
The Dual Diploma Times

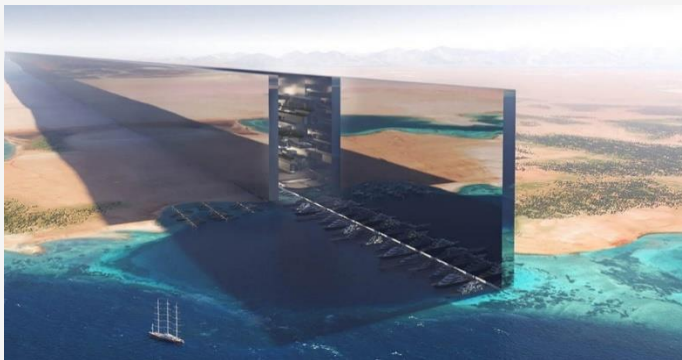
Written by Students Around the World

January 2025

THE LINE: a revolution in civilization, or an evident lie?

By Félix Kien

ABU DHABI - THE LINE is a project started by NEOM project and Mohamad Bin Salman, Prince of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is part of a Saudi rebrand plan: this plan is supposed to boost local economy, by bringing investors and tourists. THE LINE is a city that would span over 170 kilometres (105 miles) across the Saudi Arabian desert in a straight line of 500 meters (545 yards) long and 200 meters (220 yards) wide. The city would welcome 9 million people.



But how would you move into a so long city? Well, according to NEOM official website, THE LINE's residents would "have access to all daily essentials within a five-minute walk, in addition to high-speed rail – with an end-to-end transit of 20 minutes". Also, the city would be self-sustainable and renewable energy powered.

This project seems to be revolutionary and promising. But if we dig down just a little bit, we find some doubts. The density of population would be 265,000 people

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per km² which would be 6 times more than the density of Manilla, the densest city in the world. The promises of a superfast train seem unfulfillable. The train would have at least 86 stations to be relatively reachable by every citizen, which would considerably slow down the train and its maximum speed between stops.

In addition to the practically unrealizable promises, some serious problems emerge. The construction of such a city would involve large land movements, huge infrastructures, colossal extraction of materials, lots of vehicles, energy, waste and water. This would result in a large amount of CO₂ and the release of chemicals in the wild. While Saudi Arabia is involved in serious offenses to Human Rights such as the violation of migrant's rights, women's and girl's rights and the none respect of freedom of expressions, we are right to question the veracity of their claims.

All of this tied up together makes this project very questionable. After the announcement of THE LINE many projects have emerged in the same region, such as THE LINE: TROJENA, a futurist ski station, MAGNA, a luxury seaside resort, SINDALAH, an island-hotel which has already been built and welcomed its first visitors, OXAGON an industrial hexagonal shaped city and much more. After all, all of those projects had been made more to bring investors and to attract wide attention to Saudi Arabia than to serve any other interests.

Are algorithms shaping our democracies?

By Laia Condes Martí



MADRID - In recent years, there has been a societal shift in the incorporation of new technologies in our daily lives. From healthcare to education and communications, these new systems have become a part of our routine, including in the political area. Before the Internet and TV, almost everyone tried to be informed through physical newspapers. Now, our tradition of ink has been

lost, being replaced by algorithms.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines an algorithm as "a step-by-step procedure for solving a problem or accomplishing some end," and can be applied to anything from a cooking recipe to a complex facial recognition system. Nonetheless, there is a higher chance of hearing this word in

the context of social media. Algorithms are a key element in the development of the worldwide known social media platforms, like TikTok, Instagram, or X (formerly Twitter). The algorithm, tailored for each platform, recommends new content to each user based on their interactions on the platform, with the goal of matching the taste of the user. Nonetheless, how can these mere recommendations shape democracy?

In the article "Algorithms, Manipulation and Democracy" by Tomas Christiano, we are presented with two key concepts of algorithmic manipulation. The first, hypernudging, is a form of nudging that continuously reshapes taking into account the data that the algorithm has obtained from you and other users. Many algorithms hypernudge the users, like Google Maps, where the route changes continuously based on the errors that they make, or Amazon's recommendation system, which recommends products based on what others have bought alongside the product. After this, the term "microtargeting" appears, which is a form of hypernudging focused on a specific public with the goal of moving them to act or feel a certain way. Both of these techniques can be highly manipulative in the wrong hands. And until October of 2022, not many algorithms had already been using these techniques, or at least it was not obvious nor extremely harmful.

But then, Elon Musk entered the view. With his acquisition of Twitter, many changes were made to its main algorithm, tailoring it to his wishes and not for the good of the platform. His reshaping of Twitter has shown the potential dangers of algorithmic manipulation. One of his main changes to Twitter's algorithm is the expansion of the reach of Musk's tweets. That in itself is not a worrying problem, but because he shares an extremely high amount of misinformation, it can become a threat to democracy. If all voices do not count the same, if what matters is who has a bigger reach or how many billions of dollars can you pay, the democracy that we see through social media turns into an oligarchy.

It is ironic, though, that Elon Musk himself stated before buying Twitter that "free speech is essential to a functioning democracy". But I can just wonder, is it free speech when the one with the most money to buy an online platform can adjust what others see to his will?

To the same effect, there is a real problem with the propagation of fake news and the creation of echo chambers, and the algorithms in social media are the main cause of these. Simply, the goal of platforms like Twitter is to gain the most engagement so more users use it, and while they make money from advertisements, you are being recommended posts that match your interests. Fake news is tricky: there are high chances of not realizing that the information of a tweet is fake or misleading. To understand the relationship between fake news and democracy, it is necessary to acknowledge that a successful democratic process depends on the education of the population. Furthermore, the recommendation of posts that match your taste creates an echo chamber, which diminishes one's critical thinking abilities as there are no counter points to one's thoughts, but only positive feedback that pushes individuals to radicalization. As I said before, quality of knowledge and critical thinking are some of the principles of democracy.

My biggest concern is: What can we do to change this situation? The condition of democracy online is a mere reflection of its situation in democracies across the world. Anti-intellectualism,

fake news, and echo chambers not only affect online democracy, but are a significant harm to the democracies of the western world. All threats to knowledge and communications are threats to democracy, after all. Democracy can only be built and held together by those who understand its fragility, yet value its importance in keeping a world that is equal for everybody. Democracy is our best tool for respect, tolerance and dignity, and the dangers that threaten its stability only cause harm to those whose voices are not heard.

Should school uniforms be required?

By Zineb Boumala

FRANCE - In today's era, school systems have evolved and adapted themselves to the technology that became more and more present around us. But what if we went back in time and added some old-school rules? Uniforms have been talked about a lot recently. Many schools are thinking about getting uniforms for their students, but the numerous opinions about those are diverse, even among students and of course, teachers. So, in this article, we'll discover more about the pros and cons of getting a uniform to go to school, so that you can get a solid overview and form an opinion of your own after discovering all the sides of this trendy topic.



Back in time, school uniforms were often used in Catholic and private schools (and mostly boarding schools would use those). Even today, in movies, uniforms are worn to represent prestigious establishments with students of a certain social class. It is normal that students of this generation might feel wary of this new restriction as they are used to having a certain freedom of expression through what they wear. They want to represent who they are, not the institution they attend.

Let's start with the pros of having a uniform. Studies and numbers have shown that uniforms caused less accidents due to hiding weapons and drugs. One school that participated in this study saw a 63 % drop in police reports, 12% fewer firearm-related incidents and 15% fewer drug-related incidents than schools without uniforms. The study found that with baggy outfits, students could hide weapons and other things more easily.

Another advantage of using uniforms is the savings in time and money. Although uniforms cost money, they are more affordable than the many pieces of clothing that come with trends, and which can put pressure on pupils who feel the need to keep up with the latest fashion trends and for those who don't have the money to do so. For many, having to choose outfits for the week can take up a lot of time, but having an already decided outfit can save that time and "free" students from that pressure.

Consequently, uniforms reduce peer pressure and bullying. It is a well-known fact that we are most likely to socialize with people who kind of look like us (which creates a divided environment with separated groups), so most of us won't talk to other classmates and we can (unconsciously) create an opinion of them based on their looks. But wearing a uniform can bring a sense of belonging to everyone and a feeling of being socially accepted, as we all look alike. Competition between students over clothing choices and the teasing of those who are dressed in less expensive or less fashionable outfits can be eliminated.



Now more specifically in class, wearing uniforms is believed to make students more focused and disciplined, and have better test results. Since they are no longer focused on their clothes and those of others, they spend less time worrying about their opinions or what to wear, they gain a much more peaceful mind to then be fully focused on their studies. In fact, a study examined test score results from about 39 countries (which included America and Canada) to show the overall effect of uniforms. The researchers found that in countries where students wear school uniforms, the students listen significantly more, noise levels remain low and classes start on time. Other studies find that students need discipline from a young age and uniforms are the best way to introduce it.

Now, what are the cons of wearing uniforms? Uniforms can restrict freedom of expression through clothing, which is a big part of the teenage experience, which many find fundamental. Some don't think that their clothes are what separates them from one another and that bullying can still remain present.

Surprisingly, that change can also cause bullying, but between other schools. Because if some schools have their students wear uniforms and some don't, it can make students feel much more

restricted and “punished”, therefore they can start to compare themselves and some kind of competition may appear.

Last but not least, some teachers feel like it can create discomfort and a certain distance between them and their students. The personality of the pupils doesn’t show, it may feel like there is a stricter framework and the students can’t express themselves as they wish (because they may feel “inferior” or too separated from their teacher.

What are the solutions? Schools who want to install uniforms can ask their students for ways to make them more comfortable so that this new norm doesn’t come off as a bad experience. Many schools have found solutions this way. Students want to get rid of the usual classy uniform and opt for uniforms that include sweatshirts and clothes in which they feel comfortable. For girls who would feel uncomfortable with the usual “skirt” included in the feminine uniform, they can choose to wear trousers. That system is actually being more and more used everywhere. Not only that, students could vote for uniform designs to feel more involved, and choose designs with simple colors and without the school logo branded across their clothing. Lastly, to remove that kind of distance between students and teachers, uniforms could also be worn by the adults in the school.

How does technology affect studies?

By Gonzalo Francisco García

SEVILLE - One of the biggest problems affecting our society today is the excessive use of technology by young people. Mobile devices, computers and tablets have become part of the personal lives of teenagers, and even some adults. In addition to being an entertainment tool, technology can also be used for educational purposes or to facilitate accessibility in education.

Some countries, such as Spain are already regulating in a large part of its autonomous communities, the use of mobile devices during school hours. In the aforementioned country, specifically in the community of Andalusia, its *Instruction of December 4, 2023 of the Vice-Ministry of Educational Development and Vocational Training* dictates that the use of mobile phones in Primary and Secondary Education centers is prohibited, except for health reasons or pedagogical therapies.

More importantly, each teenager should understand what the use of the devices brings to them, and also the disadvantages that they present. A slide presentation is more dynamic for students than using textbooks. When doing a written job, it is much more comfortable to do it on a computer than on paper, since in most cases, people write more quickly using a keyboard than with a pen. There is a great improvement in accessibility to education for people with disabilities that prevent them from using the same methods as other students. Many students living with a disability have become able to complete the same syllabus as students their other classmates, only by changing the writing method, replacing paper and pen with computers or tablets.



However, there is a lack of interest that technology can create, since nowadays it is very normal for the teacher to publish the material on Google Classroom or an equivalent, which causes students to not pay attention in class or take notes, since once at home they can access the content through any device. Another problem is that it reduces attention levels to very low levels, as shown by a study by the eLearning Innovation Center (eLinC) of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), which says that the attention span has been reduced by 4 seconds in less than 15 years. A situation in which we can see this attention deficit is when in a class in which you are working with devices, a teacher tries to give a warning or give clarification regarding a piece of work and most of the students do not understand, since the screens to a certain extent "absorb" your attention span. This is due to the production of hormones such as dopamine. Finally, overreliance on technology reduces students' manual skills, which makes their handwriting or writing speed worse, as they become accustomed to typing on a keyboard.

The irresponsible use of devices at early ages too often causes addiction and social isolation. The light emitted by screens is highly harmful to our eye health, and, in case the technology generates addiction, it can make you stop doing sports, which is highly dangerous for your health and can cause problems such as obesity. Finally, on social networks, teenagers are exposed to constant danger, as they can be subjected to both cyberbullying and other very serious cybersecurity problems (for example grooming or scams).

How do we deal with loneliness?

By Diana Rios Galvan

BURGOS - In our lives, we can feel too many emotions like happiness or fear, but there are some feelings that we don't talk about. Those feelings are more common than we think, and if we don't know how to understand them, we do not know how to deal with them.

Some people would define loneliness as the moment when we can think peacefully or as isolation. I'd rather define loneliness as an emptiness or as an incomprehension that is felt at a certain instant but can appear at any moment in our lives.



Loneliness can affect people in many ways that depend on the person's personality and how the loneliness manifests itself. If it is caused by problems in the social environment, it can make people more mature or can make them feel unprotected. However, if it is the person who looks for the feeling, it can make them feel peaceful or calm. In many cases, loneliness is felt during adolescence, where we tend to separate from our family, and get closer

to our friends so when we arrive home, we can feel alone.

Sometimes we are in a social environment that doesn't talk about loneliness enough or we just ignore it. Therefore, people think that this feeling cannot be expressed and that they need to deal with it alone, which is completely untrue. There are different ways to make you feel better, like reading that can distract your mind in healthy ways, being a volunteer to help others or just talking about it with your friends.

Do we really value MENTAL HEALTH?

By Lucía Del Río Velado

SPAIN - Mental health is a very known topic, but there are still people who have to face mental health issues. These kinds of issues are mostly found in young people, who are stressed because of their studies, worried about their future, or just overwhelmed because of what growing up implies.

Mental health is a delicate topic, and most of the time it is classified as a taboo topic; but it is essential that we make people aware of this topic, so that we learn how to avoid and manage them. This is why schools are always so interested in talking about this topic. They show and teach students about these issues, and how to give them the importance they need to be given.



It is true that some people consider these mental health problems as taboo, or exaggeration. For individuals who suffer these issues, it is very difficult to express how they feel, as they feel alone and scared of telling others about their problems. Luckily, there are organizations and projects that are focused on this topic, helping people who suffer from these problems talk about how they feel and helping them solve their concerns.

Why is philosophy so important, even in today's world?

By Giogia Coldani

TREVISIO - Philosophy is and has always been very important for human history, since the age of Ancient Greece, when it was born. It was once considered the “mother of all sciences”, and has shaped the world in which we live today. Without it we wouldn't have, for example, such a thing as a scientific method, which is what we use every day to investigate our reality, nor would we have democracy, justice, human rights, psychology, not even such a thing as AI, which many of us might use on a daily basis.

But, first things first, what is philosophy actually? Philosophy is “*the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.*” or at least this is what the Oxford English Language Dictionary says. In simplest terms is a study of knowledge itself: the word comes from the ancient Greek *philein* (love) and *sophia* (knowledge) and is basically the science which tries to go beyond what we know and what we can discover through our senses and all the tools we have that can only probe the physical world.

It is the science which tries to give answers to the questions humanity has been asking itself for millennia: *Who am I? Why am I here? Is there a God?* and so on and so forth.



In an age in which we are all so used to having data for everything, studying something so abstract might seem crazy, but I think that it is necessary for our development as a society: philosophy pushes you to ask yourself questions, and therefore to try and find answers. What would society become if no one asked themselves questions? Nothing but a uniformed mass of people running around, not evolving, just executing orders and trying to survive the day: no scientific progress, no morals, no creativity, no freedom, no purpose.

Pretty depressing, isn't it? Well, do not worry: philosophy is the subproduct of curiosity and by nature the human mind is full of it.

But how does this involve us students? As students, we are the future of the world and I think we should all study a bit of philosophy while in high school. It not only helps develop critical thinking skills, but also gives you tools to navigate the world around you providing you with a framework

for ethical decisions, self-understanding, future learning and finally empathy and open-mindedness.

Many students feel like their time could go to a better use, maybe to something more *concrete*, as philosophy is often perceived as a lot of talk but no actual substance. However, it has been proven to improve decision making, problem solving and communication skills. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly relevant for the job market, given that thanks to the technology now available the only things humans can offer today is their own humanity, and their ability to think critically and ethically, all skills philosophy helps develop.

As Einstein wrote in his essay "*On Education*" in 1931, "The value of [...] education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think." This is why I think philosophy, paired with more concrete skills, is necessary to navigate the complexities of modern life.

The Dangers of Vaping for Teenagers

By Julie Gallas

PARIS - Over the past decade, vaping has surged in popularity among teenagers, with countless fruity and candy-like flavors, sleek designs, and the misconception that it's a healthier alternative to smoking. The advertising behind these products often paints a picture of fun and freedom, suggesting that vaping is a safer option than traditional cigarettes. However, as the trend grows, it's crucial for young people to fully understand the risks associated with vaping and the dangers it poses to their health.

The idea of vaping first caught on because it seemed like a safer and more modern alternative to smoking cigarettes. The market offers a wide variety of flavored liquids, from tropical fruit blends to dessert flavors like cookies and cream. The appeal to younger individuals is obvious: it's fun, it's fashionable, and it doesn't seem as harmful as traditional smoking. For many teens, the allure of trying something new or fitting in with their peers is enough to give



vaping a try. Moreover, the lack of smoke and the absence of the burning smell often associated with cigarettes make it seem less dangerous. In addition to this, vaping has become increasingly accessible. Many online stores allow users to purchase e-cigarettes and e-liquids, and some shops don't even ask for age verification. Despite regulations, underage teens can often get their hands on vaping products without much effort. This ease of access, combined with misleading

advertising, makes it all too easy for teens to experiment with vaping. With an increasingly younger demographic attracted to the colorful packaging and bold claims, the question arises: Is vaping really the "safe" alternative it's made out to be?

One of the biggest problems with vaping is the lack of information about its long-term effects. While smoking has been studied extensively and its risks are well-documented, vaping is still a relatively new phenomenon and comprehensive studies on the long-term effects are still ongoing. Most people who vape don't realize that the chemicals inhaled from e-cigarettes have yet to be fully studied, meaning we don't know the full extent of the damage they can cause. What we do know, however, is that the vaporized liquids contain a variety of chemicals, including nicotine, propylene glycol, and various flavoring agents, some of which have been linked to respiratory and cardiovascular problems. The long-term risks remain uncertain, but there is growing concern that the habit could lead to severe health complications down the line.

While vaping doesn't produce the same visible risks as smoking, it can still cause significant harm to the body. One of the most serious dangers is addiction. Nicotine, the highly addictive substance found in many e-cigarettes, can cause dependence, particularly in teenagers whose brains are still developing. Addiction to nicotine can affect cognitive function and mental health, making it harder to concentrate or deal with stress. Additionally, the chemicals found in e-liquids can damage the lungs and heart. Vaping has been linked to respiratory problems, such as inflammation of the airways, coughing, and shortness of breath. Long-term use could lead to chronic lung diseases, such as asthma or even chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Studies have also shown that vaping increases heart rate and blood pressure, which puts additional strain on the cardiovascular system, increasing the risk of heart disease.

To conclude, while vaping may seem like a harmless trend, it's essential to recognize the risks associated with it. The addiction to nicotine, the damage to the lungs and heart, and the potential mental health impacts are just some of the dangers that come with vaping. Teens who try vaping may find it hard to stop, and what seems like a fun experiment can quickly turn into a long-term health problem.

What does the word fashion really mean?

By Alejandra Chirinos

SPAIN - Nowadays, people have different kinds of styles, some of them are more common and others are stranger to see in daily life. Some people describe fashion as a "distraction for the real things that matter" and they state that it is "not beneficent for human development."

When I walk through the streets, I like to stare at unknown people and try to decipher their personality. If they are wearing light colors, they are considered more likely to be outgoing and positive about the world. Meanwhile, people who wear dark clothes are considered to be introverted. But this is not true at all, and that's a part of fashion that caught my attention from

an early age, because some things can mean the opposite and it's still the same. For example, dressing with dark clothes can also project elegance, independence and internal strength.



The world of fashion is a field that has grown over the years, but experts believe that it originated from the 15th century. When people think about fashion, the first thing that comes to mind is expensive clothes that can be very elegant but at the same time very uncomfortable. When I think about it,

what comes to mind are clothes that make me feel comfortable, that give me the strength and self-security that I need in my day. Fashion is not just models wearing very expensive brands that only rich people can afford, it's about the confidence you feel in clothing that makes you feel comfortable.

However, there are some people who believe that fashion affords us a different social status because someone can spend their money on high-cost brands while others prefer to pay less money for a lower quality. But, in my opinion, this does not just happen in this field. For example, there will always be people who prefer more expensive cars, houses or restaurants.

Another important critique points to how since the Industrial Revolution, the textile industry has been negatively impacting the environment. Luckily, now there are a lot of adults and teenagers waiting for the opportunity to show their creativity and invest in ideas of new and original suits, with a mindset focused on creating sustainable and eco-friendly clothing. There are a lot of magazines such as Vogue or Vanity fair that support these ecological efforts and make articles about it to increase social consciousness and to make a better world.

In the past, women were required to have a "perfect body" to be able to wear some dresses. Until the 20th century, there was not plus size for women who had different bodies from what society expected. The addition of the plus size motivated many clothing designers to incorporate a new size where many women with different figures can feel comfortable and confident. Nowadays, it's more common to see in the shops more sizes than what there used to be. Some brands such as Victoria's Secret, who has been highly criticised because of their models, has begun to include models with plus sizes in their catwalks.

Trend after trend, we are witnessing some fantastic changes in the world of fashion.

How do American celebrities shape the image of modern power?

By Yasmine Diani

RHABAT - American celebrities have played a central role in global culture for decades, shaping trends and behaviors in everything from music to film, fashion to politics. The phenomenon of celebrity is no longer limited to a simple public recognition of a personality in the field of entertainment; it is now a form of power. This power, immense and global, is not without controversy, quite the contrary. Every gesture, every statement of an American celebrity is scrutinized, analyzed and often amplified on a global scale. The resulting polemics raise profound questions about social expectations of these public figures, their responsibility and the limits of their influence. Recent scandals involving celebrities such as P. Diddy or Beyoncé perfectly illustrate the duality of this power: at once revered and criticized.



Undoubtedly, American celebrities have a global influence. Their powers of influence extend beyond the area in which they excel: music, film, or sport into social and political issues. For example, music icons like Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince and Jay-Z have been vectors of social and cultural movements. More recently, celebrities like Kim Kardashian and Ariana Grande have used their fame to launch entrepreneurial activities, shaping sectors such as fashion, beauty and even politics. The phenomenon has accelerated with the rise of social networks: a tweet, an Instagram post or a TikTok video can now transform a celebrity into a viral phenomenon, capable of reaching millions, or billions of people around the world in a few hours. American celebrities, in that sense, represent drivers of change within the current modern world regarding individual behavioral changes to public policy.

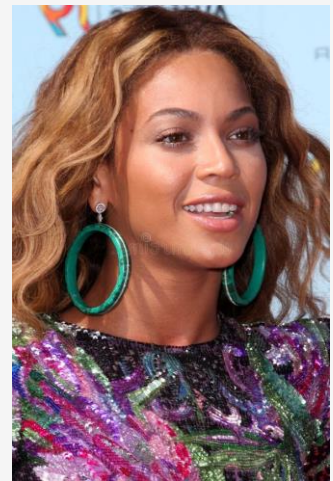
This power and influence are concurrently sources of regular controversy. Celebrities, due to visibility and status, are ever outside of the spotlight. Every mistake, every misstep, every statement that can be interpreted as controversial, quickly turns into a worldwide topic of discussion. Celebrity is increasingly connected with political and social issues, an element that came into sharp focus with personalities such as P. Diddy and Beyoncé.



Sean Combs, fashionably known as P. Diddy, is probably one of the most iconic figures within the music industry. From Hip-hop Empire, Producer, Rapper, to Entrepreneur, he has built an impressive career and is now one of the most powerful figures in the entertainment world. Yet, his career has not been devoid of controversy. Among the most shocking is the harassment case that disfigured its image in the 2000s. Several women, including young artists and employees of her label, accused Combs of abuse of power and inappropriate behavior. The charges ranged from harassment, psychological pressure to even physical abuse. Although the artist was never convicted by law of these acts, media reporting on those cases underlined some very suspicious practices in the music business where it often appears that producers and people in commanding positions enjoy total impunity.

This case has sparked a popular debate on how celebrities, by virtue of their status and power, seem to go scot-free at times. This "impunity of celebrities" aspect is even more alarming in a context where the culture of harassment and abuse of power in the entertainment industry has been highlighted through the #MeToo movement. The Combs case not only affected his image; it also exacerbated the issue of celebrity influence and responsibility for their behavior. While some people continued to support the artist, highlighting his success and contributions to musical culture, others see these accusations as a stark example of possible industry abuses.

Another example is Beyoncé Gisselle Knowles, whose influence far exceeds the musical world: she is recognized not only for her talent as an artist but also for her involvement in both politics and social causes. Through her platform, Knowles has tackled very profound issues regarding race, feminism, and social justice. Yet these positions have not been without consequences. In 2016, her critically acclaimed album *Lemonade* attracted controversial reactions, particularly due to its deeply political themes. The song "Formation," released a few months before the release of the album, was particularly controversial. Nevertheless, she produced her art proudly claiming the black cultural heritage of Knowles, as a metaphor of her social and racial struggles, including the police violence against African-Americans. This song has divided public opinion. Many fans praised the move, saying that Knowles was putting her reputation to good use by denouncing racial injustice and praising African-American culture. However, some have seen this as an act of excessive politicization, a way for the artist to play with controversial symbols and polarize her audience.



This controversy reached its peak in 2018, when Knowles performed at the Coachella Festival. The star made headlines paying tribute to black culture, including through her choreography, costumes and visual references to African-American roots. This has provoked a wave of criticism, mainly from conservative groups, who have accused Knowles of wanting to incite racial division. Calls for a boycott of her concerts have been made. Yet, instead of being weakened, the singer has managed to use this controversy in her favor, consolidating her image as an icon of resilience and

activism. Her influence has grown and she has become a model of success and resilience for many marginalized women and communities around the world.

The controversies surrounding Combs and Beyoncé reveal the underlying tensions of modern fame. American celebrities, while symbols of success, are also divisive figures. Their influence is multidimensional, a mixture of art, politics, and social commitment. But this influence is also fragile, because it can be questioned by public opinions that are never so homogenous. This phenomenon raises complex questions about celebrity accountability. Should we expect them to be irrefutable models, or does their status imply greater freedom of expression and reflection? Is their power not found in their capacity to destabilize, provoke, and shock, just like in their ability to inspire?

What can be seen from the polemics between figures like Combs and Knowles is, finally, that celebrity is far from being only an expression of talent or beauty; celebrity has become an instrument of power, carrying messages, values, and sometimes conflicts. It is through their actions and positions that these celebrities are proving how their influence is much more than superficial. Beyond an entertainer, their role has come to include social, political, and cultural actors of contemporary debate, for better or worse. This dynamic makes polemics inevitable, but they only contribute to its power of attraction by feeding the public's fascination and underlining the complex issues connected with their status.

REVIEWS

The Dead Poet's Society

By Ariadna González

MATARO - This movie follows the story of a group of teenage boys who study in a private school. They all are expected to go to the best universities and become successful in their jobs, everyone has high expectations about their futures. The school year begins and a new English teacher, who used to be a student at that same school, starts to work there. He will show to his students a club that existed years ago, The Dead Poets society. The students will discover a new world through this club and poetry, this will make them question their lives and how they're living them. This film talks about "carpe diem" and makes you think about topics such as freedom and how to think for yourself.

More than just a movie

When watching this film, you're not only going to see a movie, at the end you may feel like a different person or at least you're left with questions about how you are living your life. This film talks about really deep topics, for example, it talks about freedom and how, as teenagers, our opinions aren't always listened to by adults. How we are mistreated sometimes just because of our young age, when we all know that just because we are not adults it doesn't mean that sometimes we know what's best for us, or at least we form our own opinions and they must be listened to.

This connects with another of the main topics that talks about how, sometimes, parents or adults force you to live a life that isn't what you want but what you're expected to be. It criticizes how society has standards about what success means, and how even though you may be happy looking through society's eyes you're a failure, that's one of the many messages this beautiful movie wants to express.

"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion." - Professor Keating (N. H. Kleinbaum)

This quote is just an example of the knowledge the professor tries to show his students. During the film, you're going to be able to hear a lot of quotes that may be familiar. As the title of the film says, it is mostly about poetry. I know it may sound boring, but poetry, just like the quote says, it's one of the most common ways humans express their feelings and their thoughts and the movie uses it to express the message.

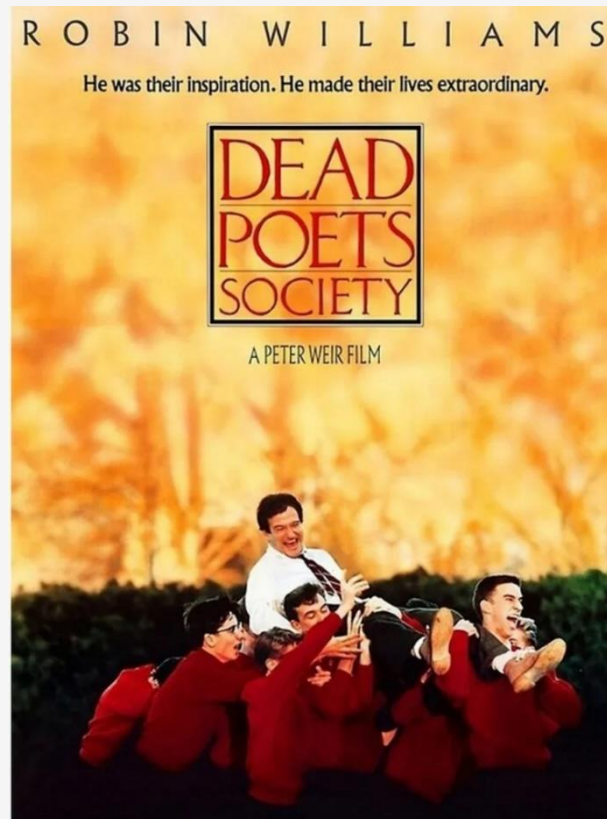
The characters

In this film, we can see that all the characters have some sort of a meaning, they're allegories of the different topics the movie wants to talk about. They're really relatable and some of the situations they go through are going to make you realise how maybe you're not doing what you truly want to do with your life, or how you're not alone when feeling a certain way.

Professor Keating is one of the protagonists, and it's truly an inspiration. A lot of the things he says are inspirational and make you question how to do things in your own life. One of the most important things he makes you think about is, when you do something, is it because you want to or because everyone else is doing it? This character is really interesting and intelligent, and definitely a key point during the movie.

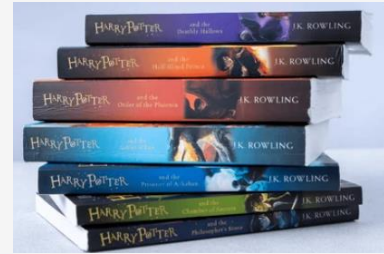
My recommendation

This movie is a must to watch. For sure it isn't perfect, for example when watching it you'll realize that it is an old movie. Topics such as the school rules are antiquated and you can see that in, for example, the school methods and the way they punished the students. But it's true that there are more good aspects than bad ones, as said, this movie can make you feel connected with the characters and relate to their stories, apart from making you meditate about topics of life. If you like films that left you thinking but are also dynamic and interesting to watch, The Dead Poets Society is for you.



Book to Film Comparison: The Harry Potter Series

By Sofia Pinto



BARCELONA - The first Harry Potter movie (2001) is about a kid, Harry Potter, who has always lived with his aunt, uncle and cousin, and they do not treat him well. But on Harry's 11th birthday, he discovers a whole new world in which he will find many answers.

The second film (2002), "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets", is about some mysterious attacks that happened in Hogwarts during the school year. Of course, Harry, Ron and Hermione, the main characters, try to find out what is happening.

The third film (2004), "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban", is about a prisoner of Azkaban, the safest prison where the worst criminals go, that escaped from there. Turns out that this prisoner, Sirius Black, is connected to the death of Harry Potter's parents.

The fourth film (2005), "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire", is about a dangerous and challenging tournament, the Triwizard Tournament, in which Harry Potter takes part by mistake. In this film, Voldemort will make his first appearance.

The fifth film (2007), "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix", is about a new teacher that arrives at Hogwarts and turns out that she is not as good as she seems to be. She is sent by the Ministry of Magic, because they don't believe that Voldemort is back.

The sixth film (2009), "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" has not any specific story or plot, in this movie it is possible to discover things related to Voldemort's past and elements that are essential to understand what will come next.

Finally, the lasts films (2010 and 2011), "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1" and "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part: 2" are about their last adventure, in which their goal is to find and destroy all the horcruxes and be able to defeat Voldemort.

The filmmakers did many things right and many things wrong in all the movies. For example, there are many elements in the movie that capture and reflect the essence of the book and they are loyal and realistic in a lot of aspects, like the scenarios and the landscapes, Hogwarts is super similar or even identical to how it is described in the books. Also, another thing that is extremely important is that they worked with the writer of the books! This is significant because having J.K. Rowling next to them and helping them in the process makes it possible to be more realistic and follow the descriptions more.

But, as I said, there are other things that could have been better. We all know that it's not possible to make a film of 2 hours or 2 hours and a half based on a book and have every little detail appear,

that's why some elements of the book are not visible in the movie. For example, the past of some characters like Voldemort or Dumbledore is not very well explained or shown, while in books, it is possible to know everything.

Finally, the cast is not very faithful to how the characters are described in the books. It is a great cast that did a fantastic job, but some parts of their appearance don't match the descriptions. I think this aspect couldn't have been better done, because the filmmakers already did a casting in which they were specific and had a particular idea in mind. They chose the actors thinking of the appearance, of course, and their acting abilities.

My conclusion is that the Harry Potter movies are quite loyal to the books that are based on, and the filmmakers did a great job producing and directing this project and choosing the cast.

POETRY

Loving the abyss

By Laia Gámez Palazón
Barcelona

They told me that failure was a mistake,
that falling down the abyss wasn't okay,
inside it I found the wings to fly,
toward a brighter day

but deep
and later, I rose

They told me, "The third time's the charm,"
but I had failed more than five.
Unsure of how to move forward,
still, I knew I had to try.

Later, after a hundred tries,
pieces began to align.
afraid of the falls,
the climb.

the
I was not
guiding me toward

Now I no longer fear the bottom
depths have taught me to fly.
is a step, a lesson, a gift,
for loving the abyss.

its
Every failure
an opportunity

FICTION

Through the Eyes of a Worn Heart

By Sara Mitchell Sanjuan

Barcelona

The following story contains references to skin color and conflicts of race. Viewer discretion is advised.

The Chicagoan bakery doorbell rings with a cheerful twinkle as he steps out of the freezing blizzard outside. The snow flurries beat against the pink-frame windows in billowing gusts of wind that howl beneath the calm staticky jazz music playing from the radio speakers. His knees ache, and his back is slightly hunched, as though carrying a great weight he can't shed from his shoulders. Deep lines etch memories of life into his dark skin: crow's feet shadow his eyes, smile lines surround his lips, and frown lines furrow deep into his brow. The white woman behind the counter eyes him warily, knuckles turning white as her palms dig into the steel bakery tongs in her hands.

She plasters on a tight smile, "One second please," as she rushes through the pink curtains behind the counter in her pale blue dress and white pinstripe apron, her tight blonde bun bobbing along. Another woman appears from behind the powder-pink curtains, this one dark, curls hoisted into a hap hazardous mess, wearing the same uniform as the other lady. She smiles wide, a small gap between her teeth peeking out from behind her lips.

"What can I get for you, sir?" she asks as she puts on some rubber gloves and takes the tongs the other girl abandoned.

"One of the chocolate cakes in the freezer, please." But as the warm smell of bread wafts through the curtains, which he supposes is the kitchen, his mind begins to slip back into the past. Back to the old house in Florida.



- CHAPTER 1: INFANCY –

The floors had been grimy, the furniture termite-eaten and covered by a layer of dust. The windows had been broken, and the cold December winds had left everyone in the household shivering day and night. His parents had lost their mining jobs because of the 1893 depression. It began when he drew his first breath. His mother always said the country sacrificed itself to birth him, and that he was its son. He had been months old at that time, with a thundering cough caused by a lung infection. His sister, with pink cheeks and cheerful bubbling laughter had been able to cure him; or so his mother had said after her burial. The warmth she had brought to the otherwise empty cold rooms kept the family alive for longer than they should have.

The neighbors called it a miracle. She was their miracle. Sweet little Minnie.

The week they had spent shivering in the rain, begging for food from any passerby who had come near, had been her last. That one torturous week, swallowed in a haze of primal famish and anguish that had ended with the sound of dirt hitting a casket. The day the bakery lights turned on amidst the curtain of dark foggy rain, the day they had crawled across the street, lured in by the smell of fresh, warm bread, the day Minnie came home with a fever so high, it bordered on burning. The preacher at the church had turned them away, stating “the child will live if the Lord sees fit, but many children don’t make it.”

They had tried to help her, bathing her in ice-cold baths, cooling the coals in their measly fireplace, feeding her double, using their savings to pay for a salve to nurse her angry rashes. Yet the Lord really had deemed her unfit to live, and one week later, after suffering through barking coughs that had replaced her laughter, painful dark red rashes blooming on her skin replacing her lively pinkness, and a weakened heart that beat slower every second, her fingers and lips turned blue, and her breaths turned shallow, and soon enough her breaths stopped altogether. Measles, they called it, a sickness that tortured children and took many of them to their deaths. Minnie had been one of them.

Perhaps the memory of a year-old child isn’t the most reliable, but the suffering and pain had been imprinted so deep on his mind, that age and time had not touched the memory, never degraded it. It was as fresh as when it had happened, and he re-lived it every night.

“Sir?” The voice is muffled, and he can’t hear anything besides the wrenching gasps of his sister as she struggled to breathe. A tear rolls down his cheek, following the curvature of the lines in his skin. “Sir, are you alright?” This time, the voice is clear, and he is dragged across the country, away from the grey December in 1894, and into the warm bakery in Chicago in 1970. His heart tugs as the memory is severed. He wipes the tears from his lashes with the back of his hand as the woman hands him a tray with a chocolate cake on it.

“Thank you,” he grits out, pain bleeding from his words. The lady, Yvonne, as it read on her name tag, smiles gently as his hands shake to grab his wallet.

“That’ll be 60 cents.” He grunts as the faded brown leather slips underneath the tips of his fingers, pennies clattering on the floorboards. He sighs deeply and begins to crouch down, Yvonne rushes over and picks up the coins before he can fully bend over. “Here, let me help,” she says with a smile, and hands them over.

“God bless, you remind me of my daughter.”

“What’s her name?” She tilts her head, stray curls tumbling down.

“Nia.”

“That’s a lovely name.” She smiles, the gap between her teeth peeking through again.

“Her mother named her,” he trails off, and time is severed once again as flashes of his wife’s smile cut through his skin.

-CHAPTER 2: Adulthood-

A hazy bubble of happiness echoes from the soft giggles of the girl in white in front of him. The veil covers her smile, and he thinks he is the luckiest man in the world. The sweat of carrying boxes into their new home, a small little apartment in the South Side of Chicago, dust fluttering in the late afternoon light. The red handkerchief in her hair, pin curls secured to her head by it. The shy smiles they exchanged because they were finally alone now. The soft jazz music playing on the radio in the empty room, furniture covered by white sheets. When she took his hands and dragged him across the floor.

“1,2,3, see it’s not that hard!” she would say as she taught him to dance. At first their steps had clashed clumsily, and they tripped on each other’s feet, giggling. Later, as the day had faded into night and the moon rose in the sky, their movements slowed, swaying as the moonlight streamed through the curtains of their living room.

The first wails of a newborn in their room as his wife wept during labor. The suffering and yelling had torn through him as she pushed and pushed, her mother holding her hand and squeezing it with every contraction. The pure bliss of their child, a girl.

“What should we name her?” he had asked.

“Nia,” she had answered with a smile. The sweet gurgle of the baby in the living room as she took her first steps. The growing feeling of invincibility every second the three of them were together.

Then, sudden helplessness when the white man’s car had struck his wife. Silent tears slipping down his unlined face as he waited with their child in his arms in the segregated hospital. He’d begged for someone to help her, but by the time the colored doctor arrived, it was too late. The moment the news was broken to him, the painful crash of his knees against the dirty white marble floor. His screams of pure agony and his daughter’s echoing cries. Nia’s silence in the graveyard, both dressed in black, staring empty-eyed at the wooden casket laying still in the hole. The priest’s words muffled against the wailing wind. And the world had grieved with them.

The whole week following her death, it had stormed and rained; angry wind breaking windows and dragging people off their feet. Rain seeped into houses, flooded the streets, shrouded the city of Chicago in a fog so thick and grey, all life stopped. But just as it had frozen, it restarted, the same as it had been before. The driver wasn’t charged, and the hospital bill lay in an open envelope on his bedside table; shouting in printed letters how even her death had a price. All the while, it felt like he had been buried underground with her. Nia wailed every night, and she lost the bright childhood she deserved. Instead, she got a life without a mother, with a father who had never stopped grieving her.

As he continued to age, Nia asked about her mother. And he repeated, over and over again, “she was the love of my life . . . An angel who fell from heaven and into my arms.” And she grew, their Nia grew into a beautiful version of her, a helpless reminder of her kind smile and the light that had shone in her eyes. She had her face, her eyes, her laugh. The one thing she got from him:

his grief. His wife was alive again when Nia's laugh echoed across the room, he could feel the ghost of her hand on his shoulder, the warmth of her smile. And she was cold when Nia cried. Their souls forever tethered together; a connection forged by loss.

The cold snow hit his face like frozen tears. He was standing outside the bakery; he didn't remember leaving. The warmth of the heating still clung to his skin as his nose turned red from the cold. Through the window, Yvonne was scolding the white girl, whose brow wrinkled, looking back at her in disgust. He shook his head in disappointment, walking down the snow-covered sidewalk with his birthday cake in his hands. The lights were off, and he turned the key in the apartment lock, balancing the tray on one arm. He pushed the door open with his shoulder and switched on the light.

Suddenly a loud chorus of "surprise!" startled him as friends and family started to pop up from behind the worn brown sofa, from inside the bathroom, from under the table. They were all wearing party hats and happy smiles. He caught the cake as it wobbled on his left arm, dropping the keys to grab it. "Careful, Papa." Nia rushed over and took the cake to the small open-plan kitchen across the room and laid it on the grey marble counter. Her movements were calm and deliberate, if only a bit stiffer; she was getting older too. He wondered if his wife would have moved the same way, if she'd been alive to grow old with him. The short tang of melancholy tugged at his heart but despite it, he felt a surge of fondness for their Nia.

He smiled at the surprise, and the small group of people began to crowd around him, wishing him a happy 77th birthday. They all shooed him to the small sofa and settled around him: his wife's sister, Anna; John, his last friend from the army, all the others had died serving or with time; Frank, Nia's husband; and Lezlie, their daughter. Nia switched off the light and walked over, the light of the flickering birthday candles wavering on her face, deepening the thin lines on her own skin. Everyone started to join in an out-of-tune chorus of the "Happy Birthday" song. At the end, he blew out the candles and Nia turned the lights back on, bringing out a bottle of champagne.

They all began to chat with each other, glasses in hand. The fizzing of the cheap bubbles provided a low background noise in between their exchanged words. John walked over and slumped on the sofa beside him, liver spots staining his dark skin like the freckles he used to have. Age had worn them out. John leaned forward, shifting to settle himself. The worn metal chain dropped from behind his shirt and hung from his wrinkled neck. The dog tag, worn with time, had rusted at the edges, silver paint chipping off slowly. The engraving protruded from the smooth plate, each letter shaping the time they met, and the people they lost.

-CHAPTER 3: Young Adulthood-

The trenches had become their home, gunshots their music, and blood their water. The smell of gunpowder clogged their lungs, and rifles became their arms. Dust from the field covered their hair, powdering it in a thick layer of sand and dirt. Their only reprieve was when they had been together, all four of them. John, Simon, Peter, and him. Flashes of John's lopsided round glasses and tousled hair, Simon's black hair and sharp grin, Peter's flushed cheeks and cheerful laugh. His heart clenched from the sofa of his home, a worn thread connecting the past and present together wears thinner each day, closer to snapping with each passing second. He could still taste the bland food of the barracks, still feel the thin mattress on his back of the room they had shared. Theirs had been the only one with the light on all night.

When Nia had been small and scared of the dark, the light through the door of the nursery had filtered through the half-open door and spilled into the room he slept in, dowsing the half empty bed in golden light. He swore that in these moments, he could hear Peter's bare feet padding around their room back at the barracks, whispering to them if they were still awake, if they could talk to him as he fell asleep. At 25 years of age, they had been kids still, thrust into a war against the rest of the world. Too oblivious to realize this would be the death of their childhood, and that it would drown in a river of blood. The four of them had shared a bond forged by loss, pain and death.

The night they had been woken by a wailing siren, "Soldiers," the white lieutenant had yelled across the barracks, "it is the time to show what you've trained for." A deafening silence filled the hall they had all been standing in, fresh faces, teenagers, kids. All wearing grey uniforms which were too big for them; sleeves tailored, hats falling over unlined brows. Too young. That day, the four of them had been separated for the first time since they arrived at the encampment. That day, Peter had gone missing on the battlefield, among the burning, bloody sea of enemies and friends.

For the rest of the week, they had slept to the sound of bombs, sirens and gunshots as their lullaby. Peter never returned. One sullen afternoon after that first battle had died down, they had gone searching the field, the three of them treading through the blood-soaked sand. Another squadron walked behind them in silence, eyes downcast. No one spoke. They held their breath as they turned body after body, each one covered in peeling skin, burnt limbs, torn faces. Every time, someone let out a ragged gasp and rushed to kneel beside it, shaking and wailing. The rest of them continued to search. Their party shrank as the sun rose higher in the sky. And it continued to shrink as the sun began to set. Their legs ached, their throats burned, but their consciousness would not stop thundering until they found Peter.

Closure was a gift; one they fought to receive; they had slept in the field that night. The three of them huddled close to fight the cold, shaking. The next morning, the three of them had set out the moment the sun breached the horizon. They hadn't slept, and with deep purple bags under their eyes they continued to march further out into the empty battlefield. By the time the sun had fully set on the second day, eyes gritty with sand and lips dry, they found him. Peter laying peacefully, a dark stain blooming from his upper chest. They had shared a sigh of relief on that battlefield, closure had dawned on them after ten days of what ifs. They were too numb to weep, too dehydrated to let tears fall. They began their march back, Peter's body in arms.

After that, the days became glum. They turned off the light in their room. Peter's bed gathered dust. And they spent their hours in a mourning silence. Until that one night, when everyone had been asleep. He couldn't and trudged down to the dining hall. Alone, he wept, his hiccupping echoing across the empty room. He wept for Peter, for their lost childhood, for the war. Then a sudden boom had shook the building. He had jumped into a defensive stance, muscles taut, tears dry. No one seemed to have noticed. He rushed to sound the alarm, bare feet clapping against the flooring.

Just as he smashed the siren, people began rushing into the dining hall, eyes sleepy, in their military pajamas. The lieutenant arrived, the picture of calm, fully dressed in military uniform, badges glistening under the flickering neon lights. "What is the meaning of this?" The lieutenant had asked him, his white skin contrasting the dark hues of the man facing him. As he opened his mouth to respond, another boom shattered against the wailing of the siren.

“We’re being attacked, sir.” He had said, no fear on his face despite his disheveled appearance and the look of disgust on his superior’s face.

“Gather the rest, we must defend what we can.” That was the final order. He sprinted back up to their room, where John and Simon were just jolting awake. “We need to get up now, we’re being attacked,” he had said, pulling on his uniform as fast as he could. The two began to scramble around the room, dressing quickly. No one looked at Peter’s bed. They had rushed to the dining hall, everyone now dressed, eyes awake. The shaking had become more consecutive now, and the medics were setting up their stations. They rushed to find their battalion, all the colored people separate from the rest, the colored medics setting their supplies on their side. The lieutenant gave the order, and they marched into the field.

Almost instantly they broke formation. The ground was uneven, huge holes peppered the sand, and the moon was covered by a thick layer of gunpowder and dust. He lost sight of John and Simon, and blindly advanced through the dark. He could not see anything, not even shadows. He could hear gunshots piercing the air, grenades whistling across the field, soldiers falling. He clutched at his leg where he had been shot, and winced as he limped to the medics, begging for anything. A chorus of noise played in the background from the pained wailing of the patients being attended. They quickly treated his wound with herbs and bandaged it. Setting him on his way. As he hobbled out of the way, he saw a familiar dark face carrying another man, screaming for help. John was carrying Simon. He had been hit, and he was gasping for shallow, ragged breaths. Two medics had rushed over to carry him onto a bed. They weren’t allowed inside, but they could not leave Simon. So, they waited for the violence to die down, for the enemy to recede back into the horizon, for the sun to break the night.

Finally, a medic walked out, eyes dim, rubbing at her blood-stained hands with a dirty cloth. They rushed to her, begging to know, begging for her to tell them he was okay. She ushered them inside, to Simon’s bed. His breaths were shallow, eyes dim. They clutched his hands. He squeezed back feebly, managing a small smile.

“Figures it would take a war to shut me up, huh?” he choked out, voice hoarse. They chuckled with tears in their eyes. They knew this was the end. “Stop crying, you’ll ruin my big dramatic exit.” Simon laughed at his own joke, coughing up blood. They laughed with him, tears rolling down their cheeks.

“Say hi to Peter for us?” John managed meekly. Simon looked at him, tears now forming in his eyes too.

“Of course.” He sighed and pulled them both into a hug. They wept together until Simon’s grip loosened. His arms went limp. It was like a thread being cut. They both made their way out of the medical tent. In the weeks after, Simon and Peter had been buried; two small, grim funerals. John and he had been awarded a medal, for their service and for their losses. The war slowed to a halt. The peace treaty was signed. And they were sent home. Dog tags around their necks and the little belongings they owned on their shoulders. John had been twenty-eight and he, twenty-five. They vowed to never lose each other, as a tribute to their fallen friends. And so here they sat, fifty-two years later, across from each other, reliving the past together.

They had tears on their cheeks again. This time sinking into the lines of their face. They could hear Simon’s ringing laughter and Peter’s padding steps. They could imagine them, full of life, young and carefree. No one else seemed to have noticed the two men on the sofa. Their grief and mourning pouring from their eyes. The TV was droning on in the background, a young blond

woman with an orange top and floral skirt was pointing at a weather map. Rain was coming soon. The clinking of glasses, the low chatter, they all slowly brought him back into the present. Stars stopped swimming before his eyes, and the world moved back into focus.

Sudden silence filled the room. The TV volume was turned up, a reporter's voice echoing across the room. "A youth manifestation, defending women's rights, was broken up today. Police barricaded the streets and . . ." The sound died down as images of police dragging and hitting people on the streets filled the screen. Batons arching in the air before striking down on helpless, unarmed women. His vision clouded again as the images morphed into the first person, as his own eyes became the camera.

-CHAPTER 4: Adolescence-

The police whistles had filled the air. A sea of navy-blue helmets cut through the throng of poor black people. Their banners and posters had waved in the air angrily, demanding change, demanding justice. They were answered with violence. Growing up, he had believed the police protected citizens, that they were good, that they were just. And that day, the inner child in him was silenced when the policeman snatched the banner from his hand and "punished" him. The line between good and bad, light and dark, just and unfair, wavered that day. He had come home bruised and torn. Shirt hanging by the frayed edges, lip bleeding, cheek scraped.

His mother had washed him, scolding him for going out, and then comforted him, in a way all mothers know how. He decided never to trust a police officer again, not after the injustice he had just lived. He felt very strongly about his beliefs, so he continued to speak up at school, at home, at the supermarket. He was always swatted behind the ear for daring to say such a thing, or scolded, or worse. But as he grew, he realized no one listened to what he said, they heard the words but would not digest them. As though they were surreal, inviable, unrealistic. His scale of justice felt tipped and unbalanced when he talked, as though instead of placing weight on the just side, he was simply piling up more weights on the unjust side.

But that had been sixty years ago, he had long stopped trying to fight for a change which would never fully be accepted. The flame of injustice he had stamped on years ago felt rekindled after so long. One memory had the power to revive such a powerful sense of justice, of fairness.

The TV was turned off, and everyone was shaken. No one talked, they simply turned away and took a deep sip of their champagne before continuing as though they had seen nothing. But a deep old flame had been rekindled in him, one long dead. Soon the sun began to set, and friends said their goodbyes, wishing him a happy birthday, a happy life. Night had fallen by the time it was just him again. Alone in the small apartment.

-CHAPTER 5: Old Age-

He began to search through his things, sifting through boxes of clothes and papers. Until he found the small box. The small box that kept his most precious memories: his wife's engagement ring, he wore his and her wedding rings on his fingers; a lock of Minnie's hair in his mother's locket, his father's watch, his and Simon's old dog tags, his old train ticket from Florida to Chicago. One box held the past. The past of one person who had touched so many souls in his lifetime. A person with a life full of joy and sorrow, with a past brimming with anecdotes and memories. Memories

which were shared, and memories which were kept. A life. Filled with injustice and change, with love and grief, with life and death. He put the past back in the box, and he slowly closed the lid. Trapping the memories for someone else to find them.

He padded back into the living room; his niece's coif lay on the kitchen countertop. He picked it up tenderly, lined fingers brushing over the white cloth. He recalled the joy on her face when she got the job, the smile widening as she walked up the steps of the hospital. He recalled the anger when she received her first paycheck, a small wage despite the nights she had spent alone in the ward, away from home, in the cold antiseptic halls, tending to the sick. "Why do I need to get paid less?" She had yelled, "I work just as hard than any of the men there!"

At the time he had not known what to say. But now he whispers into the empty night, tears shimmering in his eyes, "Yell it, demand change, demand equality." He sits on the rocking chair his wife liked, rests his head and closes his eyes. All while chanting, "Be the change, lead it." He has lived his life, one full of hardship. But full of happiness and enjoyment too. He has some regrets, some things he would change. But he's lived. And he's made his imprint on the world. It's now time to let the young take the baton, take the stage, lead the change.

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