

# **CELINE HUANG**

Artist of the Year Portfolio Submission

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"This was not the original plan." That statement sums up *The Review* experience pretty well, because I would honestly be more surprised if something went perfectly our way than otherwise. But that's part of the reason why I love the paper... a masochistic, living-on-the-edge sort of love.

This year, in the nicest words, did not go according to plan. Whether it was having to switch to a vastly different publication process to adhere to social distancing guidelines and virtual learning, running into a million technical difficulties right before print, or my laptop breaking down just as we got started on our final issue, *The Review* team certainly went through our fair share of struggles this school year.

Serving as the only junior design editor and the paper's primary illustrator, I juggled learning InDesign, managing staff, and working on illustrations on top of the stress of junior year. However, I did not let the intensity of my workload affect the quality of my art nor the creative thought behind it, adapting to each situation with flexibility and determination. Despite short deadlines and specific demands, I pushed myself to experiment artistically, shaking off stylistic and compositional complacency. Whether it was addressing sensitive topics (see "Seen but not Heard") or working around administrative censorship (see "Perpetual Pandemic"), I approached each part of the illustration process with focus and care, translating the article and its message into an effective visual language.

I took pains to ensure clarity of meaning, not only reading the article I was illustrating for but asking the writer(s) directly about what they wanted to convey and whether they had any visual elements in mind; after all, the writers know their article best. I would then run through rounds of brainstorming, never settling for the first thing that popped into mind. I played around with sketches, considering factors such as the style, color palette, composition/flow, size hierarchy, page design, and even the page adjacent to the illustration to find the best conduit for the article. My experience as a page designer also allowed me to effectively envision how the piece may work best on page. Checking with writers and others on *The Review* team, I made sure that I emphasized what needed to be emphasized, while working on subtler details that one may notice during a second look, or after they've read the article.

By the end of my third year on *The Review*, I had illustrated a total of 14 pieces including two centerspreads and three cover images for the 2020-2021 school year. But what makes me even prouder as an artist is not just the success of my own work, but that my team trusts me wholeheartedly to deliver the best possible product. Even when my ideas weren't quite understood or when tensions were high days before print, the words I heard the most were "I trust you."

Next year, I am very excited to serve as co-editor-in-chief and take on a greater role in artistic direction of the paper and help train a new cohort of illustrators.

## **COVER ILLUSTRATION: SEEN BUT NOT HEARD**

Negative space of the woman's gown serves as a strong visual element to express the invisibility Black women feel in the healthcare world. Contrast of facial detail between the Black woman and the doctors conveys a sense of fear and isolation. Lineless, graphic style deviates from artist's comfort zone in order to best evoke message of article in a clear, concise manner.

## **EDITORIAL CARTOON: AGE OF DISAPPOINTMENT**

Editorial cartoon for an opinion piece about growing up in the "Age of Disappointment" published in the November print issue. Written in the heat of the 2020 presidential election, the article expresses deep concern for the state of America and what it means for our generation. To express this same frustration from a slightly different perspective, Lady Liberty looks upon the White House as the building burns, a disgruntled mother wondering how her child has strayed so far...and so wrong.

## **ONLINE PACKAGE COVER: THE PERPETUAL PANDEMIC**

Following administrative backlash about the mention of parties in the COVID-19 online package that caused for the original illustration to be cut, this illustration highlights creative adaptability and subtlety of composition. I am proud of this piece because it shows that even in a time crunch when it'd be much easier to whip out something comfortable and basic, I persist in my quest to push my boundaries and keep evolving. Despite the style being unfamiliar to me and thus more of a struggle, I used the opportunity to experiment and produced an illustration that did what it needed to convey a message, but also satisfied me as an artist. (See [here](#).)

## **ILLUSTRATION: DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS**

Unfamiliar with the game, I researched by surveying friends who played and got a hold of its basic elements. The page was originally planned just to have the hand throwing dice, but the shortness of the article highlighted the need for additional illustrations to fill the white space, which I solved by adding the dragon and the party of characters.

## **COMIC STRIP SERIES: FREEDA OF THE PRESS**

Published every print issue, "Freeda of the Press" follows Freeda the Ferret as she investigates topics like independent voters or ferret cloning...and often misses the mark in humorous ways. However, in the final issue of the year, instead of going on another quest, Freeda and Noura, one of *The Review's* print EICs, reunite with a heartwarming hug as we hope for the pandemic's swift end.



**THE REVIEW**  
MARCH 9, 2021

# SEEN BUT NOT HEARD

How medical  
bias endangers  
Black women

PAGE 12

**STORY BY**  
Noura Jabir and Ella West

ILLUSTRATION BY  
Celine Huang

## WINTER STORM BLACKS OUT CITY

*Students endure days  
without power, water*

PAGE 2

## RELATIONSHIPS IN ISOLATION

*How Covid-19 has  
changed dating dynamics*

PAGE 8

## SHE'S THE KICKER

*Seventh grader steps  
onto the football field*

PAGE 20



# Growing up in the 'Age of Disappointment'



ILLUSTRATION BY Celine Huang

By Ella West

Maybe the world has been falling apart for the last four years, or maybe I just have a historian for a parent. Either way, I can see that the culture in the United States is shifting, hopefully for the better.

Amidst climate change that has led to fires and storms and flooding of biblical proportions; police shootings and systemic racial and gender inequality; and in the age of domestic terrorism and mass shootings at churches, synagogues, bars and schools, Gen Z has had enough.

We are, as columnist David Brooks wrote in *The Atlantic*, growing up in the “Age of Disappointment.” In his essay, “America is Having a Moral Convulsion,” he explains that we have reached this point as a result of our mounting lack of trust in political systems, institutions and each other.

Our parents grew up in a time of relative security with a begrudging belief in the government, but the institutions we trusted have repeatedly let us down.

When the #MeToo movement peaked in 2017, women across the country believed this was finally their chance to hold the powerful responsible and raise awareness about sexual harassment. But Amy Coney Barrett’s confirmation to the Supreme Court three weeks ago seems designed to undo Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s legacy of expanding women’s rights.

After the 2018 Valentine’s Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and the student-led March for Our Lives, we hoped for common sense gun control. Back in March, the United States recorded its first month without a school shooting since 2002. Apparently, the only way to stop school shootings is to close the schools.

Barack Obama’s election was a time of hope — we believed that after hundreds of years of pervasive racism, we were finally moving forward. Just two years after he left

office, hate crimes reached a 16-year high, and this past year, the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others at the hands of the police proved that systemic racism has persisted.

Now, in the midst of a pandemic that has left 238,000 Americans dead, some people still refuse to wear masks.

As we assess the state of our union, we must acknowledge that our nation is breaking. We have a president who is challenging the very core of our political system through his false claims of election corruption, one who is willing to stoke the flames of division in order to preserve his personal power. This begs the question: Who is willing to uphold our democracy?

After an election in which more people voted than ever before, clearly, some people are.

And maybe, despite living in this Age of Disappointment, we can, once again, have the audacity to hope. To hope for change, to hope for better, to hope for decency, to hope for a president who will uphold the fundamental ideals of democracy.

Across America, and even throughout the world, we witnessed people of all nationalities, races, ages and genders celebrating the victory of Joe Biden over Donald Trump. This new fervor for democracy, as evidenced by the massive voter turnout by young people, ages 18-29, makes me believe that our future can belong to us.

But we can’t let this election make us complacent. We, as a country, cannot afford it. If we continue to allow partisan politics to separate the nation, we will be right back where we started, with little progress made on the issues that have defined our lives.

Our generation has done little to create the maelstrom around us. We can thank our grandparents and parents for

that. The fire started long before Trump’s administration and has only been exacerbated since his inauguration. But, fair or not, the burden to solve the same issues that have plagued past generations is ours, and we must take action.

No matter your political affiliation, everything is on the line — right now, at this very moment. We must protect our democracy and the rights of those who are underrepresented. Democracy cannot be a right for a select few. Anyone who says otherwise is blind to history. American exceptionalism is a lie, dominated by the myths of nationalism and patriotism. America has indeed been great, but not for everyone.

Our nation has chosen Joe Biden as our new president. In order to move forward, we must honor the will of the people and uphold democratic values instead of promoting baseless claims that serve to divide. We must continue to do the work of establishing a more perfect union for all people. As Congressman John Lewis said, let’s get into “good trouble” and work towards ending the Age of Disappointment by creating the Time of Hope and Change.

Houston is a shining example of how things can be if we embrace our differences. We are the most diverse American city filled with a multitude of cultures, languages and beliefs. We respect individuality, and it’s time for our country to do the same.

Our generation must fight for an America that reflects the essential ideals of liberty and justice for all. With Joe Biden’s election, we have the opportunity to move forward, not backward, to become a country that values all of its people instead of marginalizing them.

We may have grown up in the Age of Disappointment, but it’s our time to make history.

## How to avoid living in an echo chamber

By Russell Li

Each day, after 12 draining hours of school and extracurriculars, I flop on my bed and pull out my phone. I usually scroll through Instagram because it requires minimal mental energy.

These days, social media is not only used for entertainment — especially among Generation Z, it has become a vehicle of education. Far more teens receive information from social media than print or online news organizations. The hours I spend browsing social media each day should allow me to engage with diverse viewpoints.

But this isn’t the case.

First, just like the average sleep-deprived teenager, I want the content I consume to maximize my immediate happiness, not to intellectually stimulate my brain.

Second, the social media platforms that control the rules of the game know this. As soon as I enter the app, the complex algorithms powering the platform display posts that cater to my individualized preferences. It’s

a simple marketing strategy motivated by the desire to maximize user retention — the more content I enjoy, the more time I will spend on that platform.

Repeated exposure to similar content prevents us from reading opposing viewpoints and minimizes our chances to critically consider the validity of our positions. We cannot help but believe that our opinions are correct. Scientists call this reinforcement of one’s beliefs the “illusory truth effect.” Over time, this results in the broader echo chamber phenomenon.

The echo chamber stifles diversity of thought. Repeatedly absorbing the same ideas pushes us to believe that our opinions are the only valid option because they appear to be so widely held. As a result, we not only reject other perspectives, but we also lose the ability to identify flaws in our own.

It is impossible to consume social media without feeling the influence of the echo chamber. Each platform

is built to give users an experience that aligns with their interests, perpetuating harmful consumption patterns.

So next time you check your phone to see what is happening in the world, consider opening a different app. The New York Times, a reputable news outlet with daily coverage, is offering a free, unlimited digital subscription to its website until next September for all high school students. Or try to read different content than usual on social media. The recommendation algorithms will feed you more diverse material afterward.

Better yet, put down your phone for a day. Take a social media hiatus. Whenever you’re in a discussion, in class or at the lunch table, spend time to rationally consider why someone might hold a different position.

We can only overcome the echo chamber’s polarizing effect by making an effort to connect with others, understand their opinions and reevaluate our own.





# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, *r e s u r r e c t e d*

## Club enjoys revival of role-playing game

By Lydia Gafford

Six intrepid adventurers journey through a big house — and the house does not stop. Ever. If you look, you cannot see the end. There is no end. Welcome to the Infinite House.

Ian McFarlane, Crowned Head of the Dungeons & Dragons Club, is leading a group of sorcerers, bards and druids during a Zoom campaign.

Members of the D&D Club have been meeting virtually since the beginning of the school year to play a campaign — or ongoing game — with McFarlane, a senior, serving as Dungeon Master. This game went beyond the typical medieval setting of D&D: players explored magically connected rooms in what he describes as an “infinite house-scape.”

“It was the perfect way to get me into playing D&D,” said junior Ananya Agrawal, a.k.a. the mighty sorceress Sarel. “I’d never played before, and D&D lets me live in another world where I can shoot spells from my hands.”

The pandemic has made the game more accessible for some.

“My players are online, but it’s easier to connect with everyone,” said sophomore Hanan Wishah, who was a Dungeon Master for the first time last summer.

Since experiencing a cultural high point in the 1980s, D&D’s popularity has fluctuated among young people, competing with video games and virtual entertainment. But with an estimated 13.7 million players, the iconic fantasy role-playing game is making a comeback.

The D&D Club is riding the current wave as students discover a role-playing game that many of their parents and teachers once played.

“There’s less of a stigma against doing nerdy things,” said D&D Club sponsor Evan Hegeman.

McFarlane cites the popularity of “Star Wars,” “Star Trek” and superhero movies — as well as a prominent appearance on the hit Netflix series “Stranger Things” — for the game’s resurgence. He says people no longer get bullied for having nerdy interests. Whether it is playing RPGs or enjoying anime, classically “geeky” pursuits now have sizable communities.

“It isn’t any weirder than fantasy football,” McFarlane said.

For the initiated, the game is more than an excuse to use magical monikers and colorful polyhedral dice. The style of playing can include elaborate strategies based on calculations and probability, or they can be more focused on storytelling.

McFarlane creates voices for all the characters the players encounter during the campaign. He considers the game a form of “improv comedy.”

In a typical game, the Dungeon Master describes a situation, giving the players an opportunity to respond before telling them the results of their actions and restarting the cycle by asking the players how they wish to react to the outcome.

A session usually takes a few hours, but the campaign can last months — or even years.

“Anything is within the realm of possibility,” Hegeman said. “Whatever the Dungeon Master’s mind can dream up is what [players] get to do.”

D&D was published in 1974 as one of the first tabletop role-playing games.

The game has been evolving ever since its creation by Gary Gygax, but rule changes in the 1990s and early 2000s contributed to its decline, according to SJS parent Sam Gafford.

“When I was a kid, [D&D] really captured my imagination,” said Gafford, known to fellow players as Lord Honzo of Riverdown, Defender of Icewind Dale. “I liked to think about a lot of the possibilities of storytelling and

the campaign worlds.”

(Full disclosure: Gafford is Review writer Lydia’s father.)

According to Gafford, the culture around D&D during the

1980s was quite different. Fewer people played or even understood the game, which led to widespread misconceptions about the players — and even accusations that the game promoted devil-worship.

“Among kids, the stigma was that it was for ‘nerd kids’; none of the cool kids would play D&D,” Gafford said. “Among adults, there were a lot of people who didn’t understand what the game was. There was some fear-mongering in the news, so some people felt it was the gateway-drug to Satanism.”

When Gafford was in elementary school, the father of one of his friends even destroyed a D&D module to prevent his child from playing.

Another roadblock that initially prevented D&D from gaining a greater following was its culture of misogyny, Gafford said. The artwork in D&D guides and magazines — which were a crucial part of D&D culture — often objectified women.

This imagery was problematic for girls, who often struggled to find a welcoming environment.

“In my wife’s experience, she ran across a lot of kids who played D&D and didn’t want to include her,” Gafford said.

The demographics of participants have changed from the days when mostly suburban white males played. Today, according to the game’s publisher, Wizards of the Coast, almost 40 percent of players are female.

The greater inclusivity means the target audience is practically unlimited. Case in point: of their 43 members, the majority of active players in the D&D Club are girls.

“D&D served as a way for people who feel in any way insecure — or just weird — to project onto a character,” said McFarlane. “The truth is that everyone feels that way, at least a little bit.”

What D&D players love about the game — the opportunity to role play and have a creative outlet — has not changed.

“It is just fun to create and be a different sort of person than yourself,” Gafford said.



# FREEDA OF THE PRESS

by Celine Huang

