



The Talon

Gripping News



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Ulster County News

By Sophia Roberts

2021 Budget Outline:

In early December, Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan and Ulster legislators prepared for 2021 by creating and adopting the 2021 budget. The main focuses of the budget are mental health, public health, education, infrastructure, economic development, social services, and a Green New Deal for Ulster County. The new initiatives proposed in the 2021 budget can be broken down into "Building a People-Centered Economy" and "Investments in Community Care."

To build a people-centered economy, Ryan has proposed reimagining the Hudson Valley Mall; diversifying and expanding the economy by spending \$5.3 million to support economic development; revitalizing Tech City by creating studio spaces for artists, designers, manufacturers, and others; expanding green career training and opportunities; and using 100% green energy by 2030.

A top priority for "Investments in Community Care" is Mobile Mental Health expansion. This includes the placement of a full-time social worker in the Emergency Management Department and allocation of \$871,664 to Mobile Mental Health, which provides free assistance to Ulster County residents in crisis.

The budget also includes a focus on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty by personalizing support for adolescents and investing in education.

To tackle the opioid epidemic, the county will provide housing and childcare vouchers and

transportation assistance to those under treatment. The Risk Mitigation Team will receive funding to expand and reach other parts of Ulster County.

Lastly, the budget emphasizes creating workforce housing and investing in new infrastructure, including a nearly \$3 million upgrade to the Maltby Hollow Bridge in Olive.

Essential services such as the ones above will be expanded without raising property taxes (for the ninth consecutive year) or proposing layoffs, and the overall budget is a 2.6% decrease in spending from the 2020 budget. Ryan signed the budget on December 15th following unanimous approval by the Ulster County legislature, after some amendments to Ryan's original budget were made.

The Kingstonian:

A \$60 million, 143-unit housing development has been proposed for the municipal parking lot between Schwenk Drive and North Front Street and will span Fair Street Extension and an empty parcel occupied by Herzog's warehouse. This project, the Kingstonian, is hoped to help revitalize Downtown Kingston but has faced much criticism since its proposal in 2017.

Controversy over the project has arisen for a number of reasons. Fourteen out of the 143 housing developments are to be affordable, which angered those who believe that that number should be larger given the affordable housing crisis in Ulster County.

Additionally, there is concern over whether the project should receive the requested payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreement that would save the project \$30 million in taxes over 25 years.

The Kingston Common Council and Ulster County Legislature approved the agreement, but the Kingston School Board did not due to concerns about the length of time the community "would be shouldering the burden of taxes not paid on the full value of the Kingstonian," according to board member Robin Jacobowitz. Many feel as though it would be too great a disadvantage to the Kingston school district if those living in luxury housing do not have to pay their full share of school taxes.

The developers of the Kingstonian responded to the Board vote stating that they were "disappointed in the outcome and frustrated with the process." The developers stated that "in the end, the School Board just could not understand they were turning down additional revenue, not adding a burden." The project can move forward without the Board of Education's approval, but it is unclear whether that will happen at this time.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Following negotiation of the tax breaks, the next step for the Kingstonian will be site-plan approval and securing of finances. It also faces a lawsuit filed by a real-estate investor with extensive holdings in Uptown, Neil Bender, who is seeking to overturn a planning board ruling that the project would not pose a significant environmental impact on the area.

Kingston Mayor Steve Noble is

one of the project's largest supporters, believing that the project "will have no negative tax implications, only positive!" Six of the nine Kingston Board of Education members oppose the project. Residents seem split, with some critiquing the project's design and tax breaks and others praising the additional public parking, new jobs, and new development.



Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan, Courtesy of @ulstercountyexecutive on Instagram

Onteora's Hopes for the Biden Administration

By Nelson Del Tufo

The years of the Trump administration have been nothing if not controversial. From campaign promises about border militarization to the violent clearing of protestors from Pennsylvania Avenue, President Trump embraced his culture-warrior persona and, in so doing, inspired an intense dislike from many Americans.

This backlash to the president manifested itself in President Joe Biden who, over the course of his campaign, was perceived as something different to everyone but Trump-like to no one. As the book closes on these four divisive years, the hopes and convictions of disgruntled Americans everywhere are directed at President Biden and his administration as they begin to translate hopes and convictions into a concrete agenda.

Expectations for the newly

"The general consensus seems to be that change is in the air"

elected president are not confined to people of voting age. Over the course of the last four years, it has been common to hear frustration about the direction of American policy vocalized throughout the halls of Onteora High School.

Ever since Biden's election in November, however, the tone of these discussions has shifted from outraged to pragmatic. The general consensus seems to be that change is in the air, so I asked a few of my more politically inclined classmates what they would like to see from the Biden administration.

Onteora students are undeniably most passionate about climate and environmental policy. Early on in his administration, President Trump made a great show of rolling back environmental regulations and exiting the non-binding Paris Climate Accord. Many of the students who gave statements about what they wanted to see from the Biden administration saw these actions as utterly wrong-headed, but they wanted something more than simply a return to Obama-era posturing.

Natalie Horberg, an Onteora senior, hopes to see the Biden administration "implement climate change policy that actually reflects the scope of climate

change itself" rather than adopt one of the more "moderate plans to combat the crisis." Another senior, Emily Peck, told me that she "would like to see a serious climate policy that invests heavily in renewable resources."

Biden has publicly stated that he supports drastic measures to fight climate change and wants to use the Green New Deal -- a sweeping proposal to fight climate change and overhaul the country's energy infrastructure -- as a "crucial framework" for his climate policy. This, however, notably implies that Biden does not plan on supporting the actual Green New Deal legislation.

Immigration is another subject which Onteora students express a great deal of passion about. Throughout the Trump administration, stories about ICE raids, detention camps, and -- infamously -- child separation at the border, regularly shocked the public. These dramatic headlines struck a chord with many, and over the course of the last four years, the chorus calling for immigration reform has grown.

Sophia Roberts, another senior, was especially passionate about the topic. In addition to her support for climate policy, she told me that she hoped to see an end to five Trump administration immigration policies that make the asylum process more difficult. She also stressed the need for a faster path to citizen-

ship for immigrants.

Biden supports ending the restrictive asylum policies which Sophia lamented, and, in addition, he supports temporarily halting deportations, increasing the annual number of refugees accepted into the country, and maintaining the popular DACA program.

Beyond this, however, the Biden

have a varied and diverse outlook on the future. While most young people are interested in seeing progress made on climate change, immigration, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, students also mentioned a great deal of topics that don't dominate the headlines. For example, several students expressed support for the legalization of marijuana, a topic on which Joe Biden has dragged



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

administration has kept mum. According to NPR, Biden has intentionally avoided calling immigration a top priority, as he and his team believe the issue to be too divisive. It seems likely that the Biden administration will focus on reversing Trump administration border policy rather than overhauling the system.

Something less tangible that students want to see from Biden is a different style of leadership. Donald Trump's presidency was defined by breaks from the existing norms in the realms of both foreign and domestic policy. Abroad, this strained relations with our allies. At home, news cycles were dominated by petty and sometimes bizarre conflicts between the president and his political enemies.

The manic nature of the executive branch has been exhausting to watch at times, and many students at Onteora want Biden to put this sort of posturing to rest.

Clara Mead, a junior, hoped that Biden would provide "dignified leadership to unite our divided country," which summed up the general consensus among the students whom I discussed the topic with.

his feet, even as the proposal has become more popular than ever.

Liam Bertheaud, a sophomore, told me that some of his top priorities were electoral reforms -- such as the abolition of the electoral college -- and a focus on education. Max Mielcarek, a senior, got really into the weeds: He told me that he would like to see "a defense budget cut that would go towards funding housing and urban development to bolster the rental assistance program."

If the years of the Biden Administration are anything like the last four, much of the President's time may be occupied by crises as they occur. It remains to be seen if any of these optimistic predictions about Biden's tenure will come to pass, but the recent Senate elections in Georgia will make legislating on these issues a real possibility, as Biden takes office with Democratic majorities in both chambers of Congress. Similarly, Biden has tapped a number of Obama-era veterans to head executive departments, and the past experience of these civil servants may lead to a more effective execution of new laws or policy changes.

Overall, students at Onteora



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

COVID-19 Update: A Newly Discovered Variant in the U.K.

By Shane Stackpole

On December 11th, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for emergency-use mobilization and distribution in the U.S. According to the CDC, approximately 18.5 million people, including front-line medical workers and politicians, have received one or both doses of the vaccine thus far. Distribution will continue in the coming months, which is essential in establishing herd immunity and slowing the record-high hospitalization rates across the nation.

While things are finally looking up after ten grueling months, there are obstacles to cross and hurdles to jump, making the distribution process more challenging than one would expect.

One drawback, in particular, is the latest variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was first identified in the U.K. and is now rapidly spreading to other countries. While the news of this new variant, officially known as B.1.1.7. or VOC 202012/01, is alarming, the variant is one of many that have arisen during COVID-19's existence.

In fact, most viruses -- notably Influenza, HIV, and MERS -- have a wide variety of variants that emerge due to genetic mutations. When a virus replicates, it may spontaneously and quite randomly make a "copying error" in its set of genetic components.

Some viral mutations can have virtually no noticeable effect; for instance, mutations that produce a different three-letter codon that translates for the same amino acid will have no impact on the protein's function. However, a series of mutations can lead to significant alterations in a viral protein's structure and function.

In the case of the SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7. variant, researchers discovered 23 mutations in its

genome that were not present in the initial genome of SARS-CoV-2. While SARS-CoV-2 acquires approximately one new mutation in its genome every two weeks, B.1.1.7. is the only variant to acquire this striking number of mutations.

Scientists have expressed particular concern in one mutation, named N501Y, found at position 501 in the receptor-binding domain of the virus's spike protein.

Through intense research, scientists speculate that the N501Y mutation provides B.1.1.7. with the ability to bind more tightly to the ACE-2 receptor, thus increasing the new variant's ability to invade a healthy cell. Nonetheless, there is not enough evidence to validate this concern; moreover, it's unknown whether the N501Y mutation translates to any serious clinical differences.

As of right now, there is no evidence indicating that the B.1.1.7. variant results in a different set of symptoms or more adverse symptoms than in other strains of SARS-CoV-2; however, this implication is not off the table, and scientists are rigorously investigating whether the variant has a significant effect on the severity of disease in infected humans.

A troubling observation is that another mutation, named D614G, provides the B.1.1.7. variant with the ability to propagate at a faster rate in lung epithelial cells. As such, scientists suggest that the B.1.1.7. variant of COVID-19 is more contagious and can spread faster than previous ones. Some studies indicate that the B.1.1.7. variant has increased the transmissibility rate of COVID-19 in the U.K. by 56%, and the number of daily cases has skyrocketed to roughly 40% more positive individuals than before the new variant's emergence.

As of yet, there is no evidence indicating that the B.1.1.7. variant would inhibit FDA-authorized

vaccines from working. While some mutations, such as the 69/70 deletion, presumably lead to a structural change in the virus's spike protein, the B.1.1.7. variant does not have enough mutations in the spike protein to evade natural or vaccine-induced immunity. Moreover, FDA-authorized vaccines are polyclonal, meaning that the immune system produces antibodies that target several sections of the virus's spike protein.

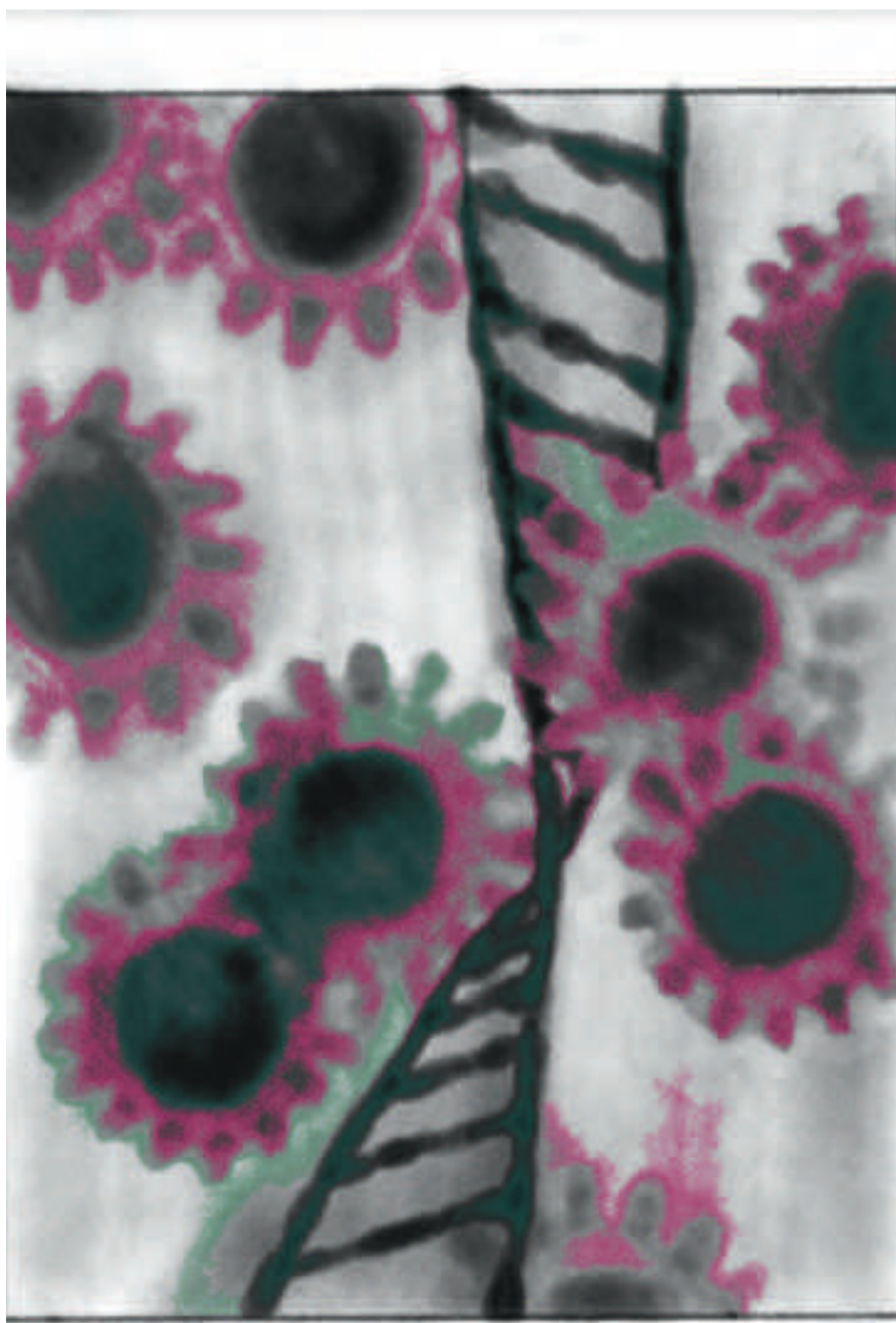
In early December, the Prime Minister of the U.K. instituted strict lockdown restrictions and

travel bans in an effort to contain the spread of the new variant. Nonetheless, the presence of B.1.1.7. has been detected in Japan, Spain, Sweden, France, Canada and nearly 30 other countries. Many of these countries have implemented a new surveillance system in order to detect the unique genetic mutations present in the B.1.1.7. variant of SARS-CoV-2 in individuals traveling to and from the U.K.

On December 29th, the first U.S. case of the B.1.1.7. variant was identified in Colorado through genetic sequencing ef-

forts. Since then, the variant has been discovered in 21 more U.S. states.

The new SARS-CoV-2 variant is a constantly changing situation, but scientists are racing to determine every nuance in the B.1.1.7. variant that may significantly change the performance of SARS-CoV-2. Dr. Anthony Fauci remarked that the new variant is something "to follow very carefully" and that "we're looking at it very intensively now."



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

Georgia Senate Runoff Elections: First Jewish and Black Senators Elected from Georgia

By Nelson DelTufo

Though Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were declared president and vice president-elect on November 7th, this was far from the conclusion of election season. Not only would the presidential election be drawn out for months due to President Trump's allegations of electoral improprieties, but the outcomes of several congressional contests would be in question for just as long.

The most notable of these drawn out congressional races were undeniably the twin battles for Georgia's two Senate seats. Not only were these races consequential because of how much power senators have to influence legislation, but they would also decide control of the United States Senate. If the Democratic candidates both won, the Senate would be split 50-50, and the Democratic Party would hold a majority by nature of Vice President Kamala Harris's tie-breaking vote.

Early in the morning on January 6th, the long and bitter election season came to a close. The two Democratic challengers won their runoff elections against incumbent Republicans and guaranteed Democratic control of the Senate.

Raphael Warnock, an Atlanta pastor, defeated incumbent Senator Kelly Loeffler, while Jon Ossoff, a documentary filmmaker, congressional aid, and former candidate for Georgia's 6th congressional district, defeated incumbent Senator David Perdue.

Ossoff, a 33 year old Jewish man, will be the youngest Democratic senator elected since Joe Biden in 1973, while Raphael Warnock is a Black pastor who preaches at the former pulpit of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Both candidates are unabashed liberals, being pro-choice, in favor of marijuana legalization, and in

favor of a public healthcare option. Needless to say, both are a far cry from their Republican opponents.

The victories come as somewhat of an upset. After months of neck and neck polling, the race was tight, but Republicans were favored due to their historic edge in the state. This rapid about-face away from the GOP has been attributed in great part to gubernatorial candidate Stacy Abrams who, despite losing her bid for governor in 2018, pioneered a new strategy in Georgia.

Ms. Abrams focused on turning out historically underrepresented voters of color rather than appealing to an increasingly small number of white moderates, and she successfully built a coalition that has only grown in the last two years. This mix of urban liberals, Black voters, and disillusioned suburbanites brought together by Ms. Abrams might not have been enough to propel her to the governorship, but it seems to be enough to turn the once reliably red Georgia into a bona fide swing state.

Georgia's political landscape is not the only one to have changed as a result of these elections. On January 20th, Joe Biden was inaugurated as the 46th president of the United States, and this ushered in full Democratic control of the legislative and executive branches.

Theoretically, whatever agenda the Democratic leaders wish to pursue could be enacted, or at the very least, brought to the floor of Congress for a vote. It remains to be seen what will come of this, but longtime Democratic policy goals--such as criminal justice reform, student loan forgiveness, and healthcare expansion--are within reach thanks to Georgia's newest senators.

The Day That Tested Our Democracy

By Ori Grady

January 6th, 2021 will be remembered as one of the most disturbing days in U.S. history. It left a mark on the world and certainly left a mark on U.S. citizens across the country, including our Onteora students. The siege of the Capitol Building will be discussed for years to come. It challenged our constitutional democracy, which was built to protect us from events like this. It's an event that won't be forgotten as reactions to it will be documented forever. That's why we have compiled a list of responses to the question we asked our Onteora community: Where were you when you heard the Capitol was breached, and what was your gut reaction?

domestic terrorism." - Raven Ryan (Senior)

"Reading a book when I got a text from my friend telling me to look at the news." - Madelynn Taylor (Sophomore)

"I was standing around with some friends after skiing while we celebrated someone's birthday." - Nelson Del Tufo (Senior)

"I was in my room on Instagram, and I started seeing pictures popping up, and I saw everyone's stories so I looked it up. I was reading about it, and I was very surprised as to what happened because that was something way bigger than just protesting. When my Mom and Dad got home, I started talking to them about it. Then I started

privilege is in our society." - Seren Kravig (Freshman)

"I was at work. My boss turned her phone to me and said, 'they've breached the Capitol.' Shocked." - Alana Wood (Senior)

"I was horrified but also shocked, it just didn't sink in for a while what was happening." - Sophie Frank (Junior)

"I was at home with my family watching the news, and when I saw it, the only thing I could think about was how disappointing and embarrassing it was for America to be seen like this." - Allie Cannon (Freshman)



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

"I thought that the hypocrisy of the situation was unbelievable." - Shayne Durkin (Junior)

"I was playing Minecraft. I thought it was quite dumb." - Holly Wotherspoon (Senior)

"I was at Hertz dropping off a rental car." - Logan Storey (Freshman)

"I remember that after a class I looked at my phone and saw this massive riot, and when I looked at the news, it just got worse. I was disgusted by the

to watch the videos posted about it." - Erin McLaughlin (Freshman)

"Shock and disappointment." - Emily Baker (Sophomore)

"I was at my house, and I honestly wasn't surprised. Trump supporters can be really crazy, and I know that for a fact because I live with some. I think I also realized the amount of white privilege displayed when they stormed the capitol, and the fact that they were just let in also shows how much white

"Home. I was disgusted that the storming wasn't being treated as it is, domestic terrorism" - Olivia Weiss (Sophomore)

"I was with my friends, and we watched the news in horror on my laptop." - Layla Sprague (Junior)

"I was at the ski mountain with company, and I wasn't surprised, but it still felt surreal." - Axel Roberts (Senior)

Top 10 Events of 2021 So Far

By Ava Maki

Although frequently overstated, 2020 was clearly a pretty eventful year. Between the early panic over a potential war with Iran, the election, and the outbreak of the coronavirus, I think it's safe to say that everyone has been personally impacted by 2020 in one way or another. Many, including myself, are hoping for a year of good health and peace. However, things so far haven't exactly been favorable. So, in light of the new year, I will be ranking the top ten headlines making their debut in 2021 so far.

on divorce. Although many theories have surfaced, the main reason for divorce has been speculated to be Kanye's spiraling mental health and an unlikely affair. This will be Kim's

ally think it's hilarious so it rests in the top three.

4: Dr. Dre Shares Recovery Photo After Aneurysm

After suffering from a brain aneurysm, Dr. Dre shared a heartwarming message to his Instagram followers on the 5th. At this moment, he is stable and lucid, but the cause of the aneurysm is still unknown. Dr. Dre has stated he's thankful for the care he's receiving and will be back home soon. Although I'm personally not a fan, Dr. Dre comes in at number four because he seems like a nice guy.

5: New Coronavirus Strain



Since very late 2020, talk about a new strain of COVID has been circulating non-stop. This new and improved virus has about 23 genetic changes. It may spread faster, but it does not appear to cause reactions more severe than the ones we've seen before. COVID 2.0 comes in at a happy medium, relieving those at risk, but bitterly disappointing those who thought "mutating virus" was way cooler than it sounded.

6: Senate Flips Blue

On the 6th, Democrat Jon Ossoff was declared the winner of his Georgia runoff. This comes after Democrat Raphael Warnock won his race by a

more comfortable margin early that morning. With these victories, the U.S. Senate has flipped blue.

7: The Weekend Gets Plastic Surgery



Canadian singer The Weeknd has recently debuted his new face to the shock of some fans. He posted a photo showing off his post-op features, horribly botched from his alleged surgery. Despite fooling thousands, this was in fact a publicity stunt to promote his new music video. This headline would have ranked higher if I wasn't so mad that I fell for it.

8: Trump's Tape

In the call between President Trump and Georgia's Secretary of State, the president encouraged him to "find him 11,780 votes." In this call, Trump has been found on record requesting Republican Brad Raffensperger to find him votes to overturn his defeat in the presidential election. Trump urges that the people are unhappy



with the result of last year's election and that Raffensperger's data is incorrect. This would have ranked higher, but I think Americans are pretty used to this kind of thing by now, so the wow factor has kind of simmered down.

9: Earth's Abnormally Fast Rotation

If you've already started out the new year on a sour foot, no worries! Scientists say that in 2021 the Earth will be spinning faster than it has been in the last 50 years. This year is on track to be one of the quickest ones to date. Scientists are now considering the addition of a "negative leap second" to compensate.

10: Youtuber CallMeCarson Exposed For Grooming Minors



Popular Minecraft Youtuber CallMeCarson has been under fire for grooming accusations made by Twitter user Miniborb. Fellow Youtuber Daniel Keem has since interviewed other online influencers who testified against CallMeCarson as well. Although no legal intervention has taken place, CallMeCarson has been under intense critique by others on social media.



Courtesy of Zach Calinda

1: Protesters storm the Capitol

Provoked due to Congress being set to confirm Joe Biden as the president-elect, a mob of rioters in favor of President Trump stormed the Capitol building later that day. Protesters pushed through barriers and fought against police, attempting to breach the building. They ended up being successful, and they spent their afternoon writing on folders and stealing podiums. This public display left one woman fatally shot, a police officer beaten to death with a fire extinguisher, and three other related fatalities. Although a lot can be said regarding this group of people, I will say that this comes in at number one purely because it's so hard to believe that this actually happened.

2: Kim Kardashian and Kanye West Divorce

Reports of Kim and Kanye's divorce were announced on the 5th of January. After being discussed over the past couple of months, the Kardashian-Wests finally bit the bullet and settled

third divorce.

3: Kanye West and Jeffree Star's Affair

Ranked slightly below the divorce reports for invalidity, coming in at number three is the alleged affair between Kanye West and makeup Youtuber Jeffree Star. It's not clear where this rumor originated, but allegations have been made all over social media. Although this headline has no evidence to prove it to be genuine, I personally



Music Recommenda- tions

By Mikayla Stock

"Solo Dolo, Pt. III" - Kid Cudi

Straight off of his latest album *Man On The Moon III: The Chosen*, "Solo Dolo, Pt. III" takes listeners on a journey through Cudi's personal struggles that have emerged as a result of isolation.

The track stems from what feels like a moment of solitude, reflection, pain, and denial all wrapped up in an honest expression of his struggles with addiction, loneliness, and the human experience.

The listening experience is as raw and tender as a lump at the back of your throat, and despite the overall dreamy sound, Cudi's lyrics certainly nod to the all-but-ethereal reality of addiction and lonesomeness.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

"The Gold - Phoebe Bridgers Version" - Manchester Orchestra, Phoebe Bridgers

I could go into some deeper analysis of this song, but I honestly think you should just listen to it and maybe go cry in a field.

This is the type of track that makes me want to go on a walk on a misty day and start weep-

ing about literally anything while also feeling like the main character of some romantic drama (but not the Netflix kind). What I mean is... it's good. It's a rainy day song, if you will. You'll like it. I think. I don't know you... or do I?



"Moonlight on the River" - Mac DeMarco

I don't know how, why, or when I came across "Moonlight on the River," but all I know is that something about it just bleeds nostalgia for me. To put it in more simple terms, it's basically one of my many comfort songs.

DeMarco's lyricism is always a work of art, but something about this track particularly resonates with me.

The song is essentially about DeMarco's estranged relationship with his father, and it goes on for roughly seven minutes, with a wildly grand instrumental for the last three minutes of the track. The vocals lend themselves as somewhat raw, quiet, and reminiscent of a broken relationship for the first part of the song. The last few minutes, however, expose how DeMarco may be feeling in a way that can only be expressed through music.



Bonus track: "Good Days" - SZA

I won't say much about SZA's latest drop because if you haven't already heard it, I am slightly concerned for your well-being.

The song sounds like drinking a nice little school-appropriate mocktail on the beach while a cool breeze drifts over your shoulders. Listening to it is also a cheaper option than therapy, and I can confirm that it does in fact help. Maybe that's why you'll catch me listening to it approximately 10 times a day.



Julie and The Phantoms Review

By Ella Williams

Have you been longing for nostalgia over quarantine? Are you a mentally unstable teenager? Allow me to introduce you to your next obsession: the Netflix original, *Julie and The Phantoms*!

I know what you might be thinking: "Isn't that a kids show?" While it is directed towards kids, the show has gained a large teenage and young adult audience. The fact that it's a kids show fulfills the desire for nostalgia without watching the redundant plots of your childhood favorites.

The show consists of nine 20-30 minute long episodes directed by Kenny Ortega. It follows a band, Sunset Curve, and a girl named Julie Molina. Sunset Curve has 4 members: Luke,



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

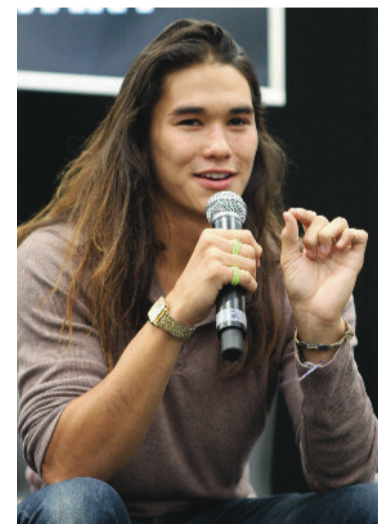
Alex, Reggie, and Bobby. Three of the members died after a hot dog incident in 1995. In 2020, Julie plays their CD, and the boys, as ghosts, reintroduce Julie to music a year after her mom's death.

Julie is the only one that can see the boys, but everyone else can see and hear Luke, Alex, and Reggie when they perform, so they form a band with Julie called Julie and The Phantoms. The ghosts then run into a situation where they have to find and fulfill their unfinished business in order to stop receiving harmful jolts that could cause them to cease to exist.

I've developed a deep love for this show ever since I first saw it, and it's definitely become a comfort show. You'll easily fall in love with the characters through their show and the actors through their frequent Instagram livestreams. The plot is both entertaining and nerve-racking. The attention to detail is captivating, and it's nice to see references to previous episodes throughout the show.

There's drama, romance, family issues, gay representation, and amazing music. The talent is unbelievable from the boys and from Madison Reyes, who is

only 16 years old. All of the actors do their own instrumental and vocal performances, which is hard to come by these days. If my explanation and praise didn't sell you yet, one of the actors is BooBoo Stewart, who plays a ghost skater. What more could you ask for?



The Queen's Gambit Review

By Emily Peck

As I watched Beth Harmon's opponent move a piece, my heart dropped. I had no idea what the move meant, but Beth's eyebrows were furrowed, so I knew it couldn't be good. Then Beth lifted her head and plucked one of her pieces from its place, moving it to check her opponent. I let out a sigh of relief. Beth won, as always.

While her opponent stomped off, likely to complain about losing to a girl, Beth gracefully accepted her win. This is the magic of *The Queen's Gambit*: Beth's raw chess talent wins her every game, and her power -- over men and chess -- is addicting.

The Queen's Gambit is based on Walter Tevis's 1983 novel of the same name, and the Netflix miniseries set during the Cold War centers on orphan chess prodigy Beth Harmon. Beth, played by the rising star Anya Taylor-Joy, is orphaned after a car crash kills her mother, and she learns chess at the Methuen Home for Girls from a kind and taciturn Janitor named Mr. Shaibel. From there she is quickly recognized as a prodigy.

When she is adopted, her adopted mother, Alma Wheatley, brings her to chess tournaments around the country, all of which she easily wins.

The series may seem like a classic feel-good sports story at first, but there are actually many more layers. Beth struggles with addiction, first with painkillers that help her play chess and then with a variety of substances when someone she cares about passes away. She is also obsessed with winning and has a hard time letting people into her life. Beth's layers are best described by Executive Producer William Horberg: "She has so many colors and so much complexity; she's broken-hearted yet tough, she's brilliant yet kind of nerd-y, she hates losing almost as much as Michael Jordan, she's got addictions, she's almost alien in her outsider-ness, she's generous with Alma [her adopted mother], she's a loner but trying out all of these various relationships with men."

I got the chance to ask William Horberg a few questions about *The Queen's Gambit*, and his pride in the series was evident from his answers. Horberg first pitched *The Queen's Gambit* to the marketplace 20 years ago, but it wasn't the right time for *The Queen's Gambit* as a movie. Fast-forward 20 years and with the change from a movie to a mini-series, Horberg and Director Scott Frank were able to



Courtesy of PxHere

get *The Queen's Gambit* off the ground.

But no one anticipated it being such a worldwide sensation. Horberg said that "after 20 years of being told it wasn't commercial," no one expected *The Queen's Gambit* to become as popular as it has. The series sat atop the Top 10 Netflix Chart for 22 days, and it was only beat by Tiger King's 27 day streak. Maybe it was such a hit because people needed a break during

election season. Or maybe everyone wanted to escape the pandemic reality and be whisked away to the sixties. Or maybe Beth Harmon sparked something deep inside many people. Horberg seems to think so, telling me, "I think she is a unique creation, and that's why audiences have responded so strongly to her, especially as played by the equally unique Anya Taylor-Joy."

When I watched Beth elegantly defeat her opponents and obsess over becoming a world champion, I was drawn into her world. The men in Beth's life seem to be caught in her gravity, and she was so sure of her abilities. All these attributes made Beth very different from the standard woman in film. Horberg remarked that "there aren't enough stories that let female characters have this much of a rainbow of colors to play."

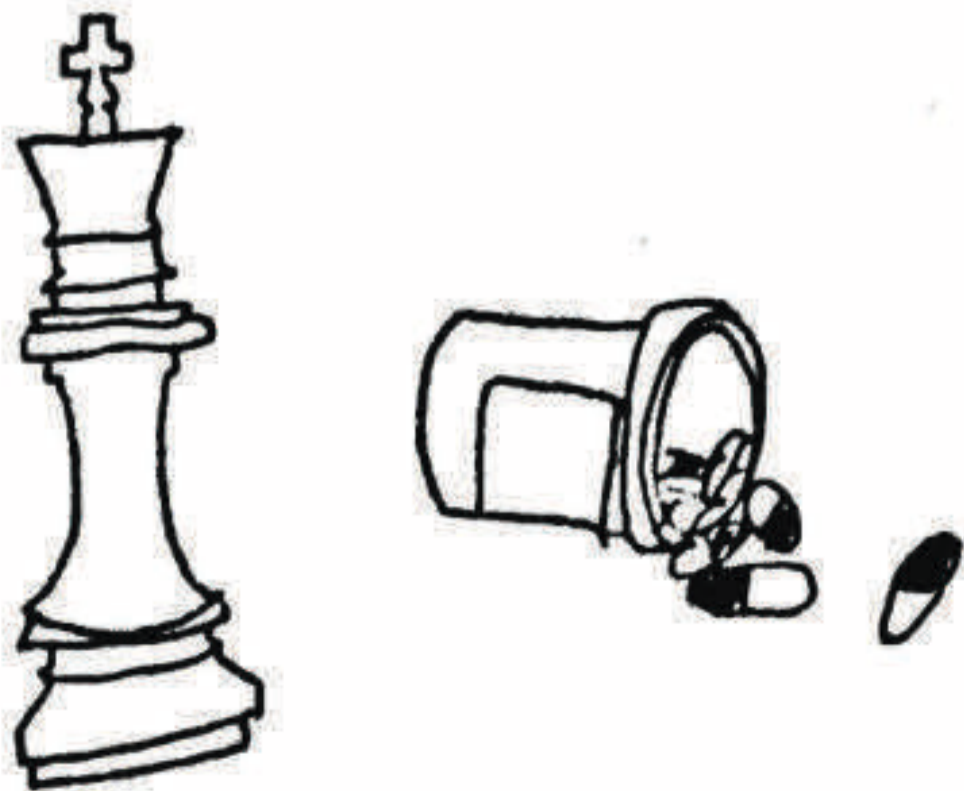
The Queen's Gambit is also different from other popular series because of its focus on chess. The series made chess seem thrilling in a way that few knew it could be. Watching Beth's facial expressions shift and her hands delicately move pieces to dominate the board was fascinating, even for someone like myself who knows very little about chess. But the creators of *The Queen's Gambit* also en-

sured that the chess games were legitimate. They employed the former world champion Garry Kasparov and New York City chess coach Bruce Pandolfini as consultants on the games in the series. "Organizing all of those chess tournaments to be both authentic and still entertaining was a big focus for us," says Horberg.

The chess in *The Queen's Gambit* captured people's attention so much that "since its release, numerous chess board manufacturers have reported big surges in sales, with increases anywhere from 215% to 1,000%," according to *The Guardian*. And many of these chess sets are likely bought by women, as *The Queen's Gambit* made chess -- an extremely male-dominated sport -- enticing to girls and women.

After watching, or more likely binging, *The Queen's Gambit*, most people are left yearning for more. I was too, so of course I asked William Horberg if we will ever know the rest of Beth's story.

"This is Beth's story," Horberg replied. He noted that adding on to the series would take away from its "perfect ending" and leave fans "more unhappy than satisfied with the result."



Courtesy of Zach Calinda

If We Make it Through December

By Mikayla Stock

The holidays are usually regarded as a joyous time for all who partake in the multitude of activities coinciding with the season. Whether you spend hours frolicking in the blanket of snow adorning the ground or eating your weight in raw sugar cookie dough, nothing seems to capture the bliss of December quite as well as the waves of nostalgia that accompany the winter days. The feelings of eagerness, delight, and magic that join with the festive atmosphere of the season hold themselves as so vivid, bright, and permanent during the years of childhood.

In my own younger years I was given my greatest memories of the holidays as they shined their light within my mind for years following. I couldn't possibly imagine a time where I didn't feel the warm fuzziness of December for the rest of my life.

It wasn't until the ever-so-remarkable year of 2020 passed that I realized my story was beginning to change, and upon many moments of contemplation, I concluded that I wasn't feeling too satisfied with a new narrative.

It's no secret that as time goes on life becomes more hectic than ever before, and to manage that stress as a teenager in the twenty-first century has been met with its fair share of challenges.

Experiencing the ups and downs of aging is one thing, but actually realizing I was experiencing those ups and downs caused me to view the holidays as a moment of darkness with the fear of an unknown future

ahead of me.

My life, along with the lives of many others my age, will change drastically within this new year we face. From graduating high school and leaving for college to turning 18, the events that will take place in 2021 always seemed like a distant story to me during my younger years -- a story that seemed like it would never be my own.

Being stuck at home over what is soon to be the past year has lent me a lot of time for reflection, but when the holiday season came around I started to realize that for the first time that I was experiencing a genuine dissatisfaction with aging.

As I remembered back to the lovely festive times of my younger days, I became increasingly uncomfortable with my own existence as a human being. Life had, for the most part, begun rendering itself as overwhelmingly disappointing, and I became incredibly hard on myself for seeing it as such. I was healthy, I had a roof over my head, my family was safe, and I wasn't struggling in some momentous way, yet I still felt like the world that I had always known as my source of comfort was finally caving in.

Remembering times when I was as happy as I used to be during the holidays made me feel so devoid of joy throughout the whole of December. College applications, an abundance of homework, struggles with my own mental state, and the stress of staying healthy further eclipsed what I hoped to be the relaxing euphoria traditionally associated with the season.



Courtesy of Natalie Horburg

I found myself so overwhelmed with the realization that times were changing and the fact that I wouldn't be able to reverse any of it. I missed being young and experiencing the joys of December in the purest way possible, and I missed the times when my mind wasn't so overtaken with how affected by the world I've become.

As a result, an overwhelming wave of emotion attacked me with full force throughout December. I knew I couldn't re-

verse the clock and would never be able to, but to make it through December was to finally accept that my reality would be changing regardless of how much I missed the younger version of myself.

Over the winter break, with the help of my family and some much needed time to rest, I realized that, yes, my narrative was changing and, yes, the innocence of my youth was beginning to feel out of reach. But to my surprise, it was all entirely okay. I am changing, you are changing, and that's all we'll ever do.

I recently heard someone speak about taking every day as it comes in an effort to keep your vibrations raised, and upon learning such a concept I noticed what it was that I was doing wrong during my moments of dreadful emptiness. My

youth, your youth, and everyone's youths are nowhere but in the present moment, regardless of the time of year or the way that nostalgia may threaten to pull at your throat.

So in this new year, I've vowed to recognize every moment of progression as something not to dread but to accept with full force in the face of my changing story. And from one young soul to another, I hope you will do the same.

"I missed being young and experiencing the joys of December"

Build-A-Fit

winter edition

1.



Start off with a turtle neck. They're warm but easy to layer.

2.



Next put on a pair of jeans. They go with any outfit and keep you warm. (if you're still cold, wear leggings underneath)

3.



After the jeans, throw on a graphic tee. It adds layers to stay warm while giving the outfit a focal point.

4.



Finally, add a nice puffer jacket. Puffers are cute as well as functional to protect you from winter's harsh temperatures.

★ Don't forget a mask and a pair of shoes when you leave the house! ★

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Courtesy of Depositphotos

Courtesy of Ella Williams



Courtesy of Pixabay

Contributing to the Community as a Student

By Laura Craig

The feeling you receive when someone else's happiness is uncontrollable is truly wonderful. Just one selfless act can make someone's day.

During this holiday season, I decided to give back to my community. I felt that now, more than ever, families are struggling with hunger and stress because they are experiencing hardships due to COVID-19.

I took it upon myself to start a non-perishable food item and hygiene product collection that will help the families in need. The food pantry is located inside the United Methodist Church upstairs from the thrift store in Phoenicia. The Phoenicia Food Pantry was founded in the 1980's and is operated solely by volunteers and through donations. It feeds 30-35 families in our community each week, and the number of families is currently increasing.

A quote from Maya Angelou speaks to what I decided to do: "When you learn, teach. When you get, give." After years of doing good for the community with my parents, I learned that sometimes, if you give someone a little hope, they live their life

a little happier.

My family has put together an event for a couple of years now called Miracle on Main Street. We work for months on end to organize a free winter wonderland so that kids can smile and families can celebrate together with the whole community.

During this event I serve free food and drinks provided by local businesses, and we also set up activities for kids in the community such as crafts and face painting. We could not host this event this year due to COVID-19.

Instead, we created a new event called The Parade of Lights that kept our community safe and happy. This event took place on Main Street, Phoenicia on Sunday, December 13th. The parade included different fire departments and police officers from our community and people who decorated their vehicles full of lights and joined the parade. I saw so many children smile from their cars as they were waving at the passing vehicles.

This event couldn't have happened without the people and first responders who took the time out of their day to help out and make a wonderful parade.

My parents have taught me that giving to others is a true gift, and that is why I was inspired to start something of my own. I can truly say that the event spread holiday cheer during this difficult time.

All I have ever wanted to do was help people and inspire others to do the same. So far, I have collected some donations, but not enough. We need to help each other through these tough times. Oprah Winfrey said it best: "To move forward, you have to give back."

The Phoenicia Food Pantry is open on Thursdays between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. for donation drop off. Check donations are also accepted by mail or at Ulster Savings Bank, 58 Main Street, Phoenicia, NY 12464 made out to the "Phoenicia Food Pantry." It is a US 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization, and for more information call Jane Todd - Director at 845-688-5828 or The Town Clerk's office 845-688-5004.



Courtesy of Laura Craig

Clawsnaps

How have you coped with mental health in quarantine?

Autumn Schouten, grade 11:

"I have found distracting myself, especially late at night, with movies works. Besides that I often let stress overwhelm me and just cry to let things go."

Zoe Gabriel, grade 10:

"Working out."

Madeline Taylor, grade 10:

"Writing. But it isn't really working that well."

Kelly Wen, grade 9:

"Taking walks at night and stargazing."

Holly Wotherspoon, grade 12:

"Lots of crying."

Liam Bertheaud, grade 10

"My sleep schedule has drastically changed in a positive way. And I drink tea now."

Sophie Frank, grade 11:

"To cope while in quarantine I have been watching lots of movies and TV, listening to music, and talking on the phone with friends whenever possible."

Shayne Durkin, grade 12:

"The thing that's done the most for my mental health is volunteering. It gives me a sense of purpose and community that I can devote myself to in multiple ways, and it's a good way to help others. It's helped my mental health for months now, and I'm sure that it helps the other volunteers, too."

Boys Are Dogs, Cats Are Girls: A Philosophical Take on the Effects of Internalized Misogyny

By Natalie Horberg

When I was a kid, I sat in front of the T.V. to watch Scooby-Doo help a gang of teens solve mysteries or the mute Penelope Pussycat try to avoid Pepé le Pew, a French skunk, as he lusted after her. Sometimes, I'd flip through channels, skimming across Josie and the Pussycats, T.U.F.F. Puppy, Hello Kitty's Furry Tale Theater, or The Huckleberry Hound Show.

With so much content to digest, it didn't take long for me to grasp the trend -- boys were dogs and girls were cats; dogs were a man's best friend and cats were ditsy little creatures that belonged on the outskirts of popular entertainment.

From a young age, we are constantly reminded that dogs are synonymous with companionship, loyalty, and masculinity, while cats are synonymous with elusiveness, self-reliance, and femininity.

Even though these notions are deeply ingrained in our culture, it is important to remember

that they are still crafted stereotypes which bear little semblance to reality. Yes, dogs tend to be more social, and cats tend to be more independent, but that doesn't indicate any measurable correlation to the intrinsic behaviors of men and women.

Although this anthropomorphism of dogs and cats is debatable, its possible impact is difficult to ignore. According to an article from *Nationalgeographic.com*, in 2013, around 52% of Americans preferred dogs and 21% preferred cats.*

If we are to take these cultural stereotypes into consideration, then the question must be asked: Are Americans not very fond of cats because, subconsciously, they're not very fond of women? Moreover, can misogyny be blamed for the continuous merging of women and cats?

Not only are offensive stereotypes about femininity infused into cats' image, but also cat-like characteristics are commonly attributed to women in

order to dehumanize them.

Examples of the latter phenomenon are not hard to come by: Cats are often paired with eccentric older women, such as witches or "crazy cat-ladies," and the phrase "catfight" has long been used to demeaningly refer to an altercation between women. Furthermore, when a woman is expressing her anger, it is not unusual to hear someone give a cat-like growl as a sarcastic parody of her emotions.

Upon closer examination, it is apparent that these associations between cats and women specifically perpetuate the inherent ageism within misogyny; they broadcast the false belief that old women are hag-like and young women are too feisty for their own good.

Feline characteristics are also used to hyper-sexualize femininity in an alarmingly superficial way. Consider Catwoman of DC Comics, a morally ambivalent enemy and love interest of Batman who is almost always clad in a shiny black catsuit.

Unsurprisingly, she was created mainly to give an element of sensuality to the series, and Batman co-creator Bob Kane even wrote in his autobiography, *Batman and Me*, "I felt that women were feline creatures and men were more like dogs. While dogs are faithful and friendly, cats are cool, detached, and unreliable. I felt much warmer with dogs around me -- cats are as hard to understand as women are... We don't want anyone taking over our souls, and women have a habit of doing that."

To those like Kane, it seems as though the only way to redeem these so-called flaws in women -- or rather, the only way to cope with their natural independence -- is to emphasize it in a way that is synonymous with promiscuity and animality rather than actual autonomy.

By translating women's strength into glaring sex appeal that only exists to please men, a twisted

sort of feminism is promoted wherein audiences are made to believe that a woman's power lies solely in how sexy she is. In this sense, pop culture harps on the idea that if a cat wants to live in a dog's world, she has to be the most objectified version of herself possible.

In other words, if Catwoman wants to play the same game as Batman, she has to do it while wearing high heels and a skintight leather catsuit.

When it comes to complaints about cats and women from both cat-haters and misogynists, they are usually quite contradictory in a way that is reminiscent of fascist logic.

Within anti-Semitism, a fascist ideology, Jewish people are scapegoated for everyone else's problems. Because this destructive, cruel conception is so wildly illogical, its implications are fraught with paradoxes and inconsistencies. For instance, when anti-Semites blame Jewish people for problems in the economy, they characterize them as being clever masterminds. However, when anti-Semites simultaneously claim Jewish people are intellectually inferior, they are then contradicting their own beliefs about how Jews are able to secretly undermine the economy.

Pinning the responsibility for an unfathomable number of problems onto a single group of individuals is always logically indefensible. But it is fairly common in everyday life, as seen in the standard arguments for disliking cats and women. People argue that somehow they are too independent yet too needy, too feisty yet too lazy, too dangerous yet easily domitable. Within these complaints lie obvious contradictions that expose faulty reasoning.

But does that mean cats and women must be immune to self-contradictions in order to be acceptable? Of course not. Opposing traits exist within women and cats because they

are three-dimensional beings, not because they are a threat to society. It is not that they are too independent yet too needy, but rather that -- just like most other living beings -- they strive for a sense of self-governance and also want to feel cared for by those around them.

It is possible that Americans generally prefer dogs to cats for a variety of reasons other than internalized misogyny. Perhaps it has to do with costs, or maybe there is some distinct scientific explanation. But philosophy isn't here to dissect all of that. Philosophy invites us to take risks by searching for our own explanations to great, seemingly unanswerable questions.

Undoubtedly, misogyny has been rampant in this country since its very beginning. Horrifically insulting, unfounded ideas have always been spread about what it means to be a woman, and over time, these ideas have sunk into the very fabric of our culture. They are reflected in television, movies, books, and the English language itself.

It is about time that this shallow, unnecessarily harmful comparison between women and cats dies down. We need to stop anthropomorphizing cats -- or any animal for that matter -- as having personas which correspond to stereotypes based on any sex or gender, and we need to do so by being unafraid to point it out in our own lives.

How can we begin to confront centuries of misogyny if we don't try to identify it in what we consume and what we believe -- in how we treat women and even how we think about cats?

**twenty-seven percent claimed to be unsure of their preference*



Courtesy of Natalie Horberg

What Does Toxic Masculinity Mean to You?

By Sophie Frank

When I set out to write an article about toxic masculinity, I knew I had to include as many voices as I could. So this article contains the experiences of many people, engaging in deep conversations about the state of our world and answering this question: What does toxic masculinity mean to you?

Toxic masculinity is a way we as a society teach men to act. The key pillars are teaching men to suppress their emotions, to maintain a tough or powerful appearance, and to think that violence or misogyny is an indicator of power and strength.

It's only recently that people have started to really study how pervasive toxic masculinity is in our culture and what kind of unexpected consequences have resulted from raising generations of men to have harmful definitions of masculinity. But now, more than ever, people are aware.

In 2019, the first-ever set of guidelines for psychologists regarding toxic masculinity was published by the American Psychological Association. This huge step means that the concept is now officially recognized as harmful but treatable. The guidelines focused on teaching psychologists how to deal with men who had been conditioned to conform to "traditional masculine ideology."

As for the manifestations of the global discussion on toxic masculinity, it's everywhere.

A recent example is the now-famous Harry Styles magazine cover. After the singer did a photoshoot in a dress, backlash quickly ensued. Candace Owens, a Republican commentator, used her Twitter account to call for bringing back "real men" after seeing the photos, sparking a conversation about breaking gender norms and how looking feminine has be-

come linked to weakness -- for both men and women.

The concept is being discussed by social scientists and every person to ever have a Twitter account, but what is it like to actually live in a culture so dominated by harmful ideals for men?

For my friends who are not men, it means fear. It means shame. It means looking over your shoulder when walking alone because before you hit double digits you were told that you had to be responsible for your own safety.

It means crying to a teacher after recess in elementary school, begging her to tell the boy who's been being mean to you to stop and hearing, "he just likes you" in response. It means learning to think that abuse means love.

It means always being punished just a little worse than your male friends, always being asked to do more chores.

It means having school administrators enforce an arbitrary dress code for women while watching men violate it without consequence. It means covering up bra straps like one would signs of a zombie bite during the apocalypse.

It means hating pink in elementary school, hating anything "girly." It means learning to associate feminine things with weakness, to think them undesirable.

It means double standards and gender inequality.

For my friends who are men, it means having a standard for perfection that's hard to measure up to. It means trying and often failing to conform.

One Onteora student told me that he plays sports even though he doesn't like them, that he plays because he feels like being athletic helps him fit into the typical male mold. Men who aren't interested in things associated with the typical stereotype often feel "ostracized," my friend shared. Though in his social circles there is an unspoken rule to never discuss the pressure to conform to a rigid set of stan-

dards, he and his friends feel it looming over them.

When asked, he couldn't trace this pressure back to one origin. Instead, he listed examples from childhood, such as watching football and being pushed in the direction of typical male interests.

He compared the standard for masculinity he's seen in the media and in his own life since childhood to indoctrination, saying that he feels men are always striving to meet a standard for masculinity, and it isn't always effortless.

Always trying to meet that standard makes men feel trapped. On social media, I found many examples of what men hate about toxic masculinity, such as having to equate violence with masculinity, not being able to ask for help when they were being bullied, the "bro code," and the difficulty of speaking out when they witness abusive be-

havior directed towards women.

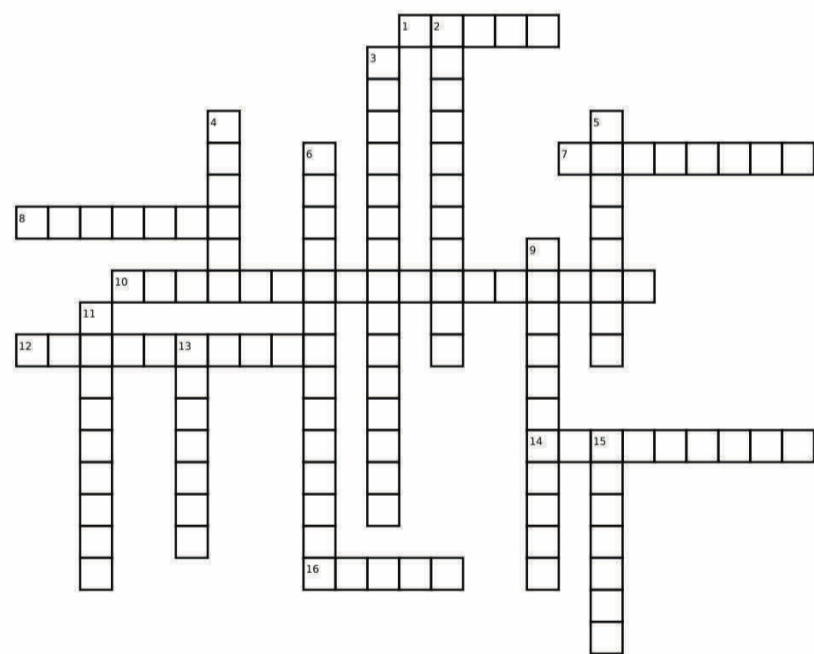
These rigid standards we've been adhering to for generations hurt both men and women. It's an uphill battle to

rip out the roots of bad behavior we've been taught to allow our whole lives. But we have our eyes on change and the whole world talking, and that's a start.



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

2. _ is the longest-named state in America.
3. Which president of the United States played a significant role in popularizing pasta in America?
4. The only animal that can blush
5. The name of a baby puffin
6. The official term for a crossword puzzle writer
9. The most commonly misspelled word in Maine
11. Colour of Cuttlefish's blood
13. The national animal of Scotland
15. The first apple pie recipe originates in _

Across:

1. The meaning of corona
7. The most common name in the world is _
8. Which country has the highest rate of twins in the world?
10. The fear of the number 13 is called _
12. M&M stands for _ and _
14. The only non-human mammals that seek spicy foods intentionally.
16. The number of Grammy Awards Elvis has won.