

# THE FACTORY TIMES

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## UUP Opens 2021 Scholarship Application Process

SUNY students are invited to apply for annual scholarships of \$3,000 offered by United University Professions, the union representing academic and professional faculty of the State University of New York.

The application deadline for the UUP College Scholarship Fund scholarships is March 1, 2021. Applications are on UUP's website, at [www.uupinfo.org/awards](http://www.uupinfo.org/awards).

"Through UUP's Scholarship Fund, our union provides support to our students who are working toward their degrees," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "The students we honor have excelled academically and have made significant contributions to their communities."

The Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to a maximum of four SUNY undergraduates who excel academically and are dedicated to the goals and ideals of the labor movement. Applicants must be full-time students enrolled at SUNY state-operated schools and have a minimum grade point average of 3.75.

Full-time graduate and professional SUNY students can apply for UUP's William Scheuerman Post Baccalaureate Scholarship. The scholarship is named in honor of former UUP President William Scheuerman.

To apply, students must have at least nine credits and hold a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.95. Law and health science students must complete at least one full semester prior to applying for the scholarship. Applicants must show dedication to the labor movement's goals and ideals.

Applicants for both scholarships must demonstrate personal and academic achievement and display a strong record of community service. UUP awards the scholarships to students on a one-time basis, but there is no limit on the number of times a student may apply.

The scholarships are funded by contributions from UUP members and their families.

UUP has awarded more than 100 scholarships since the union's scholarship program began in 1988. Three of the undergraduate scholarships are given in honor of former UUP members and their families who generously supported the Scholarship Fund. Those members are the late Eugene Link of SUNY Plattsburgh; the late Robert Carter of SUNY Oswego and his wife, Katherine; and the late Gertrude Butera of SUNY Alfred.

**For more information, contact UUP's Administrative Office at (800) 342-4206.**

*UUP represents 42,000 academic and professional faculty and retirees, with members at 29 New York state-operated campuses, including SUNY's public teaching hospitals and health sciences centers in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Long Island and Syracuse. It is an affiliate of NYSUT, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.*

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# The Great Recession: How it Happened and Why it Matters

Written and Designed by: Paul Gluck

We've all heard of the 2008 financial crisis, the so-called "Great Recession" that rocked the US. It was the largest financial collapse since the Great Depression, wiping out almost \$9 Trillion in US wealth in just over 2 years. Retirement accounts vaporized overnight, millions of people evicted, and millions of houses foreclosed by the very same banks that sold them the American Dream. Unemployment spiked to its highest since the 1980s, with the rate peaking at over 10% in 2010. We all know what it caused, but do we know how it happened? I'd say confidently that most people reading this right now don't know what a CDO or a subprime mortgage is. That in itself is a problem.

Let's start with mortgages. A mortgage is a loan that a person takes out to purchase a house. Usually, people don't have enough money in cash to buy a house, so they take out a loan from the bank. The bank offers them the loan on the condition that they will pay it back in full by a certain date, plus interest. Usual mortgages have maturity dates (due date) of 30 years. A lot of things go into whether you qualify to receive a loan from a bank as they don't want to loan someone money who has a track record of not paying the money back. This is where credit scores come in. A credit score, sometimes also called a FICO score, is basically a score based on your track record/ability of paying back loans. It can range from paying back your credit card, to paying off your car loan etc. Using the same reasoning, when loaning to a person with a lower credit score, you have a higher chance of not getting the money back, causing the risk. Banks devised a way to lessen the possible risk, making people with lower credit scores have to pay higher interests on their mortgages and agree to less favorable terms to receive their loan to compensate for the higher risk they present to the banks. Any credit score under what the bank considers "prime" or a good credit score, is referred to as "subprime" or a bad score. Therefore, subprime mortgages are mortgages that are riskier.

Moving on to a bit more complex idea, bonds. You can think of bonds as a reverse loan. Instead of you borrowing money, you're loaning to someone else. The most common form of bonds are government bonds, because unless you're counting on the government collapsing, you'll get your money back plus interest. A mortgage bond is basically you becoming the bank. You take on the debt that the bank had for giving a pool of people money to buy their houses, but in return, you will earn the interest that the people pay if they keep paying. The collateral in a mortgage bond are the houses; even if the mortgages go belly up and the people can no longer pay, you can evict them and foreclose on the property, and then sell the property to try and recoup your losses. Most people don't own mortgage bonds as the majority of ownership is investment groups or hedge funds. 401ks, other retirement savings and savings accounts, are invested in a wide variety of hedge funds and investment groups to try and make you more money in the long run. When most people say they have X amount saved in their 401k, it's not in the form of cash; rather it's the worth of the assets/stakes that they have, whether that be stock in a company, or stake in a hedge fund. So technically they don't have X amount. They have assets that CAN be worth X amount.

Mortgage bonds are divided up into groups, commonly referred to as tranches. These tranches go as followed: AAA, AA, A, BBB, BB, B. The rating is to signify how likely a loanee is to pay back the loan, plus interest. As you go further down in rating, all the way down to B, it becomes more risky. Obviously, everybody wants to buy the AAA mortgages as they are the safe bet, However, with more risk comes more reward. Banks will sell you the B rated mortgages at a much cheaper rate than they will the AAA mortgages. This means you can earn a lot more money if the B mortgage bond succeeds, but if it doesn't, and that's a fairly high chance, you stand to lose the money, and often with poorer quality collateral (the houses) than for a AAA rated bond. However, the banks are not allowed to rate their own mortgage bonds. There are 3 major rating agencies who rate these mortgage bonds: Moody's Investors Service, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch Ratings. These are the so-called "watchmen" of the mortgage bonds. All three being private companies, they make sure that the bonds are rated accurately so investors know what they're buying.

The problem arises when the banks need to increase their revenue each year. How do you earn more from mortgages? Simple, you give out more mortgages. The problem is there's not a massive increase in people who can afford houses each year, so what does the bank do? They give out riskier and riskier loans each year. All of a sudden, millions of people are suddenly qualified for a loan they weren't qualified for before. This causes there to be a so-called "housing boom" in the mid-2000s where millions of people become qualified for a mortgage. This is encouraged through government actions such as the Community Reinvestment Act, which forced banks to decrease their restrictions on loans, especially when it came to minorities. During the Clinton, and Bush administration, the Dept of Housing and Urban Development pushed banks to increase their numbers of "affordable housing loanees", who were basically just people who couldn't afford a house. Soon, everyone was buying a house; everything that had a pulse was qualified for a loan. This led to more BBB, BB, and B rated mortgage bonds becoming available. People didn't want to buy these more riskier bonds, so the banks took the leftover bonds they couldn't sell and put them into a CDO, a Collateralized Debt Obligation.

A CDO is basically all the crap that a bank couldn't sell, bundled all together and renamed. It's no longer a bundle of B rated subprime mortgage bonds, it's now a "CDO". In 2006 and 2007 alone, banks sold more than \$400 billion worth of CDOs. When the banks were forced to make more people qualified for loans, they started offering an adjustable rate mortgage, where the first 5 years of the mortgage interest payments would be much lower than the next 25 years. This led to millions of people who could only afford the lower rate buying houses. People would take out mortgages on homes, pay the low-rate adjustable mortgage and then sell the house before the 5 years were up and the higher rates kicked in. Many started buying houses just to sell them and were making a profit on the backs of these adjustable rate mortgages. The can of adjustable rate mortgages was kicked down the road, leading to a massive inflation of house prices, and the housing bubble along with it.

This was all pretty much contained within the housing market, until something happened. The rating agencies, who are in charge of rating the mortgage bonds accurately, are all private companies. Companies survive by earning money, and the only customers they had were the big banks. Now, when a big bank doesn't like the way a rating agency is rating their mortgage bonds or CDOs, what's to stop them from going to their competitors? Nothing.



This caused the rating agencies to falsely rate mortgages that were as low as Bs, all the way up to a AAA bond. So, people who bought a CDO that is said to contain up to 95% AAA rated mortgages were actually buying 95% B rated mortgages that were likely to fail. At this point, the mortgage bond and CDO industry was worth trillions of dollars, and yet, it was all built on a lie. Banks knew that at some point it was all going to blow up, they just needed to time it correctly, so when it all hits the fan, they're not left holding the bag.

In the spring and summer of 2007, a lot of the adjustable rates started to kick in. Suddenly, people were left not being able to pay their mortgage and lost their homes. This started a slow spiral where millions of people were left homeless after their higher rates kicked in. As these people started to default on the loans, the bonds and CDOs started to go bust. People who thought they had a safe, AAA rated CDO, were left with nothing, as they were really subprime mortgages the whole time. To recoup their losses, the owners of the failed bonds tried to sell the houses, but nobody wanted to buy, the demand rapidly decreasing as less people were able to afford houses at the increasingly inflated prices. This caused the bond owners to be left with houses they couldn't sell. It was at this moment that the housing bubble popped, and because of the sheer scale of mortgage bonds and CDOs, it popped the American economy.

Suddenly, millions of people saw their retirement savings evaporate as the investment groups they were invested in went belly up under the debt from the failed bonds. People saw their children's college fund dry up as trillions of dollars' worth of bonds and CDOs were vaporized. The stock market began to crash, and companies who were seemingly unconnected to the housing market saw their stock value crash as hundreds of millions of people were trying to liquidate (sell) all their assets as fast as possible.

The banks were left with billions of dollars' worth of debt as the mortgage bonds that they hadn't managed to sell yet went belly up. Ironically enough, many banks began to declare bankruptcy. Even though a lot of the mortgages defaulted, the majority of Americans still had their mortgages intact and tied to banks, along with business and car loans, so if the banks failed, there would be an innumerable amount of losses, so instead, the government bailed the banks out. The government purchased \$700 billion of these failed mortgage bonds from these banks. The taxpayers who got scammed out of their homes and their savings by banks, then paid to bailout the scammers.

This all matters to us today since all these things are still happening. Mortgage bonds and CDOs are still being sold. People who are unqualified for loans still get loans. This is all happening again and unless we do something about it as a country, which we won't, a repeat is bound to happen at some point. So, I guess take this as more personal advice. Don't trust so easily, don't let people pull the wool over your eyes, do your own research and be proactive in carving out a safe life for you and your family.

- Paul Gluck

# CENSORSHIP: NOT JUST FOR DESPOTS ANYMORE

*Christopher Bovee de Soto*



**In the earlier days of the Internet, just after the “dot-com” Bubble had burst, the world became aware that the Internet, or at least the experience of it, wasn’t the same for every country as it was for the United States. At first, the Internet was presented as a series of interconnected websites and pages. Western countries, having more freedoms under capitalism, enjoyed relatively unfettered access to all the Internet had to offer for a monthly fee. Historically oppressive regimes, however, found it within their best interests to block access to opposition websites and take down web pages that presented any sort of criticism. As services beyond webpages began to spring up; such as chat, picture, and video sharing applications, those same regimes began to crack down on these new avenues of sewing dissent against their despotic ideations.**





Back in 2014, USA Today published a listicle (list article) of the Top 10 Internet-censored countries, most of whom are to be expected due to their notable lack of democracy; North Korea, Burma, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, Syria, Tunisia, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan. Notably missing from this list is Russia and some of its former dependencies who have managed to take a capitalist invention, integrate it, then retrofit their networks. The retrofitting, an endeavor that Russia tested publicly in December 2019, allows their central government to have a kill switch that would isolate the Russian portions of the network. This also brought into question its censorship capabilities as they exercised control over all domestic incoming and outgoing Internet communications.

Belarus is the newest oppressive regime to take control of its domestic network as they interface with the global Internet. Civil unrest in the former Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic has reached a new boiling point after recent disputed elections, with the beating and jailing of politicians who had dared to oppose the election of President Alexander Lukashenko. Citizens by the hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets of Minsk to protest who the world sees as a brutal military dictator. In the height of the protests, the regime pulled all foreign reporters' visas and deported every single one of them. Unknown to the rest of the world, Lukashenko's government then implemented technology from a company called Sandvine out of Plano, Texas, to block access to social media platforms, messaging services, and any other sites that would allow citizens to report the realities of their brutal crackdown. The block put in place uses a technology called deep packet inspection, something so effective and so pervasive, that it caught the attention of networking specialists from around the world. It was discovered shortly thereafter that Sandvine had skirted US law, at best, or violated US law, at worst, by allowing their hardware and software to be sold and used in such a way.

The last example brings into focus the fact that oppressive regimes aren't necessarily undemocratic, like the country of India. A recent MIT Technology Review Podcast details how the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 lets India shutdown the Internet and other telecommunications to control what it sees as political dissent or civil unrest. For six months last year, as an example, the state of Kashmir was without Internet, television, or cellular phone services. Even after the block was lifted, only calling associated with 2G service was supplied. In Kashmir and other areas, the Indian central government has exercised this power to a great detriment of the local economies.

Consider all the information taken-in and all the economic activity conducted through television, mobile phones, and the Internet in general; then imagine all of it just stops for days, weeks, or months on end. Not because the cable company needs to repair a line, but because they're being punished by the equivalent of their very own Federal Government. Thanks in large part to how our Federal Constitution is set up, and in part to how the Internet grew semi-organically from disparate interconnected networks, implementing nationwide censorship would be both expensive and impractical. Despotism regimes took advantage by either nationalizing existing infrastructure or building their country's own first telecommunications infrastructure from the ground up, to build in their censorship controls. I'm happy to say we have a solution, Net Neutrality and laws supporting it are the best ways to prevent this from happening in all countries, democratic or otherwise.





# SCARY PLACES AROUND THE WORLD YOU SHOULD VISIT

LINDA PAREDES

Halloween may be a long ways away, but until then, let's explore some of the scariest places in the world that will give you the spooks.

## Island of the Dolls, Mexico

If you are afraid of dolls, then don't bother going to this place. Based south of Mexico City, in the Xochimilco channels, the surrounding areas are well populated but the island itself is largely deserted with hundreds of dolls hanging in the trees. Many of these dolls are unclothed. Some who have visited the place say that the dolls' eyes are moving, believed to be possessed by the spirit of a drowned girl who met her fate near the island. Legend says that the former island caretaker began hanging the dolls after he found the drowned girl, haunted by her spirit.



## La Recoleta Cemetery, Bueno Aires, Argentina

If you are looking for cemeteries that are beautiful to pass by, this is not one of them. Said to contain 6,400 statues, coffins, mausoleums, and gravestones; visitors happen to hear key jangling which is believed to be the late gravedigger David Alleno, who reportedly committed suicide after three decades on the job. At the time, his status of himself that he commissioned was complete.



## Mansfield Reformatory, Ohio

Featured in The Shawshank Redemption and several other films, the Ohio State Reformatory is home to the world's tallest freestanding steel cell block at six stories high. Many of the cells were meant to hold one prisoner at a time, but overcrowded conditions led to violence and disease, forcing the prison to eventually close. Visitors have reported seeing shadowy figures, hearing unexplained footsteps, and being grabbed or scratched. It's rumored to be inmates who've died during their sentences that are roaming the halls. If you enjoy a deeper thrill, you can do a public ghost hunt or "Escape From Blood Prison", a haunted house meets escape room.



## Nagoro, Japan

In the Iya Valley, it is said to be an eerie village with only 30 residents and over 400 large dolls. Local resident Tsukimi Ayano creates them in memory of the deceased. Bearing a striking resemblance to deceased human counterparts, wearing clothes and all, this adds to the creepy factor as they silently stare at you from all angles as you move about town. They are usually perched fishing on the riverbanks, sitting at desks in the local school, or waiting for the bus rather than being in one spot. If I were to sit in the class with one of these dolls, and it starts moving, consider me out.





## Peyton Randolph House, Virginia

Built in 1715 and restored in the 1900s, the Peyton Randolph House is one of the oldest homes in Williamsburg and said to be of the most haunted. It is said that a slave named Eve cursed the home as revenge for cruel treatment. Many who have lived in the property died, whether it be from mysterious illnesses, falling off trees, falling from windows, or shooting. Visitors reported hearing strange voices, seeing objects move on their own, and being touched or pushed.



## Sedlec Ossuary, Kutná Hora, Czech Republic

If you thought churches weren't spooky, guess again. "Church of Bones" or Sedlec Ossuary, is set to have around 50,000 human skeletons lying around the monastery, which has been deemed holy land and was once a popular burial site. The bones are artfully woven into chandeliers, candelabras, candleholders, and more, strung around above the church.



# KPOP GROUPS THAT CAME BACK LAST OCTOBER

Last October was an interesting time for K-pop fans. It has been packed with Korean groups and artists returning with brand new albums. Let us look at the six top K-pop group artists that had releases during this time.

By: Linda Paredes

Designed By: Yelizaveta Kiuchun

## BLACKPINK 1st Full Album: 'The Album'



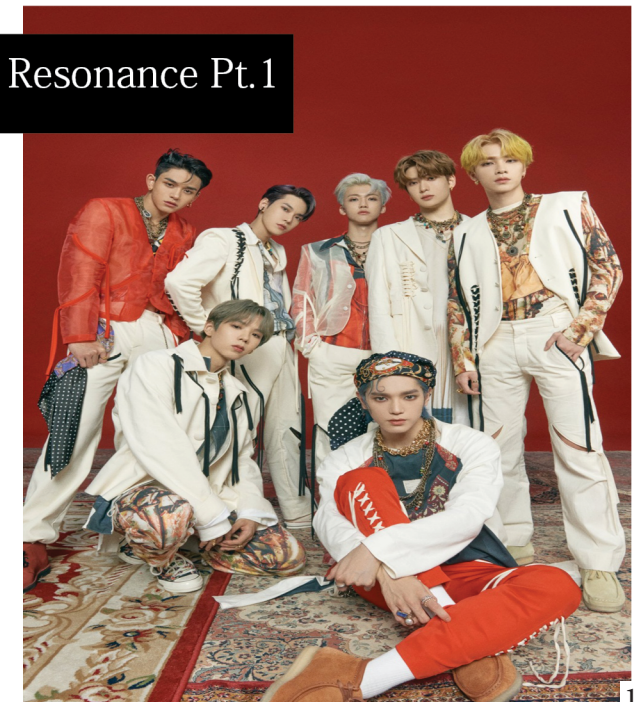
BlackPink released their first ever full album on October 3rd with the title track 'Lovesick Girls'. Their fans, Blinks, have been waiting patiently for their full album to release after their big success around the world with the hit song 'DDU-DU DDU-DU'. This album features seven songs, including their two pre-release songs 'How You Like That' and 'Ice Cream' that featured Selena Gomez, as well as 'Pretty Savage' featuring Cardi-B.

OCTOBER 3

## NCT 2020 Project Full Album: NCT 2020: Resonance Pt.1

It's been nearly two years since NCT from different subgroups: NCT 127, WAYV, NCT DREAM, NCT U have come together to release an album. NCT fans were excited when SM Entertainment announced that NCT units would reunite as a 21-member group. Their album was released on October 12 with a total of 12 songs, with the title track 'Make A Wish'. There will also be a Pt.2 releasing later this year.

OCTOBER 12



15



LOONA 3rd Mini Album: '12:00'



LOONA fans have been dying for the return of the hit group, their latest comeback being all the way back in February. Now, they returned - as of October 19 - with the title track "Why Not?". It follows [++] (released in August 2018), repackaged [xx] (released in February 2019), and [#] (released in February 2020); consisting of 8 songs, which a few of the members produced and wrote.

OCTOBER 19

TOMORROW X TOGETHER 3rd Mini Album: 'Minisode1: Blue Hour'

A new era has started as TOMORROW X TOGETHER decided to end the Dream Chapter Series from the beginning of their debut. 'Minisode1: Blue Hour' is a prequel to the next series following their universe of boys chasing their dreams. Scheduled to be released on October 26 with the title track "Blue Hour", it consists of five songs that express the struggle of teenagers dealing with COVID-19 pandemic.

OCTOBER 26



SEVENTEEN Special Album: ':[Semicolon]'

SEVENTEEN fans were surprised that they were coming back with a special after their recent Japanese mini album '24H' was released last August alongside their special fan meeting concert. Released on October 19, with the title track "Home;Run", the album consists of six songs, with four of them being performed by subunits of all thirteen members.



OCTOBER 19

TWICE 2ND Full Album: 'Eyes Wide Open'

TWICE celebrates their 5th Anniversary since their debut this month. Fans could not get any more excited when it was announced that JYP Entertainment would release an album to commemorate said occasion. Scheduled to release on October 26, consisting of 13 songs, including the title track 'I Can't Stop Me', produced by Dua Lipa; This album is described to be a mix of European electronic sound and American 80's synth sound.



OCTOBER 26



# ARIANA GRANDE: A GROWING POP LEGEND

Ariana Grande was one of the top artists in the second half of the 2010s, capturing the era's spirit and style. She emerged in 2013 with the hit single "The Way", which showed her powerhouse vocals, compared to the likes of Mariah Carey. Continuing to grow through collaborations such as "Problem" featuring Iggy Azalea, and "Bang Bang" featuring Jessie J, Nicki Minaj, and the Weekend; her popularity steadily rose after releasing three albums: "Dangerous Women", "Sweetener", and "Thank U Next", whose title track became the number one pop hit along with "7 Rings".

Ariana started singing when she was three years old, auditioning as an actor/singer. She played the character "Annie", and was involved in other musicals such as "The Wizard of Oz" and "Beauty and the Beast" at the children's theater in Fort Lauderdale. She sang for orchestras such as South Florida's Philharmonic, Florida Sunshine Pops, and Symphonic Orchestras, and debuted on national television with the United States anthem for the Florida Panthers. At the age of 13, she auditioned for the musical "13" as the character Charlotte, managing to win the National Youth Theater Association Awards for best supporting actress, recognizing her excellent performance in the musical.

Later, Ariana Grande auditioned for the Nickelodeon series, "Victorious" playing the girl of Cat Valentine. After finishing recording the first season of Victorious, she wanted to focus more on music and started working on her first album. She worked with vocal coach Eric Vetro and showed recordings of her playing songs by Adele, Whitney Houston, and Mariah Carey on YouTube. This caught the interest of Monte Lipman, director general of Republic Records, getting her to sign a deal with his record label.

In December of 2010, she released her debut single "Put Your Hearts Up" which she disliked because of the bubblegum pop sound, not wanting to record music of that genre. Meanwhile, she would continue her acting career as a voice actor, playing Princess Diaspro in "Winx Club", and reprising her role as Cat Valentine in "Sam & Cat".

On November 17, 2012, Ariana Grande released her first album titled "Yours Truly", which became first on the Billboard 200 Chart due to the 138 thousand copies sold in its first week. She became the fifteenth female artist in history of the music industry to achieve this positioning.

On March 26, 2013, she released the first single of her debut album titled "The Way" featuring Mac Miller, which charted at No. 9 on the Billboard Hot 100, as well as earned several certified platinum records in the US. She published her second album titled "My Everything" on August 25, 2014, which charted again No.1 on Billboard 200. The single "Problem" became the most successful single from the album, winning many certifications and platinum albums.

Ariana appeared at the Grammy Awards 2015 after receiving two nominations, paying tribute to Stevie Wonders. Grande released her third album "Dangerous Woman" in May 2016, with the album's title track hitting No. 8 on the Billboard Hot 100



In April 2018, Grande released her fourth album "Sweetener" with the single "No Tears Left to Cry", which debuted at number three on the Hot 100. When it was released in August 2018, the album debuted number one on US and UK Billboard 200. As if she couldn't break any more records, in February 2019, Ariana Grande released the full length album "Thank U, Next", with the title track of the same name, shooting No.1 on music charts all around the world and making it No.1 on the Billboard 200 as well. She received five Grammy nominations: Album of the Year, Best Pop Vocal Album for "Thank U Next", Record of the Year and Best Pop Solo Performance for "7 Rings," and Best Pop Duo/Group Performance for "Boyfriend."

Despite the new decade, Grande's popularity has done anything but dwindle. This year, she has done collaborations with artists such as Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber, which charted No.1 on the Hot 100, continuing her spans of No.1 debut hits. She also donated to the First Responders Children's Foundation in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic with sales of the

song "Stuck With U" and advocated for social justice reform in the wake of George Floyd's death. Just last October, she released her sixth studio album "Positions" with the lead single giving Grande her fifth number 1 Hot 100 debut. With so many awards, records, and hits, Ariana Grande has truly become - and will continue to be - a pop legend of the 21st century.

BY: LINDA PAREDES

DESIGNED BY: YELIZAVETA KIUCHUN



# SpaceX: Trials & Errors

*Written by: Christopher Bovee de Soto*

*Designed by: Paul Gluck*

Last year's entry in the SpaceX company's "Starship" series of prototypes dramatically failed another pressure test at their research and development facility in Boca Chica, Texas, February 28th, 2020. SpaceX is just one of the many brain-children of our modern-day polymath Elon Musk, "founded in 2002 to revolutionize space technology, with the ultimate goal of enabling people to live on other planets." Though other models of SpaceX vehicles have successfully exited and reentered Earth's atmosphere, their Starship series is being designed around human commercial spaceflight.

This was the most recent teachable moment to happen on the launch pad since the last explosion on November 20th, 2019. Both tests were designed to pressurize the space vehicle to its limits in preparation for launch and flight tests. Last year's test, however, was supposed to be the final test that would move the current design of Starship into its next phase. On Twitter over that weekend, SpaceX guru Elon Musk posted a video of the explosion along with some comic relief on the matter: "It's fine, we'll just buff it out," and "Where's Flextape when you need it!?" In November, he'd hoped to achieve orbit using the then prototype within half a year, with human passengers by this year. Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

The pressure tests are carried out on the Starship spacecraft and the Super Heavy rocket, which combine into a fully reusable transportation system, by filling the chamber of the rocket with tons of supercooled liquid. Viewers during the most tests were able to see the rocket venting vapor before it jumped off the launchpad and collapsed in on itself on both occasions. SpaceX has been focused exclusively on flight design for the new stainless-steel rocket, according to their cheerleader-in-chief, Mr. Musk.

The end-result of these trials and errors is supposed to serve as the first commercial starship, hence the name, Starship. The number of prototypes that came before these tests can be held as a testament to how many will surely come after. There's a reason for Elon to smile, even in failure, because measurements and observations were made, and specifications will be improved upon. There's no shortage of will, ideas, or money when it comes to Elon Musk's endeavors.

The next test is never too far off, so I'll keep watching out for their failures while hoping for success. SpaceX of course has big plans to land on the moon and even Mars after perfecting commercial space travel at who knows what expense. If sovereign nations were keen on what's about to happen in the next few decades, or mere years if you ask Elon, they'd start regulating the future end-product that is space travel. Now's the time to install such forward looking provisions into law so that companies and the privileged few that will enjoy their services can get used to the ideas behind such extreme luxury.

Commercial space flight is happening, and there's more than just SpaceX going after our attention and apparently our trust-funds if you think we can afford what it will cost. Jeff Bezos has a hand in the space travel cookie jar with his Blue Origin project and their latest iteration of New Shepard designs that they have in development in Huntsville, Alabama. SpaceX is still looking to outpace competitors by opening another facility near Orlando in Cocoa, Florida, in the near future.







# "STOP THE COUNT!"

*Jacques Anthony Bettig*

As this year's election for the next President of the United States had progressed through its natural course, the Coronavirus pandemic had introduced a slew of changes to which both the candidates and the American people had to acclimate. Although the obstacles introduced in hosting rallies and facilitating fundraisers may come to mind, the most significant difference was seen in how votes were cast. Due to safety concerns surrounding the congregation of large crowds in finite enclosures, officials nationwide had implored citizens to consider using absentee ballots. There were times when it appeared that Joe Biden and Donald Trump both acceded to a higher mail-in volume; that is, until the latter candidate paradoxically began derailing the process as rife with fraudulent potential. Despite these occasional protestations, the postal-heavy cycle had progressed as planned.

By the time Election Day had arrived in America, warnings of malfeasance had somewhat dissipated. Most of these alerts were initially sounded by Republicans, and being that their candidate had taken a commanding lead during the first night, there was little cause for complaint. Although Trump's edge over Biden was celebrated by many conservatives across the country, it was done so at the expense of optimistically overlooking a looming caveat. It was expected that because right-wing figures (including the president) portrayed mail-in ballots as a threat, those intent on voting Republican would be more inclined to vote in person. This meant that the absentee forms that were cast would likely skew in Biden's favor, moving Trump-leaning states in his favor as they were counted. However, due to the unprecedented volume of mail-in ballots, it would take some days before political pundits could determine whether their prophecies would transpire in key swing states.

Millions of Americans had finally found themselves delivered from their presidential purgatory upon the announcement five days later which declared Joe Biden victorious. Indeed, the trends anticipated in toss-up states like Pennsylvania, Georgia and Michigan did materialize, gradually turning them blue on the infamous Electoral College maps. As this happened, many Republicans had resumed their talk of foul play, presenting what they considered irrefutable evidence of a concerted effort among liberals to flood swing state polling centers with phony absentee ballots. This sentiment was accented by a terse plea the president had broadcasted via Twitter — "STOP THE COUNT!"

I will make no attempt to evaluate the verity of President Trump's electoral fraud allegations, although I am inclined to concur with state courts who have deemed the evidence presented to be tenuous at best. Rather, I would be more interested in knowing if Trump's ostensible fears legitimately spring from his doubts of the democratic process. When the president's closest advisors confide that the gambit is best abandoned, one cannot help but feel that pride is the prime impetus. This position is hardly untenable when his decades of unremitting obstinance and vainglory are a matter of public record.

I am welcome to evidence being adjudicated, ballots being recounted, and letting the chips fall where they may. Access to the judicial system is a right afforded by commoner and Commander in Chief alike in this country. However, I do think it is foolish for us as people to delude ourselves into believing that the ongoing castigation of our democratic process is about anything other than shifting blame and saving face. When one's ego has been padded for so long by the likes of eponymous skyscrapers, NBC hosting gigs, and a propensity for "winning", an alibi for losing may be a necessary unlikelihood to buy into.





# IT Certifications: Yes, Even For Grad Students

BY: CHRISTOPHER BOVEE DE SOTO  
DESIGNED BY: YELIZAVETA KIUCHUN

The great big world out there is full of professionals who thought the last thing they needed to do before launching their studied career was sit down and take some more exams. Certain professions may take for granted the idea of certifying their knowledge; such as lawyers, accountants, doctors, nurses, and therapists of all kinds. Be they boards or bars, it's well known professionals are regulated and authenticated for a number of reasons. We want to know who's giving us important advice; legal, medical, or otherwise. It's this otherwise that leads me to undergraduate and even graduate students in the field of Cybersecurity. Good grades may impress some employers, but what really speaks of knowledge and experience are industry standard certifications. As the bar exam is to lawyers, so is the Certified Information Systems Security Professional Exam for cybersecurity professionals.

Sure the CISSP is the premier cybersecurity certification at the moment, but there are more out there. The International Information System Security Certification Consortium, or (ISC)<sup>2</sup>, is just one certifying ethical body; yet they offer no fewer than six information security certifications, with varying degrees of prestige attached thereto. The exam I'm aiming for when I graduate is their SSCP, or Systems Security Certified Practitioner. With my master's degree in hand, I can pass that exam and enter into (ISC)<sup>2</sup> membership. By becoming a member, I'm voluntarily submitting myself to both scrutiny in the application process and in practice, as violations of their code of ethics can lead to sanctions. The (ISC)<sup>2</sup>, like a medical ethics board, can expel members that don't follow the rules.

The same is true for cybersecurity certifications from the SANS Institute's six different Global Information Assurance Certifications, or GIAC. CompTIA, the makers of the industry standard A+ exam for computer technicians, also makes a Security+ exam for entry level cybersecurity professionals. Microsoft, Open Linux Foundation, and many more key technology players offer exams and course materials on specialized topics in cybersecurity as well. One constant in this profession is the need to stay educated on new products, processes, and technologies, and certifications are no different. Many, if not all of the certifications I've mentioned so far, require continuing education to stay certified. Microsoft is one whose certifications don't expire, but they do actively retire them, such as my first Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator for Windows Server 2003 credential. I kept upgrading as much as possible, and now they're even retiring the most recent MCSA for Windows 10.

The key to all of this is knowing where you want to go or what you want to do with your degree once you're done. An undergraduate degree may be fine to get you in the door, but to progress up the career ladder, a few certifications will never hurt. As for me, I already work in a fantastic career, I want to prove my worth after graduation with the SSCP exam from (ISC)<sup>2</sup>. Beyond that, I'm still looking to upgrade that last MCSA to the latest Microsoft 365 Certified: Modern Desktop Associate credential, then maybe the Enterprise Administrator Expert if they haven't come up with a whole new set of certificates by 2022. Don't be shy after graduation, take a look at certifications in your own profession and see what kind of value others are getting out of theirs.

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