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CENSORSHIP ON  
TWITTER AND MEDIA





EDUCATION

# To join or not to join: The eternal extracurricular predicament

Are extracurriculars merely roadblocks on the path to post-secondary education, or are they genuine pursuits of students’ passions?

**Emelia Grossman**  
**Sofiia Savchyn**  
Senior Advisory Board

Extracurriculars have always been an integral part of the high school experience. They have been the primary way for graduating students to distinguish themselves from the sea of other university applicants. Unfortunately, with rising competition in post-secondary careers, extracurriculars are now often viewed as emblems to impress employers, colleges, and universities. As a result, participation in extracurriculars stems not from a desire for personal expression and growth, but from a calculated agenda.

The school year of 2020-21 changed the way students engage in their after-class activities, with many extracurriculars cancelled, delayed, or adapted onto online platforms. The quadmester system’s intensity caused many to reassess the value of their time and focus on the activities they enjoy most. Are extracurriculars merely roadblocks on the path to post-secondary education, or are they genuine pursuits of students’ passions? And most importantly, are universities looking closely at a student’s extracurricular involvement when deciding between one competitive applicant and another?

Before we delve into the dark side of extracurriculars, it is essential to note the opportunities extracurriculars provide and how they are often an outlet for student’s interests that can not be pursued elsewhere. 67% of the 53 surveyed NT students say they feel very passionate about their current extracurriculars, rating their passion as an 8 or above on a 10 point scale. Extracurriculars are widely perceived as beneficial and an emotionally rewarding break from the regular school curriculum. Moreover, extracurriculars allow many people to make friends and connections that may last past high school. These kinds of interactions are hard to come by in a classroom, and so for many students, especially those trying to meet new people, extracurriculars are incredibly valuable. In the same survey, 61% of NT students said they were “extremely likely” to continue with their extracurriculars as they move to post-secondary.

Holly Gomes, a grade 11 stu-

dent at North Toronto, had similar feelings about her extracurricular activities. She shared, “I most definitely will continue with some of them in university purely for the enjoyment and the learning aspect.” So, it is evident that many students partake in their extracurriculars to learn, meet new people, and follow their passions. However, this does not mean that pressure and competition do not play a critical role in motivating students to become involved with extracurriculars.

Unfortunately, the pursuit of high school extracurriculars becomes challenging alongside the necessity to live up to the unrealistic expectations of a perfect student. Demonstration of leadership skills is no longer a unique showcase of dedication but rather a requirement that often puts students at odds with their real desires. All surveyed NT students said they wanted to obtain post-secondary education in Canada, and 55% admitted to choosing extracurriculars specifically to boost their applications. With more than half of surveyed students choosing extracurriculars to improve their resume, it becomes clear that extracurriculars are no longer a simple recreational activity but another anxiety-inducing task. Catherine Katis, a grade 10 student at North Toronto, confessed that sometimes she feels pressured to participate in a wide range of extracurriculars, like sports and arts, just because it looks good on her resume. The competitiveness of the post-secondary paths creates the vain need to prioritize the applicants’ appearances on paper above all else. Students often look for leadership-based extracurriculars that could impress the admission committees.

The strain to live up to academic expectations extends beyond the graduating students. In the age of social media, with so many talented people on display, it becomes second nature to compare your activities to your peers’ from the beginning of your high school career. Arissa Roy, a grade 9 student at North Toronto noted, “I think the person who’s putting the most pressure on me is me. Especially over this year, I’ve really struggled with being okay with where I am.” Pursuing your interests can be a daunting task, especially with all the external pressures from society to mould yourself into a model student, but it is by no means impossible. “I’ve learned that if you try and change yourself, to be the perfect person

to get into something, you’re gonna lose your true gifts,” Arissa added about her own experience with program admissions.

Now, to put aside how students view their extracurriculars, what do Canadian universities think? Do extracurriculars play a part in gaining acceptance to their schools, or do they seldom look at them at all? The simple answer is that most Canadian universities and programs do not look at a student’s extracurriculars. An article from Collegexpress, a post-secondary information and advice website, says, “[generally], Canadian universities do not require essays, teacher references, or lists of extracurriculars in addition to academic achievement.” This, though, does not mean that dropping all your activities in favour of 24/7 studying is preferable. Extracurriculars are excellent avenues for students to discover what they are truly interested in, as well as contributing to their personal growth and development. Collegexpress reporter Karen McKellin also explained how in select programs, students may be asked about themselves or what they have achieved, and could be asked to provide a supplemental application. In these cases, extracurriculars could help students gain acceptance.

Choosing extracurricular activities is one of the first things a young high school student does out of personal interest. Whether that might be diving deeper into beloved activities, discovering new ones, or seeking to create an impressive resume, any reason that encourages students’ to pick their activities is their own, and none is less noble than the other. With the competition for applying to post-secondary education, it is only natural for students to partake in activities that showcase their strengths to increase their admission chances. However, it is crucial not to lose yourself in this idealistic pursuit. The reality of applying to most Canadian post-secondary programs is such that extracurriculars play a minor role in gaining students’ acceptance. High school is one of the few places where students can choose from various activities and have them comfortably built into their schedule. There are so many incredible opportunities, clubs, sports, communities that are designed for you to explore the infinite possibilities at your disposal; do not use them to barricade yourself into a corner of misery.

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EDUCATION

# The effect of going to school on students’ mental health

What has happened to NT students’ relationships and friendships while attending school during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Arissa Roy**  
**Julian Lewis**  
Junior Advisory Board

Socializing during the pandemic is a challenge for everyone. Maintaining proper distance and following health protocols, while also interacting with friends is a difficult balance, yet one so crucial to students’ mental health. For many, school is not only a place to learn but a place where people establish meaningful friendships. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has completely transformed this important method of interaction. With the quadmester system present in TDSB secondary school, a student’s chance to socialize and learn face-to-face is limited. As many have noticed in the days of isolation this past year, having contact with other students is very important for mental health. But is going to school actually helping us socialize as much as it should?

For grade 9 students, socializing and making friends during the

pandemic has been incredibly hard. When you are entering a new school environment, making friends is already difficult, and the pandemic has only made this endeavour far more challenging. Distancing, cohorts and a lack of in-person extracurricular activities create a near-impossible environment for grade nines to make friends. Many students feel isolated and alone, without anyone to talk to.

Most classes are not doing ice-breaker activities to let the students get to know each other, as teachers are struggling to fit the curriculum into the condensed time frame. Students only get one 10-15 minute break, in which they are allowed to socialize with each other. However, this is often awkward, and not a successful way to interact with others. Additionally, contact information is usually only given for group projects, which there are very few of, and almost no one talks to each other outside of a school context. While the pandemic has made socializing challenging for all grades, grade nines face extra challenges as some do not have friends from previous school years.

The challenge isn’t only making friends but maintaining these friendships. Without activities, lunchtime, or extracurriculars, there aren’t many opportunities to meet people outside the classroom and find a group of peers that share interests. We are limited to our structured class interactions and it’s difficult to expand a friendship from there. Friends can’t come into your house, and you can’t do other activities like going to the movies or eating out. Especially during the winter months, when people can’t talk for a long time outside, many students’ mental health slowly deteriorated as isolation overcame them. Since COVID, those aged 15 to 24 in Canada reported declines in mental health – 20 percentage point reductions from 60% (2019, pre-COVID) to 40% (July 2020) of those reporting excellent or very good mental health in a survey done by over 100,000 participants at StatCan.ca.

On the other hand, this does make students appreciate their time at school more. This seemingly small amount of social interaction during breaks and after school is critical for

students’ mental health. Although it is far less than what we had last year, it is liberating to be able to talk to people after having had no social interaction for days at a time.

Not only this, but the compressed quadmester system makes it all too easy to fall behind. Add the intense pressures of assignments and tests to the lack of social interaction, and having bad mental health seems like a likely fate.

Even though most of students’ time is spent online, the small part that is in person is essential to learning well, as it provides an environment where it’s easier to ask small questions and where teachers can teach without the barrier that online school provides.

Until life resumes to normal and socializing is once again a part of daily life, students will have to make do with the current system. Fortunately, going to school can improve the mental health of many students. If students need help or support for mental health issues, there are many resources listed on the official TDSB website.



Students physical distancing in the morning, a time usually used to socialize. | Photo by **Nathalie Adriana Funes Serna**





EDUCATION

# Bell’s mental health movement

Are we really making a difference?



Photo by Micheal O'Regan

**Natasha Bernstein**  
Contributor

It seems safe to say that almost everyone knows or has heard of Bell Lets Talk and their campaign in breaking the silence surrounding mental health. Through the power of social media, they have been able to shine a light on the fact that 1 in 5 Canadians struggle with mental illness. Now, it seems to be about time to look past those three well-known and thought-to-be impactful words, and understand the worldwide influence they’ve supposedly had.

Bell Let’s Talk appears to have as much of a negative impact as it does a positive one. The simple repost, or use of the hashtag, leaves others feeling fulfilled and done with their daily statement of ‘activism.’ This campaign has allowed many to pride themselves on spending 30 seconds watching a single short video and proceeding to repost it on their social media profiles only for it to be forgotten by the next day. As more people participate, the situation becomes more ironic, as one second they’re praising and supporting mental health advocacy, and

the next they’re bashing others anonymously online.

On social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter, it is not uncommon to see comment sections flooded with hate or mean jokes when a group of people collectively agree to make fun of something they decided was ‘socially unacceptable.’ For example, someone wears an extravagant outfit or is doing something as simple as a dance, depending on the viewers, the comment sections may either love or hate it. People seem to have no problem liking or commenting along with these posts, not realizing that it goes against the entire Bell Let’s Talk movement that they are supposedly supporting.

How can they praise awareness towards mental health while going along their day making fun of others? It’s not difficult to forget how large our social media impact is - a comment you post or boost by liking can have the utmost negative impact on those reading it. In less than a day, that comment will mean nothing to you. But what about the person who received it? In 2020, Bell approximated that there were 154 million social media interactions concerning Bell Let’s Talk. And as of 2016, around 20% of youth under 24 in Canada had experienced

cyberbullying. That’s approximately 20 000 people. All this comes into the irony behind the Bell Let’s Talk movement and the strong social media presence that follows along with it. We are bringing together a popularization of this brand while not genuinely meaning to support it. If millions are reposting #BellLetsTalk, it is fair to say that a large number of those are also making fun of others behind a screen.

At the end of every January since 2010, Bell Lets Talk Day has sparked a worldwide conversation that has been well-discussed through classrooms, the news, and has been amplified by the power of celebrities. Since then, around \$100 million have been raised and donated for mental health, through \$0.05 being donated for every text, wireless and long-distance calls by customers, and any social media post using #BellLetsTalk. They, as a company, have done a lot to make sure that the topic of Bell Let’s Talk has reached everyone around the globe to remove the stigma surrounding the discussion of mental health and illness.

But what about the next day? Mental illness isn’t a one-time occurrence; it is a constant struggle and battle that is fought by many. If anything, January 28th can feel overwhelming

with the seemingly endless social media posts, flooded with #BellLetsTalk.

To create and normalize discussion, there are many other sources whose direct cause is to help and educate others on the topic of mental health and illness. Foundations such as CAMH, YMHC, MDSC, and many more, are vastly knowledgeable resources that can be supported instead. CAMH’s website has many informative research pieces that allow insight into the importance of mental health. Taking it all a step further would be to directly donate money towards foundations and charities, and to spread awareness. Read through or watch videos on ways to encourage discussion on mental health and follow through with what you are learning. Although it may not seem like a lot, it can make the utmost difference if we all try and elevate our knowledge together.

With Covid-19, mental health has taken a toll on youth in Canada, and young adults are suffering from the repercussions of being stuck at home. It is now more important than ever to work safely as a team and create that sense of unity that Bell Let’s Talk has attempted to do once a year. If we can accomplish this, conversation surrounding mental health will be more than a yearly occurrence.



## EDUCATION

# Canada's opioid crisis: a raging epidemic

“Canadians should be seized with this particular crisis...[that is]...“escalating as we speak.”  
-Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer

**Sophie Block**  
Section Editor

Dubbed as the “twindemic”, the number of deaths and overdoses seen in the opioid crisis across Canada has surged in past months. With health centres more restricted and a lack of attention from the government, more lives have been lost. Over the last six years, 18,000 Canadians have lost their lives to drug addiction. In Ontario, the deaths due to overdoses during the pandemic were an estimated 50 to 80 people per week; a 35 to 40 percent increase since the start of the pandemic.

“Since COVID, we’ve seen things get much worse. The level of adulteration of the drug supply has increased,” said Dr. Alexis Crabtree, a resident physician in public health and preventive medicine at the University of British Columbia.

Many opioids within Canada have become more dangerous during the pandemic. COVID-19 disrupted regular drug-trafficking routes, which has forced producers and sellers to create new, unsafe ways to produce and sell drugs. This theory is not without proof; toxicology lab results documenting more fentanyl analogs and higher concentrations of opioids since the pandemic began.

This would serve as an explanation for the United States, where similar data can be found. With so many resources being directed to COVID-19, and the health care system under tremendous strain, the attention needed to address this issue is not being implemented.

A further cause of this increase is the lack of accessibility to health services. “Service providers where possible are going to online provision of service,” explains Mark Haden, an adjunct professor at UBC’s School of Population and Public Health. “If you want to have a conversation with your doctor, Zoom is often the first choice. And homeless people don’t have access to Zoom.”

Additionally, isolation makes getting support and maintaining healthy, positive connections nearly impossible for some. “The more connection you have with people who care about you, the less likely you are to develop an addiction,” Haden added. “And right now we’re disconnecting.”

Pharmacist Mark Barnes has been meeting with drug users since the pandemic. He detailed why he is “terrified” of what he has been hearing. “[Those using drugs] have more time on their hands. Time is dangerous to a person with opioid use disorder. Time leads to boredom and boredom leads to drug use. It gives them time to stew about their financial problems, their mental problems and why they use opioids in the first place. Addiction is not a character flaw. It’s a true mental health disorder. That’s where we

see increased drug use. That goes for alcoholism and other addictions, too,” Barnes said.

In the first 10 months of 2020, 904 Albertans died from opioid poisoning, a 66-per-cent increase year-over-year. In March, 1,000 opioid-dependency patients were cut off treatment when Alberta Health Services temporarily “suspended” clinic operations. Some patients continued to attend treatment virtually, but most were unable to. For those who did not continue treatment online, the cost was their lives. SCS visits declined from over 114,000 in the first quarter of 2020 to under 41,000 in the second, to under 35,000 in the third.

Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada’s chief public health officer, addressed the issue with grave concern. “Canadians should be seized with this particular crisis,” she said, mentioning that it is “escalating as we speak.”

Despite her acknowledgement of the issue, both provincial and federal governments across Canada have done little to help those suffering from addiction. On the Government of Canada’s website, it states that the federal government has been working to address the crisis by making naloxone kits — which are critical in saving those who have overdosed — available for free in all provinces and territories.

As well, the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act aims to help protect people who call for help when an overdose occurs from minor drug possession. Moreover, the federal government has introduced a new program to

raise awareness about the signs of an overdose and what to do by distributing cards that describe the signs of an overdose across Canada.

While these initiatives are beneficial, none of these directly address the main issue. Arguably, the most important project is to create supervised consumption sites. The government is working to quickly approve these sites nationwide. This will allow provinces and territories to rapidly set up overdose prevention sites. Hopefully, as more of these sites are set up, opioids will be consumed in a more safe environment.

Still, many Canadians are unhappy with the lack of attention given to the epidemic. “People have been very hurt by seeing how quickly the government can react to a public health emergency when it chooses to do so,” said Dr. Alexis Crabtree. “People who use drugs and their allies have been really devastated to see that comparison.”

Unfortunately, the severity and complexity of the opioid epidemic doesn’t make for an easy fix. Over time, by addressing similar issues relating to alcohol and marijuana, it seems to some experts that legalizing substances can be the solution.

Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry agrees with this idea. In a 2019 report, she called on B.C.’s provincial government to decriminalize possession of small amounts of drugs in a 2019 report. The province “cannot wait for action at the federal level,” she advised.



Illustration by **Baran Forootan**

Mark Haden provided helpful insight as to why criminalization and harsher laws are not viable solutions. “As people become more involved with the criminal justice system, they become more criminal ... Jail is a crime school in the same way that Harvard Law is an upper-crust training school; you learn some stuff, you’re constantly told who you are, and you make connections.” In support of Dr. Bonnie Henry’s idea, he says that “[ending] drug prohibition would stop that process.”

Wendy Muckle, executive director of Ottawa Inner City Health, believes that a compassionate response is most likely to be a success. “When you talk about supplying opioids to people with an addiction, people can get all bent out of shape and say, ‘You should have an abstinent life.’ But the reality is in this kind of pandemic, all of us are just trying to survive. I do feel that there’s an understanding that people have to do what they have to do to get through the day. All of us are struggling these days,” she illustrates.

Whether drug prohibition is the solution or not, something must be done immediately to effectively assist the many Canadians struggling with addiction. More resources from the federal government should be allocated for the opioid crisis, and more supervised consumption sites need to be developed to save lives. Canadians must remember that anyone can become impacted by addiction and that this issue will not go away simply by imposing new and harsh regulations.



## TECHNOLOGY

## Cell phone addiction

Ema Kazazi  
Contributor

With 3.8 billion smart-phone users in the world, it is becoming more and more common to find people “addicted to their phones,” and it is probably more likely that you are familiar with the unease that arises from being without it. In fact, nomophobia is defined as the fear of being without a mobile phone. So, how did this term come about, and why are people addicted to their phones.

When referring to phone addiction, it isn’t the phone itself that keeps you hooked. Instead, it tends to be the array of social media apps, such as Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, and many more. The primary goal of social media is to keep users on the platform and to continue to consume content for as long as possible. What all the various social media platforms are competing for is user attention, which is obtained by exploiting human nature in a multitude of ways.

Tristan Harris is the co-founder of Center for Humane Technology and was previously the Design Ethicist at Google. He claims that “We’re living inside 2 billion Truman shows, where you wake up and everything is coordinated just for you and you don’t even really realize it. But, it’s coordinated just to entertain you, or just to engage you... [Phones are] not designed to help us, [they’re] just designed to keep us hooked.”

The concept of keeping people addicted is also something that applies to gambling. Although it may not seem similar to social media at first, the resemblance can be alarming. Slot machines work through a reinforcement technique called “variable ratio scheduling.” Through unpredictable reinforcement, it keeps users absorbed in the activity. For slot machines, this means that users consistently receive different results, whether it be a win or loss, which motivates them to pull the lever another time.

Applying this technique to notifications allows people to be just as addicted to checking their phone. As people cannot accurately tell what the notification is going to be about, they are reinforcing the action of checking their notifications, creating the continuous habit of picking up their phone to check what they might have missed. Furthermore, dopamine is a neurotransmitter that is released when you feel rewarded, such as in social situations. Notifications are often used to inform you of social connections, so your brain will release dopamine, giving you a reward and adding on to the urge to check your notifications.



Photo by Mikayla Toplis

Another method used to maintain the user’s attention is infinite scrolling. Infinite scrolling means that stopping is completely up to the user with no visual cues that show the progress a user has made. Additionally, people have difficulty measuring their satisfaction through internal cues and tend to rely on visual cues instead. This results in users having a difficult time stopping, and simultaneously feeling unsatisfied with their experience, leading them to continue going through a bottomless hole of content.

Finally, the fear of missing out makes people want to continue using their phones. People feel as though being without their phone will make them irrevocably lose track of what is happening around them, increasing their attachment to their phone.

TikTok is a perfect example of an app that uses methods such as these to keep people watching. Firstly, there’s a mixed bag of content on the app that can elicit both pleasant and unpleasant emotions, which aligns with the “variable ratio scheduling” reinforcement technique. There is also an infinite scrolling feature and no real way to measure how much content you have consumed. Finally, the videos are short, and content is continually refreshed, all accumulating into an experience that is addicting but thoroughly mediocre.

Dr. Julie Albright, a sociologist specializing in digital culture and communications at the

University of Southern California, says for TikTok, “You’ll just be in this pleasurable dopamine state, carried away. It’s almost hypnotic, you’ll keep watching and watching... you can start looking at TikTok, and three or four hours have gone by because, well, let me just look at one more.”

Regarding what consequences phone addictions have on people, mental health is often brought up in the conversation as well. Although there are some studies that attempt to connect the overuse of social media to declining mental health, the link is often overstated.

Anxiety and depression rates have been increasing in adolescents; however, there are many more factors other than technology that should be considered when taking into account this statistic. This is not to say that social media has no impact on worsening mental health, but it is unfair to give it all the credit. As Candice Odgers, a developmental psychologist who studies adolescent and child development at Duke University, states, “[there are] many things that draw teens to smartphones—the need to socially connect, seek novel experiences, and learn about the world—are the sorts of things they have always sought...Phones may serve as mirrors reflecting problems or struggles that would otherwise be missed.”

There are, however, many clearer side effects to always being on a smartphone. Eye strain, posture problems, neck pain, and

a decrease in sleep quality are just some of the concerns avid phone users deal with on a daily basis. Furthermore, misinformation spreads much quicker through social media, and echo chambers, which are situations in which beliefs are strengthened by communication and repetition in an isolated system, can cause people to become narrow-minded as there are no opinions that contradict their own. If you are worried about how much time you are spending on your phone, there are some steps you can take to decrease it, such as disabling push notifications, limiting your screen time, and even gray-scaling your screen so bright notifications won’t affect you.

Although it might seem that technology is taking up more of our attention, there are designs that could be implemented which would help limit the time we spend on our phones. For example, instead of opening Instagram and being greeted with a barrage of new information, you could be given several options, such as message friends, view stories, or scroll through the explore page, which would help you accomplish what you opened the app for instead of getting distracted and wasting unnecessary time on it. For the time being, be conscious of the time you are spending on your phone, notice what features keep you absorbed, such as bright notifications or infinite scrolling, and find ways you can reduce it.



SOCIAL MEDIA

# Censorship among Twitter and the Media

“[The information we see] is all controlled by something much larger than ourselves.”



Illustration by Baran Forootan

**Abigail Kehoe**  
Contributor

Almost everything we see online has gone through some form of social media filtering. Every news article, announcement, opinion, or fact has been seen and reviewed by social media companies before reaching us. The information has been assessed, and somebody has determined whether or not it should be displayed online. We almost never see information firsthand. It is all controlled by something much larger than ourselves. Social media.

Some individuals may be disturbed to learn that the information they are seeing has been edited in some way. However, due to the terms and conditions, something that many of us don't even

read, a website is able to gain the consent needed to access and edit your posts, depending on the kind of information they possess in regards to the user agreement. As well, through your consent to these conditions, you are unable to prevent websites such as Twitter from making said changes to your posts. These conditions can be found under various sections among the terms and conditions, and they should be read before agreeing to anything as they carry some vital information.

In addition to their constant access and ability to remove or edit posts, Twitter's terms and conditions also state that they are not responsible for any inappropriate content or messaging that happens on their website. Despite this, Twitter is still able to delete any content that they deem "inappropriate" or "harassment", as well as

other similar circumstances. This ultimately gives Twitter the ability to choose which posts to display on their website and which should be removed. In other words, Twitter has the ability to censor everything their users post.

Although we do not often see many public demonstrations of this power from Twitter, there has been a very recent and public situation involving the former United States President, Donald Trump. After a series of tweets promoting and inciting violence, as well as multiple warnings from Twitter itself, Donald Trump's account has been permanently banned from the site. Additionally, he has been restricted from ever creating an account again.

Therein lies the question: does social media have too much power? Some may argue that it is done for our online protection;

others may argue that this is a violation of our freedom of speech. However, Twitter is not violating any laws as we have all signed the terms and conditions before gaining access to the site. These social media platforms may be under public and social pressure, but through the agreement to the terms and conditions, we have signed away the rights to take any legal action against the site.

So, whether you are for or against Twitter's ability to censor posts and accounts, the terms and conditions remain the binding legal contract that covers Twitter from potential lawsuits or other problems regarding their power of censoring media. Therefore, unless we choose not to use these media platforms, there is nothing we can do to fight their ability to control the flow of media.



# The truth behind migrant workers during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light some of the harsh realities that migrant workers face.

Hannah Benjamin  
Layout Editor

The ongoing global pandemic has created an atmosphere of uncertainty and danger, but many of us have the privilege and resources to prioritize our safety. However, this is not the case for migrant workers, whose working and living conditions during the pandemic are frequently overlooked. In truth, the pandemic has only exposed the long-standing inequities that are existent in Canada’s farming industry.

Migrant workers, especially those working in agriculture, are common victims of mistreatment and abuse. Their labour is constantly exploited, as they are underpaid and constantly face physical and verbal abuse. Many bosses use the method of extortion through late, erratic, or even incomplete payment. Many have been called “donkeys” and Mexican workers have been referred to as “Mexican garbage.” Several advocates communicate that racism appears to be the undermining cause for much of this manipulation and mistreatment.

With the pandemic, these issues have become more prevalent and have had more damaging impacts on

migrant workers and their familie. The Migrant Rights Network surveyed migrant workers, and 40% of those respondents explain that they were not paid for extra hours, equating to \$6,552 of unpaid wages over 6 months. Essentially, they are working 50 to 65 hours a week producing, processing, cleaning and delivering food while only being compensated for 35 hours. Over a third of these respondents also claimed that they were limited and prohibited from buying groceries and sending remittances. Worst of all, there were claims of little to no access to healthcare, despite the raging and ongoing pandemic. Their employers also gained control over them by restricting their use of public transportation. All this regulation was executed as an incentive to reduce the spread of the virus. Furthermore, they are required to work and live in circumstances where physical distancing is impossible, putting them at a much higher risk of contracting the virus. With their work environment presenting such an immense threat, protective measures and resources for COVID-19 are almost non-existent, which has caused deadly outbreaks in several farms located all over Canada. To add, workers are also buried in economic instability due to lost work and a lack of income support. The virus has caused the loss of jobs for several workers, and unlike most

of the workforce who received CERB when they lost their jobs, they do not have economic assistance to rely on while they find new employment. One migrant worker explained, “I don’t have a salary. And I need to support my 3 kids back home.”

Nonetheless, speaking out about the unsafe conditions and the oppression from employers holds the risk of losing their jobs, being deported, or losing all future opportunities to return. More than 250 cases reported that workers faced retaliation for raising concerns. Therefore, migrant workers fear the repercussions of defending their rights, and since there is almost an infinite number of those who desire to come to Canada to work, any kind of confrontation could potentially get them deported immediately. Despite all the challenges and sacrifices that migrant workers make, coming abroad to work is the best option for many of them as it is the most reliable way to sustain themselves and their families. Their only dream is “to provide [their families with] a better life,” Artemio Rodriguez, a migrant worker from Mexico, said.

Advocacy groups representing migrant workers, such as Migrant Rights Network, Migrant Workers Alliance, and Justice for Migrant Workers, have been persistently fighting for better health and safety standards,

especially after the exacerbated conditions caused by the coronavirus. Consequently, the Canadian government has recognized that “this pandemic has brought to light some unacceptable gaps in the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program, and we are committed to fixing them.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his cabinet ministers vow to re-evaluate the TFW program, specifically introducing “mandatory requirements for better living conditions for workers.” As of now, the revised TFW program has introduced a 9-month work duration to accommodate the quarantine period, instead of the usual 8-month term. The federal government has also taken an initiative to subsidize about \$59 million to protect migrant workers amid the coronavirus pandemic. It will “fund more farm inspections, provide emergency relief when needed and improve the overall living conditions on farms.” This pandemic has shown us why migrant workers are so essential in Canada as they are the ones who sustain the food chain. However, these same workers are being excluded from Canada’s rights and protections, and therefore, it is important that we speak about and bring awareness to such injustices.



Photo coutesy of CBC



TECHNOLOGY

# New future or make belief city?

## Saudi Arabia’s plans for futuristic city.

**Yasseen Mobada**  
Contributor

In 2017, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (shortened as MBS) announced an initial investment of \$500 billion into a megaproject that would involve the construction of a futuristic sci-fi-like city, planned from scratch. The investment is in line with a larger strategic framework, Saudi Vision 2030, aimed at easing the kingdom’s economic dependence on oil as well as attracting tourism and foreign investment through a more secular image of the country. The city itself goes by the name of Neom — a portmanteau of the Greek word for new, neo, and the Arabic word for future, mustaqbal — and claims to be a smart city, a future hub of international business and entrepreneurship, as well as a major regional tourist destination. It is planned to be built near the Red Sea in the northwestern region of Saudi Arabia in one of the most barren and underdeveloped regions of the country. But with the project’s first stage planned to be completed in just 4 years, the city to launch by 2030, and a prediction that it will contribute \$48 billion to the Saudi economy, the question is raised: how can this ambitious project be accomplished in such a short timeframe?

Neom’s original plan, as it was first introduced, was unclear but claimed it would be 100% automated, aiming to be the most efficient city in the world, utilizing passenger drones and flying cars, providing free access to high-speed internet, and offering access to medical human genetic modification. These ambitious plans took a wilder turn when leaked information from consulting companies hired for planning concepts for Neom involved 24-hour surveillance using facial recognition, a projection of a fake moon made by a fleet of drones, robotic butlers and maids, robot cage fighting, glow-in-the-dark beaches, and education with holographic teachers. According to the Saudi government, it will be independent of Saudi law, leaving the possibility of legal alcohol and a separate justice system in a bid to be more open to foreigners. The project’s original prediction of contributing \$100 billion to the Saudi economy by 2030 has now been cut in half following the crown prince’s latest announcement. The announcement, made just this January, details a 170 km-long city dubbed ‘The Line,’ an urban development comprised of walkable communities integrated into their surrounding nature. It claims it will use 100% renewable energy, create 380,000 new jobs, give access to all daily services within a 5-minute walk, take 20 minutes to travel its whole length, have an underground ultra-high-speed public and freight transportation system, have cognitive machine learning infrastructure, be completely road-free, provide housing for a population of 1 million, and preserve 95% of its ecosystem. The Line is would be the urban centre of the larger Neom megaproject along with 16 boroughs and an industrial city focused on robotics and clean

energy.

Neom Bay, the first stage of construction, has been completed, including the opening of Neom’s commercial airport, currently a small airport with flights to Riyadh, and a palace built for King Salman to use for vacations. Housing and business construction are now underway as local infrastructure is upgraded, a second airport is already being planned, with the construction causing the displacement of 20,000 people so far.

With a full understanding of the MBS’s goals, a thorough assessment can be made. From an economic standpoint, Neom currently appears impossible due to its failure to attract foreign investment and the lack of further funding at home. Although throughout 2018, the leaders of the project reassured there was interest from private investors, the brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi, who is believed to have been dismembered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul at the behest of MBS, has thrown a wrench in these prospects. The prince reportedly said, “no one will invest for years”, in reference to Neom.

Still, the Saudi government seems to be moving full steam ahead. Saudi Arabia is currently facing its worst financial crisis in decades due to low oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic, tripling its Value Added Tax to 15%, a tax that did not exist just 4 years ago. It has also suspended benefits to the civil service, employing the majority of Saudi citizens, while it spreads itself thin by investing heavily in Qiddiya, a sports and entertainment complex in Riyadh, and a high-end Red Sea redevelopment to boost tourism. This will cost the Public Investment Fund another \$20 billion on top of the \$40 billion being invested into foreign reserves, making it hard to imagine there is much more money to divest into funding Neom. According to the leader of the Qiddiya project, MBS is “completely committed to this vision” and “crystal clear that we stay the course, move this forward”. Adding on to the lack of capital, there is no public estimate on how much Neom would cost, meaning it hasn’t been determined or is too expensive. But even if Neom could be the solution to Saudi’s economic crisis, attracting tourism and industry, how realistic are the planning goals of the project?

Firstly, it’s best to compare the Neom project to other high-tech developments that have been attempted elsewhere. Back in 2005, then-king Abdullah announced the King Abdullah Economic City, KAEC. The \$30 billion project, which served to meet the same goal of economic diversification, aimed to create 1.3 million jobs and reach a population of 2 million by 2035. Considering its current population is 7,000, it is essentially a ghost town and its goals will likely never be met. Like Neom, it offered to fall outside of conservative Saudi laws but still failed to attract foreign investors, with the city today being small and unlively.

Another comparable, smaller-scale development is Abu Dhabi’s Masdar City. Begun in 2006, the \$22 billion project aimed to cover a modest 6 square kilometres and be a model for larger energy-sustainable cities. It

was promised to be built in eight years, yet it is still unfinished and covers only 0.3 square kilometres of its original six. Only 4.5% of the expected inhabitants live within the development, and its goal of having no private vehicles failed due to its podcars not fulfilling transportation needs. Sharing many goals with Neom, Masdar and KAEC serve as cautionary tales for overly ambitious high-tech sustainable projects.

Now let’s evaluate the technological and infrastructural goals of Neom. Passenger drones are not currently ready to serve as a legitimate means of transportation. While experimenting with genetic modification has been expressed by Japanese company Softbank, its ethical concerns only draw away from Neom’s replicable model for world cities and exacerbate concerns of its elitism. Having a fully surveilled city is a legitimate possibility with the advancement in facial recognition technology, but it’s hard to see how it would be attractive to potential residents considering Saudi’s poor reputation with personal freedoms.

Last year, members of the Howeitat tribe were vocal about the fact that while supporting Neom’s development, they did not wish to be forcefully evicted from their ancestral homeland. Abdulrahim AlHuwaiti publicly announced he would defy eviction orders to protest the move and predicted Saudi police would arrest him on false weapon charges. Later, Saudi authorities killed him, claiming he had weapons, attending his funeral to ensure there was no response by the tribe, and later arresting 8 of his cousins. Lastly, The Line’s more concrete promises are highly unlikely with current technology. Their promise of being able to go from end to end, a 170 km trip, in 20 minutes, would require a metro with an operation speed of 510 km/h. The fastest metro line in the world, located in Shanghai, moves 80 km/h slower, and with the lack of transportation companies aboard the project, it’s hard to see that speed being achieved. Additionally, an underground freight system has never been built and successfully used in any neighbourhood, let alone an entire city, making the prospect of no roads an impossibility. Even assuming subterranean freight systems worked, all businesses would have to be within a small radius, making for poor accessibility. It seems unlikely a master plan has been completed for the city as standard. Finally, the creation of a city that relies 100% on renewable energy requires a vast field of solar panels, the project’s primary energy source, and considering energy-demanding innovations planned like robots and AI infrastructure, they would need to break their promise to preserve 95% of the surrounding ecosystem due to the sheer amount of space needed for energy generation.

In conclusion, KAEC and Masdar give a peek into what Neom’s future might resemble. The lack of economic planning, funding for the project, and plan for the country as a whole jeopardizes their goal of weaning off oil. The forced eviction and relocation of the Howeitat tribe has reinforced Western views of the kingdom as unfriendly to

human rights. Saudi’s attempt to emulate the success that other cities in the Gulf, like Dubai, has backfired; regardless, Dubai has proven to be economically infeasible after it received its second bailout from oil-rich Abu Dhabi since the financial crisis of 2008. The timeframe pays no favours for the city either, rushing construction and making required technology further away from availability. From a strictly urban planning perspective, Neom appears to be nothing but a sci-fi dream reliant on goals that have never been achieved on smaller scales and technology that doesn’t yet exist.

Although every city in the world would be happy to achieve full sustainability, provide an urban lifestyle with no commute, and have access to the latest advanced technology, Neom’s unreasonable goals will turn it into the very thing it sought to destroy. As it stands, it’s set to turn into a highly unsustainable, economically and environmentally, ghost town that provides a lifestyle no better than the one it replaced.



Photo courtesy of The Guardian



# Black History: remembering overlooked figures

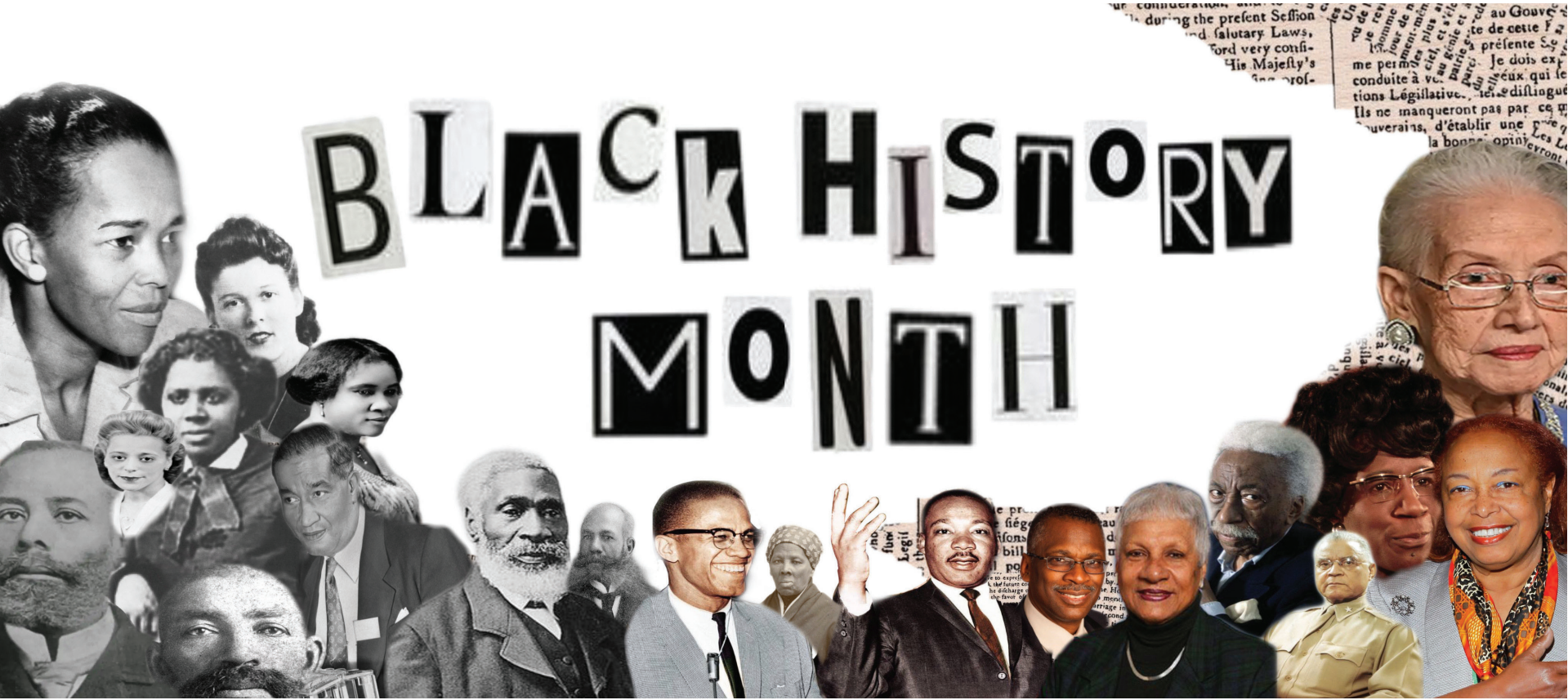


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Originating in the United States, Black History Month, also known as African American History Month, is officially recognized by the American and Canadian Government and has also recently been observed in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Ireland. Carter G. Woodson, an African-American historian, reserved a week in February to focus on commemorating the accomplishments of African Americans since both the former U.S. president Abraham Lincoln and the social reformer Frederick Douglass were born in this month, both of whom played a significant role in the discussion and abolishment of slavery in America. The acknowledgement of prominent black figures often carries the same names, which results in the contributions of equally significant individuals being overshadowed. The overlooked figures below have made significant contributions by proving their talents in various fields despite the challenges of racism:

**George Washington Carver**  
Botanist, Inventor, Teacher  
1864(estimated)-1943

George Washington Carver was born enslaved, and he later became one of the most influential scientists and inven-

tors of his time. Carver became the first African American to earn a Bachelor's degree in science. He was an agricultural chemist, agronomist, and experimenter who revolutionized the agricultural economy of the south through his developments and products acquired from peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans. Throughout the remainder of his life, he used his popularity to further promote scientific causes. He inspired many others in the scientific community with his achievements, beliefs, actions, and personal story.

**Marsha P. Johnson**  
Activist  
1945-1992

Marsha P. Johnson was an African American transgender woman who was an activist for LGBTQ+ rights and an advocate for trans people of colour. Johnson was a founding member of the Gay Liberation Front and co-founded a radical activist group, S.T.A.R (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), committed to helping homeless transgender youth in New York.

**Major Taylor**  
Cyclist  
1878-1932

In a time when cycling was considered mainly a white sport, Marshall Walter 'Major' Taylor, also known as Major Taylor, set himself apart from his peers in sprint cycling. Winning the amateur race at the age of 14, he turned profes-

sional four years later. He was the second black athlete to win a world championship in any sport. Like many black athletes at the time, he faced threats of racial violence or refusal to compete from his white peers, one even attacking and choking him unconscious. Despite all of this, he continued to gather a huge fan base and set world records.

**Bessie Coleman**  
Pilot  
1892-1926

Bessie Coleman became the first African-American woman and the first Native-American woman to obtain an international pilot's license. She obtained her license from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale in Switzerland and specialized in stunt flying and parachuting. Due to racist and sexist biases, she was extremely limited in her career and had difficulty being hired as a commercial pilot in the United States after her return. However, this did not stop her from achieving her dream while also breaking gender and racial expectations and norms.

**Carrie Best**  
Journalist and social activist  
1903-2001

In a time where Carrie Best faced racial discrimination, she finished high school only to discover there were no meaningful career opportunities for black women. Through determination for equality, Carrie became a civil rights activist

and co-founded The Clarion. This newspaper was the first to be published and owned by Black Nova Scotians. Throughout her career, she used the paper to help end racial discrimination and support positive change. For her actions, a postage stamp was released in her honour in 2011.

**Anne Cools**  
Activist, Administrator, Community worker and Senator  
1943--

Born on 12th August 1943 in Barbados, British West Indies- Anne Clare Cools grew to be an administrator, community worker and senator. She is also an influential black Canadian activist who founded 'Women in Transition,' one of Canada's first shelters for female victims of violence. She served as a Liberal, Conservative, and independent senator for 30 years. Therefore, Anne was known as the Dean of the Senate.

These individuals along with many others played a key role in the improvement of the representation of minorities, especially in fields that were considered unconventional for them. While facing many challenges along the way such as discrimination, threats of violence, and limited opportunities, they still never gave up on their passion. Today, they continue to be role models for many individuals, and it is crucial to remember their names and their stories.



# "ब्लैक हस्ट्री मंथ": मलिकर याद करें वो लोग अगोचर

Suhani Sharma  
Visual Editor

यू.एस. में शुरू हुआ, "ब्लैक हस्ट्री मंथ", जिसे अफ्रीकी-अमेरिकी इतिहास महीने के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, को अमेरिका और कनाडा की सरकार से आधिकारिक रूप से मान्यता प्राप्त है। हाल ही में इसे यूनाइटेड किंगडम, नीदरलैंड, और आयरलैंड में भी मनाया जाने लगा है। कार्टर जी. वुडसन (जो एक अफ्रीकी-अमेरिकी इतिहासकार थे) ने फरवरी में एक सप्ताह अफ्रीकी-अमेरिकी लोगों की उपलब्धियों को याद करने और जानने के लिए चुना, क्योंकि समाज सुधारक फ्रेडरिक डग्लस और पूर्व अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति अब्राहम लिंकन का इस महीने में जन्म हुआ था। दोनों ने अमेरिका में दासत्व के बारे में चर्चा और उसके उत्पादन में अहम भूमिका निभाई थी। अफ्रीकी-अमेरिकी लोगों के योगदानों को जब मान्यता दी जाती है, तब कुछ गनि-चुने लोगों को ही याद किया जाता है। इस कारण समान रूप से ही महत्वपूर्ण व्यक्तियों की सदिधियों को प्रशंसा नहीं मिल पाती है। ऐसे ही कुछ अगोचर लोग, जिन्होंने अपने जीवन में जातिवाद की चुनौतियों के बावजूद अपने कौशल से समाज को सार्थक योगदान दिए, नीचे सूचीबद्ध हैं:

**१. जॉर्ज वाशिंगटन कार्वर**  
वनस्पति-वैज्ञानिक, आविष्कारक, अध्यापक  
१८६४ (अनुमानित— क्योंकि वह तब गुलाम थे)— १९४३

जॉर्ज वाशिंगटन कार्वर का जन्म दासत्व में हुआ था। वह अपने समय के सबसे प्रभावशाली वैज्ञानिकों में से एक थे। कार्वर विज्ञान में स्नातक की डिग्री प्राप्त करने वाले पहले अफ्रीकी अमेरिकी थे। वह एक अमेरिकी कृषि

कमियागर, कृषि-वैज्ञानिक, और प्रयोगकर्ता थे जिन्होंने अपनी खोज और मृगाफली, शकरकंद और सोयाबीन से बने उत्पादों के द्वारा दक्षिण अमेरिका की कृषि अर्थव्यवस्था में क्रांति लायी। अपने जीवन के शेष वर्षों में उन्होंने अपनी लोकप्रियता का उपयोग वैज्ञानिक कारणों पर रोशनी डालने के लिए किया। उन्होंने बहुत लोगों को अपने कर्मों, विश्वास, उपलब्धियों तथा अपनी जीवनी के द्वारा प्रेरित किया, और आज तक करते आ रहे हैं।

**२. मार्शा पी. जॉनसन**  
कार्यकर्ता  
१९४५-१९९२

मार्शा पी. जॉनसन एक अफ्रीकी-अमेरिकी ट्रांसजेंडर महिला थीं जो एल.जी.बी.टी.क्यू + (LGBTQ+) अधिकारों के समर्थन में एक कार्यकर्ता और जातिवाद से प्रभावित ट्रांस व्यक्तियों के लिए एक अभिवक्ता थीं। जॉनसन "गे लबिरेशन फ्रंट" की एक संस्थापक थीं। वह स.ट.आ.र (स्ट्रीट ट्रांसवेस्टाइट ऐक्शन रिवल्यूशनरी), एक मौलिक कार्यकर्ता समूह, की भी सह-संस्थापक थीं। यह संस्था बेघर ट्रांस युवाओं (जो न्यूयॉर्क में रहते थे) की मदद करने में समर्पित थी।

**३. मेजर टेलर**  
साइक्लिंग  
१८७८-१९३२

एक ऐसे समय में जब साइकलिंग को मुख्य रूप से एक "वाइट" खेल माना जाता था, मार्शल वाल्टर 'मेजर' टेलर, जिन्हें मेजर टेलर के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, ने खुद को सुप्रसिद्ध साइकलिंग में अपने प्रतिस्पर्धियों से अलग साबित किया। केवल चौदा वर्ष की आयु में शौकिया दौड़ को जीतकर, वह चार साल बाद वृत्तिक बन गए। वह किसी भी खेल में विश्व चैम्पियनशिप जीतने वाले दूसरे

ब्लैक खिलाड़ी थे। अपने समय के बाकी ब्लैक खिलाड़ियों के समान, उनको जातिवादी हिसा की धमकियों, एवं उनके वाइट साथियों के साथ प्रतिस्पर्धा में भाग न ले पाने की धमकियों का सामना करना पड़ा। ऐसे एक प्रतिस्पर्धी ने एक बार उन पर हमला और गला घोटकर उनको बेहोश भी कर दिया था। इस सभ के बाद भी उन्होंने बहुत प्रशंसा प्राप्त की और विश्व रेकर्ड भी बनाए।

**४. बेसी कोलमैन**  
पायलट  
१८९२-१९२६

बेसी कोलमैन अंतरराष्ट्रीय पायलट के लाइसेंस को प्राप्त करने वाली पहली अफ्रीकी-अमेरिकी और नेटवि-अमेरिकन महिला थीं। उन्होंने अपना लाइसेंस स्वटिसर्लैंड के फेडरेशन ऐरोनोटिक इंटरनैशनल—पैराशूटिंग एवं स्टंट उड़ान में विशेषता के साथ—प्राप्त किया। जातिवादी और योनवादी पक्षपात के कारण उनके पास बहुत सीमिति व्यवसाय विकल्प थे, और उन्हें एक वाणिज्यिक विमान चालक के रूप से रोजगार मिलने में कठिनाई का सामना यू.एस. में करना पड़ा। परंतु यह समस्याएं उनको अपने सपनों को सच कर पाने से नहीं रोक पायी; और अपने सपनों को सचवाई में बदलते हुए उन्होंने लगि तथा जातिवादिक मानदंडों को भी तोड़ा।

**५. कैरी बेस्ट**  
पत्रकार और सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता  
१९०३-२००१

कैरी बेस्ट (एक ऐसे समय में जब उन्होंने जातिवादिक भेदभाव का सामना किया) के लिए जब माध्यमिक विद्यालय समाप्त हुआ, उनको यह पता लगा की अफ्रीकी-कनेडीयन महिलाओं के पास कोई सार्थक रोजगार के अवसर नहीं थे। परंतु समानता के लिए उनके निर्धारण के द्वारा कैरी एक नागरिक अधिकार

कार्यकर्ता बन गयीं और उन्होंने "द क्लैरियन" की सह-स्थापना की। द क्लैरियन ऐसा पहला समाचार पत्र था जिसके मालिक नोवा-स्कोशिया के ब्लैक लोग थे। अपने व्यवसाय के दौरान कैरी ने अपने पत्र का उपयोग जातिवादिक भेदभाव का अंत करने में मदद और सकारात्मक परिवर्तन का सहयोग करने के लिए किया। उनके अच्छे कामों के लिए, २०११ में एक डाक टिकिट उनके सम्मान में जारी किया गया।

**६. ऐन कूलज**  
कार्यकर्ता, प्रशासक, सामुदायिक कार्यकर्ता एवं सीनेटर  
१९४३—

१२ अगस्त, १९४३ के दिन ब्रिटिश वेस्ट-इंडीज, बारबाडोस, में जन्मी ऐन क्लैर कूलज एक प्रशासक, सामुदायिक कार्यकर्ता तथा सीनेटर बनीं। वह भी एक प्रभावी अफ्रीकी-कनेडीयन कार्यकर्ता थीं जिन्होंने "वमिन इन टर्जेशन" की स्थापना की, यह संस्था कनाडा के सबसे पहले हिसा से पीडित महिलाओं के लिए आश्रयों में से एक थी। ऐन ने ३० साल तक एक लबिरल, कन्सर्वेटिव, और स्वतंत्र सेनेटर की भूमिका निभाई। इस कारण ऐन को "डीन ऑफ द सेनेट" के नाम से भी जाना जाता है।

इन, तथा कहीं अन्य, व्यक्तियों ने मलिकर अल्पसंख्यकों के प्रतिनिधित्व में सुधार लाने में एक अहम भूमिका निभाई, विशेषतः उन क्षेत्रों में जो उनके लिए अपरंपरागत माने जाते थे। बहुत सारी कठिनाइयों (जैसे भेदभाव, हिसा का खतरा, अपने भविष्य की सीमिति आशंकाएँ, आदी) का सामना अपने जीवन के रास्ते में करते हुए, उन्होंने अपने जुनून को नहीं जाने दिया। आज बहुत लोग इन व्यक्तियों को अपने प्रेरणास्रोत मानते आ रहे हैं, और उनके नाम और उनके जीवन की कहानियों को याद रखना बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है।



Photo courtesy of CNN



# Brave enough to see it

Sara Kaboudvand  
Contributor

*“The hill we climb  
If only we dare  
It’s because being American is  
more than a pride we inherit,  
it’s the past we step into”  
“When day comes we step out of  
the shade,  
aflame and unafraid  
The new dawn blooms as we free  
it  
For there is always light,  
if only we’re brave enough to see  
it  
If only we’re brave enough to be  
it”*

Once upon a time, not so long ago, there was a “skinny black girl” named Amanda Gorman. She was just a plain, regular girl, who was diligently striving to become the accomplished, recognized, and greatly admired poet and activist she is today. Currently, Amanda is appearing on the news, in multiple media interviews, and on the headlines of several articles for the incredible results that her activism is having on our world. Her speeches, poems, and even just the strength in her opinion is not only having a positive influence on youth, but on the whole world. Her name today is most identified with the poem, “The Hill We Climb”, which was the piece she wrote and recited for president Joe Biden’s inauguration ceremony. The recitation of poetry has been a solemn moment that most US presidential inauguration ceremonies include, but this one was different for the following reasons: it was symbolic. The poet was a young black female, the poetry was praised by the news media, and most of all, it was the moment of unity that America was in great need of.

Ironically, Amanda grew up with an auditory processing disorder and a speech impediment. These unfortunate afflictions are seen as obstacles to many, but she chose to embrace them, and use them to her advantage. She even considered her disabilities as a gift; an opportunity for her to practice other activities, such as reading and writing. Amanda came to enjoy them as hobbies and eventually developed skills in them, especially in poetry. At the young age of 16, she was chosen as the first youth poet



Illustration by Ava Ireland

laureate of Los Angeles. Then, at only age 17, she published her book, “The one for whom food is not enough”. Later, at the age of 18, she founded the non-profit organization, One Pen One Page, a writing and leadership program for youth. From 2017 to 2020, she continued her work by writing poems and giving speeches to struggling communities in hopes of inspiring and restoring faith. In addition, Amanda had also once said her goal is to run for president in the year 2036 when she is old enough to qualify, and coincidentally, she was presented with an opportunity that would bring her one step closer to that goal.

After being recommended by Jill Biden for the inauguration, she began to write “The Hill We Climb”. Her initial draft described her feelings and her background, while also addressing the types of events America had gone through in recent months, such as the Black Lives

Matter movement. However, after January 6, 2021, two weeks before the inauguration, Amanda altered her poem to address the outrageous storming of the United States Capitol. This recent riot led to 5 deaths and more than 140 injuries. Amanda voiced this chaotic event in her poem, with hope for the people listening to recognize and remember its existence, and to provide a moment of learning and growth. From police brutality, ongoing racism, and even the coronavirus pandemic, America, along with the whole world, has suffered greatly. By incorporating these rather dark and sorrowful topics into her poem, she brought attention to them while at the same time, reminding the people that it was something they would overcome.

*“We’ve learned that quiet isn’t  
always peace  
And the norms and notions  
of what just is  
Isn’t always just-ice”*

*“We’ve seen a force that would  
shatter our nation  
rather than share it  
Would destroy our country if it  
meant delaying democracy  
And this effort very nearly succeeded  
But while democracy can be periodically delayed  
it can never be permanently defeated”*

Born in 1998, Amanda Gorman is only 4-8 years older than the average reader of this paper. Her ability to portray activism through art and from her heart is just one of the many traits we can learn from her. She is also now the youngest person in the United States history to recite at an inauguration. Her name may be new, but being at the tender age of 22, Amanda Gorman’s potential is boundless. We should all look forward to hearing the name Amanda Gorman again. Projects, poems, words; all of her creations will change America and the world for the better.





## EDUCATION

# The death of Social Sciences and Humanities at North Toronto

Many students are reluctant to enroll in NT's Social Sciences and Humanities classes, believing that the courses would be deemed a "waste of time."



Photo by **Amanda Wilson**

**Sophie Block**  
Section Editor

In a world where technological advancements are enriching every aspect of our lives, where prerequisites for competitive science programs are overwhelming, and where business is becoming increasingly influential, humanities and social science course options often fall by the wayside for students. This new trend is threatening the future of humanity and social sciences, although ironically, many students believe that humanity and social sciences do not lead to successful careers. At North Toronto C.I., many students maintain these beliefs, impacting not only what courses are offered at the school, but also reflecting the dangerous shift in our society.

In Ontario, the average yearly income for an engineer is \$74,052, for a doctor it is \$341,000, and for a scientist it is \$96,560. In comparison, the average yearly income in Ontario for public relations is

\$61,150, for a journalist it is \$20,400, and for a lawyer it is \$151,053. Additionally, the average salary for Canadians with a Bachelor of Arts is \$55,815, for Canadians with an MBA it is \$83,215, and for Canadians with a Bachelor of Science is C\$67,542.

When looking at these statistics, which only shows a small window into this topic, it becomes obvious why students are discouraged from pursuing a career in social sciences and humanities. Lower salaries are unappealing, especially when considering student loans and the high cost of living. Add to this the pressure and widespread view of society that technology and science is the only thing important to the future, and pursuing a non-business or STEM related career seems absurd.

Contrary to these disheartening statistics and opinions, social science and humanities careers are necessary. Microsoft president Brad Smith and EVP of AI and research Harry Shum, people who

most certainly understand the future of technology, value the importance of these subjects. "As computers behave more like humans, the social sciences and humanities will become even more important," they wrote. "Languages, art, history, economics, ethics, philosophy, psychology and human development courses can teach critical, philosophical and ethics-based skills that will be instrumental in the development and management of AI solutions." In North Toronto, students' opinions vary. Speaking to the inclination for sciences within the NT community, Abigail Shin observes that within North Toronto's community, "it seems that students especially push for business or science for post-secondary without thinking of other possible majors."

Leah Manuel voiced her opinion, which is shared by many of her peers. She says that she believes that "a lot of people decide to go [university] for social sciences or humanities if they don't really know which pathway they want to go

down in the future." This belief, which may be true for some circumstances, but in many cases is not accurate, shows the negative views that people hold for these fields.

When Augustin Benoit, a grade twelve student, discussed his reasons for not taking social science or humanity courses, he also considered the pressure of society, saying that he "decided not to take any social science courses because of the pressure there is to take math courses. Every year, I'd hear that if you don't do math, then you're not gonna be able to do anything after high school and so that influenced my decision to take math over social sciences courses."

Kiana Sharifi, who will be in grade 12 next year, agreed with Augustin. "These courses do sometimes interest me, but they wouldn't be helpful in furthering my education for the career I have in mind ... I just don't have space for filler courses," she said.



Many students struggle with this same issue; required preparation courses for university leave little space for courses of interest. Emelia Grossman, another grade eleven student at North Toronto, grapples with this, too. Though she does not plan to have a career in this field as it is not her primary interest, she is taking her social science courses in the summer, as she recognizes “that these courses can also be useful when pursuing a science or math degree because they teach soft skills and life skills that are not typically taught in STEM courses.”

Nathalie Adriana Funes Serna, a grade 12 student at North Toronto, strongly believes that social sciences must continue to be prioritized. “I think that it will be hard to get a job regardless of the field I choose; it is just about standing out -- which will be equally hard in a field I am not passionate about. I would rather stand out and put work into my passion. Moreover, I believe that unfortunately our school -- and I think a bigger part of society -- prioritizes STEM and business

sectors and looks down upon social sciences and humanities,” Nathalie detailed. “People seem to think that the latter is not as important; however, I would argue it is another essential sector. [In present day], we need vaccines, we need governments and policies to distribute them fairly; [likewise], we need social sciences to understand human behaviour and see how we can solve non-business and STEM problems such as racism and misogyny, among other bigotry mindsets. Many times business and STEM and social sciences can go hand in hand. It is essential that we start prioritizing social sciences because people in those fields make communities better in their own way.”

Kiana Sharifi also noted that “it’s a general understanding that it is difficult to get a job when studying humanities/social sciences. That being said, it shouldn’t stop anyone from pursuing what they are passionate about nor should it be thought of as an ‘easy way out’ for post-secondary education.” “[Social sciences] are an asset, and are a great way to reflect on

your own life and how you may be able to improve it. Above all they are just fun to study and talk to people about, it’s probably one of the best ways to truly get to know someone,” adds Iva-Mari Miskulin, a grade eleven student.

Mr. Silver, a North Toronto teacher who teaches History, English, and other Social Science and Humanity courses, believes that when fewer students take these courses, it results in a less informed population, as people know less about history and world issues. Additionally, he encourages all students, including those going into math and science, to take humanities and social sciences to build valuable communication and writing skills. When asked about what jobs could come out of focusing on humanities and social sciences, Mr. Silver named several, including a lawyer, journalist, teacher, and professor.

With this in mind, it becomes clear that not only must North Toronto students change their mindset, but that the world as a whole would benefit from this same change. While careers in

STEM, social sciences and humanities may not be as traditional, well-known, and sometimes not as high paying, this is very often not the case. Unlike what many think, undertaking these fields does not make you less likely to succeed, and social sciences and humanities are not typically less “safe” than STEM or business. If your passion lies within these fields, don’t disregard them because society has told you that you will not be successful. Furthermore, the benefits of studying social sciences and humanities do not only apply if you are interested in studying these same subjects in post-secondary education; the skills are applicable to every discipline and are crucial to maintaining an ethical world. Social sciences and humanities will never cease to be important, and by making space in your timetable to take a course in these fields, you will unlock critical skills that will assist you throughout your entire life, as well as assist the world as a whole.

NT STAFF

# Ms. Henderson’s farewell address

Over NT’s long history, many staff have helped make sure the school runs smoothly. One of these noble administrators was Ms. Diane Henderson, and her time at NT is coming to an end after working in the office since 2017. As a way to send her off, we sat down for an interview with her and got to know a bit more about her time at North Toronto.

<b>PJ Wilson</b> Section Editor	my favourite places for a latte and a slice of vegetarian pizza.	told someone to “GET OUT” of his office (No, I won’t tell you who it was!)	environment.
<b>How long have you worked at NT, and what has changed significantly since then?</b>	<b>What have you enjoyed about your job the most and why?</b>	As for a memorable moment, a student from Hot Air introduced herself on my very first day. She saw a new face, shook my hand and proceeded to tell me all about her future education and career aspirations. It was a gesture that makes me smile every time I think about it.	In her retirement years, Ms. Henderson hopes to keep busy taking care of her twin grand-daughters, Violet and Jade. She is also halfway through her final credit at U of T, and hopes to graduate in June after completing an Urban Studies course. Besides her responsibilities, she’s staying busy as much as possible by taking long walks and online yoga classes, but she can’t wait for the pandemic to be over, and wishes us the best of luck in overcoming it.
I started at NT on November 1, 2017 and retired on December 18, 2020, so just over three years. However, I started with the old Toronto Board of Education in 1985, took five years off to be with my two children (and several Golden Retrievers), returning to work in 1992. In the past thirty years I have met the most amazing people — people that I hope will be friends for a very long time! The NT neighbourhood has changed so much in such a short time. Every time I walked at lunch I would see a new store or building. I guess that is what is so exciting about cities, things are always changing. Stock TC continues to be one of	I really enjoyed organizing SchoolCashOnline. The program was new to me and I learned so much liaising with the staff to organize postings for student clubs and teams. When I started at NT, there were three items posted online. Last year we posted 55! The daily challenges and problem solving kept me going. There was always something interesting to do.	<b>What will you miss most about NT? What kept you here for as long as you stayed?</b>	Everyone in the office and the many students she has grown close with will miss her, but we all wish her well as she embarks upon her next adventure. As a school, thank you for your years here, come back to visit sometime! Best of luck, Ms. Henderson; NT loves you!
	<b>What’s a funny story and a memorable moment from your time at NT?</b>	I miss the laughs and camaraderie in the office. I miss the staff, students and occasional teachers that would parade through the office wishing us a nice weekend or sharing a recipe. I worked at seven very different schools, but NT just has the most warm and caring	
	Most of the funny stories involve Mr. Mack. He made me laugh every day and I miss him! The best laugh was when he		



STUDENT LIFE

# How long will students' motivation last with online learning?

Will students at NT be able to remain motivated in light of the present Covid-19 situation?

Victoria Man  
Copy Editor

Yet another quadmester finishes and a new one starts. Time travels so quick yet so slow during quads... Now that twelfth graders are finished with their university applications and supplementary essays, they can have a break. But now what? These students are celebrating (or perhaps not celebrating) the upcoming end of their high school years, while the grade 11s at North Toronto C. I. are getting more and more nervous as the entry to their senior year nears. What about grade 10s? Many tenth graders are absolutely dreading the future. With no experience with exams, NT tenth graders would “rather just ‘not’ go into grade 11 (considered to be one, if not the hardest year of high school) with no experience of exams and high pressure tests.” Grade 9s at NT are just a bit glum due to the fact that they “still haven’t experienced Red & Grey day yet” and are definitely having difficult times transitioning into high school. Most, if not all, students are fed up with online school at this point.

There are countless articles in Graffiti regarding COVID-19 and online school this year, all of which include comments from students who are tired of not being able to feel the learning environment and just walking in the halls at school with friends. Without being able to greet friends in the halls, cause havoc in the classrooms, and learn in person, many students’ motivations are slowly dimming. The big question is: can we really let our motivation die out now? The answer is: no, definitely not. From ninth graders to twelfth graders, students must not lose motivation. Not now at least... Senior students must continue to thrive in their classes and uphold their grades to ensure their entrance into university and successful graduation! Grade 11 students will have to continue to work hard this year up until the end of their graduation, due to the unpredictable university policies during pandemic times. Tenth graders, with absolutely no experience with exams, will have to study harder than ever during the rest of this year, the upcoming year, and maybe even during their senior

year! According to an NT freshman, they are “just confused by most things.” In all reality, no matter their grade, students will not be able to “stop studying, learning, and working” for the rest of their high school years because of the pandemic’s unpredictable nature. Switching from fully remote learning to hybrid learning has definitely thrown off many students. Having already gotten used to one type of learning and then suddenly having to switch back keeps students on their toes, but it gets tiring.

Experiencing so many different situations for all of the various grades has been a rollercoaster, and unfortunately, will probably continue to be a rollercoaster. With such an unpredictable

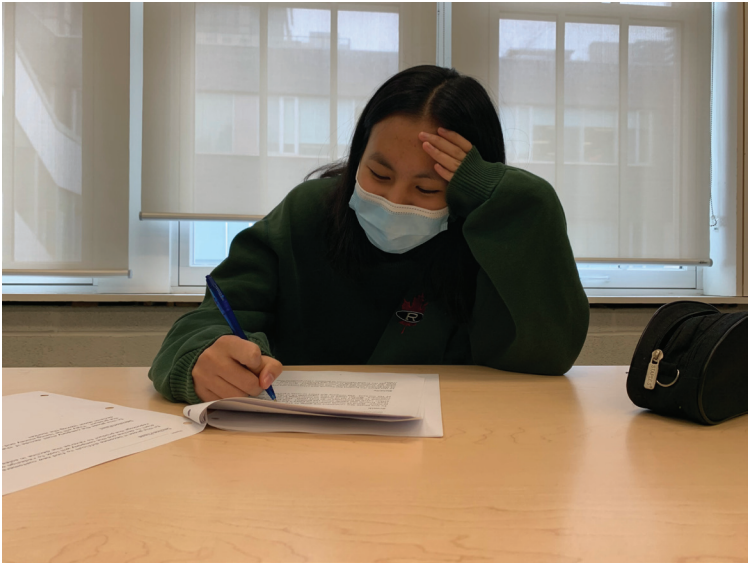


Photo by **Amanda Wilson**  
virus (I know you have heard this more than a million times), who’s to say what the next year or even the next month will look like? Maybe 12th graders might suddenly not have to work hard at all for the rest of the year, and grade 10s and 11s will end up drowning in work. Or, it may be quite the opposite. Nothing is set in stone, and therefore we all have a chance to do our best and face all that is to come in the future. Regardless of how burnt out you might feel, “a little progress each day adds up to big results.” ~Satya Nani.

EDUCATION

# March break: did Ontario make the right choice?

Many students have varying views on the subject after the Ministry of Education postponed March Break.

Janna Kazerani  
Contributor

“The Minister of Education announced [on the afternoon of February 11, 2021] that March Break—originally scheduled for March 15th to March 19th, 2021—has now been delayed by approximately a month in hopes of reducing community transmission of COVID-19.” That’s it. The decision was finalized, and thanks to COVID-19, students all across Ontario will now have a postponed March Break.

Typically, as the month of March neared, North Toronto C.I. staff and students would be ecstatic, knowing that a week long break would soon

be coming their way: a ticket to relax or even leave the city. Unfortunately, that is not a joy staff and students will be able to experience this year. For some students, it’s clear that even if March Break was kept for the initial time frame, there wouldn’t be nearly as much excitement as prior years, thanks to COVID-19. Grade 10 NT student Sophie Block says, “It’s not as if March Break would have been so exciting, for me, at least. I would have been bored at home, stuck with my siblings with little to do but go on short walks in the cold and watch Netflix.”

Based on last year’s events following March break—our endless quarantine and transfer to virtual learning—

perhaps the province has made the right choice. Postponing March Break was a decision made to prevent travel, which would lower the risk of COVID-19 cases in Ontario. This decision was made foreseeing that the reduced amount of COVID cases would allow schools to remain open, something that parents, teachers, and most students are hoping will become a reality once again. Following the announcement, Ontario’s Education Minister Steven Lecce stated that he “[recognizes] this is one more change in a year that has been challenging for so many students and [the] education staff, but “[...] it is [a decision] made on the best advice of public health officials to keep [students and staff] safe

and to keep [the] schools open in this province.” Grade 10 North Toronto student Violet East, who is, “desperate to have the chance to travel again,” has said that “[she] understand[s] [that] because of COVID-19, everyone has to deal with all sorts of restrictions, so if health officials say that the best decision is to delay the March Break for now, it probably is.”

Although it may have been the best choice for the province, how much longer will the population have to wait and suffer because of COVID-19? It has started to get better, thanks to the vaccine distribution, but will students ever be able to go back to a normal school year?



ADVICE

# Ask the Norsemen

Submit your questions of any topic to be featured in Graffiti’s advice column!

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Course Remorse-

**Question:** I started physics this quad with a spare and found it way too challenging. I ended up dropping it and now I feel like a failure and have a lot of regret. What can I do to feel better before the quad?

Dear anonymous,

First off, you’re certainly not a failure for dropping one class. This year has been tough on all of us and staying home and not being able to see our friends has definitely taken a toll on us and our mental health. Honestly, the best piece of advice I would give you is to brush it off. Things happen, we make decisions and we move on. As long as you tried I wouldn’t worry about it too much. If you have remorse about dropping the physical course, you can always try to take it outside of school or over the summer if you’re in grade eleven, or take it at a university, college or any other third-party institution if you’re in grade twelve.

Going forward, I would just concentrate on doing the best you can in your classes and maybe having a cleanse after taking tests to help you move on and focus on the next thing. I would also suggest really focusing on your mental health and trying to stay positive as much as you can until we get through all of this because, in my opinion, that is crucial to our situation. Dropping a course is certainly not the end of the world, and although you may feel frustrated about it now, in the long run, it will hardly be a blip on the radar.

The Norseman

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**Question:** I have a boyfriend, but other people are telling me that he’s flirting with other girls. He says he isn’t, but I’ve had multiple people tell me this. What do I do?

Dear Anonymous,

Hey! Okay first, make sure these sources are legitimate. From personal experience I know that people can make things up just to be messy. Second, is this the first time you’re having trouble believing your bf? Has he lied to you before? If so, it may be time to reevaluate your relationship. Red flags come in all forms and trust me you don’t want to ignore them. If you feel he isn’t being completely honest, have a conversation about it. Depending on how that goes, your solution will probably be much clearer. If he is after other girls and a polyamorous relationship isn’t on your agenda (or theirs), then it’s probably time to dip. Whatever you decide to do, just remember you deserve the world and never settle for anything less.

<3 the norsemen





# features

## EDUCATION

## How are teachers coping with online learning?

North Toronto teachers share their approaches to online learning.

**Janna Kazerani**  
Contributor

It's no shock that everyone has had to drastically change their school habits from in-person to virtual. It's straightforward for most, but when it comes to teachers and their experiences with technology-based education, their ability to adjust and adapt is greatly challenged.

One of North Toronto's math teachers, Mr. Chen, approaches online engagement by trying to relate to his students still and let them know that teachers care for their well-being. "I try to let students know that it's okay to be not okay. Especially with math, there will be times when there's frustration ... [but] I still try to instill perseverance and effort in the math class," says Mr. Chen. He also noted that he prefers to let students choose if they want their cameras on; unless they are taking a test, at which time he makes cameras mandatory. In regards to the biggest challenges he faces, Mr. Chen believes there's a lack of consistency throughout the courses he teaches. "I can't just assign students to read a chapter or watch a video; [math] needs to be cultivated, explored, and discussed, which is difficult to do in such a short time frame," he expresses. For him and all the other teachers, it has also been a major challenge to enhance student participation and social interaction.

Mr. Hobson, a history teacher, feels similarly, explaining that his biggest challenge is also maintaining personal connections with students so that they feel comfortable enough to participate. He doesn't believe there is any real absorption of knowledge without active participation from students. Mr. Hobson feels that one of the biggest challenges is the lack of focus and direction from the management of the TDSB, arguing that "there seem to be no contingency plans" and calling it a "haphazard mess." However, despite the difficulties, he believes it is a good thing to shake things up now and again. "I've been teaching for over twenty years now, so having to find new ways to do things has been exhilarating," says Mr. Hobson.

Gym teacher and swim team coach Ms. Chamberlain expressed that one thing was for certain; she has had to become incredibly more "tech-savvy" to accommodate online learning. When students are working asynchronously at home, she tries to give them a variety of tasks in the morning, followed by small evaluations in order to make them accountable for their learning.

Her biggest concern in this new form of teaching has been the isolation inherent in online learning. She went into teaching to interact and teach students in person, but this interaction is never the same over Google Meet and Zoom meetings. "I find the hesitancy students have to turn on their cameras frustrating too. I want to see them when I teach, see their reactions and get that feedback. I can see them looking puzzled or laughing... it is far more interactive and enjoyable," she expresses. Ms. Chamberlain believes that gym class is an excellent break from other more studious classes, but that it is difficult to maintain the importance of physical activity through virtual workouts.

Mr. Barnswell, an English teacher at North Toronto, is involved in numerous school clubs and teams. He says that the introduction of online learning hasn't altered his teaching

habits much, however, his interaction with the students has changed drastically. He says, "A lot of things which would normally be quick face-to-face discussions have become protracted email chains, where I'm probably a lot more direct and serious as opposed to being a little more lighthearted during in-person interactions."

Mr. Barnswell also mentioned that he attempts to "establish a sense of community" by acknowledging birthdays and accomplishments and engaging in small talk about non-school things happening in his students' lives, the world, and pop culture.

Teachers at North Toronto have varying rules regarding turning cameras on, but Mr. Barnswell allows people to remain with their cameras off, stating that, "I don't make my students use their cameras during virtual classes, but I try to encourage students to use them during presentations or

when they're in breakout rooms." He believes that as long as they can answer in some form or fashion when he calls out to them and they show some degree of engagement (chats, hands-up), a lack of a camera isn't the most pressing issue.

Due to COVID-19 and the changes it's made to education, teachers at NT are experiencing increased pressure and a severely rushed workload. On top of that, the technology they have to work with and adapt to has been an extra challenge. Teachers are putting in more effort to engage students and make this year better, but the new online learning platform has made this a serious challenge. While most teachers have found ways to adjust to this unprecedented method of teaching, the frustration and stress many students fail to acknowledge amongst teachers is present and far more intense than before.



Illustration by **Suhani Sharma**



CULTURE

# The plight of being mixed

In my family I am *mixed*, in pop culture I am *Wasian*, and on government-issued forms I am *biracial*.

Sian Huang  
Copy Editor

When I was six years old, my brother and I flew to Paris with our grandparents. I remember boarding the plane, settling into my seat, and proudly opening a package of Sour Patch Kids. But, what I remember the most was when the flight attendant asked my grandparents how old my brother and I were when they adopted us. I remember being confused. Why would my grandparents have adopted us? They were our grandparents. And their daughter was my mom. And I wasn't adopted. So, what would give her the idea that I wasn't their biological granddaughter? It took me a while to figure it out, but I soon realized something. I didn't look like them. I didn't have my grandfather's blue eyes or my mother's blonde hair. I had brown eyes, my hair was darker than theirs, my eyes looked different, but why?

People often ask me what my ethnicity is, and I tell them that I am half Chinese and half white. In my family I am *mixed*, in pop culture I am

*Wasian*, and on government-issued forms I am *biracial*.

When my parents got together in high school, many questioned their relationship as an interracial couple. Upon introduction, my maternal grandmother asked my father whether his father worked in a restaurant or a laundry, assuming that he, as an immigrant, would not be properly educated. My father politely corrected her and ensured that his father was a highly educated engineer and former military officer in Taiwan. Some people would approach my parents asking, "but what about the children?", troubled that their children wouldn't be one pure race. Against the deep concerns of some members of their community, my parents had my brother and me.

As I've grown up, I've never really felt like I belong with either side of my family. When I'm with my white side, I feel very Chinese, and when I'm with my Chinese side, I feel very white. I'm always an outlier. I feel that I exist somewhere in between the two cultures and values that my parents were raised with. My dad was raised in a strict, Catholic household with little independence as a child. In contrast, my mom was raised in a typical White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP)

household with many responsibilities at a young age.

On my Chinese side, my grandparents' and my dad's parenting views clashed. My grandparents were disappointed that my dad decided not to raise his children Catholic, and they were further disappointed when my dad let my brother and I quit Mandarin lessons. Meanwhile, my fully Chinese cousins were raised very religiously and are now fluent in Mandarin. My household is significantly less strict than my cousins' Chinese household and significantly less lenient than many of my friends' white households. This only greatedened the cultural divide between my Chinese side and my white side. My dad has faced criticism for being "whitized" by my mom and being influenced to raise his kids within the dominant culture. But in reality, my dad wanted my brother and me to fit into the dominant culture regardless of my mom's race, and it was my mom who wanted us to benefit from the rich Chinese culture in our heritage.

My brother and I fit into many of the stereotypes of both Chinese and white individuals. Following the stereotypes of Chinese kids, we began playing piano in kindergarten, started martial arts in grades 1 and 2, and both

have high academic expectations from our parents and of ourselves. On the other hand, we participate in various white-dominated activities, like ski racing. On the ski hill, fewer than 3% of the participants are people of colour. Similarly, my brother and I were the only white kids in our mandarin classes. Regardless of the activity, it's easy for us to feel out of place. I'm not recognized for my similarities, but for my racial differences. Some days, I'm the white girl; other days, I'm the Chinese girl. In a society that bases stereotypes and perceptions on race, it's hard to be in between two of them. I never know where I really belong.

Because I'm not one pure race, society has the right to tell me who I am. People like to make a game out of guessing my ethnicity. They assume that I'm adopted, that my mother isn't my mother, that my father isn't my father, and that my grandparents aren't my grandparents. No, I don't have my mom's blue eyes or my dad's black hair. Yes, I am that one Asian girl on the ski hill. Yes, I am that one white girl in the music theory classroom. I'm proud to be who I am and who I'm not.

Society always asks me *what* I am, and I've never really known. But, I know *who* I am. I am Sian.



Photos by Sian Huang



## CHERNOBYL ANNIVERSARY

# The story of uncertainty and anger told 35 years after the explosion

Witnesses of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster recount the terrifying events that unfolded 35 years ago.

**Sofiia Savchyn**  
Senior Advisor

It has been more than a quarter of a century, but the disaster on the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, near Pripyat, Ukraine, remains the ultimate evidence of the tragic consequence of human negligence.

On a Saturday night, 35 years ago, near a small town of Pripyat which was founded to serve the neighbouring power plant, an uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction set out in reactor №4 and ruptured its core in a highly destructive steam explosion. A miscommunication between the operators caused too many controller rods to be removed from the reactor core. This violation of the safety guidelines caused the reactor to become unstable and catalyzed the tragic chain of events. The initial blast caused an open-air reactor fire that roared for nine days before finally subsiding. For more than a week, the reactor released heavy airborne radioactive contamination that precipitated over parts of the USSR and Western Europe. In the weeks following the disaster, more than 117,000 people were evacuated from the 30 km radius around the power plant. They took nothing but the clothes on their backs, and even those were seized and disposed of later.

Vasiliy Krylov, 73, his wife, Galyna Krylova (now deceased), and their daughters, Nataliya and Ludmila Krylova, 45 and 38, lived in Kyiv Ukraine, in a small two-room communal apartment they shared with another family. On the faithful weekend of the catastrophe, Vasiliy was visiting his parents-in-law in Nova Krasnytsya, a village not more than 15 km away from Chernobyl. Nataliya, with her sister and mother, stayed in Kyiv. In a series of original interviews with Graffiti, Vasiliy and Nataliya shared their memories and experiences, expressing the personal caused by the world's worst nuclear disaster.

"I drove to Nova Krasnytsya on Friday after dark, a couple of hours before the accident. Maria, my mother-in-law, was born in that village, raised her children there, never lived anywhere else. It was a welcoming place, guarding forests, a river. Natasha, my oldest, caught her first fish in that river. Maria and [her husband] Semen kept cattle, ducks, chickens, and I often came to help to work the land. The shortest route went through Prip'yat, and that night I took it as usual. When I arrived, the fresh air knocked me out, and I slept like a baby. I couldn't imagine what was going on as I slept, that the town I just passed was already filled with radiation from the exploded reactor.

In the morning, there was no announcement, no news, no warnings, and everyone went about their regular tasks. In the afternoon, Maria's cousin



Vasyl Krylov and his family in front of their cottage in Nova Krasnytsya, 1985. [left to right] **Vasyl Krylov**, **Maria Vyshnevskaya** (mother-in-law), Raisa Vyshnevskaya (sister-in-law), Oleksandr (nephew), Olga Vyshnevskaya (sister-in-law), [sitting] **Nataliya Krylova** (daughter), [standing] Galyna Krylova (wife), **Semen Vyshnevsky** (father-in-law) holding Ludmila Krylova (daughter).

came by, concerned, he asked me if I could take his wife and children to Kyiv. He worked as a supply deliverer at Chernobyl. He didn't know much of what was going on but remained adamant in his plight. I agreed. The only other route out of the village was a huge detour, so we decided to go as I came, through Prip'yat. There were militia officers setting roadblocks on the way, but they didn't tell us why. We were lucky - we managed to go through. No one knew how much radiation, how much poison was already in the air. Every car, every building, every toy, every drop of water in that city was a silent killer. There was a river in Prip'yat right next to the power plant. As we were driving, I saw dozens of children splashing there, diving, laughing. It was a beautiful day."

"I was listening to a radio program in the kitchen; my mother ran in, telling me to close all the windows and stay inside. I was ten at the time and didn't know what was going on. I don't believe my mother was sure either. It was only by word of mouth people knew something was wrong with the air. No announcement was made, and the radio broadcasted its usual afternoon children's programs. It was a very hot day. Mother told me to stay put and look after my sister while she ran some errands. I waited in our room

for hours, and the dense and hot air accumulated in the room filled my lungs. I could hardly breathe."

Three days after the explosion, the government began a mass evacuation from the 30 km zone surrounding the Chernobyl Power Plant. The inhabitants of Nova Krasnytsya were one of the first ones to escape. Maria, Semen, and all their neighbours were ordered to leave all belongings behind. Their houses, livestock, and everything else they have acquired during their lives were deserted in an attempt to minimize radioactive contamination.

"My grandparents came to live with us in Kyiv after they were evacuated," recounted Nataliya. "In 1986 we all lived in a communal apartment; me, my sister, and my parents. It was a norm at the time; the government queue to obtain separate housing was years long. Fortunately, my mother managed to get the second room (out of the two in the flat) for my grandparents to live in before any new residents came. My grandma somehow managed to bring some things from Nova Krasnytsya. Plates, I think, a hideous set of them. Then my mother started to get sick. She became tired and weak, feverish at times. For the longest time, no one had any idea exactly how dangerous the situation was. People were scared, desperate to protect them-

selves, drinking bottles of iodine because it was said to help with radiation poisoning. To this day, all salt that's sold in Ukraine is Iodized salt. My mother was an incredible woman. She still worked long hours, took care of her parents, me and my sister. Eventually, her condition started to improve, and she did get rid of her mother's plates. I remember my grandparents were struggling, grandma Maria especially, but she has endured war and famine, and was determined to rebuild her life. They both passed away in the early 2000s, and neither of them ever got to visit Nova Krasnytsya ever again."

The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster on Saturday, April 26th, 1986, is known to be the world's worst nuclear accident. Its retells are brimmed with contamination updates, statistics, and death counts. However, to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the event, it is essential to recognize the individuals behind those numbers. Hundreds of thousands of families in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia have struggled through the years due to this tragedy. Many have lost their homes, livelihoods, and loved ones. To this day, the invisible force of destruction that escaped from the reactor №4 35 years ago continues to taunt those who have faced it.



COVID-19

# COVID-19 and relationships with grandparents

NT students share the experiences of their grandparents during COVID-19 and lockdowns.

*“My grandma called me just a couple of days ago to say she just wanted to call to hear my voice and tell me she missed me.”*

Courtesy of Blaize Exeter:

I haven't been able to hug my grandparents for about a year now. With-in that time, both of them have been admitted to the hospital for extended periods of time, and COVID-19 restrictions prevented me from visiting either of them. I think that the worst part of all of it was the feeling of helplessness. I literally couldn't do anything. I just had to sit there and hope for the best. Either one of them could have died and I wouldn't have even been able to say goodbye. Thankfully, they were both able to go home, but they're still extremely high risk. My grandma usually lives alone, but after her stroke, my aunt had to move in and take care of her. My aunt works as a real estate agent so there's a lot of risks there. During the weeks my brother and I are at our dad's house, so my mom steps in to give my aunt a break because even with the caretaker it's still a lot of work. My grandpa, on the other hand, lives with his (second) wife. He had a stroke a few years ago and his mobility has been decreasing ever since. The virus is only making his condition worse as going outside isn't encouraged. With all of that said, I'm grateful that my grandparents are still here as I know that's not the case for many.

*“On the odd occasion that we shovel their driveway or drop off groceries, it's painful to watch my grandmother cry through the window, heartbroken that she can't hug or embrace us.”*

Courtesy of Abigail Shin:

Before the pandemic, my grandparents always loved to have my extended family over at their house for whatever holiday was the nearest, so I think they have felt really lonely this past year. My grandparents were also very social with their church community, golf friends, and hiking buddies, but now it is just the two of them in their house. With our family, we try to do the group Zoom calls with them and bring back a little normalcy into our lives, however, for obvious reasons, it is not the same as before. I remember for my grandma's birthday we called her to sing happy birthday and as she blew out her candles, it hit me how sad I was that I was not there with her to give her a hug. My grandma called me just a couple of days ago to say she just wanted to call to hear my voice and tell me she missed me. It is hard not to give my grandparents a hug when we go drop off food or go to say hi, but keeping them safe is always the number one priority.

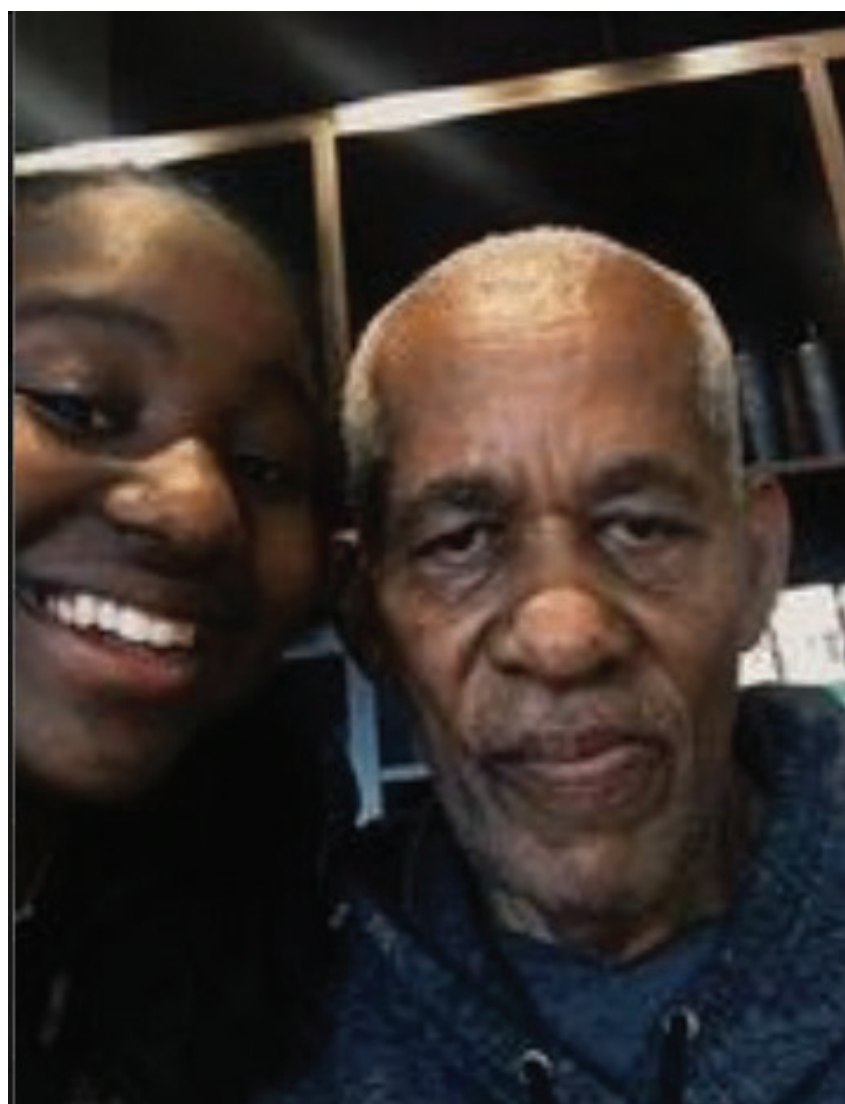


Photo by Blaize Exeter

Courtesy of Sian Huang:

My grandparents live by themselves at home, and COVID-19 has been really hard on them. With my grandmother's recent end of extensive chemotherapy and new onset of Parkinson's disease, she has gotten progressively weaker and struggles to perform daily tasks, sometimes unable to walk. COVID-19 has petrified her so much that she's too afraid to even get some fresh air in her backyard, so she spends her time cooped up inside her house. My family can rarely see her, which is really hard on everyone. We try to FaceTime and email my grandparents as much as possible, but it's often difficult to coordinate due to their lack of knowledge of how to use technology. On the odd occasion that we shovel their driveway or drop off groceries, it's painful to watch my grandmother cry through the window, heartbroken that she can't hug or embrace us.

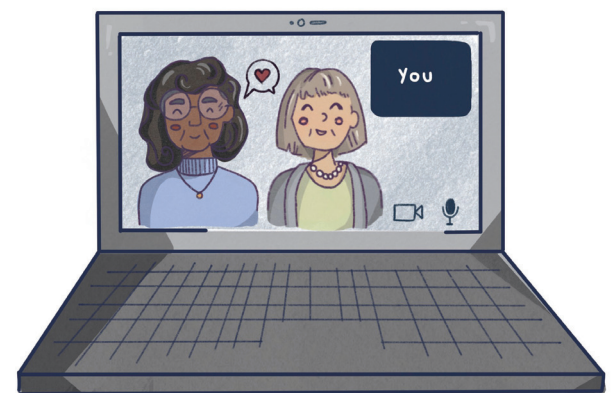
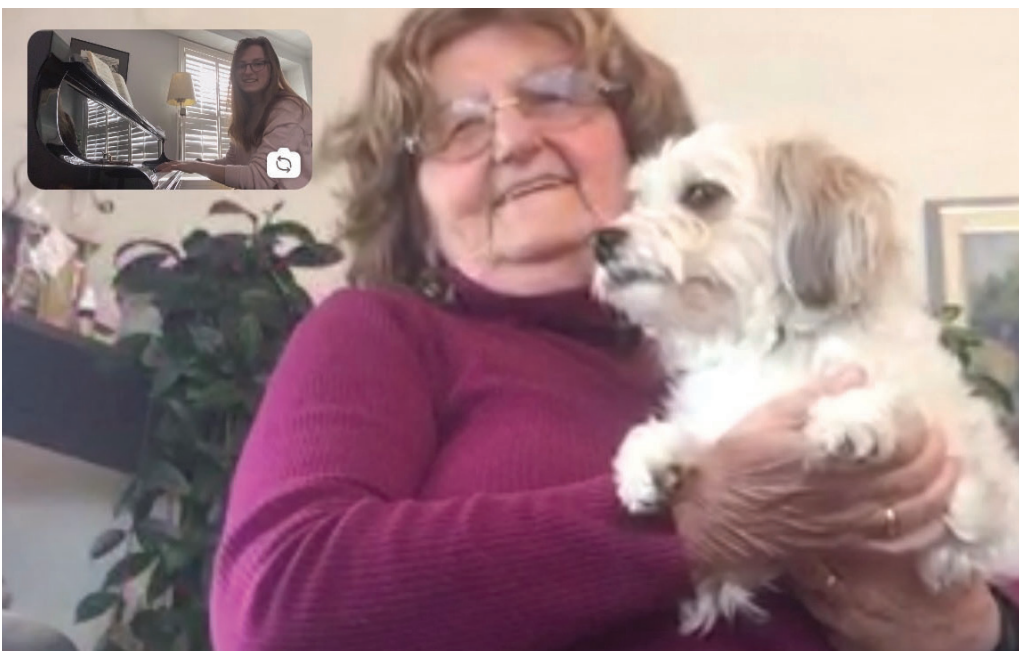



Photo by **Marina Papachristos**

Courtesy of Janna Kazerani:

I'm lucky enough to have my grandparents from both my mother's and father's sides of the family here in Toronto. It's something I had taken for granted; I could see them any day I wanted but now that chance is gone. My visits to them have either been cut down or digitalized, and it's all really unfortunate. Recently, my grandmother had to be hospitalized, thankfully nothing to do with COVID-19, but she had to stay in a Toronto hospital for nearly a week. The panic and anxiety running through my entire family was frightening. Everyone was hoping she would get better soon, without contracting COVID-19. As much angst that was imposed on us, I think my grandfather had it the worst. We'd invite him over so he wouldn't be lonely at his home, and it was devastating, seeing a 90-year-old man break down into tears because he didn't know if his wife would safely leave the hospital. Fortunately, after several days of worry, my grandmother was released. She's doing a lot better now but is mostly resting in her bed, weak and tired. COVID-19 has really made an impact on all our lives, and I think I speak for everyone when I say that I hope it ends soon.

*“It’s something I had taken for granted; I could see them any day I wanted but now that chance is gone.”*


Illustration by **Baran Forootan**

Photo by **Iva-Mari Miskulin**

Courtesy of Inessa Azoyan:

My grandmother got COVID-19 and technically recovered, but she was left with countless long-term issues that will likely never be resolved. The virus also worsened her pre-existing health issues and made them significantly more dangerous. Because of those issues, she's now in the hospital, and strict COVID-19 restrictions mean that no one is allowed to be there with her. As is the case with countless families, it's really hard as she is there all alone and FaceTime is her only source of communication.

Courtesy of Iva-Mari Miskulin:

All my grandparents live halfway across the world, in Europe. I haven't seen them in over a year and it doesn't look like I'll be seeing them anytime soon. We usually travel to see them every summer, and my family was lucky enough to be able to visit them in December 2019, but with cases on the rise and vaccinations not looking to start anytime soon, it may be another year until I get to give them a hug. I am worried that they won't be able to take the solitude and even though we video chat fairly often, it is never the same. Church was a big part of their lives and it has been a battle to convince them to stay home and protect themselves. I miss them all and just want to spend some more happy moments together, to laugh and be together. Nothing is harder than losing a family member during COVID-19, especially not being able to say goodbye and grieve with others. I am hopeful that with patience we will be able to travel safely very soon.

*“As is the case with countless families, it’s really hard as she is there all alone and FaceTime is her only source of communication.”*



SCANDAL

# Secrets, blood, and fraud

Once the world’s youngest self-made female billionaire, Elizabeth Holmes now faces up to 20 years in prison after her multi-billion dollar company Theranos was exposed to be fraudulent.

Abigail Shin  
Section Editor

Facebook, Google, and Apple are three of the many powerful companies that have influenced the world in unimaginable ways and arguably have changed the lives of billions of people around the world for the better. But what happens when innovation turns into a game to win fame and fortune? Elizabeth Holmes is an example of someone who put forth an idea that could have changed the world, gone wrong. Growing up, she was described as a driven, bright and determined child. In 2002, Holmes attended Stanford University, only to drop out a year later in 2003. After her departure from Stanford, she founded Theranos, a biotechnology company that claimed it could conduct blood tests through a machine called the “Edison”. Theranos claimed that it could conduct over 240 blood tests for diseases like herpes with just a small single drop of blood. These blood tests were supposed to be painless, cheaper, and more accessible to people all over the world. Over the next 10 years, Theranos ran successfully, garnering millions of dollars in investments and making Holmes the world’s youngest female billionaire at the time. Despite all of the high praise and acclaim, Holmes and her company came crashing down in 2015 when all of Theranos’ revolutionary claims were found to be false. All company operations were shut down and now, Elizabeth Holmes and former COO Ramesh “Sunny” Balwani face up to 20 years in prison.

Even before Holmes’ founded Theranos, her ideas were so innovative, they seemed implausible. From Holmes’ first day at Stanford University in 2002, she desired to change the world of biotechnology. Dr. Phyllis Gardner, a Professor of Medicine at Stanford, remembers one time when Holmes approached her with an idea to build a medical patch. Holmes wanted a patch that would scan a patient for any diseases and then administer an antibiotic for that disease through the patch. Ingenious and inventive, but almost physically impossible. Dr. Gardner voiced her concerns; however, this did not stop Holmes.

By 2003, just one year later, she dropped out of Stanford at 19 years old and founded Theranos, or “Real Time Cures” as it was known at the time. Even over a decade ago, Theranos’ ideas were not fully developed, and when Theranos’ Chief Financial Officer Henry Mosley questioned the reliability of its technology and the honesty of the company in 2006, he was fired.

During the operating time of Theranos, Holmes garnered high-end investors and made deals with multi-million-dollar companies. Theranos had investors and supporters like Henry Kissinger, the former United States Secretary of State and National Security Advisor; Walmart founders the Walton family; and Robert Murdoch, a billionaire media mogul. High-profile

business powerhouses were convinced by a woman with minimal education to invest millions of dollars into a technology that did not yet exist.

Yet, over time, the trust these investors had in Elizabeth slowly faded away. In 2015, Wall Street Journal journalist John Carreyrou published an exposé on the secrecy and lies surrounding Theranos and the company’s reputation as an upstanding, innovative corporation began to fall apart. After the collapse of Theranos, the Wall Street Journal reported that several high-end investors lost more than \$600 million due to the company’s closure and that previous investments into the company “now are essentially worthless”.

From the beginning, Holmes claimed to investors and the public that Theranos technology was producing accurate results as well as having an excellent financial position. Holmes and Balwani defrauded the public by claiming that they could produce accurate, fast, and reliable blood tests while omitting the concerning problems with the blood testing technology. Holmes consistently reported false information to investors and the public about her revolutionary company,

despite being fully aware that operations were not going as planned.

Theranos also had a consistent pattern of high-profile employees leaving due to the faulty technology and Holmes not providing a solution or listening to the concerns. Countless ex-Theranos employees have described the culture of secrecy that existed within the company. Ana Arriola, a former Apple product designer and Theranos employee, said that Holmes did not want to hear other people’s opinions and that if you “disagreed with her perspective and point of view, you were immediately terminated.” Another employee named Avie Tevanian, the former right-hand to Steve Jobs and software leader of Mac OS X, said that Holmes often gave him non-answers when he asked her about the specifics of Theranos’ technology. Through Walgreens, Theranos sold over 1.5 million blood tests that yielded 7.8 million test results for over 176 000 customers. Court documents state that 1 in 10 tests was either voided or revisited and now former patients are pursuing personal cases against the company. One patient claimed that Theranos technology incorrectly diagnosed her with Sjögren’s syndrome,

an autoimmune disease. After this diagnosis, she consulted a doctor who confirmed that the test results were, in fact, false. Another patient said that Theranos’ testing diagnosed her with Hashimoto’s disease, a thyroid condition, and when she was re-tested, she did not have such a condition. Theranos not only conned millions of dollars out of billionaires but also put the lives of Americans at risk.

During the early years of Theranos, Elizabeth Holmes was often called the female Steve Jobs, but now she is considered a sophisticated con artist who risked her reputation and the lives of others for fame and fortune.

In July 2021, one of the most high-profile trials will begin as Holmes will stand trial after being accused on accounts of wire fraud and attempting to commit wire fraud.

More information about the history of this ongoing story can be found on the podcast “The Dropout” by Rebecca Jarvis and in “Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup” by John Carreyrou.



Illustration by Kiana Sharifi



UNIVERSITY

# Financial barriers to post-secondary

The invisible challenges that hold low-income students back from university.

**Maeve Ellis**  
Editor in Chief

Canada is known for its world-renowned education system. According to Statistics Canada, more than 300,000 international students came to Canada in 2019 and, in 2016, the same source found that 54% of Canadians were college or university graduates. These statistics may show how great Canada’s education system is, especially in comparison with the United States, but many are still unaware of the post-secondary education barriers that exist for students from low-income families.

Students from families with a yearly salary of \$100,000 or more are twice as likely to attend university than those from families that earn less than \$25,000, as reported by Policy Alternatives Canada. The Canadian Council of Learning says, “Students from families with no history of post-secondary education—or first-generation students—are less likely than their peers to pursue post-secondary studies. In particular, young adults whose parents attended university are much more likely to go on to university compared to those whose parents did not attend university.”

So, what’s causing this discrepancy? Ask most people what they think is barring low-income students from university and you’ll hear the same answer: tuition fees. The average annual cost of university tuition in Canada rose by 40% from 2006 to 2016 when the average student paid \$6,373, according to Global News. While it’s true that tuition fees play a role in creating these barriers, it isn’t the only reason so many students do not pursue post-secondary education. Even with massive debt weighing on students’ shoulders, they are still almost guaranteed to pay it off and then some. A longitudinal study from Statistics Canada has found that over 20 years after graduation from university, women on average earn \$442,000 more and men earn \$728,000 more than those who did not get that sort of degree. Also, the Ontario government’s OSAP program provides the easiest access for scholarships and bursaries compared to other areas of the world. In an interview with Ryan Kennery, a



Photo by Maeve Ellis

representative of Universities Canada, he said that “[w]hile undergraduate tuition has only increased by 9% over the past decade, universities’ contribution to student aid has increased by 60% in the same period.”

But, after analyzing this issue through research, articles, and discussions with professionals and teachers, it’s clear that the blockades that stop our university system from becoming more meritocratic don’t jump out of a page like a pricey tuition does. In reality, they are much less easy to spot and much more ingrained in the system. Some of many that were uncovered included application fees, extracurriculars, demotivation, and preferential treatment.

For instance, one barrier is not the presumed large tuition fee, but all the little costs that add up along the way when pursuing post-secondary education. According to the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre’s (OUAC) Website, the minimum fee any student has to pay to apply to any university in Ontario is \$150. While this may not seem like a lot to the families of many North Toronto students, it can discourage others to even apply. According to CTV News, 46% of families in Canada are \$200 or less from financial insol-

veny. It is unclear, however, if the government is responsible for setting this fee. A spokesperson for Ontario’s Ministry of Colleges and Universities told Graffiti that, “OUAC is responsible for determining their application fees and policies. The ministry has no oversight over OUAC policies.” On the other hand, the member of provincial parliament, Faisal Hassan, who is also the NDP Critic for Youth Opportunity, said to Graffiti in a video interview, “We can actually waive [the OUAC application fee] because we can say there may be administrative purposes in doing it; why don’t we give them government funding to process that, and not ask that student? That’s another way we can do it.” Coupled with other scholarship application fees, mandatory down payments, and other little costs, application fees can result in an insurmountable bill.

Another barrier comes in the form of extracurriculars, which are looked at for most scholarships and admittance to specific programs. According to a study called Voices in Urban Education, from Brown University, “the rising costs of sports teams and school clubs, combined with parents’ uncertain work schedules and precarious household budgets, have made extracurricular activities a luxury they can’t afford.” Similarly, Statistics Canada reports, “Among 14 to 17-year-olds, those from the highest income families were more likely to take part in non-sport activities than were youth from the lowest income families.” Victoria Carlisle, an English teacher at North Toronto Collegiate Institute, said that when it comes to having to do extracurriculars, she does think that “people are put at a disadvantage if they have to work.”

On the other hand, this challenge of working during high school may assist disadvantaged students. Ms. Carlisle also said that “I did extracurriculars, in high school, until I reached Grade 11 and 12 and then I had to start working, but I found that I was able to fill my applications for university with

experiences and things that I learned from that.” With many special programs, especially those in STEM fields, it may be inadvertently beneficial for those who are pushed into developing real-life skills.

There are also barriers for people from financially comfortable homes, but who still need financial help for their tuition, because their parents won’t contribute to their education. The systems that are in place do not seem to make the process of applying any easier. The OUAC website says that “you must request information about scholarships, bursaries and financial aid directly from each university. There is no centralized financial service in Ontario, and each university offers different levels of assistance.”

Those who want to attend university in the United States are faced with other challenges, such as relatives of alumni getting preferential treatment through “legacy scholarships.” According to the American researcher Richard D. Kahlenberg, almost three-quarters of research universities and nearly all liberal arts colleges grant legacy preferences in admissions. As well, the New York Times says that being the child of a previous attendee of a university increases one’s chances of getting in by 20%. A lot of media attention is dedicated to a university’s actions to diversify and counterbalance racism, but this injustice and nepotism of legacy scholarships are largely unreported.

While the barriers in Canada for many people looking into pursuing post-secondary education are far more subverted, they are indeed ingrained, and more prevalent than what most people imagine. Fixing these problems takes a lot more than just looking at the big picture of tuition fees. Smaller problems, like application fees, extracurriculars, demotivation, and preferential treatment, add up to the real barriers that stop us from achieving a fully meritocratic system.

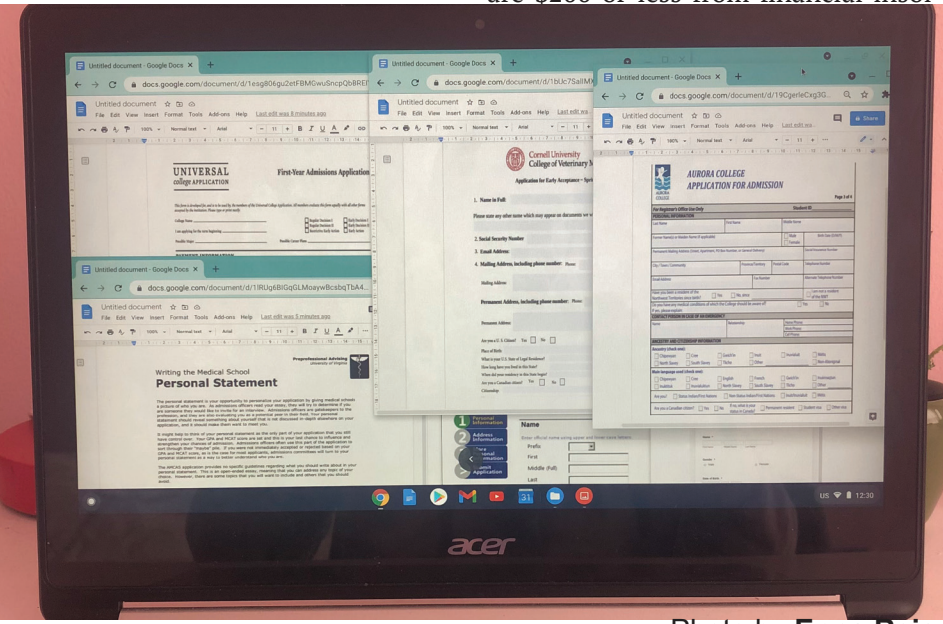


Photo by Enna Rejc



## TRAVEL

# The year which changed the travel industry forever

A frequent traveller shares her COVID-travelling experiences and addresses some of the concerns surrounding travelling during a pandemic.

**Georgia Pomozova-Mann**  
Social Media Manager

Due to COVID-19, many Canadians are afraid to leave their homes, cities, and countries, fearing the possibility of contracting the virus. Many people who had travelled often during pre-pandemic times are now unable to do so, and countless Canadians have opted for cottage get-aways and homey staycations instead of venturing on trips outside the province. The general consensus towards travelling seems to be the same: stop travelling. Less discussed, though, are the opinions from those who decided to make the seemingly fateful decision of leaving the country.

If you know me, then you've probably heard my fun-fact statement at least once before: I've been to 46 countries. Travelling is a part of my life, but, since last March, six of my trips have been cancelled. Fortunately, two of them were still able to go through. In October of 2020, my mother and I took a "risk" and went on a one-week trip to a resort in the Mayan Riviera jungle, and we left the country once again for a beachy get-away in Aruba during November. Despite the pandemic surrounding us, we always felt safe with the COVID-19 precautions and safety measures set in place.

Now you may be wondering, why? Well, when considering the many measures put in place to ensure our health and safety, there weren't any opportunities for us to contract the virus. Throughout our airport visits and plane flights, COVID-19 rules were heavily enforced; social distancing both in the air and on the ground, masks on at all times, hand sanitizer stations all around, constant air circulation, and more. I spent more of my time pondering over the fact that I was stuck in a flying tube soaring thousands of feet in the sky than over a global pandemic. The places we travelled to had up to five times fewer cases than the city of Toronto itself and they opened their countries to visitors with open arms.

There was never a point where we feared for our health, as the precautionary measures were ample. During our trip to Aruba, we were isolated on an island that required a negative COVID-19 test prior to entry. Though this may not have been the case for our vacation to Mexico, our resort enforced precautionary measures that we had never even considered before: bags being sanitized prior to vehicle entry, wearing masks on a water-bound zipline, air sanitizers, and much more. Upon our arrival back to Canada, we quarantined for the required 14 days. Despite the fears of those back home, I felt safer on a private hammock in my Aruban condo than standing in the express checkout line at a Loblaws.

Despite the fact that we had left Canadian territory for less than

24-hours on a short-lived visit to Portugal in October, we were still required to spend two weeks in isolation. Though it is understandable that many have fears when it comes to travelling right now, it's necessary to consider that it's actually quite safe in comparison to many of our day-to-day tasks. If someone who was actively travelling were to be infected with the virus, it is very unlikely that the virus would be carried back to their home country as they'd be tested and quarantined before it got the chance to spread.

Perhaps one of the reasons the countries we travelled to were so eager to have tourists was that their economies, unlike many parts of Canada, relied strictly on tourism. During our two full trips, we spoke to many locals on the topic of what they thought about tourism at this time. All of our questions and conversations were of positive response and featured a similar verdict: travellers were needed. During the March to June period in 2020, when few were bold enough to leave

their countries and were faced with full lockdowns, the economies of these countries faced heavy challenges. As a result, workers in the tourism-industry were faced with the harsh realities of the emptiness. As restrictions were eased, their plateauing lives began back onto an upward trajectory. The workers of the tourism industry relied on the return of travellers and needed their aid to survive financially and provide for their families. While many may argue that travelling internationally risks the lives of locals, doing the opposite only makes things worse. With the many restrictions and safety measures put in place, the citizens of these countries were happy to see the slow return of international travellers.

So, from the perspective of a COVID-traveller, my verdict is this: travelling during these times is what you make of it. It's important to always weigh the risks of what you're doing. We were aware that there was still a risk of contracting the virus, but we also took into consideration that the

precautions we would follow would result in a limited chance of us getting sick. Unlike some of my other travelling peers, the places I went to had very strong COVID-19 health measures which further diminished any of my concerns over being away from Canada. Acknowledging the concerns of others is always important, especially during this time, but it's also equally crucial to look over facts, statistics, and the many safety precautions.

I believe that travelling during this time is not as scary as it seems and I truly wish to go back to the beautiful places I visit. There's no right or wrong answer to "should you travel during a pandemic", but instead a variety of answers depending on the circumstances of people's lives and the level of their safety and comfort. Of course, my perspective differs from that of other people, but I hope to create a more positive mindset surrounding the now-difficult topic of travelling - especially as we slowly ease back into "normal" life.

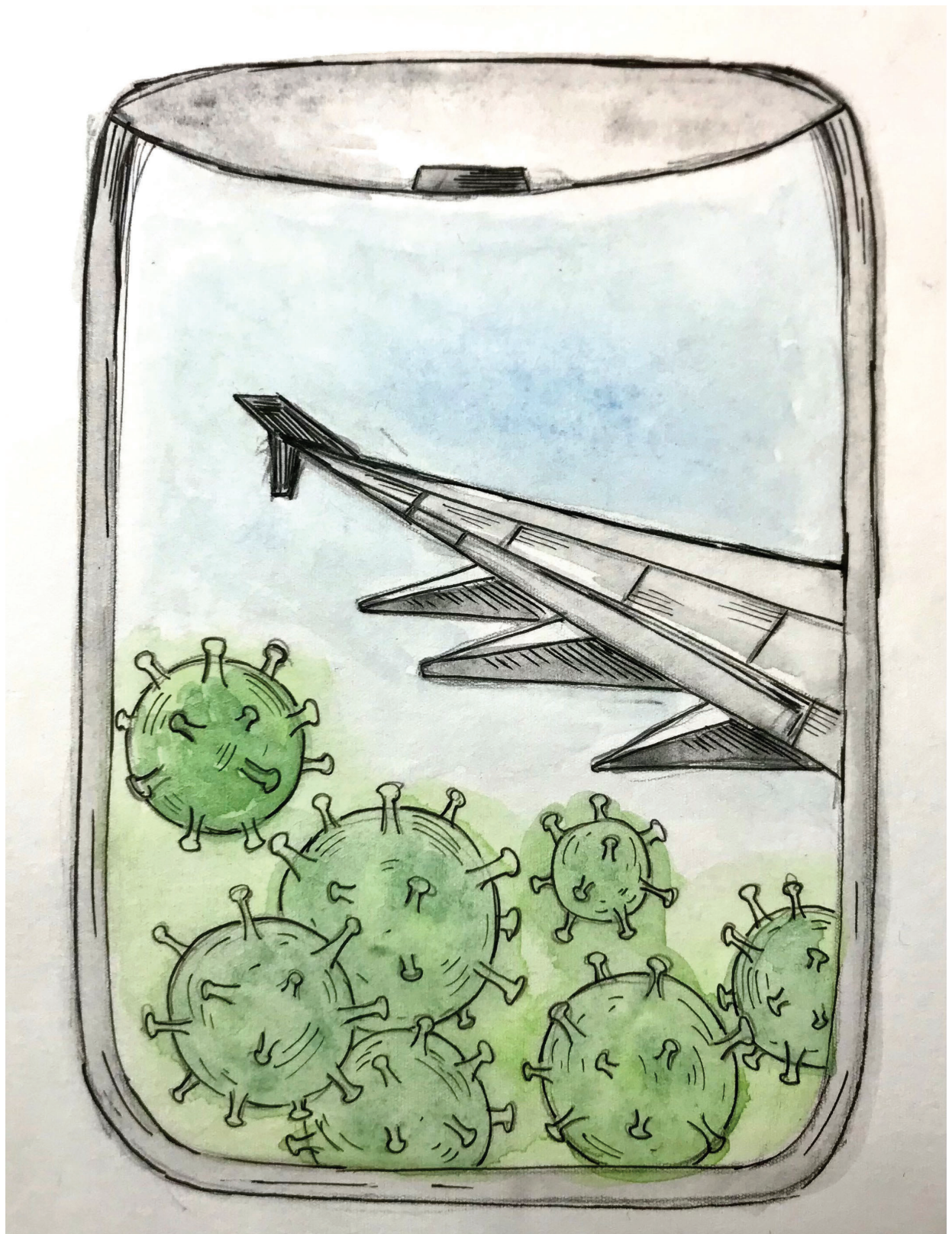


Illustration by **Danielle Xin**





# business & tech

COVID-19

## The confinement of the Coronavirus's placebo vaccine

Vaccination volunteers and their selflessness has greatly aided the development COVID-19 vaccines that will save many lives.

**Zoya Diaz**  
Contributor

After over a year of the COVID-19 pandemic plaguing our society and months of waiting, a vaccine has finally been released and distributed. When news about the vaccine began to appear throughout the headlines of every news site, the medical term “placebo” came along with it. The word placebo, which in this case is associated with the vaccine, is an inactive substance with no medicinal value that is commonly used in scientific trials for new drugs. These trials are very similar to the ones for the COVID vaccine testing process, as they both involve an experimental group and a control group; the experimental group receiving the actual vaccine, and the latter receiving the placebo. Neither group is being informed of which substance they are receiving to prevent any bias arising from the experiment. Receiving medical treatment from a doctor has psychological influence on a patient, therefore the placebo is essential to avoid any false data from an ineffective vaccine. The reaction to the placebo drug and the reaction to the actual drug are then compared; if both drugs have the same effect, it is likely that the real drug is ineffective and needs to be modified. However, this would not be possible without the tens of thousands of

people who have selflessly volunteered to test out the safety of the drug despite the potentially dangerous side effects. Nevertheless, with the significant amount of volunteers, it compels one to think, what motivates people to participate in clinical trials? Many people who are at high risk of contracting the virus will want to take the vaccine as soon as possible to ensure their safety. This is why some will volunteer for testing, on the off chance of being placed in the experimental group and receive the actual vaccine. One of the patients, Danielle Askin, age 37, was dealing with her own health issues before her participation in clinical trials. Askin, a participant in a clinical trial for arthritis was in search of a working treatment due to her own diagnosis, she explains her journey by expressing “I really enjoy having access to such high quality healthcare”. However, in some cases such as the coronavirus trial, this can be a problematic situation since the majority of volunteers are people at high risk, meaning that a significant section of the placebo group will be needing to take the actual vaccine soon. Therefore, once they do, all long term data for the placebo group is lost. The paradox of taking the placebo and being at high risk is an unfortunate circumstance because of this group's desire to take the vaccine afterwards. That is what makes clinical

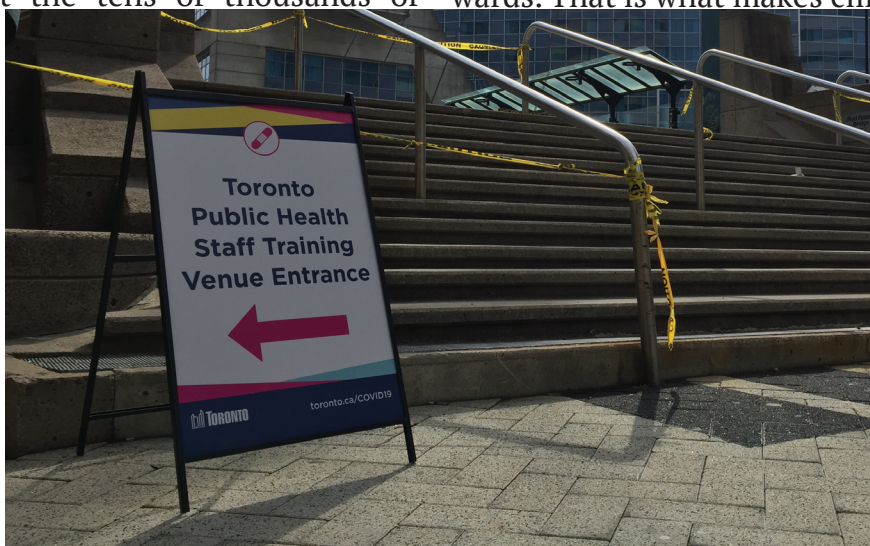
cal trials so complicated, not to mention, the unethical clinical trials that are unfortunately still a popular occurrence. For instance, in 2013 during the rotavirus outbreak in India, 2000 out of 6000 young children received a saline solution instead of a working vaccine. Every one of these children had developed the virus and were in dire need of care. However, the vaccine that all 2000 children desperately needed was kept from them as a way to protect the experiment. Hence, not only did the clinic harm 2000 children but had also violated the ethical standards attached to these experiments.

Moreover, citizens not receiving the vaccine when in dire need of it has also been prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic. With most volunteers for the testing of the COVID-19 vaccine being at high risk for the virus, these individuals should be least suited as volunteers because of the possibility of receiving a placebo. Furthermore, some clinical trials request healthy volunteers, as they greatly benefit the testing by speeding up the development process. Karen Mott, a 56 year old, and now healthy candidate says “it was my way of giving back”, when explaining her reasoning for volunteering for the Moderna COVID-19 study for so long. Mott expressed her experience of having to take prescription drugs for half of her life, and exemplified gratitude towards the people who volunteered for testing that helped cure her previous illness. Ultimately, volunteering can be an extremely rewarding experience through the knowledge that volunteers are helping others, much like themselves, to receive proper treatment.

Another group of people who make up the candidates for the clinical trials have signed up to partake in studies for the long run. Doctors suspect that these people are the skeptics

and conspirists of the lot, they have the vaccine rumours to thank for the long term data they will accumulate from these participants. Despite this, the rumours around the vaccine are ultimately harmful towards the vaccine development, and people's safety. Misconceptions about the vaccine have been circulating ever since their release announcements. Many people are afraid to take the vaccine because of the horror stories of altered DNA and microchip implantation heard from their colleagues, friends, and family. These rumours, however, have been debunked because of the clinical trial volunteers. The tens of thousands of people who have tested the vaccine for the clinical trial have come back unaltered with nothing in their system but the solution they were injected with, and therefore have done their part to hopefully restore much of the skeptics' faith in the COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccines have been proven to save people's lives. Hence, the distribution of vaccines are of the utmost importance; especially if they are to be administered to potentially high-risk patients. Canada's plan to minimize the impact of the virus is to restore the safety measures of last year's lockdown until the majority of the country is vaccinated. Keeping this pandemic under control is difficult because of the unpredictability of the virus, yet we find ourselves relying on the vaccine to overpower the virus. COVID-19 has negatively impacted communities world-wide from the economy, to our physical well being, and mental health, therefore vaccination volunteers and placebo vaccines are the heroes of this story. Their contributions and participation is what will develop the COVID-19 vaccine, which will ultimately defeat the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.



TO COVID-19 test centre preparing for their first dosage of vaccines for seniors. Photo by **Nathalie Adriana Funes Serna**



## COVID-19

# COVID-19 variants

What professionals think of the COVID-19 mutations and the help of the vaccine in combating them.

**Hailey Wong**  
Contributor

As the first reported COVID-19 case in Canada reached its one-year mark on January 25, 2020, an increasing number of health experts have raised their concerns regarding the new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The new “variants of concern” have spread to 10 Canadian provinces, with the majority of the cases being in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, as of February 19, 2021. Nevertheless, there have been no reported positive cases in the territories of Canada.

## How are variants made?

By nature, viruses frequently change through mutation, especially those made up of the nucleic acid RNA, including influenza and coronavirus. Coronavirus, the virus in COVID-19, is derived from the Latin word for crown, referring to the crown-like spikes on the virus’ surface. These viruses are incapable of duplicating on their own and rely on other protein-making cells to spread. Once the virus enters the body, most commonly through the nose or mouth, the crown-like spikes attach to a protein on the body cells called the ACE2 receptor, and create a chemical change that allows the RNA to enter the cell. The virus then uses this genetic material and reassigns the proteins to create thousands of copies of itself, further spreading to other healthy cells.

It is possible for this copying process to have errors, which result in the creation of mutations. As the number of people infected increases, so does the likelihood of mutations to occur. Since it was first discovered, there have been thousands of mutations of the virus, but these “passenger” mutations were not considered any more of a threat than the prominent COVID-19 virus. “They don’t change the behaviour of the virus, they are just carried along” explains Dr. Lucy van Drop, a geneticist at University College London. In most cases, these mutations do not alter significantly how the virus is transmitted and go undetected. However, with millions of people becoming in-

fected and hosting the copying process, a significant error within the genetic code is bound to occur. A variant is identified when enough mutations occur to modify a minor section of the virus’ genetic code.

## How are the variants different from COVID-19?

Experts are still within the early stages of research for each variant. However, current evidence suggests that the new variant strains may be more transmissible than even COVID-19 itself. Changes in the virus’ spike protein determine many aspects of the variant, including its efficiency and effectiveness. This spike protein layer uses the body’s ACE2 receptor as a way for the virus to enter human cells and begin the copying process. The easier it is for the virus to attach to the receptor, the more efficient it is at spreading.

In contrast to transmissibility, there is no clear evidence on whether the new strains can cause more harm to the human body than the current COVID-19 virus. However, the variants present similar symptoms to those that have COVID-19. Research conducted in the United Kingdom reports that those who tested positive for the strain are more likely to experience COVID-19 symptoms including fever, cough, high temperatures, shortness of breath, fatigue, and sore throat. However, a smaller percentage of people with the variant reported a loss of taste and/or smell. Similar to the common COVID-19 virus, those with the variant can also be asymptomatic and may not experience any changes to their health even if they test positive for the virus.

## What are the variants of concerns?

Experts have identified three significant changes within the virus’ genetic sequence. These strains have spread globally, and are known as “variants of concern” according to the World Health Organization.

The first variant that emerged in the United Kingdom has been identified as B.1.1.7, appearing after several mutations spread since September 2020. Although more research must confirm these findings, studies conducted by experts in the United Kingdom sug-

gest that this variant may carry a higher death risk. In fact, 22 coding changes within the virus’ genetic sequence show that B.1.1.7 may also be 30-70% more transmissible than the common COVID-19 virus.

Independently emerging from B.1.1.7 in South Africa, another variant has been identified as B.1.351. This variant was originally detected in early October 2020 and shares some mutations with B.1.1.7. As of January 19, 2021, this variant has spread to 5 of the 13 Canadian provinces and territories.

A variant identified as P.1. was first identified in early January 2021 with travellers from Brazil being tested for routine screening at an airport in Japan. This variant’s set of additional mutations may affect the ability of antibodies in vaccines to recognize it. As of March 4, 2021, Canada has 3 positive cases of this variant, all of which are located in Ontario.

## How will the variants affect vaccinations?

Both COVID-19 vaccines being used in Canada, Pfizer and Moderna, are under the category of mRNA vaccines. These vaccines provide instructions to cells on how to make the same, yet harmless, piece of the spike protein from the COVID-19 virus. After the protein is displayed on the cell’s surface, the immune system begins to create antibodies as an immune response. These vaccines train our bodies on how to respond against future infections.

Studies were conducted when developing a virus with the same mutations as the South African B.1.351 variant. The studies ultimately tested with blood taken from those who received the Pfizer vaccine. Results showed a two-thirds reduction in the level of antibody neutralization, in comparison with its effect on the COVID-19 virus. However, the level of antibodies needed to be protected from and to combat the virus is not yet known. Researchers have yet to determine whether the two-thirds reduction will make the vaccine ineffective against the variant, though it is unlikely. Both single doses of Pfizer and Moderna have lower antibody responses than the variant. Yet, both vaccines were still able to present some defense against

the virus.

Although the high number of genetic changes in the United Kingdom’s variant is raising concerns, early research suggests that antibodies created from the Pfizer vaccine are able to recognize and neutralize B.1.1.7. While the additional set of mutations in the Brazilian variant, P.1, may affect the antibodies’ ability to recognize this variant. However, there is not enough evidence yet to determine if the effects are significant enough in declaring the vaccine ineffective.

More research is needed to fully understand the impacts of variants on the effectiveness of vaccines that are currently being administered throughout Canada. If vaccines are not as effective against the new variants, they are still able to protect the body from severe diseases and death which health experts say are the most important factors.

## Preventing the spread

Although evidence suggests that the new variants spread more easily, they are nonetheless transmitted the same way as COVID-19, from person to person. Using the same preventative measures is effective in warding off these variants. However, the new variants are more efficient at taking advantage of any relaxation to those measures. Precautions that will help limit the spread of both COVID-19 and its new variants include wearing a mask, washing your hands, practicing physical distancing, avoiding crowds, getting tested if you have any symptoms, and following all public health guidelines. Experts predict that with current restrictions and lockdowns, national Canadian cases are expected to reach rates of 10,000 cases per day by the end of March. If restrictions are relaxed and more areas are lifted from lockdown, cases are expected to increase to 20,000 per day by mid-March. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy Infectious Diseases states, “Viruses cannot mutate if they don’t replicate, and if you stop their replication by vaccinating widely and not giving the virus an open playing field to continue to respond to the pressures that you put on it, you will not get mutations.”



## VIDEO GAMES

# The GameStop controversy

GameStop's unexpected increase in stock value demonstrates the unpredictability and changeability of the stock market.

**Romina Emtyazi**  
Section Editor

On January 27th, 2021, GameStop Corporations, a video game retailer company headlined news after its stock value unexpectedly skyrocketed. The estimation of this increase was around 1,500 percent, with its individual share value reaching an unprecedented US\$ 438.

The main reason why this growth was so unpredictable is that GameStop has been experiencing trouble in sales since late 2016 when gamers largely switched to buying video games online, resulting in a sharp decline of in-store purchases. In April 2020, the GameStop stock hit an all-time low in share value, with the stock price plummeting at US\$ 2.80, leading many to believe that the company was on its way to bankruptcy. Therefore, this event makes one wonder; what led to this unusual increase and why did it become so controversial?

Similar to many companies that go through a period of adversity, GameStop was the victim of a phenomenon called 'short-selling'. Simply put, short-selling is when professional investors bet that a company will fail. These investors, known as short-sellers, borrow relatively low-priced stock shares belonging to troubled companies through brokerage firms; only to sell and place the earned money in hedge-funds. (Hedge funds are pools of money used by sophisticated investors that can absorb significant losses during risky tradings.) Then, when the value of the stock goes down, they buy the stock back to return them. This strategy allows short-sellers to profit off of the difference. On the other hand, if the stock rises by the time it has to be returned to the brokers, it results in losses for the investors, which is why only sophisticated investors with the flexibility to pay the collateral damage, commit to such transactions.

In the case of GameStop, after most gamers had turned to the ever-evolving virtual reality, the company lost a lot of its value, prompting Wall Street investors and major hedge fund managers to borrow some of its cheap shares. These major short-sellers include Melvin Capital and Citron Research. However, to their dismay, these companies have lost US\$ 19.75 billion on GameStop so far. Even though the main purpose of a hedge fund is to compensate for losses in risky deals, the damage caused by GameStop has been substantial. This unexpected increase was largely due to unprofessional traders—known as retail investors—buying GameStop stocks in the past few months, particularly those who got their financial advice from the internet.

For many years, social media platforms have been known as a deciding factor in the fates of stock markets. Financial analysts and traders consider these platforms as "fuelling massive share price moves that cannot

be explained by traditional valuation metrics." Additionally, the pandemic has caused many people to turn to retail investments. Experts believe that lockdown savings and extremely low-interest rates for stock investments are the major causes for this increase. According to Swiss Bank UBS, retail investors' participation in the U.S. equity order flows, rose to 20 percent in 2020 from 15 percent in 2019. These retail investments occurred among large companies such as Google, Tesla, Amazon, and Netflix. But eventually, people started moving to smaller companies, especially those that had been disadvantaged by the pandemic and hedge funds.

The one social media platform that was pivotal in the GameStop surge was Reddit. Specifically, a subreddit called 'WallStreetBets,' commonly known as WBS. On this forum, amateur investors discuss marketing strategies, stock patterns, and decide on chosen investments. The users are not professional investors, they merely trade on the side as a hobby and use memes and phrases like 'YOLO' to communicate.

GameStop and its value had been discussed in this community multiple times — using the abbreviation GME — but in early 2021, these users realized the plan made by short-sellers towards GameStop and other companies such as AMC Theaters and Bed Bath & Beyond. Therefore, the Redditors started buying GameStop shares, driving the stock price higher and higher. This sort of behaviour has been described by many as the internet waging a war against hedge funds and billionaires. By January 27th, the stock price increased by 1,500 percent over the course of two weeks, which in turn caused many major exchanges to be halted multiple times. According to Dow Jones market data, more than 175 million shares of GameStop were traded on January 25th, surpassing its 30-day average of 29.8 million shares. As more people purchased the stocks, the incentive to buy rose accordingly. To signify the rarity of this trend, Bloomberg News marked the U.S. trading vol-

umes that took place on the 27th as the third-highest within the last 13 years. In financial terms, what the WallStreetBets caused was a short squeeze. A short squeeze occurs when a stock or asset grows sharply, forcing short-sellers to buy it to forestall even greater losses. Their rush to buy only adds to the upward pressure on the stock's price.

Following the GameStop frenzy, the Redditors and other amateur investors started buying stocks from other shorted companies. Consequently, AMC shares were up by 265 percent by the end of January and Bed Bath & Beyond shares increased by 176 percent as well.

Maligned by the Redditors, hedge funds were experiencing an unprecedented loss. Andrew Left, the manager of Citron Research, one of the hard-hit hedge funds by the short-squeeze, has a reputation for publishing reports in his newsletters about stocks that he predicts are destined to fall. In early January, he announced in his reports that he had shorted GameStop when the stock was trading around US\$ 40. On January 27th, he said that he "[had] largely abandoned the trade at a loss of 100%." He also mentioned that he will no longer be publishing his short-selling reports. Gabe Plotkin, the founder of Melvin Capital, has recently announced that his hedge fund suffered a 53 percent loss in January. Consequently, Steve Cohen's Point72 and Ken Griffin's Citadel, two powerful hedge funds, are investing \$2.75 billion in Melvin Capital, bailing it out of its misery.

Following the GameStop spike, multiple brokerage companies imposed restrictions on trading through their online platforms. Namely, these limits were placed by Charles Schwab Corporation, TD Bank, and Robinhood. These companies prevented their users from buying GameStop, AMC, and Bed Bath & Beyond stocks, and blocked money transfers to those who had profited from a previous purchase from any of these three companies. In particular, Robinhood's action stirred a lot of

controversy since it is considered the WallStreetBets Reddit Stock trading platform. Eventually, these limits were lifted.

Along with the economic repercussions, the circumstances also resulted in political backlash in the U.S. On February 18th, a Congressional hearing was held by representatives who were critical of Wall Street and Robinhood for their reaction to the GameStop surge. The House Financial Services Committee aimed to find out if market manipulation was involved in the aftermath of GameStop's value growth as a way to prevent further damage to major hedge funds. Due to an inquiry into their temporary ban on GameStop tradings, the CEO of Robinhood and other brokerage companies testified at the hearing. Robinhood CEO Vlad Tenev repeatedly stated that restrictions were established to meet new regulatory requirements. "We don't answer to hedge funds, we serve the millions of small investors who use our platform every day to invest," Tenev said. So far, the hearing has had no notable impact on the market.

The GameStop situation has once again proven that markets can be unpredictable and in constant fluctuation. Although, many financial analysts consider the GameStop situation as the official beginning of retail investment dominance in market trends, Jim Paulsen, the chief investment strategist at the Leuthold Group, stated in an interview with CNBC, "retail investors with the help of technology acting as a union in attacking is a new phenomenon." More than anything else, the GameStop growth was popularly contemplated as 'the middle-class defeating the ultimate villain: Wall Street'. Adam Bixler, a 28-year-old Redditor on WallStreetBets who works in advertising, told USA Today, "The idea that you can crack open a hedge fund like a piñata and redistribute all this money to people in the form of a short squeeze is very appealing. These are the stimulus checks that everyone wanted."



Photo courtesy of Global News



# Trump's Twitter ban is not because of censorship or tech bias

Twitter's strong stance on the reasoning behind banning Trump from the app and future prevention of usage.

**Ava Gottlieb**  
Contributor

During his final weeks in office, the former United States president's verified Twitter account was permanently suspended following the siege on the U.S. Capitol. Donald Trump has been a frequent Twitter user throughout his presidency along with his activity on many of his other social media platforms. From declaring candidacy in 2015 through his four years in the White House, Trump posted over 34,000 tweets. His tweets were considered to be official presidential statements. On January 8, 2021, Twitter suspended his account and was shortly followed by Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat and over a dozen other platforms in doing so. These actions have raised debates around free expression, free speech, and the role of social media companies in regulating online discourse.

Trump's permanent suspension came days after Twitter locked his account for 12 hours "for repeated and severe violations of our Civic Integrity policy." Twitter warned that further violations of its policies "will result in permanent suspension of the @realDonaldTrump account." In cutting off Trump's account, Twitter assessed his many tweets throughout the Capital insurrection under their Glorification of Violence policy. This policy aims to prevent the glorification of violence that could motivate others to commit violent acts, and with the conclusion that Trump not only contributed to, but also inspired the criminal acts that took place; he was in clear violation of this policy. The initiation of the riots that caused the death of five people was an important factor that led to an unprecedented second impeachment trial just one week later.

Deplatforming is a complicated issue of free speech but not when it comes to online extremism. It is not a violation of the First Amendment, instead it

is effective at removing extremists from mainstream internet spaces. When extremists are deplatformed online, it becomes harder for them to commit real-world violence. Trump's mob was not just encouraged by his speech on January 6th, 2021, but had been stirring for a while online. The high-profile deplatforming of Trump has sparked new confusion and controversy because many conservatives are labelling it as "censorship". Twitter's ban of Trump has increased distrust among conservatives through social media platforms and many have threatened to move to Parler, a social networking service with a significant user base of Trump supporters, with a large proportion of right-wing extremists

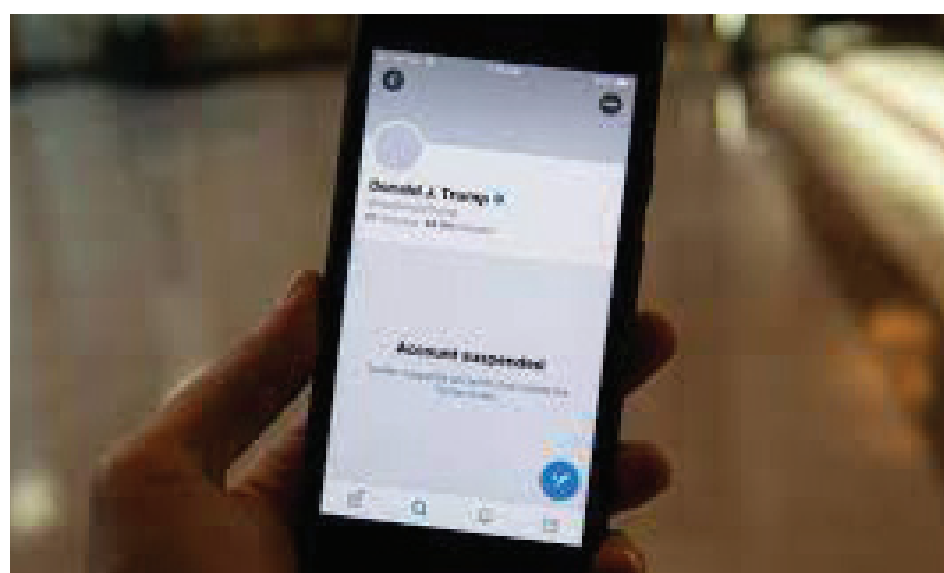


Photo courtesy of **New Yorker**

and conspiracy theorists. Nevertheless, the decision to remove users' posts and tweets has been criticized for violating the First Amendment right. President Trump is alleging that Twitter "is completely stifling FREE SPEECH" even though there is no policy for a free speech right to appear on any particular platform. The First Amendment of the Constitution states that Congress shall make no law "abridging the freedom of speech," in addition to other freedoms such as religion, press, and the right to assemble. This does not apply to Twitter since it is a private company, and not a government company. Twitter is a platform that can regulate its content while following its terms of service. There are no laws that restrict the ability of

platforms or websites to regulate their content and Trump has no governance over this private company.

Tech giants like Twitter are separate from the government and can legally censor anything they would like. "A company making a business decision to moderate itself is different from a government removing access, yet can feel much the same," said Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. He went on to express the hope that a balance between moderating and deplatforming extremists can be achieved. "Anybody who creates an online community has the right to create rules for that community," Dorsey followed. They have the right to determine who and what is allowed as long

further in banning free speech, and tonight, Twitter employees have coordinated with the Democrats and the Radical Left in removing my account from their platform, to silence me," Trump tweeted, of which was immediately removed. Twitter explained that allowing Trump to continue to post even through a different account still risks "further incitement of violence". Dorsey expressed how banning US President Donald Trump was the right thing to do but demonstrated sadness at what he described as the "extraordinary and untenable circumstances" surrounding Trump's permanent suspension. Dorsey also said the ban was partly Twitter's failure, who had not done enough to advance "healthy conversation" across its platform. The Twitter CEO explained, "we made a decision with the best information we had based on threats to physical safety both on and off Twitter."

Twitter announced that its decision to ban former President Donald Trump will be upheld if he were to run for office again. Even if Trump were to win in 2024, the company's chief financial officer stressed that permanent means permanent. "Our policies are designed to make sure that people are not inciting violence, and if anybody does that we have to remove them from the service and our policies don't allow them to come back," continued Twitter's CFO. "He was removed when he was president and there'd be no difference for anybody who's a public official once they've been removed from the service."

If Trump had solely communicated to the public through heavily edited and reviewed White House press channels, the riots would never have occurred. His impulsive tweeting ended up being important evidence in several lawsuits and provided courts an insight of him unfiltered. Twitter's action of banning was an unprecedented but necessary move for protecting democracy.

as it's not discriminatory. Many big tech companies are starting to develop clearer community standards for content moderation. These platforms are planning to release regular reports with their content moderation processes and increase transparency by making them publicly available. This has led to public concerns whether tech and social media companies have too much power when sanctioning posts and comments on their platforms. Similarly, it has awakened many to the power that private corporations hold over public conversations. Trump tested Twitter's ban when he, or someone acting on his behalf, published four tweets from the @POTUS account. "As I have been saying for a long time, Twitter has gone further and





EDUCATION SYSTEM

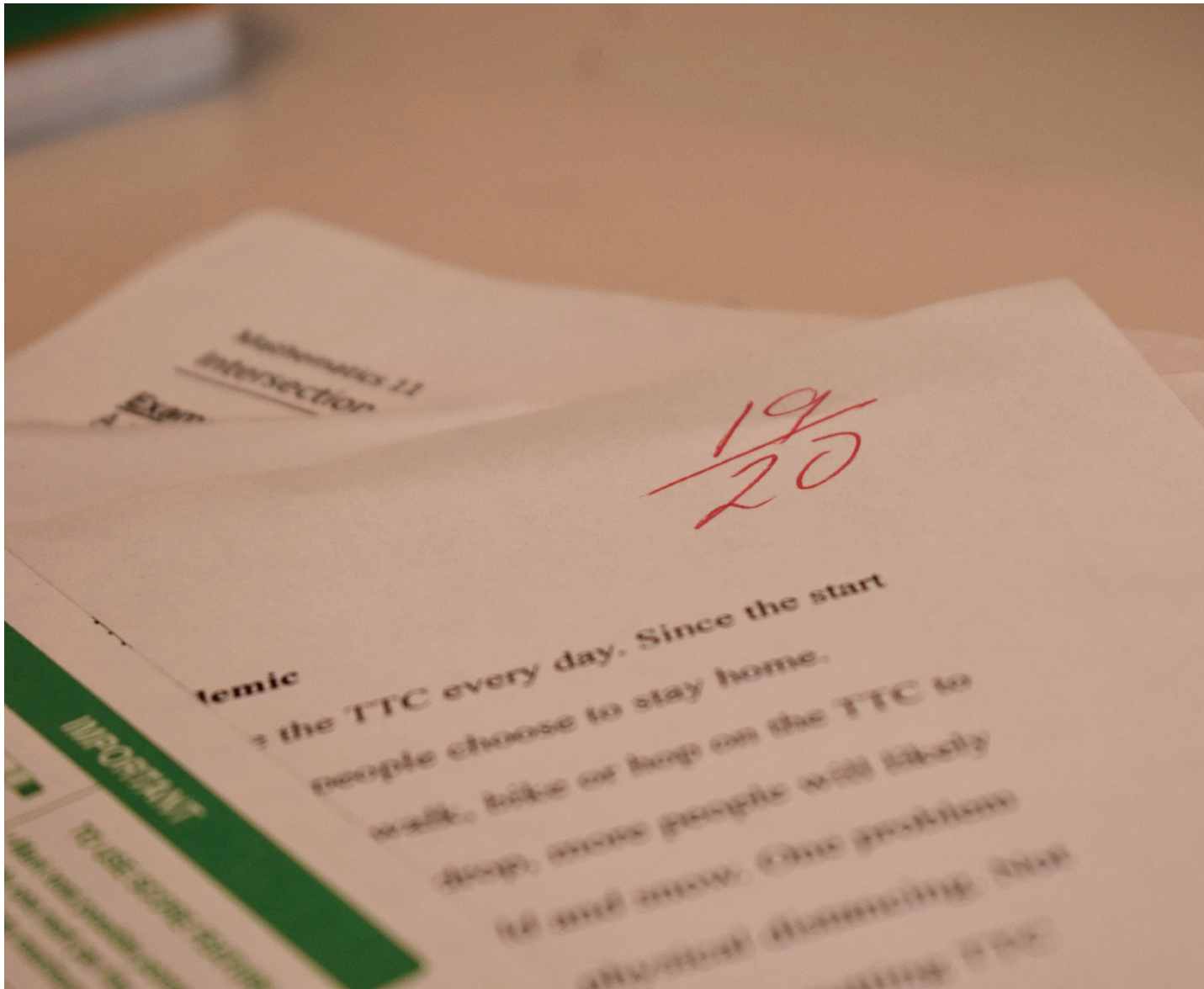
# Please give me a good mark

A discussion of highschool marks, and our unhealthy obsession with it.

**Kiana Sharifi**  
Section Editor

There’s a haze filling up the room when your teacher announces that they will be returning your tests. Not the misty, after-a-rainbow type of haze; a dark, brooding billow of dread. Your eyes dart around the room as the teacher weaves her way through the desks. As she moves closer to you, your heart beats faster, the thumping echoing in your ears. She hovers over you, sifting through the papers, then gently lays your graded test before you. You squirm in agony, deciding whether or not you dare to look at your mark. You’ve studied long hours for this test — memorizing, reading, practicing — and any mark less than your high expectations will make you feel as though you’ve been cheated. Giving into temptation, you rip the band-aid off, and there it is. The mark. Blood rushes to your cheeks and you feel humiliation strangling your chest. You panic. You frantically tear through the pages of your test searching for those red Xs, feeling a cloud of defeat rain down on you.

As a grade 11 student at a competitive school, my thirst for an exceptional grade has always far exceeded my thirst for knowledge. All my life, I have viewed my grades as a barometer of the inherent value I hold as a person; and any mark below my expectations would teeter the measurement of my success, lowering my self-worth. When grade 11 course selections were right around the corner, I considered dropping band. Band was the course through which I made my first friends, created my best memories at NT, and found real joy in learning. And yet, because it had the potential to pull my average down, I toyed with the idea of dropping band to avoid the risk of jeopardizing my mark. I didn’t end up dropping it, but the momentary lapse I had to drop the class I loved most, revealed the profound power grades have



over my school experience.

If you don’t believe me, ask any student what their last test score was. Ask them what their overall average is. Ask them what prestigious university they aspire to attend. But then, ask them what their passion is. Ask them about their career choices. Ask them what truly lights their heart on fire. Some might immediately light up and talk about their love for creating music, their desire to help people through medicine, or how they can spend hours programming hundreds of lines of code. However, the large majority will frown, stutter, and contemplate, only to say: “I’m not quite sure yet.” For grade 11 NT student Sian Huang, this situation is all too familiar. Her mind is too occupied by the demand for higher grades that “[she] still [doesn’t] know who [she wants] to be or what [she wants] to do.” Universities are meant to cultivate one’s passion, but how can they do so when their passion is virtually non-existent? How can they

do so when a student’s entire high school life has been spent slaving away for good grades to get into university in the first place? As Huang approaches university application season, she feels “the pressure now more than ever.” To reach the high standards she holds for herself, her mindset towards school has become about “choosing what course [she] can get the highest grade in, regardless of what [she is] actually learning.”

The obsession students have to value grades over learning is not just found in the halls of North Toronto. On Reddit, on a forum tucked in a corner of the Internet, I stumbled across countless other students and teachers who recognize that education has become irreparably detached from learning. Radiohead022, a teacher in Missouri, asks their students every year if they are more concerned about grades or learning. The answer is always grades. Yolonny, a graduated high school student, admits that they would be surprised if

Photo courtesy of **Mikayla Toplis**

they could remember 5 percent of what they were taught in school. Students study to ace tests, only to forget everything they’ve learned after writing it. This year, the quadmester system only worsened this circumstance, as a year’s worth of content is condensed into a mere two months. Students don’t have the time to process the information that they’ve learned because their next test is always looming around the corner. Another Redditor called Spacemage, a student living in Australia, used to cheat on many of their tests. When students cheat, it is because the school system appreciates grades more than students appreciate learning.

There’s a haze that fills the room when my teacher announces that he will be returning our persuasive essays. He hovers over me, sifting through the papers, then gently lays my graded essay before me. I squirm in agony, deciding whether or not I dare to look at my mark.



# Canada's COVAX controversy: a misunderstood, morally Just decision

An analysis of whether COVAX is the right move for Canada.

**Sophie Block**  
Section Editor

As of one year ago, the world has been hoping and dreaming for a cure. The medical world quickly jumped on this aspiration and made several safe and effective vaccines. However, this came at a price. In Canada, the government invested a large sum of money into receiving vaccinations. In poorer countries, this solution to the raging pandemic, collapsing health systems, dying citizens, and economic depression is a luxury that cannot be afforded.

To address this issue, COVAX, the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility, was initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO). COVAX is a global initiative to speed up vaccine distribution and production. 156 countries, which represent 64% of the global population, agreed to participate. It also aims to provide equitable access to the vaccine, and hopes to assist impoverished countries with their vaccine purchase. The project has secured almost 2.3 billion doses for distribution in 2021, and of these, 1.8 billion will be provided to the world's poor countries, with 1.3 billion doses being at no cost.

Shipments of the vaccine through COVAX started in February, shipping first to a variety of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. To get these vaccines, countries have to present an in-depth vaccination distribution plan. By the end of 2021, Southeast Asia is supposed to receive 695 million doses, and Africa will receive 540 million doses. According to WHO, a combination of countries in the Middle East, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, should receive 355 million doses by December of 2021.

Clearly, these allocations of vaccines are aimed towards countries that cannot afford to buy the vaccines themselves, not countries like Canada. Why, then, has Canada been promised vaccines from COVAX?



Illustration by Enna Rejc

Though it may seem like Canada is taking advantage of this program, that is not the case. COVAX is not designed for rich countries, but it does have a complex matching grants program. In September, Canada contributed \$440 million to COVAX. This contribution was less than what the U.K. made but was more than what the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated. Half of this went into a shared fund to buy doses for 20 percent of the population in 92 poorer countries, and the other half secured doses for Canada from around nine vaccine candidates. 1.1 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine are expected to arrive in Canada through COVAX by the end of March, with 3.2 million expected by the end of June.

Yes, Canada is the only G7 country to use COVAX in this manner. However, this doesn't make their request for vaccines through this program unjust. Canada is not like other G7 countries; our economy is smaller in comparison to the other 6 major countries. As well, we are not the only country to request early allocations; New Zealand and Singapore have done the same thing.

Furthermore, there has been mounting pressure for the Canadian government to increase the speed of their vaccination deliveries. The Canadian government had pre-purchased millions of doses; however, due to unforeseen delays in shipment and production, the deliveries were postponed. When Joe Biden became the president of the United States, Canada's previous deals with United States manufacturers were set aside. President Biden made a deal with Pfizer and Moderna — the two major companies that pro-

duce vaccines in the United States— that until the orders made by the Biden administration are fulfilled, no other countries can receive the vaccines. By contributing to COVAX, Canada is helping more Canadians get vaccinated faster and is helping to supplement expected shipments from the United States.

The International Development Minister, Karina Gould explained Canada's actions by saying; "Our top priority is to ensure Canadians have access to vaccines. COVAX's objective is to provide vaccines for 20% of the populations of all member states, both self-financing and those who will receive donations," she said. "Canada made the decision, as other countries have, to take on this first allocation because we recognize how important it is that all Canadians have access to vaccines."

"Canadians expect to get effective vaccines as quickly as possible and that's why we cast our net extremely wide with both international contracts and domestic investments," said Justin Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister, defending this decision. "And I know everyone is looking forward to getting those vaccines into their arms as quickly as possible."

Additionally, Katrina Plamondon, an assistant professor in the School of Nursing at the University of British Columbia Okanagan and a spokesperson for the Canadian Society of International Health, said the government is under immense pressure to speed up vaccine supplies. Turning down vaccines that have been procured as part of the original deal would be, "politically difficult to refuse."

Others though, find these actions morally wrong. Stephen Lewis, the former UN special

envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, was upset with Canada's decision. "It was always understood from the outset that this was not a source of vaccines for the rich and wealthy countries of the world," Lewis said. "It's just wrong morally and practically ... For Canada to be proud of what it's doing, I think, is a profound mistake." Independent MP Jody Wilson-Raybould, the former Liberal justice minister, also expressed her dismay and shock that Canada would take vaccines "from poor countries."

Not only is this seen as a moral issue, but critics argue that Canada's actions contribute to the toxic "vaccine nationalism." Vaccine nationalism, a new phenomenon in the race to vaccinate the world, describes the way wealthy countries buy up doses without doing enough to ensure vaccine distribution in other countries. Canada has especially come under fire for this, as the government has bought enough vaccines to vaccinate all Canadians twice. However, the government has recently announced that extra doses will be given to countries in need.

Was this the right decision? I think that while the points made by those opposing this decision are understandable, the Canadian government is not doing anything wrong. They are following the original goals of the COVAX agreement, to contribute money to have their country vaccinated, while also supporting global efforts to vaccinate impoverished countries.

Canada has always been a country that aims to aid international health, peace and security. By contributing to COVAX and donating extra doses of vaccines to poorer countries, Canada is making a substantial contribution to the global vaccination effort. Canada must continue to help other countries, while also maintaining steady healthcare for Canadians. During these difficult times, no decision comes easy, or without contradictions, but the Canadian government's decision to obtain vaccines from COVAX is both morally acceptable and practical.



COVID-19

# Which country had the best response to the pandemic?

A review of Germany's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Photo courtesy of CNN

**Grisha Tyukin**  
Contributor

By keeping death counts to a minimum, unemployment rates low, and maintaining a solid health system, Germany demonstrated one of the best COVID-19 responses in the world.

On April 8, 2020 BBC News announced that Germany reported lower deaths in March than many other countries that had a similar infection rate. Statistics from the World Health Organization support this claim, with 28 deaths in Germany, 40 deaths in Spain, 60 deaths in Italy, and 35 deaths in South Korea. The latest update from the World Health Organization reported 67,841 confirmed deaths in Germany and 95,486 confirmed deaths in Italy, since the inception of the pandemic.

As well, Germany's government gave money to workers who were impacted by the pandemic to help offset the loss in wages that resulted from stay-at-home orders. As a result of initiatives like this, Germany's unemployment rate was significantly lower than the rate in countries like Russia, which had four times as many unemployed workers due to a lack of support programs.

The strength of Germany's well established and world-renowned health sys-

tem enabled it to withstand the challenges that the pandemic presented much more effectively than other countries. Because of this, Germany was able to successfully diminish death tolls, and keep hospital crowding to a minimum. In March, the World Health Organization reported 1296 daily COVID-19 cases in Germany while reported daily COVID cases in South Korea surpassed that figure. And similarly, in December 2020 Germany reported far less daily COVID figures than the United Kingdom and has since already vaccinated 700,000 residents. Only time will reveal whether Germany's COVID-19 response will remain effective, however until then, Germany and its citizens remain in a positive light.

Германия была одной из лучших стран которые отреагировали на COVID-19. Германия одна из лучших потому что низкий уровень смертности, низкий уровень безработности и хорошая система здравоохранения.

Во-первых, 8 апреля 2020 года BBC-news сообщили что в Германии уровень смертности в марте был ниже, чем в других странах с примерно таким же количеством инфицированных. В марте например Всемирная организация здоровья сообщила что у Германии

было 28 смертей и это меньше чем у Испании с 40, Италии с 60 и Южной Кореи с 35 смертями. Это доказывает что Германия имела ниже уровень смертности из-за COVID-19, чем Южная Корея и другие страны. Я не сравнивал такие страны как Тайвань и Новая Зеландия, потому что у них низкая численность населения и, следовательно, у них более низкий уровень смертности, чем в Германии. Последний отчет Всемирной организации здоровья показал что Германия имеет 67,841 и Италия с 95,486 подтвержденными смертями.

Во вторых, Europe-ews сообщили что Германия имела низкий уровень безработности в марте, потому что когда правительство сказало гражданам оставаться дома и закрыло все офисы и бизнесы, они начали выдавать деньги бизнесом которые пострадали в пандемию. Эти бизнесы использовали деньги чтобы платить зарплаты работникам и из-за этого много людей не потеряли свои работы. Например Германия имела 2395 человек которые остались без работы, но в Россия имеет 8564, это сообщило Trading Economics. Россия имеет высокий уровень безработицы, потому что бизнесы не получали денег от правительства, и это увеличивало безработицу, и это привело к тому что людям

не могли платить зарплаты.

Наконец, в Германии была лучшая система здравоохранения, потому что Всемирная организация здравоохранения заявила, что у них уже была система хорошего здоровья до COVID-19, и это помогло им стать лучшей страной в марте. В марте в Германии была лучшая система здравоохранения, о чем свидетельствует низкий уровень смертности и ограниченная переполненность больниц. В марте Всемирная организация здравоохранения заявила, что в Германии ежедневно регистрируется 1296 новых случаев COVID-19, а в Южной Корее - 7759 случаев. В декабре 2020 года в Германии было 25000 новых случаев заражения каждый день, в то время как в Великобритании было 33000 новых случаев COVID-19. В Германии уже вакцинировано 700000 жителей, и это снижает количество новых случаев, сообщает официальный сайт Германии.

Эти три фактора делают Германию одной из лучших стран которые отреагировали на COVID-19, потому что правительство помогало гражданам сохранять рабочие места, выплачивает зарплаты и имеет хорошую систему здравоохранения, которая поддерживает низкий уровень смертности.



## COVID-19

# The Iranian government's failure in response to the pandemic

Learn about Iran's shortcomings in handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Arshia Tavassoli**  
Contributor

With over 1,000,000 identified Covid-19 cases and more than 50,000 virus-related deaths, Iran is the hardest-hit country in the Middle East region by the pandemic. Iran has faced three waves of the virus and is now bracing for a possible fourth wave with all the new variants showing up in different parts of the country.

While strict measures such as school and non-essential business closures, country-wide travel restrictions, and curfews between 9 p.m and 4 a.m have resulted in a reduction in the number of cases and deaths, the initial government response and management of the pandemic has been inadequate.

While there were unofficial reports of deaths due to COVID-19 in the city of Qom, at the beginning of the pandemic in mid-January 2020, the arrival of the virus to Iran was strongly denied by the authorities. It is commonly believed that the delayed announcement of the early virus cases was due to political reasons. The regime's strong desire for high turnout in the revolution anniversary

parade and the parliamentary elections in February are considered to be the main motives for this decision. Additionally, while most countries suspended their flights to and from China after the discovery of the virus in the city of Wuhan, Mahan Air — an Iranian airline with close connections to the Revolutionary Corps — continued flights to China for possible financial gains. These flights did not abide by safety regulations either, and passengers were not asked to self-isolate or get tested after arriving in Iran.

The first acknowledgment of the virus's arrival in Iran was made in late February 2020, and even then it was widely believed that the authorities were misleading people by underreporting the number of COVID cases and related deaths. While Iranian state news channels were announcing the national daily number of cases to be in the range of 200, multiple state-independent sources such as Radiofarda indicated the numbers to be ten times higher. This inconsistency led to confusion amongst people and caused the spread of the virus to increase dramatically in a short period of time.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a constant dispute between peo-

ple who promote traditional medicine and scientific medical practitioners. Moreover, it is important to note that obtaining vital medicine from pharmaceutical companies and importing them into the country has been a challenge due to banking restrictions imposed by the United States a few years ago. This has caused a significant lack of resources in multiple Iranian hospitals.

Even though the measures pointed out earlier have currently made this pandemic manageable for the healthcare system, the Iranian nuclear activity related U.S. embargoes and sanctions has stopped all oil exports and denied the government access to its foreign currency funds. This is affecting the ability to purchase and import medicine and vaccines into the country. The Iranian economy has suffered during this pandemic with the government having difficulty providing financial help to those affected by recent restrictions. As a result, a lot of people who cannot afford to stay home have had to accept the risk of getting sick and continue going to work.

In another recent turn of events, there was a surprising announcement by the supreme leader of Iran prohibiting the purchase of any vaccine devel-

oped in the U.S. and the U.K., further politicizing the handling of the pandemic. Currently, Iran is working on three different vaccines, which are expected to be ready for approval within the next 4-6 months. Limited vaccine supplies from Russia and China have also arrived and are being administered.

In the eyes of some Iranian officials, politics and power are more important than people's lives. This is confirmed by their initial handling of the pandemic and the recent vaccine-related announcement.

The initial wave of the virus was mishandled and politicized by the Iranian authorities resulting in reduced trust of the population in the system which in turn has resulted in many people not following the restrictions and recommendations causing multiple waves. Obtaining medications has been difficult due to banking restrictions and the situation has become more complicated due to the polarized fight between traditional medicine advocates and medical doctors. The economic impact of the shutdowns has severely affected the livelihood of the people.

We all hope that with the recent arrival of the vaccines, we can see better days ahead of us.



Photo courtesy of [usip.org](https://www.usip.org)



ATTACHMENT STYLES

# Does the apple fall far from the tree?

Real growth starts at home, and within ourselves.

**Zoya Dias**  
Contributor

“You’re just like your mother,” how does this phrase make you feel? We are born as malleable substances waiting to be sculpted by our parents into altered versions of them. Our parents project all their good and bad onto us; we become the aftertaste of the main course that is them: a muted version of their coping mechanisms, emotional intelligence, and communication skills. These traits influence our attachment styles, which are created from the connections we made in our brain as children. The attachment style of our parents will inevitably become our own because of the way our brain has developed in response to their treatment. Later, it will affect our relationships. Ultimately, we will return to the nostalgic warmth of behaviours like ghosting a friend or starting an unnecessary argument —

behaviours that were engraved in us at an impressionable age because they reflect how our parents treated us as children.

Beginning with brain development and repetitive behaviours, a child’s behaviour is dependent on the way they learned to handle emotions through the connections in their brain. Children experience the same amount of emotions as their parents; their baby brains have all the cells they need and will need for the rest of their lives. The difference between children and their parents is that children don’t know how to properly express or manage these feelings, since 90% of a child’s brain develops in the first 5 years of their life. Brain connections are made through the child’s everyday experiences and the connections between these cells is what develops and turns the brain’s gears. About one million neural connections

are made during this age; the brain makes more connections during this time than in any other time in the child’s life. Get comfortable, your relationship with your brain cells will be a greater commitment than any other relationship in your life. When the brain of a child is deprived of the human connection it starves for, the child grows up with these aspects underdeveloped and the brain gets rid of the connections that are rarely stimulated in the brain which is where issues occur. These children are late

child, whereas inattentive parents create a child that is constantly seeking validation that was originally absent from them. Other examples include emotionally serious parents who raise emotionally reserved kids and children from abusive households who avoid any emotional attachment whatsoever. Why do we do this? It all goes back to the connections made as a child. When we are exposed to unhealthy attachment styles at a vulnerable age, our brains adapt to what is given to us. Because we

are able to develop a connection with others. They are able to improve themselves from their past mistakes instead of beating themselves up for it—reenacting scenarios that might have played out during their childhood. We as humans are drawn to what’s most familiar to us despite wanting to improve or wanting to move on to something different. If what’s familiar is a warm hug and an “I’m proud of you,” the child in question will be more successful opening up to others emotionally, they will have greater self worth, and they will be more accepting of affection. Developing secure attachments within children shows them healthy ways to manage their feelings and build their self esteem. Without this knowledge, parents who genuinely want to grow closer to their kids could be unintentionally pushing them away. Teaching young children how to manage their emotions is helping us work towards building a new generation of people who understand their worth and the value of their life.

All in all, insecure attachment styles have a great impact in one’s life and sometimes even their happiness. The way we interact with others directly correlates with the way our brain has developed as a result of our parent’s teaching. Learning begins at home but in many homes we have unequipped teachers; therefore, proper parenting techniques should be widely known so that healthy attachment styles will be passed down from parent to child through generations. If awareness is not spread about this issue, children could end up resenting their parents in response. A bleak future shows kids with insecure attachment styles going on to teach their own kids improper coping mechanisms, and, like 2020’s infamous coronavirus, insecure attachments spreading like wildfire.

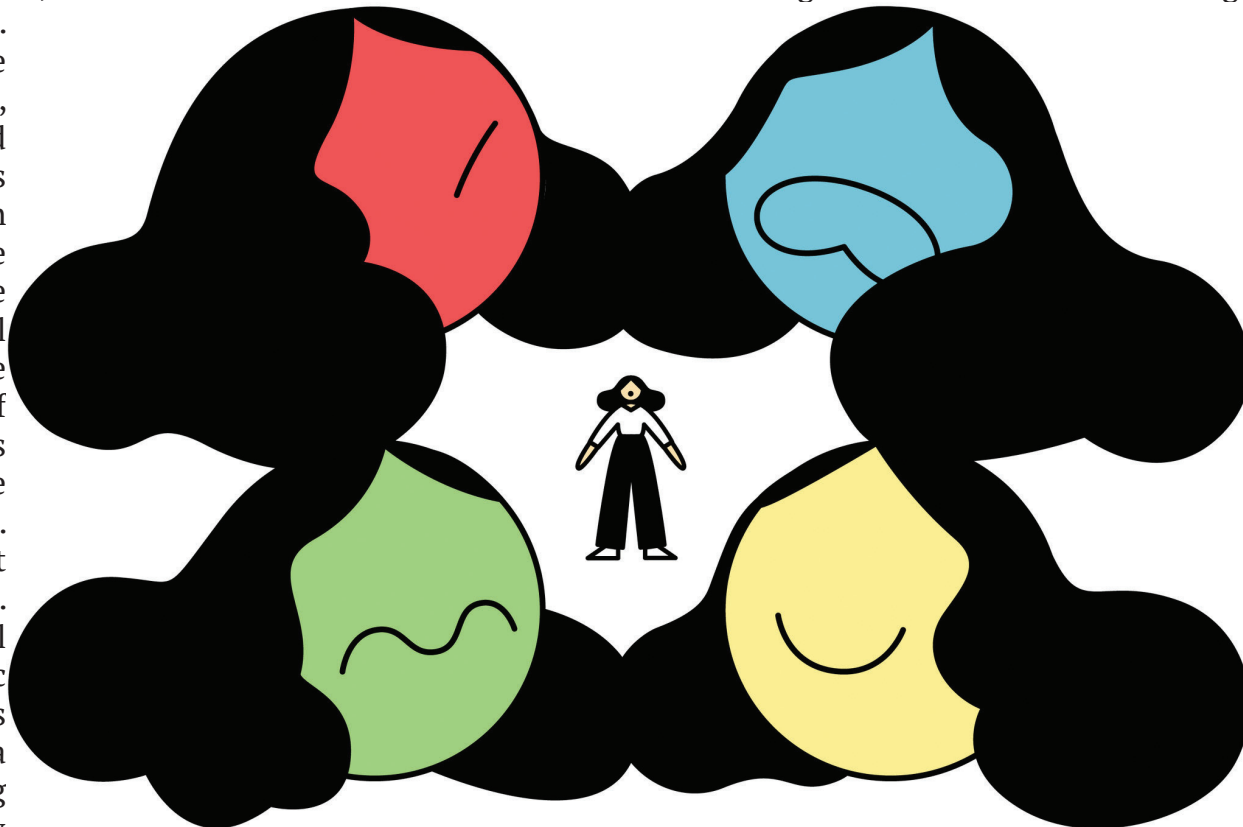


Photo courtesy of [nytimes.com](#)

to understand how to properly manage their emotions which becomes detrimental because it is during this time when the brain develops the most. Unfortunately, school doesn’t offer a course called “how to manage emotions 101.” They go on from childhood to adulthood, without knowing how to interact with others properly, which is arguably the most important skill to have—it affects your future career, mental health, and primarily, your relationships.

To elaborate on relationships, the emotional development one lacks from childhood comes back to haunt them in human interactions as adults. Relationships are all about communicating our emotions and knowing how to deal with conflict which we deal with through the attachment style learned from our parents. For example, attentive parents lead to an emotionally expressive

child, whereas inattentive parents create a child that is constantly seeking validation that was originally absent from them. Other examples include emotionally serious parents who raise emotionally reserved kids and children from abusive households who avoid any emotional attachment whatsoever. Why do we do this? It all goes back to the connections made as a child. When we are exposed to unhealthy attachment styles at a vulnerable age, our brains adapt to what is given to us. Because we didn’t receive enough emotional support when our brains were developing, they became used to this treatment. In the future, we subconsciously look for how we were treated as children in others because it is what feels familiar and it’s what we feel we deserve. That familiar cold shoulder that once belonged to our parents has manifested itself into the shoulder of our future partner or friend, but we feel this is where we belong and that it doesn’t feel right being treated any other way. About 80 percent of all children go on to developing their parents attachment styles. Within this 80 percent, following the trend of hand-me-down mechanisms, also lies children with healthy parents. They are more likely to develop secure attachment styles in their future. Because of healthy relationships being introduced at a malleable age, these children and adolescents



# Misogyny in the music industry

**Maya Milosevic**  
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 Contributors

When women threaten the gender power dynamic, they are forced to face the consequences. Sexism is littered throughout the music industry, hurting the careers of countless female artists with every advancement they make. Women in the music business have expressed their worry concerning the fact that they do not feel as if they will ever be as respected as much as their male counterparts. Female artists face a double standard that does not apply to male musicians. A woman is constantly putting up with people trying to undermine their success because they feel uncomfortable when she becomes independent and powerful. Society holds female musicians to a much higher standard, where something small can cause a large amount of criticism.

There are many double standards in the music industry that constantly affect the development of female artists' careers. Media sources repeatedly shame women for writing songs about their relationships, however, when top male artists do the same they are applauded for showing such vulnerability. If society and the industry thinks a woman "dates too much", they are shamed for it and that reputation may follow them for their entire career. On the other hand, a male artist having many romantic partners is praised, deemed powerful, and charming. As well, when female celebrities voice their opinions on their platform, it can ruin their careers. For example: in 2003, "The Dixie Chicks", a country group of female musicians from Texas, stated a single sentence about George Bush, former president of America, during a performance, which led to the downfall of their careers. While performing live, the lead singer, Natalie Maines, stated, "We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas". As American country musicians, many of their listeners are conservatives, meaning they did not take this statement lightly and did anything they could to retaliate.



Photo courtesy of **Maya Milosevic**

Their fans also did not think the Dixie Chicks were at all educated enough to speak on their political opinions. The aftermath of this controversy caused them to be blacklisted from radio, receive death threats and experience mobs of angry Americans protesting against them. Backlash to this extent is an uncommon occurrence for male singers. For example, Kanye West, a famous male rapper, speaks out against the government constantly over Twitter and in interviews, but he has never faced any backlash for it from society that tarnishes his career. Women in music constantly work against the double standards which have been enforced by society for years.

Additionally, women are held to a higher standard regarding their musical ability compared to men in the industry, causing them to be severely underappreciated. Artists like Ariana Grande state that it is "so easy" for men to become popular and successful amongst society. The industry is unable to accept that both men and women can work and co-produce successfully. Furthermore, women receive more criticism for their music than men. A study in 2015, conducted by Leanin.Org and McKinsey & Company, found that in the workplace, nearly a third of females reported that they needed to constantly provide more evidence of their competence to their coworkers in order to be accepted and respected. The University of Southern Califor-

nia conducted a study in 2019 that showed that the ratio of men to women producers is 37 to one for 2019, while it was 47 to one in 2018. This study shows that women are both unappreciated and underrepresented. Female artists are looked at by society through a microscope, picking out the imperfections and mistakes, while male artists leisurely cruise throughout their careers.

Within the music industry, people cannot fathom having a woman succeed on her own, and must grab at straws to try and make sense of it. When female musicians top charts early in their careers, people find it hard to believe they got there with their own talents. This happened with the careers of one of the biggest names of music today, Taylor Swift. When her breakthrough album "Fearless" won album of the year at the Grammys, she was immediately criticized and accused of not writing her songs, and rumoured to have male ghostwriters doing all the work. In her "Billboard's Woman of the Decade" acceptance speech, Taylor spoke about why she received such harsh criticism. "Now I realize that this is just what happens to a woman in music when she achieves success or power beyond people's comfort levels" was what she stated. When a woman goes against the picture-perfect image that men have in mind for them, they are bound to receive criticism for it. Furthermore,

in an interview with Vogue in 2018, Taylor acknowledged how the industry treated her in her early career. They saw her as a kid and looked at her success as "cute" instead of empowering. "As soon as I started playing stadiums — when I started to look like a woman — that wasn't as cool anymore". When people started to realize Taylor's true potential, they felt threatened by it. Researchers from "Forbes" magazine interviewed female songwriters and producers to gain a deeper understanding of the "lived experiences of women in music." More than 40% of respondents revealed that their male colleagues dismissed their abilities and work.

Sexism in the music industry is inescapable for women as they create a name for themselves. Women face a double standard that favours male artists. A man can do something which causes them to gain praise, while a woman can do the same and receive the opposite. Women are also held to a higher standard regarding the quality of music, forcing only them to overwork themselves in order to reach an incredibly high bar. A woman's success is constantly undermined, causing insecurities and self-doubt when it comes to the work they put out. The music industry is clearly not built for the success and promotion of female artists. Sexism continues to hurt women in music by mandating them to unfair regulations.



**POLITICS**

# Trump's acquittal

The attack on capitol hill, and whether Trump will finally face the consequences?



Image courtesy of [wwnytv.com](https://www.wwnytv.com)

**Cameron Gilliland**  
Contributor

Former President Donald J. Trump was recently acquitted of his articles of impeachment surrounding the horrific insurrection at Capitol Hill on January 6th. Specifically, the former President was impeached for High Crimes and Misdemeanors and charged under Article I of the resolution for the incitement of the attack to Capitol Hill. The resolution was passed in the House on January 13th with a ye total of 232 to a stupendously high nay count of 197 of which all were Republican. The bill was delayed however in its passage along to the Senate due to the now Minority leader Senator Mitch McConnell blocking the trial until Trump was out of office. The blockage of the trial while Trump remained in office was the sole defence his impeachment defense team would later rely on once the trial commenced on the ninth of February. When the trial began, under a now Democratic Party controlled Senate, the former president's defense looked desolate compared to the Senate's impeachment managers' outstanding prosecution. The major defense presented by Trump's lawyers was that the prosecution of a president that is no longer in office is

considered unconstitutional and henceforth unlawful. However, Trump's defense was simply horrible, not only were his lawyers disorganized and unconvincing, but simply arguing a defense based upon an argument of no sound legal standing.

The Constitution does not specifically state the legality of impeachment for a former president, as it leaves it mostly ambiguous. However, legal precedence of the past suggests that this is as constitutional as any impeachment proceeding that has come before it. As in both 1876 and 1797/98, a U.S. federal officer or government representative was charged and tried for impeachable offenses. In 1876, Secretary of War, William Belknap, was acquitted of the High Crimes and Misdemeanor charges brought against him; and in 1798 Senator William Blount was acquitted of land conspiracy charges. However, in both instances, the officials were tried while they were no longer in office. Due to the historical precedent of these two cases, Trump's impeachment and trial are henceforth constitutional. Also, the Constitution states in Article I, Clause 7, that the Senate can impeach an official and bar them from ever holding a federal office again. Therefore, under the legal and constitutional precedent, Trump's defense had no leg to stand on. The case against Trump was simple:

his months of dangerous and untruthful rhetoric about the election, along with telling his supporters mere hours before the insurrection to "fight like hell" all clearly showed his direct incitement of the insurrection. However, with what seemed like a clear decision to convict came out as an acquittal with 57 senators from both parties voting to convict, and an all-Republican tally of 43 votes to acquit, which fell short of the required 67 votes needed to convict.

Personally, I believe Trump should have been convicted for the malicious and deadly actions he took on the 6th and months prior. Because of his actions, five lay dead from the insurrection, one being U.S. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick who was beaten to death by the traitors who stormed the Capitol. His conviction should have been a moral issue, not a political one, as his actions not only degraded but threatened the very democracy that anchors the free world. Trump is a traitor. His unwillingness to accept defeat like a child caused the deaths of five people who would be alive today if he had followed the procedures laid out in the constitution he swore an oath to protect.

What scares me most of his acquittal is the lesson people failed to learn from his impeachment. His conviction would have shown that there

are consequences to the actions of anyone, even a president. More importantly, it would have also barred him from running for office indefinitely. However, given his acquittal, Trump will most likely run and could very well be elected as President again in 2024 to all our collective detriment. We need to stop letting partisan agendas poison the very morality of what it means to live and uphold a democracy. At the end of the day, all of us and not just Americans, were victims of the insurrection at the Capitol. Trump's actions have weakened the fabric of our democracy and could have very well caused repercussions on a scale far beyond the United States. It showed us the dangers of extremism, and the insecure spot of their very own democracy, the very concept that allows me to write this very piece. I cannot in good faith, even with Biden in office, proclaim our democracy is out of trouble. But its future looks brighter. The 2024 election will remain a contentious race as Trump will most likely gear up for another campaign. Until then, he will have to contend with an ongoing legal investigation happening against him in the State of New York, which just successfully subpoenaed his tax returns. Hopefully by then he will finally reap the consequences he has most certainly sewn for himself, for all our sake.



# A world without news: Australia fights back

The truth behind journalist exploitation.

Liza Rowatt  
Layout Editor

Imagine this as your near future: you wake up and it’s a lazy Sunday morning with a blue cloudless sky. You yawn and check the time. When you open your phone, you’re surprised: there are no news notifications, but you brush it off thinking the world is having a lazy Sunday as well. You eat a delicious pancake for breakfast, but start to feel sick. Little do you know that the eggs you bought a week ago had been pulled off the shelf for being contaminated with bacteria. You decide to combat your sick stomach by getting some fresh air but suddenly your weather app has disappeared. Whatever, it looks nice outside, it was probably deleted accidentally. You walk to the corner store to get the newspaper, but when you get there all the newspapers are gone. They must be sold out. That was fast. You leave the store and see a woman sitting by the wall holding a cardboard sign. It says ‘Please help me. I am a former journalist with two starving children.’ You ask her how you can help. She says “Get me my job back.” As you inquire about why she lost it, she says, “Don’t you know? There are no more journalists, only big tech monopolies.”

If we do not hold these big tech companies accountable for their exploitation of information and unjust business models, this will become Canada’s reality. We need journalists to keep us informed about the essential information that surrounds our society. Journalists provide honest information, question normalities by inquiring when others won’t, and create a sense of community by connecting us through information. As said in an interview with George Carothers, from Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, “the role that [journalists] play in Western Democracy is sacred, and worth preserving and protecting.” It takes a large amount of effort to research, investigate, and articulate news to the public. Journalists deserve much compensation for their work. Yet, big tech

companies such as Facebook and Google take advantage of them by posting their content without being paid. Moreover, “there has been a major shift in the way the advertising industry works,” Carothers said. Funding has gone from local news sources to big tech companies. While it is more costly to run an honest business, since there must be wages for journalists and editors, Facebook and Google get all this contribution for free. The average cost of advertisements on Facebook is \$27 per 100 people who click on the ad, while the average cost per 100 clicks on Google is \$150. By contrast, posting an ad in a newspaper costs \$407 for every 100 people who buy it. As this shift in funding continues, Facebook and Google become even richer, while local businesses lay off employees and struggle to stay afloat. Since the beginning of Covid-19, less than a year ago, more than 3000 journalists in Canada have lost their jobs, and 50 news outlets have closed.

George Carothers mentions “it is one thing to say someone is acting in bad faith, but with Facebook, the bad behaviour is the business model.” The longer someone stays on the app, the more ads the company can provide. Content that provokes an emotional response such as confusion, anger, or shock

keeps people looking longer, which are purposely made to generate revenue. When you have a heated discussion in the comment section, money goes directly in the pockets of big companies. When you press share they get \$0.27. This highlights why there is such a huge problem distributing and giving attention to fake news. Although it hurts us, big tech companies thrive off it. We need companies that circulate truthful and accurate news.

That is why Australia took action by proposing the Media Bargaining Code. This law was designed by the Australian government to address the power imbalance between Facebook, Google, and local news companies. Like Carothers stated, “there needs to be a better way for traditional journalism outlets to coexist with these large media platforms.” This law gives local news companies the facilities to negotiate payments for their news content used on the tech firms’ sites. If they are unable to come to an agreement, an arbitrator will decide whose offer is more reasonable. If Facebook or Google break any of the resulting agreements, they can be fined up to \$7.4 million in civil penalties. This code also requires Facebook and Google to give media outlets notice when they modify search algorithms in a way that changes their content. They must also share their use of consumer data

extracted from news content on their sites. Ultimately, allowing local and online news sources to collaborate with one another will decrease the barriers and injustices within the journalism industry.

As Australia proposes their plan to action, Canada is taking note. Advocacy groups such as Friends of Canadian Broadcasting work to gather public support of local news organizations. “It’s easy to say Facebook and Google are the bad guys. But that’s not the only way of looking at it. The other way to look at it is by asking the question; who’s actually in charge?” Carothers says. The answer should be the government that we elected. Friends’ goal is to communicate to our government that protecting local news requires more attention. Friends works to mobilize supporters so that when their candidate asks them, “Can I count on your vote?”, they say “You have to earn it by reigning in the silicon valley tech platforms,” Carothers states. They work to put these goals into action through campaigns such as newsthief.ca, which holds Facebook accountable for their journalist exploitation. It is extremely important to support the vulnerable and dying art of journalism. It is your turn now, help these journalists, visit friends.ca for more information and do your part to create a change.



Image courtesy of pureseo.com



## EVALUATIONS

# Open-book tests: yay or nay?

## An analysis of the benefits of open book testing

**Simone Bellengier**  
**Kiara Distin**  
 Section Editors

It's test day. Your teacher opens the door to their class, and you and your friends file in, nervously chatting about what might be on the test. You sit down, watching the teacher place, face down, that piece of paper that could make or break your grade. Your palms are sweaty, your legs are shaking, and you think to yourself, "What if I don't remember the formulas?" Your teacher says go. You read the first question. "Crap," you think. You start to panic. You understand the material, yet you do not recall the formulas. "What do I do now?"

In the real world, when solving problems similar to the ones that you see on tests, when are these problems not "open-book?" Outside of school, you will always have resources to help you solve a problem, whether it be the internet, friends, experts, YouTube videos, books, libraries, or almost anything else. There are a plethora of resources in the real world to help you learn, remember, and understand every single concept that is taught in school, so why go into tests with zero of these helping hands? Unless you become a math teacher, mathematician, rocket scientist, or something similar, you will rarely be required to remember the quadratic formula or use it off the top of your head. Adults who are not math (or maybe science) teachers reading this: do you remember what the quadratic formula is? No? Could you look it up if need be? Yes? That is what we thought. While it is necessary to learn very basic formulas, like  $a \div b$ , to calculate how much everyone has to pay at dinner, there is almost never an instance in the real world where it is absolutely necessary to know complicated concepts by heart.

I know some of you are thinking, "Well, how is it a real test if you have all of the answers in front of you?" Contrary to popular belief, open-book tests can still test your understanding, knowledge, and application skills. Formulas for your math test that are laid in front of you won't necessarily tell you exactly how to use it. One would still need to understand

the material and concepts of said formulas, but would not have to undergo the stress of storing the exact layout in their brain. A primary example of this can be seen in a course like business leadership or perhaps SAP (Sociology Anthropology and Psychology). If the test is written in the form of a case study, you can still demonstrate your understanding of the material by coming up with your own solutions by using your notes as a guideline or a security blanket. Generally, open-book tests have slightly harder questions than closed-book tests. This means that the answer isn't plainly in the notes, but is helpful in determining the answer. These types of tests don't eliminate studying either but rather eliminate the stress of it. Going into an open-book test without studying is just as bad as if it was not open-book, if not worse. You still need to know your stuff, you just don't need to panic if you do not know every single detail.

As the pressure for getting into university, receiving exceptional marks, and getting that perfect standardized test score increases, test anxiety overcomes many students' behaviour and ability to effectively put their knowledge to the test. Grade 12 student, Carson Paton, explains how "[He's] gone into several tests knowing exactly what [he] was doing, but as soon as [he sat] down [he] completely freeze, [his] mind goes blank, and [he] feels like all the hours [he] put into studying were meaningless." Throughout Carson's years in high school, he has experienced several moments of blanking out, which not only impacted his academic performance, but overall mental well-being. When anxiety creeps up, it creates white noise, hindering our ability to retain or remember previously learned material. Mental health is prioritized in every educational institution, yet this issue is out of students' control and teachers are unable to help with. Therefore, open-book tests would help students not only academically speaking, but holistically speaking. This is especially important today with the COVID-19 pandemic and the quadmester system. With such short periods of learning time, students are forced to forego any leisure activities in order



Illustration by **Danielle Xin**

to memorize every formula and each bit of information for the test of a unit they started a week ago. Staying up all night because you didn't have any time to study is detrimental to one's mental health, and closed-book tests only exacerbate that. "For the first year ever, I provided some formulas. I recognized that because we are going so fast, I thought we needed to focus on learning the material instead of memorizing a formula" says Ms. Mekhael, a grade 9 and 10 math teacher at NT. "I started to change my mindset because I thought it wasn't fair for the kids that can't process [the information] as fast. Without a formula sheet or summary sheet, how would these kids remember how to find the equation of a line and follow these steps? It is too hard, and learning all of this in weeks instead of months is too much for the kids." According to a study conducted by the International Journal of E-education, when comparing results and observations of students taking open-book tests, they determined that "exam scores were positively correlated, and students had lower levels of anxiety when taking open book exams." Students would no longer be placed at a disadvantage based on their abilities and will succeed both on paper and outside of the classroom.

Psychologists have determined that 56% of information is forgotten within one hour, 66% after one day, and 75% over 6 days. Students memorize the necessary information for tests as a way to achieve a good mark, instead of making valuable connections with the content and their personal lives. Therefore, the

relief of handing in a test is linked to our brains ability to immediately forget the retained content and hours worth of studying. This is known as the forgetting curve, a hypothesis describing that there is a decline of retained information if there is no attempt to grasp it; a description high school students fit perfectly into. Unless the learned knowledge is consciously reviewed time and time again, learning concepts and formulas will be forgotten in the span of days. Is this really what the education system wants to see in students? Studying is viewed as an enforced task, rather than a task students look forward to. With an open-book test, questions will be application based rather than simply multiple choice, allowing test takers to apply and prove their knowledge rather than memorizing the information or guessing a multiple choice answer.

At the end of the day, when someone truly considers the benefits of open-book tests, they will quickly realize they are more effective than tests without formulas and notes provided. Now, not every test has to be in this format, but there should be an increase in the amount of tests that are. With the easy access to the internet, constructive and applicable testing, better recollection, and improved mental health, open-book tests clearly outweigh closed-book tests. Students and teachers must begin to recognize the benefits of the different types of testing outside of their traditional methods. It makes one think: are schools testing their students in a way that negatively impacts them more than it helps them?



## BODY POSITIVITY

# Body positivity vs body neutrality: which one is better?

A new era for the body positivity movement .

Kiara Distin  
Section Editor

“All bodies are beautiful,” “love your body no matter what,” and “you’re not fat, you’re beautiful” are all phrases that women and girls hear spewing from the body positivity movement on a daily basis. But, what does hearing these statements really do, and what is the alternative?

Body positivity comes with its own challenges for many people. Our society does not necessarily encourage positive feelings about women’s bodies. In fact, it often does the opposite. Many women feel that loving their bodies may not be attainable for them, and therefore struggle with this concept. This societal mindset can create lots of pressure to love ourselves at all times, despite potentially being detrimental to our mental health. According to the HuffPost, if you’re anxious, depressed, or generally unhappy with yourself, “affirmations are not only useless; they can actually cause more damage than good.” When people are forced to use affirmations that they don’t believe, it can make people feel worse about themselves. Instead, it was shown that neutral affirmations, such as “I am working on accepting myself as I am” instead of “I am happy and beautiful,” worked better at pulling those negative thoughts away.

This is where body neutrality comes in. Body neutrality is a concept that focuses on what your body can do, not what it looks like. For example, my body lets me do what I love. This mindset also implies that your worth is not based on beauty. This means that you are loved and worthy no matter what you look like compared to society’s standards: ugly, beautiful, or anywhere in between. It’s about accepting that your body just is. You don’t have to love it, but also shouldn’t hate it. Yuna Lee, a person that has struggled with body image issues all her life, explained that “[her] worth and value do not depend on the way [her] body is shaped. The purpose of [her] body wasn’t to

please others or [herself], it was to allow [her] to literally exist.

We live in a world that tells us that we have everything to be insecure about, but that we should still love our oh-so-imperfect bodies. This has given me personally my fair share of insecurities that ebb and flow. Now, after 17 years on this planet, educating myself, and the understanding that my body is built perfectly for me under my belt, I have overcome almost all of these physical insecurities. Of course, there are times when I feel less than perfect, but it’s at these times that I remind myself of body neutrality. I don’t have to adore the way my body looks, I just have to be okay with it. This, combined with the gratitude I have towards it for allowing me to live and do the things I love, has opened a gateway to a whole new world of embracing my body for what it is.

In a survey of 45 high schoolers, 67% said that they would benefit from implementing this mindset. Peyton Lowe, another student in grade 11, says, “During times where I wish I could change things, I could definitely benefit from this concept as it instills the belief that what I dislike about my body doesn’t take away from who I am.”

This approach first came about in 2015, but it really started to gain traction in 2018 when

Jameela Jamil, renowned actress, activist, and feminist, became the face of the movement using her Instagram account with the username @i\_weigh. This account is dedicated to activism countering deeply flawed social norms as well as posting pictures of women with what they weigh, but not in the way you’d think. Instead of a number, these women weigh their hobbies, greatest qualities, strengths, and sometimes, even flaws. Jamil is a consistent advocate for body neutrality, saying “I believe in just not thinking about your body ... I can’t stand in front of a mirror and say ‘Oh I love my thighs, I love my cellulite.’ I can just not think about them, and think about my bank account and [other things].”

Although the body positivity movement is a valuable idea and is beneficial to those who are discriminated against because of their weight, the body neutrality movement is made for everyone, regardless of how thin or fat you are.

As well, body positivity still values beauty with slogans like “all bodies are beautiful.” Anna Sum, a student from NT, says “Toxic positivity is a thing, I feel like it still chains us to the idea that beauty should be a factor of worth.”

I often hear many of my friends complain about their insecurities, such as their roll-

ing stomachs, flabby arms, or thick thighs. The problem is, I also have all of these things, and I don’t feel ashamed of them, except for when I’m indirectly told to be. “My thighs are like whales” I hear my friend (who is much thinner than me) say. “If yours are like whales, then what are mine?” I shoot back. They try to defend themselves with “Oh, but you’re so skinny, I’m fat,” but I just shake my head because, in my heart, I know that it doesn’t matter that my thighs are thicker than theirs. I know that my thighs are strong and muscular, and allow me to do the activities that many other people can’t. I know that they have a lot of jiggle, but that’s so I don’t freeze to death. I know that my body allows me to do many things, and I am okay with the way it looks. As Jameela Jamil said, I can just not think about them.

While the body positivity movement is one for the books, it needs to make way for the new lead singer: body neutrality. This movement can change society’s attitude for the better, and make us more accepting of ourselves and of those around us. So next time you start hating yourself for not loving yourself, stop and think: why do you have to love yourself all the way? Your body does wonders for you; the least you can do is accept it.



Illustration by Danielle Fuentes



MUSIC

# TikTok’s influence on main-stream music

TikTok never stops influencing the younger generations and society itself.

Malak Rizk  
Contributor

For ages, music has been a way people express themselves, and through the development of social media—more specifically Tiktok— it’s becoming easier and easier for musicians to promote their songs. Tiktok is a huge social media platform with approximately 1.1 billion active users each month. Along with comedy sketches, dance videos, and short acting skits, people often share their various musical talents on the app. Whether this is done by showing off beats they made, sharing original songs, or posting different covers, it is very likely to find all types of music being shared on through this unique app.

Due to the fact that TikTok has a huge amount of active users, it is also really common that certain songs gain popularity

after they have gone viral on the app. Especially if they have been used by popular creators such as Charli D’amelio, Addison Rae, and Noah Beck. “Say So” by Doja Cat, “Old Town Road” by Lil Nas X, and “After Party” by Don Toliver, are all examples of songs that went viral on TikTok, and then placed on the Billboard charts. One of the most successful examples of the impact TikTok can have on song streams is shown by the song “Drivers License” by Olivia Rodrigo. On January 11th, “Drivers License” beat Spotify’s record for the most streams in one day, hitting 15.17 million streams globally. Rodrigo even went on to perform this phenomenal song on the Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon.

Not only do pre-existing songs gain popularity from TikTok, but many other songs have actually originated from the platform. As mentioned before, people often like to share their own original songs and there have been multiple occasions

when a creator will release a song after it gained attention through TikTok. A great example of this phenomenon is Anson Seabra. When he first started posting clips of him singing his original songs such as “Trying My Best”, “Walked Through Hell”, and “Hurricane”, they gained a lot of attention which played a significant role in boosting his music career. Since then, Anson has averaged 4 million monthly listeners on Spotify, making a career off his passion, one that TikTok jump started. Another amazing creator who gained her popularity off TikTok is Sara Kays. Her first song “Smaller Than This” gained millions of views and thousands of positive replies. She then went on to release it as its own single on April 22nd, 2020. On Nov. 5th, she released a song she had previewed on Tik Tok, “Remember That Night”, which later went on to gain 60 million streams. Both are outstanding musicians who cover various important topics and were able to get recognition



Illustration by Suhani Sharma

through TikTok. Music is something that connects people, and is, in my opinion, one of the absolute best ways to release all of your pent up emotions. It is something that can make you feel supported and understood when you feel alone. The fact that TikTok can push creators to put their music out there, and boosts pre-existing songs is something truly amazing.

MUSIC

# Sixteen

New and improved lyrics to Driver’s License by Oliva Rodrigo that all sixteen year olds can relate to.

Pakynam Sadek  
Contributor

I was so excited to turn sixteen  
I’d get a license and drive  
And feel so finally free  
  
Or maybe I’d get a job  
And learn some responsibility  
  
I’d get the marks I always wanted  
But could never achieve  
  
I’d find myself  
On a journey made especially  
just for me

But then the universe disagreed  
  
And drove me on a path  
That I could’ve never foreseen  
  
My life was in pieces  
So to speak  
—  
  
I wanted to yell  
Harder than anyone else can  
scream  
  
I wanted to feel  
Something so big and so unreal  
  
But most importantly  
  
I wanted to forget  
That there was something wrong  
with me

But all the doctors  
Made it hard to believe  
  
They told me they didn’t know  
whats wrong with me  
And that I should just live life  
normally  
  
But normal was distorted  
And I saw how people looked at  
me  
—  
  
By the end of the year  
I looked at that long list of  
things I wanted to achieve  
  
I saw how there’s no hope  
And decided to ruin everything  
that felt any ounce of real

I was self destructive  
I didn’t want anything to suc-  
ceed  
  
I lost my friends and people I  
called family  
  
So i’m standing here wishing  
all hope hasn’t been reaped  
And the light through the tun-  
nel hasn’t peaked  
  
Because I was so excited to turn  
sixteen  
I want to believe there’s some-  
thing left for me  
—  
  
And all in all  
i’m so excited to turn seventeen



# The Oscar's new diversity rules

Is the Academy's latest attempt at diversity hope for a more inclusive film industry, or is it just another publicity stunt?

**Baran Forootan**  
Copy Editor

For the first couple decades of the Oscars, the actors and films that won, were primarily revolved around straight white men, their lives, their stories, and their opinions. However, now it is 2021 and thank god, we have moved on from that. But have we really?

This year's Oscar will be the first since the Academy announced their new set of diversity regulations for eligibility of Best Picture Movies last September. Although they will not go into full effect until 2024, it will be interesting to see the impact of the new regulations since they came with such varying degrees of critique. Although, to really understand what these new rules mean for diversity in the Oscars and the Hollywood movie community in general, we will need some context on the Academy Awards past.

Starting off in 1939, Hattie McDaniel made history by becoming the first African American to win an Oscar, as her role of Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*. Even though the list of winners had already been leaked, and her win was already known, the producer of the show had to pull a lot of strings to get her permitted into the Ambassador Hotel, where the show was being held, since like most venues at the time had a strict "no-blacks" rule. She was seated at a small table in the corner of the room, rather than with her fellow *Gone with the Wind* white co-stars. Though her win was legendary, it did not do her many favours. Throughout her entire career, she was continuously cast as a servant or maid. Because of this, she received some resentment from the Black activist community for fueling the existing stereotypes. The award itself met a tragic end. After McDaniel's death in 1952, she left that historical award to HBCU (Historically Black College and University) Howard University, but after a quick appraisal, it was deemed to have no value and has gone missing ever since.

In 1972, *Cabaret* became the first movie to win an Oscar

that portrayed LGBTQ+ representation. It generally followed the story of the acclaimed musical of the same name. Set just before the rise of Nazi Germany, the movie follows the lives of Sally, a cabaret dancer and her love tri-

angle with two of the lounges regulars. This movie has been praised for being one of the first to represent sexual and gender flu-

idity in Hollywood films. *Cabaret* ended up winning 8 awards, but not Best Picture. Unfortunately, it is more common than one might think for movies containing LGBTQ+ and other minority storylines to win numerous awards; except the most prestigious one, the Best Picture.

Another great and famous example is *Brokeback Mountain*, a movie both loved by critics and viewers. The film received 8 nominations in many prestigious categories such as Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, yet walked away with only 3. Its loss to *Crash* for the Best Picture sparked what many called the "Brokeback Backlash". Some believed that *Crash* was simply a better movie, while others, knowing that *Brokeback Mountain* made more money and received better reviews, said that in the privacy of voting booths, the Academy actually showed its true prejudices.

Over four decades later, and after a confusing mix-up with *La La Land*, the prestigious Best Picture was given to *Moonlight*. Breaking multiple barriers that night, it was, and still is, the first and only LGBTQ+ film to win Best Picture. Mahershala Ali, who portrayed the protagonist of the film, Juan, was also the first Muslim actor to win the Best Actor award.

With this information in mind, the natural assump-

tion would be that as time goes on the more diverse and open-minded the Hollywood community has become, yet sometimes it feels as if we are moving backwards.

After the 2015 Oscars revealed that nearly all of their nominations consisted of white actors, viewers and angry actors alike took to Twitter. April Reign, a diversity activist, started the trending hashtag #OscarsSoWhite which sparked a big discussion that got people notic-

ing the concerning consistency with the Academy Awards. As recently as last year, in 2020, all the best director nominees were male, and out of the five, four were also white. It is not surprising to find that the authoritative positions in the film industry are held by men, since in the Oscars' entire history only five women have been nominated for best director. Kathryn Bigelow is the only one to have won. Also, in the 2020 Oscars, out of all the 20 actor nominees, stretching over four different award categories, there was only one person of colour.

Now, it is only understandable for people to be hesitant with their praise regarding the new rules since they aren't as drastic as some might hope. To summarize, the Academy has stated that a film must meet two out of the four criteria categories in order to be eligible for the Best Picture Award. The first (Category A) category revolves around the story, characters, actors and on-screen representation. Category B requires diversity from the off-camera team with 30% of the team being from two underrepresented groups (people of colour, women, LGBTQ+, etc). Category C requires the film production company to offer opportunities in training, such as paid internships to people from underrepresented ethnic groups. Finally, Category D deals with the marketing of a

film, requiring multiple senior-associates to be from diverse groups.

On one hand, people believe that these new rules are too little too late. "The Academy is hoping to increase diversity in its best-picture pool—by implementing a set of inclusion standards that every best-picture nominee from the last 15 years already fulfills," wrote the *Vanity Fair*. They are right, even movies like *The Irishman*, with a predominantly white cast and storyline, would have actually been eligible with these new rules. The *Irishman* producers (Netflix) meet category D requirements, and Category B is covered by their two female department leaders and one Mexican department head. Another frequent opinion, brought up by Viola Davis and many others, is that the rules will not be useful since it's the mindsets that need to change. "I don't want to be a part of any piece of paper that has to force people to see me," said Davis. Since the voting committee that decides the nominees is majorly disproportionately excluding those of people of colour. In 2012, it consisted of 94% white members, and a decrease to 84%, in 2019. It makes sense that these regulations will not be helpful, because they are not trying to change the problem at its core.

On the contrary, others find the regulations "dictatorial" and "anti-artist". After the initial reveal of the rules back in September, actor Kristie Allen tweeted, "This is a disgrace to artists everywhere. Can you imagine telling Picasso what had to be in his f--king paintings. You people have lost your minds. Control artists, control individual thought ... OSCAR ORWELL." Acclaimed Canadian author and Commentator, Mark Steyn went as far as saying "We used to mock the Commies for doing things like this".

Whichever side one takes, the question that everyone wants to be answered is, is this just a facade on the Academy's part to avoid a diversity scandal, or is it real change that people have been fighting for for years?

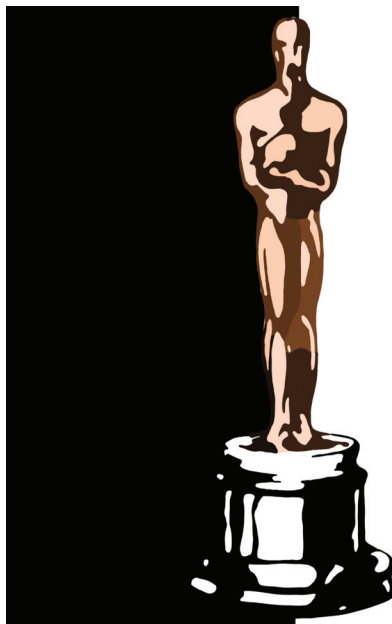


Illustration by **Charlotte Shin**



## TV SHOWS

# Canadian media gaining popularity thanks to Netflix

An overview of Canadian shows and movies gaining hype after getting added to Netflix.

Natasha Pfeffer  
Contributor

The Canadian film industry is not as popularized as the American one, meaning that many Canadian shows and movies go unnoticed. However, thanks to Netflix, many Canadian shows have gained popularity since Netflix reaches a large audience of many different people.

## Schitt's Creek

Schitt's Creek is a Canadian show filmed in Goodwood Canada, located north of Toronto. The show is centered around a wealthy family that moves to a small town named Schitt's Creek after they suddenly lose their wealth. This CBC show was released on Netflix that has received lots of attention since it first aired in 2015. As of September 2020, this show reached over 839 million viewers! This witty comedy was produced by Danny and Eugene Levy, also the main actors on the show. What's crazy is that they are both father and son in real life and on the show. The other two main characters are Canadian actors, Annie Murphy and Cathrine O'Hara. Since its release, Schitt's Creek has won 64 of 176 award nominations. These wins include: an Emmy for Outstanding comedy, an Emmy for Outstanding writing for comedy series, and an Emmy for Outstanding casting for comedy series.

## Kim's Convenience

Kim's Convenience is a show based on a Canadian play of the same name and takes place in Toronto. The first performance of this play was performed in the year 2011 and was written by Ins Choi. It is a sitcom and comedy ensemble

consisting of a family of four played by Paul Sun-Hyung Lee, Simu Liu, Andrea Bang and Jean Yoon. The show is about a Korean family that owns a convenience store and talks about the clash of cultures that the family had faced when moving to Toronto. This CBC original show, also streamed on Netflix, has attracted a lot of attention and won many awards including Best Comedy series 2018 at the Canadian screen awards, Best Picture Editing in a Comedy Program or series in 2017 on the Canadian screen awards, and won a Leo award for Best Performance or host in a Music. This is an interesting show to see because the scenes are shot in local places like Kensington Market and Queens Street. At the moment, there are five seasons and counting.

## Anne With an E

Anne with an E is a Canadian show, filmed in PEI, based on the book Anne of Green

Gables. This is a classic coming of age show with a small town twist. Those who watch it would describe it as a heartfelt, emotional, feel good tv show. Unfortunately, Netflix cancelled the show after season 3 and the chances of it being picked up elsewhere are slim. Despite this, fans are lobbying for a reboot. There's even a change.org petition for a season four renewal and many hashtags that promote the renewal. The main character is played by Amybeth McNulty. Some other main characters are played by: Geraldine James, R.H Thomson, Dalila Bela, Aymeric Jett Montaz, Lucas J. Zumann, Corrine Koslo, Dalmir Abuzied, Jonna Douglass, Kiawenti:io Tarbell. Some of the awards that this show has won include but aren't limited to: a Canadian Screen Award (CSA) for Best Costume Designer, a CSA for Best Production Design or Art Direction in a Fiction Program or Series and another CSA for Best Direction in a Drama

Series.

## The Decline

The Decline is a movie set at a remote survivalist training camp that is about a fatal accident that sets up for a show-down. This film was filmed in Matawinie, Quebec, which is located in the southwest part of Quebec. This is a Netflix original movie that runs for an hour and 23 minutes. The cast's three main characters are played by Guillaume Laurin, Marie-Evelyn and Réal Bossé. This movie is best described as dark and suspenseful. This movie is a relatively new movie; therefore, it wouldn't have been nominated for any awards just yet.

I hope that by reading this article you have discovered a Canadian film or show that you are interested in, will now watch, and enjoy.



Illustration by Charlotte Shin



# Pacey Witter: the best friend who stole the show

There's the main character, but have you ever met the yellow character? Pacey is the best friend with a compelling story.



Photo Courtesy of Everett Collection

**Blaize Exeter**  
Section Editor

Over winter break, I needed a new series to binge after finishing *Even Stevens* (which is excellent by the way). I am a huge fan of teen dramas, so when the *Dawson's Creek* trailer auto-played on my Netflix home screen, I was immediately intrigued. I honestly have no clue how I would have survived quad two without it. There are so many things to love about the show, but I think my favourite element is the character development. Usually, I only have one or two favourite characters in a show, and for the rest of the characters, I either don't like or am indifferent to them. However, with *Dawson's Creek*, each character at one point or another, was both fantastic and terrible. Depending on the episode's circumstances, I found myself rooting for characters I never would have imagined liking. I think this made the show more realistic as no one is perfect and we all have moments we're not proud of.

Though the show is called *Dawson's Creek*, I find Pacey Witter's storyline to be the most compelling. The audience is first introduced to Pacey as Dawson's witty sidekick, who's a little misogynistic but hilarious nonetheless. Overtime, he develops into a core character of the show.

I always like to hear the bad news first, so let's start with his most prominent character flaw. Pacey struggles tremendously with his hero complex. For those of you who are unfamiliar, a hero/savior complex or hero syndrome is "when someone strives to be the hero of the situation. No matter the situation or the odds, they want to be the ones that save the day." This is mostly seen through his romantic relationships. For example, Andie, Pacey's first girlfriend in the series, struggled with PTSD, so he took it upon himself to essentially "save her" from herself. Obviously that was ridiculous because he is the furthest thing from a mental health professional, but nonetheless he did everything he could to protect her. Unfortunately, his good intentions quickly turned toxic. Pacey grew more and more self-

ish and controlling which ultimately led to a tragic end to the relationship. On the other hand, Pacey's hero complex resulted in some pretty epic romantic gestures. To prove his love to Joey, who was conflicted with her passion for art, he bought her a wall. Like... a literal wall to paint on. That was definitely one of my favourite scenes of the series because literally, who does that?

Now onto everything I love about Pacey Witter. Though he was constantly evolving as a character, Pacey's sense of humor was consistent. Even in the saddest moments, like when a character who shall not be named was on their deathbed, he still managed to bring smiles to everyone's faces. There aren't a lot of funny characters on the show, so his jokes and sarcastic comments were vital to its success. Another thing I like about Pacey is that he's intelligent. This is a rare instance as we usually get a character who's either smart or funny, but Pacey happens to be both. Sure he didn't go to university like the rest of his friends, but post secondary isn't for everyone so that shouldn't be a factor of his in-

telligence. Later down the road, he managed to secure a stock-broking job and was pretty good at it. Not everyone can do that. You have to be able to learn and adjust quickly to succeed in that field which is exactly what he did. Of course, Pacey made some dumb decisions like investing both his and Dawson's entire savings in a sketchy medical stock, but at the end of the day everybody makes mistakes and everybody has those days, word to Hannah Montana.

If I had to compare, I think Pacey is similar to Shawn Hunter from *Boy Meets World*. Both of them are the main character's best friend and are perceived as people who probably will not make anything of themselves. However, they both end up proving everyone, including themselves wrong. I guess it's no surprise that Shawn is my favourite character from *Boy Meets World*.

So if you're looking for a new show to watch during your Zoom classes, I recommend *Dawson's Creek* for its drama, corniness and most importantly, Pacey Witter.



FILM REVIEW

# Malcolm and Marie

A review of the new movie on Netflix featuring Zendaya and John David Washington; an amazing and meaningful performance.

**Alyssa Pather**  
Contributor

On February 5th, Sam Levinson’s ‘Malcolm and Marie’ was released on Netflix. With all eyes on Zenda-

vid Washington both give such a good performance that the age difference does not feel uncomfortable. Zendaya holds her own as Marie amazingly well. Her acting felt so different from anything she had done before, so it was easy to not associate her with her teenaged charac-

ter. I think that Zendaya gave an Oscar worthy performance.

John David Washington was great as well, but the writing of his character hindered his ability to perform as his character. Malcolm from the beginning is a lot less likeable than Marie. Her character feels much

more likeable than Marie. I’m usually not used to seeing black and white films, but it was a great choice for Malcolm and Marie. Cinematographer Marcell Rev took such care with every shot, it made all the difference. This movie was filmed during quarantine, so the entire movie consisted of only the two



Photo Courtesy of **The Concordian**

ya, John David Washignton, and Sam Levinson right now, this was a highly anticipated film. Netflix was counting on it to be their drama of the year, providing a budget of \$30 million; however, there was a lot of controversy surrounding this film. The first being the age gap between 24 year old Zendaya and 36 year old John David Washington. The second controversy regarded Sam Levinson and his writing of Black characters. Levinson has been criticized in the past for his use of the N word in the film and his portrayal Black characters. Here is a spoiler free review of the film:

Zendaya and John Da-

vid Washington both give such a good performance that the age difference does not feel uncomfortable. Zendaya holds her own as Marie amazingly well. Her acting felt so different from anything she had done before, so it was easy to not associate her with her teenaged character. I think that Zendaya gave an Oscar worthy performance.

John David Washington was great as well, but the writing of his character hindered his ability to perform as his character. Malcolm from the beginning is a lot less likeable than Marie. Her character feels much

more human than his, even though the conflict of the film surrounds his career. The holes in Malcolm can be attributed to the feeling of Sam Levinson trying to speak through the character. Malcolm would go on monologues of what it meant to be a filmmaker. Regardless, he was still incredibly entertaining to watch. The writing in general was average. It was neither brilliant, nor abysmal. The pacing was odd at some points, but it didn’t ruin anything for me. The writing would have most likely come across worse without such good actors in the starring roles.

What stood out to me as amazing was the cinematogra-

phy. I’m usually not used to seeing black and white films, but it was a great choice for Malcolm and Marie. Cinematographer Marcell Rev took such care with every shot, it made all the difference. This movie was filmed during quarantine, so the entire movie consisted of only the two

actors alone in a rented house. Even in lulls in the dialogue, you were able to admire the beautiful camera work. In conclusion, while the writing was slow at times, the acting and cinematography was amazing and really made this movie. I would expect academy recognition due to the amount of money that Netflix put into this movie, though it would probably be recognition for the acting and cinematography only. It was enjoyable to watch, but I wouldn’t watch it again.

3.5/5 stars.



## TV SHOW REVIEW

# WandaVision: a heartbreaking show

A review of WandaVision with no spoilers! Learn the truth about WandaVision and how dark it actually is.



Photo Courtesy of ELLE

**Liam McLaughlin**  
Copy Editor

After 23 films, The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has become a staple of the action film industry, and is etched into the memories of those of us who grew up watching its movies. It is safe to say, even a casual Marvel fan knows what it means to be an Avenger: fighting for those who can't, against any threat, be it corporate greed or surveillance state or a purple alien (The Atlantic). Avengers Endgame (2019), Marvel's last installment of its phase 3 saga, was so much of the culmination of our journey watching Marvel Films, and validated in many of our minds what it took to be an Avenger. 23 films initialized a new chapter for Marvel, alongside a revamp of its storied Avengers.

Disney Plus, an American subscription streaming service owned and operated by Walt Disney launched in Canada on November 12, 2019. It features an assortment of classic Disney films, as well as a select few feature animated films. It was clear Disney's new streaming service

would be the conduit for releasing future Marvel films and spinoff series, though die hard Marvel fans, like myself, wondered how Disney planned to incorporate phase 4 of the MCU into its new streaming platform.

Nearly three months later, WandaVision, Marvel's newest spinoff series, premiered its first two episodes on Disney Plus. The first episode of WandaVision showcases Wanda (Scarlet Witch) and Paul Bettany (Vision), who previously died in Infinity War (2018), performing the life of a happy couple in a colourless 60's sitcom. The next episode jumps forward a decade; showcasing the happy couple contemplating their roles in the small town of Westview; except nothing is regular about it. After two episodes, WandaVision reveals no clear villain, or major special effects; though, when a mysterious man approaches Wanda, she does not undisguise and initiate battle, or wiggle her fingers to produce her signature red energy (The Atlantic). Wanda instead rewinds to an earlier moment where she was with Vision.

WandaVision tells a sad story - which seems especially pertinent as the show transi-

tions between superficial comedy and absolute seriousness - in which Wanda fabricates a reality so that she can be with her deceased husband, Vision. Wanda dismisses all signals of normalcy from her neighbours seeking asylum in her magical sphere and the outside world in order to fulfill her self-seeking desires. Though, many things are wrong. To make this possible, Wanda has taken an entire town hostage, who she programs as side characters in her televised series WandaVision, and implausibly resurrects Vision, who is skeptical of his existence in Wanda's world. An Avenger, for the first time, rejects her own duty; which is something Marvel fans are not accustomed to seeing.

Yet, Wanda's reality is ironic as her televised character preaches honesty, and goodness, meanwhile she is cognizant of her increasingly selfish ways. Five episodes in, Wanda's sons confront her over an argument she had with Vision, looking for reassurance that everything will be fine. Wanda responds by telling them, "In life, you can't change everything, you have to learn to accept things for the way they are." Except, Wanda

repeatedly disregards these fundamental principles.

The true sadness of this sitcom, however, is that no love can undo the circumstances that have led them to this point, nor can it justify Wanda's selfishness. The true message that lies in WandaVision is that people, even Avengers, must learn to accept things; though this means Wanda and Vision may never be reunited. WandaVision showcases a woman who has departed from her true love. More importantly, WandaVision spectacles an Avenger who has wittfully lost sight of her heroic duties, to champion good and avert evil.

It appears that in Marvel's latest television installment, the only real villain that comes to mind is Wanda herself, as she is able to endure her struggle only at the expense of others. As I finished the fifth episode of WandaVision, and repositioned my focus onto something less engaging, it was made clear that Marvel's phase 4 is not marked by flashy special effects, or an epic struggle to save humanity, but rather a single woman's efforts to save herself from her grief (The Atlantic).





**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

# Sobering but necessary: athletes in-put in social justice issues

Why athletes need to be involved in social justice endeavours.

**Angela Krstic**  
Contributor

The long-time, widespread rhetoric that professional athletes should separate their work and their social justice concerns has been diminished as a result of the rise of social justice activism. Historically, we have seen athletes standing up, fighting for the causes they believe in, and accepting the many ramifications they incur from their actions. A paradigm shift has occurred, and many members of society have accepted that athletes speaking up on injustices is normal behaviour. The sad reality is that athletes should not have to continue fighting to reduce the same types of social justice issues that have long been fought for, but must do so in order to incite real and necessary change in our world.

Behind every recent and widespread display of athlete-activism is the sombre tale of other athletes who fought for the same causes in the past, and who undeniably risked their careers and even their lives in doing so. Some of the most prominent, qualified and respected athletes were also highly influential activists that have shaped the world and demonstrated a level of excellence one should always strive to achieve, both in their respective sports and their social justice endeavours. Muhammad Ali was “the first great sports star to speak unabashedly about social issues and

challenge the status quo” according to Craig Lazzaretti from Stadium Talk. Ali was stripped of his heavyweight title for refusing to be drafted to the Vietnam War, demonstrating how standing up for social injustices can result in detrimental consequences in one’s career. Martina Navratilova was an incredible tennis player who jeopardized endorsements and popularity by openly expressing her homosexuality. The Syracuse 8 walked out of a practice to protest racial discrimination both in their football program and on campus, but were all unfortunately kicked off the team. Nonetheless, all of these athletes, among others, championed the causes they strongly believed in to help inspire change in the world and reduce the injustices faced by different marginalized groups, both in sports and overall in the world.

Perhaps the most notable and controversial movement in the past decade is kneeling during the national anthem against police brutality, which Colin Kaepernick started during the 2016 NFL season. Kaepernick said, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color...To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way.” Kaepernick has had no success in rejoining the NFL but has become a popular figure with big corporations such as Nike, who have endorsed him, his message and his cause.

More recent displays of activism, albeit gracious and sweeping attempts to spontaneously reduce injustice and ameliorate civil and social

rights, should be taken for what they truly are: a sobering reminder that regardless of all the work that has been done to reduce injustice, there is still a great deal of progress to be made. The sheer fact that athletes, whose jobs are to compete and demonstrate their physical and mental excellence in their respective sports, feel they need to speak up on social issues, proves that there is a lack of accountability and progress being made within the social institutions and individuals in the world who are meant to be addressing and solving issues, such as those who work in all levels of the government.

That said, athlete involvement in social justice endeavours is necessary because it demonstrates accountability and responsibility on the part of the global citizens with such large platforms that they have the potential to further push a social justice agenda that benefits all. Sports are one of the key parts of television that keep the industry afloat. The superbowl is often the single-most widely watched event on TV, and in 2020 the highest watched sporting event was the Chiefs-49ers SuperBowl, raking in 100.45 million viewers according to Sports Media Watch. The numerous sports movies, TV shows and documentaries are also notable mentions when it comes to viewership, such as The Last Dance, a popular Netflix documentary about Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. It is indisputable that these channels of entertainment and media have the potential to be exceptional platforms for raising awareness and promoting social justice movements.

As described by Kiara Distin, our own NTAA female Head, “A lot of the world looks to athletes as role models... If athletes take the lead on these important issues, then it’s more likely that the world will follow suit. By using an extremely influential platform and showing people that they care about these issues themselves, they inspire other people to care, speak up, and do their part as well.” In the past year alone, we have seen athletes from all disciplines bravely putting forward their beliefs and values on social justice issues. For instance, many basketball teams, like the Toronto Raptors, have worn jerseys and shoes with “Black Lives Matter” on them. These types of displays still garner widespread coverage to millions of people and relegate important values for all members of society to consider.

The trend of athletes standing up for what they believe in must continue in a world where social injustices are pronounced, as it inspires the younger and older generations alike to follow suit, fostering a society more adept to change and less concerned with separation between politics and sports entertainment. Injustice is present in every aspect, every industry, and every institution in society, and the boundaries of the issue do not stop at sports. When those in power fail to resolve the most pressing social issues, it is everyone’s responsibility, especially athletes with large platforms, to speak up, and to use one’s platform for good regardless of the possible repercussions.

**EDUCATION**

# Champa Bay and other simultaneous sports successes

With the recent success of the Big 4 teams in Tampa Bay, the area has recently been given the nickname “Champa Bay”. With these fresh triumphs for Tampa, we explore other cities that have had success at the same time in all four sports leagues.

**Kaura Sankaran**  
Section Editor

The “Big 4” refers to the four biggest sports leagues in the United States: the Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Hockey League (NHL), the National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Football League (NFL). Although only thirteen cities have teams in each league, many other cities have teams in two or three leagues and have enjoyed simultaneous success in sev-

eral of the Big 4. Most recently, over the last year, Tampa Bay has been a triumphant city in the MLB, NHL, and NFL as the Tampa Bay Lightning won the Stanley Cup, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers won the Super Bowl and the Tampa Bay Rays were finalists in the World Series. With the Toronto Raptors playing in Tampa for the 2020-2021 season, many have speculated that the city’s victory may carry over to the Raptors.

As Tampa may enjoy simultaneous success in all four leagues, I thought it would be interesting to see

if any other cities have come close or have been victorious in the Big 4. Before we start, the reader should understand that for this article’s purposes, simultaneous success will be defined as a championship or finalist finish in at least three of the four leagues within consecutive seasons. For example, if a city wins the 2019 NBA Finals, the 2019 World Series, the 2020 Super Bowl, and the 2020 Stanley Cup that would be considered consecutive seasons because they all happened one after the other without missing a season.

After extensive background research, it was found that of the thirteen cities with at least one team in each league, only one city has ever had success in all four leagues. This was Philadelphia in 1980. Although the Phillies were the only team to win, the Flyers were the runner-ups in the 1980 Stanley Cup Final, the 76ers came second to the Los Angeles Lakers in the 1980 NBA Finals and the Philadelphia Eagles made it to Super Bowl XV, making Philadelphia the first and only city to have teams competing in all four championships.



A few other cities like Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles have managed simultaneous success in three of the four leagues, but perhaps the most notable was New York’s run in 1927 carrying over to 1928. The Yankees won the World Series, the New York Giants won the 1927 NFL Championship, and the New York Rangers won the 1928 Stanley Cup. At the time, the National

Basketball League did not exist so New York not only made it to every final, but they won every championship possible. Detroit had a similar occurrence 8 years later when the Tigers won the 1935 World Series, the Lions won the 1935 NFL Championship and the Red Wings won the 1936 Stanley Cup. Multiple cities have also seen excellence in two leagues like Boston in 2018, Los

Angeles in 2002, Pittsburgh in 1979 and Baltimore in 1970. Although only one city has seen triumphs in all four leagues since their inception, that doesn’t stop other cities from achieving the same success. Futures in New York look promising with the Knicks looking to make the playoffs for the first time in years and the Giants acquiring a new young core.

Los Angeles could also be the next city to win in all four as the Dodgers look to defend their World Series and the Lakers look to repeat their NBA Finals win. Regardless of which city succeeds next, as fans, the one thing we can count on is many exciting and competitive seasons to come.

NBA

# Is Kyle Lowry leaving the Raptors?

Is Toronto’s beloved veteran leaving after the 2020-2021 season?



Photo by **Nathalie Adriana Funes Serna**

**Janna Kazerani**  
Contributor

If you’re a basketball fan, chances are you already know the rumours. What’s up with the rumours about Kyle Lowry supposedly LEAVING the Raptors? It all started on social media with a Bleacher Report Instagram post that read “The Miami Heat have long shown interest in Kyle Lowry.” While discussing this, Bleacher Report stated, “[t]here is a portion of Raptors personnel, league sources said, that

believes the franchise should bid its beloved All-Star farewell and begin Toronto’s next chapter in earnest.” This has mostly been popularized as fake news, but since Lowry will be a free agent by the end of this season, leaving is certainly a possibility. Shortly after the news about the Heat’s interest in the Toronto star, social media blew up with posts about the veteran selling his 5.3 million dollar mansion in Toronto. This news came from Sports Illustrated’s Aaron Rose. It could be that with all the new implications and restrictions the Raptors have faced from COVID-19, Lowry decided to sell his house. This could also be because his family is in Tampa with him and the Raptors’ are offi-

cially finishing the season in Tampa. Perhaps it is in fact fake news, just as some are speculating. There’s no way to really tell, until the season ends and the trade talks for free agents begin. Fans like Leaside High School student Aleksandar Tisma have been weighing in saying, “They’ve already had a pretty bad season, so they would do horribly without him.” Lowry has been the heart and soul of the team for the last nine years, so Raptors’ fans across the country are hoping for an announcement that will prove these awful rumours about him otherwise. On March 9th, 2021, Raptors fans received a bit of relief after Lowry took to social

media to address these rumours; “The lies people tell in the media are amazing!! Don’t put [information] out when they ain’t come from me!” he said, specifically addressing these rumours. So what could all this mean? Will the longest ever serving Raptor leave by the end of the season? Is the city perhaps reading too much into reported news, just as everyone had done previously with Kawhi Leonard and the “will he stay” controversy? The only thing Raptors’ fans can do right now, is wait and see.



NFL

# 10th NFL Honours award-winners

Elena Vlitass  
Kaura Sankaran  
Section Editors



Photo courtesy of CBS

## Justin Herbert Offensive Rookie of the Year

From Oregon University, Justin Herbert had a stellar NFL rookie season. Drafted 6th overall by the Los Angeles Chargers, Herbert did not disappoint. He finished the season with 36 total touchdowns (31 passing touchdowns) and eight 300 yard passing games in six of which he also had 3 passing touchdowns. He became the youngest player in NFL history to throw for 30 touchdowns in a single season at the age of 22. Adding to his impressive resume, Herbert became the second player in NFL history to surpass 4000 passing yards through the first 14 games of his career. Before him, the only other player to have ever done this is Patrick Mahomes. The young star accomplished many feats in his first season and can be expected to have a huge impact on his team in the future seasons.

## Chase Young Defensive Rookie of the Year

Fresh out of Ohio State University, Defensive End Chase Young made waves in his first season in the NFL earning himself the competitive Defensive Rookie of the Year Award. This talented defensive end was drafted second overall by the Washington Football Team and he did not disappoint. Young padded some amazing stats as a rookie including 7.5 sacks, 4 forced fumbles, 42 tackles and 1 touchdown. Great things are expected in the future of this young star’s NFL career.



Photo courtesy of CBS



Photo courtesy of Cat Crave

## Teddy Bridgewater Art Rooney Award

The Art Rooney Award is given in recognition of outstanding sportsmanship on the NFL field. New to the Carolina Panthers roster, Teddy Bridgewater quickly showed his team that he is a team player, showing the qualities of a true sportsman. Teddy displayed his deep respect for the game of football, his teammates and his competitors. Bridgewater started his career on the Minnesota Vikings however after sustaining an ACL tear in 2016, he has been working hard to prove he still has what it takes to be an NFL quarterback. The Panthers signed Bridgewater to a starting position giving him the opportunity he had been working towards. Despite an abysmal season for the Panthers, the quarterback concluded his season with 3733 total passing yards, a 92.1 passer rating and 15 touchdowns before sustaining an ankle injury. The Panthers gained a true leader when they signed Bridgewater. As a part of the Art Rooney Award, Bridgewater will be given \$25,000 to donate to a charity of his choice. A former Panther, Luke Kuchely also previously won the Art Rooney Award, which speaks volumes about the positive qualities of Panthers’ team culture.

## T.J. Watt Deacon Jones Player of the Year

The Deacon Jones Player of the Year Award is awarded to the player that leads the league in sacks. Pittsburgh Steeler T.J. Watt is a dominant player on the field, finishing the 2020-21 season with 15.0 sacks, 2 forced fumbles and 43 solo tackles. As a brother of an NFL veteran, Cardinal JJ Watt and fellow Steeler Derek Watt, T.J. comes from a competitive family and shows his passion for the game on the field. Since 2017, Watt has a total of 49.5 total sacks in his 4-year career making him a key player on the Steelers’ defence.

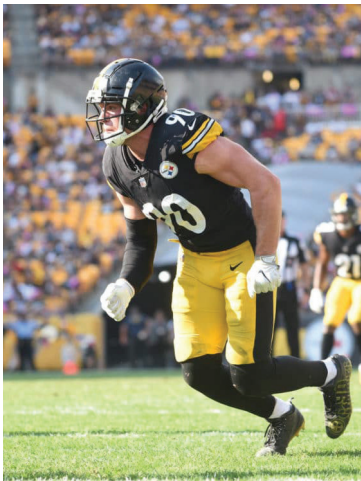


Photo courtesy of The Athletic



Photo courtesy of Buffalo News

## Josh Allen Fantasy Player of the Year

At only age 24, Josh Allen has made huge strides towards stardom with his selection to the All-Pro First-Team and MVP-worthy season this year. The young quarterback plays in the heart of the Buffalo Bills’ dangerous offence and with 436.1 DraftKings fantasy points this season, it’s no surprise he was the Fantasy Player of the Year. In his third year, Allen put up 37 touchdowns and 4544 yards with only 10 interceptions, giving him a completion percentage of 69.2%. The quarterback led the league with an average of 27.3 DraftKings fantasy points per week, giving his fantasy team’s owner an immense advantage each week.





Photo courtesy of **Sporting News**

### Steve Cannon Salute to Service

The NFL and the USAA partner up to present the Salute to Service Award as part of a year-round commitment to honour the military community. Every year, all 32 organizations nominate coaches, active and former players, team executives and personnel who best display their support for the military community. Steve Cannon, the CEO of AMB Sports and Entertainment and the director of the day-to-day activities for the Atlanta Falcons, has won this year for his unwavering support to American veterans and their families. Cannon served as a First Lieutenant in West Germany during the fall of the iron curtain and with the help of the Atlanta Falcons, he has dedicated his platform towards taking care of veterans and their families. In 2014 he started the Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund with his fellow graduates from military school, in an effort to support a fallen classmate’s family. The organization is dedicated to providing scholarships to veterans and military family members, especially to children of fallen or wounded soldiers, and has raised \$17 million to date. In 2018, he and former Falcons Head Coach, Dan Quinn, also led the first NFL team-directed visit and support to soldiers in Iraq and Kuwait.

### Alex Smith Comeback Player of the Year

After a devastating leg injury in 2018 requiring serious medical treatment and yielding a dance with death, Alex Smith defied all odds making his way back onto the NFL field. On November, 18th, 2018, Smith sustained a compound fracture that snapped his tibia and fibula, forcing him to undergo 17 surgeries. A few short days after his first surgery, the Smith family had their lives turned upside down after doctors discovered Smith’s leg was infected and he was septic from chemicals released into his body. Doctors feared for Smith’s life as the infections and complications could lead to severe organ damages and death. After fears that they would have to amputate his leg altogether, Smith was focused on fighting for his life, never imagining he would be able to get back on the field. At this time, Smith felt like he had lost a large part of his life but he knew he had to persevere to show his kids that they should never give up, regardless of the odds. After over two years of intensive physical therapy and medical treatment, Smith accomplished the impossible and fought his way back onto the NFL field. By July 2020, he was cleared to return to practice with his team, the Washington Football Team. By November, Smith was able to start a few games helping turn around the Washington Football Team’s season, giving the team a playoff berth. Upon his return, Smith received an outpour of support from fans and supporters from all over the league to congratulate him for the mental and physical challenges he overcame. Smith credited the care from doctors and support from his family and teammates as he accepted the Comeback Player of the Year award, as the reason he was able to make his triumphant return.



Photo courtesy of **People**



### Kevin Stefanski Coach of the Year

In just his first year, Cleveland Browns Coach Kevin Stefanski played a pivotal role in turning a Browns team that had a losing record since 2008 into a playoff team. Under Coach Stefanski, the Browns won their first play-off game in 25 years and achieved an 11 win season for the first time since 1994. His leadership helped instill a sense of community in the team so they could find their style. Even when the team was riddled with injuries and faced challenges with COVID-19, Stefanski helped manage and train his team to score the second-most points in franchise history, rank third in the league in total rushing yards, and become the third-best red zone offence. The team went on to beat the Pittsburgh Steelers 48-37 with authority, despite the fact that Coach Stefanski was forced to stay home for the game after he contracted COVID-19. Stefanski was able to return for the divisional round where the Cleveland Browns, who only a few seasons ago had a record of 0-16, fought hard against and nearly beat the Superbowl 54 champion Kansas City Chiefs. Stefanski received half of the total votes for the Coach of the Year award to recognize his contributions and leadership that led the team to a quick turnaround.



### Brian Daboll Assistant Coach of the Year

With the Bills’ upcoming and explosive offence, it was only a matter of time before their offensive coordinator was named assistant coach of the year. Brian Daboll has been the offensive coordinator for Buffalo since 2018, and since his arrival, he has worked closely with quarterback Josh Allen to help the Bills develop into the second-best offence in the league. They were previously the 30th-best offence and have made the largest improvement in the league over that period. His coaching also helped end the Bills’ 24-year playoff-win drought this year with the second-best record in the league. In his early days, Daboll was a Canadian-American letterman safety throughout high school and university. He entered the NFL in 2000 as a defensive assistant for the Patriots and has won five rings under Coach Bill Belichick. After rotating around the league, he found a home in New England’s division-rival, Buffalo.

Photo courtesy of **Buffalo Rumblings**



### Kyler Murray + DeAndre Hopkins Clutch Play of the Year - “Hail Murray”

This season, Kyler Murray and DeAndre Hopkins became one of the league’s most dynamic quarterback-receiver duos. Murray mounted three fourth-quarter comebacks this season, but perhaps the most impressive was the Arizona Cardinals’ win against the Buffalo Bills on November 15, 2020. Early in the third quarter, the Cardinals were down 14 points, and although they went up 3 points later, they ended up being down 26-30 with 11 seconds to go in the fourth and the ball at the 48-yard line. Murray gets the snap as a four-man pass rush comes at him, and he nearly gets sacked by Mario Addison at the 55-yard line. However, he evades the rushers and heaves a 50-yard hail-mary pass to the endzone with 6 seconds left. When the ball arrives in the endzone, three Buffalo players surround Hopkins as the four of them jump for the ball. Miraculously, Hopkins manages to come down with the ball and score the touchdown with one second left to win the game 32-30 to complete the Clutch Play of the Year.

Photo courtesy of **The Bleacher Report**





Photo courtesy of the NFL

## Aaron Donald

### Defensive Player of the Year

Winning Defensive Player of the Year is nothing new for Los Angeles Rams defensive lineman Aaron Donald. Donald won this award for his third time in the 2020 season, having previously won in the 2017 and 2018 seasons. Donald finished the season with a total of 13.5 sacks. Playing a key role in the team’s defence, Donald’s efforts allowed the Rams to finish as one of the best defences in the leagues, finishing first overall in fewest yards and points allowed, becoming the top-rated pass defence and finishing second in the league in sacks. During the season, Aaron Donald suffered a rib injury that limited his play, but this did not stop him from continuing to be the dominant and well-respected player he is.

## Derrick Henry

### Offensive Player of the Year, Ground Player of the Year

The Tennessee Titans star running back, Derrick Henry, picked up two of the NFL Honours coveted awards after a stellar performance this 2020-21 NFL season. Ending the season leading the league with 2027 rushing yards, 17 rushing touchdowns and 378 rushing attempts, Henry earned his way to receiving numerous awards for his tremendous feats on the field. Henry is only the eighth player in NFL history to have over 2000 rushing yards in a season and has led the league in all three rushing categories for the second year in a row. Players and fans alike regard Henry as a dominant player on the field, and he is well known for his strong stiff arm which allows him to push past the defence for additional yardage. Beyond his football performance, Henry’s teammates, Titans staff and those who know him well recognize Henry for his leadership, which has allowed him to help lead the Titan’s offence to be the 4th best in the league. In an interview, when asked about the star running back, Titans head coach Mike Vrabel stated that he “watched his leadership grow throughout the season,” and it “was something that [he] was probably most proud of him (for)”. As the seasons go on, teammates and fans are excited to watch Henry make an impact both on and off the field.



Photo courtesy of the NFL

## Aaron Rodgers

### Most Valuable Player, Air Player of the Year



Photo courtesy of USA Today

When the Green Bay Packers traded up to draft quarterback Jordan Love in the first round, it seemed as if the Packers were getting ready to phase Aaron Rodgers out, as the organization did with his predecessor, Brett Favre. However, with Love seemingly breathing down his neck, the 37-year-old had an extraordinary season, as he topped personal records, won his third Associated Press Most Valuable Player and silenced the critics. In his last nine games of the regular season, Rodgers scored 28 touchdowns to 3 interceptions, averaged 261.2 yards per game, 8.5 yards per attempt, had a 129.2 passer rating (out of a possible 158.3), and led his team to an 8-1 record, securing the highest seed in the NFC. Overall, he racked up 48 touchdowns, 4299 yards, only 5 interceptions, and a completion percentage of 70.7%, the highest in the league. Rodgers had one of the best single-season touchdown-to-interception ratios in the league’s history at 9.6, and now has five of the top eleven single-season touchdown-interception ratios in NFL history. This achievement is no longer new to Rodgers, as this is his third MVP in the last ten years. With his third award, Rodgers ties greats like Johnny Unitas, Jim Brown, Tom Brady and his predecessor Brett Favre, for the second most MVPs behind Peyton Manning with five. In 2011 and 2014, his other two award-winning years, Rodgers had similar seasons with 4643 yards, 45 touchdowns and 6 interceptions in 2011 and 4381 yards, 38 touchdowns and 5 interceptions in 2014. All three seasons he was selected as a First-Team All-Pro and in 2011 and 2020, 9% of his attempted passes went for touchdowns. Rodgers also earned the Air Player of the Year Award which is awarded to the top quarterback as voted on by fans. Despite his age and young talent being ready to take his place, it seems like Aaron Rodgers isn’t going anywhere anytime soon.

## Russell Wilson

### Walter Payton Man of the Year Award

Every year, each team nominates one player for the Walter Payton Man of the Year award for their exemplary service to the community. All of these men display excellent qualities in providing to events and charities that matter to them which greatly better those in their community. The Seahawks star quarterback, Russell Wilson was awarded this highly prestigious award for his numerous contributions to a variety of causes. Shortly after he was drafted into the NFL in 2012 and few even knew his name, Wilson called the Seattle Children’s Hospital to request to come and visit the patients. Ever since, he has become a regular, visiting the hospital every Tuesday to help brighten the days of children being treated. Through starting his “Why Not You Foundation”, Wilson has been able to continue to take action with a message to fight poverty through education. Wilson, along with his wife Ciara, donated \$1.75 million to help fund and rebrand a charter school in the Seattle area to help give youth the opportunities they deserve. During the pandemic, the Wilson family donated 1 million meals to children in need. Wilson uses his platform to promote social change in wake of the instances of police brutality against the black community. Wilson wanted to be a team leader and changemaker for his city stating, “The Walter Payton Man of the Year Award, to me, represents excellence, not just on the field, but more importantly off the field...I got out here and my whole thought process on my heart was, I want to make a difference”. As part of this award, Wilson will be granted \$250,000 to donate to his Why Not You Foundation and to continue to make a difference in his community.



Photo courtesy of USA Today



MLB

# The Blue Jays are buying high this offseason

While other teams are cutting back, the Blue Jays have brought out the big bucks this offseason in hopes of a 2021 return to the World Series.



Photo courtesy of CBC

**Tristan Schwartz**  
Contributor

The Blue Jays have been one of the few buyers this offseason, contacting almost every free agent on the market. With the majority of teams suffering from a loss of income from ticket sales and vendor merchandise as a result of COVID-19, many teams are trying to shed payroll; few teams are looking to sign players at large salaries this offseason.

The Jays have seen this offseason as a time to improve rather than a time to save money, with recent major signings including outfielder George Springer, infielder Marcus Semien, and pitchers Tyler Chatwood and Kirby Yates. And also the addition of pitcher Steven Matz through trade.

The Jays signed Springer to a massive 6 year, \$150 million contract, which is the largest in Blue Jays history. Springer is one of the best players in baseball and was one of the 4 top-end players on this year's market among other big-name players, like infielder

D.J. Lemahieu, pitcher Trevor Bauer, and catcher J.T. Realmuto. The Jays had been interested in almost every player available, but have been particularly interested in Springer since the offseason began. Despite strong interest from other teams, including the New York Mets, Springer made the decision to come to Toronto.

Springer is a 3-time All-Star, 2-time Silver-Slugger award winner, won a World Series Championship, and was the 2017 World Series MVP during his 7 seasons with the Houston Astros. Recently, the Astros were found guilty of using hidden cameras and garbage cans to relay signs to the hitter on what pitch was coming. Although Springer was part of the Astros during the sign-stealing scandal, he has since continued to be one of the game's best players having 174 home runs, 832 hits, 458 runs batted in, and a batting average of .270 over his 7 season career. Springer will be joining a very young group of Blue Jays players and will take over at center field.

Another big signing by the Jays was infielder Marcus Semien to a 1 year, \$18 million deal. Semien has emerged as one of the top middle in-

fielders for the Oakland Athletics over the past couple of years, finishing 3rd in MVP voting in 2019. Going into the offseason, the Jays were expected to sign a third baseman with that spot empty, despite interest from Vladimir Guerrero Jr who moved to first base last season from third base. The Jays ultimately decided to sign Semien who is primarily a shortstop but can also play second base. The Jays will most likely put Semien at second allowing Bo Bichette to continue at shortstop and possibly move second-baseman Cavan Biggio to third base, a position in which he has previous experience. The Jays decided to go with a short-term deal with Semien since it's low risk and allows space for the Jays' top prospects Jordan Groshans and Austin Martin to take over in the infield eventually.

The Jays also signed one-year deals with pitchers Kirby Yates and Tyler Chatwood, while also trading for pitcher Steven Matz from the Mets. These are some minor but still important additions to the Blue Jays' bullpen and rotation. Kirby Yates led the MLB in saves in 2019 which the Jays are hoping for him to replicate after hav-

ing a rough 2020 season due to injuries. Tyler Chatwood is also hoping to have a better year after having a 5.30 ERA with the Chicago Cubs last season. The Jays traded a few prospects to the New York Mets for Steven Matz who the Jays could use in the middle of their bullpen or end of their rotation. Matz is coming off a 0-5 season but is hoping to replicate his 11 win season from 2 years ago. The Jays are hoping to get lots of innings out of their pitchers this year after having Trent Thornton (154.1 IP) pitch more than 150 innings in 2019, and Hynn Jin Ryu (67.0 IP) pitch over 50 innings last season, who the Jays signed to 4 years \$80 million last season.

The Jays are predicted to sign another middle to end of the rotation starter before the start of the 2021 season on April 1st but have already had one of the best offseasons in franchise history. With the signings of George Springer and Marcus Semien, it appears that the Jays are ending their rebuilding phase and looking towards bringing a championship North of the border once again.



BASEBALL

# No new plaques coming to Cooperstown

After no one received over 75% of votes for the Baseball Hall of fame, this year will be the first since 1960 without a Hall of Fame Class.



Photo courtesy of American Profile

Tristan Schwartz  
Contributor

After a historic and extraordinary year, this year's Baseball Hall of Fame Election follows the trend as no players were elected to the Hall of Fame. On this year's Hall of Fame ballot, no one received the necessary 75% of votes to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame by the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) for the class of 2021.

This marks only the ninth time in history, and the first time since 2013, that no players have been elected by the BBWAA. In 2013 the Veterans Committee, a group that reconsiders cases of players not elected by the BBWAA, did elect players to the Hall of Fame. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Veterans Committee was not able to meet, meaning no players were elected through the Veterans Committee either. This marks the first time since 1960 that there

will not be a Hall of Fame class. This year, 14 blank ballots were submitted by writers which is a new HOF voting record. During the past seven years, the BBWAA has elected a total of 22 players.

In order for a player to be added to the Hall of Fame ballot, a player must have played 10 seasons and have been retired for 5 years. Players who receive a minimum of 5% of the total vote remain on the ballot for the following year, for up to a maximum of 10 years. Only 1% of the around 20,000 players to play the game are ever elected to Cooperstown making it one of the most exclusive Hall of Fames in sports.

Curt Schilling led this year's ballot by receiving 71.1% of the votes in his 9th year on the ballot, only 16 votes short of election. Schilling moved up very slightly from receiving 70% the year before. After not receiving the minimum requisite to be elected to the hall, Schilling has requested to be removed from the Hall of Fame ballot completely.

Other players who received over 50% of the votes include Barry

Bonds (61.8%, 9th year) and Roger Clemens (61.6%, 9th, year) who are both tied to PED (Performance Enhancing Drugs) suspicions, and have made little gain over the past few ballots, and will likely fall short of enshrinement in their final year on the ballot, next year. Scott Rolen (52.9%, 4th year) had one of the biggest jumps this ballot from his 35.5% last year. Rolen still has lots of time to reach the 75% requirement.

Omar Vizquel (49.1%, 4th year) was the only player to move down in votes this ballot from his 52.6% of votes received last year, after being investigated by the MLB for allegations of domestic abuse.

Mark Buehrle (11.0%, 1st year), Torii Hunter (9.5%, 1st year), and Tim Hudson (5.2%, 1st year) all received the minimum requirement of 5% of the votes required to remain on the ballot in their first years on the hall of fame ballot. Though they probably won't get into the Hall of Fame soon, they can still continue to climb the ballot during their next several years as long as they continue to receive a minimum of 5% of the votes.

There will still be an induc-

tion ceremony this July in Cooperstown, NY since the class of 2020 induction ceremony was postponed until this summer due to COVID-19 restrictions. The class of 2020 includes Derek Jeter, Ted Simmons, the late Marvin Miller, and Larry Walker who will become the second Canadian ever to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Fergie Jenkins, from Chatham, Ontario, was the first.

Next year will include the additions of newcomers David Ortiz and Alex "A-Rod" Rodriguez to the ballot, both of which will most likely be elected to the Hall of Fame with the potential to become first-ballot Hall of Famers. However, PED suspicions linked to Ortiz, though he never tested positive, and A-Rod's two suspensions for PEDs use may count against their potential elections. A-Rod in particular has a blemish on his record after facing the longest suspension in MLB history.

Although there will be no new plaques for the class of 2021 in Cooperstown, there will still be the induction of the class of 2020 to look forward to this July.



FOOD

# Cereal offender: a response

If you wish to stray so far from the respectable methods, you might as well just eat a bowl of dry cereal with a glass of milk.



Illustration by **Victoria Jennings-Fitz-Gerald**

**Clarke Strati**  
Contributor

Many months ago, I was texting a dear friend of mine in the late hours of the night. She told me of an article she was writing for this very newspaper, and I asked her what it was about. She answered that it was about cereal. My heart sank.

Now, something to understand about friendships is that no matter how well you mesh, no matter how wonderful they may be, and no matter how many years you have known each other, there are some areas in which there will always be conflict. For the two of us, that area is cereal. You see, my friend counts herself among the number of those who pour their milk before their cereal, whilst I am a respectable human being, regularly pouring my milk after my cereal. I had, however, accepted that this was a part of her and had made my peace with it. Unfortunately, that peace is no longer applicable when she tries to force her ideals on the unsuspecting public.

In past issues, you may have seen her propagating that pouring your milk before your cereal holds some benefits, insisting that her order of aberrations is somehow superior. So, Sarisha Panday—my dearest friend, my oldest enemy—I am here to set the record straight.

You seem to believe that the norm is despicable and that those who follow it are simply ignorant, and are unable to summon the courage to revolt against this “lesser” system. But have you considered that there is a reason why a norm emerges? That it is because it works best for the majority of people? Does that not make it objectively better?

If I can prove my case, will you still cling to your flimsy rebellion?

Firstly, you claim your...methods arise from a desire for crunchiness that classical techniques cannot bring you, but are you not aware that you can eat cereal dry? If you wish to stray so far from the respectable methods, you might as well just eat a bowl of dry cereal with a glass of milk. You call my methods complacent, but can you truly

call yourself a cereal lover if you refuse to accept the food as it is in its natural state, including all the struggles you must endure in order to consume it?

Additionally, you ignore the new problems your methodology brings. A drier cereal may bring you a crisper crunch, but what then when it is too much? Any experienced cereal connoisseur could tell you of the dangers of a grain too abrasive; when one’s mouth begins to feel raw from their food of choice. Now, I don’t think I need to explain why a whole bowl of dry cereal lightly touched by milk could exacerbate this problem. The gradient from a crisp crunch to a softer bite is an essential part of the cereal-eating experience, and depriving anyone of it is downright criminal.

I will admit that pouring technique is a necessary factor in any good cereal-consuming experience, but I think you are blind to the difficulties of your own techniques. If you limit yourself to pouring milk beforehand, how are you to adjust the milk-to-grains ratio in your bowl? The common man, who uses the correct technique of milk

after cereal, may have a similar issue, but most have at least managed to gain experience by practicing during their younger years. And what of the waste? A crunchier cereal is one that has absorbed less milk, and so more goes to waste. Not to mention hydration, because drinking water with cereal is a cardinal sin, so milk is the only acceptable source of fluids for your meal.

Having your own tastes is all well and good, but advising others towards an objectively inferior method is distasteful. You act as if your “rebellion” makes your stance inherently more virtuous, but if there was no need for it in the first place are you not just inciting unnecessary chaos? Can we not simply enjoy a crisp bowl of goodness without endless strife? Of course, different things work for different people, and as long as they don’t cause harm to others there is no reason to prevent people from living their lives. But, if the world was to choose which method is better... we all know which one it would be.



TRAVEL

# Oh Canada: a guide for your COVID escape

DO NOT call a pain au chocolat a “chocolate croissant” unless you want a bounty put on your head.

Iva-Mari Miskulin  
Copy Editor

Ah yes, let us all take a moment to acknowledge the fact that this whole COVID she-backle has been going on for one whole year. I’m sure during this time we’ve all had thoughts of running away to countries that are fairing a bit better with the COVID situation, say New Zealand, Australia, Finland etc. But no, we are stuck here in Canada, during the awkward winter-spring transition which means lots of slush and yucky weather (not forgetting the surprise ice storm in May of course, cause you know, climate change). I mean, being in a big city logically means that the case count is higher and restrictions are tighter, and perhaps the only place we COULD escape to is rural Canada. We could live on an island in our log cabin, eating poutine, greeting the beavers each morning...you know, normal Canadian things. I wonder why so many people around the world truly believe that Canadians sleep with moose and bears every night, like come on, do French people always sleep with baguettes and croissants? (Augustin: Yes, yes we do). Crap, nevermind then. You know, stereotypes are a funny thing and it’s perhaps something to consider when picking our preferred escape route to a COVID free heaven.

Let’s take a look at Australia. The obvious stereotypes are that everyone rides to school on kangaroos, everyone eats vegemite sandwiches on a daily basis, and everyone surfs. All of those could be correct if said kangaroos didn’t beat you up before you could ask them for a ride. Vegemite is definitely a big part of the culture though, and seriously IT’S NOT THAT GROSS; JUST DON’T BLOODY PUT 5 TABLESPOONS ON ONE PIECE OF TOAST, MATE! There’s also the national dish, pixie toast. It’s essentially buttered toast with sprinkles. Mmmmm Gordon Ramsay would be proud, he’d definitely call it “a snack a five-year-old with ADHD would invent by accident.” Overall, Australians are quite chill (except when the temperature drops below 15 degrees, then they panic), and have a “lmao idgaf” approach to life. If this suits you and you don’t mind getting insulted often, ‘straya is the place for you, g’day!

Ok enough about islands that are way too far from everything, what about Europe? So, we have quite a few options here. I would say Slavic countries may be too drastic of a change, especially with the language barrier (if you’re still set on them though, go ahead. The food is good, and the babushkas are kind; I hope you enjoy your stay). Otherwise, we can look at France and Italy, which are two countries that may immediately come to mind when you think “Europe”. Unfortunately, this is not a comprehensive guide to running away from home so I can only cover a few countries.



Illustration by Ysa Dan Mari

Firstly, France. Ah yes, the land of romance. Paris! What a romantic and beautiful city right? WRONG. Paris is more than just the Eiffel Tower folks, it’s a city, and like any city it is busy, it is dirty and it has rats (if you had seen Ratatouille you would already know this). Although France and its food and culture are all extremely beautiful (and delicious) you need to visit France and speak to natives to truly know what it’s like. Here are a couple of things you should probably know about the true France and its occupants:

If you don’t speak French (fairly fluently), lmao good luck. Even if you know words here and there most Parisian storekeepers will either a) immediately switch to English even if you truly want to practice speaking French or b) just laugh at all the mistakes you are making (they will also make fun of your accent, they’re a tough crowd to please). This is a phenomenon that is more saturated in Paris, and when asking the Parisian Augustin Benoit (a grade 12 student at NT) why this happens he replies, “because we’re d\*cks, we’re built different.” To add onto the pronunciation point, the French will furiously correct you when you pronounce French brands incorrectly (which is literally every French brand [ex Louis Vuitton, Louboutin, Chanel, Cartier etc], because I guarantee us anglophones do not have the correct pronunciation for even one of them) or if you pronounce stolen French words such as cliché, cul de sac, déjà vu etc. This may turn out to be a nice educational experience for all of us.

DO NOT call a pain au chocolat a “chocolate croissant” unless you want a bounty put on your head. I don’t have anything to add to this point, just don’t do it.

Augustin mentions that it is important to understand that “French people are full of themselves and are super confident. We have the best sense of humour, the best food, the best fashion sense, the most handsome President...like who can even compete with us?” Just a little note for you, so you’re not too taken aback by it when you meet your first Frenchie. If none of these points have scared you, France might be a nice option.

Moving on to Italy. Mama mia are you gonna eat well here. It is not a lie that Italians eat A LOT of pasta. Food is an important part of everyday life and if you love food and eating GO TO ITALY! The people there are generally very happy and welcoming, and I would say that most are excited to help people who want to learn the language or the history of a certain place. Another cool thing about Italy (again related to food of course) is that many of the best restaurants are the small ones that you come across purely by chance since they are hidden in the corners of the city. I guarantee that you will never be hungry and you will also never get sick of pasta; it’s just too good. Now there are still a couple of things you should know about Italy before you jump right out of your seat:

DO NOT PUT PINEAPPLE ON PIZZA. The Italians will murder you, literally. The mafia will not rest until they find

you and kill you. DON’T EVEN LET THE THOUGHT ENTER YOUR HEAD; they will read your mind.

A little helpful tip; do not praise France in Italy. Italians are not fans of French people (Why? Not so sure myself; I’m quoting my Italian friend on this one). They call them “baguette eaters,” “people without bidets,” and keep pestering the French to give the Mona Lisa back to them. Guess it’s safest to completely forget France exists and enjoy your parmesan cheese (this is not the place to flex your Louis Vuitton bag). Do not insult the traditional cuisine. If you are not doing something correctly (in the way you’re eating, serving, or preparing an Italian dish) do not argue with the Italians! Listen to their advice and you will live to see another day. Likewise, do not commit the unforgivable and put ketchup on your pasta. Just don’t.

Now go fulfill your pasta dreams in Italy.

And to end things off on an interesting note, the USA. I don’t even know what to say. I mean you live in Canada, why move to our objectively worse neighbour that does not have free healthcare, gun control, or poutine. You’d be better off moving to Atlantis to escape COVID than the USA eh. Maybe you should just stick around in Canada with the rest of us. Wear your mask, stay at home, don’t party, and eventually COVID will begin to disappear. We’re all in this together, my fellow maple syrup fanatics.



# The United Network of Social Platforms has a meeting - a (debatably) short play

Pinterest: “You don’t know how much incense I’ve used trying to cleanse my aura of their presence.”

By Kiara Distin and Alya Seker  
Section Editor, Copy Editor

Scene I - All apps involved in the United Network of Social Platforms take their seats around the round table to discuss the recent events regarding Donald J. Trump.

Twitter: \*slams fist on the table\* “I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS NONSENSE!”

Facebook: “Okay, Twitter, let’s take a breath. Don’t worry, you’re going to get to say everything you want to say, this meeting doesn’t have a 280 character limit. So let’s not break the table just yet.”

Google: \*bangs a gavel on the table but no one knows where the gavel actually came from\* “Okay everybody, let the official United Network of Social Platforms meeting commence.” \*said in a deep and all-knowing voice\*

Instagram: “we all know why we r gathered here today and it is to talk about the infamous cheeto mans actions on all of our platforms, like the things he preaches r highkey unacceptable and i propose that we no longer allow him on any of our sites”

Twitter: \*nods so aggressively that they get whiplash\*

Facebook: \*looks at Twitter in utter concern\*

Parler: \*forcefully gets up on the table and screams\* “I OBJECT!”

Google, Apple, and Amazon in unison: “Well then we object to you being sold on our app stores!!”

Instagram, Facebook, and Shopify: \*various oohhs and aahhs\*

Twitter: “You know what? I’m not gonna lie, I’ve been feeling this way for a really long time. Let’s put it to an emergency vote. All in favour of kicking Parler out of the Union, effective immediately, say ‘aye’.”

Every single app except for TikTok: “Aye.”

Twitter: \*confidently looks around the room, but notices that TikTok did not respond\* “All not in favour, say ‘nay’.” \*said confusedly\*

TikTok: \*remains silent, and looks neutral\*

Parler: “NAY!!!! NAY NAY NAYNAYNAYNAYNAY NAY!!!”

Reddit: \*in a comical voice\* “Hold your horses!! ...get it?? ‘Cause he’s ‘neigh-ing???’ \*looks around the room, hoping for some laughter\*

Apple: \*holds hand in ‘stop’ sign\* “Reddit, not now. Parler. Out.” \*while pointing to the door\*

Parler: \*picks up a chair and throws it across the room, screaming in protest\*

Facebook: \*looks over at Twitter\* “THIS

is why we remain calm and don’t break stuff. SECURITY!!”

Security: \*drags Parler out of the room by their arms while they continue to scream\*

Facebook: \*straightens blazer\* “Alright \*sighs\*, now that that’s settled, let’s continue, shall we?”

Discord: “Well, there is this one particular pro-Trump server which is just

Snapchat is always in their own world.\*

Reddit: “Yeah I’m pretty sick of seeing r/DonaldTrump everywhere, it makes my eyes bleed.”

Youtube: “And believe it or not, his account has 2.8 million subscribers!!”

Instagram: “bruh thats insane, how r there so many people with like two braincells that rnt even functional”



Illustration by: Ava Ireland

Youtube: “RIGHT?!?!?!? That’s exactly why I’m out!”

Twitter: “Every time Trump goes on my app, he goes on these angry, nonsensical rants. And now I’m known as Trump’s app. I don’t want to be known for that! I’m a literal bird! Bird != Trump. Let me tweet in peace!”

Facebook: “Yeah...There have been some hate groups popping up too, and the government is putting me under fire for not fact checking them. And to be frank, I don’t want to do all that work, so I would personally prefer if we just banned him altogether.”

Twitter: “Okay, raise your hand if you have felt personally victimized by Donald Trump.”

Everyone: \*raises hand\*

TikTok \*gently flops hand around shoulder level while glancing around the room\*

Pinterest: “...TikTok?? What’s up with that floppy hand of yours?”

TikTok: “Welllll, to play Devil’s Advocate for a second here...”

Everyone: \*rolls eyes and sighs; they’re getting flashbacks to socratic seminars in university\*

TikTok: “I don’t think we should ban him, I just think that storming the capitol is what went too far. So maybe I should just ban #StormTheCapitol??”

Twitter: “TikTok I swear to go-”

TikTok: “ALSO, I don’t know if y’all have heard the song about how ‘Real women vote for Trump’, but it’s lowkey catchy and has been getting me a lot of interactions. And those pro-Trump white Hunter boys that make videos about Trump2020 (even though he lost) appeal to a LOT of my users, so I kind of need him to stay...”

Twitter: “At this point I don’t think you have a brain inside your skull because that must be where you store your AUDACITY!!!”

Twitter: \*lunges towards TikTok in an attempt to throttle them\*

Facebook: \*in slow motion - jumps in front of Twitter and pulls them back down to their seat\*

Twitter: \*to Facebook\* “WHY DID YOU STOP ME!? I COULD HAVE GOTTEN RID OF TIKTOK ONCE AND FOR ALL!!!”

Facebook: \*readjusts blazer\* “I understand you’re angry but we must remain civil and find a real solution. All in favour of banning Donald J. Trump on any of our platforms, say ‘aye’.”

Everyone except TikTok: “Aye!”

Twitter: “Thank the LORD JACK DORSEY AND BLESS ALL YOUR SOULS!!!! Except you TikTok, chirp you.”

Facebook: “Perfect. It is decided that we are all banning Trump and any Trump-related content on all of our platforms, effective immediately. Please make your statements to the public within the week. Meeting adjourned. \*bangs gavel\* Help yourself to some refreshments outside; Pinterest made some special 420 cookies!”

- Scene II -

6 Months Later:  
All apps involved in the United Network of Social Platforms take their seats around the round table to discuss how TikTok did not follow up on their agreement.

Facebook: “Alright everyone, we are gathered here today because as we all know, TikTok did not take the actions that we voted on 6 months ago, which was to ban Trump and all Trump-related content from our platforms.”

Twitter: “That’s it.” \*lunges at TikTok in attempts to throttle them, and actually succeeds this time\*

Facebook: “Oh Zucky...” \*face palms\*

TikTok: \*chokes\* “I feel like I’m dead...I’m alive, but I’m dead ”

THE END





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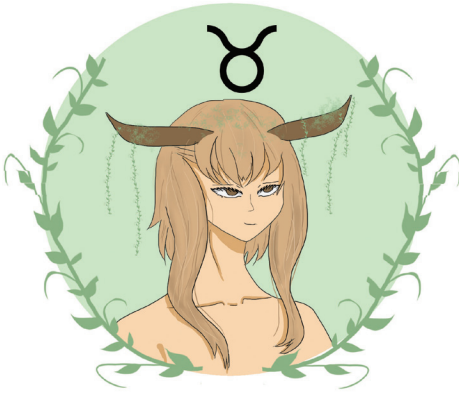


# Horoscopes

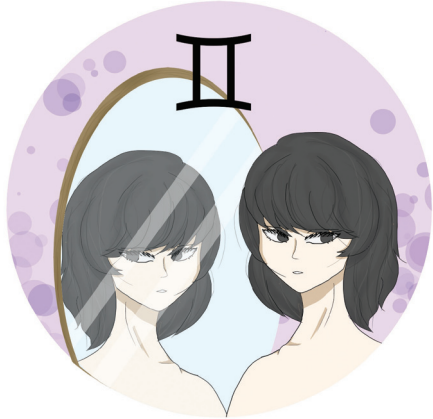
Ayush Verma | Illustrations by Victoria Jennings Fitz Gerald  
Contributor



**Aries, March 21- April 20:** Happy Aries Season! You may have picked up on the good vibes recently, Aries! This past week was tiring and this next one may seem like it too, but things will certainly get better. You'll feel back to your usual energetic self in no time. You have achieved many great things, with the help of many great people. So be sure to express your gratitude to anyone who has supported you on your journey so far. Take some time to party and relax, no gatherings though!



**Taurus, April 21- May 20:** Taurus season is fast approaching! You may have been getting lots of assignments, but luckily you have been completing them as soon as you received them! Use your extra creativity this month to aid in all aspects of your life, school and otherwise. You have also been absorbing information very quickly, so reading ahead in the upcoming unit isn't a bad idea at all!



**Gemini, May 21- Jun 21:** The time has been lovely, hasn't it Gemini? This year has been kinda busy, so it'll be nice to have a break soon. Now it is time for fun. Enjoy some funny movies, TV shows or even memes, and don't forget to share them with your friends. Hosting a virtual movie night might be a nice way to relax and have fun!



**Cancer, June 22- July 22:** The past month has been a funny one Cancer. Having completed so many things in so little time is a very big achievement and we're all proud of you! Keep trying your best and celebrate the little victories, they pile up to become the big ones. Hang on to your tight schedule while you still can, as summer is fast approaching!



**Leo, July 23- August 23:** Feel the excitement yet Leo? The upbeat Aries season has been off to a great start! You have been doing an amazing job at balancing all of your interests. It is indeed wise to enjoy yourself every now and then, so be sure to do that. You may even find new friends while doing so, keep an eye out for that!



**Virgo, August 24- September 22:** The universe is on your side Virgo! You may get rewarded for all your hard work, so be sure to promote your achievements, but do not exaggerate too much. Try talking to new people, you may be able to form a new friendship with someone you have known for a long time but have not talked to yet!



**Libra, September 23- October 23:** Have you been very busy recently Libra? Do not worry, you will be able to overcome all the work that you have been assigned very quickly. Just keep at it! You will automatically find all the motivation you need this month, so trust the process and enjoy the ride!



**Scorpio, October 24- November 22:** You've been waiting for this time for so long Scorpio! Just a few more weeks and you can relax all you want. You may find it productive to learn a new skill or work on a creative project during this time. You are doing great, don't stop now!



**Sagittarius, November 23- December 22:** It's probably been a while since you truly felt thrilled Sagittarius. Fear not, for this month will be anything but boring. You may find a new passion or maybe even find yourself taking a trip down memory lane. Be sure to greet any familiar faces while you are at it. Stay awesome!



**Capricorn, December 23- January 20:** You may feel a bit overwhelmed by all the things that are being thrown at you Capricorn. Take a deep breath and tackle each task one at a time. Don't forget to take regular breaks and hydrate. Things will get better in no time! Stick to your routine and keep calm. You can do this!



**Aquarius, January 21- February 18:** This month, Aquarius, do something that you've always wanted to do! You will be able to finish all of your tasks well in advance, and you will finally have some time for yourself. Stay true to yourself, and anything is possible!



**Pisces, February 19- March 20:** Happy Belated Birthday Pisces! This month is going to be very exciting for you! Your creative ability will have skyrocketed and your social interactions may even improve. You might also find an abundance of motivation and a boost in your work ethic this month! Take advantage of that!