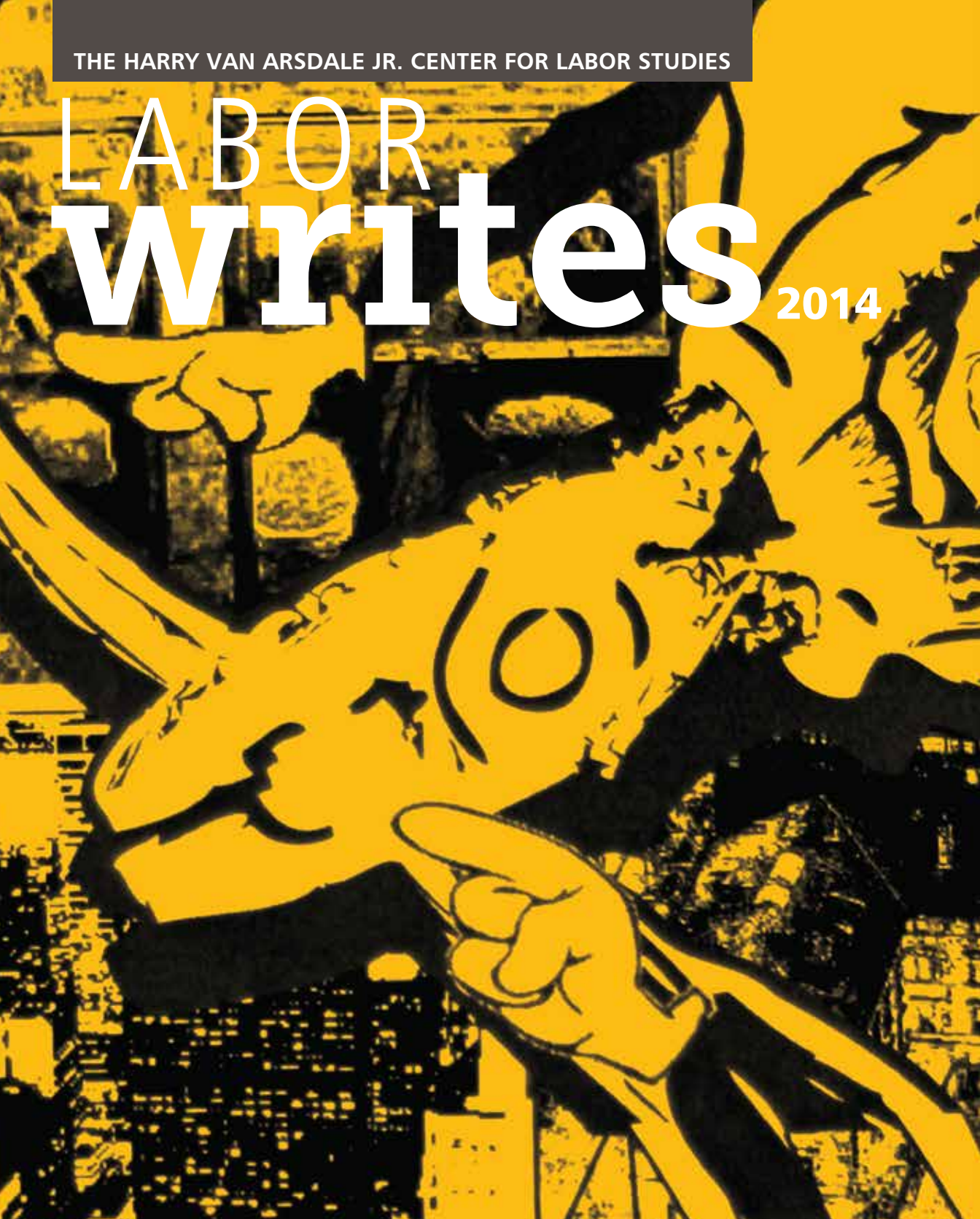


THE HARRY VAN ARSDALE JR. CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES

LABOR writes

2014



Labor Writes 2014

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**The Harry Van Arsdale Jr.
Center for Labor Studies
SUNY Empire State College**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A Word From the Dean.....	1
Michael Merrill	
A Word From the Editor	2
Rebecca Fraser	

WE JOURNEY

Artwork: “Blue”.....	3
Andrew Rossnagel	
My Journey	4
Marcin Jakubczak	
One Single Job.....	6
Chris Briscoe	
My Number Was Called.....	8
Anthony Gurino	
Finally Accepted and Extremely Happy	10
Nick Jannotti	
Worth Every Second.....	12
Anthony Lamattina	
On Becoming a Local 3 Electrician	15
Michal Laskowski	
The Saga of Dirty Tony	17
Anthony Meister	
My Journey to the Union	19
Christopher Pisano	
When I Was Young.....	21
Vernon Swindell Jr.	
Obstacles on the Path to the Union	22
Raymond Tang	

Artwork: “Guitar”	25
Mario Ruiz	
My Way to an Incredible Career	26
Philip Tuzzolino	
It Pays To Be Educated	28
Jerry Velez	
Tough Decisions	31
Lulzim Ljubanovic	
I Had No Idea	32
Tarell White	

WE CARRY

Artwork: “Hard Hat”	33
Freddie Garcia	
The Things I Carry	34
C. Del Sole	
Value of the Things I Carry Daily.....	36
Ikari Shinji	
Soldier of Labor	38
Ricardo Berberena	
The Things We All Carry	40
John Fields	
Fully Clothed.....	43
Benjamin Cadel	
More Than Just Tools	45
Chris Judd	
Life’s Hardships Are Endured Through the Items We Give Meaning To... 47	
Pedro R. Martinez	
Artwork: “Menorah”	49
Gene Shapiro	
Ready and Prepared	50
Jose L. Rivera	

The Things We Carry	52
Gerardo Ochoa	
Three Things Worth Carrying	54
Jerry Velez	

WE READ

Artwork: “Lamp”	57
Peter Presvelis	
My Rocky Road to Reading Success	58
Kendell Grant	
Reading Autobiography	61
Christopher W. Aviles	
Reading Progress	63
Joseph Fischetti	
Life in Reading	64
Michael Palladino	
Artwork: “Tattoo”	66
Jaime Lopez	
Artist Statement.....	67
Jaime Lopez	
Memorials	68
Joseph Ryals	
Artwork: “Visual Essay: Reading Moby-Dick”	69
Paul Vance	
The Price of War	76
Kyle Bullock	
Facing One’s Fears.....	78
Raymond Tang	
Facing Fears: The Key to Unlocking One’s True Potential.....	80
Pedro R. Martinez	

WE WORK

Artwork: “I Am a Worker”	83
Danny Ferreyra	
The Brohan Wheel	84
Shaun Brohan	
InVENTion.....	86
Paul Vance	
Genius Design for a Hammer Drill.....	87
Christian Giambrone	
Artwork: “The MIGHTY Mini Tugger”	88
Jonathan Cruz	
The Art of Manipulation.....	89
Jonathan Cruz	
The Master Approach to Building.....	90
Jasmine Spencer	

WE CREATE

Artwork: “Lamp”	91
Ben Rodriguez	
Plumbing Is Indeed Art.....	92
Ben Rodriguez	
Artwork: “Art, Philosophy, Plumbing Flowchart”	94
Wilber Scalesci	
Why Plumbing Is a System and an Art	95
Wilber Scalesci	
Artwork: “Wrenches and Workers”	97
Joe A. Cardoso	
Artwork: “Lamp”	98
Neil Assennato	
Tasks and Skills: An Artist Statement.....	99
Neil Assennato	
Plumbing: “Behind the Wall” Art.....	100
Joe A. Cardoso	

WE STRUGGLE

Artwork: “Boilerman”	103
Andrew Morales III	
Artwork: “Kaleidoscope”	104
Lowely Cheung	
Artist Statement: Kaleidoscope.....	105
Lowely Cheung	
The Big Fish Eats the Little Fish	106
Jason Martin Arrindell	
Letter to Senator Schumer	107
JD	
Letter to Gov. Cuomo	109
Michael Konwisarz	
Labor’s City.....	111
Tiffany Cunningham	
When Policy Began to Crumble.....	113
Matthew Gramazio	
Changes in the New York Labor Market	116
Elizabeth Irizarry	
A Substantial Ruin	119
Tiffany Cunningham	
My Impressions of the High Line	121
Olga Jimenez	

WE GATHER

Artwork: “Untitled”	123
Joe Cardoso	
Skills and Brains	124
Patrick Meyers	
On the Job.....	126
Nunzio Adinolfi	
Unions Set the Bar	128
James Chagnon	

Local 3 Meetings.....	129
John Farrell	
Labor Movement	131
Kristofor Bacchi	
Getting Apprentices to Attend Union Meetings.....	133
Michael Zukowski	
Union Meetings: To Be or Not To Be	135
Marvin B. Nelson	
Brotherhood.....	137
Shaun Brohan	
Women Apprentices in the Electrical Industry.....	140
Christina DeVoll	
Tony Mazzocchi and the Labor Movement.....	145
Scottie Cabrera	
Image: “Light Bulb Mosaic”	147
Ramon Almodovar	

A Word From the Dean

What does “Labor Writes” have to do with labor rights?

When I think about that question, I often return to a comment by a student in my first year as dean who, frustrated about the higher academic standards everyone was suddenly expected to meet, asked “why do we have to read a story about a man who turns into a bug?” The story, of course, is Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” and, though none of this year’s contributions to “Labor Writes” address it specifically, students are not only asked to read about Gregor Samsa’s transformation, they are asked to write about it. Why?

The most direct answer is that Kafka spent his days investigating workplace accidents, and then processing the compensation claims arising from them, and that even today many workers injured on the job, in the absence of adequate social protection and alternative employments, present the kind of challenge to their families that Samsa, after being disabled, was for his.

“The Metamorphosis,” in other words, can profitably be read as a piece of writing that is concerned with the consequences of not righting a wrong. What rights did Samsa, the man-become-bug, have? What rights did his family have, who suddenly lost his support, through no apparent fault of his or their own, and were henceforth faced with having to provide for him ever after?

Kafka’s story vividly reminds us that there is nothing natural about rights. They are neither guaranteed nor preordained. All our rights, even the “self-evident” ones, like “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” are social facts, not natural laws. We only have such rights as others are willing to recognize, honor and defend.

Which is where what labor writes becomes the rights of labor. To write is to record one’s thinking, to tell a story, make a point, solve a problem. It is to shape the imaginative and moral universe within which we live, where we assume the duties we are prepared to assume, and thereby enjoy the rights we are prepared to enjoy. Labor writes so that it can have rights, so that it can connect to others in ways that will encourage others to connect to it.

It is with pride and pleasure that I present the work of some of our most committed students in the pages that follow, which was done as part of their course work, under the guidance of our committed and talented faculty. Thank you all.

Michael Merrill
Dean

A Word From the Editor

This, the fourth issue of “Labor Writes,” is the biggest issue yet. We had twice the number of submissions than we had last year – lots and lots of good writing and artwork done by our students from both UA Local 1 and IBEW Local 3 in the context of many of the courses we offer. College Writing, Texts and Interpretive Strategies, Political Economy of New York, and Literature and Society are just a few of the courses represented in this anthology.

As apprentices and union members our students are busy – with work, with college, with theory, and with keeping up with family and friends. On any given day, they are reading, creating, gathering, thinking and struggling to keep the labor movement and their unions viable and relevant in today’s inequitable world. As faculty, we strive to challenge and inspire our students to do good, reflective work. And they respond thoughtfully and with a unique perspective. Here is a taste of what our students are thinking about these days. Enjoy what they have done.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee
Rebecca Fraser, Chairwoman

Cover Art

Paul Vance

WE JOURNEY



“Blue”

Andrew Rossnagel

My Journey

Marcin Jakubczak

Throughout the centuries, people have evolved through work and innovation. We work to support ourselves and families and improve our surroundings. Work is a constant learning process; it makes us knowledgeable to perform various tasks we didn't know we were capable of doing, and develop skills we never knew we had. Sometimes, we may not know which occupation is meant for us. The process of choosing to work in an office, at a hospital or school, or on a construction job site is different for every person as some people's journey begins earlier than others. This is my journey to become an apprentice.

As a bored teenager, I always heard my mother say, "Go out into the world and find something to do." I listened to her and asked my uncle, a carpenter, if I could work with him in my spare time. It was an opportunity for me to learn the carpenter's trade, be entertained and make money, all at the same time. This helped me develop a good work ethic.

As the years passed, I attended college and didn't have time to work with my uncle anymore. My new schedule was too hectic. I also realized I had more job options to choose from. I became a driver for a moving company and was hired part time to drive and deliver antique furniture in Manhattan. Eventually, it became a struggle to balance my workload and schoolwork. Unfortunately, my grades suffered and I decided to take a break from school.

I continued working for the moving company until I met my brother-in-law. He was a plumber who worked for a private company. He encouraged me to join his company and become a plumber's helper. I had no plumbing skills and I knew nothing about the benefits of plumbing. Regardless, I took his advice and started my next journey.

My brother-in-law took me under his wing and told me he would teach me an important and respectable trade. As it turned out, I was a quick learner and began my love for plumbing. I worked side by side with my brother-in-law, and we developed a great relationship. We worked in many high-end apartments and met all kinds of people – a few celebrities included. I realized I was actually enjoying this career.

After a year went by, I had a car and was in a relationship. I felt like a million bucks as I had everything going for me. One day, I opened up the Daily News and saw an article about recruitment for the Local 1 apprenticeship plumbers program. I started researching more about the benefits of joining the program and I immediately became excited. But one of my biggest issues was leaving my brother-in-law and going out on my own.

I followed up on the article and realized I had to get myself this “once-in-a-lifetime” application. It wasn’t going to be easy. I would have to wait on line and hope to receive one out of the 1,000 applications given out. I took my girlfriend with me, waited on the line overnight and surprisingly received an application. At this point, I had to tell my brother-in-law that I succeeded in getting my foot in the door. He was very excited for me and told me to go full throttle with this program and learn the trade the union way.

When I first learned that the apprenticeship program was for five years, I was a little confused. I didn’t think there was that much more for me to learn but soon realized there was so much more to know about plumbing than what my brother-in-law had taught me. I learned that the program teaches hands on about the plumbing systems, starting from the basics and how it can be beneficial for mankind.

What stood out to me the most was that I had the opportunity to go back to school, finish my college degree and get paid while doing it. I always had the desire to learn more about math and the logic behind things we do in plumbing, such as solving equations to get the weight of a pipe or the strength of a metal rod for supporting items on a wall. This apprenticeship program gives me a clear outlook and understanding for my future as a plumber. Although initially the pay is not high, the reward is great. I will receive knowledge about plumbing that I can use for a lifetime.

Of all the things I have accomplished in my life, the opportunity at Local 1 is by far the most exciting. Looking back at my journey to this point, I see that working with family built my foundation for working hard. Now, I can use my work ethic and apply it to my apprenticeship program. It gives me the confidence to succeed. On top of that, the idea of getting a college degree and doing what I like comforts me the most. I take pride in becoming a part of this union and brotherhood.

One Single Job

Chris Briscoe

Growing up, I always wondered how someone could be so devoted to one single job, following the same routine for years upon years and actually enjoy what they do. However, as I grew older and began to mature, I learned to adapt and enjoy the lifestyle that I live today. As it's not always easy to make career choices as a young adult; I was lucky enough to have a father who was not only devoted to his family, but his job as a plumber helped me set my goals.

For as long as I can remember, I grew up always wanting to help my father with hands-on projects around our home. From building decks to renovating a bathroom, my father was always teaching me his abilities. Not only did I want to lend my father a helping hand, but I also enjoyed and took pride in the work. My father began to notice my interest in helping him work and gave me the opportunity to work on his job site as a summer helper. The first job I worked on, as a helper, was The Plaza Hotel in Manhattan. This was a great experience and steppingstone as I began to learn the trade of a plumber. Being a 16 year old, this offered me opportunities that not many people my age have been given. Having worked at one of the most popular hotels in the United States gave me motivation and inspired me to pursue my career in plumbing.

The following summer, I was lucky enough to be offered the same type of opportunity. However, this summer I was going to be working as a helper at Citi field, the MLB stadium for the New York Mets. Growing up, I was a Mets fan, which made the opportunity even more exciting. Now that I started to progress and learn the trade, it was coming time for me to make the decision that would affect my life forever. Should I continue to work hard in the construction field or further my education by going to college?

As my senior year in high school was winding down, I was running out of time to make my decision. After putting much thought into my options, I realized that ultimately school didn't provide as much satisfaction to me as plumbing did. My father had explained to me that the application for the plumber's apprenticeship program was going to be given out that summer. Prior to the applications being distributed, I was initiated as a full-time helper. At that time, my father was the foreman at St. John's College. Now was my time to advance myself as a better, more-educated plumber. Finally, later that summer, I received an application after waiting on line for three days. It was a long three days, but it was well worth it.

After a long process of tests and interviews, I patiently waited for my number to be called. Unfortunately, the time at which I handed in my application worked poorly with the economy. After two years of patiently waiting for a letter of acceptance, I began to explore other options. I had always wanted to be a

plumber, as it was a tradition in my family. However, I was slowly becoming discouraged, as I felt there wasn't a promising future ahead. Thankfully for my father supporting me along these years, I was still holding on to a piece of hope. The following year, the next set of applications was being given out. Coincidentally, I received a letter from the union stating they were calling in up to 40 more applicants from the first set. It was one of the most relieving days of my life. However, there was no guarantee that my number would be called. Therefore, once again, I found myself patiently waiting for another application.

I am proud to say that my number did get called, and my career is headed toward the right direction. I am very thankful to my father for guiding and supporting me as I pursued my goal of becoming a local one plumber. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today.

My Number Was Called

Anthony Gurino

I started on my path to joining the union a few years ago, after working for companies that did not appreciate their employees. Also, I always wanted to learn a trade and knew that this could be a great opportunity to learn a skill as well as gain a good career. My path to getting here was not an easy one, but one that makes every minute I get to be in Local 1 worth it. Every day is a learning experience, and I look forward to having a long, successful career that I can raise a family with.

When I started working at the age of 13 in a warehouse, I learned a lot about the value of a dollar, as well as that nothing is given to you. I worked 40-hour weeks and was only being paid \$4 an hour doing hard labor. Eventually, I got a raise to \$10 an hour, but I learned real fast that this was not the career path I wanted to stay on. The more I worked, the more it made me think about what I wanted to do when I got older. I learned about unions from having Local 200 (Long Island Plumbers) and Local 1 family members. I got to see them work and make a good living, which made me start to think about joining a union.

Years passed and I started to work for a bank. I became a bank teller. Later, I became a head teller, worked many hours without getting paid overtime, never got raises in my pay, and I worked hard and met the bank's goals. Even when I was promised raises, there was always some sort of excuse for why it couldn't be done. This really angered me; I would dedicate my time, resources and nothing would ever come of it. By this point, I realized another job change would have to happen. I started to apply for different unions but never got accepted, so I took a position at a credit union.

I worked at a credit union in lending for a few years, but I knew deep down I didn't want to be there. Even though I liked the people I worked with, it wasn't enough to keep the job. I ran into the same wall I had been facing for years; realizing moving up in these companies and making a career for myself would be near impossible. I knew I didn't want to settle for a job that barely paid the bills and didn't care for its employees in any way. For example, no matter how much I did or sacrificed, I never felt appreciated. If I had a family to care for, I would be stuck with no future and they wouldn't be taken care of.

One day my younger brother, who worked in Local 1 as a helper, came to me, and told me about Local 1 giving out applications for their apprenticeship program. I thought this would be a long shot just like every other application I had sent in and never got accepted, but knew if I didn't try, I might be stuck forever where I was. After talking with my grandfather, uncle and brother, I decided it was the

right thing to do. At the age of 25, I thought it was now or never to obtain a career and make good money. On a hot and muggy Saturday morning, we left at 9 a.m. to get a spot on line, and my path to the union began.

When my cousin and brother went to get the applications for the apprenticeship program with me, I remember thinking what if this time I get accepted. I always wanted to work with my hands and learn a trade, and this is something that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I will always have this to fall back on, whereas with the other jobs I had, there was no job guarantee. Plumbing felt like something that I could do, and would enjoy learning, even if it meant taking a pay cut to start the apprenticeship. I knew that if I got in, at the end of the road, I would be paid a **lot** better and be part of a brotherhood.

Almost three years after I sent in my application, I received a letter in the mail from the union telling me my number had been called. Since then I have been working and learning; I love every minute of it. Taking the pay cut was worth it. Plus, I am going to get a college degree out of the apprenticeship. I no longer worry about having a career and I enjoy going to work every day. It's a big change from where this all began and I look forward to a long, successful career.

Finally Accepted and Extremely Happy

Nick Jannotti

After graduating from high school in Pennsylvania, I worked for a company called Famularo Catering. I enjoyed what I did, liked the people I worked for and with, and made decent money. The problem was that there wasn't much of a future there for someone like me. However, at that time, I was still content with working that job and didn't really think about my future. I wasn't going to school either, and I figured I could keep working there and save some money until I decided what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. The one thing I knew was that I wanted to stay in Pennsylvania, where I grew up and where all of my friends and everyone I knew lived. Not for a second did I think I would ever end up in New York. I always hated the thought of looking for a job there. I was a country boy.

My Uncle Tony was a unionized plumber for Local 1 in New York City for 20 years or more. He and his family used to come to Pennsylvania often to visit us. Once I got closer to graduating high school, he would always try to convince my brothers and me to come wait on the application line for the plumbers union. He did so knowing my mother was completely terrified about what we were going to do after school. Every time he brought this up, I would let him know that I had no interest at all in moving to New York, no matter the reason Uncle Tony had. He still didn't give up on trying to convince me that it would provide a better life for me than the Poconos would.

When I was 19 years old, I got caught up in some illegal activity and was incarcerated for six months. It was the worst six months of my life. While I was in this correctional facility, all that went through my mind was what I was going to do or change to make sure that I never have to put my family or myself through that ordeal ever again. That's when I began to consider taking Uncle Tony's advice.

The day I got out, I reached out to him and we had a long talk that I'll never forget. We spoke about how I was going to get my life back on track and also spoke about all the details of getting into this apprenticeship. Luckily, that turned out to be one of the years that they were handing out the applications. They were going to be handing them out about six months after I got out of jail, which was perfect because my parole officer wouldn't allow me to transfer my parole to New York.

Six months went by and I planned to take a bus trip out to Queens, New York, to get the application that I thought would hopefully be my escape from my old life. I caught a bus to Queens early one the morning, about three days before the applications were being handed out. I thought it was crazy but that's what I was told to do. My mother had been living in Queens for a couple of years, so

before I even went to wait on line, I stopped at her place, dropped off some of my belongings, and gathered stuff I might need. Then she did me the favor of dropping me off at the location.

I got there around noon, and there were already about 200 people there. I was shocked at the activities everyone had going on, but the scenario was actually very interesting. Everyone had tents set up to sleep, grills out to cook and eat all day, and there were even ball games in progress on every block. In the three days I spent there, I met several people and, surprisingly, had a very good time. However, after I finally received the application, I was never so happy to go home and relax for a couple of days.

A couple of weeks passed and I decided to move to New York and live with my mother, even if I didn't get accepted into the apprenticeship.

I waited about a month or two before I reached out to my uncle and asked him if there was any way he could put me to work while I was waiting to hear back from the training center. He was able to get me into the union as a MES helper working at the company where he had been working. I was so thankful that he was able to get me a head start on going to work. A year went by until I realized that I was too far back on this list to get accepted into this group of applicants, and I was not very happy. But there was nothing my uncle, anyone else, or I could do. A year later, there was another application line set up for which I made sure to be extra early. This time I was a lot more prepared, considering it wasn't my first time doing it. With all said and done, I got a higher score on the overall ranking but I still only just made the last class because things were very slow in our local at the time. Either way, my dream finally came through. I was accepted into the apprenticeship and was extremely excited about it.

Worth Every Second

Anthony Lamattina

There were many factors that led me to become a plumber. The big question is, what made me want to be one? First, I have quite a long list of plumbers in my family, so it's safe to say plumbing runs in my genes, and I'm proud of it. Another factor is my past experiences and prior career. I was a plumber in the Navy for six years before the union. As part of my story, I'd like to talk about the apprenticeship, in which there is good and bad. What I will discuss here will give my reader a clear picture of how the apprenticeship system works.

The apprenticeship is a long five years; if you ask me that is a long time. In addition, our local union has one of the lowest apprentice pay scales compared to other unions. However, apprentices are required to earn a college degree. How great is that? Who can turn down a free college education to better oneself with an associate degree to take home at the end of the day?

My father was a Local 1 plumber, along with half my cousins as well. My family's experience has pretty much pushed me in the right direction, in regard to getting into the union. But even with that push, I had decided to go to college and put the local on the side. Once, I had dreams of becoming a biologist. At that time, I was 19 years old; I still had a lot of time and options to figure out what I wanted. I attended college for two years before I started having doubts. Student loans were piling up and I was having a hard time working full time and attending the classes. I decided then that it would be a good time to put college on standby and apply for the apprenticeship.

At 21 years old, I was ready to let my family help me to get my foot into the Local 1. I was waiting for the union to start the apprentice application process and in the same time frame, my best friend joined the U.S. Navy. He had a lot to tell me about his decision and what the recruiters had to offer. After some thought, I once again changed my mind and decided to become a Navy sailor. I qualified for duty in 2006 and was offered a job as a hull maintenance technician. In civilian terms, this is basically being a plumber on a ship. I found that ironic because I wanted to be a plumber, and now I was getting the opportunity in the Navy. In securing this job offer, I signed a six-year contract. I left for boot camp at age 22 and served six years as a plumber on two separate ships.

There's a big difference between plumbing on ships and plumbing in a building, but I still learned enough to understand the tools and terms of the trade. My six-year contract was almost up with the Navy when I decided that if I got out I would use my connections and finally apply for Local 1. In February 2012, I left the Navy and my cousin informed me of Helmets to Hard Hats, a veteran

program that puts veterans on a fast track to trade jobs. Literally, within three months of using that program, I was working as a helper with a union ID card. I also had to wait another three months to become an apprentice.

Life as an apprentice has its ups and downs. One advantage is if you're ever laid off, you are guaranteed a job back right away. The downside is apprentices have to work nonstop through the five-year training period. They need the hours worked logged into their book. If an apprentice is laid off for a long period he or she might be delayed when graduation time comes because of having missed work hours. A laid-off journeyman is a whole different story. Journeymen practically have to fend for themselves when it comes to looking for work. There are bad things that apprentices have to deal with. For one, the apprenticeship is five years. That's a long time to go to school. It's also a long time to allow something to go wrong.

There are tough requirements, which, if not met, can get apprentices booted from the program. For instance, an apprentice who fails the same class two times in a row can be let go. If this happens to a fifth-year apprentice, that's basically five years and a lot of time wasted. There are other rules, too, that apprentices have to follow, such as the school and classroom rules that are very strict. There's a demerit system to enforce them. If an apprentice receives a certain number of these demerits he or she can be expelled or suspended. To avoid these repercussions, an apprentice must always be aware of the rules and regulations of the apprenticeship.

Now, let us consider the question of pay. For apprentices, unfortunately, I have to say that it's not good. The least I can say is that it starts low. I recall that for my whole first year, I received a low amount of \$14/hour. I don't know what I would have done if I wasn't receiving money from the military Post-9/11 GI Bill. Maybe I would have been working two or three jobs. There are apprentices my age with kids who have to work two jobs until their pay increases. I recall the case of a young woman in my orientation class. She was a single mother and had no idea that the pay was so low. She thought she finally had a break, just to wind up in the same boat she was already in. I remember talking to her to make her realize that the light at the end of the tunnel was worth it. I also find it odd that there are other unions with similar work that start their apprentices with what we pay our third-year apprentices. Overall, if you can look past the period of challenges, you might find a whole lot more than just \$14 an hour. I know when I look past my challenges, I see \$50+.

Another challenge for apprentices is college. All Local 1 apprentices have to obtain a college degree, become a certified welder, or become CAD-certified. A college degree is a great accomplishment. In our case, we already had our careers in the union and were getting college degrees without becoming stressed from job

hunting when school is over. Most college graduates have to spend a lot of time job hunting while our Local 1 college graduates are already working. If you ask me, the best part of this deal is, it's free.

My apprenticeship was a great decision. I got in easily due to my military experience and family connections. I might have gotten sidetracked for a while, but I had this planned for a long time. Even with all the good, the bad and ugly rules and regulations, five years of training and low apprentice pay scales, it is all worth it. For along the way, I will receive the best training, credentials and a free college degree. It all seems like a lot, but if one wishes to achieve a goal, he or she will do his or her best to grasp hold of that goal and put it on the top shelf in the toolbox. At the end of this long road of an apprenticeship, the pay will be great and the benefits will be good. It will be an honest living worth every second of the apprenticeship.

On Becoming a Local 3 Electrician

Michal Laskowski

Every important event in my somewhat adult life has led me to join the Local 3. I remember that as a little kid I never really knew what I wanted to be when I grew up but becoming an electrician was the last thing on my mind. Even when I was in high school, I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. As a result, I decided to join the U.S. Navy because I didn't want to waste money or time on college. It wasn't until my second year in the Navy that I finally found my passion for the electrical field. After my four-year contract was over, I decided to get out of the Navy and pursue a degree in electrical engineering. I was attending school and also was trying to get into Local 3, which for me was the true career path that I wanted to take. Finally, I was able to take the entry test for Local 3 through Helmets to Hard Hats, a program that gives an upper hand to veterans in finding jobs.

Joining the Navy was one of the best decisions that I have ever made. I definitely didn't feel that way at first because the first year or so I was in school learning electrical theory and mechanical engineering. At that point of my naval career, I hated the fact that I picked Electricians Mate as my rate. It wasn't until I was sent to my first troubleshooting job by myself that I fell in love with the field and my passion was born. The satisfaction that I received from successfully troubleshooting a piece of equipment and then fixing it sparked my interest and ultimately led me on the path that brought me to this classroom. At that point in my life, I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life; the only problem was that being in the Navy was not it.

Thankfully, the new Post-9/11 GI Bill and all of its great benefits gave me the opportunity to say goodbye to Navy life and say hello to college life. The GI Bill gave me the financial support to pursue a degree in electrical engineering. The only problem was that my high school grades were not good enough to be admitted to City College for a bachelor's degree, so I had to start at LaGuardia Community College for an associate degree in electrical engineering. Going to college and learning physics, chemistry and calculus for the first time built the foundation for electrical theory and gave me more of an understanding of how everything works. Looking back on my Navy days, I don't know how I was able to be a good electrician without ever taking those subjects. However, there were classes that made me hate going to school because I didn't feel as if they would ever help me in my line of work. That was when I decided that I was going to finish my associate degree and take a break from school and find a job.

In my final semester, I started to look for electrician jobs, and, with the help of Helmets to Hard Hats, I got an opportunity to get into Local 3, which I had been trying to do for a while. Every time I called for an application, I was told it was

locked for another two years. I had my first real chance for getting an application when the elevator maintenance and repair side of Local 3 opened 75 positions and gave out 750 applications to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. People camped out in front of the building for a week to get that application. I got there three hours before it opened and I stood in that line for about seven hours, only to be turned away at the last minute. I was the 763rd person on the line.

Three weeks later, I checked Helmed to Hard Hats and saw that Local 3 was offering a test to get into the union for veterans only, so I signed up. After taking the test, I got a call four days later and I was told that I was accepted into the program. This came as a shock to me because I have heard that some people wait years before they get a call back. Now that I have met the people who are in my class, I see that it is true, and I just can't believe how lucky I was to be selected that quickly.

Looking back at my life and the decisions I have made, I now see how everything is coming together. My acceptance into the Local 3 apprentice program finally made everything worthwhile. The decision to join the Navy led me to find my passion. After that, I knew I wanted to be in the electrical field. Going to college for electrical engineering helped me realize that the engineering side of the field is not for me. That is when I started to look for available positions in the construction side of the industry and ended up in Local 3's apprenticeship program.

The Saga of Dirty Tony

Anthony Meister

There are millions of different, unique people all around this earth. Each of us has our own story that describes us, yet some of us have more interesting lives than others. I have read plenty of biographies, ranging from musicians such as Jimi Hendrix to athletes such as Babe Ruth. There is a reason people write about them and not about me. I am only a New York City Local 1 union plumber, and though it's a very honorable trade of which I'm proud, I'll never star at Woodstock or hit a home run at Yankee Stadium, let alone take a single step on the grass at that stadium. So sit back and relax, and I'll tell you all about how I began this journey.

To better understand me, Anthony Meister, one must get inside the brain of the monster. I was born July 17, 1988 to Carmella and Wayne Meister on a warm summer night. I believe they both knew life would never be the same. I am the second child of two; my older and less-handsome brother, Mike, was awarded the "brains" of the family. As a kid, I was destructive; I was always taking things apart and rarely reassembling them. I used my curiosity about how things work to entertain myself. Mike was busy studying and doing his schoolwork at home and establishing his dominance as the intellectual brother. I started to become better and better with my hands. While Mike was inside being incredibly fair skinned, I was outside getting tanned by cutting the grass or working on our house with my father or on his car. I was never into cars, I have a Dodge Charger and I know nothing about cars.

In school, I was a C student with much potential but little desire to better myself. Even with a C, I passed the class and felt no different from my friends who earned better grades. Looking back, I kind of wish I took it seriously and was the CEO of Apple or something. But, hey, that's just not my style. I got into LIU C.W. Post due to the fact that my brother was already accepted. In addition, I took a C.W. Post College Business course in high school and did very well, enough to get me accepted into a private school with a C average. Now we are getting to the reasons I do what I do.

My problem with school was it had no immediate impact on my life, so why take it seriously until it does, I thought to myself. Now it does. As a C student, I never failed a class, until I walked into Accounting 101. My tolerance for professors who think they rule the world, as well as moronic kids in my class, was very low at the time. I found myself skipping class because I lived on campus and had no one to tell me what to do. Instead of learning, I was playing hockey. So, lo and behold, I failed Accounting 101. Faced with a dilemma, of hating school and not making enough money for my own good, I decided to make a phone call home. My mother answered, "Hello, baby."

“Hey ma, guess what? I failed accounting and I am done with college, what’s my next move?” I asked.

“Well,” she said “we have family in the electricians union and the plumbers union. Your cousins own a mechanics shop – cousins in Pride Lift Company. Because if you think you’re moving back home to sit on your ass all day, you have got another thing coming.”

Over the next few days, I weighed my options and two really stood out for me: Local 3 or Local 1. The electricians are always out of work due to the number of members, plus I am not down with getting shocked and killed on the job. Even though I am good with my hands, everyone makes mistakes. I, however, wasn’t ready to make one I would never come back from. I chose plumbing because I felt it was the safer option.

The apprenticeship always seemed a far-away dream. I was 20, young and dumb but ready and willing to learn. I put forth my best effort at work day in and day out, and I think it was noticed and appreciated by the right people. After I waited on that line with two of my cousins, another apprentice who is in my current class, and a few others, my boss called me and asked me my number, so that he could see if he could get me a good ranking. Thankfully I got in on the last call of apprentices three years after I had waited on line. Due to the weak economy and low demand for construction work, our normal two-year list was increased to three, so they could call more apprentices in from my list. I was ranked No. 148, and I know up to No. 169 was called.

The length of the apprenticeship doesn’t really matter to me; they seem to know what they are doing when they created this whole idea. The school is in amazing shape, and we have a very strong apprenticeship program. It seems the meaning of brotherhood still stands strong for the plumbers and less so for other trades. Whenever I see someone with a sticker or a shirt, I will always approach and start a conversation such as: where are you working, who are you working for? It is called networking. These people may never see my work or work with me, but now they know my face. If we continue to see each other, a relationship is likely to be formed, which could be beneficial if I got laid off. If that day comes, I hope I will be able to use my connections to find a new plumbing home.

My Journey to the Union

Chris Pisano

One of my favorite quotes that I hear all the time is, “When one door closes, another one opens.” I love this quote for many reasons. First, it reminds me that when things go wrong, there is always hope for the future. Second, it tells me that most things happen in the timing of the universe and not my time frame. Finally, it assures me that hard work will bring good things my way, even though I may not see it at that time. Growing up, my life has had its ups and downs, but I always moved forward and had hope for the future. My life is an example of “When one door closes, another one opens,” as can be seen by my journey to become part of the Local 3 brotherhood.

When I graduated from Curtis High School in June of 2004, I did not have any idea of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. After I graduated from high school, my parents wanted me to go to college and not to worry about working. I wanted to start working first, so I could have money in my pocket. Around the second week of June, I got a call from my friend Mike who recently started working at LaTourette Golf Course, which is about seven minutes away from my house. He said they had two spots open for maintenance crew, and that I should come down for an interview. I interviewed with the superintendent and he explained to me what the job entailed: what hours I would be working, sick days, and vacation time and salary. The only downfall – I wasn’t going to receive any health benefits, and I would be working only four hours a day.

I accepted the job and started working. My parents were still adamant about me going to college, especially since I had no medical insurance and I would be covered under their plan. I enrolled at The College of Staten Island and took all evening classes after work. I went for a few semesters, but when my boss wanted to increase my hours, I was ecstatic. I could finally buy my own car. I left The College of Staten Island and started working full time. I was working at the golf course for five years, management was drastically changing, and so was my paycheck.

It was time for a change, so I started applying for jobs that were not so great, but at that time I needed to do something. No one called. My father’s friend told him he knew someone who was a manager at a brand new job site that had just opened up. My father gave me the application and in about two weeks later, I had my interview. The name of the company was called Free Lighting Corporation, an energy conservation company. I got the job! It was completely different from the golf course; now, I would be installing energy efficient light bulbs in people’s homes. The pay was really good, and they gave me health benefits; a new journey in my life started, and I was working for Free Lighting Corporation.

During my years at Free Lighting Corp., there were city tests that were coming out. My dad encouraged me to take all of them. I took the sanitation, iron workers, operating engineer, carpenters union, MTA and, last but not least, Local 3. Out of all these city jobs, I was most interested in Local 3 because most of my uncles and cousins are electricians, and they have always told me it was the best job/trade in the world. My Uncle Sal told me that there are so many options that I can do with this trade. When I received my application, I did not hesitate to fill it out. I waited four years and they finally called me. Before getting the letter from Local 3, I got laid off from Free Lighting Corp.: one door closed and another door opened.

In April of 2013, the Joint Industry Board sent me a letter asking if I was still interested in joining the apprentice program. I couldn't check the "yes" box fast enough. My heart was pounding as fast as my hands were shaking. I was contacted by the Joint Industry Board and my career at Local 3 began. I've been working only three weeks now, but I really have to say it's been the best decision I ever made in my life and I wouldn't change it for anything. I learned so much already in three weeks and made so many friends, and, eventually, your friends become your brothers and sisters.

I really do believe that hard work does pay off and "when one door closes another one opens" because I am proof of that. To succeed in this world, you must work hard and have a lot of patience; always have the right mindset in everything you do in life or else you will never succeed.

When I Was Young

Vernon Swindell Jr.

When I was young I always saw myself with a good career: a fireman, pilot, chef, lawyer, doctor, scientist, etc. But, a plumber was never on the list. For some, it was a dream, due to prior family generations in plumbing. For them, pipes are their life, but how did, I, a young Caribbean American, get into this field?

In junior high, my mother decided it would be best if I learned a trade. Something I could fall back on in hard times, and I agreed. As a result, I applied to Chelsea Career and Technical Education High School, a school that focused on computers. What caught my eye was the population: 90 percent girls. My mother had other plans. She sent me to Alfred E. Smith Vocational High School. There I would learn the real hands-on trades, and to keep me out of trouble, it was about 95 percent guys ... great.

I decided to make the best of my bleak situation, and I made many new friends, made time for old ones and learned a lot. Then, we eventually had to pick a trade to focus on. It seemed like everyone was picking the “easy” route and choosing electrical, so I chose to be a plumber. That turned out well for me. We even had the most girls in the school, and plumbing came easy. We competed on a statewide level and came in second place as well.

During senior year, I went through a program, which was basically a fast track to the union. Pass that and you skip the lines; no wait and you are in. However, after I graduated, I decided that plumbing wasn't for me. I stopped going to the program and failed out. Months later, I was talked into “at least giving it a try.” But, how long will I “try” it for?

My first shop was a small alteration shop based in Brooklyn, N.Y. I loved it. The guys were really welcoming; my first job site was a 15-minute walk from my house, and it was all I could dream for. Over time, I gave a lot to that shop. I worked a lot of overtime and did a lot of “B” work for them, which consisted of working on live waste lines and in small spaces with rats and roaches. Getting calls at 3 a.m. telling me that I needed to go to a new job for them that day, I happily accepted. Until, one day, I got laid off. No explanation, just a handshake and a “thank you for your services.” That is an experience that showed me there is no such thing as loyalty here; it changed me, and my views, a lot. But, once again I ask, how long will I continue to “try” this union?

Hopefully, not long at all. This isn't what I saw myself doing as a kid, or the future that I thought would make me happy, so soon enough I'll be going into another field, traveling the world, seeing things from a different perspective. But while I'm here, I will be the best that I can be, I'll work hard and show those along the way who I am.

Obstacles on the Path to the Union

Raymond Tang

My path to Local Union 3 was a very long and painful journey. Before learning about the existence of the union, I was lost and did not have any goals in life. I would spend my days at home playing video games while my peers attended college. The opportunity of a lifetime came to me through the support of my mother. She is mentally strong but she is physically weak because she has been battling cancer for more than 10 years. It is thanks to her that I am who I am today because through her unwavering belief and effort, I attended a seminar held by the Chinese American Planning Council (CPC), which eventually led to my introduction into Building Works. This is a six-month-long preapprenticeship program that gave me the education and training to join Local Union 3.

In the past, I would only find work because I was in it for the money. I didn't care where it would lead me to; all was good as long as I got paid and my parents didn't bother me. All the money I made was earned with sweat and tears, but it was never satisfying because I knew it was a low-paying, dead-end job. The world has too many things that I want to do and many people who I would like to support, but it would cost a lot of money. "Money makes the world go round" and "no money, no honey," are two phrases that described my predicament. My father wanted me to be more realistic and pushed me toward finding a career, not a job, if I wanted to support myself and my future family.

It all started when my mother begged me to attend an orientation for hotel management. I honestly did not have any interest in cleaning up after guests or doing anything related to customer service. As I left the orientation, a bright orange flyer caught my eye. It was a flyer for a program called Building Works. My life changed drastically after this. I immediately sought out the coordinator to find out more about this program. At first, I thought "this is easy" since I needed to take a basic English and math test. Eventually, after passing, I found out that the test was only the first part. I had to go to the Building Works building, which is the same building as the carpenter union, to take another test to get into the program. However, this time I didn't do as well because I was nervous and misheard the instructions during part one of the math test. I thought I needed to complete only 15 out of 25 questions. Luckily, I did well during part two of the math test, but this didn't quell the fear in me. After handing in the test we were instructed to wait an hour for the final results. It felt like an eternity since I couldn't go home, so the first thing I did was call my mother to tell her how I did. That phone call calmed me down a little because I knew my parents would be there for me all the way. After waiting an hour, I received the judgment call. I passed! I made up the loss of points with the reading and second portion of the math test. The next step was just as nerve wracking as the test since I had to go to

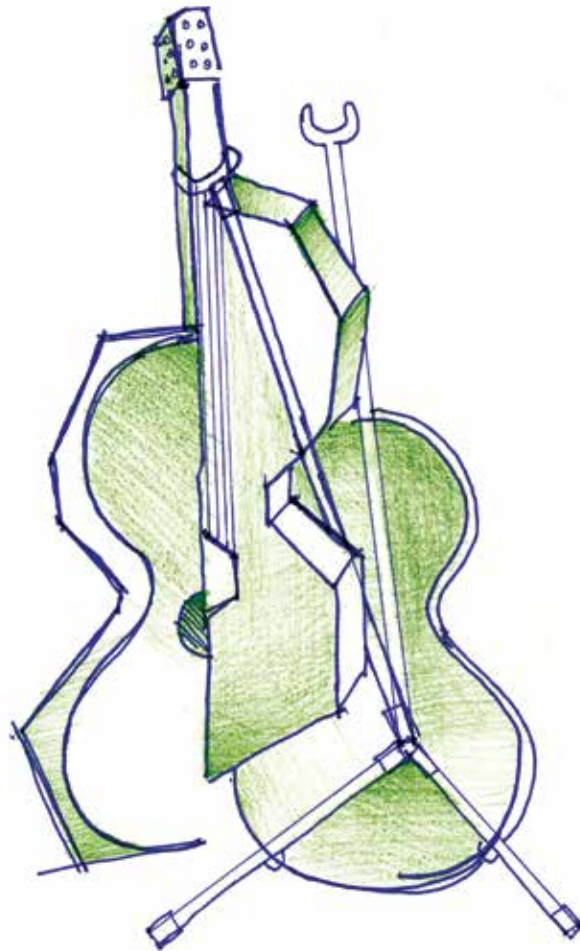
an interview. I went home to spread the good news but their only reply was that I needed to prepare myself for what is coming next. The interview was not a walk in the park and I came out feeling as if I was not going to make it, but I passed. After such a demanding process, only 30 people were selected to participate in the program.

The first obstacle I faced was to be on site at 7 a.m. sharp. The rule was to be on time and if there were more than three absences you would be kicked out of the program. I live in Brooklyn, which meant I would have to wake up at 5 a.m. to make it on time. That was the first time in my life I needed to wake up so early. In time, I understood that this was to teach us discipline. The second obstacle was the first few classes given: Basic Math and English. They were boring and made me feel as though I was back in middle school. I didn't want to go, but I endured the classes and ended up doing average in English but really well in math, which balanced out my grade. The next class was Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); this class was not so bad because it was more interesting. The teachers were actual carpenters who taught us about the safety of the construction site and told us real-life experience stories. The journey took a turn for the better as I was exposed to more knowledge. The next part of the program was the 40-hour hazardous waste class, in which we had to put on a suit as if we were in a waste site. The level of the safety suit worn depended of the levels. Level A was a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) suit, which included a tank on our backs to help us in the field. The Level B suit was for decontamination. Level B uses a supplied air respirator (SAR), to help the people with the Level A suit to wash off waste on their gear. The Level C suit was a full face respirator used to help Levels A and B to take off their gear. Lastly, we took the asbestos abatement handler classes that taught us about safety when dealing with asbestos and the lead abatement classes about the proper handling of lead. Through Building Works, I gained four licenses because each class prepared me to take state licensing exams.

Finally, as the program drew to an end, we were given more hands-on opportunities and classes. I was exposed to a workshop in which we learned how to make a room from scratch. The first thing we needed to do was put up studs and tracks to make the frame of the room; then we were taught how to account for windows and doorways. The next workshop was done in the field in which we help rebuild a church hit by Hurricane Sandy by Gerritsen Beach. We worked alongside Heart 9/11 members who also shared their experiences. I learned how to tape and that taping is easy to learn but hard to master. Then, I helped put up doors and put in knobs. When we did the kitchen, I had to put up the cabinets. After the field training, when I thought it was over, I heard news that Local 3 was accepting apprentices but required a test. I was excited but worried at the same time. I was excited because it was the opportunity into electrical engineering I was waiting for but worried because I didn't have the algebra credits required. Just as I was thinking about what I should do, Building Works set up a prep course for us.

The teacher was hard on us but it paid off because she prepared us for the test. I was very anxious the night before so that I had trouble sleeping. In the end, I passed with very good grades, especially on algebra, the part I was most nervous about.

The road throughout the program was long and hard, but I eventually understood it was to test and strengthen my resolve. The classes were used to see if we could work with one another, follow orders, give ideas to the team, and be honest if there was something we don't know. We learned a lot about the union and what it is to truly have each other's backs. What I got from the program was knowledge I will use for life. My teacher from the field would always say, "The world is a stage. Every move we make and every step we take will show," which means whatever we do on the job or in life, people will always be watching us, so we must do our best. Although I faced many obstacles along the way, I had fun.



MARIO RUIZ

"Guitar"

Mario Ruiz

My Way to an Incredible Career

Philip Tuzzolino

When I think back to when I was a kid in high school, the thought of becoming a plumber never crossed my mind. I actually had no idea of what I wanted to do with my life. What I did know was that I was just awful in school so it didn't seem possible for me to pursue a career as a doctor, lawyer or anything of the sort. As a senior in high school, most people already have planned out what they are going to do with their lives. They know what college they will go to and what they want to major in. I fell into the other category, the one where I had no idea of what I wanted to do or what my plans were. So, I guess for those who were like me, who were not able to decide what road to travel, we simply let it fall into the hands of fate.

My story begins in 2009. I was 19 years old with no thought of any career moves. Since I didn't go to college, I worked full time at a collection agency where I would serve summons to people who owed money to our clients. I also would collect payments and file documents with the county courts. I made pretty good money and also had the luxury of driving my boss's Mercedes Benz around for work. While this seemed like a good job, deep down inside I knew it was not going to be a good career and was not a job with which I would be able to support a family. Unfortunately, at that time in my life, I really didn't care much. I just knew that I was working hard and had money in my pocket and that was good enough for me. Little did I know that everything was about to change.

One day my mother came home from a family party and called me up to tell me that she had seen my cousin Tommy who was a Local 1 plumber. She said he had asked about me and that they started talking and decided that plumbing would be a good career move for me. I wasn't too thrilled about it, but I agreed just to keep my mom off my back from nagging me about it. A few months passed, and I completely forgot about the whole thing until I got a call from my cousin. He told me to get ready because he was on his way to pick me up and drive me to Long Island City to wait on line and get an application for the plumbers union. In my head, I was like, "Man, I really don't want to do this." But I didn't want to upset my family so, of course, I said okay. A nice 30-minute drive later and I'm sitting on the corner of 37th Street and Queens Boulevard, thinking in my head "What did I just get myself into?"

So I sat on line for two days straight because they only gave out a certain number of applications and it was on a first-come, first-served basis. Finally the line started to move and I got my application. I went home exhausted. A few months passed and, at that time, I had lost my job at the collections agency, so with no money coming in I thought, why not give the union a shot? I didn't really know what I was getting into though and was a bit nervous, too.

Fast forward to two-and-a-half years later and here I am. I made it into the plumbers Union, and I am now learning an incredible trade which I actually enjoy doing. I have to say, thinking back, I would have never thought that the clueless kid in high school would now have a great career. I guess it really was fate.

It Pays To Be Educated

Jerry Velez

Would you like to have a job? Or would you rather have a career? There's a great difference between the two, and throughout your life you may want to fall back on a career rather than a job. A job is just a simple word for "I'm not sure what I want to do with my life yet," but the definition of a "career" exceeds that of the word "job." So what exactly is my point here? Well, with a career you set your mind to something that you know you're going to stick with for the next years until the day you retire, and that's why I chose to become a member of IBEW Local 3. There's always a start and finish to something, from car racing, to playing chess, to completing the five-year Local 3 apprenticeship program. I will take you back to the past, just so you can witness the road I had to cross to get to IBEW Local 3.

This well-known union has been around for decades, and it has a lot to offer. It takes a five-year apprenticeship program and a college degree to reach the status of a journeyman electrician in Local 3. But why join a union that requires you to get a college degree and is not paying you that well? To answer this question, I may have to look into the future and see where I will stand in this industry, and to tell you the truth, there is nothing like having a free education and also getting paid some money, so you are really winning in two ways. If you want to get further in the union and have an opportunity for growth, I believe that everybody should have a college degree, or any form of higher education, because the more education you have, the better chance you have to earn a higher spot in the union. Also, higher education helps us do all the things that real professionals do in the workforce, from writing paperwork, sending emails, requesting material for the workers, budgeting and using analytical skills to meet the demands of the general contractor, so everyone on the job site can be safe and happy. I also believe the apprenticeship makes sense because we come into the union not knowing much about the electrical industry, and we are blessed to be in a career where we have a lot of experienced electricians teaching us the ways of the trade.

So how did I get into Local 3? It all started in middle school; my dad wanted me to attend the same high school he attended when he was younger, Alfred E Smith High School in the Bronx. This was a technical high school for the trades; in other words, you pick a trade in carpentry, plumbing, automotive technology, architectural drafting, or electrical. My dad wanted me to follow in his footsteps and become a carpenter, but I thought of how would that take a toll on my body and my future, and I decided, no, I'm not built to be a carpenter. Sophomore year, I chose to be in the electrical trade because I knew that everything revolves around electricity and future advancement depended on electricity. It may be dangerous, but there were things about this trade that I really liked; it's really hands on,

and to tell you the truth, I am a hands-on learner. Since sophomore year in high school, I decided I wanted to be a member of Local 3, but the real challenge was how was I going to get there? Right then, I knew that with hard work, doing all of my homework, not missing assignments, participating in class and being at the top of my class, would strengthen my chances to earn a spot in construction skills, a program where I could get a direct referral to Local 3.

As I proceeded into my junior year of high school, I learned how to do basic wiring, bend conduit and wire switches to illuminate light bulbs. I also drew sketches and learned how to read blueprints and put what's drawn into real-life models of the drawings. By the time I became a senior, I was so good at what I did in class at hands-on work that I got selected into an electrical wiring competition for Skills USA in Syracuse, New York. My best friend, Edward, and I were the top students in our school at the time, which made us perfect candidates for the competition. He specialized in motor controls, while I specialized in residential wiring. We competed against students from all across the New York state. The competition was intense; everything was time based so we had very limited time to do the hands-on work. I got to finish all of the assignments while the majority didn't really get to finish at all. Even though I didn't win the competition, I felt like I did my best and that's what matters the most. After that, I felt ready to take on the union world.

As I maintained focus on my schoolwork, my shop teacher added me in the construction skills program. I was 17 years old at the time, I earned my spot in the construction skills program. That being so, the program required 14 weeks of lecture and six weeks in the summer to complete to prepare us for the workforce. It wasn't easy, but I got through it and earned my referral into Local 3, along with my friend Edward and other electrical students in my school. The union called me and said I had to wait until I was 18 years old to come in. I was recently working in UNIQLO, a Japanese clothing store, and I also was attending college for electrical engineering at City Tech after high school while I waited to meet Local 3's age requirement. Most parents forced their children to attend college, but I really wasn't forced to go because I believed higher education would have positive benefits in my life. I believed that education would make my life better and there's always something I can fall back on in case Local 3 has a rainy day in the future. Nothing is promised, so why not have a separate degree?

When I finally turned 18 years old on Dec. 7, 2011, I couldn't sleep thinking of when I would get that call from Local 3. Then my phone rang, and I received the good news, and got scheduled to take the Local 3 aptitude test on Jan. 29, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. I was ready for the test because of the amount of studying the construction skills program made us do. It all paid off when I got the call in February when the union told me I passed the test. They placed me to work my first day on March 29, 2012 and I've been happy with my new career ever since.

Being an educated human being certainly pays off, as I mentioned before. Many say school is not for them; I say they're just lazy and have "better things to do." But the real point is, education is what you make of it, and if you think it'll pay off someday, then go ahead and make your own decisions based upon what you want to do. I've met some great people that influenced me to be a scholar and a hard worker, and that's why I would like to thank my electrical shop teachers for guiding me into this great career and I thank them for everything they've done to help me get into Local 3. My plans for the future go beyond that of being an electrician, I hope to one day have my college degree in business management, get my master electrician license and land a position as a project manager, an engineer, electrical drafter, superintendent, shop steward or even own my own electrical shop. In Local 3, you are not limited to just becoming a journeyman electrician, so becoming the boss is one of my long-term goals in life. I currently continue to learn from the best and one day I'll go back to them and show them I've made it, at last.

Tough Decisions

Lulzim Ljubanovic

I joined the Local 3 for many reasons; one of them was that I wanted stability in a job. Bouncing from job to job for me is not the ideal way to make a living, and I knew that when the time came to start a family, it would help me tremendously. Little did I know that while in the middle of starting a family, I would have gotten a call from the union that would push me to make some of the toughest decisions of my life.

When I applied for the union, I was 20 years old and single. Four and a half years later, I got married, had a beautiful baby boy, and was out on my own supporting a family. My job at the time was just enough for us to survive, but I always dreamed of bigger and better things for us. So when the union called, it didn't take long for me to tell them that I was still interested. However, I came to the realization that I was going to have some difficult decisions ahead of me.

The process happened so quickly that before I knew it, I was on my way to the Electrical Joint Board to pick up my job ticket and prepare for a new career. I held on to my previous job, just in case the union paycheck would not be enough for me to support my family. That Friday, I received my first union paycheck and knew right away that I was going to have to make some serious life choices immediately. My rent was almost the sum of my union checks combined for the month. So needless to say, I had to choose between whether to leave the union and continue working and living from paycheck to paycheck and chasing a dream or try to hold on to both jobs as long as possible.

I chose to try working both jobs as long as I possibly could manage to do so. It felt really good to tell people that I had gotten into the Local Union 3; their ecstatic reaction made me feel really proud of myself.

Even though some days are incredibly tough, I would much rather struggle now and build a career for the future of my family and me. Everyone wants to live the American dream of owning a home and having a career that he or she can be proud of. Now I feel that dream can become a reality with the union, and that is why I decided to join Local 3.

I Had No Idea ...

Tarell White

Truthfully, I had no idea I would be where I am today. Prior to being in the apprenticeship for plumbers, I was an ordinary high school student. All my life, my dad told me I would go to college, and once I got my degree, I would be in control of my own future. There was one point when I believed my father's words, but after seeing so many of my friends graduate college and come back home struggling, those words started to fade.

While in high school, I had a shop class, which taught practical skills. My shop class was electrical engineering, and, being in that class, I learned about wiring houses and making fiber-optic cables. One day, we had a visitor who wanted a few others and me to join a program. That moment was a life changer for me. Again, I thought about my father's words, and although college was what he wanted for me, I had never thought about what I wanted for myself. Even though Entwine wasn't the type of schooling my father had hoped for, I had a chance to learn a trade and get a free two-year degree.

So why did I become a plumber when in high school I had an electrical background? First, I had to attend a construction skills class once a week for six weeks, where I was taught what goes on at construction sites. At that time, I thought a plumber simply fixed toilets, so how hard can that be? After that, I did some research and found out that the plumbers were among the top three highest paid in the construction industry. There were two more factors that helped me reach my decision in choosing plumbing as my future. The first was that everyone in my class wanted to be an electrician, and I knew they would not have room for all of us. I wasn't willing to take that chance with my future. The second was, at the time, that there was a demand for plumbers which meant I had an easy entrance.

While in this plumbers apprenticeship, I go through a lot of hardship. Some days, I feel as if I can't do this, as if I don't belong. Then there are days where I feel as if I can do anything, and my future is in good hands. One thing I've learned while doing this is even though nobody admits it, they love when you work extremely hard for them; it shows you want to be there.

This has been a journey that I never expected I would be on, and I'm grateful for all the opportunities I have had. Journey workers often forget how it feels to be the low man on the totem pole. Right now, I'm starting from the bottom and slowly working my way to the top. There are a lot of people who would love to see me quit but I have no quit in me. I think I made the right decision and am proud to be a Local 1 apprentice. Things are going so good that even my dad is starting to think I made the right decision as well.

WE CARRY



"Hard Hat"

Freddie Garcia

The Things I Carry

C. Del Sole

We all carry lots of things with us every day. I don't mean just plumbers or tradesmen, I mean everyone. What we carry has a lot to do with who we are as people and how we go about our everyday lives. We carry things that are physical and we carry things that are mental. "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien is the book we read to give us inspiration for this paper, which revolved around a platoon in the Vietnam War. What they had to carry was ridiculous, in terms of both the physical and mental burdens it put on them. I look at the things I carry and feel as though I don't even deserve to draw a comparison to what they had to do. In any case, I have written this paper probably three times over just because I can't seem to put a finger on just what it is I carry and why. You see, it changes day to day; both the physical and mental items change based on partners, jobs, moods, weather and any number of factors. What I will try and do is pinpoint some of the things that vary a bit less.

One thing I always carry with me is my union card. Not because I have to, but because I take a lot of pride in having one. I am proud to be a Local 1 member; I am proud to represent the men and women who provide an incredible skill and service to the people of this city. Sure, the card is a small plastic inanimate object that can't really do anything by itself. One thing it can do is allow me to get up and go to work every morning with a great feeling that I am part of something special and bigger than myself. I know it separates me from the less-skilled and less-appreciated workers out there. This doesn't make me conceited; rather it reminds me of what I have been through, and what I have to continue to go through, in order for that card to eventually say "journeyman." It reminds me that I am on a journey myself and that I am working towards something better all the time.

After reading "The Things They Carried," I realized that I, too, carry some tools that are with me every day, everywhere I go. I don't have to, but I do. For example, I carry a simple multitool, at least one pencil, pen or marker that can write on any surface and a pair of channel locks. The guys in the book relied on their tools every day to dig their foxholes and to cook their meals. My tools aren't that much of a necessity, but they do allow me to feel prepared. Moreover, they let me do things that may have required another trip to get another tool or a trip to find something to write on. They save me time and help me to feel as though I am contributing maybe a little more than the next guy. One wouldn't think that a few simple everyday things could have an impact on the workday, but a few saved trips back to the shanty or gang box adds up to getting more work done more efficiently. I have a lot to prove as a new guy and I want to make sure I do the best I can. It's funny how just a couple of basic items can make a person feel that much more secure and prepared, whether I have to use them or not.

Another thing I always carry is my phone, not so much to use as a phone; it's actually in airplane mode the majority of the time. At the same time, it does allow me to take pictures to keep track of this journey that I am on. In addition, I use it to take pictures of the places I go and the jobs I am a part of. In a pinch, I have used it to look up manuals or specs on a piece of equipment or look up supplies for a job. I am sure any one of the men in "The Things They Carried" would have loved to have something like the phones we have now to make them feel a little closer to home and to help them document and deal with what they had to do.

In a way, the pictures I take also give me that sense of pride that my union card does. A lot of people will say, "Oh, you're a Local 1 apprentice, but do you do anything besides get coffee?" I can pull out my phone and proudly show them the work that I do and the jobs I have done. Just like my few tools, it also helps me feel prepared. I know I can look up something that we may be stumped on, or use it to find directions to a job site we haven't been to before. I can use it for a ton of things besides what it was meant for. I take a lot of before-and-after pictures, and I go back to them often as I learn new things and see how maybe we could have done something differently. Or, when faced with a problem that we have had before, I have a reference to go to and say, "Well this is what we did last time and it worked out well." I know we are never supposed to be on the phone at work, and I never am, but I am really glad that I have it to keep track of the so many different things that happen throughout a day.

I guess, in a way, I carry similar things to what the men in the book did, but they just don't weigh as heavily on me. I made a choice to be here; I wasn't drafted or forced. I didn't really know what I was getting into, but I also can leave whenever I want to. I miss some things when I am at work, but I always get the chance to go home to them at the end of the day.

I feel all the things I carry because they are physically there, but I also feel what the men in the book had to carry. I feel pride and honor for what they went through, so that I can have the chance to write this paper right now. I feel the same for the men and women that served before them and the ones that still serve today. I am proud to be an American; I feel we are prepared for anything with the military behind us; I am honored to share the same soil with people willing to sacrifice themselves so that others may live free. I guess that's why I had such a tough time writing this. I just don't think that what I carry can hold a candle to what they did. Sure, some of the tools may be similar and technology has changed for the better, but their burden is my freedom and my burden is making sure nothing leaks. I am not trying to sell plumbers short, not one bit. After all, we protect the health of the nation. But, it's the men and women that defend this nation that have the heaviest burden, no matter what they carry.

Value of the Things I Carry Daily

Ikari Shinji

The clock strikes five and my phone starts to ring its awful tone that I chose because nothing else would wake me. It takes all my self-control not to hit the snooze button. I can hear water running, telling me my mother is already awake and getting ready. The floor starts to creak above me as my father gets up, telling me I have only have 15 minutes if I want to get a ride with him to the train station. My dog runs down the stairs and scratches my sister's door to be let in. This is the sonata that I wake up to every weekday morning before I begin to gather the many things I take with me to work.

After checking the weather, the first items I prepare for work are my clothes. They have to be weather appropriate, especially if I'm working outside. I also need to be sure I look professional in case I run into any customers on the job. Shoes are one of the most important because I am constantly on my feet, and when working in unsafe conditions, wearing good footwear is essential to my safety and comfort.

Once I am dressed, my next step is to put on my belt with my flashlight and Leatherman. These two items represent preparedness and peace of mind. No matter the situation, these two items can almost always provide a great deal of help. I wish I had counted the number of times they had gotten me out of a tight spot, on and off the job. At the very least, they save me a trip to the toolbox when something needs to be screwed down or cut.

Next, I grab my wallet and cellphone; the latter is mainly there for emergencies. I know that if someone important to me needs to get in contact with me, that person can easily reach me. Another reason the cellphone is useful is its ability to access the Internet, which gives me access to directions, techniques or other applications for making electrical calculations.

My wallet holds many important items for work. The obvious ones are money and credit cards because you never know when you might need cash. The other items of importance in my wallet are my driver's license, OSHA card and, most important, my union card. The union card is by far the most symbolic item I carry. This 3" by 4" piece of paper gives me the right to work as an electrician's apprentice for IBEW Local 3 and gives me the right to demand working conditions agreed on in my contract.

Aside from the physical items I carry are intangible things I take with me, such as my attitude. I always try to keep a positive attitude at work. Even if I'm having a bad day or working with someone who is being difficult, I try not to let it affect my disposition. A strong desire to learn also is required of the apprentice,

considering our job is to learn the electrical trade. One of the things I struggle to carry at times is my role as an apprentice and the willingness to carry out the tasks that no one else wants to do.

The most useful thing I carry with me to work is the knowledge I have attained from four years as an electrician's apprentice for both union and nonunion employers. Knowledge of materials, techniques and electrical codes I also have used are examples of intangible things I must carry. Added to this is the awareness of what working for a nonunion company can be like with unsafe conditions, second-hand materials, an unsafe pace, no boundaries of responsibility and no benefits. It is because of this that I also carry pride to work – pride in the work that I do and in the union that represents me.

Of all the things I carry, the heaviest of these is responsibility. As an apprentice, I am expected to go to work five days a week, go to school two nights a week, and attend any other meetings that the union requires of me. I also have a responsibility to represent positively my union and its brothers and sisters, as anything I do to negatively represent the union affects all of its members. I am responsible for my family, to help support them and to prepare to support my own family one day. Above all else, I carry with me a responsibility to myself to be the best electrician I can be, every day.

Soldier of Labor

Ricardo Berberena

Bugle horns go off at 5 a.m. sharp every morning; it's the start of a soldier's day. Waking up and getting everything in order for your day's mission is first priority. A construction site is my war zone and my daily tasks are my duty. My backpack is on the chair, waiting to be filled with the things it carries for my survival every day on the battlefield. I need the basics for living, of course, water and food, enough rations to get through the day. For personal hygiene: deodorant, cologne and mouthwash. The most important for me to survive will be my weapons: measuring tape, marker and pocketknife. Without these items, I will never make it out in the war zone. One thing my backpack cannot carry is my awareness, my keen sense of focus, which is something I always carry within myself on a daily basis on the battlefield.

A soldier is nothing without his sidearm. With my measuring tape on my waist, I carry it with me all day long and it goes wherever I go. You will never know when you are going to need it – caught without it can be your death. The measuring tape is my precision weapon, like a sniper's rifle. With perfect aim, I will know exactly what to hit. I can find location and position, like an "X" on a map. I also use it to make perfect cuts with pipe and mark spots on walls, which is key in the field. Carrying a measuring tape is one of the most important things that I need to achieve my daily duties.

The one thing that can go great with a sniper's rifle is his scope. For me, a perfect combination for my measuring tape would be a marker. With both, making accurate marks and pinpointing locations becomes easier and less likely for error. On the battlefield, there is no room for error. It also becomes handy to write anything down that might slip my mind throughout the day. The marker stays in my back pocket, behind my measuring tape, for fast access and quick reach. Speed is helpful for a soldier, and routine becomes a habit because of it. So with the precision of the rifle and with the sniper scope, the red dot is where I place my mark. The third weapon I always carry is a pocketknife. Since my childhood, I remember my father teaching me a pocketknife is essential to survival. It's just a key tool for survival, period. Nothing compares to a soldier and his trusty pocketknife. I have used a knife for all purposes, even as a utensil if need be.

Intangible items are a different story. In my line of work, sometimes it feels like war, the ranks, the commands and the orders, everyone working under one outfit, for a common purpose. To survive, you need to carry things people can never see. I carry awareness inside me. It is the lack of this that can get you hurt on the battlefield. Being fully aware of all your surroundings can greatly reduce the chances of an accident. Focus also is very important to have with you at all times because we have tasks and need to get them done, which is our overall

goal. You want to work with as few errors or mistakes as possible, just to keep your day running smoothly. If you're not focused and make mistakes, you will be accountable for it. It's a push; I strive to be the best soldier I can be. I use whatever experience I have to assist with my tasks. Even if I hit a roadblock, I always find a way around it. There is always a solution, always an answer to solve my problems, so I never back down and hitting these roadblocks will only motivate me to learn more and be more knowledgeable.

In conclusion, the tangible and intangible things that I must carry with me every day on the battlefield better equip me for the day ahead. Being fully equipped and prepared can contribute to my success. My success can guarantee my survival and longevity in this war zone. As I embark on my day with my backpack filled with food, water and my important weapons, I know I am walking into the field fully prepared and ready for whatever the day brings. My awareness, is sharp and keen to all my surroundings; with a very good chance of survival, I start my day.

The Things We All Carry

John Fields

Day to day, we all have to carry something, whether it is keys, books, wallet, phone, bags, etc. The things we carry daily tend to be a personification of our inner person, yet because it's a daily routine and habit, we forget the personal items we may carry. Therefore, as we pass the people around us, we give little to no attention to individualism that exists with others in the things they may choose to carry; this is especially true in the fast-moving and rude city of New York. Still, analyzing the things we may carry as individuals, or our inner person, we can then be able to recognize the similarities we may have with another person; even though the things we carry express our individualism, it's this individualism that makes us united as people. To sum it all up, the things that make us appear to be different are actually the things that prove our similarities.

My name is John Fields and every day when I travel throughout busy New York City (going to and from school, taking care of personal matters, work or participating in community service), I generally tend to carry a few things with me. The few things I do carry are important and include items such as my keys, wallet, phone, book bag and a watch. None of these items are special or unique alone; it's the meaning that they carry in themselves that makes them special for me. The things I carry seem to carry their own unique items.

These items I speak of are actually the unique inner and deeper meanings that my keys, wallet, phone, book bag and watch hold for me. See, most people view these normal, day-to-day items as just that, day-to-day items, but they're much more than that if we put enough thought into them. Yes, my keys open doors, yet when you look at my personal keys, there you'll see many old, unused keys and current, frequently used keys. When looking at them, you may ask, "Why so many keys?" For me, my keys actually represent my sense of security with my past and present; not losing the "keys" to my past and present. Also, my wallet has a similar effect of who I am. Now, looking at my wallet, it holds many different forms of identification, some that I don't use on a daily basis and seem to just hold a space in my wallet. From the perspective of others, it seems meaningless to hold on to all these different identifications. Just as my keys, also my wallet is a link to my past – representing who I have become – from my past until now. Holding onto these identifications in my wallet and my different keys, shows my acceptance of who I am as a person; I am fully accepting of my past and my present.

Along with my keys and wallet, I carry my phone and book bag every day. Like most, my phone carries contacts, emails, pictures and music, and, like most, I can't go a day without it. I would like to focus on the music on my phone; my music is a means to relax myself from the daily mental stresses of life. My music mentally isolates me, so I have some space to myself; this is actually

a means of dealing with my stress. Now, my book bag, it does do the obvious: carrying my books for school, books for reading, my pens and pencils, etc. But every day before I go out, I always change the items in my bag to compensate for what I need for that day. This daily swapping of books, pens and items is important for me to do because it represents another way to handle to my stress. I try not to carry unnecessary burdens and stress, and I'm a strong advocate of the belief that every day has its own burdens. Both my phone and book bag represent how I deal with my daily stress.

Now, let us look at another person who holds similar items as I do but has a slightly different meaning that serves for him in contrast. This person's name is Daniel Moore, and the items he carries that are significant are his keys and phone. First, let's observe the significance of his keys. Most obvious is that he uses his keys to be able to enter into his house. Yet, the underlining meaning is that his keys represent his home and gives him a sense of security; a similar idea of what my own keys represent for me. Then, Daniel Moore's phone is an iPhone 4, which is a relatively expensive phone. Just as most of us, his phone serves the purpose of keeping connected with the outside world and access to entertainment. For Daniel, this serves for a means of relaxation; especially when he's stressed, he's able to escape for a small amount of time into his phone.

Finally, let us examine my watch; I have an NFL New Jersey Jets watch. Many people, when they observe my watch, think either: 1) the Jets team is one of my favorite teams or 2) that the watch is there just to tell time. Yes, it serves both purposes; still it does hold a deeper meaning than just those two ideas. This watch was a gift that I received for one of my achievements, so I'm showing my appreciation by taking very good care of this item. Ever since I got it, I take care of it and wear it every day if possible. Therefore, I show thanks and appreciation to the ones who gave me this gift.

In comparison, Daniel carries with him something different from a watch that he cherishes; this item is his linesman pliers. Due to the fact that he is a first-year apprentice for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 3, he has to carry his "pocket tools" with him daily and one of those tools is his linesman pliers. Pocket tools are tools most frequently used by electricians and are referred to as "pocket tools" because the pockets are the quickest access to workers tools than a bag. Yet it's what the pliers mean for him internally – he holds an appreciation for his pliers because they have become an extension of him; he has even said that he would feel weird if he didn't have it on his person. So, even though some of the details of the things Daniel carries are different from mine, the majority of it is similar; and an examination of these differences shows the subtle similarities that we both have.

When analyzing the daily items of our busy lives, we can see the similarities that we as individuals have with each other. Looking at things as simple as my keys, wallet, phone, book bag and watch helps to reveal who I am, how I deal with stress, and the appreciation of a cherished gift. These are things we all, as humans, want in our own individual lives. Try thinking about the items you choose to carry on a daily basis, and you may be surprised about how it may reveal a deeper, inner person of yourself.

Fully Clothed

Benjamin Cadel

The things we carry vary from person to person. Most people have staples that they always have on them, plus they carry all the feelings they have going on in their head. Personally, I must always have my wallet and phone on me at all times or I feel naked. If I don't have these things on me, or don't know where they are located, I will go on a rampage looking for them. Those two objects I carry are material things; I also carry the stress of everyday life and how to deal with situations that come up in my life.

The first thing I have with me at all times is my wallet. It is a must because it has everything I need to get around and pay for things. In my wallet, you will always find my driver's license, my union ID, my college ID and all the certifications I have for work. I always need to have my certifications and union ID on me when I am on a job or they can throw me off the job. In my wallet, I also have my bus tickets and my MTA card. These I need to have on me so I can get to work without having to drive myself. I also have my two bank cards in there, with no money on them and no cash on it either because every cent I make goes to bills. If I didn't have my wallet on me for a day, I wouldn't be able to get anywhere and I wouldn't be allowed onto a job site.

The second thing that I must always have on me is my iPhone. It weighs 4.5 ounces and has a 4-inch screen. It connects me to the world and I would be so lost without it. I use my phone constantly throughout the day for many different reasons. If I am on the other side of a work site and my foreman or one of my mechanics needs to get a hold of me, instead of them running around looking for me, they can just call me. This saves time and money for the company I am working for. I also use my phone to find phone numbers to supply houses for my foremen because the other guys are iPhone illiterate. On my bus ride home from work, I play games and go on social media; it makes the ride so much faster. I use my iPhone to pay bills, email, alarm, calendar, etc. Without my phone on me, I am pretty much disconnected from everything. I have to carry it with me because it has so much important information on there that I couldn't risk losing it or it falling into the wrong hands; that's why it is with me at all times.

The third and last thing I carry is the heaviest and hardest thing to carry. Stress has always been a huge problem that I have to deal with. Whether I am worrying about my family, girlfriend, work and, the worst of them all, bills, I also have to worry about my mother. My mother is not a well woman; three years ago she underwent three brain surgeries in a matter of days, due to an abscess between her skull and brain. Since the surgeries, she hasn't been the same. My girlfriend, who is amazing, causes me a lot stress with how frugal she is with money and certain

decisions she makes. Work doesn't cause me stress at all. It is actually one of the only places I am stress free. It's the getting to and from work that stresses me out. If I miss a subway or the bus it makes me so agitated.

The most stressful thing in my life is dealing with bills. Having to pay rent, which is \$1,430 a month, cable/phone and Internet bill is \$180 per month, and the electric bill averages about \$70 a month, bus tickets are \$150 a month, MTA card is a \$100 a month, and parking in the lot is \$100 a month. A total of \$2,030 in bills a month, when I make \$2,320 a month, leaves me with about \$50 a week, which I spend on food and cigarettes. Being broke is very stressful to me, which is why I am putting my all into this apprenticeship. I just want to be able to live comfortably and not have to stress about money. Stress and other mental and emotional burdens are the hardest things to carry, a lot harder to carry than a wallet or cellphone.

What I carry with me changes every day, but I know I will have my phone, wallet and my stress, for now. Having those two material things with me at all times makes me feel fully dressed. If they aren't in my pocket, I notice it right away, and I begin the search. As for the stress, I will just have to learn to deal with it and find ways to free myself from it. I know I will carry these things with me for as long as I live.

More Than Just Tools

Chris Judd

Throughout life, there are certain items a person carries at all times. These items, believe it or not, are what make a person qualified for his or her career. As an apprentice, I quickly realized what I needed in order to succeed – both the tangible and intangible. My tangible items are obviously my tools, such as my pliers, screwdriver, channel lock, pencil and many more. The not so obvious ones are my wallet, an extra phone charger, extra socks and ChapStick. Then there are the intangible items I carry; these are my emotions. Everyone feels emotion, whether good or bad; it is very important to keep your emotions in line when it comes to work.

First and foremost, I always make sure I have my wallet, which is basically my identity. My wallet holds my driver's license, union card, cash, credit card and health insurance card. I left my wallet in a taxi one time and did not realize I couldn't do anything without it. Thankfully, the next day the driver showed up at my house and dropped it off for me. I was so relieved and thankful that I gave the driver \$50. If my wallet had not been returned that day, life would have become a lot more stressful. Though it is small, a wallet enables an individual to carry on their daily routine, day in and day out.

People tend to tell me that I am way too strict with my tools. Well, I don't believe that to be true. In order to be an asset to a company one must produce. The only way I can produce a sufficient amount of work each day is if I have my proper tools. The one item that helps me a lot is always having a pencil. This is how I mark conduit in order to make bends and mark a wall to mount any electrical gear. Linesman pliers to an electrician are like a gun to a police officer. Pliers are a tool that electricians use every day. Good electricians can use their pliers for almost anything, such as stripping and splicing wire, pulling a snake out of a conduit, cutting down a screw, reaming small conduit (although now there is an advanced tool for that). My father once told me, "If you can't do it with your pliers, screwdriver and a pair of channel locks, then get the hell out of the business." That is coming from an old-school electrician though; today there is a tool for everything. I cannot stress enough the importance of taking care of tools. It is how skilled workers make their money.

Another essential item that I carry with me at all times is my ChapStick. Working in construction, one does not realize how dry one's mouth can get, which ultimately leads to dry lips, which can be very painful. In order to work professionally, I need to be comfortable. I'll never forget the first job site I was on during the winter and my lips were so raw that every time I smiled they would crack and bleed. Even after applying ChapStick to them, it took a while for my lips to heal.

All these things I carry to work can be felt, and one can physically touch them. Now, my intangible items, such as emotions, cannot be physically felt. For some reason, I pride myself in being able to harness my emotions easily. Of course, everyone knows what it's like to be happy or sad. There is one emotion that seems to be affecting me as I get older. This emotion is anxiety. For example, anytime I am sent to a new job site, I get extremely anxious. I can't sleep or eat until that first day comes and goes. I know deep down everything is going to be okay, but I just can't seem to harness my anxiety. Although it is a burden because I can't focus on anything else but the job until I settle in, it's kind of a good trait in a weird way. This means that I actually care about what is going on at the job.

Along with that anxiety, I have a lot of courage. I have no problem climbing any ladder or going up on any lift, no matter the height. It takes a lot of courage to show up brand new to a job site. Chances are you don't know who anyone is or where anything is. Being in construction can be very overwhelming, and that is why it is important to harness your emotions. I always make sure to remember everyone I come in contact with, so having a good long-term memory is very important. A good memory allows me to remember who treated me right and those that treated me wrong. Those that treated me right and showed me the ropes, I'll never forget. I worked with an A journeyman for a while, and he took me in like a son. Even though we are not at the same job site, I still call him to keep in touch.

Although it is considered "work," it helps to have some fun. They say laughter is the best medicine, which is completely true, especially in the construction business. You will meet a thousand different people; some can be nasty, so it is important to joke around with the good ones. This way, when I wake up at five in the morning during the week, I have something to look forward to.

All my items, tangible and intangible, are extremely important to me. These attributes are what help me further my career. The ultimate goal in life is to succeed in whichever career one chooses. Find the right "tools," for the right career, and success will come easy. Be prepared, and be a qualified professional, and there is no limit on how far one will go in life.

Life's Hardships Are Endured Through the Items We Give Meaning To

Pedro R. Martinez

Often in life people are faced with trials, hardships and insurmountable tasks and human emotions give embodiment and values to items that help to face and overcome these trials. Different items can bring about emotions – pain, happiness, guilt, relief; nonetheless they are carried by the particular person for a particular reason. These items can be as simple as a phone to communicate to items with a more sentimental value, such as a treasured family heirloom. The sentimental values of an item on a person is shaped by that person's particular experiences and becomes part of that person's identity.

The items that I carry both in my being, as well as on my person, have been accumulated due to previous experiences. I carry my union card with me at all times. It is a source of pride, and shows that all the strife and pain that I went through was worth it. This item also reminds that I have my brothers' and sisters' back, as much as they have my own, and every action that I do is not only affecting me but it affects the union as a whole. Lastly, I'm reminded with that small paper card, my family can be fed, bills can be paid; it is symbolic of survival. The life I had before was one of desperation, finding ways to slowly cling onto life; now I have the means not only to live comfortably, but the trials and hardships in life will hopefully be easier. These are the meanings behind just one item that I carry.

The items I carry are not only tangible ones; thoughts are ever present, and without the right coping mechanism, like any number of physical items, can weigh heavily on an individual. Burden is constantly a weight in my subconscious; while not physically straining the body, it can affect a person's ability to think rationally without the proper ability to control one's emotions. When I carry my burdens, it reminds me why I awake at the crack of dawn each morning and why failure is not an option. People count on me to provide for them and to help them when need arises. Focusing on my burdens is solely for the purpose of maintaining my goals in life, so that for whatever reason, should I stray from my path, something can keep me in check. This weightless yet cumbersome, intangible item, is one of the many that has been shaped by my trials and reminded me time and time again what I strive for.

There are many physical items as well without which one would not be able to endure the strenuous day-to-day labor of my career. A rag is always a necessity because the physical work is grueling – wiping the sweat off your face is a must.

A water bottle keeps you hydrated and thinking clearly and is vital especially on outdoor jobs. Lastly, a phone is a must not only to keep in contact with you co-workers but your loved ones as well.

My friend has been through difficulties in his life, and that has shaped the items he carries and given meaning to them. His father left when he was too young to remember, and all that was left was a small cross that can fit on a key ring. Ever since then, he has kept it as a personal memento, hoping it brings him good luck and allowing him to overcome the hardships of life. This personal event affected him in a way that it shaped what he carries, as well as the type of person he has become. In addition to that cross, he also carries things that are common – a phone to keep in contact with those close to him, a wallet to store money and keys to enter his house. So even though he carries the same items as the majority of society, the events in his life helped shaped and bring about new meaning to previous items that had no monetary value, but now have a sentimental value, sustainably more than any currency could match.

The items in life we assign meaning to help us to cope with hardships and trials of life. Whether it is items of a physical nature, such as a water bottle, that has the basic meaning of survival behind it, or intangible items that are not physically straining, but mentally fatiguing, these items help to minimize life's infinite struggles and provide a source of a person's identity. These items then reflect what type of person I have become. This is how life's hardships are endured through the items to which we give meaning.



"Menorah"

Gene Shapiro

Ready and Prepared

Jose L. Rivera

There are a few things I carry to work every day; some are tangible, and some are intangible, invisible to the human eye. These are things that I must have on a daily basis to carry out my job as a plumbing apprentice. Without them, I would be unprepared for the tasks at hand for that day. In the following essay, I will do my best to describe what these things are and how they affect my performance at work.

When I go to work in the morning, the first thing I take with me before leaving is my backpack, which carries a few of my basic, but absolutely necessary, tools, which I need to have with me throughout the day. As an apprentice, there aren't many tools I need to bring to the job, but basic things like a measuring tool are helpful. Whether it is a stick ruler or a measuring tape, it is absolutely the most important thing that I need, and it is always in my tool bag. Although having tools like a basic measuring device and pen, pencil or marker are sufficient, I also like to carry other tools, which can make my job easier and safer. The right tool for the job while working isn't always available or within arm's reach when needed, so I prefer to keep a few extra key tools in my pockets.

A backpack is simply made of a few pieces of material stitched together, zippers and different storage compartments; I can store an array of tools, almost like a miniature portable toolbox. Having a backpack gives me a fighting chance to encounter a variety of different scenarios where certain tools are absolutely necessary to get the job done. Because of my backpack, I am prepared. Carrying these items around in my pockets while commuting to work wouldn't be practical, and I probably wouldn't bother bringing them with me to work if it wasn't for my bag.

There are many things I carry with me throughout the day. Before I leave for work in the morning, I go through a checklist in my head of important things I should have on me or in my pockets such as my wallet, house keys and most importantly, my cellphone. My cellphone helps me communicate with friends, family and loved ones while at work. Although my phone is sometimes a distraction throughout the day, it also helps me communicate with my co-workers in certain situations. Having my cellphone, in general, is becoming a necessity in this day and age because of so many different tasks you can accomplish with it and all the uses it has built into it. My cellphone is almost like carrying around a laptop. I can check and send emails, visit websites, type important notes and or memos I would like to remember. It also serves as my calculator, alarm clock, watch, television, video gaming center and so many things. Having my cell phone is definitely an advantage in my day-to-day life and is something I always carry with me and is always at arm's length.

Something that I carry with me every day to work is not visible to me or to anyone who may be around me. That intangible object is the fear of getting hurt at work. Every day when I get to work, I gather my tools and always start my day off trying to clear my mind of negative thoughts of what could happen while working. It sometimes becomes an overwhelming feeling, so I must double and triple check things to make sure I am in a safe working environment, or that I am taking proper precautions in what I am doing and above all maintain safe work practices throughout the day. This fear developed after I was hurt at work by simply carrying a 10-foot piece of 4-inch cast-iron pipe through a narrow hallway, and it is something I never want to experience again. Not only did it leave me physically hurt, but it also affected me mentally, and it is why I choose to practice safe work ethics on a daily basis. When first getting back to work after undergoing surgery, it was almost a paralyzing fear, but slowly I have been turning it into a life lesson. I can learn from a mistake that I made, which was not asking for help, and now I take the time to plan and analyze the situation and task at hand.

The most important things that I carry to work are inside my backpack, which allows me to bring my basic tools and keeps me prepared for a day at work. My cellphone is the next item, which keeps me in constant contact with co-workers, friends and family. Last but not least, I carry the fear of being hurt, which keeps me aware of my surroundings and helps me have safe work practices at all times. With these things in tow on my way to work, I always feel ready and prepared for whatever challenge a day at work can hold.

The Things We Carry

Gerardo Ochoa

The cellphone and keys are a must before walking out the door for anyone. Those are basics, yet some people carry certain items with them every day because of either a psychological or emotional reason. The habit can vary from people carrying a lucky quarter to carrying a bill folded up nicely in their wallets. For some women, it's their lucky bracelet or shoes. Each item is special to each person because of the value it holds for him or her and is, therefore, carried all the time.

To any average person who works in an office, carrying a flashlight would seem absurd. To me though, it's a very important item and I can't leave home without it. My habit was psychologically conditioned in a sense. The first day on the job, my journeyman approached me and asked me for my flashlight. Scared and trembling, I responded that I did not possess one, and then he gave me advice that has stuck with since. "Always carry a flashlight kid. You never know when you'll need it, but it's good to have it on you," he said. Jason was his name, and because of him I never leave without a flashlight, which came in handy once. We had to work the night shift at JFK airport and when it was time to go home, I couldn't leave because the car would not start. The parking lot was really dark, so that's when I remembered what I had been told. I was able to easily check under the hood and fix the problem pretty quickly.

Now, remember Jason? That same guy carried something other than his flashlight with him, which was much more important to him. He had a gold chain with a gold cross tucked within his work shirt at all times. He was so attached to this item and said he hadn't taken it off his body since he first bought it and put it on. I asked him why, and then he started preaching to me about his beliefs. I got the point. The man is a religious person and believes that his job as an electrician is dangerous. The chain he carries simply puts him "closer to God," thus he feels protected by it.

Some people are very spiritual and some are just not or not as much. One thing that is true is that no one wants to get hurt or injured on the job. Adler is a guy at my current job and, like Jason, he is very aware of the risky nature of the business. He doesn't put his life in the hands of God per say, but he carries a voltage tester everywhere – even on weekends when he is not working. The story goes that when he was a third-year apprentice he was working in a live panel just installing new circuits. He shorted the circuit he was working on and got a shock that sent him flying backwards into the opposite wall. He switched the breaker off, but it wasn't functional. Its switch was dead. That was where he lost his trust in breakers. Now he carries his voltage tester to make sure that the breaker really shuts off the circuit whenever he is working within a panel.

Everyone that works in the field is always worried about getting injured working and not being able to go back home the same way he or she left for work.

However, there is always that one guy such as Rob, a very cool person who does his job very well and always wants his jobs to look the best. Rob's bends have to be perfect and the wire must be stripped to the perfect length. He is very picky with the way his job looks but above all that is his hair. It's blonde, tapered on the sides and short on the top but side-swept to the right. It must be shiny at all times and if it is not, he will take a bathroom break, whether the foreman likes it or not. He always has a small, black plastic container with him that contains the hair product he uses. He says that by the end of his workday his hair loses its shine, so he brings the gel to keep the hair looking nice because he has to look "good for the ladies." He is so attached to the hair product, he once arrived late to work on a rainy day and instead of going straight to work because he was 20 minutes late, he ran to the restroom to check his hair that was all droopy and on his face.

People always get attached to items by necessity or life experiences, and they form some sort of emotional or psychological bond with their items. Those items can be anything, from very useful life-saving tools to the most useless piece or ripped-up \$2 bill. Yet, people carry these things every day to work because they are important to them and that's what makes each person's item unique.

Three Things Worth Carrying

Jerry Velez

Every person owns a number of things that are classified as necessities, luxuries and everyday items. You may consider any of your items to be within these categories, but what's truly important is how valuable they are to you. Seamlessly throughout my workdays, I carry three items that fall into these categories: my smartphone, hard hat and a smile. As a proud apprentice for Local 3, these items I carry make me who I am and signify what I stand for.

Let me introduce you to my necessity, the item I cannot live without, my smartphone. I have had mine for two years now, and it hasn't disappointed me yet. My smartphone is with me from the moment I wake up before sunrise to when the moon is at its brightest. In the mornings, when I'm ready to leave, my fully charged smartphone and I head out to work. I feel so naked without my smartphone, that's why I have to have it on me at all times, even when it's dormant in my pocket throughout workdays. Nothing is promised, so having it on me gives me a peace of mind. In case of any emergency in my family, I'll be aware of the situation. In case the boss needs me to work in a specific spot when we're out of physical reach, I'll also be aware of the situation. In case I need to know today's forecast, trends and news, the information is readily available. The simplistic beauty of my smartphone is what makes it my necessity; it just makes my life so easy.

Day one: I'm the newest apprentice on the job, starting my career with my first employer, Gilston Electric. The feeling was great; I got to meet the mechanics and my new bosses. I noticed everybody wearing blue hard hats, and I asked my general foreman, "May I have one of those?" He laughed and replied, "Well of course; don't be silly." He realized there were no blue hard hats left, so he reached into his locker and took out one of his personal hard hats to make sure I had one. Brand new, it was white, unique and only worn by foremen. I felt big, you know, not big in the sense of weight, but big as in important. The general foreman then told me, "You have to wear this hard hat with pride; it's yours." I understood.

Later in the day, I worked with my first partner, a Journeyman electrician by the name of Lou DeMatteo. He taught me some tricks in how to use my hand tools, and how these tools and my reputation are the two most important things to carry throughout my career in Local 3. Traditionally, workers put stickers on their hard hats as a sign of pride for their job and where they have been. Lou gave me my first sticker, which says, "Proud to be a union electrician." I got emotional when he gave me the sticker because I realized the people I would be working with until I retire would always be around. This is a brotherhood.

Throughout my time working at different job sites, I carried my white hard hat. Different mechanics contributed to my “stickered” hard hat, and, for that, my hard hat is a symbol of brotherhood. Whenever mechanics get work-related stickers, they treat the workers with what they have, creating a joyful environment. With everybody happy with the stickers they’ve obtained, more and more mechanics try to get stickers to give out to the men. A luxury item is something you desire, difficult to obtain, with a great amount of prestige to it. My hard hat meets these prerequisites, and the story behind it makes it a luxury to me and something I will cherish forever.

We all have our good days and bad days. One thing about me is that I always carry a smile, regardless of how I’m feeling throughout the days on and off the job. This everyday item hides my bad days so they are just an illusion to the society around me. Sometimes, I just feel it’s nobody’s business to know why I’m having a bad day; that’s just how I am. A smile reduces the chance of someone coming up to me asking me why I am mad, angry or cranky. I feel a smile brings good vibes into the workplace and it motivates the people around me to work with happiness and love their job.

Most of the time, I’m happy, and it’s largely because I am in such a great career like Local 3. Every morning, I love the feeling that I have to go to work. It’s the feeling that every day I get to meet new faces and new aspects of the job. My smile is known throughout my apprenticeship with Gilston Electric, and most of the workers benefit from my motivational style of work. There was a time when my old friend, Lou, felt so angry and cranky that he didn’t feel like working. Frequently, if you see your partner feeling like crap, you’ll feel like crap as well, but not me. I kept my head up and worked with a smile all day with Lou. As I watched him work, he slowly began to feel better because he constantly kept noticing how happy and productive I was, so he came up to me and thanked me. “You really cheered me up kid, without saying a single word,” he said. That goes to show that a smile can have a big impact on the job site.

The things we carry describe who we are as individuals. Society is full of envy, hate and negative thinking, so don’t let the opinions of others discourage you from carrying those items. If you feel they are worth carrying, carry them. Stay true to who you are and I promise that those who like what you carry may be the persons with whom you can be friends. You’ll never know who you will meet.

WE READ



"Lamp"

Peter Presvelis

My Rocky Road to Reading Success

Kendell Grant

The main theme of my reading autobiography essay is, “reading has something for everyone, even those who don’t read often.” I am not a person who reads everything for the love of reading, nor will I ever be. However, this class has led me to two books that I’ve learned to enjoy.

My reading history as a child consisted of what I would consider the normal books that parents in the United States get their children when they are ready to read. These included Dr. Seuss, “Curious George” and “Charlotte’s Web,” among which my mother would always read to my brother and me. She was very good when it came to reading “bedtime stories,” as she called it. We always looked forward to bedtime stories with my mother; it was a treat after we took our baths and got ready for bed.

Around the age of 8 or 9, I started to have a huge hatred for reading as my father would use it to punish me. Whenever I was in trouble in school, my punishment at home would be to stand in the hallway outside of my room and read aloud for an hour. I built up such a strong wall against it that I literally could not read books. Every time I would try to read a book, I had a mental block that took me about a half an hour to 45 minutes to get past the page. If I managed to read more than two pages in a book, that would be considered a lot. The only types of material I was able to read were comics, sports articles and hop-hip magazines. I would enjoy the pictures but had problems with reading the words. It was a long struggle to get to a place where I was able to do better with my wall.

At this point in my life, I don’t do much reading, but when I do, I enjoy reading informative books and I still enjoy reading comics.

As for my reading acts, when I was younger I would read my comic books for hours. I would never finish reading in the physical space where I started. If I was home, I had no problem reading anywhere in the house as long as it was quiet. The place I really enjoyed reading was in bed. It was as if I never wanted to leave because it was always comfortable. However, not every reading place was as comfortable as my bed; the worst place for me to read was in the car. It made me sick. Every time I held my head down to read, I started to feel dizzy. This was followed by a headache, a feeling of wanting to throw up and a sharp pain on the right side of my forehead. On the other hand, reading was not always painful, and the best time for me to read was in the morning when I was always full of energy and ready for anything.

This semester I read three books. One book was for a daily assignment and the other two were for a group presentation. The book chosen for the daily assignments was “Working in the Shadows” by Gabriel Thompson. It was easiest to read because of the comedic factor, the reality and the content to which I was able to relate. I was able to enjoy the book more when reading the detailed descriptions of what the writer endured while working in Arizona, cutting lettuce all day in the field. For example, in describing the first day on the job, he recalled how his body was sore the next day from all the bending over, as well as how standing on his feet all day in the sun with no shade drained his energy. Thompson was doing this at least five days a week, and as much as he thought at some point he would get used to cutting the lettuce, his body would tell him differently. I felt that way when I first started in the business to become an electrician, and I definitely felt the pain which took my body almost four months to adjust to. I can laugh about it now.

I would recommend “Working in the Shadows” for people who are starting out in a job that requires any physical labor. The second book, “A Long Way Gone” by Ishmael Beah, was for group work. I found myself falling behind in my reading assignments so I listened to the audiobook for the first time. It definitely was a faster read, which I realized when I connected with the book. I was amazed at how the audiobook made me see through the eyes of the writer. With the accent and how descriptive the book was from start to finished, I always felt connected to both the narrator and the writer. I have never experienced that connection before by reading a book, but my first listening to an audiobook made it possible.

I would definitely recommend this book as well to people, which I already have done. The feedback I get from people who have read the book already is nothing but rave reviews about how wonderful the book is.

The last book, “Joyland” by Stephen King, was another one for group work. This was a hard read because it couldn’t hold my interest; especially, the first 10 pages. I ended up turning to the audiobook for the second time. It was much better, but listening to the audio was like a slow death. The narrator tried to use different voices for each character, even the females, and it just sounded horrible.

I did not like this book and have not spoken to anyone about it. I can definitely say that I will not be recommending it to anyone.

In the end, I discovered that my experience this semester with reading took me outside of my comfort zone to try new things. There are obviously millions of books out there in this world for everyone. I would be doing myself a disservice in not continuing to walk through new doors to see where a book or audiobook will take me. What I learned from this class was that I like autobiographies, and I was really surprised about how good an experience I had with the audiobook of “A Long Way Gone.”

I have to say that reading journals and the progress reports help me stay in line with the class schedule. Even though it was a lot with which I had to keep up, the reports helped with staying on top of the deadlines I had every week.

This class has helped me to see books in a different way, read books in a different way, and approach how I think about what I read, or listened to, in a different way, too. I can see myself reading more books like “A Long Way Gone.” I think it had a touch of everything: politics, war, survival, reality, struggle, love and hope. It was a perfect mix of everything which not all books have.

This class also has helped me step out a bit from my fear of public speaking. I have been guarded for such a long time that I only want to do what is best and comfortable for me. I can say I gave my best shot to both of my presentations that were given by my team and me.

Thanks to my professor who, in the beginning, set forward a plan for this class and worked with me to realize I have it in me to do presentations.

Reading Autobiography

Christopher W. Aviles

Since I was a child, I have always been a huge fan of books. The fantastic pictures that your imagination creates based on the descriptions and ideas of the author have always been better than any motion picture that Hollywood can conjure up. I've always enjoyed reading when it was on my terms. There's nothing better than lying in bed, late at night, cuddled up with a good read and some delicious snacks. Most of the time, however, the reading that I do is not of my choosing. Usually, an instructor assigns it to me. Personally, when a reading is assigned, it drags and is rarely enjoyable. This class gave the students the opportunity to choose the books that we read, which made the class more enjoyable.

Through the years, fantasy stories have always been my favorite because they allow you to escape the realities of this harsh world and immerse you in a world where dreams come true and magic is a normal occurrence. A world where anything is possible and the little guy can make the biggest shots. Horror stories come in at a close second. The more gruesome, the better: serial killers, psychopaths, monsters and zombies, you name it and I was entranced by it. I almost wished I could try my luck with Dracula, the werewolf or the mummy. With horror and fantasy being my favorite genres, it was no surprise that the Goosebumps Series by R. L. Stein was a collection I kept on my shelf at home. Recently, Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling have found a way next to them with the wonderful world of wizards and witchcraft that the author created.

When I do feel the urge to read, it is always when I am home. I rarely ever bring a book to work or read a few chapters on the bus or train. When I read, it is almost like a meditation period for me. Everything needs to be just right. Usually, I'm the only one home, and there are some good tunes on. I prefer some instrumentals because anything with lyrics is distracting while trying to dive headlong into the world the author has detailed for me. I have two favorite places to read, mainly because I feel less connected to reality and I can truly empathize with the characters. The best place for my escape from the world is at the train tracks by my house. Only a block away, I hop on my skateboard with my headphones on, ride down a hill, and around a fence and I'm free to sit over Route 46 and watch the cars go. On a summer night, it is almost like sitting atop of the world and watching the hustle bustle of everyone still connected to reality. The second place I enjoy reading is on my small one-person couch. It is barely big enough for me, yet I always contort myself into an odd looking, incredibly comfortable pose. With headphones on, it is really like living in a bubble; add a blanket, a cup of hot chocolate and some snacks and it is heaven.

This semester our class was divided up into multiple groups. Our instructor gave us a list of fiction and nonfiction novels to choose. My group chose “Kitchen Confidential” by Anthony Bourdain and *Watchmen*, a graphic novel by Alan Moore. Giving our class the opportunity to choose what we were to read was a pleasant surprise, but just as with everything else there was a catch. The third book that we were to read, “Working in the Shadows” by Gabriel Thompson, was assigned to the syllabus. The first book that I started reading was “Working in the Shadows;” it is a great window through which you could see the underbelly of the farm industry where people were being treated like anything but human. Long hours with little pay made it impossible to not live in poverty. Although it wasn’t the easiest book to sit through and read, it still was very insightful into a world that I know nothing about.

The second book I read was “Kitchen Confidential” by Anthony Bourdain. Since I have worked in restaurants, it was interesting to see how a world-famous chef came into being. Bourdain shows how when you work crazy hours sometimes drug dependencies come into play, and even if you do start to be on a downward spiral, you can always change and overcome anything. It is a long, hard journey to the top and although you may stumble and fall, you can always pick yourself back up.

Last, but not least, is “Watchmen,” the graphic novel written by Alan Moore. The novel follows the story of Rorschach, a not so superhero on his journey to uncover the scheme that has a superhero dying, and a diabolical plot with some of the masked heroes involved. “Watchmen” shows that you don’t need special powers to stand up for what’s right. Out of the three books, this one was definitely my favorite. Because it was a graphic novel, it propelled me right back to when I was a young boy reading comic books, dreaming of adventures with Batman and Superman. I would definitely recommend either “Kitchen Confidential” or “Watchmen.” Honestly, I don’t think anyone I know would be interested in the stories of a regular person undercover in the world of migrant workers. Not that it was a bad book, I just never found it very interesting, or at least as interesting as the books that we chose.

I believe that this class could have been beneficial for everyone if more of the class showed some interest during lectures. I think this class reinforced my belief that reading is only fun when it is voluntary, and that sometimes the classroom isn’t the best place to learn. All in all, I did enjoy the class and look forward to future classes.

Reading Progress

Joseph Fischetti

The semester is almost over; it went by in a blink of an eye. It has not been easy these past couple of months, like reading all these books and keeping up with the reports, but somehow I managed to keep up the pace. It definitely was not always enjoyable to me, and I did curse and scream at times. I have a tendency to look back and wish that I could go back in time and do some things over. The biggest thing that I would change about how I tackled this class would be the managing of my time.

I say this because I always felt that I was under the gun and rushing to get my work done. It would have been better if I properly utilized my time during the week, and not to try to get it all done over the weekend. I hated that feeling – the one I had toward finishing reading these chapters or two – and then writing my paper. In the future, I will try to get my work done, little by little, during the week.

With the term nearing its end and with all the thoughts of “I wish I had done this instead,” there are some things that I am very proud that I accomplished. My biggest feat: I did get all the work completed. I know it sounds funny that I am proud of doing the work that is expected of me, but you have no idea how many times I would sit down and say to myself, “Screw it, I really do not feel like reading and writing about any of this right now!” But, I did it, and every time that I handed in my work on time, I felt proud of myself, especially when more than half of my classmates would have nothing.

With only a week or two to go until class is over, I need to get moving and finish strong. One area that needs the most work is my reading autobiography, which is giving me the biggest problem so far this year. What I am finding the hardest is meeting the expectation of the paper, which is four to six pages. I have written a draft or two, and each time, I have come up short. I am now in the process of doing rewrite after rewrite, trying to get to the total page count. At least I still have some time left and can hopefully make it happen.

What can I say? The end of the term is almost here; I had some tough times, some easy and some that fall in between. It all hasn't been that bad and at times was enjoyable. Even still, with some more hard work to do, I know by the end of this class, I will walk away a better student and, hopefully, a better person.

Life in Reading

Michael Palladino

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one,” said George R. R. Martin. Growing up, as a boy who went to private school my whole life, reading various books by many authors was always a staple of school life, although it was never my favorite thing to do. However, when finding myself reading something that really caught my interest, it was always one of the most fulfilling and enjoyable experiences.

It’s very hard for me to remember some of my early childhood and reading experiences, but the earliest I can remember, and maybe one of the most profound memories with reading was in the fifth grade. J. K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone” had just been released and shortly became mandatory in our reading curriculum. This was a novel that was definitely easy for a young reader like me to relate to because Harry was around my age, and my young mind was very imaginative with a love for magic and excitement. Harry Potter helped children my age get out of an ever-evolving video game craze and one of the world’s biggest phenomenon at the time (Pokémon), even if it was just for a few hours while reading. The Harry Potter craze grew in America, where I found myself loving everything J. K. Rowling wrote in these books. For the next several years, I religiously bought copies of the books that followed and read with my family when not required to do so for school.

By the time I was in seventh grade, music was becoming one of my biggest passions, where I was into everything from Frank Sinatra to Daft Punk. One of my favorite artists of all time is Marilyn Manson. He was a shock rocker and one of the most controversial stars in the business. He released his autobiography “The Long Hard Road Out of Hell.” After reading his book, I came to realize most of the rumors about Manson were not truth. In fact, I learned how unbelievably intelligent and well-spoken he was. I gained much respect for the man and still look forward to a follow up.

In eighth grade, my class read, as a whole, “Romeo and Juliet” by William Shakespeare. This tragedy may be one of his most famous pieces of all time, which we not only read but also acted out as we read. I drew the role as Mercutio, in which his witty attitude and joking manner closely resembles mine. Although it was a short role for me, I thoroughly enjoyed the entire tragedy and how very well written it was. The very poetic imagery will always stand out in my memory.

The beginning of my rebellious years also started at the tail end of eighth grade, and what better book to have read at the time than “The Outsiders” by S. E. Hinton. When learning that Hinton was only 15 years old when she started writing this novel and that she got it published at the age of 18, I was totally

blown away. The book's main character Pony Boy, a 14-year-old greaser, was who I felt like growing up to some extent – a good kid wrapped up with people that really didn't have a future. To me that was cool. After reading the book, we watched the movie adaptation, which I watch from time to time, but I have never picked the book up again.

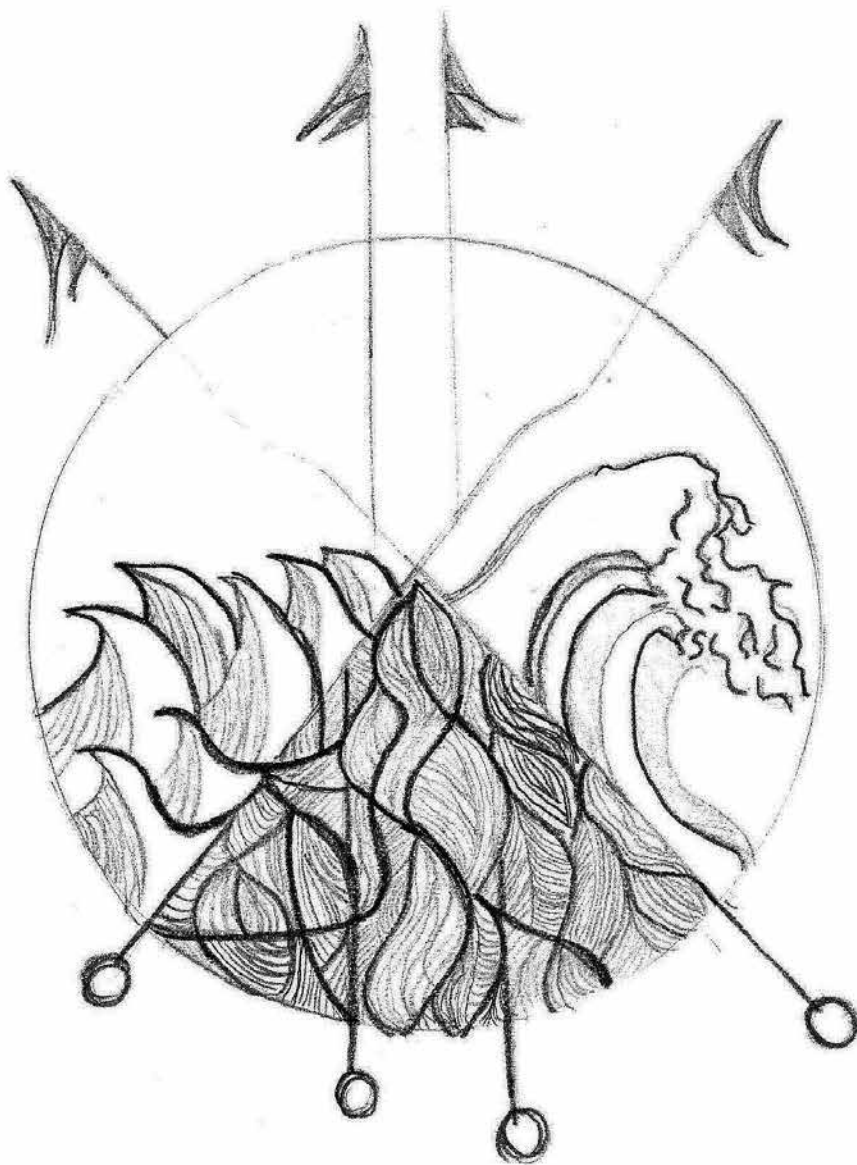
Freshman year, I took a break from reading. Whenever I had reports to do on books, I looked up plot summaries on the Internet and never really paid any attention to reading other than what we did in class. It was so unimportant to me at the time because I had my first girlfriend and all I wanted to do was try to fit in with the “cool” kids in school. I coasted through freshman year, and in the beginning of sophomore year, one of the books we were told to read that recaptured the excitement of reading in my eyes was “The Catcher in the Rye” by J. D. Salinger. The novel that was initially meant for adults became very popular for adolescents around my age because of its rebellious nature. Holden Caulfield soon became a major icon in my teenage life because of the difficulties he went through and how he conquered most of them.

Junior year was the same as freshman year, as I didn't really pay much attention to the reading and coasted by. In the senior year, I elected to take up drama as one of my courses. Drama was not a lot of book reading per say, but we did act out plays and musicals in class. One of the musicals we acted out that was a personal favorite of mine was “Grease” by Warren Casey and Jim Jacobs. I landed the lead role as Danny Zuko, in which I loved performing with the heavy accent, rocking a leather jacket, and singing songs like “Greased Lightning” and “Summer Loving.” Drama was one of my favorite classes in senior year; it was a class I do not think I can ever forget.

After high school, I took a long break from school, only going to college for a month before getting a full-time job. Reading took a back seat in my life, where drugs and partying filled the void. For the next three years, I battled drug addiction, struggling to stay sober, until I was kicked out of my house and went away long term. As a result, the only literature I picked up was the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous. Finally, today, I can gladly say, I am a few more than three months sober.

After taking the test several years back, when the electrical union finally called, I started working last October. Our first semester of college was light reading and was enjoyable. However, this semester I had to read some of the most boring books I have ever got my hands on. I did not enjoy “Working in the Shadows” and “Kitchen Confidential.” But alas! At the end of the semester, I'm grateful to have gained some knowledge from both books, and I got to read a very good book in “Room” by Emma Donoghue.

To link things back to the George Martin quotation that started this paper, I believe reading lets you enter a world outside your own, and despite the rise of technology, such as the Internet and social media, I believe one thing that will always stay constant is reading.



"Tattoo"

Jaime Lopez

Artist Statement: Tattoo

Jaime Lopez

A tattoo is a permanent representation of life: this is a tattoo for a whale man, a man of the sea, a harpooner. It is only fitting that the ocean waves, lines similar to that of the belly of the beast, and a cross made of harpoons all be represented on the emblem. The courage, strength and commitment to the goals of the voyage, a constant reminder that you and the ocean, whale and harpoon are married to each other, through sacrifice, victory and failure.

Memorials

Joseph Ryals

Memorials are very important. Whether it is wars fought, tragic events or an important person who impacted lives, memorials remind us to be respectful while sending the message, “We will not forget.”

Though I did not find Chapter 7, “The Chapel,” of “Moby-Dick” to be my favorite chapter, it was very interesting. Ishmael describes the sacred building as the Whaleman’s Chapel. On the particular day he visits, there are sailors, sailor wives and widows sitting in silence and gazing at marble tablets on both sides of the pulpit. These tablets honor the memories of sailors who lost their lives to the sea and hunting whales. Ishmael describes the solemn silence and possible grieving of those who were worshipping that day on his visit.

I work at the World Trade Center in Tower One and although a formal memorial was built on the grounds for family members, as well as visitors, to visit and reflect, there are other memorials that exist without the formality.

On the roof of One, there is a 776-foot-high tower, and at the base of the spire exists an impromptu memorial written by all the trades that helped to build Tower One. Some of the messages are written in dedication to the pride of rebuilding. However, other messages are written in memory of family members, friends and co-workers who lost their lives on that tragic day, Sept. 11, 2001.

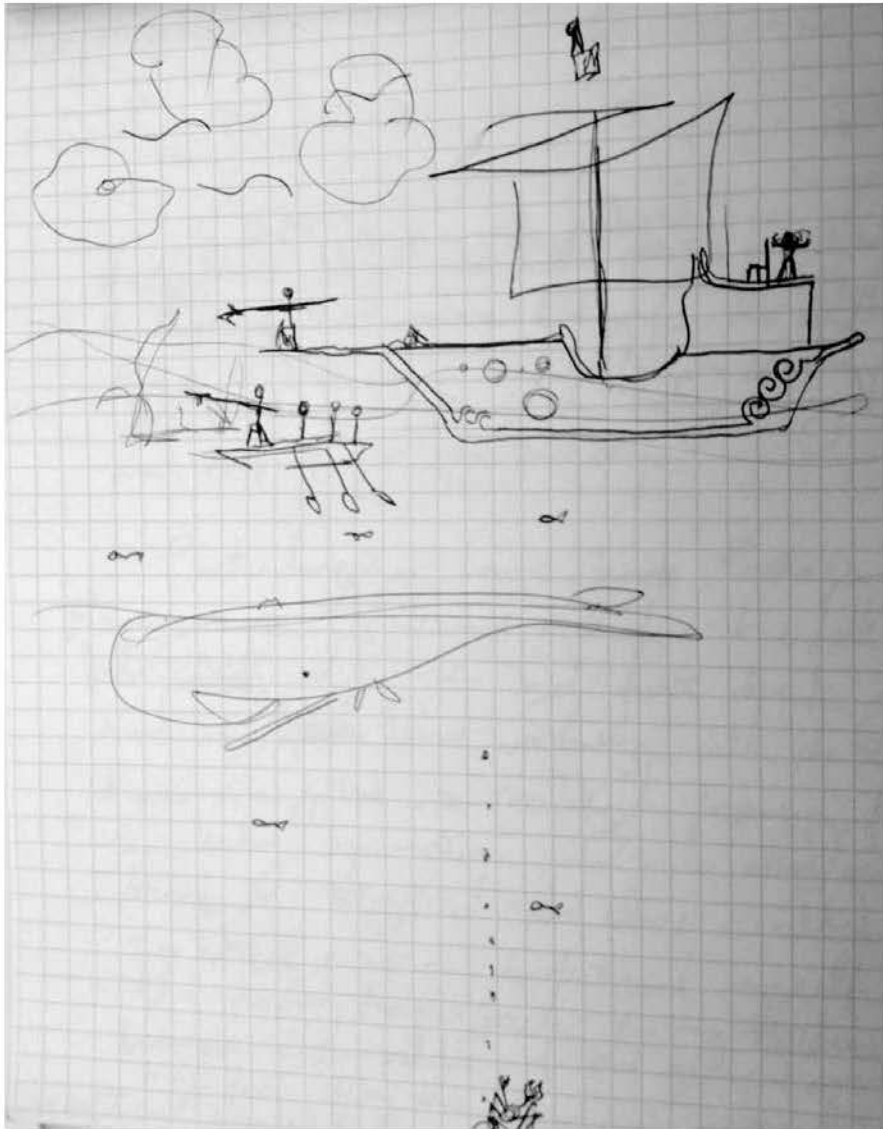
My shop’s shanty is located on the 88th floor of the tower. Every morning on my journey to get there, I have to take an elevator to the 90th floor. The elevators are only allowed to stop at designated floors due to the morning rush; unfortunately, our floor is not one of the designated. I usually get off two floors above and walk down two flights. As I walk down the staircases to my floor, there are dedications and memorials written on the concrete walls. Each morning in passing, I am always reminded of the importance of having respect for those who lost their family members or friends on that terrible day.

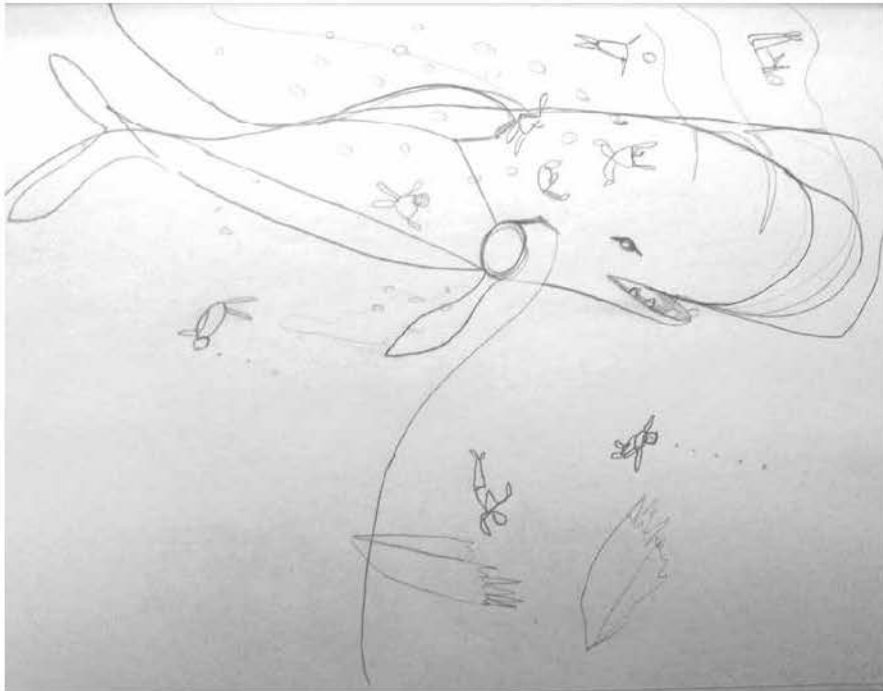
From the base of the spire, through the hallway walls and to the staircases, heartfelt memorials are posted for the workers to see. The tragedy of 9/11 will never be forgotten.



Visual Essay: "Reading Moby-Dick"

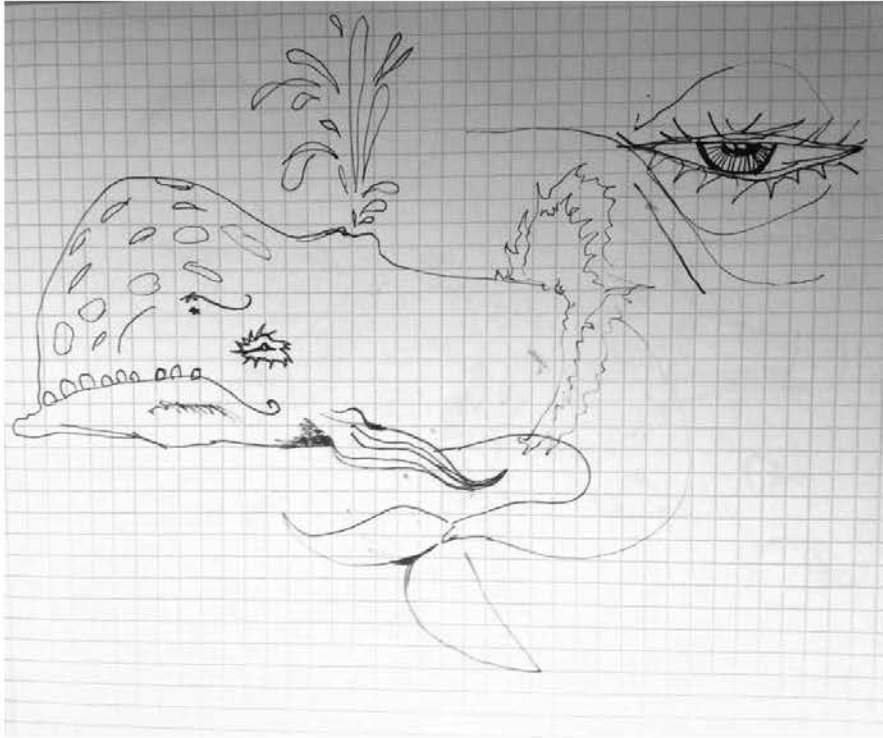
Paul Vance

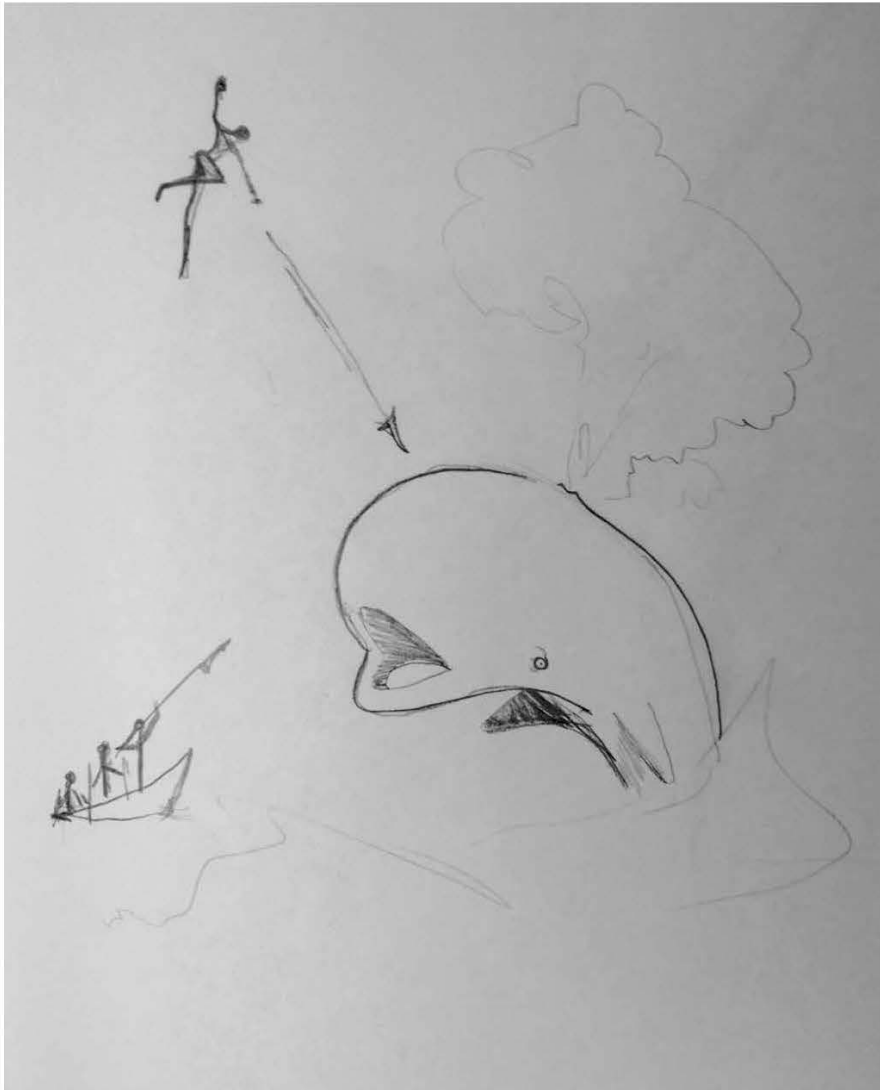












The Price of War

Kyle Bullock

War, we all know it is terrible. But what does it do to the soldiers? Soldiers join the war young and innocent, but they come out someone else entirely. In short, war changes you. Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" is about a group of soldiers during the Vietnam War. In the book, there are many characters that are changed forever because of their experience. There are many things that change the people throughout the book. The deaths of their fellow soldiers play a major role in changing people. Rat Kiley is devastated by the loss of his friend, and Norman Bowker feels guilty for not being able to save Kiowa. Mary Anne Bell was changed because she found her place in Vietnam and the war.

Throughout the book, we see many characters change in one way or another. One example of this is with the character Rat Kiley, the medic for Alpha Company. He was a great medic for his young age, and he was able to keep his cool under fire and save as many lives as he could. However, he also was an immature soldier. He liked to let off steam with his best friend Curt Lemon. Unfortunately, one day when they were playing catch under a tree, Curt stepped on a mine and died. After Curt's death, Kiley was not the same. One night after Curt's death, Kiley shot a baby buffalo. He shot its legs, its nose, its ribs and finally its throat. He was so heartbroken over the loss of his friend that he took out all his anger and frustration on the baby buffalo. One moment he was a calm young medic and the next he is an angry soldier killing a baby buffalo. Later on in the book, Kiley is further changed when they were walking the trails at night. The "night life" and all the bodies he had worked on were starting to get to him. He started noticing that when he had a conversation with someone, all he could envision was the person dead. His mind became flooded with severed limbs and body parts. One night he told Saunders, "I start seeing my own body. Chunks of myself. My own heart, my own kidneys" (O'Brien 223). All the time in the war as a medic had finally gotten to him. Eventually, in a desperate act, Kiley shot off his own toe to get himself out of the war.

When I read Kiley's story, I found it very remarkable how someone like Kiley, happy and optimistic, could change so much.

Another character that was forever changed by the war was Norman Bowker. Unlike Kiley's situation, the changes we see Bowker going through are seen a long time after the war. After the war, we see Bowker driving around the lake in his hometown, over and over. While in the car, he starts to have imaginary conversations with his family about how he almost won the Silver Star. "The Silver Star?" his father might have said. "Yes, but I didn't get it. Almost but not quite" (O'Brien 141). Instead of talking to his loved ones in real life, he makes up conversations with them in his head. Having imaginary conversations is his

way of validating what he went through. During this imaginary conversation, Bowker explains to his family the story behind how he almost won this award. Bowker and his group spent a night in a field that turned out to be the waste from the village. When it started to rain the water overflowed and the field turned into a kind of quicksand. During the firefight, Kiowa sank into the muck. Bowker tried to save him but he couldn't handle the smell and Kiowa sank under the quicksand. Bowker was unable to save his friend. In the years following his return, he still felt responsible for Kiowa's death. "Turning on his headlights, driving slowly, Norman Bowker remembered how he had taken hold of Kiowa's boot and pulled hard, but how the smell was simply too much, and how he'd backed off and in that way had lost the Silver Star" (O'Brien 153). Bowker doesn't deal well with his return to civilian life. He feels that no one can truly understand what he went through and uses his imagination to deal with his grief. Ultimately, the guilt he feels weighs on him and finally catches up. Bowker feels out of place and doesn't know what to do with himself. Soon after the drive, he took his life, showing that sometimes you never truly come back from a war.

The last character from the story that showed drastic change from the war wasn't even a soldier. This person was Mary Anne Bell, girlfriend of Mark Fossie. Mark missed his girlfriend and had her flown to their camp in Vietnam. Bell was the epitome of innocence. She was young, beautiful and fresh out of high school. Bell was very excited to be there and wanted to do anything she could to help. She learned how to take care of the sick and wounded, but that wasn't enough for her. She wanted to see the jungle. One night she sneaked out of the camp into the jungle with the Green Berets. After that night, Bell wasn't the same. When Mark found her, she was in the Green Berets compound wearing her innocent pink sweater and a necklace full of human tongues. "'There's no sense in talking,' she said. 'I know what you think, but it's not ... it's not bad'" (O'Brien 111). After that incident Bell continued to slip further from reality. She often went out at night with no gun or shoes and said that was where she belonged. Bell eventually never came back. With this one person you can see what war can do. In a matter of weeks, war turned a sweet little girl into a hardened killing machine. Seeing this, it's surprising to think that anyone could make it back from a war unchanged.

Tim O'Brien says, "War is hell." These three stories provide us with insight into just how a war can change people. It can take someone pure and innocent and turn that person into a wild animal. It can make people unable to live with the things they have seen and done. It will make people believe they cannot fit back into a normal world. It will wear down on your mind until there is nothing left but pain and unnatural images. War will change anyone that comes in contact with it.

Work Cited

O'Brien, Tim. "The Things They Carried." New York: Broadway Books, 1990.

Facing One's Fears

Raymond Tang

How do you face fear in life? The will to do so takes a lot of courage and resolve. There are many who will instinctively run away or shield themselves from the agony that follows. In some cases, there are times when you don't know what you fear. This can be considered blissful ignorance until what you fear becomes known and you dread it and cower from life. One way of overcoming fear is to know what you are afraid of and learn to face it and look it in the eye.

"Good Will Hunting" is a story about a young man, Will Hunting, who is a genius in math. Due to his traumatic childhood, he blames himself and does not know his own fears. He never holds a steady job because he self-sabotages all his efforts. For example, he seeks revenge on a childhood bully but also hurts a police officer while doing so. Hunting meets Professor Gerald Lambeau when he solves a difficult math problem. Realizing Hunting's potential, Lambeau offers Hunting the option of either going to jail or being under his tutelage in addition to seeing a psychologist. Hunting chooses the latter, but the five psychologists he sees fail to help him until he meets Sean Maguire, who also is from his old neighborhood. Hunting can relate to Maguire, and as a form of treatment, Maguire pushes Hunting to face his fears. Slowly he opens Hunting's heart and makes him realize that not everything is his fault.

I went through a dark age during high school years. My thoughts and emotions differed drastically from what my teachers or my parents wanted. I felt as if they didn't understand me. I used to hang out with a bunch of friends and did not go to school. We would go to billiards, Internet cafés and bars to have fun. I would even sleep at my friends' houses for a few months because we didn't have a care in the world. I didn't care if my parents were worried about me. My dad would ask me, "What do you want?" I would answer that I didn't know. It was never a satisfactory answer. Nonetheless, at the time, I really didn't know what I wanted to do because I was happy with my time spent with friends. My first turning point came when I skipped class and was hanging out in the park with my friends. I was stabbed in the back by an unruly kid who was a little older than I was. This incident showed how worried my parents were. I started to change and decided to give school one more chance because I also feared ending up being like the person who stabbed me.

In the story, Hunting didn't want to work at the National Security Agency or any other major company because he was scared that he was not qualified for the job. Fear is evident in the character when he wins the lottery but doesn't cash it in because he is scared of what the fortune will bring. Hunting is not confident because when all the people around, especially his friend Chuckie, tell him he is a genius; he doesn't believe them. This lack of confidence also is a reason he fears

everything. Similar to him, there was a time when I would do any kind of job just for money. My friend and I would not bother applying to recruitment agencies or looking for any simple white-collar desk jobs. My friends, especially, would not even try to go finish their GED, saying they had several expenses to take care of and that they were not born in America like I was.

Confidence is the key to making it or breaking it. The bottom line was they were afraid of going back to school and being made fun of because their English was not proficient. Although I told them that their English was sufficient to pass classes and that all they needed to do was go to school and study on the train, it was hard for me when I finally practiced what I preached.

Fear is rooted in us by action and events that occur. Sean Maguire's wife had cancer and he was afraid that she would die but sat in the hospital every day to give her support. When his wife finally passed away he was unable to move on. He feared death of loved ones so much that his relationships were nonexistent, and when there was one he pushed people away. I feel the fear of losing a loved one to cancer is something very hard to go through. My grandma and mother both had cancer since cancer runs high on my mother's side of the family. My grandma died after three years of fighting cancer, during which time we would go to Chinatown every day and take food for her in case she was hungry. Each time my sister and I were there, we would take turns feeding her because she grew weaker as she continued her battle. To this day, we regret not doing more for her because my mother cries when we talk about this subject. It is impossible to forget her, and the only way to live with her passing is to remember the good times and let time heal the sad memories. We use her as a living memory, and treat our mother even better to correct the mistakes.

People face fear differently; however, it is just something we have to go through to grow up. When facing fears, a little courage goes a long way. When lost in fear, we have to know what we are afraid of before we can face it. Thus, when we finally figure out the things we fear, it is a sign of growing up. Then, and only then, you can find your way.

Work Cited

"Good Will Hunting." Gus Van Sant, director. Miramax, 1997.

Facing Fears: The Key to Unlocking One's True Potential

Pedro R. Martinez

The movie “Good Will Hunting” by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck is a story about a janitor named Will Hunting, whose photographic memory makes him a genius. His genius is demonstrated through his list of self-defense acquittals. After an incident involving the police, Will is offered therapy and schooling in lieu of jail time. Due to numerous traumatic events in his life, Will demonstrates several defense mechanisms and emotional barriers. These barriers, which in his view are protecting him from emotional pain, are actually hampering his abilities and preventing him from achieving success. It is only after numerous therapy sessions and through the help of his friends that he is able to conquer these fears and unlock his true potential, both socially and intellectually. Will’s phobias and traits are similar to mine. We both have untapped potential and mental prisons that have hindered the abilities that were given to us. All humans struggle with fear in life, but it is how we overcome it that defines our character and allows us to unlock our true potential.

In the movie, Will Hunting’s photographic memory allows him to solve the complex theory on the blackboard in a classroom. Professor Lambeau leaves another problem on the board. Will solves it, but Lambeau initially believes that Will is vandalizing the board and causes Will to flee. When it turns out that Will had solved it correctly, Lambeau tries to find out Will’s whereabouts. Lambeau finds him and shows up at the courthouse, presenting an ultimatum to the judge to release Will on the agreement that he attends therapy. After he agrees to attend therapy and study complex mathematics in lieu of prison, Will demonstrates his skills to the professor, and it’s these skills that he possesses, coupled with the knowledge of multiple subjects and his articulate speaking, that separate him from his peers. He clearly presents untapped potential; however, he is often seen as the brilliant but lazy figure. Sean Maguire, the therapist Will agrees to work with, even questions Will’s untapped potential with this quote: “I just have a little question here. You could be a janitor anywhere. Why did you work at the most prestigious technical college in the whole fuckin’ world? And why did you sneak around at night and finish other people’s formulas that only one or two people in the world could do and then lie about it? ’Cause I don’t see a lot of honor in that, Will.”

I face a similar situation to Will’s; people similar to Lambeau, especially my family who are mostly in white-collar professions, often sense in me the potential to do many different things in life. Why did I choose to become part of Local 3 – an electrician? I viewed it as a true chance to not only reach but surpass my potential

because in the field there are an infinite number of challenges that can occur. However, these challenges can be overcome, much like how Will overcame his fears, with fortitude and perseverance.

Will's true potential, however, will never come to fruition as long as he is plagued by emotional constraints and fear. He has several defense mechanisms and emotional barriers blocking his mind. Despite being an intellectual at times, he is often abrasive and refuses to open up. The first five psychiatrists were unsuccessful in getting him to reveal his past. Despite having genuine feelings for his girlfriend, Skylar, Will keeps her at an emotional distance and frequently lies about his past, is reluctant to show his true feelings and his neighborhood, or to introduce her to his friends for fear of rejection. He suffers from intense atychiphobia, the fear of failure and rejection. All these stem from the physical abuse that his foster father inflicted on him, ultimately leading to irrational actions such as ignoring and suppressing his feelings for Skylar, and rejecting all the progress he has made as a mathematician. Sean helps Will to alleviate these fears and mental scars, which help him work toward that true potential.

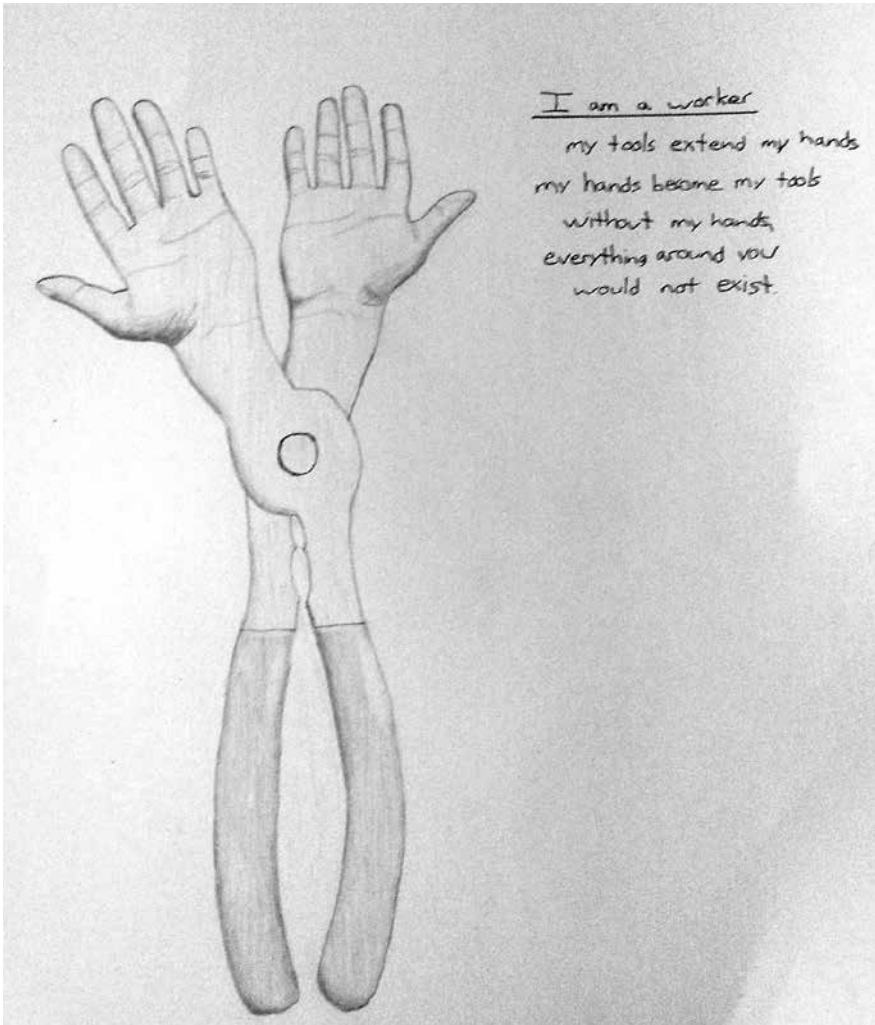
I can relate to Will because I also suffer from atychiphobia, the fear of failure. I don't see failure as an option, and I despise wasted effort. So like Will, my own potential is stagnated by this phobia, but I find relief when the burdens on the shoulders of those close to me are lifted. This, in turn, helps me face my fear, and helps me to surpass my potential – much like Will achieved at the closing of the film.

All humans struggle with fear in life, but it is how we overcome that dismay that defines our character and allows us to unlock our true potential. Due to the help of Sean and his friends, Will was able to access that hidden potential. He also was able to work through the phobias and physical abuse he endured as a child. It was through facing those fears and all the strife that came with them, that Will was able to live up to Lambeau's and Sean's wishes and reach his potential. Even in the case of my fears, which are similar to Will's, facing them helped me further my growth not only as an electrician but as a person. Facing fears is the key to unlocking one's potential, because once those inhibitions are unearthed, they open up a plethora of new opportunities.

Work Cited

“Good Will Hunting.” Gus Van Sant, director. Miramax, 1997.

WE WORK



"I Am a Worker"

Danny Ferreyra

The Brohan Wheel

Shaun Brohan

When I first started talking about the final project with my art instructor, I was not all that sure what to do it on. There have been many artists who have influenced me over the years in an artistic way, for example, Banksy, Jamie Lynn, Edgar Allan Poe, M. C. Escher and, of course, Picasso. None of which I could really relate to my work in any particular way, so we then began discussing the tool that my foreman and I actually created and use on a daily basis. I decided that, in fact, my foreman and I are artists in our craft, especially since we spontaneously invented something out of our experiences, which is not something that everyone does. I feel as though I have been extremely lucky to work on the same job with the same company for three-and-a-half years. When you work with the same company for that long, you begin to build bonds and friendships with different people. When I first got to World Trade Center Tower 4, I was working with two excellent mechanics; Guy and Chris both taught me a lot over the next couple years.

The senior mechanic, Guy, and I have a great deal in common, and I feel as though he really took me under his wing. We are both into motorcycles and he would do anything for anyone. I mean, he is one of the nicest guys I have ever met. He always takes great pride in his work and works very hard. His experience and knowledge in the trade is priceless and could rub off on anyone willing to listen and watch. Eventually, Guy became the wire-pulling foreman, and Chris and I were the first two people he recruited for the crew. After running a lot of the pipe throughout the lower floors, we knew that these pulls were not going to be like average wire pulls. The majority of the pipe runs were long and had a lot of bends. To add to the challenge of pulling wire in today's construction world, everything is value engineered to save money, but may, in fact, make our jobs harder. When they value engineered Tower 4, the pipe runs and sizes were made just to meet the code, where they used to oversize the pipe for room and convenience. However, as we continued to pull wire, the crew got larger and I met even more good people, while Guy continued to teach others, and me, different things about the trade. Guy has an old-school mentality and he believes in keeping the men happy and united. When everyone is on the same page and happy, work does not feel like work anymore and it becomes more productive. No matter how tough the pull was, or whatever problem we were facing, Guy always somehow managed to figure out a solution, and we were able to carry on.

Until one particular pull. I still remember the exact run. It was a run we had to drop from the 45th floor and was a run of eight, 3-inch pipes in the back of a deep box which had other pipe runs in front. When we first started dropping the wire, the jacket was getting skinned by the side of the pipe no matter what we

did with wheels to try to prevent that. Then, one day, Guy put me on the feeding side to try and see what was happening. As we began dropping the wire, I saw that the angle of the wire was too sharp while traveling into the pipe. The box was too deep to mount another wheel to keep the wire in the center of the pipe, and we could not use the sheath, which Green Lee makes because it narrows the pipe even more and that would skin the wire as well. As a result, Guy asked me what we could do to prevent the wire from getting damaged, and I told him we needed the small wheel from the sheath because that helps put the wire down the center of the pipe. At the same time, we needed it to be connected to the outside of the pipe, so we would not narrow the inner diameter anymore. I gave Guy some parts from the gang box and he made it happen. He cut the different pieces and welded them together to fit on the collar piece, which actually made the piece universal anywhere from two inches to four inches. We both were stoked about what we had created and put it to use immediately. It worked perfectly, and we continuously used it on almost every wire pull thereafter. It became known as the “Brohan Wheel,” and we created two more afterward. Hopefully, we will be able to get it patented and make more to help others to use in the future.

The foreman/apprentice bond that Guy and I have is very uncommon, and I must say it's been a great one. Not only has Guy taught me a lot about the trade and hard work, but he also has taught me a lot about life and friendship. We still keep in touch, though we're not working together, and he still uses one of the “Brohan Wheels” that we created to help feed the wire even if it is not necessarily needed. Guy is a one of a kind mechanic and foreman; I hope many other apprentices get the chance to work with him or someone like him during their career.

InVENTion

Paul Vance

Every single object tells a story if you know how to read it. When understanding what a sparky needs you must design in the extremes in order to take care of the middles. In exploring the rituals of a worker during the day, you begin to build a set of pocket tools you must have with you to make your days function. I feel as if every day I am making some new tool to get a new job done. Like a chimpanzee stripping twigs to find termites, I scavenge the floor for scraps and parts to add to my utility belt. Tape on a fish stick becomes my hand extension to get into tight spots. I put tape around a screwdriver, which holds my screws in place for working in a panel. Scrap rod turns into a file to dull sharp edges of large pipe. We make things to skip a step or leave a tool behind; to make running around to different floors a bit easier. Things you want to have around and on you working as an electrician are: pliers, Phillips and flat-head screwdriver, knife, flashlight, wigi tester, ruler, channel locks, tape and a pencil or marker. Certain people use certain things more but, in essence, these are the more important tools of the job. Phones might not look like a tool but serve a major purpose for today's worker. Phones work as both flashlight and digital level.

As an apprentice, I wish I could invent a coffee-order app. This is something that would send the order out to the cooks at the deli, and I just say my name and pick up a package on wheels. It also would be awesome to have an X-ray/heat sensing periscope that could see through walls and ceilings in order to work out where a conduit runs; imagine a projection of a layout that would predict trouble spots between trades based on code regulations. The periscope would keep me from walking up and down a ladder and I would be more focused on the job.

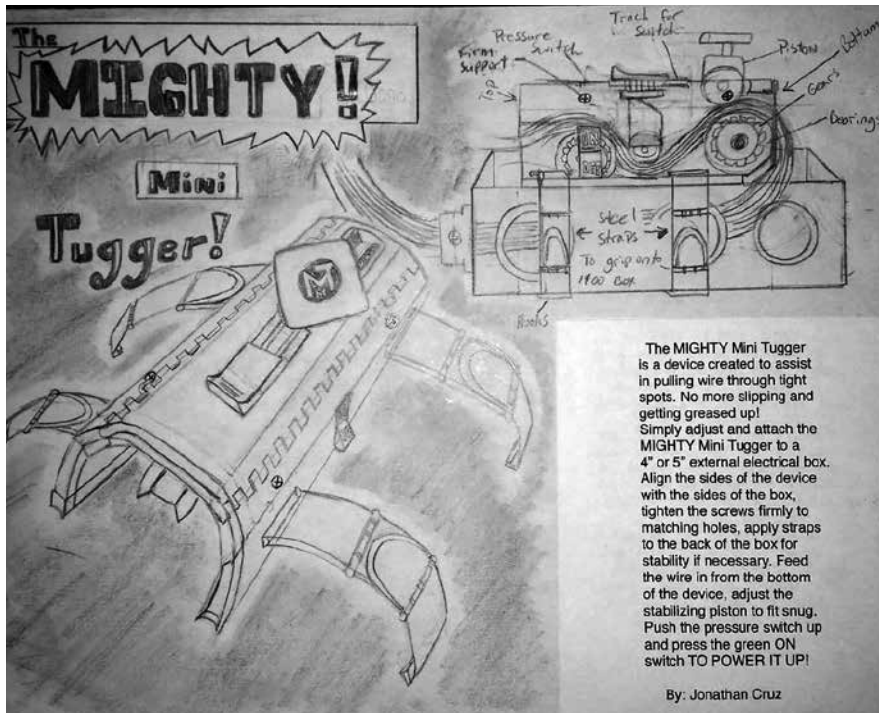
It would be nice to survey what a sparky needs in his tool bag and why they are needed. It would challenge the problems of efficiency and perhaps lead to a super tool that would represent the business and trade. This super tool would stand the test of time and survive decades. It would be something that might be customizable. It would be nice to make an extension of ourselves – something that would bring so much to our work and make us feel better about our day. Picture something organic that uses new technologies. The tools we envision could be self-designed and custom built and printed at home ... including our hearts and souls.

Genius Design for a Hammer Drill

Christian Giambrone

Currently on construction sites, many trades use a hammer drill for drilling into the concrete overhead for supports to hang ceiling tiles, electrical and plumbing piping, and many other mechanical engineering supplies. These must be attached to the structure to act as the lifeline of the buildings' operational systems.

While using a hammer drill (especially overhead), it creates a lot of dust, some of which we installers breathe. Ask and you'll find that it's very difficult to hold the hammer drill straight. A genius design for the hammer drill is to use its gyroscopic action, having a counter-acting fan to draw in all the concrete dust and expel it away from the user. Also, adding a built-in level on the tool itself could be useful for the more novice driller to drill their holes nice and straight to ensure better craftsmanship.



"The MIGHTY Mini Tugger"

Jonathan Cruz

The Art of Manipulation

Jonathan Cruz

In life, things don't always go as planned; when a plan fails, the pressure is on. What do you do to get the job done? Will you fail or will you manipulate your environment to suit your needs?

As Local 3 electrician's apprentices, we work alongside journeymen who are artisans of our trade. We are given the skills to troubleshoot and execute jobs as efficiently as possible, but more than often we are presented with obstacles in our daily routines. For instance, a fellow journeyman and I were to follow the blueprints and execute three pull boxes that supplied the feed from the breaker panels to the three pull boxes, which fed the electric to the lights on the whole floor. The boxes which measured 12"x12" needed to fit snugly in the sealing of a 6'x7' closet, where there was one existing 3" tubing and 4" tubing, which ran from the back of the closet to the front on the left side near the wall where the breaker panels rested. In addition, imagine a sprinkler head, smoke head and two 4' fluorescent light fixtures because they were not installed yet.

My journeyman told me, "Listen son, if there is one thing you are going to learn from me it is how to manipulate your environment." Staring at the ceiling, with wheels turning in his head, he told me to lay out the 12" boxes on the floor from left to right. I was skeptical as we were arranging and rearranging the boxes to see how we could make it work. But we took our measurements and decided that we had to stagger the boxes 3" apart and connect them at the rear-left corner of each box. After figuring out how we were to lay out the boxes, we had to find a way to weave in and out of the 3" and 4" tubing that lay in front of the breaker panels and how to support the tubing.

We decided to use 30 degree offsets to fit between the 3" and 4" tubing and a 90 degree bend to connect them to the breaker panel. For support, we decided to use a 7' piece, a Kindorf, that ran from the back wall to the front towards the door and attach them using $\frac{3}{4}$ " Kindorf straps. On the other side, we used a 2' piece of Kindorf that would hold up the other end. With much precision, he made the bends while I drilled five holes in each box: four near each corner to be supported by $\frac{3}{8}$ " rods, which were drilled into the ceiling, and one hole in the rear-left corner to be joined by a $\frac{3}{4}$ " connector, which the tubing would fit into and lead to the breaker panel. Everything was installed successfully by manipulating the conduit to weave in and out of obstacles that obstructed the given path, and staggering the boxes to make room for future items to be installed. In conclusion, the job was carried out using the art of manipulation.

The Master Approach to Building

Jasmine Spencer

There are people with vision who create grand plans for builders. We call them architects. Some might call them artists because they use their imagination and their knowledge to create drawings and plans for empty and existing spaces. But what happens when their visions fall short of the reality of the trades that fulfill and realize them? Another type of artist emerges and they are called tradesmen. Not every tradesman considers him or herself an artist. There are people on the job considered “installers,” who don’t know much about the theory behind their trade, which in my field is electrical work. They just do what they are told and don’t question the judgment of the foreman or architect or engineer. So far, I’ve been warned not to fall victim to becoming this type of worker. I have been taught to learn everything I can about my trade and to take pride in my work as a craftsman, an artist. Some of the electrical work I’ve seen has been beautifully crafted and so neat, you can see where the “art” comes into play with sweeping bends in conduit and wire patterned perfectly and neat.

Not everyone comes to work with a “master” approach on his or her mind. It should be the way of all workers, but, sadly, the pressure to just get a job done as quickly and economically efficient as possible has overpowered the artistic craftsman. So again, what happens when there’s an unforeseen obstacle or an “oops” as we electricians like to call it. I’ve seen this happen at a bus depot in Harlem where I was working. Risers were set to go up through the floors at a certain location specified by a set of electrical blueprints. The floor was drilled through to make a space to allow the conduit to pass through. The conduit was bent and installed to go into a pull box not far from the hole, maybe 6 feet away. Now, this was not just a couple of pipes but about 14 that were strapped and supported with racks, all done to specifications.

All of a sudden the Metropolitan Transit Authority says, “Oh no, those pipes can’t go there; we’re putting artwork in the window and they will block it.” So now what? The hole was made already; all the conduits were finished and installed. The foreman got together with the best electricians and came up with a way to bend some more conduits in such a fashion that it still was able to come out the same hole, clear the window completely, and still reach the pull box. The trick was to do all this and make it still look like it was meant to be that way and make it appealing to the eye and complement the artwork. Somehow, some way, those guys got it done and the outcome was jaw dropping. They thought abstractly and created a beautiful pattern of pipework that may have rivaled the piece in the window. It made me proud to be a Local 3 electrician. A neat and artistic display of curves and sharp bends, all identical and hitting their mark with the same amount of levelness and spacing, made the impossible possible and saved the contractor a lot of money and time.

WE CREATE



"Lamp"

Ben Rodriguez

Plumbing Is Indeed Art

Ben Rodriguez

Although you could hear many different definitions of art, in my opinion, plumbing should definitely be considered art. In Kendall Walton's article, "The Definition of Art," he addresses more than a dozen distinct definitions of art. With the seeming impossibility of a consensus of the definition, I find it very difficult for anyone to refute the evidence that plumbing is art. When considering all the different types of human expression today, many of which have been considered art; thus, I think it is important to remember plumbing. The greatest plumbing requires skilled work, expression through planning and executing, and an eye for detail, and in this sense, plumbing should definitely be classified as a type of art.

In "The Definition of Art," Walton writes that even the most controversial definitions must agree that art could be defined as "entities (artifacts or performances) intentionally endowed by their makers with a significant degree of aesthetic interest, often surpassing that of most everyday objects." One thing that I can definitely say I have learned about myself in the few years in this industry is the pride I take in my work. If I am not proud to show it off to my co-workers and supervisors, I don't feel as though my job has been well done. I take great care to make sure my pipes work properly, are straight, and well finished – the aesthetic is very important to me. In that sense, it could be said that my plumbing is intentionally completed with aesthetic in mind; by that logic, plumbing is most certainly art.

There is one part of Walton's definition I did not wholly agree with; however, the plumbers who did not intentionally create art through plumbing might still have created what could be called art. Consider, for example, the refrigerator. Each refrigerator is designed with aesthetics in mind, and very few people actually think of a refrigerator when they think of art. In the opposite sense, clouds form with no regard for aesthetics, yet this doesn't keep people from naming cloud art in the sky. Many things can be considered art. All this depends on, is an individual's own idea about art. Speaking of an individual's understanding of art, Walton's article also points out that art cannot be defined by too narrow a definition, for that would stifle the artists' creativity and possibilities. It is important to remember that expression of creativity is a definition of art in and of itself.

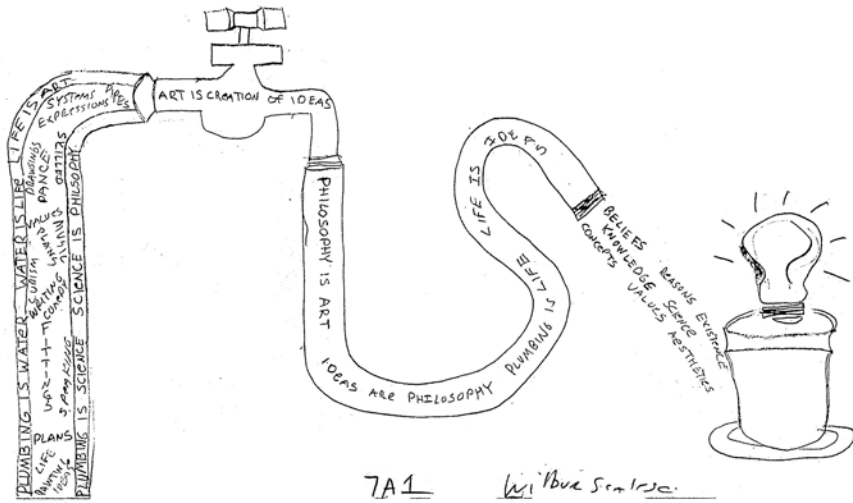
In order to consider plumbing as an art, one might consider it in the greater scheme of architecture and design. Both architecture and design fit the very same definition of art, in the sense that they are both representations of one's creativity, be it recreating another form, which was another of Walton's mentioned

definitions of art, or an entirely new proposal. Though I think of plumbing as art, I know that is not the case for all plumbers or people in general. During the course of this class, I interviewed several plumbers to find varied responses.

That said, I definitely heard from plumbers who I know do take great pride in their work, and that they would consider plumbing as art. This, to me, also highlighted Walton's idea that art is intentional. In order for plumbers to consider their work art, they would have needed to deliberately do their work with aesthetics in mind, which clearly, they did not. This reinforces Walton's definition, with which I have now become acquainted. In addition, these plumbers also might believe in an idea of art similar to Arthur C. Danto's, which has to have a subject that showed or emitted an emotion of point of view with both an artistic and historical context. Even Walton discredits this theory stating, "The view has been criticized for entailing that art criticism written in a highly rhetorical style is art, lacking but requiring an independent account of what makes a context art historical, and for not applying to music." Instead, Walton looks closely at another theorist, George Dickie's definition of art, which insists art should be explained through a set of definitions. Dickie's less-problematic definition states, "A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an art world public." Though restrooms, kitchens and boiler rooms might not seem like the ideal subject for admiration from the art's public, every piece of art has its audience.

Take, for example, my foreman, who assisted in building a bathroom for a very wealthy person. Once it was completed, this wealthy patron thought it was so beautiful, that he put up a Plexiglas wall over the plumbing to showcase what he considered to be art. He isn't the only one. Every time I find myself in a public place with exposed plumbing, I find myself looking at the details and the execution. I look to see how well the project was completed, as well as the appearance – it is, after all, exposed. Sometimes I find myself critiquing the work of fellow plumbers in malls and restaurants. In that sense, I think I could consider myself the "art world's public," for I have a somewhat knowledgeable opinion on whether or not the plumbing is aesthetically pleasing, in addition to being properly executed.

Furthermore, contemporary definitions of art have been criticized for being either too limited or too far-reaching, so even today, with modern art always surrounding us, it would be hard to cast plumbing out of a category, which even landscaping and car designs fall into. Even should you not consider plumbing art on its own, something could be said for copper sculptures made of raw plumbing materials. As well as a Google search for "plumbing art" that returns more than 50 million images. Considering the fact that it has been so difficult to come to a conclusion as to the official definition of art and the support from websites, artists and sculptors all over the world, I think it is safe to say that plumbing is indeed art.



“Art, Philosophy, Plumbing Flowchart”

Wilbur Scalesci

Why Plumbing Is a System and an Art

Wilbur Scalesci

If plumbing is a system, art can be considered one too. It is a system of colors, strokes, images and sculptures. Ideas, revelations and the reflection of your innermost secrets are part of this system. There are so many versions of art, and it is up to your imagination and how far it can take you. Same thing with plumbing – it can be rather complex to create or very easy to build. It depends on the creator or the person doing the creating for someone else's vision. The science of art and creation is easily acquired whether through art or plumbing. Both forms, art and plumbing, create life; they spark an image not easily forgotten once seen.

Manifested in your mind, these objects appeal to your senses. While working off or from this image, this spark that formed will become embedded into who you are. This is why anything that is considered art is considered philosophy as well. Art changes lives just like philosophy. They become integrated into your life, which will then allow you to create what you truly desire.

A question, an idea or a drawing, a musical recording and a photograph are many creations of art. If a person disagrees with what you consider art, it's just a reflection of who they are and the values which they hold. Such as, a person who is a murderer, their art could be that of murder. The same can be said for a football player; their art is playing a sport. Some people disagree because they might not believe that's art – but it is – especially to the person who believes it is. Just like beauty is in the eye of the beholder, art is in the eye of the beholder; the limitations are endless when you can create whatever you choose. But who can really question what art is when everyone views art differently?

We may all like similar artworks, but each view is different. The interpretation changes with each human point of view. We can say a hypothesis is an educated guess, a term more closely associated with science, but an educated guess can be used with art, so there is a connection between science and art. They can be considered one and the same.

Thus, the connections between everyday life and the art around us are ever evolving. New creations through the lives we live always create new art, new science and new philosophy. It's the new understanding of these creations that will change, and it is up to us to determine what we define as art. Since taking this class, I have learned to appreciate everything around for what it is and isn't, what it can be, can't be, and what I want it to be. The intertwining of science and plumbing is an art; it is up to the plumber and the limitations of what he or she is willing to create. At the same time, plumbing is art and, to me, it is my art;

I enjoy it very much. I will continue to believe that every day I will perfect my art by being a plumber. Keeping my eyes wide open to learn more and create more through the person I am and will become.

My values and philosophy will show through my work for years to come. Art gives life and so does plumbing; art gives purpose to life and with that we love to live. Plumbing creates life by giving us what we need – water and somewhere to get rid of our waste. People who lived around waste would get sick and die; humans need water to survive, so we would live closer to water sources. Nowadays, through science, we are able to have water come to us through plumbing, which makes living possible and the creation of life. So yes, plumbing is art and so are a lot of other things.



“Wrenches and Workers”

Joe A. Cardosa



“Lamp”

Neil Assennato

Tasks and Skills: An Artist Statement

Neil Assennato

Working in the electrical field requires many tasks and skills. One skill I have come to be very fond of is the skill of conduit bending. There are many forms of conduit and there are several ways and tools for bending each kind of conduit. There are hand benders, cyclone benders and table benders for the larger of the conduits. Conduit can come in many sizes which can range from 1/2 inch to 5 or even 6 inches in diameter.

For my final project, I chose to make an original lamp. I chose to take a piece of 1/2 inch EMT conduit and use a 1/2 inch hand bender to bend it to a rather odd shape. When I say odd, I mean odd when comparing it to the way it's normally bent to suit the needs of the electrical field. Normally, conduit is never bent more than 90 degrees, mainly because it's illogical and because it makes one hell of a wire pull. Sometimes wire is hard enough to pull through a straight run of conduit, and when offsets and angles are added to avoid objects, it makes pulling the wire even tougher. I've taken a 10 foot piece of 1/2 inch conduit and bent it into a spiral then kicked the end up 90 degrees and once again kicked it down a little more than 90 degrees to form what looks like a swan's neck. After all the bending was finished, I connected a standard 4 inch box to the head where my light bulb is placed. In order for the light bulb to be able to sit in place and not wobble, I had to take a 4 inch box cover and drill a hole in the center of it using an inch-and-an-eighth hole saw. After I was able to sit my bulb in there correctly, I snaked two wires through, connected the bulb and screwed the cover on to seal it. At the very bottom of the spiral (the base of the lamp), I simply spliced my two wires onto the end of an extension cord which could easily be plugged into any outlet and voila, an original Neil Assennato lamp.

All in all, the entire lamp would cost, in materials, about only \$20. The 10 foot piece of conduit would approximately be \$3. The two connectors would equal about \$5. The 4 inch box, cover and bulb would add up to about \$7. Lastly, the cord and wire used would come to a mere \$5. If I were to actually sell these original lamps, I would most likely look to sell them for \$75 apiece. After all, I do not work for free.

Plumbing: “Behind the Wall” Art

Joe A. Cardoso

An art enthusiast enters her favorite gallery and admires the most recent paintings. A high school student anxiously awaits his turn to proudly display his sculpture for the year-end art contest. Three young actors walking down West Fifth Street in Manhattan feel they have mastered the character while receiving rave reviews from the audience. A father listens to his daughter play the piano with such ease and elegance that it brings tears to his eyes. A photographer cautiously snaps his picture and captures the moment that will forever be captured for all to share. The baker in Fleetwood, New York, waits to add the last layer to his eight-piece hockey championship cake.

When I think of the idea of art, the above examples come to mind. However, a good point was raised, what about plumbing, is it art? After much thought, I have to agree that plumbing, too, is a form of art. Art cannot be defined into one word or description. There are many different aspects of art and art form, and I believe that plumbing can be classified amongst the above-mentioned examples.

I am a plumber and take pride in the work that I do. Perhaps it's true that society views plumbers work as “dirty work” or simply “dirty.” It may be true at times; it can be dirty work and may require getting dirty. However, plumbing is not only replacing a “leaky toilet.” Like art, plumbing is more complex than just a toilet. For instance, you have a bare room, with nothing there but four walls. A plumber is like an artist. He or she intensely stares at those four walls like his or her canvas and begins planning out in his or her head what needs to be done. Perhaps waste and vent is the first thing that may come to mind. How much cast iron pipe will be needed? What tools will be required for this work? Will no hub or service wait be used? The planning out of the plumber's work is as important as performing the work. The work and final product is what drives the plumber, and many times only the plumber is aware of how complex it can actually be. The art of plumbing is many times not immediately visible for others to admire. It's like the old saying, “If walls can talk!” What I mean by this is that many times the actual art piece is what is behind the walls connecting that toilet to that “behind the wall” art. Perhaps this is the reason many may not realize that plumbing is an art form. It's creating something from nothing.

Like many artists, there are instances where plumbers need to think outside the box. Plumbers many times need to be creative when it comes to their work. Especially when working in an older or in an existing environment. The plumber needs to be very resourceful in completing his or her task. The actual process of “thinking outside the box,” and the passion it takes to complete it, can be compared to how the artist works. All artists have passion and all artists have talent in their specific subjects. Similarly, plumbers need to be innovative when

working in their field. Many times they need to be creative. I believe the brain of a plumber works very similar to any other artist whom we know today. Plumbers simply want to use their knowledge in the trade to create something that they can take pride in and have others admire.

Art is not simply a photograph or a painting. Plumbing is a form of art. Like an architect designing the latest skyscraper, a plumber creates something that can be useful or admired. Art can be an expression or a skill that individuals may acquire. Sometimes art can be both an expression and skill. Plumbing is a mastered skill and thus considered art. It is art because it was imagined, designed, thought of and finally created. The skills needed to be a good plumber can be instinctively learned but like many artists, it also can be developed by ongoing learning. A good artist realizes that further education can only better him or herself. Further training and pursuing classes with the goal of learning other skills can only make that plumber better as well.

Many past artists struggled in the beginning and plumbers, in a sense, can be compared to them. At least that's the case when a plumber is an apprentice. The first five years of a union plumber, for example, is quite difficult. I believe only the ones who truly love what they do, manage to stay afloat. It's a struggle financially and socially. However, the only difference is that plumbers eventually do become well recognized for their skills and, thus, eventually compensated, while some artists only get that recognition after their death.

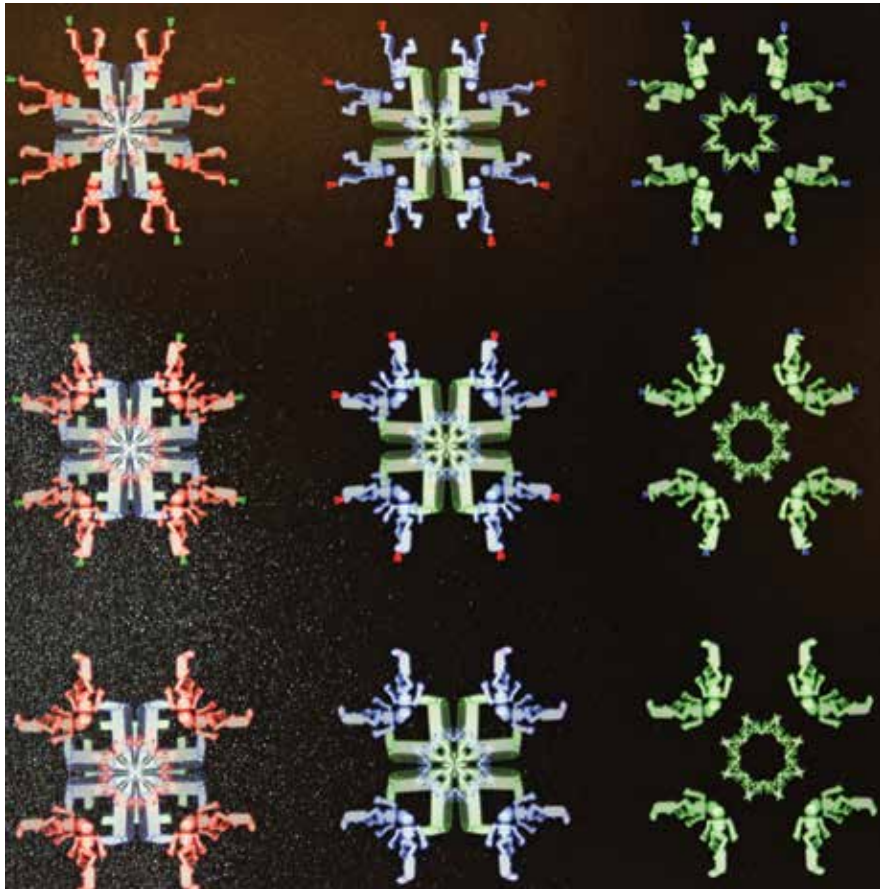
In an attempt to define art in simple terms, I believe art can be classified as a form of expression, a creation, a passion or a specific skill. In order for art to come to life, it needs a good artist. The artist needs to possess imagination, love for the work, skill and ultimately create something that can be used to help others. Art is an interpretation and not everyone will view it the same. A plumber is an artist; he or she uses skill and knowledge to create something that others can use or admire. The final product or the product that may be behind (unseen) is the art itself. There are many times when the only person who may consider the finished product as art is the plumber himself or herself or a professional who works in a similar trade. Good plumbers, like good artists, love to use their skills to benefit others. The skill of a plumber may not always be looked upon as artistic by society's standards, but I hope this essay can persuade some to view plumbing as a form of art because that is simply what it really is. Art is imagining, creating and using the skills to come up with a final product that can be used and admired by many.

WE STRUGGLE



"Boilerman"

Andrew Morales III



“Kaleidoscope”

Lowely Cheung

Artist's Statement: Kaleidoscope

Lowely Cheung

This picture is actually a frame from an animation I created. What follows is a description of the entire sequence of that animation. The first segment is a big robot stepping on a small robot. In this animation, there is always one bigger robot readily stepping on a smaller one. The idea of big and small is relative; when one thinks one is big, there is always someone bigger. The same idea applies to outsourcing. When labor is cheap in one country, there is always cheaper labor somewhere else. The result is a race to the bottom; when one falls to the bottom, there is always another bottom line to drag one further down.

The second segment is about pointing fingers at each other. Recently the government shutdown and the two parties, Democrat and Republican, were pointing fingers at each other and assigning blame. They are like mirror image to one another, blaming everyone else but themselves. There is enough blame that goes around and, eventually, the finger will point back to one's self.

The third segment is to visualize the evolution of the species when designer genes become possible. Would we be able to combine an animal gene with a human gene? Would that result in a creature that defies the norm and has the special ability to dance around gravity? That could be a beautiful thing; think of the possibilities! Let's hope the fate of this creature will not share the same fate as the designer seeds that have a self-destruct gene built in to ensure that the seed will not be able to self-destruct.

The fourth segment is about war – endless and senseless war. The reaction to this self-destructive behavior is repeatedly mourning until everyone drowns in their own tears.

The Big Fish Eats the Little Fish

Jason Martin Arrindell

This was said to me, jokingly, by my father on one of his trips from America. I saw him as being larger than life as he traveled to see me from a place that everyone speaks of with great wonder. These words long resonated in my head since I have now become an American. It is the structure of life and everyone should by now know how to function. If you are a big fish or a small fish, you still have to function at the top of your game.

“There is always a bigger fish living to your potential,” Dad jokingly said. Its profound impact lasted me all my life. Sometimes, I think it was never meant for my ears. But my first instinct was that I cannot become a little fish. And, I should not settle for the bottom of the pile. In America, you may not see this as directly as you would in other countries. It’s almost like in nature where as soon as you see a big fish you see bottom feeders, not a good name for those who see you as the last cup of water in hell. They may be your family or loved ones and your position in life directly affects them. Living your dreams shows them a lot is possible.

Even then, I thought that statement was very arrogant and harsh, but I realize that life is harsh and it’s important that people know their position.

Letter to Senator Schumer

JD

Senator Charles E. Schumer
Melville Office
145 Pine Lawn Road #300
Melville, NY 11747
Phone: 631-753-0978
Fax: 631-753-0997

To Senator Charles E. Schumer:

I'm writing to you regarding the article titled, "Swiss Weigh Slashing Top Pay in Landmark Vote," by Catherine McLean, which was published in Switzerland's The Local on Oct. 28, 2013. The article in reference is regarding an upcoming vote in Switzerland to limit the compensation of a CEO to a 12:1 ratio of the lowest paid worker of the company.

From the viewpoint of people who are in favor of this vote, the salaries of CEOs have risen to unbelievable heights. In Switzerland, the average ratio climbed from 6 to 1 just 30 years ago to now 43 to 1, with many CEOs making over 100 times more than their lowest-paid worker, and the top ratio reaching 261 to 1. To bring this back down would be utilitarian efficient, and, in theory, would have the greatest benefit by bringing happiness to a greater number of people.

Jeremy Bentham's theories of the utilitarian economy show us that the ultimate goal is to redistribute this wealth evenly to maximize everybody's happiness or utility. While this would be at the cost of utility from a rich CEO, the cost is outweighed by the benefit of spreading happiness to many more, possibly hundreds or thousands, workers in the form of higher pay.

In America, this problem is even more prevalent, and with different incentives and compensations thrown in, this ratio can jump into the thousands. Vilfredo Pareto theorized that the most efficient way to deal with the economy is by maximizing consumer surplus, which is the difference in what a consumer is willing to pay for something, versus its market price, which will always benefit those who have the most disposable income. This benefits the rich greatly, as spreading wealth out to the poor in small amounts will, at best, only result in small surpluses of money for them, while concentrating wealth into the hands of few will result in massive surpluses for those few.

When few people amass this amount of wealth, the benefit is mostly only to themselves; while the burden of these massive salaries and bonuses cannot be passed on to shareholders, so it is most often felt by the lowest workers who are not making a living wage.

I support this initiative to cap CEO pay, and believe that not only America, but other world-leading countries should follow. With money spread to those who will actually spend instead of stockpiling it, the economy will benefit overall, and if, eventually, all countries stand together in this initiative, businesses will adapt to the change.

I urge you, Senator Schumer, to introduce a similar bill in Congress so that the U.S. can begin rectifying its gross inequality as well.

Sincerely,

JD

Letter to Gov. Cuomo

Michael Konwisarz

Attn: Gov. Andrew Cuomo
P.O. Box 4105
New York, NY 10163
Phone: 212-551-9441

To Gov. Andrew Cuomo:

Recently, I was given access to Tamar Lewin's article, "Financing for Colleges Declines as Costs Rise" from my economics program at Empire State College, and I am writing because I find this article quite disturbing. The article describes how college may seem only to be a dream for many children because of the constant increasing costs. With these rising costs, there is less and less public funding coming to children who used to receive some type of compensation to attend school. Thus far, less people are able to go to college, yet we live in a society that requires some type of college education in order to be successful. In class, we discussed two different types of economic views, utilitarianism and Pareto efficiency. I would like to take a minute to describe both of them to you.

The thought behind the theory of utilitarianism is cut and dry; an idea of redistribution. Jeremy Bentham founded utilitarianism and it is based upon an idea of maximizing happiness. Bentham would take tax money and redistribute it in a way that can benefit the majority of the people. While Vilfredo Pareto had a very different idea as to what was "efficient;" Pareto had the idea of maximizing "consumer surplus" the price a person is willing to pay for a single object, which is known as their "reservation price," minus the cost. Whatever the left over is, it's known as the consumer surplus. Reservation price is based upon one's income and the best alternatives they may have. This method is anti-redistributive and tends to only benefit the rich as they have higher incomes, as well as higher reservation prices.

According to the article, the system we are dealing with now causes many kids to attend school part time while working rather than full time. Tuition, and all the costs that go with it, has risen for more than 25 years. For someone to jump-start their life, they need to finish school quickly. After the recession, both enrollment and government funding for public universities dropped. Middle-class children who are not able to afford to attend a university is a perfect example of a Pareto efficient society. Regular people (not the rich) are simply not able to access these universities. What will end up happening is that the children of a higher class will get the better education and get the better jobs. This further exacerbates who can and cannot afford college, repeating this Pareto efficient cycle. The range of

classes of people will be so much more unbalanced because there will be no voice or balance for the middle and lower classes. The rich win in this scenario at the expense of the less fortunate.

We must change this situation. Raising taxes and providing more funding for our education system would allow us to get back to a more equal society with fair opportunities for education. Let the children of our future be able to make their own choices and try and achieve the goal of building a career. This will certainly maximize the happiness in society – something we desperately need!

Sincerely,

Michael Konwisarz

Labor's City

Tiffany Cunningham

In this section of Joshua Freeman's "Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II," I learned quite a bit more about the labor movement in New York City and, specifically, what a force Harry Van Arsdale Jr. was in our city. The late '50s and '60s were a great time for the working class in New York, but as the decade came to a close, tension within the city and abroad led to the beginning of a decline of power and momentum of the labor movement, as well as the growth of the working class.

The late '50s and '60s marked a great time for the labor movement. Workers enjoyed improvements in working conditions, wages, health care, education and social services. The force of the labor movement was at its height at this time. Freeman says, "Organized labor went far beyond the traditional realm of collective bargaining in its efforts to assure decent, secure living for working-class New Yorkers" (100). Local Union 3 – IBEW was led by Harry Van Arsdale Jr. I knew he was powerful and did a lot for Local 3 members, but I was completely unaware of his role in the broader picture of the success of the labor movement. I was impressed, and a little ashamed, that I was unaware of his contributions not only to Local 3 members, but also to the entire city. He was instrumental in the civil rights movement, and he offered his support to many other unions fighting for their rights for health care, housing and some sense of financial security. I was shocked to find out that, "... before the war, ... [Van Arsdale] was found guilty of shooting an opponent and inciting a picket line riot, but managed to get both convictions overturned – Van Arsdale emerged in the late '50s as the city's most powerful unionist, and one of its most open minded and dynamic" (135).

Although the labor movement was strong and the working class enjoyed a much better quality of life, it was the beginning of the end of the workers' utopia in New York City. The early signs of this are a shift from blue-collar work to white-collar work and the dislocation, or relocation, of the city's residents. At the same time, there is an influx of Puerto Rican and African-Americans in the city, which caused racial tension, and the beginning of the civil rights movement. Culturally, New York was going through an identity crisis as the demographics, neighborhoods and industry were all changing around them.

Freeman's presentation of the past shows how committed this city can be to fighting for our rights, but it seems like the terrain is constantly shifting here. With "white flight" about to take place in response to the perceived attack on

the white working class and new neighborhoods becoming established, now the problem in many neighborhoods is gentrification. It is interesting to see this strange reverse happening.

Work Cited

Freeman, Joshua. "Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II." New Press, 2001.

When Policy Began to Crumble

Matthew Gramazio

When, in “Working-Class New York,” Joshua Freeman describes New York City as a “social democratic polity,” he is describing a time after World War II, a time when the labor union movement was becoming increasingly involved in politics, advocating education and equal rights for all. Even though many New York working-class families did not want this way of life and preferred to live in a suburban atmosphere with individual homes and lower taxes, the labor movement pushed through and tried to change the ways of New York City.

One of the main characteristics of NYC during this time was the fact that “a passion for politics and public issues permeated working-class New York” (55). There was a large group of people willing to become actively engaged in politics by attending meetings and campaigning. These members were able to push issues that would benefit all, including an expansive welfare state and racial equality. The movement also supported leaders who would further their ideas and bring to life what they wanted to accomplish.

This polity led to policies that began to end racial discrimination in the workforce. Laws and bills were passed to help open job opportunities for all, specifically for African-Americans and, “for millions of New Yorkers, labor politics meant greater access to jobs, housing, health care, education and culture” (71). The type of urban economy that supported this polity were the minority groups who wanted equal rights along with the poor who wanted to move up the social ladder.

The fiscal crisis was a time when NYC was spending beyond its means, allegedly because they were spending money on social services. At the same time, it becomes more complicated than that. Paying for the social service programs should not have caused the fiscal crisis if the appropriate amount of money was still coming into the city. Having industries leave the city greatly reduced the amount of taxes being paid to the city. Since no new businesses were opening and creating revenue for the city, the city began to spend more money on programs than it was bringing in; this is a more accurate explanation of the fiscal crisis.

Another important aspect in understanding the Fiscal Crisis is the fact that once the city was unable to repay the money they already owed, financial institutions refused to lend money to the city. The lack of new funds forced the city to cut back on programs and benefits, but the city was desperate to find more funds to get out of the debt. The city struggling to find new avenues for loans helps in the understanding of how the fiscal crisis came about.

The fiscal crisis was settled with a big gamble and politicians who lived in the pockets of businessmen. The first thing the city did to alleviate their financial woes was to cut funding to city programs and services. Next, the city looked to businesses to bring money into their economy. The problem was that the money never came. In my opinion, the moves made by the city of New York were a blind leap in the wrong direction. The city pretty much handed the keys over to businesses and said lock up, as the city government walked out the door.

After the so-called fix to New York's fiscal problems, the social democratic policy began to crumble. The businesses that were now in control of the city didn't believe in helping the city's people. All programs to help the citizens of New York City were cut, which caused social unrest amongst the citizens. The working class was made to believe that the causes for the financial problems were the poor who depend on city programs. This made the working class resent the poorer classes of New York, which caused a great divide in the classes. On the other side of the argument, the poorer classes who needed the programs from the city were upset with the middle class because they gave away all the social welfare programs. The tension between the social classes was what the businesses wanted to prevent the citizens from becoming wise to what was really happening. If the citizens would have kept up relations, they could have banded together to prevent the destruction of a city that worked for its citizens.

After the fiscal crisis in New York City, the city was faced with a whole new idea of how the city runs. The money that cities receive from the federal and state government diminishes every year, leaving the City of New York wondering how it was going to fund all the things vital to the city. The initial knee-jerk reaction to the crisis was to cut spending on social welfare programs and city services. Welfare, and funding for teachers, firemen, police officers and sanitation jobs were cut down to the bare minimum. This reaction, we all know, was a bad reaction and hit the city deep below the belt. With some creative thinking, the politicians of the time decided that without governmental aid, they needed to find a new source of income for the city. Politicians decided that the way to create income was to attract businesses to New York. The idea of how new businesses were going to rescue the city was based on the trickle-down theory. A lot of faith was placed on money flowing from the businesses to the people of the city.

In order to entice big companies to New York City, the city had to come up with a juicy piece of bait for the companies to bite down on. The city decided the way to get companies here was to give them tax breaks. Companies came into New York City on the promise of paying no, or very limited, taxes on businesses. The plan worked and companies came pouring into New York, seeming to pump up the amount of money flowing through the economy. The problem with this, of course, was that very little of this money was actually being put into the city's funds. Another problem, the city later came to realize, is that after the tax breaks expire, the companies demanded more breaks or they were going to leave New York

City. Basically, the plan for businesses to rescue New York was backfiring for the city, allowing businesses to take hold of New York and make it their own. Today, New York City is still trying to allow businesses to save the city. The businesses of today have now shifted from corporations to real estate. I'm not really sure how real estate is the answer to the cities financial woes, especially with all the tax incentives. At the same time, someone must think it's working, especially if they keep on going with this flawed plan.

If the people who surround us have a poor quality of life, it can bring down the shared quality of life, like a ripple effect. If those who surround us cannot keep up with life's cycle, the area begins to decline, allowing what we once valued in our area to disappear. "Quality of life" means something a little different to each individual. Basically, we can measure our quality of life by the achievements we make towards our wants and needs. If we meet our wants and needs without much struggle, it's fair to say that the quality of life is good. There are, of course, other factors that contribute to quality of life, such as the environment. Once an area is no longer how we want it, we begin to want an area that suits our wants, because they are not currently being met.

The basics for quality of life all boil down to a fairly governed economic platform. The first thing that is needed to create quality of life is the availability of good jobs. With good jobs, the hope is that people can afford what they want and need. Also, we need to have affordable housing and fair taxes. If the tax scale was not slanted so heavily in the direction of the wealthy and businesses, America would be in better shape. With everyone being taxed fairly, we could all pay a little less in taxes and have a little more in our pockets. More money in our pockets leads us to spending more money on what we want and need, pumping money into the system. With money flowing into the system, businesses and the government are happy because they show profit while spending what they need to exist.

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Changes in the New York Labor Market

Elizabeth Irizarry

The New York labor market landscape has changed within the past 20 years in a way that is quite disconcerting. Where there was once an abundance of good-paying jobs with good working conditions and decent benefits, there are now low-wage jobs with poor, sometimes dangerous, working conditions and little to no benefits. There are several reasons why the labor market in New York City and other cities in the United States are in the state they are today.

In recent decades, one major factor that has influenced the huge changes to New York City's labor market is the changes to the manufacturing industry. With labor costs in other countries at a fraction of those in the United States, many manufacturing companies have gone overseas. Companies also have downsized their operations due to streamlining and use machines that can do the job of many workers. Jobs that require less skill in the manufacturing industry are all but gone.

Another noticeable change in the labor market is the increase in outsourcing and subcontracting of work. In an effort to cut costs, companies are outsourcing and subcontracting work that was once done by their full-time employees. Companies no longer need to employ workers under their payroll thus eliminating paying health benefits, Social Security, workers compensation and other expenses associated with having full-time employees. Instead, they hire an outsourcing company or contractor. These outsourcing and subcontracting companies hire their own employees, pay them low wages, and, if the worker is lucky, a small benefit package. The workers who are hired are almost all immigrant workers; historically, immigrant workers make lower wages and have little, if any, benefits.

Outsourcing and subcontracting give way to "informalization." Essentially, what that means is that jobs are not covered by a contract and do not provide access to pensions, health plans, disability insurance, unemployment insurance, sick leave, holidays, or vacation benefits. These outsourcing and subcontracting companies will sometimes categorize their workers as independent contractors. This allows the employer to only be responsible for paying the employee for the work done; it absolves them of the responsibility of paying for any benefits and even from supplying the worker with the tools needed to get a job done. As a result, fewer good-paying jobs are available. At the same time, service jobs have become more abundant, and immigrants are mostly taking them. We have become quite dependent on service jobs like the dishwashers who wash the dishes at the restaurants we frequent, or those who prep ready-to-eat meals. Other service jobs include: delivery drivers, house cleaners, sitters and caring for the elderly. Unfortunately, low wages and little, if any, benefits are what these jobs offer.

Unions have been on the decline for many years because companies are less willing to accept or comply with the demand for higher wages and benefits. In earlier decades, companies would think long and hard before hiring “scabs” during union walkouts. Businesses are now bolder, hire temporary workers, and even keep them after the walkout has been settled or ended. As mentioned earlier, automation in manufacturing jobs reduces the number of workers thus reducing the number of potential union members. Traditionally, unions have had less influence in the service sector. Although there has been an increase in service jobs, this sector of workers are difficult to organize. Jobs have either gone overseas or have gone to parts of the United States where unions have a weaker presence. In the late 1990s, the economy was good, or appeared to be good, and jobs were abundant.

During these times, people tended to feel confident about the economy and didn't see the need to organize. Additionally, younger workers “have little interest in belonging to organizations that they believe quash independence.” These results weakened union membership and power. If there were enough work in people's home countries, they would stay instead of coming to places like New York. When this is not the case, many migrate to the United States to find jobs with the intentions of returning to their home countries or are regularly sending money to their families. It's common for immigrants to learn of job opportunities from someone who has gone to the United States although their “connections” can begin in their hometowns. Once here, immigrants mostly take on labor-intensive service and manufacturing jobs.

Based on the 2000 census, these occupational niches are often ethnic and gender specific. They are broken down accordingly; janitorial jobs and building cleaners, cashiers, sewing machine operators, and construction laborers are the top jobs sought among foreign-born Latinos. For foreign-born blacks, their top occupations are home health aides, security guards, retail salespersons, maids and housekeeping cleaners, and registered nurses. Among foreign-born Asians, their occupational niches are sewing machine operators, cashiers, cooks, waiters and waitresses. Studies show that these similarities tend to bring these workers together. They work together and often live with or near one another. With long working hours and little time to socialize away from work, these similarities and proximity create strong ties among these groups.

Religion also is a very important point of contact for immigrants. Here too, they congregate, form friendships and share work leads. Often, it is a place where information on activities related to work grievances and activism are discussed. These workers, from distinct social and ethnic origins, are part of a new transnational labor force. The life of a transnational worker is often made up of long work hours, and socialization occurs only within the familiar circles that they have established in the U.S. Unfortunately for many transnational workers, low wages and other abuses by employers are the norm. Employers know that

most transnational workers are undocumented, and that they are afraid to complain about poor conditions or low pay. Many workers do not know which laws, if any, are available to help them. In addition, the laws that are made to protect immigrants or employee abuse are rarely enforced. As a result, employers have taken advantage of this situation.

Even with these things stacked against them, transnational workers tend to be more likely to organize. The factors that comprise their life create an isolation and limited social network that tends to strengthen the bond between the workers. This bond can be an overwhelming factor in their decision to fight for a better working situation and stand up to their employers. They have more to lose but more to gain if they organize to overcome poor working conditions. Native-born workers in low-paying/low-end jobs are more likely to work for larger firms. Here too, workers experience abuses like working long hours with no overtime pay, unpaid hours, little or no benefits. Workers can be hired and fired at a snap of a finger with no repercussions to the employer. Native-born workers have a few more options than the immigrant worker. As pointed out in Albert Hirschman's (1990) study, "Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States," if a native-born employee has a problem at a job, they "have the option to exit from their job." They will, and can, more easily move from job to job and even from industry to industry, and will be less likely to conduct any grievance against the employer.

These workers usually stand alone, and it's unlikely for them to have the backing and strength the more circumstantially situated immigrant worker may have. Although the changes to the New York labor market seem bleak, there may be things that could be done to, once again, revitalize the wages, benefits and working conditions at many jobs. Immigrants and native-born workers would have to become much more informed on the benefits of organizing and becoming part of a union and what it could do for them. Union leaders would need to stage huge information campaigns, and have ethnically versatile support to answer any questions. Established unions could be supportive to groups who are organizing and growing; it could help union leaders to better understand the diversity, and to learn how to incorporate these differences to become a stronger union. Historically, strength in numbers has been the catalyst to change in the workplace and could be once again.

A Substantial Ruin

Tiffany Cunningham

On a beautiful fall day in New York, I was mesmerized and in awe of my first experience at and on the High Line. I had heard about it, but couldn't believe I had not been there yet. I felt a little upset that I had not taken the time to go all summer or since its opening in 2009. I was pleased to have a new adventure to take my family on and to enjoy myself. I loved the mix of old and new, the idea of ruins all around and the juxtaposition of the new fancy development. I adore the idea of a beautiful foot path to travel in the city. More green in this city is always a plus. I went away feeling really happy about it all, but then I got on the train to head back to Brooklyn and I read the article, "Home on the High Line" from "The New York Times."

My mood swiftly took a turn. As I read about the apartments and condos to be sold that are catering to growing families and then I see the price of a couple million or more, I started to feel that familiar sense of crushing in my chest. I started to feel completely alien to the audience this article is intended for. The language all seems so normal to buy a million dollar condo, and that crushing feeling was just that reminder: this is something I could never accomplish in this lifetime on the wages that I make. Again the crushing – I would love for my son to go to a good private school, which is probably not going to happen, as it will for the children living in these condos. I then revisited my memory of my meander and the winding, dancing condos suddenly felt encroaching, and I felt so very small. I almost felt mocked by them, in their grandeur, compared to my small walking stature. Then, I think, well, at least I can still enjoy the view, the shrubbery, and a place to wet my feet on a hot day. I feel like a peasant; I wonder if they look at me, from their million dollar views, as one too?

Now that almost a week has gone by, I am not feeling crushed by it, I still have fondness towards it. When I lived in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1999 - 2000, I noticed how divided the city was in terms of class. The train went around the affluent neighborhoods entirely, and unless you drove, there was no public access to these neighborhoods. One thing I can say about New York City is that we all do walk together on the streets; the class lines are blurred in the everyday hustle and bustle. You never really know what class any one person belongs to on the street. That is a good thing.

I think the High Line will be an inspiration to New Yorkers and tourists because it brings beauty to that side of town. We can refurbish and recycle what is already visible and going to ruins and make it useful and beautiful. I hope to see more projects like this as long as it isn't a means to an end of pushing people out of their homes to build ones they can't afford.

The High Line is representational of all people who wish to enjoy it. It symbolizes rebirth with a steadfast tie to the past. I loved how the architect in the article describes his building made of concrete, “In 500 years, people walking by will see a substantial ruin.” This is what the High Line Park is, a substantial ruin. I also love potential for art to live there, on buildings, on walls, on the path, homes for sculpture and even performance artists of all kinds.

My Impressions of the High Line

Olga Jimenez

The High Line is a different park; I have never seen something like it. It is free and it is a spectacular place. It looks like an open gallery with flowers. We don't have the pleasure of finding this kind of project very easily. In addition, it's open to the general public, which is a good idea that every single person can visit this place as many times as they wish. It was a good idea to make good use of those railroad tracks. It reminds us of when New York City was an industrial town, and they made positive use of those abandoned tracks; hopefully, we will have them for a long time to enjoy in New York City.

The High Line is a park because it has plants to admire and open space to relax and use as a recreational place. This is a unique idea in New York City; it fits because the city always finds innovative projects to show to its residents and visitors. In my opinion, New York City is full of surprises. It fits with the neighborhood due to the redevelopment that's going on presently. My concern is that only rich people are going to be able to live here. The apartments are very expensive. It is happening all over New York City. But if we cannot afford to live here, at least we can pay a visit.

The long-term impact of the High Line on the city is an incentive for our economy. It will bring more job opportunities, and it will keep attracting wealthy people to invest in real state. The High Line symbolizes working class and people working very hard. It represents New York's industrial history, where many accidents probably went unclaimed and injustices for the working class were unnoticed.

The High Line represents the rebirth of a place that was an area for the working class, where many working-class stories took place. To me, it's ironic that it became a development for wealthy people. The neighborhood is being "improved," and it is attracting exclusive stores and expensive restaurants. It is a very costly place to live or consume. Unfortunately, the only people who can afford to live here are the rich.

WE GATHER



"Untitled"

Joe Cardoso

Skills and Brains

Patrick Meyers

Should college be mandatory for apprentices in the Local Union 3? If you asked this question of this year's apprentice class, chances are, 90 percent of the group would say "no." Prior to entering, when informed that earning an associate degree was mandatory to complete the apprentice program, I was not happy. Before attending college, I had been out of school for eight years, so if you were to ask me the same question, I would have had to side with the 90 percent who say no. Ask me now and my answer would definitely be yes. Why the change of heart? Simply because knowledge is power; life is not just about making money. Well, not for me; I can only speak for myself. But who would differ on the point that having a good education along with skills as an electrician will only take one further in life?

I take my hat off to the Local Union 3 and the people behind building this great program for the simple fact that they really care about us apprentice electricians. In a world ruled by money and the people who control it, it is very difficult to get a free education without a scholarship, so we should take that into consideration and take advantage of it. When I think of the word union, I think: good money, career, benefits, set for life. Who needs college when you're making money, right? Isn't that why we strive to get a degree anyway? This was my mindset before the union. Before, I had a team of brothers fighting for the same cause. A union is like a brotherhood. I now see why they named it International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I will be seeing the people in this program for the next five years, maybe even for the rest of my life, on other jobs or just hanging out. I have already made a connection with a few people. We hang out after class sometimes, and call each other when we have questions about work or school.

United Association Local 1 is the only other union that mandates its members to attend college. Local 3 is one of the best unions in the world. It represents a demand trade that will only demand more in the future. Electrician also is a dangerous trade, which is why we need the knowledge to be successful and safe. However, I don't think that is the reason the union makes us go to college. During orientation, we were taught what the union is really about, and how it is set up to protect, not just us, but retirees, the retiring and new apprentices behind us. The people who are retiring are depending on us to fight the battles of the union in the future, as they did for us. A union is only as strong as its reputation and the people representing it. I am only in this privileged position because of my former union brothers who went through bad times and fought for better. They did it by being smart, not by striking.

This year's apprentice class will be making \$1 more than the class before us, and a dollar more every six months until we become journeymen. Guess who fought for that raise? Our fellow apprentices. This is a perfect example of why we should attend college. The more knowledge you have the more powerful you are. They wanted something, put their mind to it and made it happen. We, too, can have the same impact if we stand together and fight as brothers. Having knowledge is a major advantage in this world; many people can't afford to get the things we take for granted every day. Education is the key to take you far in life. Anything can happen on a day-to-day basis. The union could crumble and paychecks could stop coming just like that. But knowledge is forever and can never be taken away. You can take it with you anywhere you go along with the degree you earned.

Furthermore, we all have to retire one day; who wants to work forever? Wouldn't it be best to have some further knowledge than what we learned in 12th grade? I think the problem that we have when we hear the word **school** is we think of school as a place for children, where we had no say in what we wanted to learn or even what time we wanted to take the classes. College is completely the opposite. You get to choose what you want to learn, so if you enjoy it, the time will fly. Like the saying goes, "If you do something you love, you will never work a day in your life." I find that quote very true. As a child, I worked with electricity with my uncle, and I enjoyed it. I then went to electrical school and here I am, enjoying and learning something new every day on the job. I always wanted to go to college but on a campus away from home. You know, the real college life, but that was impossible without money or a scholarship. I never thought I would be an apprentice for the Local Union 3 or be attending college at 27 years old.

Think about it like this, if it were not for the union making us go to school, and getting an education in order to continue working, that same 90 percent of people who said no most likely would be somewhere in the world working a dead-end job, with no benefits or 401k plan. With that in mind, thank you Local 3. I truly appreciate the opportunity to be in the college chair I am sitting in right now. I know I will need it and use it in my journey through life.

On the Job

Nunzio Adinolfi

My name is Nunzio Adinolfi, and the reasons that I decided to join the union are probably not the same as other people. I applied for this union job for the first time when I was 28 years old, and I am now 44 years old. Up until entering into Local 3, I was always self-employed. In my professional life, I was always successful. I feel very comfortable and confident in my skills as a carpenter, contractor and electrical worker. The reality is, I feel very comfortable on construction sites. My only concern is coming into the union as late as I am, being 44 years old. The majority of the other apprentices are in their early to mid 20s. There is a trend, however, towards older apprentices, but I still feel a bit out of place.

Once I started working in the industry, I realized that although I am older, I too find that a major reason I am here now is the potential salary that I will receive as a journeyman. That is, if I make it through all the steps required of me over the course of the next five to six years to become one. As an apprentice, the pay is very low, but slowly starts to increase as our work experience progresses.

Firstly, as a journeyman for Local 3, the potential certainly exists to make between \$100,000 or even \$150,000 a year. Just to show up and perform the duties that as a journeyman I would have been trained to do. Secondly, I think that another major reason why I decided to join Local 3 or, more specifically, a union is because of the benefits package. One example would be the health insurance. Health insurance is a very large expense that I used to pay out of my own pocket. I paid for my wife, my children and myself. Now, as a member of Local 3, I receive health coverage as part of my pay package. Thirdly, as a member of the union, my job also is protected, as long as I'm performing my job as required, I can't be laid off or fired. This is an ultimate reason that I joined the union, and if I stay employed for the next 20 years with the local, I also stand to benefit from the representation that the union affords me and receive a nice pension. This will pay me a decent amount of money monthly for the rest of my life, once I retire.

With all that said, I am still finding it extremely difficult to work for the very low wages that I'm receiving as an apprentice. This is probably because I feel I already have almost as much experience and expertise in the field as a two or three-year apprentice, if not more. I deal with it because I know what I agreed to. However, it still doesn't make it any easier to accept. The fact is, I made more money as a teenager doing side jobs while in school than I am earning now as a husband and father of two sons. Sadly, there is no way to bypass the requirements and speed up the process.

The hope is that if I can stick to the program, I'll be able to earn a decent salary as a journeyman, without all the headaches and responsibilities associated with being self-employed. Here, I just have to show up and do the work that's already laid out for me. I don't have to estimate the work, set up schedules, find the laborers and mechanics, and order materials and deal with all the headaches associated with running my own company. I no longer need to worry about maintaining insurance, liability, workers compensation, disability, all the necessary licenses, and banking and payroll. At the same time, I can still make a somewhat decent salary. Even more importantly, as a mechanic, I can be home at a decent hour, to see the people I really work for, and that would be my family, my mother, brother, wife and children.

Unions Set the Bar

James Chagnon

Personally, I feel that labor unions are extremely important; they set the bar for high standards in all work aspects. Labor unions not only help out the people in the union, but they help nonunion workers too. Without unions, there would be no set standard to what quality work really is.

Labor unions are extremely important because they bring men and women with skills in the trade together. Without skilled tradesmen working together and fighting together, the labor-work world would be in shambles. Union men and women set high standards for all construction workers both union and non-union. With that high standard of work, they also demand to be treated fairly. We, the working people, after a hard day's work, deserve to have benefits and to feed our families comfortably.

Without unions fighting for rights, even nonunion people would lose out on many benefits of being a plumber. For example, there would be no value set to make a skilled tradesman stand out from someone who was just an average Joe worker. When people see the wages union workers make, they want some sort of equality in comparison to what they're making. It prevents nonunion company owners from taking absolute advantage of the value of work that their workers provide for them and keep them from getting walked all over. Without labor unions, nonunion workers would be able to slap any kind of worker onto any job and not have to answer to anyone. Our high quality of work prevents this from happening.

A union sets the bar in high standards of work and equality to the employer. We union members are highly educated in our fields of work. We know what we deserve; we know what's fair. Without people standing together to make sure work is done correctly and workers are being treated fairly, the construction trade would be a three-ring circus.

If unions weren't around, there would be no standard set on how work should be done. Even more importantly, there wouldn't be a standard set on how the workers should be treated. Skilled workers deserve to be able to work hard and provide for their families. Labor unions also are beneficial for nonunion workers and companies because it sets a level of competition for them to work against. Without labor unions, construction would be one wild world which no one would want to be a proud part of.

Local 3 Meetings

John Farrell

Local 3 IBEW union meetings are designed to inform union workers of a wide variety of union-related current events. They promote a sense of solidarity between workers. Workers come together to discuss upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and ways to strengthen the union. While a handful of Local 3 apprentices attend these meetings, the majority does not. There are numerous reasons why apprentices miss meetings. Some absences are due to obligations, which are out of their control, such as school; however, some apprentices don't attend by choice.

The voluntary absences can be for a wide number of reasons. One reason that apprentices choose not to go may be that the meetings are repetitive. At every meeting, they discuss almost the same items. After attending a few meetings, an apprentice might feel that they are not missing anything if they skip one here or there. While discussing how the unions must be strengthened is valuable, a lot of apprentices are unsure exactly how they are individually benefitting from the union. Besides the fact that they are earning their income from the union, perhaps explaining all of the benefits would make apprentices more inclined to be more involved.

Apprentices are told over and over again that they are lucky to be where they are. We are told how good we have it now, to have landed a job in a strong union, but many of us have no idea what our benefits are and how they work. I am in my third year, and I honestly have no idea how my health insurance, retirement plans, or any other benefits work for me. I have received a ton of packets and newsletters and read most, if not all, of them, but still do not 100 percent know what they mean. If at every meeting, one of these issues were discussed, I feel a lot more apprentices would attend. Giving lessons on these benefits would both help the apprentices as individuals and the union because it would be teaching young union members why they are so lucky to be where they are. Then, we might find more apprentices asking not what the union can do for them, but what they can do for the union.

Another major reason that apprentices do not attend meetings is the meeting locations. Unfortunately, some people currently feel that the benefits of going to these meetings are not worth the time or money it takes to get to them. The meetings are currently held in Flushing. While location may not be the best excuse, it is the No. 1 reason given for not attending. Holding the meeting in a more centralized location, such as Manhattan, might deter less people from attending.

A third reason apprentices might not attend is because they simply cannot afford to. While the term apprentice alludes to a young person, learning a trade, this is often not the case. Many apprentices are not straight out of high school or single people with no children to support. Many people, like me, have families and a mortgage that cannot be sustained on an apprentice's straight-time income alone. I waited for years for a job in this union while the recession was going on, and started a family; it took years longer than expected to be able to begin my apprenticeship. The current wages for apprentices, while above minimum wage, are not enough to make ends meet.

For a family with children, our wages are far below the poverty level. Many apprentices may be in similar situations and need to increase their income by working either overtime or a second job during union meeting hours. In these cases, the apprentice may be extremely grateful for the apprentices and union members pulling the weight of strengthening and sustaining the union while they are unable to do so. I, for one, fully intend to be more involved once I am financially stable. At that point, I will be able to concentrate on union matters more and less on just trying to get by.

There are a variety of reasons that apprentices do not attend union meetings. They range from the actual contents of the meeting, to varying levels of indifference and lack of wanting to go out of one's way, to an inability to concentrate on much other than supporting a family and getting by. Making meetings more relevant and accessible would probably alleviate a lot of absences.

Labor Movement

Kristofor Bacchi

Over the years, events and dates have made the labor movement very strong. In many ways, the people created the labor movement for better workdays and better working conditions. I strongly believe that we as the Local Union 3 could make the labor movement stronger in New York City by making our union meetings mandatory for all members to attend. I would like to see all trades come together to support each other; if one union has a problem, the others could stand by them and give them support. One big union with all workers together is better than a bunch of different trades separated all over because the man or woman's work differs.

Local Union 3 meetings should be mandatory for all members because there are so many members that do not attend these meetings. The members that do not attend usually are the people who have the most negative things to say about the union. If every journeyman and every apprentice attended union meetings, everyone would know what is going on with work, and the problems we are having economically. When I go to union meetings, I learn where my money is going, which is into funds to help other union members out. I also find out about events that Local 3 helps communities with, such as a Christmas party for kids that have nothing under their tree for the holidays. Local 3 makes a difference by helping people in their communities. If every member attended these meetings, they would have a better understanding of what Local Union 3 does to help one another out. The more union members, the stronger the union.

If all unions came together when one union is on strike, I think this would help us out when we are up for a new contract for better wages, or other benefits that we negotiate during contract time. I have been in the unions for about 10 years, and I have seen other unions strike at job sites, and, being in a different trade, I walk right by them and go to work; this bothers me a lot. Under our contract, we are not allowed to stop work if another trade is striking. We need to change this rule or the law because if we could stand with the other trades while they strike, we are stronger in numbers and will have a better bargaining tool during strike contracts. The companies would have to give in to demands because they will not get any progress done on the job. Therefore, they will lose profit.

Historically, The Knights of Labor organized and banded together to start a union to get better and fair working conditions for its members. During this period of time, there was a lot of racism and discrimination toward blacks and women workers, so The Knights did what was right. They were stronger in numbers by protesting and having strikes, and sometimes even resorted to violence in order to get what they wanted. According to history.com:

Unlike most trade unions of the day, the Knights unions were vertically organized – each included all workers in a given industry, regardless of trade. The Knights also were unusual in accepting workers of all skill levels and both sexes; blacks were include after 1883 (though in segregated locals).¹

I believe in all members attending union meetings, and I also strongly believe if we could honor other trades' strikes, all working-class people would have more opportunities to negotiate. In addition, better deals would come at contract time, which could result in better wages, better medical plans and also better retirement plans. I will continue to tell more members to attend their union meetings more often.

¹ <http://www.history.com/topics/knights-of-labor>. Accessed 4/29/2014.

Getting Apprentices to Attend Union Meetings

Michael Zukowski

This paper will look at how to get more apprentices to attend union meetings. It also will offer ideas on how things can be done more conveniently for the apprentice who faces commuting problems.

The reason for a good turnout at the meetings is to show that apprentices do care about the union and what it stands for. It also shows the older generation that things can be done with the younger crowd. As they say, you make more noise with a crowd than someone screaming alone. The three years I have been in the union, I have never seen a turnout that has wowed me. I feel the union isn't firm on attending meetings. If it were mandatory or even the way it is now, which is voluntary, there should be a consequence by the apprentice's final stages of turning MIJ. This period should be prolonged, where they have to wait longer to get to the next level based on how many meetings they missed. I'm sure this would bring a real turn around in attendance.

As for the meetings themselves, there should be more announcements on how individuals can improve their skills or learn new things based in the union "boot camps" or learning facility classes on fire alarms, etc. I know we have school for that, but there are classes that are not announced. Some of the announcements during the meetings also could be voided, such as the number figures or jobs, as well as cash on hand. I don't think anyone really pays attention to them or understands what the money is for. There are probably many things about the union, programs, benefits and other questions that apprentices don't know about. It even seems like A-mechanics don't know or fully understand what the union has to offer. There should be special classes where it's mandatory for apprentices to attend to understand what they have joined. There should be more informative meetings rather than what happened the month before, or upcoming elections, because that is all I get out of them.

The reasons, I gathered, that apprentices don't attend has been that they are in Queens and people live far (Long Island, Staten Island). They said it should be held in Manhattan since it's more convenient to get to LIRR trains and tunnels and it is less travel after work. Some people have said that they don't need to go to the meetings because you move forward regardless of missed meetings. Others have said that they don't get any information from meetings and just get it from work.

I feel that there should be stricter punishment than verbal warnings. People seem to have lost sight of appreciating what they are working for. Many apprentices, and even journeymen, have the attitude as if they don't care. Some say, "Big deal;

if I get laid off, I'll just go somewhere else," "What are they going to do, fire me?" or "I'll just collect my check." So there is a clear lack of drive, appreciation and effort to be better. Everyone enjoys the level playing field and the attitude is like a mellow stream. If you add some waves, you would see more value, and real honest working people. I feel people take advantage of the union, and it shouldn't be that way. If you work anywhere else, you are not protected the way union members are. So there is no fear of losing one's job. I believe it all starts with apprentice meetings. Apprentices should be shown that there will be punishment and they should be made to understand what the true value of being a union member is all about.

Union Meetings: To Be or Not To Be

Marvin B. Nelson

I worked, nonunionized, before I got into Local 3. I worked hard for long hours and considered myself a team player at the company for which I worked. At the time, I worked without any benefits and, oftentimes, I ended up subsidizing the company by utilizing my own vehicle, gas money and time to get much-needed materials. Right before entering Local 3, I wasn't paid for many overtime hours worked, and the company owed me a total of \$2,200.

Coming into the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, I already had an idea as to how blessed I was to be granted membership into such a prestigious organization. I walked into my first union meeting with appreciation and pride. When I was sworn in, I agreed that as a member I would attend the meetings, show my support and conduct myself professionally in return for a decent living for my family and me. From that time to now, I have made it to about 90 percent of the meetings.

I'm sorry to say that percentage isn't reflected amongst my fellow brothers and sisters. Coming to my first meetings, I noticed that attendance wasn't bad. The union hall would be about half full and, as I looked around, I couldn't help but notice the strange sense of solidarity that could be felt among the younger Local 3 members. After two years of attending meetings, I started noticing that of the 300 members who were initiated with me, only a small number of them still attended meetings. I wondered why.

During this semester, I spoke with a couple of my brothers and sisters on the topic of union meeting attendance. On the whole, I found that many members felt the union hall was too far to travel to after work. Other members felt the information presented at the meetings was repetitive and they also felt as if they wasted their time. I, too, feel a lot of the information is repetitive and that the time could be used in a more beneficial fashion. Nonetheless, that doesn't stop me from attending meetings. When it comes to location and transportation, I didn't fuss about any of that when I was trying to get in. Now that I'm in, why should I fuss? Why have some of my brothers and sisters changed?

I would have to say because they can. The union has not been cracking down on members who do not show their support. So the first thing I would do to increase attendance at union meetings is start reaching out to members who fail to attend most meetings. I would then consider a system that penalizes members for lack of support. In my view, if one is going to draw from the pot, he or she also needs to add to the pot.

Many older members argue that in their time, when the union was considered mainly to be a father-and-son business, younger members made sure to maintain the union's solidarity due to the fear of letting down elderly family members in the business. Today, they say that because our union has lost its security of being a father-and-son business, the new persons who become a member take for granted the organization we share.

Whether what they say about the father-and-son days versus the present day situation is true, it is a fact that many of our brothers and sisters do take what we share for granted. On that note, I feel that we need to police ourselves before we reach a point where we are too weak to fight against the management of today's sophisticated society. I take this issue seriously to the point of expulsion of members who show signs of not caring. These individuals give us a bad name in the fields and show no support to help in the fight against those who wish to oppress us. To me, lack of support means lack of strength, and lack of strength means battles lost.

The union keeps an account of those who attend the meetings. I can bet if our raise depended on attendance at union meetings, our union hall would be packed. I understand that the information in the union meetings is repetitive, but I feel that, with full attendance, it would be a good idea for our union to have "food-for-thought" sessions like we do here in class. I feel that would keep us informed on a whole and help us all to find a balanced focal point for our members and our future. Amen!

Brotherhood

Shaun Brohan

Throughout my life, I have been lucky enough to see and know what Local 3 and the IBEW are built on. Through Harry Van Arsdale Jr.'s foresight, he was able to build Local 3 to be one of the strongest unions ever. Without his intelligence and connections, there would be no brotherhood; New York would not be built into the great city it is today.

Thus far, I have been fortunate to be part of a Local 3 family; my roots in Local 3 are very deep. From generation to generation, the standards have been set very high. Back in the day, every member was proud to be a member, and it was an honor to hold a union card. There was no room for slacking or hate. If a worker didn't work hard or take pride in his work, there was no room for him. He was taking another man's job, and they would get rid of him. When everyone is there for the same reason and works hard together, it creates brotherhood.

Brotherhood can be best described as a friendship with the same moral ideals based on trust. The IBEW encourages its members to be active and join a club or a team to extend their network and to meet other brothers. The brotherhood is all good; it can only help you in the future. In some cases, it helps the local and the community in which we live in. We are far stronger when we are united as one group; our individual voices would not be heard or be nearly as effective. Local 3 created a strong sense of brotherhood in the earlier years, and I feel as though its presence has since faded away. Not in such a way as there is no longer a brotherhood, but the idea has faded or has been misconceived. This is mainly due to the fact that there are many disheartened journeymen and women. Many Local 3 electricians on the job today have grown very bitter to the local and the IBEW for one reason or another.

Now, more than ever, there has been a sense of individualism among members, and I feel like it is almost encouraged. In fact, rather than trying to create a stronger brotherhood, I see members shying away and keeping to themselves. It bothers me when individuals trash the local and disrespect our leaders on the bathroom walls or to other trades. This is one of the strongest locals in the world. Many have given their blood, sweat and tears so we could have what we have today. They are the ones who made the difference because they stood strongly together. We are capable of changing all of this, in the future, but complaining and bashing the local is not the way to do so. Unfortunately, I see many young members repeating hearsay on a job site, and they actually believe it to be true. I was fortunate enough to work on the same job for three straight years with the same company. On jobs that size, with that many men and women, you can see all types of people and situations. This is where the division and individualism starts, with the groups or classifications.

I met hard working loyal union members (many call shoppies), which is not a bad thing by any means. Most of them are the hardest working people who I have met and very knowledgeable about the trade; that's the reason why they are with the company for so long. They are very active members who go to every meeting, event, club members (most the time multiple clubs) and they volunteer every second of their time to the local. Then you have the guys from the hall. Which sounds derogatory but, in fact, these people are Local 3, IBEW members as well. In most cases, the guys from the hall are just as hard working and knowledgeable as anyone else. They just may have gotten caught in a rut and gotten a bad rap. No matter the classification, many Local 3 members would do anything to help someone else. I have met, and bonded with, some of the smartest people on the planet. I can call anyone at any given time with a question or just to talk, and they will be there to listen and answer, if necessary. That's a brotherhood, which goes deeper than just a friendship.

The future of Local 3 starts with the apprentices who are coming through the program right now, so we need to create bonds and friendships based on trust and hard work. President John F. Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," which can be applied to union workers' attitudes. If we want to keep our jobs in the near future, we need to lose this individualism and establish this sense of strong brotherhood and unionism. The mentor system is a good approach, but I feel as though it has got to go further than that. I want the person next to me to be capable and willing to help me, no matter what the issue. I hear people talking about fighting for their jobs and afraid of unemployment. Change starts with the man in the mirror, and I think a lot of members have lost sight of that and depend on others to take care of them, even though they would not do the same for another.

Another idea I came up with while talking to my professor is the possibility of creating some sort of company shares. I have seen this in different corporate scenarios where the company will give the employee a certain amount of shares in the company, instead of more money in the contract. If an employee gets a certain percentage of the company, they may work harder and smarter. For example, they may take care of the company's tools better, because it is as if they are part owners, and it is their own. It is as though they want the company to succeed, so they can continue to make money as well. On the job, you will see at least one person mistreating a tool, but you know if it were his or her own, they would not be so careless and maybe be more cautious. This also could strengthen the brotherhood and the union in the future. For instance, if the contractor has to keep buying tools, whether they are ladders or drills, they have to bid the jobs higher. If there are three drills on the job and only one guy takes care of his tools and the other tools break, you're forced to wait until he is done using it. He might even put a combo lock on his box because he knows how others treat their company tools. This causes unnecessary friction amongst the members when it can be avoided.

Brotherhood could be considered one of the most important building blocks of a strong union. Harry Van Arsdale Jr. had enough foresight to see this, and that's why he encouraged all forms of interaction and hard work from his members. Even though many say they don't think or feel as though it is a brotherhood anymore, the fact is, it is and always was; it just needs to be stronger and deeper than it is today. We are the future of Local 3 and the building trades in general; we cannot dwell on mistakes or the negatives from the past. We need to join together as young membership and create the change everyone always talks about but waits for the next guy to step up to make happen. This is our brotherhood, and it will be as strong and effective as we want it to be.

Women Apprentices in the Electrical Industry

Christina DeVoll

Joining a building trade as a woman can be difficult at times; when making the choice to join, there are many things to consider. In my opinion, women aren't well prepared for this type of lifestyle as a tradesperson and should do their research and know what they are getting themselves into before they decide to join. Educating oneself about the different trades and unions is key. The type of people you're dealing with, etc. If they do decide to join, here is a list of issues that women should be prepared for during their apprenticeships. Issues include: apprentice expectations, discrimination and sexual harassment, on-the-job training, mentor programs, health and safety issues, and sanitary restroom/place to change and keep personal belongings.

Here, I talk about other electricians, mostly men, as these topics concern them, but not all cases of, for example, harassment, are made by men. For these reasons, I use the gender neutral term "persons," as in tradespersons, as a default and "men" when specifically talking about males in the industry, i.e., journeymen. Also, I really enjoy my job and get a lot out of being an apprentice in the industry. These are my observations to share with other women who might read them and develop a sense of what it takes to be an apprentice and for anyone else who wants to know what goes through the mind of a female apprentice.

Apprentice Expectations

As an electrician, I can say that electrical apprentices are required to work under the supervision of experienced journeypersons. You will be working on different types of construction sites. Working inside and outside in all different types of weather. You will be around a great deal of dust and chemicals. Apprentice duties range from carrying heavy materials such as conduit, to digging ditches/trenches, to pulling cables from one area to another. The type of work that's done is endless. You will perform job duties asked by your forepersons and journeypersons and complete tasks in a timely manner. There is a lot to interpret, so critical thinking and problem solving are important. Working as an apprentice and even as a journeyperson, the job can be very physical at times. You will be around loud noises, different types of machines, debris, different trade's people and contractors, and falling objects. The construction trades are one of the most dangerous environments to work in. Projects can range from deck jobs (new buildings/construction) to demolition (renovations to older buildings). You will start out as an apprentice and finish your career as a journeyperson. There is always room to move up in the trades, become a foreperson, or even run your own company with the local someday.

The apprentice program lasts five years. The program will cover a wide range of educational curriculums. These curriculums consist of electrical theory, communication equipment, fire alarm, lighting and power, welding, low-high voltages and job site management and supervision. You will learn residential, commercial and industrial work. Apprentices will take different types of trainings such as OSHA, CPR and first aid. These trainings teach you how to stay safe on the job and even save someone's life. The program also asks that you attend college and receive a degree in Labor Studies.

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

When joining an apprenticeship, you must prepare yourself for a very serious commitment. It doesn't matter what age, race, gender, religion, weight, women will always be discriminated against for being in a "man's world." The construction world is not for everyone. Some men think that women don't belong in the trades but in more traditional lines of work, such as teaching, nursing or even a stay-at-home mother. While some women are not as capable of lifting and carrying heavy objects or maybe lack particular experience at certain times, women do find strategies to get the job done. Developing the right attitude will help to make a lasting career as an electrician, for women and men alike.

Sexual harassment is another form of discrimination. Women apprentices need to be aware of our surroundings and try and understand the people we're working with. You will soon know who you feel comfortable working with. Other times you may not feel so comfortable. Sexual harassment comes verbally and physically with comments made such as jokes, uncomfortable questions or being called "baby," "honey" and the like.

Women apprentices need to know how to handle themselves, especially if they feel they have been harassed in any way. Understanding the rules and regulations of sexual harassment, what can be done, who you can speak with, and even problem-solving skills; these are all important facts to keep in mind on the job site.

On-the-Job Training

A lot of times when you're on the job you may feel that you're receiving a lack of training or less than your male apprentice counterparts. While there will always be some tradesmen that have a problem with women on the job, especially as their partners; they may feel that they don't have to show you anything. This happens to every woman during their apprenticeship. When something like this occurs, you have to speak up to your journey person and let them know you're not learning. If they have a problem with what you have asked, the next step is to speak with your foreman and tell them you're there to learn not just get coffee or take in deliveries. As long as you speak up, you have not done anything wrong. If your company is giving you too many problems, you have the right to

contact the union, write a letter and be placed into another company. Your whole apprenticeship is so that you can learn from experienced men and women who are supposed to look out for the future journeypersons.

Everything is fast paced, so it's always nice to have a journeyperson with patience. During one of the jobs I was on, my partner was always very easily angered. For example, my journeyman would get very easily angered if a measurement was wrong, a pipe didn't fit properly or a coupling was not installed properly. He was always asking me to "get out of the way," so I wouldn't get hurt. Instead of doing this, he should have been more aware that he was working with an apprentice and his duty as a journeyperson is to teach me the proper way to measure and install, but he didn't. When you feel something like this is happening, you need to remember that you're an apprentice and the journeyperson is there to help and guide you. Make sure to pay attention, so if you ever are working alone, your skills will be good enough to problem solve anything.

Mentoring Programs

Every trade should have mentoring programs created to help the apprentices get through the apprenticeship. As electricians, women need the support for the career that they have chosen. This is an opportunity for experienced tradeswomen to be paired with apprentices and share and express their concerns about the job, ask questions, get advice and even share successes. Every apprentice is assigned a personal mentor who they can meet up with or just call anytime they need to talk. These programs are designed to not only share information but let women know that we're not alone, especially when feeling that way. Others have gone through the same things we are, and every apprentice needs a great support system. Don't ever feel shy or uncomfortable to speak up and ask for advice.

Most of the time apprentices look out for each other. So far, I have been lucky with making friends with other apprentices, and, from time to time, we also mentor each other through difficult situations. As apprentices, we need to help each other get through the program. Mentoring is a great way to give back and help our future women apprentices. I speak to mentors all the time and ask questions and receive advice.

Health and Safety Issues

When it comes to working on a construction site, health and safety concerns are very important. Women need to know what to watch out for while working on job sites. Working safely is important. Sometimes due to lack of training, women apprentices deal with a lot of health and safety issues. Understanding how safety equipment works is crucial and that includes proper protective clothing and boots; head, eye and face protection; work gloves, and the like.

While female apprentices need to be aware that even though the men have to worry about the same safety issues, we are the ones who bear children and not having the proper masks and safety gear can damage you as well as an unborn child, possibly resulting in child birth defects. Thus, it's very important that women take care of themselves and regularly attend the required safety meetings addressing the continuous safety threats related to the industry.

Working in an environment with construction tradesmen can feel hostile and give a women stress. As electricians we are told that we must keep our partners safe, so that everyone returns home safe each day. However, being the only women on the job at times can make you feel isolated and being concerned with potential harassment can be distracting – both help create unsafe conditions.

Sanitary Restroom, a Safe Place to Change and Keep Personal Belongings

Having a place to use the bathroom and change is important for everyone on the job site, especially woman. Not every shop is prepared for women to be on their job site, so they don't have the proper sanitary/changing facilities. They should always be prepared no matter what; there should always be a bathroom just for the women, and a place for them to change in and out of their work clothes if necessary. If you ever enter a job and see that they are not prepared for a woman, you speak up to your foreman and super and let them figure out some type of plan. If they have to order an outside bathroom for you; it has to be done. They can always figure out a place for you to safely change, and, hopefully, in an area that can be locked for privacy.

As an apprentice, most of the jobs I've been on had decent facilities for me to use the restroom and change. At the same time, when I first started, my foreman didn't have a place for me to use the bathroom or change, and didn't like the fact that I was on his job site. He told me that he was going to try and call in for an outside bathroom and find me a place to change. I never received my own bathroom to use or an area where I could keep my belongings and change safely. Something had happened and a shop steward reported it to the job. He pulled me to the side to ask me if I've been treated properly since I've been there. He asked me to show him where I use the bathroom, and where I supposedly was changing and keeping my belongings. I showed him the trailer that was a block away where I used the restroom. It was filled with the contractors' belongings including: bowls, cups, spoons, cereal, etc. I didn't feel that this was an appropriate condition, and neither did the shop steward. He asked for these things to be removed, and to have the bathroom straightened up to full sanitary capacity. The foreman told the shop steward that I had my own shanty to change in and he was given the key from the foreman. As we unlocked the door and opened it, the shanty was filled with plenty of electrical wires to send me to the moon.

The foreman was trying to cover himself, and say he had places for me to use the bathroom and change. He did get warned from the steward and that was that. In short, men can rough it and so can women, but we do have sanitary needs.

Being a part of any trade you have to have “thick skin” when working with men. You have to be strong and must know how to react to any bad behaviors. It’s a “man’s world,” as they say, and no matter how hard women fight, it may always be a man’s world. I don’t mind living in a man’s world, as long as I can be who I want to be and work with them just like I always have. No matter how hard some men fight to keep women away, I will fight just as hard back to be who I want to be and succeed at it. As a woman, I am a part of that world; I hope every woman entering the trades makes it and becomes the best success they can be.

Tony Mazzocchi and the Labor Movement

Scottie Cabrera

At one point in time, safety and good health in the workforce were not heavily enforced. In most cases, issues pertaining to health and safety barely existed. It was the responsibility of the employee to bring to the attention any imminent danger that they felt was occurring. However, the lack of knowledge by most employees pertaining to these issues went without mentioning. In most cases these dangerous conditions continued, either due to pure ignorance or the employees fear of losing their job. It was not until the 1970s that health and safety became prevalent in the workforce. By this time OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) had been on the rise. OSHA was becoming a popular source for regulating the conditions and setting the standards for working environments and employees.

In the 1970s, Tony Mazzocchi was a union leader and advocate for the labor movement, who would bring these underlying issues to the forefront of mainstream America. Tony fought religiously, seeking the attention of not just the employers but also the employees. He knew he had to get the employees themselves to realize the severity of the imminent danger they were in. If employees were made aware, they would more willingly assist Tony with the revolution of their work environment. There were many strategies Tony Mazzocchi took to publicize the matter at hand. Tony, being a well-respected, intelligent, persuasive conversationalist, knew he had to win over politicians' votes in regards to this issue. He would get the attention of senate leaders and political candidates and spoon-feed them the severity of these issues and why they should support him on this.

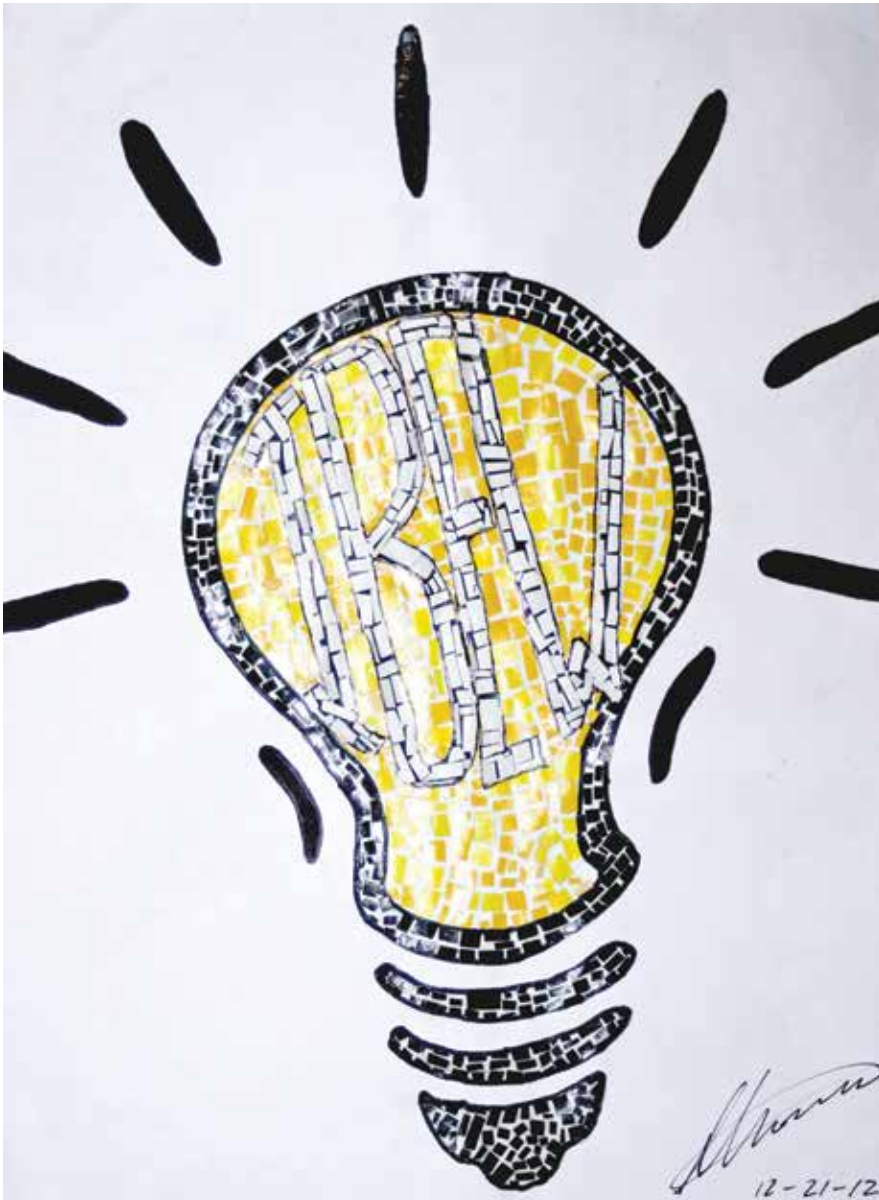
In addition, Tony would get the attention of major press, including The New York Times, by dramatizing the severity of these issues occurring. He would use his affiliations with local newspapers and press to publicize every story so that it would get a direct response. Mazzocchi was quoted in The Times saying that "corrosion and despair of the natural gas system serving St. Louis were causing millions of cubic feet of raw natural gas to flow unrestricted under the city's streets." He later stated to senate commerce that there was "reason to believe that the situation is probably similar in other major cities." Tony wanted to stress to lawmakers and politicians these conditions, and he did so every chance he got. Tony took it a step further, creating national campaign meetings where he would get together with many different leaders from different backgrounds, some included politicians, scientist and doctors. At these meetings, they would discuss all these conditions effecting the environment and human life. Mazzocchi figured that the more he brought attention to these issues, the more aware the nation would be.

In my very own case, union safety and health are stressed on a daily basis, on and off job sites. Safety and health is so frequently stressed because of its severity. On most job sites, we have safety inspectors that patrol the site to enforce many OSHA standards and regulations. Many times, before work actually starts on job sites, the employer has a safety meeting about a list of topics which include: PPE (personal protective equipment) eye protection, hard hats and the use of fall protection. These are commonly stressed because on many job sites the majority of injuries and fatalities are as a result of the lack of these safety practices. My union stresses the issue of OSHA standards. We as union members are required to take a minimum 10-hour class in order to work on a job site. This class informs the worker of safe and unsafe conditions in the workplace.

If I was to have a discussion today with Tony Mazzocchi, I would ask him how important education was to the labor movement. I think Tony would say it was very much influential and significant in many ways to the labor movement. I think a significant portion of Tony's education came from the dinner table with his family. Many of his teachings came from the conversations he would engage in about a wide area of topics. Although I'm sure Tony would stress the significance of formal education, I feel he also would agree that many of his life experiences were some of his greatest teachings. Furthermore, if Tony did not possess the education he did, he would not have been able to lead the labor organization as well as he did. I don't think he would have been as successful. Tony's education provided the building blocks for much of his organization and strategic, intelligent, well thought-out plans.

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"Light Bulb Mosaic"

Ramon Almodovar

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



EMPIRE STATE
COLLEGE

325 Hudson St., 6th Floor
New York, NY 10013-1005
212-647-7801

www.esc.edu

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