



# The Talon

## Gripping News



Volume III Issue IV Onteora High School Boiceville, NY 12412 May 2021

## New Learning Spaces at Onteora

By Sophie Frank

While students spent the past several months adjusting to pandemic life, the school library went through an extensive renovation.

The renovation has been in the works for a while, with middle school Principal Jen O'Connor wanting a more organized space and librarian Amy Weisz wanting a professional circulation desk. But the project was deemed too expensive and put on the back burner until recently, when it was finally approved and completed last summer.

The renovation updated the furniture and layout of the library. Everything is mobile: including tables, chairs, and shelving units. This was done so that classes using the library could arrange their space as they see fit.

Additionally, classes will find new mobile teaching spaces scattered throughout the library.



Mobile furniture allows for different set-ups for different kinds of learning. The new furniture includes wingback chairs, high-top tables, and study carrels. With everything being mobile, the library is a more active learning space, one that will always be growing and evolving to serve students' needs.

In addition to being a space for teaching and studying, the library is a place for fun, and it now has a Nintendo Wii to be used during free periods.

Also, Onteora has a subscription to Eagle Crate, a book subscription service, and a new Online Public Access Catalog, which makes it easier to access the library's online database.

The Catalog helps the library become more inclusive. It allows students to search for certain kinds of books such as LGBTQ+ themed books, fiction books, and nonfiction books, as well as eBooks



and audiobooks for those who prefer reading digital books over printed ones.

The library unites many aspects of school life, such as learning, having fun, and coming together--the new design reflects those aspects.

Learning and comfort are the two most important things that were taken into consideration when planning the renovation, and the new space helps address and bring together these two important considerations.

The space is "sleek, modern, and efficient," Ms. O'Connor said. It's more conducive to learning than the old library, as it was designed with active learning in mind. Both Ms. O'Connor and Ms. Weisz say that the space is now more cohesive, and they mentioned the merit of having active learning spaces.

Additionally, the new space takes into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic and people with disabilities. The Wii allows students to have fun together while being socially distanced, and the new furniture and organization of the space is compliant with regulations designed to help people with disabilities.

When asked what her favorite part of the new library is, Ms. O'Connor said she loves that when students walk into the library they find a beautiful space that is

cared for and loved.

Ms. Weisz said her favorite part of her workspace has always been students, and she said that she has "been waiting in anticipation of sharing the new and improved space with our students and staff."

As life gets back to normal, the library will be there for students as it always has, but with some wonderful updates.



Courtesy of Amy Weisz





# LGBTQ+ News Roundup

By Elijah Salazar-Garris

Many of us are aware of legislation around the country targeting transgender people, but there is more LGBTQ+ news going on that not many people are discussing. Here is a round-up of global news regarding LGBTQ+ people.

## Transphobic bills:

There have been a scary amount of anti-trans bills introduced and passed that are threatening the wellbeing of so many trans people, youth included, in this country.

Arkansas has made it illegal for trans

state, or depression and other mental health conditions.

On top of that, those already on treatments will physically suffer from the negative and sudden change of chemicals and hormones in the body.

In Florida, a bill has been passed to allow genital inspection if they suspect a female athlete is trans. This is a bigoted and disgusting invasion of privacy.

And for those thinking "But what about physical exams?" those are to determine if it is safe for an individual player to play a sport. The genital inspection is trying to exclude trans women from sports. Florida claims that they are try-

## "We deserve to exist regardless of what any law says."

teens to get hormone treatment, puberty blockers, and more.

The suicide rate among trans people is already disproportionately high compared to the rest of the population, and twice as high as the LGB in LGBTQ+. The ability to medically transition and use hormone treatments has been proven to lower the risk of suicide in trans people.

The state claims these bills protect the youth of the trans community, but this will only lead to more suicides in their

ing to even out the playing field, even though there is no proof that trans athletes perform better than their cisgender peers.

In Arizona, schools will now allow parents to opt their children out of discussions about sexualities and gender expressions. This bill also prevents discussion of HIV and AIDS, a largely LGBTQ+ issue. Removing these topics from the classroom discussion will make LGBTQ+ students feel excluded and unimportant.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Sadly, there are more bills out there affecting trans individuals. I highly encourage looking into this issue to see what is happening across the country and what you can do to help.

## Russia:

In Russia, same-sex marriage and transgender adoption was banned. A commercial showed a boy being adopted by two men, one dressed up in poorly applied make-up, which was clearly a transphobic portrayal of a trans woman.

I can only imagine what it must feel like for gay people in Russia right now. Imagine not being allowed to marry the one you love. Putin says that the country is doing this for "religious reasons."

## Alaska:

In Alaska, same-sex couples will now get equal benefits from their employers. They have been excluded from employee benefits for a few years now, so it's about time that's changed. This is a positive step.

## Ukraine:

Ukraine has a history of being a very homophobic country. However, it is now allowing gay people to donate blood.

To understand why this is so big, you should know that here in America, gay people can't have intercourse for 3 months before giving blood (lowered from 1 year in 2019). This is obviously a reaction to HIV/AIDS, but to force people to alter their behavior before giving blood because of their sexuality is deeply wrong and dehumanizing. The fact that Ukraine took this step is huge.

## Texas:

A few months ago, a gay student in Texas was suspended for painting his nails. Recently the policy was changed to be more inclusive by allowing males to wear makeup and nail polish. This is a win for self-expression and LGBTQ+ students.

## Kellogg's:

The popular cereal brand released a rainbow heart shaped cereal featuring mascots from Frosted Flakes, Rice Krispies, Fruit Loops, and more. For every box bought, \$3 will go towards GLAAD, an organization that works for inclusive media entertainment and the rights of LGBTQ+ people.

## Conclusion:

It's clear the negative LGBTQ+ legislation and representation greatly outweighs the positive steps right now. This shows the fight for equality is far from over.

For those who wonder why we need a pride month, this is why. We deserve to exist regardless of what any law says. We go through unnecessary struggles and hate everywhere every day to be ourselves. We deserve a chance to shine and we will get it no matter what.

**Editor's Note:** This article is part of a series of articles written by Gender and Sexuality Alliance club members. The GSA seeks to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ students or allies, and we work to make our school a safer, better place.



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter

# When Will Covid-19 be Over? Experts say: Probably Never

By Shane Stackpole

As thousands of Americans roll up their sleeves and hints of normalcy begin to glimmer into view, health experts are providing answers to the question that has been looming over our heads for over a year now: "When will Covid be over?"

While there is no right answer to this question, as so much of a post-pandemic world is unforeseeable, health experts have agreed that the most realistic, yet daunting answer is that Covid-19 will never really end.

"We've been told that this virus will disappear. But it will not," remarked Dr. William Schaffner, a professor at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. Before going into a state of alarm, it's imperative to break down exactly what Dr. Schaffner means.

As we steadily approach herd immunity--the point at which enough people develop immunity against illness of Covid-19 either through natural infection or vaccination, thereby making it very difficult for the virus to spread--there is telling evidence that has prompted scientists to believe that the current pandemic will transition into what's called an endemic.

An endemic is a disease that is present in society at all times without causing major obstructions to everyday life. Some examples include the common cold, the flu, and malaria.

Health experts speculate that in a post-pandemic society, most of the strict Covid-19 regulations will be dampened or lifted.

In an endemic society, for example, mask wearing will most likely not be required in public gatherings; likewise, it's probable that social distancing will no longer be enforced to the extent that it is today because Covid-19 will circulate at low levels and will no longer serve as a major hindrance to going about our everyday routines.

Like the flu, the key component of Covid-19 being in an enduring state of endemicity is that it will continue to

spread and inevitably kill individuals who may not be vaccinated or are too susceptible to infection. It's completely true that as herd immunity is established, life will begin to feel normal. However, our society will never fully revert back to resemble pre-pandemic life. Instead, annual Covid-19 shots, more frequent trips to the doctor, and wearing masks during a hypothetical "Covid-19 season" may become commonplace in a post-pandemic/endemic society.

We have been living with endemic diseases for our entire lives, so while this answer may not resemble the one we had anticipated, it's actually more hopeful than you would think-Covid-19 will just simply be another disease that we learn to live with.

Take the flu, for example. This endemic still poses a serious threat and kills thousands of vulnerable individuals each year, yet it has run its course for so long that many don't even bother getting a flu shot anymore--the same may go for Covid-19.

It seems weird that even with the advancements of science and technology and the rapid distribution of vaccines, we are unable to fully eradicate Covid-19. However, the hypothetical endemicity of Covid-19 will have little bearing on our ability to create vaccines with speed or suppress outbreaks through epidemiological protocol; rather, it is a result of the nature of SARS-CoV-2.

SARS-CoV-2 mutates with efficacy and at a very fast rate, making it very difficult for humans to catch up to new variants that emerge.

Even if the virus could transmit and mutate at a slow rate, there will always be individuals who have not been vaccinated, resulting in little clusters or pockets in the population where Covid-19 will circulate. As a result, trying to eliminate Covid-19 completely would be like playing a game of cat and mouse: nearly impossible.

This is by no means the only hypothesis as to what the future of Covid-19 will look like, but it is certainly the most plausible. The point at which Covid-19 achieves its endemic status is, like everything these days, uncertain. What is known, however, is that rapidly distributing vaccines and continuing to follow all CDC guidelines and protocols will shorten the timeline to reaching a post-pandemic world.

As SARS-CoV-2 settles in as an indefinite inhabitant of our environment, or at least for the next few years, it's imperative that we continue to place our trust in science and health experts.

We are reaching the home stretch of Covid-19's pandemic status, but we must not allow that to inhibit our ability to act with diligence and cognizance towards Covid-19 and other diseases, many of which have the potential to become a pandemic, in the future.

## Gender Inequality in Sports

By Ori Grady

It's the middle of the Men's NCAA Basketball Tournament, and the eyes of the majority of the country are looking at their tournament brackets.

Even with Covid, each team in the tournament gets to practice in huge gyms that have more than enough weights and conditioning tools to keep themselves in shape.

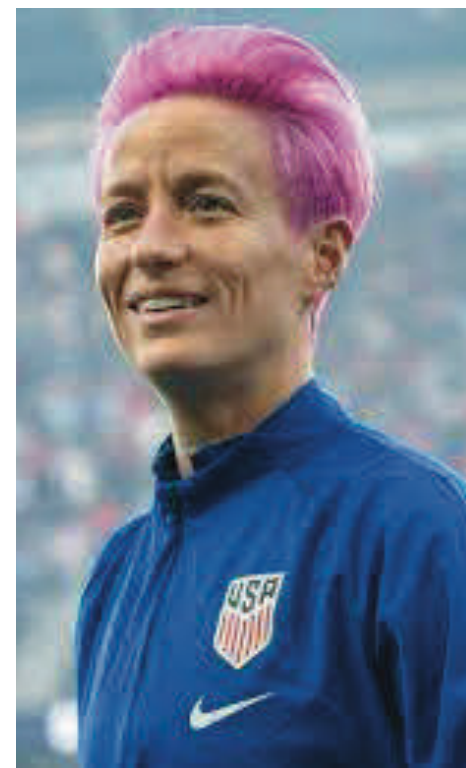
However, many people are not paying attention to the fact that the women athletes are also in the midst of their tournament, but they don't have anywhere near the amount of equipment as the men. In fact, just a couple of yoga mats and weights make up a gloomy room that wouldn't be recognized as an NCAA gym but rather a room for someone who is just starting to lift. Why is this? How on earth did this go unnoticed until Sabrina Ionescu, a superstar player from Oregon, posted a picture of the room on Twitter?

It's because it is clear that there is inequality in sports between men and women. Sadly, this has been an issue that has been around ever since the start of women's sports leagues.

World Cup winning soccer player, Meghan Rapinoe, has been a leading advocate for gender equality in sports for years now, and she hasn't slowed down. She was very upset after the news broke out about the comparison photos between men's and women's facilities in the March Madness tournament.

Rapinoe stated that "To say that you value your student-athletes and to have your women's players show up for one rack of dumbbells is just completely unacceptable." This sparked a social media outcry from many people who condemned the images revealed.

However, a portion of men and even male athletes had other things to say, including NBA star Draymond Green. He



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

said that he is "really tired of seeing [female athletes] complain about the lack of pay, because they're doing themselves a disservice by just complaining." The reason they're complaining, Draymond, is because men get paid 15% to 100% more compared to women in sports. That number is unacceptable.

People argue that it's because the revenue of women's leagues is far less due to its unpopularity compared to men's sports. Yes, that is a reason, but is that the only reason? Maybe if owners of the league put in a larger percentage of their income to the teams and listened to activists such as Rapinoe, this wouldn't be the case.

They have to try to figure out something that at least doubles the amount of pay women earn in professional sports.

Lastly, to all the people who are at home and oppose the pay gap between men and women in professional sports, you can help too. You can help by watching and attending the WNBA, NWSL, Women's Tennis, and even the LPGA Tour (if you're a fan of golf like me).

If you want to go the extra mile, do yourself a favor and buy the incredible merchandise each league has to offer. Why? Because at the end of the day, sports are a form of business. The more people who watch the games, the higher the ratings. The higher the ratings, the more the league owners make. In turn, the more the athletes earn: a perfect example of the domino effect.

Of course, this isn't the only factor of this wage gap. The fact that women have been mistreated since the Neolithic age is the more significant one. It's our job to make change. Now.



# The Future of Electric Vehicles

By Caleb Frank

For all of our lives we have been riding in gas vehicles, but an electric revolution is coming. The consequences for not switching from ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles to electric ones are drastic.

Recently, the climate crisis has been exacerbated due to the increase in CO<sub>2</sub>, 33% of which is due to ICE vehicles. Electric vehicles, EVs, can be run off of renewable energy such as wind, solar, or hydroelectric.

trips around charging, such as stops for meals.

Ms. Nelsen's lifestyle is well-suited to EVs. She doesn't drive more than her range allows (and neither does the average driver, whose mileage is just 29 a day). Nevertheless, Ms. Nelsen is okay with planning her trips a little more carefully to suit her charging needs.

However, Mr. Via's lifestyle is less well-suited since he frequently drives more than an EV's range would currently allow. A potential solution for someone who wants an EV and sometimes drives more than an EV's range permits, is renting a gas vehicle on those days; however this is more difficult and expensive.

Some companies have devoted themselves to EVs, while others have held back. For instance, school bus fleets are being converted to electric. President



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

\$14,395.00. The cheapest EV? The Mini Electric, at \$29,900,000. But there are offsetting factors. EV's have numerous tax credits which, depending on the state in which you live and the car you choose, can give back almost \$10,000 off the purchase price. In addition, gas is much more expensive than electricity and EV's need less maintenance than gas vehicles. Though the purchase price is higher on EV's, monthly costs are lower.

On top of cost being a barrier, another potential issue with EV's was brought up by Toyota, which argued that a timeline such as "zero emissions by 2035" is not beneficial since there is currently not enough infrastructure to support such a transition. They argue that if everyone's car suddenly became electric, the grid would not be able to handle it.

While this is true, we are not going to make the switch suddenly; it will happen relatively slowly. We will have time to put infrastructure, such as charging stations, windmills, solar panels, and hydroelectric turbines, in place. An added benefit is that the construction of these

technologies will create more than 40 million jobs, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency.

We are moving forward. We are getting closer to the future. We are making the decisions that will help save our ailing planet. However, we aren't moving fast enough. We need to speed up the rate of progress. Many different parties involved can help.

EV companies need to continue innovating to make these vehicles the best they can be. The government can help with subsidization and emission mandates. Lastly, consumers can help by switching to electric.

We are the agents of change. Sacrificing quality of life is not the solution, but we must look seriously at the situation at hand. Our very lives are at stake. It may not seem urgent in our day to day life, but it truly is a matter of everything we have ever known. We must make this change. The world is in our hands. We just have to choose what to do with it.



Courtesy of PublicDomain.net



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Automakers are aware of these advantages, and they are making strides to switch their lineups to electric. For instance, GM pledged to make 30 electric models by 2025. This progress is what we need. However, many people are unsure whether an EV will suit their needs.

Two teachers at Onteora High School have differing takes on this issue. Science teacher Scott Via does not currently own an EV and says that the biggest limiting factors are charging stations, how they aren't ubiquitous enough, it takes too long to charge, and the range (miles you can drive on one charge) is too low.

French teacher Christi Nelsen-Epstein does own an EV. To combat the scarcity of charging stations she usually charges at her house and uses Tesla's built in navigation system to find external charging stations when she needs them. Not to mention, she plans out breaks on road

Biden's Build Back Better plan has a goal of all American made buses being zero emission by 2030. In the upcoming years, it is very possible that we will see electric school buses in our own district.

Another major player in the automotive industry is the USPS. Currently, they use Grumman LLVs that are decades old. They are gas-powered, inefficient, and don't have airbags or air-conditioning. Electric seemed like a good option for mail trucks, and Joe Biden has pledged to move the federal fleet to 100% electric. Things were looking good, but when Oshkosh Defense landed the deal, we learned that only 10% of mail trucks will be electric. The reason for so few EV's? It would be 3-4 extra billion dollars to make more of the trucks electric.

This is indicative of the biggest issue EV's face: cost. The cheapest gas vehicle for sale in the U.S. is the Chevy Spark, at



# A Complicated Move: U.S. Pulls Out of Afghanistan

By Emily Peck

President Biden has announced that all American troops will be pulled out of Afghanistan by September 11th, 2021. This is almost 20 years after the War in Afghanistan began and after 2,312 U.S. soldiers have died in Afghanistan. Some people applaud the decision as a move to get out of a forever war, some are appalled by the U.S. leaving the Afghan people under the control of the Taliban, but most people are quite conflicted.

America originally sent troops to Afghanistan after 9/11 to root out the Al-Qaeda presence. There were some successes, such as the assassination of Osama Bin Laden, the founder and first leader of Al-Qaeda. He was killed in Pakistan in 2011 by the U.S. Navy SEALs.

The U.S. has also justified its continued occupation of Afghanistan by preventing the Taliban--an Islamist fundamentalist militant group--from taking major population centers. The effectiveness of this campaign is debatable as the U.S. was never successful in occupying all of Afghanistan, and the Taliban is closing in on a lot of cities. The U.S. does not want to stay indefinitely, and there have been efforts to train the Afghan military. However, the Taliban have been getting stronger and stronger, and the government of Afghanistan is no match for them.

America has also justified its presence in Afghanistan as being a fight for women's rights. In the 90's, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, and they interpreted Sharia law to give women very few rights. Afghan women were not allowed to leave their houses without a male escort, could not go to work or school, and had to cover everything except for their eyes. LGBTQ+ people and ethnic minorities also suffered harsh treatment. This treatment was seen as incredibly unjust by many people in the western world, and Americans believed they had a duty to better the lives of the women in Afghanistan--whether the women wanted their lives changed or not.

But the truth of the matter is, women's rights in Afghanistan have not improved that substantially, even after 20 years of U.S. "occupation." In some areas of Afghanistan that are not under Taliban rule, women do have the right to work

and live more freely. But in many rural areas under strict Taliban control, the lives of women have barely changed.

Even with all these justifications, people are getting tired of fighting in Afghanistan. American soldiers being killed in a far away country for a twenty-year war on terror is starting to taste a little sour. Americans wanting to leave these forever wars and return to a more isolated existence contributed to the rise and eventual election of Donald Trump, a surprisingly anti-war Republican. Trump vowed to leave Afghanistan, and he made a deal with the Taliban during his last year in office that all U.S. troops would leave Afghanistan by May 1st of 2021, all NATO troops would leave on the same date, and the Taliban would tamp down efforts by Al-Qaeda to attack the U.S.

But there were many terms detailing that if violence escalated or if the Taliban and Al-Qaeda grew more connected, the U.S. could back out. Most experts agree that the terms of the agreement have been broken, but the specifics of Trump's agreement are not nearly as important as the opportunity he opened up for President Biden. Biden can now tell U.S. allies that he is fulfilling the promises the U.S. made by withdrawing all troops by September 11th. But Biden's agreement is different from Trump's in many ways.

For one, the terms of the withdrawal detail that it is unconditional. No matter what, the U.S. will completely pull its troops out of Afghanistan by September 11th, and those forces will be moved to nearby bases to continue to monitor terrorism in Afghanistan and help build the Afghan government. President Biden is also planning a very meticulous and organized withdrawal with the hope of promoting stability in Afghanistan.

Many people have championed this choice. They cite the growing power of the Taliban and the miniscule impact of American troops on the lives of Afghan people as reasons to call it quits. The Taliban has also changed since American troops came to Afghanistan in 2001. They are more moderate than their predecessors in their interpretations of Sharia law, and they are willing to negotiate. They also claim that they will share power with the Afghan government, but of course that remains to be seen.

Additionally, President Biden is following through on the promise of President Trump, which is important to the credibility of the United States. Biden actually pushed back on the Pentagon's desire to stay in Afghanistan, and a President going against the military's goals is uncommon in foreign affairs. The military often has a large role in international affairs decisions, but Biden has decided to not



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

weigh its opinion too heavily, which is a major step in disentangling U.S. foreign affairs from the U.S. military industrial complex. Biden also has credibility in the matter because his son served in the war in Iraq.

It is also important to recognize that the U.S. is not abandoning Afghanistan. Funds will still be funneled in to prop up the Afghan government and its military. The move is even seen by some as largely symbolic, as most U.S. soldiers have been training Afghan soldiers instead of engaging in conflict for the past couple years. Withdrawing could send a message to the world that the U.S. is trying to end its forever war.

It should also be mentioned that the U.S. has largely accomplished what it went into Afghanistan to do: heavily diminish Al-Qaeda's power. Many people thought that it was essential to go after Al-Qaeda after 9/11 because they orchestrated the attacks, the group was so explicitly anti-American, and they were making clear plans to conduct other terrorist attacks on the U.S. Now Al-Qaeda has been heavily beaten back. It has been a long time since they have been powerful enough to even come up with a viable plot to attack America, let alone had the resources to implement one.

Other terrorist groups in the region, like ISIS, are also very diminished, and they were always more interested in internal politics than in anti-American plots anyway. What's more, the Taliban is at odds with many of these terrorist groups. So if the U.S. leaves, the Taliban won't necessarily make Afghanistan the haven for terrorism that many people fear.

There is also a very strong case to be made for staying in Afghanistan. The gains made for women, while small compared to other countries, are momentous for the women they impacted. Many Afghan women have been reaching out to the international community and asking people to not forget about them, which it appears to them the U.S. has done.

But when the U.S. withdraws, it is not just the lives of Afghan women that will get worse. There are already many signs that the Taliban is planning a large offen-

sive against the U.S. or the Afghan government. The Taliban could overwhelm the Afghan government, which won't have the technical ability or firepower to hold them off. A dangerous power vacuum could also be created with control of Afghanistan up for grabs.

Even though Biden is trying to portray the withdrawal as planned and measured, it is similar to Vietnam in that the U.S. is leaving a weak and ill-prepared government to fight a threat that even the U.S. can't defeat. After America evacuated Saigon, the South Vietnamese regime quickly fell. Some see America leaving Afghanistan as throwing away the hard work that has been done to support the Afghan government, as it will likely fall once the U.S. leaves.

Comparisons can also be drawn to when the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan. The USSR entered Afghanistan in 1979 and immediately took all military and political control. Then they withdrew in 1989, leading the Communist government they had propped up to completely collapse. Another possible ominous tale of what's to come.

It is clear that pulling out of Afghanistan was not an easy choice to make. There are strong arguments on both sides, and according to a 2019 Gallup poll, Americans are split almost 50-50 on whether "the United States made a mistake sending troops to fight in Afghanistan in 2001." The future right now is unclear. There could be a bloody civil war in Afghanistan, the Taliban could assume control, or a combination of the two could occur.

The U.S. is also at a point of reckoning with its foreign policy. For so long we have been an anti-terrorism nation and intervened in countries around the world in the name of fighting terrorism. It seems like withdrawing from Afghanistan could be a step towards a more isolationist future, but this is not necessarily true.

Biden is looking to set up bases in more countries in the region, even as terrorism is in decline in many places. It is clear that the U.S. is still very involved in the Middle East and will be for the foreseeable future.

# The Early Decision Experience

By Nelson Del Tufo

For those who decide to attend a four year college following high school, the application process can seem interminable.

You spend years researching schools, months writing a dozen essays, and long nights filling out an endless array of byzantine financial aid forms.

Finally, when all your hard work is done, you then spend another several months waiting for replies. But eventually, those replies come. It is somewhat of a right of passage for seniors to spend April of their senior year frantically touring colleges, asking their teachers for advice, and weighing options before making a final decision.

While this is the popular image of college admissions, this is not the experience of every student. For a few, the timeline is contracted, and the months of apprehensive waiting come to an end significantly sooner when their early action or early decision results come back in December or January.

This is the case for students who apply to college early through a binding process known as early decision and are accepted. The binding nature of these decisions are such that a student accepted "early decision" is contractually obligated to attend the school to which they applied, and due to this, their college application process is at an end.

This is not to be confused with "early action" applications, which are non-binding and similar to regular applications in that regard, but different in that early action decisions are released months before regular action.

There are several reasons why someone would decide to apply early decision to a school. First of all, there is the obvious fact that being bound to a school by January, as opposed to May, takes a large weight off of one's chest.

Armed with definite knowledge about their future, a high school senior can begin to plan for their post-high school life months early and can devote themselves to their high school studies--instead of their college applications.

Another reason that someone might choose to apply early decision is because

early decision acceptance rates are often much higher than regular decision rates. This is because schools get fewer early decision applications and can review them more in depth.

Finally, an early decision application, in some cases, can help a student even if they are not accepted. Early decision applications are often deferred to the regular decision round when not initially accepted. The early decision application not only demonstrates interest to the school, but it helps to make a good impression, which might help upon a second inspection.

feel for Ivy League schools."

She ultimately "glorified" the school she applied to in an unhealthy way. "It's funny," Natalie said of her feelings towards the school she applied to, "in those months being smitten... I knew that they didn't have an actual film program--which was what I wanted to major in--but overlooked it as an insignificant detail." She went on to say, "I was compromising my own passion in exchange for the grandeur of the school."

Emily's experience with the process was somewhat different. She was accepted

ceptance rates while "reaches" are highly selective "dream" schools.

Though both Natalie and Emily mentioned their regrets about the process, they both stressed the fact that, in Emily's words, "applying early decision is helpful if you 100% know you won't have any regret about going to the school you apply to."

A former Onteora student, Lila Ressler, who was accepted to the school which she applied to early decision, explains that she applied because "after visiting... I was like wow, this is really somewhere where I could see myself thriving and being super happy. I was like okay, if I got into all the schools I applied to, where would I be most excited to go?" She knew the answer and applied, and since being accepted, noted that she has been "way less stressed out than everyone else" and said that she has "felt super weirdly motivated to do all my assignments."

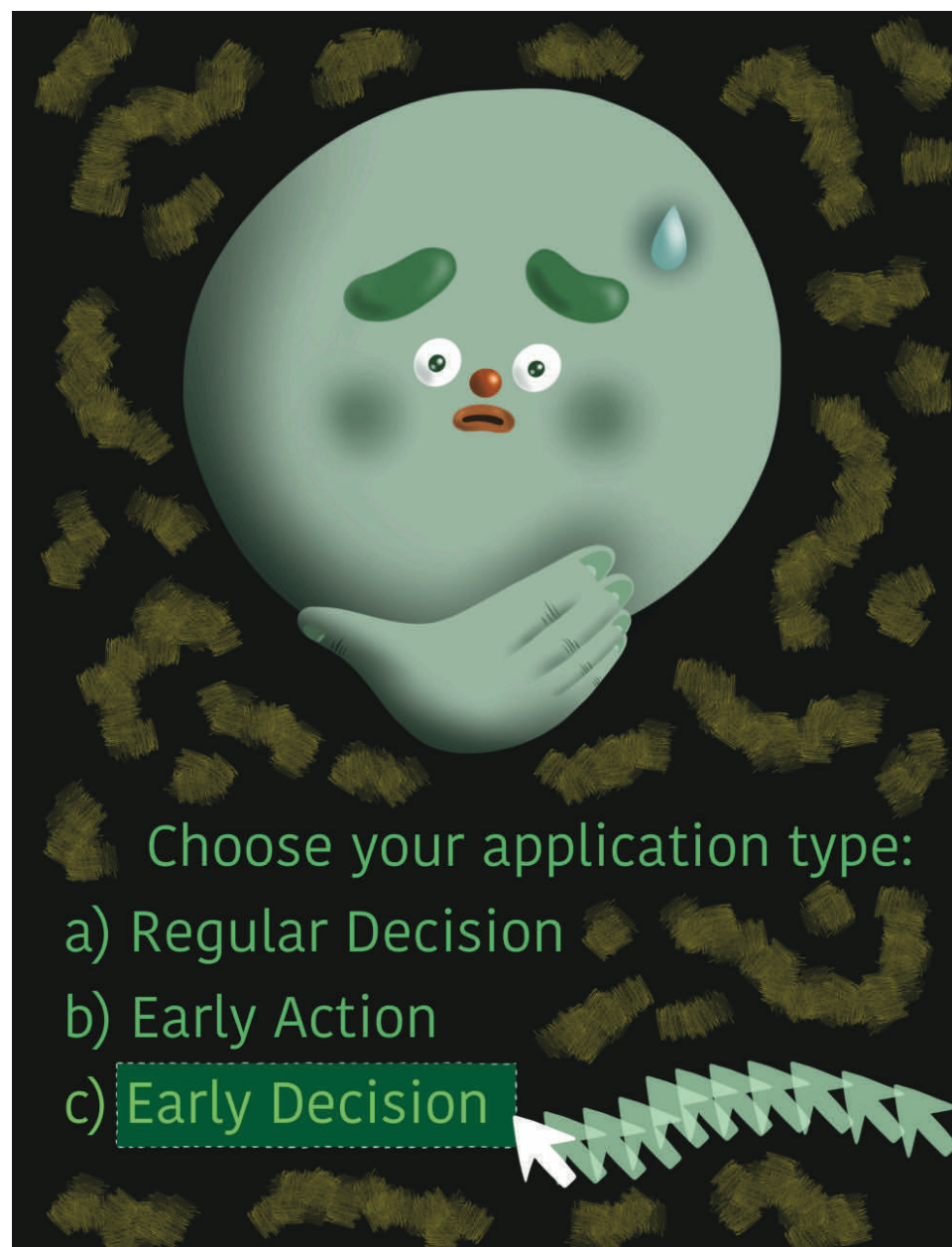
I myself applied early decision and was accepted to my top school: a small liberal arts college in Massachusetts. It's academically rigorous, cosmopolitan despite its picturesque rural surroundings, and will undoubtedly give me an excellent education.

Nonetheless, I have no way of knowing if I would have been accepted regular decision to this school, or anywhere else I might have applied. And that's the danger of applying early decision and being accepted.

Ever since early December, I have been given ample time to imagine my future life on my future campus, along with my future life at a dozen other schools which I will not be attending. I did not think I would be accepted to the school which I applied to early decision, and while loving the college, I think my lack of confidence caused me to put less thought into where I was applying than I should have.

I only came to this realization once my application was accepted, and I was bound to go to my future alma mater, that I may have (key word is may), have been accepted to a number of comparable schools. Now I will never know what my options truly could have been.

Someone who is accepted early decision will never have the closure afforded to them by choosing between accepted schools. I am very excited by the thought of attending my college in the fall, but I am also, despite myself, preoccupied with the ultimately unresolvable question of what might have been.



Courtesy of Natalie Horburg

Early decision applications, however, are not uniformly happy affairs. I spoke with two seniors who applied to schools in the early decision round and were both rejected, and though their college application journeys both ended happily, their retrospective views on their experiences do reveal the negative aspects of the process.

Both Natalie Horberg and Emily Peck applied early decision to Ivy League schools because, in Emily's words, "I applied to a competitive school to shoot my shot." Natalie expressed similar sentiments, but noted that, "looking back," the reason she applied was, "rooted in the common awe and intimidation we

regular decision to the school from which she was deferred in the early decision round, so she doesn't feel like she placed her school on too high of a pedestal in the same way that Natalie did.

That being said, even with the benefit of hindsight, the deferral was still a tough experience. "I would honestly advise people to apply early action to safeties instead of early decision to a reach," she told me over text, because "then you get a couple wins instead of a possible big rejection."

"Safeties" in this context are generally less competitive schools with higher ac-



# Onteora Senior's Art Exhibit: Growing Up Through 'YOUTH' (temporary)

By Natalie Horburg

When I first followed the artist Yoshitomo Nara on Instagram, I couldn't believe that he, my hero, had been on social media all this time. A bridge was suddenly visible between us, and the prospect of being able to directly message him was as intimidating as it was thrilling. It was January of 2020 and sitting alone in my room, realizing I had nothing to lose, I decided to reach out.

In the months that followed, excitement shifted into anxiety. I felt inadequate in the face of such an opportunity, underserving and regretful-as though Nara had made a mistake in considering me to be anything near an equal. Without warning, I suddenly stopped being able to produce any new art.

As I continued correspondence with Nara, the initial, somewhat superficial awe I felt every time we texted morphed

upon unfathomable amounts of pressure and unrealistic comparison? I couldn't make any art because in the recesses of my brain, I didn't think I was good enough to.



The thing about self-awareness is that it finally allows you to move forward with personal growth. Once I recognized where my anxieties were coming from, I was able to smash the golden pedestal, simply feel thankful for my unbelievable luck to even be in the show, and finally create.

Today, YOUTH (temporary) resides in the Yutaka Kikutake Gallery in Tokyo, where only a couple of masked visitors may enter at a time to experience the intimate world that I, Nara, and the brilliant artists Shozo Taniguchi, Yoichi Camimura, and Masao Nakahara poured our hearts into.

Working on YOUTH (temporary) has sincerely changed my life. Nara, Yutaka, Satoko, all the artists in the show, and every other person who was involved in the process, through their humility, graciousness, and immense wisdom, showed me that obsessing over where you rank in the invisible hierarchy of talent or intellect is pointless. They led me to truly see others and myself in a more realistic, loving rather than comparative lens.

Furthermore, I now understand that the true genius of Nara is not only in how he lays paint on canvas, but in the way he opens doors for young artists, collaborates with complete strangers, and embraces their similarities and differences wholeheartedly. My thanks to them for these lessons are infinite and everlasting.

To anyone who has ever dealt with feelings of inadequacy, I'd like to end with this: There is no higher plane inhabited by geniuses that you should hide from out of fear or embarrassment. Own your talents and don't ever think you're underserving of the love or validation or recognition that comes with them.

You have every right to be around people you admire, to befriend your idols, and to stand alongside your heroes.

## A Hot Take on Hot Sauce

By Sophia Roberts

If you have never had the pleasure of tasting the most delicious, flavorful, spicy-but-not-too-spicy hot sauce, you have my sincere apologies. I am, of course, talking about Cholula. This year I was fortunate enough to experience Cholula in a whole new way-out of a mini 7.5 mL packet.

As we all know, everything this year was uprooted by the pandemic. However, the lifestyle options the pandemic forced upon us (namely the purchasing of way more take-out food and greater concern about sanitation) led me to one very important discovery.

When local restaurants became more concerned with the idea of hundreds of customers handling the same hot sauce bottles over and over, they turned to new options: Cholula Hot Sauce packets.

For me, these packets quickly became a new obsession, a life-style changer, and a Christmas gift idea. Immediately, I bought a pack of 50 off of Amazon to save as a present for my friend. When Christmas rolled around, I gifted the packets and received my own from a family member. Throughout winter, the Cholula packets were ever present. My friends and I stashed them in our cars, wallets, and bags to be readily available for an on the road egg sandwich or some take-out fries.

The pandemic limited the ways my friends and I could socialize, so we often got take-out and ate it in a park or random parking lot. Cholula packets made our outings more exciting by adding spice and flavor to our food. We felt great sadness and even anger if no hot sauce packets could be found.

Though the bitterness, boredom, monotony, and sadness of teenage life during a pandemic cannot be understated, Cholula Hot Sauce packets brought my friends and I some joy and respite.



Courtesy of Zach Calinda



Courtesy of Natalie Horburg

On that miraculous snowy night, a casual correspondence which would morph into a professional relationship, and even a creative friendship, was born.

I felt star-struck, in disbelief that he would actually ever respond to my messages. Queen lyrics ran through my head again and again: Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?

Yet life grew more surreal.

That autumn, after some months of friendly back-and-forth, Nara invited me to participate in a group exhibition at the Yutaka Kikutake Gallery in Tokyo, Japan. He and Yutaka, the gallery director, had looked through my art style on Instagram and felt it would tie in nicely with the show's theme of youth. He put me in contact with his wonderful assistant Satoko Hamada and from there we began communication about the exhibition.

into something more wholesome. He was no longer just an idea in my mind, but my friend. To reduce Nara to simply a celebrity, I grasped, was to overlook his humanity and lose my own sense of self.

For so long, I had placed him on a golden pedestal. Now that I was working alongside him, I thought I had to prove I belonged on that pedestal too. But how could I ever amount to this construct of greatness when it's very basis was built







Bridget Allison, Courtesy of The Talon Staff

**Bridget Allison, English Teacher:**

"When I reflect on the year of the Pandemic, it is with a new perspective. I am reminded that we are learners of life and life-long learners and that learning is not limited to a classroom. We are a global society, and when we lead with love, not fear, we live what Maya Angelou wrote about in her poem "Human Family"--the truth that "we are more alike, my friend, than we are unlike." The pandemic gave the earth a chance to heal and people an opportunity to pause, reflect, reinvent, and show a resilience like never before in my lifetime--all together."

**Sarah Turck, Guidance Counselor:**

"So much of what we do in counseling is dependent upon non-verbal cues and recognizing emotion. It has been incredibly difficult to gauge students' needs through virtual meetings and even harder to establish a rapport with new seventh graders. Even the simplest tasks are now twice as complicated and time consuming."

What I miss most is the student who drops in without an appointment because they need a moment to talk. I can't wait to have those moments again."

**Karen Hansen, Middle School Nurse:**

"School nursing during a global pandemic--what a roller coaster ride!--or maybe more like Tilt-A-Whirl!--or bumper cars? You know--the kind of ride that makes your head spin and you want to throw up, but is also exhilarating at the same time."

COVID-19 is a new virus, so we knew nothing about it last December. All healthcare providers have had to stay informed in order to maintain the safety of others in their care, and the information was just emerging and evolving daily. The CDC would provide very generalized safety guidance in the U.S., but then the New York State Department of Health would further refine the guidelines for our state, hit so hard by the virus early on."

# Clawsnaps:

## Can you reflect on your experience this school year during the pandemic?

By Emily Peck

Furthermore, the Ulster County Department of Health would then make the guidance specific to our corner of the world. School guidelines are even more specific, and then there are different guidelines for school sports! So, processing all of the information has been a big challenge."

The most difficult part however, has been the concern for our students and the toll that the COVID shutdowns have had on them: missing school, missing celebrations, getting sick, being quarantined, feeling isolated, and possibly feeling hopeless. Onteora's staff of caring teachers, social workers, school psychologists, guidance counselors, principals, and nurses are here for you! We are feeling more hopeful now--positive COVID test rates and hospitalizations are down and safe, effective vaccines have been developed and are available locally, for free, to anyone over the age of 16. Soon, the vaccines will be available to all. We can and will get through this together--and will be stronger because, or in spite of, the experience."

**Sabrina Blakely, High School Nurse:**

"Over this past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to innovate not only as individuals, but also as a community. The complexities of our lives are ever changing. As a school nurse, my job is doing the right thing to ensure the safety of my students--even when it isn't popular. With ongoing reminders about mask wearing, temperature checks, social distancing, and quarantining, this role was one I didn't see coming."

Finding the balance between safety and learning has truly had its challenges. With those challenges came strength and endurance. We are stronger than we know when we are pushed to our limits, and with that emerges a new day for another discovery. THINK POSITIVE and NEVER GIVE UP!"

**Brittany Carroll, Chorus Teacher:**

"The past year has been...quiet. Call me naïve, but I never expected that the pandemic would last this long. I never expected our chorus room to be empty for a year. Just before we closed down for our '2-week' shutdown, I recorded the choir singing one of our spring concert pieces. It's now this memento from a happier time. A time when music filled the choir room, where friends sang together and made music together. It's a memory of our graduated seniors, of our chorus as it used to be. Now we are saying goodbye to another senior class and I never thought that they wouldn't have a spring musical or senior song at their final concert. Although we are trying to make it work, chorus just isn't the same online. I think if we had known that all of those experiences were our last, we would've truly made them count."

I have surely learned to not take anything for granted. I miss all of my students so much and can't wait until the day we can all be together again, laughing and singing and making memories together here at Onteora."

**Jessica Morra, Math Teacher:**

"Teaching the past year has been a rainbow of experiences, mostly because of the diversity in courses that I teach. Academically, remote learning requires that students are intrinsically motivated, organized, and have the ability to work well independently. My older students have adapted well to the changes. Attendance and participation have been consistently good and their work shows great effort. My younger students have struggled for obvious reasons."

As a teacher, finding the balance between a student's social-emotional health and their academic success has been challenging. Every student has a unique personal situation and every student has been struggling to some degree. Knowing how hard to push a student during these times to keep them feeling successful without overwhelming them has been a common theme for me."

I am grateful for the technology the district has provided me during this pandemic so that the transition to the re-



Jessica Morra, Courtesy of The Talon Staff

mote and hybrid learning model was as smooth as possible. I have also gained experience with Google Classroom and Google Meets, both of which I plan on using in the future to supplement my teaching practices."

In terms of me personally, remote learning has been an exhausting experience. Everything takes so much more time to do: grading papers on-line, reworking lesson plans to fit the slower pace of the courses, converting files to forms that students can access on their devices, trying to be flexible with students' personal situations which usually causes more work on my end, and finding the time to meet with students individually. This semester I teach six different courses and managing all of them at once is chaotic at times."

Watching students struggling emotionally is also very difficult for me. I have lots of my students for multiple years in a row and seeing them struggle weighs on me each day. On the other side of that, it has been weird teaching students for almost a year whom I have never met and also don't know what they look like because their cameras are never turned on. It is a surreal experience. Lastly, sitting in front of a screen for prolonged periods of time is not healthy for anyone, and so, I am looking forward to returning to normalcy hopefully in the near future!"

**Mark Castle, English Teacher:**

"The pandemic exacerbated the division in our country. The challenge is to tolerate and respect one another despite our differing beliefs (even if it requires ignoring facts). The latest insanity is the random attacks on anyone with Asian features. The absurdity of it all is as fascinating as it is sad."

**Steve Stanton, Custodian:**

"There has been a lot more work, but when you guys (the students) were all gone from March to November, there was also a lot of uncertainty. We didn't know if we were getting laid off or when people were coming back. There have







# An Exposé: The Ethics of Cheating and the Education System

By EJ Martello

With online school being pretty much the worst thing ever, a big question looms at the forefront of many of our minds: Is cheating really immoral? The answer: probably not.

Before we continue, it's important to note that this article is in no way, shape, or form encouraging cheating. That is so not the point, and if that's all you get from this then some self reflection may be in order.

**"We can't pretend we have a fighting chance at 'reforming' a system that was built to give economically well-off people a clear advantage."**

The pandemic has been rough for teachers and students alike, but its influence on students' futures has added much more stress. On top of the added pressure, students have been dealing with work up the wazoo, isolation, and an uptick in mental health crises. However, it definitely isn't the teachers that are to blame for these issues.

Once again, it is the system that we must examine--the system that sees no issue in the way that we are taught information; the system that spoon-feeds us propaganda in every class; the system that refuses to give every kid equal opportunities. So, the question must be asked: is it more immoral to cheat the system or to lean into it?

The educational system is classist to its very core. Starting with the obvious, rich parents have enough cash to send their rich kids to rich schools where they'll be tailored to get into rich Ivy Leagues where they can meet their rich spouses and make more rich kids.

But even on a smaller scale at Onteora, classism is alive and well. Only some parents can afford to get their kids better equipment, better resources, and better tutors, while many kids don't have any equipment, resources, or tutors at all.

The AP tests cost about one hundred dollars apiece, and even the reduced cost

can be a lot for a family living paycheck to paycheck. But guess what colleges are looking for on your transcript? Exactly.

If it's difficult for a kid from a low income family to get into college, it may be more difficult for them to get a good job. With this added difficulty they won't have enough money to get their kid the resources they need to succeed either.



Courtesy of Pixabay.com

And so the cycle of poverty continues with no end in sight.

So what's the bottom line? Assistance isn't enough. What we're looking at is an institutional problem so pervasive that it calls into question the legitimacy of our system. Is the system so deeply flawed that it can no longer be respected?

In fact, I'd even make the argument that participating in our system as it stands is essentially no different from playing a ridiculously high stakes game of *The Sims* (if *The Sims* was fundamentally racist, classist, and ableist and a couple people started off with 5 million simoleons and some started off with nothing).

Good on you for not using the mother load cheat, but if you did use it, not much would happen.

While cheating may make doing independent work more difficult, there aren't any foreseeable moral issues other than perhaps the feeling that other students who aren't cheating don't have a fair shot.

Luckily, unlike our educational system, everyone has an equal opportunity in the cheating game, whether or not they choose to take advantage of it.

While cheating is certainly a form of lying, we are all being lied to each and every second of each and every day that we are alive.

Many of us still believe and lean into the fallacy that this system is working for us, which it clearly can't be if the situation is so dire that we feel the need to let go of any integrity we once held. And though two wrongs don't make a right, this one

wrong certainly changes the situation enough that another wrong is on the table.

Another take is that cheating could be considered an act of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is basically just refusing to follow laws that you think are unjust as a form of political protest. And while that certainly won't free you from the consequences of your actions, it's something to think about.

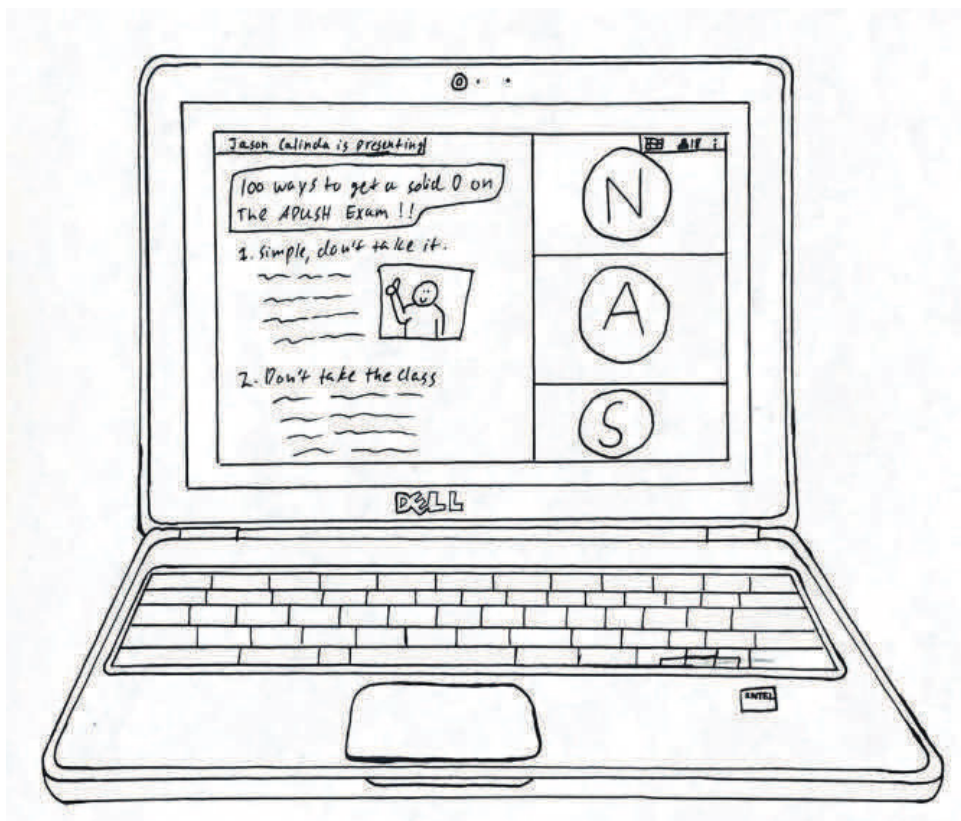
No matter how you slice it, our system is a sinking steamboat, and we are the coal being thrown onto the fire.

We can't escape the capitalism in our system--our system is capitalist. We can't pretend we have a fighting chance at "reforming" a system that was built to give economically well-off people a clear advantage.

The system is working as intended. There's nothing "broken." What is broken is our lack of resolution to rise up against it. Abolishing and rebuilding is the only way to break ourselves out of these chains.

So should you cheat? Absolutely not. However, maybe educate yourself on and participate in safe acts of civil disobedience when something is institutionally unfair. No matter what, there are extreme changes that need to be made if teachers really want the cheating to stop.

At the very least I implore you to look critically at authority figures and learn to advocate for yourself. You deserve an extension every couple of weeks, or even as needed. Ask your teachers for what helps you. The worst thing that could happen is them saying no.



Courtesy of Zach Calinda



# Toxic Diet Culture and Media

By Clara Mead and Kelly Wen

Growing up, my female peers often followed influencers like Kylie Jenner, Sommer Ray and Gigi Hadid on social media.

I would watch my friends pull back their shirts in the mirror to see their figure and hate what they saw. They were growing 11 and 12 year olds, and they were already so hyper focused on their natural and healthy bodies.

They craved the tiny waist and long legs that these Instagram stars had. They were told that these beautiful but heavily edited individuals were the standard of beauty, and if you didn't look like them you were unattractive and unwanted.

How are kids with developing bodies supposed to feel when society deems their body type undesirable? "Cut that belly fat!" "Lose inches off your waist!"

Kids today are growing up in a world where through social media, we are constantly exposed to others' lives, habits, and passions. Impressionable minds are consistently shown videos of what others eat in a day, workout routines, diets that will supposedly make you go down two pants sizes, the list goes on.

This niche of content can be incredibly toxic. Though some people may use basic exercise videos available to them through Youtube as a simple self betterment technique, many of these videos contribute to the toxic nature of diet culture. They are titled with eye-catching (and false) narratives ("I LOST 20 LBS IN TWO WEEKS!!") and consist of an individual raving about some diet pill or life-sucking workout regimen they endured to lose that unrealistic amount of weight.

So what happens as childhood transitions into adolescence and appearances are more heavily scrutinized than ever?

The same friends that hated their bodies at 11 years old are still pulling their shirts tight in the mirror, disgusted at what they see. They resort to eating only a bag of frozen blueberries on certain days of the week because they are so terrified of gaining weight.

They scroll through countless videos and pictures of people flaunting their picture-perfect bodies, and hate them-

selves because their body doesn't look like that. Though there is more body-positive representation in the media today as opposed to when I was 11, there is still a lot of work to be done to create an environment where growing kids can love themselves.

Some may ask, what are eating disorders? Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses related to unusual eating behaviors that negatively impact one's health, emotions, and ability to function in their daily life.

In accordance with the rise of diet cultures, there is an increase in the presence of eating disorders. The demand of keeping a slim shape at all times produces a community that goes to the gym every day.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Some may call themselves bodybuilders or athletes. But in reality, they are often exercise addicts resulting from eating disorders.

Individuals with an exercise obsession spend hour after hour on weight lifting and aerobic exercise to the point that can burn out their body. They count calories and cut out certain types of food groups that are high in sugar, fat, glycemic index (GI) and/or glycemic load (GL). They often feel the need to stay in a certain shape such as having abs or the hourglass shape. Compulsive exercising is the only way to satisfy their need to feel good about themselves.

The lifestyle of someone who obsessively exercises is unhealthy to both the mind and the body. The focus on the shape of their body dominates their mind every second of the day.

"Everyday I would make sure I ran before I ate, sometimes this would be very late in the day. To break the fast on a daily basis was only Nature Valley bars. I would weigh myself so much I could regularly guess my exact weight before the numbers popped up," said one anonymous student from Onteora.

# I Got Vaccinated: Here's What Happened!

By Sophie Frank

"This is so the start of every zombie apocalypse movie," I murmured to my mother as we lined up outside the Best Buy in Kingston. The joke was about how the place looked: the logo sign was gone and every blue-vested employee and piece of tech had been removed, giving the store an abandoned feeling. However, in recent weeks it's been humming with activity again. It's now a temporary vaccination site.

When I entered I was greeted by a volunteer and sent to another line that wound its way past registration tables, the vaccine station, and a waiting area. The volunteers had the process down to a science, and the line moved fast.

The first stop was a table staffed by a volunteer, who gave me a form to fill out about my medical history.

The next stop was the shot itself. The process was so fast I didn't even have time to wonder what it would feel like. (Answer: like a tiny, momentary pinch,



Courtesy of Flickr

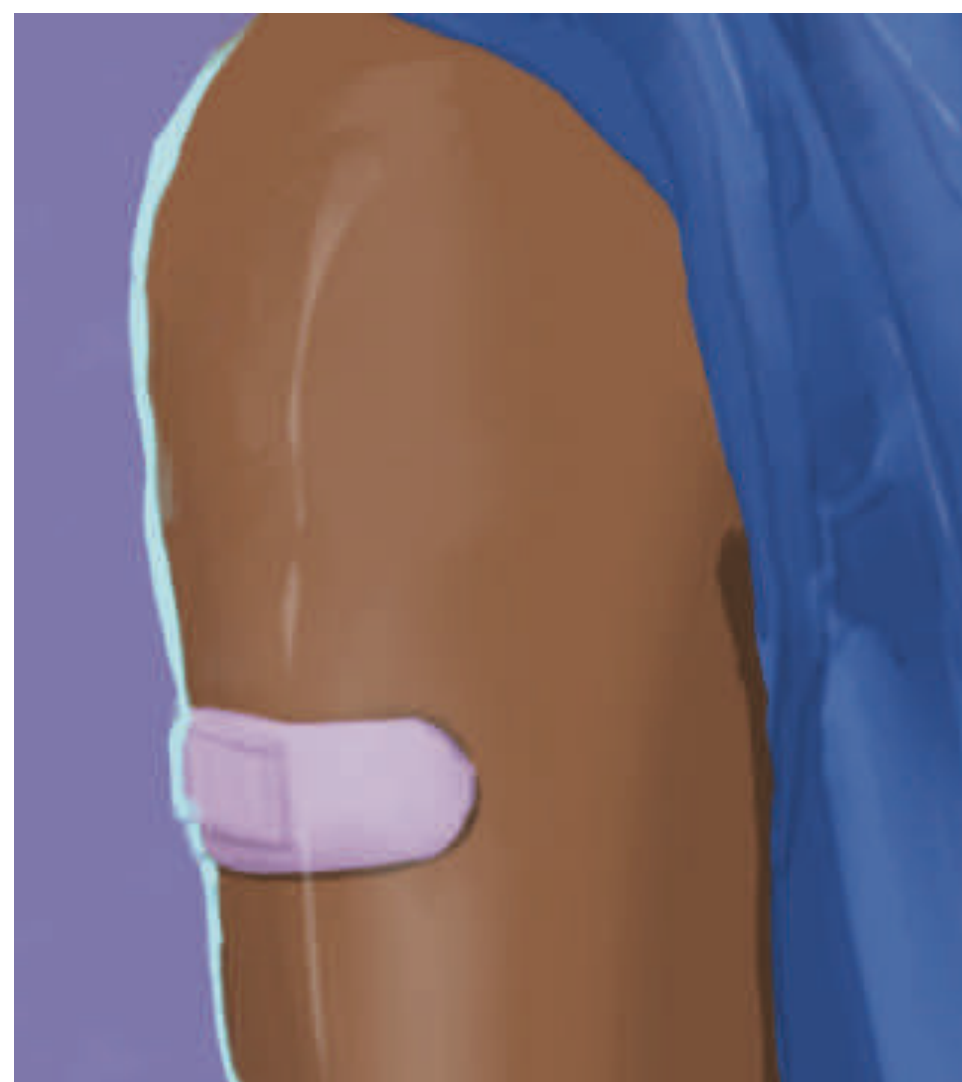
almost painless.)

After, I was instructed to go to the final and biggest section--a group of chairs scattered between the nurses stations and the exit--and wait for 10 minutes in case any side effects developed. None did, and before I knew it I was blinking in the sunlight outside.

The only side effect I suffered was slight achiness at the injection spot. I was also very thirsty--when they tell you to drink lots of water after, do not take this lightly.

I didn't know how being vaccinated would feel. I was thinking short term: being able to see friends, going to a movie. But since getting my first shot I've had something I didn't realize I'd been missing: physical safety.

We've been living in fear for so long that the chance to protect ourselves and help get life back to normal has become the alien feeling. However, it's a very good feeling.



Courtesy of Tahlula Potter



# A Reflection on Music in my Life

By Mikayla Stock

In a last effort to convert all Talon readers to avid music listeners, I will leave with you a final list of recommendations and a final personal anecdote.

Allow me to preface this story by saying that I do not know what was wrong with my tiny self, and at this rate I don't think I ever will.

Before the age of eight, I could not have disliked music more. Every time my mom turned on the car radio, her actions were immediately met with backlash from a mini me who would stop at no lengths to ensure that the godforsaken radio was silenced for good.

By some stroke of luck I am a changed gal, and now it's gotten to the point where if I don't have control over the music in the car, then I might as well just be staying home. I'm not sure what it was that altered my perception for the better, but I'm willing to bet that it was most likely Gotye's 2011 release of "Somebody That I Used To Know." I've certainly made up for the lack of listening in what was almost the entirety of my first decade of life, and I'm vaguely certain that I've gathered at least a smidgen of valuable information surrounding music's significance along the way.

First of all, music is absolutely everywhere. It's playing in the grocery store, CVS, the gas station, Marshalls (AKA the land of Jason Mraz's "I'm Yours"), and practically everywhere you've ever exchanged a piece of green paper for something else. Some music is objectively bad, but no one will admit that be-



Patrick Watson, Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

cause the beauty of it lies in its subjectivity. Everyone can love it, everyone can hate it, and regardless of that some of it will probably be playing on the radio every 30 minutes for the next six months until \*insert pop artist's name here\* releases something new.



Girl In Red, Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Once you've passed the level of grocery store and radio music, you'll come across music that some may deem "underground" and discover your own music taste. Eventually, everyone's taste settles, or perhaps it never does. But there's something especially wonderful about remaining open to everything that meets your ears, and I will always encourage such a perspective.

No matter where you get it from--whether you have one or one hundred beloved songs, or if you never know what to say when someone asks the immensely burdensome question of "what's your favorite album?"--it's hard to deny the value of music within all of our lives. It only takes one concert to realize how a person's art can unite an entire room of

sweaty people, and it only takes one song associated with a memory, person, or event to realize just how "everywhere" it really is.

Our listening experiences are so much more than sound to fill the air--they are representative markers of the thoughts, feelings, and emotional states we've experienced throughout the entirety of our lives. In the grand scheme of this trivial existence, how lucky are we to have something that's always accessible and always there as we and everything around us is in a state of constant change. So for one last time, I leave you with a brief list of some of my favorite songs to accompany some of your most human experiences...whatever that means to you.

1. "Good Looking" - Suki Waterhouse
2. "mood ring baby" - Field Medic
3. "THE LIGHT" - BROCKHAMPTON
4. "Fly Out West" - Yot Club
5. "After Dark" - Mr.Kitty
6. "So She Goes" (Acoustic) - Geskle
7. "Melody Noir" - Patrick Watson
8. "Re: Stacks" - Bon Iver
9. "Big Parade" - The Lumineers
10. "10:37" - Beach House
11. "I Exist I Exist I Exist" - Flatsound
12. "Escargot Blues" - Guantanamo Bay Surf Club
13. "untitled" - Rachael Jenkins
14. "Today" - RICEWINE
15. "Ketchum, ID" - boygenius
16. "LowerThanLow" - BONES
17. "midnight love" - girl in red
18. "Never Wanna Leave" - Hate Drugs
19. "Lilo" - The Japanese House
20. "Goodbye Weekend" - Mac Demarco

Happy listening... or sad listening. Or just okay/mediocre listening. Whatever the case, whoever you are, wherever you are, I wish you all the best today and every day to follow.

# A Guide to a Fun Summer in the Catskills!

By Laura Craig

Summer is almost here, and many of us are wondering what we will do this summer during the pandemic! Here are a few local attractions and activities that you may plan to partake in this summer.

You can explore the many small businesses such as antique stores, home goods stores, art galleries, etc. There are also many attractions local to our area including The Ashokan Rail Trail, The Empire State Railway Museum, Opus 40, Rail Explorers and many other attractions. Now you may be wondering what other activities you could do that are easy and pleasurable. You could go fishing in the Esopus Creek or swimming in one of the many swimming holes.

If you are not a water person, that is alright because we have plenty of hiking trails for you to conquer! There are countless campgrounds for you and your family to enjoy the warmth of a fire and a round of cornhole.

After all of your exploring you must be hungry, and that is no problem because there are a bunch of restaurants and eateries that would love to help settle your hunger. Theaters are starting to perform shows via Zoom, so grab a blanket and some snacks because you are going to want to see some talented people at work.

Sports are having clinics all around our area so grab your phone and text your friends to sign up! Now that you know all we have to offer, I hope that if you find yourself bored this summer you get up and explore all our area has in store for you.



Mac Demarco, Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



# Some Heartfelt Reflections of Senior Talon Staff Members

By Shayne Durkin

What a year it's been. This was definitely not how senior year was pictured in our heads, but we've all managed to make the best of it with what we've got. Instead of reflecting on this school year as a whole, let's take some time to acknowledge something pretty important: Six of our Talon staff members are graduating this year, including our fantastic Editors-in-Chief. While they've written their own farewell, I thought it important to include some words from a few of our other graduating staff members this year.

I asked the following questions: What's your favorite memory from our meetings? What's your favorite piece/pieces that you've written for *The Talon* and why? What has been your biggest takeaway from this experience?

**Simon Rands, Copy Editor:**

"My favorite memory from my time in the newspaper club is crowding around the one layout computer for hours on end, sharing a 3 gallon bucket of animal crackers, hoping to finish the paper on time.

My favorite piece that I've written for *The Talon* is the Chanukah edition of Rands' Recipes. It was an excellent excuse for me to make a ton of latkes, and I was really excited at the idea that someone would experience latkes for the first time because of me.

My biggest takeaway from my time at *The Talon* is the value of trying new things. When I joined in tenth grade, I thought I would just go to a couple meetings and try it out. But I had no idea how much I would enjoy working at the paper. I formed some incredible relationships with the other members, and I also realized that I loved grammar for its

fixed rules and laws (like math). I will definitely take this lesson with me to college and push myself to join a variety of different clubs (especially newspaper)."

**Nelson DelTufo, Layout hand, Copy hand, and one of everyone's favorite Journalists:**

"My favorite memories are definitely the old in person layout meetings that would last well into the evening. They were just the right mix of hectic and productive.

My favorite article that I have ever written was my article on the Ulster County DA race because I think local politics are incredibly important and under reported.



Nelson Del Tufo

And what I have learned from *The Talon* is the importance of committing yourself to what you're passionate about. I only started taking an active role in the paper in junior year, and never sought a leadership position, but in hindsight, I wish that I had started going to layout meetings and editing articles earlier because the paper is important to me, and I appreciate the experience so much."

**Eva Donato, Layout Editor:**

"I suspect everyone else will say the same, but my favorite memory of newspaper, and of high school in general, was buzzing around the layout computer, littering popcorn crumbs everywhere and fighting over who gets to do what. So much chaos.

When I was a sophomore I wrote an article about music in the 60s and 70s and how it reflected societal changes at the time. I just thought it was super cool. I think that while being a part of the newspaper I've learned that we're all able to be strong-willed and opinionated, but

also chill and respectful and quiet when others are speaking."



Eva Donato

**I'll give in my own two cents:**

My favorite memory from one of our meetings was in November or December of 2019. Ms. Conroy, our staff adviser for *The Talon*, had two huge tins of Jingle-Jangle, a jar of animal crackers, tea, granola bars, and pretzels. All of our desks were in a circle, and we brainstormed for a couple of hours. There was a lot of laughter being thrown around with all of our ideas, and it was just a great time.

I think my favorite piece that I've written was my article about our amazing cafeteria staff and how they were feeding families during the pandemic. (That was also my first front-pager!!) It was really important to me that they were recognized for all of the work that they do, because they're such an integral part of our community. Lastly, newspaper has taught me so much in terms of collaboration, communication, editing and writing skills, and responsibility.

On behalf of myself and my fellow graduating staff members, thank you Ms. Conroy and Mr. Edelman for making this possible. We have all learned so much.



Shayne Durkin

# Black Lives Still Matter: Police Brutality in 2021

By Ella Williams

*The Talon* staff would like to express its support of the following statements issued on behalf of Onteora's Human Rights Club:

Since the renewed support of the Black Lives Matter movement in June, justice has been cried for and police brutality has continued.

The Derek Chauvin trial began on March 29, 2021 in Minneapolis and involved convicting Derek Chauvin for murdering George Floyd on May 25, 2020. The trial, which lasted for 14 days, resulted in Chauvin being found guilty and convicted of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter.

In the midst of celebrating the achievement of justice for George Floyd, the joy swiftly subsided when 16 year-old Ma'Khia Bryant was fatally shot by a police officer on April 20, 2021 in Columbus, Ohio. Bryant called 911 when her and her sister Ja'Niah Bryant were being attacked and felt unsafe. When the police arrived, the officer yelled at Ma'Khia to "Get down!" and shot her four times without hesitation.

Another murder unfolded during the trial on April 11, 2021 just outside of Minneapolis. 20 year-old Daunte Wright was pulled over due to a traffic violation. It was then brought to the officers' attention that Wright had a warrant for his arrest. The officers attempted to detain Wright as he went back into his car. The police had a momentary struggle with Wright, causing an officer to allegedly use their handgun instead of their taser, shooting and murdering Daunte Wright. It was later revealed that Wright was actually pulled over due to his completely legal air fresheners hanging from his rear-view mirror. Protests sparked for three nights in support of justice for Daunte Wright and were viewed as unlawful by local authorities.

The Black Lives Matter movement is continuing to fight for justice for the Black lives lost to police brutality and racism.



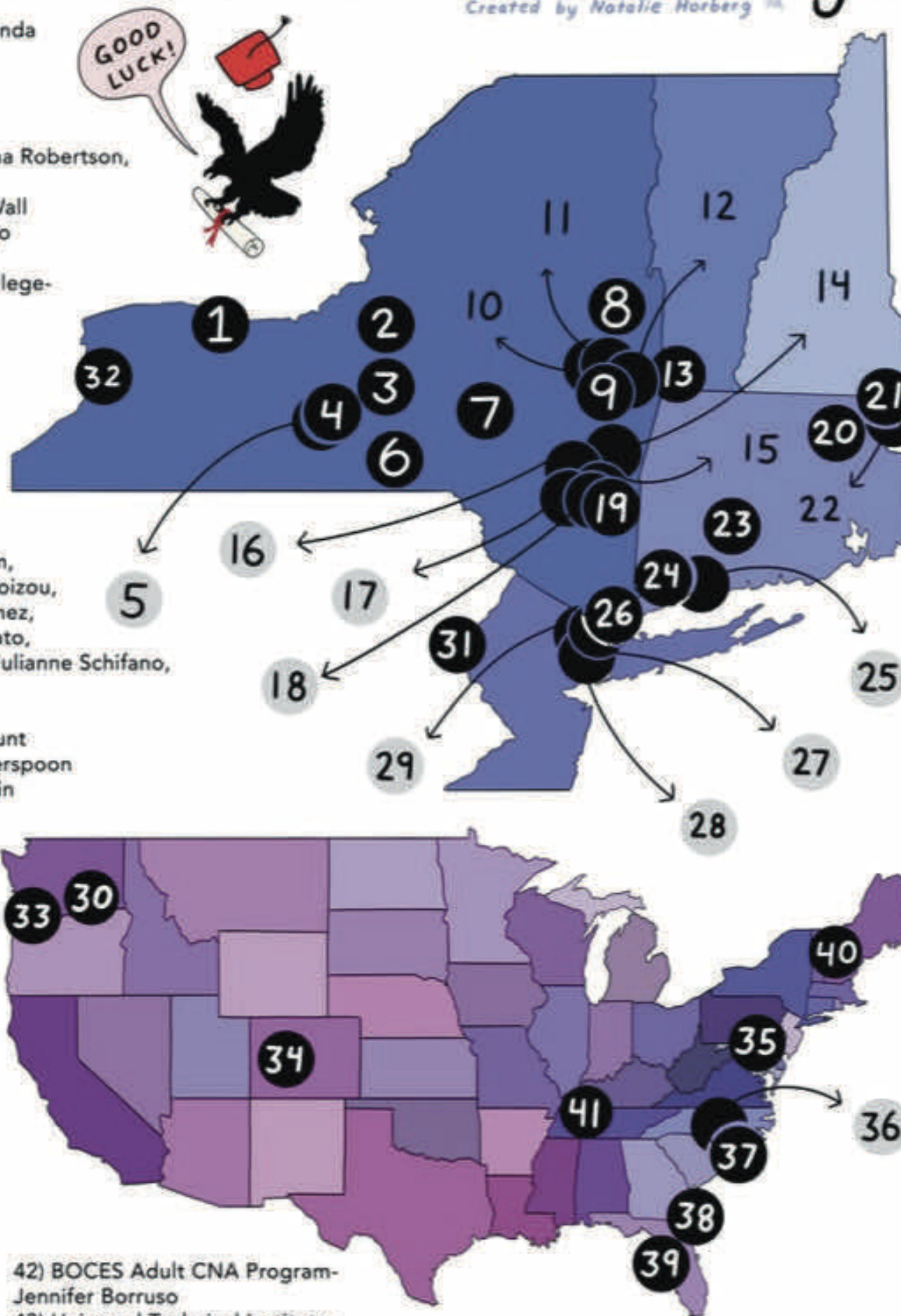
Simon Rands



# Where is the Class of 2021 Going?

Created by Natalie Horberg

- 1) Rochester Institute of Technology- Zach Calinda
- 2) Le Moyne College- Cambria D'Aprile
- 3) SUNY Cortland- Patrick Ross
- 4) Cornell University- Mikayla Stock
- 5) Ithaca College- Ori Grady, Leon Savage
- 6) Binghamton University- Ever Goldin, Lucciana Robertson, James Stala, Julian Stala
- 7) Hartwick College- Isabella Solis, Giovanna Wall
- 8) Skidmore College- Edelmira Sanchez Hidalgo
- 9) SUNY Albany- Alana Wood
- 10) SUNY Schenectady County Community College- Jessenia Miller
- 11) Union College- Maggie Turck
- 12) Siena College- Dylan Wiswall
- 13) Williams College- Nelson DelTufo
- 14) Bard College- Enzo Paynter
- 15) The Culinary Institute of America- Stefan Frasca
- 16) SUNY Ulster- Isabella Brekke, Ava Calinda, Jackson Coryell, Katerina Emig, Julia Flamenhaft, Frida Flores Reininger, Hallie Gardner, Ian Helm, Donna Howard, John Kurz, Skyler Lane, Evan Loizou, Sonny Luchmee, Michelle Martell, Oscar Martinez, Margaret Melanson, Tyler Nguyen, Joshua Odat, Aidan O'Donnell, Nicholas Ross, Raven Ryan, Julianne Schifano, Anthony Umhey, Cody Wolfeil
- 17) SUNY New Paltz- Sefie Loizou
- 18) Marist College- Daniel Rose, Jessica Zygmunt
- 19) Dutchess Community College- Holly Wotherspoon
- 20) Framingham State University- Shayne Durkin
- 21) Tufts University- Simon Rands
- 22) Harvard University- Emily Peck
- 23) Wesleyan University- Natalie Horberg
- 24) Sacred Heart University- Emma Hegeman
- 25) University of New Haven- Alissa Kolarick
- 26) Iona College- Soul Glenn
- AND
- SUNY Purchase- Analie Ingalsbe
- 27) St. John's University- Toni Nguyen
- 28) Aveda Institute New York- River Byrne
- 29) New York University- Archie Lewis-Harris, Elsa Weyeneth
- AND
- Columbia University- Maxwell Mielcarek
- AND
- Barnard College- Sophia Roberts
- 30) Whitman College- Axel Roberts
- 31) Lafayette College- Eva Donato
- 32) Medaille College- Zach Fulford
- 33) Portland Community College, followed by Portland State- Raffaele Legnini
- 34) Western Colorado University- Sam Buono
- 35) Howard University- Cocoro Cartledge
- 36) St. Andrews University- Morgan Peck
- 37) Coastal Carolina University- Nicole Lane
- 38) Flagler College- Gabriel Gervai
- 39) University of Tampa- Nicholas Christofora
- 40) Plymouth State University- Xavier Salinas
- 41) North American Lineman Training Center- Owen Allison



42) BOCES Adult CNA Program- Jennifer Borruso  
 43) Universal Technical Institute- Yael Gomez  
 44) Military (Air Force or Navy)- Alex Smith  
 45) Employment- Zachary Avery, Leah Grant, Ryan Johnsmeyer, Kayla Leonard, Steven Marin, Maria Mazariago Moran, Misha Nichols, Andrew Quick, Gavin Sessler, Michael VanLeuvan, Gianna Vianello

The maps above are an artistic rendition, not drawn exactly to scale. All information on this graphic was accurate at the time of publication.



# Letter From The Editors

Dear Talon Community,

Being the Co-Editors-in-Chief and part of *The Talon* has been such an honor. We have been members of *The Talon* since its creation. Part of creating a newspaper out of thin air is establishing processes that carry over from issue to issue to ensure the longevity of the paper. We have revised these procedures countless of times, and future Editors-in-Chief will keep changing them.

When Covid struck and Mr. Edelman said he would support us if we continued making a paper virtually, it seemed almost an impossible task. However, the excitement and determination from

and our community is the Onteora student population. It has been so rewarding to see how excited students are when we pass out papers during lunch periods. After everyone in *The Talon* has put in so much work, it is one of the most incredible feelings to know our work is appreciated.

I think it is also important to remember how much fun we've had together and that it's okay to goof around even when there are things to get done and tight deadlines to meet! One of the most iconic Talon scenes is of Talon members sitting in the computer lab, shoving hands into bags of snacks, laughing, and talking, all while trying desperately to meet a deadline. We would end up being some of the last people in the building, all because we wanted to finish a page of layout or make sure an article had been perfectly proofread. In those moments, everyone's commitment to producing

# Onteora Teacher Set to Retire After 30 Years of Teaching: ¡La Reina Elena!

By Shayne Durkin

The end of this year brings graduation and new beginnings on the horizon for many. It's an exciting time for one person in particular: Elena Garcia-McWhinnie, or to most, Señora Garcia. She's well-known throughout the building for her fabulous outfits and love of singing. After 30 years of teaching she's decided to retire at the end of this school year.

I had a brief interview with her to find out more about her thoughts and plans. Here's that interview, or rather, the best parts:

My first question was one that she's been asked many times before: Did the pandemic have any influence on your decision?

"It was actually the contrary, because it showed me as a message from the universe that even though it's hard to let go and to change after 30 years of doing the same thing, I will be able to adjust and move on into a new chapter. My husband has been retired for many years, and my mom is an elderly woman living in Mexico, and I think that having the freedom to spend more time with both of them is another influence. But I enjoyed what I learned in the pandemic, and it gave me ideas for the future."

She had to think for a while about my next question, because there were probably a lot of different answers. I asked her: What is one of your fondest memories from being at Onteora?

"One of my favorite memories I think was actually when we [Spanish Club, myself included] recited the poem 'No Te Rindas,' and decided to learn all the movements and use props. Then we presented it at the talent show, and at the end everyone was cheering and they said I should go up and run across the stage, so I gave everyone high fives. That was my stage moment, I almost felt famous." She laughed as she recalled this story, and I told her that she really is famous.

My next question was kind of a no-brainer: What are some of your plans for after this year?

"I want to stay active," she said. "I really love to study, and I'm interested in spirituality, psychology and theology. I'm enrolled in a class that explores the ways that an author from 500 years ago used the same ideas as are in modern theology. And I also want to learn Italian

and hopefully travel to Italy and practice there. I want to try to find my second calling, because I don't want to stop working. I don't know what life will throw my way, but I believe that everything will come together."

Finally, I asked Señora if she had any advice for the incoming teacher that would fill her spot.

"As a teacher, especially a new teacher, it's very easy to get caught up in all of the rules and regulations. It's important in order to develop relationships and connections with your students that you're not always such a rule-follower. So yes, I would say to anyone new coming in, don't get trapped so much by the rules." As an aspiring foreign language teacher, I made sure to listen well.

Señora carries with her much of the wisdom of Don Quixote, and an outlook on life that we can all learn from. She's always optimistic, and eager to learn and grow as much as she can.

Her teaching extends beyond the classroom and into the hearts and minds of many students, myself included. She's been my teacher, club advisor, and all-around positive influence. She's often said that she's graduating with me and my classmates, and I think that statement suits her. It's not so much an ending as it is an exciting new beginning.

In the words of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, "La ventura va guiando nuestras cosas mejor de lo que acertáramos a desear," or, "Destiny guides our fortunes more favorably than we could have expected."



Elena Garcia McWhinnie, Courtesy of The Talon Staff



Emily Peck (left) and Sophia Roberts (right)

everyone in the club made the transition relatively easy. Even in these crazy times, we have continued to produce a paper that has been enjoyed and appreciated by the community.

None of this would have been possible without the collaboration of everyone in the paper and the support of the community. All *The Talon* members work so well together, and we are so appreciative of all the hard work that they have done.

An important part of creating a quality paper has been expanding *The Talon* community. We do this by continually recruiting and training new people. After students pour their hearts into articles, *The Talon* staff help them find their voices through supportive editing sessions and group meetings. Watching new Talon members and younger students grow has been incredible to witness.

One of the other important goals of a newspaper is to inform the community,

the best quality paper possible was evident, but the environment was still fun instead of stressful and overwhelming.

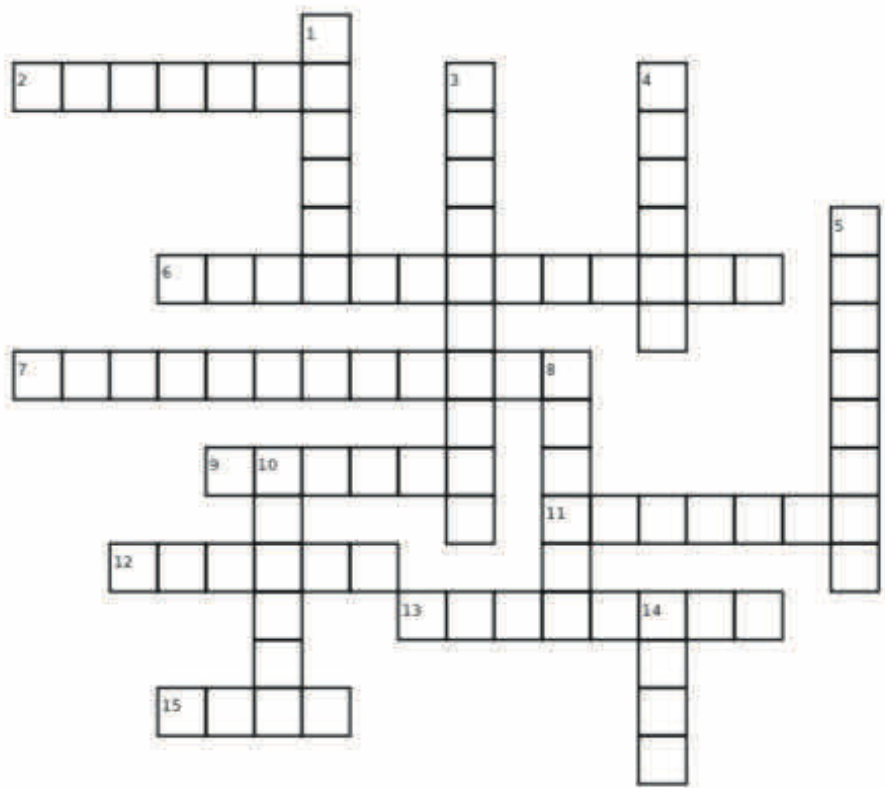
Now we are coming to the end of our career at *The Talon*. We know that when we leave, *The Talon* will continue to flourish in the hands of the two new Editors-in-Chief, Sophie Frank and Shane Stackpole, and in the hands of the staff members who have been with us during this crazy year. We have so much faith in and excitement for what they will do.

We want to thank the academy, of course. But we also want to give a huge thank you to Ms. Conroy for her never-ending enthusiasm and support, to our fellow seniors and other staff members for all their hard work over the years, and to Ben Johansen for his vision to create the paper we care so much about.

Emily Peck and Sophia Roberts, Editors-In-Chief, *The Talon*



# On The Fly



Down:

- 1. In Traditional Chinese Culture, \_ signifies the beginning of spring.
- 3. This holiday occurs on the second Sunday of May.
- 4. The meaning of vernal.
- 5. The birth flower of March.
- 8. The first day of spring marks the beginning of \_ in the tradition of Iranian religions.
- 10. The March equinox marks the start of \_ in the Southern Hemisphere.
- 14. (Acronym) This celebrates World Languages during the first full week of March.

Across:

- 2. The Italian Baroque composer who wrote the famous piece- Spring.
- 6. The scientific term for the first day of spring.
- 7. The entomologist proposed the modern concept of daylight saving time.
- 9. In Japan, the blooming of \_ indicates the start of spring.
- 11. The 20th of March is National \_ Day.
- 12. This holiday occurs on the Sunday following the paschal full moon.
- 13. In the Polish tradition, people burn and drown an effigy of \_ on the first day of spring.
- 15. Before the 14th century, spring was called \_ in Old English.



## The Talon Staff:

**Editors-In-Chief:** Emily Peck and Sophia Roberts

**Managing Editors:** Shane Stackpole and Sophie Frank

**Copy Editor:** Simon Rands

**Layout Editor:** Eva Donato

**Assistant Editor:** Shayne Durkin

**Graphic Designers:** Natalie Horburg, Tahlula Potter, and Zach Calinda

**Secretary:** Laura Craig

**Photographer:** Bella McHugh

**Copy Hands:** EJ Martello, Caleb Frank, Shayne Durkin, Ella Williams, Clara Mead, Nelson Del Tufo, and Jonimaya Huber

**Layout Hands:** Laura Craig, Caleb Frank, Bella McHugh, Ella Williams, Nelson Del Tufo, Kelly Wen, Jonimaya Huber,

**Student Journalists:** Sophie Frank, Elijah Salazar-Garris, Shane Stackpole, Ori Grady, Caleb Frank, Emily Peck, Nelson Del Tufo, Natalie Horburg, Sophia Roberts, EJ Martello, Clara Mead, Kelly Wen, Mikayla Stock, Laura Craig, Shayne Durkin, and Ella Williams

**Staff Adviser:** Elaine Conroy



Track Practice, Courtesy of the Onteora Facebook Page



Karen Hansen (left) and Sabrina Blakely (right), Courtesy of The Talon Staff