

# **Zeitgeist**



## **Spirit of the Times**

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**Leaders of Political Awareness Society**

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**About the Club**

In a matter of years, our generation will be the status quo. We will be running the businesses and casting the votes and contributing to the culture that will serve to identify our country for decades to come. As such, it is our duty to cultivate a devotion to political curiosity and vigilance so that we can shape this future in the most well informed manner we possibly can. The Political Awareness Club is a part of that cultivation, providing an environment for students to discuss and debate what is going on in the world and develop their own unique perspective they can carry with them into the adult world. We meet on Thursday afternoons in Mr. Szabs's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

**Note:** The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and are in no way intended to reflect those of Fairfield Prep as an institution.

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## **How “Last Week Tonight” Changed Journalism**

**Christopher Specht ‘15**

“Last Week Tonight” with John Oliver is a new kind of news. Sure, it’s satirical in nature, similar to “The Daily Show” or “The Colbert Report”, but this HBO show is no joke. The Associated Press even called Oliver’s segment on the Miss America pageant investigative journalism. Such segments focus on topics rarely discussed in the mainstream media, such as the sugar industry, FIFA, or even the American obsession with pumpkin spice. In this way, “Last Week Tonight” is a refreshing respite from other politically charged satire shows. No matter where you find yourself on the political spectrum, the show is incredibly informative and entertaining.

But Oliver’s show is not just boring news; Oliver himself even says the show is “...not journalism, it’s comedy-it’s comedy first, and it’s

comedy second.” Oliver’s skilled blending of jokes with otherwise somber issues such as the death penalty allows serious information to be conveyed, but in a way that makes each segment hilarious and easy to watch. For example, while reporting on misleading labels on food products, Oliver says Cocoa Krispies boasted “...they could increase your child’s immunity, which is true, but only in the sense that it immunizes them from not having diabetes.” Admittedly, the topics that Oliver has covered seem boring at a first glance, but they are incredibly important and should be given the same attention as anything covered by mainstream news networks.

This is the true value of “Last Week Tonight”. Beyond all of the jokes, there is serious information reported with a truly journalistic spirit. The show has no strong political bias and can be

enjoyed by everyone. It is a better alternative to other, slanted media sources. For those that want to be informed but not bored, this show is perfect. Segments are released every Sunday on HBO and on the show's YouTube channel.

**Dan Malloy: He's On Our Side  
James Mangan '15**

Over the past five months, I have been incredibly blessed to serve as an intern for Governor Dan Malloy's campaign for re-election. Not only have I gained invaluable political experience, but I am also grateful to work for such a capable leader as Governor Malloy.

Our governor faced an incredible amount of adversity as a young man and has still managed to become quite successful. Dannel Patrick Malloy, the youngest of eight children, was raised in a working-class Irish-Catholic family in Stamford. Young Dan struggled academically as a child until he was

diagnosed with dyslexia. Even today, he struggles with this disability. Despite his diagnosis, Dan worked hard and was able to graduate both from Boston College, *magna cum laude*, and Boston College Law School. Governor Malloy has obviously benefitted from his world-class Jesuit education: not only did it prepare him to lead our great state, but has also given him the tools to stand for social justice and a more fair economic climate for our middle class.

After a very prosperous career as an attorney, not just as a civil litigator, but also as an advocate for people in the District Attorney's office, Dan Malloy dedicated his life to public service, as Mayor of Stamford and subsequently as Governor of Connecticut. When he became governor in January of 2011, Connecticut was, quite frankly, in a tailspin. The state had no net job growth over the previous twenty years, our

schools were failing and we faced severe problems with our budget. Over the past 4 years, Governor Malloy has added 46,000 new jobs in the private sector and worked with 1,100 small businesses to create an additional 16,000 new jobs. This has been achieved partially because of his new tax credits for businesses that hire our veterans who are returning home after valiantly serving their country. He understands the value of good public education, and while many other states are cutting funding to education, our governor has increased funding, which in turn is helping our graduation rate and our students' competency in areas such as math, science, and reading. As well, Governor Malloy has funded thousands of pre-K slots and, thanks to legislation he helped pass, by 2019, Connecticut will have universal access to pre-K. In 2011 when he entered office, Connecticut had one

of the largest per-capita deficits in the nation with \$3.67 billion. Today, our budget has been balanced. These accomplishments, and a myriad of others, bear witness to Governor Malloy's ability to lead our state into the future.

Governor Malloy has also proven himself to be a trailblazer with tangible, meaningful results. While states were trying to pass minimum wage increases, Dan actually got it done and our state was the first in the nation to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour, which has provided economic relief to tens of thousands of Connecticut families. After the horrific massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2010, where twenty first-graders and six brave educators were slaughtered like fish in a barrel by a madman with an assault rifle, states all across the country, and even our own Congress, tried to pass gun

safety legislation to prevent further tragedies from happening again. Governor Malloy was the first to help ban assault rifles and impose universal background checks, something Congress couldn't even do. Just as an aside, it is absolutely mindboggling why Governor

For Dan Malloy, it's personal. Economically speaking, he has seen the best and worst of Connecticut, and everything in between. He understands that in order for people to pull themselves by the bootstraps out of poverty, they need a level playing field and proper educational opportunities. He realizes that it is unfair for well-connected, prep school millionaires like Tom Foley to get wealthier and wealthier with less stringent regulations, lower taxes and increased loopholes, while the middle class and the poor bear the brunt of this economic burden. Governor Malloy knows that effective

Malloy's opponent, Tom Foley, would be so proud of his endorsement from the lobbyists at the National Rifle Association in a state that witnessed such a terrible gun tragedy not even two years ago.

leaders cannot go at it alone, and in order to work towards strong, positive reforms, they need to reach across the aisle and work with the other team. This November, I am proud to throw my support behind Governor Dan Malloy, the right choice for Connecticut and the right choice for our future.

### **Gun Control Wit Geffs '15**

In the past decade, gun control has been one of the most heated debate topics in our country. With mass shootings such as Sandy Hook, many people are demanding gun control regulations, while others refuse to give up their Second Amendment rights. This

debate topic is sensitive. Elections are won and lost by a candidate's stance on this issue. Both sides do present valid arguments. Gun related cases have made it to the Supreme Court twice in the last few years. In 2008, the case *Distich of Columbia v. Heller* ruled that the Constitution protects an individuals right to own a gun for personal use. However, states would have the power to overturn this law if they voted so. In 2010, the Supreme Court overruled that, making it a federal policy and only gave states the ability to modify the ruling.

In the past few years, many states have done just that. Connecticut by far has the strictest gun laws of any state after the shooting in Newtown. However, many states, primarily in the South, allow licensed gun holders to carry their weapon into any non-federal building in the state, including churches and restaurants. Their argument is that

when it comes down to it, responsible gun owners are some of the safest people to be around. Wayne LaPierre, the NRA president recently said, "The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun". This argument resonates with many. Responsible gun owners have the ability to protect themselves and other around them. The main question there is "What defines as responsible gun owner?" Over the past years, 5-day background checks have been used on every citizen wishing to purchase a gun. But is this enough? Mentally disturbed people have still been able to get their hands on guns and were able to do terrible things.

This debate, like most, has a lot to do with how one was raised. And a clear line is drawn basically down the middle of the country. The majority of the people in the South support gun rights, and 42% of them have registered



guns. In contrast, only 17% of people in the Northeast have guns, and most from this part of the country support gun control legislation. Both parties are standing firm, and neither are going to be willing to budge anytime soon. Now that it is election season, politicians will be forced to reveal their position on the issue. Some such as Tom Foley have already stated their stance on loosening gun laws in Connecticut, and many think that because of the incident of Sandy Hook, this stance could cost him the election. His opponent, Dan Malloy, implemented some of the strictest gun legislation after Sandy Hook. Many politicians will do their best to dance around the topic because it is so divided. This issue is one that will persist for a long time and always be a hot debate.

**Faith in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment**  
**Matt Gardella '15**

The gun debate has been raging for years, and presumably, will continue

on for many more. While it is easy to jump on the bandwagon that people such as Dannel Molloy have, as seen in his attack advertisements against Tom Foley's pro-gun outlook, we must consider the other side of the argument and the studies and statistics that support it. The "right" side of this debate is the courageous path: it is the side argued by people who are willing and able to look past the media's inflated and exaggerated treatment of gun violence, and realize the positive effects of upholding and respecting the Second Amendment.

Gun violence victim and former-Representative Gabrielle Giffords has been a strong anti-gun activist since her recovery. She was recently quoted saying, "Dangerous people with guns are a threat to women". While hoping to gain widespread backing and sympathy, Giffords has refused to examine actual

gun violence statistics. In reality, 84% of gun homicide victims are male. Granted, this study did not account for instances of assault in which a gun was used to intimidate, which is surely a factor commonly associated with cases of rape. Self-defense, however, can be bolstered through the legal carrying of personal firearms. Without our Second Amendment rights, it is very possible that violent crime would be more common in the United States. Professors James Wright and Peter Rossi conducted a study for the U.S. Department of Justice, which surveyed 1,800 convicted, incarcerated felons. In this study, it was found that 74% of those questioned criminals had avoided occupied dwellings in fear of being shot by the homeowner. Furthermore, 40% responded that they hadn't committed a specific crime for fear of the potential victim being armed. This crucial study

highlights the most important benefit of legal gun ownership: the mere presence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment has protected countless innocent Americans. Not only does it deter lawbreakers who fear a crime gone awry, but also boosts the feelings of confidence and security for the gun carrier.

There are a couple of key facts to keep in mind while the gun debate goes on. First, gun ownership is a constitutional right. The Second Amendment protects our ownership of firearms, and while the image of tyranny is no longer relevant, the facts of gun defense can speak for themselves as to how much we really need to protect our families and ourselves. Secondly, gun homicide, gun violence, and overall violent crime has declined in the U.S. over the last 25 years. It is irrational to say our crime is rising due to guns, or that guns have all of a sudden had a

horrible impact upon society. The ever-growing influence and presence of the media is a major contributor to the anti-gun hysteria that consumes so many. Lastly, while the numbers are vastly disputed, tens of thousands of Americans' lives are spared due to the use of guns for defense. I hope every reader and advocate of large-scale gun restriction goes online and looks up some of these stories. Seeing the families that have been saved from gruesome crime because of legal gun ownership can speak volumes, even to the most adamant opponent of gun ownership.

**Domestic Violence in the NFL**  
**Steve Bosak '15**

I assume everyone has heard about the Ray Rice scandal and also the Adrian Peterson child abuse case. In case you did not, Rice, a running back for the Baltimore Ravens knocked his fiancée out in an elevator of a New

Jersey Casino. Originally, Rice was suspended for two games, but then a video of the incident was released, and he was suspended indefinitely from the NFL. Rodger Goodell, the commissioner of the NFL, was under fire about Rice's suspension and felt the need to suspend him for longer than just two games. It is not unusual for an arbitrator to find middle ground in a case like this, so this new suspension could be altered. The topic debated is how this incident should be handled and what the NFL should do to send a message to the public. One of the most prominent arguments is that the NFL is a made up of role models, and when a player breaks a law or does something immoral, he should be punished. A counter argument would be that these players rely on their jobs to support their families and in Rice's case, his fiancée doesn't want her husband to lose his job and their way of life.

Whether Rice's punishment is fair touches on a number of delicate issues, including the NFL's historical role in punishing off-field conduct, as well as its authority and obligations under the collective bargaining agreement. The issue of domestic violence itself is surprisingly relevant in the NFL, where domestic violence accounts for 48 percent of arrests for violent crimes among its players, compared to the national average of 21 percent. The league took measures on October 8, 2014 and presented all 32 teams in a meeting with a presentation of domestic violence and how to deal with it. Yes, this issue has made national headlines and has sparked a conversation about domestic violence, but is it for a good cause? Is there outrage just because they are famous athletes? Do these athletes get special treatment, or should they be treated like an ordinary person? These

are questions that are being raised in everyday conversation. Indeed, the real question is how the NFL should "police" its players and deal with these issues in the future.

### **Are we still the land of the free?**

**Sam Marcus '18**

One of the most controversial topics in our country today is gay marriage. Although seemingly unimportant to some, it happens to be a hot topic to an enormous number of citizens in the United States. In fact, 1 out of every 10 Americans is homosexual. However, we as a country are still denying homosexuals their rights. Only 31 states of our great nation allow gay marriage. How can we as Americans pride ourselves with inhabiting the "Land of the Free" if we prohibit two loving people to marry each other?

Some of the biggest opposing arguments to gay marriage focus

religious laws and values. Some protesters, such as those from the Westboro Baptist Church, claim that even God hates gays! However, doesn't this go against one of the main points of religion- to believe that we, as law abiding, neighbor loving, accepting humans, should care and love for one another?

Yet we still have cases like Matthew Shepard's. Matthew was a gay male who resided in Wyoming. While in a bar one night, a group of males lured him outside, portraying themselves as homosexuals as well. Yet instead of the implicit fornicating, they tied Matthew to a fence and beat him. Then they left him, where he died. And this was all because he was gay.

Supporting the prohibition of homosexual marriages has become one of the most ignorant standpoints of not only our great country, but our world as

well. If you do not think that two women should get married, that is ok.

Everybody, in accordance with the Constitution, is entitled to his or her own opinions. But you are not entitled to beat a 21-year-old man because of his sexuality. I am not homosexual, and gay marriage DOES NOT affect me personally. If two men in Montana get married, it will not worsen my life. It is unconstitutional for anyone to prohibit another human being to marry the person they love, just because it makes some uncomfortable. Everybody, whether male, female, black, white, gay, straight, rich, or poor, should be given equal opportunities towards their own pursuit of happiness, for we are all humans. And if we do not feel the same about one topic, that is okay. It will happen, as differences make the world go 'round. So differences, like homosexuality, should not be shunned or hidden, but accepted.

As the great John Lennon once put it, "It matters not who you love, where you love, why you love, when you love or how you love. **It only matters that you love.**" Let us embrace the warmth of love. If we do, we might just make the world a better place.

### **The Pain in Ukraine**

**Mark Sheffer '17**

In recent months, fighting in eastern Ukraine has left more than 3,000 dead and resulted in a divided country. Russian troops have crossed the border, taking advantage of the instability and stoking discontent, and have even taken up arms against central Ukrainian government troops. With an emboldened Russia and countries in Eastern Europe feeling vulnerable, it appears Vladimir Putin is imposing his will on Ukraine, as most NATO members, fearing their supplies of Russian energy may be cut off, have not responded aggressively.

The Donbas region, where most of the fighting is taking place, is a large Ukrainian industrial center. Many in this largely Russian-speaking region feel politically and culturally separated from the central government in Kiev. The recent "Euromaidon" protests in Kiev have dug a deeper trench between the new pro-Europe government, headed by Petro Poroshenko, and the pro-Russian separatists in the east. Given this deepening standoff, can the United States do anything to mitigate the crisis and instability in the region?

During the Cold War, the U.S. halted Soviet aggression largely through threats of military response with its allies in NATO. But given the current political climate and the unlikelihood of getting other nations to join in any military effort, this is not a realistic U.S. option today.

Economic sanctions are the key. Russia's economy is weak, the ruble is the lowest it has been in years, and Russia is almost completely dependent on foreign energy to sustain itself. Sanctions have been shown to work in other international crises, including in Iran and South Africa. However, they cannot work without an allied effort against the offending country.

The United States would not be able to impose effective sanctions on its own; it needs help from the European Union. However, Europe is much more reliant on Russian natural gas than the United States. To encourage a tougher European attitude toward Russia, the United States needs to help diversify the sources of European energy and wean them off Russian gas.

The European nation that could have the biggest impact on Russia is Germany. German Chancellor Angela

Merkel has met with President Vladimir Putin more than any other world leader and has been the lead European voice criticizing Russia for its intervention in Ukraine. In early October, Germany, along with France, said it would send soldiers and non-combat drones to monitor the border between Ukraine and Russia, and make sure that the September 5th cease-fire is upheld. This is a good development for Ukraine if the two nations follow through.

Indecisiveness and inaction on foreign policy has plagued the Obama Administration, especially in its second term. President Obama must make a clear statement, calling Russia's actions what they actually are- a military invasion. He also must meet any further Russian action in Ukraine with swift and tough economic sanctions. Without any pressure from the U.S. or NATO, Putin has little incentive to repair his

relationship with Ukraine and withdraw his troops from the region. The September cease-fire is a good first step, but temporarily stopping the fighting is not a permanent solution, especially because it does not deal with returning captured territories, such as the Crimean Peninsula, to Ukraine. Pro-Russian rebels still control a majority of the southeastern industrial region, and that may not be enough for President Putin.

The United States and Europe need to stand up to Putin, who has bullied much of Eastern Europe, through strong action and tougher economic sanctions if necessary.

### **Ebola: Infectious Terror of the World William Stone '15**

Ebola has been plaguing African nations for many years, yet foreign aid has always been restrained or minimal. It was only with the arrival of Ebola in countries like the United States, that the danger posed by Ebola has been fully

recognized by the international community. Ebola, or “Ebola hemorrhagic fever”, is a disease contracted by contact with blood or bodily fluids, and is noted for its high mortality rate. Symptoms manifest sometime between two days and three weeks after contact with infected bodily fluid. Decreased liver and kidney function, followed by the failure of multiple organs usually results in fatality.

Ebola has appeared in headlines around the globe for the recent outbreak running rampant across western Africa. The outbreak has been traced to a 2-year-old boy in Guinea. When he died in December of 2013 his mother, sister and grandmother became infected and in turn infected other members of their village. Ebola then swiftly spread to many other neighboring villages. Over the following months Ebola gradually spread to Sierra



Leone, Liberia and most recently, to the United States and Spain.

On October 8<sup>th</sup> the first confirmed man infected with Ebola, Thomas Duncan, died in Dallas, TX. Currently, it is unknown if any others have contracted this insidious disease, although the CDC claims that it is evacuating a potentially infected man from Florida. The Ebola victim in Spain is still alive according to the latest reports, although his chances of survival are grim, given that more than half of those infected with Ebola die.

Numerous global health organizations such as the World Health Organization are calling for massive international measures to stop this from becoming a global epidemic. Governments would be wise to take heed, because the current outbreak is the worst of its kind in modern history. The last thing anyone wants is a new Black

Plague, which may just be what will happen should appropriate action take too long to implement or not coalesce altogether.

### **Legalization of Marijuana Sam Day '15**

Throughout history, the federal government has used its states as Petri dishes for new laws. Recently, the laws being tested have revolved around marijuana. First was legalization of marijuana for medical use. This was a huge step from the previously intolerant view of our government. The next big step came with the legalization of marijuana for recreational use in Colorado and Washington. These two states will act testing grounds for the new laws.

Colorado has hugely benefited from Colorado Amendment 64. In the 2013- 2014 fiscal year, Colorado generated a total of \$50.7 million from the sale of medical and recreational

marijuana. The following year, 2014-2015, that number was more than doubled to reach \$133.6 million in revenue.

Tax revenue from the sale of marijuana in Colorado has been used in a variety of beneficial ways. Almost ironically, 30% of Colorado's revenue has gone to youth drug prevention and another 28% to substance abuse treatment. Schools receive 26% of that money, mostly going to construction, renovation, and new supplies. The remaining 16% goes elsewhere.

Washington, the only other state in the US to have legal recreational marijuana use, is projected to generate \$25 million in the tax revenue in the coming year. Looking even farther ahead, they estimate that in 2017 there

will \$200 million increase in revenue.

Between July 14<sup>th</sup>, the day legal recreational marijuana dispensaries opened, and September 8<sup>th</sup> alone, there was \$14 million worth of marijuana sold.

Those numbers are statistics for just one state. According to some 300 of our nation's top economists, legalization could generate upwards of \$13 billion dollars a year if every state legalizes it.

If that is the case, these economists estimate that \$7.7 billion could be saved by not enforcing prohibition laws.

Another \$6 billion could be made from taxing it similarly to alcohol or tobacco.

If the rest of America follows in the footsteps of Colorado and Washington, only good can come.