EDITORIAL STATEMENT:

PAIDEIA: The Journal of KCC Reads is the annual publication of the common reading program at Kingsborough Community College, CUNY. The journal publishes work on adopted common reading texts by students of the college. Given that the program's first priority is student enrichment, all KCC students are welcome to submit work for publication. We consider any work completed by a student of the college, at any level, as long as it engages the current year's common reading text in a thoughtful way that contributes meaningfully to the conversation on the book. In the main, work published in Paideia will have been presented at the annual KCC Reads Annual Student Conference, held each year in the Spring semester and featuring scholarship by hundreds of students in various formats and from multiple disciplinary standpoints. KCC Reads is part of the Coordinated Undergraduate Education Initiative (CUE) at Kingsborough, overseen by Associate Provost Dr. Reza Fakhari (room M-386 | 718-368-5029).
PAIDEIA

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EDITOR’S LETTER:

"I learned from [Robert] that often contradiction is the clearest way to truth."
—Patti Smith, Just Kids

As with the little reflective moment quoted above, we gained much this year from the wisdom contained in Just Kids by Patti Smith. We learned a lot. We talked a lot. We did a lot, on campus, in connection with Smith’s wonderful memoir slash artist how-to-guide slash LGBTQI object lesson slash… love story.

The 2014 – 2015 chapter of KCC Reads Common Reading was inspiring in very many ways. It started with Professor Paul Ricciardi, who nominated the book and whose enthusiasm and passion for it was wildly infectious for everyone involved in the program, an inspiring passion he brought to his excellent inaugural lecture, to his excellent plenary address, to his sessions at the May conference, and to all our cohort meetings. (Thank you, Paul!) Then, in November, Professor Caterina Pierre gave what can only be described as a perfectly enthralling, utterly inspiring talk on the legacy of Robert Mapplethorpe and his groundbreaking photographic work. At our student conference in May, it was incredibly inspiring, for me personally, to observe Professor Anderson's students in performance, inspired performance, of moments and lessons learned from Just Kids. To learn from my student, Nick Mancini, that he had visited the Chelsea Hotel, hung out in the lobby the way Patti did, that he had met someone who lives there and had had a long and winding conversation with this man. To see the rest of my students engaged in incredibly intense roundtable discussions about the book, making presentations that deeply impressed our Keynote Speaker (and from which he quoted in his talk); to see Profs Janowsky and Radtke's students holding likewise impassioned conversations and debates on the book, except with beautiful posters they had put much labor and thought into, visualizations that spoke through photographs mostly about what they had learned and what they believed important about Just Kids; to see Carol Wertheim's culinary arts students intensely engaged with our community, matching the food to contexts of the book and serving it up with so much panache!

We were honored, surprised and delighted by this year’s keynote speaker, Lenny Kaye. Honored that he took out time and spent the day with us. Surprised that he not only spoke but that he sang, too, and more than once, playing his magical guitar and singing like an angel. Delighted by everything he had to share with us—about the book, about Patti, too, but most of all about himself, his life, his philosophy of life, and the words spoken a few times which came together as a kind of thesis for his talk. He urged our students “to find what your sense of fulfillment is, because really that's what you want to be in your life, is fulfilled.” There was nearly as much wisdom packed into this hour and a half talk as there was in the entire book it was based on and responding to.

Much of the inspired work our students created this year is collected here, in Volume III of our journal Paideia. The epigraph above, from Just Kids, expresses an important truth regarding paideia—the acquisition of deep knowledge and the growth of wisdom—how our students acquire critical thinking to aid them in negotiating the world and all its complexities. Often this occurs by means of exactly what Smith says, by being presented with contradictory ideas, by being encouraged to think them through together, in juxtaposition despite their philisophic disagreement. This, in a large way, is what we have tried to accomplish through the common reading program in recent years. Using a collective reading structure as a means toward, as ameliorator of our collective knowledge, wisdom, intellectual creativity. Though involved faculty and staff have gained much, too, the focus has been trained on students and how this process can constructively instruct and enliven, prepare and enrich, delight and inspire them. This year, as in the past, we stood as witness, on May 5th, to precisely that, as our students “wowed” us with all the creativity, the brilliance and the rigor they brought to the study of Patti Smith's Just Kids. We witnessed their willingness to negotiate all its contradictions—of love, and art, and the American Dream, contradictions of gender and class and identity and loyalty and family, and alas, again, ART.

I think we did alright with Just Kids. I think we did alright during academic year, 2014 – 2015. And this, our third journal issue, stands as proof positive of the fact.

I hope you cherish and enjoy the astute, eloquent, painstaking work collected here as much as we did in helping our students create it, all evidence of the realization and enlargement of paideia here at Kingsborough Community College!

With best wishes for the coming academic year,

Dr. Maureen E. Fadem
Assistant Professor of English
Coordinator of KCC Reads
WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS, BUT WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF ONE ANOTHER. THE LOFT SAM BOUGHT ROBERT WAS A RAW SPACE AT 24 BOND. IT WAS AT COBBLESTONE SIDE STREET WITH GARAGES, POST-CIVIL WAR ARCHITECTURE, AND SMALL WAREHOUSE THAT WAS NOW COMING TO LIFE, AS THESE INDUSTRIAL STREETS WILL, WHEN PIONEER ARTISTS SCRUB, CLEAR OUT AND SCRAPE THE YEARS FROM WIDE WINDOWS AND LET IN THE LIGHT. PATTI SMITH, JUST KIDS
I have to confess, I’m a bit overwhelmed. There are so many things that I want to talk about today in regard to Just Kids and the amazing KCC Reads Program. But first, let me introduce myself: I am Paul Ricciardi. I am a faculty member in the Communications and Performing Arts Department’s Theatre Program where I teach Acting and Voice. I want to thank you so, so much for the great honor of being your KCC Reads Inaugural Speaker. On behalf of my fellow KCC Reads cohort, I’d also like to reiterate a few thank you’s—for the support and collaboration from the administration, from Reza Fakhari, from Dr. Goldsmith in the Honors Program, the KCTL team, the Theatre Program, and I really want to recognize my friend, the inspirational leader of KCC Reads, Dr. Maureen Fadem. Maureen, you are such a force. Thank you.

After the initial thrill of being asked to give this talk, I entered a rather long panic phase where I was stumped as to what I’d actually say to you. But soon enough, I realized that I have to start this lecture in the same place I always start as an actor: with myself. With this in mind, I’d like to share a few personal reflections…. experiences that I hope will serve as a starting place for the KCC Reads year-long celebration of Just Kids.

My first reflection is actually a true story: If you look beyond me [points to windows], you can see Breezy Point, Lower New York Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Imagine the year 1908: a young woman, pregnant, barely 30 years old, with six children (she would have another six after that) on the upper deck of a ship sailing from Palermo, Sicily to New York City. Her husband, Giuseppe Ricciardi, left for the United States months before, to work in the quarries of Maine and New Hampshire (the same quarries that supplied the granite for the Brooklyn Bridge); he had earned just enough money, now, to send for his family.

The young woman, Rosaria Ricciardi, clutched her youngest child, barely a toddler, in her arms, while she was on the deck. An unexpected wave sweeps the baby from her arms; the baby is thrown into the sea. A sailor dives into the water and saves the child. Less than a day later, Rosaria and her six children, frazzled, traumatized, hungry and exhausted from the long journey, find themselves being processed at Ellis Island. Rosaria sacrificed her home in Sicily, endured the incredible struggle of making a great and dangerous journey, with six kids and barely any money, in order to find a better life in America, by way of New York City.

Rosaria and Giuseppe are my great-grandparents, the toddler, my Uncle Rick, the unborn child, my grandpa. I tell you this story, in part because I love to tell it, but also because the journey that Rosaria Ricciardi made is in some ways universal. We have all heard stories of harrowed journeys to America, to New York City. In fact, many of us in this room are connected to stories of challenging voyages to America, to New York. Maybe this is you, or your parents, other relatives, or like me, my great-grandparents.

What is it about this place we all call home, New York City, that draws us from around the world? We keep coming here, year after year. People from all corners of the globe, all sorts of people, come to New York to make a new life: actors, opera singers, dancers, painters, poets, mothers, fathers, ministers, soldiers, Sicilian stone cutters.

In 1967, Patti Smith made her voyage from South Jersey to New York City. Her journey was not quite as long as Rosaria’s, but Smith’s voyage was equally fraught with pain and struggle; she grew up in a family with little means, was expelled from college for being pregnant, gave up her baby for adoption, and ultimately left her family to do what she had to do in order to survive, to be happy—she packed her red plaid suit case and came to New York City.

Just Kids follows the lives of poet/musician Patti Smith and photographer/artist Robert Mapplethorpe, but it all unfolds in front of the remarkable backdrop of our beloved City over the course of three decades starting in 1967. I point this out to you as a way to draw one of the many connections between us and this book. Think about it, really, we are all here now, at this college to do what Patti Smith, Rosaria and Giuseppe Ricciardi, and so many others have done, to create a future for ourselves. Patti Smith says Just Kids is about several things, one of which is that it is “a tribute to New York City.” Her book answers my question, “Why do we keep coming to this crazy place?” The book brings to light something that I think that many of us feel—that New York City is undeniably special and that there’s a magnetic pull here.

Another personal reflection I’d like to share, which has a few parts. It is
a homework assignment, a handy tip, and… a DARE. Throughout the next year, I DARE you to read parts of Just Kids out loud, WITH other people. As an actor, I read out loud all the time. As a teacher of acting, I am coaching students to do the same. The handy tip: when you read out loud, it deepens your comprehension of what you are learning. As the person being read to… well, it is a huge gift to hear the words being lifted off of the page. And of course, my own secret hidden agenda here is to turn you all into actors. I’m only half joking, BUT I am serious, and passionate, about the notion of the amazing gift of a person taking up space to read a story out loud to an audience.

I will lead by example. I will take my own dare, show you how this handy tip works, and give you a sneak preview of Smith’s book by reading to you from Just Kids. Before I do, let me set the stage. As I said, the story follows the lives of the author, Patti Smith, and her friend and lover, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. We travel through their young adult lives in New York City, from modest beginnings to artistic success and stardom. But, the passage I’d like to read is from the first chapter in the book, where Patti Smith is barely 20 years old, in college, and she has just discovered that she is pregnant:

I was raised at a time when sex and marriage were absolutely synonymous. There was no available birth control and at nineteen I was still naive about sex. Our union was so fleeting, so tender that I was not altogether certain we consummated our affection. But nature with all her force would have the final word. The irony that I, who never wanted to be a girl nor grow up, would be faced with this trial did not escape me. I was humbled by nature.

The boy, who was only seventeen, was so inexperienced that he could hardly be held accountable. I would have to take care of things on my own. On Thanksgiving morning I sat on the cot in the laundry room of my parents’ house. This was where I slept when I worked summers in a factory, and the rest of the year while I attended Glassboro State Teachers College. I could hear my mother and father making coffee and the laughter of my siblings as they sat around the table. I was the eldest and the pride of the family, working my way through college. My father was concerned that I was not attractive enough to find a husband and thought that the teaching profession would afford me security. It would be a great blow to him if I did not complete my studies.

I sat for a long time looking at my hands resting on my stomach. I had relieved the boy of responsibility. He was like a moth struggling within a cocoon and I couldn’t bring myself to disturb his unwieldy emergence into the world. I knew there was nothing he could do. I also knew I was incapable of tending to an infant. I had sought the assistance of a benevolent professor who had found an educated couple longing for a child.

I surveyed my quarters: a washer and dryer, a large wicker basket overflowing with unwashed linens, my father’s shirts folded on the ironing board. There was a small table where I had arranged my drawing pencils, sketchbook, and copy of Illuminations. I sat readying myself to face my parents, praying beneath my breath. For a brief moment I felt as if I might die, and just as quickly I knew everything would be all right.

It is impossible to exaggerate the sudden calm I felt. An overwhelming sense of mission eclipsed my fears. I attributed this to the baby, imagining it empathized with my situation. I felt in full possession of myself. I would do my duty and stay strong and healthy. I would never look back. I would not return to the factory or to teachers college. I would be an artist. I would prove my worth, and with my new resolve I rose and approached the kitchen. (17 - 18)

What I love about this passage is Patti Smith’s resolve to follow her dream. She says, without apology, that she will become an artist. She pursued her dream with persistence. She did not quit.

I see the same resolve that Ms. Smith has in the entire Kingsborough Community College family. I see it in myself, a new faculty member: my father, a single parent and a barber, raised my sisters and I. I supported myself through college, cleared houses to pay for graduate school, and waited tables for years while I lived the life of an actor in New York City. The other day, our new leader, President Herzek told his own story: first generation American, first generation in his family to go to college, and from there to eventually become the president of our school, one of the top community colleges in the entire country. The student body here at Kingsborough—I’m in awe of the level of passion and commitment towards achieving goals—dreams of becoming artists, nurses, business executives, chefs, teachers….

I’d like to shift gears for a moment and talk about my first encounter with KCC Reads: I’m relatively new at Kingsborough. I started teaching here a year ago. And I have to say, one of the reasons I accepted my position at Kingsborough is the KCC Reads Program. I’m not being sentimental here, I mean it. The KCC Reads Program weighed heavily on my decision to take a job here at Kingsborough. I was in my final interview phase for what is now my position here at KCC. I had just taught a class so the search committee could observe and get to know me as an educator: I was blown away by the level of talent, openness and welcoming by the Kingsborough acting students. I finished the class, so excited and so impressed, and then walked down the hallway in the MAC and came upon a table, covered in green books. I asked what was going on, and a student explained that she was distributing the book, Eating Animals, as it was going to be read across campus in the following academic school year. I blinked, and asked for clarification, “so you’re telling me that you are giving out books, for FREE—to students, so that the entire community can experience this book together?” The student said, “oh yes, AND we have a conference, AND teachers organize classes around it, AND we have a published journal dedicated to it.”

I was so moved. Between the amazing group of students I had just taught in the theatre class and this KCC Reads program, I knew that Kingsborough was a place I wanted to be. I was offered the job the next week and I took it.

For the record, KCC Reads has changed my life in more ways than one. I read Eating Animals that summer, and it has altered my life—the way I think about food, buy food, cook food, and eat food. I’m tempted to be cute here and say something like, “so don’t let anyone ever tell you that reading isn’t important”…but the truth is, one book really does have the power to do great things. I mentioned before that when I was planning my remarks for today, I decided to begin by starting where I always do in my creative process as an actor, with myself, my own experience in the world. I’ve been thinking about this and I also see connections between the reading of this book, and what it means to be a creative person. As an actor, I try my best to tell the truth—I strive for truthfulness on stage. As a teacher of acting, I create an environment where students can do the same (sometimes with a bit of nudging and pushing on my part). Most often, actors find truth on stage through a story, a play.

I thought more about this and realized that often, I learn something about myself through art; I find a piece of my own truth in art…all arts…but in particular, through literature, through the written word. And isn’t that your job as students—to seek knowledge…the truth? We live in a world that at times, seems to be filled with untruths, even lies. It seems to me that good art always tells the truth. Some of you might be thinking, “Yea, but what does this have to do with me, I’m going to be an accountant, a chef, a nurse.” All professions have the potential for creativity, and therein lies your TRUTH.

As an audience member, a person consuming art, whether it is a book, a film, theatre or some form of visual art, I am always looking for my reflection in the art, as in, in some way, I want to be reflected. When I go to an art gallery, and if the work moves me, it is because there is something in the painting or sculpture that reaches out to me, it touches me. It may make me sad or angry, it may not be pretty, but somehow I feel as though the art is reflecting something that lives within my heart. When I go to the theater, and actors on stage look nothing like me, or seem to have no relationship at all to my life experience, I still yearn for that moment where I realize that the playwright or the actor has tapped into some feeling or idea that is within me.

Think of a song that you really love. Any song. Is it the lyrics that move you? The beat? And what about the words or the beat? Maybe the lyrics affirm your own life path. Maybe the lyrics distract you from the challenges in your own life. But in one way or another, that song has reached out and touched you. That discovery of truth—truth that is revealed between the artist and the viewer, the writer and the reader, to me it is one of the thrilling results of reading.

I am proud to say that I was on the committee that selected Just Kids. In fact, I’m the person who nominated it. One of the concerns that came out again and again in discussing whether or not Just Kids was the right book for Kingsborough was the idea that it was about a rock star and a famous photographer and that their experience coming of age in New York City in the late ’60s and ’70s wouldn’t be relevant to the Kingsborough student body. I thought a lot about this issue, but ultimately I remembered my own desire to find truth in art. You may not be familiar with who Patti Smith is, but you may indeed be moved by her words. This is what truth in art means to me, and I know you will find truth in the pages of Just Kids. And truth in art, through literature, is not limited to novels and paintings, it could also be through a math text book, or through a case brief….that moment when you finally complete a formula, or find clarity in a concept.

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I’d like to close by reading a bit of Patti Smith’s poetry. It’s a song called “People Have the Power.” The final verse reads:

People have the power.
The power to dream / to rule
to wrestle the world from fools
it’s decreed the people rule
it’s decreed the people rule
LISTEN
I believe everything we dream
can come to pass through our union
we can turn the world around
we can turn the earth’s revolution
we have the power
People have the power...
(From Smith’s album The Dream of Life)

The reading of Just Kids is a gift in so many ways. It allows us to celebrate our home, New York City; it pays homage to our neighborhoods, including Brooklyn; and it honors the journey many of us endured to get here. Just Kids reminds us to follow a dream, to never give up. This book and this program, KCC Reads, allow us to celebrate reading and remind us that we can all seek our own truth in art, in particular through the reading of a book.
“PEOPLE HAVE THE POWER. THE POWER TO DREAM / TO RULE TO WRESTLE THE WORLD FROM FOOLS IT’S DECREED THE PEOPLE RULE IT’S DECREED THE PEOPLE RULE LISTEN I BELIEVE EVERYTHING WE DREAM CAN COME TO PASS THROUGH OUR UNION”

-SMITH'S ALBUM THE DREAM OF LIFE
Robert Mapplethorpe
American Flag, 1977
The artwork of Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989) is somewhat difficult to discuss in undergraduate college art history classes. While discussions of LGBTQ artists and gay rights activism are becoming more acceptable in the classroom in recent years, we are at the same time becoming an age in which professors are advised to provide “trigger warnings” to students before showing “disturbing content”: disclaimers are required on syllabi so as to give students an escape route from a class that might upset them; and professors are sometimes reluctant to teach “difficult” subject matter. The most commonly-used art history books do not help matters: art history textbooks employed in many high school AP Art History classes and undergraduate college classrooms rarely contain images made by Mapplethorpe, and when they do, they are not the more controversial images that he is most famous for today. Some textbooks, such as Gardner’s Art Through the Ages: A Global History (2013), commonly reproduce Mapplethorpe’s Self-Portrait (#385) from 1980, a tame image by 2014 standards, of the artist bathed in soft light and adorned with a curled coif and make up.2 The art history textbooks that we use here at Kingsborough, Marilyn Stokstad and Michael Cothren’s Art History (2014) and H.H. Arnason and Elizabeth C. Mansfield’s History of Modern Art (2013), mention Mapplethorpe in their sections on the “Culture Wars” of the late 1980s (which I will discuss presently), but do not reproduce any works by him. Even though his presence in the established canon (or, at least, the established canon that exists in corporation-sponsored course textbooks) remains somewhat minimal, his appearance whether by image or name in some of these books is a slight improvement from a decade ago. For example, H.W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson’s History of Art: The Western Tradition (2004) did not even list Mapplethorpe in the index.

The art world’s indifference to Mapplethorpe’s photographic production, often criticized for being too polished-looking and too commercial, is transparent. Many artists of Mapplethorpe’s generation were indifferent to his production because he had a rich partner, the art historian, curator, and collector Samuel (“Sam”) Jones Wagstaff (1921-1987), his supporter and benefactor. Some artists barely disguised their jealousy of Mapplethorpe’s affiliation with Wagstaff, and their relationship has often been harshly judged.3 In response to this criticism, Patti Smith (b. 1946) noted in our KCC Reads selection for this academic year, Just Kids (2010), that “Robert liked Sam’s money, and Sam liked that Robert liked his money. […] Sam secretly yearned to be an artist, but he was not. Robert wanted to be rich and powerful, but he was not. By association, each tasted the other’s attributes.”4 Having a rich boyfriend, therefore, seems to taint a legacy in a way that having any other type of rich patron does not, even though some of the human dynamics are the same. Being a rich artist is also a problem: we still trust in the myth that good artists are supposed to be poor and starving, because serious art only comes from people who are destitute and emotionally adrift.

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1 Special thanks to Professor Maureen Fadem for inviting me to give the lecture on Just Kids on November 20, 2014, on which this essay was based, and also to Safe Zones and the Women’s and Gender Studies Concentration in Liberal Arts for sponsoring the talk.

2 Fred S. Kleiner, Gardner’s Art Through the Ages: A Global History (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage, 2013), 944. This image is also reproduced in Janet Kardon, ed. Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1988), 79. I have decided to limit my use of Mapplethorpe’s images in this essay to one image only, out of respect for his copyright and as per the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation’s rules for rights and reproductions. All images discussed herein can be easily located online and/or within a text that I have cited in the footnotes below.


is not always the case. Having money never hurts an artist completely; sometimes it allows them to do what they could not do without money.

**WHY SHOULD WE TEACH HIS WORKS IN AN ART HISTORY CLASSROOM? IF THE ART HISTORY BOOKS DO NOT REPRODUCE HIS MORE CONTROVERSIAL, THAT IS HIS ARGUABLY MORE ENGAGING, PHOTOGRAPHS, THEN WAS THIS BODY OF WORK EVEN IMPORTANT?**

What was the point of his art? Where does it take us in terms of learning more about the human condition? Who were his influences? I am inclined to believe that maybe part of the problem with Mapplethorpe isn’t actually a problem with Mapplethorpe himself or with his work per se, but instead it is a problem with the lack of understanding of his influences, his aesthetic choices, and his legacy.

In terms of Mapplethorpe’s influences, there were many. *Just Kids* is a good starting point into discovering Mapplethorpe’s artistic foundations. I particularly appreciated Smith’s frankness, her love and her deep respect for Mapplethorpe as an artist, and especially her discussions of his early career when he was making sculptural constructions, collage works, and jewelry. In an interview in the catalog for the exhibition entitled *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment*, which we will discuss presently, Mapplethorpe noted that he felt photography was “the lazy man’s approach to sculpture.”

*The Coral Sea* (1996), also by Smith, contains three poems based on Mapplethorpe’s art, including one entitled “The Boy Who Loved Michaelangelo” [sic] that suggests one of the artist’s major art historical influences.” One also notes that in the interview Mapplethorpe also stated that “had I been born one hundred or two hundred years ago, I might have been a sculptor, but photography is a very quick way to see, to make sculpture.” So we have some clues found in these publications that direct us towards Mapplethorpe’s early influences.

Smith’s poetic memoir leaves the reader wanting more information about Mapplethorpe. After reading and enjoying *Just Kids*, I sought out and read her earlier novel based on Mapplethorpe previously mentioned, *The Coral Sea*. It is a novel about a passenger on a ship, called only “Passenger M” who takes a ship to over the Coral Sea in the South Pacific, near Australia, to see the Southern Cross, one of the eighty-eight modern constellations. Passenger M, traveling with just a few precious objects inherited from an uncle, is ill and wants to see the Southern Cross and find eternal peace before he dies. *The Coral Sea* is a ninety-three-page story that is at once a very real presentation of the slippage from life of the dying and, at the same time, a very surreal story of a beautiful, magical departure from this world. *The Coral Sea* is not really the story of Smith and Mapplethorpe, so at the end of *Just Kids*, Smith says: “I wrote *The Coral Sea* and made drawings in remembrance of [Robert] but our story was obliged to wait until I could find the right voice.” *Just Kids* is a memoir of Smith’s life, mostly focused on her years with Mapplethorpe, and *The Coral Sea* is a fictional novella, and neither book is intended as an art history textbook. Thus, I thought we would look at the work of Mapplethorpe from an art historical viewpoint

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7 Kardon, ed., 1988, 27.
8 Smith, 2010, 288.
this afternoon and add some art historical context to our collective reading. I want to spend some time to give Mapplethorpe the weight and significance that students might have trouble finding for him in many of the typical art history textbooks, and even in Smith’s otherwise loving portrayals.

Mapplethorpe graduated from the Pratt Institute here in Brooklyn where he received his BFA in 1970. His work was often three-dimensional, and he made jewelry, collage works, and sculptural constructions from fine book papers and textiles, and cut-outs from magazines, which he continued to use in some of his art works from the 1980s. One finds an emphasis in his works on the male body, in particular elegant male nudes, as well as biker-types and leather boys who were not often shown so explicitly in fine art images before the 1970s. At the time, images of men who were interested in men, or any art that explored homosexual themes, were generally not part of the mainstream art world in galleries and museum collections and exhibitions; if they were, their message was subdued; more overt images were usually part of a subculture that was rarely presented as prominently and publicly as the Mapplethorpe’s work was in the 1980s.

The careful reader of Just Kids gains an appreciation of Mapplethorpe’s pre-fame career. One of the nice elements of the book is that it is interspersed with images, not only photographic portraits of the two main figures, but in a few cases, early works by both Mapplethorpe and Smith. His Tie Rack (1969, Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation), complete with a saintly figure holding a crucifix on a string and with dark ties resembling the piping on Catholic mantles and priest’s robes, is a functional construction that also reflects early Catholic upbringing. Mapplethorpe continued to merge fabric and textiles with his photographic work in the later 80s, for example in his Thomas in Circle from 1987. In the mid-1970s Mapplethorpe worked on portraits, self-portraits, and photographic collage constructions utilizing the male nude. He appreciated shape, light and shade, and other formal elements in his photographs and objects, and one sees the influence of classical art and classical subject matter (portraits, figure studies and still-lifes) in his early constructions and Polaroids.

Beginning around 1977, Mapplethorpe embarked on his most important work, the photographs that would later comprise his series of images called “portfolios.” The X Portfolio (1977-1978) contained a series of images of men posing in sadomasochistic clothing and situations; the Y Portfolio (1977-1979) included his flower imagery and still-life works; and the Z Portfolio (1980-1981) was comprised of his images of nude African-American males. Mapplethorpe made these portfolios as part of his serious work, while his commissioned portraits, fashion imagery, and magazine work were part of his commercial production. He treated all of the subject matter in the three portfolios in the same manner; he felt the flowers were “[not] very different from body parts” and that while all three of the portfolio subjects have a sexual element, there is something overly formal and depersonalized about them. Mapplethorpe certainly wanted to produce images of homosexual men or beautiful men in general in order to insert them into the mainstream of the art world, to some extent, yet his interest in the subject matter was somewhat less important to him than the creation of the artwork and his process of controlling the light, shadows, forms, and ultimately the way in which the subject is seen by the viewer. The Y Portfolio, X, Y and Z Portfolios, Mapplethorpe also made portraits of some of the most important visual artists, singers, writers, and art-world figures of the twentieth century, and many of these portraits were included in the exhibition The Perfect Moment. He also accepted commissions from wealthy people for portraits of their children. All of Mapplethorpe’s images of children were commissions from the children’s parents and were taken with their parent’s permission. We will come back to the images of children because they were at the center of the controversy related to The Perfect Moment exhibition, a dispute that began in 1989, after the artist’s death. His portraits of adults included his images of the writer William Burroughs (1980); the gallery Leo Castelli (1982); the painter Francesco Clemente (1985); and the sculptor Louise Nevelson (1986). He would take many, many pictures of the sitter, but would not allow them to decide which image from the contact sheet would be the final version. He retained that right as the artist of the image, and, according to the sitters themselves, Mapplethorpe was always able to capture the spirit of the person being portrayed.

His portrait of Andy Warhol (1986) was probably the most important portrait he made, because he had so admired, and had so much in common, with the Pop artist. Mapplethorpe makes Warhol look like a saint in the portrait he made of him, and noted “I was in art school when pop art was the rage. Since I came out of that time, the Warhol influence is [in my work].” Warhol, while he is criticized today for not using his fame to bring more public attention to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, was not ashamed of his sexuality and was one of the more publically "out" artists of the later twentieth century. Both Mapplethorpe and Warhol were interested in gender exploration, decadence, sexuality, and the theme of death in their works, and Warhol had explored these themes much earlier than his 1980s counterparts. One of the important aspects of Mapplethorpe’s photographs is that he captured a moment after the sexual revolution of the 1960s, but a bit before the height of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. He captured a very brief moment (one might say he captured “the perfect moment”), from around 1969 to about 1982, when the sexual liberation movement was in full force and the word “AIDS” had yet to be uttered. He wanted to share images that spoke to people’s identity and purpose, and he attempted to mainstream images of gay couples, which were not mainstreamed at the time.

There is often an art historical precedent in Mapplethorpe’s art. His image of Brian and Lyle (1979) looks very much like the thousands upon thousands of images of opposite-sex couples produced in the nineteenth century by commercial portrait photographers. Mapplethorpe modeled his works after “acceptable” images with which people were familiar, and this image in particular is similar to the types of vernacular nineteenth-century American photography collected by Mapplethorpe’s partner Sam Wagstaff. In the X Portfolio, Mapplethorpe explores traditional images of love and coupling with his image of a same-sex couple entitled Larry and Bobby Kissing (1979). He takes the old, traditional and treasured theme of a kiss and sets it up using a same-sex couple, something had rarely been acceptable in the past. He thus challenges the traditional images of kissing, let us say by Auguste Rodin or Gustav Klimt, by asking why we do not have any overt images of same-sex couples kissing in the history of fine art. He asks, through making his photographs, if such images could be inserted into the canon in his own time.

The Y Portfolio containing Mapplethorpe’s flower imagery reminds one immediately of the paintings of the American artist Georgia O’Keeffe (1887-1986). O’Keeffe, who by some accounts was bisexual, was subjected to controversy over her own images of flowers. She made her flower imagery because she was both perpetuating and challenging an old myth that all women artists were good at were flower paintings and she painted flowers in such an uninhibited way that she presented herself as one of the great American painters of her era, male or female. Her first flower painting was made in 1924, and by 1925 critics (such as Lewis Mumford) said that they were overly sexual and that they should be read through a Freudian lens. O’Keeffe famously denied this reading of her work. She, like Mapplethorpe, was a formalist, and was interested in flowers for their colors, shape and form. She was known to have said: “Nobody sees a flower really; it is so small, we haven’t the time, and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.” But the criticism took its toll. Later O’Keeffe said “I hate flowers. I paint them because they’re cheaper than models and they don’t move.” Like O’Keeffe, Mapplethorpe liked the impassive nature of flowers: “Maybe I experiment a little more with flowers and inanimate objects because you don’t have to worry about the personality. […] With flowers, I can always juggle

9 For Mapplethorpe’s official biography and other information and images, see the website for the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation at http://www.mapplethorpe.org/
15 These can be found reproduced in Kardon, ed., 1988, 62, 63, 99 and 100.
17 For a discussion of Warhol, Mapplethorpe, and other artists who explored gay themes in their art and were censored, see Richard Meyer, Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).
18 The Tate Collection in England owns a print of Brian and Lyle, listed on their website under the title Brian Ridley and Lyle Heter (1979), and it can be seen online at http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mapplethorpe-brian-ridley-and-lyle-heter-ar0196
21 O’Keeffe’s statements on flowers have been widely quoted and cited.
things around. It can take two hours to just set up the lights." Mapplethorpe would have been familiar with the controversy surrounding O’Keeffe’s flower imagery and he would have seen her works as they are included in many public museum collections in New York City.

No artist creates in a vacuum; all artists have important influences that help them start their process and that informs their later work. As noted earlier, the Renaissance, in particular the sculpture of Michelangelo, was an important source for Mapplethorpe. The Z Portrait in particular has many Renaissance precedents. The photograph of Thomas Circle (1987), cited earlier, immediately reminds anyone who has taken their basic art history course of Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man from around 1490 (Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice). On a simplified level, Mapplethorpe was exploring the same territory as Leonardo, that being the presentation of ideal human proportions. But Mapplethorpe went further: he makes it starkly clear that classical beauty, elegance, and the perfection of the male body has always been shown as white. Mapplethorpe presented a challenge: Why are there few or no images of the black male body as beautiful, elegant, and perfect in the history of art? Can they be inserted into the canon through his art? The answer is both yes and no: these images are now part of the art historical record, but they are rarely, if ever, reproduced in art history textbooks or shown in an art history survey class because they deal with race, sex, and other “difficult” themes.

Mapplethorpe’s art is also important historically because it played a major role in the “Culture Wars” of the 1980s; this was the period in which “artists and museum administrators were pitted against political and religious figures” over the spending of government funds on controversial art. If we are naive enough to believe that the government, twenty-six years later, has finally taken its nose out of the culture business, I need only to remind us of the controversy around the late David Wojnarowicz’s film A Fire in My Belly (1986–87), presented in Washington DC in 2010 and removed from the exhibition entitled Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture when it was held at the Smithsonian, after it was attacked by Bill Donohue of the Catholic League for being insulting to Catholics and after threats from Senate Representatives that the Smithsonian should remove it or lose funding. Museum representatives have their issues with the government, but teachers are soon to face similar prohibitions, if Senate bills against “harmful materials” in the classroom are to be put in place more widely. Senate Bill SB-56, being reviewed in Kansas, would make showing any type of “harmful material,” including nudity and images of sexual conduct, in that state a Class B misdemeanor carrying a six month jail sentence. That means a high school teacher in Kansas could potentially be arrested and jailed for showing any art work displaying nudity, including the Venus de Milo or sexual conduct, including any version, of let us say, an artwork displaying kissing, such as Auguste Rodin’s The Kiss (1889), if a student or parent complains about the imagery. Forget about teaching Mapplethorpe: if one cannot show nudity or sexual conduct in an art history classroom, the whole history of art could be taught in a week, or worse, dismissed entirely. So we are a far cry from full freedom of speech in the United States.

I wanted to explain the 1989 controversy surrounding Mapplethorpe’s work this afternoon, in part to highlight how ludicrous it seems in 2014, and in part to underscore how dangerous it is for the public to allow restrictions on First Amendment rights. The controversy around Mapplethorpe’s photographs originally stemmed from the exhibition The Perfect Moment, which I have already mentioned a few times this afternoon, that opened in December of 1988, and which was to have eight venues across the United States. On December 9, 1988, the exhibition opened at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, the organizing venue, as a success. There were no complaints about the works on view in the exhibition, and Mapplethorpe attended the opening, seriously ill, to see flocks of admirers of his work congratulate him on his exhibition. A few months later, on February 25, 1989, the exhibition opened at its next venue, at Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, where there were again no problems.

Mapplethorpe finally succumbed to complications from AIDS on March 9, 1989. I must say that I find it suspicious that the late United States Senator Jesse Helms (1921–2008, R-NC) began his campaign against The Perfect Moment after Mapplethorpe’s death. The artist could not defend his work to the public at that point, and this cleared the way for Senator Helms to attack the exhibition. In April and May of 1989, Helms started a campaign against the exhibition’s opening in Washington DC that was set to begin on July 1 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, a private museum, now defunct, that received a National Endowment for the Arts grant of $30,000 to support the exhibition. Helms declared that tax dollars should not support the arts, especially if the art is “indecent.” Helms vilified Mapplethorpe’s work, calling it “sick” and saying that he was “spreading” obscenity. In other words, as Richard Meyer has pointed out, Helms used words related to illness when speaking of Mapplethorpe’s work, connecting the work to the artist’s battle with AIDS.

Helms sent four photographs of artworks reproduced in the exhibition catalogue to the twenty-six members of Congress from the catalogue, thus making 104 copies and sending them through the U.S. Postal Service to his colleagues. This was, by the way, an illegal act on the part of the senator for two reasons. Firstly, since Helms believed the photographs to be pornographic, he was actually sending pornography through the mail to government officials. Secondly, also illegal was Helms’s unlawful copying, without the artist’s permission, of the copyrighted photographs; thus he infringed on the artist’s legal copyright. It is illegal to reproduce, in whole or in part, an artist’s work without their permission or the permission of their estate, if they have been dead for less than one hundred years. (That’s why if you are reading this Keynote Address in a journal published by Kingsborough, there are no images accompanying this text.)

Helms’s illegal acts, however, had a negative impact on the exhibition. On June 12, 1989, Christina Orr-Cahall canceled the exhibition at the Corcoran where she was the director. She was later forced to resign and issued an apology for cancelling the show. Protests in front of the Corcoran on the night before the show was supposed to open there began on the night of June 30; protesters projected ten of Mapplethorpe’s images on the façade of the Corcoran. On July 12, 1989 the exhibition opened at the Washington Project for the Arts, no problems; on October 21, 1989 it opened at the Wadsworth Atheneum, no problems; on January 17, 1990, it opened at the University Art Museum of the University of California at Berkeley, to no problems. One would have thought the controversy over, but it was destined to continue.

On April 8, 1990, the exhibition opened at the Contemporary Art Center of Cincinnati. The director of the museum, Dennis Barrie, later the co-founder of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, was immediately indicted on charges of pandering obscenity and child pornography; he was acquitted. Homosexuality is often wrongly associated with pedophilia, and because of that myth Helms was able to convince people that Mapplethorpe made these photographs, particularly the images of children, for pedophiles and not for the parents who actually commissioned the works. On June 14, 1990, the show opened at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, to no problems. It was not until July 21, 1998 that the House of Representatives decided that the United States Government has an obligation to protect and promote American art, and rejected the conservative position that tax dollars not be used to support the arts.

This was a major win for First Amendment Freedom of Speech activists, especially after the crushing blow of 1996, when Congress slashed the budget of the National Endowment for the Arts by forty percent. Today the NEA’s budget is $146 million dollars, which sounds like a lot of money but is actually the same amount that the fund received in the mid-1990s, adjusted for inflation.

While the controversy that began with Mapplethorpe’s exhibition might seem moot today, the events surrounding the controversy empowered many artists of the 1980s and early 1990s, including Leigh Bowery (1961–1994), Félix González-Torres (1957–1996) and David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992), all of whom...

26 For information on the closure of the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the transfer of its collection to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, see http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/press/2015/nga-corcoran-announcements.html
28 According to Meyer, 2002, 132, the four images copied from the catalog and sent by Helms were Mark Stevens (Mr. 10 ½) (1976), “Rosie”; Jesse McBride (1976) and Man in Polyester Suit (1980). While there is no image listed under the title “Rosie” in the exhibition checklist, there was an image of a female child entitled Honey (1976) reproduced on page 49 on Kardon, ed., 1988. This seems to be an “error” in Kardon, ed., 1988, as the description for “Rosie” online matches the artwork reproduced and listed as “Honey” in the catalogue. It is possible that Kardon and/or Mapplethorpe used the title Honey in the catalogue to protect the identity of Rosie Bowdrey (b. 1973). The other three images can be found with their appropriate titles in Kardon, ed., 1988, 26, 47, and 69 respectively.

HE WAS WELL VERSED IN ART HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS, AND WAS INFLUENCED BY THE IMPORTANT WORK THAT CAME BEFORE HIM; LIKE ALL OF OUR BEST ARTISTS, HE TOOK WHAT HE LEARNED FROM PAST ART AND MADE SOMETHING NEW. HIS ART EXPLORED THE LIVES OF PEOPLE AND THE BEAUTY OF PEOPLE WHO WERE RARELY DEPICTED AS MAINSTREAM OR BEAUTIFUL IN THE HISTORY OF ART. The controversy around The Perfect Moment exhibition made people more aware of the free-speech rights of artists and that the government cannot censor free speech. Mapplethorpe also made some of the great portraits of artists of the late twentieth century. And of course, he was the best friend of Patti Smith, whom he encouraged to write and to sing, and with whom he shared his youth and his passion for creating beautiful things.

I’d like to end by acknowledging the feeling of loss one feels when reading Just Kids, and to take into account what we have lost as a culture through the death of American artists affected by AIDS. The misinformation, lack of funding for AIDS patients, and difficulty of access for testing for AIDS patients presented by the United States government in the early years of the crisis should be considered tantamount to a genocide. Mapplethorpe and other artists of his generation would have certainly had more years ahead of them. It shocks me that I am standing here in front of you, aged forty-three, one year older than Mapplethorpe was when he died. What would he have given us, had he lived another twenty-six years, and if he could have been here with us today? I suspect that he and the other artists we lost from AIDS would have created more “difficult” but nevertheless challenging and intellectual work, had they lived a bit longer and had they been given proper information and proper care from the outset. The loss of these artists to the history of American art and culture is really too great to be calculated. If there is anything that might console us, however, it is to be found in the art that they made, now somewhat less challenged at art museums (we hope) and maybe more easily accepted into American culture. The only thing we can do now is to find solace in the art that they made, learn from it, and be grateful for the art they imparted to us. We should also teach this art, and demand that it be taught to us. Mapplethorpe’s work provides an opportunity to discuss LGBTQ rights and issues of social justice in the classroom. We should also teach that we should all be willing to fight furiously to keep our First Amendment rights protected. Mapplethorpe asked the right questions and inserted, as best as he could, images into the canon that otherwise would not be there. He took the brunt of the criticism for subject matter that artists in 2014 can create more easily. Through his body of work, Mapplethorpe gave us a lot of rich material for discussion, but he also provided a window onto a world of beauty and love that could have been kept from us. Let us remember that last point most of all the next time an artist and their work is challenged by the unenlightened.

RESOURCES: Robert Mapplethorpe

Further reading on Mapplethorpe:


On the Mapplethorpe 1988–1990 exhibition controversy:


Mapplethorpe. Dir. Ondi Timoner. Forthcoming [in production, 2012]. Cinema Film. [Actor James Franco has been cast as Mapplethorpe for this forthcoming film.]

Related Websites:


Visual AIDS, an organization that uses art to fight AIDS and promote awareness. https://www.visualaids.org

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Yet you could feel the vibration in the air, a sense of hastening. It had started with the moon, inaccessible poem that it was. No men had walked upon it, rubber treads on the pearl of gods. Perhaps it was an awareness of time passing, the last summer of the decade. Sometimes I just wanted to raise my hands and stop. But stop what? Maybe just growing up. Patti Smith, Just Kids
INTRODUCTION: MAUREEN FADEM, DEPT. OF ENGLISH

One of my favorite moments of last May’s conference was this session, our faculty plenary opening the event. I have had the pleasure of working with these individuals for some time now, faculty members who have made it their business to contribute their time and creativity and also their labor to making KCC Reads a phenomenal and efficacious program. Although when I accepted leadership of this program I was entirely focused on its usefulness for our students and how to grow that, a very great side benefit for me, and I believe for the other involved faculty, is the collaboration it has brought us to, as teachers at the college.

WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TIME, IN OUR TEACHING LIVES, TO COLLABORATE AS A FACULTY; BUT THIS PROGRAM, ONCE ENGAGED AND COMMITTED TO, SORT OF “FORCES” THAT UPON US. And that connection has been a big part of my own personal “job satisfaction” level in recent years. Particularly in terms of my work with librarians Jay and Wendy, my work with the Art Department, especially Madeline, Jose and Caterina, my work with the Theatre Program and Paul and Greg’s willingness to align their work in that program with our work in this program, and, my work with individual faculty members, like Jason, who have simply chosen, on their own, to take part in this process.

Thus, I was incredibly pleased last year when Madeline, Jay, Paul, Greg and Jason responded to my request to form a faculty panel, one that would reflect on the book and/or on teaching Just Kids and/or on teaching “with” the KCC Reads program by adopting our selected texts. As you will see, they have each taken a totally different approach to those questions, each one making a phenomenally interesting and enlightening presentation. The event was very well-attended and we stayed after, for some minutes, answering questions and continuing the dialogue with students, staff and other teachers.

It was, alas, a very special moment. I hope you enjoy reading these reflections by five gifted KCC faculty members.
One of the benefits of being an illustrator is having to read things you wouldn’t choose for yourself in order to come up with an image to describe the overall concept of what you’ve read. This leads to reading in an analytical way that forces you to think critically about the content, and come up with metaphors for the main idea, or to try to communicate the predominant feeling of the book.

The reason I came up with this title, *A Community on The Same Page*, is that sharing the content of a book in our heads (however different each of our heads are) brings our consciousnesses together. People from similar backgrounds and lifestyles can choose to form a book club, but I had never heard of a common reading program until I came to KCC. I know Columbia has its tradition of *Great Books* for their incoming freshmen, which is an idea that comes close. However, unlike the consistency of the required reading in those kinds of programs, our book is different each year and it is chosen by a cohort of students, faculty and staff. This leads us to a wide variety of types of books and subject matters. It is a lofty and commendable ambition of our college to try to get as many faculty and students as possible to explore one book and find in it what could be valuable to the wide array of subjects taught here.

For instance *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot had so many different subjects to examine. There is the scientific research and discoveries that were made, the ethical questions that are explored, the historical context of racist laws that are brought to light, as well as the books’ literary value as an exciting and important story very well told. *Unbowed* by Nobel prize winner Wangari Maathai is another example of a book that bridges the sciences, history and literature. In fact the KCC Reads posters for that book would be equally valuable as Eco-Festival posters as they illustrate the link between planting trees with producing clean water which is the idea of the green-belt movement, Maathai initiated.

The first book of the Common Reading program was James McBride’s *The Color of Water*. This is a fascinating biography of his mother, a Jewish woman who married a black man in the 1950’s and immersed herself in his church and community. Besides McBride’s amazing talent as a writer (his recent, *The Great Lord Bird* won the National Book Award for Fiction, and will be a movie) is that he is also a jazz musician. To celebrate the book that year he brought his band and we were dancing on the PAC stage right behind them. That was also my first semester at KCC, it was a great introduction to the extraordinary experiences I was to continue to have here.

Another personal history was *Night*, by Eli Wiesel, which we read during a themed year of the program. It is his memoir of being a child during the Holocaust. This book was so moving that the posters were extremely powerful. The writing of this book emphasizes my point about how important the written word is. At the beginning of the book the author and his family have heard stories about the camps that are too horrific to be believed. I’m not sure even if these stories were written down it would have been more believable and led to action; yet, there is a story in the news now that is bringing another Holocaust history to light because a former Nazi felt compelled to write his experiences down in order to convince a Holocaust denier that these things did happen.

The novels *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* by Edwidge Danticat both explore the immigrant experience of young adults assimilating to a new culture, which made them so relatable to a large number of the Kingsborough community. Unfortunately those posters were destroyed by Superstorm Sandy. *The Glass Castle*, a memoir, by Jeannette Walls also told of a difficult childhood and was well illustrated by students who relished in the well described details of her eccentric family.

It may be an obvious thought, but I want to throw it out anyway—just to acknowledge its importance—READING IS AN AMAZING THING! We get to communicate through time and space via words written on a page. This wasn’t always possible for us clever human beings. The printing press was only invented 575 years ago. And though cultures have flourished and continued through spoken words and songs, through texts we can hear the voice of a single individual who may have lived hundreds of years ago in a part of the world we may never visit. We can go on voyages of fantasy, contemplate theories and adopt philosophies all through books. I think it is worth spending a moment to reflect on how awesome that is, in the truest sense of that word.
Patti Smith's memoir *Just Kids* (2010) recounts her part in one of the great transformations in American cultural history, the change from the 1960s to the 1970s. In cultural stereotypes, those decades have very different associations, and Smith has an undeniable and well-earned place as an icon of the seventies, not the sixties. Her book helps us see how she came up through the sixties to become an accomplished singer and songwriter in the seventies.

In his highly regarded book, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, Todd Gitlin (1993, 427-429) analyzes the changing mood at the end of the sixties and the lead-up to the seventies as captured in the music of the times by noticing that the rage of the Rolling Stones as heard on *Let it Bleed* and the shrillness of Jefferson Airplane as heard on *Volunteers* were no longer in vogue. Heretofore amplified, electrified, and distorted, popular music had taken an acoustic turn. James Taylor made the cover of *Time* magazine in 1971 under the headline, "The New Rock: Bittersweet and Low." The airwaves in the early 1970s were dominated by the likes of Carly Simon, Elton John, Seals & Crofts, and Cat Stevens, who played soft, mellow music under the expanded banner of rock 'n' roll. Perhaps the biggest musical act as the sixties led into seventies was Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, who were adept at both electric and acoustic music, and had connections to hard rockers like Jefferson Airplane and folk musicians like Joni Mitchell. They had played at Woodstock, and strikingly, had turned Joni Mitchell's melancholy ballad about Woodstock, on which she had accompanied herself on a piano, into a rock 'n' roll, almost bubblegum version of the song that became a hit single. The music of Patti Smith came several years later, but her approach was incubated during this same time.

Patti Smith came from a completely different part of the musical universe. As part of the first cohort of baby boomers, Smith of course was exposed to all the popular music of the times, but her background was not mainstream pop but the bohemian art scene focused in New York around the Chelsea Hotel, where she lived for a while, and Max's Kansas City, where she hung out. As a young girl with a few years of college, she had escaped her upbringing in a working class Catholic family to live in New York where she soon found her way into the bohemian underground branch of the counterculture, represented in music by groups like the Fugs and the Holy Modal Rounders (Smith 2010, 197). Those groups used humor, absurdity, dissonance, and noise in a way similar to what we later heard in punk and grunge music, which can be considered their spiritual descendants. These New York bohemians were kindred spirits to the earlier beat movement, and Smith refers to her friendships with key beat generation writers Allen Ginsburg and William S. Burroughs, as well as with Gregory Corso, another member of their group.

But younger, trendier bohemians were also connected to the scene surrounding the artist Andy Warhol. Warhol's own aesthetic was very different from that of the beats in that his art was not at all about authenticity and a rejection of materialism but just the opposite. By using corporate emblems and images of celebrities as source material for art Warhol's work not only reflected on the culture of the times but celebrated artifice and gloried in the banality of popular imagery. If that was the case, one might conclude that his art was the antithesis of the work of the authentic and sensitive artist that someone like Patti Smith strived to be. The cognoscenti including art snobs and underground bohemians embraced Warhol on the theory that his art was a sardonic and ironic commentary on the uniformity, repetitiveness, and shallowness of American culture. But one never could be sure whether Warhol and those who admired and collected his works supported the bohemian view or the bourgeois view, whether he was joking, and whether they got the joke.

Warhol attracted an eclectic group of weirdos and exhibitionists, and held court in the back room of Max's Kansas City on Park Avenue South near Gramercy Park (see Sewell-Ruskin 1998). Smith aptly describes it as "the social hub of the subterranean universe" (Smith 2010, 117). These people, whom Smith got to know well, did not necessarily have talent, but they craved attention, and Warhol rewarded them by putting them in his films and calling them superstars. Their names, such as Viva, Ultra Violet, and Holly Woodlawn,
may have been the most interesting things about them. Warhol popularized the word “superstar,” but if the names of these superstars still ring a bell it is only because of their association with him.

The group was based at his Factory on Union Square West and hung out at nearby Max’s for recreation, Smith’s own base of operation, the Chelsea Hotel in a different neighborhood on West 23rd Street, was also part of his stomping ground. He had even produced and directed a legendary, though little known, three and a half-hour long film, The Chelsea Girls (1966).

Why did Smith seek to gain admittance into the back room at Max’s? Not necessarily because of her own interest in Warhol’s universe or the underground scene, according to her narrative, but for the sake of her friend and lover Robert Mapplethorpe, who, like Smith, also yearned for fame and would later achieve it. Like Smith, he influenced the culture in his own way, but unfortunately he did not get to fully savor his success. An early victim of the AIDS epidemic, he posthumously became a flashpoint in a culture war about censorship and government funding for controversial art, the moving line between art and pornography, and even issues of decency.

Beyond Smith’s hope to further Mapplethorpe’s career, she was savvy in finding (or being found by) key people who would open doors for her. She was given a chance to break into the inner circle of the Warhol group by gaining the sympathy of Danny Fields, a Warhol confidante who served as a crucial link between musicians ranging from Jim Morrison to the Ramones (Seabrook 2010).

Part of the Warhol entourage was the Velvet Underground, headed by Lou Reed. Warhol’s imprimatur helped launch them as the ultimate underground rock band not just of the 1960s but probably of all time. He had used them as the stage band for his 1966 multimedia happening, The Exploding Plastic Inevitable, held at the Dom, later known as the Electric Circus, on St. Mark’s Place (Henry 1989, 19-29). The cover of their first album, featuring a banana that could be unpeeled, prominently featured his name and remains one of his more memorable works. Smith encountered the Velvet Underground at their reunion concerts in 1970, which were later released as the double album, Live at Max’s Kansas City. Hearing and watching Lou Reed, she recognized that his lyrics contained lyrically strong poetry (see Reed 2000).

Reed of course is a fascinating analogue to Smith. He had studied poetry with Delmore Schwartz as a student at Syracuse University and he later worked hard to create an aesthetic both visually and musically that became a brand and a calling card. John Cale, the second most important member of the Velvet Underground, later produced her first album, Horses. But between Max’s Kansas City and the Chelsea Hotel, Smith also was exposed to and became close to singers who had broken through the barrier between bohemian subculture and popular culture, such as Bob Dylan, Jim Buckley, and Janis Joplin. Dylan and Buckley were neo-folk singers and troubadours, while Joplin was a blues-based rocker. They represented more commercial popular music for the mass national radio and TV audience rather than the avant-garde or underground.

The underground arts scene in downtown New York in which Smith developed as an artist was characterized by significant cross-pollination between music, visual art, theater, and film, according to the sociologist Judith Halasz (2006). The artists crossed boundaries by moving easily into other art forms. Hammerstein’s, the theater, and related multimedia events made conceptual statements by creatively combining different modes of performing, plastic, and visual arts (Sandler 1998, 461ff).

Trying to find a place for herself in this scene, Smith tried her hand at writing for rock magazines but found that her opportunities were such that she didn’t have to settle for a career in journalism. Although she presents a modest and down to earth view of herself in her memoir, from other sources we know that she considered herself equal to the rock stars she interviewed. As early as 1972 she was quoted as saying that “because of my ego and my faith in my work, I don’t like meeting people on unequal terms” (Paytress 2006, 27). As a journalist she would have had to grovel in front of rock stars and ask them questions as a subservient life form. She knew that was not for her even if she didn’t already plan on becoming a rock star herself. Even at this early stage, long before her career took off and before punk rock coalesced as a phenomenon, she commanded attention in the downtown musical and art underground (McNeil and McCaig 1996, Sewell-Ruskin 1998).

In addition to writing, she had attempted to become an actress but found that was not a good fit either. She was more of a performance artist, even a stand-up comedian, than a standard actress. Then a woman with so much space in the underground culture for such a role. In this, her relationship with Mapplethorpe, who was also very savvy about imagery, was crucial.

She was interested in poetry and idolized French symbolist poets as well as rock singers who laced a poetic sensibility into their lyrics, most notably Bob Dylan and Jim Morrison. She modeled herself after all these icons. She cut her teeth “performing poetry night after night to an un receptive and unruly crowd who were primed to see the New York Dolls” (Smith 2010, 218). She wanted to make it in the world of poetry but decided she could not fit into New York’s poetry scene, which she considered incestuous (214). Bobby Newirth, a contact from Mary W. through the Chelsea Hotel, who was a内向型 observer connected to many of her social networks, and he encouraged her to try her hand at songwriting. This allowed her to find her voice as a poetic, lyrical songstress. In her songwriting, she followed the tradition of long balladic oral poems inspired by storytellers like Blind Willie McTell and Hank Williams (157).

Smith was conscious of her image and sought to cultivate a look drawing on her knowledge of art and film as well as her own bohemian sensibilities. A thin girl, she favored a wail look à la Audrey Hepburn in Funny Face or Yves Montand in Wages of Fear. An offhand comment made in an elevator by a Warhol associate provoked Smith to alter her image by cutting her hair. Till now an homage to Joan Baez, her new hairstyle honored Keith Richards. She describes her action as “machete-ing my way out of the folk era” (140). The new hairstyle received attention and praise at Max’s Kansas City. In cutting her hair, Smith, like many of the new guard, marked her distance from the slightly older generation of 1960s hippies that let it all hang out, hair-wise.

She also changed the clothes she wore from average women’s attire into a retro man’s suit with a white button-down shirt and skinny tie. Her signature look, as captured on film by Mapplethorpe, became her enduring image. Mapplethorpe’s famous photographs show her wearing a plain white button-down blouse and slim black trousers held up by suspenders and swinging a jacket over her shoulder. Photographs from the series are on the covers of her premiere album Horses and of her first book of poetry, as well as being in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Smith’s image completely remade the persona of the female rocker. It should be noted that the white shirt and skinny tie were a common part of the uniform of the early male punk rockers, but Smith was the only woman to make use of men’s attire and accessories. Just as punk rock music went back to basics for its energy and focus, Smith took parts of the male rock star’s image and integrated them into her own look which is only slightly feminine but tomboyish and gamine in just the right way.

Smith’s image remains as an enduring legacy of the 1970s, summing up her unique contribution to the zeitgeist. In creating this image she brought in elements from several time periods. The clothing and hair were those of 1960s British male rockers. Her hair was not combed, brushed, sprayed, mousied, or clicked, but tousled to give it a look that was somewhat wild and confrontational, though it was not outlandish. It was part of the juxtaposition of shabby and chic that soon became the cutting edge of fashion. With Mapplethorpe’s help, she created the self in which she performed. Most particularly, she did not doll herself up to be more feminine to fit a male fantasy of what was expected from a female performer. The image she gave herself enabled her to become the personality she presented on stage, and for that style, there were no female predecessors.

The punk movement in which Smith’s music is categorized, like pop art, was a snide, ironic commentary on the banality and inauthenticity of popular culture (see Henry 1989, O’Hara 1995, McNeil & McCain 1996). The punks, like the other bohemians, including their immediate predecessors, the hippies, expressed their proudly countercultural identity and political stance. Without them, rejected the uptightness, materialism, and hypocrisy of bourgeois American culture. In Halasz’s (2006, 166) words, “punk emerged as a manifestation of the bohemian search for authenticity.” The sound of punk rock music was noisy and electrified, having roots in the earlier garage rock of the late 1960s. It was often characterized by anger, rage, and cynicism. Traits one finds in Smith’s musical output along with the seemingly opposite characteristics of lyricism and authenticity. The clearest musical influences on Smith were the Rolling Stones and the Velvet Underground. But she did not significantly pick up on the theme of decadence so salient in their lyrics or vocal tone. That strain was worked to perfection by David Bowie, an even more important artist than Smith who also burst into the limelight in the 1970s a few years before Smith did. What struck critics listening to her onstage and her album was the intensity of her performance. In reflecting on the musical lineage of Smith’s sound, the critic Mark Paytress (2006, 13) draws an analogy to the Who, stating that for her as for them, “Rock was still considered a potent weapon in the West’s cultural revolution.” The comparison to the Who seems apt given the power of their music along with its humor and pathos. Smith’s innovation was to carve out a space that was womanly and occupied a role of the lead singer in a group that had previously gone only to men.

In showing how Patti Smith rose up quickly into stardom, we can see several threads connecting 1970s (and even 1980s) music to the culture of 1960s: the bohemian literary and artistic culture of downtown New York, the scene surrounding Andy Warhol and his underground, especially Lou Reed, and the powerful music, style, and swagger of rock male stars from groups like...
Smith's legacy can be heard most clearly in the female artists who followed in her footsteps, especially Alanis Morissette, P. J. Harvey, Liz Phair, and the Riotgrrl movement led by Bikini Kill and including significant grunge-oriented bands from the 1990s such as Sleater-Kinney and Veruca Salt (see Marcus 2010). Those artists used a hard rock sound, but Smith's influence can also be heard in the softer, keyboard-based music of other left of center female performers such as Tori Amos and Fiona Apple. But even as new artists and styles emerge and older ones go out of fashion, Smith's voice and image remain as permanent foundations of alternative rock.

WORKS CITED


The Kingsborough common reading program, KCC Reads, is one of the most important contributions to my course planning each semester. While I concern myself with materials, learning outcomes, and assessment tools, the common reading always reminds me of the "everything else" in life. The human element.

I think we focus a lot as educators on the teaching of teaching and learning. We worry about how learners will receive the information and knowledge we put out into the classroom. We also take a lot of time through grading, feedback with individual students, and yes, most often in our so-called down time to reflect and critically analyze whether our teaching method really worked. But I want to remind us, as KCC Reads does, about the everything else.

From the vantage point of our constitutional law course, I positioned the work of Mapplethorpe, Smith, and really a generation of counter-culture artists within the legal-political category of obscenity. Through this lens, we were able to compile points of view as we worked (our praxis) to provide a critical approach to democratic teaching and learning, with art as the subject of political violence. To me, this is what defines teaching and learning as truly democratic: that we open our classrooms, minds, and discussions to the everything else that surrounds teaching and learning. When students engage in this democratic process, they not only see the value of diversity that only the humanities seems capable of communicating effectively, but they also begin to see their own civic identity butt up, coalesce and resound with others. The common reading program is not the only way this can happen, but it provides a safe place where we can dive into the ever-changing notions of civic learning and democratic engagement in action. In other words, a book like Just Kids gives me, the educator, a chance to engage with students about the everything else in a way that builds knowledge and community into our course content. To me, this is the part of democratic teaching and learning that matters most.
Once we arrived on Lanford Wilson, the connections between *Just Kids* and *Hot L* were staggering (more on this later!!). The theatre faculty soon discovered that in addition to being a simple complement to *Just Kids*, the selection of Wilson’s play served as a means for students to more fully understand Smith’s book. That is, at first, the idea was to utilize *Just Kids* as a tool for deepening an understanding of *The Hot L Baltimore*, but in reality, both texts fully supported each other. The play offered a great window into the landscape in which Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe were living. Likewise, *Just Kids* answered many questions about the setting of *Hot L*. The play and book, tethered in this way, heightened students’ comprehension of what was happening in the art scene (and the world at large) in the early 1970’s.

Perhaps most importantly, since the main location in *Hot L* was also a hotel lobby, the play gave a specific visualization of what the lobby of the Chelsea Hotel, a prominent location in *Just Kids*, might have been like.

In theatre production, the selection of the play often comes FIRST, then the director and design team will begin to find source material (images, articles, research) to help the team “get inside” the play. However, with the KCC Reads/Theatre Program partnership, this happened in reverse, which created many interesting opportunities for a deepening in the exploration of the dramatic texts AND Smith’s book. The Theatre Program used *Just Kids* as a key inspiration in the realization of the concept of both plays, in particular, *The Hot L Baltimore*.

In the selection of *The Hot L Baltimore*, the Theatre Program faculty knew that a play that was firmly connected, thematically, to *Just Kids* was essential. Furthermore, it was important that whatever play we picked, it needed to focus on the arts world of NYC during the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. In addition, to accommodate KCC’s large theatre program student body, we needed a production that had a sizable ensemble cast, which also offered challenging roles. Lanford Wilson rose to the surface very quickly.

In the spring of 2014, the Kingsborough Theatre Program made a commitment to KCC Reads to select and produce plays that were somehow linked to the themes of the annual book selection. With that in mind, and as the 2014-2015 chosen text was Patti Smith’s *Just Kids*, the Theatre Program decided to produce Lanford Wilson’s *The Hot L Baltimore* and the 1972 musical version of Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Both plays premiered in New York City, in the very same world in which Smith’s book takes place, and both plays were originally staged during the years in which *Just Kids* is set. (This presentation will focus mainly on the relationship between the fall production of *The Hot L Baltimore* and *Just Kids*.)

**THIS PRESENTATION WILL FOCUS MAINLY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FALL PRODUCTION OF THE HOT L BALTIMORE AND JUST KIDS.**

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In the theatre, the company of actors and designers are often supported by a production dramaturg: a person charged with supporting the theatre artists in fully understanding the play, everything from cultural context to the structure of the text. A dramaturg will provide information on the period, setting, social norms, gender roles, and so on. The production dramaturg is also able to support the director in fully analyzing the script. In addition, a dramaturg will often help in educating the audience: lobby displays, program notes, audience talkbacks, and study guides (all of which the Theatre Program indeed produced). For each production, the Kingsborough Theatre Program mentors a student production dramaturg.

*Just Kids* was a major source of research and inspiration in our production and for our dramaturg. *The Hot L Baltimore* takes place in the lobby of a hotel, as stated above. To more completely understand Wilson’s play, we used Patti Smith’s detailed description of the environment inside the Chelsea Hotel. Smith describes that lobby and the hotel as a place where misfits lived. Similarly, Lanford Wilson had a love of “rejects” and populated his play with them, which resonated with Smith’s Book. A quote from Ben Brantley’s March 2011 obituary for Lanford Wilson reads:

**PROFESSOR PAUL RICCIARDI**
**DEPT. OF COMMUNICATIONS & PERFORMING ARTS**

**FROM PAGE TO STAGE:**
**THE KCC THEATRE PROGRAM COLLABORATES WITH KCC READS**

**IN THE SPRING OF 2014,** the Kingsborough Theatre Program made a commitment to KCC Reads to select and produce plays that were somehow linked to the themes of the annual book selection. With that in mind, and as the 2014-2015 chosen text was Patti Smith’s *Just Kids*, the Theatre Program decided to produce Lanford Wilson’s *The Hot L Baltimore* and the 1972 musical version of Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Both plays premiered in New York City, in the very same world in which Smith’s book takes place, and both plays were originally staged during the years in which *Just Kids* is set. (This presentation will focus mainly on the relationship between the fall production of *The Hot L Baltimore* and *Just Kids*.)
That many of these characters feel destined for self-destruction adds a special sheen to these ephemeral moments in the spotlight. It's the abiding hunger for life, in the characters who aren't quite yet down for the count, that makes the spotlight blaze. Mr. Wilson's greatest strength wasn't his lyrical way with words, which could occasionally cloy, but his infectious, sincere appreciation for the unexpected heat within lost and wayward lives.

On deeper exploration of the two texts, many more links were found. For example, in *The Hot l*, two of the central characters, Jamie and Jackie, are young drifters. Always together (albeit brother and sister), seeking truth in the world, and sometimes getting into trouble. These characters seem to be mirror images of Smith and Mapplethorpe in *Just Kids*. Another way in which the texts "spoke" to each other was through music and fashion. In the KCC production of *The Hot l Baltimore*, music was as essential as was the set and lighting design. There was music in the transitions, literally playing on the radio on the set of the play, during the pre-show and intermission, and so on. Much of the music heard throughout our production was inspired by the very music Smith discussed in *Just Kids*.

In a theatre designer's dramaturgical process, research of images (particularly historic images), namely photography, is essential. Luckily for the Theatre Program design team, *Just Kids* contains snapshots from the life of Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe (many taken by Mapplethorpe and Smith). These pictures provided an invaluable gateway into the life of the downtown NYC art scene of the early 1970's, and thus, gave a direct visual for the environment of Lanford Wilson's world. If one were to compare production photos of the KCC production of Wilson's play to photos in Smith's book, one would find that indeed, the KCC production of *The Hot l* was very much informed by it.

The most exciting part of this partnership between KCC Reads and the Theatre Program is the idea that through a common reading program, other texts emerge! Because of *Just Kids*, many KCC students also read *The Hot l Baltimore* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. True, there are many, many more connections between Smith's book and Wilson's play: the fact that Wilson's artistic home, Circle Repertory Theatre, was just blocks from the Chelsea Hotel and many of the downtown venues where Smith performed, that Wilson himself lived in many "flophouses" like the Chelsea Hotel, and so on. However, ultimately, what made *Just Kids* and *The Hot l Baltimore* remarkable companion pieces is that both artists come from the same generation of art—and that generation is most worthy of our students' study.
HE WASN’T CERTAIN WHETHER HE WAS A GOOD OR BAD PERSON. WHETHER HE WAS ALTRUISTIC. WHETHER HE WAS DEMONIC. BUT HE WAS CERTAIN OF ONE THING. HE WAS AN ARTIST. AND FOR THAT HE WOULD NEVER APOLOGIZE. PATTI SMITH, JUST KIDS
THE AGE OF FORCES

A MULTIMEDIA CELEBRATION INSPIRED BY JUST KIDS
In class we discussed the power of social forces to influence us and who we become. We especially researched the power of music to inspire and ignite change. We looked, for example, at how a place can affect us and our identity. In Just Kids, my students and I experienced a very personal connection. The spirit of Just Kids is one of celebrating the forces that define us, and that is the spirit in which my students read and engaged with the book.

WE CELEBRATED HOW WE HAVE LEARNED THROUGH SHARING OUR EXPERIENCES IN THE FORMS OF MUSIC AND COMPARING IT TO SMITH AND MAPPLETHORPE.

And our multimedia presentation is a fusion of music, dance, video and art that represents how we were inspired to share these connections, and to compare them with the experiences of Patti and Robert in their quest to find themselves.

Reginald Smith and Marcus Best were MC’s and tech directors. Jamal Nuñes was Videographer. Kris Campbell was choreographer and developed the dance video concepts. Kris said that because “the book was mainly based in a period of trial and tribulation in NYC, I saw ‘Age of Aquarius’ as a pinnacle representing America coming out of a “dark” age, making an almost seamless transition between ignorance and understanding, hate and love, with the help of music.”

Furthermore, the love displayed between Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe is what ‘Age of Aquarius’ is all about, the possible organic fiber within humans to truly love and respect one another unconditionally and in the hope that we can live in peace and harmony. There would be no ‘Age of Aquarius’ if there was no one to fight and take a stand for it, thus came the connection between Just Kids and the song, “Glory,” displaying the constant fight to rise above all darkness into an “age of Aquarius” and find our inner glory. That spirit filled the MAC Rotunda at the close of our session, as Kris and Janelle danced a grand finale and we all rose to “Glory” for our curtain call. We danced, feeling the energy of communion to stand up for love and truth.

Here are some of the best fragments from our performance on May 5th.
ANUM BAKHAR ON HER BOLLYWOOD DANCE
INSPIRED BY READING JUST KIDS

I created a dance connected to Patti Smith that was intended to show how the story of her life encouraged me to do the right thing, and to think about myself, knowing that what I'm doing is right. I always had a passion for dancing, acting, and singing but my father never liked it or permitted me to do anything like that. When I saw and read the story of Patti Smith's life, it inspired me to do what I think is right and to not let others use me. Don't care about what other people or anyone thinks, and do what I have to do. That is exactly how I ended up fulfilling my desire to dance on a Bollywood song called “Boli Pani,” by Soni Pabla, for the conference. At first when I came on stage to perform I was very nervous and very much hesitated, but at the end I did it. I got the courage from Professor Anderson similar to how Patti Smith got her inspiration and courage from the very famous singer, Jim Morrison.
Everybody has dreams. Dance is many people's dream, but some of them are facing difficulties. In some Asian countries, parents do not allow their children to learn dance; they think it is useless and a waste of time; they think the only way for their child to be successful is to study hard, and to get a good grade on exams. Is that the only way for a child to be a success? "No," no one will be successful by giving up their dreams. That will only kill their confidence and encourage them to do things they do not love. On the other hand, in some countries, children who carried their dreams to become a dancer and danced on the street are they arrested by the police. Even though it is difficult, even though the environment is negatively influencing us, we should not give up on our dreams; we should stand up and fight for it, should be altogether as one and fight for ourselves.

Every dance has a story. The name of this dance is "No." We will see from the beginning of the dance, the police try to stop our dance, but we wouldn't stop our moves, because dancing is our dream. Until they shoot us down on the floor. It is not the end, a voice from deep inside our bodies is waking us up, our soul is rising up and bringing energy to our bodies, a new life, a new day encourages us to stand ready to fight for our destiny. The main idea of the dance is telling those people who have a dream, and are for some reasons being kept from it, to stand up for their dreams. Say "No" to those difficulties and those people who disagree with your dreams. Now, we are standing here, to fight for our destiny and our dreams.

**REGINALD SMITH**  
I wrote “Zero” as a piece in relation to Robert because I saw him as a mirror reflection of myself in a different era. I truly appreciated his relationship with Patti and his determination as an artist. "Zero" is more of an interpretation of his struggles in life as well as defending his artistic decisions, in just the way I always question my future endeavors and career aspirations. To me, life in general is that of a long journey filled with construction blocks and detours that you have no anticipation for, despite planning and mapping out the directions in your mind. While it causes frustration and even pain, you have to accept, and in a way enjoy, the road blocks and mysterious issues in order to understand and have gratitude for the destination and what you’ll eventually achieve in life.

**ZERO**  
My life has been one of a course with no clear direction, but a plethora of detours, road trips, and emergency pit stops. Taking short cuts here and there to ease the journey that these humans call life, but it was nothing more than a living hell that you pay to stay. Trying to communicate with those who you've deemed myths and legends and wanting a grasp at their greatness, only to get lost in a ditch and wondering "Why did I believe in them?" My pit stops were a mixture of self-choices and anomalies, wanting to get off or trying to make sense of what people call the joyride of life. I've even met hecklers and road raged idiots screaming and tormenting me for being in their way, when they themselves are aimless. My ride has been scratched, scarred, and has broken down more than I can recollect while being trapped in my indulgence as a dream seeker. In total, if a random bypass were to count, the meter would be at absolute zero. I wouldn't have conquered or achieved anything that would be understood as a success or gain. And I am proud to be Zero, I am proud of the disdain and disappointment of my naysayers. I am proud to be Zero because Zero is my blissful savior; Zero has taught me more than any medal or revenue earned by cheap means. Zero is not the judge of my journey, but the reminder that I have an asset of unlimited growth and potential. At the end of the day no one can truly judge my journey without ascertaining the prospect of at least the passenger seat. So to my enemies who've tried to run me down in this journey, I proudly take the banner and bummer sticker of zero. I Am Zero.

**IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO BADLY THEN YOU GO TO THE DARKNESS SIDE WHERE YOU MAKE THE DEAL WITH THE SAINT**

**DAVID RUBENFELD-TORRES** I admit I had no idea what to expect when I started the book.

I had read many books before, but this one was the most difficult. Then as I read I was shocked. From the beginning Patti Smith was a survivor; she was born sick in the cold winter. But she had her family and her siblings. I look back and remember that I had my mother, who supported me. I worked hard, too, just like Patti worked hard. I did too—I had to earn it for it wasn't just given. I had to earn respect. I started drawing when I was 5 years old and writing poetry. It calmed me down. I had to learn to push myself. I found the connection between art, music and writing. I see myself as both Patti and Robert. I represent them both.

Patti is the light and Robert is the darkness - the yin and the yang.

**LIFE LIVING IN DARKNESS**

Life living in darkness  
Shadows your life  
With a lot of evil  
Life living in darkness  
Causes to change the way you  
Think, it causes a person to make deals with the devil's  
Playground and himself.  
But life living in lightness fills up your heart with love and courage.  
The lightness that God brings to your life  
Encourages you to do good things
Gazillion Voices magazine is collaborating with The Foster Care Film and Community Engagement Project, a documentary project depicting the lives of youth in foster care. Several current and former foster youth have worked on the project. This written work comes from interviewee Juliet Forde, an aspiring writer and recently aged-out foster youth. More information about the project is available at www.fostercarefilm.com.

TO ALL FOSTER KIDS:

If it takes me forever and a day ima change the system that brought us here today. Just keep fightin’ the fight and walkin’ the walk because I know what it’s like to be without a home. No matter what life brings us I’ll never leave your side. I’m gonna be the voice that changes the battles that we try to hide. I know what it’s like being left when you finally get into your comfort zone. Let your guards down only to find out you’re all on your own. Goin’ from home to home thinkin’ you’ll never wake up from life’s nightmare. Afraid to go to sleep because at night the monster creeps into your room and takes away your innocence. Never being able to trust because every bond you’ve ever built has been torn down by life’s obstacles. Scared to be loved or (even worse) to love back because you only know pain. Lookin’ for love in all the wrong places because daddy’s gone and mommy’s in the alley takin’ drugs sellin’ her body tryin’ to pursue a career in modeling. Never takin’ the time to think about the kids she left behind. Havin’ a lil’ girl out there in the world who looks just like her. As that girl grows up she has only love for her mother. Never judging her. Until she tries to find her purpose and destiny life smacks her in the face with her mother’s wrongdoing. Only leavin’ her with blurry eyes full of tears and unanswered questions… Now she has the world on her shoulders but doesn’t have time to tend to her pain because she has a point to make. She has sacrificed so many things. From her childhood to her body. So what’s it to sacrifice for the system that has brought her here today. She’s thankful for all her blessings but just once could she go back to the moment in time when she didn’t have a care in the world? When she was the red haired girl who love to dance and swirl… BEEP BEEP BEEP! She wakes up from her fairytale. Places influences us and our personal history and culture influence us as well.

AFRAID TO GO TO SLEEP BECAUSE AT NIGHT THE MONSTER CREEPS INTO YOUR ROOM
JIM ELGUIRA I AM FROM PERU. WHEN I READ *JUST KIDS* AND HOW PATTI WAS INFLUENCED BY WHERE SHE GREW UP AND HER HERITAGE, I RELATED IT TO MY HERITAGE. AND I WROTE “INCAS” AS A WAY OF EXPRESSING THAT.

**INCAS**

The Inca were attacked by the Spanish in the 1500s.
The Spanish murdered a lot of Incas and stole their Gold.
They grew corn, seeds, bananas, tomatoes, pineapple, beans and chocolate.

Around 1434, the Inca Empire was created, until the Spanish attacked and conquered it.

They lived in South America, Peru Cusco Machu Picchu.
Incas were very strong muscular men but they were not prepared for a battle.

The Incas language was Quechua.
Chincanas were tunnels underground, shortcut tunnels that the Incas used to move to other cities on foot.
They also discovered that there were 365 days in one year.
They also were the first civilization to live in the mountains.
Their governor was Inti.
They also lived in adobe homes.
They prayed to the sun gods.
The sun was their god.
YAJAIRA CARTER was inspired by the book to honor Bob Marley and his influence on so many of the artists that followed after him.

Reading *Just Kids* reignited my love for reggae and Bob Marley. It is so easy to dismiss the energies that influence our being. When it came time to write this poem, I took a page out of Jay-z’s book and freestyled it. It was important for me to feel connected and “one” with my artwork, rather than treat it as an assignment. The book also refueled my creative side, a side I had not explored in what seemed like forever. I felt like a kid again. The joy I felt during the creative process was healing for me. I can only hope that Rebel-Rebel continues to spread love, positivity, and to heal through art.

**IM A REBEL --- SOUL REBEL --- IM A CAPTURER --- SOUL ADVENTURER**

SHE. HIM. THEM.

NYC

THE MAGNET FOR ALL ARTISTS

SHE SAID...I CAN DO WHAT THAT MORRISON DOES

ALL I NEED IS A BEAT AND A MIC

HE SAID...I CAN DO WHAT WARHOL DOES

ALL I NEED IS A MUSE AND A CAMERA

TOGETHER THEY WERE THE DYNAMIC DUO

A Cliché...YES I KNOW

BUT REALLY AND TRULY

WHAT’S A POEM WITHOUT WORDS

(WE WOULD HAVE TO ASK HORACE)

A PHOTO WITHOUT A SUBJECT

I&I WITHOUT MARLEY

IS THIS LOVE -- IS THIS LOVE -- -- IS THIS LOVE -- IS THIS LOVE - THAT I'M FEELING

MARLEY TOO WAS RAISED IN A CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD

DID NOT BELIEVE IN WAR

HAILE SELASSIE WAS HIS KING

AND RASTAFARI WAS HIS BELIEF

ONE LOVE --- ONE HEART --- LETS GET

TOGETHER AND FEEL--

AWESOME !!!

BY VARIOUS STUDENT AUTHORS THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON OUR DESTINY. AND THE DEATH OF ROBERT LEFT ITS MARK ON PATTI. HER SONG “WILD LEAVES” IS A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT. KRIS CAMPBELL CHOREOGRAPHED HIS INTERPRETATION OF THAT SONG.

As the music plays and the dancers (Tina and Brian) dance their duet, Reginald Smith and Yajaira recite--

Patti- It was cold and damp and early morning. I had drifted off to sleep, but awoke with a jolt. I knew he was gone. The aria was crying its crescendo with me as I heard his words echo through the haunting melody

Robert- I live for art. I love for art....

Patti- You were my Baudelaire

Robert- You were my Joan

Patti- I was your Frida.

Robert- I was your Diego.

Patti- We were Breathless.

Robert- And forever restless.

Patti- We were *Just Kids.*

Robert- *Just Kids.*

Robert & Patti together-

*Just Kids*

Robert- We never had children, Patti.

Patti- Our art was our children

Robert- Tell our story Patti. Tell our story true. Promise me. Only you know how to.

Patti- I promise. I’ll be true to you.

We were *Just Kids*
PROFESSOR STEVE JANOWSKY

DEPT. OF ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

When Maureen Fadem asked if I wanted to have my English 12 Students be roundtable presenters at The KCC Reads Just Kids conference, I jumped at the chance for a myriad of reasons.

First of all, my class was linked with a Music 31 class, and Patti Smith’s Just Kids is a book that resonated with my students. Smith’s incredible personal and artistic journey throughout the course of the book is inspiring, and my class related to it. The eclectic and talented artists, poets, musicians and writers featured in the book gave my students a real sense of what New York’s fertile artistic life was like in the ’70s. My students also did some research on some of its important figures, like Jim Morrison, Arthur Rimbaud, Jimi Hendrix, Allen Ginsberg and a host of others. The class even made up mock Facebook pages of many of the icons and New York City landmarks featured in the book at the end of the semester. All in all, the book had a strong connection to the theme of my class.

When I first presented the idea of some of my students being part of roundtable discussions, they were reluctant and intimidated by the prospect of speaking in front of strangers. I explained that it would be an invaluable learning and teaching tool for them and myself. I would also benefit from the experience in evaluating my students’ understanding of major themes of importance in the book that would aid them in their final research-based project on Just Kids. They proceeded to become quite enthusiastic about the opportunity. Once the eight students (split into pairs), with a ninth being added on later, Nalanda Bogot, Iliriana Balidemaj, Edgar Barbosa, Stefan Gayle, Laura Gutierrez, Sharenza McEachin, Tiffany Mendoza, Brian Rivera, and Keiden Shakes were chosen, and I was thus able to use the upcoming conference as a teaching tool for my class.

I first had the students discuss some major themes of the book (four themes) that each pair would present on the day of the Just Kids conference. They came up to the whiteboard and wrote some interesting ones down including, The Chelsea Hotel as a landmark and artist community, Patti Smith’s personal and artistic choices, Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe’s profound relationship and the trials and tribulations of an artistic life.

We decided to have the students that agreed to present extract quotes from the book that connected to the themes they would discuss on the day of the conference and read them to the rest of the class. A spirited, vibrant and productive discussion ensued which served as a wonderful “practice” session for the conference. Eventually, the four themes previously mentioned were chosen by the whole class. I used the next class to have each pair (after some work at home) of presenters get up in front of the class and use their respective theme as a springboard for analysis and debate. Once the future presenters observed how involved the rest of the class became, they realized the students that they would be talking to as part of their roundtable discussions would also contribute greatly to a fruitful discussion.

On the day of the conference, my student presenters nervously awaited the start of their presentation and the other students in my class were also looking forward to contributing. As soon as the session started, my class observed how engaged the students they were presenting to were. I walked from table to table and was pleased to hear interesting points being brought up, healthy debate and “real” teaching and learning going on. The major themes of Just Kids were being discussed in an intelligent, thoughtful and revelatory way. (One of my students remarked that she now knew what it is like to be a college professor!)

What pleased me most about the session was the enthusiasm of my presenters and the attendees. One of my students, Sharenza McEachin, had prepared a collage of Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe photos as a visual aid, while Laura Gutierrez and Iliriana Balidemaj used a placard with important quotes from the book. Another heartening aspect to the session was the fact that some of Prof. Jennifer Radtke’s students, who were also presenting that day, came by to contribute.

We all know that students learn in a multitude of ways and the roundtable discussions served as a wonderful way for my class and the students who attended to take ownership of Smith’s book and fully engage the richness and poetic beauty of the text. In our next class, I started with a discussion of the day, and the presenters reflected on being part of the conference. They all told me the experience helped them truly understand the book and would aid them in the writing of their Capstone projects. As I handed out certificates for each of the presenters, I sensed a true feeling of pride and accomplishment among the group and the fact that they had been part of a truly intense educational experience.

My students and I greatly appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the Just Kids conference, and thank Dr. Fadem for the opportunity. It was a learning and teaching experience for all of us, and benefitted my role as a professor greatly.
STUDENTS EXPLORE CRITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN PATTI SMITH’S JUST KIDS
Once again, this year, I got so much out of involving my students in KCC Reads. It is the perfect way to have students studying illustration tackle the complicated process of expressing the overall feeling or concept of a book, which contains so very many ideas.

I was excited to see Just Kids chosen for KCC Reads. Since most of my students are at the same age as Patti when she begins her story, they identified with her and her struggle of growing into the person she was meant to be. Just Kids is also a love story, and as such it touched many of its young readers. I think some of the students did well at exposing the sensual and emotional turmoil that young love is bound to entail.

As an art teacher, I was particularly excited about this book because it focuses on the mysterious process of becoming an artist. It follows the journey of two young artists as they find their way to originality in their work and, almost to their surprise, recognition. This book details the mystery of the process of exploring the many roads creativity can lay out before you. It acknowledges the fears and joys that true adventure is made up of.

PROFESSOR MADELINE SOREL
DEPT. OF ART

INTRODUCTION

MANY OF THE STUDENTS IN MY CLASSES ARE BEGINNING THEIR ADULT LIVES, AND WORKING HARD, LIKE PATTI AND ROBERT, TO DEFINE THEMSELVES AS CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS IN THE FIELD OF VISUAL ARTS.

My hope, as a professor of visual art, is that my students will discover a path to express themselves in a way that is unique to them. Reading Just Kids, it was great to see my students tackle the New York City of my past from their contemporary perspective. In both eras, it has been a city that nurtures artists, a place of tolerance and invention. My students' research into the grittiness of the city of the 70's comes across well as I experienced nostalgia looking at the posters that included the city which is almost a character in this book.
ILLUSTRATING KCC READS
In the beginning of the book *Just Kids* by Patti Smith, we find Smith struggling to find her way as an artist while trying to grow up in a traditional family setting. Like Smith, I myself am very familiar to growing up in this kind of setting. Being a first generation American, my parents have different beliefs than I do about what is acceptable as a career choice and what paths should be studied in school. They felt that Art school would not lead to a serious profession, nor would being an Artist make a good career. Through my adolescent years I found small ways to rebel against these boundaries.

**IF I WAS TOLD NOT TO DRAW ON THE WALLS OF MY BEDROOM WITH MARKER, I WOULD DRAW WITH WASHABLE CRAYONS.**

When I graduated high school, I compromised with them and chose to go into a major that would provide me with a stable career.

**UPON COMING TO KINGSBOROUGH, I COULDN'T RESIST TAKING AN ART COURSE EVEN IF IT WASN'T REQUIRED FOR MY MAJOR.** That's when I met Professor Maggie Reddan. During her Design course I discovered myself again in the assignments she gave. With her encouragement I made the decision to change my major to Graphic Design. She inspired me to bring out the younger version of myself that liked to rebel and didn't take “no” for an answer.
I wasn’t able to read the book physically but I downloaded the book onto my iPod and listened to it while I was in my car. Listening to the audio made me feel like I was part of the book. I could relate to the relationship of Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe, how the two of them were loyal to each other and the love they shared between them was deep and unexplainable.

**IT REMINDED ME OF BEING YOUNG AND CHASING AFTER MY DREAMS AND GOALS.** Being loyal, dedicated and committed were and are important elements to me. Patti Smith also wrote that the same elements were important to them.

I also expressed how in the past I didn’t like to be told what to desire. It was very hard for me to stay focused because I felt like I was restricted to do what others wanted me to do. I talked about how a Professor of Kingsborough explained to me how it’s important to use the assignments as a platform to express who I am as an artist.

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**MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH**

"A REAL HOME HITTER"

*Just Kids* really hit home for me, it reminded me of my rough beginning in the big Apple. *Just Kids* is a book containing many similar experiences. I always think everyone who comes to New York for the first time must have the same experiences. We all most likely feel the journey and experience it the same way, when we're going through it and living it. Or do we?

I feel like it’s a familiar story. An out of Towner comes to New York to pursue a dream or a goal or to get away from home. Then real life hits, and you wake up to the harsh reality of living on your own.

It is true, the city does something to you at first for a while, then reality sets in, and your survival skills either kick in, or the wolf eats you and its pack finishes you off. New York being the wolf, and it’s people being the pack. It’s eat, or be eaten, swim fast or drown trying- in an ocean surrounded by lots of people and not one to extend a helping hand.

*Just Kids*, Patti Smith and Robert Mapleton have more tests trials and tribulations the city throws at them, like so many of us. Its like the city itself, or your soul or God is testing you. Or perhaps, it is really you testing yourself, so you can see if you really have what it takes to fight the on going fight, to survive, and to make it. Others around you seem to just be gliding along with ease, or that is your perception.

*Just Kids* and stories like it have this universal, on-going theme of struggling to make it in the big city in which one discovers they’re strong, unique, and meant for something more. These characters are special in because they didn’t drown, nor were eaten.

I moved from Los Angeles with my family to Louisville Kentucky. After six years of twitching motions in Kentucky, I had enough. I knew I would not need a car in New York, so I came off the train at 34th street Penn Station, I did not even know I had arrived. It was late August, a Wednesday, 5pm, and I would be attending an acting school.

The experiences that hit home for me was working in the west village as a waiter- at a not so fancy bar restaurant. Being homeless, couch hopping with 3-4 thousand dollars in my backpack. Squatting in the once before cramped Bushwick apartment me and my 7 roommates had recently move out of, where I left the window open to go back at night as I needed after climbing up the fire escape, and staying in the infamous Hotel Chelsea for a night which was AWESOME, AMAZING, INSPIRING and I did feel special. I wish I could have stayed more than that one night. But the night I did have was humbling and a wow-me experience.

I was determined to stay in the big apple and not go back to Kentucky to twitch, which was not my real home like LA anyway. But then I started getting rashes from not being able to shower and clean myself as often as I would have liked to. It was summer, it was humid, God it was hot and I itch a lot. Plus I had not been getting proper sleep, sleeping with one eye open and trying to guard my backpack and all. I was not a young scarlet damsel in distress willing to giggle, blush and let a subway trains wind blow my skirt up for a meal and a clean comfortable bed to sleep in. So being a male did not work for me. I had to say see you later New York for a while. But I was determined to come back and I did.

I can say staying in the Hotel Chelsea was $108-$112 Per night. I wanted a hot shower and clean comfy bed to sleep in the night I stayed. While I was checking in I thought it was interesting to see what looked like a prostitute and her pimp in the lobby. Then an addict was passing back and forth then stopping to lean against the wall in the lobby every now and then. He looked really sweaty and dirty, far worse than I was. There was a cop just standing looking around, but not looking too concerned about any of this all happening in front of him. That was my Hotel Chelsea experience.
My name is Catherine McConney and I'm an Artist. I've only recently discovered that I was an "Artist," in the last four years of my life. Growing up, I never attended a school that offered art classes. I actually only took art for one year in high school, which wasn't much of a memorable experience. My artistic awakening however came on a whim during a two-year break I was taking from college to figure out what I really wanted to do with my life. During that time I began taking continuing educations classes at Kingsborough on Saturday mornings. It was a happy mistake that the design course that I signed up for, thinking it would have to do with interior design, was a class that pushed me toward drawing. The teacher, Professor Maggie Reddan, was instrumental in helping me see my artistic potential and encouraged me to think outside of the box, that art was more than just being able to draw; art was being able to visualize and conceptualize.

That one design class was my turning point; I actually took it four times before I finally decided to transfer to Kingsborough to study graphic design. Like Patti Smith, I'm gradually figuring out what I'm good at and finally seeing the connection that I've always had to art. Skills like screen-printing, which I taught myself from YouTube in my free time during break. My slight knowledge of design programs, which I taught myself when I was a kid. In the words of my mother I was just "talented." I had not thought of myself as an artist.

The people that surround me are the ones that have always seen my potential way before I had. Students in high school would refer to me as "different" because I didn't seem to be a part of any particular group or clique; I was just Catherine. I'm comfortable with myself and take pride in my authenticity. Patti and Robert had a moment in the book which influenced its name. They decided to "dress like artists" and go where artists go, which was Washington Square Park. My appearance also has that effect on people. I am viewed as an artist, or simply as a creative individual. At the end of the day, gaining recognition for the art you put out there will make you feel like an artist.
CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS:
THE CAST AND CREW OF THE HOT L BALTIMORE CONNECT WITH JUST KIDS
**INTRODUCTION: PROFESSOR PAUL RICCIARDO, DEPT. OF COMMUNICATIONS & PERFORMING ARTS**

This paper represents the general framework for the KCC Reads Student Conference panel presentation facilitated by Theatre Program student dramaturg, Mila Martinez. During the session, Ms. Martinez prefaced the discussion by describing to the panel and audience her role as dramaturg on the Theatre Program’s production of Lanford Wilson’s *The Hot l Baltimore*. What follows is the text from that presentation. The student panelists speaking with Ms. Martinez were Adam Abdeliziz, Angela Auguste, Brenda Page, and Patrick Johnson.

**MILA MARTINEZ, KCC STUDENT, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF ADAM ABDELIZIZ, ANGELA AUGUSTE, BRENDA PAGE, AND PATRICK JOHNSON.**

**WHAT IS A DRAMATURG AND WHAT IS THE ROLE THEY PLAY IN A THEATER PRODUCTION?** A dramaturg is a person who is an advocate or liaison for a play. They fill in the gaps between the director and cast and between cast and audience. A dramaturg is someone who helps follow through with the director’s vision for a production run. This person plays an essential role for making sense of it all. They ask questions such as, “Why was this play written?” “What is the core theme and what was the playwright’s intention?” or even, “What was going on socially when that particular play was written?” A dramaturg can be sought out as a helpful guide to fill in gaps a creative team may have while working on a show.

Take for example the KCC Theatre Department’s production of *The Hot l Baltimore*. The play was written by Lanford Wilson in the early 1970’s and has a particular structure. When reading through *The Hot l Baltimore* for the first time, it will seem a bit mysterious and you will probably have questions, the kinds of questions received from the Hot l cast during rehearsals, such as “Why are railroad trains brought up throughout the play?” “What was the average rent cost for an apartment?” “What were the prostitution crimes rates, how many average girls were on the streets?” There are different ways to tackle the answers but, with proper resources and a little dramaturgical research, you can begin to understand the layers and sub-stories the play has to offer. In this particular setting to help the creative team, we utilized Patti Smith’s *Just Kids* as a guide to unravel the thickness of the play.

**ONE OF THE MANY REASONS THAT JUST KIDS WAS A GREAT READING COMPANION WAS DUE TO SMITH’S INSIGHTFUL DETAILS OF PLACES, PEOPLE AND THINGS.** Her investigation into the social events occurring during the period of the 1960’s and 70’s made it easy for us to understand the sorts of situations that were taking place in the play. When turning the pages of her book, we started to get this sense of wanting to be there with her and touch all the buildings, pictures, and trains that Smith was describing. We wanted to deliver this desire in our production of *The Hot l Baltimore*.

One thing that stayed with us while reading *Just Kids* and *The Hot l Baltimore* together were the themes of striving to succeed and abandonment. As Patti Smith would discuss her emotions and personal struggles in her book, so too would the characters in *The Hot l Baltimore*. She became, for us, the voice for the voiceless. She was on a road to a better life and success while the tenants of *The Hot l Baltimore* were on a path of self-destruction.

**AS MUCH AS THEY STRIVED TO MOVE FORWARD IN THEIR LIVES, THESE CHARACTERS ONLY SEEMED TO GO IN CIRCLES.**

*The Hot l Baltimore* being a hotel, and the Chelsea Hotel being a home for Smith for several years of her life, comprised another useful connection for us. A fun fact: the Chelsea is located only a few blocks away from the theatre where Lanford Wilson was writing and producing plays. There is no confirmation that Smith and Wilson ever worked together, but Smith did work on a play at Wilson’s theater. There is also some speculation that Wilson was writing about The Chelsea Hotel but there is no definite answer on this point.

The play opens in an 1800’s Victorian hotel lobby that is due for demolition. The year is 1972, and like so much of the neighborhood surrounding it, the hotel has been neglected. Richard Nixon is president, the economy is at its lowest, and the sounds of Bob Dylan, Moody Blues, David Bowie, Janis Joplin, Gladys Knight, and Led Zeppelin fill the radio airwaves. The residents of the Hotel Baltimore give us a view of how urban America was declining at this time. Traveling by airplane was becoming more affordable, and hotels were popping up everywhere around the country. People were on the go, relocating, chasing dreams, and striving for better lives.

**THOUGH THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY MAY SEEM ABANDONED AND BROKEN, THESE BRAVE SOULS SEEKS A CONNECTION.** They come from all different walks of life, and despite their brokenness, misplaced dreams, and skepticism, together they are a family, living with hope, dancing through hardships one step at a time.

*The Hot l Baltimore* was first produced in February of 1973 at the Circle Repertory Company. After a successful run, the production transferred to the Circle-in-the-Square Theater. As with the pending demolition in the play, neither theater exists today. Lanford Wilson (1937-2011), was raised in Missouri and studied in San Diego and Chicago, followed by moving to NYC in the early 1960’s. There, he became a much admired playwright. Although he had commercial success on Broadway, he is noted for being an Off-Broadway playwright, one of the first to create central, meaningful gay and lesbian characters. Besides *The Hot l Baltimore*, which became a short-lived TV sitcom in the 70’s, his other plays include the Pulitzer Prize winning Talley’s Folly, as well as Angles Fall, Balm in Gilead, Fifth of July, The Gingham Dog, Lemon Sky, and Redwood Curtain, among others.

**SO WHO KNOWS?** Maybe Wilson was writing about the Chelsea Hotel and maybe he was not. All we know is that *Just Kids* and *The Hot l Baltimore* are complementary reads, and we are grateful that we got to work and fall in love with both stories. Patti Smith now holds a special place in our hearts as do the characters of *The Hot l Baltimore*. Now, we cannot wait to read Smith’s M Train (part two) in the Fall!
We are always thankful when KCC alumni come back to the college to give back in some way. Whether it’s to share their experiences or insights or attend an event, it’s wonderful to see how much they’ve developed and accomplished since graduating. This year, five exceptional alumni, all pursuing higher degrees, graciously participated in the KCC Reads program and joined us to present their thoughts on Patti Smith’s Memoir, *Just Kids*.

**The Alumni Panel Discussions Exhibited Quite a Wide Range of Riveting Perspectives, Capturing Audience Members Comprised of Students, Staff and Faculty Members.**

Zanib Ahmad, ’14, a senior at Hunter College and majoring in Studio Art and Media, found a likeness in Patti Smith’s book to KCC students, in the sense of their diverse thinking, learning from mistakes and their pursuit to better themselves. Joel Alexander, ’11, who graduated from Columbia University in 2014 and is currently pursuing his Master’s degree in International Business and Economics at NYU, commended Patti Smith’s undying commitment to achieving her goals and her continual pursuit of “the good life.” Having just graduated from Columbia University, Farin Kautz, ’12, applauded her authenticity and drive to stay true to her art as she pursued the American dream. One of KCC’s newest alumni, Rida Abdullah, ’15, now majoring in Political Science at John Jay College, relayed her perspective on the sad, yet poetic story of Patti’s struggles. Lastly, Jennifer Faybusovich, ’14, currently at the University of Amsterdam majoring in Women’s Studies, fittingly pondered Patti Smith’s impact on the empowerment and perception of women.

It was an honor to reunite with these gifted graduates of the college and to listen to their insightful and varied perspectives. I hope you enjoy reading their summaries as much as we enjoyed having them return “home” to KCC if only for a day.
SWANS, JOURNEYS AND JUST KIDS

KCC GRADUATES WEIGH-IN ON PATTI SMITH’S MEMOIR
JOEL ALEXANDER
PATTI SMITH’S SWANS
AND OUR ROAD TO SELF-DISCOVERY

Life and death are inextricably linked. Patti Smith cements this experience by bringing both full circle, in her book Just Kids, via the birth of a baby she has to unfortunately put up for adoption, and the untimely death of her close friend and past love, Robert Mapplethorpe. This book touches on a variety of topics. It’s a wholesome portrait of New York in the late 60’s and early 70s; it covers friendship and loss, creating and exploration, poverty and wealth, sexuality and gender, and much more.

Nonetheless, what strikes me most about Just Kids is the story of self-creation. More specifically, the unfathomable, mystical, and opaque journey it tends to be. Patti, coming from a poor background, approached New York in the prototypical fashion of a wide-eyed wanderer. She took moments in stride with a heart open to experience and a mind for remembrance. From her depiction, she wasn’t particularly focused on being a celebrity, which is interesting today, in our era of overnight YouTube sensations and Instagram celebrities. Patti wanted to be an artist, and one might even say she wanted to be an artist “for art’s sake.” Her partner Robert, on the other hand, is depicted as highly strategic. The New York go-getter. He too was from a poor background, but he’s preoccupied with success. Robert’s story seems to fit another prototype, the adventurer who is willing to do whatever it takes to be in the right place at the right time – and it worked out for him. Robert would find himself in right places with right friends – the rich and famous in his case – he would hustle and he would run into a few eccentrics along the way.

The juxtaposition of Patti and Robert is intriguing since both pursue a different path toward self-creation and self-discovering. In the journey of self-creation they can come to represent two sides that we all experience. There is the side of us that just searches, and that which just wants to live and let live. And, we also have a Robert in us. In those moments we go out into the world with a particular level of detail. For academics, it may be which major to take, which job or internship to acquire, which friends to make or to avoid, which parties to attend, what clothes to wear, food to eat, food not to eat, all of this in search of success.

Personally, my Patti experience were my formative years here at Kingsborough Community College, where I studied Biology and then later after I transferred from Kingsborough to attend Columbia. At Columbia I took fiction and poetry classes, fascinated by the Beat generation and what their search for the good life meant, especially as it contrasted the old philosophers such as Kant, Descartes, Hume, and Schopenhauer. What that journey illustrated was that much of human life has circled around chasing that answer – how does one define the “good life”?

I can pinpoint my Robert days as well, those days when I entered my senior year in college and I had my life planned out to a “T.” Of course, what I had planned isn’t what occurred at all. However, this is the novelty of Patti’s book, since it illustrates effortlessly the role of happenstance and luck in one’s life. For example, there is a segment of the book where Patti and Robert have just moved into the Chelsea Hotel. They could have had a larger apartment – actually all they really wanted was a larger apartment – but because of the history and its appeal, they chose the Chelsea Hotel and shared a small room. At that hotel, they met various individuals, artists and creators who they learned from and who played significant roles in shaping how they defined themselves and approached their own work. They even met soon-to-be famous individuals, such as Jimi Hendrix and his acclaimed hat, or Janis Joplin.

However, the act of moving to the Chelsea Hotel was partly luck, partly unintended, yet it still allowed for significant self-exploration. This rings true in a common manner: there is an assumption that when things don’t go as planned, that must be a bad sign. Actually, that is not the case at all. Both outcomes, those planned and those that are surprises, bring with them a collection of experiences, which will always weigh toward the unpredictable outcomes that come to define our lives.

An example from my life was my dream of working in a Think-Tank – debating politics and international occurrences. As graduation approached, I soon became aware that maybe that was not what I had been looking for, and instead ended up pursuing my Master’s degree. A Master’s degree wasn’t what I had expected or planned at all. However, to this day I still find myself learning and being continually redefined and challenged by that choice. The ability to adapt and learn in unexpected situations is based chiefly on fostering a healthy relationship with the unknown, and tempering that relationship with a commitment to one’s goals, and a dedication to one’s self-development.

In the moment, you never know your part of history. In between Patti’s recallings of adventures through the artistic vignettes of New York, she mentions names we all recognize now, but to her in those days, those names were as impressive as any other successful handworker sitting to your left, for example. What this made me consider is the complete ‘fairytalesque’ quality of life. We trod forward in this world, looking for self-discovery, for fame, for love, for friendship, for knowledge, and we are or we meet the people who will shape much of our lives, and maybe the world.

Today, you are a student; tomorrow you can be a voice for your community. One day a graduate with a BA degree, the next a researcher of topics of vast pertinence. These things are rarely predicted in the present and when retold from the perspective of looking back, they only match in color and never in vivacity. This is a good thing. What Patti’s book allows me to realize is that every moment is interesting. The path to self-discovery is speckled with the experiences of various people, from various walks of life, and at any moment, unknown to you, you may be becoming an integral part of history. To me that is quite a discovery.

FARIN KAUTF
PATTI SMITH’S JUST KIDS: AN AMERICAN TESTIMONIAL

Overflowing in poetic prose and astonishing anecdotes, Patti Smith’s Just Kids, reads like the vulnerable heartbeat of the impoverished American artist. Triumphantly navigating the despondences of her youth and young adulthood – times littered with illness, destitution, vagrancy, and always the pursuit of honest artistic expression – Patti Smith comes to wear these spaces in time in a sort of heraldic manner. Through these societally ill-imposed ventures, Smith’s memoir reads less like an autobiography and more like an American Testimonial.

Following in the literary vein of writing as Rigoberta Menchu, the author of the brilliant and somewhat polarizing testimonial “I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala,” and Domattilla Barrios de Chungarás “Let me Speak,” Patti Smith’s Just Kids functions as a brilliant offering of insight into the restless lives of the poor American artist. Testimonial as a genre of writing allows the individual to function as a product of a community. Escaping the inner-prison of flesh and subjectivity, a testimonial allows the individuals'
experience to collide and bedfellow with those who have stumbled along the
same path. Writer Tobias Hecht in “World Literature Today” gives credence
to this viewpoint of testimonial. He explains:

“Testimonial narrative is at once a discrete literary genre and an
acknowledgment of the limits of literature itself. Rather than evoking
oppression and brutality as fiction might, testimonial literature lays
them bare through the words of those who endure and painfully
resist, excising rather than hiding the rough edges of those written
out of history.”

From this vantage point, Just Kids allows the foreigner passage into the
restless night of the young, poor, American artist in New York City.

Lingerling on the poetry of Rimbaud and passing New York nights listening
to Dylan’s hypersensitive “Blonde on Blonde,” Patti Smith’s life gives insight
into the unexceptional. For it functions as a testimonial of youth, poverty, and
rebellion - for every impoverished artist has thieved sleepless nights from the
graps of normacy and stagne hegemonic American expectations. Nights spent
broke, in love, and listening to the electric nervous system of Dylan’s poetic
lyricism are not exceptional for those of Smith’s ilk. Rather, this is the story
of most gray-eyed young lovers of art, expression, and, above all, experience.

Due to Smith’s uncanny ability to narrate the lives of herself and so
many others, her Americana testimonial gives flight to an all-too commonly
grounded and altogether different brand of rags to riches narrative. For while
Patti certainly enjoyed a fair amount of success, it is her triumphant authenticity
that burns through the haze of other U.S-media sponsored triumphs. Patti never
changed her name and she never abandoned her stripes. Her story embraces
of most gray-eyed young lovers of art, expression, and, above all, experience.

Patti, not Patti Smith, but Patti the woman, became a likeness of myself. For
when I was enraptured by Patti’s relationship with the city of New York and the
many eclectic characters she met through her journey there, I forgot about the
label of Patti Smith the Rockstar and finally got to know Patti, a young woman
with her own bag of insecurities, with talent and dreams that, like all of us, she
hoped to turn into reality.

Through Patti’s journey and her relationship with Robert, she ventured
into being an artist through poetry, music and art and established a name for
herself that would define her future. She taught me that if a person keeps their
work honest and true, they are given the power to create a name for themselves,
a name that is defined through their work and their perseverence.

One of my favorite quotes by Patti is (included in the video installation I
assembled, in the East Side of the Rotunda today): “One does their work for the
people and the more people they can touch the more wonderful it is.”

As a student body and a community of thinkers we have been given the
scepter from our educators here at KCC to light a flame for our future. We have
been given tools to assess our own situations and to let our thoughts and ideas
shine through the medium of literature, science, art and humanities. I feel that
this book is a great impression of our school and what it stands for: diverse
thinkers who show their talent and skills through the many panels we see here
today, which inspire us all through a connection with academia. Like Patti, we
too learn from our mistakes and strive to become better scholars and build a
good name for ourselves.

Patti taught me that building my name is its own currency. The value you
give your name is reflected through your work, and no matter how hard life
really gets, or if money is an issue and it most likely is, what really matters is
facing those hardships with a high head, having to suffer and learning through
these experiences. Patti faced rejection from her parents, moved to a metropolis
city where she suffered ostracization for a while, but gradually she built a name
within her group of close friends and then a name in the music scene of the
70’s, and now people around the world know her name.

Patti has democratized self-expression, really; a person doesn’t always
have to be an artist, she can be a singer, a writer, a humanitarian, as long as
they keep strength within themselves to move on. Just Kids, if anything, is a
helpful guide for artists alike to persevere, it’s a book on reflection, heart and
above all faith in oneself.

2 Tobias Hecht, “What to Read Now: Testimonial Narratives,” What to Read Now:
Testimonial Narratives, section goes here, accessed June 09, 2015, http://www.worldlit-
eraturetoday.org/2013/january/what-read-now-testimonial-narratives#.VXbsR58nX0c.
CONCRETE JUNGLE WHERE DREAMS ARE MADE:

HONORS STUDENTS EXPLORE INTERSECTIONS OF THE ARTIST, THE SELF AND THE CITY IN *JUST KIDS*
INTRODUCTION

IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO WORK WITH THE FIVE STUDENTS IN MY ENGLISH 24 CLASS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS SESSION: Nicholas Mancini, Billie Jean Delpy, Sana Mian, Ruth Rincher and Derrell Bolling (not represented here). From the first day of this Honors, Civic Engagement class, I was impressed by their passion, their intelligence and humor, and their collegiality as individual class participants. We had an amazing term: learned a lot, talked a lot, read a lot and conducted massive amounts of research in one small semester, and we accomplished even more.

These students all did impressive, original research into a variety of topics regarding social movements in US history, wrote bona fide research papers, and also found time to read Just Kids and write and present responses to the book. They brought that work to our campus community on Tuesday May 5th, making formal presentations that impressed and intrigued the large audience in attendance at their session. The students here represent the best of who we are as a college: they are creative, they are authentic, they are hard-working, they are articulate, they are informed, and they are civically engaged. Bravo!

MY SINCEREST THANKS TO THIS AMAZING GROUP: FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO KCC READS, TO OUR COMMUNITY AT LARGE, AND MOST OF ALL TO EACH OTHER AS SCHOLARS AND AS PERSONS.
THE RIGHT TIME

It has been seen through numerous examples in the world, the significance of being at the right place at the right time. That's how great moments are made and that's exactly how the story of Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe came about. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that many writers and artists were born in New York City. It was a magical time and most fruitful. Patti Smith also happened to be in this city in that era leaving her hometown behind to maybe find a better future.

Ending up in the city surely contributed to her later success. She was at the right place at the right time. New York City brought Patti to the Chelsea hotel where she met various influential individuals who aided her in breaking out of her shell. One of the names included in this list is that of Gregory Corso, who was a famous poet and an excellent motivator. The book gives us an example of this as when Patti had been frustrated with the ending of a poem Corso had quoted Paul Valery, and said "Poets don't finish poems, they abandon them." And then he added, "don't worry, you'll do okay kid." He also brought her to St. Mark's Poetry Project which was a poets' collective and inspired her to write her own poems. She also came across Sandy Daley who not only handed Robert his first Polaroid camera and served as a valued critique and confidante in critiquing his earliest photographs, but also introduced the two of them to Max's Kansas City where Patti later found several offers to work in plays. It is in this city that Patti met Bobby Neuwirth who was a painter, singer and songwriter. He urged her to write songs and that's when she pledged that she would, one day. He also took her to watch bands perform on stage and continued to open up the musical world for her as through him she had met the artists Larry Poons and Brice Marden.

Later, she encountered musicians like Billy Swan, Tom Paxton and Janis Joplin who took Patti with her to one of her concerts. Apart from the people around her, it is my firm opinion that the Chelsea hotel itself played a major role in Patti's success. When she landed into the walls of this great building, it was an auspicious time for struggling artists and writers, photographers, and actors. It was these walls that reminded Patti of what she wanted to do in her life as well as the need for her to stay focused. In one part of the book we find Patti describing the Chelsea Hotel as "A doll's house in the twilight zone with a hundred rooms each a small universe." She later added: "My adventures were mildly mischievous tapping open a door, slightly ajar and getting a glimpse of Virgil Thompson's grand Piano or loitering before the name plate of Arthur C. Clarke, hoping he might suddenly emerge."

Although all the Chelsea Hotel and all the names mentioned are immensely significant for Patti as understood through this book, I believe there is one name that truly made Patti who she is, and that name is Robert. It was during the earlier days of her stay in New York that Patti had bumped into Robert. She had been working at a bookstore and Robert happened to visit that very bookstore and wanted to purchase the very same piece of jewelry that she had her eyes on. This is when she made him promise that he would never give it to any girl besides her and he never did. She was at the right place at the right time and this perfect timing found her the missing part of her. Many say he was her soul-mate, but I disagree as I feel that they were closer than that. He was a constant presence in her life and heart. They encouraged each other when low, supported each other in decisions and gave space to one another when necessary.

This can be seen through Patti's examples, as when Robert needed to find his sexual orientation, and she took a step back. This level of consideration can also be viewed when Robert encouraged Patti to write her own poems in public and even volunteered to get her a place. Likewise, Patti advised him to take his own pictures. His first model was Patti herself. He also ended up taking the photo for the front cover of her album "Horses." They connected because of art and their unique bond enhanced art.

As said by Janet Maslin in her article "The Bohemian Soulmates in Obscurity": "So, Patti enshrines her early days with Mapplethorpe this way: we gathered our colored pencils and sheets of paper and drew like wild children into the night until exhausted, we fell into bed. "They sound like Hansel and Gretel, living in a state of shared delight, blissfully unaware of what awaited on the path ahead." They were beautiful together and played the role of filling the space of intimacy required by all human beings for one another so that they could focus on their potential success and create lives so unique that we speak of them today.

"POETS DON'T FINISH POEMS, THEY ABANDON THEM."
-Paul Valery

BILLIE JEAN DELPY MY FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT PATTI AND ROBERT IN JUST KIDS

As I read and then a few years later re-read just Kids by singer, poet and artist, Patti Smith, many thoughts and feelings passed through me. I fell in love with the beautiful friendship, turned relationship, turned friendship between Patti and Robert. To me, they are soul mates. They understand each other like no other and also not only accept, but also embrace all of each other's virtues and flaws. They whole-heartedly support and push each other to attain their visions of self-realization for each other and for themselves.

I also find Patti fascinating as an individual. She is incredibly positive throughout all the hardships she faces. Patti has a childlike amazement and curiosity for everything and everyone. Although she is very sensitive, feels emotions deeply and experiences extreme sadness, she always retains a certain hopefulness, strength and positivity. Patti is extremely strong in character. She seems to take on responsibility for the care of Robert and other artist friends without feeling burdened. She appears to love caring for others and appears always to be willing to share whatever she has.

Both Patti and Robert have an infinite love for learning. They embrace change and are very adventurous. Patti loves to travel and Robert is fascinated with trying on different life styles and environments.

I appreciate how driven and dedicated to their success as artists they both are. They are almost always creating something. Even when they barely have
materials to create with, they are still making art.

I find it interesting that Patti and Robert as well as many of their artist friends are very materialistic and adore and cherish material possessions. They are very superficial in the specific and detail-oriented ways they present themselves. I see this as an expression of them as true artists with a fascination for beauty and self-expression. Patti infuses objects with personality. The two of them are forever exchanging gifts, some of which they hold onto forever.

*Just Kids* is also to me a beautiful story of rags to riches. Patti was born very poor and through hard work, perseverance, and happenstance becomes a rich rock star. Robert comes from a more middle class background and he very poor and through hard work, perseverance, and happenstance becomes a rich rock star. Robert ever appears greedy though, despite their materialism. They are both artists and patrons.

Instead, it gave me a new perspective on a generation and way of life that I'll probably never understand, along with a deeper appreciation for New York City and for those who came before me, and the struggles they endured making it here. It also provided a lesson in the importance of companionship and the impact that such a relationship can have on the lives of others. Perhaps someday I'll write a memoir of my own, and it too will serve others in the way *Just Kids* served me while living here. And it will begin with, "Dear New York." Thank you for your time.

**NICHOLAS MANCINI DEAR NEW YORK**

Hello everyone, my name is Nick Mancini, and today I'm going to share with you all my interpretation of the memoir *Just Kids* by Patti Smith. The story behind this book is one of love and determination. The book portrays two young starving artists trying to make a life of their own in New York City, which I'm sure many of you know is no easy feat. I'm fairly new to New York, and I found that this memoir opened my mind to the people and events that took place here before me. I became familiar with people like Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso, who were the leading figures of poetic society at that time, in addition to many other artists.

One night, I even went to the Chelsea Hotel due to my insatiable love for history. Upon walking in, I could feel the energy that the building once held, despite how old it was. Sadly, I didn't get past the lobby because of renovations, but it was still a great experience; knowing of those who once called the Chelsea home.

After reading *Just Kids*, I felt impelled to look up some of Patti and Robert's work. I thought it was amazing how Patti was a pioneer in the rock scene, merging poetry with rock and roll; something that was near revolutionary at the time. Some of Robert's photos were intense to say the least, but they undoubtedly possessed their own aesthetic. What I love most about this book is that it tells the tale of two people who began with nothing in New York City, but eventually achieved a dream that most would kill for. Patti Smith knew she wanted to be an artist, and she acted on that dream even though the odds were against her; I admire that in a person more than anything. I believe one of our society's current issues is that kids are being brought up to be rewarded for everything they do, and this can be detrimental to their work ethic because they'll begin to make a habit of expecting everything to be handed to them. I understand how damaging this effect can be; not saying my mother was a bad parent, or that she loved me too much.

Robert's sexuality had an immense impact on his work as is evident by looking at his photography. I believe his work depicts the darker side of humanity out of pure fascination. Like myself, I'm unprejudiced about the way people live their lives, and I'm fascinated in learning different cultures. To a degree, Robert was discovering his sexuality through his art. He was exploiting it in a way no one had ever done before, making his work controversial. He desired more than anything to be successful from his work. Numerous times earlier in the book, you find him stressing over money, which stems from his disappointment that no one saw the value in his creations. Transitioning, now, to their relationship. This is where Patti's support usually intervened. I believe their relationship was incredibly beneficial to both. At one point, Patti returns from Paris and Robert is extremely ill due to a high grade fever. She cares for him and stays by his side until he recovers at the Chelsea, where they're finally provided a doctor. There, they make a vow stating that they'll support each other no matter what: “We promised that we'd never leave one another again, until we both knew we were ready to stand on our own” (Smith 88). And they kept that promise, aiding one another whenever the other faltered. In turn, they both ended up successful. Even though their intimate relationship ends due to Robert's sexual orientation, they still remain committed to one another's success. That's really the beauty behind this story. Had it not been for their mutual care, they probably wouldn't have ended up in the way they did.

I don't find that this book challenged or changed my ideas about sexuality. Instead, it gave me a new perspective on a generation and way of life that I'll probably never understand, along with a deeper appreciation for New York City and for those who came before me, and the struggles they endured making it here. It also provided a lesson in the importance of companionship and the impact that such a relationship can have on the lives of others. Perhaps someday I'll write a memoir of my own, and it too will serve others in the way *Just Kids* served me while living here. And it will begin with, “Dear New York.” Thank you for your time.

**KIDS ARE BEING BROUGHT UP TO BE Rewarded FOR EVERYTHING THEY DO**
Who knew reading about artists during the 1960's would be fascinating to a person who knows nothing about art. Aside from the art I learned about in Art History class last semester of structures of Greek Buildings during the Ancient Greek era, and famous paintings like Starry Nights, and Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo that's all I knew. Honestly at first I was not interested in this memoir because I did not look at art the way Patti Smith did. So I immediately thought I would not be interested, and I had no choice to read it because it was mandatory class assignment. But my perspective changed completely at the end of the book, because I got something out of it, and I learned certain things whether if it was social poverty, art, as well as unbreakable friendship. And I feel that was her message in her memoir, when she speaks on her experiences its sort of a testimony and you change the way you look at things. That's how I felt after I finished reading about what she went through becoming an artist.

When Patti and Robert both arrived in New York, they struggled with poverty being homeless with nothing to eat, a few pieces of clothing, both desperately to find a job. There was a part in the beginning of the book when some guy on the street (Before she met Robert) suggested Patti have breakfast with him in which she accepted and she said, “fifty cents was real money in 1967.” She had coffee, toast and jam, with eggs. I was surprised that you can get an entire breakfast meal for that little during that time. It honestly surprises me. I would've thought maybe a dollar could be a more reasonable price but not fifty cents who knew.

However when Patti spoke upon her searching through the pockets of strangers at one point looking for change, I felt kind of embarrassed at one point because I don't like change so I try my best to get rid of it because truthfully it makes your wallet heavy, so I don't keep pennies or nickels. I do use quarters. But I felt guilty because she was looking for change and today I see pennies' on the street every day. Although, after weeks of searching for a job, she finally got one at Scribner's, with a better salary. However Patti and Robert both debated whether she should eat or buy art supplies. She preferred the art supplies. At that moment I wasn't surprised because she even said herself: “I had more romantic view of artists' life and sacrifices.” I noticed that before you become successful the journey is not easy.

However the suffering was limited in the 70's and 80's when Patti and Robert life changed completely in the Chelsea Hotel with art, sex, drugs, and rock and roll for more excitement. When Patti met Robert she said, “I wanted to be a poet but I knew I would never fit in the incestuous community.” Robert was always by her side when she needed help whether if it was to write a song or felt the need for love, she felt comfortable around him. I've noticed that you will always remember that the one person who influences you to do well, whether if it is your child, husband, parent, or professor. Robert was there for Patti and they both influence one another differently.

The Chelsea Hotel was an unforgettable experience for Patti and Robert. They met famous artistes such as Brain Jones, Sandy Daley, and Jimi Hendrix. Truthfully in the very beginning of the chapter Patti began speaking about the artists she met, and lived in the Chelsea hotel, but I did not know any of them. Surprisingly, after reading the chapter Thomas Wolfe was an individual who "plowed through hundreds of paper of manuscripts that formed You Can't Go Home" Novel. Brian Jones, the founder of The Rolling Stones, which today you are very lucky if you are on the cover on that magazine. Also Sandy Daley a short filmmaker the one who recorded Robert getting his nipple pierced.

Overall Just Kids is a passionate memoir of two kids who came to New York so eager to become artist. What I really liked about this memoir was that I took something out of it. I learned about famous artists and a relationship that was unbreakable when Patti discovered Robert was gay and was diagnosed with AIDS. (I found that so vivid because when situations like that happen to you people have a tendency of leaving). Reading this book I sort of went behind the scenes of what it takes to be a true artist during this era I knew nothing about it. But who knew I would find it so entertaining?
The session I helped moderate this year was a series of roundtable discussions of Patti Smith’s *Just Kids*. I was given some information about how I should facilitate discussion but I soon realized that the student leaders at each hosting table came amply prepared with materials. They had read the book, done the research, and even brought their paper assignments and discussion outlines with them.

At the first table, the discussion centered on making a living and the personal sacrifices along the way to achieving one’s goal. Students shared experiences about their work and commitment toward a college education. They’re the first of their families to attend college, and getting a degree was the gateway to the American Dream. Whether they had to work and study at the same time, or parent their children while finishing the schoolwork deep into the night – they persevered. A turn to the next table and I was invited to a different line of discussion – about how to keep morals and priorities straight as one journeys toward his/her need for self-expression. Was Patti Smith responsible or not responsible enough to her first-born? Should she have chosen or acted otherwise at the time? Did religion have a role to play in her becoming the unwilling mother? The students took sides as discussion heated up on the issue of personal responsibility. To them, Patti Smith was not an icon but a teenage girl away from home first confronting the realities of the world, and their voices on her proper actions came to reflect the demands of their own maturing selves.

At another table, the discussion also took another course - this time about, strangely, notes on professors that they met and loved. If life was full of serendipitous meetings as we networked our way into various communities of like-minds based on these meetings, then like Patti Smith and her friends, those most important to one’s self-enrichment are perhaps somewhere and around, waiting for just the right moment to strike and blossom into kindred spirits and lifelong connections.

Hats off to the students of the session for knowing their business, consequently giving me the easy job of sitting back and enjoying the book from a very different angle: how does the young person of today respond to what’s essentially an ode to being young à la Patti Smith? It was, as usual, a session of discovery and learning for me.

What follows are the discussions, in the students’ own words, about being *Just Kids*.
SINCE I MADE IT HERE / I CAN MAKE IT ANYWHERE:
DISCUSSING JUST KIDS WITH PROF FADEM’S HONOR’S STUDENT
RICARDO MEDINA MORE THAN JUST KIDS

Just Kids is a wonderful book that exceeded all of my expectations. I found this book to be very powerful in the various meanings of its stories. There is poverty, romance, respect for others, finding one’s self, supporting loved ones and there is love that has no conditions. Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith had the fortune of small miracles that helped in bringing them luck and allowing them to keep persevering in their endeavors. They also had the miracle of being able to find one another and themselves. They relished the freedom to pursue a lifestyle that didn’t conform to the norm. They had the bravery to fight hunger and homelessness. They learned to trust one another, to believe in each other, to have faith in each other. They were also critics to each other’s work but most of all, they supported and loved each other unconditionally. They were free spirited individuals who were more than Just Kids.

The book starts with Patti’s upbringing and lets you know that she had come from a family that did not have many resources. Her mother was a waitress and had given Patti a uniform with the hopes that she may follow in her footsteps. She took a stab at it. It did not go well and she knew she would never do that type of work again. Finding work was hard and she often went with very little to survive on. Patti, after having a baby she gave up for adoption, eventually leave southern New Jersey for New York.

Eventually she would meet with Robert Mapplethorpe who saved her from a creepy date that may have ended in rape. The two of them would date, find a place to live, struggle to eat and pay the rent. They often went to museums but they were too poor to go in together. Usually one went and other would report back what they saw.

Patti enjoyed writing and wanted to pursue poetry. Robert was a gifted artist who did collage and paint. Both would be each other’s critic and source for support. Patti would get closer to her hopes of being published by working in bookstores such as Scribner’s. Often when they needed things, her long coat would come in handy. She wasn’t a thief by nature but she came to understand that at times, they needed to take the things they needed by any means necessary. Prior to her leaving for New York, Patti had the fortune of a small miracle in finding a purse that had just enough money to pay for her ticket. She writes the following:

Against my better judgment, I took the money but I left her the purse on the ticket counter in the hopes that the owner would at least retrieve the locket. There was nothing in it that revealed her identity. I can only thank, as I have within myself many times through the years, this unknown benefactor. She was the one who gave me the last piece of encouragement, a thief’s good luck sign. I accepted the grant of the small white purse as the hand of fate pushing me on. (Smith 25)

This quote is one of the best moments in the book as it shows Patti’s belief that somehow it was destined that she would go to New York. It’s the snowball that has to be pushed in order to start an effect. In other words, not having the fortune of finding the money to go could have had a devastating effect and her life could have turned out to be very different than it has. She never forgot that moment and recalls it as a blessing. It would be one of the first of many fortunate events that would play a role in her success.

Robert had grown up in a Catholic household. That conflicted with his feelings, and at times it showed in his art. He knew he was different and at some point in their relationship he would eventually “come out” and date men. Despite the news, he and Patti would remain committed to their friendship and the bonds between them would never be broken. They had true love for each other.

There came a time when Patti and Robert would move to the Chelsea Hotel. That’s when their lives and careers would take off. Through meeting other artists, they would gain a new circle of friends and lovers. Some would stop in and critique, others would invite them back to their place or to Max’s Kansas City, a club where their close circle would grow even wider. At Max’s there were beat poets and musicians. There also were painters and other visual artists. They would go to readings, performances, clubs, bars and parties.

Throughout all of this, Patti and Robert would continue to profess their love and mutual admiration for each other. From early on, they had always exchanged gifts and they would hold them as symbols of their love, friendship, and commitment to each other. Patti often put Robert ahead of herself. She looked up to, respected and was inspired by him. Her modesty is apparent when she has to leave Robert’s side to have cigarette with someone else. She actually feels guilty over having to do it.

The Chelsea Hotel would continue to allow them to come in contact with many but they would eventually move to a bigger space close by. This was courtesy of someone they called Pigman. He had given them a big enough space to allow Robert to have more room to work and Patti her own space in the back. Soon they would find other people in their lives and things would take a sudden change. In particular, Patti would date Sam Shepherd, the famous playwright. He would get her a guitar and she would meet with other musicians who she would bond with. They would provide music for her spoken word performances. Robert would become a photographer and reinvent himself to become one of the best of his time. Robert eventually contracted AIDS sometime after Patti had finally gotten married. She would keep close touch with him through his ordeal and would write lovingly about to dear friend she would eventually lose.

As much as this book tells a great story of becoming from barely anything, I feel it mostly tells of how there are no conditions to love and that true love never dies. They were committed to the love they had confessed to each other. Robert would find himself to be a true artist when it was difficult to be gay in New York City, in the 1970’s. Those were tough times and they show that they could transcend through love, respect, humility and compassion for others.

Patti is an eloquent writer. Even when describing some of the harsh conditions she lived under, she puts it in a poetic way. By analyzing the book, THE ARTISTS FOUND THEMSELVES AND GAVE VOICE TO A COMMUNITY THAT OTHERWISE HAD NO VOICE.
We are fortunate to be able to read her unique story. Her songs and writings embodied the spirit of pioneers who never forgot to stay humble, compassionate and caring towards others. They were more than just 

**UZAIR ARSHAD**

**AFFECTION THAT NEVER ENDS**

For me the book *Just Kids* by Patti Smith is a memoir that tells us what love is. Generally, our knowledge about love is very limited. Generally, when we see a beautiful thing or person, we say we love this thing or person. But love is something else, it is such deep feeling which can't be described in words. In fact it is a natural feeling that can neither be created manually nor be destroyed. Love is not only liking someone but knowing, understanding and sacrificing everything for him or her. And I am sure that true love has all these qualities. And if he or she doesn't have these qualities then his or her claim of loving someone is wrong.

I think Patti and Robert were true loves of each other. Despite all of diversities, they had very strong affection for each other. And they both sacrifice themselves for each other. And we can assess the intensity of their love for each other that Robert is a homosexual and he tries to hide his natural desire from Patti. He didn't tell her that he is a homosexual. And when they were living together he had never tried to have sex with Patti, and he never even told her that he was homosexual and rather he tried his best to hide his sexual desire from her. Why did he do that? Was he scared that Patti would make fun of him? Or Patti would complains about him to police that he is homosexual and he has no sexual desire for her? I think he loves Patti and he doesn't want to reveal himself before Patti because he might think that she would be hurt. Or he might not want to lose her. But being a male I can truly understand that what is sexual desire? I can understand that when a person wants to have sex then how anxious he becomes. At this time there is nothing more important for him. So Robert tried to hide himself from her but he couldn't succeed. Then Patti left him and got married to someone else. Maybe she left him because she couldn't see him yearning for sex.

The most important thing that shows their love for each other is that when many years later, despite the gender difference they still miss each other. And when Patti knew that he had gotten AIDS, then she became very sad and started crying. Then she made a phone call to Robert and he becomes happy too. As in the book it is stated that "When Robert answered the phone call he sounded weak, his voice strengthened as he heard the sound of mine" (page -266). AIDS is an incurable disease and everybody knows that it leads to death. So is it not a surprising thing that a dying person when he attends a phone call, he feels weak but when he listens Patti's voice his voice becomes energetic. Why did this happen? Did she love him? Or she told him that he had no AIDS? It was just a misconception by the doctor. In fact, it was the magic of her love that when he heard her voice, he forgot his disease. It would not be wrong to say that he forgot his death, which is always terrible and horrible. Not only Robert but Patti also wanted him a lot. As in the book it is stated that "As I resumed the pattern of my daily life in Michigan, I found myself yearning for Robert's presence" (269). Why was she yearning for him? Was she yearning for him because she wanted to fulfill her sexual desire with an HIV positive dying patient? Or did she want anything else from him?

I think it was a true, unconditional and selfless love that they both had for each other. They were emotionally attached to each other that there was no concession to find any reason for their love. Because true love is always meaningless. This story took me to my seventh grade. I had a classmate who was transferred from another school. In the beginning the relation between me and her was terrible. We always try to insult each other. I don't know why, although, we both had no issue with each other. But after couple of months, for some reason our conflicts turned into friendship. We began to miss each other. When she was absent from class, I missed her and similarly when I was absent from class, she felt my absence. We didn't know at that time that we liked each other. And soon we became best friends.

Then our friendship turned into love. But we both were so duffer that we purposed each other at that time when our school period was finished and we had to go to another school for further studies. Then my father send me to boarding school and she was transferred to another school. But we still have a very strong relationship. She knows me and I know her. We were separated almost ten years ago and we had hardly met two or three times during this time period. Because then I moved to boarding school and after finishing my high school I came in the United States. But we still talk to each other through internet and phone. We still share things with each other which we can't share with anybody else.

Distance and time couldn't spoil our relationship because this relationship is not just a physical relationship, but it is also a spiritual relationship. It is a heart's relation like Robert and Patti. And similarly our separation was also a physical separation like this beautiful strange couple, Patti and Robert, who were never separated by heart and I hoped never would be. Are you also hopeful like me?
GABRIELLE RIOS STRUGGLING AGAINST TO FIND A WAY IN

It is a story of humble beginnings, of humility in a modest surrounding that became a yearning for honest expression. Struggling through seemingly nonsensical cultural norms, Patti Smith was on her path to become an artist. That was it. No dreams of grandiose surroundings and unbelievable wealth, of untold riches and gilded columns supporting ivory and marble walls. Patti was seeking her own form of expression, her form in this world as a creator, rather than a mere consumer in a capitalist venue.

She raged against the culture of her time, in her own special way, by preferring the works of Picasso over those artists who "reflect rather than change" their time, such as Warhol. Most critically noted is the prevalent struggle against the influences of religion and the restrictions of gender. Both the Church and the confines of the popular binary gender construct have become her enemies, as if capitalism had not already taken the top spot of her list.

Although Robert is equally afflicted by these chains of common belief, unlike Patti, he is less inclined to change them, or even confront his imprisonment by society’s conventions. She addresses her discontent with social norms, and even helped Robert to finally confront his own discrepancies between who he was and who he thought he should be. Robert’s commitment to discovering his place in the world, with Patti, while still allowing himself a place in the conventional mindset is reflected in his preference of the work of Andy Warhol, as he believes reflecting society may very well lead to the same outcome of outright proclamation of a pursuit of change.

Patti is more like Picasso in that she announces her intention to use art for change and in using depictions of tragedy rather than allowing a pure reflection of the world to shine through her work. She is perhaps most struck by her struggles with sexism, mainly outside of the art community and even by her parents and in her hometown. When she experienced labor outside of wedlock, the nurses treated her cruelly and without compassion as she lay on a cold operating table. Influenced as they were by (most likely) the Catholic or Protestant ideals, these nurses became, with Robert’s father, some of the first symbols in the book for the overbearing, and at times dangerous, effects of religious restrictions imposed by society.

As a result of her impoverished upbringing and even the circumstances of her birth, Patti held no love for the capitalist system that had failed her family and was currently making her own life difficult. She would have viewed the system as flawed and unforgiving to those who had not the initial capital to support their efforts to make something of themselves in this world. Even more frustrating would have been the chaffing of gender perceptions as she grew, a sense of betrayal and confinement that, at a young age, she could not yet understand. Eventually she grew accustomed, but not accepting, of her placement among the gender guidelines.

Her opinion of the Church is one that views it less as a stabilizing force in one’s life than a low, buzzing interference against one’s choices. She sees how the Church affects Robert in his quest for identity and it is perhaps by the point that he creates a demonic image to shroud himself with at night that Patti becomes sure of religious influences harming others beside herself.

The novel teaches that it just may be in your struggles against society that we find the place we truly fit in.
INTRODUCTION

At the core of the mission for Kingsborough's Men's Resource Center rests a willingness to help our students search for the "more" in life. The "more" in life can only be defined by the individual seeking it. For our students, the "more" can represent obtaining a good job, getting into that dream four-year school or learning a new skill that will equip them to better provide for their families. Whatever that is for them, the Men's Resource Center (henceforth MRC) is dedicated to assisting students in their search for it. At the MRC, we attempt to empower, encourage and equip our students. We teach them that their "more" is within reach. It's just beyond their grasp and all they have to do is to keep reaching, and eventually they will attain it.

The KCC Reads memoir Just Kids, by Patti Smith, resonated with the MRC students because central to it is the theme of reaching for the "more" in life. At the 2015 KCC Reads student conference, MRC students Rashidi Ashman and Khalid Murad, and Kingsborough's Enrollment Specialist Dr. Harry Good III, hosted a panel discussion to speak about themes in Patti Smith's memoir. It was an exploration of the lives of Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe as they reached for their "more" and the friendship that developed along the way. In the book, Robert and Patti are focused on becoming successful artists. In fact, it is fair to say, they are obsessed with reaching their version of "the more." For Patti it was to live her dreams; for Robert it was becoming a successful artist.

At our panel both Rashidi Ashman and Khalid Murad opened our discussion by exploring their perceptions of Just Kids. Below are their reflections on the book and notes from our panel discussion.
AMERICAN DREAMS:
STUDENTS OF THE MEN'S RESOURCE CENTER UNPACK PATTI SMITH'S JUST KIDS
RASHIDI ASHMAN  A PERSPECTIVE ON THE AMERICAN DREAM

What is the American dream? Is it some elusive prize of so much value that it can never be attained, or is it a journey of dealing with the obstacles American society has to offer while still becoming the epitome of success? It depends on how a person perceives it to be, subjectively. In my opinion, the American dream is creating the life that you always envisioned for yourself and those around you. In order for the goal to be achieved, a person must not only endure the challenges faced but, must also overcome them for success to occur.

In the memoir Just Kids, Patti & Robert were the prototype for America’s ideal. They were painters, among the other artistic titles they coveted. Patti and Robert, interestingly enough emanate from religious backgrounds. Patti’s family belonged to the Catholic religion, as well as Robert’s, although his parents were portrayed as closed-minded and very judgmental of his behavior. Robert was never much of a fan of his parent’s religious beliefs; in fact, the only thing that did intrigue him was the aesthetics of church. Robert was enthralled by light and dark, robes and rituals.

Patti was similar in the sense that she was a free spirit and usually did what she wanted to do. Patti’s parents, her father in particular, wanted her to attend college so she could become a teacher. To say the least, the dream her father envisioned for Patti, wouldn’t last long, due to her having becoming pregnant. Patti was impregnated by the age of 19, by a seventeen year old boy she barely knew. During those times, if you conceived a baby out of wedlock you were considered an outcast because society believed having children was a privilege reserved for people who are married. After Patti gave birth, she put her child up for adoption, and decided to move to New York City. Her dream didn’t die or shrivel after the birth of her child but only intensified.

This is much like the dreams and hopes of many of my fellow students once they overcame an obstacle. Together we are overcomers, dreamers and achievers.

KHALID MURAD  ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE AMERICAN DREAM

By nature, human beings have quested to find what brings them a sense of wholesomeness. Desire followed by performance, hopefully leading to a life reeling in the glory of fulfilled dreams. Take the American Dream; the national ideal for a gratified life in the United States. A code which entails affluence, attainment and the ability of everyone to achieve it despite where they come from or what socioeconomic class they fall into. Hard work is the catalyst of success, as entailed in this concept.

Some envision it to be a white picket fence, a big house, and happy children playing on the green grass with the family dog, hot meals and the easy going lifestyle of privilege. Meanwhile there are those who enjoy simpler things. Painting for hours in a small apartment, selling pieces to make ends meet, or even putting the last meal of the day on the table, all in the hope that one day they will be recognized for their work. The American Dream isn’t necessarily a materialistic venture, although that idea seems to muddy the minds of many, which often causes them to give up altogether.

Patti shares in her memoir that she and Robert Mapplethorpe lived their dream by doing what they loved despite any negative or misunderstood aftermaths. ‘They appreciated living a life day to day in the seemingly awkward comfort of their work. Every day was just another empty space soon to be filled with, ink, wisdom and expression.

Robert and Patti were born into what many consider to be the American Dream. So if they were born into it, why leave it? Simply because the American Dream is really an American idea. It exists merely as a template to expel the greatness one can achieve. Dreams have no template. Patti was driven by her art and self- freedom. She became a social and political rebel, a formal anarchist steadfast with an ingenuous negation of society’s norms.

Robert’s American Dream blossomed as he pushed the boundaries of nonconformity purging his sexual eroticism into sadomasochistic works of art. He explored the heavy sexual subculture of homoeroticism in the 1970’s. The display of his work in art galleries were featured in a very distinct way. It would follow a pattern of black and white flowers, and suddenly a shift to male genitalia consuming the viewer in jolts of disbelief. He relayed a message showing there is no defined system in art, there is no defined system in a dream.

These two individual souls were able to fulfill their visions by understanding concepts that many couldn’t. Their ideas were never developed from a commonplace or typical state of mind. Two human beings, biologically armed with knowledge of certain universal elements of language structure, brought into action in the means of their raw use of language acquisition. How else could it have been that these adolescents had such a blind faith, determination and resilience to move forward and be free from doubt, or heading home taking on the paths prescribed by their parents?

The formula and foundation for grasping the American Dream is to gain the ability to customize your reality. The dream doesn’t end when you wake up; it begins when you wake up. We mustn’t fixate on foreshadowed criticisms or final products. To dream is to also be consistent in creating the way toward it. Patti didn’t focus on fame or social merits. She imparted herself through her craft. Becoming worldly and well-known wasn’t her intention. She went from being a humble poet to being an uncut rock star. Sometimes it only begins with someone strumming an acoustic guitar behind your poetic tone. She always credited the artists and poets who inspired her. She never worried about how far her art would take her, but how it can be taken by others.

As her American dream, Patti couldn’t hold it in her hands. It was far from material, but very alive and prosperous.

Concurrently, why when asked “what is the American Dream” the answer is always something physical? It’s always something that can be touched, used, seen by others, priced and valued, bought and sold, always existing on the crust of earth. The dream must always have something. Patti dreamed of freedom. Nothing was hers but freedom of self-expression. Patti and Robert were nomads of freedom. Reality existed to them in their breaths of air, their painted thoughts, their written words. Wandering seemingly without purpose, networking through cool vibes and not business cards, they aligned with the Who’s Who of likeminded young American dreamers.

We are the architects of our lives. Our dreams are a premonition into what we desire to be. Idea is the seed of reality. There is no rule for dream following. The method is only to apply it. Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe were a clear example of living a dream that most people only sleep through.

WE ARE THE ARCHITECTS OF OUR LIVES.
INTRODUCTION: MAUREEN FADEM, DEPT. OF ENGLISH

One of my favorite things about Coordinating KCC Reads is the work we do through the cohort, as a team of campus volunteers. Since being given leadership of this program, I invited students and graduates of the college to participate in its governance. Perhaps the best decision I have made in this role, it has afforded me and all of the faculty and staff involved in the cohort to work side-by-side with students majoring in a variety of disciplines and from every demographic at the college. Most of the students who've become involved have done so of their own accord—students I did not know contacting me about the program entirely of their own accord, simply because they wanted to get involved.

This year, five students presented, as members of the cohort, at our annual student conference. We could not have been better represented better or been more honored than to have had Jazmin Preyor, Anna Sacerdote, Jamila Wallace, Nickesha Whyte (not represented here) and Chris Pimentel (not represented here) come together to present personal responses, on behalf of the cohort, on this year's book: Patti Smith's *Just Kids*. I could not have been more impressed by the presentations given by these five outstanding, remarkable and dedicated individuals. Nor could I be more thankful to all of them for their support of and commitment to our campus-wide common reading program.

**THESE STUDENTS ARE THE BEST OF THE KINGSBOROUGH BEST -- AND, I HOPE YOU ENJOY AND APPRECIATE THEIR REFLECTIONS ON SMITH’S *JUST KIDS*!**

(And a brief and very special thanks to Anna and Jamila, who worked as program assistants for KCC Reads for most of the previous two years, and whose tireless efforts are responsible for much of the great work we accomplished during that time. We couldn't have done it without you two!)
OF RESILIENCE AND HOPE

STUDENTS MEMBERS OF THE KCC READS COMMITTEE OFFER PERSONAL RESPONSES TO JUST KIDS
A DIFFERENT KIND OF LOVE

ANNA SACERDOTE

It’s hard maintaining any type of relationship in this era when there are so many trust issues. As soon as a person lives with their loved one they are able to see who that person really is and sometimes it is hard for that person to adjust themselves to the life style of that special someone. The people involved are constantly changing and for many cases people cannot accommodate and so they split up. They eventually become strangers in some circumstances but occasionally we are able to witness a different kind of love, a love that despite the many changes and the different struggles, continue to last. Until death do us part. We are able to catch that love in Patti Smith’s Just Kids.

In this memoir we observe the life of Patti from her beginnings to her relationship with Robert Mapplethorpe. Patti in pursuit of her dreams leaves her family behind to travel to New York City, the concrete jungle of dreams. Here she meets Robert and together they feed each other their dreams to try and make it in the City. As they begin to know each other, Patti realizes that Robert is a gay man but that doesn’t stop her from staying together with him and fighting for each other’s dreams. We get to experience a different kind of love with no judgments and completely selfless.

Patti had grown in a poverty-stricken family. Her parents where barely able to raise her and her siblings. They had to tackle many problems and one of those was Patti getting pregnant at the age of 19 and unwed. Patti gave her child off to adoption and this was her turning point. She took her stuff and moved to New York in a quest to achieve her dreams. She meets Robert Mapplethorpe and they start a romantic relationship. Because Patti was poor, poverty stuck to her coming to New York. They had to share their experience with art and in one part of the book she explains, “We couldn’t afford to go inside. On other days, we would visit art museums. There was only enough money for one ticket, so one of us would go in, look at the exhibits, and report back to the other” (Smith 48).

Robert and Patti were so poor that they couldn’t even afford two tickets to the museums. Instead of fighting because of their problems they were content with sharing their experience. When situations like this occur many people start to blame each other for their situations, becoming greedy and only thinking about themselves. For Patti and Robert it was different. It was about sharing their events together and using that to grow as artist. This assisted their work and catapulted them into the people they would become in the future.

At one point Robert lost his job and had to survive working odd jobs. Patti tries to persuade him:

I implored him to quit. His job and scant paycheck were not worth the sacrifice. After nights of discussions, he reluctantly agreed. In return, he worked more diligently, always anxious to show me what he had accomplished while I was at Scribner’s. I had no regrets taking on the job as a breadwinner. My temperate was sturdier. I could still create at night and I was proud to provide a situation allowing him to do his work without compromise. (Smith 56)

Patti was willing to become the head of the household in order to support Robert in his dreams. This occurred during the 70’s when it was expected for men to work and the women to stay at home. Because Patti believed in Robert’s dream she decided to support it. It’s challenging to be able to think this way during that time, but the bond between Patti and Robert was so strong that she was content with doing this for Robert. Can many people have the courage to do what Patti did? Some would say it would be impossible for them to do this kind of act, and that’s why this relationship is so special.

Robert and Patti at one point split up and go their separate ways, but still keep in contact. Because of Robert’s inner turmoil with his sexuality he’s able to spend some time discovering himself in San Francisco. Patti also decides to take a trip to Paris and when she returns she comes back to Robert. At this point Robert is really conflicted with himself and Patti tries to comfort him. Robert gets sick and because of a shootout outside their apartment they run away to the Allerton motel. This was the lowest points of both Robert and Patti. One night Robert craves for Patti sexually while being sick, the situation goes about like this;

Despite his illness, he wanted to make love, perhaps our union was some comfort, for it drew out his sweat. In the morning he went out into the hall to go to the bathroom and came back visibly upset. He had exhibited signs of gonorrhea. His immediate sense of guilt and worry that I might have contracted it magnified his anxiety about our situation. (Smith 86)

Even though this put Patti in a dangerous position her love for Robert and her need to comfort him made her risk her life. Many would believe that this is reckless but isn’t true love supposed to be reckless? Her love for Robert enables her to endanger her life for him, and this exemplify the bond that Robert and Patti had. It could not be broken by any disease and would continue to thrive despite this situation. Patti also takes care of Robert at this time.

At the Allerton hotel they witness more illnesses and drug usage. Patti in these difficult conditions took care of Robert, she explains the conditions of Robert’s illness: “In the night, Robert, generally so stoic, cried out. His gums had abscessed, he was deeply flushed, and the sheets was soaked with his sweat. I sought the morphine angel. “Do you have anything for him?” I pleaded. “Anything to ease his pain?” I tried to permeate his opiate veil” (Smith 87). This image of Robert being sick doesn’t sound appealing and only someone that cares for you is able to stay in a situation like this. This could have split them up but it had made their bond stronger. She took care of him as if he was her only lifeline and she needed to protect it.

They are so perfect for each other because they might not understand themselves but they do understand each other. Willing to sacrifice anything for their success together. Combining their art together, while being a support for each other in the worst of times is what makes this relationship so perfect. If this is not true love then I don’t know what is.

Many people wouldn’t be able to comprehend how this relationship worked. It was definitely not the norm the way these two people expressed their emotions for each other. Through reading the book Just Kids we are able to witness a true type of love, without any judgment. This is a different kind of love that’s not experienced very often but is as pure as love should be.

AN ANALYSIS OF JUST KIDS

JAMILA WALLACE

Just Kids by Patti Smith is a memoir and not an autobiography because it tells the story of, not just the author, but two kindred spirits. The book is more about the friends, lovers and soulmates, Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe, than it is of its author and narrator. Their bond is a powerful challenge to conventional ideas of a soulmate. The concept of a soulmate is most often romanticized in our society. Through various media, we are conditioned to believe that a soulmate is a lover with whom one has an unshakable bond. With that being said, it is most commonly believed that soulmates are paired in accordance with the sexual orientation, an idea which Smith and Mapplethorpe contradict. “Soulmate” also has a connotation with rarity, that soulmates are one-of-a-kind. In this story, this pair proves that a soulmate need not be a lover
or spouse, but a person with whom one shares an ineffable affinity. They first meet each other on a chance encounter. Smith had moved to New York City on a whim, with the intention of staying with friends studying at Brooklyn’s Pratt Institute. Upon arriving, Smith finds out that the friend she had hoped to stay with had in fact moved; this news is delivered to her by, none other than, Robert Mapplethorpe.

Fate brings them together again when Mapplethorpe visits the bookstore in which Smith works to purchase a necklace, one she happens to be fond of. He spent a long time looking at everything, the beads, the small figurines, the turquoise rings.

Finally he said, “I want this.” It was the Persian necklace. “Oh, it’s my favorite too,” I answered. “It reminds me of a scapular.” “Are you a Catholic?” he asked me. “No, I just like Catholic things.” “I was an altar boy.” He grinned at me. (36-37)

While their first meeting only hinted at an association with like-minded people, their second encounter more clearly demonstrates a reason for them to bond, a shared interest. However, they don’telope just yet. “After he left I looked at the empty place where it had lain on a piece of black velvet,” says Smith. Mapplethorpe had not had an effect on Smith yet, since she was more concerned with the jewelry than him. The amulet plants the seed for a more significant future meeting.

Their relationship sprouts at that meeting, their third chance encounter. While working, Smith catches the eye of a science-fiction writer who wishes to take her out to dinner. The prospect of a free meal leads Smith to oblige. “It was as if a small portal of future opened, and out stepped the boy from Brooklyn who had chosen the Persian necklace, like an answer to my teenage prayer,” describes Smith (38). Smith escapes with Mapplethorpe by introducing him as her boyfriend, and the two spent the rest of the evening and following morning bonding at incredible speed. They successfully merged their worlds by opening up to each other — Smith with her personal stories and Mapplethorpe with his art. They consummate this new chapter in their lives by falling asleep in each other’s arms. Thereafter, “as if it was the most natural thing in the world [Smith and Mapplethorpe] stayed together, not leaving each other’s side save to go to work. Nothing was spoken; it was just mutually understood.” At this point, their encounters make for a great story of the meeting of two lovers. However, the next phase of their relationship illustrates much more.

As the relationship progresses, it becomes clearer that they fit the bill of soulmates. The two become inseparable. In what, at first, just seems like an act of survival, they live, love and work in synergy. They began living together and supporting each other emotionally and financially. According to Smith, “We hadn’t much money but we were happy. … We had our work and one other” (45). They develop indomitable comfort in each other and care for one another, many times prioritizing one another’s goals over their personal aspirations.

In the following phase of their relationship, their bond continues to grow as it deviates from any common precedent of soulmates. It falters as Mapplethorpe becomes less attentive and more solitary. Smith notices, stating, “Robert was good to me, yet I could tell he was somewhere else. … Something was bothering him, something that was not about money. He never ceased to be affectionate to me, but he just seemed troubled” (71). Smith eventually leaves the home she and Mapplethorpe had made, moving in with a friend in lower Manhattan. As a result, “Robert was devastated, yet still could not offer any explanation for the silence that engulfed us” (73). Despite the physical separation, Smith admits, “I could not easily cast off the world Robert and I shared. … Robert and I, unable to break our bonds, continued to see one another” (73). Though Smith enters an on-and-off relationship with another man, Mapplethorpe repeatedly asks Smith to return to their home, to him. He shows up to her workplace one day pleading once more for her return.

“Please come back,” he said, “or I’m leaving for San Francisco.” … He grabbed my hand. “Come with me. There’s freedom there. I have to find out who I am…”

“I’m already free,” I said.

He stared at me with a desperate intensity. “If you don’t come, I’ll be with a guy. I’ll turn homosexual,” he threatened. (74)

That threat reveals what had been troubling Mapplethorpe as Smith witnessed his withdrawal.

He does in fact leave for California, where he adopts a lifestyle more true to his sexuality. At this point, a lover, even a former one, may feel utterly betrayed by these changes. However, instead of cutting ties with each other, Smith and Mapplethorpe preserve their relationship through exchange letters. The content of these letter reveal his growth and discovery of himself. “He had written that he missed me, and that he had accomplished his mission, discovering new things about himself. Even as he spoke to me of his experiences with other men, he assured me he loved me,” recalls Smith (77). As more time passes, Smith gains a better understanding of her and Mapplethorpe’s differing but connected paths. “We were evolving with different needs. I needed to explore beyond myself and Robert needed to search within himself,” Smith realizes (77). This acceptance and adaptation to their contrasting personal development helped to preserve with their bond.

In retrospect, Smith and Mapplethorpe seemed to have misunderstood their polarized bond. Partly due to popular archetypes of love and romance, they felt something for one another and interpreted it as a romantic love. However, one can imagine how hard it would be to interpret an attraction as strong as theirs. Smith ultimately figures this out, stating.

I realized that he had tried to renounce his nature, to deny his desires, to make things right for us. For my part, I wondered if I should have been able to dispel these drives. He had been too shy and respectful and afraid to speak of these things, but there was no doubting he still loved me, and I him. (78)

By understanding this, both Smith and Mapplethorpe are able to grow and live more comfortably and unrepentantly. They need not be a couple, nor fully understand each, to love each other unconditionally. Their relationship is tested many several more throughout the story, but their souls remain side by side. Even other lovers in their lives must yield to their strange yet undeniable superior love.

In Just Kids, Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe display a bond that transcends current standards of friendship and romance. Their commitment to each other survives poverty, separation, sexual awakening, fame, and other (most conventional) soulmates. With patience and understanding, they cultivate a love that makes typical relationship “deal-breakers” seem frivolous.
JAZMIN PREYOR

In the book *Just Kids*, the love between Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe is magnetic. Several chance encounters, too good to be coincidence, were inspiring to me.

On Patti Smith’s very first day in New York City, she goes to an apartment expecting to find a friend to put her up only to find the friend had moved and to briefly meet Robert Mapplethorpe, one of the occupants. A few weeks later, Robert just so happens to walk into her first place of work in New York City, a bookstore, only to find they work for the same company. What seems like days later, Robert is walking through Tompkins Square Park tripping on acid and happens to walk by Patti who is on a painfully awkward date, only to be her knight in a sheepskin vest and whisk her away.

From that moment on, they only part to go to work. They paint together, they make a shabby Brooklyn apartment their home together, they barely eat and often starve together, seemingly surviving off of each other’s love. At one point they seem to grow distant, and Robert decides to go to California. Yet, he returns to New York and to Patti. Their love crosses state barriers, changes in sexual orientation, new relationships, their different but intertwining careers and lives.

When Patti Smith was pregnant with her daughter and was working on an album, Robert did the cover shoot in Los Angeles. He had already been diagnosed with AIDS then, and Patti wrote “He was carrying death within him and I was carrying life” (Page 271). Their lives were always connected. When Patti was beginning something, Robert had already encountered it and was there to guide her and protect her through the experience. I see why she always felt safe and almost blindly trusted Robert in what could be frightening situations, such as trying LSD. Robert went through the agony of slowly dying right before Patti’s eyes and still remained “stoic, minimizing his suffering” as she described on page 273.

Robert is the strength Patti gives off when I heard her speak about her book in her interviews. I can only hope to find a relationship that gives me that type of strength. This poem is in honor of them and of the love they shared.

TO ME YOU ARE THE OCEAN,
SO DEEP WITH MEANINGFUL WAVES,
WITH LOVE STORMS AND CALM DAYS,
BEAUTY FROM TOP TO MYSTERIOUS DEPTHS.

YET, YOU LOVE ME,
NOT DEEPER THAN ONE STEP.
I DISAPPEAR ON BEAUTIFUL DAYS.
ONLY WHEN IT’S CLOUDY DO I SHOW MY FACE.
YOU POUR LOVELY RAIN AND I APPEAR.
WITHOUT YOUR LOVE I WOULDN’T BE HERE.
EXAMINING CIVIC IDENTITY:
THE CRITICAL POLITICAL-LEGAL ISSUES OF PUBLIC ART
Civic identity is central in politics. In the global twenty-first century, individual expression thrives. Today, interactive technology brings visions of scenes of what we see and experience every day, directly to our inbox or mobile device. Photography is one of those technological devices that transcends time, space, and rules.

But how does our identity form in relation to our systems of law, critical theory, and knowledge in light of these technological developments? We applied a critical ideological interpretive method in these essays, to reflect on the work of Robert Mapplethorpe in the context of our teaching and learning endeavors. The voluntary submissions that follow are from individuals who reflected on their political identities and showed empathy with Mapplethorpe, as a political-legal subject. They explore the multiple dimensions involved in obscenity law, public art and expression, and the very real gap experienced between law as ideal and law as real.

I offer my own interpretation of this structured learning opportunity with students, designed to integrate the common reading: Just Kids. I enjoy the opportunity this important space provides to hear from all learners. And I am reminded of Patti Smith’s reflection on her life’s passion -- she said, “Our work was our children.” I agree.

I want to take a step back from the political-legal framework and offer my thoughts, not just as an educator, but as an artist. As I confronted what is art, what is obscene, and what were they (Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe) thinking, it became clear that I needed to put myself in their shoes. I did my homework. I gathered my supplies. I found my inspiration. But as I pushed the boundaries of art and directed my purpose toward the obscene, I lost track of myself. Somewhere in the curation, photo-shoot, and oil painting, “I” became less and the art became more. When I think about why an object (considered in postmodern thought to be nothing) could provoke such hatred, I am convinced that only the hatred for Mapplethorpe himself can be explained - “shoot the queers” (Mayor Louie Welch - Houston, 1985) is a battle cry for hatred of other human beings – but not of art, not of expression.

ULTIMATELY THE PURPOSE OF ART IS TO PROVOKE A REACTION, FOR THE VIEWER. THE CREATOR WILL ALWAYS HAVE PURPOSES THAT TRANSCEND THE CRITICAL, POLITICAL, LEGAL, AND OFTEN THE PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTS THAT CONTINUE TO BAFFLE, ANGER, AND HOPEFULLY TOUCH US ALL EMOTIONALLY. WHATEVER YOUR THOUGHTS OF MAPPLETHORPE, HIS WORK DOES ALL OF THE ABOVE.
SAMANTHA SOWIZDRAL

Strong bonds between humans can provoke familiar and unfamiliar responses. The image or imagination of ideas and objects allow us to project these emotions from our sub-conscious minds into an actively conscious, physical and tangible representation. The socio-political messages that are often found in art are simply a reflection of the socio-psychological output of these human experiences. Our familiarities with others and the emotions that are felt as a result of those relationships are what allow our minds to open freely in recognition to certain truths about ourselves and about others. Patti and Robert shared more than friendship. They shared intimacy—a strong bond of human emotions that had no definition of true or false but simply an unspoken empathy that translated through art and music. Where one lacked, the other picked up, and through this balance both emulated the confidence needed to share their life story.

Robert's need of Patti's guidance and emotional security remained a strong bond throughout his life—the book *Just Kids* alone is a testament of the immense need to translate intellectual and conceptualized emotion to the forefront of society. Robert feared his work would lack truth while Patti, an artist of words, always sought after the translations of these truths through the communication or “community” of a common language. In return this encouraged Robert to use his own creative voice to express the urgency of social agency. Oppressed emotions, like the ones Robert felt in his earlier years, are self-destructive and painfully cohesive truths. The ability to confide these inner truths through friendship and intimacy are important to socialization and the strengthening of community ties.

The oppression of these thoughts is harmful to social structure and prevents the formation of innovative concepts that can contribute to the development of the positive forward-motion of the human race which is the ability to relate and communicate with each other. Since the beginning of human existence, these emotive networks have established the prevalence of human survival. Often the representation of these relationships within a social structure are through the promotion of dominance, control and violence, which lack the intimacy of relationships and the formation of community, subsequently instituting a loss of creative expression due to fear and self-imprisonment. In return, fear masks itself with more destructive output and backward-moving behaviors which break the communal bonds that were meant to keep us together rather than pull us apart.

CODY HAYES

Robert Mapplethorpe's name, going as far back as the late 1970's, has been synonymous with visionary art as well as with controversy. His works, though simple in imagery, are deep in concepts of morals, ethics, and social status. The artist’s photos pushed the boundaries of contemporary views and caused a revaluation of what can be defined as art. However, I don't believe that was the goal set by Mapplethorpe when he first began perusing photography. In my eyes, Robert Mapplethorpe was merely in awe of the things he found beautiful and wished to share that with the world.

His art, his passions, and his general manner of living was far from orthodox in comparison to the majority of those who did not partake in the artisan lifestyle yet were the ones who funded it. From these conservative's viewpoint Mapplethorpe’s work was too “obscene” to be recognized as art, let alone for it to be honored in museums for future generations to appreciate. This brings to question, how could something a person sees as “beautiful” or “art-worthy” simultaneously be seen as too “obscene” to be viewed with any pleasure? With that question draws more questions: who should have the right to determine what’s right and what's wrong to be enjoyed? What credentials and upbringing would that person have to possess? What standard should such a person judge by? Religious? Which religion? Political? In favor of which aspect of politics? Morality? Whose morals? Why were the centuries-old sculptures and paintings which Mapplethorpe himself idealized and fashioned his photography after not labeled as derogatory? Why were they not rebuked, dismantled, burned, or destroyed when they too fit the mold by which several of his works were judged? These questions culminate in a quote I once heard:

“One man's trash is another man's treasure.”

Robert's work focused on natural acts of man and nature itself. Sex is natural. Pain is natural. Domination is natural. Submissiveness is natural. Why should art that shows the authenticity of day-to-day life not qualify as art? Is life too real for the people who live it? Obscenity and art are both terms of perspective. Anything could be art. Anything could be obscene. It just depends on who’s looking through the kaleidoscope. The art world is life itself. No one should dictate what life is about for another individual.
Robert Mapplethorpe is at once revered and hated for his art, lifestyle, and as a unique example of the culture wars and the subsequent transition in American culture, commerce, and the politics of art. At a very basic level, Robert Mapplethorpe’s public exhibition, “The Perfect Moment,” was greeted with harsh criticism and widespread condemnation among conservatives, culminating in obscenity lawsuits. As we examine the critical political-legal arguments surrounding public art, we consider the following Supreme Court definition of art that is “obscene”:

1. Whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards," would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest,
2. Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct or excretory functions specifically defined by applicable state law,
3. Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

THE PERFECT MOMENT:
In the spring of 1990, the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) in Cincinnati, Ohio, held an exhibit of photographs by the late artist Robert Mapplethorpe. This exhibit, titled “The Perfect Moment,” was controversial in nature from the very onset. There was a great deal of negative public reaction and an attempt to close the exhibit citing the Ohio obscenity statute, which makes it illegal for any person to “promote, display…or exhibit…any obscene material.” Of the 175 pictures in the exhibit, 7 were extremely controversial, making them the focus of the ensuing trial. Two of the pictures were of naked minors, one male and one female, with a “lewd exhibition or graphic focus on the genitals.” The other five objectionable pictures were of five men posing in unusual sadomasochistic poses.

INDICTMENT:
Hamilton County grand jury accuses the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center and its director, Dennis Barrie, of two misdemeanor counts each: pandering and using minors in pornography. For Mr. Barrie, the charges carry a maximum penalty of a year in jail and fines of up to $2,000; for the art center, the maximum fine is $10,000.

DEFENDANTS:
Dennis Barrie and the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center

VERDICT:
Not guilty

SIGNIFICANCE:
The acquittal of the Mapplethorpe defendants was a major reaffirmation of First Amendment freedom of speech protection in the new realm of homosexual art. It also reaffirmed the obscenity principles of Miller v. California.

REFLECTION:
Should taxpayers fund or not fund art any more after viewing Robert Mapplethorpe’s work? First, it should be established exactly what art is. Art, according to Google.com, is the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. I do believe that art should continue to be funded because it is about art is about expression from the individual. Our first amendment right is the freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition. If we stopped paying for this then we are cutting off a big part of culture because culture is expression of people’s views. Though, in some ways obscene art is a bit controversial when being shown in the public, it still is part of our first amendment right.

3 Miller v. California Test, 1973
BREAKIN’ IT DOWN:
PROF FADEM'S FALL 2015 INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE STUDENTS MAKE SENSE OF JUST KIDS
Professor Fadem’s Honors English students broke it down in this section by making good sense of *Just Kids*. Each student provided a contextual analysis of Patti and Robert’s relationship while reflecting on the merits of what a true friendship is. Anna Makogon’s presentation focused on the evidence of true friendship through the trials and long-time support that Patti and Robert showed to one another. Trisha Gustave recognized the friendship between Patti and Robert as something appealing to their artistic nature in her essay. Shahzod Saydaliev reflected on Patti’s feelings of not fitting in, and describes this as a unique aspect of the friendship. He further explains how their understanding of the arts fueled the friendship between Patti and Robert in his piece. And, Sha Mel Gloster delved into the characters’ urges to express themselves, while also exploring the development of their identities through their familial backgrounds and new life experiences. Finally, Karon Thompson explained how the timing and location of the story played a significant role in the relationship Patti and Robert had, specifically the timing of the arts movement in the Lower Eastside of New York City.

KEVICHCHA ECHOLS
DEPT. OF HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION & RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

EACH OF THEIR TALKS LEFT US WITH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON HOW FRIENDSHIPS ARE DEFINED, WHAT ARE THE BOUNDARIES OF LOVE, AND, MOST OF ALL, HOW FAR IS ONE WILLING TO GO TO SUPPORT A FRIEND.

Represented here are reflections by Trisha, Karon, Shahzod and Anna.
TRISHA GUSTAVE

THE FREEDOM OF ART

"What will happen to us?" I asked. "There will always be us," he answered... We wanted, it seemed, what we already had, a lover and a friend to create with, side by side. "To be loyal, yet be free." - Patti Smith

The book Just Kids by Patti Smith is a memorable story of her life and that of her deceased friend and lover, Robert Mapplethorpe. Their history is undeniably very interesting and important to all individuals who are aspiring to become artists and to those who are seeking to rise above their life circumstances.

This book is a unique example of life struggles and of friendship. It reveals how the road to success is filled with obstacles that can also lead us to fame or destruction. Throughout the book Robert and Patti's hunger and passion for art is evident in their tenacity. However, New York City is filled with both dangers and opportunities. Admirably, Patti and Robert as young as they were, walked through the dangers and reached for the opportunities that seemed so far away: "We were just as Hansel and Gretel and we ventured into the black forest of the world" (288). Their poor living conditions did not diminish their burning desires to create art. Their hunger and love for art prevailed. It can be said that in spite of all the difficulties and the poverty that Patti and Robert went through, they found freedom through the art of friendship because of their ever-lasting love.

As a child, Patti's character showed that she was always adventurous and determined: "When I was barely eleven, nothing pleased me more than to take long walks in the outlying woods with my dog... with my brother, Todd, serving as loyal lieutenant, we'd crawl on our bellies over dusty summer fields near the quarries... My dutiful sister would be stationed to bandage our wounds and provide much needed water from my father's army canteen" (10). This quotation definitely mirrors Patti's future life. She loved exploring. Even as a kid, Patti's character gave meaning to the success she obtained later on in life. She was a pioneer, and as she grew, her personality was shaped through the different experiences she obtained. As a young adult, Patti could be counted on by Robert to provide for them when times had gotten rough: "I had no regrets taking on the job as breadwinner. My temperament was sturdier" (56). Patti was reliable and proved to be a firm foundation for Robert as well as a great companion who enjoyed new experiences in the world of art. While growing up, Patti felt drawn towards art. It was a world that she wanted to be part of: "I longed to enter the fraternity of the artist: the hunger, their manner of dress, their process and prayers. I'd brag that I was going to be an artist's mistress one day. Nothing seemed more romantic to my young mind. I imagined myself as Frida to Diego, both muse and maker. I dreamed of meeting an artist to love and support and to work with side by side" (12). Patti indeed found her suitable match. She'd found Robert and they'd became the source of strength to each other. From a young age, Patti Smith had predicted her future and, surprisingly, Robert's too. Even before they'd found each other Patti and Robert both wanted something that was similar apart from fame. They both wanted freedom from their circumstances through love and art.

Robert is a very expressive and sensitive individual. His is able to project his feelings in a beautiful way: "I don't think," he insisted, "I feel." Robert was art in itself. His personality was very unique, just as he was shy and loving, he was daring and self-assured: "Yet Robert, though shy, non-verbal, and seemingly out of step with those around him, was very ambitious" (57). He loved Patti and enjoyed taking care of her: "At night, after trudging through the snow, I found him waiting for me in our apartment, ready to rub my hands to make them warm. He seemed always in motion, heating water on the stove, unlacing my boots, hanging up my coat, always with one eye on the drawing he was working on" (56). Robert was also very dedicated to his art work: "His ability to concentrate for long periods infected me, and I learned by his example, side by side" (59). Robert seemed the missing piece to Patti's life as she was also to him. Through his different life choices and while his view of life transformed to express himself in other ways, Robert stayed loyal to Patti. They were always there for each other. Though they were different people with different mindsets, they were so much alike: "What will happen to us?" I asked. "There will always be us," he answered" (145). They were dedicated to each other and this was freedom in itself, freedom to love each other physically and artistically.

In the memoir it is clear that sometimes our passion comes with struggles and tough decisions. A perfect example is when Patti and Robert had to choose what was more necessary, food or art supplies: "Often we'd stand in the cold on the corner of St. James Place in the eyeshot of the Greek diner and Jake's art supply store, debating how to spend our few dollars—a toss-up between grilled cheese and sandwiches art supplies." Patti Smith goes on to say "Sometimes unable to distinguish the greater hunger, Robert would keep nervous watch in the diner while I, filled with the spirit of Genet, pocketed the much-needed brass sharpener or colored pencils" (57). Art had become a need for Robert and Patti. I was just as important as food and so Patti took extreme measures to get the supplies that they needed. This also shows that the journey to success comes with many bittersweet moments. However, despite the moments they experienced poverty, Patti and Robert treasured each other by finding consolation through art and in each other's arms: "There were days, rainy gray days, when the streets of Brooklyn were worthy of a photograph, every window the lens of a Leica, the view grainy and immobile. We gathered our colored pencils and sheets of paper and drew like wild, feral children into the night, until, exhausted, we fell into bed. We lay in each other's arms, still awkward but happy, exchanging breathless kisses into sleep" (66). This is a clear example of the life of true artists, friends and lovers. This also teaches the reader that an individual dedicates themselves fully to their goal, with the belief that one day they will make it: "We're going to make it, Patti... "We promised to never leave one another again" (88). It is important to note that Robert did not say, that he hopes they will make it. Rather his perseverance is evident in his belief of their success. This is what friendship is all about. When one felt defeated, the other would comfort, strengthen and keep the faith. The love that Patti and Robert shared kept them motivated and determined to persevere towards their goal that would grant them freedom to express themselves through art.

Patti and Robert also situated themselves in the areas where they knew they would find individuals to help them climb the ladder. This shows that in other to become successful, one must be active and seek their goals and aspirations because it does not simply come to you. Robert and Patti did not remain in closed doors but rather, acquainted themselves, with legends. A huge leeway for them getting to know others was, staying at the Chelsea hotel where artists and poets were: "The Chelsea was like a doll's house in the Twilight Zone, with a hundred rooms, each a small universe... Occasionally I would bump into Gert Schiff, the German Scholar, armed with volumes on Picasso, or Viva in Eau Savage. Everyone had something to offer." (112). It was just the beginning of Robert's and Patti's journey to discovering greatness and, although Robert and Patti's life also took different transformations, they learned as they grew.

Life also has a funny way of working out. Patti was the one who appeared to be more laid back about fame but Robert greatly aspired to become a famous artist however Patti was able to get famous before Robert did. This never deterred the love they shared for each other. What Robert wanted for himself,
They were inseparable while walking the narrow road of life. They were able to find their voice and feed their inner being with what it hungered for.
 infatuation and also the representation of what many people coming to New York seek, to become one of the “in crowd,” and be recognized for your success by gaining access to exclusive cliques. These feelings of belonging are what made the journey worthwhile even when times were rough. Being immersed in the art world and able to see, and speak with the people you look up to can be inspiring to up-and-comers such as Patti and Robert.

Just Kids serves as a literary example of how being in New York City can not only inspire you to succeed, but also provide opportune moments that will illuminate your journey in its darkest hours. New York City is a unique place, a diverse cultural salad, salad because it allows its populace to incorporate heterogeneity while keeping their own distinct flavor. As Just Kids shows, through characters who derive from various socioeconomic backgrounds, we are all a community and you can draw strength and inspiration from this community. Only in New York City, can you find your light or inspiration in a street vagabond or a world renowned superstar alike.

SHAHZOD SAYDALIEV
WHAT IF THE WHOLE WORLD WAS LOYAL, ONE TO ANOTHER?

Just Kids is a story of two friends who had challenging lives to achieve their ultimate goal. Patti writes about her life experience in several places such as Kansas, New York and The Chelsea Hotel, and memories of Robert. Robert Mapplethorpe is an artist who eventually becomes her real best friend and another protagonist of the story. He helps Patti to reach an American dream.

One of the important themes of this book is love and friendship. I have never seen such a close friendship and loyalty to a friend and a dream. I’m surprised that Patti remained ambitious and persistent, even though the life was difficult. I disagree with her position of pitting a dream over a healthy, proper life. We all know that money is an inseparable factor in life. I’m not saying that life is about money and money is everything. I mean money is needed to sustain and survive. They chose what has value; art. The author says, “We didn’t have the money to go to concerts or movies or to buy new records but we played the ones we had over and over” (45). The author showed how much love they put into art. They didn’t have to hunt the latest music but instead shared it equally, as she would if Robert was alive. It’s an achievement of both friends. Patti Smith wanted the real loyalty to continue even after the death of Robert, to keep memories of him alive. She published this book because she wanted to keep Robert alive. He wanted to be famous. This book is famous and Patti achieved her goal of becoming an artist. Yes, they are artists in the world. Patti couldn’t have done it by herself. It’s an achievement of both friends. Patti shares it equally, as she would if Robert was alive.

This is a really impressive piece of writing. I would want to have a friendship like Patti and Robert have. This book is important to show what people value in friendship and in life, what makes them loyal to each other. My initial thoughts were different. I thought they are characters that wanted to give up in life because of art. There is a lot more than just creating art. There is also seeing the art and interpreting it.

Once I reached the last page, however, I understood how my perspective changed. I began to understand and do some self-reflection. If the whole world was loyal one to another, this world would be a perfect world. Since it’s not the case, I still hope that there will be a change for the better. Friendship and loyalty are two inseparable subjects, just like Patti and Robert. We, as critical thinkers, need such characteristics in order to succeed.

ONE OF THE DIFFICULT LIFE CHALLENGES WAS THE MOMENT OF CHOICE BETWEEN ART AND PROPER LIFE.
ANNA MAKOGON

UNBREAKABLE BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP

Surviving in New York City is a difficult task, but it can be an adventure when you’ve got someone to survive with. It’s essential to have someone by your side who motivates you and helps you to accomplish your goals. Patti Smith describes her experiences of living in the city with her closest companion, Robert Mapplethorpe, in a memoir *Just Kids*. She cuts deep into emotion as she unravels her struggles, such as paying rent and buying food with a minimum wage job, while aspiring to be an artist in the late sixties and seventies. It’s a tragic love story that focuses on the hardships of being “*Just Kids*” who are striving for fame in a tough city. Smith’s story demonstrates the essential importance of friendship and how it influences your character.

Life conditions don’t affect the amount of support you can receive in a true friendship. No matter the situation, true friends show support in times of need. In *Just Kids*, Patti and Robert worked long hours with minimum wages to pay for their basic needs. Nonetheless, they cherished the moments they spent together and always made an effort to please each other. They lived in a harmony that consisted of balance in which one took care of the other. “If Robert took a drug, I needed to be present and conscious. If I was down, he needed to stay up; if one was sick, the other healthy. It was important that we were never self-indulged on the same day” (51).

At her young 19 years of age, Patti was wise enough to know that one always needed more help than the other. Money was tight for them, but they shared a hunger so deep for art that they sometimes took turns visiting museums to then describe the beauty they have seen to the one that waited outside. Their immense appreciation of art led them to even sacrifice their last bits of money to see movies and visit galleries together.

The couple was savagely in love and they were mutually grateful for the other. At one point, Robert even lost his job and Patti worked hard to support them both while Robert created art at home. Even when Robert got extremely sick with trench mouth, fever and gonorrhea, Patti worked very hard to take...
care of him and their bills. This shows that any life condition, such as being poor or sick, doesn't affect the amount of support the characters give each other.

The network of people that one associates themselves with and the experimentation of the work they create helps in developing an individual's identity. Despite the fact that the most important bond is between Robert and Patti, their lesser important bonds with the many people they meet throughout their journey still contributes to the growth of their identities.

As Robert experimented with his photograph themes, such as sadism and masochism (S&M), he used his peers as models and confirmed his homosexuality. Robert meets Sam, who eventually becomes his lover, and completes him in the most unexpected way. "He was rich yet unimpressed with wealth. Knowledgeable and enthusiastically open to provocative concepts, he was the perfect advocate and provider for Robert and his work" (205). "Robert liked Sam's money, and Sam liked that Robert liked his money" (235). Further explained, Robert had always wanted to be rich and Sam wanted to have artistic abilities, making them the perfect attributes towards each other; one had what the other wanted.

Meanwhile, Patti wanted to experience different types of art, for example, writing poems, songs, and books, acting, and later pursuing her career in a rock band. Steve Paul, who encouraged Patti to write songs and start a band, helped Patti realize that being in a band was her real identity. "...Steve Paul offered to take me to Mexico with some other musicians to write songs, Robert encouraged me to go" (186). This support from Robert helped Patti form an enthusiastic bond with Steve to discover her passion for writing and performing her music to the world. Meeting a various amount of individuals, having strong communal bonds with them, and experimenting with your passions helps in building a powerful personality.

Friendships evolve through the experiences that influence our character. Hardships require the support from a friend that we need to overcome the problems we face in life. Robert and Patti formed their friendship in need of one another to survive and later expanded it in building their connections with other people.

When they first met, Robert and Patti depended on each other as lovers and experimented with their art as a hobby. Through finding their artistic passions, they met many people who were able to introduce new ideas to build onto the foundation the couple already had. As this helped them find their identities, it also helped them figure out the type of art that spoke loudest to them. Robert discovered photography after creating private drawings and found that S&M was a theme he wanted to exploit to the world through his photographs. Through this theme, he clarified his orientation which separated him and Patti as lovers, but not as friends. "I never saw him through the lens of his homosexuality. The picture of him remained intact. He was the artist of my life" (157). Even though his homosexuality abandoned the idea of them as lovers, they still supported each other through their friendship and love of art. On the other hand, Patti found her artistic love in creating poems which began with writing short paragraphs for Robert's eye only, to writing songs for her band that made her work public. When turning your private hobbies into the public representation of your identity, it's necessary to have the support through friendships that help you accomplish your goals.

Time changes one's personality, but it can't break a strong friendship bond. Through years of having each other's support, Robert and Patti found their careers and new relationships through the encouragement of wanting the best for one another. Even though they weren't able to be successful together as a couple, they still motivated each other to become prosperous as individuals. Robert and Sam began to build their lives together, and found it easy for them to be victorious with one another. "He's the only one who really gets it... Robert and Sam were as close to blood as two men could be" (234).

Later in life, Patti found her soon-to-be husband Fred and left NYC to begin her own separate life. She continued to pursue her career in song writing without Robert by her side. Despite this, they still wrote letters to each other, talked over the phone and visited each other to keep their friendship alive.

When Patti found out Robert had been hospitalized for AIDS, she left her town while pregnant to support him at his bed. "I stood by his bed and took his hand. We stayed like that for a long time, not saying anything" (275). They spent their lives supporting each other and even after Robert passed, Patti acted on his last wish and wrote their story for the world to know. Even though with time, they led different lives, strong support and motivation from each other allowed for them to have such a strong friendship bond.

In conclusion, Patti Smith's memoir Just Kids illustrates the importance of support in friendship through years of developing public and private identities. Friendship aids in the building of one's character and finding their passions. Life conditions don't affect the amount of support one is able to give to another. For example, Patti always worked hard to be there for Robert and support them both in desperate times. Their work experiments allowed them to meet many different people like Steve and Sam, who helped them discover their individual identities. This later on evolved their relationship and artwork from being private to public. After years of having such a strong friendship, they were able to successfully create and build their own separate lives. This demonstrates how important it is to surround yourself with the right people that can help you on your path to finding oneself.

"WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US? I ASKED. 'THERE WILL ALWAYS BE US,' HE ANSWERED... WE WANTED, IT SEEMED, WHAT WE ALREADY HAD, A LOVER AND A FRIEND TO CREATE WITH, SIDE BY SIDE. TO BE LOYAL, YET BE FREE."

- PATTI SMITH
The full day schedule of KCC Reads fell on May 5th this year, which is Cinco de Mayo, a day to celebrate Mexican culture. TAH 43, Catering Event Management, wanted to offer a “downtown” cocktail menu to fit the Just Kids message. Students collaborated and worked to incorporate some traditional items spun out with a twist of both “Mexican” and “downtown” themes.

**MANY STUDENTS OFFERED SUGGESTIONS FOR MENU ITEMS AND WE WERE ABLE TO USE SOME INTERESTING ITEMS THAT HAD BEEN PREPARED BY OTHER CULINARY ARTS CLASSES.**

The menu ideas, the logistics of providing on-going service through the whole day’s program, and the Mexican theme we wanted to respect, all contributed to our planning, scheduling and sequenced preparations. Students volunteered throughout the day, starting at 7:00 a.m., to create a unique cocktail buffet line – one which caught the attention of the guest speaker, who helped himself to seconds before leaving for his next gig!

When he finished speaking, Lenny Kaye noticed there was smoked pork loin on herbed biscuits with mustard, made fresh that morning by one dedicated student. Thinly sliced smoked breast of duck was wrapped in warm tortillas, passed around the room by some shy and some very proud culinary students. Smoked salmon with herb butter on black bread was a traditional cocktail item, done with the KCC spin: the salmon, like the pork loin and duck, had been prepared by a culinary arts class and was offered by Culinary Arts Program Director Thomas Smyth for us to share at this event. (THANK YOU Chef Smyth!)

Pico de gallo, cut by hand and seasoned well the morning of May 5, landed next to cheese quesadilla, three kinds of empanadas and blue corn chips – traditional Mexican items to acknowledge the Cinco de Mayo celebration. Then an unusual item came to the table: black bean hummus, which is new, edgy (and delicious!) It pared well with more traditional dips such as blue cheese and another classic, eggplant caponata.

No student or faculty member looked unhappy with the classic puff pastry cheese straws, spiked by KBCC culinary students with generous amounts of cayenne pepper, and the skewers of fresh fruit were certainly appreciated on the hot day. We didn’t have a hard time encouraging students to taste the cookies or chocolate truffles, so our menu blended old/edgy/traditional/creative items. There was something for all of our diverse KBCC population:

**Cocktail Menu**

- Empanadas, chicken, beef, and veggie
- Pico de Gallo, sour cream, and avocado
- Cheese Quesadilla
- Rolled Tortilla with Smoked Duck Breast
- Black Bean Hummus, Eggplant Caponata, Blue Cheese dip with Blue Corn Chips, and crackers
- Fruit Skewers
- Puff Pastry Cheese Straws
- Smoked Pork Loin on Sage Biscuits
- Gravlax with Herb Butter on Black Bread
- Cookies – Butter Cookies and Almond Spots
- Truffles – two kinds

During the hours we prepped, students spoke about Patti Smith, Robert Mapplethorpe, their times and artistic creative issues. We talked about new food products coming to the market these days, items that were not available 20, 30 or 40 years ago. We spoke of the concern to buy from local farms, (to use products from our own KCC Urban Farm!) and not only from large food suppliers – and how political issues informed the artistic work, music and life of Patti Smith.

As KCC culinary students seek food related work, some of our students will be in “cutting-edge” food businesses; they will be pushing the boundaries of taste, hoping to contribute their creativity to a changing food scene. Perhaps some will feed the crew working to make Just Kids into a Showtime TV special next year!
RECEPTION
CELEBRATING
CINCO DE MAYO:

HOSTED BY: PROF CAROL DURST-WERTHEIM
& THE STUDENTS OF TAH 43, SPRING ‘15
MY IMMEDIATE CONCERN WAS WHETHER TO GO NEXT, AND WHAT TO DO WHEN I GOT THERE. I HELD TO THE HOPE THAT I WAS AN ARTIST, THOUGH I KNEW I WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO AFFORD ART SCHOOL AND HAD TO MAKE A LIVING. THERE WAS NOTHING TO KEEP ME HOME, NO PROSPECTS AND NO SENSE OF COMMUNITY. PATTI SMITH, JUST KIDS
Truly amazing to be here. This is not really a keynote speech; this is a Kaye-note speech. I'd like to thank everybody. I spent some time in the room over there listening to some of the papers that the students presented on Just Kids, Patti's beautiful and heart moving memoir, and it struck me that this is what college is about. Sometimes we don't really understand that the things that we study -- the great classics, the histories, and science, and all the other things that we've learned here -- are not about abstract learning but they are about us, who we are. If we would read somebody like Charles Dickens or Herman Melville, we're reading books that were the best sellers of their day. If we're studying Bach or Mozart -- not that I have as a rocker -- this is the popular music of their time. One of the things I believe is that when you read something in college, what you do is apply it to who you are and who you want to be, and that is a beautiful thing. And I know all the students here, from all these multicultural background, on the shore of this beautiful ocean, are learning who they can be, finding out who you are and looking for what your calling might be. And to me, that's what Just Kids is about, it's finding out who you can become. And sometimes it's not apparent. You don't just graduate and get a diploma and then go into that specific job unless you know, you're training for one and that's a calling too. But sometimes you have to search and find out what is speaking to you from the world and for those that don't fit into any specific categories -- such as Patti, such as myself. It takes a little finding, and a little luck, and a little experimentation to find what your sense of fulfillment is, because really that's what you want to be in your life, is fulfilled. There's an old joke whenever I think of the artistic life, which is up and down and sideways and sometimes you're doing great and other times you're playing guitar on the street hoping that somebody throws a couple of dollars in your case, is it art or is it rent? And uh, sometimes it's a little of both and if you can make both ends of that equation meet you can formulate a life from it. But in the end it's not about either, really it's about doing your work. I was speaking with Patti this morning about this conference and telling her what it was about. First of all she wanted to send her love and respect to what you guys have done for Just Kids, for learning about it, for understanding it, and bringing it into your lives. What she said really, what she had to say most of all is that it's about the work you do. A lot of people come up to me or anybody and say, "How can I make it in the music business? Do I need a publicist? Do I need a Facebook page?" -- I don't have a Facebook page so it's hard to find me -- "How do I get myself heard?" And what we always say is that, getting heard is not the point, doing the work that makes your heart feel whole, that's the point. And I have to say there is a lot of luck to it and a lot of time and place. Just Kids is about a moment in New York's time, and when I was listening to the papers being read over there, one of the students said, "If Patti and Robert were not in Lower Manhattan at a certain moment, would it have happened?" You know, if they were in New Jersey or wherever, and it's true: there was a moment where time and place came together. That's a beautiful thing for me too. I was born in New York; I grew up in Flatbush, I spend a lot of my teenage years in Central New Jersey, which Patti always scuffs at because she's from South Jersey, "I'm from Exit 2, you're from Exit 9." It doesn't matter; we both New Jerseyans, and we came to New York because we wanted to find kindred spirits. We came at a time where New York was rough. I mean, especially in the East Village, if you went past Avenue A, you had to be armed. It's hard to believe now, and it's even hard to see when so much changes so rapidly. But the fact is that your time and place can be your time and place, as it became for us. My own personal growth: I grew up as a teenager in New Jersey, I loved music, love music record collector, and I wanted to be a singer in the Doo-Wop band, that's some really good Doo-Wop. One of the great experiences, if you don't mind a little tangent, I was about in the ninth grade, my friends and I hitch hiked up Ocean Avenue-Ocean Parkway to go to Manhattan Beach. You know, we all think we're so cool. We go out to Manhattan Beach -- I must have been twelve or eleven, something like that -- and we go out there and it's full of teenagers and we're walking around and I see, all of a sudden I see these guys and their singing, a Black bass singer, three Italians singing background harmonies, and some
Jewish guy on the top -- a great, great combination. And they're singing "Sunday Kind of Love" and "Stormy Weather" and the original "Gloria" (singing). Gloria, it's not Marie... Plus a little bit on top of my false sound. And I looked at them and I thought, God I would like to be them, and I would get to be them when I was, you know at that moment in time when you're like seventeen and looking for something to do. I turned on the television and there were The Beatles on Ed Sullivan, and within three-four months I had an electric guitar and I really want to learn how to play. And it took me a while and by that time. I was going to Rutgers in New Jersey and I got to play at fraternity parties. I kind of learned my craft. I didn't realize I was in school to learn my craft. It wasn't something that was encouraged by my folks. They wanted me to get a real job. My mother always wanted me to get a real job; I have to say, in the early 80s when I wasn't playing, I got a job at a radio syndicator doing these FM radio shows that were about as generic as can be. I called her up and say, "Yeah ma, I got this job, it pays about twenty thousand dollars a year," and she said, "Oh, thank God!" But you know, we do what we need to do. I never dreamed I would be a musician. My own joke is that if I would have thought I would be still playing guitar fifty years after I started, I would have learned to read music. But I guess it served me a good step, because without reading music, I learned how to read music in my heart, in my mind. And that's the way to do it too, there is no specific way to find out who you are. You have to listen to what your calling tells you. Along with music, I was a writer; I worked for the school paper. I loved writing, and it was writing that brought Patti and myself together, it wasn't music. I wrote an article in a magazine called Jazz & Pop, I just started writing for some of the local music magazines, and I wrote about Doo-Wop music sung acapella -- which is a very small little sub-genre mostly encouraged by local record stores who sold oldies, who picked up these guys and they would sing -- and I thought this a beautiful little scene that nobody else knows about but me, so I wrote an article in Jazz & Pop magazine called "Best of Acapella," and a couple of weeks after it came out I got a call from this girl named Patti Smith, who I'd seen around. I saw her and Robert from afar. She had just performed at an underground play in Café La MaMa that Jackie Curtis wrote; it was called "Femme Fatale." I didn't know anything about the play or anything, but I saw this incredibly striking figure and I thought, "Oh my God, she is just beautiful," and I remember sitting in the restaurant after the play and seeing her and Robert, Robert had a fur vest on and Patti sitting there and I thought, "Wow, that's a very striking person." And then she called me up because she read the article, because the things I wrote about in the article touched her; it spoke to her and the kind of music that she heard growing up in South Jersey. And so I was working at that time at Village Oldies, a record store on Bleeker Street selling oldies, some of which were almost three years old at that time, and I put on our favorite records "My Hero" by Blue Notes, the "Bristol Stomp" and you know we'd dance around, and one day she says to me, "I hear you play a little guitar," and she says, "Well I'm going to do a poetry reading and I want to shake it up. Do you think you could play along?" I said, "Okay. So I went over to the loft on 23rd Street, where she was living with Robert, and I brought my little Gibson, an amp about the size of a computer; and as she kind of talks some of her poems, I improvise rhythm behind her, very simple. I mean even then, there was a kind of melody and a rhythm to her reading. And you know that's an important thing about writing, because I always think that my writing, when I'm really on it, it's got rhythm and melody in the same way that when I'm playing guitar solo, it has narrative structure, it has logic to it. We did -- at the first reading -- we did four songs. We did "Map the Night" because it was Greg's birthday. We did our first pop song, called "Picture Hanging Blues" about Jessie James. We did a cover version of an old blues called "Fire of Unknown Origin." And then we ended it with "Ballad of a Bad Boy." which describes a stock car race: "He was a stock car racer, and I met him on the track, and he was racing the town." And then we did this, this was in February 1971. It wasn't meant to be anything. It wasn't meant to be "let's get a band together," it was just an art happening. We didn't do anything again for another two and a half years, and then she called me up and said: "Hey I'm going to do a poetry reading, want to come and play our three songs?" I said, "Sure." She had a piano player by that time, she'd do some standards, then she'd read some poetry. And then, pretty soon, I'd be on stage with the piano player and then, slowly, things started coalescing. We never thought we would have a rock band. We never thought we had anything really; we were just doing something for the purity of it. If we would have thought we would have had a rock band, it would have been a rock band. But what Patti had was so unique and special. We didn't even understand what it was. We knew that when we performed and she did her poems, and then we did a piece of music. And soon the poem would lead into the piece of music. And soon we would be playing a piece of music underneath the poem, and the piece of music would kind of magically arise out of it. Really, to have a band -- a drummer, another guitar player -- to make a record, to tour the world, none of that was what we thought. All we thought was, "This is good work that we're doing." All we thought was that it's communicating to people and maybe we'll figure out a way to put it in a piece of media, some way that it could be appreciated. But until then, we're not going to rush it, we're not going to take the predictable route. We got another guitar player, because by then me and the piano player at the time, Richard Sohl, were kind of working too hard to kind of keep up with Patti's intensity. You know, you put an ad in The Voice, we had about fifty guitarist players come down, but they all put us in a direction that was predictable. And the whole point of it is: if you do something special, even if it's special and it's you, then you're going to find out what it is you want to do. And that's kind of our path, and we believed in the music, Rock & Roll; but to be honest, it's not about Rock & Roll, just like Just Kids isn't really about New York in the 70s. Rock & Roll, Hip Hop — you can take any genre; what's really important is going in to your musical imagination and finding a way to sing, or speak, or understand. I love all music, I'm introduced often as a Punk Rocker. Personally, I really don't listen to Punk Rock. I listen to anything. I listen to the radio. I want to hear the new Rihanna song. I want to hear jazz done in the 1920. I want to listen to Charlie Parker from 1946 when Bebop is really a Punk Rock or Jazz. I want to hear what somebody does with a sample and a beatbox. I want to hear how the rhyming is. I want to hear it all, because it's all people expressing their heart, that's what it's really about. And you know the music business today, you know I'm at the point of really not understanding it because it's more from what I see about the spectacle than the heart. I was thinking the other day and hearing about U2's new tour or what Madonna plans for her new tour, and I'm thinking what would Billie Holiday do if she was playing Madison Square Garden? She would put a gardenia in her hair, she'd stand in front of the microphone and sing from deep in her soul. I went to see Katy Perry in Newark and I love "Roar," that's my favorite song of the year before last -- I haven't choose one from this year yet. And it was a great show, and she was heart full and warm, and actually sang which I appreciated, and the choreography and the staging was spectacular, and I was like, "yeah, that's good." But really when it comes right down to it, what I like to see is, I like to go to a random club somewhere and maybe there's four, five people in that club and they're just singing from the heart. They might
I REMEMBER AT THE SESSION I TOLD PATTI, I SAID, "LET'S PUT A LITTLE OF PERCUSSION ON IT, HOW ABOUT A LITTLE BASE DRUM GOING." SHE SAID, "WHAT!? *MUMBLES*" BUT YOU KNOW THAT WAS THE FIRST STEP TO US BEING A ROCK & ROLL BAND.

I REMEMBER AT THE SESSION I TOLD PATTI, I KNOW THAT WAS THE FIRST STEP TO US BEING 102 | PAIDEIA | THE JOURNAL OF KCC READS a hit single, which we actually had one, like "Because the Night," which has been a great chorus and a hook, and "Total Romance," and then we can a long dissident improvisation like "Radio Ethiopia" or on our last record "Our Investigation Into the Life of Saint Francis" and "Francesco Oddella," "P.R.O.," and "Columbus" and you know a twelve minute piece that just kind of keeps rambling and going and spiraling; we have that, we don't have to put out a record that has ten tracks that which similar to each other. We can do anything. We can have a lot of different songs, and you know you can't see Patti live, we cover a lot of territory. You know something really soft and acoustic, and then you know we got the amps on eleven and taking the things apart, I'm wrecking my guitar so my guitar tech says, "What are you doing?" That's the kind of spread, because then you can do anything, it's not predictable. You don't want to be caught in the trap of definition; too often that's how music gets stuck. I don't want to listen to Blues, I don't want to listen to Rock & Roll, and I don't want to listen to Hip Hop, because I know what they're going to sound like. I want to see what happens when Hip Hop merges with — I don't know — Free Jazz, let's try that one; I like when borders blur. Rock & Roll began when Country music and the Blues decided lets cross the color lines; let's make this music one. I like the music's like intermingled and things happen; if something is a great Punk Rock song, well it's a Punk Rock song. I want to see something new, because that's where movement forward comes. I ramble on quite a bit; I don't want to stand up here and say, "yeah, this is the answer, go out and get it," because really it's all about having fun too. You know you go for what your heart likes, try to enjoy yourself. It's going to bang you around and it's a combination of what you went, in every city, we could see a little gathering of eight or ten or fifteen or twenty people starting their own bands. She always described us as like Paul Revere, we wanted to save the music that we loved from being corporatized, from being only in the hands of virtuoso and intellectual musicians, we wanted to bring it back to the root, and that's what we represented. I've been very proud of that all the bands have that come up to us over the years and said they were influenced by us, R.E.M., U2, many of them who you don't know, some of them I didn't even know. None of them sound like us, but what we represented to them was possibility. That's part of what "Land" is about, that long song at the end that we kind of translated from "Land of a Thousand Dances" that was a highlight out of my college band. The sea of possibilities, and really that's what Just Kids is about, it's about two people who feel possibilities and their learning process. I mean for Patti, who I've known for all these years, she always tried more to make Robert be the artist than her. She'd always bend the knee to his artistic sensibility, and he encouraged her; and that's really what were always about, everybody in this room. You know if this was church I would say, just turn to the next person instead of shaking hands or whatever they do at church before the collection plate is passed. You just say, "Come on, do it. Do your best!" You know it and it's not easy, and then sometimes it's not fun and it's disheartening. And let me tell you, I've done a lot of things in my life, and I'm still doing them because that's how we survive. It's not about the work you did yesterday. I'm happy to come here—thank you Maureen—and stand up and say, yeah, I've been able to live out my dreams, but there's lots of times when those dreams are really nightmarish and you're sitting there thinking, "Man, why don't I just choose an easier way," but the fact is you're not allowed to. Because if you choose that easier way you're not living up to who you can be. One of the things that Patti and I do a lot of like our way of working, it's beyond definition. Since we began people have always tried to encapsulate what it is we do. Punk Rock is always a good starting point, and yeah, I remember when CBGBS — the saited CBGBs, which actually started out with thirty people all of whom were in the same band playing for each other — it was Punk Rock, but it wasn't an identifi-
of them is that “the guardians of history are soon rewarded with history themselves,” and I believe that because we honored history and thankfully now we’re feeling really historical, but you guys are reading a memoir that is history rooted. And the other one is something I always keep in mind: “progress isn’t in the future, it’s keeping up with the present.” So please enter the future. And you know ... beautiful school — I don’t know how you guys even stay in class. Thank you very much, I really appreciate it. You know I’m a musician, I thought since Helen had this great guitar here, I thought I’d play it. I promise not to ram it into the amplifier.

THE Q&A:

Q: Can you tell us something about the process of Patti writing the book? Did she go through many, many drafts? Was it once much longer and torn down? Did it get thicker anything like that?

A: It was a very long process. As she says in the book, she promised Robert to write it. Obviously there is a certain degree of emotion attached with it. She wrote a lot of notes. She wrestled with it for a long time. There’s that old story about Michelangelo then he made a statues he would chip away and something would emerge from the stone and I think that’s what happened. It was a lot longer in places, it was a lot shorter. As a writer, sometimes I’d go over to Patti’s house when she’s writing something and sit with her and she’d ask me questions, and we’d look at sentences. As I remember it was early in 2009, we had just finished our holiday shows and she said, “Come over and just sit with me.” And that’s what I did, because I knew if she didn’t finish the book, we weren’t going on the road. I just went over there and we sat there and looked at the sentences and pared down. There were some areas where she needed some kind of input. Basically, the book tells itself. I don’t know how to explain it. It’s like in the studio when you’re listening to something; I had so many great ideas, and then you try it on a song and the song tells you what to do, why do you need to shake something to make it sound like bones. It’s not going to work here I tried it hundreds of times and it didn’t work. It was a long process because writing is a long process. I mean you can get it all out; I’m in favor of just like spitting it out and find the great sentence and then starting from there again. But Patti is a very meticulous writer -- the right word, the right thing. But it was a long process also because she came out of poetry. It’s a different voice and so she had to learn how to use that voice and tell her tale and let the tale unfold.

Q: I know the second book is coming out was that process just as long?

A: No it wasn’t as long, M Train is a very different book, there are some elements of it but its more present tense; and it’s not as they say the sequel. That will be her time in Rock & Roll, the idea that she has for that will come. But this was more of a casual book that kind of just grew and it’s a very cool book.

Q: Thank you for coming, I have two questions about Patti and Robert, do you know were there at any point a picture or some pictures where she was frightened? Going to different places and scaring a lot of people. And my other question is a how did you get to be a musicologist writing about music and all?

A: Well I am an American History major, I have to say I was really well trained in school. I became a musician because I played in bands, and I like history, I like to see things historically. I wanted to be an American Civilization major which kind of split the difference between the English department and the History department, and when I was a sophomore they canceled it so I just went to one. But really I like cultural history and I’m a record geek, I like record collecting. As for the other question, Robert and Patti had the utmost respect for each other and he would have never challenged her to step outside of what she felt was “propriety” or he did, basically their collaboration artistically and personally was based on love and respect.

Q: Hi, I just wanted to ask you because I am writing an essay on Just Kids and my topic was relationships, so what is your view on relationships and also any advice on writing?

A: Well thank G*d you didn’t ask me advice on relationships? What was the first part?

Q: The first part was if you noticed any relationships between Patti and Robert and any advice on writing?

A: My advice on writing is to write. I actually read a very good advice on writing by a detective novelist named Walter Mosley. I’m starting a book now, I’ve written two books, I’ve wrote the Waylon Jennings the Country star’s autobiography, and it’s a very weird literary genre because the better you are at it the less people know you’re there. I wrote probably a lot, once I got Waylon’s voice in my head. I could be Waylon, in fact I was saying “You’re Waylon,
I'm Way Lenny. Then I wrote a book about the crooners of the 1930s a very uncommercial topic called: You Call it Madness, and I'm about to start a book about the history of Rock & Roll. I actually finished the sample chapter, I'll tell all you but nobody really knows it, it's about the great moments of time and space, like you know Liverpool 1963, and Memphis 1954. I did the sample chapter on Philadelphia 1959 and the next ten years; and I guess it was around January and we go on the road and I thought "well it's time to get the old hats and ears," and I didn't do it and I thought well I didn't quite know how to do it. And then one day I thought "Y'know, let's go down there and turn on the old computer and sit there, and sit there, and I sat there, and the next day I went down there and sat there, and I kept adding stuff, adding stuff, and pretty soon I had a chapter that was over fourteen thousand words long; which means if all of them are going to be that long I'm in big trouble. But the thing Walter Mosley said- and I like it- he said you should write three hours a day, don't think about it, don't write in a journal, write your book, write your real piece of writing. And I thought about that, and I said yea a lot of people want to be a writer but they don't realize that writing is like climbing a mountain. The other two books that I did really, if I would have looked at the top of the mountain I couldn't have done anything. But if you look at the page that you're writing; try to have some fun with the page, do a little word play because personally words are so playful. I love when I get a little sentence that has some weird word thing in it that I was practicing. And just do it! it's like anything, people, writing is hard work. Everyone says "oh I have a book," and I know CBGB's is working on their memoir. But to be honest it's hard work, and you got to do it, and the more you do it; I've actually realized I've been writing now for over forty years. I did a lot of writing especially in the 1980's when I was unemployed, I would write for like kind of the low end of the rock magazines. Rock Video Magazine, I use to write like eight articles every month under a variety of names. It was good, you suddenly stop taking yourself so seriously, you just start having fun, and pretty soon you realize to do that, if your name is on it, it doesn't matter because it's you and the words and that's my thing. As for the relationship question I don't even know where it started.

Q: How would you say relationships that Patti and you had how did that encourage you and didn't interfere?
A: To me the best thing about Patti and my relationship if I could be blunt, is that I was never her boyfriend. You know it's like we're brother and sister, we're as friendly as can be. We share so much history now, so many reference points, so many goofy things; what we do on the road is she gets up early, she calls me up at eight o'clock, we eat breakfast and we go take a walk, and we're walking around and we see something. I remember this time in Australia, we're walking around Sydney and we see this sign: No Junk Mail; and all the mail boxes are filled with these weird letters. And we'll be walking through anywhere like "is there any junk mail around here?" I don't know, we're buds and we talk all the time, and I'm lucky enough to be able to collaborate with her. She's got a really incredible artistic sense, she encourages me and she stuck in there for all these years, I guess I encourage her. I always like to say I'm not that great of a guitar player, I'm not special. I always listened to her breathe, that's what brought us together, when I was playing chords behind her what I was listening to was how she breathes. The calm of her voice, so when she wanted to amp it up I would be there, when she wanted to slow it down she knew how to do that, and that's what kept us together.

Q: I just have to say that while you were talking, I was so hoping that you had a guitar somewhere and that you would perform, so it's really special that that actually happened. The second thing is I never really knew about Patti Smith until I read the book; I'm very happy that I read the book, and also I was moved when that building with the gas explosion in Lower Manhattan and the horror of it, and that Patti Smith who I didn't really know until I read the book, here she was doing this fundraiser to help out in that situation, I was very impressed and moved by that; I was wondering if you were part of it? Did you two guys talk about it? And so forth.
A: I lived two buildings from that explosion, if I look out of my back fire escape two buildings away is the building that is still standing. We were so lucky that it didn't blow out of our windows. I mean I couldn't believe it happened, you know we live in these buildings. I'd say most of our gigs are benefits. Patti is very generous with her time, we're doing one tomorrow night for abused children. But you know that's how you give back. We always try to make our music mean something, and I was part of that. The theater that it was, was an old speak easy in the 20's, we went there did three or four songs, helped out, got to know the neighborhood. We'll continue doing it because if music can help, it's all about giving back. I'm really lucky. I have a ten week tour coming up in three weeks; I hope I do, but it's like we're out there and I'm playing music fifty years after I started, which is unbelievable to me and I'm grateful for that because it's a great way to be a part of the human organism. I like to believe everyone has a part, some people deal with the stomach; farmers, short order cooks, restaurateurs, there's other people that deal with taking care of the human body. I get to do something for the human organism, even the soul, music is like an abstract language that speaks to all of us in ways that we don't even understand, beyond language. I feel really lucky to give back, to change a mind or to raise dollars for a good cause.

Q: My question is I know you like to base music on meaningful historical themes, so my question is what inspired you to write "Ghosts," and what was the inspiration behind that song?
A: I wrote the music so the inspiration was I was out in the main studio room and I start playing these cords and the producer came out and said: "that's it, that's a good hit song let's continue writing it," and then Patti took it and made it about the Sioux Uprising. You know there's that beautiful book Black Elk Speaks, which talks about, to be honest, one of the great tragedies and the sins of this country, what we did to the Native Americans. I find it horrendous especially given how much this country represents certain freedom; certainly it's in trouble many a times but then you go to other countries and you realize at least here you can speak our minds, whatever our mind is. But you know it just felt like when we recorded in the studio we didn't do it like a record, we had everybody gather around, Patti wore ankle bells and basically just did it around a camp fire. A good topic and one that also has resonance because we people have lost people, I've lost too many friends to the misadventures of Rock & Roll. When we sing that song wherever it is I always try to picture during that little break between the third and fourth verse hanging on that A minor chord I try to imagine someone who passed on. Recently I have lost someone who touched my life and so, thank you for asking.

Q: I just want to know, as a band are there any people or things you didn't
kind of commercial product, sort of defined as music of the soul, music of emotions, this real judgment of real artistic vision redefined as a product to be sold in a Starbucks jingle or be restructured as something to be the same kind of like upper class mentality but listening from the soul when in reality it hasn’t changed and the music came out of playing for pennies just to get your actual song out there?

A: I don’t exaggerate either one to be honest, I do boycott Starbucks though even though I really need a coffee right now. I boycott Walmart, Starbucks, and McDonalds, forget it. I wouldn’t underestimate the way commerce comes into art and the way art comes into commerce. I think you can romanticize the counter culture, I certainly do; I went to San Francisco in 1967 and it changed my life. You know, when you’re playing you want people to hear you, you wouldn’t mind earning a living, there’s ways you move through the music business that sometimes increase creativity; the three minute single, you know, you can’t spend ten minutes trying to find the way through, you want to have the impact. Sometimes that makes you really economical, and today a lot of bands inspire to be on a commercial, but in the end it’s about the music and if it’s a great song I don’t care where I hear it, there is a vehicle somehow. I don’t sense a lot of underground now, and I’m an underground fan but that doesn’t mean that somewhere where I’m not cool enough to know, it’s out there. There’s somewhere where a gathering just like the CBGBs, really thirty people every Sunday night that’s what it was, the local people who wanted to play music and had nowhere else to play on this street that was like trashed out, that you would stand outside CBGBs, and I’m not even romanticizing it and every once in a while a wine bottle would come out of the welfare hotel above it and, and you know, you would hope you weren’t standing there. It wasn’t romantic, it was just like a place to do your work; and I think if you concentrate, I know I underline this but if you concentrate on your work, it doesn’t matter. I would love to sell one of our songs to a mega-corporation and get that Ferrari that was promised to me fifty years ago when I got into Rock & Roll that was never got delivered. I joke about it, I have everything I want in life you know, and I’m not very material like that, you know, I like to be able to go on EBay four o’clock in the morning till five forty five. But these are transitional times for how music can be found, what disturbs me most is the fact that you have things like Pandora or even YouTube, where they’re using the content that musicians make and not paying them. I mean I’m sorry, all of them are banding together to lobby congress to lower rates to musicians. I know what’s happening to my publishing royalties, I don’t even have big publishing royalties, though I do know every once in a while when a check comes in for a thousand dollars I didn’t have it and I was praising the Gods. Too often it’s the creators that are not being paid now, they want you to play for free and they want you to play for exposure, well I stopped playing for exposure, I’m as exposed as I’m going to be. I want to be paid, but if I don’t want to be paid I want to play for free like an event, I’m going to do that too. It’s a changed world; in twenty years from now believe me, they’ll count on the lobby to figure it out. This is such a trick, there’s no record companies anymore, what’s that about? It used to be you find a group, you call someone in an A&R department, I don’t know if there are any more A&R departments. I’ve seen a complete sea change in my lifetime; a hundred years ago in 1915 they had just moved from cylinder records to flat disks, the movies haven’t even arrived and how to talk, television was a figment of someone’s imagination, and computers were the stuff of science fiction. I received my first email in 1994, and now I can’t go three minutes without seeing if I’m being asked to join LinkedIn or whatever. Things are changing so quick, and if you can surf on them you can find your way, and if for some reason it doesn’t happen at least you have the pleasure of being able to get your work. I never played as good sometimes as I do in my basement, when I’m just there in the meditation and music. In the end it’s great to play for people but I play better for three people in a random East Village club than sometimes in a festival with 5 times X. It’s really speaking to yourself, and maybe if you speak to yourself in a loud enough voice that’s personal and that’s a beautiful thing.

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**Q:** Hi Lenny, thanks. I love your stance. I am an American Historian, personally you’ve made me very happy today. What I wanted to ask you about: one of the things I love about Patti and you is that you’re totally yourselves. You’re talking about the history of Rock & Roll, Rock & Roll has always been real with you. This memoir is Patti’s, and I wonder if you and Patti have had conversations about aging and how you see that towards Rock & Roll?

**A:** That’s a good question. You know, I’ve lived my life in the world of Rock & Roll. One of my earliest memories when I lived in Brooklyn right near the corner of Church Avenue, is hearing Little Richard on the radio “Tutti Frutti,” and thinking it was just the wackiest funniest thing and I was just going on the floor not knowing anything about it. And now for my golden years I’m still playing the history of Rock & Roll through the guitar. That said, for me Rock & Roll is kind of over, not as a thing, in the same way as I guess that Blues is
over or Bebop Jazz or...it's gone from innovation to performance, you know, how good you can do it. I don't think there is going to be a new stride with the electric guitar at this point, everything that's been played has been played, now it's time for the next type of music, the next instruments, a lot of it has to do with the computer. I personally can't wait until they stop modeling guitar sounds that are based on fifty year old guitar sounds and they invent some new ones. I like to hear new stuff. I feel at this point I'm a heritage artist and I still celebrate the heritage. I'm not going to go into whatever the modern music is now because there's millions of people that do it better than me, but I know how to do whatever I do and I'll celebrate it because I don't think music goes out of style. When I was into the crooners of the 1930s and learning beautiful songs like "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day." I just thought, "Damn, this song is speaking to me. It may be seventy-five years old but it's moving me and I'll try to sing it and learn all those hard jazz chords that comes along with it." We all get old, it's just becoming more aware of who you are and celebrating that part, and I don't mind it. I grew up in a time when Rock & Roll had a sense of expansiveness that thrilled me. I don't know how to say what the 60s are like, and I know I'm probably cliché but beyond all the hippie dippy stuff, what the 60s were about were possibility, you actually believed, as ridiculous as it sounds, that love would save the world. Well, for that moment it was true and it changed my life and I've tried to live up to those precepts forever.

Q: What was it like hearing the Ramones at CBs for the first time?

A: They were both a mess I can tell you. They were great you know the CB's band which have become legendary really. The Ramones became the sound of Punk Rock but what I really liked about CBGB's bands and I stole this from television, they said they were each an idea, they were very different from each other; Talking heads, Blondie, us, you name it they're all really different. Also, CBGBs being so out of the way all these bands had time to grow, nobody really though they wanted to get some place. It was crazy how you're here in the middle of nowhere surrounded by people sleeping on the street, they had a lot of time to develop and that is what I think is important now, is that people think oh man I'm going to get a little song together put it on YouTube and I'll be famous tomorrow. Doesn't work like that; you've got to really like figure it out, have the time to figure it out, and make those mistakes. Go up in wrong alleys and find out who you are, and if you put in that energy you will find out who you are, and who you are is pretty special. You know I'm standing here rambling on and you guys are great, you're paying attention! When I was in school I was like sleeping. Really it's a really nice thing.

Q: You've played with a lot of different bands, aside from Patti's which ones would you say walked away from feeling really enriched about and which ones did you walk away from feeling like "I never want to work with them again?"

A: I really only play with people I love, you know playing with Jim Carrol, one of the greatest experiences in my life, working with Suzanne Vega, producing a record by Allan Ginsberg, and last December I produced a single with Pussy Riot which was really kind of amazing. I just like playing, really, if someone asked me to play on something I'm just going to have a good time and give the best I can and remember why it is I play because to make a sound out of an instrument is a glorious thing and a sound you want is even better.
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