

Young Aspiring

- Linda Fitzpatrick

This past week, social media has been abuzz with negativity towards Old Navy's newest clothing design for children. T-shirts with the words "Young Aspiring Artist President" or "Young Aspiring Artist Astronaut" are the center of this outrage. Customers are upset that Old Navy is discouraging artistic careers and marketing this message to children. This is especially surprising because most of Old Navy's marketing strategy has been done through artists themselves — including actresses Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Amy Poehler.

I don't think there is anything wrong with encouraging young children to aspire to become astronauts and presidents, but artists should be valued with as much importance. Art is engrained in our culture. We are entertained by art, surrounded by art, and yet, most of the time we neglect to truly acknowledge and value the art and artists in our lives.

As an artist myself — a writer — I have firsthand knowledge of the lack of appreciation by non-artistic individuals. Being a writer is one of the most important and often unnoticed forms of art within the world of entertainment. Think of all the brilliant movies and TV shows you have watched. Almost every person will praise the actors and directors for their work, but hardly ever does the screenwriter get the attention when it is the script that can make all the difference. To those of you who may believe that art should be a less valued job in our society, I disagree. Entertainment is highly persuasive, so the artists who are creating such entertainment actually hold a lot of power over viewers. They can choose to create to highlight problems in our world and educate our nation, and go beyond simply providing viewers with relaxation and a few laughs.

Growing up, I relied on art. While I did not always want to be a writer, I loved to be creative. And no matter what career a person desires, I believe that creativity is extremely important. We should be encouraging our children to be artists. Not everyone will want to dedicate their whole life to art as a formal field of study, but that does not mean they won't gain skill through working with colors, thinking outside the lines, and having the opportunity to create whatever their imagination can think up.

I understand that finding a job as an artist can be very difficult. As I head to college next year, an important factor to my family and me is making sure I set myself up for the best possible chance of finding a job. But finding a job is a concern to everyone, not just artists. We may have a tradition of thinking of all artists as poor twenty-somethings trying to make a living in an industry with fewer paying jobs, but that's just not completely accurate. Every twenty-something is trying to carve their way into a different business. Some careers are easier to break into than others, but that does not mean they are necessarily better. Astronauts and presidents will have just as difficult of a time securing a job as artists. The only real difference is the material each person is studying — politics, science, or art.

I personally think Old Navy has no business discouraging artists. I am especially saddened knowing that an artist designed this very anti-artist shirt. Any career has its side effects. Any career is unstable to some degree. Let's all aspire to do what we love and work hard through the

challenges. Let's raise a nation of persistent dreamers who will make this world better instead of shying away from hard work. I personally am not going to be deterred from what I love doing because it ensures more uncertainty in the future than other careers; I hope you won't either.