This issue of A Magazine is a capsule of tireless collaboration, a representation of the hopefulness that comes with seeking the new and innovative, a body of work openly nourishing curiosity, while also offering pointed questions, hopefully pushing you to ask even more, in every and any capacity. It explores the daily choices we make and the more significant ways we interact with the world, challenging habits quietly and with a softness, as we should continue to. We hope you feel the excitement we felt while discussing and executing the new ideas we’ve delved into between these pages. We also hope you feel the sentiment as we explored and paid homage to the past (hello, lords of dogtown, thank you for gifting us with the art of cruising), speaking of something else, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together.

In existence within a society such as ours, enduring fear, distress and social strain, consistently being spoken to in a variance of tones, a back and forth of positives and negatives, there still remains a type of consistency in all the miniscule and easy—the simple joy received of consistency in all the miniscule and easy—the simple joy received of consistency in all the miniscule and easy—the simple joy received of consistency in all the miniscule and easy. They ensure you are human, as small as they may seem. We hope you discover the community we have carefully curated and in every and any capacity. It explores the daily choices we make and the more significant ways we interact with the world, challenging habits quietly and with a softness, as we should continue to. We hope you feel the excitement we felt while discussing and executing the new ideas we’ve delved into between these pages. We also hope you feel the sentiment as we explored and paid homage to the past (hello, lords of dogtown, thank you for gifting us with the art of cruising), speaking of something else, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together, for people come first and they tend to tie into just something together.
Every day we make choices, as cliche and painfully obvious as that may sound, in no means trying to sound like a generic high school graduation speech here, just ensuring we're all clear on this. But in reality, as small as those everyday choices may be, as effortless as it may seem to run to your local CVS and pick up a new face wash, or grab a cup of coffee before that 9 a.m. class, there's a tangible cause and effect, an impact. Instead of walking through your daily routine blindly, using what you always use, carrying what you always do, ask yourself why you are making those choices, ask if it adds a value, a certain joy, to your life. Even recognizing specifics of these items, like knowing the products you choose were created without being tested on animals, or whose packaging was made from recycled materials, or simply can be recycled, brings a peace of mind you may not have realized you wanted, and that little piece may feel pretty good.

In the end, light that candle as you do your homework, but maybe use wooden matches instead of a plastic lighter, take those photos on your disposable of those you spend each and every day with because they're bringing you relentless support, and don’t forget to water the plants that sit on your window sill to ensure you've got some green around to get you through the wavering Ohio weather. Yet do it with a mindfulness, an attentiveness, do it because it makes you feel at your best.

See themag.com for full product lists.
“IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT FOR ME TO PROTECT MY ENERGY.” A SENTENCE ALL GROWN WOMEN MUST KNOW HOW TO SAY AND DO.

CLEO WADE
THERE IS PEACEFUL.
THERE IS WILD.
I AM BOTH AT THE SAME TIME.

NAYYIRAH WAHEED
MAKE THIS A YEAR ABOUT YOUR ELEVATION—ON ALL LEVELS.

LALAH DELIA
Before you sit down to eat lunch in a dining hall on your lonesome or shovel food into your mouth in between classes, do you ever feel a longing that you had someone sitting across from you, or a group of friends sharing samples of their plates with each other beside you?

It’s safe to say that food, the act of eating in general, is something that is desired to be shared and easily affiliated with the basic human need and desire for connection. Naturally, that pull is something we recognize constantly, leading to comments like, “I don’t like to eat alone,” or the ever so common get together or meeting being sharing a meal. For this piece, the team at A Magazine decided to test the theory of whether or not there’s a special kind of connection able to be obtained over food, or even if food simply feels more fulfilling when shared with those you hold closest, those you spend time with day to day.

Within these photographs, you see us pulling together a meal to share, taking the time to set a table, making sure to include foods grown within season, our season being the end of summer, beginning of fall, and making dishes that are easy to share among multiples. We all had a hand, whether that was picking up bread, slicing local vegetables, plating hummus, pulling the last herbs from her garden, (thanks Ella), or helping dish out sweet potatoes and quinoa as we finally sat down to eat, all together.

Words by Malagyu Wawasuk
Photos by Alyse Nelson
SEASONAL EATING FACTS:
With produce being consumed closer to harvest, in season, a high nutritional value remains with little contamination.

When more fruits and vegetables are able to be collected at a time, purchases are made at a lower cost.

Supports your body’s needs seasonally.

Gives opportunity to build local relationships.
The following is a conversation between Mere Jones, Sabrina Niedbalski and Frankie Frank:

**HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU ARE ON YOUR PERIOD, OR ABOUT TO GET YOUR PERIOD?**

MJ: I get really cranky, honestly. I can definitely feel it coming, I get really emotional. I have one big emotional breakdown and then I get it, and then I’m good.

SN: Yeah, I can feel it coming too. I get bad acne, so I go to town popping my pimples.

FP: I could probably sleep for about two weeks straight, the week before and the week of. I’m hungry all the time, I usually eat things I don’t normally eat, salty stuff, all the clique stuff, but that stuff is all true for some reason.

MJ: I always eat peanut M&Ms.

SN: Yeah, I always feel like the moment my period starts I just know too.

MJ: (laughs), no, same! I do!

SN: Dude, I just know to go to the bathroom.

MJ: In the middle of the night!

FP: I can feel my uterus, weeks before I can feel it slowly starting to tear and shed. It kind of feels like you’re about to have a really bad poo, (laughs), you know what I mean?

MJ: I feel like it’s nice though, because it shows I know my body well.

SN: Mhmhm, same.

FP: I guess I’m just very uterine aware.

**DO YOU THINK THAT UNDERSTANDING YOUR BODY HAS COME WITH TIME?**

SN: Yeah, yes! I can always tell when it’s going to start, even when I don’t know when it’s going to start, if that makes sense.

MJ: I remember when I was in fourth grade in elementary school, when you have the period talk, and one of my teachers—and I’ve been paranoid about this ever since—said, “You’re going to have one really bad bleed through, every girl has it, when you bleed through your pants.” And I haven’t had that yet!

SN: Oh, I think I’ve had mine.

MJ: Really! I don’t think I have, so I never have so much anxiety about it, but at the same time I feel like I know my body well enough now. But truly, I can never wear white when I get my period.

SN: It’s a mental and a physical thing for sure.

MJ: It really is. You just know. It’s weird. It’s kind of cool.

**WHAT DO YOU DO TO FEEL MOST LIKE YOURSELF WHILE ON YOUR PERIOD?**

SN: I have underwear dedicated to when I get my period.

MJ: I sleep a lot. I rollerblade. I feel like it makes it go faster for some reason. If I had a partner I would definitely have sex.

There are definitely pairs of panties I stay away from, and I don’t wear my white pants, because no matter what I feel like I leak, no matter how hard I try.

**DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU FIRST GOT YOUR PERIOD, THAT YOU WERE EXPOSED TO A WIDE NUMBER OF PRODUCTS YOU WERE ABLE TO USE, OR AWARE OF EVERYTHING YOU HAD ACCESS TO?**

SN: When I first got my period, I remem- ber everyone pressuring me to wear tampons.

MJ: Yes, me too.

SN: And I remember the first time I tried to put in a tampon and I had no idea how to do it. So then I started wearing pads, and that’s really the only thing I’ve ever been exposed to. But I did go through a phase, because pads and tampons are really bad for the environment, so I was trying to figure out alternatives. But I never went through with it.

MJ: I always just wore tampons, mostly because my mom told me to, and I’ve used them ever since. I know a lot of bloggers use the period cups now and my best friend does too, so she’s tried to get me to do it.

FP: I don’t even know if menstrual cups were invented when I first got mine. I used pads. I mean, I was in the 6th grade when it started, so I was pretty young.

I usually use a Diva Cup. Tampons give me headaches and I think they’re gross, and know they’re bad for the environment. So for the first two or three days I’ll use my Diva Cup and then the last two or three days I’ll free bleed.

**DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU GOT YOUR PERIOD?**

MJ: I don’t remember the first time I got my period, but I do remember using a tampon for the first time and I went

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**FEEL LIKE A WOMAN. PERIOD.**

Words by Marissa Nichol | Photos by Moriah Meek

Periods. They are the most natural cycle of a woman’s body, and have been since the beginning of human kind. So why to this present day is it still a topic that is considered to be taboo?

Sure, women may ask each other for suggestions, mention their cramps every once in a while under their breath, or beg friends to bring them chocolate at odd hours of the day, but almost always in a private setting. We are living in a different time than when our mothers handed us our first box of tampons with cardboard applicators, so why are we still speaking about our monthly, gift in the same dull tone? With a lack in conversation among most women, we requested a few of our models and stylists working on this piece to start the conversation for you. Periods should no longer be looked at as secretive, strange or loathsome. Periods should be looked at as a time to embrace being a woman, and feeling like a woman too.
through like half a box, they were all sitting on the floor in front of me.

SN: I didn’t understand where to even put a tampon, I didn’t even understand where was where.

MJ: Honestly, I think I used pads up until my cousin’s birthday party that was at a pool, and I decided I wanted to go swimming.

SN: Yup, yup, yup.

FF: I cried. I did not want it. I knew exactly what it was and I went to my mom and was just like, “Nooo, take it back.” I also remember wanting to go swimming and not knowing how to put a tampon in. So I was sitting on my counter in my bathroom, just spread, trying to figure out where to put it, and just being traumatized with not knowing.

FINAL THOUGHTS

FF: I mean, this is a part of all of our lives, all of the time. Somebody’s probably on it right now, in this house. I’m about to be on it right now. I think it’s pretty normal. It’s funny to me how gross other women think it is to talk about it. I mean, it is pretty gnarly, but it’s no big deal because we’re all doing it and it’s not a choice. Ugh, that’d be so nice if it was.
Questions consistently asked and succinctly answered through the fluid use of line, color, shape, texture, the careful analysis of space and the conceptualized ideas shared and expressed through both fashion and art is: what is art, what is fashion? Is there a space they exist together, happily married to the elements they separately embody and to each other, acting collaboratively? They each form a product to create a fundamental perception of a piece. Tools are utilized to contrive a feeling, story or meaning within any one work of art. They both work to present questions, challenge ways of thinking and shape and shake the culture within society drastically.

Within, there is an attempt to combine both studio art and fashion design as one, to not only showcase student work within the Kent State University College of the Arts and the Fashion School but to also showcase that the two are very much able to be seamlessly blended and offer a new kind of vibrant, invigorating power when conjoined. Both forms, side by side, share a certain level of connection among the process of creation. With this, each of these facets of art carefully influence and build off of one another to support, examine and determine our world for what it is currently and what it may later become.

Words by Eleonore Zurawski
Photos by Adam Martin
SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT INTERTWINED

ARTIST: RAYMOND RODRIGUEZ (@RAYMONDPROBZ)
FASHION DESIGNER: ELEONORE ZURAWSKI (@ELLAZSKI)

ARTIST: SEPENCER PATRICK (@SPATRICK48)
FASHION DESIGNER: MADDY MEHLER (@WILLIEXGRIM)

ARTIST: ELEONORE ZURAWSKI (@ELLAZSKI)
FASHION DESIGNER: EVAN NEAL (@EV)

A MAGAZINE | 2019
Latitude’s mission is to serve the students and community in any way that they can. They believe in the importance of creating a true community catered to what is important to their residents! Knowing that Kent State is a world renowned fashion school Latitude built a stunning fashion boutique right in their leasing hub! Latitude will never be “just another bed for students;” they pride themselves on going above and beyond to ensure they are always enriching the student’s experience.

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Fashion week is coming to Kent and we couldn’t be more excited! Latitude at Kent is new on the scene, but they are quickly making a name for themselves and pulling out all the stops to let us know they aren’t your average apartment complex. Latitude’s Fashion week will be hosted Fall 2019 in their brand-new building and you do not want to miss it! This exclusive VIP event is for Latitude’s new residents and guest. Latitude’s courtyard will be transformed into LA’s fashion week showcasing all the latest designers at Kent’s very own fashion school. This event will feature everything you would expect during the glamorous LA fashion week: a runway, photobooth, paparazzi, DJ, food and more, you might want to RSVP now!
WHERE THEY COME FROM, WHERE THEY GO

WORDS BY MADISON PATTERSON
PHOTOS BY ALYSE NELSON
The natural wonders of our world have an unmistakable might. They capture our hearts after a single glance, inspire creation and remind us of the simpler pleasures of life. From delicate grassy meadows to vast and mysterious oceans, their aesthetic appeal doesn’t go unnoticed. But when their beauty is appreciated, we rarely consider how our small actions affect the environment. Especially when it comes to our clothing choices.

Our wardrobes are dictated by hazy environments in many ways. We love, love, and clothing when it’s not, comfortable chores in uncomfortable terrain, and chunky with windy times and we change.

So why is it that we neglect the other part of the environmental dressing equation - where our clothes come from and where they go. While tropical storms ravage coastlines and economic threats roam Earth’s fragile systems. We need only look in the mirror to understand why. Making conscious decisions to choose ourselves in pieces that respect and respect our wild places and its elements, while still also paying careful attention to our personal comfort can help us remember that we are not just on this earth, we are of this earth.
In slip-on Adidas that were once white but now scuffed and torn, Mark Fleming stops skating for a brief moment to make small talk with other skateboarders at Lakewood park where he comes once a week. From his shoes to his dirtied, loose-fitting pants and thinned hat, someone passing him on the street could say he looks like any other skateboarder.

However, the stereotypical image of a skateboarder we grew up knowing is no longer defined, as the sport has opened up to more people than originally imagined. Mainstream fashion, the internet and technological advancements are part of reshaping who society allows into the subculture.

Fleming is a 21-year-old film student at Cleveland State University who recalls a time in his youth before he picked up a skateboard in real life. Fleming grew up playing video games like Tony Hawk, which was what he calls his “first avenue into the world of skateboarding.” That lead him to start skateboarding around the age of 15.

“It’s about having fun and skating just for yourself,” Fleming says. “It’s a sport, I won’t say it’s not, but I consider it more of just a personal thing. Like an art.”

The art of skateboarding reaches all the way back to the ’50s, but didn’t form a distinct image and culture that stuck until the mid ’90s. That’s when Tony Hawk propped in the X Games and the stereotype of baggy pants, long hair and destructive behavior was born.

During that same decade, the first Supreme store opened in Manhattan with only a handful of T-shirt options and the same open-minded ideology of the skate world. Today it is a high-fashion phenomenon. In recent years, prominent cities like Tokyo and Paris have opened Supreme stores, and opened the general public up to its image. That also goes for Thrasher, which grew known as a skateboarding magazine in the ’80s and now has dozens of T-shirts and hoodies at Zumiez, a skate and snow driven retailer for young men and women.

Fleming would never purchase a Supreme or Thrasher item being sold today. He prefers to shop at small skate shops, which honors where skateboarding all started before it became a huge industry. His favorite is West Side Skates in Lakewood because of the connection he has with the employees.

“I’d like to think that a skateboarder isn’t someone that’s wearing really expensive clothes all the time and doing it just sort of as a fashion statement,” Fleming says. “I would prefer to see people doing it ‘cause they love to skate, and that’ll never go away.”

Quinn McCandless is a sophomore at Kent State University who started skateboarding around the age of 15. Fleming noticed an even more diverse group of people who aren’t straight-edge, people she went to high school with, growing up playing video games like Tony Hawk, who might be men’s, I don’t even know,” McCandless says as she looks down and grinds onto her plain navy shirt. “If you’re in skinny jeans skating, you probably wouldn’t be able to move. The baggier the better.”

The only brands that really matter for Fleming and McCandless are shoe lines for function. Brands like Vans, Converse, Adidas, and Nike all provide flat bottomed shoes that make controlling a board easier.

Kent State sophomore Dylan Krone skates with McCandless and two other friends at least once a week on campus. He emphasizes that the skateboarding “image” truly comes from its laid-back culture and mindlessly throwing on clothes for the day. “I’ve been free livin’ since ’96,” Krone says. “Skateboarding has always just been linked with free living, not ‘get a haircut’ living. Do what you want.”

While Krone is open-minded, he knows other skateboarders who have a judgmental mindset towards anyone walking around in mainstream skateboarding brands. “If you take a group of straight-edge punk rock guys and you introduce them to a group of people who aren’t straight-edge, they probably won’t want to hang out with each other, even if they’re into the same exact thing,” Krone says. He says that as skateboarding culture pushes forward in time, all skateboarders should support each other around the act of skating.

Although skateboarding culture is fairly diverse at Kent State because of the acceptive nature present on campus, Fleming noticed an even more diverse community when he transferred from Kent to CSU this year. He didn’t know many female skaters at Kent, but those were some of his first friends in Cleveland.

“It’s a male dominated sport and I don’t know why. Fleming says. “There’s no reason it should be a gendered activity at all.”

“It’s a male dominated sport and I don’t know why... there’s no reason it should be a gendered activity at all.”

Today, platforms like Instagram and YouTube act as a gateway into the skateboarding world for more people, including females. McCandless recently noticed people she went to high school with getting into skateboarding on social media. She says she thinks part of their inspiration is from their exposure to videos online, including a film called...
“As something grows, it’s definitely going to lose some of the original core values that it was created upon. But, there’ll always be people skating for the right reasons.”

MARK FLEMING
“The Skate Kitchen,” which features a group of female skateboarders and their lifestyle in New York City.

McCandless also observed the penny board trend took off when popular stores like Urban Outfitters started selling them, and when YouTube makeup gurus, like Eva Gutowski and Alisha Marie, sharing that they own a penny board has influenced more people to buy them.

McCandless and her friends don’t mind the subculture of longboards and penny boards. But on the other hand, Fleming finds a cultural difference between skateboarders and some one just trying to “get around.” He always approaches someone he sees on a skateboard to talk about whatever skate parts just came out. He can’t do that with someone on a longboard. “It’s a completely different world,” he says.

Skate culture is more prone to open up to so many people because of how receptive new generations are to hobbies, without caring about a reputation or image associated with it. Krone brings up hip-hop artists like Tyler the Creator and Lil Wayne normalizing skateboarding for groups of people who may have never felt they fit into that lifestyle before. “We’re moving towards a unanimous culture or something, and culture is kind of toxic because it has a lot of identity in it,” Krone says.

“We’re moving towards a unanimous culture or something, and culture is kind of toxic because it has a lot of identity in it.”

With a change in culture can come a loss of identity. There is no doubt skateboarders have carried a specific identity throughout the decades, whether they meant to follow it or not. Fleming says he sees skateboarding possibly heading towards a more monetized and commercial state.

“As something grows, it’s definitely going to lose some of the original core values that it was created upon. But, there’ll always be people skating for the right reasons,” Fleming says. He predicts there will be a divide created between those who do it for the action and those who do it for the image.

Innovations in skate parts and technology will most likely contribute to a cultural divide. A variety of electric skateboards have made it easier to go up hill and get from one place to the next faster and with less effort. This deters from the culture of sweating and working towards mastering a new trick, which is part of what Krone admires. “Skateboarding has some of the craziest technique as far as I’m concerned. You work out muscles in your legs that no one else does in the sport world,” he says.

With more people longboarding or looking to new skate technology for convenience, this may just be a stepping stone into traditional skateboarding for them. As advancements are made, the culture will continue to grow and evolve. And even 5 years from now, we will look back and see what changes have been made for future generations.
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We all know the ones who are truly there for us, who value us, and who we can always count on to comment on our Instagram pictures. They are our mates. Our best friends. Our other halves.

In the modern day, friendship has changed. Unlike the friendships our parents made when they were our age, social media and technology has changed the way some of us befriend.

For some people, traditional social interaction isn’t even accessible. For Jaydn Williams, a Kent State University freshman accounting major, making friends was an ongoing struggle because she was homeschooled.

Jadyln grew up with a very strict mother who felt it was best for her to be cyber-schooled during middle school. She remembers hating it. Her boredom consumed her, and her urgent need for social interaction grew stronger over the years. She decided she had to search for a way to break out of her own all consuming isolation.

During her three years of homeschooling, she found her escape. With just a few scrolls of her fingertips, she discovered her community through the Skout app, a social networking and dating program. As a 12-year-old, she obviously wasn't exactly in the market to date, she just wanted to find some friends to talk to.

The Skout app allows individuals to meet by preference and proximity, and features millions of people. “I honestly don’t know how I stumbled upon the app,” she says. “I think I just typed in the Google Play store apps to make friends with,” and then it just came up.”

After a few seconds of installation in the App Store, she gained a whole new world. One that took her out of loneliness and dullness. Social media has the ability to connect people who, like Williams, didn’t get the opportunity through something of typical normalcy like a high school cafeteria. It’s not a new concept, but the way we befriend and find those we connect best with is constantly changing.

“IT’S NOT A NEW CONCEPT, BUT THE WAY WE BEFRIEND AND FIND THOSE WE CONNECT BEST WITH IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING.”

Hailey Mills, an interpersonal communication professor at Kent State, spends much of her time researching her passion — social media. She says, “Social media is the global village that allows us to meet anyone, anytime, anyplace.”

Williams describes herself to be more so on the introverted side when it first comes to making friends. In other words, she’s only quiet until you “actually” meet her. But online it wasn’t forced. She found that social media allowed her to easily connect with people to start building conversations more naturally.

After building a profile, she found Seth and Brandon. Two people who were her age and she could actually relate to. She quickly began messaging them back and forth and began developing a real connection.
We constantly hear of the negatives of social media and how it can create this artificial distance between friends. Such as creating a sense we are connected with a large network of individuals, even when we are not. But, some people have found that social media allows them to find their community despite social drawbacks. It can connect people of various backgrounds, ages and interests. Apps, hashtags, and social platforms can bridge the gap of social issues some individuals encounter in the offline world.

According to the Pew Research Center, 57 percent of teens ages 13 to 17 have made a new friend online, with 29 percent of teens indicating they have made more than five new friends in online venues. It’s because social media helps teens feel more connected to their friends’ feelings and daily lives, and also offers teens a place to receive support from others during challenging times.

Jackie Cardno, a senior anthropology major at Eastern Michigan University, found difficulty making genuine friends because of her passion for Taylor Swift. She’s a little obsessed and throughout her high school experience she felt extremely misunderstood. Many people just couldn’t relate to her unwavering love for T-Swift. She found herself hiding her true self, and her true infatuation. “You... try to hide it,” she says. “Like yeah, Taylor’s cool but I’m not obsessed with her.”

On Twitter, she found she is able to be herself. She doesn’t have to hide her fangirling. She can freely post pictures of her favorite concerts or tweet the lyrics to her favorite songs. It’s her safe haven. But, Cardno did not expect Swift’s 2017 Reputation Tour to expose her to an entirely new community.

She spent many of the days leading up to the ticket sale date tweeting about the newest album and her tour anticipation. “I sent out a tweet about her, like, “Oh, I just got my Reputation Tour tickets, so excited!” she says. “And I hashtagged it with #reptourdetroit, and then another account followed me that also had #reptourdetroit in her bio. I was like “wait a minute, is Swift/Twitter a thing?”

“An advantage (to social media) is maybe seeing a different side of a person that maybe you wouldn’t see in the real world,” Mills says. “It can certainly solidify a personality and you can get to know someone online in that respect.”

She messaged the account and the two quickly connected. Her new friend suggested she follow a few of her other “Swifties” friends. After seeing the effects of the #reptourdetroit hashtag, she decided to include it in her Twitter bio. “All these people started following me, and I got added to a group chat with like 50 other people who were going to the Detroit show,” Cardno says. Online Jackie is Swiftie all the way, but she never thought it could connect her to others.

Their fandom allowed them to instantly click. Almost like they already knew each other. “We just hung out, and we had a really good time,” she says. “We were all really comfortable with each other in a way because we had a common interest.”

Befriending individuals online over common interests pushes past personality boundaries. It allows individuals to come together and really view a side of an individual they may only show online. Through communities, individuals are able to take an online relationship into the offline space.

“It’s just an easy way to find friends who accept you for that kind of stuff,” Cardno says. “I used to get picked on and made fun of. So, I went searching for another kind of friendship where I could just be myself.”

Social media friendships can be just as important as traditional friendships. As long as you’re open and willing to put yourself out there online, anything can transpire.
LESSONS IN LOSS:
THE HIP-HOP COMMUNITY

WORDS BY EMILY DAVY
ILLUSTRATION BY PETER KRATCOSKI
In the past year alone, the hip-hop community has lost two prominent young musicians. Lil Peep, born Gustav Åhr, overdosed on Xanax just two weeks after his 21st birthday in November 2017. Mac Miller, born Malcolm McCormick, died in September from the combination of cocaine, ethanol and fentanyl in his system. He was only 26 years old.

McCormick signed with Rostrum Records in 2010 and had just released his first mixtape in 2015. Although the two were at different points in their respective music careers, they were bound together by one thing: their openness about their drug habits and, as a result, their tragic deaths.

McCormick had been vocal in the past about his struggles with depression and bipolar disorder, claiming his mental illnesses to be the reason he abused drugs. He previously stated that he “hated being addicted. When asked about the threat of overdose in an interview with the Fader in 2016, McCormick’s answer, “There’s no legendary romance, you don’t go down in the history books because you overdosed. You just die,” is now just as haunting as it is sad.

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The stigma still exists though, and not just in music, but in our culture as a whole. The fear of being labeled and rejected is a common fear for people suffering with a mental illness, and can often keep them from reaching out for help. Labeling can trigger powerful expectations of rejection that will ultimately erode confidence, disrupt social interaction and impair both social and occupational functioning, the American Sociological Association says.

Angela Neal-Barnett is an award winning psychologist, an author and a professor at Kent State University. She is also director of the Program for Research on Anxiety Disorders among African Americans (PRADAA), which strives to “make a difference in the lives of African Americans.”

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One in five people in the U.S. deal with mental illness each year according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Black Americans are 20 percent more likely to suffer from mental illness, but half as likely to receive treatment compared to white Americans. Hip-hop is a primarily black industry, and the phrase “hip-hop is my therapy” has been overused by musicians for decades as an easy way of avoiding real, constructive therapy. This could be due to economic factors or a blatant cynicism for the health care system.

Dr. Siri Sat Nam Singh hosts Viceland’s “The Therapist,” a show in which Dr. Singh sits down with artists, including rappers, to reveal who they are beneath the public persona and to encourage the act of simply talking to someone, professionals or not.

In October, Chance the Rapper donated $1 million dollars to improve mental health services in his hometown of Chicago, a city that is 33 percent African-American.

Dr. Neal Barnett tells NBC, “I say for many African-Americans experiencing anxiety, factors, such as family or religious beliefs, may encourage them to downplay their symptoms as just nerves.”

“We are taught that anxiety is the result of some wrong thinking on our part. If we pray, we feel a little harder, if we keep ourselves in the world more we would not be experiencing this,” she says. Neal-Barnett encourages people dealing with anxiety to “call it what it is” in order to accept it and figure out how to manage it. Above all else, find the courage to ask for help. Anxiety is not permanent. As Neal-Barnett says, “It is treatable and you can reclaim your life.”

When it comes to the issue of drug use, hip-hop isn’t entirely to blame. Music is and always has been a mirror of the culture that it’s in. References to cocaine were abundant in hip hop during the ’80s and early ’90s due to the big cocaine explosion that was occurring at the time. Today, though never appeared to receive any treatment for his ailments.

Why is it that both musicians who were at the peak in their careers, didn’t receive successful treatment for their addictions? Here we have two young men who were open about their illnesses and their music and in interviews throughout their careers. The warning signs became eminent far too late, followed by the outpourings of love and support.

The vast majority of hip-hop musicians are male, and the same goes for their male-dominated audience as found by Spotify Fan Insights. Substance abuse and addiction, sometimes called “slow-motion suicide,” is now just as haunting as it is sad.

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I had never considered Kent my home. When I did think of home, I’d reflect on the thundering rivers and sky-scrapping mountain peaks of my native Washington state, watching my mom smoke on our porch among the evergreens, or helping my dad water sunflowers under the Cascadian sun. The associations that came to my mind were vibrant and almost palpable.

What I didn’t think of was Ohio. No flat farms, no drays of squirrels, no biting cold winters. But, hating the place you live isn’t conducive to a fulfilling college existence, so I set off with a purpose: I wanted not only to find something to call home in Ohio, but also to get lost in that home.

Practical travel quickly emerged as the solution. My roommate, a model, a photographer and I left Kent for a day trip to Cleveland: a city I scarcely ever visited, to search for something or some place to change my mind.

11:55 A.M. 
AN UNTIMELY BEGINNING

Rushing to get ready, I stuff lipstick, a piece of Juicy Fruit gum, one pencil and a crumpled wad of cash into my brown suede purse. I take one last look in the mirror to evaluate my outfit (jean jacket, pear print T-shirt and red cateye sunglasses), grab my notebook to make observations of the day and bound down the house steps with my roommate to greet our Uber driver.

We exchange pleasantries, and after passing Twin Lakes, realize we had left an hour earlier than we needed to meet the others. I write: “The Uber driver is doling out Cleveland recommendations already.” Disheartened at our slow start, I turn my head, and see the construction site dirt mounds mimic the silhouette of the approaching city skyline.

12:40 P.M. 
MARKET SQUARE

The small square across the street from West Side Market is the killing time spot for me and my roommate. A wooden bench soaked in sunlight houses us while we throw bits of old Larabar at frenzied pigeons, always aiming for the smallest birds in the bunch.

It’s one of those spots where a rare mid-October sunburn was possible, and when we finally join our collaborators, my cheeks have a cherry tinge.

2:02 P.M. 
WEST SIDE MARKET

The meeting among the four of us is our first, and it takes place in the oldest indoor/outdoor market in Ohio—an old place for new beginnings.
Stalls are crammed with meats in every shade of rose, pastries and perogies, cheese, oils and people. We try baklava, amber and ruby-colored cream cheese pastries, raspberry balsamic and pad thai, all consumed with an urgency fit for a bustling mercantile. We run up some teal steps to eye the sumptuous feast that lay below, but before long our time runs short.

Technicolor rows of plump vegetation electrify our exit pathway and although out of reach, beckon our touch.

2:02 P.M. WHISKY ISLAND COAST GUARD STATION

In our first collaborative effort, the four of us pack into the photographer’s vehicle and head for the water.

“I’ve never had so many people in my car,” he says. We laugh, I scribble it down in my notebook.

As we pull into Whisky Island, I feel as though I have just slammed a shot of Jack Daniel’s on an empty stomach—I’m car sick. But the pale slate-grey of the lake entices me with the promise of all great waters ahead. The road is calling our photographer and the model has internship obligations, but they are in Cleveland so she offers me and my roommate a ride home after she finishes. We find ourselves with nothing but two hours and a pocket full of folded green hills.

My stomach twists as I realize I have a quiz due in an hour and a phone running on 8 percent, so we go to a place that is already on my list: the Cleveland Public Library.

Golden doors revolve us into a lobby of swirling, porcelain-colored marble, seemingly begging for some heels to click on its slick floors and send taps echoing throughout. The ceilings bloom like a pastel Renaissance fresco and a friendly librarian with a thick midwest accent directs us to public computers.

As if compelled by some ancient instinct, my roommate and I race to the top of the steepest incline, carelessly throw our backpacks on the sidewalk holding brown paper bags, smiling and shivering in the fading daylight.

The model’s car pulls to the curb and we greet each other with comfort. On the turred highway I drift into a light slumber induced by the pagan croons of a Stevie Nick’s lullaby.

FOUR DAYS LATER

4:00 P.M. PUBLIC LIBRARY

By the late afternoon, our party has to dissipate. The road is calling our photographer and the model has internship obligations, but they are in Cleveland so she offers me and my roommate a ride home after she finishes. We find ourselves with nothing but two hours and a pocket full of folded green hills.

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The truth is you cannot manufacture a home, nor can you force experiences to resonate more deeply than is genuinely felt. That being said, yes, I unearthed a sense of travel in myself a mere 45 minutes away from where I live. And no, I will not be calling Ohio my home anytime soon. But that’s not to imply that the experiment was a waste. Thanks to the effort, what I will do is carry a few very special, invaluable experiences and people from Ohio into all the glorious places of my future. In that way, they will always be home.
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