



Test-Optional Policies May Permanently Change the College Admissions Landscape

Erica Yang, Grade 10, Staff Writer

In the past, many colleges required students to submit their SAT or ACT scores when they applied, and these test scores were reviewed as a separate admission factor. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it became more difficult for students to take these tests, as many test centers were closed following the closing of schools. As a result, many colleges and universities—including all of the Ivy League schools—adopted test-optional policies for the class of 2025 in order to place students' safety before evaluation. Some schools have already declared test-optional policies for the class of 2026, and others are expected to follow.

Ms. Teslik, a college admissions counselor at the High School of American Studies, defined this term. "Test-optional means exactly what the term sounds like," she said. "When you're applying to college, if the school is test-optional, you can choose to submit your SAT or ACT score, or you can choose not to."

Colleges that adopted test-optional policies claim that students who choose not to submit test scores will not be disadvantaged in admissions. However, submitting high test scores may help students gain entrance into top universities. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, three-fourths of students admitted in the Early Decision round submitted test scores.

Andrew Yang, Dianne Morales Among Top Student Picks for Mayor

Matilda Sieger, Grade 12, Journalism Student



Photo taken by Matilda Sieger, Grade 12
Maya Wiley (pictured above) is some HSAS students' top pick for NYC mayor.

The primaries of the 2021 New York City Mayoral Election are quickly approaching. Scheduled for June 22 and followed by the general election on November 2, they will be a pivotal decision for NYC, as a potential plan for emerging from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is on every New York voter's mind.

But NYC's teachers and students are concerned about one of many other hot-button issues: public education policy. Of forty High School of American Studies students surveyed across all four grades, over half have already determined favorite candidates and issues they'd like candidates to address.

Of students interviewed by *Common Sense*, one candidate has the majority of support: Andrew Yang, an entrepreneur and philanthropist from Schenectady, NY. Yang plans to relieve 500,000 of the lowest income New Yorkers and wants to make public

education more accessible to students with special needs.

"I like Andrew Yang ... because he seems like an empathetic person," said Hale Briner, a freshman at HSAS. "I like his plans for more equitable school admissions... [Yang] would give students who can't afford great tutoring for the SHSAT a better chance of getting into schools like ours."

Another progressive favorite is Dianne Morales, a Brooklyn native and former public school teacher. Morales' key policies are guaranteed housing for all, defunding the police, and integrating NYC schools.

"My favorite candidate is definitely Dianne Morales because she seems to be the most progressive of the candidates. Her platform focuses on some much-needed action right now," said Rachael Romano, a junior.

In the same vein as Yang and Morales, several in the HSAS community named

Maya Wiley, a lawyer and civil rights activist from Syracuse, NY, as a potential favorite. Wiley is prioritizing increasing access to healthcare and majorly reducing the number of guns on NYC streets.

"I'm thinking either Maya Wiley or Andrew Yang because they're both progressive and intelligent," said Lola Musselwhite, a sophomore. "I would think that both candidates would implement progressive policies and invest heavily in public education funding."

But not everyone at HSAS favors a progressive candidate. Of the same forty HSAS students polled, 14 percent stated that they prefer a more conservative candidate for mayor.

One pick is Ray McGuire, a former Citibank executive from Ohio, whose policies focus on a comeback of the private sector, as well as revitalizing the connection between it and NYC schools.

College Board Mandates In-Person Administration of AP Language Exams, Fueling Concerns and Controversy

Mia Penner, Grade 11, Co-Editor-in-Chief

After months of uncertainty, the College Board released key information in March regarding the administration of the 2021 Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Due to lingering Coronavirus concerns, schools will have the option of administering all exams at home or in person—that is, with the exception of foreign language exams.

According to the recent update, foreign language exams may "only be administered in a proctored school setting." This new policy means that a select group of sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in AP Spanish Language and Culture will take a full-length exam in school on May 21. The decision has sparked controversy among students and faculty at the High School of American Studies, fueling safety concerns and apprehension about unpreparedness.

While the safety risk posed by administering the exam in person is minor, it has become a point of contention among HSAS students.

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Test-Optional Policies

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An unexpected side effect of test-optional policies was a dramatic increase in the number of applicants, especially at the more competitive universities. Without having to submit an SAT or ACT score, many students felt they had a better shot at top schools. “What happened this year, for the class of 2021, is that because many students couldn’t take the test, colleges, especially with the more competitive schools, had a huge surge in the number of applicants,” Ms. Teslik said. “For example, MIT had something like a 66 percent increase in applicants this year, and we are seeing the same in the very selective schools like the Ivies.”

Increased applicant pools directly correlate with decreased acceptance rates. Most universities in the

country are witnessing their lowest acceptance rates in history. For example, Vanderbilt University admitted just 6.7 percent of applicants for the class of 2025, compared to 10.4 percent of applicants for the class of 2024. That’s a 3.7 percent decrease in just one year — something unheard of before the pandemic.

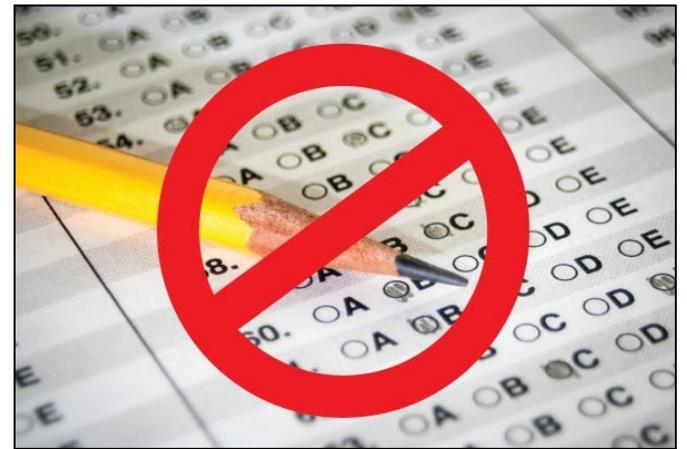
Although test-optional policies may lessen the testing burden for applicants, they force applicants to focus more on other admission factors. Test-optional policies may also help level the playing field for students from historically under-represented backgrounds who may not have access to testing prep. “I think it’ll be a positive change for students who don’t have access to the SAT, which are disproportionately lower-income Black and Hispanic students, and for anyone who isn’t a good test-taker,” said Elizabeth Murray, a junior at HSAS. “Overall, I believe it will take some of the

pressure off students but also force them to build up their portfolios.”

Luisa Valdez, another junior at HSAS, has a different opinion of the extent that an increase in colleges with test-optional policies will have on overall college admissions. “I think it doesn’t make a great change, honestly,” Valdez said. “Many students continue taking the exam, allowing them to have an advantage.”

Many seniors at HSAS, however, felt that submitting a high test score did not actually give them much of an admissions advantage. A number of students are grappling with rejection from top universities due to increased applicant pools, despite the fact that they submitted a test score.

Even though colleges are not requiring SAT and ACT scores, other admissions factors remain the same. “Every college and university uses different metrics and different ways to



Test-optional policies have shaken the very foundation of college admissions, at least for the time being.

review students, so a lot of smaller colleges that are test-optional sometimes use a more holistic review of applicants,” said Ms. Teslik. “They are definitely looking at things aside from the tests, but the big ones are your GPA, recommendations, and what kind of personal statement you wrote.”

The future of test-optional admissions is not clear at the moment. Some colleges, like the University of California schools, have permanently done away with

testing in order to review applicants in a more holistic way and accept more students who do not have access to test prep. Other universities may return to requiring the SAT or ACT once the pandemic ends. But all schools have certainly shifted away from standardized testing as a major admissions factor, instead focusing more on grades, coursework, extracurricular activities, recommendations, and essays.

Should Cameras Be Mandatory on Zoom?

Sophia Wang, Grade 12, Journalism Student

The pandemic caused most school buildings to shut down, and subsequently many schools switched to fully remote learning. This sudden shift prompted the creation of mandatory “cameras on” rules in many schools, or requirements that students turn their video on during Zoom meetings.

This rule also applies to the High School of American Studies. “It is our expectation that all cameras will be on throughout the duration of a live class, including if you are assigned to a break-out room,” stated Mr. Weiss in a school-wide email at the beginning of the spring semester, making expectations clear. Opinions on this mandatory rule differ, especially between teachers and students.

“[Having cameras on in class] is a common

courtesy. It helps teachers feel that they are not just talking in front of a screen but rather actual people,” shared Mr. Xia. Many of his colleagues shared similar sentiments.

Cameras being on has practical purposes as well. Teachers ask for cameras to be on to check if their students are present and attentive.

While some students agree with teachers, others have reservations about it being mandatory. Cesar Hernandez, a sophomore, understands the reasoning

behind the rule but disagrees with the mandatory approach. “Cameras are great for enticing students to play an active role in classes,” said Hernandez. “[But] the mandatory approach isn’t the way to go about it.”

Isaiah Rosenn, a freshman, shares Hernandez’s sentiment. He said, “It’s important to engage students and fuel class participation. [However], it can be an issue when it comes to family issues or difficult home circumstances.” Unlike in-

person school, during remote schooling, unexpected situations may arise.

Students may also have “issues with attention span and sitting in one place for a long time,” and sometimes get “really antsy and need to walk away,” said Danielle Johnson, a senior. However, due to cameras being mandatory, walking away for a brief moment is not an option, so Johnson ends up “staring at my computer screen to look like I’m paying attention even though I’m really not grasping any of the content.”

While some breaks have been added to the second-semester bell schedule, it does not help students who still have many live classes in a row. This poses an issue because it is harder to concentrate on classes with so many occurring back-to-back.

Even if students need a quick water break, stepping away from the computer is not an option because it gives the impression to teachers that the student is not paying attention.

Another issue created by requiring cameras to be on is that students can become

more self-conscious of how they look during class. Having cameras on enables students to see themselves on Zoom, distracting them as they start to worry about their appearance. Marisa Tirado, a junior, agrees with this statement, sharing, “[I kind of get] self-conscious about people seeing me or seeing what’s going on in my background, and I know it can be uncomfortable for a lot of other people too.”

The mandatory camera rule is seen as “a real problem. Teachers are trying to hold onto an old system that is no longer possible due to the new environment caused by the pandemic. It’s like trying to fit a circle into a square hole, it’s never gonna happen,” explained Johnson. Still, “people will abuse the privilege if students are allowed to keep their camera off,” said Rosenn.

Overall, teachers are adamant about students keeping their cameras on. Although students understand the reasoning behind this, many still harbor reservations about cameras.



Although students at the High School of American Studies view the mandatory “cameras on” rule as reasonable, many still have concerns.

AP Language Exams

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At the present moment—and certainly by May 21—most teachers and school staff have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. All New York residents over the age of 12 are now eligible for the vaccine as well, meaning that many AP Spanish students could have received at least one dose of the vaccine when they take the exam. Moreover, New York City schools have implemented mask and distancing mandates to diminish the spread of COVID-19.

Nonetheless, the College Board's policy gives students no alternative to taking the exam in a school setting and potentially exposing themselves to the Coronavirus. "Even though our administrators and staff have taken the necessary precautions and implemented the protocols recommended by the CDC, state, local, and DOE officials, there are always risks involved," said Ms. Rosanny Genao, who teaches AP Spanish Language and Culture at HSAS.

The bigger concern appears to be unpreparedness. Unlike the AP exams administered at home, students will not have access to notes or other resources during the AP Spanish test. Without notes to fall back on, many students feel woefully unprepared for the upcoming exam—especially given that live class time has been drastically reduced this school year.

Live classes may be especially important for AP Spanish students because learning a language requires immersion and consistent practice. In a normal year, HSAS students have Spanish classes four times a week. But due to school closures, each class now meets live just two times a week, with the other two days being devoted to asynchronous assignments. Ms. Genao was able to negotiate a third live Spanish class for the second semester, but many students still feel unprepared for the impending exam.

"Although Ms. Genao

has made a strenuous effort to teach us Spanish culture and history in order to prepare us for the AP Spanish test in May, learning in-person versus over Zoom is extremely different," said Laura Yam, a junior taking AP Spanish Language and Culture. Yam added that she has had less time to participate in class and ask questions than she feels she would have had in a normal school year.

Alexis Guberman, a senior who is also enrolled in AP Spanish, echoed Yam's concerns. "I am most worried about timing. Being online we haven't had the chance to learn all the material, and we've only taken one full test this year," she said. "We also normally learn four or five days a week, and now we are only doing three so we will not have learned everything."

Even Ms. Genao worries that she has not had enough class time to adequately prepare her students for the exam. "I have had to shorten every unit in the hopes of giving a brief, but effective overview of the curricular themes that make up our AP exam," she said. "I think all of us understand that these are unprecedented times and we want to do our best to learn as much as we can, but we have to be realistic and cover a good, but healthy and necessary part of our curriculum."

The situation may be especially worrisome because many students across the country have been attending school full time, and the exam is curved based on student performance across the board. HSAS students may perform worse than those who have been attending school for five

Schools Are Reopening. How do HSAS Teachers Feel About Coming Back?

Jolie Futterman, Grade 9, Staff Writer

The New York City public school system, the largest in America, made the bold decision to partially reopen schools this fall. By November 18, however, the three percent COVID-19 positivity rate forced all public schools to shut down. In January of this year, teachers became eligible to receive the vaccine, and in March the Department of Education announced that schools would reopen. The question remains: how do teachers at the High School of American Studies feel about coming back to school?

Ms. Elizabeth Rice, a Global History teacher at HSAS, feels that the return to school is necessary to bring more social interaction into the lives of students. "Clearly, school usually provides a lot more than just academic content and it's been hard to do that remotely," said Ms. Rice. "We all feel isolated and lonely, and the fun aspects of school are missing."

Ms. Rice also expressed her belief that students are not learning as much in online classes. "It's been hard to translate some of my more interactive activities online, some of which I've had to drop," she said.

Ms. Rice shared that she has been fully vaccinated, which she said made her feel comfortable returning to the classroom. She also expressed her excitement for normal school life in the future, saying, "We probably have to wait until fall for things to really return to normal—classes taught in person and everyone back in school. I really can't wait for that."

Other teachers, like Mr. Michael Holmes, feel that online school may be a good option. "I don't have many concerns about online school if it involves live

meetings and assignments that allow students to have the ability to discuss with teachers the assigned work," he said.

However, Mr. Holmes feels that technological problems are a substantial challenge. "There is obviously the problem of tech issues and possible poor WiFi," he said. "Those issues point to an infrastructure problem that online schools didn't create; it falls back on infrastructure issues in towns and cities which highlight that WiFi should be a subsidized utility for its citizens."

In terms of returning to the classroom, Mr. Holmes shared his concerns about contact tracing at HSAS. "I am not sure how you do accurate contact tracing when your numbers exceed the capacity of tracers to reasonably follow the path of where the virus may have spread," Mr. Holmes explained.

For HSAS Spanish teacher Ms. Rosanny Genao, Zoom fatigue is one main concern about online learning. "We have all experienced extreme Zoom fatigue, mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion after sitting for hours on end in front of a computer screen," she said. "It's hard to create a sense of a true learning community—something we do exceptionally well when we teach in person at HSAS."

Because of this, Ms. Genao feels it is very important for students to return to school. "I think it is imperative we return to some kind of in-person schooling for the sake of our students' emotional and mental well-being more than anything," Ms. Genao explained.

Ms. Genao feels comfortable returning to the classroom given her recent vaccination and the implementation of safety protocols at HSAS. "As long as our student population continues to observe this protocol, I know I will be happy and comfortable being back in our beloved toolshed."

days a week, possibly resulting in lower scores.

The College Board's decision to administer foreign language exams in person has enraged language teachers across the city, prompting the New York City Department of

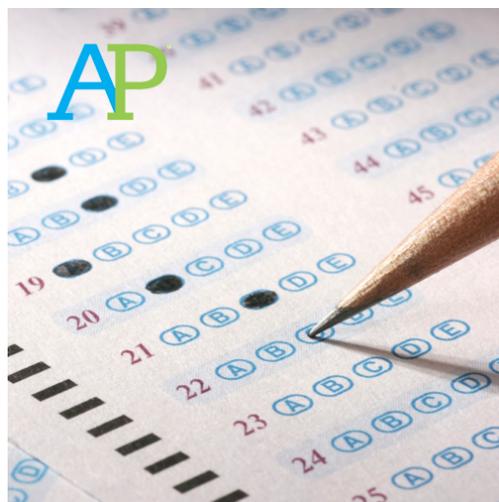
Education to step in. "Obviously, I am beyond disappointed—as are many AP Spanish Language teachers from around the city—about the College Board's decision to administer this and a few other world languages tests in person," said Ms. Genao. "It is unfair and unnecessary on so many levels, but hopefully the College Board will reconsider as the DOE's in negotiations with them about this particular issue."

As of the time of publication, no changes have been made regarding the administration of AP exams despite the DOE's efforts.

While it certainly seems unfair, the College Board's decision to administer foreign language exams in a school setting may be practical. After all, students

have access to translators at home, which makes it difficult to accurately measure their grasp of a foreign language. Still, the College Board has had ample time to develop the 2021 AP exams and may have been able to conceive a suitable alternative.

Despite the unfortunate situation, Ms. Genao has faith in her AP Spanish students and encourages them to look on the bright side. "We have to look at the glass half full here—by the time the APs come around, we'll be more than ready. Then after, we'll look back and we will feel so proud of how we have pushed ourselves and how strong we've kept all year long despite undergoing so much," she said.



The College Board's decision to administer foreign language AP exams in person puts students enrolled in AP Spanish Language and Culture in a difficult situation.

HSAS's Lack of Recognition for Black History Month

Rachel Wong, Grade 11, Co-Editor-in-Chief

With the recent surge in Black Lives Matter activism, many people see it as more important than ever for schools to address Black History Month. The students and faculty at the High School of American Studies agree that the school should do more to commemorate the month-long celebration.

Through its name, the High School of American Studies makes obvious its emphasis on American history. Many students report disappointment with what they see as a lack of acknowledgment of Black history.

"If times were normal, eight hours of my week would be dedicated to history, and even more if you count homework," said Noa Yolcut, a sophomore. "With all that time, it feels like there should be space to educate us on Black History."

Students and teachers both noted that in past years HSAS has been inconsistent in addressing Black History Month school-wide.



Art by Rachel Wong, Grade 11
HSAS students believe more should be done to address Black History Month at school.

Mr. Elinson, an American history teacher, maintains a year-round bulletin board detailing Black History. He encourages students to put up articles or post-it notes with thoughts. However, the transition to remote learning made that impossible this year, so Mr. Elinson incorporated the NY Times' 1619 Project in his classes, creating a Black History section in Google Classroom.

In 2019, Ms. Genao organized a Black history afternoon where Mr. Evans moderated a discussion room, Mr. Valerio and Mrs. Hallinan showed

documentaries and films, and Mr. Elinson ran a Black History trivia room. However, teachers recalled there was little student participation because attendance was not mandatory.

Mr. Mansdorf has also tried to organize school-wide assemblies, inviting speakers and showing documentaries, but his efforts have not become annual events.

Overall, while teachers have taken some initiative to include Black History Month in their class or organize school-wide events in the past, there is no consistent, annual staple in the school's calendar.

Haphazardness seems to be a recurring theme.

"In Spanish class, we're basically spending the month on Black History and related issues, but in other classes, it hasn't been acknowledged at all," said Elektra Birchall, a senior.

However, some other teachers have taken steps to incorporate Black history into their curriculum. "I have been part of the problem, [but] this year ... I decided to do something," said Mr. Halabi. "I took a full period to talk about New York City's Freedom Day, Feb 3, 1964, ... when half a million NYC students boycotted school to demand integration."

Looking forward, students and teachers have proposed incorporating more Black history into the curriculum by discussing Black artists, scientists, authors, and mathematicians.

Claire Lee, a freshman, also proposed adding more short readings about prominent Black figures. Most students and teachers have proposed creating a Black History elective or hosting a school-wide assembly with speakers.

The Committee for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, a student-run organization, has recruited speakers to visit classes to present talks about Black

leaders. But still, students and teachers noted that more needs to be done, and the administration should take the lead.

"I think it is fantastic that CEDI exists—but there is a difference between the school allowing a student group to organize, and the school initiating or sponsoring that work," said Mr. Halabi. "[F]undamentally, leadership has to come from the school. That is the starting point. And that is what has been missing. That really needs to change."

Ultimately, the responsibility to address Black history lies with everyone. "It's on all of us. The administration should make sure teachers incorporate Black History Month into their curriculum, but teachers should also take it upon themselves to address Black history every month," said Isabel Tribe, a junior. "As students, it's also our job to push teachers, classmates, and the administration to honor Black History Month."

Fundamentally, HSAS needs to be more active during Black History Month—especially as a history school. As Tribe said, "Black Americans have been left out of the history books for too long. Black history is American history, and it needs to be taught that way."

How HSAS Students Are Forming Connections with Senior Citizens During the Pandemic

Kara Anaya, Grade 10, Staff Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic may be taking a significant toll on people's physical and mental well-being. Everyone has had to adapt in order to maintain contact with other people while social distancing. Senior citizens have especially felt this pressure due to the extra danger of the virus for them. However, they, too, have begun adapting to these changes and have connected with others, including students at

the High School of American Studies.

The National Honors Society at HSAS partnered with an organization called DOROT to help students meet and get to know senior citizens. "Dorot" is Hebrew for the word "generations," and the name represents the program's exact purpose—to help establish positive relationships across generations.

Before the spread of COVID-19, DOROT volunteers and workers went to seniors' homes, held live workshops, and distributed holiday gifts. However, since in-person interactions are now restricted, it has become crucial to find new, innovative ways to stay in contact.

Rebecca Friedman, a junior at HSAS, talked about the work she has done with DOROT and why it is important. "As the director

of community service for the National Honor Society, I worked with DOROT's Facilitator of Intergenerational Teen Programs, Jacob Kaplan-Lipkin, to organize a discussion group with DOROT's older adults and NHS students," she said, adding that "The discussion was centered around stories—why they are important and sharing our own. Forming connections with seniors is an amazing, unique experience and way to see new perspectives and gain new friends."

The HSAS Community Service Club has also taken initiative through a pen pal program with a retirement community in Columbus, Ohio. Both the students and the seniors were able to decide if they wanted to exchange physical letters or emails with their pen pal, and then the leaders of the

club matched them according to their preferences.

Though the program has just started and some students and seniors have only responded once or twice so far, many connections have already been made. Emma Abell, a junior at HSAS, has been exchanging emails with Tricia Herban, one of the seniors, and they have begun to form a strong bond. "I've loved emailing with my pen pal! It's wonderful to be able to connect to someone, especially because the pandemic has made social interaction more difficult and complicated," Abell said. "I've learned that she loves to write, cook, and travel, especially with her friends."

Social isolation and loneliness have been difficult side effects of the pandemic. Establishing new bonds with strangers, even if they are far



The High School of American Studies National Honors Society worked with DOROT as part of a wider school effort to foster intergenerational connections.

away, helps to combat this loneliness. "We share so many common interests, and it's so nice to feel like we're giving each other something small to look forward to," Abell reflected.

Friedman summed up the significance of these new connections: "Forming intergenerational bonds is a unique and often overlooked way to create friendly and genuine connections."

The Pandemic Wall: How the Covid-19 Pandemic is Impacting Mental Health at HSAS

Raphael Jacobson, Grade 12,
Journalism Student

As we mark one year of the pandemic, many are facing what they describe as the “pandemic wall.” Some students report being burnt out, tired of an uneven work-life balance as they feel expected to be accessible at all hours of the day. Many share that they are struggling to balance their responsibilities and their mental health.

As we hit this milestone, Common Sense wanted to check in with students at the High School of American Studies.

Adin Linden, a freshman, believes that the pandemic hurt his mental health, as it has “limit[ed] social and emotional connections with peers.” When asked how HSAS could be more supportive, he said he would like there to be more facilitation of social opportunities, especially as a new freshman.

Noa Yolkut, a sophomore, also has felt the effects of the pandemic on her mental health and is approaching the pandemic wall. “Virtual learning has definitely affected my mental health,” she said. “I haven’t seen any of my friends in person since September and we never have time to interact in class.”

“Because teachers can assign work at any time, I’m always worried that I will have more coming in, whereas, during normal

school, I knew exactly what I had to do that day,” Yolkut added.

Alia Scheuneman, a senior, has also felt the effects of living and working out of the same space for almost a year, saying her mental health “goes up and down,” and while there are moments when she feels fine, “overall it’s gotten worse.”

With limited options for social interaction, she said, “I have found that I ... have to get more creative with ways to cope since I pretty much just have my home and my neighborhood to work with.” When asked what she does to help her mental health, Scheuneman stated she takes walks and puts effort into enjoying them.

For some students, there is only so much they can handle on their own, and the emotional strain of the pandemic has driven them to seek professional help. “The pandemic had definitely taken a toll on my mental health,” shared an anonymous junior. “I thought that I was fine during the first few weeks of quarantine, but, as the months dragged on, it got worse and worse... The pandemic situation actually pushed me to seek professional help again. I know there are many other students who have also experienced more anxiety and depression during quarantine.”

Teachers understand that students are struggling. When asked if she has noticed if her students are struggling with their mental health, Ms. Rockfeld, who primarily teaches seniors, acknowledged that she is struggling as well as she hits her “second pandemic wall.”

Having seen two senior classes miss large portions of their senior year, she cannot determine who has had it worse. “[The class of 2020] had [their senior experience] yanked from them. This year [the class of 2021] entered knowing it. It has been a great loss and trauma.”

When asked what HSAS could do to be more supportive of students’ mental health needs, those interviewed responded that they generally rely on school for mental health support. Ms. Rockfeld acknowledged this reality, saying, “We [the faculty] have come up with nothing.” She added that in normal times, students have approached her for support, but because of virtual learning “we have not been able to form the trust and relationship really needed for that to happen.”

Despite not relying on teachers for mental health support, a common feeling among students was that there could be better communication, both among faculty and between students and teachers, when it came to assigning work. One student described having 11 assignments due the Wednesday after returning from February break.

Yolkut recommended restricting what time teachers could post homework by, saying “it would really take that weight [of the constant work cycle] off my shoulders.”

Students are hitting their pandemic wall, and it seems that the only solution that would meaningfully improve their mental health is an acknowledgement of the reality that it is hard to function after a year of being shut in and a significant work reduction.

Student Picks for Mayor

Continued from Page 1

Logan Grodsky, a senior, voiced his support for McQuire. “I think we need someone from the outside, not another machine politician ... There is a lot of stuff in our school system that does work, and it’s important that we approach education with an eye on maintaining that,” he said.

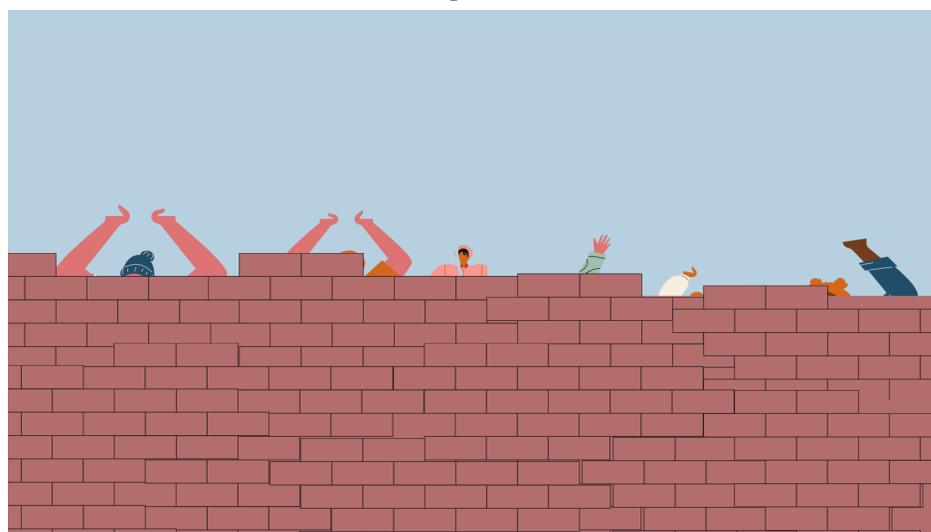
With a lot of things uncertain about NYC’s future, many HSAS students and faculty would agree that the public school system should be handled with more care than it was under DeBlasio’s administration. “Our next mayor has to

instill confidence that schools will reopen in a way that protects the health of students and teachers. I think that they will have to have a sense of the ‘soul’ of the city... Someone familiar with the complicated dynamics at work, racially, economically, borough by borough, who can really understand our essence and give life to a wounded city,” said Mr. Charles Evans, an American history and government teacher at HSAS.

Political discourse and the future of NYC have always been important in the lives of most HSAS students; now, in a time of both recovery and turbulence, the voice of the next generation of voters matter.



Photo taken by Matilda Sieger, Grade 12
Maya Wiley (pictured above) is some HSAS students’ top pick for NYC mayor.



Art by Raphael Jacobson, Grade 12

Students hit the pandemic wall as remote learning continues.

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HSAS's Local Outreach Tutoring Program (LOT)

Miranda Zanoni, Grade 12, Journalism Student

Over the past several months, political activism has been more prominent than ever before as people around the world are waking up to the role that racism plays in society.

At the High School of American Studies, racial inequality is being addressed through the Local Outreach Tutoring program. For more than three years, the program known as LOT has sought to increase racial and geographic diversity at the city's eight Specialized High Schools by offering free tutoring for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT).

The seventh and eighth-grade students who participate in the program all come from middle schools in the Bronx such as M.S. 244, which sits opposite HSAS on the other side of the reservoir. Most of the participants are students of color who lack access to SHSAT prep.

Due to the work of teachers Mr. Halabi and Ms. Genao and former Student Government President Habiba Sayma ('20), the LOT program has expanded to nearly 60 students.

Some students in the LOT program now attend HSAS. "I think we have three [freshmen] and one sophomore who were students in LOT. There is one more [student] who got in but did not come," said Mr. Halabi.

The program has been rapidly expanding. It started with about 20 seventh graders in 2017-2018, then 30 seventh graders in 2018-2019, then almost 60 seventh graders in 2019-2020.

However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, LOT has been conducted virtually since April. When asked about her experience with LOT this year, tutor Nora Kohnhurst, a senior, said, "It was a challenge to shift from teaching the kids in person to the virtual lessons. Interacting with the kids weekly was the best part of LOT, and it was more

difficult to create lessons that we couldn't present to them directly."

She added, "During the pandemic, my responsibilities changed from week to week, but generally I worked on PowerPoints, scripts, or worksheets for lessons. Occasionally, I edited a few videos for the channel."

The SHSAT was also pushed back from October to January to ensure students could take the exam safely. It is still unclear when results will be released.

It is also unclear how the LOT program will continue into the following school year. With online engagement dwindling during the pandemic, fewer and fewer students have watched LOT's videos. As of February, there are no plans for the LOT program to host new seventh graders in the fall.

However, many HSAS students are still dedicated to the program's mission of increasing diversity in Specialized High Schools.

"I think it's vital," said Paz Rebolledo, a sophomore. "I mean look at the diversity in our school. The vast majority of people are white and live in affluent neighborhoods and at least in my grade, most of the students of color come from the Discovery Program."

She added, "If there's more outreach into schools like my middle school, I'm positive more students of color and more students from low-income backgrounds will apply and pass the SHSAT because at the moment it's an issue of preparation, so hopefully LOT can combat that."

LOT's mission of diversity is an incredibly important one, that will not

Spring Sports Column

Matan Marder Friedgood, Grade 11, Staff Writer

Spring is here, and with that comes the start of the baseball season, the second half of the basketball season, the football off-season, and hockey. March Madness has passed, but there is still much to look forward to in the world of sports. Needless to say, it is an exciting time to be a New York sports fan.

For the first time since the turn of the century, both the Yankees and Mets have fans expecting them to be successful (90+ wins) this year. With a limited number of fans returning to the stands, both teams are vying for a winning April. While the Yankees have, individually, some of the best players in baseball, injury has hurt their chances in past years. Should they stay healthy, they are poised to take the American League East division. The Mets, under new ownership this season, need to prove their worth based on their offseason hype. With lots of new, upgraded pieces, their second-year manager must learn how to run his clubhouse and build a winning team with a winning attitude.

Concerning the rest of Major League Baseball, two players to watch are pitcher Trevor Bauer of the Dodgers, the National League Cy Young winner, and rookie outfielder Randy Arozarena of the Tampa Bay Rays, who recorded the most home runs in the postseason last year. A 162 game baseball season will have its ups and downs, but the New York teams should end up looking solid.

Although the NBA season is shortened this year, the excitement has not been diminished for New York sports fans. The Brooklyn Nets are full of superstars and have All-Star or former All-Star caliber players on the bench. They have become the team to beat in the Eastern Conference, at first place above the 76ers and Bucks. By the playoffs, the "big three" of James Harden, Kyrie Irving, and Kevin Durant should be back and healthy, and that is a scary thought for a postseason series. On the other hand, the Knicks are in a hotly contested fight for

the bottom of the playoffs, but with the young core of players including Julius Randle, Obi Toppin, and R.J. Barrett, the organization is developing well. They fight hard and manage to stay in games among their most threatening opponents, and it makes for an exciting watch. In the final stretch, each game means something bigger for these players than the others, and they play like it. A Nets-Knicks postseason matchup would have the city going wild, and as of now, it is a real possibility.

The pigskin has not been good to New York in a while, and the Jets are still trying to transition from a terrible to a mediocre team. With a new head coach, and the number two pick in the draft, is a new era dawning in Jets football? Only time can tell, but one thing for sure is that Darnold will not be the quarterback in this new era. He will most likely be replaced by Zach Wilson out of BYU. The Giants had a less mentioned offseason but did fill in certain missing pieces. While they may be sticking with Daniel Jones as their slinger, they upgraded the offense and defense around him, hoping for more successes in 2021 than the 2020 season. This might be the year for one or both of the teams, but it is unlikely.

Few in fan number but strong in spirit, the Islanders are a good hockey team. Sitting atop the eastern division, they are battling mainly Washington and Pittsburgh for the top spot. They are likely buyers around the trade deadline and are set to improve some holes, especially with Anders Lee gone. The Rangers are better now that Artemi Panarin has returned from a political fight in Russia. Do they have enough in them to make a playoff push? No, but one can hope, and some recent lopsided victories have bolstered fans' excitement.

If a distraction from the world is something you are seeking, this season of New York sports can provide. The Mets, Knicks, Giants, and Jets have to prove themselves as real teams, and the Yankees, Nets, and Islanders have to not screw up the good things they have going. Seasons can flip on a dime, but it is finally reasonable to expect good things out of New York teams this year.

be held back by COVID-19. Marisa Tirado, a junior who is also a member of HSAS's Committee for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (CEDI), said, "I really like knowing that we're taking steps to make HSAS more

equitable and welcoming for current and future students because I did feel kind of isolated as a student of color when I first came here. I really admire LOT's work, and I know LOT and CEDI have the same goal in mind towards admitting more low-income students and students of color."

Many who are uninvolved in diversity initiatives at HSAS support LOT as well. In a recent poll, an impressive 100 percent of HSAS freshmen support LOT's goal, and 80 percent of them would like to participate in the program as juniors.

Jackson Parker, a freshman, explained his support of the program. "I like tutoring and don't mind

putting in a bit of effort for the reward of helping someone through their work," he said. "Besides that, I see the lack of diversity at HSAS and other specialized high schools as a huge injustice, and I don't want to just sit complacent in that especially when I have an opportunity to help get students who truly care in, rather than just those whose parents could afford to get one-on-one tutoring themselves."

It is unsure what form LOT will take next year, but thanks to the committed students at HSAS, there is certainly hope for the program and its critical goal of true diversity in the complex system that is the Specialized High Schools.



Photo taken by Miranda Zanoni, Grade 12
HSAS students meet on Zoom to discuss the Local Outreach Tutoring (LOT) program's next steps.

TikTok Video Revives Fight for Gender Equity in Sports

Mia Cooper, Grade 11, Co-Editor-in-Chief

On March 18, Oregon women's basketball player Sedona Prince posted a video on TikTok about her experience at the N.C.A.A. tournament. The video revealed the haphazard weight room the N.C.A.A. provided for female athletes: a stack of 12 dumbbells and a handful of yoga mats. Prince then panned over to the men's weight room: a gym packed with squat racks and expensive equipment. "It's 2021 and we are still fighting for bits and pieces of equality," Prince wrote as her caption. Within a month, the video was viewed over 30 million times.

The glaring differences in the facilities provided to

men and women college basketball players did not stop with weight rooms. Female athletes were given cheaper, less accurate COVID-19 tests, while the men received the more precise and expensive tests. The men had an array of decadent food choices, from lobster mac & cheese to potatoes au gratin. Prince reported what the women ate, which included a few pieces of lettuce as their salad and a slice of unidentifiable meat. The merchandise offered at the men's tournament featured the famous March Madness logo, which was not on any of the women's tournament merchandise, due to the N.C.A.A. decision that the moniker would only apply to men's basketball.

Since the controversy, the N.C.A.A. apologized and gave women basketball players a full weight room and better food. This reversal only highlighted the long

history of gender inequity in sports.

On July 10, 1999, the U.S. women's soccer team faced China at the final of the Women's World Cup. The game was decided by penalties, with Brandi Chastain scoring the dramatic winning goal and ripping off her shirt in celebration. Even after this memorable win, the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team was not paid the same as their male counterparts. Six months later, the team went on strike to protest this egregious wrong. Though it was resolved within months, the discussion's revival in recent years has shown how gender inequalities are apparent in all sports.

The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team filed a gender discrimination lawsuit in 2019 because the men's team was still being paid more. Though the U.S. Soccer Federation earns more money from the women's team, which plays

and wins more games than the men's, some female players were earning only 38 percent of what the male players earned each game. The lawsuit not only claimed that the women were paid less than men, but also said that the U.S. Soccer Federation was not advertising the women's games equally and that the training and coaching techniques were not of the same quality. The inequality of the U.S. Women's National Team is not lost on students at the High School of American Studies.

Carly Brail, a junior at HSAS and a member of the track and tennis teams, feels frustrated with the persistent gender inequities in both national soccer and college basketball. As an avid fan of the women's soccer team, Brail mentioned her indignation that the female athletes are still paid less than their male counterparts. "The men failed to get beyond the round of 32 in

the recent World Cup," she said, referring to the low international standing of the U.S. men's team compared to the U.S. women's team. Because of this, she is disappointed but not shocked that the N.C.A.A. women's basketball tournament is facing similar challenges. She said that the recent controversy reinforces the message that male sports teams are respected while women's sports teams still have a ways to go.

The N.C.A.A.'s apology and short-term remedies only go so far. Women's basketball coaches and players have urged the association to use the outrage over Sedona Prince's viral TikTok as a catalyst to address deeper systemic issues in women's sports. Prince ended her video with the poignant message, "If you are not upset about this problem, then you are a part of it."

The Impact of COVID on Standardized Testing

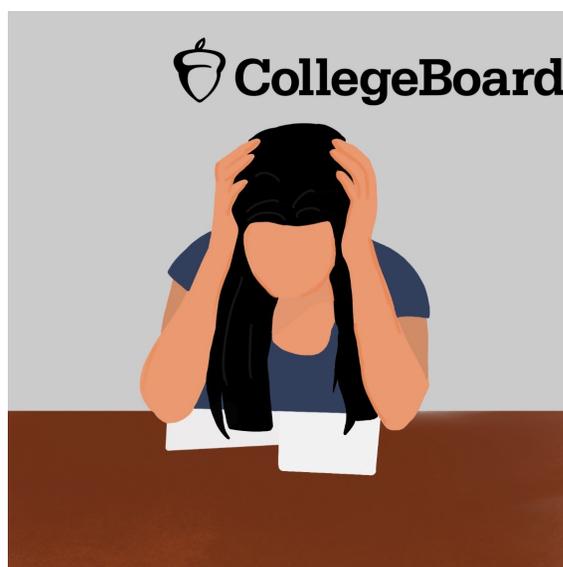
Joey Li, Grade 11, Journalism Student

As students and educators adapt to a COVID-19 school year, the College Board has made significant changes to their standardized tests. Many students rely on the College Board tests to distinguish themselves in their college applications, and colleges rely on these tests to evaluate applicants.

To prioritize the health and safety of students and educators, the College Board has decided to limit testing capacity in many areas and has closed many sites unexpectedly before the test, citing safety reasons.

"I have been registering for the SATs since September, and it's been canceled for me within short notice each time. Once, it was canceled three days before my test date," said Oscar Calamari-Abrams, a junior at Bronx Science High School.

In addition to limited SAT testing, the College Board has decided to



Art by Joey Li, Grade 11
This year, due to changes caused by the pandemic, students were left stressing over the changes made to standardized tests by the College Board.

discontinue SAT subject tests altogether in order to "reduce demands on students." Before this, many colleges had required or strongly recommended taking SAT subject tests, but after the cancellation, most have switched to test-optional.

"I took the Bio SAT II in Freshman Year because I was told that it was necessary for some schools and that it would look better on my college application," said Becca Boroda, a junior. "I was not in any way prepared for the test and I think that canceling the subject tests will impact the students in a positive way."

However, for other students, the cancellation of

the SAT subject tests has had a negative impact. According to Jennifer Ji, a junior at Stuyvesant High School, "I was planning on taking SAT II subject tests like Physics, Chemistry, Math 2, and US History as a supplement score for my college application and to replace any AP courses that were not available to me. I feel annoyed that it's been canceled since I thought it would look better on my college applications."

The College Board has also made significant changes to their AP tests since last year. The 2020 AP tests were shortened and entirely online, but the 2021 AP Exam schedule has been

separated into three different administrations for each subject between early May and mid-June.

In administration one, the test will be administered in person for all subjects. In administration two, half of the subjects will be administered in person and half will be full-length digital exams administered at home or in school. In the last administration, subjects will be full-length digital exams only.

Noa Greenhouvras, a freshman, commented, "I don't know a ton about this subject... I think this year [the tests] should probably be shortened because we can't really expect students to learn as much over online school than they would in person."

Furthermore, music theory and foreign language subjects must be administered in-person to prevent cheating, which came as a big surprise to many students.

"I feel like learning in person would have been better for my score than learning online," stated Silas Fleissig, a junior. "AP Spanish is a course that is hard to learn online. It is definitely a class where you have to be fully immersed in

learning the language, and it is harder to do that over Zoom."

"I find it really stressful that we're going to be taking the AP Spanish exam in person because we have spent the whole year online and it's unfair to now expect students to come and take it in person," said Saira Pannu, a sophomore.

Learning online has also impacted Saira. "I've gotten so used to procrastinating because working at home doesn't give the same environment for focus that school gives," she said. "I also feel like it can be difficult to ask questions on Zoom so I often don't always get clarification on things I'm confused about, making certain topics more difficult to understand."

"With online school, I just have not been learning and retaining the information like I used to," said Sophie Fishman, a senior. "I'm not even sure I have the stamina to take a full-length test."

The impact of COVID-19 on standardized College Board tests has been frustrating for many students. Though the College Board intended to relieve demands for students, many have found that it has had the opposite effect.

Entertainment and Features

Why Sia's Film "Music" was Controversial, and is it Worth the Watch?

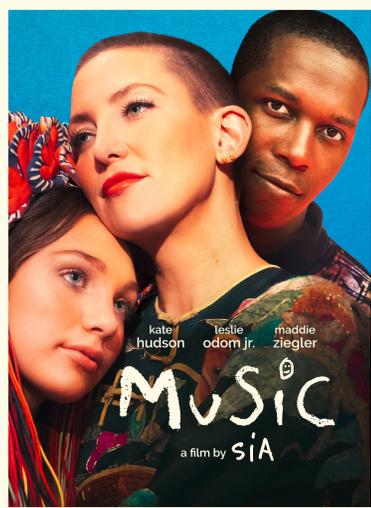
Sakari Jackson, Grade 9, Staff Writer / Opinion Piece

On February 10, Sia dropped her film "Music," which quickly received an outpouring of complaints. It earned a whopping 8 percent "fresh" score from Rotten Tomatoes critics and a 14 percent audience score on Rotten Tomatoes. But why did it flop? Should you still give this movie a chance?

Even before its release, the neurodivergent community, especially autistic individuals, was discussing how the film would misrepresent the autistic community by using a neurotypical actor. After it was released, many took to social media to discuss how the film portrayed an inaccurate, and possibly dangerous, view of the autistic community. The Autisticats on Twitter wrote an interesting thread about how dangerous the movie was to the community, and others chimed in as well.

Many of the complaints centered around the movie's opening scene. The movie started with strobing lights and flashing colors, known to overstimulate some autistic people and cause seizures in those with photosensitive epilepsy (which is common in autistic people, but also a general danger for others). The movie also did not provide a content warning about these things, which could negatively affect the neurodivergent and disabled community, especially since the movie targets this audience.

Madison Ziegler, who plays the main character "Music," incorrectly impersonates an autistic person, often making offensive and uncomfortable facial expressions. The Autisticats write: "This performance is a caricature of autistic body language. It's unsettling and insincere. And it is deeply reminiscent of the exaggerated



Sia's film "Music" portrays an offensive misrepresentation of the neurodivergent community.

mannerisms non-autistic people often employ when bullying autistic & developmentally disabled people for the ways we move."

Another disturbing sequence are the scenes in which the main character, Music, is restrained during meltdowns. This is a wild misrepresentation. The kind of restraint shown can be very bad for autistic people and sometimes proves fatal. Although Sia apologized for these scenes before the movie was even released, they are still present in the film with no content warning.

Furthermore, the majority of the backlash surrounding the movie regarded neurotypical actress Ziegler, who played the role after expressing some misgivings about portraying an autistic character. She bears some of the blame for the offensive viewing of autistic people, though she was a minor when she was hired and seemingly coerced into the role by Sia. The only group Sia worked with for the film was Autism Speaks, which views autism as a problem that needs to be cured and, ultimately, harms more than helps the community.

Keeping all this in mind, you should not watch this film. It is extremely problematic and offensive to the group that it depicts. If you are interested in watching the movie for yourself, it would be ideal to watch it someplace where it would not support Sia in any way and keep in mind how inaccurate the film is.

Mr. Halabi and How He Makes Our Schedules

Saira Pannu and Isabel Frei, Grade 10, Staff Writers

Mr. Halabi is a founding teacher at the High School of American Studies who currently teaches Algebra II and Precalculus. *Common Sense* interviewed him to learn more about his life before HSAS and his current role at HSAS. He shared his backstory and inspiring words with his students.

Q: What's your name and what do you teach?

A: My name is Jonathan Halabi and I teach mathematics.

Q: What inspired you to teach?

A: I had been working for the New York City Department of Transportation with the responsibility that went along with somebody who was a very beginning planner. I didn't have a college degree and I had left school. They offered us some money to quit so I did . . . I was a bum for a while because they guaranteed us unemployment . . . Then I got another job, as a research cartographer. While being a bum, I went back to school and finished my degree . . . I didn't really have any skills, and my uncle had been a teacher for a long time and said, "Why don't you try teaching?" I said, "I don't want to teach," and he said, "Well what other prospects do you have?" I said, "Well not really anything," and he

said, "So, why don't you try it?" So, if you want to call that inspiration that's fine, but that's the real story.

Q: What's your teaching philosophy? Do you have one thing that you always stand by?

A: My views on teaching have evolved over time. Many teachers take where they begin teaching from two places: a little bit of what they learned in teaching school or whatever program they did for their degree, and a lot from what they were taught, and I don't think I'm any different from that. I've been introspective about the things that I did when I was a kid and what worked only because it was me. There are a few kids that are really really good at this stuff and things work for us that don't work for other people. I also pay a lot of attention to what the education crowd is advising and arguing over, and I listen to the debates about how math is taught, and how teaching happens, and what happens in the classroom, and over time I've adopted bits and pieces from both sides. At this point, my approach to the structure of how mathematics is taught is very traditional and old fashioned, but in terms of what goes on in the classroom, I think there are a lot of modern ideas that make a lot more sense, and I've adopted a lot of them. I don't give tests. I thought it was necessary to teach every single thing but I'm learning that you can pick things that are more important, twenty exercises can be replaced by

two exercises and a very thoughtful question.

Q: How do you make schedules? Are they challenging to make? How do you accommodate the needs of every student? How long does it take?

A: The freshman classes are divided into two groups. I set up a schedule that works for freshmen to have different combinations of classes in the morning. Each of those groups also has different combinations in the afternoon. We end up making something where there's eight major freshman schedules plus eight or nine or ten other variations . . . We do the same thing for the other grades. I move all of the classes into a huge grid. Each box represents a day of the week with periods one through seven. Later on, I take the grids and spread it across the week, and then I mix up the order for the other days . . . It's a big process and it's long and hard. I type up all of the students' names on a spreadsheet where each student is a line with the classes they should have. The computer does a mediocre job of putting students into classes and I play around with it and finalize it. The big part is making that grid; the grid is really difficult to make. I don't make schedules for anyone, I make schedules for the school. It's like working on a Rubix code—a multi-dimensional Rubix code where you can't actually see all the sides that you're working on because it's not just students and courses and times, it's a lot more than that. The schedule creation takes me months, some parts take me longer than others.

Q: Can you tell us about your work for the Teachers Union?

A: I've been the union leader in the school since it was founded and I'm very active in the union outside of school as well. I was on their executive board for a long time and I'm the chapter leader, the UFT chapter leader at American Studies and I have been since 2002.



Algebra II and Precalculus teacher, Mr. Halabi, gives *Common Sense* some insight into his teaching philosophy, schedule-making process, and more.

A Guide to Shopping from Black-Owned Businesses in NYC

Ava Sexton, Grade 11, Staff Writer / Opinion Piece

Why Shop Small?

Small businesses make America. Shopping from small or family-owned businesses can help both the business owners and their communities. Smaller businesses pay taxes back to their city or town, circulating the wealth, while bigger corporations keep a larger percentage of their profits. Small businesses can also be more sustainable. Because products are often homemade or made on a smaller scale, these businesses tend to be more eco-friendly than the chain corporations that use mass production to make their products. Small businesses tend to have better customer service and shopping from one will provide you with a more personal experience than buying from a large corporation.

Why Buy From Black-owned Businesses?

It is always important to support and celebrate Black creators. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2017, the median income of white families was \$68,145 while the median income for Black families was \$40,258. Buying from Black-owned businesses can support Black families and help diminish the wealth disparity between Black and white Americans. It is a mutually beneficial action—you get a high-quality, community-friendly profit, and the creator gets the support they deserve.

So, Now What? Where do I Start?



Lloyd's Carrot Cake, a black-owned bakery with locations in Manhattan and the Bronx, is known for serving some of the most delicious carrot cake in the city.

Below is a helpful guide of small businesses, organized by product type, so that you can give back to your community and enjoy high-quality products!

Black Owned Businesses In NYC

Restaurants/Food:

Brooklyn:

- Café on Ralph - A cafe with vegan options
- Zaca Café - A French-American cafe
- Brooklyn Bend - A fresh smoothie and sandwich shop
- Biyou - New Orleans style soul food

Manhattan:

- Lloyd's Carrot Cake - Famously known as the best carrot cake in the city!
- BLVD Bistro - My personal favorite restaurant, classic Southern soul food
- Melba's - Comfort food restaurant
- Baked Cravings - Nut-free bakery

Bronx:

- Flava's International Grill - Jamaican soul food and fresh smoothies
- Cea-Lo Café - Soul food restaurant
- Freckle's Juice - Natural juices and smoothies
- Accra Restaurant - West African cuisine
- Paula's Soul Food - Southern soul food

Queens:

- Milk & Pull - Coffee and pastry restaurant
- Veggie Castle II - Vegan and vegetarian dishes
- Henrica's - Jamaican and Chinese fusion restaurant
- Southern Girls Soul Food Kitchen - Pretty self-explanatory!

Bookstores:

- Café con Libros - Fusion cafe and bookstore, located in Brooklyn
- Sister's Uptown - Indie bookstore, located in Manhattan
- The Schomburg Shop - Books focusing on black culture, located in Harlem
- The Lit. Bar - Locally popular bookstore, located in the Bronx
- Sister's Uptown - Family-owned business located in Washington Heights
- Gizmo Vintage Honey - Vintage store, located in Brooklyn

Fashion and Beauty:

- African Queen Boutique - African inspired fashion, located in Brooklyn
- Madame Matovu Vintage - homemade and curated vintage pieces, located in Manhattan
- The Beauty Cave - hair and nail salon, located in Manhattan
- Beaute Brownie - cosmetic line, located in Brooklyn
- Lost Queens - jewelry shop, online store
- Ace Beaute - cruelty-free makeup, online store
- Ani Organix - African skin and hair company, online store
- Oui the People - skincare and self-care products, online store flip on a dime, but it is finally reasonable to expect good things out of New York teams this year.



The Lit. Bar, which is located in the Bronx, doubles as a bookstore and a wine bar, giving readers a truly relaxing experience.

Check out the Common Sense website here!



Want to create art for Common Sense?

Contact

hsasnewspaperclub@gmail.com

for more details!



What Does HSAS Think of WandaVision?

Stephen Nichol, Grade 12, Staff Writer / Review Piece

Is it possible to enjoy scheduled television in a world of streaming? Well, if you asked most viewers of “WandaVision” at the High School of American Studies, the answer would be a resounding yes. Even several weeks after the series finale, students still debate whether or not it was a good show, if the ending was sufficient, and what it means for our favorite superheroes’ future.

The release of the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s debut television show on Disney+ went off without a hitch. How could it not? The studio had a budget of up to 25 million dollars per episode, totaling around 200 million dollars for the entire season—spanning just nine episodes.

In many cases, that money was well spent. Elizabeth Olsen and Paul Bettany, who played the lesser-known avengers Wanda Maximoff and Vision, respectively, delivered outstanding performances that made viewers invested in superheroes they probably had not cared about in earlier Marvel films.

Following the blockbuster *Avengers: Endgame*, “WandaVision” focuses on love, grief, and family—themes not often touched upon in typical Marvel productions. The show also does an incredible job at emulating both vintage and modern TV comedies like “Bewitched,” “The Brady Bunch,” “The Dick Van Dyke Show,” “Full House,” and “Modern Family.” The fact that Dick Van Dyke consulted on the show further exemplifies the golden age of television’s influence.

The attention to detail is also astounding, as each set piece can be broken down into hours of YouTube fan theories. From the diploma arrangements to a soapbox’s shape, the Marvel Universe



Students at the High School of American Studies report a variety of reactions to Marvel’s new WandaVision film, ranging from excitement to boredom.

seems to hinge on every little detail. There is even a different theme song for each episode, all to a similar tune.

However, the question remains did all the time and money pay off for viewers? Well, according to George Koral, a senior at HSAS, it certainly did. “It was brilliant! The end of every episode had me waiting until 3 am the next Friday, eager to see how the story would unfold,” he said,

However, others seem to disagree. “It was bad,” said Leo Reale, a senior at HSAS. “I liked the style of the beginning and how it was kind-of a divergence from what Marvel’s usual shtick is, and how everything was a mystery. But, towards the

end, it just felt like another carbon copy Marvel franchise.” Ben Gordon, a junior at HSAS, had a completely different view: “During the

first few episodes I got bored because they were stretching out the sitcom theme a bit too far, but once you pass those episodes, if you know about the Marvel Universe, it got very good and was action-packed.”

Daniel Giraldo, a senior at HSAS, also weighed in, saying, “I think the pacing was all off. There wasn’t enough conflict initiation or resolution in each episode, which made it feel like one long movie. That’s something Marvel does well, but it doesn’t work when they only release one episode a week.”

HSAS Confessions Accounts Take the Place of In-Person Interaction

Audrey Gordon, Grade 12, Journalism Student

The social aspect of high school may be one of the most important. Students learn to cooperate with peers and form lifelong friendships. But what happens when in-person interaction is stripped from students and they are forced to remain isolated in their homes? Do students take sufficient advantage of the internet and carve out spaces for interaction?

At the High School of American Studies, students have taken to the internet to interact with their peers. Some of these spaces are the various HSAS Confessions pages on Instagram. The upperclassmen of HSAS have created a space where students can send “tells,” or anonymous tidbits about gossip, political opinions, their classes, or their feelings.

The seniors have had three different confessions pages over the course of the past year. The first, titled *ogseniorconfessions*, failed as a confessions page and evolved into a matchmaking platform, which then also failed.

George Koral, a senior, said, “We’ve all known each other for four years, it’s too late for blind dates.”

The second senior page was uncensored. Every “tell” that was sent in was posted, including personal attacks and “jokes” that targeted and offended certain racial minority groups. The page was shut down by the admin when a “tell” claimed that they had reported the account to Mr. Weiss and the admin would face disciplinary action.

Mrs. Amanda Bollati, a teacher and former student at HSAS, said that the school had MySpace and Facebook during her matriculation and does not think it is the school’s place to censor social media. “I understand that social media is a place where kids express themselves. As long as it is not to the detriment of one’s

It was not all bad for Giraldo, though. “I thought the casting of some characters was very creative,” he said. “Jimmy Woo is a god. I thought the premise of a perfect television world and Wanda’s powers was really interesting, and I enjoyed the fake-commercials that would play during the show.”

Overall, the school-wide reaction was certainly mixed. Some thought the show was the best piece of media Marvel has ever produced, while others viewed it as an unoriginal product of the Disney machine. Nevertheless, one thing is for sure, many students at HSAS care about the show,

whatever their opinion may be.

Ultimately, to understand the hype, one must experience WandaVision for themselves. Only time will tell if Marvel’s next show, “Falcon and the Winter Soldier,” which released its first episode on March 19, will meet the same standard.

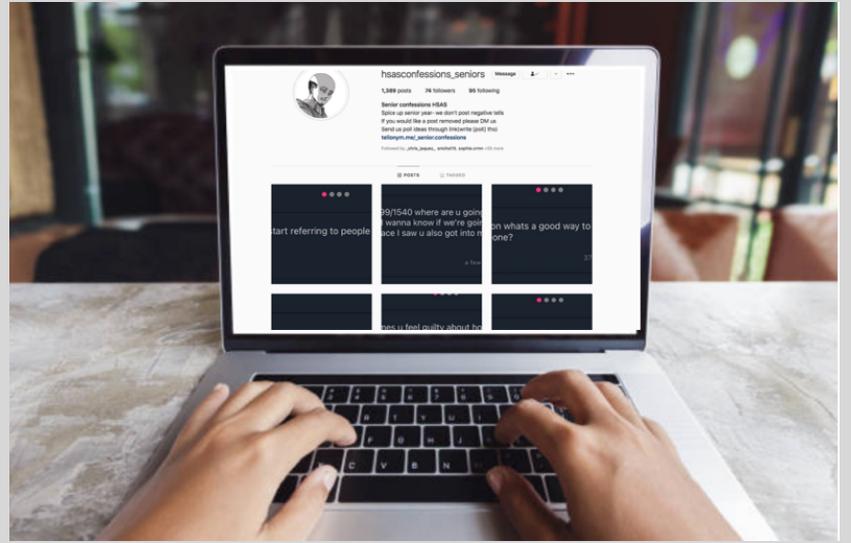


Image by Audrey Gordon, Grade 12

HSAS students created Instagram confession pages to interact with their peers online.

classmates or the school community, I don’t think the school would need to intervene,” she said.

The current senior confessions page is alive and well, posting multiple times a day and censoring material that they deem offensive or derogatory.

Their Instagram bio, in contrast with the defunct page, reads “we don’t post negative tells.” The anonymous admin, a senior, said, “I feel like it gives a platform for seniors to communicate especially in a time where people can’t really see their friends as much. Anyone is welcomed to share their thoughts and it’s generally a positive environment here.”

While the senior page is thriving, it seems like not everyone has a positive impression of confession pages.

Becca Boroda, a junior, said of the juniors’ confession page, “I hate the confessions page because it exposes people’s secrets. People treat it like a journal but it’s not a journal because you’re posting something for 100 other people to see and there are repercussions for that.”

Sasha Hamel, a freshman, agreed with Boroda’s statement. “I feel like the confession pages can get [kind of] toxic,” she said. Sasha admits that her point of view is purely based on what she has seen at other schools, not first-hand. The freshmen do not have a confessions page, and most of them have never met each other in person.

For underclassmen who have not known each other for as long, it can be isolating to not have a platform for them to communicate, anonymous or not.

Sophomore Grade Representative Manha Basher confessed, “I don’t really have contact with everyone in the grade.”

Ginny and Georgia: New Show, Bad Show

Lena Dibiasio, Grade 10, Staff Writer / Opinion Piece & Spoiler Alerts

If you liked *Gilmore Girls*, then you won't be able to stop watching *Ginny and Georgia*! At least, that's what the creators of the new Netflix show want you to think, and it couldn't be further from the truth.

Ginny and Georgia follows the lives of a mother and daughter duo who move to a new town after the death of Georgia's husband. Ginny, played by Antonia Gentry, is a young biracial girl who navigates the struggles of teenhood, new friends, and what it means to be mixed. Georgia, played by Brienne Howey, embodies the stereotypical teen mom trope, in which she acts like more of a sister figure to Ginny than a mother. Both have vastly different storylines that do not intermingle very much, quickly creating a confusing plot.

Though there are some similarities between Ginny and Georgia's relationship and the one between Lorelai and Rory, everything changes when the show reveals that Georgia is a murderer. Georgia murdered both of her husbands, whom she only married for their money and social status. One minute, you are watching Ginny try to acclimate to a new school, and the next minute, you're watching a flashback where Georgia is running an illegal gambling ring by herself at the age of 16. The plotline is scattered, with a new love interest for Georgia almost every episode and a rushed affair between Ginny and her next-door neighbor.

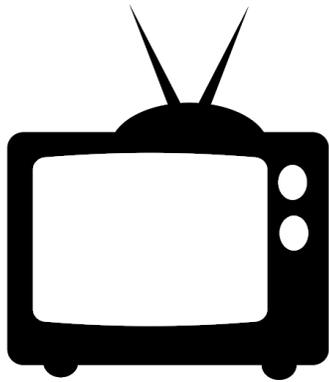
Questionable conversations also transpire between Ginny and her half Taiwanese, half white boyfriend Hunter. Ginny and Hunter label one discussion the "Oppression Olympics," in which they throw a series of racial stereotypes at one another. Each targeted the other's mixed identity as an

invalidation of their heritage. When you take into consideration that mixed people often feel alienated by the non-white aspect of their identities, this conversation came off as very tone-deaf and uncomfortable.

Though this was only one controversial dialogue between the teens of *Ginny and Georgia*, there were several other areas of teen communication that fell flat to actual teenage watchers. The way young people

interact in real life, as well as online, was portrayed poorly by the millennial scriptwriters. The instances where Hunter dabs or where one of Ginny's friends says "Sksks and I oop!" in a conversation speaks to the adult world's misunderstanding of adolescent interactions. It's rare to find any piece of media that can truly portray a realistic conversation between teenagers, and *Ginny and Georgia* painfully proved that point.

In attempts to be a multifaceted show that stays current and addresses important issues, *Ginny and Georgia* fails to meet these objectives. The concept and idea of the show are well-intentioned, but watching it feels like watching a train wreck—albeit an entertaining one.



The new Netflix show *Ginny and Georgia* features a confusing storyline and a flawed portrayal of today's high school students.

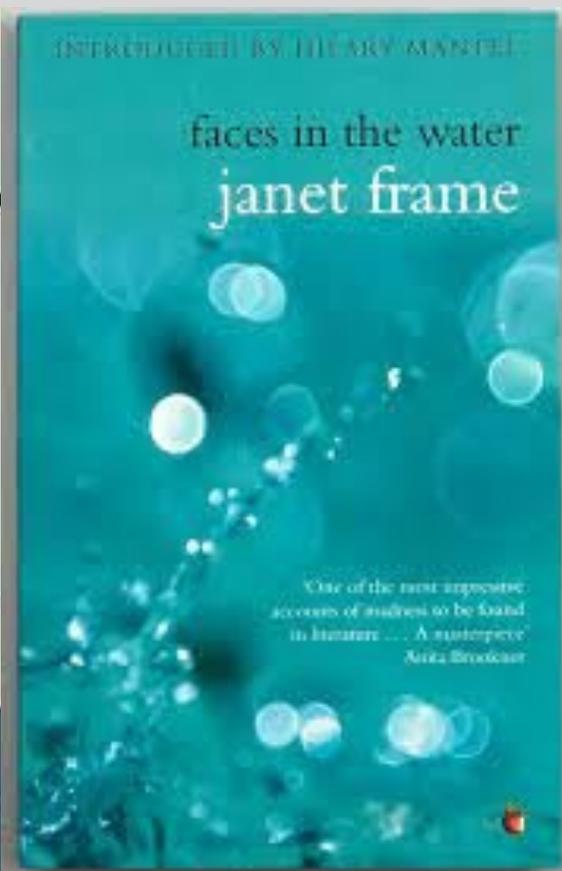
Mr. Weiss's Bookshelf

Alessandro Weiss

Lockdown was boring. What to do? Well, many of you know that I spent hours rearranging my bookshelves by color. It's pretty; you should try! It also filled up a lot of time.

In each edition of *Common Sense*, I will pick a color and tell you about a couple of the books I have enjoyed reading over the years.

We will start with the blue shelf, on which can be found two extraordinary titles: *Every Man Dies Alone*, by Hans Fallada, and *Faces in the Water*, by Janet Frame.



Fallada's novel (light blue) is based on the true story of Otto and Elise Hempel, a working-class couple that lived in Berlin during World War II. The Hempels wrote anti-Nazi messages on postcards, which they then scattered around the city. Is an act of rebellion any less courageous because it is small? Can something that is seemingly insignificant still have profound meaning? This book explores a quiet kind of bravery and the price that must be paid for standing by one's convictions.

Frame's *Faces in the Water* (peacock blue) is a semi-autobiographical novel that traces how she found her voice as a writer. Frame, who died in 2004, is probably New Zealand's best-known author. Throughout her youth, she was especially awkward and shy; she was subsequently misdiagnosed as a schizophrenic, institutionalized, and scheduled for a lobotomy. One day before the surgery, it was canceled because Frame's first book was published to glowing reviews. Her life story is depicted in Jane Campion's film, *An Angel at My Table*. We live during a time of loud, angry voices. These two works explore the impact that "quieter" people can have on others.

Happy reading! What color will I pick next?

Regards,
Mr. Weiss

HSAS Students Showcase Talent in Virtual Talent Show

Ari Khavin, Grade 11, Journalism Student

Every year, High School of American Studies students gather at Lehman College’s Lovinger Theatre to celebrate the talented student body and the beginning of winter break. But this year, the talent show was moved to a virtual platform for the first time ever.

The program featured many acts, from musical performances to cooking tutorials, but also lacked some talent show staples, like the senior-written “thank you notes” that crack jokes about teachers and the school wide singalong that typically concludes the event.

Despite this, HSAS was still able to indulge in the talents of its student body.

“I think it was really fun and interesting to see my classmates showcase their talents in the talent show,” said Kisna Pande, a freshman.

Art teacher Elizabeth DeBethune also enjoyed discovering more about the HSAS student body. “I am always astonished when I attend the Talent Show and find out who has been studying classical piano for 12 years, who has a voice that can reach the stars, and who has unbelievable dance moves,” she said.

Not only was the talent show an opportunity for HSAS to discover its students’ talents, but it was a way for the school to come together as a community.

Dahlia Shapiro, a sophomore, was pleased that the community-building aspect of the talent show remained strong this year. “It was really nice that there was a Zoom held with the whole school, especially because there had been no all-school events this year

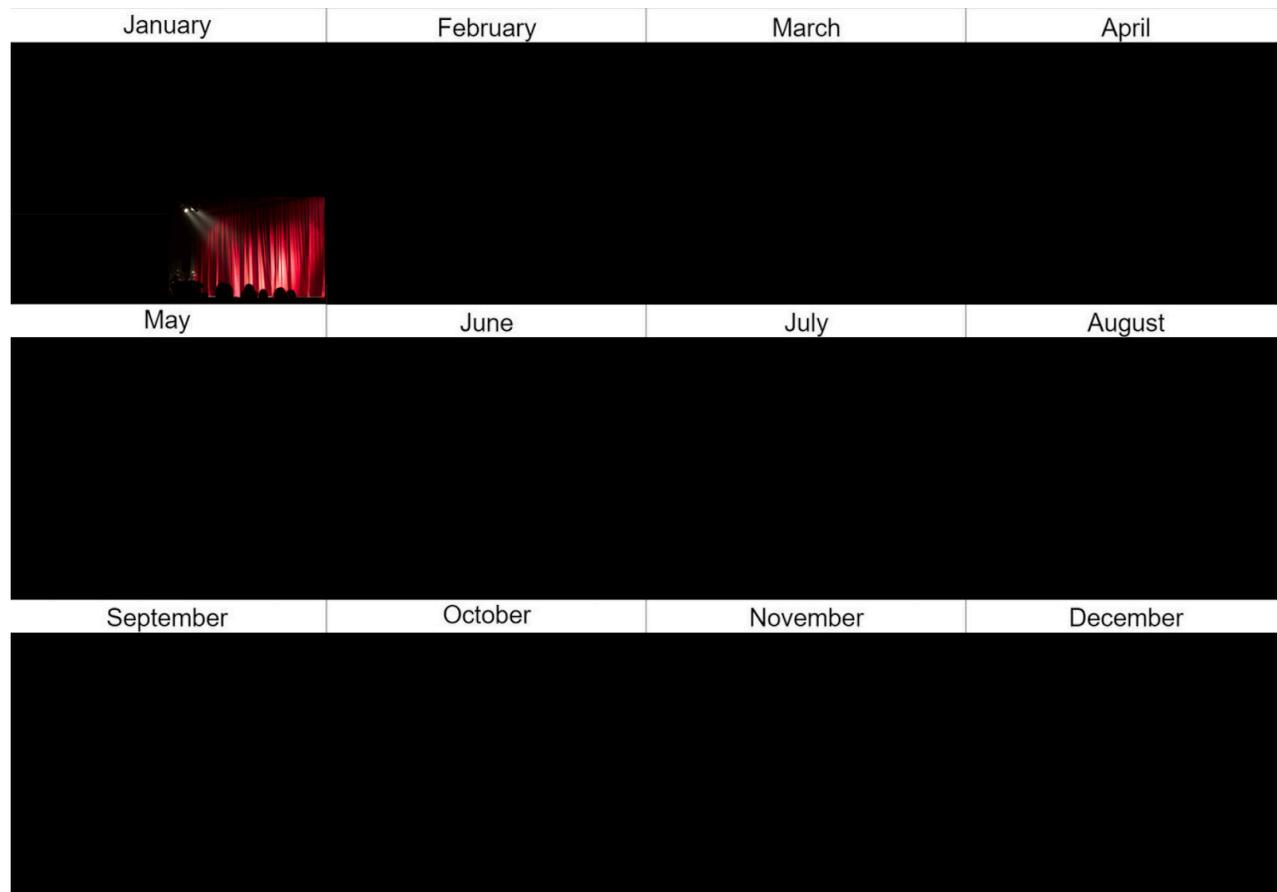


Image by Ari Khavin, Grade 11

Unfortunately, students are only given the opportunity to showcase their talents once throughout the school year.

and even more so, no all school interaction at all,” she said. “It made our community seem more real.”

Shapiro was content with the talent show, but she also felt even more could have been done to enhance the sense of community: “I wish it would have been more interactive. For example, more audience participation, especially by having the MCs talk to the audience and interact with them.”

Additionally, the talent show did not have as many participants this year, both in viewership and performance. “I actually didn’t watch the talent show this year. I just wasn’t that interested in it because none of my close friends participated in it,” said Miranda Zanoni, a senior.

Olivia Kahn, a junior, didn’t watch the talent show for the same reason as Zanoni. “I didn’t know of anyone who was going to be in it,” she said.

The talent show ran just over an hour this year, whereas it was two hours long in previous years. Students like Shapiro chose not to submit an act, and Ms.

DeBethune commented that “we can only know what each person chooses to share

through Zoom.”

Unfortunately, the talent show is the only opportunity for students to share their talents with all of HSAS. Subsequently, many are unable to share their talents due to unforeseen circumstances or unpreparedness at the time leading up to the talent show.

“I’ve played the piano for 10 years, but I did not submit it in the talent show because I have not practiced in a while and did not have a piece prepared,” said Shapiro.

Both Shapiro and Ms. DeBethune believe there should be more opportunities for HSAS students to share their talents. “I’d love to see HSAS expand visual arts opportunities, and real drama, music, and theater programs,” said Ms. deBethune. “The how and why of it is the hard part because we are a very small school with a very specific mission.”

While there are certainly challenges to implementing more of such opportunities at HSAS, Shapiro proposed “a monthly ‘Talent Spotlight’

email to which students can submit their talents to be sent out to the school.” Ideas like this could certainly be implemented by HSAS, but for now, the annual talent show remains the only opportunity for students to showcase their talents to the entire school.

Students and teachers continue to look forward to the early winter when they get to learn of the many talents the student body has to share.



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HSAS in the Kitchen: Cooking During Quarantine

Noa Yolkut, Grade 10,
Entertainment/Features Editor

As America transitioned into a “pandemic lifestyle” last March, many people began to learn a skill they never had time for before: cooking. Some stuck with “trending” foods, like whipped coffee, sourdough bread, or homemade seitan. Others remained in the kitchen over the last year, branching out to find the recipes they love to make and love to eat. Several students at the High School of American Studies spent the bulk of their quarantine cooking and baking.

Some students spent time in the kitchen before last March, like Victoria Lee, a senior at HSAS. “I’ve always liked baking, and I now had a lot more time on my hands to try recipes I usually wouldn’t be able to,” she said. Lee believes her baked goods have gotten much better since quarantine began.

Many people turned to cooking early on in the pandemic as a means to relieve stress. Following a recipe requires lots of focus, which can help take the mind off of looming uncertainties. Some psychologists even found that baking combats anxiety and depression. For Nora Kohnhorst, a senior, baking sourdough bread “became meditative and relaxing” as she continued to practice, learn, and improve.

Now that schoolwork can be assigned at any time of the day, anticipating and finishing tasks can be worrisome and difficult. Katia Chapin, a junior, found that cooking helps her deal with stress. “I tend to feel calmer when I’m cooking because cooking forces me to be away from school things completely for at least an hour,” she said. Although watching Netflix and hanging out with friends are good ways to de-stress, cooking and baking require a different level of concentration and serve as a welcome distraction from homework.

Cooking traditional dishes has helped several students feel more connected

to their culture during the last few months. With more breaks in their days, teenagers can try and make their own modern spins on the recipes their grandmothers perfected decades ago. “Challah is pretty important in Jewish culture,” said Agatha German, a sophomore of Ashkenazi Jewish and Russian descent. “I haven’t been able to see my grandma in over a year since she lives in Israel, so baking these is my way of getting closer with her.”

Additionally, German realized that traditional baking does not necessarily need a purpose. “I’ve also baked some Russian desserts with my mom like *sharlotka*. It’s almost like a vanilla cake with apples in it, and we’ve been making it together for almost seven years. It doesn’t represent anything in Russian culture, it’s just fun to make.”

In uncertain times, making foods we know and love adds some consistency to the unknown. “I’m Ukrainian, and Ukrainians go all out for Christmas Eve dinner and make twelve courses, all with symbols dating back to when they were pagans,” said Chapin, who has, like many, had to adapt her family traditions to fit the pandemic lifestyle. “Usually, we visit family for the holidays, and it’s pretty easy to get all twelve courses [done] with many pairs of hands, but this year we obviously didn’t travel, so I made the dishes with my sister and my parents. It was a little chaotic because we each made three courses in two days with limited stove, fridge, and counter space, but we pulled off all twelve, and it was really grounding to eat the Christmas-specific dishes on Christmas as if nothing was wrong, after a year of inconsistency.”

HSAS students have also spent time learning and perfecting new recipes. Lee has baked [danish rings](#) on the 21st of each month since July, German creates challah and pasta from scratch, Chapin has cooked [North African meatballs](#), and Kohnhorst now makes 25 sourdough loaves a week to sell to friends and family.

Although these wonderful chefs have

Nora Kohnhorst’s Sourdough Recipe

Nora Kohnhorst, a senior at HSAS, shares her recipe for sourdough bread. Kohnhorst has been baking up a storm since the pandemic began, even starting a bread-baking business by the name of Nora’s Bread. You can buy some bread by direct messaging her Instagram account, [@nora_bread](#), or you can make some bread of your own by following the recipe below.

STEP 1:
350g warm water
400g bread flour
100g whole grain flour (any type—rye, einkorn, spelt, etc.)

Combine these ingredients in a large bowl until a shaggy mass has formed and there are no large flour pockets. Let sit for at least one hour (I usually do 2 hours)

STEP 2:
After the rest period, incorporate 100g ripe sourdough starter into the mixture from Step One. Allow this to sit for 20 minutes.

STEP 3:
Add 14g salt and 25g warm water to the bowl. Mix these in by “scrunching” them into the dough, then stretching the dough so that the salt is spread throughout. It’s fine if the water is not fully absorbed yet. It will soak into the dough over the course of the next few steps.

STEP 4:
This is now the beginning of your dough’s “bulk fermentation”. I do a 4-hour bulk fermentation with a stretch and fold every 30 minutes. After you have mixed the salt and water into the dough, you can let it sit for 30 minutes, then come back and do a “stretch and fold”. Repeat this every 30 minutes for 4 hours.

Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel or plastic wrap between folds.

Stretching and folding consists of pulling the edges of the dough away from the bowl and towards the center, like this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYzxulQY1Gc>

STEP 5:
After the 4 hours are up, your dough should feel more airy and hydrated. Flip the bowl over and allow the dough to fall out onto a smooth, clean surface. You should now “pre-shape” it. Pre-shaping is the process of building up tension before the dough is shaped for the final time. This is done by pulling the dough in towards yourself several times, like this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYzxulQY1Gc>



Nora’s sourdough bread has been the talk of the school.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IbCylsGNL0

Let this rest for 20 minutes, covered by a kitchen towel or overturned bowl.

STEP 6:
Now it’s time to shape the dough for the last time. This is fairly similar to the last step, but you should make sure the surface of the dough is tighter than before. This is a good guide, although I would shape it slightly tighter than he does: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWAORAAAsBHg>

Let the dough sit for about a minute with the seam facing down, then flip it into a clean bowl lined with a floured kitchen towel. The smooth side of the dough should be facing down, and the wet side should be facing up. Use the ends of the kitchen towel to cover the dough so it is not exposed to air, and let this sit for 3 hours at room temperature. This is the “proofing” part of the process.

STEP 7:
After the 3 hours are done, place the bowl of dough into a refrigerator. Place a dutch oven into the oven (do not put the dutch oven in with its lid on)

Heat the oven to 500°F for 45 minutes. When this is up, take the dough out of the fridge and flip it onto a piece of parchment paper. The smooth side should still be covered by the towel, which you can then gently peel off.

STEP 8:
Score the bread using a serrated knife or clean razor blade. Take the dutch oven out, and place the parchment with the dough into the dutch oven. I like to take an ice cube and drop it in between the edge of the dutch oven and the parchment paper to create steam.

Put the lid of the dutch oven on, and place it back into the hot oven for 20 minutes.

STEP 9:
After the 20 minutes are up, take the lid off of the dutch oven and bake for 7 minutes.

After those 7 minutes, gently lift the loaf out of the dutch oven and place it into the oven by itself for 5 minutes. This should allow it to get a deep brown color all over, but if you think it needs more time, leave it in until you are satisfied with the color.

STEP 10:
Allow the bread to cool for at least an hour, but preferably overnight. Then enjoy!!!

adopted this quarantine ‘fad’ as their own, other teens, and people of all ages across America, still consider themselves ‘bad cooks.’ But often, people who claim to be ‘bad cooks’ really just do not know how to begin. “Cooking takes patience and is all about trial and error,” said German. “My best piece of advice would be to stick to the recipe exactly and not

substitute ingredients until you’ve mastered the recipe as it was written. One of the easiest and most delicious dishes is [baked sweet potato fries with garlic and herbs!](#)”

Chapin noted that “after a while, you’ll realize how much wiggle room you have in cooking if you know very generally how it works.” For her, chili is a quick, easy, and delicious dish to make.

Looking through a beginner’s cookbook can be a great way to find recipes for people who prefer to have directions on paper, but the internet’s infinite cookbook has recipes for millions of dishes. Still, if complicated recipes are not your thing, Lee says, “learn how to make eggs or something.”

Opinion

Opinion: Modern Schools' Unhealthy Obsession with STEM Programs

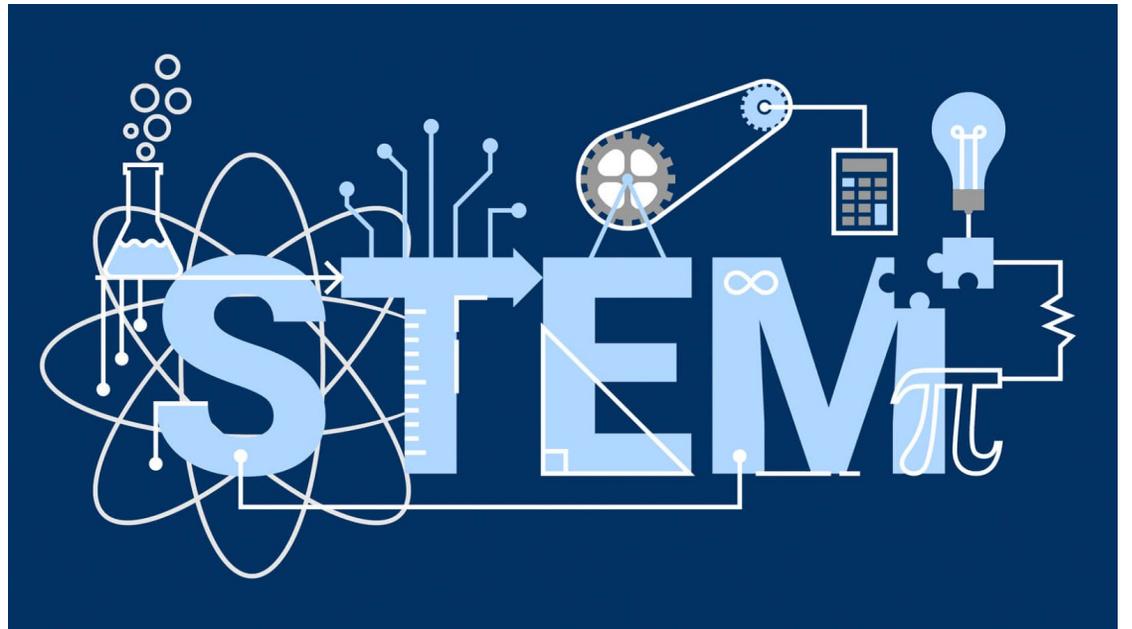
Fiona Shuldiner and Sienna Lipton, Grade 10, Staff Writers

The term STEM (an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) was first coined at the National Science Foundation in the early 2000s, but it has since snowballed into a global discussion, resulting in massive changes to the education system. As the name implies, the majority of the High School of American Studies' student body is passionate about the humanities, which is reflected in the curriculum. However, high schools that focus on history—or anything besides STEM—are rare. The majority of high school options in New York City are STEM-focused, with HSAS being just one of two out of eight specialized high schools that do not focus on science, technology, engineering, or math. This is a growing pattern across the United States. But does the rise in STEM education come at the

expense of other important fields?

STEM is certainly a growing field in both importance and numbers. There were 1.1 million STEM workers in 1960, and there are nearly 9 million today. More and more jobs are incorporating STEM, and school curriculums are adjusting to a changing world. In a 2011 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama compared the rise in STEM education to the Sputnik movement of the 1950s: just like it did with the space race with Russia, the United States has to ramp up STEM education “to stay competitive with other nations, spur economic growth, preserve national security, and propel ingenuity.”

There is no question that STEM education is crucial in today's society. However, it is far from all that is necessary for one's education. STEM jobs make up less than 20 percent of the American workforce. Even in jobs that require STEM education, other skills such as leadership, communication, and teamwork are necessary in conjunction with knowledge from math or science courses.



Many schools in the current day and age are heavily STEM-focused.

American students have also been scoring alarmingly low on tests that cover subjects other than STEM. According to Forbes, only a quarter of students are currently testing at a level deemed proficient in history and geography. Even more worrisome are recent surveys that have been done on the broader American public. Politech, a group of politically involved students at Texas Tech University, conducted spontaneous on-campus quizzes on their fellow students. When asked about who won the American Civil War, some students

answered, “the South” and “Confederates.”

Furthermore, simple civics questions were asked in a 2017 survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. The results were highly illustrative of an American population with subpar knowledge of their government. Only 26 percent of the 1,013 Americans surveyed could name the three branches of government, and 37 percent could not name even one of the rights protected under the First Amendment.

There is clearly a large disparity between the

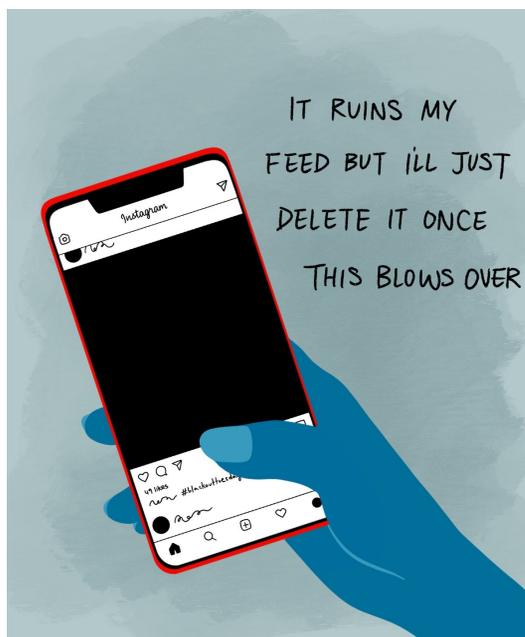
subjects taught in American schools. STEM is being emphasized in schools due to its growing necessity in many careers. Government endorsed STEM programs can be found in nearly every school. Some schools are even entirely dedicated to these subjects. However, it has come at the expense of the humanities, the arts, and other important classes. Above all, the overwhelming increase in STEM education funding has come at the expense of students, who lack basic knowledge of other important subjects.

Opinion: Social Media Slacktivism

Fiona O'Reilly, Grade 11, Staff Writer

Instagram stories nowadays are filled with colorful infographics about trending social justice issues. Social media has paved a way for young people to get involved in politics and spread awareness about important issues. But while social media platforms have undoubtedly helped spread the word about important movements, the rise of activism on social media has its downfalls: reposting Instagram graphics has become a method of false activism. People repost aesthetic posts about racism to show “support” for a cause, while really trivializing the movement that they claim to endorse.

Nothing epitomizes the idea of performative



People on social media post black squares on BlackoutTuesday as a show of performative activism.

activism more than the BlackoutTuesday movement in which people posted black squares to Instagram with the hashtag ‘BlackLivesMatter’ to spread awareness. Ultimately, this trend was more harmful than helpful. 14.6 million black squares

flooded the feed of this hashtag, overshadowing useful information about protests and petitions. In reality, BlackoutTuesday was a social trend used by many to prove their virtue to their Instagram followers.

The problem with social media activism is that people feel like they are contributing something beneficial by only reposting or using a hashtag. It allows people to have an easy way to feel good about themselves without contributing something of real substance, like donations or writing letters to representatives. In a study published in the Journal of Consumer Research, it was found that people who engaged in public activism donated less than people who privately showed support, whereas those who engaged in private support were 15 percent more likely to donate.

When a movement is trending, companies will hop on the bandwagon to sell more products. So it follows that many companies would issue statements supporting the Black Lives Matter movement without any

tangible activism behind them. When the National Football League released a statement in support of Black Lives Matter, many people on social media called them out for being insincere. Colin Kaepernick still has not been signed by any NFL team since 2016, when he peacefully protested police brutality by taking a knee during the national anthem. Rather than issuing unhelpful statements condemning racism, companies should take real action like changing their unjust policies.

The unfortunate side-effect of social media activism is the commercialization and perversion of social justice movements. Decorative Instagram posts and official statements simply serve to attract validation, rather than furthering an important cause.

Opinion: The Primary/Caucus System Should Be Abolished

Ben Gordon, Grade 11, Staff Writer

It is well known that before presidential elections, each party uses state primaries and caucuses to decide who will be nominated for president. While in an ideal world, this system works, the vast majority of ordinary people are not capable of selecting whom their party nominates for president. Instead, members of Congress should elect presidential candidates.

The primary/caucus system does not select the best possible president. Instead, it rewards the candidate who runs the best campaign. There have been many instances in which the best or most qualified candidate does not get nominated. Rather, their more charismatic and enthusiastic counterpart is selected by the voters.

However, a member of Congress equipped with a thorough knowledge of politics would make their selection based on whom they think would be the best president, not whom they find the most compelling and inspiring.

Furthermore, the vast majority of Americans do not work in intellectual fields, nor do they sit and read legal, economic, philosophical, and political theory to educate themselves. On the other hand, members of Congress dedicate their entire lives to politics, familiarizing themselves with the ins-and-outs of America's political system.

Having members of Congress vote on their party's nominee removes

populism and radicalism from national politics. The general electorate is more easily swayed by demagogues than members of Congress, whose vast understanding of the American system gives them the ability and the know-how to shut down these ideas.

Additionally, having members of Congress vote for their party's nominee guarantees that the candidate selected will be an experienced politician. Members of Congress will recognize how valuable that experience is and would be reluctant to select a candidate without substantial experience.

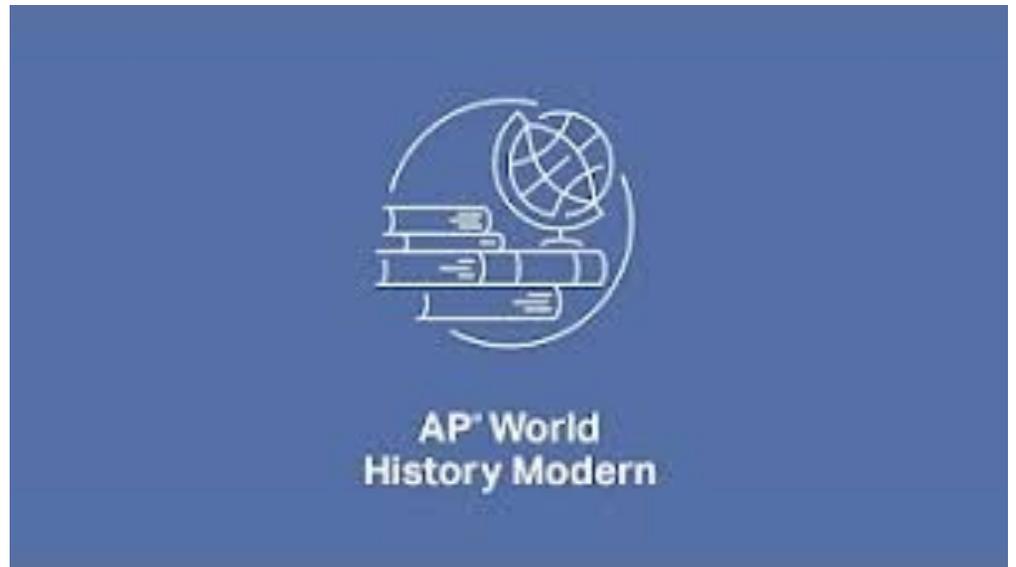
While the people should be able to choose who their president is, the major political parties of the United States need to ask themselves if giving the people too much power in choosing their nominee for president is detrimental to the party, and more importantly, to America.

It would be unfair to assume that ordinary people know nothing about politics, and it should be recognized that the vast majority of people do know if they are a Republican, Democrat, or Independent. Unfortunately, the public has more difficulty deciphering the ideological differences between candidates in a primary and end up voting for the most charismatic candidate rather than the candidate who shares their views.

The ugly truth about the US primary/caucus systems is that most ordinary people do not possess adequate knowledge to select their party nominee for president. If America wants to prosper, it needs good leaders. The surefire way to ensure this is to have Democratic and Republican members of Congress select their party nominees.



The primary/caucus system should be abolished in favor of members of Congress voting for their party's nominee.



The curriculum for AP World History Modern has a heavy emphasis on European history and does not cover other events or groups of people with as much depth.

Opinion: Is There Diversity in the AP World History Curriculum?

Kara Anaya, Grade 10, Staff Writer

Every student at the High School of American Studies takes an AP World History course during their freshman and sophomore years. The history of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean is studied, but the majority of the course is focused on Europe. Though it may seem as if the curriculum covers all regions of the world, too many events and groups of people are omitted.

The first months of the curriculum, during which students learn about Asian, Middle Eastern, and African empires, are arguably the most diverse. However, these units are cursory; customs and cultures are barely discussed. Instead, students learn about the major leaders, what they did, and the interactions these countries had while trading with one another. It is a brief synopsis of the places that existed before Europeans began to dominate the world.

A large emphasis at the beginning of the course is on the trade between Eurasian and African powers. When discussing the Silk Road and the Swahili Coast, for example, teachers did not explain in detail the intricacies of the cultures, with students mainly learning about the natural resources available for trade. Students also learned about

different religions but focused primarily on Christianity, and not as much on the importance of animism or other smaller religions.

Once the Europeans were brought into the picture, the regions containing people of color were not covered as much in the curriculum. Lessons presented these regions only in their relation to Europe.

Ms. Peterson, a freshman global history and AP World History teacher at HSAS, believes the issue to be a complicated one because the people who most affected history during the time period are white: "Absolutely the AP Modern curriculum is very eurocentric because if you want to look at who was shaping/making history in the time period, it was predominantly Europeans – think Age of Exploration, slave trade, scientific revolution, industrialization and imperialism, etc."

On the College Board website, Unit 6, Lesson 3, is titled "Indigenous Responses to State Expansion from 1750 to 1900." This lesson is the first time that the name "indigenous" is included in the title of a lesson. Even so, the focus of the lesson was how the indigenous people rebelled against Europeans who were expanding into their territory. One example discussed was the Xhosa cattle-killing movement, an act of rebellion against British settlers in South Africa. Another incident was the Túpac Amaru Rebellion, an uprising against the Spanish powers in Peru. These were all reactions, as opposed to the acts of people

who are protagonists themselves.

While there is a separate class for AP European History, AP World History also leans heavily towards the history of Europe. Though the written texts and the conquering nature of European nations makes their impact on the world easier to study, this does not mean that the AP World History curriculum cannot include a range of voices.

Ms. Peterson explained that she also believes there is room for improvement amongst teachers and the College Board for better educating students on non-Europeans. "What the College Board and we, as AP World teachers, could do better is to pull in more of the voices of non-Europeans," she said. "The biggest obstacle we have to expanding the curriculum in AP World is time. The class is a survey course, so we don't have much time for deep dives on much of anything."

Ms. Peterson continued by explaining how she was working towards enhancing her curriculum: "This summer, for example, I took a week-long course on modern Middle Eastern politics and culture with a mind to expanding and revising my curriculum so that it better represents those voices and perspectives."

In 2020, when people are speaking up about the necessity to acknowledge the value of every race, there need to be changes to the AP World History curriculum so that it lives up to its name and educates students on the history of the *entire* world.

Erasure, Ignorance, and the Model Minority Myth

By Rena Chen, Grade 11

This is the edited transcript of the speech delivered by Rena Chen on behalf of the Asian Mythbusters Project at the Committee for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion's teach-in session on April 15, 2021.

Before we begin, it is important to understand that racism against Asians is fundamentally different from racism against other people of color. The root of racism against Asians, whether it be violent attacks or unintentional slander, stems from erasure and ignorance.

As our name, the Asian Mythbusters Project, suggests, we are dedicated to busting myths regarding AAPI. Many of you may be familiar with the most obvious one: the model minority myth. Our lovely coordinator here has even suggested that we speak about this. And we have obliged.

It goes like this: Asians are privileged. Asians don't face racism. Asians are wealthy. Asians are smart.

Let's tackle this one by one.

One, Asians don't face racism. Ladies and gentlemen, I wouldn't be here to speak to you today if we didn't face racism. I will go into this later on in the presentation.

Two, Asians are wealthy. Think "Crazy Rich Asians". The thing is, the numbers say otherwise. In fact, 12.3% of Asian Americans live below the federal poverty level. In 2014, Asian Americans represented 17.9% of people living in poverty in New York City and had the highest poverty rate of any racial or ethnic group at a whopping 29%. To make things worse, Asian Americans are often underrepresented in data and surveys. According to the Pew Research Center, there is a high margin of error when sampling Asian Americans given their small population and wide diversity in smaller samples. Even in large surveys, limited English proficiency and high linguistic and ethnic diversity make it difficult to have a representative sample of Asian Americans.

Three, all Asians are smart. You know the stereotype. Chinese kids are human calculators. Hardy har

har. This is not true. Not only is it false, but it is harmful. When society places such a high expectation on you, it hurts to fall short. I have some Asian friends who aren't geniuses, who aren't good at math. Sometimes they feel ashamed or even a little useless. This is like the Asian version of toxic masculinity.

It seems like my work here is done. We've done the mythbusting, so it's time to go home. No. It would be irresponsible of me to leave it like this. Let me explain how the model minority myth is harmful.

If you take it at face value, this is a very positive image. Up until recently, I was even proud of it. Why, then, is it a problem?

The problem is exactly this: People think that Asians have everything. People think that Asians don't have any problems, not to mention racism. This mindset has resulted in erasure and ignorance.

The sad reality is that Asian Americans simply get ignored. The history of racism that we have faced in the US has been simplified to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Japanese internment camps. Most Americans are not aggressive racists but silent bystanders. Anyone who has ever been to an anti-bullying workshop knows that bystanding is harmful. We can attribute the weakness of the response to racism against AAPI to this bystander mentality.

This is because numbers are power. As we have seen in any civil rights or social justice movement, such as the recent BLM movement this summer, you need widespread support and activism to get your movement on the map and to make progress. When most activists for AAPI are Asian, and we don't have a strong non-Asian ally base, there is not much we can do.

Some of you may call me a pessimist. While it is true that we have had some successful movements, you cannot deny that we have been largely ignored by others until recently. I'd say that the crisis hasn't reached mainstream media until the Atlanta shootings. It is no coincidence that this teach-in was scheduled now, not several months earlier. The fact of the matter is that every successful civil rights movement needs strong support and large publicity. We do not have this. This is what we call erasure.

Furthermore, the gross simplification of one of the most diverse racial groups in

America has resulted in widespread ignorance. When you remember that the model minority myth itself is false, the situation gets even worse.

However, the model minority myth is not the only cause of ignorance. I have talked a lot about the positive perception of Asian Americans, but it is time for me to address the flip side.

I'm sure we've all seen racist caricatures or cartoons of Asian people. The "Corona Ching Chan does a lil dance" video from the early pandemic still sits fresh in my mind. This translates into actions. The Japanese internment camps. The Chinese Massacre of 1871. The 3,800 Asian hate incidents just last year.

Before I break this down for you, know this: ignorance causes hate. Think of irrational xenophobia like the Red Scare. Let's examine each of these examples.

I first presented the Japanese internment camps. As most HSAS students know, the American government imprisoned Japanese Americans in these internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor under the premise that all Japanese Americans were loyal to the Japanese and were therefore prone to treason and espionage. This is ignorant. These people were true Americans—American citizens, even. Some had never even been to Japan before. This ties into another big assumption that all Asians are the same, but that's a whole other story that I won't go into today.

Then, I mentioned the Chinese Massacre of 1871. 18 Chinese people were killed in Los Angeles in a riot, and none of the murderers were convicted of any crime. What caused these murders? Ignorance.

In 1869, "The Los Angeles News" and "The Los Angeles Star" started publishing editorials against Chinese immigration that described Chinese people as "inferior and immoral". These articles did not cause Asian hate, but they reflected the public attitude towards the Chinese. Do these ideas sound familiar?

Some of you may be thinking of Trump's stance on immigration. "These people are taking our jobs." "They're dangerous." "They're criminals." "They're un-American." Every single one of these statements is false and ignorant. Such xenophobia is irrational and rooted in little to no factual evidence. Ignorance strikes again.

Finally, I gave you this shocking statistic: there have

been 3,800 Asian hate incidents just last year. This huge spike in Asian hate crimes is in response to COVID-19. As logical racists have concluded, the virus originated from China, so naturally it is every Asian Americans' fault that we are in this mess. This is ignorant. We are not responsible for the Coronavirus. We did not bring it to the US. We are not vectors of the disease. We do not deserve this kind of punishment.

Now, some of you may be thinking, "Aren't we here to talk about the model minority myth?" You're right. Allow me to explain how such a seemingly positive perception of Asians has resulted in this extreme hate.

As I've explained earlier, the model minority myth leads to erasure. As a result, these crimes don't receive much attention from the media. When these crimes are not condemned, when these crimes go unreported, the criminals are emboldened. They don't face the consequences. Who cares if I punch an Asian? Again, it's the same issue of bystanding.

Listen closely: bystanding is endorsing. Do not be a bystander to Asian hate. Do not endorse Asian hate. It's that simple.

The Atlanta shootings brought this issue to national attention, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. Even now, I could argue that the attention is waning. If we don't do anything, we are going to be forgotten again until the next great tragedy.

It is time to make change. We cannot stop fighting. We cannot stop forcing people to see the crimes that have been committed against Asian Americans. Here at the Asian Mythbusters Project, one of our main series is the Anti Asian Attack Alert, or the Quad A. If any of you check out our Instagram page, you will notice a sea of red, although we are starting to mix in some new colors. These are summaries of recent Asian hate crimes. We try to post as soon as we get the news.

I am in charge of combing the news to find these articles. Now, I'll let you in on what goes on behind the scenes here at AMP. Every day, and I mean every day, I will find a news article about an Asian hate crime. Sometimes I'll find two. Sometimes I'll find three. Every. Single. Day.

I was already fairly educated on the subject before we started AMP, but this deep research shocked me. To read about hate crimes committed

against your race every single day is heartbreaking. To know that you could be the next victim, to know that your family could be the next victim, to know that your friends could be the next victims, is terrifying.

My family lives in constant fear of being attacked. We are the only Asian household in our neighborhood. We have installed extra locks on our bedroom doors. We have purchased two hiking sticks and a dagger. We are constantly on high alert when we go outside. Whenever my mom sees anyone approaching her, she starts running, just in case. My partner Olivia has had similar experiences. She told me the other day that her mother learned some self defense moves and is teaching her family how to protect themselves. This is no way to live.

What are we doing to respond to these problems? As I've said before, the foundation of anti-Asian racism is ignorance and erasure. The Asian Mythbusters Project was founded to address these two problems. As our name suggests, we bust myths. We aim to post a large mythbusting or educational post once a week to combat such ignorance. To overcome erasure, we post our Quad A series pretty much every day, given the sheer quantity of Asian hate crimes.

We are only a team of two highschoolers. Our actions alone cannot erase Asian hate. Like I said, numbers are power. We need widespread support and a strong base of Asian and non-Asian people. This is where you come in. Follow us on Instagram at [asian_mythbusters_project](#). Share our posts. Like our posts. Maybe drop a comment. I hate to sound like a YouTuber begging for subscribers, but we need your help. Anyone who is familiar with Instagram story dynamics knows that sharing informative posts is a great way to disseminate information.

Of course, we do not speak for all Asian Americans, and we are not the only outlet of education on the matter, but we are definitely trying to help. Beyond AMP, we ask you to use your own voices to help. Even if you are not Asian, your words and your actions are still invaluable. At the end of the day, will you be another silent bystander and endorse Asian hate, or will you do something to help us? That is up to you.

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