**DEVELOPING** STORY

Tehan says 'F\*\*K STUDENTS' Dan Tehan is falling down

FRANKIE THE FOX HASN'T BEEN SEEN IN SIX DAYS



**SYD 100** 

Tharunka acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal and Bedegal people of the Eora nation, on which our university now stands.

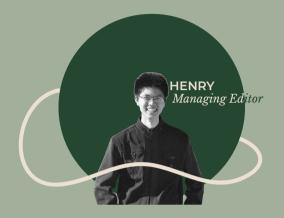
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Truth

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# **DEAR READER,**

Fake news. Post-truth. Alternative facts. In this fourth issue of Tharunka, Truth, we discover that these contagions are far closer to home than we might like to admit.

It's hard to escape the cognitive dissonance when the Twitter feed of UNSW's Chief Communications Officer, a former journalist turned spin-doctor, is hacked by a bunch of gamers. When foxes roam the abandoned campus, and a cost-cutting faculty merger is spun as the creation of a fruitful new 'mega-faculty'. When an interview with a leading Australian voice for human rights is shunted off the UNSW platform for fear of offending a foreign government.

In this brave new world of crisis communications, it's comforting to know that there will always be a space at UNSW for doubt, and complexity, and profound reflection. This is the task that our writers have taken on at Tharunka, comprising two elements: expressing the truth of our experiences, and speaking truth to power. Nidhi Kontham seeks the true beauty of Eastern architecture, liberated from European aesthetics. Jack Zhou sat down with the Chair of Arc Board to ask what our student union has been up to during COVID-19.

I commend this Foundation Day issue of Tharunka to you, dear reader, in the hope that our earnest attempts to grapple with what it means to live in 2020 might assist you to do the same.

# Creatives Sub-Editor

Welcome to Truth, which succeeds as a work of satire on many grounds, but which, I'll admit, isn't very satirical in the Creatives department; it is too sincere, too gentle, lingering too much in love and in loss. The Creatives of Truth all seem to have confronted not just '*truth*', but one always-aspect of truth - being alone.

The poets: Phoebe's 'Loneliness' and Issy's 'Paralian' seem to, in parallel, explore the interiority/exteriority split of being alone; experiencing the world, remembering the world, being in the world, while alone.

The prose-smiths: Wen's 'Time to Go' is not just a beautiful world of magic but a narrative of the complex relationship of siblings and letting go; and Aileen's 'Tethered Skies' is an exquisite play on divinity, madness, and power of the mind.

Having been in almost total isolation for more than six months now, I feel confident in saying that the creative works around me have kept me more human than I can really articulate; I know it's the same for others. So, whether laughing or crying or just falling into the lull and elan of our writers, please enjoy.

## Online Sub-Edito

It feels like we're at a point when not much can be said about Truth that hasn't been said before. The phrases 'post-truth' era and 'post-truth politics' seem to be everywhere you look in recent years.

Young people are used to having the facts at our fingers, breaking news delivered instantaneously. The recent deaths of public figures like Chadwick Boseman and RBG, the explosion in Lebanon, global pandemic statistics, we find out these things minutes (if not seconds) of them happening.

In a time of post-truth and instant facts, fact-checkers are needed now more than anything. And that's where journalists come in. Although our young crowd at Tharunka are still students, we have a lot to say, and I hope you'll stick around to hear it.

Enjoy Truth!

### ACK Features Sub-Editor

This belated Foundation Day issue of Tharunka, Truth, brings another spate of high quality writing from our student authors, who have set about tackling some challenging and important issues.

These authors have taken a unique and often provocative view which is all unified by the same preoccupation: making us face the uncomfortable truth wherever it may be.

Callum O'Donnell unpacks the increasingly concerning problem of children in detention in Australia and highlights a potential solution. As the United States presidential elections loom over the world, Ainslie Toombs reconsiders the legacy of Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama. Rory Coverdale reports on the revelations of the Palace Letters on one of the most controversial yet obscure political moments in Australian history: the dismissal of Gough Whitlam in 1975.

I am proud to have participated in bringing these voices forward, and whose unique insights deserve the attention of our loyal readers.

### **SAAFIYAH** Graphic Designer

Hi, welcome to hansonrise, we bring you a developing story of the absolute mess our Education Minister has created. His proposed fee changes per discipline works against social equity by preempting 'winning' disciplines and making them more accessible. Democracy who? He might as well have said, '*f\*ck students*'. Hence why he is being pulled down by the masses.

In other design related works, Nidhi Kontham's piece, 'If the Walls Could Talk', collages photographs supposedly showing the hidden vibrancy of India. Her work poses a simple question, why must we search for beauty within Eastern Architecture? I hope this piece offers you an alternate perspective as it did for me.

Happy reading!

# THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES -DISREGARDED, BUT ESSENTIAL

By Jeremy Ellis

The past year has not been good for the arts and humanities. We've been forced to watch the consistent devaluation of these fields. It started in late 2019 as the federal Department of Communications and the Arts was 'logically' merged into the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, with the word 'Arts' eliminated completely in the name. Esther Anatolitis (Executive Director at the National Association for the Visual Arts) rightfully coined this 'invisibility of the Arts at the top level'.

This structural change was somewhat mirrored at UNSW. As the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis settled in, changes were announced to blend the Arts, Built Environment and Design faculties into one – stressed as a 'mega-faculty' rather than a 'merger' by the new Dean, Professor Claire Annesley. Yet, I would ask whether it's indicative of the university's own disregard for those disciplines.

As if this were not enough, students in the arts and humanities are facing significant fee increases of 113% from next year. It's been championed by government members such as the Minister for Education Dan Tehan to funnel students into 'job-relevant' degrees. Yet this push for STEM education and the prioritisation of specific career pathways is contradicted by the government. Their Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) data reveals that humanities, arts and social sciences graduates have higher prospects of income than science graduates<sup>1</sup>. The field independently contributed \$111.7 billion to the Australian economy in a single year.

Despite this attack on the entire institution of arts and humanities, these fields are essential to social betterment. They hold unrecognised value, demonstrated again and again both historically and in our contemporary world.

Since antiquity, art, philosophy and the humanities were unquestionably vital in societal development – and even laying the foundations for many modern STEM fields. Consider names you know only too well, such as Socrates and Plato. Socratic dialogue set the groundwork for academic discourse, facilitating logical discussion and exchange of ideas in any field. Plato recognised the importance of mathematics and did not seek to make elite one field or the other.

People often ask, 'Why study history? Or gender and women's studies?' and so on. I would ask instead, what exactly are students studying

<sup>1</sup> Social Research Centre, 2019, '2019 Graduate Outcomes Survey', Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, https://www.qilt.edu.au/docs/defaultsource/gos-reports/2019-gos/2019-gosnational-report.pdf?sfvrsn=cdceec3c\_4.

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in these degrees? Often, it's abominations of the past ranging from oppression to genocide. Students are enabled to recognise patterns of oppression and abuse, understand their origins and development. We do not live in a utopia where oppression is just a tragedy of the past – rather, it continues. Think of the Black Lives Matter movement. Think of consistent sexism and gender pay gaps. Think of the endless discrimination the LGBTQ+ community faces.

Mathematics and science cannot create the empathy and cultural understanding needed to facilitate change. By hiking fees for the arts and humanities we also begin to limit their students to the most-wealthy. Yet, is it not likely that the most-wealthy are coming from racially and economically privileged backgrounds? How the government can justify placing the future of these fields solely in people who cannot empathise with historical struggle, only sympathise, is beyond me.

Humanities students are equipped with an awareness and understanding in ways to combat this oppression. Whether that manifests in activism and advocacy, or assisting corporations in creating diversity and equal opportunity, is irrelevant. These degrees have applicability and essential value to countless aspects of society.

Alongside their independent value, the arts and humanities are vital in facilitating STEM. Without humanities, how could we successfully communicate STEM knowledge to other nations? In light of the COVID-19 crisis, we need linguists and translators, cross-cultural communicators, politicians and diplomats to facilitate the exchange of information at multiple levels. It's essential to international politics and justice, foreign aid and trade.

Studies show the importance of explicitly teaching critical thinking and argumentation – skills taught by the arts and humanities – in bettering STEM studies. In her doctoral thesis, Dr Christine McDonald<sup>2</sup> of Griffith University focussed on the importance of argumentation for science students. Students displayed notable academic improvement in their science studies following their explicit learning of argumentation. They were able to better use evidence and make logical conclusions. A lot of people working in STEM fields (and politicians) could benefit from this.

Titans of the last century undertook tertiary education in the arts and humanities, and their contributions intertwined deeply with their studies. Take your pick: Martin Luther King Jr., Peter Thiel (founder of PayPal), Michelle & Barack Obama, Carly Fiorina (former CEO of Hewlett Packard) and more than you could imagine. Their education ranged from law to literature to philosophy. Look at any of their studies and tell me that they couldn't develop job-relevant skills.

The fact that we are now seeing politicians push for the limitation of arts and humanities is painfully ironic. Many attended university for free, and even more undertook BAs. Perhaps the most ironic case is Dan Tehan, the main voice pushing students to what he calls 'job-relevant' fields. He has a BA from the University of Melbourne, and a Masters in Foreign Affairs and Trade, and one in International Relations. His rationale for these changes in tertiary education is certainly not apparent. In tandem with the government's own contradictory data, it appears blatantly illogical.

On a final note, our society cannot deteriorate into homogenous thinking. The arts and humanities, and STEM, are equally important. The moment we all think in the same way is the moment we stop progressing. Diversity in thought is needed for us to continuously challenge each other and improve collectively. If we lack it in our minds, lack differences in education, personality and career – what's the point? <sup>2</sup> Christine McDonald, 'Exploring the influence of a science content course incorporating explicit nature of science and argumentation instruction on preservice primary teachers' views of nature of science', (Ph.D., Griffith University, 2008), https://www.researchgate.net/ publication/27483230\_Exploring\_ the\_influence\_of\_a\_science\_ content\_course\_incorporating\_ explicit\_nature\_of\_science\_and\_ argumentation\_instruction\_on\_ preservice\_primary\_teachers'\_views\_ of\_nature\_of\_science.



# <u>SPOTLIGHT</u> ON:

Sahana Nandakumar, Chair of Arc Board

By Jack Zhou

Tharunka spoke with Sahana Nandakumar. a 4<sup>th</sup> year Medicine student at UNSW and the current chair of the Arc Board. We discussed what the Arc Board actually is and what it does. We also covered their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as tips in getting involved in Arc and student representation.

## <u>Tell us a bit about yourself. What are you studying? What have you been doing during quarantine?</u>

I'm an international student from Sri Lanka. I'm currently studying Medicine, in my 4th year. I'm doing research into eating disorders and how we can better model them.

Apart from being involved in student life. I really like to dance. I'm a part of a couple of groups here and there. On top of that, I like to write. Whether they make sense or not, I just love writing and putting things on paper. That's why I was a sub-editor at Tharunka a couple of years ago.

## For people who aren't aware, what exactly is the Arc Board? What is its importance, and what is your role in it?

The Arc Board comprises 15 directors. There's a mix, but a majority are student directors – students who are elected through the Arc Board elections. There are a few other non-student directors who are adults and are either people in the university or Arc/UNSW alumni.

Essentially, what we do is focus on the big decisions or the strategic decisions of Arc as an organisation. We look at Arc as an organisation and we ask: What are our objectives? What are our goals and how does this align with our vision? This obviously involves not just reviewing our financial capabilities, but also reviewing what our students really need, what we can do better for students' experiences. We review these goals on a regular basis to make sure we're setting good goals and we're still in line with our vision.

A common confusion is that students think the Board and the SRC or PGC are the same. We're not the same, although our vision and goal always align because we're representing students. The Board works with the SRC and PGC (Postgraduate Council) to deliver services to students.

My role as Chair of the Arc Board – as fancy as it sounds - is really not a big position. I'm still just one member in a board of 15 members. The main difference is that I'm usually the spokesperson and represent the views of the Board whether it be within the organisation or at the university level. On top of that, I ensure that there are robust discussions within Arc and that students and directors are well-informed of any decision-making.

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Jack Zhou

#### How long is the tenure for each position on the Board?

Usually, the tenure is 2 years. Ever two years, the student directors have to leave. To get on the Board again, you have to run in the election and be re-elected. With non-student directors, once they are on the Board, every two years we have to renew their tenure, which can go up to six years. On top of that, the CEO is there, as well the SRC and PGC presidents who are ex officio.

#### Is this a paid position?

There are honoraria for sub-committee chairs and Chair of the Board. Out of the eight students on the Board, those who take up subcommittee chair positions or the chair of the Board are paid. But for a student director, there is currently no honoraria or allowance.

## What's been the most significant project that the Board has been up to?

I think all my answers would be completely different if there was no COVID. But currently, there have obviously been a lot of challenges for Arc as an organisation through how everything's moved online. There are no students on campus and that has had a big effect.

We've been doing a lot of scenario planning: what it current looks like, what the immediate future looks like, what the long-term future looks like. There's been a lot of planning on how we can continuously face challenges, but also adapt ourselves according to the changes that are happening, not just within Arc, but across the environment of the pandemic and the University. All our projects are still on student experience and how we can best deliver it. Most of the planning is about how we can channel our resources to deliver the best student experience we can.

On top of that, the other significant things is in continuing to advocate for students. We work along with the SRC and PGC to make sure that students are represented on a university level on what their needs are.

What's happening with Arc affiliated staff such as in the Roundhouse, Grad Shop, etc.

Currently, Arc is eligible for JobKeeper, but a significant amount of casual employees have been stood down and they are receiving JobKeeper. That forms a significant part of our scenario planning for how things are going ahead for the next year.

#### What are your plans as Arc Chair for the next year?

One of my biggest plans as Arc Chair is to really focus internally as an organisation. There have obviously been some tough decisions to sustain what we have been delivering. But we constantly look back to the surveys that we do; we constantly get feedback from our full-time and part-time staff, and from students.

My focus in the upcoming year is in making sure that there is good communication between the levels of staff and students. It's been tough moving everything online. We're trying to make sure everybody's feeling good and still connected as much as possible.

### How has the Arc Board been supporting international students who have been affected in light of the COVID situation?

We always have it in mind. The key thing to remember is that there are a lot of students on Board, including international students. It's constantly in our mind. Even when we're moving things online, we're conscious about accessibility issues for people overseas. We've moved that focus to management and to staff when they roll out their programs. We've also been encouraging our Legal Team, who has been giving lots of support to our overseas students or those on-campus with accommodation issues. We also have our Food Hub which rolled out a few months ago and is providing food. Quite a few international students have been accessing that as well.

It's important to acknowledge that we're still a relatively smaller organisation with limited funds for what we can do. That's why advocacy is a big part of the Board. We try to sit on as many committees and try to pass on the needs of students to UNSW who have the resources to do something about it. For things on the larger scale, where we don't have the finances to do it, we advocate for it on the university level.

The biggest challenge on the needs and struggles of students from when the lockdown started in March versus now, is constantly changing and evolving. We focus on continuous feedback on students as to what they really need, and what we can do to deliver them. When students bring up new issues, we sit down and plan on how we can assist them.

Thinking back, a lot of the core policies that I've held would still be the same; our objectives, goals and visions are still the same. We still want to deliver the best student experiences and a really strong internal organisation with good communication. We would have obviously strived for a lot more services to deliver on-campus.

It's not all bad – there was still an increasing cohort that was learning online. We saw a future approach to online learning. I think the important thing is learning good lessons from this situation and to use it in our long-term plan.

## What advice would you give to students who may be interested in getting involved in student representation?

My advice would be to tell them: really, really go for it. I think a lot of people are mildly interested and sit on the edge asking 'Am I good enough?' or 'Am I qualified enough?' Most of the role is just being honest and frank about what you feel and what the students you associate with feel.

Put your hand up! You learn a lot by representing students. Although COVID is challenging for many students, it is the time where you can make the biggest impact, because students need it the most. Students need representation and support now and this is the time where you can make the biggest difference.

# PLEASE, STOP PUTTING OBAMA ON A PEDESTAL

**By Ainslie Toombs** 

The election of Barack Obama in 2008 marked a historic moment in American history. In a country built on the systemic subjugation of Black people, a Black man had become president and would remain so for eight years. Many thought they'd never see such a thing occur in their lifetime, but almost half the population would go on to rank him as one of the greatest US presidents of all time.<sup>1</sup> While this was indeed a huge step forward for the country, the reality of his legacy- and his actions while president - tell a vastly different story. After all, we're talking about someone who led the world's greatest imperial, economic and military superpower of all time. It shouldn't be surprising that Obama's not all he's cracked up to be.

Compared to his successor Donald Trump, an outright white supremacist known for manufacturing "alternative facts", Obama looks pretty good. His administration legalised gay marriage, and led the way on healthcare reform, and he himself holds a Nobel Peace Prize. But instead of going on violent Twitter rants, his actions were more discreet; he sanctioned Venezuela almost to death, attacked press freedoms, and vastly expanded the United States' covert military powers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Obama Tops Public's List Of Best President In Their Lifetime, Followed By Clinton, Reagan", <sup>2020</sup>, Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy. https:// www.pewresearch.org/politics/<sup>2018/07</sup>/11/obama-tops-publics-list-of-bestpresident-in-their-lifetime-followed-by-clinton-reagan/.

<sup>2</sup> "CIA Tactics In Pakistan Include Targeting Rescuers And Funerals". <sup>2020</sup>. The Bureau Of Investigative Journalism. https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/ stories/<sup>2012</sup>.<sup>02</sup>.<sup>04</sup>/cia-tactics-in-pakistan-include-targeting-rescuers-andfunerals.



Many people remain unaware of these facts, 3 "Head Of The A.P. Criticizes Seizure evidenced by his enduring popularity, and it's easy Of Phone Records", 2020, Nytimes. to understand why. Due to the extreme behaviours com/2013/05/20/business/media/ of Trump, and the widespread publicity he craves phone-records.html?\_r=0. from the media. Obama has become revered for his 'integrity' and 'scandal-free' administration by even conservative political commentators such as David Brooks.<sup>3</sup> But this perspective is entirely ahistorical due to what is omitted from the conversation

A prime example of a 'scandal' that occurred under the Obama administration was the Justice Department's abrupt seizure of Pulitzer Prizewinning newspaper The Associated Press' phone records in 2013, which included two months-worth of its internal lines, and even some of their journalists' home and cell phones. No notice or reason was given. The A.P's Chief Executive denounced the Justice Department for making themselves 'the judge, jury Mccarthyism | John Kiriakou". The and executioner in secret.' The most insidious part though? The incident was fortuitously timed with The obama-abuse-espionage-act-A.P's investigation of CIA activities in Yemen. This act, only one among many, begins to undermine Brooks' <sup>5</sup> "Obama Used The Espionage Act To claim about the president's 'integrity.'

То further stress Obama's troubling interference with US press freedom we can look to record-number-reporters-sourceshis regular invocation of the draconian Espionage Act 1917. This act was ostensibly designed to protect US national secrets from the eyes of volatile 'foreign actors,' but has primarily been deployed to stifle Freedom". The New Yorker. https:// citizens' free speech.<sup>4</sup> The Obama administration has desk/the-espionage-act-and-aused the law to lay charges against journalists and growing-threat-to-press-freedom. their sources.<sup>5</sup> According to a 2019 article by The New Yorker, the Act is 'blind to the difference between But What Exactly Are They? whistle-blowers and spies.'6 While defending the publication of the Pentagon Papers, The Times' Washington bureau chief Max Frankel argued that without press freedom, "there could be no adequate <sup>8</sup> Maass, Peter, and Peter Maass. diplomatic, military and political reporting... between A Policy Of Cracking Down On the Government and the people.'7 To date, Obama prosecuted more journalist's sources under the Espionage Act than the preceding 43 presidents combined,<sup>8</sup> and created a precedent for further sources/. crackdowns under the Trump administration.

Moreover, Obama's use of economic sanctions against Venezuela was an almost death sentence. The infant mortality rate of the country soared after the March 2015 sanctions were imposed.<sup>9</sup> Obama's decision was condemned by the UN who stated that they precipitated the crippling "economic and humanitarian crisis" Venezuela faces today.10 What was advertised as 'sanctions against [official] 11 "- DEEPENING POLITICAL AND individuals' by the US government affected, in reality, the most marginalised of the general population.<sup>11</sup> AND THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE". This was due to the fact that, after the sanctions, financial institutions shied away from lending to the

head-of-the-ap-criticizes-seizure-of-

Kiriakou, John. <sup>2020</sup>. "Obama's Abuse Of The Espionage Act Is Modern-Day Guardian, https://www.theguardian. com/commentisfree/2013/aug/06/ mccarthyism.

Put A Record Number Of Reporters Sources In Jail, And Trump Could Be Even Worse". 2020. Freedom Of The Press. https://freedom.press/news/ obama-used-espionage-act-putiail-and-trump-could-be-evenworse/.

<sup>6</sup> Jaffer, Jameel. <sup>2020</sup>. "The Espionage Act And A Growing Threat To Press www.newyorker.com/news/news-

7 "Trump Rails Against Leaks. <sup>2020</sup>. Nytimes.Com. https://www. nytimes.com/2017/02/17/business/ media/are-leaks-illegal-explaininghistory.html.

<sup>2020</sup>. "Obama's Gift To Donald Trump: Journalists And Their Sources". The Intercept. https://theintercept. com/2016/04/06/obamas-gift-todonald-trump-a-policy-of-crackingdown-on-journalists-and-their-

"Infant Mortality Rate For The Bolivarian Republic Of Venezuela". <sup>2020</sup>. Fred.Stlouisfed.Org. https:// fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ SPDYNIMRTINVEN.

<sup>10</sup> "Venezuela's Collapse Is The Worst Outside Of War In Decades, Economists Say". 2020. Nytimes.Com. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/17/ world/americas/venezuela-economy. html.

ECONOMIC CRISIS IN VENEZUELA <sup>2020</sup>. Govinfo.Gov. https://www govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-<sup>114</sup>shrg<sup>96257</sup>/html/CHRG-<sup>114</sup>shrg<sup>96257</sup>. htm.

Venezuelan government, which effectively deprived <sup>12</sup> "Trump's Other 'National the import-dependent country of the money required Emergency: Sanctions That Kill Venezuelans". 2020. The Nation. to supply its 29 million people with food, medical https://www.thenation.com/article/ supplies, and other essential goods.<sup>12</sup> It's hard to argue archive/venezuela-sanctions-emergency/. that Obama-who holds a Nobel Peace Prize-enacted these policies in good conscience.

A final point to contend with is the expansion of s-defense-spending-dwarfs-the-restthe military under Obama. That the US invests heavily in counterterrorism programs is well known; they do, <sup>14 2020</sup>. Law.Yale.Edu. https://law.yale. after all, have a global defence budget of around \$579 and\_waxman.pdf. billion – almost as large as the next <sup>14</sup> countries' defence budgets combined.13 Obama chose to pivot the US' Are Untrue". 2020. The Bureau Of counterterrorism efforts away from the deployment Investigative Journalism. https:// of troops though, relying instead on 'light-footprint' stories/2011-07-18/us-claims-of-nomilitary operations that employ remote tactics such as civilian-deaths-are-untrue. cyber-attacks and drone strikes.<sup>14</sup> Superficially, 'light- <sup>16</sup> Ackerman, Spencer. <sup>2020</sup>, "<sup>41</sup> Men footprint' sounds like a better alternative, doesn't Targeted But <sup>1,147</sup> People Killed: US Drone Strikes - The Facts On it? Much nicer than having 'boots on the ground' The Ground". The Guardian. https:// and receiving the bodies of dead American soldiers www.theguardian.com/us-news/<sup>2014/</sup> nov/<sup>24/</sup>-sp-us-drone-strikes-kill-<sup>1147</sup>. in return, all the while avoiding innocent civilian casualties. But this perspective, again, ignores the <sup>17</sup> "Secret 'Kill List' Proves A Test Of Obama's Principles And Will". reality of Obama's actions; tactics like drone strikes 2020. Nytimes.Com. https://www. were not, as he claimed, 'exceptionally surgical and nytimes.com/<sup>2012/05/29</sup>/world/ obamas-leadership-in-war-on-alprecise' compared to armed conflict.<sup>15</sup> In fact, a 2014 gaeda.html?pagewanted=1&\_r=1. story by The Guardian uncovered data collected by 18 "As Candidate, Obama Carves Reprieve, a human rights organisation, which showed Antiwar Stance". 2020. Nytimes.Com that 'attempts to kill 41 men' in drone strikes had also us/politics/260bama.html. 'resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,147 people.'16 When you add to this the fact that Obama simply changed the definition of a 'military combatant' to any 'military-age males in a strike zone' 17 manipulating the already unreliable government statistics on civilian deaths caused by US intervention, it's clear that the anti-war president Obama promised to be was, in truth, a lie.18

However, my criticism of Obama shouldn't imply that I agree with other presidents. In fact, that's the very problem with debates such as these: they're often interpreted as Democrats vs Republicans, Left vs Right. No, I'm judging Obama based on his actions, not on his political affiliations or because of opinions I hold about a specific political party. However, I understand why, in the era of Trump, people yearn for a 'leader' who is even *slightly* less terrible. But, while Trump truly is awful, that doesn't mean Obama is a saviour, and it's high time the world reckoned with that truth.

13 2020. https://www.washingtonpost. com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/09/ this-remarkable-chart-shows-how-uof-the-world/.

edu/sites/default/files/goldsmith\_

<sup>15</sup> "US Claims Of 'No Civilian Deaths'



Ainslie is a 2nd year Journalism/Int Studies student who probably spends more time listening to podcasts and reading books than her tutors would advise. She's recently discovered that someone other than her Mum might actually want to read her work and enjoys writing everything from poetry to OP-EDs.



# CHILDREN IN DETENTION: WHY ARE WE LOCKING UP KIDS AS YOUNG AS <u>10?</u>

By Callum O'Donnell

When you were 10, you could not have been thought of as responsible or mature enough to vote in Australia's elections. You were far too young to consider how the decisions you were making would influence the rest of your life. So why is it that children as young as ten are bearing the full brunt of Australia's punitive legal system?

In Australia, children can be placed in youth detention from ten years of age, a decision that experts agree results in high rates of recidivism. The harsh reality is: if your first brush with punitive incarceration occurs from such a young age, you're likely to be spending the rest of your life at odds with the legal system. Are we stopping crime in Australia by incarcerating children who have not yet hit their teens? Or are we simply perpetuating a system that breeds repeat offences instead of rehabilitation?

## Is there any excuse to lock up a child? A combination of Australian lawyers, doctors and activists say no.

The push to raise Australia's age of criminal responsibility is nothing new. Many will remember the 2016 Royal Commission into the Northern Territory's juvenile detention system that threw Australia's uniquely low age of imprisonment into the spotlight.<sup>1</sup> It was the filmed abuses against child offenders within the walls of Darwin's Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre that moved the then PM Malcolm Turnbull to call for the Royal Commission. The fall-out from the footage which the then NT Chief-Minister Adam Giles described as 'shocking' and 'disgusting' sparked a nation-wide dialogue, with many wondering how children as young as 10 found themselves behind bars in the first place.



Being a student of International Relations and Journalism really opens one's eyes to many great truths and bestows upon a select few the ability to use the past to make predictions on the future.

Today, the momentum from the United States' Black Lives Matter movement has yet ain turned Australia's public eye towards our incarcerated minors, with 10 still being the age criminal responsibility nation-wide. The Council of Attorneys-General met and discussed e issue that had been under fire for almost half a decade, but NSW Attorney-General Mark eakman made it known that it would be "unlikely" for any reforms to be made until 2021. eakman cited the lack of an "alternative regime" as the reason why Australia cannot increase e age. He labelled the move to take incarceration off the table as a means of punishment for nors aged 10 as "ambitious".<sup>2</sup>

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It is important to note that Australia would not be leading the way forward for children's rights by enacting such a change but would instead be keeping pace with the rest of the developed world whose median age of juvenile imprisonment is 14.

There is substantial national pressure to raise the age, with National Children's Commissioner Megan Mitchell stating that "placing children in any kind of detention takes away their childhood and disrupts their healthy development. It also increases the likelihood of them re-offending." Other national organisations that range from legal organisations to medical associations have also kept pressure on the Australian government to change the age on the basis that children of 10 facing potential jail time is not only unjust, but medically unethical. Shahleena Musk from the Australian Human Rights Law Centre, said that "Prisons are hard cold places that do nothing to help children turn their lives around," and that "ten year old kids belong in schools and playgrounds, not in prisons, but Australia's archaic laws are ripping children from their families, community and culture and throwing them into concrete cells."3

The vast majority of children ending up behind bars in this country are sent there for theft, public disturbances, and illicit drug offences. Most of these children also come from severely disadvantaged communities and families already suffering from poverty, mental illness, and addiction. The statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare also show that 94% of children aged 10-14 reoffend and are subsequently resentenced within 12 months of leaving juvenile detention.

In light of these numbers, the current criminal justice system is punishing disadvantaged children for crimes that are more often than not results of their circumstance rather than inherently malicious. The statistics also demonstrate that the current system is not preventing the children who are jailed early from committing more crimes in the future. Given the rates of recidivism amongst youths, a lifestyle defined by crime is produced by locking up children through key developmental years, not prevented. Both Shahleena Musk and Cheryl Axleby have described putting children behind bars as a form of 'legal quicksand', meaning that once these children enter the system, they will likely spend the rest of their lives on the wrong end of it.<sup>4</sup>

Locking up kids locks them out of a chance at rehabilitation and re-integration into society. Coming down hard on ten-year-olds with punitive incarceration increases their likelihood of offending again. William Tilmouth, cofounder of the NGO 'Children's Ground' described our jail system as "draconian", saying it acts as a "conveyer belt", moving kids into a cycle of crime and punishment.

The disproportionate effect of the low criminal age in Australia towards children with disadvantaged backgrounds has resulted in the stark overrepresentation of Indigenous children behind bars. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, on any given night over half of all young people behind bars are Indigenous. In the Northern Territory, 96% of imprisoned children are Indigenous.<sup>5</sup> Given that youth imprisonment is an issue that affects Indigenous children so disproportionately, there has been confusion over why policies and initiatives with proven rates of success in reducing child crime amongst Indigenous children have not been implemented nationally.

Circle sentencing, a judicial process that incorporates Indigenous elders and stages the court processes in a more culturally sensitive location, has been greatly successful in reducing recidivism in Aboriginal populations in New South Wales. The alternative sentencing procedure allows community members and elders to have a direct say in the offenders' penalty. Detention is the last resort and a greater degree of concern is placed on community shame and creating long lasting change within the offender.

Circle sentencing is an option for Indigenous offenders who plead guilty early on to an approved list of offences that excludes rape, assault with grievous bodily harm, and offences involving a firearm. This alternative sentencing measure is available in 12 courts across NSW, and has been shown to reduce incarceration by 51.7%, and make offenders over 9 times less likely to reoffend. Western Australia also saw a 53% drop in serious juvenile crime in 2013 when implementing multi-systemic therapy (MST) for at risk youths.<sup>6</sup> This kind of therapy is introduced on a community and family level and teaches parents/caregivers how to better address their child's antisocial behaviour while getting to the root of the child's behavioural issues. However, circle sentencing has not been implemented Australia wide and is rarely offered to children, despite its successes.

Australia needs to seriously ask itself: Are we genuinely invested in making sure criminals don't exit incarceration just to re-offend? Or are we satisfied with punishing people within a system that's been proven time and time again to reproduce a vicious cycle of recidivism? The justice system needs to be geared towards rehabilitation, a goal we all but nip in the bud by introducing children to incarceration at the age of 10. If we lock them up, we are locking them out of a promising future.

\* "Rethinking Youth Justice: There Are Alternatives To Juvenile Detention". <sup>2020</sup>. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/ rethinking-youth-justice-there-are-alternatives-to-juveniledetention-<sup>63329</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> "I Cried In My Cell, I Was Just A Boy': The Push To Raise The Minimum Age Of Criminal Responsibility". <sup>2020</sup>. Abc.Net.Au. https:// www.abc.net.au/news/<sup>2020-07.27</sup>/raise-the-age-of-child-criminalresponsibility-in-australia/<sup>12483178</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> "Government Failing Children By Refusing To Raise Criminal Age Of Responsibility, Say Activists And Experts". <sup>2020</sup>. SBS News. https://www. sbs.com.au/news/government-failing-children-by-refusing-to-raisecriminal-age-of-responsibility-say-activists-and-experts.

<sup>4</sup> Ella Archibald-Binge, Nigel Gladstone. <sup>2020</sup>. "A Quicksand That Traps These Kids": Push To Raise Age Of Criminal Responsibility From <sup>10</sup> To <sup>14</sup>". The Sydney Morning Herald. https://www.smh.com.au/national/aquicksand-that-traps-these-kids-push-to-raise-age-of-criminalresponsibility-from-<sup>10</sup>-to-<sup>14</sup>-<sup>20200715</sup>-p<sup>55</sup>cek.html.

<sup>5</sup> "Youth Detention Population In Australia <sup>2019</sup>, Summary - Australian Institute Of Health And Welfare". <sup>2020</sup>, Australian Institute Of Health And Welfare. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youthdetention-population-in-australia-<sup>2019</sup>/contents/summary.

<sup>6</sup> Jens Korff, Creative Spirits. <sup>2020</sup>. "Circle Sentencing". Creative Spirits. https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/circle-sentencing.

# GOD SAVE THE MONARCHY?

## Whitlam's dismissal, the Kerr letters, and the push for a Republic

By Rory Coverdale

Australia is one of the most democratic countries in the world - at least, according to an annual Democracy Index by Economist Intelligence Unit, placing us ninth out of 167 countries. With 9.09 out of 10 overall, and perfect scores for two categories ("Electoral Process and Pluralism" and "Civil Liberties"), 8.93 for "Functioning of Government", and 8.75 for "Political Culture", our lowest score was "Political participation" (7.78).

On 11th November 1975, a democratically-elected leader, Labor's Gough Whitlam, was driven out of office by our Governor-General at the time, John Kerr. The Governor-General, constitutionally the Queen's representative, has '[...] and may exercise [...] such functions and powers of the Queen as Her Majesty may be pleased to assign to him'.<sup>1</sup>

This constitutional framework has been criticised for being undemocratic and unaccountable to the people. The need for national self-determination is one of the key factors motivating the Australian Republican Movement (A.R.M.), a political group which aims to reform Australia as a Republic with a President occupying the powers of the Queen and Governor-General. They were one of the leading voices behind the 1999 referendum on the amendment of the Constitution to install a President as head of state.

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Historian Jenny Hocking has recently won a High Court case, requiring any letters related to Whitlam's dismissal to be publicly released for the first time. The question can finally be answered- did the Queen insist on it? Yes, to a degree. The Royal Secretary and Kerr repeatedly reassured each other after the fact that there was "no choice". To read the letters, one would come away believing that there was a corrupt, mad, chaotic Whitlam, unfortunately dismissed due to his inaction to secure supply, by a resolute, yet reluctant, Kerr, carrying out his constitutional duty as all other options had been exhausted.

During a conversation I had with Thomas Keneally, a historian and one of the founders of the A.R.M., he said plainly that the Queen knew about Kerr's decision. He said that the queen's loyalty is to the Prime Ministerif she cannot do that, he said, why have her? "This is not democracy," he added. The letters also reveal the fact that everyone, including the Palace, knew about the dismissal beforehand, except for Whitlam himself and the general public (including even Malcolm Fraser).

In particular, a national leader's loyalty should lie with their people.<sup>3</sup> The dismissal of a democratically-elected leader by someone who is not accountable to the people arguably goes against this. And, with the Queen's correspondence released, it is possible to know the answers to questions that have plagued us since the dismissal. While Kerr did dismiss the theory that the CIA was involved4, his letters do paint a picture of someone that is frankly disloyal. Kerr, in a letter to the Palace, dismisses his critics as 'unversed', but he does 'not complain about this... politics is politics and people are entitled to line up for whatever emotional reason appeals to them.<sup>15</sup> And, perhaps a product of his audience, the letters contain assurances of Kerr's 'continued loyalty and humble duty' to the Queen<sup>6</sup>- not Australia or its people.

As Thomas Keneally said to me, the function of viceroys- our Governor-General, for example- is to ensure that the government does things conducive to the monarchy's interests, and that no Governor-General would be as 'megalomaniacal' as Kerr was in 1975. The Governor-General, therefore, is a post that aims to serve the Queen (despite its mostly ceremonial function now), by virtue of a constitution which defines it as a regal representative. The A.R.M., since their inception, have always seen the national self-determination of Australia as water, and the monarchy as oil.

As more information comes to light about the Palace's role in the dismissal, national self-determination may take on a whole new meaning for Australia. Certainly, the revelations could bring forward the question of what a government can do for its people when it remains subject to the whims of another country.

- <sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, s. 2. Accessed via Austlii.
- <sup>2</sup> A.R.M.- About, https://republic.org.au/about, cited 20 July 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> A.R.M.- About, https://republic.org.au/about, cited 20 July 2020.



Rory Coverdale is a Christian since 2016, and a third year Media (Screen and Sound Production) student. He is passionate about screenwriting, and hopes to get a career in it someday. He is also passionate about social justice and especially issues that relate to disability.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from John Kerr Martin Charteris, Private Secretary, dated Fifth December 1975, p. 1 (National Archives of Australia, NAA: AA1984/609, Part 2, p. 4)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Letter from Kerr to Charteris, dated 28 November 1975, p. 1 (National Archives of Australia, NAA: AA1984/609, Part 2, p. 18).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Letter from John Kerr to Martin Charteris, dated 28 November 1975, p. 2 (National Archives of Australia, NAA: AA1984/609, Part 2, p. 19).

# DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT - HONG KONG'S NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

### by Jack Zhou

On 30 June, the main legislative body of the People's Republic of China enacted the Hong Kong national security law, coming into effect on the following day.<sup>1</sup> This has marked a turning point in the history the city which had stood at the crossroads of democracy for decades.

For much of the 20th century, Hong Kong remained a political anomaly in East Asia. First ceded in 1843, the British government subsequently leased the city and the surrounding New Territories from the Qing Empire. Under British rule, it was subject to the colonial office, had its own common law courts, and was headed by a Governor appointed by the British monarch.

In 1984, the British government entered a joint declaration with Mainland China to return the leased territories according to the so-called 'One Country, Two Systems' policy from 1997. Economically, Hong Kong would continue to have a free customs zone without the strict regulations of the mainland. It would also enjoy its tradition of a free press. While Mainland China would exercise sovereignty over Hong Kong in matters of military defence and foreign policy, the city would continue more or less in the same way. The legislature, the independent judiciary, the system of representative government would all remain in place at least until 2047. After the handover, a quasi-constitutional Basic Law was established, setting out the constitutional framework of Hong Kong and preserving a great deal of political, economic and judicial autonomy.

For over 20 years, Mainland China played delicate balance in their approach to Hong Kong.<sup>2</sup> A more vigorous integration could risk destroying the region as an economic asset. Instead, there has been a long-standing effort for the Beijing government to influence Hong Kong politics and society. This constitutes the backdrop to Hong Kong's great number of popular movements and public demonstrations. In 2014, a proposed electoral reform bill that would heavily favour pro-Beijing factions sparked massive protests. These protests <sup>1</sup> Its full official title is Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 中华人民共和国香 港特别行政区维护国家安全法enacted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

<sup>2</sup> See Ash, R., <sup>2003</sup>. Hong Kong In Transition. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

<sup>3</sup> Kaiman, J., <sup>2020</sup>. Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution - The Guardian Briefing. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www. theguardian.com/world/<sup>2014</sup>/sep/<sup>30</sup>/-sp-hongkong-umbrella-revolution-pro-democracyprotests> became known as the 'Umbrella Movement,' which continued to push for the implementation of universal suffrage.<sup>3</sup>

Once again, massive protests erupted throughout Hong Kong when the 2019 version of the national security law was first brought into Parliament. The pro-democracy movement and many international commentators have described the law as a pretext for the Beijing government to crack down on civil liberties and remove political opponents, marking the end of Hong Kong's free press and education.<sup>4</sup>

On 23 October 2019, the bill was scrapped in what seemed like an admission of defeat by Carrie Lam's government whom protestors called to step down. Chinese laws cannot apply to Hong King unless they are passed by parliament under Annex III of the Basic Law. However, on June 30, 2020, the Beijing government bypassed the Hong Kong legislature entirely, pushing through the national security law anyway and triggering a fresh wave of protests.<sup>5</sup>

#### What's in the new law?

The national security law enacts a whole spate of new offences, forming a serious blow against civil liberties in Hong Kong. It is not only incredibly harsh in penalty but extraordinarily wide in scope. Secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers contain a penalty of up to life imprisonment. Activists protesting for sanctions against pro-Beijing officials would be captured by the law; even advocating for democracy in public or on social media could result in prosecution.<sup>6</sup> The law would also place cases out of the jurisdiction of Hong Kong courts and into Beijing, where the trials may be heard away from the public.<sup>7</sup>

In practice, the law has already been used to enforce a zero-tolerance campaign against any form of political dissent. Anything from deliberate terror attacks down to peaceful protests that carry a message critical of the CCP will be caught under the law. So far, numerous people have already been arrested under the law. Prominent media companies in Hong Kong have been raided and their executives arrested.<sup>8</sup> Independence and democracy activist organisations have been targeted, with many disbanding from fear of prosecution, such as Demosistō, home to prominent pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow.<sup>9</sup>

#### What this means for us

Although many may claim that Hong Kong is an internal political problem, its consequences have been felt outside of China. A major impact of the law is that it operates extraterritorially. This means that Hong Kong citizens who are liable to be prosecuted under the law. However, the issue of Hong Kong has also emerged across Australian universities. In April 2020, University of Queensland student Drew Pavlou was suspended for two years following allegations of inciting violence during an on-campus demonstrations in support of the pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong. He contends that his suspension was in retribution for his pro-Hong Kong democracy rally.<sup>10</sup>

In July 2020, the deans of various UNSW faculties participated in a campaign to encourage Chinese-speaking international students to return to their studies at UNSW.<sup>11</sup>

International student enrolments have fallen dramatically as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. International students account for a significant percentage of income for major Australian universities in the form of tuition fees.<sup>12</sup>

Elaine Pearson, an adjunct professor at UNSW Law, wrote an article calling for international pressure towards Mainland China for its passage of the national security law in Hong Kong.<sup>13</sup> This was posted on UNSW's official Twitter account but was later removed. This caused a backlash from students and commentators who perceived the move as acquiescing to Chinese pressure. In an open letter, President and Vice-Chancellor Ian Jacobs acknowledged that it was a mistake to remove the post and vowed to show a stronger commitment to academic freedom. However, UNSW also released a message, written in Simplified Chinese, which differed significantly from Jacobs' letter. This message apologised for any 'anxiety or distress caused to anyone as a result of the diversity of views which are expressed at the University,' emphasising that the views of academics do not reflect the university themselves.14 These controversies are likely to produce a chilling effect on staff and students who decide to speak out in support of a democratic Hong Kong.

<sup>5</sup> "Hong Kong Protests Explained In <sup>100</sup> And <sup>500</sup> Words". <sup>2020</sup>. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-<sup>49317695</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Abc.net.au. <sup>2020</sup>. What's In Hong Kong's New National Security Law, And Why Is It So Controversial?. [online] Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/<sup>2020\_07\_01</sup>/what-is-in-hong-kongs-new-china-imposed-national-security-law/<sup>12409024</sup>>.

 $^7$  BBC News.  $^{2020}$ . China's New Law: Why Is Hong Kong Worried?. [online] Available at: <a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838#:~:text=The%20new%20]aw's%20key%20provisions,sentence%20">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838#:~:text=The%20law's%20key%20provisions,sentence%20">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838#:~:text=The%20law's%20key%20provisions,sentence%20">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838#:~:text=The%20new%20law's%20key%20provisions,sentence%20">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838#:~:text=The%20law's%20key%20provisions,sentence%20"/>https://www.bbc.com/news/20%20hog%20%20%-ill,with%20%20Beijing%2Dappointed%20%20key%20ke

<sup>8</sup> Bagshaw, E., <sup>2020</sup>. Hong Kong Police Raid Major News Organisation, Arrest Billionaire Owner. [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <a href="https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/hong-kong-police-raid-majornews-organisation-arrest-billionaire-owner-<sup>20200810</sup>-p<sup>55k</sup>9h.html?utm\_ medium=Social&utm\_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR<sup>3</sup>RCohDopBSMo<sup>5</sup>Ba 7EPD<sup>72</sup>ZD<sup>3</sup>NPUgK<sup>8</sup>oNfVwbTNsZYB<sup>3</sup>RNsTINR-ilO-eM#Echobox=<sup>1597029347></sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Hong Kong Free Press HKFP. <sup>2020</sup>. Joshua Wong's Pro-Democracy Group Demosisto Disbands Hours After Hong Kong Security Law Passed | Hong Kong Free Press HKFP. [online] Available at: <a href="https://hongkongfp.com/2020/06/30/breaking-joshua-wongs-pro-democracy-group-demosisto-disbands-hours-after-hong-kong-security-law-passed/">https://hongkongfp. disbands-hours-after-hong-kong-security-law-passed/</a>.

<sup>10</sup> Abc.net.au. <sup>2020</sup>. Student Activist Critical Of University Of Queensland's Links To Chinese Government Organisations Suspended. [online] Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/<sup>2020\_05\_29</sup>/drew-pavloususpended-university-queensland/<sup>1230250></sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Facebook.com. <sup>2020</sup>. UNSW Law. [online] Available at: <https://www. facebook.com/UNSWLaw/photos/a.<sup>168902886520747/3136926489718357/></sup>.

<sup>12</sup> The University of Sydney. <sup>2020</sup>. How Universities Came To Rely On International Students. [online] Available at: https://www.sydney.edu. au/news-opinion/news/<sup>2020/05/25</sup>/how-universities-came-to-rely-oninternational-students.html.

<sup>13</sup> "China Needs International Pressure To End Hong Kong Wrongs | UNSW Law". <sup>2020</sup>. Law.Unsw.Edu.Au. https://www.law.unsw.edu.au/news/ china-needs-international-pressure-to-end-hong-kong-wrongs.

<sup>14</sup> Abc.net.au. <sup>2020</sup>. UNSW Accused Of Dishonesty After Sending 'Completely Contrary' Statements Regarding China. [online] Available at: <a href="https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08.org/unsw-free-speech-controversy-china-political-backlash-canberra/12534580">https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08.org/unsw-free-speech-controversy-china-political-backlash-canberra/12534580</a>>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Hunter, F., <sup>2020</sup>. Hong Kong Security Law Presents Free Speech Test For Australian Universities. [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/hong-kong-security-lawpresents-free-speech-test-for-australian-universities-<sup>20200723</sup>-p<sup>35</sup>etm. html?utm\_medium=Social&utm\_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR<sup>2</sup>j-<sup>7</sup>dRIEPfS<sup>2</sup>SNI-<sup>0</sup>qjtAtGSqVcnYNEFMFI<sup>7</sup>Wb<sup>74</sup>E<sup>6</sup>byUBXMIfMF<sup>5</sup>FFEQ#Echob 0x<sup>21595539903></sup>.

# IF THE WALLS COULD TALK

## By Nidhi Kontham

"Helped show India in a new light" dons the collection 'India' by Steve McCurry, a multi-award winning, National Geographic featured photographer.

Often we see Caucasian photographers "capture the beauty", "reimagine", and show an Eastern country in a "new light". We forget that the perception which they "reimagine" was one created by their own people. Over centuries the white gaze has bled into everything, including art, and has given itself the power to cherry-pick stories. Nations that have been robbed of their people, their culture. Their livelihoods are labelled as impoverished by their very thieves - who then have the generosity to *help* re-market these countries in "a new light". As opposed to what? The existing perception that they themselves have created.

'India seems to have been placed there as a colourful backdrop to the fantasies of Western visitors. A fantasy withers in the sunlight of realism. But as long as realism is held at bay, the fantasy can remain satisfying to an enormous audience'

- Teju Cole in his 2016 *The New York Times* article 'A too-perfect picture', referring to India being shallowly used as a backdrop for many Western artistic icons, including Coldplay and Beyonce.

Today, we are drowning in supposedly endearing images of Eastern countries that show the all-too-familiar story of people who are poor yet so content. As with Steve McCurry's release, if you were to look past the dirt...and the derelict buildings... and the poverty... and the depletion... you unveil the true beauty of the place, which lies in its people. The hidden beauty of the East has to be uncovered, framed, and captured in the right way and by the right person. Monuments throughout Europe however, are inherently beautiful on their own, each corner existing as a capsule of regality - a subconscious reminder of our deeply ingrained and demanded respect for Westerners.

The thing is, this dirty, unkept, brokenness that comes with Eastern architecture, often comes from spaces just being inhabited. 'Is this how they live?', we remark, pitying images of dirty walls, abrased structures, and stained surfaces.

Are these images not just the consequence of age? As a society are we so afraid of aging itself, or does it come from a more primal need for hygiene? Who knows? We're obsessed with hyper-maintenance, obsessed with everything looking perfect all the time. God forbid something does wear away with use, but if it does it has to deteriorate with perfection. The very decay of the Colosseum is perceived to be a poetic translation of the chaos of time.

To me, the dirt, the worn materials, the marks, and the stains are all just as important as the surfaces they are on. They stand as a show of time, of stories, of experiences, and if the walls could talk, they would gleam that people actually used what was created. If the walls could talk they would say they are moulded with impressions of life.

When the walls talk they will recount a thousand stories.



Nidhi Kontham is a fourth-year Interior Architecture student who has recently discovered that on top of constantly speaking, she also enjoys expressing opinions through written and graphic media. Turns out the difference between her being a student with lots of random thoughts and an articulate professional with valued ideas is just purely perception/ faking it till she makes it.

+

Nidhi Kontham







Truth

+

# LONELINESS

By Phoebe Au

Loneliness

Is the sound an axe makes Against piano keys our fingers once had kissed.

Loneliness

is a mother's silence as father's flames danced to the music's charred remains. Its ashes warm us one last day in this long, cold winter.

> Tell me not to be afraid because fear is all we have ever known.

> > Tell me not to look beyond what is already ahead.

Tell me not to ask for hope with a kiss I use to seal my lover's lips goodnight. As if flames could catch our burning tongues like secrets slipping through an hourglass.

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has always been an important creative outlet and medium for self expression. Her work is heavily inspired by paintings and personal experiences.

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Barreling forwards forever Never linear — tides don't allow for that when there's nowhere to go It's been dark the whole time. Alone Bobbing in the open sea. The sea parts, like a comb through hair. Is this the end? I can smell the salty breath of the ocean Taste the memories of the sea as it rains through the wood. Floating through the wash of the waves.

I can feel my legs cramp up. Curled into me. Longing for space again Arms crossed, a casket in the waves. No room, no comfort. A run into the sand, a seat at the table Legs are tense The stress of the tides held within them. I want to wash onto shore A swansong, dancing on salty sand. Assured that the home I left I could return to I didn't know how long I'd be in this casket when I started. I didn't know that I'd go before there would be land below my feet. I didn't know that I'd be floating until the end of the earth.

The world spins around me Or I spin around it Cramped, alone. Knees to my chest Confined to a space I didn't choose. in a world who has forgotten me Or have I forgotten it? I left the stove on; the ocean can not help me as my home burns. I need to go turn it off. Wet, the ocean never dries, and neither do I The waves, the wash develops me in a hollow cocoon, Chrysalis, smells of rotting wood, through the gaps of the casket Soft, small, shatters. Air is limited, stagnant. Barely enough to breathe.

The waves have pushed me so far I can no longer act. All that's left is a whimper and the smell of smoke through the salt Quietly smashing, against and within A shock, a wave, the blast on my side I can't hear my voice The bang of the waves against the wood Is this the bang they spoke about? At dawn, a valley or more of the same? Cool from the moon shifts to a warmer light The slats in the wood, a clock Still in the ocean, perhaps up a stream? Senseless loop of crashing waves I hear it coming, another smashing Up the wall - my mind, the image, tall Bombora, edge of the cliff Washed up, yet not on the shore.

# PARALIAN

By Issy Golding



'Issy is a non-fiction writer with a focus on Australian social politics and post-Soviet feminism. She also has a niche passion for surrealist poetry. Loves collecting too many houseplants and dismantling the patriarchy.'

## TIME TO GO

by Wen Yu Yang

Heishi made the mistake of assuming the day was over.

To be fair, it had been a long day. Junan, her supervisor at the Department of Beastly Affairs, spent hours on end grilling her for the progress on the State Senator's gaulken, which she had been forced to take home two days ago because, apparently, the State couldn't afford extra hospital space, even for its own caucus. The gaulken was a proud winged creature with a body of an antelope and a dark, curved beak; this particular one was young and barely tamed. *What else are you good for, Deputy?* Junan had asked. She hadn't been able to answer. One more week, Heishi told herself, one more week then she'd finally get what was waiting for her: a promotion as the Director of the Eastern Sector.

At least she had Veko's dinner to look forward to; the thought made her smile.

But the universe refused to let her rest.

Her first warning sign was the door slamming shut once she set foot into her condo. The second was the sight of Veko in the middle of the room, wide-eyed, half-crouched, face marred with sauce, spatula in one hand, another holding up a finger to hush her.

Identical pairs of dark brown eyes stared at each other.

Heishi's gaze shifted away from Veko's to take in the rest of the room. The couch stuck on the ceiling, the hovering vase, the smashed chair, the messy trails and splatters of sauce all over the floorboards and walls and ceiling. Heishi's gaze was blazing when it returned to its starting place. The wave of dread had disarmed her of her usual calm.

#### "You didn't."

Veko cringed. It was the same face he had pulled when his 'experiment' had blown off the ceiling of the room they used to share; he'd gotten away with it. She hadn't. "In my defence, it was hungry... and it looked cute." Being more corporeal-husk than human apparently hadn't changed his risk-taking tendencies.

Heishi swallowed a scream. "Where is it?"

Veko pointed a stiff finger at the barricaded door. The holes in it didn't trouble Heishi as much as the silence. Gaulkens, like most spirit creatures, were energy in the form of flesh—which was why they weren't designed to be held captive under any circumstances everywhere they went, the energy around them grew more volatile. And this one was no different, no matter what the Senator thought.

Heishi edged closer to the door, trying not to do anything that might startle the beast.

At a distance, Heishi peered through the hole. Veko's room was in no better shape than the common room was. The bed was ruined, torn books everywhere... there was no sign of it.

She saw the fractured window and groaned.

"Well?" Veko asked. His words wavered with the outline of his form, flickering between body and shadow. "What's it doing?"

"It's gone."

"Oh."

Heishi turned to Veko, ready for her pent-up frustration to spill from her mouth, but froze. Veko was staring at the ground. She had been too busy to notice that his skin had turned translucent and grey, sharp shoulders curved over his thin folded arms. The sight banished the venom under her tongue.

Veko had learned to draw energy from around him to keep him alive over the years, but shock had rendered him powerless to stop the little force he had flowing out of him.

She sighed, putting a hand on his shoulder. He grew more solid with her touch. "I'm going to go get it back."

"Okay, I promise I'll stay put-"

"No," Heishi said. "You're coming with me." She should've known that keeping Veko by her side was the only way to stop him from courting trouble.

\* \* \*

They headed straight for the tunnels at the south of the city. They were long out of use; a landslide had wiped out entire neighbourhoods decades ago, so violent that no one had bothered to reopen the tunnels after that.

Gaulkens had low tolerance of heat. Highland creatures, their feathers and fur were built to weather snow. The tunnels, damp and dark, were the perfect place to hide from the Southern sun. Heishi knew it was unnatural to keep spirit creatures - their constrainment messed with the way energy moved in the world around them. But Heishi was the last person to preach, ever since she had decided to keep Veko's spiritual form from leaving the same night their deadbeat father was too drunk to stop Veko from playing near the wires on the balcony.

She kept Veko in close proximity as they ventured in the passageway. Colour and light seeped back into him slowly until he was visible even in the shadows cast by the pipes and jagged ceiling, but the long day and her nerves weren't doing Heishi any favours in keeping him stable, tethered to her. She could hear power tools, or even worse, wreckers; monstrous machines used to bring down whole structures and absorb all the energy in their wake, whirring into the cores of energy that powered them. She didn't want to imagine the gaulken hiding in one.

"It went in that way," Veko pointed to the left opening of the forked split. Heishi tried not to think about how he knew that. Water dripped from above into the puddles and mud and weed and twigs and leaves. "You look tired."

"This gaulken will be the death of me if I don't get it back." She was exaggerating, just a bit. It would be the death of her career.

"I'm sorry," Veko said quietly. Heishi stiffened. He spoke the words just like that when she found him lying next to the electrical box, skin burned, only seconds left to live.

She hadn't been there to stop it. She hadn't been there to prevent this mess.

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A series of raspy whistles chased her thoughts away. Heishi and Veko shared a look and started quickly down the path. Their feet fell in time, whether because they were exactly the same height, or because they were so used to being side by side.

The gaulken was trapped in a wrecker. It was tangled in the mass of cords that powered the suction plates, hanging loose at the sides of its metal frame. They were made to survive, even as they tugged the building around them downwards.

The gaulken let out another series of cackles through its pointed beak, amber eyes aflame and its free wing flapping in a frenzy. Not a good sign. The gaulken's strength could easily tear the cords apart and send the energy rippling through the tunnels.

Heishi motioned for Veko to stay where he was.

"Easy there."

The gaulken cackled, hooves kicking and jerking at its restraints as Heishi slipped between the cords, approaching the engine and the gaulken beside it. Her heart raced..

"Hey, you," Heishi murmured, only an arm away. "Stay still for me?" Creatures spoke in the language of intent and gravity, which was the only language Heishi spoke. The gaulken turned its head, their eyes met, and it snapped at her with its curved beak. This beast will be the death of me, she thought, as she jerked backwards and began to lose her balance.

"Heishi!"

She was shoved back to her feet; she turned and found Veko tangled in a web of wires beside the core. He had slipped past her, tiny as he was. The wires pulled on him and the raw energy of his exposed spirit. It was he and the gaulken that looked like siblings, trapped in parallel, with Heishi between them.

"What are you doing?" Heishi hissed.

Veko glared back, despite his lowly place. "You would've landed on the buttons if it weren't for me; that would've set the core off." He paused. "I'm stuck."

Heishi released an exasperated breath. "Let's get you out."

"No. Get *it* out first, it's agitated."

Heishi opened her mouth to protest just as the gaulken decided to wrestle its way out, scratching Heishi's cheek with its wingtip and severing cords in the process. The wrecker began to whine, heat building around them. Veko threw himself over the core, wires tightening over his limbs as sparks and light flickered through his skin.

"No, no, no." Heishi barely had time to realise what was about to happen. She heard the gaulken screeching as it flew. She leapt to Veko's side, tried to pull him from the core as the wrecker around them began to creak and groan. But it was too late. Veko was convulsing, fading away. Heishi couldn't feel anything as everything went black.

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Heishi saw flashes in the darkness. Blurred faces hovering above her. Sirens. Veko blinking in and out of sight—Heishi hoped she wasn't hallucinating. He must've been the one to phone for assistance if they were here so quickly, if she wasn't dead. She could hear his voice, saying words both foreign and entirely familiar. Nightmare words.

"Let me go," he was saying. "I can close this from within."

"Shut up!"

"You can't hold onto me forever, Heishi," Veko yelled, "It's been too long."

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"We're not having this conversation," she yelled back.

"You can't hold yourself responsible for everything," Veko said.

"If I were home that day, you wouldn't have left the house."

"There wasn't anything you could've done," he said. "I'm sorry for all the trouble, Heishi."

She tasted wet salt. "Please."

Veko smiled. "I'll be around."

Her nightmare-brother severed the bond and tumbled into the darkness.

He had to be there when she woke. It was all she could think.



Wen is a first-year Commerce student from the Island of Bubble Milk Tea, Taiwan. When she's not writing, she can be found on volleyball courts, by the sea, or wandering in worlds of magic, faeries, and dragons.

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Truth

# **TETHERED SKIES**

By Aileen Wang

I keep the skies on a tight leash these days. No going out beyond my window. Of course, they play against me in little tricks anyway, turning indignant reds by sunset, or sullen greys by day, and only rarely pulling the curtain back to reveal a shining, robin's-egg blue. For the most part, they stay right where they are: above my kumquat tree, slanting over the slanted road. I am thankful for them, for the most part. Sometimes I resent them their intangibility: you've never heard of the sky getting sick, have you? Other times, I wonder what it must be like to be denied, not just temporarily, but permanently, the possibility of touch. Can one ever truly grasp a cloud?

Some mornings, the windows fog over and the outside world, all that remains of it, disappears from my view and thus from my existence. I am abandoned and rejected by the morning fog, and I sit with my curtains halfraised as the wind comes; change comes on the bosom of the wind. The skies, etherised like a patient, and I, the voyeur, watching in morbid curiosity for the surgeon's knife. But there is always that moment of uncertainty: perhaps the fog will clear, and the sky will clear with it. I spend long hours studying the familiar view from my window. In doing so, I construct the boundary of my world; I can almost believe that it is at my fingertips, separated by a thin mesh of flyscreen and thicker pane of glass.

Once I have made the world, I inhabit it fully. I construct myself into infinities within the rounded stage. Upon the red-brick courtyard I imbue the significance of an uninhabited possibility, onto the kumquat tree I bequeath a fixed transience. I hold onto the skies, secure and safe in their presence. I make myself into divinity: that which creates without touch, and that which creates alone. Beyond the pane of my window, I am a conductor and the world shapes itself; never around me, but nonetheless to my specifications.

The only imperfection is the road. It scars the scene, leading from before the beginning and going to beyond the end. I trace its path to the end of my windowpane, and I can follow it no more. It is, therefore, an aberration. It reminds me of the outside beyond the outside. I remember walking that road, the feeling of gravel under my boots. The air touched my skin then. The world touched me then, with the sweet touch of a lover. It was a wider world, before.

I would not follow that road now.

And yet, I am filled with a resentful curiosity. It is a sweet and bitter fruit, a path that I trace in dream and memory. I knew it once, but to know it again would be to stretch, painfully, into the world of the living once more. It would be to break the world, *my* world. To untether the sky. And once I have broken it, this walled Eden of my mind, once I see that the cage is around myself and not the sky, nor the brick, nor the kumquat tree – how will I keep the insanity at bay then?



Truth

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# Sonnets to Gonski A Tragedy in Crumbling Verse from ye olde Editorial Team



## Prelude.

O! Chancellor Gonski, mythical man The tertiary sector is in havoc -The Government splitting us asunder!

- misled, dazed, we've nothing left but panic.

For the executive staff we are burdened with questions We read that, *We are many and ye are few* Yet behind gilded glass walls, great ye are And we choose then, sir, to appeal to you:

Four dramas for your consideration, Ceremonial, sir, your role may be, But as you from Gillard through Morrison: We give our bearts in this report to thee

Poetry is nought but a small revolution But we're only asking if through our mockery we can grant our absolution.

Satire

Satire

### One.

Merlin Crossley, you've boarded your clout; climbed, become bead, of the overgrown pole Can you not ease then our pain, the triptych that tortures, the length of sword from stone?

Does mpth not dictate pou know time in reverse? Is this why policy on trimesters -'spreading studies over more of the year, *decreasing* stress'<sup>1</sup> was poorly-researched, ill-informed, so perverse? O! Professor, just confess it's a mess

You said 'universities are best served by collecting feedback from students and making it ... freely available'<sup>2</sup>. Good sir, Are we to take that as why transparency is negligent, Why our system of justice bas become so bent?

### Two.

I an Jacobs tells the papers we're doing fine We give our sympathies - CoVid, Teban! But sir, we're skeptical to your outline when being 'a globally competitive university' trumps the institution of academe. With humble means, we ken matters of gold -We're in for a future both nightmare and meme! -But roaring lions, gilded walls, isn't all we've been sold.

What's the real cost of "university to business' revenue streams'<sup>3</sup>? Won't you tell us about who's being fired? How post-grads will go without training in teaching, leaving students at risk and so-called 'teachers' unbired?

The compression of three faculties to one, This uni's integrity's second to--Well, we won't lie but we'll mask our distrust But don't expect of us silence or to simply adjust Tharunka Editorial Team

### Three.

Eileen Baldry, you must bold your bead bigb! Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

You - nay, we - lose much to this plague, department's business prohibited - social friction and fusion Disabled students are at such high risk of being silenced by circumstance, *but* we can't afford to be locked out of UNSW's plans O the DIAP4! we do mourn the funding cuts!

Don't let women be dropped from the workforce, not again. Parity *must* not fall, not under COVID's reign. Students: mature age, parents,carers, the ill - remember Uni is stronger diverse! Vulnerable students are at the whims of exec In this pandemic, don't let us fall further back!

### Four.

Professor Claire Annesley, bow we salute! You joined only this year, our dear old FASS You leave with three schools named one: ASSBEAD<sup>5</sup> - sorry, FAAD<sup>6</sup> With you comes riches, knowledge, expertise Ph.D in British English - don't be displeased! -The US has made us asses from arse Welcome to the University of New South Wales you carry burdens of so many arts

Mr. George Williams, good sir, lucky last You're 'DVC: Planning and Assurance' So, can you give us some assurance? Present us with a plan? Thus sits our cast: unconvinced, frankly, unsure what you do But we bow our heads now, and turn to you.

1 Merlin Crossley in Tbarunka Editorial Team (2016) .bttps://tbarunka. arc.unsw.edu.au/proposed-move-trimester-system-criticised-srcstudents/

2 Merlin Crossley (2015) https://tbeconversation.com/rating-yourprofessor-five-myths-about-university-teaching-quality-36129

3 Jacobs, I. (2020) Email to all UNSW staff, 'Next steps in the UNSW Response to COVID-19', 15th July 2020.

- 4 'Disability Inclusion Action Plan'
- 5 Arts and Social Sciences, Built Environment, Art and Design
- 6 Faculty of Arts, Architecture, and Design

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT Hey UNSW!

By Manu Risoldi

Welcome back and happy T3! I hope you're well-rested after the holidays and ready to get into another jam-packed trimester. Despite just coming back from a short holiday break the SRC has continued to work incredibly hard in various areas of uni life to maximise our student experience over the coming term but also to ensure academic and student life is not overly impacted by the flow-on effects from COVID-19. Below I've gone into some detail about a few of the issues we have been active in and around in the current weeks.

### MOODLE TASKFORCE

Over the past few weeks, the Moodle Taskforce wrapped up its meetings and released its report into the steps and goals that need to be implemented by the university to further enhance Moodle and elevate the way UNSW utilises online learning spaces. My contributions to the Taskforce were giving frank feedback about what has worked and has not worked within Moodle in the past as well as drawing from the SRC TI Survey Data to offer some insights into areas of improvement and what students want to see within an online learning platform.

Over these two online terms, we have seen students and academics alike interact through Moodle, and rely on the software in ways they had not previously. Moreover, we are seeing the need for staff to be better trained in utilising Moodle, and the various facets within the software. The student feedback on this taskforce mirrored our recommendations made to Academic Board and we have spoken extensively about the need for the university to implement standards for all Moodle Pages.

It became very clear throughout the task force meetings that there is a real desire for action around online learning and its being championed by our academics. Come next year and in future years we hope to see an online learning platform that allows for meaningful collaboration, fast feedback for students and a platform that can store students previous works (like an online portfolio).

#### ASSESSMENT TASKFORCE -

The Assessment task force is reviewing how UNSW utilises assessment, its procedures, and policies and is reviewing changes that both academics and students would like to see in this space. The task force has only recently been created but since our initial meeting, I have already made it clear that I think UNSW needs to shift away from assessments that can be worth 50% or more of a student's overall grade.

Moreover, I have raised concerns surrounding some courses mandating students submit more than 4 assessments a term. The academic policy makes it quite clear that four assessments per term is the maximum that can be incorporated into any given course. This policy is not being adhered to in several different courses. Assessment at UNSW has remained similar despite the move to the 3+ calendar.

The core areas of concern I will continue to raise with academics and management is reducing students' assessment load, changing the nature of assessment at UNSW and bolstering1 student support services during our assessment periods.

#### Faculty Roadshow - FASS/LAW and BUSINESS/STEM

During the holidays both Sahana Nandakumar (Chair of Arc) and I spoke to 300+ academics in an online forum about the student experience at UNSW and key areas of improvement we'd like to see. The online forum was an interactive opportunity for both student leaders and academics from across all faculties at UNSW to come together and reflect on Term 1 and 2. The key topics that we discussed surrounded online learning (what worked and what didn't), we discussed the concerns that have arisen from students in the areas of feedback, marking, and online classes.

However, we did also reflect upon the work that so many academics did do during the first half of the year because we have received an overwhelming amount of feedback from students that without their tutors and course convenors their experience during term 1 and 2 would not be what it was. Our presentation was followed by a Q and A session where academics could ask us questions, but also offer their frustrations and concerns about the future of online learning at UNSW.

The presentations were faculty-specific and we endeavoured to highlight areas of the student experience that had been done well and areas that needed improvement. Our closing remarks to the forum touched on the importance of transparency between faculties and students and the need for elevated levels of student-facing support to continue to assist those students through remote learning.

#### CONCESSION CARD CAMPAIGN

Towards the end of last month, I attended a round table discussion about concession cards for international students as well as the exploitation of workers, particularly workers who are international students. In attendance, at the round table discussion, was Leader of the Opposition, Jodi McKay, and Shadow Minister for tertiary education, Clayton Barr.

Furthermore, student unions from UTS, USYD, UNSW, WSU, and the National Union of Students was represented in the meeting. It was a very fruitful discussion and Labor indicated it would support international students receiving concession cards in NSW. Currently, both QLD and VIC both have agreements that see international students receive concession cards. NSW has fallen behind the other states and after a lacklustre COVID-19 response from the state government for international students, this issue could not be more important for the Liberal government to get on board with.

Since the round table discussion, I have begun coordinating the large universities in NSW to convene a meeting of management and student unions to discuss the universities coming together to petition the government to offer concession cards to international students. UNSW has already highlighted its interest in this meeting.

#### OUR COLLECTIVES

At the moment all collectives have moved their meetings online. Secure software has been purchased by the SRC to ensure all groups of diverse students can meet in a safe environment as a collective even with our shift to online meetings. If you're wanting to be a part of the collective meetings you can reach out to any of the Facebook pages. From there the Office-Bearers will be able to add you into meetings, discord groups, and Zoom calls! Moreover, you can directly email our Office Bearers if you're needing further assistance. Emails can be kept confidential and all contact details can be found on our Arc page.



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