

Asylum Seekers

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Blindfolded and gagged, with his hands tied behind his back, Jose grimaced as a bat struck him again. On his right, an ax moved forward and backwards slowly tracing his neck. “Tell the boy to shup up. Make him shut up,” one of the men yelled as he ripped the duct tape off of Jose’s lips. With tears of fear falling from his eyes, Jose’s three-year old son watched as his father was tortured by a cartel in Reynosa, Mexico. Earlier that day, Jose and his son had entered the United States to seek asylum, but under new policies enforced by the Trump administration, the two were sent back to Mexico. Jose was walking down the street hand in hand with his son, when a group of men thrust a hood over his head and forced them into a vehicle (Jordan, 2019).

On November 25, 2019 Jose, a 28-year-old Honduras migrant and his son were kidnapped. Hours of negotiation between Jose’s wife, Cindy, who was living in the United States and the cartel would occur that evening and for days to follow. She listened over the phone as her husband was tortured and her son wept and watched. *The New York Times* reviewed a chain of recorded phone calls and voicemails between Cindy and the cartel. It was clear in the recordings that Cindy was desperate to help her family but had little resources to do so. Working in a bakery barely paid the bills. With the help of extended family and friends, Cindy was able to pull together a ransom of \$3,000 (Jordan, 2019). Shortly after, her son and husband were released back into the streets of Reynosa, Mexico. Still waiting for the United States decision to grant them asylum.

In the past decade, the number of people fleeing violence and persecution in their native countries has grown drastically. These people are desperately seeking a safe place for themselves and their families due to race, membership in a particular social group, political affiliation, national origin, and/or religious beliefs. For many years, the United States saw the need to aid

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these individuals by allowing them to seek asylum and find safety within the United States. What a relief our great Nation was to those who were fleeing danger. These national values made the United States the global leader in aiding refugees with resettlement efforts. In fact, the United States used to offer safety to more refugees than every other nation combined. (“An Overview of”, 2020).

Sadly, that statistic has drastically changed. Under the Trump administration, the United

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The father continued to tell the reporter he didn't know where to go or what to do. The family had no money. The father had heard that many people are kidnapped at the camp they were currently staying at, and his fear was evident. Towards the end of their conversation, the reporter allowed the father to make a phone call using her cell phone. The father called his sister who lived in New Jersey to update her on their request to seek asylum in the United States. This father thanked the reporter, and they parted ways. That evening, the father's sister called the reporter in a panic. The family had been kidnapped and the cartel was demanding a ransom of \$18,000 which the sister could not manage (Glass, 2019). Events like this are all too common in tent camps that have popped up since the Remain in Mexico policy was put into place. Innocent people and their families are being kidnapped and held for ransom by dangerous cartel groups.

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Initially the Migrant Protection Protocol program was blocked by a federal judge, but since May the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals overruled and has since allowed the program to continue. Fortunately, additional unions, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), are continuing to press forward and challenge the program (Allyn, 2019). It is alarming that the officers who work with asylum seekers on a daily basis show greater concern for migrants than the United States government and the government of Mexico.

It is clear there is a lack of human rights for the migrants who await asylum. Human rights are exactly as they sound, they are rights that belong to all people as a benefit of being a human being. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was decreed by the United Nations and created by a group of delegates from diverse cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world. This document was a collection of fundamental human rights that all people were meant to be protected by. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations” (“Universal

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necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (“Universal Declaration,” n.d.). The migrants fleeing their home countries due to fear of persecution is certainly beyond their control. The complete absence of food, clothing, housing, and medical care in these makeshift tent camps is astonishing. Men, women, and children are

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An Argument Against Transhumanism

Ryan Melcher

Humanity has remained relatively constant throughout time. Our solutions to progress have been met with equal contributions to disaster. Many advancements have pushed the envelope of biological constraints, more so for the betterment of mankind. Julian Huxley, brother of philosopher and writer Aldous Huxley, was deep into these new ideologies. The term 'transhumanism' was coined by Julian, who stated 'I believe in transhumanism: once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Peking man. It will, at last, be consciously fulfilling its real destiny.' The ideals of transhumanism offer many generous benefits. Our biological limitations are no match for scientific advancement, improving all things physical and emotional have implications to open up new horizons for humanity's development. The fundamental beliefs that shine through Huxley and transhumanists center around a desire to rid the world of disease and weakness. It's hard to disagree, as these shortcomings we face today are issues we've faced since conception, and with the ideals seen in this philosophy- all can be healed.

However, the ever-growing argument that things aren't as they may play on paper are coming forward. These contentions grew from differing perspectives, often argued alongside religion. One major argument offers that there is an innate problem from modifying our given human nature. A key aspect of this debate arises from designer babies. Portrayed in Aldous Huxley's most popular novel, the implications of such technology stray away from the

‘God-given’ aspects most religions point to for our distinct characteristics. Joel Thompson, writer and professor, states it’s this need to ‘master the mystery of birth’ which destroys the bond between a parent and respective child.

Thompson argues that it’s the different perspective of price, the one of monetary value, that would keep this at bay, stating, ‘The initial high cost, availability, risk and uncertainty about life-extending therapies is likely to curtail the number of people in the world who will pursue it.’ Later going onto talking about cosmetic surgery, for example, being in demand of only those who can afford it. I argue, that even with the minority of the rich having access, the effect would be dramatic. Envisioning a world where dictators and those in control have the option to never leave office so long as they never die would be frightening. The power that is already possessed would only exponentiate. Huxley agrees with Thompson on the issue of designer babies, with both being skeptical of the humility of chance and pure humanity seen with a newborn. Pushing boundaries is fundamental to humanity’s growth, but the bounds of human nature are sensitive and often abused.

The most prominent thesis to what defines transhumanism is the idea that one-day humans will be able to transform into something vastly enhanced from our current condition that these new forms will no longer be able to be considered ‘humans’. Humans are different than any other animal that has or is roaming the Earth- the language that brought self-conscious behavior and teaching has allowed humanity to grow farther and wider than any previous contender. Studies have often pointed their attention to discovering the Earth, the living cells and their main components that comprise of all life in the universe... yet the subject of human nature had yet to be fully understood. The human race has yet to discover all of its potentials,

the act of introducing technology to humanism is only going to propel this strife. Huxley wrote his essay and developed these ideas without the presence of many of the modern-day technologies we have today. The introduction of biomechanics and research into the connection between digital space has only lead to more questions. Humans have learned that through technical advancements wonders once thought to be unsolvable are being not-so. With each stride in scientific pose comes a concerning outlook on the psn-

actions. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that history won't repeat itself with different but eerily similar cases.

Notably, Francis Fukuyama, Professor of International Political Economy at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, has aimed his sights at transhumanists and

Author Scott Cendrowski writes about persistence in humanity, “In science it’s called hormesis, the concept that limited doses of a harmful substance tend to make organisms stronger, healthier, and prepared for a bigger dose next time.” Unlike the principle of hormesis, transhumanism wishes to rid humanity of these factors which allow for growth and strength. There are clear and present vices of living a life of pure leisure, Tim O’Brian writes, “Those who live in leisure struggle more with having any meaning in their life beyond the superficial. They also often have more difficulties with food, alcohol and drug issues.” There is a significant sense of gluttony when we are given a long break from our usual struggles. In an age of defining mental illness, many people have gained issues with depression and anxiety. Medicines can trick our bodies to altering chemical imbalances caused by these disorders, although the issue will never fully be solved unless areo d ane\$#

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Right to Move

The fact of the matter is quite simple: there is systemic discrimination in urban planning. It is not a rarity, nor is it invisible. Rather, it sits quietly atop the streets of the American city, hiding in plain sight. Within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – a self-proclaimed “yardstick by which we measure right and wrong” – all humans are declared to be born with “the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.” There is a right more integral, though, and that is the right to move in general, to have the same access to the wonders of their resident city as their peers. The truth is, even in a prosperous city in a prosperous nation,

while walking, and they are effectively disabled by communities that mandate cars for getting around.” While there are still options for the visually impaired, their implementation is often sloppy. Though generally overlooked, the brightly colored, dotted patterns on sidewalks near intersections are a common example of these options. Those patterns are part of a system called tactile paving, which aims to warn those with visual impairments when they are about to encounter a hazard. In this case, the hazard is an intersection. Not only are these scarcely distributed, they commonly fail to serve another crucial purpose: to point people in the right direction. The dots, called blisters, on these portions of the sidewalk, should be arranged in rows that point directly to the destination on the other side of the street. This way, someone using a white cane knows the direction they need to walk to make a safe crossing. However, in many places, these blisters are arbitrarily rotated, potentially causing an unsuspecting pedestrian to find themselves in the center of a busy intersection. Inconsistencies like these make the whole system useless. If you can’t trust some of them, you can’t trust any of them.

Curb cuts, or the ramps cut into the curb between the sidewalk and the street, are another common accessibility feature that we take for granted. They’re a welcome addition to the sidewalk when carrying heavy objects or pushing a stroller, but for those in wheelchairs, they’re a necessity. This phenomenon is known as the curb cut effect, the idea that technology designed for the margins of society can help everybody.

Ed Roberts contracted polio at age fourteen, relying on an iron lung to stay alive. He was paralyzed below the neck, only able to move two fingers on his left hand. In 1962, he was turned down from U.C. Berkeley, not for academic reasons, but because they weren’t sure where they could fit an iron lung. Eventually, they decided to repurpose a patient room at the campus hospital, and Roberts was finally accepted. His story began making headlines, inspiring more paralyzed students to apply to Berkeley. Before long, his campus hospital became the headquarters for a group of organizers called the Rolling Quads, whose purpose was to advocate for the idea that people with disabilities had civil rights. Luckily, by the time Roberts was in graduate school, disabled students could zip around in power chairs, a technology that was recently invented to assist wounded veterans. These gave students the freedom to leave their wheelchair attendant behind, but they still had to deal with curbs.

There is a far more severe objection to walkability, and that's the question of gentrification. It is true that walkability drives up the property values in neighborhoods, so many

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virus, meaning that one is facing progressive failure of their immune system allowing life-threatening infections and cancers to take over (“HIV/AIDS”). Once known, borders became

publication of ICD-10 in 1992, although ICD-10 still carries the construct of "ego-dystonic sexual orientation" (Burton). In this condition, the person is not in doubt about his or her sexual preference, but "wishes it were different because of associated psychological and behavioral disorders"(Burton).

As seen more recently, people who identify as transgender or non-binary are being killed. At least 22 transgender and gender non-conforming people have been murdered in the U.S. in 2019 (Vagianos). I say at least because sadly too often many of these stories go unreported, or misreported. Yet no major media outlets have reported any of these incidents to notify the world (King). The HRC (Human Rights Campaign) has been tracking reports such as these for the past several years. The majority of victims were people of color as well. Given the more recent awareness of intersectionality, this issue is not just about gender but also race.

LGBTQIA+ rights in the U.S. have evolved over time and vary on a state-by-state basis. Family, marriage, and anti-discrimination laws vary by state. It was not until 2003 that in the U.S. sexual acts between people of the same sex became legal nationwide, following the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas* ("Non-Discrimination Laws"). In Nebraska, currently there is no law that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in state law. No employment non-discrimination law covering sexual orientation or gender identity, through federal law offers some protection ("Non-Discrimination Laws"). Personally, living here and identifying as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, it is very displeasing to say that the place where I live does not offer any law to protect myself from discrimination.

I myself identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. Growing up I was constantly the odd on

the stereotype that my gender was “supposed” to follow. The way that I acted and behaved was different as well. Even my vocal intonation contrasted the stereotypical gender expectation. As a young child, no one really cared since one is young and does not know any better. Yet as the older one gets, the more they should follow society’s stereotypical gender roles that “men are masculine” and “girls are feminine”. I did not fit that and faced bullying and self-hatred. Going to school made me face the truth of how others acted with what they believe to be wrong. Others confronted me, asking who I was. Being young and terrified of what the possibilities could be if I was honest, I conformed as best I could. I did not specifically know what they were asking and what it meant, but any wrong answer resulted in social exclusion and bullying.

All that I ask for is a better world for everyone and anyone. As big of a dream that is, I know that we cannot accomplish it by wishing and hoping alone. People must take action to make this shared LBGTQIA+ community dream become a reality. Slowly growing with each day, the fight to advocate for more LBGTQIA+ people strengthens. Obstacles will always exist, but obstacles help those facing adversity become stronger and better than who they were.

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Jackie Iraheta-Baires

Mrs. Palmesano

Human Rights Essay Contest

26 January 2020

In his presidency, Donald Trump has targeted immigrants from Central America. With his proposal to construct a billion-dollar wall on the Mexican border

migrants in these buildings are still human beings. They deserve the same care as any other person, regardless of their immigration status.

Even more concerning is the United States' treatment of children in these detention camps. Children were separated from their families and taken to these facilities. The age ranges from infants to thirteen-years old. According to a news article, children were forced to sleep on the concrete floor for losing a brush. Children were told to share the comb when there was a lice outbreak (Stieb). Sharing combs while there is a lice outbreak will cause the lice to spread. This shows the lack of hygiene that is provided in these detention centers. In regard to the flu outbreak in some facilities and the death of Carlos Vasquez, the United States Customs and Border Patrol is treating these migrants unlawfully. They are not taking responsibility for their wrongdoings.

Another issue that is happening in these facilities is how children are taking care of other children. This exemplifies the lack of care the Border Patrol agents are giving to the children in these detention camps. A child should not be facing these types of issues. When these children

the facilities were ill mannered towards members of Congress. Cortez talked about the abuse that she encountered such as guards telling detainees to drink the water from toilets (Stieb). These actions are dehumanizing migrants, which is a violation of human rights.

No child and no human should be facing the horrors that lie within these detention centers. It is cruel to treat these migrants like this. These people are only looking for a better life. In a world full of violence and poverty it becomes necessary to seek safety. For many, the United States is a place that can provide sanctuary from the violence of drug cartels or gangs. The Trump administration is ripping families apart. President Trump's policies show his lack of compassion and prejudice towards Latinos. The mistreatment of people in these detention centers must be stopped. It is inhumane for these families to be punished for seeking a better life. The dehumanization of these people is against human rights and the United States must prevent these malicious actions.

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Alexandria Gabrielle Schmidt

UNO High School Humanities Essay

2 February 2019

Stewarding the Public Opinion: The Boundaries of Freedom

As one can deduce from the young adult novel *Divergent*, in fictional dystopian worlds it's dangerous even deadly to be radically different. However, many are aware that concepts concerning bravely challenging the status quo are palatable when housed in the clearly fictional. It is easy and entertaining to consume such real and potent concepts because audiences are given a decent plot and are presented with well-written protagonists that one wants to love and antagonists one wants to hate. The story often feels removed from anything immediately concerning the reader. It turns out that creating propaganda and spreading it is quite similar in the ways of crafting an

. During and before the Civil Rights Movement, most can agree that white supremacy propaganda ran rampant. However, the American government and mainstream American society has, and continues to use certain tactics as a way of influencing the minds of American citizens to coerce them into following whatever mainstream America dictates-which, today is considerably intertwined with white supremacy.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) was criminalized because it was dubbed a national threat by the FBI. Thus, it would be useful for the American government to convince the

pro-Afro image they challenged the status quo about what a self-confident person with power must be, a concept that most likely intimidated and unsettled the aforementioned mainstream white majority. That same concept posed a considerable threat to the US government's ability to control the collective consciousness of minorities because a united, physically and mentally empowered group of minorities is much harder to influence and control than an impoverished and uneducated minority population. The pervading perception of the BPP during the 1960s, and the epitome of such a survival of the public opinion of the BPP merged with the progressive movements of the 2000s can be exemplified through Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance of Formation, with costumes (afros, berets, leather jackets, etc.) and notions of black empowerment reminiscent of the Black Panther Party. Thousands of African Americans took to social media to praise Beyoncé, they were opposed by white supremacists (10). Thus, while recently there has been a renewed recognition of the validity of an empowered black population in America, there has been an equally renewed opposition to such notions. This influence on the endorsement of perceptions and portrayals of canonized government ideologies.

Earlier, it was mentioned that the American government has been abridging first Amendment rights (7) through the tactics of the COINTELPRO program. However, such restrictions on freedom of speech continue to pervade society. A prime example being the Marquette University in 2015, a group of students (endorsed by the founding director of the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, Susannah Bartlow) painted a mural of Black Panther Assata Shakle (alleged murderer) with one of her quotes about how the reigning institution will not give you the education necessary to change sets them free (2). (She is an alleged murderer because if the US government had a clear agenda against Black Panthers and a clear agenda to eliminate and incriminate them then there is motive for incrimination and injustice

unless an individual has the riches and media influence of Beyoncé they may end up criminalized

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