447, 460, 465.
16 Whitely, 21.
only major star to play at the concert’s free stage, she was essentially expressing her distaste for excessive capitalism, as well as demonstrating the value of sharing (one that was paramount in the counterculture). By performing in the rain, Baez embodied the power of persistence, and perhaps meant to encourage the counterculture to push forward, regardless of the obstacles it may face. The folk singer did not shy away from controversial topics while on stage: “Baez gave lovingly of herself, playing a selection of songs about America’s changing social structure, poverty, union leaders, and about her husband, journalist David Harris, who was serving time in a federal prison for refusing to answer his draft call.”

Baez’s presence alone was inherently political, since she “represented one of the few, direct connections between the festival and the early 1960s Greenwich Village folk-protest movement.”

Although not as high profile as the other performers, Richie Havens set the political tone at Woodstock as the festival’s mesmerizing opening act. His song “Handsome Johnny” was an anti-Vietnam declaration. He also performed “Freedom,” most likely a reference to the Civil Rights Movement (like Hendrix, Havens was African American) or to the counterculture in general (“freedom” from society). He walked out in disgust during the song, which may have been to show that he thought America had failed to provide freedom for its citizens. At any rate, Havens had “established a feeling of peace and brotherhood” and notoriously “proclaimed that Woodstock was ‘all about you and me and everybody around the stage and everybody that hasn’t gotten here, and the people who are gonna read about you tomorrow.’”

Other less notable political performances were delivered by John Sebastian; Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young; Arlo Guthrie, and others. So, were these musical messages fully grasped by the Woodstock crowd? Nobody knows for sure, but much of the audience in Bethel that weekend was knowledgeable about the issues in question and might have been politically active before the festival: “The same kind

19 Hillstrom and Collier Hillstrom, 54-56.
of people who basked in the spirit of Bethel also stormed the deans’ offices at Harvard and Columbia and shed tears or blood at Chicago last summer—all in the name of a new morality.” In fact, some concertgoers held small political demonstrations at Woodstock. People cheered and chanted slogans as American flags and photos of President Richard Nixon were thrown into bonfires. When it started to rain, one participant angrily suggested that the “fascist pigs” had been “seeding the clouds.” Other political comments were aimed at politicians the concertgoers blamed for the Vietnam War’s escalation. The aforementioned free stage became a forum for the countercultural underground, and it was here that some became engrossed by political discussion, and completely forgot about the music. Moreover, booths were set up to distribute radical materials and Marxist propaganda. Even the famous stage announcements concerning the “birth of babies or the beauty of the audience or the free food…constituted a sense of political community.” But some historians have concluded that “Woodstock was not an event of the New Left” and that “the festival’s focus was music, not politics.” However, the above evidence paints an entirely opposite picture. One could even say that the Woodstock experience was undergirded by leftist principles.

An Expression of Culture: Woodstock’s Social/ Utopian, Spiritual and Artistic Foundations

Most people claiming that Woodstock lacked political awareness also declare the concert to be culturally shallow. This contention is similarly erroneous. Culture played a major role in the planning of the Woodstock Festival. Michael Lang, the key organizer and promoter, selected the upstate region around Woodstock, New York, because he was familiar with the town’s rich cultural history. Woodstock was home to painters, musicians, and playwrights—a true, popular artists’ colony. As far back as the late nineteenth century, the

21 Spitz, 358.
22 Woodstock, directed by Michael Wadleigh (1970; United States, Warner Bros.).
23 Spitz, 308-309, 382.
24 Street, 38.
25 Sheehy, 245.
town had hosted small music and art gatherings. Lang named the festival “An Aquarian Exposition,” advertising it as “3 Days of Peace and Music”, because the weekend was meant to be a snapshot of the counterculture and promote peace and understanding.\textsuperscript{26} The organizers capitalized on a thriving countercultural consciousness marked by disillusionment with the American Dream and a fear of being drafted or annihilated by nuclear war.\textsuperscript{27}

Woodstock, like most outdoor festivals, had a “carnivalesque” dimension. In medieval times, carnivals and fairs let people engage in socially unacceptable behavior and release stress and other negative emotions. They were a fun way to escape from monotonous, everyday life, and experiment with various identities. Such a gathering has been called a “cosmoscape”, “a zone structured by particular spatial and social characteristics, which afford and indeed encourage cosmopolitan socialization.”\textsuperscript{28} Woodstock was the epitome of a cosmoscape, and was carnival-like because daily traditions/behaviors were reversed and the audience actively participated. Simply being at the festival was more important than seeing the musical acts (not to say that the music was not enjoyed). Despite common folklore, the music at Woodstock was not its main attraction. When reflecting on their experiences, several concertgoers note that the same music had been played at other festivals during the summer of 1969, and that audience members at Bethel sometimes were not motivated to walk and find the main stage.\textsuperscript{29}

Again, the music itself was not the central draw. Rather, participants sought to bond with the rock performers and the rest of the counterculture community. Woodstock was “experienced as participatory, communitarian and...with no great spiritual or physical distance between artist and audience.”\textsuperscript{30} Concertgoers socialized and were eager to meet one another; “undying friendships were established on a mo-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Hillstrom and Collier Hillstrom, 38-40.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Moore, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Andy Bennett and Ian Woodward, “Festival Spaces, Identity, Experience and Belonging,” in \textit{The Festivalization of Culture}, ed. Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, and Ian Woodward (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 17-18.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Street, 31.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Street, 36.
\end{itemize}
ment’s notice.” Festivals often breed cultural assembly and collective representation, and Woodstock did not disappoint. The weekend was a gathering of like-minded individuals who developed “bonds of solidarity and a robust sense of belonging.” One man described the sense of cultural community perfectly: “I’m here for the same reason that Indians used to have tribal gatherings. Just being here with people like me makes it all worthwhile. I guess it will reinforce my lifestyle, my beliefs, from the attacks of my parents and their generation.” This attendee was correct; Woodstock displayed the strength of America’s youth and counterculture, proving they were no longer isolated or weak. It also showed that young people could gather peacefully en masse and achieve a sense of freedom without adult guidance or leadership. If anything, the weekend unveiled the underestimated power of the antiestablishment movement.

The Woodstock Festival was also an open social space for the otherwise culturally marginalized. Concertgoers could liberate themselves from society’s demands. As Abbie Hoffman suggested, the attendees may have been “sick of being programmed” by a hypocritical system. Additionally, Woodstock revealed that America’s youth was coming to realize that “personal freedom in the midst of squalor [was] more liberating than social conformity with the trappings of wealth.” The weekend allowed participants to toy with their identities, practice alternative lifestyles, and contemplate the authentic hippie philosophy. They had essentially formed a “temporary city” based upon the “egalitarian” principles they could not find elsewhere.

The Woodstock promoters were not immune to this questioning of self and internal reflection. Although originally planning to profit from the festival, organizer Michael Lang made it free of charge when it became apparent that the flow of people entering the grounds could

31 Spitz, 357.
32 Bennett and Woodward, 19.
33 Warner, 63.
34 “The Message of History’s Biggest Happening,” 34.
36 “The Message of History’s Biggest Happening,” 34.
37 Moore, 84-85.
not be stopped. Making the concert free was a “powerful subversion of social norms,” and a decision corresponding to the counterculture consciousness’s only concern: the present moment (contrasting with the early 1960s dissenters who focused on the future).\footnote{Moore, 79.} Lang recognized this moment as historic and that the attendees’ experience was more important than the money. Fellow organizer John Roberts had a harder time accepting that the festival would be a financial disaster, but eventually he did and enjoyed the rest of the weekend.\footnote{Spitz, 361.} Lang and Roberts personally grew because of the ordeal, and their change in mindset represents the wider effect Woodstock had on the nation.

The names “Aquarian Exposition” and “Music and Arts Fair” fit Woodstock well. The concert accentuated the spiritual and artistic sides of the counterculture, which are too often disregarded in recollections of the era. During an August 9, 2008, panel discussion on the Woodstock Festival, Lang insisted there was a “big spiritual component to what we were trying to do” and that he hoped the concert would be “something that would show off that spiritual side of our generation.”\footnote{“Transcript: The August 9, 2008 Panel Discussion” in \textit{The Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival: The Backstory to “Woodstock,”} ed. Weston Blelock and Julia Blelock (Woodstock: WoodstockArts, 2009), 80.} For many who made the trek to Bethel, the music acts would become secondary to the main goal of self-abandonment. To achieve this spiritual freedom, some took part in group yoga, meditation, and focused breathing sessions, designed to calm body and mind. Others gleefully began skinny-dipping in the three nearby lakes or engaged in sexual intercourse in random open spaces.\footnote{Spitz, 358-359.} One audience member who was also present at the panel discussion noted the prominence of Eastern Mysticism at Woodstock and the expansion of consciousness that participants of the counterculture sought.\footnote{“Transcript: The August 9, 2009 Panel Discussion,” 83.} This was best exemplified by a ten-minute peace and love prayer led by Hindu religious guru Sri Swami Satchidananda.\footnote{Hillstrom and Collier Hillstrom, 56.} Exposure to different cultures was not limited to the spiritual, though.
The Woodstock Festival featured several art exhibits (overseen by the University of Miami Art Department), and Native-American pieces were prominent (including a Hopi pavilion). Psychedelic paintings and other local works were presented, as well. Lang states that the arts section of Woodstock would have been larger if tremendous logistical problems had not plagued the festival.44

Politics and Culture Caught on Camera: The Woodstock Film

They say the eyes do not lie. If one is not convinced that Woodstock contained relevant political and cultural components, he/she must consult the most reliable source: the 1970 Woodstock documentary directed by Michael Wadleigh. Historians can glean only so much from interviews and analyses (which may rely on weak and wavering accounts), and nothing can match footage of the event. The movie may be biased in certain ways due to the editing process. To condense three days of action into three and a half hours, the staff had to cut parts of the weekend. Decisions on what to keep or cut were based on personal reasons or production limitations. However, the film still offers accurate impressions of the concert that cannot be found elsewhere. By including and focusing on Country Joe’s performance of the anti-Vietnam War anthem “Fixin’-to-Die,” the documentary sheds light on the festival’s political nature. Wadleigh highlights the raw and controversial lyrics, by displaying them on screen with a bouncing ball, used to encourage the cinema audience to sing along. While not as political, the “F Cheer” is left in to provide a sense of the countercultural fervor marking the weekend. Performer-audience interaction was a motif throughout the film—the “F Cheer” beingone of several such examples—and was conveyed via the split-screen effect (which was innovative for the time). The split screen is also utilized in Woodstock to “provide extra-visual commentary on points and observations made by those interviewed in the film.”45 For instance, while organizer Artie Kornfeld is seen describing the freedom of the countercultural generation, the adja-

44 “Transcript: The August 9, 2009 Panel Discussion,” 82.
45 Bennett, 46-48.
cent screen shows a young couple undressing and presumably engaging in sexual intercourse in the grass.46

What the documentary does most effectively, however, is display the sense of community and detachment from the dominant society which the counterculture ideology promoted. There are multiple scenes of concertgoers frolicking in the nature and losing themselves in the moment. In one clip, the interviewer talks to several young men sitting naked in a nearby stream. Other sections of the movie include montages of festival participants sharing drugs, drinking alcohol, and dancing together. Maybe the most poignant and culturally impactful part of the film is its introduction. Scholar Daniel F. Schowalter describes it and its meaning well: “Seemingly driven by a cause greater than themselves, like worker ants, images of old and young laboring in fields, driving tractors, and building the mammoth stage potentially position the viewer to consider the unquestioned faith, the imperative of pulling ‘this thing off.’”47 This powerful beginning underscores the importance (to the organizers, workers, and others involved) of holding the festival, which, as previously noted, connects to the counterculture’s emphasis on the present moment. Additionally, the depiction of rustic living, fashion, and values serves to illuminate the counterculture’s “rejection of technocratic urban living.”48

Conclusion

Rain. Mud. Marijuana. LSD. Free love. Electric guitar. These are the phrases that come to mind when people think about the 1969 Woodstock Festival. Now, half a century later, hopefully two more phrases—political awareness and cultural growth—will be emphasized in the festival’s lexicon. This fresher understanding contrasts with the event’s contemporary negative or lukewarm reactions. The weekend and its initial assessment should be a reminder—for both media and the public alike—that conclusions about any type of happening should not be drawn immediately. Historical or cultural phenomena

46 Woodstock, 1970.
47 Bennett, 50.
48 Ibid.
should not be quickly dismissed as insignificant, at least not without deep, investigative research. Future study should look more closely at events that have been similarly written off as inconsequential.

Woodstock was a landmark moment for Americans, but its tremors were also felt internationally. Some of the bold protesters at Tiananmen Square in China in 1989 (nearly twenty years after Woodstock) had been inspired by images of the festival.\textsuperscript{49} Woodstock sparked such fascination that its imitation has been attempted several times. A concert at Altamont in California would take place later the same year, and the 1990s were marked by two Woodstock extravaganzas. Yet none captured the spontaneous, free, and peaceful essence of the original. Those three days in Bethel not only empowered America’s youth, but also forced older generations to try to understand the counterculture ideology. Fifty years on, America may need another Woodstock, considering the current tense national climate. Only time will tell if today’s youth can express itself like the “Woodstock generation” did. That latter group made the counterculture mainstream—it would not take long for teens and twenty-somethings across the country to start wearing tie-dyed shirts with peace signs. Social activism changed as well; the causes of the 1970s and 1980s (environmentalism, etc.) were born at Bethel. Maybe the man behind it all should have the last words. On Woodstock, organizer Michael Lang simply declared, “It worked…and was a confirmation of our humanity.”\textsuperscript{50}

References


Clague, Mark. “‘This is America’: Jimi Hendrix’s Star-Spangled

\textsuperscript{49} Street, 33.

\textsuperscript{50} “Transcript: The August 9, 2009 Panel Discussion,” 67.


This is AmeriK KK Ka

Chelsea Wyche
Chelsea is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh.
See we just out here tryna succeed,
But they just wanna see us all fall.
Don’t like the color of my skin,
But like my features and all.
Tryna crush us into pieces,
But we stand too tall.
Try and say this is their land, that they built this sh*t hole,
But really, they’d probably be dead if it weren’t for our strong souls.
My ancestors, forced to build this place,
Our bodies of natural Black hair
With the finest Black bone.
Bodies in shackles,
Our communities against the cops.
Thrown up against the jail bars,
Protective gestures to prevent bullet holes
In my left-side chest,
Through the finest Black breast bone.
Screaming,
DON’T SHOOT!
Screaming,
HANDS UP!
Is the response of their fictional fear
To now what is a lifeless body
In the street.
They must be deaf in both ears
To the pleading innocence
Drained out by the explosion of hatred
They expel all year.
Excuses aged with reconstruction of
I Don’t Give A F*ck!
Engraved, inside the local sheriff’s hat.
Inscribed in his badge.
Must be scriptures of his past
Ancestral footsteps he tries desperately to fill.
He tries to purge the world of what God splurged
Will this become an eye for an eye?
Hey, I’m just tryna stay positive in a world full of blind.
The Transnational Consequences of Anti-Black Racism and Settler Colonialism on Black Women:
From Turtle Island to the Jawara Tribe

by Pia Sen
Pia is a senior at the University of Texas, Austin.
The Jawara people of the Andaman Islands live under the jurisdiction of the Indian government and are recognized as a legal and social “Adivasi” group, subject to an ongoing process of colonization which materializes in the form governmental neglect and isolation, as well as sexual and monetary exploitation. “Adivasi” is a category that refers to the tribes of the Indian subcontinent in South Asia, and is both a legal and social category. While Adivasi also refers to non-Black Indigenous peoples under jurisdiction of the Indian government, the Jawara people are phenotypically Black; they are thought to have left Africa and directly migrated to the Andaman Islands via boats, thus being genetically and culturally distinct from South and East Asians. The Jawara people have history as a hunter and forager fisherman society, and have a reputation as warriors and defenders. However, the Great Andamanese tribes have been depopulated by overuse of alcohol and opium, as well as the process of settlement. The women of the Jawara are subject to rampant sexual violence, and the exposition of the Jawara to outside society has resulted in economic and physical exploitation of Jawara people.1

When discussing the struggles of the Jawara people, there are significant similarities demonstrated by the Black and Native women of Turtle Island. AntiBlackness and settler colonialism are global phenomena that influence the lives of Black women. While public discourse within Western academia often centers on these modalities of violence within the United States, there are unmistakable parallels between the experiences of the Jawara women of the Andaman Islands and the experiences of Black and Native women in the continental Americas. These technologies of violence materialize in the forms of geographic and spatial isolation of Black Native women, as well as tropes applied to Black women (such as the hyper-sexualization of Black womens’ bodies). These are globally applicable technologies of violence, and thus important when attending to the application of violence to Black women. The ability to theorize violence is the

first step in the process of developing ways to acknowledge global anti-Blackness and settler colonialism, and decenter U.S. centric narratives that encourage American exceptionalism in public discussion.

Anti-Blackness and settler colonialism are often posited as co-constitutive antagonisms upon which the United States is founded, and are essential systems of power when theorizing the formation of Black female gender. The work of Tiffany Lethabo King, particularly In the Clearing, understands the initial inception of the United States as a process of “clearing” (as an action or verb) where the Native population is subjected to genocide to produce space for the plantation; a site where the Black body experiences gratuitous violence. Gratuitous violence can be understood in conjunction with Fanon’s psychoanalytic conception of the human, where white subjectivity is formed through the process of negation (particularly, the negation of Blackness). The enactment of gratuitous violence is inherently tied to the process of clearing. It is at that site of settlement—in the clearing—where “Native space and time is obliterated…and the settler comes to know himself and gains spatial coordinates” and thus is able to gain coherency and subjectivity. Tiffany King theorizes the Black female body as the site at which one can note the intersection of both slavery and settler colonialism, because “both the Slave Master’s need for bodies and the Settler’s need for space required the production of the Black female slave body as a unit of unending property”; that is crucial to the process of making space where white human subjectivity is formulated.

Black feminist studies have provided an intervention into male-centric African American Studies, to conceptionalize Black female bodies as experiencing an impetus for reproduction. Because the Black

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woman’s body, sexuality, and reproduction is regulated on the plantation to produce the subjects of labor (children), the Black female body is uniquely the signifier for expansion and the development of modernity. As said by Tiffany King, “When the Settler surveys the Black female body, the Settler can imagine their land, territory, property and spatial coordinates expanding. The construction of the Black female slave body as fungible and a site of accumulation is as much a product of the Settler’s imagination as it is the slave masters.”  

Black feminist studies attempt to grapple with the management of Black women’s reproduction and sexuality to produce children that can be slaves, thus reconceptualizing how property is understood in context of Black women. While In the Clearing focuses on grappling with the formation of the United States and Canada (Turtle Island), I believe these analytics are valuable globally and provide a necessary intervention into Ameriocentric discourses regarding anti-Black violence and settler colonialism.

Within public discourse, theorization of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism are often discussed in U.S. centric contexts. Discussions of race in the United States often begin from a query into the “current state of America”, as even the acknowledgement of racial bias attributes the existence of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism to the origins of the United States. While it is certainly true that the foundational history of the United States is crucial to the discussions of anti-Blackness in America, these discourses often theorize racism and colonialism as unique to the United States, creating an “American Exceptionalism” that fetishizes other nations—especially those outside of Europe—as utopian countries, without the pervasive “race problem” that the United States has. This is demonstrated by the proliferation of jokes and earnest sentiments about “moving to Canada” after the presidential win of Donald Trump in 2016—who quickly became a signifier among liberals as representing the


worst of America”, due to his overt racism and patriarchal values. U.S. exceptionalism in conceptions of race exceeds the constraints of mere jokes; visa issuing is rising. Between 2007 to 2016, the number of student visas granted to Americans increased from 6,033 to 7,045. The week that Trump was elected, Google searches for “college in Canada” spiked substantially from 25 to 100 million hits. This presumes that Canada does not ascribe to the same anti-Black and settler colonial values that shape the process of policy making within the United States.

Afropessimism has been criticized as only being able to theorize the consequences of the Middle Passage on the West, as well as the interactions of slavery with settler colonialism in context of Turtle Island. I find this to be problematic and incorrect, especially due to the extent that Afropessimism depends upon scholars like Fanon and Césaire, who are speaking in context of Algeria and Martinique, respectively. The inability to recognize Afropessimist theorization as unconfined to the United States is not only patronizing, but dangerous and dismissive—creating conditions that prove U.S. exceptionalists as unable to understand the United States as merely another nation within a global antagonistic structure of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism.

Despite the constraints of societal and academic imagination, I argue that the Black feminist theorization is globally applicable outside of the contexts of Turtle Island. It is important to discuss the ways in which tropes of Black women are continuous, and how they subsequently overdetermined the scripting of Black women, globally. The application of Black feminist understandings of power to global Indigenous and Black movements provides the possibility of

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fostering acknowledgement and further linking Black Indigenous folks around the world. Theorization of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism as a question of identity politics compartmentalizes “Black woman” and “Native woman” as separate identities, erasing these subjectivities of those who occupy multiple positions, and obfuscating the ways in which settler colonialism and anti-Blackness work together to create conditions of violence. Through analyzing these systems as structures that exist globally, we can provide a discursive shift that understands racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and anti-Blackness as structural conditions that influence our societal consciousness, while helping us attend to subjectivities that are often neglected, both domestically and abroad. This is not an attempt to dismiss the importance of domestic analysis when theorizing Black feminism. Particularly, the violence that Black Native women experience on the Native reservation is an important analytic to look at the application of violent tropes that are applied to Black and Native women in the continental United States.

The under-theorization of Black Native women in the United States—both on and off the reservation—is a political decision that is justified by the clearing. White “human” subjectivity gains coherency via the assimilation of the Native to make space for the plantation, where Black women’s bodies are viewed as a source of labor, sexual pleasure, and as a site of gratuitous violence. Thus, it is consistent with the processes of settler colonialism and anti-Blackness that Afro-Indian societies are denied from the archive for analysis and interrogation. While I do not attempt to fully explain the erasure of Afro-Indian communities by academia, legalism, and public discourse, the treatment of Black Native women on the reservation is essential when theorizing geographic and spatial isolation as a technology of settler anti-Black violence. One of the biggest issues discussed within Native scholarship is the treatment of Native people—particularly Native women—on the reservation. It is

acknowledged that alcoholism, suicide rates, and health issues such as obesity and infant mortality (three times the national rate) are significant concerns for Native people on reservations.\textsuperscript{13} The suicide rate in particular is twice the national rate, and teen suicide on the reservation is 4 times the national rate. Former residents of the Salt River reservation recount that their tribe “has the highest rate of diabetes in the world, or at least it did when I wrote my capstone research paper on it for nursing school. We spend a lot of money on hemodialysis.” Statistics are consistent with these narratives. Diabetes is eight times the national rate, and it is estimated that 50% of the population over 40 has diabetes. In addition to rampant health concerns, the unemployment rate on the Buffalo County South Dakota Reservation is between 80 and 90%, and per capita income is only about 4 thousand dollars a year. Drinking abuse is estimated to be as higher as 80%, and 1 in 4 infants is born addicted.\textsuperscript{14} There are also high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, unique to Natives who live on the reserve. Children growing up on the reservation remember seeing SWAT team shoot-outs, cops performing manhunts, and even the brutal murder of animals. The geographic isolation of the reservation is acknowledged to be a proximate cause of this violence, that enables these issues to be neglected by white suburbia, with children who grew up on Arizona reservations noting that “There are far more issues on a reserve than say, 2 miles down the road in white suburbia”.

Additionally, living on the reservation is accepted to be difficult and a source of poverty and hardship, with austere living conditions that are further enabled by the isolation and sequestration of Indigenous peoples from the broader communities of the United States. Indigenous peoples are given legal sovereignty over the reservation, resulting in judicial and legislative justification for the neglect of people on the reservation. The resulting guise of Indigenous sovereignty manifests in the form of underfunding Indigenous police de-

partments and social services. The Native reservation is often used by modernity to create illusions of Indigenous self-determination, demonstrating how the isolation of Indigenous peoples is used as a technology of anti-Indigenous violence. On reservations, electric companies often pull electric meters during the winter before snowstorms, while local grocery stores sell rotten produce. Children who grew up on the Standing Rock reservation recount having to “drive sometimes up to 3 hours away to fill up water tanks”. The system of racial capitalism also influences these conditions, where outsiders come into reservations and start businesses with inflated prices. Thus, poverty and structural disparity is further enabled by the conditions of isolation. On a reservation in Buffalo County, South Dakota (home of the Hunkpati Dakota Siouan Natives) most Natives do not have vehicles necessary for transport outside of the reservation, nor do they want to leave—the history and ongoing project of colonialism disincentives that movement. The physical isolation of the reservation makes it almost impossible to obtain jobs that are economically feasible, due to the cost of gas and a vehicle that a lot of Natives on the reservation do not have. This experience of geographic isolation is not unique to the Hunkpati Dakota Siouan Natives. On the Salt River and Gila River reservations near Phoenix, Arizona, Native children recounted that they only saw one small gas station/grocery store and smoke shop.

Black Native women growing up on the reservation exist at a unique intersection that is subject to anti-Black misogynoir and settler colonial violence. The isolation of Black Native women on the reservation demonstrates how segregation serves as a material tool of white settler society to maintain the structures of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism. The subject position is under analyzed and important to theorize the unique process of the clearing. In addition to the conditions experienced of living on the reserve, Black women experience ostracization from non-Black Native people who also live on the reservation. Roicia Banks, a Black and Native woman from Arizona, experienced “authenticity testing” of her Native identity, where, as a Black Native woman, she had to constantly prove she was “Native enough” to be considered truly Native American. Banks
grew up on a Hopi reservation. In school on the reservation, she could recall experiencing significant anti-Blackness. She was accustomed to bullying, where kids would taunt her, saying that she had “sheep’s hair” and call her the N-word—both in class and outside of school. Despite the perception of Native reservations being spaces with separation from the coloniality of the greater United States, Roicia Banks can recall her school history books and popular culture pathologizing Black culture, positing it as inferior. These lived experiences of Black Native women demonstrate how the Native reserve is not a space that can be considered distinct from the colonial atmospheres that are imposed by the co-constitutive systems of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism. While the geographic isolation of the reserve is portrayed to be a space of refuge or safety for Native and Indigenous people from the outside world among political liberals and moderates alike, the guise of Indigenous sovereignty is demonstrated to be a tool of settler colonialism that enables the United States federal government to move the Native out of sight and out of mind from the collective Eurocentric hegemonic cultural imagination. This geographic isolation is a technology of violence against Black Native women. Radmilla Cody is a Navajo, Black and Native American singer whose African American phenotype has been subject to scrutiny and violence in the public discussion. As a child, she can recall being “singled out” for her phenotypically Black features on the Navajo reservation where she grew up, similar to the experiences of Roicia Banks. She was often asked to choose between her identities, which she refused to do. The experiences of Black Native women are important to consider, because in addition to the structural conditions of living on a reservation, Black Native women experience ostracization from their own communities, as well as the structural conditions of settler colonialism.

15 “As A Black Native American, Arizona Woman Had To Prove She Was ‘Native Enough.” KJZZ, 13 Mar. 2017, kjzz.org/content/444529/Black-Native-american-arizona-woman-had-prove-she-was-Native-enough.
However, geographic isolation as a technology of violence cannot be exceptionalized among Black women in the United States to only be considered applicable to Black Native women. The geographic isolation of Black women as a tool of violence is demonstrated to apply to Black non-Native communities that are pathologized, which reflects a historic and ongoing trend. Historically, the plantation served as a site of geographic and spatial isolation, where slavery was enacted with practices of capture that reinforced carcerality and the pathologization of Blackness via practices of geography.\textsuperscript{17} Transatlantic slavery used the processes of constraint and immobilization to capture Africans. Africans were separated on slave ships from their tribes via physical isolation from each other, and were forcibly removed from Africa to produce enslavement as a process of natal alienation. The “belly of the slave ship” is a well-known cultural motif, that is recognized for the gratuitous violence enacted against the Black body who is present. The violence that occurred against the enslaved in the belly of the ship was senseless, where slaves were made to sleep in their own feces and chained for weeks to months on end. Enslaved Africans were thrown overboard if they were not seen as yielding a financial benefit to the enslavers, as exemplified on the \textit{Zong} slave ship, where more than one hundred and thirty Africans were thrown overboard in order for the Royal African Company (RAC) that financed the journey to gain the insurance money on each slave.\textsuperscript{18} Even when the enslaved African people survived the journey to Europe and the Americas, the treatment was austere and dehumanizing, based around the physical capture and isolation of the enslaved, intended to construct the logics of carcerality that are reflected in modernity. These technologies of violence were continued on the plantation via the creation of the “big house”, the “slave quarters”, the “auction block” and the “field”. Slave-owners used

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tools like iron muzzles, which fit over the heads of slaves and locked their mouths, making it impossible to speak or eat. The plantation gained its power via its ability to spatially isolate enslaved subjects, and make the spaces outside of the plantation places that were illegal for Black folks to occupy. This illegality of occupation can be seen today with the formation of primarily white neighborhoods, where Black folks are often construed “out of place”, and are subject to greater scrutiny by police and non-Black publics. In 2015, documents were leaked demonstrating the use of an application called SketchFactor, inviting users to report “sketchy” subjects in the primarily white and wealthy affluent Georgetown shop area. Sketch Factor was used as a tool of racial profiling, where Black people were usually reported as “sketchy”. Comments included phrasing by an American Apparel worker such as “3 female. 1 male strong smell of weed. All African American. Help please.” The artifacts of the group chat reflect the disparate racialization of areas like Georgetown, where only 3.7% of the residents are Black. The impetus for the exclusion of Black subjects is representative of a racial anxiety for the geographic isolation of Blackness under the guise of protecting white people. The product of spatial isolation is a site where Black folks experience violence that can be kept out of public discourse by white people and hegemonic narratives of issues considered relevant to society.

Similar to the conditions of the reserve and plantation that experience simultaneous over-policing of Black and Native movement and autonomy and neglect of Black and Native health and living conditions, primarily Black neighborhoods experience that both over policing and neglect display a dismissal of Black and Native life. This can manifest in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder for children who live in these neighborhoods. Children growing up in Chicago neighborhoods that are primarily Black are diagnosed with rates of PTSD equivalent to the rates of PTSD seen in war

veterans. Geographic isolation thus enables, but is not the cause, of these conditions of violence that are experienced outside of the reservation, demonstrating how Black and Native bodies experience anti-Black neglect and over-policing. This is further seen by instances of police brutality, SWAT raids, and the simultaneous medical experimentation and neglect of Black women, who are troped as experiencing less pain. The systemic murder of Black women such as Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd, and Atatiana Jefferson demonstrate the logics of carcerality by police who perceived of these Black women as threats. The dehumanization of these Black women is enabled by the perception of Black women “belonging” in spaces distinct from the spaces that are occupied by white people.

Geographic isolation is a consistent technology of violence that is utilized to subjugate the Jawara tribe of India, and is used to enable non-Black settler voyeurism. The Jawara people live on reservations, in attempts to geographically isolate themselves to maintain a lifestyle based in tradition and tribal understandings of the world. However, the Indian army simultaneously justifies the neglect and exploitation of the Jawara people, by ignoring reports of drugging and alcoholism, while frequently bringing in tourists who wish to observe the tribe for bribes. This further enables the depiction of Jawara as “exotic” and “animal”, and can be mirrored to the experiences and orientation of non-Black settlers towards Black Native women on the reservation. It can also be seen in Black neighborhoods that are often praised for their art and culture, while the white


gaze maintains a fetishistic relationship to the cultural capital that is gained via the production of said Black art. The fetishized notion of geographic regions cannot be considered distinct from the project of racial capitalism that is enacted upon these geographic zones. Legal documents and narrative experiences of tourists on the Jawara reservation recount being charged extremely high prices by police officers and Indian Army officials to shuttle people back and forth to Jawara reservations. Racial tourism is another demonstration of how white voyeurism is enabled by the geographic and spatial isolation of Black communities. While the reservation is often understood among Native studies to be a site of spatial isolation where violence occurs, I argue that this understanding of spatial isolation must be expanded to encompass non-Native Indigenous communities and Black communities. In addition to the reservation as a site of gratuitous violence that is enacted in excess upon Black and Native bodies, the spatial isolation that produces the plantation, the prison, the ghetto, the barrio, and the reservation are sites of simultaneous fetishization through which racial capital finds profit and is able to maintain itself. This is demonstrated through the processes of tourism on the plantation, the reservation, and Black neighborhoods. The plantation today is often visited as a historical artifact of the past, but simultaneously hailed as a site of “beautiful houses” and sprawling, gorgeous fields. Often, these discussions do not even include discussions of slavery, and when they do, they evoke feelings of white guilt that are posited as defamatory to slave owners and “Southern history”. The white-washed romanticization...
tion of the plantation is representative of how spaces where Black women experience violence can be rendered fetishized, signifying the disregard for Black life that experiences gratuitous violence. The romanticization of Black geographies is also seen in Black neighborhoods with the process of gentrification. Despite the over policing of Black communities, Black neighborhoods are often posited as “cultural” and with “rich history”, rendering them museum exhibits to be observed by outsiders in a voyeuristic process. As Black Wall Street is blown up when Black people try to gain economic autonomy, these spaces are reduced to objects for consumption. The descriptor of Black neighborhoods is then used to incentivize gentrification, where Black women are used as props to represent cultural competency. That is not to make the claim that gentrification can entirely be divorced from the economic structures of racial capitalism. However, it is possible that the psychological impetus for the co-constitutive fetishization and phobia of Blackness is what shapes the ways in which racial capitalism manifests itself. These systems can be extended to explain the occupation of the reservation with processes of tourism that occur on both Native American and Jawara reservations. Tourism often feeds the exoticization of Indigenous populations that are considered no different than zoo animals or the landscape, and thus dehumanizes the objects of fetish. Following, the process of anti-Black settler violence must not be understood solely through phobic interactions, but also through philia of both Black spaces (geographic regions) and bodies. The Black Native body, in addition to geographic space, uniquely experiences psycho-sexual fetishization. In Franz Fanon’s groundbreaking book, Black Skin White Masks, Fanon is able to note the moment of epidermalization through which Blackness is interpolated. As he sits on a train, he can recall a small white boy point at him, and say “Look, a Negro!” rendering that word a racial slur because of the associations that the child made with his epidermalized—i.e. visual—appearance. This, Fanon explains, is a psychological reaction

that is a result of living within the world that overloads the psyche with associations of Blackness. The moment of epidermalization is theorized to be the reason why white women cross the street or lock their car doors in the presence of a Black man.\textsuperscript{24} While this racial signifier is often discussed in phobic terms, there is also a philic component of the white psyche that manifests in the form of exploitation. Philia works in conjunction with racial capitalism to produce psychic and physical violence against Black-Native bodies and manifests most evidently in context of the body of a Black woman.

The hyper-sexualization of the Black woman’s body is evidenced as a continuous trope applied to Black women, through examples in the United States and the Jawara tribe. The trope manifests in the form of exploitation and sexual violence against Black women. In 2015, the Jawara tribe was brought to the forefront of discussion within Indian society, when a video was leaked that depicted an Indian army official in uniform bribing a Jawara woman to take off her clothes and engage in “sexual” dancing for food.\textsuperscript{28} Both the police officer’s desire to see the Jawara woman dance, and the societal discourse surrounding the dance of the Jawara woman as inherently sexual, represents the process of “adultification” that is imposed upon Black women, where Black girls are never associated with innocence or childhood, and instead ascribed with adult-like maturity. This process of adultification is inextricably linked with the hyper-sexualization of Black women’s bodies, because while white women are granted a “child-like” innocence, Black women’s bodies are scripted as sexual and “more mature” for their ages, to justify sexual exploitation.\textsuperscript{29} That process of hyper-sexualization and adultification is demonstrated by the legal and societal treatment of Jawara women by settler nation states such as India, as well as the European explorers who first captured Jawara women and deemed them objects of sexuality and conquest. In 2014, the first public interview with the Jawara was conducted since their initial voluntary


contact with outsiders, with an unnamed man from the tribe who wished to maintain anonymity for his safety and the safety of those who helped give the interview. The Jawara were described as beginning to come out of the jungle about sixteen years prior to this, and described the sexual abuse of girls from the tribe as systemic, saying that the “outside boys press [the girls] lots...and press them using hands and nails, when the girls get angry.” The interview was notable and was published days after eight Jawara women were kidnapped and sexually exploited by men who landed at the shores of Jawara territories in 2014. The systemic nature of the sexual abuse by outsiders is emblematic of an orientation towards Jawara women that justifies their sexual abuse, and the continuation of that sexual abuse with legal apathy on part of the Indian government.

The exoticization of Jawara women is part in parcel with the project of adultification, where young Jawara women are denied the perception of innocence and childhood, alongside the simultaneous depiction of Jawara women as “tribal” and “primitive” for their hunter-gather lifestyles, characterized by a refusal of technology—thus incompetent and unintelligent—but also constantly desiring sexuality. There is a distinct paradox within the simultaneous hyper-sexualization and framing of the Black Indigenous woman as “primitive” and “unintelligent” that exposes the gratuitous violence against the bodies of Black women. While the hyper-sexualization of the bodies of Black women is associated with the process of adultification, the framing of the Black Indigenous woman as primitive and unintelligent (and therefore in need of guidance from the modern Western world), imposes a child-like and paternalistic imposition onto the bodies of Black women, demonstrating the infantilization of Black Indigenous women. This paradoxical orientation begs the question of what it means for Black Indigenous women to be infantilized, while they are also denied the perception of innocence. The fetishization of someone who is deemed to be “a child”,

is paralogical of sexualization, because these are subjects who—under the logic of modernity—are not capable of consent. Thus, the sexual violation of Black Indigenous women is fetishized and desired by non-Black subjects. The Jawara tribe’s exoticization is exploited by the Indian Army and other entities outside of the Jawara reservation, as demonstrated by the societal perception of the Jawara. Because of the phenotypically dark features that Jawara people display, as a result of their direct African heritage, those features are often a direct object of discussion within the public discourse of Indian society. Photographs of Jawara women are sold as postcards outside of the Jawara reservation that depict half-naked Jawara women as “iinen chadda” which translates to “shed of the fair skinned”. With this imagery, the Jawara woman is rendered an object of fascination and desire, due to their Black appearances and tribal lifestyles.31

The philia of Blackness cannot be separated from the treatment of Black women globally, as museum exhibits that are denied the right to their own narratives and tellings of the world. The first accounts of Africans by European colonizers who sought out African populations for enslavement displayed a curiosity towards the African and the tribal lifestyle deemed primitive in contrast with European ideals. ‘Black’ as a color was already associated with demonic, and ‘white’ was a signifier for angelic. Blackness was scripted onto the African body as a signifier, but the hyper-sexualization of Black women’s bodies is evident even in those initial European accounts that focused on the buttocks and breasts of African women and described them as large. This initial fascination with the bodies of Black women continued with the enslavement of Sara Baartman, who was kidnapped and displayed in museums for the purpose of white enjoyment. When she died, her body was preserved for science and stored in a museum. The dehumanization of Black women with the process of adultification is based around the same philic desires to observe and sexualize the bodies of Black women and

is demonstrated in the United States today. This can be observed through the high rates of Black girls being forced into sex trafficking and high rates of sexual violence against Black women, where Black women are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual violence than their non-Black counterparts.\footnote{Hartman, Saidiya. “Venus in Two Acts.” \textit{Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism}, vol. 26, 2008, pp. 1–14, doi:10.2979/sax.2008.-.26.1.} It cannot go unmentioned that as the Black-Native women of Turtle Island systemically go missing from reservations, and one in four Native women will experience sexual assault, there are parallels that can be drawn to the Jawara reservation, where Jawara women also experience astronomically high rates of sexual violence.\footnote{“Ending Violence Against Native Women.” \textit{Ending Violence Against Native Women | Indian Law Resource Center}, indianlaw.org/issue/ending-violence-against-Native-women.} This is historically consistent with a history of gendered violence against Black and Native women on plantations and Native reservations alike, where exploitation and sexual violence remains common. The geographic isolation of Black women cannot be separated from the hyper-sexualization of the bodies of Black women and the logic of carcerality that transcends the history of the United States to encompass the world. The objectification of phenotypic Blackness puts a target on the backs of Black women, and the spatial stratification of the spaces produced by the ghetto, the reservation, the prison, and the plantation, produce the grounds for the fetishization of Black women.

The United States is founded upon anti-Blackness and settler colonialism principles, that are a result of a process of the clearing, where the Native is made invisible to produce space where violence in excess occurs against Black people, particularly Black women. However, the exceptionalization of this violence as unique to the Western world (or even as unique to the United States), as it prevents the recognition that this is a global phenomenon. On a precognitive level, the bodies of Black women are hyper-sexualized and the geographic isolation of Black and Indigenous women enables a logic of carcerality and capture, where the bodies of Black women are consumed (as demonstrated by the plantation, the ghetto, and the reservation(s)
that Native and Jawara women can occupy). The recognition of these technologies of violence and tropes of Black women are crucial to the formulation of global linkages between Black and Indigenous people to develop better understandings of how violence operates.

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The Exclusive Power of Agenda-Setting in the Modern United States Congress

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Abstract

In the United States Congress, one individual per chamber holds the power to bring a bill to the floor of the House of Representatives or the Senate. The concentration of the agenda-setting power in Congress allows a single elected representative to prevent the passage of any legislation that would negatively affect his narrow political or financial interests, regardless of the popular support for the policy. Using theories of political inclusivity and representation from prominent democratic theorists Jane Mansbridge, Robert Dahl, and Iris Marion Young, I demonstrate how the institutionalized exclusivity and the historical unrepresentativeness of the current system of agenda-setting in the United States Congress undermines other institutions meant to ensure a democratic legislative process and leads to undemocratic outcomes. I provide relevant examples of Congressional agenda-setters preventing the public from exercising its democratic agency, and offer suggestions to create a more inclusive agenda-setting process.

Few would argue against the assertion that democratic decision-making should be inclusive, and activists have been working for centuries for more inclusive political institutions. A major outcome of this activism is demonstrated by expanded voter enfranchisement guaranteed through legislation such as the 19th amendment and the Voting Rights Act—laws that ensure inclusion of marginalized groups during elections. While there has been progress on the enfranchisement front, one aspect of the American political process that remains extremely exclusive is the agenda-setting process in the United States Congress. Agenda-setting can be interpreted and applied to many aspects of the process of passing federal legislation; it can include the media, grassroots political organizations, political parties and their leadership, and elected officials, but this analysis will focus narrowly on the bill-scheduling stage of the federal legislation process in Congress. The few individuals who have historically held the power to set the Congressional agenda have been unrepresentative of the entire United States population. I will demonstrate how the current system of bill scheduling in the United States Congress undermines other institutions meant to ensure a democratic legis-
ative process and leads to undemocratic outcomes, because of the institutionalized exclusivity and historical unrepresentativeness of the process, by using theories of descriptive representation derived from political theorists Iris Marion Young and Jane Mansbridge, and Robert Dahl’s theory of democratic agenda-setting.

The agenda-setting power in congress is exclusive, concentrated in two elected individuals—only the Speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate hold the power of legislative scheduling. They alone determine what bills will be put to a vote by the entirety of their respective chamber, and these powerful positions historically have been almost exclusively held by white men of high socioeconomic status. Democratic theorist Iris Marion Young argues that “questions of what gets on the agenda of political discussion and how seriously participants take positions put forward in a discussion are crucial for an inclusive democratic process.”¹ These positions and their considerable powers of legislative scheduling were not designated by the United States Constitution, but rather were developed through Congressional rules throughout the twentieth century. Under our modern agenda-setting procedures, bills and policies with significant bipartisan support from American voters can stagnate in one or both houses of Congress, without debate or vote, simply as a result of the whim and political ambitions of one or both leaders of Congress.

As a consequence of these agenda-setting procedures, in the past decade the United States Congress has failed to pass legislation to address issues that receive massive amounts of public attention: gun violence, immigration reform, and climate change. Despite majority public support for common sense policies that tackle these generational challenges, increasing polarization in national politics has led to stagnant policy outcomes and political gridlock. There is no singular cause for these phenomena and our political system is rife with institutional problems that can be improved. I focus on the exclusivity and lack of descriptive representation in the agenda-setting stage of the formal process of passing a piece of national legislation and the impact of members of

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Congress voluntarily relinquishing the power of bill scheduling to a tiny minority of this country—a minority of two.

This agenda-setting process ensures that two people have the final say on what bills will be voted upon and what bills will die on the legislative calendar. In the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House has the responsibility to determine what motions will be considered and voted on by the House. For simplicity, the general process of a bill in the House of Representatives is as follows: a bill is first introduced to the House by its sponsor, it is then assigned to its appropriate committee(s) to be debated, marked-up, and amended, and once released by the committee(s), the bill is placed on the House calendar. Even if a bill is placed on the House calendar, there is no guarantee that the Speaker will bring it to the floor for consideration. According to Valerie Haitshusen, a specialist on Congress and the legislative process, “the Speaker’s powers offer him or her considerable latitude to exercise discretion. . .the Speaker is able to assert control over what motions may be made and therefore what measures will be considered and the general flow of House floor proceedings.” The Speaker of the House, who is elected by the plurality of a single Congressional district, has nearly sole power to determine on what bills the House will vote.

The Senate agenda-setting rules operate in the same way; the majority leader of the Senate has the privilege to decide what legislation the Senate will consider. Haitshusen writes, “to promote predictability and order, Senators traditionally have agreed to give certain procedural privileges to the majority leader. . .only the majority leader (or a Senator acting at his behest) is able to successfully propose what bills and resolutions the Senate should consider,” once a bill is released by its Senate committee and placed on the Senate calendar, it is up to the majority leader to bring the bill up for debate and a vote on the Senate floor.

The implementation of a filibuster in the Senate is an additional obstacle to a bill being passed. Before the majority leader presents a

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3 Ibid, “Summary.”
bill for a vote, he “attempts to get all Senators to agree by unanimous consent to take up the bill he wishes to have debated.” If a Senator does not give his or her consent, he or she is implicitly threatening to filibuster the motion to proceed on the bill; only 60 votes in the Senate can invoke cloture, which ends extended debate. Because cloture requires a three-fifths vote of the Senate, a bill almost always must have some level of bipartisan backing to invoke cloture. The filibuster gives all members of the Senate, particularly members of the minority party, the opportunity to delay and block a piece of legislation, but there is not an institutional rule that gives the minority party of either chamber the ability to advance legislation by bringing a bill to the floor of their respective Congressional chamber for a vote.

Because bill-scheduling is the sole responsibility of the Speaker in the House and the majority leader in the Senate, the potential for gridlock is worsened when the two chambers of Congress are controlled by opposing political parties. Party leaders may choose to pass over bipartisan legislation and, instead, pursue a partisan agenda that “helps build the party brand by pointing out differences between their own party and their opponents.” The current political climate of 2019 exemplifies this trend. In April, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell vowed to be a legislative “grim reaper” and has refused to bring up for a vote in the Senate any legislation passed by the Democratic House of Representatives. Despite this promise, the House has passed 351 bills under Speaker Pelosi’s leadership during the 116th Congressional session that are currently waiting to be debated and voted on in the Senate as of January 10th, 2020. The bills cover a range of policy matters from preventing gun violence to campaign finance reform, and are meant to distinguish the Democratic Party from the Republican control of the Senate and White House. Despite

5 Ibid, 3.
7 Camilo Montoya-Galvez, ““Think of Me as the Grim Reaper”: Mcconnel Vows to Thwart Democratic Proposals,” CBS News, 2019.
Forbes & Fifth

the legislative activity in the House, Leader McConnell has used his agenda-setting power to avoid debate and voting on the Senate floor.

On February 27, 2019, the House—under Nancy Pelosi’s Speakership—passed the Bipartisan Background Check Act of 2019. H. R. 8 would require a criminal background check for every firearm transfer between private parties and would prohibit transfers from an unlicensed individual unless a licensed gun dealer, manufacturer, or importer temporarily takes the firearm while conducting a background check. An October 2015 poll from CBS/New York Times of 1,289 representative respondents found that 92% of Americans support a federal law requiring a background check on every firearm transfer. Despite this overwhelming level of public support for universal background checks, Leader McConnell has refused to even consider the bill. Pressure from interest groups, political party dynamics, personal ideology, and financial interests prevent Leader McConnell from advancing H.R. 8 for debate on the Senate floor.

One could argue the leader of each chamber is chosen by their Congressional peers; therefore, they have a mandate to determine the agenda in the manner in the way that Leader McConnell is doing. However, despite their positions as elected representatives by their constituents and as elected leaders by their colleagues, the drawback to the Speaker’s and majority leader’s exclusive authority in bill-scheduling is the limited perspectives and interests that are represented in the process to determine what bills will be considered. All but one Speaker of the House has been a white male, and every majority leader of the Senate has been a white male; there has been a not-so-shocking absence of diverse identities and perspectives in these positions. Jane Mansbridge, a former president of the American Political Science Association, discusses the benefits of descriptive representation in her piece “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes.’” Mansbridge argues that when levels of mistrust in the government are high and there are historical imbalances in power and statues

9 Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, HR 8, 116th Cong.
between groups, descriptive representation can improve communication between constituents and their representative because the understanding of shared experiences can generate trust between the two. This improved communication leads to constituents feeling better represented by their members of Congress, and the government enjoys a greater level of perceived democratic legitimacy from its citizens. An empirical study of Black voters in America support Mansbridge’s theory of descriptive representation:

“In the United States, blacks are more likely to know the name of their representative when he or she is also black. Blacks are also more likely to report having contact with a black representative than with a representative who is not black. . .65% of blacks approve of their black representatives, while only 44% approve of representatives who are not black.”

Theories of minority empowerment give political theorists reason to believe that descriptive representation provides benefits on both proceduralist and instrumental grounds. Despite an increasing number of members of Congress from historically marginalized communities in the past several decades, this change as not translated to more diversity in the highest levels of power in Congress. Black, Latinx, queer, and until very recently, women have not been formally included in the agenda-setting process in Congress.

The designers of political institutions should strive to maximize representation of marginalized identities, because of the high levels of participation, satisfaction, and legitimacy that result from higher levels of representation. In her book Inclusion and Democracy, Iris Marion Young argues against institutions that “keep some individuals or groups out of the fora of debate or processes of decision-making, or which allow some individuals or groups dominative control over what happens in them.” Because those that have “dominative control” over the agenda in Congress are from privileged commu-

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13 Iris Marion Young, Inclusion and Democracy, 52.
nities, the interests of a select group of United States citizens are represented and prioritized by these powerful positions in Congress. The sweeping powers of the Speaker and majority leader to preclude formal debate on a radically popular piece of legislation demonstrates a deliberate arrangement of exclusion that privileges the politically, socially, and financially powerful over the interests of the average American voter.

The inability of Congress to pass a bill with over 90% support from the public is indicative of the troubling concentration of agenda-setting power consolidated in the positions of Speaker of the House and majority leader of the Senate. It is imperative to evaluate how inclusive and democratic this political system is with respect to agenda-setting and bill-scheduling. Robert Dahl, a democratic theorist and former president of the American Political Science Association, argues that control of the agenda is one of five standards for any democratic association. In his book *On Democracy*, Dahl writes, “by curtailing opportunities for discussing the proposals on the agenda, a tiny minority of members might, in effect, determine the policies of the association.”

The leader of each Congressional chamber will strategically curtail discussion on a bill by refusing to bring it to the floor. Limiting the bill-scheduling authority to only one individual per chamber of Congress effectively allows a tiny minority of Congressional members and an even smaller minority of adults in the United States determine what pieces of federal legislation will be considered for a vote.

Theoretically, this exclusion in the agenda-setting stage of the federal legislating process requires a critical inquiry into how democratic that process is. Dahl puts forth a hypothetical scenario involving a small group of wealthy property owners to illustrate how an exclusive agenda-setting process can nullify other procedures and institutions meant to ensure a democratic association:

“They propose to require that at the general meetings the members can only discuss and vote on matters that have already been placed on the agenda by an executive committee; and membership on the executive committee will be open only to the largest property holders.

By controlling the agenda, this tiny cabal can be fairly confident that the association will never act contrary to its interests, because it will never allow any proposal to be brought forward that would do so.\textsuperscript{15}

There are parallels between this hypothetical group of wealthy landowners and the current agenda-setting rules in Congress. It is not an outlandish claim to assert that the Speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate are political, economic, and social elites of the United States. These select few elites have the ability to block any legislation that interferes with their personal financial or political interests. If either the Speaker or majority leader believes that holding a vote on a bill would diminish the probability of their reelection as either a member of Congress or as the party leader, they can use their agenda-setting power to prevent deliberation, even if the bill is supported by the majority of the public.

This institutional design is an obstacle to the American polity exercising their democratic agency. Democratic governments have to carefully balance majority rule and minority rights, and when the interests of hundreds of millions can be overrode by a single person, there is an undemocratic and unjust disconnect between the collective will of the people and the outcomes of the legislative process. The people who established the agenda-setting rules of the American legislative process gave too few people the ability to determine what those legislative outcomes would be and severely restricted whose interests would be included during the consideration of bills, regardless of their probability of passage. The exclusivity of this aspect of the American political system leads to unjust legislative outcomes, because those with political power are not acting according to the will of the voters in this country. Like Dahl’s hypothetical association, the Speaker and the majority leader can ensure any bill that would be political or financially disadvantageous would never pass by never scheduling the bill for a vote, regardless of the level of public support for the policy.

The failure of the Obama Administration’s 2013-2014 push for comprehensive immigration reform exemplifies the exceptional power of one elected representative in Congress (Speaker of the House John Boehner) to utilize the privilege of the Speakership to protect

his own political position by controlling the legislative agenda. The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744) was originally crafted by the “Gang of Eight” — a bipartisan cohort of four Democratic Senators and four Republican Senators — and introduced by Senator Chuck Schumer in April of 2013. The bill included provisions to increase funding for border security and a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Under the control of Majority Leader Harry Reid, the Senate passed S. 744 with a veto-proof majority of 68 yeas to 32 nays.\(^{16}\) Along with enjoying bipartisan support in the Senate, many aspects of the bill were favored by Americans. A Pew Research Center survey from June of 2013 found that 75% of Americans agreed with the statement that “most [undocumented immigrants] are hard workers who should have the opportunity to stay and improve their lives” and 71% believed “there should be a way for them to stay in the U.S. legally.”\(^{17}\) Despite this level of support, the bill was not brought for a vote by the House, which was controlled by Speaker of the House John Boehner.

Nearly a year after S. 744 passed the Senate, President Barack Obama stated that Speaker Boehner would “continue to block a vote on immigration reform at least for the remainder of this year.”\(^{18}\) Speaker Boehner did not perceive a partisan or personal benefit to holding a vote on this popular piece of legislation, because of the primary dynamics of the Republican party. Laurel Harbridge, author of Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting in the House of Representatives, finds that ‘members’ primary election interests also make them more likely to benefit from a partisan legislative strategy.”\(^{19}\) Because of Speaker Boehner’s narrow short-term political interests, he obstructed the passage of a bill that had bipartisan support in the Senate and among the general public; therefore, he prioritized his own political power over the interests of the American public.

The United States Congress is meant to be a deliberative forum;

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19 Laurel Harbridge, Is Bipartisanship Dead?, 56.
constituents expect their elected representatives to thoughtfully and meaningfully engage in policy discussions and determine the best outcomes for their district and the nation. When the Speaker or the majority leader obstructs a bill in their respective chamber, this deliberation may never happen. In *Inclusion and Democracy,* Young describes deliberation as “open discussion and the exchange of views leading to agreed-upon policies.” For deliberation to be democratic and produce just outcomes, all people must have the opportunity to express their interests and give justification for their policy preferences. Young writes, “public deliberation under these ideal conditions provides both the motivation to take all needs and interests into account and knowledge of what they are. The conditions of equal opportunity to speak and freedom from domination encourage all to express their needs and interests.”

The leaders of the two Congressional chambers can obstruct the ability of other members of Congress to express the needs and interests of their constituents in a deliberative manner by preventing any debate at all. Without deliberation, members of Congress will not hear the justification and arguments for policies they may currently oppose, exacerbating partisan divides and polarization.

There are improvements that could be made to agenda-setting procedures in the United States Congress to ensure the process is more inclusive and democratic, and to improve the quality of deliberation. Creating an inclusive agenda-setting process requires a balance between ensuring all salient identities are considered, while also respecting the mandate of a majority party or ruling coalition. Including every member of a legislature in the agenda-setting stage of the legislative process would be a costly and time-consuming process—one that would not be an efficient or effective use of representatives’ time. One simple change that would improve the U.S. legislative system would be to extend the power to propose a bill for vote to the leader of the minority party of the House and Senate. Currently, there are levers of power that give the minority party the ability to prevent the passage of legislation (e.g. the filibuster), but this proposal would give the minority party the ability to advance

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20 Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy,* 22.
21 Ibid, 30.
legislation. If the minority leader in the House or Senate brings a bill to the floor for a vote that is truly only supported by the minority of members on Congress, it is very likely to fail, preventing a small minority from dominating legislative outcomes.

One potential problem with this reform is the possibility of the minority party in a chamber to “overheat” the legislative system—relentlessly proposing and voting on bill after bill, regardless of the feasibility of the bills’ passage, in order to crowd out the majority party leaders from bringing legislation to the floor of their chamber. If the majority party is not able and the minority party is not willing to propose substantive, bipartisan policy for a vote, it would create the same sort of gridlock that is often lamented as a problem with the current U.S. Congress. A similar, but alternative, solution that may remedy this potential problem would be to require any bill that has been passed by one house to be brought up for a vote in the other chamber within an established time period. Both the House and Senate would be obligated to deliberate the bill, and the established time frame would prevent either the Speaker or majority leader from refusing to hold a debate. This proposal may become particularly useful at advancing debate on a piece of legislation when the two chambers of congress are controlled by different parties.

Alternatively, a form of random selection could be introduced into the agenda-setting process to expand the inclusiveness of the process. The British Parliament utilizes a lottery system to give non-Cabinet members the ability to propose bills for a debate. Most bills introduced to the floor of the UK Parliament for a vote originate within the government (the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers), but there is the opportunity for members of the British Parliament who are not Cabinet Ministers to introduce a Private Members’ Bill for debate, if they are one of 20 Members of Parliament randomly selected to present his or her chosen piece of legislation.22 This system opens the floor to deliberation on bills proposed by individuals with a potentially wider range of interests than the select few Cabinet members. The power to propose a bill and initiate deliberation on said

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bill is not as exclusively concentrated in this system as in the United States. Non-cabinet members who are selected through the lottery have the chance to advance their preferred bill in Parliament and to publicly and formally express their support and justification for a policy that may not otherwise receive formal attention in the legislature.

However, there is evidence that lottery systems do not truly challenge the existing agenda-setting systems in democratic parliaments. A report by the UK House of Commons finds that about 100 Private Members’ Bills are introduced each year, but only about 5 become Acts of Parliament. Due the low success rate of Private Members’ Bills—particularly those introduced by MPs of the minority party—the MPs randomly chosen to present a bill will use the opportunity to raise awareness about a chosen issue. When an MP proposes and initiates deliberation on a policy that may not otherwise be considered if not for the lottery system—regardless of the bill’s likelihood of passage—Parliament and the general public are exposed to an expanded range of perspectives on an issue, potentially leading to a stronger collective understanding of the issue. However, it is rare that Private Members’ Bills pass through Parliament without the support of the Government which maintains effective control over what becomes an Act of Parliament.

Similarly, the power to determine what bills get brought to a vote in the U.S. Congress remains in the hands of a very select few, and without the ability to advance floor debate of a bill, members of Congress are left without recourse to ensure a bill is given adequate attention. The Speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate can prevent deliberation on a bill if they believe doing so would expand their personal power or financial resources, even if that obstruction goes against the expressed preferences of their constituents and the majority of American people. Members of Congress should reform the agenda-setting process to make it inclusive of a wider set of interests and perspectives and reject the ability of a single elected representative from impeding the passage of popular national legislation. The demographics of Congressional leadership remain overwhelmingly unrepresentative of the American public,

23 Ibid, 4.
24 Ibid, 14.
and, without reform, the question of whether the process for creating federal policy is truly democratic will remain in contention.

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Grades in a Modern Education System

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Abstract

This paper explores the plausibility of a gradeless classroom in the twenty-first century. School rankings are reliant on standardized test scores, and students are evaluated based on arbitrary number and letter grades. Both of these measurements lack important information regarding specific concepts that teachers expect students to know. Educators believe that moving away from a score based system would allow students to learn and achieve more. Instead of letters or percentages on a report card, some schools have turned to a narrative grading system. By breaking down student report cards into specific content categories, teachers produce feedback for students on individual concepts. Emory H. Markle Intermediate School in southern Pennsylvania has recently transitioned to a standards-based grading system. Through the collection of administrator and teacher opinions, readers can get a deeper understanding of the topic by current professionals in the field. In addition to the educator’s perspective, data is included on student opinions. Through current research, teachers, administrators, and parents alike support a standards-based system, due to its ability to provide specific feedback, promote student growth, and make learning meaningful.

Keywords: ungraded classroom, standards-based grading, letter grades, PSSAs, SATs, FourSights, ACTs, and other standardized tests create a learning environment driven by test scores. Unfortunately, the variation between these exams and their grading scales produces inconsistent results. What does a 1300 on the SAT really mean? How does that compare when achieving a 28 on the ACT? While these exams are broad examples of how student assessment is difficult to meaningfully measure, there are ordinary examples found in classrooms today, including traditional letter grading. With the emphasis put on grades, students are prioritizing high scores over learning the source material, itself. Some educational professionals have entertained the notion of an ungraded classroom. Instead of emphasizing letters, percentages, or any other variation of scores, educators are evaluating students based upon skill achievement.
Schools have implemented ungraded classrooms across America, but their effectiveness and credibility are up for debate. One way that schools have tried to achieve a gradeless education is through the utilization of a standards-based grading system.

Standards-based grading is a concept, rather than a specific system, like the system we know as “traditional grading”. Moreover, standards-based grading transitions to a grading system that is closely aligned to the standards that teachers are teaching in schools. Grades are broken down into individual concepts and teachers evaluate students based upon those specific skills. For example, in Honors Geometry, students would traditionally receive an A, B, or C. However, in a standards-based system, a student would receive a marking for each category in geometry, such as vocabulary and notation, coordinate geometry, and properties of circles. Students then receive feedback for each concept. Because standards-based grading is an idea for an overall different grading system, there is no correct way to implement it within the classroom. On a report card, success in a concept may be represented by a “+,” “✓,” “0,” or a number on a scale. As schools experiment with standards-based grading, educators will find methods that best fit their students and reflect their students’ successes.

**Literature Review**

**Importance of Feedback**

Because of the reliance on the evaluation of students in our educational system, the traditional letter grade system is a simple, easily understood method. Grades are both a motivator and a way for teachers to reflect on their teaching skills. Understanding why educators evaluate students is a key aspect to exploring what these

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grades should look like. Glenda Potts, a school teacher, writes that it is hard for her to discern what work should be given an 80%, rather than a 79%. This is a difference between a B and C for students, which may negatively impact their overall GPA in school. Potts is arguing that the traditional letter grade system relies too heavily on points and not enough on the information being learned. This notion has led educators to explore different modes of grading that measure students’ knowledge efficiently and are deemed acceptable by the greater educational community.

Gradeless Classrooms

The thought of an ungraded classroom is misleading. Ungraded classrooms do not remove the observation and evaluation aspect of learning. Instead, it is the way that teachers assess and evaluate students that will change dramatically. Instead of letter grades and percentages, which hold very little meaning for students, teachers are advocating for a system that tells students more about which specific concepts need improvement. A single grade for each content area does not provide students with enough information to reflect a student’s progress and learning. Educators have found that students lose self-interest in their learning experience when evaluated under traditional grading methods. These struggles are inherent to the notion of grading itself. Students no longer feel the need to learn because they wish to increase their knowledge; instead, they learn to achieve high grades. To avoid this, schools are moving towards a qualitative approach to grading. Unlike the majority of schools, students of these experimental grading classrooms receive a narrative report in addition to their report card. Because of the strict standards that states carry, narrative reports may be a difficult feat for classrooms today. Still, some schools are making an effort

5 Glenda Potts, “A Simple Alternative to Grading.”
6 Ibid.
8 Erin Lehman et al., “Investigating the Relationship of Standards-Based Grades.”
to adapt their grading system so that it focuses more on individual skills rather than an overall grade.

Today, schools are advocating for a standards-based grading system. Standards-based grading removes any behavioral aspect of a grade and provides focused, specific feedback to promote student growth. The goal of this system is for every student to be proficient at every standard. Education is becoming more rigorous. Both students and teachers are having trouble reflecting on what exactly a letter grade means. If a student receives seventy percent on an exam, what was the thirty percent that the student missed? The standards-based grading system says that thirty percent of content is important and then identifies specific skills that need improvement. Parents of students in Virginia’s Fairfax County Public School district, a school utilizing standards-based grading, were appreciative of the change and felt that they better understand how to help their children succeed in school. Most importantly, the students themselves are advocating for a standards-based grading system. While they may not know the name of the system, a majority of students want feedback that is more expansive and properly reflects all that they learn. The standards-based grading system removes the traditional grading system from the classroom and takes a step towards the ungraded classroom model.

Discussion

Although educators have used the letter grading system for centuries, they understand that the traditional grading system no longer has the capacity to measure students’ knowledge in today’s classroom. Typically, letter grades do not help teachers know how to improve their instruction, nor inform students on how to improve

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10 Ibid.
12 Erin Lehman et al., “Investigating the Relationship of Standards-Based Grades.”
13 Ibid.
14 Cindy Long, “Are Letter Grades Failing Our Students?”
their learning. Educators want to promote higher thinking by grading student upon specific skills. This can only happen when educators provide feedback that is timely, specific, understandable, and productive. Grading systems like standards-based allows for teachers to achieve all four of those objectives, while most educators agree that the traditional grading system only meets timely. Replacing traditional grades with written narratives may be unrealistic. For teachers who teach over 160 children over the course of a school day, narratives as a means of grading would be cumbersome. Even then, written narratives could be difficult for students to digest and doesn’t necessarily align with the standards being taught in classrooms today. Grading systems are meant to be easily understood, while also providing ample feedback. Educators can find a happy medium in a standards-based grading system.

In southern Pennsylvania, Emory H. Markle Intermediate School transitioned to a standards-based grading system in 2014. Over the past five years, this new grading system has been revised and altered to best fit their particular school. Eric Klansek, an assistant principal at the time of the transition, describes the transition as a positive change in the EHMIS learning community. Because students come to middle school with all different backgrounds of learning, a standards-based system is the best way to meet their needs. Educators use standards-based grading systems to outline student goals for each subject. Instead of feedback showing up as an encompassing percentage, teachers break down their class into concepts, and the teachers assign grades per concept. Each of those individual markings is shown on a student report card at the end of each marking period.

17 Erin Lehman et al., “Investigating the Relationship of Standards-Based Grades.”
18 Glenda Potts, “A Simple Alternative to Grading.”
19 Eric Klansek, in personal communication with the author, October 23, 2019.
Specific Feedback and Student Growth

Arguably, the most important part of a standards-based grading system is giving students specific feedback.\(^{20}\) Percentages hinder a teacher’s ability to assign meaningful grades. When students receive eighty percent on an assessment, educators consider the performance to be acceptable. Students will accept that grade and put the exam aside, but what about the twenty percent of information that was missed? The fifth of information that was incorrect will hinder the student’s ability to grow upon their preexisting knowledge in following units.\(^{21}\) Moreover, teachers in the classroom bear heavy weight when determining a student’s final grade. One percentage point has the ability to directly impact a student’s GPA.\(^{22}\) Instead of trying to figure out whether a student is worthy of a 3.5 or 4.0, teachers can focus on awarding student grades through their competency in specific skills.

A standards-based system makes assessments actionable by outlining what improvements must occur for the student to perform better on the next assessment. Chris Conover, a current technology teacher at the EHMIS, believes that standards-based grading focuses on content knowledge. By linking standards directly to grades, there is a clear understanding of which concepts that each student has mastered.\(^{23}\) This is the specific feedback that students that is necessary for students to continue growing. While it sounds counter-intuitive, broader marks like satisfactory and unsatisfactory leave room for teachers to provide specific feedback.\(^{24}\) By giving students a general idea of their progress, there is a clear idea of what they have yet to learn. Some students view success as seventy percent or higher, while for others it may be ninety percent. Standards-based grading clearly designates what is proficient.

R.J. Long serves as a current assistant principal at the EHMIS. Long experienced the standards-based grading system, as both a teacher and administrator for the district. He noted that one of the

\(^{20}\) Erin Lehman et al., “Investigating the Relationship of Standards-Based Grades.”
\(^{21}\) Eric Klansek, in personal communication with the author.
\(^{22}\) Glenda Potts, “A Simple Alternative to Grading.”
\(^{23}\) Chris Conover, in personal communication with the author, October 27, 2019.
\(^{24}\) Melissa Pratt, “Gradeless Classrooms: Education’s Newest Trend.”
biggest shifts away from a traditional grading system is the promotion of proficiency amongst all concepts. A standards-based grading system provides measurable milestones and objectives for students. All students are free to show how well they have learned information in varying methods and amounts of time. In conjunction with knowing what grade indicates proficiency, students are aware of various standards that teachers will test them on. When students receive their assessment, they can immediately reflect on their feedback and understand the exact concepts that need improving. Even students who earn close to perfect scores receive feedback on which concepts they got incorrect. Students will strive to achieve high grades in each category instead of just an overall grade in the class. This ensures that all students, even those who are high performing, are still learning and growing. Theoretically, this will lead to higher proficiency in each content area for all students. When schools provided parents with both traditional and standards-based grading report cards, parents appreciated the amount of detail the school had provided in the standards-based grading report card. By understanding which concepts students were proficient in parents felt that they could better help their child improve.

Meaningful Learning

By creating specific feedback that promotes student growth, educators assist students in meaningful learning. Instead of earning an A in a class, teachers give grades for each concept. Since the goal of standards-based grading is proficiency for each student, the system allows for students to maintain proficiency at their own pace. Students would be able to complete retakes without worrying about how that should affect their overall grade.

27 Eric Klansek, in personal communication with the author.
28 Cindy Long, “Are Letter Grades Failing Our Students?”
29 Cindy Long, “Are Letter Grades Failing Our Students?”.
30 R.J. Long, in personal communication with the author.
The controversy around test retakes would be obsolete in a standards-based grading system, because it removes competition from the classroom.\textsuperscript{31,32,33} Without competition, learning becomes a collective, meaningful classroom achievement. Students will no longer feel that their grading is “unfair.” For students who struggle with content, they can celebrate the little successes. Just as a standards-based system shows excelling students what they need improvement in, it also shows struggling students what they are excelling in. That boost of confidence impacts the mindset of the struggling student.\textsuperscript{34} The standards-based grading system is rooted in a growth mindset. If a student earns low percentages, they experience learned helplessness; a standards-based grading system prevents that from happening.

**Student Opinion**

Students in southern Pennsylvania participated in a poll conducted by the author regarding their feelings about their current grading system. In this study, regardless of the child’s grading system, 91\% of students said that their report card does a poor job of displaying what they have learned in class and 92\% said that they wanted more feedback on individual concepts learned in class. Often, students in traditional grading systems do not believe that their report card encompasses all of their progress in their classes. An 86\% in 11th Grade English tells you the proportion of points earned out of possible points earned, but it is missing the fact that they learned, and does not explain the progression of their skills. Such a percentage grade does not highlight their achievements in writing arguments on discipline-specific content and creating research projects, or signify their struggle to work under time restraints. A standards-based grading system would give students this information. Standards-based grading is student centered and takes into account their interest, depth, and preferences in learning.\textsuperscript{35} Overall, it is about motivating students to do their work intrinsically.

\textsuperscript{31} Erin Lehman et al., “Investigating the Relationship of Standards-Based Grades.”
\textsuperscript{32} Glenda Potts, “A Simple Alternative to Grading.”
\textsuperscript{33} Lorin W. Anderson, “A Critique of Grading.”
\textsuperscript{34} Eric Klansek, in personal communication with the author.
\textsuperscript{35} Cindy Long, “Are Letter Grades Failing Our Students?”
Conclusion

Student feedback is an integral part of the education system today; however, the traditional grading system that teachers are currently using is not meeting the needs of students. Because educators are preparing students to learn more than just facts, grades need to be more expansive than just a percentage. A letter marking cannot discern the problem solving skills that schools are trying to educate students on today. Feedback must include specific information on the tasks that students are expected to know. While this paper gathers information that is unique to the EHMIS and southern York County, other schools are beginning to adopt standards-based grading across America.

A standards-based grading system raises some concern for high schools and college acceptance. Colleges rely on quick information like grade point average in order to gauge how well students performed in school. The impacts on the college acceptance process have yet to be researched. By removing overall grades, high schools and colleges will have to rearrange how they view their students. To cut down on the amount of time that colleges review each student, acceptance teams may require colleges to put more emphasis on student SAT scores or on personal statements.

More studies on the effectiveness of gradeless classrooms are needed in order to be certain of its effects on students. As schools continue to experiment, it is likely that an increasing number of schools will transition their grading system to one that provides in-depth feedback, beyond a percentage or letter grade. Students will have clear goals regardless of their rank in the class. Through current research, teacher and administrator’s perspectives, and student opinion, education stakeholders support a standards-based system, due to its ability to provide specific feedback, promote student growth, and make learning meaningful. As the education system adapts, educators must be able to reflect those changes in a way that is advantageous for the students. The grading system is a reflection of the changing twenty-first century; educators must adapt.
References


Iris

by Jennifer Kaplan
Jennifer is a junior at the University of Pittsburgh.
Iris and Max sat in the overgrown grass on the hillside that dipped down to become their soccer field. They spoke slowly: about her coach and his, about the same old uniforms, about the sun in the sky and the humidity in the air. Iris tried to fill the space between them with her words, but there was a long, and by some means awkward, lull of silence that hung there instead. Neither she nor Max were willing to speak up, to admit what they would one day know—that she got reprimanded for watching him too intently across the field when she should have been goaltending, and he had stayed on a team for which his biggest responsibility was keeping the bench warm just to keep seeing her.

Her gaze drifted to the dry grass underneath, beside, and around them and fixated on Max’s fingers, twirling around and around a single blade of grass, tugging gently, daring to pull it from the earth and drop it down again to rest beside the lucky blades that had the chance to keep stretching to the sky. His fingers crawled, searching for another thin, flat blade to uproot, but found instead a stalk of smooth, cylindrical green, which he yanked up from the ground before looking to see its bright yellow center and smooth white petals. Color rushed to his cheeks as his eyes met hers, and he lifted the daisy ever-so-slightly away from the earth, and tucked it right behind Iris’s ear, where her hair cascaded into a braid that fell over her shoulder. Finally, they were face to face, and she wasn’t afraid, in fact, she was so unafraid that she held his gaze for years, or minutes, or maybe only seconds—neither one was counting—only breaking it to drink in the details of his face, the dark eyebrows, the eyelashes that curled upward, the brown eyes flecked with gold and hope, the freckles smattered across the straight nose, and the pink lips, the bottom of which was being bitten by the front teeth.
Iris’ fingers danced in the grass and quickly, they found a stem of their own to wrap around and tug, separating another determined flower from the sea of itchy green. She reached for Max, brushing a dark curl from the top of his ear as she tucked the stem behind it, her hand lingering on his face many moments longer.

“Daisies are my favorite flower,” she said.

“You are mine,” he whispered.
Monkeys and itches

by Anjalika Chalamgari
Anjalika is a freshman at the University of Pittsburgh.
The sense of knowing
Is a bottomless depth.
The sense of understanding

Even more so.
The brain itches with facts
And claws at opinions,
   Opinions that so accurately grasp the world
   That they become facts.
   And then the brain itches with facts.

• How large is the universe?

The itches I carry are prickly.
A scratch can grant the tiniest of satisfactions
   A dulling of the perpetual sensation,
But the itches come back.
   Jarringly,
   Painfully,
   Inscrutably,
The itches tingle.

• Why are humans shaped this way?

Monkeys, I’m told,
Are the culprit.
Our primitive forefathers,
   Drunk on the perceived slight
   Of ignorance,
Take revenge on their big-brained descendants.
The itches aren’t anything but
Their screams.

• How much matter exists in the known and unknown universe?

One monkey cries amongst a chorus of screeches.
Or is it just an itch amongst a sea of itches?
The monkeys,
The itches,
   They sit there
   Up in my head
Knocking on the door of my peace
With a loud, resounding

- What happens after we die?

**Thud.**
How do you kill a monkey?
How do you scratch an itch?
Do you set a trap for it,
leave a bright yellow banana under some bushes?

- Is time real?

    Does the itch have a special ointment,
    A healing balm that medicine says will cure all?

What about for thousands,
For millions of monkeys whose howls
    Resound into the depths of the night,
    Shaking your eardrums until they bleed?

Billions of itches that
- Do aliens exist?
    Itch,
- Are there multiple realities?
    Itch,
- Why do we get angry?
    Itch,
- How do we think?
    Itch until
    The brain’s wrinkled folds
    Give way to a smooth,
    Scrubbed surface.

I tell myself
That it’s all temporary.
    The monkeys have to sleep sometime,
    Have to eat the banana I’ve left
So conveniently under that bush for them.
• How do we feel pain?

The itches will resolve themselves,
Like a cold that disappears
After a day with a warm blanket.

But I know
That it is not the disease

• Are fish conscious?

But the reprieve that is temporary.

They say
The only way to get rid of a tumor
Is to kill it entirely,
To destroy every molecule
So that it’s malignant spawn spreads no longer.

But what if
• Why do we need oxygen to breathe?
  It’s
• Why is the Earth round?
  Unkillable?

Perhaps then the best cure
• How did life begin?
  Is to do absolutely
• Will humanity ever end?
  Nothing at all.

To hear the monkeys’ shrieks
As laughter,
• Is curiosity good for you?
And to feel the itches
As caresses.
The lived experience of a Black Brazilian woman

by Sofia Rodrigues Bolina
Sofia is a sophomore at the Humboldt University of Berlin.
1. Retrospective Trajectory

While discussing racism and sexism, Sara Ahmed remembers how Audre Lorde considered those “grown up words”\textsuperscript{1}—words whose meaning we experience since the day we are born, but which we can only name years after constantly dealing with them. And as we learn the words “racism” and “sexism”, we cannot but think of our trajectories, now being able to better understand a specific thing you were told or a certain event you were in. As Ahmed puts it, “we become retrospective witnesses of our becoming.”\textsuperscript{2}

I strongly identify with this. I only started to recognize situations I lived as racist or sexist as my younger siblings came home from school and we discussed “this very strange thing my teacher asked me” during dinner, and a memory or two of being asked a similar question came back. It is now, in the beginning of my adulthood, however, that I truly stop and look at the details, logic, and power relations behind those encounters, thanks to my exposure in university to the works of authors like Sara Ahmed, Grada Kilomba, Djamila Ribeiro and Frantz Fanon.

These scholars write drawing from experiences, including their own. Like Fanon discusses “The lived experience of the Black man”, my objective in this paper is to reflect on mine, the lived experience of a Black Brazilian woman. Though I will discuss situations universal to Black women in my country, as I will later explain, there are still many problems the majority of Black women there face that I do not, since I am, regarding class structure in Brazil, privileged. Thus, this is not an account of the lived experience of the Black Brazilian woman, but the one of a Black Brazilian woman.

This paper is structured so that first, I intend to explain the historical, political and social context of Black women in Brazil. Then, I’ll proceed to discuss three relevant aspects of that experience, since it is important to ponder how forms of oppression are intertwined and generate different forms of oppression, so that we can think of other

\textsuperscript{1} Sara Ahmed, \textit{Living a Feminist Life} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 32.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.
means of existence. My main focus will be on the Otherness in being Black, everyday racism and gendered racism. With the exception of this introductory chapter, I chose questions I was asked in my life, as well as thoughts I had, to name the sections of this paper according to the relation of each quote to the discussed topics.

As I researched works that would be important for this reflection, I made the decision of not citing any white male authors, because “[w]e learn to look to those empowered by the very systems of domination that wound and hurt us for some understanding of who we are that will be liberating and we never find that. It is necessary for us to do the work ourselves if we want to know more about our experience, if we want to see that experience from perspectives not shaped by domination.”

To better develop knowledge from the facets of the experiences I will here discuss, it does not make sense to use the point of view of those whose gaze oppresses me through race and gender. Thus, I have sought the wise words of those in whose trajectories I, in some way or another, recognize situations similar to the ones I lived.

2. “Where are you from?”

As a small young woman with thin lips, long nose, curly black hair and light brown skin studying in Berlin, it is a truly rare thing to go a week without being asked: “Where are you from?”. The majority of guesses are for India; when I am with friends who are of German or Italian descendance, I get “Spain, or Portugal perhaps?”. The truth is that my looks are deceiving. Apart from my far from straight hair, I look a lot like someone from South Asia, which makes me insist, more than once, that I am positively sure no one in my family comes from that region, right after I tell people I am from Brazil; yes, I am Brazilian, and look like this because my father is Black and my mother is white. Then the person gets confused, because I just acknowledged my Blackness unexpectedly, and I cannot but think of all what happened in the past to Black Brazilian women like me, all

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they endured that I still carry with me as I once again affirm my roots. In Brazil, the oppression of the Black woman started right after the ‘discovery’ of the country by Portuguese explorers in the 16th century, and perdures to the very moment this is written. After the quick genocide of the native Brazilian population, slavery was established. For 354 years, Black people were brought from Portuguese colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa to Brazilian plantations and gold mines, forced to work without being paid, tortured, and treated as property instead of as human beings. Then, enslaved women had their children taken from them and sold to other landowners; they were also systematically raped, used for the initiation of the sexual life of white rich young men or for the satisfaction of plantation owners’ desires, which were morally incorrect to be fulfilled by their pure, delicate white wives. Slavery was only abolished in 1888, making Brazil the last country in the world to do it. However, this did not bring any type of compensation for the centuries of oppression. Black people were freed from their owners and left with nowhere to live; they weren’t granted education nor work opportunities.

In the last 131 years since their freedom, Black people continue to suffer because they are still the poorest the ones who suffer the most with unemployment, the ones who only have access to the precarious public health and educational systems and still have to live every day in a society whose racist past generated its racist present. The only difference today is that by law, one cannot mistreat physically or verbally because of race. The prejudice Black people now face has developed into something anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez called “disguised racism”, which is based on the wrong idea that Brazil is a country with so much miscegenation between people—that racism doesn’t exist.

5 The term ‘discovery’ is in single quotes because it is how Brazilian history is often taught in school, regarding the nation as a place discovered by the Portuguese in the year of 1500, assuming there was nothing before that. However, indigenous people inhabited the country long before any European set foot there, a fact rarely studied or brought up in classes, which confirms a colonialist view of this history in which Brazil only exists with the arrival of what are considered the civilized Europeans.

6 Djamila Ribeiro, Quem Tem Medo Do Feminismo Negro? (Companhia das Letras, 2018), 141.

7 Irene Gomes and Mônica Marli, “IBGE Mostra As Cores Da Desigualdade,” Agenciadenoticias, IBGE, 2018.
anymore.\textsuperscript{8} And so, regarding statistics, Black women were 66\% of the 4,936 Brazilian women murdered in 2017;\textsuperscript{9} out of the total of 65,602 homicide victims of that year, 75.5\% were Black.\textsuperscript{10}

Considering all of this, my existence as a Black Brazilian woman is extremely odd, to say the least. I am the daughter of an interracial couple and live a really privileged life. Opposing the general fate of someone who looks like me, I am part of the rich and predominantly white elite of the country, due to my parents’ sacrifice and hard work.\textsuperscript{11} I, for example, never needed to go to a public hospital, because I could pay for the best doctors; I only study in Berlin, Germany, because I could afford going to a good private school, the Deutsche Schule São Paulo, and was able to do the Abitur, the German equivalent to the SATs.

It is unquestionably right to say that I am almost always in a very, very white context. None of the friends I grew up with were Black; nor were the teachers; none of the people who go to the stores and restaurants I go to are Black. I only encounter Black people who aren’t relatives from my father’s family when they are supposed to render a certain service: they were the babysitters from my friends, an updated version of the dry-nurse from pre-abolishment times; they were the drivers, janitors, assistants, salespeople, cleaning women from the school staff and occasionally, the student from the scholarship program of my school.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{8} Cláudia Pons Cardoso, “‘Americanizing’ The Feminism: The Thought Of Lélia Gonzalez,” \textit{Revista Estudos Feministas} 22, no. 3 (2014), 969.
\bibitem{9} \textit{Atlas Da Violência} (IBGE, 2019), 39.
\bibitem{10} Ibid, 49.
\bibitem{11} I want to stress that my parents achieved their financial prosperity and ‘place’ in Brazilian upper class on their own, but meritocracy is a myth commonly defended as real by the elite. Considering my father’s Black descendancy and my mother’s poor family, their odds of ‘making it’ to where they are now were very little. In my country, white people and the elite are always given more opportunities than the Black and/or poor, even though this is rarely acknowledged.
\end{thebibliography}
crossed my path as I left after my classes were over.\textsuperscript{12}

Thus, I find myself in a position that should not exist, according to the historic development of Brazilian society: I am a Black woman, living the life of a rich white person. In race and gender, I am the oppressed; in class, I am the oppressor. Regarding this, I have to acknowledge that there are situations infinitely worse than the ones I will describe here and which are faced everyday by people who look like me but do not live the way I do. However, my class privileges did not exempt me from experiencing racism and sexism. Actually, I’m certain the odd position I am in could offer a new perspective on these issues, which are to this day strongly present in my country. In this paper, the forms of oppression intertwine in such a nonconventional way and context that different facets of the reality of being Black and a woman in Brazil emerge.

"Have you always thought of yourself as Black?"

While preparing the bibliography for this paper, I often met with a male friend at the library so that we both would “keep an eye” on each other’s progress with the literature of our projects. We usually talked about what we were reading, so we knew the theme the other was going to write about. Some twenty days into this “research plan”, he asks me, as we go home: “Have you always thought of yourself as Black?”.

I had never discussed with friends racial issues concerning my experience, only with my family. We did talk about racist comments from our president, Jair Bolsonaro, and also about how racism is a structural component of Brazilian society; we discussed movies like “If Beale Street could talk”, directed by Barry Jenkins, and also

\textsuperscript{12} The Deutsche Schule São Paulo has three different curricula: the regular one, which consists of the obligatory subjects stipulated by the Ministry of Education, all taught in Portuguese; and the scholarship program, which offers education to children and adults from low income households. Classes in the first two curricula are in the morning and early afternoon, and students are mainly white and rich; the scholarship pupils, who are predominantly Black, attend classes in the late afternoon and the evening, so contact between students of different curricula isn’t common nor encouraged by the structure and directories of the courses.
Maya Angelou’s poems. However, I could not recall ever talking to them about my experience as Black.

The question made me think of my childhood. I remember drawing in class, as a four-year-old, and being confused when I started painting the figures. At the time, the children either didn’t paint the people they drew, leaving their skin white as the piece of paper, or used a colored pencil which we learned to call *cor de pele*. It was something near to salmon, a tone far from any human skin, but it was used as the standard. Everybody painted themselves using *cor de pele*. The thing is, I remember finding it very odd that that pencil could be used for everyone, since it was the only skin tone color there was, when I clearly was darker than my peers. Nevertheless, I kept using the pencil every time I drew myself.

Then, I did not actively think of myself as Black, but already realized I was not white like my friends. I was another thing, because no other child in class had a Black father and a white mother like I did. This was true until I graduated high school: even though I did not fully recognize myself as a Black woman, I was always the only non-white student in the sea of whiteness of the classroom. My encounter with the *cor de pele* pencil was the start of my acknowledgement of the fact that I lived in a world of whiteness, and I was not part of it.

In a confused four-year-old head…what was I, then? This was a question I did not know the answer to at the time, and as I stopped having to paint myself in drawings, the dilemma was forgotten. As a non-white person, you still can get so used to whiteness that you learn not to notice it. Even though I knew I wasn’t white early on, this became my case as years went by.

Perhaps it was due to the fact that my birth certificate categorized me as being of the ethnicity *pardo*, and not as Black. I am this mixed

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13 *Cor de pele* is Portuguese for “skin color”.
15 In Brazil, one’s ethnicity in the birth certificate can be white, black, yellow (which informs Asian descendance), indigenous or pardo, which is something close to mixed-race. The categorization does not necessarily take into account the ethnicity of the parents, but usually the baby’s skin color, something subjectively designated by the official who writes the document. This explains why I am considered pardo while my sister is considered white in her birth certificate, even though we both share the same parents and the same light brown skin tone.
thing, “neither among the rejected, nor among the accepted.” Since the day I was born, in all documents, certificates and enrollment papers I ever completed, I am non-white, but because I have less melanin in my body than my father, for example, I am officially not Black. Even though my descendants are slaves; even though my lighter skin does not make the oppression in my past any lighter.

Apart from that, growing up with white European princesses in the stories I watched and listened to might have also contributed to my getting used to whiteness. As Grada Kilomba puts it,

“Magazines, comic books, films and television force the Black child to identify with white others, but not with her/himself. The child is forced to create an alienating relationship to Blackness, as the heroes of those scenarios are white and the Black characters are an embodiment of white fantasies.”

Since there wasn’t another Black student in my class, the ones who were, not considering race, like me, were the girls, who, as I did, only knew characters like the pale Snow White or the redhead mermaid Ariel. Since they identified with those figures, I, too, wanted to be like them. I too, imagined myself with gold locks and a crown, playing with the other white girls, and therefore started to also see myself as a white girl.

Thus, I got so used to whiteness that, while learning about slave ships, Portuguese colonies and Brazilian society in the past, it never occurred to me that the African men and women who were sold in markets, mistreated and forced to work in inhumane conditions, were “my people”, my descendants. When Kilomba recalls her childhood, she writes:

“We were asked to write about the great legacy of colonization, even though we could only remember robbery and humiliation. And we were asked not to inquire about our African heroes, for they were terrorists and rebels. What a better way to colonize than to teach the colonized to speak and write from the perspective of the colonizer.”

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17 Ibid, 91.
18 Grada Kilomba, Plantation Memories, 35.
For me, there was no “we”, because I was the only one in class who would remember any humiliation, or would inquire about an African hero. And I did not, since every time I left home I was surrounded by the colonizer, the white children, white teachers, white European adventurers who left to explore the New World. I, the colonized, lived the life of a colonizer, so how could I ever think that my hero was not Christopher Columbus, but actually Zumbi dos Palmares?19

As I told my friend all this, he said: “It was so racist, but then I never thought of you as Black”. I was intrigued. In front of me stood this white man, who I went to school with since we were twelve years old, and who, for the most part of the time he knew me, did not consider me a Black person. “When I argued with my parents about the problems in our school, I always said that there never was any Black student in my class, in the bilingual curriculum, and proceeded to discuss how wrong that was”. I was intrigued, but not surprised, because I did the same thing.

His confession immediately made me think of Fanon: “As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others. […] For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man.”20 In my experience, however, the white man was quite often rich children who led a life as privileged as mine and who painted me in their drawings using cor de pele pencil, next to their own salmon skinned figures. We could all notice I was different, but not to the point of saying that I was Black, and that is, I believe, because no one who lived how we lived was that. In our young minds—and in the sad Brazilian reality—you could not be rich and Black.

The acknowledgement Fanon writes about only began in my teenage years. I once had to stay in school until late afternoon, after classes ended. I was hungry and went to the canteen to buy a snack. The cashier, who was a Black woman, looked at me and said she wouldn’t

19 Zumbi dos Palmares was a Black man, the last leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares, a resistance center, community and refuge for free Black people and fugitive slaves in Northeastern Brazil of the 17th century.
let me buy the food, because I was skipping class. She told me to return to the classroom. Confused, I said my classes had ended right after lunch, I was just staying in school to study. She did not believe me, and asked me if I wasn’t a student from the scholarship program. I assured her I was not, showing her my student ID, which identified me as part of the bilingual curriculum, whose classes ended at one o’clock. Still, she looked at me doubtfully, and told me she would only sell me something if I had an authorization from my curriculum coordinator. Seeing I would not convince her, I went to the coordinator’s office and asked for the written confirmation of my right to buy food. It is needless to say that the coordinator was perplexed by the request as she signed the piece of paper I needed.

It was only a few hours later, way after finally getting a sandwich, that I realized: the cashier was so sure I was from the scholarship program because of my skin color. Were I a white blonde girl, she would never have acted like that. It was inconceivable for her that I looked the way I do and still were not from that curriculum. I was among my own, standing in front of a Black woman like me, and it was her gaze that made clear, for the first time since my kindergarten dilemma, that I was not white, but this Other. Black Brazilian women like us both don’t have the opportunity to be part of the bilingual curriculum. We do not belong in its characteristic fair-skinned, German-speaking whiteness.

Even so, becoming deeply aware of my Otherness, also meaning thinking of myself as a Black woman, came to finally happen by recognizing my experiences in the writing of people of color like the ones I cite in this paper, but above all because of a discussion earlier this year: a white female feminist friend was reporting, shocked, how a Black colleague from her Social Studies classes said she was not offended by white people who braid their hair in cornrows. We were six or seven people listening to it, men and women, who went to school together. My friend proceeded to argue that the practice was cultural appropriation, as another one—the same guy who months later would ask me if I have always thought of myself as Black—partly disagreed, differentiating “just a hairstyle” from the act of using traditional gowns as Halloween costumes. Soon, the group was divided and the girl who told us about the situation
turned to me. “I don’t want to talk as if I knew what that is like… Tell them, Sofia. You can do that better than I can.”

At first, I was confused, since I had no experience with cornrows whatsoever or anything related to them, and then it struck me. She saw me, the only non-white person present, as the one who had the right to weight in the cornrows debate, because I was the one whose culture was being appropriated. The Black culture was being discussed and in her seeing it as my culture, I was, for her, Black.

The episode was a turning point in my consciousness of being Black, of being seen as the Other, and also, in my relationship with this female friend. Until that point, as we were both feminists and often discussing the movement, I saw her as my equal. We were two women, the Other of men, together debating patriarchal structures and sharing our female experience. As she put me in the spotlight to speak about the cornrows, she put us both in different groups. We weren’t two women anymore, but a white woman and a Black one. It made clear to me that I was not her equal, and we did not always share the same culture or experiences. In relation to her, I was also the Other, even though we both identified as women. Apart from being the Other of men, I was the Other of whiteness. I was part of the non-whiteness, I was part of Blackness, I was Black.

Thinking again of Fanon, that was the definitive point in which I truly experienced my being through others. Until then, I thought that as a woman, I was among my own when I was with this feminist friend. It took her acknowledging us as different, seeing me as the Black woman in relation to the white one, for me to understand the intersectional reality of my being. In race and in gender, I am the Other. Not white and not male.

“Have you always thought of yourself as Black?” The answer to this question, which I had internally asked myself more and more during the last year, is no. Thinking of myself as Black wasn’t something I always did. It was a process which involved who identified with me and who I identified with. Never having seen myself as equal to the white boys in school, but having learned to identify with the white girls and women, the shock and full consciousness of my being came not with the Black woman identifying with me when I did not identify with her, but with the white woman, who I
had identified with, saying “You are not like me”. As Fanon argues, the definitive placement of me as Black came not from among my own (though I did not fully regard them as equal then). I had to be a Black woman in relation to the white one.

4. “Are you the daughter of a cleaner?”

“Every time I am thus placed as ‘Other’, I am experiencing racism, for I am not ‘Other’. I am self.”

Even though my family and I are, today, conscious of being Black individuals, it isn’t something we think of every second of our days. However, surrounded by whiteness, we are constantly put in the position of the Other and so, we experience everyday racism.

In Kilomba, that is the racism referent to the events Black people repeatedly face through their lifetime; the racist experience does not happen once, but constantly. In it, the Other “becomes a deposit for white fears and fantasies from the realm of either aggression or sexuality.”

Although the author stresses out five different forms in which everyday racism manifests, two are the ones my relatives and I experience the most: decivilization and infantilization.

Every time my father or uncle are stopped by security in an American airport because they were “randomly selected” for further security check, they experience decivilization. The two Black, non-American men are seen as the violent and threatening Other, the dangerous immigrants, the possible criminals ready to explode a plane, the probable drug dealers who are trying to sell it in America. If they lose their tempers because it is the third time they go through such a situation in one trip, both Black men reinforce this role, becoming the justification for such practices. They carry on, taking shoes, jackets, belts and any other required piece of clothing off, because they do not have the luxury of being “uncivilized” towards decivilization. They cannot complain or refuse to comply. Both men have to accept going through it, because “those are the rules, darling, go with your mother, I’ll be right back with you”, even though such rules apply more to some than to others. After

22 Ibid, 44.
it all, they just proceed to their gates, thanking the officer who inspected every inch of their bodies.

Decivilization, apart from literally stopping Black bodies of smoothly moving forward (like what my father experiences in a lot of international flights), is also behind the suspicious glances I often get. Museums, shops, restaurants, bars, pharmacies, hospitals—the list of places I have been stared at goes on and on, and it isn’t exclusive of any country in the world. Every time I come closer to an impressionist masterpiece or put my hands on something really expensive, I am looked at, if not also cautiously followed, until I leave the building. I become the potential thief, or the person who could break something valuable. I am the strange presence which could cause something bad. I cannot but identify with Djamila Ribeiro: “Every security guard who follows me, every odd stare I get when I am in places judged as not for me […]. To be a black Brazilian is to feel as a foreigner in your own country.”

As Black individuals, we are not welcome even in our homeland, because we are the scary, dangerous ones. Black bodies are also stopped as they are seen as dependent and child-like: this is infantilization. Considering this, I want to return to the episode in which I was, at first, denied the right of buying food at school. I am identified as a Black teenager; regarding my school’s demographics, I am identified as part of the scholarship program, in which students were having classes at the time; since I am not in class, I am clearly skipping it—there is no other possible explanation. Even though I insist I am not, I am not believed. I, then, become the lying child, who is trying to trick the cashier; I am not obedient to the rules, so requesting an authorization from the coordinator would make me, the non-disciplined and lying student, return to class. I become the body dependent on the authorization of a master. I can only get what I asked if someone else lets me, if I prove I am not tricking anyone. There is, though, something that does not come as a surprise: a white student in my school would never be accused of skipping classes, even though I’ve noticed they are the ones that do it the most. Because white bodies are always where they are supposed to

23 Djamila Ribeiro, Quem Tem Medo Do Feminismo Negro?, 148.
24 Grada Kilomba, Plantation Memories, 44.
be, so they shouldn’t be doubted, they don’t have to prove their right of being where they are; Black bodies do, and their proof has to come from someone from higher hierarchy, like a parent, a master or a slave owner, who lets them be where they are.

Regarding other two categories of everyday racism, primitivization and animalization, I ask myself: why can’t I recall any experience with those forms of everyday racism? The only possible answer to this is that the Brazilian “disguised racism” doesn’t work with those. Primitivization and animalization would be too obvious, too pre-abolishment era for 21st century Brazil. Those forms are so clearly racist, anyone can acknowledge them. And if anyone can recognize those, as a Black goalkeeper is called by fans a “monkey”, it isn’t acceptable. And if it isn’t acceptable, it cannot be a quotidian practice, part of the everyday. With “disguised racism”, everyday racism isn’t usually spoken directly and clearly; it is thought; it is something discretely done. And so, it isn’t often recognized as racism, but rather as something we, paranoiacs, are imagining.

However, sometimes the odd gaze which tells that you are not supposed to be where you are turns into a sound; it is vocalized, and we are all so shocked we do not know how to react to it. I take my sister as an example: in the beginning of the school year, a white male student in her class went to the teacher (who was a white woman) and asked if he could use a certain version of the didactic book, an older one. The teacher questioned if the book belonged to an older sibling, he answered positively and she said there was no problem in using it. My sister did not listen to that, so a few minutes later she asked the teacher the same thing, as she was using the same older version of the book. The educator turned to her and asked: “Are you the daughter of anyone from the school staff? A cleaner?”. Shocked and confused, my sister answered that she wasn’t, the book belonged to me, her older sister. “Oh, it is okay, you can use it”, the teacher said. No student in class knew how to react to that.

25 Primitivization occurs when the Black person is put in the position of the savage, the natural being; animalization would be the assignment of the role of the wild, the ape, the monkey.

26 This refers to the real episode of the goalkeeper Aranha, player of the football club Grêmio, who lived in 2014 (Pires, 2017).
This is a situation which finely demonstrates how “within racism, Black bodies are constructed as improper bodies, as bodies that are ‘out of place’ and therefore as bodies which cannot belong. White bodies, on the contrary, are constructed as proper; they are bodies ‘in place’, ‘at home’, bodies that always belong.”

The teacher sees my sister as a Black person; oddly, this Black girl is in the bilingual program, where no Black children study, and she cannot be rich, because she has an old used book; therefore, she must be the child of a school employee, someone from staff; nobody in the upper hierarchy of the school staff is Black, but usually the cleaners are; she must be the daughter of a cleaner, then, which also justifies the old book—the family must not be able to afford a new one. For that educator, while the white body of the male student logically belonged to the environment, making the only explanation for his used book the fact that he had an older sibling, my sister’s Black body was not supposed to be there. Her presence there contrasted so much with the whiteness of the classroom, it stretched so much her state of being ‘out of place’, of being wrong, that the teacher was bothered to the point in which she had to ask where that Other, that strange body, came from. Despite already knowing the answer—that my sister could not be the daughter of a cleaner in that curriculum—the teacher wanted to place the Black girl where she was “supposed” to be: as a Black person, she belonged with the lower workers, far from the white elite, unable to pay for a new book. With a short question—“a cleaner?”—the educator asked too: how dare you take a place that isn’t yours?

In all of the three described experiences in this part, neither of the Black subjects, that is, my father, uncle, sister and myself, reacted violently. Though everyday racism is the repeated stopping of the Black body, the constant reminder that we occupy a place we are


28 In our school, teachers and staff employees of higher importance, who are majorly white, such as directors, coordinators, and chiefs of areas like communication and psychology, may enroll their children in the regular or bilingual curricula, not needing to pay for the tuition fees.

29 Cleaners, canteen workers and cooks, who are usually Black, cannot enroll their children in the regular or bilingual curricula.
not supposed to, we cannot respond to it aggressively. We, Black people, are not allowed to do anything that could be used by people to justify stopping our bodies more than they already are.

I cannot make a scene, I cannot snap; as my father often told me, I must always be polite, I have to get the best grades, I can never give someone a reason to consider me as inferior. I cannot, ever, fail. As the only or one of the very few Black people who have access to white environments, we represent Blackness every moment of our lives. We represent the others who are not there due to racist structures. I am three: a body, a race and a history. I am like Kathleen, an interviewee in Kilomba’s “Plantation Memories”:

“Caught in the triple person, one has to be at least three times better than any white in order to become equal. […] While white others speak as individuals, as Sally, Christine or John, Kathleen speaks as a body, as a ‘race’, as a child of former slaves. She is given three places to represent. […] Whatever room she enters, she is never the self, but the entire group—a group subjected to severe examination.”

Black people who are surrounded by whiteness are permanently being tested, always needing to prove themselves, and everyday racism is our patience test; we are not allowed to snap because of it and we cannot be anything other than perfect. Otherwise, we will reinforce stereotypes long associated with our race. And for that, the way we look is already enough.

5. “You must drive German men crazy”

Self-esteem is something I did not grow up with much of. Nobody, but my parents, told me I was beautiful. As the girls in my classroom were constantly complimented about their straight hair and light eyes, I learned to hate my locks to the point I decided to chemically straighten them in my teenage years. Acceptance of the way I looked came only as I graduated high school. However, there is something I always heard from older people, from adults who were acquaintances of my parents to persons I had just met, and which was meant as a compliment: “Look at that skin, that tan! You

30 Grada Kilomba, Plantation Memories, 108.
are *da cor do pecado*,\(^{31}\) you’ll drive men crazy when you grow up!”. Nowadays, since moving to Berlin, the last sentence was replaced by “You must drive German men crazy!”. I cannot emphasize enough my discomfort when I hear this.

There are two intertwining aspects bound to the Black body behind such statements: eroticization, the fifth and last category of everyday racism according to Kilomba, and the figure of the mixed-race woman, the *mulata*. I believe that both act in a specific way upon the Black Brazilian woman, by configuring gendered racism.

The phenomenon of eroticization is the personification of the Black body into a sexualized, extremely seductive and exotic figure.\(^{32}\) It explains how the Black body is deemed a rapist (above all with Black male bodies) and a prostitute-like, eagerly sexual being. This last assumption is greatly associated to Black women, and history clarifies it: used as sexual toys to satisfy their owners, enslaved women became synonymous to sex whenever and wherever one desired.

As time passed, this entangled with the figure of the *mulata*. Generated by the Spanish word *mula*, meaning hybrid, product of the crossbreeding between a mare (a noble equine) and a donkey (a second-class equine), the word *mulata* brings a sense of impurity, of something that shouldn’t exist. It used to designate slaves with lighter skin who were children of Black women and white men, and now it is more commonly used towards mixed-race women.\(^{33}\)

To the meaning of impurity, the idea of the seductive female body was added through centuries of naturalistic discourse in culture as well as the image of the “*Mulata Globeleza*,”\(^{34}\) the symbol of Brazilian *carnaval*.\(^{35}\) This is what the Black female body in Brazil is automatically perceived as. It becomes a stereotype, an objectifica-

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31 *Da cor do pecado* is a Brazilian expression, which can be translated to “the color of sin”. It is a figure of speech which equates the Black body to this seductive character who leads one to commit sinful actions.

32 Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories*, 44.


34 The *Mulata Globeleza* is “a black woman that dances samba as if on a carnaval parade, naked with her body painted with glitter, as the opening vignette plays during the television carnaval programming of Rede Globo” (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 140).

35 Brazilian festivity that occurs forty days prior to Easter, in which people dress up in costumes and go to the streets to party, dance and sing the whole holiday.
tion of Black Brazilian women, dangerously seductive and of exotic beauty, who are ready to dance and have sex whenever one wants. The Black female body becomes this only thing, it is objectified.

And so, the moment someone looks at me, I am objectified, I am “da cor do pecado”, I will “drive German men crazy!”. The eroticization I suffer not only ascribes me an automatic role, but also makes me the guilty part for it. My skin tone is “the color of sin”; it is the amount of melanin in my body that turns me into what causes another person to commit sinful things. Even though I do nothing, my body is rendered responsible for the sins others will or fantasize to execute. In this logic, I – a Black Brazilian woman - will make German men – white European men – crazy with desire, just like my enslaved predecessors were believed to do to their owners. It is interesting how I am the subject of these sentences and am deemed responsible for those actions, while I am treated as a sexual object by those who say that.

This is also implicit in rape culture. Though all women are vulnerable to sexual violence, race is still an important factor in it. White or non-white, women are usually the ones considered responsible for the act (though they are not), because of the clothes they wear, the way they behave. However, the eroticization of Black bodies brings in another level of false justification for such violence: the Black female body in Brazilian History was always sexualized, always a servant for the white owner, always raped; the white female body wasn’t. Instead, it was considered pure and innocent; what couldn’t be done to the white female body was then done to the Black. This logic thus makes violence against Black women more ‘justifiable’ because of their race.

That was the argumentation I thought of as my white female feminist friend, the one from the Social Studies class, asked me during an interview for her paper on women and safety in big cities, “Do you think that being a Black woman makes you feel things differently from or more strongly than white women?” I remember agreeing to that and answering that I did not know statistics and data by heart, but for example, if we both were walking alone on the street at night, the probability of getting raped was higher for me than for her. She started crying, a mixture of empathy for my situation as a Black woman, and rage towards what women come against in life.
The moment now reminds me of when she, asking about cornrows, put me in the place of the Other, telling me that we were not equal. Yet, this time, I was telling her that, I was the one acknowledging it: even though we were both women, she was still white, she still had that to protect her. Her Otherness was different than mine.

“How being neither white nor men, Black women come to occupy a very difficult position within white supremacist patriarchal society. We represent a kind of a double lack, a double Otherness, as we are the antithesis of both whiteness and masculinity. [...] White women have an oscillating status, as the self and as ‘Other’ to white men because they are white, but not male; Black men serve as opponents for white males as well as potential competitors for white women because they are men, but not white; Black women, however, are neither white nor male, and serve as the ‘Other’ of Otherness.”  

I am the Other, always. I am always not something, always the negation. Not white, not male, not allowed to be represented and regarded as more than a sexualized object, not free from suspicious stares, not able not to consciously know that I don’t belong in the place I am. My friend and I were not equal because we never before were. A century and a half ago, she would be the pure wife of the slave owner; I would be the raped slave, the mulata. Two Brazilian women with different fates.

6. “Those were my people”

As this paper draws to an end, it is impossible to ignore one of the most beautiful passages in Sara Ahmed’s “Living a feminist life”:

“Here was writing in which an embodied experience of power provides the basis of knowledge. Here was writing animated by the everyday: the detail of an encounter, an incident, a happening, flashing like insight. Reading black feminist and feminist of color scholarship was life changing; I began to appreciate that theory can do more the closer it gets to the skin.”  

36 Grada Kilomba, Plantation Memories, 117-118.
37 Sara Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 10.
I connect with this deeply. I started my journey discussing feelings, gender and resistance without a clue of who I would encounter; then, as weeks passed, I met Sara Ahmed, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Frantz Fanon, and their experiences in life which were similar to mine. For the first time in my life, I read something I could relate to on a level I never thought possible, and I learned that I, too, could take my experiences and develop knowledge with them.

Those authors led to the question of what knowledge, then, I wanted to write about, which introduced me to other scholars, Djamila Ribeiro and Grada Kilomba, now even closer to what I call home. Soon, I not only had a paper, but a fine collection of companion texts which made clear the experiences I didn’t fully understand or reassured I wasn’t paranoid, imagining racism or sexism, because they, too, carried accounts of those. These works are my company, my confidants, my dear killjoy survival kit.38

Due to this process, this journey, I now realize how truly retrospective this all is; there are so many situations I never noticed I was put in the position of the Other; so many new meanings to feelings I had and was for years confused about; so much struggle to finally be able to say that I am a Black Brazilian woman. Not mulata, not parda. Black.

It hurts to recognize you once behaved as whiteness, that you wanted to be with the oppressors, and also, that racism is truly in the everyday. However, it is in this retrospective searching and writing of this paper, in my going through birth certificates and family stories, that I now do what I once wasn’t able to as a small girl. I finally think, while reading about slavery: “those were my people”. I finally know who my people are and who I am. With the consciousness of everything they went through, and everything that I went and will go through too.

38 Ibid, 16-17.
References


art
gallery.
me, me, and me by me

by Ingrid Tai

An illustration visualizing the artist coming out of her shell as she grew, as well as exploring her roots and later cultural influences from the cities she's lived in. Ingrid is a sophomore at the Parsons School of Design.
through the window

by Nicholas Dapolito
Nicholas is a sophomore at the Columbus College of Art and Design.
"Nice place you got here."

"Who's going to make sure the trees will be here tomorrow?"

Always blowing things up.

Plastic isn't just for fun and games.

Industrial pollution.

Alarming lack of financial support.

"It's a little sad that things have come to this."

Time

Deadly Beauty

Constant danger and inescapable survival tactics.

Man can only mar it

A once wild continent.

Americans were on the road again.

Vapors are the greatest threat.

Endless hustle and stress of the modern world - many people accept it as part of the game that it doesn't need to be that way.

Mindless, packed between too many visitors and too few dollars to fix what had to be fixed.

You'd be surprised at the cost.
"State of the Union" is a lithograph print created from a collage, overwhelming in its appearance in every aspect—reflective of the current social and political climate of the United States. This work touches on war, women’s rights, climate change, greed, technology, the ever changing landscape of America: pressing topics that we are constantly overwhelmed by, an overflow of information fed to us by the media. The offset colors give the words and imagery an almost sickly tone, conveying the nauseating effect these issues give rise to. The political nature of the imagery and words within this work, as well as the appearance, is reminiscent of collage created during the Dada movement. Dada artists created work critiquing the system and rationality itself within the system. In today’s social and political climate, this feels all too relevant. “State of the Union” quite literally places all these issues at the forefront, compacting them into one image, questioning the rationality of it all and calling for an upheaval of the system. Maja is a junior at the Savannah College of Art and Design.
uninhibited
by Hannah Sirusas

Hannah is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh.
braindead

by Nicholas Dapolito

Nicholas is a sophomore at the Columbus College of Art and Design.
void

by Jocelyn Edwards

Jocelyn is a junior at the University of Pittsburgh.
Guten morgen. Shot at the Eggenberg Palace in Graz, Austria. Joanna is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh.
waiting

by Joanna Gorka

I am waiting. Do not mind. The following is an eerie, long exposure self-portrait. This two-faced alien is waiting in the shadows. At first glance, she appears human. But the ringing of the night is unnerving. The streetlights blaze and sharpen your sight. Perhaps a scene from a dream or are you seeing this in real life?
call for submissions

Forbes & Fifth, the undergraduate journal of the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, is seeking submissions for its 17th issue, Fall 2020. Submissions will be accepted from all schools and disciplines and from any accredited undergraduate university in the world.

Both scholarly and creative work will be considered. Recent topics have included adventure games, architecture, political diagnoses, contemporary cinema, creative writing pieces, and art submissions such as photography and screen prints.

Forbes & Fifth is open to all schools worldwide. We publish twice yearly (in April and December). Work may originate from a prompt, but it must be unique and original.

Questions? Want to submit?
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