

honorable works

2025

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cover art by tara joiner
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letter from the editors



Hannah Cargo



Colin Votzmeyer



Riley Dunn

Hello, Reader!

We are proud to present the 2025 issue of Honorable Works. Wherever you may be encountering this – from the cozy library on the fourth floor of Blank to the wider world beyond – we are happy you are here.

Honorable Works is a uniquely proud collection from the Honors Publication class. Here, students who have grown in their journalism skills get to set aside the usual process of brainstorming, interviewing, and drafting. Here, we get to feature this class as editors and curators. They pass on the torch to put their peers' passions in the spotlight.

And oh, the passions!

Far too often a student's interests and passions can get pushed to the side. Whether it's the end-of-the-year finals scramble or shifting attention to careers or academics, it's easy to let the things that delight, inspire, or even infuriate us sit quiet for a little while.

We believe that it's crucial to let these works out. Many of the projects you see are things that people have created in the spaces between their usual lives. Some are hobbies, some are honors contracts, some are expressions of belief. Many of which might not have had a moment in the spotlight.

It's important to appreciate our own hard work. It's important to remember the passions that shine in the cracks in between our "regular lives". They make us who we are, and they fuel us onward. Think of the childhood joy of sticking your latest creation on the fridge for the family to see. We hope that this issue serves a similar joy and inspiration for all the hands that touched it.

As you explore the works presented here, we hope you can share in the excitement of our students. Flip through the pages of works which include everything from reflective haiku and senryu poetry to a 3d design portfolio. Dive deeper into topics such as the "girl" modifier phenomenon and the travels of a student studying abroad. Journey through a student's song lyrics, brought to life through his band's alternative music, and discover how themes found in film can have an impact on the people who view them. Learn more about how students are responding to the changing world around them through a podcast discussing immigration policies, and examine the personal and life-altering experience of grief through a short story.

Welcome to the fourth issue of Honorable Works!
The Honors Publication Team,
Hannah Cargo (BA25), Colin Votzmeyer (BA25),
Riley Dunn (BA27)

nature in verse



Featured Honors Student: Nina Osborne

Edited By: Abby Jager

Nina Osborne is a second-year student at the University of Iowa studying geography and environmental planning. Originally from Bloomington, IL, Nina spends her time running biking, swimming, eating pumpkin muffins, and posting her writing to her Substack @osbonina.

Nina Osborne is a numbers-oriented thinker, often working with rules, theorems, and formulas. At the same time, she has a passion for creativity. One of her favorite ways to express herself, haiku and senryu poetry, combines these two things she loves. Different from other forms, haiku and senryu poems have a set of specific rules to satisfy. The form of the poem must be 3 lines with only 17 syllables total. The first line must have 5 syllables, the second 7 syllables, and the final line 5 syllables. This 5-7-5 form requires very intentional word choice and arrangement. A haiku is typically an observation of nature while a senryu focuses on human thought and feelings. Nina took to writing this type of poetry in search of a way to stay creative in the midst of a busy life. After a summer spent working outside at a park, Nina found no shortage of inspiration from being surrounded by nature every day. Writing poetry was a way to "represent my thoughts on paper in a way similar to how they aren't always linearly connected in my head," Nina said. The unique rules surrounding this type of poetry offer her just the right amount of freedom and direction to tap into her full creativity. The simple yet direct form of expression is an opportunity for reflection and interpretation.

haiku collection

Insectine

sandpapered-smooth skin
of the beetle embraces
the soft morning peace

Blue

dappled skin of the
sea -- crest proud, bow low. the sky
remains soft, still, couth

Fresh

fresh wind cuts the dark
petals gasp in their greeting:
the bloom of pink lungs



A view from City Park, overlooking the Iowa River.
The river and its surroundings are a major source of
inspiration for Nina.

senryu collection

Belief

gnawing on wishbones
the hound of hope brays his song:
the past! the future!

Focus

peach pit of passion
i chew on you, though the fruit
has ample, rich flesh.

Integrity

turbid as the bog:
murky waters of the soul,
dredged for a dollar.



One of Nina's favorite paintings, done by her grandfather.
A striking image, it reflects her interest in human focused
observations and feelings.

girl in the train car



Featured Honors Student: Solenn Vincent

Edited By: LeeAnn Mills

Solenn Vincent is a third-year honors student from Chandler Arizona studying English and creative writing. In her time at Iowa, she's been an RA at Burge residence hall and been Editor-in Chief of Broken Clock Literary Magazine, and she hopes to go into publishing, marketing, or public relations.

Solenn Vincent wrote this short story while traveling around Ireland during her six weeks studying abroad in the summer of 2024 for the Irish Writing Program. She was inspired to write this story about observing people and fated chance encounters due to all the observations and encounters she witnessed while abroad. Vincent said studying abroad changed her life as she learned to plan trips, navigate public transport, be more independent, and be more confident in herself. She would recommend studying abroad to anyone. The female protagonist in "Girl in the Train Car," her work below, was created from a variety of people she had observed while in Ireland.

My eyes wander across the train car, searching for entertainment in the boredom of the environment. They place attention on crumbs tucked between seats, smudged fingerprints on the windows, and chipping paint on the walls.

They also like to observe people. To watch the fluid movements of lips on different vowels, to watch the eyes speak more truthfully than the mouths, to detect the different colors streaked in the hairs on their heads, the varied clothing a telltale of class, nationality, and familiarity of weather.

One girl catches my eye more than the rest of my surroundings. She has the row of seats to herself and is stretched out across them, writing purposefully in her notebook. I watch her ponder, then continue writing. Her notebook is thin with small prints of jellyfish on a cardboard background. Something unremarkable but pretty, nonetheless. When her notebook tumbles onto the floor and before she snatches it up, I catch a glimpse of her handwriting. It appears legible, not from my distance, but with a sort of messy scrawl to it. A mix of cursive and print.

What draws me in the most are her eyes. The way she appears to scan the train and the passengers like I do. Except she notes her thoughts in her notebook rather than in her head like me. I want to see how her view of the world compares to mine.

Her eyes are also interesting. At first glance, they appear to be a lighter shade of brown, definitely a golden-brown with a noticeable pupil, rather than a deep soulless black like some brown-eyed people have. They are warm

and welcoming, curious and youthful, if not a little stand-offish, shy, and uncertain. A lot of people have a mix of emotions in their eyes, but hers are like the spinning of a washing machine, constantly returning then disappearing, being washed out before coloring up again. Her faint forehead lines are only visible in the light shining down on her.

Now, her eyes are greenish brown, hazel, not noticeable except in the summery golden light shining from the open window like a beacon onto her. The green and brown are beautiful, a surprise for those who look closely, who appreciate and admire her more than at a first glance.

Her cheeks are pink, but she appears to be makeup free except for her eyes. A slight sunburn, perhaps. Which only accentuates her slightly tan olive skin. Small freckles dot her arms and face, but not millions, only a few where the sun chose to kiss particular spots.

Her jawline is soft, strong when she clenches it, swallows, smiles, or turns to look up at the luggage above her head. Her cheeks are round, giving her a youthful look, but not so much that I doubt she is under eighteen. Her eyes are a lovely almond shape with a roundness to them, which makes her alluring when she narrows them in concentration, but heartbreakingly wide when she is surprised by the sudden sneeze of the man across from her. The puppy-dog eyes you imagine from dogs and kids but compelling on her.

Her brows are brown, but light enough to be blonde when the light hits them. Her little furrow draws them low, and I am fascinated by them, and the way they turn up when something is particularly striking or sad.

Her lips are thin, except for the upper lip. She is constantly worrying her upper teeth across the lower lip, slickening and plumping it. Her teeth are straight, slightly off-white. I like it, rather than the brilliant white of people wearing their teeth to nubs with fluoride, the artificiality of it all.

Her hair is intriguing. It falls loose around her shoulders and down her chest in waves, but small curls slip through, like if she applied some product, the texture would be more prominent, but she can pull both off well. Like her eyes, it appears brown, but the light brings out different shades of auburn, golden-blonde, and browns, small highlights throughout that wouldn't be visible without the sun's glow. She has a small widow's peak.

Her nose sets her face well. A small freckle sits in the middle, a charming touch. Her nose is slightly wide, and button-ish from the front. From the side, it has a slight ridge to it. It draws my eye to her more. The originality of her beauty is lovely. While she wears mascara that suits her well, she is simple. People may not spare her a second glance on the street, but to people like me, she would be their muse. Someone worth a thousand glances.

Her outfit is simple as well. A slightly wrinkled button up covers a cropped black tank, and she wears loose dark-blue jeans and white Air Forces. Something stylish and suitable for Dublin's chill, but nothing extravagant or too simple.

Her nails are painted a pearly shimmery color, nothing too obvious from first notice. She wears two rings on each finger: a claddagh ring, a petite heart, a trinity knot, and a wave. Around her wrist is a golden triple-banded bracelet with turquoise bits. She wears a golden necklace with a pearly stone in it, and large silver hoops with two small studs, triple pierced.

She doesn't notice my quiet observations the entire rest of the way. As we pull into Tralee, she gets off, trailing her small suitcase behind her. I watch her go the rest of the way, before the train drags me out of sight.

I see this girl again in Dingle. In the crowded chaos of the pub around me, I am tucked away with a Guinness, watching the people around me drinking and socializing. She is with a group of girlfriends up by the musicians, holding a glass of cider in her hand and swaying to the music. She has a rhythm to her, slightly off-beat to the point it is endearing. As the musicians pick up the speed, she dances and sings more furiously. A few boys gathered there



Solenn took this photo while traveling around Ireland in a train car, where she got most of her inspiration to write this story. (Attributed by Solenn Vincent)

are staring at her, but without the awe I do. I feel bile in my gut as one leans in to whisper in her ear. She replies to him. He pushes closer, brushing himself around her. She avoids his gaze and advances, eyes glued on her friends. Out of nowhere, she's dragging her friend close to her, sending a scalding glare at a man, as her other friend shoves him so hard, he stumbles and cowers away. She can handle herself. When I finish my sip, I look up again. She's gone.

I lean against a brick wall on Grafton Street, awaiting a text from my father. I watch the people passing me before glancing into shop windows. And freeze. There, in the coffee shop opposite me, is the girl. She is drinking a chai and has her laptop pulled out, typing intently, and glancing at her phone. She drains the final dregs and packs up. Her phone lights up and she exits the shop, walking past me across the street, murmuring in French. The effortlessness of the flow between English and French, as she murmurs apologies to people she shoves by, is admirable.

I sit on a picnic blanket, my lunch spread out around me in the shade of an oak in Phoenix Park. A quad of girls speed by on bikes, laughing loudly. The one dead last is her. Her waves were flying in the wind under the helmet, and she was wearing a flattering low-cut top and ripped jeans.

"Yuna! Hurry up!" The blonde girl yelled over her shoulder.

Yuna. I finally have a name. I looked it up. It means "desired" in Breton. It suits her.

The first time she is ever aware of my existence is at a market in Howth. I am perusing the honey, trying to find the flavor my grandmother prefers. She is headed towards the same booth. I am leaning over some of the bottles when I hear a small "excuse me."

An American accent, less feminine than I expected, but a slight twang to it, something Midwestern perhaps. Her eyes meet mine before she smiles and lowers them to the honey.

It means nothing to her, but to see this girl know of the space I share with her is enough.

She walks away quickly.

At my nearby Spar, I see her again. Dressed in a Trinity College sweatshirt, denim shorts, and wearing a Dublin Abroad tote bag. She is grabbing Taytos and Kinder.

"Airport food," she says conversationally to the cashier.

I lay in my bed, feeling myself drift to sleep, before a sudden thought occurs to me. Abroad must mean study abroad. She is likely an American student, leaving for the states because of her comment.

I fell in love without ever speaking a word to her.

And now it is too late.

disability essay



Featured Honors Student: Anya McArtor

Edited By: Alexa Justice

Anya McArtor is a first-year student at the University of Iowa majoring in speech and hearing Science, while pursuing a minor in psychology. From Urbandale, she hopes to attend graduate school at Iowa for her doctorate of audiology.

Anya McArtor wrote this essay for her class Disabilities in Global Writing and Film. She had to analyze certain values that stood out to her while watching the film *The Intouchables* then write about their overall importance. The values she chose were friendship and equality. This movie follows a wealthy quadriplegic man, Phillippe, and his newly hired caretaker, Driss, who is simply wanting this job for his parole. After shockingly getting hired, they start forming an unlikely but close friendship. As they both experience the effects of discrimination — Driss' struggle with racism and Phillippe's with ableism — they realize they both need their friendship to both succeed.

Everyone has values, these may differ greatly from person to person but the basis of the way people act, treat others, and carry themselves can be rooted back to their core values. Movies are no different, they carry a meaning and have their own values and lessons to take away. Every movie has a hidden meaning, a lesson to learn that is weaved throughout the plot and often takes deep analysis to uncover. In the movie *The Intouchables* (2011) there are many values demonstrated, the ones that stood out are equality and friendship.

Most people want to believe they treat everyone as an equal, however, they do not fully understand what must be done for full equality to happen. In the movie, Driss treats Philippe as an equal throughout the whole movie. For instance, Driss would always light and hold a cigarette for Philippe, and this became a very symbolic action throughout the movie. There is such a large difference between Philippe and Driss, from economic status to ethnic background, that from an outside perspective it would appear like all the odds were against them. However, they overcame these differences and treated each other as equals. To me, equality means an even playing field no matter what. I believe that no difference in people is large enough to forget that deep down we are all the same, therefore we deserve to be treated in such a way. I live every day of my life trying to demonstrate equality as well as continue the fight for it. It is rooted in me to treat everyone the same, to include everyone and make sure everyone feels like they belong.

Friendship is something that is easily overlooked and underappreciated in life, many people are content with the friends they have and no longer explore new friendships. This is not the case in the movie, neither Driss nor

Philippe is looking for a friendship when they first meet, Driss is simply wanting a signature for his parole and Philippe is looking for a caregiver. While friendship is commonly shown throughout all movies, Driss and Philippe's is special, because it's unique and unanticipated. They do so much together, much beyond what the job title indicates. One of the greatest examples of this is when Philippe is in severe pain one night and Driss tries to help him, but it does not make a difference, so Driss takes him out for a walk, and they eventually go out for dinner. On this walk they chit chat back and forth and the conversations they have sound more like friends talking than a boss and employee. Philippe starts talking about his wife and he says "What we had was incredible. I hope you experience that one day" (*The Intouchables*. 45:39-45:41). This may seem like a small sentence, but Philippe is opening up to Driss, which indicates their blooming friendship.

This is one of the strongest things a friend can do, which is pushing you to be the best and most confident version of yourself.

Driss and Philippe get used to having each other, so when Driss leaves for a little while, Philippe appears to be very lonely and sad. Philippe gets a new caretaker, but he is not the same as Driss and this is very apparent in Philippe's attitude. When Driss comes back and notices how sad Philippe is, he immediately wants to make him feel better. One of the nicest things Driss did for Philippe was push him to believe in himself; he helps him get the girl he has wanted. This is one of the strongest things a friend can do, which is pushing you to be the best and most confident version of yourself. I rely so heavily on my friends, similar to the way Philippe and Driss do as well. They are my people, so if I need anything from a hug to a good laugh, they are the people I depend on. I always think about how you cannot choose your family, but you can choose your friends.

Overall, *The Intouchables* demonstrates many of the same values lots of us, me included, use every day and choose to live our life around. The way that Philippe and Driss fought through their differences and saw each other as equals and formed a tight friendship with one another is not something to overlook and is a remarkable story filled with lessons and meaning.

Work Cited

The Intouchables (Intouchables, France 2011), directed by Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano, written by Olivier Nakache and Philippe Pozzo di Borgo (adapted from his autobiographical tale *Le Second Souffle*). Quad Productions et al.

divital



Featured Honors Student: Thomas DeBruin

Edited By: Isaac Branch

Thomas DeBruin is a first-year honors student from Hinsdale, Illinois, majoring in economics and minoring in music and Spanish. He is the finance director for Scope Productions and hopes to pursue music full-time.

Inspired by a variety of music genres including jazz, hip hop, and rock, the band Divital features many creative alternative songs, highlighting its poetic lyricism written by Thomas DeBruin. Hailing from Hinsdale, Illinois, high school friends DeBruin, Aadi Deshmukh, and Jathan Donthamsetti created the band in 2022 after inspiration by an AJR concert. Since its start in music, the band has begun a transitional period with the song "Insomniacs," highlighting the newer musical style to come. This song was inspired by the increased workload the band members experienced in high school with late nights spent studying. Divital is set to release its first album in December of 2025, featuring inspiration from Wu-Tang Clan, A Tribe Called Quest, Jon Batiste, and Jacob Collier.

Insomniacs

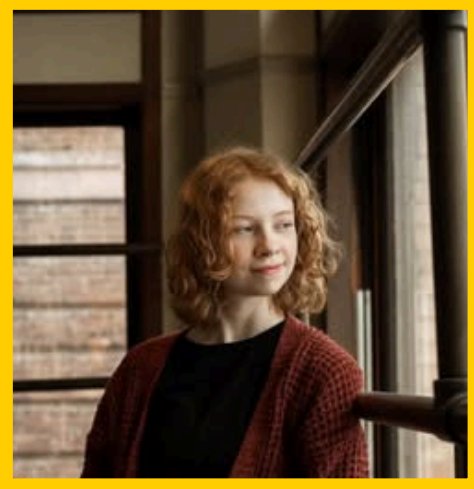
Standing out here on a frozen field
Morning dew piling high chilling my skin
They say popularity's a trade for your soul
And if you don't pay that's why they made vertigo
Why they made vertigo
Watch me fade into nothing
Into an abyss
Where gamblers and convicts are
Your only source of friends
Where all sense of feeling
Turns numb with every step
Where there's no more existing
Tired minds with tired eyes
Cannot discern black from white
Hallucinations fill our time
Paranoia's in overdrive

Wanna make my people proud
Cannot complain while they're around
Lack of sleep is a place of pride
Forever living as we die
Insomniacs
With lack of sleep they seek out to impress
Brains forever shut down I digress
Companions need support or they collapse
Into the numbness here we go
Time's
Just an illusion
As I walk
Through rings of guilt and shattered pasts
Where
Are my real friends
Be with me now
Music's all that I got left
Tired minds with tired eyes
Cannot discern black from white
Hallucinations fill our time
Paranoia's in overdrive
Wanna make my people proud
Cannot complain while they're around
Lack of sleep is a place of pride
Forever living as we die
Insomniacs
With lack of sleep they seek out to impress
Brains forever shut down I digress
Companions need support or they collapse
Into the numbness here we go
As I fall into the void I remember
The doors I held, and all the fans I treasured
And when it's done, I'll tell my brother
Admire the grit
And go back to the center

Divital's cover for their song "Insomniacs", created by their friend Anvay Atram, was released on Halloween day, 2022.



one line is all it takes



Featured Honors Student: Charlotte Hagen

Edited By: Ava Neumaier

Charlotte Hagen is a second-year honors student double majoring in English and creative writing and ancient civilization from Cincinnati, Ohio. In her time at Iowa, she has had work published in literary magazines like New Moon and Boundless, and participates in classics club and the campus orchestra.

Charlotte Hagen initially wrote this essay for Steve Duck's Honors Rhetoric class — uniting her two majors, English and creative writing and ancient civilization, to explore how the classical world is received in our modern times, particularly in creative works. This essay now encapsulates a number of other experiences since then, including translating the Odyssey's proem, their translation process under Boundless, and others. To Hagen, a second-year, "the past comes in handy as a lens to understand the present."

An extension of "Lost in Translation," a project I worked on for my freshman year Honors Rhetoric class.

January is the kind of month where I fall headfirst into a video game. I believe it's a symptom of winter break, where I have a lot of free time, get tired of having nothing to do, and have some extra money to spend. In January 2023, this game was Disco Elysium, in 2025 it was Balatro, but in 2024 I was obsessed with Chants of Sennaar. Heavily inspired by the biblical Tower of Babel, Chants of Sennaar is a 2023 game developed by French studio RUNDISC. It's an indie puzzle game where you wander around as a hooded figure (what it is about indie games and cloaked protagonists, we'll never know), working to unite the people of a massive tower together despite their differing languages.

There's many things that drew me to the game: it has a pretty art style, certainly, but it also puts the player into the translator's seat as they interpret words written on a wall, or spoken between people. The languages are all fictional, but it's easy to notice some take on a similar stylistic look as Arabic or Akkadian. As someone who has learned Latin and Classical Greek, I am also all too familiar with treating translation as a puzzle. But there was a moment that never really left me, even months after I completed all of the content in the game. At one point, the protagonist is asked to interpret a conversation between a group of warriors and a group of scientists. The scientists have been terrorized by monsters, and want soldiers that are equipped to fight them. But there is no word for "monster" in the warriors' language, like there is for the scientists. There's only one word that comes close, and it's "impure".

This is the same word the warriors use to refer to the people at the bottom of the tower, and the first people you encounter in the game. And so I was left to stare at the screen, knowing that the only word I could use to bridge this linguistic gap directly implicated harmless people who were (or at least, related to) monsters that chased me down in the dark.

I think what makes this moment so powerful is that it seemed entirely incidental, even accidental, in the grand scheme of the story. As a translator, you're going around very strictly uniting people, and the implication of using "impure" to translate as "monster" is never given second thought. There is only ever one "correct" way to translate in Sennaar, so while submitting that translation is entirely up to the player, it is the only one the game itself will accept. It is limiting, which isn't quite how translation itself works in practice.

We have an obsession with "accurate" translations. It seems kind of obvious that if you were to read or watch something, you'd want to consume it how the author intended you to. But there are certain barriers to entry that prevent a layman audience from perfectly understanding exactly what is being said, because languages rarely, if ever, translate neatly into one another.

I can parse Classical Greek and Latin, which have the extra leap of being a dead language. They're very handy for understanding functions of their descendant languages, but I can't really describe the Internet with the surviving words we do have of these old languages. The same issue arises when describing *xenia* (guest-host relationships), or the structure of patronage in Ancient Rome in modern English. We aren't immersed in the culture; we fundamentally lack the context.

For a perfect example, we don't need to go further than the first line of the *Odyssey*. The word *polytropos* is used to describe Odysseus, literally meaning of many (poly) turns (tropos). To say Odysseus is of "many turns/ways" might make sense if you were in Ancient Greece where "turns" works as a function of describing personality, or had read enough of the language, but it's not exactly a turn of phrase we see in English. So, "the man of many turns" is also made to be "the various-minded man" (Lawrence) or "the man skilled in all ways" (Fitzgerald). They scratch at the word, certainly, but does it reflect everything that "many-turned" could imply? And how do we even know what the hell Homer was implying?

Chief among these translators in my mind is Emily Wilson, whom I had the immense privilege of hearing speak at the end of summer. She is the first woman to fully translate and publish Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, also setting the epics in iambic pentameter. Poetry tends to have strict line confinements in older languages. In the case of Latin and Ancient Greek, dactylic hexameter was the preferred method for certain types of poetry (most famously being epics).

This does not translate well into English at all. It's a sort of waltz-beat, and the modern language where it seems most successfully used is German, surprisingly enough. What does work for English, however, is iambic pentameter.

Wilson chose to render the epics in more updated language (such as not using "higher register" English) and in meter, meaning words like *polytropos* become particularly troublesome. Her solution was "complicated." The way others in the classics react to this line change is roughly equivalent to the reaction you'd get shooting someone's dog in front of them. It is not a favorite of those who know the original meaning, but it's used in service to the rest of the work: keep it understandable to a modern audience, in-meter, and roughly line-equivalent. "Complicated" also implies its own abundance of meanings, perhaps different to a modern audience than its original one. But isn't that why we still tell stories?

To translate a line one way is to inherently narrow its definition to the receiving audience, which is a terrifying thought. As a translator, you've almost never made the kind of decision that would label an entire group of people

as enemies, but it is not lost on me that the word barbarian hails from the languages I've spent so much time studying. It's the language and culture our law uses, and our government models after. It's been used to justify slavery, and empire, and an insurmountable amount of hurt. But it is also the language used by dedicated writers and poets of a vast literary tradition.

Words are a form of power, and to rewrite someone's work in a different language sometimes feels like an act of hubris. But the time and effort it takes to learn a language and utilize it, to bridge the connections with another language altogether, and make decision after decision to fill in knowledge gaps that don't exist in the target language? It's a whole other miracle altogether.

And it just takes a single line to know how much work it takes.



A double exposure of the figures on a Grecian urn (left) and the characters of the video game Chants of Sennaar (right).

3D art



Featured Honors Student: Tara Joiner

Edited By: Lauren Wessling

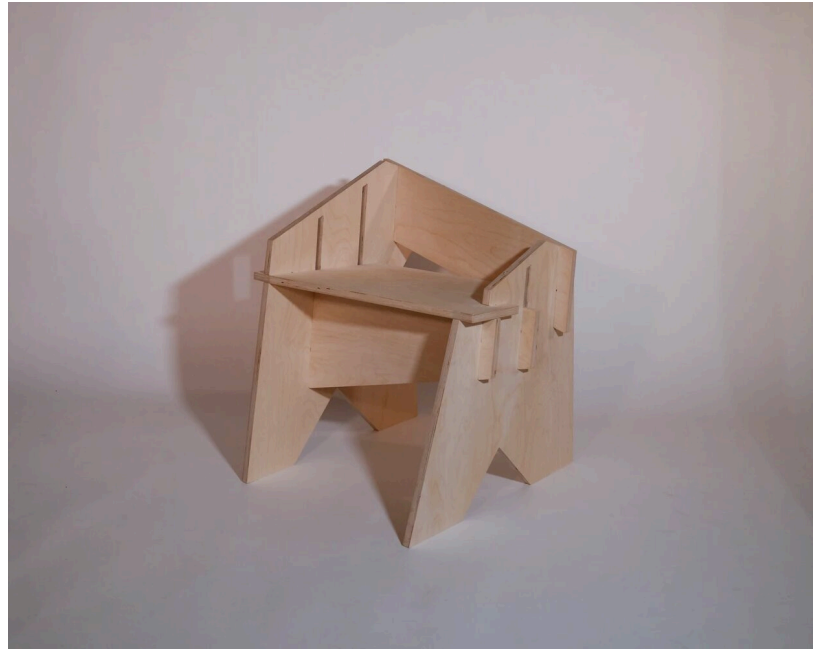
Tara Joiner is a third year honors student majoring in 3d design from Orange City, Iowa. Joiner is currently doing a research fellowship with the head of UI's 3d design program, Monica Correia and had her piece "Warp" featured in the Toronto Interior Design Show. Joiner plans on pursuing a masters degree in architecture with the goal of having a furniture studio. Link to her website: <https://www.tarajoinerdesign.com/portfolio-collections/spaces/storefront>

Tara Joiner's portfolio is inspired by the art she makes for her 3D design classes at the University of Iowa. Joiner doesn't have a specific style and instead uses a variety of mediums to explore linear and organic forms, using lots of angles and curvy lines throughout her portfolio to create simple but intentional designs. Joiner's portfolio ranges from abstract 3D-printed pieces like her lamp "Billow" to her mixed media "Wrapped Necklace." The first professionally displayed piece Joiner has had, her asymmetrical wooden chair "Warp," embodies the kind of furniture she wants to make. "It's a very fun chair, very conversational, I imagine it would be in a very cool, edgy coffee shop somewhere, and you would sit there and drink a matcha latte with your friends," she said. On the architecture side of her portfolio, Joiner's standout 3D design "Storefront" plays with shape and color and embodies organic architecture. Joiner's current project, a 3D designed coffee shop is expected to be finished in the upcoming weeks and plays into the same aspects as "Storefront."



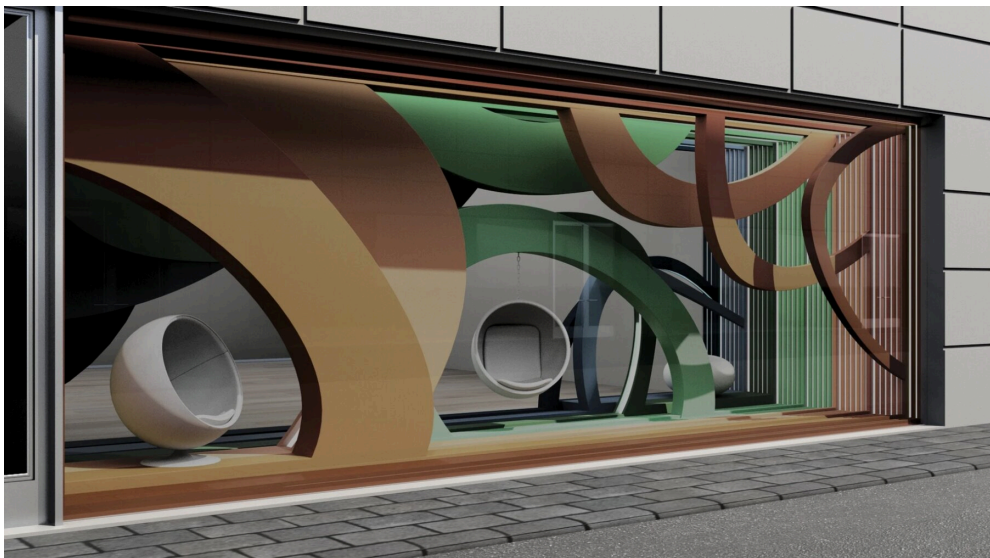
"Billow" is a table lamp that uses repetition to create a lively form. Its organic, unique shape intentionally allows light to pass through between objects and emits a calming feeling. This playful lamp was intentionally made to be easy to use and the lightbulb and socket are easily replaceable. "Billow" was designed on 3ds Max and 3D printed with plastic.

"Warp," displayed at the Interior Design Show Toronto, is a dynamic dining chair that is easily assembled and can pack flat. The chair, created with plywood, does not use any glue or hardware, making it ideal for shipping and easy assembly. "Warp" uses angular forms and asymmetry to create movement and visual interest.

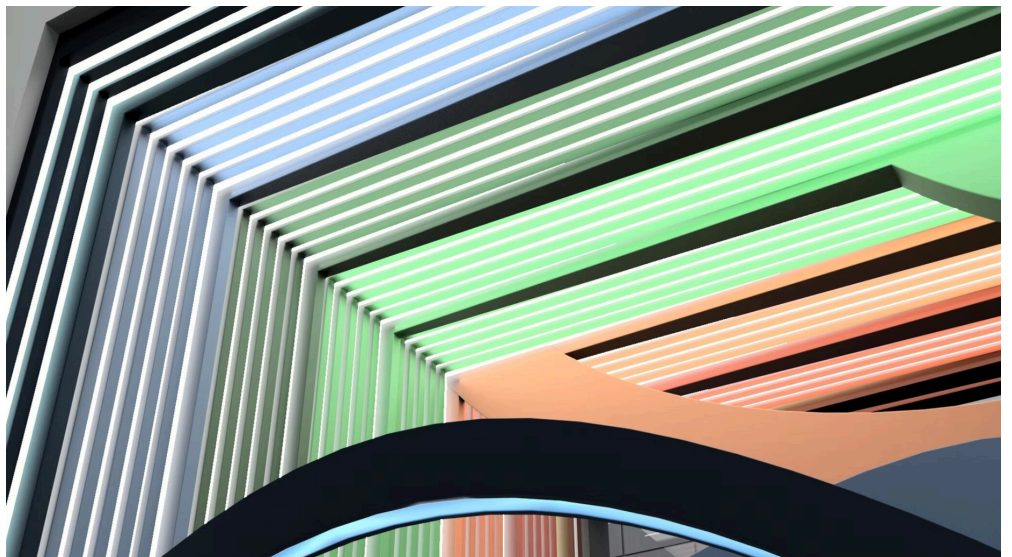


"Wrapped Necklace" is a mixed media project that used embroidery thread, wire, copper, and brass to create it. The incorporation of the thread creates different textures and contrasts with the metal. "Wrapped Necklace" plays with color to add interest to the piece.





“Storefront” is an organic architectural piece designed using 3ds Max that was inspired by three of Eero Aarnio's chair designs: Pastil, Ball, and Bubble. The window creates contrast using thick and thin forms. “Storefront” plays with light, shape, and color to create a fun environment. The window can attract customers and create interest using organic and geometric forms.



permission to grieve



Featured Honors Student: Tuesday Davis

Edited By: Charlie Moretta

Tuesday Davis is a third-year transfer student at the University of Iowa studying biology with a focus on genetics. From Mount Pleasant, Iowa, Tuesday aims to use his degree to help people with genetic conditions, as inspired by his father who has Barter syndrome type three.

Learn more:

<https://tuesdandy.wordpress.com>

Tuesday Davis' powerful short story *Permission to Grieve* examines the deeply personal nature of grief through the experience of Violet, a black woman navigating the aftermath of a miscarriage. The narrative challenges societal expectations about how quickly one should move on from loss, emphasizing there is no universal timeline for healing. Each person's experience with loss is unique, and there is no right way to heal. In the story, we see Violet's interactions with her husband, Julian; her therapist; and her work as a detective and see how each person in her life does not understand Violet's healing process. Davis wrote this short narrative while taking a creative writing class at Des Moines Area Community College. Miscarriages are often stigmatized in today's society, particularly for women of color. By centering the story on Violet, Davis not only brings visibility to the emotional toll of miscarriage but also challenges the societal expectation to grieve quietly or move on quickly.

The crimson ichor, once a clandestine river that coursed through its hidden channels, now revealed itself brazenly. It oozed with vigor, blood mixing with amniotic fluid, congregating and coagulating into a puddle on the tiles, leaving the bubblegum viscera to which it used to belong. Pain permeated her belly, aching as the possibility of motherhood departed. With it came the unmistakable aroma of metallic heartbreak, choked sobs penetrating the paper-thin walls of the townhouse. Hushed prayers and murmurs broke up the sobs and dark fingers trailed through her folds, shakily revealing what she feared.

Another loss.

"Violet, I want you to repeat after me. *I give myself permission to grieve.*"

A languid sigh and a roll of the eyes. Violet had things she needed to do, a case she needed to solve; this was wasting her time. Even if her captain made it mandatory, she wasn't here for those constable colleagues, nor herself; she was here for Julian and for him alone.

"*I give myself permission to grieve...* That's what you want to hear, isn't it? That I know it isn't my fault that these things just somehow happen? Well, I already know that. This isn't my first time, so tell me

something I don't know."

Her therapist clicked his annoying pen, writing in his stupid little notebook that she'd love to tear to shreds.

"We've been over this before, Violet. Your anger isn't going to let me help you process your—"

"I give myself permission to grieve. I don't need you to tell me what I need to give myself permission to do."

Violet huffed, her fiery rage failing to die down like a storm relenting, thunderous clouds never giving way to a calm sky. She crossed her arms over her chest, impatiently tapping her foot while she waited for his response. A moment passed... and another... and another.

The therapist leaned back in his chair, maintaining a calm composure despite Violet's previous outburst. He met her scowl with an unreadable expression, only serving to piss her off more. It didn't help that the pungent combination of too many disinfectants and an ungodly amount of lavender pervaded Violet's senses, causing her head to ache. Another groan.

"Fine... *I give myself permission to grieve.* Happy now?"

"That's much better, Violet. And can you tell me how you are taking care of yourself during this challenging time?"

Here he was again, this judgmental prick. Who did he think he was?

"I'm taking care of myself well."

"Do you care to elaborate?"

And he always asks stupid questions! At least Violet knew how to question someone, being she was a detective.

Cue that despised therapeutic silence. Violet wasn't above lying, yet would that help her here? If she lied, she wouldn't have to give any more personal details than she already had.

"I'm working and I'm eating. What else do you need to hear?"

Her fingers gripped at her knees, every second here felt like intrusive hell on Earth. Her frustration and discomfort intensified.

"How have you been coping? Have you been doing any of the methods we talked about like meditation or spending time with Julian?"

Cue that despised therapeutic silence. Violet wasn't above lying, yet would that help her here? If she lied, she wouldn't have to give any more personal details than she already had. She hated divulging her life to strangers, she hated the verdicts people would arrive at.

"I've been working... and I've been eating."

She stared holes into her therapist, hoping he would drop the topic and go back to spewing his didactic lessons on how to manage bereavement and guilt.

"I am very glad to know you're eating, but your working habits appear to be getting a bit out of hand, Violet. It's common for people dealing with grief to try and escape in their work, but oftentimes this doesn't help with the grieving process. However, meditation—"

"I don't want to meditate," Violet retorted.

"You know there's no reason to snap at me, Violet. I'm here to help you. Distraction cannot be a substitute for a salve. I understand your pain, and I hate to suggest it, but perhaps a temporary leave from the station could—"

Violet stood up, putting her trench coat on as she shot daggers at her therapist. She was fine and healthy. Violet didn't need someone breathing down her neck, telling her what she was doing wasn't conducive to her well-being—if anything, his essence of superiority was actively causing harm to her psyche. It was only fitting she gave him a piece of her mind once more before she left.

"You do not know me, so stop pretending you do. You don't understand my pain- you don't understand me. This is pointless and so are you."

Another loss.

An empty rocking horse, faded pink walls, and a vase full of forget-me-nots. Rather than going to her dedicated study or the precinct to do her work, Violet had been spending most of her time nowadays laboring in the drab room. Violet hung up her coat and made a beeline to some place to work. Unfortunately, she was quickly intercepted by a barreling Julian, dark skin colliding on dark skin. Boisterous laughter boomed throughout the house, her feet leaving the ground as she was shook about.

Violet yelped, prying at the hands around her waist. She couldn't suppress the giggles that resonated through her throat, it's not her fault it tickled. Eventually, Julian withdrew his hold on her, a goofy look written on his face.

"You're smiling again, I really think therapy is working."

"...It's just for work."

"You seem lighter... You know, I've been looking around, and I found a support group for people like us, parents that—"

Violet shook her head and unwrapped Julian's arms from around her waist, turning away from him. Her mood had been ruined again with just a few words. Everyone loved to remind her of her agony.

"I don't need a support group. I don't... want to talk to a bunch of strangers about it. Talking to one therapist a day is already overbearing."

"You're healing with it, though. And I want to help you more, somehow."

"I'm not 'healing', Julian. Listen to me. It's bad enough I have to go to that quack of a shrink and listen to him for hours, droning on about grief and loss and acting like I don't know what's going on in my own goddamn head. I don't need a whole circle of condescending self-helpers telling me how to grieve. I'm busy enough as it is."

"Violet..."

Julian lunged to hold her hand with a great amount of gentleness, gazing into her eyes and praying for her to listen.

She ripped her hand away from Julian, teeth grinding together. Violet rarely lashed out at him. The two were able to resolve issues quickly and quietly, but sometimes one or the other crosses an unknown boundary. It seems this was one of those times.

"I have to work."

"Working won't make it hurt any less, V. It can't take back the past. You won't even talk to me about it- you aren't the only one hurting..."

Julian's eyes brimmed with tears at the arguing. He wasn't an emotional man, but with everything happening around him, it was only natural for him to let down his guard.

"Maybe... maybe I should just leave for the night... since you need to be alone so bad."

Violet's expression changed into a somber one as she glanced at Julian, but he remained strong in his beliefs. He still loved her dearly, but space might be what they needed, even if it would be uncomfortable at first. Of course,

Violet didn't agree; even if she wanted her space, she wanted her husband too. Her heart throbbed at the mere proposition, but before she could respond, he spoke once more.

"I'll pack some of my things and be out of your hair soon enough."

Another loss.

Violet had stormed off. She needed to clear her head and focus on something concrete, something that was purely factual, no feelings involved. She wanted what she knew best: work.

The air was tense as she met her partner at the precinct, mascara smeared and eyes puffy. This operation was now more than just a mission; it was a lifeline, a way to anchor herself in a reality where facts and actions spoke louder than emotions.

The night swallowed the city as they drove toward the rendezvous point. Flickering lights cast shadows on the paved road and the familiar rush of anticipation and adrenaline took over. Violet's hands gripped the steering wheel as they approached their destination.

The vehicles eventually came to a stop, and the team disembarked, donning their gear with practiced efficiency. Her earlier disheveled appearance was now hidden beneath the armor of her profession and a mask of determination.

Shouts, footsteps, and the clattering of paraphernalia echoed in the vast space, dealers and customers alike scurrying away like mice who had just seen a cat as they breached the entrance. Her boots thumped in perfect synchronization with her partners as they paraded around the premises, alert and ready to act.

Violet's eyes fell on a frantic woman with track marks littering her arm. She had a bulbous and protruding stomach. She must have been in her second trimester at least. With the quick deductive skills Violet had built over the years, she could tell the marks were fresh. A low guttural growl emanated through the depths of her chest. Violet's vision blurred, feeling like a volcano about to erupt, spewing molten fury on everything in her path. She was used to seeing addicts—it was a natural part of her job—but to see an upcoming mother use so carelessly? Violet was enraged.

"How dare you?" she spat as she approached the distraught woman who was trying so hard to find an exit. Violet didn't care, she continued her rampage.

"You're just going to throw everything away like that? All for some stupid dope, for some stupid high?"

The woman refused to make eye contact, her pupils constricted and her hands jittery. She opened her mouth to speak, but only stutters came out.

"Whatever you're going through, whatever's driving you to do this, it doesn't matter. How could you even fathom hurting your child like this? You're a pathetic excuse of a mother."

Violet's eyes fell on a frantic woman with track marks littering her arm. She had a bulbous and protruding stomach. She must have been in her second trimester at least.

"Why does it matter to you?!" the woman snapped back suddenly, making Violet's partner's ears perk up.

"It matters for that child, you're throwing it all away for some foolish, temporary joy. You have no idea about the mothers who'd give anything—"

Her partner grabbed hold of Violet's arm and pulled her back.

"Detective Holmes, that's no way to be—"

"No! Let go— I'm not done! It isn't fair!" She broke free from her partner's grasp as her shoulders heaved with each ragged breath, her chest tight and constricted. The tears flowed freely down her cheeks, leaving wet trails in their wake and the room with the sound of her heart-wrenching sobs.

"I did everything right. Why does she get to have one?"

"Detective. That's no way to conduct yourself and you know that... Just go to the car. We'll talk about this later. Go take a break."

Following her partner's orders, Violet retreated to her car. Her hands landed on the wheel, as she tried to control her emotions. Violet's hands trailed down, falling into her lap as her salty tears continued to flow. She gasped for air, the sound of a desperate attempt to find solace in the tempest. Her sobs were not neat, not restrained, unlike her normal demeanor. Violet sighed, shakily speaking to herself, trying anything to simply calm down.

"I give myself permission to grieve."

swan's eulogy



Featured Honors Student: Annabelle Muñoz

Edited By: Niya Shaul

Annabelle Muñoz is a first-year student from the suburbs of Chicago and a published author with a poetry book, *Scribbles of A Madwoman*. When not writing poetry, Annabelle is busy editing work and running social media for InkLitMag. A political science major, Annabelle hopes to become a lawyer someday. Her favorite class she has taken at Iowa thus far is Environmental Science, and she can be found at Classics Club on Thursday evenings in Schaeffer Hall.

Annabelle Muñoz first had the idea for this poem when struck by the thought, "If I were to die right now, what would my acquaintances in life say about me?" Appealing to the eye with its unique formatting, "Swan's Eulogy" is meant to appear like an actual eulogy. Muñoz explains how the unique spacing separates lines that represent the words of the eulogy from the lines that share the "thoughts or remarks of the funeral attendees." Muñoz boldly explores themes of perception and purpose in this beautifully written piece.

A friend to all
close to none,
best keep your distance
lest be struck by her tongue.

Nativity deprived-
(she never adjusted quite right)
each step unsure
-though she put up a good fight.

Supposedly swans mate for life
-and she would've,
I'm sure,
Had the cob not fumbled
and the pen hadn't stirred.

But now it's too late,
her song forever unsung.
Shut the final chapter,
Goodbye
Miss. Swan.

podcast script



Featured Honors Student: Hannah Paul

Edited By: Nic Cazin

Hannah Paul is a first-year honors student at the University of Iowa from Germantown, Wisconsin, majoring in social work with a double minor in Spanish and political science. After graduation, Paul plans on going to law school to pursue human rights law.

Ever since she was young, Hannah Paul has always dreamed of pursuing law. In the spring of 2025, she took the course Social Justice and Social Welfare, which she then contracted for honors credit. Paul originally wanted to create a podcast focused on child welfare; however, at the call for mass deportations by President Donald Trump, she was inspired to change the focus of the podcast to immigration law and policies. "I always wanted to do international human rights law, but there's so much going on domestically. We can't help people across the world if we can't help ourselves," she said. This is just a small part of her podcast script with all statistics and policies being accurate as of April 2025. To listen to her entire podcast, check it out here: <https://youtu.be/baxROepBr6Q?si=nR5TrxmdxNRuHoJC>.

'They are poisoning the blood of our country.'

'No, they are not humans, they are not humans. They are animals.'

These are the words of our current president, Donald Trump, talking about what he calls the 'plague' of immigrants in America. Donald Trump views immigrants, especially those from Latin America, as an economic burden and a detriment to the stability of our country. Immigrants in Corona, Queens, a Latin enclave in New York City once filled with vibrant culture, music, and happy faces, is now desolate. People are scared to come out of their houses after Trump's demand for mass deportations runs rampant throughout major cities. The working-class population of Corona is at significant risk for economic crises as the deterrent policies of the Trump administration force immigrants to leave work and stay home, fearing for their safety. As social workers, it is our job to understand and advocate for the rights of marginalized communities.

In this section, I will dive into the complicated immigration policies and legal acts from Donald Trump's first presidential term that affect immigrants socially, economically, and emotionally. Undocumented immigrants are a large target for institutional violence and discrimination, and Donald Trump has detailed his intention to reinstate harsh immigration policies from his first term. By developing a better understanding of these policies, social workers and immigrant activists can use this knowledge to better understand the complex experiences of

immigrant communities in today's America.

In May of 2018, Jeff Sessions, who was Donald Trump's attorney general in his first presidency, announced that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is implementing a 'zero-tolerance policy' regarding illegal border crossing. The zero-tolerance policy intended to discourage and decrease illegal migration and reduce the 'burden' of processing asylum claims, which the Trump administration deemed to be majorly 'fraudulent.' The DOJ would then be required to prosecute 100 percent of the 'adult illegal aliens' apprehended at the border. Referring immigrants to immigration courts is not a new concept, however, it hasn't been enforced in the same way that Trump did in his first term. The zero-tolerance policy increased the amount of family separations by ICE; Richard Hudson stated during a Senate judiciary subcommittee hearing that from May 6, 2018, to May 18, 2018, 658 children were separated from their parents. Before Donald Trump implemented this policy, families were detained together or paroled into the country. Despite this policy not being implemented as of the beginning of March 2025, Trump has articulated his desire to reinstate every single rule that was implemented in his first administration, meaning that this policy is most likely to come back and have almost, if not the exact same, effects on immigrants and their families.

The second section of this podcast will detail how Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE, treats immigrants during the deportation process. Knowing how ICE works at all levels can help those studying and practicing social work understand how ICE interactions affect immigrants mentally, emotionally, and physically. About 90 percent of detained immigrants are placed in privately-run facilities, where the ACLU reports that most human rights violations occur. The most common documented abuses include medical and nutritional issues, which speaks to the poor conditions of detention centers that Congress members are trying to bring to light. However, despite the Biden administration's efforts to reduce these facilities, the number of private ICE detention centers has doubled in the last four years.

This brings me to an ICE facility I came across during my research: the Cibola County facility in Milan, New Mexico. Cibola is the only facility with a unit reserved exclusively for transgender women. While, in theory, this idea seems safe and progressive, isolating these women makes them easier targets for mistreatment. Trans Queer Pueblo, a Phoenix-based advocacy group, received a letter from 29 detainees in this pod detailing the abuses and negligence of ICE officials, including 'deficient medical care' that did not adequately provide treatment for those who are HIV-positive or disabled. According to the Phoenix New Times, Roxsana Hernandez Rodriguez, a transgender woman seeking asylum from Honduras, died from HIV-related complications and dehydration in 2018. Her autopsy also reported signs of blatant physical abuse from her time in ICE custody.

The centuries of oppression that still systematically affect marginalized communities in America today fuel our immigration system. As social workers, we need to acknowledge this when working with immigrants. In my next section, I will be talking about how we can work to understand our privileges and be aware of the structural racism that is affecting immigrants and these policies today. To do so, I wanted to find somewhere near Iowa City that helps immigrants in the Midwest, an area not often talked about, especially regarding Hispanic immigration. The Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice provides immigration legal services to the growing immigrant rural communities in Iowa. Rural communities already have limited access to adequate legal services, and representation for immigrant communities is in high demand. The Iowa MMJ is focused on fostering legal power amongst immigrant communities and educating them on their rights. They represent clients on cases regarding family-based immigration, DACA, green card applications, asylum, Violence Against Women Act benefits, and more. They have a total of seven regional clinics across the state that can reach a large audience that is in need.

A vital ethical concern that comes with working with immigrants is understanding that structural racism

favors a Eurocentric view of immigration, affecting the treatment of Asian, African, and Middle Eastern immigrants. American policies on immigrants are rooted in the history of colonization and the following centuries of systematic oppression that continues into the 21st century. Decades of misconceptions and disinformation affect how we perceive immigration in America. The idea of immigrants stealing jobs, increasing crime rates, entering illegally, or not paying taxes permeates mainstream media's rhetoric surrounding the impact of immigrants on America. As social workers, it is essential to understand how these mainstream portrayals affect our view on immigrants. We should analyze the way these prejudices affect our interactions with immigrant communities. Although we have dedicated a career to serving and understanding people, we matured in a country that favors the white experience and neglects the needs of marginalized communities and the biases that we were taught to be fact will always rule society.

Immigration and asylum are fundamental human rights. We need to stop blaming immigrants for our problems and for coming here the 'wrong way' because in reality we, America, are the ones who set that system up, not immigrants. The best way to fix this issue is with compassion and empathy, not blaming the people who did nothing wrong.

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when sugar and spice isn't all that nice



Featured Honors Student: Claire Opdahl

Edited By: Ashlyn Solinsky

Claire Opdahl is a first-year honors student at the University of Iowa. She is double majoring in psychology along with counseling and behavioral health services. A member of the Iowa Writers Living Learning Community, Claire loves writing essays and diving deeply into research topics. She aspires to be a clinical psychologist and is excited to write an honors thesis before she graduates.

It all started with Rhetoric. Claire Opdahl's assignment was to write a paper analyzing and responding to a rhetorical media piece. Drawn to pieces that combine media in creative ways, Claire selected a video essay produced by social media influencer Shaniyah entitled "Girl Math & Girl Power: The Conservative Politics of 'Girl World.'" "I love video essays as a format," Opdahl said. "It's a cool way of diving deeply into a topic, and it's more interesting than a plain essay." But she didn't select just any video essay — this one had a personal impact. "I consumed a lot of the 'I'm just a girl' stuff, but I never analyzed it critically. I thought it was just a fun little thing until I watched this video." The video breaks down the history and culture behind the "girl renaissance" of the late-2010s and describes some of the ways it can be harmful. The video essay is unique because it analyzes social media trends, a medium not usually found in academic pieces but which has a near-universal impact. "I feel like this piece highlights my best work," Opdahl said. Her rhetoric teacher, who decided to use the piece as an example for future students, agreed.

Between girl dinner, girl math, and the quintessential phrase of 'I'm just a girl,' in the last few years, the internet has become rife with all sorts of trends connecting back to an overarching theme of girlhood. It seems innocuous at first, simply ways for women to joke over their unorthodox food combinations or silly budgeting loopholes. Yet, this so-called 'girl renaissance' can have a dark underbelly. Critics have pointed out how these trends contribute to the linguistic infantilization of women, bioessentialism, and exclusion of many marginalized women. One such critic, Shaniya, dives into the topic in their YouTube video essay titled *"Girl Math & Girl Power: The Conservative Politics of 'Girl World.'"*

In their video, Shaniya first sets the stage by establishing how the girl renaissance came to be. Their clear knowledge on the topic builds a fellowship with their audience. By proving they're in the know, their viewers can see them not as an outsider looking in, but as someone who's actively consumed these trends. The audience doesn't feel alienated but rather invited in. Shaniya speaks on how 2023 became the 'year of the girl' with many trends

seeing their rise during that time. Propelled by media like the Barbie movie and Olivia Rodrigo's album *Guts*, young women and girls started feverishly creating content and popping the label of girl in front of it. They use "girl dinner" as a primary example. What started as a way to share odd meal combinations or snacks, slowly morphed into thinly veiled eating disorder content. Unorthodox food combinations like a waffle with marinara and cheese became videos of women using the girl dinner audio to show themselves eating things like two pieces of chocolate and a black coffee, a slice of cheese with grapes or a singular can of diet coke. The portion sizes in these videos growing smaller and smaller subtly posits that true femininity comes from fad diets and thinness, which isn't a radical embrace of girlhood at all, but rather just reinforcement of harmful rhetoric that women have already heard for decades. Through this example, Shaniya begins to paint a picture of how these trends are not as innocent as they appear to be. This creates a framework that the rest of the video essay can build upon.

Throughout the video, Shaniya references personal experiences as a black AFAB person which adds further context to their argument. They explain how growing up as a black girl shaped their life experiences and world view, which helps to build their credibility. Not only are they able to provide meaningful historical context, but their personal experience bolsters their argument. As the video continues, they make the claim that black women have been historically barred from experiencing the same girlhood that white women experience. They describe the girlhood white woman experience as one that consists of being innocent, protected, and cared for which they claim wasn't possible for little black girls whose girlhood experiences historically consisted of enslavement and segregation.

Videos consist of young women shrinking responsibilities or undermining their abilities under the guise of their girlhood. *Of course, I can't do math. I'm just a girl!* Although not stated explicitly, the subtext of these comments is infantilizing. They suggest a woman's femininity inherently gives her deficits, preventing her from having the same capabilities as a man. Shaniya makes the point that this is the same argument white men have made for decades to explain why their wives' place should be found in the home. There's perhaps an argument to be made for reclamation. But can one truly reclaim something that's only meant to bring them down?

In adding to their argument on how these trends are exclusionary, Shaniya also brings up trans women, who aren't given the same space to make jokes about girlhood that cis women are. She references Dylan Mulvaney, a trans social media star, who was ridiculed for releasing a song called *Days of Girlhood*. The same women happily joking about their "bad girl math" quickly ran to comment sections to accuse Dylan's song of stereotyping women. Shaniya argues it's a blatant double standard. One that subtly, but nonetheless, plays into bioessential arguments that cis women experience a truer version of girlhood, and, therefore, can make jokes that trans women can't. By pointing out this exclusion and hypocrisy, Shaniya begins poking holes in these trends as celebrations of girlhood. If they are, they're merely celebrations of a very narrow experience of girlhood—one that puts white, cis women at the epicenter.

However, Shaniya is not afraid to concede their point when the situation demands it. Very early on in the video, they bring up that many women see this "girl renaissance" as providing the opportunity to regain something that was stolen from them. Girlhood, for many, instead of a time of innocent, playful fun was a time of pain. Whether because of abuse or having adult responsibilities thrust upon them too young, many women long for a redo of their childhood. Which, in a way, is what these trends provide. Although not a huge part of their video essay, this concession is still arguably essential. It prevents Shaniya from the risk of alienating members of their audience who've thus far participated in these "girl renaissance" trends, especially for the reasons previously provided.

Even so, Shaniya urges that finding comfort in these trends isn't an adequate enough reason to blindly consume them. Whether the medium we consume is comforting to us or not, we must be able to view it through a critical lens. This call to action propels the rest of the video essay forward.

To summarize, even though this girl renaissance creates a place for women to reclaim a complicated girlhood, it's beyond doubt that it has been invaded by conservative and exclusionary politics. Whiteness as a default has reclaimed the landscape of girlhood, and trans women are denied at the door. Yet, these patterns shouldn't only be concerning for those being excluded. Women and girls as a whole are uncritically consuming content that diminishes us, our value, and our power in this world. Rather than subverting the rhetoric that enables subjugation, the "girl renaissance" seeks to uphold it. These trends compliment it, rearticulating oppressive ideology for new generations. Of course, I don't think Shaniya or I are here to sit atop moral high horses and tell other women the media they can and cannot consume. I've laughed at and made my fair share of 'I'm just a girl' jokes over the past few years. But I am here to urge us all to take a critical eye to the media we consume especially in a world where some of the rights once afforded to women are being called into question, I think it's more essential than ever for us to take a stand. We should take full ownership over ourselves and our autonomy. Our gender doesn't render us helpless or unable to fight back in the face of injustice. We're not "just girls." We're women.

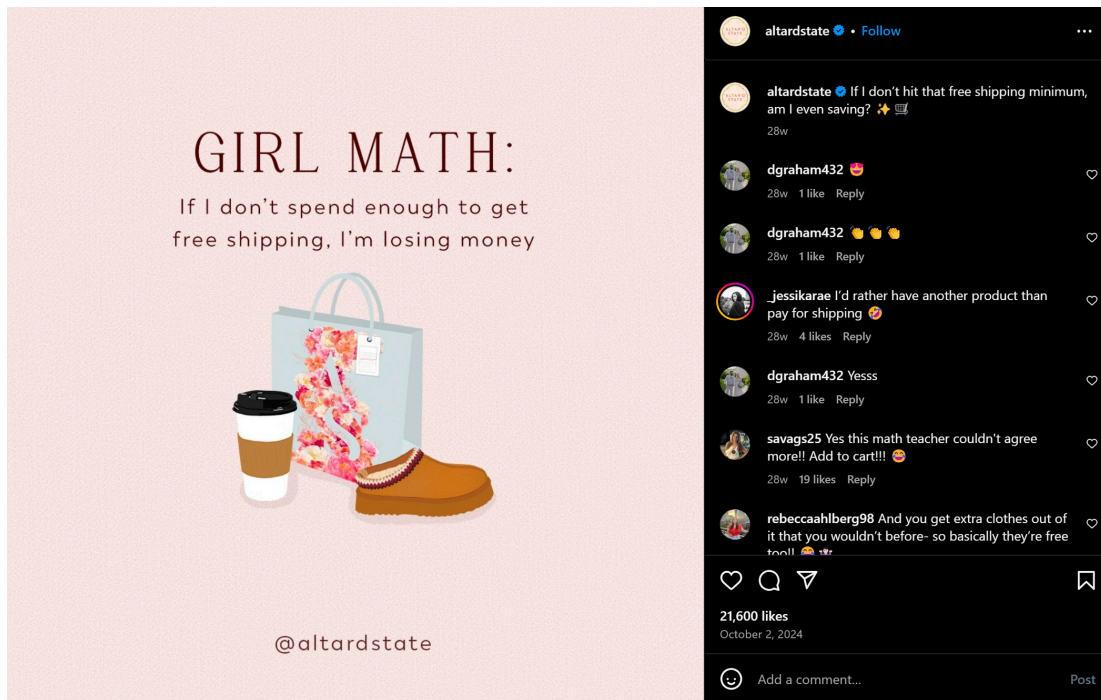


Photo 1: @lilybubbletea posted her girl dinner on Instagram: a beautifully crafted tomato rose. "Girl dinner" can refer to anything from crazy meal combinations to culinary masterpieces. Screenshotted by Ashlyn Solinsky.

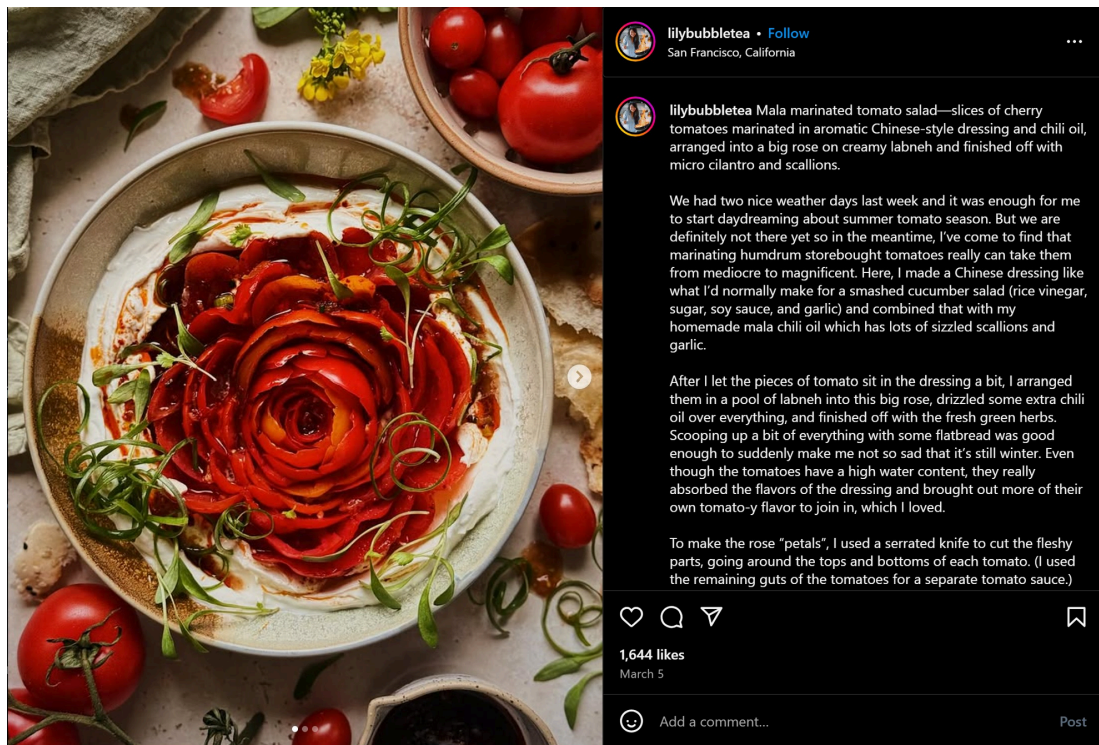


Photo 2: @altardstate posted her 'girl math' on Instagram. To some, this trend is a silly thing for women to bond over, but for others it perpetuates harmful stereotypes. Screenshotted by Ashlyn Solinsky.

meet the team



Abby Jager

Abby Jager is a first-year student at the University of Iowa studying journalism and mass communication with a minor in lifestyle medicine. Originally from Eddyville, Iowa, Abby currently competes on the Iowa women's rowing team.



LeeAnn Mills

LeeAnn Mills is a first-year student at the University of Iowa pursuing English and creative writing as a major. She is from Hamburg, Pennsylvania and after university she wishes to continue a career in the publishing industry.



Alexa Justice

Alexa Justice is a first-year student at majoring in screenwriting art & English/creative writing, while pursuing minors in rhetoric and persuasion along with Russian and Eastern European studies. Born in Russia but raised in Colorado, Alexa hopes to eventually write her own novels then adapt them into motion pictures.



Isaac Branch

Isaac Branch is a first-year pre-business student at the University of Iowa minoring in sport recreation management from Aurora, Colorado. Isaac does professional modeling for The Block Agency in the summer.



Ava Neumaier

Ava Neumaier is a second-year University of Iowa student majoring in English and creative writing on the publishing track, with a minor in communications. From New York, Ava plans to pursue a career in the arts.



Lauren Wessling

Lauren Wessling is a first-year student from Johnston, Iowa. She is majoring in English and hopes to attend law school after graduation.



Charlie Moretta

Charlie Moretta is a second-year finance student minoring in Spanish at the University of Iowa. From Northbrook, Illinois, Charlie enjoys lifting and is vice president of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity.



Niya Shaul

Niya Shaul is a first-year student from Plymouth, Minnesota. She is currently studying English and aspires to use her love of writing in the law field someday.



Nic Cazin

Nic Cazin is a first-year student at the University of Iowa double majoring in English and creative writing and ancient civilizations with a minor in French. From Wake Forest, North Carolina, Nic is planning on studying abroad in three different countries.



Ashlyn Solinsky

Ashlyn Solinsky is a first-year English and creative writing major at the University of Iowa. She grew up in rural Wisconsin and she is currently working on her fourth publication.



Holly Blosser Yoder

Holly serves as the advisor to the student editors and writers who produce the Honors Newsletter, Alumni Connection and many articles on the program blog. A writer with an interest in history and culture. Holly is the author of *The Same Spirit: History of Iowa-Nebraska Mennonites*.

