

Palabras

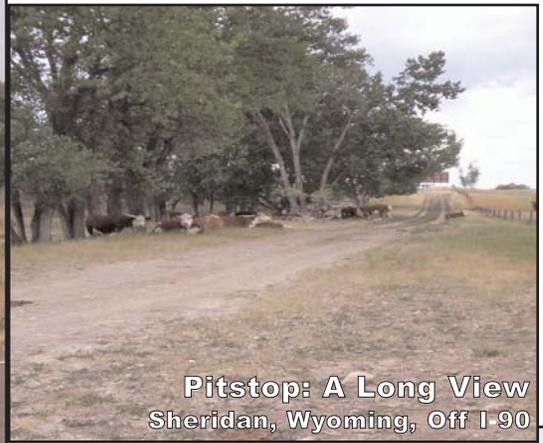
WORDS



Ears on the Skyline
South Dakota Hwy 34/Anderson Rd. to St. Onge



"Hey, who's that?"
New Mexico Hwy 84, going West to Ft. Sumner



Pitstop: A Long View
Sheridan, Wyoming, Off I-90



Ah, the Azure
Out of Hardin, MT going West on I-90



Beautiful Day
I-90, out of Greycliff, MT

Spring 2007

www.clovis.edu/web2/palabras/index.asp

Palabras publishes original research, essays, fiction, poetry, and art by Clovis Community College students and residents of New Mexico.

Palabras is also an academic journal and accepts submissions from students across the United States who are currently working on undergraduate degrees.

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HAPPY COWS

Cover Photos by Gina L Hochhalter

Photos taken Summer, 2006 during a visit to Dad in Montana



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SUBMISSIONS

Palabras favors an open submissions policy: anyone who would like to submit, may. Please submit work in hard copy format to the editor in **Faculty Office 509**, in e-mail format to **palabrasje@hotmail.com**, or in hard copy format to the **CCC Bookstore**. Please include a phone number or e-mail address so the editor may contact you.

Submissions should be no longer than 5 double-spaced pages, or approximately 1500 words. If documented, then in MLA, APA, or other acceptable format. If you have an essay, paper, or story longer than the specifications mentioned, please contact the editor at **505-769-4906** or at **palabrasje@hotmail.com**, as excerpts may be publishable.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please write to the editor at palabrasje@hotmail.com.

from the Editors...

**THERE'S NOT MUCH FOOD IN OUR FOOD
OR, A HAPPY COW IS A HAPPIER PERSON
OR, WE BE THEE GROTESQUE INCARNATE
OR, YES, RAYMOND, FRANKLY, IT DOES SMELL OF COW!**

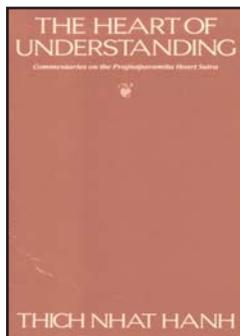


GINA L HOCHHALTER

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are...

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper... And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.

Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too....



Excerpt from:

Hanh, Thich Nhat. *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1988. pp. 3-4.

Are cows just cows? To be sure, they are not. There are happy cows and unhappy cows, much like there are happy people and unhappy people. There are well-treated cows and abused cows, just like there are well-treated people and abused people.

What's interesting is that this would suggest that there are people who treat cows (and people) with dignity and respect – but then there are people who treat cows (and people) as if they're bred for these purposes only: to serve them as bread and butter (economics), and then just as bread (food – or fodder, if you're a person ill-treated by people).

Cows aren't so simple, after all.

Let me go further.

It's difficult not to think that there's some kind of relationship between how a person thinks about the treatment of cows and how a person thinks of other people and life (breathing organics) in general.

Maybe you're asking, "Now, how can that be?" Cows are meant to be our food, after all, and people are meant to be our – well, they're more important than cows.

And – ah yes – I wholeheartedly agree!

But there are some ideas; images; thoughts that won't leave me content to think that cows are really just cows, and that humans have little to do with it.



Angela Anderson
Cow

For example: Imagine sitting down to two plates, one with a hunk of meat from one Happy Cow and another with a hunk of meat from one Unhappy Cow. Which one tastes better? I mean, which cow's flesh do you want churning and gurgling in your tummy, to then meld its vibrant way into your veins, go to your brain, travel through the sinew of your body, thus giving you the literal strength to carry on with the day?

Think it doesn't matter which cow you eat?

If not, then at least please realize that there's a problem with our food, and that the packages containing foods are probably more nutritious than the products inside. Don't believe me? Go to the packaged meats section and read INGREDIENTS. I assure you, it's difficult for me to not stop a person from purchasing that chemicalized, so-called "ham" glop from the cooled food bins in the middle of the aisles by shouting, "Wait! That stuff is really poison! Stop! Stop!"

Note: I don't know why the bins are cooled – do chemicals rot like the ground beneath our manufactured cows?



Dusty Schmid
Red-tagged – soon to be body-bagged

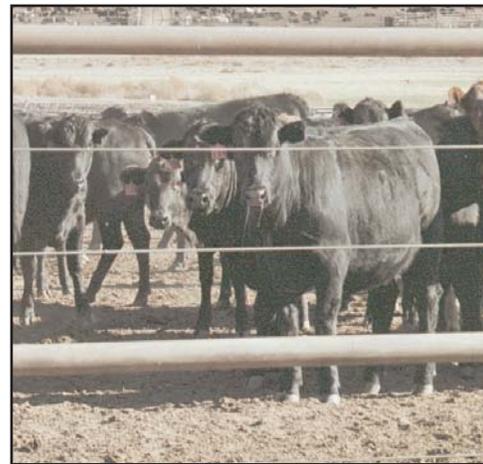
Perhaps this is the wrong way to go about it or the wrong question to ask. But what I've discovered from reading INGREDIENTS on food labels is that most of us are so used to eating

2 Editors' Rabble

the chemicals and – please pardon the word – stench injected into foods that we probably are too anesthetized to notice that living animals are treated as if they're already dead, preserved with toxins such as urine, feces, hormones that make them go blind (but shh, don't tell anyone), veterinary care that is just silly considering their living conditions, and some kind of "sanitation" process that baffles my olfactory sensibilities.

While the snot and mucus drip from cows' noses, my own scrunches up when I walk outside or when I roll down my windows for the, uh, fresh air. (A friend who

Editor's question: What is "mechanically separated chicken"?



Dusty Schmid
Mucus anyone?

dabbles in the medical field with the USAF Reserves has told me that new-comers to the Clovis area develop strange, inexplicable skin rashes and a host of other maladies just because they've moved here – could there be a connection?)

What's worse yet is that because *money* is equated to the *ammonia-induced air* (more toxins, more money?), it goes hardly noted that certain government representatives are attempting to get passed a Bill that would remove the stench of cow production from the List of Industrialized Toxins.

My lungs protest!

But since that is not enough to be persuasive, let me say instead, poor cows!

If you lack the experience to understand

my pity, go stand beside these manufactured livestock and witness for yourself what it is to see fellow creatures standing upon black, ugly, rotted ground cruelly juxtaposed by the beauty and blue-freedom of the sky. Go witness them hack, cough, and wheeze, barely able to move or stand.

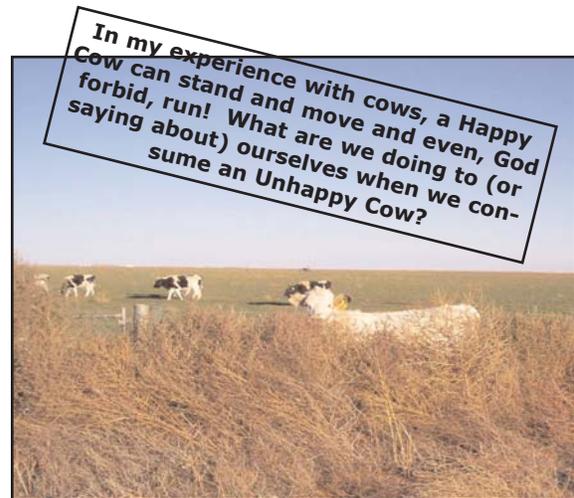
Now, go ahead, imagine yourself eating that same, bloody slab of unhappy cow on your nice, clean, shiny, 99% germ-free plate. (*Hint*: The purpose of our “germ-free” so-called consciousness seems to defeat the purpose of eating cows that stand on urine-infected ground harbouring and suffering numerous sores and ailments.)

If you are suspicious of or critical about what I’m saying (and implying), then maybe check out the *Time* article, “The Grass-Fed Revolution” (June 12, 2006). Roosevelt begins with a description of industrial agriculture as based on Jon Taggart’s southern Great Plains farming experience before he went to grass-fed, on-the-range cattle-raising: the cattle grow up on pastures “sprayed with weed killers and fertilizers,” are shipped in “diesel-fueled trucks” to feedlots where they are “stuffed” with pesticide-treated corn and soy, are “implanted with synthetic hormones to make them grow faster,” and are given “antibiotics” to *prevent* disease (par. 2). It isn’t bad enough that our food is dosed with toxins before we kill and eat it, but this ‘prevention of disease’ “has caused more and



Dusty Schmid

The Human Pogrom Mentality



Gina L Hochhalter

Peekaboo, Happy Cow. Hwy 467 (to Portales)

more bacteria to become resistant to treatment, a factor in the deaths of more than 60,000 Americans each year” (par. 11).

The ‘chemical solution’ (par. 2) to raising beef has harmfully “transformed beef from a luxury meal into a cheap fast food” (par. 7) and I wonder: why do we need so much beef in the first place when sitting on the couch watching television and text-messaging are the major modes of, eh, strenuous movement for most of the populous?

I don’t mean to be crabby (or rude — I’m erudite), but it troubles me *not* so much that cows are treated like crap so hordes of greedy mouths can feed on them, nor is it so much that the industry of food production exists (I mean, let’s be reasonable). What does trouble me is that we go so fast with the production/consumption game that we don’t know what we’re doing.

It seems we lack the capacity to care about other creatures to the point that we’ve stopped caring about ourselves: as long as we have our cell phones and game boys; fancy washing machines, TVs, nice cars, and big pickup trucks; church revivals; government funding or free money; technological wonder-traps; and standardized excuses for dumbing

down real intelligence – who cares if a few cows suffer? Who cares about what our children are eating? Who cares about the air we're breathing? Who cares about beauty, loyalty to the Earth, even honor and respect?

No matter how you answer, I beg to



Got. . . . Milk?

Dusty Schmid

argue, with certainty, that cows are not just cows, and ever the more so that it's time for more of us to wake up and see that we *are* connected to other living, breathing beings, that we *are* connected to the Earth (whether we want to be or not). We are even connected to the dark, dank-death of earth under the hooves of these livestock, and because the ground is also part of Hahn's cloud, well, we are also part of that ground.

To imagine better health and realize higher ethics, we should insist that we ALL deserve food that is *at least* low on contaminants and healthy for the environment. In conclusion, I beg to hope that you will hold the cow – and the ones who desperately pity them – at heart as you go about your day as a Creature connected to the Earth.

CONFUSION

JOHN WALKS NICE

Confusion is like losing something important, then looking in the most complex places, and then finding it in the simplest.

It's like not knowing what you're supposed to do, then ending up not doing anything, or like an unending search for an answer, when the best place to look was the start.

Reprinted with permission from *The Endless Depth: Lodge Grass Poetry, 2003-2004*. Editor, Mick Fedullo. Written by an 8th grade student.

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED?

CHRISTINE NOMEIE

Have you ever wondered about the air, how it's there? Why does it exist, why can't you resist thinking about it? It's such a mystery, not like Listerine mouth wash, but like the universe. Uh oh, I better stop thinking, my head hurts, and it might get worse.

Reprinted with permission from *The Garden of Everything: Lodge Grass Poetry, 2004-2005*. Editor, Mick Fedullo. Written by a 9th grade student.

CAN A POTATO REALLY SEE THE BEEFSTEAK LYING ON THE NEXT PLATTER?

RAYMOND E ATCHLEY

My family once owned a steak-house franchise in the southern part of the state, and for a short time I left police work and went to work cutting and broiling meat to help out during an acute illness that afflicted my then step-father. I was a great lover of fine succulent steak, broiled over charcoal after a good soak in some concoction of liquor and spices....mmmmmm!!



My appreciation changed soon after starting work. Slicing, chopping, and firing slabs and cuts of beef ten hours a day, six days a week caused me to acquire a true, though temporary, taste aversion to steak. I found myself craving nothing but bacon and eggs for every meal.

Thankfully my career in the restaurant business lasted maybe six months. I was no longer needed and I returned to law enforcement (where I apparently remained virtually unneeded). The other thing which occurred besides a return to my first vocation was my resumption of safely viewing the world through the ever-present euphemisms. The step-father I spoke of was a smoker, not just cigarettes, but also a great inhaler of the carcinogenic vapors emitted for 30 plus years straight off that hot grill as he cooked meat. The abuse of his lungs by accident or design killed him. Or as we are fond of saying, "he passed away," or "we lost him." In truth he didn't pass anywhere and I know exactly where his body is, but we feel better if we can

hide unpleasantness with a more palatable word or phrase.

Gina shines a light on another problem that any person of any academic stature at this vestibule of higher learning must consider: are we in fact a true moral species with the highest ethic if we continue to victimize another species as our foodstuff to such point that we don't even give thanks to or acknowledge the spirit of the beast we take advantage of? I studied such a conundrum in an Ethics class I attended at Bemidji State University in the early 90's (no, Gina, not the gay nineties, 1990's). It was my conclusion then, and remains, that just as I someday will provide nourishment to this earth, then I am allowed license to feed from this same arrangement of special exchange. I will concede that we have become a society oblivious to the process of dying. It is an occurrence that we shun and shy away from, not just in ourselves, but also in obtaining sustenance from those living cattle, sheep, fowl, and fish.



Angela Anderson
Cow Praying

We hate death. And yet it is the only true thing that we collectively share along with our individual beginnings. We each depart, change, pass, die, expire, leave – become eternal in our reward, worm-food – and instead of being someone at demise, become something. If we were each forced to slaughter our own living creature to eat at each and every meal, you can bet there would be a lot more veggies consumed.

Potatoes don't really see with their eyes, and the ears of corn hear naught; cut, stab, boil and broil as you wish – no ethics here.

I am forced to consider the 1973 movie *Soylent Green* with Charlton Heston and Edward G. Robinson when I consider

how Gina's cows are treated. I must consider what a meager meal we ourselves must appear; especially how old and tough we become and how many of our parts are replaced with plastic and titanium (silicone?). As for medications? Imagine an earthworm devouring the Viagra ingested, Preparation-H applied, Vick's Vap-o-Rubb'ed remains of today's corpse. That is if a worm can get through the concrete vault and steel casket that seem fashionable in American society, only to arrive at its meal which has been marinated in antibiotics and preservatives ingested in life, if not pumped in at the mortuary.

The late professor Joseph Campbell of Sarah Lawrence College noted that the Native Americans promoted a belief of spiritual interconnection between all things and that the ethics conundrum could be bypassed by

acknowledging this belief. As Campbell was an advisor to film maker George Lucas, I acknowledge that concept, and intend to be flame broiled just like Darth when I go. Trust in the Force, Gina, and the cows will be fine. Reminds me of a guy I once knew who was a practicing Hindu who liked Heinz 57 sauce, but that is another story.

Nail this to the door, but with tacks; I may have something else to add someday.



Angela Anderson
Cow Meditating

UPDATE ON PAST BLABBERING: IMAGES OF THE EDITORS AS THEY QUEST FOR...



Found the couch, which is (I insist) better than a bucket.



Found the door, but it's not carved. Yet. (We're lobbying for time and money.)

“TALL AS THE OCEAN, DEEP AS THE MOUNTAIN”

MELANI ROCHFORD

Through my fifteen year old eyes I see the world in explosions of sound, light, smell, touch, and taste. I take a drink from a cup containing Honey Vanilla Chamomile tea. A cup is more than it is. It's a "deep belly from which I drink"; it's a "hiding place"; and a "smooth blue ocean pouring out to me." I look at the desk and chair in my room. I view it as an expression-generating area that calls to me daily. Never mind the faux, wood grain, fold out style, or Walmart brand. Never mind the paint-chipped, lime green chair I rescued from being thrown out by my mom.

I pick up my pen (always a pen because I don't want to fake it or lose the words through fading) and begin to open up. The words are fire I breathe on to the page; they are sacred, special fingerprints of myself. I don't dare to stop. I don't dare to come out of the notions that dance in my head and electrically come out of my hand like magic onto the white landscape of college ruled paper. Today, it's a lovely spell-of-a-tale regarding a "tiger walking through the snowfall in the reflection of some angel baby's eyes." I glimpse "pieces of her soul." Nothing is just what it is to me, and for good reason.

Who wants the world to be "only," and "always," and "consistent?" These ideas are foreign invaders in my personal territory. No, I want my eyes to see the fragmented increments of energy, inducing bursts of feelings so deep that I could swim through them. Why be shallow? Why be like everyone else? I finish my introspection-of-sorts and wrap up with writing "the deliciousness of mother's milk." Yes, yes, I think that should suffice – until another beautiful thought hangs on the edge of my mind just begging to be captured and brought down from the secrets' place inside of me.

Another day at school. I take in the environment. I stay quiet so my observations can come through without interruption. French class is only interesting to me because I like the sound that

comes out of my mouth when I read the class book. I like how the words feel rolling out as I attempt to say *sacre cœur* (sacred heart). I also like the fact that I have a whole room full of inspiration.

I can't help but trail off in my own mindscapes; and suddenly, the air isn't invisible. Instead, it's "enveloped with the scent of primal elixir." I mean, who wants to hear about how this guy sitting next to me smells good because of the cologne he put on this morning? Yes, must save that one for later. I pull out a tiny Mead spiral pad and begin to revisit the newly acquired delectable-of-a-line paying careful attention to write fast, as I know that fleeting moments of expression slip away every moment that I fail to focus my eyes, tune in to the sounds, or not let myself frolic on the playground of this moment, in French class.

I am in the middle of envisioning how stellar it would be to backpack across Europe after graduation to visit all the places in my imagination when the bell rings and my attention has to flood out into the hall with all of the "other crazy gazes." I'm talking about the burning of eyes on me when I go from class to locker (sometimes to bathroom) and then back to another class. I try to be inconspicuous. I want to melt into the surroundings so I can see the other students in their element without them knowing that I am watching. I think that's when I see the tiny glimmers of spirit come out. Those moments seem to run and hide when people expose themselves to one another. After all, the face that I show to them isn't always the face that I see when I look at myself in a mirror. It's just one of many of my "faces." I know that they have "faces," too. I know that we all do.

Even the bus ride home is a trip within itself. I see how the sun shines through the trees and how if I squint while it zooms past it looks a little "digitized." In my brown, hard, high-traffic seat the window is like a picture box showing how others live in the physical world. Cars, homes, perfectly manicured lawns. The thought bores me and for the remainder of the ride I grant myself access to a great daydream where I'm older and have found my place far away from here in the suburbs. I

have purple dreadlocks, have changed my name to Lilacoi, and live in a VW bus that I drive to no where in particular as long as it's moving to the next place and onward to the next sensation.

The bus abruptly stops. My street peers back at me from the "picture box" that has now turned back into a "normal" window (whatever "normal" is). I arrive at my empty house and automatically plop down on my dad's lazy-boy and flick on the TV. It's a wonderful invention in my opinion. To me, it's a portal to the outside world beyond my street and school and reflection. I feel my brain begin to relax and just simply slip into the story-lines.

A few hours pass and I find myself undeniably drawn to the sanctuary-of-a-room I have. This is further revealed to me as my family slowly dwindles in from their day. The more they talk the more I want to flee to the nice, warm and enclosed personal dwellings of my room. Finally, when the arguing starts and the misunderstandings fling themselves across the room by "hitching a ride on the backs of tongue arrows," I can stand it no longer and retreat.

Even with the door closed I can hear some exterior sounds, so I flip on the radio and jam out in private to the melodiousness of some random teen angst song that just so happens to eloquently match the mood I find myself in. I thrash around a bit, completely engorged in the pretend notion that I am in a tribe in the middle of a rainforest dancing around a fire that's making me glow orange. I see the flames "lick" the night sky and view the full moon in all its "ivory elegance," hanging like an ornament among twinkling stars. I am suddenly out of breath. I sit down at my desk and try to slow my heartbeat. The moon and the sky and the flames and the rainforest disappear with my slow, deep, zen-like, meditative breathing.

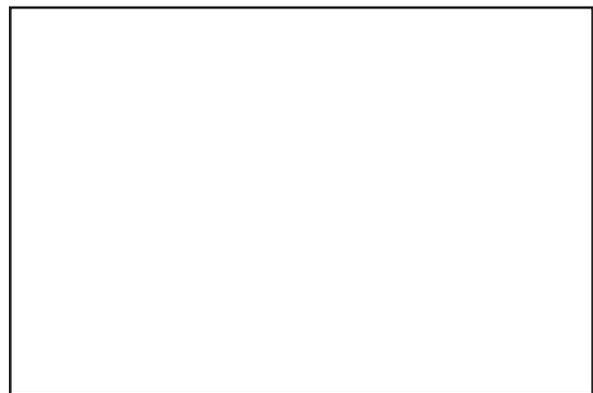
Finally, I regain myself. Then the questions start. Why am I here in this place, in Indiana? Why are my parents such a drag, and why can't they just leave me alone with my own dreams instead of trying to live through me? Why isn't what I want for myself good enough and what they want for me the right thing, when they don't even know who I am inside? The emotion "washes me ashore to distant lands of wonderment." Yes, that one's

good, too. Better write it down so I don't forget it... but somewhere deep in the recesses of me is a tiny "me" that cries.

She wants to break out of my body. She thinks that it would be much easier to fly if she were someone, something, else. I am reminded by her that it sucks to move all the time. That it sucks to not want to get close to anyone. I know that as soon as I do, they'll make me pack up and leave for another one of daddy's promotions. But then, before the tears of the tiny "me" swell up enough to fill my own eyes, I turn around and sit properly in my chair and gently scoot up to my sweet, little, Walmart brand, fold out desk.

Everything outside my room dissipates as I take out my pen and precious college ruled paper. I write, "Like rainfall, cool, refreshing and innocent. The fairies wink at me as they dance violent delights of rhythmic body chants" and I am in my real home again. In the "spaces that fill space," in the "dream castles in the sky," or the "depths of cascading, ocean fantasies," I get lost for awhile, just a harmless, little while. I am "away" inside. I relish that they can't take this away from me. I swim in the realization that, no matter where I live or who I'm around or what time dimension I find myself in, they can never take this away.

I am twenty six. My "little" sister had her 20th birthday a few days ago. I am older now; not with purple dreadlocks, but older and wiser and in some ways more real. I realize that the reason I escaped into my imagination was because reality for me was just too simple, too boring, too anything but what I wanted it to be. I have since then realized the great beauty in the "now" that truly IS WHAT IT IS, and because of that fact, it makes it twice as



enchanted. I mean, so what if the cup is just a cup?! So what if the tea is just how it tastes?! Is it any less sweet or any less real?

See, back then the world was so uncharted to me. I was wound up and wounded and had no outlets to truly discover myself because of restrictions and rules. But when I did finally escape at 17, to wander for four years, I realized that not all of us that wander are lost. That our "selves" are always staring us straight in the face, instead of being somewhere "out there." I realized that, like a seed, we must take time to grow and change and that like what Lord Chesterfield said, "If we do not plant knowledge when young, it will give us no shade when we are old" (*Inspirational Quotes Daily*).

In that I mean, we have to fall and crawl in the dark feeling our way around at first. It is necessary to the process. Without the longing I felt then, I would not have had the fuel to engage on my life's journey with such zest. I would not have embarked on the pathways which I have chosen and I would not have been who I had to be in the moments of my most profound life realizations.

I think and believe and feel for MYSELF now. More and more, for reasons of my own, I travel through my days. I find myself "giddy" with pleasure when I allow myself moments of "now." Someone giving me a smile as I walk down the corridor in my college is really just giving me a smile, and that smile is such a gift to be enjoyed when given, and to be shared in return. My perception has changed because of my collective experiences; and how they played themselves out in my world, unfolding in a dynamic domino effect, astounds me in retrospect.

I realize that life, within and of itself, is glorious without the special effects, smoke and mirrors. That it is Divine because each of us is uniquely carved from a trillion dimensions and that we each shine brilliantly without polishing, without changing. I realize that, within each of us in each separate second, we are perfect in our own way and that we are everything and exactly what we are supposed to be right now.



Kerry Budding
Elf Queen

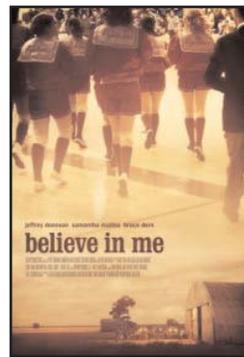
I think that if someone read these words that I am revealing, they would become part of me as I am part of them. I think this paper, this day, and everything that leads up to us crossing paths was supposed to happen, that we are supposed to meet and interact in the way that we are, for reasons beyond what we can understand or measure. I hope that my story has invoked what it should, and of course, it will. I titled this story inverted on purpose because when I was 15 that's how I thought. The life I was leading was in my head instead of "actual," and now after learning and growing, I think we should enjoy our lives and not try to make it any more beautiful than it already is in this moment.

Work Cited

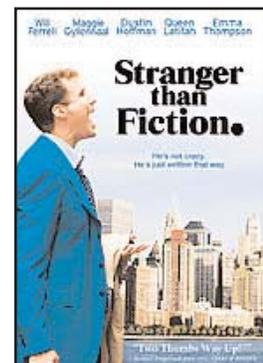
Inspirational Quotes Daily. Ed. Jim Rohn. Jim Rohn International, 2007. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.inspirationalquotesdaily.com/Lord-Chesterfield-Quotes.htm>

Editor's picks

At the Movies



At Home for a Movie



AMERICA BURNING AWAY IN NEGATIVITY

NICHCOLE ALDRICH

Americans have become pessimistic people who are so inundated with criticism for ourselves that we have forgotten to look at what is commendable about ourselves. Why is it that if we like nice things or want to look nice, then it makes us shallow people? An exterior image does not make a person and it definitely does not make a nation. "Snake oil to the cynic is often holy water to the eager. What looks like exploiting desire may be fulfilling desire" (Twitchell's "In Praise of Consumerism"). Material things are what get the majority of people out of bed in the morning to face yet another day at work. If we are such a horrible nation, then why does everyone want to be like us? Okay, so maybe not *everyone* wants to be like us. However, those who do not agree with our culture obviously have to point accusing fingers at us. Why be so desperate to point out our faults? Let me explain on a smaller scale.

I have been accused of becoming "plastic." What does that mean? It is a Friday night at Chili's, my regular hang out. I am sitting with a few friends I have met within the past couple of years. There is one friend here who I have known for about twelve years. Now, my friend is someone who drives me insane but a person I tolerate because we have been through a lot together and he knows a dark side of me that the people I now socialize with do not know. The other people work out on a regular basis, go to school, and yes, one in particular may have had a breast implant. Even though outside they may be considered "plastic," they are still good people and are working to improve their circumstances like I am.

Once upon a time I might have made the same mistake my friend did. He completely judged these people on looks. That night I was accused of hanging out with "Barbie," becoming plastic, and was told that my old friends would be so disappointed in me. Now, when I first got to Chili's he told me I looked gorgeous. When I pointed this out, he informed me that I'm just not the same person I used to be. At this point I thought, this is a good

thing, and realized that he is the exact same person he was twelve years ago (which is not a good thing). I then remembered my English instructor talking about the class cycle.

My improvement had become something negative in someone else's eyes. I am taking care of myself, improving my circumstances through education and relationships, and I have let go of the person I used to be. I realize at that moment that what I was going to write about just completely changed. There is nothing wrong with wanting material things. America was built on commerce and the drive to improve our circumstances. At what point in time did that become a bad thing?

So I spend money going out on a Friday night with my friends, on beauty products, and on clothes. I put time and effort into the way I look. Maybe one day I will decide to get a breast implant. I believe that this does not make me vain or materialistic because I also desire education and a better world just like anyone else. We do not have to sacrifice luxury to make the world a better place. I do not have to stop enjoying life and the things I earn to have compassion. I can gladly say that I have cut off my emotional connection to this old friend because he would have held back my growth. All he managed to do was make me feel bad about things I feel good about.

I say if America wants to buy the whole world, then go for it. If we want to cover up old scars with a little plastic surgery, then give me the scalpel. I am able to be a free, independent woman with the option of improving myself because I am an American. I think we should all take a step back and appreciate the small things in our life instead of getting caught up in the big picture.

Perspectives

Articles or essays of controversy are one of Palabras's favourite pastimes. If you'd like to write a refutation or an alternate perspective to any article herein, please do.



Drama

STONED PHILOSOPHY

MARIO CAMPOS

The play opens with a basement-looking room with black light posters of Jimi Hendrix, Bugs Bunny, and The Terminator. In the room are two couches facing each other and a recliner is at the top of the room. Both couches and the recliner are covered by homemade multi-colored quilts. Bongs, rolling papers, and tin foil pipes are scattered throughout the room – it's the ultimate stoner paradise. Scattered on the floor are empty pizza boxes and 3-liter Pepsi bottles. The main and largest of the bongs is known as Biggie Smogs. The stage is dim and the only thing visible is one of the couches. To the L. is a second stage that will be kept in the dark until there are knocks at the door. This second stage consists of a door on L. and a small staircase going to U.L.

Other Chavez:

Hey, buddy, you ready for a big day? (looks at Biggie Smogs. Silence) All my friends are coming over and we hope you can help us have a good time. (looks at BS and expects an answer) Last time we played we had lots of fun and solved many mysteries of the universe; I hope we can do it again. (grabs phone and calls friend) (on phone) Are you boys coming?

Matt:

(from other end of phone. Played through mic) Yea, man, you got the stuff?

Other Chavez:

(pulls bag of marijuana from pocket and shakes it) In my hands; it's the Brown Bomber.

Matt:

Brown Bomber??

Other Chavez:

Yea, man. You'll get so stoned off of this stuff you'll crap your pants!

Matt:

You do that, too?

Other Chavez:

No, man, the weed makes you do it in your pants, dude. So you coming or not?

Matt:

O yea, well, I was just kidding about that 'me too' thing, but yea, I'm going and I'm bringing Joe, Paz, Sam, and Mac.

Other Chavez:

Naw, man, don't bring Sam. Last time he came he ruined the vibe when he smoked and thought he was a giant candle. Remember we had to call the fire department and we told my mom we were cooking cupcakes? Remember??

Matt:

Yea, I remember, but I thought you'd have forgot by now.

Other Chavez:

The weed makes me wise, wise beyond my years, my friend.

Matt:

Aight man, see you in about 20.

Other Chavez:

Peace. (they both hang up and the lights dim. The lights return and an understood amount of twenty minutes passes and there is a knock on the second stage that's been in the dark stage L. Other Chavez walks off to get door)

Other Chavez:

Can't wait to blaze it! (rubs hands together and smiles. More knocking off stage L.)

Mother:

(from off stage somewhere, not visible) Are your friends here, OC?

Other Chavez:

Yes, mother.

Mother:

What are you kiddos going to do? Do you want me to make you some bagel bites?

Other Chavez:

No, we'll be fine mom. (3 knocks on door)

Mother:

Son, why is there not a smoke detector in the basement anymore?

Other Chavez:

Yea, I love you too, mom. (lights dim again and lights focus on U.L. where mom appears)

Mother:

I wish I could find a way to relate to OC. I love him so much and lately he hasn't been the same. He's been so distant and out of it lately. I sure wish I knew a way to just be like one of the guys. (long pause while she thinks of a solution, then pulls pipe from pocket. Lights it and takes a hit, blows out a huge cloud of smoke. Lights come back on and the second stage is lit again. 4 knocks on door.)

Other Chavez:

(opens door) Hey guys, what's up? Ready for a party?

Joe:

Damn, it smells like you already got the party started. (smells air. Matt and Paz both laugh)

*The Deadline for
publication in the
Fall 2007 issue is
October 19, 2007.*

Other Chavez:

No, you're just imagining things. Let's go to the basement.

Joe, Mac, Matt:

Aight!! (all exit stage R. to basement portion of set. Sit on couches in no particular arrangement)

Mac:

Man, I can't wait! I haven't been high in forever. Last time I got high I somehow managed to disprove Einstein's theory of relativity. Then I came out of it and couldn't remember how I did it. I swear weed makes you smarter.

Other Chavez:

Do you think maybe it's just because you're really stoned that you think you're smarter but not actually any more intelligent?

Mac:

Uhh? What? It makes me smarter, that's all I know. How 'bout you, Matt?

Matt:

Yes, I concur. (states very intellectually and tries to convince audience that these aren't your average everyday stoners – they're geniuses) And OC always has the best stuff. He's got some new smoke; I believe it's known as the Brown Bomber.

Joe:

Hmmmm, quite peculiar. Why on earth do they call it that?

Matt:

Uhhhh (nervous) I'm not sure. All I know is that it'll take you places.

Other Chavez:

Let's spark it! (grabs Biggie Smogs and pulls bag from pocket. Empties bag and fills bowl on bong. Takes longer than it should)

Joe:

You are taking a copious amount of time there, OC. Would you like some assistance?

Other Chavez:

No, thanks, I've got it. (sits back on couch and lights weed. Takes a deep, long hit and blows a huge cloud. Passes to Matt)

Matt:

A thousand thank yous, sir. (also sits back on recliner and repeats the smoking process. Passes to Joe)

Joe:

I cannot begin to express my gratitude! (sitting on couch repeats smoking process. Passes to Mac)

Mac:

Bravo! Bravo! (finishes rotation with largest hit of all four men. Places bong on floor. Pause for a few

seconds. Everyone should look relaxed with a laid back expression on their faces)

Other Chavez:

Wow, this stuff is incredible! I feel like I can tackle the questions that have plagued mankind for millennia. Such concepts as corn dogs: how do they get the wiener inside the corny exterior? Baseball cards: how do they get the man in there? Jell-O: how do they make it green? Real brain stumpers, ya know!

Matt:

Wow, slow down there genius! Why don't we begin with matters of a much simpler sense, such as the universe: where did it come from, how was it made? God's existence or absence and the very meaning of life? Or perhaps even what happens after we leave our body; is there a heaven or hell?

Mac:

Yes, brilliant! Much simpler matters. (non-sarcastic, very serious)

Joe:

Hey, I've got some concepts that I would like to share with the likes of you fine gentlemen.

Mac, Matt, Other Chavez:

Please do sir, continue!

Joe:

Well, let me elaborate on your first point, the universe. There was a huge ball of matter – yes huge – in a giant emptiness, or space as we call it. It was actually an older version of our own universe; after aging trillions of years it collapsed into itself in the form of a black hole. So, we live in the second universe, a twin to the first, and when the first collapsed all matter compacted so small its gravity pull was so strong it pulled everything from every direction into one giant ball. It began the process all over again and I call it the Recycling Universe. Someday, beyond our time, it will happen again. This process will continue for eternity over and over. Isn't it beautiful?

Mac:

Very interesting concept, although I disagree.

Joe:

How so?

Mac:

Have you not read the Bible you babbling fool? It's the light, the truth, no truth but the word, the word of God, God is great, God is all-powerful and loving he created the universe and we humans and that's all there is to it. We are the center of the universe, the center of his great attention; he loves us with all his heart and we need to love him back. It took him, what, six days to create the universe? In your idiotic theory it took trillions of years. Ha! I laugh at your idea and refuse to accept it as true. Evolution is basic; God is forever and complex. Come to think of it, I'm gonna read the good word right now. (pulls Bible from pocket and begins reading) Sinners!

Joe:

That's funny. It must be an immense challenge to accept a pre-fabricated illusion. Dude you are so blind.

Other Chavez:

Man, you guys are killing the high. And plus I disagree with you, Mac, but enough about the universe. I'm gonna tell you what god is.

Matt:

I'm listening.

Other Chavez:

Well, it's funny how you say God loves us with all his heart and that he gives us all his attention; and even referring to God as a him is quite the ridiculous claim. If there is in fact a god, how can we limit it with such human characteristics as gender, love, and attention? If there truly is a superior being it would be impossible for it to have any of these human attributes because it would be so great that by giving it human qualities would be to limit its power. God is so unnatural that we cannot grasp the concept of its sheer force. We only choose to give it these qualities so we can have a better understanding of it and not be left in the dark. Most people can't imagine god because the power is beyond them, beyond human, so therefore they consider it impossible. I know you probably won't accept my idea but hey, you are a close-minded Christian and I don't expect you to understand. Well, that's what god is and boy do I feel good!

Matt:

Wow, how funny and how elementary! Now prepare yourselves for the truth. God is no more than a system of checks and balances. Yes, a simple system that keeps the entire world going smoothly. Now you may call it the devil or the evil aspect of the world but it's just the counter balance of the goodness of the human spirit. Now, I know not all humans are good nor are we expected to be; but the fact that we exhibit both positive and negative actions, we maintain the balance – that is God. God is the balance, not the actions of humans. I can justify my theory with the following example: why do we thank God when we find \$20 but curse evil spirits when we lose \$20? Because the *balance* must be maintained, not the ideas of devil vs. God. If and when the balance ends the world will end. Without God we will no longer exist; without the balance there is no God.

Paz:

Perhaps?!?! The meaning of life is my specialty so I shall tackle this one head on. The true essence of our existence... hmm... let me gather my thoughts and knock you off your seats. We exist solely to maintain our own happiness. We live a happy life, we have a happy death, we have a happy afterlife. I believe no matter what makes us happy, even the grisliest of actions such as murder and adultery, we should engage in. If it pleases us, do it. Who is to say that what makes us happiest also condemns us? Who is to say that my happiness should be limited to socially accepted behaviors? If we are to live we need to live to the fullest; we only have one opportunity on this planet and to live in unhappiness is not to live at all. So, my friends, I leave you with this: do what makes you feel best and enjoy your time on Earth.

Mac:

Blasphemer! How dare you! We live to serve the Lord who's laid out specific guidelines for us to live by. These rules are called the Ten Commandments; beautiful in nature they serve to govern our actions which is the only way to heaven and everlasting ecstasy. Go ahead, be a sinner. Sin all the way to hell, you Satanist. You call yourself a philosopher but you lack the knowledge laid out before you. I hope God has mercy on your soul. You're gonna need it where you're going, you animal.

Paz:

You, my friend, are one to talk; you may call yourself a wise man but I call you a parrot, a parrot of ideals that are two thousand years old. Besides, we all know the Bible and the so-called beautiful Ten Commandments were written so that man would not kill itself off. Imagine a world without any guidelines: we would have no conscience and no idea of social wrongs. Anarchy and chaos would rule the land and while we kill each other, we would not recognize it as wrong, so why stop such actions? A cover has been pulled over your eyes, my friend, as you are controlled by some silly book with two millennium old myths. 'Tis pathetic. Anyway, the Bible is not even that old; it's a baby when you compare it to The Hindu *Mahabharata*, which consists of 1.8 million words; and the legends of the Egyptians, such as Osiris, both originated at about 2000 B.C. So your Jesus is a rookie my friend, an amateur, and nothing more than a fake. He is the original Blasphemer.

Mac:

You better watch your tongue, boy! I will not hesitate to kick your ass for my beliefs!

Other Chavez:

There will be no violence in my house, sirs; please refrain and enjoy the high.

Matt:

Thank you, kind host. I thought for a second I was going to witness a little bloodshed. Well, since we all know I have the most superior brain here I'll take on the last topic we've chosen to discuss. I must admit it's quite far-fetched but I hope you all will consider my somewhat logical explanation of the afterlife. We are in total control of our afterlife and not the way it sounds. When we die, our brains will continue to function for a maximum of twelve minutes and when we consider the dream clock we will understand that it's possible to relive an entire life in the span of this 12 minute window. And not only relive your life, but perhaps dream up your own version of let's say heaven or hell. Like I said before, consider the dream clock where a second of dream time could relate to about one hour of actual time. Consider that in twelve minutes there are 720 seconds – that could mean 720 hours of dream time! Not enough to pass a life time, but long enough to get used to heaven or hell and long enough to believe that you will remain there for eternity. Who knows, maybe I am in fact already dead and replaying my life as we speak. How would I know? Maybe I did this in my real life and now I only have twelve or so minutes left – so please let me be so I can make the best of this wild dream.

Other Chavez:

For my theory, you have to take into consideration the law that states energy is neither created nor destroyed. When we do die the energy of our nervous system, which is only a system of electric currents, passes into the atmosphere. Now this energy can be either positive, meaning you lived a happy life with few regrets, or it can be negative if you were an unhappy person. It plays off of Matt's theory that God is a balance: this tiny bit of energy will carry our last thoughts and may indeed be the so-called ghosts people see so often. A ghost could be a person's last bit of electric charge looking for an opposite charge to become neutral and be free. A neutral charge will be free to roam and do as it pleases, as it's not attracted to anything.

Mac:

Dude, my high is so coming down and I have the munchies real bad!

Other Chavez:

Yea, my high is coming down, too.

Matt:

You boys hungry – I'll sponsor some 99 cent double cheeseburgers.

Paz:

When nothing but the finest will do.

Mac:

What an amazing day. I had so much fun; same thing tomorrow?

Paz, Matt, Other Chavez:

Yea.

Mac:

And tomorrow maybe we can challenge those tough questions – remember the corndog one and....

Paz:

Don't strain yourself. Tomorrow is another day.

Other Chavez:

Well, let's head out. (all the men get up and have brown paint or some substance on the seats of their pants indicating the Brown Bomber spares no man.)

BORN THAT WAY?

BETTY POYNOR

In the gay community there is widespread belief in the "born that way" theory of sexual orientation. The heterosexual community argues there is no scientific research to support genetic involvement or the "gay gene" theory. Still others pose a middle ground and argue that it simply does not matter. This is where I find myself.

I am in the middle ground category. I have a homosexual son who died of the AIDS virus. When Scott first told me he was gay I thought the "born that way" issue was a really important one to solve. After all, I didn't want him to make me responsible for his lifestyle. Although this was something Scott and I debated on many different occasions, it was during the last year of his life that I began to see things differently. I wasn't looking at a specimen, I was looking at my son, my child, and my firstborn. Whether or not he was "born that way" was not a discussion I wanted to waste time on. It just

didn't matter. Researchers, however, think it does.

In his article "What Causes Homosexual Desire and Can It Be Changed," Cameron (1999) states that there seems to be three views in answer to the question, "Are homosexual proclivities natural or irresistible?" (par. 1). The first view holds that homosexuality is a bad habit that people who are sexually promiscuous fall into. The second view relates homosexuality to mental illness with perverse desires because of childhood trauma or poor familial relations. The third view says there is genetic basis and no choice is involved.

In my conversations with Scott, one thought came back time and again. For as long as he could remember he had felt different. He never wanted to be outside doing "little boy" things. He was never a "daddy's boy" and he remembered being taunted as a "sissy" by school-mates. I disagree with Cameron (1999) on two fronts. When it is believed that homosexuality

is a bad habit, it does away with the consideration of the person.

I have "bad habits." Scott did, too. I smoked for years and Scott bit his nails. How trivial compared to the feelings that make me me and Scott Scott. It goes much deeper than a "bad habit." The feeling of being somehow different reinforces a genetic or biological rule more than a "bad habit." Scott knew from a very young age that he was different. Until puberty came along he was never sure what that difference was. I found this to be true of many of Scott's friends also. In the last year of Scott's life, we never discussed whether it was time for him to break his "bad habit"!

Comparing homosexuality with mental illness is a slap in the face. My son was named in the *Who's Who of American High School Students* his senior year. He won a trip to Washington D.C. along with the honor. He was extremely smart, hard working, and emotionally healthy. He knew how to give and receive love. He was always respectful and in turn earned the respect of his friends and co-workers. There are homosexuals and heterosexuals who are men-



Alma Gonzales
Eve of the End of Winter

tally ill, but to say all homosexuals are suffering from a mental illness is irresponsible and damaging.

The next opinion of a genetic or biological cause is the one Scott believed. It is the only one that made sense to him because he always knew he was different. In *Homosexuality and American Public Life*, Dr. Jeffrey Satinover (1997) warns, though: "It is important to note that serious research on the biology, innateness, or genetic determinants of homosexuality has only just recently begun" (p. 1). Research into this area of genetics is still in baby steps. However, if we *cannot* agree with the "born that way" theory, we must at least *acknowledge* that it is possible.

My research has found many differing opinions about the origins of homosexuality. There is research relating to sexual abuse in childhood, a dominating mother, and a weak or passive father that some believe contribute to the lifestyle. One cross-cultural study of 375 homosexual men from six different countries consistently found that 25% of homosexual men display highly gender atypical behavior, while 50% showed marked gender atypical behavior as young children. They played with what are normally considered girls' toys and were regarded as sissies (Whitham and Mathy, 1986). Did these children make this distinction or was it something that came naturally for them?

When Scott first told me he was gay I searched and searched for the answer. I looked for anything I could find to convince him that he was wrong. Then Scott told me he was HIV positive and my search took on a frenzied pace. I had to make him understand before it was too late. When Scott was diagnosed with AIDS, the question of "born that way" suddenly evaporated. In the finality of death, the finality of my child's death, I realized it didn't matter. In her book, *When Aids Comes Home*, Zylstra and Biebel (1996) (who also lost a son to AIDS) put it this way, "At that moment, I gained a new freedom. I was free to love, leaving the judgment to God" (p. 6). This was exactly how I felt. The question no longer mattered. What did

matter was that my son was dying and all I could do was be there to love him. I told him I was sorry that my desire to prove he wasn't born that way had occupied any of our time together. Together we resolved to live his remaining time loving each other free of any prejudice or guilt.

The last conversation I had with Scott, I read to him from *When Aids Comes Home*: "You are finally so peaceful; the struggle is over. My dear, dear son, I am going to miss you more than I could ever have imagined. You taught me how to be brave and strong and how to claim victory in the face of defeat. You taught me about pain and suffering, so much suffering. You taught me about a mother's love, how far that love goes and how deep. You also showed me how to forgive. Together we learned to trust our heavenly Father more and more as our needs increased" (Zylstra and Biebel, 1996, p. 169-170).

I hope you never have to experience the death of someone you love in order to make you understand that it truly does not matter. Scott believed he was born that way and he is worthy of belief by virtue of his humanness. Everyone deserves that respect. To me, it doesn't matter. We are all born to die in a certain respect and we can either spend what time we have arguing over things that aren't important or we can look for the ways to live life to the fullest. We can also enrich our lives and widen our circle of friends and loved ones by refusing to join a debate which has no end.

Scott left this earthly home on May 1st, 2005. His favorite song was "Amazing Grace," which my daughter-in-law sang at his memorial. I can still hear Scott's melodic voice singing his favorite verse:

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

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In Memoria

Jeffrey Scott McBee



February 28, 1969 to May 1, 2005

One day an angel came to earth
to seek a child to dwell above.

He chose a wonderful person
whom everyone had learned to love.

The angel beckoned, follow me.
I'll take you to my Father's home,
where all is peace and joy and love,
and pain and suffering are unknown.

The little child then closed his eyes
and to this world, he bid goodbye.

He's gone to live forever more
in that bright land beyond the sky.

– Scott McBee, 1989