

“Ignorance is not Bliss”

Hate is a nasty emotion. Hate makes your stomach twist up in knots, your heart race, and your fists clench. Most people claim to have never hated anyone, that they could never be capable of feeling such a harmful emotion. Yet, America is country whose way of life is deeply rooted in hate, dating all the way back to the discovery of this nation. Hate has found its way into the workplace, society, and government. It has shaped this country into what it is today, and most Americans, whether or not they care to admit it, acknowledge and are okay with that. Hate is an emotion that drains the life out of whatever it has clung to. It can tear people, families, and entire countries apart. The driving forces that fuel the hate festering in America today are self-entitlement, fear, and ignorance.

One of the deepest, most sincere forms of hate is racism. Racism is an attitude that is completely based on the idea of self-entitlement. This travesty has been occurring all over the world, but America has a way of making itself seem like the capital of racism because of its controversial past. This is because America’s very foundation is based on the idea that as Americans, they deserve everything handed to them. This idea dates back to colonial times. When the Mayflower landed in America, the Native Americans had already settled there. In true American fashion however, pilgrims took what they thought belonged to them, and thus America’s sense of self-entitlement was born. This greed and intolerance for opposition has led American to become a melting pot for people who think they are better than everyone else. This causes a lot of trouble for society, and those that are the most tragically impacted are those who choose not to have a vendetta against everyone else. For example, in the movie *The Help*, the

predominantly white, southern United States reigns terror on African Americans. They are discriminated against, looked down on, and oppressed by the white people who thought they were better than them simply because of the color of their skin. This sense of self-entitlement and the hate that stemmed from it are both explored in the movie through the lives of different white and African American families. Viewers see how poorly African Americans were treated simply because they did not have a vendetta against white people like white people did against African Americans. The worst part however, is that the white people do not see anything wrong with their actions. Being raised in a country where slavery was acceptable at one point, white Americans were bred to think that they deserved more than a race that was different from their own. Self-entitlement is in the DNA of Americans, implanted in society by the idea of the American Dream, that whatever is wanted can be taken with enough brute force, no matter the price someone else has to pay. At the core of this self-entitlement and the hate it manifests is the true essence of racism, misogyny, bigotry, and all other forms of hate, fear.

The fear of someone being richer, happier, or more important in this life is the root of all hate. Human beings hate what they cannot have, it is in their nature. Fear is what drives people to better themselves, but most of the time that means kicking a few people down on the way up. The constant fear that someone, a coworker, politician, even a celebrity, is doing better than others causes humans to feel the need to make them seem lesser in order to make themselves seem greater. In the poem "Gunga Din" by Rudyard Kipling, Gunga Din is bullied, berated, and overlooked as a Middle Eastern man serving the British army. However in the poem it details the courage and compassion of Din along with the sacrifices he made for men who absolutely despise him. They despised him because they were afraid that he truly was a better man than they were/ Being a poem written during the same period as British Imperialism, when racism and hate

were deeply rooted in the nation, “Gunga Din” was very controversial. The poem was controversial because it caused people to open their eyes to the hate that they were spreading against people who were willing to die to protect them. Kipling understood the importance of acknowledging hate in order to begin mending it and making it right. Unfortunately, Kipling’s opinion was unpopular with his readers, once again because they were afraid he was right. Readers were afraid that they were these nasty, horrible men that Kipling described who tortured Gunga Din; even though he risked his life for his country just like every other man. Fear is the one emotion stronger than hate, and unfortunately they feed off of each other to form a deadly concoction of unrest in America. The worst form of hate however, is blind, ignorant, unexplainable hate.

Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to hate. Turning a blind eye and pretending to not recognize the hate in the country, or in people’s own hearts, only allows the problem to fester. The only way to begin releasing and mending all the hate in the country, is first to recognize that it is indeed happening, right in their own backyard. There are too many Americans that are oblivious to the injustices their country and they themselves are committing without even being conscious of it. Or worse, being conscious of it and choosing to feign ignorance in favor of standing up for what is right because it is controversial. An example of this kind of ignorant hate can be found in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. In Atticus’ controversial case, he is defending an African American man accused of beating and raping a young white girl. Even though Atticus proves multiple times with multiple different pieces of evidence that the African American man is indeed not guilty; the people of the town refuse to acknowledge that the man is being framed by the abusive alcoholic father and his misguided, scared daughter. The ignorant hate with which the jury and the townspeople treat the case is astounding. The townspeople

would rather see an innocent man go to jail than see justice served to a white man whose hate for African Americans caused him to ruin someone else's life. Turning the other cheek and allowing this great injustice to be served to the African American man is a horrid demonstration of how ignorance and hate mix together to manipulate a country into believing that they are doing the right thing. Ignorance is the one way to ensure that the issues caused by hate in American society are never solved, or even addressed. Ignorance in combination with fear and self-entitlement form the foundation for the hate that runs rampant in America.

There is no getting around, over, or under it; hate has a powerful, driving, and suffocating presence in American society. Self-entitlement, fear, and ignorance are a deadly combination that will keep America away from peace forever. The country must realize that the way to reconcile these wrongs and come together as a nation is to have these hard conversations about what is at the root of hate. The time is now to work towards a better tomorrow; together as a nation, peace can be achieved. However, if these relationships cannot be repaired, this hate not dissolved, then the country is doomed to repeat the same mistakes forever.

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“The Deceitful Feast”

A feast is being held in your honor. Decadent treats and filling meals splurge among the embroidered table cloth as your cup is filled to the brim with exquisite wine. Servants are at your disposition and everything goes with a sweep of your hand. You hold power, riches, and full authority. Yet something is missing. A want within you that gnaws at the insides of your hollow stomach. A want that cannot be satisfied by any feast in all of history. It is the want of simplicity. The pure and honest sensation of loving and living. This beautiful life beckons you to come forward and entices you with eternal happiness and a much desired peace. Many have been presented the opportunity to leave, to step down from their seat of power, for a more precious

life. What makes man become so obsessed with power and having so much pride? What is hindering them from leaving their table of ecstasy? Ignorance. The serpent of ignorance constricting the mind of man and making him submissive to mundane desires. Desires such as gold and other tangible lies that have blemished the soul of man. The chains that hold him down to the table of his doom.

Socrates once stated, “I am intelligent because I know that I know nothing.” A philosopher, a “lover of wisdom,” has stepped down from the high stool the community has built upon him to state that he knows less than a man down the street? That is because Socrates knew both pride and wisdom could not reside within one individual. Pride can give you a big head, but wisdom can give you the dainty taste of true knowledge. It seems today that pride is engulfing many individuals within our society. Everyone wants to be the best and everyone wants to know more than the stranger sitting beside them. That is because we wish to fulfill the peak of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – Self-Actualization. Human beings are naturally drawn to compete. Whether it be for the best bananas at the super market, the highest position in the company, or for those fancy-shmancy pants on Black Friday. The sense of pride lures us to shove everyone else beneath us in order to find ourselves. Unfortunately, it is a human instinct that is difficult to control. However, some individuals have overcome that instinct. They are the individuals that do not need to hold power over others in order to feel true happiness or find themselves. They know that the true power lies not within the riches or status amongst this world, rather it lies within themselves.

The biblical character, David, can serve as a prime example in the area of a grand man living the simple life. When God sent a prophet to David’s house, the prophet was dumbfounded that God had not chosen any of the strong, tall and smart brothers of David. God had told his

prophet that they were no worthy of a throne due to their boastful and cocky personalities. He chose David, a simple shepherd boy. David was chosen to one day become king due to his strengths in compassion and of his humble heart. When it came for a soldier to fight off Goliath, all of the tall and strong soldiers fled, but little David stood his ground, killed the giant, and became a powerful king amongst his people. David was a simple boy with no riches or luscious robes to clothe him. He lived peacefully, happily and never complained of the life that he was given. David serves as an example to demonstrate that happiness does not rest in knowing everything or in having pride amongst others. On the contrary, he was grateful for the life that he held, and being able to understand the importance, makes him a man of character and of respect. Of course there have been other individuals that cannot seem to wrap their head around this aspect of life. Joseph Conrad depicts the idea through his character, Kurtz.

In *The Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz is a man of authority. The natives fall under his hand as he forces them into labor, under any means necessary, to retrieve the abundant supply of ivory dwelling within Congo. The respect for human life and suffering is lost within the fog of ignorance as Kurtz becomes blinded with greed. His thirst for wealth leads him to kill off an immense number of natives while he resides at the Congo. However, Kurtz refuses to see what he has done and continues on with his ambitious plans. Man can be the most stubborn creature to roam the earth. There is no hope that Kurtz or any man under the binds of greed can return to their normal state of apathy. When something is placed within their sights that they fully desire, they will stop at nothing to achieve their goal. Man becomes so lost within this world's offerings. They allow enticements, such as pride and wealth, to cling onto them and redirect their moral paths. The final words of Kurtz, "The horror! The horror!" demonstrates that no good for

mankind lies within these ambitious desires. If man cannot peel away the grasp of these lurking lures, man will surely fall into his doom and allow others to fall in after him.

Individuals nowadays chase money rather than actually being in a profession they enjoy. The same goes for a high position in society. Sometimes we become so obsessed with the fact that we need to be better than everyone else or accumulate an immense amount of wealth, that we forget what our true purpose in life holds – to simply live happy. As Mark Twain has stated: “Life is pretty simple; we just insist on making it complicated.” We allow for the mundane weeds to suffocate our potential growth and blossoming. These desires that we see and can touch blemish our sense of living and they are becoming the death of many people’s dreams. Pride and wealth are two of the most difficult aspects to rid ourselves in our society. Yet it is even more challenging to acknowledge our weaknesses. To acknowledge the weaknesses is the first step to living the simple and content life. By pushing ourselves away from the table of worldly desires, we take the first step in recognizing that there is more to life than these goods that will spoil us before they rot themselves. If you want the true strength and the truth knowledge, leave the seat of pride and step away from that deceitful table. Walk towards the life that has been beckoning your name and rise above others by stepping down beside them.

“Prejudicial Paternalism”

It is popular to conceive of the American Revolution as the initiative of a loosely-coagulated confederation of disgruntled farmers – the plight of impassioned, Enlightened colonists, acting upon their divinely-ordained mission to liberate themselves from the shackles of English aristocracy, and inaugurate an epoch of libertarian, republican governance. While it is in fun to entertain this idea, to romanticize “the shot heard ‘round the world,” it is important to acknowledge the conspicuous misalignment of that image with our morally-reprehensible history. For some Americans, it is difficult to reconcile with this dissonance. It is tempting to maintain our national dignity by subscribing to revisionist interpretations of the infamous occurrences that sprinkle our history, which are meant to, in some way, absolve us of our collective shame – that is, to believe that Andrew Jackson was an American hero, or that slaver wasn’t *that* bad, or that McCarthy’s anticommunist crusades were forgivable. Ultimately, the desire of some to case our nation’s historical journey in a light of infallibility is pointless. If we ever hope to contextualize – and perhaps, rectify – America’s affinity for prejudice, we must start by recognizing the manner in which America conditions its citizens to hate.

The Pulitzer-Prize winning dissertation, *The Radicalization of the American Revolution*, elucidates the prejudicial nature that has motivated American thought since the very inception of the United States. Its author begins with a digression into the philosophical inclination of our forefathers, and the implications their gentlemanly cachets has on the nature of our government’s conception. The details of the implicate the mythological perceptions many of us have of the Enlightened Liberals that drafted our Constitution and challenged the English aristocracy. George Washington, for instance, is quoted with thinking of the American people as “the grazing

multitude” and John Adams saw himself as fundamentally different from the agricultural plebeians that largely populated the fledging republic. Of course, this is not to overlook the genuinely respectable actions taken by some of our forefathers; Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson detested the institutionalization of slavery, and George Washington refused to accept his unofficial appointment as an American dictator. However, we mustn’t forget that only landed aristocrats were politically enfranchised in Washington’s America, and that embodied in the annals of our early government was the idea that gentlemen were fundamentally superior to laymen, and that aristocrats were compelled by a paternalistic obligation to oversee and control the rabbling masses.

Through successive administrations, this attitude ebbed, and political empowerment proliferated. However, the sociopolitical fruits yielded by liberalism were not equally enjoyed by all: women and people of color did not experience liberation from this paternalistic hierarchy at the rate of their white counterparts. Naturally, the sense of diffidence that festers under the psychological weight of societal inferiority continued to exist among disenfranchised demographics. Even after Americans endured the cacophonous catastrophe of slavery’s dismantlement, even after the American South combusted from the pressure imposed by civil rights activists, even after American women were granted the right to participate in our democratic processes, the intoxicating, cancerous power of hate persists in these United States. This is beautifully articulated in Barack Obama’s *Dreams from My Father*, in which he tragically elucidates his experiences in reconciling with this social diffidence. As an African American boy birthed to a black Kenyan father and a white American mother, he has long felt encumbered by the ambiguity of his race. He admits to the disillusionment that clouded his perspectives as an undergraduate, in which his confusion boiled into resentment, and he felt compelled to challenge

Euro-America. He observed anti-blackness internalized in his black friends, who appeared to emulate the properness of white Americans, and shun staples of black culture. He observed the regrettable absence of a formidable black population in institutions of higher education, and sometimes felt that he was conditioned for failure in a white man's world.

While some of these attitudes subsided after he graduated from Columbia, yielding to a more compromising approach towards the world, he recoiled at the racial horrors he witnessed as a community organizer in Chicago. The conspicuity of the city's racial dichotomy was unavoidable; it was hardly the white Chicagoans who attended failing schools, or who went without heating in the winter, or dropped out of school at fifteen to sell drugs. To a degree, this frustrated him. When residents of these communities rose up to challenge what they perceived as injustice, they were dismissed as violent, animalistic, and disorderly. If they remained silent, however, violence would continue to proliferate in their neighborhoods, and their schools would continue to perform abysmally, and their houses would continue to deteriorate. Obama recounts the difficulty he sometimes experienced in motivating black Chicagoans to action; additionally, it was often hard to approach Chicago's city alderman about instituting reforms in destitute areas of the city. For both the poverty-stricken residents of West Chicago and the councilmen of East Chicago were aligned in their conviction that the suffering of black Americans was a foregone conclusion – that it was fruitless to even try to rectify disparities. That is peak Afro-pessimism. It was not that Chicago's fleeting white political establishment held an active disdain for Afro-Chicagoans, but rather, that it felt impossible to reconcile with the hate Afro-Chicagoans had for themselves. These people, entrenched in centuries of intergenerational poverty, could scarcely muster up the energy to help themselves. That is not to absolve white Chicagoans of the role they had to play in this tragedy; it was preconceived attitudes about race – that is, “soft,” subtle

racism – that led to redlining and white flight, which facilitated the city’s decay. That is also not to mention the inclination of some white Americans to overlook black suffering as inevitable or just a fact of life, which only exacerbated the widening of racial inequalities.

This tragedy of hierarchy in the United States plays out like a modern *Othello*, with a slew of characters irrationally fearing the presence of Othello – “the Other” – whom they fear for reasons that aren’t easy to elucidate, with an Iago-type figure – that is, our journalistic status quo of infotainment – fanning the flames of the drama. The integrity of this allegory is reinforced by Othello’s disillusioned sense of racial inferiority which facilitates his eventual downfall. Whether it be the fundamental differences our gentlemanly forefathers felt with respect to America’s yeoman farmers, or the racial dichotomy which haunts the American sociopolitical establishment, it is immensely important that we recognize the aspects of American culture that accentuate our differences – namely, our inclination to tarnish our own dignities, and buy into self-deprecating narratives. To liberate ourselves from external shackles, we must first liberate ourselves from the psychological shackles which inhibit ourselves.

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“The Modern Epidemic”

The Bubonic plague, most would agree, was perhaps the most devastating health crisis that man has ever had the misfortune to endure. An entire third of the European continent fell to the silent killer, and sadly the poor state of medicine in such undeveloped times was far from enough for rescue. Even worse, those affected were a generation far more ignorant than that of the present, and this ignorance caused their own downfall to worsen. Infected rats and public wells of tainted water spread the noxious disease to even greater lengths, making them one of the largest contributors to the stench of death in the air. This fact was all but unbeknownst to those men of the time, who became tragic prey to their own oblivious nature. Worse still were those who weaponized the plague in times of war, catapulting infected bodies over the walls of cities and camps with the hopes of weakening their foes by spreading more destruction. The unstoppable rampage of the plague was largely due to the actions of men themselves.

It is easy for the modern man to gaze upon such ignorance and laugh, thanking himself for being above such clueless behavior. However, in criticizing the speck in his neighbor's eye, he failed to address the plank in his own. In his heart rests an even greater plague, one whose toll of victimhood dwarfs that of the infamous “black death” – the plague we call hatred. Just like the Bubonic plague, hatred does not think. Hatred does not remorse. It seeks only to infect, kill, and multiply; such is the way it has been since humans first graced this planet. Hatred only halts our steps and destroys our progress, and unless we can acknowledge its foreboding presence, it will only continue to do so.

Only a fool could not recognize that humans as a species have suffered, yet most either miss or entirely ignore the problem. Physical challenges have always been present, but the

biggest source of human suffering is our animosity towards our own brothers and sisters. A brief look into history brings this fact to light. It is grimly displayed in the actions of those such as Adolf Hitler and Hidecki Tojo, who slaughtered millions because of the hatred in their hearts. Their minds were absent of any logical or tactile reason to exterminate so many lives, yet because their hate was so immensely powerful, they not only slaughtered on a large scale but did so with frightening efficiency. At the whim of a hatefully impassioned heart, countless millions were revoked their right to life.

Those who hate do not only damage others, however, but they damage themselves as well. When a man casts infected bodies over the wall, he has exposed not just those in the city, but himself as well, and in most cases numbers his own days in an instant. The threat of exposure never crosses his mind, however, and even as he lies in the thralls of death he is clueless as to what may have caused his downfall. Israel's infamous first king, King Saul, is a bitter example of how the man who hates destines himself to tragedy. Saul was a man of utmost prominence; he had divine power at his back and the loyalty of Israel at his front. However, he soon became envious of his successor David. Seeing the praise that David received caused Saul to become embittered, and in very little time, his budding envy bloomed into thriving hatred. He pursued David through country and through city, determined to improve his own life by robbing somebody else's. Even after David spared Saul's life, he refused to lessen the intensity of his loathing. Saul did not have a reason to hate; it was merely his tendency, his primal instinct. Ultimately it destroyed him, as Saul eventually took his own life. Nowhere in Saul's destruction, however, was he able to consider himself the culprit. He continued to guzzle the tainted water of the well, not knowing that it was the source of his demise.

While it is unclear what initial spark started the all-consuming blaze of hostility, the fire has not ceased spreading. The flames continue to burn us down and consume all in their path, even though we prefer to believe that the fire has long since burned out. Every man likes to believe that he is just and loving, but such is simply not the case. Hate is a disease that constantly lies in dormancy; the lack of symptoms does not mean that it is not present. It lies within even the most tender of hearts, and it is nigh possible to predict when it will expose its menacing glare. The development of the Internet has given birth to perhaps the largest and deadliest catalyst of human hatred that man has ever seen – social media. It appears, on the outside, as an innocent entity, incapable of spreading such darkness and harm; however, much like the seemingly innocuous rats of the Bubonic plague, it is one of the leading culprits. Social media platforms, while innocent in intention, have turned despicable in practice. Lacking a positive thought to spare, users instead turn their guns to one another, laughing off volleys of hatred and scorn. Even the resolute can only handle the barrage for so long, and they collapse. Users who find themselves in the crosshair often grow to loathe or harm themselves, and even some take their own lives because the wave of hostility is too harsh to endure.

In fact, the problem has grown so much to the point where hatred is not only overlooked but accepted. News stations and talk radio shows contain entire segments in which they dedicate their limited air time to tearing others apart. Video games and movies reflect or even encourage hateful themes. Songwriters dedicate entire albums to their hatred for others, only to be praised for their musical prowess. As a society, we have fallen prey to our own cold thoughts towards each other, and even those of us who can comprehend our hatred refuse to change it. We simply continue to drink tainted water from the well, and cast bodies over the wall, and allow the rats to wander about our houses. This allows the plague to spread not just unimpeded but assisted. We

have devolved into hatred's slaves; it is no wonder why we, much like the Europeans who fell to the black death, are destined to whiter by our own neglect.

“Society’s Ills: Realities and Solutions”

“To recognize structural violence forces us to ask questions about why we tolerate it, which have painful answers for the privileged elite,” write Winter and Leighton in a seminal 1999 essay. They further, “Our normal perceptual processes divide people into in and out groups...those outside our group lie outside our scope of justice. Injustice is barely noticed if it occurs to those who are invisible.” Although many are unaware of it, structural violence lays the groundwork for our society. A subtle system of domination lies behind every action, reaction, and transaction. America’s troubled history is not built on outright hatred or animosity; it is born of complex power relations that continue to color every corner of life. Discourses about hatred are unproductive because they accuse individuals for something largely beyond their control – most people are not hateful; they are only complicit. Which, in this society where violence is embedded, produces similar effects. Awareness of one’s own actions is important, but can only go so far. Instead, for real change, one must understand how the wider societal structure plays out on a small scale.

Cultural hegemony is the process by which ideology and customs spread throughout society, and it takes subtle, often undetectable forms. Examples of cultural hegemony include diamond rings as a symbol of marriage, indoor pine trees at Christmas, and most traditions that Americas take for granted. No one knows how or why these practices exist but they are accepted without question. This is the essence of why no one is aware of the larger power relations, including structural violence, that drive all facets of life.

Passive acceptance can produce major harm in a society, and it has in America many times before. For example, the Salem Witch Trials, and infamous event in American history in which many people were falsely accused of witchcraft and killed, was an instance in which the

majority of the society did not hate the supposed “witches”, but went along with the accusations so that they would be accepted and not ostracized. Arthur Miller famously illustrated this concept in his play *The Crucible* that followed characters such as Mary Warren who was aware that the accusations were unfounded but went along with them to save her own reputation. Every person does this, whether they are aware of it or not – they scapegoat another individual or even a whole group of people to preserve the wider society, or at least their own place in it. They create a double standard for those deemed threatening, and use this to perpetuate violence against them. This phenomenon is known as the State of Exception, and it is a major force of domination in society outlined by philosopher Foucault. Other examples of this include the Red Scare, which in the 1950s labeled many people as Communists and traitors. The Red Scare, which Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* to critique, mainly targeted the entertainment industry – people seen as eccentric, the outliers of society. The threats to the existing order.

Determining an implicit basis for who matters and who does not in any society is human nature. Today, groups such as Muslims, African Americans, and Hispanics are the targets of scapegoating. Although this reality is partly driven by outright hatred, it is also a result of a perceived threat that is a product of a long tradition of structural violence. For example, the Western otherization of Muslims dates back centuries, and is a produce of ideological and physical conflicts between Muslim Empires and Catholic Kingdoms. The Crusades are perhaps the epitome of the social dichotomy perpetuated between the two groups. Violent, largely meaningless conflict ensued in the name of... what? God? It is not hard to determine that the Crusades were not driven mainly by hatred of Muslims but rather a ruler’s hunger for power over land and religion’s hunger for power over life. Because of the need to fuel the army of crusaders, Muslims were painted in a very negative light. This portrayal has never ceased, the reason being

that is has been assimilated into subconscious assumptions and therefore rarely questioned. A more complex relationship now exists that allows the demonization of Muslims – the West has been taught that they are a threat, and radical groups have perpetuated this worldview. However, the foundation of this cultural animosity did not occur recently. It has been embedded in history since the beginning of the Common Era.

There is a psychological phenomenon known as confirmation bias which states that people who have preexisting views (largely because of cultural hegemony) will always more actively search for evidence to confirm these views. So it is with every misdeed of Muslims, African Americans, Hispanics, and on and on...crimes are not seen as isolated incidents, but rather part of a larger pattern that reflects on the moral character of the entire group. Because of preexisting ideologies developed over the course of centuries, every weakness is seen as innate, every misstep condemning. Humans love to categorize things. This nature is amplified when it exists in the same world that is driven by large, invisible forces of power, and further exacerbated by the principle of group polarization: within groups or even whole societies, in the presence of a single dominating ideology, conformity to it is increased and opposition is decreased. The will of the majority is powerful, and it is born of powerful forces.

This discussion of structural violence culminates in one driving force – an abstract, unemotional one, driven not by hatred but by profits. The single greatest contributor to violence of all time is none other than capitalism. Emotions manipulated by capitalism include greed, envy, and avarice. These, not hatred, are the emotions of violence. Most people do not abhor others. Instead, they fear them, seeing their power as a threat to their own standing in society. They resent them, craving some commodity they possess. Every person in America's motives are driven by profit or social gain. We want the things we do because this society has told us we

want them: a job, a house, money, a spouse, a nice car... the list goes on and on. This may not seem very threatening until we examine some of the effects of capitalism and the “free” market: massive wealth inequality and lack of upward mobility, many wars, colonialism, and even slavery. One of the most powerful critiques of capitalism is the 1905 novel *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. It unapologetically details the real world conditions created by capitalism for the “permanent underclass.” A century ago, these workers were subjected to numerous human rights abuses. Now, lower class Americans live better...right? To answer this question, a female journalist decided to enter the workforce in low-level jobs to determine how hard survival would be. Out of her experiences, she wrote *Nickel and Dimed*, a book in which she described the reality of the American poor – working three jobs and still barely able to afford rent. Such is the reality created by our economic structure.

What is the point of this explanation? The reality of the vices of capitalism, creating a societal structure teeming with violence but still largely ignored, exemplifies the challenge that faces the American people. How do we fit into the current structures that determine how society operates? How can we hope to control a complex system of violence seemingly beyond our reach? It is human nature to attempt to preserve the wellbeing of the group or society – it is how we have survived as a species: we are social animals. Because of this, we unconsciously conform to certain belief sets and actions that we think will achieve these ends. These actions include scapegoating, subjugating, and most other methods of exerting power of control over a person or group deemed threatening. We cannot change our human nature to adopt a utilitarian ethic, putting group wellbeing higher than individual wellbeing, but we can reexamine our beliefs about two things: first, where the utilitarian ethic goes too far, and second, what beliefs, systems, and actions *actually* lead to the greatest good.

Structural violence, according to Winter and Leighton, is born of otherization, or the creation of “in and out groups.” These groups are created in an attempt to maximize the utility of the majority. However, when one group is intensely exploited, the people in it are quite literally excluded from any sort of moral calculus, including one that aims to maximize happiness. People in the “out” groups are eventually not even considered. Thus, one must be careful when applying this mindset. Categorization of people is not born of hatred – it really does mean to achieve a wider benefit. However, the true effects of this categorization must be realized. It in fact does not lead to the most effective protection of human life.

So, in order to change society, we must not see ourselves as hateful beings who must change our emotions, or even neutrals who are unaffected by structural violence or systems of domination. Instead, we must see ourselves as manipulated by the larger forces of societal structure combined with psychological realities. This has many implications for how humans operate: it consists of questioning one’s actions and assumptions. Well-meaning intentions may lead to negative consequences when they operate in a society structured the way it is. Humans are not naturally spiteful creatures, but things we do not understand can easily sway us. This is why knowledge and understanding of not only ourselves, but also the forces that affect us, is key to address the problems of society.

“Who Am I To Hate Your Hatred?”

The principles of “survival of the fittest” and “natural selection” have been branded into our brains since birth. First place is always the esteemed end-goal, regardless of the morality of the path taken to get there. It is these pillars and values that have fostered the society we know today, full of hostility and hubris. Since its inception, America has propped itself up by ostracizing minorities and cultivating ignorance while denying or distancing itself from its actions when deemed illicit. It is clearly time to improve the system and adjust our focus to create a society based on love and ethics. After all, as Socrates who so astutely said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Wanting a prosperous future should imply admitting the hatred of the past and present while wanting to remedy the injustices of the country.

This American society, with limitless animosity, was established when the United States was created. It was not a negotiated compromise that won the United States its independence, but rather an era of violent protests and barbarous war. Those who resided in the British colonies despised British regulation with a passion and were willing to do whatever it would take to earn liberation. The Battles of Lexington and Concord, one of the first few battles of the American Revolution, was started because of an environment of hatred. Neither side took any violent actions until a rumor that shots had been fired emerged from the already provoked crowd and led to American civilians taking violent actions. The majority of American effort was focused on ridding the colonies of the detested British rules and regulations.

Soon, the United States had been established – on the basis of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” right? Not exactly. The revered democratic system did not extend itself

past land-owning, caucasian males. A clear example of an exploited minority group, African Americans were fettered by the chains of slavery, unable to receive basic, “unalienable” rights much less the right to a voice. The oppression of African Americans is exemplified in countless accounts from previously enslaved individuals such as Frederick Douglass, who wrote works detailing the hardships of slavery. Even when African Americans were granted the citizenship and suffrage, the white majority took measures to prevent them from voting. Without a doubt, the vote of millions of African Americans would lessen the self-proclaimed superiority of Anglo-Americans, who wanted to remain at the acme of the social, political, and economic ladder.

But of course, American acrimony encompassed Native American rights as well. Americans have always been blinded by the romanticized stories of Plymouth and Thanksgiving, where the pilgrims and Native Americans were intimate companions. Most never hear of the atrocities European settlers committed against Native Americans, pushing them away from their land, wiping out 99% of their population, and revoking their right to their culture and lifestyle. As European settlers have become “Americans” and America extended itself further west, the American government and people never tried to moderate their malevolence towards Native society. With the 1800s came the emergence of reservations, which were deemed an act of good will by the government for their willingness to allot Native Americans land. This, however, was another romanticized viewpoint of American citizens; the Native Americans were given thousands of acres of desolate, useless land. Later, through the Dawes Act, the American government attempted to “civilize” Native Americans into white society. But who decreed that white society was better than Native society just because its citizens had individual land instead of collective and had a different appearance?

Unlike most things, America's focus on hatred has not been mended over time; history has repeated itself. During the Great Depression, millions of Mexican-Americans and women, who were adopted into the workforce during World War 1, were fired to accommodate the influx of unemployed soldiers returning from the war. Mexican repatriation sparked controversy, but in the end, the self-professed superiority of the white American prevailed. In the latter parts of the twentieth century, American policy and sentiment were fueled by intense antipathy. During World War 2, as Americans went to war against Japan, the government sent Japanese-Americans to internment camps, regardless of how many generations they had lived in the United States or their level of manifest patriotism. In other words, hatred was used to combat hatred. This epitomizes the society America has grown to find comfort in – one in which the white man is paramount and his actions have no accountability attached. Later, after World War 2, the Cold War began. America found a new group to hate – Communists – and did everything they could to root “Commies” out. McCarthyism, the practice of making false allegations of disloyalty and Communist activity, was founded on the encouragement of diatribe and became widespread throughout America. The lives of many innocent Americans were ruined, but, as always, Americans saw their actions as nothing less than noble.

Moreover, in a capitalist economy, every American has been taught to fend for himself and focus on his own grandeur. In the late 1800s, Social Darwinism became a widely adhered to philosophy in the corporate world. Big business was unregulated and, therefore, allowed to do whatever it desired for capital. While it is true that corporate regulations have been imposed, the American capitalist cultural of survival of the fittest has remained and promoted indifference towards ethics and compassion.

If we fast forward to the present day, the prevalence of technology and digital media has only augmented a culture of hatred. Search engines are, in fact, encouraged to cater to the pre-existing beliefs of individuals. To them, providing information that is aligned with the users perspective, they are decreasing search time and increasing efficiency. However, this is detrimental to the unification of a country. Individuals of a certain political party or faction are more likely to be fed the same information and never once see the other side. A clear consequence of this is the polarization of America today. The “left” and “right” of the political spectrum continue to grow apart because, even if they try, they are unable to see or understand the opposing viewpoint.

Of course, the implications of the word hate itself is subject to interpretation. Who am I to say that Americans are wrong for hating Native Americans or communists? But in the same respect, why should someone else decide that I am wrong for condemning the actions of white America? While western cultures proclaim terrorists’ actions to be full of hate, the same terrorist groups believe they are spreading what is right for the world. The line between right and wrong, between love and hate, and between any other opposing forces often blur. After all, my denouncement of the antagonism of America is antagonism in itself, so who is really right?