



Hilltopics

SMU University Honors Program

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The Debate on Syria

UHP students Viral Kotecha and Preston Ash offer their opposing viewpoints on the United States' involvement in the Syrian conflict

Protecting the Global Strife

by Viral Kotecha

The United Nations reported that over one hundred and twenty thousand people have died in Syria. And, in addition, over two million people have been displaced from their homes and seek refuge in nearby countries of Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. Yet, the United States government has done very little to stop this humanitarian catastrophe. Many in America applaud the non-interventionist policy the administration has taken. However, I must disagree with that stance.

Big Stick Politics

by Preston Ash

In the end, no amount of American forces can solve the political differences that lie at the heart of somebody else's civil war." Barack Obama, Jan. 19, 2007

Apparently, the Barack Obama in 2007 is very different from the Barack Obama that we see today. Right now, the Obama administration is negotiating a possible diplomatic route to get chemical weapons destroyed in Syria, but the U.S. has remained very clear that our military is ready just in case the peaceful route does not work. For the sake of the U.S., I truly hope that it does. Because not only did the U.S. fail to get the support from our allies, but it did not even look like Congress was going to support military action.

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The Debate on Syria

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For the last three decades, our national security shifted from being one of preventing the spread of Soviet ideals to a nation focused on preventing regional chaos. While the Syrian conflict poses no direct threat to the United States, the consequences of not intervening are far too grave to ignore. One consequence is that over one million Syrians are currently taking refuge in Lebanon, a country of approximately four million. Not only do these refugees create financial burden for Lebanon's slowing economy, but also the new refugees heighten the social tension with Hezbollah, a terrorist group with strong connections to

First of all, it makes sense that the U.S. should go to war if there is some threat to the American people. However, Obama has made it quite clear that there is no immediate threat at all. Instead, he says we are going to war because the chemical weapons that were used were an "assault on human dignity." However, if the United States went after every one of those, then we should have bombed the VMAs when Miley Cyrus got on stage. I hold that if the United States strikes Syria, then it will actually create a major threat on the safety of the American people because of the backlash from Russia and Syria.

This crisis in Syria creates a moral dilemma, threatens the stability of the volatile region, and weakens the economies of our allies

- Viral

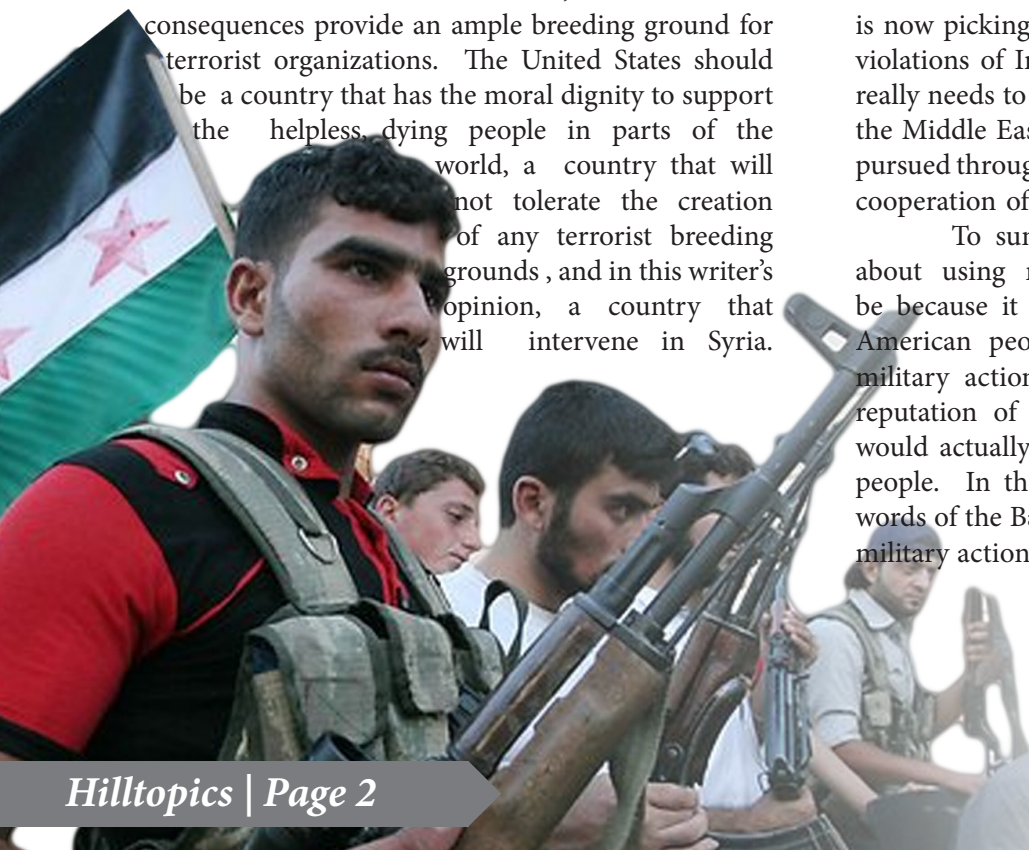
I hold that if the United States strikes Syria, then it will actually create a major backlash from Russia and Syria

- Preston

Iran. Furthermore, while the crumbling Syrian economy will create a small effect on the international economy, its effect on regional economies, especially that of Lebanon, Jordan, and Southern Turkey, is particularly severe. These economies have significantly weakened since the start of the revolution. This crisis in Syria creates a moral dilemma, threatens the stability of the volatile region, and weakens the economies of our allies. Even worse, all three of these consequences provide an ample breeding ground for terrorist organizations. The United States should be a country that has the moral dignity to support the helpless, dying people in parts of the world, a country that will not tolerate the creation of any terrorist breeding grounds, and in this writer's opinion, a country that will intervene in Syria.

Obama has recently stated that "America is not the world's policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong." However, as the President who was elected to "end wars, not start them", he seems to be extremely biased with which wrongs he points out. If America really wants to say that Syria is going against International Law, then technically it would have to say the same thing about Israel. America is now picking and choosing what we are interpreting as violations of International Law. What the United States really needs to do is try to eliminate chemical weapons in the Middle East as a whole, however this should only be pursued through diplomatic means— with the support and cooperation of the UN and the international community

To summarize, if the United States is thinking about using military action against Syria, it should be because it poses some sort of serious threat to the American people. Being the only country that uses military action in Syria would not only continue our reputation of being the "warmongers of West", but it would actually create an intense threat to the American people. In the end, I believe that we should heed the words of the Barack Obama we knew in 2007 and not use military action to get involved in someone else's civil war.



American Anglophiles

by Cole Chandler

The anticipation for the birth of Prince George of Cambridge that was felt in the States would have given the founding fathers heart attacks. However, the dynamics of British-American relations have changed dramatically since 1776 and 1812, with both countries fighting in two world wars and several conflicts as allies. The hype of the impending birth increased American's obsession with the British Royal Family. Constant news surrounding the birth caused people who did not care to remove news of #royalbaby from their twitter feeds. Reporters and photographers gathered outside the hospital to capture the first glances at the future king or queen starting in July, weeks before the baby's birth, creating news about waiting for news.

As an Anglophile I enjoyed hearing more information about the royal family, but the wait was too long. Being enrolled in summer classes, I seriously considered skipping class the day I woke up to a notification saying Catherine was in labor, but I had a midterm that I couldn't miss. Rest assured I brought my laptop and watched a live stream of the Lindo Wing doors online the rest of the day, waiting to see a clerk emerge with the notice of the birth. My infatuation with the Royals comes from a love of history and tradition, but for most Americans it comes from a love of something we cannot have. Because of the Revolutionary War, we no longer live in a monarchy; instead, we grow up with fairy tales of princes and princesses falling in love and living happily ever after. Many girls pretend to be princesses in their youths, and it can stick with them through their adolescence and sometimes even into young adulthood. Everyone wants the magical love story and since we cannot have it, we cling to details of the Royals like our lives depend on it. Our parents are tuning in to see a happier ending to the remake of Charles and Diana's story. Whatever the reason, I do not believe that the love of Royals will die down fast here in America, and the British hope it won't as the new couple and their baby are becoming the nation's biggest tourist attraction.



Athletes Outnumber Fans

by A.J. Jeffries

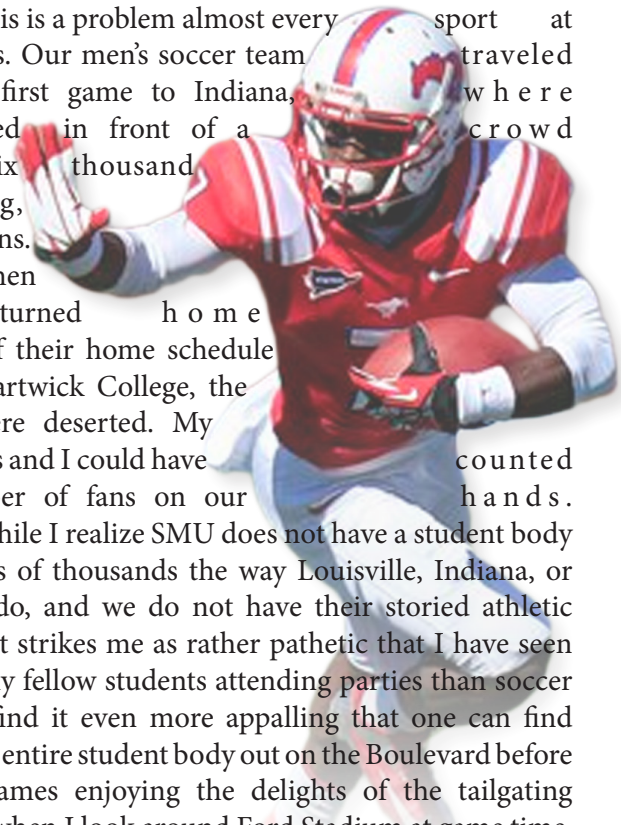
September 7, 2013. With twelve seconds left on the clock, Darius Joseph catches a touchdown that will give SMU the lead over Montana State. It was, in all likelihood, the most exciting end to a game we will have all season, but the only sound accompanying his touchdown catch was that of crickets chirping around Ford Stadium.

This is a problem almost every sport at SMU faces. Our men's soccer team traveled for their first game to Indiana, where they played in front of a crowd of six thousand screaming, devoted fans.

Yet when they returned home to kick off their home schedule against Hartwick College, the stands were deserted. My teammates and I could have counted the number of fans on our hands.

While I realize SMU does not have a student body in the tens of thousands the way Louisville, Indiana, or Alabama do, and we do not have their storied athletic histories, it strikes me as rather pathetic that I have seen more of my fellow students attending parties than soccer games. I find it even more appalling that one can find almost the entire student body out on the Boulevard before football games enjoying the delights of the tailgating tents, but when I look around Ford Stadium at game time, the excited crowds of SMU students have disappeared.

I understand that many of my fellow students have not grown up around sports, and some of them may not even like or understand the games our student-athletes compete so hard in, but that does not excuse the school as a whole for our lack of school spirit. The student-athletes at SMU put hours every day into their practices, missing out on many aspects of life here and increasing the difficulty of an already challenging school, all for the sake of their sport. Surely, the least we can do to reward their sacrifices and effort is put a couple hours of our time into supporting them when they compete. As superior as many SMU students may feel academically and economically to our contemporaries at state schools, we could take a few of lessons from them on how to support our sports teams and represent our school. Step 1? Start showing up to games. Step 2? Start caring about the results.



Do As I Say, Not As I've Done

by Margaret Fegan

I'm sorry to say it freshmen, but you and I (and with me stands the entirety of the student population) have a love-hate relationship. Most of the time, we love you guys. Most of the time, you're the awesome and impressive young people the administrators have said you are but when you swarm places with your clueless, fresh-faced selves then we start to hate you. It's not even that you've done anything excessively wrong (but do remember that classiness is next to godliness, y'all), but we loathe you all the same, and here's the real reason why: We're jealous. We're jealous that you're just beginning while we have to plan our next steps. We're trying to walk forward, but we can't help watching you over our shoulders. And have you ever tried walking like that? I've got a crick in my neck and bruises everywhere else. Aside from all the embarrassing and public floor-face contact I've experienced over the past three years (and the eighteen years prior), I've accumulated a fair amount of wisdom as to how one should go about navigating the undergraduate career.

Despite my envy, I want to grab and shake you all until you realize how amazing the days in front of you are. It sounds a little violent, but comes from good intent, I swear. Sophomores, this is also for you, and juniors too for that matter. It's never too late to start over. So I'll give you this: as you begin to create your spring schedule, take classes in subjects you don't know anything about – take an intro to anything in Meadows, try geology (the pace isn't as glacial as you might expect).

You've got so many opportunities, and they'll say over and over again how many opportunities there are at this school. So many opportunities that you'll be overwhelmed by all the opportunities but be careful to not let them pass you by. Repetition sometimes negates meaning, so I'll spell it out for you. Play the field. Do NOT believe that you don't have time to take a cool, fun class. That's what a liberal arts school is for – molding a well-rounded human that knows a good bit about quite a lot. Don't waste it.

The Breakaway Music Festival

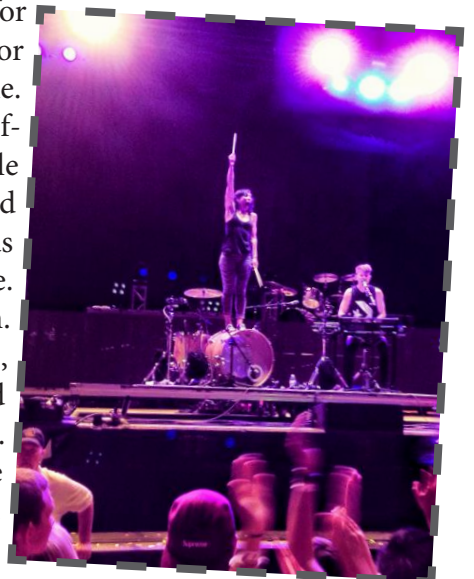
by Graham Lumley

After noticing the signs advertising the Breakaway Music Festival along the Boulevard and reading big names like Wu-Tang Clan, Matt & Kim, and Big Gigantic, I knew I was going to attend this festival. A couple friends and I found a Groupon for half-price tickets and the plan was set. The defining characteristic of the Breakaway Music Festival is how it combines Hip-hop, Indie Rock, and Electronic Dance Music (EDM) all in one event. With three stages inside the FC Dallas Stadium, we weren't entirely sure how to spend our time.

We arrived at around 2 PM, which was apparently too early, as there wasn't a big crowd until about 6. With a good amount of audience involvement, Matt & Kim's performance was the first to really grab our attention. At one point they tossed out balloons, waited for everyone to blow them up, and at the climax of one song called for everyone to throw their balloons into the air. It was absolutely incredible.

After Matt & Kim, the next duo Big Gigantic, whose one-of-a-kind act combined techno and jazz, took the stage. Their whole show was a huge dance party, and the flood of color and the sound took over all your senses. One high point of their performance was when they played a remix of "Swing" by New Zealand rapper Savage.

The last act was Empire of the Sun, a band I had never before seen perform. It was really something else. They combined music with lights, smoke, dancers, and props. These Australians really know how to put on a show. When they played "Alive" and "Walking on a Dream," everyone in the crowd sang along, it was amazing. This all new music festival was very well put together and will likely continue to grow in popularity in coming years. If you're a fan of hip-hop or EDM, I'd definitely recommend you save up to buy tickets next year. You won't regret it.



Sexual Assault Reports Worry Students

by Alexa Maffei

When the first email reporting a sexual assault on campus was sent on September 2nd, I was slightly concerned. I knew bad things could happen on a college campus, but I hadn't expected for it to happen so quickly. The second email sent only a week later regarding an attempted sexual assault was more worrisome, and when the third email was sent out the next day about yet another assault, I was quite frightened. Each email detailed what one should do in the event that he/she is assaulted and ways to minimize risk for assault, which was helpful. However, even the advice was still scary because it shows that any student can be a victim.

Many students began to express concern, especially first-years, who feared this could become a regular occurrence. There was a total of five sexual assaults reported last year, and at the end of the first two weeks of this new school year, we already had over half that number. While three and five don't sound incredibly drastic for such a large campus, it is important to note that about 90% of sexual assaults go unreported.

It is quite clear that SMU puts forth an effort to prevent sexual assault, such as the seminar and online course that the first-year class was required to complete. In further response to the sexual assault reports, Student Senate felt the need to help prevent more from happening. A program by the name of 'Not on My Campus' has begun in order to address this issue, and a new committee may even be formed. It has now been three weeks since a sexual assault has been reported on campus, and we can only hope that this streak continues.

Coming Up Soon in the University Honors Program

by Tess Griesedieck

Honors students who are beginning their enrollment meetings for Spring 2014 should be on the lookout for the special classes offered by the Honors Program. We are offering two Travel Courses next semester. The first, a trip to New York City, will take place over J Term and will explore the deep history found throughout the city. The second class, a new one to the Program, will travel to Virginia. Taught by Dr. Doyle and Ms. Spaniolo as a team, this class will explore colonial Virginia and its early beginnings. You will then travel to Virginia over Spring Break to experience all that you have been learning about throughout the semester.

Also, the Honors Program is looking for volunteers! We are going to create Focus Groups of helpful volunteers to improve the Honors Program. Any students involved in the Honors Program may participate. We will be conducting short surveys and asking easy questions to determine what the Honors Program should continue to do and what new ideas may help improve the Honors Student's experience. We will keep you posted on more information through the new Honors social media outlets and by email.

Coming Soon:

⇒ **Open House and Human Rights Major Info Session**

October 16, 2013 at 5PM

⇒ **Al & Sadye Gartner Honors Lecture Series**

November 2nd, 2013

Field trip to 6th Floor Museum.

Lecture on 7th floor, then tour of the 6th

⇒ **Honors Program Focus Groups Call for Volunteers**

Meadows' Brown Bag Dance Series

by Margaret Fegan

A few of you, and by a few I mean all, have been receiving exciting e-mails about Brown Bag lectures and events around campus that you've read from top to bottom. Remember when I waved at you at all of those events? We were there. Whatever personal feelings you may have towards the University's listserv and events, you really can't afford to miss this next series. Get ready for the next spectacular and save the date!

The week of October 7th, the brown bag autumn dance series will showcase the talent of Meadows' dance majors. The performances are held in the Bob Hope Theater lobby of the Owens Art Centre, where you may choose to watch from the ground level or the balcony. I recommend going twice to balance out your viewing perspectives. I also highly recommend going early, as space is limited and will run out fast. The pieces, choreographed by the students themselves, must first be selected for the show by the seasoned



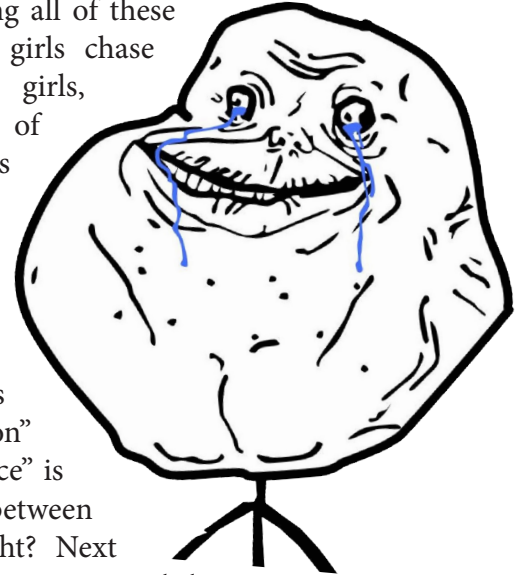
adjudicators, which is quite an honor. Pieces vary stylistically from ballet to hip-hop to jazz to break-dancing. I was fortunate enough to preview junior Shauna's Davis's brilliant duet with junior Hattie Haggard, which made the cut, and I can say with certainty that this season's show will be one of the best in recent years.

True life, it's the best thing you should ever skip your class for – which some of you may have to do. It runs from 12-1 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and 12:30-1:30 on Tuesday and Thursday. With so many shows, there's really no excuse to miss it. However, in the extreme case of a test every day at that time, there is another Brown Bag dance series in the spring, which I'm already thrilled to skip class for.

How to Stay Single Until You Die

by Alec Petsche

Are you tired of forming meaningful social bonds with others only to have them end up as long term friends or, even worse, spouses? I know I am. You guys out there, aren't you tired of having all of these attractive college girls chase after you? And girls, aren't you sick of eligible bachelors telling you how beautiful you are? I mean, let's be serious: We all came to college to study. All of this "social interaction" and "life experience" is really just filler between classes, am I right? Next time you find someone falling for you, remember these tips to maintain your lifestyle of dinner alone and binge watching last year's hit TV series every weekend.



“I want deer in the headlights eyes”

For my first edition of this column, I thought that I would discuss one of the most important aspects of dating: Kissing. An awkward kiss at the end of the first date may be the best possible way to ensure that there will never be a second. I recommend a three step technique. First, maintain deep eye contact. Seriously, you are trying to peer into this person's soul. I want deer in the headlights eyes. Second, lean your head ninety degrees to the left. This should make it so there is no comfortable way for your date to move in to meet the kiss. Finally, and this is critical, lead with the tongue. If you don't think that sticking out your tongue as you try to make out with someone makes a situation weird, email me because I have a therapist that I would like to recommend.

I hope that this method is enough to allow you to live the ideal life of an internet-age hermit, but on the off chance that it isn't, I'll be back with more tips in the next issue. Or, if you happen to be in a hurry, you could just behave in a really odd fashion.

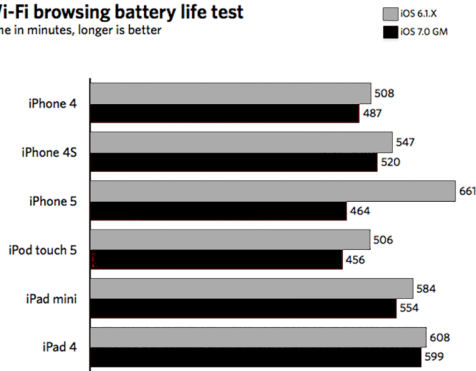
That tends to get the job done.

iOS 7: Beautiful, but Battery?

by Sam Ligon

Finally, a beautiful new OS for all your iDevices has arrived. If there were any factors pressuring Apple fans to leave the fold for a shiny new Nokia Lumina or HTC One, iOS 7 reined them back in with an impressive software upgrade. There's still something missing as far as hardware is concerned, but Apple clearly breaks away from the crowd with this clean, intuitive renovation. However, the free download actually comes at a cost: battery life. The average loss was about 12.7% (or 56 minutes) of browsing time on WiFi compared to iOS 6, according to

Wi-Fi browsing battery life test
Time in minutes, longer is better



ExtremeTech writer Joel Hruska. The iPhone 5 contributed the most to this unhappy statistic with an astonishing loss of 42.42% or 3.3 hours.

Battery life is the most important aspect of a device—without it, your lovely crystal-covered 8 mega-pixel camera lens can't capture that oh-so-perfect Sprinkles cupcake worth at least 30 likes on Insta (with the appropriate hashtags, of course). What is there to be done about battery life? It isn't like our old Sidekicks and Razrs where we could snap a new battery right on the back of our (then) very fancy flip phones. The secret lies in the software, however you'll have to give up some of the fancier features that you spent half an hour trying to download.

Thankfully, Gizmodo has organized a list of settings you can selectively turn off at your leisure. You already know the typical tips, such as turning

off auto brightness, Bluetooth, Wifi, location services, and 4G when you're not using them. Some of the newer bells and whistles might be harder to find, however. First, that cool thing where the background moves when you tilt your phone is called Parallax Mode. To turn it off, look for Accessibility under General settings and tap Reduce Motion. Turning off Raise to Speak in the Siri menu produces the same effect. Additionally, Background App Refresh (found under General settings) and iTunes and App Store automatic updating are quite alluring as well. But let's face the facts—you're going to check these fairly often anyway, not to mention being able to kill them (or not) with two taps of the home button. Hopefully these battery-saving tips will help you enjoy the transition to the lovely new iOS 7.

The Mountain Man Part 1

by Zain Haidar

I came to Taos the way I expect most visitors arrive; sweaty, in a bus filled with old women, nauseous, and suffering a minor existential crisis - nothing too out of the ordinary. Of course I chatted up the lady folk - they were much more pleasant than the woman I met at the Albuquerque Airport who lovingly described to me how nice it was to be back in New Mexico after spending so much time with "the blacks in the slums of New York." Yes that is a direct quote, and suffice it to say that was one of the most awkward conversations I've had in my life.

But hours after that conversation, followed by eons spent on the rickety bus shuttling through mountainous clearings, my reception phasing in and out, I found myself deserted, alone and unsure. I had arrived at Fort Burgwin, SMU-in-Taos' campus - luggage in hand, appetite rearing, and not a clue whom I could talk to or where to go. This, for me, was middle school all over again. Tables full of people I didn't know, fear, paranoia, and the semi-constant need to de-stress with a therapeutic nervous breakdown. I had a weird childhood, but even weirder is where that childhood has taken me in my late teens and now twenties.

My trip was funded - graciously, I might add - by a Richter Fellowship, provided via the UHP to promote independent research and scholarly innovation. This was my first experience dipping my toes into the annals of pure academia, and I soon figured out the most difficult part about engaging in a research project is explaining to people (who aren't really listening anyway) what exactly it is you're studying. I packed my bags, paid thousands of dollars, and went across the country not only for a Wellness II credit, but also to investigate the media in New Mexico and research what makes Taos and Santa Fe tick.

All of that, however, was far from my mind that first day. After meeting my professors, hauling my luggage, and struggling to breathe at 7,000 feet, I plopped into bed exhausted and listened to the howling coyotes make their rounds while I dozed off for my first Taos sleep.

Meeting Wes Moore

by Tess Griesedieck

As a self-proclaimed literary nerd, very little excites me more than the chance to hear the author of a book I've read speak. I love to write and that means I've experienced some of the struggle that comes along with writing any sort of story. You struggle to find the right words and images to convey your exact meaning to those reading the story. When it comes to the books I'm reading, though, I'm even more intrigued.

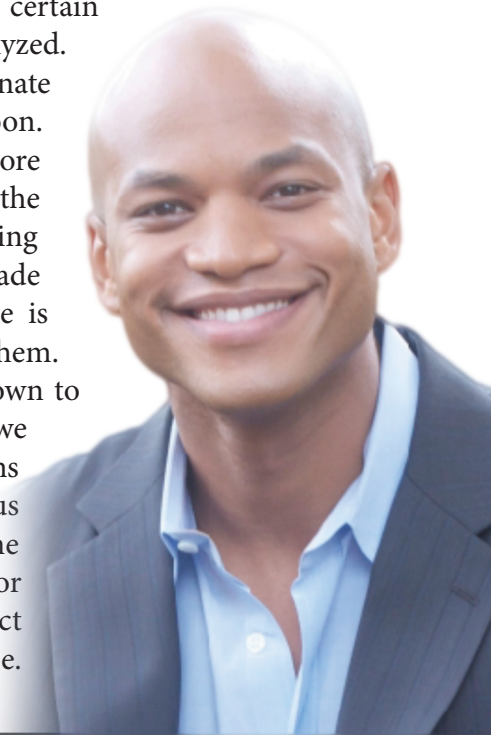
Wes Moore is the author of *The Other Wes Moore*. This book is a paralleling story that follows the lives of two boys from Baltimore named Wes Moore. One, the author, is a Rhodes Scholar and celebrated military veteran who has a wife and family. The other Wes grew up in the same area and is now spending life in prison for his involvement in a robbery turned homicide of a off-duty policeman.

In the case of *The Other Wes Moore*, it's easy to speculate why the certain stories were chosen to explain the two boys or how the book was catalyzed.

It's much more difficult to actually know these things. SMU was fortunate enough to have the author Wes Moore come and speak for an afternoon.

Anyone lucky enough to attend the lecture can confirm that Mr. Moore is an extremely lovely person to be the presence of. Throughout his speech, the Q&A portion and his book signing, Mr. Moore had a deep interest in focusing on every individual person he encountered. Which, on some deeper level, made his desire to write the story of the two Wes Moores even more apparent. He is a man who loves people and loves listening to them and interacting with them.

Perhaps my favorite part of the night was quickly walking Mr. Moore down to the Journalism Wing to be interviewed. Even though it was a short walk and we were on a tight schedule, he was happy and carefree. He kept asking me questions about myself and life at SMU, with each and every answer seeming precious to him. Spending this extremely brief amount of time with him impacted me because it was so brief. Even in these brief moments, whether it was with me or anyone else he encountered, Wes Moore was delightfully intrigued by every aspect of our lives in a way that only a man who loves to hear and share stories can be.



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