

GIRLTALK

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16-17

GENDER CONFIRMED

By Eva Kaplan

17-18

REACH OUT

By Monie Choi

18-19

VERFREMDUNGSEFFEKT PRESENTATION

By Lola Bode

19-20

SEXISM IN TENNIS

By Lily Kramon

20-21

WOMEN IN AMERICAN POLITICS

By Joanna Im

21-22

IRANIAN WOMEN TAKE CHARGE OF THE MUSIC SCENE

By Charlotte Kramon

22-24

LEFT IS RIGHT

By Eva Kaplan

24-25

TEEN REPORTING IN AN APOCALYPTIC DECADE

By Sophie Dorf-Kamienny

25

WRITING AND PROCESSING

By Shelby Luster

26

DEPARTING WORDS

By Joanna Im

LIFE HAPPENS, AND WE ADJUST

By Nadia Rivera

27-28

COVID-19 DOMESTIC ABUSE RESOURCES FROM YALE

By Eunice Park

29-32

LETTERS *from the* EDITORS

To our loyal readers, the GirlTalk Family:

Wow. We can't believe the final issue of the year is here! 2020 has been anything but calm, and through it all our writers have made their articles of utmost priority and were eager to hunt for new stories, shedding light on our most pressing problems. The integrity, class, wit, humor and passion that went into our stories this year was monumental, and our team worked side-by-side to push out magazines that we were proud to put our names on. We were able to use our voices as student journalists to push the envelope, question authority and give a platform to the marginalized and the oppressed. The love we have toward this magazine is unparalleled. It's a bittersweet time for us because this isn't just the last issue of the year, it's the last issue that our three senior Editors-in-Chief will write and edit for. Our three Editors-in-Chief are all heading off to college! Sierra Stern is going to Princeton University, Sophie Friedberg is attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and last but certainly not least, the beating heart of *GirlTalk*, Charlotte Kramon, who is finishing up her second year as Co-Editor-in-Chief, will be attending Washington University in St. Louis. Additionally, we are so proud to announce the next Co-Editors-in-Chief, Monie Choi and Olivia Weiner! We are so excited to be passing the torch to these amazing ladies... lead the charge!

And with that, *GirlTalk* Family, we thank you for your loyalty, your ideas and your stories. We've all been inspired by so many of you and will carry your stories in our hearts as we start our new adventures.

One last time, we present, *GirlTalk*!

Charlotte Kramon, Sierra Stern, and Sophie Friedberg



GOODBYE, FROM THE FOUNDER

BY CHARLOTTE KRAMON
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN SAINT LOUIS

It's really weird to think that I'm writing my last article as *GirlTalk's* Co-Editor-in-Chief. Emotional, even. But, I promise I'm not going to get too sappy.

I started this project when I was fourteen and a freshman in high school. Eunice reached out to me with the idea of starting an international feminist magazine. Me?! I thought. A sophomore wants ME to start this with her? Eunice knew I was socially and politically involved, but we didn't know each other too well at the time. I was caught off guard, but mostly, I was ecstatic. Despite attending a small school for most of my life and coming from a small family, I was always the kid with a "think big" mentality. I was fairly quiet and introspective, but in my head, I had endless questions about what everything meant. I've had to

look outward to search for answers.

That's why I started thinking about politics and social issues so early in life, in fifth grade. To be honest, most of what I used to think were my beliefs are no longer mine, but beliefs I picked up from a family member who also thinks very differently now. They were contrarian beliefs, though, which is perhaps what led me to champion them. I hate being the center of attention. I always have. But I ended up bringing temporary attention to myself when I said things others, including my present-day self, disagreed with. Perhaps I found it more painful to watch conformity justified by a common enemy: those who dissented.

In ninth grade, I discovered feminism. I read texts like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* and parts of Simone

de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. I joined my school's gender equality club and started engaging with the family member whose beliefs I used to unquestionably adopt, learning how to disagree with people on issues of identity and social justice without polarizing them or viewing them with vitriol. However, how was I to reconcile my newfound passion for feminism and my concerns about elements of the movement that felt polarizing?

The *GirlTalk Magazine*, of course! Just kidding. I've written many articles indicating that I still struggle to answer that question, and this magazine certainly doesn't have answers to everything. The questions we try to address don't have simple, objective answers. But the thing is, when I started *GirlTalk*, I realized that I didn't have to embody

any specific “type” of feminism. Eunice and I were the creators. We were free to portray and act on our identities as feminists in whatever ways we wanted, and we hoped to give other people a platform to do that too. While I’d like to think I’ve become a better writer since then, I am constantly reminding myself of the passion and excitement I channeled into my first article about women in hip-hop music and what felt like conflicting loves for rap and feminism. We didn’t give answers, but we provided a space for interesting, personal, and controversial discussions. Our first issue voiced perspectives of people who, like me, believe that feminism is a necessary part of global discourse alongside people who feel third wave feminism is actually counterproductive.

It’s become difficult to gather articles from people with political differences because we live in a polarized world where we are rarely exposed to people with different belief systems. Nevertheless, our voices remain diverse in countless ways. The term “intersectional” became more commonplace among activists when I was in tenth grade, a year after I co-founded *GirlTalk*. Many of our writers express how their experiences of gender, race, and religion overlap. Others have touched us with personal narratives about not identifying with any gender. I hope that *GirlTalk* has served as a unifying platform in which people can express their unique experiences with identity, social issues, and oppression, and relate to shared experiences with other women, as well as other genders. I think we’ve done a pretty good job with that, as I’ve seen through the many emails I’ve read, social media messages I’ve answered, and people I’ve met through school or through the ice cream event we had in May of 2019.

During my junior year I took a two-week class at school where we went to grassroots organizations in East, Downtown, and South Central Los Angeles. During those weeks, I was forced to confront my privilege from places other than guilt. The guilt I had always felt didn’t align with my “think big” mentality as a kid. Instead, guilt made me think smaller. I affirmed the message societal and political institutions want privileged kids to affirm: I am separate from those they oppress. Sure, unity is important, but I was led to believe that I was only supposed to unify people from similar backgrounds because those were the people who I was capable of understanding. Oh, how wrong I was!

Every person, from the union organizers to the Skid Row community members, was eager to share their story and engage with us. As a socially aware activist, I am supposed to contradict the institutions that wanted me polarized and separated from these individuals. Not only did I gain a more complex understanding of intersectionality, but

I came to understand that our work at *GirlTalk* can easily resonate with everyone who is passionate about social justice, regardless of where they’re from. It is the unifying platform I wanted it to be.

These are some of the many reasons building this platform was so rewarding, and so worth all the hard work. Creating and running a magazine is about so much more than writing some articles and slapping them together. It’s about more than Eunice and Hannah, our former technology director, getting irritated by my technological incompetence. (Luckily, I have fully learned how to run the website and have cut down the time it takes to upload an issue and update the site from two hours to one hour.) Getting emails and messages from our readers, like Dali and Nadia Rivera, about what our magazine means for them reminds me of what this is really all about—empowering girls and women to say what they have to say, learn what they want to learn about, and have a resource to see how people like them are navigating today’s political climate and constantly changing society.

The next generation of women is going to shake up the status quo. I’m so grateful that the GirlTalk community is a part of that, and I can’t wait to see what our new team has in store.

A Feminist Farewell (*wow, this title sucks*)

BY SIERRA STERN | PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

My first contribution to *GirlTalk* was a last-minute cover for the “Women in Power” issue, hastily drawn because my brother, the layout designer, couldn’t find anybody else to do it before the deadline. Not long after, I was taken on as a Creative Director, making me responsible for graphics as well as one article per issue. I was hesitant, at first, to involve myself so definitively with a feminist magazine, not because I ever had any issue calling myself a feminist, but because I didn’t want to experience firsthand the dismissal that plagues every genuine feminist pursuit. I was loath to stand up at our school’s assembly to make announcements that even my closest friends didn’t pretend to care about, but I found that this indifference didn’t deter me as I expected. The value of our publication was never contingent on what others thought.

At the end of my junior year, I became Co-Editor-In-Chief alongside Charlotte Kramon and Sophie Friedberg. Never a gifted journalist, I feel I’ve gained so much valuable experience from writing, requesting, and editing articles. I know which of my own articles are my worst and best. I learned that journalism doesn’t have to be a word-for-word recounting of a current event, and that I can write about the things I was passionate about in a feminist context. (It turns out, almost everything can be seen in a feminist context. Institutionalized misogyny, anyone?) In writing for *GirlTalk*, I found myself noticing things in the world around me that were misogynistic by design. In fifteen issues, we have never scratched our heads at what to write about, and maybe that, by itself, justifies the magazine’s existence.

I know that Charlotte and I have learned to have a sense of humor at school about being co-editors of *GirlTalk*. We joke about one day receiving a Teen Choice Award for our efforts (and seriously, where is it?) and, after the club fair, we thanked the people who wrote their signatures on our email list for pretending to care. In doing this, I think we subconsciously hope to distance ourselves from the cartoon feminist that almost everybody has lurking in the back of their mind, preachy and loud, somebody who sips condescendingly from a Male Tears mug and takes herself way too seriously. I hope that our next editors don’t feel like they have to make light of the magazine in order to stave off this stereotype. (Make light of it for better reasons, like the weird emails we get, or because our group brainstorming Facetimes are intrinsically a little bit cursed.)

I’m going to miss begging Charlotte to let me make BoyTalk for the April issue (☺), and going up at Town Meeting to see if I could magically transfigure apathy into interest. I will miss the sweeping pride I feel every time a new issue comes out and checking our website analytics to see if it was as funny, or interesting, or well-received as I hoped it would be. I’ll miss all the people that lent their time, talent, and anger towards filling *GirlTalk* with content



and pictures and cover art. My only regret is that I didn't get involved sooner.

My ```` final issue of *GirlTalk* comes at a time when it feels irresponsible to be passing the torch. In light of George Floyd's death and other unforgivable crimes against the black community, I want nothing more than to pour out my heart, soul, and aggressively leftist political agenda into this magazine. I have faith in Monie and Olivia to

handle these issues gracefully, and I ask of them only to strive *harder* to make *GirlTalk* an accessible space for BIPOC and the queer community. My relationship with feminist journalism is not one and done. I leave this magazine angry and appalled at the state of our world, but so, so proud. There is so much work still left for us to do.

It's been real (and I'm kind of tearing up right now?),
Sierra

Adieu in Approx. 500 Words

BY SOPHIE FRIEDBERG | UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MADISON

To think that high school is coming to a close is a scary thought. For four years, I've been gaining real-world experience so I could jumpstart a career in journalism as soon as possible. For four years, I've interned with magazines, reported for local papers, attended journalism workshops and programs, submitted Op-Eds to online papers, worked as a staff writer and then an editor for my school newspaper, and for the past year I've been an Editor-in-chief for *GirlTalk*. I did these things because, contrary to the norm, I've known exactly what I've wanted to do since the eighth grade, and known exactly what I needed to do to get there. I've been known to meticulously plan out my life years in advance (against the advice of everyone I tell that to), and I can end high school successfully knowing every activity on my resume was done because *I wanted to* get better, *I*

wanted to make a difference, *I wanted to* become a leader.

I'm a planner, I always have been. When I'm feeling overwhelmed or out of control, I make lists. So when I knew I wanted a career as a journalist, I made a list of all the things I could do to dip my toe into meaningful, respectable journalism while still in high school, and to my surprise, I got to check a lot of those things off my list.

I went to journalism programs every summer to refine my skills. I interned with a company who advocated for the rights of children being detained at the US border. I joined a passion project using only student journalists to memorialize victims of gun violence. I wrote about women's suffrage and the fallout from standardized tests. I became an editor with two papers. I had Op-Eds published in online magazines.

So now all my activities are

behind me. I wrote for all the magazines, edited all the papers, took all the courses. All my tools are in my tool kit. Today is supposed to be this long-anticipated day, where I can finally say, *I've done everything there is to do, this is what I've been working toward*.

And, quite frankly, that's the scariest part of all. Before today, I was still learning, still growing. My tool kit hadn't quite been assembled yet. I still had that last internship to apply for or that last program to complete or that last article to write. But I don't have that excuse anymore. I've been given everything, now it's up to me to take all my knowledge and experiences into my newest and biggest journey yet. For four years I've challenged myself to be bold, to be sincere, and, most importantly, to use my writing — my greatest weapon — to advocate for what I believe in. All of these little moments launched

me to becoming the writer I am today. All of these little moments solidified the ground under my

feet so I felt steady enough to stand. All of these moments included the people who gave me different parts

of my toolkit. But now it's my turn. This was my last thing, my last article to write. ✨

FROM 27 DRESSES TO CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND: How Rom-Com Genius Aline Brosh Mckenna Handles Feminism In A Widely Disputed Genre

BY OLIVIA WEINER
OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

Aline Brosh McKenna has undoubtedly written some of your favorite movies. *The Devil Wears Prada*, *27 Dresses*, *Morning Glory*, *I Don't Know How She Does It* and *Annie*. But a few years ago, Aline took a slight detour from female-centric tentpole movies and created something entirely unexpected - the Emmy and Golden Globe-winning series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, which recently came to an end after its four-season long, critically acclaimed tale of self-love, mental well being, and some pretty outstanding musical numbers. Aline is the co-creator, writer, director and Executive Producer of the series, and she was generous enough to answer some questions about navigating the male-dominated entertainment industry, her take on the term "crazy ex," her feminist intentions for *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, and one piece of advice she would give her

high-school self.

GT: In an interview with *The New York Times*, you mentioned that when you were first starting out in the entertainment industry, you learned to "speak man" ... Do you still ever find yourself having to do this?

Well, it's certainly changed a lot since I first began and I think that if you're in a meeting and you talk about the male gaze or you talk about people being sexist, people aren't going to look at you like you're insane. So it definitely changed a lot but I do think that there are a lot of the same barriers that continue to exist but maybe in a way that's a little bit less overt.

GT: You've written some of the most

iconic rom-com's out there - *The Devil Wears Prada*, *27 Dresses*, and so much more - that have all had really memorable female leads. But *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend's* Rebecca seems like a real departure. Would you say that's true? And why?

I would say that was kind of the genesis of the whole project.



I wanted to do something called *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* because romantic comedy heroines are kind of romantically obsessed in a way that sometimes creates extremes. And so when I met Rachel (co-creator of *Crazy Ex*), that was one of the very first things we talked about—how romantic comedy heroines and heroes sometimes seem like their behavior is really extreme. It's like when you see the guy running to the airport to intercept the girl or making grand romantic gestures, but some of that stuff is a little unhinged. So we were kind of looking to take that traditional rom-com heroine and examine what's really behind it. Why do we have that powerful fantasy of finding love? Why do we give that such wide latitude? Why do we say "anything is good in the service of love" when we kind of know that that's not really the case? So, she's an example of somebody who's absorbed all those stories and doesn't know the difference between reality and fantasy.

GT: Tell me about naming the show *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. Did you worry about embracing a term that is often used to paint women as emotional, unbalanced and unfit? What was the thought process with that?

I mean, I knew that it was a stereotype and the whole idea was to sort of get under that stereotype. But I always thought it was super obvious

that it was tongue and cheek.

Rachel and I were both surprised that people took it in any way as serious. It's funny because sometimes people would refer to it as *My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and Rachel hates it because that sort of implies that she's being seen through a male's eyes or as someone's possession. We really wanted to talk about what it's like to be that stereotype.



GT: Would you consider the lead of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, Rebecca, to be a feminist? Not just in belief but practice as well—considering she quits her job and moves across the country to chase a man at the open of the series? How would you describe her emotional evolution?

Consciously she is definitely a feminist. I mean, she is definitely someone who believes women should have equal rights and is very vocal about that. She's as smart if not

smarter than any man. The tension we were getting at is that no matter how emancipated a woman is, we are still told that our romantic relationships are very important in defining us. So, even though she has all the things that you would need to not define yourself through romantic relationships, she still has, and that was the satirical angle of the show.

GT: What inspired you to create the social media movement, #Female-FilmmakerFriday?

Well, like many of the good things in my life, [the movement] was born of procrastination. I was sitting at the computer, and I have a friend named Tamra Davis, who is a director. She had posted a picture of herself on Instagram saying that we need to put more images of women directing out there, and I loved that because pictures of directors are often pictures of men. I think that if you're aspiring to do something, it's great to see images of that. It feels more possible, and as I said in the tweet it's hard to become something you don't see. So, I asked her if she would be interested in making it into a hashtag and she said sure, so I texted a few friends who are also filmmakers and it all just kind of took off. I think women really like to see the different types of women that are on sets. I think it's truly inspiring.

GT: Last question. If you could go

back in time and give high school Aline any piece of advice, what would it be?

I would say that someday it's going to be cool to be smart because at the time it really wasn't, for girls especially. I was always folding down the corners of my paper and was embarrassed about getting good grades, and I wish I had known it would be cool one day. It would be nice for me to have known that I was going into a world where being smart was important and valued. To tie it into all the questions you've asked me, I still think

we are trying to strike a balance between telling women to be ambitious, stress their intelligence, and get what they want. We are also still messaging them about their weight, their looks, their clothes, and their desirability to boys. That's still really powerful and I don't know what I would have done in these days where you have to post pictures of yourself in your bathing suit. I mean, that just seems like an unbearable amount of pressure, and so we still need to work on sending the message to women that you don't need to define yourself in any way by those kinds of external standards. ✱

THE Feminist Facade

BY ALEX WEXLER
OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

February 9, 2020: Natalie Portman strides down the runway wearing a Dior gown covered with names of female directors.

Photographers are quick to flash their cameras as reporters call out question after question.

Paparazzi are in awe of her dress and cape and in a matter of hours; news and media outlets are covering the story of "*Natalie Portman paying tribute to female directors*" and "*Natalie Portman making a statement with an honorable dress*," quick to call her dress both fashionable and brave.

With any statement-making piece, just as many people are quick to criticize Natalie Portman and call her a hypocrite and a fraud, including "*Charmed*" actress Rose McGowan. In response to the admiration for Natalie Portman from the public, McGowan tweeted that she found Portman's form of feminism "deeply offensive," eventually calling her "the problem."

There seemed to be somewhat of an immediate turn around within the same tabloids that were calling Natalie Portman brave-they were all of a sudden reporting on the fact that Natalie Portman has only ever worked with one female director other than herself and began "siding" with Rose McGowan.

Natalie Portman tweeted back stating that she agrees that she isn't brave and says that she associates bravery with women who take action.

It seemed as though the media was quick to call actions of "surface-level" feminism, which got me thinking about a larger issue of media coverage of feminism and the feminist facade we so often see.

Celebrities are given a huge platform to discuss issues, but following the culture of mass media and instant news, these issues they bring up are discussed for a second by the media, but then the issue is dropped and new articles are written the next day about something else.

Then, when the spotlight of attention shines on any given celebrity for a split second, they act motivated and charitable, but as soon as that spotlight fades, these issues aren't given any more attention.

Natalie Portman is a great example because what the public often sees is what she presents.

On the red carpet for instance, she is given a platform for change and to bring up issues, but once she steps off the carpet, as Rose McGowan mentions, she doesn't stick to these charities or movements. It's somewhat easy

for Portman to brandish the names of these directors on her cape, but it seems as though she isn't willing to go much further than that.

Had Portman really been passionate about the issue of representation for female directors, we would have seen her work with more female directors.

This issue doesn't apply to just celebrities. We too are given a platform to publish a brand for ourselves, this platform being social media.

An estimated one billion people use Instagram monthly and through Instagram, we create our own facade.

Instagram is convenient in the sense that we can selectively choose which parts of ourselves we want to share, so we are given the ability to cherry pick and present ourselves in the way we see best.

Often, the brand people try to create for themselves is one that makes them seem charitable and giving. Instagram stories are a handy tool for people to post pictures of themselves, places they're visiting, as well as issues they care about.

Best of all, unlike regular posts, they disappear after 24 hours.

Clicking through Instagram story posts, you're likely to find a plethora of reposts with the basic message of "help feed kids in Sudan" or "reduce the amount of palm oil you use" by simply sharing this post.

This is ideal for anyone trying to create an image for themselves, but for conducting meaningful partici-

pation in social-justice issues, these tools are actually really harmful.

While they've had their benefits in raising awareness, these stories often provide a feeling of satisfaction for the person posting them, but they do virtually nothing.

It's important that in our everyday lives, whether it be on social media or in the news, we differentiate between meaningful involvement in social issues and people "raising awareness" simply so that they can improve their own reputation or image.

All this being said, there are so many incredible women who back their words with actions and are incredible role

models to anyone who wants to make a difference in the world.

Amanda Stenberg, for example has tastefully worked on projects such as acting in the movie, *The Hate U Give*, which addresses police brutality, and participating in a project called "Don't Cash Crop my Cornrows," which focuses on the pandemic of cultural appropriation specifically in relation to hair braiding.

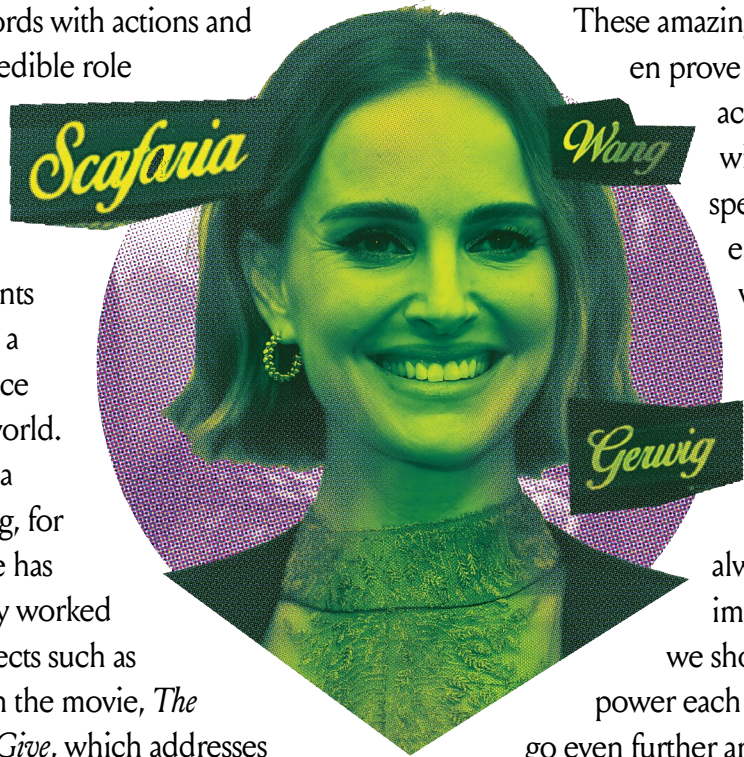
America Ferrera is another inspirational example of someone who uses their platform to make an impact. She and her husband have co-founded the organization *Harness* which gives artists a platform to have political impacts.

Ferrera also actively fights to keep families together and has recently published her book, *American Like Me*, which discusses the struggle she faced as a first-generation American.

These are both examples of incredible women who deeply involve themselves for the purpose of making a difference rather than just boosting their image.

These amazing women prove that actions will always speak louder than words and while discussion will always be important, we should empower each other to go even further and put ourselves on the frontlines of issues we care about.

Let's make something that lasts longer than a 24 hour story post and speaks louder than names sewn onto a dress. ✨



Social Media AND THE *BLM Movement*

BY LILY
KRAMON

OAKWOOD
SECONDARY
SCHOOL

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter have all played major roles in the current Black Lives Matter movement and in the fight for justice for the many people killed as a result of police brutality. With the coronavirus pandemic, social distancing has pushed social media to the fore, as it has become the hub for the circulation of articles and petitions. Many influencers and celebrities have even used their popular social media platforms to spread awareness of the ongoing BLM movement. Clearly, even though the coronavirus pandemic stands as an obstacle during the fight for racial justice, young activists aren't letting that stop them.

However, the popular use of social media as a way to support the Black Lives Matter Movement has caused conflict. This is because for some people, using social media is their only form of activism. As such, it seems that the line between spreading awareness on social media and effecting true action in the real world has become blurry. This issue was first seen on June 2, when millions of people posted black squares on social media to essentially

cause a "black-out." While the intentions for the blackout were good, the act itself didn't bring any sort of justice for George Floyd or Breonna Taylor, who were killed at the hands of police.

As people continue to post petitions, quotes, and political images about Black Lives Matter movement on their Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, activists are voicing concerns that these acts are causing people to slack off in trying to make actual change beyond their phones. As such, there clearly needs to be a balance between posting productive information on social media and taking real action such as contacting local politicians. It is when that fine balance is maintained that social media can have a positive impact on this movement and movements to come.



Social media has the potential to make both a positive and negative impact on the Black Lives Matter movement. Remember: This is a movement, not a moment. Social media can be useful in spreading awareness during a time when we are confined to our homes, but it is important to make sure that we don't stop there. If you are struggling to find other ways to get involved, try checking out the Black Lives Matter official website in order to find other ways to take action. ✨

TAYLOR SWIFT HAS NEVER NEEDED TO CALM DOWN

BY
BETHANY VILLARUZ

I received my first and only CD when I was about 8. It was Taylor Swift's *Fearless*, fresh from the Walmart bargain bin and ready for the listening. I enjoyed that CD through the family boombox intermittently throughout my childhood, but never truly understood the dedication my friends felt to Swift's heartfelt love songs. As a child, I was wont to fall into the "not-like-other-girls" trap and disavow popular culture just for the sake of doing so—so the CD eventually fell to the wayside, purposely forgotten among the rest of those "other girl" things.

Nonetheless, Taylor Swift and I have grown up together. I shouted the words to "You Belong With Me" on every family road trip,



sang "Blank Space" at every middle school dance, murmured the words to "Look What You Made Me Do" at the odd party or two. Although I was never a Swiftie, her music is omnipresent in the soundtrack of any American teenager's life. And now, with the release of Swift's new album *Lover* and movie *Miss Americana*, I was tempted to join the armies of critics slamming her evolving persona.

Since her rise to stardom in the early aughts, Ms. Swift has not been able to move for stifling attention. Whether from adoring fans or harshly critical media, she is under constant scrutiny. In *Miss Americana*, Swift opens up about the psychological aftershocks of the constant criticism—she has faced an eating disorder, stalkers, and pressure to both change and maintain an image that doesn't ruffle any feathers.

To examine Swift's numerous persona resets is to examine the

ideals of a decade, ideals that have stayed strangely stagnant throughout the years. No matter what she does, people are quick to criticize. Whether it's me at age 8 deciding she was too mainstream or some rando on Twitter claiming that the Swift in *Miss Americana* wasn't genuine, it's not hard to spot the cynicism that taints every accomplishment Ms. Swift has accrued.

It's no wonder that *Lover* features so many songs about her audience. If *Reputation*, Swift's album famous for proclaiming her own death, was spitting in her critics' eyes, *Lover* is a resolution to stop catering to the world of cynics and create music only for herself. "You Need To Calm Down," Swift's call to her critics to "take several seats" is a song I was quick to scoff at—who was Swift to speak for the queer community, to thoughtlessly fish for gay icon status? But I have since realized that it doesn't really matter what I

think. The little cynic that sits on my shoulder, pair of devilish horns and all, was telling me that I had to hate Taylor Swift for something. The song, though pandering, has a message that I think is one of Swift's most relevant breakthroughs. She'll never be able to do anything right—why don't people just chill out?

By observing the reactions of my peers in real life and on social media to Swift's music, I've come to realize that people just don't really want to enjoy things. We much prefer hating things to enjoying them for what they are. Sure, songs like "You Need

To Calm Down" and "ME!" are bubbly at best and grating at worst. *Lover* is not the most artistically significant album to ever exist.

But Taylor Swift has spent so long subjecting herself to a culture of cynicism, one that always —always— finds her lacking, that I think she deserves to have a little fun making mindless, fun pop tunes.

The impulse to hate on people like Swift just because they are willing to put themselves out there is something that pervades the life of every woman. As Swift points out in her song "The Man," it's hard to

believe she would be subject to the same cynicism if her music came from a man's mouth.

At any rate, I think a lot of society's general distaste for Taylor Swift is really just a result of hating things for no reason. And I get it. It's fun to hate things. But the cult of cynicism we have created for ourselves needs to stop—how are we supposed to enjoy things if we immediately pick out every flaw?

I leave you with this: Taylor Swift is not to everybody's taste. But she doesn't deserve judgment just for expressing her own. ✱

Casting Transgender Roles in Film and TV

SOPHIE SAXL
DALTON, NEW YORK

Imagine that you're the casting director of the next big blockbuster movie, in which the main role is a trans character. You need big Hollywood names in order to attract an audience, but that would mean you need to cast a cisgender actor to play the part of a transgender character. Would it be ok to do that? On the surface, the answer seems like a simple yes or no, but there are many factors and questions that need to be thought out in order to properly make the decision.

We have seen many examples of both trans and cis actors playing trans roles. Hunter Schafer from the series *Euphoria*, and Daniela Vega from the Oscar-winning movie *A Fantastic Woman*, are just two examples of trans actresses who portray trans roles in TV and movies. In contrast, Vanessa Ray from *Pretty Little Liars*, and Alex Newell from *Glee* are two cis actors who have played trans roles on tv. While these cis actors have played trans characters in popular teen TV shows, does that make it okay to cast cis actors in trans roles? "Actors who are trans never even get to audition for anything other than roles of trans characters. That's the real issue. We can't even get

in the room," says trans actress Jamie Clayton. As she states, trans actors have more limited opportunities than cis actors for the roles that they can play. In an ideal world, trans actors would be able to play cis characters too, but that is often hard to achieve.

The acting world constantly wrestles with the issue of finding the right person to fit the role. Since there are far fewer out trans actors and actresses than cis actors and actresses, if a cis actor better fits the role of a trans character, what should they do? This brings us to the big question: should

representation or best ability to play the role be prioritized? Trans youth need to see themselves represented properly in the media, but is that enough to give up big-name actors who are an even better fit to the character? In an ideal world, you can find a balance of both, a happy medium, but that is often not the case. Representation is extremely important for today's youth, in order to help everyone enable themselves to live their lives as their happy, authentic selves.

However, if there is no possible way to find a trans actor who fits the role of the trans character, directors need to make the decision, and that

can come down to what is best for their project.

But, can a cisgender actor truly understand and portray the complexity of a transgender character? Does this matter? "My experience as a trans woman playing a trans character is that I have found that audiences not only have empathy for the character that I play, but they find themselves having empathy for the actor who plays that character." says transgender actress Laverne Cox. If it can help cis people empathize with trans people, having a trans actor play a trans character is important. Again, proper representation is key to showing a largely cisgender

society about what trans people go through.

Evidently, the casting of trans roles matters a lot. Looking at all the facts, it is more important for trans actors to portray the complexity of trans characters, and help grow trans representation in media than it is to cast a cis actor for their look or certain personality traits. Even before we get to the casting of trans roles, the system has a long way to go.

There is not nearly enough LGBTQ+ representation in TV and movies, and the problem is definitely not solved by casting cisgender actors in the roles of transgender characters. ✱

Gender Confirmed

EVE KAPLAN

WINDWARD HIGH SCHOOL

When a child is born they are assigned a gender depending on their body. The child will grow up and everyone around them will assume that the gender on their birth certificate is the gender the person identifies with. But some people don't identify with the label they are assigned at birth. Others don't identify with any gender, some people's gender identification changes from day to day, some people switch genders—there are an infinite number of genders people identify as.

Transitioning from one gender to another can look different for every person who transitions. A very small percentage of adults (0.56%) identify as transgender and only 0.39% of those who identify as transgender put the sex they were not assigned at birth on official documents. When such a small percentage of the population is trans, it can make people who identify as transgender feel isolated since they don't have many others to relate to. This is one of the reasons why around 40% of people who identify as transgender attempt suicide.

Transitioning comes in all different forms. Some people have small transitions like painting their nails or changing their clothing to make themselves feel more valid and confident. Others cut their hair and ask people to call them by new pronouns. And some have surgery to permanently change their body to the way they feel on the inside. Every type of transition is equally amazing and equally important. It doesn't matter if it's painting your nails or putting on lip gloss for the first time because both can still be a

big step.

Many transgender people have trouble transitioning. After being told your whole life to act one way because you are one gender, it's first nature to fall into stereotypes that society has come to expect of that gender. Changing your gender is changing your lifestyle. If you are transitioning, it's often for the better and will change your life in the best ways possible, but it is also a giant change which is part of why it's so hard. Often when transgender indi-

viduals want to change their gender and their parents or a legal guardian won't let them, they feel trapped in a body that doesn't fit them. Some use chest binders so they can feel more like the gender they identify as.

Transitions are hard in any scenario, but it's also one of the hardest things to do when you have to come out or change your body, pronouns and more. In America many people are transphobic, which is another challenge faced by the transgender community. One in five American

adults believe employers should be able to fire a person for wearing clothing to work that doesn't match the gender they were assigned at birth.

Transitioning is extremely difficult, but being out in America is also extremely hard since there is so much prejudice in this country. People who transition from one gender to another have so much strength because there is no scenario where a giant personal change doesn't change your life as well. ✱



REACH OUT

BY MONIE CHOI
OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

I recently completed *Grassroots Activism*, my Immersion course—a unique opportunity offered by my high school to delve deep into a

specific interest—and was left with a lot to think about after two weeks of interacting with various organizations within my community. These

organizations ranged from Homeboy Industries, a community of ex-gang-bangers helping each other get back on their feet, to Homeless Health

Care Los Angeles, an organization that provides free, life-saving services such as needle exchange and basic sanitary resources. The one organization that stuck with me most, however, was REACH LA.

From my experience as a student at Oakwood School, I have had the fortunate opportunity to see REACH LA in action, doing what it does best: teaching those who are not LGBTQ+ about the rainbow experience and how to be informed allies.

At my school's annual AIDS prevention fundraiser, "Glove Affair", REACH LA has also distributed condoms, preached safe, consensual sex, and been the life of the party.

However, I soon realized that my surface-level understanding of what they stood for was nothing in comparison to all that they have done for the most vulnerable within our society.

This colorful, dynamic, and important group, more than anything else, serves as a safe-haven, a refuge for LGBTQ+ people of color who are often most vulnerable to hate crimes or even being rejected from their own communities.

At REACH LA's Los Angeles office, my Immersion group and I were welcomed into a sacred, intimate space where we spoke to two of their clients. From them, I learned in great detail about the exhausting

struggle that many transgender individuals have with themselves, their identity, and even with the people around them. I heard the story of a woman whose transition distanced her from her family, leaving her all alone with nobody to turn to before REACH LA took her in. From another individual, I learned about his struggle of having to suppress his identity as a gay man to ease the already unbearable solitude that comes with living in foster homes.

During our time at the REACH LA office, my peers and I laughed and cried and even learned how to vogue, and we all walked out with a heavier heart than we had gone in with. ✖

Verfremdungseffekt Presentation

LOLA:

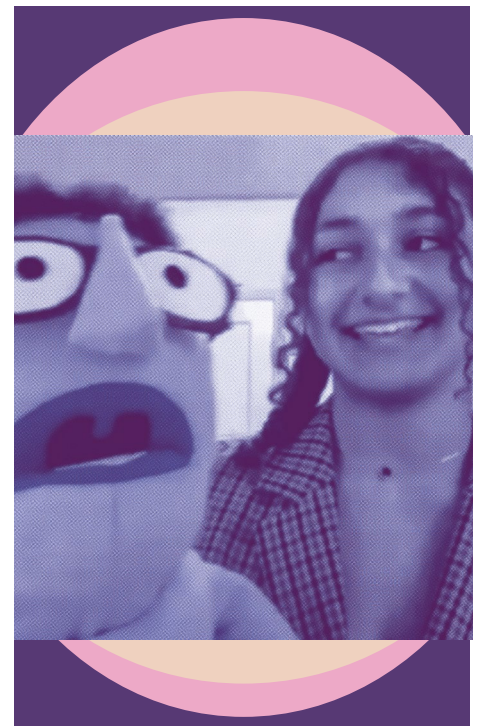
I'm passing the corner of La Brea and Santa Monica, it's 1:30 in the morning, by all means, the street should be quiet. Yet, to the left and the right of me, wherever I turn my head there are beautiful women walking past. I think of my cousin, living in Utah, coming out as a transgender woman. Eris was one of the lucky ones, everyone accepted her in our family, and she's white which is an advantage to being trans in America, but sometimes I worry.... These women before me, in short skirts and tops that hug their bellies, some even pulling at their jet black wigs. These women are hopeful but helpless.

Not to their own fault but to the fault of society, because looking at them you know they are some tough broads.

PUPPET:

Did you know that "Black transgender people are suffering at extremely high rates due to bigotry and transphobia. Nearly half of all Black transgender respondents report being harassed at work and at school. Twenty-six percent are unemployed and 34 percent report annual incomes of less than \$10,000 per year."

BY LOLA BODÉ
OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL



LOLA:

Thanks Statistics Steve, but these women are more than that they...

PUPPET:

What? I know what you're thinking but as much as these women hope to just be accepted by their communities, maybe by some stroke of luck become the next Laverne Cox...Instead, they do become another statistic.

But they should live on together

Remember Kiki

Remember Dana

Remember Brooklyn

Remember BB

All shot too soon

For living truths

It didn't matter

To the police who's right

In 2019, there were over 30 deaths of transgender people in America caused by brutality or extreme violence. It was recently reported that globally, there were 331 Trans people killed last year. ✖

Sexism in Tennis

BY LILY KRAMON
OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

Many sports that include all genders contain inequalities in treatment, pay, and opportunities between men and women. One sport that holds this injustice is tennis. Sexism and inequality continues to arise and affect the professional and junior tennis industry.

In 2017, *Vogue Magazine* came out with an article that highlighted many of these infractions. Since

1877, Wimbledon Tennis Tournament has awarded male winners of the tournament more prize money than female winners. Over a century later, in 2005, Venus Williams, a professional female tennis player, came forward and fought her very hardest and convinced the tournament heads to provide equal prize money for men and women. However, money wasn't the only form of



inequality in the professional tennis industry. *Vogue* found that spectators and commentators at tournaments would talk about female players differently than male players. Spectators repeatedly talk highly of male athletes and their technique, yet they only comment on female athletes' appearances. Sometimes, commentators even approach female players and ask them to "take a spin" for the camera, reflecting underlying sexism on national television. Commentators also ask female players if they are wearing makeup during matches, instead of highlighting their hard work and performances.

Powerful people initiate domino effects of misogynistic remarks. *Huffington Post* reported that in 2016, tennis tournament director Raymond Moore said that female tennis stars "ride on the coattails of the men" and that they should "go down every night" on their "knees and thank god that Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal were born, because they have carried this sport." This is someone who is supposed to represent both male and female players of his tournaments, and instead he

transferred credit from female players to male players. Raymond Moore influences fans who look up to these athletes and watch his tournaments.

These examples of inequality and sexism reveal a flawed tennis industry. For a long period of time, these flaws were hidden in order to protect tennis tournaments' reputations. It takes athletes experiencing injustice and outside upstanders to battle the large corporations that perpetuate injustice.

As a fifteen-year-old female tennis player, I have seen these inequalities trickle into the junior tennis world. I find myself constantly pinned against male players my age who have physically developed differently than I have. The boys I play against often have more muscle than me and are taller than me. I train for countless hours every week, but there is no amount of training that can make me develop the same way a teen boy does.

You'd think this would be evident, but nobody recognizes it. I have played many matches against boys, and I have managed to win some and learn a lot from them.

However, it is defeating to lose to someone when I try my very hardest, but physical development gets the best of my skills.

Another way that I experience sexism in this sport is when coaches complete a lineup for the match. A lineup is when the coach places the players in positions from number one (top player) to the last player. I rarely see female tennis players in the top three on my team or on other teams. Many girls feel defeated and embarrassed when entering and exiting lineup, because they feel that no matter how hard they work, they will never make it into the top three.

When I was younger, I didn't recognize gender inequity as an athlete. However, as I grow up, I've noticed that misogyny has taken over not just tennis, but also many other sports. Recently, female tennis players such as Venus Williams and Serena Williams are speaking out.

However, the tennis industry and the media criticizes their actions as unreasonable. Nevertheless, young athletes are aware of the sexism and injustice in tennis, and are using their awareness to initiate change.

Women in **AMERICAN POLITICS**

BY JOANNA IM

HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL

Political and social progress have always been tightly linked throughout American history. In the 60's, at the peak of the Civil Rights Move-

ment and general counterculture, it was often Supreme Court cases that legitimized social progress and institutional change — even through

public opinion was already slowly changing to be more accepting of anti-racism — the court ruling on *Brown v Board of Education* was

what allowed for an official, legal justification for racial integration and thus heavily influenced the anti-racism movement at the time.

Similarly, representation within political office has become a new marker of social progress, particularly since the 2000's. One example that is most often mentioned is Obama's presidency, which is a clear marker of social progress, but can also be weaponized in order to delegitimize current racial struggles — some social conservatives even point to Obama's presidency as proof that racism in American society has ended, which obviously is not the case. While the representation of minority groups is an important step in social progress and equality, it is not the only thing, or even the most important thing, in social movements. For example, while black men have served in government positions well before any woman has, it is still true that the African-American population

statistically suffers more from income inequality and social discrimination to this day. Such an instance also calls to the importance of having an intersectional approach to analyzing social progress — the 'black movement' and the 'female movement' are not necessarily separate entities, and combining the two (as well as others) focuses may be necessary in order to more accurately understand social change.

It is important to note what type of political representation such groups have in order to interpret this repre-



sentation in terms of social progress. For example, while there has been relatively more representation of the African-American community in Cabinet positions, the House of Representatives, and more recently, presidencies, there are still gaps in representation within branches of the government such as the Senate and governorships. On the flip side, there has been a consistent increase in female representation in almost all of politics, yet America hasn't had a female president. This may indicate to some that, while women have successfully and consistently fought for equality, they have not reached the status of being an utmost leader in politics. And for women of color, significantly less political representation has been achieved.

Ultimately, we should fight for more thorough political representation for all groups, while also understanding that such representation may not be the only marker of social progress.

IRANIAN WOMEN TAKE CHARGE *of the Music Scene*

BY CHARLOTTE KRAMON

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN SAINT LOUIS

Let's face it. When most of us hear about composers and orchestras, we imagine men hunched

over keyboards or male conductors flailing their arms to the rhythm of the music. This makes sense, as the [Donne – Women in Music](#) project

and [Drama Musica](#) examined 15 major orchestras worldwide and found that women composed just 3.6% of the pieces to be performed

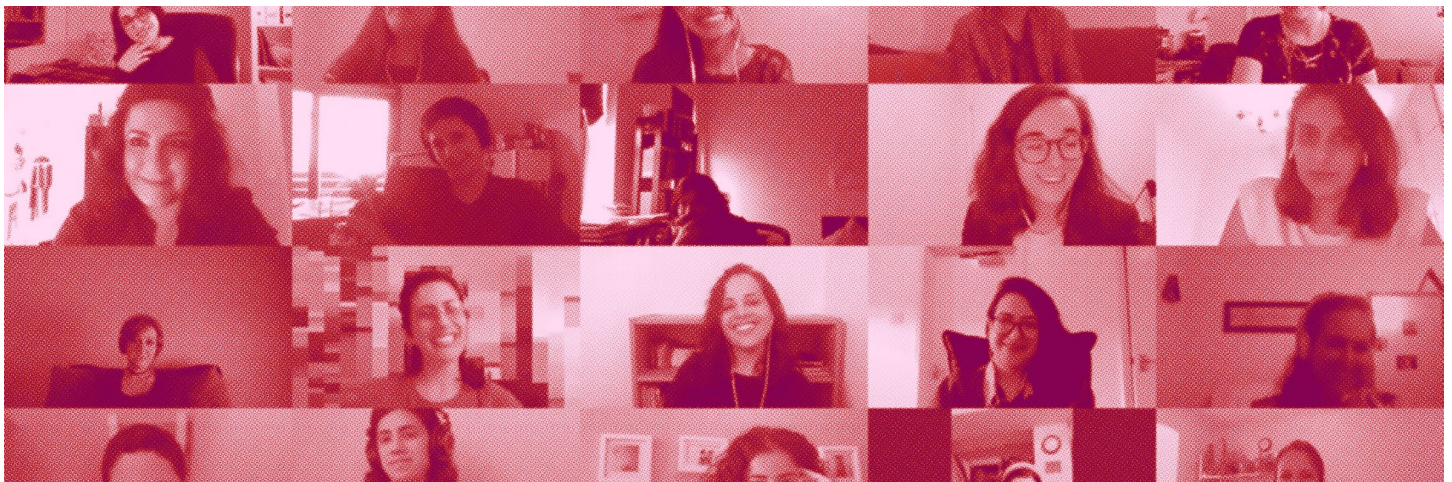
in the 2020 season, and only 8.2% of concerts included at least one piece by a woman.

Iran isn't any different. The region already [legally discriminates](#) against women, so the music scene reflects that dynamic. "In extreme cases, women may begin to question their truth and their own abilities," [describes](#) Niloufar Nourbakhsh, founder of the [Iranian Female Composers Association \(IFCA\)](#). Growing up in Iran, people criticized Nourbakhsh's dreams and abilities as a composer, and she didn't have female composers to look up to. When she

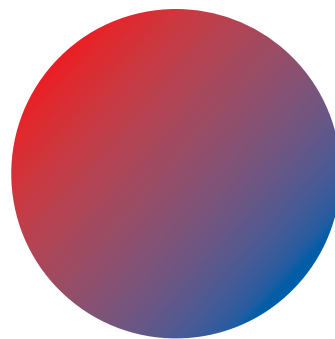
moved to the United States, like most Iranian musicians do, she uncovered a community of Iranian female composers, including [Anahita Abbasi](#) and [Aida Shirazi](#). Together, they formed IFCA, which highlights Iranian female composers through performances, events, workshops, and collaborations.

IFCA's first event took place in April 2018 at Brooklyn's National Sawdust venue, and the organization has since expanded to include composers with a variety of styles, both traditional and contemporary. They've partnered with groups like

International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) and Hypercube and hope to grow mentorship programs to support women in Iran via social media. Iran is slowly opening up to contemporary music—two of its universities [now offer](#) undergraduate degrees in composition and Tehran hosted its [first music festival](#) in 2016—but women are still discouraged from emerging into the international music scene. Nourbakhsh, Abbasi, and Shirazi experienced these struggles, propelling them to continue to successfully organize and empower young women through [IFCA](#). ✨



LEFT *is* RIGHT



BY EVE KAPLAN
WINDWARD SCHOOL

Currently, in the USA, there are two main political parties: The Republican Party and The Democratic Party. These two parties have very different values and beliefs, and they have not always believed the things they do now.

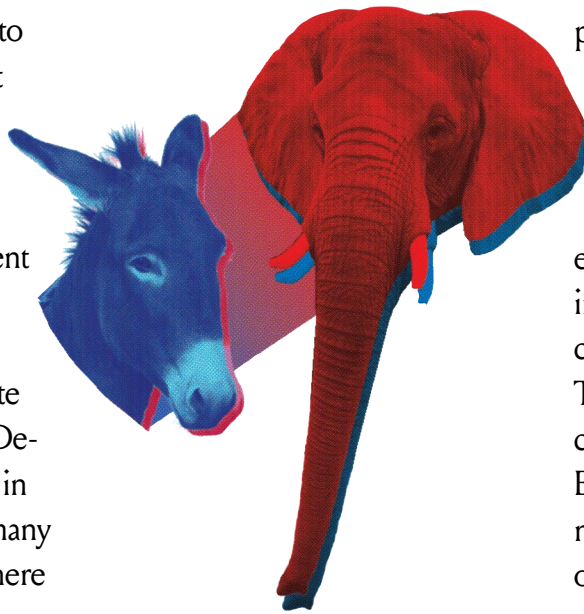
Today, the Democratic party believes the government should have a big role in the economy and our daily lives while the Republican party believes the opposite. While there may be variation within

parties, generally the Democratic Party is often associated with social justice movements and civil rights legislation while the Republican Party often has more traditional and religious-based views. Back in the 1800s, Republicans opposed slavery, and Democrats supported it, but in 2020 the Democrats would definitely oppose slavery and super-criminal justice reform often in opposition to Republican Party which in general is less focused on having equal rights for all. These changes in views are due to the party switch.

After the Civil War, Republicans were the ones to grant measures to give former slaves rights and fight for equality. Coming closer to the present, 71 years after the civil war, Democrat Franklin Roosevelt was reelected as president because of the New Deal. The New Deal included programs, public projects and more to create more jobs because of the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt was in office from 1933-1945, before many think the party switch occurred. here is a theory that many Republicans switched to the Democrat party because of the new deal which made it so there was a mix of left and right views in the Democrat party. Some time between 1936 and 1960 the Democratic Party who supported a small government started to support a larger government and the Republican Party who supported a larger government started to support a smaller government. Some people

say this switch was due to William Jennings Bryan, a Democrat who blurred party lines by emphasizing the government's role in helping social justice, a traditionally Republican belief.

Republicans didn't immediately agree with the new ideas the party adopted and debates about what the party stood for went on for decades. The Democrats started saying they believed that the government should be larger because they were trying to win the west, as they had many more supporters in the south at this time.



Big government eventually became central to the Democratic Party's platform.

Although the parties switched, the core, educated people in each of the parties stayed with their beliefs and switched parties. The party switch is very controversial and many believe it never happened. But what else would explain how the Republican

presidents started out with Abraham Lincoln and now have Trump representing their party? These are two men who have very different beliefs and yet have both been presidents from the same party. The parties have evolved and changed since they started, just like America has evolved as a country. The party switch changed America and its politics, but no one knows exactly when or why it happened.

As of 2020, America may not be on the verge of another party switch, but the Democratic Party's views are evolving. The Democratic party is moving further to the left and its values have fundamentally changed since the last presidential election. This is shown by the policies discussed in the current election cycle, from banning private insurance to a Universal Basic Income, a higher wealth tax, and more. Take some of these leading politicians, for example - Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, who are former nominees for the Democrat Party, or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a congresswoman for the state of New York show that many of the leading Democratic politicians are taking up positions and labels like "socialist" that are further to the left than America has ever seen. Even Joe Biden, the Democratic Party's nominee in the next election, has decided to support the \$15 minimum wage and the Green New Deal, both of which are policies he would have been opposed to a few years ago.

Although to some it may seem surprising that the Democratic Party is moving so quickly, this change seems to be a little overdue. America is a right-leaning country compared to the rest of the world's politics. What we call Democratic in the USA would not be considered Democratic in most other countries.

Countries that would be considered truly Democratic are places like Vietnam, which is a socialist country. With the rise of movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, America has begun a change in its politics that seems to be for the better.

There are many positives to the

Democrat party's views maturing, like how this will create more action on issues like health care and college debt. There are also many negatives to it. Many Americans who are registered Republicans are scared of change.

Part of the reason Donald Trump was elected president was that after Obama made progressive decisions like legalizing same-sex marriage, many Republicans were scared about how this was going to change America. So, they voted to elect President Trump because he held many of their more extreme values.

Rapid change might scare off many swing or moderate voters who

were leaning towards voting with the Democratic Party. Joe Biden has to find a middle ground between socialist and moderate if he wants to win the election. The Democratic Party doesn't want to lose voters, but they also want to be an evolving party.

The Democratic Party is not facing a party switch but they are facing drastic differences. Whether those differences are for the better or for the worse, once they set off a chain of events, there is no way to stop it.

Heraclitus once said, "Change is the only constant in life," and it looks like that quote is proven true by politics time and time again. ✖

Teen Reporting in an Apocalyptic Decade

BY SOPHIE DORF-KAMIENNY

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

Being a student journalist in the era of Donald Trump's presidency, Time's Up, #MeToo and countless other social upheavals, there was almost never a dull moment in the women's rights arena. Whether I was witnessing historical progress or lamenting disturbingly frequent steps in the wrong direction, the last few years have most certainly kept me on my toes.

However, the opportunity to channel my voice through reporting has, in and of itself, shaped my per-

ceptions of the issues I write about. Being able to not only learn from expert sources and others' experiences, but also to include a piece of my own perspective in everything I publish, has helped me to feel significantly more connected to the world around me.

Even beyond that, it allowed me to find my place within the chaos that I write about.

Writing for *GirlTalk*, in particular, granted me an outlet through which to express my own interpretations

of the issues that I felt compelled to report on.

Whether it be the harmful effects of rituals that scrutinize women's bodies, or the growing presence of female leadership in schools and male-dominated professions, contributing to *GirlTalk* provided an open forum for me and my peers to throw our hats in the ring, and demonstrate what's at stake for our generation.

It's undeniable that in many ways, our lives are at somewhat of a stand-

still. The mass protests and marches that shaped many people's experiences with the feminist movement are likely out of the picture for quite a while, and legislators aren't prioritizing gender equality measures at a time when it's unsafe for them to merely convene. Nevertheless, this setback has not diminished the progress that teenagers have contributed to, nor the steps that we continue to take, albeit from our respective couches.

If there's anything I have learned from reporting on gender inequity, it's that the standard is constantly evolving, and even just one article can change someone's outlook, or influence the way that they treat

others moving forward.

I feel lucky to have access to a form of expression and influence that transcends political differences, and even physical distancing.

While I am still learning to accept the fact that I can't control everything that happens around me, I know that our generation will continue to use the invaluable tools we have at our disposal to assert that our perspectives matter.

I found my outlet through writing and reporting, and though I know I will continue to hone and apply these skills beyond high school, I first must acknowledge that I have come

to the end of an era.

I will miss writing articles from the unique perspectives that we have as teenagers—many of us non-voters—dependent on finding creative ways to have an impact.



WRITING *and* PROCESSING

BY SHELBY LUSTER
SCRIPPS COLLEGE

Being a *GirlTalk* writer during this past year has been a surreal experience. With so many poignant shifts happening in our world, with every new issue I felt that the world had been permanently altered since the last article I had written. It's difficult to have a true awareness of the world that you live in when it is constantly in a state of unparalleled transition. With so many issues surrounding us, it is hard to engage with one topic without feeling as though you are neglecting and ignoring another. The pace continues to quicken even now. On the other hand, there has never been so much to discuss and learn. *GirlTalk* has aided me in understanding how I process and analyze world events and issues in a way that I never would have otherwise. I have uncovered women's issues that I would never have been made aware of if I had not written for *GirlTalk*. It has been an experience that I will cherish for years to come that has without a doubt strengthened my sense of pride in my womanhood. ✱

DEPARTING *Words*

BY JOANNA IM

GirlTalk has taught me not only how to speak up for myself, but also to voice my opinions in order to inform and improve my community. As a writer from outside of Oakwood school, I am honored that I was able to experience the unique journalism scene at Oakwood and collaborate with students outside of my school atmosphere. Throughout high school, I am glad to say I've made major strides in my personal journey to not only understand my own identity, but also how it intersects with other groups and identities. Through activities like debate, I was able to learn more about topics like feminism and anti-racism, and apply them to modern issues and politics in my articles for *GirlTalk*. Whether it be writing an article about the effects of modern-day celebrities and social media on body image or writing about the political weaponization of feminism, writing for *GirlTalk* has helped me combine my passion for political and social advocacy with journalism. ✱

Life Happens, and We Adjust

BY NADIA RIVERA

By the time most of us can read, we've established a certain routine. Though that routine will eventually change or grow over time, we can say that we're used to it. This worldwide pandemic has affected so many people's lives and routines in different ways. We've had to change the way we live. But, this is affecting us emotionally, physically and it is forcing a new way of living on us. But before we dive into this talk, I'd like to thank all the people working right now to help keep us safe and risking their health to save ours.

This pandemic obviously has us all on edge, anxious, and it may be worse for some than others. There's

almost no doubt when I say that we're all bored. Some people might even be becoming depressed due to the lack of social interaction, or for being stuck at home, aka. cabin fever.

Usually, we're trying to free up space in our schedules, but now it's become the exact opposite. Most of us have so much time on our hands, and for people who've lost their jobs or gotten sick, they have something to worry about too. Many people are trying to find a way to simply live right now because they might not have any money for resources. It seems like it's survival mode for some people right now.

All we can do right now is remember that we're always loved by someone. We must remember that we can text them, call them, or FaceTime them. We can also meditate in these times of uncertainty or do something productive like workout, or start a business to help those in need right now.

From a physical standpoint, this quarantine can affect us, in more ways than you might realize. Now, to pass the time, I know that the majority of people right now are finding a way to pass the time by browsing Netflix, Disney+, YouTube, Tik Tok or any social media throughout the day.

I'll admit, it's *really* easy to be lazy right now, but that doesn't mean that we should be. As easy as it is to be lazy right now, it's probably even easier to eat out of boredom, causing us to not be in such good shape. Sitting around all day isn't burning any calories either. Even if you do 10 minutes of yoga a day, you'll be able to see a difference in your physical wellbeing and in your attitude. When you work out, it releases chemicals from your body that literally get you pumped and happy, therefore causing the energy or motivation to do something with your day.

I know this can be hard with all these new rules, like staying six feet apart at all times, staying in our house at all times, wearing masks whenever we go out. But we need to stay positive. Realize that the more we follow

these rules, the shorter amount of time we'll need them and the sooner this will all be over.

Reading a good book, dancing to your happy playlist, meditating, and talking to your loved ones over the phone are all great things to do to keep us going.

I'd like to give my condolences to those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 and everyone affected by this pandemic. I have faith that it's going to get better.

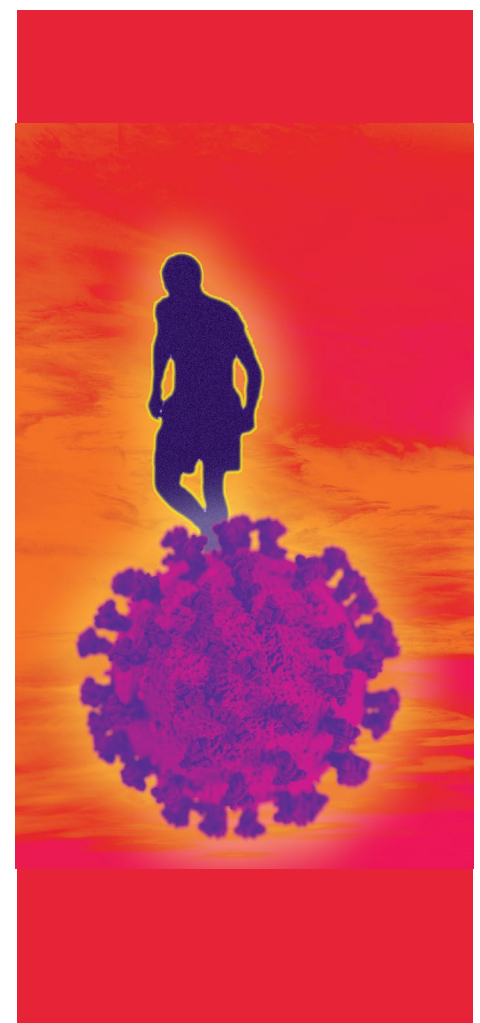
Luckily, there are other people worried about people who have caught the virus, lost their jobs because of it, or have been affected and there are COVID-19 relief fundraisers giving support.

However, you can also help out by being a good neighbor and looking out for yourself and others. Stay home, stay positive, and stay safe. ✖

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter have all played major roles in the current Black Lives Matter movement and in the fight for justice for the many people killed as a result of police brutality. With the coronavirus pandemic, social distancing has pushed social media to the fore, as it has become the hub for the circulation of articles and petitions. Many influencers and celebrities have even used their popular social media platforms to spread awareness of the ongoing BLM movement. Clearly, even though the coronavirus pandemic stands as an

obstacle during the fight for racial justice, young activists aren't letting that stop them.

However, the popular use of social media as a way to support the Black Lives Matter Movement has caused conflict. This is because for some people, using social media is their only form of activism. As such, it seems that the line between spreading awareness on social media and effecting true action in the real world has become blurry. This issue was first seen on June 2, when millions of people posted black squares on social media to essentially cause a



“blackout.” While the intentions for the blackout were good, the act itself didn't bring any sort of justice for George Floyd or Breonna Taylor, who were killed at the hands of police.

As people continue to post petitions, quotes, and political images about Black Lives Matter movement on their Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, activists are voicing concerns that these acts are causing people to slack off in trying to make actual change beyond their phones. As such, there clearly needs to be a balance between posting productive



COVID-19 & DOMESTIC ABUSE

INFORMATION, RESOURCES, & ACTION

COMPILED BY EUNICE PARK, YALE WOMEN'S CENTER STAFFER

COVID-19 is not the only rapidly spreading and deadly crisis the world is currently facing.

In contrast with other types of criminal activity which have been curbed with mandated lockdowns, domestic violence has increased during this global pandemic. Governments have imposed lockdowns without any sufficient support for domestic abuse victims, many of who are now trapped with their abusers inflicting physical, emotional, and/or psychological harm.

Domestic abuse victims face increasingly limited options for escape with concerns over privacy to call hotlines and safety to secure alternate housing. Katie Ray Jones, the CEO of the National Domestic Violence Hotline (US), explains that with the rise of COVID-19, "(domestic abuse) perpetrators are threatening to throw their victims out on the street so they get sick. We've heard of some withholding financial resources or medical assistance." Many domestic violence victims no longer have the opportunity to seek refuge at other family members or friends' houses, with particular concerns over infecting elderly parents. Additionally, delayed court proceedings complicate the process of obtaining protective orders and finalizing divorces.

“Mounting data suggests that domestic abuse is acting like an opportunistic infection, flourishing in conditions created by the pandemic.”

- NYT, 4/6/2020

COVID-19 has overcrowded emergency shelters past capacity. This shortage of available emergency housing is especially troubling when considering recent data from large metropolitan US police departments who have seen double-digit percentage jumps in domestic violence cases and calls. Across the world, the United Nations reports that domestic violence calls have doubled in nations such as Lebanon and Malaysia and tripled in China. Even in areas where domestic violence calls have decreased, web searches for help with domestic violence have increased. **All this confirms the grim reality that pandemics increase the risk for domestic violence.** The United Nations Population Fund's report confirms this with historical precedent, when during the Ebola outbreak, there was a significant rise in gender-based and sexual violence affecting women and children around the world.

Furthermore, financial difficulties triggered by COVID-19 especially affect domestic violence victims, many of who secretly save money to prepare to leave their abusive partners. COVID-19 has already laid off thousands of workers and is expected to engender a world economic recession with effects lasting far beyond any social distancing and isolation measures. Non profit organizations which provide essential housing services and support are bracing themselves for budget cuts and fundraising difficulties.

COVID-19 is not the "great equalizer." Anita Bhatia, the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Women, warns that "the very technique we are using to protect people from the virus can perversely impact victims of domestic violence." She clarifies that though she absolutely supports social distancing and isolation measures, she would like to call upon everyone to "recognize that (COVID-19) provides an opportunity for abusers to unleash more violence." Current general discussions about COVID-19 urge people to be more vigilant of their surroundings, respectful of their space, and empathetic towards others. Recognizing that COVID-19 disproportionately affects certain populations, careful awareness and acts of kindness must extend beyond one's personal circle.

Sources & Additional Reading

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<http://www.breakthecycle.org/blog/coronavirus-covid-19-and-closings-how-you-can-continue-be-safe-and-seek-protection-residents-or>

<https://theconversation.com/domestic-violence-growing-in-wake-of-coronavirus-outbreak-135598>

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/coronavirus/acf-covid-19-stimulus>

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

Various organizations have extended their services to support different forms of communication and support during COVID-19. Recommendations can be dependent on location, as governments have responded differently to COVID-19. For example, the DC court has rescheduled court hearings and has extended all temporary protection and civil protection orders. To obtain immediate, general support and specific recommendations, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7 every day.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

<https://www.thehotline.org/>

1-800-799-SAFE(7233), Live Chat: <https://www.thehotline.org/what-is-live-chat/> 24/7

"The Hotline provides lifesaving tools and immediate support to empower victims and survivors to find safety and live free of abuse. We also provide confidential support to friends and family members who are concerned about a loved one. Resources and help can be found by calling 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing may use TTY 1-800-787-3224. Additionally, advocates who are Deaf are available 24/7 through the National Deaf Hotline by video phone at 1-855-812-1001, Instant Messenger (DeafHotline) or email (nationaldeafhotline@adwas.org). If it's not safe for you to call, or if you don't feel comfortable doing so, another option for getting direct help is to use our live chat service here on this website. You'll receive the same one-on-one, real-time, confidential support from a trained advocate as you would on the phone. Chat is available every day from 24/7/365."

The National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project

(<https://nnedv.org/content/technology-safety/>)

The Safety Net Project provides free online tool kits of safety tips, information, and privacy strategies for survivors when using technology. This can be helpful if there are specific privacy concerns regarding technology. The toolkit is available here at: <https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors>.

Love is Respect

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/about/>

1-866-331-9474, Text LOVEIS to 2522, Live Chat: www.loveisrespect.org 24/7

Love is Respect, or formerly known as the National Dating Abuse Hotline, offers support, information and advocacy to people who have questions or concerns about dating relationships. They also have an interactive guide to creating a safety plan, that is a personalized, practical plan to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave, which is available here at: <https://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/interactive-safety-plan/>.

ACTION

In a letter sent 4/13/2020, a bipartisan group of US senators has demanded that the next coronavirus aid bill contain more resources and funding for victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault and family violence. Though part of the first

coronavirus relief bill included support of \$45 million to family violence shelters and \$2 million to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, more support is needed and critical. The letter asks for more funding to the Sexual Assault Service Program, Violence Against Women STOP grants, and Family Violence and Prevention Service Program. Additionally, the letter warns against the increase in intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and family violence that occurs as more people are unemployed. To provide substantial support, the senators are calling for more funding for sexual assault centers and tribal organizations and governments, such as the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

The full text of the letter is available here: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/senators-demand-next-covid-19-aid-bill-prioritize-domestic-and-sexual-violence-survivors_n_5e949724c5b6d97d91f0ee64.

If you do not see your senator's signature, you can call or email your senator (https://www.senate.gov/senators/How_to_correspond_senators.htm) to ask for their support of this letter's demands.

Though this is one specific action, there are many other ways to show support for domestic abuse survivors during this critical time.

You can call upon your local, regional, state, and/or national representatives to support additional funding for domestic abuse victims.

You can get involved with and donate to the National Domestic Violence Hotline through this link: <https://www.thehotline.org/get-involved/donate/>.

You can search for local domestic abuse shelters in your area and inquire how you can best support them through here: https://www.domesticshelters.org/help?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI5aiC6LSH6QIVD8pkCh3tfQn9EAAAYAiAAEglv-_D_BwE#?page=1.

Most importantly, you can check in on your family members, peers, and loved ones.