Don’t Let Gas Prices Get You Down?

Easy Tips To Save $$$ At The Pump.

By Tamara Wise
STAFF WRITER

Summer classes can be drudgery! Trying to cram a whole semester into 5 weeks is tiring. Even if you take only one class, you still have to go to campus four days a week. On top of all that gas prices are excruciatingly high and only seem to be rising. Not to worry though there are some steps you can take to ease the worry of gas prices so you can concentrate on your studies. The most obvious way to ease the gas sting is to take public transportation. However, you might not live in an area that offers this service, or it may be inconvenient for you to travel this way. If this is the case talk to other students in your classes and see if they live in your area. Then try to arrange some type of carpool system. Remember even if you only share rides once in a while it will help save some money.

Changing driving habits also can aid in the reduction of gas waste. Don’t drive aggressively. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency speeding and rapid acceleration can lower your gas mileage by five percent around town and 33 percent on the highway. In other words don’t take off like you’re Speed Racer when you’re at stop signs, and watch your speedometer. Gas mileage usually decreases at speeds above 60 MPH; in fact the toll on your mileage for each 5 MPH over 60 is like paying an extra $.20 per gallon.

Keeping up with your car’s maintenance is another great gas saving tip. Keep your car tuned up and change the air filter regularly. Changing a dirty air filter can save you up to 10 percent on your mileage, and it is so easy you can do it yourself! Also, make sure the air in your tires is at the proper level, and your wheels are aligned. Additionally get your oil changed regularly. Make sure to check your owner’s manual for the correct grade of oil.

Frank Aranda of Bill Heard Chevrolet says that using the manufacturer’s recommended grade of oil will aid in maintaining good mileage. Lastly, keep windows and sun-roofs closed and tops up on convertibles while driving at higher speeds; this will lower the wind drag which will aid in lower mileage. And buy your gas early in the morning or late in the evening; these are the coolest times of day and gas will be denser. Gas pumps measure volumes of gasoline, not densities of concentration; therefore you will actually be getting more gas for the bucks!

Pros and Cons of Summer School

By Jacob Benavides
STAFF WRITER

I thought I would shed a little insight about my experiences with summer school over the past four years and give you the benefits and detriments of turning in your three month vacation for a comfortable desk chair that features a one of a kind book rack at the bottom. (Sarcasm for those who didn’t catch that.)

Well let’s go ahead and get the negativity out of the way. The number one reason why summer school bummed me out was because you feel like you are in school all year round. Everyone needs a little break from the classroom and if you happen to take both sessions of summer school you will find that school is a never ending process. For some, that schedule wears down your potential to succeed. A small hiatus from campus is always a great remedy for the stress and anxiety of the college career. I have forced myself to take summer classes nearly every year and I am going to graduate in four years and some change. I don’t feel like that was the best choice for me. I feel that I didn’t reach my full capabilities in regards to grades because I was always burnt out from school. It’s nice to graduate in four years, but I caution you that rushing your college career could be detrimental to your success.

The main positive for partaking in summer classes is that it will speed up your graduation date and is the fastest way to get you closer to starting your full time career in your major. I received my Associates Degree in two years from San Jacinto College and I took summer school every year and it certainly sped up the entire process. Here at UHD, I have taken summer school every year as well and while I will say that it was exhausting, the process of taking classes in June and July have helped me achieve my goal of getting out of college within a four year time frame.

For those who are partaking in summer classes, I have this to say. Summer school is a great way to speed up the diploma process, but don’t let it burn you out. Take your time and make the grades that make you proud. If it takes another semester to walk up that platform, that’s ok. Its only a few more months right?
Black Student Alliance
Students Make Important Social Contributions

By Gloria Reisman
STAFF WRITER

Most students at UHD face serious scheduling issues trying to find time to balance family, work and education in their daily lives. Most lack the extra time to dedicate to student organizations. Still, one group has found a way to succeed in making an impact both on campus and in the community. The Black Student Alliance (BSA), which won UHD’s Organization of the Year Award at the One Main Event in April, has been recognized as a stellar example of what students can do to work together to benefit themselves and others while still having a great time.

When the fall semester of 2007 began, group membership consisted of 8 people. With Michael White as president of the BSA, enrollment has grown to include over 60 members and 14 officers that work with other organizations, participate in university events and are great representatives for UHD.

White is proud to point out that “the BSA also was given the Special Recognition Award for Community Involvement” for the community service projects they participated in such as the 2008 AIDS Walk, Emancipation Park Cleanup, Star of Hope Women’s Shelter Christmas Basket, Voter Registration drives and the Imani School Harvest Festival. They have also formed UHD’s first Gospel Choir and networked to create job opportunities for students.

The BSA has been active in organizing fundraisers to sponsor university events that pay for social activities which benefit students and attract new members. They have had pizza sales and car washes in order to host Bowling, Back to the 90’s and Lazer Tag Nights and participate in UHD’s Fall Festival, Intramural Athletics, Mardi Gras Celebration and Culture on the Bayou. A popular event many attended was Game Night last October at the Coffee House. Students were invited to play Twister, Dominoes, Spades and Scattergories.

So if you wish to meet a great and inspirational group of people, and you have time to become involved at UHD (or even if you don’t), just look on the walls of the main hallway in the One Main Building. They will be lined with colorful flyers inviting students to meet with the BSA and participate in the many rewarding and fun programs they are sure to plan over the summer and in the fall. For further information, contact them at: www.myspace.com/blackstudentalliance

UHD Grad Wins Prestigious City Hall Fellowship
Only 20 Students Selected Out of 400 Nationwide

By James Philpot
MANAGING EDITOR

Mario Angelo Salinas, a recent graduate of the College of Social Science at University of Houston-Downtown, was one of 20 students in the nation selected to serve in the inaugural class of City Hall Fellows (CHF), an elite new public policy fellowship program. Mario will spend his fellowship year working for the City of Houston.

The CHF program combines hands-on job experience with public-sector leadership training. The CHF program introduces Fellows to the inner workings of local government; brings their talent and energy to bear in addressing city challenges; and exposes them to meaningful careers in public service. Chosen from among more than 400 applicants nationwide, the inaugural class represents the best and brightest young leaders from across the country.

City Hall Fellows selected Mario for its inaugural class because of his outstanding leadership capabilities and commitment to public service. Mario Angelo Salinas was born and raised in Houston, Texas, which has served as host to both sides of his family for generations. He had a unique educational experience, beginning grade school in special education programs, he graduated high school as a recognized gifted and talented student.

This educational journey encouraged Mario to work with Americorps directly after high school, serving inner-city youth in a classroom setting. Throughout his college years at the University of Houston – Downtown, he volunteered at several non-profits in the Houston area focusing on at-risk youth and the arts. In May 2008, Mario earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a Sociology minor. He likes to unwind in the evening by watching the sunset from the roof of his northwest Houston home.

“City Hall Fellows envisions a future in which America’s cities lead the way in innovative and cross-disciplinary responses to society’s problems,” said Bethany Henderson, Founder and Executive Director of CHF. “We are incredibly proud of our inaugural class of Fellows and believe that these extraordinary young people will be a powerful force for positive public-sector change.”

“We’re glad to host the inaugural class of City Hall Fellows,” said Houston Mayor Bill White. “It is a great opportunity for them to focus their energy, talents and enthusiasm on many of our most pressing issues. I expect they will find it fascinating and challenging work. I look forward to having them as our partners.”

As baby boomers age and retire, the need for new talent in the public sector workforce is more pressing than ever before. Experts predict that, within the decade, more than half of government managers will retire. Yet, many of our nation’s most promising young leaders are passing up government jobs for nonprofits and the private sector. The result is devastating: a looming public sector leadership void in the level of government that provides the services and maintains the infrastructure that impacts each of us every day.

CHF seeks to reverse this trend. The goal of the CHF program is to create a generation of enlightened civic leaders who are as knowledgeable about environmental science as they are about political science, as comfortable with art as they are with policy, and who are trained to favor considered action over partisan rhetoric.
I was attending UH Central for it and got accepted when communications. I declared my major to Business Management. My first choice was (major) your first choice? My first choice was communications. I declared for it and got accepted when I was attending UH Central. Soon after that I noticed that I often wonder where exactly this silly rule came from. How long has this rule even been around? I tried to research these important questions on Google and Wikipedia, but the answers were hard to come by. Did Moses shout it down as a commandment from the mountain he was standing on top of? Or did the heavens open up while God warned humanity of improper preposition placement with a deep and rumbling voice from above? More likely, it was probably a group of pretentious scholars who thought this whole thing up. I bet they sat around and tried to think of the most pointless and ridiculous rule possible, and this is what they finally settled on. Actually, they probably just wanted to look smarter and more intellectual than the rest of us, and that’s all it was really about. Maybe causing grief to future students was a goal they were also working toward. Regardless, it disgusts me that we have been accepting it as the rule, without question, in all the centuries following. As a society, this blind submission to authority is something that we must learn to work past. I say that now is the time for us to fight to change this grammatical guideline that I am so strongly against. After devoting much mental energy to considering this issue, there is one obvious solution that I have finally stumbled upon. I say there should be a new rule, that every sentence must end with a preposition because this is what we talk like, what comes from within. I don’t know about you, but my proposed preposition requirement is an idea that I could really get used to.
Our Generation’s Unnecessary Fatalism

By Julia Harte
UWIRE (DAILY PENNSYLVANIAN)

He’s like a man determined to prove his point in an argument at any cost.

Over the past eight years, President Bush has finally brought the sort of damage that his fellow right-wingers long warned would come from federal government and its attendant regulations.

You’ve heard the big counts against Bush before: a mismanaged war, the degradation of traditional rights and laws, promoting a partisan agenda in our courts and schools, and an antisocial tendency to take from the poor and give to the rich.

What I hadn’t realized until recently was how well he’s sold his underlying philosophy of government.

To be sure, he hasn’t converted masses to his own radical sect of the Republican Party. But many liberal and moderate people do appear to have internalized a characteristically right-wing despair over the good intentions and abilities of our central government -- a fear of so-called “big government.”

I’ve found this despair to be especially alarming and pronounced in our own generation.

Kacie Kocher, a senior at Wellesley College majoring in political science and Middle Eastern studies, has chosen not to register with any political party. She is especially concerned that American students are not receiving the education they need to compete in the global economy.

“There doesn’t seem to be a way, or an effort, to fix this,” she said.

In her home state of Texas, according to Kocher, “most high school graduates I’ve known have trouble reading a book or passing tests that any seventh grader should be able to pass.”

Bush’s infamous No Child Left Behind Act has only aggravated this problem, in Kocher’s opinion, discouraging learning for its own sake and forcing teachers to follow a narrower curriculum.

University of Pennsylvania junior Jessica Yu is an English major from Hong Kong who deplores the arrogant and hostile reputation Bush has made for the United States around the world. She thinks the country is missing out on diplomatic and economic opportunities that will produce the world hegemons of the future.

“Other countries are stepping up to the plate where the United States isn’t,” Yu said. “A lot of international relationships and partnerships are being formed right now, and we just aren’t part -- or aware -- of them.”

Talking to peers from many different backgrounds, I hear a dizzying spectrum of other worries: the social security fund will run out before we retire, the government is slowly stripping away every last one of our freedoms, we’ll never be able to afford homes or healthcare or good schools.

see FATALISM on page 8

Editorial: Loaded words

By Daily Editorial Staff
UWIRE (MICHIGAN DAILY)

It took 217 years, but the U.S. Supreme Court finally made a decision Thursday about what the ambiguous nightmare we call the Second Amendment means. Yes, owning a gun is an individual right. But, no, your right to pack heat isn’t absolute, especially if you want to own an Uzi. The wording of the Second Amendment may be a jumbled mess, but the Supreme Court’s decision should silence the fringe voices in this debate and motivate our country to address the prevalence of gun violence in our country and on our campuses.

At the heart of the court’s 5-4 decision last week was the question of what the Founding Fathers meant when they wrote that “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

One hundred and fifty-four pages later, the court’s five conservatives adamantly ruled that the amendment was meant to protect each person’s individual right to own a gun with some to-be-determined qualifications. The court’s four liberals adamantly ruled that those five guys pulled their conclusion out of thin air. Even for a divided court, the opinions were surprising in their inability to concede hardly any points to the other side. Each side had dug its heels in and wasn’t budging.

Not surprisingly, the court’s polarization mirrored the divide that has crippled our country in the wake of this decision. But now, the courts can clarify that reasonable gun restrictions that keep guns off the black market, require background checks for gun ownership and require gun registration are legal and necessary.

By deciding the most contentious point in the debate, the court gave us a free pass to move on to points of agreement. It’s only been 217 years in the making.
Real life lessons in Grand Theft Auto

By Alvin Chang
UWIRE (WASHINGTON SQUARE NEWS - NYU)

When I hijacked a helicopter to make it on time for a date, I knew “Grand Theft Auto IV” was going to teach me a lot about myself.

In these two months of gaming, I learned I am vengeful, yet forgiving. I do stupid things for cute girls. And I like driving fast, I hate heights and if you’re begging for your life because someone has paid me to kill you, I’ll probably let you live.

The learning all started earlier this summer when “GTA IV” was being hailed as one of the greatest video games ever. I wanted to help the struggling economy by being a good consumer, so I bought it.

At first, I didn’t understand the hype.

Video game reviewers said the virtual environment was unparalleled. The game takes place in Liberty City - which is a New York City replica, except they replaced Staten Island with New Jersey. Reviewers couldn’t get over how the people in poor neighborhoods did poor people things, and the people in rich neighborhoods did rich people things. They were amazed that virtual characters acted like real people.

To me, it seemed like common sense.

However, one day, I ran across an article online about how New Yorkers were taking out their real-life frustrations in the video game after the Sean Bell verdict. In 2006, Bell was shot 50 times by NYPD officers because they thought he was reaching for a gun outside of a night club. There was no gun, but rather a cell phone.

Bell was black, so racial tensions flared up during the trial. And when a judge found the cops not guilty, some people rioted. Others participated in marches, wrote nasty letters to the police department or became bitter toward the NYPD.

And some bought “GTA IV” and shot virtual bullets at virtual cops.

“They just want to take their anger out,” a video game store employee told Kotaku, a gaming blog.

“People are upset right now.”

It’s amazing what the game allows you to do. You can shoot cops if you want; you can go to a strip club, if that’s down your alley; or you can eat at gourmet restaurants in Algonquin, which is supposed to be Manhattan.

And because of this freedom, you are permitted to make choices. But the incredible part of this game isn’t that you have choices - many games give you this ability. This game is special because of the types of choices you have to make.

In the early part of the game, I was asked to kill a man for money. After I cornered him and pointed a shotgun to his head, he begged me to let him live. I did, and I felt like I did something right. Later in the game, I tracked down Darko, a man I wanted to kill throughout the entire storyline. But when I had a gun to his face, I walked away again.

If my objective in this video game was to win or have fun, I would’ve killed these men. Instead, it seemed like my objective was much more engrained in the virtual reality: I wanted Niko, my character, to be a good person and live a good life. It’s tough to do that when the storyline forces you to wound hundreds of people and kill a few more, but I couldn’t help but try.

But why? This isn’t even real, right?

At some point, your character can start dating women, including a mobster’s sister, Kate. She’s not particularly attractive, she’s somewhat annoying and she has a voice I had to mute out. But the storyline introduced you to Kate, and though you were never forced to date her, I did.

Now, at this point, I - er, Niko - could’ve strolled into an internet lounge and found

see GTA on page 6

PROFILE
Continued from page 3

that at the end the sacrifices will be worth it. I want my daughter to be proud of me and be a good example for her.

What are your hobbies?
I like to play basketball and baseball. Another hobby I have is filming videos and editing them. I also like to take pictures and work on them. On my spare time I take video and photos at weddings and any social event. It’s just something that I like to do that I don’t really consider work.

What is something about you people wouldn’t know just by looking at you?
I think most people wouldn’t know that I am married and that I own my own house just by looking at me. People say that I look young and wouldn’t believe me if I tell them that I own a house.

Who or what inspires you the most, and why?
My wife and family are what inspire me the most. I come from a large family of 4 brothers and 4 sisters. I would be the first and only male with a degree in my family. Two of my sisters have finished their college education, my oldest sister has a Bachelors degree in Psychology and my little sister has a Bachelors degree in Business Management. I want to be a good example for my nephews, nieces (21 total) and my future kids.
GTA
Continued from page 5

myself a hot blond girl on an internet dating site but, instead, I went out with Kate. We ate fast food at Cluckin’ Bell or got drunk at the pub and played darts. On these dates, Kate told me a few things about herself, and I grew to be friends with her.

So when I walked into the internet lounge, I felt guilty and left.

When it was all said and done, I ended up landing a helicopter in front of her apartment, fighting a cab driver for running her over, and getting crime advice from her.

Then a mobster killed her at my cousin’s wedding.

Throughout most of the game, I insisted on playing as if I was just a video game and that I shouldn’t be getting so much out of it. She added that the violence is too realistic.

I tend to agree with her. I shouldn’t be learning things about myself from Niko, the immigrant involved in Mafia business. And throwing a grenade inside someone’s car is a bit uncivil.

But that’s not what people were thinking when they bought the game after the Sean Bell verdict. Their emotions were real and legitimate, and what they thought they wanted to do in real life was far from civil. So they played this game trying to simulate real life.

But if that’s how they played the game, I’m guessing these angry New Yorkers heard the conversation between two virtual cops drinking a cup of coffee. And I’m guessing more than one of them stopped themselves from shooting.

And that’s not a credit to the game, because the game simply reflects our environment. It’s a credit to us.

Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition

By Kristi Seidel
STAFF WRITER

Everyone knows about the tragic freak accident that killed thousands in 1912. The greatest ship of its time, The Titanic, set sail out of Southampton, UK on April 10, 1912 with a total of 2,228 passengers and crewmembers on board. After nearly two days at sea at 11:40PM on April 14, 1912 the Titanic met her doom. The Titanic hit an iceberg and sunk to its resting watery grave at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean taking 1,523 passengers and crewmen with it.

This artifact exhibition at Moody Gardens shows the artifacts and wreckage found on a recent expedition. It gives the people a look into the lives of those on board the ship, where they were planning on going once they got to America, why they were leaving Europe and who they were.

The most moving artifacts in the exhibit for me were at the very end of the exhibit when you view articles of clothing the people wore that were found still in tact. An overwhelming urge hit me as I saw clothes people died in. I thought, “Someone actually died in these clothes, they lay at the bottom of the ocean for nearly 100 years in these clothes. Someone owned these clothes, and now they’re dead.”

After seeing everything else in the exhibit these thoughts are overwhelming. Once you are finished viewing all the artifacts you get to see if you’re “boarding pass passenger” and you survived the wreckage. Fortunately, my passenger was second class and managed to survive. Others around me weren’t so lucky.

Anyone can go see this moving exhibition right now at Moody Gardens, Galveston for a limited time. You can visit Moody Gardens website at http://www.moodygardens.com for ticket prices and times.
By Andrew Vickers

Robots and other automaton have long fascinated the imaginations of authors and artists. Since the first automatons appeared working in Hephaestus' workshop in "The Iliad," people have imagined what it would be like to live in a world of servants who demand neither food nor pleasure and exist only to serve. For a long time, such "perfect beings" remained the sole province of divinity and myth -- found only in the imperfect minds of their inventors.

Soon, the Western world will no longer need to use its imagination. On June 18, an article in The New Zealand Herald announced the unveiling of a new robotic "companion" that will soon be launched in the United States for the measly sum of $175. Sega Toys, a Japanese firm, began advertising the release of EMA, a "big-busted, petite and very friendly" automaton who will "pucker up" on demand.

While the product, which will be marketed toward "lonely older men," seems like nothing more than another novel invention from those electronic-obsessed Japanese (imagine kissing an industrially cleavaged Rock'em Sock'em Robot), EMA's appearance is merely the tip of a large wave of automatization that is about to descend upon the world -- and we're not sure if the world is ready.

For even as price, efficiency and sophistication make the latest generation of our electronic counterparts cheaper and easier to use, there have been no real efforts by either the government or private firms to begin regulating this exploding field. Of course, any sci-fi geek worth his weight in Magic cards can tell you about Isaac Asimov's "Laws of Robotics," but even these relatively simple limitations ("A robot may not injure a human being, or through"

see ROBOTS on page 8

Music Review: Lyfe Changes

By Reggie B. Plummer

In the 60's Bob Dylan re-invented Rock n Roll and ushered in a new era, as well as a new genre called "Folk Rock". In the 90's a new genre called, "Hip-Hop" exploded onto the scene but rapidly became a cookie-cutter, quick fix and uninspired money-making machine. Lyfe Jennings, like Dylan before him, is far more than just another customary artist. He is a fresh, innovative and unique rapper that must be classified in a whole new genre, "Hip-Hop Funk Folk".

The Motivation

A tall, wiry and somewhat scraggly figure drags himself across the famous Apollo stage and nervously position himself onto a stool in center stage. Dressed in camouflage trousers, hooded sweat shirt and a baseball cap, masked with a scraggly beard and no mustache he strums' his acoustic guitar and begins his crackling soliloquy, "I done had money, I done been broke. I done been laughed at and talked about and been lied on by so many folks". January 2003, during a taping of Showtime at the Apollo. Lyfe Jennings introduced himself to the world; in so doing, he shared a universal language of intimate pains, "Lyfe" experiences and mistakes often accustomed to youth and immaturity.

Like a Phoenix

Born in Toledo, Ohio, Chester "Lyfe" Jennings grew up singing in church and actively pursued his musical passions until being side-tracked by the loss of his father at an early age and eventually, at the tender age of fourteen, the loss of his freedom. In 1992, Jennings was incarcerated for arson and spent 10 years on "lock-down". Jennings tried to make the most of his time in prison by writing deep and penetrating lyrics and by strengthening his spirituality. "Deeper situations tend to lead to deeper music, and prison was one of those deeper situations. (Music) gave me an opportunity to express emotions in an unemotional environment." In December 2002 after being released from prison Jennings wasted no time launching his musical career. Upon one day's acclamation back into the free world he produced a 4 song CD and on the third day he introduced himself to a live audience at a local nightclub.

Like a phoenix, Lyfe Jennings immediately ascended to the front of the line of hip-hop and redefined the genre in his sophomore album, The Phoenix.

Lyfe Changes

2008, in his third and most anticipated album Lyfe Changes, Jennings has obviously won the acclaim of his peers utilizing a multitude of producers and artists to enrich his already distinct and unbounded insight on ghetto "Lyfe", thuggin' and haters', as well as, relationships, spirituality, goals and a desire for higher aspirations.

This 13 track complication is indicative of Jennings' passion for evolving into the best artist he can be. Lyfe Changes is not as raw or acoustically based as his first album, Lyfe 268-192, which sold over a million copies, nor does it seem to embody his politically motivated sophomore effort, The Phoenix. Changes is a delicate combination of his two previous a albums that offers some very promising tracks. His first single, "Never, Never Land" is a melancholy, laid-back love songs equipped with a phat bass line and ingeniously placed fairy tale references. As most of Jennings songs remain lyrically deep some just straight jam. Guest appearances include Snoopy Dogg and Wyleaf Jean. Jean simply sets it off on his
inaction, allow a human being to come to harm”) have yet to be worked into the machines, which have increasingly begun to do our dirty work. Though last week’s edition of The Economist reports that rapid advances in “sight” and “touch” technology have given researchers the ability to make robots much safer, history has shown that private companies will never include expensive safety features unless forced by the market or, as a last resort, government intervention.

But even incorporating safety features into the most paranoid of androids will not be the real problem robotics present for the modern world. The danger instead lies with the sheer possibility of robots replacing humans in most of the jobs that previously served as people’s bread and butter. As robots are invented to vacuum, clean windows, dig holes, harvest crops and perform every other unskilled service job in between, they risk pricing some the world’s poorest people completely out of the marketplace.

Why keep paying someone $100 for a day of cleaning each week when Rosie the Robot Maid could be bought for $1,000 to clean every day until her warranty expires?

Instead of paying a premium for workers to perform dangerous, distasteful or difficult tasks, there will be a huge incentive for companies to simply design a robot for the job. As new generations of robots replace more and more workers, we risk becoming a civilization in which the world won’t even need ditch diggers anymore. More alarmingly, if this situation is not properly and promptly addressed, the economy could see wealth rapidly accumulate with the wealthy (i.e., those who can afford robots) at even greater rates than now - prompting huge concerns for what the world will do with people for whom we will literally have no more financial use for.

Seeing as how our knowledge of robots and artificial intelligence essentially begins with HAL from “2001: A Space Odyssey” and the creepy androids from “Blade Runner” and ends with the Fem-Bots of “Austin Powers” fame, (neither of whose invention turned out particularly happily for the humans) we’re probably not equipped to be the ones who will answer the questions. But as more and more Roombots, EMAs and ASIMOS start finding their way into our streets and houses, someone is going to have to speak up. Let’s just hope it’s not the robots themselves.

reggae infused, “If You Think You’ve Got It Bad?” His short-winded speech impediment is refreshing and a beautiful compliment to Jennings’ ever evolving and eloquently harsh raw voice. “Midnight Train” is a beautiful example of his folk-like adeptness. It is an acoustic and simple, feel-good song with slight references from Gladys Knight and Pips’, “Midnight Train to Georgia”.

Jennings’ Lyfe Changes album will not alienate r&b, rock, folk, funk or hip-hop fans. In fact, it will most probably infuse and invite collaborative conversions between the devotees of these different genres. If Jennings can continue to transcend genres and create his own unique nitch in the music industry he might be someday referred to as the “New Millennium Dylan”.

Some of these fears might be assuaged by opening a history textbook. Our current economic woes, for instance, still pale in comparison to the slump of the rampantly unsupervised market economy in the 1930s -- thanks, almost entirely, to Roosevelt’s New Deal and to successive regulations that Congress placed on Wall Street and the banks.

The war on terror hasn’t even begun to incite panic and social collapse on the scale of the Red Scare during the Cold War. Thousands of professionals were forced out of work because of rumored Communist sympathies, or simply because they would not sign a loyalty oath.

Healthcare, education, homelessness, air and water – although undeniably worse for the past eight years, these sectors of the country are still in tremendously better shape than they were just a generation ago.

And in nearly each case, our federal government performed the actual rehabilitation. Presumptive Democratic nominee Barack Obama appears to recognize this; his energetic, optimistic approach to politics suggests a man eager to take back the wheel of federal government and use it for the good of the whole country.

If there is something profoundly unprecedented about the problems this country faces today, it is – as Kocher and Yu suggest – their setting: a uniquely integrated and collective international sphere.

And if our generation wants to succeed in that world, here’s a tip: fatalism won’t translate well.