

JABS

Journal of American and British Studies

Summer Semester 2017

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A Hefty Issue: American Dietary Habits

“Nothing in life is certain except for death and taxes” goes the classic American adage. And as people grow older, they find themselves becoming more and more used to experiencing new things; new jobs, new residencies, new friends and lovers, and quite often enough new waistlines. This last fact is nothing new; it’s common knowledge nowadays that many industrialized nations in the West must now face the problem of dealing with a population that is becoming increasingly overweight year by year.

Although the United States of America, the poster child for this little conundrum, has been struggling with the ramifications of this epidemic since the 1980s, little progress has been made even in recent years. Current data from CNN state that now roughly 37.9% of Americans over the age of 20 are now clinically obese, and that this number has been on the rise in comparison to previous years. Other western nations as well, such as the United Kingdom and Germany, are following in close pursuit with 24.9 and 21.3 percent of the adult population suffering under obesity respectively.

The cause of this problem? Too many calories, too much sugar, and too little movement to name a few. Such excuses are however but a drop in the ocean, as there is currently an abundance of issues, both within and outside the USA, all of which contribute to this epidemic. It is partly due to this complexity that many American citizen forget to ask the basic question though “How has it come this?” Although this question may appear somewhat banal at first, especially for America's audience abroad, by understanding the history of obesity within the United States and its development, Europeans may have the chance to gain some insight into the overall cause of this problem and how they themselves may be able to find potential solutions to it within the context of their society and culture.

The United States has had long history with



obesity which is reflected in its food culture. Traditional American dishes such as apple pie, biscuits and gravy, pancakes with syrup, etc... are all classic staples of standard American cookery. Their popularity is in part due to their high availability during the 19th century for pioneers striking out onto the open plains. Not only are the recipes relatively simple, easy to perform, and have a low prep time (perfect for the pioneer on the go), the majority of ingredients used in preparing the meals were either readily available in the west, or could be easily conserved via lard, molasses, or other preservatives and shipped out onto the frontier. The primary problem with this fact? This means all dishes have a high sugar and fat content, which was perfect for the workers at the time as food was often scarce, but for a modern-day gourmet, disastrous.

Needless to say, through this process Americans gradually cultivated a taste for dishes that almost unnaturally combined both salty and sweet; something which isn't that common in traditional European cuisine. As America's agricultural and livestock industry began to expand through government subsidies and improved technology, this led to an over-abundance of food being produced post World War II and families began to grow accustomed to having rather big portions.

It was during this era in American history where ready-made products first became available in local grocery stores. Marketed as

a convenient way to save time on the daily chores, these products were soon considered to be superior to any fresh food available. As more and more funding was allocated towards marketing and research, companies began to find new ways to persuade and thereby retain customers. This coupled with the advertising industry boom of 1950s America and the industry's growing influence eventually resulted in an American public that had been weaned off the concept of using fresh food at the dinner table. Snowballing to the next generation, this problem continued and many American's grew up without ever learning the skills necessarily to follow and create their own diet.

As the American public started to shift towards becoming an information society in the 1970s, the increasingly sedentary lifestyle brought on by this change, combined with the precedent historical factors, led to the dietary predicament that America's well known for today.

However despite such a sorry state of affairs, there is a sliver of hope. Many Americans do recognize the need for a proper nutritional diet, and many are starting to use various forms of new media to generate discussion and foster learning. Although they touch upon many various topics in this field, the big issue they addressing is the need for people to turn away from their entrenched beliefs, and reject processed foods while building up healthier eating habits. Although there has been some effort to curb the dietary habits of the American citizen in recent years, results have been slow, and the United State's problem with obesity is still increasing.

Nevertheless, it is important to take a look at the issue and all the factors which have led up to it, so that potential pitfalls and solutions may be found. Although this seems to be a question which predominantly affects American citizens at the moment, it also has

quite the relevance to other societies as well. As previously mentioned, many other European nations are just beginning to come to terms with the fact that they too must deal with this predicament; if not now, then in the near future. In light of this development, several European nations have indeed already taken measures to prevent it as well. Health insurance organizations across the continent are issuing benefits to individuals who lead a healthy lifestyle, cooking and lifestyle programs have been sprouting up online and are becoming increasingly popular day by day, and several societies such as the Germans, who are known for their love of beer and sausage, have already started to forgo their less than healthy traditional diets in favor of some leafy greens, according to a report from the German consumer organization Stiftung Warentest. Like the United States however, further change will be needed if we are able to see any results in the near future. If these nations are to transcend this situation, further debate will be needed. Fortunately the potential for change is there, and it seems we have already begun to get off the couch, and get on the move.

Written by Charles Gutfleisch

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Barely Legal

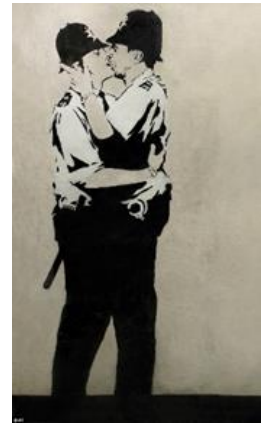
When walking through the streets of London, one will see many graffiti paintings sprayed on the walls of the countless houses. You might think that a criminal has scribbled all over the walls and some unfortunate person has to clean up after this mess. However, some other people might have a different point of view about this scribble and they might see it as real artwork. Obviously, these examples of graffiti are found not only in London, but all over the world and, most certainly, everyone has seen a graffiti before and either overlooked it or dared another glance at the unnoticed artworks of the street. One of the most controversial and highly discussed street artists is called Banksy. Though the question is, how and why is Banksy so famous as a street artist who, after all, smears and scribbles illicitly over so many walls?



For one, his artwork speaks to the recipient with blunt directness and cruel honesty. His works display topics of political situations or social circumstances that initiate heated debates afterwards. To mention one of his most famous works, images such as “the caveman” located in Los Angeles have to be named. It presents a Neanderthal man looking at the viewer while holding a tray with a fast food meal in his hand. Maybe, in a humoristic manner, it is a reminder of where we come from and the change of the consumer’s attitude of preferring fast food to healthy, natural food.

Another famous piece called “All love is valid” taken from a public house wall in Brighton addresses a broadly discussed topic from the past decades: homosexuality. It illustrates two uniformed male police officers kissing in public. Almost, as if

Banksy wants to ask the recipient, who is in charge to tell you what is appropriate and what not. Herewith he stresses that everyone should be allowed to love who they want and they should not feel restricted by social conventions.



His latest work from 2017 appeared overnight on a four-story high building in the English town of Dover. The artwork on the wall depicts a man in overalls standing on a ladder, using a hammer and chisel to remove one of the 12 gold stars of the EU flag's. Starting at the center of the eroded star, cracks are starting to stretch across the blue flag. An image of a breaking EU is created.



Beside all of his famous artworks, another reason for his publicity and fame is caused by the mystery about himself. Until now, his real name is uncertain. Only few sources claim to know the real name behind the

pseudonym, perhaps Robin Banks, Robin Gunningham or Kind Robbo. However, some other sources asseverate that Banksy is a group of artists and yet others state he is a she. Consequently, the mystery stays unsolved and keeps the excitement around him and his works alive. Whenever a new piece is discovered, journalists and reporters gather around the work and try to take the first picture of it, home owners claim their right to the work and the media spreads the news. Usually, Banksy himself states via Instagram, whether it is his work or not within the upcoming days. The uncertainty of when and where the next artwork will appear keeps the growing fan community excited.

Written by Julia Sophie Kunze

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Can We Really Change Our Character Traits?

"The 3 C's in life CHOICE, CHANCE and CHANGE. We have to make the choice, to take the chance, if we want anything in life to change."

It is important to distinguish personality from character. Personality is easily read and governed by natural tendencies. According to most personality type theories, the individual type is innate. Character, on the other hand, takes far longer to puzzle out and is more malleable. We learn who we are and what we are capable of during our entire life. One of our missions in life is to be the best version of ourselves, curating the character traits that hold us back. The meaningful questions that pop up in this situation is: "Under what circumstances are people likely to change and to be motivated to change?" A decision, twist or an unexpected encounter can shape a lifetime. The desire for change has to rise up from inside, otherwise it is likely to be temporary. If you are looking for inspiration, it is everywhere, you only have to take a closer look.

According to the influential rabbinic Jewish Sage, the Gaon from Vilna, overcoming negative traits is the essence and purpose of life. We all have positive as well as negative features within ourselves. It is our duty as conscious, thinking and moral creatures to alter any tendencies we possess and therefore, grow as a human being. It is excruciatingly difficult but possible. Adults can change their character if they see that the present way they conduct themselves is causing them problems or harm. They may be motivated to change their beliefs to a new way of thinking. If you are a procrastinator, you may strive for a more productive lifestyle. If you are gloomy, you may have

hoped you could be more optimistic. The first step to conquer any obstacle is to become aware of the character traits or habits that you are unhappy with.

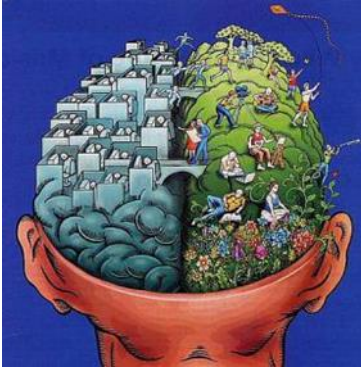


A person might have possessed negative character traits as a child or teenager but later realized that this type of behavior does not help him or her getting ahead in life. I myself had to change my life from negative to positive. I used to be very stubborn, naive and lazy, but at the end of high school I realized that these traits and a careless life would

only hold me back in the future. Therefore, I have been following my new rules that made me a better person, helped me to organize my life and gave me the opportunity to meet many valuable people. "The better you become, the better people you attract" or as the saying goes - birds of a feather flock together.

In addition, I want to mention the experience of Chuck Colson (1931-2012) who became known as one of the instigators of the Watergate Affair, during Richard Nixon's presidential administration. Colson was involved in espionage tactics, in order to get Nixon - the 37th President of the USA re-elected. After he was sent to penitentiary for his role in the Watergate Affair, he realized that bad character traits and wrong decisions had brought about many problems in his life. That was when he decided to change his ways. He became religious and started a ministry to help reform the lives of prison inmates.

Steven Spielberg states in one of his speeches that at the beginning we don't know who we



actually are. In the first 25 years of our lives we are trained to listen to voices that are not our own. Parents and professors fill our heads with wisdom

and information and then employers and mentors take their place to explain how the world works. He says that usually these voices of authority make sense but most of the time doubts start to creep into our heads and into our hearts and even if we think "That is not how I see the world." it is easier to avoid confrontation, agree and get on with one's personal way. Spielberg thinks that we do not have to repress our point of view, as for example in a Nilson song, where it says: "everybody was talking at me, so I could not hear the echoes of my mind." Spielberg also mentions that the internal voice that we need to listen to may be hardly audible and noticeable. After he himself started paying more attention, something he calls intuition came apparent to him. He makes clear that intuition is different from our consciousness. The difference, according to him, is the following, while our conscious tells us "Here is what you should do" our intuition whispers "Here is what you could do." At the end, he adds: "Listen to that voice that tells you what you should do, nothing will define your character more than that".

Above all, the motivation for any type of change has to come from ourselves, arising from a sincere desire to grow up and mature. Most of the time the motivation arises only when certain circumstances have forced the

issue. This could be a traumatic experiences, losses or failure. Moreover, individuals tend to change because of their relationships with loved ones, contact to their close friends or after a devastating break-up. Reaching adulthood, we all have a set of character rules that define how we behave and conduct ourselves in society. At times when one problematic aspect is abandoned, others can emerge, so we really have to be cautious. In reality, many people simply refuse to change that is because there are none of the above mentioned circumstances or a lack of desire, in general. Even moderate change can reap meaningful benefits. And here is the best news of all. Change that moves in a positive direction will not only expand your confidence, but it can also enrich your relationships, enhance your career or studies and empower your well-being.

Altogether, the motivation for any type of change is of great importance. We have to be aware with our problematic features and work hard in order to become a productive human being but stay an individual character at the same time. Events in a person's life and influence from others can cause someone to change his or her attitude and character traits. Therefore, motivation can be triggered by either your own will because of circumstances or because of others.

Written by Tsvetelina Slavcheva

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Committing to Cultural Change by Curiously Cloaking myself among Cadets A Semester in the United States Corps of Cadets (USCC)

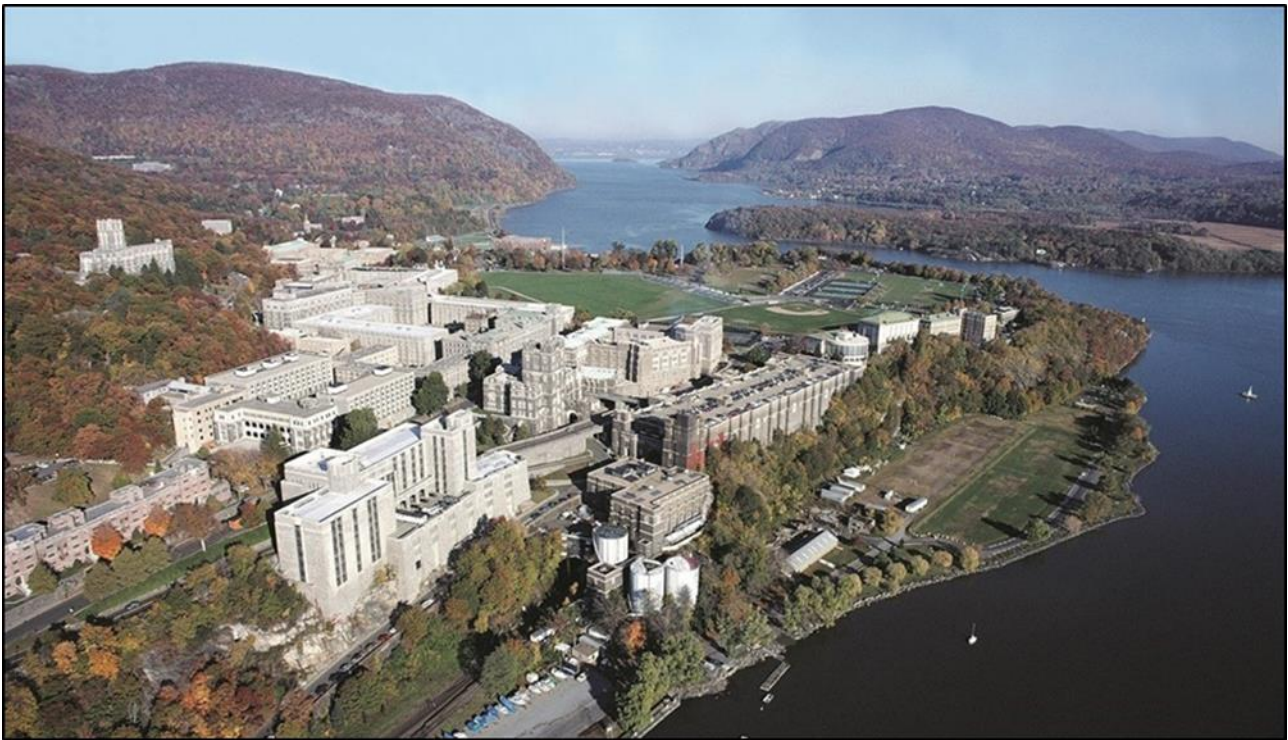


More than a decade ago, I stood astonished in the arrival hall of JFK airport in New York, gazing at meandering waiting lines, full of frustrated people from all over the world who were waiting to be processed by U.S. customs. The 9-11 attacks had not been that long ago, and just recently the United States had introduced biometric identification scans. Moreover, most of the countries in the world had yet not complied with the matter by adapting their respective identification papers. Hence, all data had to be taken and processed directly at the border upon entering the United States. Needless to say, the number of personnel was insufficient to handle all those people. Of course, back then I was not aware of all this; however, glancing over the vast crowd, I was starting to feel a sense of uneasiness. I knew my contact person was waiting outside to transfer me to West Point, Upstate New York. Time was passing by, so I timidly approached a tall police officer to ask him for advice. At first he seemed to disapprove of me and my request, but as soon as he had heard the words "West Point" he instantly snapped out of his phlegmatic poise, eyeballed me and shouted: "Follow me sir!" Bypassing hundreds of people in line, we walked right up to the customs counter, where he briefly exchanged a few words. I was processed in an instant and he shook my hand and expressed his gratitude by stating: "Thank you for your service." I was in shock; in a cultural shock to be exact. This moment of honest gratitude was a kind of acknowledgement for my profession of arms, which I was not used to. In Germany the military is often criticized and rather viewed as a required burden. Therefore, the special treatment of soldiers and public compliance was completely new

to me. It dawned on me that my semester abroad at the United States Military Academy was far from being half a year at any American College - it turned out to be a life-changing experience.

My first impression of West Point was being overwhelmed by the enormity of 65km² campus and its unique architecture. Most of the buildings are composed of grey Hudson valley granite rock. The ensemble provides an atmosphere of a majestic medieval fortress. This outside perspective of a stronghold, with an intimate, yet shining community within, was certainly beneficial to the mystification of West Point. Additionally, with the arrangement of the Academy on various terraces of the steep Hudson River valley, one cannot suppress the notion upon first arrival of having just been received into Harry Potter's Hogwarts. The mighty Hudson River gently flowing around Constitution Island adds to this notion. Amusingly, this notion of awe diminishes swiftly once living inside "Military Hogwarts" due to the cornucopia of strict rules and behavioral constraints. Therefore, many cadets react to the outside notion of awe with a smirk and refer to the impressive architecture as being prison walls.

While United States Military Academy (USMA) is the official name of the institution, West Point is the geographical name of the landmark and also the name of the small town outside of the garrison gates. The Academy houses approximately 4,800 cadets, who are organized into four years and are to a large extent self-governed, mirroring the organization and command structure of an army brigade, with the cadets



A view onto the main campus of the United States Military Academy and up north into the Hudson River Valley.

of the fourth year serving in the role of the officers. While the college itself is a member of the Patriotic League, which ranks second in status after the famous Ivy League, its academic program is considered to be among the best in the country. The Academy mainly focuses on engineering, but also provides a vast range of academic studies that the cadets can choose from, in fields such as liberal arts or social studies. In the first two years, they are academically nurtured through a wide range of academic basic courses. Subsequently, they select their major field of studies for the last two years up to graduation, when all successful cadets will leave West Point with a bachelor's degree. During the whole time, the army provides full tuition for any cadet, and many young athletes have received a full scholarship, thus, all cadets will be promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in the graduation ceremony and afterwards serve a minimum of five years within the U.S. Army. Nevertheless, only 25% of all U.S. Army officers are trained and educated at West Point, whereas the other 75% originate from the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and are, therefore, educated at any other

College or University within the USA. Due to the high number of applicants and the Academy's rigorous selection process, the graduates are seen as the cream of the crop of the U.S. Army's future leaders. A long list of former generals and also some U.S. presidents have been educated at USMA. Even if a cadet decides against an ongoing army career, they are sure to belong to an elite network of West Point alumni, who are strongly connected within the U.S. economy. All those successful people provide evidence to the deeply rooted significance and influence of the leadership values, crafted at West Point upon the ruling class of the USA. After all, the idea of a college ring, which is spreading nowadays from U.S. colleges into European Universities, originates from the United States Military Academy at West Point, where it has been established as early as 1835 and still is celebrated extensively there. Each individual class ring of any cadet will be a life-long sign of belonging to the highly influential alumni network and serve as a gateway on many opportunities in their life.

So here I was among thousands of All-

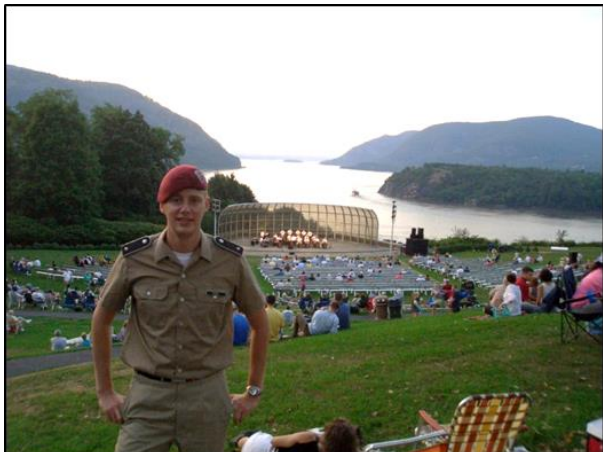


Among cadets of the 4th regiment of the United States Corps of Cadets within their quarters at West Point, NY.

Americans. In 2005, the Bundeswehr was about to initiate an annual exchange program with the United States Military Academy, and I was lucky enough to have been sent as the guinea pig. I was keen to explore this special place with its unique society and social rules, so I joined the so-called long, gray line and was breathing tradition in the world's oldest military school. Back then, I surely knew my way around in the military, even in regard to international relations, for having already completed a tour of duty in the Kosovo. However, West Point was old school military to the core. At the German Federal Armed Forces University at Hamburg, life as a "soldier on academic leave" felt very civilian, since all scholars were regular civilian people and our uniforms had to be worn two afternoons in a month at best. Additionally, the unique leadership culture of the Bundeswehr, called "Auftragstaktik" differs strongly from the rigid "Befehlstaktik" of the

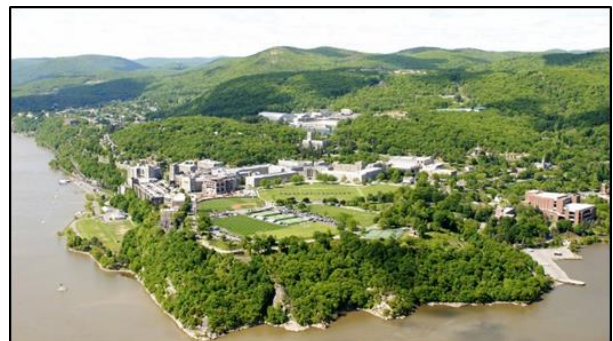
U.S. Army. It allows more flexibility and freedom of choice to the individual soldier in order to achieve completion of a task, therefore, resulting in less stiff hierarchy. For the next months, I was about to room in with a fourth year or senior cadet (Firstie) with a Hispanic background and with a third year or junior cadet (Cow) with a Chinese background. Back then, having already been a 2nd Lieutenant of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr), I decided to dodge the fact that I was already an officer. This proved to be the right decision, because I was about to find out that, due to the harsh drill, the cadets tended to stiffen up when confronted with an actual officer. As a result, I was able to make friends, and when they eventually found out about my rank, it was no longer an issue. As expected, the larger part of the cadets were absorbed by a great sense of the Academy's creed of "Duty, Honor, Country", which was introduced by former cadet, and back then Superintendent, Brigadier

General Douglas Mc Arthur (1919-22), who was a war hero of World War I and fundamentally reformed officer training at West Point. Nowadays, this creed is cited and used repeatedly by politicians and media figures such as Charles Joseph Scarborough (MSNBC) and has grown out of its original West Point context to almost a national collocation of conservatism. In the aftermath of the 9-11 attacks, when war was declared, liberalism was not in vogue within the USCC, nor among the cadets. Nevertheless, I was surprised by the open and liberal thinking of the military superiors, military and civilian scholars and the kindness of everyone on campus. Discussions were very welcome and I was always strongly urged to provide a European and a German point of view. The level of excellence of the academic courses and their scholars surpassed the school's reputation. In particular, my course on the history of unconventional warfare proved to be a perfect match for my interests. The



The “Million Dollar View” from Trophy Point upon the Hudson River during a public jazz night at West Point.

topic of my term paper on Lawrence of Arabia later back in Germany became my master thesis. Also, I unknowingly memorized and copied many aspects of classroom management and on how to organize a lecture from my scholars at West Point. I am still using many of those strategies today, for example, the usage of a clear and concise syllabus, music to create an engaging atmosphere upon opening a class session and constantly make students be an active part of the lesson. Moreover, my English improved in many ways. This cultural shift and experience at West Point laid the groundwork for another change later on in my life, when I finally left the Bundeswehr. So here I am today, in the process of becoming an English and History teacher. Looking back, I have to admit that I would not be here and be able to make that career change without my cultural and academic changes and all the perspectives and experiences that came along with West Point, NY. So, with the words of Robert Frost, “And [West Point] has made all the difference.



The United States Military Academy with the Great Plain and the Cadet Chapel in the center. (Looking south)

Written by Carsten Bleßmann

Images:

<http://www.usma.edu/Style%20Library/WestPoint/Images> (accessed on May 20th 2017) and personal pictures.

Fourth Annual Auction in Thuringian Forest

Extraordinary Sport Descendants, Tournament Pros and Leisure Partners

The fourth Thüringeti-Auction, which will take place on 3 October 2017 in the Thuringian village of Crawinkel, assembles approximately 28 splendid colts and nearly 60 youngsters. Besides a number of Koniks and Franches-Montagnes, roughly 70 excellent future saddle-horses can be purchased on site during this year's auction. These foals have the genes of former world-class performance horses in their pedigrees. Deriving from exceptional sires and top stallions like Cornet, Numero Uno, Donnerhall as well as Rubinstein, these foals are definitely tomorrow's champions and therefore hopeful newcomers from the best backgrounds. This auction is an event of paramount importance for both amateurs and professional riders in search of healthy and talented young horses. Rearing of livestock in a more nearly natural way has significant benefits for the environment in terms of care for the landscape and the conservation of grazing areas.

This exceptional breeding project is run by Heinz Bley, who has chosen to raise more than 600 horses on an area of 2,500 ha. As a part of the set-aside scheme for land, Bley was able to establish a facility which is designed based on the most modern concepts of natural horse keeping and breeding. Although the terrain is fenced in, the horses have the special opportunity to grow up under natural conditions and overcome artificial breeding methods. Instead, the horses are left completely to themselves and spend their entire lives in the open, including birth and death.

Bley's breeding and farming method has a positive impact on the overall health condition of the horses. Moreover, the performance capacity and learning ability of the horses seem to be much higher compared to traditional breeding methods. During recent years, a significant number of



The advantage is clear: These natural conditions for breeding and upbringing assure optimally developed, healthy and robust animals.

buyers report on the beneficial calmness and serenity that the horses bring along. This year's auction is complemented by a comprehensive supporting program which even includes an invitation for a weekend getaway in the Thüringeti nature reserve near Illmenau.

After a welcoming evening on Friday, September 29, 2017, the horses will be extensively presented to the public. On Sunday October 1, the organizer will offer an array of guided tours through the fascinating natural landscape, providing insights into the special living circumstances in which the world's famous future saddle-horses are raised. The gavel will be in use during the auction on Sunday, October 1. For a complete list of all events, as well as further details on numerous high quality auction horses and foals, please visit: [/https://www.pferde-sachsen-thueringen.de](https://www.pferde-sachsen-thueringen.de)

Written by Lätizia Boden

Image:

<http://www.istockphoto.com>

Highway to happiness

How our body creates bliss

„Happiness doesn't depend on any external conditions, it is governed by our mental attitude.“

- Dale Carnegie

Depending on the people you ask, happiness can be anything. Varying from a day at the beach to an after-work beer. So, if you ask someone, they can merely tell you which things lead to happiness, rather than telling you what it really means. What would happen if you asked the whole world. Even though everybody knows it and has a range of understanding for it, our body is the entity we all have in common.

Neurotransmitters are chemical compounds which are able to operate in our nervous system to keep us and our mind safe and healthy. Our happiness relies on the balance of the transmitter in our blood.

The first transmitter that comes to my mind, when thinking about bliss is Serotonin. Serotonin can influence appetite, sleep patterns, pain, and mood. This is an inhibitory transmitter which basically means, that it is calming the body and mind down instead of leading to excessive waves of motivation. Serotonin is indispensable for your sleep routine as it is a precursor to Melatonin which is activated when lights turn down and causes among others a deceleration of the pulse.

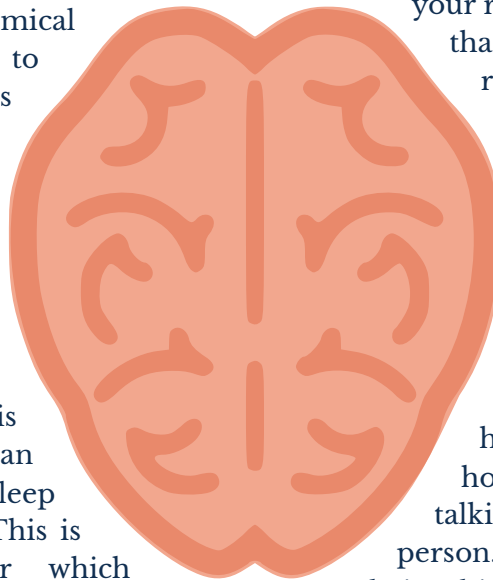
The second transmitter is Dopamine, which has an opposite effect on the nervous system. This chemical substance is released when our body tries to reward us. Either when you fulfill a task or when you eat a dose of Dopamine is released. Dopamine can be found in the intestines as well as in the

pancreas where it influences the production of insulin, and in the brain. The brain has the largest deposit of Dopamine. A lack of this neurotransmitter can lead to spastic syndromes, loss of memory and racing thoughts. As Dopamine awakes positive feelings, some people try to artificially release doses of it. This can be achieved by consuming drugs like Cocaine and Amphetamine. But you could as well train

your reward system by setting goals that call out for effort. By releasing the transmitters, the body tries to train the brain to replicate this stream of bliss. This is a natural process called conditioning.

The last compound that I perceive as relevant is Oxytocin. This is a hormone also called “Bonding hormone” or “touch hormone“. It is released when talking to or touching a beloved person. It is necessary to establish relationships between two partners as well as mother and child. A huge amount is swept into the female nervous system by birth and nurse of the child. It also well decreases blood pressure and pulse. It can be also found in the human body after cuddling with a dog.

There are ways to actively influence our mental health via these discoveries. Scientists who described the structure of these transmitters observed that some parts of the molecules can be consumed and thereby easier produced. Bananas, watermelon, chocolate, potatoes, oats, fermented food, and cherry tomatoes are



said to have a positive influence on the production of Dopamine and Serotonin.

Dopamine can be released when applying knowledge to something practical or to talk in a new learned language. By challenging your brain you are about to become happy. A lot of Adrenalin and Endorphins are released during sports. Sun and fresh air have an impact of your mental condition as well. Meet new people and settle new friendships, as it energizes your brain and your body. So try to eat, live and think a little healthier, as it helps to create a happier you.

Written by Vivien Koch

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“Immigrants: We get the job done.” How Lin-Manuel Miranda changed Broadway

It is hard to imagine politicians solving their problems by having rap battles, led by the president and performed by the secretaries of state and treasury. It is even harder to imagine George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton handling their disagreements this way. However, this is exactly what is being performed in the Richard Rodgers Theatre on Broadway eight times a week. Adding to this divergent image, nearly the entire cast of the musical is non-white, apart from King George III. The actors look nothing like their historical counterparts, and the casting was an intentional decision: “We’re telling the story of old, dead white men but we’re using actors of color, and that makes the story more immediate and more accessible to a contemporary audience. This is a story about America then, told by America now.”



Left to right: Okieriete Onaodowan (Hercules Mulligan), Daveed Diggs (Marquis de Lafayette), Anthony Ramos (John Laurens), Lin-Manuel Miranda (Alexander Hamilton)

The sung-through musical about the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, and other important historical figures, is one of the most successful musicals on Broadway. The music is just as diverse as the cast – from hip hop parts to indicate the characters’ “practical tactical brilliance” to Jefferson’s jazz number “What’d I Miss?” to show the audience that not only Jefferson is the oldest character, but also that he spent time in France and therefore missed the change from Jazz to hip hop. R&B influences can be

found in songs like “Helpless” and “Say No to this”, sung by the women of the show. Moreover, King George sings three different variations of the same song, accompanied by a pop music tune inspired by the Beatles.

The music, lyrics, and book were written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, a Puerto Rican American, who also composed the award-winning musical *In The Heights*. Just as *Hamilton*, it also brought a lot of change with it. With a mixture of Salsa and Rap, it is about Usnavi, a bodega owner in the neighborhood of Washington Heights in New York City. He discovers that he sold a winning lottery ticket and in the end every character, all of them Hispanic apart from one, realize what it means to be home. Both main characters, Usnavi and Hamilton, were also played by Miranda. Moreover, there is one thing all three men have in common: all are of Caribbean descent and immigrants living in New York City.

But while *Hamilton* shows its diversity, especially with its cast and music styles, *In The Heights* demonstrates the cultural duality of the characters with the usage of both English and Spanish lyrics. Nearly every song contains Spanish lyrics and sometimes the title is not even translated into English, in songs like *No Me Diga*, *Paciencia y Fe*, *Carneval Del Barrio* or *Alabanza*.

In *Carneval del Barrio* it becomes particularly obvious that the characters are proud of their origins: “Me acuerdo de mi tierra! Esa bonita bandera! Contiene mi alma entera!” During this song, every character raises the flag of their home country, singing about how it is a reminder of their home and that it contains their entire soul. People in the audience who knew about this happening join them and raise their flags, which they brought with them, as well.



Signs at the 2017 Women's March with lyrics from the songs "History has its eyes on you" and "My Shot"

The show creator Lin-Manuel Miranda often uses his voice to draw attention to America's minorities. As an example, he wrote a statement, which was addressed to Vice-president elect Mike Pence in the audience, and read out by the actor of Aaron Burr: "We are the diverse America who are alarmed and anxious that your new administration will not protect us..." What had good intentions was not taken seriously by the then president-elect: Trump demanded an apology from the cast via Twitter, claiming that Pence was "harassed" by them.

It seems as if not everyone accepts the diversity the musical represents, but the majority certainly does. During the Women's Marches 2017 signs with lyrics from Hamilton were held up. The most popular was probably the line "Immigrants – we get the job done" (taken from the song "Yorktown"), but also the ones "History has its eyes on you" (from the eponymous song), "This is not a moment, it's a movement" ("My Shot") and "Include women in the sequel" ("The Schuyler Sisters").

Both musicals place minorities at the center of attention and manage it to represent a more diverse cast than usual. And not only that, Miranda also brought hip hop to Broadway, making it seem like an obvious choice to write a rap musical about Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton. Using a cast which is nearly non-white to represent real life white people is something new, but Miranda wrote about this: "13 percent of the population is foreign-born; that one day soon, there will no longer be majority and minority races, only a vibrant mix of color."

Written by Tessa Sommer

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Is it really worth it?



Zinedine Zidane

The transfer of Zinedine Zidane from Juventus Turin to Real Madrid in 2001 is considered to be one of the most remarkable events of the European football. The French midfielder Zidane ranked among the

best players of the world and his new club, Real Madrid wanted to have all of them in their team. However, this fact was not even the explosive thing about it. The actual record was the transfer fee that Turin wanted Madrid to pay for Zidane. DM 147 million (€ 75 million) became the highest transfer fee of all times.

Just one year earlier in 2000, Real Madrid had landed another record by having Luís Figo signed up for DM 116 million (€ 59 million). Back then as today, Zidane and Figo rank among the legends of football. Their skills and titles are unmatched. Their



Luís Figo



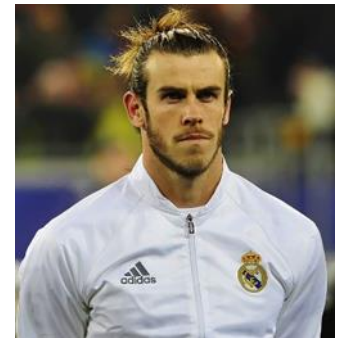
Francesco Totti

market values in 2004 were € 25 million for Zidane and € 22 million for Figo. Another great player of the past would be Francesco Totti, who is slightly younger than the two gentlemen mentioned above. He has always been at AS Rom and on 28 May 2017 he played the last game

of his career. In 2007, he had reached the highest market value of his career: € 40 million. However, his final market value is € 1 million.

At this point you might wonder why I am inundating you with so many numbers. By looking at these high values you might say that this seems appropriate regarding the skills of those players and I would agree completely. The problem that I want to address is the current change in transfer fees that are being paid for players who are not even nearly as skillful, talented or professional as Zidane, Figo or Totti. Over the last few years, the numbers have gone through the roof and reached almost utopian dimensions.

In 2012, the exceptional player Lionel Messi reached a market value of € 120 million and he has kept that number up until now. In 2013, Real Madrid paid € 100.759 million for the



Gareth Bale

Welsh player Gareth Bale. This transfer broke all records because it was the highest sum of money that had ever been paid for a player. By looking at these utopian numbers one could ask oneself whether it is even necessary to pay so much money for football players. Are they even worth it? Or is this just Real Madrid fiercely trying to sign up every excellent player in the world?

The case gets even more absurd when you look at the German Bundesliga and the market values and transfer fees that are being paid there. Heading the table are Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski with a market value of € 80 million and Borussia Dortmund's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang with € 65 million. Of course, one could argue



Joshua Kimmich

that they are the two best players at the moment and therefore their values are higher than others'. However, when you look at the bottom of the table, there are players who share the same market value as Zidane and Figo when

they were still active and in top form. As an example, I picked out RB Leipzig's Naby Keita with € 22 million and Bayern Munich's Joshua Kimmich with € 25 million. Being a fan of the latter football club, I am aware of the skills and playing quality of the Bayern players and I am convinced that Kimmich has great talent and will become one of the best players in Germany. Nonetheless, I find it almost offensive that a young talent like Kimmich is supposed to be as valuable as Zidane or any other legendary player whose highest market value was € 25 million. They are worlds apart and I am sure Kimmich and all the other rookie players would agree with that.

How can one justify such a comparison? On one hand, you could argue that money is worth less nowadays. You cannot compare money values from the early 2000s to today's because many standards have changed. However, we are still talking about vast sums of money.

The officials of the top clubs of Europe are willing to pay any price just to get players who will hopefully win the Champions League, the biggest football competition in Europe, for them. Winning this competition means even more prize money, awarded by UEFA, the Union of European Football Associations. Having the best players also

means that more and more people will become your fans and buy your merchandise and tickets to see their favourite players. Adding to that, some clubs buy players who are legends of the past, e.g. David Beckham, and use them not as top scorers but as top sellers who hopefully attract fans. Many fans begin to lose their desire for the game. They come into the stadium and expect to see goals and fights but get a faked show event instead. It has become very hard to enjoy finals and other important games since many of them are being manipulated and sold to the highest bidder.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

The direction in which this change is moving seems not very bright for fans and clubs who value "blood, sweat and tears" more than money and power. Nonetheless, they will continue to fight for fairness in football.

Written by Laura-Maria Hegewald

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Make-Believe or Reality?

For me the theatre is something magical. Even its atmosphere fascinates me. It is an absolutely different world, a world of greater feelings, stronger emotions. It is much more than just make-believe. But of course, I can only judge from my point of view, as a person from the audience.

I am neither an actress nor a director, so I cannot say for sure whether actors should 'be natural' or 'seem natural', but I guess that it is impossible to be organic on the stage all the time. If a player is real on stage, it means that he has something in common with his character, or he has had some similar experience in his actual life. But an actor plays so many parts. Of course, if he performs, for example, only lovers, he may be almost the same in reality. However, very talented artists can represent almost any role. Personally I appreciate it when an actor whom I seem to know very well surprises me, playing something absolutely different from what he has played before. In such cases it is hard to guess when an actor is natural, and when he seems natural. I believe, it does not matter what an actor is like in life: if he is good enough, he will be able to play anything. The main reason people do theatre is to find a self-understanding and fulfilment. Human nature leads us to be original and to express ourselves. What could happen to us if, instead of being confronted with a conventional play when we went into a theatre, we just sat on the main public square of our town and watched the world go by?



Such a thing happened to me recently in Theatre Square in Dresden. I had a chance to see 120 performers and 25 children who naturally wanted to express themselves wordlessly by acting pantomimically in the play *The Hour We Knew Nothing Of Each Other* (German: *Die Stunde da wir nichts voneinander wußten*). It is the idea of the Austrian playwright Peter Handke who sat in a cafe near Trieste almost 30 years ago and got into a real state of observation of pedestrians around him. It was interesting to observe how the coming and going people were involved to interact. They were surely shocked by the naked man who ran around Theatre Square. There were enough other bright unforgettable scenic modern images, such as businesswomen, natty in black suits, a skateboarder, old gents, military veterans, soldiers with their leader, a woman with an envelope in her teeth, a jogger, tourists, transvestites, bohemians, jugglers, young lovers, workers, Papageno, Moses. All of human life with death and life form was introduced to viewers.

Nevertheless some actors (or those who know them well) say that sometimes they just forget that they are acting, that it is only make-believe. They begin to live on the stage. I think that is great.

Just for me the most exciting thing during the performance is when I forget that I am in the theatre, when I get so involved in the action that it seems real. At such moments all my emotions are greater, I have an

experience I would never have in my life. I often recollect one evening. The play was called "The Canterville Ghost". It is a story about a family who move to a castle haunted by the ghost of a dead nobleman, who killed his wife and was starved to death by his wife's brothers. Eleven artists acted marvellously. The play was full of humorous and satirical scenes. First of all, it was staged by Susanne Lietzow for kids and their parents. Eventually, the atmosphere was so amazing. I had a feeling that everyone was as excited as I was and we all, the audience and the actors, united. It is a kind of trying to escape from my problems or difficulties. It is a search for something better, for new feelings, for heroes, for something I need but do not have in reality. I guess the thing is that we all wear some masks, we all have to pretend sometimes; but in the theatre we can take our masks off because during the performance

there is only you and the stage, and you do not have to care what other people will think of you. I mean you do not have to hide your feelings.

In fact, what is reality? And is there only one reality? Sometimes it seems to me that Julia Lambert, the heroine of W. Somerset Maugham's Theatre, was right when she said: "Roger says we don't exist. Why, it's only we who do exist. They are the shadows and we give them substance. We are the symbols of all this confused, aimless struggle that they call life, and it's only the symbol which is real. They say acting is only make-believe. That make-believe is the only reality."

Written by Tatiana Korneva

Moving Up

“So, this is it. A real beauty and a bargain.”, declared the man whose classified ad for an “affordable flat” I had responded to, with nothing short of paternal pride in his voice. The place was not quite what I had expected. The walls and ceiling were blackened by what I could only assume to be layers of soot, the linoleum flooring was an otherworldly landscape of hardened blisters, and the advertised “modern furniture” was in fact clumps of charcoal, hastily swept to sad little piles in the corners of the room.

“What happened here?”, I asked.

“Oh, right. Well, the previous tenant’s meth lab exploded. Burned the whole place down. That’s why it’s available. Lucky for you!”

“When is this biting stench of smoke expected to go away?”

“That’s the urban aroma, boy. Better get used to it.”

“I’m not sure about this.”

“What’s to hesitate?”

“It’s still smouldering.”

“Get it while it’s hot!”

“I’ll call you.”, I said, but I never did because back then, I was still clinging on to the naïve illusion of finding something better, something more affordable, something more livable.



“Rustic fixer-upper”



“Unique living arrangements with an urban flair”

I had spent the past couple of weeks looking for living arrangements in this exciting city, the city that was home to the university of my choice (after having received rejection letters from my seven other choices), and with the first semester creeping up around the corner, I was getting increasingly concerned. I did not feel as if my expectations were too high. All I wanted was a comfy little place to call my own, not too far off campus, not too unreasonable in rent. And possibly only minimally fire-damaged.

The next offer was for a “furnished loft with Eastern European ambiance”, meaning that it looked like one of the abandoned places in Chernobyl. As the landlord handed me some protective gear against the asbestos in the walls, he told me not to worry about the unidentifiable fungal growth that had taken over the kitchen sink. It was expected to gain sentience in a few weeks, at which point we could split the rent.

Still thinking that I could do better than this, I tried my luck at shared living arrangements. Maybe I could find some nice flatmates that would welcome me in their midst, laying the ground for the most beautiful of friendships!

The first offer in this category had been described as a “depressing hellhole for a desperate sucker”, which I mistook for jolly sarcasm. The flat was owned by a band called “Poxy Prolapse” and they characterized their

music as “intestinal punk”, a genre wherein no actual instruments were played. Instead, musicians would be kidnapped off the streets and subsequently skinned alive. Their maddening screams of agony and futile begging for mercy would then be recorded. I listened to a few tracks. Not very danceable, in my opinion. They told me I would have to share a bunk with a gentleman whom everyone only referred to as “Hatefist” (a name they’d only whisper, not say aloud). He was a lovely fellow with an interesting profession as an, as he said, “pious mercenary” and “soldier for god” whose voice he’d sometimes hear in his dreams, though further details would be on a “need-to-know basis”. I was about to sign the contract when the band suddenly began practicing, which caused my eardrums to violently implode. The blood gushing from my ears triggered a severe war flashback in Mr. Hatefist, who then proceeded to pummel me into a coma. When I woke up at the hospital a couple of days later, someone else had already taken the room. *Pity that.*



“Traditional living in quiet neighbourhood”

My next attempt at flatmating was with what I assumed to be some sort of university fraternity. They called themselves “Father Randy’s Holy Death Cult” and offered a “snug little space in a professionally outfitted torture dungeon”. Apparently, they were a grassroots movement devoted to the worship of an ancient god with an unpronounceable name, who was fabled to bring about the destruction of the universe.



“Spacious but with a slight humidity problem”

All they asked of me was to sign away my life savings and to bring a bucket of goat’s blood and a pair of “eyes of the unbeliever” to the initiation ritual. Of course, I immediately applied for a membership. The blood and the eyes were swiftly acquired (this city has an amazingly varied flea market, I tell you), but the actual ritual proved more challenging than anticipated. I accidentally mispronounced the Ancient One’s name, so instead of summoning him, I ended up giving everyone cursed hemorrhoids, causing monstrous tentacles to sprout from their zealous sphincters. Needless to say, the group was hereafter rather lukewarm about my membership application, so we decided to part ways. I waved the hooded men goodbye. About two dozen goopy tentacles waved back.

The semester had long since begun by this point, of course. My temporary housing was a discarded freezer by the roadside. To save on rent (discarded freezer rates have gone through the roof in recent years) I shared it with a hobo with a heart of gold named Ethanol Eddie. He had been wronged by the government, which he plotted to overthrow one day. I assured him my undying allegiance, though admittedly, this was mostly to keep him from talking in my direction as his acidic breath kept making my eyes water. We still write each other to this day.

The next flat-viewing was for another single apartment mysteriously offered up as a “spiritual home”. The landlord drove me to a

barren plot of land in between two housing blocks. When I asked where the apartment was, he informed me that this was a “spiritual home” in the sense of me having to imagine the walls and a ceiling, because, after all, nothing worldly could ever possibly be as beautiful and perfect as the human imagination. I agreed and cried on the way back to my freezer.

The next one was slightly better insofar as having a corporeal existence, but it was located right between a drum circle therapist and an asylum for behaviorally challenged howler monkeys, so I had to decline, considering my eardrums were still healing from the splatter band.

This went on for quite some time. I viewed countless apartments, rooms, roomlets, crawlspaces and refurnished bomb shelters, failed to impress legions of landlords and landladies and cried myself to sleep in the arms of Ethanol Eddie numerous nights. Since this is a story of hope, however, I can assure you it ended well. I ultimately did find the perfect place, a comfy studio apartment directly on campus! Although by “studio apartment directly on campus”, I mean “bag deposit locker at the library”, and by “comfy”,

I mean “cripplingly claustrophobic”. It is cheap, though, and with the additional benefit of lacking any kind of electricity or plumbing, I can focus even more on my studies, as I recite the lecture material in the darkness of the night to distract myself from the creeping insanity.

People often say that starting anew is hard and that it can be gruelingly difficult to settle in a big city, but I say risk it anyway, even if it does leave a group of death cultists with tentacles growing out of their rectums in its wake. You have my permission to turn this into an inspirational poster.

Written by Ilko Tschiedel

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East to West and Back: A Reverse Culture Shock Experience

Many globetrotters say, “you cannot go abroad without coming home a changed person”. Since hopping from one country to another has become much easier nowadays, many can certainly relate to this. We typically do a lot of planning and preparation before leaving home in order to avoid culture shock upon entering a different kind of cultural environment.



However, we rarely do any preparation for returning home, and thus, some unexpected difficulties in re-entering our old world may be experienced. This rather common phenomenon, caused by travelling abroad is called reverse culture shock. This term is used to describe “surprised, disorientated and confused feelings experienced when people return to their home country and find that they no longer fit in as they used to. This may be due to a change in perspective, a decrease in excitement, an appreciation for and of different customs, or because during the period of residence abroad, the home country was idealized.” I am one of those given a chance to see a bit of the world. This year marks the tenth year of my life abroad. Ten years ago I was just a fresh Bachelor graduate in Secondary Education, who left the Philippines for the very first time, full of curiosity and eagerness to experience what lies behind the periphery of my comfort zone. The first five years was spent teaching in China, but also travelling around the neighboring Asian countries, and short yearly home visits during holidays. Within this decade, I have been blessed to also see 32 other countries. I have lived now in Germany for 4 and a half years and have experienced

different levels of culture shock, no matter how hard I try to prepare for it. As my introduction suggests, I will be recounting only those experiences opposite to “culture shock”, which is the process of mild shock experience in re-entering my own culture. Each time I visit home, I usually notice certain life patterns which are no longer relatable, resulting in my negative feelings. I have managed to reduce my list to 10 aspects which I think would be enough for a short article like this.

1. Smiling at and Chitchatting with Strangers

This is what I have always missed while being in Germany. In my first year here, I complained about and I was dismayed on a number of occasions when nobody returned the countless smiles I threw at the Germans around. But little did I know that few years later, I would already be contradicting myself upon returning home. I realized later on that awkwardness envelops me whenever I get friendly smiles from strangers, and those small talks initiated by unfamiliar people seem to alarm me, unlike before. I tend to care so much about my personal space and privacy now more than ever, and I seem to just choose who I want to give my smile back. My friends have made me realize this certain change. I welcome their unfavourable comments but I keep on reminding myself never to reach the point of becoming a killjoy and an unfriendly soul.

2. Straightforwardness and Seriousness

Communication also, has become sometimes difficult with some people back

home. Without a doubt, this is a German influence in me, just like the first on the list. I used to complain a lot that Germans are so serious, until last year, my niece commented that I have changed from being bubbly to being flat. I have become difficult to please when it comes to jokes, and unfortunately, some lame jokes do not even sound funny to me anymore. I grow up in a culture that prefers a flowery type of conversation or being indirect in channeling feelings and opinions toward others. A decade after, I just unintentionally turn into a straightforward one. There were times in conversations that I was misunderstood and mistaken for being arrogant or proud, when all I wanted was direct-to-the-point conversation.

Indeed, being alienated and withdrawn from folks at my own home is not the best consequence of being abroad for quite a while!

3. Embracing Nut-Brown Complexion

The majority of the Asian society has set a certain standard that white is synonymous to beauty. I can only presume on the Filipinos' perspective that is being a sign of colonial mentality and inferiority complex brought about by centuries of Spanish colonization and decades of American occupation. I and probably the other fifty percent of the Filipino population are born with nut-brown skin. I used to be unhappy with my dark skin color before, but after seeing the other side of the world, I have come to realize that skin color is not a big deal and should not be unnaturally altered, and we all just have to embrace the one we are born with. I feel deep frustration whenever I am surrounded by people back home seeing nothing wrong in their distorted perception of beauty. It is irritable when friends around talk about how the glutathione they are taking and other

skin whitening products they are using work well for them. I just cannot avoid rolling my eyes about this!

4. Sorting Garbage

One of the things I am grateful for is the serious attitude to the segregation of trash in Germany. In the beginning, it felt like taking an endless course in the ins and outs of this complicated process. Back home, I grew up only making a distinction between biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. My host country has converted me, after a while, into being a passionate trash-sorter type. Imagine the horror of my family and the rest of the neighborhood when I

installed five containers of different colors at our front yard one day. They looked at me as if I was out of my mind while sorting the trash and nagging at some of them for



not completing such a simple task. Up to this day, plastic trashes are still secretly burnt by many at the backyards in our community. At times, I feel like advising them, but the moral conundrum facing me as the younger one and them as the elders stand between us. I keep my silence to avoid tension, but it surely does not feel great at all.

5. Religiosity and Hypocrisy

My journey abroad may not have twisted my Christian faith, but I have come to realize that life on earth is not about religion. The too much religiosity and backwardness back home does not impress me now. The majority of the Filipinos still live with the cultural past introduced by the Spanish colonizers centuries ago, and combined with the new Christian way introduced during the half century of American occupation. Going to Sunday mass or service regularly means saving one soul from hell, and it raises my

eyebrows when I hear old people using hell to scare those who miss Sunday masses and church services. Another practice that makes me frown now is I still hear people throwing bible verses at their opponent in an effort to win an argument. It bothers me knowing that many still earnestly believe that more verses you know and quote from the bible, the more chances you get at being victorious and righteous, even in political and scientific discussions. Hypocrisy in all aspects is also very common in our society. Critically commenting on all these, makes me only appear more evil to the eyes of my conservative aunts and uncles, so sometimes, all I can do is to shake my head and raise my brows in silence.

6. Obligatory Spending on Any Occasion

The majority of the people back home, even the very poor ones, always have the excuse of spending money. Yearly town or village fiestas may not only mean a commemoration of its founding, but a celebration honoring Catholic Church Saints designated to each place. During this time, my fellows find quite a good justification of spending extravagantly although their pockets are almost or even already empty. They sometimes end up borrowing money just to extravagantly celebrate fiestas, birthdays, graduations, weddings, baptisms, and even funerals. I have now become a very vocal critic to this lifestyle that I used to partake in. I have already lectured many and have also been engaged in heated debates just because of this. Neighbors, for example, can have all the courage and fortitude to borrow money simply for a ridiculous reason of wanting to celebrate someone's birthday inviting a battalion of guests. This particular aspect of my reverse culture shock makes me feel a sense of rootlessness and shame.

7. Taking Naps and Soap Operas

Taking an early afternoon nap is not equal to laziness. It has, in fact, been proven to be beneficial for the body. However, being away from home and not having practiced the

habit of napping for a long time, I cannot avoid, at times, being unintentionally surprised by the deafening silence I hear between 12:00-14:00. Another favourite activity of millions of Filipinos after dinner, is the endless watching of soap operas. I have nothing against nightly family or any group bonding in front of the television, but to concentrate just on soaps until bedtime is for me unideal. I do dislike the fact now that many, especially women, take the dramatic flows of the episodes they watch on the television as a pattern of their lives, which expectedly, have full of nonsense dramas.

8. "Ma'am, Sir" Mentality

Upon entering shops or any establishment, you are always greeted with the Hello Sir, Hello Ma'am greeting. The Sir/Ma'am word is unbelievably inserted in almost every sentence resulting in the overuse of expressions. I refuse to claim that this is totally negative because this can be understood on both sides. Some may take this Ma'am, Sir mentality as a form of inferiority complex, an acceptance of inequality or as a hierarchical tendency, but to some, it may be a mere sign of respect. This was not an issue for me before, but having observed, I have learned to prefer, for example the German "Sie" form as a pronoun sufficient enough to convey respect. Hearing this greeting nowadays make me stop for a second, for I am reminded through this indicator that our society is very unequal.

9. Slow Service

With regard to establishments, I tend to get very impatient now with the slow service, especially in malls and supermarkets. I used to not feel any inconvenience when the service personnel were like turtles moving around. But nowadays, observing a cashier and a bagger sharing the task of supposedly a single person seems intolerable for me, and I cannot help but criticize how much manpower is wasted. In addition, I usually get a hostile stare from the other onlookers

each time I insist on putting my own items by myself without waiting for the bagger to do it for me. I find it quicker, and it is how it is being done in many parts of the world which I have gotten already used to.

10. Attitude to Drinking

Lastly, how can I forget to mention the effect of the drinking habit I have acquired from the Germans? One day, while watching my four brothers and others drinking at the porch, I suddenly felt a quench of thirst, so I confidently grabbed a bottle of cold beer from the fridge, gulped it without caring about the world around me. It did not take seconds for me to realize that my observers were dumb-founded and dismayed. By the way they looked at me, I instantly realized that what I had done was not acceptable for many conservative families. It was not a problem to explain to my family, later on, how it works in the west but to explain to the whole country that there is nothing wrong with healthy women drinking alcoholic beverages, just as how men do, would take forever.

So, what makes the re-entry shock more difficult than culture shock? Outside your country as a traveler, you are expected to commit mistakes and to have occasional

cultural misunderstandings, but this kind of support and understanding might be absent at home upon return. It is even harder to realize that you have disdain for so many aspects which are quintessentially your own. Yes, I have changed, I will never ever be the same again, I will never completely feel at home again because part of my heart will always be in places that leave a mark in me, and I will continuously be influenced by cultures elsewhere. It can be uncomfortable and weird to be alienated in your own home, but this is the price to pay when you have the endless desire of leaving pieces of yourself throughout the world.

Written by Eden Riveral

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Talking about my family: A very big one, for a change



My family in December 2015

Children are a blessing, my father always says. That is probably one of the reasons why my mother and him raised fourteen children altogether. Given the circumstances with the situation of families in Germany and in Europe as well, it is quite a shock for most of the people whom I tell the number of my siblings. Nowadays, when people talk about having a 'big family', it typically means three to four children. So, what is a family composed of more than 6 people called then?

I have to say that I absolutely understand people who won't believe me when I say that I have thirteen brothers and sisters, who react surprised or even shocked, or who – more often than you would think – immediately connect the size of my family to anti-social, subcultural behaviour. In the world of today it is just not normal anymore to have more than (a maximum) of 4 children, compared to society some 200 years ago. Families, just like the actual term of "family" have changed a lot over the last century. Traditionally, a family consisted of two married people with children whereas today a family can also be constructed by an

unmarried couple with or without children living together, or by single parents and their children. According to the Statistical office of the EU (Eurostat), since 2013 almost two third of all households in the EU were composed of only one or two persons, however, households with six or more persons make only 2% out of the total. Additionally, getting married is out of fashion, too. The crude marriage rate was almost halved in the EU between 1964 and 2011, in particular, it went from 3.4 million to 2.1 million couples which said "I do".

The fact that so many people decide to concentrate on their career and then never get the chance to raise children is actually sad, whatever the reasons behind it, it may be that they are too old already, too busy at work, too convinced that they would not get along with a child.

Whatever the case may be, I am used to having all my brothers and sisters around, to get annoyed by all the noise, to assert myself if I want something, to fight over the last piece of chocolate. It still goes on, after telling about my siblings, people are not able

to get out of shock when it comes to my nephews and nieces.

Seven of my brothers and sisters are married and they managed to crowd the streets with a procreation index of 28 children. That obviously leads to a lot of babysitting, helping out, babies crying and cuteness all over the place.

The root of all this comes from an ecclesial community of the Catholic Church, the Neocatechumenal Way which was found a few decades ago. Being on this Way, people believe that it is God who determines the number of children one gets, which can often lead to quite big families sometimes.

I know many people cannot imagine in the least how it is to live in such a big family, but for me, I don't know any differently. The last two job interviews I had were quite funny because I was not asked to describe my skills or why I would fit perfectly into that company but to describe my family and how it is to live with seven brothers and six sisters.

There are definitely differences between smaller families and mine. I remember when I was younger, we all had to be home for

dinner because my father who was working all day wanted to see us at least once a day. Hence we always had great (and especially cooked) dinners which is uncommon to many people I know. There are not only positive sites to having lots of siblings, of course; for example, I often had to take my little brother and sister with me when I met my friends – terrible for me, though entertaining for them. We never got birthday or Christmas presents as big as our friends', but today I can say that I am happy to have been raised in the way I was. No matter how loud, uncomfortable or inconvenient my family might be, I love them and I hope that the situation of the family in Europe will stabilize and eventually improve.

Written by Sophia Hell

For more information on the statistics of families, marriage etc. go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_in_the_EU_-_statistics_on_household_and_family_structures

The Place Beyond...The journey of one can change the lives of many. ...The History Maker's Mystery

What do we need to make history? Most people might think we need some paradisiacal visions while they are actually just afraid of future developments in the third world or the Middle East. Whether you tremble with fear or jolly excitement, changing history, changing the future always means to venture into unknown waters. Humans always were brave – how horrible the outcome would ever be: the status quo was never enough. However, did they really imagine 'bad' aftermaths for the world, or maybe the opposite?

Usually people tend to create 'escapist illusions' in times of horror. For instance, Thomas Morus who lived in a time full of apocalyptic images still managed to create one of the most wonderful fantasies ever with paper and feather: Raphael Hythlodius is lost in a terrible thunderstorm and eventually finds himself on an unknown faraway island. Its society is reasonably well organized, life is pleasant. The Utopians work few hours a day, they live in prosperity and peace, and they can spend many hours on arts, science or joyful conversations.

Albeit the European citizens of the 16th to 18th century have searched for this mysterious land, called Utopia, with matchless passion, they actually dedicated two hopeless centuries to withering away on expeditions; then, however, they stroke on the idea to build a factual version of this paradise. Today, the notion of creating Utopia is still vivid in the minds of some readers and fans of Harry Potter: for instance, some people tried to reach the Hogwarts Express by running against the column between platform 9 and 10 at King's Cross some years ago. Off to Hogwarts!

Regarding these rather harmless tries of breathing life into J.K. Rowling's magical world, the state drafts and ideas for an ultimate society in the 19th and 20th century,

inspired by Utopia's publication, appear so jeopardous and of partly murderous consequences even that one feels rather queasy – they risked it all, gained nothing and fabricated the reverse theory along the way. (Bizarrely, these outcomes are part of one of the most popular fiction genres today: the Dystopia.)

The Second World War, with a now unrecognizable utopian belief at its core, ended in a monstrous tragedy of, by then, unknowable extremities and inequity; nobody knows that it began with an almost inspiring utopian ideal: a world government. Sadly, enforced with totalitarianism this dream soon became a nightmare. En voyage, the vision of 'peace for all' became 'peace for the selected' and even though Europe is not a battlefield today anymore we are living in a twisted hollow peace. Just because you are at peace, it does not mean the world is as well. We are blind to the people who do not die or hunger in our own garden.

Advancing into the future, scientists draw a dark place for upcoming generations. Our world has become too melancholic, filled with dystopian beliefs which are to grow into our destiny. Instead of finding solutions, instead of finding Utopia, some of the once starry-eyed idealists ship themselves to the gates of hell in the 21st century.

Yes, to make and change the future history with utopian designs can be risky and frightening at first. Change always is terrifying. Yet this is the only way to strive for solutions that can alter the world favourably – **as long as they do not become totalitarian!**

You have the choice to sketch the passionate endeavour of Utopia or a destructive Dystopia, getting lost in the Styx of adversity.

Whereas future can be quite a distant word, change is not. As immediate as it sounds, just as mind-blowingly simple it can be

Here are 5 things to spice up your personal voyage to a future-utopia:

1 More Love Letters

If you found this letter...

Hannah Brencher's life took a turn for the worse. Nevertheless, she decided not to float in self-hatred but started to write love letters to strangers instead, hiding and sharing them in all possible places. In 2011 she founded the organisation MORE LOVE LETTERS and Co-founded the website "If You Find This E-Mail".

The emotional support provided by hundreds of Love Letters every day is unbelievably vast and encouraging. If you want to join the movement, grab a pen and check out: www.moreloveletters.com or share your personal insight at www.ifyoufindthisemail.com

2 Slow Down

Psychologists have studied the phenomenon of increasing dystopian fiction in contrast to diminishing idealistic enthusiasm. One of the answers is seen in the accelerating lifestyle of today's society, already criticized by many. To invent utopian visions and new positive ways of living, a person needs space and time. However, students rarely have enough time, meaning hours, to lean back and think about new social models. Creating a lovely *Utopia* needs **time, time and time....**

"Courage is not the absence of fear but the judgement that something else is more important than fear. The brave may not live forever but the cautious do not live at all."

- Meg Cabot, writer

3 Kintsuki

Constructing utopian ideas can be quite exhausting, but an open and optimistic mind-set is always the best start: In Japan, the ancient art of Kintsuki teaches how to repair broken objects with gold. The flaw is seen as a unique piece of the object's his-tory adding to its beauty.

4 Trees, Rice & Juliet

However idealistic it may be, every step counts: search with Ecosia instead of Google if you want to help planting thousands of trees by paying with your search information, or go to freerice.com to train your English vocabulary while donating 10 grains of rice per right answer. Juliet Capulet might be dead but her secretaries are certainly not! If you struggle with mental health problems, love-sickness or want to help a friend, send a letter to Verona – Juliet will be your BFF and help you out! (Though it might take her up to 6 weeks.)

5 Courage & Kindness

Sometimes, however, **kindness requires a lot of courage**. The movement **#choosekind** wants to remind you that everyone struggles with it: "Who is it that I inspire to be? This is the question we should be asking ourselves all the time." Get inspired and explore the story of August Pullman: **"Wonder" is in German theaters in January 2018. A film no one on earth should miss!**

Article and list written by Maria Seidel