

ENVISION.

Spring 2020

DEAR READERS,

CONTENTS.

Wherever you are in the world, we hope that you and your loved ones are safe and secure.

We're excited to introduce the Spring 2020 issue of *Envision Magazine*, a publication that reports, critiques, and discusses international relations. Our goal as a publication is to share student voices, highlight often underrepresented corners of our world, and keep the Choate student body informed, inquisitive, and passionate about global events.

We're living in uniquely disturbing and troubling times. The coronavirus pandemic has uprooted day-to-day life, poked holes in our world's most vital institutions, and exposed economic and technological disparities across the globe. Stranded from the familiar silhouettes of Hill House and Lanphier, current events don't feel as foreign.

This issue of *Envision Magazine* addresses some of the global ramifications of the coronavirus. Scroll to an article by Mai Ly Hagan '21 to learn about underdeveloped countries' vulnerability to the virus. If you want to read about how international students at Choate are adapting to remote learning, peek at an article by Lara Selçuker '21.

We also hope to direct your attention towards news that doesn't make the headlines. Ami Hoq '21 zooms into the intricacies of the U.S.'s student visa system. Mieke Buterbaugh '23 writes about how coastal fishing communities are suffering from rising sea levels and temperatures.

We are hopeful that *Envision Magazine* can continue to feature a variety of voices and opinions and become a platform for students to write, read, and connect with each other and our world. With that said, we are looking forward to hearing from you. We hope that whether it's this issue or the next, *Envision* can be an outlet for you to express your ideas and connect with our community. We need your voice.

LOVE,
THE MASTHEAD

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Graphic by Senching Hsia '21

"It's all the same with your eyes closed."

TRUMP'S IRAN POLICY IMPERILS WORLD ORDER

By Begum Gokmen '23

Time and time again, President Donald Trump has been quick to act with his first impulse instead of prioritizing international cooperation and diplomacy. The assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani on January 3 was no different. Trump doubled existing tensions between Iran and the U.S. and carelessly led both countries to the brink of war, compromising world order.

The relationship between Iran and the U.S. has been on the rocks since Trump decided to pull out of the Iranian Nuclear Deal in 2018, leading to the reimposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran and devastating their economy in the process. In response, Iran resumed its uranium enrichment, stepping further away from the nuclear deal and enraging the U.S. in the process. What started as an attempt to assert U.S. dominance and spite Iran ended up working against U.S. interests.

A year later, the U.S. blamed Iran for attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf Region and a drone strike on a Saudi Arabian oil refinery, despite Iran denying their involvement. Later, on December 27, 2019, a U.S. contractor was killed, and many other American service officials were wounded, during a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk. The U.S. later blamed Kataib Hezbollah, an Iran-backed insurgent group, for the attack.

In retaliation, the U.S. launched "defensive strikes," targeting Iran-backed Iraqi militia and killing 25 fighters who were linked to Iran. On December 31, Trump tweeted, "Iran killed an American contractor, wounding many. We strongly responded and always will."

Infuriated Iranians then broke into the U.S. embassy compound in Baghdad, vandalizing the entire building and setting parts of it on fire. "Iran will be held fully responsible for lives lost, or damage incurred, at any of our facilities," Trump, with typical bravado, added in another tweet on December 31, "They will pay a very BIG PRICE! This is not a Warning, it is a Threat. Happy New Year!" Trump has little tact, threatening and taunting the Iranian government over Twitter instead of handling the

conflict in consultation with his administration.

This brings us to January 3 when Soleimani was assassinated. "This is the equivalent of Iranians assassinating the U.S. Secretary of Defence," U.S. Democratic Senator Chris Murphy said on the matter.

Thousands of Iranians gathered in Soleimani's hometown, Kerman, for his two-day burial and funeral procession in Tehran and Qom. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani stated, "They have made a strategic mistake. They will see that more difficult days await them."

Prior to the attack, Trump did not inform Congress about his plans. In accordance with the War Powers Resolution of 1973, the president is required to alert Congress 48 hours prior to launching a military attack, barring an "imminent threat." The Trump administration claims that there was an "imminent threat," but the evidence remains unclear, and the Trump administration refuses to release any information on the matter. "We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war," Trump said on January 3.

This begs the question: How close are Iran and the U.S. to a full-scale invasion? After Soleimani's assassination, Trump tweeted a message to Iran, warning them to forget about retaliating. He claimed that if they did, he had already chosen 52 possible targets to strike, one for every American held during the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1979.

Having promised a "severe revenge," Iran eventually retaliated by firing more than a dozen ballistic missiles on the Ain al-Assad air base and an Iraqi facility in Erbil where U.S. personnel were present. Luckily, there were no casualties.

However, tensions are only escalating with time. The U.S. continues to implicate strict measures on Iran during the coronavirus outbreak. U.S. sanctions have obstructed Iran's means of fighting the virus, preventing Iranians from accessing medical supplies essential to save lives. Even in times of such crisis, Trump has little regard for civil diplomacy — now, more than ever, we need international unity.

U.S. STUDENT VISA SYSTEM PLAYS ROULETTE WITH PEOPLES' LIVES

Or are there just too many zeros?

By Amitra Hoq '21

Graphic by Senching Hsia '21

The U.S. is rich with opportunity, but only for people with access. The academic journey of a privileged American is vastly different than the journey of a foreigner navigating the twists and turns of the U.S. student visa system. Any foreign student interested in studying at an American high school, college, or graduate school is required to apply for a J1, F1, or M1 visa — all of which fall under the I20 form. The process of applying for any of these visas is riddled with racial and economic injustices, which are exacerbated by the intricate screening process, interviews, and the executive powers pulling the strings. If a student is interested in applying for an F1 visa, they must follow a series of steps:

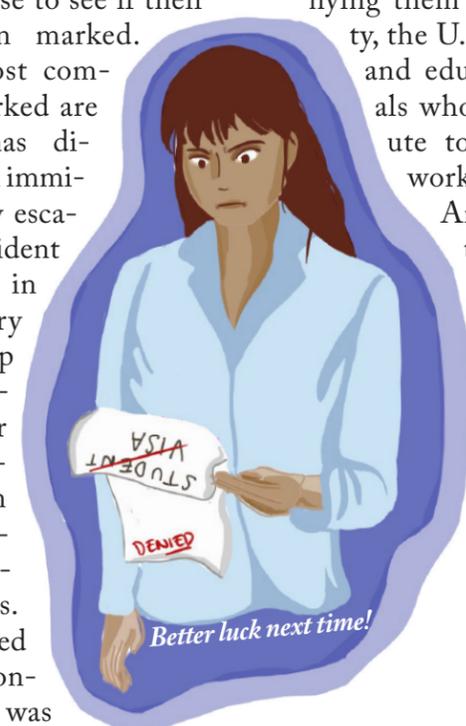
find a sponsor who is part of the Student Exchange and Victory Program, submit an application to Homeland Security after paying a \$200 application fee, and interview with a U.S. immigration officer. After the candidate has been interviewed, a counsel at Homeland Security reviews the visa — this process is the same for M1 visas, except the M1 covers vocational and technical schools. A J1 visa allows a student or professional to remain in the U.S. for an extended period of time while working or shadowing in an institution. After the J1 visa has expired, recipients have the chance to reinstate their visa by serving in an underprivileged community for three years. If a student goes down this route, their J1 visa is

waived, and they can apply for a green card. However, certain countries have long wait times; for example, it can take up to 20 years for an Indian citizen to get a green card. Thus, Indian citizens have to think of backdoor ways to obtain their green cards, which can include marrying an American citizen. Moreover, among all of the I20 visa types there are certain guidelines that students are required to follow. For instance, students are prohibited from working for more than 20 hours a week — this can be difficult for students who are paying rent, buying textbooks, and footing their own meal plans. If students break this rule, they are unable to legally live, work, or visit the U.S. in the future. The ultimate goal is to at-

tain an H1-B visa—a non-immigrant visa that allows graduate students to be employed in the U.S.— after their F1 expires; however, this application process is purposefully complicated. In order to receive an H1-B waiver, students are required to meet a list of qualifications set by the U.S. government: a student must be involved in Specialty Occupations, the Department of Defense, or work as a fashion model. If a student does not fulfill any of these criteria, they are declared “H1-B capped” and entered into a lottery system. If the student does not win the lottery, they are sent home — the outcome for an overwhelming 62% of H1-B applicants. This prevents international students from maintaining connections in the United States beyond secondary education, derailing their career pursuits. Another major drawback to the visa process is the interview, which gives U.S. officials the opportunity to make overwhelming generalizations based on religion, ethnicity, and other identifying factors, denying a visa to a perfectly eligible candidate out of prejudice. For instance, if a candidate is unable to provide a reason that is deemed “proper” as to why they should be able to study in the United States, their F1 visa will be denied. What’s more, if a candidate seems to have no intent to return home or shows intent to overstay their visit during an interview, they could be denied their visa. Take Siming Liu, a post-doctoral fellow at Stanford Uni-

versity who went back home to China to take a course on solar plasma processes. He was denied reentry to the U.S., missing his presentation in Denver at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society. Regarding this experience, Liu said, “My interview lasted for less than one minute. The officer only read a letter from my department [...] and reached his decision. An officer from the embassy called me the following day and asked me to send them my resume because they do not know why my application should be checked and what to check for. I had my resume with me during the interview. The visa officer never asked for it.” Liu is one of around ten scholars each year from Stanford University who has trouble reentering the country. After an interview, all non-immigrants must subject themselves to a security check on the Consular Lookout and Security Database to see if their name has been marked. Among the most common names marked are Muslim. Stigmas directed at Muslim immigrants have only escalated with President Donald Trump in office. In January of 2017, Trump signed an Executive Order banning immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries. The act received backlash nationwide—Trump was

sued by numerous human rights organizations, most notably the American Civil Liberties Union. Trump made changes to the act, and, eventually, the third version was upheld by the Supreme Court in June of 2018. The act was passed on the basis of protecting the U.S. from terrorism; however, it was truly a way for Trump to promote his discriminatory ideologies. Ultimately, I20 visas are difficult to receive, and, even if a student gets one, it comes with a time stamp. The student receives a U.S. education or gains valuable work experience in the U.S. only to be sent back to their country if they don’t make the cut for an H1-B or a green card. It benefits both the student and the U.S. government to make the visa process simpler. If a student receives a college education in the U.S., it doesn’t make sense that they shouldn’t be able to continue on their trajectory. In denying them this opportunity, the U.S. loses valuable and educated individuals who could contribute to the American workforce. It’s time America prioritize education and merit over discrimination and racism, but this change needs to start in the White House.





Graphic by Senching Hsia '21

CORONAVIRUS PANIC PROVIDES PRIME MINISTER ORBÁN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

By Nathan Lang '22

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, many governments have imposed rigid lockdowns and strict curfews with the hope of containing the disease. While certainly important to curb the spread of the virus, these changes have created room for leaders, such as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary, to exploit their power beneath the guise of stifling the coronavirus.

On March 30, the Hungarian Parliament passed an act known as the Coronavirus Law, which granted Orbán the right to suspend all existing laws and rule by decree until two-thirds of legislators agree to terminate his emergency powers. The law has brought Hungary's government to a standstill—no elections can take place, and all entities viewed by the government as “obstructing efforts to protect the people from the pandemic” can be sentenced to five years in jail.

Even when entrusted with absolute power to fight a pandemic, Orbán has prioritized his political agenda over public health. The prime minister has made sure his political party, the Fidesz, secures the majority in parliament. Without a free-minded legislature to do so, it will be nearly impossible to unseat Orbán for the foreseeable future, signifying the fall of

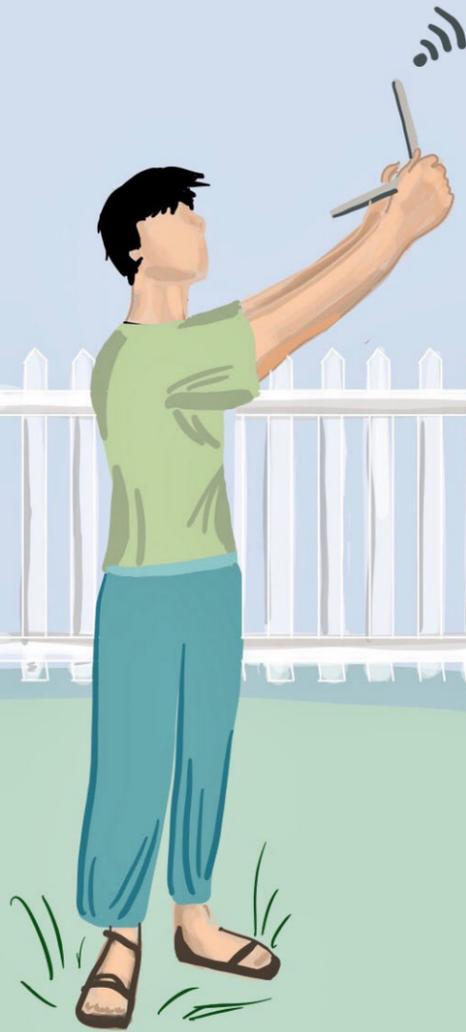
whatever was left of Hungarian democracy.

Even before the Coronavirus Law was passed, political scientists had long contested Hungary's status as a democratic nation. Because the nation has one of the highest levels of press control out of all E.U. member states, both Freedom House and V-Dem revoked Hungary's status as a democracy, making it the only E.U. state not to have the distinction. The Freedom House explained Hungary's status change in a press release: “After centralizing power, tilting the electoral playing field, taking over much of the media, and harassing critical civil society organizations since 2010, Orbán moved during 2019 to consolidate control over new areas of public life, including education and the arts.” The Coronavirus Law only worsened these verdicts, forcing many unwilling leaders in Hungary and the rest of Europe to acknowledge the country's corrupt government.

Orbán's autocratic regime poorly prepared Hungary to tackle the pandemic. Instead of enhancing outdated healthcare infrastructure, his regime opted for constructing sports arenas. Instead of taking extreme actions to stifle the pandemic, Orbán has used his emergency powers to silence any and all opposition

from the press and other political parties, thus nobody can contest his inadequate leadership. Taking advantage of the stifled press, Orbán has used these new powers to promote his radical ideas of “illiberalizing” the E.U. by encouraging European governments to build autocracies.

The Coronavirus Law not only threatens Hungary's citizenry, but it challenges the political landscape in Europe. However, European nations have been reluctant to take any serious action against Orbán and his anti-democratic ideologies. A joint statement issued by thirteen E.U. countries called on the European Commission and Council of Ministers to monitor and discuss the emergency measures of all E.U. members when appropriate. Shortly after, the European Commissioner issued a statement of disapproval, promising to “monitor, in a spirit of cooperation, the application of emergency measures in all member states.” Both statements avoided mention of Orbán or any of his actions. This reluctance is mainly due to the coronavirus and the devastation it has incurred; many countries are too preoccupied with handling internal affairs to focus on foreign politics. Hope lies in E.U. intervention; if not, the future of Hungary looks grim.



REMOTE LEARNING UNEARTH'S DIGITAL AND ECONOMIC DIVIDES

By Darcy Rodriguez '21

As the coronavirus pandemic spreads globally, governments have imposed strict isolation measures with the hope of mitigating the pandemic. As a result, many institutions have shut down, including schools. This educational upheaval is affecting an estimated 55 million students in the United States and 300 million students globally. Unprecedented closures have had unparalleled effects on society, beyond lost time in the classroom.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the only way school closures will make an impact on containing the virus is if they exceed eight weeks. Even then, countries that have closed schools, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, “have not had more success in reducing spread than those that did not.” Additionally, the CDC recommends ample preparation for the academic, economic, and social impacts school closures are having on society.

Many public schools are service centers for students of lower socioeconomic status. These are the only places where students can access consistent meals and medical and mental health resources. For example, in New York City, the largest public school district, there are over 114,000 students who are homeless. School closures for more vulnerable students means that they do not know when their next hot meal will be.

In response to educational institutions closing, school administrators have introduced remote learning. At face value, this seems like the most feasible and acceptable solution. Technology is as advanced as it has ever been, and, nowadays, virtually everyone is familiar with online learning platforms such as Google Classroom and Canvas—or so we assume. However, there are many students who rely on school-provided devices and internet services to complete their work. With everyone home, some

students are sharing devices with siblings who are in class at the same time as they should be.

The situation worsens in developing countries where only one in five people are online. In China, 56 to 80 million people don't have access to a stable internet connection. Just to attend an online class, students hike up hills and mountains, setting up makeshift classrooms wherever they can find a signal. In sub-Saharan Africa, 82% of learners struggle to find an internet connection. Educators are experimenting with using television broadcasts and radio to conduct online school. However, students with in and out internet, or no internet at all, are disadvantaged, and their academic trajectory is severely disrupted.

The coronavirus outbreak highlights the problems easily overlooked in a school environment which seeks to give everyone the same experience. From the classwork assigned to even uniforms in some schools, educational institutions strive to create equal opportunity to learn. Now, everyday necessities such as food, Wi-Fi, and even a first-aid kit prove to be privileges rather than utilities.

It is important to acknowledge that, as a world, we are facing unparalleled challenges requiring original solutions. While acclimating everyone to remote learning, public schools in the U.S. have been reopening schools to provide meals for vulnerable students and educators are working on finding devices for them. This effort to alleviate some of the pressures students are facing is something to be celebrated.

The coronavirus draws attention to vast technological and economic disparities across the world. Education should be universal; however, the virus has disadvantaged students without the adequate resources to make the transition to remote learning. This is a call for broader education reform — we need to even the playing field.

SETTING SANCTIONS FOR SURVIVAL

By Mai Ly Hagan '21

*Vietnam's Swift
Coronavirus Action
is a Model for
Underdeveloped Nations*

I'm writing this article from a hospital in Hanoi, Vietnam where I will be spending the next two weeks in quarantine. My family is not allowed to visit me, so, in the past couple of days, my only interactions have been with the nurses who come to take my vitals. My situation isn't unique — this is one of the many measures the Vietnamese government has imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Any Vietnamese citizen coming from Europe or the U.S. is subjected to a 14 day quarantine — of which I am six days in. It is odd to think that

I am somehow participating in history from an isolation room.

While this article initially intended to analyze various responses to the coronavirus across the globe, it has since evolved into a case study of Vietnam — a demonstrative authoritarian response to the coronavirus.

Vietnam, as of the morning of May 7, has experienced 288 confirmed cases and zero deaths due to the coronavirus. The first case emerged on January 23 — a Chinese citizen from Wuhan who was visiting his son in Hanoi. Both fully recovered.

Over the next couple of weeks, 14 more cases would emerge, all concentrated in the urban areas of Hanoi and Saigon. The cases were all related to travel to and from Wuhan, except a receptionist from the southern Khanh Hoa province who had interacted with the father and son — this marked the first domestic transmission.

On February 1, the day that the receptionist tested positive for the virus, the Vietnamese government declared the coronavirus as an epidemic. Subsequently, all schools in Vietnam closed, flights to

mainland China cancelled, and the Ministry of Health began to distribute information on how to curb the virus's spread. A music video of the hit V-pop song "Ghen" went viral globally, instructing listeners to wash their hands, avoid touching their face, and stay away from crowds. In addition, the government quarantined 10,000 people in the Son Loi commune northwest of Hanoi — this quarantine was in response to a mere five reported cases in the area.

By February 25, all of the patients had recovered. In fact, everything was returning to normal. It seemed that, because of swift government action, Vietnam had won the first battle with the coronavirus. Schools reopened and Vietnam was days away from being cleared completely of the virus. Then, on March 6, a new wave of infections emerged — all connected to a flight arriving to Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport from London Heathrow. Despite the government's best efforts, cases were on the rise.

Once again, schools closed and the government sent out an advisory to all citizens in Hanoi to practice social distancing. Most notably, Vietnam fortified their travel restrictions — visas were suspended for eleven European countries, Japan, and South Korea. Any Vietnamese national coming from those territories is subjected to a test for the coronavirus upon arriving, and subsequently taken to a facility to be quarantined for two weeks — just as I was.

So, what does all of this mean?

Vietnam takes such a rigid approach to the virus because the nation cannot afford to have a pandemic. In a press conference, Mayor of Ho Chi Minh City Nguyen Thanh Phong stated that Saigon's hospitals are only capable of containing around 1,000 individuals — insufficient for a city with a metropolitan population of eight million. Unlike other affected areas such as the United States, Europe, and Korea, Vietnam's infrastructure cannot handle large hospital populations.

The Vietnamese scenario mirrors the situation in other at-risk countries. While publicity surrounding the pandemic has centered around wealthier nations, developing countries will have more drastic fallouts due to low sanitation, the high cost of healthcare, and the poor distribution of resources. In regions where clean water and electricity

are not a guarantee, how can governments be expected to care for a significantly ill population?

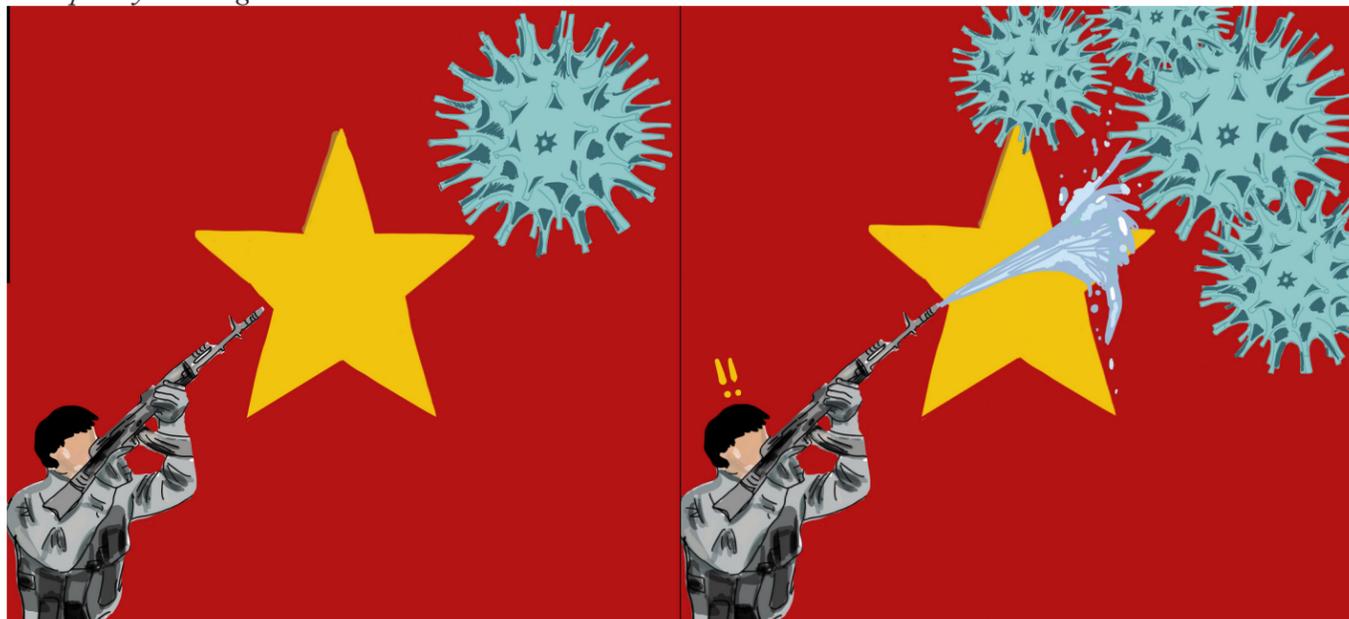
While social distancing works for some people in the United States, it is unreasonable in developing nations where people have compromised housing situations and individuals coming from impoverished backgrounds don't have the option of staying home. Most of all, how will the cost of testing and treatment be subsidized? The coronavirus is already exposing pivotal flaws in developed nations, and, thus, the impact it could have in countries with less resources is terrifying.

For instance, experts begin to worry as the coronavirus spreads to Bangladesh. The main concern is a camp which houses one million Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar. The camps are overcrowded and unsanitary — a disease outbreak would devastate this population. For the Rohingya, the pandemic could affect the process of repatriation to Myanmar. Since the camps are reliant on foreign aid volunteers, removing them to prevent the virus's spread will negatively impact the community. If a person were to test positive for the coronavirus, many camps have proposed setting up an isolation tent. However, by the time the carrier has tested positive, they will have impacted several other people.

While Vietnam's response seems dramatic, it is necessary. On any given date, the coronavirus situation reflects the situation two weeks previous. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that symptoms of the virus can take up to two weeks to show. This means that when a person tests positive, they actually contracted the virus two weeks ago — their steps must be traced in order to isolate the disease. So, when the numbers are in the single digits, it does not account for the fact that if those individuals interacted with any other people, in two weeks the number will have increased exponentially. Any infection at all is a sign for worry.

Other nations can learn from Vietnam's response. All citizens and government officials have a responsibility to understand the nature of the virus. It is not enough to react, but governments must also anticipate. There is no preventing an epidemic anymore; the problem is too widespread. The question changes from what we can do to prevent the spread of coronavirus to how we should grapple with its consequences.

Graphic by Senching Hsia '21



MADURO'S INDICTMENT: MORE FOR SHOW THAN JUSTICE

Is Trump after peace or power?

By Sofia Muñoz '23

On March 26, the Trump administration indicted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and fourteen other Venezuelan officials on charges of narco-terrorism, money laundering, and drug trafficking, offering a \$15 million reward for anyone with evidence corroborating these accusations. While Maduro's indictment is a symbolic step towards bringing the dictatorial president's reign of terror to an end, it is unlikely to result in much change. With mounting pressure on Maduro, many are wondering if the indictment will be a step towards his resignation or compel him to tighten his grip on Venezuela.

Throughout Maduro's seven years in office, the Venezuelan economy has shrunk by nearly half, and many Venezuelans continue to suffer from

a deteriorating quality of life. Consequently, more than three million Venezuelans have fled the country, and citizens that don't have the means to leave are struggling to maintain basic necessities—Venezuelans have been spotted scavenging for scraps of food on the street and ransacking houses for supplies.

Maduro has turned a blind eye to this humanitarian crisis, directing his efforts towards his alleged underground drug trafficking organization called Cartel de Los Soles. In theory, the Cartel imports cocaine into the U.S. with the help of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—a guerilla movement that has been involved in the Colombian armed conflict since 1964.

According to U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr,

"For more than 20 years, Maduro and a number of high-ranking colleagues allegedly conspired with the FARC, causing tons of cocaine to enter and devastate American communities."

Contrary to this claim, Geoff Ramsey, Venezuela expert at the Washington Office on Latin America, told the *Guardian*, "Venezuela's nowhere close to a primary transit country for U.S.-bound cocaine. If the U.S. government wanted to address the flow of cocaine, they'd focus on corruption in places like Honduras and Guatemala—both governments that the administration has coddled in recent years." While Maduro is far from guilty, the U.S. may not be his primary target for cocaine imports.

There seems to be more to the story than simply exposing Maduro's affiliation with a drug

organization. "The evidence [Barr and his staff] point to against Maduro is thin, which suggests this is more about politics than about drugs," Ramsey added.

The Trump administration's indictment might have more to do with putting the U.S.-backed Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó in power. Both Maduro and Guaidó have proclaimed themselves the legitimate leader of Venezuela, but neither has managed to completely outmaneuver the other.

Precedent also suggests a more political motivation for the indictment. In October of last year, New York courts found Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández to be a co-conspirator in a large-scale drug conspir-

acy case, but Hernández, a close ally of the U.S., was not charged. Although he is facing similar accusations, Maduro isn't getting off easy, unlike Hernández. The U.S.'s motivation for putting Maduro behind bars might have more to do with helping Guaidó than eliminating the Cartel.

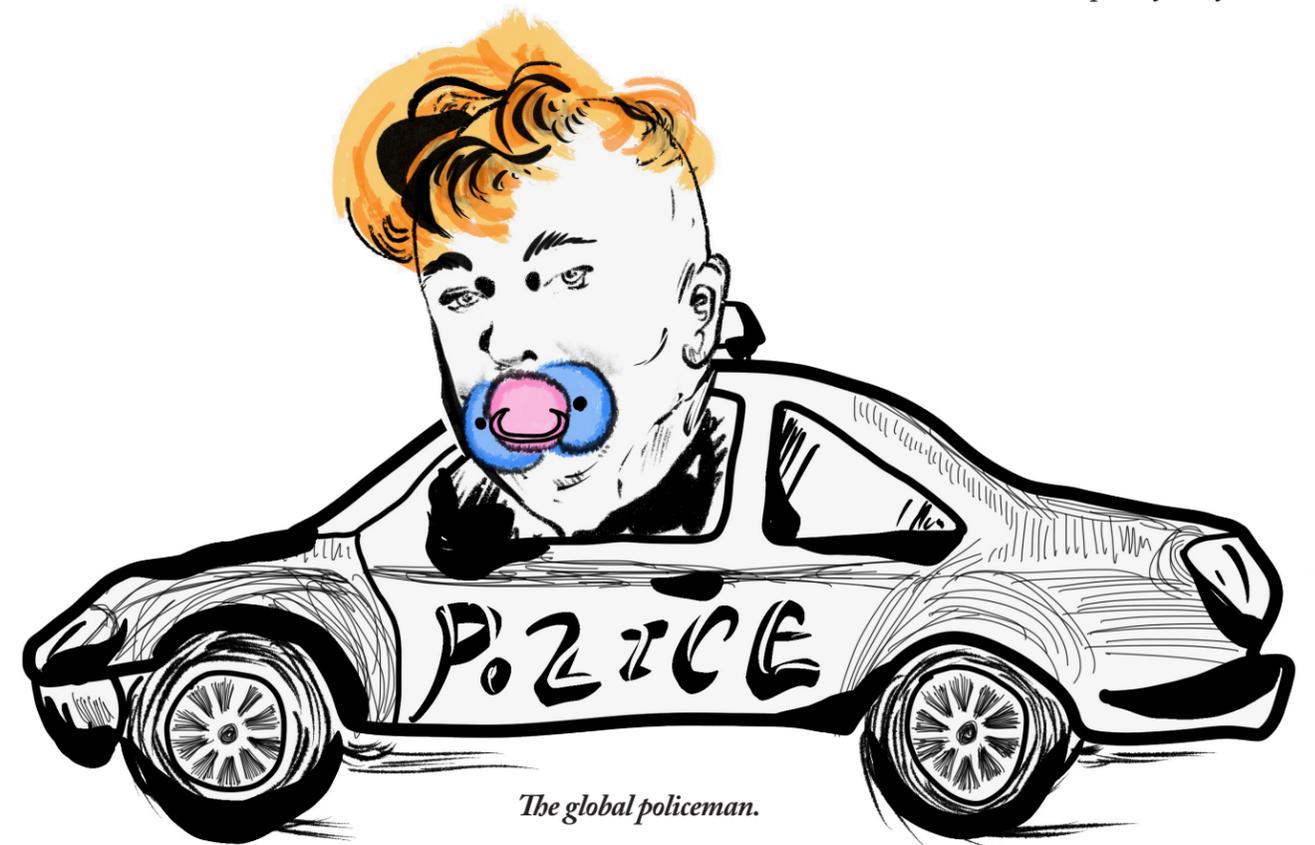
Regardless, the U.S. indictment may not be as effective as the Trump administration hopes. Firstly, the U.S. is unlikely to arrest Maduro because of a possible violation of Venezuelan sovereignty. Traditionally, countries' leaders are immune from arrest in their territories, thus there is little chance that Maduro could be extradited and put on trial in the U.S.

Additionally, Maduro has the support of politically-estab-

lished countries such as Russia and Iran. Russia has continued to buy oil from Venezuelan companies that are blacklisted in the U.S., and Iran has provided important equipment for Venezuela's oil refineries, propping up the nation's damaged economy.

Most importantly, Maduro won't step down because he has the support of the Venezuelan military, which is heavily armed and has used brutal tactics to silence worried citizens and members of the opposition who have pressured Maduro to "abdicate his throne." Some observers are optimistic that Maduro's indictment will force his allies to turn against him, but, more likely than not, the Venezuelan President will remain in power.

Graphic by Abby Lu '22



The global policeman.

DOES THE U.S. PRIORITIZE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES OR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SAUDI ARABIA?

Emma Hermacinski '22

The U.S. is clearly a trade leader on the global stage, but sometimes its presence in arms dealing can be understated relative to other industries. American engagement in both the Foreign Military Sales and the Direct Commercial Sales shapes the state of global politics, impacting the livelihood of citizens and nations alike.

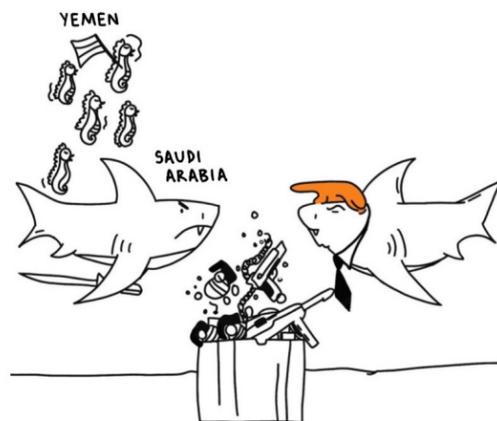
The U.S. is the largest arms trader in the world, and over 20% of its sales go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government has long depended on American military equipment — around three-quarters of Saudi arms imports are of American origin. However, Saudi Arabia has been using U.S. arms to commit a series of human rights violations in Yemen, raising the question of whether America should interfere.

Saudi Arabia has the highest military expenditure relative to gross domestic product in the world, indicating its commitment to the war in Yemen. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2015, Saudi arms sales have increased by 131%. Countries such as the U.S. have continued to feed this hunger for weapons, despite the numerous citations of atrocities committed by Saudi troops in Yemen.

For instance, Saudi Arabia's aerial and naval blockade has prevented food and medicine

from entering Yemen for years, causing one of the worst humanitarian crises of the past decade. Just recently, Saudi Arabia declared a ceasefire in Yemen due to concerns surrounding the coronavirus pandemic; however, this ceasefire is by no means permanent. The Houthi rebels, insurgents fighting against Saudi Arabia, have rejected Saudi peace terms and intend to continue fighting following the ceasefire.

While the Arms Trade



Graphic by Mai Ly Hagan '21

Treaty, drafted by the United Nations in 2014, is designed to regulate trade deals, it never completely went into effect — the U.S. only partially ratified the treaty and Saudi Arabia didn't sign it at all, allowing both countries to circumvent checks ensuring that weapons will be used responsibly.

Despite the countless atrocities Saudi Arabia has committed, there are numerous

arguments for an American continuance of arms sales. Firstly, some believe that there are more effective methods of dealing with the situation that don't involve cutting Saudi off completely — one such method would be to encourage Saudi to act more humanely.

In addition, the consequences of American abandonment could be quite dire. The second and third largest arms traders in the world, Russia and China, respectively, sell arms without any sort of ethical code. If Saudi Arabia was left with no means to keep an American-made army running, they could turn to Russia for a fill-in. This would make it easier for Saudi to commit more human rights violations.

Ultimately, the greater concern of curtailing arms sales to Saudi Arabia would be disrupting the U.S.-Saudi alliance. As the U.S. moves forward, coordination with allies in the Middle East will be critical to resolving political and economic conflicts. As a result, completely cutting off arms sales to Saudi Arabia would heighten tensions between the two countries, harming the prospects of a peaceful future in foreign diplomacy. Knowing the consequences, very few have argued for a complete cutoff of arms sales.

PRECIOUS ALLIANCES WITH ISRAEL DRIVE TRUMP'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

Campbell Pflaum '23



Under the terms of President Donald Trump's grand plan for Middle Eastern peace, Palestine would look very different than it does today. His plan would legalize Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, expand the Gaza Strip, shrink the West Bank, and designate 15% of Jerusalem to Palestine and the rest to Israel. This is an abrupt departure from past presidents' attempts at arbitration. In previous years, the U.S. expressed interest in Palestinian self-determination — Trump tiptoed around this in his plan.

After his sweeping promises to create a "bigger and better deal," Trump unsurprisingly failed to bring about any sort of peace negotiation. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas quickly dismissed the proposal as a "conspiracy," heightening tensions between the U.S. and Palestine. However, the proposal served to strengthen U.S.-Israeli relations — President of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu stated a few weeks later that Trump is "the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House."

Trump has been a consistent and vocal ally of Israel throughout his presidency in part because of the U.S.'s vested interest in maintaining its alliances in the Middle East — sway in the region means control over the area's precious oil supply.

A century of foreign intervention in Middle Eastern affairs has paved the way for terrorism, dictatorships, and poverty in the region today. The U.S. has had soldiers on the ground in the Middle East for the last three decades and

has made several attempts to overthrow and assassinate rulers in the region, including, most recently, Iranian General Quasem Soleimani.

The U.S.'s history of intervention has sparked anti-American sentiment in a region where maintaining control is crucial to the U.S. economy. Thus, preserving alliances with Israel and Saudi Arabia has been the cornerstone of American foreign politics.

However, previous U.S. presidents have maintained a strong alliance with Israel while trying to foster a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Trump's interests seem to lie solely in keeping Israel on his side, instead of reaching a fair compromise. His reasoning for doing so can be attributed to the interests of his voter base. A large portion of his supporters are white, evangelical Protestants who support Israel, and turning out those suburban voters was, in large part, the key to his 2016 win.

Christian Zionism, the belief that the creation of Israel in 1948 was the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy bringing about the second coming of Jesus Christ, is practiced by an overwhelming number of evangelicals. A poll conducted by LifeWay in 2019 found that 80% of evangelical Christians believe in Christian Zionism, and 50% supported Israel because of their religion. Trump's endorsement of Israel is key to keeping these voters. The more publicly and blatantly Trump acknowledges the sovereignty of Israel, the more likely his voters are to notice.

PRISON LABOR: OPPORTUNITY, EXPLOITATION, OR UNFAIR COMPETITION?

By Alicia Xiong '21

In U.S. federal and state prisons today, 54% out of 1.5 million incarcerated persons are considered part of the American workforce. They are known as prison laborers — a form of labor run by privatized companies who pay their workers less than a mile fraction of the revenue.

The ethics of prison labor are widely disputed across the world, especially in the U.S. and the U.K. Generally, people in favor of prison labor believe in reducing recidivism — the process by which a criminal is reconvicted. In addition, they affirm that prison labor provides inmates with job training and experience, thus allowing prisoners to escape the perpetual cycle of crime that they are often unable to break. However, those against prison labor believe menial wages and a lack of workers' rights and protections effectively make prison labor a form of cheap labor.

The debate over prison labor is more complex than a conversation about workers' rights; it has boiled down to a discussion surrounding personal gain. While there is a level of concern for the rights

and opportunities afforded to the prisoners, corporations and the general public are more invested in how prison labor affects their livelihood and profit.

Incarceration systems and corporations are incentivized to invest in prison labor because they profit off of the exploitation of inmates, which is hidden beneath the facade of granting prisoners work experience. A 2012 initiative in the U.K., known as One3One Solutions, encourages private businesses to set up production deals with prisons in order to reduce recidivism. However, the groups that are actually profiting from prison labor are the prisons themselves.

More and more public prisons are becoming privatized; as a result, they can hold onto their profits, rather than giving all of their proceeds to the government. Within these prisons, inmates toil in desolate conditions, are paid close to nothing, and are prohibited from striking and protesting. Ben Gunn, an ex-convict and former prison laborer, said that having “grown men putting tea bags into larger plastic bags and getting paid £10 a week [...] teach-

es you nothing about work ethic, just about being exploited.”

On March 9, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York state announced the NYS Clean initiative — New York state would begin producing 100,000 gallons of hand sanitizer a week using prison labor. This triggered an uproar from the American public who were opposed to the idea of prison laborers producing the hand sanitizer because it puts inmates at a high risk of contracting and spreading the coronavirus.

However, Cuomo's team glosses over this issue by branding the use of prison labor as job training and skill development for prisoners. In actuality, Cuomo is hiring inmates because it's cheaper — the prison laborers are currently being paid a mere 50 cents an hour.

What's more, when prisoners finish serving their time, they encounter difficulties finding jobs, despite any work experience they may have obtained while imprisoned. Gunn added, “It's almost standard policy for employers to refuse to even interview anyone with a criminal record.” Corpora-

tions are interested in making a profit, even if it means exploiting prison laborers in the process — any supposed benefit of prison labor is advertised by companies in order to cover up the injustices of the system.

This isn't unique to corporations. While there is a degree of concern surrounding the unethical nature of prison labor, the public is less inter-

ested in protecting inmates and more invested in keeping their jobs. For instance, prison labor has devastated civilian labor in the U.K. Since the Tories rose back to power in 2010, British workers have been suffering from a long-term wage depression. Companies such as Going Green and DHL are phasing out British workers and replacing them with prison laborers

who get paid as little as 30 pence (roughly 37 cents) an hour.

Ultimately, people who are against prison labor are driven by economic gain, afraid of losing their jobs to inmates who are paid much less for the same amount of output. People protest that inmates should be paid higher wages in order to make prison labor more expensive, thus less appealing to employers.

Graphic by Laura Kors '21



THE ENVIRONMENT MAY PAY FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

By Ellie Pyper '22

Amid the endless supply of sour news surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, there seems to be a spark of hope: the environment. The empty streets, deserted airports, and subsequent drop in economic activity has yielded a short-term dip in greenhouse gas emissions. However, will this drop in emissions continue in the long-term?

In China, measures imposed by the Chinese government to slow the spread of the coronavirus have led to a 25% drop in carbon emissions in the month of February alone. In fact, the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air “estimates that this is equivalent to 200 tons of carbon dioxide [...] more than half of the annual emissions in Britain.”

Graphic by Mai Ly Hagan '21



What's more, the fog pollution in normally busy cities such as New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, and Los Angeles has lifted — New York state alone has seen a 50% drop in pollution when compared to this time last year.

This can be attributed to government lockdown measures and social distancing practices. With people working from home, cars are

left untouched in garages and metro cards are abandoned at the bottom of backpacks. People are spending less time in transit, which vastly reduces carbon emissions — transportation alone accounts for 23% of the world's carbon levels.

While this data is very compelling, it begs the question: what will happen when lockdowns are lifted? As soon as people have more mobility, carbon levels will most likely jump back up to worrying levels. The coronavirus is a temporary break in the normal, but when a vaccine is produced and distributed, things will pick up again.

The coronavirus provides a glimpse into a more environmentally friendly world. However, as Associate Professor and Epidemiologist at McGill University Jill Baumgartner told the *New York Times*, “It's not a sustainable way to reduce air pollution, and the long-term economic and well-being impacts of this crisis are going to be devastating for many people.”

In the long-term, experts are saying that the world could soon be experiencing an unprecedented economic recession. This would slow the transition to clean energy, decrease funding for solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources, and stall research on climate change. Researchers also warn that drops in oil prices due to a lack of demand and skittish investors will increase oil usage, derailing investments in electric vehicles and other forms of renewable energy.

On the surface, the environment is benefitting from the world's economic, political, and social standstill — carbon emissions are decreasing and people are consuming less. However, pivotal research on environmental policy has been stalled and clean energy initiatives are pushed back. When the lockdown lifts, we will be in the same situation we were in before the virus, except with less funding to take steps to introduce more eco-friendly lifestyles.

CAN FISHERMEN WEATHER THE WEATHER?

By Mieke Buterbaugh '23



Rural fishing communities are being hit hard by the impacts of rising sea levels and temperatures. Not only are they losing out on a source of sustenance, but these communities depend on their fishing industries to make a living. What's more, the effects of rising sea levels could also lead to a substantial amount of rural property loss, which only serves to worsen economic instability for many of these communities.

In low-income coastal communities, fish are a crucial source of protein and micronutrients. According to a study conducted in Malawi by researchers Jeremy Pittman and Robert Blasiak, “Subtracting fish from the diets of coastal communities with few nutritional alternatives could generate a decades-long public health crisis.”

What's worse: as sea levels rapidly rise along the mid-Atlantic coast, coastal communities are being threatened by overflowing. According to a study conducted by researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, after a 1.5 foot rise in sea level, 2,275 land parcels in the county of Gloucester Virginia will be at medium risk of recurrent flooding and 405 parcels will be at high risk by 2050. This issue will only escalate with time, and, for rural towns and communities, the answers to these problems are very difficult and expensive.

In addition, many fishing communities are experiencing widespread erosion and sea ice loss as a result of rising sea levels. According to a study assessing the vulnerability of rural Alaskan fishing communities, “Residents of rural Alaska are reporting changes in the geographic distribution and abundance of marine resources and increases in the frequency and ferocity of storm surges in the Bering

Sea, causing changes in the distribution and thickness of sea ice and increases in river and coastal erosion.”

Another threat to fishing communities' livelihood is increases in ocean temperatures. In South Thailand, the seawater has gotten progressively warmer. Niwat Chaloe Wong, a local fisherman, told Aljazeera, “When the water is hot, all the decaying matter on the ocean floor floats to the surface and creates a bloom of algae. This blocks the oxygen from the water and the fish can't breathe anymore because the water is rotten. That algae is very slimy and it coats our nets, so when we try to pull them in, they slip out of our hands.”

If fishermen can't sustain their businesses, they'll be forced to sell out. In South Thailand, many fishermen take out loans for their boats and equipment. Without a consistent source of income, many fishermen cannot repay these loans and have no choice but to sell their boats, effectively closing their industries.

Unfortunately, the effects of climate change on fishing communities frequently goes unnoticed and unreported. According to Executive Director of the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission Lewis Lawrence, “You never read about adaptation needs in rural coastal communities. We don't matter. We are not on people's radar.”

Fishing is the cornerstone of coastal communities, providing families with food, money, and a purpose. As sea levels rise and temperatures increase, fishermen's livelihood is jeopardized. Climate change affects many often underrepresented pockets of our world. It's our responsibility to help limit the effects of global warming, and raise awareness about the conditions fishing communities are facing daily.

Graphic by Mai Ly Hagan '21



TALES OF THWARTED EXPECTATIONS

Three international Choate students share their stories.

By Lara Selçuker '21

On March 17, Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis made the difficult decision to extend remote learning for the entirety of the spring term. This came as a surprise to many students. Going into spring break, the Choate administration advised students to bring books and essential belongings with them, but, at the time, it was hard for students to imagine that the virus would spread as fast as it did. The Choate student body is now scattered around the world, and few are in ideal study environments. Some are living in hotels or moving from place to place. Some are in others' homes seeking refuge. Some are in quarantine. Some are grappling with complicated familial situations, financial insecurities, and inaccessibility to vital study resources, such as Wi-Fi or electronic devices.

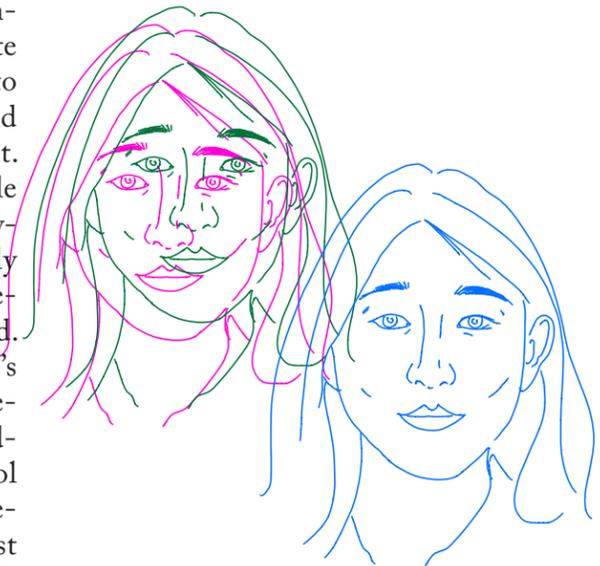
Evrin Almaz '21, an international student from Turkey, planned to stay in the U.S. over spring break — the commute back home is long, and she didn't want to risk travel complications on her way back to campus at the end of the two weeks. Almaz hoped to spend the first half of vacation on the Spring Break College Tour and the latter half in an Airbnb near Choate with some other international friends. Everything was going as she planned until Dr. Curtis's first email announcement, which postponed campus's reopening until April 6. Exactly one week went by before Dr. Curtis sent out a second email. Throughout this week, dozens of international students were stuck between going home and seeking refuge with domestic students, still unsure of how the situation would play out. Some are still avoiding going home due to troubled family situations or unideal study environments. "I was very disappointed in how Choate handled housing," Almaz said, "Going back home isn't an option for me." For the past few years, Almaz has been depending on school-provided housing. Although she sought out the Choate administration for guidance in navigating this tricky situation, it wasn't as helpful as she would've hoped. Almaz is currently living with a Choate friend in Colorado for the remainder of the school year, but her summer living situation is still up in the air.



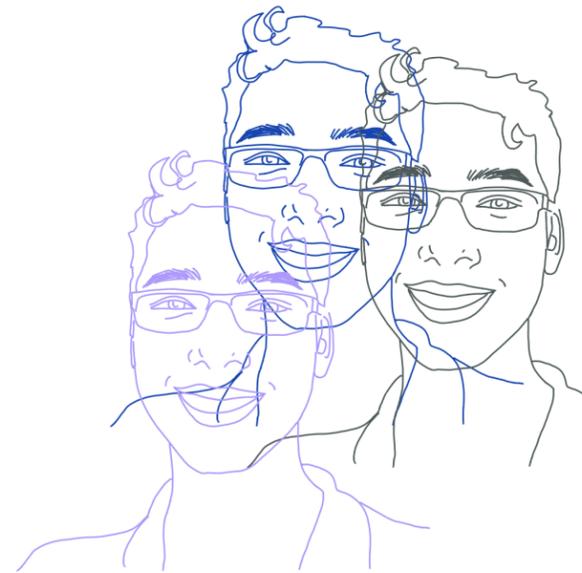
Graphics by Eliza Marovitz '21

Like many of her peers, Ariel Kim '20, an international student from South Korea, was caught off-guard by the cancellation of the spring term and subsequent shift to remote learning: "I wasn't expecting that we wouldn't come back to school at all. I was thinking that maybe spring break would get extended, or maybe we'd have remote learning for a bit. I certainly didn't expect school to get canceled for the whole term," said Kim. For the first part of the term, Kim was staying in an apartment near Choate, "The apartment was really just for my mom to stay temporarily and for an extended period of time with two people. It's quite cramped," she added.

At the moment, Kim is back home in Seoul where she's juggling an 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. daily schedule. As a senior, Kim is also grappling with not being able to say goodbye to her classmates and properly culminate her high school career. "Choate is now nothing but online classes for me. Senior Spring is supposed to be the time when school isn't just about school. We didn't get to just hang out with our friends on campus, and that's really sad. Even if school does reopen, a lot of students won't be able to make it back," she said.



Kai Joseph '21, an international student from Hong Kong, was shocked at how quickly his situation evolved. Like Almaz, Joseph stayed in the U.S. over break. He was in a hotel in New York City for a while, and he intended to move in with a friend from Connecticut afterwards, but his parents urged him to go back to Hong Kong. "I would be willing to swim across the Dead Sea with a papercut if it meant I could go back for the spring term," Joseph exclaimed. For him, classes run from 10:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. Although teachers are recording classes, Joseph intends to stay up, "I am going nocturnal," he said, "The biggest drawback to relying on recorded sessions instead of participating in live sessions is the inability to ask questions. It's obviously going to be a lot harder for students relying on recorded classes to get in direct contact with their teachers, especially if they're on a time crunch, to clarify their understanding of course material." There's also a social component to online classes, "I miss being around people and connecting with my peers and teachers. Zoom doesn't reflect the same depth of immersion as being in a classroom," Joseph added.



The coronavirus pandemic challenges everything we thought we knew. Hope remains our tether to the world and each other. On the bright side, this situation has allowed students to spend more time with their families before heading off to college, or back to boarding school, and, for some, it has forced them to be more appreciative of school, friends, and technology. This crisis will have a permanent impact on societies worldwide socially, politically, and economically — working from home just might become a model for the future.

MODERNITY'S ROOTS STRUGGLE TO CONNECT

Why do things seem to be getting worse?

By Bianca Rosen '21
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Modernity has its costs and we may not be doing enough to mitigate them. Take Kasiet Sidikova — a woman who is at once pioneering and traditional. She lives beneath the daunting peaks of Alichur, Tajikistan where women are considered keepers of the home. They are expected to follow in their mothers' footsteps: tending children, cleaning, preparing meals, and obeying the man of the house's every wish. There isn't an abundance of opportunity for women to stray from this fate and, equally important, there isn't much inclination to do so — it is second nature for women to assume these roles.

Kasiet was unlike girls she grew up with — she is currently working towards a career in tourism. Still, she leads a very different life from the typical American. And even as she breaks with many of the traditions of her community, she remains bound, and comforted, by those around her.

In the United States, we have the right to an education, freedom of expression, and, though quite variable depending on the region and a little bit of luck, the opportunity to pursue any lifestyle we wish. None of that is the case in the rural mountains of Central Asia where Kasiet grew up. This is not to say that she leads an oppressed life; in fact, she, and others in her village, are a close community connected through religion, tradition, and family.

In the United States, by almost every measure we are better off than we were in the past — and seemingly way better off than Kasiet and her kin. Our incomes are on the rise, life expectancy is higher, and we are more educated. Poverty, crime, and drug abuse are on the

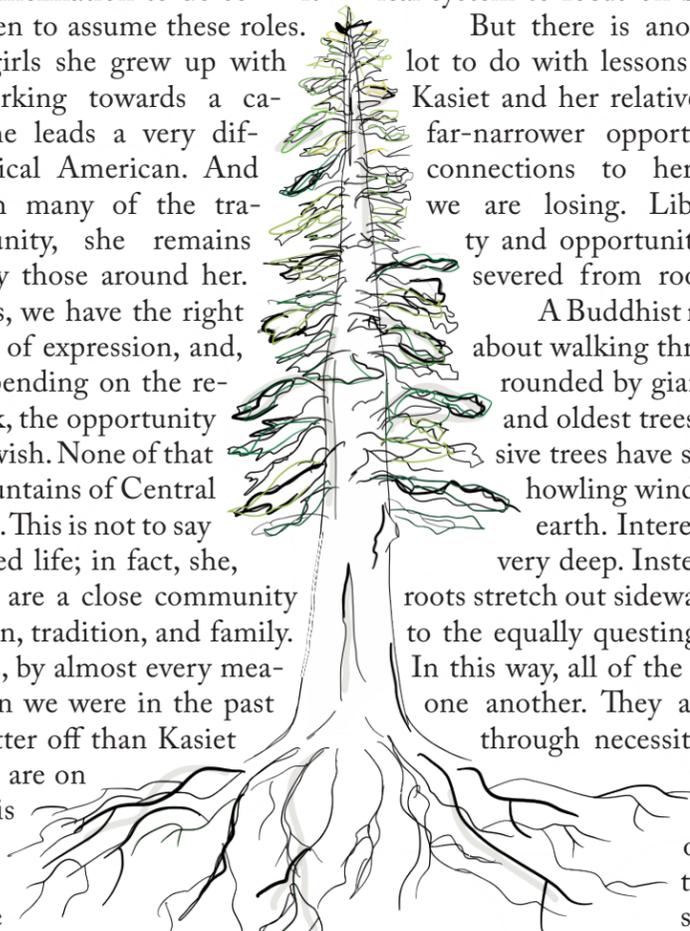
decline and the number of hate crimes is significantly falling. Our laws and society are tolerant of a wide range of behavior and increasingly intolerant of homophobic, sexist, and racist comments.

Yet if we are all so much better off, then why don't we feel that way? Conventional explanations include growing inequality — the sense that while I am better off, I am still slipping behind because there are others who have so much more. Also to blame is the tendency of the media and the political system to focus on bad news and wrongdoing.

But there is another reason, and it has a lot to do with lessons that can be learned from Kasiet and her relatively closed community and far-narrower opportunities. Kasiet has deep connections to her community, something we are losing. Liberalism and individuality and opportunity, for all their appeal, are severed from roots, adrift from tradition.

A Buddhist monk has done a "Ted Talk" about walking through the Muir woods surrounded by giant redwoods — the largest and oldest trees on the planet. These massive trees have stood for centuries through howling winds and storms that rock the earth. Interestingly, their roots are not very deep. Instead, to keep standing, their roots stretch out sideways seeking and latching on to the equally questing roots of other redwoods.

In this way, all of the trees in the forest support one another. They are a collective, interlaced through necessity, much like a traditional society in Tajikistan. Perhaps we need to adjust our ideas of liberalism and tolerance and opportunity so our roots can reconnect.



Graphic by Eliza Marovitz '21

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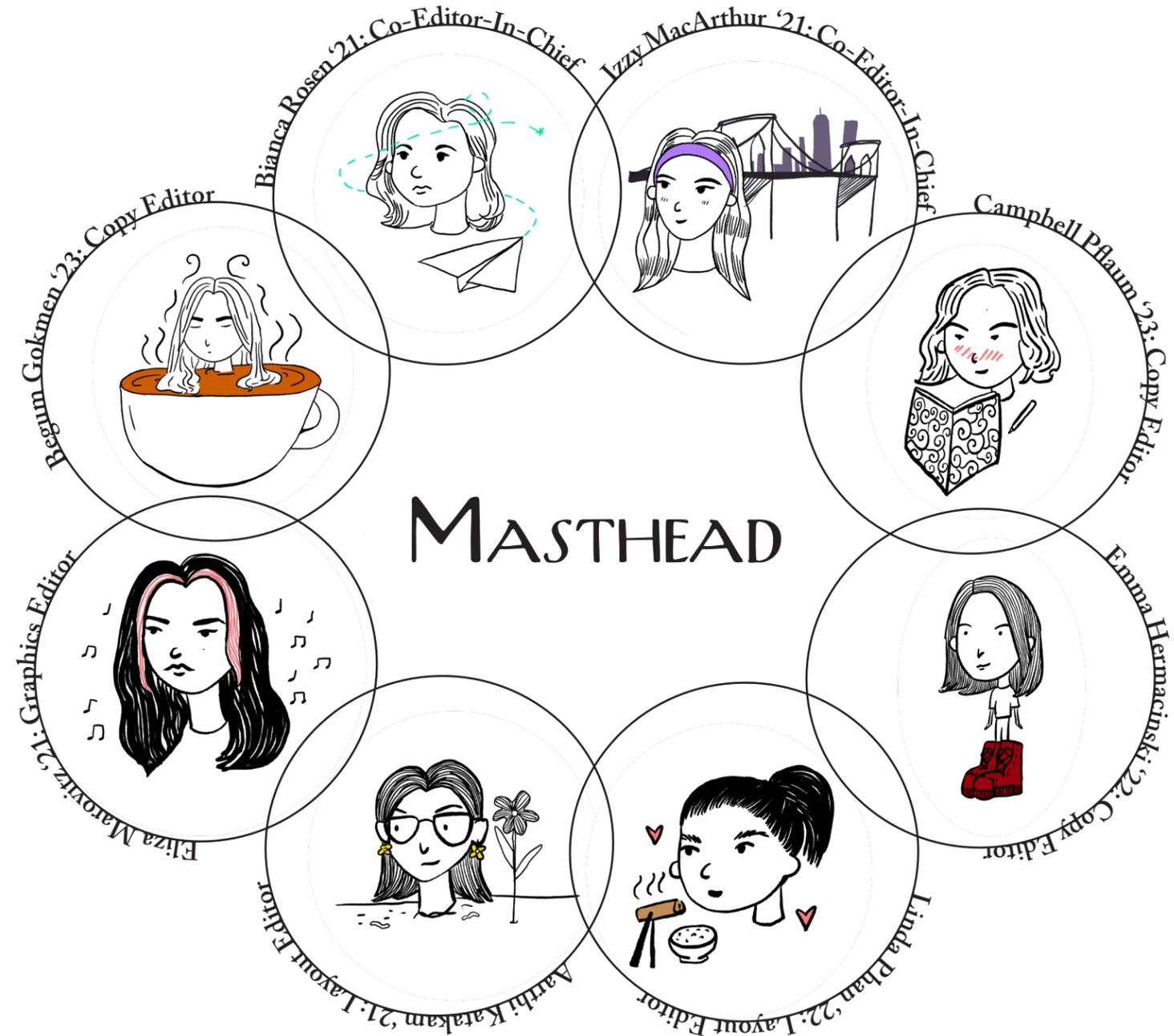
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