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## MAINSTREAM Policy

The Mainstream is a public forum that is published monthly by the students of Paint Branch High School. Every effort has been made by the staff to ensure that the news is accurate and free of bias. Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published as space allows. All letters are subject to laws governing obscenity, libel, privacy, and disruption of the school process, as are all contents of the paper. All letters should be submitted to advisor Brian Woodward in room 3301 or sent to Paint Branch High School, 14121 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD 20866. To contact the Mainstream via e-mail send correspondence to: Mr. Woodward at: [brian\\_woodward@mcpsmd.org](mailto:brian_woodward@mcpsmd.org)

## County Council Proposes The Crown Act

BEVERLY YIRENKYI  
STAFF WRITER

The CROWN Act, which stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, is a proposal introduced by Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando and Council President Nancy Navarro. This bill, when passed, means that no one can be specifically discriminated against within the work field based on their hair style. It will endorse the idea of equal opportunity within our county.

Jawando and Navarro introduced the bill on Tuesday, September 24. According to Jawando, his goal for the bill is to eliminate discrimination within the workforce of Montgomery County. Jawando told Elle Meyers of *The Sentinel*, "Montgomery County is a majority-minority county with over half the population identifying as people of color....At over 200,000 women and girls, Black and Hispanic women account for the highest number of ethnic populations in Montgomery County. In the context of discrimination, hair-style policies are used as a tool to discriminate against Black and Hispanic women in the workplace."



County Council member Will Jawando.

Without protection, women of color who are employed within our community could still be subjected to discrimination within the workforce due to their selected hairstyle.

### EDUCATION

## The College Board Exerts its Control Changes Affect Registration, Classroom

CAITLYN NEILS  
CENTER EDITOR

Almost all high schoolers have interacted with the College Board at least once in their high school careers. The non-profit organization is responsible for administering exams like the SATs and PSATs, which can, arguably, sway your higher education plans.

As the world changes, so does the College Board as it adjusts all tests for relevancy each year. Annual changes can be as simple as a change in name or a content change like this year's AP World curriculum which cut out hundreds of years from their course, starting from 1200 BCE rather than the previous start date of 8000 BCE.

The biggest of all these changes for the 2019-20 school year is the exam registration date, which (moved from mid-February to mid-November). This wasn't a random adjustment, however, as the College Board tested the date change during the 2017-18 registration period with 40,000 students in an attempt to evaluate the effect of early registration. The results, according to the College Board, revealed an all-around increase in scores. An increase in scores means college credit for more students, so the move-up seemingly had nothing but a positive effect on students.

In fact, underrepresented minority students in the test group saw a rise of 12% while white and Asian student scores rose by 5%, respectively. Additionally, low-income student scores increased by a considerable 20%, while middle to high income student scores rose by only 4%.

The 40,000 students who the College Board piloted the program with accounted for just 1.4% of the 2,808,990 students who registered for AP Exams in 2017-18. While being only a small percentage, the non-profit organization deemed the 1.4% to be enough to transition into a nationwide early registration date.

However, while these positive changes look good on paper, critics note that the numbers don't take into account first-time AP takers who can be hesitant to take such a long exam. By February, students have a good idea about their AP courses and whether they believe they'll do well in May, but a November date forces students to make a decision based on a measly two months.

Prisca Adasi, a junior



who had taken only one exam last year, questions why the change ever happened because a February date is easier to work with. Additionally, Jecoliah Kiflu, a junior who had taken one exam so far but this year is juggling three, believes the date pressures you to make an informed choice because you have to make your decision before first semester is over, which is not enough time. With taking three exams, paying over \$200 is harder to manage by this earlier date, as it's hard for families to gather this on top of other end-of-the-year payments.

For those who want more help, another addition this year from the College Board is AP Classroom which could be the answer to those prayers. AP Classroom is provided as a resource for teachers to give College Board-approved practice for students to gauge their understanding of course-related content. The program provides students a timeline for assignments to keep them

on track for exam season with creative tasks that can range from multiple choice questions to recording answers and taking pictures for teachers.

Some teachers who have already used AP Classroom ran into some minor troubles that they hoped would be worked out by now. AP World teacher Ms Lueck is hopeful that the kinks will be worked out soon. She notes that while she is aware of the eventual "learning curve" for students to use the technology, she (along with the other AP World teachers) still plans to integrate AP Classroom into the curriculum this year.

Finally, another addition this year to also ease troubles are custom ID labels for each student taking an AP exam. No longer will a student spend fifteen minutes bubbling in information during an exam, allowing testing to run smoother and faster for all.

Rolling out the changes across America can be tricky. The College Board had once observed an adversity score for SAT takers - an unseen score that rated a student based on challenges they might face - but after a year, quickly abandoned it in favor of a new program called Landscape. Hopefully, in a year's time, we'll see whether or not these changes last.

## Summer in Japan PB Sends 5 to Saga, Kyoto

MARIA POULOS  
GUEST WRITER

This summer, five Paint Branch students and their Japanese teacher, Mrs. Korn, travelled to two cities in Japan, stayed in a small town with host families, and went to a Japanese school. The group may have begun their journey to Japan in late-June, but the process actually started much earlier as months of planning, fundraising, and organizing took place leading up to the trip.

Students were elated to say that they got a chance to go to Japan. "The fact that this was actually possible was unbelievable," said 9th grader Leah. The trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity to not only go to Japan but to also experience aspects of Japanese life. Living with host families during the trip was quite an experience for students. For each traveler, the host family became their real family and each student said that they will continue to communicate with them. Living with strangers taught them a type of kindness that will last a lifetime.



Five PB Students visited Japan this summer.

HEALTH

**Dangerous Lead & Red Meat**

Health, whether physical or mental, is one of the most important aspects of people's lives. Every day brings new information, new studies, and new theories that can have substantial impact on one's lifestyle.

**Red Meat Not so Dangerous?** For years, people have been told that consuming red meat is damaging to their bodies and that overconsumption could lead to various diseases. However, despite the warning, Americans still "eat meat in quantities that are double the global average" reports James Hamblin of *The Atlantic*. Still, despite the analysis, this is not an excuse to eat large heapings of red meat, especially since many medical organizations continue to caution people to eat meat in moderation.

**EPA Sets New Lead Rule.** People have also been told about the dangers of lead in drinking water. This reached its apex in 2015 in Flint, Michigan where dangerous levels of lead in the drinking water caused severe health issues. According to Stephanie Ebbs of *ABC News*, the issue is still a concern, including situations that require "medical intervention" and lead to mental and physical delays and diseases. Lead transfers into the drinking water through lead pipes, which carry water to residences. Although the number of people exposed to lead in their drinking water is not as high as in previous decades, the severity of the issue remains. There have been efforts to combat this problem, including, according to Ebbs' report, a new rule set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that looks to "reduce exposure to lead from drinking water around the country" in various manners. The government agency's rule will hopefully see results in the near future.

- ANGEL BENJAMIN

CLIMATE

**The Amazon is Burning**

What once was a symphony of bird songs has been interrupted by a band of crackling flames. Smokes obscure the canopy as trees stand ablaze. This is what the Amazon rainforest's residents see, all creatures alike.

Over the summer, the world's eyes were on Brazil and the beloved rainforest as news spread of the ecosystem being on fire. According to the *BBC News* staff, conservationists believe that the fires were caused by illegal methods of deforestation, considering the relationship between mining and logging industries and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro. He is actively accused of being lenient on environmental protection in the Amazon, allowing the cutting of trees in order to make room for farms.

The *Washington Post's* Terrence McCoy reported that "the amount of fires that have destroyed the Brazilian area of the rainforest have drastically decreased from "roughly 31,000 fires" to "20,000 fires" during September, as given by Brazil's National Institute for Space Research. This could be due to government intervention and rainfall. Despite the "35 percent drop" in the number of fires since August, this does not satisfy those who fear for the Amazon. It is evidenced that rainforests are crucial elements in fighting the world's climate change battle. Deforestation, especially in the Amazon, worries climate scientists.

The World Wildlife Fund, as reported by *CNN's* Leah Asmelash, explains that the ecosystem is known for its great possession of carbon, containing between "90 to 140 billion metric tons." If all of this was to be released into the Earth's atmosphere, there would be "devastating results." Experts agree that the sheer number of fires that have occurred in the region leaves the Amazon with a future that will require centuries of recovery to even get close to mending the damage.

- ANGEL BENJAMIN

SPACE

**U.S. Navy Confirms UFOs**

Is there life beyond Earth? This is a tricky but simple question asked by all of mankind. The universe is a giant and virtually unknown place with billions of "what if's," including whether aliens actually exist or not.

Or, perhaps, that is no longer in question.

Recently, the world became a step closer to learning the truth about a topic that has stumped them for years: UFOs. Ariel phenomenon, more popularly known as unidentified flying objects (UFO), is the belief in mysterious objects or phenomena that can't be explained by science and are widely claimed as extraterrestrial spacecraft. Videos of UFOs have crossed television screens and the internet for years. The debate over their authenticity has raged for just as long. It wasn't until recently that the United States Navy confirmed that some of the decade old videos are indeed real.

The belief of aliens existing and visiting earth has skyrocketed in the weeks since the navy acknowledged this. According to *CNN's* Eric Levenson, "The US Navy just acknowledged that three clips of declassified military footage released between 2017 and 2018 are actually 'unidentified aerial phenomena' -- their words, not ours." All of this has taken the world's curiosity about UFOs and the universe to the next level.

With this new information, people are now more than ever pondering questions like "What is exactly beyond earth?" "Do aliens actually exist?" and "What else is the government hiding?" Add to these questions new concerns over public safety and you've got a topic that has captured everyone's attention.

- DIAMOND SCOTT

**MD Raises Age for Tobacco and Nicotine  
Some See Law as Response  
to Vaping Concerns**

ISRAEL WHITE  
STAFF WRITER

On October 1st, the Maryland bill raising the legal age to buy tobacco and nicotine products from 18 to 21 years of age went into effect. As of this date, purchasing any of the following products under the age of 21 is prohibited by law: vape pens and all electronic smoking devices, liquids used in them, cigarettes, filters, pipes, and rolling papers.

The law, however, stipulates that active military personnel aged 18-20 who can provide a valid military identification card upon purchasing tobacco products, are the only group exempt from the new laws. According to the *Military Times*, State Senator Michael Houghes who proposed this exception argued, "people in the military, if they're 19 or 20, can't smoke a cigarette or a cigar, to me was an affront."

With the trend of e-cigarettes rising over the past decade, the Maryland Department of Health has seen a substantial increase in tobacco usage by young adults. According to the Maryland Department of Health website, Secretary Robert Neall claims that "most smokers start when they are underage and their brains are still developing. This can quickly lead to nicotine addiction and also make them more susceptible to other addictions."

While vaping is considered a safer alternative to cigarettes, it is still not safe; nicotine is the main agent of both. Michael Blaha of John Hopkins Medicine reports that as a result this, the nicotine in e-cigarettes, vaping causes a craving for nicotine and can result in withdrawal symptoms as well. The craving and symptoms from vaping are noted as having the potential to be as severe as those resulting from smoking cigarettes.

Maryland is now one of the 18 states to have passed legislation raising the legal age to buy tobacco and nicotine, and more are predicted to do the same. However, according to *The Baltimore Sun* writer Pamela Wood, the FDA is pushing further and "plans to take flavored products off the market and require companies to have them reviewed and approved before selling them."



**Passing of Our Panthers (continued from p. 1)**

relay races, and also did the long jump. Coach Dillard described her as an athlete who played a key role on the team. "She was very helpful and dependable," said Coach Dillard, "I was looking forward to using her for leadership on the girls team the upcoming year."

A memorial was held at the track a day before school started and it gave a chance for the track team, including alumni, and parents to remember Halimatou. A poster was made in her honor, stories were shared, and bubbles were blown to spread her positive energy. Every practice and race this season will be dedicated to her as a commitment to perform well because she would've done the same.

While the PB Community was still reeling from the loss of Halimatou, just three weeks later, on August 17th at around 3:40 am, Damion Callery, Jr. from the Class of 2019 died after being shot twice during a home invasion.

According to Montgomery County Police, "The initial investigation by detectives determined that Callery, Jr. encountered an armed suspect or suspects in the backyard of his residence [in Burtonsville] and was shot." Montgomery County Police

still have the case under investigation.

He played on Unity, a local football team in the Silver Spring area, upon entering high school and then played on Paint Branch's JV football team as a running back for part of his high school career. "It was always evident that he had a passion for football; he was a natural at it," said Paint Branch Varsity Head Coach Mike Nesmith.

Damion, "Damo" to his peers, was planning to attend Bowie State University to study business and marketing. His warm, friendly soul made him a well-liked person by his peers and a person who was loved by his friends. A candlelight memorial service was held the evening following his death at the Greencastle Park and Ride. Friends and family came out to grieve and commemorate his life by lighting candles spelling out his name.

The Montgomery County Police Department released a flyer seeking information from the public concerning Damion's murder, which includes up to a \$10,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest of his killer(s). This search for information was not, however, without controversy as shortly after the flyer was released,

several posts turned up on Twitter commenting on the image of Damion that the police used.

The image, an unsmiling Damion whom some referred to more as a mug shot than a heartfelt photo, was used in place of a more suitable image such as one of him smiling in his graduation attire or football jersey. To many, this image made the poster look too much like it was portraying him as a suspect instead of a victim in his own murder.

Paint Branch English teacher Mr. Christopher Ellis watched Damion grow as a student at both Benjamin Banneker Middle School and Paint Branch. Mr. Ellis was disappointed by the flyer but not surprised by the image and presentation of Damion because, he notes, "that it happens too often with young, black males."

Mr. Ellis continued, saying "I think it's important that we remember these victims, like Damion. Victims of tragedy are not statistics. Damion struggled, like many young men do, with himself as a middle schooler only to persevere and emerge with excellence at the end of his life. It is a shame that was not accurately represented in the court of public opinion."

