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Welcome to our seventh issue of ¡Escriba! Write! It overflows with the inspired – and inspiring – creativity, work and reflections on life that we are always privileged to share. As ever, we hope that if you are a student, you will be moved to submit your own work for inclusion in the next issue. Art in any medium, and any kind of writing (essays, special research projects, poetry, personal narratives), in any language, are eagerly sought by the editors and production team of this journal. We have so many Hostos faculty to thank for their help in connecting us with our authors and artists. But first a few highlights of the issue. For the first time this year we are pleased to include Honors essays. Qudus Lawal’s fascinating and original essay exploring how Chinua Achebe’s novel Things Fall Apart is taught in Nigeria and in New York City, is represented by a lengthy excerpt in our journal. Crisne Lebron’s Honors essay is equally original. In “Verbal to Visual: Making Words Come Alive,” she creates a cartoon animation of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem “The Eagle,” and analyzes the poem in connection with W. K. Wimsatt’s seminal essay, “The Intentional Fallacy.” If you are wondering how she does it, all will be clear when you read her essay. We want to thank Professors Gregory Marks and Gina Cicco who worked with Ms. Cresne and Professor Frances Singh for her work with Mr. Lawal. Also for the first time, we present the winner and runner-up essays written for and presented at the English Speakers Union contest. Danielle Seta describes the magic carpet of reading and Christopher Kallicharan imagines how an alien views homosapiens. They are as engrossing as their subjects suggest and we thank Professor Craig Bernardini for making sure they are seen here and for explaining how the English Speaking Union has invited Hostos students to join their contest for over 25 years! The Natural Sciences department has been very active this year in encouraging writing about all sorts of interesting and timely subjects, and we are so pleased to include a number of essays and narratives that focus or respond to issues including gender and biology, genetically modified food, arthritis from a personal and scientific perspective, a report on “Bodies: The Exhibition,” and a group response to a new Hostos recycling initiative. Prof. Flor Henderson introduces it in “Hostos Goes Green,” with the help of students in biology and chemistry classes. Many thanks to professors Flor Henderson, Julie Trachman, and Olga Steinberg-Neifach for their help in connecting their students with ¡Escriba! As we have from the first issue, we proudly include this years’ winning Women’s History Month essays, with thanks for the work of Professor Jerilyn Fisher and professors Maria Bennett, Elyse Zucker and Andrea Fabrizio for their students’ winning essays on Shirley Chisholm and Louisa Capetillo. This year’s winners are Nasira Mowla, Yongpeng Wu, and tied for third place, Angel Bland and Bochy Lora.
The works just described are by no means all the great writing there is. We offer poems, both in English and Spanish, and several more revelatory essays. We know you will enjoy them all. The written word is greatly enhanced by the genius of our art and digital photography students, as you will see.

What’s offered here is a feast for the eyes. From the Picasso-inspired “La Vie En Vert” to the optical illusions offered by “Self Emerging from Darkness to Light,” our art students demonstrate a rich imagination and an impressive grasp of technique. Hostos’s diversity is also celebrated, from the Chinese “New Year Lion Dance” to a vision of racial unity in “Hands in Harmony.” Wielding a digital camera and manipulating software as deftly as a paint brush, our photography students also transform the banal of the ordinary into deeply personal and redemptive visions of life. Among the memorable images is that of a streetlamp suffused by an orange glow and framed by tree branches, and the knowing gaze of a child as he grasps a rock in his hands. Many thanks to Profs. Ian Scott and Rees Shad for inspiring their art and photography students to produce such an evocative and moving collection of work.
Images and words have a critical function in our daily living. But we are hardly aware of what the relationship between these two elements is, and how they interact. Films are a sequence of images based on a script. Plays on Broadway are products of the relevant writers and thinkers’ writings. The commercials presented every ten minutes on the television are the basis of a marketing story. Clearly, there is a connection between words and images. Images bring alive the story that words are trying to tell. That is why in this project, I decided to explore the relationship between words and images by creating a cartoon animation of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem “The Eagle” and evaluating it in connection with W. K. Wimsatt’s “The Intentional Fallacy,” a mid-twentieth-century critical/theoretical essay on the literary art.

“The Eagle” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, was written in the 1851. It is one of the poems with more visual clarity than others I have read in my Literature and Composition class. The poem I chose for this project needed to be uncomplicated, but deep. This is why I chose Tennyson’s poem to represent how images can come to life.

The Eagle
He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring’d with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

“The Eagle” is two stanzas of three lines each. In the first line, Tennyson uses alliteration with the words “clasps,” “crag” and “crooked” to describe the posture of the eagle. With the use of these words, Tennyson is describing how the eagle was holding to a big rock. In the second line, Tennyson describes that the eagle was “close to the sun” which means two things: that the sun was so big that it seems as if the eagle was next to it, or that the eagle was so big that it could be close to the sun. Either way, the phrase is a deliberate exaggeration. Tennyson was trying to describe the personality of the eagle. If the eagle was close to the sun, it means that he was so high that the eagle was almost touching the sun, which also means that the eagle is above every living thing around him. Furthermore, Tennyson observes “in lonely lands, ringed with the azure world, [the eagle] stands.” With this phrase we can see how the blue color of the sky is involving the eagle. Finally, with the line “The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls,” Tennyson describes that there is water—
better yet, waves—under the crag. For all these reasons only four elements (the sun, the crag, the eagle and waves) are present in my cartoon representation of the poem “The Eagle.”

After choosing the elements that were going to be present on the animation, the real work began. Normally, when professionals do this kind of work, 12 to 15 cells (or pictures) are needed per second. But after timing the poem, I realized that to read the entire poem it took only 20 seconds. This meant that I needed less than the regular amount of cells for my animation. My advisor and I decided that 4 cells were needed per second - or 80 cells for the whole project. Obviously, the output is not going to have the same flawless smoothness as an animation of 15 cells per second; more cells=better sequences, but 80 cells was my maximum.

Now that the timing was all set, I had to sketch what each element would be doing at certain points. Clearly, the sun and the crag were going to be easy because they did not have any movement. Thus the crag in cell #1 will be the same crag in cell #80. But the eagle and the waves were going to take more thinking and time. To organize this I used cell #1, #20, #40, #60 and #80 as a pattern. From cell #1 to cell #40, the eagle was going to be standing in the crag without doing much—just sitting, maybe shifting a little. And from cell #40 to cell #60, the eagle would flap; within the last 2 seconds the eagle would fall. This is because according to the poem the eagle does not “do” anything until the last part of the poem. After I sketched all 80 cells in ink, it was time to color! This took a lot of time and markers.
Going through this process of interpreting and visualizing Tennyson’s poem about the eagle helped me better relate to Wimsatt’s point in “The Intentional Fallacy.” Wimsatt argues that we should focus critical attention on the work, not on the author’s “intention,” what he or she meant. The reader should use the information provided in the poem and the knowledge that the reader might have acquired from similar experiences in the reader’s life. The reader’s imagination will take course and the intention of the poem will be created. When we read the poem “The Eagle” we might conclude that Tennyson was a naturalist or that he was trying to portray his own life through the eagle. We need further information besides the information in the poem in order to obtain an answer. Yet, if we just go with the information presented in the poem and let our imagination do its job, there is no external information that will change the images that come to mind when we read the poem. Now, if what matters is to find or criticize the author’s intention, then it will matter if Tennyson was a naturalist or a self-absorbed person. In this case, I chose Wimsatt’s way. Instead of looking outside of the poem, I just focused on the words themselves. I let the words come alive in my imagination and the product was a big, fat, yellow sun, a rocky crag, a wrinkled sea, an azure sky and an eagle.

It might seem easy, but creating animated poetry was harder than I thought. Critical thinking skills to evaluate a text, digital design and cartooning abilities and above all, organizational skills, were all critical in the creation of this project.
After all, it is more than obvious to enhance the importance of the words and images. To images, words are like the ketchup for the hot dog, like the milk for the cereal or like the green, red and blue for our eyesight. Without words, images cannot stand by themselves and without images words cannot dance, walk, fly, be, or die. Images are music to our eyes. Words are the lyrics of our soul. The image-story of our words is the visual product of our imagination.

Works Cited


Excerpts from “The Conflict of Language in African Literature: Examining the Reading, Study and Research of Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe”

Act I: How I Was Taught Things Fall Apart in Nigeria.

The novel Things Fall Apart is one the most famous Nigerian novels. In, Nigeria, which is also my own home country, the book is not strange to parents, teachers or students. Educated parents remember reading it in secondary school, while parents deprived of secondary school education emphasize its importance to their children. English literature teachers advise their students to get a copy of the book. Some students can’t wait to have a copy, while other students dread the name.

The fame of this tale of the rise and fall of an African man is not limited to Nigerian families and schools. “Nollywood” (the Nigerian film industry) saw it as treasure on a platter of gold. In the 1980s, it was adapted into a television series called “Things Fall Apart.” This series spread the story of the novel like a wild fire in hamattan (a dry wind from the Sahara desert). The series made the novel accessible to everybody, irrespective of age and level of literacy. Therefore, mandatory inclusion of the novel in school curriculums died out. Most secondary schools, especially in the eastern region of Nigeria, Achebe’s birthplace, withdrew the book from their required texts for English literature for Senior Secondary School.

About a decade after the TV series, the book became less well-read amongst secondary school students. Out of the approximately forty college-bound Nigerians I have met so far in the United States, only a few reported that they had read the novel in school. Therefore, my secondary school was an exception since we studied the text in the 10th grade.

The novel might not be familiar to everybody, so I am providing a summary. The major character, Okonkwo, is a hardworking farmer who is among the elders of the village of Umofia. He has gained his fame from all the surrounding nine villages due to his conquests in wars, and his unbeatable wrestling skills. When a neighboring village kills an Umofian, the little lad, Ikemefuna, who has been planned to be sacrificed, is given to Umofia to avoid war and is put in the care of Okonkwo. For three years, Ikemefuna lives with the large family of three wives and thirteen children, and becomes an integral part of the family especially as a role model to Nwoye, Okonkwo’s first son.

Eventually, the time for the sacrifice is at hand and the oldest village elder advises Okonkwo not to disobey and not to sacrifice the child either. Due to his fear of being called a coward, Okonkwo neglects the advice of the old one, and not only follows the clansmen to the place of sacrifice, but gives...
the young boy the last and fatal cut. Although this event worries him for a few days, he is able to get over it by drinking palm wine at his friend’s house. Then the news comes to them that the old one has died. Unfortunately, at the burial of the old man, Okonkwo misfires his gun and kills the son of the dead man. Hence he has to be exiled for seven years. He decides to live his years in exile at his mother’s village, Mbata. Before his years in exile expire, the British missionaries and explorers come to Umofia.

The District Officer calls for a meeting with the elders after a church is burnt down. But instead, they are arrested and severely punished. This really angers Okonkwo, so when one of the messengers of the District Officer comes, he beheads the messenger. In the old days, his action would have been regarded as manly, but it is received with disappointment and hisses of mockery by his fellow clansmen. He realizes that they are not ready for a fight and the values he believed in are extinct. The next day his body is found hanging on a tree in back of his house. When the District Officer sees this, he thinks of adding the occurrence in one or two paragraphs of his book: The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.

The main idea emphasized throughout the novel when I was taught it, was the downfall of a powerful African man. He was powerful yet insecure, and due to his ego fell like an Iroko tree (a tall, thick tree found in the tropical African rain forests) chopped off at the end of its trunk by a powerful chain saw. The little essays we were asked to write dealt with moral values. We were asked to write about a story that supports the general phrase “Pride comes before a fall,” as this was a moral lesson from the book. Writing this moral lesson was like déjà vu, because the tales we heard as youngsters – the story of the proud cock that was killed by his shadow, and the story of the arrogant hare who challenged the tortoise to a race and many others – illustrated the same concepts, so it was not much of a task.

In addition to writing about moral values, we were required to write essays about the value of industry and social community. We discussed obvious differences between Okonkwo and his lazy father Unoka. This was one of the interesting aspects because we were able to associate Unoka and Okonkwo with some of our classmates and friends; some students even secretly found Unokas among the teachers. Also, we were able to recognize the association of industry with our social community. One of the highly exalted ceremonies mentioned in the book is the New Yam Festival which is not just about coming together to eat as much yam foo-foo and vegetable soup, but also is the celebration of industry and hard work. We derived this conclusion from Achebe’s remark in Things Fall Apart that “… every man whose arm is strong,
as the Ibo, people say, was expected to invite large number of guests from far and wide” (37).

Also, it was our responsibility to write down the meanings of the new words found in the book and use them in sentences. This task was the most tiring of all, because it lasted as long as the reading of the book. It slowed down our reading and the continuous turning and tilting of the neck from the book to the dictionary literally gave us a pain in the neck. The formation of sentences was also a task that gave me a migraine. By the time I had written twenty sentences I had forgotten the first ten. So the exercise was frustrating as well. Another boring task that most of us approached with languor was to extract the figures of speech used by the author and identify their importance. As we went deeper into the concept of figures of speech, we began to find the task too complicated for our academic understanding.

Our final project however, replaced the boredom with excitement. We had to do a stage play of the major incidents from the book. This drama would be presented in front of the students, and our grade based on the reaction of the audience. Since the television series adapted from the novel ended before most of my classmates and I were born, we had no idea to imitate, but our original ideas, supported by insights gotten from parents, uncles, aunts and teachers who watched the series produced an exotic progeny of the novel.

Looking back on this experience, I still feel most of the tasks were tiring and somewhat unproductive; but they improved our understanding of the English language. We tried to incorporate the new words and freshly invented metaphors, similes, hyperbole and other figures of speech in our conversation with each other and this sky-rocketed our eloquence and confidence in speaking English. After that semester, we engaged in various interclass and interschool debates and the judges were blown away by our organization and eloquence of oration. Although we did not win every competition, our wins were much greater than losses.

*Things Fall Apart* was a springboard for discussion of moral values, the encouragement of morality and reprobation of pride, the reward of humility and the horror of arrogance. Not only was the teaching approach moral, it was used as a means to teach us English. The search for new words, figures of speech, and the use of these newly found words and literary terms in our writing and spoken English. Also, the essays which were mainly based on a moral and cultural community were meant to improve our writing organization, spelling accuracy, grammar and vocabulary utilization. Most importantly the length of our essays gradually increased from 250 words to 450 words. Although I was bored by the tasks, the Nigerian teaching approach improved my scholastic English and developed my self-confidence.
Intermission: In New York City, Where I Live Now

One day my sixteen-year-old sister came back home from school and told me with a gleam of excitement that they started reading Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart. I was not surprised at her enthusiasm because when I was sixteen and about to start reading the book that was the way I felt. She told me that their first assignment was to write an essay about pre-colonial Africa. I realized that the depiction of pre-colonial Africa was not included in my own study of Things Fall Apart back in Nigeria! I began to wonder how different our understanding of the book would be, because my sister was studying the political aspects of the novel while I studied its linguistic and moral aspects.

I decided to interview students at her school to find out how big the difference of understanding was.

Act II: How Things Fall Apart is Taught in the United States

In order to study how Things Fall Apart is taught in the U.S, I got my sister to invite some of her friends to a discussion. I asked her to make the group multi-racial so I could really explore the heart of the world. She selected her classmates based on their race. There were a pair each of Hispanic Americans, African Americans, Asians and three Caucasians (two Russians and one White-American). My sister was the tenth. After the interview, I spoke to the teacher, who requested that her name, the students’ name and the name of the high school not be used.

[Mr. Lawal describes a list of questions he wrote for his sister and her friends to discuss The Editor apologizes for the necessity, due to space, of excerpting from the rest of his essay.]

I listened to the group argue their points of view passionately, while I took necessary notes and tentatively threw in my opinion. The Asians claimed that, fiction or not, the depiction of Africa by the Nigerian author was awful, because it degraded Africans. “That is what our tradition teaches us” they said almost simultaneously. They also added that they believe Achebe meant no harm to African heritage, but this was rejected by some of the others. One student said Achebe wrote his novel to appreciate Nigeria’s colonial masters. He linked Achebe to the son of Okonkwo, who became a Christian. According to him, Achebe was rebelling against African beliefs and concepts just like Nwoye, who rejected his father cultural beliefs.
As the argument continued, I observed that the White American was quiet, so I got her into the conversation. As if emancipated from vocal inability, and just like she had been rehearsing a speech, she started, making it known that she is half British, so we would not see her observation as “conservative and sarcastic.” Then she continued, “Different people have different traditions, beliefs and their idea of what is right and wrong.” So she is not in a place to judge Okonkwo’s tradition. “However, I don’t believe that the African tradition is as extreme as Achebe writes it to be” she said and added, “that is a reflection of the length writers will go to in order to make their book sell.” In a sudden chorus, the group yelled “Go girl!” and applauded. I realized then that she was actually rehearsing for a debate on “Fiction: Reliable Source of Information Dissemination.” I also found out that the speakers for and against this notion were self-chosen, not assigned a position by their teacher.

While the hot argument was calming down, I threw in a question: “Has this book influenced your perspective of Africa?” But I got a lot of depressing answers. These answers revealed hidden fear and skepticism about the African races. One of the Russians said that the manner in which Okonkwo cut down Ikemefuna still gave her “chills” and it sometimes made her look at Africans “as kind of scary.” One of the Hispanic Americans in support of fiction as a reliable means of information dissemination was unable to defend her point. However, she made a very strong argument saying “In every tradition, gathering or group of people, there is always a bad seed, and the writer is only pointing out the presence of the bad seed.”

My sister, who has been pretty much silent, rejected the claim of her Hispanic friend. She said that those people mentioned by her friend were real, not fictional, and she herself felt disappointed with the way Okonkwo killed Ikemefuna. “Some of my friends don’t talk to me that much after we read that in class” she said, but some of the group refused to believe what she said. The other African American, whose parents are Ghanaians, said she became skeptical about going to Africa after reading the book, but her parents made her realize that it is a work of fiction, and that even if it were true, Africa has changed from what it used to be. After some few more arguments on who was going to win the debate, I thanked the group for coming.

The next day, I went to the school to meet the teacher and give her a brief description of my two hour experience with her students, while expressing my profound gratitude to her dedication to the students’ success. During my brief half an hour stay, I was able to ask one huge question which she readily answered. I asked her if there is any other thing the students were supposed to learn from the book, apart from the analysis. And she answered
by showing me the curriculum she had to follow in teaching the book. It included five essays, two debates, class discussions and an exam to test the students' understanding of the book.

[....]

Having interviewed this group, I realized that the students are very much involved in the book, due to analytic approach of the teaching. The presence of debate and class interaction and arguments really stimulates the students' interest in and attachment to the book.

Walking home I was comparing the way I was taught *Things Fall Apart* with the way it was studied in the United States. I concluded that I read *Things Fall Apart*, but never studied it. So I decided to read the book over, and I was surprised how opened my eyes were. One phenomenal occurrence that thrilled me was the fact that I was close to tears when Okonkwo cut down Ikemefuna, and I would let the tears pour out if I were not in the train. But, when I read it in Nigeria, three years ago, I literally felt nothing. I marveled at how my emotional attachment to what I read had changed just by listening to some group of high school students who actually studied the book.

Conclusion from my discussion with my sister's fellow students: The approach stimulated the students' interest and attachment to the book. It also developed a negative reaction to Africa and Africans. Race influenced students' participation and discussion.

Recommendations for teaching *Things Fall Apart* in the U.S. and in Nigeria: Teacher should include Museum trips, viewing of selected documentaries so that students will develop positive views of Africa and Africans. The study of the book should be in a literary context. Nigerian teachers should integrate some of the teaching methods from the New York City curriculum in order to alleviate the boredom of the Nigerian approach.

Works Cited


[Mr. Lawal’s essay is much longer than the excerpts we have published here. If you want to read his entire paper, please contact Escriba’s Managing Editor, Professor Miriam Laskin.]
En obscuridad me encontraba
Mientras tu me alagabas,
Mientras otro me lastimaba,
Tu ahí siempre estabas
Y mi corazón sonaba.

Yo no te hacía caso,
Pero tu ibas al paso
Encendiendo en mi una luz,
A mi lado siempre estabas tú.

Pero como una tonta te ignoraba
Y mi cuenta yo me daba
De tu amor por mí
De mi amor por ti.

Y poco a poco te añoraba
Cuando a mi lado no te hallaba.
Es entonces cuando me di cuenta,
Que en mi corazón se abría una puerta.

La puerta del amor,
La puerta del calor
Es entonces que entendí un nuevo sentimiento.
Lindo, bello, hermoso crecimiento.
Donde surgió de amor un nuevo nacimiento.
Que trajo a mi vida nuevas emociones
Lo que me hizo escribir nuevas canciones.

Canciones de alegrías, canciones de tristeza,
Y te digo con certeza,
Que me has devuelto la vida,
Y te digo todavía
Que mis emociones son tuyas,
Y que las tuyas son mías.

Porque mi amor es tuyo y el tuyo es mío
Es que día a día yo sonríe.
Te amo Papote.
Dædalus firm as a rock
Proud of being intelligent, creative and a bright genius,
He wanted to be like a God:
Everything he touches would be great and strong.
But he forgot nature
Even the sea and the sky.
He received a lesson which he never would forget
His son, his appreciated son,
Beautiful like the sun, would never come back.

Icarus flew through the sea even close to the sun,
Dædalus took Icarus with him to be free from the bad king,
But nature was present too,
And his son was taken.
Now he is in the sea and
Close to the sky forever.
And Dædalus alone went to his new home,
Alone without his beautiful and loving son, Icarus.
Teacher. A word that has a lot to say
To hear, and most important, to instruct.

Teacher is a person who through his devotion
Lectures, teaches us to understand things better.

Teacher is the one who through Geography
Teaches us that there are no limits.

Teacher is the one who through Chemistry
Gives us those necessary Elements to form the composite of a union.

Teacher is the one who through Math
Teaches us how to add love in our hearts
And subtract the pain in our lives.

Teacher is the one who with Foreign Languages
Teaches us how wonderful it is to speak more than one.

Teacher is the one who through Arts, teaches us the beauty
Of the things that are not real, yet culturally enrich our minds.

Teacher is the one who through English teaches us
How to communicate with others
Even though we do not come from the same roots.

Teacher is the one who through Business
Teaches us how to survive
In this world where we have to pay so much for so little.

Teacher is the one who through History
Teaches us to think in the present, with the future to come.
They teach us
Things we need to know so that
Consequently we can live a better life in this world.

Teachers are people who grant their life to teach us.
Teachers are all this and more.
Thanks for everything.
Maestro, la palabra que dice mucho de que hablar,
Escuchar y lo más importante instruir.

Maestro es aquel:
Que con su devoción nos enseña a comprender mejor las cosas.
Que con número nos enseña a resolver los problemas.
Que con geografía nos enseña que no hay límite.
Que químicamente nos da los elementos necesarios para formar los
compuestos de una unión.
Que con diferentes tipos de idiomas nos enseña que no solo de una
lengua vive el hombre.

Maestro es aquel:
Que nos entrega su vida enseñando y nunca acaba de aprender.
Que nos enseña los caminos de la existencia.
Que con la historia nos enseña el pasado, y el presente para que
pensemos en el futuro por venir.
Que con física nos da la destreza que debemos poseer.
Que con arte nos enseña la belleza de las cosas reales,
No reales y culturalmente enriquece nuestras mentes.
Que con economía nos enseña a sobre vivir en este mundo;
Un mundo donde tenemos que contribuir más y recibimos menos.

Maestro es aquel:
Que entrega su vida a instruir.
Dedicated to the Hostos Honors program

Thank you for being by my side in good times
And bad times and
For bringing a smile to my face
Every time I need it.
Thank you for believing in me and
Making me feel special.
Thank you for guiding me
In the right direction whenever I feel lost and
Confused and
Most of all
Thank you for helping me become who I am today.
WHY DON’T YOU

Why don’t you accept me the way I am?
Why don’t you welcome me into your world?
Because you are welcome in my world any time.
Why don’t you give me a hand in times of need?
I would give you a hand any time.
Why do you judge me so severely and
Make assumptions about me that you don’t know?
Every person has the right to a trial.
Did you know that?

Why don’t you accept me with my defects and virtues?
Why don’t you understand that
At the end we are all human beings.
I need you like the water needs the ocean.
I need you to be inside me and within me.
To know my ups and downs, in bad times
And in good times.
I need you like my heart
Needs your breath to inhale me
Feel me
And embrace me until I’m forever yours.
Eres como un bebe que apenas
Tienes a las cuando tu me ves
Se te alegra el alma.

Tu quisieras estar conmigo noche y día
Pero la distancia no separa.

Se te ilumina el rostro con mi mirada
Y ves el atardecer cuando ves que me marcho.
Soy como el ángel que ilumina tu sendero.

Y si piensas por un instante que me alejo
Es como si te perdieras en el desierto.

Seré tu despertar en tus mañanas,
El atardecer en tus tardes,
Y la noche en tus noches.

Siempre estaré contigo
Porque eres mi tierno amor.
When you touch me I see sparks
It doesn’t go away, it light up the dark.
When you kiss me I can’t breathe
My heart starts to beat and I can’t see.
When you’re gone I can’t be happy.
Even if it’s not too long I feel down and crappy.
When you’re upset the sun doesn’t shine.
The words I said I regret, I can’t take back time.
When you say those beautiful words
I feel so lucky
But also kinda confused.
Because I still have you. What did I do?
When you’re upset just remember this,
And think of me too!
Don’t feel gloomy.
Because I love you.
YOU WILL FIND

Dig for joy in a land of sorrow
Fish for love in the sea of hate
Hunt for hope in a strange forest
You will find
You will find.

Go into the market of emptiness
Buy me strength
For this I will repay
Countlessly, I promise.
Maybe this time
You will find.

Search for peace in the midst of turmoil
Drop the rope for the spy of life
Do not look away so soon
For what could not be today
Might tomorrow show to toil.
Arthritis, what a pain! Many of us may know someone who has some form of arthritis or we might have complained of some aches or pains that we generally associate with getting old. We don’t realize that the simple aches that we feel are just the body’s way of warning us of a problem. We are just too quick to blame it on old age, but attention should be given to these slight discomforts.

Arthritis is a word that is now given to describe many forms of joint diseases. The word arthritis actually means joint inflammation. A joint is an articulation that helps in bone growth, and enables the body to move when skeletal muscle contract. Inflammation is swelling. The inflammation of joints is a painful experience and makes the joint unable to move due to the swelling at the joint. Sufferers experiencing such flare ups have a limited range of motion, thus decreasing their ability to partake in activities of daily living (ADL) such as walking, opening a can, or even bathing. Due to their limited ADL, the quality of life decreases (granted not all experience a decrease in their life quality).

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 46 million Americans have had their doctor tell them that they suffer from some sort of joint disease or arthritis. Gout, Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) are some of the diseases that fall under the broad category of arthritis. The effects that these diseases have on the human body are similar. The major symptoms are pain, stiffness in the affected joint, and swelling. There are two types of joint disease that many are familiar with, and they are Osteoarthritis (OA) and Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA).

Osteoarthritis is commonly referred to as a degenerative joint disease. Degenerative means a breaking down of, and in this particular case it is the breaking down of the joint. Diagnosing Osteoarthritis is done by listening to the patient’s complaints and taking a radiograph of joint. The joints that sufferers complain about most are the weight bearing joints, such as hips, and knees. Studies have shown that Osteoarthritis is more prevalent in women over the age of 50 than in men of the same age group. Men are at lower risk. About 45% of men suffer from Osteoarthritis of the knees and hips. Women are at higher risk for Osteoarthritis of the knee but at lower risk of Osteoarthritis of the hands. Deaths related to Osteoarthritis are about 500 per year.

The risk factors for Osteoarthritis vary. Some risk factors include, but are not limited to, over weight, injury, and/or occupational, (these are factor that are called modifiable). Examples of occupational factors are construction for men, and cleaning (i.e. maids, housekeeping) for women. Factors that are called non modifiers are gender, age, sex and race. Science is still looking into
the role that other factors may play in Osteoarthritis. Some of the other factors being studied are hormones like estrogen, and vitamin deficiencies, particularly decreased levels of vitamin C, D and E.  

In Rheumatoid Arthritis, the condition is described as an autoimmune disorder. An autoimmune disorder is when the body produces antibodies that attack healthy tissues. Antibodies are normally produced to kill off antigens such as bacteria but in autoimmune disorders such as Rheumatoid Arthritis, they attack healthy tissues. Rheumatoid Arthritis is one of the most painful and disabling diseases of the arthritis family. Diagnosing Rheumatoid Arthritis is done in different ways. It starts off by collecting the patient’s complaints of painful joints, then by a radiograph of the specific joint, followed by blood testing called Rheumatoid Factor.

Deaths related to Rheumatoid Arthritis are due to diseases that are secondary to RA. Diseases such as Cardiovascular (hypertension) and infections caused by medications used to help slow down the process of RA. Factors for Rheumatoid Arthritis are still being studied although there have been some links to genes. “Genetic susceptibility markers. Most attention has been given to the DR4 and DRB1 molecules of the major histocompatability complex HLA class II genes. The strongest associations have been found between RA and the DRB1*0401 and DRB1*0404 alleles.”

Treatments for Arthritis are vital for the patient. When the patient is in a flare up (of his or her condition), their quality of life diminishes. When in pain, one cannot complete activities of daily living (ADL) hence the patient suffers a decreasing quality of life. Even a simple task such as bathing can be painful. Treatments for Rheumatoid arthritis are many and with today’s scientific advances, we are discovering new medications and treatments to slow the process of arthritis. Since we know that arthritis presents with pain and inflammation, treatment begins by first decreasing or eliminating the pain. This is done with the aid of physical therapy and with pain relievers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). If no relief is achieved, then Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as ibuprofen (Motrin) are added. For many Osteoarthritic patients, this is the medical regimen.

In the case of Rheumatoid Arthritis, pain relief is not the only solution to the problem but slowing down or eradicating the process of the disease. When NSAIDs do not alleviate the pain, steroidal medication, one of which is prednisone, is added to the patient’s medication list. Medications that are used to slow the progression of the disease are called Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) and biological response modifiers. DMARDs “block this cytokine and can help reduce pain, morning stiffness and tender or swollen joints, usually within one or two weeks after treatment begins. There
is evidence that TNF blockers (Tumor Necrosis Factor), “a protein made by white blood cells in response to an antigen (a substance that causes the immune system to make a specific immune response) or infection” \(^9\) may halt progression of disease.”\(^{10}\) Biological response modifiers block cytokinase, a protein that triggers inflammation. These medications have a quick response time of about 2 weeks, but the patient must be under supervision of a doctor to monitor blood work.

I decided to pick this topic because as I type this essay, I too am suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis. At this moment I am feeling pain in my left knee and right shoulder. Rheumatoid Arthritis has been in my family for at least three generations. My maternal grandmother suffered from it, and my mother is severely incapacitated by it. As a child I remember hearing my mother’s cry of pain. Within the last 10 years, my mother’s condition took such a turn for the worse. She has endured several surgeries. She had bilateral hip replacements, bilateral knee replacements and most recently she had rods placed in her neck to hold her neck up. RA has so deteriorated her cervical spine that her neck was slowly sinking into her chest making it difficult for her to take a deep breath. My mother’s current physical state is completely handicapped. She is also wheelchair bound because her last knee surgery was not successful and left her unable to walk. Since her neck surgery 4 years ago she is totally dependent on my father and her aide to do her daily needs such as bathing, eating, and the brushing of her hair.

As for me, I was diagnosed in October of 2001. Being a mother of four, my worries would be that I might have the same fate as that of my mother and also that this disease might continue on to my future generations. I was in excruciating pain for about 3 years before I was put on the DMARDs. I have gone through many trials of medication and therapy. DMARDs helped temporarily. I went from having pain every day for hours, to flare ups every 3-4 days lasting 1-2 hours. My Rheumatologist (a doctor who specializes in arthritis and joint diseases) was not happy with pain relief for 3-4 days only and added the biologics such as Enbrel. I have been on Enbrel for the last 3 years and my quality of life has greatly improved. Now my flare ups are caused mainly when the weather is bad and when I forget to take my medications. My lists of medications are Folic acid, Methotrexate, and Enbrel. Both Methotrexate and Enbrel are taken as an injection. I inject myself once a week with these specific medications.

Taking Anatomy & Physiology this semester has helped me broaden my understanding of my physical ailments during a flare up. Thanks to modern science and new medications which my mother never had a chance to take
advantage of, my future looks better knowing that there are medications that can help slow down the progression of this terrible disease.

Works Cited

Ever since I was a little girl, I demonstrated a desire to express my political beliefs to others. However, I grew up in Nicaragua, where the people could not enjoy freedom as people do in this country. Nicaragua was a communist country where expressing one’s own ideas is strictly prohibited by the government. Not to mention, in Nicaragua, people with disabilities were not entitled to opportunities for advancement. In addition, disabled people did not have the right to an education. This was considered unfair for the fact that a majority of my life I was home, while my siblings went to school. Despite the fact that I faced a very difficult situation, my family and I did not let this obstacle overcome us. My hopes and dreams for success were still alive.

My family and I came to the United States in 1990 with lots of encouragement, enthusiasm and hope to attend school. However, I still had many obstacles to overcome. In this country, it is certain that everyone is entitled to a free education. Of course at that time, my documentation had to be prepared and I had a minor health problem. When I arrived in this country, I had to wait for my green card. Not to mention, I also had to undergo a liver transplant. Between waiting for my green card and recuperating from my liver transplant, attending school was not possible until the year of 1992. At that time, I was 15 years of age.

On my first day of school, I felt out of place because I had never attended school before and I didn’t speak any English. Not only did I have to learn English, but I also had to learn to read and write. I met a teacher who taught me how to believe in myself and not to be afraid of challenges. With her help, I was able to overcome many obstacles and I graduated from high school in 1998.

I began college in Fall of 2006 and I have never forgotten the encouragement of that teacher, who helped me to not only learn English, but also to read and write. There are many things that I still need to learn and obstacles to overcome, but I have the determination to pursue an education and later a professional career so that I can achieve the American Dream.

Now that I live in the United States, I have the opportunity to not only attend school, but also participate in organizations that will allow me to express my political beliefs and personal convictions. Currently, I am a member of the Ambassador’s Program at Hostos Community College where I am learning leadership skills through community service, public speaking and debating activities. In addition, I am the Vice President of the Ability Awareness Club, which allows students with disabilities the opportunity to learn their rights as students and attend extra-curricular events. As the Vice President of this club, I helped develop a workshop discussing the role of the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, organized a holiday outing with
the assistance of the club advisor and planned a formal lunch thanking the Hostos College community for their support of students with disabilities. These opportunities have afforded me the chance to not only show my leadership qualities, but also my ability to act as a team player. In addition, students, faculty and staff at Hostos Community College have been able to see beyond my disability. I am viewed by many as a young woman who is not only ambitious, but is friendly and shows compassion for others.

My interest in attending the Model New York Senate Conference stems from my desire to further develop my leadership skills as well as my attraction to public policy and public administration. Attending the conference will be a great experience for me as an emerging leader because I will be given the opportunity to network with professionals working in various parts of the New York State government.

My career goal is to represent low-income people, especially those with disabilities. At present, many people with disabilities are misunderstood by society. Some people believe, for instance, that because a man has a hearing impairment, he is not able to work or that a woman with a speech impairment cannot express her ideas effectively. That is not true. Disabled people are very capable of becoming successful. This success is measured not only by dedication and hard work, but also acceptance by the larger society. I believe I prove this everyday when I come to school and succeed against great odds.

If accepted into The Model Senate session, I will use this experience to further develop my skills. Furthermore, as I attain my skills, I will use them to work with others and help them achieve their dreams. That is, I will be the one who can represent and lead people who have special needs.
Kwami Johnson. “Little Astro Puffs.” 2009
Denia Bianco. 2009.
Massiel Garcia. 2009.
Abigail Torres. 2009.
Felipe Moreira. 2009.
Laquisha Dykes. 2009.
The New York chapter of the English Speaking Union, an organization that promotes “international understanding and friendship through the use of the English language,” has been sponsoring contests at Hostos to award high-achieving students in English for over 25 years. This year, essay contestants were asked to write on one of two topics: either to describe their discovery of the world of books, or to take the perspective of an alien to describe humankind’s oddest feature. Thirty students entered the competition. What follows are the winning and runner-up essays. Both Ms. Seta and Mr. Kallilcharan read their essays aloud at the annual Award Winners’ Tea at the New York English Speaking Union headquarters on May 4th.
Descending through the atmosphere, past pure white clouds, across a vast stretch of blue ocean, and over towering, snow-capped mountains, my ship low orbits this peculiar blue green planet. Scanning for life forms, my sensors detect a curious indigenous species: Homosapiens or, as the natives refer to themselves, “humans” or “mankind.” I find these humans to be an endless source of fascination. They are extraordinary in their achievements in what they refer to as “science,” “art,” and “music.” Though their customs and habits are alien to me, I can tell mankind is on the path to enlightenment. Through my observation, I have noticed one aspect of human social behavior I cannot fully comprehend. Humans all possess the strange devotion to imaginary omnipotent beings referred to as “gods.” Humans create elaborate stories of these “gods” as their creators, benefactors, and even punishers. They establish a myriad of customs and traditions to support these “gods,” called “religion.” The devotees of these religions use their self-imposed customs as ways to separate and divide their species. It baffles my mind, that though humans are biologically identical to one another; they adhere to the belief that they were specially chosen by these “gods” to be the sole inhabitants of this planet.

From my research, I have inferred that one of mankind’s basic needs is to establish a creator or “god.” The earliest forms of homosapiens created a crude belief system, in which they thought imaginary beings were in control of the world around them. Everything was the will of the “gods:” the sun, the rain, the night. Humans, despite the distances between them, all formed religions to further support these new beliefs. No matter where on this planet humans resided, they formed religions; from the jungles of South America, to the deserts of Egypt, to the fertile plains of India. I find it amusing that even though these followers of religions were unaware of other inhabitants of their planet, they still felt they were the chosen people of their “gods.”

I disguised my form, turning it into that of a homosapien and went down to interview these faithful believers. I asked a Christian, “For whom did god make this planet?” They responded “the Christians.” I posed the same question to many other religions: Muslim, Hindus and Jews. They all replied the same way; they each felt they were the divinely chosen people of this planet. The urge to differentiate between one group of humans and the others into broad groups according to their chosen religions is only the beginning. For within the same religion humans have divided themselves even more. Those humans who follow one god or set of beliefs may see themselves as different from humans who follow the same god but worship in their own traditions.

Even though devotees share a common belief in one god, they will war and fight each other over who is praising “god” properly. Christians all share
the belief in their monotheistic god and belief in Jesus. But Roman Catholics, Protestants reformers and orthodox have been at conflict with each other for centuries. This problem is not just unique to Christianity. Muslims divide themselves into Sunni and Shia. Hindus into castes and sects; and Jews into denominations. The role that “gods” and divine creation fulfills is that humans need to feel special, to feel they are on this planet for a reason, a purpose.

I have deduced that humans created these various gods, religions, sects, and beliefs to better understand the things in their world they can not control. Mankind uses these religions as a way to control their society. They base their religions on these “gods” to enforce morals and social standards. To comfort their worries and concerns over a unknown world, to rationalize the horrible events that happen to them or thank when their fortune rises. So these “gods” and religion serve humans as a safety mechanism to assure mankind they are not alone and they have a purpose.
Reading has been a journey starting as early as kindergarten and continuing even as a college student. As a child, reading did not appeal to me; it seemed to be a hassle. I could not understand why my parents and teachers kept calling it “rewarding.” I struggled with reading for the majority of grammar school. It was not until the third grade when I had a tutor on Saturday mornings that I realized my problem was not that I didn’t enjoy reading, it was I needed to improve my basic skills. Rosemary, my tutor at the time, taught me to read properly using a Disney book collection. Once I enjoyed what I was reading it no longer came as a challenge and from then on it became the rewarding experience I always hoped existed. Throughout my life, my feelings towards books has deepened with my learning ability. Now I know it isn’t always that you don’t enjoy a novel; sometimes you just need to look deeper into it to find something that you can relate to in order to find it interesting. For me, then, reading has gone from beginning as an unenjoyable activity, to becoming a creative way to relate to others’ work and giving me great pleasure.

All I wanted was to be like everyone else. Why couldn’t I read happily as my classmates would do as they discussed their summer reading log aloud to the circle? One afternoon after leaving my third grade class with Mr. Gomez - a strict teacher whose idea of fun was assign us to write words five times each - I asked my Dad, “When will I be able to share my stories with my class reading circle?” Soon, he got his good friend Rosemary to begin tutoring me. At first I was nervous that my efforts would not make a difference and I would never love to read as much as my classmates. Then one early Saturday morning she greeted me at the door with what looked like the greatest invention since the electric toy car. It was a book collection of all the Disney movies, decorated and colorful. I was never excited before to see a book. I was so interested in the stories that reading began to seem like second nature to me.

As time went on, I started reading other stories as well. When I brought my Disney books to school, the other kids thought they were just as neat as I did. I remember one book in particular that hooked me into the world of books. I carried it with me everywhere, reading certain parts over again and again. The book was Aladdin. It was not my favorite Disney movie, but for some reason the details about Jasmin’s beauty made me want to read more because they described her so beautifully. One thing I have learned from reading as a child is there is no better way to expand your imagination and creativity as with a good novel. Although at the age nine it wasn’t as clear to me, Aladdin showed me “a whole new world.” Maybe at the time it seemed to be a magic mystery, but as I grew, the true lesson was revealed: there is a whole world of books that Aladdin opened up for me. Still, at such a young
Today I am very grateful I had the opportunity to have a tutor who knew how to hook her reader. Now I read often for leisure and it remains rewarding. That experience I believe has had a lot of impact on my style of reading. I look for creativity in what I read. I believe every author has their own way to express their imagination in fiction. When I read I look for that and have never found a novel boring for that reason.

Whether I am reading for school or my own interest, I make it a point not to judge the book until I have finished it completely. Sometimes the point of a novel doesn’t occur to me until months after completion. I sometimes need an occurrence in my own life similar to the book to learn its lesson. Those who only read novels that mirror their own lives block so many lessons to be learned about different topics. For example, a teenager will often read novels about other teenagers going through the same problems they are. Sometimes reading about teens is helpful to other teens for making good decisions of their own. However, to read about a girl from the South (for example) if you live in New York can teach you a lot about other people and places.

Overall, my feelings towards books have changed over the years because as a child, I looked for topics of interest to read about and now I try reading novels about things that don’t seem – on the surface – to have any relevance in my life. I believe as I continue on my journey I will continue changing the kinds of books I enjoy. As of now, my leisure reading has fallen to the back burner a bit. When I find time to read, it is often fiction about vampires. Who would have thought someone once so interested in Aladdin would one day enjoy reading novels about blood sucking monsters! The truth is, I do not enjoy blood sucking monster stories; I just enjoy reading about different things.

Thankfully, my encounter with a tutor in the third grade persuaded me to become an active reader. A lot of people who don’t read may have not had an opportunity to learn the way I did. Children definitely need to be exposed to different kinds of books to see what interests them. Once a child becomes interested it is very unlikely for them to not enjoy reading in the future. The best time to learn to enjoy reading is in grammar school. Recalling this experience has reminded me how vital it is to start reading at a young age and also the importance of reading in my life. I realize how much my reading has developed and changed since that trip on the magic carpet so very long ago and my reading tastes will always continue to evolve.
This year, for the first time, the Women’s Studies Discipline Council and the Council of Women’s Centers instituted a “CUNY Student Recognition Day” to honor students from the CUNY colleges who have done outstanding academic or activist work in Women’s/Gender Studies. Two essays by Hostos students were identified by faculty on the Hostos Women’s Studies Curriculum Sub-Committee (Professors Fabrizio, Figueroa, Fisher, Justicia, Trachman, Makloufi, Ramson) as exemplary. Ralph Pimentel researched and wrote about Assia Djebar for his Honors project, under Cristina LaPorta, who was also his French professor. Prof. Jerilyn Fisher’s “Introduction to Women’s Studies” was the impetus for Carla Mercado’s essay (researched in collaboration with Donna-Ree Beckford, Paolo Henri Paguntalan and Diosmery Villela) on A Shining Thread of Hope. To a room packed with enthusiastic students and proud faculty and staff, presentations and awards were given on May 1, 2009 at John Jay College. Hostos was among the 15 colleges that nominated students for this inaugural Women’s/Gender Studies Recognition Day. In addition to having the opportunity to discuss their work with interested peers and professors throughout the university, to hear their work extolled by John Jay’s President and Provost, our winning students received certificates of achievement signed by the Director of Center for Women and Society at the Graduate Center. We proudly present their essays in ¡Escriba!/Write!
“When I write, I always write as though I was going to die tomorrow. And each time I finished, I wonder if it is really what they expected from me since murders go on...” – Assia Djebar

War. What comes to mind when you hear that word? Bombs, bullets, planes, destruction? Men sacrificing their lives for their country and/or beliefs? What about the women? What role do they play?

Assia Djebar, feminist, novelist, director, poet. She was the first Algerian woman who had the grades to attend the prestigious French school Ecole Normale Superieure de Sevres (Zimra 68, Writing Woman). Djebar wrote her first novel, La Soif in order to prove to the French that she, a woman, could write like them. The book received praise from the French. She was criticized by her own people during the revolution for writing the book. This was when she exiled herself to Tunisia and later to Morocco, where she wrote the novel, Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde (The Children of the New World).

The French colonization and subsequent liberation of Algeria was long and brutal and Assia Djebar had to live through it. Her novel, The Children of the New World, is about the struggles and the roles that women played in the liberation of Algeria from French domination. In the book, each female character seems to have an epiphany of sorts.

“I should leave.” These are the words uttered by one of the main characters in the book, Cherifa. Married to a man who forced himself upon her for three years, Cherifa is beautiful, yet unable to bear children. One day, as her husband once again forces his will upon her, everything in her recoils and she finally comes to the realization that she must leave him. An uneducated Muslim woman in Algeria deciding to end a marriage and start a new life is a very difficult thing to do. This was the beginning of Cherifa’s personal liberation. It was followed by another moment of personal awakening later, when she attempts to save her second husband, Youssef (a member of the FLN, Front de Liberation Nationale). She leaves her house, no longer satisfied with just being an observer, and walks across town to warn Youssef that he is in danger of being captured. From that day on, she went from being an everyday Muslim woman, observing what goes on from the safety of her own home, to a truly “free” woman, capable of making decisions on her own and able to do what she can in order to liberate Algeria from the French oppressors.

Cherifa is one of the best representations of change in the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Cherifa is overcome with oppression, yet towards the end, she becomes the symbol of a free woman. Djebar deftly brings us to understand the different levels of oppression in a Muslim country under colonization at the time. Not only are the women subjugated by the French,
they are also captives in their own homes, subsumed by the men in their lives (as is shown to us by Cherifa when she leaves her first husband).

Lila is another character in the story who has a different kind of awakening. Her transformation is the most interesting to me. She seems to already be independent – when we first read about her, she is out buying a new home, by herself, and not wearing the traditional veil. Lila is an educated woman and is married to Ali, a highly educated Muslim man who left her in order to fight in the war. She seems bored and depressed because she had a miscarriage. Her apathy soon turns to empathy when she hides one of her relatives in her house. Once she is caught and arrested for harboring an enemy of the French, we begin to see her apathy fade away. She now cares about the ongoing war and feels honored to have played a part in liberating her country.

I enjoyed reading about Lila because of her complex her personality. At first glance, Lila is already liberated, free from the oppression of tradition, i.e. walking around without a veil, being highly educated for a woman of the era. One would think that Lila would be an exemplary modern woman for the culturally entrenched Cherifa to measure up to. The more one reads about Lila though, the more one realizes how Cherifa is actually freer than Lila. Cherifa might not have been very well educated, but she did care about the war. She at least observed what was going on. When she marries Youssef, she even becomes an active participant in the liberation movement. It isn’t until the climactic moment when Lila is being arrested that this character become enlightened and part of the collective liberation struggle. Even though there are quite a few differences between the two, Lila has a little bit of Assia Djebar herself. For example, Djebar’s father feels no need to impose the veil on his daughter so Djebar would walk around in modern clothing, receiving an education alongside the boys. She grew up independent for the most part, like Lila.

Another important female character in the story is Salima. She is quite the mystery at first. When she is introduced, all we know is that she is imprisoned and she used to be a school teacher. There is also a prison guard, Taleb, who treats her with kindness, giving her a blanket so she might be able to sleep at night, but she can not because of the screams of another prisoner being tortured. As the story progresses, we realize Salima is not an ordinary prisoner. She is an incredibly strong woman who is part of the underground liberation movement. She refuses to succumb to her interrogators and at one point, the guard questioning her realizes he will get nowhere with her. She has a stronger will than he does. Salima is proud to be imprisoned and to have participated in the war (as Lila did during her own personal liberation).

Henri Pouillot’s, Mon Combat Contre La Torture (My Fight Against
Torture) sheds more light on the torture that went on during the Algerian War. Pouillot was a French guard who decided to speak out on the atrocities committed during this period. He was stationed in Villa Susini, a torture center during the ongoing war. Pouillot explains how both men and women were tortured during the war, but how the women had it worse. Villa Susini was practically a brothel. The French knew about the beliefs and culture of the Algerians. They knew if they decided to rape a woman, she would be ostracized from society. This was true whether a woman was a virgin, or married. According to Pouillot, the French took advantage of this and raped the women twenty to thirty times a day. Children would be born from the crime. The women would be psychologically scarred for life, since they could never come clean and tell their husbands or family what really went on in Villa Susini.

Pouillot’s testimony makes the story of Salima even more astounding than it already is. This is a woman who is imprisoned by the enemy, is interrogated and tortured yet still refuses to break. She knows she is part of this struggle, she knows she must endure this torture in order to make a successful contribution to the cause. Salima is the person whom both Cherifa and Lila eventually end up being like: a part of the cause.

One needs to underscore that Assia Djebar lived through the war and she most likely used a lot of what she saw and experienced as inspiration for her book. The Algerian War was real and women all over Algeria most likely underwent awakenings similar to the ones experienced by the female characters in the book. Children of the New World is filled with other characters that play distinctive roles in the liberation of Algeria. Although the book is considered fiction, there are a lot of incidents within the book that are factual.

The film “The Battle of Algiers,” directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, helps anybody interested in learning more about the colonization and liberation of Algeria. It allows you to visualize what went on, the brutality, the sacrifices, and the fear. One of the most poignant scenes in the entire movie is when a group of women, members of the liberation movement are about to play their part in the war. Shortening their hair and coloring it blonde, they take off their traditional veils and make themselves look more European. Each one would then sneak past French guards and plant bombs in different parts of the town. One could feel the women’s tension in this scene and it allowed me to fully appreciate the role women played in the war. The movie serves as a great backdrop to Assia Djebar’s novel. The role that women played in the war would be lost to history if it were not for writers like Assia Djebar or movies like “The Battle of Algiers.”
There was also the documentary, “La Nouba,” filmed by Assia Djebar herself. The documentary was all about listening to the Berber women retell their stories of the Algerian War. It not only gave the viewer more insight on what these people went through but also gave a glimpse into a bit of Djebar’s history since she’s part Berber too. The Berber were the original people of Algeria. They pass on history and knowledge orally, through music, stories, and dance. They mixed with the Phoenicians and the Romans, then later between the 8th and 16th century, Arabization through Islam began in Algeria. Once the Arabs arrived, the primary language of the people of Algeria became Arabic. This caused the language of the Berber, Kabylie, to be left behind. When the French colonized Algeria in the 1830s, the new primary language was French the language of the colonizers. Even after Algeria gained its independence, Kabylie was only spoken amongst a small group of people. Arabic was still the language of choice.

The Algerian war of liberation was not an easy struggle. Algeria was a country divided between those who wanted to have a peaceful resolution and those who wanted independence. As the fight for liberation gained momentum and French atrocities became more evident, many Algerians who had opted for a peaceful pro-French resolution, found themselves supporting the liberation movement. In the end, the story of Algeria is a bittersweet one. Even though it was successfully liberated from the French, Algeria soon after liberation suffered more oppression, namely and ironically by Algeria’s former heroes, the FLN. They have dominated Algerian politics since the French left and refuse to let anybody run against them in elections.

Today it seems like Algeria is being used as a guinea pig; as Roger Kaplan says, “a testing ground for the ability of postcolonial Islamic societies to develop modern institutions.” It is only recently that Algeria seems to be in a positive state of affairs thanks to the current president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Thanks to Bouteflika, women now have much more rights than they traditionally held. Women are now able to sue for divorce and can also get a passport without the permission of a man (Kaplan). Even though he disliked them, Bouteflika felt it was a wise political decision to bring back the language of the original people of Algeria, the Berber. The language is now taught in schools to children, alongside Arabic.

The battle between politics and Islamic fundamentalists continues to this day. Bouteflika is doing a good job in building a decent future for the country. Algeria is nowhere near as good as the freedom fighters in the Algerian War dreamed it would be, but in time, it can get there.
Works Cited


La Nouba. Dir. Assia Djebbar. 1979


How can we know where we are going if we don’t know where we’ve been? So many of us have heard this phrase or some variation of it, but in the history of the United States, the trials, tribulations, and molding of an entire culture is often studied at a glance for a couple of weeks out of the year and afterwards dismissed. High School students are generally exposed to the surface level of slavery in America. They learn about the extensive hard labor, whippings and beatings, but are not aware of the atrocities that extend beyond that. Students are not made aware of the complexities that went along with slavery and how humanity was stripped away from African Americans, especially African American women who were not only subjected to physical abuse, as were men, but also to sexual abuse. Brutality was the law and the enslaved faced it on a daily basis. From these circumstances, and unbeknownst to them, so many heroes rose; they were just the enslaved trying to survive. Knowledge of these powerful people, especially the even less-spoken about African American women, can be used as the driving force for empowering young minds, in particular, young African American girls.

African American women had a difficult experience while enslaved, particularly in the antebellum South. Nevertheless, during the time of the pre-Civil War years, African American women attained numerous accomplishments that ranged from (but were not limited to) education, and the arts. Most importantly, women in this era learned to become advocates for themselves, their children, their families, and their entire belief system.

The education of an enslaved person was illegal during this time, but that did not keep many from finding ways to become educated by learning to read and write. In Hine and Thompson’s *A Shining Thread of Hope*, historian William Loren Katz is quoted; he gives an example of the transgression of educating a slave: “Margaret Douglass, a white woman from Norfolk, Virginia, was tried and found guilty, according to the court, of ‘one of the vilest crimes that ever disgraced society.’ She had taught Kate, ‘a slave girl, to read the Bible. No enlightened society can exist when such crimes go unpunished,’ ruled the court” (74).

However, attitudes of oppression such as those of Southern Whites did not keep the enslaved people from becoming educated. Women and men in bondage would gather at night, after working long, exhausting days, and in these gatherings someone who had learned to read, either by being taught within the master’s home or simply by eavesdropping on lessons being taught to the free, White children; then they would teach other slaves. An influential enslaved woman was Milla Granson, who taught hundreds of slaves to read after being taught by her master’s children. Ms. Granson believed literacy would lead her and other slaves to freedom. Her dedication to literacy
was evident when she would sit in the field in the middle of the night teaching groups of slaves to read.

For those who were not able to become literate, there were other forms of education that also made them productive. Mastering a particular trade made many enslaved women indispensable. An important trade mastered by African American women was midwifery. Being a midwife was considered an achievement because these women “...enjoyed a position of respect in both the black and white communities” (78).

During slavery, African American women - under these constrained conditions - were also very successful in the arts, in particular, music. The ability to improvise European styles of music led to the evolution of jazz and gospel during the antebellum era. Enslaved people would often gather around a campfire. “Out of them came songs, stories, dance and humor that would prove the most powerful influence in the formation of a genuinely American culture” (86). From the broadening of this tradition came different genres of music we continue to enjoy today such as blues, jazz, gospel, rhythm and blues, and the many forms of music that extend from these.

One documented “juber rhymer” was a young African American woman from a plantation in Maryland named Clotilda. Some of her lyrics were published in The Old Plantation, and What Gathered There in an Autumn Month, by James Hungerford. In Hungerford’s book Clotilda is described as a “Colored....Under ‘expanding circumstances’ she might have been a genius; in her present condition she is only eccentric. She can make you rhymes all day long... for she can make melodies as well as rhymes” (100).

In spite of all the obstacles that enslaved women encountered during the antebellum years, many mothers succeeded in protecting and defending their children. Such children were automatically considered the property of the mother’s owner, and, many owners sold these children for profit. “You are here to get my son... but the first man that comes into my house, I will split his head open” (83). And when one did, Harriet Ross lived up to her words. With her young daughter Araminta watching, Ms. Ross defended her family; her daughter became the well-known Harriet Tubman, who was one of the most prominent women of the Underground Railroad. With the protection of slave mothers, families were sometimes able to feel a certain sense of togetherness in an otherwise chaotic and life-threatening situation.

The chaotic times enslaved people experienced in the United States, in particular in the Deep South, were like none ever recorded in history. African American slaves were exploited and oppressed every single day, without regard to age, gender or physical condition; simply no regard at all. For example, African American slaves experienced whippings, floggings, and
lashings on a constant basis. This was sometimes done by the slave owner or the overseer on the assumption that brutal treatment would make the slaves work faster and harder. The slaves were treated as sub humans in part because of slave owners’ great fears that a single drop of knowledge that the slaves received would be a great threat to them. Any slave caught learning would be excruciatingly disciplined in accordance with the law, which was the law of the slave owner. Besides beating the slaves into submission, the owners would starve the enslaved, sometimes only feeding them once a day. Along with the physical strain, there was also psychological strain. Enslaved African Americans were robbed of their time with their family and loved ones. Hine and Thompson point out, “They were under constant assault from the white world, which did everything it could to make them ‘good slaves’” (71).

Without a doubt, being an enslaved Black woman in the United States during the antebellum was an especially unfortunate fate. The most common way to dehumanize a woman during this time was through rape and battery. It was meant to break the best of wills and spirits. When the slave owner thought it was time for their “stock” to produce, sometimes they would lock a man and a woman in a shed hoping she would be impregnated, all against her will. Treated like stock, if she did not get pregnant, she would get beaten and the act of rape would be repeated. If she failed to become pregnant after several attempts, she would most likely be auctioned off. Notwithstanding the sexual abuse, these women were still expected to perform their daily duties, whether in the field or in the home, and, whether pregnant or not. The enslaved males were emasculated by not being able to do anything about the abuse that their female family members and friends were going through.

Some women were kept enslaved strictly for reproductive purposes. The slave owners bought these women to breed more slave workers for them or in order to sell their children. Even being pregnant did not keep these women from ruthless beatings. The owner or the overseer would dig a hole in the ground in order to fit the woman’s pregnant stomach while she received whippings on her back. As soon as the child was born into bondage, if the mother was lucky enough, she would get a month to take care of her newly born child, but usually she would have to return to the fields the day following labor. At birth, the child became the property of the slave owner.

Another horrible fate was being a beautiful black woman; it was almost always automatic grounds for victimization. These women, called ‘fancy girls,’ were often the highest auctioned slaves because they would become sex workers. The money made from their prostitution, of course, was paid to their owners. In 1857, for example, an advertiser ran the following ad in the newspaper: “A slave woman is advertised to be sold in St. Louis who is so
surpassingly beautiful that $5,000 has already been offered for her, at private sale, and refused” (97).

With all the oppression enslaved African Americans experienced, it is no surprise they constantly resisted the abuse. Resistance to the oppression became part of daily life, which came in the forms of, but was not limited to, opposition to daily work, and running away. The resistance of a cook, Alcey, who would have rather worked the fields than in the master’s home, was documented as follows: “Instead of getting dinner from the coop, as usual, she unearthed from some corner an old hen that had been sitting for six weeks and served her up as a fricassee!” (92). The slave women’s fight against slavery was a way of life.

One type of abuse many women were able to successfully and ferociously oppose was sexual abuse. An enslaved woman constantly feared being raped by her owner, the overseer, or any white man who thought he could use her. According to Hine and Thompson, African American women resisted and denounced the abuse, saying, “You do not own this - not this part of me” (94). One enslaved woman, Elizabeth Keckley, was able to resist her master’s advances for four years and as a result, she only had one child by him.

Another form of resistance exhibited by African American women was abortion. With the help and support of other black women, pregnancies would be terminated in order to not bring another slave child into the world, since children born to African American women were considered property of the woman’s owner. There are several recorded instances in which mothers’ decision to terminate their child’s life occurred after birth. The parents who decided to commit infanticide, it’s been said, did so for the same reason women voluntarily terminated their pregnancies: they loved their children too much to allow them to be victimized in such a horrendous way.

With so much information about conditions for women under slavery that is omitted from the traditional history of the United States, it is crucial that high school students are made aware of more inclusive facts. The oppression enslaved women experienced and the actions they took to resist oppression prove the inspiring women we’ve learned about through A Shining Thread of Hope helped mold this country. In one way or another, these circumstances and heroes have influenced every one of us, no matter what our race, ethnicity, or religious belief. How can we deny students the right of having an inclusive version of history? If we deny them this right, we deny them the knowledge of their true selves.
Works Cited


Each March, recognition is given and prizes are awarded to participating students in English 091 and ESL 091 for the best essays composed under supervision. This year, their essays herald the achievements of either Louisa Capetillo, Puerto Rican activist and writer (1879-1922) who worked on behalf of wage earners, against domestic violence and for children’s educational opportunities; or Shirley Chisholm (1924-2005), the first African American woman elected to Congress from New York’s 12th district in Brooklyn, co-founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the first woman to campaign as a Presidential candidate (1972), and a lifelong advocate for women’s, workers’ and minorities’ rights. Students research the lives of both “candidates” in order to determine which woman they would like to nominate, with supporting detail, for a hypothetical award in honor of their having served women, family and children during their time of activism. This year, essays were judged by faculty members and a Writing Fellow. Winners read their essays aloud at the Closing Ceremony for Women’s History Month, attended by the college community and oftentimes, the winners’ friends and family. The four winners this year, whose essays are published here are: 1st and 2nd Place, Ms. Nasira Mowla and Mr. Yong Peng Wu. In a tie for 3rd Place are Mr. Angel Bland and Mr. Bochy Lora.
Dear New York City History Council,

It has been brought to my attention that New York City wants to recognize a woman who best represents an important contribution to women’s equality. This year, the nominees are Shirley Chisholm and Luisa Capetillo. I understand that only one nominee can be chosen so I think the Council should award Luisa Capetillo for her remarkable dedication to public service and women’s rights.

The time I am talking about is the early part of the 20th century. At that time in Puerto Rico, very few paid laborers existed, and they were isolated and spread across the country. Slavery and feudalism slowed down the working class. Poor workers were neglected by rich people. Luisa Capetillo stood beside those workers and fought very bravely for their rights. In particular, she organized many debates and strikes. She played a prominent role in a strike, and so she quickly became a leader in the union. Her several strikes resulted in winning the minimum wage for workers in 1916 in Puerto Rico.

Luisa Capetillo was baptized a Catholic, but she rejected religion, though she was not an atheist. Even though she did not agree with the rigid dogmas and rituals of the church, she considered herself a good Christian. She believed that to be a Christian meant to believe in justice and equality. She insisted that all women, not just the rich or literate, should have the same right to vote as men. She advocated for free and liberal education for all men and women. In fact, she was the first woman to wear pants in public, to show people that women can do the same thing that men do, which is why they should be considered equal. She was later arrested for it. She challenged the court that there was no such law that prohibited her from wearing men’s clothing. The judge agreed, and so the charges were dropped.

Capetillo never went to school but yet she was a writer. She was never afraid of telling people what she believed in. She was the first woman in PR to write feminist ideas and theories of women’s right. She wrote and published “My Opinion about the Liberties, Rights, and Responsibilities of women.” She published her own book, Humanity in the Future in 1907. She was a reporter too. She wrote for the union newspaper and published her own periodical. She also wrote and published a collection of essays.

In conclusion, I believe that the New York City History Council should honor Luisa Capetillo because she fought for workers’ causes and the emancipation of women almost until her death. Furthermore, she lived her life on her own terms, defending her right to be free.
Dear NYC History Council,

If you paid any attention in history class, you probably remember a few great people in history like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. No doubt everybody knows who they are. But if I ask you to name a few female heroes, would you be able to answer me? I have learned that you want to recognize one inspirational woman whose life’s work best represents making an important contribution to women’s equality. There are two nominees, but only one can be chosen. They are Luisa Capetillo and Shirley Chisholm. I suggest that you choose Luisa Capetillo because she contributed greater advantages and created more roles for all women in the public sphere.

Luisa Capetillo was a woman involved in political struggles. In the 20th century, women were treated unequally in our society. For example, they did not have the same rights as the males to vote. Women did not have the power to make decisions for their country and their future. Capetillo struggled for women to have the same right to vote and she also struggled for women to divorce legally. It used to be only men who could file for divorce; females did not have the right to do it. If a woman married a bad man, she had to be in his company forever until one of them died or he divorced her. Women now have more rights through Ms. Capetillo’s struggles; her movement provided great advantages to all women.

She was also involved in labor struggles. She not only struggled for a better political position for women, but also helped women gain rights in their workplace. Many women who were working the same jobs as men did not earn equal salaries as men. In fact, no workers, whether male or female got good salaries at that time. Capetillo helped to pass a minimum-wage law for Puerto Rico. After the minimum wage law, all of the people who worked at any profession benefited. So, the minimum wage movement helped not just female workers, but also male workers to get higher salaries.

Capetillo played an important role in influencing women’s minds. She was a writer and an educated women who believed women’s value is not just to stay home, take care of their children and let their husband to decide their future. She strongly believed females and males are equal. For example, she was the first female who dared to wear pants. You are probably thinking, why is this important for us? Then let me tell you some history and explain it to you. In the 20th Century, all women just wore dresses; only men could wear pants. In other words, she was challenging the supreme authority of men. She was trying to say: if men can do it, then I can do it as well. She published many articles about her own education and inspired women to stand up for themselves. Your future is in your hands; nobody can take it away from you.
or control your destiny except yourselves. That was what she tried to teach all women.

Shirley Chisholm is also a great woman, but Luisa Capetillo is greater. She was a leader in the political and labor struggles of the working class at the beginning of the 20th Century. Her actions helped workers to gain better treatment and payment at their jobs, and also influenced people’s minds as well. She is the one who imparted a divine influence on the mind and soul.

The reasons that I mentioned explain why you should choose Luisa Capetillo. I hope my suggestions will help you a bit and that you will adopt my idea.
Dear NYC History Council,

I am writing to you in response to your Women’s History Month essay contest. The candidate that I recognize whose inspirational life’s work best makes an important contribution to women’s equality is Shirley Chisholm. I feel her life’s work best represents a woman who has worked hard to improve the lives of women and children, and also has made progress in women taking on more important roles in society and politics.

Shirley Chisholm worked in the day care field early in her career because she felt the needs of the children were not being met. Ms. Chisholm wanted to improve the quality of early childhood education for the kids in the neighborhoods and this sparked her interest in politics. Shirley Chisholm started in politics by educating men and women in the neighborhood about politicians who were sensitive to their needs, and she rallied voters to the polls.

In 1964, Ms. Chisholm decided to run for a seat in New York’s State Assembly because she felt she could do more good to help women and children as a representative than in her previous roles. Ms. Chisholm served in the New York General Assembly from 1964 to 1968. During her tenure, Ms. Chisholm proposed a bill to provide State aid to day care centers, and also voted to increase funding for schools on a per pupil basis so that crowded inner city schools would get their fair share.

After serving in the State Legislature, Ms. Chisholm went on to run for, and win, New York’s Twelfth Congressional District seat, becoming New York’s first African American woman elected to Congress. In Congress, Ms. Chisholm continued to fight for children’s education and women’s rights by co-founding N.O.W. (National Organization for Women). Ms. Chisholm was elected to a second term in office. In 1972, at the DNC (Democratic National Convention) in Miami, she announced her candidacy for President of the United States, which was the first time any woman was considered for the presidency.

I feel Ms. Chisholm’s body of work best inspires women because she was a pioneer. Ms. Chisholm broke many barriers that were in her way in becoming the woman she was. Any woman, no matter what race can draw courage and inspiration from her.
Dear NYC History Council,

It has come to my attention that this council is considering recognizing one inspirational woman whose life’s work makes an important contribution to women’s equality. To my understanding, the council will choose between Luisa Capetillo and Shirley Chisholm. In their time, both of these remarkable women changed the course of the world. For many years, Luisa Capetillo fought for women’s rights, especially women workers’ rights. At this time, Luisa Capetillo should be recognized because she laid the foundation for women’s rights in the early 1900s in Puerto Rico, more than fifty years before Shirley Chisholm started her work for women’s rights in New York City.

Luisa Capetillo spent most of her adult life fighting for women’s rights. In the early 1900s she realized that women workers were being suppressed, underpaid and mistreated by employers. She began to educate women workers on employee rights. She also organized women workers to protest against workforce inequality. During her life, Luisa Capetillo helped pass the minimum wage law in Puerto Rico, which assured that women would get paid the same as men, thus leveling earning potential.

Luisa Capetillo’s crusade started in Puerto Rico but she made an effort to educate women in other places as well. Between 1912 and 1916 Luisa traveled to New York and Florida to educate women on workers’ rights as well as voting rights. She also traveled to Cuba where she gave lectures to workers on how to start workers’ unions.

Ms. Capetillo was a pioneer in the fight for women’s rights. When she began her crusade against inequality in the early 1900s, she put herself at risk of being killed because she defied men in public, which was considered unacceptable at the time. Ms. Capetillo became the first woman to wear jeans in public, which was significant because it showed women that they too could wear what men wore, thus closing the gap between genders.

Luisa Capetillo deserves to be recognized by the NYC Historic Council. She paved the way for women like Shirley Chisholm to carry on the fight for women’s rights. Women have accomplished great things since the early 1900s such as being elected to government office, hired to run major corporations, and being appointed presidents of universities. Parallel to Rosa Parks, who protested against blacks’ inequality by refusing to give up her seat for a white passenger on a Montgomery bus at a time when blacks were expected to do so, Luisa Capetillo fought for what she believed in, thus changing the world forever.
On March 9, 2009, as one of the activities for Women’s History Month we held a Forum on Gender and Biology. Our invited guest was Dr. Janet Haynes of Long Island University. Dr. Haynes explored with our students and faculty various issues that pertain to gender. Topics included a consideration of the distinction between the terms “sex” and “gender” and government policy decisions with respect to medical studies about gender. Prof. Julie Trachman’s students Kevin Williams and Vanessa Hernandez have offered us their responses to this provocative and educational forum.
Dr. J. Haynes presented “Gender and Biology,” and I must say that the topics discussed were interesting and thought provoking. Things that I thought or believed were true, are not true at all. For example, I had assumed that all XX genes would turn out to be females whereas XY genes would be males. To my amazement, this is not entirely true. I’ve learned that for XY to become male it must also carry an SRY gene. XY can become female if it does not carry the SRY gene. Androgen intensity syndrome and hormonal imbalances can influence XY to become female. I learned that there is a difference between “sex” and “gender.” They do not mean the same thing. “Sex” refers to genes, chromosomes, male/female gonads, testes and ovaries. Conversely, the term gender does not only refer to sex, but also refers to individual and societal roles in society.

In 1997, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) prevented women from participating in clinical trials because they believed that testing women of child-bearing age could potentially harm a fetus. By doing this, they were excluding half the population. In 1985, the Public Health Service decided that the exclusion was potentially harmful to women. In 1986, the National Institutes of Health urged the inclusion of women in research trials. In 2000-2001, analysis showed that although women were included in trials, there was little analysis of sex/gender related differences. In 2001, the Institute of Medicine published a report advocating study of sex/gender related differences at all levels: cell to organism.

Estrogen may protect from atherosclerosis but it does not protect against Alzheimers’ disease. I’ve learned that women get intoxicated faster than men. Several factors influence the rate at which women become intoxicated: namely, women produce lower levels of gastric enzymes to break down alcohol; women have higher fat/lean muscle and less body water. On my own, I probably would not have thought of this and I always pondered why exactly is it that women become intoxicated faster than men.

Science now offers tests to verify (pre-natal, at birth, or later) whether an individual is male or female but the results of these tests are never conclusive. Some of these tests are: estrogen/testosterone levels, Barr bodies, karyotype and SRY gene. The instructor mentioned a point that in 1993, according to work published by Anne Facesto-Sterling, there are five sexes! I would have liked to know what are the names given to the five sexes but the names were not mentioned.

To conclude, I believe that this forum was informative and interesting and I gained much knowledge from it. After attending this forum, I can say that I learned a great deal of information that will be beneficial to me in the future. Based on what was discussed, I believe that no one ever stops learning.
and even things that you thought might have been true are not necessarily true at all. This is because research in the sciences continues and what we learn from new research may change what we previously knew or believed. I believe that it is absolutely necessary for researchers to include all sexes in their research and studies, because different drugs may affect different sexes/genders in different ways.
Dr. Janet Haynes gave a very interesting presentation on the topic of Biology and Gender. She went back thirty years, when the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) prohibited women from taking part in early clinical trials and the testing efficacy of drugs. Scientists did not take into account women’s hormonal fluctuations, and even female rats were not selected for studies. It was not until 1985 when the Public Health service took an active role. They wanted to find out how we can know the effects of drugs on women and how drugs interact with childbirth. In 2001, it was found that although women had been included in the studies, results were not being analyzed. The issue of having no data for women made it seem like a biased study.

Dr. Haynes spoke about the interrelationship of biology, gender, and society. She handed out a questionnaire which explored gender and biology. An article written by Dr. Sterling in “The Scientist” called “Define Bi-Sexes” explored the tendency to be more inclusive and identify variances in relations to developments in embryonic, ovarian, and external genitalia. She referred to it as “inter-sex” development.

I learned that sex or gender is not only defined by the X-or Y chromosomes, but that there is a segment of a chromosome called the FY gene that, if omitted, the testes or ovaries would not be functional, the androgens do not reach the levels that they should. External appearance is normal but internally there are deficiencies. Dr. Haynes spoke about ambiguous genitalia, where the androgens and the receptors do not interact. I’ve learned that male identical twins are more alike internally than female identical twins. Random studies explained that in the XX chromosomes (female), usually the father’s X chromosome is inactivated. In twins male chromosome, the X is not inactivated. Levels of enzymes in the same chromosome are very variable.

A video was also shown exploring birth defects. For example, Spinal Bifida affects women worse than men. And biological differences in estrogen and progesterone reveal that women have a stronger immune system triggered by having children. One extremely interesting fact that I learned was about MRI studies on the act of thinking. These studies show that women’s thinking ability is eight times bigger than a man’s, and women use both sides of the brain when we read as opposed to men who only use the left side of the brain when actively thinking. I also learned that women lack a gastric enzyme like Asian and Native Americans to absorb alcohol than men.

In essence, there is a clear demarcation on how Genetics and Biology affects gender. The presentation was extremely interesting, new to me, and conducive to learning. I’m delighted to have attended this presentation.
The concept of genetically modified foods introduces a new way of thinking about our feeding habits. This is an important issue because food provides energy and nutrition to our bodies by satisfying our basic needs. There is a lot of evidence on the beneficial outcomes of genetically modified foods, but there are some disadvantages as well. Emphasizing the use of new techniques for genetically modified foods will increase social awareness about our position in nature.

Deborah Whitman (2000) writes about ambiguous issues for cultivating genetically modified foods around the world. According to the US Census Bureau (2008), the world’s population went over 6 billion people over the last 50 years. This is likely to cause an enormous disturbance in the world’s ecosystems, and there will be consequences to address as a result of these changes. It is a fact that the world’s population continues growing, and one of the major problems that humanity is going to face is a lack of food. Under these circumstances, genetic engineering can be one of the solutions to the problem. The new genes produced through crop plants (soybeans, wheat, corn, potato, and other agricultural goods) introduce new modifications in their natural structure and resistance. Some of these new genes provide resistance to pests and fungal and bacterial diseases. These techniques allow people to have control over the production and harvest which will guarantee an increase in the food supply.

However, there are disadvantages in cultivating genetically modified foods. For example, modified genes may produce undesirable genes, and these so-called hidden genes might become as-yet undiscovered biohazards that may strike humanity. Unusual consequences may happen, putting at risk not only humans, but other species on our planet also. Many of these genes, known as transfer genes can be dangerous to the environment and hit non-target species - plants or animals that cohabit with the food crops. There are also technical limitations for cultivating genetically modified food that have to be carefully observed. The process of genetic modification is very slow. It takes many generations to select and cross crop plants until the desirable traits emerge (Levetin, 2008). Eventually, scientists introduce the “new plant” to its new environment, disturbing the ecosystem. None of these factors can be good for the environment and for the different living populations on Earth.

In my opinion, genetic modification of food plants is a necessary process to enhance food production for the growing population on this planet. Nevertheless, we should not forget that there might be some risks. At this point, scientists have no choice but to keep the food supply stable. The steps for a plausible solution must be taken very seriously by developing safer techniques based on extensive experiments that guarantee better products. Genetics is a
growing field of study, and many discoveries are going to enrich the process of gene modification. The tricky part of this process is its randomness. There will be unknown outcomes, just as in nature.

Although Whitman (2000) emphasizes various facts and ambiguous issues about the process of modification of genes in foods, she introduces an interesting rhetorical question about genetic modification: “Are they harmful or helpful?” With this, she puts us in a position to decide for ourselves about the consumption of modified foods. As the old saying goes “without knowledge, there is no freedom.” Therefore, we are left with a clear message – freedom of choice.

Works Cited

“Bodies: The Exhibition” offers visitors the unique opportunity to examine the various systems in the human body, as well as to see the effects of disease on many of the body’s organs. The exhibition features over 200 specimens, including both bodies and individual organs. The exhibit unveils the many complex systems of organs and tissues that drive every aspect of our daily lives and unite us all as humans. It offers visitors a fascinating opportunity to learn about the human body. It is a morbid yet interesting display that turns death into an educational experience. The purpose of the demonstration is to interest students in science and anatomy and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. Actual human bodies are used for the exhibit.

The exhibit is all about impact. Seeing an actual black, cancerous lung, a brain that was damaged by a stroke, or a skeleton holding up its own muscles, is very impressive. The section on early human development is probably the most powerful part of the entire exhibit. Seeing these real bodies placed in various poses and positions are the key. For example, you see all the muscles, joints and, other parts in action, as it were. You see muscles stretched, the way joints are supposed to move, the way, blood flows through the body. It was very interesting and totally fascinating.

For those who are not familiar with it, it is an exhibit of real human bodies that have been preserved and dissected to display specific body systems. The different systems include the skeletal system, muscular, nervous, circulatory, digestive, respiratory, urinary tract and reproductive system; the cardiac and endocrine system. There’s a room dedicated solely to human fetuses in various stages of development. Some of them are kind of scary, especially the deformed ones. I was a bit morally conflicted as I walked through the exhibit. I had a moment where I was face to face with one of the cadavers, studying the facial muscles when I realized, “this guy used to be alive.”

To teach all students about medical anatomy, this exhibit is a must-see. No exceptions. Your whole view of the human body will change as a result of coming here, and you’ll be walking away with a whole new appreciation for the crazy wonders that are your torso, innards, and limbs. And you’ll be a lot smarter.

The Exhibit is presented thematically, by body parts and functions. My favorite, most memorable sections of the exhibit were the lungs of a smoker and other cancerous organs. Oh, not to mention the fetus. It was amazing to see how they grow over time.

But “Bodies: The Exhibition” is not for the faint of heart! Dead bodies are all over the place and they are awesome. There are muscles fanned out away from the body, a human brain, and an array of fetuses. Another bizarre part of the exhibit is the “Smoker’s Lungs” they have on display. If there’s any
reason to quit, the lungs give you a good reason. The smoker’s lungs were gray or black and had nasty looking cysts.

For people who appreciate arts and science; I think it’s worth seeing this exhibit. I agree that it’s not for everyone since these are real human cadavers and some people may find it unethical. But, these are made for educational purposes and they were presented very well and with utmost respect. On the inside, humans are all the same. We have the same muscle groups, the same blood, and the same skeletons. So, go check it out, and see what you really have inside.
On February 5, 2009, soon after the initiation of the spring semester, the Hostos Committee on Sustainability launched the Hostos Recycling Program with a seminar. Diahann MacFarlane, Chair of the committee and Mr. Roland Colavito, a representative of Royal Blue Inc., presented an overview of the recycling process and explained the activities that were going to take place at Hostos Community College. In an effort to make the event more productive, the committee reached out to faculty teaching on that particular day and invited them to bring their classes to the seminar. Two Biology classes and one Chemistry class from the Natural Sciences department attended the event. The information was valuable for all participants, students, faculty and staff alike, some of whom were not very familiar with the underlying details of the recycling process. It was also helpful because the presenters informed us about the materials selected to recycle; they displayed the different containers, distributed flyers and indicated the locations of the recycling stations throughout our campus.

The message was clear: the success of the recycling program is dependent upon the collaborative effort of the entire college community. It is up to each person in the institution to continue promoting the benefits of recycling and encouraging everyone to assume the responsibility in this endeavor. As an institution of higher education, Hostos should strive to become an example to the community of the South Bronx. Every classroom, office, corridor, and every corner of our campus inside and outside should be a model of recycling.

We invite you to read some of the many student responses to the seminar in English (Bio120, Che220) and Spanish (Bio130) and follow their example in pursuing ways to help reduce the carbon footprint of Hostos Community College.

Veronica Ayala: “As a student and citizen, I think it’s about time that someone stood up for a change that would benefit each and every one of us. Recycling will not eliminate, but will surely decrease, our outrageous pollution levels. It will decrease the waste that goes out to the landfills located throughout the world. It will save many trees in rainforests around the world, which will lead to saving the homes of many animals and possibly avoiding extinction of others. I will definitely share all this new information about recycling with my fellow students and friends to inform them of the importance of recycling and how they too can make a difference.”

Haydee Aybar: “Con el incremento del plan de reciclaje en Hostos, nosotros, los estudiantes, ayudaremos a salvar nuestro mundo, el cual se está viendo afectado por el calentamiento global. En mi opinión, todos, como ciudadanos que somos, tenemos el deber de reciclar no solo en el campo escolar sino también en nuestras casas, en nuestros empleos, para así vivir en un mundo mejor.”
Bryan Blanco: “I think we all should contribute to recycling because this is a way we can help to save not only our community, but our future. This world cannot function without the green life of trees since they produce the oxygen we breathe. I feel this is a great opportunity to show Mother Nature that we can help out. We can help the program at Hostos by putting up posters about recycling and by having a maintenance team that lets people know where they are supposed to throw their trash and how are they to recycle.”

Henry Cabrera: “Después de la charla en reciclaje, me quedó la sensación de que nosotros podemos hacer mucho para ayudar con este lindo programa. Por ejemplo, comunicando en nuestras casas a nuestros familiares. El mas importante es el reciclaje y cómo hacerlo correctamente. Si todos reciclamos, la salud de la tierra será mejor. Ayudemos a nuestro planeta a ser un lindo lugar donde vivir. Para ello debemos reciclar todo cuanto podamos para un mejor mañana.”

Prof. Fernandez Demonstrates Recycling Plastic, Outside Hostos Library