SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS

THE SEARCH FOR REALITY: FORGIVENESS AS A FOUNDATION OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

What does it mean to be human? What makes human beings unique? Many species of animals have highly functioning intelligence quotients and coexist in a communal lifestyle. Love is a distinguishing factor that separates the human from all other life forms. It is esse, or the very being of humanity (Jankélévitch 555).

What is love? Love is not the broken nuclear family system where about fifty percent of marriages in the United States end in divorce (“Marriage and Divorce”). Love is not the communal atmosphere of small towns where racism and hatred run rampant. Nor is it found in the cooperation of nations who fluctuate between cooperation and hostility depending on the current political policy. Love is much more than a feeling, a legal agreement, or a popular campaign. If it exists, love must have evidence. Forgiveness shows that love exists between people.

Forgiveness happens when lovers makeup after a bitter argument, when victims of war crimes and abuse reach out to their abusers with kindness, when children reunite with absentee or abusive parents, and when communities suffering from ethnic and racial violence are able to show grace towards the perpetrators of crimes against them. In these settings, love appears.

Key words: esse, forgiveness
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES .............................................................................................................. iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. v

Chapter 1 Introduction ..................................................................................................... 1
  Sub-Chapter 1 (My Family) ......................................................................................... 2
  Sub-Chapter 1 (Enter the Victim and Perpetrator) ...................................................... 3

Chapter 2 Healing for the Victim .................................................................................... 8
  Sub-Chapter 2 (Psychology) ......................................................................................... 10
  Sub-Chapter 2 (Philosophy) ......................................................................................... 13
  Sub-Chapter 2 (Personal Conviction) .......................................................................... 15
  Sub-Chapter 2 (Spirituality and Religion) .................................................................... 16

Chapter 3 Solidarity ....................................................................................................... 19
  Mystery of Unity ........................................................................................................... 19
  Ideology and its Dangers ............................................................................................... 21

Chapter 4 Empathy for the Perpetrator ......................................................................... 22
  The Human Community ............................................................................................... 22
  Redemption ................................................................................................................... 23

Chapter 5 Closing ......................................................................................................... 25
  Application to Today ..................................................................................................... 25
  Artwork ......................................................................................................................... 26
  Final Thoughts .............................................................................................................. 31

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................. 32
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ken Tsutsumi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lila Tsutsumi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Minidoka (National Archives)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self-Inflicted, 2017 (Oil on canvas)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Solitude, 2017 (Oil and acrylic on canvas)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Like Mother, Like Daughter, 2017 (Oil, acrylic, and airbrush on canvas)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What do I Gotta Do, 2017 (Acrylic and airbrush on canvas)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Giving Up, 2017 (Acrylic and airbrush on canvas)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Good to See You Again, 2017 (Oil and acrylic on canvas)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Embrace the Freckles, 2017 (Oil on canvas)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Don’t Leave Me, 2017 (Oil, acrylic, and airbrush on canvas)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Concentration Camps (Japanese American National Museum)............................. 8

Table 2. Supreme Court Cases (Japanese American National Museum)............................ 9
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Growing up, I was very patriotic. This fact may seem humorous given my Japanese and German background. As a “halfie” or half-Asian individual, I never completely belonged in either the Asian community or the majorly Caucasian population of the small suburb where I have lived the past twenty-one years. I remember my peers calling me “Germanese” and asking if I was part Italian in order to complete my ethnic background of the Axis Powers. Yet, these small affronts towards my background do not compare to the agony that my grandparents and their siblings, members of the Nisei or the second-generation of Japanese migrants to the United States, endured.

My mother, Joan Tsutsumi Muench, a third-generation Japanese woman, always stressed how my grandparents bore no bitterness towards the United States for stripping them of their rights and forcing them into “relocation” camps during the World War II. Thus, as a child and an adolescent, I was not angry towards the U.S. for how my family was treated. I even agreed with my high school history teacher that Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who authorized the prison camps for Japanese Americans, was one of the best presidents of the United States.

Since my grandparents died when I was two years old, I did not know them personally. As I talked to my parents, great-aunt, and first cousin and sifted through numerous history books, I began to realize to a meager extent the depth of the pain inflicted on my family. Sadly, first and secondary school educators rarely discuss or teach the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in depth. Without knowledge and empathetic learning, people are bound to repeat history. Already
today, the vicious causes of the internment are resurfacing towards various racial and religious groups.

Sub-Chapter 1 (My Family)

My family had different responses to the terrifying events that occurred during World War II. My mother's parents, Kenneth and Lila Tsutsumi did not complain about the concentration camps. Their attitude towards racism and the prison camps was one of forgiveness. Joan described her parents as never being bitter and rarely talking about the camps. My grandmother Lila, or "Rira" as it is pronounced with a Japanese accent, and my grandfather Kenneth, or Kinzo, worked in Minidoka, the prison camp to which they moved. As a child,
Lila’s peers shot her with toothpicks from guns made out of clothespins. Meanwhile, Lila’s sister-in-law, Kay Abe, also went to the camps. She stressed the importance of her faith throughout that awful time. She said that she and her family believed that God had a purpose for everything that was happening to them. Although these attitudes are generously forgiving, Carolyn Ling, Kay's daughter, discussed the difficulty of not being angry at the rounding up and incarceration of an entire group of people due to a racist edict. My grandparents and their respective families were among the thousands of Japanese individuals relocated. My grandfather and grandmother were dating at the time. They were placed in the camp called Minidoka with 10,500 people of Japanese ancestry (Tsutsumi 6). Some family members did not survive the camps. Lila’s father died at Minidoka. Joan Muench recalled the event:

“Grandpa was driving a jeep in the desert looking for firewood. He got lost, it got dark, and he was tired. He decided to lie down on the seat and go to sleep. When he did not return to camp, search parties were formed. My dad volunteered to go in one of the search parties. Three days later, they found him lying on the seat of the jeep like he was sleeping. He had frozen to death.”
Sub-Chapter 1 (Enter the Victim and Perpetrator)

Figure 3. Minidoka (National Archives)

About a hundred years earlier, Japanese migration was a highly political and controversial topic when the first immigrants began to cross over the Pacific Ocean to seek their fortunes. Stan Flewelling, author of Shirakawa, which chronicles the stories of a Pacific Northwest Japanese American community, stated that numerous laws and movements developed to keep the Japanese and other Asians out of the United States (41). Outraged U.S. citizens even coordinated anti-Japanese committees and leagues (Flewelling 42). Who were these citizens seeking to keep the peace within the U.S. and better the nation? Excerpts from several of the groups clearly show that many outraged citizens believed that the U.S. should be a White nation. Flewelling reported the following quote from the White River Journal in December of 1906:

“The White and Brown will not mix. It is a law higher than man can make….The Jap is entitled to protection and the right to do business as are other foreigners, but when it comes to making him a citizen the people will seriously object. The Japs are entitled to
great credit for their rise from barbarism. We admire them but that is no reason they
should become an integral part of this nation.” (qtd. in 44)

Also, Flewelling quoted the *Auburn Argus* from April 1907 which described Japanese people as
“almond-eyed Orientals” who should be banned from owning land (qtd. in 44). Obviously,
Caucasian individuals during that time felt that Japanese people were inferior and should not
assimilate into the United States. Despite these harrowing circumstances and extreme racism,
Japanese people in the U.S. persisted. Most of the Issei, or first generation Japanese migrants,
and Nissei stayed in North America. They quietly moved their families across the Pacific Ocean,
fought to keep difficult jobs with long hours that no one wanted, and eked out an existence. They
also tried as hard as possible to integrate into American society. For example, Japanese people
stopped wearing their normal clothing, such as kimonos, and adopted Western dress in order to
fit into society. Their quiet efforts to make a future for themselves and their children paid off
eventually in the early 1900s as many Japanese families were able to move from dawn-to-dusk
farm jobs to owning grocery stores, gas stations, hair salons, and laundromats. Also, the Nissei
formed political clubs to organize themselves and fight for their rights as U.S. citizens. When
circumstances for Japanese-Americans began to improve, the “Day that Will Live in Infamy” or
December 7, 1941 occurred. On that date, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. According to the
National WWII Museum, the U.S. lost 2,403 lives, including armed-servicemen and civilians,
that day (“Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet”). The *National Archives*
stated that during that fearful and hate-filled time, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued
executive order #9066 (“Japanese Relocation During WWII”). This order authorized the
detaining of all people of Japanese descent in prison camps. A few years earlier, Nazi Germany
forced all people of Jewish descent into prison camps during a time of great upheaval, fear, and
anger in their own nation. In the United States, thousands of Japanese men and women lost their jobs, homes, businesses, and dignity. T.A. Frail, a writer for *Smithsonian*, reported that the United States detained 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in centers in the middle of the United States. According to the Japanese American National Museum, ten concentration camps, four Justice Department Camps, two Citizen Isolation Camps, and sixteen other centers existed for imprisoning Japanese individuals (“Japanese American Incarceration”). Conditions were harsh and privacy was difficult. Individuals who had committed no crime were the victims.

According to one man of Japanese descent, who wished to remain anonymous, his parents described the camps as being great for young people. Many young people were able to be around their peers all the time. His parents described “camp” as almost like a big social club. All the young people had jobs in these U.S. internment camps. This same man said that his mother probably worked in the mess hall, or some other "female" job. His father worked as a coal truck driver. Japanese Americans used coal and firewood to heat their barracks. Neither of his parents were paid for their jobs. The jobs kept them busy and helped them to keep living and surviving while at camp. This man's grandfather was about sixty-five years old when he was moved to the camp and most likely did not have a camp job due to his age. He also stated that although the camps may have been like a big social club for young people, more mature adults, especially those who owned property, were more likely to be bitter towards the U.S. government. His grandfather, for example, lost his grocery store. He said that people could only take what they could carry. After his parents returned to the outside world after getting out of the camps early because they chose to move to the East coast before the war ended, they experienced "a fair amount of racism." Japanese Americans were not allowed to move to the West coast until the end of the war. Originally, this man's parents lived in Seattle, Washington, a mainly Caucasian
city, and had experienced racism before the camps as well. Both of his parents found jobs in New York with the help of liberal Jews in the area and Catholic priests back at camp. Interestingly, Jewish Americans, who were also facing racism during this time, helped Japanese Americans. His parents were able to get jobs in a Catholic orphanage and a Russian relief warehouse dealing with second hand clothes. His grandmother worked in the Catholic orphanage with his mother. When the war ended, his grandmother returned to Seattle, Washington.

A second-generation Japanese woman, who also wished to remain anonymous, talked about her stepfather’s experience at camp. He described camp as a place where those in power sold any item for money, including food and supplies. The neediest people did not receive these vitally necessary goods. She also described her step-father's unwillingness to watch people come and steal his belongings and loot his house before being forced to go to the prison camp. He threw his belongings out so people could not take them. "No one helped the Japanese," she said. The Japanese were treated as sub-human. People of other Asian backgrounds would say, "I'm not Japanese." This woman’s mother, who was an Issei, did not allow her to speak Japanese at home. Her step-father discussed rationing in the camps as being awful. They did not have bread, soy sauce, or even flour to make bread. The people in the kitchen would sell things and not give much to people. Quarter inch gaps existed in the barrack walls, which let in the freezing cold during the winter and dirt and dust all year long. The barracks were very crude and poorly built.

George Takei, a star from the popular television show Star Trek and human rights activist, describes his family's experience of being crowded into one horse's stall while waiting for the government to build barracks (“George Takei: They interned my family. Don’t let them do it to Muslims”).
Patriotism abounded among Japanese Americans after the camps. Many people besides Ken, Lila, and Kay chose to forgive those who put them in prison camps, which were eerily similar to those in Germany during the same time. As an illustration of this unlikely patriotism, the Japanese American soldiers were the most decorated of the U.S. soldiers in World War II (Takei, “Why I love a country that once betrayed me”; A Celebration of Hope and Healing: Saluting Washington Medal of Honor Recipients).

Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? The victim is anyone that is wronged against. The perpetrator is the one who inflicts the harm. In this scenario, the thousands of Japanese individuals who had committed no crime were the victims. Yet, many of them chose not to act in that role. Some pretended that the camps were an adventure. Others believed that God was directing their lives no matter what happened. Who were the perpetrators? In 1941, the White supremacist groups and anti-Japanese committees were not the only people who made Japanese individuals’ lives miserable. President Roosevelt, who was later heralded and applauded in many history books for his New Deal, was also not the only perpetrator. The entire nation was guilty for allowing such a racist order to be carried out in a society that professed to be democratic.
Chapter 2

Healing for the Victim

Once an individual realizes that he or she has been suffering because of another’s actions, he or she must learn how to heal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date of Operation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Utah</td>
<td>Topaz, UT</td>
<td>9/11/42 – 10/31/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado River</td>
<td>Poston, AZ</td>
<td>5/8/42 – 11/28/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gila River</td>
<td>Rivers, AZ</td>
<td>7/20/42 - 11/10/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granada</td>
<td>Amache, CO</td>
<td>8/27/42 - 10/15/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Mountain</td>
<td>WY</td>
<td>8/12/42 - 11/10/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome</td>
<td>Denson, AR</td>
<td>10/6/42 - 6/30/44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manzanar</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>6/1/42 - 11/21/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minidoka</td>
<td>Hunt, ID</td>
<td>8/10/42 - 10/28/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohwer</td>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>9/18/42 - 11/30/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tule Lake</td>
<td>Newell, CA</td>
<td>5/27/42 - 3/20/46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the Japanese American former internees were able to move on and live their lives. My grandparents were two such people. They were both artists, raised their children, sent them to college, and enjoyed their grandchildren. My great aunt was another such individual. She moved back to Seattle, made a life for herself, loved her children, and continually served food to the
homeless almost every night of the week. Not all of my family members were able to make this transition. My father recalled one of my great uncles and his wife, both of which were college-educated before the war, being unable to get the jobs they deserved. Instead, they opened a laundromat store. These survivors did not have a positive outlook on the United States after the war. Also, my grandmother's stepson, Gordon Hirabayashi sued the United States government and later emigrated to Canada.

Table 2. Supreme Court Cases (Japanese American National Museum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supreme Court Case</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hirabayashi v. United States</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>upheld the legality of using racial criteria in the military's curfew order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korematsu v. United States</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>upheld the constitutionality of the military detention process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex Parte Endo</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>found that the War Relocation Authority could not detain U.S. citizens who were shown to be loyal, effectively ending incarceration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So what does a victim do after living through an atrocity? What is the role of forgiveness? Can forgiveness heal? Writers talk about it, musicians sing about it, and actors try to capture it on film. Nevertheless, does forgiveness and human love really exist? And is it really the answer to those who have suffered atrocities?

This issue of healing goes beyond the prison camps set up for Japanese-Americans during World War II. Hatred, rape, murder, and torture have taken place throughout history and
exist today in many areas of the world, including the United States. Smaller conflicts happen between individuals on a daily basis. How do people heal from pain? Psychologists, therapists, counselors, and spiritual leaders all seek to help people find the answer to this question, and to find peace.

Sub-Chapter 2 (Psychology)

Figure 4. Self-Inflicted, 2017 (Oil on canvas)

As a patient goes to a family doctor when he or she has a physical ailment and needs assistance, so many people go to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or therapist to get help for issues dealing with the mind. Suffering mental and emotional trauma often requires going to see a trained professional in order to fully recover. The two components of psychology are behavior and the mind. According to Peter Gray, author of psychology, behavior involves “the observable actions of a person or animal” (1). The mind controls an “individual’s sensations, perceptions, memories, thoughts, dreams, motives, emotional feelings, and other subjective experiences” (Gray 1).
**Current Theories:**

Under the umbrella of psychology are various approaches. Some of these approaches include: cognitive psychology, business psychology, social psychology, and personality psychology. The two types of psychology typically used to help victims heal are clinical psychology and counseling psychology.

Clinical psychology and counseling psychology both deal with psychopathologies. Louis Castonguay, Professor of Psychology at the Pennsylvania State University, defines a psychopathology as an overabundance or lack of an element of normative behavior or emotion that deals with the mind. All people have dealt with stress, extreme emotional upheaval, and difficult circumstances. When one has a psychopathology, the emotional upheaval or nonnormative behavior interferes with normal life and requires professional help. Some of the various types of doctors that work in the field of clinical or counseling psychology are psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists. According to Andrew Peck, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the Pennsylvania State University, psychologists and psychiatrists have PhDs. Psychiatrists are able to prescribe medication. Therapists have Master’s degrees and are more common and less expensive to visit than psychologists and psychiatrists (Peck). A plethora of therapies have emerged from psychological practice, including talk therapy, art therapy, music therapy, poetry therapy, sand therapy, and drama therapy.

The American Psychological Association, or APA, defines clinical psychology as the branch of psychology dealing with normative versus abnormal behavior and psychopathologies and their treatment and prevention (“A Career in Clinical or Counseling”). People who go to see clinical psychologists can expect to receive a diagnosis and treatment according to the DSM, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The DSM is continuously a work in
progress and specifies criteria for defining disorders (Castonguay). Also according to the APA, counseling psychology is the branch of psychology concerned with how individuals and psychopathologies change and mutate during a person’s lifespan (“A Career in Counseling”). Individuals who go to see counseling psychologists can also expect to be diagnosed and treated using the DSM. However, they will probably be treated over their lifetime, not for a few sessions. Typically, psychologists and therapists today do not use the Freudian couch. Patients are talked to as equals and are given advice, new life regimens, and possibly medicine. Mental health workers may use all of these tools in the healing process.

To summarize, clinical psychology and counseling psychology differ in that clinical psychologists usually work with their patients when they are experiencing severe mental health symptoms whereas counseling psychologists deal with psychopathologies over the lifespan of a client (“A Career in Clinical and Counseling”).

Although seeing a doctor or a therapist is extremely helpful, the love and support of family and friends is vital to the recovery and healing of a suffering individual. According to Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher, authors of Amish Grace, psychologists today advise forgiveness as a way to find personal happiness and achieve a more realized version of oneself (180). In fact, positive psychology is an entire branch of psychology devoted to thinking positively and fostering healthy human relationships (Castonguay), which include the process of forgiveness.

Classic Theories:

Although Freud and Jung’s theories are not taught as often in Psychology classes, their writings are still vital philosophical theories today. These writings help individuals get one step closer to understanding human life and what truth's definition is in actuality.
Freud's *Id & Ego*, describes the three parts of the unconscious: the id, ego, and superego (18). The ego represents reason, id represents impulse, and the superego represents conscience. According to Freud, the unconscious is the part of the mind that humans are unaware of during thinking processes (3). Is forgiveness just an overactive superego? Or is forgiveness a way to satisfy an overactive superego and not be tormented by it, leading to healing. Freud worked mainly with patients on a case by case basis (Castonguay). People have claimed that bitterness and unforgiveness make them feel miserable (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 180). As an answer to this inner conflict in the unconscious, individuals may choose to forgive in order to find peace.

**Sub-Chapter 2 (Philosophy)**

Philosophers in the past have discussed the topic of forgiveness in depth. Many discussions of life and truth have taken place after world atrocities, including the Holocaust and apartheid in South Africa.

French-Jewish philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch leads one such discussion in his works *Forgiveness* and “Should We Pardon Them?” According to Sam Fleischacker and Josh Feigelson, authors of a book review on *Forgiveness*, Jankélévitch originally views forgiveness as an idealized action where the victim completely grants amnesty and grace towards the perpetrator without being offered an apology or reparations (161). Jankélévitch believes that people forgive too often without really meaning it. Typically, individuals’ forgiveness follows one of two routes: “times heals all wounds” and “to understand all is to forgive all” (Fleischacker and Feigelson 160). Firstly, time does not heal. In fact, time can make the wound worse. Bitterness
and deep hatred can become more and more deeply rooted in an individual’s being. As William Faulkner stated in his book *Requiem for a Nun*, “The past is never dead. It's not even past” (qtd. in Bowman). Secondly, if one understands all and excuses the offenses, the offense is excused rather than forgiven. It is not acknowledged as the evil that it is and truly forgiven (Fleischacker and Feigelson 160-1). According to Fleischacker and Feigelson, “Forgiveness is a product neither of the passage of time nor of the excuse. Nor again is it merely an opportunity for the wrongdoer to rehabilitate himself…or for the victim to display her magnanimity…” (161).

According to Jankélévitch, forgiveness involves three crucial steps. First, forgiveness is an “event” or something that actually changes one’s relationship with another (Fleischacker and Feigelson 161). Forgiveness is not just something that goes with the flow of a typical relationship. There is a before and an after. Second, forgiveness is a “gratuitous gift” without any other side motivations or concerns (Fleischacker and Feigelson 161). For example, the Countess in Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* does not truly forgive her husband because she is motivated by the desire to save her marriage and her honor rather than purely just to forgive him. Third, forgiveness creates or renews a personal relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (Fleischacker and Feigelson 161). Fleischacker and Feigelson summarize Jankélévitch’s view of the matter in the following statement:

“…true forgiveness is something unnatural and nonrational, flowing from us as an expression of grace…if one can manage forgiveness in this sense, one can achieve a pinnacle of humanity, but to substitute something short of it for the real thing is disgraceful, demeaning the beauty and importance of real forgiveness” (161).

Thus, in his book *Forgiveness*, Jankélévitch defines forgiveness and refuses to accept anything less than true forgiveness as he defines it.
However, towards the end of *Forgiveness* and in his paper “Should We Pardon Them?,” Jankelevitch’s views have slightly changed. He struggles with the question of what is unforgivable. Although an ideal version of forgiveness still exists, he does not believe that the Jewish people should forgive the Germans for the Holocaust (Fleischacker and Feigelson 163). To Jankélévitch, the Holocaust is unforgivable. It is “inexpiable” or no punishment that is in proportion to the crime exists (Jankélévitch 558). Jankélévitch also states that crimes against humanity are “impresscriptible,” meaning time has little to no effect on them (556).

**Sub-Chapter 2 (Personal Conviction)**

![Figure 5. Solitude, 2017 (Oil and acrylic on canvas)](image)

Besides the scientific view of personal healing espoused in psychology and the philosophical view of healing, other ways of dealing with pain can be found in personal conviction. One noteworthy example of personal beliefs is found in the *Last Lecture*. Randy
Pausch, professor at Carnegie Mellon and author of *Last Lecture*, was a man who knew his days were limited. He had ten cancerous tumors growing throughout his body. His book is his last words to his children with wisdom on how to live life. Placed neatly in the middle of the book is an honest talk on forgiveness. Forgiveness was a vital part of living life and being able to fulfill his dreams before expiring.

According to Pausch, the perpetrator or one seeking forgiveness should follow three important steps. These steps involve two statements and a question: “What I did was wrong,” “I feel badly that I hurt you,” and “How do I make this better?” Although Pausch primarily addresses the perpetrator, once these steps have taken place, the victim is able to choose whether or not to forgive and heal. According to Haseena Sahib, author of the blog *Reflection is Remedy*, Pausch states if the victim chooses to forgive, a relationship is healed and both parties can move on. This process is extremely important for the victim and leads to a happier life. The nearness of Pausch’s death after writing his book and giving his lecture entitled “Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams” give his departing words of advice an air of extreme urgency.

**Sub-Chapter 2 (Spirituality and Religion)**

Religions offer another way to look at the world that differs from science, art, or personal opinion (Peck). Many religions offer a way to find personal peace and fulfillment as well as a path to god. Members of the Tsutsumi and Abe families followed one of the two following major religions: Buddhism and Christianity.
Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama or the “historical Buddha” founded Buddhism. Chang Tan, Assistant Professor in Art History at the Pennsylvania State University, stated that the Buddha was born in Nepal and reached enlightenment in India. The Buddha was a prophet whose mother conceived in a dream with a mystical elephant. During his lifetime, the Buddha sought truth and release from suffering. He did not eat any living thing, including vegetation, and ate only dead animals and rotten plants. During that time, he became extremely emaciated. However, despite his suffering, he still had not found what he was searching for. He fasted for ninety days while being tormented by demons and seductive women. Finally, after overcoming these challenges, the Buddha reached enlightenment. After reaching enlightenment, the Buddha left four noble truths, which are as follows: life is cycles of suffering, the cause of such suffering is desire, one can escape desire and achieve nirvana, and the way to overcome desire is through the eightfold path. The eightfold path is as follows: right beliefs, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. Thus, healing for the victim comes through reaching enlightenment by following the eightfold path.

However, besides the traditional view of Buddhism, numerous branches exist, including Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism is a more personal form of Buddhism, which originated in China and traveled to Japan (Tan). Individuals are still able to achieve enlightenment in Zen Buddhism, however, they are able to do so through personal discipline, meditation, and discourse with teachers. Zen Buddhists do not reach enlightenment through reliance on scripture, rituals, ceremonies, or icons. No direct preaching occurs in Zen. Yet, adherents are able to achieve nirvana by solving paradoxes, riddles, and rising above reason to a deeper truth. Thus, in Zen, healing and wholeness is achieved as the individual removes himself or herself from the
distractions of the world and seeks truth. Also, those who undergo drastic, at times irrational sacrifices in pursuit of truth are able to achieve a Zen state of mind. To summarize, in all variations of Buddhism, self-sacrifice is a key element in achieving nirvana (Tan). Forgiveness in all of its forms calls for a sacrificing of one’s rights to seek vengeance and retaliation.

**Christianity**

Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. The basis of Christianity revolves around the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, died for the sins of the world, and rose from the dead. According to Christianity, Jesus’s death makes it possible for human beings to be completely forgiven by God for the evil that they think and do. This is an example of forgiveness as discussed by Jankélévitch. It is a “gratuitous gift” without any side motivations (Fleischackler and Feigelson 161) besides love (*The Bible*, 1 John 4:10). According to Christianity, after believing in Jesus’s death and resurrection, humans are forgiven and reach salvation. Also, according to Christian teaching, after receiving this love and forgiveness from God, humans are then able to fully forgive others and themselves.
Chapter 3

Solidarity

Figure 6. Like Mother, Like Daughter, 2017 (Oil, acrylic, and airbrush on canvas)

Mystery of Unity

According to Bernhard Schlink, professor of public law and legal philosophy and author of the novel The Reader, solidarity is the act of bearing empathy towards an individual. Solidarity happens when any conflict occurs, and some people take the side of one party and others take the side of another party. For example, the coming together of Native Americans and other members of the United States to protect the environment and sacred sites is an example of solidarity. It can also be seen in the millions of women and men all across the world on January
21, 2017 who came together to fight for women's rights and protest the inauguration of the forty-fifth president of the United States.

Sometimes, solidarity with a particular group is a choice. In other cases, solidarity is forced upon individuals because of their ancestry. For example, according to Schlink, descendants of Nazi guards are forced to be identified with and bear part of the guilt of their ancestor’s crimes. On the other hand, Jewish descendants of Holocaust martyrs and survivors are also forced to identify with their forbearers. These examples abound throughout time and history and are extremely pertinent today. Japanese Americans were grievously wronged by the United States during World War II, yet are by default in solidarity with their ancestors who committed atrocious acts in Korea and China. How does an individual rise above these groupings and show empathy towards others? How do people break free of the guilt and pain their ancestors inflicted on others? These questions are difficult. No easy answer exists. However, empathy and sympathy towards the survivors of atrocities and those in solidarity with the victim is essential for healing to take place (Schlink).

Only the victim can forgive. Those in solidarity cannot forgive in the victim’s place. According to Jankélévitch, when others forgive in the place of the victims, the victims are forced to be in a fait accompli, or are given no choice to decide whether they wish to perform the action of forgiveness (566).
Ideology and its Dangers

Figure 7. *What do I Gotta Do*, 2017 (Acrylic and airbrush on canvas)

Despite the beauty of solidarity, it also has dangers. When people come together over a shared heritage or shared belief systems, beautiful events unfold. However, at the same time, beliefs can also blind people and make it impossible for them to view others with differing beliefs as human beings. As John Bowman, Professor of Art at the Pennsylvania State University stated, ideologies tend to blind individuals to other people’s experiences and make relationships impossible. The Democratic and Republican parties exemplify this phenomenon, especially during the 2016 United States presidential election. It was extremely difficult for members from differing parties to relate to one another and unite over common interests.

Jankélévitch warns against being caught up in *contestation*, or meaningless debates that people participate in when they would be more productive by being quiet (560).
Chapter 4

Empathy for the Perpetrator

Today hatred and mass hysteria appear to be on the horizon at all times, where no one feels safe, and everyone is suspicious of their friends and neighbors. A sense of empathy, of putting oneself in another's place, is extremely necessary.

The Human Community

Figure 8. Giving Up, 2017 (Acrylic and airbrush on canvas)

No matter what another person has done, no matter how cruel or barbaric, that individual is still a human being. This realization is often hard to digest, especially when that person may be
an extremely powerful political figure or a distant, self-absorbed CEO, people are still people.
The perpetrator must be held accountable for his or her deeds. Jankélévitch warns against not being specific. He states, “…if everyone is guilty, no one is guilty. Let us speak of everything; let us speak of nothing (563).”

**Redemption**

Redemption occurs for the perpetrator when he or she is forgiven by the victim. When the victim sacrifices his or her right to exact vengeance and instead chooses love. After this process takes place, the perpetrator is no longer the victim’s enemy. Instead, he or she is a normal human being, like anyone else. This idea of empathy was dramatically exemplified by the Amish community a few years ago when they showed grace towards the killer of Amish children at a local schoolhouse. The book *Amish Grace* chronicles the aftermath of this tragic event. Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher, authors of *Amish Grace*, interviewed many individuals of the Nickel Mines Amish community who were impacted by this event. They found out that many individuals and the community as a whole showed kindness and care towards the killer’s wife and his family even a few hours after the children’s deaths (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 44). Many Amish people even attended the killer’s funeral (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 46). The authors note at the end of the book, “Rather than pursuing revenge, however, the Amish showed empathy…[they] chose not to vilify the killer but to treat him and his family as members of the human community (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 180).” The Amish are not the only examples of people who chose to forgive. Countless examples can be found throughout history after tragedy. For example, Louis Zamperini, a U.S. prisoner of war in Japan
during World War II, had his story described in Angelina Jolie’s film *Unbroken*. He chose to forgive his cruel torturer. He went to visit the man who had inflicted agony on him. Although the man refused to see him, Zamperini’s act of forgiveness still humanized his former torturer. Kay Abe’s decision to forgive the United States for her and her family’s imprisonment and her decision to view the internment as “being part of God’s plan” humanized those who imprisoned her. Her decision and Ken and Lila Tsutsumi’s decision to forgive also left a legacy to their descendants to forgive those who acted against them out of racial prejudice and view such as people as human beings no better or worse than themselves.
Chapter 5

Closing

Application to Today

Today, in the United States, fear and hatred are the governing emotions being manipulated by political leaders to gain power. Both of these are the opposite of forgiveness. Friends and family are turning against one another over politics, beliefs on human rights, and the future of this nation. Hatred is not the answer. Neither is fear. At this time, this society must remember that all of its members are human beings. Human beings with dignity, a desire for love and need for healing and/or redemption.

The people of the United States must make sure that "mass hysteria, fear, and the failure of...leaders (Takei, Distinguished Speaker Series)" do not lead to the imprisonment of Muslim or people of Arabic descent. Although the acts carried out by ISIS, the United States government, and other political and social powers are atrocious, people must respond in a way that does not dehumanize other people. As Jankélévitch warns, complacency is out of the question. It was complacency that allowed the

“monstrous machine for crushing children, for destroying Jews, Slavs, and Resistance fighters by the hundreds of thousands, could only have functioned thanks to innumerable complicities and the complacent silence of all; the torturers tortured, and the small fry of minor criminals helped out or laughed…there were indeed few innocent among the millions of mute or complicit… (565)”
As stated by one Nissei woman, during war, all sides experience atrocities and war crimes. According to Susan Sontag, author of *Regarding the Pain of Others*, if an individual does not agree that evil exists in the world, he or she has not “reached moral or psychological adulthood (114).”

**Artwork**

Alongside this investigation into what forgiveness means for humanity today, I created a series of paintings and installed them in Patterson Gallery in State College for a week under the show title “REJUVENATE.” These pieces were made with mixed media, but are mainly oil and acrylic on canvas. Each painting tackles an issue associated with the process of forgiveness.

The process of artmaking is extremely personal to the artist. Each individual has a unique way of going about producing a piece, whether it is a painting, installation, digital art, film, photography, sculpture, or clay pot. In the process of oil and acrylic painting, one typically begins the piece with a blank canvas. The artist can view the blank canvas as empty and lacking character or as a world of possibilities waiting to come to life. Often, painters create their own canvases by stretching raw, cotton cloth over a wooden frame. The canvas is then primed, as if one is painting a wall in a house, with gesso. Gesso is typically an acrylic-based primer that prevents oil from leaking through the canvas. After the artist has gained a tactile relationship with the canvas by creating it from cloth and wood, a surface is finally ready to have paint applied to it.

When dealing with the subject of forgiveness, the blank canvas is especially relevant. Artists often recycle used canvases by removing the cloth and re-stretching new, unprimed cloth
on top of the wooden frame. This process of remaking and forming something new out of an unwanted piece of art and its mistakes exemplifies what takes place during forgiveness. When an individual forgives and chooses to pardon the perpetrator, the latter receives a second chance or a start-over.

Furthermore, the actual movement of picking up a paintbrush and moving various colors around on a surface involves a large amount of chance, success, and repeated failure. Often, exceptional art comes out of taking a failed piece and adding or removing elements to make it more beautiful than the artist originally envisioned. Artists may have to paint hundreds of canvases and ultimately discard them in order to create work that is excellent. Furthermore, artists are critiqued in academia, magazines, journals by art critics and peers, which may be excessively critical. Artists must choose whether to persist and learn from these rejections or give up on their work. In a similar way, failure and tragedy in life can be a catalyst towards growing and learning as individuals and as a society. Often the deepest pain is what causes people to learn how to sacrifice and put others before themselves. However, the individual must choose whether to grow or become embittered from adversity. Forgiveness transformed the tragedy that the internment camps inflicted on Lila and Ken Tsutsumi and Kay Abe into an uplifting and beautiful legacy. The Tsutsumis and Abe chose to live in a way that reflected peace and reconciliation despite the horror of their collective past.

The following paintings are a few samples of the most powerful pieces from the show.
Good to See You Again is the most obvious painting dealing with forgiveness between two parties. The painting discusses the topic of two individuals who have not spoken with one another due to a fight for about twenty years. The men could be a father and son, brothers, friends, or ex-lovers.
Embrace the Freckles discusses forgiveness and acceptance of oneself. The painting is based on a poem from a spoken-word performance during Penn State’s slam poetry group WORDS finalist session. The poem was by a young woman who described receiving crude comments about her having freckles and being an African-American woman. She also described her acceptance of her facial features and her pride in herself. The poem is ultimately one about triumph. When an individual is able to accept himself or herself despite other’s perceptions and one’s own regrets, a beautiful process takes place.
Don’t Leave Me was the final piece in the show. Patterson Gallery is essentially a gallery split into three sections, which is made out of a hallway. Once the viewer has passed to the end of the hallway, Don’t Leave Me was on the left wall. This painting addresses the ongoing nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not happen once and then it is complete. Often, individuals have to continue to forgive those that do evil towards them multiple times. Humans without fail continue to hurt each other even though reconciliation over past offenses has taken place. Furthermore, the painting deals with the emotion of not wishing to part with another individual that he or she has grown to love tremendously. It deals with the subject of unrequited love and
forgiving and loving especially when the other party does not apologize or reciprocate with kindness.

**Final Thoughts**

With all of the pain, fear, and anger, felt today, what should the people of the United States, and the world do? What actions should individuals take? What can be done?

Love exists. The fact that people around the world and throughout time have been able to show courageous acts of love through forgiveness proves that it exists. Konrad Lorenz, German thinker and scientist whose involvement with Nazism casts a dark shadow on his character, is famous for his work in imprinting with geese. In his words, “We know that, in the evolution of vertebrates, the bond of personal love...was the epoch-making invention created by the great constructors when it became necessary for two or more individuals...to live peacefully together...the obvious conclusion is that love and friendship should embrace all humanity, that we should love all our human brothers indiscriminately (Lorenz 299).” In the words of the revered Persian poet, Rumi, in his book *In the Arms of the Beloved*, which discusses his exorbitant and unrestrained mystical love for God and for his mentor,

“Every question I ask is about you,

Every step I take is toward you.

I slept well last night

But I woke up drunk,

I must have dreamt about you (30)”
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