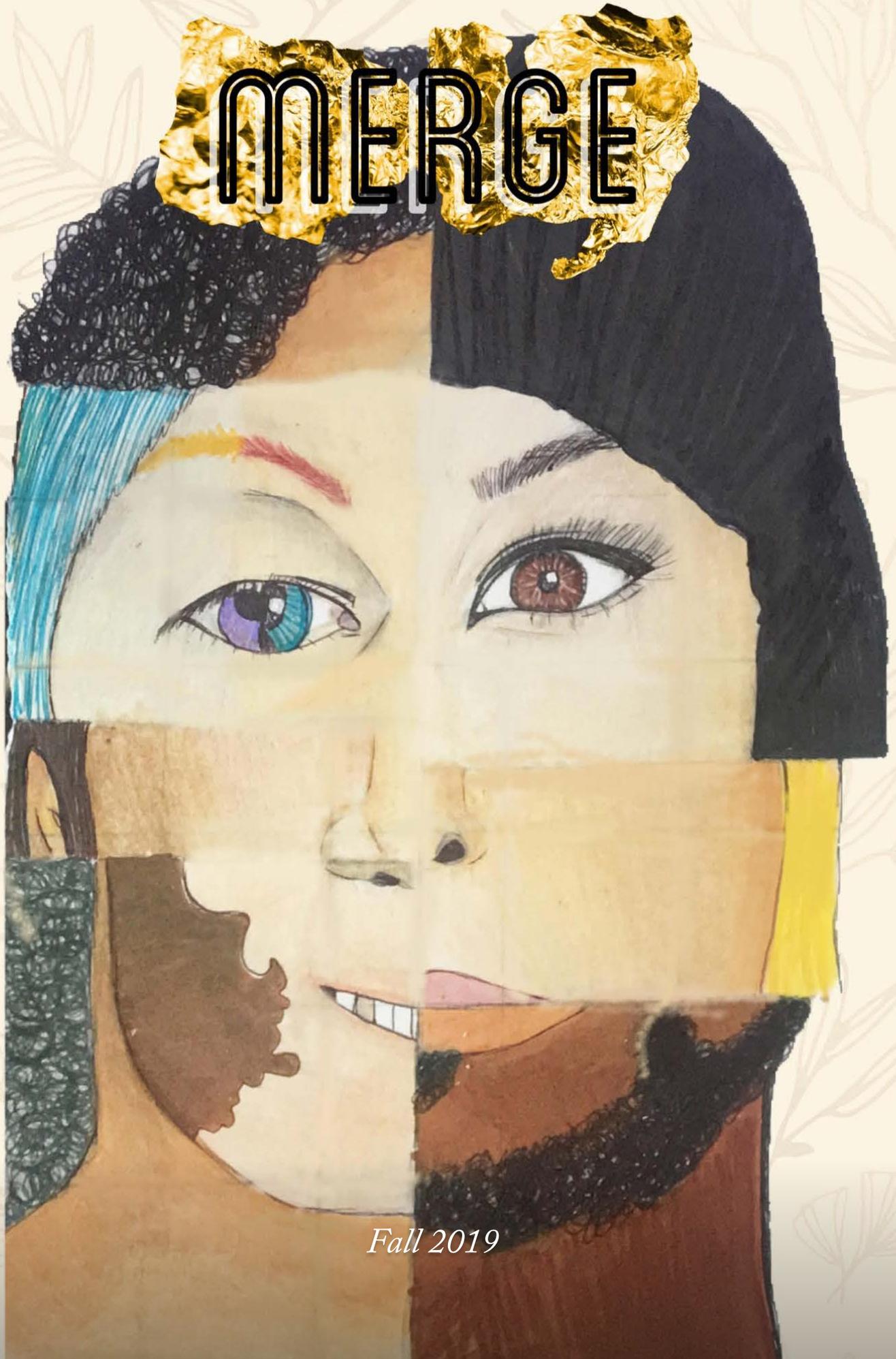


MERGE



Fall 2019

Cover Art By Sophia LeVan

...

CONCEALED CONSCIENCE

By Patricyonna Rodgers

Sometimes she allows me to invade her space

so I can show her the world in a better state

She lets me arouse her eyes

to adjust to clear blue skies

She allows me to whisper sweet words into her brain

so that they will cancel out all the years of pain that she
endured by herself

She lets me hug her soul

but just as I am in her

I am in all of you

Set me free

from the back of your mind

just as she does

See, tearing down the towering gates of hatred

and freeing you all with the air of compassion is my only
goal

Let me sing lullabies to your heart

so that humanity will cancel out malicious words with
amicable ones as we depart

Let me excite your nerves

so everyone can see the beauty in their bodies and not
just the made-up mistakes

May I change your perception

so that you see no deception?

Allow me to pursue these wondrous acts

and you, my friends, will impact the world in which we
reside

and then

only then

I won't have to hide.

...

COSPLAY PHOTOSHOOT

*By Grace Howland and Katelyn
Nguyen*

WHAT IS COSPLAY?

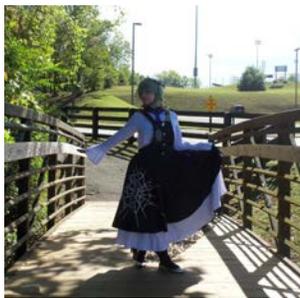
Cosplay, short for costume play, is the act of dressing up as a character from a series one enjoys. Cosplayers can either make, piece together, or buy their costumes, and they can be worn at pop culture events known as conventions.



Grace Howland as Kirumi Tojo, "Danganronpa"



Katelyn Nguyen as Tomoe, "Kamisama Kiss"





...

**TRUE LOVE: “THAT
THING IN THE MOVIES”**

By Amber Clark

“True Love” is an intriguing thought. For some, it is their deepest wish and strongest desire. For others, it gives the courage to leap over cultural walls and win battles that defeat the odds. But what is “True Love,” and where is the line drawn between fiction and reality? People have a way of subconsciously identifying this term as a perfect utopia — a destination where there are magic pumpkins and fairy godmothers, and everyone is breaking into song. “True Love” is real, because of the individual’s strong desire to find it, but there needs to be a more realistic view of this term.

In her book “Love 2.0,” psychologist Barbara Fredrickson states, “Just as your body was designed to extract oxygen from the earth’s atmosphere, and nutrients from the foods you ingest, your body was designed to love.” She relates love to the reflex of breathing, in which our bodies, in search of relief, activate a natural response. Dr. Athena Staik also reveals research concerning this topic. In her blog, “Neuroscience and Relationships,” Staik speaks about love being “the primary reason to live” and, for most individuals, “their quest for meaning in life.” It seems that, not only are we genetically made to love, it is one of the strongest desires that we possess.

We do not have to look far to find physical evidence of true love in the world, even in nature. Louise Crane states that swans, when they mate, do so for life.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “True Love” is the “Perfect romantic love between people,” or a love which is without flaw. However, no one person is perfect, so there cannot be a perfect love between two individuals. True love is something that is worked on in spite of the difficulties life may bring. It is a commitment that goes beyond feelings and steps into a role of faithful pursuit.

As William Shakespeare, one of the great poets, said, “The course of true love never did run smooth.” We live in a time where movies and TV shows have set the bar for our romantic experiences. This results in unrealistic expectations for our significant others. If there is not some ancient mystery unfolding on the first date, or some fairytale-esque scenery in the background, it must not be love. Unfortunately, if people do not change their expectations of this term, they will not be able to find genuine fulfillment in their relationships.

“True Love” can still be true without being perfect. It is present even without any “fireworks.” What makes “True Love” real is the individual’s desire to make it so — to make it work and create something beautiful through the good, the bad, and even the ugly times. “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always preserves.

Love never fails” (1 Corinthians). So, does “True Love” exist? It does. However, let us keep our pursuit of it realistic, or it will simply remain a myth.

...

WE

By Patricyonna Rodgers

We

Greater than you and me

Greater than one single being

If you get tired, you can lean on me

See, let me tell you about the power of we

What caused the Nashville sit-ins

The fight for equality

What caused the march for our lives

We will be heard, don't look so surprised

We

A word so powerful that it is almost serene

Not just about being heard

More like we will be seen

“We” gives the children something to aspire to be

A change in this world is what “we” brings

We

I still haven't told you all of what “we” brings

That list goes on and on

But never underestimate the power of “we.”

...

COACH CORN: IMPACTING YOUNG MEN

By David Wilson, Charger Infielder



Michael Corn has been in the profession of coaching baseball for over two decades. During that time, he has molded young, sometimes immature, teenagers into young men and impactful human beings.

How is Corn so impactful? It comes down to one simple answer: his demanding coaching style.

Corn grew up in a blue-collar family in Unicoi County, Tennessee. He states that it was there he learned the concept of “receiving what you worked for.” This mentality stuck with him as he went on to attend Unicoi High School, Columbia State Community College, and

Coker College. At these three establishments, Corn was heavily impacted by the rigorous coaching styles of his coaches. All three coaches — Coach Baxter, Coach Painter, and Coach Schmotzer — were stern and demanding. Corn thrived in these environments, and he admits that he loved and retained those life lessons.

After his playing career was over, Corn began his coaching journey at Tusculum College. There, his views developed even more. “During my nine years at Tusculum, I learned so much. The biggest jump was going for the mindset of being a player to a coach. Once becoming a coach, you learn there’s a big gap between teaching and learning. You learn how to interact with young men,” said Corn. After his tenure at Tusculum, Corn went on to coach as an assistant at the University of Tennessee before returning to his alma mater, Columbia State.

At Columbia State, Corn demands what he considers the “three rungs of success.” These attributes — effort, energy, and enthusiasm — are foundational principles instilled in every Charger. Each principle can be used for success in the workforce, as a parent, or as an athlete. Corn preaches a commitment to work ethic, and, most importantly, for the work to be done with a smile. “Doing what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, to the best of one’s ability will help for success whether as a father, as the CEO of company, or as a student down in the Warf building. These things take zero talent,” said

Corn. Thus, Charger baseball players are known to have a gritty, hard-nosed personality, just like their coach.

Assistant Coach Desi Ammons played under Coach Corn several years ago. “There’s a method to the madness, the foundation and attention to detail is a staple of our program. That hasn’t and will never change,” said Ammons. Ammons went on to say all of his successes correlated to the philosophies he learned under the tutelage of Corn.

Over time, Corn has grown in knowledge of the overall game, but he admits his style has not changed in teaching today’s teenagers. “Every coach is different. Each, though, has a foundation and an overall culture. A key is adapting to players. Today’s players are more questioning than in the past, therefore you teach them why something needs to be done instead of just telling them to do something.” Current Charger Brandon Johnson, a right-handed pitcher from Alabama, has been very successful under the mentorship of Coach Corn. “The positivity and structure that flows throughout the program was a key drawing point for me. I give Corn all the credit in my success, he’s helped me become not only a better baseball player, but a better man, day in and day out,” said Johnson.

Coach Corn has been a father figure to hundreds of men over the last twenty years, and his philosophy is simple.

Corn said, “I teach our guys by taking care of the squirrels, by taking care of the little details, in the end the elephants don’t kick your rear. That can be applied whether to parenthood, the workforce, or as a baseball player.”

...

THE LEVAN FAMILY’S BUTTERNUT SQUASH RECIPE

By Sophia LeVan

From Thanksgiving to birthdays, this dish is a staple in my family. Passed down from my Great-great Grandmother, it’s one of my favorite dishes that my father makes. The earthy flavor of the butternut squash mixed with the sweetness of the brown sugar, both enhanced by the creaminess of the butter, makes for a soul-warming dish sure to please your guests!

Ingredients:

½ stick of unsalted butter

½ cup of brown sugar (This can be modified to taste, just be sure to use brown sugar.)

A dusting of Cinnamon

2 whole butternut squash (Tip for picking them out: look for ones with minimal scratching or cuts, as well as a creamy-yellow pallet.)

2 tablespoons water

A piece of rosemary or a few dried rosemary leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-heat your traditional oven to 400 or convection oven to 350. Take your butternut squash and wash them using warm water and soap. You'll want to sure there's no dirt on the exterior. Half both squashes and scoop out the seeds using a spoon.



Next, cut the butternut squash longways, making sure not to cut through the butternut squash all the way. Place them skin-side-down in a large glass pan and pour 2 tablespoons of water into the bottom.



In a bowl, microwave the butter until it's melted (about 40 seconds). Mix the brown sugar with the butter and stir until it's dissolved. Sprinkle a dusting of cinnamon onto the sugar butter mixture and mix it in. Now, taking a basting brush, smother the tops and crevices of the squash with the cinnamon sugar butter mixture, making sure to really smother every squash with it.



Place the pan into the oven and let the squash cook for 30-40 minutes. You will know that it is done for sure when you can easily cut the squash with a spoon.



Transfer the squash out of the pan and onto a cooling rack to cool. Once it's cool enough to handle without burning your hands, peel the skin. It's easiest to use a spoon or paring knife to do this. Once peeled, chop and place the squash into a bowl. Use a potato masher to then mash the squash. Make sure there are no huge chunks. Mix it with a beater and then cover it with saran-wrap. Microwave it for approximately one minute. Finally, for garnish, place a piece of rosemary or a few dried rosemary leaves on the top.



...

THE BETTER ROAD

By Amber Clark

There is a path for each of us leading down an unknown road.

There are cliffs and ledges that we must walk, and we must walk alone.

.

Although the nights are dark, and the deserts so dry,

The King is always there, and he has never left your side.

.

“But why?” you ask him, as you make your way through.

“Does my path have to be so harsh, and the wind so cruel?”

.

With a soft smile, and with a gentle hush, the Lord replies, “It is because.”

“Because you asked to know me more, because you chose the better course.

.

Not everyone would take this road, for it's not easy to live
a life

Full of burning ash and sharpening stone.

.

But watch what I will do in the middle of the storm.

There is a creation taking place, and only I can see its
form.

.

For up from the ash is where I make my greatest
treasures,

And in the end, there will be a bond that will never again
be severed.

.

So trust me, my Beloved, with the seeds that have been
sown,

And let's dream again together, here, on the better road.”

...

FALL FASHION SHOOT

*By Madelyn Garcia and Amber
Clark*

|"RADIANT IN RED"



Make your statement.

"WARM IN WOOL"



Lose the layers and stay fun, cute, and light in wool.

"FUR FUSION"



Bring your wardrobe to life by adding texture.

|"CAR-PE-DI-EM"



Seize the day by adding a French neck scarf.

...

CON-GOING 101

By SpookyBooCosplays

Do you have an interest in tabletop gaming, cosplaying your favorite characters, reading manga, partaking in your favorite fandoms, watching anime or cartoons, and/or analog gaming? Do you like meeting new people who have the same interests as you? If you answered yes to either of these questions, you might like Con-going!

Con-going is going to, and sometimes partaking in, an anime convention. Anime conventions, or “cons,” are more than just a group of anime-lovers sitting at a table, arguing over which *waifu* is best. Cons cater to more than those who love anime.

Most conventions have cosplayers, analog and tabletop areas, AMV contests, lip-sync contests, and panels or activities specific to certain fandoms. Some conventions have Vocaloid or AI performances, Raves, Cosplay Balls, Manga Libraries, or even maid cafes!

Each con is different. I suggest checking out their websites to see their specific events. If you think you

would be interested in Congoing, keep reading to learn the basics!

FINDING A CON

There are many anime conventions in Tennessee to choose from. Some include Middle Tennessee Anime Convention in Nashville, TN and Akai Con in Lebanon, TN. MTAC will be held next in April 2020 and Akai Con in July 2020. AnimeCons.com is a great resource for finding cons in your area.

Be sure to consider how you'll be getting there, where you'll be staying, what time of year it is, and traffic in the area. If you are staying in a heavy traffic area, you'll probably want to stay within walking distance of the convention. However, if its winter, you won't want to walk anywhere.

PLAN AHEAD

Make sure you have set a budget for the trip and take emergency money, just in case. Many hotels may drop unexpected charges for rooms, so make sure you are prepared. Also, make sure you know the exact location of the con, what panels and events you want to go to, where you'll be parking, if at all, and where you'll be eating.

Con food can be expensive, and you can't live off free breakfast at the hotel.

If you plan on bringing a cosplay, be sure to bring a sewing kit. Know what you'll be taking to the convention and what you'll be leaving in the hotel or at your house. The con's website or app should have most of the information needed to plan these things.

STAY HYDRATED, HEALTHY, AND HYGIENIC

One of the most common reasons people seek medical help at the con leads back to dehydration. It's easy to get parched when you're walking around a venue for several hours, surrounded by crowds of people. Be sure to bring a few water bottles and some snacks. If you have a severe allergy to something, bring your EpiPen with you. Bring your medical supplies; you never know what could happen.

Not only is it easy to get thirsty, it's also easy to stink! Be sure to wear deodorant, shower, and practice basic hygiene when at the con. You might not think you stink, but everyone around you will.

MAKE FRIENDS

Don't be afraid to talk to the people waiting in line with you! I've met some great people that way. Be social. If you see someone wearing a cosplay that you really like, tell them, or ask for a photo! Most cosplayers will appreciate the positive feedback. Just remember that cosplay does NOT equal consent. It doesn't matter if their costume is Bowsette or Pikachu, they are still human beings and deserve the same respect you would give to your grandmother.

HAVE FUN!

Be sure to follow all con rules and follow the directions of the con staff, but the most important thing to remember is to have fun! That's why you're going, after all! Just relax and take it easy. It'll go by faster than you realize.

...

“LUIGI’S MANSION 3” GAME REVIEW

By Grace Howland



Nintendo

Nintendo's "Luigi's Mansion 3" was recently released exclusively for the Nintendo Switch, just in time for Halloween, and it's not a game one wants to miss. If familiar with the series, one knows the game will take a comically spooky turn, despite the friendly appearance at the beginning. Luigi was given a free invitation to a fancy hotel, and he brings Mario, Peach, and a few toads along with him — but no Daisy, unfortunately. A scream from Peach in the night alerts our hero Luigi. He finds her, Mario, and the toads trapped in picture frames. It is up to Luigi to rescue them from King Boo, who has trapped them and come back to haunt the hero. Armed with the Poltergust G-00 and aided by Gooigi, his gooey doppelgänger who can be controlled in single-player or by another player, and Gooigi's creator and ghost research expert Professor E. Gadd, Luigi will have to solve puzzles and capture hundreds of ghosts if he hopes to save his friends and escape the haunted hotel.

The story mode can be played in single player or multiplayer, but this is not the only mode. The game includes other multiplayer modes. For example, the online co-op mode "ScareScraper" is for up to four players, who can traverse different floors with different goals, such as capturing ghosts or rescuing toads. "ScreamPark" is a local multiplayer mode for up to eight players. It has three different minigames with the essence of something that would be found in "Mario Party."

With enjoyable gameplay, challenging bosses, a good soundtrack, and charming cutscenes, this is a game that should definitely be added to one's Switch game collection. Mario's brother takes the spotlight once again in the third installment of the "Luigi's Mansion" franchise, and it honestly may be the best one yet. Taking place in a hotel rather than a mansion, each floor has its own unique theme, such as a shopping area, a greenhouse, and even a medieval castle. If unfamiliar with "Luigi's Mansion," this game is not your typical Mario game. It homes in more on puzzle-solving and ghostbusting rather than being a platformer. I highly recommend this game for anyone who may be a fan of Luigi and anything related to the Mario franchise.



...

MOVIE REVIEW SERIES

By Patricyonna Rogers

A REVIEW ON “CHARLIE’S ANGELS”

From the emotional tribute to girls around the world to the kick-butt ending, the 2019 “Charlie’s Angels” proves to be just as good as its predecessor. When it comes to remakes, it is often hard to live up to the standards that the original movies set. It is always a good idea to look at the remake with a new angle and a fresh pair of eyes, and that is exactly what “Charlie’s Angels” does. Elizabeth Banks and Elizabeth Cantillon have recreated a movie for the newer generation and made it one that we can all relate to. It is a movie that allows the new generation of girls to create their own memories. In other words, we have a new generation of angels that we can call our own.

A REVIEW ON “HARRIET”

Movies about important figures in history never fail to disappoint. However, they can still fall short of the reality that was experienced in that time period. “Harriet” is a great movie, but it seemed to filter itself from the promising effects it could have had on the audience. It beat around the bush, one could say. Gregory Allen Howard and Debra Martin Chase could have dived a little deeper into the history of this legacy-bearing figure. However, “Harriet” still proved to be a movie that all Americans need to see.

A REVIEW ON “LAST CHRISTMAS”

“Last Christmas, I gave you my heart.” These beloved lyrics have never rung so true as in the movie “Last Christmas.” As the movie begins, you believe you are watching a heartfelt story. However, your perception changes towards the ending. Life lessons are ample throughout the film, and it provokes the audience to take a second look on their lives. One character, who could have died, received a second chance. Finding herself lost in life after falling ill, she begins to —discover life in a new light with the help of a friend. Creators Emma Thompson and Paul Feig created a truly inspiring film.

A REVIEW ON “MIDWAY”

“Indescribable” is the word that comes to mind when asked to conclude this film’s depiction of the trials that our soldiers faced at the Battle of Midway. The movie did not fall short of showing the emotional depth, extreme hardships and conditions, and courage — even when they had to fake it — of every soldier. “Midway”

re43\ creates an environment of gratitude with every second. The audience can never grasp the actual trials our soldiers experienced, but “Midway” got pretty darn close to making them real and conceivable. Roland Emmerich and Harold Kloser created an outstanding movie that captures the reality of a world-changing war through just one battle.

A REVIEW ON “FORD V. FERRARI”

“Ford v. Ferrari” is simply a tear-jerking movie. It takes the audience back in time to when Ford was trying to excel and beat its competition, Ferrari, in creating a faster car. It follows Ken Williams, the man who helped make it possible, who was eventually robbed of his history-making moment. Ken Williams led a life that will forever be revered. He helped Ford create an award-winning car and set records to beat his own. “Ford v. Ferrari” is a must-see. James Mangold, Peter Chernin, and Alex Young have created a movie with the potential to become a family favorite in many homes and serve as inspiration

to our youth. Don't forget the tissues as you watch every boundary-pushing moment and raw emotion put into what made a revolutionary era in car history.

...

LOST REFLECTIONS

By Madelyn Garcia

I keep longing for a feeling

any feeling

to replace the emptiness

vested deep in my core

This loneliness spreads like a disease

devouring me from the inside out

.

Though this loneliness

is no stranger to me

it is certainly no friend of mine

but a thief instead

Stealing my reflection of the person

I once was and

leaving me hallow and bare

.

This loneliness spreads like a disease

crippling enough to bring me to my knees

until I'm crawling

begging

please

.

I keep longing for a feeling

any feeling

to bring me to my feet again

I want to feel like me again

.

How did I get so thrown from myself

that I forgot how to ask for help

How did I get so thrown from myself

that in the end

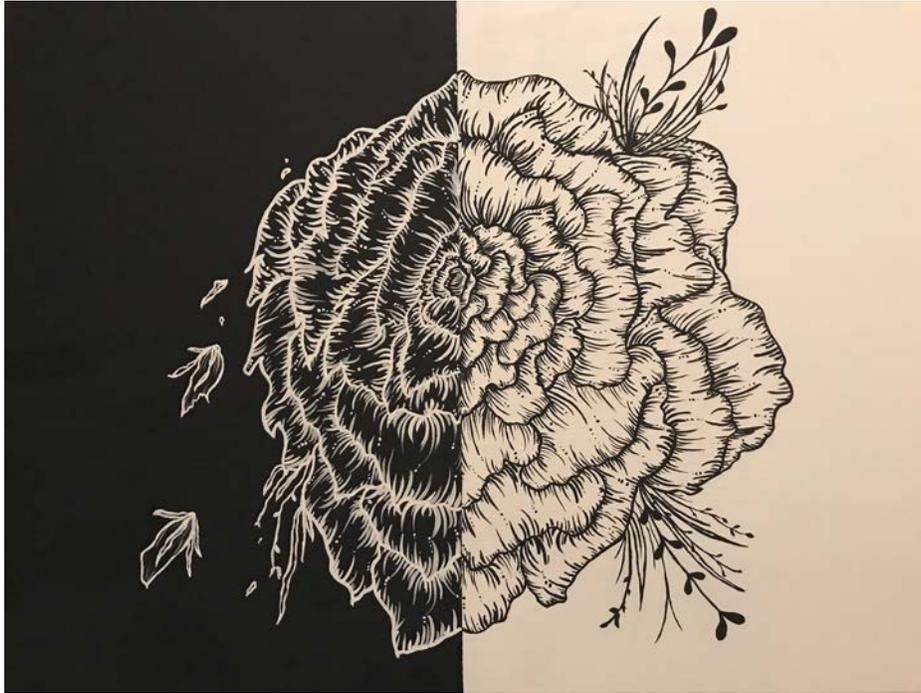
this loneliness became my only friend

...

ET MAGNUS FECETUR (2019)

"The Great Divide"

By Sidney De Osio



Acrylic on Canvas, 18x24

...

IN THE FACE OF

By Patricyonna Rodgers

As I stare down the barrel of a gun

Labeled discrimination, stereotype, hatred

All the above

A sordid continuation of a broken nation

One to soon be inhabited by the unborn

That discrimination leaves broken and torn

There is an unspoken agreement between the living, the
dead, and the future

That we sign off on when we are conceived

So, what does that tell you?

It tells me we have a responsibility to change the things
that should not be

To move ourselves beyond the graveyards hatred has
foreseen

Starting now

So that maybe we could keep our future generations

From being viewed as nothing but a number in a rigged
system

Created by broken people

Keep our girls from being viewed as nothing but sex toys

But when the word rape appears, simply dismissed for
the next toy

And educate our boys to realize that a woman's attire is
not your permission slip to retire your raging hormones

Or that

It's okay to cry; it doesn't make you less of a man

You don't have to fit into the hype of hypermasculinity

Protect the Muslim from being viewed as nothing but
terrorists

Or black people from being viewed as a charity case able
to be saved for 25 cents a day

25 cents a day, but we can't help other countries increase
their poverty rate

Because what if it was you being viewed under that
microscope labeled

Stereotype, discrimination, hatred

All the above

And I know we struggle with our own issues, but we are
so caught up in our own

That we can't simply pick up the phone

To call that friend that may be 3 seconds away from
pulling the trigger

2 seconds away from cutting a little deeper

1 second away...

The next day you're getting a phone call saying it's too
late

We're so caught up in our own world that we don't see
the resolve staring at us

Unity, equality, equity

It's time for us to adjust

Exterminate the unjust rules and laws destined to hold us
back

We have to pave our own destiny

Come together

Invite unity

So that we're staring in the face of

Hatred, stereotypes, discrimination

All the above

We know we are not alone.

...

MIGHT I HAVE A WORD?

By Patricyonna Rodgers

If you happen to fall upon this article, you might be a college student. If you are not, then I can assure you that we still have something in common — we are living. Therefore, this essay is also for you!

Life is a wondrous event that we are all gifted with. Throughout life, we experience ups and downs — some ups more than downs, some downs more than ups — at different periods. When we are happy, the world is

alright. However, sometimes we get stuck with some bad news that we do not know how to process, or an event occurs which devastates and saddens us.

Each of our situations is unique, but we all have something in common. We all experience a point of grief, sadness, or depression in our lives. Whatever you may call it, please keep going. Our lows do not make us. Our lows hit, and whatever it is tends to hit harder than expected, but we must keep going.

Time and time again, we hear about negative events, negative findings, and negative emotions. Time and time again, we must keep moving forward and push past it all. Throughout the negative, find a glimmer of hope. When there is not a glimmer to be found, please try. When you find yourself trying as hard as you can, know that you are not alone. Someone out there is feeling the same emotions you are.

Do not lose hope in yourself, in your life, or in humanity. You are needed in this world. Most importantly, you are wanted in this world. Therefore, you must keep going. The world wants and needs to see your smiling face.

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