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We would like to thank all the students who submitted an essay for consideration. We appreciate your hard work and encourage you to keep writing, using this rich, complex and valuable process to discover your voice as you respond to the people and world around you.

A special thank you to the English Department for publishing this journal. It is your vision to nurture and support our students that inspires them to develop their writing, using their words to express their individual and collective voices, as they discover what they know and what they need to learn.

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--The Committee for the *Journal of Student Writers*

Table of Contents

Narrative / Descriptive Writing

Angelica Escalante, “Crisis Averted, Education Inserted”	2
Raven Geneve Gomez, “The Origin of Passion”	5
Ivan Limon, “Unrequited Awkwardness”	9
Elia Montoya, “My Trip to Cuba”	13
Elias Palomino, “Libro de Milagros: Posole Verde”	16

Analytical/ Expository Writing

Rebecca Clausson, “A Leader to Success”	19
Jacqueline Rivas, “Culture: Its Values and Behaviors”	23
Alex Santa Ana, “Moving Out of the Cave”	27
Jovanny Vilchis, “Making a Difference among Young Minds”	33

Research Writing

Jhoanna Mae Mercado, “GMO: Why Label?”	37
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Angelica Escalante

Crises Averted Inspiration Inserted

Is having a midlife crisis possible at the age of 21? If so, the word would not contain the “mid” in front of “life”. Let’s say instead I had my first life crisis in my early 20’s, because although midlife crisis is an actual thing, I believe at different points in life a crisis is experienced. For me, it happened in the summer of 2014, when Nevada is roaring with dry desert heat, living alone in Sin City Las Vegas. I moved from California, where the weather goes from a chilly raining night, to a high burning summer heat like next day afternoon. I had plans to start my education, with goals towards building a solid career. When my plans came tumbling down that summer of 2014, I felt like a tumble weed rolling away onto the desert with depression and desperation. My inspiration for educational knowledge was nonexistent, until I met a woman who seemed as though she could move mountains with her fragile tiny, bony hands.

During the summer, when the sun was at its highest and its bright yellow rays would burn the skin, I would go down to the strip. Las Vegas Nevada’s old famous strip that is, where thousands from all over the world come to inhabit the tall beautiful luxurious hotels. I’d only walk down there during the week, when its streets were less crowded. I never expected to see a familiar face that hot summer week. Cynthia Gudiel, my old high school friend, was sitting in a round glass shimmering table outside a small patio Café. The opportunity to catch up with every detail of our lives since we last seen each other was everlasting. Laughing louder than a cheering crowd and just re-visiting old high school memories. Around her positive attitude and nostalgia she brought upon me the opportunity to move back to California opened like a large window when she offered me to reside with her. I did not move back with family, instead my old high school friend gave me a home to stay.

I now live in a small lime green, two bedroom home, a very humble home. Angelica Esparza, mother of my best friend is the head of the house. I remember her back in my teenage days, tall with glasses, and a little chubby. Today she looks very different. Still tall but thin and a bit dark skinned. She welcomed me with open arms, no questions asked. As days went by and she saw me struggling to find a job, she sat me down on her red mahogany rectangle kitchen table. My anxiety was at its worst that day, my body shaking like a tree on a very windy storm. She looked at me with a face full of concern and understanding. That day I had a meltdown, I told her every single detail of my past life and how I had not one ounce of inspiration to continue moving forward, all she did was stay quiet and nod in concern. When I finished, the first thing she told me in an angry stuttering voice, “running away is not the answer or solution to anything mamita”. And then she proceeded off to telling me her past 7 years.

She told me of her family’s problems first. Her voice was shaky as she told me of her husband’s abuse. As she told me how he would put his hands on her daughters her eyes glittered with tears full of guilt. It was only when she told me that she was so afraid of him to even stand up to him to protect her daughters, did those tears of hurt, resentment, and self-guilt started rolling down her bony cheeks. She told me things did not get any better, her husband spun out of control. They had lost everything, their house, their business and family. Then she told me of her career as a registered nurse. She told me she went back to school to get a career so she herself could get her daughters to move forward. She talked about her struggles, and how she wanted to just give up during her last semester of school. How her family told her to not give up, even though she was tired and crying from exhaustion. Her greatest obstacle was being born with defected kidneys. She had only one kidney that was struggling to sustain her, so she had to attend

dialysis four days out of the week. This is why her skinned darkend to a mocha color, and her body thinned out entirely. On top of that she had work, school and two daughters to take care.

When she finished telling me about her past seven years, she proceeded to telling me that I could do what she did. That I could too, go back to school and look for my reason to be. She opened my eyes with her life story. I have no children of my own, no abusive husband to hold me back. She was the only one who pushed me to pursue my educational goals. She did so by offering me a home with not rent to pay, to pay my books and even get me a car. She opened a window of opportunity that I had once closed because of my self-doubt and courage. She inspired my being here in Cerritos College to further my education. I always put in thought, the day I told her I signed up for classes, how she hugged me with great joy and told me in her stuttering soft caring voice how proud of me she was. For her, I will complete my goal, her compassion and will to move forward has filled my heart with a bursting sensation of self-motivation for success. She turned my crises, to a window of opportunity.

Raven Geneve Gomez

The Origin of Passion

Once you're in a state of dreaming, you don't hear a single thing. At this moment in time I'm thirteen and dreaming about happy girlish dreams, until I hear loud cries of pain echoing in my suburban childhood home in Sparks, Nevada. The only audible thing is my name "Raven, Raven!", repeating in a continuous chorus of shrieks. Slipping out of my bunk bed, I dart out from my lilac colored room toward the source of the ruckus. I think to myself, "Where is that noise coming from?" Right away I rationalize that the sounds are coming from the kitchen since it sounds far.

Racing through the mint green hallway, I pass by picture frames of my entire family hung upon the walls. Each photo is a different size and shape, but the majority of the photographs showcase my twelve-year-old, female cousin, Alex. Immediately, I reach the living room where my family and I spend most of our time watching the latest Filipino dramas. In our living room we own an old stereo system that sits atop a wooden cabinet and besides that sits our giant screen T.V. that weighs a ton. There are two dark green identical couches sitting adjacently from each other and the curtains are drawn, revealing ominous light from outside. The clouds are surrounding the sky on this day in 2011 and the clouds are not giving the blossoming flowers a chance to grow.

As I shuffle into the kitchen, I witness a scene that is difficult to forget; it's as if I'm a detective just arriving at the crime scene. There is a scarlet red substance that covers the floor and also decorates the khaki pants and the blue collared shirt she wears. Her body is in an awkward C shape but luckily there are no visible bones. The brown, curly locks on her head are tangled and her glasses are bent from the accident. She's lying helplessly on the ground crying

out “Help!” I gingerly approach my grandmother who is seventy-three years old while she’s lying on her side on the ground with a pool of blood surrounding her face.

The kitchen area is orange with all the usual appliances and in a corner of the kitchen we have a washer and dryer. Now that I see her lying in the middle of the floor; she is not the same person I have always known. My grandma has always been a short, brown haired, Filipino woman with a feisty attitude and a loud mouth. At times, she intimidates me with her ferocity, but I respect her and care about her nonetheless. I feel a mix of emotions as I take in the whole sight. At first, I am paralyzed in place trying to register the scene in front of me. For a second, I feel squeamish but I didn’t want her to see that so I try my best to seem calm. Then I feel fear. I fear that there might be severe damage to her head and that she may not recover from this, that I may not have a chance to save her. I call out, ‘Lola!’ because it means grandma in our language. I ask her what happened and she tells me the story of how she ended up on the floor.

As she’s telling me her story, I am cleaning up the crimson red goo off of the floor as quickly as I can. I rush back to my bedroom and wake up my two sisters so that they can help me lift Lola onto a chair. All three of us work together to get her up. Lola works at Wal-Mart and she’s supposed to work today as a people greeter. They’re the ones that stand by the door all day and welcome customers. She asks me to get the telephone so that she can call her boss and call out for the day. The second phone call I make is to her son, my uncle, Michael. I tell my uncle Lola’s story of how she ended up on the floor.

“Well, what happened was that I was walking around the kitchen, making myself some breakfast until I felt some bone cracking in my leg. After that, I felt too weak to stand and started falling toward the ground. My nose started bleeding non-stop. My nose hurts a lot so I think that I may have broken my nose,” my Lola explains.

“Well why didn’t you call 911?!” my uncle yells at me.

“Lola says that it would be too expensive to call them and that she was still breathing and just needed to get her nose fixed.” I reiterate.

“Ok fine, we’ll be right there and take her to Urgent Care. If something like this happens again you HAVE to call 911, got it?”

“Yes Tito Michael, I understand.”

Some time later, we enter the clinic and wait patiently for a doctor to see her.

My uncle and my dad go in with her to find out if she’s really ok. The doctor’s findings are similar to what my grandma suspected, she did have a broken nose but the doctor also diagnosed her with a condition. She has a condition called osteoporosis, which is when the bones of our body start to become brittle and weak and is prone to fracture easily.

After that horrendous fall, my grandmother only got weaker as time passed by. Although she kept taking her vitamins and drinking beverages designed to increase bone density, she never got back to her previous state. Seeing her health decline upset me and devastated me because she raised me and my siblings when our mother wasn’t there, and I couldn’t do anything to make her better. The time came when she could no longer perform tasks that even a child could do. Our roles had reversed, we became the parent and she was the one that needed a lot of attention. We would bathe her, feed her, dress her, and wheel her around to wherever she needed to be. I became her gladiator who was trying to keep her from harm. I administered her medications that were prescribed by her doctor and I knew each name along with the dosage and what it was for. Lola always wanted to have a nurse in the family, so I decided to make her dream come true.

I enrolled in a short nursing course and learned all the basic nursing skills and during my training, I get a call. My dad told me that Lola was in a critical condition and was on life support.

At the time, my dad and Lola were living in the Philippines while I was here in California so I had no way to see her. She took her last breath weeks before I took my certification exam. When I took the exam I prayed to her and told her that I was doing it for her. Getting my license was a bittersweet moment because, on one hand, I was ecstatic that I had received it, but on the other hand, my grandma was not there to see my accomplishment and be proud of me.

Lola made me realize that nursing was not an easy job. In order to be a good nurse, you have to be passionate about helping others and to treat them as if they were part of your family. I never knew that I was capable of compassion until this happened. I will never forget her first fall, the time when she needed me the most. I will never forget how much I loved her.

Ivan Limon

Unrequited Awkwardness

It was my senior year of high school, it was my last to months before graduating and I was antsy to begin my life after high school. My good friend Manny couldn't wait either he decided to invite me to one the parties he was invited to. "Come through man it'll be tight," he asked. I doubted it. I was an introvert, a hermit on a mountain. "Yeah man, I'm taking Laura too." "Laura?" I asked nonchalantly. Laura was Manny's girlfriend, I had a secret crush for a long time. She was very pretty, soft light brown eyes and sharp juttred cheekbones, cute braces and long feathery hair. She had been with Manny since the summer of last year. I was always attracted to her but it was Manny who had the stones to ask her out. I wasn't mad, I probably wouldn't have been able to handle the relationship. "Alright, but I need a ride." He chuckled and said "Ill come get you at 8 okay."

I admit that I was excited to attend my first party and I was also glad I had a friend like Manny. He was always the one to help me get out of my shell he was what I always wanted to be. Good looking, intelligent, charismatic and most of all kind. To say the least Manny was a true friend. So that Saturday night he came by my house in his 1993 BMW 325i, a gift from his dad. I was dressed in the nicest pair of jeans I owned and a black Lacoste polo shirt I borrowed from my brother. Manny unlocked the door and said, "Apurate, guey." ("Hurry dude") I smiled. "Thanks man." I noticed Laura sitting in the back seat she was wearing a pretty beige dress and light makeup. "Hey Laura" I stammered. She smiled and cheerfully said "Sup' Ivan" eager to speak to her I kookily stuttered "Ready to party then?" She just chuckled and said "You're such a dork!" I flushed with color and smiled back. "Vamonos" (Lets go) said Manny bringing me back down to earth. I climbed into the seat in front and we were off.

I have never drunk, smoked, snorted or even wanted to do any substance in my life. In the car now knowing what I might have been in for I was a bit worried. I told Manny how I felt. “If you don’t want to go just say it and Ill leave you home.” Laura interjected and touched my arm softly “Please go, it’ll be fun.” I was defeated and at the same time enervated. How could I say no to those lovely eyes? “Ok” was all I could say.

We arrive to an enormous Mansion in the North part of town. It belonged to a football player’s parents who were out of town or were negligent of their kid. It had a least 6 bedrooms 3 and a half baths and a Jacuzzi plus pool. The houses entire living room was larger than my own home. I hardly knew the football player but we met him at the door shaking my hand like we were old friends. We continued into the flat and we could hear and feel the music vibrating through the walls, a sea of people congregated through out the house. Some of the people seemed out of it, and others looked as though they haven’t slept for days. I recognized know one and the three of us walked over to the pool area.

A remix of Lana del Rey’s Summertime Sadness was playing in the background and I gazed at the lights reflecting off the bean shaped pool. Manny and Laura had already gone off to do who knows what and I stayed behind on the lounge chair nonchalantly on my phone. I caught glances of Manny and Laura making out, I couldn’t help feeling a twinge of jealousy. I look away and try to focus on the music, now a remix of Martin Garrix that I detested. A couple people that I know stop by and say hi offering me a drink that I refuse, I’m getting bored with the music and lights when I hear my name excitedly called, “Ivan!” It was Laura coming to my rescue. “Hey” I responded enthusiastically. “You know I always see you at school and you never say hi to me! Why is that? I think you’re cute!” She said also this very fast and very drunkenly. I was both horrified and speechless. “I’m sorry about that” was all I could spurt out. I

pretended to forget about the whole spiel, but instead she went on to tell me how she thought I was cute and funny in a weird way. I kept looking over her shoulder and checking to see if Manny was going to pop out and say: surprise! She edged closer and closer to me. It seemed she was trying to kiss me and I was sorely tempted to allow her to do that. At this moment I am paralyzed, I see the freckles on her button nose and the galaxy like irises of her light brown eyes. But what happened next snapped me back to my senses; her breath reeked of cheap alcohol and stale cigarettes. I pushed her back as gently as possible and here expression changed to one of offense.

“What are you doing?” she exclaimed. “Nothing what are you doing?” I rebuked. I thought about Manny and what a horrible friend I had been. I was overcome with guilt and could sense that Laura was too. She looked at me with one last look of disappointment and scurried away into the house. I was flustered, I did not know what to do. Manny my best friend had no idea. I was overcome with sadness and selfishness. I did not want to tell him what had happened because that would mean the possibility of sacrificing our very good friendship. I was torn and not wanting to face Manny, I cowardly walked the three-mile trip home.

I woke up the next morning feeling as heavy as a ton of bricks, I had a headache and could feel the beginnings of a nasty cold. I heard the ding from my cellphone and saw that it was Manny. He wrote, You good bro? I wanted to tell him and at the same time I knew what was at stake. My friendship of not just one but two people I cared about. Any girls? He typed. I laughed aloud at the absurdity of my situation. I replied back No man nothing, I'll see you Monday and thanks for taking me.

Monday comes around and its like any other day. Manny and Laura are hugging and kissing like as if the events of Friday never happened. Laura and me never spoke about what

happened and we never told Manny, nor did he find out. Manny and Laura broke up a year after the party, I never found out the cause. I'm filled with guilt about it to this day, although it happened nearly 4 years ago. I haven't partied since that day and Manny and me still keep in touch and play video games from time to time. I guess these kind of things really do work themselves out.

Elia Montoya

My Trip to Cuba

Our culture has shaped us to believe money will give us happiness but other cultures, know that money does not buy happiness. Cultures that live in poverty tend to live happier with the little that they have. I was able to witness this when I took a trip to Cuba. Cubans live a slow paced life full of dance and music. In every restaurant they played live music and everyone danced along. Every street I walked through there were kids running around playing soccer and the older folks enjoying a friendly conversation with a mojito in one hand and a cigar on the other. Everyone looked like they had no worries. This trip was an eye opener and taught me to appreciate cultural values over materialistic values.

The plane landed at La Havana, Cuba Monday morning at seven o'clock. By the time I got my luggage and went through customs, the blazing sun was already felt. The heat was unbearable, I was having trouble adjusting. A man by the name Ernesto picked us up from the airport and drove us to the Candy House. The drive took about thirty five minutes but it seemed longer because the Ernesto took his time. I used this time to take a power nap. We finally arrived to the Candy House where Candy welcomed us with open arms. She gave us the keys to the house and showed us around. After, she kindly offered to cook a meal for us for a low price, since food was not included in our package. We were hardly at the house but Candy made it a pleasant stay by being attentive to all of our needs.

After recharging our batteries and cold shower, we were ready to hit the town. As soon as I stepped out of the house, I could feel the heat and humidity had worsen; I started sweating from every inch of my body. It was a twenty minute drive to the city and to get a little feel of the real deal we decided to ride the bus with the locals. At every stop the bus picked up

new passengers and there was not a single person who did not give us a puzzled look. I felt like an alien from outer space, like we were some exotic creatures they had never seen before.

Although we were peculiar to them, they did not hesitate to assist us in giving us directions to get around. Despite the fact that they were eager to guide us, they were not always the best at giving directions. As the bus was heading to the opposite side of where we wanted to go, we decided to get off at the following stop. Stepping out of the bus, a boy from inside yells out the window and asks if we are carrying a camera. As I nod yes, he pulls his friend closer to him and both with a huge smile across their face pose for a picture.

Fifteen minutes had passed by and the waiter calmly came holding a tray with five mojitos. The ice in the mojito melted within two minutes and as I drank my watered down mojito, another fifteen minutes went by. Finally, the food arrived. The fragrant aroma of the stewed beef made my mouth watery before I even took a taste out of it. The meat was so tender and savory, it was a delight beyond words. The live music in the background was uplifting. The musical notes of the saxophone, piano, drums, and guitar echoed in the entire restaurant creating a heartwarming ambience. Everyone in the restaurant, from the patrons, musicians and even the workers seemed to be unconcerned about time passing by; everyone carried a carefree attitude.

After lunch, we take another ride on the bus to see where it leads us. We end up at La Plaza de La Revolucion. On the side of the street we see an extensive row of classic cars lined up. These were used as taxis. As we approached the cars, the owners of the cars did not waste any time to try to convince us to take a ride. We were easily convinced to take a ride to La Bodeguita del Medio. Squeezing through the crowd to get inside the bar area, I heard a delicate singing voice near my ear, almost like a whisper. I turned back and a lady held up a bag of caramelized nuts for me to purchase. It amazed me how she had lured me with her voice. At the

end of the bar, there is another lady busily sketching on her notepad. Soon enough she comes up to us and flashes a caricature that is supposed to look like one of us. I started admiring how not one single person begged for money, instead, they offered some kind of craft in exchange.

This trip to Cuba made me appreciate cultural differences. Coming from a culture that has a thirst for material possessions, never did I imagine there was a culture who looked beyond materialism. I was able to see how Cubans expressed their happiness with what they have and welcomed tourists with a good-natured spirit. Whether being at a fancy sit down restaurant or in the back of a bright blue 1950 Chevrolet, music is always present, following in a harmonious manner as to heal the soul. This trip has taught me to be grateful for the simpler things and aware that we do not need possessions to be happy.

Elias Palomino

Libro de Milagros: Posole Verde

Inside my Abuelita Luisa's old worn down leather recipe notebook read perhaps one of the most magical recipes that I have ever come across; and in the tenth page of her diary or as I like to call it *El Libro de Milagros*, it read, "*Posole Verde.*"

Growing up I remember going with my Abuelita to the local grocery store to purchase ingredients for the meal she was going to prepare that given day. Being the exquisite chef that she was, my Abuelita would only use fresh ingredients and did not dare to use anything else because she feared that it would ruin her reputation in the kitchen. Every ingredient had to be ripe and fresh because my Abuelita insisted that it made a difference in her cooking. After all the shopping was complete, preparation was the next step to be executed. Preparation was my favorite step because I was able to observe how a recipe was made. It was in this step that I got introduced to many diverse aromas in my Abuelita's cuisine and out of the many aromas that I was able to experience in her kitchen, my favorite was when she would make posole verde. One of the steps she would take in preparing posole verde was placing *chile poblanos* over the stove fire to roast. This would cause the *chiles* to gracefully sizzle and let out a beautiful aroma that would overflow from the house and onto the front yard. Neighbors that would pass by would often stop and bask in the aroma and holler, "It smells good Señora Luisa, when are you going to invite us over?". Their comments would make my Abueita smile; she loved being complimented on her food because to her it meant that she had impacted someones life by the way of her cooking.

Today, whenever posole verde served I recall many memories that I have made over the years with my family and friends. Posole verde is only served in special occasions such as

family gatherings—its impact goes beyond its flavor and aroma. I love how this dish brings family and friends together each harmoniously enjoying each others company and each uniquely preparing this delicacy to their liking. The posole is served with chicken, hominy, and a delicious broth that has been made from various spices and earthy green ingredients that give it its color and thus its name. And though not much needs to be added to the perfectly seasoned posole, everyone has the choice of adding extra ingredients such as lettuce, radishes, cucumbers, diced onion, and freshly squeezed lime juice. It amazes me how everyone uniquely prepares their posole to their own liking and still achieve the same result of comfort and satisfaction! I like to think of this result as being therapeutical because everyone is warmed by the perfectly seasoned broth that gracefully hugs their bodies. This amazing effect lead me to realize that there had to be another ingredient that was not listed in my Abuelita's *Libro de Milagros*; something supernatural that had the ability to spark the same reaction in everyone.

One day out of curiosity I asked my Abuelita if she had a secret ingredient that she added to the posole; one that was not listed in the pages of her book. After convincing my Abuelita that I could be trusted in keeping a secret, she smiled at me and said in a warm voice, "*El secreto es amor mijo.*" I was shocked by her response because I couldn't believe that something so simple and yet complex could be incorporated to the recipe. I took some time to observe how my Abuelita would did it and I realized that it was true. I found that incorporating love to her cooking wasn't something physical that could be perceived but rather an attitude of excellence that she carried. She achieved this excellence by washing her ingredients with gentleness, chopping and dicing with precision, and adding spices and seasoning with perfect proportions. Her attitude of excellence in the kitchen made me realize that love really was the secret that

made a difference in her cooking. It was the very reason as to why others kept coming back to the dinner table time and time again.

After enjoying many dishes from *El Libro de Milagros*, I learned that food has the ability of bringing family and friends together as my Abuelita did with her posole verde. It was through her example that I learned that love is vital in the kitchen because it prompts the chef to pursue excellence for the simple reason of seeing others satisfied. And even though my Abuelita has gone to be in a better place, she left with my family a legacy of impactful recipes that are to be shared from generation to generation—recipes that are hidden away in the pages of *El Libro de Milagros*.

Rebecca Clausson

A Leader to Success

There are many factors that contribute to making success possible, but some of the most important ones come from a person's culture. Culture provides people with traditions, values, and beliefs that aid him or her in life, leaving the person prepared for when obstacles come their way. In Christopher Quinn's film, *God Grew Tired of Us*, brings light onto The Lost Boys of Sudan who had fled from a war in Sudan to seek for a place of safety and peace. After years of walking to find peace the boys settled at a camp in Kakuma. Some of these lost boys are given the opportunity to relocate to the United States to be able to live a better life. One Lost Boy specifically, John Bul Dau, who had been a type of leader for the boys, was given that opportunity to go to the United States, where he worked multiple jobs, went to school, and eventually founded the John Dau foundation. Because of John Bul Dau's circumstances, he had to take on a huge leadership role at a young age which provided him with a foundation to drive his success.

John Bul Dau felt that holding onto his traditions was a big part of being a leader. Dau was relocated to the United States where he did not have family or many friends with him; being on his own in a new society could be incredibly lonely. In the film, Dau expresses concern for the younger lost boys who came to America because they were dressing differently and losing sight of who they are and where they came from; worrying that they wouldn't succeed. Dau believes that continuing with the traditions from Kakuma would help them feel less alone and continue on to their path to success. For Dau, keeping these traditions kept him from giving up and taught him how to talk and be there for people. In Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*, the author explores many ideas that could give an explanation to why people become so successful. One of

those ideas included the way people were raised, that being taught how to talk to people, or having practical intelligence matters. Gladwell states, "... social savvy is knowledge. It's a set of skills that have to be learned. It has to come from somewhere, and the place where we seem to get these kinds of attitudes and skills is from our families" (102). Dau came from a culture that had nothing but each other. Because Dau and the other lost boys travelled for years starving trying to find a safe place away from the war; they had to rely on each other to stay sane, always talking and being there for one another. Dau may have not been taught the same type of "social savvy" people in the United States learn, but because of his culture's values, he was given the skill to be compassionate, strong, and there for people who are down and those skills are what makes a leader.

Being this leader that held on so tight to traditions, provided Dau with a strong sense of value to his culture and a desire to give his people a better life. Dau always took pride in his culture; everything he strived for was to give back to his people to end the suffering they are going through. In Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld's "What Drives Success?" the authors illustrate how culture can be a major influence on how a person's success is motivated. In the article, it explains how children from different cultures are motivated; for example, "A central finding in a study of more than 5,000 immigrant's children led by the sociologist Ruben G. Rumbaut was how frequently the kids felt 'motivated to achieve' because of an acute sense of obligation to redeem their parents' sacrifices"(Chua and Rubenfeld). Dau's parents weren't necessarily why he felt the need to succeed; it was his people. He felt obligated to do everything humanly possible to find ways to help his friends and family back in his homeland. He longed to find an end to the war of Sudan, to give his people back in Kakuma money so they could live; he eventually started up multiple foundations and a clinic to help his people. Dau, out of many

were given the opportunity to go to the United States to live a better life; so he felt the need to use the opportunity to give back to the ones who didn't get the same chance.

Like any leader, Dau feels like he was given this life and leading position for a specific reason given by God. In the film, the Lost Boys held their religion close to them, and like the title of the film, many of the boys wondered if their God was tired of them. But for Dau, he believed otherwise; that their God just had a plan, and had much more in store for them. In "What Drives Success?" Chua and Rubinfeld talk about other successful groups and give an example of a religious group and how they feel; "Mormons believe they are 'gods in embryo' placed on earth to lead the world to salvation...." It seems that many who are successful and have a close relationship to their religion, have this kind of answer to why they are supposed to be leaders. While in Dau's case, because of all of the hardship and horrible circumstances he was put in, he held onto his religion to help give him a reason to continue to strive for a better world for his people. God having a plan for him seemed to be the only reasonable answer to why he and his people went through all that they have. This gave Dau the sense that he was chosen to lead this type of revolution to give his people what they deserve.

This leadership role may have been Dau's foundation to succeed, but it also gave him a sense of fear that he could lose everything once again. Although he became a strong leader for all of the Lost Boys because of everything he has gone through, Dau was still that young boy who was torn away from his family and was forced to leave everything he knew as home. While in "What Drives Success?" the authors illustrate that every successful person has three specific traits; superiority complex, insecurity and impulse control. The authors write, "...people feeling simultaneously superior and insecure...it's precisely this unstable combination that generates drive: a chip on the shoulder, a goading need to prove oneself" (Chua and Rubinfeld). While it

is notable that Dau's leadership role gives him the superior sense; his fear can be described as a type of insecurity. Dau utilizes his fear to push himself as much and as far as he can to find a future where him and his people will no longer lose everything they love. Dau's leadership and fear, together powers his desire to succeed or prove to his people that there is a better world out there for them all.

All success comes at a price, something may seem like the absolute worst thing in the world right now, and it may even be; but that one horrible thing can lead to many good things and even success. It just depends on how one learns from the experience and utilizes it.

Jacqueline Rivas

Culture: Its Values and Behaviors

Culture exists in the lives of every human being; it transmits from one generation to another, and their culture can sometimes be seen in the clothes they wear, the food they eat, and in the music they listen to. However, Ken Robinson, The author of *The Element*, has a (slightly) different meaning to culture. Robinson defines culture as “the values and forms of behavior that characterize different social groups” (148). For example, Baseball fans are social groups that make part of this culture. They share the value of wearing the logo of their favorite team and attending to their games, and they also have this behavior of cheering on their team when they play. Baseball fans share the same value, the feeling of belonging in a community where the devotion and fascination for the sport (and its players) is absolute.

Baseball fans are a culture in which they share the passion for the game, and they enjoy cheering their team whether some fans practice the sport or not. For many fans, watching the sport is just as enthusiastic as playing it; this culture brings people together because they all have a connection with each other, and that connection is their passion for the sport, especially when they get together to watch their team play. Ken Robinson states, “connecting with people who share the same passion affirms that you’re not alone; that there are others like you and that, while many might not understand your passion, some do. It doesn’t matter whether you like the people as individuals, or even the work they do. It’s perfectly possible that you don’t. What matters most is having validation for the passion you have in common”(116). For these people, the sport is part of their lives, so finding groups that share the same interest gives them a feeling of belonging, and that is what makes this social group their own culture.

These baseball fans pick up on valuables that they see on other fans, such as collecting bubbleheads, souvenirs, and cards. There are many groups of fans out there that love to go to the games to collect bubbleheads and buy souvenirs, while other fans love to visit antique stores in hope of finding old and valuable baseball cards. These groups share the value of collecting things from the sport they feel so passionate about. Robinson wrote, “The power of groups is that they validate the common interests of their members” (146). Of course if it is more than one person feeling the same interest for baseball, or its players, the fans feel that connection that makes them a part of a social group. Feeling a connection to a social group is huge, especially if they bump into one another at a game or an antique store buying baseball collectible items. Robinson states, “We don’t choose our families, but we do choose our friends, and we often choose them as a way of expanding our sense of identity beyond the family. As a result, the pressure to conform to the standards and expectations of friends and other social groups can be intense” (142). It is the same for baseball fans, they cannot choose their families but they do get to choose the kind of friends or social groups they want to make a part of. These social groups have more impact to them because they feel that they are a part of their own different culture. As fans, they interact with others to share their interest of collecting every valuable item, and aim to get the biggest collection of bubbleheads, souvenirs, and baseball cards. This is what makes them feel like they are a part of a community, a community in which they bond (as fans that have passion for the game and its players).

Being part of the baseball fan culture means staying dedicated to the team. Having dedication to the game and their team, gives the fans a social affiliation in which they can openly share their interests to other people that feel the same way about the sport. In *The Element*, Robinson mentioned, “Sports teams make fans feel as though they are part of a vast, powerful

organization. This is especially true when the teams are winning. Look around at the end of any sports season, and you'll notice team jerseys of that season's champion sprouting all over the street, even in places far distant from the team's home city" (128). Being a dedicated fan makes other fans feel like they are a part of a family with the difference that they might not know each other well, but knowing each other well is the least of their worries. They just want to be in a crowd that enjoys the sport as much as they do, and know that they can count on them to cheer on their team to victory.

Making part of this culture gives the fans a chance of forgetting about the problems out in the world, and making them get in their zone of happiness. For fans, the game (baseball games) helps them to relieve some stress and enjoy (with other fans) some good 3 hours of baseball. This culture of social group unites to share their passion for the game, and although people cannot stand 3 hours of baseball, these dedicated fans do. As Robinson stated, "When you're connecting this way with your deep interests and natural energy, time tends to move quickly, more fluidly" (90) and this is what this culture experiences when they get together to watch their favorite team play, it all makes part of the fascination this community has for the passion to the sport.

Everyone belongs to a social group that makes their own unique culture; it is just a matter of figuring out where it is that everyone belongs. One thing that is for sure is that no one has to feel alone, just by communicating with people and opening up they will share their interests that a couple of people might just have in common. It is then, when similar likes and interests are involved that people make their culture, and bond.

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Alex Santa Ana

Moving Out of the Cave

The story “Allegory of the Cave” narrates about the imprisoned in a dark cave since their childhood. It was a dark wall, nowhere to go and no scenery to view. They had no knowledge to gain, except for the shadows they saw on the wall, their illusions. It is ironic to them when a prisoner departs from the cave. Eventually, the freed prisoner returns to the cave and ridiculed by the others. Their norm were only illusions. Plato categorized the story through three movements, in the cave, moving out of the cave, and returning to the cave. The two short stories “Superman and Me” by Sherman Alexie and “Fourth of July” by Audre Lorde are related to “Allegory of the Cave” by Plato in terms of symbolism and standing up for their beliefs. Alexie and Lorde gave insights about how themselves who belonged in a subordinate group and eventually broke out of their chains and stood up to education and obtaining an enlightened mind. It is important to have an enlightened mind and view reality as the real world rather than concealed illusions. In addition, it is important to share knowledge to others who may value it, with the risk of being ridiculed for it.

According to the short story “Superman and me,” it is a story about a Native American, Sherman Alexie, who enjoyed reading books by learning to read observing his father. The short story “Superman and Me” by Sherman Alexie, he acknowledges, “My father, who is one of the few Indians who went to Catholic school on purpose” (16). Unfortunately, Indians would not even dream of reading and writing because they did not want to assimilate to the American culture. The American way of life was thinking intellectually and a good problem solver. In addition, they did not have role models who possessed those characteristics. The other Indians, “prisoners,” who kept Alexie trapped in the cave were apathy in regards of improving

themselves academically and improving their way of life. Therefore, the “cave” represents the reservation and the other Indians. Fortunately, there were a few Indians who valued Alexie’s enlightenment. “A smart Indian is a dangerous person,” writes Sherman Alexie by comparing himself to traditional Indians, “widely feared and ridiculed by Indians and non-Indians alike” (17). An enlightened Indian is considered to be a cultural betrayer. The “shadows on the wall” were the way they viewed an Indian who is enlightened as a negative characteristic that would cause their culture to demolish over time. The “chains” were the defiance of being ignorant. Therefore, Sherman’s plan was to shine the light in hopes that the prisoners would exit the cave and discover the new world. The new world was beyond the shadows, it was reality.

Alexie made his move to depart from the cave when he developed an interest in reading and writing when he observed his father, who was his “mentor.” His father kept many reading materials around the household. He learned to read a Superman comic book. It is a very distinctive way when learning to read. Sherman Alexie notes, “Superman is breaking down the door” (17). He observed Superman as his hero who broke down the barrier that led him to success. In addition to his father, Superman played a role as Alexie’s “mentor”. That barrier was the negative stereotype of Indians who are unenlightened, and Alexie wanted to get past that. By his motivation and effort to save himself, he eventually exited the cave to discover the new world. He was a select few of Indians with the characteristic of being educated.

After Alexie discovered the new world, he was eager to save the lives of other Indians by sharing his knowledge and enlightenment in hopes they would get past the barrier. Unfortunately, Alexie’s enlightenment was very brief and eventually lured back into the cave because the other Indians chose to stay stagnant with their way of thinking and refused to assimilate to the American culture. Although he shared his ideas about reading and being a

creative writer, the prisoners stayed inside the cave and had negative insights about the prisoners who valued Alexie's enlightenment. The prisoners just ridiculed him and refused to discover changes in their way of life. Sherman hoped that other Indians moved away from the cave, he could change the negative stereotype into a positive one. Unfortunately, they returned to the cave and stuck to their old ways when Alexie attempted to lure them out. Instead of preserving their culture, it was tarnished. Leaving the cave was close, but no cigar.

The short story "Fourth of July," it is a story that tells about Audre Lorde and her sister Phyllis, who experienced racism one summer, but was unaware that it was occurring. Therefore, she was trapped inside the cave with nowhere to go. "My mother and father believed that they could best protect their children from the realities of race in America and the fact of American racism by never giving them name," Audre Lorde notes in her essay "The Fourth of July" by concealing reality, "much less discussing their nature" (255). They were the prisoners who were unenlightened about racial segregation. The cave was Lorde's belief that she lived in a world of equality. She was in a world where "nothing is what it seems." Unfortunately, it was only an illusion. The chains kept her from discovering the outside world because her parents concealed the fact that racism was occurring. "I learned later that Phyllis's high school senior class trip had been to Washington," writes Audre Lorde in her essay, about a situation that her sister experienced segregation, "but the nuns had given back her deposit in private, explaining to her that the class, all of whom were white, except Phyllis," (255). That is one situation of segregation and shadows on the wall. The nun was shielding Phyllis' eyes by covering up the truth. Another time is when the waitress/server turned them down to dine in at a restaurant. Instead, she suggested that they can take the food to go. Although the waitress had a good conscience, she

needed to abide to the policy. The puppeteers were the parents, the nun, and the waitress because they concealed the fact that they were living in a segregated world.

After encountering situations of segregation, Lorde began to become curious of these occurrences and considered to exit the cave. Whenever Lorde asked her father about it, he explained about segregation in America. Therefore, her father took the role as her mentor because he was not secretive and admitted what reality was. However, he would only discuss it when she asked about situations that related to segregation. The waitress also played the role of a mentor when Lorde and her family encountered that situation in the ice cream parlor. Her body language suggested that segregation was occurring. Her mentors admitted that her world was nothing is what it seems. After these few incidents, it is now clear that Lorde will see beyond the inside the cave, no matter how hard her puppeteers attempt to conceal the truth outside the cave. Although the “puppeteers”, her parents, in this story kept Lorde from leaving the cave, they had a good conscience. Her parents thought it would be in her best interest not to move away from the cave. Lorde could not resist being trapped in the cave, so she was ready to break out of the chains to make an exit from the cave.

Despite her motive of moving out of the cave permanently, Lorde unexpectedly returns. After she stepped into the sunlight, Lorde got infuriated of what she discovered of the new world. Unlike Lorde, her parents and two sisters steered away without any motive to step out of the cave. They knew what was outside, but refused to admit it. In her eyes, America was an awful place to reside. She encountered inequality and segregation. Therefore, she resided back into the cave when she wrote her essay “Fourth of July.” She discussed about segregation and inequality she encountered one summer at D.C. Her thoughts about how America is too “white” and displeased her eyes.

The three movements by Plato, in the cave, moving out of the cave, and returning to the cave were explained in the essays written by Lorde and Alexie. These movements described the importance of thinking critically and sharing one's enlightened mind with others who would value and respect it. Unfortunately, people who share this enlightenment must consider the risk for being ridiculed for it. For example, some refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture/group or refuse to accept reality. However, that should not stop people with minds of enlightenment. Having an enlightened mind means one is an effective problem solver, self-confidence, and think outside the box.

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Jovanny Vilchis

Making a Difference among Young Minds

Since the creation of Motion Pictures, society's current standpoint has constantly been reflected on the big screen time and time again. These films whether they may be action, horror, or drama they tend to mirror change in societal views concerning war, love, race, family and other issues transpiring around the world. Drama films in this case can reflect our society realistically at our worst, our best, or somewhere in the middle. In today's society education is a must, but not everyone has that luxury, and those who do are taught by professionals- teachers. In this day and age, there are all sorts of educators, the ones who just teach as a job while the truly passionate ones go the extra mile for their students. Films have brought us heart moving and inspiring stories such as *Freedom Writers* (2007), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and *Dead Poets Society* (1989) that portray the passionate and inspirational teacher. With film styles changing over time, the concept of watching a teacher passionately unifying, teaching and inspiring their students is nothing but incredible; society values these teacher drama films because they are encouraging and uplifting.

When films show different groups of people coming together to unite as one at the hands of a strong teacher it is viewed as an extraordinary feat. In the 2007 film *Freedom Writers* the movie itself can reflect some of society's racial tension among students in a classroom, who are later brought together by their teacher. Hilary Swank plays as Erin Gruwell first year teacher at a Long Beach high school that wants to impact the lives of young students after watching the L.A. riots. Gruwell commits to unifying her students through education. She assigns her students to write a journal and write about their lives, to tell the story of their hardships, losses, the happiest moments in life, and their goals. We in society know that when trying to prove a point we

sometimes need to be hard and realistic to get through to someone. She uses the Holocaust as an example to show all the racial and gang related fighting will bring nothing but hatred and sadness, with them leaving nothing behind but their cold dead corpses. The classroom receives a new perspective, discovering they are capable of being someone in life, and growing close to one another, despite the past racial tension. Society can see that if you're dedicated and passionate to make a difference you will achieve greatness. The classroom's performance increased greatly with Gruwell who prepared her students to graduate high school and several attending college being the first in their families. Gruwell's character is a prime example of the few caring teachers who encourage and unify students through education.

Societal views on these amazing teachers have been portrayed in films for a while, one notably in 1988 with the release of *Stand and Deliver* where an educator is strongly passionate to refuse giving up on his students education. Like a true educator Jaime Escalante played by Edward James Olmos is an example of how a teacher should be, with having confidence in his teaching ability and the belief of the potential his students actually possess. In this Academy nominated film Mr. Escalante switches to teaching math at one of the poorest performing schools in East L.A. He gives Angel one of his troubled student's time and time again second chances because he believes in the potential he has for learning math. In another case, he goes out of his way to speak to the father of a student to convince him that his daughter is really bright, is better off finishing high school and going to college instead of being employed in the family restaurant. We, in society are mostly selfish, but when an educator comes along to ensure his students receive the opportunity to a successful future they move heaven and earth leaving us exhilarated. He is determined to tap into the hidden potential of his class, he prepares them to take AP Calculus by their senior year. He devotes himself completely so his class can excel in their

academics. Working through all of summer with them while staying after school extra time and Saturday mornings. His students take the test with every single one of them passing which arouses suspicion because such a feat has never been accomplished before. He goes down to the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to fight for his students, so their scores can be acknowledged. The ETS gives the students the option to retake the test with only a day to review the entire material. Society appreciates the idea of someone other than a parent fighting for their children out in the real world. After retaking it they once again show they passed with no gimmicks and for the following years Jaime has more students take and pass the exam. This tells us that in our society that a committed talented high skilled educator can teach and shape students into being great.

Sometimes in order to find the strength to pursue what makes us happy we need an inspiring teacher to show us the way. The year 1989 brought us a riveting Drama of pure inspiration known as *Dead Poets Society*. In this film Robin Williams portrays renowned educator John Keating in his first year teaching at Welton Academy. Keating teaching English, uses poetry to inspire his students to think for themselves and to view the world in a different way. He uses Todd a shy student lacking in confidence and brings him in front of the class to devise a poem at that very moment. Guiding Todd for a short while he leaves his side for the entire class to see him express a deep moving poem. Keating advising him to never forget the moment, giving Todd an ounce of self-belief. Society values these moments where a young person grows and experiences greatness which is brought upon by the helping hand of a good mentor- just as how Todd experienced this with Professor Keating. Keating not only inspires Todd but also a student named Neil, who is interested in acting but has been shut down by his father to take on any extracurricular activities. Keating teaching his students the phrase “carpe

diem” which translates to “seize the day” ushers a movement in them to chase for their goals and dreams. Neil sneaks under his fathers and the academy’s radar to pursue his love for acting in a local play. On the opening night of his play, he is seen conquering the stage and receiving a standing ovation for his performance. Upon putting Keating’s teachings to practice, Neil is seen living his dream and achieving true happiness during that moment in time. People constantly say to follow your dreams and to be happy is what life is all about, but there are times when we are too afraid. In life parents don’t agree indefinitely with their children’s aspirations, but what they don’t understand is their child’s happiness is at stake. The few number of teachers in today’s society know pursuing a great career is ideal, but happiness is what we live for and that’s what they try to get their students to see.

Ever since films became a part of our lives, their use were merely to entertain us, now instead they reflect societal views during that given time period. In our time there is so much hate, racism, and oppression with our students but education is a key factor used by teachers to fix this. From the release of *Stand and Deliver* in 1988 to the 2000’s with *Freedom Writers*, the creation and releases of these Student-Teacher dramas have touched on different issues but have all had one common entity that is a teacher who passionately values their students. With films evolving over time, the fact that there are teachers out their- who commit to bringing their students together, actually willing to teach them for their sake, and inspire their minds- is what society values to hear and witness. Society appreciates the passion of these amazing educators that go out of there way for the next generation’s success and happiness. How do we know this? Because we’ve seen these types of films on the big screen from the past, in today’s local cinema, and we’ll keep seeing them for years to come.

Jhoanna Mae Mercado

GMO: Why Label?

Most people may have heard of GMO's in the supermarkets and places where people buy food. What is GMO? GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organism - meaning a plant or an animal's normal DNA is altered in the lab to produce more desirable traits or introduce a new gene to specie that does not normally have one. One example of a genetically modified crop is to withstand pesticides or plants made to produce their own pesticides. Another example is a plant or animal made to produce more of its kind in a shorter amount of time. It may be a breakthrough for the biochemical industry but an ultimate concern is its safety. Do we have a choice? Many debates and studies have emerged regarding safety of ingesting these foods long-term. Because of the proliferation of GM crops, 60 - 80 % of processed foods produced in the United States and sold in stores contain genetically modified ingredients which according to studies, most consumers do not know. This should cause concern about the unknown dangers to human health. Products sold in the market should be labeled for consumers to be more aware and give people more options to eat safe and natural foods.

The proliferation of GM crops cannot be denied in our food systems. Every year GM crop production has considerably increased since its invention. The United States is hailed as one major producer of GM crops and is known to be an advocate for its consumption. Also, one major player that backs United States' strong reliance of these GM crops, an enormous agricultural biotech company involved in the making and patenting of GM seeds, is Monsanto. Imagine a corporation so big like Monsanto, according to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), it "controls 80 percent of GM corn market and 93 percent of the GM soy market in the United States...worldwide, a record of 433 million

acres of GM crops were grown in 2013 by 18 million farmers” (Thompson). Even though, the US produces 40 percent of GM crops globally, as stated by the United States Department of Agriculture:

“90 percent of soybeans, sugar beets and corn are genetically modified and food ingredients made from those crops - such as high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, soy, lecithin and cornstarch are found in most processed and packaged food, sodas and cereals” (Thompson).

Sadly, a large percentage of the population, until now do not know that they are eating GM food and GM food products. It is because of lack of public awareness of its widespread existence and somehow these giant food corporations, “also play an ugly role of censoring and intimidating those individual or groups who challenge oft repeated claims that GMOs are safe to eat” (Koberstein).

One major issue - the patented seeds of Monsanto have caused concerns to critics that it will give the company as much control for food supply worldwide. As stated by Wohlers, “This monopolistic dominance continues to have troubling spillover effects on seed prices and patenting” (Wohlers 76). In addition, anti-GMO protesters worldwide including fifty-two countries, marched on the streets on the 25th of May in 2013, to voice out concerns that all GM crops were unsafe to eat and harmful to the environment as well, because of the heavy reliance of pesticides and herbicides. Not to mention, corn crops used in the United States were also used as primary food for cattle and livestock. Thompson said, “So most US-grown meat is raised on a diet of GM grain as well. By many estimates, 80 percent of American food supply contains some form of GMO” (Thompson).

There are many controversies surrounding Genetically Modified Foods, whether they are beneficial or harmful to our society in general. Some benefits from the invention of GM crops in our food system are enhanced nutritional content of foods and making plants survive harsh environment. Those in favor of GM foods are also saying that because there is no sufficient evidence that it harms humans, it is therefore, safe to eat. The supporters of GM food believe that, “the possible health benefits of GM foods overwhelm any possible dangers” (Thompson). However, those against GM foods say that, because it is fairly new sufficient testing should be done. One significant study about GM food that was pointed out by Chen-Yu Zang of Nanking University - “the Chinese scientists announced they had discovered a potentially serious problem health effect associated with eating GMO rice” (qtd.in Koberstein). It was found that “RNA interference” used by Monsanto for fighting insects in their crops killed the bugs that eats it. Zhang’s findings explains that, “when humans eat the insecticidal RNAi, it could reach the bloodstream and trigger an increase in blood levels of low density lipoprotein, also known as “bad cholesterol,” leading to a heightened risk of heart attacks” (Koberstein). Monsanto later contradicted Zhang’s claim by publishing in *Nature Biotechnology* that the study had errors because of mishandling. In efforts to disprove Zhang’s paper that same year, Monsanto requested a University professor Vicki Vance to talk about *Biosafety of Genetically Modified Microorganisms*. An agreement was made and the Professor openly aired to discuss Zhang’s paper but was dismissed when the professor insisted, so the talk never happened.

Another study suggests that when Brazil nuts mixed with the soybean gene, it increased the susceptible individuals to have a high allergic reaction. In the same way, the “GM peas that expressed a greenbean protein intended to protect against weevils, unexpectedly caused a

number of unintended allergic reactions in mice” (Wohlers 74). The lack of testing requirements from eating GM food also emerged, Antoniou, Robinson and Fagan explains that:

“In order to detect health effects over time in humans eating GM foods, long-term (chronic) animal feeding trials are needed. But currently no long-term tests on crops or foods are required by regulatory authorities anywhere in the world. Reproductive and multigenerational tests which are necessary to discover effects of GM crops or foods on fertility and future generations are also not required” (qtd.in Le Vaux 114).

The necessity to label GM foods or not, raised questions to people worldwide. One of the nation’s known to mandate labeling of GM foods for the fear of certain risks to health and environmental safety, in particular is Europe. Europe’s stance on this and skepticism toward acceptance of GMO started in the 1990’s due to the alarm caused by “mad cow’s disease,” which caused controversy worldwide, although the two were completely unrelated the concern is focused primarily to human health and safety. The incident prompted these nations to strictly ban import of what they call, “Frankenfoods.” European Union (EU) is known to be one of the “strictest GMO regulations in the world.” (Thompson). Also, over 60 countries have approved mandatory labeling of GM foods which includes Brazil, China, Russia, South Africa, Turkey and the European Union (EU) members consisting of 27 countries in total which was according to the Center of Food and Safety (Wohlers 79).

On the other hand, because United States does not perceive GM foods and non-GM foods as different, the regulatory agency does not strictly impose mandatory labeling with the thinking that the *substantial equivalence* concept is enough to explain that it is “safe”. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, “The concept of substantial

equivalence “embodies the idea that existing organisms used as foods, or as a source of food, can be used as a basis of comparison when assessing the safety of human consumption of a food or food component that has been modified or is new” (qtd.in Wohlers 76). However, the growing concern from citizens and efforts of the grassroots organization and their legislative in lobbying labeling has not gone unnoticed. In fact, a poll conducted by New York Times in 2013 showed that, “93 percent of Americans want foods that contain GMOs labeled.” (qtd.in Thompson). It cannot be denied that a lot of American consumers are now more publicly aware of these GM foods circulating in our food systems. Also, visible protests of many non-profit organizations against GMO products are pushing voluntary labeling from food companies and eventually mandatory labeling across United States. As an example, Whole Foods market has announced that all their stores with GM products will be labeled by 2018 (Wohlers 80). The store voluntarily set labeling of products in all their branches.

In conclusion, as a consumer’s viewpoint, it has sparked an interest not just personally as an individual but also a concern to a family member who is more susceptible to certain diseases. What could be the worst consequences long-term? That still, is left unanswered until the requirement for long-term studies will exist in a governing body or law that will mandate it worldwide. GMOs could be beneficial, although, its safety raised concerns there have been different viewpoints from benefits and harmful effects. The public should have a voice and prerogative in choosing what kind of food, GM food or not, should be part of a person’s diet. This is absolutely true, as stated by Laux, Mosher and Freeman, “consumer opinions are an integral part to the success of technological innovation in the marketplace” (Laux, Mosher, Freeman). Another idea pointed out in the article by Le Vaux; there is a lack of testing long-term

from ingesting these foods in humans, so there is no definite answer that it is absolutely safe and risk-free for consumption (Le, Vaux). Even the journalist, Koberstein points out that,

“ The production of genetically modified foods always involve the use of pesticides, including some which have been shown to be highly toxic to the environment and humans, like atrazine, chlorpyrifos, as well as hazardous insecticidal proteins that are genetically embedded into the plant” (Koberstein).

From a consumer’s awareness, a product bought in the stores will give power to an individual on their stand about labeling. If more people will support to buy labeled non-GMO foods, food companies will consider voluntary labeling and may consider shifting to more non-GMO production of foods. And in no time, it will follow that most of the states in the US will be gearing to implement further mandatory labeling. It is the consumer’s right to know what they put in their mouth, and this is the time to show that the general population have a say on it, not just the food companies having a control over food production.

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