

## AP Language and Composition: Summer Reading 2017

### *Purpose for these Assignments*

The focus of this AP course is understanding, analyzing, and writing non-fiction prose, and engaging with ideas to develop and support personal arguments. The selections listed below will give you practice in close reading of arguments.

Two required summer assignments for AP Language and Composition are listed below.

**Assignment 1:** 1. The first post should talk about you - your likes, dislikes, fears, hopes, ambitions, study habits, work ethic, and goals. This is your introduction to me, so make it pop.

**You will complete Assignment 1 and email it to me using the subject line ASSIGNMENT 1 and YOUR LAST NAME**

Please email your Assignment 1 to [lhibbs@pasco.k12.fl.us](mailto:lhibbs@pasco.k12.fl.us)

**Assignment 2:** For all of these articles, please respond to the prompts below. To facilitate your analysis, you should print out the articles and number the paragraphs of each. Please label each entry with the author's name and then number each response. **You will complete Assignment 2 and email it to me using the subject line ASSIGNMENT 2 and YOUR LAST NAME.**

Please send the entire Assignment 2 to [lhibbs@pasco.k12.fl.us](mailto:lhibbs@pasco.k12.fl.us). **Do not** send it one article response at a time.

“Mount Holyoke Commencement Speech” Anna Quindlen  
<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/media/commencement-speech-0>  
Quindlen argues against perceived perfection.

“Road Warrior” Dave Barry  
[http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-02-08/features/1998039084\\_1\\_road-rage-left-lane-motorists](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-02-08/features/1998039084_1_road-rage-left-lane-motorists)  
Barry argues the causes of “road rage” and other related “rages.”

“An Honest College Rejection Letter” Mimi Evans  
<https://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/an-honest-college-rejection-letter>  
Evans argues the insincerity of universities' selection process through this satirical letter. *Make sure to discuss its use of **hyperbole** and **satire** in your response.*

“Morning-After Pill” John Jeremiah Sullivan  
<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/11/14/morning-after-pill/>  
Sullivan argues about what Trump's win means to America.

“Another case of justice delayed, justice denied” Leonard Pitts, Jr.  
<http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/leonard-pitts-jr/article148955514.html>

Pitts argues that white police officers are responding to cultural views on race.

“Our Dangerous Drift from Reason” Andrew C. McCarthy

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/440361/police-shootings-black-white-media-narrative-population-difference>

McCarthy argues that the narrative of “cops preying on black men” is a distortion created by the media.

**1.** Investigate the author. What is the author’s age, for which publications does he or she write, where was he or she educated, what interesting fact can you find about him or her?

**2. a. Identify** the issue that is discussed. Explain what side the author defends and give three quotes from the article that illustrate his/her belief. Be sure to look for quotes that convey bias.

**b. Explain** how the author uses pronouns to create a personal connection with the reader, or to create a division between two factions, or to create unity between the reader and the author.

**c. Watch** for “but,” “however,” “yet” or any of these kinds of contrasting conjunctions. Where, how, and why does the author use these words?

**3.** Discuss your opinion about this issue and give your reasons for your position.

**4.** Look up any references to people or events (if the author alludes to something or someone you don’t understand, look it up. For example, one article mentions Sartre and Sappho, another uses the phrase “crabs in a barrel” - you should investigate these types of references). Add these to your entry for those topics.

**5.** Create a vocabulary list of words whose meanings are unfamiliar to you.

- Write the word
- Copy the sentence in which the word appears.
- Write the dictionary definition that seems to apply to the way the word is used in the sentence.

**6.** Two of these selections address the same issue. How do the authors show their bias? How do their opinions differ? Who makes the more convincing argument and why?

**7.** Keep a copy of your responses **so that we can discuss the articles in class on the first day of school.**

*Assignment 1.* The first post should talk about you - your likes, dislikes, fears, hopes, ambitions, study habits, work ethic, and goals. This is my introduction to your writing style – I want to hear your voice. My response is below.

I started teaching at Ridgewood Junior High School in 1984 - and have since taught English grades 6-12, Journalism I-IV, Newspaper, Television Production, AP Language and Composition and, most recently, senior English. I was also the media specialist before the district school board cut that position in an attempt to save money – an ill-considered decision that proves that politics does not advocate for students but only punishes them. Of course, having spent the better part of fourth quarter taking myriad end-of-course exams, you know better than anyone how politics has directly affected your life.

I have three sons, and all are Ridgewood graduates.

I've lived in the same house for the past 30 years. It is situated within walking distance from my father's house, my sister's - "The Widow Cochran's" - house, and another sister's house (a master baker whose obscene delights make even the most stoic person cave). We are a very close, very large family and have huge "parties" nearly every month from which many of us try to extricate ourselves. The benefit of attending is that we then have fodder for gossip and grousing to feed on between parties. My husband, the kindest person I know, stoically attends but never engages in gossip. Which is a shame.

I'm not a fan of country music, but will listen to anything James Hibbs, my oldest son, tells me to listen to because he's brilliant. I love bread, and I don't eat beef or pork because they're disgusting. I'm hate spiders. I like challenges, and I hate, hate, hate driving. I despise busy work and promise that AP Language will not waste your time. If you and I commit ourselves, you should leave this class questioning everything you see, hear, and read.

And I do read. I find people who read more attractive than people who don't read. I believe in being nice (or at least pretending to be nice), and I believe in the healing power of macaroni and cheese. One day I'd like to be a grandmother, but I'm not sure that's ever going to happen.

I'm excited about summer. I have attended the AP Language readings in Louisville – once - and Kansas City, MO - twice. This year, the reading is in Tampa and I'm excited that it's so close to home.

I'm eager to read your responses to this prompt. Have a good summer and read.

## **Beyond Road Rage there is Shopping Cart Rage**

February 08, 1998 | By Dave Barry | Dave Barry, Knight Ridder/Tribune

IF YOU DO MUCH DRIVING on our nation's highways, you've probably noticed that, more and more often, bullets are coming through your windshield.

This is a common sign of Road Rage, which the opinion-makers in the news media have decided is a serious problem, currently ranking just behind global warming and several points ahead of Asia.

How widespread is Road Rage?

To answer that question, researchers for the National Institute of Traffic Safety recently did a study in which they drove on the interstate highway system in a specially equipped observation van. By the third day, they were deliberately running other motorists off the road.

"These people are morons!" was their official report.

That is the main cause of Road Rage: the realization that many of your fellow motorists have the same brain structure as a cashew.

The most common example, of course, consists of motorists who feel a need to drive in the left-hand, or passing, lane, even though they are going slower than everybody else. Nobody knows why these motorists do this. Maybe they belong to some kind of religious cult that believes the right lane is sacred and must never come in direct contact with tires. Maybe one time, years ago, these motorists happened to be driving in the left lane when their favorite song came on the radio, so they've driven over there ever since, in hopes that the radio will play that song again.

But whatever makes these people drive this way, there's nothing you can do about it. You can honk at them, but it will have no effect. People have been honking at them for years: It's a normal part of their environment. They've decided that, for some mysterious reason, wherever they drive, there is honking. They choose not to ponder this mystery any further, lest they overburden their cashews.

I am very familiar with this problem, because I live and drive in Miami, Fla., which proudly bills itself as the Inappropriate-Lane- Driving Capital of the World, a place where the left lane is thought of not so much as a thoroughfare as a public recreational area, where motorists feel free to stop, hold family reunions, barbecue pigs, play volleyball, etc.

Compounding this problem is another common type of Miami motorist, the aggressive young male whose car has a sound system so powerful that the driver must go faster than

the speed of sound at all times, because otherwise the nuclear bass notes emanating from his rear speakers will catch up to him and cause his head to explode.

So the tiny minority of us Miami drivers who actually qualify as normal find ourselves constantly being trapped behind people drifting along on the interstate at the speed of diseased livestock, while at the same time we are being tailgated and occasionally bumped from behind by testosterone-deranged youths who got their driver training from watching the space-fighter battle scenes in "Star Wars."

And of course nobody ever signals or yields, and people are constantly cutting us off, and AFTER A WHILE WE START TO FEEL SOME RAGE, OK? YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT, MISTER NEWS MEDIA OPINION-MAKER??

In addition to Road Rage, I frequently experience Parking Lot Rage, which occurs when I pull into a crowded supermarket parking lot, and I see people get into their car, clearly ready to leave, so I stop my car and wait for them to vacate the spot, and Nothing happens! They just stay there! What the heck are they doing in there??!! Cooking dinner???

When I finally get into the supermarket, I often experience Shopping Cart Rage. This is caused by the people -- and you just know these are the same people who always drive in the left-hand lane -- who routinely manage, by careful placement, to block the entire aisle with a single shopping cart. If we really want to keep illegal immigrants from entering the United States, we should employ Miami residents armed with shopping carts; we'd only need about two dozen to block the entire Mexican border.

What makes the supermarket congestion even worse is that shoppers are taking longer and longer to decide what to buy, because every product in America now comes in an insane number of styles and sizes.

For example, I recently went to the supermarket to get orange juice. For just one brand of orange juice, Tropicana, I had to decide whether I wanted Original, Homestyle, Pulp Plus, Double Vitamin C, Grovestand, Calcium or Old Fashioned; I also had to decide whether I wanted the 16-ounce, 32-ounce, 64-ounce, 96-ounce or six-pack size. This is way too many product choices.

It caused me to experience Way Too Many Product Choices Rage. I would have called Tropicana and complained, but I probably would have wound up experiencing Automated Phone Answering System Rage (" For questions about Pulp Plus in the 32-ounce size, press 23. For questions about Pulp Plus in the 64-ounce size, press 24. For questions about ").

My point is that there are many causes for rage in our modern world, and if we're going to avoid unnecessary violence, we all need to keep our cool. So let's try to be more considerate, OK? Otherwise I will kill you.

March 26, 2015/ McSWEENEY'S INTERNET TENDENCY

**An Honest College Rejection Letter**

**MIMI EVANS**

Dear Applicant,

The Admissions Committee has carefully considered your application and we regret to inform you that we will not be able to offer you admission in the entering class of 2015, or a position on one of our alternate lists. The applicant pool this year was particularly strong, and by that I mean the Admissions Committee once again sent candidates like you multiple enticing pamphlets encouraging you to apply, knowing full well we had no intention of accepting you.

However, you will be pleased to know that you have contributed to our declining admissions rate, which has helped our university appear exclusive. This allows us to attract our real candidates: upper-class kids and certified geniuses who will glean no new information from our courses or faculty, whose parents can incentivize us with a new swimming pool or lacrosse stadium.

As a reminder, we don't aspire to be a socially exclusive learning environment. In fact, we have chosen to actively pursue a more diverse campus and welcome all minorities. But our admissions program is quite unique; we combat past discrimination by discriminating in the present. It is one of the many techniques that our Nobel, Peabody, and Oscar award-winning faculty has helped to develop.

While we consider applicants from all backgrounds who excel both in and out of the classroom, we really want student savants who relentlessly pursue a single instrument, sport, or other activity. Unless you have written a *New York Times* bestseller, won first place in the Intel Science Fair, or cured type 1 diabetes using only solar power and a tampon string, we'll put you at the bottom of the pool.

You may be wondering how a near-perfect SAT and ACT, a dozen perfect AP scores, and your presidency of four clubs did not distinguish you from the pack. Please know that we take many other factors into account as well, including socio-political-monetary context, Asian-ness of name, BMI, and modified-Rorschach (in which one of our assistants holds your application from across the room and we try to discern the outline of your profile).

You should also know that our committee did not fall for your attempts to look "humble" or "well-rounded." Volunteering in developing countries is nice, but truly generous individuals volunteer to improve their local communities, while truly wealthy families buy a third-world country for their child to gentrify. We also realize that your extensive study of how "Novel cyclic di-GMP effectors of the YajQ protein family control bacterial virulence" was not influenced by your passion for "volunteering with the elderly," nor

was it anything but a résumé inflator. Most importantly, we know that your minimum-wage job did not teach you “patience, teamwork and leadership.” No one learns anything from minimum-wage jobs except how much they hate people and that they shouldn’t have majored in political science.

The reality is that we are no longer looking for students who are remarkable candidates for college; we are looking for people who have already made a difference, so that we can grow our list of impressive alumni. Your value to our college depends solely on your ability to attract future applicants. Since you are no Emma Watson or James Franco, we urge you to consider your acceptance letters from state universities and equally expensive second-tier schools, and commence nursing an inferiority complex for the rest of your life.

We sincerely hope that you find it in your heart to forgive us for not “seeing” your “full potential.” Please remember that we will need your tiger-parent instincts in approximately three decades when you push your own children to the brink of death, and once again help us boost our *US News & World Report* ranking.

Best,  
Dean of Admissions

## **National Review**

### *Our Dangerous Drift from Reason*

Media distortion of ‘officer involved’ police shootings has consequences.

By Andrew C. McCarthy — September 24, 2016

In a time when “narrative” has supplanted factual reporting, Fox’s Bret Baier’s evening news program is usually an oasis in the desert. So I winced when he asserted, amid Thursday’s report on the deadly Charlotte rioting — euphemized by the media as “unrest” and “protest” — that blacks are significantly more likely than whites to be killed by police.

It echoed the distortion peddled by the *Chicago Tribune* in July, when “officer involved” shootings in Minnesota and Louisiana led not merely to “unrest” but to a massacre of cops in Dallas. African Americans, the paper claims, are two and a half times more likely than Caucasian Americans to be killed by police.

Are they really? The *Trib* says so, but only after adjustments are made for the marked population difference between the two races. But wait a second: If there is so plainly a bounty on black men — if the chances that a young African American will be killed in a police encounter are so uniquely high that our cities are in upheaval, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division is on permanent alert, and black parents nationwide feel compelled to have “the talk” with their kids — then why is statistical fiddling necessary to portray this crisis?

Because there isn’t a crisis — unless we’re talking about one that is wholly manufactured.

The exceedingly inconvenient fact of the matter for the “cops are preying on black men” narrative is that far more whites than blacks are killed in confrontations with police. Last year, in fact, it was roughly twice as many.

The social justice warriors can’t have that, of course. So, making like Olympic judges from the old Soviet bloc they so resemble, today’s narrative repairmen knead the numbers to make the story come out right. The spin becomes “fact,” dutifully repeated in press coverage and popular discussion.

In this instance, the hocus-pocus is to factor in that, although there are 160 million more whites than blacks in the country, this 62 percent portion of our population accounts for “only” about half of “police involved” fatalities (49 percent). Blacks, by contrast account for an outsize 24 percent of the deaths despite being only 13 percent of population.

The premise of this exercise is ludicrous. By and large, police are having lethal interactions not with the nation’s *total* population but with its *criminal* population.

The elephant in the room, the fundamental to which we must never refer, is propensity toward criminality. It is simply a fact that blacks, and particularly young black men, engage in lawless conduct, very much including violent conduct, at rates (by percentage of population) significantly higher than do other racial or ethnic groups.

This is not a matter of conjecture. Crime gets reported by victims; the police don't invent it, they investigate it. Overwhelmingly, the victims of black crime are black people. Indeed, as Heather Mac Donald relates in her essential book, *The War on Cops*, only 4 percent of black homicide victims are killed in police interactions. If African-American parents were really having "the talk" that is pertinent to protecting their children, it would have to involve the reality that those children are overwhelmingly more likely to be shot by other black youths. The police are having "police involved" confrontations with young black men largely because black communities demand police protection — and understandably so.

What would happen if police were to default from their duty to serve and protect — the position demagogues are increasingly pressuring cops into. Then, naturally, we would hear the alternative "narrative": that American society had abandoned its most oppressed communities to a dystopia of crime, poverty, drug abuse, and hopelessness — and don't you dare mention who is doing the oppressing.

To brand the cops as villains regardless of whether they are active or passive is play-acting, not problem-solving.

There's another infuriating thing about the "cops preying on black men" narrative fed us nightly on the news and daily on the campus. There used to be, if not truth, at least a certain coherence to it: The story line, consistent with a racialized fable, was that *white* cops are preying on black men.

But the narrative won't hold. In too many "police involved" incidents, such as the tragic one in Charlotte this week, the involved police are themselves black. So just as "global warming" had to become "climate change" to adjust for, you know, reality, the cops in our narrative have been "whited out," as it were.

Sadly, this legerdemain has been a boon for the narrative. Now the story is that racism is *institutionally* ingrained. It is not an individual cop's race that matters. It is that the profession of policing itself is, to hear the head of the Obama Justice Department's Civil Rights Division tell it, an enduring symbol of slavery and Jim Crow.

Presto: The African-American cop is no longer a change agent moving us toward a better, more integrated, more harmonious society. When he dons the blue uniform, he is just another perpetuator of a hate legacy. And thus, the real-life fallout of our increasingly perverse, race-obsessed narrative is that *all cops* become targets.

The supplanting of fact by “narrative” — in race relations, in our politics, in our assessment of national-security threats, in our foreign policy — has become such a fad that we are at the mindless point of skipping past what it portends.

It is all well and good — even necessary — to find thematic ways to express truth, to teach its lessons. “All that glitters is not gold,” for example, is a theme, not a narrative. It is a transcendent bit of fact-based wisdom that allows us to navigate the world as we actually experience it.

A narrative, to the contrary, is an excuse for avoiding reality and acting against our best interests.

The most consequential organization in radical Islam is the Muslim Brotherhood. Laying the groundwork for its American network, the Brotherhood gave pride of place to an intellectual enterprise, the International Institute of Islamic Thought. The IIIT’s explicit, unapologetic mission is the “Islamization of knowledge.”

It is not a slogan or an idle phrase. The mission traces back to the ninth century. Its purpose was to defeat human reason. In this fundamentalist interpretation, Islam is a revealed, non-negotiable truth. Reason, rather than hailed as mankind’s path to knowledge and salvation, is condemned for diverting us from dogma. Knowledge therefore has to be Islamized — reality must be bent and history revised to accord with the Muslim narrative.

But with the demise of reason comes the demise of progress, of the wisdom that enables us to solve problems. That is why Islamic societies stagnated, and why the resurgence of fundamentalism has made them even more backward and dysfunctional.

It is this way with every totalitarian ideology. We’d be foolish to assume it can’t happen to us. Slaves to narrative are fugitives from reason. Their societies die.

*— Andrew C. McCarthy is a senior policy fellow at the National Review Institute and a contributing editor of National Review.*

## MIAMI HERALD

May 05, 2017 7:45 PM

### Another case of justice delayed, justice denied

BY LEONARD PITTS, JR.

So when will there be justice for Levar Jones?

The question is occasioned by a reader's recent request for an update on an incident I wrote about in 2014. Jones, an unarmed African-American man, was shot by South Carolina State Trooper Sean Groubert during a routine traffic stop in Columbia.

Jones did nothing to merit this. You know that if you've seen the dashcam video. It shows Groubert, who is white, pulling up as Jones is exiting his car at a gas station. Groubert asks for his license. Jones reaches into his open vehicle to retrieve it. Groubert, in a panic, yells for him to get out of the car. Jones is complying when Groubert opens fire. "Get on the ground!" he yells, as Jones, hands raised, stumbles and falls.

"What did I do, sir?" he asks. "Why did you shoot me?"

Groubert pleaded guilty to a charge of "assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature" in March of 2016. So when I checked for an update, I fully expected to find that he is now serving time.

Instead, I found he hasn't even been sentenced yet. Again: It has been 14 months since he admitted his guilt, and though he is in jail, Groubert has yet to be sentenced.

There is much to unpack here, beginning with that anguished question: "Why did you shoot me?" Groubert probably wonders the same thing, but from where I sit, it's no mystery.

I expect many white readers, heavily invested in the fiction of their post racial innocence, to reject this by reflex, but the fact is, white people often prejudge black ones on sight as dangerous or scary. They perceive black boys as bigger and older than they are, and black men as larger and more threatening.

Don't take my word for it. Take social science's. These things have been quantified in studies, including one recently published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Statistics released in 2014 by the Department of Education found that even in preschool, African-American children are significantly more likely to be suspended than white ones. We're talking *toddlers*.

Understand the mindset that finds even little brown babies scary, and you understand Groubert's sudden panic. He did not, I believe, act from conscious malice. No, he acted as this country wired him to.

Not that he shouldn't be held accountable for it. No, accountability is key. Without it, credibility is impossible. Which explains the state of things between black people and the justice system.

Some white people pretend not to get this. Attempting to deflect cries of "Black lives matter!" they point to the gun carnage in urban Chicago or Miami and opine that black people should instead be protesting so-called "black on black" crime.

But when a black criminal shoots someone, he will, if caught, be held to answer for it. When a cop shoots an unarmed black person, he probably won't. Prosecutors decline to prosecute, grand juries decline to indict, juries decline to convict. Now an officer has pleaded guilty, and yet a judge declines to judge.

Maybe there's a reasonable explanation for that, though it's hard to think of one, and the judge, who is black, had not returned my call by deadline time. Absent the explanation, one is inclined to consider this simply superfluous proof of systemic bias, a "justice" system that can never seem to find the gumption to punish its own when they mistreat people of color.

We are left to wonder when — *if* — we will see justice. But can you imagine if the black motorist had shot the white cop?

You wouldn't even have to ask.

Commencement Speech at Mount Holyoke College Anna Quindlen  
Sunday, May 23, 1999 - 12:00

I look at all of you today and I cannot help but see myself twenty-five years ago, at my own Barnard commencement. I sometimes seem, in my mind, to have as much in common with that girl as I do with any stranger I might pass in the doorway of a Starbucks or in the aisle of an airplane. I cannot remember what she wore or how she felt that day. But I can tell you this about her without question: she was perfect.

Let me be very clear what I mean by that. I mean that I got up every day and tried to be perfect in every possible way. If there was a test to be had, I had studied for it; if there was a paper to be written, it was done. I smiled at everyone in the dorm hallways, because it was important to be friendly, and I made fun of them behind their backs because it was important to be witty. And I worked as a residence counselor and sat on housing council. If anyone had ever stopped and asked me why I did those things--well, I'm not sure what I would have said. But I can tell you, today, that I did them to be perfect, in every possible way.

Being perfect was hard work, and the hell of it was, the rules of it changed. So that while I arrived at college in 1970 with a trunk full of perfect pleated kilts and perfect monogrammed sweaters, by Christmas vacation I had another perfect uniform: overalls, turtlenecks, Doc Martens, and the perfect New York City Barnard College affect--part hyperintellectual, part ennui. This was very hard work indeed. I had read neither Sartre nor Sappho, and the closest I ever came to being bored and above it all was falling asleep. Finally, it was harder to become perfect because I realized, at Barnard, that I was not the smartest girl in the world. Eventually being perfect day after day, year after year, became like always carrying a backpack filled with bricks on my back. And oh, how I secretly longed to lay my burden down.

So what I want to say to you today is this: if this sounds, in any way, familiar to you, if you have been trying to be perfect in one way or another, too, then make today, when for a moment there are no more grades to be gotten, classmates to be met, terrain to be scouted, positioning to be arranged--make today the day to put down the backpack. Trying to be perfect may be sort of inevitable for people like us, who are smart and ambitious and interested in the world and in its good opinion. But at one level it's too hard, and at another, it's too cheap and easy. Because it really requires you mainly to read the zeitgeist of wherever and whenever you happen to be, and to assume the masks necessary to be the best of whatever the zeitgeist dictates or requires. Those requirements shapeshift, sure, but when you're clever you can read them and do the imitation required.

But nothing important, or meaningful, or beautiful, or interesting, or great ever came out of imitations. The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.

This is more difficult, because there is no zeitgeist to read, no template to follow, no mask to wear. Set aside what your friends expect, what your parents demand, what your acquaintances require. Set aside the messages this culture sends, through its advertising, its entertainment, its disdain and its disapproval, about how you should behave.

Set aside the old traditional notion of female as nurturer and male as leader; set aside, too, the new traditional notions of female as superwoman and male as oppressor. Begin with that most terrifying of all things, a clean slate. Then look, every day, at the choices you are making, and when you ask yourself why you are making them, find this answer: for me, for me. Because they are who and what I am, and mean to be.

This is the hard work of your life in the world, to make it all up as you go along, to acknowledge the introvert, the clown, the artist, the reserved, the distraught, the goofball, the thinker. You will have to bend all your will not to march to the music that all of those great "theys" out there pipe on their flutes. They want you to go to professional school, to wear khakis, to pierce your navel, to bare your soul. These are the fashionable ways. The music is tinny, if you listen close enough. Look inside. That way lies dancing to the melodies spun out by your own heart. This is a symphony. All the rest are jingles.

This will always be your struggle whether you are twenty-one or fifty-one. I know this from experience. When I quit the *New York Times* to be a full-time mother, the voices of the world said that I was nuts. When I quit it again to be a full-time novelist, they said I was nuts again. But I am not nuts. I am happy. I am successful on my own terms. Because if your success is not on your own terms, if it looks good to the world but does not feel good in your heart, it is not success at all. Remember the words of Lily Tomlin: If you win the rat race, you're still a rat.

Look at your fingers. Hold them in front of your face. Each one is crowned by an abstract design that is completely different than those of anyone in this crowd, in this country, in this world. They are a metaphor for you. Each of you is as different as your fingerprints. Why in the world should you march to any lockstep?

The lockstep is easier, but here is why you cannot march to it. Because nothing great or even good ever came of it. When young writers write to me about following in the footsteps of those of us who string together nouns and verbs for a living, I tell them this: every story has already been told. Once you've read *Anna Karenina*, *Bleak House*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, you understand that there is really no reason to ever write another novel. Except that each writer brings to the table, if she will let herself, something that no one else in the history of time has ever had. And that is herself, her own personality, her own voice. If she is doing Faulkner imitations, she can stay home. If she is giving readers what she thinks they want instead of what she is, she should stop typing.

But if her books reflect her character, who she really is, then she is giving them a new and wonderful gift. Giving it to herself, too.

And that is true of music and art and teaching and medicine. Someone sent me a T-shirt not long ago that read "Well-Behaved Women Don't Make History." They don't make good lawyers, either, or doctors or businesswomen. Imitations are redundant. Yourself is what is wanted.

You already know this. I just need to remind you. Think back. Think back to first or second grade, when you could still hear the sound of your own voice in your head, when you were too young, too unformed, too fantastic to understand that you were supposed to take on the protective coloration of the expectations of those around you. Think of what the writer Catherine Drinker Bowen once wrote, more than half a century ago: "Many a man who has known himself at ten forgets himself utterly between ten and thirty." Many a woman, too.

You are not alone in this. We parents have forgotten our way sometimes, too. I say this as the deeply committed, often flawed mother of three. When you were first born, each of you, our great glory was in thinking you absolutely distinct from every baby who had ever been born before. You were a miracle of singularity, and we knew it in every fiber of our being.

But we are only human, and being a parent is a very difficult job, more difficult than any other, because it requires the shaping of other people, which is an act of extraordinary hubris. Over the years we learned to

want for you things that you did not want for yourself. We learned to want the lead in the play, the acceptance to our own college, the straight and narrow path that often leads absolutely nowhere. Sometimes we wanted those things because we were convinced it would make life better, or at least easier for you. Sometimes we had a hard time distinguishing between where you ended and we began.

So that another reason that you must give up on being perfect and take hold of being yourself is because sometime, in the distant future, you may want to be parents, too. If you can bring to your children the self that you truly are, as opposed to some amalgam of manners and mannerisms, expectations and fears that you have acquired as a carapace along the way, you will give them, too, a great gift. You will teach them by example not to be terrorized by the narrow and parsimonious expectations of the world, a world that often likes to color within the lines when a spray of paint, a scrawl of crayon, is what is truly wanted.

Remember yourself, from the days when you were younger and rougher and wilder, more scrawl than straight line. Remember all of yourself, the flaws and faults as well as the many strengths. Carl Jung once said, "If people can be educated to see the lowly side of their own natures, it may be hoped that they will also learn to understand and to love their fellow men better. A little less hypocrisy and a little more tolerance toward oneself can only have good results in respect for our neighbors, for we are all too prone to transfer to our fellows the injustice and violence we inflict upon our own natures."

Most commencement speeches suggest you take up something or other: the challenge of the future, a vision of the twenty-first century. Instead I'd like you to give up. Give up the backpack. Give up the nonsensical and punishing quest for perfection that dogs too many of us through too much of our lives. It is a quest that causes us to doubt and denigrate ourselves, our true selves, our quirks and foibles and great leaps into the unknown, and that is bad enough.

But this is worse: that someday, sometime, you will be somewhere, maybe on a day like today--a berm overlooking a pond in Vermont, the lip of the Grand Canyon at sunset. Maybe something bad will have happened: you will have lost someone you loved, or failed at something you wanted to succeed at very much.

And sitting there, you will fall into the center of yourself. You will look for that core to sustain you. If you have been perfect all your life, and have managed to meet all the expectations of your family, your friends, your community, your society, chances are excellent that there will be a black hole where your core ought to be.

Don't take that chance. Begin to say no to the Greek chorus that thinks it knows the parameters of a happy life when all it knows is the homogenization of human experience. Listen to that small voice from inside you, that tells you to go another way. George Eliot wrote, "It is never too late to be what you might have been." It is never too early, either. And it will make all the difference in the world. Take it from someone who has left the backpack full of bricks far behind. Every day feels light as a feather.

*the* PARIS REVIEW

**Morning-After Pill**

*By John Jeremiah Sullivan*

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Letter from Our Southern Editor

I live in the southeastern part of North Carolina, in a county that went for Trump. I'm one of those people who shouldn't have been surprised but was. I had to leave town the morning after the election and did not want to go. The night before, lying in bed, my wife had been crying. We had the TV on, and she burst into tears when it became clear what was happening. When I left the house the next morning, my eleven-year-old daughter—for whom Hillary Clinton's candidacy had been one of the more exciting and life-enlarging things she'd experienced—was crying her eyes out. I've noticed that the crying thing has already become a meme ("Pictures of people crying about Trump!"), and then a discredited meme ("Quit crying, liberals!"), by which talk we somehow moved in twenty-four hours past the reality that a good percentage of the country was openly weeping at the result of the election. Because, you know, that couldn't mean anything.

When the taxi pulled up, the woman driving was black. I saw her face and thought, Oh, thank God. There were assumptions at play. I was guilty of some form of reverse crypto-profiling. But whatever, it was a human reflex. I was confident that if the driver had been a Trump person, and if that driver had started talking about the election, I would have undone my seatbelt and opened the door of the car and allowed my body to roll out onto the pavement at high speed. Instead she asked, "How do you feel about the election?" When she heard my answer, she expressed her own relief. "Oh, okay," she said. "See, I can't be sure where people are coming from." She told me that earlier in the morning, when she'd been leaving home for her shift, her husband had asked her not to wake their thirteen-year-old son. "Let him sleep late today," the man said. They were concerned about how the boy was going to react. The night before, he'd been scared. She said he'd asked, "What'll happen to us?" By which I assume he meant his family, or black people, but which question applies just as well to, well, us. Americans.

I'm old enough now to have paid attention to eight or nine presidential elections. To deny that this one was categorically different you'd have to deny the evidence of your senses. The mood in the airport was bizarre and upsetting. It's a tiny airport. There were maybe forty people in the waiting area. I recognized ten of them and knew two or three. Some looked pale and crushed, like I figured I did. Most looked like they couldn't give a crap. One guy was talking loudly on his cellphone—by the way, Americans, while I have a soapbox, please stop doing that, please stop talking loudly, which to say very audibly, on your cellphones in public places, and please especially stop making eye contact with others while you do so, it is just exceptionally annoying, also vaguely sociopathic in a way I can't put my finger on but know is real, so help me—and this man was telling his friend, "Well, in retrospect, she just had a lot of problems as a candidate, more than we knew about, too many problems," et cetera. I wanted to say that these problems seemed

to me more ours than hers and had consisted mainly of the has-vagina variety, but I didn't want to interrupt his cellphone conversation.

Most interesting in the gate area was to watch folks watching one another. It was clear from people's expressions and from something in the furtiveness of their glances that a lot of us were thinking, "Are you one of them? Did you do this to us?" And the Trump people, or the ones I profiled as Trump's, were maybe thinking, "Are you giving me a look because you think I voted for him? Up yours! This is America. You can't guilt me for voting my conscience." I can't prove that they were thinking those things, but I wasn't wrong. I found myself looking at two men in particular. They had on camouflage baseball caps, one's arms were covered in aged tattoos, and they were whispering to each other, making each other laugh. They were the kind of guys I typically look at fondly, when I see them in public, with thoughts along the lines of, "Ha ... if my New York friends were here, they'd be looking at these guys and thinking they're such rednecks and stupid and whatnot, but I've known people like that all my life, and they have a magical way of turning into funny, weird, compassionate individuals when you talk with them." It's one of my most strongly held beliefs and has been for my whole adult life, that we don't really see each other when we observe from a distance, that you have to get close to know anything at all and even then often don't know. This morning I looked at them with hatred. I can't believe I've written the word, but there's no other for the feeling. That was the only moment my vision went swimmy. I have no desire to be that person, who lets politics affect him so deeply he forgets the higher truths. We're all confused and error-prone. If we weren't, we wouldn't *need* politics. We have to fight fiercely to respect one another. If we don't, it's not even that we're lost, it's that there was never a point to any of it.

For reasons I've never isolated successfully and that a competent therapist could probably help me escape from, I love this country. Not a little but with a bone-and-mother love. That line we used to say when we were kids around the flagpole, pledging allegiance *to the republic*? I still feel it. I still mean it. "But don't you," I ask myself, "despise nationalism?" Yes. If we were rational creatures, we wouldn't be having this conversation. If I had to make an apology for the contradiction, I'd say it's not the nation I love. It's the experiment. The one that started more than two and a half centuries ago. As the flag stands for the nation, the nation stands for the experiment. The experiment was designed to prove something specific: that a people could build a country not on blood ties but on a shared vision, on the values cherished by the highest traditions of the Enlightenment: personal freedom, social equality, religious and ethnic tolerance, and the rule of law. Anyone wanting to help with the experiment was and is welcome to join. The experiment has not yet proved abortive. But it is going astray, sharply and quickly. I don't know a sane individual who doubts that. We absolutely cannot let it end.

What should we do? The answer seems clear. We should wake up. Let this election of Donald Trump call forth a great awakening. Specifically, I call on people like me—soft white liberal upper-middle-class college types—to get off their asses, our asses, and fight. That's what this is, a fight. If you doubt it, if you're telling yourself (perhaps for reasons of emotional survival that are forgivable) that this is just another election, that the

Republicans and the Democrats pass power back and forth in a kind of game and that only fools get overexcited, you are telling yourself a story. I will mention a single issue and let it stand for a dozen others. Climate change. We have just elected a man who professes not to believe in the existence of it. Yet it is real. Why even write this? Isn't it virtually guaranteed that anyone who has read to this point in the piece already knows as much or more than I do about the climate? I mention it for the sake of starkness. It is occurring, it is dangerous in a way we can hardly fathom yet, dangerous in a way that few problems faced by humanity were ever really dangerous. How can I, a layman, sound so confident? For one reason: I have spent a lot of time around scientists in my life. I like to write about them. A thing I have noticed about them, across the board, is that they love to prove one another wrong. I mean, they love it like we love sex and chocolate. If you're a scientist, and all of the other scientists believe something, and you figure out that they're all wrong about it? Your career is made, comrade. You are famous. You are important. So, when we hear that 97 percent of climate scientists believe that the planet is warming and that we are in grievous trouble, and that the majority of the other 3 percent are either crackpots or in the pocket of the petroleum industry, that means something. It's not like hearing that 97 percent of preachers believe in the Bible. The preachers want and need to agree with one another, or their system would collapse. The scientists, on the other hand, are not only programmed to disagree with one another but rewarded for it. And they agree about climate change, and they are scared, and many of them are depressed (clinically), and the witness of our eyes and data is telling us every year that their warning can be dismissed only at our peril. But the man we've elected, who knows, I'm pretty sure, even less about the climate than I do, is willing to tell us—you, the people who voted for him, and me, a person he's now sworn to protect—that this awful and species-threatening event is not happening. He is at this moment surrounding himself with people who believe the same, or have at least found it advantageous to claim so, and who will behave accordingly. Why would they deny reality? Reality is not of primary importance to them. Power, wealth, ego: these are. These things are more real to them than the survival of this species. That is not an opinion of mine and barely even an analysis. It is just now. I beg you, lone Trump supporter still reading, to set this truth on the table, put it there and just consider it nakedly. Forget politics, forget grabbing people by their pussies, and think of your children, or other people's children. Hell, think of mine. This election risks having been a suicidal gesture. The suicide not of a man but of a civilization. The ice is melting, the seas are rising, the temperature is climbing. The man we elected is standing next to Mitch McConnell and smiling proudly.

He's my president, I know. He's the leader of the country I was just claiming to love. Am I supposed to respect him? What would that mean? It's a corruption of the word respect. What I can do is serve him, however. I can do that best by serving the country he now represents. And I can do *that* best by attempting whatever's in my power to help make sure his presidency lasts only four years.

Who is to blame for this state of affairs? We are, if anyone. The left. I am. Let's confess it in all transparency. We were stupid. We forgot about a huge part of this country. We forgot about "regular folks." We forgot about middle-class and working-class white people who don't like the same things we do. It began a long time ago, this forgetting.

They weren't sexy. And anyway, enough of them were usually on our side that it didn't matter. That was not just stupid but criminally negligent. We were also repeating a mistake that is older than our nation and that may doom us: the inability to understand who it is with whom we truly have common cause. It goes back to Bacon's Rebellion. For the colonial elites to win, they first have to convince the "regular folks" not to side with the blacks and Indians. Best yet is if you can get both groups not to trust each other. Don't fall prey to it. Greater polarization serves the other side. We just learned that. We have to reach out to the Trump voters. We have to present them with a vision of liberalism inspiring and coherent enough that those among them who can be swayed will be swayed. The margins are razor thin and can be moved.

As for those fifty-three percent of white women who voted for him, all one can say is, crabs in a barrel.

This election must lead to a liberal awakening, an era of new cooperation and activism on our side, or there simply may not be another opportunity. Get up and get out. Stop fixating on the mote of our differences and look at the beam of our shared plight. Get to the pipeline and stand with the Native Americans from whom we violently stole the very land we walk on. Get to the southwest and stand with the immigrants who are terrified of being sent home. Get to the capital and let them know you'll lay your body in front of the tanks if necessary. Let the rest of the world know that what they're seeing on TV is not the real America, or doesn't have to be. Speak truth to your neighbors with dignity and without violence, and listen to them with an awareness of the vast range of opinions that a democracy both allows and depends on. Let's find and cultivate a candidate who can not only win in 2020 but lead us afterward, too. This is what I will try to do, to be part of doing. I've been too self-involved, and too boutique-y in choosing my causes. I think I forgot about the experiment. I wasn't a good steward of it. That is changing. My eleven-year-old will hold me to it. She doesn't know what cynicism is. I'm with her.

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