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To the Reader,


VOICES is a student run magazine which consists primarily of creative, nonfiction writing. It provides a platform for students to delve into controversial issues, investigate experimental journalism, and publish a myriad of art mediums. Students participating in the club have the opportunity to explore their "voices" as they are able to incorporate a first person point of view throughout each article. Essentially, the magazine aims to exhibit short pieces that push beyond the boundaries of race, culture, and societal norms in order to catalyze paramount discussions.

This year's magazine is centered around global issues. Each piece of art and writing provides an introspective view of everything from environmental threats to gender inequality. Bringing light to such a topic allows us to expand our intellectual palette to pertinent and pressing matters.

We hope that you enjoy what we have put together, and more importantly, how you can use your voice to enlighten others.

Sincerely,
Maya Nayak

The VOICES leadership board is honored to give a very special thanks to Ms. Corwin for helping finalize the articles.



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Social Media Takeover

Sloane Berman (Class of 2025)

All day, I want is to look at my phone. All day, instead of focusing on school work I keep checking my phone. All day, my mind keeps wondering: have I gotten a text yet? Did they snap me back? I know that I have these thoughts, and I bet everyone else around you has these thoughts too. Social media apps are targeting teens everywhere, and every teen who uses these apps falls into the trap. I am one of those teens, and you probably are too. Knowing that others think like this as well makes me worried for my generation; worried that these apps are going to consume our lives and alter the way we will think. However, I realize that with these apps comes responsibility, and it is all of our responsibilities to address these kinds of issues.

72 percent of people in the United States use social media ("Social Media"). There are 329 million people in the United States; that means close to 237 million people use social media just in this nation.

Before quarantine, I did not have a TikTok account and all my friends thought I was so weird. They would ask me, "why do you not have it?" and "are your parents not letting you get it?" So I got Tik Tok and I was immediately hooked. The videos captured my short attention span and the variety of videos kept me interested every time. Social media is supposed to be a tool and a gift but instead people feel pressured to have it and now if you do not have social media



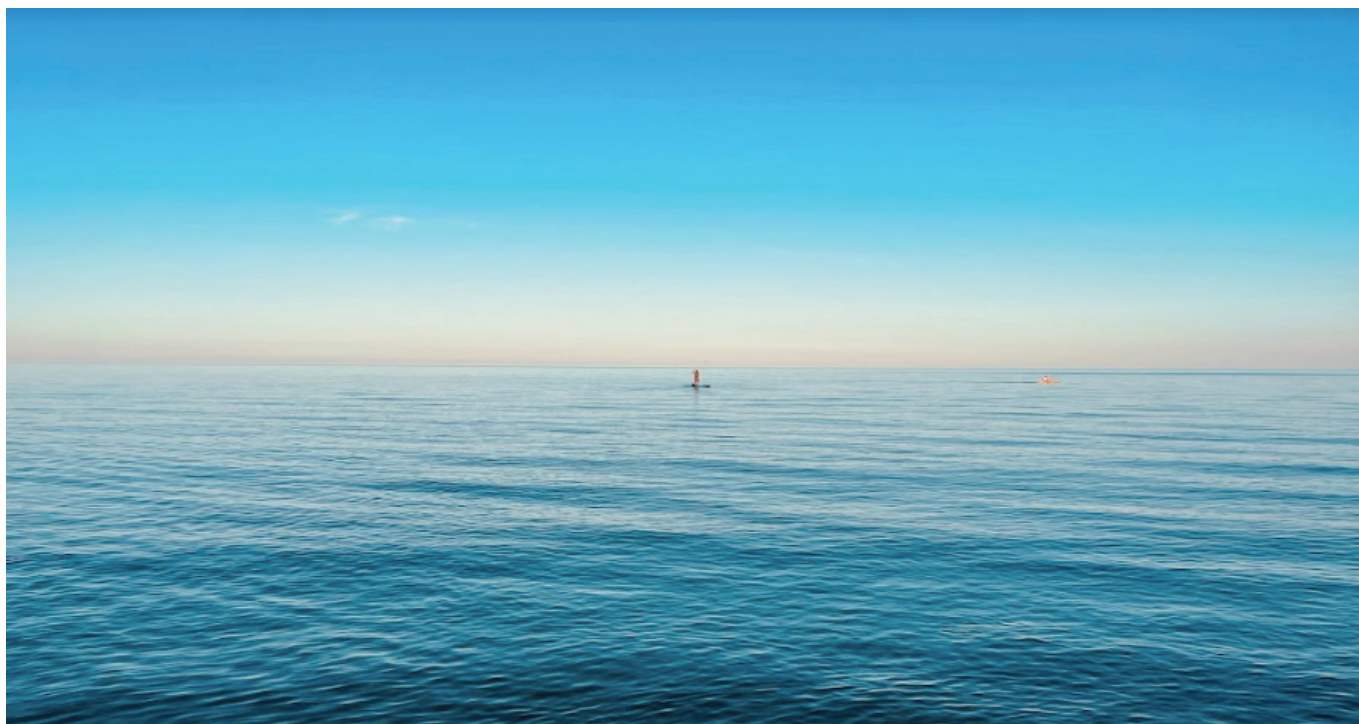
society thinks you are weird or have a problem and that is not how we should be thinking.

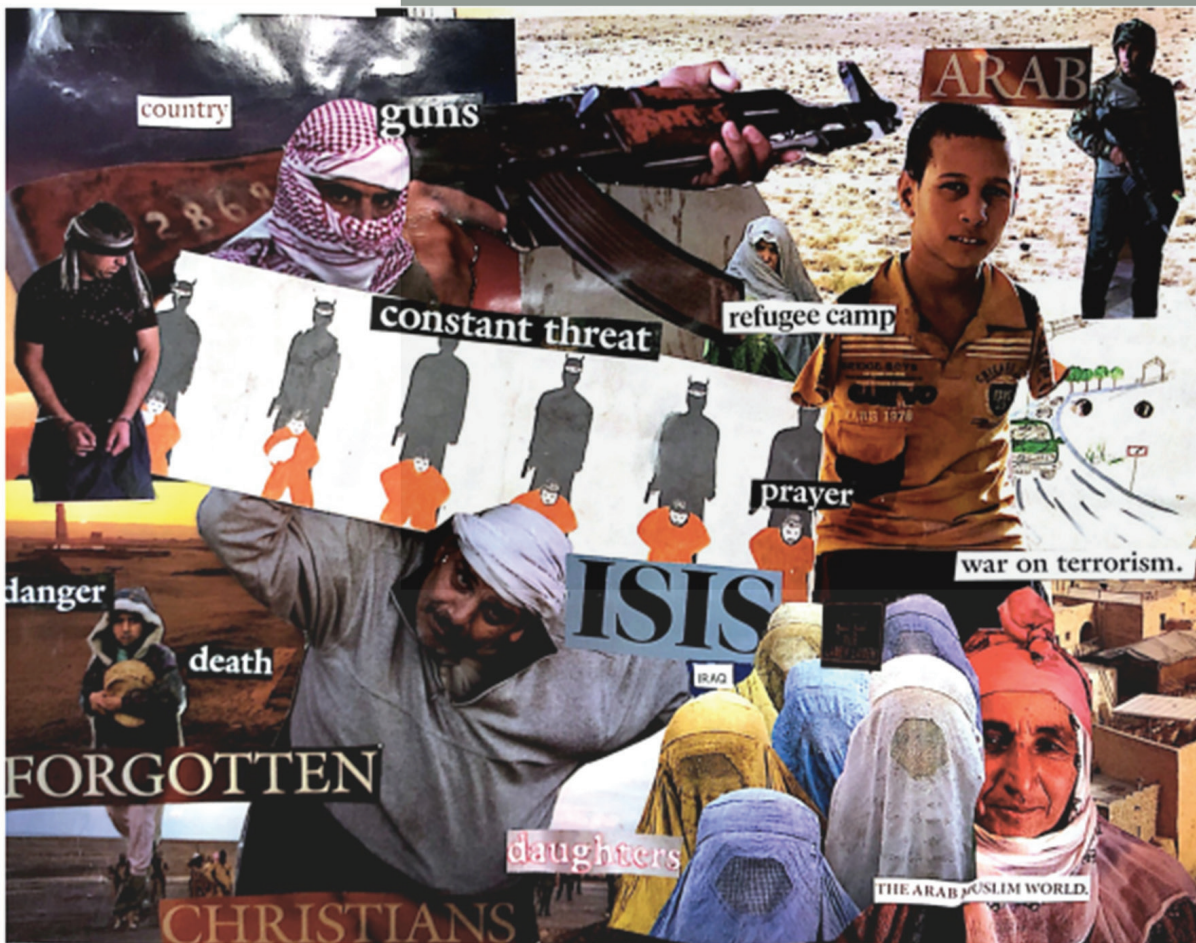
Social media has been used to spread awareness for many amazing causes but it also has been a platform for misinformation. "Observers have begun to express concern over the opportunity for misuse, particularly the spreading of misinformation" ("Social Media"). I use Instagram and Snapchat all the time and those platforms are mostly where I get my news but Snapchat and Instagram are not always reliable. Those platforms can twist people's words and spread false information on current events. It is so easy to lie and spread false information over social media because you are just behind a screen people think there are no consequences, and that nothing can hurt you when you are behind your screen. But that is not true because on the other side of that screen there is another person who is affected by the false information that is being spread. Social media can affect friendships and even your mental health.

Even though social media has had a lot of negative effects on the world, it has also had positives. It has helped me express myself and climb out of my shell. I am a very shy person when you meet me, and I do not open up that easily, but social media has helped me open up and communicate with new friends. The best example that I can provide of this notion is what happened last year. I was new to DCDS and knew nobody going into the school year. During the summer before I came to DCDS I started following people that went to DCDS, liked their posts and they followed me back! The first day of school I walked in and started making friends because they knew me through social media. Following and liking through social media helped make new friends at a new school so much easier.

Although my experience with social media has not been bad, I know of people who have struggled with it. My advice for people who have had a negative experience with social media is that it is perfectly alright to step back and take a break. You do not have to put on a happy face all the time. I know people who have struggled with the consequences of social media and the best solution was always taking a break. I think the biggest mistake people make with social media is that they don't know when to stop. It is ok to delete social media apps for a while and step back, it is ok not to post all the time, it is ok to delete social media for good, it is ok not to be ok. It is all ok.

Social media can be both good and bad, but it is still taking over the world. It has allowed us to see what is going on around the world and help people. All around the world people are liking and sharing on social media and it is taking over. People's mental health has been affected by social media and it can be addictive and harmful but it could also be fun and useful. Social media is a platform for all types of good and bad, but it is all up to you the way you want to use it.





If Not War, What is Iraq?

Julia Nona (Class of 2024)

While many people see their parent's country of origin glamorized in destination magazines, I only ever saw mine in news headlines. Iraq, a country torn to shreds by war, terrorism, and a crumbling government; a people deprived of their humanity because of the selfishness of their rulers.

For the past two decades, Iraq has struggled to gain stability politically, after the fall of Saddam Hussien, but Iraq has not always been this way. We only see the news about the state of the country now, but I look to see what could have been. A country that could have been prosperous, and people that could have been properly educated. Beautiful landscapes could have attracted tourists from across the globe and a captivating history could have prevailed, intriguing people all over the world.

The heedless Iraqi government stripped all these possibilities away, and now it is the people who suffer the consequences.

The president of Iraq, Barham Salih, and his officials sit in their estates, protected and surrounded by all the riches and materials they need and want, while the average family in Baghdad is overwhelmingly threatened by poverty, malnutrition, and violence. The Iraqi powers care more about money than the safety and well-being of their people. This continues to have detrimental effects on the country. Clutching onto the little freedom they have and employing it, the citizens of Iraq take to the streets in protest of the self-serving president and government. They rally for the children who will never get the opportunity to live a fulfilling life, for the colossal unemployment rates, and the many people being affected by the corrupt systems present in

Iraq. For these reasons, many residents of Iraq are constantly attempting to flee their motherland, in hopes to provide a better life for themselves and their families. Because of this many countries bordering Iraq are swamped with refugees, making makeshift camps and temporary housing for the people flooding in rapidly. The profuse amount of these asylum seekers has caused distress in these countries, which have no other choice but to welcome them into their land.

It deeply saddens me that many people and media corporations dismiss and underestimate the severity of the dire situation in Iraq. The pictures we see on the news of the rubble and the "aftermath" of war, and corruption, were once someone's home. The ghost towns congested with broken and abandoned buildings used to be filled with laughter and joy during the '60s and '70s. Between 184,382 and 207,156 civilians have died from direct war, caused by the Iraqi government, terrorist organizations, and other nations. Consequently, there have been many more individuals who have died from indirect war and famine. What troubles me the most is that the numbers which I have stated above are not in my mind just a statistic. Each one of those people had a family and had their aspirations. They were business owners, doctors, educators, parents, and children; all of these people should not be compressed into one number. This data cannot carry the weight of the atrocity that took place in Iraq and it certainly does not express the horrific reality the Iraqi people are faced with every day. People to this day are suffering from the effects of the war and government corruption, left with no place to live, no family, and scarce resources. I hate that I can sit in the comfort of my home, not having to worry about a single thing, while other children in Iraq do not know if they will live to see tomorrow. Though there is not much I can do to help the people of Iraq, I try to stay vocal about the brutality and injustice taking place in their country.

I would not be telling the full truth if I said that the Iraqi government is 100% to blame for the lawlessness that took place there. Iraq is a third-world country, so I never expected much from their rulers, as for America that is a different case. America came into the war-torn country with the notion that they could help the Iraqi people and "save" them. However, when they stepped foot on that soil their instinct was to protect the black gold rather than the people. Although it is so controversial to call out America for its wrongdoings, it is necessary in this case. It started with President Bush who paved the path of exploitation of the Middle East, then all the other presidents and administrations followed in his footsteps. Our leaders should know better. They heard the screams of the innocent but so quickly ran towards money. Both the American and Iraqi powers were so heavily driven by wealth, that they turned a blind eye to the real issue at hand, resulting in more chaos, corruption, and death.

Some people will say that it is useless to care so much about a country that is in decline. They only perceive Iraq as a place so low and poor with no ability to flourish. I view Iraq in a much different light, beyond the red-stained rubble, and faulty governing. I see hope. This hope does not lie within the country itself but in its people, community, and traditions. There is something so irrevocably beautiful about the Iraqi people's ability to come together, to assist each other, and despite all of the agony and grief, to persevere. In the future, I long to witness Iraq thrive and advance in all aspects of society and hope to watch the people prosper. I have never been to Iraq or experienced what it's like to live there, but for some reason, I still have an immense connection to it. I cannot help but feel a smidge of jealousy towards the people who can truly identify with their parent's country of origin. I am often consumed by this feeling of homesickness for a place I have never belonged to. I want to be able to observe the masked beauty of Iraq; I want to experience the culture; I want to see where my dad grew up. I try to be optimistic and believe that all this is possible, but right now, it is unachievable; so for the time being that will just be a distant dream of mine.

Who Runs the World?

LADIES

Joey Inslan (Class of 2024)

Girls. As a woman, I have always been able to pick up on the minuscule aspects that surround me in my life. And I do not mean the weather on a vibrant, summer day, or the music playing in the background of a mall. I rather deeply pick apart and analyze the culture of how women are treated, seen, and heard.

My whole life I have been “handled” differently than my brothers, male peers, and friends; the only difference between us has been my gender. In history class we learn about men and their significance, while women are quintessentially viewed as housewives. And even when we do learn about a woman’s historical paramountcy, it is not presented as powerfully or justly. Being a woman, the thought of being paid a different amount upsets me. Thus, as an advocate for female rights and equality, I truly believe that women deserve to have the same pay as men working on the job do, if not more.

Growing up, my mother taught me how to be a strong, independent woman, but I feel as if this world is very dependent on each other. Especially men. When I was a child, my grandmother was a golf coach. I had talked to her about what it was like and she expressed that as a coach it was interesting to see that some of the sports that were paid significantly lower salaries were the girls sports. This is one reason people have fought for unions as the unions reinforced equal pay. Personally, I wasn’t surprised by this. Throughout history women were seen as less compared to men, so I had only imagined they would’ve been paid less. American Progress says that on average, women make 82 cents for every \$1 earned by men. Meaning, if a man makes \$100,000 a year, a woman working the same job will only make \$82,000; think about that for a second. If you’re completely appalled, you’re not alone.

I also asked my grandmother about other times that she noticed wage gaps or gender equality. She told me “when [my] great grandmother was promoted to an administrative position in her place of employment, she received half the wages of a man, because his wages were primary income and hers were considered secondary. Same job, way less pay.” This proves that not only is gender equality an issue now, but it has been for many years. There aren’t a lot of people trying to fix the wage gap, so it is likely that it will remain until at least 2059 (Forbes). Now, this isn’t only an issue in fields dominated by women, it’s also an issue in fields dominated by men.

My father is a superintendent for a construction company. Though not many women work in his field, it is seen that yet again women make less money than the men. Women in construction, that don’t work commission, average 86 cents to every \$1 for men. That’s insane. Whether women are a majority or a minority in a field, they will still be underpaid. An undying trend.

After numerous hours of researching, I’ve learned that the problem is deeper than just gender. Pew Research Center shows that wage gap is also divided by age, and in the past couple of years, it continues to widen (Pew Research Center). Over the past 50 years we had started to show some growth, but around 2015 numbers dropped exponentially. And thankfully, we as a nation are slowly working towards equal pay.

Women of different races are also paid differently. American Progress showed that in 2018 most women of color earn significantly less than an average white woman. Asian women make an average of 90 cents to every \$1 dollar. Hispanic and latino women make the least amount with an average of 54 cents to every \$1 dollar that the white male makes. Black, American Indian, and white women make somewhere in between that.

March 2020 is a month that US citizens won’t forget. Covid changed our lives in numerous ways. Some were good, some were bad, but some things didn’t change at all. The wage gap was one of them. At first, Covid was doing good things for the pay gap. Less people working meant higher wages for those in the actual working class. Many people also lost their jobs which screwed with things a little bit. As more and more people are resuming work, the gap continues to revert back to its original amount. Unfortunately, that means that women have to work even harder to get the same amount as men do. And with today’s economy, that’s going to be difficult.

Equality. We are taught equality in pretty much every school subject ever, yet it doesn’t prepare us for the real world. In preschool, elementary school, and most of the time middle school they are treated the same so nobody’s feeling hurt. But this world isn’t about equality and it won’t ever be.

Prejudice. Sexism. Inequality. Women. Four words that when arranged in the right order can change everything. We need to work together, as women, to slowly change the prejudice, sexism, and inequality behind the wage gap. Because we are women and we are worth it.

As a young woman living in the U.S. during this time, I have never been forced into anything. I have great parents who allow me the freedom to possess goals and who unwaveringly support me in doing what I want to pursue in life. I am able to travel the world, go out as I please, and play as many sports as I please. I am able to attend the college of my choice and choose their career path that I would like. However, there is an unfortunate flipside. Up until recently, I knew absolutely nothing about arranged marriages; but after hearing that some girls really just do not have a choice in who to love, it got me thinking, what if I was in their situation? What if I was unwillingly stripped from my family and utterly deprived of the right to choose who I truly love?

A true part of growing up is relationships. Whether it is friendship, dating, or marriage, most teenagers and young adults focus solely on picking whom they want to be around. The people who surround a person can ultimately affect the course of their life. Positive relationships are necessary for a healthy environment and growth as a person. As a young woman I could not imagine not having a say of who I can or can't be with. Even more importantly, as a young woman, it is pertinent for me to address my concerns.

Arranged marriages occur - and are usually targeted - to adolescent individuals across the globe. However, they are most common in Middle Eastern countries, Africa, and India. Some people agree with arranged marriages because of high-renowned traditions rooted in their family and culture. Another reason is simply because someone's elders feel as though their knowledge and wisdom defeat all other ideologies. The parents feel that they are giving their children a better life, when in reality they are virtually making them prisoners in their own home.

There are also more dangerous things that may occur during arranged marriages. Every year, around five hundred people in Britain are faced with domestic abuse because of an arranged marriage (Shackle). Women living in the countries where arranged marriages occur cannot divorce their spouses or simply do not believe in it, leaving women stuck and with no way out of the violent atmosphere they are engulfed by. "The women fear deportation and all the shame and honor issues back home. It is worse than death. With that level of control over someone, you can be violent, or you can treat women as a servant, which is what a lot of families do" (Shackle). Some men often see

women as one thing...an object. Many men visualize women as someone who cooks, cleans, takes care of children, or they simply objectify them. When young women who do not know any better are cornered into a situation, not only are they ripped of the freedom of love, but they are also stuck with no way out. As a woman this makes me feel guilty that I have not appreciated the freedoms in my life as much as I should have. I am so privileged to live the life that I live but I need to be more aware of the important issues around me.

However, some countries have tried to prevent this by outlawing arranged marriages. "Yet, traditional and tribal practices ensure that children, some as young as three or four years old, are being entered into marriages" (Brooks). Arranged marriages swindle a child's livelihood right from them. Children lose their purity and innocence, deprived of their ability to choose their direction in life. "Girls are the ones most often forced into marriage at young ages and in some developing countries of Africa and Asia, more than twenty percent of girls are entered into marriages before they are fifteen" (Brooks). As a fifteen year old girl, I put myself in the shoes of these girls and realized how lucky I am to have the freedom of free will. Children are innocent and when thrown into a situation like an arranged marriage, their childhood is taken instantly. Young girls are not a man's object and the notion of them being trapped in a situation, most of the time with older men, is just completely sickening and heartbreaking.

I was conversing with my friends whose grandparents were coerced into arranged marriages during their teenage years. In the past, arranged marriages for children were viewed as normal. By the age of 13, it was common for girls to be married off and have children. I'm going to be candid here - thinking about this unreservedly terrifies me. I am only fifteen years old and can barely take care of myself, let alone a child. Teenagers nowadays cannot decide who they like, what they want to do with their lives, or if they might even want kids.

After putting myself in others' shoes, I cannot imagine at this day and age that I could marry someone and have children. But the scary thing is that there are people who see this as conventional. It's not. Young women should be able to choose who they love wholeheartedly.



Wedding Blues

Brooke Skiba (Class of 2024)



Natalia Pataq



Mia Beck



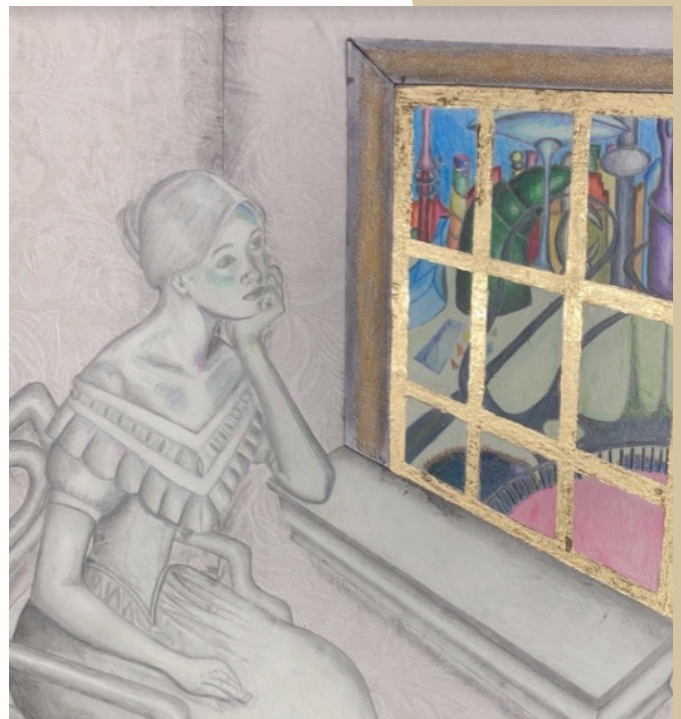
Kiran Nayak



Laine Mihalic



Katherine Chen



Molly Prokop



Bias.

Katherine Chen (Class of 2025)

Having a loved one sent to prison is something nobody wants to experience, and I know that if this were to happen to me, I would be beyond devastated. However, I am lucky enough to never have had to worry about this issue, having only seen this issue from a friend's perspective, which was already very difficult to watch. Yet for many communities right next to us and around the world, this is a prominent and incredibly heartbreaking issue. As we've seen from the Black Lives Matter movement, which has become incredibly well-known in the past few years, African Americans are disproportionately stopped and arrested compared to white individuals. When I first saw this on the news, I was disappointed but unfortunately not surprised. And the more I learn, the more I find myself experiencing this feeling over and over again. While unequal and unfair arrests are already a problem themselves, we're going to go a step further and look at the criminal justice system - what happens to people after they've been arrested? One would hope that the process is fair and only requires the unfairly arrested and their families to have to deal with the hassle of trial, which is already a heavy burden to bear. But as you may have expected, the process is not at all fair, and often punishes or rewards defendants for their race (Angwin et. al). This isn't even the biggest issue. There is a huge lack of media coverage for issues like this one in our society. I often read about issues in our society, yet I had never read anything about our criminal justice system being unjust until I met my mentor for an artificial intelligence summer camp, who sent me the only four articles that have ever been written about this issue; and that's a problem. Our criminal justice system, which is supposed to be fair and just, really isn't, which is a problem in itself, but the fact that nobody knows about this issue is even more of a problem. This matters because our country is supposed to be fair to all (see: the Pledge of Allegiance), but it isn't, and that needs to be fixed.

For us to better understand this issue, we first need to take a look at some facts. But before that, why don't we read a nice story about two real people showing this issue in action. Brisha Borden, an 18 year old girl, was running late to pick up

her god-sister from school. She spotted a small bike and then tried to ride it down the street. The mom of the boy who owned the bike chased after her, and Borden immediately dropped the bike, but it was too late - a neighbor had called the cops, and she was arrested for burglary and petty theft for the bike, valued at around \$80. In a similar situation, Vernon Prater was arrested for shoplifting \$86.35 worth of tools from a Home Depot. He had previously been charged for armed robbery not one, not two, but three times. Meanwhile, Brisha Borden only had a few misdemeanors on her record from when she was a juvenile. However, Borden was rated by the COMPAS algorithm as highly likely to commit another crime, while Prater was rated as low risk and unlikely to commit another crime. Why? Well, you can probably figure it out. Borden was black, while Prater was white. However, we can't draw any conclusions just yet. But two years later, the opposite has happened. Borden has not been charged with any new crimes, and Prater is in jail for breaking into a warehouse and stealing thousands of dollars' worth of electronics (Angwin et. al). This is an incredibly common theme in the use of the COMPAS algorithm.

In fact, the algorithm is twice as likely to incorrectly flag black defendants as future criminals, and a lot more likely to mislabel white defendants as not likely to commit another crime in the future (Angwin et. al). In fact, when you compile all the data gathered by ProPublica, it comes down to one shocking and disappointing reality - this algorithm, which is supposed to be just and accurate, is only a bit more accurate than a coin flip (Angwin et. al). Yes, a coin flip. Our criminal justice system uses an algorithm that's only a little more accurate than a coin flip to determine life consequences for real living people, and that is absolutely unacceptable. If somebody you know and care about was on trial, especially if you're a person of color, there's no way you'd be okay with an unfair algorithm being used to determine their fate. Yet this algorithm is still in use, and will continue to be if we as a society continue to sit back and be okay with it.

You might be wondering, why is this even a thing? After all, computers don't have racial bias. They simply take in information and run an algorithm. While the algorithm is private information because the company that wrote it is a private company that makes money off of this unfair algorithm, we actually don't need it to find the root of the issue: systematic racial injustices in society. After all, a machine can't be racist by itself, but it can make racist decisions as a result of the data it's been fed. Over the course of American history, there has been a constant theme of racial injustice, and that's the data the algorithm was trained on! If the algorithm was trained on racist information, it's 100% going to make racist decisions simply because that's what it's been trained to do.

So what can we do about this huge issue? A big first step is simply educating others that there is a problem, as there cannot be change in society without people who believe that there is a problem and there needs to be change. I first learned about this issue through a program about artificial intelligence when I signed up for the Criminal Justice branch, and it helped me become more aware of the issues with our society. And I hope that the next time you're talking to someone about issues in society, that you consider telling them a little bit about this serious yet unknown issue.



For more information: <https://www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing>

FORGETTABLE

Freedom

Cultivating Kids: Education in Kabul

Kiran Nayak (Class of 2025)

HELP.

NUCLEAR WASTE



This year, my grandfather told me about his adventures in medical school during the 1960s. I was amazed how he meticulously painted a picture of the beautiful gardens where he and his classmates studied, and the streets where he walked to get to class. I was fascinated hearing about his memories of everything from the lifelong friendships he established to the struggles he endured as an aspiring physician. Though his experiences were very much common in the medical sphere, there is one aspect that stood out to me: he attended school in Kabul, Afghanistan. To this day, I still have difficulty processing my grandfather's vivid details. Hearing him talk about this progressive utopia, I was sitting back thinking of the atmosphere that it has molded into today. I find it ironic that despite my grandfather's endeavors, Afghanistan is now a place where learning is not encouraged, but rather dismissed.

However, due to recent events, I am able to visualize and converse about what has occurred in Afghanistan. As a result of the Taliban violently seizing and terrorizing various districts, schooling seems as though it is the last aspect people are worrying about. Moreover, inhabitants are barely scraping by, grappling to maintain a secure environment for their families.. So then, I ponder again, what would people do to go back to the safe and beautiful days of Kabul, where people were happy and the city was not gloomy and depressed. Other days I think, why did the Taliban choose Kabul? What did Kabul do to the world? Kids' education is hindered and more importantly girls are discouraged from learning by virtually everyone. It is not their "duty" to sit at home and make food or clean; it is their inherent right to have a worthy, just future.

Being a high schooler myself, I attempt to put myself in the shoes of those young women as they are missing out on the opportunity to learn, or having a future involving my education. I was put into preschool at the age of three. Unfortunately, there are kids in Kabul who grow up never seeing the inside of a school. However, there are a myriad of children who face this, all because of terrorism attacks and bombs just miles away from their homes. We are lucky to not only feel safe while learning, but also having a school with great opportunities. Other kids do not have nearly the same amount of privileges that we do. I feel that people need to be educated on what they can do to help. They need to know that kids around the world, the same ages as us, are less fortunate, involving their education. The part that scares me the most is that any one of us could have been those kids.

In Kabul, children - girls specifically - are missing out on the opportunity to learn because it is unsafe. Provinces around the area of Kabul have been shut down due to the terrorism and threats. The Taliban either shut the schools down or they burn them down. Parents in Afghanistan are worried that their children are not going to have a future. The people of Afghanistan are thinking of various unpleasant outcomes that could be a reality for their children. "I want my daughters to be something in the future," said a mother sending all five of her daughters to school; "I regret not being educated" (Zama Neff). Due to the daily attacks, this mother is struggling to raise and educate her kids. She is regretting not educating herself before, because now she cannot help her children learn.

Afghanistans are facing a lot of confusion on what their kids' futures are going to look like. Parents are very worried and kids are left confused. "For every Afghan family, the question of whether their children will be able to continue their schooling hangs in the balance" (Zama Neff). What this means is that parents are worried that the Taliban will never stop fighting for kids to not go to school. They will never truly be "gone". This is because they have made such a widespread group of people that share the same beliefs. Because of the Taliban some kids will grow up to never have a future. Even if a small percent of their parents are educated they cannot provide opportunities like college for their kids. Because of the Taliban trying to take over, not only have they left kids without a place to learn, but they have also taken educators' jobs away and parents' lives. Because kids are not going to school anymore, parents are home and forced to quit their jobs. This has made it hard for parents to provide things for their children. Even everyday items like food, water, clothing. Right now Afghanistan is a conflicted country because of the terrorists corrupting areas.

I often wonder about how lucky we are to not only attend a school but a school that puts us at an advantage with our lives. Although school can be difficult sometimes we have resources and teachers who are not only supporting our education but helping us learn. We are encouraged to learn whereas others are scolded if they do. We are put ahead of the game for life whereas others have not even gotten a chance to start.



It's All In Our Hands. Literally.

Mariella Gabrys (Class of 2024)

From fishing trips to tent camping to days on the beach, I realized that the outdoors played a very large role in my life from my childhood up until now. I grew up camping and have been going every summer since I was old enough to walk. I have vivid memories of spending summers hiking through the upper peninsula, climbing the Sleeping Bear sand dunes, and wading through the lower falls of Tahquamenon. As I get older I find myself more aware of the essential role the outdoors play in our lives. Whether you're a huge outdoor person like myself, or not, the environment around us still undoubtedly affects us. Along with plants, weather, and bodies of water, animals and biodiversity contribute colossally to the environment. Living in a suburban neighborhood, I am only able to see and pay attention to the more common animals that are around me, namely squirrels, chipmunks, and birds - which there have always seemed to be plenty of! Up until recently I have never really thought about the fact that there are a myriad of animals who are threatened and dwindling into extinction. While there may seem to be plenty of animals around us, there are species that we may not even realize are threatened within our own state, country, and world.

While animal extinction is certainly a global issue, I wanted to first focus on threatened species that reside in the state of Michigan, where I have grown up. Animals such as the Hine's Emerald dragonfly, Canadian Lynx, and the Piping Plover (bird) are only a few that have made the Michigan state list of threatened species.

There is also a world wide list of animals. This list can be accessed by anyone and is called the World Wildlife Fund. The list consists of animals around the globe that are ranked from critically endangered to least concerned. Simply taking the time to take a look at this list can be very impactful. It allows people to become aware of this pressing issue that impacts the globe.

Some of the main causes of animal extinctions include deforestation, climate change, overhunting, and invasive species. Primarily, when large areas of habitat are taken down or destroyed (in order to build something else) and not replaced, deforestation takes place. This leads to catastrophic crown fires, wiping out entire species populations and releasing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Secondly, overhunting is caused by humans hunting too many of certain species of animals without allowing them to be replenished and re-reach a stable

population number. Additionally, invasive species also have an effect on animal populations because they are not native to the area that they are brought into. Since they are not supposed to live there, they have no natural predators that can keep them from becoming overpopulated. While I believe that people should be allowed to pursue hobbies that they are passionate about, I do not believe that a hobby that is taken too far, is unethical, or unlawful can be justified.

After at least taking a minute to become aware of the animal extinction issue, the next step is to realize why it is such an issue. Animals becoming extinct disrupts the food chain and ultimately leads to imbalance within the environment around us. While it may seem minor for one small insect or frog population to be utterly wiped out, it is. If you sit with this fact, you will acknowledge that wildlife consistently relies on one another; if we continue to lose species, it could create a disastrous domino effect within ecosystems, eventually altering humans.

Animal extinction is an issue. There are some ways to combat it. The easiest way for students to contribute is to simply donate to an organization that has been able to make a greater impact when it comes to protecting species. Additionally, states such as Florida hold laws for when land is taken land is set aside and conserved. There are also places - namely zoos and rehabilitation centers - which take in animals and either rehabilitate them if they are injured, or house them and breed them in captivity to bring up population numbers. Efforts such as these are only small steps in working towards reducing worldwide animal extinction.

A few more measures that can be fulfilled are simply recycling when possible and making sure not to litter. Recycling and not littering can be monumental when it comes to protecting areas that animals need to inhabit in order to survive. Another action you can pursue is to educate yourself before supporting brands or people who may contribute to deforestation. By starting to take these small steps we can not only make a change but educate others so that they can help too.



Pride

By: Leah Barbash (Class of 2025)



Am I accepted here? Will people like me if I'm different from them? Am I going to be safe? These thoughts pervade several minds as individuals walk into school, a place they go to every day that most people would feel safe and accepted in. However, there is a way to counter this feeling, which many LGBT students have championed. There are many situations that can cause these students to feel unsafe which is why it is paramount to make sure that people like this can feel secure and accepted in school and in the larger world. How would you feel if you walked into your own school and saw that all the rainbows and anything rainbow just in general had been taken down just to make sure that they don't show their support for LGBTQ+, to make sure that they don't show their support for you? Would you interfere in a conversation where you heard someone talking to their friends about LGBTQ+ people, and calling them slurs behind their back? How would you react if you woke up to the news that someone had been hurt just because of their sexuality or gender and feared for your own safety? You'd be pretty terrified, wouldn't you? Don't worry, I think we all would be; however, there are ways to bring awareness and create safe environments for LGBTQ+ students. So, let's have a look.

Have you ever noticed the rainbow shield-looking stickers outside of almost every classroom? Some individuals have overlooked the true meaning behind them; those were made to show LGBTQ+ students where they can go and can feel safe if they ever need help. A safe space can be many things such as a person you feel comfortable talking to or a room you feel particularly safe in. From my own personal experience, I know that it is very comforting to have access to various safe spaces to go to; I also feel secure to be surrounded by so many supportive peers on a day-to-day basis. At the beginning of the year, some of my teachers handed out little pieces of paper asking for my pronouns and what I preferred to be called. These encounters completely changed my mind of what a healthy, safe space looked like because in middle school I had quite the opposite experience. When I entered high school, I realized that teachers - including middle school teachers - truly care about everyone; they respect us as much as we

respect them.

My school also has a Friday club called SAGA (Straight and Gay Alliance) which is a safe place for LGBTQ+ students to meet and get to know each other. SAGA also does a lot of other things such as raising awareness and hosting fundraisers - and it is a lot of fun! I have met some terrifically genuine people through SAGA and it feels nice to know that there is a group of people who can relate to me in some ways and will accept everybody. I know that I can depend on them for advice and vice versa.

Although I have catalogued various examples of things that my school does to help LGBTQ+ students feel a bit more comfortable in the environment, I now ask, what can you do? The best way to help for me personally and probably a lot of other people is to simply accept us and make us feel welcome instead of placing various stereotypes on the community. It would also be very helpful if individuals who are not a part of LGBTQ+ would attend a SAGA meeting so that they will be able to sympathize with our hopes for the future of the community. Just like how you cannot judge a book by its cover until you've read it, you cannot judge a person for their sexuality until you have been educated on the topic. You can educate yourself by talking to people, google (even though sometimes it's not very trustworthy), and reading about the recent situations surrounding LGBTQ+. Donating to charities is also a really good way to raise awareness and can assist lots of LGBTQ+ people receive the help and safety they need.

If you ever see someone being bullied or hurt for their sexuality it never hurts to step in and see what's going on and make sure they are okay; if they are not, get them to a safe place where they are okay. There are so many measures that you can take to ensure that everyone in your school can feel safe and accepted. Always keep in mind that everyone has their own feelings and opinions and you never know what impact you can make on someone. If you keep this mantra close to your heart, it can only have positive outcomes! And if you are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, I want you to know that you and everyone else are valid, no matter what anyone says.



*Sloane Berman
Class of 2025*



*Maya Nayak
Class of 2022*



*Annika Chinnaiyan
Class of 2022*



*Julia Nona
Class of 2024*



*Katherine Chen
Class of 2025*



*Kennedy Tidjani
Class of 2022*



*Ben Luu
Class of 2023*



Know Your Worth

Ally Bromely (class of 2023)

Always feeling the need to be beautiful is exhausting. I wake up almost an hour earlier than I need to leave. I put on my makeup every day, even though it is bad for my skin. I blow dry my hair every day, even though the heat is bad for my hair. No matter what, no matter the contingencies of the day, every morning I wake up and put on makeup. I started wearing makeup at the beginning of the school year, and I feel like if I stop now, everyone will look at me differently. The constant pressure to be perfect as a woman is completely unjust. I think beauty standards are high because girls feel the constant need to compare themselves to others. It has become one of the most important things in our world today. To me at least, women's beauty seems to overshadow their intelligence, capability, and compassion. These beauty standards are harmful to the well-being of women and cause them to constantly think of themselves as less, just because they don't look like the models.

The media has a major effect on the way women view themselves. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and many other social media platforms are filled with images of women setting unrealistic beauty standards. Kelly Oakes is the author of the article *The Complicated Truth about Social Media and Body Image*. Oakes writes "In a survey of 227 female university students, women reported that they tend to compare their own appearance negatively with their peer group and with celebrities, but not with family members" (Oakes). This idea that women need to look a specific way, only came up because of social media. Mahnaz Habib is a writer for the *Silver Chips*. In his article, *Pressure to be Perfect*, Habib claims "Approximately 91% of women are unhappy with their bodies, and often resort to unhealthy eating habits to achieve their ideal body shape" (Habib). The media constantly promotes unnatural skinniness; no matter how skinny we are, it never feels good enough because of the constant portrayal of this "perfect" body type in all the mainstream media. A lot of the girls my age, including me, are very insecure about their bodies when they have no reason to be. They could be skinny but feel the need to be curvier. Or they can be curvy, but want to be skinny. The point is no matter what you look like you'll never feel good about it because of the constant comparisons we are making.

Women are more likely to develop mental disorders associated with body image because of the unrealistic social and cultural standards that are forced upon them from such a young age. For as long as I can remember, I have been seeing pictures of models everywhere I go. I never realized we were supposed to be insecure about our bodies until the idea was introduced to me through social media. The little aspects, such as hip dips or cellulite, never crossed my mind until I was essentially instructed to be feel bad about them.

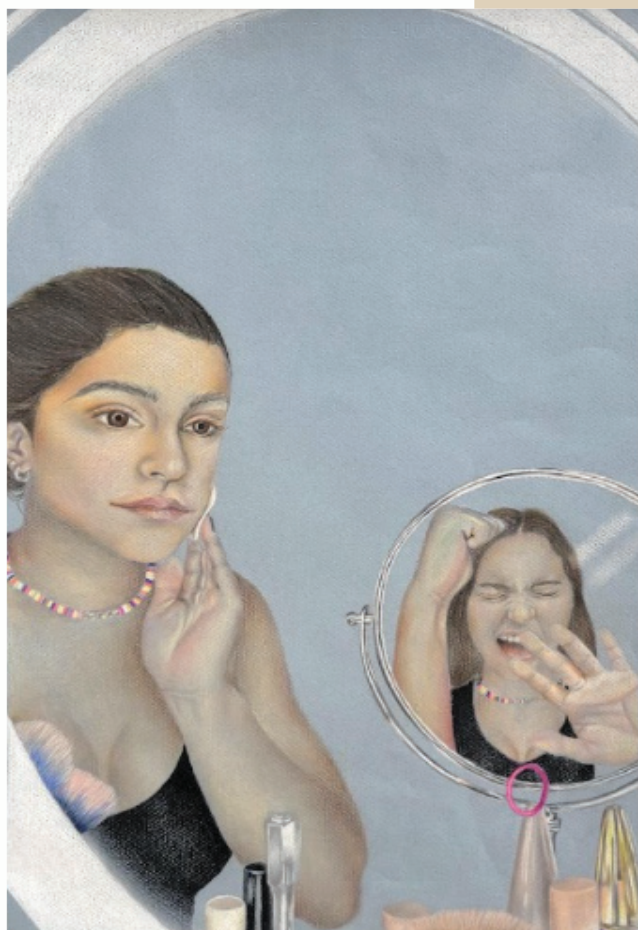
Even though beauty seems like the solution to happiness, it always has its downsides. Even if you achieve this “perfect” standard, it may soon become all you are looked at for. Some women are often associated with their appearance. They may be smarter or more capable in business, school, and overall career success, but this doesn’t matter if they are perceived as beautiful. This causes us to dedicate almost too much attention to our external persona. And makeup is the biggest culprit of this: “Research from 2017 found that over 50% of cosmetic consumers from all age brackets use makeup at least multiple times a week” (“Too Much Makeup”). Like I said, every morning I wake up and do my makeup. I haven’t gone to school without makeup since 8th grade, and the time I did go to school without makeup, I received persistent comments on how I seemed really tired. And I’ve realized that the pressure to always keep up our appearance is forced on us by other people. We may feel attractive, but there is always someone telling us we don’t, propelling us into a deeper state of timidity and self-consciousness.

As very young girls, we have been taught to change ourselves to satisfy others. Myriads of women are expected to be skinny, but not too skinny, to be curvy, but do not have a stomach. We are shamed for the natural things about our bodies. Teenage girls think they have to look like models when that is an extremely unrealistic goal. We are raised to believe that our bodies are only there to please other people. And as a result, many women are prone to eating disorders, insecurities, and low self-worth because of the constant pressure to be “perfect”. Many teenage girls develop the mindset that our worth is measured through how beautiful we are perceived.

I used to depend on constant reassurance

from boys, and other people, to believe that I was truly pretty. I have ultimately concluded that your own opinion is the most important one, no matter what others say. You are gorgeous even when you don’t feel like it, and the standards set by social media do not define your external and intrinsic characteristics. No one is comparable and feeling the need to match a certain mold to be perceived as beautiful is unrealistic. These expectations are hard to overcome, but hopefully, soon you’ll realize that everyone is perfect in their own individual way.

Now every morning when I get up, I go straight to the mirror. All I see is myself for who I am. And that is all I need to know my worth and beauty.



Madeline Vartanian (class of 2023)



It's Not All Rainbows and Sunshine

Angelina Gappy (Class of 2022)

As I submit my final college application, I feel a sense of relief as my finger hits the enter button. Not even a minute later, reality hits me. Missed assignments and emails from teachers begin to accumulate, and my parents threaten to confiscate my phone and any social media accounts that I have. I have not even looked at my school work since I began applying to schools. In every class, I had fallen behind because of all the missing and incomplete assignments that I received during the first quarter. I am required to attend mandatory TAP/AE; This felt like the so-called domino effect. While I was trying to meet the deadlines for my college applications, I was missing the ones for my school.

A student from Michigan State University gave me insight on what really happens when going through a big transition like going from high school to college. "When we came to college the drinking/smoking experiences were super new and exciting and it was a way to meet new people. Eventually, the substances and socializing we started doing that were the highlight of our weeks started becoming problematic and impacting our daily functioning (slow, unproductive, feeling unwell, worsened depression and anxiety symptoms, etc) drinking is huge at MSU and it's rare to go to a social gathering without substances. There's even a club at Michigan State JUST for sober hangouts because we are all constantly around drinking and drugs. When I was surrounded by a lot of "frat people", cocaine and pills were being used frequently by so many and even though I never did it, being around reckless behaviors became my new norm." - Anonymous

College is a significant transition for many students; not only because they are moving away from home for the first time, but because they are being immersed into an atmosphere where rarely any professor will give sympathy and where no one will accept excuses. Additionally, college-bound students will not have access to the support system that they grew up with. Students face a lot more stress from a variety of sources. Such as homework, college



athletics and more. This is because of the amount of freedom and independence that they have, which is something they might not be used to. For example, much higher academic demands, adjusting to a new environment, and implementing a completely new support system.

Higher education also provides an opportunity to experiment with alcohol and other drugs, which can exacerbate mood issues and increase the risk of suicide. "I used to joke about big party schools setting kids up to be addicts but depending on the crowd you get yourself in, it's real. There were multiple kids last year that overdosed on laced drugs/drank themselves to death (literally). My friends and I were somewhat new to college so we learned together it truly does affect your mental health. I have to make sure all of my schoolwork, chores, and mental health is in check before I agree to participate in drinking/partying. Setting boundaries and realizing it's okay to say no to plans is important. You can ALWAYS go to another party but you can't redo an exam or go back in time after a shitty night. Even stupid stuff like making sure you're eating well, sleeping, getting outside, all contribute to how college will affect mental health."

These students have so much on their plates with exams, new school, and sometimes even extra jobs that they do not have time to go out and simply live. They are overworking themselves by refusing to leave the dorms or take any breaks, no matter how badly they need them. When you are stuck in a new setting for the first time and do not know anyone or the area, it is always hard to adventure and make friends. Through recent research and interviews, I conversed with some sophomores who attend Michigan State University. We discussed everything from their personal experience to ways they have chosen to escape from what may feel like the end of the world.

"When I reached my peak of this party life exposure as a freshman, I was also at my all-time low in my personal life. I felt hopeless, I wasn't taking care of myself or my priorities, and inevitably found more peace, happiness, and appreciation in simple sober times. I've seen kids I used to know completely changed by drugs and alcohol from college. On game days kids wake up at the crack of dawn and start drinking."

Being in a pandemic and a new place reshapes your entire college experience as it becomes more difficult and different from what previous students have been through. They are being immersed into an atmosphere where not everyone is going to be worried about you and where most of your professors do not exhibit a high school-like guidance. You will definitely have more freedom, but that comes with setbacks; and especially now with the pandemic underway, students have a myriad of responsibilities. So, what is my advice? Take each day one step at a time. Relax and bask in your college life, but know your limits and consider your actions fully. Only then will you be able to see that your academic future truly rests in your hands - and that is when you will understand the importance of your college journey.

Crisis in Depth

Annika Thakur (Class of 2023), Angeline Spencer (Class of 2025) and Elisabeth Petroski (Class of 2025)

Every day on the news we hear about the world's biggest problem, and every day, it changes. All these issues may not be occurring right in front of our eyes, but they all affect us in some way. Seeing the destruction from the bombing in Ukraine, personally makes us sympathetic for those families fighting for their safety, and simultaneously we feel grateful for the security we have here at home with our loved ones. We think back and wonder, "Why did this happen? Could this have been avoided?" We asked similar questions to the students in our school to better our community by raising awareness about the millions of lives in jeopardy as a result of multiple worldwide crises.

Here are the questions we asked:

1. "In your opinion, what is the most important event that has greatly impacted the world despite the crisis in Ukraine?"
2. How has this event affected your beliefs as well as you personally?
3. How would you prevent and or improve this event?

As we interviewed students in each grade, we gathered a wide variety of responses. The main three crises we encountered were covid 19, hunger, and renewable energy. Each of these events affect people around the globe, whether they are directly affected or learning about it remotely. It is important to ask students questions about crises to raise awareness and become involved in bettering our planet.

In response to one questionnaire, one junior, in particular, stated, "The covid 19 pandemic." We asked how this had affected them personally, and their answer was something I think we could all relate to. They expressed, "I think for me personally it was just a time where I was reaffirming my own political beliefs so it definitely kind of

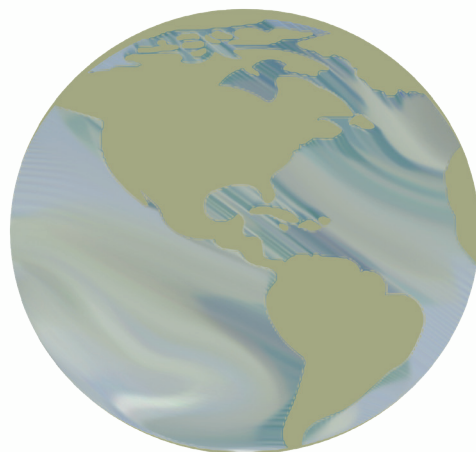
set up my opinions differently and obviously it changed the social life of everybody not being able to interact and hang out with people, it really affects everybody,” we all know that the pandemic had put a hamper on our friendships, and relationships, as well as any athletic opportunities. We asked how they thought we could improve and prevent the Covid-19 Pandemic from affecting more people and they stated, “I mean I think that we are already on the road to improving it already but encouraging vaccinations, encouraging or mandating masks when necessary and on a more personal level just practicing empathy and respecting other people’s political and personal beliefs even if they do not necessarily align with your own.”

Everyone has had a different perspective on what they believe is a major event or issue but, a junior brought up the global issue of hunger. Not knowing when your next meal is going to be can be very scary for many, globally. This junior believes one way to start solving global hunger is to “have a deeper understanding as well as more accessible information on sustainable farming & making the most out of everything we eat.” We took a deeper look into sustainability in the agricultural world or farming and found that the majority of developing countries around the world use sustainable farming practices to reduce the poverty percentages as well as increase the country’s macroeconomic benefits.

One freshman expressed his concerns about “new companies like Tesla advertising, saying electric cars are the new future.” Newer studies have shown that renewable energy has contributed tremendously to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in the air. This topic can bring about climate change and if more people use electric cars, how that could change the air we breathe in the future. This student also

believes “this new way of renewable energy will decrease the inflation of gas due the crisis in Ukraine.” The government suggests that they support these renewable energy projects as well as the research that goes into them.

Drawing from the information we have gathered from the interviews, there seems to be a mass amount of past and present crises in the world. Whether these crises be environmental, war-related, or political, there is one common theme: people are in pain. People from the western hemisphere to the eastern hemisphere have experienced the same problems: having no place to live, losing a family member, or being in debt. It is true that everyone may deal with these issues differently, but there is still a global unity in persevering together. Global crises like the ones students stated affect everyone, even the people who did not see it nor feel it, still know the event happened and affected them emotionally; this also contributes to a widespread sense of power and strength. That one feeling can spark a revolution, an era of change. Everyone’s different opinions and thoughts have the capacity to come together and create solutions to these problems. By asking students about such crises and solutions, we hope to feed the flame and encourage them to think deeper about how they can have an impact. future. Going to a protest, signing a petition, or starting a letter-writing campaign, each little act is one step closer to a brighter future for us all.



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HUMANITY

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