

Diane Guo

NSPA 2022 Designer of the Year Portfolio

Designer's Statement

In my junior year, I started as a staff member for *The Review*, the school newspaper organization. As one of four designers -- we all also illustrated -- I felt motivated to pull my own weight, designing and illustrating as I juggled the stress of junior year, extracurriculars and taking care of my baby sister. For our first print issue, I designed about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the pages and the centerspread, slowly gaining respect and trust from my team. Our design editor-in-chief promoted me to design editor soon after we published that issue. No one in *The Review* had been promoted in the middle of the school year before.

My promotion made me feel like my sweat and almost-tears had paid off though I knew that becoming an editor would bring new challenges, and I could not wait. Brimming with excited anxiousness, I stepped into the role of overseeing about half of each issue and assisting where necessary, managing staff and teaching them InDesign and Photoshop, and designing about 9 pages each print issue.

I found myself facing new artistic challenges with each design, but the constant support and "I trust you"s I received from my advisers, board, and staff gave me the reassurance and courage to experiment. I sketched each page before even opening InDesign, fiddling nonstop with text sizes, different photos, graphics or illustrations, keeping in mind article length, size hierarchy, color palette and flow of the page. I made sure to communicate closely with the writer(s) to ensure the message they wished to convey is emphasized as well as the photographer(s) to achieve high quality and dynamic photos that would visually elevate the page. As both a designer and illustrator, I often found myself designing the pages I illustrated for or vice versa, which I found assisted me in taking into account the finer details that one might not notice until closer inspection.

The Review community is one that inspires individual improvement. The pleasant familiarity of not only pushing my own boundaries while doing what I love is something I seldom encounter within my daily life, hence why I cherish *The Review* like I do.

In my junior year, I designed 24 pages, including 2 centerspreads, 1 cover and 2 other spreads. Within this year, I have found that I have grown not only by learning soft-skills and earning my place as a designer but also by slowly but surely improving in design, illustration, and InDesign knowledge. I cannot be prouder of my achievements and am incredibly eager to serve *The Review* as a co-editor-in-chief for the 2022-2023 school year. I feel that excited anxiousness again, but only because I hope to help the next cohort of designers just like how I was.

Untangling the Roots of Hair Identity

Photoillustrations using photos of the students emphasize the different hair textures and styles. The airbrush effect outlines the hair while a cleaner brush texture adds dots, triangles sparkles to further highlight and contrast the hair compared to one another and against the student themselves. Vibrant colors creating a pseudo-rainbow references the variety, uniqueness and beauty of hair. The bright, saturated hues and large, punny headline also provide a contrast to the comparatively negative issues regarding hair.

A Process of Becoming

Using the colors from the trans flag, the gradient from pink to blue in both the illustration -- the shirts of the students shift from fully pink to fully blue -- and subheadings within the article reflect how gender is a spectrum. The lowercase headline and lack of quotation marks around the pull-out quotes act as a nod towards non-conformity. Purple, the median color between pink and blue, is used for the headline to not only emphasize the importance of the "process of becoming" but also show that this article does not favor either or any gender.

Off and Away

An aerial shot of the high school plaza, circle, and quad is immediately recognizable to each member of the St. John's School community; this cover provides a sense of familiarity in contrast to the college centerspread discussing new beginnings. Photoshop assisted in editing out the immense amount of pollen on the roofs and brightening the overall appearance. The trees in both the circle (top left) and plaza (center) act as a background for the white logo and text, providing legibility. The logo originally has a colored rectangle behind it, resembling a stamp of sorts, but the placement of the picture made that rectangle obsolete, so it was removed. The bottom of the page consists of the school address, website URL and notable articles within the issue.

Addressing the Jewish Experience

The top left photo, depicting the Star of David, comprises real news headlines regarding anti-Semitic incidents. The black and white of the picture reflect a seriousness that must be taken when discussing such events. There are more pull-out quotes in this spread to not only give voice to our students but further highlight the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism. The green spot color matches the green on student Evelyn Arouty's sweatshirt of Greene Family Camp (GFC), creating a link between the picture and the article not only through writing but also design.

Brenckmann finds his footing in the shoe resale business

In showcasing student Max Brenckmann's shoe collection and business, I traveled with photographer Isabella Diaz-Mira to Brenckmann's house to obtain pictures of his shoes. selecting the more popular shoes, they were cut out and placed diagonally across the page to draw the eye towards the triangle made by the shoes and sidebar. The pull-out quote box acted as the perfect stand for a shoe.

Untangling the Roots of Hair Identity

By Lydia Gafford & Annie Jones

DESIGN | Diane Guo, Celine Huang & Alice Xu

PHOTOS | Sarah Clark



SPOTLIGHT

Adonai Ross loves talking about her hair.

We're sitting on couches on the second floor of the Quad when I ask her how she feels about discussing her locks.

"I love talking about my hair because, for me, it was a journey," said Ross, a junior.

Like other Black students, Ross struggled to form a positive relationship with her hair.

Growing up in predominantly white institutions can make hair unintentionally alienating.

"I used to hate my hair with a passion," junior Arianna Doss said. "I wanted my hair like everyone else's."

Ross asked her parents if she could straighten her hair when she was younger, but her mother refused.

"I wanted something that was easier to manage," Ross said. "But she told me to embrace [my] curls."

Growing up, Doss became attuned to the differences in hair maintenance compared to her white classmates. When she was in Lower School at Annunciation Orthodox School, she told her classmates that she only washed her hair once a week, to which they replied, "Oh my gosh, it must be so dirty."

THE PRICE OF BEAUTY

In 2018, consumers spent \$2.51 billion on Black hair care products, according to *Essence* magazine, and anyone who has ever gone shopping for these products knows that they are often locked in anti-theft display cabinets. Not to mention, curly hair products are generally more expensive.

Planet Curls is one of the most popular hair salons in Houston for people with curls, with women's haircuts costing between \$100 and \$120. As they work, stylists provide a long list of products and chemicals that their clients should either use or avoid.

Gerri Curtis, owner and founder of the salon, said in a phone interview that clients hoping to transition to their natural hair need to avoid sulfates, parabens, silicones and alcohols, which are common in hair products.

"You have to go for the gusto," Curtis said. "Put your old hair tools in the attic so you're not tempted to straighten your hair again."

Since relaxers were created in 1909 by Garrett Morgan, Black Americans have used them to straighten their hair. Ross says that her great-grandmother used to complain that her daughter's hair was "nappy," so she used relaxers. Ross's grandmother had similar complaints about her daughters, so they too used relaxers.

Ross has been wearing her hair naturally since ninth grade and recently helped her grandmother transition to natural hair. Ross discovered that the supposed nappiness of her grandmother's hair had been greatly exaggerated. "It was so soft, with looser curls than mine," Ross said.

Ross worries that her aunt, who still uses relaxers to straighten her hair, has been conditioned to believe that natural hair is unattractive. "In the back of her head she still feels like, 'my hair is so nappy, my hair is so bad; I don't have good hair.'"

Curtis estimates that 80% of her clients have had their hair relaxed.

"Even people with looser curls have straightened them," Curtis said. "In the African American community, that's just what they do. Their parents tell them to do it; it's gone on for generations."

Relaxers, which Curtis describes as "burning" the hair, can cause hair loss, inhibit growth and make hair more brittle and breakable. "We're in it for the health of the natural hair," she said. "Every journey transitioning from relaxed to natural hair happens when you say, 'I'm gonna embrace who I am.' To embrace your natural hair is something that everyone should do."

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

Dayton Voorhees started growing his hair long in second grade until his homeroom teacher instructed him to cut it. At the time, male students were required to cut their hair when it reached their collars.

Although Voorhees wanted his hair longer, he kept getting it cut until one day he decided "this is a stupid rule" and sent a handwritten letter to then-Head of School Mark Desjardins.

After receiving no response from administrators, Voorhees continued to send letters over the next two years. In fourth grade, Voorhees received a handwritten letter from Desjardins informing him that the rule was going to



ADONAI ROSS

be changed.

Over the years, Voorhees has received some intrusive comments.

"I've had some friends tell me they liked my hair better short, or it made me look like a girl," Voorhees said. "I actually had one kid at camp try to convince me I was a girl, but I knew that I liked it long and eventually people would grow up and stop teasing me."

Male students can now wear their hair as long as they wish, but there are still hairstyles that the School deems inappropriate. According to the Upper School Student and Parent Handbook, "only naturally occurring hair color is permitted" and male students must be clean-shaven.

Noelle Alexander dyed her hair bright blue toward the end of her sophomore year, but during her first week back junior year she was told to dye it back to a natural color.

"I wanted to do something fun, make it a little unique," Alexander said. "That was the first time dyeing it, and I fully bleached my hair."

Since Alexander has been straightening her naturally brown hair for years, she wanted to do something else that "showed personality."

"For a lot of women, your hair is something pretty personal," she said. "I was getting too attached to my hair as it was. I figured that the easiest way to get it done with was to completely change it."

Alexander understands that the School has the right to restrict hair colors, but she misses her short-lived Blue Period.

"I don't think there should be a rule about hair when we have uniforms," she said. "When it was blue, I had some fun doing cute hairstyles, but I'm just not excited by my hair anymore."

PERFECT AS YOU ARE MADE

Eden Anne Bauer, a senior, always wears her hair in a side braid that reaches her hips. Her mother's side of the family is Sikh, a religion that asks adherents not to cut their hair.

"It symbolizes that you're perfect as you are made," Bauer said. "You don't need to change anything about yourself."

Bauer maintains her long hair to honor her heritage and express solidarity with other Sikhs.

"Men in Sikhism wear turbans to protect their long hair, so they face a lot of discrimination when they come to the U.S.," Bauer said. "I like to keep my hair long to keep a connection to that part of me; it makes me feel closer to my family."

While Bauer occasionally trims her hair, she has never cut off a significant amount.

"It's incredible to think I've had this hair with me my whole life," she said. "Every single morning I wake up and I brush and braid my hair, so it's nice having that routine. I also just think it's pretty."

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Peer pressure often figures into the relationship between teenagers and their hair, especially for Black students. Classmates have encouraged Ross and Doss to get their hair straightened. But they warned against commenting on teens' hairstyle changes.

"Saying you like my hair better when I wear it a certain way is not the compliment you think it is," Doss said.

Ross once straightened



DAYTON VOORHEES

her hair for a school function, and a classmate commented that boys would find her more attractive if she kept it that way. She does not straighten her hair anymore "because that opens the door to those kinds of conversations."

"They told me that if I were to change a couple things about my appearance and straighten my hair, then all the guys would actually start liking me," Ross said.

Attending a predominantly white high school made Howard University student Cameryn Burnette ('18) feel isolated and judged for her hair and race.

"I always felt like I was the Black Girl," Burnette said. "Now that I'm not at SJS, I do feel more freedom to try different hairstyles because I know I won't face any judgment or weird looks."

In November 2016, Burnette told the *Review* ("Splitting Hairs") that when she wore her natural hair at school she received negative comments.

"One thing about being Black at SJS was that I always felt so scrutinized for every single little action," Burnette said. "I don't blame the white kids and adults around me for acting like that because we had such limited exposure to Black culture and Black people."

Experiences of isolation ultimately pushed Burnette to attend Howard, a Historically Black University in Washington, D.C.

"If I really wanted to discover myself and experience life unhindered by the American concept of race, I needed to spend time in an environment where my race was not the first thing people notice," Burnette said.

Members of the African-American Affinity Group supported Burnette during her time at St. John's and helped her realize she wanted to attend Howard.

"[AAAG] couldn't shield me from racism that I faced in the classroom, but it did give me a space to vent frustrations and feel heard and seen," Burnette said.

Kennedy Black, president of AAAG, has always worn her natural hair in Upper School. In Middle School, she went through a period of "trying to conform," but she is now comfortable enough to wear her hair in a variety of ways. At the time of her interview, she sported colorful box braids.

"For the longest time, I wanted my mom to press my hair," Black said. "I would beg her to get a perm. But I'm really glad that she wouldn't let me get one because I would have regretted it."

Black said that a faculty member once complimented her hair, and then came up to her and touched it without asking.

Touching someone's hair without permission is always inappropriate.

"I'm not a petting zoo," Adonai Ross said.

Before she came to St. John's in high school, Arianna Doss struggled with feelings of isolation at AOS because no one in her grade had hair similar to hers. Today, she finds Black role models on social media.

"Following empowering people on Instagram and social media helped me realize that I do like my hair," Doss said.

Ross also turns to AAAG for a confidence boost. She recalls freshman year as the point when she "was able to feel comfortable" wearing her natural hair to school.

Burnette attributes her strong relationship with her hair to her family's support.

"It was always important to my parents and extended family for the children to have positive imagery around them that celebrated all Black skin and Black hair," Burnette said. "I never felt like I needed to change my hair to be beautiful."

GUEST COMMENTARY

Knot My Style: A Student's Brush with Hair Conformity

By Arianna Doss

The relationship I have with my hair has always been touchy.

As a little kid, I used to complain about the tangles, pain, and maintenance, but after a series of rude comments, I began to truly resent my hair.

In first grade, I took classes at Houston Ballet, and one class in particular still stands out nine years later. My mom and I got up early so she could do my bun for that day's ballet class.

Like most weekday mornings, I sat on an oversized bear, suffered from butt cramps and fatigue, and complained about my hair's endless knots. By the time I arrived at dance nine hours later, my bun was messy and frizzy, but it got the job done.

As I stood in a straight line with all the other little ballerinas, the instructor's eyes lingered in my general direction for an uncomfortable amount of time. Finally, she asked, "Who did your hair?"

I looked to my right and left, trying to figure out who she was talking to when she demanded again, "You! Who did your hair for class today?"

I recognized that I was the "you" she was addressing, and in an unassuming voice, I replied: "My mom."

The dance instructor appeared taken aback before forcefully responding, "Tell her to do it better next time."

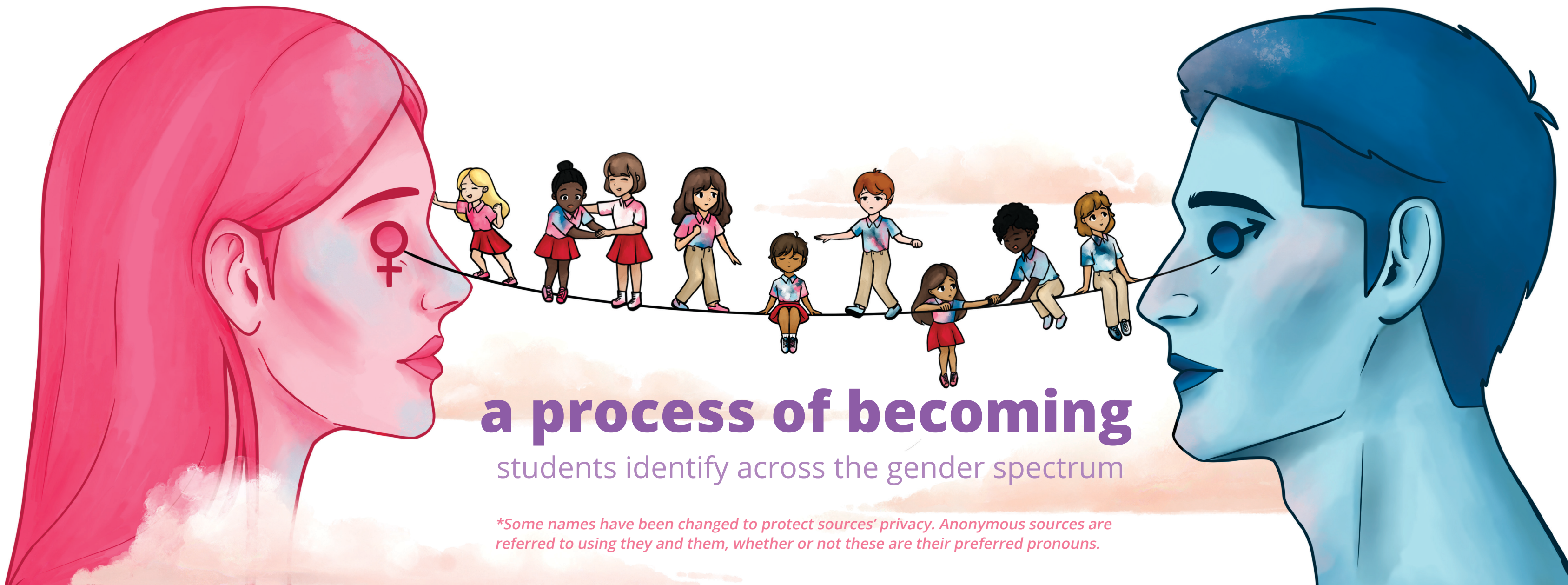
This encounter sowed seeds of doubt about how the public perceived my hair. From then on, a voice in the back of my mind always whispered that I needed to straighten my hair. Straight equaled pretty. I begged my mom for permanently straight hair; she understandably said no. Regardless of the damage caused by texturizers and relaxers, an athlete living in Houston's constant humidity cannot realistically maintain the style, so it did not make sense to straighten my hair in the first place.

As I grew older, I learned more about how and why my hair differed from most of the people around me, but I still looked forward to the couple of times each year when there was low humidity and no sports to play so I could rock straight hair—the style that always yielded the most compliments.

In 8th grade, my mom and I brainstormed different hairstyles for my final middle school yearbook photo. I wanted straight hair, which adhered to Eurocentric beauty standards. At the hair salon, I waited as two other Black teens, clearly friends, got their hair styled. We spoke a little, and I found out that both girls were upperclassmen at St. John's. They too were getting their hair straightened for school pictures.

I wish I had not allowed myself to feel so pressured to straighten my hair. It was not until I got to high school—where I was not the sole Black woman in my grade—that I even considered favoring any other styles. It took me years to find role models who embodied confidence with their natural hair. I have formed a much more appreciative relationship with the curly strands growing out of my head, and I know now that all hair is truly beautiful. I just wish it had not taken me quite so much time to come to this conclusion.





a process of becoming

students identify across the gender spectrum

**Some names have been changed to protect sources' privacy. Anonymous sources are referred to using they and them, whether or not these are their preferred pronouns.*

ILLUSTRATION |

Diane Guo & Alice Xu

By Annie Jones

Additional reporting
by Lydia Gafford

Healthcare workers across the nation have decried Gov. Abbott's most recent directive as a threat to the health and safety of transgender teens and children. A peer-reviewed paper by The Trevor Project, a nonprofit focused on suicide prevention among LGBTQ+ teenagers, found that transgender teens with access to gender-affirming hormone therapy were less likely to have symptoms of depression or suicidal thoughts and were 62% less likely to have attempted suicide in the past year.

After Abbott's letter was sent, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services removed the Trevor Project's suicide prevention hotline from its website's list of crisis lines. Now, it lists no crisis lines specifically for queer people. Queer teenagers who have found their mental health impacted by Abbott's political maneuvering can no longer easily access professionals trained to help LGBTQ+ youth.

Surgical and hormonal gender-affirmation treatments are already difficult to obtain. Minors need both parental approval and a letter of support from a mental health professional before they can be prescribed gender-affirming hormones, which means that many of those seeking treatment must wait until they are financially independent adults in order to transition. According to a 2017 Oxford University study, teens who received gender-affirming healthcare had to wait, on average, 4.5 years after discovering their gender identity. With such high rates of depression, self-harm and suicide, that wait time can mean the difference between life and death.

The ramifications of Abbott's edict remain to be seen, but it has already negatively impacted the mental health of transgender people in Texas and beyond.

Just days after Abbott sent his letter to the DFPS, the Florida House of Representatives passed their own controversial bill, known as the "Don't Say Gay or Trans Bill." If the state senate passes it, teachers will be prohibited from speaking on LGBTQ+ issues.

Frankie, an Upper School student, is hopeful that in Texas, authorities will not prosecute those who provide treatment to trans kids since it is not yet a crime – but they have their doubts.

Abbott gave no information on if or when his broad interpretation of "child abuse" will be enacted, so Texans are left to speculate – and debate.

Bran considers Abbott's move a "purely political" attempt to shore up his base in advance of a 2022 gubernatorial race against Democratic nominee Beto O'Rourke.

"I have no clue if [Abbott's directive] will pass," said Payton, an Upper School student. "I would say that a lot of this generation is having an existential crisis about the future, and that is certainly not helped by personal attacks from politicians."

A PATH TO SELF-DISCOVERY

Quinn, an Upper School student, began to wonder if they were transgender just a few years ago. Since then, they have experimented with different names and sets of pronouns, wondering all the while if they were "really trans." Due to the cultural assumption that some transgender people, especially youths, fake their identities for attention, Quinn struggled to convince themselves that they had the right to identify as trans.

"I don't want to make a big deal about it," Quinn said. "Just let me be here."

Quinn observes that societal expectations of the trans community are often restrictive, with the "social media image of a nonbinary person" being a skinny, white, female-assigned individual with a penchant for hair dye.

Another common misconception is that trans people always know their gender when they are young. Those who break the mold can find their identities questioned by others. The reality is that people often discover that they are transgender later in life.

"I had a pretty gendered childhood, and I was fine with it at the time," Quinn said.

After hearing numerous stories about trans people who knew their gender identity when they were children, they began to doubt whether or not they were trans because they did not have that experience.

Payton, who uses all pronouns (they are happy to be referred to as "he, she or they"), has noticed that their identity confuses people who remember them as a little girl who loved wearing dresses and playing with Barbies.

"A lot of people are like, 'oh, you did this thing when you were a kid, so you must be this gender,'" they said. "But playing with a doll isn't a gender."

Payton's parents, after all, were the ones who bought gendered clothes and toys: "I didn't have any money when I was five," they said.

Sophomore Shaheen Merchant knew that she was a girl at three years old, but she "lost confidence" in herself when dressed in a boy's school uniform. She went through phases of acceptance and denial of her gender identity during middle school before coming out to her friends and family last summer.

"I decided that this isn't going to go away," Merchant said. "So I'm going to do something about it."

Few students have openly transitioned during their time at St. John's.

Clothing is an important mode of self-expression for trans people, being one of the fastest and easiest ways to match gender identity to appearance. Em Trautner ('20), former Head Prefect, discovered that feminine clothing made them "feel alive" while battling debilitating anxiety and depression.

While self-isolating in their Brown University dorm room during the pandemic in early 2020, they freely experimented

with dresses and makeup. By the time quarantine ended, Trautner had adopted they/them pronouns and the name Em. They discovered that trying new clothing and pronouns in a judgment-free environment helped them discover their identity more than thinking quietly about their gender ever could.

"It's like solving a math problem by guessing and checking," Trautner said. "I can't think myself into an identity. It was a process of becoming and trying."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Name-changing is typically one of the first steps of transitioning. Most trans people pick a "chosen name" for themselves that aligns better with their gender identity than their birth name does. A 2021 survey by The Trevor Project found that trans people whose chosen names and pronouns are respected by their families are half as likely to attempt suicide.

Those who refuse to respect "something as simple as a name or clothing choice are potentially putting someone at risk of suicide," Bran said. "People call their kids nicknames all the time. Just think about it like a nickname."

Trans people who change their name are often met with resistance. Trautner notices that "the world has trained us to think, as trans people, that going outside the norm is an inconvenience or bother."

Preferred pronouns are often disrespected, which is referred to as "misgendering." Those who use they/them, like Trautner and Bran, find that some refuse to use the singular "they," despite the fact that it was used as far back as the 14th century.

"You are putting someone's life in the balance because of your grammar rules," Bran said.

They also note that Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the Associated Press have decided that they/them can be used as a singular pronoun.

Trautner's chosen name, Em, is lifted from the first letter of their birth name, commonly referred to as a "deadname." Besides being affirmingly gender-neutral, it also sounds like a nickname, which allows Trautner to use their chosen name without outing themselves as non-binary.

"I like that I have more control over the degrees to which I'm out in various spaces," Trautner said. "Sometimes I don't feel like putting my life at risk at the gas station."

Merchant also found comfort in the name Shaheen, which is a gender-neutral name in Muslim cultures that she found on a baby names website.

"At extended family gatherings, my mom can say, 'hey, Shaheen, come here,' and people think that's my name," Merchant said. "Regardless of how I present, Shaheen is safe, but also affirming."

Shaheen was recently added as a nickname to Merchant's profile on the SJS website.

Quinn still uses their deadname at home and on official documents, even though hearing or writing it can sometimes cause them gender dysphoria, the distress that a trans person experiences when their appearance or the way they

are perceived does not align with their gender identity. In 2013, the diagnosis was added to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Transitioning, whether it be with hormones, surgery or changing a name, alleviates this distress.

"It's nice that forms these days have different options for preferred pronouns, but I just can't use them," Quinn said. "When I click the button for my assigned pronouns, it feels like shoving myself further back in the closet. I type in my assigned name even if there's a box for my preferred name – I just can't do it."

In Texas, a legal name change can cost anywhere from \$150 to \$300 and can take more than six months. Minors need a court order to change their name; if they do not have the time for a hearing and hundreds of dollars to spare, they have no avenue to legally do so.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF INTERSEX HEALTHCARE

The same surgeries that Abbott considers child abuse on transgender kids – which are illegal for minors in Texas and rarely performed in the rest of the country – are fully legal and quite common for intersex kids. Intersex people have atypical sex chromosomes, which creates a combination of male and female sex characteristics.

Abbott's letter also does not mention medically unnecessary cosmetic surgeries frequently performed on intersex kids, even though the majority of these "intersex surgeries" are performed on children less than two years old.

According to Planned Parenthood, doctors and parents typically "decide" what gender an intersex child should be raised when they are newborns. Most infants then have surgeries performed on their genitals and are prescribed estrogen or testosterone.

Abbott's interpretation of the law is enforced, the prescription of these hormones to transgender children would become illegal.

"Abbott is terrified that he's going to lose the election," Frankie said. "If he wanted to protect kids, he would be doing the opposite of what he's doing now."

Abbott has not yet mentioned whether intersex surgeries and hormone prescriptions will be debated when the matter goes to court.

DISSONANCE OF GENDER

Without access to gender-affirming medical care, high school students are left to combat dysphoria on their own. Payton tries to relieve their gender dysphoria by wearing loose-fitting clothing – extra-large sweatshirts are a staple of their wardrobe.

"The shapeless blob is the vibe," they said. "I can't be dysphoric if I can't look at myself. It's definitely tough sometimes, especially if it's hot out and I can't wear a hoodie."

While Payton's identity "fluctuates," they always wear the uniform skirts, even when they feel more masculine and do not want to be referred to with feminine pronouns. "I don't understand gender norms very well," they said. "It's a lot easier to exaggerate masculine and feminine qualities when they're being subverted. When you wear a suit, it's traditionally masculine, but if you tuck your shirt in or wear it fitted a certain way, it reads as feminine."

But dysphoria is not so easily managed. "I know that my dysphoria is very deeply intertwined with my general body image issues," Quinn said. "I'm not satisfied with my appearance 90 percent of the time. Some of that has to do with the parts of my body that have to do with my gender, but some of that doesn't. It makes it easy to second-guess my dysphoria: Am I just upset about how my body looks in general, or is this a gender-specific thing?"

While dysphoria contributes to mental health issues in the trans community, transphobic discrimination and bullying are a near-universal experience among trans teens. And those who cannot share their identities with others are more likely to feel isolated or depressed, according to The Trevor Project.

"Having to hide your identity feeds a lot into feeling like you have to isolate yourself," Payton said. "That spirals into anxiety: What if people don't like me? Am I being too obvious? Am I not being obvious enough?"

Payton notes that the "stereotype that gay people act differently is that gay people act differently in ways that can lead to bullying by peers who notice these differences."

"A lot of the way people act is rooted in gender norms," they said. "If you're trans and you don't identify with those gender norms, you don't want to act that way. That can lead to bullying and people treating you different, and that can also lead to depression and anxiety. It's a vicious cycle – once you step foot in it, you're caught."

Bran worries that friends and family members would be "distrusted" or refuse to speak to them if they revealed their true gender identity.

"If I came out to them, I would lose them – that's just how it is," they said. "People nowadays are so much more accepting of being gay, but gender is a dealbreaker."

While trans people can and do find refuge in safe spaces or with supportive friends, Bran notes that once they leave the relative safety of the St. John's bubble, it is like "getting hit in the face."

"I realize all of a sudden that people don't want me around," they said. "It's easy to forget that we're a minority when we go to a school like this, but less than 10 percent of people are queer."

Despite the progress that America has made in accepting trans people, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation reported in December that 2021 was "the deadliest year on record" for transgender people. Texas, along with Florida and Pennsylvania, led the nation with five murders.

Jay Brown, who co-authored the report, said that the record number of anti-trans bills recently passed by state legislatures likely fueled the rise of all hate crimes.

Even for those who have avoided being the victim of violence, the constant barrage of transphobic policy decisions, like the one proposed by Gov. Abbott, can be exhausting.

"Having to think over and over again about what our parents would be subjected to – that's traumatizing," Bran said. "If I were to ever get [breast removal] surgery before I turn 18, my family could be separated, and that's terrifying. But I don't want to think about that every time I talk to someone."

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING

Through it all, Trautner loves being trans. "Being trans is the best thing that ever happened to me," they said. "I get, in such an embodied, concrete way, to be my own creator. I don't think I would feel this amount of euphoria and strength and love in my expression if I were cis, because this is something I did for myself."

After months of isolation and experimentation, they lived with their parents the summer after their freshman year of college. Trautner decided to come out as non-binary and introduce their new name to their parents.

Trautner's coming out was "one of the scariest experiences of my life, but also one of the most joyous and affirming."

"I always thought I had to love myself before I could do anything as scary and brave as coming out to my parents, but really the opposite was true," Trautner said. "I tried thinking myself into loving myself, but it wasn't until I asserted myself that that created love. For me, self-love was conjured."

For trans people, figuring out their gender identity can be stressful and isolating. Asserting that identity can be dangerous. But Trautner finds joy in the mess.

"I know less and less about my gender identity every passing day, and it's the most beautiful thing possible," they said.

On Jan. 21, Trautner came to a forum hosted by PRISM to discuss their transgender journey and encourage students to assert themselves and love their queer identities.

"Transness is love," they said. "I love myself enough to use a name for myself just because I like it better, to use pronouns just because they make me feel good in the face of this awful world – being trans gives me a very concrete way to conjure up more love for myself, just by my very being."

Though transgender rights are frequently violated – by everyone from high school students to lawmakers at the highest levels of government – Merchant says that times are changing, and the trans community can persevere.

"We've all been broken down," Merchant said, "but we've all built ourselves back up."



VOLUME 73, ISSUE 4

GRADUATION 2022 OFF AND AWAY

Our seniors have navigated hurricanes, the Great Texas Freeze and a global pandemic. See where they're headed next in our special section.

PHOTO | James Li
DESIGN | Alice Xu & Diane Guo

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Leaked Roe v. Wade draft opinion spurs student activism

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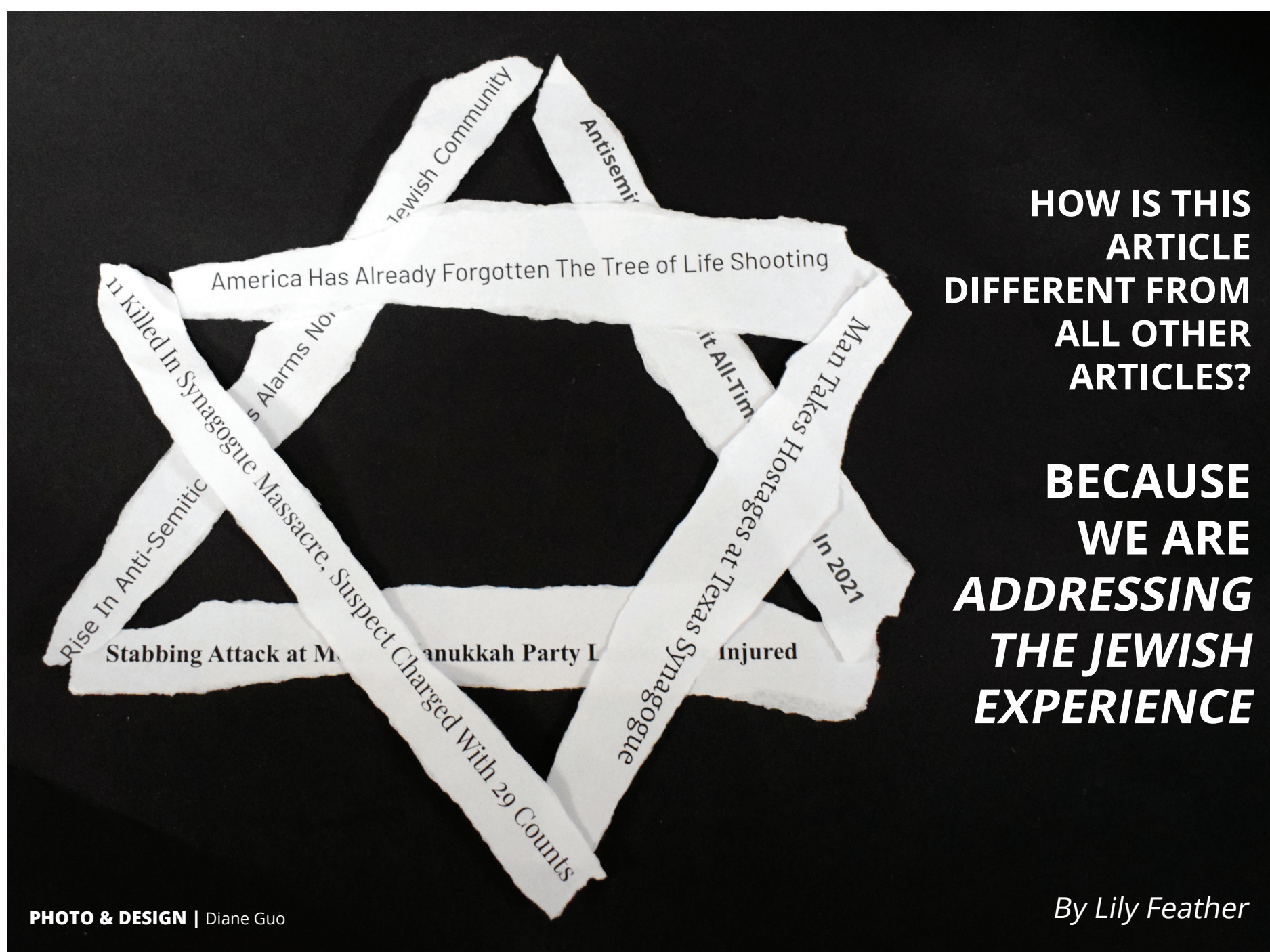


PHOTO & DESIGN | Diane Guo

HOW IS THIS ARTICLE DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER ARTICLES?

BECAUSE WE ARE ADDRESSING THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

By Lily Feather

Evelyn Arouty still remembers the day she found out that Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker was being held hostage at a synagogue outside Dallas. Scrolling through Instagram in late January, she repeatedly noticed posts referencing “Prayers for the Cytron-Walker family.”

Arouty, a sophomore, knew both Cytron-Walker and his teenage daughter from Greene Family Camp, a Reform Jewish summer camp north of Austin.

During the 11-hour hostage situation on Jan. 15 at Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Arouty and her camp friends texted each other, unable to get in touch with the rabbi's daughter. They felt helpless, wondering if she was okay.

Known to his congregants as Rabbi Charlie, Cytron-Walker “is there for everybody, constantly,” Arouty said.

It was exactly his welcoming personality that led the rabbi to admit a 44-year-old stranger from England into his synagogue and prepare a cup of tea for him before realizing his guest was an antisemitic gunman on a mission.

The standoff ended after 9:30 p.m., when Cytron-Walker flung a chair at the gunman and ran for the door with the other three hostages. FBI agents stormed the synagogue, shooting and killing the gunman.

The gunman's plan was to leverage the lives of the Jews in exchange for the release of a terrorist being held in a Texas federal prison. He believed that “Jews control the world,” a pervasive antisemitic theory.

I don't think people realize that antisemitism not only still exists, but is still dangerous.

LIV RUBENSTEIN

Law enforcement representatives initially stated on CNN that the attack was not motivated by antisemitism and “was not specifically related to the Jewish community,” but officials later walked the statement back.

Since the 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue, the Secure Community Network, an organization dedicated to self-defense workshops for American Jews, has seen an increase in security and safety training. The shooting, in Pittsburgh, killed 11 people and injured six.

According to the Texas Tribune, Houston's Congregation Beth Israel typically spends about \$175,000 a year on hiring law enforcement to patrol its grounds, and, on Jewish High Holy days, the synagogue will employ as many as 15 guards and a bomb-sniffing dog.

After the Colleyville attack, Jewish leaders called for increased funding to provide security at houses of worship. Arouty soon noticed that her synagogue increased security.

“It just makes you think the world isn't safe anymore,” she added. “Things like that need to be acknowledged.”

But at St. John's, none of her friends or teachers mentioned the attack.

No one, not even the Unity Council or Jewish Affinity Group, responded to the event.

“Absolutely nobody knew about it,” Arouty said. “That's only four hours away.”

Senior Liv Rubenstein was at a party when she heard the hostages had been released. She was greatly relieved, but none of the other attendees even knew what had happened to begin with.

“I don't think people realize that antisemitism not only still exists, but is still dangerous,” she said.

JEWISH STUDENT LIFE

As a Jew at St. John's, Arouty describes her experience as mostly positive.

In recent years, the school has provided a day off on Yom Kippur, which allows Jewish students to observe the holiest day of the year. During Passover, the cafeteria provided matzah for people observing the holiday's restrictions on leavened bread products, but that practice has fallen through the cracks because of Covid. Food Services Director Alan Mallett has committed to bringing the matzah back next year.

Most Jewish students, however, point to Chapel as a bone of contention. Arouty recounted how she and her younger brother have, on separate occasions, been told by teachers to recite the Lord's Prayer while in Chapel, both in Lower and Middle School. When Arouty's brother told the teacher that he was Jewish, the teacher insisted nonetheless.

“That is totally inappropriate,” said Ned Mulligan, Director of Spiritual Life, who states unequivocally that students are in no way required to recite the Lord's Prayer during Chapel, a point that he clarifies at the start of every school year.

When she was in Lower School, a classmate once made a Nazi salute when Arouty was in the room. In Middle School, a former friend made “questionable comments and jokes” to her.

“You can't really do anything,” Arouty said. “You just tell them that is not okay.”

Rubenstein recounts a number of insults over the years, including comments about the size of her nose or when people say she “doesn't look Jewish.”

“It's not the compliment that you think it is,” she said.

As a freshman, while taking Global Issues in Historical Context, Rubenstein noticed their textbook said that Jews refer to their god as Yahweh because they do not say G-d's

name. The textbook, which is still being used, repeats Yahweh 18 times. In fact, Jews use different epithets for G-d (Jews also do not write out G-d's name on paper) but Yahweh is actually G-d's name in Hebrew. In modern Jewish culture, it is forbidden to even say Yahweh.

While not as egregious as the antisemitic violence in the news, these microaggressions “get under your skin after a while,” Rubenstein said.

You can't really do anything. You just tell them that is not okay.

EVELYN AROUTY

Rubenstein's Jewish elementary school, The Shlenker School, put a shatter-resistant film on the windows to prevent children from being injured in case an explosive device detonates. The Houston Jewish Community Center and Shlenker have received multiple bomb threats.

“When you're Jewish,” Rubenstein said, “You expect and plan around violence.”

COLLEGE PROCESS FOR JEWISH STUDENTS

During her college search, Rubenstein consulted Hillel, an organization dedicated to informing students about the Jewish experience on college campuses. Based on her research, “several schools were crossed out.”

According to the Anti-Defamation League, last year one-third of Jewish undergraduate students experienced antisemitism, including slurs, vandalism and being held responsible for actions of the Israeli government, especially after the conflict between Israel and Gaza last May.

With the rise of antisemitism, 15 percent of college students felt the need to hide their Jewish identity.

“You're constantly having to explain not only that you deserve to be there but also having to explain geopolitics and the history of antisemitism – there's just not time for that,” Rubenstein said.

In recent years, an anti-Zionist movement has become prevalent on college campuses. The BDS movement seeks to “Boycott, Divest and Sanction” the state of Israel. While BDS claims to be a peaceful organization, calling itself “a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality,” its critics condemn it for its demonization of Israel and the conspiracy-fueled belief that Israel is an apartheid state.

BDS has gained a following among self-identified pacifist college students, while its leaders opposed Israel's



Sophomore Evelyn Arouty wears a sweatshirt from Greene Family Camp, where she first met Rabbi Cytron-Walker. Cytron-Walker was taken hostage in January.

PHOTO | Isabella Diaz-Mira

existence altogether. During the current school year, 17 BDS resolutions were considered on college campuses across the country, and, of those, 11 passed at universities including Pomona University, the University of Illinois and Columbia.

Rubenstein noted that Jewish leaders have long recognized the relationship between antisemitism and opposition to Israel's existence (also known as anti-Zionism). She hoped that people would recognize both the antisemitism and anti-Zionism that motivated the Colleyville attack, but the topic made people uncomfortable when Rubenstein brought it up.

“I thought that maybe this incident would be the time where something would change,” she said. “It didn't.”

On his sister's college visit to Swarthmore in 2019, senior Josh Siegel met with several Jewish professors who told him their school was not a welcoming environment for Jewish students. Because of these warnings, and because he knew that BDS was prevalent, Siegel did not apply.

“There's always going to be antisemitic presences on college campus,” Siegel said. “Antisemitism is rampant in all institutions across all of time.”

Last fall, colleges including the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Minnesota and Wesleyan began the semester on the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, one of the two most sacred days in the Jewish calendar. Jewish students faced a difficult decision. At Wisconsin, which ranks sixth in the nation in terms of largest Jewish population, the college's Hillel chapter informed Chancellor Rebecca Blank of the scheduling issue. After further complaints from students, Hillel and other Jewish organizations, Blank sent out an apology letter to the school – but refused to move the start date.

A similar situation occurred at Wesleyan, in which the administration also did not change the start date. Dotan Appelbaum, Senior Board Advisor of the Wesleyan Jewish Community, reacted in an interview with the Wesleyan Argus: “I was simultaneously outraged and entirely unsurprised.”

STUDYING THE HOLOCAUST

For many students, World War II can seem far away, but Jewish students are still deeply impacted over 75 years later.

During a football game back in Middle School, some visiting students overheard that Siegel's grandparents had been killed in the Holocaust. The students then denied the Holocaust ever happened, called Siegel an offensive Jewish slur, and then kicked a soccer ball at his face.

German propaganda used during WWII, featuring caricatures of large-nosed Jews with bags of money, is still prevalent today. Senior Lindsay Frankfort tries to brush off these stereotypes when people make comments about “Jewish noses” or assume that she is Jewish because of her appearance.

Some St. John's students have been told by classmates to “go back to the chumbers.”

“Even though I wasn't there at the Holocaust, it still hurts, because I'm part of it,” Arouty said.

Literature at St. John's specifically focusing on the Jewish experience is present but limited. English Department

Chair Rachel Weissenstein teaches Viktor Frankl's Holocaust memoir “Man's Search for Meaning” in her spring seminar.

In Clay Guinn's senior English seminar, students read Art Spiegelman's Holocaust-themed graphic novel “Maus,” which sparked controversy in January when it was unanimously banned by a school board in Tennessee because it allegedly caused students “discomfort.” After the ban, Maus shot to the top of Amazon's online bestseller list.

Until it was removed from the curriculum last year, students in freshmen English used to read “Night,” Elie Wiesel's memoir about his experiences during the Holocaust. Junior Josie Feldman enjoyed reading “Night” and was dismayed that it was no longer being taught.

“Numbers and facts often minimize the emotional impacts of the Holocaust,” Feldman said.

“In ‘Night,’ Wiesel recounted his personal experiences of the Holocaust, and his narrative left a much greater impact on me than learning about the Holocaust from a textbook or teacher.”

Feldman said that her teachers have handled Holocaust education well overall.

“People hear stories about how teachers are talking about the Holocaust, and they ask the Jewish kids about it,” Feldman said. “That's never happened to me.”

According to Weissenstein, “Night” is no longer taught

in the Upper School because the curriculum is constantly being changed. In recent years, it became apparent that many incoming ninth graders had already read “Night” in their respective middle schools.

History teacher Derrick Angermeier consulted with two English teachers before they taught Night last year, to give them context on the events of the Holocaust.

“It's frustrating sometimes to see Holocaust education get lumped in with the so-called controversial subjects of the historical record,” said Angermeier, who helped restructure Modern World History's Holocaust curriculum last spring. In his Modern World History class, students spend a few days on WWII and the Holocaust, discovering the stories of French Jewish children victims.

“One of the most transformative things that you can do with Holocaust and genocide studies is use it as a powerful empathy tool,” Angermeier said.

Junior Arianna Doss first read “Night” in seventh grade when she had little to no context about the Holocaust. When she started, she told a friend not to worry, because the main character would be reunited with his family in the end.

“Why wouldn't there be a happy ending?”

The shocking conclusion deepened Doss's understanding and made the events of the Holocaust much more real for her. Today she considers the memoir as “life-changing and perspective-altering.”

“It was hard to imagine as a seventh grader, or even now as a junior, society's capacity to dehumanize and do awful things to people,” she said.

Amy Frake, an educator at the Holocaust Museum Houston, was pleasantly surprised when JAG board member Abby Golub reached out to her about giving a presentation for Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, on April 28.

For some Jewish students, the event was too painful. “I didn't go because I didn't want to cry,” said one Jewish student who asked to remain anonymous.

Frake told stories of the Holocaust through the diaries of those who lived it.

“Even if students have studied the Holocaust before, they'll often know the basics, but they usually don't have an in-depth idea – and often they'll have some misconceptions,” she said.

Numbers and facts often minimize the emotional impacts of the Holocaust.

JOSIE FELDMAN

Besides teaching students about history, Frake notes that the Holocaust is still an important part of the cultural conversation. Holocaust comparisons are still prevalent, such as when Putin recently claimed the invasion was to “denazify Ukraine.”

“If students can understand the background of the Holocaust, they can be part of this conversation, and they can judge for themselves if a comparison makes sense or not,” Frake said.

Over the last few years, Frake has noticed an uptick in antisemitism, including hatred toward the Holocaust museum.

“Something that surprises me about my job is how relevant it still is.”



A collection of ancestral photos from Matt Stein, husband of Review adviser Shelley Stein, tell the story of his relatives who were persecuted during the Holocaust.

COURTESY PHOTOS | Matt Stein DESIGN | Lily Feather



MAVERICKS

Brenckmann finds his footing in the shoe resale business

Sophomore Max Brenckmann started his own shoe business during the pandemic, amassing Instagram followers and a loyal clientel along the way

By Wilson Bailey



Like so many middle schoolers during quarantine, Max Brenckmann was bored. So, he scoured Youtube for “how to be a shoe reseller.”

Now a sophomore, his one-man company has eclipsed six figures in sales.

When he was nine, Brenckmann traveled with his father to Chapel Hill to see the North Carolina basketball team play. There, amongst a powder-blue sea of Jordans, a sneakerhead was born.

Before starting Feet First, Brenckmann struggled to obtain valuable shoes for his own personal use. He lost out to typical struggles of the business – bots and lack of time and connections. Tired of flipping used sneakers from eBay and restoring them with a washcloth and some elbow grease, Brenckmann went to his local sneaker shop, the now-defunct Modern Hype on Kirby. There, he met Sahid, an employee at the store. Brenckmann paid above market for unreleased, factory Nikes. They did not even have a box to go with them.

“Sahid was crafty,” Brenckmann said. “Those backdoor pairs really fostered the start of our business.”

With some capital established, Brenckmann tried to negotiate with Sahid on more valuable shoes.

“They were \$5,000, and, no matter how hard I tried, he wouldn’t sell,” Brenckmann said.

The shoes were never released to the public, and Sahid made bank on the resell.

Brenckmann decided to focus his business on selling mid-range priced shoes exclusively on Instagram. He added sports cards, too, carrying on a hobby he and his father enjoyed.

Despite the practice being common among resellers, Brenckmann does not use automated computer programs, or “bots,” to purchase his inventory. Resellers can pay thousands for a bot that floods a sneaker release page to acquire dozens of shoes. When a shoe is “dropped,” Brenckmann uses auto-fill software that populates the information form.

On one occasion, Brenckmann went to the local storefront for Parisian-inspired brand A Ma Manière a couple hours before opening to get his hands on a pair of Christmas-edition Jordan 1s. The line was already around the street.

“I whipped out my phone and used the auto-fill to get a pair.”

Sometimes this strategy yields 20 pairs, while the average customer struggles to procure a single pair.

Prospective buyers then direct message

Brenckmann on Instagram, where he has almost 6,000 followers. Once a price is negotiated, customers use PayPal to complete the transaction.

“Because Instagram is such a direct interaction between buyer and seller, when there is room to drop a few bucks in the price, I’ll do it,” Brenckmann said.

Sometimes, transactions are not so smooth. Brenckmann has been scammed a couple times, the most notable con costing him \$500.

“I had done \$2,000 in sales with this guy from L.A. before,” Brenckmann said. “I bought two Dunks and, when my packages arrived, the shoeboxes were empty.”

When Brenckmann confronted the scammer, he was blocked.

In 2021, Brenckmann moved over 200 hundred pairs. His most expensive sale was a pair of Chunky Dunky Nike SB Dunks, a limited edition collaboration between Nike and Ben and Jerry’s, a garish hodge-podge of faux cowhide and tropical tones. They sold for \$800.



My typical customer is a college student with a fashion passion. But women snatch up all my Nike Dunks, the retros — all of it.

MAX BRECKMANN

Usually, Brenckmann’s prices are fixed. He aims to make 20-30% on the sticker price paid to big box stores, but he regularly undercuts the prices found on StockX, the leader in establishing the value of aftermarket shoes.

“Some resellers don’t like StockX because they eat up most of the inventory,” Brenckmann said. “It’s nice to be able to beat their price and use that in negotiations.”

But beating StockX’s prices sometimes puts Brenckmann at a loss on a deal. In one instance, Brenckmann took a tip from popular trend forecasting

account, Sneaker Invest, and bought 20 pairs of Jordan 1s in the grade school sizes. After collecting dust for six months, the shoes increased \$5 in value, and Brenckmann barely broke even.

Brenckmann usually houses 300 pairs at a time in his gameroom, but specializes in the Nike Dunks and Jordan 1 silhouettes.

“My typical customer is a college student with a fashion passion,” Brenckmann said. “But women snatch up all my Dunks, the retros – all of it.”

While most of his shoe deals are negotiated on his public Instagram account, he has a private story for the sneaker whales.

“I have 50 or so people on that are either constantly buying or buying in bulk,” Brenckmann said.

For these customers, he will typically bundle 20 to 50 pairs together.

“The collectors will pay a premium,” Brenckmann said. “It’s better for the buyer to obtain the last 20 pieces of their collection instead of [making] 20 individual deals.”

Brenckmann uses Instagram Live for his sports card business. He will post when he is going live with packs for sale. When a viewer buys a pack Brenckmann opens it on the livestream, like an interactive unboxing video.

“A guy once bought a \$50 pack, and I pulled a Klay Thompson-signed rookie card,” Brenckmann said. “When the stream ended, I looked it up – the card was worth over five grand.”

Many of his sales come from repeat customers, who leave rave reviews in the comments section.

“Legit as always. Would sell him my liver if I need to,” one reviewer said.

Brenckmann wants everyone to feel as excited about shoes as he was when he went to that North Carolina basketball game. This year, he launched the Feet Come First project in order to further that mission. He has donated over 150 pairs of shoes.

“I wanted to give back to the kids who love shoes but don’t have the resources to kickstart their collection,” Brenckmann said.

With his shoe and sports card businesses firmly established by 2021, Brenckmann set ambitious goals for this year: reach \$600 thousand in sales, hit 10,000 followers and create a company website.

In five years, he hopes to have a brick and mortar store.

Despite selling hundreds of shoes, his own personal collection is only a little over a dozen, featuring the creme-de-la-creme of his many deals.

Unsurprisingly, his favorite shoe is still the Carolina Blue Jordan 1.

“It’s the shoe that started it all for me,” Brenckmann said.

Brenckmann's Picks for the Hottest Summer Kicks

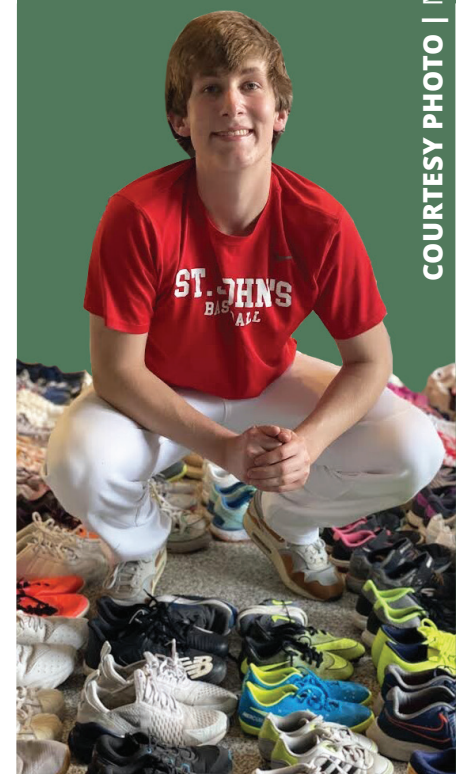
1 Nike Dunk Low "Panda"

2 Air Jordan 4 "Lightning"

3 Air Jordan 1 High "University Blue"

4 Air Jordan 11 "Cool Grey"

5 Yeezy Slides



COURTESY PHOTO | Max Brenckmann