

InLight

Volume 4, Number 1

Life is a force to be
reckoned with.

Be one with the force.

Arielle Asare '23



Dear Bullis Community,

Thank you for reading our 7th issue of InLight. InLight is a student-led platform for dialogue that explores cultures, lifts voices, and illuminates light on injustices. Contributors narrate their own stories, shedding light on their experiences, customs, politics, and the social issues of their communities.

This issue is special to us. It is the first issue after going remote and transitioning to in-person after the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past two years, the Bullis community has dealt with many challenges. We have adjusted to wearing masks, hybrid blue-gold days, assembly online and the return to online instructions when cases were high. We are finally all together, and the Bullis community has become stronger.

The pandemic has raised awareness for many social justice issues exemplified through the Black Lives Matter Movement, Stop Asian Hate Movement, and other causes. Most of all, it has led to a rise in youth activism and organizing. Across the country, youth have mobilized to advocate for the issues they care about to try and create positive change within their communities. The effect that youth activism has had is monumental. Youth worldwide have become more civically involved and have actively pushed their elected leaders to create tangible change about the issues that matter to them.

This shift is also evident within Bullis. As a result of the pandemic and all that has been going on in the world, there has been an increased amount of self-discovery and expression of thoughts and feelings. COVID has had a tremendous impact on mental health, and it has exacerbated the mental health crisis impacting teens the most. Through InLight, we wanted to provide a safe space for self-expression where people can share what matters most.

We hope that you enjoy reading the stories of Bullis Students and come away with a new understanding of our community and the issues that matter to us as Upper School students.

Special thanks to Ms. Watkins and Dr. Romeyn for helping us create and build our Spring 2022 Issue.

Sincerely,

Co-Editors Akahara Santoshkumar and Sarah Ashkin '23

Art: Belle Gambino '23

Inlight Magazine

Spring Edition 2022

Volume 4, Number 1

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Icebreakers

As I look back at my High School experience, there's a chronological commonality. The starting point for so many classes is the same: coming up with an adjective that describes you and starts with the same letter as your name.

I always had such trouble with these exercises, especially in classes where I knew most of the people already. Would my friends agree that I'm "considerate," "cheerful," or "creative?" Is there a more apt word? What am I forgetting? Such a short introduction comes with such pressure - Charlotte has never been "concise."

I've since realized that it's not the icebreakers that leave me frozen, but the exposure of myself.

Further reviewing the past four years, I remember times where I've held myself back at school. I've frozen when there's the opportunity to ask questions after an assembly, when volunteers are needed for Blue and Gold festivities, when I wanted to go all out at an audition, or when I've been asked to write for InLight.

It's never been from lack of curiosity, spirit, stage presence, or writer's block - it's from the fear of doing something new. I wanted the person I was known as to be static, dependable, and hopefully, likable. For the most part, I know how people see me. I know the reaction when my hand is perpetually raised in class. No one is shocked when I act like I'm best friends with someone I've never spoken to. Heads do not turn when I ramble about a song, book, or painting. My attempt to remain unchanging is a desperate cling to control. Your perception of me is not something I can restrict.

I don't know what decisions about my character you're going to make between each period. I don't know what judgments you've made about me off this page. Yet, I'm terrified of giving you a one-word summary of myself. I'm scared of gaining new definitions.

I'm beginning to recognize that it's more important to find new descriptions that make me happy than to worry about your version of me. It doesn't matter what type of person you think I am from the C-starting adjective I attach to my name as long as I know I'm considerate, cheerful, creative - and more.

Charlotte Caine '22

Art: Belle Gambino'23

Thus, Listen Carefully

I hear the world sighing,
unwillingness, disappointment, and helplessness I hear,
The school sighing as it thwarts its beloved children from being with each other,
losing chuckling in the hallway or cheering on the field,
The teachers sighing as they are trapped by one little laptop screen,
the energetic figure at the front of the classroom leave out blank,
The students sighing when they can only see each other's faces covered with masks,
the innocence and loveliness of children disappear soundlessly,
The parents sighing when the family trapped at their cherished home,
coziness has merged to reticence, stealthily,
I hear the world sighing
Likewise,
giggles ring out under the cloud slightly but firm,
praises glow under the masks, rumble but genuine,
happiness appears under
the sighing, from everyone's heart.
So I listen closely,
The world chortles this time.

Julia Zhu ' 23

Art: Carolyn Tang ' 22



South Asian Representation in Movies and Television

As a child, I loved watching movies and television. I would immerse myself in another world: putting myself into the main character's shoes and going on adventures with them. As an Indian American, there were few characters like me. I only ever saw math-loving nerds, girls with strict parents who were only allowed to study, and men with thick accents. Society has begun to emphasize social change, yet the representation of South Asians in the media is small and stereotypical.

Mo from Lemonade Mouth was the first Indian character I saw myself in because of our shared love of music and singing. However, as a child, the excitement of seeing a reflection of myself concealed the now apparent Eurocentric and tokenized version of an Indian character. I realized that the shortening of Mo from Mohini made her a more Western character. I saw the stereotypical nature of her father and how he was controlling and limited her to academics. It wasn't that it was wrong to have strict parents or shorten your name. It was wrong to feel like all South Asian characters that I saw on television and movies all had the same characteristics. The unique cultural characteristics of these characters were taken away to fit a Eurocentric view, creating a lack of variety of diverse characters, directly relating to the lack of representation in film.

When you think of South Asia, most minds go to India. In reality, the South Asian diaspora is much larger, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Each country has a distinct language with separate cultures and customs. Unfortunately, this isn't represented in the media, and these vibrant cultures are lumped together into one.



It isn't enough to put a South Asian character in a movie or a TV show for the sake of token characters. Movies and TV aren't just entertainment; they shape our perception of the world and the people who inhabit it. In an increasingly digitized society, it's challenging to live life without connecting to the media. It is crucial that children see themselves in the media at a young age because it helps bolster their self-worth and perception of their culture.

In a study done by USC's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, 5.9% of characters were Asian in the 1,300 of the top-grossing films from 2007-2019, and only 44 of these films had an Asian lead or Co-Lead. The population of Asians (Including South Asians) is 7.9% today. Comparatively, this number is disappointing and disproportionate to the number of Asians and South Asians living in the United States.



One of the most common myths revolving around South Asians and Asians is the "model minority myth," the idea that Asians strive to excel in all facets of life, are polite, and leave no room for failure. This idea perpetuates a one-dimensional narrative of the South Asian experience. These characters lack nuance and fleshed-out personalities, relying on stereotypes as their main traits. A perfect example that goes against the "Model Minority" myth is Devi, from the hit Netflix show "Never Have I Ever." Throughout the show, Devi, a high schooler, tries to navigate her situation by lying, manipulating her friends, and acting in her self-interest. Devi is the antithesis of the idea of the Model Minority Myth, having far more realistic problems and acting like a high schooler.

Although South Asian representation has a long way to go, comedians and actors such as Hasan Minhaj, Mindy Kaling, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, Kumail Nanjiani and Amrit Kaur are paving the way for a new era of South Asian entertainers. They are fearlessly flipping the switch on the traditional roles that South Asians are boxed into, inspiring the younger

generation to live authentically and with pride in their heritage.

Akshara Santoshkumar '23

Note from the Editors:

During the Second Trimester, AP Language and Composition Students students wrote their own version of Walt Whitman's poem, "I Hear America Singing." "I Hear America Singing" highlights the backbone of American Society - the mechanics, the carpenters, the shoemakers, the mothers, and the seamstresses. Through vivid imagery, Whitman praises the working class and declares how America is a land of opportunity and freedom.

Students were inspired by Whitman's work and wrote their own poems. The poems presented an alternative view on what it means to live in the United States. Instead of using the verb singing, students used verbs such as suffering, trying, and crying to represent the essence of America. The poems alluded to many current events in the world and reflected the polarizing nature of the US and the challenges that occur on a daily basis within our communities.

Furthermore, the poems called out the shortcomings of our country and reflect the students desire to see change in American Society so that it is more equitable for all people. After living through a global pandemic and witnessing important historical moments, we wanted to include these pieces in the magazine to create dialogue about what it means to be American and live in America today.

In the pages that follow you will see two poems from Upper School students who embrace the nature of America today. We hope you come away with a new perspective.



I Hear America Suffering

I hear America suffering, through the voices average of Americans,

A government formed to protect the people is facing a lethal pandemic with the priority of political agendas.

I hear the people suffering, expressing their displeasure under their masks or in the hospital bed with their last dying breath.

A pandemic that not only damaged people physically but also slowly deteriorated our mental sanity,

I hear the people suffering, as debates are still going on stopping the nation to unite, facing the pandemic, and preventing all the deaths.

A strong and free society slowly turning fragile towards different and minority opinions.

I hear the people suffering, through their fear of saying, expressing themselves online resulting in toxic reactions, getting slain by the cancel culture.

A government that promotes freedom of religion dictated by hypocritical Christianity.

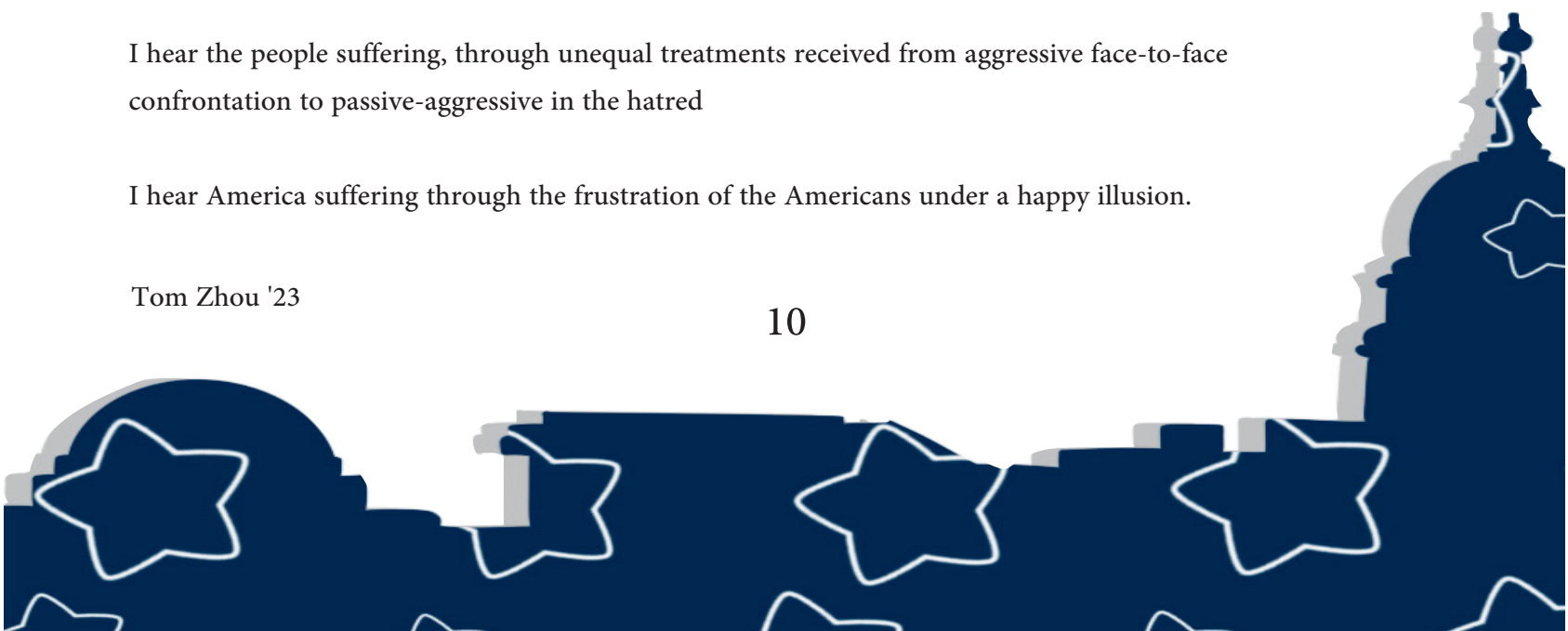
I hear the people, women suffering, as they lose control of their body over the texts and beliefs they may or may not even believe in.

A society of diversity with hidden racial hierarchy,

I hear the people suffering, through unequal treatments received from aggressive face-to-face confrontation to passive-aggressive in the hatred

I hear America suffering through the frustration of the Americans under a happy illusion.

Tom Zhou '23



I Hear America Trying

I hear America trying.

People trying to change things that they do not like.

People complaining far and wide about the false narratives being pushed.

The screaming can no longer be ignored.

People being convinced the grass is greener on the other side.

People searching for the truth coming up empty-handed.

Groups rallying and rioting and speaking out.

People becoming educated, but in the wrong way.

People refusing to hear other arguments,

caught up in their own fantasy lands.

Stuck there, glued down.

People are finally speaking out for their causes,

friends dead to them if not supporting.

America is trying to make a change, but is a change for some worth making in exchange for Democracy for all?

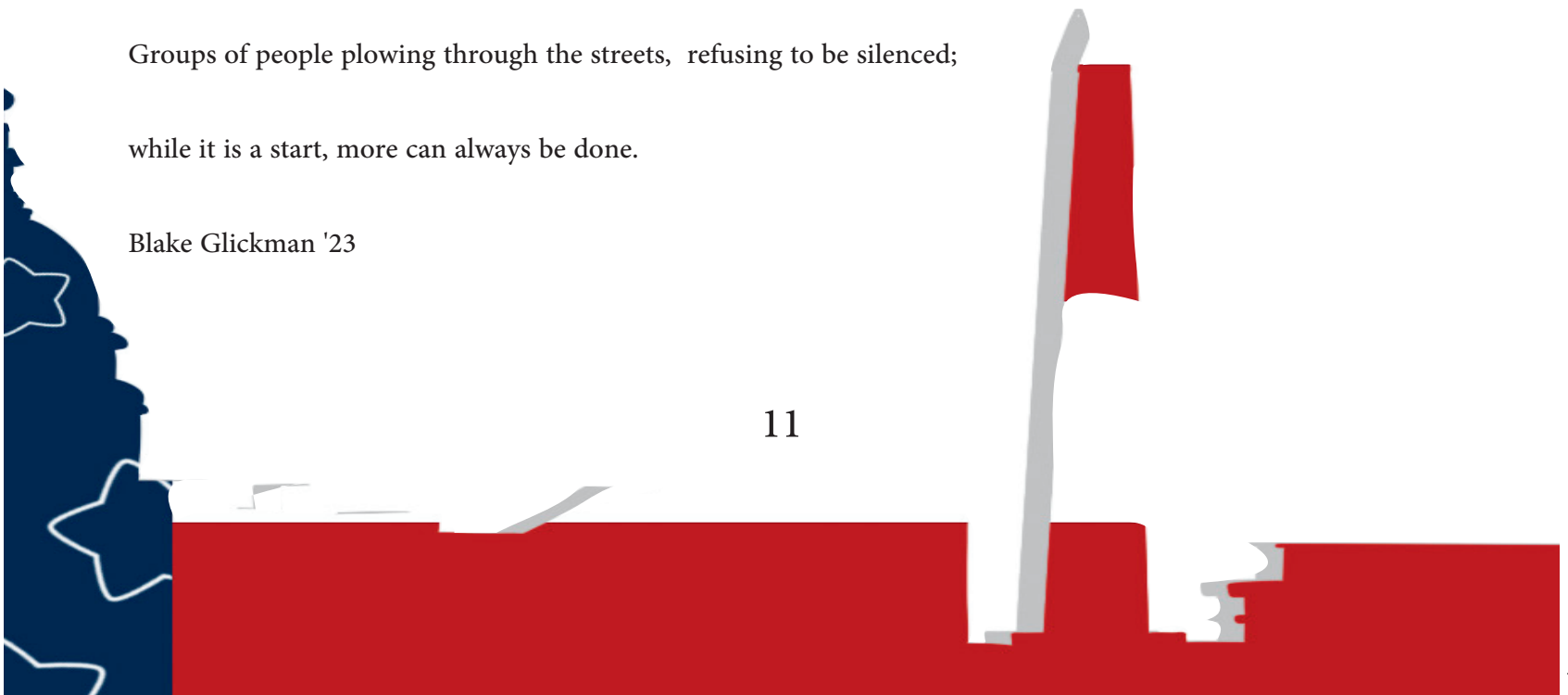
Art: Shri Khera 23

Like a bulldozer, America presses on.

Groups of people plowing through the streets, refusing to be silenced;

while it is a start, more can always be done.

Blake Glickman '23



Product of XX

Why are you angry?
Why are you always angry?
The begining of it all you were told "Oh my, you have gotten so pretty"
You learned that you are and should be pretty and they are strong and fast
You hold onto it as waves grasp ashore
Flowers are pretty, pink is pretty, lipgloss is pretty
You hear worlds like ugly, fat, short, tall, twig and those are certainly not pretty
I want to be pretty, I want to be pretty
Pretty grows into a monstrous vixen enticing me with her sweet honey lullabies
Pretty shakes her head and sways as she sings no no you're not pretty....
But this,,, this here can make you pretty....
Her song churns the air into molasses holding everything in desperation and slow motion
You consume pretty like water and dinner the later becoming less prevalent than before
You consume pretty like oxygen until oxygen is tossed like seawater for fresh water and full coverage
But you will like the flood through, you will let it consume you because
If not pretty, than what.
If pretty is the sickness,
I will chase away the best parts of me
If pretty is the sickness,
I will forget the things that have never forgotten me
If pretty is the sickness, then infect me
I will sing away my soul and burn all my everything

Steadily the same
Constantly consistent
Simply static
Unfortunately, the way things persist are confined
Swimming the same line
Paralleling yourself
Twisting your slope

Shaving your spine
Perpendicularly to yourself
What a sad way to go
Striving not to be alone
A sickly sweet antidote
Sing the same wrong notes to the ones you used to know
The known unknown is known to the unknown
It made me perpendicular when all I wanted was parallel
It sweeps the knees, it un-catches your breath, it steals your sight
It made me
It made you
It made us
We are not tangibly alone, yet insurmountably still. Can you feel the warmth of your skin?
Or is it what we feel just the hot searing glow of greed and comfort of being parallel?

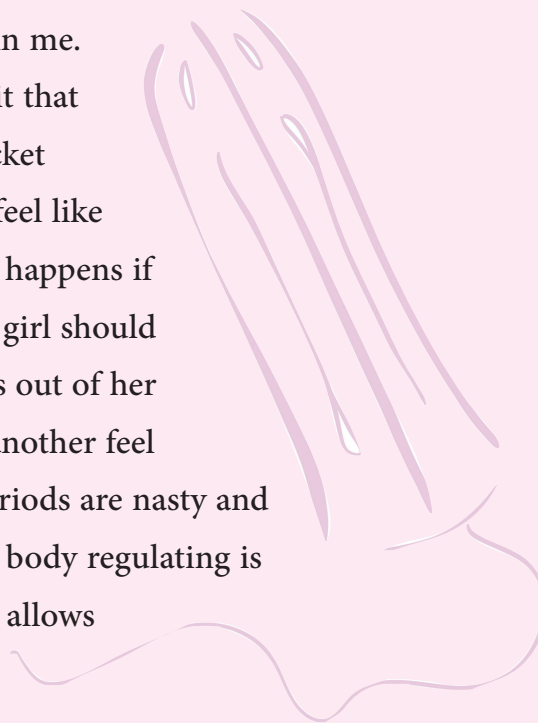
Anonymous



Dear vagina owners,

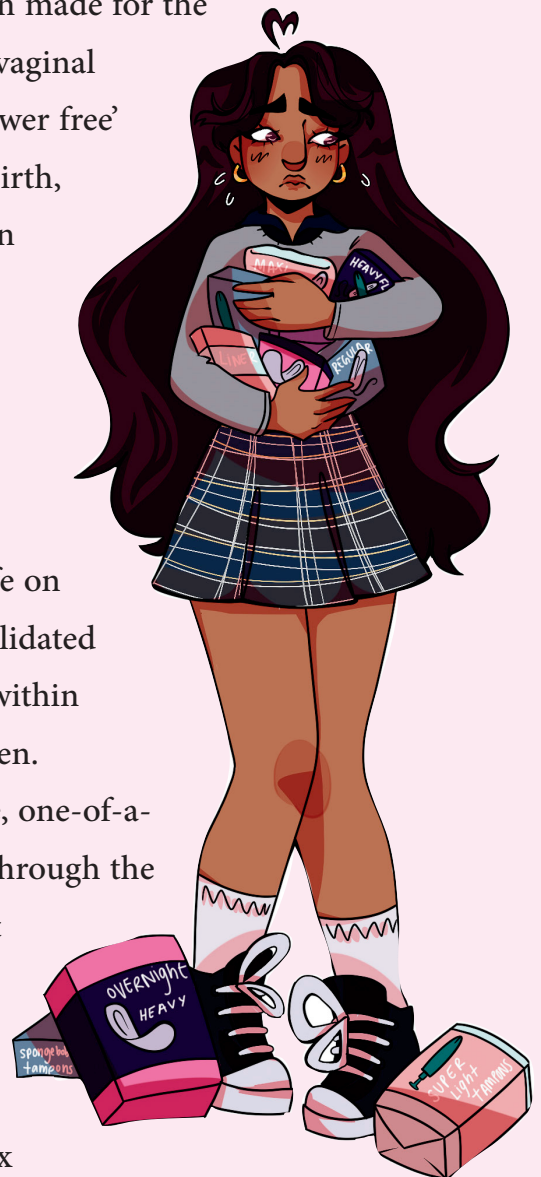
I remember when all my pads scattered across the classroom floor, the shame I felt, the guilt that began to reside within me. Why was it that I felt guilty for having a vagina? Why is it that we have to discreetly slip a pad or a tampon into our pocket when we go to the bathroom? Why has society made us feel like our vagina working is disgusting and a secret? And what happens if I take my whole backpack with me to the bathroom? No girl should have to be embarrassed if their jumbo-sized tampon slips out of her pocket and falls onto the floor. No person should make another feel ashamed for menstruating. The societal stereotype that periods are nasty and vaginas are disgusting needs to be challenged. A woman's body regulating is not vile, and a woman's reproductive organ is not ugly. It allows the circle of life to continue; she is beautiful, she is an organ, she is what gives humans life, she is a gift, and she is healthy.

Before the capabilities of the female vagina are unraveled, let's go over what the vagina does for humanity to continue its circle of life. Her period typically begins around the ages of ten to fifteen. The symptoms of her period are tender breasts, mood swings, cramps (on a scale from tolerable to extreme), headache, acne, bloating, back pain, and much more. Her period is triggered by two hormonal chemical messengers: estrogen and progesterone (her ovaries release both hormones). These hormones begin to satisfy her home: the uterus. This fresh lining of her womb is prepared to be shelter for a fertilized egg, BUT if no egg is attached, her lining begins to crumble and shed. This shedding is what causes her bleeding. She loves to bleed for approximately 5-7 days. On average, she excretes within two cups of blood per month. Thirteen to fifteen days after she completes her menstruation for that month, one of her fresh eggs will be released from her ovary, traveling through her tubes to her womb. This is known as her ovulation. Her ovulation can cause symptoms from vaginal discharge, mild pelvic pain, heightened senses, to nausea. Her ovulation is what takes place between each one of her periods. When ovulation ends, her cycle restarts. She repeats the same process every month until she gets old and tired--menopause hits. Isn't she strong? She is built for the impossible. She is the machine of life. She is not disgusting, for she is a beautiful butterfly growing in her cocoon until it is time for the next month to occur.



What is her capability for the unimaginable? She is an organ made for the unrevealed. Her powers are precise. She is a self cleaner. She uses vaginal secretions to cleanse herself. However, that does not call for a 'shower free' pass, as she is still unable to clean her outworkings. During childbirth, her cervical opening can reach 10 centimeters in diameter, the skin and muscles stretching to accommodate the offspring. While menstruating, she can cause unbearable bouts of vomiting and intolerable pain for many--to the point where Advil and Tylenol cannot numb the nerves she attacks. Her vigor is mighty. She can satisfy her owner, cause her owner grave discomfort, and bring another being into the world- continuing the process of human life on Earth. She should not be kept a secret, and she should not be invalidated or censored. She should be embraced and celebrated. Everything within humanity comes from her; she is the seed for our everlasting garden.

As owners of vaginas, society has taught us that our unique, one-of-a-kind organ is something about which to be ashamed. It is visible through the mocking of periods: "It must be her time of the month again." But making a mockery of the cycle nearly every woman undergoes is not the insult one supposes it should be. Menstruation is a compliment. It is one that means strong, beautiful, life-energizing, and natural. It is a compliment that only the female sex possesses. So with that, to all the lovely vagina owners reading this, embrace her--embrace yourself too! She is one of a kind and special; she creates, nourishes, and continues the pattern of the beautiful thing humanity calls life.



Sage Sharma ' 23

Art: Shri Khera ' 23

Sticks and Stones

How do I know when I have hurt someone?
Now, I speak not of physical pain, rather emotional pain.
How do I know when I have made someone's heart ache?
How can I tell I have caused them pain when there's nothing to be seen.
There's no cut.
No scrape.
No bruise.
One's heartbreak: a stage of sadness, pain, remorse
A pain you can physically feel in your heart
a ball stuck in your chest and throat leaving you numb and empty
Speechless
"Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never break me,"
What a brainless saying that is.
If words can't hurt me, why do I feel pain?
Unable to find a bruise, cut, or mark on my skin because it doesn't exist.
Worthless, agony, lonely
Words that hurt more than a scrape or bruise
Words can cause eternal misery that will never leave one's side.
Sticks and stones may break my bones but words cause internal scars of unforgettable pain.

Bianca Ripoli ' 25







Alexa Gerald '23

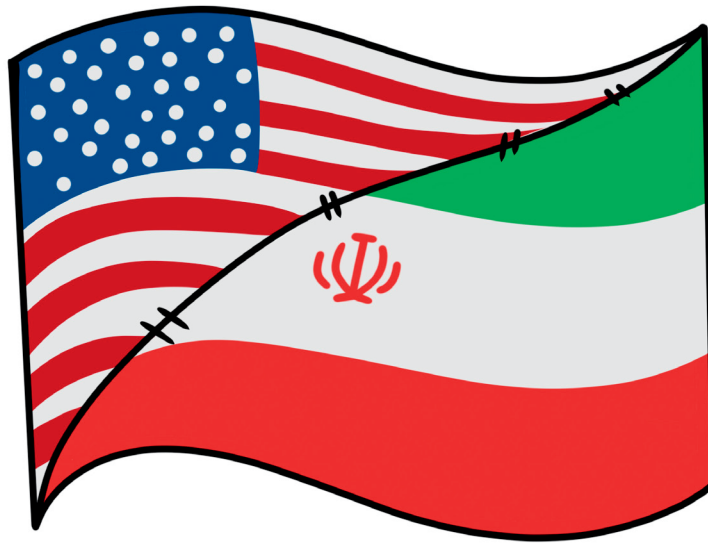
Iranian - American: A Story of Identity

I live in an Iranian family. My Mom, Dad, and the generations before them have all been born in Iran. I was however, was born in America. Therefore, I identify as Iranian-American, yet I haven't seen myself embracing my heritage as much as the rest of my family. Part of that is because some Iranian traditions and policies contradict my beliefs. I don't feel that I am ashamed to be Iranian, but at the same time, I do not feel proud to be Iranian.

Throughout my life, I have considered myself white, and even some of my close friends, who are aware of me being Iranian-American, identify me as white. I began to think that maybe this is why I don't fully embrace my heritage. I thought about it for a while. I realized that constantly judging my heritage made me not want to embrace it anymore.

A recent event where this was evident was when I went to a celebration for Eid, the Iranian new year, and my dad started looking at shirts to buy that said "Tehran" on them. I told him that I would never wear them if he bought one, so we walked away from them. He then asked me, "Aren't you proud to be an Iranian?"

and I responded, "No." I never thought that I would answer no to what he said. That day I realized that there is another reason I'm not proud to be Iranian. Being raised in a family with incredibly traditional values didn't allow me to be comfortable with them. I cannot find myself fully expressing myself without negative repercussions from my family. I don't understand why my parents were raised with such traditional values and why, even though they were brought here at a young age, were adamant about raising their kids with the same values. So I never have associated being Iranian with pride, but I have associated it with close-mindedness instead. Now that I am a young adult, I have created my own relationship with my heritage. Though different from my parents, I still think of myself as Iranian and defend my culture in some cases. I do see myself as more unique, as I know a whole different culture and language. I don't ever deny myself as Iranian. I participate in the new year's events, the tradition of jumping over small fire pits, and speaking the language with other Iranian people. I especially love speaking Farsi, as that is a quality of Iranian culture I am proud that I can do. The language itself exists in many places, but it is mainly an Iranian language. I am proud of this part of Iran and speak openly and proudly, even with non-Farsi speakers and non-Iranians. While I may not agree with some of the other aspects of Iranian culture I am proud to celebrate the holidays and speak the language.



Art: Shri Khera '23

YOU CAN STARE BUT...



Noa Smith '22