### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Laskin and Jennifer Tang</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelique Imani Rodriguez</td>
<td>Sweatin it out to Yesterday’s News</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Egbeyan Eromosele</td>
<td>Definition of a Beautiful Woman</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David A. Rodriguez</td>
<td>E.R. Bed 8A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David A. Rodriguez</td>
<td>Backpack Literature</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camonghne Felix</td>
<td>Pre Calc</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocio Rayo</td>
<td>El Boom</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Hunter</td>
<td>The Balance</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. E. Cuevas</td>
<td>Beautiful</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. E. Cuevas</td>
<td>A Small Lesson</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhadames Nin</td>
<td>Orgasmo</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayma A. Flores</td>
<td>Esperanza/ Hope</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Maldonado</td>
<td>The Itch</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camonghne Felix</td>
<td>On God and All Other Things that Hide</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Triunfel</td>
<td>The Ruling Class and their Beginnings</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Santos</td>
<td>Hostos Alumni Relations Circle of 100 Celebration</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Santos</td>
<td>Hope and Happiness</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jocelyn Gonzalez</td>
<td>My Grandfather’s Aspirations for Women</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Rosario, Eddie Torres, &amp;</td>
<td>Engaging our Men in Women’s and Gender Studies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Jones, Facilitator</td>
<td>Work and Classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha Williams</td>
<td>Growing Up with Gender Identity Disorder</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai Cuahteneco</td>
<td>Humid</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Kosseh</td>
<td>If the Words Could Come Again</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Angel Cruz</td>
<td>Torment of Regret</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camonghne Felix</td>
<td>The Lesbian Guide to Loving a Man</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Ngelezi Brown</td>
<td>Mother Nature</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JUNE 2011**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angelique Imani Rodriguez</td>
<td>Revolt of the Colonized Woman</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Egbeayan Eromosele</td>
<td>Patrick’s Paradise</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul S. Cuscione</td>
<td>Warning! Your Cell Phone is Hazardous to your Health</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julissa Lopez</td>
<td>Flu</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binet Balde</td>
<td>My Visit to the Natural Sciences Department</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Carroll</td>
<td>How Clean is My Home?</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David A. Rodriguez</td>
<td>Now that She’s Gone</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David A. Rodriguez</td>
<td>The Last Leaf Falls</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camonghne Felix</td>
<td>Ashley Jones</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Kosseh</td>
<td>Is It So?</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Egbeayan Eromosele</td>
<td>Deeply Human</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Egbeayan Eromosele</td>
<td>Comatose</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai Cuahutenco</td>
<td>Inside the Mind of a Murdering Child</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerilyn Fisher</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Crespo</td>
<td>Luisa Capetillo, First Place</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha Velez</td>
<td>Luisa Capetillo, Second Place</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambar Sepulveda</td>
<td>Luisa Capetillo, Third Place</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taydra Nesmith</td>
<td>Luisa Capetillo, Honorable Mention</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ARTWORK

Brawny Galvez  Flying High  FRONT COVER
Robert Knights  City Veins  BACK COVER
David Cruz  Drought Refugees, June 1938  20
Kamar Brown  Mississippi Delta Children, 1936  37
Laura Vega  School Bullying  39
Laura Kemp  Diamond  40
Rochelle Towler  Portrait  41
Jose Martinez  Hostos Community College  42
Andres Moreira  The Zone  43
Brawny Galvez  Wings  44
Deysha Paredes  Times Are Changing  45
Carlos Bastian  Solidarity  46
Felipe Moreira  Girl and Graff  47
Jeong Seon Hwang  Urban Reflection  48
Myung Shin Kim  Spring is in the Hair  49
Elijah Richmond  Flames and Sorrow  50
Mavel Soto  Couch Potatoes  51
Rosmond David  Cranes  52
Sudian Buchanan  The Eyes of a Garden  53
Erick Santos  Train 1 - Memory  54
Samuel Baez  Gate  85
Deysha Paredes  African American Family from Texas Moved to California  91
You are holding in your hands the ninth issue of ¡Escriba!/Write!, our annual student literary and art journal. We want to remind all Hostos students that they can submit writing or art to our next issue at any time. We are so proud of our redesigned Escriba website (at: http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/escriba), thanks to Prof. Catherine Lewis of the Digital Design and Animation Program. Our new website not only offers past issues of ¡Escriba!/Write! in PDF format, but also includes a handy submission form so that any Hostos student can upload their writing or art for inclusion in the next issue. Another benefit of the new Website is that this year we will be able to display an online-only Supplement to the print version of the journal. More student writing and art will be available in this special supplement beginning in June, 2011.

This year we are happy to present some very strong poetry and prose on a wide variety of themes – about social and political issues, personal challenges, journeys, love (requited and unrequited), being far from home, sexual and gender identity, health, the environment and more. We also include work in Spanish as well as in English and want to remind our writers that we welcome pieces in any language. We have a particular interest in bilingual writing (see, for example, the poem Esperanza/Hope by Rayma Flores).

In addition to our poetry, we are honored to publish some award-winning prose. Paul S. Cuscione’s essay “Warning! Your Cell Phone is Hazardous to Your Health!” won first prize in an essay contest sponsored by the New York State Society of Radiologic Sciences. And we’re so pleased to be able to present winning essays from our Women’s History Month essay contest, with an introduction by Jerilyn Fisher, professor of English and Women’s and Gender Studies. We have many more Hostos faculty members to thank for their help in identifying students who have writing or art to grace the pages of our journal. Kudos and our thanks to Prof. Fisher and the following faculty members who sent us their students’ winning Women’s History Month essays: Sue Dicker, Andrea Fabrizio, Gregory Marks, and Madeleine Stein all in the Hostos English department. In addition we thank professors Craig Bernardini, Weldon Williams, Marielena Hurvich, Geraldine Ruiz and Flor Henderson of the English, Humanities, Language and Cognition, Radiologic Technology and Natural Sciences departments for sharing their students’ creative work with Escriba. We also want to thank students Rocio Rayo and Elijah Richmond for being a crucial part of our editorial team. Without their help with art, publicity and editing duties, ¡Escriba!/Write! would not have been able to meet its new, earlier deadline and would not be as strong an issue as it is.

Not only do our students excel in utilizing language, our art and digital photography students have produced breathtaking imagery. Whether
they wield a traditional painter’s brush or take advantage of the variety of graphics, textures and animation offered by digital technology, the results are spectacular. Inspiration strikes artist Deysha Paredes with the same ferocity of lighting in her work, “Trees, Water, Lightning,” while Laura Vega’s “Bullying” uses graphic art to comment on a serious problem. Myung Shin Kim’s “Spring is in the Hair” fills a canvas with delicately rendered swirls of paint while Jeong Seon Hwang challenges the viewer’s depth perception in a study of three people near a shop window. Kudos to professors Rees Shad, Catherine Lewis, Sarah Sandman, Michelle Cheiken, and Mark Schoon from the Digital Design and Animation program, and to Prof. Ian Scott of the Visual and Performing Arts unit for providing a nurturing and supportive atmosphere in which our students’ creativity is allowed to flourish.
Curls of cigarette smoke filled the dimly lit room
As she walked in…
All satin curves and jazz riffs in her hips…
Leaning into the bar, she purred for a drink…
Crossed legs and sipped…
Wincing at the bitter burn
In the back of her throat
That still tasted better than the acrid scorn he had left inside of her,
Like a pebble grating at her insides.

She turned her face, curls falling over eyes…. 
Hiding tears she refused to shed over a love lost…
She just wanted another drink…
A warmth in liquid amnesia…
Some spirit that could take the moment away…
Lips part…
Red stain rimmed on glass cup…
His face vanishing into bottoms of bottles…
Into rum-soaked fantasies of something better than what he left behind.

The sudden wailing of horns and strings lifted her from her feet…
She stood to the sounds of the congas thudding from the jukebox…
Music shifting her body…
The beat too intense to ignore…
Drinks forgotten…
Lavoe resonating against her cracked spirit…
Her stolen heart…
Her broken silence…
Soothed her hurt…
Eased her mind…

And as the song played…
Her feet did the talking…
Her hips invited…
Her thighs welcomed…
Her hands moved…
Her smile lit up…
And she danced…
She danced…
Swept away the bullshit under her moving feet…

And in that brief moment,
While the sweat beaded across her forehead…
And her body swayed to rhythms and beats and clave…
She remembered she had breath…
She remembered she was alive despite the death of this chapter…
She remembered…
That she would survive…
That she could survive…
And that she already did.

His love was yesterday’s news and she sweated him out on the dance floor.
Because my hair grows upward like thick mountains
And my skin and eyes are black as Egyptian Queens
When I was a child I’d say
“Mommy, how come I don’t look like the girls on TV?”
My mother would smile and say,
“Because you are perfect just the way you are.”
Now when I walk in the streets
Strangers look at my strong, textured hair and ask
“Are you a boy or a girl?”
I ask “will I annihilate my ancestral gifts of facial features, skin and hair
To look like some else?
To be the beaten, starved, caged definition of a woman
Just to feel accepted?”

Never again will I judge my self-worth by another person’s standard of beauty
Self destructive
Because it taught me to hate the Earth-like width of my nose.
I am one of the billion definitions of a beautiful woman
And my individuality is my power.
On the biological and cultural bridges of time,
Women’s life stories
Braid themselves in resemblance.

Whether we contend with mental illness
Or live life’s daily challenges
Within a wheel chair;
Whether we recover from our addiction to drugs
And unhealthy relationships;
Whether we overcome the traumas of sexual abuse
Or gain the inner strength
To accept the unchanging truths in life -
We women are great leaders.

Intelligence is the ancestor to true beauty.
Warriors pregnant with the multiple roles we fulfill within all nations
There is no such thing as a woman’s limitations.
The gems of mental, spiritual and physical health
Is ours through self love.
Knowing that being women means more
Than the shape of our bodies.
It is the transcending feeling of flight within femininity.
A feeling that is present from birth.
Like a black panther and its claws.

Nothing beautiful is without power.
So I will never apologize for being true to myself.
So the next time someone asks me
If I am a boy or a girl,
With a bravery like the transgendered communities
I will tell them “My soul is half male and half female
Like the rhythm of nature’s heart beat.”
I will tell them
“My ability to love is my power
And my sexuality is an architect of that power.”
I will tell them I am a feminist
Who descends from the Great Ancient African Civilizations
I will tell them “I am me.”
Her stare is muted
Lacks focus
As she ponders
Into the nothingness
She drifts
In and out of alertness
Occasionally
Taking an inept breath
I get up
Stroke her hair
She reaches out to me
Grabs me
Calls my name
She is calm
Her eyes are fixed on me
And
Not through me
Like before
She smiles
I smile
I see my reflection
My ancestors’
Beauty

Her gaze widens and I let go

I sit
Bow my head
Humbled
When I realize
She is speaking with God
It’s okay grandma, it’s ok.
Tragically buried
In their designer sacks
Vaporous
As their claptrap classroom participation
And
Linear written accounts,
I suspect

Professor,
Grasping at the
Ebb and flow nature of
Early morning restlessness
Seeking signs of inspiration,
An authentic thought
Then comes the disappointment

I wait
With one thousand or so
Pages of words
Until you exhume
My body of work
Snuggled
At the bottom
Of your designer sacks
In my pre-calc class, 
I watch two red haired girls sleep. 
The one 
To the left of me, 
Her skin giggles when she breathes. 
Her body swells when she inhales 
Like an embarrassed lighthouse stuffing herself into the horizon 
As if trying to find a baby titanic to save 
before it quick sands.

I remember who she is when she’s awake. 
She’s all heartthrob stumble. 
She speaks like a tripping matchbox, 
I find myself expecting fiery, 
At least even spark, 
But only her eyes swelter. 
Her lips are pastel and rugged 
Like someone has been trying to stuff an explosion down her throat for years.

There’s an untouched worksheet 
Filtering the body oils from beneath her hands. 
Something about Sigma and Delta summations. 
I know that if she were awake 
Her hair would be playing freeze tag with her face. 
She’d be shoving her fingers into her scalp 
The way a frustrated lover might 
If attempting to tug the tension from her cheeks. 
She is still bent over, 
An envelope with too much beautiful 
Still cuffed in manila. 
She’s a crushing sentiment, 
With too much silent at all the wrong moments. 
Sometimes, 
I catch her staring. 
Wonder if she sees anything.

The other red head is on my right.
I don’t really see her much,
But usually
She’s a peeking thunderclap of a goddess
Standing stick straight atop the last Himalayan Mountain.
She’s loud sometimes.
I wanna shut her up sometimes.
But today she’s fumbling with swallows of exhaustion
A pregnant feline
Belabored with her own strength.
She doesn’t know this – but she scares me.
Scares me enough
That I won’t ever really tell her to shut up.
Because if she wanted to
She could give my reputation a run for its money in this class.
And I know that she wants to,
Just not enough.
When she’s awake
We meet eyes in a brick housed battleground type of way.

There’s a shrugging scaffold bridging the three of us,
So when the red head on my right
picks her head up from the cradle of her arms
looks over to me
and Says “You got the answer to the last equation one?”
The other red head is awake,
And looking over my shoulder
For the answer to the same equation.
I hunch my back
Like a wilting clover,
Tuck my hands into my jacket
And say “The limit doesn’t exist.”
A beat is coming from our bodies
A rhythm from our souls
Making me feel reckless
Slowly losing control.

Setting up camp in my subconscious
Like campers in tents
Intense
Your voice floats through my dreams
Like my brother’s incense.
My body reacts to you
Heart quickens reps
You’re barely legal
Still taking baby steps.
We are from different points in the city
X and Y intercepts

We have good conversation
About verbal illustration
Giving me mental motivation
Thinking about your dictation
My oral stimulation
Using words for penetration
Verbs for escalation
Cultivating elevation

Same dream every night
For about a week.
As soon as I close my eyes
It’s their face I wanna see.
Thought they were a water sign
They began to feel so deep
I look at them and I see myself
Albeit abstractly.
Enjoying getting to know
This person that I seek
I realize what they lack ain’t fuego
But the ability to see
themself as I do
with perfect clarity.

Smolder
While they ponder
Lava begins to seep
A bird shit on their flame once
Couldn’t stand the heat.
Burns the meek around them
Getting rid of the weak
Going to bed early tonight
To see them in my sleep.
Looking out upon the distance, grasping shadows with intent insistence  
Delightfully bathing in scents of pollen… pollen wafting through the air  
Set against a backdrop leaning, forever walking intently dreaming  
With fortitude I dare to trod in dim lit corners I wonder where  
Catching the balance of here and there.

Looking out my window dreaming, silent raindrops crystals seeming  
With imminence of moments fleeting  
“tis mirrors,” said I, as the joker laughing, clutching gold illusions chafing  
Knowing it’s a grand illusion, empty pages drenched in confusion  
“Ah Ha,” said I, with ladies prancing, songs of lore maidens dancing  
Written on silken pages, writing songs of forgotten ages  
Cataracts that clear when waking  
The Gong it rings… should I despair?  
Walking the balance of here and there.

Looking out the new day calling, the voiceless mass echoes falling  
Contagious rhythms there beguiling, amidst the din of moonlight shining  
Taunting windswept corridors of time  
Playing host to the jigsaw puzzle in my mind  
Wondering where, wondering where  
Is that daunting balance of here and there.

Looking at myself entreating, from the windows reflection beating  
Rapping gently at my soul, could it be songs of old?  
Pulling up from asunder, could I possibly have made a blunder  
It’s just the line between here and there.  
Outside my window the sky imbues, so I tell my story to  
Anyone that seeks to choose, to find oneself with nothing to lose  
To walk a path that’s rarely tread, to seek a path where it’s often said  
That the sun doth shine and the blood flow’s red  
From the bottom of the bosom to the nth of nine, from milkyways finding  
love on time  
The blessing of another chance, or is it just happenstance  
That voice that roars from deep within and guides us through thick and thin  
The strength to show the cupboard bare  
To walk the balance of here and there.
Beautiful. That is how I am.
I am 300 pounds of beauty.
Who can beat that?
Who says I need to be like Naomi Campbell
To be full of beauty, and to feel like a supermodel?
She is only 113 pounds of beauty;
I’m more than double that amount.

I wear a little black dress
That cheerfully swings around
Like the ones worn by the hotties on TV,
Just that mine is a size twenty-two.
I have even clipped an iPod
Between my beautiful rounded breasts.

Who says I can’t be beautiful
Like the girl next to me
Wearing that pink little dress
That turns heads everywhere she goes
With a matching bag
Made by Prada,
Or it is by Chanel?

Who says I can’t be beautiful
With tattoos all over me?
What is the difference between me
And Tila Tequila?
An artist drew them
All over my beautiful body
Which served as his most expensive canvas.

Who sets beauty’s standards?
Who has the authority to define beauty?
Who doesn’t want to believe in me?

I am beautiful.
A beautiful round mama.
Or did the mirror lie?
Someone told me once to write a poem.

A poem about what!
I brutally replied.

About kindness
She said.

“Drought Refugees June 1938” by David Cruz
Based on photograph of same name by Dorothea Lange.
Entre la confusión
Y la sombra de tu presencia te vi llegar.

Mirándote a los ojos me besaste bruscamente
Mientras tus manos gruñirán tus deseos;
Sentirás mi calor acariciando tu piel sutilmente.

Tus labios húmedos se entornarán con los míos;
Navegare tus pechos firme de exaltación, deslizaré mis manos por tus caderas
encendiendo el fuego de nuestra pasión.

Ardientemente nos fundiremos entre la convulsión;
Apaciguaremos nuestras codicias; recorreré tu abdomen con mi lengua
ardiente, devorando tus deseos y fogosidad
Con una locura inocente.

Suspiraremos sin desperdiciar el espacio y el tiempo;
Bañaré mi piel de tu sudor, bañaré mi rostro con el néctar de tu amor...
Mi piel pegajosa se aferrará a la tuya.

Perderemos el sentido amándonos y perderemos la noción del tiempo;
Nuestras exclamaciones se escucharán en nuestro refugio
Mientras siento tu piel vibrar como un volcán en erupción.

La lava ardiente de tu orgasmo se desliza entre tus muslos,
Mientras tus ojos disimularan como desfalleciendo
Y tus uñas cincelan mi espalda.

Ufff. Desplomados como dos locos,
Dejando entre las sabanas mojadas los recuerdos;
Mirándonos fijamente entre abrazados sellaremos nuestros indestructible amor.
HOPE (ESPERANZA)

This autumn,
I see my dreams fall
Like leaves from the trees.
My eyes shedding hopes
In this agonizing journey.

And there is no air
Only Emptiness
Who looks into my eyes
And mocks me,
Who sits beside me
And reminds me
That you are no longer here.

So many springs now,
And you,
My air to breathe,
My music to sing,
My feet to walk,
You, are no longer here.

Since then,
I walk towards bitterness,
Without knowing where
You have gone.
ESPERANZA (HOPE)

En este otono veo como mis sueños
Caen como las hojas de los árboles.
Mis ojos derraman ilusiones,
En este camino de agonía.

Y es que no hay aire,
Solo tengo la nada.
Ella, que me mira a los ojos
Y se burla
Ella, que se sienta junto a mí
Y me hace sentir
Que ya no estás aquí.

Tantas primaveras
Y ya no estas.
Tu mi aire para respirar,
Tu mi música para cantar,
Tu mis pies para caminar.
Desde entonces
Camino hacia la amargura,
Sin saber adonde
Fuistes a parar.
Esperanza.
Thursday morning arrives early with 6:30 am on the clock. The neighbors constantly remind the tenants under of their weight with their every footstep which almost reminds one of the tremors felt in Jurassic Park. The phone rings.

“Hello?”

“Dude, I got the bad JuJu man! I need your help.”

“Bad JuJu? You sleep with someone? Did you glove up?”

“Yah. I did.”

“The entire time?”

“Yah yah. 90% of the time.”

“Well that’s what you get for being stupid. How old was she?”

“What are you, a reporter? Me pica. Just come over!”

Patrick holds his phone in his hand against his chest and stares at his wooden ceiling, wondering why the world punishes him with irresponsible friends whose problems become yours by mere association. If your friend gets into a fight, you get into a fight. If your friend is bored, they will call you and try to share their boredom. In this case, if your friend has an STD, that can only mean that they will definitely try to share it on a mental or even spiritual level.

Arriving to the door step, he rings the door bell. It was an average apartment building with your typical garbage cans chained to the rails in front. Apparently in that neighborhood one can’t be too careful.

“Yo, come in, I’m crapping bricks man, we’ve got to find a clinic that’s open.”

“You better have at least Googled it, otherwise I’m going home. I’m giving you my Saturday morning.”

Both begin to frantically search the Net. One is on Wikipedia; believing it to be a reliable source, as the other is editing the contents of that same Wikipedia page. It’s humorous how easy information can be manipulated for the benefit of the manipulator. As the pages begin to freeze due to the opening of multiple tabs, one could see the beads of sweat on the Chlamydia host’s forehead as he truly believes he is dying by the minute. Patrick, on the other hand, is carrying himself rather relaxed as if he’s used to his friends being in these situations.

“I’m never calling that girl again.”

“I hope not” says Patrick. “If things get graver, you might have to get a biopsy and I tell you this because I don’t want you to go out that way.”

“A bio-what? Do I look like Darwin Einstein? What the F- is a biopsy? Is that like a pill or something?”
“A pill? No man, that’s when the doctors stick a… *sigh* yah man, it’s a pill.”

The Chlamydia host finds a phone number to a clinic with national bases on one of the sites.
“Patrick? Do me a favor. Call this number and see where they’re at?
“Why aren’t you doing it?
“Because I get all nervous and sound retarded.”
“*sigh* Give me the number and your phone.”
“Use yours.”
“Why?”
“I don’t want Jess to find out I’m calling an STD clinic.”
“You’re still with Jess? The very cool, nice, loyal and innocent girl whom I got along with perfectly and told you if you lost her it better be for a very good reason? That Jess?
“That’s the one. Just call man and don’t say anything to her, its….” He crosses his arms and raises his chin in the air. “Its guy code.”

Patrick thought to himself, where did this set of “guy” codes originate from? It’s possibly just a subtle form of mental slavery. If there is anything universal about men, it’s that they all eat and apparently have all been indoctrinated in this “guy-code” following cult. Believe it or not, breaking guy code is completely taboo. You just don’t do that.

“You had to bring out the guy codes” says Patrick.

The Chlamydia host continues to Google STD’s in Google Images, where everything looks extreme in nature. The images in major search engines are often extremely misleading and very inaccurate. Common razor bumps for example could lead to Folliculitis and these look like small red pimples which are often itchy or burning. Now if someone has these symptoms in their pubic region what is one going to automatically assume?

One thing is for sure: they will definitely be consulting the Google Image section. To their surprise, many STD’s are merely infections which can be cured with doctor prescribed antibiotics. The fears which most go through when dealing with STD’s is the thick level of shame that comes with the infection. People are more likely to write “wish me luck on my uvulopalatopharyngoplasty aka UPPP on their twitter page than “Wish me luck. Hope doctor John Doe’s able to figure out what I contracted.” It goes without saying that there’s no good way to die, but no one wants to die of an STD. That would be just an awkward funeral.

Patrick dials the number. In a confident tone Patrick says, “Good morning, I was looking to see what your office hours are?”
“Hi! Good morning. We are open Monday to Fridays, 8 to 5 pm, Saturday 8 to 12 pm and we are closed on Sundays” says the operator who sounds bubbly and cute.

It was a Saturday for them, 1400 hours, or 2:00 in the afternoon.
“Ah…shhh…” responds Patrick.
“Sir?”
“One second….”
Patrick is not the sentimental type but he does certainly try to keep his worried friend calm; so as carefully and gently as he could he tells Joshua the host, “Hey Dick…” Joshua raises his shoulders and sticks his arms to the side. “All...cuh cuh cuh cuh closedddd.”

“That’s just ridiculous! They’ve got 24 hour gift shops, how they not going to have this?” The operator could be heard snickering in the background. “Yo, even the operator finds this shit funny. Hold on there’s got to be one somewhere just let me ask!”

Patrick reluctantly picks up the phone after a deep sigh. “Excuse me, could you check if there are any other locations open at this time?”

“Certainly, may I ask where you are located?” “I’m in Queens, 11377.” “Okay...one second...” Keyboard clicking can be heard. “Alright. There is one, but…” The operator hesitates. “It’s in Milwaukee sir.”

Patrick looks to Joshua. “Yo, they’ve got one in Milwaukee...” “Milwaukee??” says Joshua as he assumes the thinking man position, rubbing hairless. “Thank you very much Ma’am, I have a feeling I’m going to be calling Greyhound. You have a good day.” “Thank you ...” Patrick hangs up the phone, cutting her off labeling her the bearer of bad news.

Turning to Joshua he says, “So what now?” only to see him with a suitcase, packing it as if the IRS were at the door. As the stress piles, Patrick picks up his coat, puts on his hat, grabs his pack of cigarettes off the brown marble table next to the hallway door. It has been a month now since he left his command. On a technical basis, he is and has been on unauthorized military leave and at some point they will catch up with him. After enjoying the dark gloomy day with clouds racing each other across the sky as they smother the sun, he puts his cigarette out and thinks about his fiancé. He had to leave her there, he just had to. If he comes back he’ll be tried…but if he doesn’t...Patrick takes a deep breath and exhales. He whispers to himself...

“One laughable problem at a time.”
The ambulance trickles across my threshold, its lights mounting the opposing walls in increments, an ambiance of belts and shoelaces and all the things I could cut my breath with. We all follow standards. The EMT workers calculate vitals and ask procedural questions. I answer them and find stupid things to wish for.

Normally, during this process, my mother will stand between both mirrors in the bathroom, throwing my belongings into pillow cases -- finding the things I might take with me and finding ways to fit herself into all of them.

They only gave me medication the first time, when I was delirious with confusion and my hands, awkward as they are, grabbed at the bedsheets as if I could rip into a different reality, as if the one I was attempting to tear out of was the dream and all I needed to do was be pinched and woken. They take blood before they sedate me, as to keep the samples intact, then ask me to relax for the last time -- forewarning. The sedatives do not make me feel as if I am being drugged. Being drugged feels like being drugged. Being silenced feels like silence. There is freedom in being out of your mind; however, being stuck inside of your mind is a different sensation. I won't describe it.

Then they tell me, in this expressly permissive voice, that I can speak. It is patronizing. They want me to know that my self will is trapped between my teeth, that everything I say will be frozen between margins and documented for reference. I did not speak, the first time. I waited to be released from the sedative. I told the therapist this, two weeks into treatment. He asked me if I liked making people uncomfortable, I asked him if this surprised him. He didn't answer. I didn't really expect one, just maybe the courtesy of one.

When my mother came to visit, for the first time, She stayed for less than an hour, laying handmade cards from my 8th grade classmates in front of me. They read silly, childish things: “Hope your Asthma gets better! Love, Tasha” and “Drink lots of Orange Juice. XOXO, Malea”. I didn't want them. In the 8th grade, I was no secret. I had no friends, except for the books in the classroom libraries (that were significantly below my reading level) and the other strange girl who spoke only sometimes. These were courtesy letters, because the teachers had asked it of them.

My mother did not look at my hair. I was still natural then, matted into a box of curls, grease, tears and sweat. She offered me a brush, it's bristles spaced evenly, the wooden handle thick in my hands. The guard cleared his throat. I couldn't have that brush - it could be easily dismantled. She could only bring me sturdy things like wide-toothed plastic combs, and cloth scrunches, no rubber bands.

Before she left, she asked if she could bring anything back for me. I couldn't think of anything practical to possess, not in a place where other children could barely remember their bodies. So I asked for a white rabbit. She returned, the next day, empty handed. In New York City, there are no white rabbits for sale.
Since the beginning of human life, the production was connected to the ruling class' power, and the exploitation of the working class. In order to maintain the exploitation of the working class, the ruling class recurred to the state. All the social, political, and economic forces described the human origins, and how they performed throughout their living evolution.

Production is the transformation of the raw materials. Also, it is the source of wealth. “One can say that the productive forces encompass the hold range of means available to human beings for mastering nature and producing material goods to satisfy their needs” (Jalee, 10). The raw materials form part of the finished product. A raw material is something used by human labor or industry, for use as a building material to create products or structure, such as water, wood, milk, or petroleum. The means of production are the tools, the machines, and the equipment. They are owned by the ruling class. “The means of production, generally considered to comprise on the one hand useful materials from natural sources: mineral, coal, petroleum, wood, water, etc.; and on the other hand the instruments of production: tools, machinery, and increasingly advanced equipment which makes it possible to extract or harvest useful natural materials, and then to transport and industrially transform them (Jalee, 10). Labor power can be defined as work capacity or the ability to do work. “The labor power of humanity itself, without which natural resources could not be extracted from the ground, nor could the machines or equipment of any factory transform these natural resources into items for human use”(Jalee, 10).

The ruling class owns the means of production. This class does not produce wealth. It is composed by a small minority that owns most of the wealth; the slaves’ owners, the feudal lords, and the capitalists. The first ruling class was the slaves’ owners. The slaves’ owners owned the means of the production, the slaves, and their family. A slave's owner had the right to kill their slaves if they refused to work, and if they escaped, they had to be returned to their rightful owner. The second ruling class was the feudal lords. They owned the land. Although the serfs were not paid, the feudal lord had to give them a piece of land. The capitalist class was the last ruling class. Capitalists are those who own the capital, the owners of the factories, banks, computers, oil, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, media, health insurance, weapons, etc. This class controls the production of the wealth. “The very rich families and individuals who compose the owning class live mostly off investments: stocks, bonds, rents, and other property income” (Parenti, 6). “You are a member of the owning class when your income is very large and comes mostly from the labor of other people, that is, when others work for you, either in a company you own, or
by creating the wealth that allows your investments to give you a handsome return” (Parenti, 7).

The working class does not own the means of the production. This class produces the wealth. It is composed by a large majority that owns a small part of the wealth; the slaves, the serfs, and the workers. The slaves owned nothing. They only received a bare subsistence in return. “James Madison told a visitor shortly after the American revolution that he made $257 a year on every slave he owned and spent only $12 or $13 for the slave’s keep.”(Parenti, 7). The serfs owned a piece of land. They made their own tools, clothes, etc. Workers live mostly off wages, salaries, and fees. “Thus we discover the existence of two social classes with objectively antagonistic interests: on the one hand, a numerically small class owning almost all the means of the production and, on the other, a numerically enormous class, without which no production would be possible” (Jalee, 12).

Exploitation occurs when the ruling class takes advantage over the working class. “Worker’s wages represent only a portion of the wealth created by their labor. The average private-sector employee works two hours for herself or himself and six more hours for the boss.” “Workers are simply paid substantially less than the value they create” (Parenti, 7). When slavery existed, slave owners’ forced their slave to work for free. The feudal lords were protected by a law that said that the serfs had to work because it was a legal obligation. However, the capitalists did not force their workers to work but in order to get the money for subsistence, they had to do it.

The state is an instrument of the ruling class to maintain exploitation. “Thus the state is not old as human society. It is a product only of class society. Indeed, the state became necessary to maintain the dominance of one human group over another, and so cannot be for the benefit of all, exploiters and exploited alike, but only an instrument in the hands of the oppressors” (Jalee, 90-91). The state utilized the force in the slavery to make the slaves work for free. The law in the feudalist period to make the free labor of the slaves a legal obligation, and the ideology in the three periods to convince the workers that they had to work because if they did not they were going to hell. Finally, I can say that the state is not based on humanitarian purposes, but it has become the protector of the minority class’ domination.

To conclude, I have learned some things that I did not know about the background of our political, economic, and social evolution, all of which have been changing over the past years. By having all the power, the ruling class has the control in their hands since “Politics and economics are two sides of the same coin” (Parenti, 3).

Works Cited
On December 2, 2010, donors, recipients, and the rest of the members from the Hostos Alumni Relations Office gathered together to participate in the Circle of 100 Gala in the Atrium of Hostos Community College’s A building for the unveiling of The Circle of 100 Tree of Life. I was one of the individuals who participated in The Circle of 100 by playing the song “Imagine” by John Lennon. I performed in front of the public, along with my brother David, who also performed as a guitarist as everyone cheered for us throughout this special event. The other performer, Rondell Charles, did a rap/hip-hop version of the same song and also made an excellent performance that excited the crowd.

The Circle of 100 is a membership group of people who continue to show support to college students who want to accomplish their educational goals. Members of The Circle of 100 donate to provide scholarship grants to those who need it to cover their financial expenses. These scholarships are also awarded to students who want to make a transition and continue their studies at a four-year college. The Tree of Life that was unveiled at the Gala was created by Juan Fernando Morales. It depicts a Ceiba tree whose fruit bears the names of donors whose contributions give life to the existence of the Circle of 100. I feel that this event helps me realize that there is hope for each and every one of us who want to overcome our struggles so that we can continue to strive for success by getting a decent education and preparing for a career that we want to excel in, as well as by working hard to support low-income families who struggle through poverty.

This Tree of Life also symbolizes vitality, a pillar of strength, and the lasting growth that our donors pass on to our younger generation. Since its inception in 2006, the Circle of 100 has awarded 93 emergency grants of up to $500 to needy students. In addition, the Circle has awarded 33 scholarships of $1000 each to facilitate students’ transition to four-year colleges. The Hostos Circle of 100 is co-chaired by Professor Emeritus Gerald J. Meyer and Dean Emeritus Virginia Paris. Other members of the Executive Committee are Nydia R. Edgecombe, Director of Alumni Relations, Professor Elyse Zucker of the English Department, and Ms. Saudy Téjada, an Hostos alumna (Class of 2004).

“Education is the path to freedom and the foundation for endless opportunities,” said Professor Meyer. “Unfortunately, many Hostos students have their education interrupted or delayed by financial hardships or unforeseen circumstances. The Circle of 100 was created to ensure that educational opportunities are within reach for as many of our students as possible.”
According to the article “Positive Psychology Links Hope and Happiness,” people believe that hope is not the best of luck, but if they do realize that they want to succeed in life, people should make an effort to find hope for themselves.

Researchers have studied emotions such as hope and they now say that hope is something very important for those who want to live a better life. Hope can also help others to set goals. For example, I can get the skills I need for a better position while I’m looking for a job. What is very significant to me is that hope can be something more specific and that can change the lives of others. When a student goes to school for the first time and learns new things, hope helps. But there are people who don’t believe in hope, and they think that hope is for losers.

That’s not what hope is about. It is about what people can do to make a difference so that they can use their time to think of what’s important. Studies have shown that millions of people have had a difficult time figuring out what’s going to happen with their lives. Would they find peace nowadays or perhaps there won’t be any happiness for these people.

Ever since I’ve read this article, I started to get this feeling that if I can pursue success, then that means I do have hope. Only if I had the courage to make something positive, and that I’m willing to make the sacrifice for myself, then that means I do have a hopeful attitude. People have to really understand that feelings of hope and happiness do have actual practical benefits. They can also develop a person’s critical thinking skills, as well as one’s memory because no one knows exactly what’s going to happen to them if there isn’t any hope.
Our senses have a funny way of making us remember a time, place, or thing. A cinnamon bun, a known and tasty treat, triggers a precious memory that had a strong effect on my childhood, as well as who I aspire to become. The simple pleasure of making a fresh pastry reminds me of my grandfather, an ex-Navy chef and loving man until his death in 2010. Being born into a Puerto Rican family, it was valued that a woman knew how to cook, clean, and take care of the household. However, my grandfather believed that this did not define us. Maintaining a household is not something my grandfather wished I would do. It is quite amusing how the cinnamon bun came to play along with that fact.

In a traditional Hispanic home it was the mother who showed her daughter how to cook and clean. However, my grandfather took on that role and taught me many things that would enable me to become a good woman in society. My grandfather baked goodies every weekend and it was my job as a little helper to take out the ingredients he needed. He would prepare the tastiest treats, my favorite being the cinnamon bun. He asked me one day what I would like to be when I grew up, and I said I would like to be a housewife who can bake all the time. I never expected my grandfather to be upset. He looked at me and said, “Is that all you think a woman does all day long, cook and clean?” I shook my head, and he chuckled. I was very confused. I remember saying, “Are we not making cinnamon buns anymore?” He said, “Yes, we still are, but you have to understand women do more than cook and clean; they work outside the home and even become doctors.” I asked if there was a job for baking, and he said of course. He told me about his experience as a Navy chef.

I was amazed that a woman could do the same thing as a man. I was happy that my grandfather opened the door of opportunities for me as a young girl. The fact that a man, my own grandfather, believed in women to succeed as more than a housewife was a blessing. Many times I have seen men put women down, and say their place is the home. Today I am a Liberal Arts major and aspire to go to cooking school and become a pastry chef. The experience of baking and having that communication with my grandfather allowed me to not be confined behind the four walls of a home.

I, Jocelyn Gonzalez, a Hostos CUNY student, will not subject myself to being just a housewife, but will become a successful Puerto Rican woman, all thanks to my grandfather and his tasty cinnamon buns. This positive experience in my childhood led me to continue on with my education.
Cynthia Jones, Facilitator: On Wednesday, March 9, 2011, as one of the extensive activities for Women’s History Month, a panel of male students enrolled in either Introduction to Women and Gender Studies (WGS) or Gender in the Workplace responded to the call: “How best can we ‘engage’ our men in working actively toward gender equity and other feminist goals?” Sharing their narratives, the panelists engaged the audience in a conversation about considering their own identity, consciously acquiring information about issues related to gender equity, critically thinking about media’s messages about gender, and advocating for equity in a variety of ways such as enrolling in WGS courses.

Carlos Rosario, Panelist: Sometimes I find myself thinking that ignorance was a deep sleep that I and many have awakened from. I remember changing when I saw a workshop on violence and its effect on children; this workshop challenged my way of thinking and started me on the journey of activism I now walk. After the workshop I joined a program called Relationship Abuse Prevention Program where I had the opportunity to speak and conduct workshops in regards to homophobia and domestic abuse. Many years after high school I have continued to lead discussions and educate on various related issues.

Just when I was beginning to think that I was a true activist, I learned the definition and myths associated with the word feminism in my women’s and gender studies course. Again my eyes have been opened but this time my keener sight is focused more clearly on the programming of gender: I have learned to truly see the performance that masculinity is, and femininity is, something which we men and women are conditioned for starting at birth when males and females are separated by the common color coding system of blue and pink. Specifically, I am now alert to this “performance” that men enact in movies and in books I have read. I can also see it in my own reactions to situations I experience, which I have sometimes infused with a need to portray myself as dominant. As I take this course I start on a new journey of self discovery and I come to new perspectives about the male gender role, especially as it is to be expected to be played.

I can say first hand that men are conditioned to “perform” their gender. From toddler to my mid teens I remember elder family members and friends teaching me how to stand, eat, talk and even express emotions as a man. For a long time I felt that in order to succeed I, as a man, had to dominate others; I forced my peers to accept me as a leader in games by picking on those boys with less dominant-natured attitudes, thinking of my people like pawns in a game that could be moved to my advantage.
Gender inequality bleeds into other forms of injustice such as homophobia. If men did not have the need to perform as “real men,” they would not attack other men for being different; nor would they feel the need to hide their true selves, parts of which may not conform to conventional expectations for men, such as expression of fear or insecurity. If we didn’t need to perform as “real men,” then boys and guys that don’t have rippling muscles, who may be smaller or larger, wouldn’t be targets of ridicule. People are attacked every day because they don’t fit in to the “normative” of society; hatred is even shown to children who are innocent of such judgments.

One set of texts we read in Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies comes to mind: well known stories such as “Snow White” and “Cinderella” in the traditional versions such as Grimm’s, we never find a female hero; instead the female leads who are deemed “good” are typically saved from a “bad” woman by a male character—her “prince.” Another image which I am now opened to seeing in these tales, as another example of these texts being problematic, is racism; I cannot begin to describe the degree of shock I felt when I realized that the antagonists in these tales always are characterized with darker skin tone,: even in the Lion King, the antagonist is more darkly complected than the other characters. These images subliminally have, in effect, taught readers and viewers negative messages of both gender and race, limiting their personal vision of what is a hero and who they should aspire to be.

To create change we need more education and workshops for younger people about gender and about equality—to challenge this harmful conditioning under which so many of us remain blinded. If I had been able to learn some of the new perspectives I have gained in Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies earlier in my life, I would have been able to be a stronger activist and would have educated even more people by now. One way that we can all become activists for equality is this: We all need to hold ourselves and other people accountable for our/their words. Our friends, partners and family members should be challenged when they say negative comments about race, gender and sexual orientation; this way we will all start to think about ourselves as being part of the solution, rather than contributing further to the problem of unfair stereotyping. Change never happens over night but by planting seeds we can grow to be the leaders of a more enlightened tomorrow, freeing boys and men from the pressure to act dominant and freeing girls and women from the gender-bias they face.

Eddie Torres, Panelist: We are men. We are superior to women in almost every way. They are emotional and lack common sense. I am a man. I do not cry; I am strong and I know what is right for me and for women.

If this doesn’t sound surprising to you, it shouldn’t. The fact is that, as males, we are privileged but most of us don’t see that. How many times have we watched women carrying multiple bags and we think, “She shouldn’t be carrying that herself.” Or we see a bad driver and assume there’s a woman behind the wheel. We, as the male sex, judge women and are, at times, completely unaware of the extent to which we do so.
Taking a Women’s and Gender Studies course, I feel qualified and proud to call myself a feminist. You don’t really know what feminist means? Did you assume it meant I am trying to be “feminine”? This alone is a great reason to enroll in Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies. You’ll see: feminism isn’t a threatening term, instead, as City College professor and feminist/humanist author bell hooks asserts in the title of one of her books, “feminism is for everybody.”

I want to be a productive human being, one who is able to transcend stereotypes because I know I can do better than to judge others by their group membership rather understand them by their individuality. Along those lines, I want to understand better what helped shape the important women in my life. You would think that to gain this kind of perspective, you’d have to travel the world or have lived a thousand lives. I assure you: I did neither. I signed up for a Women’s and Gender Studies course.

Don’t worry. You will not begin to grow mammary glands because you finally understand the concept of gender and how gender role expectations influence us every single day of our lives. I am a man and I am also compassionate, humble. You can claim all this too!

On a side note, should we meet on campus and begin to talk, I have warned you: I will talk open-mindedly as a feminist, expressing views you may have never heard a man say aloud before. You have been warned. I’m proud of where I’ve journeyed this semester.
This poem’s about a girl named Stephanie,  
Who’s more unique than what the eye can see.  
I knew her since we were very young,  
About the time where this all begun.  

Now we go into the life story,  
Of a girl who grew up with GID.  
I remember her coming over for play dates,  
Which always seemed to go quite great.  
But I noticed every time we played house,  
I was the wife and she was always my spouse.  
My mom came in the room one day,  
During our usual time of play.  
Once she saw Stephanie wearing a suit and tie,  
She told her to get out and I said goodbye.  
My mom told her mom everything that she seen,  
Her mom said that was no excuse for being so mean.  
She told her that everything would be fine,  
That was until she turned nine.  

Stephanie’s discomfort turned into distress,  
Once she started to grow breasts.  
She grew more and more depressed,  
Each time she was forced to wear a dress.  

As years went by her gender distress grew worse,  
She referred to living in her body as being a curse.  
Her condition was getting worse as it seems,  
As she grew into her late teens.  
She dressed and acted like a boy more than before,  
To the point where you couldn’t tell she was a girl anymore.  

Throughout her years in high school,  
She was tortured and called a fool.  
All this stress without hesitation,  
Easily lead to self-mutilation.  
All she had was me to talk to,  
I stayed by her side so this was more easy to get through.  

Surprisingly, she graduated without delay,  
And thought she would get better if she got away.  
In college she started taking psychology,  
Which made her understand herself and feel more free.
She went to many therapy sessions,
But unfortunately there was no progression.
Her therapist saw what all this pain and suffering was leading to,
So she knew exactly what Stephanie should do.

She’s now thirty-two,
It’s about time since it was way overdue.
She has finally finished her recovery,
From her sex reassignment surgery.
Most of her tormented feelings are gone,
Now that everything is where she feels it belongs.

This poem’s about a girl named Stephanie,
Who’s now the happy and handsome Stephon.
Oh beloved winter of mine, where have you gone?
Has the wind taken you to the other side of the globe
or has the world suddenly decided to revolve?

I miss the silver-white dust
That crawled on the edge of my window,
Sending tickles down my spine.
The piercing kiss of the first gush of air,
The blood-red tinge of
My ears, nose and cheeks.

The same effects of aphrodisiac.
Find comfort in hot chocolate;
Curling up into sheets that smell
Of cheap detergent.
Needles that prick the
Ends of toes,
The azure stain on life,
Bruised purple on your icy lips,
While the stiff branches,
Like fingers,
Stagger back and forth.
Like a seesaw.

I miss how frosty eyelashes get.
Melt when lowering my gaze,
Speckles of liquefied water,
Resemble tears,
But—but,
I’m “Oh so warm inside."

Oh beloved winter of mine, where have you gone?
Has the wind taken you to the other side of the globe
Or has the world suddenly decided to revolve?
“School Bullying” by Laura Vega
“Diamond” by Laura Kemp
“Portrait” by Rochelle Towler
“Hostos Community College” by Jose Martinez
“The Zone” by Andres Moreira
“Wings” by Brawny Galvez
“Times Are Changing” by Deysha Paredes
“Solidarity” by Carlos Bastian
“Girl and Graff” by Felipe Moreira
“Urban Reflection” by Jeong Seon Hwang
“Spring is in the Hair” by Myung Shin Kim
“Flames and Sorrow” by Elijah Richmond
“Couch Potatoes” by Mavel Soto
“Cranes” by Rosmond David
“The Eyes of a Garden” by Sudian Buchanan
“Train 1 - Memory” by Erick Santos
JOSEPH KOSSEH

IF THE WORDS COULD COME AGAIN

If the words could come again,
Like the wind at night
Just take me by surprise
I don't need to be ready.
Sweep me off my feet
Like the perfect Romance
Hmmm.
Oh I,
I wish.

If the words would come again,
Like the smell of back home
Being by mom and dad,
Playing in the streets with all the other kids
Day time and night time would just be titles
The street will never sleep,
The people who pass by will just be on shift
The only meal that will make me run home
Will be ready for me.

If the words would come again,
Like that first time I rode my bike.
Daddy would've finally let go,
And I would be racing into a new age
All my little arm hairs that stood due to fear,
Will now rise because I'm near
Near the point of finding me.
My friends will be all the other biker kids
And I'll be looking at the guys on the motorcycles
Just speeding past, living free.

If the words could come again,
Like my first High School buddies
I would be laughing up a storm
And making funny sounds in advisory
I would have been kissing a girl
Because I chose a dare
Why didn't I pick Truth?

I would be falling in love
With a girl who had a girl
And she would become a very great friend
I would be in a room with two funny guys
Who know the wrong things,  
And say them to test your reaction 
Laugh out Loud.

If the words would come again,  
Like laughing at your mistakes  
Because they made you who you are,  
I would be saying damn, not that one again.

I would remember all those things grandma and grandpa told me not to do  
Of course I did them  
That’s why I’m laughing now.  
I would be getting punished by grandpa:  
“Hey you! Get over here!”  
I mean I’ll cry,  
But they never really hurt  
I would be sitting down one day  
Telling my kids the same things.

If the words would only come again except rather than me saying them I hear them  
I would still be seeing you grandpa, and maybe some how you wouldn’t have left  
I would be In the kitchen with mommy just to spend as much time as i could, cause soon it’ll end  
I would be laughing at the mistakes my little brothers made, and help them Rather than now sit here, and just miss them.

If the words would come again  
Like when we came here  
I would be smiling through the window of the plane  
While my mom is crying watching her two men leave.  
I would be crying for the first time  
Hearing that she couldn’t give birth again.

I would be sighing just thinking I could’ve been her soldier  
I could also be dead in that blood diamond war  
I would probably not make it high enough to lift her into Glory.

Every word that ever came, man. Hmm.  
Oh I, I wish, the words could come again.
Regret pierces like a double edged sword,
One edge comprised of memories that inflict their torment,
The other solitude - delivering its poison as the blade exits the body
A toxic sorrow penetrating down to the core.
Infiltrating your heart in an instant, awakening the realization –
I let you go.
How could I let you go?
For an insignificant moment of gratification?

Perhaps thinking such a moment might linger.
The punctures bound me with such memories,
Memories of joy, laughter, and passion
Memories they taunt me!

Each gash dangles my past life above me
Beyond my grasp.
If only my anguish could cease there,
With every jab there is a second piercing;
The solitude mocks me at every turn.

Surely it feasts in my ridicule,
Boasting at my despair.
I am left powerless and at its mercy.
As I wait here weakened with the regret of losing you.

You, the only one I have ever loved.
I plea with the sands of time to mend my wounds.
Yet I sometimes fear the healing of these wounds
Because although indeed I did abandon you
My love for you
I could not forsake.
For loving you – that –
I shall never regret.
Step 1:
Can you recall your last time being held?
Being morning’s shrapnel,
A piece of aid still dictating the expunge of your elbow?
When was the last time she let your hair claim the pillow
Watched the sun catch the rise of your face?
Does she kiss your with her hands
Or her chest?
Do you still feel it after the bath?

Step 2:
He’s got a different way of making you something
There is still battle in his vigilance
He is still watching the way your excuses plait
He is not as easy to slaughter
This makes him almost worth the blood
And always worth the prayer.

Step 3:
Your mother will smell it in your hair, actually.
She’ll tell you that your palms are leaking a different kind of covenant
She will lean closer than she has
In the past year
Because this exposure is familiar
She can tell you which gifts to buy on his birthday
Which colognes make more sense
Which carpet is best for your knees on his christmas.

Step 4:
Don’t you dare admit it to her.
This will trivialize any other woman you happen to love after you almost love
him.
When she asks you what happened,
6 months from today,
Stare at her with baleful squirrel eyes.
She doesn’t know what she’s talking about.
Step 5:
It will always be an almost, for you.
The challenge will rush the potion from your lungs.
You can't trap men into the same place you trap your women.
They are built differently,
They fit differently.
Women are like triangles,
Men have no corners; you cannot satisfy their need to everything you.
So they will run differently.
You will see their ankles before you can tag their legs.

They will tell you things about their god
About how your skin has settled dichotomies between the words and that altar.
He will tell you about what he can't do
Instead of what he has not done to save this, not yet.
You will still wonder
Why he hasn't come to his senses
Why he hasn't revisited that sunrise
Why he hasn't listened to the playlist you would never have sent him if he hadn't
Held you like that
If he hadn't showed you the pillar in being small sometimes

After two months
And then 4
And then eight.
After 3 beds
And 6 women,
Someone will ask you if you loved him
And you will say
That you could have.
Maybe.
Almost.
It is a nice day
The sky is bright and blue
People are up and down
Talking and Laughing
Doing what they do best:

Going to work, going to school
People are resting at home
People are travelling
Planning about tomorrow

Oh it is a good day.

Oh the building is shaking!
I hear people screaming
I hear the sound of water,
I see the water from the Ocean
Travelling at great speed,
On land, I see
Buildings, cars and people in the water
People –
Everything-

Swept away.
What a day!

I see yesterday,
I see today,
I see tomorrow,
Full of fear, crying, sadness, misery.

Oh God
Oh Mother Nature.
She always thought blue eyes were supposed to be a good thing,
A warm thing,
A safe thing…
Fantasized about romantic moments deep inside his heart,
Where the raw sensuality of her lips spoke sugarcane truths to him
And he loved her despite her brown eyes.

For a time, he did…
Marveled at the vastness of her lovely lines
Sketched out like a map…
She was his movement then…
His conquest, his plan…
He always returned to her…

But soon she sank under the pressure…
Devalued, exploited, impoverished.
He stole from her -
Stole her dignity
Her mind
Her riches
Without regard for her limits.
And in turn, she depleted her own supply,
Thirsty for what he had always promised.

Wanting progression in his haughty, stagnant gaze,
She prayed for a change.
Addicted to saccharine pledges of honor,
To small amendments in his demeanor with her
Analyzing and replaying his affections,
She opened palms burned with her own vices,
Begging for the good he seemed to hide behind
Fairy tale blue eyes that were cold and unyielding.

He now stared at her in disgust
With an unfathomable loathing
that sat heavy in the timbre of his voice
and doused her in shame.

She was alone in his presence
And alone inside of herself

Ignored
Forgotten.
At one time
She was his golden cause,
His reason,
His fight for life and truth.
She had been promised the world in ribbons.
Yet she took to shredding herself into bits and pieces
That he then used to perfume the nights he spent in someone else’s bed.

She cost him nothing.
But paid the price for his greedy desires
And he had sucked her soul dry,
Left her gilded coffers stripped and bare.

One night, she crawled out from under herself…
A fist raised against the devastation
He had written across her face
With the slap of his hand.

He had believed he’d always be the boss of her.
Arrogantly believed that the softening of the ice in his blue eyes
Would calm the storms and ease the mutiny
She now savored like a warm plate of food

She had held out for too long.

And now, hungry for release,
Despite the odds,
Despite her fears,
She looked in the mirror,
Fell back in love with brown eyes
And fought back.
Cinnamon clustered red bricks
Mold the promising fireplace in Apt. 3L.
Everyone assures you the fireplace is artificial.
But only you can see
The flames of blazing blues and roaming reds
Which shine upon the chocolate skin of those fancy dolls
Guarding the exquisite piano.
As you wonder how all of the world’s perfection can be hidden in one place,
You look up and suddenly it is all so clear.
There stands
A black angel with a smile resembling birth
And a heart so big it can’t help but steal your heart’s beat.
As you two dance to the sounds of Christmas and the scents of Thanksgiving,
The black angel says his name is Patrick.

It is then you know everything will be okay.
For years, angel Patrick
Would cast his obsidian wings in flight
And cast a trail of gold diamonds in the sky
For any soul in despair
Never turning a blind eye to the world and all of its vacant demands.
Patrick, suspended by unmerciful winds,
Fell short of his flight one night.
And into the adoring arms of another angel,
One who could now truly be at peace,
As they both roamed hand in hand among the stars.
Tears of dismal say “you should have been there”.
Serene moments of silence throughout the day
Tell me
It’s going to be okay.
As I warm my hands by his fire place.
It’s going to be okay.

_for my Uncle Patrick 1949-2007
We love you more than words will ever express._
Introduction

The cellular phone is a pervasive technology that has evolved from a luxury item justified only by the rich businessman, to a necessity to some and an addiction to others. According to Portio Research Limited, approximately 4.344 billion cell phones are in use globally. Since the latter part of 2008, one fifth of households in the United States have chosen this technology as their sole method of voice communication, replacing traditional landline telephones. (Fram, (2009). A 2009 Marist Poll found that “87% of U.S. residents say they own a cell phone.”

So how did this technology evolve? History tells us that Alexander Graham Bell received the first U.S. patent for a communication device called the telephone in 1875. This device allowed a human voice to be transmitted across a cooper wire. We grew up with the telephone and in my generation every house had at least one telephone. The first patent for “cordless phone” technology was given in 1959 but the technology did not become commercially viable until the breakup of the Ma Bell monopoly in the early 1980’s, it was then that several companies started manufacturing wireless phone systems. These cordless phone systems were still connected to landlines but in actuality were two way radios using RF or Radio Frequency technology. Radio waves are part of the electromagnetic spectrum of radiation. Today’s cell phones use EHF (Extremely High Frequency) or microwaves which are the same technology our microwave ovens are based on. Because the telephone started out as a safe technology we grew up using, people do not even think about the possible negative health consequences of using their cell phone. Cell phone usage has negative effects to your health. However, when it comes to the health risks associated with using a cell phone, there is conflicting research.

Mobile phone technology is new and its effects are unknown.

We have only been using wireless communication technology for the last thirty years. There are not large enough studies conducted over long enough periods of time to come to the conclusion that this technology is safe. Cigarette smoking and even X-Rays where once thought to be safe, until enough information came to light to prove the dangers of using them. Most of the major studies have been done in countries that have a financial stake in the manufacturing of cell phones. Interphone is one of the largest studies ever done. It took place over the course of ten years and included the research of 13 different countries, comprising subjects from the age of 30-59. Even with large studies such as Interphone (which included 14,078 cases), there are on going
debates about what the data actually means, thus with no conclusive results the report remains unpublished. “But one thing they all agree on is that more research is needed.” (Reardon, 2009, para. 6). Another issue involved is that the technology being used is rapidly evolving; the current incarnation of the cell phone is less than ten years old. The Stewart Report from the International Experts Group on Mobile Phones claims (Stewart, 2000, 40) “New Telecommunications technologies have been introduced without full provision of information about their nature and without prior discussion within the scientific community about the consequences for health.” The research is static while the technology is dynamic.

The use of Cell phones increases the risk of cancer.

Using a cell phone held up against your ear can increase your risk of getting cancer or brain tumors due to the proximity of the radiations’ source to the head and brain. There are many studies available which indicate a link between various types of cancer and cell phone usage. A study done in Sweden by Dr. Lennart Hardwell showed that the risk of acoustic neuroma and glioma are increased from 20% (low grade glioma) to 400% (high grade glioma) by long term mobile phone use (>10 years), highest risk category being ipsilateral exposure. (Harwell, Carlberg, Söderqvist, Mild & Morgan, 2007). Dr. Ronald B. Herberman, MD and Director of the University of Pittsburg Cancer Institute and UPMC Cancer Center testified before the Domestic Policy Subcommittee Oversight and Government Reform Committee “My attention was directed to a large body of evidence, including expert analyses showing absorption of RF into the brain and the comprehensive Bioinitiative Report, review of experimental and public health studies pointing to potential adverse biologic effects of RF signals, including brain tumors, associated with long-term and frequent use of cell phones held to the ear.” (Herberman, R. 2008). Dr. Herberman felt strongly enough about the connection between increased cancer risk and using a cell phone that he issued a warning to his staff which included 10 detailed steps to reduce exposure to the RF electromagnetic radiation.

Cell phones do not cause cancer.

Sources such as the US Food and Drug Administration and the American Cancer Society have found cell phone usage has not been directly linked to an increased risk of brain, and other cancers. The United States Food and Drug Administration is the government agency responsible for evaluating and regulating the safety of products that emit radiation. These products cover medical to entertainment electronics. The FDA website under the topic of Radiation emitting products, health issues, a simple question is asked and answered, “Do cell phones pose a health hazard?” (www.fda.gov 2010). The answer clearly states the scientific evidence has not proven that cell phones cause cancer or any other health issues. The American Cancer Society has evaluated close to 30 studies which were focused on the relationship between tumors and cell phone usage. The results of these studies have been similar. “Most studies do
not show a “dose-response relationship” -- a tendency for the risk of brain tumors to increase with increasing cell phone use, which would be expected if cell phone use caused brain tumors.” (www.cancer.org 2010). Certainly these organizations are credible and have no financial interest in the outcome of this controversial health topic.

**Mobile phones emit low-level RF.**

Because the RF levels emitting are so low, there is no direct link between mobile phones and health issues. According to the FDA cell phone levels of RF are low putting them into the range of microwaves. Microwaves produce non-ionizing radiation, not to be confused with ionizing radiation such as gamma or x-rays which does have a damaging effect on biological tissue. The Federal Communications Commission defines a biological effect as a measurable change in a biological system. The presence of a biological change does not translate into something that is biologically harmful. When the biological effect “causes detectable impairment of the health of the individual or of his or her offspring” it is categorized as harmful to ones safety. (U.S. FCC Office of Engineering and Technology, 1999).

These RF levels are only at their peak when actually transmitting and receiving, which limits the amount of exposure. The FDA stated that no proof existed that cellular phones are dangerous. However if people still have any apprehension there are many preventive methods that can be implemented to further decrease exposure to the low level of RF energy. (U.S. FDA 2010).

**Cartoon Interpretation**

In this cartoon the artist is suggesting that the man using a cell phone is aware that cell phones are dangerous, by the comical way he attempts to protect himself with the metal helmet. In addition he appears to be discussing these concerns with his physician, who states “If you’re worried about the dangers of mobile phones why don’t you use it less.” As with any other type of radiation, the time of the exposure is one of the factors that determine the patient dose. By suggesting that the patient use his phone less the doctor is reinforcing this principal. With the advent on new technologies such as mobile internet, text messaging and email people are using their cell phones for extended periods of time and carry them constantly. By turning the phone off when not in use the patient could further decrease his exposure. Another concept radiation protection uses is increasing the distance between them and the source of radiation. This patient could eliminate the need for his humorous helmet by using some ear buds with a microphone. The ear buds would allow him to use his cell phone without having the phone pressed against the temporal bone, which is in close proximity to the brain. Most cell phones today include these ear buds in the box. The other option is to use the speakerphone which is my personal favorite, especially in the car. I would also recommend he not carry the phone on his person, he could simply turn the phone off or put it in “Airplane” mode when not using it.
Conclusion

Radiation protection is founded on the premise that there is no safe amount of ionizing radiation. We should apply this approach when thinking about how and when we use our cellular phones even though they emit non-ionizing radiation. All the negative health implications of long-term cell phone usage are still unknown. Brain tumors take at least 10 to 20 years to manifest themselves. (Khurana, G. 2008). Taking a lesson taught to us from history with the health issues associated with x-rays and cigarettes, we need to take a more conservative approach when using a cell phone. Cell phones are now rated for how much specific absorbed rate per kilogram (SAR) they emit. There are many sources on the internet that compare the specific absorbed rate of phones from various manufacturers. Choose a cell phone model which emits a low amount of radiation to begin with. As consumers we should demand that objective studies be done over a long period of time using a number of subjects significantly relative to the amount of people using this technology. These studies must be conducted by experts in the medical community familiar with studying the mechanism of the causes of cancer. We should pressure our lawmakers to put in place more stringent requirements regarding minimizing the specific absorbed rate. While it is not within the scope of this paper, I would be negligent not to mention the importance of controlling the cell phone usage of our children; their bodies are far more susceptible to the effects of RF radiation (Khurana, G. 2008).

The biggest challenge is to make people understand that no one is asking them to stop using their cell phone. Cell phones are an invaluable communication technology.

Work Cited

Please visit http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library/escriba/ for a complete list of works cited.
The flu virus, as you know, is rather remarkable when viewing it from an antigenic variation perspective. Antigenic variation is the process by which infectious organisms (pathogens) alter their surface proteins in order to evade a host’s immune response. This antigenic variation not only enables immune evasion but also allows pathogens to cause reinfection. They do this very well as they are not recognised by the host’s immune system. When an organism is exposed to a particular antigen (a protein on the surface of the pathogen) an immune response is stimulated and antibodies are generated to target that specific antigen. The immune system will then “remember” that particular antigen (immunological memory) and if the host is exposed to that same antigen again, those antibodies will act rapidly to destroy the pathogen. However, if major changes in the surface glycoproteins occur due to RNA mutation antigenic drift, the antigen changes and the host’s immune system will not recognise it. This will lead to the pathogen causing the infection again. Meanwhile, it leaves the host’s immune system with no other choice but to generate new antibodies to target the new antigen.

So how does vaccine work in ensuring a protective antibody response to the influenza virus? Let’s begin with the actual vaccine. The vaccine is comprised of whichever three strains of the virus the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes will be the biggest threat to Americans’ health that year. The CDC bases its decision on which flu viruses were most common in China and Australia during the previous year. Knowing that the flu has antigenic variations using three strands in one vaccine is a great strategy to try to avoid the seasonal flu from emerging from an epidemic to a pandemic.

When making the vaccine, the chosen viruses are inactivated (killed) and then individuals can either get injected with the vaccine or inhale it, as a nasal spray. Once the vaccine is inside you, it stimulates your immune system into thinking it has been infected by the flu recently. Therefore, your immune system produces antibodies against the virus. The antibodies are built specifically by the body to target the H (Hemagglutinin) and N (Neuraminidase) proteins found in the outer surface of the virus. The H protein is important for the virus because it allows the virus to adhere to cells and gain entry so that the virus can be replicated. The N protein is an enzyme that helps the virus escape from cells once new viral particles have been replicated within the host cell. The antibodies that our body builds work efficiently to attack these specialized proteins, they bind to the virus and target it for destruction. Then, when you actually do come in contact with the real live virus, your body’s immune system remembers the encounter (immunological memory) and it readily fights off the illness before it even starts.
Keep in mind though, that the flu vaccination only contains three strains of the virus. Therefore, when an individual encounters another strand that was not part of that specific vaccine, the individual will most likely experience symptoms and become ill, until the body builds antibodies to fight off that specific strand. Therefore we can safely conclude with the fact that the flu vaccine an individual gets does last a lifetime, but the possibilities of those specific strands not being mutated are very low. This is why we need to be vaccinated every year. That is because every year we are being vaccinated with three new potential flu causing strands. Being vaccinated for the swine flu is also important, because the strand of flu that causes the swine flu is not included in the seasonal flu viral “cocktail.”

When I first started this class neither me or my son had ever been vaccinated for either the influenza or swine flu, but with what I learned during this semester, it has enlightened me and from now on I will definitely make sure that we get vaccinated every year. Now I understand how important it is to be vaccinated, not only for me and my family but for our entire community. For the more of us that are vaccinated, the less opportunity the virus has from spreading, a phenomenon known as “community immunity.” Vaccinated individuals protect the unprotected ones by stopping the chain of transmission in its tracks and drastically lowering the probability that the unprotected ones encounter the virus.
The Natural Sciences Department began the tradition of celebrating an Open House in the fall of 2007. The reason for the Open House Celebration is to get students involved, and share what they have learned through the semester. It is also challenge and prepare students for the future. Professor Yoel Rodriguez and Professor Henderson were in charge of organizing the 2010 event.

According to the organizers, the focus for the 2010 event was show how the department is providing high quality courses for Education Programs in Science and Engineering as well as supporting courses for the AAS, Allied Health and Liberal Arts Program. This year’s program included science seminars by several professors, open labs for anatomy and physiology, biology as well as chemistry and physics demonstrations. Students also presented their experiences in the organ donor network.

Out of all the presentations I attended, the one that got my attention the most was the presentation about organ donation. The students were in Biology 230. I liked it because I believe that every one of us should know and understand how we can help others when they are in desperate need. I think that organ donation is a good thing because it puts us in the position of saving lives and changing lives not only of the person who is receiving the donation but for his/her family and friends as well. The presentation that impressed me the most was conducted by a group of students in Professor Bates’ class. The group members were Vesta Winn, Sharnay Adam, Earl Jackson, Denise Ozerrof, and Elias Gomez. The project was presented by Vesta Winn. She explained how they learned about the kinds of organs that can be donated: bone and connective tissues, eyes, corneas, heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, pancreas, skin, small intestine and veins, and the function of each organ. Vesta also explained that the best donors are healthy donors. I think we all should think about donating organs.

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was the theme of another presentation I attended. One group talked about how the oil spill affected the bird species that live in and around the Gulf of Mexico. The presenters mentioned that there are thousands of bird species that are being affected by the oil spill, some are dead, some have been cleaned, some are doing well, while others remain in unstable condition even after being cleaned. According to the presenters, if one wishes to help they can either donate money to the companies that are cleaning the oil spill or they can volunteer to help in the Gulf. We cannot afford to lose all of these species, because many other species depend on them, including us.

The Natural Sciences Department’s Open House went very well. Students, professors and staff participated in the celebration. I liked the way it was
organized, but I think if more students knew about the event it would had had a bigger and better audience for the presenters. In the future I would like to see students taking classes other than biology to participate, because it’s was a fun, informative and a great experience. In my opinion when a group is presenting, all group members should be able to share their knowledge with the audience.

My advice to anyone reading this article is to get involved in Hostos’ activities, no matter if it is the open house of the Natural Science or English or any other department. We should feel free to learn new things, and to teach others what we already know. It’s good to be part of the community that offers wonderful opportunities, a community where our future begins.
My mother used to say that she wanted the kitchen floor “clean enough to eat off of.” I never wanted to eat off the floor, but I did appreciate a clean kitchen. With all of the commercials telling us to worry about dangerous germs and then promise us that their product will kill any germs in our home, it is difficult to know what to use and when. Although Moms would love to be able to sterilize their environments, to completely kill any and all living organisms, it is more likely that we can adequately disinfect by applying a chemical or agent to reduce the number and growth of microbes around us.

Everything in the store seems to say “antibacterial” on the label these days. In the film “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” the father used Windex as both disinfectant and antiseptic, spraying it on people and surfaces to kill anything from acne to salmonella. Antiseptics are for use on living tissue and mucous membranes; disinfectants are for use on inanimate objects. I have that product at the front of my cleaning cabinet, but only use it to clean glass as it is intended. Because it contains alcohol, it will destroy many microbes, but please don’t spray it on a pimple.

I looked under my sink in both kitchen and bath to learn what was actually in those spray bottles and powders I use. How effective are they? How safe are they for humans to use? Is there anything right or wrong with the way I use these miracles of modern chemistry? In my kitchen arsenal against dirt and germs, I have Comet Powder and Pine Sol cleaner. In the bathroom, where we often think the most germs are “hiding” I find Soft Scrub Cleaner and Lysol Toilet Bowl Cleaner.

Bear with me as I go through a short tutorial on how I clean my kitchen and bath, then I will explain how the products are recommended to be used by their manufacturers. This will be followed by an unbiased assessment of how well I perform my cleaning tasks.

First, the kitchen. Generally, I am very careful in the kitchen, wary of cross-contamination and leaving any residue that may lead to the growth of microbes. I normally will use a simple detergent to wipe down work areas after food preparation. After cutting meat I will use Comet or Soft Scrub with Bleach to kill any nasties left lurking around. I clean the floors with Pine Sol twice a week or when needed.

In the bathroom, chlorine is king. I’ve always felt a feeling of safety, or maybe relief, when getting a whiff of bleach. You just feel that nothing could possibly live in that environment once it’s wiped off with bleach. The toilet is like ground zero for germophobes. I use a strong product called Lysol Toilet Bowl Cleaner. You add it to the bowl and let it sit for several minutes. Then I scrub the inner bowl with a stiff brush before rinsing. The outside of the bowl
and the floor around is cleaned with Soft Scrub and water. The bathtub gets the same treatment as the outside of the bowl.

So, how are my techniques and do I use the “right stuff?” Let’s go to the labels and see what the active ingredients are in my products.

Dawn Liquid Dishwashing Detergent: Ethyl Alcohol (Ethanol)
Comet Cleanser: Calcium Hypochlorate, Calcium Carbonate, Sodium Carbonate
Pine-Sol: Pine Oil, Isopropyl Alcohol, Alkyl alcohol ethoxylates
Clorox: Hypochlorous Acid
Soft Scrub with Bleach: Calcium Carbonate, Sodium Hypochlorite
Lysol Toilet Bowl Cleaner: Hydrogen Chloride (Hydrochloric Acid)

I’m beginning to see a trend in cleaning products: Hypochlorate, Hypochlorous, Hydrochloric. I think chlorine could be termed the ubiquitous cleaning ingredient. So what exactly does chlorine do to microbes, and is it safe? According to an article in Scientific American on-line, the way that chlorine causes “bacterial death probably results from chlorine attacking a variety of bacterial molecules or targets, including enzymes, nucleic acids and membrane lipids.” Most likely the chlorine acts to destroy the outer membrane of the cell, releasing the cell’s contents and effectively killing the microbe. According to Microbiology: An Introduction, “Hypochlorous acid is the most effective form of chlorine because it is neutral in electrical charge and diffuses as rapidly as water through the cell wall.” This means that it sneaks up on the poor bacteria and hits them from the inside when they’re not looking! There is no way for the cell to defend itself from the onslaught of the chlorine cleaning machine. Chlorine is thought to be relatively safe when used according to directions. Dangerous fumes of chlorine gas can be created if you add an acid to any of these cleaners, so be careful.

According to the website of the makers of Soft Scrub with Bleach, you apply the cleaner with a sponge or cloth, rub a bit and rinse or wipe clean. They do say to avoid “prolonged contact” which is probably a good bit of advice for just about anything with chlorine as the main ingredient. I would say that my use of this product is pretty straightforward and in line with their directions.

As for the Clorox bleach, I seem to be using it both right and wrong. The manufacturer of this product has two general dilutions they recommend in using their product for cleaning. For disinfecting surfaces, a 16:1 ratio of water to bleach is recommended. If you are disinfecting (sanitizing) cooking or eating utensils, a much more diluted 64:1 ratio is called for. Interestingly, their recommendation for what comes in contact with our mouths does not include rinsing with water, only for air-drying. If you clean your wall or floor, they want you to rinse with water and dry.

I rarely rinse anything I have cleaned with a bleach solution. Unless, however, I have mixed it with some detergent in an attempt to make my own one-stop cleaner/disinfectant. Clorox does not stay chlorine for long when mixed with water. Again, according to the manufacturer’s website, chlorine dissipates into salt and water after a period of time. That is why they want you to make
any chlorine solution on a daily basis. Forget that solution you mixed a month ago with the old Windex bottle and stuck under the sink. You’re just spraying salty water by now.

The other powerhouse ingredient in my arsenal of cleaners seems to be good old alcohol. Ethyl in my dishwashing detergent and isopropyl in my “all-purpose” cleaner. According to *Microbiology, an Introduction*¹⁰, alcohol is a very good killer of bacteria and fungi, as well as enveloped viruses (think the Herpes & Rubella viruses¹¹). It also has the distinct advantage of quickly doing its job and evaporating, leaving no residue. That means no rinsing for me! Well, it would if I only cleaned with plain alcohol. Because both Dawn and Pine-Sol contain detergents, you must rinse to get the nasty stuff off your plates and off the floor. But I have the satisfaction of knowing the alcohol took care of any herpes virus that might have been hiding under the stove.

In general, I believe I’m doing pretty well with my cleaners. I have learned, however, that I am paying for a lot of chlorine. I may well rely on my newfound knowledge and come up with my own cleaning solutions for the kitchen and bath. All I really need is the bleach and some simple detergent added to water in the correct proportions. Along with an occasional splash of isopropyl alcohol, I can’t see what more I could need to live in a world less crowded with pathogenic bacteria.

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xi. [http://www.sciedigest.org/TAXVIR.HTM](http://www.sciedigest.org/TAXVIR.HTM)
Abuela spoke to me in Spanish,
teaching me all the essential words
And
Things I needed to know:

Bodega, when she’d send me to the store,
Bacalaitos, when she’d cook us quick meals,
And
Boricua, cuz that’s what you called ah
Puerto Rican.

I felt proud,
Different,
Extraordinary,
Born into a rich culture...
Puerto Rican
Yet
Now that she’s gone
I feel ordinary
And not Puerto Rican at all
Muted
Missing your rustic brilliance
Fading
Into the nothingness
Transitioning
Into ah Neolithic age

There's beauty in silence

When I close my eyes
Meditate
Chant
Pray
I find you
When a little girl says
That a man’s hands have been
Where they should not have
And nobody moves
Expect flames.
Send notice to the hurricanes and ask them
To hang the halos from their pockets;
There will be no preservation of innocence
Not today

Ashley Jones sits in the corner of her prison cell
With a mickey mouse mascot and some silence
To share the stories with
She cannot see the way her feet twitch in the dark

So she closes her eyes
And imagines them running
Across pavement
Or minefield
But running
Like she’s always had to
But running like she’s gonna really get somewhere this time

She is 14
And will spend the rest of her life
In solitary confinement
Where she will eat her fingers
Converse with the bricks
And contemplate shoving herself between them

At 5
Her stepfather held her down beneath the quilts and told her
That little girls are made
To be open windows
And that he could throw himself inside of her
And then throw her out of one
At 8
Her mother left her in the middle of a crack house
By accident

At 9
They both bullied her into eating dinner
at gunpoint

At 10
She stabbed them both
The government sent her and her sister to live
With grandparents who bathed their home in Ammonia
And could not stand anything that could stain the paint

At 14
She stabbed, shot and set fire to everyone she lived with
Her grandmother
Her grandfather
Her sister

This pattern
Is trying to knock the symphony from our doors
It wants us to listen
To the stories that scare the protests into is

Hear this: she is a baby
Singing her hands into slave songs
Where freedom means
Forgetting to be afraid of blood
And terror
Means turning herself into a horror movie protagonist

Hear this: there is hope
In revenge
In being so angry that you see nothing
But your stepfather’s face
When he snatched the spirit from you

Hear this: there is redemption
in calling your mother’s name when being shoved
Face down
Hands bound to your waist
While remembering the pistol she hit you with

The judge says “Between the ages of 2 and 3
You develop a conscience
She never got the voice that says, ‘This is bad, Ashley.’ ”

Ashley says “Everyone I loved, Everyone I trusted.”

The judge says “Ashley Jones is no poster child
For the argument that life without parole is too long.”

Ashley says “They betrayed me”
Ashley says “They betrayed me”
Ashley says “They betrayed me”

When a little girl says
That a man’s hands have been
Where they should not have
And nobody moves
Expect the fire
Expect to watch it hollow in her chest like a nucleic stimulator
Expect to watch her spit it at you

Ashley says “They betrayed me.”

This apology is 9 years too late
But we want you to know
That we are so sorry
For watching your childhood die
Then burying it with the monster we made out of you.
Is it so easy to walk away?
Let the fortress we once built just wilt away?
I want to say I’m unharmed by this deed you fed me
But I’d be lying and that’s not the man I am.

Is it so that you once went into my arms?
Well, why are you dethroning my heart?
Why set a mark that wasn’t going to last?
Don’t take your feet and walk away!
You told me it would last forever
Now you say it’s all past, I know.
But I had a blast and I want you back.

Is it so that the eyes I saw
Now see through me?
That the tears which escaped you
were meant to drown me?
That though I stand before you,
You see the man behind me.
Is it me, or is it you?

Is it so that you must go
And I mustn’t care?
So why is it that I do and I just fear
Like a spear struck through my heart
Is it a wonder why I hurt?

But it was fun, and even if it was so
I’m still me, still strong
And won’t let go.
I can’t have you, but now that’s okay.
Today I know we were not meant
To be so.
You are silent strength
With eyes quilted from the fabrics of PRIDE.
Though I’ve only known you for a while… Sister,
Can I call you my sister?
Because your smile wraps the world and time in a golden embrace
Never letting go.

What dwells behind those eyes
That causes the sky to rain warmth, my Sister?
Is it the heart of diamond that beats within your soul?
A heart of diamond so the strength inside of it
Will never be punctured?

Those nearest you can feel the gift of determination
Drumming, Drumming through your veins
Writing new songs of bravery and reliving old ones
As they echo Beat… my Sister!

My eyes have witnessed good intentions flow from you
Like a river of gifts.
We Africans descend from vast lands rich with life and culture.
Within you Beauty and Respect have found shelter.
I am often in awe of your natural features.
Your face that appears to have been carved
From the purest elements of Earth.

My Sister,
Within your life,
This inner radiance you have
Leads you and those you most love
To the depths of true happiness.

My Sister
You are silent strength,
With eyes quilted from the fabrics of PRIDE.
Though I’ve only known you for a while… Sister,
Can I call you my sister?
Sister.
Suspended above us
These numbers howl for our diligence.
With every breathe we take,
These numbers rapidly increase.
But we never look up.
We have been taught to never look up at these numbers.

Never talk about them, ever since our childhoods.
Refusal to understand,
Refusal to accept the millions upon thousands of people inflicted
With the reality of Sexually Transmitted Disease.
A rare and inconceivably lethal reaction to an HPV infection
Is known as Epidermodysplasia Verruciformis.
The massive elevation, mutation, and sprouting
Of the human skin to the point
Where it resembles tree bark.

So the truth about sex is dismembered.
Intricate parts of sex become a freakish secret.
The acquiring of an STD
Becomes a justifiable punishment
Affirmation of the corrupt character lurking.

These exiled numbers.
These millions infected,
Though impelled into secrecy, repressed,
Still manage to puncture new layers of truth.
Truth trickling down on me and you
On the young women coming of age,
Yearning for acceptance
From a world that values
Their bodies over their minds.
A world unrelenting,
Until these young girls relinquish their intellect.
Truth trickling down on me and you
On the young men in search of their identities
And of what a man should be.
Determined to prove they meet these myths
In all the destructive ways.
Truth drenched, drowning in the endless number
Of new born babies inflicted with Sexually Transmitted Disease.

Truth raining, striking down.
Truth trickling in the form of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis
Like a monsoon raging
Across our planet Earth
Through the bright of day
And the lull of night.
Truth wailing as it wears the face of HIV and AIDS
With over twenty five million deaths
World wide since 1981
You are not invisible, we see you
After the wedding,
Followed the handfuls of rice,
Hit pavement like shards of glass,
Made a hole—
Big enough to send my lock and key
Spiraling down into the black abyss,
Hot and fiery.

They drank something like
Cheap bubbly yellow wine,
_Tasted like piss if you ask me._

Are they celebrating closing
The casket or signing the deadly pact?
I don't know,
Why ask me?

Follow me to where
Not even the walls have eyes.
Stumbling, mumbling,
The underground roots crumbling,
But most of all…
Her _penetrating_ whispering.

Fury lurking in a bottle
Told me, “Beware,
The river runs red down this path.”
Behold now these deadly instruments!
Play good music when they
Cut down like threads,
Like scissors to cloth,
Like chisel to a piece of rock,
She makes the stream crimson cherry
While the music plays
A silent melody.
We’re all out of control.
Dance, dance, oh dance!
Dance to this tune.
Drunk, drink, spill
Drunk till we can’t say no more!
“I’m a designer,
I made a sculpture,
I—am an artist!”

*Daddy, oh Daddy,*
*Won’t you be so proud of me?*

The bride?
Oh—You wait!
*She’ll come back.*
Don’t be hasty—
There’s always time
for a grand finale.
She’ll be a work of art!
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 examine a passage entitled “The Opinion of Many Men and My Opinion” (1909) by Luisa Capetillo, Puerto Rican feminist, activist and prolific writer (1879-1922). Here, Capetillo, who worked tirelessly on behalf of women’s and factory workers’ rights, makes several compelling arguments to counter patriarchal attitudes about women’s subordinate “place.” A crusader on “the ground,” Capetillo also uses her pen to protest attitudes that denied women equal status while, at the same time, devalued men’s participation in everyday domestic life.

The winners of this year’s contest wrote summaries and their own responses to Capetillo’s multi-faceted position, exploring their own experiences still relevant to the central argument Capetillo makes. With pride of accomplishment, winners read their essays at the Closing Ceremony for Women’s History Month, at which President Matos-Rodríguez, expert on Luisa Capetillo, spoke. This event in recognition of the woman sometimes called “Puerto Rico’s first feminist” and of our students’ developing skill was attended by the college community and the winners’ friends and family.

The four winners this year whose essays are published here are: 1st Place: Stephanie Crespo (Professor Sue Dicker), 2nd Place--Samantha Velez (Professors Andrea Fabrizio and Gregory Marks); Third Place: Ambar Sepulveda (Professor Jerilyn Fisher), Honorable Mention: Taydra Nesmith (Professor Madeleine Stein). The other Honorable Mention is Samuel Mangual (Professor Hilda Mundo-Lopez).
In one of her essays, Luisa Capetillo writes, “A woman does not stop being a woman because she engages in politics or expresses her opinion” and “the male sex does not stop being a man upon learning to cook, mend, sweep and sew.” Luisa Capetillo states these points to show that there is no such thing as being superior or inferior when it comes to men and women. If a man were to do the laundry, that wouldn’t make him less of a man and if a woman became a police officer, she wouldn’t be less of a woman.

Luisa Capetillo was a feminist supporting the rights of women in the 1900’s. Her intentions were not to offend anyone, but to educate. In the same essay, Capetillo writes, “Women would not be warriors even though they know how to die like any brave soldier.” She supports this by using examples of people in history such as the warrior Napoleon and Empress Semiramis, both strong and intelligent leaders.

Luisa Capetillo and women like her have paved the way for the women of today. I am an Emergency Medical Technician. I wear the same uniform as every man in my ambulance company and I strongly believe a woman can do anything a man can do. In fact we as woman have proved this to be true. Although living in the year 2011 is an advantage, I still come across people who voice their opinion about my profession in a negative manner. I also have a good friend who’s a male nurse and he receives comments about his job title. It makes me wonder if a man would starve or wear dirty laundry if it weren’t for his wife, or if a woman with these opinions would ever learn how to put oil in her car.

Luisa Capetillo’s legacy has lived on for many years. Women like her have stood up for us and given us the opportunity to prove that no matter if you are a man or a woman, you should have the right to choose how you live your life and who you want to be.
In the article “The opinion of many men and my opinion” by Luisa Capetillo, she starts off by telling us about what most men think about women. They feel women are trying to cast them aside, take jobs from them and should just stay home and be housewives. Capetillo then starts defending us women, saying that what these men think is not true. The main point of this article is that women are just trying to make themselves better, and this is human nature. We are not trying to take anything from men; we are just trying to better ourselves.

Capetillo reminds them to think about their wives, mother, and daughters. She is saying to put a face of the one you love on these mean thoughts. No matter what, men will always love and support the important women in their lives, and also think very highly of them. For example, I want to be a lawyer and maybe even a judge one day, and my father knows my dream. He told me that he will do anything to support me and help me to achieve my goal. Also when I do make it, he will be very proud. Capetillo is showing men that they might feel like women should just sit back, not try to be a judge, but then when they look at the ones they love they might not have the same feelings. All parents want the best for their children. Capetillo is saying that it’s easy for men to think this way, but as soon as they see their daughters, they might feel differently.

Capetillo is right; all men feel this way at one point in their lives. It’s not right because we are working just as hard as the men are. It’s not easy to become a lawyer or a doctor. There is a lot of hard work that needs to be done. We are not trying to belittle men; we are just trying to better ourselves. We need more than sitting at home cooking and cleaning.

The quote that I really like and understand is “a woman does not stop being a woman because she engages in politics or expresses her opinion.” Capetillo is saying we have voices too and we should be able to use them. We are nothing less if we express our selves. Everyone needs to hear what we are saying too. We are just as smart as men, and it needs to be known. We have the right to speak and be heard. I agree with her one hundred percent. Women are smart and have a lot to say and the world should hear it. Men are just scared of us because we are powerful and we can run the world.

Men say these mean things to belittle us because they didn’t want to see us run things, and they don’t want to give up their power. Capetillo is a very powerful female. We are not trying to be superior to men we are just trying to better ourselves. Men really don’t feel this way they are just are scared of us because they know we can run things. We are powerful; we take care of children, cook, clean, and work. Men don’t know how we can do all that.
Men believe that women should not be given the right to improve their lives by doing the same work and having the same rights as men. In the essay “The Opinion of Many Men and My Opinion” Luisa Capetillo explains the opinions men have towards women and the rights women were allowed during that time in the past. Capetillo also explains her beliefs towards these statements that men were often saying about women. She believes that women are still going to be women no matter the kind of work they do, and that men should think about the women in their own lives and what is best for them instead of discriminating against them. I strongly agree with Capetillo.

A woman will always respond to her role as a woman no matter the position or situation or job she is in. Capetillo states, “A woman will always be a woman, whether she is a good or bad mother, whether she has a husband or a lover.” No matter the job she has, she will always come home to assist others in her role as a mother, wife, or a daughter. She will start catering to her home and family when she gets home, even if she also does an outstanding job as a detective or a teacher.

Capetillo also says that men should think about the individual women in their lives before discriminating against all women. Capetillo states, “The men forget about their wives, their mothers, and their daughters.” Men underestimate women and want them to stay behind them and not stand by their side. They forget about their own mothers, the women who raised them. They forget about their wives, the ones who cater and support them every chance they get. Most importantly, they forget about their daughters, the ones who one day will grow up to be women facing discrimination such as expressed by “many men.” These same men should instead be fighting for their daughters’ better futures, helping to make them as bright as possible.

In conclusion, I believe (and Luisa Capetillo made it clear back in 1909) that women should be given the chance to accomplish the same goals as men. All women should be able to fulfill their dreams and they can’t do this unless they have equal rights. Men should help, not interfere with women’s progress. Instead of arguing about what we should be doing, men should support women’s ideas and as a result, try to improve this world. After all, this is only one world we live in. We should all try to make it a successful and bright future.
How men sometimes think of us women is degrading. In my opinion, women can do anything men can do. Women work just as hard as any man. Cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children is hard labor, even if it’s just inside the home. Men shouldn’t just label us as housewives. Yes, they do work long hours, but so do we. What about the women who take care of home, work a 9 to 5 job and go to school? What about being a single parent? Doing it all by ourselves, we are phenomenal, independent, strong and dynamic. Women, shouldn’t be judged because we want to be judges, mayors, chiefs of police, or legislators, says Luisa Capetillo, but we should be recognized as women trying to make a difference in others’ lives.

According to Capetillo’s essay, “women will not be warriors, even though they know how to die like any brave soldier.” I believe that statement is definitely an opinion.

Women carry and birth babies for nine months. Does that not make her a warrior? Just like a male officer, a female officer apprehends her criminal and takes them to jail. The female officer does the same paperwork, gets injured in the process, and is fired the same way a male officer can. They both get the same reward of achievement for being the best they can be. So, does that still not make her a warrior?

Women before my time proved themselves. For example, Harriet Tubman, a remarkable woman, led the slaves in Maryland out of slavery and into freedom in Pennsylvania and then to Philadelphia; Jane Addams, a social activist who founded the Hull House, was a charter member of the NAACP, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and a labor union organizer; Josephine Baker, was an African American international singer, civil rights activist, World War II heroine and Clara Barton, an American humanitarian and organizer of the Red Cross.

In 2006, I went to a school called The New Program (Non-Traditional Employment for Women), a six week training school to become a carpenter, laborer, iron worker, painter, etc. Every morning you had to come in at 6am, lift up to 100 pounds of different size boards four flights up and down stairs and learn how to use heavy machinery, plus, be excellent in math. We used math for many different tools. For example, we used rulers for measuring wood, tables, poles, etc. With the rulers, you had to multiply, divide, add and subtract to get the right measurements. Math was the hardest part, as I wasn’t that great at it. There were a lot of tests we had to take, but at the end it paid off. We were taught by women whom were foremen and four-year apprentices. Every week a successful woman came to talk to us, just to let us know what it was like to be in her shoes. Some stories were amazing and horrifying. Women
even died on the job because of jealous men, but one thing they all taught us was to never give up.

When you work under pressure, you tend to give up. At those moments, I just thought about my son and making a difference in the next little girl or woman’s life. I did what I had to do. I graduated my pre-apprentice program. I say, don’t give up, fight for what’s right, believe in yourself and don’t let anyone discourage you. I feel like a warrior, even if they think I’m not.

“African American Family from Texas Moved to Califorina”
by Deysha Paredes
Based on a photograph of the same name by Dorothea Lange