

THE MATRIX

fall 2015

cover photo: *Shades of Gray* by Sarah Henderson

THOUGHTFUL IN

fall 2015 · the matrix

what provokes your thoughtful inquiry?

THOUGHTFUL INQUIRY

This issue of The Matrix marks a return to the past. When the Matrix began in the fall of 1996, student volunteers (many of them from the PLU Honors Program of that era) worked vigorously to bring a journal of social justice themes and topics to the campus. No one was paid or compensated for their work. The Matrix represented the importance of “speaking out” as a form of service, reflecting the deep commitment to justice that its contributors, editors, and readers have in common.

This fall, stemming from changes made in PLU’s student media programs, we return to volunteers (and, neatly, many come from the current PLU International Honors Program). Student volunteers can earn academic credit for their leadership, but the fall 2015 issue is entirely the work of students who simply gave their time, energy, passion, and deep thought to the journal you now have in your hands. Are you motivated by this issue to add your contributions to The Matrix? Email us. We hope to continue building a strong and committed group of Matrix leaders as we move into 2016.

Beth Kraig
Matrix Faculty Advisor

We’ve all heard it countless times: “PLU seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care – for other persons, for their communities and for the earth.” I even bet many of you have it memorized. But what do these words really mean? For me, one part of this statement seemed harder to define than others: “thoughtful inquiry.” As a First-year, I remember finding it extremely grandiloquent and meaningless. Service, leadership and care seemed to be values easily defined by action. You might volunteer at a food bank, or serve as the captain of a sports team, or hold the door open for someone... even if they’re 20 feet away. But as I have grown as a learner at PLU, I have grown to understand the tremendous importance of thoughtful inquiry. Now it seems obvious to have it listed first.

While reading this issue of The Matrix, I encourage you to consider what this means for you. Many of the pieces included were originally works or reflections for PLU courses, while others critique the university’s commitment to this very mission statement. The topics range from systematic racism to social construction, and similar to holistic inquiry itself, provide a breadth of exploration. I hope you enjoy the work presented and continue to consider topics of “thoughtful inquiry” in your life.

Haley Ehlers, senior
Editor

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Mental Illness? You. Have. No. Idea.

They tell me it's not okay to make fun of African Americans.

Yeah. Absolutely. 100% not okay.

They tell me it's not okay to make fun of the LGBT community.

Definitely not. It's just not okay.

And then they promptly launch into a casual joke about the mentally ill.

You've probably done it unintentionally. Little offhand comments like, "God, I just have to keep this clean, I'm so OCD about it." To those with OCD, or who have family that struggle with it in real life, that hurts. You're perpetuating a stereotype. It makes us cringe. It makes our stomachs drop sickeningly.

And no, I'm not exaggerating.

"One minute I was fine, and the next I was gone crazy. Ha, maybe I'm like bipolar or something."

Whoa. Ouch. Why are we making light of mental illness, exactly?

Here's the thing. People with mental illnesses and disabilities are fighting some of the most terrifying battles ever fought. Because frequently they're at war with their own minds. The battlefield is in their own head, and it's far nastier and more insidious than any human enemy.

Not only that, but these illnesses impact their families as well, sometimes to the extreme. The financial costs of caring for the afflicted family member. The sheer emotional strain of watching a loved one suffer. The roller coaster of

The battlefield is in their own head, and it's far nastier and more insidious than any human enemy.

being misdiagnosed by mental health professionals, and the search for an accurate diagnosis. Working through the balance of medicine and psychological therapies. The alienation from social circles, not just for the afflicted person,

but for their whole family as well. Lives are in jeopardy. Futures are destroyed. Families torn apart. Friendships irrevocably broken, because let's face it, a friend who won't stand by you when your own mind attacks you just isn't a friend. Whole lifestyles have to change to deal with mind-searing stress. Priorities are rearranged in a hurry. Social etiquette and norms are set aside in favor of what is best for the sufferer.

The emotional strain is something akin to having a terminal illness, without the terminal part. It's that serious, it's that terrifying, it's like a thunderbolt that strikes the whole family and just keeps striking them whenever they hear some flippant offhand comment about mental illness.

For example, maybe that means I have to get a little mean when someone does something that threatens my ill family

So please, stop pitying and diagnosing us, and start treating us like humans.

member in a social setting. Maybe that means I'm going out of my way to show people that I'm comfortable with social awkwardness, so that they have no excuse to shun it.

Mental illness is a big deal.

What you see in newspapers, in movies, or on the TV, that isn't reality. You only see the success stories of a guy with Asperger's who's finally succeeding in college, or the bipolar kid who's miraculously recovered.

What they don't show is how rare real recovery is. They don't show the thousands of kids and adults that are still struggling, many of whom will never be able to hold a job, drive, have a family, or even hold a "normal" conversation. In that way the media is belittling those lucky few who become successes, because the media does not communicate how intense that struggle was to reach success, and how rare such success stories are.

So please, stop with the stereotyping. You have no idea how much it hurts them, how much it hurts their families. They're already facing impossible odds. You're not helping by joking. Just because you've taken a course in psychology, or even have a doctorate in it, doesn't mean you know jack about what it's like to live it. So please, stop pitying and diagnosing us, and start treating us like humans. We're a struggling minority too – facing an uphill battle.

So the next time you think of mentioning mental illness in casual conversation, think again. There are more of us around than you might think. We don't say anything, but light words on mental illness and disorders only add to the damage and make us sick to our stomachs.

It's like making jokes about Hitler in front of Holocaust survivors. Not okay. Not funny.

So please, try to have an appreciation for just how intense mental illness can be. Trust me, when you're fighting your own mind, what happened at last night's get-together is utterly unimportant. Who is dating whom? All that means nothing. So please, don't belittle the struggles of an overlooked minority. It's not okay. Words have meaning, and words can hurt. Have some compassion for once and start treating these issues with respect equal to the devastating impact they can have on people – and their families.

They tell me that racism and discrimination against minorities is not okay. They tell me I should be careful with my words and be respectful of others.

I wish they'd follow their own advice.

Natalie Stephanson is a PLU First-year of undecided major.

A letter to myself before I took my first Women's & Gender Studies class

Dear Audrey,

You have no idea what you're getting yourself into. I know that I have a penchant for drama, but honestly, you are completely unprepared for the profound paradigm shift you will experience in this class. It's hard to believe that just a few months can be so transformative, but the next ten weeks will change you forever. I know that you have a lot of unanswered questions right now, and fortunately for you, that won't change. The main difference between you and me, considering I am who you will eventually become, is that you will learn to ask deeper, more specific, and more relevant questions.

First of all, as an English major (spoiler alert – you'll officially declare in November), you should know that language is prescriptive and not descriptive. Every word creates meaning that is laden with cultural baggage, because without words, objects wouldn't exist as we understand them through language. This idea comes from a school of philosophy called structuralism, and a helpful way that you can think about it is that language makes matter, or stuff, matter, or mean something. The matter and the meaning (or the signifier and the signified, to be technical) are



Audrey Daiss is a Junior who is triple majoring in English Literature, Anthropology, and Women's and Gender Studies, because she just really likes the idea of suffocating under

the amount of work she'll have to do for three Capstones. She hopes to attend grad school abroad and eventually find her way to her dream city of San Francisco to become an activist and feminist blogger.

two separate entities fused together by language. This process is also inherently political, based on who decides which words describe what and how. "Doing Gender" by West and Zimmerman will explain this better than I can, but basically, gender is a part of this continual process of constructing meaning. Gender is something you do constantly, and it's being communicated to others through signs that you're not even aware that you're giving most of the time. I know it's odd to think about something so intensely personal also being cultural and thus public, but you'll soon learn that those distinctions are completely socially constructed as well.

In fact, while we're on the subject, pretty much everything is socially constructed. Heterosexuality? That term has only been popular since the 1930's, and heterosexuality as we understand it today (attraction to the different sex) has only existed since post-WWII. Katz describes this phenomenon in "The Invention of Heterosexuality,"

Try to imagine a world without any identity categories, other than "human being." It's basically impossible to you now, but later, it will be a world you get a glimpse of.

which also outlines the creation of the homosexual as the abnormal, abject opposite to the heterosexual (abject means dehumanized, and it will become your new favorite word). I know this information sort of challenges your ideas about the importance of identity (and might make you a little unsure about your identity as a heterosexual – don't

freak out), but you don't have to sacrifice those ideals. Just know that identities are completely socially constructed too. Even when they fall along a spectrum, that spectrum is defined by its end points, and thus people will always be trapped by these socially constructed identities as long as our current system is maintained. Borders and boundaries are interesting because an identity needs an opposite to be defined by, and once you start to poke holes in the border between the two, everything falls apart. Try to imagine a world without any identity categories, other than "human being." It's basically impossible to you now, but later, it will be a world you get a glimpse of.

As an Anthropology major, you should know that you'll read Gender Diversity, an ethnographic account of different cultural constructions of gender. In Brazil, they base their entire gender and sexuality system on who the receiver is during the sex act. Males who are the passive participant in the sex act are categorized with women, but not as

women, and are "legitimate sexual objects" for men. So different from the American construct of homosexuality,

right? You will also do a presentation on gender variants in Polynesia, who are again categorized as "like women" but not a part of the category of "women." Some of these systems of gender organization may seem outlandish or even oppressive to you, but you have to remember that you are as much a product of your culture as they are a

product of theirs. If you were from somewhere else in the world and you heard about how trans individuals in America were treated, you probably wouldn't think very highly of American culture. Don't let your discomfort get the best of you; it's good for you to be uncomfortable in order to grow.

Furthermore, it's important to remember when to be an advocate and when to step back and listen. In regards to Ferguson, you think the blatant displays of violent anti-black racism are bad now, but the problem is only going to get worse. Darren Wilson won't be indicted for the murder of Mike Brown, a white police officer in New York will choke a black man to death on video and face no punishment, and you're going to be really angry about it, along with a lot of other people. You're going to be confused and upset and outraged, and you're going to want to talk about it; while you absolutely should talk about it, just remember that this movement isn't about you and your needs. Recognize that, as a straight, white, middle-class, non-trans woman, you occupy a position of privilege relative to most other people. Don't abuse that privilege. People of color experience enormous injustice on a daily basis, and you need to let them tell you about it, in order to even begin to understand racism and be a better advocate for racial justice.

Likewise, people at PLU (and more specifically, in this class) have undergone a diverse set of experiences, and you should listen to them and learn from them. I know that you want your voice to be heard, and you want to contribute to the larger conversation, but it's

important to know when to back off. That being said, when you feel like you're onto something and no one else is willing to answer, go for it! Put yourself out there! If you're wrong, at the very least you'll learn something from your mistake. You can't be afraid of failure.

From now on you must always ask yourself, where are the women?

You'll begin to embrace the feminist pedagogy's tenant of humble inquiry, which will eventually make you a better person. Don't assume you know anything.

Finally, you're going to read this book about international feminism that will blow your mind. I know that you've always teetered on the balance between maintaining a sense of cultural relativism and struggling to end sexist oppression (those are bell hooks' words, which will become your new Twitter bio) but you can do both! Unfortunately, I have some bad news for you: you're kind of a White Feminist right now. As in, a woman who is so focused on her one axis of oppression (sexism, based on gender identity) that she fails to recognize the identities she occupies which grant her privilege within our society (race, class, ability, religion, sexuality). That's okay though, because in a few months you will realize how messed up this is and start working to change your perspective! You have to care about more than just reproductive rights and slut shaming to be an international, intersectional feminist, and considering how much so many people suffer due to various forms of oppression based on identity, that's

definitely the feminism you need to get on board with. I know you don't think of yourself as racist, and for the most part you're not, you're lazy when it comes to issues that extend beyond your nation's borders, and bad at acknowledging your privilege as a White person. You

wear clothes made by women working in garment factories in Latin America and South Asia: don't forget about them. Your

bananas come from plantations that may employ women to work in shacks full of chemicals: don't forget about them, either.

From now on you must always ask yourself, where are the women? How did they get there? Who does it benefit? Never take off those feminist goggles. The world is going to seem unfamiliar and strange and infinitely more unjust than it did before, but you can handle it. You're not alone. You don't need to single-handedly save the world or dismantle the patriarchy, in fact, you can't. Your goal should be to learn from others, grow in your understanding of global issues, and to recognize sexist oppression when you encounter it. Don't be afraid. There are countless people working all over the world to end oppression of all kinds, and you can be a part of it.

Love,
~ Audrey

Here at the Top of the Hill

by: Sarah Henderson

Picture a hill. The sides slope gently upward, forming a perfect parabola in three dimensions and 360 degrees. At the top of this knoll is the center of balance, humanness, ubuntu. When you stand here, you see opposing forces rolling away from you in every direction. Good rolls away to your right, evil to your left. Femininity rolls away in front of you, masculinity behind. You turn ninety degrees and now each force rolls away from a different part of you; their directions are of no consequence. They roll away from you at every degree, natural opposites in opposite directions down the hill. But you stand at the center, balanced between them all.

This hill is my image of how humanity should function. We should all strive to sit atop this grassy knoll, and if we so happen to roll down one side or another we should have the gumption to get up, shake the dirt from our pants, and walk



Dog, eating rice and vegetables, or exploring Mother Nature with bare feet and a camera.

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back to the top of the hill. If we need help, we ask. If we need to apologize for hurting someone or something, we do so, and we mean it. We know that sitting on the top of the hill is the best place to be—it has the best view—and we would do anything in our power to get back up there, and help anyone else get up there too.

But humans are blessedly (and tragically) complex. They do not always want to sit at the top of a hill and discuss with their neighbor the beauty of the sunset or the trees or the flowers. They do not always want to smell the fresh air and taste the breeze on their tongue. They are perfectly content to root around the bottom of the hill, maybe climbing up

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this slope or that for a while, but still preferring the mud at the bottom to the sunshine at the top. This is the wondrous scope of humanity. And it is beautiful, and also sad, because something in the falling so hard or rolling so softly down the hill makes some humans refuse help. They have fallen down a side of the hill that is darker and deeper than the others, and not only can they not find a way out, they refuse to be helped. The hill

begins to look like a cliff, rising sharply, impossible to climb. And so they begin to pull others down to them, begin to clamber on top of them, trying to pull themselves up.

And so a cycle of abuse and hatred is born out of the muck at the bottom of the hill. And once this cycle has started, once everyone is bloody and bruised and covered in mud, it is dirty work trying to patch and clean and straighten them up. Eventually everyone is hurt by this cycle, and everyone needs help out. And the healing takes forever, and the mud has stained the skin. But finally everyone has caught a glimpse of the top of the hill, a way out of the mire, and they begin to help each other up and up and up. The mud will leave a stain and some hurts

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will never heal. Countless have been lost to the dark and the dirt. But the survivors climb to the top of the hill, and remember those left behind, and figure

out together how to be human again.

Minow's version of patching and cleaning the wounds left by mass atrocities is a list of imperatives. Reaffirming the humanity of victims should be first in any response to mass atrocity, restoring to them the humanity and dignity that was taken and violated by affirming "the utter wrongness" of these acts. Rehabilitating perpetrators should be second, restoring the morals and humanity that they lost by committing heinous injustices against their fellow humans. Asserting the role of bystanders should be third, causing them to "face their own choices about action and inaction." Seeking to confirm a common and shared humanity must be the overarching and ultimate goal. I would expound on Minow's list by including a definitive stress on necessary actions, and the order in which they should occur (within the priority of victims, perpetrators, then bystanders.) A process of both telling and listening to encourage and promote healing should be the initial response, but should take place in conjunction with establishing commemorative monuments, initiating common and shared resources, and offering apology and forgiveness. Never forgetting is crucial to affirming our common humanity, but the opportunity for forgiveness that is made possible from creating a holistic truth and remembrance is crucial to deep healing. It is the way of getting up, back into balance, and it is the handhold without which the climb back up the hill would be insurmountable.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the number of bodies in need of help up the hill is still insurmountable; the hurts and evils of apartheid were deep and they were wide. The muddy pit at the bottom of this particular hill was filled

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with far more bodies than anyone could have dreamed—even those at the top were still mucking around at the bottom. And in most cases, humans, the beautiful and deplorable creatures, would not be

helped out of the mire. They could not see that the seat of their collective pants were covered in mud, so soft and easy had been their fall. And though the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was unable to get New South Africans all the way up to the top of the hill, it made strong headway. By allowing the victims of apartheid to tell their stories to sympathetic ears, the TRC was able to bring everything out into the open, down to the "small stories that had gone



I feel what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now I -- it feels like I got my sight back by coming here and telling you my story.

missing,"¹ effectively denying South Africans the possibility of denial and reestablishing not only the humanity of victims, but the common humanity of ubuntu. Though the TRC had its shortcomings, it facilitated the healing needed for South Africa to begin its long trek back up the hill.

And the New South Africa is still climbing, for healing is never quite finished. A tree that is chopped down can be glued back together, but it will never again be alive. The dead cannot be healed, and the living are only ever half alive, having left parts of themselves with lost loved ones or with memories of bodies beaten, maimed, and violated. But the remarkable restorative power of the TRC, of any truth commission, is the deep healing that comes from the platform to finally tell the real truth and to finally have someone listen. Lucas Sikwepere's response to being asked for

his take on telling his story to the TRC speaks for itself: "I feel what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now I—it feels like I got my sight

back by coming here and telling you my story."² The fact that Mr Sikwepere's words have been used time and again speaks to the profound healing power of the TRC. The fact that his sentiments

have been repeated by so many voices is just as telling: "Since then I've been blind...But today...it feels as if I can nearly see..."³ "...the TRC will grant me the possibility to wake up from this nightmare...so that I too can share in the process of healing taking place in our country."⁴ The healing is in the telling, and in the telling falling on open hearts. Even psychologists weighed in to promote the restorative power of truth-telling, in terms of both individual and national healing. "Know the truth and it will set you free; expose the terrible secrets of a sick society and heal that society."⁵ In

other words, show the temporarily dim-witted humans the mud on the seat of their pants, and set them to shaking it off and climbing up the hill.

Healing of the sort that sets humans back up hills is as necessary for perpetrators and bystanders as it is for victims, albeit to a lesser degree of instance. Perpetrators applying for amnesty at the TRC were brought face to face with their victims, and made to face the truth of what they had done. Only after listening to the questions and stories of their victims were they allowed to change roles from one of listener to truth-teller. During his hearing, Colonel Roelf Venter admitted: "Then I was not sorry because I thought it was right. Now I know that it was wrong and I regret my deeds." Though this may sound trivial, it is the kind of statement that allows a human who had thrown himself down the hill for a cause he thought was right to turn around, shake the mud from his pants, and set back up the hill. This sort of reintegration into humanity is necessary to end the cycle of violence. It is as essential that perpetrators be made to listen to their crimes from the mouths of those whose humanity they violated as it is that they face the humans they once treated as animals on the grounds of equality. Not only to exalt the victim, but to humble the perpetrator. They can then add their story to the collection, signed with a flourish of humility, to complete the holistic compilation of truth and remembrance that is so critical for deep healing.

But alas, tragic and beautiful humans, this

humble healing is not to be for everyone. Most white South Africans never tuned in to the broadcasted hearings, played cricket instead of attending hearings when the TRC came to their townships, or simply never bothered to apply for amnesty or to tell their stories. They had slipped down the hill so slowly, so gently, that they never even felt they were falling. And never once did they think to check for mud on the seat of their pants. Despite the emphasis on forgiveness and the presence of Archbishop Tutu, even

Some humans, deplorable and wonderful creatures that they are, choose to continue living in the mud at the bottom of the hill, “unable to fathom the essence of humanity.”

the white churches stayed quiet. Only when black activists, “at the instigation of whites,” threw away their humanity in desperation and opened fire in a church did an Afrikaner appeal to the TRC. When politicians bothered to show up, they beat around the truth or lied outright, sinking back into the mire and through the fingers of the well-meaning Amnesty Committee. It was easier for F.W. De Klerk to admit to knowing nothing than to admit that “apartheid was evil and we were responsible for it.” And big business and agriculture, built up into white domination by the racial capitalism of the apartheid system, never bothered to show so much as an eyebrow above the stinking muck. This lack of participation was perhaps the biggest disappointment of the TRC, which worked so tirelessly to compile truth from victims only to end up with half a story of apartheid. Some humans, deplorable and wonderful creatures that they are, choose to continue living in the mud at the bottom of the hill, “unable to fathom the essence of humanity.”⁶

Nevertheless, the TRC succeeded in shaking the mud out of South Africa’s proverbial pants. It might even be said that to some degree, they were able

to help South Africa halfway up the hill. But a truth commission’s success is dependent on a deep healing built by holistic truth and remembrance; it somehow needs to get every individual to participate. When an entire nation has fallen down the slipperiest slope, when most of those were pulled down to be trod upon, beaten, maimed, and killed, their humanity stripped from, it takes the entire nation, whatever is left, to collectively move back up the hill. This is why perpetrators and bystanders, the ones who pulled fellow humans down in order to use them to rise, must be allowed to regain their humanity in order to support the victims, to help them up the hill. Everyone must find it within themselves to forgive, even (and especially) the victims. Part of the success of the TRC comes from the victims, in an endemic tendency for forgiveness that stems from an understanding of and propensity towards ubuntu. But in any truth commission, there must be an emphasis on forgiveness, occurring on the individual level before any other. Truth commissions must be allowed as much time and resources necessary to establish a holistic truth and remembrance. Only from this holistic remembrance can come deep healing, from which can come forgiveness, from which can come balance. Every human is a part of the collective humanity, and each must help in the collective climb back up the hill.

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<https://www.flic.kr.co.my/photos/32020964@N08/4330004547>





by: Sarah Henderson

Here at the Bottom of the Hill

Picture a hill. The sides slope gently upward, a parabola in every degree. You are a rock atop this knoll, resting for the briefest of moments at the exact pinnacle, the center of balance, humanness, and equality. Opposing forces roll away from you in every direction, and you are at the center, the epitome of freedom and equality for the briefest of moments, contemplatively poised to roll back down and become a new burden.

Picture the bottom of a hill. The top seems æons away, the shadows it casts are long and dark, and you are standing in muck. You are faced with this rock. You are the human who has to push this rock up the hill, because it has inevitably rolled back down it again. You're not really sure why you have to push the rock up the hill, but as it stands there in front of you there isn't any reason to let it go on standing by. It must get to the top of the hill again. You must get to the top of the hill again. You and the rock must somehow manage to get to the top of the hill, because a wonderful abstract idea is up there, and what else is there to do but shoulder the burden and carry on?

Picture a castle. This castle is warm and dry and lights shine from every window. It beckons from the shadow beneath the hill, mocking you with its cheery glow. What is a rock anyway, compared to a castle full of light? You turn away from the rock and wade through the muck towards the warmth, feasting with your eyes, reaching with your tongue and your hands and your nose, as warm and comfortable sludge slowly fills your ears. Before you know it you're up to your chin in mud, but here is the door, glorious wondrous door, so why bother to turn back? It opens for you when you flash your skin and then you're in, and the light and the warmth are better than you could ever have imagined, and the people here are fat and happy and nothing at all could cause you a care in the world. You don't even notice that you've turned upside down.

Where is the humanity in that? Where is the horrible ugly beautiful wonderfulness that makes humans so human?

You and the rock must somehow manage to get to the top of the hill, because a wonderful abstract idea is up there, and what else is there to do but shoulder the burden and carry on?

Where is the intrigue in fat happy people hiding in a castle, devoid of blood, sweat, and tears, without dirt under nails or calluses on hands and feet? If our society is built on freedom and equality, then what are we doing at the bottom

of the hill, cowering in a castle buried miles deep in mud? Shouldn't we all be working together to roll that rock toward the freedom and equality at the top of the hill? A collective humanity is our collective struggle, "itself enough to fill our hearts"¹ and convince us that free and equal life is for free and equal living. Our burden, and "one always finds one's burden again,"² is to ask questions, look for other voices, and really listen. Without a sense of humanity, what are we but fat happy people hiding behind white castle walls?

Living in castles is a posh life. Pushing stones up hills is not. To become conscious of the castle, of the immense, ongoing social injustice holding up the

Where is the horrible ugly beautiful wonderfulness that makes humans so human?

walls that have given you nothing but comfort, and then choosing to leave posh for push takes courage. It is a constant struggle to keep from receiving gladly the silver platter bearing the arrows and olive branch of freedom and equality; an uncomfortable obligation to see the muddy platter bearing the scarred head of a small African American child for what it truly is. It is an ongoing and vigilant fight against the disease which afflicts the privileged: Upside Down Thinking (UDT) disease, with racism at its core.

In order to build Castle America, African people had to be seen as "without worth or history."³ In order to be bought and sold like animals, they had to be seen not as human beings, but as beasts of burden worth the same as the average ass. Because it was profitable, this way of thinking became the mortar holding up the walls of the American castle. Racism is the mud that infiltrates every pore of the American being, a virus that spares neither the victim nor the victimizers, and wherein the afflicted is said to have UDT disease and believes herself to be climbing higher toward freedom when in fact she is crawling

deeper into the mud of the American Dream. This country stripped enslaved African people of their dignity, history, and of any possibility of self-definition; it is a white castle built of black bodies. It came to the point where the only way for black people to survive was to embrace their collective identity as an unassuming

The country stripped enslaved African people of their dignity, history, and any possibility of self-definition; it is a white castle built of black bodies.

wall, to "serve and obey and remember who they were."⁴ The soul of an entire people was wiped entirely away, for their history began and ended with slavery, Jim Crow, and institutionalized racism. When every view of the world is white, what are African Americans to do but "cobble self-esteem from a vacuum of stolen history?"⁵ When your black body is holding up white walls that keep you ever out, what else is there to see but mud, mud, and more mud?

The African American community thus has had to create a history for themselves. This involves owning and remembering the centuries before slavery when the racism born to sustain it did not exist, but also owning and celebrating that which was resilient in the enslaved and oppressed African American people, because "history forgets, first, those who forget themselves."⁶ African American culture democratizes history by collectively unearthing and owning a story that America decided "did not exist to be told;"⁷ owning the ancient civilizations of Mali, Ghana, and Songhay, the hair that is so unique to their race, and music that began in Africa and became a means of "communication and survival" through centuries of slavery, evolving into a way of "retaining humanity in the face of adversity,"⁸ progressing further into a refusal to be silent in the face of extreme urban poverty caused by insistent institutionalized racism, and now rehabilitating a lost and broken view of Africa by incorporating traditional African

rhythms and imagery into performance and song. African Americans are not the black walls of white castles.

After almost four centuries of ongoing oppression, black people are refusing to be walls for white people to cower behind—and they are calling out to

us. They are telling us their stories and trying to make us listen, but our ears are clogged with mud and our eyes refuse to see. Instead of choosing humanity

and freedom and equality, instead of struggling to push that stone up the hill in order to have even one brief moment of clarity at the top, we privileged Americans are content to cower behind our white castle walls, burying ourselves in mud in efforts to reach what we, in our diseased state, think is freedom. And not only are we content to allow our ears to remain clogged with mud, we are quick to cover them up to keep the mud in place—and we are quick to contaminate

“

"History forgets, first, those who forget themselves."

any rumblings we do hear by pulling the voices by the tongue down into our filth. We muddy the voices that we hear because we don't want to hear them. We cover them in muck until they are homogenized and with white noise again filling our ears we settle back into the comforts of our warm sludgy mud.

Despite all this, in American today, black culture is thriving. Both black and white hip hop and rap artists are the pinnacle of popular culture, which would seem to suggest some sort of social uprising against the castle in the mud. But this is unfortunately not the case. What is happening, instead of an appreciation and acceptance of black people, and consequently their

culture, is a widespread appropriation of “blackness” into white popular culture. Black culture is being simplified into racist generalizations and stereotypes by the privileged, who “take on ‘blackness’ to be fashionable, cool, edgy, or funny.”⁹ In music videos, white hip hop and rap

Privileged Americans have a knack of staying privileged.

artists use black dancers as props, speak in Ebonics, twerk, and eat watermelon; in presenting themselves white icons cornrow their hair and grill their teeth. By generalizing black culture into distinct stereotypes and ignoring the plight of the people they generalize, white popular culture mocks the rich history that was built from resilience to social injustice and furthers the injustice by silencing the voices of African American people. “It’s as if, no matter the injury, no matter the pain, a wrong is a wrong only when acknowledged in the broad mainstream of our society.”¹⁰ As long we privileged whites remain locked inside our castle with eyes squeezed shut and hands

We need to all begin choosing to leave the castle, shaking the mud out of our ears, and listening to the rhythms, rhymes, and stories of African American voices.

holding mud into our ears, America will never admit its wrong and exit the castle en masse for the rock-up-hill struggle. It takes an entire society to see a wrong—just as it takes an entire society to fully democratize history and thus make possible any sort of restorative justice. Neither is possible without the other. The whole society has to get behind the rock and push if there is to be any hope of movement up the hill toward restorative justice in the form of freedom and equality for the entire integrated society.

But UDT disease is slippery and it’s catching. Black people can demand justice as hard as they want, can democratize their history as much as they can, and still it wouldn’t be enough to

get the castle-goers’ heads out of their proverbial muddy asses long enough to affect any sort of meaningful change. The hurt can be great, the social disintegration costly, and the distance between Americans miles long but woe be unto the victims when they are “small in number, peripheral and voiceless.”¹¹ They’re not getting anywhere—not through the castle walls, and not through the mud filling the ears of the privileged inside. Privileged Americans have a knack for staying privileged, and the most privileged are the most diseased, the most hard-core believers in the right-side-up-ness of their upside down world. And they stand on corners inside the castle with the loudest of the mud-slinging megaphones. Thank the powers that be that some privileged folks have managed to clear some mud out of their ears and see the mud on the walls! They’ve seen what the castle is built on and the American dream is looking less and less brilliant in this murky light, and they’re thinking and they’re talking about walking away. These people are the

cure to UDT disease—the ones with the gumption to pull their heads up out of the mud to see real, brilliant, unclouded reasoning. Unheard voices, African American voices, are critical at this moment

of brilliancy, for here is their chance to speak and be heard. Here is their chance to take up their agency in a way that can finally make real change.

We cannot hide in our castle forever and continue to tell ourselves we’re free, just, and equal. African Americans and other minority groups can demand justice as much and as loud as they want, but they are still all but powerless against the diseased mud-slinging megaphones of the Ultra Upside Down Thinkers. Until the privileged white American majority gets their heads out of the proverbial mud, they will never hear the music of the minority. It takes both teams to get out of the mud, both teams to tell their stories, both teams to truly listen

to each other’s stories, and both teams to start rolling that rock up the hill. We need to all begin choosing to leave the castle, shaking the mud out of our ears, and listening to the rhythms, rhymes, and stories of African American voices. Then we can join our African American brothers and sisters in taking up the cause of rolling that rock up the hill. The more of us that stand in solidarity, respecting a culture and listening to their voices, standing back to let them lead us all in taking a stand and democratizing history, the closer to restorative justice we all will be.

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"FUNNY"

by Tyler Dobies

The following was originally prepared for a class assignment asking me to "speak my truth." It is meant to be read aloud.

People tell me I'm funny
And, honey—you know I am.

People tell me I'm funny
In spurts of seemingly frivolous laughter, they declare it to the world:

"You crack me up"

"Tyler, why are you so funny?"

One girl even told my sister: "Gabrielle, I love your brother. He is so funny."

People tell me I'm funny
And, honey—you know I am.

People also call me sassy, but I don't know why.

That's a lie. I actually do.

People tell me I'm funny.
That I'm hilarious.
That I'm fuck-ing-hi-la-ri-ous.

People don't realize how I became so funny

A quiet kid is never heard.

They don't know the history

A brown kid is never heard.

It doesn't even cross their minds to wonder.

A shy kid is never heard.

Well...A shy, brown, quiet kid is never heard.

Now, I hate a story monologue just as much as the rest, but how come I never had people listen to me until I made them laugh, chuckle, giggle, tremor from their insides, or smile?

How come when my imagination and insight initiate my intelligence to form speech to communicate an idea, as soon as I am finished speaking: the next white boy raises his hand...

"Yes, Matthew, you have something to say?"

"Well I was just gonna say..."

He perfectly plagiarizes my idea, rewording it—the dove that I released into the air, the garden that I planted, the bed that I made.

(Please don't think that this has not happened in the classes that you are in.)

He catches that dove, he tramples that garden, and he pees in the bed to say exactly what I just said as if it were his own.

"Matthew. Wow. Good reading, I'm so proud of you."

And you know it's not Matthew's fault.

It's not the teacher's fault.

It's not my fault.

It's not your fault.

It's not our fault.

We did not ask to be brought up in a society that tells us white people are more important than brown people.

And that when people of color speak, they are not worth listening to.

Except when they are making you laugh.

People tell me I'm funny

And, honey—you know I am.

I am funny because I am coping with not being heard. With existing in a world that refuses to listen to me when I talk, when imagination and insight initiate my intelligence to form speech to communicate an idea...

But I am heard when I tell you something funny

Yet your cackles do not come without a cost

And if you see me as only funny, you do not see me at all.

Yes, I love being funny and I love making people laugh, but I am much more than funny

And when I raise my hand because I think I have something of value to contribute:

Please.

Listen to me.

Listen to me. *Listen to me.*



Tyler Dobias is a Senior Theatre Major with an emphasis in Acting/Directing and a Music minor. Tyler is originally from Golden, Colorado, but moved to Washington during the summer of 2010. Tyler also loves One Direction.

EVERY DAY I FEEL THE KNIVES OF GENDER PRESSED AGAINST MY THROAT.

an open letter to President Krise

Dear Dr. President Krise,

I write to you as a concerned student who, despite attempts to affect change and raise awareness on campus, still faces institutional harm within PLU. What I have to say cannot remain closeted nor taken lightly. I have decided to take a stand and break the collective silence on PLU's complicity in transphobia.

Statistically speaking, there are approximately 33 students at PLU who identify as transgender in some way, based on national statistics from the National Center for Trans Equality. The true number cannot be known, as the fear of discrimination and backlash keeps many closeted, only able to truly express themselves part time. I am one of the few who is out and visible.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide



Angie Tinker is a Senior, class of 2016, with a double major in History and Chinese studies.

Prevention, in conjunction with the annual National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 41% of transgender

Do you believe that this school is doing all it can to protect and value the lives of all its students, trans and otherwise?

people attempt or successfully commit suicide. That's approximately 14 of your students. Again, I am a survivor, and every day I feel the knives of gender pressed against my throat.

Before I continue, I want to hear your voice. Do you think this campus – your campus, my campus – is exempt from these damning statistics? Do you believe that this school is doing all it can to protect and value the lives of all of its students, trans and otherwise? What is your stance on the continual process of gendering and misgendering that happens at our fair university? What would you do, esteemed Doctor and President, if your close friends

and colleagues were the victims of such discriminatory policies and pressures?

What if I told you, Dr. President Krise, that PLU was not only fully complicit in transphobic policies, but actually an active perpetrator of discursive violence against transgender students, staff, and faculty? Every required reporting of gender and biological sex, every dead name from a previous gender that is read on rosters, every faltering explanation of ignorance when I go to the Counseling Center and Health Center for trans health issues, every one of these failures by the university is a microaggression, the constant weathering of seemingly small discriminatory actions and discourse, permitted and mandated by the university against its students.

The systems that are supposed to support me let me down. The Bias Incident Report Team quietly documents transphobic action in the classroom without calling

for any wider change. The conduct system forces me to relive and redocument issues of discrimination over and over again in my reports to different individuals, retraumatizing through reenactment. Shouldn't the swathe of disrespectful and discriminatory students be required to endure this bureaucratic process instead? Shouldn't this type of violence be prevented in the first place by university workshops and training?

There are token efforts for the token transgender representatives. I've spoken on gender panels, explaining the complexities of gender identity, performance, and perception while being subject to personal questions about my privacy. I've been singled out as the only student required to give my pronouns in front of the class. I've noted with disappointment the disrespect and controversy allotted to gender-neutral housing, the limits of and ignorance about gender-neutral bathrooms. I've attended the most recent

event, a memorial for those transgender individuals whose life has been tragically cut short by random violence and suicide; this consisted of printed out pictures with short biographic details, often truncated by holes punched through words. It further

Appeasement is violence, assimilation is calling for complicity.

contained a space to write comments on the memorial, were some students remarked how “interesting” aspects of our death were. I worry every day that I, too, may end up as a low quality printed picture, caught by violent strangers or even confused classmates who feel deceived in some way.

Is this what a first rank university does? Do we silence and placate, or do we call for justice? Appeasement is violence, assimilation is calling for complicity. Anything short of full liberation perpetuates systemic violence.

This liberation is an act of

cannot be done alone, nor can it be done by any single advocate. It is a continual process of reflection, resolution, and reenactment. It requires deliberation and decision, analysis and assessment, intentional inquiry and civic care. It requires an expansion of gender-neutral facilities and the proliferation of information about them. It requires facilitated name-changing services for operations within the university. It requires trans sensitivity training and the provision of trans-specific healthcare needs and referrals. It requires a public apology to all trans students, past and present, on behalf of the university. I give you the benefit of the doubt with regards to the damage wrought within this university. However, further silence and inaction is willful abandonment. Ignorance is no longer an excuse.

Let us begin.
Yours in resistance,
Angie Tinker

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

MATRIX PLUS *A new feature!*

Some Matrix material just demands more discussion! With the support of Angie Tinker, the editors have selected this commentary as a “Matrix Plus” feature. We will coordinate in-person dialogues at PLU to further the process of naming and reducing transphobia and transapathy at PLU. Join us!

Please email The Matrix (matrix@plu.edu) or faculty advisor Beth Kraig (kraigbm@plu.edu) or author A. Tinker (tinkerer@plu.edu) and let us know that you would like to TALK in person!

We will have at least 1 dialogue in J-Term and at least 1 additional dialogue in February when spring semester deigns. Let's move from reading The Matrix to putting its demands and challenges into action.

Book Review of *The New Jim Crow*

by: Bernadette Hayden

Alexander argues that criminalization of drugs does more harm than good for minorities who are disproportionately being arrested for drug crimes. In many states, Black men are admitted to prison on drug charges that range from twenty to fifty-seven times greater than white men (Alexander 98). White people are not only more likely to do drugs, but sell illegal drugs as well. Yet white people are much less likely to be arrested for drug crimes than minorities.



Bernadette Hayden is a First-year at Pacific Lutheran University studying Political Science and Women's and Gender Studies. In the future, Bernadette plans to become a lawyer and work at a non-profit to provide legal assistance for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Take a moment to imagine yourself walking down a darkly lit street. Out of the corner of your eye, you spot a man in the shadows, sprawled on the sidewalk. He seems to be injecting himself with something. You suddenly realize he is using drugs and you become scared and run away. Now that you've pictured this interaction in your mind, what does this person look like? A study found that ninety-five percent of respondents pictured a black drug user, while only 5 percent imagined users of other racial groups (Alexander 106). Contrary to this racial stereotyping, research done in 1995 has shown that African Americans constitute only 15% of drug users (Alexander 106).

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander uses these shocking statistics to point out how unconscious racism is plaguing our criminal justice system. Alexander is a professor of law at Ohio State University and holds a joint appointment at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. She wrote *The New Jim Crow* to bring to light the shocking similarities between the Jim Crow Laws and our modern

system of mass incarceration. Her book provides alarming evidence that "the war on drugs" is less about keeping our population safe than it is about a system of socially acceptable racial control. As a reader and student of PLU, I was

Her book provides alarming evidence that "the war on drugs" is less about keeping our population safe than it is about a system of socially acceptable racial control.

astounded that so many people in society and on college campuses (including myself) were completely oblivious to these very prevalent issues. I was intrigued and driven to learn more about "the war on drugs" and its detrimental effects on our citizens.

Alexander argues that criminalization of drugs does more harm than good for minorities who are disproportionately being arrested for drug crimes. In many states, Black men are admitted to prison on drug charges that range from twenty to fifty-seven times greater than white men (Alexander 98). White people are

not only more likely to do drugs, but sell illegal drugs as well. Yet white people are much less likely to be arrested for drug crimes than minorities.

It is no longer legal to discriminate against people because of their race. However, it is legal to discriminate against "criminals." Once someone is labeled as a felon, even for simple drug charges, that person may face employment discrimination and be unable to get, and keep jobs. Many are barred from getting any license. This means that if a felon went back to school to become a doctor, he couldn't reach his goal because he would be unable to obtain the license. They also lose their eligibility to receive aid from the government for services such as food stamps and financial aid.

If African Americans are statistically more likely to be charged for drug crimes than whites, they are more likely to face

White people are not only more likely to do drugs, but sell illegal drugs as well. Yet white people are much less likely to be arrested for drug crimes.

these difficulties. It also doesn't help that felons are unable to receive subsidized housing, making it difficult to live with their families. This leads to an increased

likelihood of becoming homelessness. Without financial aid, many are not able to go back to college to boost their economic standing, and many have no choice but to continue to live in poor communities. It then becomes obvious, in my opinion, that so many newly released “criminals” resort back to selling drugs with no other way to financially support their families. Because of this very circular cycle, most African Americans find it difficult, if not impossible to get out of the criminal justice system.

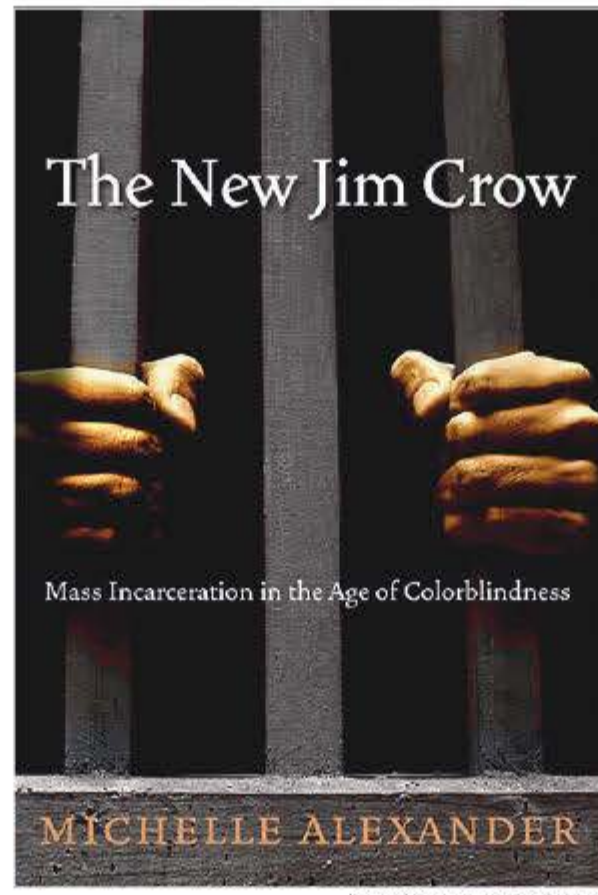
Before reading *The New Jim Crow*, I was convinced that the laws put in place, making certain drugs illegal, were there for the primary reason of protecting citizens from extremely dangerous

As a reader, I began to feel as though everything I had previously understood about the danger of drugs was completely socially constructed and didn't have anything to do with reality.

substances. However, if safety is the issue, then why is drinking legal if alcohol related deaths are close to 100,000 annually (Alexander 206)? Compare this to the 21,000 people who die annually due to all illegal drug fatalities including AIDS, drug overdose, and violence associated with the illegal drug trade. (Alexander 206). Now, maybe it's just me, but it looks like legal drugs are more harmful to human health than illegal drugs!

As a reader, I began to feel as though everything I had previously understood about the danger of drugs was completely socially constructed and didn't have anything to do with reality. I completely agree with Alexander that the legalization of drugs would greatly benefit our society. However, I wasn't completely convinced on how the process of legalization could take place in the United States, and what the positive and negative side effects could be. I was intrigued and therefore driven to do more research about the success and/or failure of countries who have legalized all drugs.

In defense of the United States, there are many negative side effects of using



narcotics including HIV/AIDS and associated crime. The United States tried to combat these issues by “getting tough on crime.” The US is doing this by increasing sentencing in prison for drug use, including 5-10 years for first time offenders (Alexander 87). The United States Supreme Court also continues to uphold lifetime sentencing for first time drug offences (Alexander 90). The idea of decriminalizing all drugs in the United States is seen by many as being preposterous and very dangerous. However, Portugal took a very different approach when faced with the highest rates of injection caused HIV/AIDS in the European Union, as well as extremely high drug-related crime (Greenwald 16). In 2001, Portugal became the first country in the European Union to “decriminalize” all drugs including cocaine and heroin. Fourteen years after decriminalization, Portugal is having incredible success and should be seen as an inspiration for lawmakers in the United States.

Before reading *The New Jim Crow*, I was hesitant to support legalization of all drugs including heroin and meth. My thinking was that if more people had access to drugs, more people would use them, resulting in more HIV/AIDS cases. However, in Portugal between 1999 and 2003, drug-related cases of HIV dropped by 17%. Cases of Hepatitis C and B were also reduced (Greenwald 17).

The reasoning for this reduction is partly due to the fact that drug users have access to clean needles without fear of being arrested. Decriminalization of drugs is not only a safety issue but a health issue as well. If we truly cared about the wellbeing of the citizens in our country, we wouldn't send people to jail for trying to gain access to cleaner and less dangerous drug related equipment.

Sadly, in our society, drug addicts are portrayed as hopeless and often as though they are dangerous. If you think about it though, what's the difference between heroin and Twinkies? Many people are addicted to junk food; it's a substance that they feel like they can't live without. Many often die of illnesses that could have been prevented by eating healthier foods. There are so many health services available for junk food addicts, and

In Portugal, the number of people in treatment leapt from 6,040 in 1999 to 14,877 in 2003, an incredible increase of 147%. With their government now focusing primarily on the rehabilitation of their citizens, Portugal has increased the number of detoxification pleaces, therapeutic communities and half-way houses!

drug addictions should be treated no differently. The way the United States deals with drug users is by sending users to prison, often causing withdrawal symptoms that can lead to relapse. It's the same as junk food addicts who “diet” and abruptly stop eating unhealthy foods as a way to fix their addictions. They are also extremely likely to relapse back into their old habits.

In my opinion, drug addictions are just like any other addiction. The only problem is that it's a crime in the United States to admit to having this addiction. Nobody will arrest you if you admit to being addicted to junk food. However, most drug addicts in the United States are afraid to receive help because they are afraid of going to prison. In Portugal, the number of people in treatment leapt

from 6,040 in 1999 to 14,877 in 2003, an incredible increase of 147%. With their government now focusing primarily on the rehabilitation of their citizens, Portugal has increased the number of detoxification places, therapeutic communities and half-way houses! The country also increased funding for these treatment and prevention strategies (Greenwald 15). I think the United States could greatly benefit from following Portugal's lead by spending more for treatment and recovery programs instead of punishing those with addictions through imprisonment.

In *The New Jim Crow*, Alexander doesn't go into great depth about the negative aspects of using drugs. She mainly just talks about how imprisonment isn't a good solution for those who use drugs. One of my main concerns about legalization prior to doing this research was about whether decriminalization

The United States has the responsibility to ensure that the laws it puts in place are the most productive and are not newly formed versions of The Jim Crow Laws.

would cause massive increases in drug users. I don't believe that drugs are good for people, and I believe that we, as a society, should try to avoid them, but not by criminalizing them. In Portugal after decriminalization, more people were able to access treatment without fear of imprisonment, and drug use rates have actually gone down as a result! In almost every category of drug and for drug usage overall, the lifetime prevalence rates in the pre-decriminalization era of the 1990s were higher than the post-decriminalization rates (Greenwald 14). I found it incredibly fascinating that legalization can actually decrease the use of drugs overall.

How is the United States expected to deal with increasing drug usage? Isn't "getting tough on crime" the most productive way to deal with increased illegal activity? The United States actually has a lot in common with Portugal prior to 2001. Before decriminalization, Portugal had one of the highest rates of drug use in the European Union. These days,

things have changed. For almost every narcotic, the lifetime prevalence rates—the percentage of adults who will use a particular drug over the course of their lifetime—is far lower in Portugal than in Europe generally (Greenwald 22). Between 2001 and 2005 in Portugal, the age group of 15-64 had the absolute lowest lifetime rate for cannabis in the entire European Union! For the most part, states in the European Union have double and triple the rates of drug use of post-decriminalization Portugal (Greenwald 22). Both Portugal and the United States have been faced with similar issues except that they both have chosen polar opposite paths. Since drug use is still increasing in the United States, but decreasing in Portugal, I think it's safe to say which path has been more efficient in decreasing drug use.

These statistics would really strengthen Alexander's argument that decriminalization of all drugs would greatly benefit our society. I agree with Alexander that "the war on drugs" is a form a racialized social control that disproportionately affects African Americans and their families. This disproportionate incarceration leads to homelessness, increased poverty and the collapse of African Americans families. Racial bias plays such a huge part in the drug war which is a major reason why in 2006, 1 in 14 black men were behind

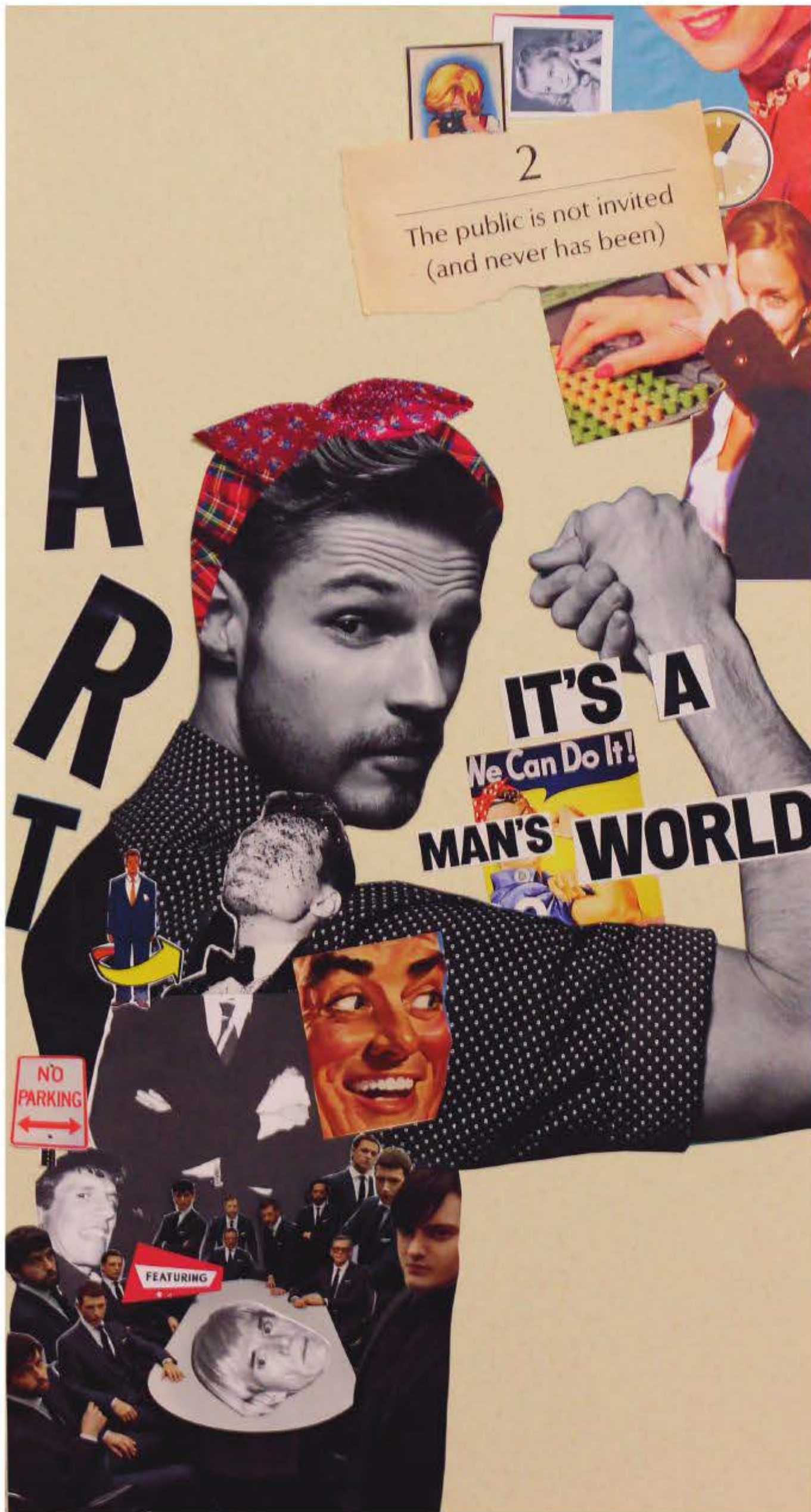
I was personally driven to do more research and will soon be writing to my representatives because I truly think that lawmakers should know the detrimental impacts of the laws they create.

bars compared to 1 in 106 white men (Alexander 100). Alexander provided compelling evidence that we as a society need to put an end to "the war on drugs." However, I would take it a step further and say the United States has the responsibility to ensure that the laws it puts in place are the most productive and are not newly formed versions of The Jim Crow Laws. Lawmakers in the United States should be looking at alternative solutions to drug use and figure out better, more productive solutions than

mass incarceration. Following Portugal's lead we can revolutionize this country in a positive way by decreasing drug use, HIV/ AIDS rates, and decreasing the number of years that families are separated due to incarceration.

Reading *The New Jim Crow* empowers readers to take action in the fight against "the war on drugs." I was personally driven to do more research and will soon be writing to my representatives because I truly think that lawmakers should know the detrimental impacts of the laws they create. They should also know that sometimes throwing money at a problem doesn't fix it. Incentivizing law enforcement with more spending money and taking bribes from privately owned prisons isn't solving the problem. Lawmakers need to step back and follow the example of other approaches. Insanity is trying the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. It's time our lawmakers realize that making drugs illegal is not working and they can't just expect different results each time they sentence a drug user to years and years in prison. We can see through research how effective decriminalization has been in Portugal. This only adds to the compelling evidence that Alexander's book presents. Through this overwhelming amount of research and evidence my opinion on mass incarceration has completely changed. Readers of *The New Jim Crow* will find themselves questioning their own morals and transforming their beliefs due to the irrefutable evidence presented to them.

References: Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012. \ \ Greenwald, Glenn. *Drug Decriminalization of Portugal: Lessons for Creating Fair and Successful Drug Policies*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2009. Cato.org



Artists are confined to certain social spaces based on the time and place from which they come, and also the style in which they paint. This is an unavoidable truth. By continuing to make assumptions about the precise meanings behind these paintings, we continue to confine artists to certain spaces. Rather than redefining the history of art, we are confirming the same ideas of "... romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying and monograph-producing substructure upon which the profession of art history is based."

Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"
 Art News, Vol. 69, No. 9,
 (January 1971).



Jasper Sortun is a Senior BFA with a concentration in Graphic Design. I am all for the democratization of art, but I find myself obsessed with ideas of exclusivity in bringing about an intimacy which, if shared the right way, can become utterly universal. One day, I hope to be an illustrator. For now, I am a careful collector of images.

In the Introduction to Holocaust & Genocide Studies (HGST 200), students closely examined the ongoing impact of centuries of violence, theft, and cultural destruction directed against indigenous Americans. When families experience horrifying loss at the hands of others, they are often deeply harmed and may even pass along the legacies of violence and wrongful force to the next generation -- this is known as transgenerational trauma, and we studied the enormous damage caused by the U.S. system of ripping children from their homes and locking them into boarding schools (where corporal punishment, random violence, and sexual assaults were common).

As a student in the class, Shannah Young made profound connections to her own experience, growing up in a family where transgenerational violence and trauma shaped her fears, anger, and deep commitment to justice. She shares her thoughts with all Matrix readers, but especially hopes to touch those who are very directly affected by transgenerational violence and trauma. Can we all learn more about the ways in which such trauma may shape substance abuse, self-harm, and harm to family members? Can we do much more to reduce the impact of such trauma and work to prevent it? Read this commentary and form your own answers to those questions.

Beth Kraig

I look into their eyes and listen to their voice and hear nothing but pain, loss and sorrow. They, the victims, talk about the loss of trust, the stabbing in the back from family, neighbors, and friends. I see the lost in their eyes, the soul sucked dry, yet they are still living. They talk about fear -- fear of the murders coming back, fear that it will happen again. They fear speaking because they were told not to speak. They lost loved ones to death and loved ones to trauma. I don't just sympathize with them, I empathize and relive moments of trauma and loss. People who I trusted have hurt me, my dad and my mom have both left me questioning their existence as parents. My dad would leave me sitting on the side of the road waiting, questioning where he was. He had me questioning on my birthday, Christmas, Thanksgiving, you name it. My mom, an adult child of an alcoholic, was taught the same things I was taught. Don't talk, don't feel, don't trust -- feel your sadness alone, isolate yourself, because no one cares and you don't want to burden other people. I think back into times I sat living with pain in my heart, with loss, confusion and fear. I sat alone many nights and days not wanting to share my truth, questioning my worth, and feeling as if I will never love or trust anyone. My scars were deep, my anger filled my body, my sadness filled my heart. But I was taught to don't feel, don't trust, and don't talk. As we watched the videos and read of these survivors I go back to those days.

I tell myself I just empathize, I understand but no, that isn't it. I lived through those emotions, those emotions are my deep currents and these survivors stirred them up. I was deeply hurt hearing about the native kids because I know how it feels, I lived through it, to have absent parents. I know what its like to not want to go home after school. What hurt the most was having to hold all of that inside. I had to put a smile on and act like nothing was wrong or nothing was going on. No one

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asked me so I felt like no one cared. My dad did not want to show up, so again I felt worthless. My mom was busy with work, taking care of us kids, and her boyfriends that many times when I needed someone, I felt helpless. The times I got help were the times I had a melt down. I have yet faced those deep emotions of pain, anger, loneliness, helplessness, and sadness until this class. I sat with anxiety, shaking, from our topics because it reminded me of the little girl that needed her own validation

of those emotions. Fear was the biggest emotion though. Fear of being trapped, of being told I was worthless, or proving that point. I feared to trust because then there is a possibility of being proven right: trusting isn't good. I feared to talk because I was told to not feel and having those emotions in my head made me feel crazy. I felt crazy because by myself I could not comprehend or have the resources to understand that I was just normal. I was scared to love myself, to not be jealous, to not question everything a person does because that would be going against my family. I feared that their habits were a part of me because my family was a part of me. I feared the concept of sad and lonely because I was taught that those emotions make you weak and vulnerable. To be taught to not feel sad or lonely when you were actually sad and lonely makes a person feel crazy and even lonelier. I sat and pondered on the idea of suicide, why did these kids believe that that was the one way out? I questioned that for many hours and many days. Did they feel too engaged and wrapped around this negativity that there was no hope for change? I too fear my own light. I too sometimes fall victim to my past. I too questioned my existence when facing my anxiety. I then question the difference between a victim and a survivor. Falling victim is saying: I belong to my past, that my past is my present and future when it isn't. A survivor, in my case, holds the past as a badge of honor. That their past is something to be proud of, an adversity faced with truth.

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