

## Emily Zhang

I joined *The Lion's Roar*— my school's in-print newspaper— in my freshman year as the result of an accident: while trying to send a digital drawing from my laptop to my phone, I unknowingly texted it to a huge group chat instead of myself, much to my chagrin. On the bright side, one of the people in the groupchat was a graphic manager for the newspaper at the time. Seeing my drawing, she privately messaged me about joining, and the rest is history.

I took on the position of graphic manager already an Adobe Photoshop artist of five or so years, and yet it's so astounding how much my art style grew in just the first few months on *The Lion's Roar*. I had previously been accustomed to drawing tightly rendered digital paintings. Given the fast-paced nature of the newspaper, however, I quickly learned that the art style I was used to was not efficient nor consistent enough to allow me to produce multiple high-quality graphics per issue. After natural experimentation with composition, render level, saturation, and even texture, I developed a cleaner style that was fitting for all types of articles. As I adopted this new style, there was one point at which I realized just how little previous experience I had with illustrating big-picture ideas through simple shapes. I still love rendering details, but had I not joined *The Lion's Roar*, I would have remained stuck in them.

Being graphics manager for the past two years has taught me so much about collaboration. On top of coordinating the artists on *The Lion's Roar* of all grade levels and experience by sending monthly surveys and assignments, I was responsible for communicating with section editors as well. The weeks leading up to the publication of our first issue was a steep learning curve for me as both a graphics manager and artist— never before I had drawn something that corroborated someone else's work. With practice, however, I learned to draw graphics that not only aptly illustrated articles, but complemented them in a way that brought out the best in both text and visual. I found that the most successful graphics were those that worked in tandem with the article to add a new level of meaning to the author's story, such as piece 2 of the portfolio. To ensure that the graphic encapsulated the article in the best way possible, graphics often went through many revisions— one time, we went through eight distinct versions of a single graphic before reaching one that we were satisfied with!

Yet, as I quickly learned, engaging with the article occurs on more than just one level. In addition to creating graphics that work with the article element-wise, it was clear that a spatially dynamic graphic was far more arresting to the eye than a rigid rectangular graphic. The rule flipped on its head when our newspaper went digital during the second half of the year and all visuals suddenly had to be rectangular, but my knowledge of creating compositionally interesting graphics still applied, as seen in piece 4.

Overall, my experience on *The Lion's Roar* has taught me an incredible amount more than just drawing. I enter my second year as graphic manager with more collaboration, design, and organization skills than I could have imagined. At the end of the day, it seems like my accidental text message turned out to be a gift in disguise.

# Generation

Young voters hope to shift the political paradigm

BY SOPHIE LEWIS



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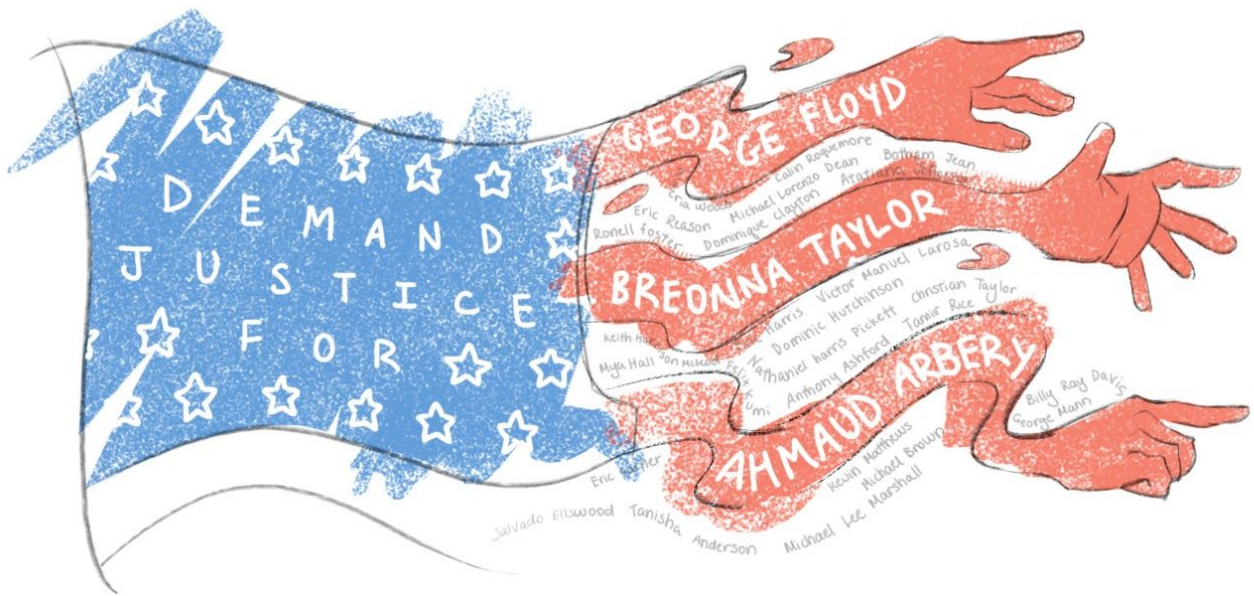
Debate team empowers and engages girls by joining with national organization. Beyond Resolved



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### Piece 1: VoterZ

This piece illustrates various kids our age accompanying an article about the political ideology of Gen Z. The figures are drawn nondescript enough that they represent not an individual, but different demographics as a whole. To make the otherwise flat color graphic more dynamic, I added geometric shadows.



## Piece 2: Black Lives Matter

Because of the interconnected nature of the Black Lives Matter movement and our nation, I opted to stylize the American flag in a way that considers our nation's tendency to push forward without making amends to the past and present. Names hold so much power; we honor victims of racism by remembering. I experimented heavily with texture and design in this graphic.

# THE FINAL STRAW

As the global climate crisis worsens, social pressure motivates students to make environmentally conscious decisions, but some may lose sight of what's at stake

By SOPHIE LEWIS

Climate change news has only become increasingly dire — July was the hottest month on record, and Greenland lost a record-breaking 12.5 billion tons of ice in August. But given that the world has yet to see the sort of large-scale changes necessary to slow the pace of climate change, what actually motivates people to care, and, more importantly, to take action?

Arizona State University professor of psychology Robert Cialdini has been at the forefront of answering this question. He and his team asked over 1,000 California households to conserve energy for one of five randomly assigned purposes: saving money, helping the environment, preserving the earth for future generations or joining their neighbors. The results were remarkably clear.

The neighborhood that understood that their energy consumption was considerably higher than that of their neighbors was the only one to significantly reduce their energy use. Cialdini proved that group norms, not personal gain or societal responsibility, inspire change.

Likewise, many students make environmentally conscious decisions in their day-to-day lives based on the example set by their peers. While group influences can lead to positive change, some students worry that trends followers may lose sight of what's at stake.

One of Newton's major green initiatives is Newton Power Choice, a program where residents can opt to switch to 100% renewable energy. As of June, 5% of the community had switched, but Green Newton president Maria Cooper said that Newton can do better, given that switching would increase monthly energy costs by just \$2.91.

Cooper has worked to frame the initiative as a competition with Boulder to increase participation. "That's to make it catch people's attention more than anything, because obviously it's a win-win all around if both communities succeed at getting as many people as we can to choose 100% renewable," she said.

Senior Elian Kopf said that he and his family are proud to support the initiative.

"I dislike the fact that my family has a sign on our lawn that says '100% green electricity,'" he said. "Being a good example is very effective for issues like being an environmentalist because people act based on how other people act."

Kopf, for his part, said that he's been inspired to start biking to school after seeing a friend hike through the winter. "That definitely makes me want to hike at least as fast as the

warm weather and maybe when it starts to get cold as well," he said.

For senior Dylan Adornitz, making environmentally harmful choices can be humiliating.

"At lunch, I was sitting with a couple of friends, and I took a plastic straw from the cafeteria. They were all just looking at me and I was like, 'Oh crap,'" he said. "Now I always keep a metal straw in my backpack."

Students also find eco-inspiration on social media. For senior Coco Lherrier, something clicked after she saw a post about the benefits of metal straws. She bought one and subsequently began searching for alternatives to the other disposable plastic items that she had grown so dependent on.

"I've seen a plastic container or a Starbucks cup. I immediately start feeling really gross, and I try to avoid those things as much as possible," she said.

For Lherrier, the largest obstacle that she had to overcome to live a plastic-free life was her parents, who found it difficult to change their habits.

"The other day my dad was like, 'Coco, can you please get some more of those reusable Ziplocks?'" she said. "I was really happy because my mom and my dad used to go through plastic bags, and now they just want me to guide them into being as environmentally considerate as they can be."

The same straws that catapulted Lherrier's move to a plastic-free life, however, could be causing more problems than they solve.

In July, President Donald Trump unveiled plastic straws with his name on them. Aside from the fact that a pack of 10 straws costs \$15, many were outraged by this new wave of merchandise — for instance, a Vanity Fair headline read: "Trump Now Selling Merch Specifically Designed to Destroy the Planet." Given a cotton MAGA t-shirt could take up to 2,700 gallons of water to be produced, according to National

Geographic, why only now are environmental activists outraged? According to some, the current trendlines of plastic straw alternatives trump a logical approach to sustainability.

Junior Nyri Hagan said that she uses her metal straw whenever possible.

"I'm at home with a mason jar or a cup. I'll use one just because it's easy," she said. "It's definitely not necessary, but since I've already used resources to make this straw, why would I not use it?"

In 2015, marine biologist Christine Figgott and her team encountered a turtle with a plastic straw stuck up its nose in Costa Rica. Her video of the straw being removed with pliers went viral. Now, Instagram is flooded with posts that encourage switching some one's metal, silicone, paper or even bamboo straw will save turtles, Lherrier said.

It's evident that America has a plastic problem — between 170 and 390 million plastic straws are used every day, according to estimates from market research firms — yet straws comprise just 0.02% of all plastic pollution in the world's oceans. (And turtles are far more likely to ingest a plastic bag than a plastic straw.)

Junior Valerie Goldstein, who has strived to help the environment since she became a part-time vegetarian in fifth grade, said that the harm straws do to the environment is often exaggerated.

"I saw this quote on Instagram that plastic straws are the thoughts and prayers of climate change," she said. "It's dangerous to say it's just like, 'Straws are the bad guy. If we can just get rid of straws, we are really close to stopping climate change.' That's just not accurate at all."

Lherrier said that she, too, noticed that metal straw advocates on Instagram have lost sight of the reason why metal straws were invented in the first place.

"I've seen videos where people get plastic straws, and

then they throw them away, so they can use their metal straws. And it just makes me so mad because why would you get a plastic straw in the first place?" she said. "People are using it as an excuse, all for the class."

Conversely, Lherrier said some people wrongly assume that she and others are eco-friendly because it's eco-friendly. To avoid this perception, people then turn away from helping the environment, Lherrier said.

"I relate it to feminism and how some people just view feminism as the whole 'bustier' thing. They think it's pushy and it's overacting," she said. "Some people, if they see another person trying to do what they can to be sustainable, they're like, 'You're just doing this for the class. You don't actually care.' ... That's something that I've experienced, and people need to realize that it's not for anything except for making the world better."

Students said that regardless of one's motivations for helping the environment, it's important for everyone to pitch in however they can.

"I can't really choose which products we're buying in my family household," Goldstein said. "I try to choose to do what I physically can do, like choosing to pack my lunch every day instead of buying it."

People don't have to live a perfectly green lifestyle to make a difference. Newton outreach coordinator for Mothers Out Front, an organization that advocates for a sustainable future, Rachel Adler Golden said.

"I don't begrudge people who don't do this 24/7. In fact, I don't do this 24/7," she said. "You do what you can, when you can."

Adler Golden said that environmental efforts, however, cannot just exist on an individual level.

"What we just together and speak up and call out corporations and put pressure on our decision-makers and all kinds of folks who are in the fossil fuel industry or being supported by the fossil fuel industry, ... that's where the big changes are going to be," Adler Golden said.

For Kopf, large changes nevertheless begin with small steps.

"As long as society's not 100% unified, the corporations and the government aren't going to jump in and start trying to save the environment as well. There has to be something where we all push together, and we're not going to push for that if we don't all care," Kopf said. "And that starts with little actions like saving straws."

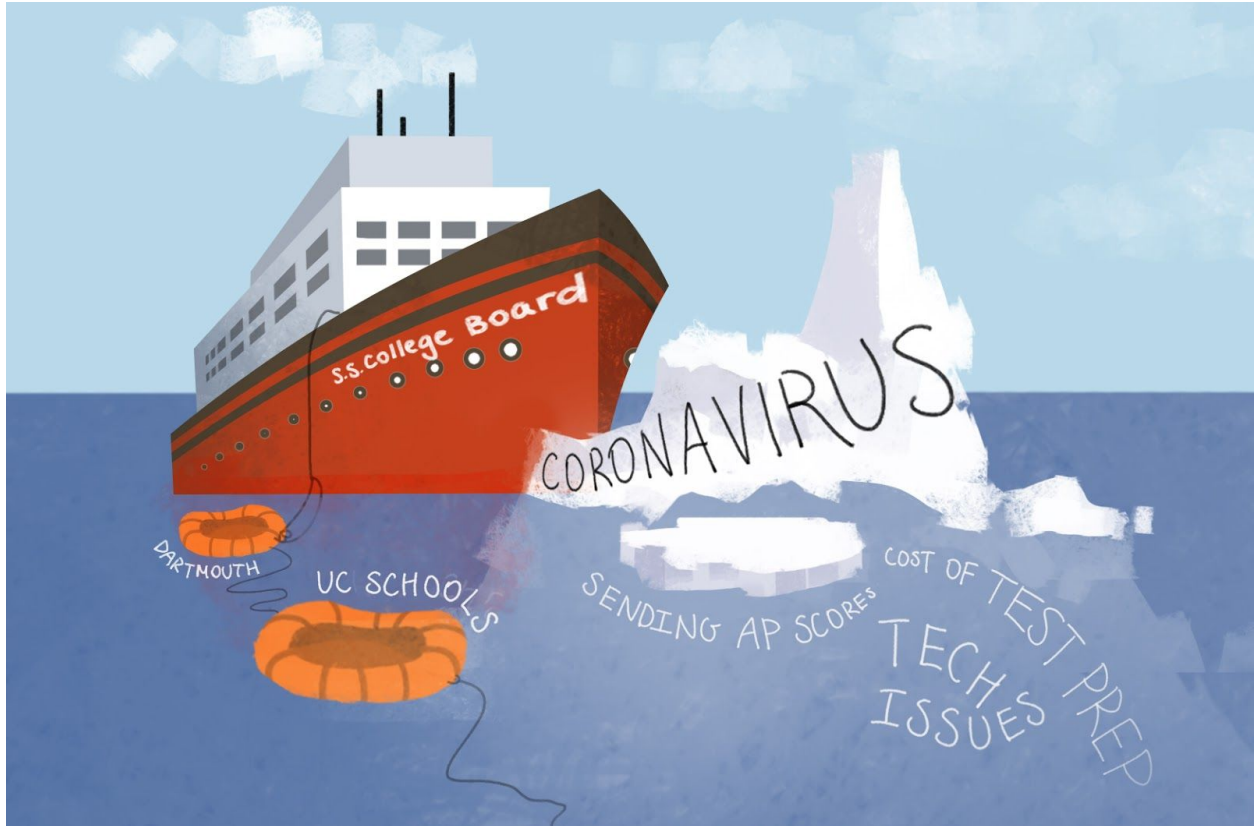
WHAT CAN YOU DO?			
Action	Importance	Commitment	Cost
<b>Choose 100% Renewable Energy</b>	Coal and natural gas companies are responsible for one-third of America's carbon dioxide emissions. Changing how we power our homes makes a big impact.	One call to Eversource at 1-866-969-8065 is all it takes to switch the source of your home's energy.	Raises monthly energy costs by \$2.91 through Newton Power Choice.
<b>Bike to School</b>	Help eliminate South's pervasive driving culture and reduce your carbon footprint.	Significant, especially in bad weather.	It's cheaper to buy a bike than to park at South for one year.
<b>Use a Metal Straw</b>	It's debatable.	Just click on an Instagram ad and place your order.	Sold in packs for about \$1 per straw.
<b>Eat Less Meat</b>	Livestock requires an absurd amount of resources — five times as much grain as the entire U.S. population — and produces 20% of U.S. methane emissions.	A major lifestyle change.	Meat alternatives can be expensive. A Beyond Burger, for instance, costs about \$2 more than a beef patty.
<b>Compost</b>	The average American throws out one pound of food every day, that adds up to 30% of America's total food supply.	No greater than taking out the trash.	Newton has partnered with Black Earth to take your compost for \$7.99/month. This price will be lowered if 500 Newton residents sign up.

Sources: Black Earth, Green Newton, Newton Power Choice, Scientific American, UNDA, U.S. Energy Information Administration



## Piece 3: The Final Straw

In this piece, I worked with a consistent color palette of low-saturation colors to create a unified appearance across the two page spread. The icons across the bottom represent actions that alternate in degree of helpfulness to the environment, reflecting both the way that environmental consciousness comes in multiple forms and also that an individual can be simultaneously eco-friendly in one area but less so in another.



#### **Piece 4: The College Board Capsize**

Accompanying an article that examines the decline of the College Board's influence in wake of the coronavirus, this graphic depicts the College Board as a capsizing ship. Yet, the coronavirus is just the tip of the iceberg— undercurrent problems include technical issues and the exorbitant cost of test prep. On the left, lifeboats represent colleges that have literally jumped ship and adopted test-optional policies.





### YouTube: Your New College Counselor

October 11th, 2019

50K 50K SHARE SAVE

**By Sophie Lewis** SUBSCRIBE

High school seniors post videos on YouTube of their reactions to their college decisions. But the helpfulness of these videos remains up for debate

1,000 COMMENTS SORT BY

Commenting publicly as a student

**Camilla Hayao, '20**  
This is a really important part of life, at least for us, that it's worth documenting.

**A** newly arrived freshman at MIT, Ryan Normandin wanted to document his college experience and help clear up any confusion with such a reputable school. But when he was not selected to be a student blogger for the MIT admissions website, Normandin said he decided to try something even cooler: making YouTube videos.

By the time he graduated in 2013, Normandin had released over 120 videos on his channel, known as ProdigyMedia17. He posted a holistic portrait of his experience as an MIT student, from rapping about tough physics problems to dancing in the Park Street subway station. The majority of the videos were filmed at 4 a.m., right after Normandin finished his problem sets.

"Watching it back, I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, these are horrible. Why would anyone want to watch these? They're incredibly boring,'" he said. "But then I got these messages to this day saying, 'Your videos were so inspiring, thank you so much.' It was very unexpected. I didn't expect people to watch it and draw inspiration from these videos."

Normandin's simple, pixelated videos pale in comparison to the high-quality college decision videos that have since taken over many students' YouTube feeds.

In an era of teenage vloggers who make millions of dollars, many high school seniors have taken to documenting the one part of their life that most YouTube stars can't compete with for views: applying to college. These college reaction videos are astonishing in their simplicity: A kid applies to a dozen or more schools, the kid opens college decisions from their bedrooms to be readable, the kid celebrates for League acceptance with screaming friends, the kid does apparel for the school they committed to and the kid posts a video with college emblems displayed on the thumbnail. But somehow, each of these endless videos is successful enough to merit thousands of views or more.

For some students, watching college decision reaction videos can be motivating, while others said these videos can make an already stressful process feel more overwhelming.

**AUTO PLAY**

It's no new trend for students to compare their college prospects. On the College Confidential "What are my chances?" forums, students (and their parents) post SAT scores, GPAs and extracurricular activities behind the anonymous facade of a username.

Now, college comparison culture has seeped into the already booming YouTube reaction video market. People love watching others react to anything and everything, be it song covers or haircut fails or their own college decisions.

Senior Joseph Rasmussen said that although he did not plan to fall down a college decision reaction video rabbit hole, web algorithms knew he would be interested.

"Google does a pretty good job with understanding that I'm 17 and nervous about college stuff, so they recommended it to me," he said.

Once you watch a college decision reaction video, it can be hard not to click on the next one, senior Adina Smith said.

"I just saw one in my recommended on YouTube, and I watched one. And once you watch one, YouTube shows you all the other videos you can watch, and then you get trapped in a cycle of watching more and more different types of videos," she said.

Senior Camilla Hayao, however, said that she exercises discretion in choosing college decision videos to watch.

"I needed to gravitate more towards people I could identify with. So like, Asians," she said.

Hayao said that these videos appeal to growing competition—and community—in the college process.

"They're becoming more popular just because as the whole college process becomes increasingly more competitive, people in response are doing things increasingly more supportive because we all understand that the whole process is super stressful," she said.

For Smith, the successes depicted by students in college decision reaction videos can be misleading.

"People in the videos might be bragging a little if they get into really good schools," she said. "It also can provide a sense of

false hope because these people are getting into all their dream schools, which is not realistic most of the time."

What disheartens some motivates others. Senior Allie Flores said that college videos inspired her to work harder on her own applications.

"I'm just binge watching YouTube, and I think across one of these videos, and then I watch it, it gets me excited for the whole thing. And then maybe I'll work on an essay or do some of the Common App, just to get more stuff done at a time that would just be spent relaxing and doing nothing," she said. "I I hadn't seen them, it'd still be doing the same steps, I just might not be doing them at the same pace."

**RECOMMENDED FOR YOU**

In many ways, these college reaction videos are like virtual scrapbooks—high schoolers love to commemorate their milestones. Smith said that the plans to film her opening her decision letters so that she can one day reminisce with family and friends.

"I don't think I would post it anywhere, but I think that the reactions when people are opening acceptance or rejection letters is just something that people might like to have for the future," she said. "Just to look back and see how they're feeling at the time and how they feel a few years later, once they're already into college and things like that."

As a first generation American college student, Rasmussen said that his parents feel strongly that he should film his college decisions to share with friends and family.

"My mom went to college in Israel, and my dad didn't finish college in Israel," he said. "So for them it's a point of pride, and also at the same time for them it's just interesting to see a memorable life achievement that they want to be able to capture."

**UPLOADING...**

Because she had seen so many college decision reaction videos herself, 16A Amrit, a student from Santa Monica, California, wanted to create a video of her own.

"I figured if I found one in watching others then maybe someone else would find one watching mine," she said. Her video, posted in April of this year, was titled "College Decision Reactions 2019 // NYU LEAGUE, UGA - MCGRETT".

While she initially worried about receiving negative comments, Amrit said that she's found the college niche of YouTube to be surprisingly supportive. Her parents, nonetheless, were apprehensive about Amrit's video, specifically that she save face.

"Their concern was less with me putting myself online and more with like, 'If you get rejected, do you really want to advertise that?'" Amrit said. She remained unfazed.

"I don't care about the potential consequences of people knowing that I didn't get into some places because I don't think that that's a measure of how good of a student I am, how good person I am, that sort of thing," she said.

When it came time to make her video, Amrit said she asked her friends to react to her college decisions with her to make the video as entertaining as possible and to receive as many views as possible.

"Whether I got in or not, I wanted to have friends there so either they could console me or celebrate with me," she said.

Now a freshman at Duke University, Amrit said she continues to be amazed by the popularity of her video.

"I remember posting on my Snapchat story. Oh my God, it hit one thousand views. And then it just kept growing and it kept getting more views—it was exponential almost," she said. "Now it's at 350,000 or something crazy like that, which I never would have imagined."

Amrit said that she tried to dispel misconceptions about the college process through her video.

One viewer she said, was a parent who expressed concern about her seventh-grade daughter's college process in the comment section.

"She was like, 'My daughter does this and this and this."

*Continued on next page*

## Piece 5: YouTube College Reaction Videos

After lengthy discussion, the section editor of the article and I decided to abandon the original graphic idea in favor of creating a graphic that directly engaged the reader. I was unsure about utilizing the two page spread to mimic YouTube's interface at first, but it soon became one of my favorite designs all year due to the creative way the article and the visual came together.