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# The Spectrum

◆ *e cineribus et ad astra* ◆

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ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Healthy kids have healthy habits.  
Grace Du '19 and Kaitlyn Chen '19 / Co-Chief Layout and Website Editors

## Healthcare Should Be a Right, Right?

By JESSICA ZHANG '22  
Layout Editor

“It costs me about ten grand a year to breathe,” E. Weiss told the *New York Times*.

Living on an annual medical deductible of \$5,000 and another annual prescription deductible of \$3,000, Weiss’s \$1,400 asthma inhaler has a roughly \$100 co-pay for a 30-day supply. Receiving a 90-day supply only saves about \$6 total. Because of her medical bills, Weiss cannot afford home repairs, vacations, or college funds for the kids, even with three jobs spread out among two adults.

Given that healthcare is essential to a human’s survival, it is surprising that, even after hours of working each week, some still can’t afford it. Universal health care has been a point of debate due to political polarization and bureaucracy. Yet, whether healthcare is a right shouldn’t be contentious at all.

Franklin D. Roosevelt came close to establishing a national healthcare system during his presidency, but Senator Wagner failed to pass a bill that expanded upon Roosevelt’s legislation. Later, while President Truman focused on the Cold War, America pushed aside its healthcare plan once more. Now, years later, though America has advanced technologically, healthcare is still inaccessible to many. A universal healthcare system can change this.

During the Great Depression, Roosevelt established the New Deal, a plan for new federal reform and relief programs. As part of this legislative package, he signed the Social Security Act, but the American Medical Association (AMA), an organization of American physicians that informs the public about health and science, opposed the implementation of federally-funded health insurance. Fearing that the AMA’s influence would stall his

legislation, Roosevelt excluded any mention of health insurance: he recognized the public’s fear that soon after establishing federally funded health insurance, the government would take over the medical profession as well.

Nevertheless, nearly every New Deal agency was providing funds for healthcare by 1935, and to organize all of the programs, Roosevelt created the Interdepartmental Committee to Coordinate Health and Welfare Activities. At first, it concentrated on coordinating programs on federal health, education, and welfare, but in 1937, it created the Technical Committee on Medical Care, or the TCMC with the intent to expand “public health and maternal and child health services of Social Security, build more hospitals, increase medical relief, establish a general medical care program supported by taxes and insurance, and create a workman’s compensation program for illness or disability that

occurred on the job.” The National Health Conference in Washington D.C. brought a group of over 170 individuals from the medical profession, public health service, and labor organizations together; all of them strongly supported the goals of the TCMC. After the midterm elections of 1938, Senator Robert Wagner of New York introduced a bill that expanded on the health provisions of the Social Security Act and included many TCMC recommendations.

The AMA retaliated, and the bill failed to pass. Once again, politics stifled the plea of citizens for a safety-net policy to protect their wellbeing: after the Wagner bill died in Congress, the advent to federal healthcare was delayed yet again.

During the Cold War, president Truman advocated for universal healthcare but eventually lost.

Shortly after World War II, he said, “Our new Economic Bill of...

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# Intro

## Letter From the EIC's

By NITHIYANI ANANDAKUGAN '19 AND JASMINE MANGAT '19  
Co-Editors-in-Chief

We write this note about two-and-a-half months into school, shocked at where the time has gone. Indeed, it seems that the beast of first semester senior year has taken time, chewed it up, and spit it back out at us. Alongside balancing early college applications and school work, our senior members on staff have worked diligently here at *The Spectrum*. We could be neither more proud nor more grateful for that.

We see our juniors, too, with bags under their eyes as they juggle school, PSATs, SATs, ACTs, SAT Subject Tests, etc. Neverthe-

less, they show up at our meetings ready to work. Undoubtedly, this Fall Issue has overlapped with one of the busiest times of our lives. With this in mind, the issue is aptly themed "Health." As we catch ourselves in this mad balancing act, we try our best to stay conscious of our health—both physical and mental. As such, this issue focuses on both aspects of wellbeing. From articles about healthcare to health related YouTubers, our writers have covered the stories that matter to them.

Hopefully, you'll find that many of these topics matter to you, too.

Cheers,  
Nithyani and Jasmine

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## Gentrification: How Racism Still Haunts Boston Today

By AADITHI VALLATHARASU '20  
Spectrum Staff

Old homes replaced by luxury condominiums. Local businesses cleared for chain stores. Historic buildings torn away for strip malls. Residents displaced for revenue. Ten years ago, a simple drive through Roxbury's Columbus Avenue would have revealed an entirely different community than what you would see today.

Gentrification occurs when wealthier residents move into urban communities and bring along commodities that suit them. In doing so, they displace the working class living there. City governments gentrify by using the power of eminent domain, the right of the government to seize any desired property in exchange for "just compensation" that is set by officials. Many justify eminent domain because it paves way for economic growth. After all, an increase in the median income of a community results in greater cashflow into businesses, which can create jobs over time.

Eminent domain, however, is problematic because it seems to be the root cause of gentrification. When luxury stores and restaurants are placed in a community that cannot afford them, residents are unable to access basic necessities like an affordable grocery store. Statistically speaking, gentrified communities are mainly African American and Hispanic. *Real Estate*

*Boston* reported that in South Boston, after gentrification, "home prices rose 89%," showing that former residents would clearly struggle to afford the re-done area. As a result, those subject to gentrification have no choice but to leave a now affluent and predominantly white community behind.

The continuation of gentrification allows for the continuation of a racist Massachusetts. Places like Roxbury, Dorchester, East Boston and South Boston, once predominantly filled by minorities, are now the same neighborhoods being gentrified and being claimed as "blighted." Gentrification instills a notion that poorer communities have no value in comparison to wealthier ones. This mentality perpetuates racism, not just from government to resident, but from citizen to citizen. First, the government sets a precedent: by allowing gentrification, people are told that discrimination by color and income is okay. Second, physical segregation between races leads to less interaction. This isolation among cultures leads to discrimination.

According to the African American Intellectual History Society, "Boston has been and continues to be, in all the ways that matter, one of the most segregated cities by race in the nation." This segregation impacts education, housing, and all aspects of daily life for these minorities. As minorities are pushed further and further away,

they receive little attention from the government. For example, according to *WBUR*, although Massachusetts is a leading state in education, it has one of the widest gaps between white and minority language proficiency. This goes to show that segregation through gentrification is not only morally unjust but also has an impact on minority children's abilities in school and beyond.

History has proven the racism behind gentrification. In 1857, for example, Seneca Village, a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Manhattan, was seized through eminent domain. Residents were evicted, and the area gentrified, allowing the government to create the ever-so-famous Central Park. These same scenarios are replicated in present-day MA.

*The New Boston Post* reports that "more than a fifth of Boston neighborhoods—21 percent of the 57 city tracts described as eligible to gentrify—have become gentrified since 2000."

Even more shockingly *The Boston Globe* writes that "more than a quarter of all Bostonians now live in formerly low-income neighborhoods that have since been gentrified, many over the bubble years of the early and mid-2000s. And that number is likely higher now." The Boston City Council has allowed for minority communities to be targeted and displaced for the sake of economic progress.

This may come as surprising to some Bostonians. How can Boston, a city that elected progressives such as Ed Markey

and Elizabeth Warren, be racist? Framed by these passionate representatives, Massachusetts is commonly perceived as forward and tolerant, especially by its privileged residents. However, because of this perception, when discrimination does oc-

cur, it slips under the public's eye. The majority of residents are unaware that this is even happening because of the political veil we created. But, it is happening every day and unjustly so. We must all keep that in mind.

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# News

## The Baseball Powerball Angels

By MICHAEL CHENG '20  
Spectrum Staff

On a warm August afternoon, the twenty-six Power Baseball Angels (PBA) file off a rented coach bus into the empty parking lot next to Veterans Field. They mill about in the fresh air, each of them clutching a glove and a can of Monster Energy. The Power Baseball Angels, aged from nine to twelve, hail from all across China. On the last leg of their American tour before they fly back to Beijing the next morning, they are here to play on exhibition with the AB Baystate U-11 team.

The superintendent is there to throw the first pitch during the pregame festivities. He looks a bit out of place on the mound in a crisp white button-down shirt. But he's happy to be here: "This was a wonderful educational opportunity for our kids to be a part of something bigger," he later tells me.

He is joined by many families and well-wishers, including a dozen or so volunteers from the AB marching band. They are slated to play the halftime show. At a baseball game.

A film crew tails the team, having followed them around for over a year, documenting a baseball team for a Chinese audience that doesn't care much for this elite sport.

The director sees it differently: his film "isn't really about baseball. It's about the kids." To him and many others, "these kids are, relatively speaking, a little bit special."

According to team coaches and film crew members, some members of the team are orphans or were abandoned. Others were some of the sixty million children "left behind" in rural villages by migrant parents who moved to the city for jobs. Coaches claim that the players weren't selected for potential baseball abilities. That could come later.

As the game continues, the scorekeepers' table is turned into a de facto press box where *The Boston Globe* and *The Beacon* ask for a translation of the manager's comments from Mandarin to English by a Boxborough resident who helped to organize the event.

The announcer has scrawled the away lineup on a sheet of notebook paper. That's about it. They're not keeping a scoresheet. They're going to let the kids play.

After the third inning, the marching band starts to play their trademark song, "Children of Sanchez" as the Angel manager, Sun LingFeng, calls for his players to clap along.

Sun is as much of a baseball icon as there is in China. As the captain of the '08 Olympic team in Beijing, he scored the winning run in the 12th inning of their lone Olympic win against archrival Chinese Taipei, the high watermark of baseball in modern China. Now he is the public face of Power Baseball LLC. He expresses his belief that baseball, like many other industries in China's booming economy, is growing. The MLB's recent investment in three development centers in Chi-

na is encouraging. However, this wouldn't be the first time people have felt optimistic about the prospects of baseball in China, nor the first time an organization such as Power Baseball tried to stay ahead of a trend that never came.

The assistant coach was a little taken aback when I asked what the most memorable part of this experience would be to the kids.

"They're not picky...To them, it's like these chances fell out of the sky."

But the question remains: could these kids be helped in more effective ways? Would it be cheaper to pay for textbooks instead of plane tickets? The reality is that education still seems to be the only consistent "golden ticket" for anyone in China to attain a better life. Sports is often considered an equalizer in America, giving everyone, regardless of wealth or background, a chance to succeed. The same can be said about the Chinese college entrance exam. However, the team's assistant argues that this "golden ticket" is marred today by declining odds and rising prices with "supplementary" test prep classes, making it harder for more disadvantaged students to compete.

Sun later offers an alternative to the mentality that education is the only way for a better life in China today, an alternative he knows well. In 2002, he became the first player to bat in the Chinese Baseball League. He claims that all of the kids on his team could make a living as players or coaches in China, partly because of the underdeveloped nature of Chinese baseball. But even if Sun's envisioned career for the kids doesn't work out, baseball can still fulfill its original intent for the players as a team sport. The coach hopes above all else that his players take away three things from the game and from this trip: "equality, passion and a willingness to dream."

"Our goal for them really is to have them become a better person, to rise up and flourish in society, that, in the end, is what we want for them, and the teamwork, the passion, that is where the real

value in the game lies," he says.

In this sense, the PBA vs. AB is also just a baseball game mirrored in thousands of small towns and big cities around the nation, around the world. When it comes to the missed chances for his team during the game, Sun isn't complaining. Quite the opposite: "That's the power of baseball. It is always going to give you hope. As long as the game hasn't ended, the game isn't over. It's the same in life. It's not that just because I stumble early in life, that I can't come back and have a good life."

The Angels line up, shoulder-to-shoulder in front of their dug-out on the third base line, facing the field and the crowd before breaking ranks and taking the field, whooping and sprinting as they do.

"They do that every inning," Sun says. "It's a team. Everyone takes the field together."

As the Power Baseball Angels take the field for the final time in America, clinging to a 2-1 lead in the bottom of the sixth inning, the manager excuses himself for a moment from the de-facto press box behind home plate to go encourage his pitcher.

"[While] I don't care about the result, I want my players to feel a sense of accomplishment, a sense that win or lose, they need to compete," Sun explains.

AB walks off Veterans Field with a 3-2 win. There was no crazed excitement, no mob at home plate waiting for the winning run. It feels anti-climatic, as the umpire and players simply walk off the field in relative silence. There are gifts to be exchanged, food to share. It's an odd feeling, as if the team being celebrated is the team that just lost.

For the last few pitches, I stand alone next to Sun in silence. In that moment, the outcome of the game didn't feel important enough to ask about. Because his team has already won. They are the lucky ones, the Powerball Angels, simply because they'll get the chance to play again. They're not picky.

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## My Girl-Boss Friend

By LIZETTE STA. MARIA '19  
Girl Hero Columnist

For my 18th birthday, my friend, Helen Symonds, gave me a picture of both of us, the lyrics to our favorite song in sixth grade, and a plaque that said "Girl Boss." Really, she is *my* girl hero. As one of her longtime friends, I've always been so humbled by Helen's management of the adversity that comes with having diabetes.

Our friendship began back in fifth grade, when we were both extreme One Direction and Little Mix fans. I often went to the nurse's office before lunch for my inhaler, and Helen came with me to get her blood sugar checked and insulin delivered. Helen has type 1 diabetes, a chronic condition in which the pancreas has stopped producing the insulin hormone altogether. The body needs insulin to get blood sugar into individual cells to produce energy. Without it, people must regularly inject themselves with insulin and test their blood sugar levels frequently, typically before meals.

"To be completely honest, my memory of the day I was diagnosed is somewhat blurry," she says. She was diagnosed at age four.

I ask her about the challenges she must face. She responds by addressing a very pertinent challenge to young children with diabetes: "Things like low and high blood sugars are mostly felt internally. So when you try and verbalize to an adult what you're feeling, it can be hard, because sometimes they don't understand that what you're trying to describe is a low blood sugar."

As a result, Helen developed insecurities at a young age: "When I was younger I was very aware that I was different. It didn't help that in second grade, because of the way the insulin I was on then worked, I had to eat a snack at a specific time every day to stop my blood sugar from dropping . . . I got so upset when someone I thought was my friend told other people that I was diabetic."

"Now, I wouldn't think twice about it," she adds.

That's one of the things I love most about Helen—the kind of "So what? Who cares?" attitude that she employs during times of vulnerability. But it did take a while for Helen to get to this point. She claims that her diabetes is something she's held close for a long time. It really was only

recently, in the past three years, that she became more open about it. One day, I noticed the acronym "T1D" on her Instagram bio, and I watched in admiration as she chose to tell her diagnosis story to the class during a French project.

I soon became curious to find out how central diabetes was to her life.

"I absolutely do live by the fact that you shouldn't let your illness.. define you. And in no way does diabetes define me. It is not the only part of me, it is only a small part of me," Helen said.

She continued by describing other parts of her identity: "I'm also a daughter, a gemini, a singer, a dancer, so many other things."

But Helen admitted that she would be "naive" not to acknowledge the impact of diabetes on her identity. She discussed now how many of her life experiences and lessons learned were connected to her diabetes, so she doesn't know what kind of person she would be if she wasn't diabetic.

Given that the Fall Issue theme is health, Helen expressed her own definition for being healthy: "To me, being healthy means being at the best level you can be taking into account chronic illnesses and other problems you have."

Helen also pointed out how "health" doesn't just imply physical fitness, but it also takes your mental state into account.

But, Helen "also caution[ed] people not to beat themselves up if they're not the best health currently," especially with mental health. She continued: "It's important to be healthy and reach that state, but it's also important to accept that sometimes, things are out of your control. You're going to have good and bad days, and it's the same with your health."

We ended the interview by discussing our girl heroes.

"One of my girl heroes is Sonia Sotomayor, a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States...She's also diabetic, which to me was a very important thing to have growing up," Helen says.

She pointed out how "there's not very many books with main characters who have type 1 diabetes." This was an issue for Helen growing up because "books were [her] source of inspiration" For her, "it was nice to learn about a strong, empowered woman who just so happened to also have what [she has]."

# Health

## Healthcare Should Be a Right, Right? (Cont. pg. 1)

By JESSICA ZHANG '22  
Layout Editor

... Rights should mean health security for all, regardless of residence, station, or race—everywhere in the United States.”

Truman's proposal for universal healthcare was met with the pervasive fear of communism associated with the Cold War. As such, Truman's ideas of America's healthcare system never came to fruition. Yet, healthcare ought to be a right insured to everyone, despite these irrational fears.

Of course, since then, America's healthcare has certainly advanced, but it still remains rather exclusive. While the system has “a relatively high life expectancy after age 80,” “advanced medical technology,” and is a “world leader in pharmaceutical innovation,” 60% of Americans believe that the government should ensure healthcare coverage to everybody. The U.S. is advanced in medi-

cal practices and technology, but not everyone has access to healthcare because the country has continuously endorsed a private system: forty-two million Americans live without healthcare and medical access. Luxuries such as fancy clothes or a new car may be considered privileges, only earned through hard work—but not healthcare.

According to *The Washington Post*, 38% of households making less than \$22,500 a year reported being in poor or fair health in a survey taken between 2011 and 2013, which is more than three times the rate of health problems faced by individuals in households making more than \$47,700 a year, where only 12% being poor or fair health. The U.S. maintains enormous disparities in healthcare, and this is unfair to those who cannot afford it. People who are in lower income brackets are typically the ones who need healthcare the most, yet they cannot obtain it because healthcare in the United States

remains outrageously expensive and unattainable.

Action must be taken to make healthcare more accessible. A universal healthcare program can help through a the two-tier or single-payer system. Advantages of universal healthcare include eliminating administrative costs of dealing with different private healthcare insurers, lower costs for patients, and a healthier workforce. Disadvantages include higher taxes and healthy people paying for others, longer wait times, less funding for medical technological innovation, and reduced funding for other programs.

Currently, U.S. citizens might enjoy shorter wait times, but healthcare is far too expensive because of the competitive environment: healthcare companies demand higher profits because they possess advanced technology. With universal healthcare, wait times may increase, but people will be able to afford healthcare such that hospitals and treatment will become

more accessible. Equal access is almost certainly more important than the convenience of healthcare for a few. Moreover, even though universal healthcare means higher taxes or healthy people paying for healthcare, healthier citizens would benefit the country as a whole. Another disadvantage of universal healthcare is that money will be distributed more evenly among the population, which may stanch technological innovation. This issue, however, is about equity. Universal healthcare may also reduce funding for other programs, but healthcare is almost undoubtedly most important. An unhealthy people cannot work, and a limited workforce slows the economy.

Fundamentally, the advantages of universal healthcare override the disadvantages; the most important thing is that people are healthy. Thirty-two out of thirty-three developed countries have universal healthcare. France has a two-tier system, and spent 11% of its GDP on healthcare,

at \$4,600 per person in 2016. Similarly, the United Kingdom uses a single-payer system, and spent around 10% of its GDP, with \$4,193 per person in 2016. In contrast, the US uses a private system and spent 18% of its GDP, with \$9,892 per person in the same year. Countries can most certainly use universal healthcare systems and still succeed in making healthcare more accessible.

In the past, universal health care has failed to take hold because of political factors. Currently, many Americans suffer from a lack of healthcare, even though the US possesses advanced technology in the medical field. Even more, if other countries can use universal healthcare successfully, America can too. The plain truth is that: healthcare is a right, and action must be taken to secure this right for all. This change is inevitable and a time will come when healthcare will be available to all. If we make it happen.

## Vaccines are Vital

By DIVYASRI KRISHNAN '21  
Spectrum Staff

On February 8th, 2008, fifteen-year-old Martin McGowan woke up to severe leg pain and nausea. It was unlike anything he'd ever experienced; he'd felt some discomfort in his legs the previous day, but had chalked it up to muscle strain from the preceding basketball tryouts. Now, he was urging his parents to take him to the emergency room. Martin tested positive for influenza that day; the pain in his legs was a result of Compartment Syndrome, which cut off blood circulation to his legs as the disease attacked his muscles. He was taken into surgery in an attempt to restart circulation to his legs, but his heart stopped during the procedures. In a matter of hours since he'd first felt the symptoms, Martin McGowan had died of influenza. His parents spread his story and lobbied furiously until, three years later, the CDC expanded influenza vaccination requirements to include children from as early as 6 months to 18 years.

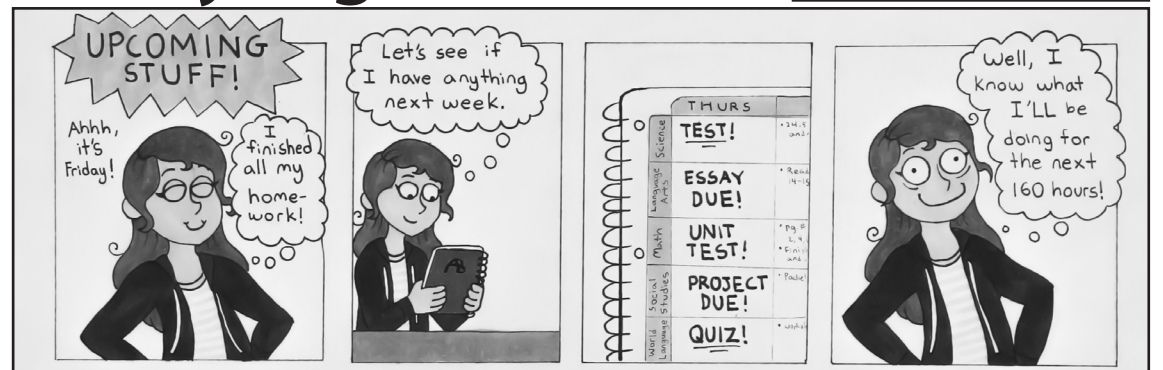
This was a victory for the McGowans and every family who wished to protect their children from Martin's fate. The dangers of influenza and other common, highly infectious diseases are often overlooked because of widespread vaccination and herd immunity. We take it for granted that we don't get more than a runny nose, a bad cough, and light body aches during flu season. It's easy to forget the devastating effect influenza epidemics have had in human history.

The Spanish Influenza of 1918 killed more than any epidemic ever had; a particularly lethal strain had surfaced that year, and no effective treatment or vaccination had been synthesized. At least forty million deaths were recorded, with some estimates reaching up to seventy million. Scientists now work tirelessly

to predict the next year's strain and develop a vaccination to prevent a resurgence of influenza to epidemic proportions. Although we've progressed greatly in the fight against infectious diseases, not all vaccines work perfectly. Some, such as the smallpox vaccine, can induce immunity. But most require booster doses to strengthen resistance against the disease. Influenza, because it mutates so rapidly, is given a new vaccine every year constructed as accurately as possible to counter the predicted new strain. Meningococcal vaccines are given to kids once they turn eleven and again when they turn sixteen. Hepatitis B vaccines are also administered in double doses, with a six month interval between the two.

The point of a vaccine is to introduce a part of the targeted virus to your immune system, which will prepare specific antibodies to efficiently and effectively fight off the disease should you actually contract it. Without vaccines, your immune system is only first introduced to a virus when you get the disease and takes some time to create antibodies, during which the disease may cause irreparable damage or death. Thus, a vaccine “arms” the immune system without actually causing the disease itself; it isn't full immunity, but it's the closest we can come. Vaccines are vital for the health and welfare of not only an individual but an entire population. Certain people cannot take vaccines because of age, health problems, and other circumstances; therefore, they rely on the majority of the population's vaccination to protect them from the disease. Vaccines promote “herd immunity”; although the individual is not entirely immune, they are sufficiently protected to fight the disease, leading to the collective resistance of a population against an outbreak. To preserve the general health, vaccines are an uncompromisable factor.

## Friday Night Fun



By Emily Hiltunen '22  
Cartoonist

## Flint Water Crisis: Still Unsolved

By IRIS LI '21  
Spectrum Staff

Perhaps you've heard about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan over the past few years—about the twelve thousand children who were poisoned by lead contaminated water or the city officials who denied the contamination time and time again. After the national craze surrounding Flint dissipated, many have either forgotten about Flint or assumed that the water crisis has resolved. However, the water crisis is still an ongoing problem for the town's citizens.

The crisis began when Flint decided to switch from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department to Karegnondi Water Authority to save money after a financial crisis. When Flint transitioned to nearby Flint River as its water source while the new pipeline was under construction in 2014, the city did not add an anti-corrosive agent to the water to prevent the pipelines from rusting and contaminating the water in a “wait-and-see approach.” Not long after the switch, people reported their water smelled foul, was discolored, and had a metallic taste since most of the pipelines in the city contained lead. The city only contaminated the water more by flushing the system with chlorine each time they found a new contaminant creating more harmful byproducts. Lead is an irreversible neurotoxin that is most harmful to young children. It can also cause additional kidney, nerve, and developmental problems that do not help the financial situation for those living in poverty, which is almost half the city's population.

Most people would think that with the amount of national news coverage the Flint Water Crisis received, the city would speed up the recovery process. But the crisis is still a harsh reality. In 2015, when most people on the city council voted to reconnect the

water supply to Detroit's water system, the city's appointed emergency manager, Jerry Ambrose, overruled, saying that it would cost too much. He even claimed that the water from Flint was safer than the water from Detroit. When asked if the water was unsafe to drink, officials denied the claims and Flint's mayor attempted to disprove the claim by drinking tap water on the local television; city officials continued to deny claims even when people brought bottles of dirty tap water to city meetings as evidence there was definitely something wrong with the water. In March of 2017, after fifteen city and state officials were charged with crimes ranging from false pretenses to involuntary manslaughter, the state of Michigan agreed to cover the costs of replacing all the lead pipes. As of 2018, the pipes of about 6,200 homes have been replaced, but twelve thousand homes are still waiting for new pipes. Flint Mayor Karen Weaver explains to *The Washington Post* how inconsistent funding may be the reason why the homes that need lead-free pipes still don't have them.

A possible solution to speed up the process would be to devote several

weeks, or months, to fixing the pipeline as quickly and as safely as possible. Michigan's government should give Flint the rest of the \$120 million that was promised as soon as possible, and the state of Michigan should cover the medical and water bills of impoverished families since many of them have young children that were affected. The city even charged the highest rates for tap water during the water crisis. Michigan can worry about debts later because they need to worry about the safety and well being of their citizens first. Additionally, they should continue to hand out bottled water and restart distribution where it was recently discontinued.

Flint's water crisis is a prime example of corruption among city officials. It has led to the distrust between authority and the people as it showed Flint's citizens that their government cares more about their reputation. This distrust can lead to even more dangerous events in the future because if and when another major city or small town is in a dire situation similar to Flint's, people will be hesitant to trust anything and everything that comes out of officials' mouths.

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# Health

## Health Affecting Physical Looks

By PRISHA DAYAL '21  
Spectrum Staff

The 2017 Miami fashion show for *Sports Illustrated* featured plus-sized models for the first time. Although many praised the magazine's radical step towards body positivity, the show also faced just as much backlash. The president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr. Frankum, says that using "unhealthily overweight models" sent a message that "it is okay to be severely overweight" by normalizing it, when in fact, "you are putting yourself at risk."

Making judgements about one's health based on their appearance may seem like a harmless observation, but in reality, labelling people as "unhealthy" without medical expertise can have detrimental effects on society by perpetuating stereotypes and causing young women and men to negatively perceive their bodies. It also establishes the definition of being healthy from a physical standpoint, rather than concentrating on the medical meaning of "healthy."

Even in the age of body positivity, there is an underlying stigma around plus-sized women in today's modelling industry. Notably, Ashley Graham, one of many successful plus-sized models, told *Business Insider* that she was often accused of "promoting obesity." For instance, Nicole Arbor, a controversial blogger, released a video criticizing Graham's appearance on *Sports Illustrated* and explaining that the magazine's aim should be to

"celebrate athleticism." These bold claims are alarming because they were driven by preconceived notions about a person's health based on her appearance. Graham rebutted Arbor's comments on *the Ellen Show*, saying she is not a "promoter" of anorexia or obesity. Instead, she asserts that women are healthy at every size "as long as they are getting off the couch and moving their body." She clarifies that she follows a healthy lifestyle and "works out because [she] loves [her] body, not because she hates it."

Additionally, appearance-based judgements are destructive to young women's and men's mindset because it diminishes their self esteem and confidence. In popular culture, models are portrayed as the epitome of "perfection." If the media only show one body type to fit this "perfection," it sends a message to young people that they need lose weight because their bodies are "unhealthy."

Further, the media often shift the focus from the emotional and mental component of health to the physical aspect. The shift reiterates the false message that people can only be healthy based on looks and body type. We often forget our mental and emotional health also plays a crucial role to our wellbeing. Being healthy means that individuals can accept their bodies and, if needed, change it for only themselves.

In the past few years, our society has taken strides towards being more inclusive to men and women of all sizes. A plus-size retailer named Lane Bryant started

the "#I'mNoAngel" campaign to "celebrate women of all sizes and empower them to love every part of themselves." The campaign was effective as it spread the message that the Victoria Secret models are incredibly healthy and beautiful, but not everyone has to look like them to be considered fit and healthy. Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign articulated the internal definition of health and beauty. And, American Eagle's fall denim campaign featured a diverse set of male models to celebrate the individuality and differences of real life people.

"It means so much to be able to represent so many people who think they, too, can be seen as desirable or powerful," said Thaddeus Coates, one of the American Eagle campaign models.

This campaign was especially important because society generally expects men to be "stronger" and "have more control over how they feel." According to Coates, men are unfairly excluded from the topic of body positivity because they "don't open their mouths because of other things like masculinity, and societal standards on men in the world of fashion." Society should usher in a wave of communication that empowers and cultivates men of every body type.

These efforts will help both women and men who face a daily struggle regarding their body image and health. As students, it is up to us to change the conversation about health and appearance to nurture a community of self loving individuals at school and beyond.

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## New Vegan Options

By PRISHA DAYAL '21  
Spectrum Staff

Veganism is becoming increasingly widespread. According to *Healthline*, many people are switching to a "way of living that excludes all forms of animal cruelty, whether for food, clothing or other purposes." The diet also has many health benefits. A study published by JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association) found that processed meat consumption was tied to 57,766 deaths from cardiometabolic diseases in 2012; therefore, eliminating these types of fats greatly reduces the risk of heart-related health issues. Another health benefit is the ability to absorb calcium more efficiently for bone formation. These benefits have also caused many to turn to veganism, including AB students. However, upon examining the lunch menu at AB, the lack of vegan alternatives to the meat-filled lunches was apparent.

Creating the school menus and deciding what to serve each day involves a lot of research according to Kirsten Nelson, the Head of Food Services at AB. The food services team "attends conferences with the School Nutrition Association which includes food shows where they sample and get new ideas."

Additionally, they bid with forty-nine other school districts in Massachusetts to get the best price for food items. When determining what food to serve according to the budget, the team does not "look at how many vegetarian versus non-vegetarian items to offer." Instead, they try to "offer a nice variety that is well rounded for the school for the student population."

According to the AB district website, the menu has evolved over the years by introducing gluten free items and more fruits and vegetables into the menu. The food services team also serves whole grain breads only. These were fruitful efforts that the school had taken to make the menu healthier,

but there is room for improvement. Nelson emphasized that the school does currently offer several vegetarian and vegan options daily, but she recognized that there is space for change and improvement. Thus, the school is "looking to find more offerings people are interested in," and are excited to hear new suggestions directly from the students. To take small steps to make the menu more inclusive for all, they plan on meeting a group of students who are willing to discuss new menu items.

"This is an exciting time for us as this year, we have a new Manager, Amy French, and a new Cook, Kevin Flannery, who are open to receiving feedback about the current lunch situation," Nelson added.

Many schools across the country undertook efforts to gradually incorporate more vegan options in their menu. Organic Authority reported that over ninety-five school districts in the northeast observe Meatless Mondays. Last fall, the Los Angeles Unified School District piloted a vegan menu through which students were able to provide feedback on the new items the school offered. The Fort Walton Beach High School in Florida created a fifty vegan meal cycle to make vegan meals a more appealing option and to add variety. In the Santa Barbara School District, the school began to offer plant-based meals daily after their partnership with a local vegan meat company called Hungry Planet. Live Kindly reported that the school serves two million meals a year, half of them being vegan.

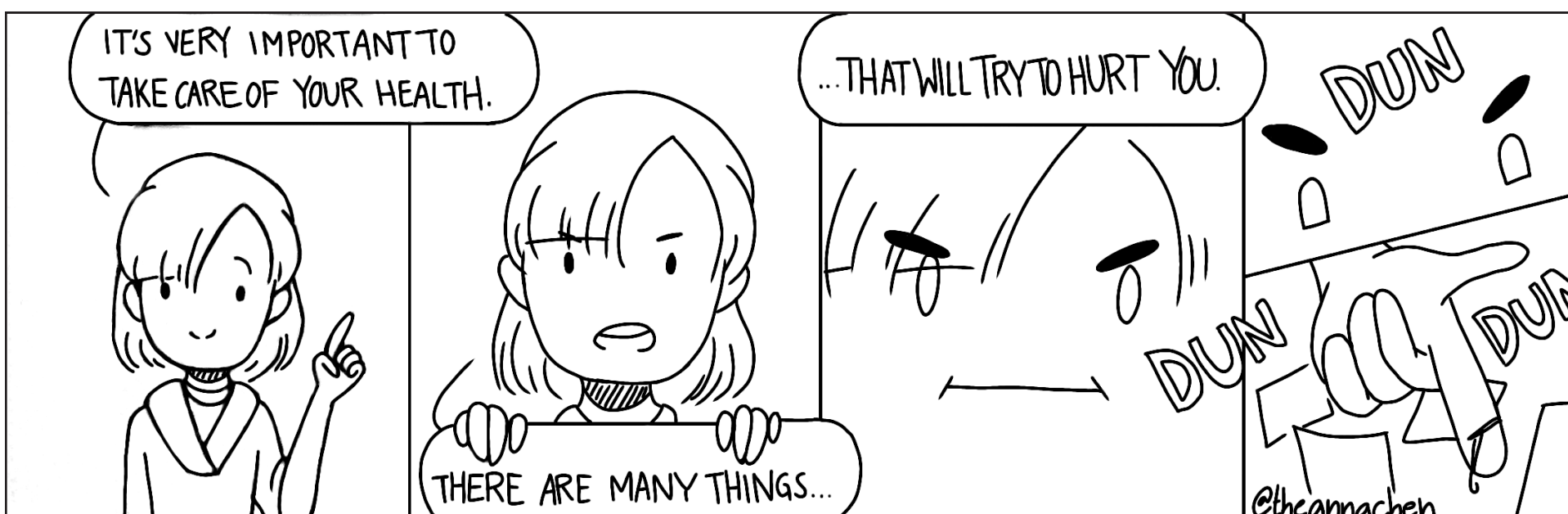
With the rapid evolution in diets and lifestyles, it is important for schools' lunch menus to accommodate these changes. Although the AB Food Services does have to continue adding more vegan options, it is determined to keep increasing the variety of food it offers students to fit their dietary needs and promote healthier eating habits.



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## Most Dangerous Health Risk: Paper Cuts

By ANNA CHEN '20  
Cartoonist



# Forum

## New Branch of Professions?

By SOPHIE ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff

For many, social media has functioned as a revolutionary new way to stay connected. The first form of social media, “bulletin board systems,” arose in the 1970s and behaved similarly to forums and blogs. Later on, Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn emerged. But with the emergence of social media, a new type of profession, or perhaps even, entrepreneur, developed. We call them “influencers.” What originally started as a way to connect with friends is now dominated by these popular influencers or people who pursue careers on apps such as Instagram, leading to a less authentic experience when using social media.

Whereas celebrities are those we know from TV shows, movies, or songs; influencers are those mainly known from their emergence through social media. Compared to celebrities, social media influencers feel like friends. On YouTube, for example, a specific niche of creators offer advice about productivity and effective studying. However, at the core, they are still relatable and openly talk about their stress, allowing their followers to create a close connection with them. We are also able to access or contact them through the comment section.

By developing this connection with their followers, influencers become a major force in marketing. According to Andrew Arnold, a contributor for Forbes, “When studying products such as shoes and clothing, it was discovered that 5% of the influencers offering product recommendations were driving 45% of social influence. They have earned the trust of their followers as a result of establishing expertise or other influence in a very specific

niche.”

On the other hand, the rise in social media marketing has increased the amount of advertisement and sponsorships, driving away users who prefer more genuine content. Marketing helps support some of our favorite influencers, but too much makes them seem less authentic and more like celebrities. Sponsored posts lose the personal touch because whether the influencer simply wants to gain more money or rather to truly connect with their audience becomes unclear. Sometimes, sponsorships seem out-of-place and not in-sync with the creator’s usual style in posts and videos.

According to Michael Quoc, a writer for Medium, “The standout finding for us is that a ... majority (52%) of Millennials said they trust influencers less than they used to.” If this trend continues, influencers will become less like friends and more like salesmen. The marketing on social media might corrupt our experience more as we see an increasing amount of ads. Thus, marketing will slowly start to drive

away users who prefer more honest, relatable connections between each other and their influencers.

As trust between producers and consumers weakens and as users disappear, social media as a whole will suffer. Influencers ought to support their relationship with their fan base or their biggest supporters. When followers walk away, influencers should realize that they might have pushed too far with their money-based ambitions, and in turn, they may lose money as their popularity dwindles.

In general, this new trend in social media continues to adapt as society’s needs change. Social media sites have started leaning toward the entertainment business with new streaming and video services on apps such as Instagram and Snapchat. However, we should remind ourselves that the main purpose of social media is to connect with friends and family and possibly even to meet new people. If we forget this, we might lose thousands of internet communities that allow users to connect with one another over specific interests.

## Popular Politics

By BRANDON WU '21  
Spectrum Staff

Who is the most influential person in the world? Better yet, who are the one hundred most influential people in the world? According to *Time*, thirty-three out of the most influential people in 2018 are involved with the entertainment industry. Despite our love of entertainment, most people draw a distinct line between their casual life—their hobbies, friendships, and interests—and their career: being a student, a parent, a boss, or a coworker. Recently, however, I’ve noticed entertainers being involved in a much more serious topic: politics. I noticed a significant change in the lyrics of many of the artists I listened to, most notable of which were Eminem’s album *Revival*.

Eminem has been known for his lyrics in his rap career. However, his graphic lyrics and willingness to speak his mind have not only made him one of the most influential rappers in history but also one of the most infamous. Eminem’s release of *Revival* criticized Trump as a “chump” who “watche[s]... Fox News like a parrot and repeats...” in the song “Like Home” while also addressing racial injustices in America through lyrical exaggeration such as claiming the racial tension in America has “drifted back into the sixties...” and that it “seems like the average lifespan of a white man is more than twice than a black life span.” Creative expression leads to many exaggerations, but when placing the blame for this racial tension, Eminem looks to Republicans, rapping, “F\*\*\* your Republican views.” Marshall doubled down on his rejection of the major political party in a freestyle against Trump at the BET

awards. Although many of Eminem’s fans were Trump supporters, Eminem expressed that he did not want anyone who supported Trump in any way as his fan, rapping, “I’m drawing in the sand a line, you’re either for or against.” With these two statements, Eminem lumps Trump supporters together. Despite their individuality and own reasons they may have had for voting for Trump, Eminem’s history of musical exaggeration influences him to portray all Trump supporters as the same. This stereotyping erases the unique qualities of the people who supported Trump, leaving them vulnerable to false assumptions and unwarranted hatred. Assumptions such as these negatively impact society because they contribute to the tensions between different groups of people, and in this case, the racial tensions in America. Since artists influence the public greatly, as seen through fashion trends, workout routines, diets, and skincare regimens, when an artist speaks out about their political views, it influences their fanbase and fuels debates about politics. If an artist has exaggerated or extreme views, they agitate the public and provide a platform for misguided hatred and chaos.

Through the controversial election of President Trump, musical artists have channeled their need to entertain to unintentionally affect the passage of information and the political alignment of their fans. Instead of the advice of a political representative, celebrities and entertainers have begun to branch out into politics, bringing an enormous amount of their fans into a vastly different climate where political views are based not on research, but on the opinions of influencers who may not be well-versed in politics.

## Chinese Politics: The People’s Right to Free Speech

By VERA TSANG '20  
International Relations Columnist

In 1949—just one year before the end of the Chinese Civil War—Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, as former leader Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist troops retreated to an island now known as Taiwan. Since the victory of Mao, China has been under the control of the Communist Party, which continues Mao’s controversial legacy to this day. The drastic changes socially, politically, and economically have been occurring in rapid fire. To maintain the progress, countries have to enter aggressive terms to protect both their reputation and power.

Recently, Xi Jinping—president and leader of China—tightened his grip on the country when the National People’s Congress unanimously agreed to overturn the presidential term limits, allowing him to gain access to interminable command. But what has risen most suspicions is that out of the three thousand votes, only two voted against the amendment. Conflicts rise as people wonder why so many officials agreed to allow a single person to gain absolute power with little opposition. Since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, student-led protests against the Chinese government that ended in violence, the Chinese have been pushing for a democratic society. However, their demands seem to be ignored rather than listened to. In fact, citizens protesting

against the Chinese government have been tortured, mysteriously disappeared, or even killed.

Renowned Chinese human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobao—often called the “Chinese Nelson Mandela”—advocated against the communist government, and was sent to jail as a political prisoner. After several years in prison, Liu died of liver cancer in July of 2017 after being denied to be sent overseas in order to heal. Chinese professor, Sun Wenguang, suddenly went missing after being arrested in the middle of an interview with the podcast, *Voice of America*. Sun, a longtime critic of Xi Jinping, discussed the Chinese government’s spending on foreign projects during the interview.

“Throwing money around like this is of no benefit to our country and society,” Sun said.

Dong Yiaoqing, a woman from Shanghai, filmed a video of herself throwing ink on a poster of Xi, expressing her opposition to the president and calling the government “Chinese Communist’s Party mind control.” Hours after posting the video on Twitter, Dong posted a photo of police waiting outside her door; since then every trace of her from social media to phone number—has been erased.

However, it’s not just ordinary Chinese citizens that have been under attack. Chinese communist politician and Interpol president Meng Hongwei went missing in September 2018, and Interpol reported a sudden resignation. The Chinese government excused his abrupt actions, explaining that it was for “legal

troubles.” However, since he went missing, no one has heard from him. Meng’s wife spoke out about her concern for her husband, saying that because of this “everybody in China is at risk.”

China has, as John Oliver put it, “never been known as a haven for free expression.”

Whenever one dissents with Xi, the government wastes no time to use their power and censor the information posted; photos of Winnie the Pooh were once banned after Xi was compared to the animated character. The Chinese government has enforced perhaps the strictest online censorship in the world, having an undeniable control over media and the internet. Reports of torturing prisoners and denying them lawyers have been revealed through foreign interferences, and Sweden recently criticized the government for their treatment of Chinese Muslims, denying them religious and cultural rights and regarding them with isolation. China even has a list of “untrustworthy people” after establishing a monitoring system that has prevented some from travelling or buying a house. There have been plans to expand upon this list, rating the people with “social credit scores” based upon their observed behavior.

Despite this oppression, esteem for Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party grows. Xi has been referred to as “Big Uncle Xi” by state news agencies. The area where he grew up is now a popular tourist attraction.

Over the last thirty years, China’s GDP growth averages nearly 10% a year, making it, according to the World

Bank, “the fastest sustained expansion by a major economy in history.” This growth has benefitted over 800 million people, equating to tremendous support from the Chinese middle class. Internationally, China is growing in support. China and Pakistan have such strong ties that children in Pakistan are taught Mandarin as their second language. The country is invested in over sixty countries in Africa, the Middle East, South America, and Europe, creating and supporting projects. China even made

a propaganda video describing these infrastructure projects, giving hopes of better resources, international relationships, and wealth. Regarding such growth, there is no denying this country is one of the biggest—literally and figuratively—and continues to grow every day in both international and domestic power.

As Xi Jinping put himself, “China needs to learn more about the world, but the world also needs to know more about China.”

# Forum

## A Brief Inquiry Into The 1975: New Music, New Meaning

By GENEVIEVE RUDOLPH '19  
Music Columnist

I regularly find myself searching for a song or an album that encompasses my emotions at any given moment. Few songs have made me really listen to how the music conveys a message. The 1975 recently debuted a few songs from their upcoming album coming out on November 30th called *A Brief Inquiry into Online Relationships*. The album comments on our lives as teenagers in the ever-changing technological world. The singles beautifully depict the “sadness or euphoria,” as Billy Joel might say, that is an essential part of the high school experience. The lyrics also speak to issues that many millennials face today: cheating, vulnerability, love, and more. But the band’s efforts to convey a larger message to address a specific topic isn’t unique: the band has explored these overarching themes and has evolved

since their beginnings in September of 2013.

### Instrumentation in Past Works

Their first album, *The 1975*, released in 2013, was a rock album with its own twists on the genre. They incorporated 70’s and 80’s instrumentation including the drums and electric guitar common to the period. The second album is called, *I like it when you sleep for you are so beautiful yet so unaware of it*. It struck me as a primarily electronic album because of its incorporation of synthesizers and digital sounds. One particular song, “If I Believe You,” began and ended with a smooth jazz trumpet and saxophone that cascaded through the tune. The instrumental interlude provided an image of a smoky coffeehouse jazz session in the old streets of New York.

### Lyricism in Past Works

Originally, when the band’s first album came out, it seemed as though they touched upon surface-layer top-

ics such as lust. But in their second album, they shed light on personal and atypical thoughts on topics such as religious beliefs; the deceased nana of the lead singer, Matt Healy; and emotions involved in relationships. Their song, “The 1975” is a perfect example of the incorporation of simple lyrics contrasting with dynamic melodies. This particular song began as dark and solemn as the beat evolved into crunchier noises: clinking keys and chomping. The band repeated the lyrics “before you go (Please Don’t Go),” making listeners to wonder what the lyrics mean in relation to the instrumentation. The album was a platform for people to contemplate what the instrumentation was trying to convey about the topic, a common theme in *The 1975* songs.

### What’s Next?

The band’s newly released songs from their upcoming album reflect their sounds from previous albums

but embrace new styles and topics. “Love it if We Made it” has very similar instrumentation to their original songs. Although, in addition to the original sound, it commented on the seemingly corrupt state of modern society, repeating that “Modernity has failed us.” The music video portrays images of burning buildings, protests and irreparable environmental damage, a statement regarding the state of our society. The second song, “TOOTIMETOOTIMETOOTIME,” has an electronic pulse that is practically impossible to not bob your head to; it describes how easy it can be to cheat while in an online relationship. Finally, their last release, “Sincerity is Scary,” has a gorgeous tone filled with light trumpet interludes.

In an interview with Zane Lowe, one member said, “Sincerity Is Scary’ is about me trying to denounce all of that postmodern fear of like being real, you know? Like

irony first, irony first. Make sure you’re ironic because then you can’t be judged on being a person.”

Essentially, vulnerability and expressing true emotion is increasingly difficult for teenagers. It’s easier to post a picture and present a “perfect image” to the world than it is to show reality. The song conveys this message by exploring a relationship with a person who feels unloved by another, telling them, “you should be pulling me in,” showing our generation’s fear of vulnerability.

The new album will pose questions for our generation to ponder through its depiction of how our view love and how these views may lead to more global issues in the future. My favorite aspect of *The 1975* is how they combine old and new instrumentation and lyricism to convey a larger message in each album. Tune in on November 30th for their new music in *A Brief Inquiry into Online Relationships*.

## Elizabeth Warren

By VERA TSANG '20  
International Relations Columnist

Though Elizabeth Warren had not yet arrived, the whole room filled with people cheering, carrying her signs, and wearing her pins at a town hall meeting in Woburn, Massachusetts. Coming from a middle-class family in Oklahoma, Warren wasn’t born into wealth, and described her family as “hanging on at the edge by our fingernails.” Despite these conditions, they worked assiduously. Her mother worked at a minimum-wage job to support the family, and Warren worked at a restaurant starting at age thirteen. At the town hall, Warren referenced the importance of minimum wage jobs and how back then, it actually saved her family from entering an inescapable level of poverty.

“It is astonishing how a minimum wage job right now, can’t even support a single mama and her children,” Warren said.

Warren hasn’t been afraid to decry big corporations and the unfair treatment of underpaid workers. Earlier in 2018, she even proposed a federal bill, the Accountable Capitalism Act, which would allow workers to elect representatives on a company board of directors; this would ultimately give workers a voice on company boards as the United States has almost no representation for the workforce in corporate governance. Warren continues to advocate for middle-working class families and has written books on their struggle. These include *The Two-Income Trap* and *This Fight is Our Fight*, describing how Trump could “deliver the knockout blow” to the middle class. Along with her outspoken opposition to Donald Trump, his cabinet, and the recent confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh, Warren clearly has the ambition

within her that strives for change and ambition that goes as far as running for president.

According to the *New York Times*, Warren announced during a town hall meeting in Holyoke, Massachusetts that she would “take a hard look” at running for president in 2020 once midterm elections are over. She called for the need of a female president to mend the “broken government” in Washington. She further elaborated on her future campaign plans, describing how she is “worried down to [her] bones about what Donald Trump is doing to our democracy.” However, her candidacy for president could turn into another Hillary Clinton situation. Clinton was constantly badgered about her emails and FBI investigation—along with her controversial marriage to Bill Clinton—Warren could face similar treatment. Recently, Warren was challenged by Trump on her Native American ancestry, who said that if she took a DNA test, he “will give [her] a million dollars to [her] favorite charity.” The claims, which started during her 2012 campaign for Senate, put her under lots of scrutiny. While Warren took the test successfully—even releasing the results to the public—she has remained under fire. People will always find excuses to dislike women in politics, and Warren’s “Native American heritage” could just be that excuse.

Warren continues to advocate for a democratic nation. Since Trump’s inauguration, she hasn’t cowered away from displaying her strong opposition and has been considered—according to the *Boston Magazine*—the “new face of the Democratic Party.” While there is no denying her prominence down at D.C., her influence continues to grow, and her re-election in the midterm elections could elevate it.



Elizabeth Warren meeting with student reporters.  
John Vitti / The Boston Globe

## Girl Hero Youtuber: Cloudyapples

By LIZETTE STA. MARIA '19  
Girl Hero Columnist

She concocted a 50-50 mixture of cold-pressed castor oil and olive oil to serve as her facial cleanser. “A very luxurious, deep clean for the lazy girl,” she claimed in her trademark tone—50% caustic and 50% sincere.

In 2013, the YouTube beauty community was on an upward trend; the makeup was becoming more elaborate, and the skincare routines were becoming more complex to catch up. Kassie’s oil cleansing video was a breath of fresh air. Watching it today, five years since it was first posted, I notice a few things I had missed before: in Kassie’s eyes, a hint of sadness, melting with each pat of oil. In her sly smile, a humble confidence, a confident humility, and an inner strength.

Kassima Isabelle, a Canadian youtuber, known for her YouTube channels CloudyApples and today, GloomGames, has been a role model of mine for quite some time now—but she wouldn’t consider herself as such:

“I often get labeled as a natural beauty blogger, but I feel like the thing I’m most natural at is being an [idiot]. I tend to share a lot of my flaws and downfalls on this channel [CloudyApples] because I catch myself being an [idiot] so much, and it really helps to vocalize the thought process.”

While I stumbled upon her channel as a fairly insecure seventh grader looking for DIY methods to clear my skin, I stayed tuned all these years because Kassie exposed me to more than just my outward imperfections: unwittingly from 3,000 miles away behind a camera, she had helped me to better understand them. I had found commonality in our experiences—everything from being afraid of others’ success—and I had gained inspiration from her introspective mentality. It was uncomfortable at first, but just as enlightening, each time she’d thoughtfully articulate the lessons she’d learned.

One of the very first videos I watched about Kassie’s philosophies was “Happiness Takes Effort,” in which she recounted a memory of a Late Bus driver who lifted the spirits of tired, miserable

passengers such as herself by simply “cracking jokes and laughing and smiling.” Kassie took this as a lesson to seek happiness during difficult or even just mundane times, like the dreary bus ride home.

She also encouraged her audience to be kind to one another: “I hope that you guys will come away from this video with a passion to leave everybody a little bit better than the way you found them. Approach everything you do with that love in mind, and things will be better for you and everyone else.” They were simple but effective words to live by.

In December 2013, Kassie posted her “Draw My Life” video, and I came to find that the situation wasn’t as simple as it seemed. Kassie had previously suffered from clinical depression, but by making the effort to change her lifestyle, adapting a more holistic approach to diet and skincare, and holding onto happy encounters, she was able to manage her depression and abandon the various medications that weren’t working for her. Her sister, however, was unable to do the same. “My sister had taken her own life,” Kassie said in the video, her voice sounding like it might break. But it only grew resilient as she continued her story:

“Some days after hearing the news [of the suicide], I reflected on what I taught myself and figured I had to spread some love and positivity. Otherwise, the gravity of the situation would be too much. So, I wrote and filmed a video called ‘Happiness Takes Effort.’”

When I heard that last part, it echoed in my head. I thought back to “Happiness Takes Effort” and gained a stronger appreciation and admiration for Kassie. She had turned her darkest days into love and light worth sharing.

In 2015, another critical video dropped: “The Truth About my Life... Over Pho.” I like to think Kassie was ahead of her time with this one; this was before the mukbang video trend, where YouTubers casually eat while talking to their viewers.

She began by confessing that she had attempted to fast for Ramadan in solidarity with her Muslim mother, but she hadn’t been able to follow through successfully. Those who observe Ramadan are

not supposed to be feeding into negative energy while fasting. To put it into perspective, Kassie told a story about a lesson she learned from a cab driver. Kassie had scrambled to the cab driver’s defense out of perceived kindness after a woman on the street verbally harassed him, but in doing so, she became hateful to the woman. The cab driver politely asked Kassie to stop.

Reflecting during the video, she said, “I have never been so ashamed at myself and inspired by humanity at the same time.” I think that was the epitome of a self-proclaimed “idiot” vocalizing her thought process.

She also integrated the idea of grief into the story. Through her attempt at fasting, she was able to fully mourn her sister’s death, albeit two years later. She admitted that perhaps immediately going back to making uplifting videos may not have been the right thing to do, but no one really knows what to do in situations of loss. Kassie found herself wearing a mask of happiness in the same way that her sister had, and fasting forced her to sit down “with an empty belly and let all of these feelings that [she] had been repressing hit [her] with full force.”

I still think she was strong to film “Happiness Takes Effort,” but I think she’s even stronger for showing such candor and vulnerability to her audience. Over noodles, sriracha, and hoisin sauce, she said, “I’m not trying to be perfect on this channel; I’m just trying to be honest.” This is something I wish all young girls could hear.

As a senior, I realized I have grown up a lot since that oil cleansing video. Kassie played a part in that. She’s my hero because her quirky and honest account of her own growth taught me that “it’s okay to be a dynamic human who screws up sometimes.” I would say I’ve been through my fair share of turbulent teenage years, but the mistakes, the learning, and the reflection don’t stop at my young adult life. Because of Kassie, I’m now better equipped to handle uncomfortable situations that may help foster growth later on. I’ve resolved to stay true to myself and wear no masks—only my heart on my sleeve to serve as my superhero cape.

# Off Topic

## The 6 Best Reasons to Stress Out

By SUPRIA SHROFF '22  
Spectrum Staff

**You got less than a perfect score on your test.**

Oh, how horrible! This one test means that you will flunk all your classes, eventually drop out, and be forced to live in a ditch due to lack of education when you grow older. Evidently, your future is determined by this one test, so your life may as well be over.

**All your friends have the brand new iPhone X, but your parents say that your old iPhone 5 is perfectly fine to use.**

What a catastrophe! It's so obvious that if you don't have the newest phone, your friends are going to drop you like a hot potato. Having a phone that is "so four years ago" will 100% damage your reputation and make you a social outcast. Who cares about your great personality? The only thing that matters is that you have the newest, best phone.

**You accidentally snapchatted an ugly picture to someone.**

This is quite a stressful pickle you have gotten yourself into. Even though there is nothing you can do about it, you should definitely spend sleepless nights worrying. The person you sent the snap to is definitely convinced that this is how you actually look, even though he sees you at school looking normal every day.

**You wake up feeling super sick and stay home from school.**

This is a big stresser, not only

because of your health, but because of all the make-up work you have to do when you return. An hour of doing homework for each class, remembering to get class notes, learning the presented material, attending extra help, plus studying for upcoming tests, etc. etc.. It's a lot! The obvious solution here is to sacrifice your sleep because we all know that school trumps life.

**You're running through the hallways at top speed to get to 8th period, when suddenly, you drop your entire pencil case, spilling the contents everywhere.**

Now you'll be that awkward kid who shows up late to class. Everyone in the hallways is watching you hastily shove your pencils and erasers into your bag. They hide their chuckles behind their phones, and you feel like they are snapchatting your unfortunate mishap. This experience will most

likely haunt you for the rest of your life because, let's face it, such things happen to only you.

**You are writing your first newspaper article as a freshman.**

There are just so many things that cause stress in this situation. For example, you can worry about whether you interpreted the assignment correctly, whether the article is too short or too long, whether you turned it in on time, and whether you made a good impression with your writing. Most importantly, you can stress about what everyone else will think. I, for example, am stressed about my article on reasons to panic because I can only hope my readers understand that I wrote this article to show the foolishness of stressing out needlessly. In stressful situations, just take a deep breath, relax, and know that it's okay to mess up sometimes: it's all a part of the high school experience.

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## Infectious Affection

By BALWANT SINGH '19  
Love Doctor

**If my crush asks to start a Snapchat streak, isn't that basically asking for marriage?**

Um, yes. When ISN'T that implied? Just kidding! Although the creator of Snapchat has reported over 100,000 snapchat proposals, only about 70% of proposees said "Yes." However, I genuinely believe that, if someone adds you, you aren't good friends, and they're of the gender you're into, then there's a possibility they might be in love with you. I mean, why wouldn't they want to see your beautiful face on a daily basis?

**Does sharing a study guide count as flirting?**

Storytime: Sophomore year, I was stressed. Clarification: I still am now, but not as much as I was sophomore year. Studying for Biology tests was a struggle because I never did any of my outlines until the day before the test, nor did I do any actual studying. Even worse, somehow, all of the Biology tests coincided with my U.S. History tests, and like Biology, I never did the outlines until the day before for history class. Anyway, someone special in my Biology class noticed my stress and asked if I wanted their study guides. I was touched. For the next three months, Biology turned into a romantic joyride—we even dissected a rat together. I thought he was flirting with me because he always shared his labs and study guides. And then I found out he also shared the same guide with ten other people but made a separate doc that was only shared with me to make me feel special! So

no, sharing study guides does NOT count as flirting.

**My crush blocked me on Instagram because I recalled a very specific post on their page from 2013, and they felt "violated." How do I win them back?**

We ALL get a little crush crazy and try to investigate everything about them by looking through their entire Instagram or their Facebook profile. However, you need to know your boundaries! You have to be incredibly cautious about the information that you're getting. My advice would be to drop them as a crush and start fresh with a new one! Do your stalking, but make sure to act incredibly oblivious about everything in their life (except for things they've specifically told you before).

**My boyfriend constantly wants to me to text him back, but I really like to finish my homework before I use my phone. I don't think this is healthy. What should I do?**

As a certified mentor in Distraction Prevention, I identify this as a very toxic relationship! You don't need someone who doesn't understand that school is a priority. Either break up or make up! Make sure he knows what matters to you more.

**I have a crush on my best friend's brother!**

Watch "Best Friend's Brother" by the cast of Nickelodeon's *Victorious*. It's a very good song and will comfort you in this situation.

**Should I text my ex back?**

No. You're done with them.

## A Guide to High School for Freshmen, by a Freshman

By ALISA KHOMIAKOVA '22  
Spectrum Staff

The bell pierces the fall air as students trudge to school. Within the crowd, it's easy to spot the anxious freshmen. Fear fills their widened eyes as they enter the school. They know they will get lost. They know they will fail to open their lockers. They know they need a newspaper article to help them survive the year—and they're in luck! If you are a 9th grader, fear no more and look no further! You are now in possession of the freshman's guide to high school.

Health is probably the most important aspect of surviving high school. Besides sleep, high schoolers tend to lack proper nutrition. If you don't have time for breakfast, grab a quick bite before the bus. Eat healthy lunches too, especially if you play sports. Also, don't forget to drink water: hydrate or die-drate.

Another way to make sure you stay healthy is to join a club or sports team to make some new friends. It's crucial to your happiness that you sometimes focus on activities other than schoolwork.

If you have trouble with anything, remember that you have a counselor who will be happy to listen and to help. However, if you would rather not talk to a human about your problems,

there are therapy doggos in South Commons on Wednesdays beginning at 10:30. It has been scientifically proven that if you boop a snoot, you'll feel better.

In terms of school work, many students feel that the piles of homework are on the verge of swallowing them whole. This, however, is not the (pencil) case. If you just attack your work with puns and a sarcastic attitude, you'll be far more successful than you think. In all seriousness, though the most important tools in your arsenal are your teachers. They are here to help, and they truly want to see you succeed. However, with the large number of students they have, it can be difficult for them to cater to your individual needs. To learn most effectively, you need to be willing to come to your teachers and to ask for help. Although asking questions will make things far less confusing, teachers can't do all the work for you; you need to put in the necessary effort, and yes, this means... studying. Since you can't immediately memorize every bit of information in class, looking over notes and study material at home is important. One good way to study is to have two sets of notes. In class you can scribble as much as you want, but when you get home, copy your notes down nicely and neatly. Then

use the tidy version to study. If you want to, you can also compare notes with your friends. But sometimes, procrastination takes hold, and no studying actually happens. This is where one of the greatest inventions of all time comes in: *the planner*. If you have everything that you need to do written down neatly, the workload can seem far less daunting, and it will motivate you to get off your instachats, facegrams, and snapbooks and just finish your work. This way, you will spend less time worrying about what you have to do, and more time actually doing it, which leads to peace of mind. If the studying doesn't go according to plan, there are always ways to improve your grades. Some teachers offer test corrections for a few extra points. Others provide extra help after school or during their free periods, which will help your grade on the next assessment.

Now introducing our last topic: miscellaneous tidbits of advice. Contrary to popular belief, being healthy and on top of your schoolwork aren't the only two parts of high school you need to worry about. To survive, you need to have other skills as well. For example, how to locate a senior if you need one: stand in one spot and loudly proclaim how much homework you have. Those with the most intense

death glares will most likely be seniors.

Another problem you need to know how to combat: how are you supposed to move quickly during passing time? The solution is relatively simple: just locate the nearest tall person headed in the same direction and latch on to their backpack. They will effectively part the flow of the crowd and pull you along in their wake, allowing speedy travel to your destination. Falling down stairs is not recommended; however, if you are late, it can serve as an effective shortcut.

The cafeteria sells hot chocolate. Do not waste this opportunity.

The Senior Staircase is not only for seniors, as the name may

imply.

And finally, the third floor does not exist. However, "I was trying to find the third floor" can serve as a good excuse for being on the roof.

Every student will love and hate high school. It's a time of change and self discovery. It's a time when you can take a bite out of an orange as if it were an apple and nobody will stare at you as if you are an absolute moron, for they will all be busy with their own worries and insecurities. In the end, my most important piece of advice is to not take high school too seriously. After all, these are your last days of freedom before adulthood, and that's when the real responsibilities kick in. Enjoy.



Freshmen roaming the halls with houses on their backs.  
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