



Sarah Golder

NSPA 2020-2021:

Photojournalist of the Year Submission

The Harbinger | Shawnee Mission East High School | Prairie Village, KS

Personal Statement

Although I like to think of myself as fairly personable, I used to catch myself toning down my laugh or changing parts of my personality in hopes of fitting in. But this habit of restraining parts of myself was eventually thrown out when I became a photographer for my newspaper, *The Harbinger*.

Our staff's reputation behind the J-room's door tends to be an even mix of loud voices and hard work. By sophomore year, I had the work ethic nailed — arguably a bit too much due to my perfectionist issues — but the loud voice and visible confidence were still absent from my persona. But then, somehow, my confidence with myself and my work grew as each semester on staff passed. I learned how to take criticism and run with it instead of shrinking in on myself and that taking on a firm and intimidating demeanor in order to successfully lead my staffers or to get the full picture for a story was necessary.

My new-found confidence encouraged me to follow my instincts to cover a story. Even while covering an event I felt strongly about, like protests such as Climate Change, Black Lives Matter, student walkouts or the Asian Lives Matter vigil this year, I learned that a good photojournalist is, at her core, an observer, not a participant. Every situation deserves an unbiased party whose sole job is to observe and record.

During one of the first rallies I covered, my staff and I made the decision to blur the faces of the protestors so that their identities were protected from disclosure. I knew that photos of protestors at other rallies had caused their safety to be in jeopardy with opposers of these rallies tracking them down and hurting them. However, my journalism advisor challenged my decision, reminding me that they chose to go to the rally and that it was not my job to protect them. I struggled with the decision to print their faces (after all, I strongly believed in their cause and did not want to feel responsible for any harm that came to them), and pushed back against my advisor. But ultimately, I agreed, even though I was uneasy about it. When I next covered a protest, I uploaded the unmodified photos with faces toward the camera to my newspaper's website. While I still worried about potential problems, I also understood that my pictures and observations could be part of the tipping point needed to catalyze change.

Like any situation involving ethics, there is rarely a definitive right or wrong answer; ethics live in a murky grey area that I'm still wading through. I'm proud of my choice to challenge my teacher, and I'm proud of myself for not shrinking back from a difficult decision. I still don't know where I stand on the issue or if I would consistently make the same decision. What I do know is that I will continue to learn from others and be open to different ideas while I determine what is right in journalism and the role a photojournalist plays.

By now, at the end of my high school photojournalism career, I find myself eager to drop everything for the opportunity to capture another moment and be the observer in any situation — whether it is an intense political rally or a rival sports game. I've learned an unquantifiable amount about leadership, humility and knowledge while being a high school journalist. I will apply those lessons as I continue to pursue stories that challenge myself and photojournalist skills.

Dodgeball Daze



Senior Alex Curchin makes eye contact with an opponent in their second match of the tournament. Shawnee Mission East's STUCO held a Dodgeball Tournament, their first collaborative event with Shawnee Mission North, to raise money for a charity of the winning team's choice.

This tournament was the first STUCO event our school had been able to have all year. The collaborative event drew handfuls of students from both East and North to compete and pay to play in the tournament. The bright colors and eye line from Curchin to his opponent make this one of my best photos from this event.

A Slice of Anatomy



The Anatomy and Physiology class took advantage of in-person days during hybrid school to conduct a dissection on a cow eyeball to go along with their unit on eyes and ears. In this step of the dissection, senior Jane Ford uses a scalpel to make an incision through the sclera in the middle of the cow eye.

The lighting and detail of this photo made it the most interesting to me from this dissection. This was my first time in a dissection, so paying attention to each step was crucial for me to not miss any potential photos. This was the fourth step of the dissection and Ford had the job in her group cutting the sclera and cornea — one of the most technical parts of the dissection.



Mask Up, Layup

Shawnee Mission East senior, Reese Althouse, drives towards the basket to score a layup for the team in the first half of the game. Althouse was the team's top scorer, making nine of the team's 20 points. The Lady Lancers lost to Shawnee Mission West 58-20 in this league game on Feb. 5.

When shooting sports games, I always have a list of shots in mind that I want to get before I arrive. For basketball, an offensive vertical shot is number one on that list due to the intense nature of the shot as well as how it captures the action of the game in such a condensed way. This was my favorite vertical shot from the game because of the different layers. First is Althouse dribbling the ball, next is her primary defender on the far left and finally is the secondary defense in the foreground. The Shawnee Mission West players act as framing in this photo for East's player to draw the attention of the audience's eye at first glance.

For the New Generation

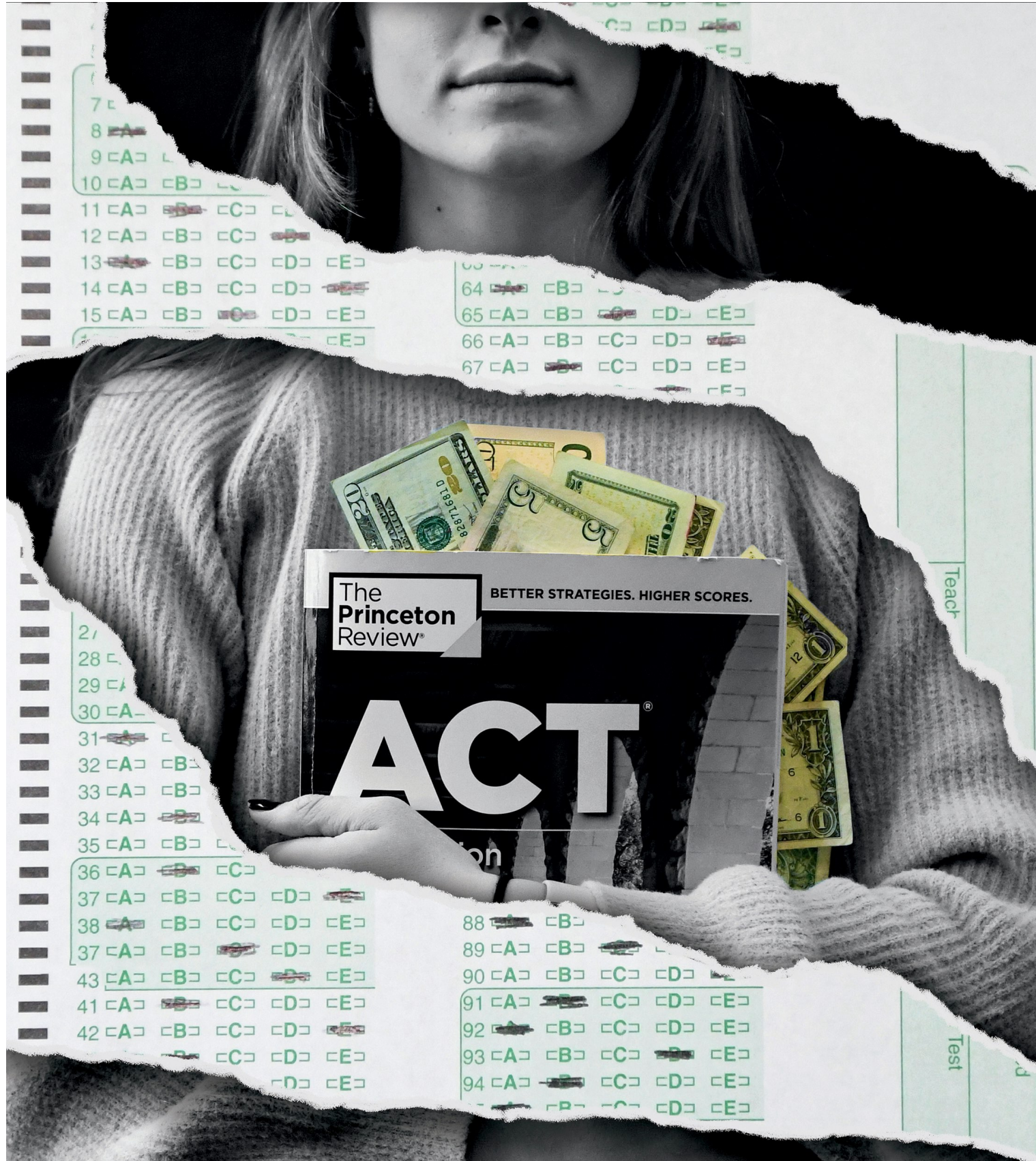


While the crowd listens to Missouri Representative, Emily Weber's, speech, a protestor holds a sign saying "Stop hurting our elders, our women, our people." On March 28 the owner of Vietnamese coffee shop Cafe Cà Phê, Jackie Nguyen, organized a rally and vigil to stand together against Asian hate crimes around the world. Supporters gathered outside of Cafe Cà Phê in downtown Kansas City as various speakers from around the Kansas City and AAPI community recounted their experiences combating hateful actions.

The lighting and intense facial expressions make this photo pop out. The young woman in the center's bright hoodie draws the audience's eye to her and to the words on her sign. This rally had hundreds of attendees, so finding a person who could stand out was top on my list of photos I wanted from the event.

Payments Make Perfect

Cover photo for a *Harbinger* newspaper spread about the excess amount of payments required to perform well on the ACT and the pressure each test puts on the student, published Feb. 8, 2020.



The use of the back and white brings attention to the correlation between money and the test with the exaggerated green color. Additionally, the ripped scantron on top of the photo acts as a depiction of the behind-the-scenes actions that come with each test. Achieving this photo illustration was a personal victory as I spend six hours teaching myself how to use the correct software on Photoshop to get the desired result.