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KLIPSUN

EVOLVE / FALL 2017



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

If there is one constant we can all expect in life, it is that there will always be change.

These changes, may they be destructive, dividing, didactic or oportune, are what define our future moving forward.

As we go through the motions, we rarely notice the quiet transformation, the metamorphosis of unassuming things from language to our environment and relationships to conversation.

That is the nature of evolution.

Truly,

Kyra Taubel-Bruce

Kyra Taubel-Bruce



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NOT YOUR AVERAGE BALLERINA

My journey to confidence as a black dancer in an art dominated by white women

opinion piece by **KATHRINE BRASETH**
photos by **JHOMARIE SADANG**



The first day at the studio was a tough one. The cold brick walls were littered with posters of beautiful ballerinas in pink tights, their hair slicked back into perfect buns.

In a class of 15 girls all around the age of four, many of us found community in our similar names starting with the letter “K.” Although several of us related to each other through our names, something else divided me from the group.

On that first day, I sat in front of the class on a carpet square while the other girls placed themselves on the worn-down strips of tape marking where to stand. I didn’t do this because I had to, but because I didn’t feel comfortable just yet. It took me a few classes to join in on the fun, but soon I was running through the ballet combinations in the small dance studio, leaping and jumping in unison with my peers. Still, I was shy. I wasn’t ready to dance without a care like the other girls.

Through my entire dance career I knew I was different from the other dancers in a way I could never change. Standing in a line in front of the long mirrored wall of my dance studio, my brown arms stuck out of the crowd of dancers. I tried to shrink myself and be small so my differences were less noticeable. I wasn’t secure with myself yet.

I was one of three dancers with brown skin and curly hair. In the back of my mind, I was always aware of this fact even if my peers didn’t acknowledge our differences. In an art form where the need to stand tall is drilled into your head week by week by dance instructors, my yearning to shrink away was just as great.

Ballet is extraordinarily beautiful. The skill be considered talented is hard to come by and technique takes years to perfect. This looming standard is known to most dancers, even to those just dancing for pleasure like I was.

Ballet is not just the correct movements of your feet and arms, but the overall look of the dancer. Do they fit the mood of the dance? Do they fit the era of the dance? Everything from how tall you are to the length of your hair is critiqued. Obviously, Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker” from 1892 isn’t set in America’s “melting pot,” but we still use this to base the cast of every ballet. Even though this is not verbally expressed, nor was I ever told I couldn’t get a role because of my skin color or the fact my hair required more gel than everyone else to slick back my curls, I still felt I didn’t fit the “look” of ballet.

Ballet originated in Europe, where the majority of the population is white.

"Through my entire dance career I knew I was different from the other dancers"

Today, a prominent leader in the ballet community is Misty Copeland, an African-American ballerina at the American Ballet Theatre. Copeland is the first black dancer to be promoted to principal ballerina at this prestigious dance company. She toppled barriers and is celebrated for her breakthrough in creating a more diverse dance world.

Representation is critical, and those who find representation through television shows, classrooms, media and more should feel blessed. The absence



of people who looked like me in institutions meant to embody images of the world shaped how I valued myself in society. Take, for example, a television program that portrays a teacher. If you never see a teacher who looks like you, it’s harder to imagine yourself being a teacher.

By only seeing negative images of black people in the media, there was nothing to remind me that I, too, was capable of being a teacher, a doctor, a dancer or win “Actor of the Year.” Seeing leaders and professionals played by white actors, while people of color are given the roles of criminals and welfare recipients, was subconsciously affecting how I viewed myself and what I thought I was capable of. These negative images are internalized. Only rarely is black excellence covered by a mainstream news outlet.

I never realized I was letting negative portrayals of people of color affect me and my confidence. Looking back years later, as I am able to share stories with friends who had similar experiences in their journey of accepting their blackness; it’s an obvious and sad observation.

It’s human nature to feel the need to belong and be accepted. Loving my blackness is something I’m proud to do. Being embraced by friends and family who don’t allow negative images to influence how they view themselves is inspirational. They welcome critical discussion and resilience through self-love. Moments of self-growth and self-love come through looking for inspiration from the many powerful black women around me, whether that be my family or dancers like Misty Copeland.

From my first day of ballet at four years old to waltzing on the stage for my last dance performance at 18, I was always the same brown-skinned, curly-headed girl. But now I stood taller and took up as much space as I pleased, because I was no longer struggling with accepting who I am. ■

(left) During her time in ballet, Western senior Kathrine Braseth was one of the only women of color.

(top) Five-year-old Kathrine Braseth getting ready for her first ballet recital, Candy Stripes.



CRISIS OF COVERAGE

Under Trump's spotlight and in the wake of the digital revolution, journalists are being forced to redefine their field

story by DANIEL HART

photos by NATE EMORY

As Margaret Sullivan, media columnist for The Washington Post, covered the Republican National Convention in July 2016, a T-shirt for sale caught her eye.

"The words on it were: Tree. Rope. Journalist," Sullivan says. "And then in parentheses: some assembly required." The shirt's purpose was for laughs, but Sullivan attributes the sentiment to President Donald Trump's rhetoric.

On the other side of the country, white-haired press veteran Floyd McKay shakes his head.

"I've never seen anything remotely like Trump," McKay says. A professor of journalism emeritus at Western, McKay has covered politics since the 1960s, beginning with the administrations of Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

"Nixon was false, but not ignorant," McKay says. "He was a crook and a thug, but he was not ignorant. You didn't have the feeling that he wouldn't know what he was talking about. With Trump, you get that."

Trump has sparked an identity crisis in American journalism. As he circumvents the media's role as government watchdogs, journalists must figure out how to respond.

"As you know, I have a running war with the media," Trump said on his first day in office. "They are among the most dishonest human beings on Earth."

Trump has repeatedly called reporters "scum," "terrible people" and "dishonest." As he continues to allege biased reporting and blacklist news organizations, American journalists are faced with a choice. Should they accept or reject their designation as Trump's nemesis?

Of course, Trump isn't the author of this narrative. Well before his candidacy, Americans' trust in the media was already decreasing steadily, according to Gallup polls. This complex phenomenon may be caused in part by the increasing popularity of fringe news organizations who vocally distinguish themselves from "the mainstream media."

Trump's use of Americans' distrust is destructive, though politically savvy, says Todd Donovan, a political science professor at Western. When news outlets lose their credibility, unfavorable coverage of Trump is easy to discard as biased.

(left) Journalists sit at the edge of their seats in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room waiting on Sean Spicer, White House Press Secretary, to answer their many questions, Jan. 23, 2017. (Official White House Photo by Nate Emory, courtesy of whitehouse.gov)

“He’s attacking the legitimacy of that adversarial watchdog role,” Donovan says. “That’s probably more long-term damaging than the fact that he can drive the news cycle with Twitter.”

This crisis of credibility has risen in the context of another. In 1990, U.S. daily newspapers reached their peak workforce of 56,900 people, according to NiemanLab. Between then and now, as that number approaches a multi-decade low of 30,000, the media has experienced a digital revolution – and profits have dwindled.

“The business model of newspapers has been terribly diminished because of the internet,” Sullivan says. “It hasn’t entirely taken it away, but it has largely taken away the main source of revenue that supports journalism, which is print advertising. And no one has really figured out a way to replace that.”

Sullivan has seen these changes over a career as chief editor of The Buffalo News in Buffalo, New York, public editor of The New York Times in New York, New York and in her current position at The Washington Post in Washington, D.C., which has gained a reputation for challenging Trump’s false statements.

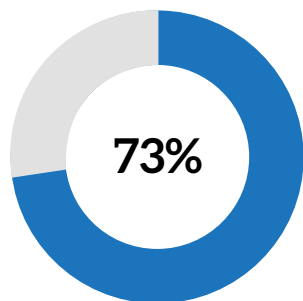
U.S. journalists face a dramatic, discipline-shrinking shift to the internet and a president who vehemently resents unflattering coverage. One might ask whether they will join the protestors in the streets, subjectively opposing Trump, or continue reporting neutral, objective facts.

Media ethicist, educator and author Stephen Ward rejects this dichotomy in his essay “Radical Ethics in a Time of Trump: How to Practice Democratically Engaged Journalism.”

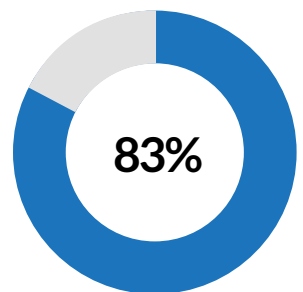
Percentage of U.S. adults who think...

Based on a study by Pew Research Center

the tensions between Trump and the media are getting in the way of Americas' access to important political news.



the relationship between Trump and the media is generally unhealthy.



A THIRD PATH

“It is not a choice between acting as a journalist or acting as an activist,” Ward writes for MediaShift. “It is a problem of how to practice an engaged journalism dedicated to democracy while retaining the values of factuality and impartiality.”

Ward penned three essays advocating for what he calls “democratically engaged journalism.” He argues that while

avoiding partisan lobbying, journalists need to be dedicated advocates of a democracy’s ideals.

“The role of journalism in a democracy is to inform the electorate,” McKay says, “and there’s nothing more important. The founding fathers created the first amendment for a reason.”

Becoming subjective and openly hostile erodes the media’s credibility, according to Ward. And yet, blindly recording what politicians assert as fact won’t do either in a time when the definition of a fact is publicly contested.

“When he says something that’s just false, do you say, Trump says the moon is made of green cheese?” Seattle Times Reporter Tim Brunner wonders, weighing in on the dilemma. “Do you repeat it? Or do say in the headline, Trump makes false claim about the moon?”

Sullivan rejects both subjectivity and false objectivity.

“I don’t see either of those as an acceptable way to go about doing journalism,” Sullivan says.

Addressing the prospect of an opposition press, Sullivan quoted The Washington Post’s executive editor Marty Baron, who said in a February media conference, “we’re not at war with the administration, we’re at work.”

On the other hand, “the neutral facts of what’s going on, presented without any inflection or just very straight, has its purposes,” Sullivan says. “But it tends to be not fully the way we should go about it, because it seems too much like stenography, and not searching enough.”

Instead, Ward proposes, journalists have a duty to advocate for liberal democracy “in the face of a populist, non-egalitarian ‘strong man’ approach to government.” Journalism supports democracy by fact-checking politicians’ claims to the public, and this responsibility is even more important with an administration that is aggressively loose with the facts. Ward calls on journalists to act as “objective advocates of democracy.”

But calling journalists advocates can be tricky.

“The word ‘advocate’ can be misinterpreted,” Sullivan says. “What it really means is simply ‘speaking for,’ and I think speaking for those things is completely appropriate. But we have an idea in this country of what being an advocate is, and it tends to evoke ideas of people with picket signs. It sounds like political partisanship, but it doesn’t need to be.”

So while journalists should not take Trump’s bait, subjectively opposing him as an individual, neither should they passively relay politicians’ misinformation to the public, free of scrutiny or objective evaluation. Ward champions a third option – passionately advocating for democracy and avidly investigating alleged facts.

Since journalism is so crucial to democracy, Ward argues, journalists’ highest commitment should be to democratic ideals.

THE QUESTION OF ACCESS

“Inside out” journalism is becoming obsolete, says Jay Rosen, a professor of journalism at New York University in his essay “Prospects for the American Press Under Trump.” He uses the term to describe relatively direct, cooperative access to high-ranking government officials as sources.

Whereas journalists have traditionally been used to some level of this access, Rosen says they will now need to rely on lower-level

government workers for key information. This strategy may need to become routine.

But the situation is a little more complicated.

“It was really interesting to me that for all of [Trump’s] disparagement of news media, the way he announced that the Republican healthcare proposal was going to be withdrawn was by picking up the phone and calling first, one person from The Washington Post, Bob Costa, and then Maggie Haberman from the New York Times,” Sullivan says. “So it isn’t that simple that access journalism is fully over.”

The best strategies haven’t changed. When journalists are shut out at the top, they work around, McKay says. Politicians who avoid direct contact with the press are nothing new.

McKay cites his past work as a political reporter on The Oregon Statesman. He would sometimes meet government sources informally for coffee – not necessarily the governor or secretary of state, but perhaps one of their aides, or the chief elections officer. Through conversation, McKay would gain a better idea of which political stories would soon be important. On the other hand, the source would better understand what McKay was looking for.

“And next thing you know,” McKay says, “Maybe a week or a month afterwards, I’d put a call through to them and they’d pick up the phone.”

McKay says politics is an inside game, and relationships with sources are key.

LEARNING TO LISTEN

Journalists need to become better listeners by bridging the gap between the abstract issues they cover and the troubles readers encounter daily, Rosen says.

“Whenever troubles don’t match up with issues, there is trust to be won for journalists able to listen better than systems that are failing people,” Rosen writes.

Sullivan says too much of U.S. reporting comes out of major coastal cities. She gives a negative example of shallow reporting from her hometown.

“Whenever a big news organization would come and do a piece about Buffalo, you could almost dictate in advance what it was going to say. It would be about the crumbling steel mills along Lake Erie,” Sullivan says. “They were a joke, because they didn’t really get at what was going on and it relied on impression and stereotype too much.”

During the election, many journalists came into communities briefly, wrote stories, and left according to Sullivan.

“That’s very different from being a part of a community,” Sullivan says. “Some of the best journalism that’s been done, both politically and otherwise, is from people who actually live in a community and are more absorbed in it.”

Rosen and Sullivan both refer to Washington Post reporter David Fahrenthold as a model of transparent journalism. Fahrenthold won a Pulitzer prize for his crowdsourcing-style investigative journalism of Trump’s alleged charitable donations.

Sullivan also uses The Upshot, the New York Times’ data analysis venture, as an example of trust-building methods.

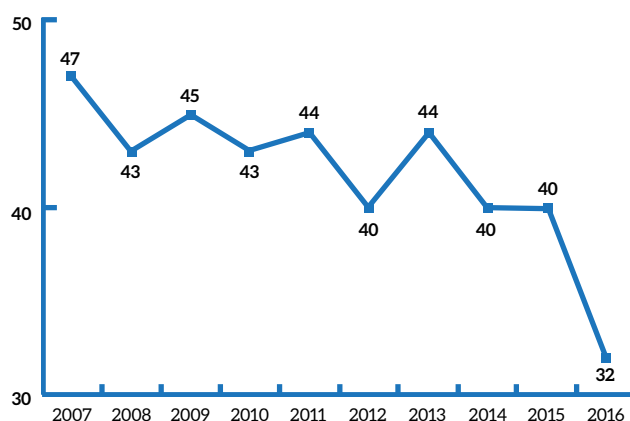
“You can see the raw data and you can see how they interpreted it,”

Sullivan says, “but you don’t have to rely on their interpretation. You can see the more basic information.”

Before The Washington Post and The New York Times, Sullivan worked her way from summer intern to top editor of her hometown paper, The Buffalo News. At that point, listening and transparency were already becoming values for her. At the suggestion of her younger, digital-oriented managing editor Brian Connolly, Sullivan decided to have live chats with Buffalo readers. They could ask questions of the editors and get answers in real time.

Percentage of Americans who have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media.

Based on a study by Gallup



“It was honestly very stressful to do because you never really knew what you were going to be asked and you could really trip over your own feet in real time,” Sullivan says. “But I do think that it made readers feel like somebody was listening to them.”

Seated at a computer with Connolly, who provided real-time editing, Sullivan fielded questions and typed out answers for 45 minutes to an hour. By the end of the chat, Sullivan was covered in sweat. Nonetheless, she felt it was an important service to the paper’s audience.

Real-time dialogue. Open, transparent data analysis. Relationships.

Using these methods, journalists say trends in media trust are reversible. By reevaluating the central values of the field and working through what they look like in real life, journalists can regain the relationships they once had with their sources and readerships.

Thoughtful adaptability, together with commitment to its core values, has always been necessary for journalism to endure, McKay attests. During his time at Western, McKay taught media history.

“I would ask the class. I would say, ‘well, people say newspapers are dying. Can you tell me any form of news media that has actually died? There isn’t any. The closest you can come is newsreels in the World War II era, but they just morphed into television,’” McKay says. “They always just adapt. Radio adapts, television adapts, newspapers adapt, magazines – the whole thing.”

Trump may have created an unprecedented crisis for journalists, but the fruit of that crisis may be a stronger, more profound form of journalism. ■

A close-up photograph of a brown goat with large, curved, textured horns. The goat is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Its fur is a rich brown color, and its face has a darker, almost black patch around the eyes and muzzle. The background is a blurred forest scene with green foliage and tree trunks.

FARMER'S

FATE

A couple who faced harsh zoning realities relocate in pursuit of their dreams

story by **ANDY GIBBS**

photos by **EDWARD CLEM**

On a balmy summer day, Aaron Cohen drove past a rusty mailbox and down a rutted driveway in his electric blue Chevy. Riding shotgun, his 80-pound mastiff dangled his slobbery jowls out of the window as Cohen adjusted his aviators.

From the looks of the location, Cohen was skeptical. The property was 30 feet from the highway and neighboring mobile homes. A deafening train track paralleled with buzzing powerlines topped off his disappointment. It wasn't exactly his ideal location to continue part two of his farming journey.

Cohen first moved to the small Skagit Valley town of Hamilton in September 2014 when his stone manufacturing company in Seattle started to go under. The loss of his company and the stress that came along with it gave Cohen unbearable anxiety.

"I wanted to get as far away as possible from the city life and refine myself," Cohen said.

In an effort to start fresh, Cohen decided to take on something completely new to him – farming.

Cohen began refurbishing the land at the one-acre century old farmstead in February 2015 while working construction full time. As spring arrived, Cohen smiled seeing the surrounding lilacs, poppies and magnolias bloom into full color. He tilled the soil for his gardens, dug holes for fence posts and eventually brought pigs, ducks and goats to his first farm.

As Cohen leaned against the splintery walls of his sunbleached barn, he daydreamed of a near future that included breeding goats and pursuing the path of artisan cheese making under the name "Ghost rider's Farm." He dreamed his goat cheese would one day be served on plates in fine dining restaurants along Chuckanut Drive.

Work on the property was going smoothly and remained uninterrupted, until Cohen's neighbor began complaining to Hamilton city officials in secret. At the time, he thought they had a mutual understanding of each other.

Then one day, Cohen saw a man walking down his driveway, and to his surprise it was Hamilton City Council Member Brian Kirkpatrick. There was a problem, according to Kirkpatrick.

(left) Cohen and Schlosser's alpha male goat stands off with the camera just before feeding at their farm. The relocated operation hopes to one day supply artisan cheeses to the surrounding area.

He informed Cohen that it was against the law to breed goats, meaning they could keep their animals but couldn't obtain new ones when the older ones passed away.

"How the hell am I supposed to have milk? How the hell am I supposed to have cheese?" Cohen retorted, as Kirkpatrick stood silent.

Unfortunately, Cohen and his girlfriend, Shannon Schlosser, already planned a trip to Lake Stevens to pick up a baby buckling goat for their herd, which they already met and named. Schlosser lost her \$100 non-refundable deposit.

Then there were the ducks. The mayor complained via email about the noise.

They gave away three of their six ducks to try to appease the mayor but it didn't yield any response. The mayor instructed them of the city's legal decibel limits and Cohen made efforts to prevent the noise caused by the ducks during feeding time at day and night. He got a bigger feeder and started free feeding them so they could eat whenever they wanted. Although it seemed to work, Cohen's analysis of the noise levels on his property compared to that of his Honda – making just as much noise, if not more.

In August 2016, Cohen received an email from the mayor telling him to build a bigger fence around his duck pond, which was just enough to push him over the edge. Cohen and Schlosser decided to pursue their goat cheese dreams elsewhere.

"I'm an upright citizen. I pull my own weight. I'm a productive member of society. I don't need to be told what to do," Cohen said. "That goes way back to my youth, the old punk rock in me."

Wanting to restart the farm he began in February 2015, Cohen toured 37 properties. In December 2016, the hunt ended when Cohen and Schlosser purchased a disheveled plot of land in Sedro-Woolley with hopes it would be the farm they always wanted.

Cohen and Schlosser's feet sunk into the mud as they approached their newly purchased property. The December air and gray clouds above signaled a heavy rainstorm. Abandoned vehicles and trash scattered the soggy landscape between the naked trees and the shrouding blackberry thickets. Tobacco smoke dissipated from the back porch as the couple scanned their new seven acre property. Their arms folded and their brows furrowed, but they saw potential for this Sedro-Woolley plot to be their goat cheese farm, without any interruptions this time.

The \$330,000 property fit their budget. It would have been an extra \$200,000 had it not been for the 4,000 gallons of water in the basement and abandoned vehicles littering the property. This fixer-upper was a major setback from when they started in Hamilton, but Cohen said nothing had changed in his heart. The dream of having their property support them remained.

Looking at the trashed, seven-acre property could easily be disheartening, Cohen said. Since moving in, they have made great

"Cohen and Schlosser decided to pursue their goat cheese dreams elsewhere."



**“I’m a
productive
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of society.
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strides in fixing the property. Having pumped all 4,000 gallons of water out of the basement, they now aim to repaint the exterior siding of the house and remodel the master bathroom. First thing each morning, Cohen clears paths through the monstrous blackberry thickets to get his first goat pasture established.

He manages the challenge each day with 20-foot by 20-foot increments. The goal for now is to harbor a functional chunk of land similar to the size of the farm they had back in Hamilton.

“All of our resources are wrapped up into this home now, so now it’s just sweat equity as they call it,” Cohen said.

The next step is to find a tractor that can spread dirt and mulch across his new waterlogged land. Fourteen inches into the ground lies thick clay, causing all water to rise to the surface. Due to this, the gardens and pastures will have to start from the ground up. Goats have sticks for legs and will sink right into the mud, Cohen said.

This is all new and challenging, Cohen said, but it beats dealing with the Hamilton zoning laws.

Cohen and Schlosser’s new neighbors don’t tell them what to do, in fact, they wave when they pass and bring housewarming gifts.

In their first week at the property, the couple’s neighbor Burke Smith stopped by with a hand-split bundle of kindling and a six-pack of beer.

“Welcome to the neighborhood,” Smith said.

When Cohen and Schlosser had problems with coyotes attacking their ducks, Smith gave them a pistol with a handful of blanks to ward them off.

On a brisk March afternoon, Cohen and Schlosser shared a quick work break on the porch. They slipped off their boots and sat on the front steps to soak in the last moments of sun. Suddenly, a sequence of gunshots broke the silence followed by laughter and rowdy shouting. Cohen and Schlosser looked at each other and laughed in relief to have carefree neighbors.

“I love our new neighbors,” Cohen said.

Schlosser chimed, “Shoot your little hearts out.”

It was a sigh of relief for Schlosser and Cohen when they had to sign an agreement sheet acknowledging the agriculture zoning laws in their neighborhood. It said residents have no right to complain about noise, smell, machinery or animals.

In early May, Cohen sloshed through the waterlogged grass in tall rubber boots to make his daily feeding rounds at dusk. His two stout kunekune pigs waddled close behind him grunting and squealing with their bellies grazing the ground.

He lifted a garage door into the barn and the pigs followed him inside. He opened the fence gate to let out two waist-high goats, Loretta and Emmylou.

“Who’s hungry?” he said in an animated baby voice as they stampeded to their designated feeding spots.

He watched them eat as he took his moment of free time to roll a cigarette with loose tobacco. Every night, their frenzied eating springs a laugh out of him and in the end makes his farming lifestyle worthwhile. ■



(top-left) Cohen and Schlosser give one of their two pigs a belly rub after their evening feed. Feeding time can be hectic on the fledgling farm, with goats and pigs eying each others food and making frequent attempts at stealing a bite.

(left) Abandoned vehicles and piles of trash litter the compound that Cohen and Schlosser are attempting to turn into a sustainable farm.



LISTEN CLOSELY

Life with a speech impediment
and how I found my voice

opinion piece by **BRYN YASUI**
photo by **EDWARD CLEM**

I felt my cheeks flush with a wave of heat, my heart sitting heavy in my stomach. Before the teacher said a word, I knew this feeling of anxiety all too well.

“Say your name and your favorite color,” she said.

“My name is Bwyn. It’s pink,” I replied.

My teacher’s eyes lingered on me for a long moment while the other kids giggled until she moved on to the next student. I didn’t like the color pink – I hated pink as a matter of fact. I said pink because I couldn’t pronounce my actual favorite color, orange. It didn’t matter how much I strived to avoid saying words with L’s or R’s because they’re everywhere – even in my own name.

As if being forced to speak out loud at school wasn’t enough, my mother would stop me every other word to pronounce them again on the car rides home. It wasn’t long before I came to realize that no one would ask me for clarification or notice my mispronunciation

in the first place if I didn’t talk at all.

For 13 years, I struggled with Functional Speech Disorder, otherwise known as a lisp.

Speech impediments are typically categorized as a childhood problem, subsiding by the age of five, according to online speech pathologist Dr. Caroline Bowen. At the time, I was eight years old.

I could overhear my mother and aunties gossiping at family dinners over appetizers, wondering when my speech impediment would disappear. Their faces read like a book with concern and I would quietly sit on the other side of the room, a wallflower.

This was the normal routine. “How is school?” and “How are your siblings doing?” were just a few of the redundant questions my family members would ask me. Responding with the shortest answer possible, I watched their eyes focus on my lips and the phonetic sounds instead. It was apparent that my family could

(left) Bryn Yasui spent 13 years struggling with Functional Speech Disorder, better known as a lisp. After several unsuccessful stints with different therapists, a breakthrough came when she started to smile while talking. Yasui is on track to graduate with a bachelors degree in journalism in fall 2017.

care less about my personal life as they nodded their heads every so often with a “mhmm” and “is that so?”

Although everyone tried to listen, I was so convinced that no one heard a word I really said – they just heard my lisp. The more it occurred, it seemed as if my disorder began to define me in everyone’s eyes, including my own.

In elementary school, my friends would play basketball and ask me to join, but I would sneak away and jump into my mom’s car to attend speech therapy lessons instead. While these lessons were costly, my mother insisted they were worth it.

Every speech therapist my parents forced me to visit practiced confrontation methods to face my situation head on. In a small white room, I read long excerpts from books only to listen to a recording of myself stumbling over my words time and time again.

Inside my head, I was trapped in a glass box of my own insecurities ricocheting off the walls – my mouth forming words, perhaps even screaming at the top of my lungs – but no sound being heard from the spectators on the outside.

I cowered at the sound of my own voice.

After years of speech therapy, there was no improvement. Every two-hour session felt like an ongoing nightmare of facing my greatest weakness, hearing no progress and leaving the appointment with failure hanging on my shoulders.

The last speech therapist I spent time with hasn’t left my memory since our first encounter. My head was held low as I walked into a small, quaint household in a residential neighborhood. This was no ordinary office for speech lessons. Walking into the house, a middle-aged woman smiled at me and embraced me in the warmest hug. For a second, I thought I was in the wrong place.

No claustrophobic white rooms or recording devices were to be found in her home; just an ordinary living room adorned with family portraits and vintage furniture. She told me to refer to her by her first name. Mary smiled at me as she asked generic questions. “What is your family like? What do you like to do in your free time?”

Her large brown eyes were fixated on me, just me, as she asked follow-up questions with genuine interest. Those 20 minutes of laughing, talking and becoming more acquainted with each other were the longest I’ve ever spoken to someone without being asked for clarification at all.

For the first time, I felt normal. I felt like an actual person contrary to being viewed as the special kid who needed help. Those glass walls were looking thinner than ever. Someone was finally listening.

She grinned and laughed as the conversation died down slowly. I didn’t want it to end.

“Bryn, I think I know how to help you with your speech impediment,” her eyes crinkled sympathetically as she put her hand on my knee.

For so long I had been ashamed, and in turn, morose, about my lisp. I couldn’t imagine a future moving past my speech impediment and being able to talk out loud without fretting over every other word. I believed this was solely my problem to fix, but Mary provided the help I needed all along.

“When you’re talking and smiling at the same time, your words are enunciated much better. If you smile more and practice difficult words, I know you can outgrow this and talk to everyone like you were just talking to me.”

I was the only one in my way when it came to conquering the demon that haunted me day after day.

I followed her advice: slowing down when the tough words came up and smiling to improve my pronunciation. Entering high school, I quit speech therapy lessons for good.

Junior year came around and I jumped the gun by joining the school newspaper. I’ve been enthusiastic about writing for as long as I can recall – the silent world of self-liberation free from regulating. This was my escape from the humiliation; a safe space I confided in throughout the years of being muted. After all, words written on paper can’t be mispronounced.

My first day as an amateur reporter was nothing less than onerous. I approached a random student after many deep breaths with beads of sweat on my forehead. I felt my throat tighten and blood rush to my face as I began to ask a complete stranger questions. To my surprise, the students I interviewed didn’t laugh or judge me like I had anticipated. I had real conversations with my sources. We had a connection and I felt a sense of belonging that I didn’t believe existed.

The more interviews I conducted, the more I fell in love with this feeling of engaging with others, growing comfortable with the sound of my voice and telling someone’s story through my words.

Walking through the halls and encountering fresh new people was still another obstacle of its own. “Hi, my name is Bryn Yasui and I’m part of the Eagle Eye” gradually became easier to say without feeling myself talk too quickly or stumble over my name like I was a little kid again. Eventually, listening to others speak and focusing on them more than my own voice delivered a new breed of self-confidence.

I would smile, enunciate clearly while the source and I would have real conversations about topics that mattered. There was that sensation of real, genuine communication I thought I had forgotten and developing confidence in myself flourished in my new found passion.

Here’s the thing about reporting: it’s not about talking, but soaking in information like a sponge and building a personal relationship with individuals to translate through words.

Journalism has become so much more than an industry consisting of questions and answers – storytelling through reporting allowed me to see the problem I had struggled with for 13 years of my life.

A person deserves to be heard. ■

"I was so convinced that no one heard a word I really said."



BERKOMPAS

AND
THE *BONSAI*

Ancient art takes root in the Northwest

story and photos by ALEX POWELL

Tucked away in the antiquated suburbia of Ferndale, George Berkompas sits outside in a cracked, off-white plastic chair surrounded by more than 130 bonsai trees lining the edges of his rugged backyard.

Holding a small pair of red-handled pruning shears in one hand and a delicate branch hanging off a 36-year-old Rhododendron bonsai in the other, George begins his work. With a few precise snips, he administers minor edits to the fragile potted plant, just enough to shape the branches in the twisted and uneven form he desires.

After pruning to his liking, George pulls out a fine, six-inch strand of aluminum wire from his pocket and begins to conform it to the tree. Round and round, he intertwines the wire through a portion of the Rhododendron, fashioning the branches into the structure that will eventually personify the tree's unique design.

Spring is a busy time of year for George and his backyard empire. The warm April air brings life to his bonsai trees. Each one has been hand-designed and planted by George himself – some of which are merely months old, while others, decades.

Bonsai, a Japanese phrase meaning “planted in a container,” is an ancient form of tree planting on a smaller, more controlled scale. From every root to branch and every stem to leaf edge, each bonsai tree reflects a miniature version of its parent plant, each one formed by George's steady hands and years of persistence.

“Patience,” George says quietly to himself. “Just be patient.”

George has been using bonsai art to test his patience for the last 30 years.

In the winter of 1987, George had his first encounter with bonsai when his wife, Gert, gave him a baby Gem Spruce as a Christmas gift. This vivid green, spiky plant would eventually grow into a lifelong art project for George.

“It gave me something to take care of,” George reflects on his first experience with bonsai. “I wanted something that would constantly keep me busy.”

In their years of marriage, only George has carried on the passion for bonsai art. But every now and again Gert will sit on their big, gray couch pressed against a large window overlooking their backyard and watch George pace his small corner of the world.

“This is his place of peace,” Gert says. “He's worked very hard for years to get his trees where they are now.”

George's roots in the bonsai community have grown thick in his time living in the northwest. He's been a teacher of bonsai art for just over 12 years, sharing his love and knowledge of planting to the small society that thrives on it.

On the third Tuesday of every month, George climbs into his rustic 1998 Ford Ranger and drives five and a half miles to Rain-Cap



Automotive Accessories, a small shop located along the Guide Meridian.

Inside the tiny sheet-metal shop, George and just over a dozen artists spend two hours together discussing, learning and further exploring the art of bonsai. For years this space has been home to George and other members of the bonsai society. It is a challenging time of trial and error.

Amidst dirt-stained hands and bits of leaves hiding under fingernails, everyone spends their minutes wisely with George. Some look for advice on new potting techniques, others clip bits of branch and aluminum wire. Everyone moves at their own pace. No two projects are alike.

California native Jeff Dodson is one of the few who attends these small, intimate community gatherings. Before relocating to Washington in 2014, Dodson spent his life in southern California studying botany and specializing in plant pathology at California State Polytechnic University.

Although Dodson has been working with plants almost his entire life, he didn't get into the art of bonsai until his retirement and relocation. Between a desire to keep busy around the property and his love for the natural world, bonsai fell somewhere in the middle.

“The northwest was really why I got into bonsai,” Dodson says, explaining that Washington's temperate, damp climate in contrast to the hot, dry environment of southern California has fostered a richer community of bonsai artists.

(left) Bright red blossoms flourish from the branches of a 65-year-old Rhododendron tree. The blossoms on these trees only come once a year, usually lasting one to two weeks.

(above) George Berkompas holds a 25-year-old Spruce bonsai in his backyard.



Dodson's favorite tree is one he says people typically avoid, due to both its rarity in nature and particular needs to thrive. The Ginkgo Biloba, also known as the Maidenhair Tree, is a unique prehistoric plant originating in China over 200 million years ago, Dodson says.

The tree is better known in Japan as Hiroshima's "bearer of hope." Not only is it considered a living fossil carrying many medicinal uses in Eastern culture, it also symbolizes life and resilience after surviving the 1945 atomic blast that wiped out almost everything within its radius.

The tree is one of the more finicky bonsai Dodson has worked with. This is a result of the species' ancient age and need for acidic soil conditions, making it very difficult to maintain as it ages. But when the plant does flourish, Dodson says the extra effort is always worth it.

There are several steps toward a bonsai's success that require a good deal of forethought, creativity and knowledge. Each artist's path is different and so is the result.

Every bonsai begins with a branch from its parent species or a seedling for the more advanced, Dodson says. From there, an artist must decide potting method, type of soil mixture, and appropriate level of pH in the water used.

Over time, these variables change. If the bonsai isn't thriving, adjustments must be made to find out what the plant needs, whether that includes changing fertilizers in the soil or pruning less. If the tree continues to struggle, the artist is forced to begin again from the ground up and the entire process starts over.

When a bonsai does thrive, the artist is given the opportunity to pinch, cut and trim the tree's branches however they desire, leaving the possibilities endless.

One of the most vital steps in the creative process begins with the soil chosen, which is unique based on geographical location and typically crafted by artists to their liking, according to Dodson.

"One of the greatest lessons bonsai can teach is accepting the differences in each person's work. Just like people, no two bonsai are alike."

"We have a fairly consistent climate and some of the best soil in the nation," Dodson says. "A person in Arizona is going to have a different soil mixture than someone in Japan. There is an endless amount of soil combinations out there, you just have to find the right one that suits the needs of wherever you are."

For members of the bonsai community, their soil mixture is already prepared and ready to use thanks to George, who has been refining his personal mixture in his years of planting experience.

"He's already taken care of the majority of work," Dodson says. "George is incredibly generous with his recipe, which is something he has been perfecting for years."

In addition to George's popular soil mixture, imported lava rock has become a new norm for the small community. This type of potting succeeds because of the rock's porous nature and phyllosilicate minerals within it that help retain water. Lava rock also provides extra stability for the little trees as they grow, George says.

Another norm for the northwest artists is moss.

"That small, green fuzzy thing growing between the cracks of your driveway," George says with a large grin across his face. "We love that stuff."

The moss provides a soft, carpet-like layer to the base of the tree and with the year-round rain showers, locks in moisture essential to each tree's prolonging. Moss and lava rock have become the signatures of the bonsai community in Washington, a local practice George believes other bonsai artists around the world are jealous of.

Unlike many traditional bonsai styling techniques, which tend to exaggerate and perfect a tree's shape, George's bonsai have always encompassed simplicity and minimalism. Without removing non-uniform branches and typically undesired growths in the tree, George's art strays from the conformed and leans on the natural.

"The northwest is a uniquely weathered landscape and I want my trees to embody that," George says, describing his bonsai as an imitation of any tree you might already find in the natural world.

George's oldest bonsai, a craggily 65-year-old Azalea, sits close to the edge of his home. The bright red blossoms that come in spring only last about a week, making it his favorite tree.

Embedded in George's collection of trees lies the history of his life, years of learning and refining an art form not many are aware of in the northwest. Art, he says, takes a lifetime to master.

"You can't be in a hurry," George says – a phrase he attributes to his initial interest in bonsai art and a motto he has fully inherited in his life.

One of the greatest lessons bonsai can teach is accepting the differences in each person's work, George says. Regardless of using the same materials, methods and even species of plant, George and his bonsai society have no artwork or style that reflects one another.

"Just like people, no two bonsai are alike," George says. "I don't feel like I really teach people anything. It's closer to guidelines, the rest is for them to decide what their tree will become and that's what's fulfilling about it."

Due to the excessive amount of wet days in Washington, George says watering his bonsai is almost never a problem. With a lot of time in the northwest and some help from the rain, George has permanently planted himself in his little patch of Ferndale soil.

On the rare occasion that the sun does shine, you can find George pacing his backyard, watching over his bonsai like a grandfather to his grandchildren. Inside the house, Gert sits on their big, gray couch pressed against the back window and watches George in his place of peace, tending to his lifelong art project in hopes to one day pass his work on to future generations. ■

(left) Bonsai trees line the edge of George Berkompas' backyard in Ferndale.

(bottom) A malleable piece of aluminum wire wraps around a delicate Rhododendron branch. Bonsai trees are typically shaped by wire, which allow the artist to form the tree in whatever shape desired.





Science is REAL Denial is NOT a POLICY

BELIEVE IN SCIENCE
TRUMP'S BRAIN IS FACT FREE

FACTS MATTER

Roy
SCIENCE IS A BATTLE AGAINST THE LIES

Facts Matter
SCIENCE MATTERS

CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS REPUBLICANS TOO

Humanity Needs Science + Truth
not Fascist Lies

STEMINISM
RESPECT THE FACTS
LEARN RIGOR
TEACH INDEPENDENCE
STAND UP FOR SCIENCE

LESS INVASIONS MORE EQUATIONS
#Fund science

\$\$ SUPPORT SCIENCE

TRUMP ONLY FUND THE NIH THEY CURE CANCER

SCIENCE A WAY

POLITICAL SCIENCE

A chemist works to transform politics by getting scientists to run for office

story and photos by **JESSE NICHOLS**

Andrew Zwicker is a plasma physicist. He's worked at the Princeton Plasma Physics Lab for nearly two decades. When he started, he studied fusion energy, hoping to one day use it to power the planet. Year after year, he would see his lab's federal funding rise and fall. It wasn't any different under Democratic or leadership. Zwicker was frustrated with the way politicians were handling scientific issues, from research funds to climate change. He wanted to see more evidence-based thinking in politics.

In 2014, his friends approached him with an ambitious idea: Rep. Rush Holt was retiring after representing the Princeton area for 16 years in Congress. Holt was also a plasma physicist and used to run the Princeton Plasma Physics Lab where Zwicker now works. Holt had even hired him. Slowly but surely, his friends started suggesting he run for Holt's seat.

"I sort of laughed the first time, and I was dismissive," Zwicker says. "But enough people did it that, all of a sudden, I started taking it a little more seriously. I thought, 'I could complain, or I could try to do something. Why not me?'"

Before he announced his candidacy, he met with Holt. He wanted to know if Holt thought the system was broken or whether a scientist in politics was a lost cause.

"His message was: the way to fix the system is to get more scientists and analytical thinkers into the political process," Zwicker says.

(left) A crowd of activists march out of Cal Anderson Park toward Seattle Center during the Seattle March For Science.



If you want to find a scientist, Congress is a bad place to look. Only a handful of the 535 members of the House and Senate come from science backgrounds. Shaughnessy Naughton, a chemist-turned-political organizer, is trying to change that. She founded 314 Action, a political group rallying scientists nationwide to run for public office, from Congress to school boards. Their goal is simple: they feel science should play a greater role in government, and who better to advocate for science than scientists themselves?

“When you have politicians that are so openly embracing non-science, it’s very troubling,” Naughton says. “I think the way to combat that is to get a seat at the table. We need scientists to go beyond just advocacy, and step up and get involved in electoral politics.”

Before politics, Naughton was a chemist. She earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Bryn Mawr College and researched infectious disease treatment for the pharmaceutical company Wyeth in Philadelphia. As a scientist, Naughton was concerned with education cuts and climate change denial in Congress. In 2014, she decided to run for Pennsylvania’s 8th Congressional District.

At the same time, Zwicker was running for the congressional district just across the Delaware River in New Jersey. The two scientists became friends, often meeting to discuss the unfamiliar world of political campaigns. Zwicker had entered the race for Holt’s former

seat – he joked he was the second American plasma physicist to enter politics. He filled his campaign team with scientists. His treasurer was a nuclear engineer and his data analyst was a computer scientist. His campaign manager had just received a doctorate in physics and had some spare time on his hands.

Meanwhile, Naughton was soliciting campaign funds from chemists, climate scientists, physicists, computer scientists and mathematicians. Both scientists lost in the Democratic primaries, but the ball was rolling. In 2015, Zwicker ran for the 16th District in the New Jersey General Assembly. He won by 78 votes. Naughton tried for the same congressional seat in 2016, again losing in the primary.

Instead of running again, Naughton decided to take a new approach. Both she and Zwicker had learned the challenges of running a congressional campaign as a scientist. Scientists often don’t have experience campaigning or fundraising and they might not have access to the same donor networks as career politicians. What if Naughton could help encourage, train and support scientists getting into politics?

Naughton founded 314 Action in summer 2016. The social welfare nonprofit – which got its name from the first three digits of pi – would find scientists aspiring for office around the country. They’d help them learn the system, teach them about fundraising and campaign strategies and connect them with resources

and volunteers in their area. All the while, the group's affiliated political action committee would raise money to fund the most promising candidates in races around the country. 314 Action would also campaign against Lamar Smith, Steve Knight and Dana Rohrabacher, three Republicans who reject mainstream climate science and serve on the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

Donald Trump catalyzed Naughton's movement. President Trump rejects mainstream science on issues like climate change and vaccine safety. He appointed climate doubters to top environmental roles and proposed a budget which would cut funding to federal research agencies studying energy, climate and health. After his election, thousands of scientists started reaching out to 314 Action, Naughton says.

The group held their first online candidate training on March 14, 2017, a date aptly corresponding with their name. Chemists, neuroscientists, astrophysicists, engineers and even a shark scientist signed up to learn about fundraising, election law and campaign messaging. A month later, they held their first in-person training at American University in the District of Columbia. The group also partnered with the March for Science, a pro-science protest in Washington, D.C., and more than 600 other cities around the world. Naughton marched alongside thousands of scientists in Washington, D.C., and Zwicker spoke at his local march in Trenton, New Jersey.

In Seattle, scientists and activists marched across the city – from Capitol Hill to Seattle Center. After the march, a group of scientists squeezed onto a patio table outside a diner a few blocks from Seattle Center. Julieta Gruszko, one of the marchers, set her homemade flag against a nearby fence. The sign was a long plastic bag decorated

**"We
need
scientists
to go
beyond
just
advocacy."**

(left) Julieta Gruszko holds a flag after the Seattle March For Science. Gruszko is a doctoral physics student at University of Washington and a volunteer with the Seattle chapter of 314 Action.

(right) Matthias Smith is a doctoral physics student at University of Washington and a volunteer with the Seattle chapter of 314 Action. Smith and his colleagues are working toward teaching local scientists how to effectively communicate with the public.

with drawings of rockets, planets and the words "rise up," serving as a makeshift wind sock.

"Seattleites are too quiet for my taste," Gruszko says. "Especially STEM Seattle people."

"I didn't expect it to be a wild raucous march," Matthias Smith retorts from across the table.

Gruszko and Smith are doctoral students studying particle physics at the University of Washington. They're also members of the Seattle chapter of 314 Action, one of dozens of on-the-ground groups in cities and states around the country. The two learned about the group from Isaac Backus, a fellow physics student.

"He recruited all the physicists that he knew he thought might be interested," Gruszko says. "We form a quorum through 314."

Smith is from a small farming town in southern Illinois. In 2016, nearly two-thirds of his town voted for Trump. Smith was the valedictorian at his high school, and now he's the local scientist. He doesn't think his neighbors back home mistrust scientists – they just don't listen to them. Smith and his colleagues are trying to change that.

While the national group is focused on campaigns and elections, the Seattle chapter is putting their effort into the basics: teaching scientists how to communicate. They had handfuls of pamphlets for a science communication training they were hosting the following Friday at a local science bookstore. In the spirit of the movement, their training was based in research. The group is using Dialectical Behavior Therapy, a technique originally coined by psychologists in the 1990s working with patients with borderline personality disorder. Now the technique is used to help anyone who might feel attacked or defensive in conversations. Their goal is to teach scientists how to talk about tough subjects, starting with a simple conflict – a neighbor who keeps taking your parking spot – and slowly working up to a conversation about climate change.

"We don't want to send people out into the world without teaching them the skills they need to be successful," Gruszko says. "So first step: teach them the skills. Second step is go out into the world. Because if not, you can do more harm than good."





(top) Washington Rep. Suzan DelBene writes on a girl's sign at the Seattle March For Science on Saturday, April 22, 2017. Rep. DelBene holds a bachelor's degree in biology, and spent her years before Congress working in the technology and biotech industries.

(right) Activists approach the Seattle Center during the Seattle March For Science.

For the Seattle chapter, it's not just about getting scientists elected. It's about making science a larger part of the political process. The group sees a lot of ways to get there, like forming science lobbies or building science advisory committees with local lawmakers.

Blending science and politics doesn't come without risk. Critics, like Rep. Lamar Smith on the House science committee, have accused researchers and government agencies of politicizing science. 314 Action says that's not their goal. The Seattle group aims to be nonpartisan, simply wanting to see more science in the political process. On a national level, 314 Action mostly supports Democratic candidates, but they have a special fund to support Republicans who want to make evidence part of their platform. Regardless, Gruszko doesn't think much of the criticism.

"I don't think the public buys that scientists are politicized. If

you look at surveys, people still do tend to trust science and scientists," Gruszko says.

"It's about making science a larger part of the political process."

"Everywhere? Even in republican districts?" Smith asks.

"Yeah. More than they trust most other professions," Gruszko says.

It's true: 78 percent of Americans believe scientists act in the public interest, according to a 2016 report from Pew Research Center. Americans are less confident in politicians, religious leaders, business leaders and journalists. Evidence suggests advocacy might not harm that trust, either, according to a 2017 study in the *Journal of Environmental Communications*.

Researchers from George Mason University showed participants one of six Facebook posts from a hypothetical scientist. The posts ranged from objective statistics all the way to advocating for emission regulations on coal plants. But readers didn't seem to notice. The study showed advocacy made little difference in the scientist's reputation, suggesting scientists can speak up without sacrificing their career.

In New Jersey, Zwicker has two jobs: scientist and politician. He doesn't seem too concerned with advocacy or what people call "politicized" science. In his eyes, scientists are the ultimate skeptics – you won't find someone harder to convince than a scientist. When it comes to politicized science, he feels like the real problem is in government.

"You could use climate change, you could go back to evolution, you could go back to Galileo," Zwicker says. "Scientists haven't politicized science. Policymakers have."

Zwicker approaches lawmaking like he'd approach a science problem. Right now, he's working to raise his state's minimum wage. To start, he read as many economics studies as he could find, on scales ranging from cities to nations, and used that research as the backbone for his policies.

"Who cares whether it's energy policy or minimum wage? It just doesn't matter. You do the exact same thing," Zwicker said during the March 314 Action webinar. "And you'd be shocked because that's not necessarily how politics works. A scientific approach is so desperately needed in all areas of public policymaking."

Zwicker is running for re-election this fall. He says he's the first Democrat to ever represent the 16th District. New Jersey has the highest density of scientists in the United States, he says, and his district was full of undecided voters. He says his background in science helped his electoral success.

When he swore in, he had the choice of book he'd use to take the oath. He got copies of the U.S. and New Jersey constitutions, along with the United Nations declaration of human rights. Finally, he tucked them into the front cover of an 1811 copy of Newton's "Principia" that he checked out from the Princeton library. He placed his hand on the four books, raised the other, and took the oath of office. ■

MAD
SCIENTISTS

RESIST
TRUMP
NO CUTS TO
SCIENCE





SHIFTING GEAR

How much would you pay
to experience the outdoors?

opinion piece and photos by MADISON KRUEGER

As an outdoor enthusiast and future backpacking guide, I value how nature allows me to escape the talons of capitalism. It doesn't try to sell you something. It doesn't want anything from you. You go out in nature to just be.

And yet, here I am, hiking along a narrow trail off Chuckanut Drive wearing an over-priced wool base layer I was told was the best hiking shirt, a brand-name baseball hat and this season's latest backpacking pack. How did I allow my love of the outdoors to become this expensive?

I started thinking about the self-proclaimed "dirtbags" of Yosemite Valley in the 1950s and stars of the documentary "Valley Uprising." These outdoor pioneers were climbing the valley walls by day and running from park rangers by night. They climbed boulders in tennis shoes with old ropes tied around their waists.

Today, to climb those same boulders, you'll need a \$60 harness, a \$65 helmet, \$80 climbing shoes, a \$20 chalk bag, and you don't even want to know how much rope costs (I'll tell you anyway: \$200). The founder of the well-known and pricy outdoor company Patagonia, Yvon Chouinard, was one of those dirtbags and often lived off of 50 cents to \$1 a day. The origins of outdoor culture were laid-back, simplistic, and, dare I say, anti-consumerist.

But open any outdoor retailer's website or social media page and you'll be overwhelmed by the latest equipment with the newest technology, clothing made of the "recommended" materials and, oh, the price tags. For example, on The North Face's Instagram you'll find a video of a down sleeping bag called the Hyper Kazoo. It features Thermobaffle technology (I can't make this up, people),

"innovative woven baffle construction," boasting "increased warmth and durability" and is "woven from a single piece of fabric with no seams or stitches." The sleeping bag has a 15-degree warmth rating, weighs just over one pound and costs \$360.

You would think sleeping on the ground on the forest floor, away from electricity, air conditioning and Wi-Fi would be cheap. You would think taking a step toward reconnecting with your rugged and primitive being would be an escape from capitalism. I go outside to experience the world untouched by humans, unlittered by our standards and hierarchies. But valuing money and brand names in nature is like focusing on hairstyles at a football game. We're missing the point.

In an attempt to spend my summer immersed in the outdoors and away from society, I signed up to volunteer as a backpacking guide in the Canadian wilderness and found myself spending a fortune on clothing and equipment. We were told by other guides and staff to splurge on shell layers, shoes and packs. Most of us dished out \$350 for an Arc'teryx "Alpha AR" shell jacket because it was recommended by other guides. It's light, windproof, waterproof, made of durable GORE-TEX® Pro with a helmet-compatible StormHood™ and pit-zips. And, it's not much thicker than a plastic bag.

That purchase made me wonder: humans have been surviving and enjoying the outdoors without streamlined pit-zips for centuries. So why am I paying hundreds of dollars for brand-new technology I'm told I need to enjoy the outdoors?

Well, capitalism strikes again. The outdoor recreation market

"Why am I paying hundreds of dollars for brand-new technology I'm told I need to enjoy the outdoors?"

is a \$646 billion industry according to the Outdoor Industry Association. And it's no surprise when you walk into your local REI and see just how much equipment you need and how expensive each item is. Boots are \$200. Tents are \$300. A hiking shirt is \$75.

I can only imagine how the Yosemite dirtbags would scoff.

Before the days of outdoors as a leisure activity, people survived. Hundreds of years ago, humans dressed themselves in seal and whale intestines and found it was a way to let sweat out without letting moisture in, which is basically

how modern GORE-TEX® works today, according to Alaska Native Collections. People used animal fur and eventually created wool garments and insulation out of down.

I'm not saying we should skin some animals and brave the outdoors the old-fashioned way. I'm saying we are lying to ourselves if we say we love the outdoors and then overspend on more and more unnecessary Patagonia mid-layers because they look cool. Preaching to myself included, here.

Patagonia, for example, advocates for sustainability and environmental responsibility. They sent a bus around the country to repair old Patagonia clothing and gave 100 percent of profits to grassroots environmental organizations on Black Friday. They're the same company, though, that sends me daily emails about the new technology and sales I just can't miss out on before my next adventure. There are enough cotton t-shirts in the world. Paying to self-advertise Patagonia on my chest is not sustainable.

I'm not saying we should compromise our safety. Of course we need to stay safe and warm when experiencing the outdoors. And if the only way to do so is to buy a \$300 jacket and a \$200 rope, I'll bite the bullet and go for it.

If you're a fellow outdoor enthusiast like me and many others who have been sucked into brand-name outdoor experiences, we need to take a step back and remind ourselves we can't impress Mother Nature with a brand-name baseball cap. We go to nature to remember money and status aren't what matter there.

We go to just be, not to be seen. Or at least we should. If retailers are making quality gear and clothing that

will last, I'm willing to splurge. But if they're trying to sell me more of what I don't need, they've lost me. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference, though, especially if you're not a seasoned outdoors specialist.

If you want to figure out what you really need in the outdoors, do your research and talk to someone more experienced and trustworthy. Then, thrift shop. There is quality gear at Goodwill just waiting to be recycled.

However, I won't deny the feeling you get when you buy something new. There's something about getting a carefully packaged box delivered to your doorstep and unraveling a clean item wrapped neatly in plastic.

We must remind ourselves of the reasons we explore the outdoors and how we can be more responsible, myself included. Outdoor retailers have made enjoying nature a financial burden, making us believe that the outdoors is something that can only be experienced by those who can afford name-brand clothing.

Can someone please ring Mother Nature and tell her we've lost our roots?

Somewhere along the line we turned a grassroots culture pioneered by dirtbags living out of the back of their vans to climb boulders into mainstreamed, affluent, middle and upper class excursions. Where Americans went wrong was trying to tame what was always meant to be wild with new and improved products.

We are being sold the lie that we need this expensive, brand-name gear to experience nature. And I'm not buying it. ■



(above) A full set of gear from REI for a day hike can easily run over \$500, a far cry from the minimalist foundation of the outdoor experience.

OUR CHANGING LANGUAGE

story by BEN JOHNSON

photos by ZOE DEAL and JHOMARIE SADANG



The evolving dialects of the Pacific Northwest

If English in the Pacific Northwest was a person, how would you describe it?

Kristin Denham leans back in her chair, taken aback by the question. She looks up at the ceiling in her office, thinking for a few seconds before suddenly jerking forward with the answer.

“Surprising,” she says with a smile.

Denham, a professor of linguistics and department chair at Western, wrote a book on linguistics – literally, a thick green textbook titled “Linguistics for Everyone” which she compiled with fellow Western professor Anne Lobeck.

While the region is associated with fish-throwing, coffee drinking and tech companies, the Pacific Northwest doesn’t have a reputation for a unique accent.

“Many people here think it’s a standard way of speaking,” Denham says.

But the West, once categorized by linguistic giant William Labov as an “area defined by the absence of features found in the Northern and Southern regions,” is developing its own quirks, habits and dialects throughout Washington, Oregon and California

In Washington, it starts with little things like eggs, bags and bagels.

Research by Alicia Wassink and Valerie Freeman at the University of Washington suggests English speakers in Seattle are changing the pronunciation of words that include an “a” sound followed by a “g,” like in the words above.

For example, say the word “bag” out loud. Do you find yourself saying something more like “beyg?” If so, you’re not alone.

This shift in pronunciation is called a “velar pinch,” and occurs when speakers merge the ending of their vowel sounds with the beginning of a “voiced velar,” which means the sound is formed between the hard palate, or roof of your mouth, and the soft palate in the back of your mouth. The “g” in bag is an example of this sound.

While many dialects in the United States experience this phenomenon, Washington State is unique because the raising occurs whenever this vowel comes before a voiced velar.

This leads to a vowel sound in “bag” that sounds more like the vowel in “bet.” When this occurs, linguists say the vowel has been raised.

It may be a subtle change, but Wassink’s research found widespread raising in Seattleites of all age groups and ethnicities in 2014.

Dialect changes are taking place across the country, with speakers in each region shifting the pronunciation of different groups of vowels. In the midwest, the Northern Cities Shift describes the raising of vowels in words like “but,” which can transform into “bot” and then “bat”, according to research by Corrine McCarthy at Northwest University. Shifts are also currently taking place in the southern United States and in California.

If English in the Pacific Northwest were a person, it would share with its neighbors. According to research by Tyler Kendall, one of Wassink’s associates, features of Californian and Washingtonian English are also found in Oregon.

According to Kendall, changes like the velar pinch are pervasive, rapid and constant. Language is always changing, Kendall says, which doesn’t make his job as a linguistic researcher more difficult.

“It just makes it more interesting,” Kendall says.

Kendall is a professor at the University of Oregon who focuses his studies on the past – specifically a time when Portland was less weird, he says.

The most unifying linguistic feature of Pacific Northwest is called the “caught-cot merger,” and may have originated as early as the 1890’s, Kendall says.

The merger focuses on the two vowels in the words “cot” and “caught,” or like in the names “Dawn” and “Don.” In most parts of the country, the word “caught” is pronounced with a very specific vowel sound.

“Think of Woody Allen saying the word coffee – kawfee,” Kendall says.

But in the Pacific Northwest, this vowel sound has merged, creating an almost identical pronunciation for the words cot and caught. Surprisingly, recordings on wax cylinders – a precursor to vinyl records – from the 1890s show a nearly complete merger of these words in Oregonians, Kendall says.

While Kendall’s research focuses mostly on the past, he believes more targeted, specific dialects may become apparent in the west.

“Rather than one big dialect, the West may fracture into sub regions over time,” Kendall says.

Back in her office at Western, Denham says the history of linguistic change gives linguists a good idea about what to expect in the future.

She grabs a pen and paper on her desk and begins writing the words “egg” and “bag” as with characters from the International Phonetic Alphabet. She writes the raised versions of each vowel in bubbly blue cursive until the vowels are raised as high as they can go. Egg becomes “ayg,” bag becomes “bayg.” She points to the word “bayg,” now at the peak for vowel pronunciation.

“You can only raise so much until speakers are forced to lower again,” Denham says. “The words still need contrast or speakers won’t be able to communicate effectively.”

She draws an arrow that starts at the highest word and circles back to the bottom of the list. When vowel sounds reach the height of their pronunciation, they drop back down to the bottom for the process to start again, Denham says.

If the language of the Pacific Northwest was a person, it would always be changing. ■

(left) A collection of mouths forming the words eggs, bags, and bagels.



REMOVAL

play by LAUREN BRIGOLIN

photo by ZOE DEAL

CAST LIST

a young woman LEAH

her mother CLAUDIA

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is a work of theatre that addresses a very real issue. If you have questions, concerns, or if you or someone you know is a victim of sexual violence, help can be found through Western's Consultation and Sexual Assault Support at 360.650.3700 and Whatcom County's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services at 360.671.5714.

On April 23, 2017, I was introduced to a study by Alexandra Brodsky for the Columbia Journal of Gender and Law. It described a type of sexual assault I had been previously unaware of called “stealthing,” where one partner non-consensually removes a condom during sex without the other person’s knowledge and/ or consent.

This 28-page study explores legal responses to non-consensual condom removal through interviews. In her study, Brodasky says, “survivors make clear that, as a result of the removed condoms, they experienced fear of STIs and pregnancy and also a less concrete but deeply felt feeling of violation.”

United States courts have not heard a case with this form of rape, which leaves people confused about what they can do, what has

happened and what to call it. However, in January 2017, a Swedish court convicted a man of rape through stealthing and two California and Wisconsin lawmakers are currently working to formally classify stealthing as rape.

I had to find a way to pose the question that Brodasky says many victims ask, “I’m not sure this is rape, but...” As a journalist and a playwright, this is how I brought “Removal” into being.

The play describes a conversation between a mother, Claudia, and her daughter, Leah. The play has been condensed and is meant to be performed on a stage. As you read on, I encourage you to use your imagination to bring to life to a conversation some individuals are struggling to have right now.

At Rise:

Same as last Saturday but everything has changed. LEAH is on her computer and the phone. She is trying to solve what happened. Scrolling. Scrolling. Listening. Listening. Finally:

LEAH

Well, yeah. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

LEAH hangs up. The quietness of knowing without understanding settles.

CLAUDIA exhumes into the room. Holding something. Finally:

CLAUDIA

Leah? What is this?

LEAH

I don't know.

CLAUDIA

Oh. Well, it kind of looks like a pregnancy test.

The Mother stares at the mother-to-be.

CLAUDIA

Uh-huh. You know what the curious thing is? There's a little itty-bitty looking plus sign in it. Annnnd, I know it's not mine, cause' I had my tubes tied and unless your father is hiding somethin'? You know, I, I thought we had a pretty open dialogue about sexual stuff, ya know?

LEAH

I know.

CLAUDIA

Should we talk about this? Actually, that's not a question. We're talking about this.

LEAH

I took the Plan B pill.

CLAUDIA

Honey, what happened?

LEAH

I'm figuring that out.

CLAUDIA

I'm not pretending to be oblivious, I know you're sexually active, we talked about that. I mean, asking advice on blow jobs is one thing, but, ya know... Was it Ethan?

A pause.

CLAUDIA

Honey, I'm not mad, I'm just confused.

LEAH

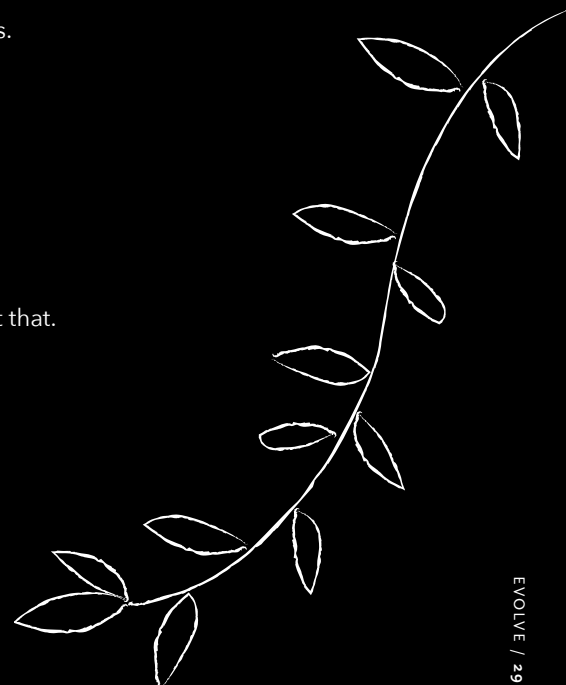
I am too.

CLAUDIA

How can I help you? There are things we need to do if you're pregnant—

LEAH

I'm not pregnant.



Ha, ha. This little thing, tells another story —
My period started.

CLAUDIA

LEAH

A breath. A moment. An anomaly in normalcy ceases.

CLAUDIA

Oh. Why, didn't you start by saying that?

LEAH

Because something else happened.

CLAUDIA

Like what, do you have an STD?

LEAH

They're called STIs now, mom.

CLAUDIA

Did Ethan give you HIV?

LEAH

No, no, not —

CLAUDIA

I'm gonna need you to pick up the pace, hun, are you okay?

LEAH

Yes. And, then no, I'm not sure, Mom! I'm trying to figure it out.

CLAUDIA

Okay?

The quietness of not knowing. And needing to understand settles. Finally:

CLAUDIA

Do you want to talk about it?

LEAH

I think so.

CLAUDIA

It doesn't have to be with me. We can go to a doctor, or your dad if you want to talk to him.

LEAH

It's all jumbled; I don't know where to start...

CLAUDIA

Were you drunk?

LEAH

No, mom.

CLAUDIA

Don't get snippy. I'm just trying to understand. Drugs?

LEAH

No. We were completely sober.

CLAUDIA

Okay.

LEAH

We... We, well, you know he was the one I'd been, like, sexually active with, sorta?

CLAUDIA

Yeah, blowjobs and whatever, but not like sex-sex, right?

LEAH

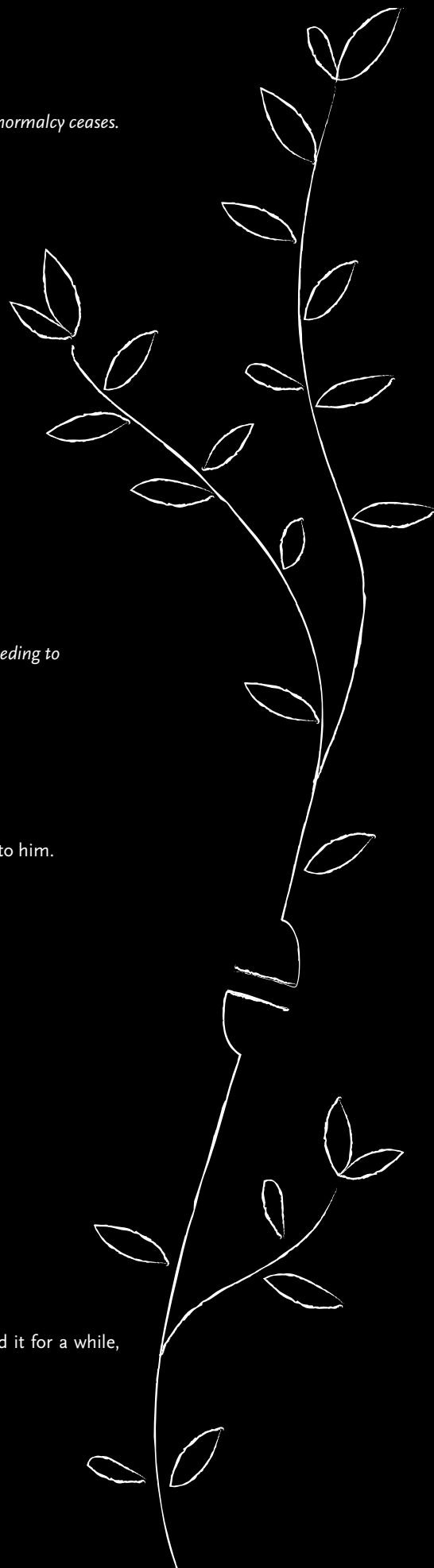
Yeah... We, we decided. Let's have sex. We talked about it on and off, but never did it for a while, cause, I don't know, and then we looked at each other and said, "let's do it."

CLAUDIA

So you both agreed to have sex, alright.

LEAH

Kind of?



CLAUDIA

What do you mean, “kind of?” It sounds like a sober and enthusiastic “yes” to me? What happened?

LEAH

It was. We set boundaries. We agreed we’d use a condom, which he had, if one of us said stop, we’d stop. But neither of us said stop... Neither of us *said* stop... But, he, I don’t know how he did it, but like... He removed the condom?

Deafening silence. An anomaly. Knowing without understanding suffocates the two.

LEAH

Mom...? I think I was raped.

CLAUDIA

Sexually assaulted.

LEAH

Raped.

CLAUDIA

But— I’m not saying what you’re feeling is wrong, but... I mean, you agreed to have sex?

LEAH

I know, that’s... I’m confused. But we – I – agreed to have sex with a condom because...

CLAUDIA

STIs, pregnancy...

LEAH

I feel awful inside. I said yes, to sex, but with an agreement that was broken? I was reading online... It’s, it’s this thing called, “stealthing,” –

CLAUDIA

What is?

LEAH

What he did to me. Removing the condom, it’s called stealthing and I think I was — (*raped*)

CLAUDIA

Please stop saying that word. It—

LEAH

But that’s what—

CLAUDIA

—I know, yes, I hear you; it just makes me uncomfortable to hear that word.

LEAH

I found forums online where men were talking about their stealthing and were sharing tips on how to do it without the other person noticing. stuff like, “It’s a man’s right to spread his seed,”—

CLAUDIA

That’s the stupidest shit I’ve ever heard.

LEAH

I know... I’m sorry.

CLAUDIA

You did nothing wrong. Not a single. Damn. Thing.

LEAH

I didn’t say anything to him after... I didn’t know what happened or what to say. I just left feeling sick. ...Mom?

Softer than the sound of moonlight touching the ground: LEAH’s question.

LEAH

Was I raped?

Ten unheard heartbeats pass. Finally:

CLAUDIA

... I don’t know.

The unanswered End.

A person wearing a grey hoodie is seen from the side, reaching out with their hand towards a plant in a field of tall grasses. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with a bright sky. The text 'FINAL SHOTS' is overlaid in a white, serif font, with a horizontal line underneath it.

FINAL SHOTS

Online exclusives at
klipsunmagazine.com



MIND OVER MATTER

"One misconception is that meditation is about emptying the mind. I see it much more as a tool for investigation of the mind."

– Sue Samalley, a professor emeritus, department of psychiatry at UCLA

story by MAX BROBURG
photo by JHOMARIE SADANG

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Budweiser



STAYING ON TRACK

"We call it the smell of money. . . methanol, hot rubber tires, exhaust fumes and the stink of burning oil."

– Steve Beitler, former sprint car driver, current owner of Skagit Valley Speedway.

story by ANDY GIBBS
photo by EDWARD CLEM

FASTENAL

EMBALE - BELLINGHAM
DALLAS - ANAHEIM
MIAMI - EDINBURGH
SAN ANTONIO - ALBUQUERQUE



NECA





MUSCLE MEMORY

Whether by design or by accident, the team embodies a lot of the qualities of their coach, John Fuchs.

story by RYAN PARISH
photo by EDWARD CLEM

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COVER PHOTO

Birds flying in London,
England by Kyra Betteridge



KLIPSUN IS A
CHINUK WAWA
WORD MEANING
SUNSET

