



THE CURRENT

**THE RESISTANCE
ISSUE**

SPRING 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

Slowing Down: A Rest Against Time
Tattoos, Piercings, Blue Hair, Oh My!
The Collective Voice: Michiganders
Make an Impact

PLUS!

CULTURE

LIFESTYLE

AND MORE!

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear resilient readers,

We live in an age where the truth can be hard to find. It's becoming increasingly difficult to define ourselves and our aspirations – and even more so to resist the pressure to conform to the norms of who we're “supposed to be.” In a world that seems so stuck in its ways, how can we break the mold?

In this issue, we look at resistance from a kaleidoscope of angles. With limitless options available to each person on clothes to buy, movies to watch, even pets to share our lives with, it is vital now more than ever that we evaluate our consumption and expression through a critical lens. Prepare to challenge your worldviews as we push back against notions of normalcy, from individual expression and philosophy to the role that each of us plays in our own communities.

We understand that it can be difficult to think about “resisting” — the idea seems dauntingly abstract and difficult to execute in ways that may not involve chanting or sign-making. We hope this issue sparks introspection, inspires you to think and challenges you to make the connections that lead to change.

Write, relax, reinvent yourself or revolt. Change is inevitable. Remember that you have the power to influence how that change happens. Together, we can mold our society into something truly special.

In defiance,

Mars Robinson & A.V. Brooks
and the full Current staff



THE CURRENT

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CURRENT

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 3 | Slowing Down
A Rest Against Time | 12 | Tattoos, Piercings, Blue Hair, Oh My! |
| 4 | Locking-in with Linguistics | 13 | Do Something: You Don't Have to be Loud |
| 5 | How Monster Studies Brings Monsters to Life | 15 | The Collective Voice
Michiganders Make an Impact |
| 6 | Resistance Literature
Turning the Page | 17 | When Movie Adaptations Betray Us: Fight Back |
| 7 | Resistance Literature
Timeline | 18 | Out With the New and in With the Old
The Revival of Vintage |
| 9 | Misfits, Rebels, Weirdos | 19 | Wrap Up
Everyday Resistance |
| 11 | My Best Friend and Favorite Screensaver | | |

CONTENTS

SLOWING DOWN: A REST AGAINST TIME

With countless class deadlines and fast-paced work environments, speeding up seems like the only way for you to succeed. While generative AI [forces workplaces](#) to demand more from staff already trying to cope with chaotic political and economic environments, slowing down feels more like a luxury than ever, especially when the consensus is that people who work fast are more successful.

[Hillary Glasby](#), an assistant professor at Michigan State University who teaches in both the Professional and Public Writing program and the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities, believes having more unrestricted time is an indicator of a fulfilled life.

“I have really promised myself that time is something I want in my life ... at the end of my life, I want to have had time,” she said.

Glasby recognizes that not everyone has the ability to prioritize personal time. “I think there’s probably more stress for younger people to feel like they don’t have the luxury or privilege to say no to things,” said Glasby. She went on to note the importance of remembering to do things for ourselves. “If it’s really not doing anything for you, let it go.”

However, it is hard to find time for reflection and thought, especially when faced with external forces. Maddie, a human relations junior at Michigan State University who requested we only use her first name, explained that she felt pressure from her classes and job to get things done quickly.

“I feel a lot of outside pressure to get things done fast. My classes have multiple assignments due on the same day every week, so I feel pressure from school,” she said. “At my



job I also feel like I have to multitask in order to get everything done on time.”

[Grind culture](#) promotes the idea that nonstop work is the only path to success, making it hard for many to feel like they are accomplishing enough. The increasing promotion to move faster can impact an individual’s emotions, productivity and free time. Despite recent pressures, the need to do more may be the factor that is holding people back from succeeding.

“Having a tight schedule can cause me a lot of stress because it limits the time I get to do things that make me happy,” Maddie said. “My busy schedule limits these activities to later at night, which causes me to lose sleep.”

Slowing down doesn’t have to look like doing less — it can actually allow you to [access higher brain functions](#) and mental regulation. Taking back a couple seconds of your day and pacing yourself while walking to class or work is a simple way to practice slowing down. Actively engaging with the world around you may increase your creative thought process and [improve your short-term memory](#).

Mindfully engaging in your routines is another way to implement [slow living](#). For example, when you take your trash outside, you might stop to look around and notice three things: the cars going by on the road, the trees swaying in the wind or your neighbor walking

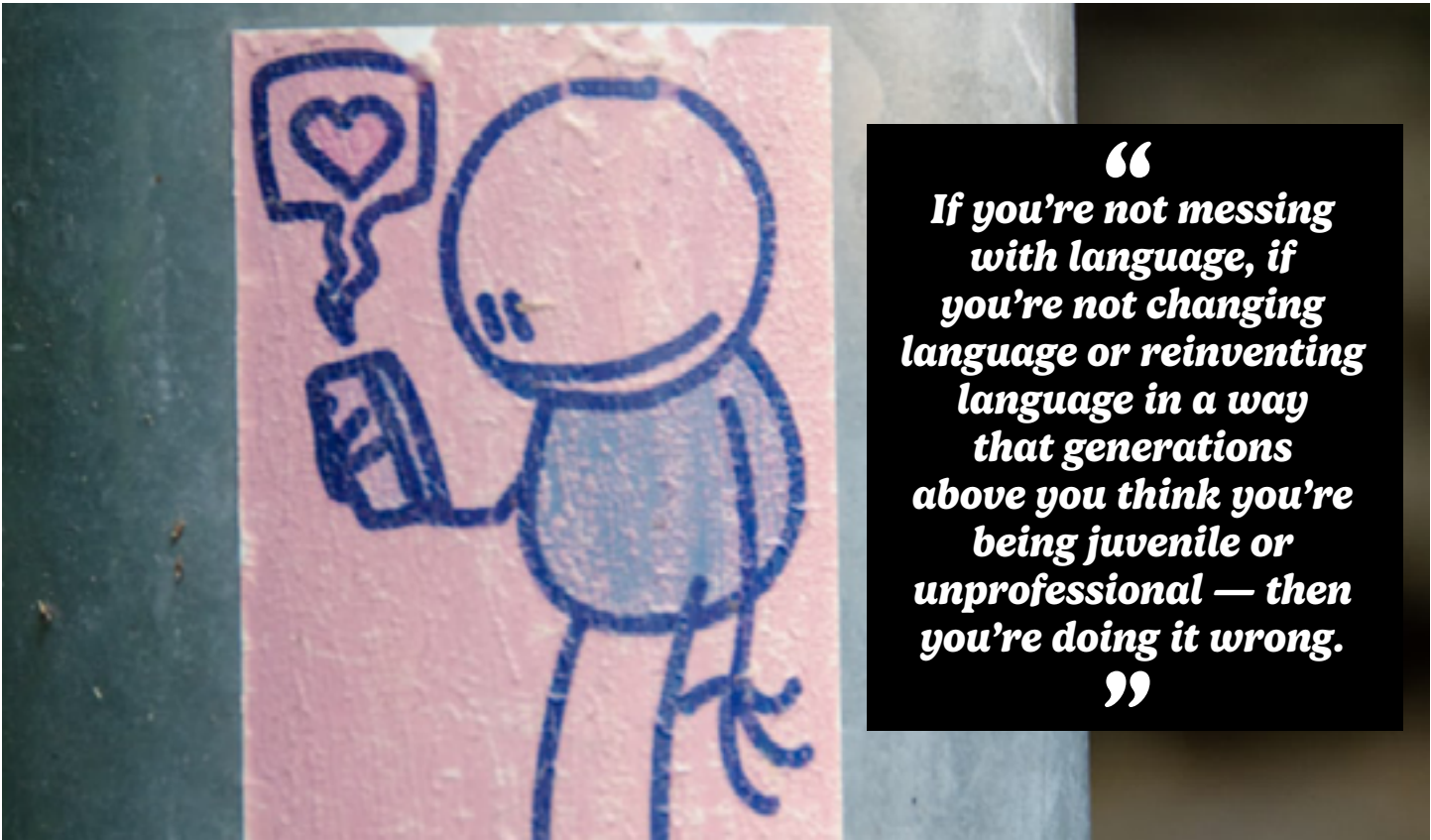
their dog. Whatever it is you find, you are taking active steps to slow down and become more aware of your reality. Incorporating mindfulness into your routines will help you become more [productive and allow you to invest in your performance without leading to burnout](#).

In a society that increasingly values speed over quality, remember who you are and what you value. Take time for yourself: a couple of seconds a day to stop, take a look at the world around you and breathe.

“
At the end of my life, I want to have had time.
”



Katelyn Holsten is a junior majoring in English with a concentration in creative writing and a minor in writing. Outside of class, she is a copyeditor for VIM magazine and The State News.



“
If you’re not messing with language, if you’re not changing language or reinventing language in a way that generations above you think you’re being juvenile or unprofessional — then you’re doing it wrong.
”

LOCKING-IN WITH LINGUSTICS

Past-due homework sits waiting for a Gen Z student to “[lock-in](#).” A group of Gen Alpha students sit at a lunch table saying they’re “[cooked](#)” for their test.

Language is continually evolving, and how we create meaningful communication will change as words are modified to fit new contexts. Almost every aging generation looks upon the latest group of young adults and asks, “How can they talk like that?” For current young adults, learning to speak this casual language is easier than it looks; all you need to do is open your phone. With roughly [5.22](#) billion social media users, there is an abundance of online communication that can transfer to daily dialogues.

Among many, [brain rot](#) has a very negative connotation. Linguistic brain rot is when

individuals repeat language or terms that are frequently said on social media. Sophomore Connor Larsen admitted he frequently uses brain rot. When asked if brain rot had a negative connotation, he said, “Brain rot is a coping mechanism for people who overuse the internet,” he said. However, Larsen was careful to mention that older generations used their own slang but that our culture doesn’t categorize that language as inherently harmful the way it does with brain rot.

Madeline Holcombe, a writer for [CNN](#), dissected how brain rot has evolved into a popular way to complain about the excessive use of social media among youth. Brain rot is known for allegedly decreasing critical thinking and attention spans. But categorizing brain rot in this way doesn’t allow us to recognize the positive bonding effects it can have for younger generations to communicate in a shared language. By challenging these negative assumptions, we redefine the value brain rot can have.

Michael O’Rourke is an MSU Philosophy professor who conducts research under the umbrella of philosophy of communication, and he offered a response to brain rot’s unfavorable perception. He stated, “If you’re not messing with language, if you’re not changing language or reinventing language in

a way that generations above you think you’re being juvenile or unprofessional — then you’re doing it wrong,” he said. “The whole point is to separate yourself from previous generations.”

O’Rourke also mentioned how [code switching](#) changes the way people communicate. Maybe in a job interview it would not be appropriate to say, “oh yeah, can’t work [6-7](#)” or say, “she’s [delulu](#)” (especially if you want to get hired). But if you’re spending time with your friends, maybe the most compelling word is something all your peers will immediately understand.

Older generations tend to look down upon younger generations’ use of language and scoff at its apparent absurdity. We shouldn’t fear that response. There is a time and place for all language use, and every generation should decide for themselves how they want to use it. Together we can all lock-in with our own unique linguistic style.



Ellie Malachowski is a senior majoring in English with a minor in philosophy and law. To relax and unwind, she loves to read, watch “The Office” and be with friends.

HOW MONSTER STUDIES BRINGS MONSTERS TO LIFE

Monsters have always lurked among us. They take on many forms: a wild feline prowling the night, a hidden spectre lurking amongst the dark in the corner of your room or even a human who has committed horrific acts. Some of the most interesting monsters are formed through fiction that imitate society and are reflections of cultures from where the monster stories are born from and the writers themselves. Scholars who choose to study these fictitious beings delve into the field known as monster studies.

[Monster studies](#) is a literary academic field that seeks to understand the significance of monsters in media and their cultural meanings. “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” a Sumerian work written more than 4,000 years ago, is one of the earliest texts to engage with monstrosity. An article from [The Monster Network](#) says that “some of the most influential scholars of the early Christian and medieval periods sweated over the definition and etymology of monstra [monster], and the problem of the presence of monsters within God’s supposedly perfect creation.” Monsters have long been with humans, and monster studies is not a new topic of discussion.

While the field isn’t particularly large, there are academic spaces ready to be explored by interested students. [ISS 205](#) is an undergraduate course MSU students can take to learn about and analyze monsters. Professor David Baylis, an instructor for the course, has said that the course serves “to find a creative new way to explore the concepts of interdisciplinarity and integrative inquiry



across disciplinary perspectives. Monsters are a perfectly (un)natural vehicle through which to do this as they challenge neat classifications of knowledge and experience.”

Media is full of monsters to analyze. Godzilla, for example, is a well-known monster who has undergone numerous iterations. From an atomic terror of humans to a goofy loveable protector of Earth, his versatility is his greatest strength. In “[Godzilla, Mothra and King Ghidorah: Giant Monsters All-Out Attack](#)” Godzilla returns in the form of a supernatural entity made up of restless, vengeful souls of victims who died during the Pacific Theater. This version of Godzilla is committed to destroying Japan due to a Japanese history of “[forgetting](#)” atrocities committed during World War II. Though the theme of criticism of the topic, which is [highly political in Japan](#), is expressed indirectly in the movie, the message is clear — it is a critique on Japanese society, a problem that remains socially relevant today.

While many monsters have a greater message about society, many are merely a reflection of their authors. A well-known monster writer is H.P. Lovecraft, who spawned the genre of Lovecraftian horror. Lovecraft believed that “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of

fear is fear of the unknown,” which is reflected in Cthulhu, a popular monster of his own creation. Lovecraft’s work is widely recognized today, but it’s less commonly noted that his own intense [monstrous phobias](#) were the foundation of his creations. One of his stories, “The Dunwich Horror,” is about the “horror of rural, uneducated farmers”; the story itself is actually a reflection of Lovecraft’s own classism, as the monsters are the “uneducated farmers” in the tale.

Monster studies isn’t just a fun, whimsical topic that it may seem to be: it’s a very real form of literary and media analysis of these fictitious beings and what shapes them. The field continues to open new paths for exploration, such as the [elective](#) course previously mentioned, which offers deeper insight into historical and contemporary understandings of society. You may come for the monstrous stories, but don’t be surprised if you leave with a deeper appreciation for the messages they send.



Ayaka Sakamoto is a senior majoring in neuroscience. An avid lover of fantasy and sci-fi, she can be found reading books taking place in fantastical worlds, dystopias or in a galaxy far, far away.



In January 2026, a retired English teacher made a [video](#) on social media about an activity she’d done with her high school classes where she asked students to debate which dystopian novel had the most chance of becoming true in our world. The novels up for discussion were “1984,” “The Handmaid’s Tale,” and “Brave New World.” This teacher believed the students always made the most compelling argument for one book in particular — try to guess which one — and we’ll return to it later.

Everyone can remember a time they were forced to read a classic novel in school. However, there is a reason classical literature is taught. What is one thing all these classical novels have in common? The answer is simple: [resistance](#). When asked why we’re taught classical literature, MSU Literature Association President Katie Youmans stated: “There’s a reason they’re so renowned. They set a lot of tropes that get transferred into the modern resistance literature we read.” These [tropes](#) created a foundation for classic resistance literature, they have often left minority perspectives unaccounted for. Our job as readers is to seek out not only where resistance literature can be found but also the multiple perspectives that can be gathered from it.

Goodreads has [27 different categories](#) for resistance literature and more than 10,000 books tagged with that label. Some categories have as few as five books, while others have thousands. These categories average out to over 350 books in each category. Although roughly 10,000 books labeled with resistance sounds like a large amount, compared to the amount of books in existence, it is actually very few. Individuals can be hesitant to label books as resistance literature because the traditional understanding of resistance literature is more rigid. Resistance literature has often been grouped into the meaning of resistance, but if we expand on what it means to resist something within literature we can find it in many different types of novels.

In reality, many stories can be identified with resistance themes, but it’s often not noticeable to readers. For example, Harry Potter needed to question his parents’ death and the wizarding world’s lurking villains. “Alice in Wonderland” needed Alice to explore why the White Rabbit was in such a hurry.

Many stories we’ve encountered in our youth have some level of resistance, and this continues through adult literature. There are more books that can apply as resistance literature if we change our long-standing beliefs about this category. In an article listing [15 resistance novels](#), nine have been published after the year 2000, proving that contemporary literature contains just as many — if not more — themes of resistance than traditional literature.

“
Classical literature is not typically believed to incorporate representation, but that is what resistance should be all about, gathering new perspectives to test our status quo.
”

Have you made your guess about which dystopia made the most compelling argument? The retired English teacher stated that every year the students who selected “1984” had the most compelling argument. Sarah Oakley in “[200 Common Themes in Literature](#)” stated, “George Orwell’s novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four, focuses on themes of totalitarianism, repression, censorship and surveillance.” One

way these themes can be tackled is through the resistance literature genre.

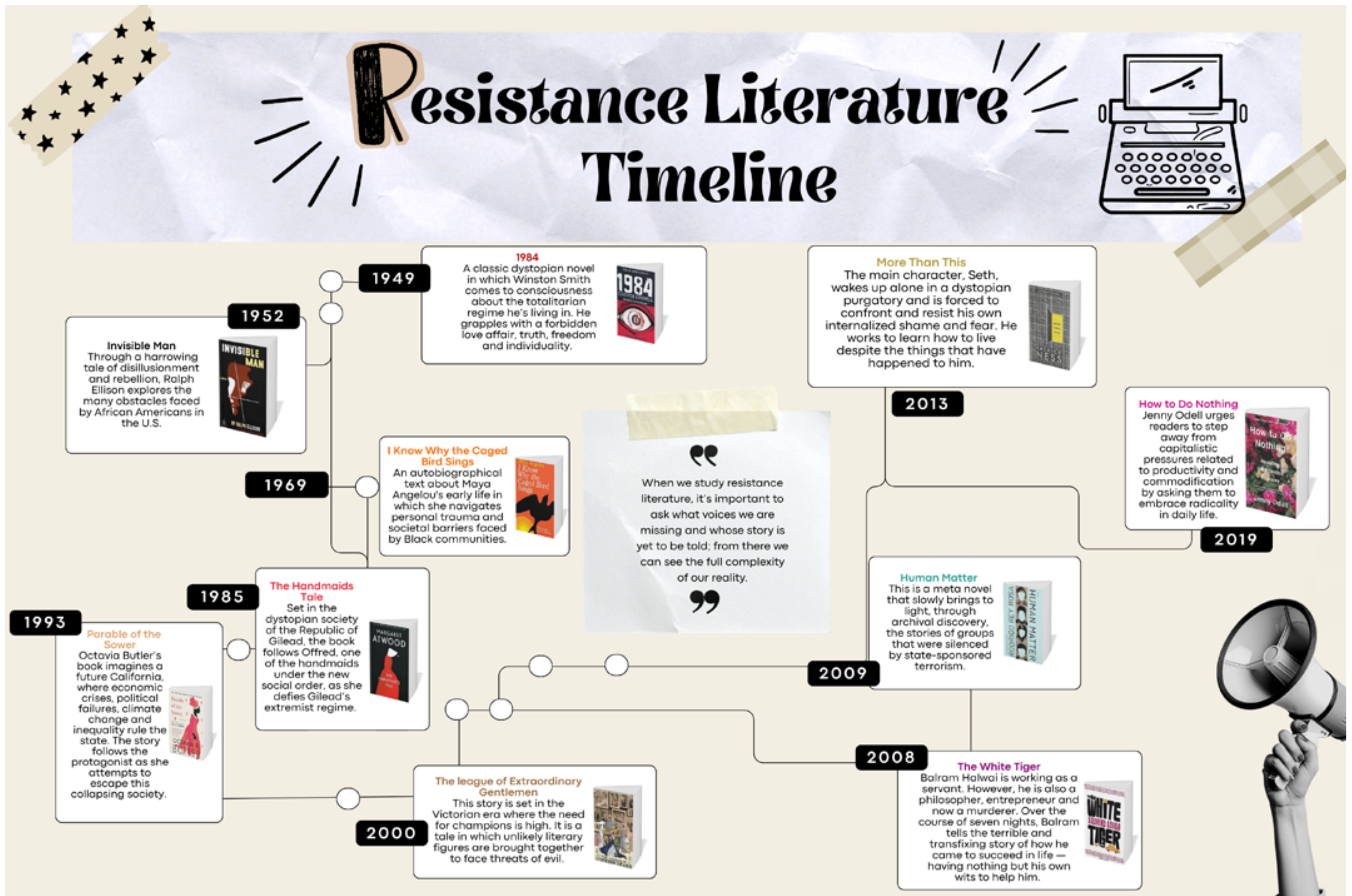
“1984” is an example of a widespread classic taught in English classes throughout the U.S., but like many other classics it does not incorporate minority perspectives. “1984” was published in 1949, but if you think the lack of diversity could be blamed on the time, consider that just three years later, a resistance novel with far more diverse themes — “Invisible Man” by Ralph Ellison, was published in 1952. Unlike “1984,” “Invisible Man” is not as widely taught. The novel by Ralph Ellison takes on resistance in the context of race, oppression and the right to self-expression in an entirely new context.

Classical literature is not typically believed to incorporate representation, but that is what resistance should be all about: gathering new perspectives to test our status quo. Classical literature can set a foundation, but it’s important we continually grow our understanding of resistance literature. When we study resistance literature, it’s important to ask what voices we are missing and whose story is yet to be told; from there we can see the full complexity of our reality.

We live in a time of social and political unrest. Because of this, it’s important to visualize the change we want to see in our world. There are stories that make us reflect on who we are and what history and whose history we want remembered. Without observing and learning from the resistance in stories, our society risks living through dystopias we want no part in.



Ellie Malachowski is a senior majoring in English with a minor in philosophy and law. To relax and unwind, she loves to read, watch “The Office,” and be with friends.



MISFITS, REBELS, WEIRDOS

Consider what you represent. What inspires your personal expression? Does your lifestyle reflect your personal beliefs? How does your identity inform your worldview? In a [subculture](#), you would share many traits with a tight-knit community, all brought together over a shared passion — a hobby, a music genre, perhaps a political belief.

[Countercultures](#), on the other hand, are communities where people are united by their shared opposition to an aspect of society and strive towards changing said aspect, typically through art or activism. There is often a significant amount of overlap between both kinds of social groups, with subcultures often evolving out of a counterculture. However, the element of opposition is what separates counterculture from subculture.

Today, cultures in the United States are tangled together through the binding thread of the internet. Subcultures are being swallowed by mainstream culture, abstracting them to the point of [imitation rather than involvement](#). The spaces where one can participate in a counterculture and express their opposition to said mainstream are shrinking.

So what does it mean to be countercultural when the ideas, activities and signifiers that previously worked to identify countercultural beliefs are absorbed into mainstream culture?

Poetry and Pontification

The idea of holding a nonracial countercultural identity first emerged in the middle of the 20th century. The [Beat Generation](#), traumatized by the impact of the second world war, expressed their pain through writing morose literature and embracing an existentialist philosophy. In theory, the subculture descending from



Photo from Hayley Asai

the writers of the Beat Generation were the [Beatniks](#). In practice, this was not the case.

While the Beat Generation critiqued materialism through [poetry](#) and set the stage for more open discussions of sexuality and drug use, the Beatniks were seemingly content living a hedonistic lifestyle uncharacteristic of the counterculture they were attempting to emulate. The traits the Beat Generation used to protest war and heteronormativity were swiftly absorbed into mainstream U.S. culture by the mid-1960s. Despite this, the Beat Generation writers still managed to maintain [safe spaces](#) to create and discuss topics that were taboo to most Americans of the time.

Spaces are incredibly important to Sasha Wade, a junior at MSU involved in [folkpunk](#) bands, LGBTQIA+ friend groups and [Yiddishist](#) groups within their Jewish faith. When Wade first arrived at MSU, they “were really looking for a space, y’know, that wasn’t mainly frat guys, somewhere where I felt safe.” To Wade and others, countercultural

communities provide the freedom to be seen and heard without judgement. To express themselves in ways that may not align with mainstream ideas of how a person should dress, talk, think or behave.

Oppose and Impose

The fear of being labeled a [poser](#) — someone who enjoys looking as if they belong to a subculture without actively participating or holding common ideas to said subculture — can interfere with one’s countercultural expression. To [punks](#) in the 1980s, there were few things worse than being called a poser. Generally, punks held negative views on structural systems of power and withdrew from mainstream culture, instead expressing themselves through art; homemade music, zines and clothing. Punk subculture is synonymous with the idea of being countercultural. Yet those who identify with the ideas but not the [look](#) may feel alienated from the subculture entirely.

Despite holding several punk ideologies and participating in various punk and metal bands, MSU junior Brayden Chrisman does not consider himself punk, much less countercultural. “I just don’t present that way... like, I don’t fully embrace all of the DIY elements. I guess it’s kind of like I’m normal-passing.” To Chrisman, one must immerse themselves fully within a counterculture to validly claim it as part of their identity. To be countercultural is to own any anti-mainstream beliefs entirely, and display these beliefs through all facets of one’s character — including appearance.

Another student who does not perceive herself as wholly countercultural, MSU junior Ani Eisenberg, argues that the perceived boundaries of countercultural identities shouldn’t prevent people on either side of a counterculture from exchanging ideas and art. Eisenberg takes part in punk, rock and alternative bands, has DJ’d on Impact FM Radio and performed music in both national and international venues. “Music is an interpretation of everything wonky, and weird, and different, and that’s why there are so many genres, and so many kinds, and so many artists.” To Eisenberg, the degree to which one considers themselves countercultural doesn’t really matter; it matters what they do with their beliefs, what they are able to create and contribute to the spaces they occupy.

Right and Wrong

A counterculture, at its core, is a group that shares ideas opposing a facet of mainstream culture. By this definition, Donald Trump’s supporters — a group that identifies itself with the slogan, “[Make America Great Again](#)” — arguably created their own conservative counterculture in the mid-2010s. It sounds like an oxymoron today, but there was a time where MAGA was considered a fringe segment of reactionary [far-right](#) Republicans rather than a dominant political belief.

Similar to the [Tea Party](#) movement that preceded it, MAGA is pointedly opposed to decisions Democrat president Barack Obama

made in the years before Donald Trump took office. This enmity has only intensified since Democrat Joe Biden held the presidency, with MAGA citizens and government officials alike using their power to enact change in society according to far-right ideals. [Turning Point USA](#), for example, is a national organization that creates student-led chapters on educational campuses. Through frequent debates and assurances that their stated political beliefs are “correct,” Turning Point USA is able to recruit young adults directly into MAGA.

MAGA primarily differs from other countercultural movements through their emphasis on strengthening established systems of power in the United States — [patriarchy](#), [capitalism](#) and [white supremacy](#) — rather than dismantling them. The MAGA perspective in 2016 viewed the actual mainstream as transgressive counterculture and themselves as the mainstream, righteous culture. A decade later, MAGA has certainly become mainstream.

You and Society

That brings us to the present. There’s a shared thread throughout all of these examples of counterculture — no matter how rebellious the ideology, almost everything about a counterculture is consumed by mainstream culture eventually. Even subcultures seen as powerful today will inevitably fizzle out. Methods of expression previously considered

harmful or unpopular will be removed from their rebellious roots, their power diminished. Neutralization does not always mean acceptance, however.

Connor DiGasbarro, a junior at MSU and avid skateboarder, describes the skating scene at MSU as “pretty good” despite not having many places to legally do this activity. “[East Lansing] is actually pretty anti-skater. You’ll see signs all around, especially near stairs, that warn you not to skate there.” He attributes the endurance of the skating community to the bonds that have formed between its members — not support from East Lansing as a whole.

There’s no going back to the isolated countercultural groups that existed prior to the 2000s. Your identity will always be attached to the mainstream somehow — it has to be. Consider what you have rejected and inspect it closely. Defining what specifically you oppose about the mainstream will aid in finding community with others who share your viewpoint. Society is ever-evolving, and remaining trapped in the idea of what a counterculture should look like will only prevent you from evolving, too.



A.V. Brooks
is a junior dual majoring in English and humanities-prelaw, with a minor in cognitive science. In her free time, she enjoys pondering, crafting and creating change.



Photo from Brayden Chrisman

//
**NEUTRALIZATION
DOES NOT ALWAYS
MEAN ACCEPTANCE.**
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My Best Friend and Favorite Screensaver

With countless places to be and people to please, many young people seek solace at home. For folks living on their own for the first time, coming home to an empty apartment at the end of the day can bring on [painful loneliness](#). However, having roommates can also feel isolating because everyone brings their own stressors to the table. For me, hanging pictures up on the walls and having my childhood blanket were not enough to make the ugly tile and cracking ceiling of university housing feel like home: I needed something more.

Having an animal companion can [reduce stress](#) by incredible margins. Many people describe their pets as the best [listeners and supporters](#) in their lives. While nothing can truly replace human connection, animals can be a life-changing addition for many people.

While cats and dogs are the most popular pets in the U.S. with over [100 million families](#) claiming at least one of these as their animal friend of choice, these traditional pets are not without barriers. Many small living spaces like dorms and apartments bar these larger animals from lease agreements, and young adults — a population already vulnerable to lack of companionship — make up the [largest proportion](#) of people living in this type of housing. Additionally, dogs and cats, coupled with food bowls, collars, kennels, toys and

more, can often take up a lot of much-needed space and can be quite a [costly endeavor](#).

There is quite a diverse and often unnoticed selection of pets beyond these more common sights, ranging from [birds to lizards](#), each with their own needs and affordances. While weighing these pros and cons as I prepared to move into my first place all of my own, I met my newest best friend, Sebastian.

“
Having him around gives me a confidant, a supporter and sometimes just something to watch.
”

Sebastian fit so much life into such a small betta fish body. While they may seem simple, betta fish possess very [unique personalities](#) and have many [therapeutic effects](#). They’re also very easy to accommodate: tanks can be customized to fit individuals’ space and tastes and cost only about [100 dollars](#) to set up, [significantly less](#) than many larger pets. This flexibility is very beneficial to many young people [struggling to pay rent](#) or save for their futures.

I got to know my fish friend quite well in the time that we spent together, as he did me. He listened to me vent about every fight with friends and each stupid homework assignment. He instilled in me a deep love and appreciation for fishkind.

Unfortunately, as with all pets, Sebastian couldn’t last forever. While Sebastian has passed on to a much larger fish tank in the clouds (as has his brother Toby) I still have a beautiful betta to keep me company. Mikey now greets me every morning and keeps the tank plants well loved.

Coming home and chatting with my fish has become a favorite part of my routine. Having him around gives me a confidant, a supporter and sometimes just something to watch.

If you’re on the hunt for a new best friend and favorite screensaver, pop by the little cups at your [local pet store](#): there might just be someone waiting for you.



Mars Robinson is a senior studying professional and public writing with a minor in gender studies. He is an avid animal lover and enjoys connecting with people and nature.



Tattoos, Piercings, Blue Hair, Oh My!

Tattoos, piercings, blue hair, oh my! Using body modification as a form of personal expression can showcase our vibrant personalities, values and identities beyond what we have the chance to express verbally. In corporate spaces, creative expressions are often silenced in favor of black suits, white button ups and “professionalism.” Altering one’s physical appearance is no easy choice; it impacts identity, social perception and potential work opportunities. Confronted with their future job prospects, what should employees and job seekers do when faced with the decision of picking between their unique selves and carbon-copy corporate culture?

Body modifications come in all shapes and sizes. While [tattoos and piercings](#) are the most common forms of body alteration, customizations such as [scarification](#), [stretching](#), [body implants](#) and many others are also included in this grouping. Meriah Serrato, a former student and tattoo and piercing aficionado, reflected on encounters she has had centered around tattoos and outward creative expression at her place of work. “With my tattoos, I want people to see what I love,” she said. “Every time I see a customer come in with a tattoo or piercing, I see what they care about enough to show it off.” Serrato has 25 piercings and multiple visible tattoos. Like many of her customers, these modifications are how she displays her values: the cross on her wrist for instance, connects her to “the big man upstairs.”

Nearly [a third of U.S. adults](#) have at least one tattoo. Tattoos have been historically associated with [violence, criminality and mental illness](#). This association has led to [widespread discrimination](#) in the workplace and many individuals with tattoos are anxious about the professional repercussions of having them, particularly those who are still preparing to enter the workforce.

Emily Keller, a tattoo artist of two years, reflected on her experience interacting with older people who tend to be more aligned with traditional values. “I used to hide my tattoos,” Keller said. “You have to know when to code switch — and it has nothing to do with you, but rather knowing your audience.” Keller is now 80% covered in tattoos and has shifted her perspective in an effort to embrace her own identity and creativity. She no longer strains herself covering them up, and instead reflects on how they impact her social acceptance. “Sometimes people see me as aggressive ... that gives me a lot of anxiety.”

Physical appearance is one of the first attributes that people tend to notice in social interactions and a large factor that informs an initial impression. DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] in workplace hiring practices places a greater [emphasis on personality](#) and professionalism as an attitude rather than a look. Serrato, a Puerto Rican and Mexican American, reflected on the racial impacts of tattoos, noting that people of color are

impacted disproportionately while their white counterparts are able to separate themselves from racial implications. Serrato said, “We see these negative stereotypes of tattoos a lot in POC [Person of Color] communities: somebody will generalize based on race, such as a Hispanic man with heavy tattoos being [equated with a cartel member](#).”

The physical look of the “professional” has always disproportionately discriminated against POC and those with body modifications; particularly those with extensive decoration such as scarification, implants, or stretching. Re-framing professionalism as an attitude with [sought after traits](#) of dependability, ethical integrity, communication, respect and excellence will continue to reaffirm expressive and authentic work environments rooted in care and support. Seratto stated that despite our traditional structure of physical professionalism, “if we stripped it down, it’s what you bring to the table that matters, how you handle situations, how you interact with people; not about how you look.”

When practicing professionalism as an attitude, individuals with body modifications work to redefine the associations of their physical expression as they actively resist this traditional outlook. Seratto reminds us that “historically, everything informs everything, and to ignore that [information] is a disservice to yourself, everyone you know, and everyone you are going to meet.”

Rising professionals must weigh their complex identities against the carbon-copy culture of corporate life. As contributors to an ever-changing and sophisticated society, people can easily lose their true sense of self. Acceptance of body modifications in the workplace would necessitate a complete acceptance of our whole and complex identities; a workplace that honors its employees as individuals can support them holistically in all aspects of their lives, creating a more reciprocal working relationship for all.



Mia Wertheimer is a junior studying English and professional and public writing. In her free time you can catch her junk journaling or cuddling with her cat, Drogo.



DO SOMETHING: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE LOUD

Resistance is a large word. Ask anyone what “resistance” means and you may get a multitude of definitions. There is electrical resistance, air resistance, drug resistance and, most importantly for this discussion, resistance as a form of general opposition. But even this generalized definition is still a massive term because resistance is a type of question; a question that asks who is “resisting” and what is being “resisted.”

When you, reader, think of “resistance,” what comes to mind? Perhaps you envision individuals holding handmade picket signs with raucous screams. Maybe these individuals are wearing college backpacks with bodies spray-painted in a bold rainbow. Perhaps you think back to large gatherings like the [March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](#) in 1963 or the famous Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 during [the first feminist wave](#). Or perhaps you think of more recent events and the

[Minneapolis](#) protests enter your mind. These are all undeniable acts of resistance: loud, declarative and unwilling to settle for anything less than profound change. However, writing is another, essential form of resistance that can vary in loudness or “volume.”

Masaki Takahashi is the former Lansing poet laureate (2022-2024) and has made it his personal mission to promote spoken word poetry throughout the community and

beyond. The founder of the non-profit 517 Poetry Room spoke about the importance of spoken word poetry to give a voice to the voiceless. When asked whether poetry itself is a form of resistance, he stated: “In the rooms I am in, I very much find that to be true — that it is an important part of the oral tradition of real stories, to make people see things in a different way.” To this extent, we can choose to alter imparted narratives and tell the unseen stories that better reflect our unique experiences of the world, simply by writing.

The 517 Poetry Room was founded in 2017 and hosts monthly open mics nights at [the Robin Theatre](#). As he spoke, a small but poignant revelation emerged that the Poetry Room and, more importantly, the diverse community the 517 Poetry Room creates, is itself a form of opposition against division. As Takahashi put it, the Poetry Room “creates a different narrative of who can be in a single room together.”

“
The kinds of acts that even the observers in Minneapolis are doing to slow down the process [make a difference]. It doesn’t have to be loud, it doesn’t have to disrupt everyone else’s lives as long as you slow down the unjust acts.”

An important consideration is that spoken word poetry as a type of resistance is still public, in that your writing is exiting your personal sphere to be seen by others. Individuals are writing with an audience in mind, at least partially, since writing is only part of the process of resistance. The second half of this process is the expulsion, the sharing of one’s writing with a trusted

community. There is a notable distance between this image and the protest and picket sign image typically associated with resistance. This portrayal of spoken word and community feels closer in volume to that of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#),” an act that was publicly oriented — loud but also, paradoxically, quiet.

Laurie Hollinger is the Assistant Director of the RCAH Center for Poetry at MSU. In her position, she handles a multitude of tasks from managing the center’s interns, to overseeing the background logistics when bringing in guest poets for events. Hollinger is also part of a local feminist spoken word group named Voices of the Revolution, a group that has been closely tied to the Lansing community since 2008.

A brief moment stood out as Hollinger said, “Most of the writing I did from the past has been, you know, largely just journaling for myself ... to be able to work through whatever was perplexing me — which is a lot.” She added that she still journals to help “sort through” her experiences and observations. For people who cannot enter the public sphere, or who do not have a community they feel comfortable sharing their writing with, journaling provides another option.

Journaling is by no means a new development as journals are prevalent throughout [history](#) and seen as valuable today for the level of intimacy and flow-of-consciousness information they can provide to historians. [Anne Frank](#), [Emilie Davis](#) and even [President Harry Truman](#), kept a journal. In a time where 1,000 problems call for our attention, taking a moment to reflect is resistance.

In the conversation that followed, Hollinger mentioned another act of resistance that, although comedic in delivery, bought up an interesting point. “There is this one story my friend Terry tells, that back in the 1980s she was working as a server at the Green Door in Lansing. And, you know she made something like \$2,500 that year that she had to pay back to the IRS ... she owed about \$14 and some change to the IRS. And she was so mad about it that she decided she was gonna pay her tax bill on a check written on ... a maxi pad.”

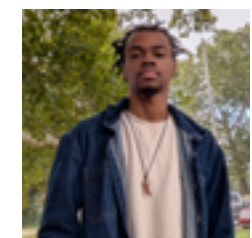
In the “machine” of the IRS, or similar bureaucracies, this small public act would not have a large or lasting impact, but Terry did it anyway. For some, this form of resistance could be seen as immature, an action that shadows the same logic of a teenager dying

their hair rebelliously pink. But even this hypothetical teenager is using the means available to them to express their opinion and individuality. Therefore, if the expression of one’s individual personhood is seen as “immature,” perhaps we should instead question what “maturity” means and who is creating such a definition.

Hollinger recontextualized this form of opposition in a broader sense. Hollinger continued, “The kinds of acts that even the observers in Minneapolis are doing to slow down the process [make a difference]. It doesn’t have to be loud, it doesn’t have to disrupt everyone else’s lives as long as you slow down the unjust acts.”

In this light, Terry’s small act of resistance is the voice of a powerless “other” attempting to use anything they possess to fight back. The graffiti of England-based street artist [Banksy](#) fits into this category. Writing a brief message of love on a blackboard for random passerby also fits into this category. As Hollinger said, these acts do not need to be “loud” but you need to do something, anything to “slow down the unjust acts.”

From thoughtfully crafted speeches used in large, marching protests, to small sticky notes written in-between classes, writing allows us to materialize our thoughts and engage with the spectrum of resistance. Perhaps you also share your writing publicly in a club or with family. Or maybe you do not enjoy writing much but you still like journaling your messy thoughts. Writing as resistance provides you with a flexible tool that can project your voice at whatever volume you wish, but engaging in the act of writing is the foremost concern. The first step is to take the first step. And so, an immense set of questions remain: how can you resist, reader, and what are you resisting?



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THE COLLECTIVE VOICE: MICHIGANDERS MAKE AN IMPACT

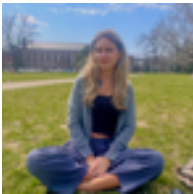
Small acts of resistance in your own life are an incredibly important tool. However, the collective voice of many individuals created from public protests is [unequivocally powerful](#). Whether attendees show up with 20 friends or just by themselves, a community is built there: one with shared values, a common heart and a dream for a better tomorrow.

The current state of our world can sometimes feel disheartening and it's [easy to feel powerless](#) to right the wrongs you see around you. While this can seem overwhelming, consider instead how that feeling can empower you to connect with your community.

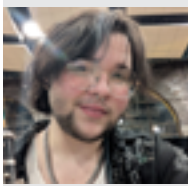
When individuals come together and use their voices and talents for the common good,

remarkable change can take root — and what better way to broaden your own community while making an impact.

Whether your passions are [art](#), public speaking, photography, networking or simply caring for your fellow neighbor, everyone has a place at a protest.



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Mars Robinson is a senior majoring in professional and public writing with a minor in gender studies. He is an avid animal lover and enjoys connecting with people and nature.

Looking to attend a protest? Stay safe with [these tips](#), and check out [this guide](#) on making effective signs!

Students stand outdoors during the MSU ICE Protest, East Lansing, Michigan, on January 29, 2026

Students protest during the March Against Compulsory ROTC in the year 1960; photo from Michigan State University Archives

Two students make a protest banner during the 1989 student occupation of the Hannah Building; photo from Michigan State University Archives

People protest outside of the Capitol Building during the 2017 Women's March, Lansing, Michigan

A group of people hold signs during the Black Lives Matter Protest, Flint, MI on September 23, 2020

Walter Adams with protestors during the March for Peace, 1969; photo from Michigan State University Archives

WHEN MOVIE ADAPTATIONS BETRAY US: FIGHT BACK

Fans stake claims on characters and storylines they feel reflect who they are, who they want to be or the actions they would take were they subject to the circumstances of the narrative. Once a fan has found their own meaning in a piece, they will go down swinging for it — defending a character, director or author until they’ve either won or cut their losses. When a fan’s favorite stories are retold as movie adaptations, they may turn on the new character representations in favor of their beloved pre-established characterizations.

In the case of literary adaptations, significant changes to narratives and characters can spark controversial debates. On one hand, novels provide imaginative freedom for the reader. On the other hand, movies can help an audience immerse themselves in the story via sensory inputs: sound and sight. [Linda Hutcheon](#), an English professor at the University of Toronto, said that within the movement from novel to the big screen, there is a necessary compression of the narrative where plot lines are trimmed, psychoanalysis is removed and “stylistic texture” can become lost. When directors — many of whom claim to be fans — remove plot points that the fan base declares essential, backlash is inevitable.

In Emerald Fennell’s new “Wuthering Heights” movie, fans were torn between their love for the actors who were cast and the integrity of the original story. In her “trimming,” Fennell managed to almost rewrite the story, even placing the title “Wuthering Heights” in quotations as an attempted [safeguard](#) from backlash for these changes.

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#), a Guardian columnist and author, wrote that “[the novel] ‘Wuthering Heights’ is at its heart a story of class and race. Emerald Fennell has got it all wrong.” Fennell cast the white Australian actor Jacob Elordi to play Heathcliff, characterized in the novel by his “dark-skinned” appearance and complex personality as a result of racial



oppression. Similar to Heathcliff’s recasting, in the novel, protagonist Catherine Earnshaw is 17 years old at the height of the story and described as having “brown ringlets” of hair. Margot Robbie — who was cast as Earnshaw in Fennell’s adaptation — is 37 years old with straight, blonde hair. One [BBC](#) article described the adaptation as “Hollywood’s worst casting.”

In perhaps an even larger shift, Fennell [flipped the central themes](#) of the story from class struggle and racial inequality to lust and “zeitgeitsy [BDSM](#).” Fennell’s adaptation was completely misaligned from the Victorian novel that challenged boundaries and [moral conventions](#) of the time. Between the theme-flipping, poor casting and erasure of oppression, many fans were upset by this film.

Fan culture depends on fans feeling heard and seen in their consumed media. The interaction between a fan and the fandom’s media is rooted in [sociological, educational, gendered and economic implications](#). Fans tend to be unaccepting of changes that do not embody the full spirit of their favorite stories. In adapting “Wuthering Heights,” Fennell lost touch with the “spirit” of the novel — the historic racial and gendered commentaries that first drove the novel into the spotlight more than 150 years ago and have kept it there until today — and as such lost much of the viewership of people who first fell in love with the original story.

One such person is senior English Major Jordyn Deitsch. “I think they would’ve benefitted from using a different title and framing it as being inspired by the true Wuthering Heights,” she said “One thing I won’t get over is the casting.” For many

viewers, seeing the lack of faithfulness to the novel feels like a stab in the back. The identities and histories of their favorite characters have become fuzzy and blurred like an unfocused camera.

So how can we preserve the integrity of our favorite narratives amidst the misalignment of their adaptations?

“
Fans see themselves as stakeholders in the story — and when the new telling of that story goes against their values, it’s up to them to make it known.
”

Standing up for the interpretation of a story that best aligns with your values and identity can be as simple as defending a novel over an adaptation or as complex as petitioning a directing team for the inclusion of certain text-specific elements. What matters most, however, is making sure your story is heard and that you see parts of yourself displayed in your favorite characters.



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OUT WITH THE NEW AND IN WITH THE OLD: The Revival of Vintage

With a [rise in fast fashion](#) as well as soaring costs for basic necessities, Gen Z has found their own way to push back. It seems that every time you step outside or look online, you are hit with a new advertisement for another fleeting fashion trend. The speed at which these trends change promotes even faster fashion as companies feel the need to keep up with the latest styles. In response, there has been a significant rise in thrift shopping among young people. The root of this rise seems to be an effort to go against fast fashion, the rising cost of clothes and a desire to feel like your clothes are expressing yourself.

Thrifting has become a common pastime for many, especially because the thrill of hunting to find a new staple piece can be addicting. There is even a sense of pride in telling people that an outfit of yours is fully secondhand. Knowing that you are the only one with those exact pieces gives a feeling of uniqueness that is hard to find in this era where [individuality has become so notable](#). Clothing companies constantly endorse uniformity by reproducing current trends as quickly as possible. Thrifting goes against this by supplying people with a multitude of distinct options.

Gen Z has been called the [sustainability generation](#), one that really focuses on the welfare of the planet. Growing up with climate change as a prominent issue has shaped the way that they interact with the world and each other, and so the planet’s welfare is always on their mind. This lack of a stable climate

has pushed Gen Z to [expect sustainability](#) from their favorite brands and celebrities. Brands like Shein and Temu are seen as immoral for their production processes that are environmentally damaging, and [unethical due to poor working conditions](#) and low pay for employees. These companies are unable to produce quality goods; therefore, the appeal of these businesses lies in their affordability rather than the quality of their merchandise.

The decrease in clothing quality is another key factor that drives the thrifting craze among Gen Z. Joy Kaltenbach, a senior at Michigan State University, says that quality is the main reason she thrifts her clothes. “My winter jacket was thrifted, and it kept me warm throughout the cold winter we had this year,” Kaltenbach said. According to [UCLA Sustainability](#), “fast fashion pieces only last less than 10 wears before [being] thrown in landfills.” Quick-changing trends continue to push brands to focus on production speed, rather than the quality of their products.

One of the major reasons that thrift stores have seen a dramatic increase in customers is the rising prices of basic items like clothing. With rising prices and stagnant wages, working Americans are struggling to make ends meet. A [Pew Research](#) report found that while unemployment was not a worry for the majority of participants, there was a noticeable level of workplace dissatisfaction. The central cause for this is due to the rising cost of living without seeing a reflection in their pay.

Stores that used to be revered for affordability, like Target, have seen inflation in prices for unchanged products. At the same time they were exposed for poor moral values, Target’s prices had a significant climb and pushed customers elsewhere. On a [Reddit public forum](#), many users expressed a lost faith in Target. Stores that were once clean and affordable are now messy and expensive, motivating customers to shop elsewhere. With Gen Z entering adulthood in a failing economy, as well as having such a strong focus on moral issues, the appeal of thrift stores has become very prevalent.

The rise in thrift store activity can [boost economies, as well as personal morale](#). With a focus on sustainability, cost effectiveness and uniqueness, thrifting offers an individual experience in modern times. Living in a capitalistic society like ours steals originality and the affordability of basic items: thrifting has risen in opposition. Next time you’re looking for affordable clothing, skip the fast fashion sites and check your local thrift store. You might just find your new essential garment that will last for years to come.



Reese Mackraz is a senior pursuing an English degree. In her free time, you can find her reading a book with her cat, Boo Radley, or enjoying quality time with friends.

Everyday Resistance !

It can be daunting to resist on a large scale, but making an impact is easier than it seems.

Here are some ways to fight against the mainstream in your everyday life!

Expand Your Expression

Madonna sings, “express yourself, don’t repress yourself.” Don’t be scared to branch out and try different ways of expressing yourself, whether that’s through your style, music taste or art. Take risks and go outside the box. Steer away from shrinking yourself into anyone else’s perceptions of what you should be or do. Instead of “finding” yourself, create yourself. Try out new styles, play with gender expression, listen to different music genres, talk to people you normally wouldn’t and expand your horizons.

Create Art

“The technique of art is to make objects unfamiliar” - Viktor Shklovsky
The world is a confusing place. With the floods of troubling information comes desensitization, but art allows us to take a step back and reexamine our perceptions. Create something — anything — then keep creating and challenge your own constructions. How “good” it is does not matter: it’s about the process of looking at something anew, through “unfamiliar” eyes.

Find Balance

Find what fulfills your life. Setting your goals for the amount of personal time you want in your life is crucial to finding a sense of balance. However, in order to understand your goals about time, you have to reflect. Gaining time for reflection can come from paying attention to what makes you happy, asserting boundaries and even learning to say no. Discovering how you feel and what you believe to be important can help you decide how much personal time you desire.

Go Offline

Touch grass. Literally! Information is constantly being delivered directly to us through our screens. Spending time away from your devices can provide you with more time for activities that tangibly improve your life, such as going outside or hanging out with friends. Setting screen time limits on apps or websites you overfrequent, finding offline interests or even deleting your social media accounts can help you avoid harmful habits like doomscrolling and bedrotting.

Strengthen Your Communities

Investing time and effort into your communities not only benefits you, but allows those around you to build new connections too. Friends, family and pets all play a role in your outlook on the world. Think critically about who you spend time with and what they bring to the table. Expand your horizons: show up at a protest, attend a town hall meeting, help out at a food drive or go to an art show or local concert near you.

Realign Your Finances

Put your money where your mouth is! There are many ways to express your values as a contributor to society. You can support local markets to promote community; follow a “no-spend” plan to build a savings; participate in Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions as advocacy or shop secondhand to think critically about consumption. We vote with our dollars — how will you vote with yours?

Take Back Language

Any email, text message or conversation that you have with someone is an important form of communicating language. By understanding how the words we use carry weight and biases, we can learn how to make our language more accessible to a diverse audience through linguistic justice. We can evaluate our own negative stereotypes and change how we frame sentences to accommodate for the historical and racial implications to language.

~~THE CURRENT~~

