A collection of works by Calhoun Community College students, faculty, staff and alumni.
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Ipse Dixit

Clarity was staring me in the face.
But my faculties decided a facade was its place.
Frankly my fortitude made me highly fortunate for debate.
Or I was positioned by pride to only believe my brain.
My solipsistic vision makes me feel christened.
To the point I’m ordained to division from egocentrism.
I’d just like people to listen.
But maybe they’d want the same.

- Jordan Cox
The following poem was inspired by Sherry Turkle’s book *Reclaiming Conversation*, Calhoun Community College’s Big Read for the 16th Annual Writers’ Conference. It was the result of an assignment given by Phyllis Brewer for her Fall 2016 English Composition I course.

**Look Up**

We hide behind a screen
that made us into machines
that can no longer feel
because we have created a profile that isn’t actually real.
We edit and revise
turning our words into lies
just to get more likes.
Facebook and Instagram
have a set number of words you can say
because people get bored and walk away.
And I don't know how we got this far
to even have our arguments in text
which seems so good because now there’s no blow ups, right?
But maybe we aren't really resolving the fight
because I don't know if I’m really being heard.
If you don't look me in the eye
and actually see me cry
because of what you did.
But no, you couldn't actually talk to me.
You ran behind your phone and hid.
And I guess device free only includes me.
Because you tell me to get off my phone,
but you can't go one second without your own.
So I cry out, please listen to me.
But you’re too captivated by what you’ve seen.
And I guess I don’t exist in this new world of yours
because every time I try to talk to you
you close a door.
So I see this little thing as a cage that has captured our gaze
because we’re so concentrated on this
that we forget to look up and see the world as it really is.

- Deborah Solomon
Holding On But Falling Away

“Time moves in one direction, memory another. We are the strange species that constructs artifacts intended to counter the natural flow of forgetting.”
—William Gibson

Shredding papers to frustrate identity thieves,
I discovered a scrap of yours.

Words of gratitude and grief angle off
in all corners of an old drugstore bill.

But the sorrow is also mine,
sorrow for not seeing the signs sooner:
the six red boxes of yellow cake mix on the pantry shelves,
the eight silver blocks of cream cheese in the crisper,
and the boiler of burned beans,
hidden in a corner of the laundry room.

In dark and lonely hours,
you recorded names, birthdays, and deaths,
lists obsessively recalled in little lined memo books
and on the backs of envelopes:
parents, siblings, husband, and finally
daughter.

Over and over,
dates of joy and dates of grief.

And now, the only kindness,
none are dead.

All live in an eternal present
where you are not 90,
where I am sometimes your daughter,
my mother,
where you and I bake pies for your mama,
because she likes that, you say.

Never mind the math
and reason.

—Dr. Leigh Ann Rhea
Old Man

Josh Bond
Tinge

Beyond my window, I can see it looming.  
A shadow growing in size each day,  
suffocating more innocent souls.  
At times, I too have been encompassed,  
surrendering myself into its depths.  
I met my neighbor there,  
as well as other familiar faces.  
The faces come and go. Young and old.  
But the reason stays the same...  
Through my doorway, I can see it dooming.  
Its companions willingly obey,  
continuing the rise of vexation.  
The darkness swelling as it  
opens its arms to more creatures.  
Like a loving albatross of hatred  
Because of a tinge of skin.

- Carlee Jones
People Watching

For as long as I can remember, I have always loved people. However, a social butterfly I am not. I much prefer a third person point of view. Now, today’s modern culture tends (hopelessly) to thrive upon sociality but the benefits of my solitude are of greater importance to me. Though, I am still young, I now leave the house as often as I would if I were fifty years elder. You could say I’m part of the foundation. Some might think that sounds lonely, but really, it’s not. Loneliness can be painful, but not an ounce of pain I feel. Instead my time is spent observing my housemates. Along with me, a family of four lives in a quaint house. (It is old and my part doesn’t get much light and to be honest, it is really quite small—only about a foot and a half wide—but home is where the heart is, after all.) Todd is the man of the house. Proud, tall and rigid he stands with forty-eight year-old grace. He is strict and spends most of his time at work. When he is home, however, they keep their gazes downcast and skitter ‘round like mice. Meals are always silent. Darling Leslie, Todd’s wife and mother of his kids, lives haunted by decisions past. Her once grand dreams of great success in the big city were diminished by family’s prods to be realistic. She still longs for her dreams, though twenty-two years too late for her crafted twenty years prior fantasy; it is evident when she encourages her children to fight for their own. Jenny is the daughter, the eldest at the tender age of sixteen. Ah, yes, sixteen. I’ve heard it can be a difficult age. It was not for me, but then again, I didn’t have a Daniel who would claim to have bad service and not receive the text when he clearly read it. Austin was three years younger than his sister. He, too, had boy troubles though his were a bit more pressing. He came home yesterday with broken glasses—the third time this month! Many nights he cries, curled up with the dog, when he thinks no one can see him. Of course, the dog can’t be forgotten. a large beast he is, so unfittingly named Flufferkins. I would have picked something like Alexander or Bartholomew as a name but when named, to be fair, he did resemble a cotton ball. He doesn’t like me very much. He barks and disturbs the most peaceful of nights. It’s a good thing no neighbors are close enough to hear. Yes, these are my housemates. I sometimes like to consider myself part of their family even if they don’t know it. I watch them in their busy lives and wonder if they forget why being human is rightly marvelous. They should people watch sometime because I know best of all why it is. How do I know this? It’s quite simple, really. You always see the value once you give something away. (To me, a trifling thing.) Truly, humanity is hard to retain when you live in the cavities of the walls.

- Rhonda Warren
Standing Under His Panic of a Freakin’ American

Understanding. What the hell are we standing under?
Hispanic. Whose panic? It’s his not ours.
His choice of words is the cowardly killing of a calf that never gets revealed because it never has a chance to grow & thrive in the wisdom & knowledge that we privileged destructors con 10 you to perpetuate & funk shun one another in hate.

African American. They’re a freakin’ American too so you might as well get over your choice of Lang wage.
It’s so expensively destructive.
Realize your choice of words you caucy asions.
The fear that you cock your weapuns with has reached its end & the demise is waiting around the corner store.
Quit buying the same thinking with the same feeling & choice of communicating.

If I’m reckless then you, Mr. Poly, are wreckfull.
With out caw shun your wreckfull decision deciding.
You are so afraid of progress that the fullness of your flabber gas stations are turning Mother Earth into a divorced Queen with no power to control her rain.
When her storms begin melting the hue of a man’s skin due to imperialistic abuse of power... Were you able to see the mystery of Mr. Poe?

Way out on a know ledge we stand under...
It's time we wiz by our current dumbness to the few chairs we allow ourselves to sit in, on, & around each other.
Are you in formation of a past fear or are you ready to up the date of our hard driven computational exit stance?
Don’t be leaving yourself.
Have faith & live long love.

- Cameron Fish
I Am Babel

I am Babel.

Building myself above believable measures.

As if I’m the passage to heaven.

Bound to fall.

I descended.

Disconnected.

From the men and the message.

-Jordan Cox

Follow the Light

Kathy Bost
Enjoying a Moment
by Emily Shelton

On Friday, October 7, 2016, at 7:00 p.m., football fans on both sides screamed and shouted, rooting for their teams. Kids ran around while teens and parents socialized and watched bits and pieces of the game, depending on the intensity of the plays. When socializing was not enough to sustain the craving for something interesting, the devices came out. A coach on the field or someone in the press box was recording the entire game to recap afterwards. Since phones were already out, it seemed to be the perfect time to record a play to share on social media. When technology was used, it took away the pure enjoyment of a moment and became a distraction. Moments were not truly captured under those bright, Friday night lights unless some sort of technology was used by fans or coaches to watch a play that brought the crowd to their feet.

Was a moment truly enjoyed when technology was present? With the upcoming generations, technology is becoming the first thing they encounter. One would have expected to see children so concentrated on a device that the game right in front of them did not even exist. However, that night kids were not on devices at all; they were playing with other kids. They were playing their own football game, dreaming of playing on the football field and growing up to be just like the varsity players. Teens and parents, on the other hand, had the attention span of a child. If the game became the least bit boring, their minds directly went to their phones. When phones were brought out, the moment to spend time with the people around them was lost. Instead of just watching the game, they chose to go to their phones and be reminded of drama, news media, and emails from their bosses. Teens had
their phones out recording or taking pictures to put on social media, allowing everyone to know they were there. Coaches paced up and down the sideline as the team made plays. One coach threw his arms in the air, while another shook his head in disappointment at a play gone wrong. Instead of swapping out players to correct the error made, a video was capturing it all to review afterwards. This moment would not have as much of an effect on the player after the game as it would have during it.

Technology can be used as a source to help or to take away from a moment. This did not seem to be an issue with kids that Friday night because they played and enjoyed every moment. Technology was not taking away the fun; they were making memories with other kids. It appeared different for teens and parents, however. A video allowed one to replay a specific moment in time, which could be used positively. Teens posted those items on social media and shared with the world a moment that had some effect on their lives. For the parents, their use of technology took away from the relaxation from being away from their jobs. When it was used, a moment of laughter with friends or watching a player powerhouse through defenders to score would not be remembered. It would be remembered for the device being held in front of their faces. A coach used a Go-Pro to record the game; it could be used for those who were not present to reflect on what happened. College recruiters could ask to see a specific play of someone of their interest. On a negative note, instead of physical correction while on the field, only a visual aid would be provided with a video. A line has to be drawn distinguishing positive and negative uses or intentions and when technology begins to be the sole focus in one’s life.

When does technology become a distraction? Sherry Turkle, a psychology professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, states in her book *Reclaiming Conversation*, “If we don’t look at our children and engage them in conversation, it is not surprising if they grow up awkward and withdrawn” (108). Under those bright Friday night lights, the kids were not the ones withdrawn from peers or other adults. If anything, the kids were effectively communicating with those around them. The teens and parents seemed to be the ones who needed to relearn these particular skills. The devices became a distraction as eyes were directed to them instead of the game. A different problem with a Go-Pro for coaches could arise, and there could be technical difficulties. If a problem occurred, it seemed necessary to get it fixed immediately, thus taking their minds off of the game. Once again, instead of coaches fixing a wrong play right then, they would rather have it recorded so they could wait until afterwards to address it.

For many, technology is used daily and is becoming an issue by people relying heavily on it to capture a moment in time instead of living in it. Often technology is frowned upon when kids and teens are seen with it, but it is not a bad thing when parents do the same. What many people overlook is that usually a kid knows when to put it down, but many adults do not. It might not be a bad idea to take notes from a kid on how to truly live in the moment.

**Work Cited**

Slumber On, Oh Ancient Ones
by Skye Boyd

Sleep. That mysterious realm that draws people in, beguiling the mind with promises of peace, stillness, and tranquility. The ancient writers use sleep as a symbol to show the delicate psychological mindset of their characters. But in the ancient tales, sleep can be an avenue of respite, refuge, and strength. This sleep is characterized by the characters Odysseus, Jonah, and Jesus.

Homer uses sleep to illustrate the delicate state of Odysseus’s mind. Odysseus is a man of action and deep thinking. He is endeavoring with all of his strength to get home, yet he is thwarted at every turn. He sees sleep as necessary but not vital as he states, “There is a time for many words, and there is a time for sleep” (line 389). This sleep is illustrated in his determination to get home. On Aeolia’s island, Aeolia gives Odysseus a bag that contains “the wild wind ways,” which he uses to aid him in sailing for home (289). He leaves the island and sets course for home and sails for nine straight days without sleeping. His unwavering drive and determination often lead him down a path of sleep deprivation. By the tenth day, he is physically exhausted, and his body succumbs to that natural state of sleep that is stated in The Odyssey as “sleep, sound and sweet, and very much like death” (83). This sleep is catastrophic for Odysseus as his men are not trustworthy to stay out of mischief. When Odysseus awakens from the deep slumber, he realizes what his men have done and curses the gods for lulling him into such a deep, restoring sleep. To Odysseus, sleep is as stated by Homer as “very much like death,” and he sees it as a last resort (83). Not until he is on the Phaeacian ship, does Odysseus find the peace in sleep as “[a] man who had suffered deep in his heart, / Enduring men’s wars and the bitter sea- / But now he slept, his sorrows forgotten” (92-94). Homer, the ancient writer, effectively uses sleep to illustrate Odysseus’s delicate state of mind and the vital role that sleep plays in restoring and renewing his mind.

Unlike Odysseus, the prophet Jonah uses sleep as a means of refuge and escape. Jehovah commissions Jonah to go and preach repentance to the city of Nineveh. He rebels against Jehovah and flees by ship to Tarshish. While on the journey, Jonah seeks harbor in the realm of sleep. His flight from Jehovah has taken its toll on him physically and mentally. In his mind, he knows that it is useless to run from Jehovah. As the ancient writer David said in Psalm 139:7, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” Despite knowing Jehovah’s power, Jonah still does not obey Jehovah. To escape the profound enormity of his actions, he falls into the deep realm of sleep and abandons all consciousness, seeking refuge and rest. Unaware that a storm is raging outside, Jonah sleeps to escape the storm raging within his mind. To him sleep is a safe haven from his thoughts and also a respite to strengthen his body against the ongoing turmoil swirling inside him. In the depths of slumber, Jonah is oblivious to the labors by the mariners to save the ship. The mariners turn to their gods for help, recognizing their need for aid.
When Jonah awakes, he understands that the storm is sent from Jehovah and also knows that he cannot entreat his God because he has run away from the very presence of the one who can save them. Jonah counsels the mariners to throw him overboard and states, “this great tempest is because of me” (Jonah 1: 13). His temporary slumber has rejuvenated his body, both physically and mentally, and sets him on a course towards Jehovah. He urges the mariners to throw him overboard and says that only then will the storm abate and the waters be calm. Jonah’s sleep is characterized by the ancient writer as a means of blissful rest, a brief period in which he can escape from the storm inside his mind, yet when he awakens, he is refreshed and finds the strength and courage to do the impossible.

Jesus, the Son of God, understands the very nature and implication of stimulating sleep. In the biblical account of Mark chapter 4, Jesus seeks haven in a boat after a long day of preaching and expresses his desire as stated by Mark “to cross over to the other side” (Mark 4: 35). While crossing over, an immense storm arises and beats the boat to the point of sinking. Jesus is physically, mentally, and emotionally drained from his day of ministering and instructing his followers. The storm does not distress him. Instead, he seeks refuge in the stern of the ship and lays his head on a pillow and falls into a deep sleep. Jesus’s faith rests in the knowledge that God his Father is at the helm of the ship and that he will safely reach the other side. Mark, the ancient writer, embodies Jesus’s sleep as healing and dynamic, so sleep is his refuge amidst a horrific storm. Jesus is neither afraid of sleeping, as Odysseus is, nor exhausted from a futile fight against Jehovah’s will, as Jonah is. Jesus is running toward a solution, the quiet state of sleep. He knows that sleep produces alertness and that it revives and restores the soul. The writer Mark illustrates the crucial effects of deep sleep when Jesus’s disciples frantically awaken Him, and He arises to calm the storm with all the poise and serenity as He states “Peace be still” (Mark 4: 39). Jesus is the very archetype of the words He speaks. His temporary reprieve in the peaceful realm of sleep fortifies, strengthens, and revives Him.

Ancient writers use the symbol of sleep to illustrate the delicate emotional state of their characters’ minds. Each character’s need to abandon himself in the realm of sleep is illustrated by the common necessity to find rest, strength, and refuge. Odysseus’s lack of rest causes him to ultimately surrender to sleep, Jonah’s disobedience to Jehovah compels him to escape into sleep, and Jesus finds momentary reprieve from the outside pressure of life. All three characters find strength in their rest and are able to face their impossible task.

The Pain of Hate

Malanya Monette

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Homo sapiens are an inarguably fascinating breed. They have inhabited the earth for over 200,000 years and are the most intelligent organisms. They possess unique skills such as utilizing spoken and symbolic languages and forming intricate social structures. Like any other animal, humans have gradually evolved over time, gaining newfound insight and increasing their brainpower. Now, they have the ability to expertly cook a turducken, masterfully chisel marble into any imaginable shape, and successfully travel the 238,900 miles it takes to reach the moon, yet amid these extraordinary feats, the species is still unable to prove or disprove the existence of a higher power, fully understand the complexities of gravity, or advance into a fundamentally more refined version of itself. If one were to compare a present day human against those who predated him, he would have two specimens who could not be more mentally or physically different. But if one went a step further to examine the nitty-gritty of mankind—his primal fears, motivations, and desires—the two specimens would be identical. For example, Henry Ford's Model T is a far cry from Lamborghini's Aventador, but they are both cars due to the fundamental characteristics that make a car a car. They have four wheels, need a steering mechanism, and require an engine to operate. This same logic can be applied to humans. They have an innate need for love and companionship, crave safety and belonging, and require
food and water to operate. It is the invariable mechanics of human nature that allow for literary works from Shakespeare, Fitzgerald, and others to remain applicable today. In fact, Edith Wharton’s 1934 short story “Roman Fever” supports this point as it highlights aspects of the human condition that have yet to change. This narrative brilliantly reinforces the reality that Homo sapiens often have differing versions of reality, are motivated chiefly by self-preservation, and are incapable of achieving absolute happiness.

One of the more draining parts about social interaction is that no two people have a duplicate interpretation of reality. This truth can be most readily seen through Wharton’s characters Alida Slade and Grace Ansley and their involvement in a dramatic love triangle while vacationing in Rome. In a dramatic twist, Grace is hopelessly infatuated with a young man by the name of Delphin Slade who is also Alida’s fiancé. However, this slight inconvenience does little to deter Grace from meeting Delphin in the Colosseum after receiving an invitation. Ultimately, the young lovers part ways, and Grace is married off shortly thereafter. Fast forward about thirty years later to a Roman rooftop terrace where Alida and Grace are finally uncovering the truth behind the adulterous rendezvous. It is revealed that Alida knew about Delphin’s invite since she “wrote it” and had lived for years with the hidden gratification that Grace had waited “around there in the dark, dodging out of sight, listening for every sound, trying to get in” (785,786). In a second, equally shocking disclosure, Grace tells Alida that she “didn’t wait. He’d arranged everything. He was there. We were let in at once” (786). Evidently, while Alida was authoring the summons, her faculties had been clouded by rage as she had failed to account for the possibility that Grace would answer the letter. In summary, Grace had lived through the years with a fondness for the memory of her and Delphin’s Colosseum date and cherished the letter she believed he had written. Alida had enjoyed the smug satisfaction of ruining their faithless relationship, concluding that they had never united. Nonetheless, neither had a clear understanding of the encounter, and those unclear pictures certainly did not match. The reason for humans’ constant discrepancy may be explained by the fundamental attribution error or a simple misreading of a situation. At any rate, one would have a tough time finding two people who perceive an event in the exact same manner. For example, anti-abortion advocates view abortion as a heinous act against the fragility of life and believe the woman should be held responsible. On the other hand, depending on the situation, the woman receiving the abortion may view the operation as a way to prevent birthing a tangible reminder of rape or to spare the child from a life of poverty. While these might both be valid versions of the reality of abortion, they are just different and will never agree. It should be noted that having conflicting accounts of an event is not a negative characteristic of humanity; it is just how they are made. Alida and Grace’s discoveries about that night simply prove that after 200,000 years, mankind continues to differ.

However, what man does not differ on is his unconscious drive to safeguard his own interests and his survival. There is a surplus of evidence in “Roman Fever” to support this assertion. First, Grace and Delphin continue their affair despite his marital commitment to Alida. It is easy to cast Grace in the role of the innocent beauty, too overcome by her passions to let a lifelong friendship hinder her love. After all, she is quiet, unassuming, and content to just sit and knit. But what Grace does is wrong. She blatantly ignores the boundaries of her close friend’s engagement and chases hedonistic fulfillment. Grace’s actions are outrageously despicable as she chooses to betray her friend and violate her trust. She and Delphin have no right to damage Alida in such a way and their affair is inexcusable, but they are simply doing what humans do: prioritizing their pursuits over others’. Second, Alida is willing to put Grace’s health at risk to ensure her engagement remains intact. She claims that she “was upset when [she] heard [Grace
was] so ill,” referring to Grace’s battle with Roman Fever after her rendezvous with Delphin (786). However, the credibility of Alida’s sympathy begins to fracture when she tells of a story about a similar love triangle in which the adulterous friend dies of Roman Fever. In fact, according to Alida, the tale “made such an impression on” her that it hardly seems a coincidence she guides Grace towards the same fate (784). The notion that Alida is willing to let her friend die to achieve her goal is a cruel reminder of how animalistic humans can be. To this day, people circumvent and curtail the efforts of others to attain success and personal gain. For example, Francis Underwood, the television character in *House of Cards* who initially serves as the House of Representatives’ majority whip, then manipulates, deceives, and kills his way to the epitome of power: the Oval Office. While his actions may seem extreme, he represents the broader principle of hunt or be hunted, which remains in almost every aspect of life. However, the human species would be lost without this drive as it is what keeps society moving towards bigger and better accomplishments. Had this characteristic been bred out of the gene pool, humans might still be using stone tools.

If only mankind’s capacity for total happiness was as easily adjusted as tools. According to the idealists and optimists, humans have the ability to arrive at complete happiness if willing to work hard enough. But that is simply not true. Unfortunately, people will never reach a personal utopia, as there will always be some part of life in which they experience discomfort. For Alida, it is the constant torment that her marriage never emulates what Grace and Delphin shared and the disdain she develops for Grace. She even wonders, “Would she never cure herself of envying her? Perhaps she had begun too long ago” and decides that she “must make one more effort not to hate her” (783). For Grace, it is the loss of Delphin that keeps her clinging to their memory and his letter for so many years. Her undying attachment is evident when Alida reveals the phony nature of the letter because Grace “covers her face with her hands,” which is then “streaked with tears” (785). While these women have both lived satisfying lives filled with excellent times, neither has been able to completely move on emotionally from that fateful Roman night. Sadly, this plight is one every human who lives and breathes suffers, and there is no cure. Mankind is perpetually unsatisfied with so many facets of life. Whether it is the insufficient amount of material items, the upsetting bank statement, the current political landscape, or the mountain of unresolved emotional blocks, humans have a tough time even being happy, let alone happy about everything. People will always want more, never have enough, could have done better, should have done this, or were scared to do that. These are the cards Homo sapiens are dealt, and they will just have to do their best.

Homo sapiens have been playing with the same hand for generations and have yet to profoundly alter the fundamental components of the human condition. The only difference in people now is that they have moved beyond throwing rocks in their caves to adopting a larger vocabulary and a more cunning smile. As a species, humans are incapable of a major emotional shift because they cannot modify their DNA. Just as the crocodile will always kill with a death roll and the gray wolf will always live among a pack, the human will always use his superior intellect to convince himself he is capable of change.

**Works Cited**

Today, millions of Americans woke up to the sound of their morning alarms, grabbed their phones, and maybe hit snooze a couple of times or maybe got right up and made themselves a cup of coffee. That is not uncommon; people wake up every morning to their alarms and do the same routines. The thing that is interesting is the complete dependency on something that can fit in the palm of someone’s hand. Over the last twenty years, a phone has gone from something only used to make calls to something a person cannot live without. It is used to keep track of calendars, meetings, emails, social media, news media; it is even relied on to wake people in the morning. That sure seems like a lot of responsibility for such a small device. This four-inch chunk of metal has taken over the world, and in some regards, it is a great thing. It keeps people connected at the touch of a button, well hypothetically at least. People have voluntarily enslaved themselves to the technology that comes along with a cell phone and have become addicted to being able to access anything they want, anytime they want, all while losing track of the important things in front of them.

If there is a solution, it is a simple one, yet hard to do. Humanity has to learn to be okay with a dead phone. The world has to get back to the place where they are not starving for an outlet as soon as their phones get to
twenty percent battery; instead they need to refill the battery of their souls by having real human interactions and real conversations. The lack of intentionality is at the root of the problem: people do spend time together, but they do not check out of their phones for long enough to have any quality time with the company they are keeping. It has become generational; it is just the way children have been raised. They grew up with everything literally at the touch of a button, so anything but that would be a world they do not know. They do not realize though how much life they are missing out on when they are trying to see it through a Snapchat filter. This volunteer enslavement to the phone attached to millions of hands is somewhat choice, somewhat circumstance, but it is something that can change. All it takes is a little bit of a conscious effort to put the phone down and to pay attention to the world that is missed when eyes are on the screen.
The Control of Technology

by Leah Carpenter

For thousands of years, slavery has been engrained into human culture, but after over 245 years in America, change was sought. Even to this day, scars and splits from the slavery of African Americans can be observed in American society. However, while America was focused on erasing those scars, something else has crept in and taken over. A new race now enslaves mankind: technology. With technology, people can escape to worlds away from reality until the technology controls the reality, but how can someone escape the technological labyrinth woven into everyday life? Technology controls the everyday life of present day society, but finding the important things of reality can put people back in control.

Technology has enslaved thousands of people across America. From the constant access of a phone to the infinite discovery through the web and social media, the sweet lure of technology’s easy access can make it even easier to miss how much it controls the lives of many. Businesses keep digital files as well as advertise their services digitally. Google answers any quick question that might easily be answered by a book somewhere nearby. Texting is the most convenient way to contact others whether they are in the same building or not. Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook are the fastest ways to share ideas, thoughts, and pictures with the world. Technology has created the mentality that faster is better, but what happened to “the joy is in the journey”? The internet is not completely reliable, and it seems to be much harder to hack paper than databases. Things seen and experienced in person are easier to recall. Relationships do better with communication in person, and thoughts are portrayed more clearly and better understood when presented in person. It is easy to be enslaved in the world of technology, but getting out takes personal effort.

Though technology has claimed several lives to its control, there are ways to escape its prison. Limiting personal use of technology to a couple of hours a day can lead to more personal contact with the world and others. Finding a new hobby such as arts and crafts, gardening, music, and exercising can provide a welcome distraction from the screen and can be quite enjoyable. Also, if less time is spent on a device, more time can be spent in person with friends and family to further relationships. Technology can be infinitely helpful in everyday life, but getting sucked in too much may cause people to lose their humanity.

Technology has taken control of everyday life, and it is time to seek freedom away from the screen. This slavery is not a thing to be trifled with and can hurt more than people realize. As society strives to erase the scars of human slavery, it is important to escape from technology’s grasp, as well. If the danger is realized, then control can be regained over technology before it completely controls humanity.
Enslavement of the Mind
by LaKesha Cohn

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation order to end slavery. Although slavery ended 154 years ago, in modern society, we still enslave ourselves to elements of the mind. Fear is one of the most wicked forms of slavery people can let reside in their lives. Fear of judgment or just change in general confiscates the exciting adventures and opportunities that life offers. I had to learn this the hard way.

After I graduated high school, I went on to start life as a working young adult. I convinced myself that “school was not for me.” I was happy, free from my parents and school, and every time anyone would ask me if I was in school, I always told them the same thing, “school is not for me.” The thing is, after a few years, I realized what a huge mistake I had made, and I yearned to get back in school. By this time, I was about twenty-one years old, and the thought of getting back in school was horrifying. Being somewhat content in life, fear of the unknown was holding me back. I didn’t tell anyone of my desire, not my family, friends, or even my husband. I kept this longing desire suppressed inside for years. Fast-forward ten years to 2015. Now, I had been out of school for thirteen years. One morning while in a training session for work, the presenter changed my life! He ended his presentation with this quote, “Never let your fear decide your fate.” This quote had an extremely emotional effect on me. This is exactly what I had been doing, letting my fear steal the things I wanted to accomplish in life. To become free, I had no choice but to change my path. Within thirty days, I was registered at Calhoun.

People should take advantage of every situation in life. They should learn from their mistakes, throwing themselves at lightning speed toward all things they want to achieve. Doing the work will not always be easy; however, this is the only way to remove fear. The life lessons learned along the way will be priceless. Self-investment is a winning investment. These are the lessons I have learned, and the sense of accomplishment I feel for changing my course is unfathomable.
Rest in Peace
by Jordan Paul

I wanted to know the man’s story.
A distant, heavy voice, whispered in a harsh tone, “In these parts of the farm, there is a man. He appears every Halloween to haunt this place.”

I clawed up my dirt walls, struggling against the steepness. The ground under my feet shifted and fell back into the depths. My fingernails dug at the edges, and I heaved myself out of the dark and stale hole. I stumbled onto my feet.

Stepping forward, the leaves crackled under my weight.

Younger, giddy voices became clear. “Now! This man died years ago. He had caught a disease that at first was just a coughing fit, but it soon became deadly. It turned his eyes hollow, his skin pale, and made his heart stop short. But his brain never gave in.”

The voice was like thunder and lightning.
Cornstalks bent and broke as I made my way toward the rocky path. The closer I got to the man’s voice, the more I saw.

A dim lantern hung low on the rusty tractor. Behind it was a wagon. Barrels of hay lined the insides. People in costumes sat, huddled together in the crisp night.

There were ones as ugly as the Wicked Witch.
herself. Many Draculas made their appearance. But the kids' outfits were ballerinas, goblins, and pirates. One of them stuck out more than the rest.

It was a woman.

She had her blonde hair tied in two braids with ribbons, wore red heels and a short blue and white dress. Her friends surrounded her, wearing something similar.

The voice stuttered and stopped, leaving them in silence. A man behind the wheel banged in front of him on the tape recorder. “Dammit! This pile of crap never works,” he yelled back to the crowd. A nervous laugh escaped their lips.

The story picked up again, and the man leaned back in his chair. He continued driving and quickly turned a corner. They disappeared from my sight.

“This man fell in love with a human. Now, this ain’t no love story.” There was a sound of flesh being ripped. An image of her being beheaded flashed in my mind. On the tape recorder, the man let out a cackle after her head hit the ground with a thud.

They were too far away, and the voice was too quiet. It was barely a muffle. Creeping out of my safe haven, I sauntered along the road, wanting more. Needing more.

I followed the voice. It was soon drowned out by screams and then by laughter.

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Two red lights glowed in the distance.

“The rest of the journey is your own. Try not to get beheaded on your way back to the fair, and keep your loved ones close. Whatever you do, do not go into the cornfield and stay on the path…”

The tape recorder trailed off.

Silhouettes moved through the shadows. Many of them stared after the tractor, until the lights vanished between the plants.

They left in groups one by one. A harsh breeze twisted the tall stalks. Its rustling filled the air. Again, it brought the odor of fresh cut grass. Dark bodies began to blend with their surroundings. Laughter and screams echoed throughout the night.

I made my way toward them, shifting through the corn and was soon standing in front of them.

There was a sharp giggle beside me.

“Dude, they’re going to freak!” A man shorter than me stepped into view. There was a white mask with holes where his eyes and mouth should be. The black cloak draped over his form flowed.

There was a girl behind him.

A red line drawn around her neck was marked with stitches. Her dirty white dress was tattered and torn with fake drops of blood scattered all over it.

She smiled, “Nice costume.”

Her eyes roamed over me. “You almost look…” she blinked, “like a corpse. Who did your makeup?”

I stared at the girl, hesitantly glancing between the two.

“We don’t have time for chit-chat. Everyone came here to get scared; it’s our job to scare them. Let’s go!” the boy whimpered and yanked the girl away.

A sympathetic look crossed her face. She waved, and they were gone. She muttered to him annoyed, as they raced through the corn toward a group of girls huddled on the path. They jumped out of the shadows a few feet away, scaring them.

The girls let out high-pitched screams. Grasping one another, they ran and stopped in front of me, letting out a round of hysterical laughter.

Dorothy was with them.

Red lip gloss smothered her lips, sparkling with the stars. A small woven basket hung loosely on her wrist, a stuffed dog placed inside. Her hands trembled, but there was a smile on her face. She seemed to be staring right through me.

I itched to get closer.

Dead leaves crunched under my weight. All three girls were startled. In a panic, one of Dorothy’s friends shoved her. She trampled into the corn. Her eyes widened in terror, and a scream escaped.

I caught her and pulled her to my chest.
Everything was still. Her arms wrapped around my neck as if we were embracing each other. It ended too quickly. She pushed me away.
I let her go.
“Crap! I am so sorry.” A wry smile played across her lips as she struggled to regain her footing. My hands were there in case she needed them.
“Ivory, you fell into the clutches of a dead man!” Her friends barked out laughter.
Strands of blonde hair shielded her blush. Ivory smoothed out her skimpy costume. Tugging at the seams, she pulled the dress down.
“Thanks,” she mumbled, staring at the ground.
I opened my mouth to speak, but only a dull moan came out. Her eyes met mine. Shock glazed over them. “You’re really going full out with your character, aren’t you?”
Again I tried to speak, but again my words ran into each other.
Her head tilted. Suspicion crossed her face. She studied me closely. The gears turned in her mind, but the puzzle pieces weren’t fitting.
I wondered why.

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All three girls left me hidden behind. They finished the maze sooner than they expected. As they continued to talk about me, I continued to watch them.
They crossed the picnic area full of roaming families. The girls disappeared within seconds, blending in with their surroundings.
Eager to follow them, I stepped out of the cornfield.

Even on level ground, I’m sluggish and slow. I limped through the dew-filled grass. People who pretended to be something they weren’t, stared and clung to their children as I passed. They pinched their noses and turned away as if a rotting odor churned their peaceful stomachs.
I didn’t smell anything, except for the delicious scent of meat.
The rubbery hot dog stuck between two slices of steaming bread and drowned in mustard and ketchup. Piles of chips stacked high added color to their plates. Cups as tall as my forearm full of sizzling soda lined the tables.

My belly rumbled violently inside of me.
But when I stumbled close, it wasn’t what I was searching for.
I wanted something else.

Scanning the area for Ivory, I couldn’t spot her anywhere. There wasn’t any flash of blonde hair. No blue skirts flew in the breeze.

I gave up.

An empty picnic table stood off to the side, farther from the others. It was my escape. I blundered toward it. The air was silently eerie with the distant laughter of parading costumes.

Alone, I collapsed onto the cold, hard bench, making myself comfortable. My eyes began to roam over the people nearest me.
Some of them sauntered around hand in hand. Some leaned on each other, and some wrapped around each other.

My shoulders slumped after I let out a deep sigh. I gazed down at my own hand, wondering what it must be like to hold someone else’s.

A cool chill washed over me. My teeth chattered.

Beneath my pale, dirt-covered skin was a squirming thin green line. It shifted through my dark purple flesh. I could see it, but I couldn’t feel it.

Quickly, I glanced up and scanned the area to make sure no one noticed the worm living off of me.

Gazing back down at my forearm, I struggled to reach the bug with my other hand. Its head was rough and hard. I pulled the thing slowly from my body with two fingers, leaving a fresh wound in my weak skin.

It danced as I watched.

Intrigued and hypnotized by the creature, everything else disappeared. I recalled the hole I found myself in. I remembered Ivory’s puzzled expression. Staring off into the cornfield, I remembered-
The wiggling, slimy animal fell from my grip. It hit the ground with a quiet splat, free to feed on other corpses. I glared at the green sliver. That was until Ivory stepped into view cutting me off.

“Hey,” she smiled and without thinking took another step, squishing my predator. Its guts spilled out into the dirt. “You never told me your name?”

Her sweet scent rolled over me.

With a longing I’ve never known, I desperately screamed my name loud and clear. But it only came out as a rumble of nonsense.

Ivory’s hazel eyes caught fire. Her chest rapidly moved up and down with each breath she took. “Are you okay?”

She hesitated and trembled as she stretched out her hand toward me.

I grabbed it.

Flinching, she jerked it back, but I held on, keeping her close.

I needed this. I needed to see for myself.

Hungrily, I pulled her arm closer. Her skin was lively. Kissed by the sun, she was tanned in the most beautiful way. It gave off a golden radiance that I couldn’t possess. The aroma of smoke made me want to hold her forever.

Most importantly, there wasn’t a single worm crawling or burrowing inside of her.

My heart dropped. We were different.

Ivory fought me. Her shaking hand slid free.

“What’s wrong with you?”

She stared into my eyes. My bloodshot, clouded, glazed-over eyes. With the puzzle pieces almost put together, she whispered in astonishment.

“What are you?”

The last thing I saw was Ivory, sprinting away from me. It was as if she had torn my heart out, stomped on it, and then shoved the still beating mess back inside of me. It was as if I was dead, but continued to walk the earth anyway.

I decided to hustle after her. Easing myself onto unsteady feet, I trampled through the crowd. They all parted for us. She darted under the strings of lanterns.

The soft glow surrounded us.

Ivory headed toward the shadows. She stumbled in front of me and tripped into an alley. A grunt quickly followed by a sob echoed through the night.

I turned the sharp corner. Dusk stared at me. Ivory wasn’t there; she was gone. It was as if she disappeared into thin air.

Hastily, I scanned every dark crevice. She has to be here somewhere. She couldn’t just leave.

But it was silent.

Empty and cold.

Collapsing against the brick surface, I came face to face with my reflection. A shattered window hung suspended on the opposite wall. The lights were off in the room. Haunted and shocked, my expression didn’t seem real.

My skin was discolored with yellows and greens, rotted. Pieces of it were missing. Flesh and veins were exposed, but it didn’t hurt. My eyes were hollow with dark circles around them. They were mounted above my chapped and scab-covered lips.

I tried to speak, to prove to myself that it wasn’t true, but no words were able to force themselves out of me.

I glanced down at my chest. Behind my ripped shirt was a bloody mess and open wounds exposing ribbons of muscle and chunks of organs that no longer bothered me.

That no longer bled.

Hesitantly, slowly, and carefully, I placed my bony palm where my heart should have been. I waited for a steady thump, thud, and pounding of my still beating life.

Nothing.

Staring into my own eyes, I hoped for some sign of life, but I was long gone.

I was dead.

I stumbled backwards, clutching my sides. How
was I supposed to tell Ivory? She’d never understand.
She’d hate me. She wouldn’t want to be with me.
“Hi.”
My eyes met hers in the windowpane. Her dress was twisted in her hands. Ivory’s silhouette stood a few feet behind me. She kept my gaze, but wavered before closing the gap between us. Her breath was like fire on my back, whereas mine, didn’t come out at all.
“You aren’t going to eat me, are you, zombie boy?”
Stunned, I turned to face her. Our noses were inches apart. She peered at me, biting her lip. The question hung in the air. Stars flickered above us, casting long shadows across our faces. Shade from the buildings loomed over us, a chill settling into our bones.
A rich breeze picked up, sending loose strands of blonde hair into her blue eyes. The trees behind her gently brushed each other, their leaves scratching together.
My hand gently smeared old blood onto her soft, perfect cheek.
Ivory seemed to be waiting for more than just an answer.
She took a sharp breath as my hand ran along her neck and arm, a river of my stale blood followed, but her pulse vibrated rapidly.
Her heartbeat thrived. It ricocheted in her chest and clattered against my palm.
I wanted it. I wished mine could be the same.
She laid her hand over my still heart. “Zombie boy...?”
I shook my head, watching her blush ripen under my gaze. Smoothly, her warm, gentle hand slipped into mine. Grasping it, I tugged her into the darkness with me. At first, Ivory was reluctant, but then she let her guard dwindle.
I led her back to the corn maze. We became drowned in the stalks, going deeper and deeper, toward the center.
“Zombie boy, where are you taking me?” Her voice trembled. Ivory took that question and rephrased it, asking it over and over again.
“What are you going to show me?”
Squinting over my shoulder, she clung to my arm as we rummaged through the plants. We were close. I knew we were.
Ivory screamed.
We plunged into the earth. I hit the bottom first, and Ivory tumbled in after me. She crashed into my mushy body. Out of the corner of my eye, chunks of dirt and dust rained down on us. Without warning, I flipped Ivory over, shielding her from the rubble.
She winced and squirmed underneath me as the clumps pounded against my back. Our eyes never left each other’s.
“I’m fine.” Her voice was just a whisper. “I know you’d ask if you could.”
Everything grew still. Her breathing echoed throughout the small hole. Ivory surveyed every inch of the six foot walls. Her eyes watered at the stench. “So this is your grave?”
Transfixed, I managed only a slight nod.
“I like—” Ivory was cut off by her own rattling cough. Her heartbeat slowed ever so slightly. I stared at her and kissed her lips.
Evening Gathering

Sallie Estes
Beauty

Karen Wallace
An Interview with Dr. James Klauber, President of Calhoun Community College

By: Colton Hicks

On February 1, 2017, Victoria Cottles, a former Calhoun student and current employee of the Sigma Kappa Delta National office, and I set down for an interview with President James Klauber of Calhoun Community College. I was in great anticipation to meet the leader of the college where I have been a student for two years. He wore a crisp suit and one of his trademark bowties for the interview. The conversation was focused on his goals for the college, the value of coming to Calhoun, and airplanes.

At this time, what do you believe is your greatest accomplishment at Calhoun?

“I think the biggest accomplishment we’ve made is turning the culture and the direction of the college from resting on an all-access institution to a student success institution. Yes, it’s important to get students in and it’s important for them to pay, but it is more important to get them to graduate. We are much further than I thought we would be two years ago. Let’s take a look around. We have the Student Success Center in Decatur, and we are building one in Huntsville. Those centers are designed to take students, no matter their academic problem, and give them free tutorial assistance. All they have to do is use it. I think the single best accomplishment is moving from the all-access model to the student success model.”

What is your biggest challenge as president currently?

“Maintaining the quality and being on the cutting edge of technology. It is very important for our faculty to realize that students...”
have high expectations. The important thing is maintaining that freshness, especially in our online classes, in the way we deliver content. We have to make it interesting. If students are not interested, they will not learn. I think maintaining innovation and quality are the big things.”

Two years ago, you had a goal of about a 45% graduation rate: Has the college made progress in this direction?

“We don’t know the exact number yet. I know that it will increase, but I don’t know by how much because we’re not finished calculating it. The reason I can tell you that I know it will increase is because our fall-to-fall percentage of students staying here has gone up. It was about 55% last fall. It’s good for Calhoun, but I want to get us, on the retention side, sustained at plus 60% on a rolling average. That would make a huge difference. We are working towards our graduation rate goal, and it is getting better. So yes, we are making progress!”

In last year’s interview, you mentioned that there were those who were resistant to a few of the different policies that you were implementing, has that resistance broken down?

“I think after faculty members finished the Quality Matters for the online courses it was like, oh it wasn’t that bad. We are better for it, so I think some of that resistance has broken down. I think a lot of people are starting to see the changes that we’ve made. The one thing we’re going to start working on now is implementing the Lean Management System. It focuses on two premises: one is creating a culture of respect for one another and two is constant improvement. It’s being used increasingly on college campuses. It gives everyone a chance to be part of the decision-making, and I think that goes to break down some of those barriers.”

In the same interview from last year, we discovered that you love Star Wars. Have you been able to see the new Star Wars movie Rogue One yet? Would you recommend it?

“I’ve seen it twice! The great thing about Rogue One is that it completely eliminates your need to go see Episodes I, II, and III, which were complete disasters! It’s more violent than the other Star Wars movies, certainly more than I, II, or III, which were more like George Lucas’s “Star Wars Fairy Land!” Rogue One is an incredible movie, and I would highly recommend it!”

College can be stressful for students. When you were in college, what did you do to relax?

“I went to what was a public, all-male military college. I basically lived behind bars for four years! I’ve often said prisoners were treated better in South Carolina than Citadel cadets were! It was very stressful, especially my freshman year. Now at The Citadel, if you wanted to, you could sign out and go running in downtown Charleston for an hour after classes. That was my release. I would do that at least three times a week. That was probably the best stress relief. Going out running was my way to relax.”

Did you have a favorite teacher in college?

“Yes, I had a couple of great professors! One was Navy Reserve; he was the head of the history department. His name was Captain John Coussons, and he was perhaps the best history professor I ever met. He was an expert on Southern History, just walking knowledge. The funny thing about him was that I often think he was a reluctant American. I think he wished that England would’ve won the war! He thought the Queen was just the greatest lady there was. Another professor I had was Colonel Archilesi. He was in the Political Science Department. He taught international relations and a lot of these international courses. Remember I went to college during the height of the Cold War. This guy hated the Russians! Hated them! He hated communism! I’ll never forget, he used to end just about every class with this line: ‘Gentlemen, communism is out there, and you better be watchful for it!’ Great professor, but boy he hated communism! Those two professors were two I had to talk about.”

We know that you have a love for non-fiction books like “Lean Acres,” which is a book you mentioned last year. What is your favorite book in this genre since you’ve been at Calhoun?

“Rich Karlgaard’s book The Soft Edge. That’s probably been one of the best leadership books I’ve read. He came out with a second book this past year called Team Genius. This book really looks at how do we best, as institutional leaders, form the right teams and the right size of teams to come up with innovative solutions. One of the most important things he talks about is having cognitive diversity. In other words, it is important to have people who don’t all see things the same way. When you’re putting together a team to accomplish a goal, you need to have a difference of opinion. That generally creates the best solution. That’s been the book of late.”

If you could make a pitch to high school seniors, veterans returning to school, or just people wanting to better themselves about the value of coming to Calhoun, what would you say?

“I would say we offer several things. A quality, affordable education. It’s close to home. We’re here when you need us, and there are support structures to help give you every opportunity that you need to be successful. That’s the value that is here, and it is a great value!”

What is your dream car?

“I don’t really have a dream car: I have a dream airplane. I fly. I’m a private pilot. It’s my one and only hobby. My favorite airplane is the Beechcraft V35. If you ever see one, it has a V-wing in the back. It is the symbol of beauty and grace in the general aviation fleet.”
The Black Students’ Alliance (BSA) is open to all students who want to network with other students, college faculty and staff, and members of the community. In 2016, BSA planned and hosted many events designed to help resolve questions or issues pertaining to Black students as well as campus and community concerns as a way of enriching college life for Calhoun students.

BSA wound up the 2016 spring semester on April 20 with the 1st Annual Culture Fest held on the Huntsville campus. During October, the organization sponsored Breast Cancer Awareness programs on both campuses. They then wrapped up the fall semester with the much anticipated and always appreciated Soul Food Fest during November on both campuses.

BSA kicked off another eventful year on January 19, 2017, with a Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year’s keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. F.D. Reese, played an integral role in the Civil Rights Movement. As the local leader in Selma, Dr. Reese signed the invitation to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He marched with Dr. King before and after the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge confrontation and in the Selma to Montgomery march, which led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

As part of this year’s celebration of Black History Month, Calhoun’s Student Services department and the BSA sponsored an essay contest. Reflections on Black History: Past, Present, and Future acknowledged the enslavement of Africans in America for over 245 years and asked students to consider issues that enslave people today. Student Services and BSA hosted a public reading for the top three scoring essays, which were also awarded monetary prizes and which can be read in the essay section of this edition of Muse. (pp.17-20)

Black History Month events for 2017 included an open discussion about Eddie S. Glaude Jr.’s Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul. Rev. Niger Woodruff moderated the discussion on the Decatur campus on February 2. On February 8, the Huntsville campus hosted “A Conversation on Faith and Race” facilitated by Christian Cheairs, pastor of ViewPoint Community Church, and Stephan Fincher, pastor of Tanner United Methodist Church.

The conversation continued on the Decatur campus with an open discussion on race led by Art Leslie, Director of the Huntsville Inner City Learning Center, on February 16. The 27th Annual Gospel Fest brought Black History Month to a close with a full house enjoying another exciting evening of music and celebration on February 24 on the Huntsville campus. BSA wrapped up the 2017 spring semester with another successful Culture Fest on the Huntsville campus on March 22. Students shared the food, dance, and music from their cultures. BSA continues to offer opportunities for bridging gaps and discovering common ground among students at Calhoun.
Each chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) is challenged to research our Honors Study Topic and then apply its finding to improve the community. Members of Calhoun’s chapter decided to analyze Virtual Reality (VR), which is a digital creation that mimics the real world, specifically its medical application. The students’ goal was to provide a VR unit to local pediatric hospitals. To this end, members’ efforts were split into three phases. First, chapter officers organized and led research teams and then initiated an awareness campaign to share the findings. Next, the chapter arranged to meet with local hospital administrators to explore the potential of providing this beneficial therapy to their patients. Students began fundraising for the necessary equipment. Finally, after careful examination of all required materials, members secured, assembled, and delivered a VR unit to the hospital.

PTK members received instruction on conducting academic research and sought guidance from numerous professionals (including the president of a business management consulting firm, college instructors, healthcare officials, and Calhoun’s Dean of Business) to gain the skills needed for the chapter’s project. Additionally, students collaborated with multiple partners, including college administrators and staff, various charitable organizations, and hospital personnel. Because of this training and hard work, a local pediatric hospital became the third in the nation to have this innovative technology.

The project produced numerous positive outcomes. Of the survey responses, 50% said the therapy had a “strongly beneficial” effect while the remaining participants reported a “mildly beneficial effect.”

- One survey respondent regarding her daughter that “it keeps not only her mind off therapy, but also keeps her eyes and hands busy. She is always anticipating playing with the unit. I think it is a fantastic way to keep them distracted.”
- One patient stated, “My experience was very cool, and I would like it more often. The VR therapy put me in a great mood.”
- Another respondent said, “This is an amazing device to have for children! You will never know the depth of its impact. Thank you!”
- Fundraising efforts resulted in half of the VR unit costs, so the Calhoun PTK chapter donated the remaining funds.
- During the awareness campaign, PTK members distributed hundreds of flyers and used numerous social media outlets to educate more people.

PTK: College Project for 2016

The College Project offers an opportunity to further Calhoun’s mission: “Success for Every Student.” Chapter leaders met with both the Director of Distance Learning and the Technical Application Specialist to discuss using Blackboard as a comprehensive platform for information delivery. To provide hands-on training, members collaborated with the Advising Office to host MyCalhoun 101 workshops to educate students about college technology. PTK partnered with the Scholarship Office Executive Secretary and the Scholarship Committee Chairperson to present forums explaining the new scholarship application and guidelines. The success of these workshops led PTK members to recognize the need for a student resources repository, designed for students, by students. The chapter collaborated with the Distance Learning Director to deliver this information to all students via Blackboard. With a Technical Application Specialist, PTK members created a course consisting of the information from the workshop and numerous other college resources.
A Profile on Barbara Wright, Instructor of History

By: Mattheus Episcopo

History is the study of the past, a look at major events that shaped our world, the legendary leaders whose irresistible charisma allowed great empires to rise and fall, and the civilizations that came before us, producing the inventions and philosophies that our modern society is based upon. However, history is not just the past, nor is it simply the present day. It is also the future, as we can use our knowledge of the past to form theories about the course of the nations and societies of today. No one knows this better than Barbara Wrenn Wright, instructor of history at Calhoun Community College, who agreed to an interview, where I soon learned that not only has she dedicated her life to the study of the past, but also as an outline, a prediction of what the future might hold for our generation as well as those that follow.

A native of Westchester County, New York, Instructor Wright was born to a close-knit family that included a brother who now resides in Connecticut. Her father survived the Great Depression and it shaped him into the person he would become. “People learn from their experiences, good or bad, in every era,” Wright says. “It doesn’t matter if it’s the Great Depression or 9/11.” Neither of her parents attended university, which motivated her, instilling the value of education. In school, she pored over the pages of biographies of great people like the legendary Charlemagne and admired historical heroes like Joan of Arc. She was fascinated by life in other times and different cultures, imaginatively placing herself in the shoes, or sometimes sandals, of those who had walked the earth before her.

Diligently walking her own path eventually led Wright to her experiences in education. Initially, she focused on Art History while at the University of North Carolina. Anyone who has taken a class with this professor can attest to this cultural background, as she often strengthens her lectures by taking a break from the cold facts to warm the orations up with presentations featuring paintings, sculptors, music, and architecture from the time. After some time in North Carolina, she attended the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, where she gained her Bachelor of Arts with distinction.

After graduation, Wright worked in advertising and public relations. After years of marriage, relocating around the country, and motherhood, she and her family moved to Huntsville, Alabama. Here, she applied to the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), but found fate had changed her course. The university did not offer a graduate degree in art history; therefore, she chose to major in world history. After completing her master’s degree, she worked as a history teacher at Randolph, a local preparatory school, and it was at this point she realized she had truly found her calling. “It was the perfect job for me!” she explains. “And it never gets old.” She turned her eye back to the university she had graduated from and soon began lecturing at UAH. Working alongside her professors was a great honor to her and an enriching experience. Since 2010, she has been bringing her passions to Calhoun. Wright feels she will continue teaching forever. “I love teaching because I’m still learning,” she explains. “I learn about how and what my students think. I learn about their goals. Teaching keeps me in the classroom.”

But she isn’t locked in the classroom 24/7; Wright, a member of the Archaeological Institute of America, has been to locations that most people can only dream about experiencing. The great city of Rome has felt her presence, as has the entire length of the Italian peninsula that houses it. Further along the Mediterranean, she has visited Greece as well as the Byzantine capital Constantinople, which is now the Turkish metropolis of Istanbul. Back in Western Europe, she has walked the streets of Berlin, Paris, and London. Closer to home, she’s found time to visit South American countries, such as Costa Rica. What’s next on her agenda? “I’d love to visit Celtic lands.” The civic-minded teacher feels her profession assists in the political process. “We need educated citizens. It’s crucial to democracy,” Wright says. “And I’m proud to contribute to that.”

When it comes to Wright’s warnings to the wise, a reoccurring theme in her classes is a solemn comparison between the legendary Roman Empire and the modern United States of America. “Life hasn’t changed much in some ways even over a thousand years later,” she states, highlighting the ancient world’s problems dealing with epidemics, forming governments, natural disasters, religious freedom, and taxes. She also points out the constant presence of philosophy and feels these questions that are at the core of being human are likely to persist. “One reason we study history is to help us,” Wright says. “We’ve got to understand and learn from the ancients.” She points out that the Roman Republic and Roman Empire were similar to us in politics, economy, territory, power, and diversity, but still struggled with wealth gaps, wars, and social conflict. She explains that the question we should be asking is what we can learn from the Romans to improve our own future, lest we become a warning to future civilizations as well.
REVIEW:
Calhoun’s 2016 Spring Production You Can’t Take It With You
By: Victoria Cottles

I knew we were in for an exciting evening when I paid for my ticket as the attendant warned, “Just so you know, we’ll have firecrackers going off a few times during the performance.” As Sigma Kappa Delta members and sponsors stepped into Calhoun’s Black Box Theatre in the Fine Arts Building on the Decatur campus, we were transported to a 1930s upper-class family house in New York City. The eyes were drawn to the lovingly crafted set where immaculate wooden carvings, antique furniture and fabrics, and fine china were all displayed with a natural elegance. However, just before the lights dimmed, we also spotted a few unusual and out of place props such as a skull candy dish and a small tank full of rubber snakes, giving us a hint of what was to come.

The Sycamore clan, led by matriarch Margaret “Mimi” Vanderhorf, is a family whose main goal is to live life with their happiness as the sole priority. Every day is spent cultivating their respective hobbies and passions, outlandish as they may be, and gathering around the dinner table in the evenings to spend quality time with one another. Most families are relaxed and quiet in the privacy of their homes, so it is refreshing to see a family who is outrageously improper, unapologetically loud, and undeniably close.

The initial curiosity to Mimi is the fact that before the events of the play she was the CEO of a company before suddenly resigning to take up her hobbies of golfing and snake collecting. Females of her position were seldom present during the 1930s, and to relinquish such power was a direct contradiction to traditional American Dream ideals. Mimi, who is a grandfather in the original production, breathes renewed life and a feministic twist in this tale during a time when there was great turmoil and conflict in America. We were pleasantly surprised by how much we not only enjoyed the chaos and onstage shenanigans, but were touched as well by the underlying message that questions materialistic values and what truly makes a soul happy and content. The Director’s Notes expertly ties together in its closing words the title of the play, direct lines from the script, the inclusive theme, and general advice we all can attest to, “[w]hatever the size of your bank account, you can’t take it with you.”

Student Success Symposium:
Making Success Stories

Excitement was in the air on August 30, 2016, at the 8th Annual Student Success Symposium. Students, faculty, and staff in attendance were welcomed, and with the featured speakers introduced, the symposium was underway. Calhoun students were buzzing with anticipation at the idea of hearing three of their own speak. Stephanie Miner, a current Calhoun student, was the first to speak. She spoke about her battle with cerebral palsy and how that disease made her road to success at Calhoun difficult. Through it all, she has been successful and plans to become an advocate for children with disabilities after she graduates. The second speaker, Dr. Dewight Cowley, a Calhoun alumnus, discussed his time at Calhoun and how the people at Calhoun had accepted him and helped him to achieve his goals. Necia Nicholas, a member of Calhoun’s faculty, was the last person to speak. She detailed the tough road she traveled to get to where she is today. Her final statement is the reason so many students, teachers, and administrators love Calhoun Community College. She declared, “Calhoun is not just here to give you a book learning. It’s here to make you a student success story.” The three speakers reminded all of us that there is a road to success, and we are on it.

- Colton Hicks
Calhoun’s 2016 fall production, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, definitely lived up to expectations. I had the honor of attending on opening night, October 13.

This play had many firsts for the Calhoun theatre program; the most notable “first” was that this was the debut performance in the new venue located at the Alabama Center for the Arts in downtown Decatur. When asked how the new venue made the performance different, Mr. Bill Provin, Calhoun’s theater director, said that it put the performance on a higher level. While he loved the old theater, he asserted, “The new theater is just the best.” The new building is a wonder to behold. He pointed out that the new technology, like lighting and sound, was amazing and much easier to work with. Also, it would be the first time a live band would be used. This addition seemed to be a bold move for the theatre program. When asked about how the use of a live band added to the production, he replied, “It was incredible! Incredible!” He talked about how the play really needed a live band and how the band was as much a part of the play as the cast.

The play is set in the Putnam County High School gym and remains there throughout the production. The show begins with cast members singing about anticipation over the spelling bee. The audience is then welcomed by Rona Lisa Peretti, played by Angela Green, who also picks a couple of audience members to take part in the play. The contestants are introduced as Leaf, Logainne, Chip, Olive, William, and Marcy. All of these contestants have their own personal issues, like lack of self-worth, fear of not being good enough, and even feeling abandoned by those who supposedly love them. Each is inwardly fighting these problems throughout the production. All of the contestants are funny and lovable in their own way. Assistant Coach Douglas Panch, played by Phil Parker, is introduced as the man who will be giving the contestants the words they are to spell. Coach Panch is an interesting character who had apparently just dodged being fired because the school “couldn’t prove anything.” Matt Episcopo, a Calhoun student who attended the play, pointed out that the coach deserved a lot of credit, “as a lot of ad-libbing was required to hold the play together, but he pulled it off successfully in
All of these characters combine to make this an unforgettable performance.

The show is a fast-moving musical comedy but has some touching moments as well. Obviously, the play revolves around spelling difficult words, but it is more in the way some of the contestants spell the words that makes the show funny. An example of this would be when Leaf, played by Kyle Vellacott-Ford, goes into a trance-like state and sings his letters or when William, played by Daniel Moore, draws out the word with his foot and then spells it. The songs also bring funny moments to the performance. Marcy, who is always expected to be perfect, learns that she does not have to be perfect all of the time. These struggles help the audience connect with the characters.

Once the spelling bee is down to the final two contestants, William and Olive, the dynamic of the play changes drastically. Olive, played by Erin Barrow, sings about love to her parents, whom she imagines are in the room. She feels deserted by them but is always hoping throughout the play that they will want to be a part of her life, insisting that a seat be saved for her father who is also supposed to bring her $25 entrance fee. The emotions of the moment and of Erin were so powerful that they brought tears to the eyes of many audience members. A play that had been so loose and funny turns into a cauldron of feelings in seconds. This special moment changes the whole perception of the production.

William and Olive seem to be falling in love as the play goes on, so when Olive fails to spell a word correctly, William is faced with the choice of purposely misspelling the word and losing his dream or spelling the word and losing his love. The contest is sealed when Olive tells him that it is okay. William spells the word correctly and wins the spelling bee. Coach Panch, like most of the audience, has a soft spot for Olive as he gives her a $25 runner-up prize. After William and Olive have a sweet reunion, the characters all tell the audience where their lives went after they had grown up. The audience is then serenaded one more time as the play ends.

The Calhoun theatre program is definitely growing. This latest play is just another example of how far they have come and how good they are. Everyone who attended the production left with the same question on their minds, “When is the next play?”
Sherry Turkle’s arrival at Calhoun Community College on October 24, 2016, for the Writers’ Conference had become one of the most anticipated events to take place at the college for the fall semester. There were to be two sessions in which Professor Turkle would be speaking, one at 9:30 a.m. at the Health Sciences building on the Decatur campus and the other at 7:00 p.m. at the Alabama Center for the Arts in downtown Decatur. The fact that Calhoun had purchased and distributed 1,800 copies of Professor Turkle’s new book *Reclaiming Conversation* to students added to the interest in the speaking sessions.

The early session was standing room only, and the night session was expected to be filled to capacity, as well. Students eagerly gathered to finally meet the author of the most talked about book at Calhoun. The room silenced in awe as Professor Turkle entered. Her wisdom and knowledge were evident with the way she held herself. As she took her seat, students began to form a line to have her sign their copies of her book. The buzz of excitement grew from being in the presence of someone so renowned. Slowly, I made my way to the front of the line and received a welcoming smile. Once the line died down, students started searching for seats to listen to what Professor Turkle had come to discuss. I found a seat with some friends, and we patiently awaited the upcoming presentation. The audience quieted as she began to speak. She expressed her concern with technology and what it has taken from society: communication. Students are so willing to send an email or call a teacher when they have an issue with schoolwork but are reluctant to meet face-to-face during office hours for fear of the conversation being imperfect. Being a professor herself, Sherry Turkle has had experience with this firsthand. She has also found that the lack of conversation is linked to a lack of empathy. Her comments about this issue showed just how many years of studying and research she put into the topic. I realized that I agreed with everything she was saying, and even found myself guilty of some of the examples she provided. She quickly became an inspiration to me, and I have tried to change some of my habits since reading her book. Professor Turkle concluded the night with a statement that really resonated with me: “I am not anti-technology. I am pro-conversation.”
muse /ˈmyʊz/ v. To ponder or meditate; to consider or deliberate at length. 2. To wonder. N. (Greek mythology) Any of the nine daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus, each of whom presided over a different act of science. 3. In general, the spirit, or power inspiring and watching over poets, musicians, and all artists; a source of inspiration. 4. (Archaic) A poet.

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