Mission

We believe that Wheaton’s culture of consciousness and involvement deserves an equally passionate and mindful written means of political and social expression. We want to counter the insularity of small-campus life by providing a publication whose commentary serves to illuminate those issues affecting a larger national and global community.

Our primary objective is to inform and stimulate discussion, as it is our most deeply held belief that a democracy cannot function without a well-informed electorate.

Thanks

John Oliver; for the idea.

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A Meditation on Presidents and Progress

BY FAHEEM DYER ’19 EDITOR

Boston, July 2004. The FleetCenter stadium roars with the inspired applause of a thousand voters gathered to support presidential candidate John Kerry. The star of the hour, though, is a fresh-faced candidate for Illinois’s open senate seat, Barack Obama. The young, energetic master orator lets his tone soar as he so beautifully articulates that “there is no liberal America or conservative America, there is the United States of America!” It was a tacit philosophical promise that the leadership practiced by those speaking that day at the 2004 Democratic National Convention would be a leadership for all, not for some. The promise made Obama a national fixture, and eventually the president. It seems, though, that as far as America is concerned, that promise has been accepted as a tragic overestimation at best.

In 2016, as his time in the Oval Office draws to a close, young liberals throw around terms like “less than hoped,” “didn’t do enough,” and “stifled” unsparingly in reference to the Obama years. As vocal and belligerent movements of opposition rose to dutifully pitch fits and supposedly slow his momentum, the narrative of his legislative life has gone from the campaign message of unity in the name of progress to gridlock in the name of extremism. Obama’s has supposedly been a tenure of stalled progress and stymied change, in need of correction with harder lines and bolder stances. I’m writing to tell you that this is a skin-deep reading. The real breakthrough of the Obama age has only just begun.

Consider Ronald Reagan, who took bold stances in fresh ways on a slate of new conservative issues. Because of the right messaging to the right demographic coalition, Reagan managed to install a sense of righteous purpose into just enough voters to move them to action and awareness in a way that has lasted long beyond his eight years in office. This was the so-called “Reagan Revolution,” a surge in a new kind of strong conservatism, and—very importantly—a reframing of the hot political topics on his coalition’s terms. After the arrival of the Reagan brigade, “Big Government” was suddenly the great black specter from which all politicians had to run, the military was the first and finest tool in the country’s arsenal in the fight against half a world-full of enemies, drugs were without debate or nuance a scourge on the youth and the question of wealth was “how best can the rich stimulate the economy for us?” rather than “who and what exactly generate growth, and how?” This kind of philosophy prevailed for years; term after term, president after president, and party convention after party convention, on BOTH sides.

That general American philosophy—the tough-guy, trickle-down, family-values brand conservatism— didn’t get its first effective rebuke until 2008. Reagan-style top-down economics and global posturing had its credibility sapped by the perilous leadership of his most inept practitioner (George W. Bush) and his presidency, and gas was thrown on the fires of dissatisfaction by a global economic meltdown caused by banking practices begun in the eighties. That year, the electorate was flooded for the first time by millennial voters with new priorities and a fresh distaste for the neconervative middle ground America had reached. The safe choice, an establishment candidate with practice catering to that middle ground, was cast aside by the Democratic Party in favor of Obama, a candidate espousing an ethos that quietly, nearly implicitly, rethought the political landscape. Looked at in that context, Obama’s victory alone is one of his greatest achievements: he and the movement that made him started the process of not necessarily bringing the country together, but bringing it to the left.

As Reagan did with his pinpointing of specific issues his hefty base cared about, Obama and the tide that carried him to the White House have (sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly) brought notions of social and economic justice into the public consciousness, and groups like Occupy and Black Lives Matter have emerged to carry on the fight in these arenas where he is perceived to be sluggish or not enough of an actor. What’s more, demographics are no longer on the side of the Reagan coalition, but with said “Obama tide,” and Reagan’s unholy conservative alliance is coming apart at the seams anyway. Questions of elitism, corruption, and populism brought to the fore only recently (in the wake of Obama’s rise, no less) have cannibalized the Republican primary, claiming the candidacies of expected giants like Scott Walker, Chris Christie and poor sweet Jeb Bush, to say nothing of the tasteless, plastic-haired shysters that they have propelled to the front of the race. For all the claims of need for a political “revolution” coming from the more restless among the Democratic base this primary season, what we have neglected to recognize (admittedly, it isn’t obvious) is that a revolution is already underway.

The same way Reagan reformed the very skeleton of political discourse around a neoliberal tough-guy folkways, Obama’s effect on politics, both the nuts-and-bolts AND the symbolism, is the reformation and resurgence of progressive principles in the soul of the American voter. To politically act on the assumption of anything contrary to that is to deligitimize the weight of President Obama’s victory. There are real steps toward further progress that can be made by riding the wave started in 2008. “There are real steps toward further progress that can be made by riding the wave started in 2008.”

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n 2013, Americans learned that their information had been stolen by the National Security Agency (the NSA) in the name of the War on Terror. Phone records, emails, GPS data—all had been collected, carefully filed away, and analyzed. New data centers were in the works, capable of holding and processing information on a scale that at the time was nigh unimaginable. Companies had colluded with intelligence agencies, building back doors into their software to allow for unimpeded access. Programs were created to detect guilt, and to find patterns of behavior that might indicate terrorist sympathies.

In an alternate universe, I am certain that this series of realizations would result in the immediate termination of the NSA. American citizens would march on Washington and demand that their politicians do whatever was necessary to end these programs. Perhaps in this alternate universe the NSA offices would be surrounded until proof could be produced that the spying had truly stopped. Records would be burned, hard-drives smashed, and officials imprisoned.

In this universe, the reaction was somewhat different. When Americans learned that their government had been spying on them, nothing happened. In fact, when Edward Snowden released the first of his revelations from a hotel room in Hong Kong, many called him a traitor. Some feared that he would be assassinated by the United States Government in an effort to prevent further leaks. Others hoped he would be with baited breath.

In many ways, this entire situation, and the response to it, is a result of what can only be described as “the new normal.” It was not unreasonable for Americans to believe that their government might choose to assassinate a citizen for revealing the extent of the NSA’s activities. In fact, the United States Government assassinates people on a regular basis. It is not unusual.

When Seal Team 6 crossed national borders, killed a man, and dumped his body in the ocean, America celebrated. Drones rain death from the skies, killing our enemies as they sleep in their beds. Often, their families are nearby. President Barack Obama regularly speaks of these killings as some of his greatest achievements. The public seems to agree. This is now the way America fights its wars.

It is also no longer unusual for the United States to use torture to obtain information. When the American people first learned of Guantanamo Bay, they were horrified. The study released by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 2014 reveals that CIA interrogators repeatedly waterboarded prisoners in a “series of near drownings.” Others were “hooded and dragged up and down a long corridor while being slapped and punched.” How could America, the land of the free, possibly use such techniques? Some demanded that the facility be closed down immediately. However, others cautioned that the information was too important, too vital to the success of the War on Terror. Guantanamo Bay remains in operation to this very day. The American people decided that they could live with the knowledge that men were being tortured on their behalf.

Having already accepted assassination and torture, perhaps it was no great leap for Americans when Snowden made his revelations. It was simply business as usual, learning that the government had them under surveillance. If it made them safer, then it was worth it. If anything can be said to define this “new America,” it is the belief that anything can and should be sacrificed to protect the lives of its citizenry.

Now, in 2016, few people still talk about the NSA. It is a throwaway line, a bad joke. “Be careful what you write in that text message! The NSA might be reading it.” Or “hello to the FBI guy reading this!” Nobody cares.

Is the relative lack of attention the NSA has received a result of a changing psychology? Did Americans simply lose interest? As the internet sinks its claws ever deeper into the minds of the citizenry, has interest become fleeting? Perhaps in all of the noise, the NSA registered as little more than a blip on the population’s collective radar and was quickly forgotten. Did the American people, having already accepted the loss of their moral superiority in the name of national security, simply decide that losing their privacy was no great sacrifice?

There is a kind of fatigue that sets in when faced with a daily parade of horrors. Fear and hatred become constant companions, and perceptions shift. It becomes normal to celebrate the deaths of your enemies, killed by missiles fired from above. It becomes normal to ignore the innocents caught in the blasts, women and children dismissed as collateral damage. It becomes normal to celebrate the deaths of your enemies, killed by missiles fired from above. It becomes normal to ignore the innocents caught in the blasts, women and children dismissed as collateral damage. It becomes normal to close your eyes when faced with the atrocities committed in the name of defense of liberty. When these things are normal, a few emails and a few phone calls are small change.

The short attention span of the American people has certainly also played a role. Things that are new and different are prized, rising to prominence before quickly fading into obscurity. The NSA leaks seem to have followed a similar pattern.

Further, we can look to the fatigue of war, where in times of strife the population often decides to limit civil liberties for the duration of the conflict. They also often choose to look the other way when it comes to massacres and war-crimes perpetrated in their name. This war is no different. However, this is a conflict with no end in sight. Already, it has stretched for fourteen years, a sizable portion of my lifetime. Children in their sophomore year of high school have never known peace. The temporary apparatus of wartime is becoming permanent, and no one seems willing to stop it. And why would they?

After all, national security is at risk.
Are Millennial Women Afraid of Hillary Clinton?

BY VIOLET KNOLL ’16

The media is terrible to Hillary Clinton. If it’s not her pantsuits, her “yelling” or her choices in her marriage, then it is her terrible sin of being ambitious. While 2016 has been free of pantsuit chatter, it was a marker imposed on her that decided that she was ugly or unfeminine during the 2008 election. Instead, this cycle we have memes circulating on social media with a picture comparing her and Bernie Sanders on the “things that matter” about such things as Star Wars, Harry Potter, or anything cultural portray an out of touch, older, matronly figure compared to Bernie Sanders, who in these creations, speaks exactly like a millennial bro. This judgment, that she is aloof, serious, or out of touch further feeds the feeling that being like Hillary Clinton is something to run away from.

Many millennial women, feminists included, have made the choice to vote for Bernie Sanders. I am not demonizing this choice, but rather I aim to suggest that the two candidates’ feminist policies have done what many third and fourth wave feminists have also done: dismissed the work of those who came before us as not as intersectional or as inclusive as the next. Columnist Katha Pollitt argues that the logic of “waves” is off, and in the case of Hillary Clinton, writes that “it’s a useful stereotype for those who want to reduce women’s political disagreements to family feuds and cat fights, or to score easy points for their age group — or suggest that Hillary Clinton looks old...Hillary Clinton may not use up-to-the-minute terminology like ‘intersectionality’ and ‘whorephobia.’ She probably won’t be calling herself a ciswoman anytime soon. But there is nothing old-fashioned about her issues.”

Perhaps Clinton embodies a much more elite, white feminism, but why do millennial women have more faith that Bernie Sanders is an intersectional feminist dreamboat, sans his progressive economic stance? A Washington Post op-ed urges women to consider the double bind that Hillary faces as a woman in politics before making a choice between Sanders or Clinton, using arguments about the invisibility of certain traits, like ambition, in men, but their prevalence in discussions about women running for public office. We have demonized Clinton, despite the tremendous growth that she has shown towards most social issues, including those about race and gender.

I think millennial women are afraid of Hillary Clinton, and it’s not because, as Gloria Steinem stated, that the “boys are with Bernie”, but because we have internalized so much of the negative attention that she receives that the idea of becoming someone like Hillary Clinton is the worst thing possible. She is the vessel for which millennial women desperately want to escape; we want to be seen differently than the out of touch, hawkish, and ambitious woman who worst of all, isn’t all that “cool”. •

Super PACs: Buying Influence, Not Elections

BY RACHEL IAFOLLA ’18

Super Political Action Committees (Super PACs). They seem pretty frightening; the idea of big money buying elections is not one that sits well with some citizens. However, maybe they are not as scary as we think. “We,” in this case, refers mostly to self-identified Democrats, a group which is more likely to dislike Super PACs, when compared to their Republican counterparts (citation). While Super PACs are able to advertise, make calls, and raise unlimited funds for a given candidate, a look at their success rates may calm some liberal nerves.

Prior to 2010, Super PACs were not an issue; unions and corporations did not have the power to independently spend money to influence elections on the federal level. This all changed when the Supreme Court deemed that fact unconstitutional Citizens United v. FEC, and in the subsequent case of SpeechNow.org v. FEC., the Super PAC was born (citation). While some feared the Super PACs would give power to the wealthy to “buy elections”, did they succeed in doing so?

In the 2012 election between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, the Super PAC as we know it today made its debut. As a result, more than $840 million was spent on the election (as of October 30, 2012), and of the money, a majority went to conservatives (citation). Romney received more monetary support from Super PACs than Obama, but did he win the election? Well, obviously not. While both parties utilized Super PACs, if they really bought elections, Romney would have won due to his greater source of funding. In this case, the power of grassroots supporters, smaller donations, and the voice of the American people proved stronger than that of wealthy donors.

In the current election, Super PACs are once again a big topic of discussion. Most notably, Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders’ campaign has managed unimaginable success without the help of one. On the opposite side, Republican candidate Jeb Bush boasted a massive Super PAC—the biggest dedicated to political candidate, in fact—but faced humiliation, and ultimately defeat, in the national polls. The belief in the decisiveness of Super PACs in buying elections is clearly up for questioning.

Perhaps the true power of Super PACs was best summed up by presidential candidate Donald Trump when he said that, “when you give, they do whatever the hell you want them to do.” It is when a huge Super PAC candidate wins that the wealthy have their power. The focus on “buying elections” may take away from the greater issue for the average citizen; it is the matter of buying influence which is truly frightening. If one keeps all of the focus on what happens on the national stage, one may overlook what is happening behind the scenes. Looking at Super PACs as something more complex than buying elections is a critical to adopt if we wish to understand what is happening within our government. •
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Defending the Legacy of an American Giant

BY CONNOR MATHIS ’18

It is a rare opportunity to compare a US President to the all-time greats Franklin Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. It is a lofty goal to even stand in the shadows of these men, and not many presidents do. But there is one president that is very similar to both of these men. The travesty is that he has been left out of the typical American history lexicon. I’m of course talking about LBJ, a man whose presidency soared to the highest heights imaginable, as well as some of the deepest, most painful lows in American history.

Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson inherited the presidency through succession. He began his time in the White House as an accident and he fully knew the only reason he was there was because of President Kennedy’s murder, but that didn’t stop him from taking over the presidency full force. He immediately began to push the Democrats in his party to support the Civil Rights bill by using the “persuasion skills” he honed during his time as Senate Majority Whip and Speaker of the House.

Through his efforts, he not only passed this bill, but he also initiated the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which got rid of poll taxes, literacy tests, and appointed people to make sure that these laws were being upheld in Southern states. He also abolished Immigration quotas and passed the Civil Rights bill of 1968 which got rid of housing discrimination and gave added protection to Native Americans on reservations. LBJ was very similar to a 20th century Lincoln, as his policies gave African Americans the civil rights they deserved and fought so hard for, just as Lincoln set the slaves free.

The connection between LBJ and FDR is even easier to make. LBJ, as he initially ran for congress, campaigned as a staunch New Deal democrat. This truth is very evident when seen through his “Great Society,” a dream Johnson had about what America should be.

LBJ began his succeeded presidency by waging an "unconditional war on poverty." Similar to FDR, Johnson created many social programs in order to help impoverished Americans get ahead. This was overwhelmingly successful as his policies tackled issues from all over the board. He created Job Corps to help underprivileged youth get job training and hone skills. He created Upward Bound to help poor high school seniors attend college. He created Head Start, providing Preschool to poor children, and the School Breakfast Program which made schools provide breakfast to children who may have not been able to eat at home that morning. Not to mention he also created low-interest college loans and gave additional funding to schools in order to have additional teachers at schools to help teach bilingual children who may struggle with English.

His efforts towards what he dubbed the “War on Poverty” are more than just those listed here, but all these programs were wildly successful as the poverty rate in America dropped from 22.2% to 12.6%, similar to FDR dropping the unemployment rate from near 25% to below 3%.

This may already sound like an impressive résumé for a president, but the list isn’t nearly done. The Gun Control Act of 1968 was brought about by the assassination of JFK, RFK as well as MLK Jr. which prevented all convicted felons and the mentally ill from purchasing firearms. He founded Medicare and Medicaid, taking care of the health needs of the poor and the elderly. He made Food Stamps a permanent program in the US, the same program FDR started. LBJ also made it so cigarettes would come prepackaged with warning labels and meats had to be graded up to a federal standard.

With all of these sweeping domestic reforms, why isn’t Lyndon B. Johnson remembered as one of our greatest presidents? Well, he was responsible for the extreme escalation of US involvement in Vietnam which caused between 1,484,000–3,886,026 deaths.

Johnson did not have anything near spotless record, and neither do the other presidents mentioned, but his policies have affected millions upon millions of people throughout the US. He enormously shaped the world and the America that exists today through his sweeping reforms and advancements to human rights and civil programs. Johnson has been left behind by High School curriculums and the counter-culture of the Baby Boomers, but his legacy lives on in the modern American identity.

"LBJ [is] a man whose presidency soared to the highest heights imaginable, as well as some of the deepest, most painful lows in American history."
What is Your Culture War Good For?

BY CAMERON ADELMAN ’19

Walking down Commonwealth Avenue in Boston on a Saturday morning, it’s impossible to ignore the pulsating mob of protesters stationed outside Planned Parenthood’s clinic doors. Even from a block or two away, the mass of people visibly chants and throbs with the flow of clinic visitors. Their shouts about God and His so-called “views” of abortion are audible down the street. While most pedestrians cross the street or walk a wide girth around the mob, I have been in the midst of their ranks. They rub their prayer beads and clutch signs with images that supposedly show aborted fetuses. They thrust pamphlets at anyone close enough to touch. Often, they bring their children with them, too young to know the hate their parents preach, but clutching signs all the same. Anyone who goes into the clinic has to walk through their lines. I’ve grown accustomed to ignoring them, after all, I’m not there for the reason they choose to protest. Most of the people entering the clinic are not there for abortions either. Statistically, very few of the women going to Planned Parenthood are those the protesters are trying to stop. For this reason, protesting Planned Parenthood on location is extremely ineffective: so few of the people entering the clinic are actually there for an abortion.

Employees of Planned Parenthood are taught to not interact with the protesters. The volunteers stationed outside the clinic doors to assist people entering the clinic are told the same thing. If they try to give you a pamphlet, you shake your head. You ignore the religion fueled judgments they hurl at you. It may not matter that most people ignore them, the protesters feel accomplished if they can see that they’ve rattled someone. If a patient looks scared, or looks like they might avoid going into the clinic, they feel vindicated. Even if the protesters don’t change the minds of those who enter the clinic, if they can deter someone from getting to their appointment, then they feel as if they’ve won. These “small victories” as they’re seen are the reason the protesters come back day after day, week after week. If every single clinic visitor ignored them, perhaps they would stop. Unfortunately, not everyone knows to ignore them, or is strong willed enough to put on a brave face when being told that they’re a murderer. The few visitors the protesters manage to get to are what keep them coming back. The actions of the protesters are damaging not only for the few women coming to Planned Parenthood for abortions, but for all the people simply seeking sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

What the protesters don’t know, or perhaps what they choose to ignore, is that only 3% of people coming to Planned Parenthood are there for an abortion. The other 97% are there for birth control, STI testing or treatment, prenatal care, or a myriad of other services that Planned Parenthood provides that aren’t abortion. When it comes down to the numbers, less than 3% of the people actually entering the clinic are there for an abortion, because looking beyond patients there for other services, there are the people that accompany patients to their appointments, and all the clinic staff. The protesters go after everyone who walks through the clinic doors, but only 1 or 2% of those people are even there for an abortion. Everyone else is just a side effect of their consistent but ineffective efforts to stop abortions. The protesters keep coming back though, they keep protesting despite how impressively the numbers are against them.

The protests have gotten bigger in recent months. Since the leaking of footage supposedly showing Planned Parenthood employees discussing the sale of fetal tissue, anti-choice minded people are trying harder than ever to get Planned Parenthood shut down. It doesn’t matter that the footage that everyone is so up in arms about was doctored, anti-abortionists have had enough. Planned Parenthood is in serious danger of losing their federal funding, much to the delight of the people who station themselves outside the clinic doors, chanting about God. The issue, though, is the federal funds that go to Planned Parenthood do not go towards the 3% of women who go to the clinic for an abortion. The funding is there for the other 97% of people in need of contraception, STI testing and treatment, prenatal care, help after a sexual assault, and numerous other services that aren’t the subject of protests. Shutting down Planned Parenthood, or taking away the much needed federal funding will not stop abortions from happening, it will lead to unsafe abortions and countless people in need of sexual and reproductive health services who will no longer have somewhere to go. Abortions happened long before Roe vs. Wade occurred, the issue was that they were dangerous. Deaths from abortion decreased dramatically after the passing of Roe vs. Wade, but it is easy to understand why. Making abortion illegal does not stop abortions from occurring, it simply takes away the safest and best options for the women who need them. Planned Parenthood is an invaluable healthcare institution, and denying people access to their services would not lead to fewer abortions, but more unsafe ones and unwanted pregnancies.

Statistically speaking, the efforts of Planned Parenthood protesters are unsalvageably fruitless. Regardless of your stance on abortion, the fact that only one or two people out of one hundred that the protesters interact with are there for the reason that they’re protesting should be an indication that their energy should be focused elsewhere. Perhaps that’s why there have been so many efforts to tarnish Planned Parenthood’s name and remove their
Examining the Politics of the ‘Wheaton Bubble’

BY ANNA VANREMOORTEL ’18

Last semester in my Sociology class, I was assigned to write a paper that addressed the political culture of Wheaton and how the structure of the school affects our chosen form of activism. As most people know, Wheaton is a fairly liberal school. In fact, in November of 2014, Niche ranked Wheaton College as the tenth most liberal college in the United States based on a political poll of 50,000 students. Wheaton’s Facebook page shared the article with the line “According to Niche, we’re putting the ‘liberal’ in Liberal Arts.” Our school is proud of its liberal student body, as it lines up with many of the school’s core values including diversity and inclusion of all identities. While many students enjoy the safety and comfort of the “Wheaton Bubble” and the school’s collective stance on social justice and political issues, the bubble tends to exclude those with more conservative views.

Wheaton’s rank as number 10 in liberalism suggests that it attracts some of the most liberal students in America, but this is difficult to prove. The school resembles many other small New England liberal arts colleges with a student body made up of mostly young, middle class Americans coming from areas around the Northeast. To understand the true reason Wheaton students express mostly liberal views in the manner they do, I examined the structure of our school and the specific liberal issues we choose to address.

Due to the small size and residential campus, Wheaton is able to offer students a tight-knit community where they can interact and learn in all areas of campus life. This proves to be ideal for discussion-based activism because of the constant interaction between students. Though Wheaton students participate in discussion, I’ve noticed that it is a bounded discourse where all discussions have an underlying answer based in the liberal perspective. In the classrooms, students are encouraged to participate in discussion based lessons where they connect their own opinion and experiences to the class material. Some students may use their own personal experience with an issue such as racism or sexism to add to the class discussion. Including these personal experiences changes the tone of the discussion from one about politics to one about morals. When discussing such personal and emotional values within the liberal perspective, many students will hesitate to bring up opposing views to avoid offending classmates or professors. Some students even avoid speaking out in fear that their professor will grade harsher if they disagree with the student’s values or beliefs.

The Wheaton Bubble doesn’t simply enforce liberalism on campus, it enforces the idea that liberalism is morally right. As students, faculty and staff, we select specific liberal ideas to practice, labeling them as social justice causes rather than politics. The main ideas we focus on include issues of diversity, identity, and privilege. These values hold more emotional meaning to students compared to other liberal ideas such as supporting welfare or taxing the rich. Leaving out the factors of liberalism with fewer emotional ties, such as economic views or the responsibility of government, defines liberalism in a narrow but moral light. This causes liberalism at Wheaton College to mean something different than liberalism in other parts of the world and makes it difficult for people with conservative views to voice their opinion without coming across as offensive. By selecting specific liberal ideas to focus on the school supports liberalism as a moral perspective rather than political, enforcing the idea that the liberal view is “right.”

Taking this into consideration, we can start to understand Niche’s ranking from a sociological standpoint. The rank was determined by a poll of students at various schools who had been living on their campus, or “bubble,” for various amounts of time. Living in a campus bubble doesn’t only affect how students voice their political perspective, but how they view a specific political perspective in general. It can affect how students view themselves as liberals and how they view others as conservatives. And when this view is put in a perspective of morality, the minority group of students with different perspectives are labeled not only as “conservative” but “immoral.”
America’s Imperialist Agenda: How It Exports Anti-Abortion Policies

BY ALEXANDRA NATALE ’16 EDITOR

Abortion makes America uncomfortable. According to the Guttmacher Institute, the leading researcher on sexual and reproductive health in the U.S., states have enacted 231 abortion restrictions in the past four years. While that’s a horrifying statistic, it only scratches the surface of our nation’s deep discomfort in regards to abortion. Abortion makes us so uneasy that we don’t want it to happen anywhere in the world. We don’t even want other countries to talk about it.

Despite the fact that abortion is one of the safest medical procedures a person can undergo, America’s puritanical history and deeply ingrained misogyny have rendered abortion one of the most controversial issues in our country. We’ve tried to export this culture to other countries as well.

In 1973, Sen. Jesse Helms introduced an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act intended to prevent foreign funds from being used to provide abortions. The amendment reads: “No foreign assistance funds may be used to pay for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions.” It’s important to note the timing of this amendment—it was shortly after Roe v. Wade, the landmark case that legalized abortion. The anti-abortion movement was reeling from this momentous loss, and began to look for ways to advance their agenda otherwise. This is how foreign countries became the unlucky recipients of a twisted American legacy.

In 1983, this policy was expanded upon with the introduction of the Global Gag Rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy. First imposed in 1984 by the Reagan administration, this policy stated that any non-governmental agency receiving U.S. funds could not educate their patients about abortion. This meant that these NGOs could not even use their own money to educate their patients about abortion as a reproductive health care option, or tell them where to obtain one. If they were receiving U.S. funds, they could not say anything about abortion at all.

The Global Gag Rule has turned into an unfortunate game of political ping-pong, as every Democratic president has rescinded it and every Republican president has reinstated it. These policies have devastating effects on the ground. When the Global Gag Rule was last in place, a community health center in Ghana saw a 50 percent increase in people seeking treatments for unsafe abortions. The Helms Amendment cut off access to abortion for the Nigerian school girls abducted from Chibok, who were raped and impregnated by the terrorist group Boko Haram. The Zika virus has been linked to birth defects, but the Helms Amendment limits access to abortion to avoid these defects.

It can’t be allowed that we only pay attention to the Helms Amendment and the ways in which America’s anti-abortion culture harms women worldwide when there is a tragedy that reaches the U.S. media. As we push back against the dangerous policies that limit women’s choices domestically, we must demand that our government stop limiting access to reproductive healthcare globally. Geography should not determine your access to healthcare.

No Country for Refugees: Ending Borders to End Violence

BY MARYAM AHMED ’16

Human history is one of global migration, and yet modernity has inextricably linked the figure of the migrant with criminality and suspicion. Consider the refugee “crisis” facing Europe, purportedly beginning in the summer of 2015. The political right lost very little time in shoring up national and ideological borders: it’s a shame, yes, but we can’t help everyone. Brown migrants, after all, posed not only a significant threat to European cultural values, but would inevitably become a heavy economic burden. The left, for its part, presented its stance as one of benevolence. Not only would countries benefit economically from immigrant workers, but European ideals of democracy and liberty necessitated the acceptance of refugees. Naturally, however, this compassion could not be extended to all refugees.

Unsurprisingly, neither response managed to escape a neoliberal framework, leaving borders – and nationhood – intact. But it is the very existence of borders that have relentlessly inflicted violence upon humanity. Borders, and the nation-states they circumscribe, are not innate, inevitable features of modern life but ideological constructs that have been tortuously drawn and redrawn, often through violence and exclusion. Our lives are organized around the sovereignty of the nation-state, but this is a notion that must be problematized.

At the basic level, borders allow for the production of hierarchies – dividing people into citizens and non-citizens. The former become the sole category worthy of the right to a life...
of unrestricted movement and free of violence. Accordingly, the increasingly militarized border controls of Western nations have only served to visit repression upon people—more accurately recognized as “non-citizens.” As seen in the Mediterranean, for refugees unable to enter countries through legal means, risky, perilous passage becomes their only recourse.

Now outside of the law, refugees are especially vulnerable—to extortion, sexual violence and theft. In turn, the implication of smugglers as criminals by nations of the Global North refuses any complicity in forcing people to attempt these treacherous journeys. This evasion is part of a larger refusal of complicity—many refugees are refugees precisely because of Western policies, a fact that often disappears in these conversations. A history of Western exploitation and intervention inevitably leads to the displacement of peoples.

Refugees, however, face violence not only on their journeys but expressly at the hands of Western governments themselves. The squalid conditions of detention centers only allow for further repression. Once there, refugees face an indefinite detention period, as the bureaucratic state moves at a sluggish pace even while people’s lives are harmed.

A world in which refugees are safe is not one that can be accomplished through tepid reform that seeks to “open” borders via lax border controls and “easier” paths to citizenship. It can only be done by putting an end to the very idea of borders—and consequently, nation-states—theirselfs.

Marriage, Italian Style: Same-Sex Civil Unions Still Unrecognized in Italy

BY BEATRICE OCCHINI

This not a tale set a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, though its roots date back almost 10 years. We find ourselves in civilized Western Europe, where Italy retains the cherished title of the only Western country that still does not officially recognize same-sex unions, de facto depriving many of its citizens of fundamental civil rights.

It took thousands of protests from LGBT groups and other movements, an official condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights (dated July 21, 2015) and a soon forgotten bill draft presented in 2007 for a new law (the so called DDL Cirinnà) to be presented. This law finally made its way into the Parliament last February, among protests, criticisms and plain political stonewalling. But let us attempt to make matters clearer: what does it mean if a government doesn’t recognize any civil partnerships apart from heterosexual marriages?

Let’s make up an example: Marco and Antonio are happily in love and living together, so they decide to buy a house. Now, since no legal partnerships exist in Italy outside of heterosexual marriage, Marco and Antonio aren’t allowed to assign the property to both of them and, for the sake of simplicity, they toss a coin and decide that Marco will be its legal owner. Now, what happens if Marco dies in a car accident, leaving no will behind him? The house and its ownership probably isn’t the first thought on Antonio’s mind after his partner’s death. But he will be forced to think about that when Marco’s closest relative, let’s say an aunt, demands Marco and Antonio’s house for herself. Wait, I mean Marco’s house, because that house, no matter whether Antonio paid for it, no matter whether they furnished it and lived there together, belonged to Marco, and now it belongs to Marco’s closest relative. This relative is not and cannot be Antonio, because Antonio and Marco are two men, and therefore, in the eyes of the law, they can’t have a romantic partnership or even share feelings, let alone belongings. Now, to understand the depth of the problem, imagine that we weren’t talking about a house anymore, but about Marco’s biological child, Maria.

As a matter of fact, the newly drafted law entails a fifth clause that would allow Antonio to adopt Maria. Clause 5, known as “step-child adoption,” would represent a milestone in the fight for civil rights in Italy, and as such it has become a bone of contention in the “Bel Paese,” raising a choir of ignorance and intolerance throughout the peninsula and across political orientations. Louder than all other voices, the Church, with its omnipresent stake in Italian politics, decreed that clause 5 is simply “unacceptable. The Pope has already expressed his position: every child deserves a mother and a father.”

On February 17, the opponents of the DDL Cirinnà managed to postpone the discussion by means of the old stonewalling tactic of presenting hundreds of useless amendments to the draft. Anyway, it’s not yet clear whether the government will have sufficient numbers to pass the law, since a whole group from its very ranks (the so called “Catholic-democrats”) currently refuses to vote for a law entailing the aforementioned “step-child adoption” system.

Two possible scenarios open up right now. The government could refuse any compromises, presenting the unaltered draft of
If American Idol Meant Something: The Political Function of the Eurovision Song Contest
BY BRIDGIT BURKE-SMITH ’16

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europe has undergone two devastating world wars in the last 102 years. Both wars broke up old countries and created new ones. In between the wars, a weak League of Nations failed to prevent the blood that would be shed by ruthless dictators, and a second war, even more terrible than the first, was inevitable from the very beginning of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Since then, the world, and the much stronger body of the United Nations, has worked hard at preventing a third world war. But sometimes a heavy dose of nationalistic competition can be good for countries.

Since 1956, this need for intra-European competition has been expressed through the Eurovision Song Contest. Eurovision is the longest running annual TV song competition, held amongst the European states (though, for some reason, Australia sometimes throws their hat in). Countries send representatives to the contest and people in Europe cast their votes for whomever they like, though they are not allowed to vote for the representative of their own country. Set apart from sports coverage, Eurovision is a distinct trans-European viewing experience that absolutely confounds those outsiders who think it’s just a singing competition. Eurovision is way more than ‘American Idol on steroids.’ Eurovision’s critics call it trivial and deride it as being culturally inferior, but it is intensely political, especially for smaller countries that cannot claim the spheres of power and influence possessed by other nations. Ireland in particular is very proud of their legacy in the contest. They first entered the competition in 1965, and since then have no longer just a mostly rural small island country near England.

The competition’s voting is supposed to be unpredictable and based on the talent of the musical acts, but it is not unsurprising who votes for each other. It’s a commercialized competition that some argue sanctions ‘playful xenophobia.’ In many ways, Eurovision showcases the tension brought about by the economic policies of the European Union. It is a way, in an age of increasing globalization and international networks, for countries to retain an identity separate from their membership in the EU. Voting patterns effectively tell you which countries are friendly with which, and are very geopolitical in nature. The event is supposed to be apolitical, but political alliances and divisions are often very obvious. Political and cultural friends (such as Russia and Armenia, Cyprus and Greece) tend to vote for each other, while countries that are at war or recently have been at war tend not to vote for each other, even if they are neighbors (with the exception of the former Yugoslav states).

Though the focus is supposed to be on the performances and talent, just like our own American Idol, viewers can’t help but develop loyalties to acts for reasons beyond their quality of singing. Eurovision allows Europe to work out political competition and divisions in ways that they otherwise could not. Last year’s winner was Sweden, and with this year’s contest (taking place in Stockholm on May 14) already making headlines for the Ukraine’s anti-Stalin submission to the competition, it is set to be as interesting to observe as always.
Global

Nordic Exceptionalism—A Real Model for Liberal Aspirations?
BY THOMAS FENU ’19

Amongst all the blur of the political speeches during the Republican and Democratic debates, one topic in particular stands out: Bernie Sanders’ fascination with Scandinavian economies. In a time when we are facing a global financial crisis—sadly still stemming from the financial crisis of 2008—using countries such as Norway and Sweden as models for rebuilding America’s economy makes no sense. This obstinate persistence in referring to Denmark, Sweden et al. as models of economic virtues is called “Nordic exceptionalism.”

Bernie Sanders seems to be a fervent believer in the Danish and Swedish economies, which he has repeatedly singled out for admiration. It is rather surprising for such a statement to be made by a Democratic candidate seeing as these economies are considerably more capitalistic than the U.S. For example, the top 10 percent of people living in Norway, Sweden and Denmark earn between 65 and 69 percent of the total annual wealth income of these countries. However, this fact can be balanced by the fact that these countries also have huge income tax rates, which can go up to 85 percent of an individual’s income. It is hard to imagine that such an increase in taxes, which most people in America already perceive to be too high, in order to finance healthcare, would be welcome in the U.S.

It is also worth highlighting how excruciatingly high the cost of living in Scandinavian countries is. Importation has always increased prices, and Scandinavian countries pay that price every day. No matter how much these nations focus on exports, trying to re-balance times more expensive than in countries like Germany and Spain.

Mr. Sanders talks extensively about the amazing health care system that exists in Denmark; it is true that America’s own system needs improving. Such improvements have already begun, through the implementation of Obama Care in 2010. Yet, we saw how unwelcomed this statute was by the Republican Party. Is America really ready for a change in its healthcare system?

All in all, I find it hard to trust the examples of Nordic economies. When we see how expensive life is in these countries, how unequally national wealth is spread out within society and how in the end using such systems would probably harm America’s economy more than they would help, I question to which extent is it right for Bernie Sanders to use these countries as models of American aspirations.

A Destabilized Germany: Refugee Crisis Divides a Nation
BY ELENA BAUMGARTNER

It is Sept. 5, 2015, when a few hundred people gather together at the central railway station in Munich. They stand behind barrier tape like fans, eagerly awaiting a very special train. With her slogan “Wir schaffen das!” (‘We can do it’), the German Chancellor Angela Merkel opens the borders to Germany, just as Hungary tries to close theirs. From that moment on refugees did not have to come to the country illegally or by dangerous means of transport. Merkel made available an organized and safe route for refugees to travel.

On Sept. 5, one of the first organized trains brought several thousand refugees, mostly Syrians, from Hungary through Austria to Germany. People awaited them and applauded. The assembled crowd sang and cried and could not hide its emotions about the fate of these people. The Red Cross provided basic health checks for the incoming asylum seekers; hundreds of volunteers helped out that day. They brought food and water, games and stuffed animals for the children. This day showed a positive, strong Germany—a community that really could do it!

This is unfortunately only one side of how the German population is currently dealing with the refugee crisis. Almost six months have passed and thousands of people have been arriving at the German border every day. Politicians seem to be overwhelmed as they search for solutions. All the while, the German people get more and more irritated. More than 200 refugee homes were burnt in Germany in 2015; these homes were targeted by right-wing extremist groups who hoped their residents would burn with them. Though it is a sad picture to draw, we can no longer deny that these kinds of groups are currently growing in Germany.

The right-wing party AfD (‘Alternative for Germany’), for example, misuses Merkel’s slogan by misrepresenting it as an...
Germany indeed ‘Can do it!’, can live up to Merkel’s positivism. People’s fear and anger and regenerate the initial belief that and set up a constructive asylum policy. This would take away politicians who need to realize the urgency of the problem the station in Munich to integrate the refugees, but also through about the change. This can be achieved not harmonious, multicultural Germany, now is make integration possible and create a future certain parties and organizations. In order to prevail, despite its current incitement through years, Germany must not allow xenophobia to millions of refugees over the next couple of pre-election poll the AfD party gained supporters and reached 12 percent, the highest the party has ever attained. The CDU—the Christian Democratic Union, the party of Angela Merkel—is swiftly losing voters. As the country opens up the borders and welcomes This is a trend that could become very dangerous. This can be achieved not only through the strong work of people like the volunteers at the station in Munich to integrate the refugees, but also through politicians who need to realize the urgency of the problem and set up a constructive asylum policy. This would take away people’s fear and anger and regenerate the initial belief that Germany indeed ‘Can do it’, can live up to Merkel’s positivism. •

Belgian Chocolate, Eurocentrism and the Erasure of African Suffering

BY ADRIAN JENNINGS ’18 EDITOR

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s I sit here nibbling on a piece of Trader Joe’s Pound Plus Milk Chocolate, imported from Belgium, I can remember the first time I had Belgian chocolate, as a young boy visiting Franschhoek, South Africa. I had never heard of Belgian chocolate, but I was told that it was the best chocolate in the world. Once I had tried some I found it hard to disagree. It was creamy and sweet and seemed to melt into pure warmth as I swallowed. However, when I think of Belgian chocolate now, I find it hard to ignore the history of violence and oppression that has fuelled its rising star. Chocolate first became popular in Belgium in the latter half of the 19th century, just as Sir Henry Morton Stanley—who uttered the famous words “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” upon his finding of fellow African explorer David Livingstone—was exploring the Congo Basin under the sponsorship of Leopold II, King of the Belgians. Leopold was desperate to cash in on the “Scramble for Africa”, and so he secured the “rights” to the Congo territory at the Conference of Berlin of 1884-1885, where Africa was divided between the European powers. Leopold proceeded to make the Congo “Free State” his private property—including all of the people who lived there. The Belgians immediately began extricating as much wealth as they could from the basin’s abundance of raw materials, mainly rubber, ivory—and cocoa beans. In 1912, Jean Neuhaus invented the praline: the creamy-centered chocolate that many now know as “bonbons.” Belgian chocolate subsequently became famed for its skillful, artistic chocolatiers. “Belgian chocolate” quickly became synonymous, as I would find out in the early 2000s, with chocolate of a refined quality. Yet, “Belgian chocolate” would not have existed if it were not for Congolese cocoa beans: beans that were harvested by Africans subjected to the cruelest colonial rule of all. If Africans didn’t meet Leopold’s production quotas they were maimed or killed, their villages and land were burnt and their women were kept as hostages. Leopold’s two-decade rule was responsible for the deaths of approximately 10 million Africans. The valuing of the Congo’s resources over the lives of its people didn’t end with Leopold: even once the nation had attained independence from colonial rule, it’s first democratically elected leader, Patrice Lumumba, was assassinated by a Belgian-sponsored coup to avoid losing control of the basin’s material wealth. The assassination initiated the Congo Crisis, a series of civil wars that claimed around 100,000 African lives. The Democratic Republic of the Congo—the modern nation-state descended from Leopold’s “Congo Free State”—remains to this day one of Africa’s most unstable and conflict-ridden countries, and has been the source of conflict in the Central African region in general, such as the Great African War of 1998-2003. Neo-colonialism is expressed foremost through the world’s capitalist system, one that elevates some nations as the “Core”—home to high-skill labor and manufactured goods—and demotes others to the “Periphery”—centers of low-skilled labor and raw materials. The example of Belgian chocolate demonstrates perfectly the tendency of this system to erase the suffering involved in transactions between the “Core” and the “Periphery.” Belgian chocolate may be famous worldwide for its artisanship, but the suffering of the Congo’s people is relegated to Oxfam commercials and college students reading “Heart of Darkness.” It is important that our materialistic desires are interrogated, lest they come at the expense of another’s humanity. In October 2007, Trader Joe’s began to phase out Chinese products amid concerns that they did not meet the company’s “organic” standards. It can only be hoped that the company is as committed to the impact of its merchandise on the people involved in its production as it is to the impact of these products on the environment. •
A primary goal of behavioral science has always been to establish causal relationships between activated neural circuits of the brain and observable behaviors. The origins of behaviors in complex biological systems, such as mammals, are difficult to pinpoint because they are influenced by so many internal and external factors, like hormones or the environment. In recent years a new methodology for understanding behavior has arisen: optogenetics.

Optogenetics, put simply, is the combination of genetics and fiber optics to control cell function with light. There was a lot of build-up behind that, however. In 1979, Francis Crick (famous for his work in discovering the structure of DNA) called the idea “far-fetched,” arguing that the mammalian brain was not equipped to respond to light in the way that plants do, as mammals do not make or have light-sensitive proteins that dictate movement. So, how did researchers manage to get the neurons in rat brains to produce these light sensitive-proteins? The answer lies in viral vector genetics. Viral vector genetics is a tool developed in the 1970’s that uses a virus to deliver genetic material to a targeted host cell. In the case of optogenetics, the genes from algae that produce light-sensitive proteins (otherwise known as rhodopsins) were isolated and stuffed inside several lentiviruses, which were then introduced to target neurons of the rat brain. Once the genes were expressed in the neurons, those neurons were capable of responding to light.

It’s important to understand how a neuron works before we can define what kind of responses these genetically modified neurons are capable of. Neurons are only found in the central nervous system and are stimulated by both electric and chemical signals, and specialize in transmitting nerve pulses. Neurons transmit nerve pulses by utilizing a change in voltage within the cell, which is where the light sensitive proteins come in. Typically, neurons allow a concentration of sodium ions into their membranes through voltage-gated ion channels—when enough sodium ions enter the membrane, the cell becomes depolarized and the action potential travels down the neuron and signals the next neuron. With the advent of optogenetics, these voltage-gated ion channels are replaced by photosensitive ion pumps and channels that then control the flow of polarized ions, such as sodium. Now comes the interesting part: upon the application of light (typically LED lights) to the modified cells, the photosensitive ion pumps allow ions into the neuronal membrane, which then causes the cell to fire. Different types of light (blue light versus yellow light) can cause different responses, primarily the activation or inhibition of cell function. With the flip of a switch, a cell (or group of cells) can either be made to fire or be silenced entirely. In many cases, both are equally as important. LED light is typically applied through fiber optic cables that are installed into living organisms under anesthesia, and can be controlled when the subject is awake.

Though optogenetics is a methodology that started within the field of neuroscience, it has the capability to change the landscape of almost every area of biological science. Imagine being able to activate silenced myocardial cells in the event of a heart attack, or stimulate neurons in the spinal chord in paralysis victims—if ever streamlined enough to be used in man, the field of optogenetics could change the entire landscape of medicine. However, several practical and ethical issues stand in the way of using optogenetics in medicine.

First and foremost, the use of viral vector genetics in humans has a limited success rate. At best, the genes are simply unable to be expressed in human cell tissues. At worst, introduction of foreign genes may indeed express the desired proteins, but can also cause leukemia-like diseases in tandem with the preferred outcome. Currently, gene therapy solutions are being investigated for diseases such as adenosine deaminase deficiency (ADA), hemophilia, and a variety of cancers.

Secondly, there is no light delivery system that is compact or streamlined enough for practical use in humans. In rats, LED light is delivered through a cannula (essentially a tube inserted through the skull and close to the surface of the brain) with an optic fiber coming out of it, which is then attached to a light system, be it LED or laser lights. Cannulas themselves are prone to shifting and dislodgement, which would be a particularly difficult problem to solve in people, who are constantly moving about. Simple acts of rolling over while sleeping or brushing one’s hair may shift the cannula and cause disturbances in the brain.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, ethicists ask if optogenetics should even be considered for human use. In the event that the methodology would ever become streamlined enough to for use in personalized medicine, would it be dangerous? Addiction could be cause for concern—if people could manage their own applications of light, recreational stimulation of pleasure centers in the brain may be difficult to monitor. In this case, the possibility of abuse
(akin to the abuse of prescription drugs) may be a concern for the future. Furthermore, if light application techniques are ever capable of being remotely controlled through devices or Wi-Fi, the significant risk of being “hacked” may also be an obstacle in ethical use of optogenetics. One might imagine a world in which an abusive partner takes control over their victim’s remote or disables Internet connection at critical moments. While optogenetics couldn’t enable complete mind control, it could still be devastating for individuals whose control is compromised. Finally, if neural enhancement through optogenetics is possible (such as increased memory storage or decreased sensitivity to pain) we then need to avoid slipping into eugenic practices that would create potentially harmful cultural trends or laws for people who do and do not have genetically manipulated brains. For example, optogenetics could be commercialized and commoditized in such a way that those who can afford it could pay for memory enhancement, allowing them to compete unfairly within institutions such as higher education or the job market.

Optogenetics is, without a doubt, an exciting and revolutionary methodology. Application of optogenetics, though particularly useful in neuroscience, could be positively applicable in all fields of medicine and create solutions to illnesses that currently lack even remedial treatments for symptoms, let alone a cure for entire diseases. First-in-man trials for the method have already begun, though they are experimental at best and barely foreshadow widespread commercial use. We must bear in mind that optogenetics, like with all advances in science, comes with a set of ethical considerations that need to be carefully parsed and considered before being unleashed into the commercial world.

Since 2001, corn ethanol related production has increased threefold as corn ethanol has been championed by legislators as the new trend in renewables. The corn industry is the main proponent of this fuel source, as it would support increased growth in the Corn Belt, however scientists have yet to endorse its production. In the midst of the controversy surrounding corn ethanol vs. other renewables, I believe firmly that corn ethanol is a poor means of energy production and requires much innovation if it is to become a viable source of domestic energy. As a nation we must exercise caution before we introduce another source of energy into the equation.

Corn ethanol despite its marketed viability as a biofuel has many unintended consequences on the environment and has limited energy yields. In order to meet rising corn demands new land needs to be cleared for corn production, which demands a large quantity of nitrogen based fertilizer and water resources. In the U.S, over 80% of U.S corn and soybean production occurs in the Mississippi-Atchafalaya River Basin. Excess nutrients provided by the fertilizers then run-off into the neighboring river and are deposited into the Gulf of Mexico increasing the area of what is known as a ‘dead zone’. Said ‘dead zone’ refers to an oxygen-depleted (hypoxic) region in the Gulf of Mexico the size of New Jersey that is inhabitable by most living organisms. This problem is likely to expand into other parts of the world, as the European Union has been a major proponent of corn ethanol since 2003. The UK has used 1.4 million of hectares of farmland for the purpose of ethanol production, mostly in developing countries overseas, which has taken a toll on biodiversity, food prices, and the impoverished. All for the virtue of developing a ‘green’ fuel; tropical forests are cleared, water bodies are polluted with nutrients, and the people suffer from food prices that fail to keep pace with inflation.

For all this trouble, one would assume that it must be an extremely efficient, productive fuel. To even develop corn ethanol, one must input significant quantities of natural gas to produce a fuel with a mediocre energy yield at 10% next to sugarcane.
which has 370% energy yield. Thus, in the process of producing ethanol you are expending more energy than you are receiving in return. Given the extent to which the production of ethanol contributes to environmental destruction and carbon emissions, it is an act of sheer folly to classify it as a ‘green’ source of energy. If biofuels must be used at all, it should behoove humanity to invest in cellulose ethanol, utilizes cellulose from wood chips, grasses, and crop waste. It uses far less energy when it is processed, and doesn’t put food prices at risk. Although the corn industry is already a force in the U.S economy, we shouldn’t add to its clout by supporting an inefficient fuel source.

When looking at all the cons associated with corn production it should be clear to any environmentalist that when it comes to renewables corn ethanol is a misuse of tax dollars. Corn ethanol destroys biodiversity, increases nutrient pollution, and is a terribly inefficient fuel source. The only non-refutable pro declared by proponents of corn ethanol are the jobs it creates however the same could be said for any renewable energy industry if given proper funding. If the U.S moves investment from corn ethanol to cellulose ethanol and other renewables, we would have a much better chance as a nation of developing both sustainable and domestic forms of energy.

The Price of Resources

BY KELSEY BUCKLEY ’18

Researchers in a Yale-led research team are working to put a price on natural resources. The project was started in hopes that having a dollar value to look at and compare will allow policymakers to conduct more informed decisions regarding natural resources.

The team, led by Eli Fenichel, assistant professor at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, has been developing a method that compares natural capital with monetary capital. Other collaborators on the research represent Arizona State University, Michigan State University, California State University and the U.S. National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration.

For the bulk of their research the team focused on a groundwater aquifer in the Kansas High Plains. Agriculture is a substantial part of the economy in the region, and the ground water plays an intrinsic part in agricultural success. According to information released by Yale, the team’s analysis found that the state is losing $110 million per year in the value of the aquifer due to their current management policies.

In regards to what these types of figures mean to environmental policy Fenichel said, “The idea that we can actually measure changes in the value of natural capital is really important.” He then went on to explain how policy makers in Kansas could look at the report, and have a better understanding on how to manage their resources more affectively. Being able to make these types of changes is particularly important in places like Kansas where the natural aquifer is vital to the economy.

“The key is to convert one form of capital to another in order to allow society to continue to consume more in the future. Because that is what sustainability is really about,” said Fenichel.

The research team published their work on pricing natural capital in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The authors hope that their new method of pricing will lay the groundwork for others to collect data and make similar calculations.

The Rise of Zika

BY STEPHANIE LANGLOIS ’17

Zika virus is a hot news topic lately, and it’s no surprise since these stories are often accompanied by pictures of babies born with misshapen, abnormally small heads. The babies are suffering from a condition called microcephaly which usually causes lifelong intellectual disabilities. However, the reality of contracting Zika virus is often much less dramatic. Zika virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito (A. aegypti and A. albopictus). Most people who contract Zika virus do...
not show any symptoms at all. On average, 1 in 5 infected people will experience fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle pain, and headache. These symptoms only last between a few days and one week and the virus is eliminated from the body after about a week. There is no evidence to suggest that women who become pregnant after the virus has left their body are at a higher risk of having a baby with microcephaly. In addition, the media seems to skim over the part that not all pregnant women who contract Zika during their pregnancy will have babies with microcephaly. In fact, this number is so low that microcephaly was not even connected with Zika until October 2015 (it is still a circumstantial connection), although Zika virus has been around since the 1960’s.

This information does not mean that the spread of Zika virus is not serious. The sheer amount that we do not know about Zika is alarming (this is also true of many other tropical infectious diseases). The virus only occurred in relatively small populations until recently. The cause of the spread is unknown, although several scientists point to global warming as a plausible factor, because of its ability to increase mosquito populations in certain areas. We do not know to what extent having Zika while pregnant can cause birth defects. We do not know how much more the illness will spread. We are not sure whether it is sexually transmissible. Furthermore, like many other infectious diseases, economically disadvantaged people are at a disproportionately higher risk for contracting Zika. This is concerning in itself. However, Zika has become a media sensation largely due to its circumstantial connection with microcephaly. Although as mentioned before, this portrayal of the virus is not wholly accurate.

In fact, although microcephaly is still very rare (1 per 6200 to 8500 births), there are much more common risk factors than contracting Zika virus for having a baby with microcephaly. These include chromosomal disorders, maternal viral infections such as rubella (German measles), toxoplasmosis, and cytomegalovirus, maternal alcoholism or drug abuse, maternal diabetes, and maternal malnutrition. Perhaps the obesity epidemic, poor maternal nutrition in disadvantaged populations, substance abuse, and vaccination controversies would be given much more media attention if we accompanied them with pictures of babies with microcephaly as has been done with Zika virus. So while the recent outbreak of Zika virus is concerning, it is important to keep this illness in perspective with many other global public health problems.

Throughout the history of the United States, the idea of voting for a candidate that does not belong to one of the two major political parties has often seemed illogical to the average voter. This is a direct result of fear, for it is the fear of the greater evil winning that forces individuals to vote for a perceived lesser-of-two-evils. Thus, while a vast percentage of Americans may agree with their policies, third parties are not given many votes. In some regions, however, third parties have seen moderate success in local and state elections, despite running against members of both major political parties. One must, in turn, question what could possibly behoove an individual to vote for a third party despite running the risk of causing the party they least agree with to win the election. Furthermore, one must wonder if there are personal, biographical factors that lead one to be more likely to vote for a third party.

On November 3, 2015, I collected 493 surveys from voters in Waterford, CT to learn more about what it takes for an individual to vote for a third party candidate. This comprehensive survey examined many facets of each respondent’s biographical background, including their age, religion, sex, sexuality, level of education, income, place of birth, ethnic background, whether or not they had seen advertisements for third party candidates, and more. While it is important to note that this survey only took responses from a single town during a local election, the results have revealed several surprising facts.

First and foremost, to little surprise, the results revealed that one’s registration as a Republican directly correlates with one’s likelihood to include Republican candidates in their vote, and increases the chances that they will not vote for a Green Party candidate or a Democrat. We also found statistically significant data to suggest that voters unaffiliated with any political party were more likely to vote for Republicans than Democrats.

The survey also revealed facts about sex and sexuality. Females were shown to be considerably more likely to vote for Democrats, but there was little conclusive data to suggest that sexuality had any impact on one’s vote, despite the Republican Party being historically anti-LGBTQ+ rights, the Democrats having come around to support such rights only in the past decade, and the Green Party being avid supporters of such rights.
One’s place of birth and ethnic background yielded many surprising results as well. For example, individuals born in the Southwestern United States were statistically less likely to vote for a Republican than they were to vote for a Green or a Democrat. Those born in Latin America were likely to vote for a Democrat, while individuals born in Western Europe and Africa were less likely to do so.

The primary focus of this study, however, was to see whether or not one’s level of education had a significant impact on one’s likelihood to vote for a third party candidate. To observe this, each individual was asked to identify for which parties they voted, and the highest level of education they completed. I hypothesized that individuals with more education would be more likely to vote for a third party candidate, as they would have more political background knowledge and would have more experience with conducting the kind of investigative research that would allow them to learn more about third parties. These results suggested that this hypothesis can be accepted, as the study yielded statistically significant results that those with Bachelors and Masters degrees were more likely to vote for Green Party candidate than a Democrat or a Republican. Additionally, it should be noted that there was significant evidence to suggest that individuals with Doctoral degrees are statistically less likely to vote for Republicans.

The final bit of statistically significant data that was found is that individuals that saw advertisements for third party candidates were more likely to vote for a third party. This is important to note as it means that advertising from third parties has the potential to convince individuals to change their vote. Based on this finding, one might hypothesize that third parties do so poorly because they are not given the opportunity to present their platform and advertisements on the same scale as the Democrats and Republicans. Additionally, it should be noted that there was significant evidence to suggest that individuals with Doctoral degrees are statistically less likely to vote for Republicans.

To summarize, the data collected suggests that the original hypothesis has merit and can be accepted, as there is a clear relationship between higher levels of education and including a third party in one’s vote. This research is significant in that it can help enable political movements to consider the populations to which they should appeal and advertise. With targeted campaigns and more knowledge about the sociology of their prospective voters, third parties may begin to lead more effective campaigns that lead to their strengthening and the strengthening of democracy in the United States.

The results of this paper are, of course, far from complete. While obtaining 496 thoroughly completed surveys felt like a massive task in and of itself, it is difficult to have such a small number be representative of the United States, or even the State of Connecticut. It is, therefore, necessary that more surveys be collected to further this research, and it would be wisest to collect the data in areas with increased diversity beyond the demographics found typically in Waterford, CT. Anyone wishing to continue this research also must decide whether or not they wish to continue research into factors that lead to one’s voting for the Green Party, or if they truly wish to research factors influencing votes for any and all third-party candidates. In order to more thoroughly study third-party candidates across the political spectrum, one must find electoral races where non-Greens are running, and use the same survey to poll the public about their feelings on those different third-parties. One must also note that this survey merely accounted for biographical influences on each individual, and does not consider biological factors in the analysis.

I spent last semester in Ballyvaughan, County Clare, Ireland at Burren College of Art, a small, independent art college in the west coast of Ireland. At BCA, I benefited most from a graduate level based course called Art in Context, which required spending the first three months researching a topic I wanted to respond to visually and the last month creating said responsive artwork.
chose to focus my attention on climate change and water’s role as a natural resource and component in thermal expansion and sea level rise. Water and sea level rise are extremely influential to an island. In Ireland, I found a lot of comfort in being near and surrounded completely by the Atlantic Ocean like I am at home. I decided to outline the shapes of Ireland and Martha’s Vineyard on watercolor paper, relying on the geographic imagery of these two places to reflect on what is a permanent home and a temporary one and when and how those become both temporary and permanent. As I contemplated the idea of permanence in terms of island communities I decided to focus on a set of people who have and will never experience a permanent home due to climate change, those who already feel the disproportionate effects of the industrialized, developed world.

“Displacement” is a series of island “paintings” which were made in watercolor, food coloring, charcoal, and/or pastel. The island imagery used reflected the island states and/or countries that are in danger of disappearing in the following years due to climate change such as the Marshall Islands, the Maldives and Kiribati. When each piece was completed they were nailed onto either a recycled, wooden shipping crate or driftwood and left outside for 24 hours during Storm Desmond, an extratropical cyclone that occurred during my stay. Nailing the images onto a wooden surface referenced the pinning down of these states, an unwelcomed and unstoppable puncture into a symbol of their home. Leaving the artwork outside unprotected and utilizing natural processes like rain to alter my “paintings” was done to relinquish control and reiterate the processes of erosion, thermal expansion and sea level rise, which all threaten island communities. I chose to title several pieces in the series by their population, the total amount of people who would be displaced in the island state chosen due to climate change. “Displacement” embodies the displacement of water, land, people, culture, and home.

For me, in order to be a successful artist I must understand the processes behind the natural world and recognize what is important to demonstrate through my art. With this, I’ve decided to take my passion for environmental science and redirect it to fuel my art and by doing so, become an advocate for sustainability through my art practice; allowing myself to use art as a means of communication to promote well needed awareness.

I also wrote a poem than went along with the installation:

**Displacement**

As the borders erode  
Home shrinks

As salt skin dries  
The speckled sea washes out

Homogeneous blue  
As the islands drown
Tumblr and the Alternative Hyper Reality

BY MARY MARGARET YANCEY '19 EDITOR

If I could boil Tumblr down and compress it into a singular phrase, it would be “here are the things I worship as an expression of myself.” Tumblr is a social microblogging platform that has made its way into our daily vernacular, among the likes of Facebook and Twitter, and has evolved with these other platforms to create a virtual experience. For many young adults and teenagers, Tumblr provides a sanctuary outside of their real lives, a bubble in which they can self-express without consequence.

Personally, Tumblr put me through a loop. I was eleven when I first signed up, but initially it was a relatively benign experience. I logged on maybe once or twice a week, and scrolled through my dashboard for maybe 10 minutes. But as we all very well know, social media can take you by the balls and suck you in. Suddenly, I was spending all of my time on Tumblr, madly attempting to create the perfect aesthetic blog. I secluded myself all day from all social interaction, inside and outside of school, including with my own family. The tipping point finally came when my dad confronted me about the issue when I was barely fourteen — I see my dad about eight times a year, so the fact he picked up on my obsession with my computer screen was very telling of my plight. He sat next to me and looked me dead in the eye, “It isn’t real, what’s on your computer. What’s real is me and your sister, who are right there in front of you.”

I know I’m not the only person who has been sucked into the world of aesthetic blogs, or as I dub them for these purposes, alternative hyper-realities. For those who don’t know what an aesthetic blog is, it is a type of blog that correlates with a specific theme, such as soft-grunge or fandoms. My aesthetic blog, like many others, was one dedicated to a photographic romanticization of adolescence. Carefree, happy photos of friends in the back of a pick up truck, consuming alcohol and smoking cigarettes in a low-lit bedroom, running in a field, lying naked in a bed and teenagers, Tumblr provides a sanctuary outside of their real lives, a bubble in which they can self-express without consequence.

Alternative hyper-realities are something different and seemingly better than the reality of the person behind the screen; this kind of imagery has created new normative styles and ideals for them to express through click “reblog.” Alternative hyper-realities, therefore, produced an expected context for what life should be like; whether it’s a fantasy about an ideal romantic context like camaraderie or love, or just what one encounters on a daily basis, it’s a rift in one’s reality. And since they cannot seek out this reality in real life, they stick to their laptops, and like myself, socially isolate themselves and become more miserable with their own lives and more attached to the life they’ve created online. They’re not seeing what’s real, & what’s right there in front of them.

The Hurting Times, the Helping Times

BY JORDANA JOY '17

Journalism has taken an unexpected, major turn since the creation of the internet. In a world with a need for immediate, concise news, and more of it, many newspaper companies have found themselves struggling with being the best at reporting breaking news on several platforms. For instance, The New York Times has found difficulty juggling the management of an online website, publishing online stories and distributing them through email, Twitter, and Facebook, as well as publishing online content and releasing a new physical paper every day of the week. As discussed in Nikki Usher’s book Making News at The New York Times, opinions on how this work should be split and resolve bounce between perfection across the board and knowing a newspaper company’s limitations.

Since journalism requires immediacy, one would imagine that the internet would be the perfect medium for trends and news for an even quicker delivery to its audience. In the era of blogging, social media and online networking, the elitism of the “big paper industry” has now seemed to become antiquated, and simply having a website for the Boston Globe does not retain the amount of viewers as it once had.

As of late, the internet has become the image of entertainment and “shallow” pop culture and news of the social degree. This, evidently enough, has become the medium for young people. One of the most prominent examples of this apparent shift in topic importance is the popularity of Buzzfeed. An American media company founded in 2006, Buzzfeed is most popular for its quizzes, videos, lists, and op-ed articles, but has made recent leaps and strides at “hard-hitting” journalism. Since its founding, Buzzfeed has divided its content into 28 different sections and is available in 10 different countries and editions outside of the United States.

The founding of the company was primarily focused on viral trends and social commentary, until the shift in focus to breaking news. This move, according to The Times, “added more traditional
content, building a track record for delivering breaking news and deeply reported articles.” Buzzfeed had also deleted over 4,000 earlier posts in 2014, as noted by The New Yorker, “apparently because, as time passed, they looked stupider and stupider.”

So what does this mean for other hard-hitting journalism companies? Due to its formatting and attention to social trends, the writers and content in websites such as Buzzfeed allow for journalistic opportunities outside of the hierarchy and elitism that exists within companies such as the Times. People of color, queer people, women, and other minority groups now have a new and more expansive forum to publish opinion articles and share stories in ways that traditional paper companies do not. Within this sense, companies like Buzzfeed are making leaps and bounds in showing just how diverse news is and can be.

However, traditional professionalism still has a major impact on how we view our news. Knowing where we are getting our news and knowing whether it is accurate or not is perhaps the most vital part concerning the success of journalism. In reading a paper, the honesty and integrity of the information is within the text; cited and trusted. Sites like Buzzfeed do not yet have this sense of integrity. And, ultimately, the physical layout of the Buzzfeed News segment is downright dismal and visually unappealing in comparison to the rest of the website. Why read about Antonin Scalia’s death when you can read about the next fifteen bizarre foods you should eat? Here, we are making an abrupt, conscious choice between entertainment and journalism, fun and depressing, enlightening and boring, which, to say the least, is concerning and a myth in the making.

Within this sense, companies like Buzzfeed are making leaps and bounds in showing just how diverse news is and can be. However, traditional professionalism still has a major impact on how we view our news. Knowing where we are getting our news and knowing whether it is accurate or not is perhaps the most vital part concerning the success of journalism. In reading a paper, the honesty and integrity of the information is within the text; cited and trusted. Sites like Buzzfeed do not yet have this sense of integrity. And, ultimately, the physical layout of the Buzzfeed News segment is downright dismal and visually unappealing in comparison to the rest of the website. Why read about Antonin Scalia’s death when you can read about the next fifteen bizarre foods you should eat? Here, we are making an abrupt, conscious choice between entertainment and journalism, fun and depressing, enlightening and boring, which, to say the least, is concerning and a myth in the making.

Ultimately, I am unsure where the need to entertain and the need to inform can live within the same website. Both entertainment and journalism serve a vital role in our culture, but there is little overlap in which they can exist. Currently, entertainment is taking journalism’s spotlight, and a post about the president’s inaugural speech on Buzzfeed is not going to change that.

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**Self-Portraiture As A Radical Act**

**BY PIA PARISI-MARCOUX ’19**

I’m not an art expert; I won’t presume to define it. But I believe that art is in large part about being seen. We see something – perhaps a concrete object before us; perhaps something that exists only in indeterminate space – and decide to recreate it somehow. If art is about being seen, social scrutiny of art inevitably revolves around who does the seeing – as well as what they choose to look at, how the recreative process (i.e.: the translating of intangible to tangible) alters the subject, and, because art does not exist in a vacuum, how these perceptions leave us to interact in the surrounding world.

A hackneyed but definitely necessary discussion is that of the female muse and her male sculptor. Of male artists, critic John Berger wrote, “You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting “Vanity”, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure.” Therein lies the truth upon which most of western art is contingent: men define female identity; usually as it is convenient for them. Because the lens through which he appraises the world is to him incontrovertible, man cannot comprehend that a woman’s identity extends beyond what he makes of her. She may stand before him as herself, but she is at the disposal of his entire catalog of deeply embedded prejudices. The truth is but a minor casualty of his unassailable power to decide what “is”.

For instance, let’s consider Vanity’s theoretical artist. Perhaps he believes a woman’s actions are a reflection of how she desires to be seen; that if she makes a joke, it is because she desires that he find her funny, or if she wears makeup, it is because she desires that he find her attractive. Only he can make a joke for its own sake; only he can be concerned with his appearance and yet have no ulterior motives. To him, vanity, inauthenticity, calculation, and of course, obsession with him, are written into female DNA. This is how he paints her. He thinks he has unearthed some precious nugget of the true female experience, never once considering that that “truth” is a smokescreen for his own desire.

Why exactly is this so disastrous? Well, imagine a young woman: she is taught that the creative history of her civilization is propped up by men. She visits museums and those teachings are reinforced. She may be physically represented in their creations (that is, if she is white), but something is missing — she does not feel as if she is looking at herself. So what, in the modern age, do we do? Plainly speaking, more women need to make art, and controversially, to make art of themselves. And they are: the digital age has seen a pantheon of women using Instagram and social media as their own personal gallery spaces. In doing so, they challenge artistic standards across the board. One of the most controversial, and in my mind, most radical forms of this subversion is — yes — the selfie.

One of that same young woman’s earliest instincts is to explore herself, an inclination that swiftly meets its end under the crushing weight of social expectation. She is told — whether technology-resistant, millennial-hating baby-boomers or by boys in her class whose fragile masculinity is threatened by her self-love — that she is vain. They are incredulous that she could find anything in her own face that merits consideration. They say: “you are only worth looking at if I decide you are.” That is why self-portraiture is revolutionary. It is one thing for a woman to decide to “see” — in other words, to be the artist, to decide what is interesting and worthy of being enshrined through visual medium. It is another matter entirely to decide she herself is worthy of being looked at, and bolder still to decide that she is worthy of being looked at by others. She is saying, “I want to look. I want to look at myself. And like it or not, all of you are going to look at me too.” She is both artist and muse, leaving no room
for male interpretation of her identity. Selfies may serve as proof to you of our regression into cultural wretchedness, but to me, they are proof of my refusal to be drowned out and forgotten.

Why Aren’t Political Cartoons Funny?
BY WILLIAM KELLEY ’19

Political cartoons are weird. I’m all for using comedy to push a political agenda. It’s better than hate-mongering or just straight-up lying to the public. But I have not seen a single political cartoon that could be considered genuinely humorous, at least, not in the way that the author intended. Instead political cartoons seem to operate in a strange gray space where they’re not funny and they’re also not really saying anything important or new. They’re sort of like the John Kasich of satire.

Political cartoons are generally run in newspapers and magazines. The New Yorker is generally considered to be the home of the best and most clever cartoons, but that’s sort of like being the most rational person at a Tea Party rally. If you look back in time, you’ll see this is not a recent practice at all and also that the farther back you go the less funny they get. If tragedy plus time is comedy, then it follows that comedy minus time is just tragedy.

Political cartoonists run the gamut from liberal loonies to right-wing nuts but they all at least two common characteristics. First of all, they all love labelling things. You might say that if you have to explain a joke it’s probably not that funny. Political cartoonists would disagree and then probably draw a picture of you with a huge nose with “annoying” written on your shirt. If there is anything in the panel which is not clearly a famous person or politician they will slap a label on it just in case there’s someone who can’t make a connection between the elephant in the suit buying guns and the GOP.

The other thing all cartoonists love is making Barack Obama’s ears huge. I understand that exaggerating features is one of the main appeals of caricature, but honestly after you see it for the twentieth time it just starts to feel mean.

One thing political cartoonists do not like, however, are jokes. Honestly, if you’re lucky you might get a pun but more often than not you’re only going to get maybe a really desperate reach for a pop culture allusion. Maybe Hillary Clinton will be drawn as Superman and next to Bernie Sanders as Batman and then the text underneath will read “Dawn of Justice?” I mean, it probably wouldn’t be that clever, but you get the idea.

Maybe there’s something to be said for the fact that not everyone has the time or the inclination to read a multi-page article about the flaws in Ted Cruz’s tax plans. Maybe for that person a drawing of Ted Cruz with a huge head throwing sacks of money at a guy in a suit labelled “millionaire” will be enough to sway their minds for the upcoming election. Actually, having written that out, that’s a terrifying prospect. Please read articles. Do not let cartoons decide who will become the most powerful person in the world.

Black Celebrity Actually Has An Opinion On Race
BY YUSUF SOLOMON ’19

In a traumatic turn during the half time show of the Super Bowl 50, long time pop singer Beyonce Knowles-Carter angered millions of Americans with her rhetoric heavy performance that shed light on her views of racial politics, something that veered off from her usual message of teaching females of all ages to respect themselves and “making that a$$ clap”. While there was plenty of posterior undulation to go around, Mrs. Knowles-Carter also would adopt bodysuits for her backup dancers that would be inspired by the Black Panther party, a Black National group who just so happened to have an impeccable fashion sense.

While Mrs. Carter is enjoyed by many women of all races, Nicole Bryce of Fieldsboro, MI admitted that the major change in tone was, “surprising, especially considering she was essentially promoting a blatantly racist organization that would seek to help disenfranchised blacks work their way out of poverty through...
At this present day and age, the black American sees no freedom, nor does he feel it, nor does she will it. On the news, at the polls, in the forums, on the campuses, in the halls, at the tables, behind the podiums, black Americans pick away. Tongues thrusting about, we pick away at the leaves flapping back and forth on the branches of this American tree we call oppression, but have yet to direct our gaze to the trunk, much less the roots. When we do so, we will understand that the name of this game, which we have been so hopelessly rag dolled and dominated by, is power. Power. Economic. Political. Institutional. You own, you dictate. Reparation nation startup money. Secondly we must understand the nature of black oppression today. We must understand how well refined and multifaceted white supremacy is, and how we need to be able to read between the lines of the lines to understand any aspect of American life that concerns us. Our individualism and pluralism will be our death. We must be black first, and must, think, share, argue and act only as a collective the way we have for centuries before separation from our customs. If it be impractical or even unnecessary for us to repatriate to Africa physically, we must do so in thought, mind, spirit, and custom. Does the black man and woman in 2016 even dare entertain the idea that his tongue is not his own, her name is not her own, our customs, even some of those which we have created ourselves are not our own. No African crossed the Atlantic named Williams, Miller, Smith, Clark, or Ferguson, yet we dot our I’s and cross our T’s, signed, love Toby, because we are American? Are we even? Good questions to consider. Tune in to covert psychosocial warfare on the black consciousness. Primetime. Whatever channel you choose, or magazine for that matter. We must understand that the education of black youth in the home and on the street must begin from very small ages with knowledge of self. Centuries of lies continuing to this date force us to hate our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, skin, hair, faces, shapes. We will find it hard to grow having such a dissipated spirit. Further to education, there is absolutely no reason why black youth en masse today do not know the teachings of say, Marcus Garvey, or the political ideology of Black Nationalism. Mama, who’s Stokely Carmichael, who’s Angela Davis, what is a panther, why is it black, you already told me about Dr. King, yes we talked about Rosa Parks last week, its March now, and who is Malcolm, and why did he have such a funny last name, and why was he so violent, why were the deacons so violent. Is it coincidence no classroom or textbook bears witness? I heard Amiri say “give us our lives or forfeit your own.”

As much as I’d like to apologize,

Love, Your bro J
Explaining Trump’s Success
BY BRIAN JENCUNAS ’14, RESEARCH COORDINATOR, MASSACHUSETTS CITIZENS FOR JOBS

From the day Donald Trump rode down an escalator at Trump Tower to announce he was running for President, the 2016 election has been like no campaign in modern history. Never before has one candidate dominated the media coverage like Donald Trump has commanded headlines this year. Virtually everything that has happened in the Republican primary has been caused by Trump or occurred in reaction to him. It was Trump’s branding of Jeb Bush as “low energy” that caused the onetime front-runner to fall to the back of the pack. Trump’s vow to build a wall on the Mexican boarder suddenly made immigration one of the race’s major issues. Most recently, Trump’s claim that Ted Cruz’s Canadian birth makes him ineligible to be President has remained in the headlines months after legal experts debunked the argument. Trump’s isn’t, as some analysts have suggested, proof that our political system has changed. Instead, it happened because other Republicans failed to understand or take seriously the billionaire’s appeal.

For far too long, the other candidates assumed Trump would defeat himself with his extreme rhetoric. They failed to understand how Republican primary voters had been inured to over-the-top statements thanks to talk radio and vitriolic right-wing blogs.

By the time other Republicans realized Trump was a serious contender, it was too late. He had increased his poll position from the dismal 8% he started at to, in some polls, a clear first place of 40%. When his opponents began attacking him, they failed to understand the reasons for his support. Most Republican attacks on Trump have been about his deviation from conservative orthodoxy or how his temperament disqualifies him from being commander-in-chief. Neither of these criticisms moves voters away from Trump, whose campaign is about attitude not issues.

Trump’s hardline stance on immigration - building a wall and deporting every illegal immigrant in the country - caused his competitors to assume he was appealing to the most conservative Republican voters. The other candidates assumed those voters would be driven away from Trump once they learned about his moderate stances on abortion and other issues.

These attacks ignored how different immigration was from other issues. Surveys show that voters who are hardline on immigration can be moderate on taxes, health care, and social issues. In fact, Trump consistently wins among self-described moderate voters.

The voters who are most conservative about immigration are often otherwise moderate, or even liberal, on fiscal issues. They are attracted to Trump because he promises government without limits, so his liberal stances against cutting social security and for single payer health care are benefits instead of problems. Every time Jeb Bush or Ted Cruz accuses Trump of not being a “true conservative” his voters are driven towards him rather than away.

Ultimately, these failures have left the Republican Party with a problem of their own making. They have an unelectable frontrunner who threatens to define their party in ways that are anathema to large swaths of voters. If Trump is the Republican nominee, his 60% unfavorable rating means he is all but guaranteed to lose. If that happens, Republicans will have nobody to blame but themselves.

America’s Primary Concern: Who Will Take the White House
BY BRIAN SOWYRDA, DEPUTY POLITICAL DIRECTOR AT THE NEW HAMPSHIRE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

After months of tireless work by each candidate and their respective campaigns, the 100th New Hampshire First in the Nation primary came and went faster than expected. Just mere minutes after the final polls in New Hampshire closed, major news outlets had called each race. The results showed Sen. Sanders the victor in the Democratic Primary by more than 22%, and Donald Trump the winner in the Republican Primary by nearly 20%.

But what do these results tell us? How will the rest of the race for the White House unfold? Former New Hampshire Gov. John Sununu once famously uttered that “the people of Iowa pick corn, and the people of New Hampshire pick Presidents.” Will his statement hold true in 2016?

On the Republican side of the ticket the outlook is bleak. The candidates have chosen to engage in a game of schoolyard name calling, and have preyed upon the fears of Americans for political gain. They have argued steadfastly for such things as barring all Muslims from entering the US (Mr. Trump), “carpet-bombing” ISIS controlled areas of the
Middle East (Sen. Cruz), and against a woman’s right to choose, even in the extreme cases of rape and incest (Sen. Rubio). These positions are symbolic of how out-of-touch the Republican Candidate’s are with many American people, and if enacted would stand to do tremendous harm to the progress cultivated under President Obama.

Not only are their positions out-of-touch, but their party is fractured between the “establishment” and the DC outsiders. Mr. Trump has grabbed the momentum after his decisive win in New Hampshire, and will likely build on it with a win in South Carolina. All the while, the remaining candidates are forging on with their long shot campaigns, waiting for their counterparts to drop out so as to seize their support when they do. But if the remaining candidates do not begin to suspend their long shot campaigns soon, Mr. Trump’s lead may prove too commanding for any one candidate to challenge by the time they do.

On the Democratic side of the ticket, the outlook is far more encouraging. Sen. Sanders and Sec. Clinton are in an increasingly tight battle for the party’s nomination. After splitting the first two battleground states, the Nevada caucus is now critically important. If Sen. Sanders is able to win in Nevada, momentum will be wholly in his corner, and he will be ripe to test the belief that South Carolina and the other southern states are a firewall for Sec. Clinton’s campaign. If Sec. Clinton is victorious in Nevada however, momentum is likely to swing back in her direction, which could propel her to victories in South Carolina and other southern states on Super Tuesday. Either way, Sec. Clinton and Sen. Sanders are in for a long battle to become the party’s nominee.

One thing we do know is that unlike the Republican candidates, Sec. Clinton and Sen. Sanders will continue to engage in substantive, policy driven debates about how to build on the successes of President Obama. They have passionately advocated for, among other things, equal pay for equal work, addressing the opioid addiction crisis that is crippling American communities, and a woman’s right to choose. Despite differing approaches, their visions for America are, at their cores, the same: a country whose growth and progress raises the quality of life for individuals of all walks of life, especially those from lower and middle classes.

The question still remains though, will Gov. Sununu’s statement hold true in 2016? In many ways this election cycle has been far too unpredictable to call. But what I do know is this: the candidates on the Republican side of the ticket represent an outdated, out-of-touch view of America, whereas both Democratic candidates have presented platforms which will bring about much needed change and progress. So, my only prediction is this: come November, a Democrat will once again be elected President of the United States.

The Importance of Women in Politics

“When I first ran for local office for my town’s school committee, my opponent campaigned on the fact that he was a businessman and I was only a mom. His entire campaign was predicated on his assertion that as a woman I was unqualified.”

BY JENNIFER BENSON
MASSACHUSETTS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

In this second week of December, 2015, women in Saudi Arabia had the opportunity to vote and run for office for the first time. 17 women won elective office. Here in the US women have had the opportunity to vote for nearly 100 years. It is amazing to think that in less than 100 years, women have come this far, serving at the highest levels of government, but we still have a way to go.

In Massachusetts, where I serve, women make up 52% of the population, but are only 24% of the legislature. Why is that? One reason is because women run for office less often than men. Women have to be asked multiple times before they decide to run, and often believe they are not qualified, when in fact they are far more qualified than many male candidates. Whenever gender differences are discussed, I realize we are talking in stereotype and generalities, however, this phenomenon is well studied, and it is clear that differences in the decision process to run for office is attributable to gender.

Why should we care whether a candidate is male or female, or whether enough women are running for office? Aside from the fact that women makeup over half of our population and our government is a representative democracy, women have an important set of skills that translate into government service very well. Women tend to be more tuned into issues relating to families, children and seniors – issues that are most important to voters. Women are also naturally more collaborative and more interested in getting work done rather than getting credit. All too often, legislative work suffers because politicians are too concerned with grabbing headlines.

In October 2013, it was a bipartisan group of female US Senators who worked to find a way to avert a government shutdown. This group negotiated a deal which became the driving force to keep the federal government open. It was the women who came together, were willing to negotiate, demand, temper and take the heat in order to do what was in the best interest of the country.

When I first ran for local office for my town’s school committee, my opponent campaigned on the fact that he was a businessman.
and I was only a mom. His entire campaign was predicated on his assertion that as a woman I was unqualified. Later, when running for State Representative, my opponent used a similar line of argument, he was a businessman and I was a mom, though he added I would make a poor State Rep because I would need to spend time taking care of my children. Apparently he had missed the last 50 years of women working outside of the home.

My goal isn’t to bash men, these two examples are extremes and not the norm, but they highlight social expectations that we have not been able to completely escape. This also isn’t to say women are better than men, they simply have a different, but equally important, set of skills. Most notably, they represent a significant segment of the population. My hope is that we can get to a place in our country and political system where the gender of the candidate isn’t noteworthy. I would love to live in a time when we have many great candidates, male and female, who run because they believe they can make a difference and that a candidate isn’t first judged on gender, but on ability.

The Ins and Outs of Organics: Old Farming with New Benefits

BY MARGARET BARESSI, MPH, PRACTICE COORDINATOR AT BETH ISRAEL DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER

The organic food movement has become increasingly popular over the past decade. Aided by supermarket chains like Whole Foods, and celebrity endorsements, most Americans are not only familiar with the word “organic”, but associate it with being healthy. Now before we let Gwyneth Paltrow take credit for saving the public’s welfare, it is important for everyone to understand what it actually means for a food product to be organic, as well as the public health problems alleviated by organic farming.

To begin, we must go back to the source, American farms. Since the 1970s shift from small family farms to the “Big Ag” industry, conventional farming practices have become highly mechanized through widespread pesticide use, commodity crops, concentrated animal feeding organizations, and genetically modified seeds. Although these methods have drastically reduced food prices, they have resulted in environmental destruction, increased obesity rates, and adverse health effects related to pesticide exposure and contaminated animal products.

However, organic farming marks a return to historic agricultural methods that are highly regulated to ensure compliance. The National Organic Program is responsible for making all rules and regulations surrounding the growing, labeling, and handling of organic foods. In order for a farmer or food company to stamp their products with a green or black “USDA Organic” sticker, they must both follow the NOP’s strict guidelines in practice and have their operations examined and certified as compliant by an NOP approved agency.

For crop growing NOP organic guidelines include: farmland that has been pesticide free for at least three years, pest management through physical, mechanical, and biological efforts (such as screens/nets and planting cover crops) instead of poisonous chemicals, and prohibition of genetically modified seeds. For organic livestock handling, guidelines include: providing certified organic feed, letting ruminants out to pasture for an entire grazing season, providing animals access to the outdoors all year round, and prohibiting the use of growth hormones or antibiotics.

Now that we have established what it means for a product to be organic, it is important to understand the public health benefits of organic food. Organic farming not only reduces the amount of harmful pesticides we ingest, but also reduces the amount of pesticides released into the environment and the exposure of farm workers. Choosing organic livestock handling over concentrated feeding operations reduces carbon emissions and their contribution to global warming, as well as environmental pollution from toxic manure lagoons.

Despite its substantial benefits, strict NOP guidelines make organic farming more labor intensive and expensive. Consequently, organic foods are more expensive than conventional products, which can pose a problem for consumers. However for prudent shoppers, it is possible to maximize the health benefits of organic farming while minimizing cost by choosing to buy organic only for certain high risk foods, such as those on the Environmental Working Group’s “Dirty Dozen” list and all meat products. If shoppers make an effort to buy organically, then consumer demand will encourage farmers to adopt certified organic methods and eventually will lead to lower prices.

The Speech Divide: Freedom of Speech in a Racial Context

BY MOJIQUE TYLER, YALE UNIVERSITY ’19

On August 9th 2014 Mike Brown was shot and killed by a police officer by the name of Darren Wilson in Ferguson Missouri. People from Ferguson flooded the streets for days after the shooting. On May 24, 2015, when the police commissioner announced that there would be no indictment in the Grand Jury, cities across America erupted into flames, some literally.

Neither the shooting, nor the protests of police brutality were new to us. In 1991, the beating of Rodney King sparked national
outrage as the first major case of police brutality caught on camera, and just like 2014, American cities were aflame. These acts of violence are so common to us that, though the anger never fades, we no longer expect indictments, let alone convictions. The protests however, were different this time. They contained people from every racial background imaginable and they were led by students, women and queer people of color. They were more widespread, and more emboldened. If police brutality was the only measure of the oppression of people of color, and was rectified simply by knowledge of its existence then this article would not be necessary.

When Black Lives Matter protested the white supremacist monopoly on violence, much of the activism that tore through campuses like The University of Missouri (Mizzou) and Yale, dealt with a monopoly on speech, and the spaces in which it exists. You may be asking yourself, but aren’t there people of color at Yale and Mizzou, don’t they have control of their voices? Or, you may ask the slightly more weighted question, aren’t most of the oppositions to the racial activism at Yale, Mizzou and beyond, situated in defenses of free speech?

Both of these are ostensibly true. While there have certainly been other critiques of the movement, the most prominent is an accusation that in reprimanding racism, one detracts from free speech.

Setting aside the fact that there was no ban issued, the same tenets of free speech applied to racists apparently do not apply to activists. The very people who argued against a letter cautioning students to be mindful of cultural appropriation and racism on Halloween were the first to criticize protesters for speaking their mind against the Christakis’s (the master and associate master of Silliman College at Yale who wrote a letter stating that the caution limited freedom of speech). Speech only belongs to the dominant narratives, and moreover, many of those who don’t fit into these narratives are threatened for the use of their speech.

When people talk about freedom of speech in the context of racism, they usually mean two things: the freedom to not be held accountable for their speech, and the freedom to define what speech is worth hearing.

Racism constitutes a constricting of free speech and it further entrenches current definitions of speech that have been formed by the very people who argue for the right to be racist. People should have the right to voice their disagreements, but people of color have the right to respond. Often the responses will look like marches, shouting and chalked sidewalks some people would rather not see, but unlike us, they can just look away. •

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Overcoming the Great Divide: A Generation’s Choice

BY GREGG GONSALVES, CO-DIRECTOR OF THE YALE GLOBAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

We have an extraordinary ability to ignore the world around us. Getting out of the bubble that is American university life, particularly the kind found in four-year private institutions and in bubble of the years that follow, takes a conscious decision and set of choices and most decide to stay inside where it’s warm and comfortable. This retreat into the elite as a life strategy for those who are lucky enough to have the option isn’t surprising, even if it is objectionable to some.

However, the equilibrium of the past few decades has been shattered by the Great Recession of 2008. Now, we’re in the crosshairs of movements that span the ideological divide, from the nativist right wing of people like Donald Trump in the US, Nigel Farage in the UK and Marie Le Pen in France, to the anti-austerity left of Bernie Sanders here, Jeremy Corbyn in the UK and Alexis Tsipras in Greece. Hiding out in our bubbles, isn’t an option any longer. The current generation—yours—is stuck in the middle with a choice, turn right or turn left.

Ronald Reagan was able to break the post-war liberal consensus, which gave rise to the Great Society programs in the US. Bill Clinton dragged the Democrats to the right to win. Barack Obama set up shop in a Democratic Party that was already captured by the technocrats of the Clinton era. Whether Obama tried to move the party to the left or was simply the leader of the next generation of the technocratic elite is up to history to decide. What’s clear is that many people are not happy with the status quo he and his most recent predecessors have left us.

We have a choice this year and it’s not between political candidates. It’s about how we want to live our lives. It’s difficult to sit this great debate out. Of course you could ignore it all, build a fortress for yourself, but it feels like we’re headed for a great lurch in one direction or another, and most of us won’t have the resources to seal ourselves off from the tumult. •
UNTITLED BY BLÁITHÍN HADDAD ‘19
I don’t shake because I’m scared of you
I shake because I have ants in my pants
and black widow spider goosebumps creeping up
my arms
a side effect from the sound I create putting myself
out there is something I took two summers to do
back in middle school and when I finally did
I got two hands on me for my troubles
one over my mouth and the other over my breast
and now silence is a space I can protect myself in
like a burrow for infant rabbits
I want the pink fuzz of my voice and the paper-mâché
of my body
to stay baby new.

I shake because I was born into a patriarchy
where the one with the decision-worthy genitalia
Is the only ones allowed to wear the thorny crown and
he
ruled the castle with an open palm that never stopped
stinging
and I didn’t have the keys to the castle door
and I never learned to swim,
And there were sharks in the water
even if I had the courage
but you pushed me and
I fell in And as my lungs filled salty
I was eaten alive jaws style.

There was a language the men spoke like hyenas and I
couldn’t understand.
I could read the shorthand calligraphy my mother
and I shared as our ink was dried in the stares
but I wanted water colors, I wanted oil paintings, hand
prints on the walls spelling “listen, I am screaming”
in bright blues and reds and yellows but we weren’t
allowed to color on the walls. My father couldn’t read
it so he wiped the words away with bleach and bigotry.

So when I shake I don’t shake because
I’m scared of you I shake because I’m scared
of my own voice and its ability to exist freely.
I haven’t heard it in too long. I’ve been drawing on the
walls instead. Don’t wipe it away. •
**GULABI GANG** BY SHRUTI SUDARSAN '19

As a girl, the colour pink has been an important part of my childhood. Pink was the colour that washed the walls of my bedroom wall when I was 7 years old. Pink was the colour of my Barbie dolls’ packaging boxes, clothes, shoes, and handbags; Pink was the colour of most of my anarkalis and paa-vadas. More importantly, pink soon became the colour I associated with ‘girly’: a word I used to disassociate myself from gendered stereotypes of vulnerability, superficiality, and weakness. However, at 17, I learned that the colour pink meant something completely different to a strong group of women in rural Uttar Pradesh. *Gulabi Gang* is a group of women clad in bright pink sarees from the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh. Wielding bamboo sticks, these women fight against sexual abuse in marital relations, female infanticide, child marriages, and dowry. For these women of Uttar Pradesh, pink is a symbol of strength, courage, and determination. The stark differences between my attitude towards the colour pink and the women of Uttar Pradesh’s are clear. As a privileged Indian woman, the proverbial stork has dropped me in a family where India’s patriarchal and capitalist framework has worked for me. •

**WEAR IT PROUDLY** BY ANGELA HYDE '19

This galaxy is made up of mostly dark matter

God filled it with BLACKNESS

There is nothing minority about the word black

These white stars are proof that we can coexist - Beautifully

The killing of a black man is an obliteration of the sun. •

**BLACK GALAXY** BY NATAJA FLOOD '16
Stop it!” I said, through clenched teeth and a face marred with anguish and fear.

“Stop what?” said the innocent assailant with genuine confusion.

“Stop looking at me like that! I feel your eyes boring into me day in and day out. What do you want from me?! I can’t place the feeling I get from you!” I dug my nails into the palm of my hands as my voice echoed throughout the void.

“Ah, that,” the figure sheepishly rubbed one of their hands against the back of their head, as if they’ve been in this predicament before.

“I mean it! If you’re gonna dislike me like other people do, JUST DO IT! Don’t be a coward about it, I can handle it!” My voice began to quiver as I lied to them and more importantly myself.

“I would never do such a thing,” they looked hurt. By my words? No, it’s my pain that bothers them.

“You don’t know me! Leave me alone!” I can feel the damn dam about to burst.

“I understand that I can’t understand,” I took a step back from the sheer conviction of those words.

“Why do you care?!” I sneered with a false sense of bravado, hoping to get any reaction other than this… “You’re hurting. You think that you’re alone,” those damned eyes held such warmth in them.

“I’m not going to apologize…” Almost inaudible were these words, but they were the strongest I had said in so long.

“You don’t have to,” the figure hugged me with such fierceness, as if I would disappear from this world in an instant.

“I’m not going to apologize for my existence anymore,” I hung my sweat and tear soaked face upon the figures shoulder.

“I’m…relieved.” we’re… at ease? This stranger is at peace with a stranger?

“Who are you?” I uttered in a whisper. This feeling is comforting. I believe it is known as _______.

The figure removed themselves from my person. They gently grasp my shoulders. They smiled the truest smile I’ve ever seen. “I’m ______.”

“Oh…” and I started laughing. Laughing, with sincere happiness.

“I’m glad I found you,” I said. I meant that.

“I had to be lost in order to be found. But you never lost me.”

“True. I did forget you though… I won’t anymore, I promise,” I felt my soul heating up.

“The void is closing,” said the figure, with serene happiness.

“Is it?” I said, with feigned bewilderment

“Yes. Now go ignite hope.”

The void is closing. •

FILLING THE VOID BY ANDRU ANDERSON '19

AS WE GROW BY KARL RIVERA '16
Rosie the Nanny by Nataja Flood '16

Rosie be momma when mama gone
Rosie be cleaner
She be cook
She be play date
Be nannie
Be woman
Be mother
Be slave

Rosie be leaving her kids in the Eastern Cape with her momma
Rosie be far from home
Rosie be under paid
Rosie be Thandile and not Rosie

Rosie be one of the family but don’t eat at the table with us
Don’t pray with us
Don’t shop with us
Rosie don’t be on the Christmas card

But Rosie be family

Rodie got kids we don’t know about
Rosie got kids we don’t ask about
Rosie got kids that we don’t care about

Rosie got kids that she care for because she’s always busy taking care of me

Rosie kisses me good night like I be her son
Rosie tell me stories about lions and tigers and bears
Rosie tuck me in
Wipes my bum
Taught me how to walk
And pee by my self

Rosie isn’t my momma but loves me just the same
Loves me just the same
Loves me just the same
Like I be black child in Langa running up Sandile Extention

Rosie loves me just the same.

A Mans House by Angela Hyde '19

1. Don’t take breaks: *there is shit to do* and it doesn’t matter if today you feel like dying the dishes need more TLC than your heart and we care more about the clutter on the counter than the landfill of mess that is clogging the crevices of your mind even if it’s overflowing into the ocean of your every-day life. and polluting the sun, blocking the light around you.

2. Don’t speak at the table: *your voice is annoying, nobody cares*, everyone knows that silence is the best seasoning to mutual uncomfortableness broken by the giggle of those too young to understand the meaning of disillusionment.

3. Don’t be passionate: *everything you think is wrong* and the love you hold is a blindfold you need to open your eyes to your ignorance;
remember the sins we gave you when we made you 
and repent for us.

4. Don’t have friends: family is the only thing 
you need, but suffocation and guilt are daggers 
hidden in words that come out of mouths with 
teeth that create a city of hypocrisy.

5. Don’t be depressed: it hurts us to see this part 
of you, the mask you wear should look our 
dreams

6. Don’t fall out of line: just remember that we 
love you just the way we made you.

AS WE GROW BY KARL RIVERA ’16

SHE BLINDED ME WITH SCIENCE 
BY PIA PARISI-MARCOUX ’19

MONSTERS LIVE HERE BY ANONYMOUS

There is a fire in her hips and a hurricane 
trailing on the tips of her toes they’re light 
and magical because they have no choice 
she is running from the monsters under the bed 
except the monsters don’t live under the bed, they 
live in Mommy’s room, when will spring come 
that hot time when she knows tat going outside 
won’t freeze her feet, or make teddy-bear wet 
when the moon and the hot night 
can keep her company, as she waits for the sun to 
come back and make the monster go to work.

His fangs aren’t just in his mouth Mommy 
They’re on his tongue and his finger-tips.

Did you see I ran into the door today too? 
Let me bring you flowers and let’s run away 
To where there ain’t no monsters left 
I don’t know where that is but maybe 
The moon will guide us.

SHE BLINDED ME WITH SCIENCE 
BY PIA PARISI-MARCOUX ’19

AS WE GROW BY KARL RIVERA ’16

MONSTERS LIVE HERE BY ANONYMOUS

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EVERY GIRL IS A RIOT GRRRL

BY PIA PARISI-MARCOUX

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