

April 2021
Issue #2

solucky

**Pushing
Boundaries**

Black fashion &
Personal Innovation



A Brown
Girl's Guide
Breaking the
gender norms



In this issue

Overview

Brand - 4

Magazine - 7

Trending

Pushing Boundaries: Black Fashion & Personal Innovation - 10

My Journey with Makeup - 20

Friday Fashion Favorites - 26

Self Improvement

Innovation in Mental Health - 30

Culture

A Brown Girl's Guide to: Breaking Norms - 34

South Asian Highlights:

Creator Spotlight - 40

Stretched Thin: A Bay Area Story - 44

Review

Playlist of the Month - 50

Innovative Technique in the Classics - 54

Support

An Argument for Defunding the Police - 58

More

Advertisement Applications - 64

Contributor Applications - 67

Acknowledgements - 68

Brand

Throughout the month of April, the solucky team has focused most of our time & energy into preparing for our second magazine issue. Although we typically try to bring our audience collaborations & weekly content, we decided to prioritize streamlining our magazine creation process for the upcoming months. We see this month as an investment into the future, & it allows us to be more ready to bring you exciting, relevant content. We focused on working through conflicting schedules, team communication, & the artistic process. As a result, we are very excited to bring you a variety of quality pieces in our April issue.

Issue #2 was a journey full of hard work & impactful experience. Our team has tirelessly worked through conflicting schedules & heavy school work to put this issue together. I can confidently say that this issue has continued to raise the standards of our magazine. We were also able to welcome new contributors to our team, allowing us to expand & increase the potential of each future issue.

- Sanjana Solanki
[Founder]

Overview



Courtesy of Disha Desai

A large, stylized photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a black leather jacket over a patterned top. She is looking off to the side. The background is dark and moody.

Magazine

Last month, we were pleasantly surprised to see the overwhelmingly positive response to the release of the first issue of solucky magazine. This month we decided to build off of that & bring you another magazine filled with quality content.

Our theme for this issue is innovation. So most of our pieces are all about pushing boundaries in different areas & industries. We did our best to demonstrate in not only our pieces but in our magazine design & aesthetics as well. In terms of content, we covered a wide variety of topics. As you read through, you'll get the chance to learn about innovation in fashion with a focus on the Black community, breaking South Asian standards for women, creative film techniques, & more. We have also included a piece from our social perspective columnist focusing on the plight of policing in America & examining solutions. The photography featured in this issue was shot by a range of photographers from California to New York, aiming to encapsulate our theme of innovation & pushing boundaries

This month, we are also excited to announce that we are formally extending the invitation to you, our readers, to share your creativity & passions with us! We are now accepting one-time submissions from individuals who want to make short-term contributions to solucky magazine. Examples of submissions include poetry, personal essays, photography, digital art, & more!

Thank you for giving us a platform to share our passions & bring you content.

Hope you enjoy this issue!

-Ananya Dutta
[Head Editor]

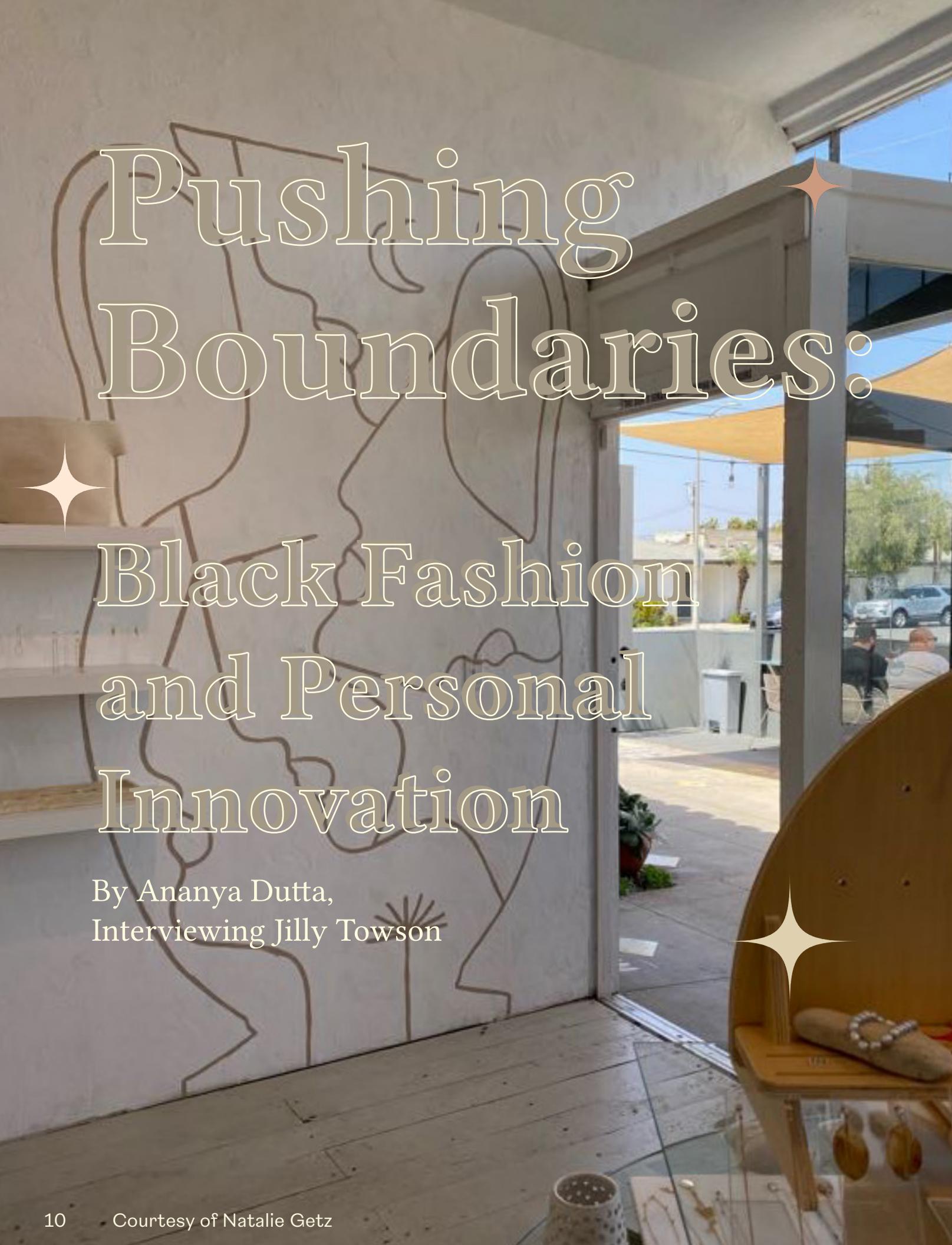
Overview

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black top and jeans, standing on a rooftop. She is looking up and to the side with her hand near her hair. The background shows a city skyline with various buildings under a clear blue sky.

trending

Pushing Boundaries: Black Fashion and Personal Innovation

By Ananya Dutta,
Interviewing Jilly Towson



This month's issue is all about innovation, so I thought it would be appropriate to include content about people & communities that push the boundaries of fashion. For a long time, the Black community has influenced the fashion industry as a whole. Despite this, credit seems to elude them. Historically, major brands have been happy to appropriate Black looks without any of the credit. To learn more about the Black community's influence on fashion & get insight into what innovation in this industry looks like, I decided to interview Jillian Towson. As a published model, creator of a fashion podcast, & curator of a fashion exhibit at the Smithsonian museum, Towson can be considered an all-around fashion expert. For this article, we conducted an email interview where we discussed the Black community's role as innovators in fashion as well as the art of pushing boundaries.

The aesthetic of a fresh set of acrylic nails has recently exploded in popularity. It is common today to see long, manicured nail sets on women of all ages & races. This trend was originally popularized in the Americas by Black women. According to Towson, the first example that came to her mind when discussing this trend was the 1980s Olympian track star, Flo Jo. "Flo Jo made history at the olympics while wearing a killer set of long red acrylic nails," she wrote, "And I absolutely love that she wore acrylic nails throughout her entire track career. Now, acrylic nails are seen on influencers & people of all races." Yet, Black women are rarely given credit for starting this trend & ironically are criticized for the very trend that they created. Towson asserted the importance of giving credit & added, "I think it's so important to know who started the trend, because Black women have (and still often are) scrutinized for wearing acrylic nails while others who've hopped on the trend are praised."

It is ironic that the very creators of the trend are the ones receiving criticism for wearing it. This is an issue that doesn't just stop at acrylics, unfortunately. Hoop earrings, oversized clothing, & even Air Jordans are all aesthetics originating within the Black community that were initially associated with negative stereotypes— that is, until they were adopted by white society. Towson states that “Black women have started several fashion trends & it's often not until White women hop on the trend, is the trend no longer considered ‘ghetto.’ At the same time, Black women are still referred to as ghetto when rocking a fabulous set of acrylic nails, & that's definitely something that needs to change.”

Despite this, Black designers have still pushed their way through & continue to redefine & modernize fashion standards. Towson provided three great examples of Black designers who push boundaries with their innovative genius. “Tia Adeola, she makes these beautiful matching sets that are fun & flirty. She also created these super beautiful masks with frills on them that are such a beautiful & bold look.” Adeola is a designer who creates high-end fashion pieces that have been worn by the likes of Kali Uchis & Lorde. Her works have also been featured in various magazines & runways, & are available on her website tiaadeola.com. “Second is Andrea Iyamah. She makes gorgeous resortwear that is chic, fierce, & bold all at once. Her swimsuits are what are particularly bold to me, & really push creative boundaries. A lot of her swimsuits have bold colors, can be worn multiple ways, & have straps that resemble leaves & flowers that frame the body beautifully.” Andrea Iyamah also recently dropped a spring/summer collection, which is available on her website, andreaiyamah.com. “Third, is LaQuan Smith. His work is some of the most on point, beautiful, & hot garments that I've seen that I think would be perfect to wear”



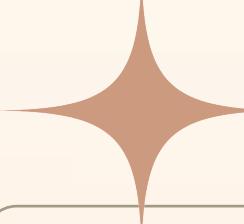
Courtesy of @jilly.t on Instagram



out. My favorite piece of his right now is a black puffer coat & a matching puffer mini skirt.” LaQuan Smith is a fashion designer from Queens whose work has been supported by Beyoncé, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, & Kim Kardashian. His pieces are typically high-end & available at his website, laquansmith.com.

Keeping with the theme of innovation, we then discussed hoTowson stated that she accomplishes this within her own looks by taking risks & focusing on her individuality. Towson elaborates how “personally, I try to push boundaries with my own style by literally trying anything that I think looks cool, when it’s within my budget. I feel like oftentimes, at least for myself in the past, people are scared to try new things in terms of fashion because sometimes it can feel like a big risk!” Still, it can be a little nerve-wracking to follow your fashion dreams, & Towson definitely understands. “It can be scary not knowing if others will like your outfit, or if you yourself will even like your outfit, but you’ll never know unless you try. I recently bought knee high white boots which I absolutely love, but was kind of scared to wear them casually outside, because I thought that people are going to be like ‘who does she think she is? where is she going? Why is she so dressed up?’ But at some point you have to realize that whether or not people know or care who you are you’re important, so why not dress like it?”

Some of her tips for our readers to spruce up their looks involve picking out investment pieces, buying more tops than bottoms, & being bold. “When you buy those investment pieces, buy something that you’ll wear all the time,” she said. These pieces don’t have to be expensive necessarily, but they do have to be something you feel comfortable in & will continue to reuse. The tip regarding buying more tops than bottoms is probably my favorite since it’s ‘broke college student friendly’.



“We’re college kids on a budget, so really having two or three really good pairs of jeans is perfect,” said Jilly. Lastly, being bold is possibly the most important part of being able to push boundaries in your personal style. This can mean a variety of things:

“Being bold can be finally buying the top you’ve been eyeing on Instagram or Pinterest for months but weren’t sure if you’d be able to pull it off or not. & even without seeing whoever’s reading this right now, I’m telling you if you wear it with the right attitude (and styling) you can pull it off for sure!”

The Black community is a major source of innovation in fashion, & credit must be given where it’s due. Learning the stories of popular aesthetics such as acrylic nails & street fashion adds a level of depth to it & allows us as consumers to appreciate it more. There are so many modern trends that have originated from or drawn inspiration from other countries & cultures. So I leave you with this suggestion today today: the next time you see a trend in an industry you’re particularly interested in, take the time out of your day to do a couple minutes of research & explore its origins. You won’t be disappointed.





My Journey With Makeup

By Sanjana Solanki

It was never easy to be a South Asian girl with a love for makeup. Despite it being a valued hobby of mine, my interest in makeup was generally looked down upon, by my elders. Makeup is an art that is generally underappreciated & undervalued. It is seen as a useless hobby that is meant for people who cannot achieve much in life, but the skill it takes to obtain detailed looks & perform tells an entirely different story.

Makeup combines my best qualities such as precision and perfection. It also allows me to express my creativity & innovate using the materials around me. Over the years, I was slowly able to tune out the criticism & begin to showcase my





special interest to people who would truly appreciate it. By showcasing my skills & building my platform, I created a name for myself. Soon, I began to receive clients, people who were willing to pay for my makeup service. I worked with many different people; from dance teams to high school students attending school dances. By displaying my talent, I became someone who not only represented a small portion of the South Asian community that is passionate about makeup, but also the owner of a successful side business.

Aside from my main Instagram account (@sanjana.solankii), I maintain an account dedicated to my passion for makeup. On this account, I post every makeup look I have done since the beginning of high school. Although it has a lower follower count at the moment, I hope this account can continue to grow & gain a larger audience. Below, you can view a few of my recent looks. For now, I will continue to post for my friends & family who have been there since the beginning!

Nautical Antiques & Collectables *Jan Hiddleston*

©



DAVID GARIBALDI PAINTING WITH RHYTHM



Friday Fashion Favorites

Instagram handles of each individual are attached - to find more favorites, check our Instagram highlights (@solucky.life)!



Self Improvement

Innovation in Mental Health

By Anula Narasimhan

COVID-19's been hard. For everyone, for a multitude of reasons. Not only did the virus take away a dreadful amount of lives, it left most of us in a resulting state of widespread anxiety & panic. In fact, during the pandemic, over 4 in 10 adults have reported symptoms of anxiety or a depressive disorder, up from 1 in 10 adults reporting so merely one year prior. A decline in mental health leads to a decline in productivity, which inevitably leads to a decline in the economy. At this stage, we are left with no choice but to address this very prevalent & growing issue, resulting in massive innovation in the mental health space.

1 - Destigmatization of Mental Health

At the core of it, humans are social beings. When the pandemic stripped that & forced us to isolate behind closed doors, we were left with nothing but ourselves & our thoughts. Whether it was the loss of dear ones or losing sources of income, it is inadvertent that our thoughts turn negative. Depression sinks in, jobs are lost, mental health issues rise. Going through a tough time collectively brings a sense of closeness, & therefore more outlets to express our emotions & thoughts that would be otherwise difficult to navigate through. This sense of community sets the stage for the destigmatization of mental health.

2 - Data-Driven Solutions

Prior to this past year, mental health was not treated with the same importance as our physical health. As it was given less attention, less research was completed in that arena. What makes research in this area tricky is that there is no simple x-ray or blood test that can be conducted to diagnose a patient, instead mental health care workers need to focus largely on self-reported information.

The pandemic gave rise to mental health issues, fortunately, & now more data is being collected by healthcare workers & employers via recurring surveys or questionnaires, which are then in turn used to create data-driven solutions. For example, Eleanor, an addiction treatment startup, uses clinically validated questionnaires to measure anxiety & depression levels, in addition to HEDIS measures & social determinants of health. Many companies are following Eleanor's lead in evidence-based care to ultimately provide the most effective long-term solutions to the most prevalent mental & behavioral health problems today.

3 - Regulations, Policy, & Law Lead to Ease of Access to Care

The pandemic is a blessing in disguise as far as regulations for mental health are concerned. The urgent need paved the way to the pullback of the Ryan Haight Act, which was put into place in 2008 & made it illegal under Federal law to "deliver, distribute, or dispense a controlled substance by means of the internet". This enables people with mental health issues to be able to utilize telehealth appointments & receive the required medication online, rather than having to show up in person.

4 - Employers are getting serious about it

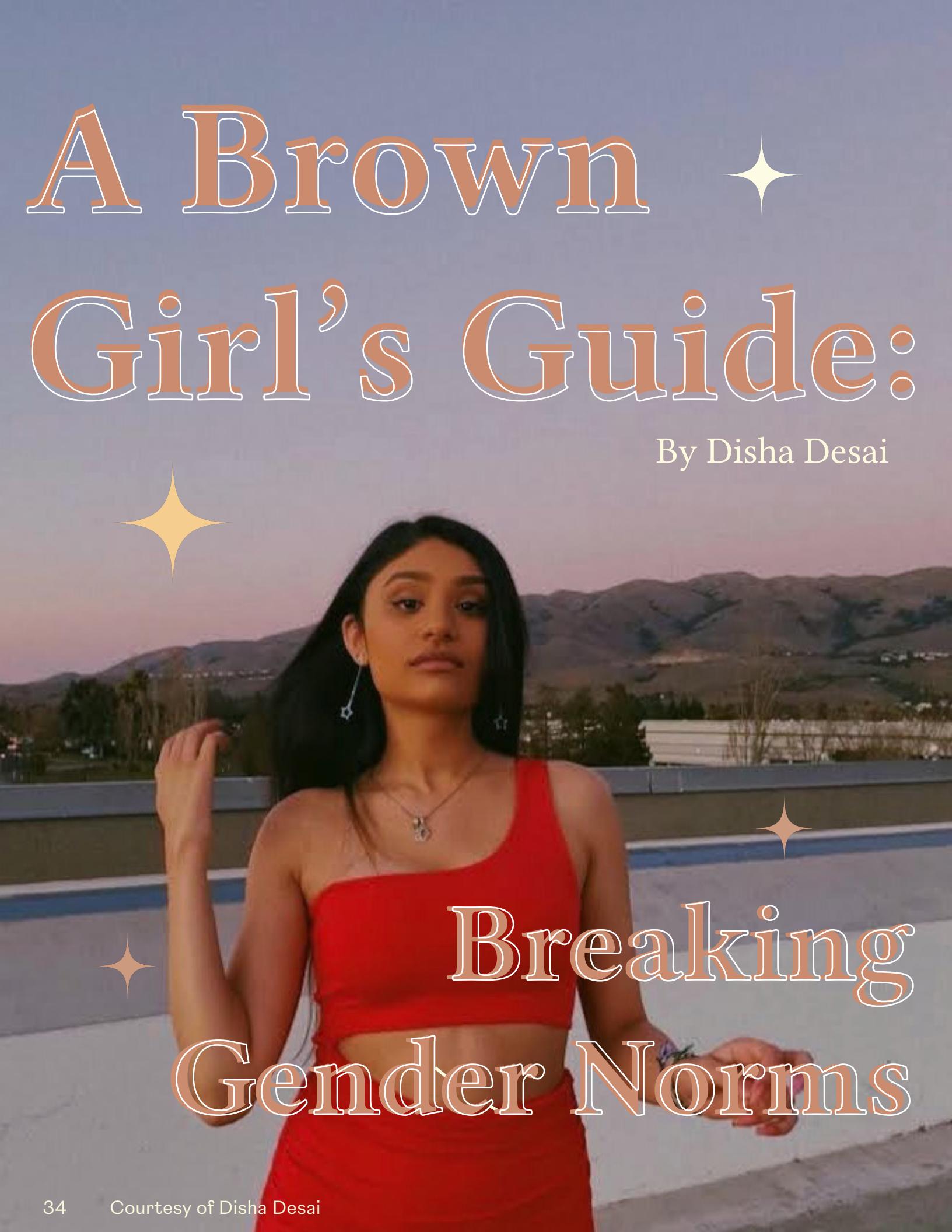
After seeing the impact mental health has had on productivity, companies, both large & small, have an even larger incentive to tackle the problem. Employers like Deloitte, one of the largest consulting firms in the world, have become diligent in tracking employee vitals & sending out mental health resources weekly to prevent burnout. In addition, around 54% of employers will offer free or low cost virtual mental health visits in 2021, a huge jump from almost nil pre-pandemic.



Culture

A Brown Girl's Guide:

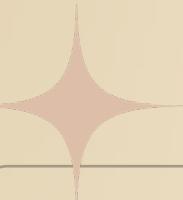
By Disha Desai



Breaking
Gender Norms

In terms of gender roles in brown culture, men have consistently been more valued than women. Often when I speak to older relatives, I realize that so many generational traditions & stereotypes exist to keep women in subservient societal roles, & breaking these standards is incredibly tough. South Asian girls generally grow up facing a series of restrictions & have conflicting, sexist standards placed upon them. For example, many young girls are taught to cook & clean at a young age not for their own benefit, but rather to better serve their future husbands. It is also common for parents to restrict what girls wear, who they see, where they go, & how they look. On the other hand, South Asian men face far fewer restrictions in the house & generally receive more freedom to explore the world & come & go as they please. Placing these unattainable standards on South Asian women is harmful & negatively impacts our futures.

In terms of restrictions, one of the biggest sources of conflict for girls is what they wear. South Asian parents often reprimand their daughters for dressing either too feminine or not “lady-like” enough. The restrictions on clothing also go along with judgements on our appearance; we are also judged for our body types, skin color, & weight. As a result, so many young brown girls tend to be less confident in their bodies & appearances because of the norms that are put into place from society & older generations. When we wear crop tops & short clothing, it is considered shameful, although traditional Indian clothing features blouses that tend to be cropped & short. Clothing is a source that many South Asian girls use to express their individuality & style. Crop tops & short clothing can also be considered a way to embody femininity & embrace sexuality. Ironically, many parents’ fear of short clothing stems from a fear of men. However, instead of forcing girls to dress modest & encouraging the harmful sexual stereotypes behind a lack of clothing, we should instead teach young boys to respect women regardless of how they choose to dress. By breaking the negative stereotype behind short clothing & “crop tops”, we can empower young brown girls to be confident in their skin & their body types.



Who we see is also a big issue for brown girls. While brown men are typically allowed to go out for longer with less questions asked, standards of modesty keep young brown women from enjoying the same degree of freedom. Although brown boys don't receive complete freedom in this sense as many brown parents do not believe in dating during adolescence for either gender, it is important to note that comparatively, they tend to face less consequences for breaking rules & receive more freedom to go out. In the case of brown women, many of us have early curfews placed upon us & are heavily discouraged from interacting with the opposite sex. Whether romantic or not, if we are seen with a boy by an aunty in the community, the news travels fast & we are looked down upon. Hence, the common brown girl excuse "I'm just going to the library" is born (we are almost never actually going to the library). Strict parents simply create sneakier children, & that is incredibly true when it comes to brown girls. When our parents place restrictions on us, they are teaching us to find ways to circumvent rules & that we cannot trust them with the reality of our situations.



A saying that always rings in my ears is "Log Kya Kahenge?", what will people say? More often than not I am faced with that question, either from my parents or from other people around me, but why live a life for others when you can be happy & inspire others to pursue their passions at the same time? Though the older generations may not understand why some norms are sexist & wrong, we can instill new ideas & change the way women are perceived in brown culture.





Creator Spotlight:

By Sanjana Solanki

Preet Samra is a South Asian makeup artist who started her career by providing makeup services for aunts & cousins when attending Punjabi weddings. Growing up as a dancer for 12 years, Preet has been heavily interested in the creative aspect of life. She recalls how dance inspired her to pursue makeup as well saying, “some of my inspiration sprouted from dancing for sure, because I would also dress up & do makeup for performances.” Preet is also able to incorporate “complex clothing & jewelry” into her looks, which is coincidentally also her favorite part of being South Asian. In the future, Preet has plans to expand her online presence beyond her career as a makeup artist & explore social media influencing.



Preet
Samra



Stretched Thin: A Bay Area Story

By Ananya Dutta

TW: Sensitive Content

"If I am not making money, I am worth nothing to this country."

The minute those words slipped out of my mouth, I regretted them. Now, this was not because I realized any falsity; in fact, it was quite the contrary. I regretted them because as I said it out loud, it became real. The weight of what I said lay in the air for a bit & settled on my shoulders, threatening to crush me.

I grew up in Northern California. Home of the world's finest wine counties, sprawling beaches, tech tycoons, & the Golden Gate Bridge. Also home to gentrification, insanely high rent, mind-numbing traffic, & **one of the worst educational stress crises in the nation**. The intense pressure felt in Bay Area schools is something that I am all too familiar with. I attended public schools for almost the entirety of my life, which gave me a front row ticket to the shit-show that is our educational system. Outside of the Silicon Valley, schools tend to be criticized for significant matters such as a lack of educational resources, unqualified teachers, & high crime rates around the area. If we measure Silicon Valley schools by these parameters, they pass with flying colors. Kids at these schools often have access to some of the best resources available. Most parents can afford to give their kids luxuries like outside tutors, funds for extracurricular activities, SAT prep, & more. However, the perceived normalcy of these schools is exactly what makes them so dangerous.

To understand the atmosphere of these schools, we must examine the demographic breakdown of the surrounding area. The total minority enrollment at the high school I attended for two years was 88%. This percentage consists primarily of immigrants- specifically Asian American immigrants. In fact, the town where I come from is so heavily populated by immigrants that I often joke around & call it "Little Asia." This is a town **where white people are a minority-** let that sink in. There are some nice things about living in a town like this. For example, there are roughly five boba shops on almost every block you travel to. The South Asian fare, which I have sampled consistently, is some of the best that you can get outside of the actual Asian continent. There is a strong emphasis on cultural values & connection. However, there is a dark side to this immigrant safe haven

These schools have cultivated a culture of workaholism. Children of immigrants constantly describe a need to do better. As my roommate put it, when you're up against white kids who have generations of wealth & connections... who wouldn't feel the need to compete? In my home town, this need to succeed has consumed a majority of the students. In high school, forget about sports: your popularity & respect around the school could be traced directly back to the amount of APs you were taking. Bonus points if you had an SAT score above 1500 (which is more common than you'd think). Students were expected to take part in at least 4 APs, 2 extracurricular activities, start a nonprofit, & get a 4.0 starting at the mind-boggling age of 14. This toxicity is more than just harmful; it's deadly. For some, the shame of disappointing their parents & the fear of not making it to "right" college is too much to handle. Unfortunately, far too many students respond by taking their own lives.

If you took a look at my grades from when I was younger, you likely would've come to the conclusion that I was a mediocre student. Since 5th grade, my transcript became littered with B's & C's... & perhaps the occasional A. However, almost every teacher I encountered had the same thing to say to my parents at those dreaded conferences: "**She's smart. She just needs to work a little harder.**" Struggling with symptoms of unmedicated ADHD, a rapidly developing eating disorder, & depression meant I was working hard, but I just couldn't seem to get it right. My assignments were always turned in late or missing & I either zoned out or talked too much during class. Obviously, this had a detrimental effect on my education. After transferring schools, I was in a much better place since a lot of the pressure was taken off of my shoulders. I was able to find a way to focus & started getting all As. When I graduated & made plans to move to the East Coast for school, I thought to myself: **thank god, I'm finally free.**

I was wrong.

My first semester of college was possibly one of the best of my educational career. I enjoyed every single one of my classes. For the first time, I felt like I was finally speaking the same language as my peers. I actively participated in all my classes & by the end of the semester, I found out that I made the Dean's List for my grades.

On top of this, I also started my marketing career by working with an Instagram account aimed at bringing college students together & joined the Asian alliance at my school. But it wasn't enough.

The happiness I got from my success was limited. I realized recently that had brought a piece of home with me all the way to the East Coast. I started comparing myself to the students I knew from the Bay Area at other colleges. Sure enough, they were in 10 different activities, sororities, & on the boards of nonprofits. I felt a sinking feeling in my stomach. This was like high school all over again. My best, when compared to others, was mediocre. My answer to this was to work harder. That piece of home I brought with me was the pressure that had been instilled in me from the seventh grade.

I constantly feel like if I am not doing the absolute most, I am not doing enough. This is a byproduct of the capitalistic, white-supremacy upholding society we live in. By holding myself to the standards set by this society, no matter what I accomplish, I will never feel like I am enough. The constant comparison to others that has become almost easy to me now will never do me good.

It takes years to unlearn bad habits. I can almost predict what will happen over the next few months: I will push myself too hard, have a few breakdowns, go through a healing period & maybe start the whole process over again. The minute I stop trying, though, is the minute I have failed.

I still stand by the statement that I opened with: If I am not making money, I am worth nothing to this country. At the same time, I hold another statement to be true as well:

My worth could never truly be determined through an unsustainable standard set by an unfair system.

A photograph of a city street. In the foreground, there's a black trash can on the sidewalk. To the right, a black pole supports a rectangular sign with a white border. The sign has the words "PUSH BUTTON FOR" at the top and a large arrow pointing downwards in the center. The word "REVIEW" is overlaid in large, brown, outlined letters across the middle of the image.

REVIEW

Playlist of the Month

o COLLABORATIVE PLAYLIST

parking lots & downtown views



spotify playlist of the month - april

Created by sanju • 24 songs, 1 hr 17 min



This month's playlist, "Parking Lots & Downtown Views", created by Sanjana Solanki & Disha Desai, is the perfect playlist for when you want to feel creative, energized, & innovative. This playlist truly makes me feel very special, if not entirely one of a kind. Just listening to this playlist honestly gives me confidence to take on the day, gets me pumped to take on anything whether that is my missing math assignments or simply complete errands. It's the perfect soundtrack to a day of wandering downtown & parking lot adventures. The strong guitar chords & fast beats remind us of the chaotic & fun lifestyle that comes along with living uniquely & creatively.

Link: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3zw-j7tWOAfDsjAbtNFPp8W?si=6783006d908243eb>

(I am aware that not everybody has the same taste in music as I do! If this playlist isn't your style, check out this column next month & we'll have something new for you)



Innovative Technique In the Classics

By Roshni Sudharsan

When discussing innovative techniques in movies, it is important to recognize & commend the groundbreaking initiatives taken in classic movies like **Vertigo** & **The Graduate**.

Alfred Hitchcock's **Vertigo** is famous for its first application of the reverse dolly zoom when the main character, Ferguson, travels up the stairs of the bell tower & looks down from above. This technique essentially moves the camera backwards while zooming the image to induce a dizzying effect on the viewer. In fact, rather than solely portraying Ferguson's vertigo or dizzy disposition, Hitchcock gave his audience the taste of his medicine. It gave the audience a visual illusion of falling without the actual falling. For Mr. Ferguson, his life was riddled with fear of the above after he hung on for his dear life on the edge of a skyscraper after he watched his fellow officer fall right next to him. The dolly zoom perfectly depicted Ferguson's acrophobia & his point of view as that is what he imagines everytime he looks down from the stairs. It seems as though this inventive technique created by Hitchcock has been popularized & replicated in more modern movies such as Spielberg's **Jaws** & James Wan's **The Conjuring**. We, as an audience, have to thank & take Mr. Hitchcock's influence with a grain of salt as we still have to endure the dizzy effect that the directors want us to feel while watching their intriguing stylistic choices.

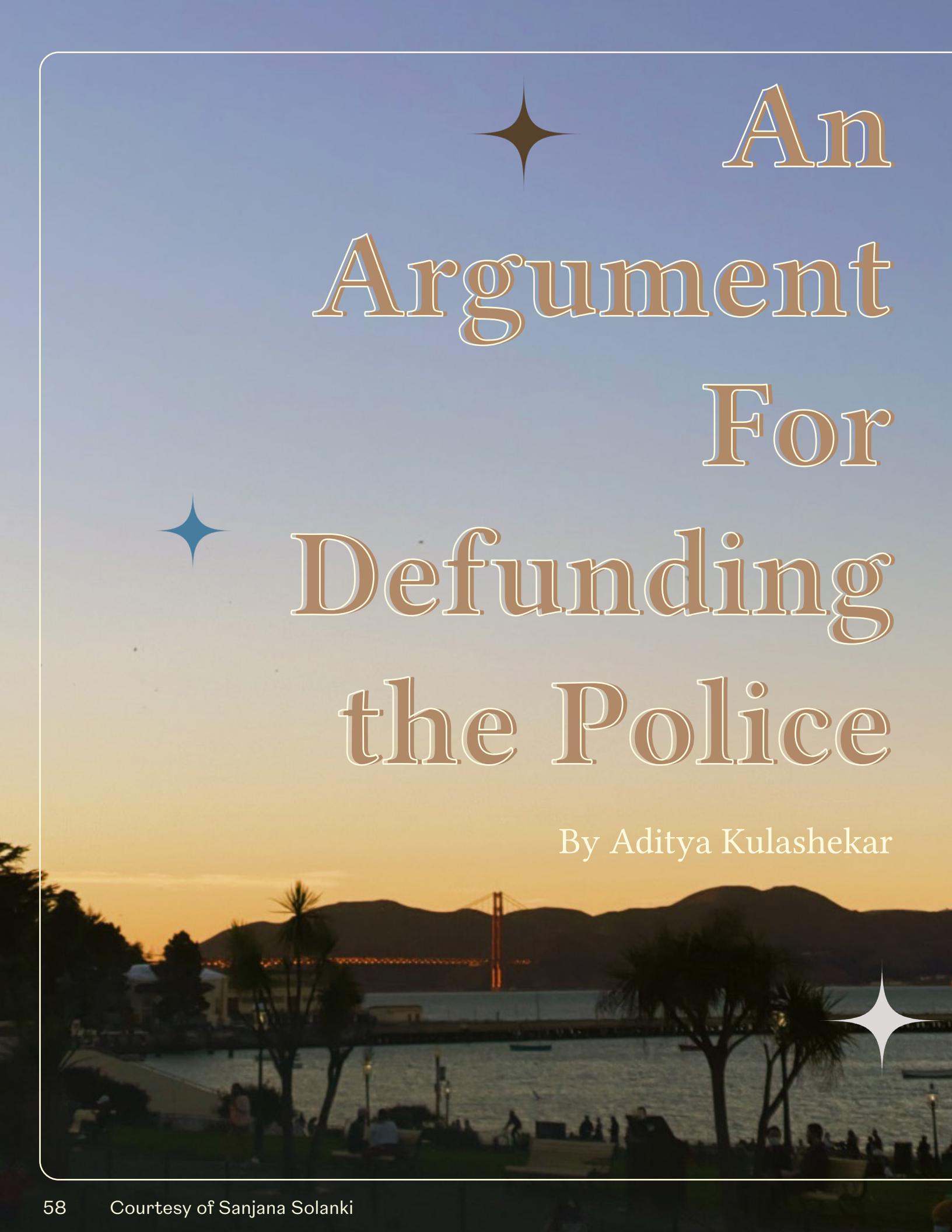
Mike Nichols' **The Graduate** also portrayed various innovative tech-

niques within their transitions. **The Graduate** is a wondrous tale about youthful rebellion & lust in the recent graduate, Benjamin Braddock. Nichols' cinematography is noted for its creative combination of different cuts to portray the passage of time during the main character's relationship with Mrs. Robinson, a lustful, but married, older woman. For example, during the two consecutive scenes in which Benjamin first swims & then engages in a night of lovemaking with Mrs. Robinson, Nichols utilizes a combination of a match cut & j cut to include a seamless transition.. A match cut is a cut between one shot & another with the actions of the characters matching in each shot. (The diving into the pool matches the diving onto Mrs. Robinson). A J cut is a cut where the audio from the later shot is heard from the preceding scene. In the movie,, we are able to hear Mrs. Robinson & Benjamin while Benjamin is still diving in the pool from the previous scene. The creative decision to combine the two different types of cuts strengthened the voice of the movie & demonstrates Nichols' affinity for innovation.

The techniques utilized in the classics continue to have an effect on today's moviemaking. & as a viewer, remembering the imagination of the classic movies adds a depth of perspective to watching the more modern movies. It is a beautiful feeling to be able to identify where & how the different ideas of directors today impact the innovation of today's movie makers.

Support

or removed my clothes. With dry Snacks, I cleaned out my washing the distinct smell of strip club out of my clothes & drank my tea. How do I feel? Complex. I am a feminist through & through but I take off my clothes for money. Generally, I feel empowered. In the club, I am in control. I say what flies & what doesn't. I dance & picture myself at home, naked in front of my mirror. I am a powerful woman that commands respect, worship & adoration. While these feelings ring strong, I am left with the aftertaste of misogyny. I replay the foul



An Argument For Defunding the Police

By Aditya Kulashekhar

Over the last week, citizens of the United States have intently followed the trial of Derek Chauvin, the man who infamously murdered George Floyd by kneeling on his neck for nine minutes. During the proceedings, Chauvin's lawyer Eric Nelson made a comment that went largely unnoticed. He kicked off the trial by explaining to the jurors that Chauvin was doing "exactly what he had been trained to do over the course of his 19-year career." While Chauvin is undoubtedly guilty & should face the harshest form of punishment under the law, that sentence perfectly encapsulates the state of law enforcement in our modern-day America.

Law enforcement officials follow a nasty pattern of taking justice into their own hands & playing the roles of judge, jury & executioner all at once. Minneapolis is unfortunately a city that demonstrates this concept well, as it continues to remain at the center scandals involving police brutality. When Philando Castile passed away after getting shot seven times, the murdering officer asserted that he was acting in self-defense after he saw Castile's gun in his hand. Castile's gun was later revealed to have remained in his pocket. When Chauvin brutally murdered Floyd in broad daylight, he argued it was necessary to restrain Floyd because he was resisting arrest despite video evidence that demonstrated the contrary. & in the case of Daunte Wright, the officer Kim Potter argued that she accidentally pulled out her gun instead of her taser. For anyone wondering, a gun weighs approximately 66% more than a taser. However, this isn't just a Minneapolis problem; it is a national one.

In 2020, the organization Mapping Police Violence collected data on over 1,100 people killed in the US. In more than half the cases, the cops were unable to be identified, while in more than half, the cops were responding to non-violent offenses. Furthermore, 121 Americans were killed by cops during routine traffic violations. & out of 1,127 deaths, only 16 cops were charged with a crime. The police run amok, murdering citizens & abusing their powers with almost no accountability. Too often they resort to means of violence to assert their power & domination. They capitalize on the leeway given to them by their superiors & the broken justice system ensures a lack of consequences for them.

This can also be considered a direct result of their training, which involves an utter lack of guidance on de escalation & racial biases. The ones who pay the price for this tend to be Black & Brown communities across the country.

Those who defend the police often argue that they contribute too much to society to be abolished or defunded. They often point out how police are supposedly essential to preventing certain crimes such as domestic violence. What they may not realize is that only 55% of domestic violence cases get reported to the police. Furthermore, the police themselves are plagued with issues regarding violence against women. A little while ago, social media was alight with one particular statistic - 40%. According to two studies mentioned by the National Center for Women & Policing around 40% of police families have experienced domestic abuse. Knowing this statistic can cause a great deal of anxiety for women, especially if their abuser has ties to the department. Furthermore, the police have a disappointing track record when it comes to cases of sexual assault. Many survivors describe the experience of reporting their case as stressful & less than a third of all sexual assault cases are actually reported to the police. Additionally, more than 90% of all 911 calls are nonviolent encounters, yet our local & federal governments spend billions upon billions of taxpayer money training the police force for violent situations that they barely encounter. It makes absolutely no sense that we depend on people who are trained to use violent & aggressive methods to de escalate non violent situations. There is absolutely no justification for the amount of money we spend on training & paying the police, which is why we must defund the police.

However, there seems to be a lack of understanding of what defunding the police truly means, as some believe advocates want to take all local & federal funding away from police. That is flat out false. Best described by the Brookings Institute, defunding the police means "reallocating or redirecting funding away from the police department to other government agencies funded by the local municipality." Most of the money would go to local programs helping citizens in need of housing, education, work, & mental health services. In wake of the murders of George Floyd & Breonna Taylor last spring, many urban centers in

the US, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, & Austin, have taken steps to redirect funding from police to other services. One city in particular, Camden, New Jersey, found immense success in defunding the police. In 2013, Camden was considered the most dangerous city in the country, & that wasn't the worst of their problems. They also had an extremely corrupt police department; in 2013 itself, the city provided over \$3.5 million in damages to citizens who fell victim to immoral police practices. The city eventually fired their entire police force, & hired 100 new police officers at half the average salary of the previous group of officers. Redistributing the left-over money to social programs, the city saw massive economic benefits, & saw a decrease in homelessness & an increase in educational opportunities. On top of that, the city was able to repurpose & demolish many of the abandoned buildings & factories that were common throughout the city pre 2013. The city also reshaped their new police force to be more community oriented, with more emphasis on de escalation & how to respond to situations that wouldn't require any violence. Clearly, Camden serves as an example of the potential successes from defunding the police.

Ultimately, our policing system is broken. Not only does it fail to provide the services required by American citizens, but it actively works against us. To solve this, we must remake our police system & create one that's less militarized, more compassionate, & better suited to the plights of every citizen, not just a certain subset. To restore trust in our policing system, we must train officers to adequately de escalate situations & carry out their duties without the absolute imbalance of power that has currently plagued departments. While law enforcement is necessary in any successful state, it's clear that America's police force has too many flaws to continue as it is. Reforms must be made, & defunding the police is a step in the right direction. It's an absolute travesty that our state & local governments spend millions upon millions of dollars to militarize our law enforcement agencies, especially when there are millions of people in America who can't afford basic healthcare needs, or citizens who can't get access to non-contaminated water. It's time for our tax dollars to fund humane practices & training techniques, for us to prioritize human needs. We must defund the police.

Moose



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Courtesy of Sanjana Dadi

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reading this
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See you next month!

- solucky Team <3

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