



VOLUME 74, ISSUE 1



**Warning**  
Image may be distorted  
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# The Struggle to Conform

## *How Eurocentric beauty standards alter our self-perceptions*

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DESIGN | Alice Xu



STORY BY Aleena Gilani

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# Weatherill brings grace, gratitude to Upper School

By Lauren Baker & Lillian Poag

**O**n the coffee table in Kevin Weatherill's office sits a bowl of colorful salt water taffy from Ocean City, New Jersey. The new Head of Upper School invites us in and offers us each a piece.

Visiting Shriver's, a beachfront taffy store, during the summer is a generational tradition in Weatherill's family, and each fall he brings home taffy to share with his school. This year marked the beginning of a new tradition: extending his roots to St. John's.

Weatherill introduced himself to the Upper School at the opening assembly, where he referenced the immortal line from the 1989 baseball film "Field of Dreams" – "If you build it, he will come" – to analogize the excitement of bringing students back to campus.

A few weeks later, he spoke in Chapel about kindness in the face of adversity. He recounted his experience caring for his twin brother who, due to complications at birth, was born with cerebral palsy.

"In a space like St. John's, I became part of a community that allowed me to grapple with the proposition of how five minutes could lead to such different opportunities in life," Weatherill said.

Before moving to Houston in June, Weatherill worked at schools in Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina. He and his wife spent their first summer in Texas taking his five-year-old twins, Grant and Harper, to the Houston Zoo, the Museum of Natural Science, the Children's Museum and Astros games.

When it comes to baseball allegiances, Weatherill admitted he was in the process of becoming an Astros fan – strong emphasis on "becoming."

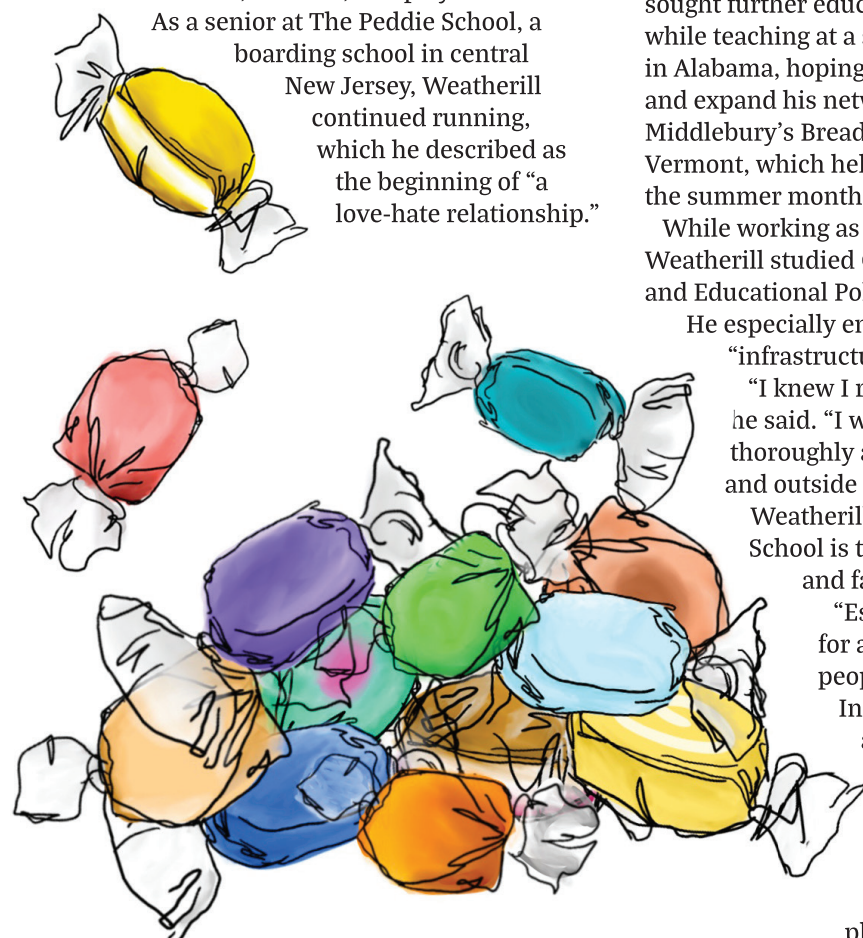
"I'm a firm believer that you can have both a National League team and an American League team," Weatherill said. "I have a strong allegiance to all Philadelphia teams, but the Phillies are in the National League – so I can be open to the Astros."

Although Weatherill was excited the Phillies qualified as a Wild Card team, clinching their spot in Houston, he concedes they may not be World Series-ready for another couple years.

Athletics played a significant part in Weatherill's upbringing; he ran and played soccer, ice hockey, basketball and baseball.

"If it was in season," he said, "we played it."

As a senior at The Peddie School, a boarding school in central New Jersey, Weatherill continued running, which he described as the beginning of "a love-hate relationship."



Head of Upper School Kevin Weatherill's first goal is to build connections with students and faculty.

PHOTO | Isabella Diaz-Mira

The next year he was running cross country and track at Bucknell University.

Weatherill went to college knowing he was going to be a teacher.

"I loved that experience of writing my ideas and expressing things that I had never before shared with anyone," Weatherill said. "English was this thing I understood and studied well, but it also had a personal application in my life."

Weatherill's predecessor, Hollis Amley, also studied the humanities. Dean of Students Bailey Duncan says this background allows both administrators to "make personal connections with others."

After college, Weatherill sought further education while teaching at a school in Alabama, hoping to renew his love of teaching and expand his network of educators. He attended Middlebury's Bread Loaf School of English in Vermont, which helps teachers earn degrees during the summer months.

While working as a college counselor in Alabama, Weatherill studied Organizational Leadership and Educational Policy at Vanderbilt University.

He especially enjoyed learning about the "infrastructure of education."

"I knew I really loved being in schools," he said. "I wanted to understand them as thoroughly as I could, both in the classroom and outside of it."

Weatherill's first goal as the Head of Upper School is to build connections with students and faculty.

"Establishing goals or initiatives for a place before getting to know its people is foolish," Weatherill said.

In the spring, Weatherill is teaching a senior English seminar focusing on children's literature, which he hopes will help him "better understand the people I'm meant to lead."

Beyond teaching, Weatherill plans to attend as many

athletic and fine arts events as he can, and he is looking forward to attending the fall play, "Clue," and experiencing Kinkaid Week. He has already attended the Fall One Acts and a debate tournament, and watched every fall sports team in action.

"It's one thing to see students interacting in English – that's a graduation requirement. You have to be there," he said. "There is a different motivation behind joining a team or production. If you're interested in school and the life of students, you should always be keen when students are choosing to do something they're passionate about."

Weatherill's advice for students is simple: "Act with grace and gratitude."

Looking back on his earlier years in education, Weatherill admits he did not take

enough time to find joy in what he was doing. He now understands that "you find joy if you're appreciative of the people around you and the experiences you have."

An easy way to spread gratitude, Weatherill says, is by simply saying "thank you" more often. Not only is it polite, but it honors the work of others.

Weatherill appreciates the warm welcome the community has given him, and he is greatly enjoying his leadership role so far.

"Part of what has been so rewarding early on is that the School has exceeded expectations," he said. "I came here knowing St. John's is a great school, but there is a difference between being on the outside looking in and working within the school daily."

As we left his office, Weatherill thanked us for the interview.

"Even the idea that someone would want to interview me shows the genuine care people have for others in this community."

You find joy if you're appreciative of the people around you and the experiences you have.

KEVIN WEATHERILL



ILLUSTRATION | Lucy Walker

# Protests spark fear, memories of 1979 Iranian Revolution



Seti Shalchi (front row, second from right) left Iran when the Islamic Republic took all of her family's possessions, including photos. This picture is one of only a few remnants of her childhood.

By Annie Jones

*We have omitted Sophia's last name from this online edition to protect her family.*

In 1983, Sophia's grandmother fled Iran with her husband and children, leaving her family behind. Last month, she returned alone to a tension-filled Tehran for her sister's funeral, worried that it would be the last time she would ever see her family.

Protests in Iran began when news broke that Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman, died in police custody on Sept. 16 after being arrested for improperly wearing her headscarf, or hijab. Police claimed that she died suddenly of a heart attack; doctors determined that her skull had been fractured. Her father maintained that she was beaten to death by the police – until he, too, was arrested.

In response to the protests, the Iranian government has restricted the country's internet access and shut down Instagram and WhatsApp. It has been difficult for Sophia, a senior and The Review's production manager, to confirm that her 79-year-old grandmother is safe.

"She is holed up in her sister's apartment with the shades drawn and the doors locked," Sophia said. "Every city is in flames, and the only contact we have had with her is one email."

The streets of Tehran are flooded with protesters. Women have begun publicly shaving their heads and burning their hijabs – in Sophia's words, "begging for freedom."

A few brief videos taken by protesters have made it out of Iran. In one clip, a woman dances before casting her hijab into a fire. Another shows a woman cutting her hair before her a massive crowd chanting "zan, zendegi, azadi," which translates to "woman, life, freedom."

"All of these young women are just sick and tired, and they can't live anymore," Sophia said. "When you grow up knowing that there could have been something better for you, why wouldn't you try and fight for it?"

Since Amini's death, police have killed at least 150 protesters, spraying them with gunfire and poison gas. Hundreds more have been injured or arrested, including the local female journalist who broke the story, now in solitary confinement.

"The government has declared war on their own people," said Seti Shalchi, a substitute teacher and parent of an SJS graduate.

The current Iranian government took power in 1979, when the first Ayatollah overthrew the country's monarch, Mohamed Reza Shah. The new Islamic establishment implemented Sharia law, a justice system built on conservative Islamic values. The government then established a religious law-enforcement group, the Guidance Police – known to the public as the morality police.

In recent years, economic devastation brought on by U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, coupled with heavy sanctions, has gripped the country. A weakened oil industry and high unemployment rates have left young people with little hope for the future.

"They're not only protesting against the hijab," said Barbara DiPaolo, who taught Modern Middle East until her retirement in 2021. "They are protesting against the government itself. There are even some clerics that are speaking out."

But overwhelmingly, the recent protests are led by young women who have only lived under the Islamic Republic.

COURTESY PHOTO | Seti Shalchi

Shalchi's family lived in Iran until she was 15, when the first Ayatollah of the Islamic Republic overthrew the Shah and banished her family from the country.

As a teenager, Shalchi attended boarding school in Switzerland; the last time she visited Iran was the summer of 1978. Her father was an engineer who had worked on the Shah's palace, which was justification enough for the new regime to take all of her family's possessions while they were visiting her at school.

"They took everything, from our photo albums to our dog," Shalchi said. "I haven't had a Persian passport since 1979."

Before the Islamic Republic, Shalchi says that women were allowed more agency in how they dressed and expressed themselves.

"We walked around in shorts and t-shirts. We used to go to the beach in bikinis," Shalchi said. "Now, you see these young, educated people trying to fight for their human rights and getting killed and beaten and tortured."

Former president Hassan Rouhani relaxed rules around the hijab, but

when Ebrahim Raisi came to power after a highly controversial 2021 election, he tightened restrictions. The Quran does not state that women wear a headscarf, so DiPaolo sees Raisi's stricter enforcement of Sharia law as an assertion of power.

"The hijab has always been unpopular," DiPaolo said. "The new president is much more conservative than the one before, so he initiated new laws where they can get 10 days to a month in jail, they can be fined, they can be lashed – publicly beaten with sticks."

Sophia's father fled Iran at age 14 after the establishment of the morality police and mandatory military enlistment. Sophia has never met her family in Iran or seen the country where her father grew up.

"It can be very lonely to be from a country that you can never go visit," Sophia said. "To never know that side of my family, never know that language, never know the culture or emotions beyond anger and sadness and fear."

Growing up in schools with few Middle Eastern students, she has felt overlooked because Persians often look "racially ambiguous enough" for their struggles to be ignored by most Americans.

"What we are worrying about is: are my relatives going to be arrested for not wearing the right clothing? Am I ever going to meet them? When they die, am I going to be able to go to their funerals?"

Sophia has, in fact, already missed two family funerals because of the ongoing violence.

The United States has had no formal relations with Iran since the 1979 hostage crisis, when 52 Americans were held hostage in the embassy for 444 days. The nation has watched as protests flame up every few years – the 2009 Green Movement and 2018 economic protests led to more than 100 deaths and nearly 8,000 arrests, but elicited little response from the U.S.

But these protests especially, Sophia says, cannot be overlooked.

"The Iranian government is not afraid to kill and forget," she said. "And if we keep forgetting, we're doing their jobs for them."

**The Iranian government is not afraid to kill and forget. And if we keep forgetting, we're doing their jobs for them.**

SOPHIA

## China-Taiwan conflict hits close to home

By Elizabeth Hu & Jennifer Liu

Kit Wah Tam said a final goodbye to her infant daughter before fleeing with the rest of the Kuomintang, members of the Chinese National Party, to nearby Taiwan around 1949. She promised the Western missionaries that she would come back for her daughter after she settled down with her two other children. But when she returned just a few months later, it was too late – her baby had already been adopted.

The missionaries had given her child to a family just a few blocks away, but they refused to disclose her whereabouts. By the time she was reintroduced to her daughter through a meeting set up by other family members, Kit was already in her 70s.

Today, Kit is 95 years old and lives in Hong Kong. According to her great-granddaughter, junior Bella Hendricks, Kit has expressed that not raising her daughter "was one of her biggest regrets."

While Kit's story ended with a reunion, many refugees never found their loved ones after the Chinese Civil War ended in December 1949.

In recent years, China has become more aggressive in its long-standing efforts to unite the mainland and Taiwan. In August, the Chinese army ramped up military activities in the waters around Taiwan, including naval deployments and missile launches. The display was in response to a visit by U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan.

"China has been on this quest to reclaim all their lost land and maintain any land they risk losing," said senior Diane Guo, an editor-in-chief of The Review, whose parents emigrated from China in the early '90s. "That's why they're so fiercely defending the South China Sea and Taiwan."

Although the majority of Taiwanese citizens do not think war will break out, decades of anxiety have affected generations of Chinese emigrants.

Chinese teacher Summer Pao's grandmother moved from China to Taiwan for more religious freedom and better job opportunities in the 1940s. Years after the war ended, Pao's grandmother still felt lingering anxiety, which she impressed on her children, including Pao's mother.

"My mom had fear in her heart growing up," Pao said. "The provocative behavior from China is feeding into that fear again."

Despite the older Taiwanese generation's resentment towards the Communist government, they still feel a strong connection to China. Taiwan has inherited many of its cultural traditions from China, including popular foods and national holidays. As time passes, however, the children and grandchildren of these immigrants do not feel that same cultural tie.

Taiwan became a constitutional republic in 1996 while China remains under a Communist system. Many key differences have arisen in Taiwan as a result of governmental separation, such as less government interference in property ownership and a more welcoming stance towards outside influence. Other distinctions between the two show up in their languages: Taiwan uses traditional Chinese while mainland China uses the more modern, simplified Chinese.

Most mainland Chinese people recognize Taiwan as an independent government but still consider it a part of China. On the other hand, indigenous Taiwanese people, as well as those who fled after the civil war, firmly maintain that Taiwan is a separate country.

Pao says that it does not matter whether or not Taiwan officially declares its independence through an all-out war or a peaceful declaration. Their different passports, currencies and systems of government already make Taiwan an independent nation.

"China and Taiwan are not the same country," Pao said. "But if that statement is going to cause a lot of trouble, we'd rather not say it."

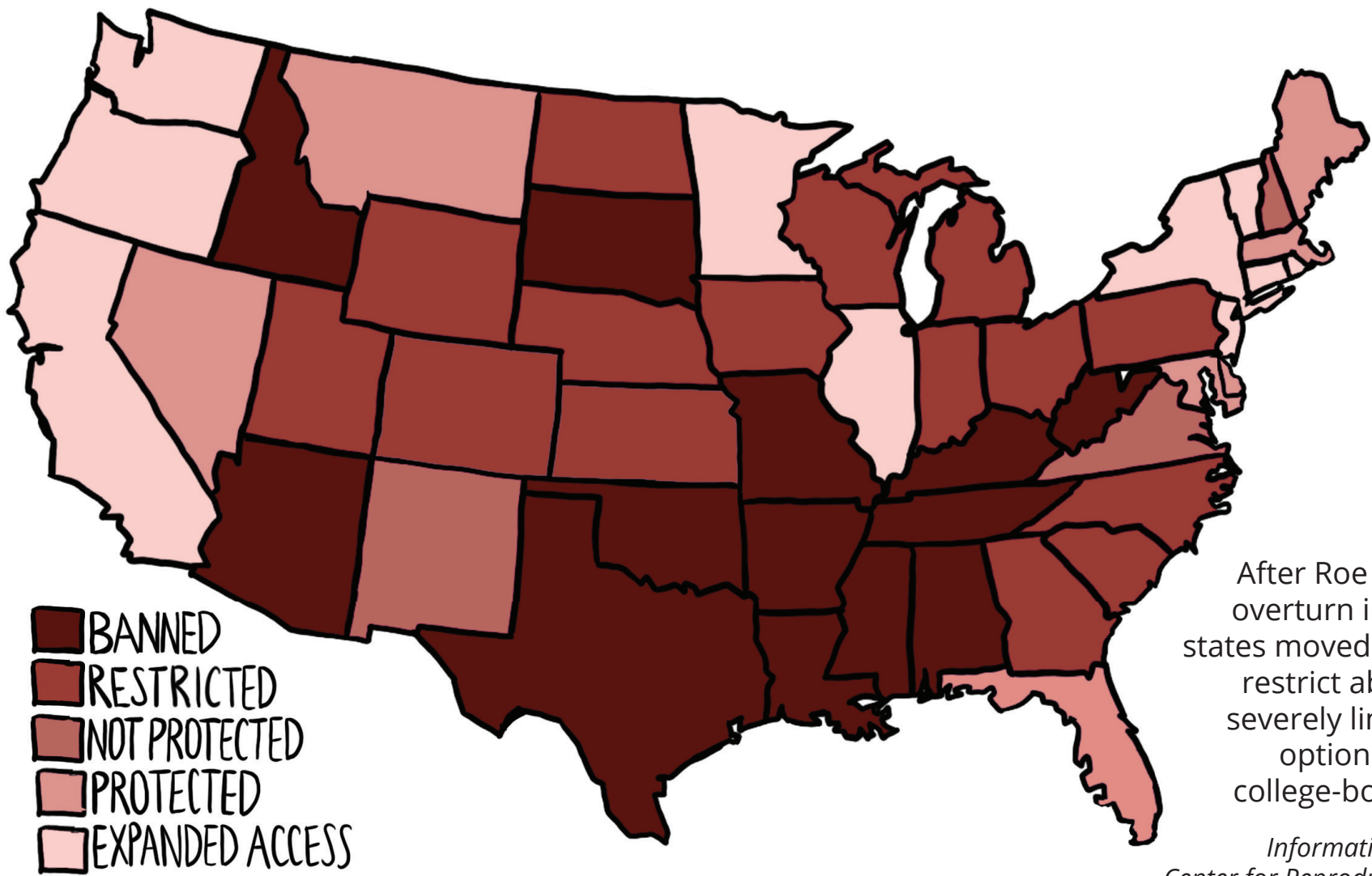
Taiwan and the United States have a long-standing friendship. President Joe Biden has even promised to stand with Taiwan should China attack, applying international pressure on the Chinese government.

Yet the U.S. alliance with Taiwan increases tension between the U.S. and China. On Sept. 24, the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, said at the UN General Assembly that Beijing would take forceful steps against any "external interference."

"I think this is really a competition between America and China," Pao said. "We're just caught in between."

Additional reporting by Aleena Gilani

# Where to apply? Abortion, LGBTQ+ rights laws complicate college application process



After Roe v. Wade's overturn in June, 28 states moved to ban or restrict abortion — severely limiting the options of many college-bound girls.  
Information from the Center for Reproductive Rights

By Annie Jones

ILLUSTRATION | Lily Feather

Due to the private nature of the topics discussed, and of the college application process in general, all students will remain anonymous, and names have been changed to protect their identities.

As a transgender junior, Carey has already decided that they will move far away from Texas for college – to Canada, specifically.

Carey refuses to attend a college where they would encounter significant barriers to transitioning as an adult. “It’s not something I’m going to do for a bit,” they said. “It’s the rest of my life.”

So the South, most of the Midwest, and the Great Plains are out – very few states in these regions offer Medicaid coverage of transition surgeries or hormone replacement therapy. In the most populous Canadian provinces, both treatments are significantly cheaper and easier to access.

Carey, who keeps track of when the state legislature meets and what they will discuss, expects the situation for trans people to get worse before it gets better. Yet they cannot simply make their college decision based on the current political landscape; they try to predict how the culture will change in the years to come.

From a slew of so-called “bathroom bans” to the proposed criminalization of transition care for minors in Florida and Texas, local laws restricting trans rights have become a priority in Republican-led legislatures.

“Even if they aren’t getting passed right now, they’re getting proposed,” Carey said. “This is the same thing with the heartbeat bill that started in Alabama: it was unconstitutional at first, but continued pushing of the conversation to a more conservative place eventually overturned Roe v. Wade.”

Arkansas, Mississippi, Virginia and West Virginia have already banned transgender students from competing in intercollegiate athletic competitions that do not match their assigned gender.

Virginia has made it difficult for young adults to socially transition without coming out to their parents by requiring faculty to refer to trans students by their given names and pronouns unless a parent files a written petition.

Carey is far from the only student crafting their college list with these restrictions in mind. But college counselor Jeremy Johnson has noticed that students typically decide which regions to focus on prior to their first meeting with their counselor.

“The students can be self-selective without saying it out loud,” Johnson said. “We’ll have statements like this, for

one reason or another: ‘I’m avoiding the Deep South.’”

According to Johnson, other college counselors echo his sentiment. Although it has come up in a “handful” of conversations, students don’t commonly bring up state laws on women’s and LGBTQ+ rights to their college counselors because students can do their own research beforehand.

The density of highly selective institutions in certain regions influences college decisions more than political leanings, Johnson said. On the wall of his office hangs a map of American colleges that he gestures to, pointing out that the most queer-friendly regions – the East and West coasts – are also home to the Ivies and the University of California system.

Mavericks prefer the Northeast to the Rocky Mountains, but not necessarily because of their views on abortion, Johnson said. He adds that the popularity of certain colleges “ebbs and

flows,” but the most applied-to schools remain relatively constant, even as state laws change.

For one senior girl, who is mostly applying to schools in the South and Southeast, the policies of state legislatures did not matter.

“I’ve never even thought about it,” she said. “It didn’t occur to me as a factor.”

According to the School Profile compiled by college counseling, of the out-of-state universities in which ten or more St. John’s students have enrolled since 2018, five are in highly restrictive states regarding abortion: Tulane, Vanderbilt, Washington University in St. Louis, Duke and Wake Forest.

Out-of-state colleges that are popular among graduates and still have access to abortion are the University of Chicago, the University of Southern California, and all of the Ivy League, save the University of Pennsylvania.

The Washington Post recently reported that “prestigious colleges and universities are likely to be in high demand regardless of changes in abortion law.”

While state-level politics are important to some, they do not necessarily dictate campus culture.

“College campuses as a whole tend to be more liberal environments, even within conservative areas,” Johnson said. “But in a blue state, it is possible to find a more conservative environment. Students don’t wrap their heads around that quite as much as they focus on the region.”

Carey is in a position to prioritize the legislative environment over financial considerations: “I am a very privileged person that I can go where I want for

college,” acknowledging that theirs is far from the typical experience.

Asher, a transgender senior, is at the tail end of the college application process, but they still do not know if they will stay close to home. Since in-state colleges are generally more affordable, Texas schools seem the most realistic for their family.

“I’m not the most aware about the medical transition laws in my home state, but I think most of them apply to people who are under the age of 18,” Asher said, “so I’m not overly worried now.”

In the wake of Roe v. Wade’s overturn, tubal ligation – the medical procedure of getting one’s tubes tied in order to prevent an unwanted pregnancy – is a higher priority for Asher than medical transition. Binding their chest and socially transitioning provides enough relief from gender dysphoria – for now.

For Leslie, a senior, regional abortion restrictions were a “deciding factor” in her college applications. She chose not to apply Early Decision to a particular school because the state has an almost total ban on abortion.

“That definitely was disappointing, but I’d rather be safe than sorry,” Leslie said.

Although she could travel to a less restrictive state if she needed an abortion, she wants to study in a state that allows abortions at least 15 weeks after contraception. That makes Texas a no-go – unless she is not accepted anywhere else.

“There is a little part of me that’s worried that, if none of the other applications work out, I’ll be stuck here,” she said. “I can cross state lines if I need to, but I shouldn’t have to.”

I can cross state lines if I need to, but I shouldn't have to.

“LESLIE,” A SENIOR

Out-of-state colleges in restrictive states with most SJS grads, 2018–22

18–27 students

Washington University in St. Louis  
Vanderbilt University  
Duke University  
Tulane University

13–16 students

Wake Forest University

Data from 2022 St. John’s School Profile

# True to her roots: Student's wig business provides luxury hair experience

By Lily Feather

**A**seda Sarpong had hit a difficult stretch during her freshman year. During this time, she started to think about her life and decided that she wanted to do something for herself – start a business.

Over the summer, the concept for Anure Hair was born.

“It was just meant to be,” she said. “Wig business!”

Before long, Sarpong was looking for vendors and scheduling meetings during her free periods. For her brand logo, she designed a broken heart with a star growing inside. The image represents how the struggles she went through were “not for nothing.”

Her vision is exciting, refreshing and brand new.

FRANKIE BLEAU, ANURE STYLIST

Now a junior, Sarpong launched her online store on July 6, her birthday. Since then, Sarpong’s wig and hair extension business has processed over 260 orders. She has assembled a creative team that includes models, photographers, a creative director, a stylist and a videographer.

Sarpong manages to text with her creative team throughout the day when they are working on a project. Her creative director, Denzel Lamar Washington, directs Anure’s photo shoots, creating mood boards to communicate the brand’s look.

“It helps tremendously to have a creative branding team in place,” said Frankie Bleau, Anure’s stylist.

She looks to other websites for inspiration, including Ivy Park, Beyonce’s clothing line, and used web design company It Geeks to build Anure’s online platform.

Sarpong wanted her website’s visuals to distinguish it from other hair extension websites, so she decided to have a photo shoot for her home page visuals. Her team featured multiple locations across the city over the course

of a long day of shooting. Since Washington missed some of the shoot while flying in from New York City, Sarpong herself directed four models for the first hour.

Her creative team shot two videos of her models for the site: one candid and one a “lifestyle shoot,” in which the models were “up and looking cute.” Sarpong knew a manager in Atlanta who helped her contact two of the models from the shoot, and she reached out to another through Instagram.

“When you advertise it through lifestyle videos, it gets a lot of traction,” she said. “I want customers to feel like they’re buying an experience.”

When customers visit the website, they are greeted by models showing off their wigs in a full-screen lifestyle video. “Usually big companies will have a mannequin just wear their wig,” Sarpong said.

Bleau heard about the opportunity to style a high-profile look for hair. She and Bleau had an “instant connection,” according to Sarpong.

“Her vision is exciting, refreshing and brand new,” said Bleau.

Bleau has enjoyed working with Sarpong and expressed his admiration for her inventive business and attention to detail. “Not only does she listen, she gives feedback. If she doesn’t like it, she’s going to say No,” Bleau said. “If she does like it, she’s going to put her own spin on it in a way you would never expect.”

I want my customers to feel like they're buying an experience.

ASEDA SARPONG

Bleau’s job is to style the models for Anure’s photo shoots, pulling from different department stores once he gets the mood board for the look. After paying a rental fee for the clothing, Bleau’s clients tag the brand they use in the shoot. So far, Bleau has pulled clothes from Carolina Herrera, Gucci and Balmain to evoke Anure’s “high-fashion, luxurious and expensive” look.

“Without an image, you have nothing,” he said. “If nobody wants to look at you or be you, you won’t get too far.”

Sarpong maintains that Anure’s wigs – which start at \$450 on the website but average more than \$700 – are worth the price. She wants to give customers, most of whom are African American women in their twenties, a high-quality wig that will last them at least five years.

“It doesn’t have split ends, it doesn’t shed, it doesn’t itch. It’s a wig that you can treat like your own hair,” she said.

Sarpong needs to mark up her wigs at least 40% to make a profit, and she often checks other websites to ensure her items are priced competitively.

“What people don’t understand is that my wigs are an investment, because you’ll buy them one time,” she said. “A lot of people will buy synthetic wigs for \$200, and they’re gone after one wear.”

Anure also sells bundles, packages of hair that customers can use to make their own wig; tape-ins, which are longer-lasting extensions; frontals, which cover the front of the scalp; and closures, which cover the back.

“When customers buy those products, they are looking for hair that they’ll feel comfortable putting on their head. A lot of bundles will itch or badly irritate your scalp,” Sarpong said.

Once a customer places an order, Sarpong ships it directly if the product is on-hand, or she requests it from her vendor. Sometimes she processes orders through Tiger Marshall, a Detroit hairstylist who refers Sarpong to her clients. If a customer places an order through Anure’s website, Sarpong will ship the order from her storage location, MEDRX pharmacy. Her mother owns the pharmacy, and Sarpong prefers to ship orders from there instead of her house, citing space and security purposes.

Wigs are important to Sarpong because every time she wears one or sees other members of the Black community wearing extensions or bundles, she feels “unstoppable.”

“Everyone around us growing up, aunts and sisters and moms, all wore bundles and wigs,” she said.

Sarpong plans to expand Anure with a storefront in Detroit, the hair capital of the world. The store, which Marshall will manage, will exclusively sell Anure products. Having a physical location has been one of Sarpong’s biggest goals and will make Anure stand out from the competition.

“I know there is a big and bright future ahead,” Sarpong said.

In the two months since her 16th birthday, Sarpong has been working on what was once “just a dream” that she used to think about all the time.

Now, she said, “It’s real.”



Aseda Sarpong shows off hair extensions from her company, Anure, while attending her aunt's wedding in Venice, Italy.



COURTESY PHOTO | Aseda Sarpong  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION | Amanda Brantley



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# Freshman appears on B'way, 'Grey's Anatomy'

By Serina Yan & Johnathon Li

**B**orn with a condition that paralyzed her face, a teenage girl lays in a hospital bed awaiting surgery. She tosses dry, witty quips at her father and is adamant about getting the operation before her freshman year of high school, despite his reluctance. In recovery from her surgery, she accidentally discovers that her father is dating her algebra teacher.

Daya Burman, a guest character on the ABC medical drama "Grey's Anatomy" in the Season 16 finale, is played by freshman Caroline Basu.

Born into a theater-loving family, Caroline Basu has always been a performer.

"She was always reciting things and dancing and singing and putting on shows," Basu's mother, Meg, said.

When Basu was seven, she saw "Matilda" on Broadway. Realizing that the actors were only a few years older than her, she became inspired to start acting professionally. She performed in her first professional show with Theater Under The Stars at eight years old, which solidified her love for acting.

"Once Caroline realized that she could actually perform in real life on stage and not just for her parents in the kitchen, she was hooked," Meg said.

After watching the Broadway production of "School of Rock,"

Basu made it her goal to be in the cast. She auditioned five times and took acting, dance and music lessons for two years before being cast.

"Sometimes I would get a callback and they would have me fly back to New York to read a different scene," she said.

Basu decided to put school on hold for fifth grade while attending Annunciation Orthodox School to accommodate her acting schedule. She moved to New York with her mother at 10 years old and performed on Broadway for nine months.

While other Broadway shows had designated tutors for their child actors, most of the actors in "School of Rock" attended school in-person. Because the Basus were not planning on staying in New York, they had to adapt; Caroline's mother decided to homeschool her for the entirety of fifth grade. After the show ended, Basu returned to AOS for middle school.

"Homeschooling was less than ideal – she didn't like it, I didn't like it," her mother said. "But we got through it."

Basu was a swing on the show, which means she would act when other cast members were sick or on vacation. As a swing, Basu had to learn and cover eight different roles, but she did not perform every night. Generally, Basu would perform in night shows on most weekdays, matinees on Wednesdays and two shows a day on the weekend.

On set, Basu would write down her blocking on note cards. She did not worry about memorizing her lines, since the show was playing on a speaker backstage every night. Her parts

"got ingrained into my brain."

Even under the pressure of a live audience, Basu could feel the audience's energy and enthusiasm. She enjoyed the authenticity of stage acting as opposed to screen acting – each scene was a little different every time she performed.

Every show I got an adrenaline rush. And directly after a show I was exhausted and went straight to sleep.

CAROLINE BASU



Caroline Basu plays a patient with facial paralysis alongside "Grey's Anatomy" series regulars Jesse Williams (above), Camilla Luddington and Richard Flood in an April 2020 episode.

COURTESY PHOTO | Caroline Basu

"Every show I got an adrenaline rush," Basu said. "And directly after a show I was exhausted and went straight to sleep."

She has also accumulated screen acting credits from "Blue Bloods" on CBS and the Hulu original series "Ramy." Basu says that screen acting is a more controlled and calmer process.

"It's much more repetitive," Basu said. "On stage, my heart rate is always super high, but for screen acting I don't get nervous."

To get into character, Basu reads through a scene, taking a few minutes to get into the mindset of the character. Basu particularly enjoyed playing Daya

on "Grey's Anatomy" because of the character's dry attitude and personality.

Due to Covid and heavy competition at Basu's age, she has recently experienced a "dry spell of auditions." As a result, Basu has had more time to pursue other passions, which include working at the zoo and participating in track and field.

Basu is unsure of pursuing a career in acting because the industry is so unstable; however, she plans to continue auditioning.

"It was hard for me to drift away from acting," Basu said, "but I've realized that I can love acting while doing other things that I am passionate about."

# Fine arts get 'intense' as students hone skills in summer programs

By Mia Hong

**W**hile many high school students flock to public pools or ice cream shops for summer jobs, Patrick Tsang flew all the way to New York City for a summer theater intensive.

Tsang worked for Musical Theatre International, a musical publishing company. During the program, he auditioned for, rehearsed and filmed 15 musical numbers from three different shows. The goal was to compile these clips into three video files – one for each show – that could be sent out to schools across the country as vocal and choreographic demos.

Tsang worked from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for 10 days along with 300 other high school and college-age students selected from over 6,000 applicants. He was the youngest boy there.

"It was a little intimidating at first," Tsang said, "but in the end, it was just a bunch of kids having fun at a summer job."

Tsang knew when he interviewed for the program that it was going to be a huge time commitment. While he ultimately enjoyed the job, he admits that the process was "seriously intense."

"In the moment, it felt like I was just dancing all the time," Tsang said. "We would rehearse for a few hours, take our 30-minute lunch break, and then rehearse some more."

On the first day of the program, Tsang and the other actors spent the entire day singing and dancing for directors to determine which parts they would play in each musical number. For the next week, they rehearsed for hours to perfect

their work, and during the final days, they filmed each song.

"During filming, they told us we weren't allowed to sweat because the camera would be able to pick up on it," Tsang said. "We had two pounds of microphone technology strapped to our backs, which didn't help either."

Because each number had to be reshot up to seven times due to sweat, extra gray and pink t-shirts were kept on-hand for actors to change into between shoots.

Within the last two days of the program, a few actors fell ill and were unable to complete the filming process. Many numbers had to be re-choreographed to accommodate the reduced number of performers on-stage.

It was a little intimidating at first, but in the end, it was just a bunch of kids having fun at a summer job.

PATRICK TSANG

"It was very difficult, especially because we'd practiced these numbers the exact same way countless times over the past week," Tsang said. "To change the choreography so last-minute was super stressful. We worked really hard to overcome that, though, and it paid off in the end."

Like Tsang, sophomore Genna Larsen also participated in a performance intensive over the summer and was able to



Genna Larsen practices the fish lift at the Houston Ballet Academy.

COURTESY PHOTO | Genna Larsen

hone her ballet skills with students from all over the world during a five-week program sponsored by the Houston Ballet.

Larsen dances year-round at Houston Ballet Academy, so it was convenient for her to audition for their summer program, but the course was still a rigorous undertaking.

"The audition process was a big deal," Larsen said. "While I didn't have to perform a routine because I already dance at the Academy, I still had to submit a headshot, and action shots too."

The dancers studied traditional forms such as pointe and took classes Larsen described as "unexpected for a ballet intensive," including musical theater and jazz. Conditioning classes were also common in the students' schedules, and program instructors set up panel talks focused on the importance of safety and averting the risk of injury.

"One of the biggest reasons for doing a dance-focused summer intensive is to stay

safe," Larsen said. "It's dangerous to stop dancing over the summer and then to come back at full speed in the fall."

Toward the end of the program, classes became more focused on skills required for the end-of-summer performance, which included a routine to the Waltz of the Flowers from the Nutcracker.

"The performance was terrifying and completely exhilarating at the same time," Larsen said.

Larsen's dance career continues this fall as she works towards the Student Choreography Showcase for the Caprice III class and the Upper School Dance Concert in the spring.

Tsang also plans to continue his theatrical career on the VST stage and hopes to perform in the spring musical, "Nice Work If You Can Get It."

"After having done musical theater for so many years, I am really excited that I can audition for my first musical with the school."

# The struggle to conform

## How Eurocentric beauty standards alter our self-perceptions

By Aleena Gilani

**W**hen Arianna Doss began using Snapchat in middle school, beauty filters were her “go-to.” Yet some of them would consistently alter the shape and positions of her facial features and make her skin tone lighter. The face that ultimately appeared on the screen did not look like hers.

At the time, it did not register that the filters were changing her features to look whiter.

“I didn’t think I was trying to appear white,” said Doss, who is Black. She just thought she looked better with the filter.

Now a senior, Doss is careful about which filters she uses on the app. The most popular “beauty” filters doctor non-white features and lighten skin.

The pervasiveness of these filters can be attributed to Eurocentric beauty standards, the long-standing belief that European features, hair and skin tones are the benchmark for what constitutes attractiveness.

“It’s something people don’t really think about,” senior Ananya Das said. “It’s just what our idea of beauty is.”

Snapchat is one of many social media platforms whose user-made filters equate European features to beauty, giving many people of color a negative perception of their appearances. A 2021 survey by the International Journal of Women’s Dermatology of 134 young Black girls using Instagram showed that two-thirds felt insecure about both their non-white facial features and their darker skin tones.

“You’re set up for failure. It’s not gonna happen,” science teacher Neha Mathur said. “Even if you do attain those standards, it’s not going to be long-term.”

These unattainable standards also hurt diverse creators and influencers on social media, making their work less accessible.

“Platforms generally tend to promote the content of creators that fall into these standards,” senior Lucia Varma said. “If they don’t, they receive a lot more hate.”

But social media is only one of the more recent promoters of Eurocentric beauty standards – the entertainment industry has been perpetuating them for decades. Despite a recent shift in a more equitable direction by hiring more directors and actors of color, television and film industries across the globe are still hesitant to cast actors with darker skin tones and non-white features for lead roles.

Actors of color with lighter complexions are seen as more attractive and thus have more opportunities. According to the Geena Davis Institute for Women in Media, from

2009–2019, only 19% of Black women in leading roles in American films had darker skin tones. In Bollywood films, the vast majority of actresses in main roles have fairer skin.

“In the film industry, lighter-complexioned women have historically gotten more roles, and they get the roles of the sexy protagonist and the romantic character,” said Kim Roquemore (’87), English teacher and Community and Inclusion Faculty Associate.

The issues of colorism and racism in cinema recently received attention after the release of “In the Heights” last summer, when Asian American director Jon M. Chu came under fire for a lack of Afro-Latin actors in the starring roles. Chu also received similar backlash for his 2018 film, “Crazy Rich Asians,” which cast some half-white actors over fully ethnically Chinese actors. Even popular blockbusters directed by people of color still cast fairer-skinned actors over those with darker complexions.

“When you’re growing up and you don’t see anybody who looks like you on TV,

you reflect that onto yourself,” senior Rachel Chih said.

“You think that means that you can never achieve that level of success because you don’t have the features that the world wants.”

go to a nearby salon together.

Many female students with darker hair also feel pressured by their classmates to shave their legs and arms.

“It’s not intrinsic,” said science teacher Neha Mathur, whose teenage daughter realized her legs looked different “only when others made her realize it.”

For some students of color, wearing their hair in natural hairstyles is daunting. The ideal of straight, light-colored hair is one of the more pervasive beauty standards, even though satisfying it demands substantial amounts of time and money.

Though Arianna Doss sometimes wears her hair naturally at school, she is still “very conscious of how it’s perceived.” Until last year, Rachel Chih chemically straightened her hair to blend in with her Asian friends and family.

“My hair was really fried, but I kept doing it because my hair was super frizzy,” said Chih, who is Taiwanese. “Everywhere you saw shampoo commercials, it would be silky, soft and straight, and that was what I wanted to look like.”

Growing up, Chih also felt insecure about her then-uneven eyelids. In middle school, she resolved to alter them when she became an adult. Her eyelids have since evened out.

“I remember telling myself when I grew up, the only time I’ll ever get plastic surgery is to correct my eyelids,” Chih said. “How have we as a society conditioned our children to think they need plastic surgery to look like everyone else?”

These insecurities are exacerbated by attending a predominantly white school.

“It’s just the culture. It’s not like people are seeking to shame students of color,” senior Sue Lyn Roberts said. “There is just this pressure to conform.”

As a minority student, Varma has difficulty discussing her experience with the majority of her classmates.

“Nobody wants to be told that their life is so much easier,” Varma said. “It makes the conversation very short – people are either defensive or afraid to discuss it at all.”

Many people of color – especially those with darker complexions – have trouble finding cosmetics that match their skin. The American skincare and beauty industries typically cater to white consumers, as companies typically underestimate the buying power of people of color. Historically, companies have provided multiple shades of concealer and foundation for people with lighter skin tones, while only having a few for those who do not.

“You just have to be intentional about which brands you’re shopping,” Doss said. “It can be frustrating. Only a few brands have my color.”

While Varma has noticed that some companies are now offering more shades, she remains cynical, suggesting that they are only becoming more inclusive “so they don’t get canceled.”

“Companies feel like they have to do it now,” Varma said. “They’re not doing it out of just an understanding that they should have wide-ranging foundation tones. But it’s still progress.”



International Eurocentric beauty standards are largely a product of European colonialism. When the British colonized the Indian subcontinent in the mid-1800s, they used the pre-existing caste system to further divide Indians based on skin tones.

Although people in lower castes, like the Shudras and Dalits, were already more likely to have darker skin tones because of their roles as laborers, the British took advantage of the system by placing themselves at the top of the social hierarchy. Because Indians with fairer skin and European features most closely resembled the English, they were elevated to higher castes and received better treatment.

“That just fed into our idea of lighter skin, better person,” said Mathur, who grew up in India. “We have always been colonized by people who are lighter-skinned, and that has merged into our psyche.”

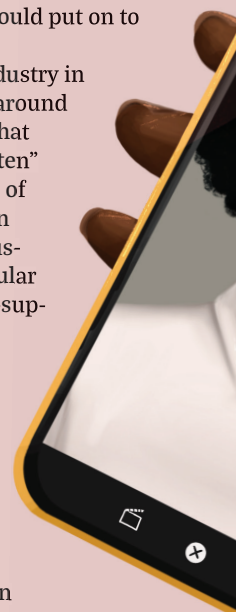
Even though India and Pakistan regained their independence in 1947, the subcontinent’s history with colonialism has shaped its beauty standards. People who look whiter are still overrepresented in the entertainment industry and have more job opportunities.

“Fair skin is always given a preference, especially for girls,” Mathur said. “Our parents would make sure that we didn’t stay out in the sun, and we were given this homemade mixture that we would put on to have lighter skin.”

The skin-whitening industry in India is valued today at around \$500 million. Products that “brighten,” “lift” or “whiten” skin constitute over 60% of all products developed in the Indian skincare industry. One of the most popular products is the melanin-suppressing face cream Fair and Lovely, which was first produced in the 1970s by British conglomerate Unilever.

Fair and Lovely is ubiquitous in Indian pharmacies and grocery stores and is a staple of many Indian American communities. “Everyone knows it,” Ananya Das said. “I know adults in my distant family who use and swear by it.”

In response to the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, Unilever changed the product name to Glow and Lovely, but rebranding did not diminish its popularity.





# nform

The arrival of European colonizers in Southeast Asia in the 16th century also impressed Eurocentric beauty standards on its indigenous population. In the Philippines, history teacher and East Asian Affinity Group sponsor Jack Soliman says that lighter skin and European features are still glorified. According to the World Health Organization, half of the Philippine population used some kind of skin-lightening treatment in 2019.

“The Spaniards brought over their racial hierarchy in that the lighter or more fair-skinned you are, the higher status you have,” Soliman said.

When he was growing up in a small Filipino community in Baltimore, parents would tell Soliman and his friends to “cover up outside so you don’t get too dark.” Even in America, looking white or having European blood was a status symbol – one family in his community even touted that they were of Spanish descent over seven generations. “There was something definitely off with the family’s perception that they were better than everybody else,” Soliman said. “It became obvious how many of the adults in our community were obsessed with that status.”

In East and Southeast Asian countries, a surgical procedure used to create double eyelids, called an Asian blepharoplasty, has become normalized. Over one million people around the world undergo the procedure every year.

When these countries began to embrace Western culture, either through European colonialism or during the Cold War, it helped develop a beauty standard that double-lidded European eyes were more

attractive than mono-lidded Asian eyes. By the 1980s, actors with double-eyelids, like Korean actress Hwang Shihye, became the exemplar of beauty. And the preference for white features continues to grow: thin noses, straight hair and high cheekbones are now highly sought after by people in Asian countries, especially women.

“Just seeing that my features aren’t something that people are proud of is disheartening,” Chih said. “Why was I born into this? Why is what I was born with not enough?”

Slavery and colonialism have also led to a similar beauty standard in both Africa and within Black American communities. Enslaved Africans with lighter skin or who looked whiter often worked within the home, while those with darker skin were forced to labor in the fields.

“People who look closer to how the colonizers look are going to be perceived as better than the ones who don’t,” Roquemore said. “If you are this darker hue, you are less than. In any community of color, that ideology is going to permeate our thinking, and it’s been that way for centuries.”

Slavery was abolished in America in 1865, but the ratification of the 13th Amendment was followed by decades of segregation and Jim Crow laws, when Black people with darker complexions were still treated as inferior in most areas of society. This long history of white supremacy has meant these standards remain enforced on Black Americans today, both by society as a whole and within the Black community.

“It can be a little uncomfortable having those conversations – and to admit that we have experienced that and that we enforce it onto each other,” Sue Lyn Roberts said.

started seeing the beauty in who I was – in my race, in my culture and my facial features,” Chih said. “The standards are always going to be there, and I’ve come to terms with that. They’re not going to make or break my day.”

Lucia Varma turns to Latinos Unidos to escape these standards at school. The affinity group provides her with a sense of belonging that would be otherwise unattainable.

“Just being able to go to the meetings and be in a place where you can look around and see some of your own features is comforting,” said Varma, who is a co-president of LUA. “It gives you a familiar sense of safety and comfort that you don’t get a lot around the school.”

Over the past decade, faculty sponsor Kim Roquemore has noticed that the African American Affinity Group has made an impact on Black students by providing them with a community on campus.

“I have met students from St. John’s who were in AAAG, and they are confident in

the way they look, in the way they go about the world and in expressing themselves,” Roquemore said. “They are very bold, and I think that that has a lot to do with their experience in AAAG.”

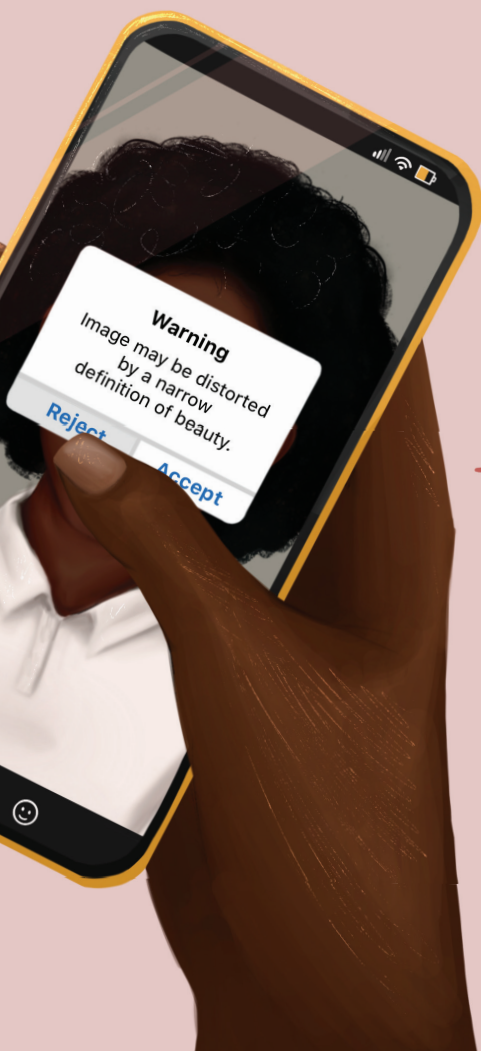
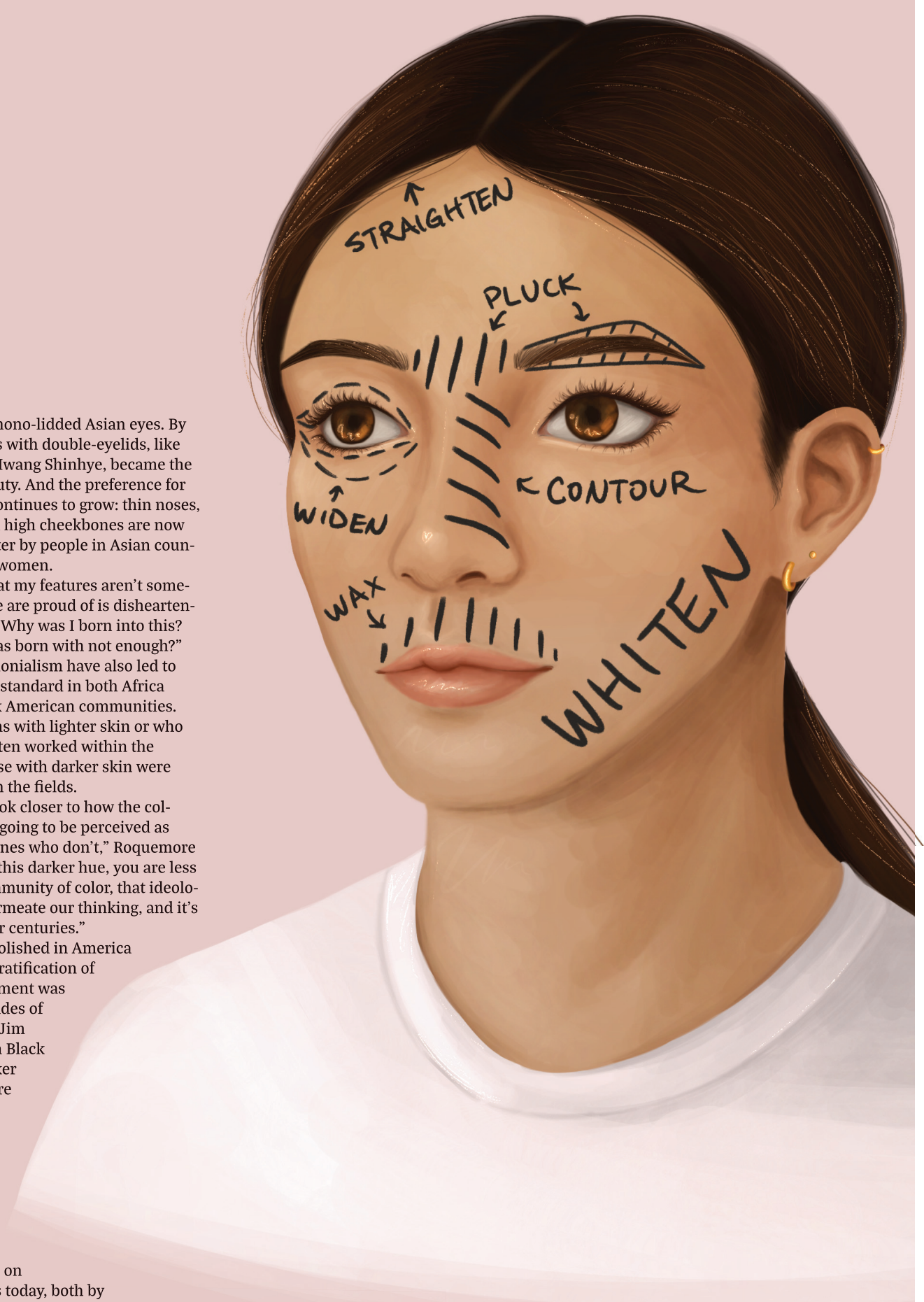
But when Roquemore was a student in the 1980s, affinity groups were nonexistent.

“I was never made to feel different intentionally. I just felt different. I felt invisible,” she said. “In terms of Eurocentric standards, it was just clear that I didn’t fit them all.”

Roquemore has watched firsthand how the School’s policies and the community has evolved to become more inclusive and accepting. D’Hania Hunt, Director of Community Engagement, credits a significant part of this change to affinity groups.

“My hope is that, with affinity groups and having more diversity at the school, people know that it’s great to be who you are – and that we celebrate the differences that people have versus everyone trying to be a cookie-cutter or look one certain way,” Hunt said.

Ananya Das, who is a president of the Women of Color affinity group, has made it a point to help female students of color feel comfortable in their own skin: “We really want to dig into that everyone is beautiful.”



## embracing their beauty

Though Roberts acknowledges that she still feels pressure to conform, she is now more confident in her appearance. She often wears her hair naturally and tries to follow influencers who look like her on social media.

“Eurocentric beauty standards affect every young woman of color, especially at St. John’s,” she said. “They still impact me, but I try not to let that affect my perception of myself. I’ve tried to be kinder to myself.”

For Chih, moving away from insecurity and towards acceptance was a process of “pretending I didn’t care until I didn’t care.”

“Once I hit high school, I just really

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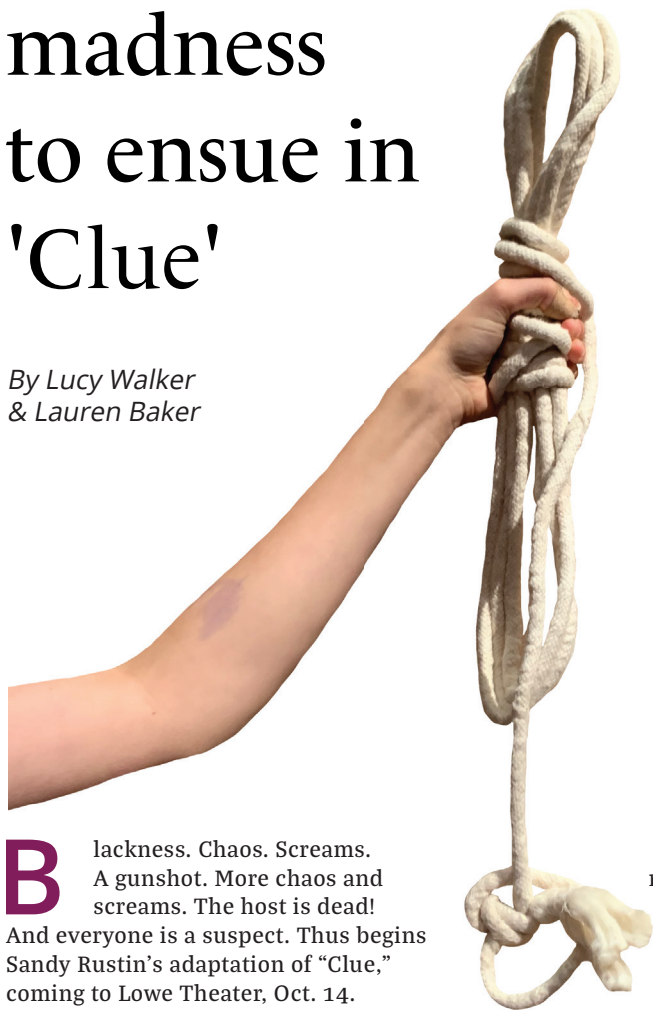


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# Murder-mystery madness to ensue in 'Clue'

By Lucy Walker & Lauren Baker



Physical comedy is an essential part of "Clue's" campiness. In actor Sophia Jazaeri's (Mrs. Peacock, far left) words, "it's never stopped being funny."

PHOTOS | Diane Guo

**B**lackness. Chaos. Screams. A gunshot. More chaos and screams. The host is dead! And everyone is a suspect. Thus begins Sandy Rustin's adaptation of "Clue," coming to Lowe Theater, Oct. 14.

The upcoming Johnnycake production is based on the popular Hasbro board game, first released in 1949. In 1985, a film version starring Tim Curry became a cult classic and was first adapted as an off-Broadway musical, then a stage play.

Set in 1954, the play investigates the paranoia of the Red Scare. Blackmailer Mr. Boddy (sophomore Grady McMillan) invites his six victims to dinner:

Colonel Mustard (senior Jay Love) a confident, glass-half-full military man.

Mrs. White (senior Noelle Alexander), an intense and dramatic widow.

Mrs. Peacock (Review Production Manager Sophia Jazaeri), an elderly senator's wife and flibbertigibbet.

The anxious Mr. Green (senior Jack Aitken), who is accused of being a "disloyal Republican."

Miss Scarlett (senior Ava Steely), who exudes a posh and mysterious air.

Professor Plum (sophomore Dayton Voorhees), a suave ladies' man.

Although not part of the Hasbro board game, the final main character is the bombastic butler Wadsworth, played by senior Drew Adams.

While Jazaeri's Mrs. Peacock first appears to be a fastidious socialite, her uptight facade begins to deteriorate after a few drinks, unearthing a new layer of her personality.

"Despite her prudishness, she stands up for herself and her fellow women in the room," Jazaeri, a senior, said. "She represents a woman that, at this time in the world, wouldn't have been allowed to express those ideals."

The intensity of the show allows Jazaeri to fully commit to her role.

"I get to be this totally outrageous, pretentious character who thinks so highly of herself," Jazaeri said. "For someone who doesn't really have a lot of pretentiousness to begin with, pretending I'm somebody who is so confident is really fun."

The night goes off the rails when Mr. Boddy is murdered. Soon, everyone is trying to figure out

whodunnit, and the audience discovers you can't spell manslaughter without laughter.

"Physical comedy has been around forever, and it's never stopped being funny," Jazaeri said. "For the older audience, there's a lot of innuendos and references you catch if you're really paying attention."

The cast spent hours perfecting their gags, paying special attention to their cadence and delivery.

"Timing becomes really key," director Jamie Stires-Hardin said. "Pause on one, scream on two and turn on three."

Stires-Hardin, who worked as a casting director before coming to St. John's, enjoyed the "puzzle" of piecing together the cast, which has been rehearsing together since August. To achieve the proper level of campiness, Stires-Hardin selected students she knew would create a coherent ensemble.

Timing becomes really key. Pause on one, scream on two and turn on three.

JAMIE STIRES-HARDIN, DIRECTOR

In between scenes, actors occupy the greenroom, a backstage space lined with couches, where they can do homework and socialize. This year, parents have provided a stocked snack closet and refrigerator, which the actors have covered with magnetic letters, arranged to form names, lines and even the Pythagorean theorem. Although the greenroom fosters camaraderie, the fridge is a source of friendly division – seniors versus freshmen, cast versus crew and parched versus thirst-quenched.

"I usually stay out of fridge politics," sophomore Caden Brandt said. "I always ask what shelf is okay to take from so I don't upset anyone. I don't touch that Dr Pepper."

Brandt discovered his affinity for

theater when he started attending Saturday crews as a freshman under the invitation of Love and Adams, whom he met through quizbowl. He has yet to miss one since he began.

"So it's their fault I'm here now," Brandt said.

This fall, he has decided to expand his horizons. In "Clue," he plays an unexpected cop, marking his acting debut. Although Brandt was hesitant to act at first, he found a community in the theater. He has grown closer with the cast, directors, techs and faculty costume designer Teresa Fogler.

"Mrs. Fogler is awesome," Brandt said. "Every time I see her, she always puts me in a good mood."

Johnnycake Vice President Maggie Whelan, who previously only teched, is also embarking on her acting career in "Clue," portraying an unfortunate motorist who stops by the Boddy mansion to call a mechanic.

"I just wanted to try acting. Tech can take an emotional toll on you sometimes," Whelan said. "A lot of your work does go unnoticed."

It takes more than actors to put a show together. To ensure everything runs smoothly, stage managers Diane Guo and Adele Wan have enlisted the help of 10 additional crew members. "Clue" is particularly complex, with set pieces including hidden panels and entire rooms on wheels.

"It's an extremely tech-heavy show," Wan said. "There's a lot going on at once."

The cast and crew have worked together to create a professional experience for the audience. Whether you've already bought your ticket or you're still deciding, the cast and crew hope to see a full house.

"It's ninety minutes of absolute absurdity," Jazaeri said, "and it's going to be amazing."

PHOTO | Lucy Walker



# Dutch goalie proves to be a real 'Boon' to Mavs field hockey team



Juliana Boon joined the Maverick field hockey team after helping the Dutch U16 team win the European Field Hockey Championship. **COURTESY PHOTO |** Juliana Boon

By Elizabeth Hu

As the buzzer sounded, signaling the end of regulation for the European Field Hockey Championship semifinals, the Netherlands and Belgium were tied 1-1.

The goalie for the Under-16 Dutch field hockey team, Juliana Boon, steeled herself for the shoot-out and took her position in front of the goalpost. The only other person on the field was a Belgian attacker, poised on the 23-meter line.

When the shoot-out ended, no Belgian had found the back of the net, and the Netherlands were moving on to the finals.

"I stopped every single ball," Boon said. "That was the moment when I was like, okay, I just did that."

Less than two weeks after winning the championship and saying one final goodbye to her teammates and friends in

the Netherlands, Boon moved to Houston.

After playing soccer when she was younger, Boon switched to field hockey when she was 7. She tried different positions before finding her strength as a goalie. When she was 10, she joined a regional team, then progressed to junior nationals at 14.

Practice for the Dutch junior national team started in the early afternoon, so she had to leave school at 10 for the 90-minute drive. In high school, Boon was taking 11 different subjects. Soon she was calculating what she could afford to let go and what she needed to prioritize, frequently pushing back non-graded assignments while keeping up her grades.

"Both academically and athletically, I had to perform," Boon said. "But at some point, I got used to it."

Boon acknowledges that maintaining her spot on the national team required sacrifice.

"It takes a lot of energy, but when you get into that environment where you're surrounded by the best 18 people of your age group in the country, you know you're there to work hard," Boon said. "You have a trainer that's there to make you better. You have girls around you that are improving because of each other. It's worth it."

A preseason injury to the incumbent goalie allowed Boon to step into the starting role for the Mavs. Sometimes, in the middle of an intense game, Boon will shout instructions to her teammates in Dutch before remembering where she is.

In the Netherlands, due to a lack of space and facilities, schools do not have sports teams, so the best athletes play club sports. Boon was used to training three times a week year-round, but overall athletes do not spend as much time practicing as in the U.S.

"There was a bit of a culture shock because I feel like we thrive more often working hard at St. John's," Boon said.

Even though the approach to practice is different, Boon is grateful that the Mavs have such a competitive field hockey program.

"Of course it is different," Boon said. "But I knew that coming in."

The Dutch National Team holds tryouts annually to determine rosters. Regardless of the number of years a player spends training as a part of the National Team, a position on the team ultimately depends on individual success. While field hockey is a team sport, "at the end of the day, you're there to improve yourself," Boon said.

Competition to stay on the National Team was intense.

"At St. John's, I feel like we're trying to lift each other up because everyone here wants to get into a good school," Boon said. "It's not a position we take from each other – it's one that we grow into together."

In just a few weeks, Boon has formed strong connections with her teammates. The team chemistry is so strong that head

coach Rebecca Elliot sometimes forgets that Boon is a new student.

"Everything we do is new for her in terms of things like team trips and Buc-ee's," Elliot said. "But we kind of forget that until we go do it because she has just immersed within the team so naturally."

Freshman forward Gracey Crawford says that Boon is a great addition to the team.

"She brings a lot of extra energy to the field, whether it's cheering for us or doing really well in a scrimmage," Crawford said. "We have adjusted to what she brings, and she has adjusted to what we give her."

Because junior national teams are divided by age, each group separated by one to two years, Boon has rarely played with anyone more than a year younger or older than her.

"Now, I get to help a new freshman player learn a technique that she hasn't seen before," Boon said. "You're working together to become the best."

Crawford adds that Boon "fits into their group really well," and that they can talk to her about anything.

"She acts like a sister to a lot of us," Crawford said. "If she's encouraging me to be good, I want to be just as good."

Boon hopes to play for an American Division I college team.

"I would love to keep playing field hockey in college because, when you play a sport for so long, you don't want to just give it up after high school."

**PHOTO |** Nick Hensel





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# Elite Takes: Del Frate partners with Overtime, amasses over 400k followers

By Richard Liang

Two years ago, Nico Del Frate posted a 30-second clip about Oklahoma City point guard Russell Westbrook on TikTok. After a few days, the video reached over 200 likes and 3000 views. As of October, Del Frate's account, Elite Takes, has over 400,000 followers, and his videos have over 46 million likes on TikTok.

"I'm in a position where I can fulfill my dream of being a voice in the sports industry," Del Frate said.

Junior Del Frate's sporting ambitions began shortly after he watched his first NBA game: a Milwaukee Bucks-Utah Jazz regular season matchup. While the game carried little implications for the playoffs and was otherwise "unremarkable," it gave Del Frate a peek into the fast-paced world of professional sports. He was hooked.

"Sports allowed me to escape from reality," Del Frate said. "Once I fell in love with the drama and implications of sports, I couldn't stop thinking about it."

Del Frate started watching TikToks in middle school for updates on the latest sports headlines, fantasy football strategies and facts he would deploy during lunchtime debates. Whenever Del Frate was not swamped with school or basketball practice, he was scrolling through his For You page. His screen time increased exponentially when the pandemic stalled most of his daily activities.

"The most entertaining thing I did all day was scroll through sports TikToks," Del Frate said. "I saw other people giving out their sports takes and realized I had something to say, too."

On Dec. 23, 2020, Del Frate launched Elite Takes.

The first few months were "rocky." The account gained little traction, hovering around a thousand followers.

"I was putting up four to six videos a day, but I wasn't seeing any results for my effort," Del Frate said. "I was seriously considering giving up."

I'm in a position where I can fulfill my dream of being a voice in the sports industry.

NICO DEL FRATE

On the brink of throwing in the towel, Del Frate caught a break when Houston Texans tight end Brevin Jordan "duetted" one of his videos. A "duet" is when one TikTok user creates a split-screen video with another creator's clip. Jordan had over 100,000 followers on TikTok, which helped promote Del Frate's video.

Elite Takes gained over 3,000 followers in the next week.

Del Frate rode the momentum, posting more videos about the NFL Draft and the NCAA March Madness basketball tournament. By spring, Elite Takes had over 10,000 followers.



Del Frate has garnered over 46 million likes on his TikTok account.

PHOTO | Eshna Das  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION | Amanda Brantley

During the NFL offseason, Del Frate was running out of click-worthy content, so he pivoted to the NBA despite his relative inexperience covering the sport. His first NBA video was an analysis of Atlanta Hawks All-Star point guard Trae Young.

After posting the Trae Young video, Del Frate went to play video games. Less than an hour later, it had over 20,000 likes. In a few days, the video garnered over 2.5 million views and half-a-million likes, and Elite Takes grew from 10,000 followers to over 100,000 overnight. TikTok stardom had arrived.

Junior John Burnett, who has been watching the videos since the beginning, credits Del Frate's authenticity for his success. Unlike many sports content creators, Burnett says, Del Frate is not limited by popular trends and does not intentionally aggravate his audience with inflammatory opinions and hot takes.

Burnett cited a video analysis of Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa's throwing motion. "I hadn't seen anything about that on TikTok," Burnett said. "His combination of creativity and ability to make difficult concepts easier to understand is what separates him from everyone else."

This unconventional approach makes Del Frate a target for online criticism. The comment section is full of alternate opinions and, in extreme cases, personal attacks.

"I used to have this squeaky voice, and people liked to pick on me for that," Del Frate said. "I'm lucky to say that I haven't received any death threats, though."

Del Frate used to take each negative comment to heart. In hopes of pleasing all his viewers, Del Frate began publishing opinions that were more popular and less contentious, but when he continued to receive criticism for his more conventional takes, he realized that it was impossible to satisfy everyone. Del Frate has since stopped looking at the comment section, instead turning to his friends for feedback. "When you talk about a certain player or a team, you're going to have to single out a certain fanbase – and they're not going to appreciate it," Del Frate said. "Haters are gonna hate. I've accepted that."

Del Frate has expanded his influence by creating Elite Takes accounts on Twitter and Instagram. In the last year, he began partnerships with Overtime, a sports media company with over 55 million followers, and Chalkboard, a global group chat for sports fans.

In a "volatile" entertainment industry, Del Frate's platform has grown exponentially.

"Elite Takes has become a part-time job," Del Frate said. "I'm like a basketball player who shoots in the gym alone, except I make videos."

Beyond TikTok, Del Frate sets his sights on the big leagues. He plans on pursuing a career in sports commentary and potentially starting his own sports media company.

While his first take – a comparison between Seattle Seahawks quarterback Drew Lock and Carolina Panthers quarterback Baker Mayfield – aged "horribly," Del Frate has not looked back since introducing himself as Elite Takes on TikTok.

"If freshman Nico were to see where I am now, he would think I made a great choice sticking with Elite Takes," Del Frate said.

Buffalo Bills QB Josh Allen leads a potentially historic offense.

PHOTO | Creative Commons

## Del Frate's Top 10 Takes

- 1 The 2001 Miami Hurricanes was the greatest college football team ever assembled.
- 2 USC quarterback Caleb Williams will win the Heisman Trophy.
- 3 New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick is the most overrated in the NFL today.
- 4 LeBron James is the greatest NBA player of all-time.
- 5 Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo is the best basketball player in the world today.
- 6 Denver Broncos quarterback Russell Wilson is overrated.
- 7 Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson will win Offensive Player of the Year.
- 8 Miami Dolphins wide receivers Tyreek Hill and Episcopal grad Jaylen Waddle are the best receiving duo in the NFL.
- 9 The Buffalo Bills offense has the potential to be historic.
- 10 The best team in the NFC is the Philadelphia Eagles.



Del Frate wears a Jaylen Waddle jersey in almost every video.

PHOTO | Nico Del Frate



# Tipping Point: Has gratuity gone too far?

By Cameron Ederle

**Y**ou've been there: your card gets approved while paying for a coffee, and you think you're in the clear. Then, the barista swivels the screen and you are presented with the final boss of the transaction: 15%, 20%, 25% or No Tip?

The line behind you suddenly seems restless, and it feels like the barista is staring daggers into your forehead. You have to make a decision – and fast.

Choosing No Tip risks a dirty look from the college student glancing over your shoulder, and even picking 15% could provoke a crushing expression from the barista. The full 25% verges on obscene, so you go with a cool 20%. Your conscience congratulates you for paying upwards of six dollars for a shot of espresso and warm milk.

Today, tipping is no longer based exclusively on quality of service but also social and cognitive factors.

With the advent of point-of-sale systems equipped with contactless credit card payment, the way we tip has been transformed. The excuse of "I don't carry cash" is no longer valid, and easy-to-select options combined with the added societal pressure of an entire line of customers behind you promotes a culture of mindless over-tipping.

New tipping systems take advantage of a customer's desire for quick and efficient payments by calculating predetermined tipping amounts, so you don't have to do the math.

A glowing screen – rather than a paper receipt – makes the act of tipping a much more public event. As more sit-down restaurants offer credit card payments at the table, it adds the pressure of seeing your server while you're tipping. According to Software Advice, 41% of customers increase their tip amount when their server or cashier is in their immediate proximity.

At first glance, this forced gratuity sounds appealing to anyone in the service industry. When I worked at Baskin-Robbins for minimum wage, turning on the charm for customers was as important as using the correct scoop: almost half of my pay depended on tips. The Rice Village location had yet to update their system with credit card tipping, so I had to put in a bit more work to coax an extra coin out of my customers.

Just down the street, there was a bakery with credit card tipping where I was presented with the option of tipping 20% after ordering a pre-made cookie that the cashier

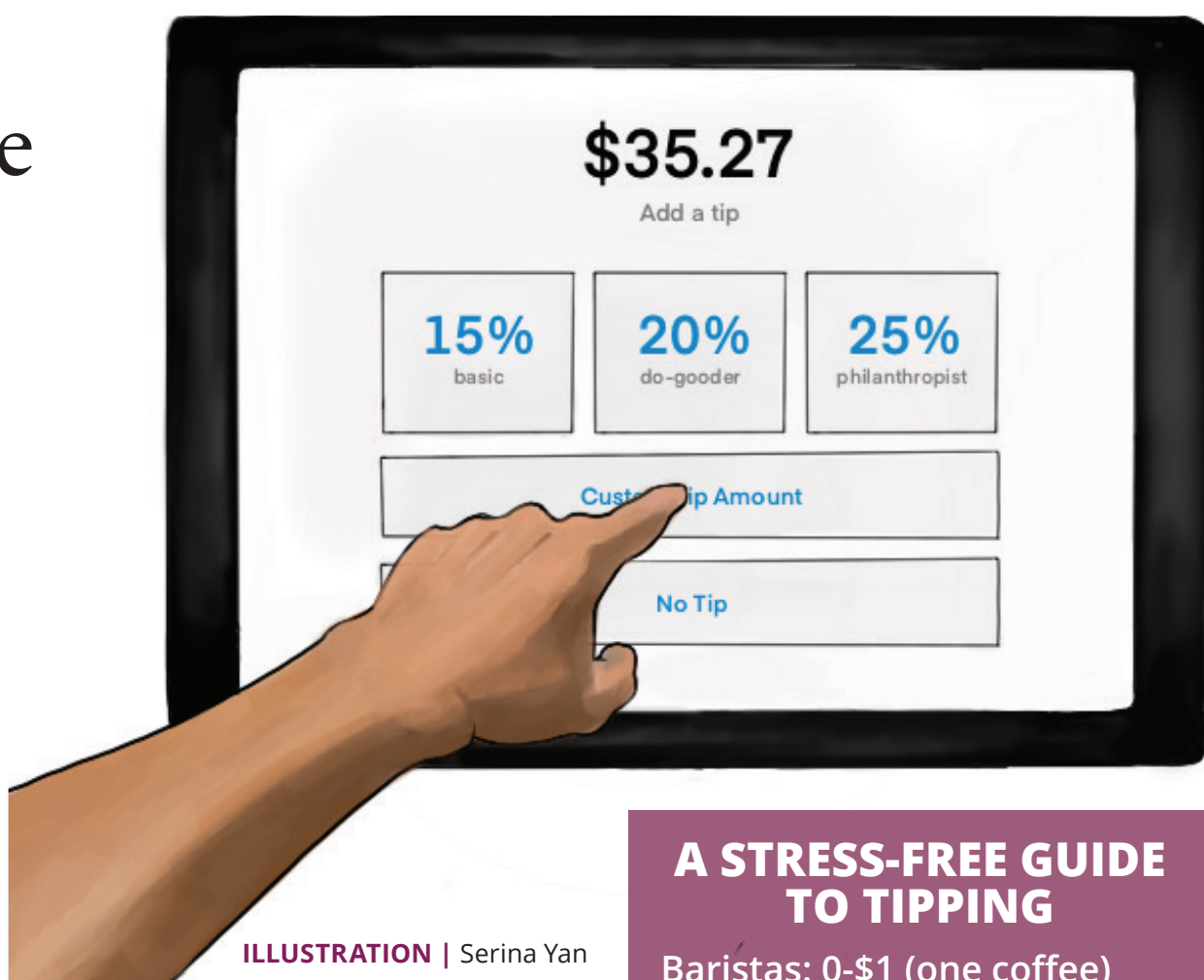


ILLUSTRATION | Serina Yan

plucked from the display case. Needless to say, I was jealous.

In the grand scheme of things, overtipping can be a detriment to low-wage workers in gratuity-dependent industries. Today, 42 states have lower minimum wages for restaurants (Texas is tied for the lowest at \$2.13 an hour), provided employees make up to \$7.25 with tips.

Complicating matters, employers commit an estimated \$15 billion a year in gratuity theft from employees. An increase in tipping could provide even more fuel for employers to withhold higher wages and further increase the long-term instability of income in tipped industries.

So the next time you buy a boba tea or a double scoop of mint chocolate chip, take a few extra seconds to calculate your tip – and don't be afraid to tap Custom Amount.

The antidote to the culture of mindless tipping is simple: base the amount on your experience, not the first thing thrust in front of you.

## A STRESS-FREE GUIDE TO TIPPING

Baristas: 0-\$1 (one coffee)

Food delivery services: 10-15%

Haircut/nail technicians: 10-20%

Sit-down restaurant servers: 15-20%

Uber/Lyft/taxi: 15-20% (add \$2 for help with bags)

From The Emily Post Institute

# A prescription for Election Fever: take the long view

By Wilson Bailey

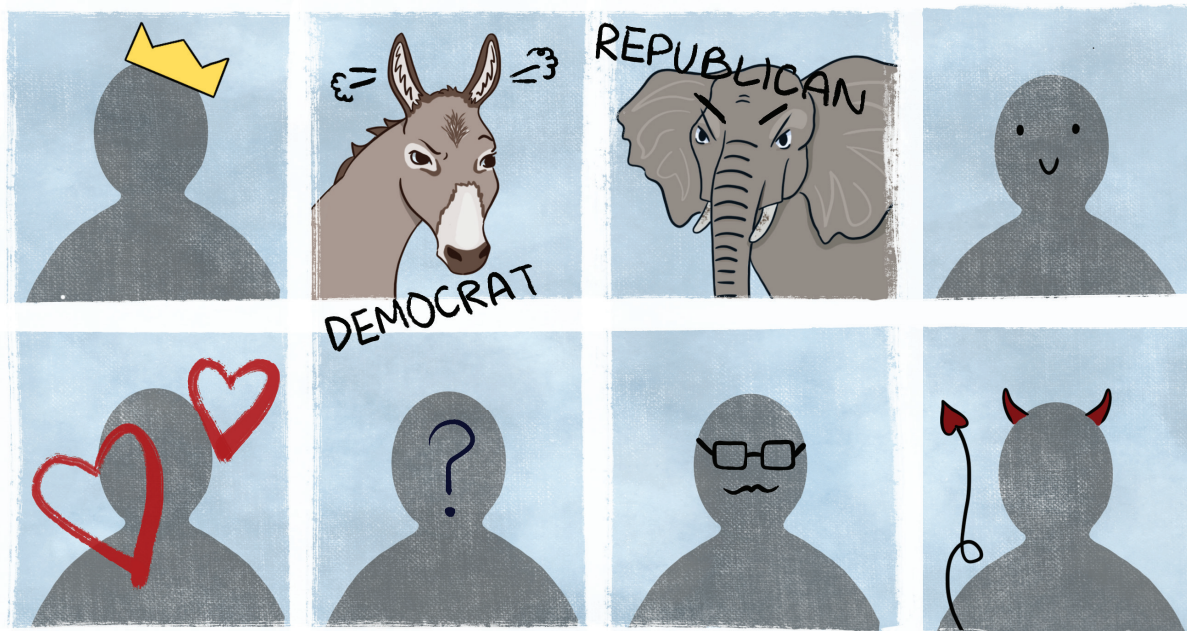


ILLUSTRATION | Georgia Andrews

**W**hether it's the upcoming World Cup, the newest Marvel movie or an election cycle, what's happening in the world often dictates our conversations and preoccupations. As we approach the November midterms, the School will inevitably catch a nasty case of Election Fever.

Do not mistake heated debate for a more troubling strain of the virus: voluntarily quarantining in an echo chamber. Symptoms include denial and subsequent grumpiness when something doesn't go according to plan.

The distinction between measured intellectual

debate and impulsive finger-pointing is perhaps more pronounced at St. John's than at other independent schools. Here in Texas, the elite intellectual class still includes conservatives. As a result, old oil money and the medical elite are pretty evenly represented within the SJS community. We argue voraciously, and political debates are the perfect vessel to demonstrate how smart and virtuous we are. It's as if choosing to be strident instead of sympathetic might bump up your IQ and your reputation a couple of points.

We all get a little carried away during election season,

but some of us will fall off the rationality wagon and succumb to sanctimonious Instagram-reposting and commiseration with fellow believers. When the dust settles, it is worth asking: will you regret how you acted in November?

We would all do well to take a deep breath and remember that politics ebb and flow. One Republican victory doesn't mean we'll plunge into Orwellian dystopia, and one Democratic win doesn't mean we'll stop celebrating the 4th of July.

The people who lock themselves in a room with nothing but a mirror and their self-admiration run the risk of losing faith in politics if their candidate doesn't win.

If it's your party's turn to ride the wave, try not to be gluttonous in expecting to get everything at once. You'll melt down when the tide inevitably turns or a 51-49 Senate majority doesn't provide all the items on your partisan wish-list.

For anyone frowning their brow: despite what some politicians and pundits might say, this is not the most important election of your lifetime. Our future does not hinge on your immediate political gratification. There will always be another referendum to pass, another movement to support, another protest to attend. Nothing is set in stone.

By the very nature of our system, no politician or political movement can spell total doom for America. But neglecting the exercise of bipartisan debate in favor of frenzied arrogance is getting us closer to whatever a step away from doom is.

Far too many of us would rather score points than give any ground, even if that ground is ceded quietly and to ourselves.

So on the evening of November 8th, take two aspirin and show some magnanimity in the morning.



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**Mission Statement**

The Review strives to report on issues with integrity, recognize the assiduous efforts of all and serve as an engine of discourse within the St. John's community.

**Publication Info**

We mail each issue of The Review, free of charge, to every Upper School household, with an additional 1,000 copies distributed on campus to our 698 students and 98 faculty.

**Policies**

The Review provides a forum for student writing and opinion. The opinions and staff editorials contained herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Head of School or the Board of Trustees of St. John's School. Staff editorials represent the opinion of the entire Editorial Board unless otherwise noted. Writers and photographers are credited with a byline. Corrections, when necessary, can be found on the editorial pages. Running an advertisement does not imply endorsement by the school.

**Submission Guidelines**

Letters to the editor and guest columns are encouraged but are subject to editing for clarity, space, accuracy and taste. On occasion, we publish letters anonymously. We reserve the right not to print letters. Letters and guest columns can be emailed to review.sjs@gmail.com.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

We're back. Did you miss us?

The high school experience is famously brief, and with each fall come new people to give their own spin on established traditions. For the newly-minted seniors, we feel both old and new – old in that Cameron and Wilson have now run every inch of River Oaks; new in that we still feel the novelty every time we enter the oasis that is Senior Country.

This year, both the old and the new give us reason to rejoice and reflect.

We've welcomed Kevin Weatherill from South Jersey. Not many new administrators can seamlessly allude to both "Hamlet" and "Field of Dreams" in the first few weeks of school. Our new Head of Upper School has ping-ponged from committee meetings to performances to athletic events, all while helping his twins adjust to a new home (Page 2). Although he's a diehard Phillies fan, we hope that Yordan Álvarez's 9th inning heroics entice him to don some Astros orange (unless there's a Houston-Philly World Series matchup – then all bets are off).

There are 182 freshmen on the North Campus – the largest class to date. After just half a semester, the Class of 2026 has not only figured out how to navigate the hallways, but also knows the School well enough to have a favorite breakfast (The Editorial Board favors Taco Tuesdays over Croissant Thursdays, but it's close).

The freshmen have already established themselves as varsity contributors and participated in the recent one-act plays – one has even appeared on Broadway and "Grey's Anatomy" (Page 7). We also have 29 freshmen on The Review who are promising writers, designers, and copy editors.

Not all new students are freshmen. Case in point, Juliana Boon, international field hockey goalie extraordinaire joins us from the Netherlands (Page 12).

We've also got a brand new Editorial Board, so look for us to make cameos in our long-running comic strip "Freeda of the Press" (Page 15). We've already made some changes to the paper, including the backpage, now dubbed the "Rearview," which will be dedicated to things that make us uniquely St. John's.

Like humidity, tree pollen, and Houston traffic, some things never change



PHOTO | James Li

– our school still maintains its distinct DNA. Whether it's as lighthearted as a student TikTok account dedicated to sports analysis (Page 13) or as serious as how Eurocentric beauty standards permeate our community (Pages 8-9), Mavericks are uncompromising when it comes to speaking about what matters to us. Members of our community are grappling with political tension at school (Page 14), in our country (Page 4), and abroad (Page 3).

As an established forum for both celebrating the triumphs of our community and providing commentary on how we could improve, we understand that The Review must fully represent the School's diversity in order to function as its "engine of discourse."

We fail in that endeavor if we only cover varsity captains, quote the most gregarious Mavericks or represent just one point of view.

This year, we want every member of the community to be interested in at least one article in every edition. This issue also covers the madcap fall play, "Clue," (Page 11) the societal obligation of tipping, and the importance of not being limited by partisanship (both Page 14).

We aspire to be more than an echo chamber for any one faction of our community. So we celebrate what is new without losing sight of who we are.

Go Mavs and Go 'Stros,

Wilson Bailey



Cameron Ederle



Diane Guo



Annie Jones

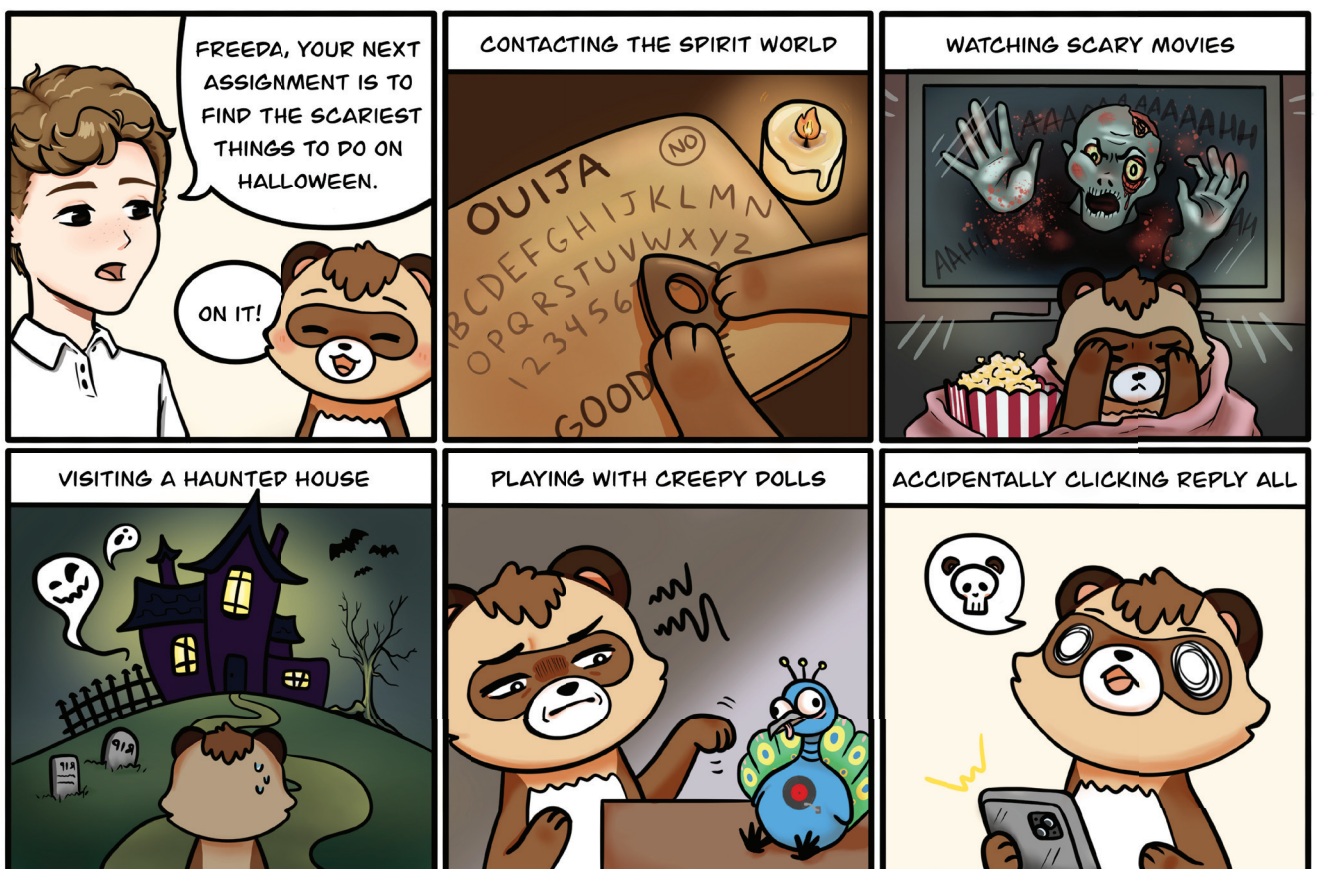


Alice Xu



FREEDA OF THE PRESS

WRITTEN BY GEORGIA ANDREWS  
ILLUSTRATED BY ALICE XU



# October

The 1998 film "Rushmore" was co-written and directed by Wes Anderson ('87) and filmed on St. John's campus. The protagonist is Max Fischer, a precocious 15-year-old who is known for founding or leading eccentric clubs, including the Rushmore Beekeepers and the Kung Fu Club. His overinvolvement in club life comes at the expense of his grades. "He's one of the worst students we've got," the Head of School proclaims.

Max also participated in several clubs that really exist: Calligraphy Club, debate, French Club, Model UN, theater, Chorale, lacrosse (manager), wrestling (alternate), track & field (JV decathlete), fencing, and the Review.

Today, SJS boasts over 100 clubs for nearly every interest. So we got to thinking: Which current clubs would Max Fischer have founded, led, or participated in?



## THE NINE

1. **crochet club**



4. **tap dance club**



7. **Spanish singers club**



2. **hypothetical club**



5. **Lego™ club**



8. **Ultimate Frisbee club**



3. **charcuterie club**



6. **rowing club**



9. **cornhole club**



By Lucy Walker

9/12

 Yearbook at the Zoo



By Isabella Diaz-Mira

9/30 

Game vs St. Mark's




By Lexi Guo


10/7 

Music Assembly

### Things to look forward to:

- homecoming: 1920's themed !!
- football game Oct. 14: Senior Night  
→ vs Legacy School of Sport Sciences  
→ theme: **Pink Out** 
- fall play (blue) Oct. 14 & 15 @ 7
- Thanksgiving Break



 (sjsreview): wilsonbailey\_, diane-g-camille, cameronederte, anniejones0 and others liked your post. 20 min ago

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