



THE  
**Keystone**  
MAGAZINE

8

YOU WILL NEVER  
WALK ALONE

*How Keystone Responded to the  
Coronavirus Pandemic as One Community*

VOLUME 8 / SUMMER 2020 / A PUBLICATION OF  
THE KEYSTONE ACADEMY OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

**THE KEYSTONE MAGAZINE ISSUE 8: "YOU WILL NEVER WALK ALONE"**

A Publication of the Keystone Academy Office of Marketing and Communications

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A young Keystone community member reads a picture book at the Middle School library. It reopened during the return of younger students to campus in early June 2020

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# Pandemic, People, and Possibilities

The Keystone school year 2019/2020 is a tale of two semesters. The first was routine, as much as anything ever is at our school, the second upended. Public health and the coronavirus pandemic ruled our lives from late January. It is fitting, therefore, that this magazine begins with an inspiring essay on how our extended Keystone family came together to ensure that none of us walked alone in these dark and difficult times. And it is fitting, too, that those students who were in many ways most affected by COVID-19, the courageous Class of 2020, form the frame near the end of this publication. They are, indeed, the Class Of Vitality, Independence, Determination. The seniors who are featured at length in essays are merely three of the sixty-eight members of this class, all talented, creative, and substantial young women and men.

In between, you will read of so much else that has happened and been done here in the past twelve months. Extraordinary visitors and colleagues, telling us of apes and our environment, spacecraft design and our stars, unusual universities and our learning. Our graduates feature strongly, for the first time, and their news and exploits are glad but, in one awful case, sad. We still mourn the passing of John-son Li. Remarkable teachers are celebrated, and remarkable exploits by our students chronicled. The news moves from arts to athletics to activism, from new mascots to new networks, and much else.

But it is the pandemic and our response to it that dominates, as it should. Here are some thoughts that I shared with the Class of 2020 on their long-awaited graduation day, August 22. For me, these thoughts raise powerful and provocative questions:

There have been many plagues and pandemics in the past century, and further back – a surprising number, as researchers are suddenly realizing. Humans have survived them. Our economic and social systems have survived them. This pandemic is deadly for some, of course it is life taking, and we should not trivialize and must not forget that, but the vast majority of us will survive and we might just be able to make more of our lives afterwards, and that’s life making.

Here are two reasons why it is unhelpful to think of this pandemic as unprecedented. First, it makes us feel powerless. Yet, we have scientific, medical, economic, and other resources that are more powerful than ever before to deal with such events. Let’s make more of these, collectively, within and across nations. Help build a world that does that in your future.

Second, it reinforces our blindness to, or disregard for, the fact that significant numbers of our fellow humans habitually lead their lives surrounded and infected by deadly diseases, and without schooling. Viral death and suspended schooling are completely precedented for many millions: it is a dismal part of their daily lives. This pandemic has revealed that starkly. We should not trivialize and must not forget that. Let’s make more for and of the lives of the disadvantaged. Help build a world that does that in your future.

At Keystone, we are playing our part in helping to build that world.

Throughout that second semester, a damaging and, for some, deadly time, I sent a Sunday poem to the students and employees of Keystone. I find solace in poetry. I turn to poetry for inspiration and upliftment. Here’s a poem that I sent in early February:

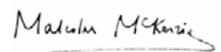
## Choices

by Tess Gallagher

I go to the mountain side  
of the house to cut saplings,  
and clear a view to snow  
on the mountain. But when I look up,  
saw in hand, I see a nest clutched in  
the uppermost branches.  
I don’t cut that one.  
I don’t cut the others either.  
Suddenly, in every tree,  
an unseen nest  
where a mountain  
would be.

What a simple yet endlessly powerful thought is enshrined here. How often do we set out to do something that seems sensible, and then change our plan because our alertness and flexibility shows us something more useful, more beautiful, more freeing? Not enough, in my experience.

This pandemic offers us that possibility, that choice. This magazine demonstrates some of the ways in which we have exercised those choices.



Head of School  
Keystone Academy

Editor's Note

# Are You a Candlelight or a Raging Fire?



We are accustomed to witnessing new life appear as springtime dawns. We were not prepared that this new decade would usher in such dramatic change.

The coronavirus pandemic has defined 2020: the impact of crisis has swept through everything, as if dark rainclouds had descended or hurricane left devastation in its wake. The virus has shaken the world, and our own small lives; nations try to recalibrate from such an earthquake, and on an individual level, people try to retain balance.

This year, we have been thrust into situations that remind us what we have taken for granted: the value of our health, the beauty of simple contentedness, and the critical coexistence between us and the environment. We rarely ponder over these matters, but the pandemic has brought their value front and center.

Renowned science fiction writer Liu Cixin wrote in his novella *The Wandering Earth*: “At first, nobody cared about this disaster—it seemed like a wildfire, a drought, the extinction of a species, the disappearance of a city—until they were closely bound up with it.”

What we would only see in fiction has now become a reality.

We have all encountered gripping stories of survival, or felt touched by ordinary people and their inspirational acts of courage or charity. Such moments made us hopeful for a future that was still worth expecting. Yet, as another morning arrived, we are shocked by the unabated spread of the coronavirus, the precipitous rise in casualty figures, violent riots and other conflicts. Such reports broke our hearts and filled us with despair. In the face of such calamity, displaying happiness was seen as imprudent; sharing well-wishes became too superficial and, at times, reckless.

This crisis has warned us that what matters for humankind is often hidden and difficult to identify. Like the air that keeps us alive, what we need most can be difficult to perceive.

After the world has been brought to its knees, how should we live in the “new normal”? In the face of adversity, what attitudes and beliefs should we adopt to reshape our realities? What responsibilities do we, as an educational institution, have so our community can improve their family life, society, and the environment? How should we go beyond the boundaries of nations, languages, and cultures to re-learn the nature and interdependence of human development?

In this edition of *The Keystone Magazine*, titled “You Will Never Walk Alone: How Keystone Responded to the Coronavirus Pandemic as One Community”, we share stories from our students, parents, and teachers to record the unforgettable experiences we have shared in the months following the pandemic.

Humankind has weathered numerous catastrophes, plagues, and wars of various scales; as our Head of School, Mr. Malcolm McKenzie shared in his recent graduation ceremony address, these are, in fact, not unprecedented times. Everything we are experiencing now has happened before, to some degree. However, it is still meaningful to listen, to write, to preserve stories, and thoughts amid crises and disasters.

We believe that this edition of *The Keystone Magazine* will not only provide a substantial and authentic witness to the past that we have faced, but also offer guidance for everyone to discover, understand, and reshape a new world that is coming.

We hope that the stories and the theme of this issue will resonate strongly with you—because life is vulnerable and variable; it is full of twists and turns. Yet, if we remain resolute, courageous, and wise enough, we can find new possibilities and richer experiences. This offers spiritual freedom and the greatest opportunity for growth.

In the fictional work *The Plague* by the French philosopher and journalist Albert Camus, the protagonist Dr. Bernard Rieux documents his thoughts on the evil of the crippling pestilence so that future generations can recall the injustice, outrage, and lessons during this calamity. When the plague subsides, Dr. Rieux does not feel relieved or cheerful like the people around him.

“He knew that the tale he had to tell could not be one of a final victory. It could be only the record of what had to be done, and what assuredly would have to be done again in the never-ending fight against terror and its relentless onslaughts, despite their personal afflictions, by all who, while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilences, strive their utmost to be healers.”

Even though each one of us is seemingly a minor witness to the tremendous crisis of the pandemic, our unique perspectives and memories still make up valuable fragments of this pivotal event. We can combine our experiences into a “common memory.” Our collective experiences remain part of history forever.

As German philosopher Karl Jaspers emphasized, “Each of us has an inescapable responsibility to humankind as a whole.” If people will not re-examine their experiences, it will be impossible for communities, nations, and the entire world to achieve a collective reflection. Remember: our individual experiences are always precious and worth cherishing, regardless of how limited our power may be.

That same power drives our spiritual growth, and it often comes from the moments that we preserve and refuse to forget.

It is better to face adversities, challenges, and disasters in life than turn away from them. The air that keeps us alive may extinguish a candlelight, but it can turn the same flame into a raging fire.

Are you a candlelight or a raging fire?



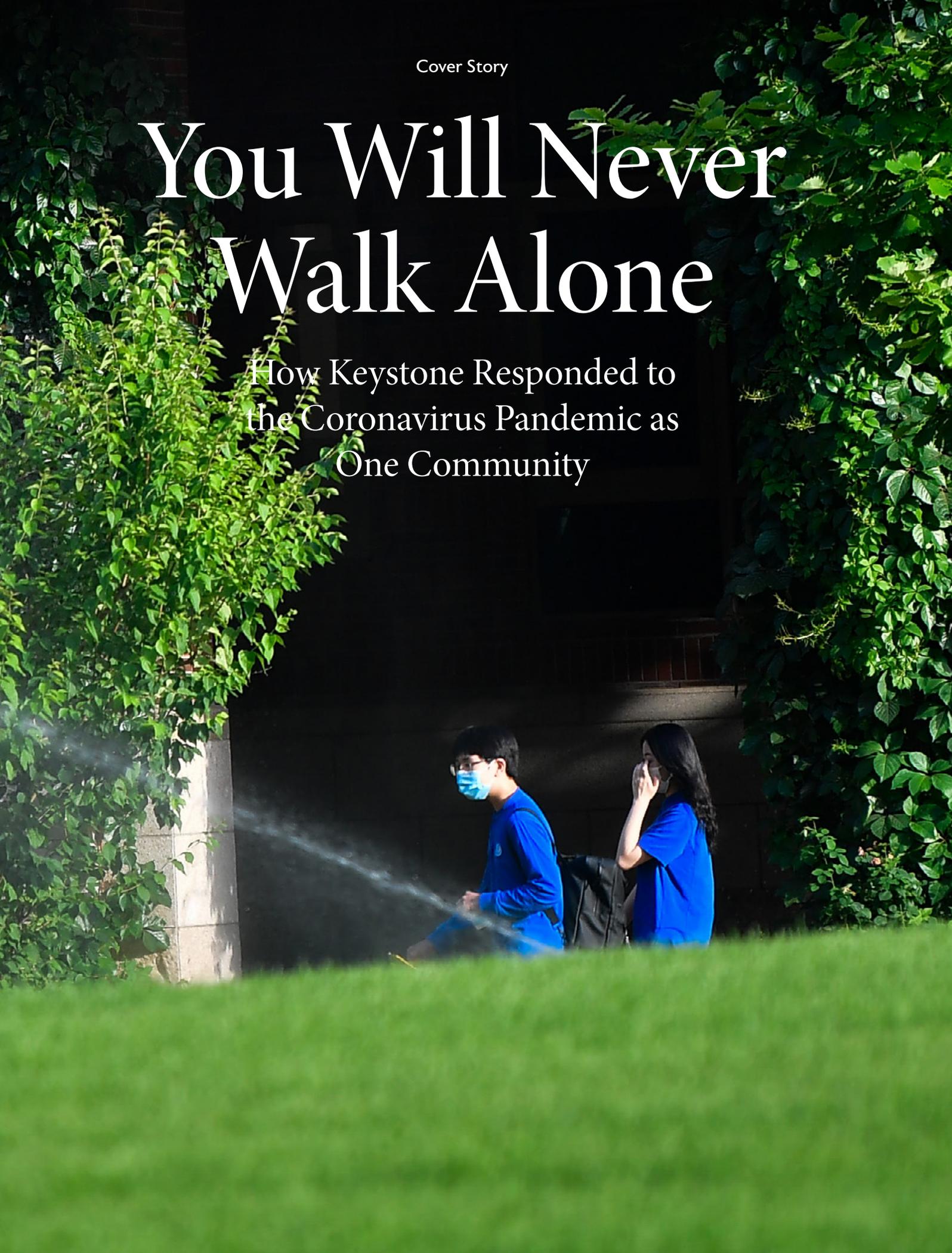
*Sabrina Liu*

Sabrina Liu  
Director of Marketing and Communications  
Keystone Academy

Cover Story

# You Will Never Walk Alone

How Keystone Responded to  
the Coronavirus Pandemic as  
One Community





Everyone began the new year with the appalling news of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which stopped the world in its tracks and changed our lives in many ways.

Although Keystone Academy temporarily closed its campus for four months in response to the impact of the pandemic in China, the school remained open and moved classes to digital platforms. Alongside this online learning approach, Keystone employees endeavored to run the school and its residential community normally. Faculty and non-teaching staff collaborated despite working from home or across different time zones. School leaders who were in Beijing monitored the situation closely with the government authorities and established new protocols to ensure the health and safety of residential families and the smooth operation of the online learning program.

Meanwhile, community members—from students and families to teachers and staff—have demonstrated generosity through numerous charitable initiatives and acts of service for front-line medical staff and the many others impacted by the pandemic, in China and abroad.

In this special feature, we chronicle the actions of the Keystone community, and how it has risen together in the face of adversity.

1  
After a four-month online learning program, Keystone students returned to a "cooler campus" but a "warmer school"

2  
The Keystone Health Center received over 15,000 masks donated by student Cao Junyi (middle) and his family



## A Reason to Survive

The people of Wuhan, like many others in China, were all set to usher in the Year of the Rat. Red lanterns decorated neighborhoods and major public plazas were jam-packed with locals who were buying last-minute holiday fare. Festive melodies mixed with the chatter and excitement of people in supermarkets. Families had gotten together for the Spring Festival, except that many celebrations did not happen at all.

The authorities in Wuhan locked the metropolis down on January 23, 2020 in an attempt to contain the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, then known as the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak, sending everyone into a state of confusion. The discordant sounds that previously filled the streets faded to a deafening silence, unless an ambulance sounded its horn or a speeding police car passed by.

As the health crisis unfolded, many people began mobilizing support for the communities impacted by the outbreak in China. Keystone community member Frances Yang, who was in Wuhan at the time of the lockdown, recounts stories of survival and hope in the city.



“At a time of sorrow or despair, we slowly wondered, ‘What should we do?’” Ms. Yang says.

Many in Keystone know Ms. Yang as one of the school’s Board of Trustees. In addition, she and her husband leveraged their resources to help communities. At first, Ms. Yang arranged food deliveries to a hospital. She later helped with the logistics of delivering supplies from donors across the country to various medical centers in the city. Her husband, meanwhile, help turn school campuses into makeshift quarantine centers and hotel rooms into temporary quarters for medical responders.

Ms. Yang recognized the psychological trauma brought about by the pandemic, so she organized online counseling sessions with the help of teachers, psychologists, and counselors from a research society.

“I ask myself the reason why we did so much during this time,” she says. “A friend put it very well when he said that only if he gets up and works hard every day can he feel a sense of normalcy. His words sum up my feelings. And so, I got up every day, started making phone calls, and delivered items to various hospitals. It made me feel useful and gave me a reason to survive. Otherwise, I would have been overwhelmed by the news every day.”

As the outbreak escalated during the holiday, government authorities ordered schools to delay reopening and imposed lockdowns on various areas in Hubei, and later across the country.

At Keystone, the school’s Health Center alerted the community of a new strain of pneumonia in Wuhan and advised the staff to reconsider traveling during the holiday. School leaders later decided to extend the closure of the campus following government orders. They also formed three task forces to monitor the outbreak closely with the authorities. The Academic Committee, composed of academic division heads and deputies and the Innovative Learning and Information Technology (IT) teams, implemented the online learning program for students. The Operations Committee dealt with running vital school functions, while the Resident Volunteer Committee ensured smooth communication about implementing residential guidelines on campus, as well as collecting feedback from resident families and supporting non-resident families.

Head of School Malcolm McKenzie guided the community throughout the crisis through his frequent and reassuring communications about the school’s new health and safety

protocols, advice to staff and families, and temporary changes to the methods of teaching. He also tapped into the power of literature, sending weekly poems with themes of hope and resilience to families and employees.

The Health Center's former medical director, Dr. Eric Meng, who was barely a month into his new position when the outbreak reached the capital, consistently provided medical bulletins to the community where he balanced scientific information about the coronavirus with practical advice and preventive measures. Dr. Meng has extensive experience in managing health crises as he was a front-line medical worker in recent calamities in China, including the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003 and the Sichuan earthquake in 2008.

"I witnessed another violent outbreak of an infectious disease that disrupted the normal functioning of society," Dr. Meng says. "But I felt again that in the face of disasters, when we work together toward common goals, we can overcome difficulties."

#### **No Ordinary People**

Dr. Meng and the Keystone Health Center team tried to procure additional medical supplies such as masks and disinfectants, as the school's reserves could not meet the needs of the staff on duty during the winter vacation. The items, however, had become scarce and left the team "fretfully searching for suppliers" until "unexpected support" arrived.

"There was a student who gave us his stock of pollution masks, and the Keystone Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) also brought 400 KF94 face masks for our teachers," Dr. Meng shares. "A parent abroad donated 1,000 surgical masks and 100 N95 masks. She refused our payment and insisted that this was her 'small contribution' to the community."

On the part of the PTA, Keystone parent Sharon Wei launched fundraisers. She and her colleagues found a medical device company in Beijing that sold the 400 KF94 masks that they donated to the Keystone Health Center.

Alongside that, Ms. Wei tried to deliver medical supplies to the front-line responders in Hubei through her nonprofit Morning Star Public Welfare Institute. In mid-February, she delivered 500 sets of goggles and protective clothing to traffic police officers stationed at checkpoints in Huanggang, one of the cities hardest hit by the outbreak. She also endeavored to send 10,000 surgical masks to a hospital in the province of Jiangxi, only to find out that the items she procured were counterfeit. Fortunately, she was able to recover her payment from the manufacturer.

Through WeChat groups, Ms. Wei mobilized people to raise funds to purchase 23 tons of medical alcohol from a factory in Anhui Province. On learning about the efforts of Ms. Wei and the people supporting her initiative, the factory owners found them a driver to transport the shipment between Jiangxi and Hubei.

Since many cities in Hubei were locked down, supply vehicles headed to the province needed clearance as they would be quarantined before they could return to their point of origin. Ms. Wei says the driver managed to travel across 3,000 kilometers and move between 15 different cities in two days to deliver the donations to several hospitals.

"It was hard to stop for even a moment," Ms. Wei says. "But he got all the donations delivered so people felt at ease. It really moved us. In the pandemic, it is always the people who seem to be the most ordinary who give the biggest impact."

At the time of publication, the Keystone PTA has raised RMB 115,000 in cash donations to buy masks and disinfectants for hospitals in Hubei. Meanwhile, the Keystone Health Center has received more than 25,000 face masks of different types, 500 face shields, and around 250 boxes of hand sanitizers and alcohol pads, from donors including the Keystone Parent Soccer Club and a number of families and students.

## Viral Calls for Support

Groups of Keystone students in China and abroad utilized the power of social media to rally support for their charitable initiatives. During her self-isolation period in Beijing, eleventh grader Angela Wang launched a massive fundraiser, together with her friend Charlie He from the International Department of the Experimental High School Attached to Beijing Normal University.



3

3  
Several Keystone students volunteered for fundraisers and online teaching during the pandemic. They include (left to right, first row): Michael Li, Eva Yuan, Selina Ma, Martin Chen, Brady Ding, (second row) Harry Han, Tori Gu, Iris Zhang, Kelly Yang, Elva Han, (third row) Virgil Jin, Ethan Han, Tony Chen, Medaly Retamozo, Cindy Hu, (fourth row) Steve Liu, Leo Lyu, Derrick Zhang, Jack He, Tina Chen.

The duo collected more than RMB 58,000 in one week, using the money to purchase disinfectants and air purifiers for three hospitals in Hubei. They also tapped into their social networks to find suppliers and people who could help them get to grips with logistical bottlenecks. The students were surprised to receive numerous responses and donations from friends, family members, and even people whom they had never met. Some of their contacts also persuaded the duo to form a proper organization to facilitate their fundraising efforts and get guidance from a third party. They heeded the advice and initiated the Yuema Fund Project, a foundation that was listed by Charity in China and published on the website of Lingshan Charity Foundation, the public fundraising platform designated by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs.

The duo held a second fundraiser under the foundation banner and raised RMB 171,000 in three weeks, exceeding their initial target by RMB 30,000. By the end of February, they were able to send their donations of food supplies, medical items, protective equipment, and personal hygiene products to the staff of Xiannüshan Community Health Center in the city of Hanchuan in eastern Hebei.

For Angela, everyone had two choices during the disorienting period: to watch the news and see the developments unfold, or to find ways to make a positive contribution.

“I chose the latter because I know we will succeed as long as we put in effort and try our best, no matter how hopeless the situation is,” Angela says. “I have been involved in a few community service activities before, but this situation completely changed my attitude towards service. Even after this pandemic, I will continue to participate in aid operations. I will refuse to be an indifferent bystander.”

At the same time, several student organizations at Keystone banded together to form the Keystone Assistance Project for COVID-19 Committee, where they organized fundraisers and coordinated the service actions of their peers. From late February to mid-March, the student-led committee and the PTA organized four projects and raked in over RMB 124,500, which they used to procure daily necessities and crucial health supplies for several medical facilities and their staff in Hubei.

Literature Playhouse, a club formed by the Keystone Office of Marketing and Communications, organized an online poetry recital in March with eleven students. The event collected a total of RMB 9,400 from ticket sales, which the club donated to the student-led committee.

As the pandemic epicenter shifted from China to Europe, and then to North America, student leaders redirected their efforts to the affected communities in those continents through the Keystone alumni network. The committee, through Secondary School Student Council representatives Kate Lei and George Qiao, connected with Cindy Liang, Leo Ma, and Jason Wang from the Class of 2019 to facilitate the delivery of donations from the Keystone community.

Cindy, a first-year student at Queen’s University in Ontario, Canada, was able to deliver 3,650 surgical masks from China to the front-line medical workers of Kingston Health Sciences Centre. University of Minnesota freshman Leo sent 1,800 medical masks to the charity People Serving People. Meanwhile, Jason shared a total of 3,840 medical and N95 masks with the faculty and staff of Colgate University in New York, where he is a first-year student.

In a similar initiative, tenth grader Derrick Zhang procured 1,500 surgical masks from his separate fundraiser drive. He sent the donations to a school community in Windham, New Hampshire in the United States, where he used to be a student. He originally planned on a larger project but had to scale it down due to difficulties in sending items to the United States from China. In the end, he viewed his endeavor as an enriching experience, saying his efforts allowed him to think outside the box and find new solutions to problems.

4





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4

Cindy Liang from the Class of 2019 worked with her Keystone peers to deliver 3,650 masks from China to a front-line hospital staff in Ontario, Canada

5

Students juggled learning virtually with volunteering remotely—and they succeeded

### Online Interactions, Real-Life Connections

Other Keystone students who saw the sweeping impact of the pandemic on education, especially on children in hard-hit areas, endeavored to share their resources through volunteering remotely. They juggled their initiatives with the demands of the online learning program at Keystone—and succeeded.

A group of eighth graders from the class of Individuals and Societies (I&S) teacher Celina Li became teachers themselves after joining an educational program launched by Keystone parent Cindy Huang to provide virtual English lessons to second graders in Wuhan from mid-February.

Under the program, the participating Keystone students, including Mandy Zhao, took turns in delivering online classes during their lunch break. Mandy saw how the program al-

lowed them to understand the situation of their peers living in the center of the health crisis. She also noticed how the younger children gradually became more optimistic during the course.

“My student is younger than me, so his English ability isn’t that good yet,” Mandy says. “So it takes us a long time explaining our lessons. However, we learned to be patient so he can memorize the words. And aside from this, I tell him we will always be with them to overcome the difficulties they face there.”

In March, ninth grader Ella Jiang volunteered for an online platform initiated by five peers from another international school in Beijing to teach English to Wuhanese youth. Ella

experienced the challenges of teaching virtually herself so she sought guidance from her advisor, Physical Education teacher Aki Mustonen.

Mr. Mustonen, who learned about Ella's initiative upon asking how she managed classwork, felt very proud of his advisee and how she embodied the Keystone value of compassion.

"This volunteer work will benefit Ella in numerous ways moving forward," he says. "The fact that she has taken the initiative in the middle of such difficult times goes to show the caring personality she has and how she wants to make a positive impact in other people's lives. This is a special experience and the start of a lifelong journey for Ella, and something that she will further discover along the way."

In April, the "Spring Action" group of eleven Keystone Secondary students organized virtual sessions to tutor students from the Xi Mingyi and Dong Mingyi primary schools in Henan province. This was the first time that the group conducted remote teaching, as they had had class exchanges with those schools in previous years.

Also in the same month, two Keystone juniors partnered with a school in South America to teach English to students who had inadequate access to the internet. Medaly Cardenas Retamozo, who stayed in her home country of Peru during the pandemic, worked with her Beijing-based classmate Tori Gu on establishing a remote teaching system at the school to help students develop their language skills.

Tori finds comfort in seeing their program in action despite the difficulties in setting it up remotely and the 13-hour time difference. Medaly, meanwhile, says the initiative was her way of giving back to her community "what I was lucky enough to have."

#### A "Wealth of Life"

Director of Service Learning Zadok Huang, who supervised the Spring Action group, and Dean of Students Kelli Sanchez find it incredible and reaffirming that many Keystone students have stretched themselves and found ways to help their peers locally and globally. Mrs. Sanchez says "it's truly beautiful [to see] where their minds go in a time like this," and highlights how Keystone's five shared values have provided the community with a perspective to examine the crisis.

"It is easy to fall into the trap of negativity, but our students proved they did the opposite and endeavored to bring more positivity into the world," she says. "There is the more individual approach, using our value of wisdom: 'How will they continue their learning?' But then you think further—what do our values of justice and compassion mean in a situation like this? 'We have so much at Keystone, are we in a position to help others?' 'How do we do that while keeping our own community safe?' Examining all of this through the lens of our shared values, and then acting accordingly, led to deep and meaningful learning."

Mr. Huang commends the students for standing up, taking the initiative, and responding to the challenges in positive ways.

"Our children sought to aid those people most affected and in need," he adds, "and all of this work is substantial. Not only has it provided a source of charity for the broader community, but it has also reinforced a commitment to serve within ours. This commitment is close to our hearts."

Ms. Frances Yang, meanwhile, considers the outpouring of support and the stories of resilience in Wuhan and Hubei "a wealth of life."

One of the donors who reached out to her was the former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. Aside from supplies, Prime Minister Hatoyama donated a calligraphy work and painting (pictured below). This surprised Ms. Yang.

"I was thinking, 'The hospital is so messy now that these donations may be set aside or disappear after the pandemic.' But then I realized that the crisis will end and leave an unforgettable impact and lasting trauma on the entire population of Wuhan. Medical supplies will soon dry up, but these works of art represent the hope of many people for Wuhan. These works become the memory of a city."

6



Ms. Yang plans to build a memorial in her school in Wuhan so the future generation will be reminded of how the city rose above adversities. But as the threat of the pandemic remains, she encourages everyone to take action, no matter how little or insignificant it may seem.

“We can do something meaningful, such as giving spiritual encouragement, which may be more important. I also think the creativity of children is much broader than ours. They can really do something for this city and medical staff and our teachers should listen to what our students aim to do,” Ms. Yang adds.

She also believes the epidemic is an opportunity for communities to reevaluate their values and identify their motivations for doing good.

“Your dedication comes from the heart, not from the slogans that you hear people say every day. When adversity comes, what do you do and how do you face them? Some people want to act, but complain when they encounter difficulties along the way. We should be cultivating people who do good for society and for others, rather than the ones who just say slogans after disasters happen.”

### Class Act

According to UNESCO, as many as 1.58 billion pre-primary to tertiary students around the globe were affected by country-wide school closures in the middle of April, during the height of the pandemic in the first half of 2020. In China, the number reached 278 million—or its entire student population.

To address the disruption in education, the Chinese Ministry of Education launched an online learning platform and broadcast primary school classes on public television, while many schools in the country adopted distance and digital learning approaches. Educational institutions that resorted to using the internet and mobile applications have been taken aback by technological limitations and time zone differences.

The response to this “new normal” has been mixed, with many parents all over the world venting on social media and saying online learning programs are “too tiring and frustrating.” They also voice concerns about the adverse effects of too much screen time on children’s health. Meanwhile, some international school teachers have noted how they struggled with “hidden workloads,” technological hurdles, and student accountability issues while ensuring quality learning still takes place.



7



8

6  
*Shan chuan yi yu fengyue  
tong tian* (“Wherever we  
are, we share the same  
moon and sky”)

Former Japanese Prime  
Minister Yukio Hatoyama  
wrote this calligraphic work  
and dedicated it to the  
front-line medical workers  
in Wuhan

7 8  
Students turned to art  
to express their feelings  
during the pandemic, and  
to raise funds for charity.  
The artworks include *Leaves  
from the Core*, a collection  
of graphic novels by  
Grade 9 students, and the  
postcards drawn by Grade  
10 students Kelly Yang and  
Sisley Wu

Head of School Malcolm McKenzie called the online learning program happening across the globe the “largest and longest experiment [of its kind] in the history of education” and an “opportunity that we did not anticipate.” Keystone’s program, which ran in two phases during the second semester of the academic year 2019–2020, followed the orders of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission. Phase 1 was based on reviewing and consolidating previously learned knowledge.

“Students have been doing inquiry- and research-based learning. When they learn independently, they will produce some knowledge points and encounter new methods of understanding,” Associate Head of School and Dean of Curriculum Lili Jia says. “This is not to say that we are taking a new class, but that new knowledge will be generated naturally in the process.”

Many Keystone educators such as Chinese Language and Literature (CLL) teacher Jinghui Du looked at the first phase of the program as a chance for her students to reflect deeply on the pandemic. Ninth-grade CLL teachers set up a special course where classes analyzed *The Plague* by the French-Algerian novelist Albert Camus. In a reading guide, Ms. Du referenced her classes’ previous literary lessons regarding the “shackles of life,” which students had summarized as “poverty, disease, environment, ideas, and politics.”

Saying she felt “in a state of war every day,” Ms. Du adjusted the content of her instruction to match the developments in the health crisis. This encouraged students to participate in the discussions, especially those who paid little attention to the news coverage of the pandemic. Ms. Du noted the growth and the change in the disposition of her students since starting these literary activities.

“It is necessary to encourage students because they are not on the sidelines of this event. If you don’t guide them and let them stay at home, it will become a ‘new disaster,’” she declared.

The entire tenth-grade level, on the other hand, engaged in the Keystone United Nations (KUN), a demanding academic task that has become even more challenging as it was completely delivered virtually. The KUN is an annual interdisciplinary unit (IDU) showcase of the I&S and Mathematics Departments.

A total of 92 students joined the KUN’s seven interrelated forums on global peace and progress. I&S teacher Jeffery Heitmann says the online design of the KUN turned out to “work exceptionally well.” Teachers were able to concentrate on their forum assignments and help their students with their topics. He also noted how the students exhibited

“understanding, kindness, and hope for a better future” during the sessions.

I&S teacher Dr. Deborah Smith Johnston enjoyed how students articulated the ways they could positively change the world, “and they did exactly this in their committees.”

“In this current global crisis, there is a need for people to stand up and inspire their peers to act,” Dr. Johnston adds. “It was inspiring to see young people take on issues of global importance, using academic language to demonstrate why they were significant, why action is needed, and how perspective and quantitative analysis mattered in the determining of policy. What a gift we have been given!”

### **A Moment of Catharsis**

Keystone took a week break from online instruction in late March, giving the community a brief respite from the onerous start of the semester. It was also a time to observe the Tomb Sweeping Festival and remember the people who had suffered from the pandemic. In a letter he sent before the break, Mr. McKenzie called on everyone to “build on the best that we have demonstrated so powerfully and generously since early February” to grow as individuals and as a community.

The next phase of the online learning program, which became more diverse, robust, and systematic, promoted learning in exciting ways and gave students a platform for creative expression. In the Primary School, the online classes of Chinese Visual Arts teachers Tao Sun and Nan Lu blossomed with photographs of flowers and vivid vistas taken by their third graders.

Mr. Sun says it helped that their homework prompt was simple: go outside in their garden and capture the signs of spring. He adds that not only did the assignment help children enjoy the beauty of nature when the situation became better in April, it also allowed them to exercise the new skills they had acquired during the online learning period. The same students took delight in the growth of their plants in the Keystone garden, which they remotely cultivated with the help of their Science teachers.

Primary School Drama teachers De Anne Dubin and Elizabeth Steck and their second graders celebrated their first virtual lesson in April with special guests, the Singing Puppets. The children had made these puppets out of socks or stuffed toys. Ms. Dubin says they stepped up the joint English and Drama classes by writing “Online Together”, a song about the live lesson class rules.



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These blossoms were taken by third grade Chinese Visual Arts students for a simple assignment: go to their gardens and capture the signs of spring

The second phase of the program provided catharsis to many Secondary School students as they turned to the arts and literature to release their emotions or express their reflections during the self-isolation and quarantine periods. Sixth graders compiled poems of hope and resilience, which they composed for their CLL classes. They later sent the anthology to the weary workers at a hospital in Wuhan. CLL teachers Emily Huang and Zoe Zu informed the students that the doctors and nurses were deeply moved by the poems and commended them for their literary talents.

Meanwhile, eighth graders documented their pandemic experiences through poetry, journals, and photography. The whole level published the collections in a booklet series for an interdisciplinary unit showcase of the CLL and Design classes with teachers Shujuan Cao, Xinyu Fu, La Li, Liangfang Li, Jie Ren, Mark Hobbs, Eider Suso, and Jamie Twinney.

The ninth graders studying Visual Arts with teacher Martina O'Connor also completed a visual novel on the challenges that teenagers faced during the period. The novel, which contained short chapters digitally drawn by the students, was sold for charitable purposes.

Twelfth graders under the DP (Diploma Programme) Visual Arts course released their portfolios, which also featured works inspired by the pandemic. Their teacher Bolsyn Urmuzov raved about the craftsmanship, resourcefulness, and diligence of the students, saying the “extreme [but] transformative environment has truly challenged our young artists.”

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Other Secondary School students turned to music to relay their messages of hope and inspiration. In April, ninth graders Joey Cheng, Victor Ding, Yeung Liu, Arvin Wang, Dlency Zheng, Vicky Zhou, and their tenth-grade peers Andrew Li, Yutong Wen, Chloe Xu, and Eric Zhu released “Tomorrow Will Be Better,” a track that they produced and wrote. Their music teacher Jasmine Yang says the song allowed the students to “express gratitude to and admiration for the front-line medical staff in the battle against the pandemic, and also their longing for a better future.” The song can be viewed on the video streaming site Bilibili. Dlency and her tenth-grade friend Ella Zhu also released the song “I Know I Can” with five other student singers from across China. The song, which conveys a message of hope and love amid the pandemic, became part of the *Red Star Youth No. 1* album produced by the global record label Taihe Music Group.

The impressive Keystone Capstone Project presentations, held in May, were entirely done online for the first time since they started in 2016. The tenth graders who engaged in the KUN in March presented a wholly different but equally rigorous project that marked the end of their China and the World program and the Middle Years Programme (MYP).

Chinese teachers Toby Huang and Cara Li and their colleagues guided students during the entire course and provided them with a wealth of online resources. Mr. Huang adds that the pandemic allowed the student presenters to reflect deeply on the concepts of “a global village and shared human destiny.”

### The Value of a Community

“I keep on saying that school is open even though the campus is closed,” Mr. McKenzie wrote in one of his first letters to the community since the onset of the pandemic. “That is true, and much learning is indeed occurring. Crises sometimes bring out the worst in people, but often they bring out the best. Let’s make sure that we show our best.”

Mr. McKenzie’s messages have become a resounding call for everyone to continue looking at the crisis from a perspective of growth while remaining conscious of the suffering of others.

The online learning program and temporary campus closure, which Director of Innovative Learning Sandra Chow initially described as “uncharted territory,” challenged Keystone leaders, teachers, staff, and families. Running the school with a limited workforce was another test for many school administrators and non-teaching personnel who worked from home for more than three months. Alongside these, school leaders ensured that each community member living on campus and beyond was safe, and assisted those affected by the crisis. Despite limitations, setbacks, and surprises, Keystone has gone a long way in navigating that uncharted territory.

“It’s been amazing to see how all the different pieces have worked together,” Ms. Chow remarks, reflecting on how the entire Keystone workforce collaborated in those five grueling months. She appreciates how her peers have risen to the occasion by upskilling themselves and training others who needed to learn new remote teaching platforms. This, she says, built a “huge community” that made everyone feel they were never alone.

Besides online learning, the school has consistently provided families with virtual counseling and parenting suggestions through the Center for Student Development (CSD), as counselors have tried to find ways to mitigate the debilitating effects of the self-isolation period. They also tried to address the overwhelming curricular workload on the emotional and mental wellbeing of students. The academic division heads say they have all noticed these issues in the children, and observed how they yearned to be together with friends and teachers.

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Head of School Malcolm McKenzie invited ninth graders to write him their thoughts about returning to school. He referenced several of them in a letter he sent to the community in May 2020.

“Students had to have more self-management and they had to take more responsibility for their own learning,” Head of Middle School Dr. Maureen McCoy says. “Especially when there wasn’t a live class, all students had to practice the self-discipline of doing work on their own schedules. Some thrived. Others struggled.”

Head of High School Dr. Diana Martelly also shares that some of the students felt they had fewer distractions and discovered they were good as independent learners. “But we do have a few students who struggled and really lost their way,” she adds. “The socializing component has been a challenge for most of our students.”

“I think that reflects society in general: different approaches are better for different reasons,” Head of Primary School Catherine Copeland says. “Students were saddened to know they could not come back to school because we all recognize that being together, being in a community, and being with friends and teachers is far preferable.”

Alongside the online learning program headed by the special Academic Committee, the Operations and Resident Volunteer Committees established systems to run the school normally. The Operations team, which included Associate Head of School Lili Jia, former Chief Operations Officer Dennis Guo, Director of Facilities Jeremy He, and Security Manager Alex Mao, worked closely with the government authorities, especially during campus inspections by the government authorities in March and April, and ensured the readiness of health and safety measures and security protocols before the campus reopening. The team also made sure engineering, housekeeping, logistics, and security personnel had adequate and appropriate protective materials throughout the semester. In addition, they installed thermal scanners at the main entrances and ultraviolet disinfection facilities in the air conditioning and circulation units.

Meanwhile, the Resident Volunteer team updated the guidelines for campus residents and established communication mechanisms to send out notices from school leaders and collect feedback from families.

The health and safety protocols posed a significant challenge to Keystone’s residential program. Dean of Students Kelli Sanchez, who was in the United States for the entire semester, says “it was hard to imagine” that the school could bring students back to the dorms. In addition, dorm parents who had traveled abroad before the pandemic could not return to China due to travel restrictions.

“However, we’ve found new ways to connect, and have become more creative in how we bring people together,” Mrs. Sanchez adds. Many faculty members who lived on campus graciously took on residential duties or acted as substitute dorm parents. Student leaders, meanwhile, conducted online contests such as vlog challenges and House competitions to keep their peers motivated.

“At the heart of this, we came to realize how important connections and our community are to our students and their learning. It’s easy to take advantage of the daily interactions we have with students, so we were thrilled when we did get to bring them back to the dorms,” Mrs. Sanchez remarks.

### **Physical Distancing Leaders**

Following a green light from government authorities, the school gradually reopened its doors to students in late April. This started with the Class of 2020, who marked their glorious return to the campus with a poignant sharing of their journeys at Keystone.

Cady Feng and Francis Liu delivered a joint address on behalf of the graduating class. In her moving speech, Cady said that “Keystone is not a place” but rather about the community and sum of relationships, referencing the film *Thor: Ragnarok*. Later, the Class of 2020 presented their Character and Community projects, with each student highlighting how they lived by the five shared values during their time at Keystone.

During the emotional final assembly, Mr. McKenzie urged the seniors to take inspiration and courage from what they have gone through, adding that this year’s graduates would be remembered in the way they faced the challenges with vitality, independence, and determination.

Ninth graders resumed their classroom learning two weeks after and became the school’s “physical distancing leaders.” Teachers tried to blend lessons with reminders on observing a one-meter distance rule. Some ways were as quirky as using a hula hoop.

Chinese teacher Wang Yang employed these colorful rings in her CLL classes. The concept, she says, came from chats with several colleagues, and it was her colleague Cao Shujuan who first mentioned hula hoops. That transported Ms. Wang to a magical scene from *Journey to the West*, where the Monkey King outlines an invisible circle with his staff to protect his master and fellow apprentices.



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Hula hoops made their way to the Primary School, where fourth and fifth graders, the last cohorts of students allowed to return to campus, linked the giant rings to red and yellow vests. The resulting garb looked like a frame of a ball gown, but the industrious children added their personal touch and crafted complete “social distancing costumes.”

Head of Primary School Catherine Copeland shared the offbeat idea, as well as Keystone’s experiences in reopening the campus and ways of teaching bilingualism virtually during the health crisis, in a webinar of International Primary Curriculum (IPC) schools worldwide in May.

“We’ve already created quite a storm with our hula hoop concept and the rest of the world is fascinated with it,” Ms. Copeland says. “For many schools around the world, it is still a very abstract idea of how we are going to make our reopening work. By sharing our experiences, we, as a school and a community, are providing service and leadership.”

#### **Remaining Steadfast and Generous**

*“I just have one thought to share. It is something I’ve always been told, but for the first time, I actually feel it by myself.*

*It is always said that when you lose something, you cherish it more. That is exactly what I felt when I returned.”*

That was the short message of a ninth grader whom Mr. McKenzie referenced in one of his letters published before the remaining Secondary School students returned to campus in mid-May. At an assembly, Mr. McKenzie invited ninth graders to write him their reflections on coming back to school after three months of learning virtually. The return of the Grade 9 students, he said in the meeting, reminded him “in a sentimental way” of the time when Keystone opened in 2014. Then, ninth graders were the most senior students on campus.

The remaining weeks of the second semester seemed to have a semblance of normalcy amid the minor inconveniences of physical distancing measures. “Because of these new safety rules, our campus will feel very different in some respects,” Mr. McKenzie told the community in another letter.

“[But] let’s treat this reopening as a rebirth. And it is up to us all to remember that there is an important distinction between the campus and the school. Although we do need to be more distanced physically, we also want to be closer as a community. We may have to live on a cooler campus for a while, but we must make sure that we become a warmer school.”

In the weeks when the campus was open, laughter and chatter from children who missed the company of one another filled classrooms and dining halls. Students basked in the sunshine and played team games for their Physical Education classes in the Keystone oval. Primary School staff, meanwhile, prepared for activities to welcome the remaining pupils set to return in the final week of the semester. In the Secondary School, faculty, college counselors, and the school’s Communications and Events teams were adding some finishing touches to the simple send-off ceremony for the Class of 2020.

But then, an outbreak suddenly happened in southwestern Beijing. As a result, the government authorities ordered yet another closure to schools.

The abrupt end of the school year was a downbeat and disappointing moment for the Keystone community, especially for many children who had been yearning for a kind of closure to what had been a tumultuous and tough year. But school leaders encouraged everyone to look at what they have gotten out of their positive experiences in the past six months.

“We have gained more resilience and have become more creative and connected,” Dr. Martelly exclaimed. “We already have these, which is why we have been successful despite the

challenges. We are thriving, and the only way to continue that is to adapt. We have to continue pushing ourselves.”

“The community should be very proud of all we have accomplished,” Ms. Chow says. “I hope that we can reflect on the successes and triumphs that we, as a community, have overcome. As we move forward, knowing that there might still be uncertainties ahead, we can move forward stronger, more experienced, and more prepared so we can be even more innovative and effective in all that we do.”

As the community headed into an unusual summer, and an unpredictable continuation of the year, Mr. McKenzie

asked everyone to remain steadfast and generous to deal with hardships and heartbreaks with a positive and resilient spirit. In his final letter of the academic year 2019–2020, Mr. McKenzie shared with the community a stanza from *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*, the acclaimed literary collection of Irish poet John O’Donohue.

*If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will be kind  
And blushed with beginning.*

12 13 14

Keystone teachers who are in Beijing supported their students online and remotely in many ways. Teachers and staff also upskilled themselves during the online learning program



**SOURCES (FOR THE TIMELINE ON PAGES 22-23):** ● CCTV. 《教育部发布2020年春季学期延期开学的通知》. 27 January 2020. <<https://cbgc.scol.com.cn/news/222002>>. ● CCTV. 《截至1月30日24时新型冠状病毒感染的肺炎疫情最新情况》. 31 January 2020. <[http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-01/31/content\\_5473262.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-01/31/content_5473262.htm)>. ● Naming the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the virus that causes it. Technical guidance. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2020. ● *China Daily*. 《每日一词 | 在线教学online education》. 21 February 2020. ● Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC). 《民航局控制疫情防控期间国际客运航班量》. 20 March 2020. <[http://www.caacnews.com.cn/1/1/202003/t20200320\\_1296102.html](http://www.caacnews.com.cn/1/1/202003/t20200320_1296102.html)>. ● IB. *May 2020 examinations will no longer be held*. 23 March 2020. <<https://www.ibo.org/news/news-about-the-ib/may-2020-examinations-will-no-longer-be-held/>>. ● CAAC. ● *China Daily*. *College exam postponed to July 7, 8*. 1 April 2020. ● *China Daily*. *All Beijing students set to return in June*. 14 May 2020. <<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202004/01/WS5e82baaaa3101282172834d0.html>>. ● Reuters. *Beijing district in ‘wartime emergency’ after virus cluster at major food market*. 13 June 2020. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-beijing-idUSKBN23K03V>>. ● *The Telegraph*. *Beijing orders closure of schools amid ‘severe’ coronavirus outbreak*. 16 June 2020. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/16/china-reinstates-travel-curbs-contain-severe-coronavirus-outbreak/>>. ● 中华人民共和国中央政府. 《北京：其他口岸入境进京人员纳入统一管理 集中医学观察》. 20 March 2020. <[http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/20/content\\_5493557.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/20/content_5493557.htm)>.

## DECEMBER

Wuhan Municipal Health Commission reports a cluster of new pneumonia cases in the city

## JANUARY

23 China imposes strict lockdown in Wuhan and nearby cities in Hubei Province

24 Keystone school leaders inform the community of the novel coronavirus in Wuhan and form special committees to monitor the situation with the government authorities

27 The Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) announces delay of school reopening in spring 2020

30 The World Health Organization declares the coronavirus outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) as China reports over 9,600 cases

## FEBRUARY

01 School leaders update campus guidelines for residential families

08 Keystone formally postpones ACAMIS (Association of China and Mongolia International Schools) Conference, which was scheduled for March 2020

11 WHO names the illness caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus as COVID-19 (coronavirus disease-2019) as the number of cases in China reach over 40,000

12 The MoE publishes further guidelines to ensure learning continues despite disruption in classes

28 Student-led Keystone Assistance Project for COVID-19 Epidemics formally launched

## MARCH

01 Keystone school leaders hold a flag raising ceremony for the first time since the holiday break

07 Beijing Deputy Mayor Zhang Jiaming and key city government officials visit Keystone

09 Off-campus faculty and staff who have completed 14-day quarantine now allowed to work in school

15 Global COVID-19 cases reach 153,000, with pandemic epicenters shifting from China to Italy and Iran

19 The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) announces reduction in the number of flights out of China

23 The International Baccalaureate Organization announces the cancellation of the May Diploma exams worldwide



The Beijing Municipal government requires nucleic acid testing for people entering the city

24

Keystone publishes guidelines for the second phase of its online learning program

25

Authorities temporarily suspend the entry of foreigners to China

28

## APRIL

Global COVID-19 cases reach one million

04

The Beijing Education Commission announces the partial reopening of school campuses in the city for Grade 12 and Grade 9 students on April 27. The national college entrance examination (gaokao) is rescheduled to July 7-8

13

Authorities inspect and evaluate school reopening conditions in the spring semester of 2020

18

The Keystone Libraries organize Love of Reading Week virtually

20-24

Keystone becomes a member of the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) and the Principals' Training Center (PTC)

27

The Keystone Class of 2020 returns to campus and delivers Character and Community Presentation for their Keystone Diploma

29

## MAY

Keystone announces that the Class of 2020 receives over 300 offers from universities and colleges across the globe in the 2019/2020 college applications season

08

Grade 9 students return to campus

11

The Beijing Education Commission announces the resumption of classes for students from Grades 6-8 and Grades 10-11 on June 1 and Grades 4-5 on June 8

13

Global COVID-19 cases breach the five million mark

23

## JUNE

A cluster of COVID-19 cases is identified in Xinfadi market in southwestern Beijing. The Beijing Education Commission suspends the return to school for Grades 1-3

13

Authorities suspend classes for all levels of schools in Beijing

16

Global COVID-19 cases reach 10 million

29



Keystone joins the Chinese nation in a national mourning for the people affected by the pandemic during the Tomb Sweeping Festival

The Keystone Libraries organize Love of Reading Week virtually

Keystone becomes a member of the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) and the Principals' Training Center (PTC)

The Keystone Class of 2020 returns to campus and delivers Character and Community Presentation for their Keystone Diploma



Keystone announces that the Class of 2020 receives over 300 offers from universities and colleges across the globe in the 2019/2020 college applications season

Grade 9 students return to campus



Students from Grades 4-5 in the Primary School and Grades 6-8 and 10-11 in the Secondary School return to campus

The academic year ends abruptly following the outbreak in southwestern Beijing

# Recording Reality

Text and photography by Jasmine Zheng,  
Keystone Class of 2018

*Life itself is not the reality.  
We are the ones who put life into stones and pebbles.*  
— Frederick Sommer



Images by Maxwell Xu

In an era where time is fragmented, everyone is overwhelmed by information. Words and pictures encroach on our sensibility of the real world. Compared to popular news online, what happens around us appears trivial. We are so used to seeing through the eyes of others that do not give time to ourselves anymore. Life is not only about the things thrown to us by society. There is more to explore, and recording is the best tool on this journey to discover reality.

Recording can be a ritual and a habit. Photography used to be a ritual to me; bringing a camera to events meant a stylish attitude or an affirmation of its value. Photographic works do not convey excess subjective elements from their creators, so the audience is free to interpret these images using their own feelings, experiences, or understanding of reality. On the contrary, words are a private matter. I prefer using them to trace my feelings. Words are less ritualized, but they are more real to me.

Now, I prefer to bring a camera with me to capture moments. Photos can become materials for further creation. Photography became a habit partly because of pressure from the real world, where too much fragmented information stalled me. Also, time offers me the luxury to write and devote myself to a composition. Before, I hardly knew what I want to write on paper even if I had the time. Another reason is that the private form of words can no longer cater to my aspirations. I want to inform people of the things they are oblivious to. For example, only a few people have the patience to read long-form articles now, but photographs can give them an emotional experience.

Lewis Hine once said that “If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn’t need to lug around a camera.” Now, photography and words combined keep me recording and make my voice heard by more people. One friend who loves painting has had an experience similar to mine, but now he likes to capture photos before drawing the scene.

Everyone can record things in their own way. No one form is superior to the other, and people do not need to conform to the norm. They must find what suits them most so recording can become their hobby, or better, a long-term passion.

When I returned to China in April 2020, I remembered an instance when I was on the bus led by a police car to a hotel for quarantine. While the blue and red emergency lights shone on pandemic signs by the road, I experienced a mixed feeling of familiarity and strangeness as we traversed the streets. It was a pity that I did not have the time and energy to document this journey, but the impact of the pressure and stress lingered. I was determined to record the stories that had happened in this city during the pandemic. Apart from self-quarantine, I could contribute nothing as an ordinary witness. I saw how the city fell asleep and how it recovered gradually. My photos and words for it may be the only contribution I could make. I walked the streets and alleys, in malls and groceries, and witnessed how these places swelled with people after weeks of strange silence. Individual power can be limited, and most of the time, we are only witnesses. In those moments in which we cannot get involved, we can be chroniclers.

Except for what is happening now, I have also endeavored to explore some stories from the past. A friend introduced the existence of “the wastelands,” or those dusty buildings abandoned in the modern city. Forgotten by modernization, these wastelands may remain hidden between clusters of imposing skyscrapers, but they are still icons of the times. Creaking floor tiles and calendars showing dates from the last century are the proof of the longevity of these places that were once boisterous and glorious but failed to catch up with the frantic pace of city living. I can even see propaganda messages in red paint. As Susan Sontag writes in *On Photography*: “To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability.”

Each broken beer bottle, each wooden door covered with cobwebs, and each crumpled newspaper has a story of its own, waiting for newcomers to collect and resurrect. Recorders freeze time to keep the trace the past leaves behind. We cannot physically travel back in time, but we can find stories in the debris left by the past. Recordings are slices of the real world, just as those wastelands are a microcosm of history. We may never know or experience fully what transpired in the past, but records allow us to see a part of it. Records enable these events to transcend time.

To some people, ‘recording’ provides them with what can be crowed about. They pick eye-catching events or center on sensational stories, which are more likely to become viral on social media but add more noise in the already turbulent information era. However, this contradicts the idea of recordings to “dig out real life.” Sometimes, the author may be sucked into an emotional whirlpool. I see recording as a tool to help people become more patient and conscientious when observing life and when engaging with the real world.

Recording is a journey of self-discovery. Just by viewing my photos or re-reading the words I wrote in the past, I can always recollect the feelings at the moment when the recording was made. They have made me rethink my motivations for choosing scenes or angles and why these intrigued me. Recordings allow me to understand myself better as much as they give me a chance for introspection. There is a saying that “intervening excludes recording and vice versa.” But a person using any recording form is at least an invisible participant and the initiator of ‘recording’ as an incident. By recording others, we are also recorded at the moment. In this context, we are not only producing for others but work for ourselves as well.









Special Report

# The Indomitable Human Spirit

UN Messenger of Peace Jane Goodall  
Spreads Hope in Beijing





It was sixty years ago when a sandy blonde-haired woman began an adventure to Africa that would redefine our understanding of the human species. Now at 85, there's no stopping Dr. Jane Goodall from gathering people around the world in her lifelong quest to protect the environment.

The renowned primatologist and UN Messenger of Peace visited Keystone Academy on November 12, 2019 as the first stop in her four-day tour of Beijing. Keystone, a new member of her Roots & Shoots environmental organization, invited over a hundred students and educators from nine other member schools in Beijing to celebrate Goodall's return to the capital.

Student leaders from these schools were thrilled but stunned to present their projects in front of the very person who has inspired them to care for the environment. Goodall applauded and encouraged all of them to continue their initiatives.



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Dr. Goodall says chimpanzees saw her as a "white ape"  
—  
Photo 1: Courtesy of Roots & Shoots China  
—  
Photos 2, 3, 4: Courtesy of National Geographic

## Jane, the White Ape

Dr. Jane Goodall took everyone by surprise when she appeared on the Keystone Performing Arts Center (PAC) stage.

“I’m going to give you a special greeting which has never been heard in this auditorium before: ‘Woo... oooh oooh... oooh oooh oooh hooh!’ That means, ‘This is me, this is Jane,’ in chimpanzee pant-hoot.”

Her introduction was resonant and full of character, in stark contrast to her calm voice. The gradually increasing pitch and pace of that hoot set the tone of her keynote speech about her illustrious and fascinating career.

“I could still remember arriving at Gombe National Park in Tanzania for the first time...” the primatologist recalled, “And walking along Lake Tanganyika, looking up at the valleys and hills, wondering how I am going to find the chimpanzees. In the first few months, I didn’t get close to them. When they saw me, they ran away. They’d never seen a white ape before. And that’s what I was: a white ape.”

Goodall was the foremost of the Trimates, the three female researchers who were sent by the respected anthropologist and archeologist Louis Leakey to scientific expeditions in Africa in the 1960s to study the behavior of hominids (great apes) in natural environments.

Goodall’s groundbreaking research into chimpanzees and her subsequent discovery that the species could use tools put her in the headlines

and shook the scientific community at the time. Many people, according to Goodall, told her that she should “dream about something [she] can achieve.” However, she had a powerful advocate in her mother Margaret, who briefly accompanied her during the initial research in Gombe, Tanzania.

“If you really want something, you have to work awfully hard and take advantage of every opportunity. But don’t give up,” Goodall recalled her mother’s most important piece of advice. “That’s the message I’ve told young people around the world, and particularly in disadvantaged communities.”

Her message has continuously reverberated around the world, inspiring adults and children alike. Head of Primary School Catherine Copeland compared Goodall’s timeless message to today’s “growth mindset.”

Copeland said Goodall and her scientific endeavors had formed a vital part of her childhood and growth as an educator. So, when Keystone confirmed Goodall’s visit in September, Copeland tried to hide her excitement. But her emotions flowed when she was finally able to reflect on the visit of her “personal hero.”

“I jumped and called my mom and sister,” she recalled. “When we had our induction, I asked the teachers, ‘If you could invite one person in the world for dinner, who would it be?’ Dr. Goodall is the person I would...” – she stopped, teary-eyed – “...the person I would like to meet.”

## A Role Model of the Youth

Every two years, the influential conservationist returns to China to speak at engagements or meet with young members of Roots & Shoots. Her trip in 2019 coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Roots & Shoots China chapter. It also served as a run-up to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of her work in Gombe.

Aside from being an environmental activist who travels almost all year round, Goodall is also an accomplished author who has written several memoirs and children's books about her life and career. Among those publications, Keystone sixth grader David Shao finds *My Life with the Chimpanzees* the most inspirational. The book has motivated him to read more about the animal world.

At the age of 11, Shao already has a two-inch-thick compilation of his research into various animal species. During Goodall's visit, the young Roots & Shoots member put on the organization's signature green T-shirt and brought some of his research materials.

He waited pensively and patiently for his turn to meet Goodall to ask this burning question: How did she bond with the baby chimpanzees? Was it similar to raising her own son in the rainforest? And he got the answer, right from the scientist herself, who was seated just five feet away from him during a question-and-answer session.

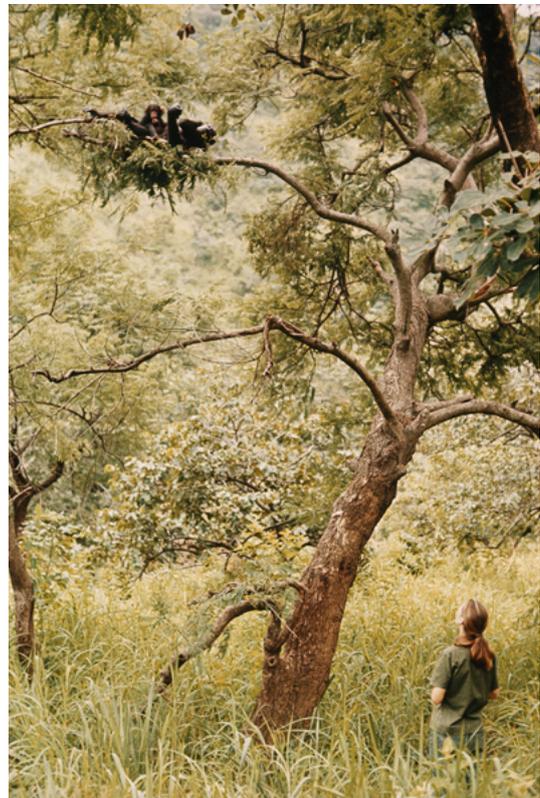
"If you're somebody who's looking after an orphaned baby chimpanzee, there's no difference. They're just like a human baby."

"It was a very satisfying experience for sure, but I don't know how to describe the feeling!" Shao said. "I also wanted to tell her that many people in China are actually trying to help the environment. Many also care about the lives of animals."

While many other students in the audience missed out on the chance to get Goodall's responses to their questions due to time constraints, most were content listening to her witty, concise, and inspirational remarks.

"Jane Goodall is someone I've looked up to for a very long time. I've been a member of Roots & Shoots for three years and it is a great way for me to express my love for the environment," said Nurrانيا Alfian, an eighth grader from the Canadian International School of Beijing.

"My heart stopped when I first saw her. It was unbelievable for me to finally be able to see her in real life," eleventh grader Nicole Partridge from Yew Chung International School of Beijing said about presenting to Goodall. "The only difficult part was I got nervous, because this is Jane Goodall I'm talking to. I told her, 'You're a role model.'"



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Keystone Roots & Shoots members present their environmental initiatives to their "personal hero."

### People at the Heart of Conservation

Roots & Shoots is in about 60 countries, including China, where it has 20,000 student members “from kindergarten to university and everything in between,” Goodall said. Keystone Academy became a new member school of the organization in May 2019, allowing it to host the conservationist in the first leg of her tour of Beijing this year. This was her 16th visit to China.

The Keystone Environment and Sustainability Committee, led by Director of Faculty Chad Fairey and Primary School Science teacher Leah Newey, and the Keystone Performing Arts Center team with Director Michel Ouimet and Drama teacher Karen Bailey Summers co-organized the visit. The Primary School Department oversaw several fundraising activities for Roots & Shoots.

One of the organization’s conservation projects is for the white-headed langur, a critically endangered monkey species endemic to the province of Guangxi in southern China. Keystone has raised RMB 10,000 from the different events organized in the run-up to Goodall’s visit.

For the first time in Keystone history, a group of students, including five from International School Beijing (ISB) and 30 from Keystone Academy, planned, engineered, and delivered a live broadcast. Students who covered the visit brought together equipment from both schools, including two Tricasters and nine cameras. The program was then streamed to venues throughout Keystone Academy and other Roots & Shoots schools.

“Opportunities like this are critical to learning in the modern age of communications, and having students from different schools collaborate to deliver a program like this makes for the best of authentic learning. Students are beyond enthusiastic. They are dedicated and passionate about the outcome,” said Eric Johnston, faculty supervisor and founder of the Keystone Student Media Services (SMS).

Ms. Copeland said Goodall’s visit gave students a chance to connect many environmental topics they learn in the classroom to the world outside of school. She also believes that Goodall’s concept of putting the community at the heart of conservation, which improves the lives of people, animals, and the environment, strongly relates to Keystone’s values.

“Community is a concept that we promote here at Keystone. The more that we collaborate, the more we work together, the more that we understand each other and the more we celebrate differences—these help us stand out and succeed in our academic and community pursuits,” Copeland said.

### **The Indomitable Human Spirit**

“Anyone who has heard her speak, or heard her story, has been mesmerized by her life’s work and moved by her philanthropic legacy,” actor Leonardo DiCaprio said about Goodall. He penned a profile to honor the conservationist for TIME Magazine’s 100 influential people of 2019.

Her influence has also reached *The Simpsons*, which released a special episode featuring the scientist in her full Gombe exploration outfit. The protagonist Lisa Simpson looks up to Goodall as her “personal hero.” Her advice to the curious girl?

“You might get lucky if you work really hard. And don’t give up.”

That also encapsulates the message of *Jane Goodall: The Hope*, a National Geographic TV special on how the scientist has overcome the obstacles in her life and career. It was released in April 2020 in time for the 60th anniversary of her adventure to Gombe.

For Goodall, people who all don’t give up and tackle what seems impossible have the “indomitable human spirit.” Everywhere she goes, she brings Mr. H. to serve as a reminder of that undefeatable attitude in life. The stuffed monkey was a gift from Gary Haun, a blind magician whose story has inspired the scientist so much that she named the present after him.

The UN Messenger of Peace continues to travel the world to spread her message of hope. Many people wonder if this is her current adventure. But the octogenarian says she is ready to go elsewhere, sounding confident and optimistic.

“My next great adventure is the stage of dying. So, when you die, it’s either nothing, which, in this case, you’ll find there’s nothing, or something beyond the alignment of this planet, which I happen to believe. Can you think of any more exciting adventure than discovering what’s beyond, if there is?”

But in true Jane Goodall fashion, she reiterates she will never give up.

“I will never let chimpanzees go extinct while I am alive! You and Roots & Shoots are going to help these animals!”

“You all have that same indomitable spirit. Let it out in the world to make it a better place. I would like all of you who care about our future to join me in saying, ‘Together we can! Together we will!’”



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7 8  
Students from other schools (first image) attended Dr. Goodall's speech at Keystone. The primatologist also introduced Mr. H. (second image), the stuffed toy monkey that accompanies her everywhere she goes

Sep  
2019

**Keystone Students Explore Different Environments  
Outside of the Classroom**

Students from various grade levels ventured outdoors as part of the Keystone Outdoor Education Program (OEP), which brought them to different landscapes in Beijing, Hebei, and Inner Mongolia. These experiential learning trips allow students to explore the world while applying concepts they have learned in the classroom.



Oct  
2019

**Juniors Lead Conference on Finding Solutions to  
Global Issues**

Students and educators from across Beijing joined Keystone’s second Global Issues Network (GIN) Conference, which challenged them to find solutions to pressing global issues such as climate change and gender inequality. The conference was led by eleventh graders Tori Gu and Loubna Laribi (pictured right) and co-organized by Inspire Citizens, an educational consultancy organization based in Beijing.



Nov  
2019

**Keystone Introduces the “New World Thinkers”  
in Official School Video**

Keystone released the school’s official video that captures the excellence of our students learning from and for the world. The video shows moments of brilliance in the community and how they light the path of our “New World Thinkers.” Watch the video on our website ([www.keystoneacademy.cn](http://www.keystoneacademy.cn)).



Jan  
2020

**Letters from Malcolm McKenzie Volume 2  
Now Published**

Many Keystone community members have grown fond of reading the convivial yet personal letters from Head of School Malcolm McKenzie, which are published via *In the Loop* every week. His thoughts in the past two years and legacy at Keystone are documented in the second volume of *Letters from Malcolm McKenzie*. This Chinese-English anthology is for the benefit of Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC), an organization that uses education to empower economically disadvantaged girls in the rural regions of China.



Feb  
2020

**Keystone Forms Committees, Launches Online  
Learning Program to Address Campus Closure**

Keystone formed three task forces to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning with the relevant government authorities. The school implemented an online learning program to maximize the quality of learning and support for students in a remote and digital environment. The entire program ran for sixteen weeks and was integrated into classroom teaching as the campus reopened for the majority of students in May and June.



Apr  
2020

**Keystone Joins China in Commemorating  
the People Affected by the Pandemic**

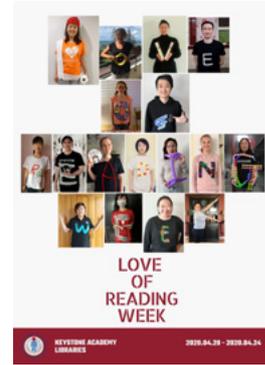
The Chinese nation marked the Tomb Sweeping Festival with a three-minute pause to mourn the deceased and show respect to those who passed away or are still suffering from COVID-19. Head of School Malcolm McKenzie referenced the occasion in a letter, saying it is “a time to be thankful for family and forebears, to think about our ancestors, and to appreciate them for who they were and for their part in giving us life.”



Apr  
2020

### Annual Love of Reading Week Takes a Digital Form

The Keystone Libraries organized this year's Love of Reading Week virtually, with fun and collaborative events that promote literature. Director of Libraries Kacy Song says this year's event was more personal and brought the love of reading and literature home. "Reading expands our experiences and imaginations and it is an effective way to empathize with others and know their feelings," Ms. Song adds. "So, keep reading, even when the Love of Reading Week is over!"



May  
2020

### Keystone Becomes a Member of PTC and EARCOS

Keystone Academy is now an official member school of two more professional and academic organizations worldwide. We are now a part of the PTC (Principals' Training Center), a group of over 150 schools worldwide that "strives to provide world-class, research-driven practical training, designed to be put into practice in the international school setting." We are also the newest member school of the EARCOS (East Asia Regional Council of Schools), a prestigious organization of 180 schools in East Asia with a mission of "[inspiring] adult and student learning through its leadership and service and [fostering] intercultural understanding, global citizenship, and exceptional educational practices within our learning community." Dean of Faculty Paulina Aguilera says "We are excited to be a part of a wider school network and we know that our teachers and students will not only benefit greatly from this partnership but will contribute their skills and ideas to the other EARCOS and PTC member schools."



May  
2020

### Primary School Library Introduces New Mascot

Meet Xiaotu, the blue-eyed red fox who invites young pupils to our Primary School (PS) Library. Xiaotu and its creator Zoe Zhang from the fourth grade bested the 100 other participants in the PS Library Mascot Design Competition, held in April. Zoe says Xiaotu represents the intelligence and enthusiasm of young readers, while its eyes symbolize wisdom. The red fox also wears the gray Keystone Chinese uniform that connects to Chinese culture. Xiaotu will appear on a special bag and other merchandise items of the PS Library.



May  
2020

### **Keystone's Third Graduating Cohort Receives Over 300 University Offers Worldwide**

The Keystone Class of 2020 has achieved most encouraging results in the 2019/2020 college applications season, receiving over 300 offers from universities and colleges across the globe. The breadth and diversity of university offers this year demonstrates the strength of a Keystone education, reflecting our high academic standard and attesting to the quality of extracurricular provision that students receive throughout their tenure here at Keystone.



May  
|  
Jun  
2020

### **Senior Students Share Their Keystone Upbringing in Media Interviews**

Several members of the Class of 2020 made waves in media interviews and events where they talked about their Keystone journey and how the school developed their character and knowledge. Aurora Yu and Kevin Zhang were the inaugural guests of the Student Talk online interview series by KingLead, an online platform for educational resources and services in China. Aurora joined Shuhan Wei and David Cao in another interview by Baba Zhenbang on their high school life. In June, David returned to Keystone along with his peers Cady Feng, Chloe Chen, Jimmy Chen, Francis Liu, and Selena Zheng for the Class of 2020 Graduate Talk, a special session where they shared their stories of successes in school and experiences of applying to colleges abroad.



May  
|  
Jun  
2020

### **Keystone Students Celebrate Their Return to Campus**

After several weeks of campus closure, Keystone became livelier as students gradually got back to school. The first to return were the ninth and twelfth graders, who became the “social distancing” leaders at Keystone. In June, the remaining Secondary School students and fourth and fifth graders were welcomed back by their equally excited teachers.





*Do not be swayed by the world, and instead, let your inner state—your heart—follow you for life.*

# 1 Shining On

## Cady Feng's Brilliant Balancing Act at Keystone

Almost four days have passed and Cady Feng has emerged from her room, at last with a draft of an essay about *The God of Small Things*, ready for review. Her dad is there, happy to see his daughter finally finishing the paper that they have talked about since the summer holiday. It will be Cady's Extended Essay (EE) for her IB Diploma Programme.

Her topic is an unconventional choice—and a challenging one. Teachers and peers who know Cady well assumed she would go for a topic related to physics or chemistry or her special academic interests. But something in the novel has excited Cady, propelling her to a challenge that will soon reward her in many ways.

A lot of people at Keystone Academy unfairly think of or refer to Cady as a *xuébà*—an academic overachiever by Chinese standards. But more than her academic brilliance, it is her incredible balancing act across curricular activities and personal interests that has dazzled and inspired her teachers and classmates alike.

## Lost for Words

Cady is in the middle of a class when a notification pops up—an email from her parents, telling her she has received an offer from Princeton University. Cady tries to contain her glee in three words: “Oh, okay! Cool!”

Cady has applied to several universities, including Princeton and the University of Cambridge, and has balked at the idea of going to a “chosen school”—what is sometimes called a dream school.

After the class, she goes straight to her college counselor Percy Jiang who rejoices too, as Princeton is the first offer that Cady has received. Soon after, she will get an offer from Cambridge.

“I have a school to go to now,” she says, and then grins. “I think I’m going to be happy at all the schools that I have applied to. I will be happy anywhere. Just like Keystone, I’m so happy here.”

Cady’s transfer to Keystone Academy was, in her words, a “random decision,” a process that neither she nor her family planned out. Although feeling content in her previous school, Cady says she wanted to try something new.

And at the time of writing, four years have gone by since that transfer. Cady has blossomed from being a timid girl to a confident and well-balanced young woman. She likes the variety of extracurricular offerings at Keystone, especially the activities that she is not good at.

In her previous schools, for example, she was never considered a sporty student; at Keystone, she is a competent but, in her words, “terrible” squash player. Her foray into this sport, which started with an evening friendly with a fellow boarder, eventually led to a hobby. Sometimes, she takes it to a competitive level. She admits, though, that she gets beaten by younger players to the point that she has come to terms with losing. Cady is not quitting, however. She is resolute that she will win even if it is “not by skill but by probability.”

This is the same determination that has fueled Cady’s pursuits in many fields, even if that means reading a book a couple of times just to decipher the author’s message.

Cady is a self-confessed bookworm, devouring almost any read that’s on recommendation lists, especially if it has a good cover. “I know, don’t judge a book by its cover,” Cady gleefully exclaims. “But oh, *The God of Small Things* has a pretty cover!”

That book, the debut novel of Indian writer Arundhati Roy, harnesses the structure and conventions of language to depict the childhood struggles of a fraternal twin born in a harsh society. Cady goes on explaining for several minutes, highlighting parts that intrigued her at first reading.

“For example,” Cady begins, “when the mother [of the protagonists] was very angry, she said, ‘You jolly well behave.’” She recalls, dramatically: “They thought, ‘Jolly Well is a deep well where people who misbehave go.’ Things like that. So, how children interpret reality, how they misunderstand the complexity of the world around them.”



1  
Cady (seating second from left) and her peers from the Keystone Service Council during the Color Run charity event



Cady finds the narrative of *The God of Small Things* complicated as “so many things are happening all at once.” She even remembers her feelings after finishing the book for the first time, although she doesn’t know how to describe it. The impact of the novel on her has been so immense that Cady dedicated a 4,000-word Extended Essay to it so that she can dig deep into Roy’s use of nuances and “unconventional logic and wording.”

“I still love that book even after I wrote an essay on it,” she confesses, “so I think that means something—as most people wouldn’t feel that way after they spent months writing an essay about one book. I mean, I should be sick of the book by that point, but I’m still not, which means that it must be really great.”

That something is manifested clearly in her essay. One can sense that it is a labor of love and not an academic requirement. Her English teacher for two years, Keystone’s former Assistant Head of High School and IB Diploma Programme Coordinator Rick Spadafora says Cady’s monograph is a “very advanced analysis of a book,” and one of the most challenging topics he has encountered in his career. Mr. Spadafora says Cady has gone to great lengths to find evidence for and back up her research, resulting in a “university-level paper” with ideas “so fantastic and rare.”

“She chose to write an essay about an English book, and she challenged herself and did it in English,” Mr. Spadafora remarks. “I was caught by surprise. I thought she would have chosen physics or math, because she’s very strong in those areas.”



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 "This tanghulu picture" Head of High School Diana Martelly says, "reminds me of Cady because we both came to Keystone at the same time. So we are batchmates."

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 At the graduate handover ceremony in 2019, Cady represented the Grade 11 class

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 (From left to right) Doris Li, Cady Feng, Aurora Yu, and Francis Liu launched Keystone's first Science Fair in 2019

## Star Power

Teachers see Cady as the epitome of the well-balanced student: studious yet active, soft-spoken but confident. For her junior and senior years, Cady chose Higher Level Physics, Mathematics, and Chemistry courses—a rare combination in the IB curriculum. Cady also took on an advanced level Economics course.

Outside Keystone, Cady is a formidable force in international competitions. In 2019, she topped the Math Olympiad of the ACAMIS (the Association of China and Mongolia International Schools) and bagged the Global Excellence Award at the Canadian Physics Olympiad (CAP). The year prior, she was awarded the Global Silver Medal at the British Physics Olympiad (BPhO).

For two consecutive years, she was inducted into an elite group of high schoolers around the globe working with Pioneer Academics, a research program allowing select students to work on research papers together with experts. Among them was Emeritus Professor of Psychology George A. Gescheider from Hamilton College, who was Cady's instructor for her paper on neurology. The professor commended her for an "outstanding performance comparable to what I have seen in the best undergraduate students in college for many years."

These big words and recognition do not sway Cady; instead, she treads lightly as she seeks the concepts and principles behind the subjects she is studying. When she encounters confusion, she will try to find answers by herself until she gets through the bump. Her Chemistry teacher Ritah Mpuhia says Cady even "walks in front of us," assisting her peers who face learning obstacles on the way.

There are some, however, who are blinded by Cady's brightness, even calling her a *xuébà* or "academic overachiever" because of the high bar that she has set. High school senior Frankie Fan thinks those people "ignore the hard work Cady has been doing," saying that the *xuébà* is just like them—she also gets extremely nervous when there is an exam and feels tired after a long day at school.

"Cady is like a star that emits light," Frankie says about her good friend. "A star needs a lot of energy to shine bright. And because Cady works so hard, she sometimes doesn't even realize that she is twinkling."

In the classroom, Cady may be a math wizard. However, only a few know that she attains this excellence through spending afternoons reviewing lessons or using homework-less days

to explore new knowledge. When others stay up late chatting with friends, Cady will try experiments to test her research projects. She is always focused—her laptop doesn't have WeChat installed on it.

The way she manages her time is remarkable. Some people may think this life of order is devoid of fun; on the contrary, Cady is happy with what she does. She plays squash, dances ballet, and even joins yoga sessions with her teachers. For people who see Cady as a *xuébà*, they miss all the other aspects of her personality.

Cady's firm understanding of herself releases her from the undue expectations of a society that puts too high a regard on people whose résumés glimmer with sensational achievements or spectacular pursuits.

"I work hard," she says, "Of course, I have my shortcomings, but I will not force myself to do things I do not like. And I am fortunate to be surrounded by good friends, so I feel no one needs to know me."

## Getting into a "Good Inner State"

Cady remembers her participation in the Keystone United Nations (KUN) in the ninth grade, joining debates and writing resolutions. She prefers the latter, because she feels uncomfortable "intentionally picking arguments with people." Debating takes her out of her comfort zone, and even if she has tried to step out of it in the past two years, she feels "miserable there every time," especially when people quiz her to find faults in arguments.

She is aware, though, that debating develops the critical skill of reasoning. So, what she does instead is to live by her family's rule: "Do not criticize others unless we can think of something better to say." It came in handy when Cady was preparing for her Extended Essay and college application essays, because her parents gave constructive feedback on her drafts to make them more readable.

The Feng's family rule is a refined version of the adage "learn from mistakes." Cady recalls an incident at the end of the eleventh grade, when she felt so stressed that she vented to her parents. As most parents would do, Mr. and Mrs. Feng offered their daughter constructive advice; their daughter, however, was seeking a listening ear.

"That time, I felt more upset when they gave me advice," Cady says, "And so, I called mom and said, 'In the future, please just don't do that anymore. Just listen.'" They agreed.



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6  
Keystone Service Council members. Cady is in front and center.

7  
At the Science Fair, Cady and her friends held on-the-spot experiments, which attracted a crowd

8  
Cady represented Keystone at different academic competitions locally and globally

And they have been doing that since then.

“One night when I was stressed, I Skyped my parents because I couldn’t seem to focus. I told them I needed someone to be there for me. And just like that, my mom remained on Skype while reading a book—we were not talking, but she was there... My parents are really sweet and when there are things that are not working, we try to figure out a solution together and learn together.”

Outside of the family, Cady says she is surrounded by “amazing friends” with whom she shares similar vibes and values despite coming from different backgrounds and having unrelated interests. What she knows for sure is that her friends are the people on whom she can depend. This environment allows Cady to be herself to get into “a good inner state.”

“You don’t have to run all the way or shout your success. No matter what choice you make, do it because you are happy. Do not be swayed by the world, and instead, let your inner state—your heart—follow you for life.”

### Growing Together

The Fengs may be welcoming another engineer in a few years. Cady is looking to follow the lead of her dad but will focus on either electrical or mechanical engineering. She hopes to build structures that will benefit people without harming the environment. As to what kind of project it will be, Cady says nothing concrete is in the pipeline yet. An idea that has been flowing in her mind is a system that can power a remote village.

“I like the environment and I know it’s unfair that I have so many opportunities when other people don’t,” Cady says shyly and almost inaudibly. “I want to make their lives better. I want to do it for a reason. It feels the right thing to do.”

Cady references her childhood memories of her parents taking her out to nature to explain why she believes in environmental protection. She remembers when she ran around their community to find the largest pinecone, and an anecdote about how she collected used bottles and papers and sold them to a recycling shop to get an allowance. Her mom didn’t want her to do housework “that she was supposed to do” in exchange for money.

Mr. Feng says his daughter is truly considerate of other people’s feelings and innately curious, some traits he first noticed when the young Cady wondered how animals move and machinery operates. As an engineer himself, Mr. Feng responded

to the queries of his daughter, as if he was giving a small lecture. In addition, he and his wife would read her books so she could find out more about how the world works. This sparked Cady's interest in exploring things, which was piqued further when she entered Keystone because of its different approach to learning and teaching.

Mr. Feng admits that he and his wife do not know much about what an IB (International Baccalaureate) class is like, other than that it seems more challenging than the pace of a public school class. When Cady reached out to him for her Extended Essay on the novel *The God of Small Things*, Mr. Feng told her, "No problem." Cady, he says, has written book reviews in the past, so he believed she could take on that "big project."

In the process, his daughter "worked so hard that she closed her door for four days and stayed in her room to concentrate on writing," Mr. Feng reveals. Once finished, she solicited her dad's comments, who, unfortunately, has not read the novel yet.

"I told her to make sure that somebody who has not read the book could understand what she wrote, instead of going straight to statements because they may distract the readers," Mr. Feng adds, saying Cady immediately understood and adjusted the draft accordingly.

Mr. and Mrs. Feng understand the wide difference between the way they learned—because they "had to fight for their lives" back in the day—and their daughter's "better situation" under the IB system and a Keystone education. This is why they want Cady to pursue whatever will make her happy, under one condition: that she should not stretch herself too much. Mr. Feng jokes that did not happen in Cady's "ten tough months" dealing with college applications while still working very diligently at her academics.

Mr. Feng also references the good time management habits and sense of academic responsibility that his wife has instilled in Cady. Keeping a planner and ticking off to-do lists give Cady a feeling of achievement every day. Meanwhile, working on assignments by herself has developed accountability and responsibility because it is "her task and not ours," Mr. Feng says.

Despite all of this, Mr. Feng says there is nothing special in their parenting style, because "other families have been doing more for their children." What Mr. Feng is confident of is that they are growing with their daughter while acquiring new knowledge together, learning from each other's mistakes, or following her progress—all to make sure they understand one another.

## Just Keep Going

"Not to worry too much. Nothing is too big of a deal." That is Cady's message to her future self, who will, we hope, stumble upon this piece long after she graduates from university. Surprisingly, the Cady of 2020, a girl with a jolly disposition and bright aura, is sometimes a worrier! Although she finds solace in the company of the good people surrounding her, Cady admits it is those things that she cannot control that concerns her.

Despite that, she has kept on moving. She did not know until the tenth grade that there is a powerful saying that captures that very action, attributed to Winston Churchill when he rallied his people to "never, never, never quit" by telling them this: "If you're going through hell, keep going."

Cady is aware that, as a young person, she has not experienced much; so that expression "just makes sense" in relation to what she has gone through, especially those times when she moves on deftly from the feeling of anxiety or of being overwhelmed.

"I will not be able to control certain things as I grow up. Because right now, in school, everything is structured. If I do something, I get a certain result in life. But it's not going to be that way in the future. So, Cady, don't worry about things you can't control. Just keep going," she tells herself.

*Special thanks to Mr. Jonathan Burslem, Dr. Cos Fi, Dr. Diana Martelly, Dr. Maureen McCoy, Ms. Dorothy Mubweka, Mr. Aki Mustonen, Ms. Ritah Mputhia, and Mr. Rick Spadafora.*

*We are always ourselves, in the past, in the present, and in the future. You are always yourself.*



# 2

Francis Liu finally reached the summit of a hill, and the vastness of everything green and blue was everywhere. It was summer, but the breeze sweeping across the Inner Mongolian highlands was so biting that it felt like it was autumn already. As Francis closed his eyes, he entered a state where he merged with the sky and the ground. There, he traveled down a stream together with the mosquitoes clinging on his left arm.

He laid down on the grass and looked at his zenith, where specks of light slowly punctured the dimming sky. Then he realized those stars were moving away from us.

“All of a sudden, I fell into an inevitable pessimism – that the world is so big that my life wouldn’t matter at all,” Francis wrote in an essay. “Behind this pessimism, there is an attitude towards life. Because of this pessimism, we needed to strive, as the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. Because of this pessimism, we need to rise above ourselves, and turn this tragedy into a personal triumph, a celebration of life. And because of this tragic optimism, I needed to be happy and free.”

Francis has a habit of taking notes of strange encounters or writing his reflections on the mundane—a “romantic undertaking,” he says. In that essay about his trip to Inner Mongolia, he remembers how the experience brought him to an open space that made him feel free, small, and insignificant. Those recordings have fueled many of his discussions and writings. They have allowed him to explore the extent of what he knows, what he does not know, and what he wants to know.

Graduate Profile —————

# Thinking Out Loud

Francis Liu and  
the Writings of a Young Philosopher



### “You Are Always Yourself”

Francis’s smartphone is ready whenever he gets “whimsical thoughts,” often occurring at night or whenever he stays up late. He has a particular liking for evenings—a time when “he lives in the present moment.”

On a frigid winter midnight in 2018, for example, Francis found himself engrossed in an article about the American singer Frank Ocean, of whom he is a ‘stan’ (“obsessed fan”). Francis reached a point where he questioned himself about his obsession.

“Put the phone away and go to sleep, and you’d better wake up early next morning so that you could go and find something of your own,” he wrote to himself.

The then-fifteen-year-old student soon launched an inquiry and resorted to philosophy in the hopes of finding an answer to the subject of self-exploration. Among the many schools of thought, it was Kant’s revolution in epistemology—that “objects must conform to our *a priori* knowledge” as opposed to prior assumptions that “knowledge must conform to objects”—that resonated the most with the teenager.

Francis presented his wintry dilemma and his findings and arguments in a rousing speech during a Talkeystone address

in 2019, when he was in the eleventh grade. His speech went through several rounds of review and revision, with the help of former English teacher Audrey Moh.

“So how is this philosophy related to the subject of self-exploration?” Francis asked the audience in reference to Kant’s revolution, with full conviction but shaking hands. “By asking ‘Who am I?’ you’re implying you need to put in this amount of effort to achieve ‘yourself’ or to ‘find yourself.’ We are saying that ‘ourselves’ are somehow detached from our ‘current self.’ This idea is simply ridiculous. What do we mean by finding ourselves? We are always ourselves, in the past, in the present, and in the future. You are always yourself.”

Francis thought he sounded like a crying baby at the start of his speech. The audience heard otherwise: a confident young man with ideas so powerful and bright that the most apt response was thundering applause. Teachers from the floor even gave him a standing ovation. One of them also commented that Francis’s delivery was as excellent as a real TED Talk. When everything settled down, Francis felt the joy of having the public hear about his discovery for the first time, something he considered a significant leap towards philosophical exploration.

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Francis's musings fueled his widely acclaimed Talkeystone address in 2019

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Several teachers view Francis as a "peer" and an "old friend" owing to his deep philosophical thinking



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### Intellectual Exchanges

The first inklings of Francis's interest in philosophy appeared when he encountered Albert Camus's *The Outsider*, sometime in his ninth grade. The novel proved to be a challenging read for Francis, but reviews online helped him grasp its subtexts.

He spent part of his tenth-grade summer vacation reading *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Here, he learned that humans have only two ways to learn and grow: either without pain, letting others teach or impart knowledge to you; or with pain, going through and reflecting on hardship.

His fascination with philosophy blossomed in the next three years. By the beginning of the IB DP (Diploma Programme), Francis felt confident that he could do well in Philosophy and chose it to replace Chemistry for his standard level DP courses, studying it alongside Chinese and English. Meanwhile, he had Mathematics, Physics, and Economics in the higher level DP courses. This is a powerful and unusual combination.

Keystone teacher Yuanching Huang has witnessed the progression of Francis since first meeting him in 2017. She views Francis as a "peer" whose mission "stems from his pursuit of the truth of life." In her tenth-grade Chinese Civilization class, Ms. Huang recalled how Francis offered a

lot of surprises, especially in his Keystone Capstone Project, the culminating product of the China and the World course in the Middle Years Programme (MYP). In his outstanding 4,500-word Chinese research paper, Francis explained interdependent functions and limitations of the ancient Chinese economic system and the development of Chinese science and technology from a mathematics perspective. Such a detailed paper impressed Ms. Huang, who holds a doctorate in Ancient and Modern Chinese History from Peking University.

Ms. Huang continued her intellectual exchange with Francis over the next two years, this time in the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) class. In a discussion on the relationship between technology and ethics, Ms. Huang said she was struck by Francis' speed of thinking and how he remained resolute in his views despite facing counterarguments from equally perceptive classmates.

Jeffery Heitmann, Francis's Extended Essay (EE) supervisor in Philosophy and ninth-grade teacher, has also seen that determination in him. For Mr. Heitmann, Francis is "quiet but intense," and an "old friend" with whom you share ideas and good time talking about whatever comes up. Many times, Mr. Heitmann said, their conversations have gone in

directions unrelated to why they met in the first place, but have still ended up being interesting and enriching.

In 2019, Francis was among the Keystone students who joined an elite group of high schoolers around the world to work with Pioneer Academics. It allowed him to be supervised by Professor Niki Kasumi Clements of the William Marsh Rice University in his comparative study, “Justice to *Rén*: The Self and Society in Ancient Greece and China.” In this 7,000-word thesis, Francis painstakingly compared the philosophies behind the concept of “justice” in Plato’s Republic and the Confucian virtue of *rén* (benevolence) in Confucius’s Analects. He then analyzed their roles in the development of western and Chinese societies.

Professor Clements highly commended the study and ranked Francis as one of the top 5% students she has encountered for undergraduate-level academic work.

“He has the intellect, empathy, and foresight to see not only how the past informs the present, but how we need to change the present with a responsible orientation towards the future,” she wrote about Francis. “He will make an exemplary university student—and the more rigorous the university setting, the more I wager he will thrive.”

Francis will continue his pursuit of philosophical studies at university level in the United Kingdom. He has received admission offers from the University of St Andrews and University College London, among others.

“A student with a cross-cultural understanding is an indispensable member of a global society,” Ms. Huang says,

adding that when it comes to exploring the meaning of life, Francis has been her most persistent student. “I believe that his passion for life and intercultural academic abilities will enable him to make a more dynamic contribution to everyone in the classroom of any university.”

“Philosophy will be a fantastic match for his personality and who he is becoming,” Mr. Heitmann says. “Professors and peers will be lucky to have Francis in their class and he will have a great time as he loves to discuss ideas and their implications.”

### Keep Calm and Remain F6 Xi

The summit of Mount Kilimanjaro was barely 100 meters away—just a stone’s throw from Francis. He had been hiking for more than a day, so he should have reached the peak in an hour. But he passed out.

*When I woke up, I found it difficult to control my body. In one moment, I could stand. Then I could not. Instantly paralyzed. Everyone tried to give me oxygen, but I thought I was fine. So, I kept on refusing.*

*And then they tried to let me sip juice and hot water. They just tortured me like this. My feet were numb. They carried me as they went back and forth—there was a campsite nearby, but they never got there.*

*I thought they were game characters in the virtual world, and then grabbed me to take revenge on humans, because humans created them and gave me freedom.*

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On the way to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, Francis passed out and entered a “dream state”

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Francis, together with local kids in Tanzania

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He has also proven his athleticism and showed agility in the Keystone badminton team

He journaled that vivid “dream state” shortly after he was brought to a base camp to recover from altitude sickness. Despite the incident, Francis felt the entire trek to the highest mountain in Africa was a pilgrimage that connected him with nature.

He drew from these existential reflections for many discussions in his essays, most recently in a college application supplement where he interpreted that hallucination in Kilimanjaro. In this piece, Francis wrote the freedom he relished in the dream state made him “shut the Apollonian glory away, [as] I was Dionysiac,” referencing Friedrich Nietzsche’s description of intellectual dichotomy in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Francis also suggested that “dreams create a world that exempts us from morality,” and that “in dreams, we are more real than we are in reality.”

Francis thinks his reflective writing is influenced by the philosophical books he has devoured and by being *fó xì*—or “being like Buddha” as Chinese millennials say. In English, this idiom can mean someone who is levelheaded, steadfast, and not likely to be swayed by emotional outbursts.

There are other books which have left a considerable impact on Francis. His classmate and friend Cady Feng recalled their great discussions of the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, both recommended by Francis before the holiday season. During the previous summer vacation, meanwhile, Cady gave him James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*, a novel about a fictional utopia called Shangri-La.

That book came to Francis’s mind when he reflected on his trips to Inner Mongolia and East Africa and how they made him feel free, small, and insignificant. He remembered the part when its protagonist Conway responded to the accusation of his English friend, that eastern civilization was “incapable of getting any work done quickly.” Conway, as

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Francis recalled, suggested that “it could be the western world that is pushing the modern world at a pace too fast.”

Cady says that when she and Francis would hang out and dine together, they would usually talk about reasoning and religion. “And together, it sounds so heavy,” she jokes. More than this, the two friends have shared memories outside of academics. Cady revealed that Francis could do more than just write, because he could also sing songs from *Frozen* and *Hamilton*, at least on a bus ride during their eleventh-grade trip to Inner Mongolia. She also commended Francis for his painting and calligraphy skills.

The two students also worked together to launch school initiatives during their tenure at Keystone. They formed a quartet with Aurora Yu and Doris Li to kick off the school’s inaugural Science Fair in 2019 and a trio with Jimmy Chen to establish the Mathematics Club KAP (Keystone Activities Program) to support students in the middle school. Francis also set up the Philosophy Club KAP with East Li to popularize philosophical concepts to students from lower grades.

Besides these, Francis is a strong contender in math contests at home and abroad, earning accolades at the tournaments organized by the Association of China and Mongolia International Schools (ACAMIS), the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), and the Math League. He has also proven his athleticism through the school’s badminton team.

Francis’s college counselor and previous dorm parent Percy Jiang sees him as a “young philosophical student” who uses his knowledge to uplift others and bring forward inspiring conversations. Francis, he said, acted as a reliable, quiet, and conscientious Dorm Council head, winning the support of his peers from the same grade and student boarders from other levels.

Francis’s friend Selena Zheng admires the way he openly expresses his grasp of literature and the arts to express his ideas. “When a person shows his inner emotions to the outside world, he reveals the most vulnerable part of his heart to others. When Francis expresses his love and his sadness, it is not because he is weak and lonely, but because he has the courage to show himself to the world. He is embracing the whole world,” she adds.

### Keeping Connected

On a midwinter night in early 2020, the song “Superposition” by Canadian singer Daniel Caesar played randomly



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in Francis's music player, instantly transporting him to the humid and sunny streets of New York, when he stayed over in the apartment of his sister Jemma in the summer of 2019. He wrote in a diary entry:

*It reminds me of the oil stains on my hands when washing dishes at noon or night. My sister and I made scrambled eggs with tomatoes, shredded potatoes with soy sauce, cabbage, and rice.*

*It reminds me of the heat waves on the streets of New York. The silver necklace that I just bought was covered in too much sweat that it was slightly rusted...*

*I went to Beijing Shi Da High School and decided to become a day student in the second half of the year. My mother would wait for me to come out of school at 9.30 pm, regardless of the cold. If I looked up at the clouds in the summer evening, I would wonder how far the sparse stars in the sky are from me. I would lie in the back seat of the car, hold my mother's phone and play Sia's "Chandelier" while reading a web fiction, Jueshi Tangmen. Five years have passed now, and I may not have heard "Chandelier" for a long time, but as soon as my mind remembers it, the scene of the battle between the hero Huo Yuhao and Ditian will emerge. I remembered the teenager lying in the back seat of the car five years ago. The dim streetlights that roared on the highway shone on his face. It was a unique smell of summer nights. Time was interlaced.*

Francis tried to cook some dishes for his big sister Jemma during his short visit. Now grown-ups, Jemma appreciates how her *didi* is caring for her more now than when they were children.

The siblings have always been tightly knit, and this relationship continued during their time at Keystone. Jemma, a soon-to-be sophomore studying architecture at Pratt Institute, was among the first graduates of our school. Francis, meanwhile, entered Keystone in the eighth grade, "as a boy who did not pay attention to what kind of person he was." Over the years, he has become more aware of himself due in part to the flexibility that the academic schedule at Keystone provided him.

The siblings made full use of their free time at Keystone to discuss philosophical ideas and the universe in general, or to take after-dinner strolls to chew over the books they had finished.

Jemma is not surprised by her brother's choice to major in philosophy as "he has always been curious about knowledge

and persistent in his beliefs." She supports his decision even when other relatives and friends are skeptical about his choice because she believes philosophy will bring out the best in Francis.

Now, even as a student in the United States, Jemma continues her intellectual exchanges with Francis, talking about "the things we can never explain and the questions we can never answer."

### **Learning Day by Day**

The audience was all ears as Francis continued his Talkeystone speech. It was only his voice that resounded throughout the hall.

*"Just keep in mind that every action of yours contributes to you as a whole, and there is no dumb decision making. And we should not give narrow definitions to ourselves and place ourselves as some distant but finite figures in the future. We need to take responsibility for our present actions. Kant's philosophy has taught me to place my current self as the frame of reference before any grand but unrealistic plans for the future. Only the true heroes know what it takes to be free and do what they want despite all the obstacles. So, when you go home this evening, lying on your bed, staring into the ceilings, or cellphone, instead of asking 'Who am I?', I want you to say: 'What can I do?'"*

A couple of months after that speech, Francis somehow finds himself "not knowing what I do want, again." But he takes that easily, as he learns more about who he is, day by day, little by little.

"I'm sure that I will do well in this ever-going process of learning," he writes. "I want to remind the older Francis that he never regretted anything that he had ever done, and that Francis always was an optimistic person. The younger Francis doesn't want the older Francis to give any advice, at least for now at the age of 18, because he feels confident with whatever he does, and more importantly, he enjoys the process of learning from failures. The 18-year-old Francis also wishes to remind the older Francis about the precious time he had spent with his friends in Keystone."



*Everyone is good and everyone deserves goodness. I've always felt proud of doing something for a higher meaning.*

# Living the Dream

Basir Talayee and  
the Pathfinder's Journey to the East

An act as simple as opening doors for others—literally—makes Abdul Basir Talayee feel so overjoyed. The warm-hearted and compassionate Afghan student at Keystone Academy has a daily habit of doing random acts of kindness because it does not take too much of his effort and time. Instead, it brings him more energy.

Basir is so enthusiastic about sharing his life story during his Character and Community presentation, a project that wraps up his senior year at Keystone, that it takes him roughly a minute to explain that anecdote of opening doors before moving on to the moments where he has exhibited compassion and respect, two of the five Keystone shared values which have resonated so strongly with him.

“Everyone is good and everyone deserves goodness and I’ve always felt proud of doing something for a higher meaning,” he says. “I am from Afghanistan, a country that has been involved in war, but I want people to know that my story is totally different.”

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## A Big Dream

Among the many international students who attended Keystone's second Global Issues Network (GIN) Conference in October 2019, quite a few teenagers captured the attention of Koen Timmers, a world-renowned Belgian educator and a Global Teachers Prize nominee in 2018. But one of the young attendees from Keystone, Mr. Timmers said, "set the bar pretty high" by aiming big: to become a president.

That was Abdul Basir Talayee, who was the conference's committee leader for the topics of gender inequality and water scarcity. He focused the discussions on how water shortages in less-developed countries affect or violate women's rights.

Basir instantly connected with Mr. Timmers over lunch, telling the speaker that one of his former teachers also vied for the Global Teachers Prize. That small talk led to Basir's sharing of his "big dream" of helping his home country Afghanistan, and how that aspiration led him to Keystone Academy.

Born in the province of Ghazni in central Afghanistan a year after the 9/11 attacks, Basir spent his childhood in a relatively placid village without knowing that a war had been ravaging other parts of his country. When he moved to Kabul for his primary school years, all he saw was "a totally destroyed city" as US military forces were driving rebels out of the capital.

"I was taking the bus to my school when a military vehicle 60 meters away from us was bombed," Basir recalls. "The bus lurched forward, the windows shattered, and all I could hear was my own scream. As I ran home crying with drops of blood on my school uniform, I wished for only one thing: a place where I could study in peace."

Basir pondered over the ways he could continue learning while helping his fellow citizens. At first, he thought of being a scientist to invent a machine. "But that cannot solve all of



our problems," he says. Then he set his sights on becoming a writer. "But my stories cannot feed the people." Finally, he composed his ideas and ruminated on being a leader—the future president of Afghanistan. "And my projects will focus on two things: education and women empowerment."

Basir grew up in a family where his mother was the breadwinner, an uncommon sight in a country where women are supposed to be relegated to the home. Although Mrs. Zamera Sharefee did not have the chance to get a formal education, she understood its importance and made sure her five children would be literate to have a better future. Her lead informed Basir's understanding of the role of women in the community, that "if you empower [them], you empower their families and then the entire society."

Sometime after the bomb attack, a still shell-shocked Basir implored his mother to buy a computer so he could apply to schools abroad.

"It looks like you've gone crazy!" he remembers his mother saying, "But I don't have much money now." Mrs. Sharefee, a cleaner at a private school in Kabul, could only just make ends meet, but found a way to buy a laptop on loan—a second-hand one that cost 12,000 afghanis (about USD 185 / RMB 1,320 in 2016). Still, Mrs. Sharefee bought it, under one condition: "Make sure you don't play video games!"

Even if Basir could do so, power rationing in Kabul was commonplace and internet data connection was expensive. And so, he would prepare his application letters under candlelight and, when he was online, would try to decipher school websites using a translator app. He narrowed his selection down to the boarding schools that offered him a full scholarship: two in the US and Keystone in China.

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Basir spoke with students from other international schools in Beijing about water scarcity and gender issues during the GIN Conference.



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### The Journey to the East

“Dreams make your life more interesting,” Basir says of his aspiration, referencing *The Alchemist*, a novel that he has read four times already. Its protagonist, Santiago, ventures out to Egypt from Spain to find a treasure after having a recurring dream, but his experiences on the way prove to be more worthwhile than the treasure itself. Basir loved the story and even saw himself in Santiago. But their difference? Basir journeyed further to the east—to China.

After some deliberations with friends and family, Basir settled on Keystone's grant, which came first among the three schools that offered him a full scholarship. He remembered how the supposed 30-minute admission interview by former Keystone Dean of Admission and Institutional Research, Rachael Beare, extended to an hour.

“She showed a lot of interest in me and listened to what I said,” Basir adds. “I have had hundreds of moments with people who listened to me, but the level of understanding of Ms. Beare was so different.”

Basir was resolute in his decision to go to China, despite having no idea about the country at all. His parents and former classmates urged him to move to the US instead, because they thought it would be easier for him to get a

college offer there. But the courageous teenager saw China as an adventure of a lifetime, and a chance to “explore a culture that others were ignoring.”

In Beijing, meanwhile, Ms. Beare was moved by Basir's “determination to honor his mother's sacrifices” and his efforts to bring out the potential of his country. Keystone conferred upon Basir a full scholarship, one that would not only provide him access to quality education, but the capacity to enjoy it as well. In addition, his presence at Keystone would help expand the awareness of Chinese students of the world around them.

Gaining admission and applying for a scholarship was already a long shot for Basir. On the Keystone side, obtaining his student visa turned out to be even more painstaking, with Ms. Beare considering it one of the biggest challenges she has dealt with at Keystone. Although it “[seemed] impossible” to bring him to China, “Basir never lost faith and never stopped believing that it could happen,” Ms. Beare added.

It did happen. In November 2017, Basir came to China as the first Afghan high school student in recent memory, according to the Embassy of Afghanistan in Beijing. He brought with him a heart full of hope and excitement, a skill in English just enough for saying basic phrases and questions, and a jacket so thin that he nearly froze before reaching Keystone.

Upon his arrival, he received a warm welcome from Head of High School Dr. Diana Martelly, and his new teachers.

Many of the Keystone people with whom Basir has connected in the past three years have seen the rapid development of his personality and skills. In Afghanistan, he was a boisterous boy; at Keystone, he has let loose that lightheartedness and brings smiles to whomever he is with. Back home, Basir could communicate in three languages: in China, he added two more. Not only has his English improved hugely during his time at Keystone, his Chinese has also flowered from nothing and became something that connected him closer to many people.

Chinese teacher Cao Shujuan saw how Basir strove for understanding in their lessons by practicing and engaging with her outside the classroom. Even if “he was not the fastest learner,” Ms. Cao said, “he is a student with the most solid foundation.”

In the Chinese New Year breaks in 2018 and 2019, Basir was invited by a couple of his Keystone peers to homestays in their hometowns which allowed him to explore the culture and cuisine of his host country. And over those two years, he traveled to seven provinces in China.

Basir stayed in Beijing in the Chinese New Year break in 2020, as the then-novel coronavirus began spreading across the country. The unexpected event gave him more time to bond with his teachers who lived on campus during the online learning program at Keystone.

Dr. Martelly helped Basir make the most out of the self-isolation period. She biked with Basir and others on the outskirts of northern Beijing, taught him to play the guitar,

and they watched inspirational speeches and movies together, among many activities. In one of their bonding moments, Dr. Martelly played John Lennon’s “Imagine” and it became an instant hit to the teenager who had never heard of The Beatles and their world-renowned songs. On one frigid February afternoon, Basir belted the song’s memorable chorus out so loud that his neighbor from the opposite tower, Hilda Man, lead learning specialist from the Keystone Center for Student Development (CSD), overheard him and sang along afterwards. Ms. Man even refers to him as ‘Basir Lennon.’

#### “A Brave Man Stands for Women”

At the beginning of his senior year at Keystone, Basir worked on his Extended Essay (EE) on feminism in which he compared the letter read by Afghan writer and activist Noorjahan Akber to a select audience in the US in 2018 with the speech delivered by British actress Emma Watson at an event on gender equality at the United Nations headquarters in 2014. Basir astutely wrote that both women were “representatives of the modern fourth wave of feminism,” and that they rightfully “reflected the power structures” in place in their respective countries. But their views, he noted, were “fundamentally dissimilar” as they were born and raised in different realities: Akbar and the Afghan people are in a state of war, while Watson and much of the rest of the world live in peace.

Basir also recalled in his essay the arrival of Watson’s movement, HeForShe, in his school in Kabul in 2015. One of its programs, he said, centered on encouraging young men to be “good partners and supports for women, and help them have the same opportunities men have.” Its slogan remained etched in his mind: “A Brave Man Stands for Women.”

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Basir’s mother, Mrs. Zamera Sharefee, and his youngest brother, Abolfazal

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Dr. Diana Martelly, Hilda Man, and Sandra Clark-Guillotel (from left to right) helped Basir improve his English skills





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Basir brought the soccer lessons and experience from the Keystone team back to his program in Afghanistan

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Keystone held its first GIN Conference in 2018, and Basir was one of its student volunteers

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(Clockwise from the top) Basir's sisters Rahila, Nadira, and Adela

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During one biking trip, Basir and Dr. Martelly lost their way, but they ended up bonding more

In a country whose traditions are founded on fundamentalist religious beliefs, “feminism” has a pejorative connotation and being a “feminist” can trigger prejudice. Basir saw the feminist movement as breaking the current notions about the gender roles in his society, and that men should be part of this action too.

He has viewed his childhood observations of his mother’s efforts and their life in a war zone as his motivation for working to attain gender equality. And by studying at Keystone, he has achieved more milestones toward this endeavor, with the help of his teachers and friends.

In one of his many actions while at Keystone, Basir shared his knowledge of applying for scholarship programs abroad with his three younger sisters. As he was the first child in the family to study and live overseas, Basir utilized his Keystone experience to help his sisters write application essays and get ready for the demands of studying abroad. They all succeeded: Adela is now a first-year university student at College of the Atlantic in Maine, Nadira is preparing for her junior high school year at George School in Pennsylvania, and Rahila is a rising tenth grader at Dublin School in New Hampshire.

Meanwhile, Basir traveled back to Afghanistan during his summer vacation in 2018, to launch a program to allow school-aged girls to play soccer in a safe space. He brought home the sport and leadership knowledge from his high school soccer team and Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS) experiences, and event management skills that he developed in the Keystone boarding program and other activities on campus.

After hearing Basir’s initiative, his sister Nadira felt thrilled that the only question she had was: “When?” All of his sisters threw their support to their older brother’s “brilliant plan” because it was “a dream come true” for them, however risky and challenging it was.

Basir’s fellow senior student and best buddy from Keystone, Carlos Key, who was admitted to Columbia University in 2020, initially balked at the idea but realized that his friend would still proceed to help his community. This was one of the many stimulating conversations and exchange of life experiences that the two teenagers have had over the past year. And many times, Carlos was moved by his friend’s story of survival and triumph over so many adversities.

It is not only overcoming struggles that the two teenagers have talked about. They both worked on their college applications together. For Carlos, Basir's funny stories and uninhibited laughter are enough to wake him up at the breakfast table. Beyond this, they have also worked together in many extracurricular activities, such as the GIN Conference in 2019, whose unifying thread was about uncovering the passions of young people.

While Basir helmed the committees on gender inequality and water scarcity, Carlos ran around the event halls, taking photographs of the sessions. During lunch, Basir sat together with the event speakers, including Koen Timmers, at a table and shared his ongoing initiatives. The Belgian educator, as mentioned earlier, was impressed by the depth of Basir's story and aspirations, adding that Keystone has given him and many other students a perspective that "education needs to be global."

"Once you are able to wrap around your head about that fact that we are all having different ideas but we are all the same, then you will be a very good president," Mr. Timmers said. "And Keystone gave him the right foundation for that."

Basir has set his sights on bringing home the lessons he has learned in China and the "unique experience at Keystone" so that more doors will open for Afghan children. He sees himself as a "role model" who will inspire many young people to continue dreaming big.

#### What Matters Most

Basir spoke breathlessly and looked nervous when he delivered his ten-minute Character and Community presentation speech in April 2020, during the period when senior students were allowed to return to school after three months of learning online. In this presentation, the final project for the Keystone Diploma, Basir tried to summarize the last four years of his life and presented memorable photos in a six-slide PowerPoint deck.

"Everyone is good and everyone deserves goodness, and I learned that from Ms. Martelly," he spoke proudly, while Martelly was watching him from a distance. Basir has always looked up to her as a teacher, mentor, and mother figure combine. He has seen how she treated the people around her with kindness.

"And so, I asked myself, 'Why can't I be like her?' Everyone has a good side that we should appreciate," he continued.

Dr. Martelly has always tried to see Basir's optimism and pureness, despite the times when he had become so stubborn that she almost gave up on him. She knew stubbornness so well because she herself was called stubborn by her grandmother during her younger years. Later on, the grandmother would applaud her closely related good side: being persistent.

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“It doesn’t matter whatever personality a person has,” she says, “as long as they use that trait to be able to do something good for the world.”

Some days before the presentation, Dr. Martelly gave her “last few lessons” to Basir by watching together with him “The Last Lecture,” a rousing speech by the late American computer science professor Dr. Randy Pausch. Among the many life lessons the professor shared, it was his idea that “If you wait long enough, people will surprise you and you will see that goodness in them.” She wanted Basir to know that as well.

Dr. Martelly also knew from the very start that the big dream of the Afghan teenager was to become president. For her, “It doesn’t matter if he becomes president.”

“He told me he wants his country to become better,” she recalls, “For him, it means being in a position where he can make it happen. As long as Basir stays focused on what he wants to achieve, and I’m sure he will, he will get there and it won’t matter what or who he is. He’ll discover that by himself.”

### The Afghan Pathfinder’s Next Stop

Basir and Dr. Martelly were together when the student received an email from one of the universities he had applied for. He did not even want to read it alone, and when he opened it...

“I could not believe my eyes!” Basir says with hearty laughter. “Yes, I made it!”

It was a full scholarship offer from Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q). All of Basir’s hard work, writing 18 personal statements until late, paid off. Dr. Martelly witnessed the teenager’s academic struggles and downbeat moments, but she has held him up and reminded him of his big dream.

Soon after, Basir shared the good news with his teachers, telling them that he “couldn’t fit in my skin from happiness,” and that NU-Q would now have its “Afghan moonman.”

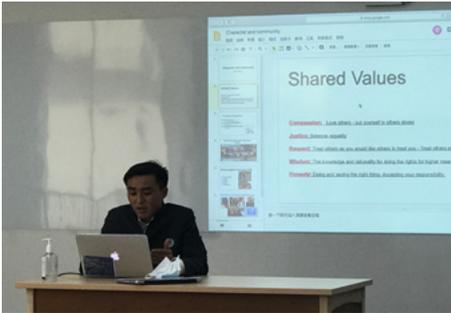
“You have always contributed something to my learning, academically and personally, and it has changed my life,” he

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The student bikes together with his teachers Dr. Martelly, Baldeep Sawhney, Cao Shujuan, and Amanda Shen

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Belgian educator Koen Timmers said Basir “set the bar pretty high” during Keystone’s second GIN Conference in 2019

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“I’ve always felt proud of doing something for a higher meaning,” Basir said of his soccer program for Afghan girls

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He bonded with almost all of his teachers, including Mr. Nehemiah Olwande, his advisor and English teacher

wrote to his teachers. “I couldn’t be ready for the next stage of the journey and my current success without you. I am so lucky that I had all of fantastic and compassionate teachers like you by my side.”

At the time of writing, Basir has yet to decide which subject to major in, but he is considering studying a combination of business and journalism, with a minor in politics. All of these interests come back to his ideas over five years ago: create something useful, write stories, and lead people to a better life.

While he is preparing for the big move—another journey, but this time, to the west—a group of Keystone teachers have banded together to continue helping Basir, such as raising money for his living allowance and buying him daily necessities.

Basir is moved by all the love and compassion that he has received from his Keystone family. “I have grown so much in the past three years and have always practiced our five Keystone shared values. All of my acts in the future will be guided by our shared values. They will stay with me forever. I will keep on passing them on no matter where I will be.”

For the young Afghan pathfinder who has lived in a war zone, he finally found that safe place for learning that he had been wishing for. Now, another door has opened—in the Middle East—and Basir is off on another journey.

“I am going to pursue the greatest education possible so that I can create the greatest change possible in both Afghanistan and the world,” he says.

KEYSTONE

WE CALL  
THAT DANCING HEART  
IN THE DARK  
AS THE MOON

IBDP

Keystone IBDP Arts Exhibition  
Presented by Grade 12 Visual Arts Students

EXHIB

ONE

ARTS

BITTTON

Student

Artists

+

Kaitlyn Li

+

Emita Lin

+

Selina Han

+

Nerina Wang

+

Shuhan Wei

+

Catherine Yang

+

Betty Zhu

Visual

Arts

Advisor

+

Bolsyn Umuzov



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**SELINA HAN**

What is self-deception? It is to escape from reality mentally instead of solving it. For example, my procrastination. In this exhibition, I explore the theme of self-deception through a series of artworks. I have tried to showcase this theme in different contexts. I express and visualize my viewpoints towards several social issues that I pay attention to, including environmental concerns, health problems, technology, among many things. Pink is applied in most of my artworks because, to me, this color represents an illusion that stops us from seeing the truth and the crucial reality. One of the principles of design that I employ in my pieces is contrast—in forms, textures, and colors. Since I see the intrinsic value of art in its power to educate and inspire, I believe contrast catches the attention of viewers and spreads out ideas. I hope my viewers will be inspired by the ideas embedded in this series, and to think critically and broadly about these issues.



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**KAITLYN LI**

Throughout my journey of exploring a variety of art pieces, some forces have dragged me to reflect on myself. These have also inspired me to investigate how art delivers emotions toward the audience. There is a certain power that art holds as it attracts and differentiates people who achieve unique feelings from experiencing it. This shows me its importance and purpose for investigation. Based on our past experiences, we view the world in a different light or look at it from several perspectives. We also think in various ways. So, the same art piece can project different meanings and values based on the audience and their experiences or understanding. During my journey, I have developed and adapted several different types of media, including oil painting, sculpture, and digital art. I left a special space in each art piece open for interpretation, and I hope my exhibition will take the audience on a journey of reminiscence and reflection.



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**EMITA LIN**

The title of my exhibition is a word with which I describe myself, so all artworks in my showcase are about “Self-expression.” They focus either on my emotions, thoughts, identity, or even my other aspects. My creations are completed during different periods when I turn to art to record and preserve my feelings—and it is art that allows ephemerality to transcend immortality. The messages behind each artwork differ significantly, and they are quite self-explanatory.



7

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**NERINA WANG**

My exhibition is titled “Our Generation” and I choose to explore this topic because of my understanding and experiences in my life. Our generation has experienced something so new and unique. As technology developed and gave rise to the creation of the Internet, collision of cultures, and globalization, many of our ideas and understanding of the world now have become vastly different from the time of our parents and elders. Since high school, I have had a global education, and compared to traditional Chinese culture I learned from my parents, there is a collision of ideas and concepts. A lot of memorable moments in my school life encourage me to show how I understand the feelings of young people. We are such an interesting generation: we have more attraction and distraction in our lives; we connect to others via the Internet; we have freedom in many ways; we wear colorful clothes; we love bonds; we access games and other forms of entertainment. However, we are growing much quicker in a way that is incomparable to elders, and yet our minds get challenged by negative feelings that we cannot deal with sometimes. I want my works to become a bridge that connects different generations, and to let everyone know us even more.



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**SHUHAN WEI**

We live in a world that changes so fast, and we are the generation that copes with change. What I remember when I was young is entirely different now that I am older. Change can be so little and yet so significant; it can be both physical and conceptual. Sunlight casts shadows in different corners from morning to afternoon, and the concept of love from the last century is distinct from the concept of love in this century. Similarly, art has changed over time, and we learn about change daily through every approach. I use my artworks to explore the contrasts between concepts, ideas, people, and objects and they reflect my observation of the world where I live. My exhibition is called “Metamorphosis”, which implies the strange transformation in this modern society. To break down the theme, I discuss the changes, divergences, and similarities in many fields. When the audience sees my exhibition, I wish they can build personal connections with the artworks. I also hope people can interpret the artworks in many ways.



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**CATHERINE YANG**

I named my exhibition “Beauty without limits” as these three words capture my creative process. As a feminist, I always inadvertently blend elements of feminism in my artworks. I usually depict a woman’s body or features of females in my paintings to convey a sense of freedom and equality. Before reaching 20, I saw and heard so many unjust comments, criticism, and prejudice towards the way women look, dress, or behave. Even I have experienced these and encountered remarks such as “Women have to be slim,” or “Women should have curves,” or “Women should behave ‘properly.’” There are also notions that “Women should be soft,” or “Women should remain as a housewife and be her husband’s accessory.” But should we? The feminist consciousness has flowered in my mind as I grew up. I believe that we are the master of our own body, and we should not blindly obey the unspoken but unfair rules in society. “Don’t let boundaries bind yourself” is the only rule I follow when I create my artworks. My exhibition also explores several subtopics of my theme.



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**BETTY ZHU**

In my artworks, I investigate the theme of “Human Life” – or the changes, stages, or emotions in one’s life. In my creative this process, I used a variety of art media such as oil paint, acrylic paint, pencil, collage, sculptures. I also utilized formal qualities, basic art elements and principles. The inspiration for my theme comes from my science investigation experience in which I explored sedimentary rocks. These materials form when sediment is deposited out of the air, ice, wind, or other substances, thus transforming into a product of hundreds or even thousands of layers of accumulated elements and becoming tangible evidence of ‘time.’ This concept has inspired me to create a series of art productions that explores the idea of human life. Just as sedimentary rocks, our past experiences gradually pile up and form our lives.



# It's About Time

## Pioneer in World History Deborah Smith Johnston on Presenting the Future to Students

*The time machine is ready, and you have one round-trip ticket to travel in time. Where would you go?*

For world history teacher Dr. Deborah Smith Johnston, she would rather take a trip forward.

“I’ve watched enough *Star Trek* to know that if you want to change the past, it will mess up the present. If we’re trying to prepare our students for the future, I want to go to the future and look at what skills I should be teaching my students. When I return to the present, I will be able to help my students live in that world ahead of time, 100 years from now.”

Her thoughtful view of this hypothetical scenario is unique, especially when other people would take this chance to correct past mistakes or alter their futures.

Even though that time machine is not here yet, Smith Johnston can take her classes on a journey to different eras in history. Her goal? To expand their view of the world.

“I believe that part of studying history is studying the future,” Deborah Smith Johnston says.

### An Understanding of History

In traditional methods of teaching world history, the future is an entirely separate topic, or worse, excluded. But in Smith Johnston’s Individuals and Societies classes at Keystone Academy, talking about the future stimulates the creativity of her students.

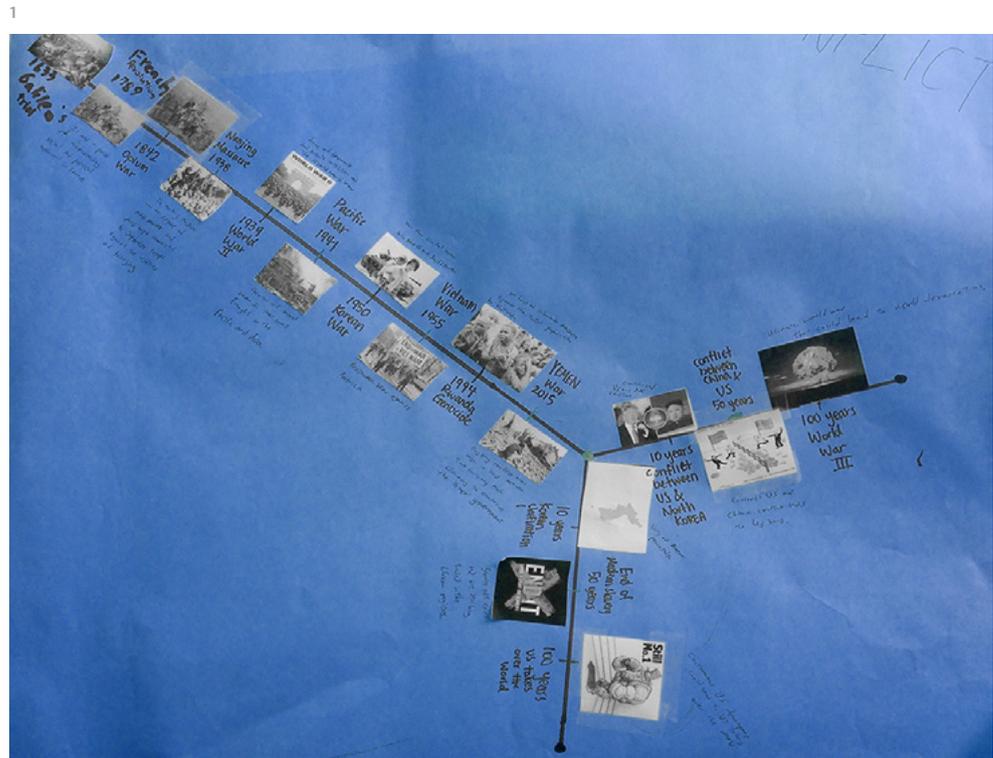
Smith Johnston herself had envisioned a positive future following a life-changing moment while she was completing her Master’s in International Affairs at Columbia University in New York in the late 1980s. After coming across a book that said, “The way to change the world is not through military action or wars—it’s through education,” she immediately went across the street to Teachers College and began her endeavors to get a teaching certificate. During that time, she said, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had been recruiting students, including her friends, to work in Afghanistan. She was resolute: “I don’t want to join the CIA; I want to be a teacher!”

In one of their many activities during the school year, Smith Johnston and her students predict a future scenario for a topic in world history using the Y-shaped “Future Timeline” (pictured below). On the left half of the graph, students list critical events that have shaped the course of the topic. From the midpoint, which marks “Now” or the present day, the graph branches off in two directions: a probable future, and the students’ preferred future.

Her childhood experiences heavily influenced her interest in international affairs. The young Deborah Smith and her family had traveled their native Canada extensively before relocating to the US in the late 1960s. They later moved to England and ultimately to Egypt where she finished high school. She even received her diploma on a piece of papyrus and graduated at the foot of the Great Pyramids of Giza.

“They love imagining the future!” she gushes. “Because most people don’t ask students to imagine the future but to recite the past. I want my students to think about what events would probably happen in the future if things continue on the present trajectory, and what scenarios they would prefer to happen in the future, if they could alter those trends.”

One of her teachers, she recalled, made history come alive by “dancing on tables like the Egyptians,” and even “putting Hitler on trial.” This opened her understanding that history is made up of a variety of perspectives.



1 The Future Timeline is among the activities in Dr. Smith Johnston’s class that stimulate the creativity and imagination of her students



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In the early 1980s, Smith Johnston returned to the US for her undergraduate study in International Affairs and Russian Studies at the College of Wooster in Ohio, which her daughter now attends. Later in the decade, she continued to explore international affairs alongside training as a teacher for her graduate studies at Columbia University.

Meanwhile, the relatively underdeveloped academic field of world history had been gaining traction in the US in this period. Many professors and scholars pivoted away from viewing history from the perspective of Europe and started looking at global approaches. This movement paved the way to the establishment of the World History Association (WHA).

Smith Johnston became a member of the WHA in 1997, almost a decade after she began teaching history in middle school. It was also the period when she started her doctorate in World History at Northeastern University in Boston. Her committee, which included renowned world history and African studies professor Patrick Manning, encouraged her to explore new approaches to teaching the discipline.

### **Facilitating Learning**

Smith Johnston and her husband, TV producer Eric Johnston, moved from Massachusetts to Washington State in the early 2000s with their two young children. Meanwhile, she traveled extensively for research, with students and with her family.

In 2011, she and her son went to Beijing to attend an annual conference of the WHA, an event that “propelled the organization beyond its American roots.” Her first visit to China further developed her appreciation for its culture and history.

The family relocated to China after the couple accepted a job offer from an international school in Shanghai. This allowed Smith Johnston to pursue her interest in the Middle Kingdom as she was able to take her classes on trips to several cities along the ancient Silk Road and to Guizhou.

Her path eventually brought her to Keystone Academy in 2018. Deborah admires the school’s Chinese Thread—or a strong China-conscious focus on the curriculum—that lets her refine her world history pedagogy and teach alongside faculty members who have in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture and history. In one class, she was able to tap into her Chinese peers to teach the Chinese Civilization course to English-speaking students.

“I learned more about Chinese culture,” student Guy Watts says of Dr. J—their term of endearment for her. “Our sixth-grade class made me more knowledgeable about China, which I didn’t know much before. She makes projects more fun. She is enthusiastic and we feel more engaged in the classroom whenever she teaches us.”

Outside the classroom, Smith Johnston is also a longtime debate coach. She has been co-mentoring the Debate Club

KAP (Keystone Activities Program) and bringing students to tournaments to solidify their knowledge and “practice talking about what they are learning.”

Grade 11 student William Tian is one of her many mentees. However, it is his experience under the tutelage of Dr. J that he values the most.

“I know I’m not good at debating or public speaking. Dr. J was my Individuals and Societies teacher and she once encouraged me to join this KAP. She was full of hope for me, so I joined. I spent a lot of time thinking about it, but then I finally decided to join. At first, I didn’t do well in the training because I’ve always felt nervous when talking in front of people, but Dr. J and my classmates encouraged me. She taught me how to relax and said, ‘Everything will be fine. If you realize, you can do it.’”

“My objective is to make my students better thinkers,” Smith Johnston says. “It is crucial to me that all voices are heard in my classroom. I try to make sure every student talks every day in a class not because I’m forcing them but because they want to. That is how I gauge their understanding. And so, I think of myself as not a disseminator of information but a facilitator of knowledge,” she said.

#### A “Shift” in a Student’s Life

Drawing on her childhood experiences in Egypt, Smith Johnston has been able to examine her North American roots from the outside. This “worldview,” as she puts it, is what she has been sharing with her students. She believes students with a worldview will be able to appreciate their home countries as well as to look through numerous lenses to celebrate and understand the diversity and commonalities among everyone.

“Educators like Dr. J were instrumental in building spaces where I could grow intellectually and learn about myself as a learner and a person in this world,” says Ariela Rothstein, one of Smith Johnston’s former students.

They first met at a tenth-grade World History class at Lexington High School in Massachusetts more than 15 years ago. Rothstein admits she could not remember what her first impression of Smith Johnston was.

“But I do remember the feelings I had in her classroom—that she respected me as an intellectual. She valued student opinions and wanted us to work hard and develop our own ideas and become critical thinkers and kind human beings.”

This teaching style left an indelible mark on Rothstein, who is now a World History teacher herself. Despite growing up in a family of educators, Rothstein did not find the motivation to teach until a “shift” happened after her first class with Dr. J. There, she realized how “a good teacher can really change students’ lives and their sense of themselves.” As a side note, Ariela’s father is Dan Rothstein, co-director of the Right Question Institute, a critical thinking educational resource on which Keystone teachers were trained at the beginning of 2020.

The student-teacher duo has continued communicating even after Rothstein graduated from high school. In the years since, Rothstein has sought inspiration and educational guidance from Smith Johnston, whom she calls the “lifeline of my first year of teaching, whether she knew it or not.”

“Dr. J and I have shared curriculum ideas over the past decade and I still teach many of the units she has shared with me,” Rothstein says. “No matter what my email to her, whether a connection to her class, a request for resources as I began planning my own courses, or questions about education, she always responded with care and thoughtfulness. Knowing that I had someone to reach out to—who had taught me in all the ways I wanted to teach my students pedagogically, and also taught me so much content about the world—I just felt like I had a support system through her.”

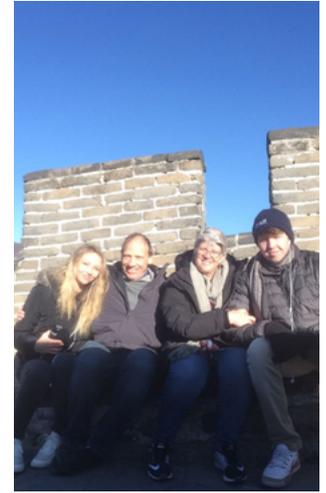
For Keystone eleventh grader Alisa He, “perspective” was the key lesson in her Individuals and Societies class with Smith Johnston. The student thought World History was a “boring subject,” but found herself becoming more interested in it, thanks to Dr. J’s creative reimagining of historical topics, or through using games or giving special rewards.

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Dr. Smith Johnston together with (from center to right) WHA President Merry Wiesner-Hanks and 2019 Pioneer in World History Award recipient Carter V. Findley

4 5  
The Smith Johnston family on the Great Wall of China in Beijing (top) and Chengdu (bottom)



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“How do I view the world now?” she ponders. “I see comments, news, and different sides and arguments about what is happening in the world today. Before, I may agree with a side that relates to my view. Now, I will listen to another side and analyze how they come to a conclusion and see what their perspectives are. Now, I won’t judge something whether it is purely right or wrong. I’ll think about it through the perspective of other people.” This lesson served her well in Theory of Knowledge, a class she took with Dr. J in the 2019–2020 academic year.

### **Standing on the Shoulders of Giants**

“It is a fascinating time to be living in China,” Smith Johnston says. “I’m so blessed to be able to bring this perspective to my family and friends and colleagues in the US. Among the things they want to know the most about are my insights into the country. Because of my being here, I feel like I’m a Chinese cultural ambassador.”

For Smith Johnston, this type of cross-cultural dialogue is now important more than ever to remind Chinese citizens that most Americans do not identify with the current administration.

In June 2019, she presented her research during the 28th WHA conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico. At this workshop

titled “Chinese Global Cities: Supporting Academic Conversations,” she and her co-researchers Sonja Czarnecki and Linda Black discussed their study on internal and external migration in Beijing, Shanghai, and Xi’an, and how these movements can become an interactive lesson in world history.

The workshop also marked the second collaboration between Smith Johnston and Czarnecki. They presented together at a world history conference in 2008.

“I learned so much from her that time and I knew it would be a great experience to work together again,” says Czarnecki, Dean of Students and History faculty member at Bishop Seabury Academy.

The conference in Puerto Rico was where the WHA named Smith Johnston a Pioneer in World History, a prestigious accolade given to only two people every year in recognition of their exceptional contributions to world history studies.

Smith Johnston calls it a humbling but intimidating experience to be part of an elite group of awardees that includes her mentor, the former president of the American Historical Association Patrick Manning.

“Isaac Newton said, ‘If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants,’ when people were developing

what other people had done. It's only because of what those giants did that I was able to do the work that I do," she states further.

The WHA award is one of the many accolades Smith Johnston has received throughout her career. She was the National History Day James F. Harris History Teacher of the Year awardee in 2018. She also received the Global Education Teacher of the Year from the State of Massachusetts in 1994 and a national Geography Education award in the same year.

Beyond these recognitions, Smith Johnston says her ultimate goal still is to be able to contribute to new teachers, colleagues, and students. Keystone teachers Rachel Hopkins and Sandra Clark Guillotel say their colleague has inspired them to view world history holistically.

"The world is Dr. Deb's classroom," Guillotel explains. "As such, she is always 'in the classroom.' There is always something new to see, new ideas to exchange, new perspectives to be gained. Through her, I have discovered a small passion for history myself! Also, her ability to merge a challenging MYP [Middle Years Programme] concepts-based course with the needs of the Language Acquisition students has been useful to me as an advisor."

Hopkins says teaching with Dr. J has challenged her to teach from a more global perspective. "Many of experiential activi-

ties that we do in class stem from Deb's influence. She wants them to be a part of the lesson rather than the students simply listening and taking notes."

In the case of Czarnecki, Smith Johnston's impact has been "immense" as she has "transformed the approach of teaching history."

"Like many educators of my generation, I never studied world history *per se* as a high school or college student—the world history 'movement' had not yet had much influence. She was instrumental in helping me get oriented to the seminal works in the field by scholars—for my own background knowledge and for use in the classroom. She has been active from the early days of the world history movement and knows the field and practitioners better than anyone else," Czarnecki adds.

Rothstein says Smith Johnston's model of teaching has kept her focused on some of the essential parts of education: creating intellectual space where students can grow, question, critique, and analyze.

"I am teaching in very different contexts, but creating those brave spaces is a universal theme. What we share is an ultimate respect for human beings—students and adults—and recognition that creating brave intellectual spaces where all voices are respected is the goal."

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Dr. Smith Johnston accompanied Keystone students to the Titanic Studios in Belfast

7  
She gave a sweet surprise to one of her students, who was celebrating his birthday—cupcakes!

8  
Students in her Individuals and Societies class create papyrus

## Envisioning a Better World

Two weeks after the opening of the first semester of 2019, Smith Johnston welcomed her advisees with a sweet surprise. As the class began, she went to her desk and retrieved two baking trays hidden beneath several sheets of paper.

Two of the students were celebrating their birthdays, and they were surprised to see the chocolate cupcakes Dr. J had baked. She then sang “Happy Birthday” together with her students. After the simple celebration, Smith Johnston, like a mother, reminded the students about their important tasks.

In her 30-year teaching career, Smith Johnston has seen students who have fallen through the cracks regardless of the school or method of learning. Her experiences have made her aware of her crucial part in the growth of her students.

“One of the most important roles I’ve had at Keystone is being an advisor. I’ve always had a motherly approach in this pastoral role. I want my students, particularly the older students, to feel that compassion, but I also want them to have a sense of how you balance your academic life.”

For now, the time machine is still unavailable, but there are still ways to envision a better world.

“This is today,” Smith Johnston points to the junction in the future timeline. “From here, I want them to be able to see forward because as soon as we start to visualize a positive future, they believe we are more likely going to go that way.”

*Special thanks to Eric Johnston, Rachel Hopkins, Sandra Clark-Guillotel, Ariela Rothstein, Sonja Czarnecki, Alisa He, William Tian, and Guy Watts for providing information and materials for this profile.*

# She's Only Just Begun

Why Every Walk Away Leads  
Chinese Teacher Feng Qionqiong  
to a Better Beginning

If there's a phrase that would sum up Feng Qionqiong's life from college to present, it would be "walking away." When Ms. Feng was still living in her hometown in Jiangxi Province more than a decade ago, she pursued a teaching career at a century-old school which others could only envy. Later, however, she followed the path of her personal hero in leaving her sought-after post to take a postgraduate degree in Beijing. After graduating with a PhD from Beijing Language and Culture University, Ms. Feng once more walked away from an opportunity, this time teaching at that very institution. Instead, she came to Keystone Academy.

All of these instances have puzzled her relatives and friends. To her, every time she walks away, it leads to a better beginning.

蘭有異香





### A Strong Woman

As a person who is curious about anything new, Ms. Feng never thinks there are barriers between different disciplines. Just because she teaches literature doesn't mean she is confined to the world of words. She has studied jazz dance for many years and loves classical music. Ms. Feng has also ventured into the realms of business English, mathematics, and big data. Her broad interests have opened her mind to various ways of thinking and teaching.

Back in her home province of Jiangxi, Ms. Feng lived a life that many newly-qualified teachers could only dream of. After graduating from university, she taught at her town's renowned high school, which has over one hundred years of history. Her career gave her the figurative "iron rice bowl"—a stable job and a hard-won place on the government payroll. It was fulfilling at first, until her class size swelled to more than 70 students.

"I like being a teacher because we help educate people and develop the next generation. But when there are 70 or 80 students in a class, I can't take care of everyone," Ms. Feng says. "I am just teaching. I can't connect with their hearts or, even more so, make a real impact on them. This arrangement frustrated me. That was not what I want to be."

Despite the opposition of her family and friends, Ms. Feng left the "iron rice bowl" behind. One day, she came across an episode of the TV program *Lecture Room* which talked about the image of women in modern literary works. Ms. Feng was deeply moved by the discussion of female empowerment by the show's host Li Ling. She felt sure that the image of a "strong woman" was what she would expect of herself.

This led to her decision to go all the way to the north and pursue a postgraduate program under the same TV host, who also taught at Beijing Language and Culture University. Ms. Feng juggled her doctorate studies with teaching at the university, and later, motherhood.

"I was pregnant when I submitted my thesis proposal. Just before my defense, I welcomed my baby," she recalls. "And after that, I asked myself: 'What is the best education for my child?'"

Ms. Feng strongly believes that a child should follow their own path based on their interests, but with guidance from a teacher. When she became a mother herself, she decided to bring this concept to younger students—and left her university teaching career. She found a place to realize her education dream: Keystone Academy, a school that shares her educational philosophy.

## Building Identity

Young people can pursue anything they want or learn everything under the sun. For Ms. Feng, only by shaping character can teachers help children truly grow as responsible citizens. Based on this belief, Ms. Feng puts forward her educational philosophy: identity, learning, creativity.

“These are three stages that students must undertake, step by step, to grow up,” she explains. “None of these three stages can be sidestepped or neglected. If the students start to learn knowledge before building their own national and cultural identity, they risk losing their core. They may even belittle themselves because of a lack of self-confidence in their national culture.”

“On the other hand, if students do not learn from the world after shoring up their identities, they will be trapped in narrow-mindedness and cultural arrogance. Only after building identity and learning can the students grasp the fine elements of the vast cultural heritage shared by humanity to create new things. Once they have a strong identity, they realize the purpose of learning for the world.”

She integrates this philosophy into her classroom projects. In 2018, for example, Ms. Feng required her students to produce a documentary about their family as a summative assessment for a literature course. In this project, students

talked to the elder family members for up to three generations, allowing all of them to delve into their identities and learn more about their ancestries.

It turned out to be a very successful program. During the filming process, the then-eighth grader Lily Gao became emotional to learn about the past of her family.

“It was only after making the family documentary that I learned how awesome my mom is,” Lily sheds a tear while talking about the experience. “Mom was born in a small village and studied hard to get the highest score in a college entrance examination. Through hard work, she found her place in Beijing and became a partner of a law firm. That is truly amazing!”

Even parents were glad that they were able to share family stories with their children. Ms. Feng describes how the uncle of one of her students made a family tree and proudly said, “Son, take a photo of them all. This is our family lineage.”

The documentary project became a chance for families to go back to their roots. Some parents who had planned to spend the Chinese New Year elsewhere went back home to let their children experience their roots.

From learning individuality through family documentaries, Ms. Feng moved to cultural identity through the course, “Ancient Poetry on the Map.” Here, she taught classical Chinese poetry from three different ancient cultures—the San Qin (三秦), the Dongwu (东吴), and the Jingchu (荆楚)—and connected them to the areas where they originated. The course touched upon folk traditions and folk identity of the people from these cultures while looking into their future. The students did so by conducting comparative analyses and learning geography.

Through the course, the class encountered ancient verses that referenced the 24 solar terms and traditional festivals linked to the lunar calendar. Ms. Feng helped students interpret these intangible cultural heritage concepts, thus further building their cultural identity from the perspective of history.

“Whether it is a family identity or cultural identity, my ultimate goal is to let students develop their sense of mission. They need to know that they are born out of such a great family with a profound and excellent culture. This power is beyond their imagination and it allows them to create a lot of great things. When students have self-confidence and



a sense of mission, they will be able to better learn from and for the world,” Ms. Feng says.

### **The “One Seed” Plan**

During a Keystone Activities Program (KAP) session, Ms. Feng gathered her students around a table for a discussion about creation.

“If you were God, what kind of world would you create?” she asked one student, followed by with another question: “If you had a magic lamp, what wish would you make?”

“I want to create a world where everyone is happy,” one child responded.

“I want to create a world without technology because it makes the world very complicated,” replied another.

“If I had a magic lamp, I would wish to give people the right to choose to live or die,” another one said.

Though the responses may seem idealistic and ingenuous, Ms. Feng held the discussion for a reason: to encourage the students to see more perspectives so they could establish and reach for their life goals.

Ms. Feng calls her KAP the “One Seed Plan,” inspired by her vision that every child is like a small seed. Through this KAP, she hopes the members will grow and branch out.

“This KAP helps me do some serious thinking about what kind of person I want to be and what my future life should look like,” tenth grader Iris Zhang says. “Ms. Feng has encouraged us to think about our college life. Thanks to her KAP, I’m getting more prepared for university admissions exams and clearer about my study interest and how I can get there.”

Besides hosting sharing sessions, Ms. Feng also conducts study tours with her KAP members. During the week-long National Day holiday in October 2019, she and ten of her students went to Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province to study the history and development of blue and white porcelain. This tour not only emphasized the crucial role Chinese ceramics played in driving the progress of western civilizations, but also showed how students could contribute to society through learning history.

Students knew about porcelain only from books or the Internet before coming to Jingdezhen. On the trip, they saw the process of creating and decorating porcelain first hand. They

also learned from the professors of a ceramics university and local traditional artists directly.

“Take the environmental protection equipment used in porcelain making as an example. Students previously learned that only Japan employs such equipment, while China does not. In Jingdezhen, however, we found out that potters there also make use of this equipment. Sometimes, background information may be either insufficient or inaccurate. You would never know these sorts of things until you see them yourself,” Ms. Feng says.

She has plans to grow the One Seed Plan KAP and take it further. They are planning to go to Japan for another study tour on porcelain making, providing students an opportunity to compare the development trajectories of Chinese and Japanese porcelain. Ms. Feng is also looking to take her students to Silicon Valley in the United States so that they can feel the power of technology.

### **Creating Something New Every Day**

On the podium, Yike Shi recited a poem over soothing instrumental music. Ms. Feng took her camera and recorded a video.

It was not a performance or a competition; the recital was part of a tenth-grade Chinese Language and Literature class taught by Ms. Feng. Students read poems as a basis for evaluating their studies in the poetry unit, where they composed verses that echoed various themes such as patriotism or reality. The young poets were also required to interpret those themes and analyze the form and language of their compositions using background research or adding music to them.

The exam day of Ms. Feng’s literature class turned into an artistic extravaganza where students presented their poetry. Some compositions were inspired by classical Chinese poetry; others were made into songs. In one presentation, several students rapped a poem about their views on life.

Kevin Zhang wrote “Liuzhou Getou” and “Qinyuan Chun,” inspired by Song-era literature. Through these two poems, Kevin expressed his desire to live a simple countryside life.

“Ms. Feng inspired me a lot, especially when I was writing the poems,” Kevin says. “I realized that idylls flourished during the Jin Dynasty, so this kind of poetry wasn’t new at all. So, I put my own take on it: regardless of where you live or your family, nothing in the world will affect your

happiness as long as you maintain a pure and simple heart. This view of life is something I have never thought of before, and I have benefited a lot from it.”

Ms. Feng was pleased by the compositions of the students. Their works exuded sincerity and self-reflection, as if they were made for a literary performance and not for an assessment.

After several decisions to walk away, Ms. Feng has finally found her direction in life. At the time of publication, she has worked at Keystone for four years, a period shaped by her passion for developing the character of her students.

“We all want our children to become the best that they can be. How to make them grow for the better is something I have been working hard for.”

Her first four years at Keystone are only the beginning. As Ms. Feng says herself, “The next four years will be even more exciting.”



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Ms. Feng accompanied several students for a summer program in Italy

The Paris Institute of Political Studies, also known as Sciences Po, is often hailed as one of the most prestigious and selective European schools devoted to the social sciences. Founded in 1872 in the French capital, Sciences Po has produced numerous intellectual and cultural figures. It has continuously heralded a rich tradition of cultivating the minds of students at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Sciences Po places a heavy emphasis on making its school body and curriculum more international. It does so through a broad and deep diversity that reflects the institution's aspirations in becoming a training ground for tomorrow's world leaders.

Amid that, the institution still maintains a strong French identity and culture. Much like Keystone Academy, Sciences Po is deeply committed to providing holistic education to its students.

In 2013, the prestigious institution welcomed Frederic Mion as its new president. A visionary and dynamic leader, Mr. Mion has expanded Sciences Po's presence beyond France's borders. Mr. Mion encourages cross-cultural collaboration and hopes to cultivate a sense of civic responsibility in students, not only for their communities but for the world.

Mr. Mion continues to be a trailblazer in the world of global higher education. At Sciences Po, he teaches students a strong sense of curiosity and wonder, academic excellence, and adventure.

The possibilities of education are endless, and it is a journey with many roads. In this edition of *The Keystone Magazine*, Keystone's Director of Marketing and Communications Sabrina Liu and Director of the Office College Counseling Percy Jiang invite you to a dialogue with Mr. Mion. They delve into Sciences Po's educational philosophies, the merits of education, and the value that a Sciences Po education holds for young minds.

# The Idea of a University

IN DIALOGUE WITH

# Sciences Po



Photo: Courtesy of Sciences Po

**FREDERIC MION**

President of Sciences Po

**SABRINA LIU**

Director of Marketing and Communications  
at Keystone Academy

**PERCY JIANG**

Director of College Counseling  
at Keystone Academy

**SABRINA LIU** Mr. Mion, we are delighted to have you join us! I would like to begin with a question about your educational background. Before joining Sciences Po, you attended many prestigious universities around the world, and each of them has a vastly different educational system. In the United States, you attended Princeton University. In France, you attended an institution under the *Grandes écoles* – or the most distinguished schools of higher education in the country. Could you please tell us what makes the *Grandes écoles* system unique?

**FREDERIC MION** I am honored to speak with Keystone Academy. Historically, the French system of higher education was split into two unequal parts. In the traditional sense, universities in France are not selective institutions. By French law, universities are mandated to take in all students who have obtained a high school diploma. Selective institutions, called the *Grandes écoles*, typically accept students after two years of preparation and after they have received a high school degree, in addition to completing extremely competitive entrance exams for a spot in the institutions. These institutions offer degrees in engineering, business, and several other fields.

At Sciences Po, we are at a crossroads of the two systems because we are a selective university. In France, we embody a unique system because we are a mixture of a *université* and a *grande école*. We are like American and British universities since we select our students based on incredibly competitive procedures utilized in their countries.

We have our students work hard because it is essential for them to be in environments where they are academically

stimulated during the years that they study with us. We incorporate many activities into their weekly schedules which enable them to develop in other ways as well. Students immerse themselves in the arts, athletics, and other activities that will help them take up an active position in the world. At Sciences Po, we see that as essential.

**LIU** I agree with you. It is important to nurture students in a holistic way. In that regard, how does Sciences Po compare to other educational university systems around the world?

**MION** If you look at French institutions, universities were more inward-looking 30 years ago. They hadn't yet accomplished the transformation of an institution which is open to the world and has a global outlook. Whereas during the same time, a school such as Princeton University, considered one of the top ten universities in the world, attracted talent from around the globe due to its reputation.

Since then, things have changed because the world of higher education has seen national frontiers come down. From the end of the 1990s to the early 2000s, those barriers to entry no longer existed. A great example would be the bright Chinese students at Keystone. Your students now look at the entire world for their futures. These students will look at opportunities in North America, Europe, and possibly in other countries in Asia. China has a reputation of having excellent universities as well.

The difference between the French and American institutions has disappeared. There are elements of singularity that remain in France compared to the American system. This may have to

do with the fact that in many instances, French universities and *grande écoles* require you to specialize in one field very quickly. In contrast, undergraduate studies in the American system tend to be very general for the first two years before a student must choose a major and a minor. In France, historically, students were made to specialize in one discipline early on.

Sciences Po has always espoused a different model. We are an institution that has always been multidisciplinary at the undergraduate and the master's levels. Even though we encourage our students to specialize in a discipline so they can focus on a professional field, we make sure they keep abreast of many other subjects. It is because we believe that the confrontation of various disciplines is essential if our students are going to tackle significant challenges and understand the complexity of the world.

**LIU** This leads me to my next topic about these changes. Globalization has become prevalent in many discourses involving development around the world. We are entering an era where educational institutions must look beyond their national borders to grow and expand.

**MION** At Sciences Po, we are unique in that sense. There is no other institution in Europe that, at least at the undergraduate and graduate levels, possesses such a diversity of origins within the student body. This stems from a deep belief that the strength of the university is linked to the diversity of its student body.

As a student, learning will come not only from professors but also from peers. To extract valuable lessons from peers, you

must ensure that they are not another version of yourself. If those peers are exact replicas, they will simply confirm your biases, ideas, and prejudices. Thus, the valuable lessons meant to be learned in a classroom will not be available.

Insisting upon having a diverse student body at Sciences Po is about being true to our mission as a university. We want to make sure that we, by virtue of that diversity, give our students the very best educational experience they can hope for.

Having a diverse body means we also make a great effort in selecting our students. We want them to be academically excellent students who embrace certain values. These are all things that one expects from a selective institution.

We also work hard to ensure our students to be as different from one another as possible. Nearly 50 percent of our student population is comprised of young people coming from all over the world, and I am proud to see that we have a few hundred Chinese students in our midst.

**LIU** It is wonderful to learn that Sciences Po has such a strong commitment to international diversity. France has long been regarded as a country with a rich historical and cultural heritage. Its educational system has given birth to some of the world's most influential philosophers, artists, educators, economists, and politicians. The school serves as a source of inspiration and foundation for modern critical thought. The 150-year legacy of Science Po continues to produce leaders in several fields. How does France's historical and cultural heritage make Sciences Po a unique



school? What influence does this have on daily student life and learning at Sciences Po?

**MION** This is an excellent question and one which we need to approach with caution. We are, of course in many ways, heirs to a long tradition of French intellectual and artistic production simply by virtue of being French, of being based in Paris from the onset, and also of now having campuses in many towns with considerable historical heritage and background. We take great pride in being part of that tradition and heritage.

Much is drawn from that common heritage. In France, we are renowned for teaching our students methods which will help them structure their reasoning, as well as the ways they think, write, and produce an argument. Traditionally, this methodology is associated with Sciences Po. We take pride in the fact that we have produced famous philosophers and thinkers over the centuries. Among whom belong the 20th-century novelist Marcel Proust.

We also produce famous figures in other fields such as the fashion designer Christian Dior, whom you would not immediately associate with a social sciences university. Those two I quote because they are, in a sense, good examples of the French literary and artistic tradition in which we take pride. When our students join Sciences Po, they become part of our history and culture.

The reason why I say we should approach this with caution deals directly with diversity. We do not want our cultural heritage to intimidate students from other cultures and countries. In places within France and other countries, Sciences Po's cultural heritage is not immediately accessible and can seem strange or perplexing. We make sure a diverse applicant pool feels comfortable applying to Sciences Po.

One of the things which we have done in the last 20 years is to make sure that we can offer an education to students who have not mastered the French language. We do not require our students to master French to graduate from Sciences Po. We emphasize on offering education in English to those students

who choose to study in this language. Of course, during their years with us, they are encouraged to learn French and most of them do. It is part of the idea of choosing a French university over a British or an American one.

France values its language, culture, and history, so making it possible to study in English was a way to open our doors so that these things are accessible to students from the less favored and less privileged families. Even from those within France who might otherwise think that Sciences Po is too elitist and too hard for them to get into.

**LIU** Many people whom I have talked to think the French, as you said, are cultural elitists. They believe that the French possess the best of everything. What do you think about this assumption?

**MION** Yes, and you are kind not to use the word, but I can use it myself: cultural arrogance. In many ways, today, we have to fight against that. If we are proud of our culture, as I am, then we have to make sure that anyone can access and be given the keys to it. We cannot just flaunt it as something unattainable.

**LIU** France has played such a pivotal role in shaping not just modern cultural trends in Europe, but also in the entire world. There was a time in history when France embraced artists and scholars from around the world.

**MION** Yes, exactly, and this is our history. What made us great historically was our ability to draw in talent from all over the world with open arms. That is a lovely expression.

**LIU** Sciences Po's admissions brochure says the institution's "Undergraduate curriculum emphasizes the study of the humanities," and "Fields such as art history, geography, literature, and philosophy are paramount to cultivating a critical analysis of contemporary political, economic, and social questions." Why are these crucial elements in students' learning and development? How do these various disciplines enhance a students' learning experience at the institution?

**MION** The reason we insisted upon that is traditionally, at least for French families, Sciences Po is associated with the social sciences. For example, this encompasses economics, law, sociology, political science, and history. These five disciplines are the pillars of our undergraduate education and for the professional schools that we offer at the master's level.

For our students to approach the world in all its complexity and to make sense of it, they must be provided with tools derived from other disciplines and other models of approaching the world. Hence, our insistence on focusing

on traditional humanities such as literature, philosophy, history, and art history amongst others. Students in the first two years at the undergraduate school must follow artistic workshops. They choose from a variety of disciplines such as painting, video creation, poetry workshops, and more. This may seem excessive, but it is because we feel that practicing art is another way of experiencing. It is vital to understanding the world, in the political sense as much as it is the social sciences. We feel that the humanities are an essential complement to the approach that the social sciences afford.

While we do not offer courses in the hard sciences, students are also exposed to this element. The world, as we know it, is changing. With the rise of technology and the development of artificial intelligence, for example, students must learn to socialize with those in disciplines which are notably different from their academic backgrounds. Hence, our insistence on exposing students to fields outside of the social sciences, from the humanities and the hard sciences.

**LIU** I asked that question because I wanted Chinese audiences to understand what you are saying about the importance of the humanities.

**MION** What I've realized in my six years as president of Sciences Po, from talking to a lot of recruiters, is that increasingly, they want to recruit young people who are not only technically competent but also have a firm grounding in our shared culture as humans. There is no better definition of the humanities. They realize that the technical skills one acquires in school will fade quickly, as changing ever rapidly. The speed of that change is unlikely to diminish in years to come.

Ultimately, what will make recruits good employees, and eventually capable leaders in their institutions, is their ability to grasp the world with a wider view. Seeing the world in a broader context with a substantial personal grounding is what makes them human.

It is the combination of the two that will make them good humans. This is the importance of the humanities in the early stages of education. The impact of these people on future generations is likely to be tremendous so we must make sure they are reliable and good humans.

**LIU** All educational institutions seek to attract the best and brightest students to their institutions. What type of student would be suitable for a Sciences Po education? How does the university ignite and cultivate curiosity in its students?

**MION** That is one of the key questions we keep asking ourselves with a renewed sense of urgency year after year. There

are three main qualities that we look for in a student. First, we recruit students who perform exceptionally well academically. They must be excellent students who have demonstrated their ability to study hard and to focus on subjects that are not typically easy and for which they might not have a great love. They must be good students. This is essential.

Second, and equally important, is curiosity. They must demonstrate that as high school students, they are interested in the world outside of their bubbles. They must have a genuine interest in public affairs, international relations, and other cultures and countries. They must have a sense of adventure. In time, that will be necessary for them to become the leaders we want them to be.

The third quality is linked to the second one in that we want students willing to take an active part in society. Even as high school students, there is so much they can do to leave a positive presence in the world. We have made it mandatory for our students in those first years to participate in what we call 'civic engagement.' Throughout the first three years of their education, students help people who are in need, whether these be senior citizens, people with disabilities, and so forth. We want to test that ability early on, so when applicants get accepted into Sciences Po, we know that they will take an active part in the community. This could mean that in high school they are part of a society which does great civic engagement work or any number of activities. We have no set criteria as to what that active part should be, but we want to know that they are willingly engaged.

In short, these are the three qualities: excellence in academics, curiosity to the point of having a sense of adventure, and the will to participate actively in society.

**LIU** Sciences Po has a unique undergraduate curriculum which requires all students to spend their third year abroad and complete a Capstone Project. In what ways does the university prepare students, through the Capstone Project, to craft new narratives about the world and help shape the global dialogues of the future?

**MION** You are correct in saying that this is relatively unique to our institution. I have seen many great universities over the past six years, and I do not think I have come across any that have made it compulsory for all undergraduate students to spend a year abroad. Oftentimes, there is a mandatory study abroad program or semester, but rarely an entire academic year.

Having an entire generation of undergraduates who will all go away for one year is very unusual. Also, having several cam-

puses that focus on a different region of the world is odd. This is one element which makes Sciences Po unique.

The decision to mandate that all students study abroad during their third year was made in the early 2000s. This was a bit of a shock to many parents and educational communities in France. Yet it has proven to be one of the best decisions ever made at Sciences Po. First, we believe in the education that we provide, and we understand that education will only ever be one way of looking at the world, one way of grappling with it. By sending our students abroad to another educational institution, usually other outstanding universities around the world, we give them a window to different ways of approaching these very subjects outside of Sciences Po, and other means of working on these problems. Our methodology is quite remarkable to us. I know that there are different methodologies from elsewhere that students will gain knowledge.

Learning through the lens of another institution is also learning through the lens of another culture. For example, a student could go from Belgium to France or from France to Belgium, but the cultural shock will be limited. They will learn a few things but probably not as much as they would if placed in different circumstances, say in India, or a country in Africa, or in China. In these places, students will know more just by living with people who come from different backgrounds and perspectives on a day to day basis. In return, these students will learn a tremendous amount about themselves, which links back to our discussion about the importance of the humanities and having a firm grasp of our shared culture as humans.

You will not believe the way our students change during that third year abroad. Even before they leave us at the end of their second year, oftentimes, I have the impression that they have grown into full adults during their stint at Sciences Po. Our students indeed become more mature, but in many ways, they are still grown-up teenagers. When they return from their third year abroad, they are completely changed human beings. They have undergone an accelerated metamorphosis throughout the year.

Students' third year abroad also adds a useful dimension to their experience because they learn from another culture. For many students in France, they point out during entrance interviews that the third year abroad is one of the key reasons why they want to be admitted to Sciences Po.

**LIU** Sciences Po should call itself a world university. The institution has seven campuses and each focus on a different world region, and a compulsory third year abroad program. These experiences make Sciences Po a world-minded uni-



versity, and one gets the sense that they are learning from the world. You do not just coddle your students, you also let them go.

**MION** You are right. In a short period during the early 2000s, Sciences Po had to develop a network of partnerships with universities that could accommodate the hundreds of students who suddenly had to spend a year abroad.

We had to form ties quickly with universities who knew of us, but not too well. Over the period of two to three years, many of those universities expressed that they had been impressed by the quality of our students. This, in turn, was the best recognition that we could get. It has helped us tremendously by gaining a robust international reputation because universities have recognized our outstanding students. They have begun to think highly of the institution from where these pupils came. This has had a positive effect on the number of associations with which we have been able to build connections. Those institutions include Columbia University, The University of California – Berkeley in the US, and Peking University and Fudan University in China. This was also an excellent decision because those students have proven to be our best ambassadors. They are the best images of the type of students Sciences Po can produce.

**PERCY JIANG** Keystone is a world school and we are trying to educate our students to learn from the world and learn for the world. What is your advice on how students can best prepare themselves for the future?

**MION** We should not forget that the key is helping students get a sense of who they are and not telling them who they are. Simply put, not forcing them to be who we want them to be. We have to help them discover who they are and there is no better way of doing that than by encouraging them to follow their inclinations and enthusiasm for a subject, an author, or even for a type of sport or art. Pushing students towards excellence means helping them identify those things in which they will take such pride and joy and try to excel doing. What applies to education in general also applies to the academic world.

**LIU** Currently, Sciences Po has partnerships with 470 universities around the world, including existing partnerships with universities in China. What are the university's plans for further development in China?

**MION** In China, we currently have 14 partner universities with which we have student exchanges. So far, this has proven to be a network large enough to absorb the Sciences Po students who want to go abroad and who, in turn, are



sent to us because of these exchange mechanisms that our students are delighted to have.

Our current aim in China is to deepen our relationship with three key institutions, namely the Tsinghua, Peking, and Fudan universities. By deepening these ties, we want to make sure that the dual degrees we have with two of those institutions work even better. We also want to be able to work jointly on research projects or programs having to do with public debates that are important to us and that we know will be important to our partners. That is one example of the goals we aim to develop with Chinese institutions.

**LIU** This is great to hear, and I know that so many students will benefit from these exchanges. Sciences Po is often regarded as Europe's top university for students interested in the social sciences and the humanities. Many successful world leaders have graduated from the institution as well. Leadership is not only relegated to specific domains such as

politics or business but also in many other areas. How does Sciences Po define leadership? What is the definition of a successful Sciences Po graduate?

**MION** That is a tough question, and I don't think I have a short answer for that.

Different styles of leadership emphasize certain qualities over others, but all of those put together become crucial. If I were to refer to my style of leadership, the one that I feel the most empathy with, it involves a lot of listening and attention to others, to their questions, preoccupations, and perspectives. To be a good leader, you must be attuned to the mood of those around you. You must be able to feel and understand it to produce the types of decisions and visions that will be valid for your community and which will create some kind of consensus in that community.

What I think are the essential ideas in leadership are: first,

you don't have to be consensual, and second, you have to develop listening skills. When we say leaders do not have to be consensual, it means you have to break away to be a great leader sometimes. Even then, your decisions will have a meaningful impact if you make sure they are understood by those who must implement them, and that those people are prepared to receive the idea you have. The second idea is listening, which is a crucial element to creating an atmosphere that enables people to buy into your vision.

The third idea is not to take yourself too seriously. Keep a distance from yourself so you can see yourself as one with people. Doing so will give you a better perspective on the right things as well. This idea seems to me to be another good quality of a leader.

**LIU** Yes, I agree. Leaders sometimes think they are the most important people in the world. Learning how to keep a distance is a good quality to have.

**MION** We are all fallible, even the greatest of us. We all make mistakes. We are more prone to making more mistakes if we forget that.

**LIU** At Sciences Po, all students are required to participate and complete what is known as the 'The Civic Learning Program' designed to enhance global citizenry among students through civic engagement. What is the importance of creating and nurturing civic-minded students? How do the qualities and skills gained in this program prepare students for a life of service?

**MION** We try to make sure that the students we recruit come from all walks of life and all countries. We want them to reflect a variety of perspectives, even those who come from less prosperous backgrounds. Once they get into a selective institution such as Sciences Po, they become children of privilege in one way or the other. We feel it is essential for them to receive the ideas that we previously discussed alongside a traditional university education that comes with classes and exams. We want our students to experience firsthand what less fortunate people are facing. It could be understanding a kind of disease, or it could be living in poverty or even being a refugee or a prisoner in a hostile country. It could be many things.

We hope our students will be effective world leaders. Before that time comes, they need to experience the difficulties that some people have gone through and the situations where these future leaders will have been asked to serve the underprivileged. In this process, they will have realized

that there are limits to their capacity to do good or perform well. This means that even if one has good intentions, that type of work is demanding, and it requires more than what we imagine or offer. This experience is vital in building the leadership qualities we described earlier. Hence the reason we subscribe to that civic engagement course.

**LIU** It's great to cultivate a sense of empathy in students. Once students complete a Sciences Po degree, they will emerge into the world with new life experiences and an enriched intellectual foundation. In many ways, alumni help craft the narrative about an institution and help shape the global story of the world. How do Sciences Po graduates shape the institution and the world long after they have completed their degrees at the institution? What is the new narrative that you foresee being created by Science Po graduates?

**MION** I mentioned earlier that the Sciences Po students who attend universities abroad during their third year have turned out to be the best ambassadors. We are aware that not only are our alumni our ambassadors in the world at large, and not just for universities, they also are our greatest asset. We should be able to connect with them and keep in touch with them in ways that are far more effective.

It has become a more central task because our alumni community is all over the globe. It was less the case 30 years ago because our alumni were primarily French and some of them had been abroad, but most of them were in France.

Now our alumni are everywhere on the planet. In China, for example, there are approximately 500–600 alumni.

Community is the greatest tool we possess to produce more visibility for Sciences Po, to attract more talent. Students from Keystone, for example, will identify with us more quickly if they can picture Sciences Po through the example of a few alumni who happen to be in a close circle or at least within the country. It will help them project themselves into the world. We aim at strengthening the ties between our alumni and making sure that those alumni communities are far more structured and tightly knit.

**LIU** Sciences Po has played such an essential role in shaping the history of France and Europe. Given the current student population and global experiences that Sciences Po has provided them, and with an inspiring and charismatic and great leader such as yourself, I believe that Sciences Po graduates will change the world!

**MION** *Merci beaucoup!*

# Leveling the Playing Field

Keystone Students Take Action  
on Gender Inequality Issues



Inside a soccer gym in Kabul City in Afghanistan, everyone can see the excitement of young players trying to kick the ball towards the goal. The players are all female students from two high schools, and watching from the sidelines are their cheering family members and friends. It is a sight to behold, considering that girls are banned from playing the sport elsewhere in the country.

The friendlies happen under Afghanistan's first and only soccer program for girls. Keystone Academy student Abdul Basir Talayee launched it in the summer of 2018, during his vacation from his eleventh-grade studies. Though he faced fierce resistance from traditional families and issues in funding, Basir made it happen and convinced 35 parents out of the 50 families that he had talked to.

Basir knows directly about unfair treatment towards Afghan women. He is the "favored" child in his family, while his three sisters have received less financial support and means to explore their capabilities.

"When I realized that, I tried to change the situation in my family," he says. To overcome the lack of opportunities in his country, Basir applied for scholarships abroad and was admitted to Keystone. While in Beijing, he continued supporting his three sisters by helping them study English and complete applications for schools abroad. Now, all of them are studying in the US.

"Girls should be able to pursue their dreams or goals," Basir says about his understanding of gender equality. To him, sport enables girls to cross boundaries and break a "wall of limitation" because of old-fashioned beliefs.

"If boys can go to school, girls should too. If boys can be athletes, girls should have that opportunity too. It is important that all members of society, regardless of their backgrounds and cultures, have the same amount of opportunities and rights to be able to contribute. Both, together, can make something good for the whole society."

## Sparking Conversations

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) says there has been some progress in the issue of gender equality worldwide, but not a single country can claim to have achieved it.

“Real change has been agonizingly slow for the majority of women and girls in the world. Multiple obstacles remain unchanged in law and in culture. Women and girls continue to be undervalued; they work more and earn less and have fewer choices, and experience multiple forms of violence at home and in public spaces,” UN Women says in its International Women’s Day 2020 campaign.

Keystone eleventh grader Medaly Cardenas Retamozo has observed this in her home country of Peru, where the culture is still patriarchal. In rural regions, she says, girls cannot go to school, simply because families believe education is unnecessary or a privilege. This results in a considerable disadvantage in the labor market and the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Many women also experience harassment based on their clothing.

Here in China, Grade 10 student Anne Zhang says she has experienced the issue of preference for boys in their traditional household. Anne understands this thinking though she believes “it is not a good thing,” especially in a modern society where “girls can do what boys can.”

Both students are members of Girls LEAD (Leadership Excellence Acceptance Diversity) club, a Keystone Activities Program (KAP) for students who support feminist ideas and activities that spark conversations on gender equality.

In March 2019, the club hosted the Beijing edition of Women’s March Global, an event organized by the organization of the same name. The march brings together people who fight for women’s and human rights worldwide.

“We in Girls LEAD support this activity. We think the problem of gender inequality is not solved yet, so we want to use our force to spread this cause to more people here in China,” Anne says.

Besides the march, Girls LEAD also holds an annual “biased” bake sale where they sell cookies at a higher price for male students and staff. Group co-advisor and Chemistry teacher Portia Mhlongo says the activity aims to show boys the reality of unequal pay and discrimination against women. The response to that activity has been mixed, with the two girls saying they have heard harsh comments from some male students.

“There are boys who do not understand what girls are experiencing and this is one example of a misunderstanding. They don’t know the situation or the real reason, so they think what we are doing is not necessary. But what can be done is to encourage boys to ask questions so we can let them know what happens to girls,” Anne says.

“Some of the boys think that we do movements like this to seek attention. In our presentations, some see us as people just talking on stage and not as people to whom they can relate. Men feel left behind in these presentations because it is not about them. But we need to talk to them. What I can do is to try to give examples so they can relate,” Medaly adds.

## An Iron House That Is Hard to Break

The theme for this year’s International Women’s Day on March 8 is “I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights.” This year’s observance also marks the 25th year since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a resolution that promulgates the principles for gender equality. A number of events and high-level conferences will be held in the coming months to discuss progress on the resolution. It includes the Generation Equality campaign which mobilizes people around the world “to drive actions that will create the gender-equal world we all deserve.”

Ninth grader Kevin Chai is hopeful that a gender-equal world will be achieved, though he still feels it will take a long time to materialize. Kevin says men and women in his immediate environment seem to be happy, but the situation is different on Chinese social media. He has seen efforts from many organizations and the media to realize gender equality, but believes the effects of centuries-old bias against women are like “an iron house that is hard to break.”

“In addition, there are harsh criteria for defining ‘qualified’ women. Although the concept of ‘male outside, female inside’ is no longer the case nowadays, women are still under tremendous pressure. They must become ‘almighty women’ who have superb economic strength and be all-around mothers who can do childrearing and act as spiritual teachers and tutors. They also need to remain beautiful. Meanwhile, the universal definition of men’s success is simply making money. Isn’t this an injustice? It’s really difficult for my female friends.”

This is why for Chinese teacher Judy Jiang, the topic of equal rights is worth exploring as it impacts everyone, whether it is about their personal lives, career, education, marriage, or civil actions. For Theory of Knowledge teacher Christine Shi,

achieving equality is important as everyone faces a form of discrimination.

“It is the minority, and not the gender, who is discriminated against,” Ms. Shi adds. “At the basic level, this issue is a kind of empathy training. Only if I can imagine the suffering of the person on the other side may I feel the original intention of gender equality. If you can’t tolerate everything you face in that position, why ask others to bear it silently? In this situation, the Golden Rule applies: ‘Don’t do anything to others which you don’t want others to do unto you.’”

Ms. Jiang also believes the lesson about gender equality should begin at home and at a young age.

“Parents and teachers should understand that the process of cognitive development of children happens alongside the process of gender consciousness, so our response should be natural. Beyond that, our role is to cultivate children’s respect for others, others’ preferences and choices. This is the direction that we should take to guide them, rather than always-tangled “boy” and “girl” labels,” Ms. Jiang adds.

In the Song family, the concept of gender equality is taught from childhood. Mrs. Song, a Keystone parent, says their family tries not to emphasize the gender-specific division of labor or characteristics.

“Our family is more concerned about our children’s passions, their responsibility in society, and the manifestation of their self-worth. We pay more attention to the value that we should reflect in society and not gender,” she says.



illustration from freepik.com

## Education Empowers Everyone

On a wall in Portia Mhlongo's chemistry laboratory is a poster of Nobel laureates in the field of sciences throughout the years. Her class has noticed that it is "white Western men who dominate" the image. Still, Ms. Mhlongo wants her students to see another side to it: that there are scientists like Tu Youyou, Jane Goodall, and Katherine Johnson who have paved the way for young girls to pursue careers in STEM.

Aside from this subtle reference to gender equality, Ms. Mhlongo also uses her classroom as a platform to spark conversations about pressing global issues. She received an opportunity to join the Climate Reality Project in 2014, which has galvanized her into teaching students about clean chemistry and climate change education.

"When you start to work like that, your radar starts opening and you begin to see your purpose. What I want for students is for them to realize and own global issues and say, 'What is my role and how can I help people to do something?'"

For Basir Talayee, his hobby has become his way to open opportunities for others. Since the launch of the soccer program in 2018, the number of female Afghan players in the team has doubled to almost 70. He has also reached out to soccer instructors in Kabul, many of whom have agreed to coach the girls' team. Basir plans to expand the program to cover more high schools in the capital city, to the point that girls playing soccer will become normal.

Just like Basir, many members of the Keystone community have taken part in actions which promote gender equality. In October 2019, for example, student leaders organized the school's second Global Issues Network (GIN) Conference which highlighted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (5), and climate action (13).

Several Keystone teachers have volunteered to teach English to and hold a series of training sessions for a group of young female scholars from a program organized by Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC). Keystone has also welcomed the EGRC scholars to use the school's learning spaces. English teacher Jaime Weiler says she feels blessed to be able to share the school's resources with the young girls.

"The lessons we can provide and the additional cultural experiences that we offer will help provide the girls with a broader understanding of the world. As the program evolves, I hope that we will be able to involve more students into our program," Ms. Weiler adds.

The events planned by Girls LEAD for International Women's Day in 2020 were canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, but it did not mean their actions were also put on hold. The group members communicated regularly on their social channels and shared stories about people who act on gender inequality issues worldwide.

"We will not do justice as teachers if we don't discuss issues like this," Ms. Mhlongo says. "It is a global goal to achieve equality in 2030. We need to level the playing field in the things we want and do. Providing opportunities for students to engage with the gender inequality issues and their impacts is the first step to achieving this goal. As Nelson Mandela said, 'Education is a powerful tool to change the world.'"

"When girls get an education, everything will be different," Basir says. "Women who get opportunities to work outside invest in the education of their children and provide them learning opportunities and make sure they learn the right skills. It makes a huge difference for the children and the family. We need to get past the culture of the previous generation. If we change our traditional way of thinking, our actions will change."

# Reach for the Stars

KEYSTONE EDUCATION SALON  
MAKES A BRILLIANT COMEBACK WITH

## Spacecraft Designer Yang Hong

The vast sky has fascinated humanity for millennia, but it was only in the last century that we were able to travel beyond our home planet. Our curiosity has led us to reach for the stars: we have already sent several human beings to the Moon, and launched numerous machines into the vast unknown of space.

In the 2000s, nations that have successfully sent humans into space set their sights on launching crewed probes to Mars, in the hope of expanding our presence and prolonging our existence in the universe. On October 15, 2003, a crewed spacecraft blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, making the Chinese dream of reaching outer space come true. Are we ready to rocket to another planet? Or is it too difficult, like the proverbial rocket science?

On its return, the Keystone Education Salon heard about the progress of Chinese crewed spaceflight, directly from a spacecraft designer himself. Aerospace engineer and professor Yang Hong has played a significant role in the research and development of this field, from developing a new type of satellite, to presiding over several missions of the Shenzhou program. He addressed an audience of eager students and parents at the Keystone Performing Arts Center on January 8, 2020.

In this edition of *The Keystone Magazine*, we share with you the development of China's crewed space program and the lesser-known stories behind it, as recounted by Professor Yang during the salon.





#### About the Speaker

Yang Hong is a professor at the China Academy of Space Technology (CAST), where he has worked since receiving his master's degree there in 1991. Professor Yang was the chief designer of Tian-gong-1 and the deputy chief designer of the Shenzhou series of crewed spacecraft. He is a Permanent Fellow of the International Academy of Astronautics.

His stellar work in the field of spacecraft design has earned him various accolades, including winning the prestigious China National Scientific and Technological Prize twice, in 2004 and 2013. In 1999, he won an Outstanding Contribution Award for the "First Flight Test of Manned Space Project," in addition to the Outstanding Chinese Youth Award for Scientific and Technological Innovation, the Special Award for National Scientific and Technological Progress, and the title of National Outstanding Scientific and Technological Worker. He has also been awarded the China Space Merit Award, China Space Contribution Award, and the honorary title of Manned Space Hero.

Professor Yang's recent research interests include information engineering and systems engineering.

#### The Chinese Dream of Reaching Space

On September 21, 1992, China approved the launch of a crewed space program and implemented a "three-step" development strategy.

So far, China has launched a total of 14 crewed spaceflights, with 11 astronauts going into space and returning safely.

We launched a total of six spacecraft at the first step, of which the first four Shenzhou spacecraft were crewless. Why did we launch these four before the human-operated one? As we all know, a crewed spaceflight must be treated with the utmost care as it involves human life. Therefore, the standards for its reliability and safety are incredibly high, and we undertook numerous experiments to ensure the safety of Yang Liwei before he entered space. This was the work I did.

As the deputy chief designer of Shenzhou 5, the first Chinese-crewed spacecraft, I ensured the reliability and safety of the spacecraft so that he could return to Earth safely. We anticipated and prepared for every possible scenario that could happen, and made hundreds of plans for all situations that we considered. So I felt very confident before the launch of Shenzhou 5. While I did not feel nervous though, I was still worried. Our hearts were racing as I stood on the launchpad during the countdown. Yang Liwei's physiological parameters remained stable. In the very last moments of the countdown, he even gave us a military salute in front of the camera. It touched us deeply.

After his successful return, he told me two factors that strengthened his mental capacity. The first reason, he said, was that he fully believed in himself, and his years of training and experience as a pilot made him mentally strong. Secondly, he said he very much believed in us, the engineers who built the spacecraft, saying he felt relieved that we were able to design a perfectly safe and reliable spacecraft. He also jokingly told me, "You have locked me in this spaceship. The doors are closed one after another, so I have no choice but to believe in you." Although it was a joke, we were moved by his humor. So I educated my team, whose average age was 29 years old, though I was older, that "the life of the astronaut is in the hands of every designer, and thus no one can afford to make any mistakes in the work for which you are responsible." Our teacher once told us, "Each of you designers should imagine yourself as an astronaut to see if you dare to take the spacecraft you have designed. If not, how do you expect the astronaut to feel assured?"

If humans are going to set foot on farther planets, we will need to design a life-support system with oxygen, food, and water built for long-term space travel. If we take all these resources from Earth, the fuel consumption will be enormous. Therefore, it is essential to make full use of what we have in space. For example, when astronauts work out in space, their sweat will evaporate. The moisture in the air can be harvested to form condensed water, which is then purified to create potable water, thus reducing the need to bring water from the ground. Astronaut urine can also be cleaned and recycled. Meanwhile, the electrolysis of water produces hydrogen and oxygen gases and the latter is pumped back into the capsule so astronauts can breathe. Carbon dioxide exhaled by astronauts is collected for the redox process of hydrogen and carbon dioxide to produce water, which forms a small ecological cycle and minimizes supply runs from Earth.

If we go further into deep space, we won't be able to rely on this technology alone. We will need to grow vegetables and wheat in space, as well as other crops which can be grown easily, in order to solve the food problem. The key point is that these green plants can take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen through photosynthesis in space. This bio-ecological technology will meet humankind's need for oxygen in space.

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## **The Lesser-Known Stories Behind the Development of Crewed Spacecraft**

Our team members are relatively young. We have been engaged in crewed space flight since the 1990s, with difficulties and painstaking efforts at the beginning of the program. How do astronauts cope with these difficulties and challenges? I will share some stories with you.

### Story 1: "Pulling Out the Base"

I still remember vividly this story about the launch of Shenzhou 1 at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. When it was in preparation for liftoff, we found a data anomaly in the computer. To fix the error, the spacecraft had to be disassembled, and the base of the reentry capsule opened—called "pulling out the base." This meant that the work at the launch site had to go back to square one. Worse still, all the launch devices had already been installed on the spacecraft and they were likely to explode if we were careless. Besides, hundreds of instruments had been mounted on the base and the sidewall of the reentry capsule. Given that the space for the operation was narrow and dozens of cables would be repeatedly pulled out and plugged in, unexpected new problems would occur if we were not careful. However, unless the base was pulled open, the failure would remain and it would pose significant risks to the spaceship upon entering space. Our instincts for crewed spaceship design prompted us to make up our minds to "pull out the base" for troubleshooting.

We made a meticulous and detailed plan, arranging a clear working procedure for how to get in, remove the base of the reentry capsule, take out the equipment layer by layer, replace the software, and then put it all back. We drove 1,000 kilometers from the launch center to take the equipment to a research institute in Lanzhou, where we completed the software replacement. Experts from Beijing flew to Lanzhou to join in the replacement, and then returned to Jiuquan to install the equipment back in the spacecraft to ensure there was no mistake. We were touched because everyone tried their best to ensure the successful launch of the spacecraft.

### Story 2: No carelessness allowed

Shortly after the Shenzhou 3 spacecraft entered the launch site in 2001, a malfunction was discovered in the plug-in that transmitted the spacecraft's key instructions. It was the failure of an electrical connector. Although we had adopted a "double-point and double-line" design, Shenzhou 3 was a full-system test flight in crewed condition. While no one was onboard, we still needed to follow the standards of a



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crewed spacecraft, so there was no room for carelessness. In troubleshooting, we found a defective technological design by the connector manufacturer. Once this kind of failure appeared, it represented a potentially fatal risk. We found that 77 such connectors were installed on the spacecraft and all of them had to be removed and discarded. While all of our staff had already entered the launch site, the design flaw in these parts meant we had to withdraw all the equipment to Beijing, just as though we were putting the entire mission to an end.

It would take three months to redevelop the pieces, but nonetheless they were withdrawn because it was a serious incident. In fact, one of our designers had identified the flaw in Beijing. However, they didn't take it seriously and thought it was fine to replace the parts with new ones. Later, everyone was punished due to this incident. I received the most severe punishment. Because I was the designer's superior, I asked for punishment. Such an accident taught my team and me a lesson that we should never be careless about our work.

### Story 3: A forced innovative rescue scheme

For crewed spacecraft, two phases were the most dangerous: the launch phase and the return phase. Once astronauts came across any problem with the rocket during this period, we had to race against time to rescue them. Out of a total of 583 seconds, astronauts had two seconds to escape. For

example, if the rocket were about to explode, we would have to prevent it from blowing up the entire spacecraft. The spacecraft would have to be separated, after which the parachute would be opened. If there was a rocket failure during lift-off, the spacecraft would immediately return by using the reentry capsule to bring back the astronauts. We would ensure the safety of the astronauts as long as they were in the capsule. It is easy if the capsule touches down on land. But what if it falls into the sea? The spacecraft can land on the sea within a diameter of more than 5,000 kilometers. And if that happens, the astronauts cannot stay inside of the capsule for more than 48 hours, otherwise they will lose consciousness. So we must rescue them promptly. We have higher requirements for rescue at sea because astronauts must be found within 24 hours. How do we find them within a 5,000-kilometer range? The United States relies on an aircraft carrier formation. Thus, our designers needed to come up with an innovative design based on the domestic condition and the current situation.

The design is divided into three sections. If there is an accident during this period, the astronauts will fall into three fixed rescue points, each one equipped with two salvage ships from the Ministry of Transport. A total of six ships will be enough to solve the problem which originally entailed the dispatch of an aircraft carrier formation. This is the innovative rescue design we have developed suitable to China's domestic condition. Sometimes necessity is the mother of invention.

#### Story 4: Astronauts pack the parachutes by themselves

We also have carried out numerous experiments on the ground to ensure the safety of returning astronauts. These include the rocket sled test and the impact test, and also using a plane to drop the reentry capsule to test the reliability of its parachute opening in landing. The area of the reentry capsule parachute is 1,200 square meters, currently the largest of its kind in China.

It is the norm that the parachutes are packed by pilots and parachutists themselves. As parachutes are the astronauts' lifeline, our chief designers must be present at the scene of packing to ensure no mistake is made. This tradition has remained to this day.

The Shenzhou team is composed of young people. We once set up a monument in Amgulang, Dorbod Banner, Inner Mongolia, where Shenzhou 5 landed, to honor the return of astronaut Yang Liwei. However, none of the current Shenzhou team members had been there, so we organized an activity to visit the Shenzhou memorial site. We have developed a "Shenzhou oath", which can be summarized into four phrases:

- 1 the political culture in which the interests of the Motherland are paramount;
- 2 the innovative culture of climbing the scientific and technological peak bravely;
- 3 the quality culture of zero defects, zero failure, and zero doubtful points; and
- 4 the team culture of helping each other, "all in the same boat."

These stories are some of the most impressive moments I have experienced in the field of crewed spaceflight over the past 27 years. There are many other similar stories as well. I will sum up my experience with a few words: the safety of astronauts is in the hands of each designer. "If I were an astronaut, I should dare take the spacecraft I designed." This is what our chief engineer said to me.

Second, the success of one spacecraft does not equal the maturity of a space program. One success does not mean continuous successes in the future, and ongoing successes do not guarantee the next success. I can say all of this based on my experience.

As for how it feels to be a member of the spacecraft family, we are now in the third phase of a crewed spaceflight project. We have yet to complete the final mission of building China's space station. As a designer, on behalf of my community, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts.

First, we must be aware of the gap. Despite many successes, we must remain clearheaded. Astronauts are faced with high risks and crewed space flight is even riskier. There is still much room for improving reliability and safety. Therefore, we must have a clear mind and must not be complacent.

Second, everything should start from scratch. After every successful return and reflection, everything will start from the very beginning again. We should not be smug about past achievements or think that we will succeed next time if we made it last time. There is no room for complacency.

Third, success is the absolute principle. Comrade Deng Xiaoping, the chief designer of reform and opening up, said that development was the absolute principle. For Chinese spacefaring personnel, success is the absolute principle. Only those who succeed in their endeavor are regarded as heroes. No matter how hard you work, if the space mission fails, those efforts are worthless. We may make a lot of mistakes on the ground, but we get full marks if the space mission is successful. This is the characteristic of spaceflight, and success is the absolute principle.

Fourth, let our capabilities speak for us. We have to refine our skills to catch up with the advanced world level. The most important thing is to improve and strengthen our capabilities. Our principle is "To speak less and do more. To be a doer rather than a speaker." To improve our abilities with such an attitude and let our capabilities speak for us; this is what we do.

Finally, I would like to share with you a motto of the Shenzhou team: "To create brilliance with excellence and serve the Motherland with success."

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Young students in the audience brandished their flags as sixth grader Mark Miao (pictured right) performed his heartfelt rendition of "I Love the Blue Sky of the Motherland" before the question-and-answer session



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Sabrina Liu, Director of  
Marketing and Communications,  
and eighth-grader host Gao Yi  
introduce Professor Yang Hong  
to his Keystone audience

## INTERVIEW WITH SPACECRAFT DESIGNER YANG HONG

**GAO YI** Professor Yang, my name is Gao Yi and I am an eighth-grade student. I am interested in astronomy and have learned about constellations and myths. I often read astronomy books, visit museums, and make some telescope observations at my school observatory. I am honored to be the host and have the opportunity to talk with you. My first question is: how did you enter the space field and what was your aspiration when you were our age?

**PROF. YANG** Since childhood, I set my sights on becoming an engineer. I was born in a small city at the foot of the Changbai Mountains in Northeast China. Back in our city then, there was only one engineer who designed buildings. I thought it was awesome and it inspired me to be an engineer. At that time, I thought civil engineers were amazing enough. After attending college and starting to work, I learned that there were various types of engineers involved in many fields such as residential construction, bridge building, and aircraft and satellite design. I felt proud that later I entered the field of space exploration because I believed as a science and engineering student, my major in information technology could play a significant role in this field. Luckily, when I started working, China's space industry was thriving and providing young people with a platform for development.

**GAO YI** This is a question from a second-grade student —“What is outside the universe?”

**PROF. YANG** I don't think the universe is divided into the inside and the outside. The universe is infinite, so it cannot be split into inner and outer parts unless there is a boundary or a limit.

**GAO YI** If so, does it mean that the universe we are exploring is only a small part of the infinite universe we know?

**PROF. YANG** Yes. We have only explored a tiny part of the universe. Our cognition as a species, and our ability to think of such magnitude, is so limited that the room left for exploration is also massive.

**STUDENT** Which part of the spacecraft design process do you find the most difficult?

**PROF. YANG** This is an excellent question that still catches me off guard. We have encountered a lot of problems in the design process. Crewed space flight means sending astronauts into space and then bringing them back safely. The most difficult thing is minimizing risks, which we worry about the most. While the risks cannot be eliminated, they can be reduced to an acceptable controllable level. There are dangers in everything, but for crewed spaceflight, the gravest peril involves human life.

**STUDENT** Aside from the Moon, why can't we see other satellites from Earth?

**PROF. YANG** Despite its great distance of 380,000 kilometers from Earth, the Moon has a large diameter, so it can be seen with the naked eye. In comparison, artificial satellites are much smaller, usually with a size of only a few meters. Therefore, these satellites can be seen with suitable illumination, such as at dusk or in the morning. They can only be seen at particular times when light and darkness are alternating. Most of us can't see them because they are too small for human eyes, but we can see them with large telescopes.

**STUDENT** How is an astronaut selected?

**PROF. YANG** That's a good question. The selection process is rigorous. Some astronauts told me that the first batch of Chinese astronauts consisted of 14 people, all of whom were selected from the Air Force pilots. It is like picking one out of ten thousand, not just out of a hundred. We are still selecting new astronauts, including pilots, spacecraft engineers, and scientists.

**GAO YI** How long does a satellite last? What happens when it is decommissioned?

**PROF. YANG** We have de-orbiting technology to deal with a decommissioned satellite. When its fuel is running out, it is crucial to reserve some fuel to lower its orbit. For instance, the orbit can be reduced to 200 or 300 kilometers. Then it will gradually deteriorate, reenter the atmosphere, and burn up. This means it will not become space junk. We are currently taking the initiative to de-orbit a satellite in this way to ensure the cleanness of space. Space is a common area for humanity, so we should keep it clean.

**GAO YI** How long and how many people does it take to make and launch a satellite?

**PROF. YANG** It depends on the development level of the particular era. In the first few years of the Space Age, it took countries several years to produce a satellite because of limited industrial foundations and weak links. But with the advancement of technology, the production cycle has become shorter. Now the production cycle can take one or two years for a medium-sized satellite. A smaller one would need a shorter time. In the near future, satellites could be mass-produced.

**STUDENT** How do astronauts go to the toilet while in space?

**PROF. YANG** During the Shenzhou 5 mission, astronaut Yang Liwei flew in space for 21 hours under difficult conditions. Tiangong 1 had special sanitation facilities, but these were completely different from the ground. We had no way to experience it. If you want to, you are welcome to become an astronaut when you grow up and you will know the answer.

**STUDENT** Professor Yang, have you ever felt like giving up?

**PROF. YANG** I can tell you that I have taken part in the crewed spaceflight program since 1992, right after it just got started. In 27 years, I have never thought of giving up.

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Students asked Professor Yang about the challenges he has faced in his career. After sharing his stories and insights, the spacecraft designer told the students: "I have never thought of giving up."

Keystone Marketing and Communications Director and salon organizer Sabrina Liu wrapped up the event with a passage from "Who Speaks for Earth?", the final chapter of *Cosmos* written by the astronomer and author Carl Sagan:

*We have begun to contemplate our origins: starstuff pondering the stars; organized assemblages of ten billion billion billion atoms considering the evolution of atoms; tracing the long journey by which, here at least, consciousness arose. Our loyalties are to the species and the planet. We speak for Earth. Our obligation to survive is owed not just to ourselves but also to that Cosmos, ancient and vast, from which we spring.*

"We believe that the future depends on our understanding and discovery of the universe," Liu added. "We are born of the universe, and our destiny is closely intertwined with it. The source of the universe is calling us and we are eager to return because this call comes from our birthplace. Let's get on board; it's time to set off for the stars."

*The speech of Professor Yang and the transcript of the question-and-answer session have been edited for brevity.*

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# MOSAIC



Mark Sutton Vane



Sal Anderson

Liz Printz



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## THE MASTER CLASSES

In the 2019–2020 academic year, we introduced the Master Classes series where experts break down the complexities of human nature through their inspiring journeys and stories. We welcomed architectural lighting designer Mark Sutton Vane<sup>①</sup>; wig artisan Liz Printz<sup>②</sup>; children's book authors Xiang Hua<sup>③</sup>, Gerelchimeg<sup>④</sup>, and Shasha Lü<sup>⑤</sup>; *El Deafo* author Cece Bell<sup>⑥</sup>; and film director Sal Anderson<sup>⑦</sup>.



Cece Bell

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Xiang Hua



Shasha Lü



Gerelchimeg

## TAKING CENTER STAGE

In the first semester of the 2019–2020 academic year, troupes of Keystone student actors, writers, directors, and backstage technicians delivered spectacular theatrical performances. In November 2019, eighteen Primary School students kept everyone wide awake with their show, *Bestest Bedtime Stories (As Told By Our Grandpa) (He's Silly!)*<sup>1</sup>. A month later, their peers in the Secondary School performed the remarkable Chinese-language drama production *Xiānshēng*<sup>2</sup>.



*Bestest Bedtime Stories (As Told By Our Grandpa) (He's Silly!)*



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## INNER JOURNEYS

In the academic year 2019–2020, Literature Playhouse organized six events based on four classic novels, leading students in a deep literary exploration and appreciation of different cultures. The club also hosted its three-part *Storyteller* series, which delved into the creative processes in various literary forms. The series featured writer [Nanpai Sanshu](#)<sup>1</sup>, who explored the mystery of literary creation; director [Yang Zhichun](#)<sup>2</sup> and his musical documentary film *The River in Me*; and science fiction writer and Hugo Award recipient [Hao Jingfang](#)<sup>3</sup>, who talked about the inner journeys that writers and readers that go through.

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Nanpai Sanshu



Yang Zhichun



Hao Jingfang





## DISPLAYS OF ATHLETIC PROWESS AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Students from multiple grade levels participated in several sports competitions within Keystone and China during the first semester of the 2019–2020 academic year. On campus, students competed in the annual House Competition in September. Outside of school, our martial artists received several awards at the 16th Beijing Wushu Competition in June. In November, our young paddlers won big at the ACAMIS (Association of China and Mongolia International Schools) Table Tennis Tournament, and a duo scored a big win at the annual BASE (Beijing Area Sports Exchange) Chess Tournament. In January, our athletes continued Keystone's strong showing in the Beijing and Tianjin International School Athletics Conference (ISAC), clinching a number of medals and championships in basketball and swimming.

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## HIGH NOTES

Keystone performing halls turned into concert venues where students showcased their musical talents in the second half of 2019. Student bands delivered smoking hot performances during the *Rockin' da PAC*<sup>1</sup> concert, at a time when temperatures suddenly dropped in November. Just before the community headed home for the winter holiday in December, the Keystone Academy School of Music gave everyone *A Festive Celebration*<sup>2</sup>, a year-ender performance featuring musical ensembles, dance, and wushu groups.



## THE CLASS OF VITALITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND DETERMINATION

The 68 members of the Keystone Academy Class of 2020 continued to demonstrate a strong academic showing despite the challenges faced by all this year. Keystone bade a simple but sentimental farewell to our third cohort of graduates at the start of the academic year 2020–2021.





# Alumni Updates



For Keystone alumni interested in sharing stories,  
email us at [communications@keystoneacademy.cn](mailto:communications@keystoneacademy.cn)

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## Donations from Keystone Community in China Reach North America

Thousands of medical masks and other personal protective equipment procured from the student-led Keystone Assistance Project for COVID-19 Committee reached beneficiaries in several locations in the United States, through the efforts of our alumni there.

Leo Ma from the Class of 2019 delivered 1,800 medical masks to his beneficiary, People Serving People, a non-profit organization that provides homeless people in Minneapolis, Minnesota with accommodation and food. The organization's manager, he says, thanked the Keystone community and compared the donations to "pure gold." Leo, who is a freshman at the University of Minnesota, says he appreciates the support of his Keystone friends and family despite the difficulties in sending the donations.

In New York, Jason Wang '19 received a total of 3,840 medical and N95 masks and shared these with the faculty and staff of his school Colgate University. The freshman says his parents motivated him to communicate with his Keystone family, saying he felt glad after hearing about the charitable project of the current student leaders in response to the pandemic. "I admire their sense of social responsibility, and it inspired me to engage with them to ensure the success of the donation. I also felt it was my responsibility as a Keystone alumnus to help with projects like this," Jason adds.

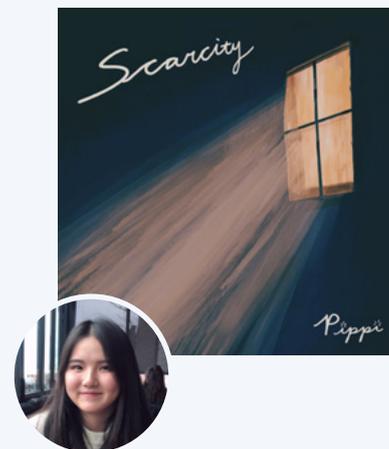
Queen's University first-year Commerce student Cindy Liang from the Class of 2019 sent 3,650 surgical masks to the front-line medical workers of Kingston Health Sciences Centre in Ontario, Canada. "I remember very clearly upon hearing about the project that my heart jumped in excitement," Cindy says. "I was also full of gratitude and admiration for the student leaders. This is also the first time since leaving for Canada that I have felt an inextricable connection between Keystone and me." The initiative encouraged Cindy to take action and coordinate the overseas donation efforts between the Keystone student team and the largest hospital in her community in Ontario.



## Alumna's EP *Scarcity* Abounds with Teenage Life Experiences

Rising singer Ashley Fang from the Class of 2018 added verve to the self-isolation period of her followers with her brand-new extended play (EP), *Scarcity*. Ashley says she had thought of the concept for her release in the fall of 2019, but worked on her music extensively during her quarantine months in Beijing in early 2020. The four-track EP includes the Chinese single “Spring”, inspired by a mild winter’s day in Evanston, Illinois, where she spent her first year as a psychology student at Northwestern University. “Then, I thought about how the process of healing is similar to seasons changing,” Ashley adds. “Just as spring always kicks in unexpectedly after a long winter, you wake up one day and suddenly realize what has kept you down for the longest time doesn’t bother you anymore.”

The title track, meanwhile, is an atmospheric jazz tune about one’s hopeful search for true love. Ashley says that while the process of songwriting and production was simple, it still took her at least four days to record, produce, and mix each song. *Scarcity* is available for streaming on NetEase Cloud Music (search “Scarcity-Pippi”).



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## Alumni Team Launches Educational Platform

Three members of the Class of 2018 launched Lumi Academy (明墨堂 *míngmò táng*), an educational platform where they share their college application insights and advice with high school students. The team, composed of Vincent Liu, Leo Sheng, and Phoebe Sun, releases articles and vlogs through their official WeChat subscription account. Leo is studying Applied Mathematics at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, while Phoebe is majoring in Economics at Middlebury College in Vermont. Vincent is in Beijing, studying Biology at Tsinghua University. For more information about their platform, search “Lumi Academy” on WeChat.



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## Six Alumni Give Tips to Outgoing Seniors on Study and Life Abroad

The graduating Class of 2020 engaged in a virtual session with six Keystone alumni, who shared their insights into college life and living in North America and Europe. Class of 2019 members John An (École hôtelière de Lausanne, Switzerland), Candice Cai (The University of Sydney, Australia), Cindy Liang (Queen’s University, Canada), Steven Shi (Middlebury College, US), Alex Xiao (Union College, US), and Jasmin Zheng (St. Andrew’s University, Scotland) also talked about the skills and perspectives that helped them thrive in a new environment. The Office of College Counseling (OCC) hosted the special webinar in mid-May as part of its sessions to help our latest graduates transition from high school to college.

For Keystone alumni interested in participating in future activities like this, please contact the OCC at [collegecounseling@keystoneacademy.cn](mailto:collegecounseling@keystoneacademy.cn).

# In Memoriam



## Li Yaojia

Keystone Class of 2018

June 22, 1999 — June 29, 2019

It is with profound sadness that we inform you all of the passing of a member of the Keystone Class of 2018, Johnson Li Yaojia. He died in a car accident on June 29, 2019.

Amid this difficult reality, let's remember who Johnson was in our community, and how the light that permeated his being illuminated us. Johnson was a young man with a gentle and jovial spirit. He was much more than just a student at Keystone; Johnson was a brother, mentor, and close friend to many. His friends remember him as a person who possessed a remarkable ability to converse with and welcome everyone fully into his life. He believed fiercely in kindness and reciprocity. His humor, intelligence, strength, and spirit impacted everyone who had the opportunity of interacting with him.

Faculty members describe Johnson as a young man who worked every day to make the world a kinder place. Whether it be by inviting expatriate students into daily conversation when he took notice of social exclusion, or simply by greeting every member of the faculty and staff at Keystone with a smile of acknowledgment, Johnson left a significant mark on all. He was both gentle and a gentleman.

According to one of his closest friends, David Ma, one of Johnson's ambitions beyond material and professional success was to continue to exude qualities such as kindness, optimism, strength, and honesty in his future roles as a husband, father, and friend. Johnson defined success as "Being able to ignore everything but the voice in your heart." These are qualities that we all have the capacity to express, and Johnson embodied these traits. He was forging and following his own path in life.

Many of us have anecdotes to share about Johnson. In the words of Greg Barnes, Director of Summer Programs at Keystone Academy, "Johnson is one of those special people who seemed to always be smiling. He was open and friendly to strangers and would give everyone the impression that he already knew them well. Johnson indeed made the world a brighter place for everyone who knew him. The world is a little darker without him in it."

Johnson's character touched the lives of many, and his compassion will influence the lives of even more. Johnson may have left the physical world but there's a little of him still in all of us. Please help his family and everyone he left to make sure that we will treasure the friendships and community that we have here at Keystone, because of him.

To subscribe,  
contact us at:  
communications@  
keystoneacademy.cn

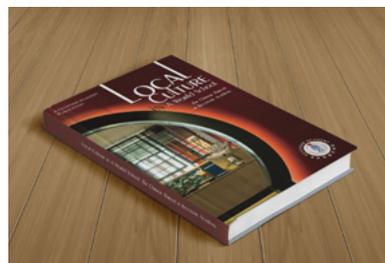


## ***Local Culture in a World School: The Chinese Thread at Keystone Academy*** ◆

By Sally Booth, Ph.D. and Min Dai

...

The Chinese Thread, the defining feature of Keystone since its opening, has evolved into the anchor of this new world school's culture. This book is both a statement of a grand idea and of how that connects to our drive to be a world school, and a record of how that idea has been acted on so far.



001 — PUBLISHED IN 2018

## ***Letters from Malcolm McKenzie (Volumes 1 and 2)*** ◆

Translated by Echo Cai and Christine Shi

...

The writings of Keystone Head of School Malcolm McKenzie form part of a broader roadmap for the community as we head into uncharted territory in China's ever-expanding education field. This anthology documents Mr. McKenzie's thoughts and legacy in our new world school.



002 — PUBLISHED IN MARCH 2020

## ***Keystone Education Salons: We Are from the Infinite Void*** ◆

Produced by the Keystone Marketing and Communications Office

...

The first-ever book of the Keystone Education Salons documents the thinking processes, collision of ideas, and spontaneous expressions in these meetings.



003 — LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER 2020

## ***Deep Learning: A Journey in Critical Thinking and Reflective Knowledge*** ◇

By Vivek Bammi, D.A. and Sally Booth, Ph.D.

...

At Keystone, the synthesis of Chinese and global perspectives is deliberate in the original plans and evident in its vision and academic program. This book captures the Keystone model of critical thinking through active learning. It becomes a model so others might replicate the Keystone approach, not just in IB schools, but also in school settings across China and the rest of the world.



COVER DESIGN TBD

004 — COMING SOON

# 2020.10 BOOK LAUNCH

5 years of insightful discussions

10 select salons on the themes of poetry, philosophy, literature, music, and education

This is the space for boundless ideas.



I hope that twenty years later, our young artists can create something completely different. Not only belonging to China, but also to a vocabulary of the world, expressing the particularly heroic idea that everyone can be equal and communicate on a global platform. I am looking forward to this moment, the moment that belongs to you.

— Meng Jinghui / Theater Director

It is in the process of asking about the meaning of existence that human beings have philosophy, religion, and art. It is because of philosophy, religion, and art that we feel that survival is meaningful.

— Zhou Guoping / Philosopher, Scholar

