



Mainstream



Volume 50, Issue 2

December, 2019

PB Perspectives Presents: *Twelfth Night*

photo by: Miss. Perkins



Natasha Dao (left), Mackenzie Ezegbunam (middle), and Lauren Gantman perform during Act 1, scene 5 of Perspectives' production of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

Paint Branch High School's theatre club, Perspectives, proved that they are able to tackle all things acting in their performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, a 17th-century romantic comedy. The story centers on twin characters, Viola (played by Natasha Dao) and Sebastian (Michelle Gutierrez), who are separated in a shipwreck. After the shipwreck, Viola disguises herself as a man and is renamed Cesario. "He" is then given a task from the Duke of Illyria, Orsino, to persuade Olivia (Lauren Gantman) to fall in love with Orsino. Olivia's companions encourage her to fall in love in the hope that it will distract her from mourning her brother and father. The plot comes alive when Olivia falls in love with Cesario instead.

Like any Shakespeare play, *Twelfth Night* was difficult for audiences to follow because of its sophisticated language. A simple statement such as "I am tired" translates to "I am not restful" in Shakespeare. Students spend an entire class period deciphering two paragraphs of Shakespeare, so one can imagine a student audience - and many adults as well - trying to decode a Shakespeare play in real-time. Quite a challenge! Although many had only a vague grasp of what the characters were discussing on stage, the actors compensated by intentionally being overdramatic with hand motions and voice inflections. It would be wrong to not publically applaud characters such as Clown/Feste (Mary Shawhan), Toby (Annie Petersen), Maria (Mackenzie Ezegbunham), and Andrew Aguecheek (Jonathen Lopez) for their incredibly engaging and lively performances. Members of Perspectives truly brought their characters to life.

When asked about her experience working with such an advanced play, Mary Shawhan exclaimed that "one of the challenges was that [they] weren't able to rely on the words to get [their] message across," instead actors have to "work through inflections and movements."

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Climate Change Exacts its Toll on Ecosystems

ANGEL BENJAMIN
NEWS EDITOR

Everyday, trees are ripped from their stumps, separated from their homes to make way for construction sites, roadways, or other projects deemed necessary. This is not breaking news nor is it surprising since climate change and its effects continue to be seen and felt all over the globe.

Although climate change is a common topic of discussion, many may not understand what the term actually refers to, often confusing it with global warming, which is simply the planet's temperature increasing. NASA defines climate change as "the broader range of changes" that are occurring in the environment. The evidence of these changes are usually covered by the media when intense tropical storms ravage coastal areas, rising sea levels affect populations, and frequent wildfires ravage forests.



An increase in wildfires is just one of many issues facing earth's ecosystems due to climate change. (Image credit: USFWS/Gerald Vickers)

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The U.S. Education System *From Progress to Decline*

ALANA CAMPBELL
OPINIONS EDITOR

During the last week of October, nationwide test scores revealed a downward trend that's concerning to many education officials, perhaps most notably, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), commonly referred to as the National Report Card, has been used annually since the early 1990s as a tool to measure the current state of America's education system. Roughly 600,000 students in grades 4 and 8 are tested from every state and Washington, D.C.

In this year's report, only D.C and Mississippi saw substantial score improvements for both reading and math. Nationwide, reading scores fell with 4th-grade scores declining in 17 states and 8th-grade scores declining in 38. Math saw more mixed results, with certain states increasing slightly, and others dropping by just as much, leading to a mostly stagnant average. The report also revealed that two-thirds of American students can't read at a proficient level, and declines occurred in both high and low achieving students. These results are the continuation of a 2-year downward trend and generally stagnant progress that experts are concerned about overall. Peggy Carr, the associate commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), told Lauren Camera of US News and World Report that the 3 point drop in 8th graders' results is "a very meaningful decline."

From the 1990s to 2015, U.S. students made considerable progress with 4th graders improving 27 points in math and 6 in reading,

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Journalism 1

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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@mcpmsd.org

2020 School Calendar Brings Change (again)

SALINA PETROS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MCPS released its calendar for the 2020-2021 school year which reveals a sudden change that may not be very welcome news for students. According to the MCPS press release, in 2020-2021 students will move back to beginning school before Labor Day as the first day of classes is slated for Monday, August 31, 2020.

In a long discussion by the Board of Education and other elected officials, the board finalized a calendar that they feel provides the mandated amount of instructional days for teachers and students, and that takes into consideration days off for religious holidays.

According to *Washington Post* reporter Donna St. George, one issue that was of concern to Muslim parents was a conflict between the holiday of Eid al-Fitr and AP testing. "Helping to clear the way was a decision by the College Board to create extra testing options: Advanced Placement tests planned for May 13 would be given a second time, on May 18, to support students observing the holiday..." reported St. George. "Muslim parents and students had pressed for the day off, citing the holiday's importance and issues of fairness."

As far as other days off, the new MCPS calendar calls for days off to coincide with two Jewish holidays and a string of days around Christmas and Easter.

The change back to starting before Labor Day comes on the heels of the state legislature's override of Governor Larry Hogan's veto of a bill that undid Hogan's 2016 Executive Order, which mandated that schools begin after Labor Day and end classes no later than June 15th.

Future Women in Business Conference at UMD

GIODONA CAMPBELL
STAFF WRITER

On November 22, Paint Branch's Finance Academy was invited to Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland for the seventh annual "Future Women in Business Conference." The conference encourages young women who are enrolled in the finance academy at their school, to further their education in the business field.

Upon arrival at Maryland, attendees were directed to an area where breakfast was provided. After breakfast, everyone was directed to the auditorium where they welcomed the event's keynote speaker, Nicole Lopez. Lopez, a 2017 graduate of the Smith School of Business received a warm welcome as the attendees anxiously awaited her remarks. She shared her experiences working and being a part of the business field. She also talked about her transition into the professional world, which she described as a time of "self-discovery."

After the speech, attendees met Lopez, and then were presented their case competition for the day. The case competition was based on a company that sells ice cream cakes in Mason jars called "Jars by Dani." The company was founded by 2012 Smith alum Dani Beckerman. Attendees had four hours to disperse into their assigned teams and come up with a cohesive business plan to improve aspects of the business. Teams discussed areas including marketing, supply chain, accounting, and how to attack a competitive landscape.

After four hours, the teams were brought back together in the auditorium for the final round. During this final round, teams had the opportunity to present for everyone, including the CEO of Jars. After the last set of presentations, lunch was served. As the program ended, organizers announced the winning team, which received a bag of Maryland gear.

Climate Change (continued from p. 1)

Earth's ecosystems are constantly damaged by these forces, and are one of the biggest victims of climate change.

As biology class explained, numerous organisms (both living and nonliving) coexist and interact to survive, forming systems of interdependence and life known as ecosystems. Generally, when one ecosystem is harmed, the biome it resides in is also affected. *National Geographic* describes biomes as "large sections of land, sea, and atmosphere" in which various ecosystems can be found. Coral reefs are aquatic biomes threatened by tropical storms, while forests are terrestrial biomes affected by large wildfires. Over time, this damage will build up and lead to the collapse of multiple ecosystems.

Also affected within those systems will be thousands of species which may vanish as their habitats are no longer suitable for their survival. Of course, as has been the case throughout earth's 4.5 billion years, these ecosystems will naturally rebuild themselves. However, this process can take centuries to complete and the impacts of the devastation would have already taken their toll.

Unfortunately, some ecosystems and biomes are more susceptible than others. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describes how climate change can cause a "cumulative impact" on areas already injured by

"human stressors." Overfishing and pollution have caused significant problems including suffocating marine animals and draining marine populations, both of which threaten the precious conditions of biodiversity. While evidence shows that humanity's involvement has caused severe marks on the Earth's health, people have more so advanced the natural processes of the world – in a negative way – than directly cause them, at least not all of them.

Ever since the Industrial Age, factories have poisoned the atmosphere, while oil spills have severely damaged numerous marine habitats. The list of issues caused to ecosystems by humans is limitless. Yet, what can one do to alter the impact or slow the process of climate change?

With recycling and solar panels, environmentalists and scientists believe that stricter action must be taken to combat and remedy the consequences of human actions. The biggest impact, experts agree, must come from governments and influential industries.

To have a true impact on ecosystems requires a shift in the economies and societal

habits of large nations such as China and the United States, especially those that consume heavy amounts of natural resources. For example, nations – including the U.S. – could protect forests through limitations on logging, and could loosen their dependence on fossil fuels by focusing on a stronger infrastructure of solar and wind energy.

A shift to renewable energy as a main source would greatly impact mining and logging industries and require the participation of world leaders and governments, one country at a time. The European Union, though, have proven that such a task is not impossible especially since Britain had committed to a goal of being coal-free as an energy source. Not only does it lead to a "net-zero carbon economy" as *The Guardian's* Niko Kommenda reports but it also limits further contributions to climate change. Scientists and environmentalists alike are desperately trying to slow down the effects of climate change, both on the planet as a whole and endangered areas.

Despite their studies, research, and findings, large

industries and nations alike are struggling to understand the severity of the situation, and the existence at stake.

As economies, societies, and governments continue to engage with fossil fuels and greenhouse gases, the more carbon dioxide is emitted. Glen Hendrix, from *Medium* (a social journalist platform), explains how the world's current atmospheric carbon dioxide levels has not been this great since the Pliocene period, where "seas were 100 feet higher" and there was "very little ice" in which the carbon dioxide levels back are estimated to have been "over 400 ppm". Hendrix estimates that humanity's actions, if continued, will lead to "475 ppm by the year 2043".

In this context, many advocates of the earth appreciate the deliberate action of one citizen when serving to protect the world whether that be as simple as picking up floating debris in a nearby pond or protesting a construction project.

As *National Geographic* notes: the solutions are there, it's just up to humanity to utilize them.

***“Over time, this damage will build up
and lead to the collapse of
multiple ecosystems.”***

HEALTH

Life Expectancy Decreases

After decades of increase, the life expectancy rate in the United States has been on a notable decline for the past three years. According to a recent study by Steven Woolf, a professor of Family Medicine and Population Health, and Heidi Schoomaker, an Eastern Virginia Medical School researcher, drug overdoses, suicides, and organ system diseases are heavily responsible for the decrease.

According to their study, “Life Expectancy and Mortality Rates in the United States, 1959-2017,” these specific causes have been linked to “young and middle-aged adults of all racial groups.”

CNBC writer Uptin Saadi examined these findings in his article “US Life Expectancy Has Been declining Here’s Why” and found from 2006 to 2016, death rates for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis increased by 7.9% for men and 11.4% for women. He also found that from July of 2016 to September of 2017, opioid overdoses increased by 30%, and that from 1999 to 2017, the national suicide rate increased by 33%.

Washington Post writer Lenny Bernstein reported on the study and spoke to Joshua Sharfstein, former secretary of health in Maryland and current vice dean of public health practice at Johns Hopkins. Sharfstein said, “I think this is a very dismal picture of health in the United States. Life expectancy is improving in many places in the world. It shouldn’t be declining in the United States.”

- ISRAEL WHITE

POLITICS

Harris Drops Bid for Presidency

On December 3rd, in a somewhat surprising move, California Senator Kamala Harris dropped out of the Democratic Presidential race. Harris, who at one-time was seen as a top tier candidate, had dropped, registering in only the low single digits.

In an announcement to her supporters published by *The New York Times*, Harris said, “My campaign for president simply doesn’t have the financial resources we need to continue...But I want to be clear with you: I am still very much in this fight.”

Times reporters Astead W. Herndon, Shane Goldmacher, and Jonathan Martin noted that “Her departure removes a prominent woman of color from a field that started as the most racially diverse ever in a Democratic primary, and raises the prospect that this month’s debate in Los Angeles will feature no candidates who aren’t white.”

At the beginning of her campaign, Harris was seemingly loved by the public. One reason for this was that her campaign provided a chance at history as a victory would make her the first woman of color, to earn a major party presidential nomination.

As time passed, social media scrutiny of the candidate began and information about Harris began to flood timelines. Her connections to mass incarceration as an Attorney General and District Attorney came to light.

According to *Vox*, after a dissection of Senator Harris’ past, her stance on mass incarceration created issues for her. “She pushed for programs that helped people find jobs instead of putting them in prison, but also fought to keep people in prison even after they were proved innocent. She refused to pursue the death penalty against a man who killed a police officer, but also defended California’s death penalty system in court. She implemented training programs to address police officers’ racial biases, but also resisted calls to get her office to investigate certain police shootings.”

- MAINSTREAM STAFF

SCIENCE

Solar Probe Nears Sun

With a space theory in hand and a solar probe destined for the sun, scientists are excited to learn more about the heart of the solar system.

In August 2018, NASA launched the Parker Solar Probe, a probe specially designed to withstand high temperatures. Named after Eugene Parker, who theorized the existence of the solar wind, the spacecraft was crafted to understand the energy of the sun’s corona (the outermost part of the sun’s atmosphere) and its solar wind (the flow of charged particles from the sun), the key aspects that constitute the star’s atmosphere.

The probe uses Venus as a point to move its orbit closer towards the sun, with the end goal of being within four million miles of its blazing surface in the next five years. Currently, the probe has provided scientists with data about the presence of magnetic fields and energy waves in the solar wind.

NASA hopes that the probe’s mission will lead to revolutionary information, shifting the world’s understanding of solar energy and activity. The probe’s findings and data are also expected to reveal answers to long-standing questions about the temperature of the star’s atmosphere and the power source of its solar wind.

Scientists believe that the probe and its discoveries will help contribute to the protection of Earth’s artificial satellites and of the planet itself from future space-weather events.

- ANGEL BENJAMIN

CollegeTracks:
A New Program for Success

ISRAEL WHITE
STAFF WRITER

With college edging closer every day, the application and financial aid process can quickly get confusing, overwhelming, and just overall stressful. No one wants to be left staggering under the pressure of paperwork, decisions, and deadlines. However, this year a new program, CollegeTracks, has joined the Paint Branch community to help.

According to Ms. Barclay, the Director of this college access program, CollegeTracks primarily serves low-to-moderate income, first-generation-to-college, immigrant, and minority students as they navigate through the college process. The program provides students with the necessary information and guidance to ensure that this preparatory step for the upcoming transition is clear and stress-free. CollegeTracks assists students in searching for colleges, applying for scholarships, and organizing any testing plans for SAT and ACT.

CollegeTracks is not only present at Paint Branch High School but in other Montgomery County schools such as Bethesda Chevy Chase, Wheaton, Watkins Mill, and Quince Orchard. The program will likely be branching out to other schools in the county as well.

Any juniors who are interested are more than welcome to join. There are no grade point average or test score stipulations and those who enroll enjoy the benefit of CollegeTrack’s assistance as they transition into senior year. CollegeTracks offers rolling admissions and there is no maximum amount of students allowed to be a part of the program. For the registration form and any additional information visit the office in Room 2236 from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm any weekday but Wednesday. For more information, students can also contact or call Mr. Peter Marsden - Program Director of CollegeTracks at Paint Branch at marsden@collegetracksusa.org (240-813-3847).

Celebrating Achievement
AP Event Acknowledges Some of
PB’s Hardest Working Students

CAITLYN NEILS
CENTER EDITOR

Last school year, Paint Branch students took over 1100 AP exams in a wide array of courses. While these test numbers reveal a small drop from the previous year (from 1223 to 1179), they still represent a strong representation of challenging coursework for PB students.

Each year, the College Board honors students for their performance on the AP exams, taking into consideration both their yearly scores and cumulative scores over their time in high school. After examining students’ performance, they present them with awards such as AP Scholar, AP Scholar with Honors, AP Scholar with Distinction and more. To celebrate this achievement, the Paint Branch administration congratulated these students on November 27th with an AP Award assembly, commending 82 students for their hard work. Friends and classmates were able to watch and cheer for those who achieved these lofty titles. However, for many in attendance, one question remained: what do they all mean?

When a student takes an AP exam in May, it is graded and then given a score between one and five, which is sent back in July. The College Board registers this score and tracks student achievement. The result is that after taking at least three exams, a person becomes eligible for the AP Scholar award, which is

granted if they received a passing score of 3 on three of those exams.

The next level is the AP Scholar with Honors award which is given to students who have scored 3 on four exams and recorded an average score of 3.25 on all exams taken. Paint Branch boasts an average of 3.63 for the group of students who received this designation.

The final honor from College Board is the AP Scholars with Distinction award. Students earning this award received passing scores on at least five exams while recording at least a 3.5 average on all of their exams.

There is a final honor that students can earn from College Board called National AP Scholar award. This is normally awarded after graduation, and requires students to earn an average score of at least 4 on all exams taken, and earned a score of at least 4 on at least eight exams. From the class of 2019, only one student - David Burgess - earned this award, but in the class of 2020, there are ten Paint Branch’s students are in line to gain the title.

Overall, while fewer tests are being taken, students are excelling. Students seem to be working hard and earning higher scores as averages have jumped and more AP Scholars are named. For Paint Branch that means more opportunity. The school can pride itself on such a studious population, while the student

body is able to explore harder classes and topics not explored in core classes.

Paint Branch offers 19 AP classes, but students are offered the flexibility to take any of the 38 exams that College Board offers. Additionally, students can take as many AP exams as they wish but PB AP Coordinator Mr. Gerber discourages this track because of the stress that can come with studying and the weight of multiple exams.

As for the celebration of AP student achievement, Mr. Gerber emphasizes that it is not only important to commend these students for their work, but encourage those who sat in the audience. “Most of the kids sitting on the stage probably thought no way I could get this, but it’s meant to show them that anything’s possible,” he affirms.

Mr. Gerber also notes that teachers gain a sense of accomplishment when students earn the score they were shooting for or were unsure they could achieve. “A teacher cherishes when a student does get that five,” Mr. Gerber explains, “or if the student was struggling, shot for a 2, and was satisfied with getting a 2, the teacher feels satisfied with themselves.”

The goal for PB, according to Mr. Gerber, is to get most, if not all Paint Branch Panthers to experience at least one AP course and challenge themselves.

Calling All Writers:

It is time to SIGN UP for JOURNALISM!

If you like to write but are tired of the same old English essays, join JOURNALISM!

Sign up for *Beginning* or *Advanced Journalism* during registration, which starts this week (December 18th).



The Political Importance of Joker



ALANA CAMPBELL
COLUMNIST

Prior to its release, *Joker* was slammed by film critics for its edgy subject matter, and many journalists warned audiences of the potential mass-violence that the film could incite. Of course, no actual violence occurred as a result of *Joker*. Despite all of its pre-release anxiety, the standalone DC film has had unprecedented box office success, breaking the record for highest-grossing R-rated film of all time in just its fourth week. The remarkable popularity of this film suggests that audiences aren't just interested in watching the typical action blockbuster, and are willing — even eager — to watch films that challenge their assumptions.

Although it wasn't flawless, *Joker* was an emotional rollercoaster with scenes ranging from exhilarating to unnerving to heart-breaking. But most impressively, it was unique in the ways it diverged from typical movies of its genre. For most superhero movies, the ending is extremely important; you watch to see who wins the war and who dies along the way, but, in *Joker*, if you're at all familiar with the character, you already know the ending. You're watching to figure out the why; what factors made that outcome inevitable? Director Todd Phillips and his co-screenwriter Scott Silver had the daunting task of trying to work backwards from a widely known character, creating a convincing backstory as well as providing an explanation for the monster he became. But this film didn't just show one character's development, it made audiences look at the role societal norms and politics that play in the creation of real-life villains.

Many critics labeled the film "problematic" for encouraging audiences to have sympathy for a "bad guy" in a time of ever-growing mass violence. But the suggestion that most of society's "villains" are products of the very society they terrorize isn't a defense of their actions; it helps us understand them — which can only be a good thing. These people, though they've done terrible things, deserve our sympathy not just for their sake but for ours. By refusing to understand why they are the way they are, we allow more people to fall victim to that self-destruction. No one's born a villain, they become one, and if we did more to prevent that, we wouldn't have a mass-violence problem.

Phillips' interpretation of Joker's origin story diverges wildly from the original — so much so that it's essentially a different character — which begs the question, why? The answer comes when the credits roll and the audience realizes that this movie is about much more than Joker. Phillips had an important message to share and an ingenious way to do it: draw audiences in with a big name; leave them with a new perspective. The film's success suggests that this goal was successful on both fronts. Franchise films and Disney reboots tend to dominate the box office, and while there's nothing wrong with entertainment, these aren't the types of movies that have a lasting impact. Just by its ability to dominate public discourse for as long as it did, *Joker* has proven that it is that kind of movie.

The Critical Element of Hair Porosity

Do you ever wonder why your hair dries so fast? No matter how much hair grease and moisturizer you coat it with, it feels like dead grass the next day. Well, this is probably happening because you don't know one of the most essential pieces of information about your hair: its porosity.

Hair porosity is a measure of the flexibility of your hair cuticle which is the outermost part of your hair shaft. It detects how long and the amount of moisture your hair can retain, in addition to how often moisture passes in and out of your hair strands.

Many people with coarse, textured hair tend to get frustrated because their hair dries out so fast and it's usually because they are unaware of their hair porosity. Knowing your hair porosity can aid in determining what products to use on your hair. In fact, learning the porosity of your hair means saving money as you will, ultimately, cut down your spending on products that may not work on your hair.

An article on *NaturallyCurly.com* explains the two methods you can use to find out your hair porosity: the first one is called the Float Test. For this test, you take a strand of hair and drop it into a bowl of water. Then you let it sit for 2-4 minutes. If the strand of hair floats, you have low porosity. If it's slightly submerged in the water, then it's medium porosity. If it sinks to the bottom, you have high porosity. The second method is called the Slip 'n Slide Test. For this test, you take a strand of hair and slide your fingers up the shaft. If you feel little bumps along the way, this means that your cuticle is lifted and that you have high porosity. If your fingers slip smoothly through the strand, then you have low porosity hair.

High porosity hair people have the most trouble keeping in moisture because the cuticle is always lifted. A key tip to keep in mind if you have high porosity hair: when rinsing the conditioner out of your hair, rinse with cold water to close the cuticle. As for low porosity hair people, which is what my hair is, we have to make sure our cuticle is open when we're about to apply products. To do that, wet your hair with warm water when you are about to apply conditioner and lukewarm water when rinsing.

Even though your hair's porosity is mostly due to genetics, other factors can contribute as well. According to Healthline, these factors include: "Blow drying, bleaching, straightening, overwashing, and using harsh products..." This source also states that "too much ultraviolet [the sun] exposure can also increase the porosity of your hair. To protect your hair from the sun, wear a hat or some type of head covering when you're outdoors." No matter what the porosity of your hair is, handling your kinks with proper care and a daily dosage of moisture will make it thrive.



GIODONA CAMPBELL
COLUMNIST

Technology at its Finest: Introducing Virtual Power Plants



DIAMOND SCOTT
COLUMNIST

We all know the wonders of technology and its huge involvement in our lives - both the good and the bad. As we enter a new era, technology continues to evolve and is now making it possible to combat our biggest enemy yet, global warming.

The reason this is possible is because of a new invention called Virtual Power Plant Technology (VPP). This new tech is a huge advancement for humans because it presents the possibility that we will no longer need to depend on the weather for renewable energy. This is because VPP stores the electricity that's supplied from renewable sources, so even when the sun has said goodnight and the wind isn't blowing, we will still be able to use the energy stored in the plant.

A VPP, in the words of Next Kraftwerke, a company that operates one of Europe's largest VPPs, is "a virtual power plant is a network of decentralized, medium-scale power generating units such as wind farms, solar parks, and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units, as well as flexible power consumers and storage systems. The interconnected units are dispatched through the central control room of the Virtual Power Plant but nonetheless remain independent in their operation and ownership."

This showcases just how important the invention is and how it can change the way we live and function. According to Phil Taylor of National Centre for Energy Systems Integration in Newcastle, England, we will no longer need to carry fossil fuels in order to provide controllable energy.

The main goal of VPP is to recycle renewable energy in order to reduce grid consumption. Jahnvi Sajip, a Project Manager and Electrical Engineer at New York Engineers, states that the benefits include flexible configuration, power grid load reduction, and higher reliability. A quick summary of these three is that a VPP can expand by adding new distributed energy resources to its' virtual platform, energy flows are distributed in a way that reduces the load on power lines, and if an error affects one of the generation systems connected to the VPP, there's only a tiny loss of capacity.

This is a huge win for our world of innovation and technology, and it is also great knowing we aren't at a loss for combating global warming. So, as a new decade begins to make its appearance, hopefully VPP will become a worldwide phenomenon.

Humans are not Cancer: There's Still Hope for Our Existence.

These days, when one opens any news channel, they're bombarded with negative images about what is happening in our society, of moments that show our faults, of events that seem to signal a demonization of ourselves into individuals who are simply resentful towards our own existence.

These moments seem to provide the message that humans are nothing more today than destructive beings destroying the world. Sometimes, I even hear words either accompanying or following these stories that express some nihilistic statement about our existence not mattering in this vast space and universe, and how the world would just be better without us.

It's true to a certain extent that we've made errors in the past and even now we're doing a lot that is destructive and unjust. There's corruption, tribalism, destruction of the planet, inequality, war, and poverty. I'm not denying the existence of evil within our world - that would be too naive. However, the first noble truth of Buddhism is life is suffering, and that is probably the most profound truth there is. Life is hard and it's filled with malevolence, we all know that.

What's also true, is that there is goodness within us, and we're making significant strides in solving the issues that exist in our world and we are bringing some kind of light into the world. We're learning and changing as we move along, and we are doing so at a rapid rate. According to *Gapminder*, a Swedish non-profit that promotes sustainable global development, in the last 20 years, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has decreased by 50%. You probably didn't know that. They also state that 80% of humans now have access to some kind of electricity. The list of all of the things we have accomplished as humans in just the past few decades is much longer, but we too often focus only on what is wrong.

We never talk about these accomplishments, these successes. There are scientists, doctors, artists, and others who are trying their hardest to bring some kind of change. Millions of people have contributed their whole existence to bringing light and benevolence into the world. However, we're here generalizing our existence as some kind of cancer ravaging the world.

Maybe you can call me an optimist, but I truly believe there is an inherent goodness within us. I know we can be messy at times, and we're flawed, but it's important that we have a little bit of compassion and sympathy for ourselves. Most people are trying. Sure, we can talk about the malignance permeating our existence, but let's also talk about the other side of it. Let's talk about the part of our existence that is filled with a desire to love each other, care for one another and bring joy, art, beauty, and change into the world.



NIGUS GETAHUN
COLUMNIST

The Pisces Prophet: Dec. 14-Feb.14



SONCHEREE McCAMPBELL
FEAUTURES EDITOR

Congratulations! You’ve survived November’s Mercury retrograde. Let’s hope that this next period will be more gracious to you.

On December 20th, Venus will enter Aquarius, where it will stay for 18 ¾ days. Aquarius is the sign of originality, independence, and humanitarianism. Since Venus is the planet that rules romance and pleasure, relationships are expected to have a more unconventional approach. Instead of the standard date night, couples may get the urge to be more whimsical. Go stargaze or participate in volunteer work!

On December 22th, Capricorn season will begin. Capricorns are known to be practical, ambitious, and disciplined. These qualities will intensify when the Moon enters Capricorn on December

26th and when Mercury enters Capricorn for 7.3 days on December 29th. Mercury rules communication and expression, so professional interactions such as talking to authoritative figures or tackling your lifetime goals may seem less daunting during this time period.

The new year will start off strong on January 3rd, when Mars will enter Sagittarius, the sign of optimism, freedom, intellect, and straightforwardness. When encountering the planet associated with aggression and action - amongst other things - you may become restless, and have a desire for adventure. This will continue for 57.25 days.

On January 13th, Venus will enter Pisces, the sign of imagination, sensitivity and compassion. When encountering the planet of love and bliss, romance will be more dream-like. There will be more of an urge to settle down with a significant other.

On January 16th, Mercury will enter the sign of Aquarius. Original ideas will spring forward. Make sure to jot down your entrepreneurial thoughts because this will only last for 7.3 days!

On January 20th, Aquarius season will begin. Independence and freedom will be the main themes and will intensify on January 24th, when there will be a new moon in Aquarius. New moons symbolize beginnings. When in Aquarius, the ability to detach, network, and “think outside the box” will be stronger.

On February 3rd, Mercury enters Pisces. Logic within conversations will take the backseat while emotions and daydreams will run high. Becoming empathetic listeners will be second nature. It’s important to reflect and give yourself reality checks to avoid calamities!

On February 7th, Venus enters Aries, the sign of energy, courage, confidence, and quick-wittedness. There will be an urge to be in short-term, non-committal relationships. Remember that Venus will only be in this position for 18 ¾ days!

On February 9th, there will be a full moon in Leo, the sign of faithfulness, generosity, open-mindedness, and lovingness. Full moons represent growth, high power, and realizations. When encountering the full moon, you will gain clarity in self-awareness.

Find out what’s happening in the cosmos again on February 14th in the next edition of *Mainstream*!

Trinity’s Take: New Music

TRINITY GOPPY
FEATURES EDITOR

Swoozy Baby by Al Roger, Jr.
Rating: 5 stars

Be on the lookout for up and coming artist Al Rogers, Jr. This 25 year old Baltimore native has a sound that is a mix of neo-soul and a funky rap style that has made him quite popular in the Baltimore music scene. *Swoozy Baby*, his second album, expresses positive vibes, or swooz, as he likes to call it throughout. Rogers has a very diverse style and brings a unique twist to his artistry by incorporating his personal experiences while growing up in Baltimore and creating a blend of Baltimore club music and R&B influences.

Swoozy Baby, a 10 song album, shows off his versatile rap style that compliments his soulful and mellow voice throughout the album. Rogers brings a more mature and fun side to *Swoozy Baby* than his previous album, *BrightHeartedN***a*. This album’s production pulls listeners in by his beat-driven songs and the effortless transition of speeding up or slowing down or even crying out on a verse. *Swoozy Baby* shows Roger’s ability to incorporate clever word play on multiple verses that tell a story throughout each individual song.

Overall, this makes the album feel raw and energetic. You can hear the rawness and relaxation in his voice, that makes listeners vibrant. Standout tracks include, “This Ain’t A Love Song,” “Sumptin Strange” and “Spider in the Tesla.” Roger’s dynamic spirit makes the album idiosyncratic and this is why he is definitely going to bring something to the music industry that hasn’t been seen in years.

Over It by Summer Walker
Rating: 4 stars

Summer Walker is bringing soothing melodies to the charts with her new album, *Over It* (although the popularity of the album shows that she is far from over). Walker is becoming a voice for most women who are going through relationship issues and that makes her popular among the younger crowd. Walker has collaborated with PARTYNEXTDOOR, London on Da Track, Drake, Usher and many others in the industry. This shows that although she is new to the music industry, she is already making a name for herself. If she is doing this now, just imagine what she will do in years to come.

Over It, an 18 song album, reveals her artistic ability as she expresses her frustrations about men who refuse to acknowledge her existence on social media and in public. Walker’s voice pours smoothly into beats, making listeners feel connected even more with the album. Walker consistently shows her singing abilities to compile a mixture of emotions that exhibit authenticity throughout the album. Compared to her last album, *Last Day of Summer*, Walker has become more developed in her artistry which makes the current album so relatable. Standout tracks include, “Body,” “Playing Games,” and “Over It.” This will definitely not be the last time we will see Walker.

Al Youngboy 2 by Youngboy Never Broke Again
Rating: 5 stars

Teenage rapper NBA Youngboy is probably the most relatable rapper in society today. His music is filled with pent-up aggression and anxiety that makes most teens relate to what he is going through. Youngboy came onto the music scene in 2015 and since then he has been showing more and more growth. His collaborations include Kevin Gates, Dababy, Future and many others.

Al Youngboy 2, a 15 song album, demonstrates Youngboy’s ability to incorporate his blend of personal trauma and treacherous relationships that makes listeners listen closely to his lyrics and relate. Youngboy shows his structured writing skills because although he is talking about what he is going through, he is not unhinged. Youngboy often changes his delivery from scarred to vulnerable.

Overall, this album is one of his best because he dives into heartbreak that most artists are not willing to talk about. Standout tracks include, “Lonely Child,” “Carter Son,” and “Ranada.”

Human Trafficking: What to Know About This Global Issue

DIAMOND SCOTT
STAFF WRITER

Sick, horrifying, disgusting, and unimaginable are just a few terms used when the subject of human trafficking comes to mind. It’s terrifying that humans are capable of causing such harm and trauma to each other; it’s beyond disbelief. The U.S government defines human trafficking as the trade of other humans through force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Human trafficking has been a serious issue since the late 1820s and the problem has gotten increasingly worse since then.

The International Labor Organization (ILO), an organization dedicated to advancing social justice and promoting decent work by setting international labor standards, estimates that in 2016 - the most recent year that data is available - 40.3 million people

regardless of age and gender, are victims of human trafficking around the world. They reported that 81% are trapped in forced labor, 75% are women and girls, and 25% of them are children. Trafficking is a serious issue that instills fear throughout the globe because it can happen to anyone, anywhere. Experts agree that it is important to be cautious and alert at all times in order to not only know the signs of trafficking, but to protect yourself.

According to *Polaris*, an organization working to eliminate modern-day slavery worldwide, the warning signs for victims of human trafficking include aspects of their lives in their work or living conditions, poor mental or physical health, abnormal behavior, and a lack of control in their lives. Some of the specific behaviors within these areas include not having free will, being fearful, anxious, or depressed,

working excessively long hours, living at place of employment, and avoiding authority figures/ law enforcement.

Crystal Isle was a victim of trafficking and now speaks out against it. In 2016 she shared her story via *The Guardian* in an effort to help fight against trafficking. In the article, she talks about her ordeal and goes into detail about her life being trafficked. Isle recounts the treatment and pain she had to endure and provides detail about the domestic violence, sexual assault, exploitation, and forced labor she suffered. As a result of her experience, she developed anxiety issues and suffers from post-traumatic stress. However, it wasn’t until she was arrested for possession of drugs, an incident that forced her to lose custody of her son, that she was able to fully escape that tragic and painful life. Isle is one of the lucky ones who

was able to escape and make a new life for herself, which is what motivates her to combat this global issue. In the article she states, “I am the exception to the rule. I am one of a handful of victims that has survived to lead a different life. Now, I am determined to be part of the solution: to raise awareness and to agitate for a change in policy and the law. I hope you will lend me your encouragement.”

The U.S. is high on the list of leading human-trafficking countries. According to *USA Today* writer Cara Kelley, “the State Department found the top three nations of origin for human trafficking victims were the United States, Mexico and the Philippines.” Kelly also notes that State Department estimates reveal that “in the U.S., sex trafficking victims include immigrants as well as American citizens” and that “According to the National

Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1 in 7 of the more than 23,500 runaways reported to the nonprofit organization were likely victims of child sex trafficking.”

Combating human trafficking, although unlikely to occur to most people, is a significant enough problem that it is important to learn a few ways to protect yourself. These include having your phone on you at all times as well as pepper spray and other deterrents, being aware of your surroundings, avoiding walking alone if possible, acting fast and not hesitating to fight back, not trusting unfamiliar people easily, listening to and trusting your instincts, and being ready for anything.

Your safety matters and it’s important that everyone is aware of the possible dangers that are lurking in our world. So, keep strong and remember the warning signs and methods to defend yourself.

Real or Hype?

The Ivy League

NIGUS GETAHUN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

With college applications finishing up, hundreds of thousands of students will have applied to Ivy League and other prestigious colleges this year, and for most, waiting for a response will be a dreadful process. With a price tag of over \$60,000 per year and very low acceptance rates, it makes one wonder whether these colleges are even worth their hefty prices. Are they real or hype?

Top tier universities have seen quite a bit of controversy in recent years, including the “Varsity Blues” scandal and a Harvard lawsuit. Despite these incidents, every year top 20 schools like the Ivies, MIT, and Stanford see an overwhelming and increasing number of applicants. They are institutions that hold enormous power not only within the country, but also around the world. As a result of this prestige, they create an illusion that only the best of the best can get in. Because of this, a degree from one of these prestigious institutions is seen as a doorway to any part of the world.

Whether one is interested in going to a selective medical or law school, attending a premier graduate school, or going into banking or politics, a degree from an Ivy League school could serve as a key to many of those doors. According to a *Business Insider* report, Ivy League schools are the top feeders in the field of investment banking, and Harvard, Penn, Columbia and Cornell are among the top 10 target schools for Wall Street banker recruits. In addition, the top six universities with the most Rhodes Scholars

are Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Dartmouth, and Brown. The prestige and sway of these schools reaches across not only the country, but the pond as is revealed by the connection to Oxford.

Beyond the prestige, these schools hold one of the largest endowments of any colleges. Besides having a lot of money for research and resources, this means that they are able to give generous financial aid to their students. Colleges like Harvard, Columbia, Yale, and Princeton give a full ride to students whose family income is below sixty-thousand dollars. Seems shocking, but it makes sense when you realize that they earn over 10 billion in endowments every year.

Prestige matters and the value a degree from these schools hold is definitely real. There is no debate that someone who goes to a school like Harvard or Columbia will have a lot of networking opportunities, resources, and world class professors than someone who goes to a small liberal arts or state college. Education is always up to the individual, of course. How hard you work means a lot in school as it depends on how one is able to take opportunities and utilize the resources offered. Even so, a degree from an Ivy League is certainly valuable.

Final
Conclusion:
Real

Stomp Harder

Should Step Be a Sport?

GIDDONA CAMPBELL
STAFF WRITER

Do you think that step falls in the same category as cheer and poms? The answer to this question really depends on the individual and his or her understanding of just what a step team is and how they perform.

The only real distinction that separates step from poms or cheer is that step performances don't involve pom poms being in your hands. The Eclectic Step Team has been at Paint Branch since 1986 but has never been represented as a sport under the PB Athletics umbrella. Nationally, the under representation of step as a sport has been an issue within the athletic industry, which is basically the same thing cheerleading went through before finally gaining classification as a sport.

So, what will it take to make that change for step?

Stepping is more than dancing; it is a form of art that is displayed through your body, which is used as an instrument. According to *Essence* writer Veronica Hilbring, “There isn't a specific origin date, but the start of stepping dates back to Africa.”

Hilbring also notes, “Stepping is popular within the HBCU Greek life; it's intertwined with the strolls performed by fraternities and sororities. She states, “That grand tradition of unity and camaraderie in step has been passed through generations of organizations. ‘Greek Sings’ evolved into Greek shows which eventually progressed into step shows that remain popular to this day.”

Additionally, step has found its way into other cultures as the power of its presence has beguiled many. “While its origins are in the Black community, stepping has spread to Latino and Asian cultures

to multicultural fraternities and sororities as well,” reports Hilbring.

However, while all of the attention on step has increased its visibility and respect, it has not done much for its entry into the world of sports. As a former Eclectic Stepper, I know first hand that step deserves to be categorized as a sport because of the sweat, soreness, and shouting that is exerted in every rigorous performance and practice. The sharpness that goes into every arm and hand movement, and the importance of smooth transitions into different formations, and other elements mean that everything has to be on point. If you're a step off or don't stomp hard enough, best believe you're in trouble.

Like any other dance team - including poms- when competition approaches, the atmosphere shifts. The focus and discipline increases and practices are longer and more frequent. Senior Lancia Kear, a former captain of the Eclectic Steppers, reflects on the thorough sequencing involved in perfecting routines during the practices. “You practice how you perform,” she states. “Everyone has to hit the same move at the same time, your arm has to be at a certain [same] angle or it throws off everything... even if it's just one person.”

Paint Branch Athletic Director Coach Heather Podosek understands the plight of the step team and other groups that feel that they should be recognized as athletes. However, Coach P. notes that in order for step to be listed as an official sport in PB Athletics, it has to go through layers of approval. Factors such as game and practice facilities, Title IX compliance, financial impact, safety, and transportation come into play if any team wants to be added to the athletics program.

Coach Podosek states, “In order for a program like step to be considered a sport, it would need to be more of a combined effort from all the step teams in the county to go through the application process.”

The Eclectic Steppers participate in a number of competitions and performances each year and have had continuous success including winning “Montgomery County's Got Talent” in 2018 where they represented Paint Branch. Additionally, they have performed at Strathmore in return for mats and mirrors that the organization donated to the team. They have also hosted competitions and teasers at PB for step.

Kear feels that step has done its part in supporting the school, but feels that it has been a bit of a one-way street. “We [the step team] bring a lot of support for the school but it is not being reciprocated,” she states.

One area that also factors into step's argument to be seen as a sport is their need for consistent practice spaces like other teams. Step requires the same type of equipment for practices that cheer and poms use, including mats and mirrors, not having their own is not a problem at this time thanks to the Eclectic Steppers collaboration with Strathmore, but the team will eventually need new materials.

Another factor that aligns step with sports teams is, just like athletes on those teams, step team members need to get a physical in order to participate. Ultimately, the reasons that step deserve to be recognized a sport far outweigh the possible challenges such as safety and cost of equipment. Hopefully, one day in the future the step athletes from around MOCO can unite and schools will finally be able to officially stomp back for step.

Le Petit Prince: A Critical View Through a Child's Eyes

ISRAEL WHITE
STAFF WRITER

The Little Prince aired on Netflix in 2015 and immediately captured praise from its viewers. It earned 7.7 out of 10 stars on IMDB and attained worldwide attention from critics. In France it earned a César Award and in the United States it earned an Annie award.

However, it would be a terrible mistake to overlook the novella that inspired the film, *Le Petit Prince* (*The Little Prince*) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Originally published in 1943, the novella begins with the narrator telling the story of a young boy, himself, who creates two drawings he considers masterpieces. The drawings do not receive the credit they deserve by those he shows them to. The adults don't really “see” what the boy has drawn in the first piece, nor do they embrace his second one, which is an attempt to reveal to them what they have missed.

The adults simply advise the young artist to apply himself to more important subjects of study. Annoyed at first, the boy heeds their advice and, at only 6 years old, gives up his dream of being a “magnificent” artist to settle for a more traditional job as a pilot.

The story then jumps forward and the boy, now a pilot, has crash landed in the heart of the Sahara Desert. With him he brings a new, respectable knowledge of geography - he can distinguish even China from Arizona, “which is very useful if you get lost during the night,” he sarcastically brags later in life. In the desert, he meets a perceptive, golden-haired child from asteroid B-612 who never lets a question go. This is the little prince.

The story's poetic tale then carries the reader alongside the narrator as the child prince recounts the story of what happened to his small asteroid-planet that forced him to leave, the people he met on

his journey, and how he too ended up in the desert.

The novella adopts the appearance of a children's story but subtly addresses the depressing realities of many adults' and teenagers' lives. Pressing topics such as the role responsibility plays in any meaningful relationship and the dangers of a monotonous life are all brought to light through the eyes of innocents. For instance, on one of the planets, the little prince encounters a lamplighter who puts the lamp on his planet out in the morning and lights it after dark because “orders are orders.” While this in itself does not appear too complicated or pitiful, the planet spins faster and faster every day and the lamplighter has to adjust.

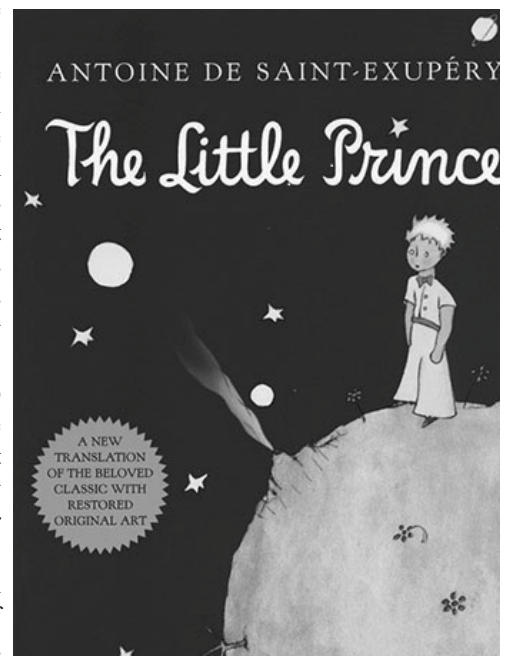
Ultimately, he must light and put the lamp out every sixty seconds to compensate for how short the days have become. Additionally, the person who actually gave him these orders is never even brought up. “Orders are orders” is his sole

purpose for dedicating his life to such a job. On another planet, the little prince meets a man who is all alone and who, through pathetic sobs, tells the child that he drinks to forget that he is ashamed of drinking. “Grown-ups are certainly very, very strange” the little prince reflects.

The little prince is an easy character to fall in love with because he personifies innocence and wonder, two elements that adults often forget to embrace. He balances the draining aspects illustrated in the story with sincerity, purity, and altruism that develop throughout the tale. He embodies the important parts of life that so many people lose sight of for one reason or another.

To write such a revealing story off as just a children's

book would be to neglect its underlying messages about life and love. It would focus solely on the colorful pictures and the book's short length when the importance of it is what you can not see.



Reality TV: Ethics or Entertainment?

TRINITY GOPPY
FEATURES EDITOR

Why do people enjoy watching the suffering of others? This is the question that often comes to mind when I watch a reality television show. Shows like *Love and Hip Hop*, *Survivor* or *Teen Mom* are extremely popular and watched by millions because of the consistent drama they exhibit. Although they are very entertaining, for me, they are just morally wrong. Networks like *VH1* or *MTV* work hard to cater to the audience’s craving for drama and conflict, so cast members are often dehumanized or demonized to create more tension among everyone on the show. This is shown consistently on *Love & Hip Hop*, a reality show on *VH1* with multiple versions that are set in multiple cities, such as

Hollywood or Atlanta, which focuses on the professional and personal relationships of people in the music industry. Usually on this particular show people fight over “cheating scandals” or rumors about one another. The situations that some of the cast members place themselves in are often unrealistic and seem to have been created by the show. For example, on the Hollywood version of the program, celebrity couple Lyrica and Floyd “Al” Bentley’s moms are always arguing and fist-fighting in defense of their children. Their moms, Lyrica Garrett and Pam Bentley, often take sides when their children have disagreements and this regularly results in them physically fighting. Absurd situations like this are common in reality TV shows and it is just uncalled for. Realistically, people do not get in fist fights with their son/daughter-in-law’s parents, especially if they are over 45

years old. It just feels more like fiction than reality. While reality shows like *Love & Hip Hop* or *Basketball Wives* do not really serve a greater purpose, some reality programming is truly entertaining. Shows like *Survivor* or *The Challenge*, where contestants compete against each for a chance to

“...cast members are often dehumanized or demonized to create more tension...”

win money, have entertainment merit. On *Survivor*, for example, contestants generally have two choices: form an alliance with other cast members or backstab people in order to win. While backstabbing to win a show seems a bit harsh, the concept of competitive reality TV shows is harmless. On *The Challenge: War*

of the Worlds, “veterans”(people who have been on the show for more than one season and have excelled) and “rookies” (people who have recently come from other *MTV* shows like *Ex on the Beach* or *Real World*) battle each other regularly. Vets often team up against the rookies and this creates a more intense competitive environment that makes entertaining TV. Let’s be clear, the difference between competitive reality shows and shows like *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *Love and Hip Hop*, or *Basketball Wives* is that the contestant’s goal is to win by being smart and making alliances, unlike the latter who tries to see who can be the most violent or mean toward others. Although it may amuse viewers, the pressure of remaining interesting just to be on the show is wrong and sends a terrible message. Reality shows really present an ethical issue by

commodifying people’s lives for entertainment. These shows intrude on people’s personal lives and manipulate their behavior to incite gossip, create rumors, and instigate arguments and even physical fights. They are corrupt because they rely on the dramas of others. Reality TV sends a bad message that being on these shows can help one create an instant celebrity stardom when in reality it just tarnishes your image and gives viewers, who could be influential celebrities, a glimpse of who you are and a reason for not wanting to work with you. The whole purpose of reality television is to show the “reality” of character’s lives, but in actuality it feels distorted to appeal to the audience. It seems that these shows are becoming more vulgar and offensive to find new ways to shock viewers, like showing racist bullying or physical fighting. Overall, reality Tv shows are morally wrong.

Teacher to Some, Mother to Others
The Importance of Mrs. Miller

ZAIRE THOMAS
STAFF WRITER

“I enjoy teaching because I love the lightbulb.” If you have ever been in Mrs. Miller’s class, you know that this light bulb goes off quite often for her students. To her, “knowledge is power. It brings meaning and value to my life to help other people become more powerful.” Mrs. Miller has been teaching for 11 years with MCPS, the last seven years at Paint Branch. Before becoming a full time teacher, though, she taught informally for one and a half years for Casa de Maryland, an organization that works with the immigrant population in Mayland.

Mrs. Miller grew up in Long Island, New York and attended the University of Maryland where she majored in Spanish, and her master’s in Education. Mrs.Miller is involved in many different clubs here at PB such as Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), World Languages Honor Society, and is the school’s representative for the teacher’s union.

She was previously involved with Key Club for two years as well. She expresses that she loves the diversity of backgrounds and cultures at Paint Branch, and her work with PB’s clubs certainly reveals this

One of the most important things to Mrs.Miller is the LGBTQ community because she identifies as LGBTQ and feels that it is important for her to be a role model for all kids, especially those who may struggle finding their voice. “I

think it’s important for students to have a safe space to talk about the issues that affect them,” she says. “The good issues and the bad ones.”

Looking back, Mrs. Miller recalls her own coming out experience as difficult and one that made her feel “scared.” She didn’t know how her mom would react so she sent her an email. “She was actually really cool about it,” Mrs. Miller recalls. “When I realized she wasn’t going to disown me, I was super relieved,” she says smiling.

She wasn’t expecting her mom to be so open and accepting of the fact that she was gay. Her mom was actually quite curious about it and asked questions, especially about how long she had known. After telling her mom, Mrs. Miller says she felt at peace and a sense of happiness.

She recalls though that not everyone in her family was as supportive. While most of her family was “really accepting” she has an aunt and uncle who were not. “They refused to come to our wedding; they didn’t think it was a real wedding,” she remembers. While she was upset at this response, she didn’t let it impact

“When I realized she wasn’t going to disown me, I was super relieved.”

photo by: Zaire Thomas



Mrs. Miller is originally from Long Island, New York, but has come to call Maryland - and Paint Branch - home.

her life and hopes that they’ll come around one day. Ultimately, while coming out was tough at times, Mrs. Miller knows that her experiences can help her guide others. She encourages people who are having difficulties with coming out to be a part of GSA to express themselves and talk about their situation.

Sophomore Kendra Simms, a current student in Mrs. Miller’s Spanish 4 class, enjoys her teaching and her overall way of being. “She has a happy spirit and has the ability to make others happy when they’re in her classroom,” says Simms.

While Mrs. Miller’s title says teacher, it is clear that she is much more than this to her students and to the PB community. She’s a teacher, a mother-figure to many of her students, a role model for those who aspire to embrace their true selves, and a person who is always willing to lend a hand.

Education System
(continued from p. 1)

and 8th graders improving 19 points in math and 5 in reading, during that time period according to *Camera*. After 2015, however, scores either declined or stayed stagnant. “The results are, frankly, devastating. This country is in a student achievement crisis, and over the past decade it has continued to worsen, especially for our most vulnerable students,” says Donald Trump-appointed Education Secretary Betsy DeVos in a press release, a sentiment echoed by many members of NCES. She adds that this stagnation puts U.S students at a growing disadvantage on the world stage.

The *NAEP* website explicitly cautions against making causal assumptions, adding that “inferences related to student group performance or to the effectiveness of public and non public schools...should take into consideration the many socioeconomic and educational factors that may also have an impact on performance,” but that didn’t stop people from speculating. In her speech at the *National Press Club* in D.C., DeVos notes the climbing cost of per-pupil spending and suggests that the funding has gone not to the students but to administrators and the many levels of “bureaucracy” within the school system. Education Reporter Valerie Strauss thinks DeVos and others are misinterpreting these results, making them a bigger deal than they are.

In her *Washington Post* article, she proposes the idea that since students aren’t affected by their scores on these tests, they don’t have any incentive to do well. Conversely, Joy Pullmann, former teacher and current executive editor at the conservative newspaper *The Federalist*, attributes the low scores to the failure of the Obama-era education initiative Common Core, while Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, attributes them to a lack of counseling resources and emotional support for traumatized students.

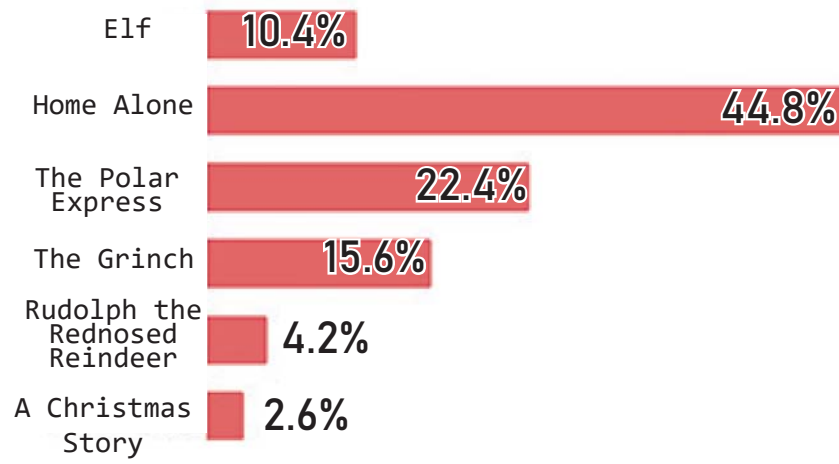
Unsurprisingly, this trend of underachieving test scores isn’t just present in elementary and middle school. The data from the 2018 ACT scores also presented a notable statistic: According to an article from the educational organization EdWeek, only 40% of students that took the test were able to meet the benchmark for college readiness, a 7 point decrease from 2012.

Currently, to try to solve this growing problem, DeVos is proposing more school choice policies and less national involvement in the school system, which she believes is better handled by the states.

For more information come talk with Ms. Vancavage in Room 1201



What's Your Favorite Christmas Movie?



Stanlie Joannis, 10th

What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"New Heaphones"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Rudolph"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Home Alone"



47.9%

of Panthers are going definitely going holiday shopping.
42.7% might shop, and 9.4% will not.

Tenoila Sessi, 12th

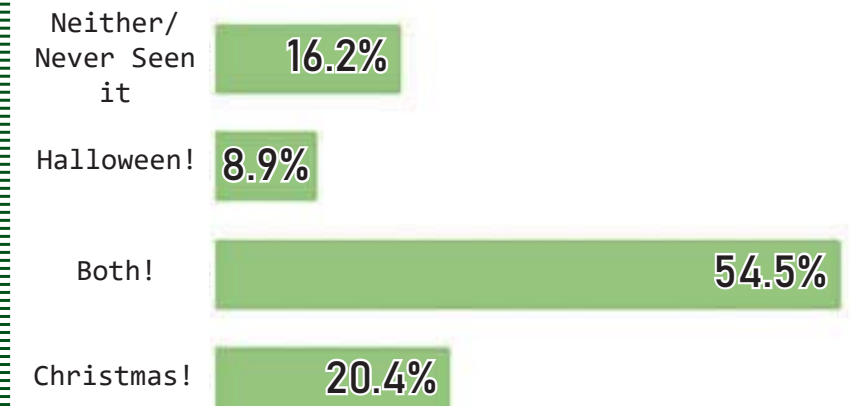
What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"Some new tech, so I can explore my boundaries"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Blitzen. (Fun Fact: he's Rudolph's father)"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Jingle all the way"



Is the Nightmare Before Christmas a Christmas movie or a Halloween movie?



Gabriella Gabriel, 9th

What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"Shoes"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Prancer"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Holiday Calendar"



Meleni Flores, 10th

What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"Yellow hunter boots"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Rudolph"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Home Alone"



15.9%

of Panthers believe in Santa.
84.1% don't.

90.5%

of Panthers celebrate Christmas.
Only 9.5% do not.

Chelsea Nkwazema, 11th

What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"Cash"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Prancer"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Home Alone"



Leonard Owusu, 11th

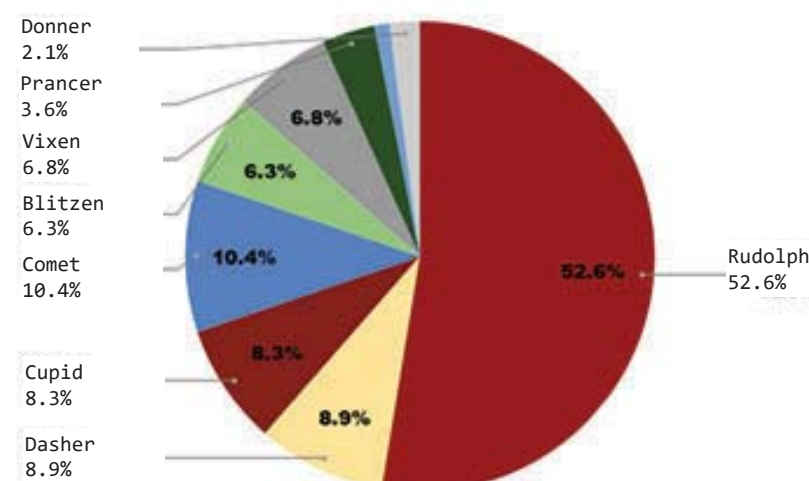
What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"Money"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Dasher"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Home Alone"



Whose Your Favorite Reindeer?



Kebim Castro, 9th

What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"Shoes"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Rudolph"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"Home Alone"



52.6%

of Panthers are staying home this break.
33.3% might be going away, and 14.1% are definitely going away for break.

Habiba Sherif, 12th

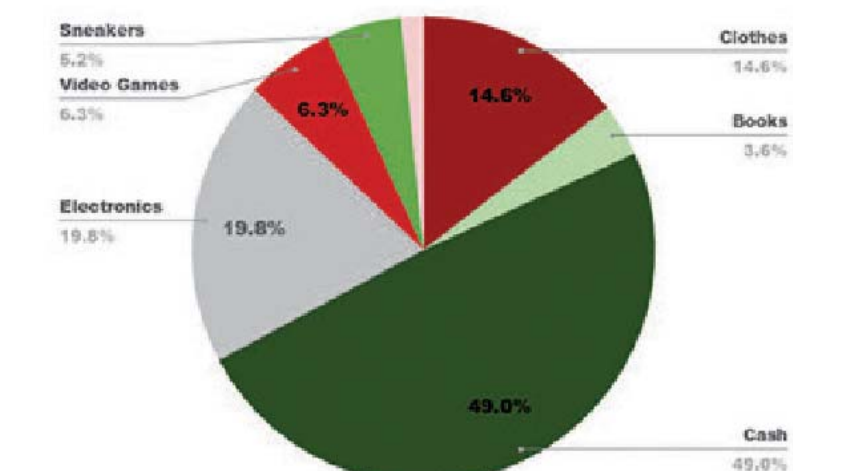
What's on the top of your Christmas List?
"College Money"

Who's your favorite reindeer?
"Rudolph"

What's your favorite Christmas movie?
"The Grinch and The Nutcracker. I can't decide!"



What's on the Top of Your Gift List This Year?



Gene Therapy for Aesthetic Purposes is Wrong

PRO

CON

In modern society, if you don't like something about yourself, you have the ability to fix it. But what about making that decision for your children?

According to the "Human Genetic Modification" entry from the *Center for Genetics and Society*, there are two different ways that genetic modification can be applied to humans. Somatic genetic modification is used when addressing a health condition or risk. Germline modification changes the "genes in eggs, sperm, or early embryos." Germline is the kind of gene editing that brings a debate on ethics as this type of genetic modification is seen as creating "designer babies"

When it comes to Somatic genetic modification, many are in favor of using this medical advancement to help eliminate possible medical threats in early embryos and to treat genetic disorders in children and adults. The possibilities of gene therapy are exciting in that it can treat many genetic conditions such as muscular dystrophy and kidney disease.

However, there is a dark side to gene therapy: using genetic modification to create a so-called "designer baby," which is possible through Germline editing. It is simply wrong to change the physical appearance of a child or attempt to give an unborn child certain traits that you deem important. Real human life is not the same as playing The Sims. The idea that an individual could use gene editing to "build-a-baby" is sickening, to say the least. Not only is it an abuse of power, but it is extremely selfish considering the genetics of all future generations would be altered as well. If parents aren't willing to love their child no matter how they are born, then they shouldn't have children at all.

Although the possibility of genetic modification is very intriguing, especially Somatic modification, we should not rush into it. We must be careful not to get too carried away with this medical breakthrough and the medical field must be diligent in how it is used. Mary Todd Bergman of the Harvard Gazette states, "While somatic gene editing affects only the patient being treated (and only some of his or her cells), Germline editing affects all cells in an organism, including eggs and sperm, and so is passed onto future generations. The possible consequences of that are difficult to predict." This, the possible consequences, are what make Germline editing very risky and why Somatic editing, which only affects the target cell, is both safer and morally right.

Our goal as a human race should focus on bettering people for who they naturally are, rather than trying to create this "perfect person." The beautiful thing about humanity is that we are all so unique, and it is those differences that help us to advance in the world. Trying to manipulate or change that in any way is wrong. We should prioritize using gene therapy for those who truly need it, and not for aesthetic reasons.

-JORDAN SHORTER

Poor body image, self-esteem, bullying, and depression. These are all problems that are centered upon the basis of one's appearance.

Poor body image is directly intertwined with self-esteem because a lack of it is the direct cause for the resentment an individual hold against the body they were born with. Bullying happens for a variety of reasons, including when one is deemed to look "different." Cruel comments and abusive actions are thrown at people simply because they are unlike the rest. The end result of all this suffering is feelings of sadness, a sense of being overwhelmed by the fact that there is nothing you can do to change who you are, and even depression.

But what if I told you there was something you could do or even your parents could do before you are born to change this?

That's right, there is a fix to all of this: Genetic modification.

Science today allows us to genetically modify babies while they are still in the womb to be aesthetically sound. Gene modification can be employed to determine an unborn child's eye color, height, and body shape. Essentially, we can create a specimen of astounding physical appearance.

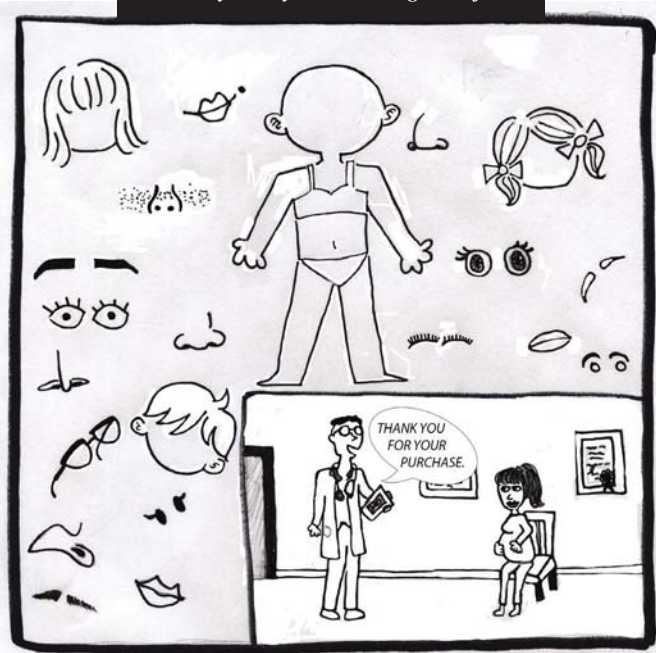
Think about it; we are creating people with the potential to lead amazing lives. Brian Armstrong, the CEO of the company Coinbase, a digital currency wallet and platform, spent a year talking to scientists about the possibilities of genetic engineering. According to Armstrong, he found that "it could help eliminate hundreds of diseases. It could eliminate many forms of pain and anxiety. It could increase intelligence and longevity. It could change the scale of human happiness and productivity by many orders of magnitude." These are goals we strive for on a daily basis, so just imagine simply being born to meet these goals with ease? The possibilities of what we could do would be limitless.

People obviously will say this is unethical, that "we are playing God" when we alter an unborn child, but I disagree. With this science we are able to reverse birth defects and stop anomalies that could complicate childbirth. So why can't we prevent the problems the future holds in store for these same children? We need to give them the things necessary to succeed in this superficial world we have created.

We live in a world where a small population possess the perfect size, where beauty isn't in the eyes of the beholder, where the vast majority of the population subscribes to the exact same definition of beauty and perfection. So, we try to fit this new definition and hope that we are accepted. Many fail. However, if we can be born with traits that are craved by society we immediately fit this definition, and we could even create a new one. We destroy the possibility of experiencing the struggle of low self-esteem. Perhaps bullying will always occur in this world, but with genetic engineering we can equip its victims with the traits necessary to defend themselves, leading them away from loneliness, leading them away from the emotional turmoil that comes with not measuring up to society's bar.

- ZOPUTA DIFINI

cartoon by: Caitlyn Neils & Angel Benjamin



Studying Foreign Language: Benefits Outweigh Challenges

CAITLYN NEILS
OPINIONS EDITOR

Chances are, you know someone who speaks another language, or maybe it's you who knows the second language. Perhaps your parents speak a language and you can understand it, but you can't speak as fluently as they do. There are a number of different scenarios related to people and what they can or cannot speak, but whatever the circumstances, why not add a new language to your arsenal?

Taking a foreign language in school might seem aggravating because of the constant homework and the class being taught in another language. But there are amazing benefits one reaps from learning a language (besides the obvious coolness and looks of awe you instantly get when switching tongues). Learning a new language is proven to enhance many mental processes and the advantages often spill into daily life. Some of the advantages include improvements in one's native language, improved grammar, and better decision-making according to studies published in the *Foreign Language*

Annals, the International Journal of Psychology and Early Childhood Education Journal. There is nothing but good that comes from studying a language.

When it comes to learning a new language, however, research shows that it's best to start young. If school districts made taking a foreign language mandatory in elementary school, as illustrated by a Kansas City school study conducted by J.M. Cade, teachers would see a boost in standardized test scores, reading skills, and memory. Children's brains are like sponges; they are malleable and soak up information. As studied by Joshua Hartshorne in an MIT study, up until the tender age of ten, children are more open to learning languages and quicker to pick them up than adults: "[there isn't] much difference between people who start at birth and people who start at 10, but we start seeing a decline after that." Additionally, children who learn in elementary schools tend to enter longer programs for language learning, continuing the trend of speaking multiple languages.

Knowing a language can also open doors. Being multilingual

improves one's chances of attaining a job and can ease the transition into a job in a country where your first language is not the primary one. It also provides the opportunity to have a lucrative career in translating or tutoring. Teaching becomes an option as well since foreign language teachers are always in demand, especially in a country that has over 53 million Spanish speakers, and 1.32 million French speakers, according to the 2010 US Census. The US Department of Education has listed Foreign Language as number four in most wanted teaching positions, following after the likes of STEM subjects.

Overall, learning a second language provides nothing but benefits. This is why school districts in the U.S. should make learning a language mandatory before middle school. For those who don't speak the language they choose to study at home, school offers a routine of constant dialogue that they can't access elsewhere. A foreign language classroom becomes a multi-cultural hub of heritage and dialects where students can prosper and learn.

My Return to Social Media After an 8 Month Hiatus

SONCHERE McCAMPBELL
FEATURES EDITOR

After being unplugged from social media for eight months, I have concluded that social media is necessary for fast individual success.

In a previous article - "Human Vs. Computer: The Setbacks of Social Media" - from the February, 2019 issue of *Mainstream*, I asserted that social media "simply overstimulates, creates drama, and gives people a major case of FOMO." Although I still find truth in this statement, I now realize that completely removing myself from the digital loop did more harm than good. Sure, I had more time for self-discovery, but not having social media kept my growth stagnant because I could not network with people who could have aided my progress even further.

So, after eight months of non-activity, I decided to redownload my favorite apps: Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Instantly, I was overwhelmed by how many people I had access to; not only could I follow the one chick that I always see in the halls or the one dude who is friends with that one friend of mine who is in college, but I also had access to people in specialized businesses.

In "Human vs. Computer," I mentioned that taking a break from social media allowed me some introspection and allowed me to discover that I am passionate about music. However, signing back into my social platforms helped me reaffirm this musical passion as it gave me access to people within the music industry whom I had not heard of in the past 8 months. Not only was I able to brainstorm some new music projects with people my age on Apple Music and Spotify, but I also gained access to people in the music industry through the contacts of these same individuals. If I hadn't branched out into social media again, I wouldn't have made these valuable connections.

Social media acts as a social networking web, a place where your interests are actualized. I learned that time away from social media is essential for growth, but I also learned that it is important to recognize when it is time to get back into the digital game. It is important to be in tune with yourself and recognize when social media becomes engrossing rather than obliging. People should take breaks as necessary.

The Rationale for Dress Codes

NIGUS GETAHUN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

At the start of each school year students murmur about dress codes. A simple walk down a hallway reveals the thoughts of young people loud and clear.

Each year, girls complain about the dress code being sexist and that it puts a limit on their self-expression for the sake of not distracting male students. Late last year, students took their concerns to Twitter where they expressed their experiences with the issue using the hashtag #iammorethanadistracted, a hashtag that originally started in 2014 by a group of New Jersey high-schoolers that is still used by activists that want to take the issue to social media.

So, are dress codes unfair, sexist, or maybe a bit outrageous? In order to come to an answer we need to address why we have dress codes in the first place. Is it simply to wage a war on women? Is it to stop them from distracting boys? Dress codes are essentially there to

teach us to dress in a manner that will contribute to a productive work environment not only now, but also in the future. They are protocols established to create a suitable learning environment free of distraction. That is the argument at the heart of dress codes. However, the question of whether this prescribed culture of dress is fair must still be addressed.

The dress code for Paint Branch High School is outlined in the school code booklet as follows:

“Students are to come to school properly attired so as not to distract themselves or others. No clothing that exposes body parts and with messages that endorse illegal activities or advertise alcoholic beverages or drugs are permitted. Shoes must be worn at all times.”

These rules are not outrageous. You might think they’re not fair, but they’re necessary to create a suitable working environment for everyone. Specific rules such as fingertip length shorts and pants staying above the waist seem like the main ones that most students find ridiculous and unfair.

However, these are necessary to orient students around responsible decision making and help them mature. Girls are allowed to wear skirts and shorts, and often their attire is not called out unless their body is clearly exposed. The same rule applies to boys, who generally are not called out unless their underwear is noticeably exposed. These are rules needed to foster understanding in students and help them better gauge their attire and their behavior, as the goal is to create a culture of maturity and productivity in working areas.

One area related to dress code that seems ludicrous is this idea that the purpose of dress codes being in place is due to boys not being able to control themselves- this is an idea that is saturated; it’s for the same reason that we don’t come to school in swimwear or wear a shirt that reads “Get high.” It is not because the school system is trying to oppress the student body but rather because it wants to uphold one of the values of education- getting people accustomed to presenting themselves in a more mature and appropriate manner.

You’re Only Fooling Yourself

BEVERLY YIRENKYI
STAFF WRITER

Christopher Columbus Day is one of the rudest and illegitimate holidays that has ever been established.

Think about it. You cannot discover something that was already there; you cannot find something that was never lost; you cannot begin the destruction of a group and be praised for it. It simply doesn’t make sense.

The Columbus narrative is just the first of many examples of how we allow those in power, those with money, those with numbers or followers, to justify their actions with ignorance. The “I didn’t know” or “I didn’t realize” excuse has to stop being a socially accepted reason for offensive, racist, and abusive behavior.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau was shown by the media to have donned black face on multiple occasions; Matt Lauer, the once beloved NBC *Today Show* host, has faced numerous rape and sexual assault allegations in the past few years; and Lori Loughlin, better known as Aunt Becky from the 90’s sitcom *Full House*, was implicated in the college admission scandal earlier this year.

When each of them was forced to respond to the public for their actions, their attempts at true remorse were less than stellar. Trudeau apologized and expressed remorse for his actions. Lauer, who first faced allegations in 2017, has consistently denied any wrongdoing. Loughlin pleaded not guilty in November to charges of bribery and conspiracy but has not commented publicly during the scandal.

So what punishment did these people actually face? Nothing when you really think about it.

Despite his past racist actions, Trudeau was re-elected in 2019, Lauer has been off television and living in a sort of exile albeit with a bank account in the millions, and Loughlin, who paid over \$500,000 to get her daughters into USC, may face some financial penalties and minor jail time, but it pales in comparison to what she and her designer husband have.

Yes, each has suffered some embarrassment and, perhaps, personal loss, but they still enjoy some form of fame, money, and popularity.

Why these three - and many others - are able to escape severe punishment for their actions, both legal and social, is because of the favor that the public provides to those who enjoy fame, wealth, or other positions of power. These *social untouchables* are one of the prime reasons why Cancel Culture exists. Cancel Culture is a term created through social media that promises to be a regulatory policing system that publicly denounces a public figure who isn’t being held accountable for their actions quickly enough. However, the public, due to diverging opinions, cannot unify consistently enough for it to actually work.

Societally we need to stop validating others’ actions because they make false claims of ignorance. It is time to hold them accountable and tell them “look, you are this big age, so it is time to stop claiming ignorance.” One can’t justify painting their face black for a costume, for an event, or for any reason. As an adult you should know the mockery that those of a darker pigmentation have faced throughout our history. You can’t grope and attack people because you are a “celebrity” and then claim innocence, and you can’t buy your children’s education and feel that saying “sorry” or “I know it was wrong” is enough. People can’t continuously abuse their power, take advantage of their elite status, and force the idea of a self-serving apology, for that’s exactly what it is: *self-serving*.

As a public, people need to stand up together and stop supporting and tolerating the molesters, cultural appropriators, and scammers of the upper class. Together, people can advocate for a better system that holds the elites accountable for their actions.

A LOOK BACK: To commemorate PB’s 50th Anniversary, we are re-publishing an opinion/editorial that ran in a previous issue of *Mainstream*. This month’s piece is from October, 1979.

Teachers deserve better

Twenty-three million adult Americans are functionally illiterate. Student test scores across the nation are dropping. Scholastic Aptitude Test average verbal scores dropped two points in 1979 for college bound seniors; the average math score for the same group dropped one point.

Who’s to blame? The educational system and, of course, the teachers.

Or, perhaps, we’re all to blame.

Today teachers receive very little compensation for the important job they do. Parents worry that their children are not receiving a good education (remember those dropping SAT scores?) and lay the blame for this on teachers.

Students complain constantly about too much homework and unfair grading policies.

How many students ever honestly appreciate their education? To how many does it ever occur to thank their teachers for that education? Oh well, after all, it’s “just their job.”

Even if it were “just a job,” it’s an important one: teaching tomorrow’s doctors, lawyers, businessmen, journalists, and every other person vital to a smoothly running society, including teachers.

But it definitely is not “just a job.” It is a

profession. Teachers spend at least four years becoming educated in a particular field, so they can turn around and pass that education on. They deserve to be treated as professionals by their students, not as enemies to outwit and escape. They deserve to be treated as professionals by their parents, not as babysitters hired to spoon-feed their children. They deserve to be treated as professionals by the Board of Education, not as a labor force to be paid outdated wages.

In these days of “double-digit” inflation, does it make sense to limit teachers to single-digit cost of living raises as Montgomery County has done in the past few years?

Montgomery County, despite its reputation as a wealthy county with a fine school system, currently pays starting teachers over \$1400 a year less than the District of Columbia, and over \$300 a year less than Prince Georges’ County. The Montgomery County Education Association is presently asking for a 15 percent pay raise for teachers next year. Perhaps it’s about time they get what they’re asking for, or how much longer will anyone want to be “just a teacher?”

Depression is NOT an Aesthetic

AMEENA MISBAHOU-JALLOH
STAFF WRITER

A teenager crying about something dumb: “OMG I’m so depressed because my mom said I can’t stay home for school! I don’t feel like going to school at all. *crying emoji* now I’ll post myself crying on my finsta.” This scenario, a teen who has no idea what depression is but calls themselves depressed as soon as they start to feel slightly bored or any other mood swing they experience caused by puberty, is all too common today.

On social media, depression has been trending as many adolescents believe that

being bored one day and happy the next, feeling like your parents don’t understand you, and easily becoming upset at stupid situations that occur in everyday life are the signs and symptoms of depression. To these people, it is yet another aesthetic, another “something” in their life to call attention to.

According to Ranna Parekh’s entry “What is Depression” from the American Psychiatric Association, “Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act.” Looking at this definition and the seriousness of the

condition makes me wonder why is depression trending on social media for adolescents.

Heart-rending songs are climbing the charts.

As a 15 year old girl in a generation where phones are used for almost everything, where people can shop online for anything and, where Twitter is used as a public diary to express anyone’s feelings – even political officials (I’m talking about you, Donald Trump) – I get it.

A lot of our favorite artists write songs about their own difficult experiences, using sad lyrics to describe their agony. These artists are labeled as “cool”

and “deep” so the music they create is automatically “cool” too. It isn’t. At least the lyrics aren’t. They’re miserable and gloomy. It’s even more miserable if you can relate to those gloomy lyrics.

There is no beauty in depression.

Depression is a black hole in the depth of your soul, draining every cheerful emotion you ever had, only to feel lost and in a state of desolation. Through the levels of depression, you begin to lose yourself, and shy away from everyday activities. Even if you feel a bit of happiness, anything you do wrong, whether no one noticed or not, that bleeding feeling of anguish comes back again, as if it were karma, coming to take control of you. Again, and again, and again.

It’s like running in a hamster’s wheel, from this big, scary monster, making absolutely no progress.

Depression is real and it is not an aesthetic. Of course people use words loosely and are not careful with what they say, but when it comes to depression, that’s not okay. The bottom line is, depression sucks. How can anyone see beauty in depression? How can feeling hopeless, believing you have no purpose in this cruel world, or questioning your existence be considered pretty? Depression is not a trend, it’s a serious mental disorder. Stop using it to describe a brief moment of sorrow that would be forgotten in three hours, or less, because it’s “trending;” this overlooks the solemnity of actual depression.

It's Time for African American History to be a Required Course

MARKAYLA MERCHANT

STAFF WRITER

As kids we were taught pieces of our history. We were given facts, here and there, about what it's meant to be black in America back then. The first thing that we learned about was slavery. We learned about Jim Crow, and Martin Luther King, Jr. We learned about Rosa Parks taking a seat, and Harriet Tubman freeing slaves. We were given a glimpse into 400 years of chains and abuse, and then a quick look at the aftermath.

Yet, there are still many things about African American history that we don't know.

Black History, while extensive, has never been a focal point in the United States until individuals stood up and made it happen. Negro History week was created in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, according to the National Museum of African American Culture. At this time, the rise of the Harlem Renaissance was beginning and artists such as Langston Hughes, Georgia Douglass Johnson, and writers like W.E.B Du Bois were flourishing. Amidst a burst of artistic, creative, and controversial art forms, was this special week. This week was dedicated to teaching about the struggles of African Americans and to celebrate. Black history month was created soon after that and has continued to this day. However, despite this, too many heroic black figures, innovators, scientists, and artists are being forgotten. Not teaching about these important figures and their contributions is detrimental towards our growth in America today.

As young kids growing up in today's society, we need to know these people. Slavery ended in 1865, and Segregation ended in 1954. Our lessons end with that. In our English classes we rarely read books written by black people.

In science class we never learn about black scientists such as Mae Carol Jemison, the first black woman to travel in space, and Katherine Johnson, whose major aeronautics contributions helped us get to the moon.

We need to teach about these people and their contributions just like we learn about Martin Luther King Jr. and Frederick Douglass. We need to know more about the Harlem Renaissance not only as a literary and artistic period, but as a huge influence in the civil rights movement. Teach about the Black Panther Party, a political organization designed in 1966 to fight police brutality in connection with our world today and police violence. There are still Black Panthers alive today and we need to hear from them. There is a hallway in this school named after the African American author Toni Morrison, yet many students do not know who she is.

By not teaching about black history and important black Americans, we are telling young people that the era has ended, and that the past is in the past. This subject is far too endless to be contained within a couple of units in a history class or English class. The impact that black history has had on every aspect of the world is unlimited, and it's important for every student to understand it. We're required to take US History, World History, and study our National, State, and Local governments (NSL), and now it is time to require every student to take black history as a designed course.

We aren't teaching kids what to be, or how to think, we are giving them a heads up. We're giving them a look into their background, and boosting them towards the future. We'll teach the real truth about our history, and give lessons that aren't stained with blood. If we don't teach kids that they can be more than slaves, then they'll grow up thinking that they're chained. That, as learners and teachers, is something we cannot stand for.

Anemia Can Have a Serious Impact on Teens

EMMANUELA GENESTE

STAFF WRITER

Have you ever gotten up so fast to the point where you begin to feel dizzy when you looked up; and suddenly felt like you were about to fall? If you answered "yes" this may be due to the fact that you stood up too fast, or it may be a sign that you have anemia.

"Anemia?" you may ask. "Yes," anemia is a condition in which you lack enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen to your body's tissue. Anemia causes you to have iron deficiency in your blood cells. Because of this, the heart must work harder to make up for the lack of red blood cells or hemoglobin in the body. Hemoglobin is an iron-rich protein that helps red blood cells carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of your body. If you have anemia, your body doesn't receive enough oxygen rich blood, which causes you to experience various symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, irregular heart rhythm and even cravings to eat things that are non-edible.

There are many different types of anemia, each with its own cause, and symptoms that can vary based on the person. Anemia can be temporary or long term, and can range from being mild to being very severe. According to *Mayoclinic.org*, certain types of anemia include aplastic anemia, sickle cell anemia, iron deficiency anemia and vitamin deficiency anemia.

Anemia is a condition that can occur in anyone, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH), "women are at a higher risk of this health disorder than men. NIH also reports that women, during their menstrual periods and pregnancy, along with people who donate blood frequently, people who don't have enough iron or people who take certain medicines/ treatments are at a higher risk in getting iron deficiency anemia. people over the age of 65,

People who experience chronic conditions such as cancer, kidney failure and diabetes are also at a higher risk for anemia.

Many teenagers, especially girls struggle everyday with anemia in silence. The reason teens are at risk of iron-deficiency anemia is because of their sudden growth spurts, and teen girls are more prone to anemia because of their menstrual periods.

Zaire Thomas, a 15-year-old Paint Branch student, struggles with the everyday symptoms of iron deficiency anemia. "The first time I found out I had anemia was when I was 11 years old after I had just gotten my menstrual cycle," says Thomas. "When the symptoms happen I tend to experience things such as shortness of breath, dizziness, feeling nauseous, and headaches. When I'm in the shower I tend to feel very dizzy and my head starts to spin as everything begins to turn blurry."

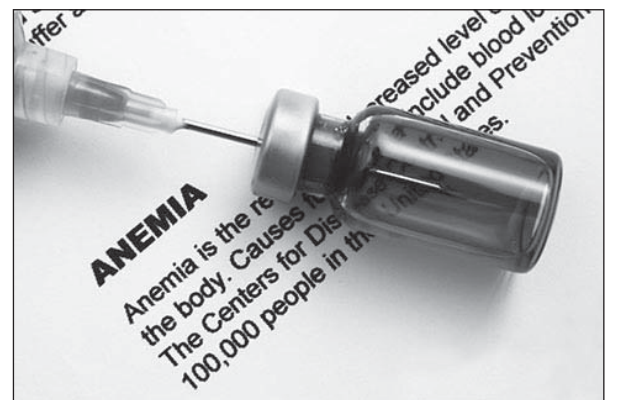
Another 15-year-old Paint Branch student, Noura Osegeura-Argasmou, also experiences anemia, but she has a special type called aplastic anemia. According to *Kidzhealth.org*, aplastic anemia occurs when the body stops making red blood cells from an infection, illness, or other cause. Oseguera states that she experiences fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness, a feeling of being unbalanced, loss of appetite, dry mouth and has strange cravings for inedible things.

She had aplastic anemia at the age of 14. "At first I didn't know what it was for a very long time until I went to the doctor and they told me I was diagnosed with aplastic anemia," says Oseguera. "Despite all the effects of

anemia there are ways to prevent getting this blood disorder and to lead a healthier lifestyle if you already are diagnosed with it. According to *Mayoclinic.com*, some ways to prevent anemia and lead a healthier lifestyle includes adjusting to a diet that includes iron-rich foods such as beef and other meats, beans, lentils, iron-fortified cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, and dried fruit, taking vitamin B12, and vitamin C foods such as citrus fruits and juices, peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, melons and strawberries. These will help increase iron absorption.

Being diagnosed with iron deficiency anemia and aplastic anemia doesn't have to be a terrible thing, but it can be when people don't know how to treat it, specifically teenagers.

I personally struggle with iron deficiency anemia everyday of my life, but at the same time I always find a way to take care of my body and try to reduce the symptoms as much as possible. One of the things I do is always carry a water bottle with me to keep myself hydrated in case I start to feel dizzy, or have gone a whole day without eating anything. I tend to feel very lightheaded and dizzy when I walk for a long period of time. I don't have an appetite. I still force myself to eat regardless of how I feel because, in the end, I can't let being anemic stand in the way of living my everyday life.



Gun Violence: When Will it be Enough?

NOURA OSEGEURA ARGASMOU

STAFF WRITER

A student huddles in the back of a classroom. The lights are dimmed, the door barricaded by a single desk. The students have been prepped for this kind of situation, so why is it so scary now? Maybe, it has something to do with the fact that an assault rifle is still legal in over 40 states even after mass shootings at places like Sandy Hook Elementary School and a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado.

When did a person's second amendment right start to contradict the right to live?

In the first 46 weeks of this year, there were 45 school shootings. Let me state that again, 45 school shootings. The most recent school shooting at the time of

publication occurred on November 15, 2019 at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, California. The incident - once again - shook the nation. With our national average increasing to roughly one school shooting a week, many feel that we have finally reached a time where gun reform must happen. Of course, when gun reform is discussed, it sparks different emotions in people.

When asked her reaction to the Santa Clarita shooting, Paint Branch security guard Ms. Marquitta Anderson said that "Every school is run differently and I can't speak on their security, all I can say is that school should be a safe place."

PB English teacher Mr. Ellis thinks that the Santa Clarita shooting may be the final

straw in creating some form of gun reform. "This cycle of violence that we have is creating an unsafe space for students. Their priority shouldn't be fear of getting shot at, but learning," he says.

Currently in the United States, seventeen states and the District of Columbia have passed extreme risk protection orders, or so-called red flag laws, to prevent gun violence. Maryland strengthened its gun laws in 2018 by enacting an extreme risk protection order law, banning bump stocks and similar products that simulate automatic fire, and allocating millions of dollars to urban violence prevention programs. As a result, the state's gun laws jumped from sixth to fourth-strongest in the country.

Maryland's gun death rate per one-thousand people is 12.3, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

By creating new regulations and laws, school systems in those states should, ultimately, be safer. However, that does not mean that any school is truly protected, which is why school districts all over the U.S. - including Montgomery County Public Schools - have put in place active assailant drills to prepare for situations. Just like fire drills, students in our schools now prepare for gun violence. Of course, parents send their kids to school expecting a quality education and safety, but schools have decided that because there are incidents, students must be prepared.

But how does a screen describing what an active assailant is like actually help out schools? Could anything be done to better prepare security guards, students and staff? Ms. Anderson, from PB Security, says "Training; constant training and security needs to be done. More needs to be done so we train with police and school staff to formulate a plan and ensure safety procedures."

PBHS sophomore Christina Anderson states, "The drills are useful in some cases, however, it isn't always when we're gonna be sitting in the middle of a classroom so they need to be expanded so we can practice in all different situations. We need to be prepared for all times."



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The Athlete Life

Chimdi started running track his freshman year and made the varsity track team. He is a two-time regional champion in the 200 outdoor and the 4A state champion in the 300 indoors.

Patricia is starting her fourth season on the varsity basketball team. She just became a member of the 1,000-point club and signed a letter of intent to play at UMBC. She is a member of the student athlete leadership council and won first team all-state as a junior.

At what point in the day do you begin preparing yourself for a meet?

Two nights before. Start flushing your body with water and fill with carbs for energy.

What techniques do you use to mentally prepare for a meet?

I listen to music, make sure I keep moving around, review my plan for the race.

What does meet day feel like for you?

It changes. One day it can feel like another day at the office and you want to get it over with, but the next I'm jittery and excited.

Do you have any pre-meet rituals?

I always make sure I put my headband and goggles on after my warm up and pray right before my first race.

What is your favorite thing about your team?

It's my family.

What qualities make you a good team leader?

I'm serious when I need to be, demand more from myself and others, and I'm always ready to help and guide my teammates.

Osuji

Chukwundi



Patricia

Anumba



What techniques do you use to mentally prepare for a game?

Remind myself why I play basketball and mentally lock in.

What does game day feel like for you?

Game day feels like any other day just a little more exciting.

What techniques do you use to mentally prepare for a game?

Remind myself why I play basketball and mentally lock in.

Do you have any pre-game rituals?

[I] pray before I play.

What is your favorite thing about your team?

How we can all connect and bond with each other.

What qualities make you a good team leader?

I'm a vocal leader and lead by example on and off the court for the younger players on the team with less experience.

How long do you plan to continue playing - in college or beyond?

I'm going to play in college at UMBC and beyond college if I get the opportunity to play overseas.

Winter Sports Calendar

Get out and support your PANTHERS

Wed, 12/18

Boys JV Basketball vs. Magruder
@ PB

Girls JV Basketball @ Magruder

Girls Varsity Basketball @
Magruder

Boys Varsity Basketball vs.
Magruder @ PB

Thurs, 12/19

Varsity Wrestling vs. Watkins
Mill @ PB

JV Wrestling vs. Watkins Mill
@ PB

Fri, 12/20

Girls Junior Varsity Basketball vs.
Blake @ PB

Boys Junior Varsity Basketball @
Blake

Girls Varsity Basketball vs. Blake
@PB

Boys Varsity Basketball @ Blake

Thurs, 12/26

Boys Varsity Basketball - Hardy
Hoopfest Holiday Invitational
TBD

Fri, 12/27

Boys Varsity Basketball - Hardy
Hoopfest
Holiday
Invitational
TBD



U.S. Women’s National Soccer Gets a New Coach Ahead of the 2020 Olympics

ALANA CAMPBELL
OPINIONS EDITOR

Jillian Ellis, the coach responsible for the US Women’s National Team’s (USWNT) recent Women’s World Cup win, announced she was stepping down in late July. Ellis served as Head Coach for five years, and led the national team to two consecutive World Cup victories and eight total tournament victories. “The timing is right to move on and the program is positioned to remain at the pinnacle of women’s soccer,” she said in a statement from U.S. Soccer. Her last game, an October 6th 1-1 draw versus South Korea, wrapped up her impressive tenure as the most successful coach in USWNT history.

Named FIFA’s 2019 Coach of the Year, Ellis had a record-breaking win to loss ratio with 106 wins, 7 losses, and 19 ties. Under her leadership, her team averaged 3.1 goals per game, conceded an average of 0.5 goals, and 63 percent of her 132 games ended in a shutout. It would be an understatement to say that the next coach has some big shoes to fill.

USWNT General Manager Katie Markgraf headed the selection process, and by October had narrowed her search to two primary contenders for the position: Utah Royals FC Head Coach Laura Harvey and Reign

FC Head Coach Vlatko Andonovski, current coaches in the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL). Both boast impressive resumes including Harvey’s 10 years of experience, two “NWSL Coach of the Year” titles, and her successful four-year run as Arsenal Women’s coach.

Vlatko wowed Markgraf and the search committee during his in-person interview, according to Jeff Kasouf of the soccer news site The Equalizer. Kasouf reports that “He showed up...with 16 mini-presentations — not a 16-page presentation, but 16 individual topics — for U.S. Soccer, ranging from tactics to team culture and his long-term vision for the youth program.” Vlatko has always been known for his over-preparedness and attention to detail, and this is what made him a standout candidate. At an October press conference, Markgraf said that, following the meeting, the decision to choose Vlatko for the position was unanimous.

Before entering the NWSL seven years ago, Vlatko hadn’t yet made a name for himself, but through hard work and preparation, he was able to climb the ranks and gain recognition for his coaching ability. Vlatko came into the NWSL at its inception as head coach for the former club Kansas City FC. In his first year, despite lack of funding and mismanagement from the club’s owners, he was able to get

them to the championship, and in subsequent years, two consecutive victories in the title game. Before the club folded in 2017, Vlatko quit and moved to Seattle Reign FC. In Seattle, he took a team that had finished in fifth place two years in a row and got them to the playoffs. In 2019, Vlatko had, arguably, his finest year as a head coach as he took a team that faced seemingly insurmountable challenges further than anyone expected. At one point there were 12 players — including star-player Megan Rapinoe — on the injury report, six with injuries that were season-ending. This was only exacerbated by the World Cup call-ups that prevented eight players, most of them starters, from playing for nearly half the season. Normally, a team would be crippled by this much adversity, but Vlatko executed what Neil Morris of The Equalizer calls “aggressive mid-season maneuvering” and against the odds was able to get his team to the playoffs for a second year. It’s because of this perseverance and ability to improvise that he was voted 2019 NWSL Coach of the Year.

Although Vlatko has cemented his reputation as an outstanding coach, he hadn’t had any international experience, which critics weren’t afraid to point out. Subsequently, the pressure was on in early November after he took over the USWNT at his first two exhibition games against Sweden—one of the

only teams to beat the US in the past five years—and Costa-Rica. He made a few changes to the roster, calling up players from past years as well as new ones, but it largely remained the same with most of the players from the World Cup announced as well. Many of the star players — Rapinoe, Alex Morgan, Kelly O’Hara, Crystal Dunn and a few others — were unavailable play due to injuries, so these games saw a lot more bench rotation as well as first caps for a few players. The games ended in a 3-2 victory, and a 6-0 victory, and demonstrated that, although he still has some kinks to work out, Vlatko is prepared to continue Ellis’s momentum.

The 2020 Summer Olympics will be Vlatko’s opportunity to show that he can take this team in an upwards direction. He has just two months before Olympic Qualifying starts, and then he’ll be tasked with selecting the 18-player roster (five fewer players than the World Cup Roster) and then developing those players into a gold-medal winning team, something that Jill Ellis was unable to do in 2016.

Everyone from fans, to critics, to the players themselves expect the USWNT to win every game they play, and with a roster as talented as the current one, it’s not an impossible task. So far, Vlatko has proven that he has the drive, the preparation, and the ability to make that a reality and take the team to the next level.



After a wildly successful career leading the United States Women’s National Soccer Team, Jill Ellis will hand the reins over to well-respected coach Vlatko Andonovski. According to reports, Andonovski will continue to rely on the team’s core players, but must find some new players to mix in as well.



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Independence Program

Compiled by: Beverly Yirenyi

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Featuring...

Jacob Wade



Any New Year’s resolutions?

My New Year’s resolution is to improve my concentration and mental skills. It’s hard for me to focus, especially with all of these distractions around. So next year, I’m trying to reduce all distractions completely.

Are you excited for winter sports?

I’m very excited. My favorite winter sport is basketball. I even get to see my friends cooking it on the basketball court.

Have you gotten any college acceptances?

Yes. So far, I’ve been accepted into three colleges.

What is your favorite thing to do over winter break?

My favorite thing to do is to see my family and friends.

Kelly Anokwu



Any New Year’s resolutions?

My New Year’s resolution is to try to eliminate procrastination from my life, and pursue my dreams and passions.

What sport are you excited for this winter?

My favorite winter sport is basketball for the rivalries and its competitive nature; but I’m also excited to see what indoor track will accomplish.

Have you gotten any college acceptances?

Not yet and it’s stressing me out, but I know December is usually the month, so I’m crossing my fingers.

What is your favorite thing to do for winter break?

I love to sleep in, listen to music, and play video games. Now that’s happiness.

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If you are interested in becoming a patron for Mainstream, please contact Mr. Woodward at: brian_woodward@mcpsmd.org
THANK YOU!

photo by: Miss. Perkins

Twelfth Night (Continued from p. 1)

Shawhan asserts that performing Twelfth Night “was a challenge but a really good exercise in being silly and expressive on stage.”

Mr. Bergmann, who took over the directors role from the esteemed Ms. Perkins for the fall production, expresses that he was aware of the tribulations of performing and watching Shakespeare, but his intention was to offer a play that would

“appeal to students as well as challenge them.” Prior to working with Perspectives, Mr. Bergmann had been the director of Parkland Middle School’s productions for 15 years and has worked extensively in community theater for 20+ years. In his “Director’s Note” located in the playbill for Twelfth Night, he exclaimed that when Ms. Perkins approached him and asked if he would like to be head director during her break,

he immediately said, “Yes!” He thought directing a high school production would be “easier” than directing a middle school one because of the larger range of shows that high school theatre has available to them.

Paint Branch is excited to see Mr. Bergmann’s directing skills with a musical as he continues to handle the job when Perspectives hits the stage again in the upcoming spring production



President Pete?

Buttigieg Leads in Iowa, but National Appeal Still Low

LAUREN GANTMAN
STAFF WRITER

Pete Buttigieg. You may have first heard of him as the guy whose last name you couldn’t pronounce, but now he’s the Democratic presidential candidate surging to number one in the Iowa Caucus Polls. Since Buttigieg launched his campaign last April, media coverage of him and his campaign have sky-rocketed. As someone who started at the bottom, the small-town mayor commonly known as “Mayor Pete” appears to be making a big impact in the first stages of the road to becoming the Democratic nominee.

Buttigieg was born and raised in South Bend, Indiana, a place better known as the home to the University of Notre Dame. In 2004 he graduated from Harvard University, and shortly after was named a Rhodes Scholar, becoming one of a select few who study at prestigious Oxford University. Following his education, he worked at a

distinguished private consulting firm before jumping into politics and being elected mayor of South Bend in 2011 at the age of 29. During his first term as mayor, he took seven months of unpaid leave to deploy to Afghanistan where he served as a lieutenant in the navy.

Clearly not one to rest on his laurels, Buttigieg, on April 14, officially announced his campaign and threw his hat into the crowded ring of Democratic hopefuls.

Buttigieg began his run for president as a relative unknown, especially next to names like Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders and Vice-President Joe Biden. He is also the first openly gay man to run for president. Since his April announcement, his polling numbers have steadily increased as he made his presence known on the debate stages and the campaign trail. He likes to tell people that if he became president, he’d be the “first Maltese American, left handed, episcopalian, gay war veteran, mayor, millennial” president.

So what has made him so popular in critical first

primary states like Iowa and New Hampshire? The short answer is his moderate platform. On one of the key issues of the election, health care, Buttigieg wants to establish a Medicare for all plan, but, as his campaign page expresses, only for “all who want it.” This approach is considered too moderate as it falls into the place between abolishing the private health care sector, which is what progressives like Bernie Sanders want, and not having government-funded health care at all, which is a Republican or conservative standpoint.

Another key issue, gun control, is one Buttigieg feels he can especially connect with young people on. He was a part of the first generation to ever experience school shootings, as he was in high school in Indiana when the Columbine shooting took place. Buttigieg’s plan for gun control includes creating universal background checks and banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. However, he also understands the important balance of not violating the Second

photo credit: peteforamerica.com



South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg is at or near the top of most Iowa polls heading into the new year.

Amendment, which is a key point for gun rights advocates.

Even though his campaign is enjoying its first place polling in Iowa, Buttigieg still has a long way to go. National polls place him in fourth place behind Biden, Sanders, and Warren. While the media has turned more of its focus toward Buttigieg, not all of the

attention is good. Paint Branch AP Government teacher Ms. Hall has theorized that one reason why Buttigieg shot up in the polls is because of negative attention on Warren.

No matter where you stand on Buttigieg’s candidacy, it is hard to deny the somewhat meteoric rise of the young mayor.