Dear UIC OneWorld Readers,

After months of writing, editing, and designing, we are proud to present to you the 2015–2016 issue of UIC OneWorld. Our mission, as a student-run publication, is not only to raise awareness of world issues, but also to encourage involvement in global affairs by creating a journal that incorporates student research, knowledge, and personal experience. As such, the articles featured in this issue may cover sensitive or controversial topics. This year, we have incorporated a new Opinions section. While most of the articles in our journal maintain an objective perspective, any personal views that are expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial staff, the Honors College, or UIC. UIC OneWorld welcomes and publishes work that covers a diverse range of interests, beliefs, values and experiences.

We would like to thank our faculty advisor Norma Moruzzi, Director of the International Studies Program, for her continuous developmental and financial support, without either of which this publication would not be possible. We would also like to thank the Honors College staff, including Dean Murphy, Sara Mehta, and Abigail Kindelsperger, for continual encouragement and leadership advice. Most importantly, we would like to thank our writers for having the courage to share their thoughts with others.

We hope that you enjoy this journal and get inspired to learn more about these issues and to take action.

Sincerely,

Viveka Patel
President
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EXPERIENCES ABROAD
Archaeology is a field I never expected to major in when I began my studies at UIC. A Gen Ed course turned out to be completely life changing, and before I knew it, my bags were packed, complete with a Spanish dictionary, sunscreen, and a jar of peanut butter; I was heading to the desert. I traveled with a small group of students to the Contisuyo Field School in Moquegua, Peru in the summer of 2013. After six weeks in a remote mountain town called Torata, situated in the southern Andes, I emerged as a more enlightened student.

A large van arrived in the small bus station in Arequipa, and Dr. Ryan Williams was in the driver’s seat. Dr. Williams is a distinguished professor and researcher both in the Andes and in the Anthropology department at UIC. We headed east through magnificent turns in the sandy mountains, sprinkled with volcanic ash from 1600 AD. We picked up our other professor, Dr. Sofia Chacaltana, en route to Torata. Torata is essentially an archaeological suburb of Moquegua. The two professors work together at sister museums, exchanging information and artifacts between the Field Museum in Chicago and the Museo Contisuyo in Moquegua, Peru.

My experience through the Contisuyo Field School greatly contrasted my experience in Chicago. We were not in a glamorous city or studying at a university, but rather in the desert, more specifically in an archaeological zone called Sabaya. The lifestyle in the region was either agricultural, archaeological, or a mix of both. It was about a twenty-minute ride between our house in Torata and the field in Sabaya. The hands-on experience was something students in Chicago simply can’t have. In addition to the techniques we practiced and the history we studied, we followed a schedule of real archaeologists.

A typical week ran as follows: Monday through Friday we were in the field in Sabaya excavating from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We then did lab work such as bagging artifacts and talking about what we found that day until it was time for dinner around 5:00 PM. We had strict buddy system rules, no Internet, and one bathroom for ten people. Indeed it was very different from life in Chicago. On Saturdays, we had long lab sessions, which varied; one week we learned how to make stone tools by hammering rocks together. Another week, we learned about historical weather patterns and their relevance to the types of soil we dug up.

After six weeks in a remote mountain town called Torata, situated in the southern Andes, I emerged as a more enlightened student.
The Museo Contisuyo was also running a field school for geology at the same time, and we had the opportunity to work closely with the geology students when we visited the museum on the weekend. Sometimes they even helped us use ground-penetrating radar to see deep underground. A cartographer from Argentina also came and showed us how to map our sites using proper equipment. One thing I will never forget was when an 87-year-old man walked by our excavation site on his way to the market in Torata and gave us the best piece of advice I have ever received. He said the secret to a long life is to “walk, eat tomatoes, and don’t drink a lot.” The local people added a lot to my experience. Though I only speak limited Spanish, it was fun to communicate and laugh with them throughout the workday. One lady wanted me to stay and marry her son.
After working hard all week, we were able to take a bus ride to Moquegua to shop at the market and unwind, or even stay in a hostel. Our teachers made our experience very enjoyable, showing us the two bars in the town and how to navigate the market, from buying bread for the week to eyeliner to llama-themed souvenirs. We had a Fourth of July cookout with other archaeologists and our last weekend we traveled to the highlands, close to the Bolivian border for a water festival! The festival celebrated irrigation and the town’s access to water. Ironically, the natives celebrated with beer, wine, and pisco (a clear, strong alcohol)...basically anything but water. Our last day the Sabaya locals threw us a little going away party with cuisine like *cuy* (guinea pig), *aji de gallina* (chicken, rice, and yellow sauce) and *chicha morada* (a sweet drink made from purple corn). A lady had a traditional Andean dress she let all the girls try on, and then we danced all afternoon.

Despite working in the field for a majority of the time, it was a culturally immersive study abroad experience. I learned a lot about Peru and picked up some Spanish, an appreciation for the culture of the Quechua natives, and of course how to properly measure and excavate an archaeological site of shallow graves and pottery. This trip sparked my interest in traveling, backpacking, and living off the bare minimum. Throughout the numerous hardships encountered on this trip, there were memories created that I will cherish for a lifetime. On a particularly frustrating day of speed-excavating a body after being looted the day before (artifacts were stolen), the local ladies surprised us with cold drinks in the field and told us to lighten up. I realized it is important to count your blessings, be kind to everyone, and see the world. I am saddened by the fact that so many students don’t get the opportunity to go abroad, meet new people and explore. If you happen to stumble upon your passion, pursue it. You never know where it will take you.

If you happen to stumble upon your passion, pursue it. You never know where it will take you.
After a night at the water festival in the highlands, we drove down a mountain to swim in this alluring spring.

Photo credit: Becky Steenstrup
As we grow up, we realize that every moment in life is precious. We can appreciate life more when we start putting things into perspective. Once I started college, I knew that now was the time to do things that I wanted for myself because there is nothing holding me back; this was the one time where I would be allowed to invest in myself. As a freshman, I joined several clubs because I was curious about the opportunities and wanted to explore my options. A club that particularly drew my interest was UIC MEDLIFE because it presented the opportunity to travel. During Spring 2015, I was fortunate enough to partake in a medical mission trip to Riobamba, Ecuador with MEDLIFE. How I managed to get my parents' approval and finance my trip was another story, but I can assure you that it was worth every argument and penny. What I learned from my travels in Riobamba was priceless and I would do it all over again if I could for three reasons:

To Test My Independence and Experience the World
Stepping out and doing things on my own was the best way to prove to my mom and dad that I am one step closer to being an independent young adult. I am often anxious, but I realized: what better way to challenge my anxiety than stepping outside of my comfort zone. I did just that, since I was with a bunch of strangers about to travel to a foreign country, and I was terrified of flying. I cannot begin to tell you the beauty in the experience of traveling to a different country. Everything about it was beautiful; the culture, the people, and the scenery were all truly something out of a book. When I first arrived, I was hesitant about even the littlest things, but I can assure you that it was worth every argument and penny. What I learned from my travels in Riobamba was priceless and I would do it all over again if I could for three reasons:

To Embrace a Change of Perspective
On one of the first nights in Riobamba, I attended an informational meeting where our volunteer leaders stressed the purpose of my group being there. Along with a boatload of information about the lack of health
such as noble thoughts can be used towards improving the world.

During my time in Ecuador, my MEDLIFE instructor informed our group about striking statistics, such as, there is only one doctor per every 980 people and only 51% of people are covered under Ecuador’s public healthcare system (even though it is guaranteed for all). During my clinical experience, I worked with indigenous people who only spoke Quechua. The majority of the MEDLIFE team did not know Spanish, let alone Quechua; therefore, communication was difficult. To convince these men, women, and children of the importance of health care was by far the most difficult task. Many refused health care simply because of a lack of education. Some of the hardest things for me to witness were children crying out of fear, not knowing that they would be getting help, and women refusing care because of their fear of not getting approval from their husbands. My mission trip to Riobamba, Ecuador, made me constantly contemplate Dr. King’s words. Through this contemplation and through my experience I realized that only one thing can save us in the type of world we live in: empathy.

This is not something I could have possibly learned on my own. I had the opportunity to educate children about oral hygiene. I even got to work closely with many amazing individuals, including the sweetest Ecuadorian girl named Gloria. To the best of my ability, I tried to engage in conversation with her in my broken Spanish. I attempted a simple conversation of asking the little girl what she wanted to be when she grew up and why. Her response was a doctor because she wanted to help others. It was such a simple answer yet so touching. It warms my heart knowing how much compassion this little girl has for others. Gloria helped define the purpose of my trip and ultimately taught me that a small thing such as noble thoughts can be used towards improving the world.
on-one interaction was great, and I loved being able to talk with the people to explain our purpose for being in their community.

From just one week of traveling I walked away with a new understanding of not only myself, but also the world. I know so many people who regret not traveling because of silly excuses. Do not make it a regret. Do not let the idea of money or fear stop you from a learning experience; there can be a way. Whether you decide to go for as little as a week or a summer, it does not matter because you will walk away with an experience of a lifetime.

see that not all patients took advantage of free health care, but I learned that this is due in part to cultural differences, and it was important to show an understanding of this. I noticed that simple things like a friendly environment can help ease a patient’s worry. The dentist and I played songs off my iPhone to make a less frightening environment for patients and because we both had a mutual love for American pop culture and teeth. While the dentist got to work with the patients, I helped by talking to them and making sure they were comfortable. By using simple language, I tried to gain trust and understanding because I could only imagine the nervousness before an unfamiliar oral procedure. The one-

Noble thoughts can be used towards improving the world.
Ci rivediamo: A Study Abroad Experience in Italy

SYDNEY SHAVERS

As I entered my final year of college, I made a last minute decision to study abroad, an experience I did not want to miss. I was keen on picking a country with a rich history of art, and immediately I thought of Italy. Being an art major, I believed that Italy would be the best place to immerse myself in the culture that birthed the Renaissance; it is also steeped in influential art, architectural institutions, and artifacts. As I was preparing to leave the United States in May, I tried to gain more knowledge about the history and culture of Italy. This involved not only learning Italian words and phrases in order to communicate, but also keeping up with the politics of the country as well.

Upon reaching Italy, I attended the Lorenzo de’Medici Institute in Florence and ended up with an apartment in the heart of downtown. Florence is a very old city so the roads in el centro, the downtown area, are very narrow, making it hard for bigger cars to get through. In fact, the taxi that my new roommate and I shared to our place could not get through our street, and we had to drag our luggage through the huge outdoor market to our apartment. While in Florence, I tried to make the most of my limited time in the city. My friends and I visited many churches and museums including the Uffizi Gallery, which houses many famous artworks like The Birth of Venus by Botticelli and Medusa by Caravaggio. Florence is also home to one of my favorite museums, Museo del Novecento, which holds modern and abstract art including Umberto Boccioni’s work and others from the Italian Futurist movement.

Outside of Florence, I took many solo trips via trains to nearby cities. I was able to visit the Colosseum in Rome, go to the World’s Fair in Milan, and attend my favorite excursion of the trip—the Venice Biennale. I stayed in hostels and home shares, meeting people from every part of the world. Conversations were sometimes stilted with language barriers, but it was very rewarding when I could form a connection with someone who didn’t speak a lick of English or even Italian.

In my downtime after my printmaking and fashion illustration classes, I would go out with friends for aperitivo, a pre-dinner drink to socialize and relax while eating small appetizers. My favorite pairing was the refreshingly bitter regional specialty drink, Spritz, and tomato bruschetta. Afterwards, we would go to dinner and get gelato as we looked for somewhere to watch the sun set over the Arno River. One thing that I noticed almost immediately was that it is extremely common throughout the cities in Italy for people to come into the pubs and restaurants to sell roses or small souvenirs. A good portion of these vendors had heavy African accents. Luckily, I had the chance to talk to a few of the vendors and often the stories were similar: most had little to no money and had family members back home to support. The bar and restaurant owners just went about business when the vendors entered the shops, acknowledging and greeting each
Studying abroad in Italy was not only a great experience because I was able to explore a different culture, but also because I was able to see the world from another perspective. My insular world was no longer so, and I was presented with the opportunity to talk to people and bear witness to stories that I normally would not have heard.

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other; it was just a part of their day-to-day lives. In contrast, some of the reactions and the lack of empathy from my fellow classmates was shocking. They criticized the vendors and would brazenly yell at them if the vendors tried to talk to them. My classmates would imply that they did not belong there or were being rude and a nuisance. It really showed the disconnect between our lives here in the United States and the rest of the world. It is easier to judge when you are somewhat removed from a situation.
The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Globe

MARIEL RANCEL

Before I begin, I’d like to dedicate this article to the most important man in my life: my dad. Without him and his profession, my vast experiences with far away lands would not be possible. Thank you, Dad!

Thanks to the Internet and advances in transportation, we have never been more globally interconnected than we are today. Yet, as I have observed while “tourist watching” in foreign places, it often feels like the ancient arts of hospitality and travel are lost to our snapchat stories and never-ending quest for Wi-Fi. This article is a cry for a revival of Homer’s Odyssey—a modern-day guide to being a great guest in an unfamiliar land. It is my vehement opinion that the best kinds of travelers spend their vacations not only making memories, but also understanding the host cultures they visit and using their newfound insights to make changes in themselves, the places they travel to, and the places they live.

But what credentials do I have to make a statement so bold? I am, after all, only 20. However, I have been blessed with the opportunity to visit almost 30 states in America and 8 countries outside the US. I have traveled by airplanes, buses, ferries, trains, cars, and RVs. I have stayed in an innumerable amount of hotels (both fine and humble), countless dorm rooms, and motels. I have traveled the world as a tourist, relative, business person, student, competitor, and volunteer. I don’t know about you, but I think that’s at least the beginning of a credible opinion on travel! Here, then, is a hitchhiker’s guide to the globe:

When I travel, my outlook on a place starts with that very first breath.

If you have ever stepped out of the airport and into cities like New York, Los Angeles, or Frankfurt, you might remember the heavy taste of concrete, metal and God knows what else that settles on your fleshy pink tongue. Or, if you’re swimming to greener pastures like Edinburgh and Portland, how lovely it feels to open your mouth wide for photosynthesis. It is easy to see which countries value air quality or how industrialized a place is by this first breath; it is also a good indication of a region’s attitude towards issues of sustainability.
and key in glass counters and cabinets. It’s good theft prevention, yes, but it also hints at the high demand for healthcare here despite the country’s universal health care policy. While there are doctors and medications available, not everyone can use these resources. Why?

Unfortunately, the lack of pharmacies and doctors’ offices outside the city, where the mountains are dotted with indigenous communities, makes these resources difficult to get to and thus, many locals consider it a waste of time. After hiking down the mountain for hours to catch a bus to the city before the sun comes out, one might...
wait hours for a simple consultation that will likely result in a referral and another day lost. It often feels that their time is better spent attending to their fields and livestock. When Ecuadorians do make an effort to seek out the health care their government promises them, their quality of care is subject to how critical their condition is or how much they can afford to spend to get quicker treatment in a private clinic. We were told that, even though an organ transplant is essentially free, to be put on a transport list here was like a death sentence. If you were in a stable condition, you may be forced to wait for months, maybe years, for an organ. By then, it might be too late.

Finally, after ensuring that I have access to medicine and food in the case of emergencies, I turn my attention to the biggest insight into a place: the people who live there.

Do not be misled to believe that the people of a new place are the foreigners when, in reality, you are the foreigner. In my experience, the best way to approach someone, especially if you do not speak the same language as them, is to greet them using the customary greeting in their country. It seems silly to me to state something so obvious, but you might be surprised at how many tourists make no effort to learn even the most basic greetings of a culture. How would you feel if someone walked up to you speak-
When do people get married? In Edinburgh, London, and Barcelona, people waited until their 30’s—an indication that young people there prioritize getting college educations and building a career.

It’s exhausting to throw yourself into the unfamiliar, but, sometimes, it has to be done in order to make you appreciate what you have. You will find that compassionate and apathetic people exist across all cultures. You will see people are a product of culture as much as culture is a product of people.

The human condition never fails to take my breath away at the end of a trip. How can people millions of miles away from me feel the same joy or the same frustration I do? It really is the stuff of legends.

Keep in mind, a greeting is only one of many windows into a culture. How do people eat in the place you are visiting? If they eat street food, try the street food! In Barcelona, I indulged in a wonderful urban market full of tropical fruits from Africa and fish off the coast. In Ecuador, I ate chicken feet and quail eggs from carts with chiming bells. And in Puerto Rico, I ate mangoes and starfruit off the trees.

I can make no promises, however, that these people will be as receptive as you would like them to be, especially in the beginning. This is because new and unfamiliar people may seem scary—which is true for both tourists and locals. But don’t let this discourage you. Sometimes, all it takes is one smile or, as mentioned above, a simple gesture for people to share a piece of their culture with you.

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A Newly Discovered Species: *Homo Naledi*

A new species of the human ancestor has been uncovered deep within the Rising Star Cave in South Africa. *Homo naledi* is the name scientists have given the species, which appears to have several characteristics of the modern human, but at the same time comes across as primitive and ape-like (Shreeve). “Naledi” means star in the Sotho language. In March 2014, after three weeks of excavating by paleoanthropologist Lee Berger’s team, 1,500 bones of fifteen members of the species had been uncovered. How did these bones reach deep within the cave? During what time period did this species live? What were they capable of? These are some of the questions that are part of a raging debate within the scientific community.

*Homo naledi* displayed traits of both the modern human genus, *Homo*, and the more primitive genus, *Australopithecine* (Amos). Many scientists believe that one of the *Australopithecine* species evolved into the *Homo* genus. When the team analyzed 190 teeth, what they observed was something completely new. Like modern man’s teeth, the molar crowns were small with five cusps; however, premolar roots had more of a primitive characteristic. The braincase of *H. naledi* was measured to be 560 cm³ for males and 465 cm³ for females in volume, about half the size of the braincase of modern humans (Amos). The hands of *H. naledi* resembled that of modern humans as well, suggesting that the species was able to utilize tools. The long leg bones and “strong muscle attachment” are “characteristic of a modern bipedal gait” (Shreeve). Moreover, *H. naledis’* feet are strikingly similar to the modern human’s feet. The *Australopithecine* features are prominent in the primitive shoulders of *H. naledi*, since their position indicates they helped the species climb and hang. The curled fingers are also indicative of climbing. The pelvis is “flared outward,” a physical trait commonly seen in primitive species (Shreeve).

How the species ended up in a secluded chamber is a question that is baffling many scientists. Only the bones of *H. naledi* were found at the site. There was no evidence of occupation of the area because no tools were present. The arrangement of the bones indicated that the bodies of *H. naledi* were disposed of. The idea that the bones could have been washed into the cave was ruled out because no rubble or stones carried by a wave of water were present (Shreeve). The only explanation Berger’s team had was that the bodies of *H. naledi* were placed
in the cave by other *H. naledi* in a “ritualized manner” (Shreeve). However, the idea that this species could carry out such complex behavior seems highly improbable.

At the moment, no one knows how old the bones are. Thus, it is difficult to pinpoint where *H. naledi* belongs on the human family tree. Berger believes that *H. naledi* is the species present from the transition from *Australopithecine* to *Homo*, about two million years ago; however, there are other possibilities as to when the species existed because it possesses traits of a unique animal (Shreeve). The discovery of the *H. naledi* has changed the way scientists understand human evolution. Berger views human evolution as a “braided stream”: humans have emerged from a common ancestor but down the river the species may converge once again (Shreeve). Like *H. naledi* there may be other species waiting to be discovered.
Democratic Elections in Burma

Disclaimer: Controversy exists over whether to use the name Burma or Myanmar when referring to the country. Burma was the official name until 1989, when the military junta changed it to Myanmar without the consent of the people. For the purposes of this article, I will use Burma since it is better known.

For the first time in twenty-five years, Burma will hold its freest elections (Campbell). The last time elections were held was in 1990, but those results were quickly overturned by the military. However, the current elections are complicated by rampant religious and ethnic tensions that trace their roots back in history.

Burma was annexed by Britain in 1886. After World War II, Aung San was able to negotiate Burma’s independence (“History of Burma”). However, he and members of his cabinet were soon assassinated by an opposition group. For the next ten years, the democratic government attempted to bring stability to the nation, but in 1962, General Ne Win overthrew the government and established a military junta. He instituted the “Burmese Way to Socialism,” which crippled the country’s economy (“History of Burma”). Under his rule, Burma transitioned from one of the richest countries in Southeast Asia to one of the poorest.

Ne Win’s regime was extremely brutal, cracking down on any signs of opposition. In 1988, riots broke out due to the government’s economic mismanagement. Ne Win was superstitious and wanted to remove all currency from the circulation other than 45 and 90 kyats because he believed the number nine was lucky (“Burma’s 1988 Protests”). This move essentially wiped out much of the peoples’ savings since most people had 100 kyats. Human rights groups estimated that there were three thousand deaths in six weeks due to the military crackdown. Troops repeatedly fired on the protesters and on the doctors treating the wounded (“Burma’s 1988 Protests”).

In response to international pressure, the military regime allowed multi-party elections to be held in 1990. Although the National League for Democracy (NLD) won with 52% of the vote and 80% of the seats, the military refused to recognize the results and instead placed Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the NLD, under house arrest for fifteen years (“Myanmar’s 2015 general elections explained”). Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, rose to prominence during the 1988 riots when she made a speech at the Shwedagon Pagoda. By placing her under house arrest, the military hoped to silence her by preventing her from having contact with the outside world. Instead, Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 “for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights” (“Aung San Suu Kyi—Facts”).
In 2010, the military held multi-party elections for the second time. The military ran under the name Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). NLD boycotted the elections since the military extended Suu Kyi’s house arrest so she could not participate (“A Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi”). As a result, USDP-backed Thein Sein became president. Now, the elections are being held again this year and this time, the NLD plans to participate.

An uproar arose when the election campaign voter lists were published earlier this year. Only ten Muslims, of six thousand, were on the list even though dead people were included in the list (“Myanmar’s 2015 general elections explained”). This is most likely due to strong ethnic and religious tensions between Muslims and Buddhists. None of the parties can afford to alienate the Buddhist community. Ma Ba Tha, a highly popular nationalist Buddhist group, claims that the increase in Muslims has been threatening the safety of Buddhists. They have succeeded in having legislation passed that forbids Buddhist women from their religion, interfaith marriage and polygamy (Fisher). Ma Ba Tha has primarily cast its support with the USDP, allowing the USDP to gain many voters. In response, USDP has made it public that it has given large financial donations to Ma Ba Tha (Lone). Furthermore, Ma Ba Tha has criticized the NLD as a party of Muslims.

It should be noted that unlike the US, Burma’s president is elected indirectly. The Hluttaw (parliament) is composed of three groups: the Lower House, the Upper House, and the unelected army representatives. Each of the groups nominates a candidate and the representatives vote on their choice. The president is the one with the most votes. The other two candidates become vice presidents (“Myanmar’s 2015 general elections explained”).

Currently, the most popular party appears to be Suu Kyi’s NLD. They have great support among the ethnic Bamar majority, but that is not enough to win the election. They need to gain support among the minority ethnic states, which control 31% of the seats (“Myanmar’s 2015 general elections explained”). However, many of the minorities, which make up a third of Burma’s population, have complained of persecution. Most notably, the U.N. has called the Rohingya Muslims “one of the world’s most persecuted peoples” (Campbell). Rohingya Muslims are treated as illegal immigrants, because many Muslims immigrated during British rule. Suu Kyi has been criticized for staying silent on this matter, but she is most likely afraid of alien-
but the military still has enough power to veto any attempts to change the constitution. The new members of Parliament swore into office in February, but they have yet to announce the three possible candidates for presidency.


The military hoped to silence her by preventing her from having contact with the outside world. Instead, Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 “for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.”

Suu Kyi has yet to announce a candidate who will take her place. Initially, it was assumed that she made an alliance with Speaker of the Lower House, Thura U Shwe Mann, who had ties to both the military and NLD. However, he was purged by the USDP in August (Kuok). While Shwe Mann was at a meeting, police forces surrounded the USDP headquarters and forcibly removed him. It is speculated that the reason was because USDP conservatives were angered that Shwe Mann wanted to reduce the power of the military and make it possible for Suu Kyi to become president. No matter the candidate chosen, Suu Kyi has vowed that “If the NLD wins the elections and we form a government, I am going to be the leader of that government whether or not I am the president” (Gowen). Burma’s fate is still to be decided. Even if the NLD wins the election, the president’s power is tempered by the military’s guaranteed seats. These upcoming elections are signals that Burma is gradually moving towards democracy, but there are still many ethnic and religious tensions that still must be resolved.

Notes: The election referred to occurred on November 8th, 2015 with Aung San Suu Kyi’s NLD securing a landslide with 77% of the seats (Holmes). These results guarantee that NLD will have enough votes to determine the next president, but the military still has enough power to veto any attempts to change the constitution. The new members of Parliament swore into office in February, but they have yet to announce the three possible candidates for presidency.


The military hoped to silence her by preventing her from having contact with the outside world. Instead, Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 “for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.”

Suu Kyi has yet to announce a candidate who will take her place. Initially, it was assumed that she made an alliance with Speaker of the Lower House, Thura U Shwe Mann, who had ties to both the military and NLD. However, he was purged by the USDP in August (Kuok). While Shwe Mann was at a meeting, police forces surrounded the USDP headquarters and forcibly removed him. It is speculated that the reason was because USDP conservatives were angered that Shwe Mann wanted to reduce the power of the military and make it possible for Suu Kyi to become president. No matter the candidate chosen, Suu Kyi has vowed that “If the NLD wins the elections and we form a government, I am going to be the leader of that government whether or not I am the president” (Gowen). Burma’s fate is still to be decided. Even if the NLD wins the election, the president’s power is tempered by the military’s guaranteed seats. These upcoming elections are signals that Burma is gradually moving towards democracy, but there are still many ethnic and religious tensions that still must be resolved.

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“Entering politics is a fate worse than death,” said Miriam Defensor-Santiago in 1988, then Commissioner of Immigration and Deportation of the Republic of the Philippines. Her political career has since expanded, as she has served as a senator for over seventeen years and finished as the runner-up in the presidential election of 1992. She is once more a candidate for the Philippine presidency, and the election will take place on May 9, 2016. Her words illustrate the complex, sometimes dangerous world that is Filipino politics.

As the nation approaches another presidential election, the importance of its outcome becomes clear. Tensions continue to rise in the South China Sea as Southeast Asian nations dispute the People’s Republic of China’s claims over international waters, including areas claimed by the Philippines (Torode). Three senators out of 24 in the Philippine Senate have been charged with plunder for the misuse of public funds totaling over P580 million ($12 million) (Diola). The nation continues to combat insurgencies in the southern region of Mindanao, including the communist New People’s Army (NPA) and the Muslim separatist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) (BBC News). The new president will have to face all these issues and more once elected.

To begin analyzing the upcoming presidential election, one must first become familiar with the turbulent political environment of the nation. The incumbent president Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III is the son of 11th president Corazon “Cory” Aquino and Senator Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr. Cory Aquino was swept into the presidency in 1986 in a flurry of protest known as the People Power Revolution, following alleged fraud by then-incumbent for 21 years Ferdinand Marcos. Her husband Ninoy, a critic of the Marcos regime, had just returned from exile in the US when a gunman murdered him on the Manila runway. Immediately, the people pointed fingers at President Marcos. Protests escalated and forced Marcos into exile, leading to Cory Aquino’s ascension to the presidency. Their son, Benigno Aquino III, also a former member of the Philippine Senate, was elected president in 2010 to serve a six-year term (McGeown).

Noynoy Aquino’s rise and political success is but one of many tales of the influence of family in Filipino politics. Philippine law prohibits political dynasties, as family politics is referred to in the 1987 Constitution, yet clans in provinces across the archipelago exert massive influence. The Marcos family, for example, is the most influential family in the province of Ilocos Norte. Before ascending to the presidency, Ferdinand Marcos was a...
member of the Philippine House of Representatives for Ilocos Norte. His wife Imelda has represented Ilocos Norte in the House since 2010. His daughter Imee transitioned from representing the province in the House to being its governor in 2010. His son Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. has been a House member, governor, and most recently senator since 2010. As shown by the Marcos clan, families play a huge role in the Philippine political landscape. Indeed, in 2013, 73 out of 80 provinces had political families with huge political clout (Regencia).

Another force in Filipino politics is the influence of the wealthy, especially members of the media and entertainment who frequently run for office themselves. Throughout the country, the transition from show business to politics is no strange occurrence. Joseph Estrada, elected president in 1998 (before being overthrown in 2001) and mayor of Manila in 2013, has played the lead role in over 80 movies and has produced over 70 films (Biography.com Editors). His entrance into politics in the 1980s was no doubt helped by his popularity in the entertainment industry. Another example of a media figure turned politician is boxing champion Manny Pacquiao. With a net worth of P1.4 billion ($30 million), he is one of the richest politicians in the nation (Kade). Currently representing his home province of Sarangani in the House, he is setting his eyes on higher office, including the Philippine Senate and presidency (Moreno). Indeed, wealth and politics in the Philippines often go hand in hand. In fact, the 13th richest person in the Philippines, according to Forbes, is former senator Manny Villar, with a net worth of P70 billion ($1.5 billion) (Adel). Both wealth and media fame are factors that help politicians continue to be elected.

Amidst all the pageantry of politics, the shadow of corruption and violence remains in the headlines. In 2009, a vice-mayor in Maguindanao province decided to run for the governorship, challenging incumbent Andal Ampatuan, Sr. of the most influential clan in the province. This vice-mayor, Esmael Mangudadatu, had a convoy of supporters and family members journey to the provincial capital where he would later file his election papers. On the way, this convoy was ambushed. A group of gunmen massacred at least 57 civilians, consisting of family and supporters of Mangudadatu, lawyers, and journalists. While the Ampatuan clan denied involvement, Mangudadatu emerged victorious and attained the governorship (McIndoe). Even since the days of Marcos, violence has
followed politics. In 1971, the Plaza Miranda bombing ended with dozens of injured politicians who were united in opposition to Marcos (Tiglao).

Now, with a sense of the various aspects at play in Filipino politics, the 2016 presidential election shines forth as a prime example of these factors at work. The main contenders for this race are opposition candidate Vice President Jejomar Binay of the United Nationalist Alliance (UNA), administration-backed former Interior Secretary Manuel “Mar” Roxas II of the Liberal Party, independent Senator Grace Poe, Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago of the People’s Reform Party, and Mayor Rodrigo Duterte of PDP-Laban. Their running mates (who take part in a separate election) are Senator Gregorio Honasan of UNA, Representative Leni Robredo of the Liberal Party, independent Senator Francis Escudero, and Senator Bong-bong Marcos of the Nacionalista Party, respectively.

All the candidates in the election are veterans of the Filipino political scene. Vice President Binay’s family is the prevalent clan in Makati City, where his son Jejomar “Junjun” Binay Jr. was mayor for five years. His daughter Nancy was elected to the Philippine Senate in 2010. His running mate Senator Honasan is a former soldier who helped topple the Marcos regime in the 1986 People Power Revolution. Binay’s camp has been hit by allegations of corruption during his time as mayor of Makati City, accusing him of receiving billions of pesos in kickbacks (Estanislao). Administration-backed former secretary Roxas is the grandson of Manuel Roxas, fifth president of the Philippines and leader during the nation’s independence from the US in 1946. His running mate, Representative Robredo, is the widow of Jesse Robredo, cabinet member of Noynoy Aquino who died in a plane crash in 2012 (Vanderborg). Like Corazon Aquino, fervor after her husband’s death propelled her into politics. Senator Grace Poe was abandoned by her biological parents at birth, spurring doubts over her status as a “natural-born Filipino” necessary for her to be able to run for the presidency. Her adoptive parents, Fernando Poe, Jr. and Susan Roces, were both movie stars. Fernando Poe, Jr. was the runner-up for president in the election of 2004, marred by allegations of fraud perpetrated by then president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Poe’s running mate, Senator Escudero, comes from a political family active in his home province of Sorsogon. Poe has also been accused of lacking the 10-year residency requirement to run because of her time studying in the US (Salaverria). Senator Defensor-Santiago is a political veteran of over 30 years, but without
ties to a political clan. Her running mate, Senator Marcos, however, is a member of a political clan. Criticism of Senator Marcos stems from the actions of his father Ferdinand’s regime (Macaraig). Mayor Rodrigo Duterte has been the mayor of Davao City since 2013 and has served in that capacity from 1988 to 1998 and 2001 to 2010. Duterte, under whose leadership crime has significantly dropped, has claimed being involved with the “death squads” which have killed over 1,000 alleged criminals in the city (Kline). While under fire from human rights groups, he enjoys wide support from the Filipino people for his tough stance on crime, experience, and no nonsense approach to government. In sum, the field of presidential candidates is filled with people who are no strangers to the political process.

No matter who the Filipino people choose as their next president, the future leaders of the republic must face the nation’s biggest problems, namely violence and corruption. These problems ripple outwards, affecting the nations of Southeast Asia and especially the United States. The Philippines’s relationship with the US dates back to the Spanish-American War. After Spain’s defeat, the US took the Philippines as a colony. It declared independence in 1946, after the country fought with the

US against Japan who previously occupied the islands. Throughout the Cold War, the Philippines battled communism alongside the US in Korea and Vietnam (Woolf). The US also maintains several military bases in the Philippines and it has helped the nation combat the Muslim separatist insurgency in the southern region of Mindanao. The US has delivered aid following several natural disasters, such as Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs). Since independence, the Philippines has maintained a close relationship with the US. In a 2014 study by the Pew Research Center, 92% of Filipinos had favorable views of the US, making it the most pro-American nation in the world (Stokes). With such close ties, the Philippines continues to be one of the nation’s strongest allies in Southeast Asia.

The Philippines is embroiled in the eternal battle against corruption, and only with the help of honest politicians can the interests of the people be represented in government.
The 2016 Philippine presidential election is a great example of the political landscape of the nation. Political families, the wealthy, and the entertainment industry exert massive influence in the political process of the archipelago nation of almost 100 million people. In a land where elections breed violence and political dynasties rule, the interests of the Filipino people must remain at the forefront of national attention. Since the Philippines is one of the US’s strongest allies, the US should encourage open and fair elections in the Philippines. The Philippines is embroiled in the eternal battle against corruption, and only with the help of honest politicians can the interests of the people be represented in government. Ultimately, what is at stake in Filipino politics is the future of the nation.


What’s the Deal with North Korea?

KATIE GONZALEZ

In early August 2015, the legs of two South Korean border guards were blown off by land mines as they patrolled the demilitarized zone (DMZ): the 4-kilometer wide neutral territory separating North and South Korea. Suspicious that the land mines were provocation from the North, the South retaliated by blaring propaganda from loudspeakers along the border. Because reclusive North Korea restricts its citizens’ access to international politics and culture, South Korea’s decision to play the propaganda was a heavily resented tactic by the North that hadn’t been used in over a decade. The North responded with artillery fire and issued a strict deadline for the loudspeakers to be turned off. In lieu of this threat, both sides agreed to a meeting of representatives to defuse deteriorating relations between the two Koreas (“North Korea Profile”).

Between August 22nd and August 25th, envoys from each state met in a border village along the DMZ. The meetings produced a joint statement signed by both countries that outlined a compromise to ease tensions. Though North Korea did not claim responsibility for the blasts, it lifted the “semi-war state” declared on the South at the onset of the loudspeaker propaganda. In return, the South agreed to turn off the loudspeakers, at least for now (“North Korea Pulls Its Scary Face”).

Additionally, the two countries came to several agreements that could actively improve relations. The Koreas agreed to meet in Seoul at an upcoming date to negotiate various topics. They also agreed to encourage higher exchanges between non-governmental groups from both countries. Finally, they committed to hold another round of reunions for Korean families separated during the Korean War (Mullen & Kwon; Sang-hun).

A consideration of Korea’s past is necessary to understand the present situation. Post-World War II, the Korean Peninsula was divided by its occupants—Soviet troops to the north of the 38th parallel and US troops to the south. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, was inaugurated in 1948 and its rule has followed a patrilineal succession. The terms of all three rulers have been marked by internationally condemned missile testing, cycles of peaceful outreach followed by retractions of peace, violated treaties, famines, and denials of nuclear intentions. With sustained support from the U.S. that continues today, the Republic of Korea, or South Korea, was also declared in 1948. The early years of South Korean politics was tainted by corruption, but eventually the state implemented democratic elections. South Korea has since taken active stands in

Any hope for a resolution to their half-century old ceasefire might not result in much.
international diplomacy. The Korean War ended with a ceasefire in 1953: as a result, the North and South are still, technically, at war. Indeed, war-like acts such as border fire exchange, naval battles, and threatening rhetoric occur regularly, interspersed with negotiations and peace talks that often reap no lasting outcomes (“South Korea Timeline”).

North and South Korea have manifested two distinct ideologies that, in instances such as this recent interaction, can be analyzed through the lens of two major international relations theories: Realism and Constructivism.

The dominant theory of international relations has been the concept of Realism. Because states—instincts of human creation—are extensions of intrinsically selfish individuals, they each pursue what Realists believe is the ultimate interest of them all: power. The only way to guarantee a state’s self-interests and secure its safety is to accumulate power, especially through military advancements (Jackson). While each of the Koreas is intent on increasing its national interests by gaining power, North Korea’s top priority is to achieve long-range missile and nuclear capabilities.

Realism explains that there is no overarching international force states must obey, as demonstrated by the North’s continual defiance of international sanctions. North Korea systematically only cooperates internationally when it is in dire need.

In contrast, Constructivists believe that power is based in people’s beliefs, and a state becomes more powerful when it can convince others to adopt its concerns. In this regard, ideas supersede military strength. South Korea is a democracy that allows the free flow of ideas from citizens, which creates a constant evolution of culture, discourses, and beliefs. In contrast, North Korea is reclusive from the intellectual anarchy of the rest of the world.

The August meeting was an act of collaboration on both sides, and Constructivism indicates that both states will mutually benefit from this exchange of ideas. However, because it also dictates that a state’s interests are constructed by its history, the fact that North Korea has repeatedly defaulted on most promises of peace must be considered.

Realists might observe that North Korea would not concede its desire for military strength through missile and nuclear technology. Constructivists would note that the health of active and evolving ideology is poor in North Korea, which prevents change. Both Realistic and Constructivist theoretical interpretations indicate that the recent meeting between the two Koreas, the resulting agreements, and any hope for a resolution to their half-century old ceasefire might not result in much.


“South Korean soldiers sit on a military vehicle, just south of the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas, in Yeoncheon, August 22, 2015.” Photo credit: Kim Hong-ji
Global Warming

In the past century alone, researchers have provided ample amount of scientific evidence on the recent changes in the environment, also known as global warming. These changes include warmer temperatures, milder winters and even hotter summers. Each study and survey concludes that all of these changes can be associated with human activity and its harming effects on the ozone layer, leading to frequent natural disasters.

In order to prove that global warming is caused by the changes in the atmosphere, British scientist John Tyndall conducted an experiment in 1859 to test how atmosphere and temperature are related on Earth by testing how different gases are transparent in the atmosphere (Weart). After testing nitrogen, oxygen, coal gas and CO$_2$, Tyndall was able to prove that those gases were rather opaque, which allowed them to trap radiation inside the ozone layer of Earth’s atmosphere by absorbing the radiating heat and warming up the Earth’s surface (Weart). Therefore, these gases, particularly CO$_2$, are now considered “greenhouse gases”.

Thus, it can be concluded that CO$_2$ emission levels on the Earth’s surface significantly impact the Earth’s temperatures as well as the ozone layer. However, as cars became the primary method of transportation, the usage of fossil fuels increased. With increased fossil fuel usage came the increased CO$_2$ emission levels. Furthermore, increased CO$_2$ levels were not caused just by fossil fuel usage; other human activity such as deforestation also increased CO$_2$ levels (Chattopadhyay).

Tropical rainforests have been recorded to absorb huge amounts of CO$_2$ and produce about as much as 40% of the oxygen in the Earth’s atmosphere. However, human activities such as deforestation hurts this process. Over the past century, about half of the Earth’s forests have been destructed in order to clear area to establish civilizations or to produce supplies such as paper (Chattopadhyay). Therefore, we can see that when increased usage of fossil fuels is combined with the destruction of oxygen-producing rainforests, CO$_2$ emission levels have skyrocketed, significantly harming the ozone layer.
Despite the harm that has already been done to our environment, it is still not too late to reverse our carbon footprint and save the Earth from being completely destroyed. Utilizing alternates to everyday choices such as carpooling, recycling, and reusing are some ways to help decrease your own carbon footprint on Earth. However, the most important step that we can take is to raise awareness about global warming and inspire others to join us in action.


OPINION
Let’s Get Real

LUCIA WHALEN

Drops of sweat dripped down my belly in the midday Miami sauna as I entered the Climate Reality Leadership Corps Conference on September 27, 2015. The Climate Reality Leadership Corps is a focused three-day training founded by former US Vice President, Al Gore, for the purpose of training people on the science of climate change, including the causes and concrete effects. The Leadership Corps is a global network of over 7,500 activists working to educate and empower communities in over 125 countries to take action on climate change. According to Gore, the fact that most attendees were not scientists is crucial, as we need empowered average citizens giving presentations to other “lay audiences,” in order to make the scientific knowledge of climate change understandable to the general public. By fostering a public awakening of the reality of the climate crisis, we can mobilize a critical mass of activists to take power over the American government’s decision-making.

The event brought in scientists, media personalities, and politicians to explain the science of climate change in accessible language, as well as to discuss the media’s lack of honest communication, which undercuts the urgency of global warming and the necessity of policy change. The conference opened with a speech from Florida Senator Bill Nelson, who spoke of the prophetic placement of the conference in Miami, as the streets flooded outside the doors of the conference from the season’s high tide. “Miami is the new Atlantis” rang through my ears as he forecasted a two feet increase in Miami’s sea level by 2016. The entire coast of Florida is projected to be underwater by 2070, and according to the Climate Reality Project, “Flood losses could potentially top $3 trillion annually under current sea-level rise projections. In addition, saltwater contamination of the state’s freshwater supply and extreme flooding events are significant and immediate risks” (Climate Reality). The conference’s location in an environment where the effects of climate change are so clearly having a negative impact on the infrastructure of the city and the health and safety of its occupants brought the immediacy of the issue to the forefront of my consciousness.

I returned back to UIC’s campus, a place that is relatively silent on the issue of climate change. Attending the conference stoked my inner fire to see massive change happen in the city of Chicago, and more specifically on the UIC campus. Everyone can be aware of the root evil of CO₂ production—traffic jammed on the Jane Byrne Interchange with brown smoke coming out cars’ back ends, construction, and packaged and processed foods at every store. Here in the city, we see the social justice effects of climate change: we see food deserts and unequal distributions of wealth. We see the polluted sky...
passing through Gary, Indiana and parks full of trash. We see treeless streets and coal power plants in low-income neighborhoods. We seem to live for the most part with tunnel vision in the Midwest, not recognizing the extent to which our every decision has an effect on the environment. As citizens, it is our responsibility to develop an awareness of the extent to which our emissions affect not only our immediate environment, but the global environment and the humans living halfway around the world.

Most importantly, new city planning is imminently needed, as the current infrastructure of cities is not built to handle impending extreme weather events or those already taking place. Scientists project that climate change will increase the frequency of heavy rainstorms, leading to intense flooding, for which Chicago is at high risk (“Climate Change Threatens Health: Flooding”). Increased rains will lead to the overflow of streams, rivers and lakes, which in turn increases water-borne pathogens in drinking water. Furthermore, cities like New York and Chicago have older sewage systems that carry sewage and rain water in the same pipes. According to the NRDC, “These pipes cannot handle the volume of stormwater and wastewater, and untreated sewage is often discharged into local waters which people swim and play.” Therefore, cities including Chicago need to take immediate steps to update infrastructure to meet the needs of the future environment.

So what can we as individual citizens do? In his essay, “Civil Disobedience,” Henry David Thoreau calls for “every man [to] make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.” Thoreau calls for a nation of citizens that demands their needs and takes revolutionary action in order to live under a government that makes decisions...
by the people and for the people. In essence, the essay calls for citizens to break those laws that are not aligned with their moral beliefs. Thoreau comments on the way in which silence in the political realm and not taking a stand implies taking a stand with the oppressor. Civil disobedience calls for activist groups to negotiate with government, as simply having an anti-government position does not lead to tangible change, but rather to an apathetic population. The dangers of apathy warned of by Thoreau, and the need to take action and voice botheration, is directly applicable to the current state of US politics around climate change. The current issue is not whether or not technology can restore the damages created by human-generated climate change. Rather, the political will is not present to demand policies that implement extensive programs to switch to a clean energy economy. With only 57.5% of voter turnout for the 2012 election, the US population has a clear lack of political engagement, which is allowing politicians to make decisions in favor of corporations, rather than voters demanding that politicians create sustainable policies immediately (“2012 Voter Turnout Report”).

The media plays a massive role in spreading public awareness and shaping scientific and policy discourse. However, most recently, rather than spreading awareness, the media has contributed to the muddling of thought on whether climate change is a pressing issue, exemplified by news outlets like Fox routinely holding “debates” which showcase a climate change skeptic in opposition with a scientist. Such coverage on climate change hastens the concept that climate change is debatable, rather than a reality that needs to be addressed immediately. In fact, research from Southern Methodist University found that some children’s textbooks depicting human-caused climate change with uncertainty have roots in conservative media misinformation, delivering messages such as, “climate change is possibly happening, that humans may or may not be causing it” (“How Fox News Climate Change Denial Finds Its Way Into Children’s Textbooks”).

Writing brings the initial awareness necessary to activate passion within individuals, and the first form of activism is the circulation of knowledge in the public.
In order to rally activism, it is crucial that the public be properly informed. Writing and publishing about the concrete truth of how climate change is affecting human lives and the environment provide a form of activism equal to the effects of grassroots canvassing. Writing brings the initial awareness necessary to activate passion within individuals, and the first form of activism is the circulation of knowledge in the public. By publishing daily news that raises consciousness around the effects of climate change worldwide and what politicians are or are not doing, as frequently as People magazine publishes on the Kardashians, the world will see a profound shift in the way people make decisions that affect carbon emissions.


The study concluded that the four 6th-grade textbooks studied, including books from major publishing companies like McGraw-Hill, “used language that ‘more closely match the public discourse of doubt about climate change rather than the scientific discourse’ [that] one might expect from academic texts,” which demonstrates how strongly conservative media misinformation impacts public thought. As citizens of the United States and this Earth, we are called to demand accurate news and a government that is committed to taking vigorous action to mitigate climate change exacerbated by human actions, so as to live within a society that values truth and integrity over political drama and power.
The United States education system teaches children their roles in society starting at a young age. Children are not only responsible for their academics, but also for issues going on around them; they are told they can make a difference in society. They are given power, in the form of education. Growing up, kids may feel powerless, but with age, as well as education, some students come to realize that the amount of power they hold is, in fact, even greater than many politicians. Especially in the past year, students around the country have been taking action based on this realization.

College applications ask about students' extracurricular activities, leadership skills, grade point average and standardized test scores. Why? Why are colleges making students work so hard to get in? These requirements are only an extension of what primary and secondary schooling has been teaching students; involvement provides students with an opportunity to be able to envision and eventually carry out the change they want to see at a global scale. Along with developing intellectually, it is necessary for students to develop socially and culturally to understand what is occurring at a global level (Braskamp et al). The United States educational system is designed to involve students in all aspects of learning. They are encouraged to engage in social events, to give back to their community, and to perform academically at high standards. Students are taught to think of all the possible perspectives involved when approaching a problem. When a problem is first presented, they are also asked to think about the causes and effects of the problem. One main reason why students are considered such an influential group, within both local and world affairs, is that they bring new ideas to overcome social challenges.

Also, some student organizations have associations with the media and other social groups that strive to support their cause (Van Dyke). Students in higher education are not only influenced by their own peers, but also by the rest of the world, often via social media, which causes an influx of updated information at every second. Movements that are able to attract a large number of participants have a higher chance of becoming successful (Van Dyke). Student protests go a long way because college campuses provide easy access to peers who understand the viewpoint.
When two students attending the University of Chicago experienced racism from other students, they turned to the administration of the university and spread their words to other other students and faculty through social media and mass emails (Fang). The widespread support they got on the issue helped others see these students’ perspectives and the motive for their actions. Gaining publicity on an issue is a large part of getting to the solution of said issue. Though these students did not act on behalf of a student organization, they were still heard, which shows the benefits of acting through a college campus within a population of peers.

Though students are taught to observe from all prospective viewpoints before beginning to resolve any area of conflict, they are criticized, mainly by older adults, for holding radical views or for approaching issues without adequate decision making (Anderson). This clarifies many of the initial motives for students to take action: fair and equal treatment of everyone’s views. Student activism is a way for the younger generations to be heard, worldwide. It is an expression of what children are taught early on, and what colleges are searching for in every applicant.

Student activism is a way to make a difference in society, and their peers are their greatest influences and their biggest supporters.


Every Christmas season, my church and I gather together to spread a little Christmas cheer the old-fashioned way: caroling. Our first destination is always the local senior center and, for an entire hour, we see the worn faces of the elderly folk in the room light up as they hear our young voices singing to them. After, we approach them and talk with them, and for many, these few minutes of interaction bring utter joy and delight. However, as I walk away from their happy faces and leave them to be wheeled back to their rooms by a nurse, all I can think is, “How did these kind-hearted individuals end up at a senior center?”

In America, the practice of moving the elderly to senior centers became a fairly common custom in the 19th century after the Industrial Revolution (Martinez-Carter). After this period of industrialization, men and even women of American households were able to obtain mechanized jobs, generate more income, and buy separate houses for every generation. Grown children were needed at their jobs and were no longer available to care for their aging parents. Consequently, many elderly people had no other choice but to move to “assisted living” residences. This among other factors caused the multigenerational household to be broken up.

The practice of moving aging parents to senior centers was solidified as a normal part of American society through the following century and into the early 2000s.

I urge individuals to rethink their overall mentality towards senior citizens and to value the wisdom we can obtain from our elders.

However, it must be noted that the majority of America’s elderly do not reside in assisted living or senior centers. According to the US Embassy, “about 1.5 million out of 37 million Americans aged 65 or older” reside in these homes (Blechman). But this statistic does not indicate that a majority of Americans do not question the existence of the “assisted living” institution. It seems to me that the American dream revolves around the idealized structure of the “nuclear family” and deems the elderly as a burden on the path to achieving this dream.

In many cultures around the world, multigenerational living arrangements are the norm. For instance, the elderly in Mediterranean and Latin American homes are active members of the family—they are entrusted with the care of young ones while breadwinners labor outside of the home (Martinez-Carter). A UIC student who immigrated to America two years ago from Belize comments on America’s senior living arrangements saying, “...it was very difficult to comprehend how someone would ever exile such an important figure in the family, how
they could even consider them a burden." This student’s view provides an outsider analysis of the “assisted living” industry: its very existence is an indication of our society’s low respect and value of the elderly.

After reading this article, it is necessary to reflect on the practices of assisted living centers in a different light. For many families, this option may be the only viable choice in light of medical reasons, but for others, it may be a sign of dwindling value of the elderly. However, I urge individuals to rethink their overall mentality towards senior citizens and to value the wisdom we can obtain from our elders. This can be done by merely smiling at the elderly we meet on the street, or even by rethinking the value of a multigenerational household rather than the idealized “nuclear family” construction. Together, it is possible to compel a greater part of American society to view elders as blessings rather than burdens. ♦


UIC OneWorld is a UIC Honors College student publication that features articles addressing global issues and affairs in an objective manner. Although a majority of the articles pertain to issues and affairs in foreign countries, writers are not limited to these. They are encouraged to write about issues occurring within the United States, as well.

We're always looking for writers! If you're interested in writing for UIC OneWorld, please email oneworld.uic@gmail.com with a brief summary (2–5 sentences) of your idea. If you do not have an idea of what to write about, but are still interested in writing, email us expressing this and we'll provide you with some topics to choose from.

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