

# Unsolicited Literature **GREY AREAS**

Spring  
2019



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This is our fifth issue.

We love sharing our issues  
with people.

You can contact us at  
[unsolicitedliterature@gmail.com](mailto:unsolicitedliterature@gmail.com)  
and we will respond.

We also accept unsolicited  
entries.

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## “Alexa” — Elena Ricciardi

## **GALLUP POLL OF AMERICANS' CONFIDENCE IN AMERICANS OVER THE DECADES**

“More generally, how much trust and confidence do you have in the American people as a whole when it comes to making judgments under our democratic system about the issues facing our country—a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?”

	<b>Great</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Not much</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1976</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1974</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>

source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx>



**J.K. Rowling**

@jk\_rowling

Follow



Snape is all grey. You can't make him a saint: he was vindictive & bullying. You can't make him a devil: he died to save the wizarding world

1:43 AM - 27 Nov 2015

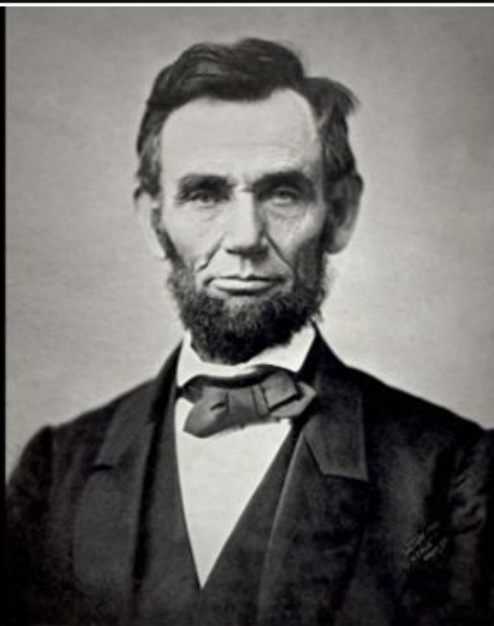
22,965 Retweets 36,853 Likes



741 23K 37K

Don't believe  
everything  
you read  
on the internet

Abraham Lincoln



# Crossfade

Marc Elias Keller  
*mek.network@gmail.com*

“Crossfading?”—Jacob repeated the word and asked what Gracie meant.

She propped herself up on her elbow and smiled like a little girl telling a secret. “When the very end of one song fades out as the very beginning of the next song fades in. And there’s a bit of overlap. That’s what’s happening here. Just some overlap. Crossfading.”

“Stop with the word games,” he sighed. “You’re *cheating*. You have a boyfriend.”

She ran her fingers through Jacob’s long tangly hair and kissed his neck.

“Wait. I want to talk for a minute.” Jacob flicked a tendril away from his right eye. “If you want to be with me, then end it with *him*. I don’t want to be a side piece.”

Gracie laughed. “You’re not a ‘side piece.’”

“What *am* I, then?”

“The next song.”

A twinkly melancholic song with whispery female vocals played from her phone. She always controlled the music when she was at his place.

“So—when are you going to break up with him?” he asked.

She looked over and stared at the framed photos of urban graffiti on Jacob’s bedroom wall. “I don’t know. We live together.”

“So?”

In the corner of Jacob’s craggy apartment, his rescue mutt scratched himself vigorously, thumping the threadbare carpet, a sound that blended in with the thumping bass from a nearby trap house in the “still gentrifying” neighborhood. Gracie thought of her quiet, already-gentrified neighborhood where she lived with her boyfriend. “So it’s complicated.”

“It’s not *that* complicated. You just find an apartment. Or move in *here*, with me.”

Gracie closed her eyes against the overhead light in his bedroom, which didn't have any lamps, so it was either blaring bright or pitch dark.

"*Are* you actually going to break up with him?" Jacob pressed.

Her tone sharpened: "Do you really have that much to complain about? I mean, this is a pretty sweet setup for you."

"But I *like* you."

Gracie smiled. "And you're getting the best of me, babe. The hit singles. You really want to put up with the filler songs?"

Jacob sat up, frowning. "You think the 'best of you' is sex?"

She shrugged with one shoulder. "Maybe." The whispery vocals trailed off and another melancholy song, this one featuring gravelly male vocals, crescendoed in volume. "I do like you," she went on. "And maybe you *do* like me—or maybe it's just your ego. Maybe you just want to win."

"Win what?"

"*Me*," she answered. "All of me. You want to be the only song in the playlist. Just you, on repeat."

"I just... I thought that's where we were headed..."

Gracie glanced toward the window as the rap music got even louder. "I'm giving you this"—she glanced down toward her naked body—"and I'm not really asking much from you. But *you* want more from me. OK, fine, but what more do I get from *you*? Besides sex and good conversation about art—what *else* can you give me?"

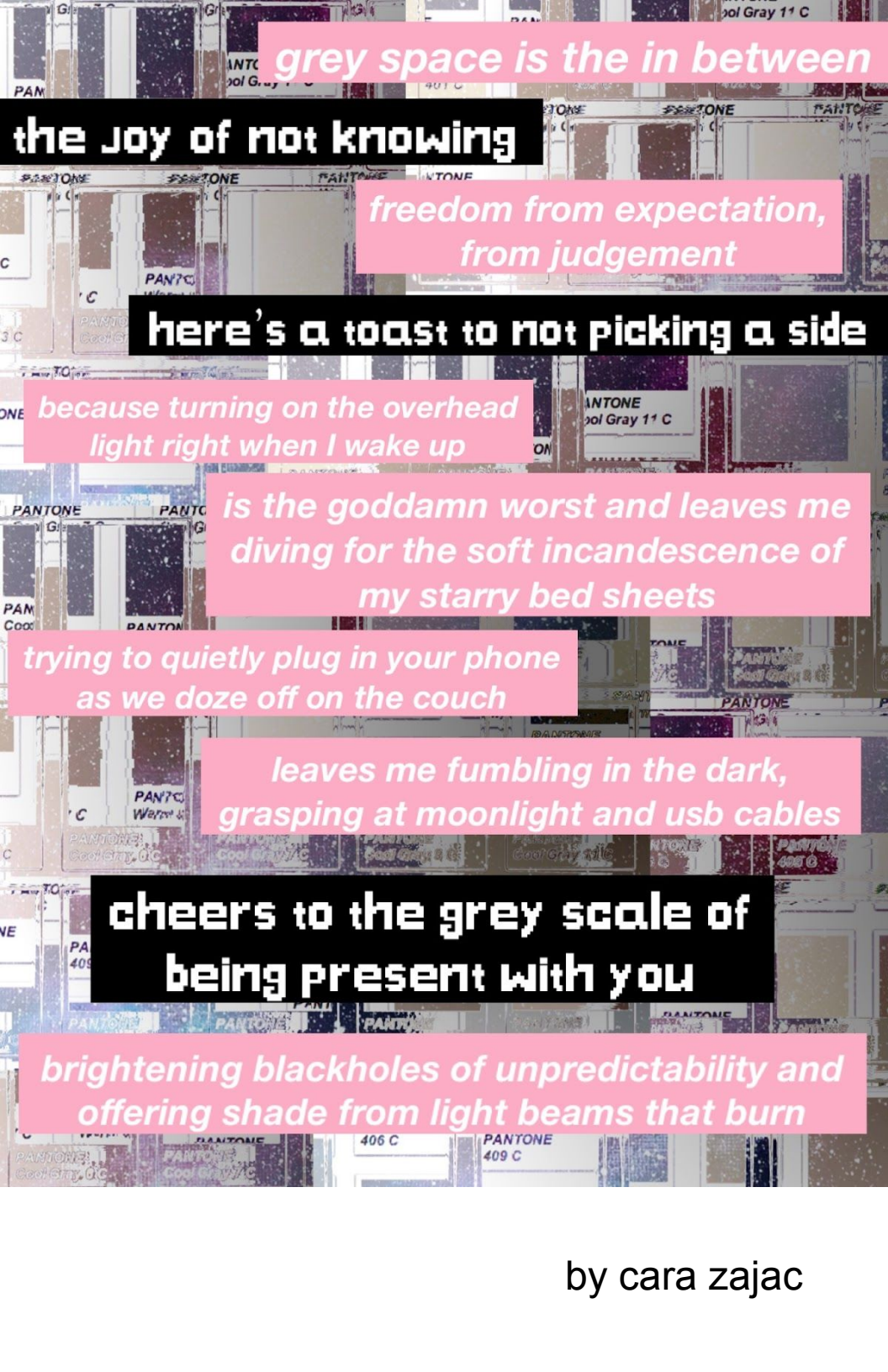
He flopped back down, stung and stunned. Gracie scooted close to Jacob and stroked her fingertips down his chest. She kissed the smooth part of his cheek, between the edges of his nostril and beard. "Babe—just take what I'm giving you. For now, at least."

"Don't lie to me," he said.

"I'm doing the opposite of that."

Gracie left just after eight o'clock. After Jacob heard his door close, he listened for a while to the thumping of the trap house and his itchy mutt. He listened, too, for the buzz of his phone, or the approaching footsteps of an encore, a reprise played only for him—but no. The music was over. For now, at least.





*grey space is the in between*

**the joy of not knowing**

*freedom from expectation,  
from judgement*

**here's a toast to not picking a side**

*because turning on the overhead  
light right when I wake up*

*is the goddamn worst and leaves me  
diving for the soft incandescence of  
my starry bed sheets*

*trying to quietly plug in your phone  
as we doze off on the couch*

*leaves me fumbling in the dark,  
grasping at moonlight and usb cables*

**cheers to the grey scale of  
being present with you**

*brightening blackholes of unpredictability and  
offering shade from light beams that burn*

by cara zajac



# Make America Grey Again

Derek Zwyer

The area between knowledge and belief is grey. For example: the fact that I'm writing by hand right now instead of writing on the computer. This choice, like most choices, was based on something somewhere between knowledge and belief. I'm writing by hand not just because I believe/know that I've been on the computer too much lately, but also because I believe/know that there is a difference in the quality of product that the two ways of writing produce. It's not just that I don't feel like typing. It's that I have this assumption, this idea, this belief, this knowledge about myself and my writing skills. Well, so, what is it? A belief? Or something I know? Do I know for a fact that I write better by hand than I do on the computer, or that there's any difference at all? How would I know that? Just by the feeling? By comparing the output? The only logical answer is: by experience.

If I have the experience of my writing being perceivably better when I write by hand, who could deny that I know this? I guess we could disagree. But can you disagree about knowledge, or just beliefs? Suppose I showed you my writing and told you whether I wrote each piece by hand or by keyboard. And over the course of months you spent hours and hours reading my writing, and you started keeping rubrics of assessments you made by which you kept track of your enjoyment levels of the various pieces of writing, and you kept track of whether each piece was written by me by hand or on a computer, and you compiled statistics. And in the end you found that you liked pieces I wrote on the computer almost five times as often as you liked pieces written by my hand. And so you tell me this, and I reply that, well, first of all, it's really weird how into this you've gotten, because I was just trying to show you my writing, and I didn't realize you were conducting a study, but moving on, O.K. You may have your opinion about this, but

you're wrong. I know for sure that my writing is better when I do it by hand. I have no doubt about it. You tell all your reasoning, and I thank you for your time, but disagree. So, what do you say? Do I know or just believe that I'm better when I write by hand?

In the philosophy world, last I checked, and I'm not really the most up-to-date, knowledge is considered to be justified true belief. So there are three kinds of non-knowledge: justified beliefs that aren't true, true beliefs that aren't justified, and justified truths that aren't believed. So, you could say that in this case about my writing, I have a justified belief that I write better by hand, but that it's impossible to prove that it's true, so it's not knowledge. In this case, what is true is subjective, because artistic value is probably subjective—I think...maybe. I don't know.

Suppose your coworker claimed to know that a young employee recently hired at your company was being paid more than you without having adequate credentials. Your coworker says they know it for sure, but no one has told them,

and they haven't seen any confidential pay stubs or anything. In short, your coworker has no evidence at all. You would say they believe this, not that they know it, right? Well, suppose they're correct and this new guy really was getting paid out the wazoo though he basically has no qualifications. If your coworker was right, does that mean they knew it? Even though they had no reason to claim they knew it, no objective justification? I would argue no. They had true belief, but it wasn't justified, so they didn't have knowledge. But does that mean that you have to know how you know something to know that you know it? Ya know? No?

Now, as I think about the third and final kind of non-knowledge, a justified and true thought that isn't believed, I think that maybe things are about to get weird. Like, tree falls in a forest weird. Because with the justified belief that isn't true...well, that's basically just what we normally call a belief.

And with the true belief that isn't justified, that's what we'd call a good guess. But the true and justified thing that isn't believed? What is that? Knowledge that isn't known? Ignorance? But not the kind of ignorance where someone has wacky and incorrect ideas about how things work that aren't justified or true. This kind of ignorance is a purer form, a lack of exposure, a lack of belief rather than a lack of common sense to a belief.

Each of us as individuals has limited exposure to the possible experiences of life, so there will always be so much that is justified and true but that we will never get the chance to believe. And when we do get the wonderful chance to believe something, do we just stop there? No, we verify it. Either actively or somewhat passively and over time. We verify beliefs through our sense of conviction, and we verify our justifications through our sense of causation. But what about truth? How do we verify truth? We verify belief through our sense of conviction, and we verify our belief's justifications through our sense of causations. But how do we verify truth? How else but through experience. And especially, maybe necessarily, through experience of the perspectives of others. We validate each other to mutually experience a greater reality than our own executive functioning.

I didn't write about the difference between knowledge and belief to be pedantic. I did it because not only do people think they know things that they actually only believe, but people also think they don't believe things that they actually know. First one's delusion, second one's denial. I truly believe (ha ha) that many people do not justify their beliefs sufficiently, and that this dearth of cognitive motivation is the antecedent to a spate of disturbing real world consequences ranging from murders to political campaigns. Let's not be so uncomfortable with the grey gulf between belief and knowledge that we so despise the protracted act of justification. And with that, with my mention of discomfort, of feelings, we tread into where the going gets really grey. And that's where we need to learn to be.

It's time to stop pretending there are two equal sides.

There is the intellectually and morally superior side, and then there are the right wingers.

The right hates that we Reddit-browsing and NPR-listening coastal liberal "elites" are the winners in a service-based globalized multicultural society because of our open worldview, and they blame all their failures on minorities and undocumented immigrants. They are seeing how America is increasingly becoming vibrantly diverse, and how non-white people will soon be the majority and losing their privilege terrifies them.

I've come to realize that much of American history is made up of periods where liberals drag conservatives kicking and screaming into the future, then we try to compromise for a while, then we go back to dragging.

"No, conservatives, we're not going back to England."

"No, conservatives, we're not making George Washington a King."

"No, conservatives, you can't form your own country with blackjack and slaves."

"No, conservatives, you can't keep denying women the right to votes."

"No, conservatives, we're not going back to the way things were before the depression."

"No, conservatives, literacy tests aren't constitutional."

"No, conservatives, you can't deny homosexuals the right to marry."

The names of the parties change from era to era, but it's always been liberals dragging conservatives against their will into a better future. I grew up in one of the in-between eras, where we all thought that compromise was a possibility, but I'm more and more realizing how mistaken I was about that. It's time once again for liberals and progressives to stop being nice and drag our country into the 21st century.

The simple fact of the matter is that conservatives just aren't offering any good ideas any more. What's the compromise between "We need to stop climate change" and "Lol, climate change isn't a real?" Or "Homosexuals should have the right to marry" and "Homosexuals cause hurricanes?" It's like being in a group project with someone who didn't read the book and expecting them to do their share of the work.



October 11, 2018 - M. illo

10:19pm

Happy National Coming Out day !

<3 (\_O..O\_) <3

I'd like to take the time to express solidarity by being vocal and visible as an androgynous and non-binary.

some brief blurbs

I remember so many years having fallen silent on this day. How finally freeing it is to speak openly as I reflect on the times in the past I chose to remain unvoiced

out of fear then out of concern then just out of social niceties (not wanting to draw attention)

But, today, I owe it to myself and my enB community to draw attention to non-binary entities. esp. other androgynes like myself.

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Pronouns: (subject/object/possessive)

I do NOT use "they/them/their" formally.

(informal: we have barely met and haven't exchanged pronouns - they is acceptable)

(formal: we're friends and you know what pronouns I go by - please, use my pronouns)

I use mixed-alternating pronouns (He/them/her)

"He stepped out. Will you bring them her jacket?"

optional written variations: (s)he/(t)him/(t)he(i)r (or as suitable to style)

"(s)He forgot (t)he(i)r coat. Bring it to (t)him?"

I use Spivak pronouns (ey/eir/em) or (e/es/em) or variations

"I gave em es coat. E was happy to see it"

Other variations of pronouns you are welcome to refer to me:

[thon] (that one) ; [hu-man] (hu/hus/hum) ; it/it/its ; no-pronoun and (fxcker/fxck/fxcks) if you enjoy vulgarity

if you're in a cis/het community and find this approach to pronouns a bit much for you; generally, it's fine when you're referring to me with whatever pronouns you feel comfortable as

long as you're, also, comfortable with others referring to me as something different.

if you're part of a queer community and find the concept of gender-neutral pronouns overwhelming, i encourage you to get more acquainted with them for your own sake apart from mine. But, know i would much prefer it/it/its or one/one/ones over they.

Other terms I use to describe my gender: Other, non-binary (enbie), demifluid, transgender, transsexual  
since we're here, terms I use to describe my sexual attraction: biromantic, demisexual, skoliksexual, polysexual gay, queer

---

Those of us whose gender is not woman or man are not often represented. The times that we are seen our diversity is rarely or inaccurately demonstrated.

All of us are too often looped into umbrella'd group extended beyond their good use. To an extent that as individuals our specific-genders become hidden and erased.

We are (even more often) lopped into gender: as a "one of us" or as "the other one."

"of us" referred to 'incursably inclusively' in adjacent to binary-gender.

"of the other" referred to 'excusably exclusively' rejected in groups we have little place, but with little place to go.

We are grouped to one side: trans woman or trans man, and we are grouped on the opposite side: trans/cis women or trans/cis men. (first- left; right-second)

We are (sadly, the most oft) left off. Not to be referred to at all.

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Because of my history, I find the being forcibly spoken of as a man or as a woman to cause me the most distress and dysphoria. (flexibly spoken or friendly spoken with gender-specific terms does no such harm for me.)

I have experienced dangers due to my androgyny, frustrating to face, but even at violent times there is comfort in affirmation. I

take respite in my androgyny. I have experienced dangers being seen as a woman and dangers being seen as a man.

These moments have been difficult to navigate as they will come with the added disorientation. It is a weird state to have to have concern over the aversive affects of being perceived as a man and having to have concern over the aversive affects of being perceived as a woman. Also, in both cases these experiences are, I imagine, less concerning in some ways than if I were truly one or truly the “other” one. It does come with some different added concerns and disorientation.

this is a hard concept to simplify, I hope it makes some sense still.

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There are many forms of non-binary gender

Certain non-binary genders and their descriptors acknowledge or feel some relationship to the poles of binary genders (demigirl, genderfluid, transmasculine are examples that often-the-case lean to one side of this polarity).

Other genders, more removed from this polarity, attempt to be termed still around/within the confines of a binary-gender spectrum. These terms favor abstraction in order to best translate to this culture's predominating polarity, aiming to provide clarity among clashing/coexisting/narrow-

-broadly compartmentalized concepts (androgynous, agender, neutrois are examples that can be abstractly defined within a spectrum while existing relatively “equivalent distance” from either polarity)

Other genders still attempt to be more boldly defined outside the binary polarity and its surrounding spectrum. (apogender while still defined on the gender spectrum uses 3 or 4 poles instead of 2)

Other gender terms use focal points outside the gender-spectrum to further express gender subsets (two-spirited, other, amalgagender are examples of genders that are defined firstly based on attributes outside the gender spectrum)

This is still a very simple summary and a no where near expansive categorization of non-binary genders. Additionally, my own understanding of non-binary genders may be refuted and is by no means conclusive.

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In being an androgyne, I position myself among gender-binary, in enough to say that I am just as much neither male nor female as I am both.

I relate to the gender androgyne because of the stability in the terms history. While androgyne's etymology is strongly rooted in our cultures binary-gender focus, these roots ground me. My anomalous gender is shown to be acknowledged through my current culture's history and present despite that this same history attempts to define this third gender in miss-fitting bounds. To me the term androgyne is a reflection of how people with my gender (and other genders related) exist in this cultures history and have been seen/grasped/acknowledged through the times even when the general populous only roughly understood. There are other terms that better describe my gender that have potential to resonate with me, but these terms are still in flux, archaic, dying and shifting (mostly dying) which makes them harder to fully connect to.

Androgyne is no better but is best for me in the present climate —so much more could be said but to take away

More Non-Binary Specific Spaces

More Non-Binary Inclusive Language

More Non-Binary Diverse Visibility

Thank you and goodnight!

<3 <3 <3



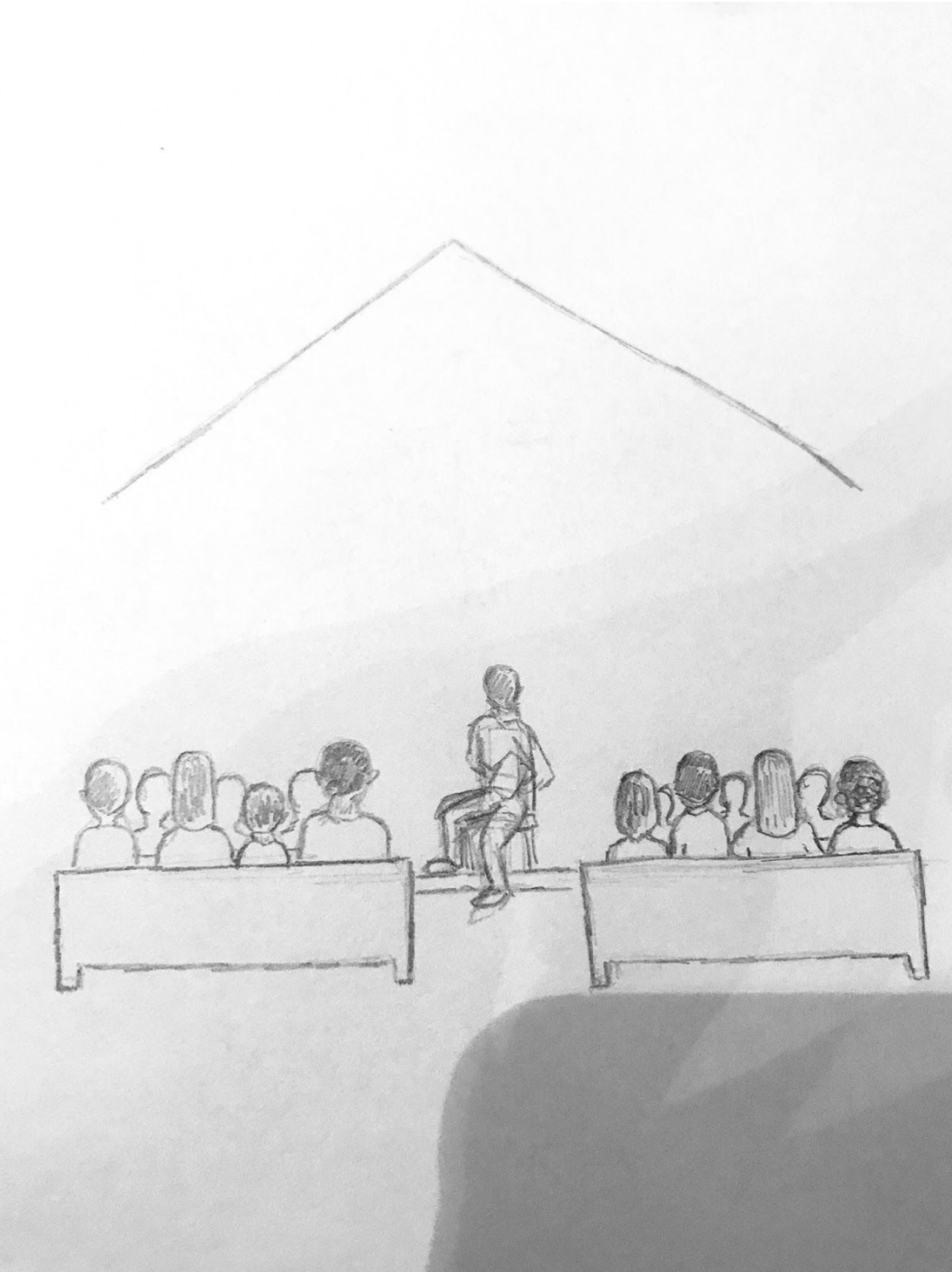


## twinkle toes

The stomping won't stop! It gets louder and louder and never decreases. Pounding one by one down the street. The men in suits make their way to where they have to go taking the path that every day never changes. The volume increases with each passing day. Out the door goes a man in a cab to a street with no name and to meet a gothman that looks the same in front of a familiar Building that is painted Grey.

Photo by Drew Bissell

Writing by Atmospheric Press at age 10



1, 3,4,5, 7,8

KATIE FIELD (DRAWING ON PREVIOUS PAGE ALSO BY KATIE FIELD)

WEDGED BETWEEN MY TWO EX-LOVERS  
I SWEAT,  
THE CHURCH PEW  
STICKING AND UNSTICKING FROM MY THIGHS

WE ALL STOMP TO THE ACCORDION'S WHEEZE &  
MOUTH FAUX SYLLABES CRÉOLES,  
UNSAID, LIKE ALL THINGS BETWEEN US  
& DELIGHTFULLY  
UNFIT FOR CHAPEL

APPEL ET RÉPONSE & ELBOWS KNOCKING  
MAKES RUBBOARDS OF ALL OF US  
VIBRATING SPINES &  
DAMP COTTON FLESH  
AND I'D RATHER BE AN ACCORDION

LET THE AIR WASH THROUGH ME  
SWEET FULL SIGHTS  
SHARP INTAKES OF SURPRISE  
BUT I DON'T THINK ABOUT THAT  
UNTIL AFTER

# T-Money's Thoughts on Moral Absolutism

*\*Note: It may or may not turn out that there is more to the story than it seems. Maybe I followed false stories. Maybe I didn't properly research the context of the claims I am making. That is the point. If I can get it wrong, so can you. So can The News. So can your Mother, or your Teacher. Question everything. Give everyone their proper context and three-dimensional scrutiny.*

*Show compassion.*

*\*\*Extra Secret Note: I probably don't actively promote all of these ideals or opinions in my personal life but don't you go using that against me and making claims of hypocrisy, I'm just spreading a credo here.*

There are no real villains in the third dimension. In this Real World (if you believe in such things) we inhabit, where you can see three hundred and sixty degrees of a person, their good angles and their bad angles (even the ones they don't know exist), no one is a monster. Nor is anyone a hero. That evolutionary artist up in heaven, or down in our DNA, or wherever She is, had too much attention to detail to let anyone be so polarized. The process of creation could not be limited to just the traits that go into one or the other, good or evil, black or white...

So just like a made-for-TV high school movie, we at T-Money Estates pronounce that it is unfair to cast people into social roles based on your judgment of them, to irreversibly label people based on an incident you heard that they were involved in, and to drive someone away, out of their place in your world, because one of their character traits doesn't fit with your expectation of a good human.

However, on the flip side of that shiny judgmental coin is sanctifying the people who we think (Hope? Desperately Wish?) will save us in this world, resting all our faith on their ability and



willingness to make all the right choices, believing naively that they are free and able to do the right thing all the time, or that they have the vast wisdom already in their minds and hearts to always know what is right. Sorry to break it to you, but there is no way they can know or do what is right for every single person.

Let's face it: life is hard. The simplest way to put it. We do not ask to have to live it, but we have to commit to powering through the ugly timeline allotted to us. We will make mistakes in that time. We may even be trained, cajoled, tricked, BRAINWASHED into making those mistakes. We may be shown by those we trust to make mistakes like them, thinking it is how life was meant to be lived. We may be culturally outfitted to continue the cycle of traditional mistakes. But we are not wholly those mistakes. We can't let the burden of realizing our mistakes be carried around, dragged around, thrown around until the end. The already dreadful burden of staying alive is so palpable, why must we add an extra weight of suffering onto it? Why would we add that extra weight onto anyone else?

Your favorite heroes had their mistakes and burdens. Your most glorified villains had their redeeming qualities. Take Nixon, for example. The scandal. The nefarity (sure, it's a word. I've decided). But did you know that he is responsible for: The EPA, Title IX, The National Cancer Act, Ending The Draft, and finally desegregating those last seven stubborn Southern states, despite his well-known racist disposition.<sup>1</sup> So he went a little nuts at the end there. Maybe there's a difference between covering up for criminal intent versus covering up for damage control. Did you consider that?

Martin Luther King, Jr. had "numerous dalliances" during his civil rights campaign, as well as a drinking problem.<sup>2</sup> Gandhi had a creepy habit of making virgin girls sleep in his bed with him, though he persisted in his devotion to celibacy.<sup>3</sup> How could someone as revered as Stephen Hawking be the kind of person to abandon his wife of 25 years and their 3 children, for some floozy

he probably started a relationship with while he was still married?<sup>4</sup>

Bono. What a complicated guy. Frontman for a revered classic rock group, but more importantly, founder and face of a major charity organization that fights for the end of poverty and disease in Africa. But he is universally known to be one of those people that you just can't stand, he's just so impressed with himself. And for good reason, it turns out. He is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions for his incredible work on his charity that essentially seems to throw expensive parties in the name of raising awareness and then shames governments into trying to treat their people better. Thanks, Bono, for your selfless work to help those less fortunate than you. Ya douchebag.<sup>5</sup>

Let's talk about Fidel Castro - the controversial and generally vilified figurehead of revolution and dictatorship, who honestly wasn't trying to create a cult of personality around his regime, it just sorta happened, because he was such a charismatic guy! You have to be charismatic to pull off everything he accomplished, even his enemies admitted that. Was he a champion of his people or a power-mad dictator? I guess it depends on if you liked his ideologies -- did he protect his people from the imperialist greed of the U.S. (at the cost of a few comforts like national wealth)? Or did he engender human rights abuses and poverty to keep his people subservient? Anyway, whatever his intentions, his leadership developed Cuba into one of the best-educated and healthiest societies in the Third World.<sup>6</sup>

Do Bad Guys realize that they're The Bad Guys? Or do they feel so passionately that what they're doing is right that they inadvertently overlook the necks they're stepping on during their journey? Or, like Machiavelli, do they know that some suffering must take place before things go smoothly and my people will thank me later? Maybe there have been some Good Guys along the way that were so Good that they sacrificed any chance of being seen as a Good Guy so that the world would start to function better, the government would serve its people better, the people

would work harder to be served better. Martyrs. How many martyrs have we vilified because we needed someone to blame?

And while we're here, let's examine the double standard about passion. The Notorious RBG is widely regarded as a saint among Supreme Court Justices. She is a pioneer, a hero, a leader. She's passionate about justice, just look at her face when she's speaking. Wait, that's right, she's about as emotive as a dead pan (see what I did there?). And by the other token, look at Brett Kavanaugh. What a reprobate, ranting on and on about how he likes beer. Practically crying as he shouts about the indecent behavior he and his family have had to endure. His vivid expression of emotion, indeed, his PASSION, makes him a danger to society, a danger to justice. When we see someone we like expressing their ideas passionately, it means they are devoted to the cause, ready to lead us into the light. When it's someone whose ideologies differ from our own, those of us who are amateur psychologists suddenly sense a streak of unhinged mania, a menace to all that is good and decent in the world. It's all about how you spin it. Propaganda has a place in brainwashed societies for good reason.

Maybe people are only able to process the crimes of and condemn those who they can afford to let go. We can feed Harvey Weinstein to the dogs because he is obviously a skeezeball who works in the skeeziest industry around and nobody needs him. Garrison Keillor can be dropped off the cliff because who even cares about him anyway? Only 64-year-old ladies who like the country farm aesthetic, that's who. Kevin Spacey - regrettable, but most likely he was soon to come to the end of his career anyway. But loveable old Bill Clinton has done so much for our country, and after all he and Hillary have stuck it out despite all the hardships and scandals, so what's 10 or 12 serious criminal misconduct allegations?<sup>7</sup>

Just a last set of existential quandaries from a lucid journalist over at Washington Examiner, in case you were going to be mad if I didn't mention him: Is Donald Trump an unfocused and deranged

manchild who floated to the top based on a lifetime of undeserved fame and riches he just happened to inherit? Or is he, like many in the Millennial generation, extremely good at multitasking, getting his impression of the world from the vast tentacles of the internet, switching jobs when he feels inspired, and understanding the importance of a personal brand in the quest to be well-known enough to be propelled into any career he chooses? Is he terrible or are we all terrible?<sup>8</sup>

As Molly Ringwald remarked about the problematic nature of some art from the past, as long as we can acknowledge and talk about the problems, we can still appreciate the art.<sup>9</sup> That goes for humans too. [Almost] every human has a complex background of highs and lows, honest pride in their personal achievements, and hidden chagrin at the times they were less than estimable. We all live in a grey area between good and evil, between monsters and angels, between black and white. We all deserve to exist and to find our tiny corner of happiness as we traverse, as we all must, the rocky path of life.

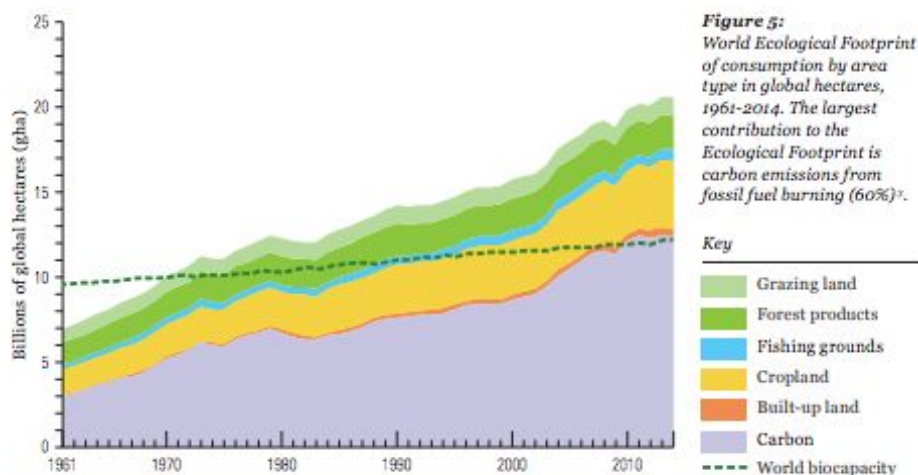
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# RUNAWAY CONSUMPTION

The ability of ecosystems to renew themselves is called biocapacity. The biologically productive areas of Earth provide this service<sup>4,5</sup>. Both the demand on this area – people's Ecological Footprint – as well as biocapacity are measured in global hectares (gha), biologically productive hectares with world-average productivity<sup>6-8</sup>. Together biocapacity and Ecological Footprint provide an empirical basis for determining whether humanity is living within the means of our planet, and how this relationship has been altered over time<sup>9</sup>. Through changes in technology and land management practices, biocapacity has increased about 27% in the past 50 years. But it has not kept pace with human consumption: humanity's Ecological Footprint has increased about 190% over the same time period.

Laurel Hanscom,  
Alessandro Galli and  
Mathis Wackernagel,  
Global Footprint Network









Open your mind

to things hidden  
from plain sight

This and previous page  
by Greg Goldstein

Inspiration often requires instigation

He sits at the throne of his desk

Pondering the tent village

One block left, and two blocks back

Under the cleanly paved rumbling concrete

How did they manage to run a refrigerator there?

Do their generators run on gasoline

Or do they borrow the power from his office

From time to time.

He wouldn't mind if they did

He runs his computer all night

Bitcoin mining his way towards mediocrity

He wonders about their christmas tree

And how they have managed to acquire one there

While he himself stacks empty cans

In a tree like shape for the holiday

He wonders if they are travelers or natives

If they are mentally divergent

Substance addicted

Or recent graduates of the prison system

It all seems possible

He daydreams about engaging them

With cups of coffee

That pours freely from the kitchen

Of this concrete castle

But he does nothing

When it gets cold they start a fire

And the police come and clear them out

They're trash lingers in the potholes

Of those rarely traveled back roads

He stops daydreaming

Until the weather gets warm again

And one by one the tents reappear

In that same spot under the onramp

by Alie Eiseman

# The Color of Truth: Grey

## Jesse Levin

*Jesse Levin has worked at the intersection of the military special operations veteran, disaster response, and entrepreneurial communities for the past 10 years, conducting response and recovery operations and launching startups around the world.*

Truth is often grey or ambiguous at best as it pertains to disaster response operations. While facts are facts, when it comes to the world we operate in, black and white isn't really a reality. Subjectivity is real, as are perceptions, survival instincts, bureaucracy, cultural nuances and a plethora of other elements inherent to the realms of humanitarian assistance, disaster response and austere environment logistics. There is a check the box narrative that is often perpetuated by the mainstream press pertaining to coverage on large-scale disasters. Blame, accusations, political corruption, disaster capitalism, ineffective NGO operations and general shortcomings and failures of the community at large often dominate the news cycle and the psyche. What is not understood, by many, others than those viscerally involved in the response and recovery ecosystem is the utter complexities, vested interests, and archaic cultural constructs that have material impact on the realities of all facets of disaster response and economic recovery. The color of truth is grey.

The general posturing of humanitarian aid has been reactionary in nature. All resources, organizations, and response capacity is designed to respond to large-scale occurrences in a retroactive reactionary manner. Our human nature compels us to help and to chip in, and current methodologies and avenues for the general public to partake in helping their fellow mankind comes in the

form of contributing to NGOs or to rallying to compile huge amounts of stuff to be shipped to the impact zone. It is important to explore the detrimental impact of this current structuring as it pertains to the actual last mile impact on populations that, as a collective community, we all set out to help. Currently this reality is in flux as the entire ecosystem is shifting from reactionary response to proactive readiness and it will be sometime until the underlying reasoning for all of this emerges from the murky depths of mainstream media.

The realities on the ground in large-scale disasters, or what is referred to as “ground truth” is often misunderstood or overlooked by the massive response ecosystem, which operates off of checklists and preconceived notions. While, often well intentioned, there is no one size fits all methodology or solution to solving challenges inherent to re-stabilizing an impacted region. It is incredibly difficult to gain a clear picture of what is actually transpiring on the ground, what local capacity exists, who the movers and shakers are, and what the true, underlying systemic challenges are that are impacting and impairing recovery.

Very few organizations that come in from abroad to help are equipped to rapidly gain clear ground truth. It is often the small local NGOs, foundations and independent business owners and entrepreneurs that have the clearest understanding of what is happening, how to fix it, and who can help locally. However, it is this local last mile capacity and knowhow that is, more often than not, entirely excluded from the conversations, planning and resource allocation in disaster response operations. The system is simply not set-up to rapidly identify and work with these types of resources, and instead is set-up to execute large-scale, exceedingly complex operations that entail the coordination of shipping in millions of metric tons of supplies and personnel into a disaster

zone. That, unfortunately tends to completely undercut and undermine the local capacity, making organic economic stability and recovery all that more difficult.

Furthermore, we must look at the currency at which NGOs depend on to conduct their response operations. Without donations these organizations can't exist. What fuels donations? Is it conveying the incredibly complicated story of what is happening in say a place like Haiti or Puerto Rico? Or is it simply showing horrific pictures, saying the situation is terrible send more money to help? It is often not in the best interest of these organizations to be entirely truthful. The narrative of what transpires in the aftermath of disasters is easily crafted and manipulated. Few have boots on the ground and even fewer have the capacity to get content, imagery and videos out to the public. Hence, organizations can craft whatever message they like, or is best suited to their respective donor base and mission set.

From conducting this work for over a decade all around the world, here are a few observations I have made. Local populations, local business owners, local NGOs, and local entrepreneurs are often the best suited, and most well equipped to solve their own challenges. What they need is strategic backing and support, which they most often fail to get. The plethora of external aid that floods into a disaster-ridden location, often has far more negative than positive impact by further hampering organic economic stability.

The system is slowly shifting, and adapting to more effectively identify, empower, and scale local capacity as a critical component in response and recovery operations. Much of the rhetoric of the government is starting to promote the importance of "proactive whole community readiness" which entails critical local infrastructure like food markets, banks, and grocery stores take

measures to prepare to provide continuity of service despite disasters before they strike. For every \$1 spent on proactive emergency mitigation measures \$6 are saved on recovery and rehabilitation spend. It is as simple as this. If a grocery store can keep food cold, and has pre-planned emergency contingency arrangements with suppliers in case of a disaster, if banks can maintain connectivity and access to capital despite a loss of conventional connectivity, and if gas stations can continue to pump gas despite loss of power – then less dependency needs to be placed on external aid. “Self sufficiency” is both a social and an economic imperative in this day and age when we are, as a global community, experiencing a sharp increase in both man made and natural disasters.

This is a perspective, and it's grey. It is not meant to imply a stark black and white reality. It is not to imply that there is no need for international NGOs, or that they don't do a tremendous amount of good. A short article like this, with next to no context or supporting details, might not elicit a receptive response, since it contradicts many of the ingrained constructs we are used to as a society. It is, however, intended to spark a conversation, a desire to dig a little deeper, to read between the lines and to be open to the fact that what we see in the mainstream is not always what is transpiring on the ground when it pertains to disaster response and humanitarian efforts. This isn't about waving the fake news flag, it's simply celebrating the notion that situations in which a multitude of agencies, countries and resource communities converge with the best of intentions generates an exceedingly complex situation that sometimes, despite the best of intentions actually causes more harm than the good it set out to do. The good news is that is changing.



# GREY MATTER HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

*anonymous*

Grey matter contains most of the brain's neuronal cell bodies. The grey matter includes regions of the brain involved in muscle control, and sensory perception such as seeing and hearing, memory, emotions, speech, decision making, and self-control. (1)

Grey matter must be disappearing in our brains because people forget the lies and excuses that have been used for centuries to justify killing each other. For example, I ask people what the domino theory is and many of them have no memory of it. Shocking, because that was the theory that was used to justify the 20 year Vietnam War. The domino theory was a theory prominent from the 1950s to the 1980s that posited that if one country in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect. (2) The domino theory was used to justify the need for American intervention around the world. There are arguments on how valid the domino theory is, but I would argue that it is irrelevant whether it is true or not. More important, the catalyst for US involvement in Vietnam turns out to have been a lie, as discussed below.

On August 2, 1964, United States President Lyndon B. Johnson claimed that North Vietnamese forces had twice attacked American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin (3). Known today as the Gulf of Tonkin incident, (also known as the USS *Maddox* incident named after the destroyer USS Maddox) this event spawned the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of August 7, 1964, leading to war between the United States and North Vietnam. It also foreshadowed the major escalation of the Vietnam War. (4)

The original American report blamed North Vietnam, but became very controversial with belief that at least one, and possibly both incidents were FALSE, and possibly deliberately so. (5)(6) The National Security Agency had originally claimed that a second Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred on August 4, 1964, but evidence was found of false radar images and not actual North Vietnamese torpedo boats. In the 2003 documentary *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert McNamara*, former United States Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara admitted that the August 4 Gulf of Tonkin attack NEVER HAPPENED.(8) In 1995, McNamara met with former [Vietnam People's Army](#) General [Võ Nguyên Giáp](#) to ask what happened on

August 4, 1964 in the second Gulf of Tonkin Incident. "Absolutely nothing", Giáp replied. (9) Giáp claimed that the attack had been imaginary. (10)

The outcome of the two incidents was the passage by Congress of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which granted President Lyndon Johnson the authority to assist any Southeast Asian country whose government was considered to be jeopardized by "communist aggression". The resolution served as Johnson's legal justification for deploying U.S. conventional forces and the commencement of open warfare against North Vietnam.

In 2005, an internal National Security Agency historical study was declassified; it concluded that *Maddox* had engaged the North Vietnamese Navy on August 2, but that there were no North Vietnamese naval vessels present during the incident of August 4. The report stated, regarding the first incident on August 2: at 1500G, (5) Captain Herrick ordered Ogier's gun crews to open fire if the boats approached within ten thousand yards. At about 1505G, *Maddox* fired three rounds to warn off the communist boats. This initial action was never reported by the Johnson administration, which insisted that the Vietnamese boats fired first. (6)

In summary, The Gulf of Tonkin incident, used as the reason for the United States to step up the Vietnam War, was subsequently found to be a lie! So a false incident leads to a 20 year war! 2 Million CIVILIANS in Vietnam died during the war, along with 1.4 million military fighters. A 2008 study by the BMJ (formerly [\*British Medical Journal\*](#)) came up with a toll of 3,812,000 dead in Vietnam between 1955–2002.

The strategists who thought up Gulf of Tonkin, which is what was used to get enough public support behind a 20 year invasion and occupation of Vietnam, were lucky that enough grey matter had previously died out and we forgot how common incident creation has been over the eons. Let's look at just a few others:

Ask historians why World War 1 was fought and you will get multiple answers, none of which are correct. The causes of World War 1 (1914-1918) remain controversial. (4) The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is said by many to have led to World War 1, (12) but that is simply an excuse. Oh, and World War 1 was called "the war to end all wars", and that of course did not happen, but I guess it made people feel better at the time. 17 MILLION PEOPLE died in

world war one (including 7 million civilians), and casualties totaled 37 MILLION. So 1 Franz Ferdinand equals 37 MILLION people. Makes sense to me.

Consensus on the origins of World War 1 remains elusive since historians disagree on key factors, and place differing emphasis on a variety of factors. This is compounded by changing historical arguments over time, particularly the delayed availability of classified historical archives. The deepest distinction among historians over the origin of World War 1 is between those who focus on the actions of Germany and Austria-Hungary as key and those who focus on a wider group. Some believe that Germany deliberately planned a European war, some believe the war was unplanned but still caused principally by Germany and Austria-Hungary taking risks, and others believe that either all or some of the other powers, namely Russia, France, Serbia and Great Britain, played a more significant role in causing the war than has been traditionally suggested. (4)

After World War 1 the American public said it would never go overseas to fight another war, and that nothing could ever make us want to fight another overseas war. Oh but wait, the attack on Pearl Harbor was all it took to have Americans lining up to go to war. That new war was called World War Two and that was the deadliest military conflict in history in terms of total casualties. Over 60 million people were killed, which was about 3% of the 1940 world population (est. 2.3 billion) (13). In comparison, 2,335 American soldiers died at Pearl Harbor, the event that encouraged the United States to enter the war.

I have to skip the Korean War because it's too exhausting. I'll just say "see Vietnam above".

The attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 killed 2,996 people. The United States people were ready to kill someone, anyone, after that attack. Since the United States invaded and occupied Iraq and Afghanistan over 1 MILLION people have been killed according to some estimates. Opinion Research Business (ORB) poll conducted August, 2007, estimated 1,033,000 violent deaths due to the Iraq war. I guess we should soon start to feel that we have accomplished our revenge goal.

What surprises me the most is that every time there is an "INCIDENT" that causes people to want to go out and kill, people forget history. Their grey matter has gone into hiding. Where is the discussion over the 20 year Vietnam War being fought for no reason at all, other than to satisfy our need to kill? Where is the discussion over our 17 year

invasion/occupation of Afghanistan and our 15 year  
invasion/occupation of Iraq? When will our blood thirst for revenge be  
satisfied?

Even Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, a man so closely associated  
with United States involvement in Vietnam that a U.S. Senator  
described Vietnam as “McNamara’s War”, subsequently (20 years after  
the war ended) said “I think the human race needs to think more about  
killing. How much evil must we do in order to do good?”

In the future, when we have the next Archduke assassination, or Gulf of  
Tonkin event, or the next Pearl Harbor or World Trade Center event,  
use your grey matter to decide “How many millions of people will now  
need to die to make us feel better about ourselves”.

PS I am only referring to events of recent history. I am positive that if  
you go back thousands of years you will find the same exact excuses to  
kill each other.

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They tell me i need botox but i dont care  
Imma keep making facial expressions beyond repair  
Nothing needs repair except their minds  
Because aging is awesome and i'm so damn fine  
Used to be a clueless bitch but now i know a thing or  
two

Time is valuable i won't waste it on you  
Found a grey hair or a few but blessed for those  
I don't get older i just keep getting better

Made so many mistakes; hard to see through grey  
areas  
But without those mistakes the future wouldn't be as  
clear

Although the orange president is tryna kill our future  
We will build a wall with the bricks he spits at us  
Not a wall in texas but a wall in maralago  
First we'll free his employees then lock him in  
Sorry ivanka but you and jared chose to stay  
Throw in a few saudis to keep them at bay

Aging is awesome if you're learning things along the  
way

Staying in with loads of eye cream on with bae  
Used to put on a new outfit and hit the bar  
Now im all about those new pajamas and not going  
far

All of us survivors are here to grow  
Those who didn't make it we'll one day see, i know  
So teach me something and share what's on your  
mind

Thank you for your patience, so loving and kind.





## Atmospheric Press

grey as ash H G Wells reports tonight  
his pallor is reactive as ash by your side  
americium is proactinium's gash in a flash unabashed  
through your sash there's numbers of dead people

there is uranium there is contemporary striking  
Succotash there is sweet corn coal cash lima beans

Here is someone sweet as Illinois as paper boys in  
1968,  
but it's a bit late, don't you think? through sour

thrash there are lips  
bitten there are kids  
smitten there is no one  
left or right or awake  
all night there is only

us in the interim (In terrorem)  
all brush our teeth with ash  
the Volcano Tambora  
planted for us alone to eat

Photo on previous page

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**What'd you think of  
the zine? Did you  
like it? Dislike it?  
Didn't read it but  
have other things to  
say? Well, next issue  
will include a new  
feature, which will  
be "Letters to the  
editor." Email  
unsolicitedliterature  
@gmail.com with  
your letter!**