

Being American: Our Changing Identity

By

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Introduction:

“We go forth all to seek America. And in seeking we create her.” –Waldo Frank

I was wearing my Captain America sweatshirt in near 100° weather and I felt good. It was red, white and blue day at the summer camp I have been working at almost every summer since I was 16. The same camp I had attended for five years from 8 to 12. My “leadership” professor, yes, I have a leadership professor, told me that this camp is like cookies and milk; something comforting from my childhood, but something I should move on from. Well... at 22 years of age I love cookies in milk; but I digress.

The sweatshirt had been given to me as a Christmas gift from my Student Government staff back at American University in Washington DC. I was the student government president the year prior. My staff, or, team, as I prefer to call them felt more like a family away from my family. Knowing my love for all things superhero and specifically Captain America, they had pulled their money together and gotten me the Captain America sweatshirt. It’s so loud you need earplugs to look at it and the hood actually has eyeholes in it so that you can pull it over your head to make a mask.

I didn’t have the mask on as I stood atop the hill overlooking the carpool as parents dropped their kids off for their respective group for the day. This is a day camp for kids 3 years old to 12. I happen to be the head counselor for the oldest group of boys, the 10 through 12 year olds. My sweatshirt was unzipped and I was wearing a blue “USA” shirt underneath, my shorts had a white and blue checkerboard pattern and I was wearing bright red high socks.

A small boy from one of the younger groups walked over to me and tugged on my sweatshirt to get my attention. I looked down to see his curious face staring back up at me. He had a round pale face, messy black hair and red juice stains already forming around his mouth. “um, whatsup?” I asked.

The boy looked me up and down and then said, “What does USA stand for?” He was young so actually this was a fairly reasonable question. I turned to him and knelt down so that I could talk to him at eye level.

“Well son, USA stands for a lot of things. It stands for Freedom and Independence, the right to question authority and the right for independence. It stands for becoming whatever you want and defining yourself not by your origin, but by your own standard of hard work and what you make of yourself.”

As I spoke I began staring off into the distance, feeling the strength and sincerity of my own words. A glance back to the boy and I saw that he too was squinting in the same direction that I had been staring off into.

“What are you looking at?” he asked, then shaking his head as if regretting the question he had just asked, “That didn’t make any sense at all!”

The boy gave me a confused angry look then stomped off only turning back to say, “You’re really weird” as if just to emphasize his thoughts of me even though he had already made them apparent.

The boy walked over to his counselor and one of my close friends, “Nick, what does USA stand for?”

Nick looked at the boy having heard his encounter with me, “It stands for the United States of America.”

He looked up at me and shook his head.

America.

About This Book

I am an American. However, I am not just an American, I am a 23 year-old boy... Man. I have two sisters, one is three years older than me and the other is three years younger. I was born in 1989, spent most of my life growing in a Philly suburb, attended a private high school, fell in love once and traveled abroad once. I am a millennial. Well, people might actually argue with me right there, cause technically millennial are those born between 1990 and 2000. However, culturally I still fall in the category of the Millennial... so what does that mean?

This is not a book about America, because our America will be different than any other America prior. Nor is this a book on how to be an American, because nobody

should ever tell us how to do that. Instead, this is a book about our identity, the identity of the millennial generation in America. I don't expect that I will be the last to write about this, but I may be one of the first of our generation to make an attempt at it. As a member of the millennial generation, I grew up in the 90's where I believed our country's ability to take on the world's problems were limitless. I believed in a future of perfectly sustainable flying cars, where everyone had equal rights, where we had landed on mars and AIDS was only referred to in history textbooks. And yet, the world I looked onto was wrought with war and inequality, was poorly educated, had a broken economy and a rapidly degrading earth. With that, came this growing trend of pessimism for things to come. Moreover, society will tell you that our generation is "troubled", has a short attention span, is disengaged and holds no respect for authority.

Well... I am not a pessimist, which is true for many of us out there. SO! I thought it time to redefine who we are. We are not the apathetic, undisciplined youth society and the media would have you believe us to be. We are creative, fully engaged and already changing the landscape of the future. My America... Excuse me, our America, will be better than it has ever been before. This is the story about how we (the millennial) are being American.

Each chapter will end with a food recipe that is relevant to the chapter and/or my life at that point. I think food is one of the best ways to understand and appreciate our culture as well as other cultures. In fact, I think it's one of the best ways to understand our own culture, perhaps more so with American cuisine than other cuisines. Afterall, what is American cuisine? Hamburgers and hotdogs? Nope, that's from Germany... Pizza? No,

that's Italian... Cheesecake? Nope, French. So what is American cuisine? Well, personally I think restaurant's like Applebee's or the Cheesecake Factory have American cuisine down the best. These are restaurants where you'll get Southern grilled chicken on a Mediterranean salad, an Asian eggroll filled with a Latino bean concoction, Pad Thai with a tall glass of raspberry lemonade and a side order of mac n' cheese and a big slice of oreo cheesecake for dessert!... Okay, maybe these are awkward combinations, but the point I'm trying to make is that our cuisine reflects our people. It too is an interaction and fusion of many different cultures!

So please enjoy! I have personally made (or attempted) all of these recipes, though not all of them are my own personal recipes (Yes I give credit to where I found them... god!).

American Apple Pie

I felt this first recipe was most appropriate, because what is more American than good ole' homemade Apple Pie.

Moreover, I grew up with the stuff. The recipe you see here can be found on

www.AllRecipes.com it's the same recipe I used when I made my first attempt at Apple pie. This is a really great website, it offers nutritional facts, straightforward recipes and directions and room for people to leave comments.

Linda Stradley in her piece,

"Apple Pie – A history of Apple Pie", notes that we've had the Apple Pie in our culture ever since the 18th Century. We've been eating this stuff ever since we were an English colony and the British brought over "pips" to be planted to grow apple trees.



Courtesy of FoodPornDaily

<http://foodporndaily.com/pictures/deep-dish-apple-pie-with-flaky-cheddar-crust-and-cinnamon-ice-cream/>

Ingredients:

1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
1/3 cup white sugar
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1/3 teaspoon ground cinnamon
7, 1/2 cups peeled, cored and sliced apples
1 cup raisins
1 recipe pastry for a 9 inch double crust pie
1 egg

Directions:

1. Preheat oven 425 degrees F (220 degrees C). Spray deep dish pie plate with cooking spray
2. Combine white sugar, light brown sugar, flour, lemon, cinnamon, and mix well.
Add apples and raisins to sugar mixture; stir until fruit is well coated.
3. Spoon apple mixture into piecrust. Place second piecrust on top of filling, and trim edges. Lightly glaze top of pie with a beaten egg, then sprinkled with a little sugar.
4. Bake till golden brown, about 35 to 40 minutes. Place on a wire rack, and cool 30 minutes.

Chapter 1: Culture is an Orange

“One cannot be an American by going about saying that one is an American. It is necessary to feel America, live America, love America and then work at it.” –Georgia O’Keeffe

“Take one and pass it down”, said professor Gary Weaver as he handed a bag of oranges to the student closest to him.

“I want each of you to take your orange and get acquainted with it. Examine it closely, get to know every bump and curve on the surface of your orange.” (By the way, I’m paraphrasing this lecture)

When I received my orange, I weighed it in my hand until I knew its weight, held it up closer to the light so that I could examine its peel closely. I felt around its outer rim so that I understood its unique bumps and dimple from where it was once held by a stem. Pretty soon I found myself getting attached to my fruit. I held it lovingly, even gave it a name... Charlie.

“Alright, now that you’ve gotten acquainted with your orange, place it back in the bag”, I looked up at professor Weaver. I had only just gotten to know Charlie, I wasn’t sure if I was ready to let go of him. But not wanting to let on too much that I had grown attached to my fruit, I placed him back in the bag with all of the others. Professor Weaver then mixed the oranges around in the bag again and then handed them back out.

“Do you have the same orange you had before?” he asked, and immediately everyone in the class muttered a similarly resounding “no”. The response from the class was both unanimous and instantaneous. No, none of us had the same orange we had before, moreover we could point to specific differences in this new orange that allowed us to quickly determine the difference.

We then placed all the oranges on a table together and went one by one to pick up *our* orange. I was reunited with Charlie once again.

“Your culture, is like that orange” Professor Weaver explained. He went further to explain that like the orange exercise, all of us have a specific unique cultural experience, but that oftentimes it is in the details that separate ours from others. However, despite there being only differences in details, it makes a huge difference for us as receptors of culture. This was my first experience with understanding culture. Furthermore, our culture is abstract, and yet there are specific physical characteristics that we can point to where we find it.

Professor Weaver told us the exercise was over, and that we could eat our oranges now if we wanted. I looked down at Charlie, somehow I couldn’t bring myself to eat him, I had actually grown attached. With a look of what I can only assume was amusement, professor Weaver began his lecture as the majority of the students in the class left their oranges sitting on their desk, unharmed.

Professor Gary Weaver is one of the world's foremost experts on culture and cross-cultural communications. I had the privilege of taking his Cross-Cultural Communications class when I was a Sophomore at American University in Washington DC. I remember first hearing of his expertise when I connected the dots between his name on the syllabus and his name on the big green "Culture, Communication and Conflict" textbook that was required of all Cross-Cultural Communication classes at American University.

Culture

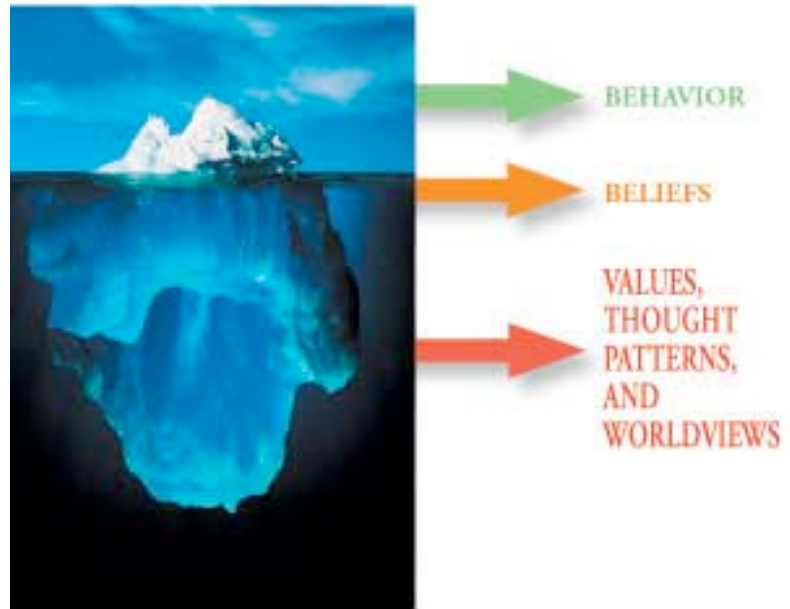
Most of what I know about culture is based on the lectures and information given to me by Professor Weaver himself. Culture involves the beliefs and way of life for a group of people. In essence, it's the programming that teaches people to behave and communicate a certain way. There are for example, instances of children who are raised without much of any human interaction and thus resort to animalistic tendencies. These children are often called "feral", and at a certain age are incapable of smoothly entering our society.

People generally have two cultures, that with which we grow into from birth (Enculturation) and that with which we experience as we grow older (Acculturation). People are constantly being acculturated as they experience new cultures and experiences. The millennial generation is going through a major process of acculturation right now as we enter and finish our college years and enter the workforce. However, for many of us, the process of enculturation has already occurred, the millennial generation experienced that through the 1990's. These unique experiences have defined our

perspectives on race, class, gender, ethnic groups, values, ethics and generational characteristics.

Professor Weaver has developed a theory for understanding culture in more tangible terms. He calls this theory, the Iceberg theory. It relates culture to that of an iceberg where there are parts that are

visible and parts that are invisible to the naked eye. The “visible” part of the iceberg that which is above the water is represented by our behavior. These are our cultural norms that are observed by the naked eye. Below the surface is our belief system and



below that are our values, thought patterns and worldviews. So, when conflicts arise between two different cultures, consider this a collision of two icebergs. The sections of the icebergs that are colliding are those pertaining to values, thought patterns and worldviews. All we see are the behaviors of people clashing, but what is actually occurring is non-visible and below the surface, a clash of values, of thoughts patterns and worldviews. To truly understand culture is to dig deeper than the visible behavioral norms. Almost all cultural manifestations can be explained with an understanding of those basic value and thought patterns by which everything else is explained.

So, what is the American cultural identity? Well, first of all there is no simple answer to that, and most Americans would probably disagree about their cultural identity (also an aspect of the American cultural identity). But that's what this book is really about, discovering our own cultural identity, that of the millennial as we begin to inherit the country.

Iceberg Wedge Salad

What's more American than taking something like a head of cabbage... and dumping cheese and bacon on top of it. I originally experimented with iceberg lettuce as the basis for vegetarian recipes when I directed a vegetarian cooking show on my university's student run tv network back during my freshman year of college. Most of my experimentation was unsuccessful. But this recipe I found as a contribution from Morton's the Steakhouse (<http://www.mortons.com>) on a website called www.delish.com. It's not technically vegetarian because of its use of bacon bits, but could easily be made to be vegetarian with just a slight change of recipe. Enjoy!



Ingredients:

- 2 heads iceberg lettuce
- ¾ cup Bacon Bits
- 1/4 cup egg, hard-boiled, chopped
- 1/4 cup tomato, chopped
- 1/4 cup blue cheese
- 1 1/2 cups Morton's Blue Cheese Dressing (below)

Morton's Blue Cheese Dressing Ingredients:

- 1 cup real mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup plus 1 tbs sour cream
- 2 tbs buttermilk
- 1/2 tsp Durkee Sauce
- 1/4 tsp seasoned salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3.5 oz (about 1/4 cups) blue cheese, crumbled

Directions for the Dressing:

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise and sour cream. Add the buttermilk, Durkee sauce, and seasoned salt. Whisk until well mixed. Season to taste with salt and pepper and whisk again.
2. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold in the blue cheese. Transfer to a storage container with a tight-fitting lid and refrigerate for at least 1 day and up to 4 days.

Directions for the Salad:

1. Remove any wilted outside leaves from lettuce head. Strike bottom of lettuce head on a flat surface to loosen core. Pull core out. Place lettuce head on cutting board and slice from top to bottom. Remove approximately one inch off each side, depending on the size of the head. Slice two 2-inch thick slices from center of head. Repeat with second head.
2. Ladle dressing across wedge so that it runs over one side. In this order sprinkle: bacon bits, chopped egg, chopped tomatoes, and blue cheese over the top of the salad.

Chapter 2: What...erm... Who... is American

"The foreign-born, the Third World immigrant with non-Western religions and non-European languages and appearance, can be as American as any steerage passenger from Ireland, Italy, or the Russian Pale" -Janet Sternburg

In 1920 Alessandro Lalli moved from his small town of Sessano Italy to the United States looking for a better life. The promise of free enterprise and a rapidly expanding economy drew the young Italian national to the shores of Philadelphia. His wife, Antonietta refused to join her husband on the journey because she felt Americans to be too “barbaric” for her liking. Alessandro quickly found work as a shoe repairman in Paoli, Pennsylvania. He lived in a small apartment just above the shop, at night during the winter, the temperature dropped so low that water left out would freeze. It was a tough life, but Alessandro was hardworking and determined. After a decade and a half he had earned enough money to buy his own shoemaker shop in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. So in 1937 he wrote a letter to his 18-year old son Anthony, requesting that he too leave Italy and come join him in the United States. The purpose of this request was to avoid Mussolini’s military draft for the war just beginning to consume Europe. Anthony never knew his father, having only been 9 months old when he originally left for America. However, Mussolini’s war meant near certain death in the forests of Tunisia where many of Italy’s soldiers were sent to fight, so for Anthony the decision was clear. Anthony accepted his father’s request and within the year boarded a boat headed to the United States.

Anthony worked in his father’s shoemaker shop, it’s where he earned his living, learned English and eventually fell in love when a gutsy young woman named Rose Alesiani walked into his shop. Life was difficult for the new immigrants as they

acculturated to American society, but they were safe and free from the oppression of axis powers. Anthony found himself family, work and a home in America; the only thing he lacked was American citizenship. Then Europe's war found its way to America. On December 7th, 1941 the "date which will live in infamy" America changed forever. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor shocked the nation out of isolationism. In a moment, America's safety was contested and future uncertain. The following day Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to an anxious nation, promising justice, security and a better tomorrow. He declared war on Japan,

"No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people will through their righteous might win through to absolute victory... With confidence in our armed forces-with the unbounded determination of our people-we will gain the inevitable triumph-so help us God."

February 4th, 1942, Anthony received a letter from the government of United States. He was given a month to either join the army and fight for the Allies in the now global conflict, or be ejected from the US and return to Italy. In essence, the US offered Anthony an option for obtaining citizenship, join the army and fight the same axis powers he had fled. Anthony took the deal reluctantly leaving Rose and his life in America behind to fight Nazis in Europe. In 1943 Rose received a letter from the US government, Anthony had gone missing over enemy lines, presumed KIA.

In May 1945, Anthony was found in a prisoner camp in Germany. It turns out he hadn't been killed, he had been captured behind enemy lines; the conditions he endured was so intense that his stomach shrank to the size of walnut. His diet consisted almost entirely of baby food for two years until he fully recovered. As for Rose, well she didn't

waste much time once Anthony came “back from the dead”, by July 1945 they were married. The army gave Anthony time in Atlantic City to recuperate; he used it to take his newly wed wife on a honeymoon. Rose and Anthony would buy a small property in Paoli, Pennsylvania where they would build a house and eventually have 3 daughters together: Linda, Nina and Lisa. Nina is my mom.

Rose, would pass away on July 11th 1968 from Breast Cancer. Anthony, my grandfather, would remarry in 1978 to another woman named Rose (I think that’s just a coincidence...). Apparently at this time, my grandfather and grandmother were working in a paper bag factory, my grandfather was a machine adjuster and that’s where they met. Through my childhood, my family would spend almost all of our holiday’s at my grandfather’s house. With the exception of maybe birthdays, it was the one location that physically got us all together again. The house is a white one story suburban home that sits on a beautiful 2-acre plot. At the end of the property my grandfather kept a garden where he’d grow fresh ingredients for the very same Italian delicacies he’d cook for us during holidays. There also lay a rundown beaten up chicken coop long vacant from the days that my grandfather and my mom kept chickens and ducks (mostly as pets though they’d use their eggs). Our holidays were spent in the large spacious basement below the house where my grandfather tended this big crackling fireplace that gave me the soundtrack of Christmas and Easter.

My grandfather would live to be 97. He passed away in late August of 2010. I was asked to give his Eulogy. It was a bright, but oddly chill Tuesday in the waning days of summer. It was the first week of classes back at American, but I left for a couple of days to be with my family and play my part at the funeral. Before I spoke I remember the

setting was solemn, about what you'd expect at the funeral of someone who was fortunate enough to reach 97.

"Hello, My name is Nate Bronstein, and Tony Lalli was my grandfather."

The rustling of tissues and whispers silenced as I began.

"And if there is one thing about him, it is this... He was the best grandfather to have for a middle and elementary school project. Pick an immigrant in your life? Done! Interview someone who has overcome a great obstacle in their life? Done! Do a report on a European country? I pick Italy! Done! I've done more reports, posters and presentations on this man, than I have done on any author, athlete or president."

That was my attempt at humor, and it succeeded in breaking solemn faces into etched smiles and cracking the silence with laughter. But I was being honest, my grandfather was the perfect case study for many of the projects I was assigned through elementary, middle and even high school.

"But those were all just the facts and stories behind the man I got to know as I grew up. From refusing to be held by him as an infant, to my excitement upon hearing that he'd be baby-sitting my sister and I. To my confusion the first time he said, 'watch for the bones' as I enthusiastically dug into my Jell-O, to my annoyance and –sigh- the second, third,

fourth and thirtieth time he butchered that same joke. This is to you Tony Lalli, my grand father.”

The room fell silent again, this time their attention held by my words.

“To the pride we all held in your beautiful garden, and the joy I personally felt biting into one of your raw tomatoes freshly picked from their vines. To those smells and sounds of summer my sisters and I spent at your house, or on that swing of yours. To my fiery determination and competitive drive I felt every time we launched a new Easter egg hunt in your yard. To the way the soft smell of smoke towering into grey through the chimney and the ever constant and familiar crackle of your fireplace somehow seemed to make Christmas eve special. To the first time you offered me a glass of wine and I felt truly grown up, or that time you had us use jars of our own urine ward of ground hogs and I felt juvenile. I stand here today, and I wonder. If we were told at birth and everyday thereafter that we are dying, how would we live our lives? Would we live it to its fullest? Would we allow ourselves to love? Or close off hope of that for fear of pain? Would we build ourselves a home? Or stay adrift so as not to experience loss? Would we find a belief and a cause, and fight for it with everything we had? Or would we stay causeless, for fear of being beaten down? For this man, there would be no hesitation with how to answer those questions. At 17 he left his family and all that he loved, but found himself a new family, a new wife, and a grandmother that I would sadly never know. And when she passed, he did not give up hope and he maintained his capacity for love and he remarried. And at 17, when he left his home and traveled across a great ocean to a distant

land, he built himself a new home; both figuratively and literally, and he started from scratch. And upon landing on our shores, he found himself thrown into a great war. A war that tested his strength and endurance in every way imaginable, a war that tested his faith in god. But he endured, through all of the unimaginable hardships a POW and soldier could face, he endured, so that others wouldn't have to, and so that we could have the rights we enjoy so freely today. This was a war from which he would return a hero. This man raised my mother and my aunts, he helped raise me and my sisters. He extended his family beyond blood and because of him, Ellen his caregiver and her son Richard are also a part of our family, just as much as any of us. Looking at this man, and everything he did, all that he endured, all the trepidations he overcame; this is a man that embodies a generation's unbeatable determination to do the job at hand. And looking back, it is clear to me, that anyone can die, but it takes courage to truly live life. Life lives, life dies. Life laughs, life cries, it tries and gives up. But life looks different through everyone's eyes. And I take comfort in the fact that through those eyes, life was beautiful. The ripple from my grandfather may at first seem small, but it will gain momentum, and it will be insurmountable. Because my grandfather will be passed on through his daughters, and through me, my sisters and everyone else who he touched. My grandfather, in this sense, beat death. He could not stop it from happening, but what he did do was far more meaningful. He prevented death from separating us from him. We have our memories of him, we will have his lessons and his passion. We will not forget the things he did or the things he said. But even if we did, we could never forget how he made us all feel. Tony Lalli, my grandfather's life, is far more powerful than

death will ever be. The world, is that much better and that much more beautiful because of him, and we will all miss him, very much.”

The legality of citizenship in America has changed dramatically over the last century. It has ebbed and flowed with America’s tolerance and role in the global community. However, originally the debate around citizenship was centered on the legality for those of African American descent. World War II catapulted the country on the international stage in a way where conflicts regarding immigration policy were inevitable. The debate today is centered on increasing security along our Southern border, the issue of illegal immigration and the inefficient system by which individuals are expected to legally obtain citizenship. Since the turn of the century, Immigration has become an integral piece of the American culture. In 2006 columnist Charles Krauthammer described the US as an, “interaction and fusion of cultures¹”. Professor Gary Weaver in his journal entry *The American Tapestry*, compares the American identity to more of a cultural tapestry where the cultural framework of the US exists more like a mosaic of different peoples². Regardless of one’s interpretation, it is clear that the existence of immigration has had a major affect on American society and American culture. This has been true since before World War II when my grandfather obtained his citizenship and since before World War I when my great grandfather obtained his.

¹ Krauthammer, Charles. "Don't Believe the Hype. We're Still No. 1." *TIME* 5 Feb. 2006. *Www.time.com*. 5 Feb. 2006. Web. 2 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1156589,00.html>>.

² Weaver, Gary. "The American Cultural Tapestry." *EJournal USA* (2006). *Www.America.gov*. 1 June 2006. Web. 3 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/May/20080528175157xjsnommis0.4013636.html>>.

However, our methods for allowing citizenship and respecting the flow of peoples across our borders *have* changed dramatically over the years.

Before I really get into how immigration has changed and affected America through the decades, I want to backtrack to our formation as a country. Our original ancestors were predominantly white Europeans, but they were not typical Europeans. After all, to take a chance on the “new world” and brace the treacherous journey across the Atlantic ocean, you’d be insane by the standards of some people. Some of our ancestors, were draft dodgers, religious enthusiasts, even criminals. To leave everything behind in their “old country”, they must’ve been willing to give up tradition and embrace change. They were focused on self-achievement, progress and self-determination. Most of all, they were willing to embrace change and take risks. Our nation formed from this flow of immigrants and through its history we’ve fought very few wars on our soil, have experienced relatively consistent success and never experienced the feudal system. All of these characteristics differ very distinctly from our European counterparts.

Origin of Naturalization in the US

Our first distinct attempt at addressing naturalization rules and regulations was in 1790. This was the Naturalization Act of 1790 that limited naturalization to only those immigrants who were deemed “free white persons” and also were of “good moral character”³. With this act citizenship was inherited only through the father, thus if a child were born in the US and its father was not an American, the child too would not obtain

³ Landsberg, Brian K. "Naturalization Act (1790)." *Major Acts of Congress*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004. 63-65. Print.

American Citizenship⁴. This act created major ambiguities for immigration law, it also purposefully excluded American Natives, Indentured Servants, Blacks and Asians. Five years later this act was repealed and replaced by the Naturalization Act of 1795. This new act upheld the previous reservation of citizenship for “free white persons,” but complicated the attainment of citizenship by requiring that an individual have a residency of 5 years before obtaining citizenship. The previous act required an individual to have residency for 2 years⁵. This act also required that an immigrant renounce his former citizenship and that they declare their intent for citizenship at least three years before the start of the process. This standard would remain the same until the 14th amendment of 1868 brought on by the case of Dredscott v. Sandford in 1857.

Dredscott v. Sandford

Prior to the Dredscott v. Sandford case, Congress had passed the Missouri compromise in 1820, which was an agreement between pro-slavery and anti-slavery states in the United States⁶. According to the compromise, states north of Kentucky prohibited slavery⁷. This ultimately is considered to be one of the many precursors to the Civil War, however it also created an immediate question on whether or not those individuals who were former slaves could receive citizenship. Moreover it raised the question of the status of the citizenship of the children of slaves who were born in Northern states. Dred Scott was a slave from Missouri, a state that allowed slavery.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ 60 U.S. 393; 15 L. Ed. 691; 1856 U.S. LEXIS 472; 19 HOW 393. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2012/04/16.

⁷ “Missouri Compromise”. *Primary Documents in American History*. [www.LOC.gov](http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Missouri.html). 6 April, 2012. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Missouri.html>

However, from 1833 to 1843 he resided in Illinois and the Northern part of Louisiana that prohibited slavery⁸. After these ten years he returned to Missouri where his former slave owner had passed away and sued his former slave owner's widow for his freedom. Scott cited his residency in a free state and claimed that this had entitled him to his freedom and citizenship⁹. Having failed to prove his case in state courts, Scott appealed to the local federal courts and later saw his case taken to the Supreme Court.

The case was more complicated than a simple, "is Dred Scott a slave or not". It also posed the question of whether or not a slave could become free upon entering a free state, if a non-citizen could sue in federal courts and if the Federal Government could deny a citizen the right to property without due process¹⁰. In favor of Dred Scott, some argued that upon entering the free state of Illinois, Dred Scott's new status of freedom overrode his previous status of servitude. This is further strengthened since it is slavery was forbidden in Illinois, and thus Scott legally could not be considered a slave within that territory. Countering this is the argument that depriving an individual of property without due process is a direct violation of the 5th amendment. Thus, as a slave, Dred Scott would remain the property of his owner even in the free territory.

In 1857 in a 7-2 decision, the court ruled in favor of the slave owner stating that Scott is not only a slave, but never had the right to use the federal courts. Justice Roger B. Taney drafted the opinion that stated the National government is the only body that can confer citizenship, and that a slave is not a citizen. Thus, no person descended from a slave could be considered a citizen. The court also ruled that the Missouri compromise

⁸ Kommers, Donald P., John E. Finn, and Gary J. Jacobsohn. *American Constitutional Law: Essays, Cases, and Comparative Notes*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. Print.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ 60 U.S. 393; 15 L. Ed. 691; 1856 U.S. LEXIS 472; 19 HOW 393. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2012/04/16.

itself is unconstitutional thus permitting slavery in all states. While this was a major setback for abolitionists, it also drew more attention to the idea of naturalization and the legality behind obtaining and maintaining citizenship. Unfortunately it would take a bloody Civil War to repeal the decisions made in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.

The 14th Amendment

Following the Civil War, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was created specifically to protect the rights of African Americans. The 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments (Reconstruction Amendments) of the constitution were then adopted to protect the Civil Rights act and redefine citizenship in the US¹¹. Specifically the 14th, adopted in 1868 included three clauses that dramatically affected citizenship in the United States¹². These three clauses include the Citizenship Clause, the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause. The Citizenship Clause specifically overruled *Dred Scott v. Sandford* by stating that all individuals born in the United States are US citizens¹³. The Due Process Clause prevents the government from taking a person's life, liberty or property without fairness. Finally, the Equal Protection Clause required that states provide equal protection under law to all people within jurisdiction. Later on, this final clause would help end racial segregation and gender inequality¹⁴. Combined, these clauses permitted naturalization for all citizens in the United States regardless of race, protected the "privileges and immunities" of citizens, protected citizens from being denied life, liberty

¹¹ Kelly, Martin. "14th amendment summary." [www.About.com](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/a/14th-Amendment-Summary.htm). *American History*. 3 April 2012. <http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/a/14th-Amendment-Summary.htm>

¹² Ibid

¹³ Legg, Basil R. "The Equal Protection Clause - An Individual Right To Equal Protection Of The Law." *George Washington University Law Journal* (2011). Print.

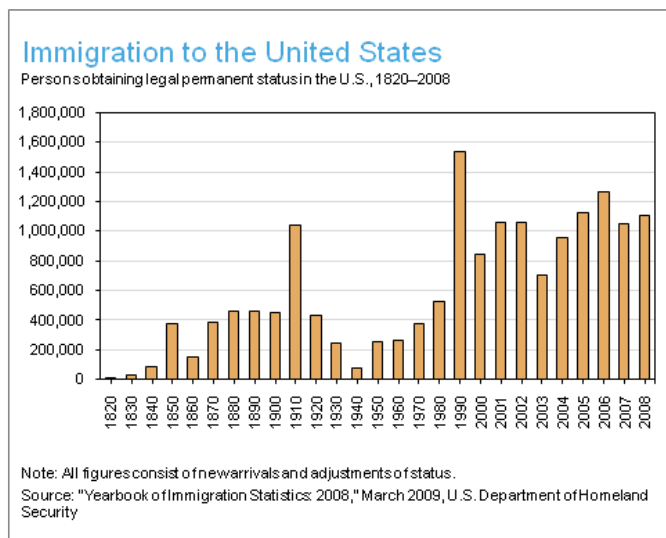
¹⁴ Ibid

or property without due process and ensured that all citizens would receive, “equal protection of the laws”¹⁵.

These new laws lay the groundwork for later immigration policies. Until this period in American history, traveling across state boundaries was an equivalent to a foreign born citizen traveling to the United States. States held different rulings on basic parameters surrounding what defined citizenship. The 14th and later 15th amendment ended this debate on a legal level though debate persisted on a cultural level. True integration and acceptance of these new policies would not occur for another 60 years. After which, along with the civil rights movement, American moved on to other matters concerning immigration and citizenship. It is necessary to realize that every major turning point for policy regarding citizenship and acceptance of “foreign born” citizenship requires both a legal and a cultural shift.

Influx and Resistance

With the end of the Civil War, increased industrialization and stabilization of domestic law, immigrants begin pouring into the United States. Some of these immigrants come to take advantage of the rapidly expanding economy while others come to the US to flee religious persecution. The Naturalization Act of 1870 is passed specifically to outline



¹⁵ Ibid

naturalization laws for immigrants. From 1871 to 1881 there is a massive influx of almost 3 million immigrants¹⁶. In the next decade from 1881 to 1891, this number reaches 5.5 million¹⁷. The result was a string of new legislation aimed at limiting immigration and excluding certain pockets of people, specifically the Asian community.

In 1848, hundreds of thousands of Chinese flocked to the West Coast looking for a better life during the height of the Gold Rush¹⁸. The Chinese were often viewed with prejudice and perceived as being inferior, but their cheap labor helped construct the transcontinental railroad. After the gold rush Chinese immigrants continued pouring into the country, their cheap labor was blamed for rising unemployment among the white population and previously assimilated European immigrants¹⁹. The resulting concerns resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was the first major law in the US that restricted immigration. The law was signed and placed into effect on May 6th 1882 and it halted Chinese immigration for ten years and prohibited Chinese from obtaining citizenship²⁰. Then in 1892 the law was extended for another ten years only to be made permanent in 1902²¹. While some of these restrictions were put in place due to economic concerns, the cultural concerns cannot be ignored. The Chinese were treated especially poorly and excluded from the country because their physical differences made it more difficult for them to assimilate into American society like their European counterparts²².

¹⁶ Smith, Martin L. "Key Dates and Landmarks in United States Immigration History". *Immigration to the United States*. Harvard University Library Open Collections Program. 1999. <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/timeline.html>

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Miller, Joaquin. "The Chinese and the Exclusion Act". *The North American Review*, Vol. 173, No. 541 (Dec., 1901), pp. 782-789. Published by: University of Northern Iowa

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)". *Immigration to the United States*. Harvard University Library Open Collections Program. 1999. <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/exclusion.html>

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

It's relevant to note that only ten years after the original Chinese Exclusion Act, the United States passed the Naturalization Act of 1906, which required all individuals who sought citizenship to learn English first. These laws effectively froze immigration from China for 60 years and made assimilation and the obtainment of citizenship for Chinese already living in the US, nearly impossible²³. This act did specifically target the Chinese community, but it was not the only example of resistance to the influx of immigrants. The Chinese Exclusion Act preceded the Immigration Act of 1924 that set strict limitations on the influx of immigrants from all countries. It limited that annually the US would only accept a number of immigrants that from a particular country that equaled or undershot 2% of the total size of immigrant population already residing in the United States²⁴. Three years later (1927), this would be amended to remove the percentage system and replace it with a general quota of 150,000 immigrants annually²⁵. This was the first standard quota set for US immigration.

Reopening of Immigration Policy

World War II shifted American immigration policy. The nation was flung onto the international scene in such a way where the isolationist policies of the prior century were no longer practical. These shifting of policies would ultimately result in another great rush of immigrants to the US and the revival of immigrant populations that were previously barred. The three main pieces of legislation that brought about a shift in immigration policy are the Bracero Program, Magnuson Act and the War Brides Act.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ "National Origins Act." *Immigration Laws*. www.immigration.laws.com. Web. 13 Apr. 2012. <<http://immigration.laws.com/national-origins-act>>.

²⁵ Ibid

First, the Bracero program was initiated in 1942. It targeted Mexican nationals specifically and was designed to temporarily contract Mexican laborers to come the US and work to help the American military industry for the war effort²⁶. This was not a matter debated and agreed upon by Congress or the Supreme Court. Instead, the decision to initiate the Bracero Program was made between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mexican president Manuel Avila Camacho. The agreement lasted until 1947 when it was renewed specifically for the agricultural industry later expiring in 1964²⁷. This was not a permanent agreement but rather a “guest worker policy”. The Mexican nationals were hired for a limited period of time, but then returned to Mexico at the end of their terms. However, the Bracero program saw approximately 4.5 million cross the Southern border and laid a foundation for greater fluidity along the border²⁸. Moreover, while illegal, not all of the 4.5 million who crossed over returned to their country at the end of their terms. This was especially true for those who had remained in the US for 10 years or more²⁹.

The Magnuson Act was signed on December 17th, 1943, the same year that China became an official ally of the United States in World War II. The act allowed Chinese immigration for the first time since the original Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882³⁰. Furthermore, the act allowed certain individuals of Chinese descent in the US to finally obtain their citizenship. This was the first time since 1790 that Chinese were permitted to be naturalized, although it maintained a previous ban on Chinese from owning property

²⁶ Massey, Douglas S., and Zai Liang. "The Long-term Consequences of a Temporary Worker Program: The US Bracero Experience." *Population Research and Policy Review* 8.3 (1989): 199-226. Print.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Bixby, Michael B. "Judicial Interpretation Of The Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act." *American Business Law Journal* 22.2 (1984): 125-64. Print.

or businesses by ethnic Chinese³¹. While this was, to some degree, a step forward for US immigration, it *did* limit the number of Chinese that could enter the country to approximately 105 a year due to the constraints set by the Immigration Act in 1924³². Chinese immigration remained disproportionately low through World War II up until 1965. After the war the third major act of World War II, the War Brides Act allowed spouses and adopted children of US military personnel to enter the country³³. The War Brides Act of 1945 shifted the parameters that determined citizenship by association and temporarily removed immigration quotas that had been previously been set.

It's self-apparent that the presence of war dramatically shifted immigration policy at a rate far faster than what had originally occurred. Prior to the Second World War, immigration and naturalization policy required years of debate and transition on a legal level and even more time on a cultural level. The presence of war made open immigration policies more practical; that along with an expansion of the powers of the President allowed the executive to rapidly change policy without much debate. The US post-World War II, while not as open as it is today, would never limit immigration like it did before WWII.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

Following the Second World War, the United States began playing a much larger role in the international community. 1965 was both at the height of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, the prior policies of the 1920's quota system was viewed as an

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ M, Thomas. "1945 War Brides Act: American War Brides Experience." *American War Bride Experience*. 2005. Web. 15 Apr. 2012. <<http://uswarbrides.com/WW2warbrides/1945act.html>>.

embarrassment³⁴. The US at this time was utilizing an international policy to attract other nations in order to better compete against the iron curtain and spread of communism. Meanwhile domestic pressure from the Civil Rights movement pushed US policymakers in the direction of a more open immigration policy³⁵. The result was the Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished the quota system replacing it with a preference system that weighed an immigrants skills and familial ties to the US. Restrictions on visas were set at 170,000 a year, though this did not include immediate relatives to US citizens³⁶.

This policy change had dramatic effects on the culture of the US. One third of population growth became driven by legal immigration. Before the act the immigration made up only one tenth of the total growth. Furthermore, more immigrants from Latin America, Asia and the Mediterranean began pouring into the country. This act is the precursor for many of the notions of America's melting pot ideal. In the 2000 census it was estimated that 11.1% of all American citizens are foreign born.

Modern Immigration Policy

By 1990, policymakers had experienced a major shift in their openness towards immigration. The Immigration Act of 1990 increased the immigrant cap by well over 40%³⁷. With its signing, the US permitted the acceptance of up to 700,000 visas per year. The decision process was placed through a lottery system, though those who had close familial ties were favored. This resulted in another major influx of immigrants, so the act

³⁴ Luibheid, E. "The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act: An "End" to Exclusion?" *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 5.2 (1997): 501-22. Print.

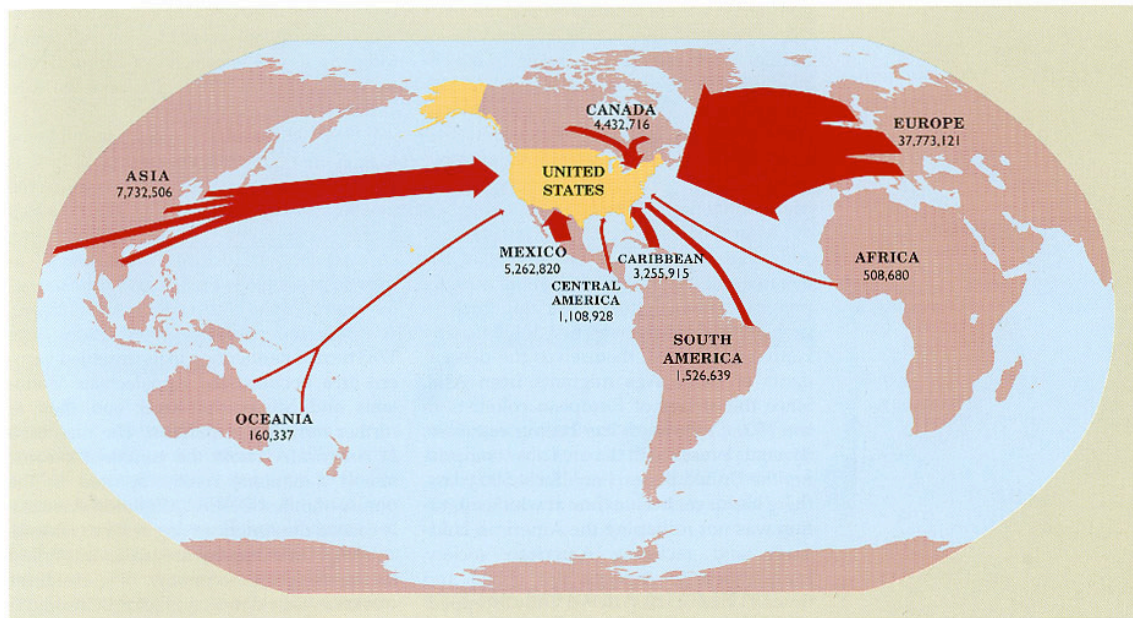
³⁵ Bennett, M. T. "The Immigration and Nationality (McCarran-Walter) Act of 1952, as Amended to 1965." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 367.1 (1966): 127-36. Print.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ "Immigration Act of 1990." *USCIS* -. Web. 15 Apr. 2012.

<<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=84ff95c4f635f010VgnVCM1000000ecd190aRCRD>>.

further included a clause that would favor up to 50,000 applicants from nations that had few emigrants to the US³⁸.



Sources of U.S. Immigration, 1820–1995

The United States is a net immigrant country, meaning that more people enter the country than leave. There has been an increase in the number of people emigrating out of the US³⁹. There are a number of reasons for this phenomenon. In part it is because of economic reasons when there is job creation and invention overseas that attracts citizens elsewhere in the world. Another plausible reason is that individuals serving in the military who are stationed elsewhere in the world sometimes give up their American citizenships to continue their life in the foreign countries they have been living. Political reasons can also result in a shifting of citizenship⁴⁰. For example, dissatisfaction with the 2000 presidential election led to a small but noticeable bump in the number of individuals who emigrated from the US.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Schachter, Jason P. "Estimation of emigration from the United States using international data sources". United Nations. Nov 2006.
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/migrationegm06/doc%2019%20ilo.pdf>

⁴⁰ Ibid

Today immigration is one of the most significant methods for population growth in the United States. Moreover, it is one of the biggest reasons for why, despite being a developed nation, the US remains relatively young while her counterparts in Europe continue to age. Many point to immigration as one of America's greatest strengths. Charles Krauthammer described the US as an, "Interaction and fusion of cultures"⁴¹, pointing to the fact that, "Intel was cofounded by a Hungarian, Google by a Russian, Yahoo! by a Taiwanese."⁴² Others have similarly referred to America's healthy flow of immigrants as a source of strength. Amy Chua in her novel *Day of Empire*, describes America as a "hyperpower", citing that the "real secret to America's strength lies in its human capital. [that] if relative tolerance is the key to world dominance, the United States has always had a huge advantage over other nations of Europe. Not only has America attracted immigrants; it is a nation of immigrants."⁴³ She goes further to note that "95% of Americans today descend from someone who crossed an ocean to get here."⁴⁴

However, there is still intolerance and aggression towards immigration in America today. This is true even if we have moved on from much of the antagonism against immigrants in the 19th and 20th century. This brings into play what Professor Weaver calls the cultural cookie cutter. It's the argument that, while America is tolerant in a lot of ways, you need to fit within a standard cultural mold to truly be accepted in

⁴¹ Krauthammer, Charles. "Don't Believe the Hype. We're Still No. 1." *TIME* 5 Feb. 2006. *Wwww.time.com*. 5 Feb. 2006. Web. 2 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1156589,00.html>>.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Chua, Amy. *Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise To Global Dominance--And Why They Fall*. New York: Doubleday, 2007. Print.

⁴⁴ Ibid

American society. Those immigrants with physical differences thus had the hardest time assimilating into American culture. However it's not just about physical differences, religion, languages and customs have all served to affect whether or not a people can easily assimilate. Now, this isn't to say a people who are very different cannot find their place in America! Now more than ever they really can, and more so than ever there is room and acceptance for differences. However, there *is* an *American* culture, and those cultures that run antagonistically to it may clash... But I'll get to more of that later.

Ragu Alla Bolognese

I thought it would be appropriate to honor my grandfather with a recipe that is reminiscent of what he cooked for me in my childhood. In Italy there is a major cultural divide between the North and the South. Southern Italian cuisine tends to be more traditional while Northern Italian Cuisine has mixed with surrounding European and Western influences. This dish is a meat based pasta dish similar to what my grandfather would make on certain holidays and sometimes, if we were lucky, our birthdays. I found this recipe on www.italianchef.com. It's one of my personal favorites.



Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped fine
- 1 stalk celery, chopped fine
- 1 carrot, chopped fine
- 4 ounces pancetta, diced
- 4 pounds beef short ribs, cut into 2 inch pieces
- 2 35-ounce cans imported Italian peeled tomatoes
- 1 cup beef broth
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

- 4 leaves of basil, chopped
- 1 pound mezze rigatoni
- Freshly ground ricotta salata cheese for serving

Directions:

1. In a large deep sauce pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot and celery, cook stirring occasionally until the onion is translucent, about 10 minutes.
2. Add the short ribs and pancetta and brown the ribs on all sides.
3. Crush the tomatoes with your hands, and add to the pot. Then add the beef broth, season with salt and pepper to taste, and let simmer, stirring occasionally for 2-1/2 hours. Add the chopped basil in for the last 10 minutes of cooking.
4. Bring a pot of generously salted water to a boil, add the mezze rigatoni and cook until al dente. Toss the pasta with some of the sauce, sprinkle with grated ricotta salata cheese and serve as first course. Transfer the ribs from the sauce to a serving platter and serve as the second course.

Italian Meatballs

Growing up, I loved my grandfather's meatballs. This was the best part of any pasta dish, and the best part about them was the leftovers. My mom used to cut some of them up and make them into sandwiches to pack for my school lunches. When it came to holidays at my grandfather's house, his meatballs were the gift that keeps on giving. I know I've already given a recipe relevant to my grandfather, but his meatballs are just too good to pass up. This was the taste of my holidays...



Now, this recipe is the closest I have found to what my grandfather used to make. I found it on a very handy website called www.simplerecipes.com. Really as long as you have the right ingredients you make this bad boy in 45 minutes or so. Also, I encourage you all reading this at home to experiment with the recipe. One time I added brown sugar, another time I added maple syrup, just a thought!

Ingredients for the Meatballs:

- 1 pound ground beef (at least 16 percent fat)
- 1 pound ground pork

- 2/3 cup milk (whole or 2 percent)
- 3 slices of white bread, crusts removed (about 3 ounces)
- 1/4 cup ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan or romano cheese
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons Kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano or marjoram
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- About 1 cup of flour for dusting
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 1/2 cups (24 ounces) of tomato sauce

Ingredients for the Tomato Sauce:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 3/4 cup finely chopped onions
- 3/4 cup finely chopped carrots
- 3/4 cup finely chopped celery
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 28 oz. can crushed or whole tomatoes, including the juice, or 1 3/4 pound of fresh tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil or 2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions⁴⁵:

1. Start with the tomato sauce, which will simmer while you prepare the meatballs. Heat olive oil in a large skillet on medium heat. Add the onions, carrots, celery, and parsley. Stir to coat with the oil, reduce the heat to low and cover the pan. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes until the vegetables are soft and cooked through. Remove the cover, add the garlic, and increase the heat to medium high. Cook the garlic for half a minute, then add the tomatoes (if using whole canned, break up with your fingers as you add them to the pan.) Add the tomato paste and basil. Season with salt and

⁴⁵ Taken from: http://simplyrecipes.com/recipes/italian_meatballs/

pepper. Bring to a low simmer, reduce the heat to low and let cook uncovered until thickened while you prepare the meatballs, 15 to 30 minutes. Purée in a blender, or push through a food mill for a smooth consistency. Adjust seasonings.

2. Heat the milk in a small pot until steamy. Turn off the heat, tear the bread into little pieces and soak it in the milk until it partially dissolves. Mash it until you get something that resembles a paste. Turn it out onto a plate to let it cool.
3. In a large bowl, combine the beef, pork, ricotta cheese, grated parmesan, eggs, salt, parsley, oregano, black pepper, garlic cloves and the bread-milk mixture. Mix it well with your hands until it barely combines. Don't overwork the mixture or it will become tough. It is OK to have some discernable bits of bread or meat in the mix; better that than overworked meatballs.
4. Wet your hands and form the meatballs. A traditional size for this sort of meatball is 2-3 inches across, but you can make them any size you want. Once you roll the meatball in your hands, roll it in the flour to give it a good coating. Set each one on a baking sheet as you work. You might need to rinse your hands a few times as you make the meatballs.

5. When all the meatballs are formed, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Brown the meatballs on at least two sides. Don't worry about the center getting cooked through, as you will finish these in the sauce.
6. Once all the meatballs are browned, arrange them in the sauce, turning each one over in the sauce to coat. Cover the pot and simmer gently for 15-20 minutes. Serve with the sauce and pasta or crusty bread. Sprinkle with a little chopped parsley for garnish if you want.

Chapter 3: When in doubt, dawn your cape

*"Each must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, and which course is patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide it against your convictions is to be an unqualified and inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let men label you as they may. If you alone of all the nation shall decide one way, and that way be the right way according to your convictions of the right, you have your duty by yourself and by your country. Hold up your head. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Doesn't matter what the press says. Doesn't matter what the politicians or the mobs say. Doesn't matter if the whole country decides that something wrong is something right. This nation was founded on one principle above all else: The requirement that we stand up for what we believe, no matter the odds or the consequences. When the mob and the press and the whole world tell you to move, your job is to plant yourself like a tree besides the river of truth, and tell the whole world--
--No **you** move." --Captain America*

I stared out at my entire high school sitting motionless in their seats of our auditorium waiting for me to make the morning announcement. It's 2008 and I am a senior at my small private High School Shipley, located in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. With class sizes of about 80 people, we're small enough that we're able to gather the entire high school in one auditorium to make announcements once a week. As the newly elected Student Government President, one of my duties is running these weekly meetings. But this week is different and the crowd can sense that there is a change in my energy, a tension running through the room.

"Shipley, today I have some very sad news... it's my regret to share this with you and I ask that all of you stay strong in moments like these."

Out of the corner of my eye I can make out the uncomfortable fidgeting of our schools administration. Sure, I had "gone off script before", in fact every week I typically did some kind of "stunt" to advertise an upcoming event or ongoing initiatives. But these

were usually joyful, welcomed events that brought lively energy into the room. This time, I expressed an ominously solemn energy.

“Shipley, as of yesterday... America’s greatest hero, Captain America was killed in the line of duty serving the people of this great nation.”

There was a pause of confusion and surprise at what I said. I raised my hand as if to quell the abrupt shift in mood.

“I know this comes at a shock to you all! But our good friends at Marvel have taken away our greatest hero... and for that reason, I ask that we all have a moment of silence to remember our star spangled champion and his mighty shield.”

I bowed my head in silence... the room raised theirs in laughter... America.

Let me backtrack a bit...

I grew up with superheroes; in fact, I’m admittedly a superhero geek. In my childhood room back home I have a tin Captain America shield hung up on one wall, a giant poster of Captain America posing dynamically in front of an American flag over my bed and an equally as loud poster of Superman standing on a mountain with an American flag in hand billowing in the wind behind him as he stares into the sunset. This is only a sampling of the “geekdom” that encircles my room, but there’s a point to this.

Like all millennials, I am a child of the 90's. Growing up I loved watching superhero cartoons, the X-men, The Amazing Spider-man, Batman, the Ninja Turtles... I'll even throw the original Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers in there too. But most of all I loved the Super Friends, a cheesy superhero cartoon series that originally ran its course through the 70's. Every week America's most famous heroes: Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman and Robin, the Flash, Green Lantern ect., would take on the nefarious legion of doom who always had a new plot to take over the world. No matter the mad scientist, alien threat or monster, my childhood heroes stood victorious by the end of every twenty-minute episode. Oftentimes they could even solve the world's problems with a peaceful and reasonable discussion convincing the villain of the week to reconsider and change their ways for good. The show's animation is poorly done with faded coloration that allows for only the most basic of movements from its characters. But that didn't matter to me. These were heroes, proudly standing for truth, justice and the American way, always using their powers for the greater good. It was enough to get my friends and I riled up enough to make our own costumes and run around looking for monsters to defeat and evil to triumph over.

In the late 90's early 2000's, DC Comics began releasing a new TV series "The Justice League", that I watched religiously. The new series, like super friends, depicted the team up of America's greatest heroes. Only this time the plots were more complicated, sometimes taking multiple episodes to solve a world crisis, the villains had real motives, internal conflicts and relationships among the main characters were apparent and sometimes you weren't always sure where the line fell between good and evil. Also, the animation was way better. The TV series also followed the comic book

story arc more accurately, eventually leading into an expanding version of the TV series called “Justice League Unlimited,” which brought in many lesser-known superheroes. To the comic nerds of the world, this new more complicated and edgier series was heaven. For me, it was a release from the news about my dad. I could transport myself to a world where people could leap buildings and move faster than a speeding bullet, a world where there was no question that evil, like that of my dad’s cancer, would surely be vanquished.

By the end of the twentieth century my comic book horizon had expanded to a new hero who had faded from the mainstream for some time. Captain America today is huge, arguably one of the top ten most popular superheroes. But back at the end of the twentieth century, he was still considered one of America’s most out of date and dorkiest heroes. He can’t fly, no super strength or speed, he wears a flamboyant costume that looks like Uncle Sam vomited all over and he wields a clunky shield that looks like a huge target... I see the criticism, but 10-year old Nate saw something more in Captain America.

The story of Captain America is that Steve Rogers was a sickly, 90 lb man who grew up in lower Eastside Manhattan, New York on July 4th (yep, 4th of July) 1920. He was eager to serve his country in World War II, but because of all of his physical problems he was rejected from the military. But he never gave up; he persisted until one day he was picked up by a secret government project called Project Rebirth. The project sought to create super soldiers for the US military, the formula was designed by a German scientist by the name of Dr. Josef Reinstein who defected to the US after being forced against his will to design the formula for the Nazis (later changed to an evil

organization called Hydra). The formula transformed Steve Rogers into the “perfect” human specimen, pushing all of his natural attributes to the pinnacle of human potential. Shortly after the experiment succeeded, a spy kills Reinstein who dies along with the secret to the Super Soldier Serum. Rogers is given a shield made out of a fictional material called “Vibranium” that is virtually indestructible and he takes on the mantle of “Captain America”, donning his red, white and blue uniform to represent the ideals of his country wherever he goes. In 1941, the first issue of Captain America, produced by Timely Comics (now Marvel), depicts Cap socking Hitler in the face with a good ole’ American right hook. Anyway, in the comic book series, Cap helps America win the World War II, but falls into the arctic after sacrificing himself to stop a missile headed for Washington DC (later amended to be a bomb headed for New York... Later amended to be his arch nemesis’s jet). In a fit of superhero logic, Cap is frozen in the arctic until the 60’s when he is discovered by a comic book government agency called “S.H.I.E.L.D.”.

Cap is a man out of time. Carrying with him the values of the World War II generation by applying them to our modern problems. In the 60’s when the US government entered Vietnam, Captain America objected to the war and dropped the mantle of Captain America, taking on the new persona of “Nomad”. Nomad’s costume makes him look like a transvestite and no longer wields his shield... but that isn’t to lessen the importance of what Steve Rogers represented. It was perhaps, the greatest moment in comic book history of a fictional superhero opposing a real world government action, especially for that of Captain America who represents true American ideals. After the war Cap would take up his shield and costume again, but only once the nation was “back on the side of good”.

Throughout Captain America's history, he has been asked to run for president and take sides on a number of polarizing issues. In every instance Captain America has stood by his own American values, never straying from the side of "justice", even when "justice" got blurrier with the issues of the 21st century. As a result, Captain America has never been corrupted, nor taken a political stance that has placed him in one party or the other. In the Marvel Comic book Universe, Captain America is the most respected hero. Villains know that if there is ever a chance at defeating the superheroes, they have to take out Captain America first, because he is their rallying cry and their leader. As long as there is a Captain America, there is hope and fighting chance for good. No matter how powerful the hero in the Marvel Universe, all heads turn to Cap in times of crisis. And that's why he is my favorite. Sure, I love Superman too, and growing up in the 90's he taught me about the fight for "Truth, Justice and the American Way". But growing up, in the 90's I was small for my age and picked on by kids older than me. Superman represented raw power and indestructability... Captain America represented the potential to be greater than we are. Not only was the small scrawny guy turned into a national hero, but he drew his real strength from what he represented and the respect and faith others placed in him. I



could relate more to that than the alien from Krypton.

Now, back to my story earlier...

In 2008, Captain America was killed. It was the culminating event of a series Marvel called “The Civil War”. This series was initiated when (in the comic book universe) a bunch of amateur superheroes irresponsible chased down a villain that had the ability to create contained nuclear explosions. He went off near an elementary school killing everyone in a several block radius (not the same heroes from my childhood). Public outrage of the event led to the government initiating what they called the “Superhero Registration Act”. It forced all superheroes to register with the government; thus relinquishing their privacy and secret identities. This split the superhero community in two, those in support of the act, and those against the act. Captain America leaned towards defending freedoms and protecting privacy, thus opposed the act. Iron Man leaned towards security and thus supported the Act. In the end, Iron Man won... Captain America was arrested and on his way into court, shot and killed. His last words, “No more innocents hurt”.

Obviously I meant to be comical when I made my school hold their moment of silence for my star spangled hero. But a piece of me was actually affected by a world without Captain America. What does that say about my country when our own superhero is killed in his own comic book? Well, at least we have Superman, right? Truth, Justice and the American Way? Well... On April 27, 2011, DC Comics released their 900th issue of Action Comics, which actually had Superman publically renounce his American

citizenship once and for all. After 900 consecutive uninterrupted issues of Superman, he bluntly states that, “truth, justice and the *American* way, -- it’s just not enough anymore⁴⁶”. In another fit of comic book logic, Marvel would bring Captain America back from the dead in 2009. Superman on the other hand is still a “citizen of the world”.

For me personally, the superhero genre matured with my problems. In 1999, my dad was diagnosed with kidney cancer. At the age of 10, I was still very unclear about what was happening, and with every explanation from my mom and grandparents came words of reassurance that his condition was treatable. I remember being told repeatedly how lucky we were it was just kidney cancer. Slow moving and isolated to an organ of the body that could be removed with relative ease. At this time however, I began to realize that evil isn’t always a rampaging monster or evil scientist looking to take over the world.

After countless visits to the hospital, my dad’s infected kidney was removed, a treatment that was considered to be a cure. However, he would have to return to the hospital every few months for a check up, just to make sure nothing had metastasized and spread elsewhere, but this was only a precaution... so I was told.

Before there were superheroes, there were the American Tall Tales. Babe and his blue ox, Pecos Bill who would lasso and ride tornadoes? These were the superheroes of the old, they’ve been a part of our culture as long as we’ve had one. They speak very

⁴⁶ Hudson, Laura. "Superman Renounces U.S. Citizenship in 'Action Comics' #900." *Comics Alliance*. 27 Apr. 2011. Web. 22 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.comicsalliance.com/2011/04/27/superman-renounces-us-citizenship/>>.

specifically to our ideals as a country and our generation. Remember Weaver’s cultural iceberg? Well the American Superhero gives us insight into deciphering the value portion of our iceberg.

Our country is what is called a “To Do” society. A society that defines itself by earning one’s status and valuing self-determination. This is in contrast to what is a “To Be” society, societies defined by tradition and heritage. The superhero narrative and the cowboy narrative for that matter fall firmly in the category of “To Do”. Powers and abilities that grant single individuals the ability to make great differences in the world. But we’re not the only culture that falls in the “to do” category, and there are aspects of our society that are very “to be” associated. Professor Weaver helped me construct the following chart that separates To Do and To Be cultures and what cultures are associated with them:

To Do	To Be
Earn Status	Ascribed Status→ may lead to ascribed gender roles
Need for achievement (Individual Achievement)	Affiliations (Need for affiliation)
Equality, everyone should have an equal opportunity	Not equal, varies by birth and heritage
Emphasis placed on self-reliance and independence (Cowboy Values)	Ought to be able to depend on others, interdependence
Individual Competition is important	Cooperation is important
Failure leads to individual responsibility and guilt	Failure leads to shame, loss of face and/or dishonor
Focus on pursuer a better and brighter future	Focus on one’s heritage and past
Based upon class mobility and rising up the “chain”	To some degree a caste system

Swiss/Germans	U.S.	U.S. (South)	Europe
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You will typically find “To Do” societies associated with urban areas and “To Be” societies associated with rural areas. And where are most superheroes located? That’s right, urban areas. Now, our society is also obsessed with a number of other cultural characteristics that have promoted super heroism. Namely the melodrama... that’s right, we’re very melodramatic. We like simple stories of good vs. evil, your underdog story of a person facing great odds and overcoming them. And in these stories good always beats evil. Sure, we see this in the superhero genre, but we also see it in our other classics. Star Wars, Rocky... I would even say Jaws and E.T. fall into this category as well. Now, I do believe our take on the melodrama is maturing, but it’s still very much an active characteristic of our culture. It’s the result of a history filled with success and triumph. Our counterparts in Europe for example relate more to the tragedy genre.

Now, by this point I’ve made my superhero geekdom embarrassingly clear. Fortunately for me, with the new multi-million dollar movies Hollywood keeps pushing out, my obsession with superheroes is cool... well... acceptable for the first time ever. But beyond the fandom, there is a lot more to extract from the superhero genre. This isn’t just about comic books, it’s about significant pieces of the American culture that are particularly relevant to our generation. We, more than any other generation, has grown up with a thriving and maturing culture of superheroes. What are they? Elliot S. Maggin in his forward to *Kingdom Come*, one of the greatest superhero graphic novels of all time said it best, “Super-hero stories – whether their vehicle is through comic books or otherwise – are today the most coherent manifestation of the popular unconscious.

They're stories not about gods, but about the way humans wish themselves to be; ought, in fact, to be.⁴⁷”

Superheroes and comics are not new, they've been around since 1938 when Action Comics released the first ever Superman comic. Since his creation, Superman has been depicted or referenced millions of times across fashion, music, video games, literature, movies, TV series and more. Every superhero since Superman is defined by how similar or how different they are from the original “Man of Steel” himself. In this way, the red and blue tight wearing alien from Krypton with his stylized “S” logo is more a part of the American culture and identity than many of our other fictional icons such as Mickey Mouse or Bugs Bunny. In many ways, he represents our cultural hegemony in the world, moreover his status as the premiere super powered individual seems to be a metaphor for the power of the United States in the world. Superman is after all patriotically colored, an immigrant from the stars who was raised in the American heartland and a proclaimer of American ideals, “Truth, Justice and the American way”.

Captain America was designed for propaganda, to capture the American spirit and inspire our youth to stand for our cause during the Second World War. Consider the symbolism of Cap. The wings on the side of his head are reminiscent of Apollo, the messenger of the gods. Because Cap is the symbolic messenger of American ideals and values, he is not the god himself, but rather a defender of them. The blue helmet from World War II is symbolic of the sky blue helmet worn by the UN peace keepers, because the American soldier does not conquer (or at least isn't supposed to), instead they liberate and protect. And what about the symbolism of protecting and defending? Does cap wield a sword? A Gun? No, these are tools to attack, to destroy. Captain America

⁴⁷ Waid, Mark, and Alex Ross. *Kingdom Come*. New York, NY: DC Comics, 1997. Print.

wields a shield, a tool whose design is to protect and defend. Furthermore, the shield itself is loud, easily spotted and virtually indestructible. That too is meant to represent the American ideals. The man wielding the shield may die, but the shield will not perish, it will live on. Moreover it can be picked up and used by anyone, and so long as it is held, there is no shame in proclaiming itself. Captain America's shield is perhaps the most notable symbol in the superhero world, maybe second only to Superman's stylized "S" logo. But this shield has changed over time; today it is the perfectly aerodynamic circle, but in World War II it was a triangular shield reminiscent of the age of knights. Back then the shield looked a lot like the logo of the Marshall Plan and the shield on the American crest. Coincidence? Definitely not...



Cap's Original Shield



Symbol of the Marshall Plan

So what does it mean that Cap was killed (later brought back) and Superman has now renounced his American citizenship? I believe this is significant, but not cause of alarm. In terms of Superman, as an American cultural icon, it's almost even more symbolic that he embraces the world more intently by disassociating specifically with our government. After all, is that not what our culture does anyway? Moreover, Superman has adapted his citizenship in the same way that our generation has adapted our citizenship. The world is far more globalized, borders more fluid; and as we interact, so do our cultures forming a new cohesive culture. This is not to say we are no less American... but it is to say that we're not the same kind of American as prior generations.

Superman said he doesn't want to be American anymore, fine, doesn't change the fact that his origin lies here and he still represents American ideals. As I mentioned before, Captain America has disassociated with the government before as well. Most notably during the Vietnam war when he dropped the mantel of Captain America until he felt the government would better represent its people. Well... Superman dropped his citizenship at time when public satisfaction with Congress has reached a low of 8%, unemployment and cynicism with the state of the country among youth (my generation) is at 70%⁴⁸. The same time mind you, that we had our big debate about the Patriot Act which killed Cap... If Superheroes are the subconscious of our generation, then it only make sense that what happens here reflect in their world. Well, that's precisely what happened. When we turned on ourselves and lost faith in our government, so did our heroes. This is a battle that has, in many ways, defined us... fortunately it's changing

⁴⁸ Kegley, Charles W., and Eugene R. Wittkopf. *The Future of American Foreign Policy*. New York: St. Martin's, 1992. Print.

again, and I think it's because our generation is finally growing up and getting our chance to make a difference. With Cap back from the dead I think we may just get that chance too.

When I was growing up in the 90's, my heroes were loyal to the government, the lines between good and evil were clearly drawn and there was no question that we stood on the side of "good". Well, similarly, my grandfather's generation belonged to what is referred to as, the Greatest Generation. This is the generation that grew up through the hardships of the Great Depression then fought in World War II as they matured. They then returned from the war and brought great prosperity to the country, launching the following generation, the Baby Boomer generation. The Greatest Generation were strong followers of what is called Duty-Based Citizenship, citizens that held a relatively close association with the government. And when I say close association, I don't mean that they weren't critical, merely that they typically were very loyal in following necessary procedures for the government. These include paying taxes and voting. The baby boomers followed similarly to some degree, but our generation is different. We're more disassociated with our government, but that doesn't mean we're disassociated with our country. For example, while the millennial votes significantly less than other generations, we also involve ourselves in community service more than prior generations... but I'll get to more of that later.

Our generation has been defined by a whole new host of events. Perhaps most notably 911. But through the 90's things were pretty good. It was a time when unemployment stood at a healthy 4.5%⁴⁹ and few international conflicts really captured the attention of the American people. This was before 911, the war on terror, real fear of

⁴⁹ Ibid

a nuclear Iran or a competitive China. We ourselves, felt like superheroes; as a child of the 90's I expected a future with perfectly sustainable flying cars, where everyone had equal rights and AIDS was only referred to in history textbooks. I guess we'll just have to make these happen.

Macaroni and Cheese

Growing up, it was always a real treat when my mom made Macaroni and Cheese. As I got older it was really the first thing I learned how to cook on my own. I absolutely love Macaroni and Cheese, I did back then and I do now too. Over the years as my food horizon expanded I learned that Macaroni and Cheese can actually be made to be fairly gourmet. And how do you make Macaroni and Cheese even more American than it already is? Well... You add Bacon of course! Now I've made a number of Mac n' cheese recipes over the years, but this one is one of the best. I found it on a website called www.familycircle.com, it's the four cheese with bacon recipe. Give it a try!



Ingredients⁵⁰:

- 1 box (1lb) cavatappi pasta
- 6 slices of bacon, diced
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons of all-purpose flour
- 2 cups of 2% milk
- 1/2 teaspoon of onion flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of pepper
- 1/2 lb of sharp cheddar, shredded

⁵⁰ recipe and ingredients taken from: <http://www.familycircle.com/recipe/pasta/four-cheese-with-bacon-mac/>

- 1 cup of Colby-jack cheese (4 oz.)
- 1 cup of mozzarella cheese (4 oz.)
- 8 slices of Kraft Deli Deluxe American Cheese (6 oz.)

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Coat a 3-quart broiler-safe baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to boiling.
2. Cook cavatappi 8 minutes in boiling water, then drain. Meanwhile, in medium-size saucepan, cook bacon over medium heat until crisp, 6 minutes. Transfer to paper towels. Carefully pour off drippings, returning 2 tablespoons to pan. Add butter.
3. Whisk in flour until smooth. In a thin stream, whisk in milk. Stir in onion flakes, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat and simmer 2 minutes. In large bowl, toss together cheddar, colby-Jack and mozzarella.
4. Remove milk mixture from heat; whisk in American cheese and 1-1/4 cups of the cheddar mixture. Toss bacon pieces with remaining shredded cheese.
5. In pasta pot, combine cooked pasta and cheese sauce. Pour half into prepared dish. Sprinkle with a generous cup of the bacon-cheese mixture. Repeat layering.

6. Bake at 350 degrees F° for 20 minutes. Increase oven temperature to broil and broil 3 minutes, until top is lightly browned. Cool slightly before serving.

Chapter 4: This Land is My Land and Your Land

“Ahead and to the west was our ranger station - and the mountains of Idaho, poems of geology stretching beyond any boundaries and seemingly even beyond the world.”

—Norman Maclean

“The Bald Eagle”, I said bluntly as I stared into the eyes of the volunteer coordinator at the Philadelphia Zoo. The other volunteers were looking back and forth between me and the coordinator, my friends who knew me were just shaking their heads. The volunteer coordinator had only just mentioned that we’d get to specialize in an animal of our choosing and be the resident “expert” on that animal when I interrupted her.

“I choose The Bald Eagle”, She seemed a bit taken a back.

“Uh, well... people don’t usually pick that, we have a lot of animals and normally you take a week or two to experiment with some of the other exhibits first...” I probably should mention that this was my first day on the job.

“Sure... but I know exactly which animal I want to specialize in, and it’s bald and not a naked mole rat”... America.

For about a month, I got to be the “Bald Eagle Expert” at the Philadelphia Zoo. What does that mean? Well, I was that dork in a bright green “Zoo Crew” shirt standing outside of the Bald Eagle exhibit with a number of Bald Eagle artifacts like a fake talon, egg ect.. If you had a question about the Bald Eagle I would answer it for you. In fact, I could give a lecture about the Bald Eagle. It’s history, relevance to the country, how it

barely survived the pesticide DDT but now is no longer endangered... How it could dive at speeds of up to 200 mph, and that the females were always bigger as a result of a naturally occurring phenomenon called reverse sexual dimorphism.

My dad is a veterinarian. He purchased his own practice when he was 29 and expanded it experiencing much success. His veterinary hospital lies on the same property as our house. Combined, it's about a 2 and ½ acre property divided between the Hospital and the house. Growing up my older sister spent more time over at the hospital than I did, but I used to run over there and disrupt the workflow when I got bored. Our veterinary hospital was this kind of magical place where we kept what felt like hundreds of animals (not really that big) at any given moment. In the basement of the hospital we kept our surgery and x-ray rooms. My dad and mom originally met at an animal hospital in Devon; since my dad purchased his practice, my mom worked as a veterinary technician at the hospital. My dad is one of the best too, time and time again other doctors would turn to him for advice. On more than one occasion there would be an emergency and someone would come knocking on our door in the middle of the night with a sick animal or a dog that was just hit by a car, my dad always got right up and went to work. Remember everything I said about Superheroes? Well my dad was my first superhero.

There was also this guy named Bob who was the animal warden in our district. That means this was the guy in charge of picking up all of the stray animals... and road kill. Anyway, I thought this was one of the coolest jobs in the world. Bob was this big heavily tattooed guy with a deep voice that treated me like a man... even if I was a tiny 8-year-old. My Halloween costume for first, second and third grade was an animal warden, which basically involved me dressing in camo and strapping fake animals to me.

But who wouldn't love a job that supplied our hospital, thus my house, with a steady flow of kittens and puppies. We were constantly looking for homes for these animals, and sometimes when we couldn't find homes, we'd take them in ourselves. My dad would give free treatment to any stray animal or litter of puppies/kittens that were birthed at our hospital, he didn't think it moral to profit off of something like that.

In our small town, everyone knew my family because of dad's practice and they all loved him. After all, everyone had an animal that they took to us. But more than that, we were very much a "mom and pop" kind of a business. My dad was actually the third veterinarian to own the practice, and it's situated in a residential location where it's not even permitted to have a business practice (we were obviously grandfathered in). Suffice it to say, our practice was sort of old fashioned. Clients would come to drop off their animals and stay to chat a while, with my dad, my mom and our receptionist Cathy who has been with us longer than I've been alive.

When it came to animals, my family is super eccentric. Without having to worry about boarding our animals or medical costs, we went a bit crazy when it came to our pets, but I loved it. Growing up we had 4 dogs: our stocky and overtly protective terrier mix, Tuffy, our beautiful, intelligent and loyal yellow lab Greta, our energetic and lovable Australian Shepherd Pete and our dumb as a doornail King Charles Spaniel Bob (Best. Of. Breed). We also had 5 cats, 5 parrots (all of which given to us by clients), some toads, frogs, chameleons and a blue-tongue skink (found by Bob... the animal warden not the dog), a guinea pig, a rabbit, fish, turtles, chickens, ducks, 2 emus (yes the ostrich-esque birds) and 2 goats. No, we don't live on a farm... but about as close to one as you could get in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Taking care of animals was simply a part

of life, so was dealing with their deaths when that came around as well. Thus, neither responsibility nor death was a stranger to me growing up in this unique situation.

My dad taught me and my sisters about bird calls, and the names of animals when we were on family vacations... That's another thing, we always traveled together on family vacations, and almost always to locations where we could get closer to the environment. One year, after my older sister raised money for a foundation called Turtle Time that combatted light pollution along shorelines, we got to let newborn loggerhead sea turtles out to the ocean.

There was a drawback to living so close to our hospital. We were never able to escape work, and anyone so involved in medicine will tell you how much work there really is. So around the time that I was 9, my parents bought a vacation home in the mountainous region of Pennsylvania called the Poconoes. Over the years we would decorate our home there in the style of a beach house, ironic considering the house lay atop a mountain and was surrounded by a sparse development and the temperate forests found along the East Coast of the United States. This place was perfect for my dad as it captured his five favorite things: Animals, Opportunities to take photographs, Reading, Astronomy and of course, time with his family. We would go on long walks in and around house and along nearby trails where he could use his canon digital camera to take gorgeous photos of brightly colored birds or lumbering black bears. At night he would roll out his, then state of the art, telescope and gaze at the stars. My sisters and I loved this; and while at a younger age it was harder for us to appreciate the simplicity of this kind of life, observing and appreciating the environment was very much a part of our childhood. I in particular loved gazing at the stars. Up at our Pocono home away from

home, it was the one place where I could completely lose myself in the vastness of endless lights that lay sprawled above me... final frontier and all of that.

Anyway, when I was a senior in High School, we were assigned to serve our community for a couple of weeks in order to graduate. I eagerly took this as an opportunity to follow some connections my family had made with the Philadelphia zoo and volunteer there. I loved every minute of it, all the while widening my understanding and passion for conservationism. Back then our generation was still very much growing into itself, but now I see that our generation will be the most ecologically minded generation of our nation's history.

The Bald Eagle can dive at speeds of almost 200 mph. Their beaks are considered to be the most powerful among raptors, their talons on the other hand, while strong, use them more for holding and gripping their prey down so that they can use their beak to tear into the flesh. The Bald Eagle mainly hunts fish, but only out of opportunity, they will hunt any small mammal. Their nests are considered the mansions of the bird kingdom, weighing up to and over 1.2 tons. Many times they construct these on mountaintops. The Bald Eagles is also fiercely independent, keeping with them only their mate with whom they stay with for life. However, in harsh months such as exceptionally cold winters, the Bald Eagle has been known to roost with other Eagles to stay warm, then branching out afterwards once conditions have eased off. They are found all across the continental United States, in almost every climate from tundra to tropical. In so many ways, these large birds of prey symbolize the people of this country.

Our ancestors were in awe of the landscape and environment here on the continental United States. Our natural resources appeared to be virtually limitless to the original settlers. The US today possesses about 5% of the World's population and over 30% of the world's natural resources. Moreover we possess every climate from arctic tundra to the tropics. Such a setting fed a complex within our culture called American Exceptionalism. For all intensive purposes we were a nation that is blessed.

However, our generation is now experiencing what no other generation has ever really experienced... a limit to our nation's resources. Moreover, we're experiencing a harshness to our climate that we've never really seen before. Hurricane Katrina may be the most extreme example of this, but twisters tearing through our heartland, bigger hurricanes and shifts in the prevalence of rain is all changing our relationship with the environment. Through the 90's, big cars were all the rage. Gas guzzling just wasn't an issue when we were growing up. However, gas today is a major issue, and not just because of the CO² emissions but also the geopolitical issues that arise with being reliant on resources from potentially hostile or unstable regions. This is true for gas, but it's also true for other raw materials that are not found in the continental United States. Because of this, our world is a lot smaller today than it was yesterday and far more interconnected. Perhaps human interaction isn't a bad thing either, but our generation, at the behest of others, has begun shifting our behavior towards a respect for scarcity.

Scarcity is more than a term to describe the phenomenon of rare or lessening resources, it's also an economic term that drives markets. Some say that it also drives ingenuity; take for example telephone wires. In America we used to use copper for telephone wires. As copper reserves began to be depleted, the price went up, a direct

result of scarcity. Well, when this happened two effects occurred in the market. First, it became economically advantageous to find new reserves of copper, and so the “pot” grew thus tempering the price. However, simultaneously people began looking for new ways to make telephone wires. Thus, fiber optic wires were developed, they were made primarily out of sand, something we’re not running out of any time soon and they’re more powerful than the copper wiring.

I believe in ingenuity and the potential to create new technologies. This has been integral in the production of new tools for alternative energies; even the advent and prevalence of new florescent light bulbs provides us with a very real tangible example of this phenomenon. But our generation has also begun recycling and reusing more than prior generations. According to some statistics the US is now the 7th highest recycler in the world; behind Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Switzerland⁵¹. This certainly wasn’t always the case as we can see when we think back to 2005 when the US walked on climate talks in Kyoto⁵². With a new revamped ecological mindfulness, our generation is unique to prior generations.

Ferdinand Tönnies was a German sociologist from the 1800’s who wrote about societies that were more in tune with nature and societies that were not. He created this theory basing it off of the phenomenon that he observed when people moved from rural areas to urban areas. He called the rural community a *Gemeinschaft* and the urban community a *Gesellschaft*. Between the two there were very distinctive differences in the cultures. The *Gesellschaft* is more reminiscent of the “To Do” culture I spoke of earlier

⁵¹ http://www.aneki.com/recycling_countries.html

⁵² Revkin, Andrew C. "U.S. Delegation Walks Out of Climate Talks." *The New York Times*. 9 Dec. 2005. Web. 1 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/09/international/americas/09cnd-climate.html?pagewanted=all>>.

and the “Gemeinschaft” is more related to the “To Be” culture. However, with the spread of ecological awareness and respect for nature, our generation may lean once again to the Gemeinschaft. Below is a chart outlining the differences between the two cultures:

Gemeinschaft	Gesellschaft
Homogeneous community which shares a similar if not identical culture	Heterogeneous urban community with people living together with very different cultures
Rules are internalized and everyone knows what’s appropriate	Rules must be externalized to prevent total chaos
Everyone shares the same religion and is brought up the same way	Religion may vary but is removed from common discourse
Sense of Spontaneity	The Spontaneity is gone, replaced by many rules
Known as a whole person, they know religion, family ect.	Very inhuman, nobody knows one as a whole human, just a fraction of one -One is defined by what he/she does and the relations they have to other people
Distinction between insiders and outsiders, leads to people be outright excluded if they are not an insider	There is GENERALLY no distinction between insiders and outsiders and everyone is more or less welcome
Human, inhumane	Inhuman, humane

Ferdinand Tönnies was critical of the Gesellschaft. He felt that the disconnection among people was not naturally and resulted in the compartmentalization of our society, making us disconnected and schizophrenic. However, what I’ve found is that those members of our community that are, in particular ecologically minded, tend also to be more closely connected to human interaction and tend more to shy away from urban disconnected settings. In the coming years, our generation’s interaction with the environment will continue to define us. Just as ignoring it did for many of our ancestors.

Tom Kha

Over the years more and more of my friends have turned vegetarian as a result of an increased awareness for the environment. Now personally I'm still a huge fan of meat, but I like to cook for my friends... so I started trying to teach myself some unique vegetarian recipes. When I was a freshman at American, I worked as the director of a Vegetarian Cooking show with our student run television network. That's when I first



learned about this simple Thai soup called Tom Kha. It's honestly one of the best palat cleansing dishes I've ever had. It's a smooth kind of creamy soup that balances sweet and spicy. I found this recipe on a website called, www.veggiewala.com, it's a great website if your vegan or vegetarian.

Ingredients⁵³:

- 1 14 oz. can of coconut milk
- 2-3 cups vegetable stock
- 6 1/4-inch slices of galangal
- 2 5-inch stalks of lemongrass, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 Kaffir lime leaves
- 1/2 block (7 oz.) firm tofu
- 1/2 cup sliced cabbage
- 1 lime, juiced
- 4-6 large white mushrooms, sliced
- 1 medium beefsteak tomato, cut into large wedges
- 1 chili pepper
- 1 tbsp olive oil (optional)
- 1 tsp sweet thai chili paste (optional)
- Salt to taste
- Cilantro for garnish

Directions⁵⁴:

1. In a medium sized pot, bring the coconut milk, vegetable stock, galangal slices, lime leaves, and lemongrass pieces up to a boil.

⁵³ Taken from: <http://veggiewala.com/tom-kha/>

⁵⁴ Ibid

2. Simmer for about 10 to 15 minutes. While the base of the soup is simmering away, you can prep the rest of your ingredients.
3. After the base of the soup is sufficiently flavored, skim or strain out the galangal, lemongrass and lime leaves.
4. Add in the cabbage, mushrooms, tofu, chili (use as much or as little as you like and feel free to remove the seeds if you wish), salt, lime juice, olive oil, and chili paste. If you need to add more broth at this point, you can do so.
5. Bring everything back to a boil for a minute or two just to heat through.
6. Add in the tomatoes at the last second. Serve and garnish with cilantro.

Chilaquiles

I am placing two vegetarian recipes here because I challenge all those who say it's impossible to make something vegetarian and filling. That, and I think this is a delicious recipe. Both this and the Tom Kha were suggested to me by one of my closest vegetarian friends... Well one of my closest friends, who then also happens to be vegetarian. Chilaquiles is a latino based recipe that's really designed for breakfast but I think can be consumed at just about anytime during any day of the week. It's important to note however that because of the use of eggs in this recipe, it's NOT vegan... it *is* vegetarian by most standards though, so I hope this suffices. I found this recipe on a blog called www.betterwithbutter.com. Enjoy!



Ingredients⁵⁵:

- 1 bag corn tortilla chips (the thicker the better)
- 1 can red chile or enchilada sauce
- 1 poblano pepper, diced
- 1 half yellow onion, diced
- 1 half jalapeno, diced
- 1 zucchini or other small, tender squash, diced
- 1 can black beans
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- quesadilla or pepperjack cheese
- avocado, cilantro, sour cream and queso fresco for garnishing

⁵⁵ Taken from: <http://betterwithbutter.com/chilaquiles/>

-butter for sautéing
-four eggs

Directions⁵⁶:

1. Sauté onion, jalapeno, poblano and squash on medium heat with butter until tender. Pour enchilada sauce in skillet with veggies and heat to a simmer.
2. Pour tortilla chips in a baking dish, cover in sauce and veggies, add beans and cumin and mix to coat all chips (don't over mix or let chips sit or they'll become too soggy).
3. Cover chips with a generous amount of quesadilla cheese.
4. Set broiler on high and bake until cheese is bubbly and beginning to brown.
5. Meanwhile, fry eggs.
6. Top chip dish with fried eggs, avocado cubes, cilantro and queso fresco and serve with sour cream.

⁵⁶ Taken from: <http://betterwithbutter.com/chilaquiles/>

Chapter 5: Technology and Us... *Are in a relationship*

*"It is not really necessary to look too far into the future; we see enough already to be certain it will be magnificent. Only let us hurry and open the roads."
-Wilbur Wright*

In the Spring of 2012, I started having some... complications... with my laptop. At first, I thought I had too many applications running at the same time. That would explain the colorful spinning icon on my 15" Macbook Pro that's affectionately referred to as the beach ball. It's the icon that takes the place of the cursor when your computer is "thinking" or processing information. But my spinning beach ball was appearing more frequently than normal, and I quickly found that I didn't have all that many applications running. So I decided to check my hard drive, but that too had plenty of room on it. I started getting very frustrated with my computer. It was taking forever to do the simplest of tasks. Then my computer started freezing, making it impossible to open basic word documents, something for which no amount of my yelling or frantic tapping of the directional pad seemed to be able to fix. So finally, I used a library computer and located the nearest Apple Store in Washington DC. For me it was located in Bethesda, Maryland; I needed to metro over there and walk several blocks to reach it.

The store, as is true for all apple stores, is this futuristic looking cube with the bright apple logo emblazoned on the front. I brought my laptop in for its check up and diagnostic at the genius bar. Our "genius" was a young man by the name of Will. He first asked my laptop to strip down out of his hard plastic covering. I know he felt vulnerable doing this, but it was necessary for the check up. Will then began his diagnostic, checking everything from my laptop's optical drives to his hard drives. After a few checks he frowned and asked if he could take it around back to analyze something.

I agreed and Will took my laptop away from me. I waited with baited breath for the return of my computer. In the meantime I texted friends and “well-wishers” with my smartphone. Will was gone for about 20 minutes, when he returned I immediately knew there was something wrong by the look on his face.

“Sir, we need to have a conversation about your computer”, he said with a look of a concern.

“What’s wrong?” I asked fearing the answer.

“It’s dying,” as soon as the words were uttered my heart sank. How could this happen, my laptop was only a year old and I had taken very good care of it.

“How long does it have?” I asked.

“Maybe 24 hours.”

“Is there anything that can be done?”

“Well there is something but... there’s no guarantee we can save it, and it may cost you some too”

“Whatever it takes, just save what you can” I said hoping that my computer would survive.

Will went on to explain that my laptop’s hard drive was dying, and that he could try to transfer the data out of it, but there was no guarantee the hard drive would make it through the transfer. Moreover, I would need to purchase an external hard drive to store the information in the interim while the data transferred. My laptop’s basic word, picture, music and video files could be saved this way, but all of my applications and settings would be lost. Apparently my hard drive really did only have 24 hours left to live, any later and I would have lost everything.

The procedure ran smoothly but just to be certain I agreed to let my laptop stay overnight so that it could be monitored. The next day I returned to the apple store to retrieve my laptop. I dressed it back in its protective plastic cover before slipping it back into my messenger bag and taking it home. When I arrived back at my house and turned it on; my heart sank again. My laptop’s operating system was welcoming me like it was the first time we met. It asked me for my name, and information. When I reached the desktop I found that all of my custom settings were back to factory settings; my background back to the standard factory background. My laptop did not remember me; all of its knowledge about my habits, schedule, favorite tv shows, websites, my photos from past adventures and vacations... all of it was gone. And then a horrifying thought came into my head. The last memory my laptop ever had of me, before all its memory was erased, was of me yelling at it, frustrated because of how slow it was operating.

Like many college students, my laptop computer is my lifeline. In the morning I use it to check my schedule and the weather. I then carry it to class where I use it to take notes. After class I'll use my laptop in group-discussions and for group projects. All the while I use it to check Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and of course my e-mail. At night, I use my laptop to check the news, watch movies and TV shows, chat with friends and do my homework. The next day it starts all over again. Suffice it to say, I use my laptop for just about everything from communication, to work, to entertainment.

Over the years, our laptops get to know us pretty well. They absorb our photos, take on our specific customized settings, take a new background and store our files and information. They recognize our top searches on the Internet, remember to log us on to facebook, keep track of passwords and our schedules. Our personal computers become just that, uniquely personalized to our specific taste.

The millennial generation may very well be the first to grow up with this standard. But my first experience with technology wasn't my old computer, or my phone. Nor was it the advent of the Internet and DSL lines. Instead, it was the audiobook. Back in the 90's this was all the rage, and my parents loved them. We would go on family road trips and plug in a good audio book to pass the long hours driving across state lines. I listened to Jim Dale read me Harry Potter long before I read themselves.

It wasn't until 1999 when I received my first "computer" I was in 4th grade. My teachers had given up on trying to decipher my handwriting, so they asked my parents to make the investment in getting me this very basic device called an "alphasmart 2000".

They argued that learning to type was a practical skill for me anyway, and that this would save their own vision by saving them from having to squint at my chicken scratch all day. The alphasmart looked like a glorified keyboard with a small very basic black and white LED screen situated just above the keyboard. My alphasmart 2000 could only hold about 9 files at a time, ran on 3 AA batteries and its only purpose was word processing. I remember the Alphasmart 2000 was a big deal too, because it was the first model that also had its own spellcheck. Now, people *had* laptops at this time, it just wasn't common for elementary school kids to have them. Within the next two or three years, my classmates started turning up with laptops. By the end of Elementary school we were doing presentations with programs like Powerpoint, and writing longer essays that incorporated pictures. An "alphasmart 2000" just didn't cut it anymore. By the time middle school rolled around, everyone in my school either had their own laptop or had access to other school computers. Now, I do realize that my school isn't a normal school, and for most students my age it wasn't normal to have a computer. However, what is true for almost all of us millennials is the frequency by which we began using computers.

The first laptop I got that was designed more for entertainment than word processing was my Dell Inspiron 8500. It had a removable cover so that the outer appearance of the computer was more aesthetically pleasing for its user. The screen was a 15" wide screen, it had a Pentium 4 processor (then the most powerful of its kind) and a state of the art Radeon graphics card, it was designed for gameplay and watching movies. Before this dell, my dad had always picked me out a used laptop model that was designed to fulfill my academic needs. This model went beyond pure academics, and for that reason back in 2003 I had to agree to pay for half of it. It would last me 5 years, getting

me through high school up until the summer of 2008 when I would trade out my Dell for a 15" Macbook Pro for college. By this time many of the features that were so special for my Dell now came standard in most models. The widescreen display was no longer special, the powerful graphics card no longer unique and the super fast processor obsolete.

By High School, my technology was not centered on my computer. Most of us already had cellphones by now, but this started to change too with the advent of texting, the built-in camera, powerful cellular processors and access to the Internet from our mobile devices. In fact, I remember when we stopped calling our phones, phones and started referring to them as "cellular devices". The smartphone was not the first of its kind though, my dad and I were always techno-geeks, so I remember back in Middle School getting my dad's old palm pilots and eventually his old "pocket pcs" (Think smartphone but without the phone part). When I was 12 I got my first cell phone. It was a Motorola flip phone (black and white screen, no camera). In early high school I got another Motorola flip phone (color, no camera). In that 4-year span, I was already out of date, my friends were able to check their e-mail, take photos and text one another while I was still calling around and having to carry a camera if I wanted to take pictures. My first "smart phone" was the Verizon LG Voyager. It had its own keyboard, a powerful camera and full access to the Internet. Suddenly I was fully integrated into this growing world of mobile communication. I had access to the worldwide web from anywhere (within my network range of course), and I could connect to my friends instantaneously. Later, in my college years, I would upgrade again to a Verizon Droid, which would further expand my mobile capabilities and introduce me to the world of mobile apps.

In college, just about everyone has a laptop. And as I mentioned before, it is necessary for completing our assignments, entertaining ourselves and communicating with others. Even as we do our homework and write our essays, we're checking our e-mail, facebook and taking breaks by watching videos on Hulu and YouTube. We live in this digital haze of constant perpetual interconnectedness because of the technology we hold. The advent of the laptop and the smartphone has granted us unprecedented access to the Internet, thus unprecedented access to social media. This is a major characteristic of the millennial generation, one that is not changing and one that has come with much criticism. In the Spring of 2012, I spoke with Don McPherson, a former NFL player and current public speaker and activist for ending sexual harassment and assault. He described the millennial generation's obsession with technology as a threat to our ability for basic human interaction, one that will limit our ability for collaboration. When I asked him if there was one thing he would change about how youth communicate, and what it would be? He said getting youth to put down their technology for every other day. Zadie Smith criticizes the movie *social network* and our generations obsession with technology in her piece *Generation Why*. In it she criticizes social sites that emphasize connection because, "the quality of that connection, the quality of the information that passes through it, the quality of the relationship that connection permits –none of this is important."⁵⁷

This seems to be the chief criticism of our use of technology. That by using facebook, twitter, foursquare ect., we're incapable of real person-to-person human interaction. Moreover, we don't hold the same level of friendships with people and that

⁵⁷ Smith, Zadie. "Generation, Why?" *Best American Essays 2011*. Mifflin: Houghton, Harcourt. 185-99. Print.

attention spans have been shortening. Well, first of all, on that last point, our attention spans have been shortening since the advent of the television. We now get little tidbits of news and live in the age of the sound bite. But even then, it's not that we're incapable of staying fixated at one point for an extended period of time, it's more that we juggle multiple attention fixations at any given moment and time. For the first time, because of technology, we maintain relationships with more people than ever before. Sure, our interactions on the web don't always mean we're meeting in person, but it does mean we remember birthdays, can coordinate meetings, spread news, advertise events and share our thoughts. At no point has our generation ever said that we're no longer meeting in person, it's true that we hold a lot of interaction online, but none of us believe this to be a replacement for actual human to human interaction.

I do believe our generation is still learning to use this technology. For example, we're just now starting to see a trend of "tech-etiquette". If you go to a party people ask that you turn off your phone, or leave it in a basket by the door so your not tempted to text other friends who are not present. Our generation is maturing and learning how better to balance our use of technology with actual human-to-human interaction.

The birth of the World Wide Web as in 1992, back then only 15% of homes in America had a computer of their own. By 2000, that number had risen to over 50% and today we're closing in on 100%. And even those people who don't have their own computer have access to one. The internet is no longer within nearest access of a phone jack, but instead all around us all of the time. This means unprecedented access to information and communicative tools. In this way we may really seem like superheroes to our counterparts of the 80's and early 90's. We've seen the use of facebook and

twitter cause mass movements in the Middle East (Arab Spring) and now we're using it to mobilize our own generation for our own causes. It's true that Facebook and inherently social and inherently a tool. Like all tools it can be misused. In fact, Edward T. Hall, one of the world's renowned experts on culture wrote in his book, *Beyond Culture* about the use of tools and how sometimes our tools take on a life of their own and remove the human aspect out of them. Hall referred more to the use of weapons and how they've helped us to take the humanity out of killing... but his theory applies just as well to communication as well. Only I don't believe we're misusing our technological gifts. I've seen too much good to believe that.

Homemade Blue Berry Flap Jacks

I never pass up an opportunity to call "pancakes", "flapjacks"... it always feels way more American that way.

Anyway, one of my favorite breakfast foods growing up was pancakes, especially when they were mixed with either blueberries or bananas. This recipe is specific for Blue Berries, but feel free to experiment by cutting up some bananas and replacing the blueberries. My mom and dad would sometimes make these on special occasions, especially during holidays or on longer vacations. They would

taste delicious but the best part of them was the smell from homemade pancakes and how it would always fill the house afterwards. This recipe I found on www.allrecipes.com, it's very good and since finding it I've used the batter recipe to make other kinds of pancakes as well... enjoy!



Ingredients⁵⁸:

-1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

⁵⁸ Taken from: <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/todds-famous-blueberry-pancakes/detail.aspx>

- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 1/4 teaspoons white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 tablespoon butter, melted
- 1/2 cup frozen blueberries, thawed

Directions⁵⁹:

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, salt, baking powder and sugar. In a small bowl, beat together egg and milk. Stir milk and egg into flour mixture. Mix in the butter and fold in the blueberries. Set aside for 1 hour.
2. Heat a lightly oiled griddle or frying pan over medium high heat. Pour or scoop the batter onto the griddle, using approximately 1/4 cup for each pancake. Brown on both sides and serve hot.

⁵⁹ Ibid

Chapter 6: Our Moment

*“We’re going to rush the hijackers” –Jeremy Glick,
United Airlines Flight 93, final words by cell phone to his wife*

I was cursing myself as I crossed Western Avenue on foot, leaving my house in Maryland behind as I crossed over into DC towards the American University Campus. Originally when I agreed to rent my house in Maryland, I thought it would be an advantage to be removed from campus, some degree of separation is good when you’re overtly involved in student organizations and the Student Government President at American University. But mornings when you have to get up at 7:00AM and get to campus quickly, while wearing a suit and carrying other bags can be tough.

I don’t have a car, so I walk the 30 minutes to campus everyday. As Student Government President I’m fortunate enough to have an office where I can leave many of my things throughout the day. Also as Student Government President, I’m obligated to support as many other students and student organizations as possible. But this event didn’t take much convincing.

It’s September 11th, 2010. Nine years since the day that changed my life, America and the world. Our College Democrats and College Republicans set aside their differences and agreed to come together and plant two hundred American flags as a memorial for all those lost nine years ago. 200 flags, 1 for every 10 people lost. The event will take place in front of the solemn marble memorial that sits just off our main quad, the memorial is etched with the names of those from the AU community that we’re lost on September 11th.

I arrive just as the small group of about 30 students begins their moment of silence. We patiently let the silence take us as we reflect in unison of all that has happened since that fateful day nine years prior. Afterwards I help plant the 30 flags and then step in front of the memorial to make a few remarks as the Presidents of both the College Democrats and the College Republicans requested.

“At this moment and at this time, we stand here as one people. Set upon the course of one mission, to ensure the events we witnessed 9 years ago may never happen again. And to ensure that our children may never have to fear or be threatened. Life can be hard, it can bleed, it can hurt, it can bend and it can break. But life is beautiful, no matter the origin, religion or ethnicity. Life is too short to not take advantage of and too valuable of a gift to forget. So on this day we remember, we remember the rescuers that ran into danger, the innocent lives lost and last phone calls that were made nine years ago. But may we also remember all those who are precious to us today, our friends, our family, our neighbors, our fellow countrymen and women. May we live with one heart, move as one hand, look to one flag and honor one land. Never forget the community you have, the family that can rally, in times of trouble that will be our greatest strength. And coupled with the unbreakable will of human kind and an unwavering spirit, we together will bring about a world in which terror is only referred to in history textbooks... thank you all for coming, and god bless, the United States of America.”

Almost all millennials can say where they were when the towers fell. It has defined our country and our generation. We were pretty young when September 11th happened, but just old enough to know what was happening... even if we couldn't necessarily understand it. Of course, nobody really understood it. Growing up we were taught that our country was impenetrable; we had by far the most powerful military, the biggest economy and were surrounded by oceans. No war had ever and would ever be fought on our soil, we were safe. The wars of the past we only knew about from history textbooks and stories from our parents. Sure, we have been told about the Vietnam War, the Korean War, even operation Desert Storm... But these were distant to us, things of the past. Our economy had been experiencing a boom and from our perspective the world loved us. This is what I meant when I talked about the relevance of superheroes to our generation. Because from our perspective, growing up in the 90's we felt like superheroes.

Statistics will show what Americans were most concerned about back before 911, but what most don't understand is what my generation was really afraid of: 1) Killer bees coming over from Africa, 2) the Y2K bug that was supposed to bring about the apocalypse and 3) collecting Pokémon cards. I remember watching an episode of The Simpsons when Homer and his family went to Washington DC. In the episode there were protesters standing outside of the White House with big signs that said things like, "Everything Okay". The Simpsons was actually making fun of the fact everything was good. My first introduction to politics and controversy came in 2000 with the election of George W. Bush when he was elected without winning the popular vote. I remember a lot of people getting very riled up about that. I too was upset, but still had very little fear

for anything to come. Mind you, this isn't to say by any means that I think George Bush's election has anything to do with September 11th. All I'm saying is that I had no fear for things to come. To be fair, we were kids, how much should we really know about the economy or wars overseas? Moreover, on a personal level, my father's cancer had been cured by modern medicine just 2 years prior. For all intensive purposes I had only ever experienced everything turning out for the best.

Then came September 11th. And the attitudes of my country changed forever. Well, we found out pretty quickly after September 11th.

I was in middle school when it happened, on my way to math class. A teacher pulled me and my classmates into one of the larger science rooms where my whole class could sit together. Another teacher came to the front of the room and told us very bluntly, that an airplane had crashed into one of the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon. That's all the information we were given. The teacher asked if we had any questions or wanted to talk about what we were feeling. I raised my hand.

"Yes Nathan?"

"So... Who's attacking us?"

That was my initial thought... The world trade center and the pentagon, there was no way it was a coincidence. The teacher panicked a bit at this, but regained her composure pretty quickly.

“What would make you think it’s an attack, we don’t have that kind of information.”

Later I would find out that our administration was asked not to give too much information. Parents were coming to pick up their kids and they wanted to try and explain what was happening themselves... but that’s just it, they wanted to *try* and explain. Like I said before, we weren’t old enough to understand the event, we were only old enough to know what was happening. And when you’re a kid and you don’t understand something, you turn to your parents. So that’s what we did. But how could our parents explain to their 10-year olds that the world as we knew it had just changed. Or that from now on, our enemies could strike us in a way we had never before had to defend against. That there were people who hated our country, or perhaps more accurately, our country wasn’t as infallible as we were led to believe. All we knew was what we were told and what was explained for us. And what we were told and was explained for us lay contrary to everything we had ever known before.

When my mom picked me up she was the one that told me a second plane had hit the world trade centers and that they had collapsed. When I arrived back home I remember how quiet everyone was. They were all in their homes watching their TVs, watching history take place. My dad set up a big tv in our hospital’s waiting room. There were people crowding around it, watching and listening. That night our President spoke to a terrified nation, promising justice would be served and that we had no reason to fear.

The next day, to my dismay, I went to school, my dad told me that we shouldn’t change our lives because of what had happened. Although the entire city of Philadelphia

was on lockdown. Everyone had a reason to think they were the next target. Everyone found something in their town or neighborhood that was worth hitting. Even those in the most rural parts of the country found reason to fear; after all, if our rural small towns were hit, what kind of message would that send.

On the bus ride to school the radio was playing. Men and women were speaking in worried voices of what this event meant. Then something miraculous happened. My bus driver, perhaps sensing our apprehension, switched to a different station. They were playing America the Beautiful, and I remember, for the first time in my life, really appreciating it. That was the day I found my patriotism. That song on that bus ride is what made me love my bruised country. I started watching the news and reading the newspaper after that. I began learning and engaging myself in whatever politics I could. I saw my country enter a war in Afghanistan and then Iraq. What I didn't understand I asked questions about, I started to fully engage myself in this topic that before, I had given no consideration too. My dad loved this newfound passion of mine, and more often than not he'd quiz me over the dinner table about the events of the day. He used to listen to the news from a radio he kept in the corner of the surgery room of our hospital.

When the government began giving us terror alert levels and we started finding anthrax in our mail, my dad and I began devising contingency plans. When Americans were sent abroad to fight the "War Against Terror", I started keeping a tally of all the lives lost in Iraq and Afghanistan with a white board I kept in my room. News was depressing more than it was good, but I maintained my faith that things would get better. I had to be optimistic, if not for my own sake, than that of my sisters and mom.

The Summer of 2002, I found an article in TIME magazine that spoke of something called the Bottle Neck Period. They described this as a period in most species history where they surpass the carrying capacity of their ecosystem and their population “bottlenecks”. Meaning that many members of the species die due to harsher conditions and scarcer resources. The article talked about how a number of major issues were colliding at the same time: Overpopulation, Disease, Lack of Resources, War ect.; and that by 2030, humanity too would enter its bottleneck. It would be the most difficult time in human history, far surpassing any other conflict or global pandemic we have ever faced. The article ended by saying that there was some hope, that the one variable unaccounted for was human ingenuity. And that it is possible that our generation could get us through the bottleneck period smoothly, solving all of the problems we will face, and then experience a period of unprecedented piece and prosperity. The article at first scared me, and I wished to myself that our generation would be able to live up to that hope... After a few moments I felt a hole of anxiety form within me. If I am sitting here hoping my generation will solve it, how many others are doing the same? At what point will someone stop and say, “I will play my part in solving the problems we face”.

So that’s what I did. I pledged that to myself. And years later I would find that I wasn’t alone. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of us had the same crisis of confidence that was replaced with a determination to protect those who are precious to us and combat the problems our species will inevitably face. This I believe will be the defining feature of our generation... And to those naysayers, I counter two points. First, we’re only just getting started. The millennial generation that was so affected by September 11th is just hitting the workforce now, and we’re only the first round of it too.

And we're already starting to play our part and make a difference to the world. We are more open-minded, tolerant, progressive, bi-partisan, civically minded, sustainable and inventive than prior generation. In part because we don't have a choice, we have to be... And the second thing I'd say to the naysayers out there... What's the alternative to not believing in us... giving up?

In 2004, my dad's cancer came back. It was over 5 years after it was considered to be "cured", so its return shocked all of us. My mom was only just beginning to relax about the bi-yearly check-ups. I think my dad maybe had one or two more to go before the hospital would have given him the green light to drop all fears of the cancer returning. We were lucky though, I mean within reason... We had caught the cancer early and it appeared only isolated to the liver, a location where the infected parts could easily be removed.

The summer of 2004 was spent going back and forth from our house in Ardmore, Pennsylvania to Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia. My dad spent much of the summer there; my sisters and I would make due by trying to keep ourselves preoccupied with other things that summer. Honestly we felt most at ease when we were at the hospital with our dad. Even seeing him in his weakened state, but surrounded by a state of the art medical facility was a thousand times better than lurking ominous feeling of *not* knowing what was happening. By the end of the summer my dad came back home to us. For a second time they told us this was a cure, and they asked that he return for a check up every three months.

My parents asked us to keep this a secret, and so that's precisely what we did. Nobody needed to know about my family's battle against cancer, we didn't want to be looked at differently. From this point forward our lives were defined by waiting for each check up.

Chicken Noodle Soup

My mom used to make something for me called Arthur Godfrey soup. It's the same recipe that her mom made for her when she was a little girl. Basically it's glorified chicken noodle soup, but somehow it was always extra comforting and very familiar. On nights when my mom had to rush over to Jefferson Hospital but my sisters and I had too much homework to go with her, she would make this for us. It was really quick to make, but filling and nutritional. Most of all, it was soothing. She would make it for us when we were sick too. I found the following recipe on a website called www.tasteofhome.com. It's a delicious chicken noodle recipe that's very reminiscent of what my mom used to make. I'd suggest scrambling up a few eggs and mixing them in afterwards to get the full affect of Arthur Godfrey soup.



Ingredients⁶⁰:

- 4 cups water
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups cubed cooked chicken breast
- 1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 3/4 cup sliced celery
- 3/4 cup sliced carrots
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium chicken bouillon granules
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 3 cups uncooked egg noodles

Directions⁶¹:

⁶⁰ Taken from: <http://www.tasteofhome.com/Recipes/30-Minute-Chicken-Noodle-Soup>

1. In a Dutch oven, combine the first 10 ingredients. Bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.
3. Stir in noodles; cook 5-7 minutes longer or until noodles and vegetables are tender.

⁶¹ Ibid

Chapter 7: Ah, That's My Fancy Private School Learnin'

"The test of education, apart from the accomplishments that secure places in an artificial system, should be this: Let the man be thrown naked on an unknown shore, and be forced to win his way amidst a new people. It may then be of little use to play cricket or to mishandle Tschaikowsky on a piano, but good physique, intelligence, and will power make their way infallibly." –Arthur Lynch

I anxiously glanced back up at the clock, I had an hour left to go and it was already 2 in the afternoon. The damn exam was running a good 2 hours behind schedule. This, after already having to complete a good 4 hours of exams. I let a sigh escape... to the annoyance of the young woman to my right, and leaned back over my bubble sheet re-check my answers.

After another quick sweep I confirmed my suspicion... I had for perhaps the first time in my life, finished a standardized test ahead of schedule. Ironical too, that the exam I finished ahead of schedule is the Praxis II exam that will allow me to retrieve my certification to teach Elementary Education. It's 2012 and I'm reaching the end of my college career, so naturally it's rational that I jump right back into education the moment I finish, right?

A few months ago I was accepted into Teach for America. It's a prestigious program based out of Americorps that sends America's brightest to America's most in need. The program was started in an attempt to attract a coalition of passionate individuals to the places in America where teachers were most lacking. I'll be trained for a month over the summer, then placed into a school under a 2-year contract. Of the thousands upon thousands that applied for the corps, only 8% of us were accepted. This is an honor, an honor that receives a lot of criticism for being self-serving. Who can blame its critics though... sure we go through hell for a month... but we're guaranteed a

job and then placed into the cushy Americorps alumni network that will look after us. To my critics I say fine... say what you want now, I'll prove you wrong when I successfully empower and educate my students. Perhaps that's a cocky attitude, but as long as I never give up that mission, who's going to complain.

So, in a couple of months I will head back to Philadelphia to teach Elementary Education... And boy does it feel ironic that I'm going to end up teaching.

Einstein once said, "if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will always feel inadequate". I think that pretty much sums up my first year of education. I had a learning disability when I was really young. My older sister had one too, so we were sent to "special school" specifically designed to address learning disabilities in students. This place was called Benchmark, it is highly selective, highly prestigious and very expensive. My parents really prioritized this education to make it work, and I know now how lucky I was that they were able to afford it. Benchmark gave both my sister and I new strategies to deal with our learning disabilities. In first grade I only knew seven letters of the alphabet and could not spell my own name. By the time I had reached third grade, I developed strategies to overcome my learning disability and was reading at a 6th grade level.

I stayed at Benchmark for nine years, elementary through middle school. It was 9 years instead of 8 because Benchmark takes an extra year to catch us up to our counterparts in other "mainstream" schools. I will never be able to thank Benchmark enough for instilling in me the strategies they did... but I also never truly belonged there. I believe education is both an academic and a social experience. Through my early

elementary years I was picked on and had very few friends, this didn't help the confidence of a kid who was also at the very bottom of his class. Around third grade I started to take martial arts, theater and improv outside of school; all of these slowly turned my confidence around and started making "friends".

By middle school these friends of mine started getting involved in alcohol and drugs, something for which I would later learn is very common. In 2002, we were all on a field trip to Washington DC, I remember my best friend handing me a water bottle that was filled with vodka. Most of my class had been drinking the entire time and was looking at me expectantly. I turned them down.

Later a girl in our class would take pictures of their activities with a disposable camera. When she went to get them developed the developer reported the activities to her parents, which then made its way over to the school. About half of my class ended up being pulled out of school and sent off to corrective behavior camps. It was around that time that I learned the alcohol was only the tip of the iceberg, there was a lot more going on that I hadn't seen. Later several of my friends would drop out of high school, a few would be arrested for a number of activities, but perhaps it's not important to get into that. These were people whom I could seldom relate to. Many of them were the heirs to large fortunes and lived in bubbles rarely penetrated by any real world problems. After Benchmark I applied to a number of high schools. Given my need for computer access and academic experience thus far, my parents felt I would fair much better in a private school than a public school.

I got into my top choice, a small school called Shipley in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. There I thrived academically and met my two best friends, Jason and

Isaiah. Jason is first generation Korean and Isaiah is African American. Among the three of us we were our own miniature league of nations. Through the years we would only ever grow closer to one another, and as that happened so did our families. Today I consider Isaiah and Jason just as much family to me as I consider my sisters.

American University was my first choice. It had absolutely everything I wanted: a strong political science and international relations program, political activism (#1 most politically active), a campus and was located in Washington DC. Not to mention the mascot is the Bald Eagle and the school colors are red, white and blue... I remember being in awe of Washington DC and the greatness that surrounded me. This is the capital of the free world, where MLK told us he has a dream, FDR promised us “we have nothing to fear but fear itself,” and where JFK reminded us to “ask not what the country can do for you.” This is a town of empowerment, and making a difference for your country and the world.

Within my first couple of days I would undergo orientation with a selective Leadership Program I had applied and been accepted too. It’s an organization with 35 students per class that specialize in leadership studies and participate in class work that promotes social entrepreneurship and civic mindedness. In one of our first orientation sessions the upperclassmen in the program took us on a tour of the monuments surrounding DC. Lincoln was and continues to be my favorite today.

My senior year... this year. A representative from Teach for America reached out to me, suggesting that I consider applying to the corps. After much consideration I accepted, deciding that perhaps the single greatest way to affect change in America, will be to engage and educate her youth. If nothing else, it would be a start... So here I am,

taking my praxis exams and prepping to enter the same public schools that would have failed me had my situation been different.

Anyone who knows education in America will tell you that our education system is broken. As I mentioned, it most certainly would have failed me had I gone through the normal process. We rank 14th in reading, 25th in math and 17th in science⁶²... and the gap is widening. But that's something many of us are well aware of right? Media now more than ever is shoving that down our throats. But what is oftentimes not considered is the diversity of youth today and how that is affecting our education. As the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) put it, "the nation is in the process of transitioning from one in which a single racial/ethnic group predominates to one that has no single race/ethnicity that can claim a majority of the population"⁶³. By 2018, it's expected that 45% of public high school graduates will be minorities, that's a 15% increase from today⁶⁴. Our current system is not designed to handle this shifting dynamic of cultural experiences. Moreover, many of these youths will have difficulty gaining access to higher education.

This will be a great issue for our generation in the long run... In the short run we have another host of issues. Namely the rising cost of higher education and thus student debt. Before it was expected that if you went to college, got a good education, worked

⁶² Shepherd, Jessica. "World Education Rankings: Which Country Does Best at Reading, Maths and Science?" *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 07 Dec. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/dec/07/world-education-rankings-maths-science-reading>.

⁶³ WICHE. (2008). *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity 1992-2022*. Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education.

⁶⁴ Mortenson, T. (2007). Consequences of the Widening Gap Between Reality and Policy in Opportunity for Higher Education. *New Direction for Student Services*, 49-54.

hard and got good grades, you would earn more and have a better life. This is in part after all... the American dream, is it not? Because of student debt, that dream is seriously being undermined. Post-grads today are making almost 9% less than our counterparts from the 90's, moreover most of us are unemployed, in fact 35% of us are⁶⁵. When you see those statistics about rising unemployment rates, what you usually don't see is that most of that is concentrated among us, the millennial generation. This coupled with the fact that we're also thousands of thousands of dollars in debt, has done a lot to define our generation (We average about \$24,000.00 of debt)⁶⁶.

All this points to the fact that our generation is leaving college with a major disadvantage. This further shifts our cultural identity away from the melodramatic ideals of prior generations. It's just beginning to manifest itself in our obsession with everything from our childhood. For example, the recent spike in the popularity of Star Wars that resulted in its return to theaters. You may have also noticed the recent string of fairy tale based tv shows and movies: Once Upon a Time, Grimm, Snow White ect.. Our generation is clashing a bit with the reality of our situation and thus beginning to look nostalgically back at our childhood. This is nothing to fear, merely something to watch as we mature and take on the issues we face... What is of concern is the fact that college costs continue to rise at a steady pace. Paying for college will continue to get more difficult unless there is a countering trend that occurs. The debate over college debt is occurring right now, and beginning to involve key members of our own generation.

⁶⁵ Post, The Huffington. "If You Lose Your Job, A College Degree May Not Protect You." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 02 Feb. 2012. Web. 30 Apr. 2012.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/02/long-term-unemployment-college-graduates_n_1250418.html.

⁶⁶ "FinAid | Student Loans." *FinAid! Financial Aid, College Scholarships and Student Loans*. Web. 30 Apr. 2012. <http://www.finaid.org/loans/>.

Chicken Satay with Peanut Sauce

As I've become more experienced at cooking, I began widening my horizon a bit and experimented with some other recipes. I am especially fond of Asian cooking, so I've explored a variety of Asian cuisines. One that I absolutely love is Chicken Pad Thai, especially when it's made with a good peanut sauce. The following recipe is for Chicken Satay, so it does use noodles but instead has you skewer chicken and sauté it with the peanut sauce. However, almost every time I've made this recipe I



have actually just made the sauce and then mixed it with soba noodles and separately cooked and sautéed chicken to make pad Thai. However, this recipe is great the way it is too. More than any other recipe I have cooked this for friends because of how filling and exotic it is. I found this recipe on www.foodnetwork.com, it's brought to us by Tyler Florence.

Chicken Satay Ingredients⁶⁷:

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 1/2 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into strips
- 20 wooden skewers, soaked in water 30 minutes
- Vegetable oil, for grilling
- Butter lettuce leaves
- Fresh cilantro leaves

Chicken Satay Directions⁶⁸:

1. Combine the yogurt, ginger, garlic, and curry powder in a shallow mixing bowl, stir to combine.
2. Place the chicken strips in the yogurt marinade and gently toss until well coated. Cover and let the chicken marinate in the refrigerator for at up to 2 hours.

⁶⁷ Taken from: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/tyler-florence/chicken-satay-with-peanut-sauce-recipe/index.html>

⁶⁸ Taken from: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/tyler-florence/chicken-satay-with-peanut-sauce-recipe/index.html>

3. Thread the chicken pieces onto the soaked skewers working the skewer in and out of the meat, down the middle of the piece, so that it stays in place during grilling.
4. Place a grill pan over medium heat and brush it with oil to prevent the meat from sticking. Grill the chicken satays for 3 to 5 minutes on each side, until nicely seared and cooked through.
5. Serve the satays on a platter lined with lettuce leaves and cilantro; accompanied by a small bowl of peanut sauce on the side.

Peanut Sauce Ingredients⁶⁹:

- 1 cup smooth peanut butter
- 1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons red chili paste, such as sambal
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 2 limes, juiced
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1/4 cup chopped peanuts, for garnish

Peanut Sauce Directions⁷⁰:

1. Combine the peanut butter, soy sauce, red chili paste, brown sugar, and lime juice in a food processor or blender. Puree to combine. While the motor is running, drizzle in the hot water to thin out the sauce, you may not need all of it.
2. Pour the sauce into a nice serving bowl and garnish with the chopped peanuts.
3. Serve with chicken satay.

⁶⁹ Taken from: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/tyler-florence/chicken-satay-with-peanut-sauce-recipe/index.html>

⁷⁰ Taken from: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/tyler-florence/chicken-satay-with-peanut-sauce-recipe/index.html>

Chapter 8: The Civically Engaged Generation

“I’m tired of hearing it said that democracy doesn’t work. It isn’t supposed to work. We are supposed to work it. –Alexander Woollcott

The cold mindless drone of living with nothing but dread and a purposely-forced sense of optimism proved to be the most fatiguing duty of all. The events of that morning kept replaying in my mind. My room was so cold that morning as the phone rang and woke me at the unforgiving fourth hour of what would be, the longest day of my life. My mom came to my room with a clear sense of unease so expertly hidden through years of practice, and so expertly unearthed through my own sense of perception crafted and refined over the years. I knew the news even before she came to my room. I knew it had been the hospital that called, and I knew the imperative stance my father stood in his ongoing battle against the growing cancer; a beast which had so swiftly and easily plucked us all from our lives of normalcy.

After she left to spread the news to my sisters, I waited for the familiar clack of our front door as my mother left to see my father. There had been a relapse in my father’s condition; I closed my eyes to let the full impact of circumstances flood every last vestige of my mind. A practiced craftsman in the art of optimism, I let these thoughts ease as my consciousness roared up once again, like a great liberator pulling back the tides of oppression. I knew we would have all been pulled from our restless sleep had the news been dire, but my greatest sense of comfort, stemmed from the strength of my father, who had so vehemently denounced any inclination towards pessimism.

It’s 2007, and a few months ago the cancer returned... again. This time it had metastasized to my dad’s lymph nodes. We first noticed the return of it when my dad was driving home from the movies and started seeing double. Calmly he explained to the

rest of us that he needed to go to the hospital right away... some quick tests later and his suspicions were confirmed. I suppose it's pretty hard to fool someone already so knowledgeable of medicine.

Only two hours before, I had finished writing my first speech for the school that had chosen me to lead them through their newest set of arduous tasks set forth before them by their teachers. I had to focus on nothing but this task that lay ahead of me, so, I let the sensation of power and confidence wash over me as my suit gave me my all too familiar hug and pat on the back. This suit had traveled with me to different cities and different masses of people, it had seen me falter and rise above challenges and opposition. It was with this suit that saw me get elected to be the president of my school's student government, and my last visit with my father after a "pre-semester" meeting with my school's administration. And now, I placed the words I had so passionately sculpted only a few hours before, into the inside pocket of my jacket; as if I was passing the deed to my soul into the hands of a friend whose trust could provide the infrastructure for all of my emotional tendencies.

I had nothing to fear in front of the hundreds who had chosen me to lead them. I had earned their trust and won their respect, and now, as thoughts of that morning followed my every step, tugging at the corner of my consciousness, I forced back any lingering thoughts to my father whose condition remained uncertain. For the time being my consciousness knew, that the only task to be focused on was that of the immediate, "Stay driven," was all the voice inside me needed to say. I silently walked through the large metal doors to the ocean of friends, peers, teachers and administrators. I tapped my foot in anticipation for what I took such great pride in. I was not nervous, only excited to

prove to all that their choice in me was not a gaffe. I rose before the masses as my name was called and all fell silent as eyes from every angle turned toward me, marooned on my podium surrounded by miles of judging eyes.

“Good Morning. You know, to start, I must first say something that upsets me. In fact, I despise saying this... but summer is over. And after being but two weeks into the arduous throws of senior year I am exhausted!” There, that relaxing and approving laugh which revealed a break in the wall of expectation surrounding my podium. The tension eased away as I continued and silence recaptured the mass before me.

“How we managed to so abruptly switch from a life of summertime shenanigans to school, I will never know. But, alas, here all of you are, sitting in the Yarnall gym (The name of my high school’s gym), patiently waiting for me to make a point.” Indeed, the swell of patient anticipation for what they knew my style for speeches was, seemed to grow more evident. They knew I had some trick, some unexpected ploy that would make this speech, an outlier to others. As I continued, a growing sense of unease rekindled the lost tension,

“How to do that remained a mystery to me until late last night, when I finally consulted with my trusty Pocket Patriot Handbook.” And with that, I whipped my hand to my back pocket and pulled out the trump card the ocean of expectant eyes had been awaiting. My small red, white and blue colored book of patriotic quotes caught the ocean completely off guard. The eruption of surprise and laughter tore down the walls of expectations, as all tension so swiftly flooded out of my being, and was so swiftly replaced with an emboldened sense of confidence, “Now, that’s better,” whispered the all too familiar voice of my subconscious.

“In it I read a great quote by Confucius which reads, ‘Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.’ Meaning that we triumph and win not by succeeding and being perfect at everything, but by failing again, and again, and again. Until eventually we succeed...”

I put down my book and allowed the few seconds of tension to grow, as if some flaw or unexpected crowd response had occurred. “Shipley, my name is Nate Bronstein and for you! I am prepared to fail! Again! And again! And again! I am serious! About failing.” Sound flooded every last vestige of my mind, even where tension and fear had once staked claim. The eruption of laughter and applause filled my marooned podium and showered me with the approval I had so passionately sought out to obtain. The noise increased as the ocean rose to its feet, and then slowly dissipated as I waited to continue.

“I could have come up here and gone off on some whimsical tale about how all of you will succeed and be great at everything. But I cannot and will not, because the fact of the matter is that you will not always succeed, and you will not always be completely happy. Moreover, we are beginning a new year, and things will get harder.”

I felt the rider in control of the speeding racehorse, as I allowed my new relaxed self to begin controlling and manipulating the feelings of the crowd. Now I would harden the atmosphere and bring about a serious tone. “That being said, whether you are bristling with confidence or not, whether you are a mighty oak or a little acorn, every one of you

has absolutely everything you need to succeed, excel, and be happy at Shipley (The name of my high school). And if you're still concerned just look to your right and look to your left; and know that you're not alone."

The familiar lift of empowerment welled up inside me, if only this mass which had given me its respect and support knew all that had been happening behind me, and how these words were the written thank you for all that they had given me.

"And this is what makes us great, for we are united not by color or race or religion or by the place of our birth. Not by a social status or a bank account or a hobby or a skill. We are united by our differences and an unwavering sense of tolerance, and you don't need me to bring back my life-sized cardboard cutout of myself to prove a point about our uniqueness." A more than welcomed laughter filled the crowd,

"Good, keep it light" whispered my consciousness in my ear. I thought very fondly of that cardboard cut out, it had been in my first speech, and with it, I had earned my reputation as an outlier.

"I don't know what will happen this year. And that is my greatest comfort, because as long as I don't know what will happen, anything can happen. And as long as anything can happen, we will have the best year Shipley has ever seen. I am your peer. I am your President. But most importantly, I am your friend. As we begin this, a year which will one day be remembered as the greatest year Shipley has ever seen, I wholeheartedly

welcome you back. And remember, there is nothing wrong with Shipley, that cannot be cured but what is right with Shipley.”

My Senior Year of high school was not my first time as Student Government President, nor was it my last. I served as the Student Government President of Benchmark and American University. At Benchmark I had to run on a ticket with my chosen campaign partner who would serve as my Vice-President. I had the opportunity to give a speech in front of the whole school and I could leave flyers in people’s lockers. For the latter I photo shopped my face on Uncle Sam and passed them around. Back then photoshop was a big deal. That coupled with my speech helped me win my election back in Middle School fairly easily... Though the position turned out to be a joke. It was more like a symbolic thing... something for which the administration made painfully clear with their lack of support.

In high school I served in the student government my freshman, sophomore and junior year, running and winning the presidency of the school for my final senior year. By that time I had earned myself a reputation as caring very deeply for my community. In that election I had the chance to make a speech to the entire school and I could leave as many flyers around campus as I wanted too. I took a humoristic approach to get the attention of my school and then followed up with meaning real tangible goals. That election was my first tough one as I was running against students that had been at Shipley for years.

After winning I enjoyed some real influence in the school. I organized social events and gatherings, ran assemblies to the High school every week and spoke at “All-

School Assemblies” every month or so. I was the head of spirit, regularly taking my shirt off, donning a green cape and painting a big Green “S” on my chest for Shipley (school colors were green), I advertised other events regularly and addressed real issues that our school faced. Sometimes it would be a student who had broken the student conduct code that needed defending, other times there were issues involving scheduling or student moral. Regardless, I found myself very busy with this new position and I took it very seriously... I just didn’t take myself seriously. So regularly I made comical videos with Isaiah and Jason, and then showed them to the entire school during assemblies. Sometimes we made these to advertise events or talk about issues, but other times it was just for fun. My school loved the videos and, if I don’t say so myself, ended up really loving me. I gave myself to my community and I think they saw and appreciated that very deeply.

As the “All-School President” of Shipley, I sought to organize the first ever network of Student Government Presidents in the Philadelphia area. Over the summer I actually held a summit of these SG Presidents where we excitedly talked of organizing a music festival that could be made annual and raise money for a mutually agreed upon cause every year. Ultimately this plan would fail... but I would keep in touch with the other SG presidents.

American University makes Shipley’s Student Government look like nothing. AU actually has the most active/influential student government for its campus in the United States, maybe even the world. The system is set up like the actual US government with 3 branches; a legislative comprised of 30 “senator” positions that creates bills and resolutions, an Executive Branch that has 60 members serving underneath 4 main

executive positions including the President and the Judicial branch. The mission of the American University Student Government (AUSG) is as follows: The American University Student Government represents the needs and collective voice of over 6,000 undergraduates. Please use our site to learn more about the policy, programming, and service initiatives we provide for the student body. Our mission is to advocate for policies that will tangibly benefit students, offer top-notch programs and lasting traditions, provide services and resources to students, and work with clubs and student leaders to establish a positive cohesion between our groups.

Now, I involved myself very heavily with the university the moment I arrived. I joined the debate team, started working at our university tv network, and even acted in a school play. But I also ran unopposed and served in the Student Government as a senator. Remember that Leadership Program I mentioned? Well the President at the time was also in the program, and matched up as my “buddy” (Think fraternity big), so he pushed me to run... almost as much as my teaching assistant and the Speaker of our senate (also in the Leadership Program).

The following year I got even more involved with my campus community, but also delved deeper into the AUSG. I began working as the Outreach Director for the new president... who happened to be the same guy who was our speaker the year before and my TA. He ended up being quite the mentor for me, encouraging me to run for President my Junior year.

By the time I ran for AUSG President, I had involved myself with 14 different organizations across campus, and risen to leadership positions in many of them as well. Colleges Against Cancer, Model UN, Mission Improvable (Our campus Improv Troupe),

you name it! But that didn't mean what it meant in high school where I could personally get to know everyone. At American, my campaign was intense even though it lasted only 2 weeks. I had to find myself a campaign manager, I made t-shirts, buttons, flyers, chalkings and about 5 different campaign videos that I sent out via my own personal YouTube channel and Twitter page. All the while I had to follow the strict rules and regulations of the board of elections that regularly imposed sanctions on campaigns that broke rules and I had to give speeches to organizations across campus in an attempt to earn their endorsement.

For my logo I used the Captain America Shield. I proudly proclaimed myself as "Captain American," someone who espoused campus spirit and pride and was committed to turning AU into a home away from home. It may sound dorky, but after 3 years of over exerting myself in student clubs and painting my chest the school colors, wearing and cape and wielding a big Captain America shield at sporting events, I had enough eye witnesses to support all of my claims. During the week of campaigning I rationed sleep to maybe 3 hours every other day. I even had two a capella troupes make endorsement songs for me. It all paid off in the end when I was elected SG President... the most influential position I have ever held to date.

As the SG President I worked 60 hours a week running my organization of over 200 people with a budget of \$700,000.00. The organization itself has 37 different unique departments that specialize in a wide array of activities. Everything from advocacy, to communication, to services to programming. Now at the time, the SG had a poor reputation around campus, so I begin rebuilding broken bonds and relationships. I got to know each individual and established an emotional bond. Slowly the Student

Government transformed itself from an organization to a community and then into a family. Each member transformed from colleagues to friends. I connected the diverse departments under one umbrella mission for which, regardless of each member's job or duty, we could all pursue in unison. That mission is to build the students of American University, a home away from home. In 4 months we had created 4 new departments, including one that increased service at my University by a staggering 1,900%. We brought the Lions Club to AU, making AU the First University in DC to host one. We more than doubled interest among people to join the organization and tripled attendance at our events. We also shattered record after record for attendance at our sporting events, including the DC record for attendance at a Volleyball game in DC.

While this was happening, I saw another need for the AU community... representation in the local community. AU lies within what is called an Advisory Neighborhood Commission, jurisdictions overlap with AU, but students have never had representation on this commission. This was becoming a major issue as our university was looking to pass its ten-year-plan to improve campus facilities. In the largest coordination of student leaders AU has ever seen, we gathered the most influential student leaders from across campus and brought them into a meeting to discuss how to address this. We decided to find two students to run in the local election. One for each of the two districts that ran through AU's campus. In order to do this properly we would have to build our PR team, fundraising committee, field work team and find a campaign manager. About 2 months later and many sleepless nights, our team succeeding in building a team, fundraising what we needed, canvassing where we needed to go and elected one of our own to local government, one the youngest elected official in the US.

Soon after this I caught the attention of our University Merit Award office, they asked me to apply for the Truman Scholarship. The Truman Scholarship is the most prestigious leadership/service award that can be won by college Junior. It's an award for, "college juniors who show leadership potential and have an interest in government or public sector service". The award process is one of the most intense processes I have ever experienced. AU only nominates 10 students to go for the award because it's such an intense process that they don't have the resources to support more than that... 10 is a lot for this award. Only 1 person is selected from each state in the United States. Once they are selected they are placed into the Truman network which essentially guarantees you work and acceptance into grad school, as well as \$30,000.00 in scholarship for wherever you so please.

The first step in the application process is a very intense written portion that asks you questions with very strict word and character limits. Questions like, in detail describe where you will be working 5 years from now, 10 years from now. Describe your leadership, what do you view as the biggest problem to society? Ect.. Then it asks you for a highly detailed policy proposal. Most don't make it past this first round, my year only 2 out of the ten of us made it to the next round... the final round. This involves us going back to our home stay and getting interviewed by a panel of Truman judges. For mine, I sat in a panel with a former mayor of Philadelphia and other equally as prestigious judges. I remember the 6 other candidates competing for the award eyeing me and the others with so much apprehension. I didn't like that process very much at all. A year later when I applied for Teach for America I would see how much more pleasant the process is when everyone isn't competing for one spot.

Anyway, a few weeks after my final interview and the night after night I had lost trying to fulfill my duty to my university in my capacities as a student, the president and a Truman finalist, I received a letter from the Truman foundation. Or rather, my mom did. She opened up while I was on the phone with her.

“You didn’t get it”, she said, with clear disappointment in her voice.

I shrugged, “No worries, I have to get back to work anyway”.

This last story is my story of youth civic engagement, a characteristic that has defined our generation both as one of our strengths and one of our weaknesses. Our generation appears to be divided in this regard. About half of us remain fairly disengaged and disconnected, and half of us are reminiscent of the “flower power” generation with our commitment to service. The focus of my Truman work was centered on Youth Civic Engagement and what it means for our country and our generation.

“Youth” refers to adolescents and young adults between the ages of 10 and 24. By this definition of “youth” there are approximately 60 million youths in the United States, or 21% of the country. Youth is the transition term for an individual leaving childhood and entering adulthood, or the “awkward period between sexual maturation and the attainment of adult roles and responsibilities”⁷¹. Last year 1.9 million youths were victims of homicide, robbery and assault, making violence the second leading cause of

⁷¹ (Carnegie Corporation of New York, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century* (October 1995), pp. 20-21.)

death⁷² for youth⁷³, behind drunk driving and ahead of suicide. Youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are at the greatest risk of being a victim or a perpetrator of homicide. This is the second leading cause of death for youth in the United States. Moreover, youth in the past year were the victims of 1.9 million rapes, robberies and assault⁷⁴. Youth who have no positive connections to their communities are isolated, bullied or drop out of school, in fact current statistics show that 1 in 4 drop out.⁷⁵ These youths resort to risky behaviors,⁷⁶ such as violence leading to early death, drug use and delinquency⁷⁷. Those who should be developing positive personal narratives⁷⁸ and life goals are missing the basic foundations of self-worth and belonging. This in my mind is the greatest battle of our generation, because this is our generation. 15 to 24, is well within the range of the Millennial.

In 2006 the Center for Information and Research found that only 26% of youth claim to “vote regularly”⁷⁹. Today, over 60% of youth express cynicism with the government saying that it is inefficient and wasteful⁸⁰. Civic engagement varies dramatically from voting, to volunteering, to following the news. There is a trend of

⁷² Zeldin, Shepherd. “Preventing Youth Violence Through the Promotion of Community Engagement.” University of Wisconsin. Vol 32, Wiley Periodicals, inc. 2004

⁷³ (Carnegie Corporation of New York, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century* (October 1995), pp. 20-21.)

⁷⁴ (Zeldin, Shepherd “Preventing Youth Violence Through the Promotion of Community Engagement and Membership” University of Wisconsin. 2004.)

⁷⁵ (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008)

⁷⁶ Risky behavior can refer to teen pregnancy, homelessness, prostitutions, dropping out of schools, commission of felonies, low self-esteem and depression, sexual abuse, rape and incest, permanent injury from guns, knives or physical abuse. (Burt, R. Martha Ph.D., Urban Institute. “Why Should We Invest In Adolescents?”. Pan American Health Organization, Washington D.C. 1998.)

⁷⁷ Zeldin, Shepherd. “Preventing Youth Violence Through the Promotion of Community Engagement and Membership.” University of Wisconsin: Journal of Community Psychology. September, 2004.

⁷⁸ The Personal Narrative is the understanding individuals have about themselves and their role in their community. It is based on family, teachers, peers and surrounding influences. (Nakkula, M.J., and Toshalis E. (2006) Chapter 1: The construction of adolescence. *Understanding Youth: Adolescent Development for Educators*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.)

⁷⁹ (Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey, Oct, 2006.)

⁸⁰ Ibid

rapidly declining civic engagement; it is the result of an increasingly disconnected youth population. Youth need this link to society to develop a sense of self worth; this is especially true between the ages of 10 and 15 when they undergo the most mental and emotional development. If this connection is not established between the ages of 10 and 15, youth begin pursuing risky behavior. As of 2005, one in three girls in the US were pregnant before the age of 20⁸¹.

However, this is not the case for all of us, studies have been conducted on civic engagement and its ability to prevent risky behavior.⁸² “Civic Engagement” is the participation in and building of one’s community. This can take a number of different forms but is most easily broken down into five basic categories. The first is service; this may include formal volunteering through an organization as well as less formal ways of helping others or working to solve a problem in a community. Participating in a group, connecting to information and current events, political action and staying socially connected are four other forms of Civic Engagement. One such study of over 1,000 youth revealed a direct inverse relationship between civic engagement and risky behavior⁸³. Engaged youth maximize their sense of community and transform from victims of social problems into change agents. Engaged youth are 11% more likely to have a grade point average above a B+⁸⁴ and pursue higher education⁸⁵, are 24% more likely to vote, and 200% more likely to be civically engaged in adulthood⁸⁶.

⁸¹ Trussell, James. *Teen Pregnancy in the United States*

⁸² (*Civic Life in America: Key Findings on the civic health of the Nation, Issue Brief. Corporation for National & Community Service. September, 2010.*)

⁸³ Alessio Vieno, Maury Nation and Douglas D. Perkins. “Civic participation and the development of adolescent behavior problems.” *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29 June, 2007.

⁸⁴ Kimberly Spring, Nathan Dietz, Kelly Arey, John Foster-Bey and Robert Grimm Jr., *Youth Helping America, Leveling the Path to Participation: Volunteering and Civic Engagement Among Youth From Disadvantaged Circumstances. Corporation for National & Community Service. March, 2007*

Our generation needs to engage itself if we are to be running full steam to take on the issues we'll have to face. I think part of this will mean us turning inward and ensuring that we do not leave our counterparts behind. Just as my peers at American helped me achieve higher levels of leadership, we must do the same for our counter parts who feel disconnected from society. To some degree, even those of us who are engaged feel dissatisfied, even resentful with the state of the world and the way we're treated. That's fine, we should feel that way together, and do something about it too... together.

Gingered Chicken, Vegetable Ramen Soup

Over the years I've had weeks where I was so busy I didn't have time to sleep. Sometimes I would leave my house at 6:00AM and not get home until 1:00AM. On days like these, I survived only thanks to ramen. I actually love ramen noodles, I have ever since I was really young. Even if I wasn't a poor starving college student, I think I would still indulge in them from time to time. However, after a while I decided that it might be good to experiment a little and improve my ramen so it was at least a little healthier. This recipe



is super quick and super easy, perfect for those nights your exhausted and don't want to put too much energy into making yourself some food. I found this recipe on www.kitchendaily.com, I stumbled upon it a couple of years ago when I was looking around for a good ramen recipe. Enjoy!

Ingredients⁸⁷:

- 1, 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup water

⁸⁵ The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Detailed Look at How Youth Participate in Politics and Communities. October 2006.

⁸⁶ Independent Sector 2001; Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004

⁸⁷ Taken from: <http://www.kitchendaily.com/recipe/gingered-chicken-vegetable-ramen-soup-149385/>

- 3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 pound chicken tenders
- 2 medium carrots, cut diagonally into 1/2-inch slices
- 1 large celery rib, halved lengthwise and cut diagonally into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1,3-ounce package ramen noodles, coarsely broken in package; flavor packet discarded
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley or cilantro

Directions⁸⁸:

1. Puree ginger in water in blender. Transfer to a 3- to 4-quart heavy saucepan and add broth. Bring to a boil.
2. Add chicken tenders and reduce heat, then simmer slowly, covered, until just cooked through, about 5 minutes. Fish out tenders with tongs and chill in a bowl in fridge while finishing soup.
3. Add carrots and celery and simmer, covered, until tender, about 10 minutes.
4. Add ramen noodles and simmer, covered, until just tender, about 3 minutes and stir in parsley.
5. While noodles are cooking, coarsely shred chicken and then stir into hot soup.

⁸⁸Taken from: <http://www.kitchendaily.com/recipe/gingered-chicken-vegetable-ramen-soup-149385/>

Chapter 9: You're Hearing Me, Not Listening!

"I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

-Robert McCloskey

I looked at my friend Bo in surprise and horror, he reflected my look right back at me... This was the funniest thing either of us had ever experienced... but there was no way we'd survive if we laughed. Master Jin stared at us, perplexed and annoyed as we stood in front of him, shocked and unaware of what he wanted us to do.

"I said, do Penis push-ups now!" He repeated, this time with more anger in his voice.

It's the summer of 2010 and Bo and I were at our first Jujutsu lesson. I've actually been taking Martial Arts ever since elementary school... I think I only briefly mentioned that before. I am not a black belt in Tae-Kwon-Do, a red belt in jujutsu and I hold a certificate in military combatives. But that summer back in 2010, I was just starting out at this new studio just outside of the perimeter of AU. It gave me something to do with my free time during the summer I stayed in DC working as the AUSG President.

Now, I'm sure you're wondering where I was going with that story, I'll get to that...

Bo and I have gone on a number of adventures together at AU. One time we were both hired by Republican Senator of Missouri to be the entertainment at his son's birthday party. He hired us to dress up as jedi and teach his kid and his friends how to be jedi themselves... but that's a story for another day.

Over the summer Bo and I wanted to take up another martial art, so we found this small studio that had just opened up. Jun Kim Jin runs the studio, but it's his first civilian school. He's trained military and police for years, serving as a general in Thailand for some time as well. He's apparently trained in martial arts for well over 45 years. And this first day of class he taught us a wide array of pressure points, thus inflicting immeasurable amounts of pain on us... now we stood in front of our Japanese Yoda with him defiantly asking us to do... penis... push-ups.

Master Jin held out his hand and made a gesture that indicated he meant that we do a push-up with our fingers outstretched so that all of our weight is on the points of fingers.

“ooooohhhh!” We said in unison... “Fingers!”

His accent made fingers sound oddly like “penis”

There once was a Chinese Restaurant near the University of the District of Columbia called the *Peking Duck*. The waiters and waitresses at this restaurant were accused of being racist against their black customers because they were writing a gratuity on only the checks of their black customers. When asked about this, the waiters and waitresses at the restaurant simply replied, “Black people don't tip.” Meanwhile, black customers who were interviewed stated that they didn't tip because the waiters and

waitresses were rude and abrasive. This was a general breakdown of nonverbal communication.

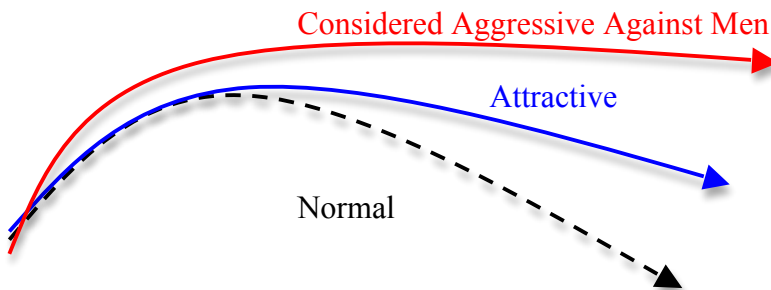
The Millennial generation will experience more scenarios with varying communicative situations than any other generation prior. It's the result of a more diverse country with a constant flow of immigrants. Well that, and the fact that we travel more than other generations too. So understanding the difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is important.

In the Peking Duck example, what African Americans perceived to be “rude and abrasive” was actually the Asian waiters and waitresses not understanding social communicative tools. They were coming off rude and abrasive because they didn't understand tone, a feature in our language that's very important. Sometimes Asians who have trouble with this vocal feature will supplement their speech by saying please an extra amount. A normal pitch in American society will typically rise and then fall towards the end of the sentence, like so:



This varies for people by age, sex and ethnicity.

Take for example a young female in American culture:



Slight changes in the pitch and tone create completely different effects for the listener.

Edward T. Hall in his book *Beyond Culture*, talks about the difference between High Context Cultures and Low Context cultures. These terms are used to describe cultures in which it's necessary to know a lot of context to communicate, and cultures in which it's not necessary to know a lot. For example, if I were to walk up to someone and say, "Nice weather we're having", they would probably know pretty quickly that I'm not really interested in talking about the weather. I'm more interested in saying hello or getting to know them. What we say is only a small piece of how we communicate. Body language, tone, volume and cultural sayings all represent societal context. American society is generally low context, and the millennial generation is especially low context. On the whole, we say what we mean, especially in our generation when we do so much texting and typing. However, there *is* a context to our communication even if it's still relatively low. For example, if a girl who I don't know very well texts me "hey" and nothing more, I can assume she's upset about something. Similarly, if she texts "heyyy" it's probably likely that she's interested in getting something from me. Slight variations in simple texts express an enormous amount of meaning. Most millennials grow up learning this,

but other generations will have you believe there is no depth or context to our modes of communication. In other cultures, high context cultures, there is a tremendous amount of cultural and societal relevance to just about everything you say or do. For these cultures it's far more difficult to communicate. In this way, it's appropriate that American society remain relatively low context so that it also remain relatively open to new cultures. Low context cultures tend to be more present in "To Do" societies. This makes sense considering that much of the high context is based on the tradition prevalent in the "To Be" societies that defines them.

Aussie Burger:

During the summer months I love to grill. I especially enjoy experimenting with different types of burgers. I'm embarrassed to say that it wasn't really until college that I really started experimenting and realizing that there is so much you can do with hamburger. Try mixing it with maple syrup for example and you'll get this sweet savory burger, slab a piece of sharp cheddar on that and you've got yourself a real treat. Well this next burger is another personal favorite of mine. It's hearty and savory with a zing. I found this recipe on a site called www.epicurious.com, enjoy!



Ingredients⁸⁹:

- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Asian chile paste such as sambal oelek
- 1 1/4 pounds ground beef chuck
- 4 kaiser rolls, split

⁸⁹ Taken from:

<http://www.epicurious.com/articlesguides/howtocook/dishes/burgerrecipes/recipes/food/views/Aussie-Burger-242924>

- 4 pineapple rings
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, divided
- 4 large eggs
- 3/4 cup drained sliced pickled beets

Directions⁹⁰:

1. Combine ketchup, mayonnaise, and chile paste.
2. Mix beef with 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper, then form into 4 (4 1/4-inch-diameter) patties.
3. Lightly toast rolls on grill.
4. Pat pineapple dry and brush with 1/2 tablespoon oil.
5. Oil grill rack, then grill pineapple and burgers, covered only if using a gas grill, turning once, until pineapple is tender and caramelized and burgers are medium-rare, about 4 minutes total.
6. Heat remaining 1/2 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot, then fry eggs.
7. Spread chile mayonnaise on rolls, then assemble burgers with pineapple, beets, eggs, lettuce, and tomato.

⁹⁰ Taken from:

<http://www.epicurious.com/articlesguides/howtocook/dishes/burgerrecipes/recipes/food/views/Aussie-Burger-242924>

Chapter 10: Have Faith

“What doesn’t kill you, will only make you stronger.” –Mark Bronstein

“I can’t believe this has happened” were the words that kept replaying in my mind. I had never felt so cold before. Where was my old friend, my consciousness, who whispered his words of optimism in my ear when I needed him? He was just as lost as I; once again I felt that familiar pat on my back from my suit. Now it would share a new venture with me, one darker than we have ever had to face before. Only months before I had proudly and confidently spoken of the future with such optimism. That dark cold phantom that followed me and tugged at my mind that day, seemed to be proudly cackling in my face with the satisfaction of having triumphed over my ability to push it aside. “I’m so sorry” were the words that kept brushing our ears as one by one the black procession of friends and family passed in front of the ever united line of my family. We were surrounded by support and had never felt so alone. There was a painful grating sense of anticipation for something else. No longer would the pessimistic news be conquered with a bout of optimism, preaching of progress and hope. After ten years, the fight had ended, and never before had such a massive burden of defeat, been thrust upon us. I sensed the procession’s length and felt the sting of realizing how many my father had touched. In the procession of support, there stood not just friends, but doctors, and proprietors, tailors and students, people from perhaps every generation and every walk of life. And then there came the first of my great mass, and the second and the third. Like an army of liberators came a separate procession, one compromising of every student in my class and every single one of my teachers. “No way,” my consciousness was equally as shocked, and for a moment, the omnipresent weight of grief lifted as one by one I

embraced the arms, felt the pats and saw the nods of my small army. I sat stunned as my turn to speak came about. I had almost forgotten of the contract placed into the trust of my suit pocket. Remembering the words I had sculpted, I re-opened the painful experience of opening my heart wider than I had ever before.

“For him.” There, my consciousness was back beside me, and ready to share this burden. “We wrote this for him,” I nodded to my old friend, he was right, and now we would talk for him. I stood before the darkest crowd I had ever seen. The hush was muffled by the sounds of grief and sorrow. I felt the presence of my army which had always given me so much support, the army which I had always shown such strength to, I knew this would be no exception as I swallowed and began, “I could never beat this man at Scrabble.” With a rush of relief the seemingly impenetrable fortress of grief cracked with an eruption of laughter that had been missed for so long. “This is how we will give them strength,” whispered my consciousness. As I continued, a mutual understanding took hold that this would not be like the humorous and happy speeches of my past. I swallowed as I drove through the hardest speech I would ever have to make. As my words projected into the masses before me, I knew as well as they, that it was because of he who these words had been dedicated too, that I was strong enough for this new burden. “What more can I say about him? He wasn’t just my dad, he was my mentor when I needed guidance, my doctor when I was hurt, my friend when I needed someone to talk to and he was always my teacher. Eight years ago I was alone with him driving down Lancaster Avenue, when he turned to me and told me, ‘Nate, what doesn’t kill you can only make you stronger.’” I wondered if my army of support, now swaying with a clear sense of deepening emotions, would recognize that these were messages I had extended

to them for so many months. My speech was a blur even as I spoke the words, with each line I saw the powerful effect it had etched in the faces of all those I could discern beyond and below my podium, “my father was a dreamer, but he was hardworking, passionate and diligent enough to make his dreams happen.” As I spoke, I became more and more certain of the strength he had given to me before he left. With each fact and story I told, I knew that I was setting forth my own edict and personal law that I would follow for the rest of my life. As I moved through the words I had so meticulously carved, I came to my promises to him. “I wish I could talk to him face to face right now. I have so much to say and show him. I would tell him that good looks are not the only thing that he passed down”

The unexpected eruption and coughs of laughter felt as though my father himself was smiling, “He would have really liked that,” whispered my smiling consciousness. And so, my words moved back towards the serious present, “‘what doesn’t kill you can only make you stronger,’ you were right dad, because we are stronger now than we have ever been before. But when we experience hard times and begin to be overwhelmed with pessimism I will be the optimist you were and I will do everything I can for my family. Because that is what Bronsteins do, that is what family does and that is what you would do. We are going to miss you dad, but we are not going to let you disappear.”

On October 16th 2007, I lost my dad to cancer. It made me question my religious faith, something that had been shaky from the get-go. I was raised to be both Jewish and Christian. My dad was Jewish and my mom Christian. We celebrated the high holidays of both religions and attended both synagogue and church. The reason I feel the need to

talk about this, is because religious struggle will continue to be a very big issue for our generation. It's something that I feel is very necessary to address. In particular because the millennial generation of America has been taught to fear Islam. We were taught, from a young age, to associate Islam with terrorism. There also is not a positive image for Judaism either... but that less so than Islam. In this section I want to show something that I believe our generation has already figured out several times over... that these three religions share more in common than differ and that they're naturally designed for peaceful coexistence. I'd like to point out that my not mentioning other religions is only because I didn't want to write a 100,000,000 page long book to cover every single religion of the world... these are the three most represented in the US.

Consider the example of the church of *Corpus Christi* located in Toledo, Spain. The church reveals architecture of Muslim origin and symbolism of Jewish decent. The church was originally constructed as a synagogue for Judaism by Muslims; only after was it taken by the Christians in the late 14th/Early 15th Century. Before then, Jews, Muslims and Christians happily coexisted, intermingled and interacted with one another. This is also true for "The Holy Lands" of the Middle East where the Jerusalem, the current capital of Israel is located. All three of the major religions of Europe: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, place an extremely high value in the Holy Lands and Jerusalem. Christians place high significance because they believe the holy lands to be the place of the birth, life, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus. In Judaism, the Holy Lands link the holy cities of the Old Testament. The Holy land is also home to the Western Wall, the last standing part of the Second Temple, which is the most sacred site in Judaism. As for Muslims, the Holy Lands holds importance in that Jerusalem is said to be the site of the

prophet Muhammad's ascension into heaven. Not only is the Holy Lands arguably the birthplace of all three religions, but before the 4th Century, people of all three religions peacefully coexisted here⁹¹. Moreover, upon closer analysis of the three corresponding texts of each religion, one can see that each religion is based upon consistent and complimentary values.

Christianity is seemingly best summed up by the Nicene Creed in the bible which presents a set framework of values centered on the pursuit of "goodness," justice, righteousness, and moral integrity⁹². Christianity also values forgiveness as is epitomized by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the practice of "confession"⁹³. Judaism's main text, *The Torah*, holds very similar values to that of Christianity since the Bible formed from the Torah⁹⁴. In Judaism, moral integrity, family and forgiveness are all valued very highly, as is practiced very directly in the Jewish high holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur⁹⁵. Judaism also places a uniquely high value upon independence and self-sufficiency. As for Islam, the word "Islam" means "submission to Allah (God)" and the term Muslim means "those who submit" and "followers of Islam"⁹⁶. Islam, as is presented in the Quran, is constructed of five basic pillars: *Tawheed* (believe in the "oneness of God"), *Salah* (prayer), *Sawm* (fasting), *Zakat* (charity), and *Hajj* (pilgrimage

⁹¹ Kuruvilla, Samuel J. "Palestinian Christian Politics in Comparative Perspective: The Case of Jerusalem's Churches and the Indigenous Arab Christians." *Holy Land Studies*. Volume 10, Page 199-228

⁹² *The Nicene Creed*, The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, http://www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts/creed (accessed 2, Dec. 2011).

⁹³ Southwood, Katherine E. "*Social-Scientific Methodology and Biblical Interpretation*." *Holy Land Studies*. Volume 10, Page 249-253

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Tom W. Smith. *Jewish Distinctiveness in America: A Statistical Portrait*. New York: American Jewish Committee. 2005.

⁹⁶ *Islam 101*, Five Pillars of Islam <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> (December 1, 2011)

to the holy site of Mecca)⁹⁷. From this we see a basic value structure for Islam that includes: peace, tolerance, protection of family and forgiveness. From this analysis it appears that differing religions has no cause for conflict of identities. My point here is to show that all three of these religions in nature have peacefully coexisted. I believe that contrary to what our generation has been taught, this is the direction we're headed in... And for that reason, I have faith.

Chicken Stir Fry:

My dad's favorite thing to cook for us growing up was Chicken Stir Fry. So I thought I would honor him here with a recipe I found that's similar to how he used to make it. When my dad cooked stir fry it was always kind of special and also kind of improvised. He didn't use measurements and he'd often mix in whatever brandy was lying around the house. My family used to do these things called family movie night.



And on a lot of those nights he would fry up a big batch of chicken stir fry with his big wok. We always ate until there was absolutely nothing left. Since he passed away I've tried capturing his recipe as best I could. I can make some pretty good stir fry if I don't say so myself... but it won't ever be up to par with my dad. I'm sort of okay with that too... Anyway! This recipe I found on a site called, www.panlasangpinoy.com, it's fairly similar to how I make it, but feel free to mix things around and experiment. It's pretty hard to mess up stir fry.

Ingredients⁹⁸:

- 1 1/2 lbs boneless chicken breasts, sliced into strips
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, sliced into strips
- 1 medium red bell pepper, sliced into strips

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Taken From: <http://panlasangpinoy.com/2011/08/24/asian-chicken-stir-fry/>

- 1 teaspoon ginger, minced
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil

Directions⁹⁹:

1. In a bowl, combine chicken, soy sauce, and lemon juice. Mix well and marinate for 1 hour.
2. Heat cooking oil in a wok, then sauté ginger, garlic, and onion.
3. Add the marinated chicken, and then stir fry for 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Put-in the salt, ground black pepper, hoisin sauce and sesame oil and continue to stir fry.
5. Add red and green bell pepper, and cook for 4 to 5 minutes more.
6. Turn off heat. Transfer to a serving plate.
7. Serve hot with Soba or rice noodles
8. Share and enjoy!

⁹⁹ Taken From: <http://panlasangpinoy.com/2011/08/24/asian-chicken-stir-fry/>

Chapter 11: Up, Up and Abroad!

"Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will [America's] heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy." -John Quincy Adams

I gaze through the glass wall drifting by me as I ride the moving sidewalk toward my gate. I had already prepared myself for my final goodbye with my mother just before I entered the security line. And yet, here I stand watching her with her head down slowly moving away with an anxiety filled stride. I feel myself filling with guilt; it has been my job to ward off anxiety. I promised my father and so many others that I would protect them and keep them happy and safe. And yet, here I am, leaving my country, everything I know and everything I love... and for what? A semester abroad in Madrid to, "learn beauty," as the pamphlet in the Abroad Office had described to me so many months before. I want to yell to my mom, get her attention and wave to get one final smile out of her... Wait... What am I doing?

No... I have a passport, I have a beard, I am a man! I'm going abroad!

3 Apples

My friend Kristen Cleveland knows me better than most. She was one of my teaching assistants and mentors when I was a freshman in the Leadership program and later became one of my closest friends. Kristen is the kind of leader other leaders depend on. While she may not be the one giving the speeches and standing at the head of the crowd, she is the one keeping the schedule of events and ensuring everything is running

smoothly “behind the scenes.” In my junior year of college, while I was President, we lived together in a small house about two miles away from campus. She had a car and would oftentimes force me to allow her to give me rides to and from campus so I wouldn’t have to walk. But more importantly, she provided an ear for me to vent to... I used it often.

One night over a plate of nachos and a pile of homework, Kristen placed unto me some wisdom about going abroad. She knew I was concerned venturing into the unknown of leaving the US for the first time. Kristen had in fact left the country on a number of occasions; she had spent a semester in South Africa only a year prior.

She explained to me that entering a new culture is like being handed 3 apples. The first apple you bite into tastes delicious. In fact, it may be the best apple you have ever tasted. It tastes so good that you eagerly reach for the second apple. You bite into the second apple and what do you find? A worm! It’s disgusting! You spit it out and want to reject it. It may even make you sick and miss the first apple. It makes you wonder why this apple had to be so different when the first apple was so good. But you get over it, and then you reach for the third apple. The third apple... tastes like an apple. It’s satisfying, not mind blowing like the other, but satisfying all the same.

Culture shock is like three apples...

Everyone should go abroad, in fact, more of my generation has gone abroad than any prior. In Fall of 2011, I studied Abroad in Madrid, Spain. While there I traveled to 11 different countries including Croatia and Turkey and saw over 30 new cities. Moreover, I saw that American culture is everywhere. Our music, food, clothing, movies, even our politics. What happens here spreads to the rest of world and catches on like a wildfire... for better or for worse.

On May 1st 2011, only a couple of months before I arrived in Madrid, Osama Bin Laden was killed Americans across the country... Millennials across the country crowded the streets cheering and celebrating. For me, it was a moment to celebrate being American. To dance in the streets with my fellow countrymen and women chanting USA, USA. One of my closest friends Andy picked me up and drove me to the White House where we cheered with a crowd as equally ecstatic Americans. Meanwhile a my friend Julie was studying abroad in France. There, the French were not amused by what they saw, in fact, many of them were frightened and appalled. And if you think this was just the French being snooty again... well, it wasn't just them. All across the world people looked at our dancing and celebrating with contempt. My friends had to explain our cultural perspective, what the event meant to us and that for many of us, this wasn't about a man's death. However, for some of us it was... After years of waiting our generation finally got its moment to cheer and celebrate the might of our country. A celebration mind you, that prior generations got plenty of but that many of us felt cheated out of. This was our day to feel like a superpower again, and it felt good.

However, after traveling through Europe, it's impossible to see the US as anything but the super power it is. Our generation can never ignore the influence it will

hold on a global scale. Perhaps more accurately, the influence it already holds on a global scale. We are no longer just the leaders of tomorrow, we are the leaders of today.

Spanish Tortilla:

When I was living in Spain, I stayed with a host family. My host-mom Celia cooked traditional Spanish food every night. So I took this as an opportunity to learn as much about cooking as I possibly could. At first she seemed eager to learn from me as well. But quickly our sessions devolved into her telling me what to do and me just following orders. Which is okay I suppose. Anyway! My favorite dish is a staple in the Spanish diet, the simple Spanish Tortilla. It keeps and goes great with just about everything, it's super versatile, good on its own, but can absolutely be experimented with. This basic recipe can be found on www.spanishfood.about.com, enjoy!



Ingredients¹⁰⁰:

- 6 to 7 medium potatoes, peeled
- 1 whole yellow onion
- 5 to 6 large eggs
- 2 to 3 cups of olive oil for pan frying
- Salt to taste

Directions¹⁰¹:

1. Cut the peeled potatoes in half lengthwise. Then, with the flat side on the cutting surface, slice the potato in pieces approximately 1/8" thick. If you slice them a bit thick, don't worry – it will simply take a bit longer for them to cook.
2. Peel and chop the onion into 1/4" pieces. Put potatoes and onions into a bowl

¹⁰⁰ Taken from: <http://spanishfood.about.com/od/tapas/r/tortilla.htm>

¹⁰¹ Taken from: <http://spanishfood.about.com/od/tapas/r/tortilla.htm>

and mix them together. Salt the mixture.

3. In a large, heavy, non-stick frying pan, heat the olive oil on medium high heat.
Carefully place the potato and onion mixture into the frying pan, spreading them evenly over the surface. The oil should almost cover the potatoes. You may need to turn down the heat slightly, so the potatoes do not burn.
4. Leave in pan until the potatoes are cooked. If you can poke a piece of potato with a spatula and it easily breaks in two, your potatoes are done. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon or spatula and allow oil to drain.
5. Crack the eggs into a large mixing bowl and beat by hand with a whisk or fork.
Pour in the potato onion mixture. Mix together with a large spoon.
6. Pour 1-2 Tbsp of olive oil into a small, non-stick frying pan (aprox. 9-10") and heat on medium heat. Be careful not to get the pan too hot because the oil will burn - or the *tortilla* will! When hot, stir the potato onion mixture once more and "pour" into the pan and spread out evenly. Allow the egg to cook around the edges. Then you can carefully lift up one side of the omelet to check if the egg has slightly "browned." The inside of the mixture should not be completely cooked and the egg will still be runny.
7. When the mixture has browned on the bottom, you are ready to turn it over to cook the other side. Take the frying pan to a sink. Place a large dinner plate (12") upside down over the frying pan. With one hand on the frying pan

handle and the other on top of the plate to hold it steady, quickly turn the frying pan over and the omelet will “fall” onto the plate. Place the frying pan back on the range and put just enough oil to cover the bottom and sides of the pan. Let the pan warm for 30 seconds or so. Now slide the omelet into the frying pan. Use the spatula to shape the sides of the omelet. Let the omelet cook for 3-4 minutes. Turn the heat off and let the tortilla sit in the pan for 2 minutes.

8. Slide the omelet onto a plate to serve. If eating as a main course, cut the omelet into 6-8 pieces like a pie. Serve sliced French bread on the side.
9. If you are serving as an appetizer, slice a baguette into pieces about 1/2 inch thick. Cut the *tortilla* into 1.5” squares and place a piece on top of each slice of bread.

Chapter 12: Renewable Family

“We believe we must be the family of America, recognizing that at the heart of the matter we are bound to one another...” –Mario Cuomo

Ever since I arrived at AU, I’ve been involved in Colleges Against Cancer, the chapter organization of the American Cancer Society. It was always sort of my way of getting even with cancer. Colleges Against Cancer runs a number of events to educate and raise awareness about cancer, but most importantly they raise money to combat cancer. The largest culminating event, is this huge 12 hour long event that takes place in our gym called Relay for Life. Relay for Lifes are held more or less wherever there is an active colleges against cancer. It’s the largest culminating fundraiser of the year.

During my Freshman and Sophomore year I held leadership positions in the club and helped organize and run the event. But my Junior year, as SG President I didn’t have time, instead I supported the event by helping to fund it, advertise it and speak at the opening ceremonies...

“Hello American University,

I can’t tell you how great it is to come to this event and not have to help run it. The people who put their time and energy into bringing all of this together are truly amazing, and I think we should all give them a huge round of applause. I served in Colleges Against Cancer last year and the year before as the survivorship committee head. And in that role I was always given a chance to speak here at Relay. Well, now that I’m the Student Government President I get the privilege to speak again, but without having to put in all the hard work of helping to run the event. It’s truly the best deal of all time.

Anyway, since my freshmen year, I have always begun my speech by telling this story.

Let me tell you a story, about the greatest man I ever knew. The man who I have modeled myself after every single day since he passed away three years ago. A man I will tell my kids about one day, and a man whose lessons I will pass on to my grand children. A man whose memories I will keep alive long after I go... My father was a veterinarian, he purchased his own practice when he was 29 and expanded his business experiencing much success. Success that could only be measured by the respect he pulled in from our community. For you see, aside for being a successful businessman. My father was someone everyone in our town could rely on and oftentimes came to for advice ranging from finances, to kids, to personal strife. One woman in particular, was especially close to my father and my family for that matter. Her name was Ellie Scenna and I guess you call her a “regular” client. Every time she came by our hospital she would stay and talk with our employees and my father, she traveled a lot and would always board her animals with us. Now, Ms. Scenna didn’t have much of a family, but what she did have were friends. She had been diagnosed with diabetes and my father had always known her to have problems with her heart as a result. Well, one day her condition took a turn for the worse, and her heart was experiencing major complications. Ms. Scenna, without much of a family, was left alone in an empty emergency room. And then my father got the call about her condition. Without any hesitation, he drove to the hospital and walked straight through the emergency room. He was stopped by one of the attendants who told my father, “only those who are related by blood can be let through”.

My dad looked at this man and said, “I may not be related by blood, but if she needs blood, she can have my own.”

“He was let through to see her.

My family started its fight against cancer 15 years ago when my dad was first diagnosed with Kidney Cancer. Three years ago, during my senior year of high school, I lost my mentor, my teacher, my best friend and my father, all at the same time. And since then, I have not forgotten him, and every morning I wake up and night I go to sleep, I remember him. I remember what he taught me, and everything that he meant to me.

We all have our reasons for being here today... Whether you have lost someone, whether you have known the pressure of being the last optimist, whether you wake up to face it everyday, or maybe, you have decided to get even. But what all of us have in common, is the greatest and most essential resource we have. An underlying sense of hope. And with this hope, breeds a generation a dreamers. Dreamers who are hardworking, diligent and passionate enough to make those dreams happen. My fellow dreamers, somewhere along the line, our causes turned into a great movement, and we found one another, and together decided to stand up. Somewhere along the line, we decided that enough was enough, and that if change does not come on its own, then it is something we will bring about. Somewhere along the line we grabbed a hold of hope, and with it we raised ourselves up, we raised our siblings, our neighbors, our parents and our friends. Hope is

risky, but it is a necessary risk. It is the last thing we lose, and the one thing we cannot do without, while there is hope, there will always be life.

There are moments in our lives that we are asked to be more than what we think we are. And it is not fair, and it is not easy. But these are moments that we do not run from. Not today, not ever. Not here, not at this university. When I lost my father, I thought I lost the fire, that will fight. But his final lesson came in the form of the community that rallied around me to support my family and I. My friends, who for the first time felt more like family. I learned that loving a cause meant being able to give your blood, even if you're not related by it.

We are not afraid to stand a part when others are fearful. Because we understand that sometimes, we need to dawn our capes to become a hero to grab a hold of hope.

My dreamers, it takes courage to have hope. But look around, we were not raised on fear, we were raised upon courage, upon creativity, upon tolerance and imagination. I once called us a university of superheroes. And today I don't believe that has ever been truer. Today, it does not matter what letters you wear on your chest, what party you affiliate with or what organization you represent. Today all of us dawn our capes, just as we did to take back the night to combat rape, just as we did to dance the night away to fight aids; and just as we did to defeat intolerance when we rallied to reaffirm sanity.

My Superheroes! My dreamers! My relayers! My survivors and caregivers! We were raised upon an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand! And one day, perhaps many years from now, we will tell our children, and we will tell their children about all the reasons we came together today. We will pass on our stories, and we will explain that we were the greatest generation, not because it was easy, but because that is what we had to be. Because we were prepared to stand up, and because when others were overcome by pessimism, we remained the optimist, and together, our network of dreamers, we relayed for life.”

Prior generations valued the “Nuclear Family” very highly. Us Millennials don’t. This isn’t to say that we don’t care very deeply for family... because we do. But our definition of family is very different than what prior generations think of. We’re more mobile than prior generations, we have to be in these trying economic times. We’re also not as tied to gender roles. Women are settling down to start families like they used to because they’re building their own careers. Instead, we’ve found family in our friends and acquaintances. We are less stringently tied to relationships based on the blood connection and more stringently tied to association with one another.

This is not a weakness, on the contrary I consider it to be a source of strength, perhaps our greatest strength. It is what keeps us moving our generation forward together in unison despite more differences among us than the more homogeneous generations of the past. Our unique similar experience the events of the 90’s and earlier 2000’s has given us all a shared perspective and narrative that can be used to bring us closer together as one generation. So, as is true with our perspective on our energy, the old way of

thinking is out for us... we're embracing something new and something more sustainable. We're no longer the nuclear family, we're the renewable family!

Pepper-Honey Cedar Plank Salmon:

Something I've really gotten into lately is salmon. I've always really liked fish, but I rarely prepared it because it's too hard to keep and you can't freeze it the same way as you can with meat. However, Jason and I have gotten into somewhat of a work-out, health craze... and there are few things healthier than a good well prepared salmon. Not to mention it's good for your blood pressure and your complexion, not that I'm necessarily worried about those things... Anyway, I love salmon and lately I have been rediscovering the joy of preparing it. This recipe is especially good. I found it on www.allrecipes.com, enjoy!



Ingredients¹⁰²:

- 6 (6 ounce) skinless, boneless salmon fillets
- 2 (12 inch) untreated cedar planks
- 1/4 cup pineapple juice
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pinch salt and pepper to taste

Directions¹⁰³:

¹⁰² Taken from: <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/pepper-honey-cedar-plank-salmon/detail.aspx>

¹⁰³ Taken from: <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/pepper-honey-cedar-plank-salmon/detail.aspx>

1. Soak the cedar planks in warm water for 1 to 2 hours. Add a splash of bourbon to the water if desired.
2. Bring the pineapple juice, soy sauce, vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil, and honey to a simmer in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low, and stir in the sugar, 1 teaspoon black pepper, cayenne pepper, paprika, and garlic powder. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has reduced to a syrupy consistency, about 15 minutes. Set the sauce aside.
3. Preheat an outdoor grill for medium heat. Place the planks on the grate. They are ready to cook on when they start to smoke and crackle just a little.
4. Season the salmon with a light sprinkling of salt and pepper. Place the fillets onto the smoking cedar planks, close the lid of the grill, and cook for 10 minutes. Spoon a small amount of the sauce over the salmon fillets, and continue cooking until the fish turns opaque in the center, about 5 minutes more. Serve with the remaining sauce.

Chapter 13: Looking Ahead, Now and Then

"What would the most advanced, most forward looking, most self-assured country in history do without its periodic crises of confidence?" -Charles Krauthammer

Head tilted toward the sky, I felt the familiar omnipresent warming press of summer. Like a chapter at the end of a long book whose glossary never gave indication of ever ending, there stood that glimmering ray of opportunity I knew would come but never expected to see. The voices of hundreds washed in and around me, as I stood on the soft ground recently misted by the dew of the morning which had arrived only hours before. I stood feeling invincible as the familiar excitement roared up in the pit of my stomach. All around me the procession of my peers had scattered and expanded towards the congratulations of their friends and families. My eyes closed and the sounds of my own consciousness eroded the roars of laughter and cheers of pride. "well done... we did it." The air had never smelt so crisp, even as it picked up its own bite from the cigars several of my peers had begun to light, I still felt as though the air had never been more refreshing. One by one, peer, parent and faculty made their appearance before me and revealed their pride. The flash of blue blazer and white dress created a moving forest of familiar faces and figures. With each glimpse came rushing the invisible burden that comes with saying good bye to an old acquaintance and friend; a friend who has added a familiar dent or curve to the mold which formed the end result of what comes out of four years of high school. I felt an invincible and speechless sense of pride to have been called their leader. And of this class, a class who had shaken foundations and overcome their own trepidations countless times, a class that only months before stood on the precipice of disunity and disaster. Like marbles so meticulously picked and polished and left in the same bag for so long, now we gleamed open for all the world to admire. The

words I spoken in front of this army only moments before followed me wherever I moved, like echoes following me out of a long tunnel which I had never expected to reach the end of.

I kept replaying those words in my mind, as if to make certain I had properly opened my soul to my peers only moments before. My speech was still so vivid; there I stood, staring out at this army, “When I first expressed that I wanted to speak today, I thought I knew exactly what I wanted to say. I then learned the difference between knowing what to say, and knowing how to say it.” The silence was absolute; never had I spoken to such a large and such a diverse crowd, and never had the silence been so deafening. “They’re listening,” whispered my consciousness, he was serious, and he stood beside me this time, he wasn’t there to support me, there was no need, not this time. “And so, that day was followed by countless others spent staring at a blank computer screen, hoping the right words would come. I have never had such a hard time finding those words. There is no doubt that this is a great day, a day of reflection, a day to look ahead, a day to consider our hopes and dreams, and a day to look to the future.” The crowd seemed frozen, not one person stirred as I delivered my final speech, all eyes had been on me before, but never had there been such anticipation for what I was going to say. “But first, this is a day to say goodbye, a day for closure. Let us not leave today with trailing shadows of our past. Never say goodbye when you still want to change something, never give up when you’re not ready to accept it. Never say you don’t love that person anymore, when you’re still not ready to let go. This could be your final chance, so put it all out on the table and don’t be dismayed, because for many of us, our goodbye today is merely a necessity so that we may meet again.”

My consciousness smirked now; he knew what was coming as I abruptly changed my tone and instantly lightened the atmosphere of the crowd. “With that! I think it’s time that I too, put everything out on the table and came clean about a few things myself.” The army was caught completely off-guard as the silence was instantly cut down with grunts and coughs of surprise and laughter. Never was my control and articulation so complete, with a smile, I moved my eyes off of the words I had so meticulously laid down on the sheet lying on the podium in front of me. I would not need my script for this part. One by one, to the delight of the crowd, I proudly stated the “secrets” I had concealed. First was my discipline note for eating a cookie, and then, my stripping down to nothing but boxers at an upper school assembly. “Okay, here’s the big one, Shipley... I still don’t know the school song,” The eruption of delighted laughter was tremendous, as the entire army stood to their feet and applauded. I waited as this died down, all knew that now the mood would once again shift, as I opened myself up entirely.

“Shipley, I am nowhere near the same person I was four years ago. Back then; I thought I knew what strength was. I thought it meant learning to be entirely self-reliant and independent, learning to depend on nobody else, but still having the capacity to be depended upon,” I had no doubt that my peers knew that this would be my thank you for all that they had done. As I continued, I felt my words being absorbed by my peers as they silently listened. “This year was the hardest year of my life. And for a time, things got really bad... I began to shut myself off from everyone, choosing to handle everything on my own. I never asked for, nor did I expect anyone’s help. But the people before you silently and swiftly came to me and stood by me. This class... these athletes, scholars, artists and musicians... they saved me.” My consciousness was stirring again, “Thank

you,” he wasn’t talking to me this time, now it was to my class which had never felt so much like family. “They taught me what strength was, because they helped carry my burden in my darkest hour; they gave me someone to depend upon, something and someone to need. And I love this school. I love this class and I love everything we stand for. And I vowed to do everything I could for it, because, in the same way that I found something to need, I also found something to fight for, and something to give myself too.” My heart was pounding now, I couldn’t feel or sense anything, never had my passion been so directly driven towards the words I was saying. “Shipley, anyone can give up, that is basically the easiest thing to do in the world. But to hold it together when everyone else would understand it if you fell apart, that’s what true strength is. And this is something I could not exhibit without this class. In the words of my father, ‘what doesn’t kill you, can only make you stronger.’” “I hope you’re watching this dad,” whispered my consciousness, I knew he was, there was no way he would miss this.

“The greatest honor I have ever had has been to call myself a member of this class. To the family and friends here watching this today, I say keep watching. Watch where we go and what we do, for we will be the greatest generation. Not because we are, but because we have to be.” Now my words soared away from me, like birds leaving their nest, never was my confidence so absolute. “We are quickly losing the luxury of being those who are reassured, as we take on the great responsibility of being those who do the reassuring. But this is a burden we are ready to carry. We are not perfect, but we are enough.”

As I continued my final speech, my heart relaxed, “They understand,” whispered my consciousness, I knew that now, he would sit quietly and listen to the rest of my

speech. “I can’t say what will happen from here... But I take comfort in that, because, as long as we don’t know what will happen, anything can happen. Though I am sure of one thing, no matter what happens, one way or another, in the end, it will all work out and it will all be all right. Because I know who we are, I’ve seen what we’re capable of, and I know we will not allow the alternative to happen. And so, Shipley, in the words of the famous guitarist Tom Petty, ‘You and I will meet again, when we’re least expecting it, one day in some far off place, I will recognize your face, I won’t say good bye my friend, for you and I will meet again.’ Now I have one last honor, and that is to graduate alongside the largest family I have ever had. And so for one final time, my name is Nate Bronstein, and I thank each and everyone of you.”

Those words were so clear and so vivid in my mind, and so quickly, they had become a memory on their own too. Another whisper in my ear took me out of my reflective trance, it was my consciousness again, as it drowned out the static of voices which had formed its own constant beat, my consciousness once again whispered, “You’ve done it all here, now it’s time to move ahead.” I felt the tug of despair for leaving a home that had chiseled my character and polished off its roughness and imperfections in so many ways. Looking up to find my own ocean eased this irritation into a sense of confidence as I approached the wall of my family. With an ever-clear sense of pride emanating from their mass, I was pulled into their circle. Only this time, for the first time, I stood the outlier knowing the place I once occupied was now to be left vacant, as my drive to fulfill my own dreams and forge my own circle would allow me to leave. My body ignored the increasing heat of the day, as if the sun itself had turned into

nothing more than a fly irritably buzzing by my head. This day will forever remind me of both the end of something great, and the beginning of something incredible.

Four years later, I would audition to be the commencement speaker for my graduation at AU, just as I had for Shipley. Two weeks after my audition I was told I had been selected. The words so carefully crafted to thank and send off my peers would continue to churn in my head until finally I could let them out:

“My Name is Nate Bronstein, and I believe in super heroes. I think I always have. When I was 8, living in my suburban town just west of Philadelphia, I used to rush home from school everyday to catch the latest episode of “The Super Friends.” A cheesy, cartoon series that originally ran its course through the 70’s. Every week, Superman and friends would put a stop to an alien invasion, stop a rampaging monster or foil the plot of an evil scientist. Banded together, my caped childhood heroes were unbeatable. Their commitment to truth, justice and the American way was enough to get me making my own cape and running around our neighborhood looking for villains to defeat and evil to triumph over.

When I was 10, I learned that evil doesn’t always wear a dark cape and plot to take over the world. Instead, it can be an invisible and unrelenting force; one that neither gives warning, nor shows mercy. Evil for me at the age of ten, was the cancer that intruded into my father. The ensuing battle against the cancer would last 8 years, an exhausting cycle of victory overshadowed by setback, repeated again and again. This was one of the hardest times of my life; while my family fought its war against cancer, I saw my country

enter a war against terror. As a child of the 90's, and more specifically, a comic book nerd of the 90's, I grew up believing good would always triumph over evil, and that the potential of our country to solve all of the world's problems were limitless. I believed in a future of perfectly sustainable flying cars, where everyone had equal rights, where we had landed on mars and AIDS was only referred to in history textbooks. And yet, the world I looked onto was wrought with war and inequality, was poorly educated, had a broken economy and a rapidly degrading earth. Meanwhile, my father's condition was not improving; it was enough to make the optimist in me turn pessimist. That is until one night when I was 18. I was driving home from the movies with my dad having just seen *Room 1408*, a horror movie from 2007 with John Cusack and Samuel L. Jackson. As we were driving I started venting about the state of the world, how tired I was fighting to remain an optimist and how helpless I felt in trying to make things better. He quietly listened to me as I let my years of pent up frustration out into the open for the first time. After I had finished we sat in silence for some time until we pulled up to a red light and he turned to me. He gave me two pieces of advice that night that have stuck with me to this very day. First he said, "What doesn't kill you, will only make you stronger." And then after a pause he gave me his second piece of advice, "When faced with any challenge, just remember: always *always*, do the right thing."

I was 10, when I learned what evil was. That night, 8 years later, sitting in that old Toyota Land Cruiser with my father after what would be the last movie I would ever see with him, he taught me what it meant to be a super hero. You see, a hero has faced it all. Challenges, burdens, crisis's, fears... But what makes a hero heroic, is *not* that they are

undefeated, it is that they are undaunted. Their values and morals unharmed despite every challenge thrown their way. They are not more than human, but instead dare to be greater than what others expect.

This, class of 2012, is our story. A story of persevering against odds no other generation has ever faced. My father would pass away on October 16th 2007, but he was my spark, the trigger for my passion and drive. And as I stand before you now, I know that each one of you has that spark. A different but equally life changing person, event or moment that gave you a fiery passion and pushed you to give yourself to something greater than yourself. And that, I believe, is the defining characteristic of this campus.

One year after my spark, I find myself lying on the bed in my recently unpacked dorm room for the first time. The previous several days were a haze of goodbyes, last minute shopping trips and traveling to this new place. Laying in the darkness of my room staring out the window up at the stars, I am able to let my mind wander for the first time in weeks. I hear the distant buzz of an unfamiliar city, the humming of people down below at the front of the residence hall and that annoying mechanical voice, “*Mass Ave, Walk sign, on, To cross!*”

I’m in awe of my new location and the greatness that surrounds me. This is the capital of the free world, where MLK told us he has a dream, FDR promised us “we have nothing to fear but fear itself,” and where JFK reminded us to “ask not what the country can do for you.” This is a town of empowerment, and making a difference for your country and

the world. And as I drift out of consciousness I dream of what is to come and how it will change me.

In the next four years, I would witness history take place, with the inauguration of our country's first black president, a rally organized by comedians that would fill the National Mall and a snow storm that would shut down city operations for a week. I would watch us as year after year we would create the largest team at the DC Aids walk. I would march with this community every year to take back the night and combat violence against women. I would watch as we successfully initiated and ran a political campaign to elect one of our own to local government. And when the Westboro Baptist Church reminded us that there are those who do not tolerate our tolerance, I would watch this community stand together, protecting and loving one another as we rallied to reaffirm sanity. And through my four years I would be a part of *this* community, that would raise over \$300,000 to combat my oldest enemy, cancer.

Some mornings would mean waking up at 6:00AM to plant 200 American flags to honor those lost in 9/11, other mornings would involve trees being planted, parks being cleaned or children being educated.

In a year's time this place would be my home away from home, and I would find myself a another family here. There is something special here. It's a drive and a passion that is unique. Here there is not just a love of giving back, it's a commitment to it. And we don't just stand for what we believe in, we move to defend it. We don't just fight for a

cause, we live it. At the age of 18, my father taught me what a super hero is. At the age of 23, this community taught me how to become one.

Our class in particular has been called a lot of things. Students? Eagles? Wonks? We haven't always agreed on what best describes us. But I think that's okay, because we were never a community that defined itself by words, when we could do so by action. Our future will be tough, but Class of 2012, I believe that we will be the greatest generation not because it is easy, but because it is what we are prepared to become in order to protect all those who are precious to us.

My name is Nate Bronstein, and thanks to this community, I still believe in Super Heroes.

Class of 2012, we have a world to save... it's time to get back to work.

Thank you."

The End

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