CRESCENT

MAGAZINE



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CRESCENT MAGAZINE

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Faculty Research Spotlight with Dr. James MacLeod

Grace Gleisner

Dr. MacLeod chairs UE's department of History, Politics, and Social Change, which encompasses a vast assortment of areas of study. Dr. MacLeod has a plethora of different research interests himself, from 19th century Christianity in Scotland to WWII history right here in Evansville. In his free time, Dr. MacLeod illustrates political cartoons which have appeared in news sources across the country! We covered lots of ground in Dr. MacLeod's interview, which is available in its entirety in the digital version of this article at *crescent.evansville.edu*.

Dr. MacLeod's first research area concerned the origins and history of his local Presbyterian church in Scotland. He studied the social and political influences on his church's history, uncovering themes that are familiar to many Americans today. In both 19th century Scotland and modern-day America, the advance of science and changes in society cause new and changing perspectives on traditional beliefs. In Dr. MacLeod's experience, this situation gives churches two options: either compromise with or accept modern beliefs or turn their backs on them entirely. Either choice can result in cultural and religious divisions, which are easily visible in America today.

In the midst of these religious decisions and cultural changes, conversations about individuals' beliefs, their implications, and the reasons behind them continue to be both critically important and highly sensitive. **Religion is a key component of many peoples' identities and worldviews, so talking about it with the genuine desire to listen and learn can help us get to know and appreciate our peers and create a culture of respect and understanding.** Proceeding in this way helped Dr. MacLeod study religious history, a complicated subject requiring both delicacy and objectivity.

Some of Dr. MacLeod's family members served in the British army medical corps in WWI. Eventually, Dr. MacLeod's long-term curiosity about this time period developed into a new area of professional interest focusing on the impact of the First World War on religion. He knew that during WWI many nations drew a connection between dying in battle for one's country and entering automatically into Heaven. In order to analyze this connection, Dr. MacLeod studied 1,177 WWI memorials during a sabbatical in 2012. He found that the vast majority (around 80%) did have religious themes, with a smaller number (around 13%) having iconography or text he considered unusually religious. He explained that, depending on how one views the data, this could mean either that people remained religious in spite of all of the horrors of the First World War or that the challenges of the war made many people only superficially religious.

Finally, after more time spent here at UE, Dr. MacLeod began researching local Evansville history. He confessed that he used to look down on local history but has since discovered that **"local history is the foundation on which everything else is built, and it's important to know your own roots and where you come from."** His investigation of the time period during

and after the Second World War has resulted in books, lectures, and even a documentary on Evansville's history and culture! The documentary, which the local Showplace Cinema aired, featured oral histories from Evansville locals. The film allowed those who would otherwise be absent from history books to tell their stories about experiencing WWII and segregation in Evansville.

Currently, Dr. MacLeod continues to research post-war Evansville. He published a new book, *Lost Evansville*, in 2023, and hopes to continue learning and writing about the local Civil Rights Movement in the future. In 2017 he also released a book on a prior Evansville Courier cartoonist Karl Kae Knecht (1883-1972), 6,000 of whose original cartoons reside in the UE library archives!

Often, students may fear that their areas of study and research interests may restrict their work opportunities, graduate school studies, and research specialties in academic careers, but Dr. MacLeod's story is a testimony to the fact that this isn't always the case! Dr. MacLeod explained that many academics' interests change over time, and that even if they have to set aside an interest for a time they can sometimes return to and study it later. He encourages students who are interested in academic careers to pursue them in spite of the difficulties of graduate school and not let their fears stop them from attempting what they dream of doing.

No matter the range of one's academic interests, it's important to have hobbies and skills outside of academia. For Dr. MacLeod, one such passion is creating political cartoons. After years of doodling and consistent practice he expanded his cartoon's audience through a blog, from which newspapers began picking up his work. Today, the *Evansville Courier* publishes one of Dr. MacLeod's cartoons every week! The cartoons comment on and highlight both national politics and local events. Dr. MacLeod shared that drawing cartoons has a very different methodology and goal than conducting his research, even if both mediums touch on similar themes. Cartoons take a strong stance on a complex issue without explaining any of the nuance of the situation. Scholarly research, on the other hand, attempts to look at many angles of an issue objectively before arguing one position at length.

Many artists struggle to share their work with a wider audience. Here is some advice from Dr. MacLeod for getting your work out there:

1. Use repetition to practice and perfect your craft.

2. Have persistence when you try to share your work.

3. Be willing to face rejection, take suggestions, and listen to your critics to improve what you do.

4. Having an opinion or vision is often more important than perfect technique.

5. Don't let the fact that you're still developing and improving stop you from sharing your work right now!

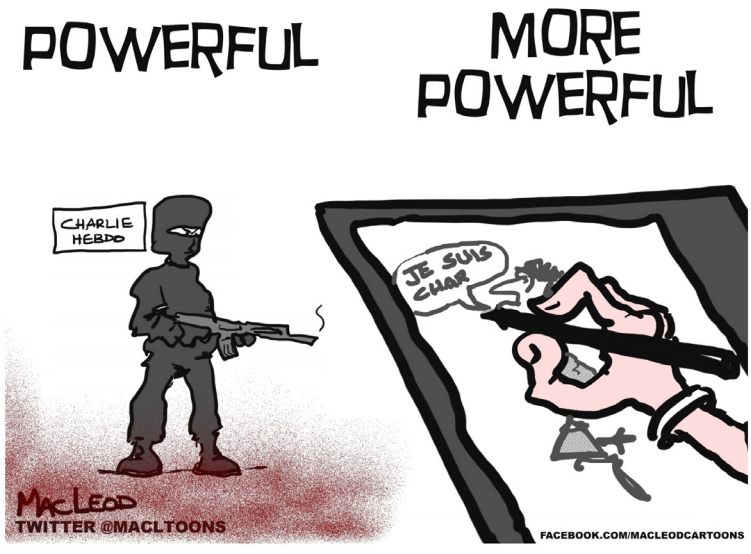
In 2015, Dr. MacLeod created one cartoon of which he's particularly proud. In response to an ISIS gunman's slaughter of 12 Charlie Hebdo cartoonists in Paris, Dr. MacLeod illustrated a cartoon uplifting the power of creativity over the terror of violence. The cartoon went viral, and Dr. MacLeod said that the national response was "like nothing else in my cartooning life." The cartoon appeared in newspapers including the Washington Post and on networks such as CNN and NPR, The State Department put the image on its website's landing page for three days, and MSNBC and other channels interviewed Dr. MacLeod about his work. This cartoon's reception stands a testament to the power of art to convey powerful ideas and unify people in the face of tragedy.

When asked for his final thoughts, Dr. MacLeod stressed his gratitude he has felt for the privilege of teaching from his first day at Harlaxton after getting his PhD to teaching and interacting with students every day at UE. He believes in UE's students and their abilities and encourages them not to pay too much attention to those who complain about "students today." According to Dr. MacLeod, people have always complained about students. He said that in some ways "students have always been terrible," but more importantly "they've also always been awesome!"

Want to view Dr. MacLeod's cartoons? Find his work on Facebook and X under "MacLeod Cartoons."

Stay tuned for future faculty research spotlights in upcoming issues of Crescent Magazine!

Are you a faculty member who is interested in being featured? Contact Grace Gleisner at gg126@evansville.edu.





Whispers Through the Wall

Javad Dehgan

What is love, if not the yearning to transcend the barriers that life places before us?

In the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, the wall stands not merely as a physical divide but as a symbol of the human condition: the struggle to reach across the unseen forces that separate souls. Love, it seems, is not found in the absence of obstacles but in the unrelenting desire to overcome them.

The wall, cold and indifferent, exists because of ancient fears inherited and unquestioned. Yet, within the cracks of its surface lies a quiet rebellion. It is there that whispered words pass, uniting two hearts in defiance of tradition and division. This is the paradox of love: though the wall exists to keep them apart, it is the wall itself that brings them close. Without the barrier, would their yearning have been so sharp, their connection so profound?

Love often asks us to confront such paradoxes. It thrives on the tension between distance and closeness, between the known and the mysterious. Pyramus and Thisbe never saw one another's faces before their fateful meeting, yet they knew each other in a way that transcended sight. Is it not true that we come to understand another's soul most deeply when our senses are restrained? Love that is purely physical may falter but love that roots itself in the unseen the voice, the thoughts, the essence, becomes unshakable.

Their story also confronts the nature of miscommunication and the fragility of human perception. Pyramus, upon seeing the bloodied veil, assumes the worst. His despair blinds him to the possibility of hope. Is this not a mirror to our lives, where assumptions so often cloud truth? How many loves, dreams, and connections are lost because we act on fear rather than seeking clarity?
Yet perhaps the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe lies not in their deaths but in their devotion. Their willingness to risk everything, even their lives, speaks to the depth of their connection. In their final acts, they prove that love is not safe; it is a leap into the unknown, a willingness to suffer for the sake of something greater than oneself.

And what of the mulberry tree, its berries forever stained red? It stands as a reminder that love leaves a mark, not just on those who experience it but on the world itself. The transformation of the tree speaks to the enduring power of love to change the fabric of reality, to turn something ordinary into something eternal.

Pyramus and Thisbe's tale asks us to reflect on our own walls, the barriers we inherit, build, or allow to persist. Are we brave enough to reach through the cracks? Do we dare to risk heartbreak, misunderstanding, or even loss for the chance to touch something eternal?
Their story is not a cautionary tale but a challenge: to love boldly, to seek connection even in the face of division, and to find beauty in the struggle.
For in the end, it is not the wall, the veil, or even death that defines their love. It is the act of reaching, of daring, of believing that, for a fleeting moment, two souls can become one.

UE Archaeology Takes On the 2025 AIA Conference

Julia Ribblett



From left to right: Julia Ribblett '25 (author), Paige Byington '27, Jade Hindersman '25, and Dr. Rebekah McKay

Each January, around 2,500 eager academics, students, and enthusiasts of archaeology descend upon an unsuspecting U.S. city for the Archaeological Institute of America's annual meeting. The Archaeological Institute of America, or the AIA, as it is more commonly known, was founded in 1879 and remains North America's largest and oldest society for Classical archaeologists. Today, the AIA has over 200,000 mevmbers, which now includes art historians, philologists, and other professionals who study ancient Mediterranean cultures, like the ancient Greeks or Romans. Before the annual meeting, the AIA's board decides on a general theme for that year's conference, and then members can submit their most recent work to be considered for a presentation during a session. In fact, being selected for a presentation at the AIA conference is a very prestigious honor in the field of Classical archaeology!

This year, the conference was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from Thursday, January 2nd, to Sunday, January 5th, 2025. The overarching theme was related to climate change and its impact on Classical archaeology. Philadelphia was an especially appropriate place for a gathering of archaeologists since the city is already famous among history buffs for spots like Independence Hall and the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. The most exciting part of the trip, however, was that UE's Archaeology and Anthropology Department had a group in attendance for the very first time! Braving cross-country travel and bitter cold, one UE Archaeology professor and three students, including myself, survived the chaos of Philadelphia for a truly unforgettable experience.

The festivities opened on Thursday night with two back-to-back receptions, one for first-time conference attendees and the second for all members. Some participants came from academic institutions as far away as Canada, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. Then, on Friday morning, everyone had to wake up bright-and-early to arrive at the first sessions by 8am. Presentations ran until 5pm on a diverse range of topics, including the art of Western Asia, the history of women in Roman archaeology, and the effects of climate change on Greek archaeological sites. The sessions continued through Saturday, with more topics like current research on prehistoric Greek and Italian sites, new discoveries in Pompeii, and advances in digital archaeology, just to name a few. According to UE student Jade Hindersman '25, Saturday featured her favorite session of the conference, a presentation that focused on ethical practices in museums. Not only did Hindersman find the content fascinating, but she also witnessed an exciting and heated debate following the presentation. She recalled an impressive remark from an admired academic, Dr. Patty Gerstenblith of DePaul University, who said, "It is our duty as archaeological professionals to uphold the highest standards of ethics as possible, even if the law does not match up with those standards." Saturday was also my favorite day at the conference because I attended various sessions on ancient Etruscan archaeology, my chosen specialty, and met some of the most respected experts in that discipline. Finally, Sunday marked the last day of the conference, but the day was still filled with sessions on topics as broad as ancient Mediterranean religions and Roman urbanism.

Fortunately, the UE group did have some free time over the packed weekend when they could explore Philadelphia. Some of the group's favorite spots for lunch included Honeygrow, a salad and stir-fry fusion place, and the Reading Terminal Market, which sold famous Philly cheesesteaks. While on an independent trip, UE student Paige Byington '27 visited the Penn Museum and saw many famous Egyptian, Greek, and Roman artifacts. Byington particularly enjoyed seeing the Mesopotamian cylinder seals after hearing so much about them during her archaeology classes here at UE.

The most important insight that the UE group gained from their time at the AIA's annual meeting was the various benefits that their experiences will now provide for a future career in archaeology. According to UE professor and attendee Dr. Rebekah McKay, undergraduate students who attend a professional conference can network with potential graduate school advisors and learn about the most up-to-date research, which is especially important in the field of archaeology where the rate of publishing data is infamously slow. Dr. McKay also stated that undergraduate students who choose to submit an abstract, poster, or paper for a presentation at a conference have the chance to receive critical feedback on their ideas. Of course, these benefits are not just limited to archaeology students alone. Many other disciplines in the humanities and the sciences have professional conferences that can provide rare and valuable opportunities for career advancement for undergraduate students that attend. Following the example of their success at this year's AIA conference, the UE Archaeology group hopes that their positive collective experiences will help boost university and donor funding for future archaeology and non-archaeology undergraduates who wish to go to professional conferences, as well as encourage campus to hold more career fairs and networking opportunities for humanities students.



Mental Health

Rachel Hoke

Spring semester has begun, and a new year has started. Many see this time as a clean slate and go into the new year and new semester feeling great. For others, this can be an overwhelming time. Coming back to campus after a month-long break from college to immediately return to grueling classes and work schedules could easily tank anyone's mental health. You end up feeling frustrated with yourself, making you lose your motivation for schoolwork. Then you take a break from work and end up frustrated with yourself again. It can be a vicious cycle that only harms your mental health more. Some of us might be feeling winter-associated depression or could be struggling with other things. Achieving a good mental health status can be an uphill battle, but please know you are not alone.

You are worthy.
You are loved.

If you feel like you need to seek guidance for anything you can visit UE's Counseling Services on the second floor in Ridgway, call them at 812-488-2663, or email them at *counselingservices@evansville.edu*.

If you are in an immediate mental health crisis you can always call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) You can also text "HELLO" to the Crisis Text Line (741741).

There are many tactics you can find online on how to improve your mental health. I've included some of my favorite strategies for grounding myself in this article. While I know that these activities are not a cure for mental illnesses, these are activities that can help you connect back to yourself and ground you. I hope you try some of these out this semester. You never know, they might just work for you!

Square Breathing

Inhale for 4 seconds. Hold your breath for 4 seconds. Exhale for 4 seconds. Rest for 4 seconds. Repeat until you have done it three times!

Yoga

Taking at least 10 minutes to do a full-body stretch in the morning can help you feel ready to seize the day!

Alternatively, you can do some yoga at night to help you unwind and relax before bedtime. Just make sure you find a calming yoga routine to follow as doing strenuous exercise before bed can lead you to having a harder time falling asleep.

Baking

I love to bake when I'm feeling stressed out. There's just something so calming about mindlessly following a recipe. Plus you get a sweet treat when you're done!

Journaling

Writing down how your day went can help you reflect and make goals for the next day. Many people like to doodle, make lists, and write out their goals and dreams for the year in their journals.

Knitting/Crochet/Sewing

Some people might find knitting, crocheting, and/or sewing relaxing. Creating something useful or cute with your own hands can also give you a sense of accomplishment.

We are all here to further our education, but please remember to take care of yourselves, Aces. We can only achieve our best when we are our best selves. Good luck with the rest of your semester!

Matters!

Can Americans Trust Conspiracy Theorist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as Secretary of Health and Human Services?

Violet Oliver

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., nominated as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) in December 2024, has shared plans to enhance the quality and nutrition of American food, focusing on improving public health and well-being. However, questions remain about whether these plans will be implemented effectively and if they will truly benefit the American people.

Eliminating Ultra-Processed Foods from School Meals: According to Alexander Tin of CBS News, Kennedy intends to remove ultra-processed foods from school cafeterias, promoting the consumption of whole, nutritious foods among students. In his article entitled, "What is 'Make America Healthy Again"? What to know about Trump and RFK Jr.'s wide-ranging platform," Tin takes a step-by-step approach to outlining exactly policy plans are in store in an RFK Jr. lead health movement.

It's important to consider that when Michelle Obama introduced healthier school lunch standards as part of her "Let's Move!" initiative, the changes faced significant backlash from students, parents, and even school administrators. Does RFK Jr. believe he can implement similar plans without facing the same backlash that Michelle Obama encountered? Even when his beliefs stretch far beyond her attempts at making lunch periods healthier around the country?

Banning Harmful Food Additives: In an article by The Hill, "With a focus on food, RFK Jr. can actually make America healthier," opinion contributor Michael F. Jacobson attempts to guide some of RFK Jr.'s broad goals towards more achievable targets. RFK Jr. advocates for stricter regulations on food additives, including artificial dyes and seed oils, which he believes contribute to health issues such as ADHD and cancer.

While he highlights that many additives commonly found in American processed foods, particularly those marketed to children, are already banned or strictly regulated in other countries however there is limited evidence to support a connection between food additives and conditions like ADHD or cancer. Most reputable health organizations, including the FDA and the American Cancer Society, have not endorsed these claims, citing a lack of scientific data to establish such links.

In Jacobson's view, the current nominee for United States Secretary of Health and Human Services would be best served approaching his health initiatives from the perspective of scientists and leading nutritional experts. Jacobson believes RFK Jr.'s focus on foods should remain in the realm of restricting sugary drinks for children, reducing the amount of salt in the American diet, and adhering to smarter food labeling policies if he wants to fulfil his goals of a healthier America.

Restricting Sugary Drink Purchases with SNAP Benefits: In the same article from The Hill, Jacobson explains some of how Kennedy proposes to bar the use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for purchasing sugary beverages, aiming to reduce sugar consumption among low-income populations. A 2011 estimate of SNAP benefit usage credits around $10 billion being spent on sugary drinks alone, making it the single-most-purchased item.

Sugary drinks, however, are often an affordable indulgence for American families. Restricting access could feel like an unfair limitation for those who already face financial challenges.

Claims Made About Chemicals in Water: "If you expose frogs to atrazine, male frogs, it changes their sex, and they can actually bear young. They can lay eggs, fertile eggs," Kennedy said during an episode of his podcast in June 2022, "And so, the capacity for these chemicals that we are just raining down on our children right now to induce these very profound sexual changes in them is something we need to be thinking about as a society." CNN reporters Abby Turner and Andrew Kaczynski covered Kennedy's controversial comment in their article "Robert F. Kennedy Jr. repeatedly suggested that chemicals in water are impacting sexuality of



children," in which they explain that atrazine, a common herbicide, may be an endocrine disruptor, but it certainly has never been linked to the gender identity or sexuality of human beings.

The claim is ever more baseless when considering that atrazine is not in tap water in high amounts, with the CDC citing an EPA standard of allowing a maximum of 3 µg of atrazine per liter of water, an incredibly small amount. It is entirely likely, as the CNN article states, that RFK Jr.'s claims including the chemical's impact on frogs and sexuality is the direct result of far-right commentator Alex Jones' controversial, and blatantly false, claim that there were chemicals in the water "turning the frogs gay."

RFK Jr.'s unscientific claims extend further as he questions the safety of fluoride in drinking water, a measure that is extremely effective at decreasing dental decay, as outlined in a CBS News article entitled, "What to know about fluoride in water following RFK Jr.'s health claims, controversial studies." His commitment to inaccurate data could deepen concerns about his ability to implement practical and effective health reforms.

Enhancing Food Labeling: In Time magazine's article, "The Power RFK Jr. Would Have Over Food," Nik Popli describes Kennedy's support for clearer food labeling, which would inform consumers about unhealthy ingredients, empowering them to make healthier choices.

"Kennedy has criticized the FDA for being overly lenient on food additives and processing standards. If confirmed, he would likely press for stricter regulations, clearer food labeling, and increased transparency on harmful additives," writes Popli. It's a stance that appeals to both sides of the aisle, and one that has received praise from leading health experts. If successful, it could have a profound effect on the lives of millions of Americans.

Final Considerations: Kennedy's plans to reform the nation's approach strictly to food and nutrition broadly reflects a desire to prioritize public health. By targeting the root causes of diet-related illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, RFK Jr. aims to shift the focus of American food policy toward prevention rather than treatment. Through advocating for reforms that hold corporations accountable, fostering equity in food access, and promoting sustainable practices, it appears that his initiatives aim to create a healthier and more resilient food system for all Americans. However, these proposals have sparked debate over their fairness, and ore concerningly, their scientific foundation. As he steps into this influential role, the American people will need to weigh his vision for improving public health against the challenges of implementation, and the likelihood that scientific support will not be at the forefront of his efforts.

FIRESIDE
ACES RADIO



COLLEGE ATHLETES AND THEIR LOVE FOR THE GAME

MASON TAYLOR



For many college athletes, the game is more than just competition; it's a way of life. It starts with childhood dreams, backyard battles, and a relentless drive to improve. By the time they reach college, they've spent years training, sacrificing, and pushing their limits, not just for scholarships or trophies, but simply because they love what they do.

Getting to the college level is no easy feat. Only around 7% of high school athletes make it to the collegiate stage, and an even smaller 2% compete in Division I. The road is paved with early-morning workouts, late-night study sessions, and countless sacrifices. For those who make it, the grind is worth it.

Balancing sports and academics is like working two full-time jobs. College athletes dedicate an average of 20 to 40 hours a week to their sport, depending on the sport. This includes practices, training, games, travel, coursework, exams, and projects. It's exhausting, but the love of the game keeps them going. The feeling of stepping onto the field, court, or track makes the long hours and sore muscles worth it.

The bonds formed in college sports go beyond the wins and losses. Over 80% of athletes say their teammates feel like family, and it's easy to see why. They push each other in workouts, celebrate the victories, and pick each other up after tough losses. Not to mention the countless hours spent together off the field, course, etc. These relationships last long after the final whistle blows, shaping who they are both on and off the field.

For most college athletes, the competitive chapter of their career closes after graduation. Less than 2% go on to play professionally, but the love for the game doesn't disappear. Many stay involved in coaching, playing in rec leagues, or even just watching with the same passion they had as kids. The sport may no longer be their daily grind, but it will always be a part of them.

At the end of the day, college athletes don't just play for scholarships or recognition. They play because they can't imagine life without the game. And that's what makes it all worth it.



"the Loop"





BY RAWLSTON MORTON & NICHOLAS KEE

TRENDING



* AI Is Your New Study Buddy! *

- Chatbots are getting smarter, helping with notes, essays, and even break-up texts. Microsoft just made their AI tools free for businesses—next stop, your syllabus?

* Tech That's Everywhere! *

- Open-ear earbuds are suddenly THE thing, mini projectors are making dorm movie nights elite, and AI voice assistants are learning how to roast you. The future is weird.

* 2025's Albums We're Dying For *

- Lana Del Rey (The Right Person Will Stay – May 21) and A$AP Rocky (Don't Be Dumb) are incoming. And we're still waiting on Gaga to drop something...

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The Fall of DEI in the USA

Grace Burnell



In the United States, politics have become identities, and identities have become political. Some may argue against that, but in our current climate, people fear their rights being taken from them because of the color of their skin or the person they love. After the last election cycle, the US government is majority Republican, and in their limited time in office, they have made some significant changes. In Indiana, Governor Mike Braun has made big moves. One of his executive orders prohibits the state government from funding or pushing forward DEI initiatives. Soon after he did this, President Donald Trump followed in his footsteps, closing offices filled with DEI officials and planning to terminate them at a federal level.

But why are DEI initiatives important? DEI stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. This means embracing each person's differences regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, physical ability, and anything else that impacts their social identity. These initiatives promote treating everyone fairly, offering them equal opportunities, and letting everyone's voices be heard regardless of their identity. Often, these things are most relevant in the workplace. DEI training helps employees and employers understand cultural differences and how to accommodate differing perspectives. It also aims to build a more diverse workspace during the hiring process so that there is not only one type of person working for a company. People who push back against DEI claim that it is an attempt to promote racism against and takes opportunities from white people. One loud critic, Elon Musk, said, "DEI means people die" in a post on X.

In 2020, following the Black Lives Matter protests, Indiana's former governor, Eric Holcomb, established the Office of the Chief Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity cabinet position. He said this person would help tackle systemic racism within the state government.

The Indiana Government website stated that its mission would "provide guidance and support to State of Indiana Agencies in order to normalize and operationalize equity, inclusion, and opportunity." Governor Holcomb appointed Karrah A. Herring as the state's first diversity czar in November 2020. When interviewed after the announcement, Holcomb stated his goal was "to better build diversity and foster an inclusive environment within state government and the services we provide so every Hoosier can take full advantage of their gifts and potential." Herring said at the time that she knew her position was only secure as long as Holcomb was still in office. The Indiana State Government website has now removed any webpage referring to the Chief Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity position and missions.

Governor Mike Braun assumed office on January 13th, 2025.
By January 15th, he had already signed several executive orders, including one that eliminated all DEI initiatives in the state government, cutting Herring's position.

Braun said he believes DEI should be replaced with "MEI: merit, excellence, and innovation." Braun's executive order begins by stating that it ensures "all Hoosiers have equality of opportunity by eliminating DEI in state government." Executive branch state agencies cannot utilize state funds, property, or resources to "support diversity, equity, and inclusion positions, departments, activities, procedures, or programs" if they "grant preferential treatment" because of one's "race, color, ethnicity, or national origin." They cannot "participate in or receive any training, instruction, procedures, or programming" that "endorse preferential treatment" because of their identity. Employers cannot treat potential employees who provide statements "relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion" differently. And agencies cannot "mandate any person to disclose their pronouns." The full document is available at *https://www.in.gov/gov/files/EO-25-14.pdf*

When Donald Trump returned to his position as the President, he acted similarly to Braun. During his first week in office, President Trump has signed over 60 executive orders, including ones aimed at DEI initiatives at the federal level. He ordered the federal government officials overseeing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to be placed on leave and that the agencies would be forced to close their offices by the end of January. He claimed that DEI programs are "forced illegal and immoral discrimination programs." He is also expected to sign orders that remove DEI practices from the US military and ban transgender individuals from serving.

Many major companies have pulled back on their previously stated DEI and anti-discriminatory practices in response to his actions. Some of these companies include Target, Meta, Amazon, McDonalds, and Walmart.

On college campuses, DEI is focused on admissions, recruitment, and programs aimed at underrepresented students. Our campus is filled with diversity, and it is unclear if any of these changes will affect us directly. UE's Center for Inclusive Excellence promotes the importance of DEI. Their webpage says: "At the University of Evansville, diversity and equity are integral to our academic excellence. We're committed to fostering a welcoming campus for individuals of all backgrounds through the Center for Inclusive Excellence, providing resources for students, faculty, and leadership." They promote and participate in events such as the MLK Day of Celebration, UE Pride Camp, Journey to Justice, and Springboard. To learn more about their work or reach out, you can find them on Instagram ***@ue_cie*** or their webpage at *https://www.evansville.edu/center-for-inclusive-excellence*

The world we live in today is constantly changing, as are the policies being enacted. While it is vital to be well-informed on your rights and what is going on in Washington, taking care of yourself is also important. If you find yourself spiraling into dread, it is okay to take a step back. What is most important is to pick yourself back up, understand what is happening and what you agree with, and find a way to speak up and fight for what you believe in.



HOT OR NOT?

Rachel Hoke

One Student's Opinion on the Ace's Grill Exchange

Now that the Ace's Grill Exchange has been running for a while, I figured it was time for someone to give their honest opinion on it. This past month, I have been on a mission to try the options offered for the meal exchange. There have been some items that I have yet to experience, such as the "vegetable of the day", but I feel I have a pretty good idea of what is good about this meal exchange program and what is not.

This is just my opinion and if you have a different one, great!

Right off the bat, I'm going to say that the Ace's Grill Exchange is actually good. I have not once taken a bite of one of the meal items and regretted getting it. I have realized that I tend to prefer the hot meal exchanges over the cold selections. This is due partly to the fact that I will almost always prefer a hot meal to a cold one, but I think that hot meals have more agreeable and predictable flavors. I was honestly surprised by how much I liked the first hot meal exchange I ever got, which was a pepperoni pizza with a side of fruit. The pizza was just the right size and was of pretty good quality. The pepperoni was a little burnt on top, but I didn't mind it as I couldn't taste it. The sauce on the hot meal exchange pizzas is easily the best I've had at UE. The cheeseburger/ hamburger, chicken tenders, and grilled chicken are also pretty good! The french fries come out crispy and the Mac and Cheese is fairly standard. All of this sounds great; however, I have noticed one glaring problem with Ace's Grill Exchange: the quality differs between days. Remember that first pizza I got? Well,I got another one a week or two later and it was not as good. The sauce was still great but the top was still a little doughy and the bottom was a little too brown. I noticed that the cheeseburger that one of my roommates had gotten looked of a lesser quality than mine had a few days prior. We both agreed that things like what buns they use for the sandwiches vary between days/weeks. The food is still decent; however, I would prefer to always get a meal exchange that looks and tastes the same every time. I think this is something that could be easily corrected through time. The kitchen staff will get used to the demand for the items and get a better workflow for cooking during busy times.

Although the quality may vary, I believe Ace's Grill Exchange is a worthwhile meal option for students. I would love to see the menu expand with healthier and more diverse meals, including more options for the vegan and vegetarian students. Overall, this is a great addition to UE's campus!



The first pizza I received.



The second pizza I received.



Roommate's cheeseburger

TRUMP TRIUMPHS

Thanks To The Bro Vote

LUCAS JABLONSKI

For President Donald Trump, the campaign trail to his 47th presidency really began eight months before he announced his candidacy. On March 9th, 2022, Trump made the first of many podcast appearances with the "Donald Trump x Nelk Boys" episode of the ***Full Send Podcast***. The Nelk boys, four prank Youtubers turned podcasters, spoke with Trump about the current Biden administration, which had just entered its second year, and the retraction of troops from Afghanistan. Trump's critique of Joe Biden was scathing and unflinching, a theme that would repeat itself throughout his campaign. This podcast appearance eventually grew into a full-blown partnership between President Trump and Nelk, with the boys posting pro-Trump advertisements on their social media accounts, interviewing JD Vance, President Trump's running mate, and even appearing onstage with him at a rally. To the average American voter, this podcast appearance and Trump's friendship with the Nelk boys would not seem consequential, but to the keen observer, this moment could very well have been the catalyst for Trump's victory, and the factor that distinguished him from both Kamala Harris and former President Biden.

In between his first podcast appearance and the summer of 2024, President Trump continued to make waves among a community of staunch supporters. With his indictment on March 25, 2023 and the ensuing, viral mugshot in August, his claims that the Democratic party was influencing the courts against him rang loud for millions of Republicans. For his supporters, the mugshot was not that of a federal criminal, but of a political martyr. During this time, he also began to attend Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) matches where he rubbed shoulders with entertainers and athletes. By going to the events where the untapped voters and cultural influencers were, he began to solidify himself in the masculine, "Bro" culture.

After an interlude in 2023, President Trump's campaign began to pick up steam. While he utilized the usual methods of candidates, he also delved into the realm of podcasts once again. His first appearance on the 2024 circuit was on influencer Logan Paul's podcast ***Impaulsive***. Though they discussed multiple facets of his campaign including the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the war in Gaza, and Biden's ineptitudes, they also discussed cultural events like Trump's new Tik-tok account, the Jake Paul and Mike Tyson fight, and his thoughts on Elon Musk. Logan Paul and his brother Jake have been the face of "Bro" culture since they got their start over a decade ago, and by going on Logan's podcast, President Trump opened the door for many young men across the country to see him in their preferred medium of entertainment. After this first appearance, he went on to be interviewed on ***This Past Weekend with Theo Von, The Lex Fridman Podcast, Andrew Schulz's Flagrant, Bussin With the Boys***, and, most notably, ***The Joe Rogan Experience*** which has been recognized as the most listened-to podcast of 2024.

The correlation between Trump's new media endeavors and his win are no coincidence. As The Civics Center Found, roughly **54%** of the vote from Americans ages 18-24 was for Kamala Harris while in 2020, that same age group brought in **59%** of the votes for Joe Biden as per the Pew Research Center. Another poll by The Civics Center found that men ages 18-29 voted for Trump by **49%**. Though these are all purely statistics, and they can be left up to interpretation by analysts and citizens, it is clear that the vote of the "Bro" culture was significant in placing President Trump in a higher position for a key demographic of voters. In fairness to his opponent, Harris did go on a number of women-centered podcasts, most notably the ***Call Her Daddy*** podcast in which she discussed key voter concerns like abortion and her history as a prosecutor.

The saturation of President Trump in the podcast, entertainment, and masculine media space was a strategy that worked very well for him. Unlike Harris who places priority on demographics that historically had voted for the democratic party, Trump reached out to a community that until this election season, had felt unrepresented and unmotivated to vote. Acting as a strong, vitalic leader in contrast with former President Biden's weakening persona, President Trump gained the support of many young men in America and won the support of the majority of American people.



"Dana's a good friend of mine. He's an incredible guy, and he's built an incredible organization with the UFC."

A LIST OF LITTLE MEDICINES: POEMS PROSE MUSIC AND MOVIES FOR SOOTHING THE SOUL

ZORAH MEHRZAD

I was going to title this There is No Hope and the World's on Fire: "I think the poets might disagree," invoking that cheeky line from Laurie (a lá Timothée Chalamet) in Little Women. But I've actually never seen the film, and I'm trying to write this sincerely, so we'll hold off on the third-hand interpretation. And while that will soon graduate from my To-Watch list to my Watched list (I promise!), I'm going to spend the next nineteen-hundred or so words trying to convince you to add a couple of things to your own lists. Poems, books, a couple of essays. Some music and movies too because I just can't resist a thorough collection of recommendations. This is all one-part advice and two-parts my selfish desire to get more people talking about things I can hold conversations on. I hope you find something you like.

My methodology for sorting was to establish broad themes, find fragments of writings that fit them, and then expand from there. So, you'll get a heading, a couple of things I like, followed by stream of consciousness, all wrapped up with a little "prescription." Nothing here is listed for the purpose of passive consumption, even if watching a movie feels like kicking your feet up. You can learn from anything. These suggestions just happen to be (hopefully) more fun than a textbook.

ON HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEXT

Home by Warsan Shire

No one leaves home unless
Home is the mouth of a shark.
You only run for the border
When you see the whole city
Running as well.

The truth is, being raised by immigrants and refugees while growing up in a world with a deepening hatred for immigrants and refugees can make you feel pretty numb. I remember starting college on the heels of Biden pulling out of Afghanistan. I remember my house being quietly tense for weeks beforehand. I remember pictures of civilians falling off of planes, clinging desperately to the landing gear in an attempt to flee with the few aircrafts that were taking any non-military passengers. My father and uncles had Tolo News on for days in a row, the broadcasters growing more and more grim. So, when I saw a headline saying that over 2,000 Afghans were being blocked from entering the United States only days after Trump's inauguration, my heart dropped to my feet. This came quickly on the heels of news that ICE agents are now allowed to enter "sensitive locations," places like churches, hospitals, schools. I'm not sure where people think anyone should go, if home is the mouth of a shark and wherever you run to wants to hunt you. Prescription: watch Vice (2018, dir. Adam McKay) and listen to Bad Bunny's new album DeBí TiRAR MáS FOToS. Read How the García Girls Lost Their Accents by Julia Alvarez (buy it in a physical copy if you can) and The Ministry of Time by Kaliane Bradley, focusing on how the main character deals with her family's legacy. Print out ICE red cards; you can find them online at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. Keep one in your wallet, your backpack, on your person. Distribute others for people to pick up and see.

The Interviewer Wants to Know About Fashion by Hala Alyan

If you listen close enough,
You can hear the Earth crack like a neck.
Be lucky. Try to make it to the morning.
Try to find your heart in the newsprint.
Please. I'd rather be alive than holy.
I don't have time to write about the soul.
There are bodies to count.

The line "I'd rather be alive than holy" haunted me for weeks after I read this piece. I still think about it a lot. In December, the Instagram account @ grieftolight posted a Terrance Hayes poem (I recommend his book American Sonnets for my Past and Future Assassin) called "The Same City." In it, a man's car breaks down in the rain and his father comes to jump it. His stepdaughter is in his arms, and infant, and he's thinking about the biblical parallels of raising a child that isn't "yours." Hayes writes, "Let me begin again/I want to be holy." There's so much life in Hayes' writing, it's hard not to agree. I want to be holy. Alyun is more likely talking about choosing life over martyrdom—she's Palestinian. A lot of people are surviving more than they're living right now. Prescription: read The Punishment of Gaza by Gideon Levy and Perfect Victims by Mohammed El-Kurd. Listen to Mustafa's song "Name of God." Watch Democracy Now! whether it's their clips or full episodes. Boycott what you can. There are alternatives to Coca-Cola.

ON OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Journal, Day 3 by Richard Siken

Everyone I know is in some kind of pain.
Everyone. How do you like them apples?

This whole prose piece is great, I really can't recommend it enough. In fact, maybe it would help to know that I have it written and/or saved in about five different places. This is in case I misplace a copy, or it ever gets taken off the Internet. Actually, poetry.com was down for maintenance once when I needed to read it quite desperately, and luckily, I'd typed the whole thing up in Notion. Which is what you do when you're very normal about something. That aside, this reminds me of the

Robert Anton Wilson quote, "Under the present brutal and primitive conditions on this planet, every person you meet should be regarded as one of the walking wounded," or pretty much any line from Dan DeLillo's White Noise (talk about literary existential crisis). Truth be told, I'm still often astounded by how little I know about the rich inner lives of other people. Sometimes one of my classmates will share a personal anecdote in class and I'll get psychic whiplash. It's humbling. Prescription: you should join a book club or make one. Find a way to talk to other people about the things you read and watch if you don't feel much like talking about yourself. Read Cosmos by Carl Sagan and consider your place in the universe and then read They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us by Hanif Abdurraqib. Watch HyperNormalisation (dir. Adam Curtis, 2016) on YouTube and consider how we got this far.

ON WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Be Not Afraid by Ellie Black

He said through a thousandth
mouth I could not see: YOU MUST BE
VERY CAREFUL AND YOU MUST
BE KIND YOU MUST BE AFRAID
YOU MUST NEVER BE AFRAID YOU
MUST BE THE CONDUIT THROUGH
WHICH THE WORLD SEES ITSELF A
MIRROR HELD INFINITELY UP TO ITSELF

I like poems about angels who talk in all caps. Keaton St. James wrote one called "texts between angels trying to live as mortals" that's divine. But this poem is less about angels and more about some sort of godly mandate to act in the best interests of humankind. There's also something comforting in the contradiction. You can be afraid, but you can't let it stop you. I am even more content with the lack of contradiction in "YOU MUST BE KIND," and even more happy at the use of kind instead of nice or good. There's some kind of weight to "kind" that doesn't exist in its synonyms. I liked when the father in About Time (dir. Richard Curtis, 2013) says, "Remember to marry someone kind," in his best-man speech, and how he went back in time just to say "I love you" to his son. Prescription: read Existentialism is a Humanism by Jean-Paul Sartre and then read it again. There are a lot of valid criticisms of Sartre, but he has some valuable points in that lecture. Read Three Flash Fiction Stories by Barry Charman (published in ergot press). Feel a little scared and then watch About Love (dir. Richard Curtis, 2013). Try to live your days like Tim does by the end.

24. Cheryl Strayed
(Dear Sugar Letter #24)

"You go on by doing the best you can. You go on by being generous. You go on by being true. You go on by offering comfort to others who can't go on. You go on by allowing the unbearable days to pass and allowing the pleasure in other days. You go on by finding a channel for your love and another for your rage."

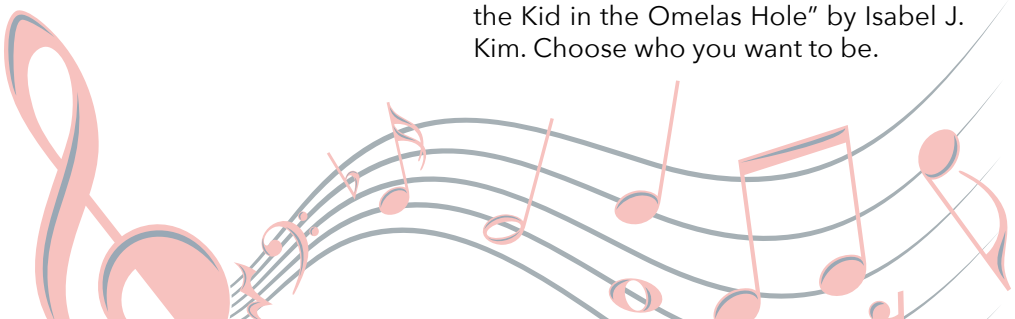
I don't really read self-help books per se. I'm of the mind that any book can help you with yourself, so I read fiction mostly (purely personal preference). But Strayed's advice columns are written like a hug and sometimes like a Heimlich. This excerpt in particular reminds me a little of the poem "[for comrades who ask]" by Tim Blunk, which reads like a long list of suggestions. Especially now, I think it's important to point out that Blunk wrote this while imprisoned for protesting against the US's support of apartheid in South Africa. Sometimes it's easy to look at the dark times and think that there is no point in finding joy, that it's selfish or futile. But a community is only as strong as its most exhausted individual. Remember to rest. Prescription: watch LaRussell's Tiny Desk Concert on YouTube (starting at 13:22 will get you to one of the most joyful renditions of any song I've ever heard in a long time, but the whole thing is great) and listen to Himera's "Himera Remixes The World" on SoundCloud. Read Mutual Aid by Dean Spade. Give your time when you can't give your money.

On Living by Nâzim Hikmet

Living is no laughing matter:
you must live with great
seriousness
…
you can die for people—
even for people whose faces you've
never seen
even though you know living
is the most real, the most
beautiful thing.

The only way this essay can end is with this poem. It's only two fragments from the entire thing, which is much better in whole than it is in parts, but these are some of my favorite lines. Other than perhaps the part where he talks about living life seriously "like a squirrel," which is great for a lot of reasons. I saw a pair of students laughing at a particularly chunky squirrel as I walked to lunch. I don't think I've ever heard anyone laughing so loud behind Olmstead before. Living is no laughing matter, but laughing certainly matters in life. Prescription: read Murderbot: All Systems Red by Martha Wells and any of the Lego movies, but the Batman one is best. They're funny but genuine, and both of them manage to handle heavy topics with the gravity they deserve, just with interesting packaging.

On the reality of seriousness and living, you should read up on Nâzim Hikmet. You should also look at Edward Hirsch's take on the poem. Hikmet wrote this in prison. Even locked away, he remained steadfast in his commitment to the importance of living—and dying—for other people. "Even for people whose faces you've never seen, even though you know living is the most real, the most beautiful thing." Hopefully you'll never be faced with that sort of choice, but I don't think it's bad to put it into practice. Caring about the wellbeing of strangers is not just important, it's necessary. Prescription: read "Those Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula K. LeGuin and then "Those Who Stay and Fight" by N.K. Jemisin and then "Why Don't We Kill the Kid in the Omelas Hole" by Isabel J. Kim. Choose who you want to be.



EGYPT IS NOT EGYPT IN YOUR TEXTBOOKS: MY PERSONAL STORY OF LIVING IN GOD'S HELL ON EARTH

SAIF ABDRABU

I came to the United States on January 18, 2024, hoping to find the home I had always been deprived of. I sought asylum on January 9, 2025. But after Elon Musk's Nazi salute on January 20, I no longer know which side I need protection from.

PART 1

I was born in Cairo, the capital of the Dictatorship of Egypt, with a traditional, abusive, and strict Muslim family. When I was in elementary school, I remember asking my biological mother: **"What does God look like? Because I can see him as this big, brown giant creature that is always watching us."** Suddenly, my body shook, feeling the heavy hands of my mother slapping my face and yelling, **"Haram! Never think or say anything like that again!"** And just for the record, slapping on the face was a **"nicer"** form of punishment in my family.

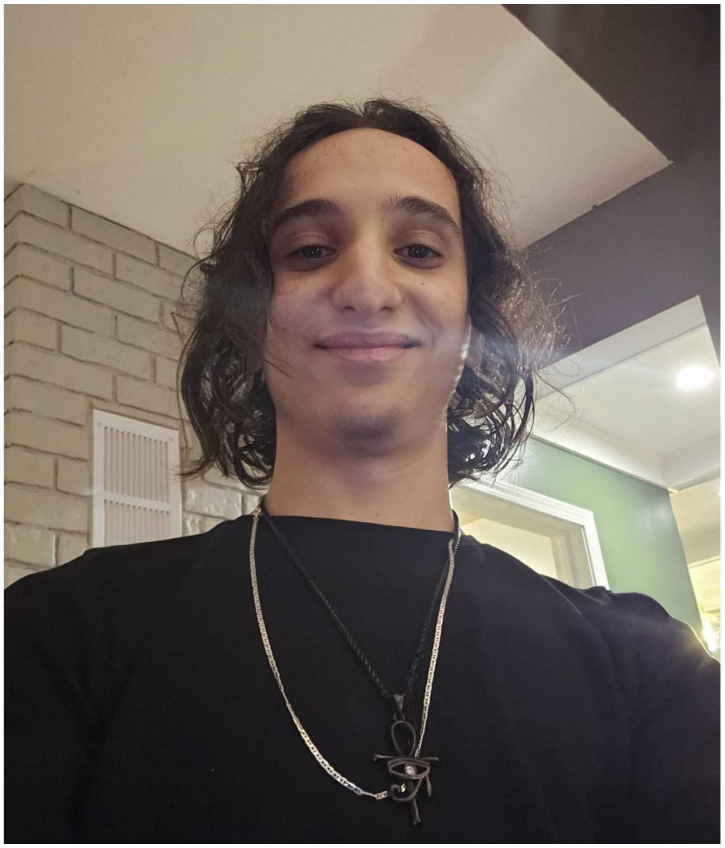
As I was growing up between 2011 and 2019, from ages 10 to 18, I watched the Dictatorship of Egypt unravel. Mubarak's 30-year dictatorship (1981-2011) endured a deadly revolution in 2011. Although the terrorist group of the Muslim Brotherhood played a role in the revolution in order to take control of the country with the assistance of the military, the military was already playing both sides, orchestrating a long con conspiracy. This later resulted in a coup on the Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013 after they had won the first democratic elections in 2012 and its ongoing aftermath; an oppressive fog that never truly lifted. But oppression is not just written in history books or broadcast on the news; it seeps into life, friendships, choices, and the very sense of self.

Living under a dictatorship is not just about fearing the government; it is about fearing the people around you. The system does not just rule with an iron fist; it molds the minds of its citizens, turning them into its enforcers. Only those consumed by it know exactly how it feels when you are stripped of your personal, rudimentary rights. In layman's terms, they are enforcing the policy of a corrupt government, which eradicates your rights. I call it the enslaved citizen policy.

And when the system turns its own people into watchdogs, the betrayal does not come from distant officials in uniform; it comes from the very people you once trusted. When I was a teenager, making friends was effortless. It was easy because I was never truly myself. I was never able to be myself, and the one time I did, it caused my best friends of 5 years to be my executioners. They stabbed me in the back and tried to tell my biological family, **"Your son is going down a 'bad' path. He is an atheist. He promotes and supports LGBTQ+ rights and freedom of religion, disagrees with the Qur'an, has long hair, and we suspect he is bisexual."** Yes, this was my very **"bad path."**

While the system turns citizens into enforcers, it keeps its iron fist ready for those who slip through the cracks. In 2020, I encountered that firsthand. I was with a group of friends in a casual coffee shop in downtown Cairo when we were forcefully detained by two men identifying themselves as state officers—think of homeland security officers, though without uniforms, badges, or anything to indicate who they were. We were held for over 30 minutes. Our phones were thoroughly searched, and we were questioned for social media logins, such as text messages and Facebook, with no search warrant, prior criminal history, parole, or permission. It was this or else. And when I say else, please think about the CIA black sites in shown Hollywood blockbusters, but strip away the cinematic restraint, and mix it with a group of inhumane men who take pleasure in torture, armed with





a dozen toys. One of those toys? An electroshock torture device.

In 2017, there was a concert in Cairo for the Lebanese band Mashrou' Leila, whose lead singer, Hamed Sinno, is openly gay. Sarah Hegazi, an Egyptian activist, was among a group of fans arrested for waving a rainbow flag in support of LGBTQ+ rights. She was charged with **"joining an organization whose intent was to contravene the law by inciting acts of immorality or debauchery."** According to Sarah, the officer blindfolded her and took her by car to a location she did not know. She sat in a chair, gagged with a cloth with her hands cuffed. She was subject to an electric shock until losing consciousness. Sarah sought asylum in Canada in 2018 but was unable to escape her mental prison and died by suicide in 2020. In 2019, a successful, **"religious"** engineering student went with his best friend, who mocked him for depression, to the Cairo Tower. All of a sudden, the engineering student jumped off the Cairo Tower, which is 614 ft.

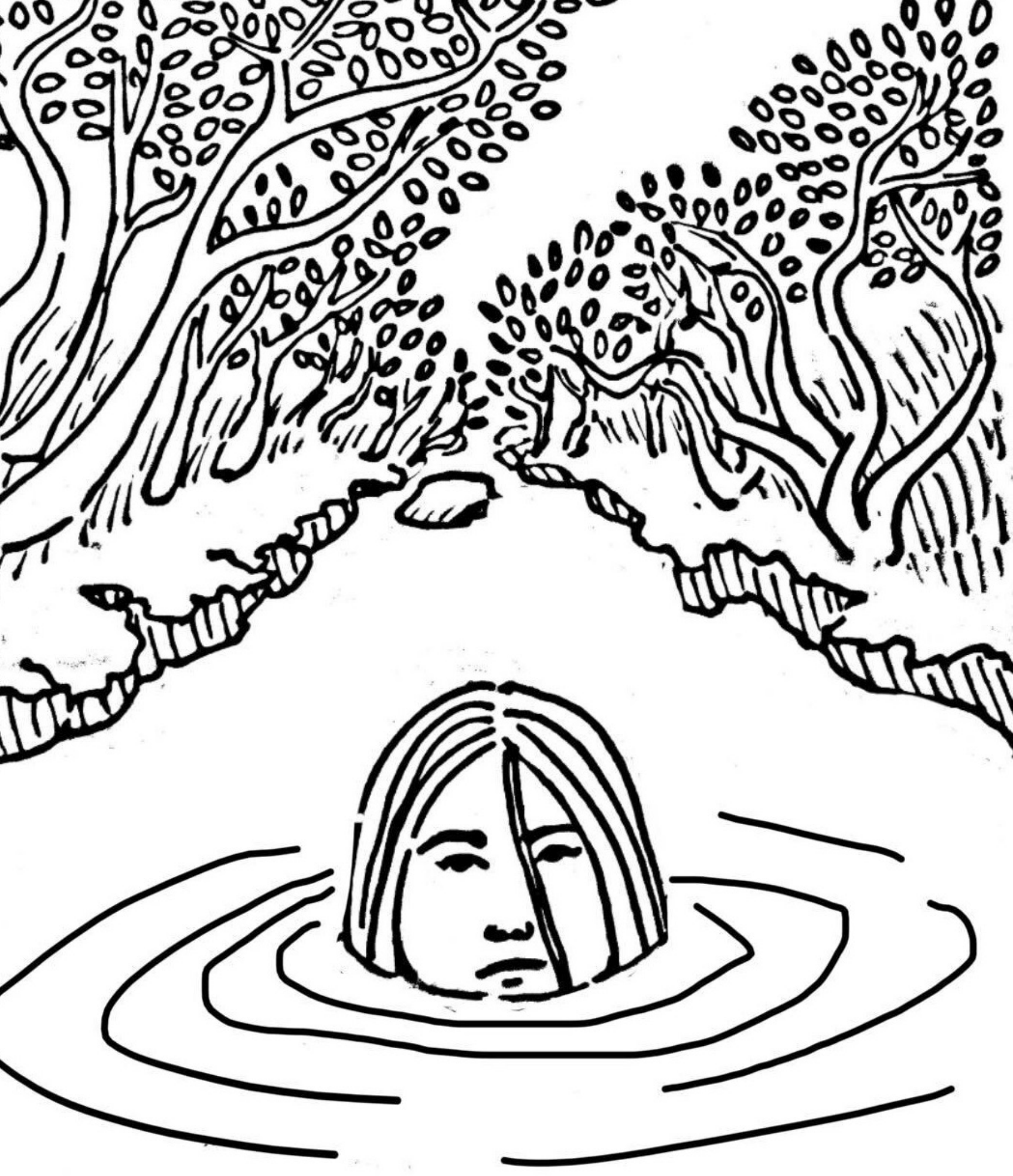
In August 2020, I decided that was enough. I took a huge risk for the good it would bring. Something I knew would be illegal and punishable by the Egyptian Constitution. I created an online community, which eventually peaked at 33,000 members, to promote mental health awareness and human rights, support LGBTQ+ rights, and spread **"real scientific information."** To illustrate, being or even supporting anything but heterosexuality is criminalized in the Constitution and the medical community in the Dictatorship of Egypt. All will be discussed in another part of the series named The Ridgeway Napkins of Crimes.

Because of this continuous fear and oppression, prior to coming to the United States, I was a zombie; my overall health was poor. I was 77 pounds. I had sunken eyes. I was in a state of waiting, waiting for my arrest, waiting for nightmares to stop, and waiting for the moment I would follow through on the suicide I had already planned. But coming to the United States has changed everything for me. It did not just save my life; it has caused a renaissance of my soul.

My decision to seek asylum may seem obvious to most, a dash for freedom, a way out, but it is never that simple. Choosing to flee was a Pyrrhic choice, a hollow triumph, where I traded one kind of prison for another. The doors for my asylum may lead to freedom in one sense, but also lead inward to the darker recesses of my mind, where all the wounds I thought were buried resurface, raw and unrelenting. It is a mental prison, not one with walls, but with roots that entangle me from within. Every step forward unravels the self I once knew, and with every breath, I feel the weight of a future that never truly feels under my own control. Would I turn back the clock and do anything differently? Not in a million years. They say freedom comes with a price, but it also comes with access to mental health services.

This is part one of a series of personal essays. Until then, the mystery remains: Had I escaped the cage or just stepped into a larger one? I do not have the answer, and perhaps the answer is not yet mine to know.


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The Right Time but The Wrong Guy



It is no secret that Kendrick Lamar is known for his groundbreaking music, lyrical depth, and social consciousness. His long-awaited Super Bowl Halftime show is just one example of how powerful and unforgettable his artistry is.

Not only did he make history as the first solo hip-hop artist to headline the event, but he also used the opportunity to tell a powerful story about patriotism through his stage design, costumes, and setlist, featuring songs like **"Humble," "DNA," and "Not Like Us."**

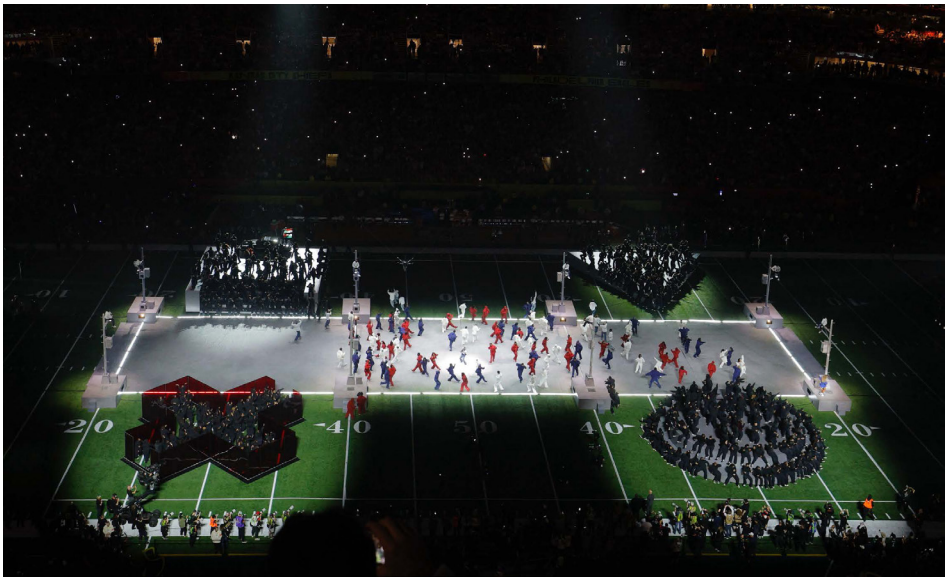
One of the most obvious symbols throughout the whole performance was dressing dancers in red, white, and blue then arranging them together to create a formation resembling the American Flag. Every person featured in the performance, including the backup dancers, were also Black Americans. The dancers forming an American flag with Lamar in the center of can be representative of how this nation was built on the backs of Black Americans.

As Lamar stands in the middle of the formation, he creates a physical divide within the dancers' formation. This is a visual metaphor for the ongoing racial and political division in America that continues to rip our nation apart. Following along with the theme of patriotism, we see Samuel L. Jackson dressed as Uncle Sam. He is acting as the narrator for the performance, introducing Lamar by saying, **"It's your Uncle…Sam, and this is the Great American Game!"**

Jackson's role represented the **"clean"** or **"sanitized"** version of American history that often criticizes and tries to control how Black artists express themselves. In one instance, he calls part of Lamar's performance **"too ghetto."** Throughout the entire half-time show, Lamar's performance is continuously referred to as **"a game."** A couple of times within the performance, the camera pans over the audience; when this happens, the words "**WARNING WRONG WAY**" and "**GAME OVER**" appear in lights.

Chance McDowell

This motif is also seen in the stage design itself, reinforcing the idea that life is now a game to be played, and that someone else is deciding the rules for you.



As the camera spins around to show them dancing on the field, it becomes even clearer that they are performing in a prison yard. This highlights the disproportionate mass incarceration of Black Americans and the racial inequality in both prisons and the justice system. It is during this part of the performance that he features his song **"Not Like Us,"** where Lamar announces, **"40 acres and mule / this is bigger than the music."**

This is a direct reference to the reparations that were promised to Black Americans when slavery was abolished. It was January 16, 1865, when Union Gen. William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15 called for each formally enslaved family to receive 40 acres of land. That promise was never fulfilled.

Commentary on reparations was not the only historical reference made by Lamar that night. Early in the performance, Lamar says, **"The revolution is about to be televised / You picked the right time but the wrong guy."** This references Gil Scott-Heron's 1971 poem **"The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."** The poem argues that change does not come from big corporations nor the government. It comes, instead, from individuals , who the media will ignore and censor.

Other than Lamar's performance, this Super Bowl is marked in history for another reason: it is the first Super Bowl in history that a sitting United States President has attended. President Trump attended the fifty-ninth Super Bowl following the NFL's recent decision to remove the **"End Racism"** slogans that have been stenciled on the end zones since 2021. In my opinion, Lamar's fearless performance to openly criticizes patriotism and our government was incredibly inspirational, especially to do it in front of a President who is at the helm of much of what is wrong with our nation.

His performance will continue to be praised, analyzed, and torn apart by people online. Regardless of anyone's opinion of whether it was **"the best"** Super Bowl performance, it had a purpose. That purpose was to make people listen to what Lamar has to say and what so many Black Americans have been saying for years. To me, it is one of the most audacious public acts of protest in modern history. The revolution is now being televised, and in my opinion, we picked the right time and the right guy.




ILLEGAL
N STOLEN
LAND
CLIMATE
HANGE IS
REAL
ENOUGH!
FELON.
FASCIST.
FOOL.
FUCK
THE
PATRIARCHY
POWER TO
PEOPLE
KKK
DON'T
SHOOT
EAT THE
RICH
CEASEFIRE
free
PALESTINE
TRANS
RIGHTS
ARE HUMA
RIGHTS
BLM
JusticeNow
MY BODY
MY CHOICE
PROTECT
KIDS
NOT