

# INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



The John Locke Institute, which organizes one of the world's most prestigious essay competitions, described the publication of their alumni's articles in Inspire Youth Journal as a "success" and a "fantastic achievement."

## Edition of the Year

The Bravery of Afghan Women  
Rewinding the Clock  
Thunberg's Climate Lawsuit  
Species Extinction  
Saudi Arabia 2034  
Debunking Schizophrenia

AI Tools & Financial Decisions  
March on Washington  
The United States' Nail Industry  
Kodokushi: Loneliness in Japan  
Inside the Brain Revolution  
The Power of Private Equity

**This special edition is proudly printed and displayed in the Sixth Form Center at King's College International School Bangkok.**

## INTRODUCTION

Dear All,

Inspire Youth Journal is a global platform for youth journalism, connecting young writers worldwide who are passionate about current global issues and fostering peace.

Inspire Youth Journal presents its Edition of the Year 2025: a special release to highlight the very best articles we published in 2025. This edition includes twelve articles by twelve different writers who have written articles that we felt were the most informative, clear, engaging, and articulate to effectively educate young people around the world on pressing current issues. All of our published articles and submissions have been reviewed in depth to find the very best ones that were holistically exceptional. Only 4.8% of the articles published in 2025 made the cut for the Edition of the Year 2025.

Inspire Youth Journal would like to congratulate all of the writers whose articles have been selected and would like to highlight the skill that each one of these articles showcases. For those who were not selected, we still recognize the time and effort that goes into all of the pieces we publish. Keep writing and we hope you find success in following years or other endeavors.

Finally, we'd like to thank all of the featured authors, other Inspire Youth Journal submitters, designers, editors, and dedicated readers as your hard work and contributions are what make this journal possible.

Sincerely,

The INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL Team  
Global Platform for Youth Journalism



## TESTIMONIALS

### Desh Subba:

Philosopher and author of books including Philosophy of Fearism; Trabeman's Journey to Fearless; Trans Philosophism; Fearnorphosis; Scapeghostism; Eco-Fearism; and Fear, Law, and Criminology

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the entire Inspire Youth Journal team across the globe. You are doing outstanding work in journalism—inspiring energetic youth and fostering a spirit of solidarity. As a partner, I've had the privilege of observing youth activities through this platform, and the progress is truly marvelous.

The journal's design, content, and editorials are captivating and thoughtfully crafted. Each year, its success continues to grow, providing a powerful space to highlight new ideas and voices. The future of Inspire Youth Journal is undoubtedly bright, and I am proud to be a part of this meaningful journey.

Keep the youth enthusiasm alive and thriving! Wishing you all the very best.

It is truly inspiring to see the Inspire Youth Journal – Edition of the Year 2025 bring together such diverse, thought-provoking voices from across the globe. The quality of ideas, depth of research, and relevance of topics reflect not just strong editorial vision but a genuine commitment to nurturing young thinkers and future leaders.

What stands out is the platform's ability to amplify meaningful narratives—giving young writers the confidence to question, express, and influence. In a rapidly evolving world, such initiatives play a critical role in shaping informed, responsible, and globally aware individuals.

My congratulations to the entire team for curating a publication that is not only intellectually enriching but also socially impactful. I look forward to seeing this platform continue to grow and inspire many more voices in the years ahead.

### Dr. Nitya Prakash:

Nobel Peace Prize  
Nominee (2022), CEO of  
Quality New Zealand  
Education Limited

### Mark

### Beales:

Assistant Director of the Sixth Form Center and Deputy Head of English at King's College International School Bangkok; published author (Lonely Planet); IB Team Chair and former Principal.

The Inspire Youth Journal is a professional, student-led publication that is packed with high-quality writing and research. As a former newspaper editor, I can appreciate how much effort it takes to produce something like this. What's especially impressive is the scale of the journal - more than 200 young writers from more than 40 countries work on this. Congratulations to everyone involved!

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## THE BRAVERY OF AFGHAN WOMEN

Moska Ahmadzai



**W**hen you think of Afghan women, do you picture warriors, leaders, and visionaries? Throughout history, Afghan women have embodied these roles. Yet, their stories are often overshadowed by stereotypes that reduce them to victims of oppression. It's time to remember the legacies of Afghan women whose courage and leadership have shaped Afghanistan's history.

Afghan women have shown an unwavering spirit throughout history, using knowledge as their sword and courage as their shield. This strength and resilience are imprinted in the lives of many, including, but not limited to, Malalai of Maiwand, Gohar Shad Begum, and Zarghona Anaa. This article seeks to honor these extraordinary women's legacies by showcasing their courage, leadership, and historical impact on Afghanistan. They have served as a symbol of determination for many generations and continue to inspire courage in Afghan hearts.

### **Malalai of Maiwand**

Malalai of Maiwand was a courageous, selfless Afghan woman during the Second Anglo-Afghan War in the battle of Maiwand, which took place on the 27th of July, 1880. Despite the fact that Ayub Khan was the military commander, it was Malalai of Maiwand who saved the day.

When the battle intensified, she was there to tend to the wounded and provide water to Afghan fighters, including her father and fiancé, on the day that was supposed to be her wedding. Eventually, there came a point in the battle where the Afghan army, despite its superior numbers, started to lose morale, and the tide seemed to be turning in favor of the British. Seeing this, Malalai took off her veil and shouted out:

***“Young love! If you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand, by God, someone is saving you as a symbol of shame!”***

Her words reignited the fighting spirit of Afghan fighters and resulted in Ayub Khan's army winning the battle. She was struck down and killed by a British soldier, but her bravery and resilience continue to be a beacon of hope to the hearts of the Afghan nation.

### **Gohar Shad Begum**

Gohar Shad Begum was a 15th-century queen of the Timurid Empire. She made Herat, the capital of the Timurid Empire, a center of cultural renewal by passionately promoting Persian culture, the arts, and education. The construction of a magnificent architectural complex, including a madrasa (school), library, hostel, mosques, and a hospital, was initiated by Gawharshad in 1417 (Zhwak 14). She promoted Persian language and culture to the forefront of the Timurid Empire and supported poets and painters, such as the female poet Mehri Herawi (“Her Story”). After her death in 1457, various institutions and structures, such as Gohar Shad University in Herat and Gohar Shad Mosque in Mashhad, have been established across Afghanistan and beyond to honor her legacy and celebrate her contributions to art, culture, and the emancipation of women in Afghan history.

## THE BRAVERY OF AFGHAN WOMEN

Moska Ahmadzai

### Zarghona Anaa

Zarghona Anaa, the mother of Ahmad Shah Durrani, was an influential figure and key advisor to her son during the Durrani Empire. She not only raised a great leader but also actively supported him throughout her lifetime. Her thoughts and words influenced Ahmad Shah Baba's decisions in leading the empire. For instance, when Ahmad Shah Baba gathered government officials to plan the construction of a new city in Kandahar and discuss measures to avoid potential enemy attacks, they all agreed to build seven walls and moats around the city to ensure the safety of the citizens. However, after Zarghona Anaa heard about this news, she summoned Ahmad Shah Baba and told him:



***"My son, always remember that Afghans never rely on earthen walls or water-filled moats for protection. These defenses might save you and me, but what about your brothers and sisters outside these walls? Don't they deserve your protection? And another thing is that you should not wait so long that the enemy passes the borders of the country and reaches your city."***



Her words inspired Ahmad Shah Baba to change his decision and led him to build a simple fort (Gaheez). Zarghona Anaa's remarkable leadership can be seen from her words and decisions.

Although Afghanistan has long faced severe wars, economic instability, and conflicting societal norms, Afghan women have continued to stand strong in the face of adversity. From the Afghan-Anglo War until today, Afghanistan has been the land where women have been historical warriors, great leaders, and changemakers. Afghanistan's history shows the bravery of Afghan women, their resilience, and the continued efforts of all Afghan women in building a brighter future for their beloved country.

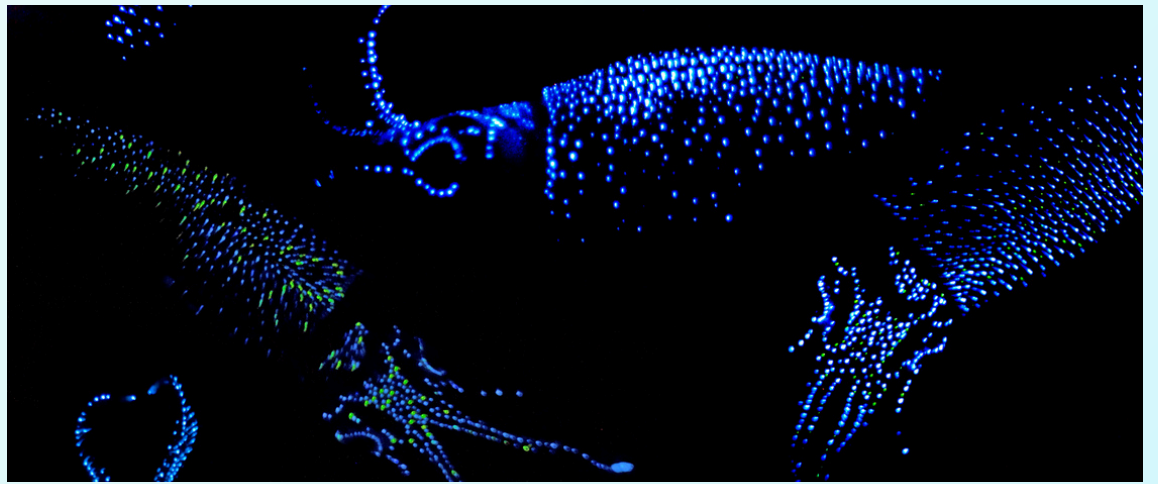
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## REWINDING THE CLOCK: DISCOVERING THE WORLD'S FIRST BIOLUMINESCENT ORGANISM

Bao Ngoc Truong

**H**ave you ever seen a firefly, wondering how it could glow? From fireflies to glow worms, algae to squid, a dazzling array of organisms can do something that may seem like magic: generating their own light through a process known as bioluminescence. This isn't just a one-off phenomenon. In fact, it has evolved independently at least 100 times in nature and has dozens of diverse uses, including luring in prey, throwing off predators, and finding a potential mate.



For a long time, the first glow-in-the-dark creatures were thought to be small marine crustaceans called ostracods which lived around 267 million years ago. However, a recent study by a team of American researchers has said otherwise. By studying an oft-bioluminescent group of deep-sea critters named octocorals, the scientists found that they shared a primeval light-bearing ancestor of deep-sea soft corals which suggests that the phenomenon may have evolved in the sea more than 500 million years ago—thereby making its first known emergence more than twice as old as previously calculated.

“Light signaling is one of the earliest forms of communication that we know of—it’s very important in deep waters,” said Andrea Quattrini, a co-author of the study. For animals, especially those that live deeper in the ocean than sunlight can reach, bioluminescence can make the difference between dinner and having dinner. For example, it can lure prey and deter predators. “Bioluminescence, and light signaling in general, could be one of the oldest forms of communication that we have evidence of, which was not what we were originally expecting,” says Danielle DeLeo.

Today, marine creatures that glimmer include some fish, squid, octopuses, jellyfish, and even sharks—all the result of a cold light chemical reaction, one that requires the presence of luciferin—a light-making compound. Cold light means less than 20% of the light generates thermal radiation or heat. The luciferin chemicals that animals use to create light may come from their bodies, from their diets, or from storing a special kind of bacteria in their bodies. Fireflies, for instance, can produce luciferin, while Hawaiian bobtail squids rely on *fischeri* bacteria in their light organs, and jellyfish obtain the chemicals through their diet of smaller marine animals.

Many deep-sea soft coral species light up briefly when bumped, or stimulated with a brush in the laboratory. That’s what scientists used, attached to a remote-controlled underwater rover, to identify and study luminous species, said Steven Haddock, a study co-author and marine biologist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute. Zoologist Andrea Quattrini, curator of corals at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., and her colleagues were determined to understand how—and when—bioluminescence may have developed in octocorals. Quattrini has spent about a decade testing living octocorals collected from the ocean by sequestering the creatures under a blanket or in a dark room and nudging them with a pair of laboratory tweezers, looking for signs of light.

Quattrini’s team mapped such results in an evolutionary tree that shows how different modern octocorals are related to one another, letting the scientists look for patterns in which branches can and can’t create light. A recent, detailed octocoral evolutionary tree using genetic data from almost 200 species gave them that chance. First, they placed additional octocoral fossils with known ages on that tree to better illuminate how various lineages are related. They also mapped out the tree branches that featured living bioluminescent species.

Ultimately, the analysis suggests that the first known evolution of bioluminescence in a marine environment occurred some 540 million years ago—much longer ago than previous estimates of 267 million years.

## REWINDING THE CLOCK: DISCOVERING THE WORLD'S FIRST BIOLUMINESCENT ORGANISM

Bao Ngoc Truong

The fact that the proposed date falls just before or during an event paleontologists have dubbed the Cambrian explosion, when a burst of biological diversification occurred, was a very elegant and interesting finding indeed. "It is the time that we knew that eyes were taking off," says Copley, referring to animals that evolved the ability to detect light. It makes sense that bioluminescence would emerge around the same time. "I don't think it's a coincidence at all." In other words, the seas and oceans of the world are generally dark places. But almost as long as complex animals have existed, so too have there been lights flickering in the darkness.

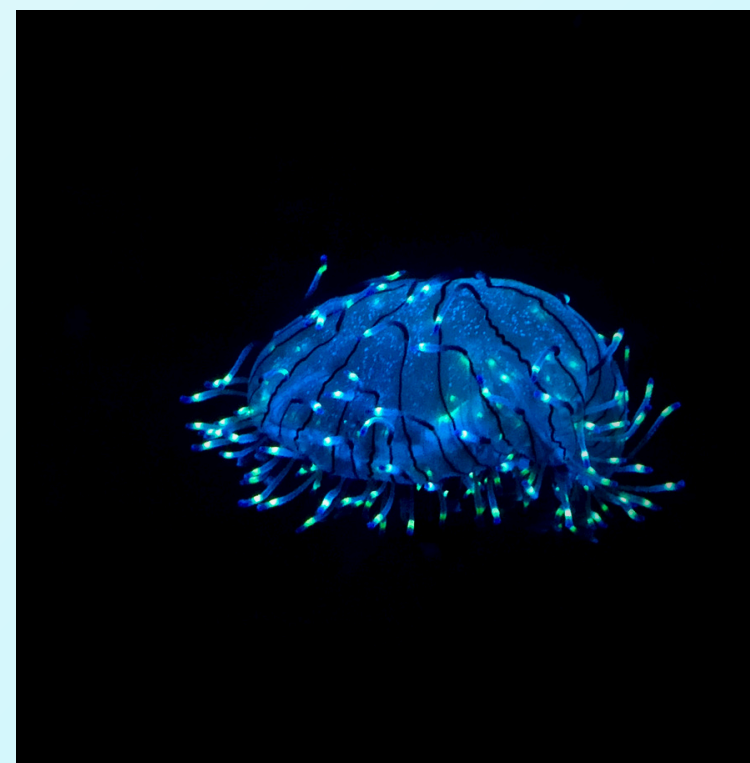
The ocean houses by far the most organisms that utilize bioluminescence. This is probably because the oceans have much more area of land deprived entirely of sunlight. Just about 200 meters below the surface, existing creatures already develop bioluminescence to glow in the dark. "It's so diverse and variable," says DeLeo. In some cases, bioluminescence can lead the way of an animal's quest for a potential dinner. Predators with rumbling stomachs can use the process to blind and stun their dinner, draw gullible prey into their maws, or act as a searchlight to spy on a swimming snack.

Octocorals can also shine in the dark. Although superficially similar to the stony-housed polyp colonies that make up coral reefs we see, these wiggly animals have a soft structure, along with a few other morphological oddities. Seeing their soft bodies and immobility, many scientists have suggested that their bioluminescence may have been used as a "burglar alarm", as recent research has shown them glowing brightest when being prodded with. Perhaps a bright shine is the best way to frighten off a hungry predator.



Other scientists disagree, suggesting that glowing was probably not used for today's burglar alarm-like purpose. "We think this light production was more of a secondary byproduct," says DeLeo—an inadvertent brilliance triggered by another biochemical reaction. But over time, the bioluminescent reactions "were kept because they started serving this really important function of communication, or light signaling."

Debates about its uses aside, scientists are still trying to exactly pinpoint the actual primal ancestors of bioluminescence organisms. It's highly possible that the ancestors of these bioluminescent beings may go back even further than the Cambrian era. Unfortunately, due to a paucity of fossils older than this period, scientists may never conclusively find out when this underwater starlight first appeared. One thing is certain: thanks to that initial ignition, an abundance of lifeforms today can light up their surroundings—giving researchers countless opportunities to study this remarkable ability.



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## THUNBERG'S CLIMATE LAWSUIT REJECTED BY SUPREME COURT IN SWEDEN.

Ed Green

A class action lawsuit filed in 2022 by prominent climate activist Greta Thunberg and hundreds of other activists, who call themselves the Aurora Group, has been rejected by Sweden's Supreme Court. The lawsuit argued that the state was violating rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) by not doing enough to combat climate change.

In 2023, after a request by the state for the case to be dismissed, the district court the lawsuit was filed with asked the Supreme Court to clarify whether a lawsuit of this nature could be trialled in Sweden.

***The Supreme Court's decision was that: "A court cannot decide that the parliament or the government must take any specific action. The political bodies decide independently on which specific climate measures Sweden should take."***

The court said that its decision in such a case could "only concern the question of whether individuals' rights under the convention [ECHR] have been violated, not what specific measures the state is obliged to take".



This therefore leaves the door open for an adjusted lawsuit to be brought against the Swedish state in the future, as long as it alleges that specific individual rights under the ECHR have been violated by the Swedish government's perceived inaction over deterring climate change.

Similar climate-based lawsuits brought to the European Court of Human Rights have experienced varying outcomes in the past. There was success for the plaintiff in 2024, when the Swiss government was ruled to have violated its citizens' rights by failing to do enough to combat climate change. However, a 2023 climate-inaction lawsuit brought against 32 European countries by six young Portuguese people affected by deadly wildfires in 2017 failed, demonstrating how it is extremely difficult to achieve success and progress through cases like this.

Ultimately, the failed case in Sweden and the previous lawsuits in Europe show that the fight against climate change is not over for Thunberg and her allies. They also create the opportunity for similar lawsuits to become more frequent in the future.

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## HOW DOES SPECIES EXTINCTION IMPACT GLOBAL ECOSYSTEMS?

Donya Fournier

**W**ith global temperatures on the rise, many species are going extinct because they are not able to adapt and evolve fast enough in order to resist the change in temperature. Scientists have recognized this pattern and are putting in place measures to prevent the biodiversity of ecosystems from decreasing too drastically. Biodiversity is necessary for the overall strength, tolerance, and resilience of a community and ecosystem and indicates genetic variety (The Happy Turtle Straw).

***This concept is sacrificed as the extinction rates rise exponentially.***

This genetic variety ensures that a population is more fit and therefore is able to evolve in order to reproduce successfully while overcoming environmental challenges. From a global perspective, the extinction rates are seeming unnatural, key species are being harmed and disappearing and something needs to be done.

In everyday life, the extinction of a few random species might not seem like the biggest deal; however, when observing the impact and the importance they have to their ecosystem, one species' extinction may deteriorate an entire community of organisms. According to researchers from Columbia Climate School, the global species extinction rate is increasing significantly, specifically "1,000 to 10,000 times faster because of human activity" including habitat loss (e.g. deforestation), poaching, displacement, and disease (Cho, Marsh). In agreement with this observation, Rao and Larsen pointed out that although extinction is a natural event, the rates are so high that it is becoming abnormal.



## HOW DOES SPECIES EXTINCTION IMPACT GLOBAL ECOSYSTEMS?

Donya Fournier

A strong illustrative example would be birds. Birds deserve more credit for their role in the global ecosystem than we give them. They pollinate around 5% of the plants we use as humans everyday, spread seeds of asexually reproducing plants with their droppings which are also great fertilizers for the seeds and coral reefs, and they eat insects and pests on agricultural grounds (Shaw). Overall, birds help maintain a healthy environment not only on land but also in the sea and for so many different species around the world. As observed and reported by Bird Life International, as of June 2024, of almost 12,000 bird species, 126 “are lost to science.” Due to the magnificent impact birds have, their extinction and disappearance play a negative role in the sustainability of numerous ecosystems.

***The extinction of birds alone can cause an entire ecosystem to collapse because of the lack of productivity and resilience it will have.***

A specific initiative that has been taken, specifically by the United States, is the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that was originally passed in 1973 to protect key species in certain environments (Cho). Another example would be the Red Kites, a reintroduction program in south England. In consequence of the political and social climate recently, these laws are being suppressed and their impact is getting mitigated; nonetheless, it is important to make sure these programs and laws are maintained and adhered to. Another way we can fortify the ecosystem we are surrounded with is by placing clean water and food for specifically birds especially during extreme seasons. As articulated by the Center for Biological Diversity, it is extremely important to also advocate for the protection of the environment. Whether that be to state, county, country, or organization officials, it is essential to bring attention to maintaining a healthy earth in order for all organisms to have the resources they need to cooperate in society.

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Photos from Louis Fournier

## SAUDI ARABIA 2034: A TEST FOR MIGRANT LABOR RIGHTS

Tanisha Kinikar

In 2034, Saudi Arabia is planning to host the next FIFA World Cup, following in the footsteps of Qatar, its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) partner. Billions tune into the FIFA World Cup for entertainment, but what goes unseen is the exploitative labor in the background. As the 2034 World Cup approaches in Saudi Arabia, it's critical to understand migrant labor systems and their consequences.

### **Migrant Labor in the Middle East**

A migrant worker is a person engaged in paid employment in a state where they are not a national. As of 2019, migrant workers in Arab countries alone amount to over 15% of migrant workers worldwide. As more nations become industrialized, the desire for "unskilled" labor will increase. Today, about half of the workers in GCC countries are migrant workers, mainly from India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

### **The Kafala System**

The power balance between migrant workers and their employers is controlled in the Middle East under a principle called the "kafala system." This system gives private companies in the GCC complete control over the status of migrant workers through a visa sponsorship contract, typically lasting 2-3 years. These sponsorships are initially administered by the Interior Ministries, but are then transferred to employers who sponsor the worker's travel and residency.

Employers do not typically follow the host nation's labor laws, leaving room for exploitation and abuse. Because migrant workers are legally tied to their kafeels and often have dependent residency status, they have limited working mobility and low bargaining power.

### **Human Cost**

In most GCC countries, workers require permission to leave the host country, switch occupations, or even quit. With no other resort, they are frequently forced to endure dangerous conditions and poor pay. Employers may confiscate passports and restrict access to phones.

### ***Legal aid is virtually inaccessible.***

In 2020, reports revealed that workers in Qatar were routinely underpaid—or not paid at all. Since most migrant workers under the system are bound to their employer by a contract, their employer can reduce wages significantly without losing employees. Furthermore, despite having college degrees or academic credentials, many migrants are placed in elementary occupations based solely on their race or origin country.

Another major but overlooked issue is debt bondage. Most host countries require the employer of the workers to pay a recruitment fee, which unjustly ends up being the worker's responsibility and debt to pay off. This results in workers forcing themselves through more intolerable work.

### **The 2022 Qatar FIFA World Cup**

The rebuilding of the Khalifa International Stadium began in 2014, in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This labor-intensive project required an immense amount of cheap labor, supplied by the migrant workforce. Migrant workers performed the intensive labor of constructing roads and hotels in temperatures above 100°F. The conditions of the World Cup contributed to the death of over 1,000 migrant workers in the past five years.

Mohamed, a 38-year-old migrant worker from Sri Lanka, saw a chance to start a new life for him and his family by taking a promising job in Qatar. "With the burgeoning petrol crisis and rising food costs in Sri Lanka, it was becoming difficult to support my family," Mohamed said. He sold his only means of transport for the job and was sent to Qatar, where he was shocked by the conditions he would be working and living in.

He was to live in a dirty, small room with ten other men and was put to work on a construction site with no safety hazards. He worked for months and received a small weekly allowance for food, but was not permitted to send remittances and had not received a consistent salary. At the end of eight long months, Mohamed received two months' worth of pay and purchased a flight back to Sri Lanka. "I feel the labor court has ties to these companies," he said. "There is no justice in our situation."

The 2022 FIFA World Cup threw a spotlight on the exploitation of migrant workers in Qatar, and stories like Mohamed's received enormous worldwide attention. Rather than sitting back, Qatar was pressured into taking immediate action. Since then, several regulations such as mandatory hydration breaks, a standard minimum wage, and shorter hours have been implemented.



## SAUDI ARABIA 2034: A TEST FOR MIGRANT LABOR RIGHTS

Tanisha Kinikar

According to workers in Qatar themselves, these are dramatic improvements from the conditions during the World Cup and have attracted positive media attention. However, they are yet to encourage many other GCC countries to significantly alleviate the status of migrant workers.

### Why the System Persists

Even with the recent spotlight on the Gulf region, differences in global and regional policies have left the movement of labor largely unregulated. The economic growth of many Gulf nations still depends on the consistent availability of cheap labor. Host countries give migrants the “dirty” jobs that nationals do not want, often under hazardous working conditions. Despite unjust treatment, legal support remains out of reach due to language barriers and workers’ fear of termination. Most migrant workers work overseas for the sole purpose of sending remittances to their origin country. For many, the alternative to working—returning home with nothing—feels even worse.

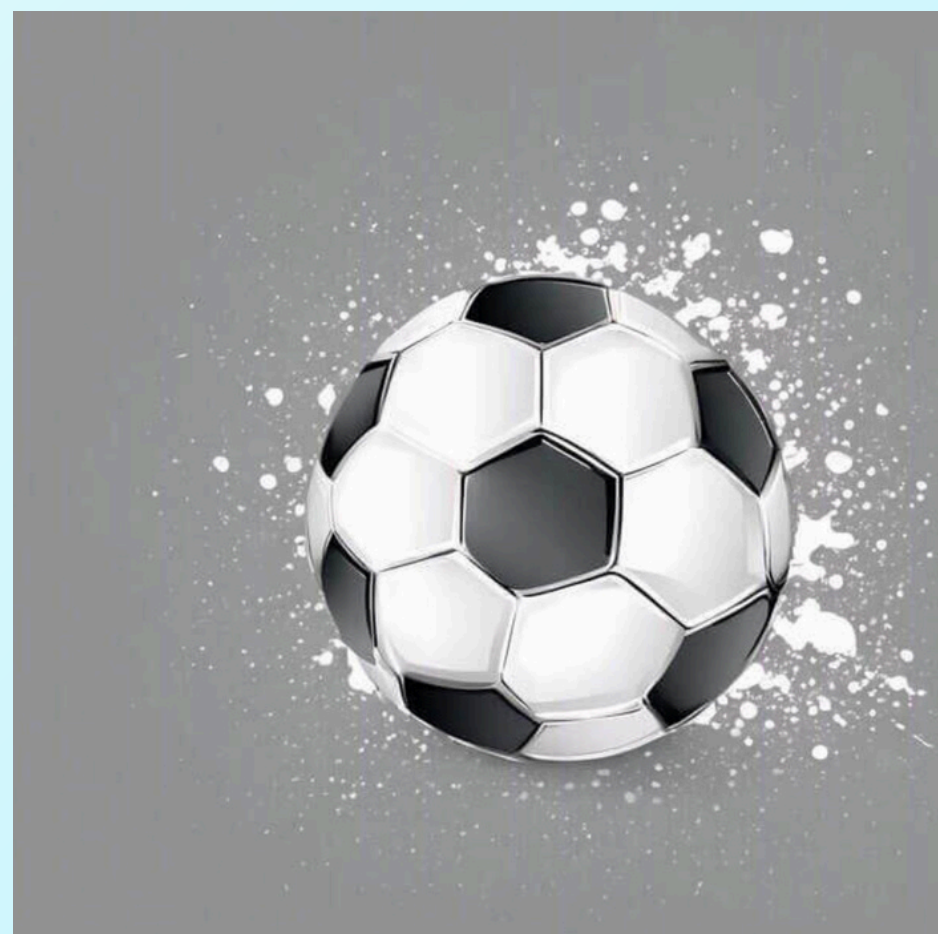
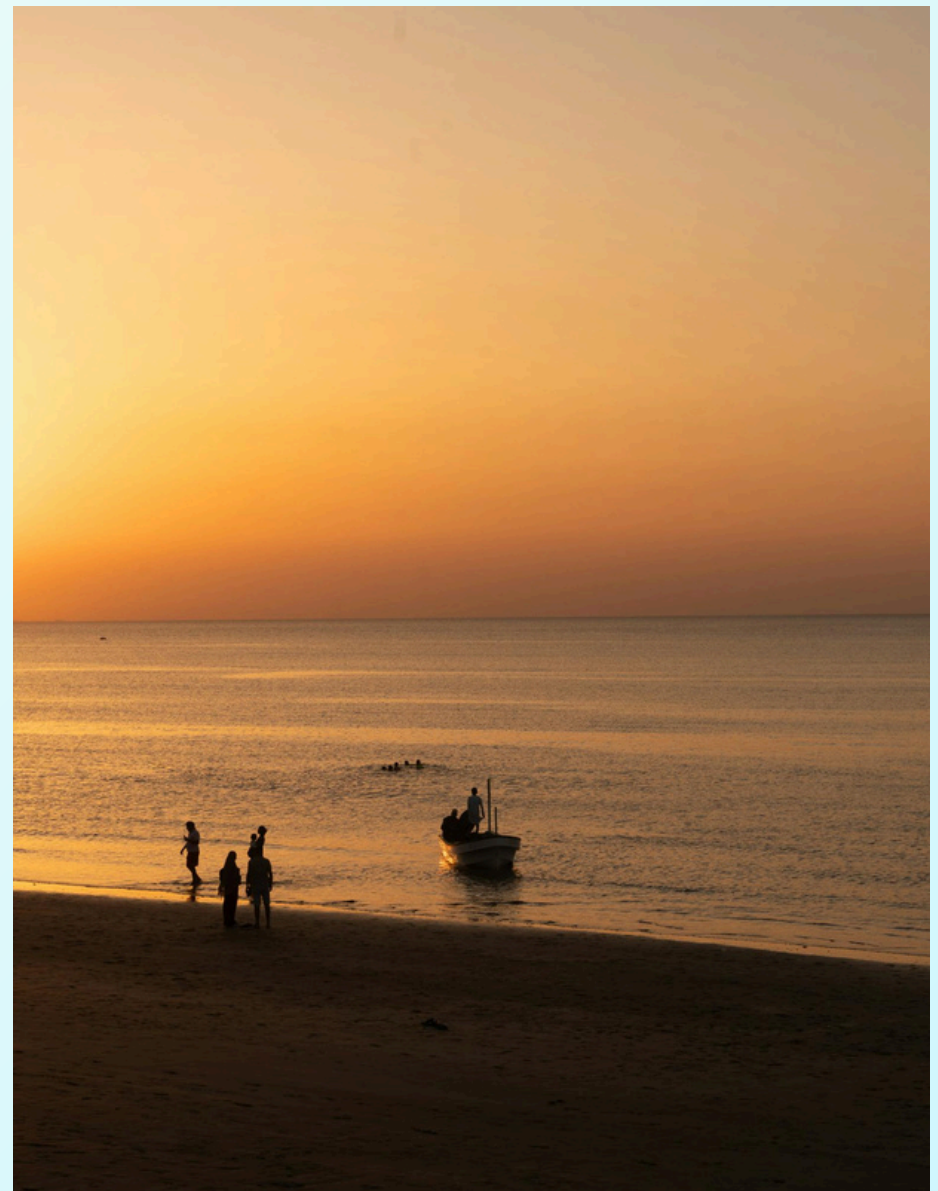
Even some reforms meant to address the issue often fall short. The International Labor Organization has collaborated with governments and NGOs to write reform policies, but implementation is difficult to enforce across all firms. Many reform policies are also inaccessible to all migrant workers due to an intentional lack of awareness perpetuated by employers.

### A Call Before Saudi 2034

Saudi Arabia, the host of the 2034 FIFA World Cup, still employs over half of its labor force from abroad and is notorious for the systemic abuse of migrant workers. Learning from the Qatar World Cup, the international community must be proactive and enforce measures to protect migrant workers long before FIFA preparation begins in Saudi Arabia. We cannot afford to wait for another media spectacle to protect migrant workers—we must start creating protective and equitable systems today.

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## DEBUNKING SCHIZOPHRENIA: A DISORDER RIDDLED WITH MYTH

Chau Do Minh



**A**s mental health awareness grows, conversations around anxiety and depression have become more open. Schizophrenia, however, remains shrouded in fear and myth—despite being no less real, and no less treatable than them. Myths about danger, violence, and “split personalities” haunt our world to this day, leading to social stigma that prevents individuals from seeking professional help.

***Experts say that misinformation about schizophrenia not only distorts public perception but can also be detrimental to schizophrenics.***

They often face discrimination in housing, employment, social circles, and even accessing medical care, on the grounds that they are “violent” or “unreliable”, or even “possess multiple personalities”. With over 24 million people worldwide living with schizophrenia, mental health advocates argue that the truth must be brought to light. This article examines some of the persistent misconceptions and what science actually tells us about this disorder.

For decades, schizophrenia has been confused with dissociative identity disorder (DID). This belief has only been reinforced by every form of media, from social media messages and false infographics to horror films and crime dramas. However, DID and schizophrenia are different disorders, albeit very easily confused. Those suffering from both disorders hear voices and appear emotionally unstable, but these symptoms originate from distinct sources. For DID, they may seem to be coming from another entity inside one’s head, called an *alter* or *headmate*, that may attempt to talk to or pass messages along to the *host*, or the original entity, who interprets these messages as real voices coming from other people. For schizophrenia, though, voices come from auditory hallucinations, where voices command or comment on the person’s actions. Emotional instability can come from *switching* in DID, where the entity controlling the host’s body changes, causing potential breakdowns or confusion. In contrast, individuals with schizophrenia usually have difficulty organizing their thoughts and may act impulsively, resulting in difficulty focusing, illogical reasoning and tangential speech.

As medical expert Amy Morin puts it, “Schizophrenia is a condition marked by disturbances in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Dissociative disorders are characterized by problems with the continuity of memories, thoughts, identity, and actions that result in a disconnection from reality.”[1] She also emphasizes the importance of differentiating between these mental disorders to ensure the correct and timely treatment of schizophrenia.

## DEBUNKING SCHIZOPHRENIA: A DISORDER RIDDLED WITH MYTH

Chau Do Minh

*This stereotype fuels stigma, social isolation, and discrimination, making it harder for the individual to receive employment, housing, or community social and financial support. It also discourages people from seeking help due to fear of judgment.*

Another persistent myth suggests that schizophrenic individuals are emotionally flat, incapable of empathy, or inherently psychopathic. Popular media can exaggerate these traits, portraying characters with schizophrenia-spectrum disorders as cold, detached, and, at times, dangerously indifferent to others. While schizophrenia can affect emotional expression, it does not make someone psychopathic. Reduced or inappropriate expressions are part of a group of negative symptoms seen in schizophrenia, called the blunted effect. Dr Timothy Legg and educator Rebecca Joy write, "Some people with schizophrenia report they still experience a wide range of emotions, but they may not show those emotions in the form of facial expressions." [5]

Believing that schizophrenic patients are emotionless, cold, or cannot control their emotional state can exacerbate existing social problems, most notably the public avoiding, fearing, or expressing hatred towards these individuals, even instilling prejudices in children. Misunderstandings can harm social relationships, particularly if others assume the individual is indifferent or unwilling to engage. Other problems may breed, resulting in not being able to integrate into the workplace or get access to supportive services. Individuals may even feel alienated from their own emotions, contributing to frustration, low self-esteem, or depression

As society becomes increasingly aware of mental health, it is crucial to bring the reality of schizophrenia into the public eye to challenge discrimination, separate fact from fiction, and promote understanding. Through this, we can help create a safer, compassionate world for those with schizophrenia and inform neurotypicals of the difficulties schizophrenia brings to one's life.

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## HOW AI TOOLS ARE RESHAPING FINANCIAL DECISION- MAKING

Prasanna Chandankhede

### **I**ntroduction

Back in the day, financial literacy meant mastering basic concepts such as budgeting, calculating interest, saving, and managing debt. But as we transition into the digital and AI era, these skills look very different. Algorithms now decide how investments should be allocated, where investments should go, and how much investments should be made — all through new mobile apps and AI-powered chatbots that offer instant expert advice. While this transition brings both empowerment and new risks, it raises an important question:

*“What does it mean to be financially literate in the digital era?”*

### **Basics to Algorithm**

Traditional financial literacy required personal effort in order to get effective results. Individuals had to research investments, track expenses, and balance checkbooks all on their own. But, nowadays, budgeting apps and mobile apps with integrated AI features handle all the calculations and give recommendations. For the younger generation, this feels natural, but for millennials, not so much. Investopedia (2025) found that 41% of Millennials and Gen Z are comfortable with AI managing portfolios, compared with just 14% of Baby Boomers. While technology saves time and efforts, it risks turning financial literacy into pure dependence on these apps and bots.

### **AI in Everyday Finance**

Artificial intelligence has integrated itself in daily financial life. Budgeting apps like Mint track patterns and recommend adjustments. AI-advisors such as Betterment design customized portfolios, while AI-powered credit models are reshaping how borrowers are evaluated. Even payment systems now powered by algorithms, particularly Buy Now, Pay Later platforms that encourage spending while hiding long-term debt. The Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2024) has warned that while these tools help expand access, they also increase risks of overspending and fraud.

### **Opportunities of AI Finance**

We all know that AI offers clear benefits. First-time investors can now build diversified portfolios within minutes without needing expert advice or a finance degree. They can simply make decisions based on the recommendations from AI. Robo-advisors, now managing more than \$1.26 trillion globally (Barron's, 2025), have democratized access to financial planning. Personalized advice, which was once a privilege only for wealthy clients, is now easily available through apps to the general public as well. If used responsibly, these tools can broaden access to financial security and long-term stability.

### **Risks and Pitfalls**

Even with its advantages, technology remains a double-edged sword. Kiplinger (2025) reports that AI chatbots make mistakes about one-third of the time, yet nearly half of their users already rely on them. The issue here is that many people lack the financial knowledge to spot errors. Another issue that arises is Algorithmic Bias, as AI models can reinforce inequalities in lending. Generative AI tools, according to MoneyWeek (2025), often give inaccurate advice and lack transparency, raising regulatory questions. Moreover, fraudsters also exploit AI, creating deepfake scams and fake investments.



## HOW AI TOOLS ARE RESHAPING FINANCIAL DECISION- MAKING

Prasanna Chandankhede

### Redefining Financial Literacy

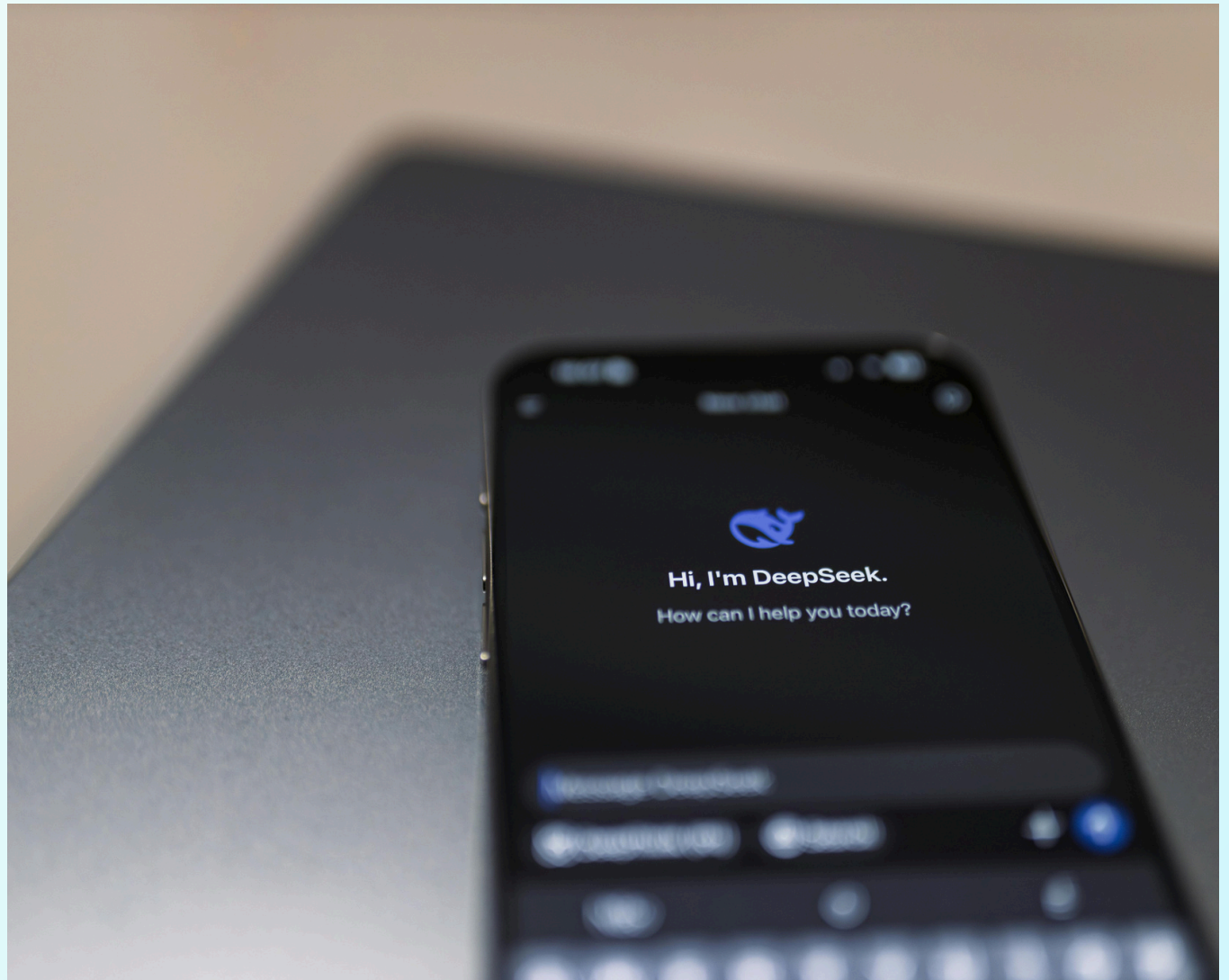
In today's world, the definition of financial literacy must expand. It no longer suffices to understand savings and debt but rather, people must also practice digital literacy. True literacy now involves knowing when to trust the algorithm, and when to rely on your own independent judgment.

### Conclusion

AI has revolutionized financial decision-making, enhancing accessibility, efficiency, and inclusion, but also introducing dependency, bias, and fraud. The wisest financial decision to make today may be knowing when and when not to let the algorithm decide.

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## MARCH ON WASHINGTON: CAUSES, FACTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

**T**he March on Washington was an event that had been in the making for twenty years. In the 1940s, activist A. Phillip Randolph planned a march in Washington, a protest against the segregated US military and the discrimination against Black Americans in the American army. Seeing that over 100,000 people were expected to join the march, President Roosevelt began negotiations with Randolph in an attempt to avoid large-scale civil disobedience during times of conflict. The result was the establishment of Executive Order 8802 and Executive Order 9981: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry, 1941, and Desegregation of the Armed Forces, 1948, respectively. After this achievement, the march was called off.

This success, however, was not enough to end racial inequality in civil rights, and by the 1960s, the freedom and civil rights of Black Americans in the United States were still not equal to those of whites. A "March on Washington" was planned once again, with Bayard Rustin as the main organizer and with the collaboration of the "big six": James Farmer, Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young, all of whom were leaders of civil rights groups.

The March on Washington was organized to advocate for freedom and equal jobs for African Americans. The main desired legal change was the passing of a major civil rights law pending in Congress that would prohibit discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, sex, or race, alongside preventing discriminatory employment practices that targeted Black Americans, alongside other marginalized minorities.

***This long-overdue legal change had been a dream of many Americans for years, especially amongst the Black American population, who had been facing discrimination in the United States for centuries without civil rights laws protecting them.***

This demonstration should be viewed in the context of the American civil rights movement to be truly understood. The civil rights movement roughly ran between the early 1950s and the late 1960s. In addition to the March on Washington, the movement encompassed countless other mechanisms for legal change. For example, the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation, or achievements of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a group that challenged unjust laws in court and lobbied for equal rights.

The march took place in Washington D. C. on August 28, 1963. An estimated number of 250,000 people joined the march, arriving in Washington by planes, trains, cars, and buses from all over the country. The protestors spent the day marching from the Washington Monument to the National Mall to the Lincoln Memorial, ending up at the White House, where a meeting between John F. Kennedy and the leaders of the march was held. There were musical numbers, chants and speeches from many people, including Rosa Parks, John Lewis, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, who gave his well-known "I have a Dream" speech.

As Martin Luther King, Jr, emphasised, the march remained non-violent: "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force".

One obstacle that was faced regarding the March on Washington was the lack of support from certain groups, such as the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations or the Nation of Islam. A notable person who lacked his support for the march was Malcolm X, who even dubbed it "the Farce on Washington." Though he did attend the march, because he "could not not come," he was clear about the fact that he did not support the protest.



## MARCH ON WASHINGTON: CAUSES, FACTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

The government responded to the march by inviting the leaders of the protest into the White House to meet President Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon and discuss the need for bipartisan support of civil rights legislation." Even though President Kennedy supported the civil rights bill, he was fearful that the march would weaken the image of the USA from an international perspective. Due to the concept of 'soft power' that arises from the international narrative a country tells about itself, Kennedy was still worried that the idea of a doubtful shadow over the USA's justice and equality would affect the nation's power in the long run. As for the opponents in Congress, some speculated it would be a violent affair, by "unwitting followers" of "communist" leaders.

Now, let's look at the March of Washington's success. In the short term, it's clear that the march was a victory, seeing that it resulted in the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This act ended up protecting the civil rights of not just ethnic or racial, but also religious groups.

On the other hand, the March on Washington didn't solve all problems regarding civil inequality. "We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality," said Martin Luther King. There are various problems that ended with the March on Washington, but racially motivated police brutality towards Black Americans is not one of them, as seen with the murder of George Floyd in 2020, for example. Thousands of people from all around the world went out to protest that crime. More than fifty years after the March on Washington for equal civil rights, people were out marching once again for the same purpose. This shows that the March of Washington didn't solve all problems regarding civil inequality. But it also reveals a crucial notion about civil unrest and protesting that speaks volumes.

### ***Protesting is powerful.***

It's the unity of citizens in persistent action in a fight for positive legal change. Sometimes, the desired change is reached, as seen with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and sometimes it's not, as seen with police brutality. But people continue to march, and that's what matters. Marchers didn't accomplish ending police brutality in 1963, so they continued marching in 2020. In the words of Martin Luther King, "1963 is not an end, but a beginning." The journey will go on as long as there are marchers on the streets, until King's dream that "my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by their character" is fulfilled.

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## THE UNITED STATES' NAIL INDUSTRY: A CATALYST AND INHIBITOR IN THE TRANSFORMATION AND GROWTH OF VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN CULTURE

Kaity Dong

### Context & Background

The Vietnamese people continuously encountered hardship beyond the 1970s - long after the Vietnam War eventually came to a formal end in 1975. Many sought asylum to escape their homeland, but the term refugee created a label- making Vietnamese people a target no matter where they went. This was the lived reality for the millions of displaced Vietnamese people. Whether by discrimination, racism, or political exclusion, Vietnamese people endured harsh and difficult circumstances no matter where they went. Even for those who managed to escape at the height and eventual end of the war, thousands in the United States were ultimately repatriated due to policies reflecting societal attitudes towards immigrant and refugee communities. Over time though, the Vietnamese community began to flourish, leading to the culture taking root in cities all over the States in a wide variety of distinct ways.

### The Relationship Between the Vietnamese Community and U.S. Nail Industry

*Immigrant communities, regardless of cultural and/or ethnic background, tend to have one thing in common when starting out in the United States: employment in undesirable and subservient fields.*

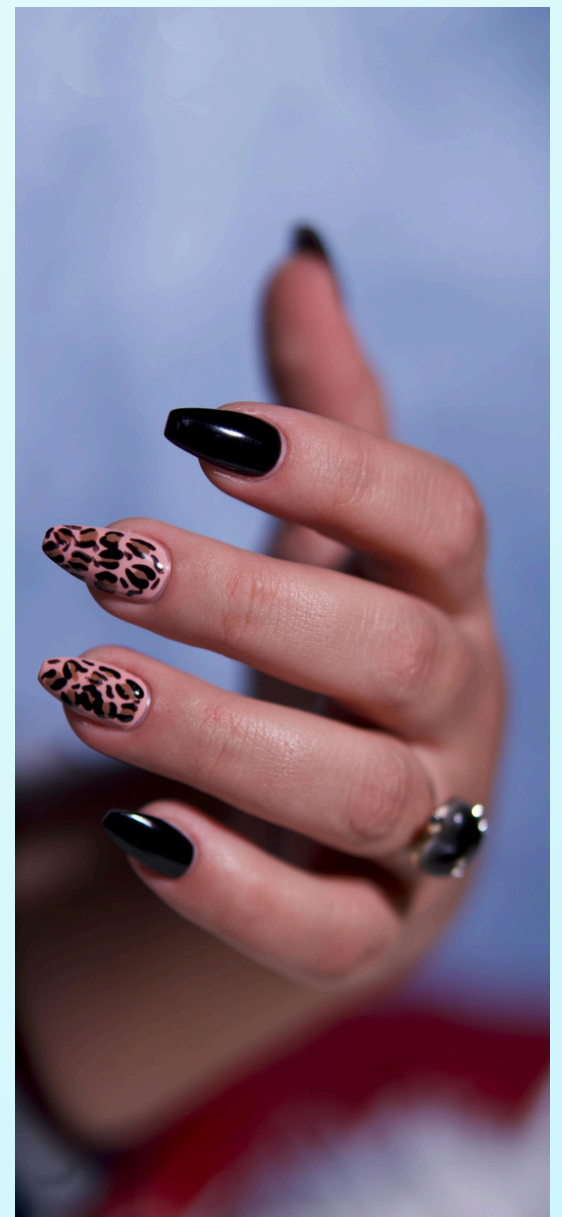
As reflected in society, these tend to perpetrate harsh and negative stereotypes depending on ethnicity. For the Vietnamese, it's the beauty industry; especially the nail industry.

The linkage between Vietnamese people and the nail industry starts with Hollywood. Tippi Hendren, actress and philanthropist, visited Hope Village in 1975- a refugee camp for Vietnamese women based in Northern California. With her, she brought her personal manicurist, Dusty Coats, who taught the Vietnamese women there how to do nails for the first time. Later, Hendren aided them in securing jobs as nail techs all over Southern CA, which ended up kickstarting a billion dollar industry in the United States.

Prior to the nail industry boom, these services were almost exclusive to the upper class. Manicures and pedicures were a luxury service and normally inaccessible to the working and lower classes. Due to a wide range of factors (such as the electronics boom, the high influx of readily available Vietnamese labor, and the nature of Vietnamese culture and community), those new to the United States were drawn to the rising industry of beauty. These conditions not only made luxury beauty services more accessible to the working and lower classes, but it also gave way to honest and good employment opportunities in the United States.

### Filial Piety and Arrival in The States

Vietnam emphasizes a largely patriarchal society. It is heavily influenced by Confucian beliefs of filial piety, placing women in dutiful positions as caretakers of the home and men as the sole provider and head of house. Due to this aspect of Vietnamese culture, with the devastation of war, many Vietnamese men fled with their families to the United States with the hopes of providing a better life and future- as the ones primarily responsible for supporting their wife and children.



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The reality was that this dream was otherwise inaccessible for the time. Vietnamese people encountered harsh racism in a country not their own and in a tongue foreign to most. As a whole, Asian men faced extreme emasculation while women endured hypersexualization. Since most Asian cultures stress modesty and respectability, rarely did Vietnamese people choose to speak up for themselves.

### A Catalyst for Change

Most Vietnamese men, often due to a combination of factors (limited English proficiency, low education, marketable or industry-specific skills, etc.) ended up in highly physical and undesirable jobs. Typically, more than one. These occupations were highly intensive and normally did not pay well enough to support a family on their own. Thus, many wives ended up needing to seek supplemental income.

The budding nail industry's success is highly contributed to the increasing demand for services and mainstreamed availability of skilled labor and innovative technology. The novelty of these services to the greater population and the need for employment gave rise to the Vietnamese community's connection to the profession. Thus, a shift in Vietnamese culture began to take place.

In comparison to the exhaustive work most Vietnamese men experienced, the beauty industry was less rigorous and paid better. Vietnamese women suddenly had opportunities beyond household responsibilities and stepped into roles typically reserved for men back in Vietnam. Eventually, this shift continued to include more opportunities for education and other career possibilities that would've never been considered before under traditional values. The nail industry served as a catalyst for shifting Vietnamese stances on gender roles and highly influenced the continuously growing community of Vietnamese-Americans in the United States.

### An Inhibitor for Growth

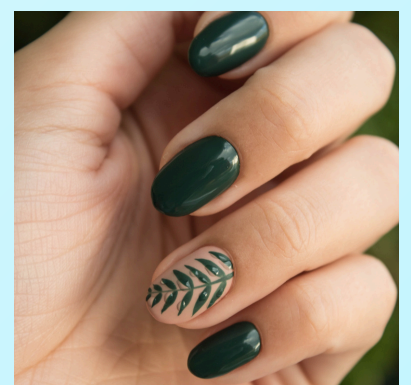
On the other hand, as previously discussed, immigrant communities are associated with subservient and undesirable roles. The Vietnamese community and its connection to the nail industry is not an exception. During my preliminary research on the connection between minority populations and the nail industry, there was extremely limited data and research on areas beyond what has been discussed- Vietnamese history. While there is fledgling research into the hazards of being a nail technician, such as increased risks of thyroid cancer, dermal conditions, respiratory issues, and reproductive harm, this field is not a primary concern for American academia nor legislation. Vietnamese-Americans, for the foreseeable future, are stuck in subservient roles and associated with this industry.

### Conclusion

While the nail industry created opportunities in growth for Vietnamese-Americans and aided in the stride towards gender equality, the continued social perception of this community and profession highly inhibits their pursuit of opportunities beyond this trade. The overwhelming perception of Asian-Americans as a whole already makes it difficult to pursue greater economic and social mobility. While nail beauty initially uplifted the Vietnamese community, the current generations have experienced its detriment in numerous ways. To fully conceptualize its long-lasting effects, Vietnamese-Americans and many other communities need to be prioritized in the United States.

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## KODOKUSHI: THE SEVERE LONELY EPIDEMIC IN JAPAN

Teu-Khanh Phuong

**J**apan is frequently referred to as “the ideal country to reside in” due to its incredible scenery, technological advancement, and strong sense of community. Coming to Japan, tourists are awe-struck by how genuine, polite, and welcoming Japanese citizens are, representing a core principle in Japanese culture: “omotenashi” - selfless hospitality and expecting no returns from guests. While all of this accurately reflects the diversity and uniqueness of Japanese cultures, a hidden reality persists, threatening the existence of the population.

Kodokushi, or lonely death, demonstrates the reality of Japanese society, where the elderly in particular are isolated and pass away unknowingly, only to be discovered after a period of time. The first case of kodokushi that gained widespread attention was in 2000, when skeletal remains of a 69-year-old man were discovered on the floor three years after his death in a small apartment. His monthly expenses were automatically deducted from his bank account; his death went unnoticed by neighbors and authorities. It was only when his savings were empty that local police arrived to investigate, finding his body rotten. More lonely deaths were reported in the same residential area in summer 2017 when households surrounding them noticed an overpowering smell coming from a man’s apartment. Since then, the Tokiwadaira housing area in Matsudo, Japan, has been the first community to address the growing numbers of lonely deaths of its elderly residents.

Although statistics on the exact number of kodokushi cases are rare, according to the NLI research center, a consultant team in Tokyo estimated that about 30000 people across Japan were victims of lonely deaths each year, with 70000 cases in 2024. Most of the elderly were above 65, usually in deteriorating health conditions, and isolated inside their tiny spaces. Being one of the world’s oldest populations, more people in Japan are spending their retirement years alone, with little interaction from the outside world. According to the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, “The number of people over 65 living alone stood at 7.38 million in 2020 and is expected to rise to almost 11 million by 2050.” This devastating occurrence drew public attention to Japan’s pressing social problems, including low birth rate, economic stagnation, and a reduction in family units.

Behind the lonely epidemic lies a silent crisis in Japanese society, originating from a cultural foundation embedded in Japanese beliefs. The first prominent reason is the age aspect, with Japan not only having the world’s oldest population but also being one of the fastest-aging societies. Therefore, the issue of aging in isolation gradually becomes unavoidable owing to inadequate healthcare directed at senior citizens. This was consequently followed by a sudden decline in multigenerational households, which used to dominate Japan’s families in 1980. Multigenerational households refer to an extended family structure with more than two generations living under the same roof. This type of living arrangement is common in some parts of the world, such as Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East. However, this form of family connection in Japan disappears quickly, as stated in ScienceDirect, “According to the population census, multigenerational families declined by half, from 16.1% in 1970 to 13.9% in 1985 and 8.5% in 2000. Married couples co-residing with their parents also continued to fall from 18.1% in 1970 to 16.1% in 1985 and 10.8% in 2000.”



## KODOKUSHI: THE SEVERE LONELY EPIDEMIC IN JAPAN

Teu-Khanh Phuong

Nevertheless, a profound reason lies in the hesitation to express one's devastating situation and financial difficulties to others, especially relatives and loved ones, which leads to isolation during one's final years.

*As a nation that values a sense of community, Japanese people believe in contributing to society.*

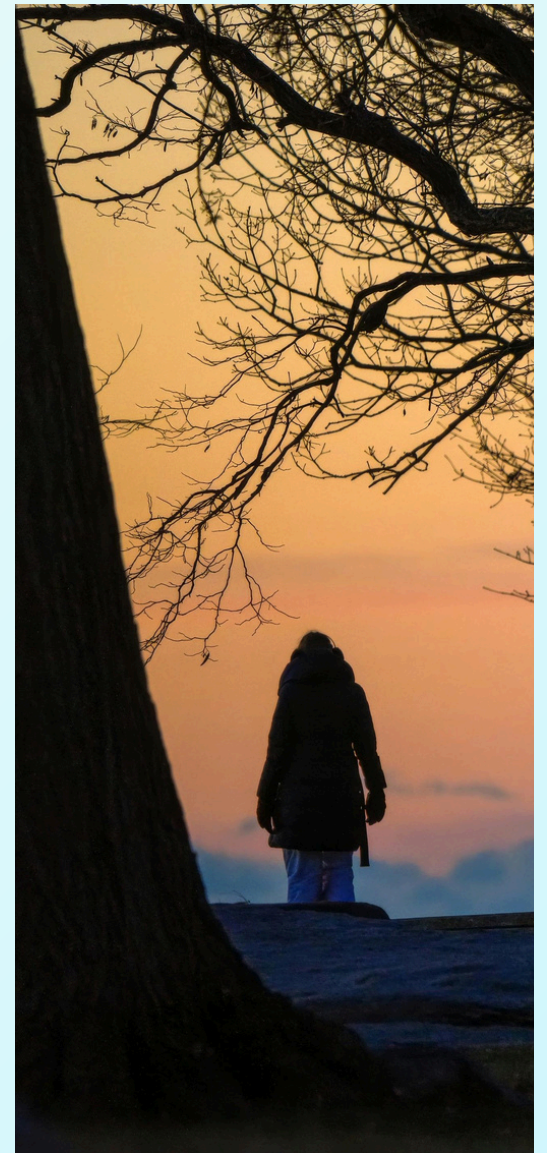
This places enormous pressure on Japanese citizens, as career advancement and achievements are indicators of success, determining their ability to dedicate themselves to society's collective benefits. Consequently, as parents age, they choose to live in solitude in order to facilitate their children's development path. Notably, Japanese culture highly emphasizes individuals' ability to obtain independence and discipline. From as young as elementary school students, children are taught crucial life skills such as taking care of themselves, solving their own problems, and controlling their emotions effectively. As a result, Japanese are typically ashamed to admit their hardship and disclose personal information about their conditions of living. This tendency of miscommunication and disconnection between family members is the driving force behind deteriorating mental health among retirees, and in some extreme cases - kodokushi.

"Japan is a society of depression," said Takuya Shiota, who works at a cleaning agency and as a social advocate, during an interview with ABC in August 2024. This simple statement describes the country's prevalent issue regarding loneliness and isolation, one of the indirect factors leading to solitude deaths. For many, solitude deaths reveal the country's gradual loss of a sense of community; in particular, neighborhoods that contain elderly no longer look out for one another; instead of seeking assistance, many choose isolation.

Despite this growing concern, many aspiring individuals are working tirelessly to reduce kodokushi incidents, bringing connection and values to elders seeking friendship. In Yokohama, in the district of Kotobuki, lived a huge number of elders, most of whom were lonely and in worse health conditions. However, with regular health check-ups coming from doctor Osamu Yamanaka, many begin to receive the necessary medical support and reassurance. His weekly visits not only ensure early-detected disease but also strengthen community values, encouraging conversations and understanding among the elders. His small actions have inspired other campaigns directed at assisting the elderly, such as the Zero Lonely Deaths campaign organized by Yoshiko Sato. The program not only aims at preventing solitary death but also improves old people's mental health and restores community spirit through routine check-ups.

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## INSIDE THE BRAIN REVOLUTION: HOW A NEW ERA OF NEUROSURGERY IS REWRITING THE FUTURE OF HEALING

B. Mohan Krishna Reddy

A quiet revolution is taking place in the operating rooms of the world. Neurosurgeons, long armed only with scalpels, drills, and magnifying lenses to perform brain surgery, are now performing this intricate procedure using robotics, real-time imaging, and digital maps that illuminate brain anatomy. The era of minimally invasive neurosurgery is here, and it is revolutionizing the science and the soul of medicine.

*For most of the history of medicine, brain surgery was associated with high-risk, last-resort functions.*

A single mistake could lead a patient to suffer paralysis, memory loss, or worse. But now, at leading medical centers, from Baltimore to Tokyo, surgeons are performing operations through openings smaller than a coin, in many cases, they are not even performing the operation through the skull. They are threading ultra-thin devices like wires through blood vessels. What would take weeks to recover from now takes days. The results are remarkable.

Johns Hopkins Medicine, a leading facility for innovation in neurosurgery, recently celebrated a quarter-century of its excursion into this new chapter. The institution states that endovascular surgery to manage aneurysms, strokes, and arteriovenous malformations via micro-catheters has supplanted open-skull surgery. In addition, hybrid operating rooms have integrated imaging, robotics, and neuronavigation systems in what are, in effect, digital choreographies, and the tools of extended reality, which permit the surgeon to project holograms of neural pathways into the surgical field, marry human touch with computer vision in action, and evoke memories of pure science fiction.

For patients, the difference is staggering. Before, there were so many complications or systems like being able to extract tissue under the skin had to be figured out in spite of the limitation of a patient and usually the prospect of improved outcomes were fleeting, but today, there are better measures, in some cases, procedures that do some outreach from non-fatal (aura) diagnosis and survival(life affirming). For example, in an extraordinary case in which neurosurgeons engineered a biodegradable wafer to deliver chemotherapy directly into the surrounding tissue post-resection. The wafer slowly dissolves while releasing chemotherapy effectively enough to double survival rates with patients with glioblastoma. This innovation represents a combination of engineering, pharmacology, and plain old guts, the alchemy so to speak of the new neurosurgery.

Nevertheless, despite the admirable advances of science, there are challenges that remain attached to the ground. The enhanced imaging systems, robotic arms, and neuronavigation systems powering these advances remain limited to a few affluent nations; many institutions in developing parts of the world do not even have the equipment or specialists needed to provide the same level of care. The equipment can be worth millions of dollars and it may take years of training to work with it. Nevertheless, the movement is underway. International partnerships, tele-surgical programs, and portable robotic systems are emerging to propel advanced brain care into new parts of the world.



## INSIDE THE BRAIN REVOLUTION: HOW A NEW ERA OF NEUROSURGERY IS REWRITING THE FUTURE OF HEALING

B. Mohan Krishna Reddy

At the center of each of these advances, this movement is not merely one of machines; it is about how humans are reimagining the limits of what they understand about themselves. Neurosurgery has become a lived intersection of physics, biology, and computation; in this area, the delicate dance of neurons meets the precision of engineering. Every surgery today is not simply an act of survival; it is an act of human intelligence and empathy working together.

For young readers and potential scientists, there is an obvious lesson. The future of medicine will be shaped by bold thinkers across boundaries, those who can see the connection between a physics equation and a heartbeat, between a computer algorithm and a human soul. The evolution of neurosurgery, from the crude practice of trephination to holographic brain mapping, demonstrates that science is inevitably dynamic, it is an evolving narrative of courage, creativity, and compassion.

As the lights of operating rooms around the world dim for the next generation of surgeons, one thing is for certain: the brain; an exquisite and vulnerable product of human evolution, will always remind us what a powerful thing it is to have ideas supported by knowledge. The next groundbreaking discovery may not come from a seasoned surgeon, but rather from a student somewhere reading about this great revolution; an actual human being inspired to move humanity one step deeper into the mind itself.

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## THE POWER OF PRIVATE EQUITY: DRIVING GROWTH OR DRAINING COMPANIES?

Ayush Ranjan

**P**rivate Equity (PE) has become a massive defining force in capitalism. It's a multi trillion dollar industry that buys, restructures, and sells different companies with an identified goal and promise of discovering a hidden power within. Advocates argue that Private Equity brings discipline, capital, and management directed focus to underperforming firms; many critics say that the sector's reliance on leveraging and short holding periods often decreases/strips assets, jobs, and long term investment from various companies and communities. Furthermore, the truth presents itself in between, being nuanced and very sector dependent.

At its best, PE can be a driving force for productivity. An in depth review of empirical studies discovered that buyouts will generally enhance a firm's total factor productivity and often lead to positive spillover effects across various industries. For example, in Europe and the US, firms that were acquired by PE saw stronger management practices and mostly higher output per worker that was relative to their non acquired peers. Yet gains in productivity often coincide with significant internal restructuring like job reallocations, plant closures, and wage downward pressure for certain workers. A study found that workers at firms that underwent a leveraged buyout (LBO) were close to 1% less likely to be employed after one year and 2% less after three years, incurring wage losses of roughly 10% after one year and 18% after 3 years relative to workers in matched firms.

The healthcare sector conveys some of the risks when PE enters areas tied to social welfare, rather than just pure manufacturing or services. One US cohort study discovered that nursing homes that were acquired by PE firms experienced relative increases in emergency department visits and hospital visits for conditions that were preventable, with higher Medicare costs per resident. Additionally, in-hospital care shows similar trends, where hospitals acquired by PE had a 25.4% increase in hospital acquired adverse conditions like falls and bloodstream infections when compared to matched non PE hospitals. These findings elude that in sectors where staffing, long term investment, and patient outcomes matter, the short run, cost shortening incentives of PE conflict with quality of service.

Financial performance is one of the biggest positive arguments for PE. Some large industry reviews and market reports demonstrate that private markets have often outperformed public equities on a gross-of-fees basis, bringing in huge pools of capital from pension funds and sovereign wealth. However, that performance is contested with net-of-fees returns and the difficulty of comparing private and public markers leaving space for debate. Furthermore, the socialization of risk, when distressed PE backed firms need to be bailed out or leave areas with hollowed assets, raises both political and ethical questions beyond the normal return calculations.

So, what's the policy takeaway? First, transparency-private markets remain cloudy relative to public firms, limiting regulators and stakeholders ability to analyze systemic risk or even social impacts. Second, sector specific gaurdrails-certain industries that provide essential services (health care, housing, etc) may really need stronger quality and labor protections. Third, incentives-connecting PE compensation and exit structures with longer term performance, rather than only short term leverage pushed gains could preserve value without encouraging thoughtless cost cutting.



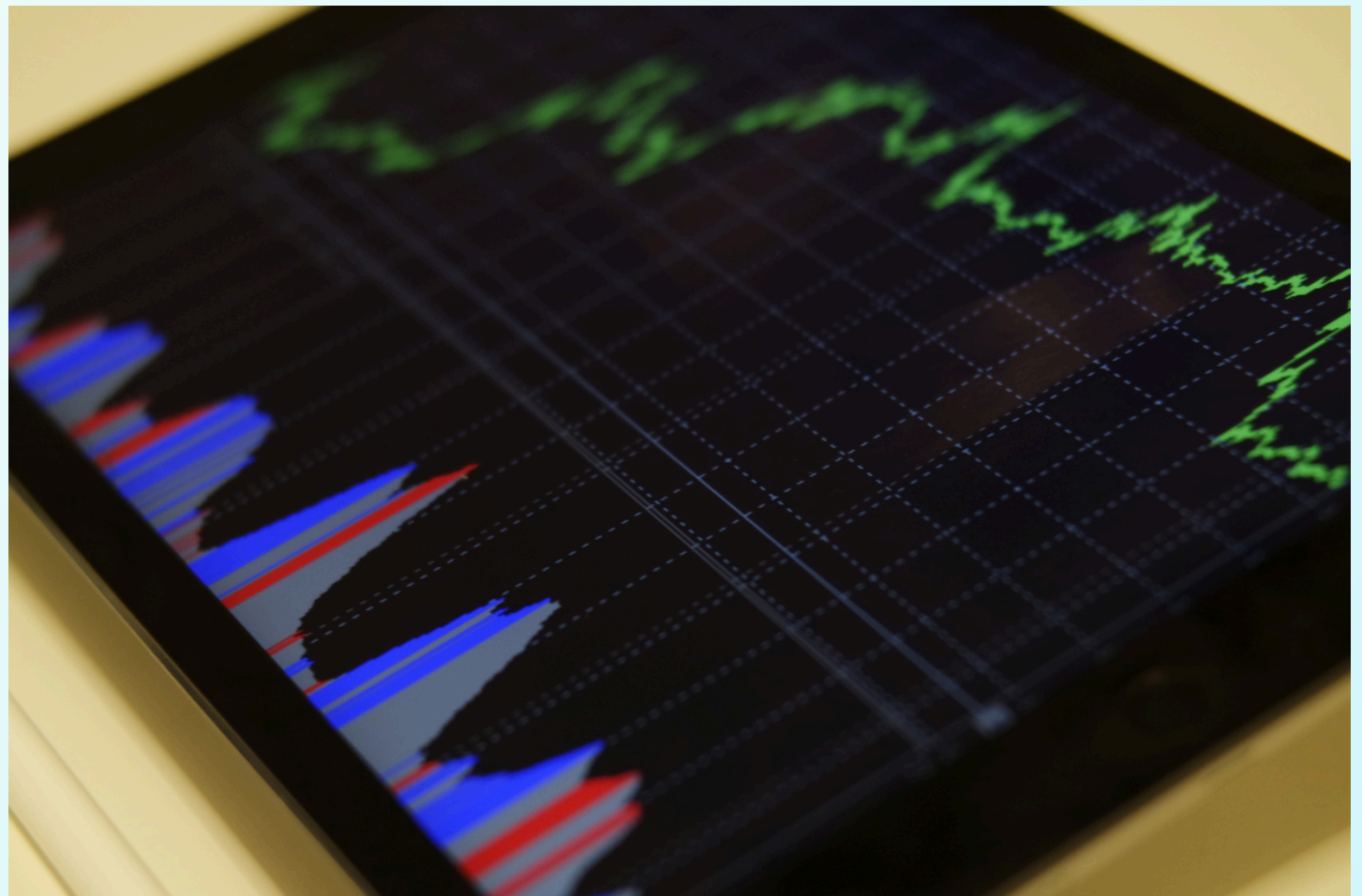
## THE POWER OF PRIVATE EQUITY: DRIVING GROWTH OR DRAINING COMPANIES?

Ayush Ranjan

Private Equity is not intrinsically villainous, nor is it a sheer blessing. It is a financial technology, a set of incentives, structures, and skills—that can either fix a struggling business or hollow it out, depending on governance, leverage, and the nature of the asset. Policymakers, investors, and the public should in turn demand for better data, better accountability, and customized regulation that maintains the sector's potential while limiting harm. Only then can we judge PE not by its promises to deliver huge returns, but by whether those returns come at an acceptable human or economic cost.

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## REVIEW OF GENERATION Z VOICES ACROSS BORDERS: INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL'S GLOBAL PLATFORM

Professor Bishnu PATHAK, PhD – Nobel Peace Prize Nominee (2014 -2019)

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**T**he Inspire Youth Journal, Founded and Developed by Inspire Youth Debate and Vietnam Public Forum Academy, provides a platform for young (popularly called Generation Z) voices in global youth journalism. The Journal's goal is to connect emerging writers worldwide to address pressing global issues and promote peace and harmony through dialogue and storytelling. With a multicultural team of over 200 contributors from 40 countries, the Journal is more than just a publication, a common living platform. It serves as a dynamic forum where high school and university students, as well as recent graduates, can share ideas, document truths, seek justice, and engage in debates. By sharing diverse perspectives and transforming local experiences into inspiring narratives, the Journal educates and connects youths across borders. It also helps develop skills in ethical journalism, critical thinking, and creative storytelling. The IYJ empowers young voices, emphasizes the importance of perspectives, and highlights the role of stories in shaping the future. It bridges generations, challenges misinformation, and promotes solidarity around justice, equity, and sustainability.

Recently, I received the final draft of the 25th Edition of the Year 2025 (reference no. 1195/0ln3/2265), which showcases the project's global reach. Contributions from forty countries were included, totaling 250 articles. Only twelve articles, approximately five percent of the submissions, were chosen for publication. This selection process highlights the extensive international participation and the editorial team's dedication to upholding high standards of quality and relevance.

In her article "The Bravery of Afghan Women," Moska Ahmadzai highlights the courage and leadership of Afghan women throughout history. She shares stories of remarkable women like Malalai of Maiwand, who inspired Afghan fighters in a battle against the British, Gohar Shad Begum, a queen who promoted culture and education, and Zarghona Anaa, whose wisdom influenced imperial decisions. Ahmadzai emphasizes that Afghan women have a long and rich history of warriors, resilience, bravery, and catalysts for change. Their stories inspire and educate, showcasing a relentless pursuit of rights and identity for the future of Afghanistan.

The article "Rewinding the Clock: Discovering the World's First Bioluminescent Organism" by Bao Ngoc Truong delves into the origins of bioluminescence, the natural ability of organisms to produce light. Traditionally thought to have originated in marine ostracods around 267 million years ago, recent research on octocorals suggests that bioluminescence may have emerged over 540 million years ago, coinciding with the Cambrian explosion. Scientists propose that light signaling could be one of the earliest forms of communication, serving purposes such as deterring predators, attracting prey, and selecting mates. While there is ongoing debate about whether early bioluminescence was a defensive mechanism or a biochemical byproduct, its enduring presence underscores its significance in ecological survival. Despite limited fossil evidence, the study highlights bioluminescence as a fundamental evolutionary trait that continues to influence marine ecosystems today.

In 2022, Ed Green wrote an article about Greta Thunberg's climate lawsuit being rejected by the Supreme Court in Sweden. Thunberg and the Aurora Group had filed a class action lawsuit against the Swedish state, claiming that inadequate climate action violated rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. The Supreme Court of Sweden dismissed the case, stating that courts cannot force the parliament or government to implement specific climate measures. However, the ruling does not rule out the possibility of individual rights violations being addressed through legal means. This decision highlights the challenges faced in advancing climate litigation, contrasting with varying outcomes in Europe, such as Switzerland's recent ruling against its government in 2024. Despite setbacks, Thunberg's case demonstrates the ongoing efforts of climate activism and the potential for future legal challenges.

In her article "How Does Species Extinction Impact Global Ecosystems?", Donya Fournier delves into the pressing issue of species extinction and its far-reaching consequences on global ecosystems. The escalating threat is fueled by rising temperatures and human activities like deforestation, poaching, and habitat destruction, leading to extinction rates that are 1,000-10,000 times higher than natural levels. The rapid loss of biodiversity is jeopardizing ecological balance and resilience. Birds serve as a poignant example of this crisis, as their crucial roles in pollination, seed dispersal, fertilization, and pest

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control are at risk, potentially leading to ecosystem collapse. Fournier emphasizes the importance of conservation efforts such as the U.S. Endangered Species Act and reintroduction programs, underscoring the need for ongoing advocacy to protect biodiversity and ensure ecological sustainability for future generations.

In her article "Saudi Arabia 2034: A Test for Migrant Labor Rights," Tanisha Kinikar explores the upcoming FIFA World Cup and its impact on migrant workers in the Gulf region. She sheds light on the oppressive kafala system that ties workers to their employers, leading to exploitation, wage theft, debt bondage, and unsafe working conditions. By drawing comparisons to the situation in Qatar during the 2022 World Cup, Kinikar shares stories of abuse and mentions some reforms such as minimum wages and hydration breaks, but points out their limited effectiveness. She emphasizes that the 2034 World Cup in Saudi Arabia will be a crucial moment for testing migrant labor rights and holding the global community accountable with genuine ownership.

In her article "Debunking Schizophrenia: A Disorder Riddled with Myth," Chau Do Minh challenges common misconceptions about schizophrenia and stresses the importance of understanding it beyond stereotypes. She explains how myths that portray individuals with schizophrenia as violent or unable to function properly distort reality and contribute to discrimination. Minh points out that schizophrenia is a complex mental health condition characterized by symptoms like hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking, but with the right support, many people can lead fulfilling lives. By dispelling false beliefs, she emphasizes the need for compassion, awareness, and accurate information, presenting schizophrenia not as a hopeless condition but as one that requires empathy and informed care.

In his article "How AI Tools Are Reshaping Financial Decision-Making," Prasanna Chandankhede delves into the impact of artificial intelligence on the financial industry. He discusses how AI algorithms and predictive models are transforming investment strategies, risk assessment, and consumer decision-making. Chandankhede emphasizes AI's ability to analyze large datasets, identify patterns, and offer real-time insights that improve accuracy and efficiency in financial planning. While recognizing the benefits of AI, he also addresses challenges such as ethical considerations, data privacy issues, and the potential risks of excessive reliance on automation. Chandankhede's narrative highlights the dual nature of AI as both a valuable tool for making informed financial decisions and a technology that requires careful oversight and governance.

Elza Elif Mehdiyev's article "March on Washington: Causes, Facts and Consequences" researches into the significant event in American civil rights history. She explores the social and political dimensions that led to the 1963 march, focusing on the collective push for racial equality, jobs, and justice. Mehdiyev highlights the impactful speeches, particularly Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream," and the march's role in shaping public opinion and influencing key legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Her analysis emphasizes the enduring impact of the march as a catalyst for change and a symbol of unity and coexistence.

In her article "The United States' Nail Industry: A Catalyst and Inhibitor in the Transformation and Growth of Vietnamese-American Culture," Kaity Dong examines how the nail salon business has served as both a springboard and a hurdle for Vietnamese immigrants. She discusses how the industry has offered financial stability, community identity, social cohesion, and cultural representation, while also subjecting workers to exploitation, health hazards, and limited upward career advancement. Dong underscores the dual nature of nail salons as sites of empowerment and restriction, influencing Vietnamese-American culture in intricate ways. Her examination underscores the themes of resilience, adaptation, and the ongoing quest for respect within immigrant labor structures.

In her article "Kodokushi: The Severe Lonely Epidemic in Japan," Teu-Khanh Phuong explores the rise of solitary deaths among Japan's elderly. She discusses how cultural changes, urban isolation, and weakening family bonds have led to the phenomenon of kodokushi, where individuals die alone and undiscovered for extended periods. Phuong emphasizes the psychological, social, and economic implications of this epidemic, stressing its effects on communities and public health.

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She calls for enhanced social support, community involvement, and policy changes to combat loneliness and uphold dignity in Japan's aging population.

In his article "Inside the Brain Revolution: How a New Era of Neurosurgery Is Rewriting the Future of Healing," B. Mohan Krishna Reddy discusses the transformative advances in neurosurgery and their impact on medicine. He explores how technologies like robotics and AI are revolutionizing the treatment of neurological disorders, improving precision and patient outcomes. Reddy emphasizes the merging of science and compassion in this new era of healing, highlighting neurosurgery's role in advancing medical progress and offering hope for humanity.

In his article "The Power of Private Equity: Driving Growth or Draining Companies?", Ayush Ranjan explores the complex impact of private equity on businesses today. He discusses how private equity firms can provide capital, streamline operations, and foster innovation, presenting themselves as agents of growth. However, Ranjan also examines the negative aspects, such as aggressive cost-cutting, high debt levels, and a focus on short-term profits that can undermine companies and harm employees. His analysis highlights the conflicting roles of private equity as both a driver of progress and a potential threat to long-term stability, prompting readers to critically evaluate its overall impact.

### Concluding Appraisal

The production of investigative articles by youth, popularly known as Generation Z members, is a commendable intellectual endeavor that deserves recognition. These young writers exhibit exceptional critical thinking and disciplined expression early in their academic and professional journeys. Their work underscores the enduring power of the written word in addressing complex issues with poise and analytical rigor. Not only do their contributions stand as individual achievements, but they also serve as inspiring models for future generations of Gen Z to cultivate reading habits, critical thinking, and civic engagement. Anh (Elsa) La's dynamic leadership in guiding this journal publication is particularly commendable for her dedication to amplifying youth voices in global conversations. Oraina Ali's editorial stewardship ensures the clarity and accessibility of the content, further enhancing the impact of the publication. The support from the Vietnam Public Forum Academy underscores the importance of institutional backing in empowering youth-led initiatives. Together, these efforts showcase the synergy of youthful creativity, editorial leadership, and institutional collaboration, fostering a culture of inquiry and advocacy crucial for the intellectual growth of upcoming generations.

Ahmadzai, a human rights advocate from Afghanistan, highlights the courage of women leaders and the hardships faced by women in Afghanistan, blending her heritage for gender empowerment in her work. Bao Ngoc Truong, a Vietnamese writer and poet, focuses on science, tracing the evolutionary roots of bioluminescence, demonstrating how youth voices can illuminate complex research. Ed Green, an aspiring lawyer with a keen interest in politics and journalism from the United Kingdom, engages with law and activism, narrating Greta Thunberg's climate lawsuit in Sweden and placing it within the broader European struggles for environmental justice. Donya Fournier, an author and accomplished athlete from the USA, delves into ecology, examining species extinction and its ripple effects on global ecosystems. Tanisha Kinikar, a passionate changemaker from the USA, investigates migrant labor rights in the Gulf, connecting sports spectacle with human rights concerns.

Minh, an 8th-grade student from Vietnam, reflects on connecting small moments to larger ideas. Prasanna from Ghana aspires to join the United Nations. Chandankhede, a student at Delhi Private School International Ghana, is interested in AI. Elza Elif Mehdiyev, a 12th-grade student at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School in Canada (originally from Turkey), is a TEDx speaker and changemaker passionate about international law, world politics, and environmentalism. Dong, a fourth-year student at the University of California, USA, studies Political Science-International Affairs and conducts research in various industries. Phuong, a 10th-grade student from Vietnam, is passionate about exploring social studies and participating in global debates as an aspiring writer. Reddy, a 9th-grade student from India, is a multidisciplinary researcher, writer, and global youth leader with a focus on neurosurgical innovation and healthcare equity. Ranjan, a junior at Oakton High School

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in Virginia, is interested in finance, particularly derivatives trading and fixed income.

By striking a balance between contributions from authors in developed countries (USA, England, Canada) and those from developing countries (Afghanistan, Vietnam, Ghana, India), the Inspire Youth Journal achieves a unique equilibrium. It amplifies voices that are often marginalized while also presenting perspectives from nations with greater institutional power. This dynamic interaction transforms youth journalism into a collective expression of global solidarity.

The journal's diversity goes beyond geographical and cultural boundaries; it is a rich tapestry of intersecting themes that shed light on how Generation Z voices from various parts of the world grapple with common global challenges. By examining the authors and their topics side by side, we can see how science and environmental urgency (Truong and Fournier), politics, law, and justice (Green and Kinikar), cultural and historical resilience (Ahmadzai, Reddy, and Chandankhede), and global social equity (Mehdiyev, Dong, Ranjan, Minh, and Phuong) come together in a cohesive dialogue.

In the realm of science and the environment, Truong delves into bioluminescence, drawing connections between ancient evolutionary processes and contemporary scientific inquiry, while Fournier explores species extinction and its link to ecosystem collapse. These works transform scientific exploration into a lens through which we can view environmental responsibility and the interconnectedness of human and non-human life.

Within the jurisdiction of politics, law, and justice, Green examines Greta Thunberg's climate litigation within European legal frameworks, highlighting the role of Generation Z activism, while Kinikar critiques migrant labor rights in Saudi Arabia, exposing the exploitation behind global events like the FIFA World Cup 2034. These articles showcase the intersection of politics, law, and human rights, illustrating how Generation Z journalism challenges established power structures. In discussions of cultural and historical resilience, Ahmadzai reclaims the narratives of Afghan women as leaders and changemakers, while Reddy and Chandankhede emphasize perspectives from developing nations, focusing on resilience, social reform, and cultural heritage. Together, these contributions underscore how culture and history empower marginalized communities and amplify voices that are often overlooked.

In the spheres of global social equity, Mehdiyev, Dong, and Ranjan bridge the gap between privilege in developed countries and struggles in the global community, while Minh and Phuong represent Southeast Asian voices that reflect both Western debates and regional realities. These authors bring a balance of perspectives from developed and developing countries, promoting dialogue across borders.

The Inspire Youth Journal serves as a platform for a cross-border dialogue, where culture, history, law, politics, justice, environment, and social equity intersect in a shared conversation among Generation Z from diverse backgrounds. Authors from Afghanistan, Vietnam, England, the USA, Ghana, Canada, and India offer unique cultural and historical perspectives that resonate with common concerns. Afghan history intersects with American environmental activism, Vietnamese science engages with European legal discussions, and African and South Asian viewpoints align with North American calls for equity. This borderless dialogue fosters a sense of solidarity, emphasizing that Generation Z journalism transcends geographical boundaries and is united by a collective pursuit of justice, sustainability, and human dignity. The diverse origins of the authors create a chorus of perspectives where science meets justice, history meets activism, and local struggles meet global debates. This interplay elevates the journal beyond a mere publication; it becomes a platform for solidarity, embodying its mission as "A Global Platform for Generation Z Journalism."

## AUTHOR PROFILES

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Moska Ahmadzai**  
Newspaper Writer

*A human rights advocate who studies at the American University of Afghanistan AUAF*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Ngoc (Jess) Truong Bao**  
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### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Ed Green**  
Newspaper Writer

*A first-year Law student at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Donya Fournier**  
Newspaper Writer

*A student at Arizona College Prep High School (Class of '27), United States*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Tanisha Kinikar**  
Newspaper Writer

*Incoming freshman at the Wharton School; senior at South Brunswick High School in New Jersey, United States*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Chau Do Minh**  
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## AUTHOR PROFILES

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Prasanna Chandankhede**  
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*A junior at Delhi Private School International Ghana in Ghana*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Elza Elif Mehdiyev**  
Newspaper Writer

*Incoming NYU Abu Dhabi student; 12th-grade at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School (DSBN), Ontario, Canada*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



**Kaity Dong**  
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*A fourth year University of California, Riverside student studying Political Science-International Affairs with a minor in Labor Studies*

### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



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### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



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### INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



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