Speak About It promotes consent education

By Julia Smith

As the VST lights dimmed, “I Just Had Sex” by the comedy group The Lonely Island blasted from speakers. Nervous laughter erupted. Stage lights revealed a handful of young adult presenters who began to introduce themselves.

The tension was palpable. Such was the introduction to consent training on Jan. 15 from Speak About It, a nonprofit organization that partners with high schools and colleges across the United States to educate students about healthy sexual relationships through engaging theatrical performances.

Speak About It first presented at St. John’s two years ago when administrators asked Upper School nurse Tesa Stark to encourage greater discussion surrounding consent and sex education.

“I liked that [Speak About It] did not give a message that sex is bad, but more about how [students] go about making a decision based on [their] values,” Stark said.

Upperclassmen witnessed an abridged Speak About It performance that was approved by the administration. The surprisingly frank performance elicited many responses, ranging from overwhelmingly positive to extremely uneasy.

“I was uncomfortable with the way it was presented,” junior Janie Spedale said. “I thought it wasn’t talked about well.”

Spedale was not alone. Many other students felt uncomfortable with the upfront way in which the presenters introduced issues related to sex.

“It was hard to get people to participate,” senior Peer Manager Oronde Cruger said. “But it is really a lot about identity formation.”

Meridian Monty, a junior, greatly appreciated the upfront communication of sensitive information.

“Yes, it’s going to be uncomfortable, but this is information,” Speak About It educator Megan MacKenzie said. “Everything they talked about needs to be talked about.”

Monty said, “The way they approached it is important because [everyone] learned something. [Students] were paying attention.”

The show’s forthright and creative approach ensured that students would talk about it.

“Everything they’re talking about needs to be talked about,” Cruger said. “It’s about being respectful to each other.”

Some people thought it was in some ways a little less useful than I perceived it as,” sophomore Rumi Kunsrami said. “A lot of people thought they were trying to be too [politically correct].”

Speak About It aims to be as inclusive as possible in order to create a safe and considerate environment for all their audiences, even if they use terminology that not all students understand. A similar empathy for others is Speak About It’s main message to students about consent and relationships.

A lot of what we’re talking about is just being good to each other,” Cruger said. “It’s about being respectful and caring.”

Many students want to see these conversations continue year-round through basic sex education and forums on consent and relationships. Open conversations about consent at school are often overlooked, and Speak About It was a strong first step in introducing these ideas.

“It was a great experience,” junior Mansfield Owsley said. “I thought it was very eye-opening.”

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Let’s talk about relationships

Dear Readers,

With Valentine’s Day just around the corner, we figured this was the best time for an issue focused on love and relationships. No matter your opinion on the holiday, it is necessary to discuss relationships — both at St. John’s and in a broader context.

In this issue, we address what St. John’s is doing to educate us about relationships but also what they could do better. We analyze the dating culture on campus and across the nation in this era of female and LGBTQ+ empowerment, technology and social media.

Relationships have a significant impact on emotional growth and mental health. They teach us what we enjoy and what makes us feel comfortable while also revealing our own flaws, both major and minor. We also learn vital communication skills and how to support others.

Furthermore, it is important that we distinguish healthy relationships from toxic or abusive ones; thus, we must learn how to define our boundaries.

Living under the St. John’s bubble can be a highly judgmental experience. Just read the centerspread and see. Public displays of affection and conversations about sex are mostly taboo in these storied cloisters.

Because everyone knows everyone, we tend to scrutinize other people’s relationships — or lack thereof. This hypocritical attitude hinders our understanding of what about gender and sexual identity, with the focus on consent in the context of the digital era.

“They spent a lot of time talking about gender and identity stuff, which I think was good,” sophomore Liv Rubenstein said. “Even if a school does have sex ed or talk about consent, generally it’s not from a queer point of view.”

The Speak About It educators and school administrators strove to create an age-appropriate introduction into the conversation surrounding sex and consent. “We figured we would start with something that references [drinking and hooking up],” Speak About It program manager Orondre Cruger said. “But it is really a lot about identity formation.”

In order to encourage students to answer questions, presenters set up a text line, which allowed freshmen and sophomores to ask questions anonymously.

Underclassmen reactions were similarly mixed. Some people thought it was in some ways a little less useful than I perceived it as,” sophomore Rumi Kunsrami said. “A lot of people thought they were trying to be too [politically correct].”

Speak About It aims to be as inclusive as possible in order to create a safe and considerate environment for all their audiences, even if they use terminology that not all students understand. A similar empathy for others is Speak About It’s main message to students about consent and relationships.

A lot of what we’re talking about is just being good to each other,” Cruger said. “It’s about being respectful and caring.”

Many students want to see these conversations continue year-round through basic sex education and forums on consent and relationships. Open conversations about consent at school are often overlooked, and Speak About It was a strong first step in introducing these ideas.

“It was a great experience,” junior Mansfield Owsley said. “I thought it was very eye-opening.”

XOXO,

Mia Fares
Sophia Lima
Leila Palaski
Sophia Lima
Izzy Andrews
Sophia Lima
Leila Palaski
Izzy Andrews
Mia Fares
Iran conflict hits close to home

By Noura Jabir

I

FEBRUARY 13, 2020

ACT announces section retests, superscoring

By Max Beard

B

eginning in September, the ACT will offer students three options that they have long been requesting: section retesting, superscoring and electronic test-taking. These changes will give students more flexibility in the test-taking process. For example, a student may choose to retake the Science and English sections but keep scores on the Reading and Math sections from a previous testing date. According to the ACT website, "section retesting gives students the opportunity to showcase their skills and accomplishments gained over a lifetime." Students need not worry about their test-taking abilities on one particular day. Many students are concerned that the new policies will lead to score inflation. "Now colleges are going to hold students to a higher standard," senior Lawrence Appel said. For colleges that request all test scores, section retests will not matter since schools will be able to see how many times a student has tested. Many colleges already allow for superscoring, which takes a student’s best score from each section across all test dates in order to form a composite score, so some students don’t consider this new policy a big deal.

Gabby Perkins, a senior, can relate to the frustration of having to retake the entire ACT just to raise the score on one particular section. Perkins once retook the ACT just to raise her math score. "I bombed three sections out of four but did well on the last one and it raised my score." Perkins said.

CollegeVine, a college prep blog, noted, "one of the major complaints about the ACT change is it exacerbates what is seeking to remedy: test anxiety. Some students can retake just one section, they’re more encouraged to retest. With the pressure of college admissions looming, some high-achieving students will retest and retest in an effort to achieve a better score.

College pressure might be felt even more acutely among St. John’s students, who, according to the School website, average among the 98th percentile of test takers. The median ACT scores for the Class of 2022 were 23 for the Math, 24 for the Reading, and 24 for the English.

Kenley Turville, Associate Director of College Counseling, doubts that students will fall into a cycle of constant retesting. "St. John’s is a competitive environment," Turville said. "Our students want to be their very best, and there’s a lot of good that can come from that, although I sometimes worry about the wellness side.

High-stakes standardized testing has come under scrutiny for penalizing economically disadvantaged students. Taking a single ACT can cost up to $90, so students of higher-income families are able to retake tests without worrying about cost. Students of low-income families, who are already at a competitive disadvantage, may face more drawbacks. "If a student who can afford expensive test preparation, are further handicapped if they cannot utilize multiple testing opportunities and superscoring. Critics of retesting claim that it continues to benefit the wealthy. And with the scores expected to rise, taking the test multiple times may be even more necessary than ever. According to CollegeVine, some students “might not even have an advisor to tell them they can retake, much less counsel them to do so.”

Turville says that part of the motivation for the new policy is economic. "At the end of the day, the SAT and ACT are businesses," Turville said. "They both want students to take their tests, and this creates an incentive for students to take the ACT over the SAT.

Many students are concerned that the new policies will lead to score inflation. "At the end of the day, the SAT and ACT are businesses," Turville said. "They both want students to take their tests, and this creates an incentive for students to take the ACT over the SAT.

The SAT currently does not offer students the ability to retest a particular section. Perkins once retook the ACT just to raise her math score, "I one section and it raised my score," Perkins said. "I thought I was relatively informed, until we walked into class on the first day and took a quiz," Sarofim said. "It’s a region unified under one name, but there are so many cultures, ethnicities and races," Sarofim said.

"I really didn’t believe the war was going to happen, so I thought most of them were funny." Some students, including junior Natalie Brown, worried that morbid humor would diminish the implications of a global conflict.

"Young people are spreading a false narrative," Brown said. "In spite of all the memes and all the jokes, people need to realize that so many people would suffer or die in such a large-scale conflict." While Brown finds the memes about war with Iran insensitive, she understands why young people share them, as Gen Z has never experienced a war within U.S. borders.

"It’s hard to envision what war in our cities might even look like," Brown said. "As we joke about it." Barbara DiPaolo, who teaches the history elective Modern Middle East, said that when students use humor, it reflects a lack of knowledge. "Of the 23 seniors I taught last semester, I was dumbfounded," DiPaolo said. "It was simple stuff, names and terms that we hear all the time on the news, but we were all shocked," Rupani said. "Partially because of how devastating the event was but also because such a similar thing had crossed my mind a few days earlier." By the time school started on Jan. 7, rumors of war had spread, prompting Generation Z to social media with memes about a potential World War III.

"Every single TikTok, everything on Twitter was about World War III," junior Alexandra Gill said. "I really didn’t believe the war was going to happen, so I thought most of them were funny." Some students, including junior Natalie Brown, worried that morbid humor would diminish the implications of a global conflict.

"Young people are spreading a false narrative," Brown said. "In spite of all the memes and all the jokes, people need to realize that so many people would suffer or die in such a large-scale conflict." While Brown finds the memes about war with Iran insensitive, she understands why young people share them, as Gen Z has never experienced a war within U.S. borders.

"It’s hard to envision what war in our cities might even look like," Brown said. "As we joke about it." Barbara DiPaolo, who teaches the history elective Modern Middle East, said that when students use humor, it reflects a lack of knowledge. "Of the 23 seniors I taught last semester, I was dumbfounded," DiPaolo said. "It was simple stuff, names and terms that we hear all the time on the news, but we were all shocked." DiPaolo adjusted the syllabus this semester in order to begin with issues relating to Iran, diving into the aftermath of Suleimani’s death while also studying the legacy of tension between the U.S. and Iran.

"If you only look at the Middle East from a modern-day standpoint without the history behind it, you get a skewed perspective," Sarofim said. "We’re fortunate to have a class that delves into the context of what we see in the media." Eleanor Cannon teaches another history elective. The History, Geopolitics and Economics of Energy, which has been discussing the events in Iran.

Cannon supplemented her curriculum in order to discuss the effects of the conflict with Iran on the oil industry. According to Cannon, such discussions are particularly relevant at St. John’s, where many community members are linked to the oil industry. "Of the 23 seniors I taught last semester, I was struck by how many of their parents work in oil directly, work in oil services or provide legal representation for oil companies," Cannon said. "A major move in oil markets would have a major effect on the people at St. John’s, and that’s what might happen if we were to go to war.

While Cannon indicated that full-scale war with Iran is unlikely, she worries that if violent conflicts were to ensue, Houston would become a target. "All you have to do is drive down towards Galves- ton to realize how much petrochemical and oil infrastructure is in this town," Cannon said. "There are certainly a lot of vulnerabilities."
Rent increase closes the book on Rice Village institution

By Abigail Poag

Back in the 1980s, when Rice Village still had a five-and-dime, a Kosher deli and an adult movie theater, then-teenager Josh Pesikoff ('87) would ride his bike to Half Price Books on the corner of Kirby and University.

“When I was in high school, I wasn’t super organized — in fact, I was super disorganized, and it was not uncommon for me to find myself with a reading assignment and no book,” said Pesikoff, the father of Jonah ('19) and sophomore Lily.

Longtime patrons like Pesikoff were shocked and dismayed to learn that the Rice Village bookstore is slated to close in March. The culprit: increasing rent prices.

Before there was next-day delivery on Amazon, Half Price Books customers would comb through the store’s assortment of new and secondhand books, CDs, movies and knickknacks, often leaving with something they did not know they needed.

The store’s five remaining Houston-area stores, including the Montrose location, will remain open. There are no plans to have a going-out-of-business sale before the store’s official closing on Sunday, March 8, and all inventory will be redistributed to the other area locations.

Based in Dallas, the chain’s Rice Village location opened in 1981. Assistant manager Bronwyn Mouton has only been working at that location for two years, but she said that former employees talk about how celebrities like Michael Jackson and ZZ Top’s Billy Gibbons have visited the store, and every Houston mayor has also allegedly stopped in at some point since it opened.

The store even caters to four-legged visitors. “Our employees love it when customers bring in their dogs,” Mouton said. “People out walking their pups often end up being treated like celebrities when they stop by.”

Besides the lively atmosphere at the store and the eclectic mix of products, Mouton pointed to the store’s convenient location as a reason for its continued popularity. When she was little, Ananya Agrawal frequently walked from her West University home to the bookstore with her family, where her parents would let her and her siblings pick out a book before getting ice cream.

As a second grader, Agrawal was obsessed with the Goddess Girls series — she owned all but the fifth book in the 25-volume series. When she finally found the last book to complete her collection, she was "ridiculously excited.”

Now a sophomore, she is still an avid reader but recognizes that not everyone her age is. Her eleven-year-old brother could fully operate their mother’s phone before he could even read. According to Agrawal, a reasonably priced bookstore is vital to encourage people to read more.

A New Chapter for Rice Village

The Rice Village has undergone rapid development in recent years. Originally developed in the 1930s, the outdoor shopping district attracted a variety of unique tenants over the decades, ranging from the punk-rock store Rat Records to surfboard retailer Bay Surf Shop, both of which have long-since closed. National chains began moving in during the 1990s, including Gap and Banana Republic, and other more mainstream stores have followed suit.

As Rice Village becomes increasingly upscale, trendy businesses like Sweetgreen and Shake Shack are in, while relics of the past are out.

While a few decades-old businesses remain, like Dronge’s Fine Writing Instruments, which has been in the Village since 1987, the closing of the Half Price Books is a sad day for some Houstonians.

“It’s the end of an era,” Pesikoff said. “If those walls could talk, they could describe the old Rice Village, and I can’t think of any other store that could do that.”

While he is all for progress, Pesikoff will miss having a nearby store where he can find a classic book without spending a lot of money.

“Sometimes you just want to go get a Stephen King book, and there are a bazillion,” Pesikoff said. “I still can’t believe they’re closing,” Agrawal said. “It’s sad to see so many places go.”
Vail Kohnert-Yount
Advocating for universal equality

While an undergraduate at Georgetown, Vail Kohnert-Yount (`13) once helped unionize the cafeteria staff. Since then, she has remained at the forefront of political activity, whether it’s co-hosting an annual Gulf Coast Planned Parenthood Roe v. Wade luncheon, co-founding the People’s Parity Project or organizing a protest at Harvard Law School against then-Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh.

After working in Washington, D.C. for four years, Kohnert-Yount moved back to Houston for six months and began volunteering at Jane’s Due Process, an organization that aims to ensure legal representation for pregnant minors in Texas.

At Harvard Law School, she and three fellow law students co-founded the People’s Parity Project (formerly the Pipeline Parity Project), a national organization committed to ending harassment, discrimination and other injustices in the legal profession. In 2018, they organized one of the largest protests in Harvard Law history to prevent Justice Brett Kavanaugh from continuing to serve as a guest lecturer. Due to the mounting pressure, Kavanaugh chose not to return.

Kohnert-Yount and her People’s Parity Project co-founders were recently recognized by Rep. Jamie Raskin (MD-08) in Washington, D.C. for their efforts to prevent law firms from having their own attorneys and other employees sign contracts that include “forced arbitration” provisions.

“If someone has a sexual harassment complaint or any other complaints,” Raskin said, “they would not be forced into one of these secretive off-limits entities where real justice is not done.”

This summer, Kohnert-Yount worked on cases in Texas involving sexual harassment and the assault of low-wage workers in the workplace. She has fought to help immigrant women whose employers threatened to have them deported if they reported any harassment or assaults.

Kohnert-Yount will graduate from Harvard Law in May and will move back to Texas to work at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, an organization that provides legal services for low-wage workers.

Caroline Spears
Promoting environmental action

While attending St. John’s, Caroline Spears (`13) heard mixed messages about climate change from teachers and the media, which motivated her to champion environmental causes.

At Stanford, Spears obtained a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in Atmosphere and Energy Engineering. Armed with an understanding of climate change, Spears encourages people to get involved in the climate change conversation by talking to local representatives about possible solutions.

For the past two years, Spears has been writing climate-specific policy papers for political candidates by compiling data from each politician’s district, giving candidates pertinent information that they need to stay informed and up-to-date on the attitude of voters.

Because candidates do not usually have the time to run a full-time campaign and complete their own nuanced policy research, politicians tend to receive their information from lobbyists, who have ulterior motives. Spears created a whole new way to provide politicians with the necessary environmental information that will allow them to make informed policy decisions.

In her experience, many politicians view climate change as an overly complex, controversial issue, but scientists have already found feasible solutions—they simply need proper implementation. Spears uses data collected by universities across the country to determine what solutions are preferred by the voters in each district, which allows for climate reform while complementing a politician’s ability to appeal to the greatest number of people.

Spears has provided several presidential candidates with information to form a basis for their climate change platform. Additionally, she has worked with politicians in Texas and Virginia, including Rep. Lizzie Pann-Fletcher (TX, TX-07), a fellow St. John’s graduate (`99).

Spears recently founded and serves as the executive director of Climate Cabinet, an organization that consults with political candidates and other groups on climate change.

Farris Blount III
Supporting community through ministry work

Ministers commonly face the misconception that their job solely entails preaching on Sunday. In over three years as the executive minister at West Avenue Baptist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Farris Blount (`13) has found that this is not the case.

After graduating from Stanford and Harvard Divinity School, Blount is now studying for his doctorate at Boston University’s School of Theology.

While preaching is an important part of his job, Blount spends only a small fraction of his time preparing and delivering sermons. The majority of his work is behind the scenes, helping manage the church’s finances and serving as the chief contractor for all building, maintenance and construction projects.

Blount tracks all the money that comes in and out of the church to ensure that West Avenue Baptist has the financial ability and structure to pay its bills. He even writes all the year-end reports to guarantee that church donations are deposited properly.

Along with other ministry leaders, Blount oversees several ministries, teams and volunteers at the church.

During his time at St. John’s, Blount never thought he would be a minister. Even now, he sometimes takes time to reflect and make sure he has chosen the right career path.

As a minister, there are often more lows than highs. He works with people from all walks of life who have endured many difficult experiences.

Blount attends many funerals to support the families of those who have passed away. He works with the church’s benevolence team to ensure that each family is taken care of.

Blount also wants them to find purpose. Second Day partners with organizations who conduct interviews with the fellows, educating and empowering young people who want to jump start their social impact careers.

Second Day launched their Impact Fellowship this fall at Rice, UT Austin, Georgetown and Harvard in order to help graduating seniors find social impact jobs.

Each student Matin works with has their own dream social impact job. Although she is not an expert in every single field, Matin helps students understand the industry by conducting research and connecting them to mentors so they can build a long-lasting career.

With Matin’s help, participants learn how to position themselves for a job, write a compelling proposal and demonstrate a strong interest in the field. Second Day partners with organizations who conduct interviews with the fellows. Not only does Matin want to find employment for the fellows, but she wants them to find purpose. Second Day aims to ensure that each job placement will be a good fit for each fellow.
Get in. The future is waiting.

Taycan

Soul, Electrified
Local nonprofits help combat human trafficking

By Sophia Lima

The Galleria serves as a hub for shopping, entertainment and hanging out with friends. This shopping mall, just two miles from St. John’s, also serves as a major hub for human trafficking. An article from CultureMap Houston described the Galleria as “one of the most sexualized districts in Houston.”

Houston is one of the largest cities for human trafficking in the world because of its access to international borders and the I-10 highway. Houston also hosts many sports events and conventions, both of which are targets for sex trafficking.

Human trafficking occurs when people are exploited through force, fraud or coercion for the economic gain of others. Victims include child soldiers, domestic servants and sex workers. Physical abuse, false promises and threats pervade this system.

Approximately 40 million people are victims of human trafficking around the world, and about 1 in 4 are children. This underground industry generates over $150 billion in illegal profits each year.

Kathleen Grabowski has worked as a federal probation officer for 26 years and has encountered victims of human trafficking. Yet her daughter McKenna, a senior, only recently became aware of the enormous scale of the problem.

“Human trafficking is something rarely spoken about, but it’s such a big deal,” Grabowski said. “No one really wants to admit it happens just streets away from us. As Grabowski grew increasingly aware, she searched for further ways to get involved. As a member of Art Junction, a student-organized fundraiser that encourages participation in the arts, she invites high school artists to create unique pieces for a silent auction and sale. 100% of the sales go to charity, so Grabowski knew she wanted the artwork to benefit the fight against human trafficking.

She decided to dedicate her fundraising to A 2nd Cup, a nonprofit coffee shop in the Heights that is dedicated to battling human trafficking. The proceeds from A 2nd Cup provide aftercare solutions for human trafficking survivors, including housing, mentoring, tutoring and learning essential job and life skills. Grabowski also volunteers at A 2nd Cup every Sunday, where she aids the baristas and keeps the kitchen running smoothly while taking care of small tasks as needed.

The coffeehouse was founded in 2011 by Erica Grabowski. An article from CultureMap Houston described the Galleria as “one of the most sexualized districts in Houston.”

As a middle school teacher at the time, “the thought of one of her students ever being trafficked made her want to act,” so she opened A 2nd Cup.

The coffee shop also raises funds through merchandising. They sell jewelry from Branded Collective, a Nashville-based nonprofit that aids human trafficking survivors through economic empowerment jobs. Branded’s jewelry is handcrafted by human trafficking survivors. Captors of sex slaves often brutally mark them with a number or symbol: a forced tattoo, a burn or knife cut. Likewise, survivors engrave their initials into each piece of jewelry they make.

Each piece of jewelry is also stamped with a number, and the purchaser can register this number on Branded’s website to send a Message of Hope to a survivor.

Once she began volunteering at A 2nd Cup, Grabowski discovered other organizations in Houston with the same mission. She now volunteers every other month at Elijah Rising, which was originally founded as a prayer gathering. This faith-based nonprofit organization aims to end sex trafficking in Houston through prayer, awareness, intervention and restoration.

Houston human trafficking hotspots

Grabowski said, “They are providing victims with a stable job to help them reintegrate into society.”

The store even offers an exclusive candle subscription for $25 each month.

Elijah Rising hosts free Van Tours that educate the public by taking people to human trafficking hot spots in Houston. The two-hour tours run three times a week in private groups of eight to 12 people, featuring testimonies from the staff and relevant statistics.

By shedding light on this issue, Elijah Rising hopes the information and shocking visuals will compel people to respond with action.

The group has made significant achievements in the battle against human trafficking. In 2013, they negotiated the closure of Angela’s Day Spa on Southwest Freeway which was a front for prostitution. In 2014 they opened the Museum of Modern-Day Slavery in the Heights in order to expose the harsh reality of human trafficking by recreating the appearance of a brothel and displaying a collection of artifacts.

Elijah Rising recently added a new dimension to their efforts with the purchase of an 84-acre property in rural Fort Bend County where they have established a Restorative Care program that provides housing, trauma-informed counseling and a caring community of support for survivors.

With life-skills education such as money management, the Restorative Care campus serves as a haven and transitional space for survivors. The campus also protects victims from falling back into the cycle of human trafficking.

When researching human trafficking for her Data Analytics class, senior Louisa Sarofim learned that less than 0.2% of victims are successfully rescued. After the shocking discoveries from this project, she felt compelled to take action.

“There is so little solid information on the topic, and research often grossly underestimates the number of victims,” she said.

Sarofim plans to do human trafficking training at the YMCA. The course includes how to identify a victim and respond, how to distinguish fronts for prostitution and what makes someone vulnerable to human trafficking.

“It is so important to educate people our age on this topic because Houston is such a hotspot, and we are so close to danger,” Sarofim said. “We need to be informed for our own protection and in order to help others.”

Photo by Bailey Maierson

Source: Freedom Church Alliance

The Elijah Rising store, where Grabowski works, sells goods made by human trafficking survivors by providing them with materials to create candles, soaps, bath salts and more.

Their slogan, “Goods That Empower,” is displayed in giant white letters on their store display window.

“They are not teaching them how to make a candle,” Grabowski said. “They are providing victims with a stable job to help them reintegrate into society.”

The store even offers an exclusive candle subscription for $25 each month.

Elijah Rising hosts free Van Tours that educate the public by taking people to human trafficking hot spots in Houston. The two-hour tours run three times a week in private groups of eight to 12 people, featuring testimonies from the staff and relevant statistics.

By shedding light on this issue, Elijah Rising hopes the information and shocking visuals will compel people to respond with action.

The group has made significant achievements in the battle against human trafficking. In 2013, they negotiated the closure of Angela’s Day Spa on Southwest Freeway which was a front for prostitution. In 2014 they opened the Museum of Modern-Day Slavery in the Heights in order to expose the harsh reality of human trafficking by recreating the appearance of a brothel and displaying a collection of artifacts.

Elijah Rising recently added a new dimension to their efforts with the purchase of an 84-acre property in rural Fort Bend County where they have established a Restorative Care program that provides housing, trauma-informed counseling and a caring community of support for survivors.

With life-skills education such as money management, the Restorative Care campus serves as a haven and transitional space for survivors. The campus also protects victims from falling back into the cycle of human trafficking.

When researching human trafficking for her Data Analytics class, senior Louisa Sarofim learned that less than 0.2% of victims are successfully rescued. After the shocking discoveries from this project, she felt compelled to take action.

“There is so little solid information on the topic, and research often grossly underestimates the number of victims,” she said.

Sarofim plans to do human trafficking training at the YMCA. The course includes how to identify a victim and respond, how to distinguish fronts for prostitution and what makes someone vulnerable to human trafficking.

“It is so important to educate people our age on this topic because Houston is such a hotspot, and we are so close to danger,” Sarofim said. “We need to be informed for our own protection and in order to help others.”

Photo by Bailey Maierson

Source: Freedom Church Alliance

The Elijah Rising store, where Grabowski works, sells goods made by human trafficking survivors by providing them with materials to create candles, soaps, bath salts and more.

Their slogan, “Goods That Empower,” is displayed in giant white letters on their store display window.

“They are not teaching them how to make a candle,”
Kamat makes 'little acts of kindness' for no-kill shelters

By Russell Li

Rhea Kamat first started making clay figurines in sixth grade when she had an overabundance of free time. She had no idea that her creations and love for animals would later come together, resulting in a project that promotes animal welfare.

Kamat, a junior, had previously rescued two cats and volunteered at a no-kill animal shelter, but contributions to her passion were limited.

After experiencing firsthand the pain of putting down a pet, Kamat wanted to give animals in shelters their best chances of survival.

She decided to do more to support animal welfare movements and took the initiative to develop her own project: Marticus Clay, named for her two pets, Catticus and Martie. Kamat raises money to donate to no-kill animal shelters by handcrafting clay figurines that resemble animals, fantasy characters and food. All sales are through the Marticus Clay website, and her profits benefit organizations like Houston Pets Alive! and Friends for Life.

"Shelters hate to put down animals, but overcrowding and a lack of resources leave no other option than euthanization," Kamat said. "My project provides another option by funding no-kill shelters to help spread the no-kill movement in Houston."

A no-kill animal shelter does not euthanize its animals, whereas a kill shelter may resort to such methods in extreme cases.

Although Kamat supports no-kill shelters, all animal shelters would benefit from increased funding, Kamat said. "Hindshelters that never put down their animals, regardless of funding deficits, especially admirable," Kamat said. "I want to support these places so that one day all animal shelters can be no-kill, but sometimes it’s necessary to volunteer at kill shelters because doing so may help alleviate the factors that lead to euthanization."

Kamat primarily raises awareness for her project through word of mouth and her parents’ social media channels, spreading the cause to her friends, family and community. Since the launch of her website in November 2019, she has raised $1,500.

Charitable acts are not unusual for Kamat.

"When you talk to Rhea, little acts of kindness jump out to you," junior Jenny Green said. "They highlight her character and carry over to everything she does."

Kamat did not expect her clay creations to appeal to many people, so she is "thrilled" at receiving an outpouring of support. Her success has inspired her to continue developing Marticus Clay to broaden its effect.

"This cause is inspiring for both myself and those who buy my products," Kamat said. "Each purchase helps give purpose to an action, even if it's as small as buying a clay thing."

Green recognizes Kamat’s dedication to her work.

"When Rhea’s empathy joins with a cause she is passionate about, the product is bound to be meaningful to both her and others," Green said. "From the way she enthusiastically discusses and addresses such topics, her readiness to make a positive impact is evident."

Through her project, Kamat has rekindled her hobby of making clay figures, and she has also come to appreciate her work for the joy it brings to her customers.

Moving forward, Kamat plans to devote a few hours each weekend to expanding her nonprofit now that she has more free time. She hopes to streamline her website, restock existing clay products and open up a custom requests section for figures that are not currently offered.

"Last semester, it was challenging to balance managing the company with school and testing for college," Kamat said. "Starting [in January], I’ve been able to spend more time helping the company move along and the no-kill movement, because that’s what this effort is all about."

Visit www.marticusclay.com to donate to Rhea’s fund.
The next Elon Musk? Student inventor programs self-driving car

By Fareen Dhuksa

Although Ethan Saadia doesn’t have his driver’s license yet, he has built his own self-driving miniature car.

Inspired by Elon Musk’s work with Tesla and the self-driving car industry, Saadia, a junior, modified a red Mini Cooper with his cutting-edge self-driving platform, which he calls Project WOMBAT (Working On Machine-Based Autonomous Transport).

"Every Tesla that comes out of the factory is now fully equipped to be a self-driving car as soon as they push out the software in a few months," Saadia said. "I just wanted to be a part of that."

Saadia has always been intrigued by technology and passionate about creating innovative products. Before eighth grade, he released the Mov App, a class scheduling app designed specifically for St. John’s students. It was recently released to the App Store for Apple Watch. Later that year, he created a robot equipped to be a self-driving car as soon as they push out the software in a few months.

"I remember seeing Ethan’s car work last year in a video and being extremely impressed that he was able to figure out where we can drive and when we have to stop," Beck said.

Using this theory, Saadia implemented two advanced cameras for the car to maneuver itself, similar to Tesla’s exclusive use of cameras in most of their self-driving cars. Without any external command system to direct motion, his car relies solely on the battery-powered cameras.

Saadia’s advisor and ISP supervisor Dwight Raulston frequently checks his progress. According to Raulston, Saadia’s project is the first self-driving car he has seen a student make in his 38 years teaching in the Upper School. The most similar project he could recall was a freshman welding his own go-kart.

While many of Saadia’s physical modifications used toy car parts, he designed and 3D printed numerous custom parts. Sometimes it was just trial and error.

"I had to try a lot of things and see what worked," Saadia said. "There was a lot of prototyping before anything did work."

Saadia faced particular difficulty in steering the car. The original steering mechanism was not built for high tolerance, so Saadia spent weeks making extensive modifications in order for the car to move in the desired direction.

Saadia’s work has impressed faculty and inspired peers to take advantage of school resources, especially the Engineering room.

"I remember seeing Ethan’s car work last year in a video and being extremely impressed that he was able to create such an invention completely on his own," junior Henry Miller said. "It’s so cool that St. John’s students have the opportunity to explore their interests in this way, and I hope to explore these opportunities for myself."

Apps aid focus, productivity

By Ellie Monday

After a particularly busy week earlier this year, a sophomore girl who asked to remain anonymous realized that she had only slept a total of four hours in seven days. Apalled, she began researching ways to combat the root of her problem: procrastination.

Most students admit that they have accidentally pushed off an assignment until they find themselves dangerously close to its deadline. A StudyMode survey of 1,300 American high school students revealed that 86.5% of them procrastinate, primarily through social media.

Students cite struggling after eight hours at school. Homework time is also reduced by the rigor that St. John’s extracurriculars demand. Jesse Beck, a sophomore and two-sport varsity athlete who also plays club softball, frequently arrives home late on school nights and goes straight to sleep before finishing her work.

"By that time, I’m not in a mental state to do my homework," Beck said.

As a result, she sometimes ends up completing assignments the day they are due. Even if she feels like she has finished it in a timely manner, she says it is never as good as she thought.

"I don’t feel like I have to finish it right then, so I just talk myself out of it until the last minute," Beck said.

Ironically, the rising solution to procrastination lies in the main culprit: phones. Apps such as Forest, StudyBreak and Screen Time’s weekly data serve as self-restriction methods to keep students on task.

Such apps have yet to become widely popular at St. John’s. According to a poll of 65 students conducted on The Review online, only 51% indicated that they use anti-procrastination apps.

Procrastination can be frustrating to teachers as well, as cramming assignments in a limited amount of time degrades its quality. English teacher Kyle Deman is skeptical of apps as a long-term solution.

"These apps are more of a Band-Aid than anything else," Deman said. "I'm much more concerned about the detrimental effects that constant exposure to screens has on a student’s overall well-being."

The sleep-deprived sophomore partially attributes her improved study habits this year to a computer app called 1Focus, which blocks apps and websites for unlimited minutes or hours. She says that if students commit to these apps and don’t disable or cheat them, they are good resources to prevent procrastination.

"When I slept four hours that entire week, it was really unhealthy for me," she said. "Thankfully, this year I have systems in place that are helping me to not procrastinate [to that extent] again."

51% of students use anti-procrastination apps

Data from a Review Online poll of 68 students
Informality has been the hallmark of dating in the past, occasionally hooking up to exchanging promise rings. Today there is a wide spectrum of ways in which people in long-distance relationships did it without social media platforms.

Social media presents individuals with an easy, public opportunity to meet people they wouldn't otherwise encounter. On Instagram, some users follow people they don't even know simply because of an attractive profile picture or because they have a mutual friend.

There's an App for That

Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Coffee Meets Bagel, According to Business Insider, an estimated 23.8 million adults used dating apps in 2018. They revolutionized dating culture, with half of U.S. couples and 60% of LGBTQ+ ones — meeting online, a 2017 study published by The National Academy of Sciences.

"If you're looking for the love of your life, you're probably not going to find that person on Tinder," said Archer, a senior who asked to remain anonymous. "It all just depends on what you're looking for." Over 70% of 18- to 25-year-olds on Tinder have a conscious choice to stay single," hence its reputation as "the hookup app." Meanwhile, 85% of Bumble users are "looking for marriage or a boyfriends/girlfriends." Everyone was on [Tinder] for the same reason, and it might've not been the healthiest reason," said Archer, who signed up for Tinder when he turned 18. "I just wasn't a huge fan.

"I just wasn't a huge fan," said Archer, a senior who asked to remain anonymous. "I wasn't a huge fan." Even if apps weren't designed with a specific clientele in mind, they often become a self-fulfilling stereotype.

Dating 2.0

Bumble's strides parallel those of modern society. Women feel more comfortable in their sexuality, have more one-night stands and prioritize their careers over early marriage. Even with these changes in dating over the past decade, some antiquated ideas remain unchanged. Though support and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community
Dating in the NEW decade

Story by Izzy Andrews & Sara Doyle  /  Design by Leila Pulaski  /  Graphics by Matthew Hensel and James Sy

said William Flood, a senior at Lamar.

"You might see somebody kissing in the stairwell," added that most adults and staff members turn a blind eye to these smaller acts of affection.

Gender norms are also changing, albeit slowly. Several senior boys interviewed said that some girls still appreciate traditional gender roles. One boy called them "symbolic"; another said that if he didn't conform to these standards, he would be "judged." Gender roles are not always so extreme at Foster — or anywhere. Usually, students can just be seen cuddling or making out in the hallway, everyone's going to see you and everyone's going to be talking about it."

Mind the (Age) Gap

The harsh scrutiny of relationships not only affects PDA but also age gaps between couples. At other schools, the rule of thumb is a couple two grades apart, while unusual, is not radical. At St. John's, however, one grade limit is the level. Several senior boys indicated that dating two grades down is not respectable.

"With a one-year gap, there's barely any talk about it," said a senior girl at Kinkaid said. "Two years is a little weird. Three years people would think is disgusting." It's harder to maintain a relationship with a partner years apart because levels of emotional maturity and life experiences vary across grade levels. While a senior might be worrying about leaving for college, their sophomore peer may have no understanding of what's in store.

"When you're [an adult], the difference seems trivial," said Amuragut Rutrøy, a senior at Cinco Ranch High School. "But every year of 'living life' is much more impactful when you're 15 and 18 rather than when you're 35 and 38."

The tight-knit St. John's community also contributes to the dearth of serious relationships. "Everyone knows everyone, so if you're dating someone, everyone's going to know in a second," Arthur said. "You're either not dating or you're very much private."

People who have attended St. John's for a long period of time also find that the dating pool here is no longer appealing.

Some combat the issue by dating across grades or outside of SJS. "I've been here [since Lower School], and I'm so over our guys," Cassidy said.

"I Just Have Other Priorities"

St. John's students tend to prioritize homework and extracurriculars, so having a full-time relationship often just isn't feasible, which leads to casual hookups at parties instead.

"It's very hard to maintain having a significant other alongside the sometimes crushing academic workload," Garza said.

"When students are in a relationship, academics can take priority over all other pursuits. Shah stresses the importance of communicating to any potential partner that academics come first."

Regardless of where one attends school, though, dating isn't as commonplace as pop culture would lead one to believe. High schoolers seem to be preoccupied with other activities, leaving finding a partner at the back of their minds.

"I'm not at a time in my life where I'm going to devote significant resources into seeking out a partner," Garza said. "I just have other priorities."
Interest in musical leads to double 'Dancing Queens'

By Ella Chen

Just minutes after Sarah Hill learned that she had been cast as Sophie, a leading role in the Upper School musical "Mamma Mia!," she received a phone call from Natalie Brown, who had also been cast as Sophie.

There wasn’t a typo on the cast list, nor were Hill and Brown upset that they were playing the same part. Such is the nature of a double-cast musical.

Double-casting became necessary when over 75 students auditioned in September. In order to give students as many performance opportunities as possible, the directors decided to double cast the ensemble and the female leads.

"It really is an opportunity to get as many of our talents onstage as possible, and we have so many talented students," lead director Jamie Hardin said.

One of the most popular of the so-called "jukebox musicals" of the 1990s, "Mamma Mia!" draws from the expansive songbook of the Swedish pop quartet ABBA. Composed by the male half of the group, Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus (and book by Catherine Johnson), "Mamma Mia!" amassed 5,773 performances over its 14-year run, making it the ninth-longest-running show in Broadway history.

ABBA, which also featured Frida Lyngstad and Agnetha Fältskog, was a global phenomenon from 1976 to 1981. 25 of their hits landed in the UK Top 40 and nine went to No. 1, including show highlights "Dancing Queen," "SOS" and "Take a Chance on Me."

The show revolves around Sophie Sheridan, who is getting married on a Greek island where her mother Donna (played by Karli Fisher and Sophia Groen) lives. Because her mother has never revealed the identity of her father, Sophie invites three men who are most likely to be her father. Hilarity, lots of sequined jumpsuits and many ABBA songs ensue.

Rosie (played by Meridian Monthy and Gabrielle Solymony) and Tanya (played by Katina Christensen and Amelia Williams) round out the cast as Donna’s old friends the Dynamos.

According to Hardin, double-casting allows actors to put their own spin on each character.

"What I love about having the two casts is its two interpretations," Hardin said. "It’s going to be two different performances, so people should really come and see both."

Brown, a junior who has been performing in musicals since she was four years old, said that having two casts highlights the differences of each character.

"It’s really interesting to get to see how different parts of the characters are brought out by different actors," she said. "Everyone is so talented, and I love watching all of them."

"Mamma Mia!" marks sophomore Bobby Havinka’s musical debut. He plays Skye, Sophie’s fiancé. Despite being nervous in early rehearsals, Havinka soon became accustomed to his role and its many challenges.

When Havinka was struggling to learn one of the dances, Hill leaned over and told him he was doing great.

"It may not seem like a big deal, but Sarah has this effect of making me feel better whenever she is around," Havinka said.

In an effort to accommodate all the cast members, the directors created a sound booth offstage, which allows actors to sing backup when they are not onstage.

"Sometimes having two people play the same role is helpful," choreographer Victoria Arizpe said. "If someone is missing a rehearsal, I can have their counterpart step in for them so I can see what it’s going to look like."

While having two casts gives more students the chance to perform, it also requires more rehearsal time.

"At some point you’re having to switch off between the two different casts, so the rehearsal time starts to double," ensemble director Scott Bonassio said.

Despite the challenges, the directors were happy to see so much enthusiasm from their actors.

"The entire cast has been really fun to work with," Arizpe said. "It’s a fun show, so that also feeds the process. Everyone seems to be having a good time."

"Mamma Mia!" will be performed in the Lowe Theater on March 5 at 7:30 p.m., March 6 at 7:30 p.m. and March 7 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tickets become available for purchase on Feb. 25 at 9:00 a.m.

By Ella Chen

Actors in "Mamma Mia!" rehearse the musical number 'Does Your Mother Know.'

Photo by Maxx Shearod
With rooms of dazzling lights, bright colors and delicious food, Houston's Color Factory is a celebration of creativity specifically designed for the Instagram generation.

In October, Houston became Color Factory's third location along with San Francisco and New York. Featuring 19 interactive experiences from artists around the world, these unconventional installations are characterized by their striking, vivid aesthetic.

Vivian Terry, a junior, found the experience highly stimulating. "Once you start walking through, you see all the different colors and dimensions," Terry said. "It feels a lot more alive than it seemed at first glance."

Color Factory reflects a trend of interactive art exhibits that provide ready-made Instagram photo ops. In the age of social media, taking pictures is a critical element of the experience, attracting Millennials and Generation Z. Similar interactive exhibits at Candytopia and the FOMO Factory have recently made their mark in Houston.

Whether or not visitors have an Instagram account, everyone can still appreciate the artistry of the installation. "The most important thing is definitely not Instagram pictures," Terry said. "It's the cool ideas that all these artists came up with."

Every room is designed by a different artist, with some even featuring a complimentary food pairing. Located in Upper Kirby (3303 Kirby), tickets are $35 and covering the floor of a bright yellow room. Visitors can play in the confetti just like snow. Sweet colored popcorn is provided by Make Your Life Sweeter.

Created expressly by Color Factory, this exhibit features pounds of colored confetti falling from above and covering the floor of a bright yellow room. Visitors can play in the confetti just like snow. Sweet colored popcorn is provided by Make Your Life Sweeter.

Complementary Compliments

A trio of creators (Christine Wong Yap, Leah Rosenberg and Erin Jang) have assembled a brightly colored room that resembles a jail visitation facility in which visitors can exchange kind comments across the glass. "I would like visitors to have a chance to look closely at someone — to slow down, observe colors around them, share an experience, and feel a sense of connection to someone else," said Yap, a New York-based artist.

Terry says she felt closer with the people accompanying her as a result of the exhibit.

In "Perfect Pairing," a sub-exhibit that follows, Mod-Sweets offers guests pieces of candy that compliment each other based where they sat in the "jail."

To the Moon

The final exhibit consists of the epitome of childhood nostalgia: a ball pit. Color Factory partnered with NASA to create a sea of white balls beneath 10,000 hand-placed optic lights resembling stars. Visitors are also offered black "gravity-defying" ice cream from Aqua S. as they exit.

Color Factory opens at 9:30 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. (Mon, Tue & Thu), 8 p.m. (Fri and Sat) or 7 p.m. (Sun.)
Music of the 2010s: Sounds as complex as the decade was chaotic

By Indrani Maitra

T he teenage years are a time rich in self-expression, pushing social boundaries and adhering to global trends. Contrary to parental fears, youth culture is not the root of modern moral degrada-
tion nor is it an outlet for teens to rebel against the sacred values that defined past generations.

Youth culture is an attempt to form a social identity. Teens feel trapped between childhood and impending adulthood, so they embrace the wondrous transition of adolescence. Pop culture allows teens to partake in something bigger than themselves, eventually forming their own worldviews based on what they see and enjoy, not just what their friends or family want them to like.

Teen culture is an artifact of growing up, and every ten years, it’s fun to look back and see how it’s evolved, especially when we see the world gradually devolving into chaos.

As sophomore Thalie Waters said, “The culture of youth in this decade is very divergent, which differs from youth cultures in the previous decades.”

How Pop Earworms Reflected the Optimism of the Early Decade

Music went through an unprecedented revolution from 2010 to 2019. The progression of popular teen music taste was complex just as the decade was chaotic.

Teen pop made a significant comeback in the early 2010s. English teacher Elizabeth Rasmussen Carlson ('08) recalls cheerful optimism of the early decade. English teacher Elizabeth Rasmussen Carlson ('08) recalls cheerful optimism of the early decade.

How Hip-Hop Became the Dominant Force of Social Consciousness

As the world delved into chaos and the digital world took over, the teen music scene underwent a seismic upheaval. Mainstream music progressed from trashy pop to urban rap. Alternative culture distilled into more serious territory, addressing rampant inequality, double standards and gender roles in her album “Lover.”

While in the early decade, an artist releasing political songs was subject to much scrutiny but the complexity of black masculinity and colorism is an exploration of streaming services like Spotify on the digital world.

How Pop Earworms Reflected the Optimism of the Early Decade

Music went through an unprecedented revolution from 2010 to 2019. The progression of popular teen music taste was complex just as the decade was chaotic.

Teen pop made a significant comeback in the early 2010s. English teacher Elizabeth Rasmussen Carlson ('08) recalls cheerful optimism of the early decade.

The infiltration of politics into art is the most prominent change in the pop culture this decade. Songs evolved from love letters to shouting critiques of social injustices.

In 2016, Beyoncé released her uber political album and corresponding mini-movie Lemonade, an unabashed embrace of her black identity and commentary on police brutality.

Chidish Gambino’s 2018 hit “This is America” won the Song of the Year Grammy for its unflinching look at gun violence and racism.

Kendrick Lamar’s Pulitzer Prize “To Pimp a Butterfly” explores the complexities of black masculinity and colorism.

Artists like Lil Nas X and Troye Sivan use music to express queer desire and be refreshing about their identity.

Even Taylor Swift, who has tried to remain an apolitical star, recently ventured into more serious territory, addressing rampant inequality, double standards and gender roles in her album "Lover.”

While in the early decade, an artist releasing political songs was subject to much rancor and controversy, political protests expressed through music are far more ubiquitous now. Maybe it’s because we need to understand the political climate.

“Music is a creative outlet for activism and asserting your identity,” Waters said. “It’s what’s normal now.”

Additional reporting by Sophia Si and Chloe Zhao

Visit the Review Online this month for the next installments of the Decade in Review on movies, television and technology.
Basketball captains model spirit, sportsmanship

By Wenqing He

Basketball captains model spirit, sportsmanship

By Wenqing He

Practice makes a perfect teammate

Rebounding from serious injury

By Cameron Ederle and Wilson Bailey

FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Basketball captains model spirit, sportsmanship

By Wenqing He

Practice makes a perfect teammate

Rebounding from serious injury

By Cameron Ederle and Wilson Bailey

FEBRUARY 13, 2020
stand with them hearts, but we still sense of unity was not present among the team. Fore the club swimmers attended school practice, that which creates a more cohesive team unit. Swim team to train concurrently with the diving team, a.m. and 4:00-5:30 p.m. every school day. This new addition to their club responsibilities. Club swimmers are now required to attend at least one Maverick practice of their choice each week in ad-
dition to their club responsibilities. In one fell swoop, Luhnow and Hinch were gone. Younger swimmer Ben Luhnow has the morally correct thing to do. As Jim Crane said, "We need to move forward with a clean slate." From a publicity standpoint, he looks like the good guy.

Luhnow, who had been general manager since 2012, witnessed the worst seasons the club has ever experienced. When Hinch was hired in 2015, the club was on the rise, and he gave the team just what it needed to reach its full potential. Luhnow’s blockbuster acquisitions of Justin Verlander in 2017 and Zack Greinke in 2019 accelerated their success. The 2017 World Series not only brought joy to the city of Houston, but also gave the players from which they could give back to their community. While Hinch’s and Luhnow’s reputations might be tainted, the work they did on and off the field remains unmatched.

As die-hard Astros fans, we are inclined to defend them no matter what, but this situation is a tricky one. We recognize the faults and shortcomings of the organization, but nothing makes us angrier than hearing uneducated baseball fans calling for MLB to vacate the 2017 World Series title. The Astros are certainly not alone in this scandal. While they are currently the only team to have received punishment from the MLB for sign-stealing, there are strong indicators that many other teams have done the same. The Red Sox ‘‘painted ways’’ with manager (and former Astros bench coach) Alex Cora. MLB has yet to even punish Cora, but both the organization and Cora himself clearly knew a suspension was coming. Not only did Cora instigate the cheating with the Astros in 2017, he went to the Red Sox in 2018 and did the exact same thing — winning another World Series. MLB may be finalizing his punishment, but the Red Sox organization needs to be as thoroughly investigated as the Astros. Days later, former Astros outfielder Carlos Beltran was let go just weeks before he was to begin his first season as manager of the New York Mets, allegedly also because of the potential punishment that awaited him.

We understand that what the Astros did was unacceptable despite similar practices by other teams. If such actions are common throughout the league, MLB should not only be targeting the Astros for doing something that doesn’t upset the competitive balance. We know they cheated, and opinions on the proper punishment will undoubtedly vary. In addition to the suspensions, the Astros were also assessed a $5-million fine, the largest that commissioner Rob Manfred could dole out. The team was also stripped of its first two picks in the draft for the next two years. We might not realize it yet, but this could be the most painful part of the punishment. Astros superstars Alex Bregman, Carlos Correa and George Springer were all first-round draft picks once upon a time. The punishment is brutal. It’s impossible to definitively say how this penalty will affect the upcoming season. Maybe our talent will fizzle out without the potential advantage that sign-stealing provides, but it would also be impossible to say that the Astros do not have superior physical athleticism and skill. You could pitch anyone a fastball, and even if they knew it was coming, it would take a practiced and well-coached player to predict its placement and knock it out of the park.

So, yeah, if you know us, you know we love the Astros. It is a disappointment to know that our pride in the team’s purity and authenticity has been tainted, and it will take some time for the organization to recover. This season you will still find us glued to our TVs or at Minute Maid Park decked out in orange and blue. We hope you join us.

SHATTERED

The Astros broke our hearts, but we still stand with them

By Claire Seinsheimer and SJ Lasley

If you know us, you know that we love the Astros. They provide a guaranteed constant in our lives. Their 162-game schedule allows us to watch them play more often than other Houston sports franchises, and the team itself gives us something pure and genuine to root for.

- Review Online, October 22, 2019

J ust a month after we wrote this ode to the Houston Astros, the cheating scandal broke. Houstonians were devastated. Former pitcher Mike Fiers admitted that the team used electronic sign-stealing technology in the dugout, propelling the Astros franchise into a vicious spiral of self-destruction. You’ve heard the rumors; you may have read the MLB report. You probably have your own opinions on the matter, but the truth is undeniable: The Astros violated an MLB memorandum. We openly called for MLB to vacate the 2017 World Series title. The Astros are certainly not alone in this scandal. While they are currently the only team to have received punishment from the MLB for sign-stealing, there are strong indicators that many other teams have done the same. The Red Sox “painted ways” with manager (and former Astros bench coach) Alex Cora. MLB has yet to even punish Cora, but both the organization and Cora himself clearly knew a suspension was coming. Not only did Cora instigate the cheating with the Astros in 2017, he went to the Red Sox in 2018 and did the exact same thing — winning another World Series. MLB may be finalizing his punishment, but the Red Sox organization needs to be as thoroughly investigated as the Astros. Days later, former Astros outfielder Carlos Beltran was let go just weeks before he was to begin his first season as manager of the New York Mets, allegedly also because of the potential punishment that awaited him.

We understand that what the Astros did was unacceptable despite similar practices by other teams. If such actions are common throughout the league, MLB should not only be targeting the Astros for doing something that doesn’t upset the competitive balance. We know they cheated, and opinions on the proper Club swimmers make time for practice with whole team

By Natalie Boquist

The newly built Lamar High School pool facility has provided Maverick swimmers with a new and improved practice space, but it also came with a new reality for club swimmers. Club swimmers are now required to attend at least one Maverick practice of their choice each week in addition to their club responsibilities. In the past, the team’s access was limited to the Weekley Family YMCA. With only three or four pool lanes available, the team did not have enough room for club and non-club swimmers. Since club swimmers had access to other pools, coaches and practice times, they were exempt from school practices.

This year, the athletics department negotiated pool time in Lamar High School’s new facility. The swim team is now able to use eight pool lanes from 6:00-7:30 a.m. and 4:00-5:30 p.m. every school day. This new facility provides more space while also allowing the swim team to train concurrently with the diving team, which will make us more competitive.

Only half of the events at swim meets are individual, so the team must be in tune in order to win meets. Before the club swimmers attended school practice, that sense of unity was not present among the team. The team has already seen a change in dynamic with the new rule in place. Freshman club swimmer Zoë Halstataris said the change has helped her get to know her teammates and coaches better.

“Only swimming with the people on your team at meets doesn’t necessarily build team community and companionship,” Halstataris said. “When we go to practice with the non-club swimmers, that team bond definitely strengthens.”

Training together in the same facility at least once a week has also created better understanding between club and non-club swimmers.

“l think it could be a challenge for non-club swimmers to be required to attend daily practice and then not be placed in a favorite event,” assistant coach Krista Hensel said. “If swimmers don’t earn a spot, we are striving to put more emphasis on an environment that builds and strengthens the team mentality of collective work put in by all our swimmers.”

For senior club swimmer Will Sampson, the new rule holds the club swimmers more accountable for being a part of the team. The joint practice times also allow all swimmers to practice relay exchanges and other technical skills.

“Even though we are still not extremely integrated into the SJS practice regime, it still facilitates more team cohesion and forces you to be more involved,” Sampson said.

Since the requirement is only once a week, club swimmers have found flexibility in their schedules to meet the requirement.

“Sometimes, I can’t go to club practice because I have to go to St. John’s practice,” Halstataris said. “But it’s not that hard to work around since we’re only required to attend one practice.”

Their ability to choose which school practice to attend also helps them ensure the new rule does not impact their club training.

“I choose to go to SJS practice on Friday morning because my club does not offer a practice at that time, so there is no effect on my club swimming,” Sampson said.

Even though the club swimmers only attend one practice a week, bonds are still formed simply from the experience of doing the same sport.

“The sport of swimming is a family — once a swimmer, always a swimmer, no matter the experience level,” Hensel said. “The shared experience of being in the pool in a sensory-deprived environment, starting at a black line on the bottom of the lane, pushing oneself to and beyond limits, overcoming real and sometimes mentally perceived obstacles brings a team together.”
For many St. John’s students, sex education consisted of a 30-minute gender-segregated egg-and-sperm presentation in sixth grade. At the time, we were not pro-actively engaged with the idea of sex and may have checked out once the presenter compared the shape of a uterus to the Texas Longhorn logo. Although basic sex education is necessary for pre-teens to understand the foundations of the human reproductive system, the discussion should not end in a middle school classroom. Like it or not, relationships—sometimes sexual in nature—are part of high school life. Abandoning the conversation or providing minimal education only increases potential risks. According to the Journal of Adolescent Health, comprehensive sex education is crucial to ending the cycle of unfulfilling and dangerous sexual experiences. Students need to obtain accurate information in order to make informed decisions. Otherwise, the cycle of unfulfilling and dangerous usage, 93% of boys and 62% of girls have been exposed to pornography before the age of 18. We encourage the School to provide an all-inclusive sex ed curriculum no later than freshman year. If we abdicate the responsibility of teaching students about sex, it is necessary to ensure the health and safety of all high school students. Students need to obtain accurate information in order to make informed decisions. Otherwise, the cycle of unfulfilling and dangerous relationships will continue.

Teenagers need sex education. Where’s ours?

F

Illustration by Angela Xu

Source: Guttmacher Institute

77% of U.S. schools emphasized abstinence in sex ed

55% of U.S. schools taught students how to use a condom

of U.S. schools emphasized abstinence in sex ed

of U.S. schools taught students how to use a condom
Weight loss is a tool used to increase self-esteem and make people feel better. It’s February, and by now most New Year’s resolutions have crumbled and feelings of guilt are setting in.

While losing weight is not an inherently terrible goal, the extreme focus on weight loss is problematic. Diet culture promotes the idea that conforming to a specific body standard is more important than your health, both physical and mental.

In middle school, one of my teachers took great pride in the cafeteria fireplace on one of the few cold days before winter break. One of my friends was sipping on her daily can of La Croix when she jokingly remarked that she might be addicted.

The theory caught the attention of another friend, who warned that carbonation could cause weight gain, or so he had read.

A long discussion ensued. If La Croix had zero calories, then she shouldn’t gain weight, but the bloating effects of the bubbles could not be ignored.

As it turns out, La Croix does not in fact lead to extra pounds: its lack of calories ensures that the contents of the beverage will not be converted into fat.

Still, the seed of fear had been planted.

Such reactions are fairly common and reflect a culture in which weight gain is feared and calories are the enemy. In such circumstances, even water — that paragon of health — can be viewed with suspicion.

The Moral Value of Food

"Diet culture" is a system of beliefs that promotes thinness as the only path to health and desirability, but what makes dieters even more dangerous is when society places a moral value on food.

This unhealthy system pervades our society. Celebrities promote dangerous diets while friends make casual remarks about needing to work off dessert. It seems like everyone believes that eating "clean" and exercising constantly not only makes you thinner, but somehow makes you better.

From a young age, I was taught that there exist two types of food; good and bad. Consuming good foods (salads and fruit) made you pure and healthy, whereas eating bad foods (Chess, Gushers and other sweets seldom found in my house) meant you were greedy, unable to control yourself or simply bad.

While some are not concerned about eternal damnation for eating devil’s food cake, many fear weight gain. Dieting is so ingrained in our society that most dread being seen as fat.

Lizzo recently decided to take a break from Twitter after trolls constantly harassed her and made insensitive jokes about her appearance. This rampant fat-shaming is just one of the ways that overweight body types are portrayed as morally inadequate.

Too often we assume that people who are overweight are lazy, lack work ethic or do not take proper care of themselves, yet it is nearly impossible to determine someone’s health from their appearance, weight or clothing size. Both size zero and plus-sized people have their own medical issues. Having more fat cells does not make you a bad person — and it cannot dictate self-worth.

Beauty is Not Pain

Weight loss is a tool used to increase self-esteem and make people feel better. It’s February, and by new most New Year’s resolutions have crumbled and feelings of guilt are setting in.

While losing weight is not an inherently terrible goal, the extreme focus on weight loss is problematic. Diet culture promotes the idea that conforming to a specific body standard is more important than your health, both physical and mental.

In middle school, one of my teachers took great pride in the cafeteria fireplace on one of the few cold days before winter break. One of my friends was sipping on her daily can of La Croix when she jokingly remarked that she might be addicted.

The theory caught the attention of another friend, who warned that carbonation could cause weight gain, or so he had read.

A long discussion ensued. If La Croix had zero calories, then she shouldn’t gain weight, but the bloating effects of the bubbles could not be ignored.

As it turns out, La Croix does not in fact lead to extra pounds: its lack of calories ensures that the contents of the beverage will not be converted into fat.

Still, the seed of fear had been planted.

Such reactions are fairly common and reflect a culture in which weight gain is feared and calories are the enemy. In such circumstances, even water — that paragon of health — can be viewed with suspicion.

The Moral Value of Food

"Diet culture" is a system of beliefs that promotes thinness as the only path to health and desirability, but what makes dieters even more dangerous is when society places a moral value on food.

This unhealthy system pervades our society. Celebrities promote dangerous diets while friends make casual remarks about needing to work off dessert. It seems like everyone believes that eating "clean" and exercising constantly not only makes you thinner, but somehow makes you better.

From a young age, I was taught that there exist two types of food; good and bad. Consuming good foods (salads and fruit) made you pure and healthy, whereas eating bad foods (Chess, Gushers and other sweets seldom found in my house) meant you were greedy, unable to control yourself or simply bad.

While some are not concerned about eternal damnation for eating devil’s food cake, many fear weight gain. Dieting is so ingrained in our society that most dread being seen as fat.

Lizzo recently decided to take a break from Twitter after trolls constantly harassed her and made insensitive jokes about her appearance. This rampant fat-shaming is just one of the ways that overweight body types are portrayed as morally inadequate.

Too often we assume that people who are overweight are lazy, lack work ethic or do not take proper care of themselves, yet it is nearly impossible to determine someone’s health from their appearance, weight or clothing size. Both size zero and plus-sized people have their own medical issues. Having more fat cells does not make you a bad person — and it cannot dictate self-worth.

Beauty is Not Pain

Weight loss is a tool used to increase self-esteem and make people feel better. It’s February, and by new most New Year’s resolutions have crumbled and feelings of guilt are setting in.

While losing weight is not an inherently terrible goal, the extreme focus on weight loss is problematic. Diet culture promotes the idea that conforming to a specific body standard is more important than your health, both physical and mental.

In middle school, one of my teachers took great pride in the cafeteria fireplace on one of the few cold days be-
60 SECONDS WITH

JOHN PERDUE

Nickname
The Kid, JPerds, Perdooch
Dream job
Chubbies model
Weird hobby
Throwing weights like children
Quirk
Wearing short shorts
Theme song
"Cantina Band"
Love to hate
Cauliflower ear
Hate to love
Tik Tok
Relationship status
Lexbot
Red carpet date
Natalie Portman
Phobia
Needles
Doppleganger
My mother
Known for
My academic prowess
Book
Vocabulary Energizers 3
Slogan
I wouldn’t have it any other way
Allergies
Losing
Follow me?
@J_Perds

LEXIE LEITNER

Nickname
Lexbot
Dream job
Ballerina
Weird hobby
Manchester girl accent
Quirk
I drink coffee with a straw
Theme song
"How Do You Sleep" by Jesse McCartney
Love to hate
Lizards
Hate to love
Wrestling
Relationship status
The Kid
Red carpet date
Patrick Dempsey
Phobia
Flying
Doppleganger
My mother
Known for
My sister... if she had blonde hair
Known for
Eyebrows?
Book
Traditions and Encounters AP
Slogan
I’m Lexie and I know it
Allergies
Incompetence
Follow me?
@lexieleitner

FREEDA OF THE PRESS

BY MIA FARES

LINKEDIN  FACEBOOK  INSTAGRAM  NAT GEO
Special Report: How vaping trends threaten teen health
According to the CDC, over 2,000 people have been hospitalized due to vaping, and teens remain disproportionately at risk.
Speech by Julia Smith

Alumna performs at Radio City Music Hall
Isabel Wallace-Green ('15) recently performed in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.
Speech by Abigail Poag

Sara Rose Caplan speaks to PRISM about LGBTQ+ experience
PRISM invited alumna Sara Rose Caplan ('11) on Dec. 3 to speak to members about her experiences as a transgender woman.
Speech by Chloe Zhao and Lydia Gafford

New Lamar pool provides swimmers with quality training space
The swimming and diving team has benefitted from practicing in Lamar’s new pool this season.
Speech by Leo Morales and Sophia Jazaeri

Impact: Caroline Spears
Sophomore Ella West sits down with Caroline Spears ('13) to talk about her work writing legislative papers for politicians.
Podcast by Ella West