



free press
the spring issue




Hello Gorgeous!

It's been a long school year, but we're glad you're still here with us. We're all a little tired and burnt out, but we have one last issue in store for you.

This issue is all about breaks — literal breaks, figurative breaks, and everything in between. We asked our writers to think about the ways that people decompress and escape, and they truly delivered.

As usual, we hope you find something in here that you can connect with, because that's why we do this. Each writer, editor, and illustrator leaves a bit of themselves in each article, and we're each hoping you're the right person to pick those pieces up and pass them on.

We'd like to thank all of our writers for giving us infinite reasons to care about this publication as much as we do. We also owe a huge thank you to our wonderful E-Board; you're the best team we could've asked for and this year has been an absolute delight. And lastly, thank you to all of our readers — we've really created our best work because we've had a loving and attentive audience.

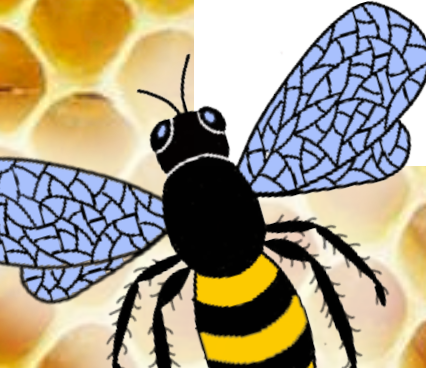


So thank you for hanging out with us this year. We know we'll see you soon. Until then, stop the smell the post-rain air, and maybe some roses.


XOXO,
Julia & Plamena

Interested in getting to know Free Press better? Reach out to us!
Email editor@bufreepress.com for any inquiries.
We're looking forward to getting acquainted, cutie.

You can see all of our beautiful *full-color issues* at binghamtonfreepress.com!



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art by helena ojarovsky

daylight savings

by helena ojarovsky

Hey, Kelly. It's been awhile since I've seen you. So I guess it all started when... Oh shit. Is this not my therapist's office? But a Free Press article?

Ever since daylight savings took place March 10th, I became keenly aware of a shift in my attitude. My day-to-day experience felt lighter, past issues seemed to fall off, and my overall mood became more positive and hopeful. Was it classes? No. Psych stats has kicked me in the ass so many times, I can no longer sit down in Lecture Hall 14. Was it my pills? Yah, like my 25 mL of Zoloft is doing anything (note: see my doctor about said pill). I put two and two together and realized daylight savings was pulling a fast one over on me.

Over the last few years, I've noticed that my worst moods started around November and end around March. Some would call this Seasonal Affective Disorder, and they might be right. But for me, it was less so depression, though that was very relevant in my teens, and more so a spirit change. What I mean is that rather than feeling an overall low mood and lack of focus, which I normally feel during depression, I felt an uncomfortable shift in my being. During those months this year, I endured a breakup, worked really hard, pushed myself too much, and did a lot of thinking about myself. I thought about my freshman year and matched my worst months to those from November-March. I truly despise the sun setting at 4 pm; it makes me feel like a farmer. Once the sun has set, I'm done with the day. Overall, daylight savings seems to mark a clear shift in my year. I think I would describe daylight savings months as a butterfly cocoon. I'm wrapped up in myself for a period of time and then once the sun comes out, I break free and am fully me.

These metaphors are what I have to talk to Kelly about.

I don't have a plan on how to solve these mood changes. I don't think I can control the weather but I think what's most important is that I have noticed what's affecting me and that I know the feelings don't last forever. I think as I have gotten older (lol 20), I have realized that I can't try and force how I'm feeling, but what helps me is that I can notice, observe, and go from there. I have noticed what my limitations are, what makes me happiest, what I need from people, and what I can give. Further, these dark months are making me confront moments where I am vulnerable, something that can make me especially uncomfortable. By this point I've learned that I can't ignore that feeling of exposure, and instead, I need to accept and live in it. I think this daylight savings experience is a good example of that lesson I'm learning.



art by helena ojarovsky

so you want temporary relief? : how your vacation perpetuates colonialism

by Dheivanai Moorthy

Diaspora culture has meant something different to me at every age, which means currently at 19, it is feeling every sour pang and sweet note at once. It was until only very recently that reached the epiphany that I am surrounded by so many intuitive and powerful people of color from their own diasporas that are willing to break fast on these critical conversations. Diaspora culture is hesitating to open your biryani/kanji/insert-food-you-damn-know-you're-not-getting-at-bing during lunches at middle school. It's looking back and tweeting about how you were braver than U.S. troops for doing so. It is losing your immigrant work ethic during finals season. It's interrogating your mother why they needed to leave. It is being told by your mother to do what the cops say, no matter what. It's blasting Om Shanti Om in the shower. It's feeling Indian here and feeling American there. It's seeing your father hesitate in English, it's you forgetting the languages of your father. Some afternoons it's writing mediocre lower-case letter poetry about mango trees. Other nights it's feeling like a white person appropriating your own culture. It is the forced redefining of home. Most days it's the isolation. Lately, it's been reclamation.

On breaks from school, though, diaspora culture is seeing white kids vacation to your motherland you are too poor to visit.

It's not horribly uncommon for people to fall under the belief that traveling is a remedy for being a shitty person. Even if you're not a shitty person, and it's the fault of shitty circumstances and simple kismet shrouded in scum-- traveling is your "cure" to dilemmas, maladies, and emotional distress. Society has systematically spoonfed you to believe that traveling is meant to provide you new experiences and immersions in cultures other than your own that will shock you just enough to bring either peace of mind, or heart (never both). It is in capitalism's nature to establish guilt within ourselves for resting, for acknowledging that we are cogs in machines, for breathing and not being able to measure our tangible productivity. If your labor can't be materialized on paper, did you really contribute your energy in a worthy manner? Until you come to this point of self realization, capitalism's next urge is manifested in you almost ripping your hair out, then loosening your tie, and saying calmly to your nuclear family "let's take a break. We could all use a break!"

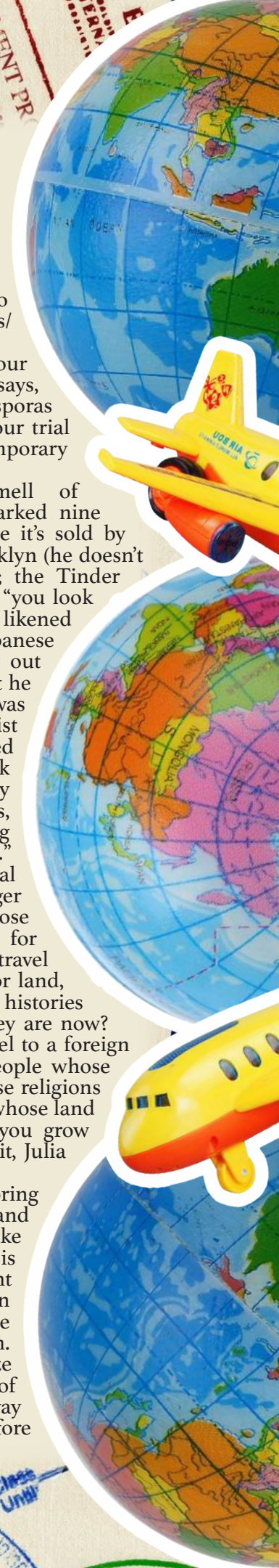
What's that? Oh, you're running from something a bit more long-term? Divorce? Quit Wall Street? Existential crisis you've put off since switching out of PPL at Binghamton? Temporary


relief, then, is what your adventure to Costa Rica/Thailand/the Maldives/Bali is, no?

Contrary to whatever your anthony bourdain netflix binge says, the indigenous lands of our diasporas are not for your soul-searching, your trial and errors, or temporary relief. Temporary relief? Go take a fucking Tylenol.

Ah, exoticism. The smell of sandalwood or turmeric milk marked nine times higher at Wegmans because it's sold by an indie guy in the middle of brooklyn (he doesn't fit in. he doesn't want to fit in); the Tinder matches that start with a hopeful, "you look tropical af" (love love love being likened to pineapples); the plethora of Japanese posters all over his walls; finding out months after you've broken up that he only fucks with Desi girls. What was that lukewarm, patronizing, racist melodrama that Julia Roberts starred in? Sleep Breathe Love? Eat Fuck Cry? Eat Pray Love! Fuck Eat Pray Love. The secondary title to it reads, "One woman's search for everything across Italy, India and Indonesia." This is absolutely hilarious for several reasons, but writing lmao in a larger font won't serve the same purpose and me phrasing some questions for you. Why do white people need to travel far to see a certain culture, faith, or land, exclusively ignoring its original histories and stories to understand who they are now? Why do white people need to travel to a foreign land to educate themselves on people whose origins they've never studied, whose religions they've never paid attention to, or whose land they've disrespected? Why must you grow at the expense of others? What is it, Julia Roberts? You can't grow at home?

You don't even need to bring your passport on a plane to understand or experience this phenomenon. Take the case of Hawai'i — because it is legally a U.S. state, the entitlement that whites in particular feel in being at "home" in Hawai'i is a prime example of sickening nationalism. The need to justify and naturalize the U.S. military occupation of islands that are over 2000 miles away from the continent existed long before





Pearl Harbor... Hawai'i becomes a feminine place in need of the masculine military to safeguard both Hawai'i and the rest of Amerikkka. Native Hawaiian women in particular become symbols of a happy, paradisaal place, a place where white military men will have fun, drink those pineapples they love so much, and get their own Native Hawaiian girl.

Part of decolonizing travel culture is being real about where we came from, how we got there, where we're at, and where we're going. It is quite literally a vessel; moving conversation between the ways that we are privileged and the ways we are oppressed, because places, like identities, are not static but forever in flux. For many of you, it'll make you the most uncomfortable you've been (you said you wanted growth), but we must locate ourselves within spectrums of power you're complicit in to deliver the truths about place. Power is hardly ever as linear or binary as basic white travel narratives paint it to be... decolonizing travel culture starts with asking the right questions, not theoretically, but honestly. If communities don't have sovereignty or the self-determination to shape how they want their cultures to be consumed or communicated, or how their economies are governed and their environments are treated, then tourism and travel culture are only a continuation of imperialism you thought was long gone.

If you claim that travel is the modern-day vehicle through which it's possible to explore the condition of living and how our relationships to places shape us and our experiences, then it is also a vessel for understanding how our identities and political histories inform place and how power structures give reason to why and how we migrate (or don't). It means it's a catalyst for acknowledging how that affects the places we pass through. Tourism, travel media, and the culture surrounding vacations have always been complicit in perpetuating settler colonialism, racist ideals, and exoticism. It perpetuates an archaic, false image of indigenous peoples as smiling caricatures who are ready, willing and able to serve at the beck and call of the white "american" tourist. They're not, and they don't need to explain that to you!

Here are 10 questions to ask yourself before heading to your (un)destination: (you're probably never gonna get another person of color to fucking spell these out for you, so here you go)!

1. What is the purpose of your vacation? Do you have family or friends in the location? Do you have a tangible connection or reasoning to the place you yearn to visit?
2. Why are you traveling to _____? Why this location? Is it an occupied territory? Is it occupying a territory? What airlines are you flying on?
3. How are laborers and workers of color affected by your travel?
4. When you're traveling... are you supporting indigenous and local economies, industries, companies, and institutions? What is the relationship between tourist workers—communities who often experience an occupation of foreigners, of westerners, of mostly white people coming into their communities and shifting the local economies and an indigenous local culture—and how those communities relate to their culture?
5. How is your travelling affecting other people of color who depend on the tourism industry as workers and laborers, usually unfortunately cheaply paid and forced labor, and not labors of love?
6. Where are you eating? What are you eating?
7. Where/what sites are you visiting? Are you allowed to be there? Are you allowed to take pictures there?
8. Why are you really posting shit on instagram with "pura vida" captions? Do you know what pura vida means? Hint: we can taste the fetishisms, and lemme tell ya, they reaaaaal bitter...
9. Are you staying in a local hostel or a hotel completely headquartered somewhere in the west?
10. Where are you buying your souvenirs? Who is producing them? Are you allowed to wear them?

Bon voyage!

*If France can raise over half a billion dollars for Notre Dame in 24 hours, pay up some reparations while there's still all this cash laying around! Reminding you that French former colonies in Africa are still being forced to pay colonial taxes as indigenous land is still violently disrespected everywhere. Reminding you that we actually got to see the Notre Dame, and Christian missionaries burnt things down before we ever got to preserve native histories.

If only adulthood pushed us as hard to try new things as our summer camp counselors and scout leaders did. These activities can provide some fun ways to add some variety to your schedule. Pick and choose tasks to complete as side quests or complete all the tasks under a heading to earn the badge!

EXPLORING

Get Started! Enlist friends to visit a local business you've never been to. an ice cream shop should be an easy sell.

Advanced! Take a hike or a relaxing nature walk in a region of the Nature Preserve you've yet to visit.

Challenge! Find an event or performance in Binghamton you've never attended and participate in it.

COOKING

Get Started! Prepare a favorite family recipe and ask your friends to do the same. invite them over for a potluck.

Advanced! Learn how to make a dish that was pioneered in a country whose cuisine you rarely experience.

Challenge! Using canned beets, green olives, bagels, a pear, and ricotta (or a vegan alternative) make a coherent Instagram worthy dinner.

VULNERABILITY

Get Started! Write thank you letters to important people in your life and send them.

Advanced! Make a new acquaintance on campus or online and try to have a meaningful conversation with them.

Challenge! Mave an honest conversation with yourself or a close friend about the future. try to examine your doubts and question your beliefs.

ARTISTRY

Get Started! Find art on campus! attend a theatre production, visit a local art museum, or go to a club event focused on the arts.

Advanced! Find a famous piece of art from a form you have little background in and try to replicate its style. remember: anything that allows creative expression is art! music, writing, choreography, cooking, and mathematical proof are art forms!

Challenge! Make a work of art about escalators.

CITIZENSHIP

Get Started! Collect some friends and write letters to local politicians together.

Advanced! Volunteer your time to a local charity that works on a cause you don't understand and try to learn more about it!

Challenge! Read up on the platform of a politician you disagree with. Try to locate where their points are coming from, and then find evidence to support your opinion on issues where you disagree.



by madison werner

gotta find 'em all: by casey adrian

a scavenger hunt for bored college kids

I grew up in Binghamton. This means that, as a teenager, I was bored. 24/7. After all the cow-tipping and tractor-pulling was over, my friends and I used to go around town on little scavenger hunts; we would separate into teams, take two cars onto the road and look for lots of little things. In two hours, the team that successfully found the most items and made it back to the meeting spot (read: someone's parents' basement) would win bragging rights and a plastic bottle of Mr. Boston.

If you and your friends have spring fever and are looking for something fun, here's a list of things to do or find. Make sure you provide evidence! Please travel safe!

- brick from an abandoned building
- mango juul pod (they're surprisingly hard to find these days)
- get the phone numbers of as many strangers as possible at trivia
- photo with a cat you find at a party
- remake that video of jojo siwa and north west as a tiktok
- roll of toilet paper from a public restroom
- photo of you strapped into the child seat of a shopping cart
- political lawn sign
- photo with someone whose name could be Sharon
- photo with someone who is definitely a liberal arts major
- send a photo of something phallic in your family groupchat
- photo with that person in your class that wears their frat gear daily
- a jazzman's booth
- call your old high school pretending to be a parent concerned about the vaping epidemic
- natural deodorant that works
- photo of you cradling the condom fish bowl in front of an RA office
- post a "like for a tbh" status on facebook
- make out with a stranger in the wegmans cheese aisle
- shotgun a can of san pelligrino
- the ugliest thing at goodwill
- a photo with a person wearing something 15 year old you would wear
- text an ex to come smash and give them the address of an Arby's cuz they have the meats
- collage every tinder photo of a man with a fish
- ask your uber driver to tell you their life story in detail
- photo with a bouncer who's confiscated a 4Loko from you
- eat a fruit you've never eaten before
- photo with a professor who absolutely hated you
- make a photo montage of the mueller investigation set to a megan thee stallion song and play it for a stranger

movies turning 10 in 2019

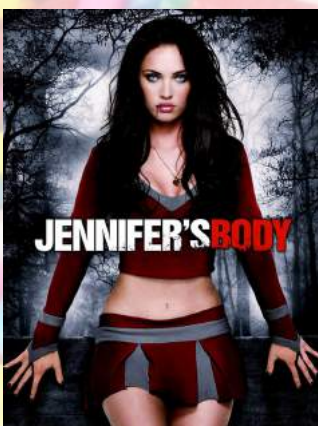
by deirdre delasho

If you are a longtime fan of the *Free Press* or a longtime fan of me, you may know that in 2017 I wrote an article about movies that were turning ten that year. You probably don't know that, but now you do. I think it's always a fun thing to do because you never realize just how short (or long) 10 years can feel. Anyway, here are the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of 2009 in the world of cinema (even though *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* came out in 1966 HAHA just a little cinephile humor for you!)



Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience: One of the best documentaries of our time. Period! The Jonas Brothers take to the stage at Madison Square Garden and apparently Taylor Swift was there too?? An all-star cast if I ever did see one. This film also won a Razzie for Worst Actor for their roles as THEMSELVES. Imagine being nominated for an award for being bad at being YOURSELF. Yikes!!

Paul Blart: Mall Cop: Honestly this movie is good and I'm not afraid to say it. I saw this in theatres and it was a thoroughly enjoyable viewing experience. This movie follows the story of our underdog hero, Paul Blart, who patrols his kingdom (a New Jersey mall) on his segway steed. Ridiculous antics unfold for Paul. This film keeps you on the edge of your seat for its entire 91-minute run time. Will he get the girl? Will he save the day? Will there be a dope-ass sequel? (Spoiler alert: yes, yes, and HELL yes!!)



Jennifer's Body: This is one of my favorite movies of all time. This might not be surprising if you know me because I have such a thing for feminist cannibal horror movies. Jennifer's Body was grossly misunderstood when it first came out and it kind of flopped at the box office but its powerful message of eating those who do you wrong you still rings painfully true today. So please, put some respect on Megan Fox's name.



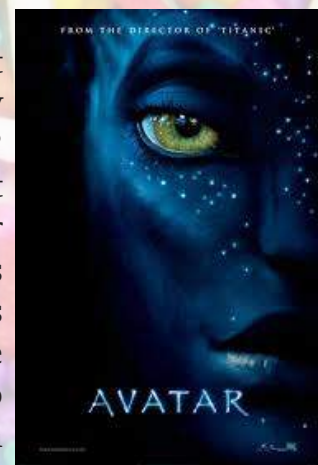
Inglourious Basterds: I don't like Quentin Tarantino for a variety of reasons but this movie is so good. Fun story about me: I watched this for the first time when I was on a plane to France and there's a scene in the movie where a British lieutenant and some Americans meet an undercover German soldier at a bar. The British guy outs himself as not-German when he holds three fingers up to order three beers. Apparently in Germany (and France) they count to three on their fingers differently than we do in England and the U.S. I decided at that moment to do the European three-finger so I could fit in in France. This has been Quentin Tarantino's only remotely positive impact on my life.

2012: This one is confusing. It's CALLED 2012 but it actually came out in 2009. Hope that clears that up!



Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince: This was the first Harry Potter movie that I saw in theatres but if we're being completely honest it's probably the least memorable book/movie of the whole series. Right? Also, do the Harry Potter movies even matter anymore considering that JK Rowling tweets something literally every single day that disrupts the existing canon of the Harry Potter universe?

Avatar: Avatar is infamously the highest-grossing film of all time (it made \$2.79 billion at the box office, which is A LOT) and probably will not be dethroned any time soon. The reason this is so weird? No one ever talks about this movie. No one remembers this movie. It had little to no cultural impact whatsoever. When you mention Avatar to someone, they say, "What? That movie with the blue people?" Is Avatar anyone's favorite movie? Do we need the 57 Avatar sequels that James Cameron announced that he will be making within the next five years? And if you think I'm being harsh, I challenge you to an exercise: name a character from Avatar. Literally any character. Can you? Yeah, that's what I thought.



Walking: by Julia Carmel **A Contemplative Act**

I do my best thinking while walking. I'll just put my headphones in and walk as far as I can. It doesn't matter where I'm going; it's just reassuring to feel my feet taking me from one place to another.

Recently, I've been thinking about the desire paths that I pass on these walks. We have them all over campus; they're routes that urban planners didn't account for when they were designing an area — trails that pedestrians usually end up paving with their own feet. These paths are ways to cut corners and get straight from point A to point B, so they're just labelless trails of muddy footsteps and trampled grass.

While I'm walking around Binghamton it's easy to fixate on how college can seem like a series of massive cliches. Though the college experience has been archetyped to death through TV and media, I think it's a more tumultuous and emotionally raw time than people want to acknowledge.

Throughout my four years at Binghamton University I've grown much softer. I arrived as someone who was scared, and in turn, came off as scary. All of my defense mechanisms were in full swing when I moved here, and I was most comfortable when I was closed off.

But something incredible happened; I met my *people* here, and they helped me grow into the person who I wanted to be.

On a fundamental level my friends are a homogenous group; most of us are loud and proud and incredibly gay. We're fun because we bring life to every party, even if that "party" is just showing up to class. I like to think that we were drawn to each other by some contagious energy.

But on many levels my friends are incredibly different. We each have complex emotional baggage to deal with, but our various issues have forced us to grow as a collective.

No one wants to admit it, but growing kind of fucking sucks. Growth is usually rooted in unpleasant situations; huge fights, tough mental health seasons, break-ups, and other tragedies.

We've all dealt with our own painful experiences, but as much as they sucked, we can acknowledge that these moments were for the best. They inspired us to rethink who we are and what we believe in, and that's a process that's inherently important and significant.

I'm so proud of all of the ways that my friends have grown in the last four years. As a collective we've learned how to merge our different desire paths, finding ways to communicate and love each other that feel mutually beneficial, and that's no easy feat. Tougher memories (see: chaotic fights at the Rat and emotional nights in the dorms) now pale in comparison to the profound levels of love and respect that I have for the people who my friends have grown into.

None of us can do everything right, even when we try our best, and that's ok. We all make mistakes that hurt other people and hurt ourselves, but our mistakes aren't a fair indicator of our character or integrity.

I'd argue that it's more productive to measure people through the ways that they've stretched and grown to support the people who they love. It's telling to look at the ways that we learn to express our love, our anger, and our problems to the people we care about. There are so many reasons for us to be proud of ourselves; we've learned how to unpack our baggage and acknowledge our flaws, and that's truly what I'll remember when I look back at my time here.

I know that I can't speak for everyone because we're each living out incredibly unique college experiences, and I know that most people don't leave college hand-in-hand with their freshman year friends. But even

if it's unusual, it's wild to think about the lasting support I've received from people who have stood by my side for four years of chaos and growth.

I'm lucky because I found people who were willing to wander with me. I can't imagine what my time here would've felt like if I didn't find people who wanted to drag me into the Nature Preserve to watch a meteor shower or cry with me in the artisanal cheese aisle of Wegmans. After all of the parties and classes and concerts I have to wonder what risks I would've taken if I didn't have adventurous people by my side.

As bizarre as it feels, it was here in Binghamton where I learned how to love and grow and share my stories. It was here where I learned that the only difference between feeling pathetic and feeling vulnerable is having people in your corner who want to empathize with you. It was here that I learned that it's ok to let down the witty, cutting facades, because it's so much more profound to be soft and kind and genuine.

I owe so much of who I am today to the incredible friends who have been nothing but patient and kind to me. I'm so lucky that I found a place and a space where people were willing to believe in me more than I believed in myself.

It's an understatement to say that it's hard to find your sense of self. I'm sure I still have a long way to go in that respect, but it's been magical to step into my voice and body and really own everything that I am.

I'll never deny that Binghamton is a city that's filled with memories and love, but at this point in my life (and at this point in this article) I have to acknowledge the duality of it all; this is also a city where I've made many mistakes.

The weight of my choices feels so different when I'm looking at myself in retrospect, and when I look back at my time here sometimes I can't help but fixate on my mistakes.

At times my growth has involved stepping on people's toes and leaning in unusual directions, and I want to apologize

to all of the people who I leaned on in the wrong ways. Each person's growth comes many layers of pain, and though I'm grateful for all the ways that I've changed, I'm hoping I can leave the anger and hurt and embarrassment that's manifested here in the past.

Throughout all of this pain and growth I've tried to remember that each person is changing and moving at their own pace, and the people who couldn't match and complement my growth aren't bad people. They're not toxic, but they also weren't giving me the energy I needed when I was in a significant period of growth, and that's ok. It has grounded me to remember that it's natural to grow apart from people who want different things, but I also try to remember that I don't need to fill the newfound space with bitterness.

These four years have somehow been both a blip and an eternity, and I'm grateful for all of the memories and moments I've had here, but it's now my time to get the fuck out. It's really easy to stay in one place for too long, and we're all afraid of the unknown, but I'd say that many ways stagnation and resentment go hand in hand. It's easier to wallow in what you know, but it's not fair to stay in a place that's weighing you down. I'd say that if you start to resent a place that once filled you with love and purpose, that's when it's time to move on. It can feel scary and surreal, but I promise you that when the moment is right, you'll get the courage to make a change. When that happens, you need to listen to your gut and follow it.

Maybe writing this piece is more for myself than anyone else, but if it resonates with any of you, then it was worth my time.

So this is where I leave you. I'm proud of how I've grown here, and I hope you feel the same way about yourself. I don't know where you're going, and I can't promise that our paths will cross again, but trust me when I say that any path you take will get you exactly where you need to be.



fair weather friends

by **anthony georgiou**

Being picked up without a single warning at all and being whisked away from any solid sense of familiarity and close friendships at home is a lot to handle, especially as a kid. Subjection to a seemingly indefinite amount of time alone with my family made vacations revolve around trying to avoid cabin fever, rather than enjoy a break.

My only escapes were the other kids who I ran into, kids who were also in the process of going from one tourist trap to the next. Though I'm mostly past my days of family-only vacations, the question that remains is where are those kids now? Especially in the time before social media, their impact on my life usually ended at a cameo in our family albums or a couple fuzzy memories at best. Maybe it's my anxiety surrounding the endless paths my life could have taken other than the one it did, but those short term friendships still have a way of creeping into my brain from time to time.

The Pre-Social Media Days

These are the people who are outside of the realm of "Twitter do your thing," and therefore, they are pretty much outside the realm of reconnecting. These friends mostly came in the form of beach trips, where I was left to fend for myself after my parents invariably knocked out in their lounge chairs. Usually, some vague magnetising force of mutual understanding bonded me and these new friends over the course of our shared circumstances, and then never saw each other again.

What sucks about these lost friends is that it goes to show that there are cool people all over the world, and as much as you try, it's pretty hard to meet all of them. On the flip side, all of those people might have ended up being terrible people. But for real, I actually

owe these temporary friends way more than I even realise. Even as I was imprisoned away so tragically on an idyllic, picturesque beach (big woe is me) they gave me a mental oasis to save me from my earthly one.

Now We Have Social Media

These are weird. I guess this is an inevitable part of aging after 10 years old, but social media has become a place where these strangers-in-a-far-off-land turned friends are a completely different ball game. These are almost hard to compare because of the fact that they're accessible, or at the very least they could be through effort, but at the end of the day there's still some sense of separation. Here, the existential dread is almost amplified due to the accessibility to their lives that's offered through technology. It's seeing their life presented to you in a way that is visible enough to imagine yourself in it, but still out of reach. It's the type of situation that keeps your FOMO going about something going on in the world that you will inevitably miss out on just by the virtue that you can't, in fact, be present on all corners of the globe at once. Obviously it depends on just how much you connected with them while you were there, but you really can't know if they even remember you. The way social media presents their life it almost feels like a confirmation of your deep-seated fear that they don't think about you at all compared to how much you think about them. But that's just the negative aspect of it— in reality it's actually insanely cool that the advent of social media allows us to effectively stay in contact with people from across the globe. Especially if you ever go back there, you'll have a friendship that can survive miles, which is one that's worth holding on to.

The One With the Huge Well

One of the clearest memories I have of my early encounters is this one specific kid who, upon meeting me for the first time, laid out his in-depth business plan for digging a hole into the beach until we hit the waterbed, from which we would be able make a profit from selling the water. What sticks out to me

the most is just how committed he was to this bit, in that we actually did mine straight down until a weird build up of underground ocean water started filling up the floor, with only one old person yelling at us for the huge pit we inadvertently created in the process. Also, the foam that coats the top of ocean water sometimes? This kid either thought (or again, was really committed to the joke) that it was actually milk to the point where he actually drank it? Honestly props for not instantly throwing up after that.

The One in Key Club

Going back to the same beach — but this time in high school and in possession of a phone — the friendships I made during this trip did not involve a giant well or selling ocean water at the beach. Instead, in a moment of teenage angst/boredom, I took the beach to do something other than rot in my airbnb and enjoy the sunset. On this walk though, I noticed a flag sticking out of the sand. I immediately did a double take when I recognized that it

was actually representing a local key club, which is a volunteering club I was a part of back home. Adjacent to the flag was a bonfire, and adjacent to that, a group of high schoolers. Somehow, within my pubescent awkwardness, I found the courage to actually walk up to them and interact. What was crazy was that apparently in California, school starts midway through August, so they ended up inviting me to come to school with them and give a speech during their first key club meeting of the year. In the moment it

seemed like no problem at all, but as I stood in front of at least a hundred kids I realized I didn't know anything and completely flubbed the entire thing. Huge embarrassing disaster aside, it was honestly kind of magical, and after the meeting we got into one of their cars and got food together. By the time I had to leave I told them I'd see them soon since I was totally 100% going to go to a University of California school, definitely. As you can see I'm currently at Binghamton, and that was

it. We actually did exchange snapchat and went back and forth for a couple days, but when that died down they just became names on my phone.

The Ones That Hopefully Happen Eventually

Going forward in life, I can't help but wonder what the chances are of something similar happening in the future. Now that I'm living in a post prototypical family summer vacation world, I can't help but toy with the fear that the same sources of boredom and cabin fever won't be around to draw me to interact with the strangers I meet in places

that are strangers to me. Especially since it's feasible for the first time for the idea of travel to be something more personal as opposed to being just a system for my parents to drag me away from my video games. Will that same drive exist when I'm travelling with my pre existing friends or even by myself? These are totally valid questions but they're also kind of downers. At the heart of it, maybe there will be or maybe there won't be but that's always the case with stuff you can't plan for, but personally, I'm hopeful that it will.





Window
by Anna Link

The bus passes
the block where two of my homes lived,
one much less friendly than the other.
Each claimed another, and I,
the windowsill where dead wasps sit
conversing with cobwebs,
peeling back layers of dust
that cast snow into shadows
and skin into light.

The false moon above glows orange,
dimming barren ghost trees,
ginkgos heavy with memories
of ripeness, rotten weight.
On this same string suspended,
we nourish the spoken,
unfeeding promises
of a solitary, yielding self:
We push and pull without reciprocity,
dizzied by the spinning globes that retreat,
then occupy.

Springtime Daylight
by Christina Millan

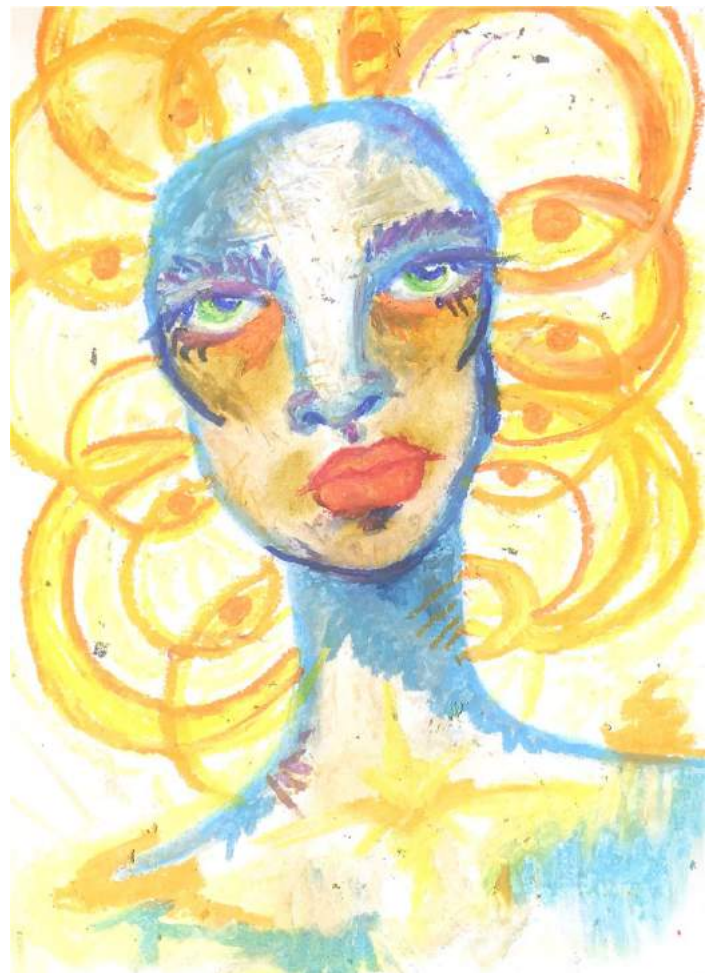
The way dew dances in the morning light
tempts an idea of safety from the monsters
that hunt in the dark. Making you hope their
lust rest with the glare of the passive moon.

It doesn't, they merely dress it in a facade.
Their eyes constantly betraying them.
The way they stare, pretending to be a
housecat, but we can always see their mane.

When trying to witness the dew dance in the
springtime light we stand prepared in case
they may attack. Any noise, groomed to make
us hold our keys between each knuckle.

Who knows if it's the squawk of geese or the
whistle from the old man watching you again.

art by anna link



an ode to a one hit wonder

by *nikita narsingh*

you sit patiently amongst a sea of others
nonchalant and crisp
i float through and my hands grasp
your scrunched fabric
in the dressing room i try you on
the dim light hits us both so well and
i feel as though your patterns may have
been made
just for my skin

the day i get to wear you to the beach
is a beautiful one
spring break under the tropical sun
the UV index hitting a perfect 4
87 and sunny

but as i walk down to the cool ocean
waiting for my thirsty skin
i hear it-
a cat call
and then another

my slitted eyes reach the group
of teenage boys
and i can tell by their smiles
that they are so proud of themselves
and i want to ask them if their mothers
would be, too

suddenly the ocean becomes a place to
drown
and not a place that hydrates

i do not let them see me almost cry
i do not let them see me wince
as i let myself float i know my mom will
say
it is because of your deep v plunge
and cheeky bottom
so i decide that i will not tell her

and when my friends ask i will say
that it did not bother me
because i don't want anyone to blame
the \$27 i spent on you

i know that it is not just me
that this isn't the biggest deal in the world
but i've been to stadium concerts
and a whistle sounds like the loudest thing
i've ever heard

and it is then again that i wish
that this skin came with instructions
that my body came with a manual
telling me how to dress it
how to maneuver it
that someone could fit everything
that comes with my womanhood
into a book and i could read it
and set myself free

but until then
i go home and wash you and set you in
the box
of old bathing suits in my mother's walk in
closet

never to be worn again
my \$27 one hit wonder

art by *colleen fucigna*

water damage

by plamena diulgerova

your crusted eyelids stiffly flutter open
you see her tan, freckled back
the air you breathe into her shoulder blade
heats the skin of your nose
you shift your chin up,
careful, careful, careful

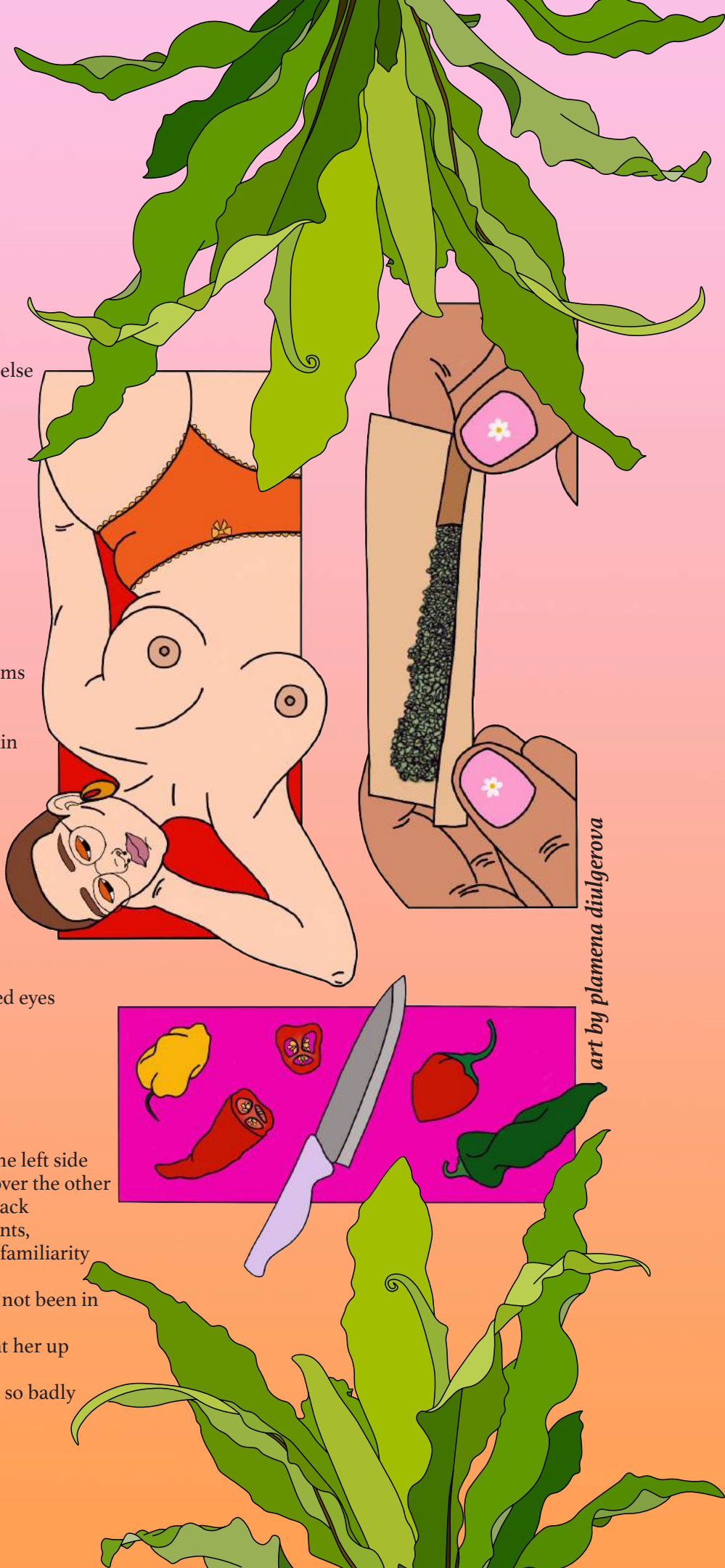
her hair smells like geranium and something else
oranges or tangerines or a sorbet
and you remember the scoop of her
you had last night
the omniscient image
of two warm bodies dancing in cotton sheets
clashes with the daylight
peaking above the pots on her windowsill

you can stay in your moment as long as
she does not share your recognition
of how differently you will move
around each other and how
you will brush your teeth in different bathrooms
but you want the flavor of her to linger
on the bones in your mouth
for the next time you can drag them on the skin
above her jugular, a gentle sensation across
her protected heartbeat
drumming so quickly that only a bite
could consume the life within her
and make it your own

her waist shifts under the bend of your elbow
and you hold your breath;
you will suffocate before you pop the bubble
you have blown with your ecstasy
but she rolls over and her tired, purple rimmed eyes
look like the loveliest bruises,
frozen softly in a moment of coexistence
before reason glazes them over
and she coarsely laughs,
asking for a cigarette

they are on the windowsill and you slept on the left side
so you swing one bare, sheet indented thigh over the other
and reach to shake one out of the crumpled pack
you stare at the peeling paint beneath her plants,
the yellowing moisture damage screaming of familiarity

there's water running in some room you have not been in
and she's behind you with a solo cup
she seeps the windowsill with rain as you light her up
she had joked about being a plant murderer
but you see she only wants to keep them alive so badly
that she drenches their roots
while she kills herself



art by plamena diulgerova

BY ELIZABETH SHORT

SECRET CONFESSIONS OF A CLOSESTED COMIC BOOK NERD

Okay, so I have a confession to make: I am a superhero fan. Big time. It's not just comic books either: I started reading Harry Potter in kindergarten, have sat through extended editions of Lord of the Rings, listened to the Doctor Who soundtrack to unwind, practiced the Vulcan salute for hours as a kid, and re-binged all three original Star Wars movies last Christmas with my parents.

Ironically enough, the first time I saw a Marvel movie, I fell asleep. In the movie theater. Holding my date's hand. Whoops. But! After snapping awake about 15 minutes later, I actually really loved the movie. I slowly began entering this world that I admired from a distance. By the time I picked up the Hawkeye series (a brilliant series), I was sold. While this aspect of my life is something I really care about, I actually try to avoid mentioning it to people until they get to know me better. The honest to god truth is that I'm a bit afraid of their judgement. Not very Wonder Woman of me, I know.

And honestly, I don't blame some women for being a bit turned off by comic books or nerd culture in general; It isn't exactly forgiving. All you have to do is scroll down to the comments of any YouTube video and you'll get what I'm saying. I'll shorthand it for you: if a woman's the lead, at least a third of the comments are going to say the franchise is ruined and that they'll never watch the final product. I read some pretty awful comments when an issue of Amazing Spider-Man put Peter in an "Ask me about my feminist agenda" t-shirt. The shirt (which he borrowed from a female character btw) ignited the usual complaints about how comics are "forcing diversity where it isn't there" or "being corrupted by leftist *%\$\$%" and blah blah blah. And those are the more politely worded ones.

But all the disparaging aside, I'm thrilled about the future of comic books and their movies. Wonder Woman was amazing, and Into the Spideverse not only won an Oscar but featured an immensely diverse cast of characters. And Captain Marvel? Blew. Me. Away. Brie Larson could step on me and I'd say thank you. She pushed a 5,000 pound Jeep as part of her training for the movie. Not to mention she faced massive backlash from male fans after she said she didn't care about white male reviewers, as these films aren't directed at them.

Everything about the film subverted both my expectations and typical tropes I've seen before. During a pivotal confrontation between Carol and an opponent, the camera panned out to a wide shot: one character on each side. The size difference

between the two was striking. Our hero seemed incredibly small. Brie Larson is 5'7", so the choice in perspective felt incredibly deliberate. That is what I loved about this film; Any other shot would have the protagonist set in the perfect lighting, towering above his enemy, and just dripping with cinematic metaphors about his righteousness. As a woman who's barely 5'4", I hate that crap. Captain Marvel doesn't need to be tall to kick your ass. But lots of people weren't as big a fan as I was.

To the men who just don't quite "get" Captain Marvel, and I say this with affection: you don't have to. It's not written for you. And before you get all "I've never been handed things just because I'm a guy!?" on me, I'm just saying that y'all have never had a movie get boycotted for its protagonist, or 'cause its lead actor called for more diversity on their press tour. Your emotions aren't "a weakness" or something that needs to be "kept in check".

The montage of Carol getting up after falling down so many times nearly brought me to tears. I remember falling in soccer or baseball or every other sport I've played, stumbling over a speech and having each failure held against not just me, but my gender. My shortcomings were a reflection of womens' intelligence and weakness. But every time women fail, we grit our teeth, crack our necks, and bare down harder. We push ourselves higher, further, faster. That's what makes Carol Danvers a great hero: she was an "ordinary" (by some standards, disregarding the fact that she was an air force pilot) person who stepped up. But that's the best part. She's so human. She cries when facing painful memories, pushes hard against everyone telling her no, and she WHOOPS with joy when she flies. Her emotions make her better. She's got nothing to prove, and neither do any women who want to be the hero.





taking a break from online dating



by jason russo

I think it's safe to assume that most Free Press readers have tried online dating at least once in their life. Whether it was Tinder, Grindr, Match.com (we see you with that money), Hinge, Farmers Meet, Gluten Free Singles, or any of the other hundreds of other dating apps and websites, the majority of college-aged people looking for love are drawn to the Internet to find it. Our parents call us crazy and warn us about stranger danger, but in all honesty, it's becoming the most utilized way to meet people for hookups, dates, or even friends.

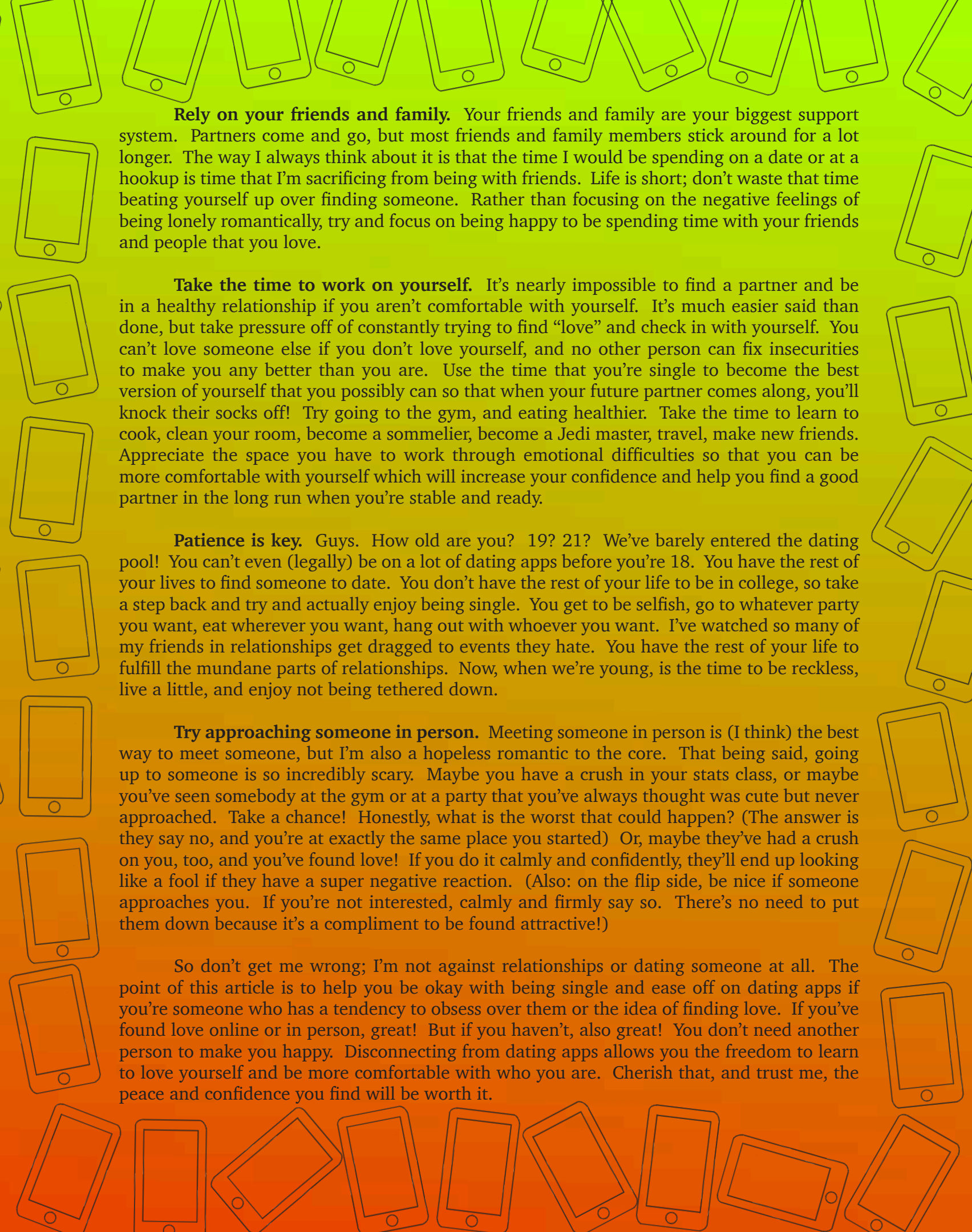
Especially in the queer community, dating apps are one of the only ways to meet other queer people. It can be really, really hard to find queer people to be friends with or experiment with, even at a massive, liberal arts university like Binghamton and, like it or not, apps like Tinder and Grindr are fixtures of the LGBTQ+ community.

But there are so many negative effects that online dating can have on a person (that's a whole article in and of itself). I've used several of the apps mentioned above to limited degrees of success, and it hit the point where I was spending hours upon hours refreshing the stupid little mask logo and the Tinder home screen to find the same people as before. So, this semester, I decided to delete all of them. Here's a collection of what I've learned and some tips for surviving sans digital satisfaction:

Dating apps rely almost exclusively on physical attractiveness, but there is so much more to a person than his/her/their looks. It hit a point on Tinder where I didn't even click on people's bios or scan through their photos. I was so goal-oriented that I judged guys based solely on the first picture that popped up. After I deleted the apps and (ironically) ran into a lot of people that I had matched with or seen online, I realized that some of the guys I was obsessed with SUCKED and some guys I swiped past because I didn't immediately find them attractive were actually really cool and worth spending more time on than the split second it took to swipe left. Try and remember that these profiles are people, too.

You are also more than your profile!!! It can be so easy to become dejected and to start doubting yourself because you face rejection on dating apps. Every time someone didn't respond to a message or each time I didn't match with someone who I thought was really cute, I immediately thought it was a flaw in me: I'm not hot enough, I'm not fit enough, I'm not funny enough. But, in reality, maybe the person accidentally swiped left. Maybe he actually sucks in real life. Maybe he swiped left because he was intimidated by how hot I am!! There are a plethora of reasons as to why someone didn't match with you.

It's okay to be single. I think the media and even our friends make it seem like you need to be in a relationship to be happy, or that finding a partner will "complete" you and solve all of your problems when, in reality, it's often the opposite. I know I have friends who have been emotionally devastated by relationships, and would probably have been better off without dating. You don't need to be in a relationship or even have someone to hook up with in order to feel validated and loved.



Rely on your friends and family. Your friends and family are your biggest support system. Partners come and go, but most friends and family members stick around for a lot longer. The way I always think about it is that the time I would be spending on a date or at a hookup is time that I'm sacrificing from being with friends. Life is short; don't waste that time beating yourself up over finding someone. Rather than focusing on the negative feelings of being lonely romantically, try and focus on being happy to be spending time with your friends and people that you love.

Take the time to work on yourself. It's nearly impossible to find a partner and be in a healthy relationship if you aren't comfortable with yourself. It's much easier said than done, but take pressure off of constantly trying to find "love" and check in with yourself. You can't love someone else if you don't love yourself, and no other person can fix insecurities to make you any better than you are. Use the time that you're single to become the best version of yourself that you possibly can so that when your future partner comes along, you'll knock their socks off! Try going to the gym, and eating healthier. Take the time to learn to cook, clean your room, become a sommelier, become a Jedi master, travel, make new friends. Appreciate the space you have to work through emotional difficulties so that you can be more comfortable with yourself which will increase your confidence and help you find a good partner in the long run when you're stable and ready.

Patience is key. Guys. How old are you? 19? 21? We've barely entered the dating pool! You can't even (legally) be on a lot of dating apps before you're 18. You have the rest of your lives to find someone to date. You don't have the rest of your life to be in college, so take a step back and try and actually enjoy being single. You get to be selfish, go to whatever party you want, eat wherever you want, hang out with whoever you want. I've watched so many of my friends in relationships get dragged to events they hate. You have the rest of your life to fulfill the mundane parts of relationships. Now, when we're young, is the time to be reckless, live a little, and enjoy not being tethered down.

Try approaching someone in person. Meeting someone in person is (I think) the best way to meet someone, but I'm also a hopeless romantic to the core. That being said, going up to someone is so incredibly scary. Maybe you have a crush in your stats class, or maybe you've seen somebody at the gym or at a party that you've always thought was cute but never approached. Take a chance! Honestly, what is the worst that could happen? (The answer is they say no, and you're at exactly the same place you started) Or, maybe they've had a crush on you, too, and you've found love! If you do it calmly and confidently, they'll end up looking like a fool if they have a super negative reaction. (Also: on the flip side, be nice if someone approaches you. If you're not interested, calmly and firmly say so. There's no need to put them down because it's a compliment to be found attractive!)

So don't get me wrong; I'm not against relationships or dating someone at all. The point of this article is to help you be okay with being single and ease off on dating apps if you're someone who has a tendency to obsess over them or the idea of finding love. If you've found love online or in person, great! But if you haven't, also great! You don't need another person to make you happy. Disconnecting from dating apps allows you the freedom to learn to love yourself and be more comfortable with who you are. Cherish that, and trust me, the peace and confidence you find will be worth it.

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