

Western Illinois University
2021 Thomas E. Helm Undergraduate Research Conference

Abstract

Live Scholarly Presentation

Major: Liberal Arts and Sciences

Faculty Mentor: Everett Hamner

Dear Nicki (of 2024): A Time Capsule Exhortation

Nicole Quinn

This creative writing project is simultaneously a scholarly and personal reflection on the state of American culture in our neoliberal era. The 2020 election could not have been much more divisive or more shaped by misinformation, and by looking ahead to address myself four years from now, this time-capsule letter aims to exhort myself and others toward a healthier situation in 2024. Calling on the federal government to restore democratic values (including readily available voting, regardless of race or socioeconomic status), my presentation urges quick and bold action addressing climate change, excessive political lobbying, stagnant wages, tax loopholes, the wealth gap, widespread poverty, systemic racism, and police brutality, among other social problems. I particularly consider the roles played by unregulated capitalism and white supremacy in contributing to systemic oppression, and I reach beyond US borders to see how American cycles of exploitation have extended to global populations. Lastly, I explore the concept of “tribalism” and possibilities for neutralizing the alternative facts and extremist ideology that increasingly pervade our polarized society. We live under a neo-feudalistic oligarchy that too often reflects only the interests of most powerful and wealthy one percent, and it is time for Americans of all political leanings to take back their democracy.