



The Talon



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The OCS Food Service: Feeding a District During a Pandemic

Shayne Durkin

School has been closed for three months now, and in that time few students and teachers have even been inside the building to pick things up. But throughout these past few months, there have been people working every week to help support the Onteora community, and they provide necessary meals to nearly a third of our district population. I was fortunate enough to have a virtual interview with Christine Downs, who is the School Lunch Manager at Onteora, and has been overseeing the food service meal deliveries since March 18th.

How exactly does the food delivery system work? According to Downs, families first have to register online for meals. There are questions included about any dietary restrictions and how many meals are requested. This service is not limited to families who receive free or reduced lunch, so anyone can register.



Courtesy of Onteora Facebook

The next step is giving the transportation department the requests and finding which run each family is on. There are six runs throughout the district, so there are six drivers and six monitors delivering the meals. Families receive meals in two deliveries: The first meal comes on Monday, with two breakfasts and three lunches, then the second meal is delivered on Thursday, which includes three breakfasts and two lunches, delivered around 12 PM.

When it comes to the food, the state guidelines for school meals still apply: milk, meat, meat

alternatives, vegetables, grains, and fruit. There are three meal packages that are delivered. The first package is milk and juice, the second is breakfast, and the third is lunch. The staff make meals in the kitchen, and they also ship out snacks. In effort to waste as little as possible, sometimes the staff has to get creative. "I just took what we had left of blueberry muffin mix and made bread, because it usually goes bad over the summer. So now we have blueberry bread to ship out this week," says Downs.

Staff are in the kitchen twice a week to prep, package, and ship the meals. The packages are loaded into coolers and labeled for shipping. "Some items are frozen, we ship ice packs, but everything can be eaten when you get it," says Downs in regard to food shipping.

is spread out in the kitchen making the meals. It took us a while to reach a balance. It requires a lot of forward thinking, and knowing who's doing what."

In regard to the future of this system, things are not set in

This system feeds roughly one-third of the Onteora School District, which is about 330–345 students and their families. The men and women behind this massive undertaking all deserve recognition for the work they have been doing. In the cafeteria are Donna Carr, Loretta Davis, Ella Gille, Nancy Albright, Joanne Plourd, Leigh Anne Burns, Sally Piland, Kim Zindulka, Tina Janson, Kaitlin Lane, Christine Tucciarone, Pat Knight, and Christine Downs.

"It took us a while to reach a balance. It requires a lot of forward thinking, and knowing who's doing what."

There are eleven workers in the kitchen weekly, and they are divided into different stations. Downs explained it best- "There are three in the cafeteria packaging the milk, three in the serving area, and everyone else

stone. If Governor Andrew Cuomo issues an executive order, then feeding will continue through the summer, but until further notice, meals will continue to be delivered through June 29th.

Of course, this would not be possible without the help of the transportation department, including Raymond Clinton, Nicole Sommer, Russell Oakes, Roger Benjamin, Stewart Benjamin, Scott Benjamin, Laura Kaiser, Anthony Weber, Peter Jubie, Bernice Bonestell, Michele Hilty, Colette Perfit, Jennifer Hashbrouck, Kim Faulkner, Kerri Gaddis, Lisa Ryan, Kim Fischer, and Veronica Kivlehan.

On behalf of everyone in our district, thank you. Thank you for continuing to work during these unprecedented times in order to help others. You are all heroes to the Onteora community.



Courtesy of Onteora Facebook

The Brain Chip that Will Change the World

Emily Peck

Fast forward thirty years, you are walking down a silent street, yet you are surrounded by people in conversation. You are staring ahead, but you are also scrolling through your friend's social media. You are stepping off a sidewalk, but you are also reliving your thirtieth birthday and tasting the cake.

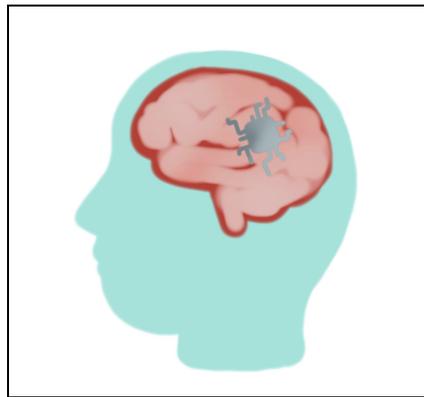
This seemingly dystopian world is an alarming prediction of the future; nevertheless, it is a prediction that is becoming ever-clearer with Elon Musk's Neuralink, his company that is developing a brain computer.

This computer will be inserted by a sewing machine-like robot that will "take a chunk out of your skull," as Musk puts it, then the robot will insert the device, connect electrodes to the brain, stitch it all up, and make the device flush with the skull, which renders the super-humans with the computer chip indistinguishable from others. An important note is that this procedure is not full AI symbiosis, that would require something more invasive, but it is eerily close.

A robot in your brain. A robot arm plopping down electrodes. It all sounds quite alarming, but

the scale of the device renders the procedure one of the least terrifying aspects of these brain-computers. The devices are a mere inch in diameter, with electrodes, aka. "tiny wires," capping out at the width of a quarter of the diameter of a human hair. If the electrodes are conceptualized as acting like circuits and putting a frequency through the areas of the brain, all while avoiding important blood vessels, the device does not seem too alien. It can even be taken out, so the procedure is not a permanent one.

"...once this new, easier communication takes off, people will likely never go back."



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

In fact, the intended primary uses of the computer are even more comforting. Neuralink's first goal is to tackle disabilities with their device. Musk himself says it can "in principal" cure anything wrong

with the brain: it is a cure for the blind, deaf, low functioning, paraplegic, epileptic, and so many more people. It is easy to agree with Musk's assessment that this device is "awesome," or at least it is in the device's first versions.

But projected later versions are less morally concrete. First of all, the device could eliminate the need for humans to speak, yes, for humans to speak, within five to ten years, according to Musk. With just a thought, people would be able to communicate a message to others, and once this new, easier communication takes off, people will likely never go back.

To be fair, there are clear benefits to mind-to-mind communication. For example, complex thoughts will be communicated with less transfer-loss and more quickly. When a human communicates a complex thought, they lose information in the compression of the concept into words, and there is further information loss with the decompression and interpretation by the listener. All of these barriers are eliminated with Neuralink's device.

Another attribute of this non-verbal communication is the potential for breaking language barriers. If humans could send their thoughts to someone who speaks another

language, and that other person could receive the thoughts in their native language, all of the sudden everyone in the world can communicate. Maybe all that is needed to resolve world conflicts is communication. Maybe if all the people in the world can talk to each other, we will enter into a new era of understanding and peace. Maybe...

Finally, and perhaps most ominously, this device could allow people to “save state,” as Musk says, and “restore that state into a biological being.” In non-genius talk, it will be possible to save a moment in

computer chip is in a brain, the organ that controls how people experience the world, its users will be able to recall everything from a past moment: senses, emotions, everything.

Even more unsettling is the possibility that people will be able to edit these memories. People will have the power to change how they remember the past. According to Musk, “you’d think you were you” when you go back into a memory, but is that reassuring enough? Or are we entering into the simulation theory?

A utopia that includes this

at the chance to purchase one, and this technology will diffuse hierarchically. But it will not do so quickly enough as to avoid exacerbating societal inequalities, and it is nearly certain that this computer chip will make the world more unfair.

But wait, can able bodied people protest this device? What with the potential benefits for the disabled, it could be considered selfish for fully functioning people to deny them this device. With this, all arguments against the chip are rendered immoral. Therein lies the inevitability of this computer chip. It is coming because of its irresistible potential uses. Neuralink claims they are simply getting ahead of a clear trend, and there are many others, such as the Pentagon, with the same mindset and plan. Brain computer chips are almost certainly going to be invented during the lifetime of current students at Onteora, which is striking.

But, realistically, this trend towards technological symbiosis is evident when our society is looked at closely: people are already attached to their phones figuratively, the device merely establishes a more literal, and efficient connection. So maybe we are to blame for this new technology.



Courtesy of Any Silicon

time and then go back to that moment and relive it like a movie. Except the experience will be more than a tv screen could ever deliver. Since the

device can certainly be imagined, but so can a dystopia. A computer chip that holds all these possibilities is incredibly alluring. It is so enticing that wealthy citizens will likely jump

Navigating the Pandemic as an Administrator

Sophia Roberts

The transition to working and learning from home has been a challenge for everyone. For myself, the transition to learning from home was not always smooth, but thanks to Ontario administrators and staff, the transition was easier than I could have imagined. I reached out to Superintendent Victoria McLaren, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Jodi DeLucia, High School Principal Mr. Lance Edelman, and other district administrators to learn about the transition from their perspective.

For most, the transition occurred without major obstacles, but it was hard for administration to take everyone's needs into account. Edelman said that he tried to imagine what everyone was going through by putting himself in the shoes of his son, who is a student, and imagining himself in his wife's position, that of a teacher. Edelman made many of his decisions based on the perspectives of his wife and son and how they would want their leaders to act.

Administrators across the board were concerned about how to support students and staff

through the transition. Dr. DeLucia was especially concerned with equity, and how to distribute resources. The biggest challenge for her was "finding ways to support students" whether that be in providing food, chromebooks, or even access to the internet. McLaren mentioned the food delivery service provided by Ontario to have been "a huge undertaking to set up" but that it has "gone really well." She said, "Food security is an incredibly important need for a child, and everyone involved was completely dedicated to ensuring that our students would receive meals if they were in need."

Tailoring to students' needs was a challenging part of the process for most administrators. Cynthia Bishop, Director of Pupil Personnel Services noted that "online learning isn't for everyone." To Bishop, providing special education, English as a second language education, academic intervention services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, teaching of the deaf, and counseling services digitally "felt daunting," but the dedication of all the teachers and service providers made the process possible. Bishop and her staff made special accommodations for students who could not handle classroom meets by arranging smaller groups and specialized meets,

"and many students preferred that format."

The issue of students not having access to technology was partially combated by John Reimer, Director of Technology. Transitioning a district like Ontario, one fairly minimal in its utilization of technology, to online schooling, was not easy. Reimer said, "my team and I had to create all the google classrooms for K-6 [and] this was not something that the staff and students were used to... We have also provided any student that needed a device with one and [we] continue to provide remote technical support as best we can."

The guidance department has also been working very hard to support the mental health of Ontario students. Edelman said that the "counselors are in a tough spot," but they have been in open communication with their students and continue to be available if students need their support. There is a lot going on behind the scenes in guidance. The guidance department has meetings with administration and communicates issues students are having so that accommodations are made for these students.

Edelman was also concerned with moving to pass/fail grading. He wanted to recognize students who had worked so

hard all year and were continuing their hard work from home, but he did not want to punish or disadvantage students who were having an especially hard time during the transition,

do whatever they could in order to support our students and their families.”

Dr. DeLucia also spoke about “the amazing faculty and

the community. He felt that sometimes he should’ve “admitted to not having an answer” instead of avoiding a topic. Also, it was overall far more difficult to get information out to people. Even communicating with teachers became an arduous process. Setting up a meeting between Edelman and a teacher was a process that could take hours, when previously it would’ve just taken a call to the teacher’s room.



Courtesy of Ontario Facebook

especially those with disabilities or without internet. The current grading model seeks to account for these potential issues by allowing students more flexibility with assignment due dates and reducing the weight of the fourth quarter in grade point averages.

Many administrators mentioned that the dedication and hard work of their staff made the transition smoother than expected. In McLaren’s words, “the team work that has taken place throughout this time has been incredibly gratifying. I have seen everyone step up and

amazing community” making the transition easier. She feels as though administrators got even closer during this time because they had to meet with each other more purposefully than before. Mr. Edelman also mentioned his appreciation for such “caring, compassionate staff.”

Even with the cooperation and dedication of staff, the transition was not without its hiccups. Edelman stated that despite the overall successes of the transition, there is a lot he would have done differently. Mostly he talked about changes to enhance communication with

Bishop feared that “parents and students would not be able to get into our meetings,” which would have been another potential problem for communication. The director of transportation, Nicole Sommer, and her staff miss their daily communication with parents and students. Sommer told me, “I have made some great connections with amazing parents and miss hearing from them. The bus drivers, who refer to their students as “my kids” miss seeing you all every day.”

This gap in communication between the school and parents has been frustrating for both ends. Parents often come to administration with questions, but sometimes administration doesn’t have any answers. Edelman said that some parents like to play the “what if” game, but he thinks that it is important to not speculate on

potential outcomes, given how much is still unknown.

Edelman wants the community to know that they can “have faith in us.” The Onteora staff are all working their hardest and constantly evaluating their mistakes and successes. He says, “please be patient with us.” There have been moments when it’s frustrating for parents and administration alike because administration cannot always share all the information they have, as they must always respect privacy concerns. Edelman is good natured about the criticism he receives and sees it “as part of the job” to receive, respond, address, and learn from comments from the community.

Likewise, McLaren says that she tries to respect everyone’s opinions, “everyone is experiencing this situation from their own perspective and sometimes I need to step back and just listen to what I’m being told about another person’s experience.”

McLaren said that “Communication was difficult to navigate in the beginning. We tried to keep people informed, without overwhelming them with information because if you send out constant letters, people will become fatigued and may stop reading them.

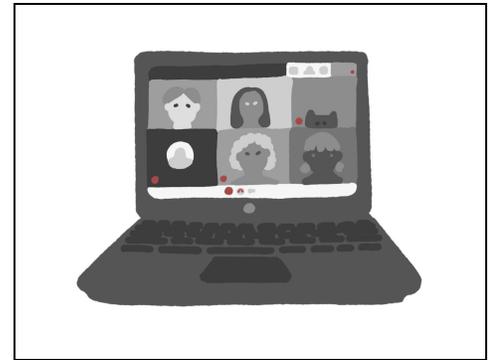
Dr. DeLucia, on the other hand, felt that communication actually

improved during this time. Administration came up with creative and new ways to communicate, especially with parents and students.

Even with physical distance separating the Onteora community, many administrators echoed the sentiment that Onteora has stayed strong, united, and connected throughout the pandemic. Reimer stated “I truly believe as a district that we have all come together and made this transition as smooth as possible and provided whatever support was needed for our students and staff during this hard and unpredictable time.”

Edelman mentioned that the Onteora community has been encouraging during this time. Edelman said, “we didn’t get everything right, but people were really, really supportive.” He also commented that the school closure gave him the opportunity to work closer with the student government and senior class, emphasizing his pleasure in working with them and stating “our student leaders are so impressive.”

Dr. DeLucia also expressed pride in Onteora students. “Our student body is engaged



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

and has really overcome the challenges they have faced.” Dr. DeLucia said that “people really wanted to help” and “people came out of the woodwork to help,” whether that was with donating supplies or offering to drive food for the food service delivery.

McLaren was also impressed with the support of the community, “One of the most amazing things that have come through this situation is the support of the community. Right from the beginning, I received an overwhelming number of emails from both staff and community members offering to help out in any way.”

Sommers had an enlightening take on this as well, saying, “I feel this District, including all of the administrators, teachers, parents and students have made this transition seamless and having watched everyone come together has been an uplifting experience. However, I cannot wait until we can all be together again.”

UFOs: They're Real

Shane Stackpole

On June 24, 1947, Pilot Kenneth Arnold reported that he spotted nine flying objects gliding in a “V” like formation in Washington. Arnold described these strange objects as “saucer like” which originated the popular term flying saucer. Following this extraordinarily peculiar sighting, others across the nation began to report their own encounters with obscure aircraft. This catalyzed a boom for the influence of extraterrestrial life and UFOs in pop culture.

Movies such as ET and Close Encounters and conspiracies about Area 51 gained tremendous popularity. UFO and alien sightings accompanied by grainy images and disturbing physical evidence have been reported since. Generally these sightings have not been taken seriously because they were thought to be solely based on the sensational and fantastical ideas of extraterrestrial life—at least up until now.

In November of 2004 and January of 2015, three irregular videos that appeared to

exhibit unidentified forms of aircraft were taken by US Naval Aviators. Shortly after, they were leaked and have been circulating the internet since, driving speculations and conspiracies regarding UFOs. The footage appears to depict the objects flying aerodynamically in ways that human aircraft can not achieve.

Pilot David Fravor who took one of the videos explained, “This was extremely abrupt, like a ping pong ball, bouncing off a wall. It would hit and go the other way.” Another pilot, who took a different video, described the object as “defying the laws of physics.” Up until a few months ago, there was no justification that the three videos are real and were not fabricated by editing technology, as many UFO videos are.

“This moment is groundbreaking because it may be the beginning of vital information about the mysteries of space being released to the public.”

On April 27, 2020, the Pentagon, for the first time in history, officially released and declared the authenticity of these three contentious videos of UFOs. What does this exactly mean for us? Is extraterrestrial life real? Should I be worried about an Alien invasion?

Although the long awaited veracity of these videos is thrilling, especially for UFO enthusiasts, it does not prove that extraterrestrial life is real and that these UFOs were alien designed. This announcement also does not explain what these objects are, just that they were real and unidentified.



Courtesy of Talon Staff

Pentagon spokesperson Sue Gough explains that the ultimate purpose of releasing these videos and declaring them authentic was “to clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage that has been circulating was real, or whether or not there is more to the videos.”

Many people have been questioning where to go from here and how to sit with the information that there are mysterious objects flying around our planet. This moment is groundbreaking, not just because UFOs are “officially” real but also because it may be the beginning of vital

information regarding such objects and the mysteries of space being released to the general public



Courtesy of Natalie Horberg

“What does this exactly mean for us? Is extraterrestrial life real?”

In 2017, Tom DeLonge founded the private UFO research organization, To the Stars Academy of Arts and Sciences. The company is in possession of private documents and materials regarding unidentified aerial phenomena. DeLonge and members of the organization believe that the nation and world may be at the brink of what's referred to as “the grand conversation.” This means that after 70 years of misinformation, the country may have reached a point at which previously confidential information is released. DeLonge says, “We believe that this level of recognition is exactly what is required to eliminate the extreme

skepticism surrounding U.A.P. events, so we can finally move towards sharing and analyzing reliable data from respected institutions.”

New information may start becoming available to the public not only regarding UFO and extraterrestrial life but also for all inexplicable realms of science and our universe. NASA recently shared that during a neutrino detection experiment in Antarctica, evidence was fortuitously found that explains how matter would behave in a hypothetical parallel universe.

This theory proposes a symmetric world to ours composed of antimatter in which time extends backwards from the Big Bang, which is the exact opposite of how our universe operates. It's surprising that NASA has released information this speculative to the public. But like DeLonge and his team hope, this too may be the beginning of a new wave of information to come forward and become validated for the general public.

There's an infinite cosmos that's yet to be discovered. This is only the beginning of what might be revealed to the public regarding extraterrestrial life, unidentified objects, and the endless mysteries beyond planet earth.

Voting During a Pandemic

Nelson Del Tufo

Just a few months ago, in February of 2020, the most covered stories across the nation were about wildfires, celebrities, domestic border policy, the Green New Deal, and of course the ever-evolving race for president.

Looking at headlines from when COVID-19 was but a storm on the horizon leaves one with a peculiar feeling. Some stories seem utterly frivolous given the current context, and others remind you of how dire the situation was even before the nation was hit by the worst pandemic in a century. Many problems unrelated to the current pandemic are still important whether we're social distancing, going back to school, or reopening the economy.

One issue which is a peculiar mix of pressing and trivial given the scale of the pandemic is that of voting, namely how elections will work given the circumstances. 2020 is an election year, and there's no way around this inconvenience. As politicians have become fond of saying, America has held elections in the midst of crisis before, even during the Civil War in the 1860's, but this pandemic presents a wholly new set of issues.

Never before has it been so important to avoid large gatherings and close contact with strangers, both of which are staples of voting across much of the country. Furthermore, many voters, and a majority of poll workers, are at an increased risk to contract COVID-19 because of their age. All of these issues and more have led to heated debate across the country over how to hold an election during the pandemic, and if we should even do so.

By late March and early April, COVID-19 was spreading rapidly throughout the nation, and many states were issuing stay at home orders and taking drastic steps to limit the spread of the virus. In many places, these drastic steps included: ordering the closure of businesses, the suspension of the school year, and the postponement of Primary elections scheduled for the spring.

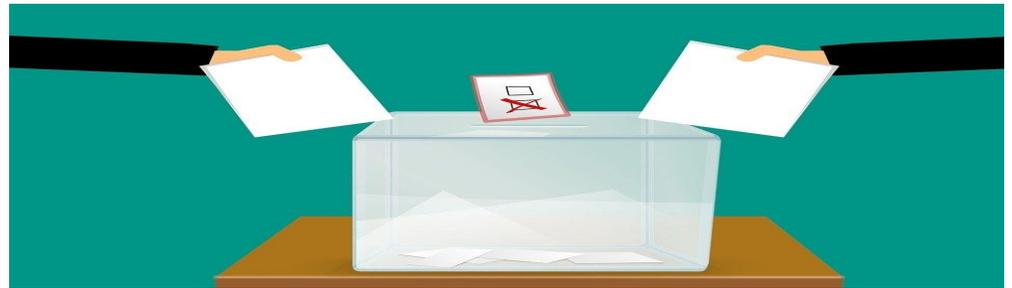
“2020 is an election year, and there’s no way around this inconvenience.”

Some states however, were unable to postpone their primary elections due to lack of infrastructure or cooperation across state governments. In Wisconsin for example, a lengthy legal fight between the Governor and the state supreme court resulted in a traditional in-person primary on April 7th,

with reduced polling locations and few absentee ballots issued.

“The issues with voting by mail have three components: legal, logistical, and political.”

Despite the low turnout associated with primary elections, according to Wisconsin Public Radio, the gathering of over 400,000 was enough to cause a severe spike in COVID cases that resulted in the deaths of numerous poll workers and voters.



Courtesy of Talon Staff

In November, the turnout is expected to be much higher than it was in any of the elections held this spring, and as such there could be a much more catastrophic result. Understandably, many officials, both state and federal, are seeking to avoid this result.

The obvious solution is to not hold an election until after the pandemic is under control. This, however, is arguably unconstitutional and certainly

politically infeasible. Even if the Supreme Court were to agree that this could be done, it would only be with the consent of Executive and Legislative Branches, the latter of which is divided between Democratic-controlled House of Representatives and Republican-controlled Senate.

Another potential solution is to not hold a traditional in-person election, and to conduct voting online or via mail-in ballots. Voting online is unlikely to happen because national security experts and elected

officials have almost universally condemned the proposal due to security concerns, but voting by mail is more complex and much more contentious.

The issues with voting by mail have three components: legal, logistical, and political. There is no unified election law in this country, so the rules of mail-in elections and absentee-ballot eligibility vary from state to state. Other legal issues have to do with potential litigation. A lot can go wrong with an absentee ballot that can't go wrong when



Courtesy of pexels.com

voting in person. When you vote at a polling location a worker signs you in and works out any issues with filling out the ballot, and then your vote is automatically logged in the system. When mailing in an absentee ballot, however, there's no face-to-face interaction with a poll worker to fix your signature incongruence or residency info, and your vote is far from automatically logged.

To be accounted for, your ballot must reach its respective board of elections by a certain day. This brings us to the logistical issue involved with voting by mail: the USPS simply doesn't currently have the capacity to transport the millions of ballots that will be cast in November, and they certainly won't if their budget is cut due to the stress of the pandemic, as some elected officials have suggested.

Finally, the political issues with voting by mail might be the greatest obstacle to overcome

before it can be a reality. The political facet of this problem centers around the lack of cohesion and leadership. As previously stated, election laws differ by state, but the federal government could theoretically create a unified national plan.

This is unlikely to happen, however, because the president of the United States has come out against voting by mail because he believes that it's susceptible to fraud and gives Democrats an unfair advantage. Though both of these statements have been criticized by elected officials and non-partisan groups, his consent and leadership would likely be necessary on the issue, as he holds a great deal of influence over lawmakers in his party and would need to sign any bills passed by congress.

Though it looks as if partisanship and federalism will provide roadblocks on the path to safer voting, there is a great deal of time until November, and a great deal of lower turnout elections that can be used as test cases and experiments for the "real deal." One of these lower turnout elections is New York State's primary on June 23rd. To find information on this election, your eligibility for an absentee ballot, or the availability of early voting, visit the New York State Board of Elections website.

My Experience With Standardized Tests During a Pandemic

Sophie Frank

With three minutes left on the timer I hit "Submit" and sent my AP European History essay off into the world to be put under the merciless glare of the College Board. I collapsed against my desk chair, realizing that the thing I'd worked towards for the past eleven months, the exam, was over. And it hadn't looked anything like what I was imagining.

Instead of jumping into the arms of my friends, our faces alight with that nervous but elated energy that accompanies all these big milestones, I sat alone in my room, the place I've spent most of my time while in quarantine. Everything was familiar, the opposite of how the looming, imposing AP exam had felt all year. Instead of putting my pencil down, my sore fingers the mark of the hard work I'd done in the last three hours, I watched the test portal close and all my work vanish into cyberspace. Instead of putting the test out of my mind and going out for a celebratory dinner, I reached for my phone and searched up #CollegeBoard on Twitter, because the only way to survive everything moving online is to commiserate with others. The news about

glitches and even racism within the standardized testing systems was coming in fast.

This test is just another thing that had to be altered due to the Coronavirus that has kept us in lockdown since March. The College Board first announced that they were changing the format of the test in mid-April. They shortened the exams and created an online portal for exam submission. The whole college system reacted to these changes, with some schools even saying that they would drop their SAT and ACT requirements for students applying in 2021.

While many students agree that changing the test but still allowing students to take it was a good idea, (in the email they sent to announce the changes, they reported a survey demonstrating that the majority of students were in favor of taking the test) a student resistance began pushing back after experiencing problems submitting their exams.

Some said that the portal wouldn't allow them to turn in the test, some said that their personal student ID didn't work, locking them out of the testing portal, and all agreed that the College Board was unresponsive. Everyone was told to retake the test in June, which would mean losing all of their progress from the original

May exam. After a few weeks of pushback, the company announced that they would introduce a new email-submission option as a last resort, but it only helps students taking the test after May 18, one of the last days of testing. For all other testers, the retake is the only option.

Besides technical issues, a rumor started circling the Internet claiming that the College Board had set up a Reddit page to catch people looking to cheat on the exams by pretending to be cheaters themselves and then asking students for their exam IDs, which is illegal.

And then there was the issue that is brought up every year and yet never changes—the company claims to be a non-profit, and yet yearly rakes in billions of dollars; in 2017, they had a revenue of \$1.068 billion, and their CEO is a billionaire. Outrage sparked quickly, with #CancelCollegeBoard starting to trend on Twitter shortly after exams started. As always with major corporations, people were calling for a redistribution of their wealth and saying that the organization cares more about money than its students.

So, it appears that AP exams are yet another aspect of normal life to fall under the COVID-19 curse, wherein things that used

to be a fact of life now seem off, uncomfortable, or frustrating. I have noticed many instances of this in the months since school closed. Going on social media feels like a chore, not an escape. Communicating with anyone is a delicate dance, and I have used the phrase “I hope you're doing well in this difficult time” far too much.

I am lucky that I had my own AP exam go off without a hitch, meaning my only concern left around this subject is the fact that a significant part of my college future is determined by an unseen judge using a largely arbitrary grading system. No biggie, right? Many people are not so lucky. On top of technical issues and systemic economic inequality, we have to deal with a global pandemic that is altering just about every fact of life.

At the time of writing this article, my only real feeling is sludgy, begrudging acceptance of this new way of life. But I am determined to have this feeling not be forever. I am determined to celebrate my exam score when I get it, and not let the pandemic take away months of hard work, and to inform future generations of both the facts and the news and the human reactions to it through this article.

Opinion: Billionaires Are the Scum of Our World

Eleanor Martello

Billionaires? Ha! More like people that probably shouldn't exist when you think about it for a couple seconds.

Billionaires. What can I say? Turns out, the term "filthy rich" is more accurate than we thought. Before we dive into the extreme wealth gap in America, the injustice of billionaires as a whole, and bootlickers, let's discuss what it means to be a billionaire.

There is a thought process that claims that the harder you work, the more money you make. So, is it possible that billionaires simply worked billions and billions of dollars harder than we did? No. The only true way to make that crazy amount of money is by exploiting your workers and receiving a ton of.... "help".... from the government.

To add insult to injury, there is no way that billionaires could ever spend the gargantuan amount of money that they have. Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, even said, "The only way that I can see to deploy this much financial resource is by converting my Amazon winnings into space travel. That is basically it." Instead of paying his workers a higher wage or

improving conditions of his warehouses or donating large sums of money, he goes for space travel.

However, Jeff Bezos is not the only person to blame here. Blame the people who implemented the system, rather than those that are benefitting. If billionaires and the top 1% were being taxed fairly, the middle class would get enough room to stretch its legs.

For example, Amazon paid \$0 in federal taxes for the second year in a row in 2019. Instead, they got a \$129 million federal tax refund. If wealthy companies were taxed instead of handed loopholes, we could join the rest of the "developed" world and finally get free health care. We could stand a chance at being first in the world at something cooler than high incarceration rates.

"But" you say, sparkles in your eyes, "Billionaires donate to charity sometimes!" You're right, but one percent of \$1 billion (Bezos, for example, has about \$152.9 billion) is just \$10 million. To you and me that may seem like a lot, but to them, it is a single grain of sand in his embarrassingly large sandbox.

Let's explore this. Say a multi-billionaire such as Jeff Bezos made a donation of \$2 billion. An American household's median net worth is

around \$97,300 a year (as of September 2018), and if a household like that donated the same proportion of their net worth as Jeff Bezos, it would be about \$1,100. While that is very generous, it's nothing to write home about. Billionaires' donations are simply not a good enough reason to ignore the many reasons that their very existence is nauseating.

With all this stacking up, how is it possible that some people fight tooth and nail for the "rights" of billionaires? Could it be that they seek approval from these immoral money-suckers? Or perhaps they have the delusion that they will one day be immoral money-suckers? They are actually statistically much more likely to become homeless. We can't know for sure what empowers people to be as passionate as they are for billionaires who show time and time again that the average person is a blade of grass in a billionaire's lawn.

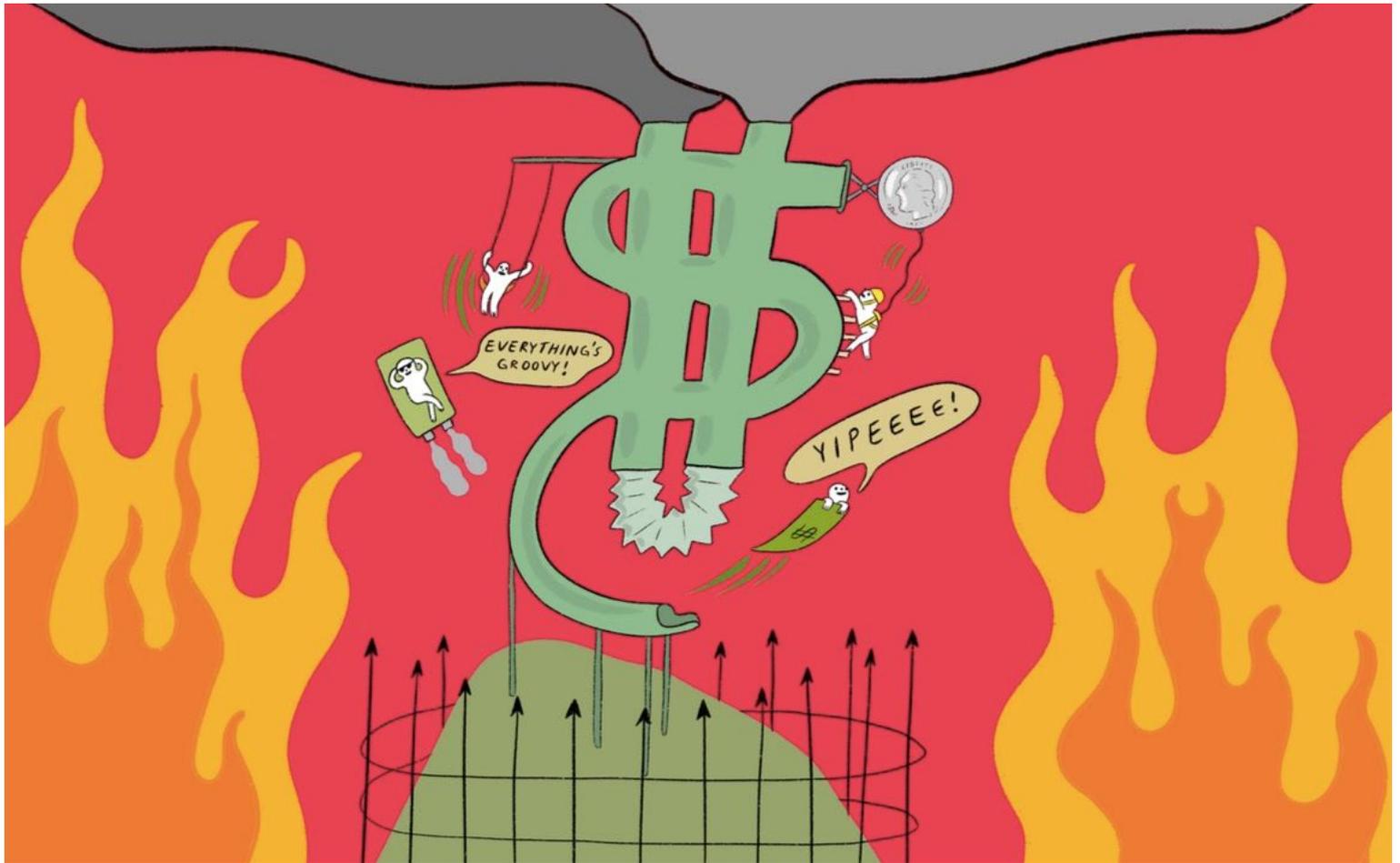
Perhaps it's all about what some folks claim is the "American Dream." This is a beautiful sentiment with absolutely nothing behind it. Our Founding Fathers, as great as they were, wrote oppression of the lower classes into the Declaration of Independence. People say that they'd be disappointed if they looked at us now, and maybe they would be—for giving women, people of

color, and poor people the right to vote. The fact of the matter is that this is going exactly how the founding fathers hoped it would, which is more alarming than good.

Billionaires have grown far too powerful. They have caused

irreparable damage to the economy, and the wealth gap is growing larger and larger. The middle class is being eradicated. We as a country are choosing to ignore that they hurt innocent, working people, people not too different from ourselves. Will we continue to stand idly by,

complicit in the disintegration of workers' rights and the growth of power-hungry companies? Or will we choose to acknowledge the foul play at hand and end billionaires' reign of terror once and for all?



Courtesy of Natalie Horberg



Freshman Auden Stellavato:

“Ok so, first and foremost, this time has made me realize how much of the world around me I don’t fully understand. This time has taught me that I need to learn from what is happening so that I can start to help from an informed position. I also recognize and hope that all of the protests are only the front of a big wave of change. Especially within the police force, our government, and our whole system as a country. The very basis of our country’s “freedom” is founded on violence, individualism, and oppression, and we need to address that in a meaningful way. I also think that we have a leader who spreads and continues this cycle of hate and oppression, so I’m hoping that with his removal, the change we’ve been hoping for can happen on both a micro level and a governmental level.”

Claw Snaps:

“What Are Your Thoughts, Feelings, and Reactions Towards the Current National Unrest?”

Brian McHugh

Sophomore Ella Williams:

“When this all began in March, I wouldn’t have expected to be actively fighting for black lives and LGBTQ+ rights on top of being in a pandemic. I believe the government handled all three very poorly and is only causing harm. I’ve never really thought about losing my life over the color of my skin until this time. I hate the fact that black people have to live in fear every day, and living in a sheltered area caused me to be less educated and prepared than I should’ve been. It’s also horrific that the LGBTQ+ community is being oppressed by the government, especially during pride month. It’s important that we stay strong and continue to fight against discrimination, no matter what the authorities do. Protests definitely need to continue as well as petitions being passed around and donations being made. These movements and protests only work if we are all one unified unit. The progress we’ve made so far is great, but there is much more progress to be made in order to have a large change and impact in America.”



Senior Mateo Childs:

“Honestly I’m happy to see all of the protests and everything, the police and justice system have for so long been harsher and more brutal towards black people in this country. There hasn’t really been a time where institutionalized racism hasn’t existed, and I’m hopeful that all of the protesting will bring forth a time when the murder of a black person isn’t excused because the killer was wearing a badge. I’m proud that people around the country and the world have gotten up and gone out to protest and advocate for change. Of course, during this era of Covid-19, the mass assembly of people is worrying, and I hope the gatherings don’t lead to more death and suffering, but I believe something must be done. Change will not happen on its own.”

Sophomore Molly Whitehead:

“I am embarrassed to be an American. I love living in my home, I have lots of space, and I am very grateful. But I can say that I find this area to be ignorant and I don't enjoy it. There are still so many white kids in our school and our society that say the n-word and show obvious displays of racism. We pretend like it's fine, and nobody says anything, but I am sick of that. The people that sit around and don't say anything are also at fault. It's hard for me to focus the feeling I'm having right now into words, especially when words are not my specialty. I am usually not invested in politics, but I can see right from wrong. What is going on right now in America is wrong. Our President is out playing golf during this pandemic. The Black Lives Matter movement is a strong movement that I believe is good with all my heart. I don't understand what is so difficult about equality. Maybe it is that the federal criminal justice system was built on racism. I hope that this world will change and we can end racism, because it's gotten to the point where everyone is tired—tired of the mistreatment, the injustice, and the violence.”

Junior Axel Roberts:

“I think that the nation has good reason to be unrestful. Systemic racism in general and the destruction of black lives are currently and have always been serious problems in this country. It's not a new problem, it just has never been fixed, and the murder of George Floyd was the final blow for this generation. Police brutality towards people of color is not new; all the way back in 1992 the nation experienced very similar unrest after the police murder of Rodney King. Unfortunately, no change was made because the same thing has been and is happening. It's extremely frustrating, nearly 30 years and it's the same crap. While I think peaceful protesting is the best way forward, it makes sense that these violent riots are happening. It's frustration and desperation. I think Martin Luther King said something like “riots are the tantrums of the unheard” which resonates with me. I can't ever fully understand the frustration and pain that many people of color are experiencing and so I don't want to pretend like I know how anyone feels or like I've experienced the evils of racism because I haven't. I feel really bad that I am so disconnected from these issues and that my day to day life isn't directly affected by this unrest. I'll be honest, as I've started working again and my personal life has

gotten a bit busier, I've heard less and less about the unrest and I haven't done as much as I should to help fight for reform and a solution to the issues of systemic racism and police brutality. I have no excuse other than my isolation from these issues and the media which is partially my fault and I will try and fix that by getting to more protests and donating to more organizations. On a related note, my uncle is a police officer and he is absolutely mortified by the racist and wrong actions of police like the ones who murdered George Floyd or Breonna Taylor. He has pointed out that the methods of the police who killed George Floyd were completely against police training and wrong. He has been in many very tense and dangerous situations but has never killed someone. I may be biased but he is an example of a good cop. I'm not saying that we should give cops the benefit of the doubt, the police system should be under scrutiny and definitely needs reform, I just can't get behind the blanketing of all cops as bad. There aren't two sides to the argument, it is absolutely wrong what these countless racist and abusive cops have done, but there are at least a few good people in the police department. That being said, I completely support defunding the police and reforming and breaking down the police system. It is in many ways flawed.”

Lockdown Banana Bread

Eva Donato

This recipe has kept me moving and grooving throughout these past several months. I have never tasted a more delectable or moist thing in my life. I wish to pass my gift onto everyone during this dark time.

Ingredients:

1. 3 ripe bananas (I usually do about 2 and a half)(up to everyone's banana preferences)
2. ½ cup butter, melted
3. ½ cup sugar
4. 1 egg, beaten
5. 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
6. 1 teaspoon baking soda
7. Sprinkle of salt
8. 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
9. ½ cup (but really 1 whole cup) mini chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Grease the loaf pan.
3. In a large bowl, mash bananas until smooth. I like them to be completely smooth because banana chunks repulse me, but to each their own.
4. Add the melted butter and stir until combined.
5. Add the sugar, egg, vanilla, baking soda, salt, and flour, and stir until the batter is smooth.
6. Add in chocolate chips. The Ghirardelli milk chocolate chips are elite, but any chips will do. Use about half to a full bag of chips. I always use a full bag, and at that point the chocolate begins to overpower the bread.
7. Bake from 50 minutes to an hour. This is a very tricky part. I always set my timer for 45 minutes first. At that point, it is fully cooked on the edges and the top but not in the middle. If you would like it to be especially moist and crumbly, take it out when the center is still soft and batterly but not wet. If you would like it to be more firm, take it out

when the entire loaf is completely cooked (be careful to watch the edges so they do not burn).

8. Attempt to not eat the entire loaf in a day, and fail.

I hope this bread brightens your day!



Courtesy of Eva Donato

Dear Onteora Community,

We would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued support and guidance throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. We are especially grateful for our administrators who have ensured the continuation of *The Talon* through an online platform. Thank you to our readers and dedicated journalists who have supported *The Talon* and made it the dynamic paper that it is. We would be remiss to not thank our teachers and staff for their dedication to their students and continual hard work. Ms. Conroy, we are so appreciative of you and everything you have done to create and support *The Talon*. A final thank you goes to Onteora students, and the community as a whole, for being caring and helpful to one another during this confusing and difficult time.

Sincerely,
The Talon Editorial Staff

Letter From the Editor:

Dear Onteora Community,

It has been my great pleasure to serve you as a journalist and editor for the past two years. While *The Talon* itself was the brainchild of Ben Johansen and Elaine Conroy, I have been dedicated to its success and integrity since its birth.

As I write this from my sofa in quarantine, this is not the way I expected to be saying goodbye to this publication or to my high school career. While *The Talon* family has only existed for two years, it has easily become one of the largest influences in my life, and one of the experiences from high school that I will cherish forever. Working with *The Talon* staff has been incredible, as never before have I worked alongside such creative and impressive individuals. Leading this staff had been humbling, as I have learned just how much talent truly walks the halls of the Onteora High School.

My final year of high school now comes to a close, and I must come to terms with the fact that next year I will not be here to experience the publication process with the people I've come to know and love.

Before I depart for the next chapter of my life, I'd like to explain just how much this newspaper and its staff has impacted me.

There is this common misconception that we have as young children and adults: that our teenage years are supposed to be this cinematic, magical experience. That we are meant to see all these colors and do all these things. We think this way because we watch movies, we read books, and through it all, high school and adolescence are regarded with so much admiration and romanticized so much that we expect our lives to always feel that way.



Courtesy of Miriam Silver-Altman

But the truth is that we are not doing it wrong, we are not missing out or failing somehow, because those portrayals of our lives aren't real. The real high school stories are the ones about fear, where you're standing on the edge of the cliff between childhood and the rest of your life, not knowing how to move or exist in a world that doesn't seem to wait for you. The real high school stories are the ones that make you think, the quiet ones that prove just how fragile and bad we are at living. They are about the beautiful and raw state of human existence, and that feeling when you know you are scared to face your future, but choose to fight for it anyway.

The reality is that we lose so much more than we should have to as teenagers, so much that we almost forget about all the landmarks pointing us to somewhere brighter. It is hard enough to look back on those years and remember all the mistakes you made, all the people you hurt, without adding on the idea that you were supposed to be starring in your own teen movie.

Who we are after high school is not a result of parties or neon lights, it is a result of the people and memories we carry with us. The quiet moments are the only ones that end up mattering. The moments spent crowded around the layout computer late at night, all sharing each other's

breath, the time spent rummaging through Ms. Conroy's cupboard where she hides her snacks, the things about myself I've revealed to these people and no one else: they are what will matter years from now, when I look back on these few years that will be so inconsequential then but that are so incredibly important now, and regard this part of my story with a casual nostalgia we give to strangers on a train.

As someone who has just left the period of life most often romanticized later, I hold a unique perspective on the nature of the world. It is in my hands to decide where I go from here. I get to live that cinematic life if I want to from now on, but the truth is that I haven't missed out on anything, not really. I am here, and I survived, and I think that is the greatest adventure I could have asked for.

Thank you to everyone who has made these years and this publication so incredible, I swear to never forget any of you. And please, do not forget me either.

Kind regards and all the best,
Miriam Silver-Altman, Editor in Chief, *The Talon*

The Talon Editorial Board would like to express its wholehearted agreement with and support of the following statement issued by the Ontario Student Government:

Dear Ontario students,

Over the past weeks, we have all felt pain and anguish in response to the latest in a string of senseless murders that are the result of systemic racism. We are outraged by the wrongful deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, and countless others. Our hearts break for their families and loved ones. It is easy to forget that our country was founded on the original sin of slavery and that racism is at the root of the

American experiment. The current situation is just the latest iteration of a broken system that has existed for over 400 years. We can still love our country, our community, and our police, but we have a responsibility to acknowledge that something is profoundly wrong.

Every American has the right to be treated equally and with dignity, especially by the institutions and people that are meant to protect us. It is a painful reality that the parents of black children in this country must teach their kids to take precautions with the police that white Americans have the privilege of forgoing. We must demand better not only from law enforcement, but from our country's healthcare system. COVID-19's disproportionate impact on marginalized communities has laid bare these racial inequalities that we have long understood but never seen so clearly.

We would like to recognize many of our students, teachers, and alumni for lending your voices to this issue — we marched with many of you at the recent Black Lives Matter demonstration and we were inspired by our community's unified presence. Even as these issues fade from the front pages of our newspapers, we must continue to deepen our understanding of the history and reality of racism in America. If we hope to grow as a nation and as people, it is incumbent upon each of us to educate ourselves, to hold each other accountable, and to make sure that our actions are consistent with our dedication to justice and equality.

Sincerely,
Your Student Government



Courtesy of Miriam Silver Altman

Congratulations Class of 2020!

We have all worked tremendously hard over the past four years, and we should be very proud of our accomplishments. As our time at Onteora draws to a close, we are confronted by some mixed emotions. We miss each other and are sad and frustrated over losing the in-person experience of our senior year, but we are so grateful for the outpouring of love and support from our community. Administration, faculty, community members, law enforcement, and alumni have worked tirelessly to organize a graduation ceremony that is safe but also gives us the recognition we have earned. The caravan-style procession on June 25 will be a celebration of this year's graduates throughout the Onteora Central School district, and we hope to see you all there.

Many of you have heard that beginning June 26, socially distanced graduations of up to 150 people will be allowed in New York. Even if we postponed our ceremony, this attendance restriction would not allow for our parents, loved ones, and teachers to be there for our graduation. Our caravan ceremony has been confirmed and will continue as planned. Teacher and community participation in this year's ceremony is expected to be extremely high, and we can't wait to celebrate alongside everyone.

We hope this is not the last event we are able to organize for our class. As safety regulations shift to allow more people to gather, we are putting in every effort to ensure that we have an event where we are able to see our classmates over the summer. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any ideas, questions, or concerns.

For details on graduation, please visit the school website or the Counseling Center Communication Google Classroom page. We hope you all are as excited about graduation as we are! Stay safe and we'll see you on the 25th!

- Class of 2020 Senior Officers



Courtesy of Onteora Facebook

ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL



2020
Class of



Come celebrate the Class of 2020 by participating in our graduation celebration!

Thursday, June 25

5 P.M. Ceremony on Radio Woodstock 100.1 FM

5:30 P.M. Caravan Procession

Show support by:

- Tuning in to WDST 100.1 FM
- Select a location along our caravan parade route and celebrate our graduates with signs, noise, and cheering as our students pass through the various municipalities of our District.
- Decorate storefronts and areas along our route.



Caravan Parade Route:

- Route 28 to Main Street Phoenicia
- Main Street Phoenicia to Plank Road
- Plank Road to Wittenberg Road
- Wittenberg Road to Tinker Street
- Tinker Street through Village of Woodstock
- Route 375 to Route 28
- Left on Route 28 to Basin Road
- Basin Road to Dike Road
- Dike Road to Route 28A
- Route 28A (BWS) to Route 28



2020 GRADUATION

Where is the Class of 2020 Going?

★ = State University of New York ☆ = out of state ◇ = in state



Kylie Apolito
Samantha Berryann
Mateo Childs
Audrey Delisio
Dylan Diehl
Kiarra Edwards
Stevie Erceg
Melanie Jacobson
Sarah Jones
Mohammad Kabbah
Alexander Loiacano
Isabella Luther
Alyssa Page
Jacob Schouten
Megan Sorbellini
Alisa Thiel
Audrey VanBlarcom
Chasity Wilber
Cole Wilber



Alexis Frasier
(spring semester)
Christina Hamberger
(or SUNY Ulster)
Falcon Krause



Lorelei Davis
Owen Martin



Corey Chun
Megan Davis



Alyssa Roberts
Kaseb Smith-Allgire



Alexander Epstein



Erin Downs
Faith Grant



Benjamin Grinberg
Lucian McMenemy



Patrick Fitzgerald



Jude Foster



Sierra Apolito



Siena Beck



Brian McHugh
Grace Hallinan



Sierra Jenkins
Samuel Joseph-Brewster



Daniel Meisler



Ashley Hillard



Zachary Howenstein



Yasmin Chefridi



Nathan Ross
Eva Leonard



Akanksha Robison



Gianna Stancarone



Aniyah Glenn



Katherine Queen



Ellery Loheide



Loretta Mainieri



Loic Roels
Jason Zheng



Emily Salem



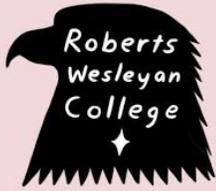
Jazarah Shim



Nicholas Boccio
 Nikolas Crawley
 Amanda Gutierrez
 Kiara Harkless
 Austin McKay
 Bryan Norton
 Sammy Page
 Juwan Powell
 Gabrielle Purdy
 Matthew Purdy
 Mia Quick
 George Reid
 Brandon Reid
 Violet Reid
 Quinn Savatgy
 Grant Shiloh
 Caleb Smith
 Hayley Stokes
 Naomi Teitler
 Kevin Umana Alarcon
 Tobias Warnes



Aaron Loori
 (automotive)
 Emily Morreale
 (culinary)
 Dakota Stange
 Robert VanLeuvan
 (automotive)
 John Auer
 (electrical)



Brooklyn Zeh



Sveinn Frasca
 Kiara Jones
 Taityana McMillian
 Sophia Musialkiewicz



Liam Meechan



Miriam Silver-Altman



Jacob Stern



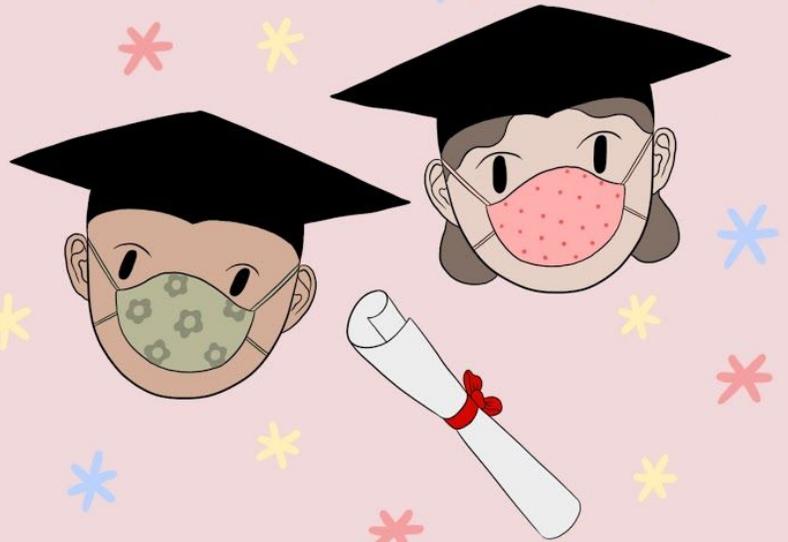
Esme Waldman



Monroe Maki



Ciarra Palmer



All information was accurate at the time of the creation of this illustration. Made on 6/18/20.

Congratulations to the Class of 2020!



Illustrated/Designed by Natalie Harberg 7/20 2020

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Courtesy of Onteora Facebook