

Artist of the Year Statement: Rae Gray

Prior to this year I was mainly a photographer for our publication, but because of the pandemic I had to move about an hour away from my high school to my grandparents home. This caused me to be unable to take photos of our already limited school events, but opened the doors for me to explore my capabilities with art and journalistic design. Before this year my skills in digital art were fairly limited, and I had only published maybe two or three last minute thrown together pieces for online stories. I am leaving staff this year with over 30 published art pieces, and became the designated “art guru” for our publication.

This year I focused on merging the visual aspects of a story with the written content in order to create an immersive experience for the viewer. For Volume 33 of our publication I focused on creating a dynamic relationship between the written words on the page and the visual that goes with it. I wanted the art and story to come together as one whole working together using cutouts and having the text wrap the art itself instead of just the box whenever possible. When not creating that dynamic I focused on the overall meaning to a story and the key thoughts expressed in the finished piece to create the most compelling visual that I can to draw the reader into the story.

The first piece in my portfolio is art that I created for a special headline design for my In-Depth on the insurrection at the Capitol on January 6. I wanted to convey the actual scene of the day itself while also incorporating the ideas that I touched on in my coupling story about the rising political tension in our country and the implosion of American democracy because of the events that occurred on that infamous day.

The second illustration that I am showcasing comes from a commentary piece that I wrote on the second impeachment trial for former President Donald Trump. With this drawing I wanted to express my own personal views on the handling of the accusations of fraud in the 2020 election. I depicted the former president as a whiny toddler who did not get his way and threw a fit, with faceless people in suits in the background representing the social pressures that he faced from other members of his party to give an apology that ended up being hollow and forced, much like a mother would force their misbehaving child to do.


My next work in my portfolio is our Senior Staff drawing for the graduating class of 2021. Because of the pandemic we were unable to safely take the staff photo that we desired, so I took on the challenge of drawing all 16 senior members of our staff together for our senior sign-off page. The art depicts all of us posed around the treasured green couch that we would lounge on over our 4 years on staff in the newspaper room, an artist's depiction of both what we had hoped to get from our senior year, and the reality of what we were presented with.

The fourth piece that I selected is a commentary work that I illustrated for our editorial on the Amazon workers' battle to unionize. I wanted to convey the idea that large businesses like Amazon value their profits and production over the lives and concerns of their workers. To do this I drew the product boxes and the boss in the foreground, overshadowing the concerns posed by the workers picket signs in the background, overlaying smog-emitting factories.

The last artwork that I have included in my portfolio is a visual representation of the white-washing of MLK's legacy. I drew both an in-color and black and white depiction of MLK, then merged the two works together to create the effect of the black and white image being painted over the in-color version. This work was one of the instances where I wanted to create a dynamic relationship between the art and the written text by having the story be flush against the left side of the art.

RISING UNREST





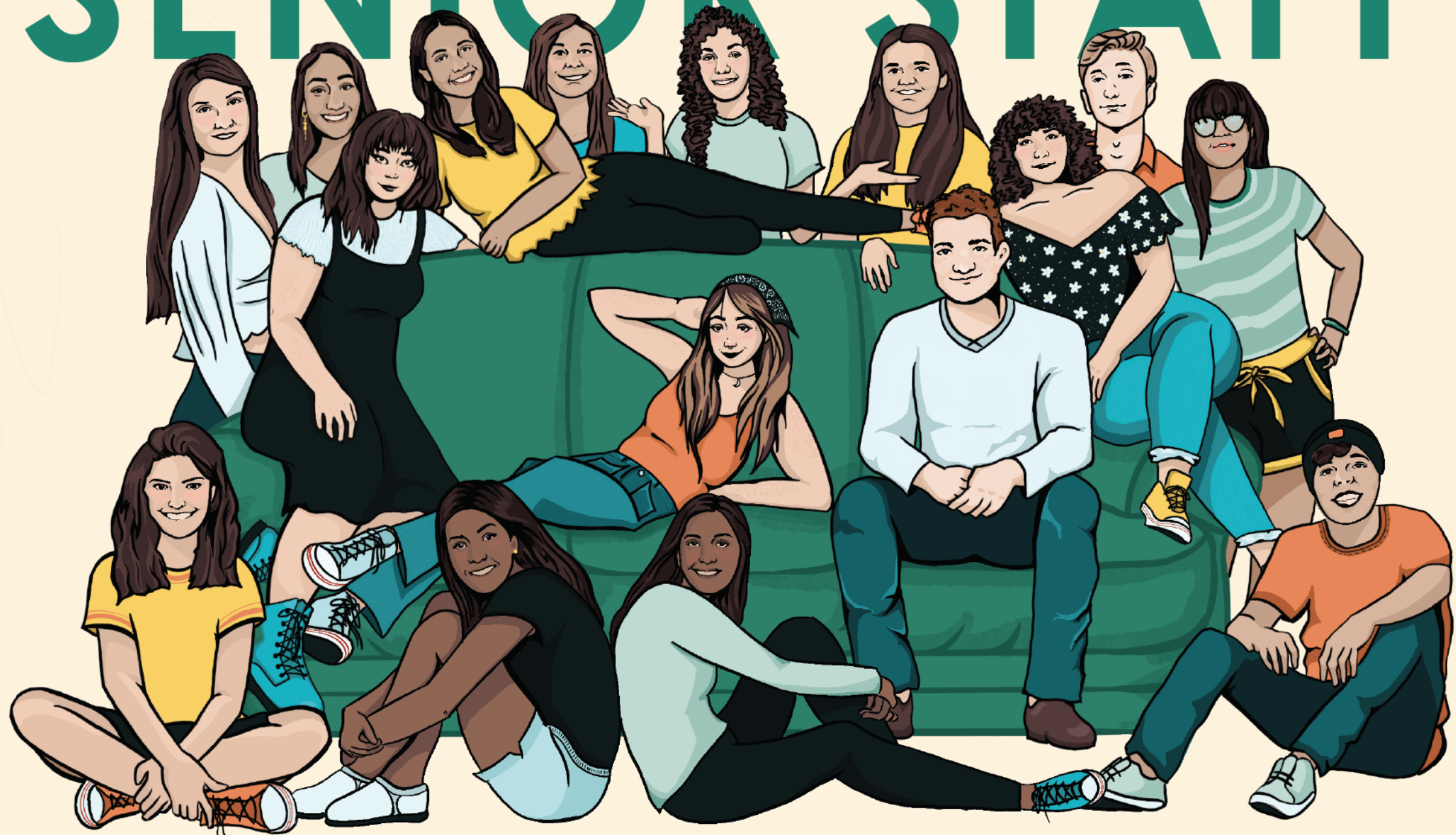
Now tell them you're
sorry...

BALLOT

✓ Biden

FRAUD

SENIOR STAFF





Smug expression

Let us FORM UNIONS!

WE DESERVE BREAKS!

GIVE US BETTER WAGES!

BOYCOTT BEZOS!

WORKERS UNITE! JOIN THE FIGHT!

