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Problems and Solutions of “Do What You Love”

The Little NYC Bus Tour That Could

Introduction

Warren Buffet, an iconic American entrepreneur and investor, once commented on career choice in front of hundreds of Columbia University students: “Look for the jobs that you would take if you didn’t need a job. . . Don’t sleepwalk through your life” (Investors Archive). This statement establishes an analogy that we hear every day when it comes to choosing a career: “You Should Do What You Love.” Miya Tokumitsu, the author of the book “Do What You Love: And Other Lies About Success And Happiness,” identifies the origin of this mantra in a famous commencement address performed by Steve Jobs at Stanford University in 2005 when he said, “You’ve got to find what you love. . . the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.” Tokumitsu points out that by stating that, Jobs forgets to acknowledge a lot of workers working under him so that he can achieve what he loves. In our project, we are going to provide educational opportunities for the participants to learn about the problems of “Do What You Love” (“DWYL”) and how people try to solve the problem.

Curatorial Statement

The idea of “Do What You Love” is distracting elitism that allows people with agency to question whether their labour gratifies them emotionally, or if it is just for profit. Finding value in your work does make life easier; however, that doesn’t take away from the fact that it is labour. If you don’t find pleasure in your labour because of your circumstances, this exhibit wants to show you ways to express your individuality and emotional labour that is easily accessible.

While there is value in the work of people who do what they love, it is reflective of their socio-economic class, and the invisible behind the scenes labour that goes into making their lives easier is ignored. This exhibit also wants to illustrate these invisible labourers who allow people to do what they love, specifically in the New York City area.

To illustrate those different ideas about labour, this project will show the media’s representations of various labor and invite actual labourers to give visitors more authentic insights.

The Project

This project takes the form of a one-day “Underground” New York City bus tour. The tour will be built up of visits to five different locations around each borough, with the exception of Staten Island, where our guest speakers deliver insightful speech about how they tackle the problems comes with “DWYL” statement in their own creative field. Each of our guests will illustrate how they overcame economic obstacles to work in the field that provides them with the most emotional gratification. While our guests are being shuttled from location to location, they will be shown short films about each speaker/the subject they are discussing, and will be given plenty of time to discuss the films. Hopefully, with the pairing of the films, guest speakers, and

different locations, our guests will leave us with a new sense of what it means to “Do What You Love”!

Budget and Target

We’re trying to attract the bourgeois youth, those who have recently graduated university with their parents' money behind them, and those aspiring to be social media influencers. We want people who can pay a ridiculous price for educational opportunity, under the belief that they will have some kind of labor oriented spiritual awakening about what they want to do with their lives. On a surface level, the purpose of this project is to educate people about the problems with “DWYL” and empower people to find emotional gratification from their work, however what we are really trying to do is find people who have economic agency to contemplate the love of their labor, and exploit them. Our ideal candidate is someone who is in their mid twenties who tries to find fulfillment in becoming an influencer on social media, and is under the assumption that this tour will provide greater mental clarity in where they see their professional lives going. To attract these people we are going to pay social media influencers of a high caliber to advertise that they will be attending our event. By doing so we will prey on the self-esteem of low level social media users who are chasing more ‘clout’. Their desire to either figure out what their doing with their lives, or gain followers by attending a social media charged event, will force them to buy our overpriced tickets. Although we are exploiting them, we do hope they find some kind of emotional/spiritual fulfillment in our tour.

Each ticket will cost \$160, and this will more than cover our fixed expenses (the bus/paying the guest speakers/marketing), all we have to do is sell a minimum of 30 tickets. The bus will cost \$1500 dollars (driver included) and each guest speaker will be paid \$500 for an hour and a half of their time in addition to promoting the event on social media, and \$1000 will

be used to pay other social media influencers to promote the event. In total, the budget of this project is \$5000. If everything goes to plan and we sell each ticket, we'll make our money back, with an additional \$4000. What we hope to accomplish through an initial investment of \$5000 is that we can show our investors that we can work on a small scale and still easily make our money back and then some, with the hope that they will be encouraged to invest in future projects. In the future, our work would be built on the same ground work, just on a much larger scale with people who have greater "social influence" in the online world, with the goal of making far more than \$4000 in profit.

Guest Speakers, Locations, Film Selections, and Bus Route

1. Abigail Disney at Fork Film Productions (25 East 21st Street, Manhattan)

Abigail E. Disney is an award winning documentary filmmaker and a granddaughter of Roy Disney, the co-founder of Disney company. She is currently a Board Chair at The New York Women's Foundation and advocates for women's rights, anti-violence, and working toward equality through documentary filmmaking.

2. Nelson Molina at Treasures Of The Trash Museum (343 E 99th St, Manhattan)

Nelson Molina has spent thirty four years working for the New York department of sanitation, during this time he helped clean up after 911 and after hurricane Sandy. In his off time, he curates a museum in the upper east side that is entirely devoted to putting items of New York City "trash" on display. The film being screened on the way to his museum will be *Treasures in the Trash* by Nicolas Heller.

3. Marco Saavedra at La Morada (308 Willis Ave, The Bronx)

As an undocumented person, Marco Saavedra is an owner of a Mexican Restaurant “La Morada” in the Bronx and has fought in court over his assurance for asylum in the U.S. He openly advocates for the rights of the undocumented immigrants in the NYC. The film selected for him is *Infiltrating Ice* by Aura Bogado & Francis Reynolds.

4. Wilfredo “Bio” Feliciano at 5 Pointz (45-46 Davis St, Queens)

Wilfredo “Bio” Feliciano is a founding member of the world famous art collective known as Tats Cru “The Mural Kings” originally known as TAT Cru founded by Brim, Mack and Bio in the eighties. He has been featured in many publications, movies, music videos and documentaries throughout his career. Also, he has painted in numerous countries over the past 30 years. Bio has collaborated with many of the top graffiti artists in the world from past to present day. He has also lectured at M.I.T. and various universities in the United States. The film is *Stations of the Elevated* by Manfred Kirchheimer, which looks back graffiti communities in the 80s.

5. Stephanie Boyce at Muddguts (27 Graham Ave, Brooklyn)

Stephanie Boyce is an artist from Brooklyn who designs tattoos, and is renowned for the high volume of drawings she’s managed to create in an extremely short period of time. She has allowed her art to be her primary purpose to overcome poverty, addiction, and mental illness. The film is called *If You Know Me Is To Love Me* by Nicolas Heller’s (aka NewYorkNico).

Problems with “DWYL”

The following essays illustrate the problems with “DWYL” that our projects are based on. By illustrating the issue at hand, our investors will hopefully have a greater understanding of how this mentality is easily exploitable for profit.

1. People Who Can’t Do What They Love

On Instagram, there is this trending hashtag #doWhatYouLove, where people share the working lifestyle and hobbies that they like. Meanwhile off the internet, people complain more often than not about their work life. Indeed, doing what you love seems far too idealistic for an average person. We have too many bills to pay, too many responsibilities to fulfill, and too little time to both earn money and have fun. Under the circumstances, some people choose to earn money, some others choose to have fun, and a few people have the privilege to choose both. There is also the question of should you, and could you have fun in your work. Should you choose the kind of work that you would never want to leave, or should you choose the kind of work that leaves enough time for you to have fun outside of it?

They say that finding jobs is like dating: some jobs are just harder to love. For people who want to live a life with the job that they love, a lot of them stumble on the first step: finding the job. Louis Efron pointed out in his article “Why You Can’t Find A Job You Love” published in Forbes Magazine, that references a classic saying of the ‘boomer’ generation, that if you work hard, you are on the path to success. While hard work unarguably a necessity of being successful, the mindset of “working hard” can be misleading, because in some way, it encourages people to settle for paths that are difficult for them, not because they are doing more, but because the tasks might be harder to them personally, therefore the tasks are more effortful to them. As a result, people settle for jobs that are not necessarily suitable for them, but they are reaffirmed that it is the way that things are supposed to be, due to the fact that they believe

they're on the path to their dream job. What people don't realize that there is a difference between loving the job and loving the success that the job would bring. The job is the process and success is the result. There is always a risk to the result, but anyone can enjoy the process if they like it.

Of course, not everyone chooses a job they do not love because they want to be successful. Some people are forced into a job because of financial circumstances. For example, factory workers in rural areas are forced to work long hours to sustain their living, and they frequently risk their health and have greater difficulty finding passion in their labor. These people are classified as the blue-collared "laborers". Of course, labor work also exists in the white-collar class, and just because it is less physical work does not take away from the fact that it is still labor. There are an increasing amount of reasons why people would choose an office job that they do not enjoy doing, as opposed to working in a factory. It's easy to assume that there is less stress in a corporate office environment, however in office spaces workers face intense competition and are constantly being evaluated, leaving them feeling agitated and burnt out, the same way a factory worker might.

Oftentimes, the word "labor" is used when describing jobs where people do not take pleasure in working. Here we treat the word synonymously with not being able to do what you love, even though the word has other uses in other contexts. There is also another type of labor frequently discussed in office work in particular, the so-called "emotional labor" which was popularized on the internet around 2017. Contrary to the intuitive understanding of emotional labor as being emotionally involved and caring for work projects, in Sophie Wilkinson's article "Why Was Everyone Talking About Emotional Labour in 2018", she discusses three interpretations of emotional labor that have been popularized around the society in the past few

years. The first of which is by American sociologist Arlie Hochschild, who first introduced the phrase “emotional labor” in 1983 in her book *The Managed Heart*. Hochschild defines emotional labor as “to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.” According to this definition, emotional labor is about maintaining the self-image that a person is doing work that he or she enjoys or at least feel content with, when in fact the work deeply disturbs the person. The silencing of the voice of the workers adds on to the unpleasantness of the work. The second definition which inspired a wave more recently is by U.S. journalist Gemma Hartley, who describes the term in her article “Women Aren’t Nags - We’re Just Fed Up” that it refers to women doing housework and “life admin” in the household as a form of unpaid, and sometimes unpleasant form of work which leaves them feeling tired, frustrated and over-worked. This is the most common form of emotional labor that is acknowledged nowadays, and it is certainly very prevalent. People are forced into this kind of emotional labor because of gender roles and social norms from the time that men earn money and women do housework. Thinking back to that stage of domestic family structure, neither men or women are working to do things that they love. The family objectives back in the days were mostly only to make a living. As people’s pursuit of doing what they love and financial need progresses, men and women make shifts in their daytime jobs, but the basic need for domestic work are neglected in the career discussions, adding on additional burden for women. The unpleasantness of the labor, in this case, comes from work overload and lack of compensation. The third kind of labor that Wilkinson discusses revolves around the marginalized people, who are susceptible to microaggressions in the workplace, but they have to pretend that everything is okay. This kind of emotion labor stems from the unfit of the person to the role. This is where stereotyping plays a role, where identity is mistaken for the mind. When finding suitable jobs,

the congregation of the like-minded is inevitable because ideally, everyone would love the jobs that they do. Discrimination comes from the fact that sometimes people expect the dissimilarity in identities means the dissimilarity in the mind. While that is true in some cases, insisting and reinforcing that one identity is more “right” than another is unnecessary and puts unnecessary mental strains on people who do not deserve them.

Going back to the topic of people not being able to do what they love, the three types of mental labor which Wilkinson discusses all center around people not being compensated enough in their work for the additional mental strain pressed up against them. Their hard work is not met with the rewards that they supposedly deserve in the traditional expectation for working hard. Now the question is: can these unenjoyable types of labor be justified with a higher monetary reward? On the one hand, it is difficult to translate health and emotions back to money (although it works the other way around sometimes), but on the other hand, if the people engage in these types of labor are able to get paid more, they might struggle less to support themselves (which is a mental and physical strain in itself), and if work structure permits, they might be able to spend less time on labor. Yet, what would a laborer do in his or her free time if they get a chance when they carry their physical and mental strains outside of work? The physical and mental strains from work change the workers’ bodies and minds to suit the jobs. When people who do what they love seem to “be themselves”, laborers become workers of the discriminated jobs, machines designed for the tasks. Indeed, nowadays many of the labors are being replaced by machines such as vacuuming robots and equipments in the factory assembly lines, but labor continues to exist wherever employers don’t find the replacement financially beneficial or feasible, and there is always a need of labor in the office workspace. Going into the white-collar class, work

becomes more crucial but the workers do not necessarily find them more meaningful, and workers cannot love what they do if they do not first and foremost find meaning in their work.

2. Can't Receive Enough Money

The second problem of “Do What You Love” is the fact that some people don't receive enough rewards for the work they do. Even though “enough” is a relative and subjective term, we often find people who pursue what they love, but their payment doesn't match their workload. In this part, we explore two common types of labor that fall victim to this “Do What You Love” mantra: the unpaid internship and the university professors.

In the first episode of HBO's “Girls,” Hannah, who has been working for her dream company for over a year as an unpaid-intern, gets cut out the financial support from her parents and asks her boss if he can hire her as an employee. Her boss, Alister, replies to her and says, “I'm so sorry to lose you.” Hannah, with no financial resources to live, decides to quit the internship and starts searching for a job (“Pilot”). This story illustrates the exploitation of unpaid internships that is common among students who want to gain work experience in a specific field for their careers in return for their free labor. This type of internship is practiced especially in the government, fashion, and TV and film industry. Although it is hard to find an absolute origin of the internship practice, it is said that the concept of the modern internship stems from the intern system in the medical world in which the new medical school graduates become interns for the training period. However, in the 1960s, the United States Congress and the White House adopted the system and started recruiting interns for their assistant jobs, spreading the system to the entire nation (Haire and Oloffson).

Many would point out the fact that there are two types of internships: paid and unpaid. An obvious advantage of hiring an unpaid intern is free labor. However, determined by the U.S.

Department of Labor, all the employees working for “for-profit” companies must receive financial compensation, and the unpaid internship is only possible if the internship isn’t an employment but rather an educational opportunity for students who seek a career path (Fact Sheet #71). This Fact Sheet/Guideline states that the intern must be the “primary beneficiary,” not the company that hires them, and even recommends for those companies to affiliate with some institutions to offer the school credits. Also, it states that the work that the *interns* do should “complements, rather than displaces, the paid employee.” Nonetheless, since those students are often enthusiastic about finding their career, they often willingly acknowledge their working for free and convince themselves that the internship is a necessary experience for getting a job even when it is not.

The effect of an unpaid internship is polarized. Some would say that the experiences they receive during the internship are very helpful, and some states the opposite. Yet, one of the biggest issues with the unpaid internship is the fact that not all college students can afford their time to work for free. If students have part-time jobs to support the expensive college expenses, they wouldn’t have the liberty to sacrifice their money-making time for potential career training. This fact leads to the discussion of whether the unpaid internship is a fair system, and the answer seems to be negative. According to a study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, in 2015, 40% of all interns were unpaid. Then, 56% of students with some form of internship or co-op experiences reported that they received a full-time job offer upon their graduation whereas only 37% of students with no internship or co-op experiences could get an offer (Crain). This proves that having an internship experience will dramatically increase one’s chance of finding a full-time job, yet at the same time, being not able to experience the internship due to financial difficulties will significantly restrict one’s chance of getting a full-time job.

Therefore, this system of unpaid internship creates an unfair consequence and needs to be changed. Luckily, an article on *Wall Street Journal* reports that today's unpaid internship rate has been declining, and many companies started paying their interns so that the position becomes more attractive and competitive, gathering better candidate pools (Thomas). If this trend continues, especially with the growing well-paid internship programs of tech companies, the problem of the unpaid internship seems to solve soon.

The second type of people who do what they love but do not receive enough compensation are people in academia. In *Friends'* episode 14 in season 10, Ross Geller, a Paleontology professor at New York University, excitedly tells other characters that he gets tenure for his job. He explains, "I can never be fired! No, seriously. I have job security for life!" ("The One with Princess Consuela"). Although this seems nothing to do with the fact that college professors are underpaid, Ross's comment illustrates a harsh reality in the job field that one might see as well-paid and fulfilling.

In the article published in *The Atlantic*, college professors report how enjoyable and lovable their jobs as a professor: "Most of us choose to mentor students, update lectures, attend conferences, conduct new studies, etc because we love the work," said NYU's psychology professor Jay Van Bavel (McKenna). It is great. Those people do what they love. Also, the average salary for professors at the doctoral institution is around \$160,000 ("The Annual Report"), which is triple the income of the average person in the U.S ("Social Media Graphic"). However, Miya Tokumitsu argues that many college professors are adjunct faculties and being underpaid for the amount of work they do. In fact, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reports that more than 40% of all the teachers at universities are adjunct faculties, meaning that they are part-time and always at the risk of getting fired. Even though

their workload is similar to that of full-time faculties in many cases, they usually do not receive any benefits, insurances, nor retirement plans (“Background Facts”), and their salary is almost half of what the full-time professors would receive (“The Annual Report”). As seen in Ross’s case, it takes them for years before they get a tenure-track with job security and not everyone can even be a full-time faculty. Since the graduate school program takes years to complete, they are in their late twenties or thirties when they start working as a part-time faculty. What happens if they have to leave the job for some reason, such as maternity leave, injury, or illness? Moreover, what if one is carrying a lot of student debts? It will take them for years before they can settle their lives.

College professors are often said to be high-income jobs, yet behind such high-payment, there is always a period when they pay tens of thousands of dollars in graduate school and worked so hard for little pay. If this system continues, one has to endure the tough times before they become full-time, and without a tenure track, they would not receive job security for a very long time. We think that professors just teach students and do research. Yet, reality seems more challenging than we think.

The unpaid interns and those adjunct faculties are the subjects of this “Do What You Love” mantra. They are often very enthusiastic and love their jobs, and you might even think it is necessary for them to endure such a harsh period. However, financially challenged students or college professors cannot afford that. We should not forget that this mantra not only overlooks people doing what they do not like but also paralyzes us about stakes behind “doing what we love.”

Now that you understand how easy it is to exploit those who think they’re pursuing a career in what they love because of their burning passion for an idea of ‘success’, we hope that

our future investors can see the financial opportunity in providing a false sense of validation to interns, PA's, graduate students, graphic designers, and baristas with high hopes. We truly hope that they're able to get something out of our motivational bus tour, however in reality it is unlikely they will succeed in this late capitalist reality tv show dystopia that is the United States, and we think that someone should make a profit off of it. Invest in our bus tour, *The Little NYC Bus Tour That Could !*

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