



ON THE RECORD

BY AND FOR THE YOUTH OF LOUISVILLE • SPRING/SUMMER 2023

**DIVIDED
WE FALL**

Local drag queens fight back p. 30

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Iranian Women

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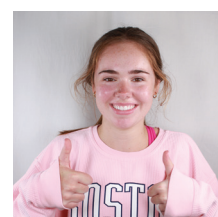
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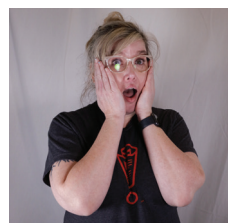
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ABOUT US

On the Record is a magazine and public forum by and for the youth of Louisville. In 2015, our publication transitioned from duPont Manual High School's tabloid-size school newspaper, the Crimson Record, to a magazine that focuses on longform, in-depth storytelling created for a Louisville-wide audience and distributed locally. Using our training as writers, photographers, and designers, our mission is to create quality local journalism that includes the crucial, but often overlooked, youth perspective. Each issue's content is determined and produced by youth.

SUPPORT OUR MAGAZINE!

On the Record is an educational and journalistic enterprise that does not accept school funding.

This magazine is completely funded by external donors and advertisers, meaning that we appreciate any and all partners in advertising and donations to aid us in continuing to spread youth perspectives on local issues.

If you are interested in supporting On the Record's mission, please see page 59.

WHERE TO FIND OTR

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If you wish to distribute this magazine to your school or business, please contact us.

By subscribing to On the Record, you can receive both editions of our magazine delivered to your door. Subscriptions require sponsorship. More information about subscriptions can be found on our website.

Additional stories can be found online at ontherecordmag.com. Social media content can be found on Instagram and Twitter: [@ontherecordmag](https://www.instagram.com/ontherecordmag).

OUR CREDENTIALS

On the Record is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association, the Columbia High School Press Association, the Kentucky High School Journalism Association, and the Society of Professional Journalists Louisville Pro Chapter. Previous accolades include NSPA Pacemakers and CSPA Gold Crowns. Individual stories have earned multiple NSPA Story of the Year placements, CSPA Gold Circles, and the Brasler Prize.

CONTACT US!

On the Record would love to hear from you! Our magazine is published by the students of the Journalism and Communications Magnet at duPont Manual High School, 120 W. Lee St., Louisville, KY 40208. Leave us feedback at ontherecordmag.com or through email at ontherecord@manualjc.com.

You may also contact the faculty adviser, Liz Palmer, at lizpalmer@manualjc.com.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I always have a tough time writing the letters that preface each issue. My brainstorm sheets are reminiscent of a TV thriller crime map — large circles, arrows, and incoherent scribbles scattered throughout the page in an effort to somehow bind vastly different stories together under one thoughtful, impactful, even showstopping theme — one that will blow readers' minds before they even flip to the first story.

This time, however, my brainstorming sheet is simple, clean, and grounded in a way it hasn't been before. It's not because the stories are any simpler than they have been in the past. In fact, in my absolutely biased opinion, they are just as complex and varied as ever. Rather, this time around, my brainstorming sheets are far less convoluted and chaotic because it has finally dawned on me that I don't necessarily have to reach for these lofty connections in these letters. In fact, every one of the stories in this magazine — and nearly every single story we have written in the past — are already inherently connected.

Our goal here at On the Record has always been to take stories that were previously under the surface and bring them to light with a youth-specific focus. This desire to share the underrepresented yet essential voices within our community is what truly connects all our stories, in this magazine and beyond. As I have grown in my role as editor-in-chief, and seen our reporters grow as well, I find myself more and more aware of and grounded in our mission as a staff: to commit to our community, to represent youth's essential involvement in it, and to consistently grow and challenge our own perceptions — these things are at the center of all of our stories. I no longer have to waste ink or create a mess of papers to conjure some catchy, cohesive central theme. Our purposes and main priorities as a staff are just as thoughtful, impactful, and showstopping as any message that I could write in this letter.

From investigating the impacts that Senate Bill 115 has had on the drag community, to breaking down the history of the Louisville Slugger Museum and Waverly Hills Sanatorium, exploring the complex views on JROTC programs, and taking a deeper look at Louisville's pageant scene, this year we not only researched and interviewed but also visited and engaged with our subjects constantly. Our reporters toured recycling plants and farmers markets, got behind the kitchen counter at various Hispanic restaurants — one of our reporters even got up on stage in a drag show! This magazine reveals a variety of overlooked communities and parts of our city, including the Iranian women fighting for freedom from afar and the underappreciated sections of downtown. Through and through, in this issue we took stories that were out of the spotlight and brought them to center stage.

I hope that this magazine makes as much of an impact on you all as it has on me. Simply by opening it up, you are a part of the movement that is working to create a more educated and compassionate Louisville. And for that, we thank you.

Much love,

Bella Tilford ♥



**Come thru,
u leave no
crumbs.**
(or sips)





Farmers markets' sense of community and fresh food offer an alternative to standard grocery stores.

writing by MAYA O'DELL • design by CLAIRE DIXON

A cold winter breeze brushed my shoulders; the smell of fresh air filled my nose. People filled every corner of the small church parking lot. Kids were running around everywhere. Adults were strolling by different stands. The sounds of laughter surrounded me. So many things caught my eye; arrays of color were everywhere. It was mid-February. How could this place be so vibrant, so happy, so packed? Everyone was smiling; happiness was infectious — I would've guessed these people all knew each other. But I was wrong. All of these people were just typical Saturday shoppers at The Bardstown Road Farmers' Market.

Among the Crowd

Gwyneth Baker, a 15-year-old Ballard High School freshman, decided to forgo her usual Saturday trip to the grocery store in favor of going to The Bardstown Road Farmers' Market. As she walked past the different stands and crowds of people, a soft smile appeared on the corners of her mouth.

Baker said that she and her family attend farmers markets a couple times a month to explore the new produce and other items farmers markets have to offer.

"I think that it's a great way to expand and try new things," Baker said. "There definitely are certain things that you can't get at a farmers market that you do go to the grocery store for, but there are some things that are just unmatched at the farmers market, and just, like, 100 times better than you can ever get at a Kroger."

While standard grocery stores produce mostly cheaper

food with a larger variety of brands, there isn't as much of a guarantee that the food will be fully fresh. This is mainly because grocery stores have suppliers from all around the world. Canned and dry foods in grocery stores can sit on the shelves for multiple days to weeks at a time. Farmers markets, on the other hand, are known for their fresh food. There, vendors tend to sell more raw types of produce such as uncut vegetables, fruits, spices, and goods of that nature that have come right from the farm.

Along with fresher produce, vendors at farmers markets can sell unique products that may not be on store shelves. During my visit, one vendor was selling banana chip peanut butter while another was selling strawberry- and lavender-infused jam. At a farmers market, the variety of unique foods create an environment of vibrancy.

However, there are some criticisms of farmers markets. Vendors often have less of their product to sell compared to grocery stores — and varying opening times lessen availability of products even more. Furthermore, there is a noticeable difference in the amount of farmers markets in low-income neighborhoods compared to more affluent areas. However, unlike what many may think, price is less of a barrier than poor infrastructure. Quality space, such as available parking and public restrooms, is a crucial factor in running a successful farmers market. However, in low-income neighborhoods where these are less available, it is harder to create community

spaces. Fortunately, according to the Farmers Market Coalition, many organizations are starting to reach out to low-income neighborhoods in order to establish farmers markets.

With more inclusivity, more people can get involved in their communities. To me, farmers markets provide that connection.

Farm to Table

Farmers markets are reliant on dedicated vendors to ensure a successful day at the market.

"Oh, I love the farmers market," Dudley Tapp said.

Tapp, the owner of On Tapp Dairy Farms in Springfield, Kentucky, spends most of his days on his farm. Wandering through the many acres of land, he must remember to collect the chicken eggs, milk the cows, and feed the animals before harvest, all in an effort to have the freshest food.

Tapp takes pride in his farm's refusal to use any steroids or preservatives in its products.



"I think that it's a great way to expand and try new things."



- Gwyneth Baker, freshman, Ballard High School



Cloves of Joy: Fresh garlic sits in the sun at the Field Day Family Farm's booth at The Bardstown Road Farmers' Market on Feb. 25. Photo by Anna Burzynski.



Green Thumb: A row of greens lays out at The Bardstown Road Farmers' Market on Feb. 25. Photo by Anna Burzynski.

Unlike Tapp's farm, many items in corporate grocery stores include these additives. For example, prepackaged meals that one can 'grab and go' often have many preservatives. According to Grocery DB, a grocery database, 73% of foods in the United States are ultra-processed, meaning the items are made with manufactured ingredients and are prepackaged. Tapp's products are an escape from these practices.

While Tapp sells many different types of ordinary produce, the backstory of a certain delicious product makes it extra spectacular. "A Foolz Errand" is a website that has ranked 1,745 chocolate milks in 52 countries. Tapp got a perfect score on his chocolate milk: 10.0. I had the opportunity to try this "perfect" chocolate milk. I can't lie — it's



In Bloom: A vendor from Bellaire Blooms hands a child one of her flowers at the Douglass Loop Farmers Market on April 15. Photo by Anna Burzynski.

the best chocolate milk I've ever had. It was creamy and rich, but not super thick. That, plus the hint of salt, put this chocolate milk on a high pedestal for me. From avoiding preservatives to putting his all into his recipes, Tapp works to make sure his products are his best.

Tapp believes that farmers markets have made his career much more enjoyable. He's been a farmer all his life, and, while working alone out on his fields has its own rewards, time spent on the farm is not very social.

"I didn't see anybody," Tapp said. "This is really enjoyable for us — to get to know people and have repeat customers and, heck, we know people's kids' names and stuff. It's a lot different than just farming."

Noah Chodkowski, a 22-year-old farmer, stand worker, and field manager for Field Day Family

Farm, gave some insight about the reality of being a farmer. He's been working as a farmer since he was a teenager, and working at farmers markets since he could walk.

"It's not a very well-paying job, but it's a good life experience kind of job," Chodkowski said. "It's fun if you like to get messy and drive a tractor ... There's slow times and then there's fast times — it fluctuates." Chodkowski wakes up early to come to a farmers market every Saturday morning. He also works on the weekdays to ensure that there will be products to sell. This is very different from the typical restocking process of a grocery store.

At a standardized grocery store, there are distributors who ship their farms' goods to the store. From there, various employees are in charge of unloading, stocking, and checking out the products.



“This is really enjoyable for us — to get to know people and have repeat customers and, heck, we know people's kids' names.”

- Dudley Tapp, farmer





Chodkowski, however, does this with little help.

Behind the Stands

While customers and farmers are crucial to keeping farmers markets open and running, the stand workers are critical to ensuring that products can be sold.

“I’ve worked a lot of retail jobs ... but I feel like every customer is happy to be here and is super friendly and fun,” Erin Warmbier said. Warmbier is a stand worker for Groce Family Farms, which produces a variety of meats at The Bardstown Road Farmers’ Market.

Warmbier works at the Groce Family Farms’ stand two Saturdays a month to give the owners time off on those days.

Nadine Seckman (15), a sophomore at Atherton High School, has also worked at farmers

markets. Before they opened their own store, she helped out her dad’s business, Bean, now a local coffeehouse, by managing their stand at The Bardstown Road Farmers’ Market. For her, the best part of working at farmers markets is “the community, and how people come to support local businesses instead of corporate ones.”

Kentucky has close to 360,000 small and local businesses, many of which are in Louisville. Farmers markets are one of the many outlets that those businesses can use to further show off their products and up their sales. As a result, not only do Louisville’s communities benefit from the connections that farmers markets create, but so do the people running the stands.

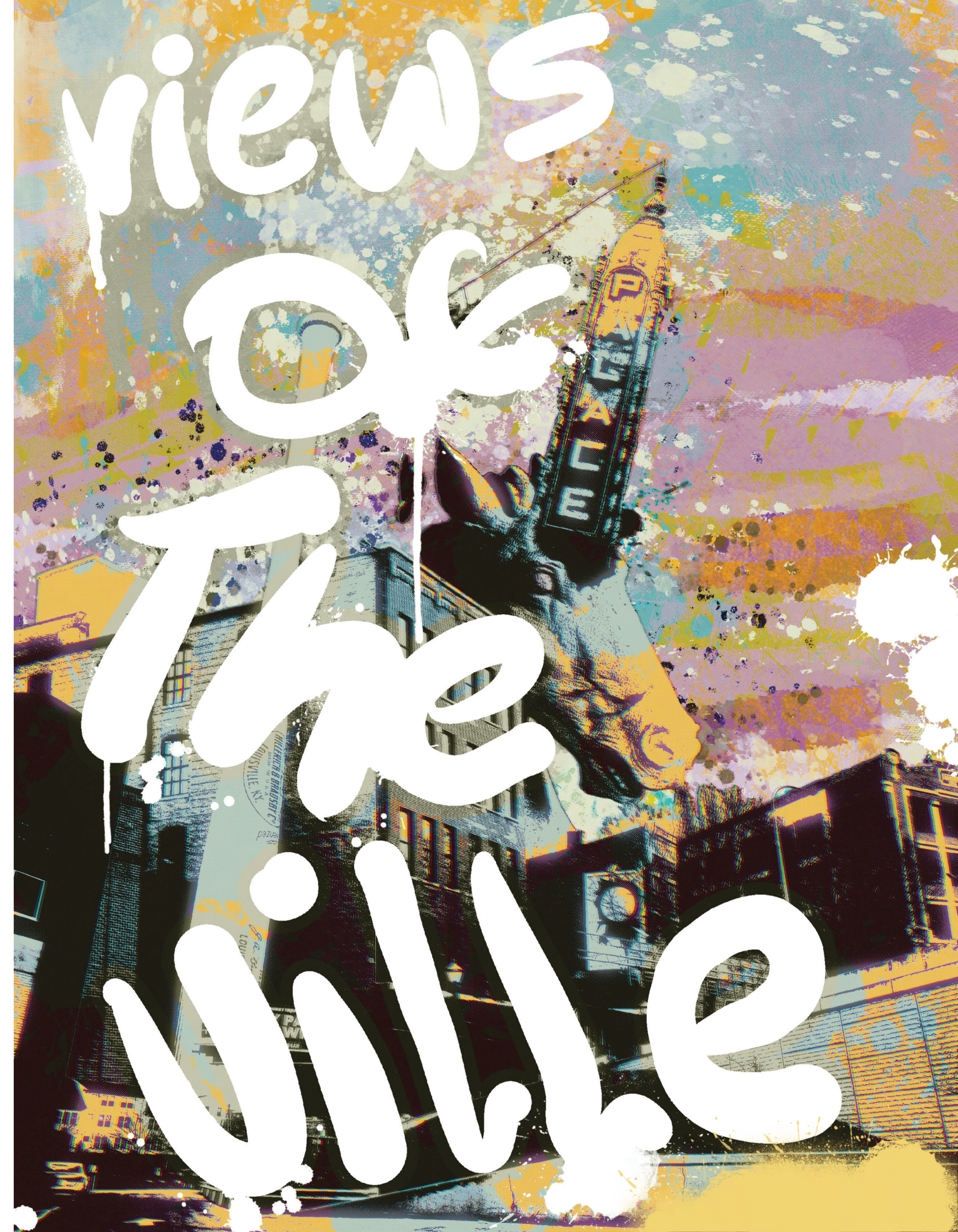
“It helps the seller spread their brand and gives people an

excuse to get out of the house and be a part of the community,” Seckman said.

“I love my community – the people are lovely. A lot of us local farmers support each other and lean on each other in hard times. And it’s a bit of symbiosis I think,” Chodkowski said. “This experience for me has taught me discipline and diligence.”

After strolling through the bustling parking lot during my visit to the farmers market, I came to realize that no experience at a farmers market is the same. At these markets, there’s something for everyone, from fresh produce to handmade bread and jam to flowers and soaps. No matter if one needs groceries, a job, or just wants to have fun, farmers markets are a great way to indulge in the community. •

views of The ville



Many Louisville residents don't view downtown as suitable for youth. How accurate is this perception?

writing by LUCY VANDERHOFF • design by ARI EASTMAN

My friends and I were a little nervous when my mom dropped us off in downtown Louisville. We were unfamiliar with almost everything around us. But it was a fine spring Saturday, and as we walked down Main Street from Slugger Field, I heard surprised remarks from my friends about how many people there were, how clean the sidewalk looked, and how nice the landscaping was.

For many Louisville teenagers, a trip downtown is an unusual way to spend their weekend. To find out other teens' opinions, I conducted an informal survey of 100 Louisville Male High School (LMHS) students. This school is notable because it draws students from a much more diverse selection of areas from all across the city compared to a typical Jefferson County Public Schools cluster school, which draws from specific neighborhoods. Only three of the LMHS students said they thought about downtown as an option when it came time to go hang out with their friends. Most teens who responded to the survey think of downtown as somewhere unsafe, not teen-friendly, and boring. While this may not represent the opinion of all Louisville teens, these are sentiments I commonly hear from my peers. So, I set out to investigate these assumptions and see how much truth they hold.

Downtown Louisville is in a transition period. After the pandemic, many former downtown employees now work from home, leaving the central business district quieter than before. Many Louisville residents'

perception of downtown has also changed following some highly publicized violence, an increase in the homeless population, and the brief period of rioting during the otherwise peaceful civil rights protests following Breonna Taylor's death.

However, downtown was and can be a place where people across the city come together. The decline of downtown has also led to Louisville's pursuit of revitalization and has brought about new advertisement campaigns such as #DowntownStrong from the Louisville Downtown Partnership, a non-profit focused on the revival of downtown. From the partnership to elected officials, everyone is thinking about ways to breathe new life into the city's heart. But where do teens fit into these efforts?

We've Been Here Before

One stop along our weekend adventure was Fourth Street Live, a car-free block of bars and restaurants centered around a common area that often features concerts and other public events.

The block was vibrant, full of tourists and locals alike, but, as a group of teenagers, we just walked right through. There was simply nothing for us to do — aside from a few chain restaurants, almost everything was focused on having a sit-down meal, going clubbing, or drinking bourbon, all of which can deter teenagers.

When Fourth Street Live opened in 2004, it was that era's primary downtown revitalization effort. But before that, the very same site had been home to two

similar efforts: the River City Mall of the 1970s and the Galleria of the 1980s. Like many cities, Louisville has had to constantly reinvent its central business district to fit ever-changing lifestyles, work habits, and preferences.

"I think downtown clearly was at its heyday in the 1920s and the 1930s — extended into World War II — but automobile sprawl had already begun taking its toll," said Dr. Tom Owen, a Louisville historian and University of Louisville professor.

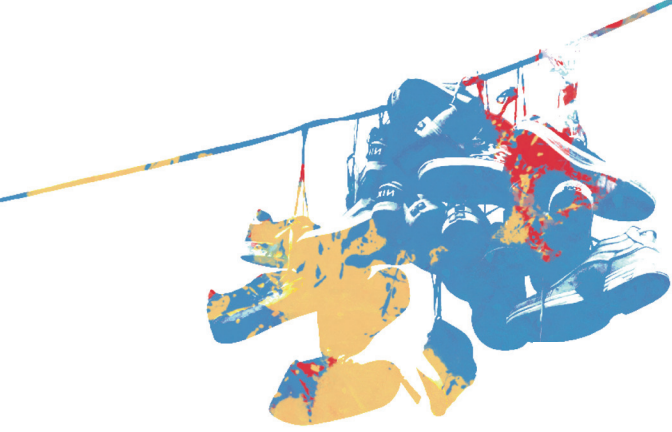
In fact, Owen explained, there was already anxiety about the future of downtown in the 1930s. By the 1960s, the city was building plazas, new high-rise buildings, and developing the waterfront. However, the widespread, growing use of the automobile only enabled more suburban sprawl as single family homes began to take over huge amounts of land. This sprawl evolved with the digitization that came with the 21st century, and only became intensified by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. With new technology, people no longer had to commute downtown to work, and the advice to "stay at home" during the pandemic didn't help this phenomenon.

"There are dynamics that are complex ... every job does not have to be in a downtown cubicle — it can be at home," Owen explained.

The latest iteration of downtown revitalization is #DowntownStrong, which was launched in early 2021 and aimed at kick-starting activity downtown by reminding Louisville residents of the opportunities there.

Morning Stroll: A man walks by an alleyway in downtown Louisville on March 18. *Photo by Gael Martinez-Morison.*





“We’re the growing population of Louisville.”

- Keagan DuLaney, LMHS sophomore

“The downtowns in every city are the one place where everybody should have something to do, where everybody belongs, where everyone should feel welcome,” said Rebecca Fleischaker, executive director of Louisville Downtown Partnership. “I think it’s very important that teenagers do get put into that.”

Perceptions vs. Realities

A prominent factor behind downtown’s negative reputation is the idea that homeless people are dangerous. As a result of these stereotypes, downtown is often viewed as somewhere sketchy or dirty.

At one point, my friends and I decided to go check out the waterfront. We took a pedestrian bridge from the Galt House down to where the Belle of Louisville was docked. Aside from a homeless man, we were alone on the bridge. Talking about it afterward, our group agreed that we felt conflicted — we felt bad for the man and his situation, but we were also four teenage girls, taught by society to be alert of our safety around unfamiliar adult men.

Many other students I spoke with told me they had similar impressions, and that’s part of the problem — discomfort around the homeless leads to a hesitation to go downtown.

Ryan Curry, an LMHS junior, recalled walking past an encampment of homeless people beneath a downtown overpass.

“Two of them are passed out on the street. And then one guy walked up to me, said something incoherent, and then vomited,” Curry said.

Louisville is not alone in facing a rise in homelessness, which, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, has increased across the United States for four straight years. In turn, this has required cities across the country to devote more resources to help those in need, while at the same time keep their central business districts safe and attractive.

Louisville is also trying to fight homelessness. In January, his first month in office, Mayor Craig Greenberg announced a plan to address homelessness by allocating \$8.25 million in assistance for the prevention of homelessness, \$24 million for affordable housing, and the creation of a new community care campus and medical facility for the homeless. The aim is to break the cycle that keeps so many trapped in homelessness, according to a press release by the mayor’s office.

My hope is that programs like this can help that man we saw on the bridge. Who knows what circumstances put him in that position?

However, downtown Louisville has another perception problem on its hands.

In my survey, I asked students to rate, on a scale of 1-5, how safe

they thought downtown was. The overwhelming majority — 86% of students — ranked downtown’s safety as three or less. Only three students rated it “totally safe.”

Many Louisvillians, including some of those students, saw news images and videos of violent rioting in 2020. A period of protest followed the death of Breonna Taylor, a Louisville resident fatally shot in her apartment during a police search. While the majority of the protests were peaceful, for many teens I spoke with, the images of vandalism, burglaries, and police tear-gassing stuck in their minds.

The protests are long over, but stories of violence downtown continue to make headlines. In early March, a man was arrested for attacking someone with a hammer in Jefferson Square Park. This follows another arrest after a different hammer attack in October. A third man was arrested for cutting two people in the throat in Fourth Street Live later that month.

More recently, Louisville made national headlines following a mass shooting at the Old National Bank downtown. A 25-year-old bank employee killed five of his co-workers and injured eight other people before being shot by police. This is yet another example of the growing gun violence issue in the United States.

These serious crimes can weigh heavy on the mind and instill fear in local residents, which



ultimately adds to the reluctance of many to explore downtown.

Nonetheless, I felt safe on the day I visited, especially on densely populated streets like Main Street and Fourth Street. In fact, when it comes to statistics, only a small fraction of Jefferson County's crime occurs downtown.

"It's a very teeny percent," Fleischaker said. "I'm not saying nothing ever happens, but downtown is pretty safe."

Perhaps Fleischaker is right. Crime does happen, but is it really as common as people believe? With all the attention on downtown, the city is putting more resources there than ever before.

But, right or wrong, downtown being unsafe is a perception many teens and adults alike share. The city has a long way to go to change that impression, and until then, teens can work on changing their own perception.

A Walk Down the Row

As my friends and I wandered downtown, I didn't notice any dirt or trash in the streets, but the art pieces placed across them. Murals, statues, engravings, and plaques were everywhere. We all stopped to take photos with a statue of previous Mayor Charles Farnsley on a bench, then again a few steps later at a recreation of Michelangelo's David. The David, constructed by Serkan Özkaya, is part of the 21c Louisville art museum and hotel, a free museum along "Museum Row." Museum Row is a strip of museums which line Main Street, capped off by the Frazier History Museum.

The Frazier Museum has tried to attract tweens and younger kids with basketball shooting games as part of their "Kentucky Rivalries" exhibit, a newly-opened exhibition highlighting historical and iconic Kentucky conflicts. They've also courted college kids with free

memberships. But teenagers are a "blind spot," said Simon Meiners, communications and research specialist for the Frazier History Museum.

"That is one population that we're continuing to look at to make inroads with people," Meiners said.

Perhaps the blindspot goes both ways.

"I don't know that teenagers think of themselves as doing these kinds of things," Fleischaker said.

Although museums aren't always aimed at teenagers, they can still explore whichever museum piques their interest. For teens interested in history, it may be the Frazier or Roots 101; for art, the Speed or Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft (KMAC); and for sports, the Slugger Museum.

The cost of some of these museums may act as a barrier to teens exploring these activities, but they get the opportunity to enter almost all of these for free each summer with the "Cultural Pass." Louisville Metro created the Cultural Pass as part of Vision Louisville, a long-term initiative to improve Louisville's community and built environment. Developed through a partnership of the Louisville Metro Government, Arts & Culture Alliance, Fund for the Arts, and the Louisville Free Public Library system, the Cultural Pass is offered every summer to Louisville residents ages 0-21 and provides free admission into various attractions. The Pass can break down barriers for teens across the city, providing them with easy access to interesting and fun opportunities.

Giving Downtown Louisville a Chance

During our day, our group ventured into the KMAC, and we were pleasantly surprised to find

that all students are admitted for free. The museum, although small, was enjoyable and an overall great experience.

We found a few interesting things downtown: museums like the KMAC, small shops, and local bakeries. These activities, however, were sparse. Many students I surveyed agree: while there are a few cool activities downtown, they are often unknown, uncommon, or not concentrated enough to justify a visit.

"I think there just needs to be more activities that appeal to teenagers in downtown," Joseph Zeru, an LMHS junior, said. "Almost everything in downtown is for adults, and it makes it very unfriendly to teens."

As I researched and talked to teenagers about downtown, I came to a few realizations. So many of the teens I spoke to said they thought it was important to revitalize and keep teens coming downtown.

"We're the growing population of Louisville," Keagan DuLaney, an LMHS sophomore, said.

And yet, many teens would rather go to other neighborhoods like Nulu or the Highlands than check out downtown with their friends. In fact, before researching for this story, I was part of that group — I wouldn't have even thought of downtown as an option when planning an outing. But after spending time downtown, I find myself wanting to head downtown.

Biking along the Ohio River, exploring a new museum with my friends, admiring the art along Main Street — all of these activities have always been available, even free, and right in the center of our city.

"There are such great opportunities for you to get to know your city better," Fleischaker said. "So I would put it back on the teenager." •



Zan. Zendeği. Azadi.

woman. life. freedom.



Standing Strong: Golnoush Esmaily, 20, grasps her poster on University of Louisville's campus on Feb. 23. The poster depicts freedom and Esmaily's cultural connection to Iran. *Photo by Keller Mobley. Photo illustration by Mali Bucher.*

The Iranian women's revolution is not just an overseas issue. It is worldwide.

writing by SYDNEY WEBB • design by MALI BUCHER

Woman: a word that seems incapable of depicting womanhood to its truest extent. A word that encompasses the pain, triumph, and perseverance of women in two syllables. Etched in those five letters lie the stories of mothers, gatherers, suffragettes, queens, factory workers, and daughters.

Woman: a justification for oppression and a rationale for inequality. Often, the struggle for women's rights is spoken about as a thing of the past. Boxes that our ancestors have checked. As American women, we find comfort in our right to vote, to work, to go to school, to protest, to own property, and to control our lives. However, in recent months, the overturning of Roe v. Wade led to massive movements of women across the United States. Women are protesting, signing petitions, and advocating for their rights tirelessly. We have found, and must continue to find, strength in each other.

However, our nationwide strength continues to face one disabling limit: self-interest. By only focusing on the advancement of women in our home country, we fail to address the worldwide women's movement in its entirety. In fact, in order to win the fight for women's rights in one place, we must fight for them across the globe. Unfortunately, a feat like this seems distant and unachievable. I thought so, too. I couldn't begin to imagine a world where women everywhere connected.

It wasn't until I received a video in December of my 2-year-

old American cousin repeating the Iranian women's battle cry that I began to believe in the possibility of women supporting each other on a global scale.

I am one-quarter Persian, which is the ethnic background of many Iranians, and I have felt a familial connection to Iran my entire life. My grandfather, born in Iran, immigrated to the United States when he was 18. Soon after, he married my American grandmother and had my uncles and mother.

Then, they moved back to Iran, living through the 1979 Iranian Revolution. At that time, the shah was the leader of Iran. The shah position was passed down through the monarchy, and in 1979, the shah was Mohammad Reza Pahlevi. The 1979 Iranian Revolution, also known as the Islamic Revolution, overthrew Pahlevi and monarchy. The new Supreme Leader of Iran, Ruhollah Khomeini, instituted an Islamic Republic that the current supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has inherited.

When the war with Iraq began, my family permanently immigrated to the United States, bringing stories and lessons with them. I grew up hearing political tales of Iran that I found difficult to grasp at a young age, but that were subconsciously ingrained into my cultural understanding of my heritage.

Therefore, when my grandpa mentioned the growing unrest in Iran in late September, as someone with Iranian roots, I felt an automatic pull to the cause.

“You always feel shame as a girl, even as a woman, to do something.”

- Niloofer Sabzevari, activist and radio host

However, my experiences as a woman are what fueled my interest in the protests.

Currently, the Islamic Republic of Iran follows Islamic Sharia, which is a code of living that all Muslims are expected to follow.

These conservative, religious norms were solidified into law, specifically in regards to one's appearance. Over the past couple of decades, the Gasht-e-Ershad, or Iranian morality police, have become increasingly strict toward women who don't perfectly adhere to Sharia law.

On Sept. 16, the Gasht-e-Ershad arrested and beat 22-year-old Mahsa Amini for wearing a hijab in a manner that did not follow Sharia law. Soon after, she passed away, causing a wave of controversy surrounding the cause of death and official autopsy. Nevertheless, her passing sparked another Iranian revolution. This time, led by women.

“Zan. Zendegi. Azadi,” my cousin said in the video. This is the revolution's battle cry. It



They want freedom. They want democracy. They want just a normal life.

- Niloofar Sabzevari, activist and radio host

translates directly to “Woman. Life. Freedom.” These words, my grandfather explained to me, are the key to Iran’s liberation. As I watched her repeat those words, I was struck by the connection of women worldwide. The same words screamed by hundreds of women at protests, many of which have been arrested or murdered, are being said by a 2-year-old girl in America. We are all connected.

Whether they be a toddler, a mother, or a grandmother, women everywhere are linked through generational oppression due to their ethnicity, gender, or both. While Iranian women fight for their right to freedom thousands of miles away, it is crucial to realize that physical distance has no power compared to our community’s support. To do this, I turned to Persian women in Louisville that are working adamantly for a better future for their families and communities in Iran.

Their stories give “woman” a new definition – one of hope, love, and community.

Zan: Woman

Getting arrested was a common occurrence for Niloofar Sabzevari. The first time she was arrested, she did not commit a crime – at least, not by American standards. Instead, as an eighth grader, she was taken by police for wearing sunglasses.

Sabzevari is an Iranian American woman who immigrated to America in the 2000s when she was in her early 30s. As a young girl growing up in Iran, she witnessed the oppression of regime rule. While the Iranian government

continues to strip freedoms from her family, friends, and other young women in Iran, Sabzevari has made it a mission to share her voice wherever it will be heard. More importantly, she gives Iranian girls and women a platform that is denied to them.

Her first arrest happened in eighth grade on a trip to Tehran, the capital of Iran, with her mother and relatives. Upon arrival, they were taken into police custody for inappropriate appearances.

“You have nail polish? Shame on you,” Sabzevari said, describing the police’s confrontation.

Police officers pulled Sabzevari off of the streets simply because they perceived her nail polish and eyewear as tempting to men. After being taken, she was urged to sign away her rights to paint her nails and remain modest according to Islamic Law. Her mother tore up the paper. They didn’t get out until midnight.

“It was a torture. I’ll never forget that,” Sabzevari said.

Many more arrests were to come after the first, but Sabzevari would continue to find her way out. The goal of her life’s work, though, was not to emphasize her amount of jail time spent or protests attended. Rather, it is to expose the harmful social norms of Iran and their consequences.

Iranian girls, she explained, face a level of societal expectations, pressures, and prejudices like no other.

“The regime made it harder because it brought regulations,” Sabzevari said.

As these social norms were cemented into regime law,

discrimination against women skyrocketed. More specifically, concerns of modesty associated with Islam became a priority. While Islam preaches modesty to both men and women, regulations were skewed toward women due to century-long justifications of objectification. Because of this, girls are required to begin wearing hijabs at a young age. All women must wear loose clothing to avoid portraying their curves or “female traits.” This is because a female’s biological figure is seen as a form of temptation in Islam. Sabzevari was arrested because her sunglasses and nail polish were too fashionable, and therefore inappropriate. This experience is not limited to her. In Iran, drawing attention to oneself is considered a crime against both the church and state simultaneously.

The effect of such amplified social norms? Shame.

“You always feel shame as a girl, even as a woman, to do something,” Sabzevari said.

The fear of bringing shame upon yourself and your family is what allows the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue enforcing its laws. These beliefs, though, have debilitating effects. Girls grow up with a lack of confidence in not only their physical traits, but their identities. The constant state of being under male control strips away personal liberties at birth.

“They said, ‘If you are a woman, you always need somebody that owns you, and your permission is under them, and always a man should be with you,’” Sabzevari said. “And that was disgusting.”

Because of this, Sabzevari decided she would never have a child in Iran. She couldn't risk it being a girl. In fact, after immigrating to America because of unsafe political conditions at home, she realized that she wouldn't want a boy in Iran either. Now, as she raises her son in America, she watches as he loves himself, something she will never take for granted.

As an immigrant, Sabzevari has seen both sides of the equation and is able to compare her past experiences with newer ones. She believes that now, conditions are even worse.

"They want freedom. They want democracy. They want just a normal life," Sabzevari said.

That is why she, along with two other Iranian women, created the Freedom Hour podcast on WXOX 97.1 FM. On their podcast, they discuss current events of the women's revolution, share Iranian music, and tell true stories to their viewers. They are ensuring that Iranian voices are heard.

"It doesn't say American women rights," Sabzevari said, explaining that the women's rights movement is not limited to the United States, or for that matter, one singular country at all. It applies everywhere.

The women's rights movement is global and it makes no exceptions. To fight for one, is to fight for all. As Sabzevari does this, she gives the word woman a new definition.

Woman: sharing your voice until it is heard.

Zendegi: Life

Golnoush Esmaily (20) immigrated from Iran to America as the guardian of her younger sister in 2019 and is currently studying at the University of Louisville (UofL) for her Masters of Business Administration. She joined the Iranian Student Organization (ISO) at UofL in 2020 in the public relations position



Fighting for Freedom: Niloofar Sabzevari holds a sign on Feb. 16 from one of the several peaceful protests she has organized to bring attention to the crisis in Iran. Photo by Keller Mobley. Photo illustration by Mali Bucher.



Generational Connection: Sydney Webb, 17, and her grandfather, Manoutchehre Barati, seated in his home on Persian New Year on March 20. *Photo by Keller Mobley. Photo illustration by Mali Bucher.*

and has since been promoted to president of the club.

The ISO creates a place for Iranian students at UofL to come together and celebrate holidays, as well as to welcome new students. Furthermore, the club is open to all students at UofL. Esmaily noted that many Persian and non-Persian students alike joined to learn more about Persian culture.

“At the end of the day, it’s important to know where

someone is coming from,” Esmaily said.

And it goes both ways. Growing up, Esmaily had a clouded view of what America looked like for women. After arriving in America, she realized that despite improvements, it was not as perfect as she once imagined. The same clouded views exist for Americans toward Iran.

“Iran is not always what you see in the movies,” Esmaily said.

She explained that incorrect depictions of Iran in American cinema, such as stereotypical scenes of deserts in places that are, in reality, urban, cause misconceptions about the country. Moreover, American news oftentimes fails to cover Iran’s issues entirely.

For Iranian and American students at UofL, being a part of ISO furthers students’ interpretation of Iranian



culture and politics in a way that breaks down generational barriers of understanding. And this is vital. Esmaeily emphasizes the importance for both cultures to understand each other in order to not only coexist, but work together. Oftentimes, Esmaeily points out, Iranians subconsciously assimilate into American culture before finding a balance between their nationality and new environment.

“It’s going to be somewhere between, so you are neither American nor Iranian,” Esmaeily explained. Arrival at this balance requires time, effort, and a supportive community. Once reached, it has the power to change the conversation. Recently, the ISO has taken a new direction of working closely with similar Louisville organizations to aid the women’s revolution in Iran.

“And that’s why I said, even though you’re here, doesn’t mean that you’re no longer Persian. Like, you feel more connected,” Esmaeily said.

She explained the personal turmoil associated with being miles away from friends and family and not knowing how to help. Esmaeily texts her friends every night to check on them after protests. She receives images of them getting beaten. She learns of them getting shot, arrested, and in the worst cases, sentenced for execution.

Coming to America may have increased her distance, but it did not decrease her passion. Esmaeily explained that celebrating Persian holidays is more important for her in America than it ever was growing up in Iran. It is a way to feel connected despite the distance.

“So I need to celebrate them. I need to be with other people during those days,” Esmaeily said.

Organizing celebrations within the ISO is more than a party. It is a time for the entire Iranian community at UofL to find strength in each other, share their voices, and connect to their culture.

Life: something celebrated.

Azadi: Freedom

“This time it will have an end. Yeah, it will have an end,” Sabzevari said.

Despite the years of oppression, Iranian women

“And that’s why I said, ‘Even though you’re here, doesn’t mean that you’re no longer Persian.’”

- Golnoush Esmaeily, president of ISO at UofL

both in and outside of Iran are hopeful. They are bringing strength in numbers. Women are taking to the streets in the hundreds and thousands, ripping off their hijabs, cutting their hair, and chanting their war cry against the regime. The culture of intimidation, fear, and shame on which the regime has thrived are being not only questioned, but attacked.

People worldwide are creating online communities, such as Twitter groups, to plan and publicize protests. Teenage girls in Iran beg organizers online to schedule protests before 10 p.m., or they can’t leave their houses. Everyone is playing a part.

“We even want freedom or death because it’s how long do you want to live like a slave? You know? Especially girls, especially girls,” Sabzevari said.

Girls of every age are stepping up because they are stronger together, but why should it only be in Iran? The need for women’s rights is worldwide; therefore, the problem should be tackled as such. By isolating



Deep In Thought: Golnoush Esmaeily, 20, reflects on her experience as an Iranian woman living in Louisville on Feb. 23. Esmaeily is the president of the Iranian Student Organization at the University of Louisville. *Photo by Keller Mobley. Photo illustration by Mali Bucher.*

political and social issues to their location or ethnicity, we overlook similarities that are right under our noses. If the women are uniting locally, it's time to do the same globally.

"Instead of telling, 'Oh, sorry for what's happening to your family,' No. Hold my hand," Sabzevari said.

She expressed that in order to help Iranian women in their time of need, Americans must stop simply sympathizing and start acting.

In Esmaeily's case, this looks like organizing Persian cultural events that foster a supportive

community for Persian men and women to celebrate their traditions. Her efforts work to involve American community members and educate them on Iranian culture and current events. By bridging the cultural and physical gap of Americans and Persians, Esmaeily and her organization are paving the way for future cooperation.

Sabzevari, on the other hand, is dedicated to sharing stories that go untold. Stories that aren't circulated in the media. Stories of men and women that have been arrested, killed, or have gone missing. Stories that we need to know. Her investigations

and experiences educate her listeners, followers, colleagues, and community leaders of new, first-hand developments of Iran's current situation.

Most importantly, Sabzevari explained that it is in the hands of the youth. Young Iranian women started the revolution, and as it continues to progress, they need a global society behind them to finish it.

"They are my leaders. The reason that I'm here, I support them and I'm gonna go all the way to the end until they win," Sabzevari said.

Freedom: achievable. •



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COCINAS AUTÉNTICAS

AUTHENTIC KITCHENS



¡Provecho! (Enjoy!): Taquero Mucho serves up their most popular dishes and drinks on March 1. Photo illustration by Jazmine Martinez.

Authentic Hispanic restaurants add culture and vibrancy to the Louisville community, but are often overlooked.

writing by MICHELLE PARADA • design by JAZMINE MARTINEZ

The smell of spice filled the kitchen. The stovetop cracked as dough baked and crisped against the heat. My mother flipped and kneaded dough next to the stove, hands covered in corn flour. Peppers and onions lay chopped on a cutting board as I grated cheese into a bowl — my contributions to the meal. As my mother rolled the dough into small balls, she methodically opened the tortilla press sitting beside her and closed it again on the dough, flattening it into a thin circle. The whole house smelled of salsa and melting cheese and the windows were open to let in the fresh air. Shifting the cooked tortillas off the stovetop, loving hands pinched the edges, filled the now bowl-shaped tortilla with sauce and cheese, and carefully placed each finished product onto a plate. The picaditas were ready.

Picaditas are a traditional street food sold by local vendors and in markets all across Mexico. While they originated in central Mexico, they quickly became popular throughout other regions. My mother was born and raised in Mexico and learned to make picaditas from her mother, who learned from her mother before her. Now, as a second-generation immigrant, I am learning this recipe, along with many others, as well.

There is love behind the recipes my mother teaches me. Eating these foods at home reminds me of the generations of people that have upheld our culture for decades. Yet when I look to find picaditas at Mexican

restaurants in America, I struggle. In fact, carnitas, barbacoa — nearly every recipe I've grown up with — tastes different, or is nonexistent, in many of America's Mexican chain restaurants.

Though most Americans would likely claim to have eaten Mexican food at least once in their lives, and some may even claim to be Mexican food fanatics, many have unknowingly never had truly authentic Mexican food.

As a young Hispanic woman who has become well-accustomed to the traditional flavors and recipes my culture has to offer, noticing the differences between my mother's cooking and Americanized dishes isn't a surprise anymore. I've gone to many restaurants advertised as "Mexican" and been served inauthentic dishes.

Taco Bell, Chipotle Mexican Grill, and Qdoba are well-loved within the United States, and understandably so. These restaurants make traditional Mexican flavors feel more familiar to the American palate. However, no matter how popular the food these restaurants offer may be, the adjustment of traditional recipes by large Mexican chain restaurants not only skews the image of Hispanic recipes but also diffuses the culture behind them. Furthermore, along with spreading a false narrative of what Mexican food looks and tastes like, they're profiting greatly off of doing so — even at the expense of family-owned Hispanic businesses.

Natalia Martez Garcia, an 18-year-old Mexican woman working at Panchitos, a Mexican

dessert restaurant in Louisville, explained how many of the dishes that are prepared in the restaurant are very similar, if not identical, to the ones made back in Mexico.

"Those snacks ... and many other prepared snacks made here are like the ones there — same with the ice cream," Garcia said, pointing to the top shelf where many snacks were located.

From chocolate-dipped bananas, esquimales, and Mexican ice cream, Panchitos offers a variety of unique and authentic Mexican desserts that can be hard to find within Louisville otherwise. Husband and wife Jose and Alicia Fabian opened up the Preston Highway location of Panchitos in 2015. However, Panchitos was actually first opened in Lexington by Jose Fabian's parents back in 2009. Since its opening in Louisville, the restaurant and the various recipes they offer have become favorites of many Louisville residents. As a result of its popularity, the restaurant opened a new location on Bardstown Road in 2019.

Though small, family-owned Hispanic restaurants like Panchitos are typically not as popular or well-known as big chains, they are widespread and tend to be appreciated within their individual communities. According to CHD Expert, which collects, analyzes, and manages food service data, 73% of all Mexican food restaurants are independent, meaning that they are locally-owned businesses that operate on a small scale. Within Louisville, Panchitos



Order Up:

A Taquero Mucho employee grabs a tlayuda from the kitchen through a small window on March 1. *Photo by Jazmine Martinez.*

is just one example. Taquero Mucho, El Taco Loco, Con Huevos, and La Sierra all fit this label of independent restaurants. By focusing specifically on their community, rather than needing to prioritize appealing to generalized American palates, these restaurants are able to stay more true to authentic recipes and add vibrancy and culture to the Louisville community.

Not only do authentic, independently-owned Hispanic restaurants within Louisville combat the inaccurate or Americanized recipes served by many big chains, they also combat the cultural grouping that is extremely common among the chain industry.

I come from two different cultures – Mexican culture from my mom’s side of the family

and El Salvadoran culture from my dad’s. In Chicago, where I lived for the first 10 years of my life, El Salvador’s and Mexico’s unique cultures were equally represented, making it easier to appreciate both of them. However, once my family moved to Louisville, it was difficult to find that kind of specificity in Hispanic restaurants. The variety I was used to made it harder to adjust to Louisville. Though Louisville is still fairly diverse, a lot of Hispanic cultures, and more specifically, Hispanic foods, are colloquially labeled under the umbrella term of “Mexican.” “Let’s go get Mexican food,” can mean food that is traditionally Cuban, Salvadoran, or even more commonly, just American. As a result of this categorization, the diversity within the Hispanic

world is simplified into one label that doesn’t do it justice.

Junior Moreno, a former student at Fairdale High School and the 25-year-old son of the owner at Señor Pupusas, a Central American restaurant, spoke about how he grew up around Salvadoran cuisine.

“My mom used to sell food out of a trailer and people were like ‘Well, you gotta open your own restaurant.’ Fast forward years later, we finally decided to open it,” Moreno said. “Everything we sell here is 100% authentic. We sell Honduran food, Salvadoran food, and also Mexican food.”

The restaurant is fairly new to Louisville, having opened just two years ago, but is already well-loved in the Okolona, Prairie Village, and Fairdale area. Many of

the recipes at Señor Pupusas were passed down from generation to generation in Moreno's family. All of the dishes served at their restaurant have their own history in their origin countries. Unlike big chains, this variety of foods is displayed proudly.

Even within a single culture, there can be distinct differences in cuisine. Mexican cuisine alone is more complex than many people realize.

Within Mexico, there are seven different food regions — Norteño (Northern Mexico), Bajacaliforniano (Baja California), Oaxaqueño (Oaxaca), Jalisciense (Jalisco), Veracruzano (Veracruz), Yucateco (Yucatan), and Poblano (Puebla & Mexico City). When all of these are categorized under the label of "Mexican food," it causes the dish to lose a part of its identity, ultimately diffusing the culture behind it. Many restaurants use mixtures of all these regions and like to make things easier by categorizing them under just "Mexican." Although this label is not technically wrong, there is a deeper meaning that gets undermined by its simplicity.

Gulliermo Ramirez and Agustino Gutierrez, the owners of Taquero Mucho, are from different regions of Mexico. Their mixture of Oaxacan and Guanajuato cuisine adds a unique, culturally specific, and accurate addition to Louisville's Mexican food scene. Like Señor Pupusas, Taquero Mucho is also new to Louisville, having opened just a year ago.

"I come from the Baja zone of Mexico, and I had the opportunity to come to this country and I saw that I had business opportunities there. And I said, 'One day I'm going to be in business,'" Ramirez said.

As Louisville continues to bring in more and more people

who open authentic Hispanic restaurants, Louisville residents are provided with an opportunity to expand their palates and combat the misrepresentation of cultural foods within America as a whole.

Within Louisville's family-owned, independent Hispanic restaurants, there is a rich spreading of genuine Hispanic culture that allows me to be confident that my culture's traditional recipes are being preserved and passed down. With the same care and love my mom makes her picaditas, authentic kitchens within Louisville are cooking up and serving a vibrant culture to the Louisville community. It's simply our city's choice now whether or not they want to take a taste. •

“Everything we sell here is 100% authentic. We sell Honduran food, Salvadoran food, and also Mexican food.”

- Junior Moreno, 25, son of Señor Pupusas' owner

Family Time: Michelle Parada, 16, eats dinner at Panchitos with her family. This restaurant serves many food items, along with ice cream that is made in-house. *Photo by Jazmine Martinez.*





TAKING CENTER STAGE



Lineup: Drag queens, CC, Nicole Jackson Valentino, Vanity Mirror, and JC, perform at CC's Kitchen on Feb. 18. The drag queens perform in spite of Senate Bill 115 looming over the fate of drag performances. *Photo by Erica Fields.*

Louisville's drag queens take a stand against stereotypes after Kentucky's legislature attempted to ban drag shows.

writing by SAMMIE HADEN • design by NOA YUSSMAN

I've lived in Louisville my entire life. I grew up going to school in Old Louisville, memorizing street names, and exploring downtown. So I thought I had the wrong place when my GPS, programmed for CC's Kitchen, directed me to Fourth Street.

I've walked this road dozens of times. I think I'd notice a drag show, I thought.

The only indicator that I was at the right place was my group of friends, who were waiting for me outside of the rather ordinary-looking entrance.

As we walked through the doors, we were immediately immersed in the atmosphere of the room. The normality of the outside was washed away as we entered a room lit by large sconces decorated with fluffy white and pink feathers. Walls covered in large kiss prints and shelves lined with outrageous pink and blue wigs filled the space. Looking around, I caught a glimpse of other customers behind me with the same wondrous looks on their faces.

My head spun forward when I heard the sound of large platform heels clicking across the floor. I looked up to see five drag queens towering over me, each in floor length, vibrant-colored dresses.

One of the drag queens stepped forward and I craned my neck to take in her teal blue polka dot dress and bright blue wig. She introduced herself as CC, the general manager, marketing manager, as well as a performer. I was surprised to be welcomed so warmly at the door by the entire cast. Although it's typical for drag queens to greet customers, making personal connections today was of the utmost importance.

On Feb. 10, just a week before we attended CC's Kitchen's drag brunch, six Republican Kentucky state senators proposed Senate Bill 115 (SB 115), which determined

that "adult-oriented businesses" cannot be located within 1,000 feet of public places like child-care facilities and parks. Section 2 of the bill defines a drag show as an adult-oriented business, and lumps them in with cabarets and "adult live entertainment establishments," otherwise known as strip clubs.

As of March, the bill is dead. But it matches other bills limiting drag shows across the country, and symbolizes the potential for future bills proposed in the next legislative session that might succeed in banning drag shows for good.

If SB 115 had passed, CC's Kitchen's classification as both a restaurant open to all ages and as a drag show would've meant that the restaurant itself could stay open while the show would be forced to shut down.

On the day I attended, as CC explained the bill to the crowd, I began to understand just how impactful not just the passing of this bill, but the proposal itself, could be. The show could eventually be closed, leaving a majority of the cast standing before me out of a job.

"So this is me waving my finger in the air," CC said, holding her head high alongside the other four drag queens. "We're not gonna go down quietly."

More Than a Performance

Throughout the drag queens' performances that morning, each one I spoke with had a costume change. Perhaps the most daring costume was worn by Louisville-born drag queen Nicole Jackson Valentino, who donned a short-sleeved shirt, fishnet stockings, and mini biker shorts.

Valentino goes by her stage name, as do all of the other queens I met at CC's Kitchen. Her quick wit headlined the

show, and it took no time before she had the audience in the palm of her hand.

During her performance, she asked for a young person in the crowd to join her on stage. I looked up from my meal and scanned the room, suddenly realizing people at surrounding tables were encouraging me to volunteer. The adrenaline that the cheering audience instilled in me almost made me forget my fear of speaking in front of large groups, but even the noise of their applause wasn't loud enough to drown out the sound of my heart pounding. As I joined Valentino on stage, I willed myself not to look out at all the people watching me.

So this is me waving my finger in the air ... We're not gonna go down quietly.

- CC, drag queen and general manager of CC's Kitchen

"What's your name?" Valentino asked, holding out the mic for me.

"Uh, Sammie," I said.

"Uh, Sammie?" You don't know your own name?" Valentino joked. "Say it with confidence this time."

"My name's Sammie," I said confidently, smiling into the mic.

Valentino continued to ask me questions about myself, easing my nerves about being on stage with quippy jokes.

"Let's turn on a clean song for her," she said. "You know Carrie Underwood?"



Proud: Adriana Fuentes performs before an enthusiastic crowd at CC's Kitchen on Feb. 18. She carries an "I'm Proud" fan to showcase her support of the drag community in light of the announcement of Senate Bill 115. Photo by Erica Fields.

Before I had time to answer, "Before He Cheats" blasted through the speakers. Valentino smiled at me, prompting me to dance along to the music. I stepped off stage and jogged across the room, waving my arms to the lyrics of the song while the audience cheered me on.

When I returned back to my seat, I didn't think twice about the many eyes that had been watching me. I only imitated the confidence of the drag queens, feeding off of the audience's responses rather than letting them scare me.

While the drag show draws large crowds similar to the one I saw the day I joined Valentino on stage, CC's Kitchen also functions as a restaurant, and performers have no problem chipping in. Although she holds a management position, CC has cooked, run tables, washed

dishes, and performed in drag — all in one workday.

Although performing remains a priority, some queens have a career outside of drag. Valentino, who hosts the brunch every Saturday, is one of these performers. So if the drag brunch was eventually shut down, she would still have a source of income.

But many drag queens rely entirely on performing to make money, and Valentino refuses to forget about or leave them behind.

"Nicole would still travel and perform. And I've always been a person who takes entertainers with me wherever I go. So I will try to find work for my brothers and my sisters in the community, and try to see if we can overturn it," Valentino said.

The community Valentino would be helping to find jobs for is

a large one. Louisville is home to numerous nationally recognized drag shows, most notably including The Hub, Le Moo, Play, and CC's Kitchen. While Play functions as a nightclub for people 18 and over, the others operate as restaurants, catering to all ages.

The day I went, the audience at CC's Kitchen was filled with people both young and old. Among them was a little girl, who immediately caught my eye. I watched her hold up a dollar bill for CC during her performance, laughing as they chatted while the audience clapped along to "I Wanna Dance With Somebody."

The little girl, Ahzaria Tarter-Sharp (7) attended the show with her uncle, Andre Sharp, and moms, Brielle Sharp and Tianna Tarter.

Tarter-Sharp's moms, who have attended many drag shows in the past, had no problem

DRAG BRUNCHES IN LOUISVILLE

cc's kitchen

651 S. 4th St.
all ages

illusions

527 W. Market St.
21+

le moo

2300 Lexington Rd.
all ages

play louisville

1101 E. Washington St.
18+

the hub

2235 Frankfort Ave.
21+

bringing their daughter to the drag brunch.

"She had a great time; she loved it," Tarter said.

"Love is love is love," Andre exclaimed, watching his bright-eyed niece eagerly wait to take a picture with the cast after the show. "She enjoyed herself a lot."

Bills On Bills

Bringing kids as young as Tarter-Sharp to drag brunches isn't entirely uncommon. But if local attitudes reflected SB 115, youth would be kept far away from drag shows.

I reached out to all six senators who proposed the bill via email. Although I received a response from Senators Southworth and Tichenor, neither of them followed up with me for an interview.

Tichenor told PBS on March 10 that she recognizes performing as the opposite gender has occurred for decades, mentioning Robin Williams' character, Mrs. Doubtfire.

"This bill is not in any way addressing those types of performances," Tichenor told PBS.

While she believes that drag performances "limited to adult audiences" are not a problem, with SB 115, she is targeting performances that can be viewed by the youth.

"What is hateful about keeping children away from sexualized adult performances?" Tichenor asked.

The proposal of SB 115 mirrors many other efforts being made to ban drag shows across the country. After weeks of protest against the bill earlier this year, the Kentucky House ran out of time to read and pass SB 115. Although the bill is dead in Kentucky, the issue perseveres throughout the country.

Tennessee General Assembly recently passed their own bill, SB 3, banning drag shows "on

public property" and in areas where children may be present, accomplishing what Kentucky was attempting to pass. This will make Tennessee the first U.S. state to ban drag shows. The first violation of this new law is a misdemeanor. The second violation is a felony. The bill is on track to take effect July 1 of this year, although the ACLU of Tennessee has threatened to sue on the grounds that the bill is unconstitutional.

"Tennessee: we're also fighting the same fight that you guys are doing over here with SB 115," said JC, a Nashville-born performer at CC's Kitchen, who, at the time, was concerned about the potential passage of SB 115.

Although the banning of drag shows is a national issue, they have become increasingly important to Louisville over the past couple of decades, and banning them would have an impact on not only the city's tourist economy, but also its prominent LGBTQIA+ community.

Louisville Drag

Louisville has had a reputation as an inclusive city for years now, presenting many opportunities for gay youth to celebrate their identity. One of these events is the annual Kentuckiana Pride Parade & Festival, which occurs every June in NULU. According to their website, it is estimated that over 20,000 people will be in attendance this year. In January, The New York Times placed Louisville as #40 on their list of "52 Places to Go in 2023." The article described Louisville's rising LGBTQIA+ scene, highlighting drag shows, along with Derby and bourbon, as noteworthy aspects of the city. It went on to list Play as a "thriving hot spot."

Louisville's drag scene is a large, critical part of the city.

"We have drag that is booming, and has been booming

for the past 15-20 years,” JC said. “A lot of people have been more exposed to it.”

Many drag queens compete in pageants, such as Mr. Entertainer of the Year, which JC is aiming for in 2023. This coveted title is part of one of the top pageant systems in the world, with shows held here in Louisville.

Drag performers from many cities and countries come together in Louisville. JC has lived in over 45 countries, but finds himself coming back to Louisville often.

“They’re so welcoming; they are incredible,” JC said. “A lot of people from all over the world come to Louisville to compete.”

And while Louisville houses performers from across the globe, many drag queens come right from our own backyard.

“I actually live in Lexington. But I’m up in Louisville all the time,” Vanity Mirror (19) said. “I kind of switched between them both, so I guess I grew up in Lexington and Louisville.”

Mirror was the youngest drag queen performing at CC’s Kitchen the day I went. For many young, aspiring drag queens, it can be difficult or intimidating to perform when you don’t have any personal relationships.

“It was a little hard at first because I didn’t really have the connections to start,” Mirror said. “But you know, our generations very much like YouTube and Instagram and all that kind of thing. And luckily, I had a very open community around me.”

During our brunch, her young age immediately caught our attention. Although she entered to a slower, sassy jazz song, her overwhelming confidence immediately stood out. We couldn’t help but pause our eating to watch Mirror perform. Her bold entrance was only highlighted by her floor-length,

sequined black dress and hoop earrings so large they seemed to dance with her. She winked at me as she slickly took a dollar bill from my extended hand, large, silver bracelets jingling in my ear as she did so.

Surviving Stereotypes

While Louisville’s drag community reflects CC’s Kitchen’s drag queens, remaining bold and united, performers still face stereotypes. Perhaps one of the most common stereotypes is that drag performances are always sexually explicit.

“Look at all the layers I’m wearing; this is a couch cushion,” CC said, pulling out a large, padded cushion from her backside. “There are three pairs of tights, there are things underneath ... It is all makeup and foam and a facade.”

All five drag queens I spoke with reported having been stereotyped in the past. While everyone has different experiences, Valentino has found a successful way to cope with unfair stereotypes.

“I’m fortunate enough to not let no one treat me less than I treat myself,” Valentino said. “So I have had a good experience, because I don’t allow people to give me bad experiences.”

While I was interviewing them, many of the performers discussed the stereotype that all drag queens are transgender, a view accompanied by prejudice and unfair treatment of its own. According to JC, these stereotypes against the trans community could be seen in Section 2-12 of SB 115, stating that performers “exhibiting a gender expression that is inconsistent with the biological sex formally recognized on the performer’s original birth certificate using clothing, makeup, or other physical markers” were not



Mirror Mirror: Vanity Mirror, 19, confidently performs at CC’s Kitchen on Feb. 18. *Photo by Erica Fields.*

allowed to do so on public property or a location where children may be present.

This sparked uproar amongst Louisville’s transgender community, seeing as the bill only

mentioned performers who dress up as the opposite gender.

“Drag” acts as an umbrella term, with drag queens, drag kings, and male or female performers all falling under this category. Defining the differences between a drag performer and a transgender person is key. Drag performers typically dress as the opposite sex for entertainment purposes, while a transgender person does not just present, but identifies, as the opposite of their biological sex.

There are also distinctions that must be made under the word “drag” and all of the labels included in it. A drag queen dresses femininely, as either a man or woman, and a drag king is a person who dresses masculinely, also as a man or a woman. Some drag performers don’t like the idea of being stuck under just one label. For example, while JC technically qualifies as a drag king because he is a male who dresses masculinely, he referred to himself as a male performer at the drag show.

While labels create distinctions within the LGBTQIA+ community, drag performers continue to support each other through their differences. Although JC is a male performer, he continues to raise awareness of the struggles other members of the LGBTQIA+ community are facing.

“I’m a male, my gender marker is male,” JC said. “So this bill doesn’t affect me, which I believe is just a bypass against the trans community.”

Taking Action

CC’s Kitchen’s drag queens are strongly opposed to the passing of bills banning drag shows and focus on raising awareness of these proposals and their implications. CC reached out to local leaders to discuss the bill.

“I have requested to meet the mayor of Lexington as well as

the mayor of Louisville,” CC said in February.

While Louisville’s LGBTQIA+ community and its allies’ protests successfully sent a message, and SB 115 wasn’t passed into law, not every state has a drag community as active as Louisville’s. But, like CC, local drag queens and gay youth continue to speak out in attempts to prevent more drag shows around the country from being closed.

As of April, CC’s Kitchen’s drag show remains in operation. But that doesn’t mean a similar bill won’t be seen in future legislative sessions, one that Louisville’s drag queens fear may succeed in legally shutting down drag shows.

“The Kentucky motto is ‘united we stand, divided we fall,’” Valentino said, “but they’re dividing us. So we’re gonna fall.” •



Food Runner: CC serves orders at CC’s Kitchen on March 12. CC opened the restaurant during the pandemic, which helped provide jobs when many drag queens were out of work. *Photo by Erica Fields.*

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OUR BURDEN



The failings of our current recycling systems have inspired youth to take the issue into their own hands.

writing by JACKSON BARNES • design by SILAS MAYS • infographic by STELLA FORD

I'm sure you've seen the logo hundreds of times over: the loop of arrows, folding back on themselves in a clockwise formation. Plastered on everything from cardboard boxes to the very bins themselves, this insignia has become a universal symbol for reducing, reusing, and recycling.

The well-known recycling symbol has a name: the Mobius Loop. Despite being so familiar, its arrows conceal much more than what can be seen at first glance. Like the Mobius Loop, there are many aspects of recycling that aren't common knowledge — parts we take for granted or treat as givens — no matter how simple the process may seem. Even the phrasing, “to throw something away,” is vague. We never really stop to think about the process. It's expected that our recycling will end up where it's supposed to be, but that isn't always how things work.

But I'll explain all of that later. First, we should explore the path our recycling takes.

Where Is “Away?”

After we throw our paper or cardboard boxes into the recycling bin, we rarely see them again. While it may vary from city to city, there is a common path that all recycling takes. The first step is on us: the initial disposal of each product. Louisville functions as a single-stream system, which designates a single bin for all recycling, not separate ones for different materials. This means that, instead of one bin for takeout boxes and one for yesterday's paper, we have an all-encompassing blue bin. Our participation ends at the disposal. However, the process continues from there.

Whether different kinds of recyclables are grouped together or not, they are collected —

either by a government entity or contracted company — and taken to a processing facility. In Louisville, there are two primary companies that manage recycling: Westrock and Rumpke. Rumpke, despite having trucks and dumpsters that operate within Louisville, is headquartered in Cincinnati. According to Karen Maynard, the public education supervisor for the Public Works Solid Waste Division, Westrock is local, making it the go-to for residential recycling.

Once the waste is at the facility, workers on a conveyor line attempt to quality control, pulling off objects that can't be processed. For example, pieces of cardboard with grease that end up in facilities that cannot handle them have to be manually removed. Plastic bags are another commonly prohibited item because they stretch and can end up wrapping around the machinery. Unfortunately, workers can't catch everything, which leads to recycling contamination. This is a recurring issue, with entire loads sometimes being rendered unusable. These loads are simply referred to as landfills.

After the contaminants have been removed and the rest pass through, the recycling is sorted by type to be sent to facilities with different processing capabilities, ranging from plants that work solely with paper to those that focus on glass beneficiation, and everything in between.

“They'll use gravity, air, magnets, eddy currents — anything that's going to help move material automatically is used to separate everything into its own commodity,” Maynard said.

The materials each have unique ways of being remade

into new products, often kept under wraps by the respective companies that process them for the sake of competition and profit. It is, after all, still a business.

If everything goes according to plan, the raw material can be packaged and sent out to buyers. From there, it's made into products once again, and the cycle begins anew.

The Emergence Of the Recycling Movement

Advertising and educational messaging surrounding recycling is extremely prominent, ingraining a sense of responsibility into the minds of many, especially youth. In the 1970s, the effects of America's long obsession with disposable consumer products were catching up to us. As a response, both the government and corporations collaborated to create the rules that are familiar to us now. Those regulations still impact society today.

The way in which awareness about recycling is presented seems almost frantic and can be found nearly everywhere. Articles flood social media feeds, advertising “green” products and providing personal lifestyle tips on how to reduce one's carbon footprint. Even the recycling bins themselves, which are typically bright colors, are structured to draw attention. In your schools, homes, and businesses, the bins stick out like a sore thumb. If recycling has been in the public eye since the '70s, then why is it still not reaching its full potential?

The answer to this isn't a simple one.

Breaks In the Loop

Whether it be due to a constant shifting of responsibility, lack of education, failing infrastructure, or basic inability to participate,

there are many barriers that continue to hinder recycling as a whole, including within Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS).

The district has taken steps throughout the years to be more sustainable, yet they aren't always seen to fruition. In 2017, recycling initiatives had begun to become a priority in JCPS with the introduction of recyclable cardboard trays. But in 2020, the trays stopped being supplied to JCPS following supply chain issues, and JCPS returned to styrofoam trays. Additionally, JCPS has made attempts to enforce recycling in all of their schools, but this has been tough to maintain.

The district follows the Kentucky Revised Statutes, specifically chapter 160.294, which essentially says that each local board of education is required to have a program for, at the very least, white paper and cardboard. The 2022-23 official JCPS Facility Compliance Manual also claims that all conventional recyclables should not be taken to landfills, including plastics and metals. Although these rules are in place, they are not always successfully enforced.

"We do have a recycling dumpster, but what I found when

I got here was that it was normally getting thrown away," said Andrew Gray, a teacher at the J. Graham Brown School. "It's kind of up to us to make sure it gets done."

Joseph Irwin, the environmental coordinator for JCPS, and his department hear reports once every couple months of schools combining their recycling and trash. However, they strive to reach out and solve these occurrences as soon as possible.

"It's not a common thing that people reach out to me but if someone reports that to me or our department or one of our people, we immediately address that. We don't want people's efforts to go to waste when they're trying to help the environment and save the district money," he said.

Despite efforts by Irwin and his team, considering that there are 165 schools in JCPS, making sure each and every one is up to standard is a massive task. According to Irwin, custodians are meant to be the ones making sure that schools' recycling ends up in the appropriate dumpster. However, after seeing recycling being thrown into the dumpsters alongside their trash counterparts, how can students

trust that their schools properly recycle each week?

As a result, a common scene now, all across JCPS, is the advent of environmental clubs or other student groups associated with managing recycling for schools. This helps students ensure that these policies are being carried out. Gray initially began Brown's environmental club as a recycling effort eight years ago. Similarly, Ballard High School, according to Irwin, has a student group dedicated to taking out the school's recycling.

While the effort put forth by environmental groups is admirable, to see these recycling procedures reach their full potential, they must not just be performed by students but prioritized by the district.

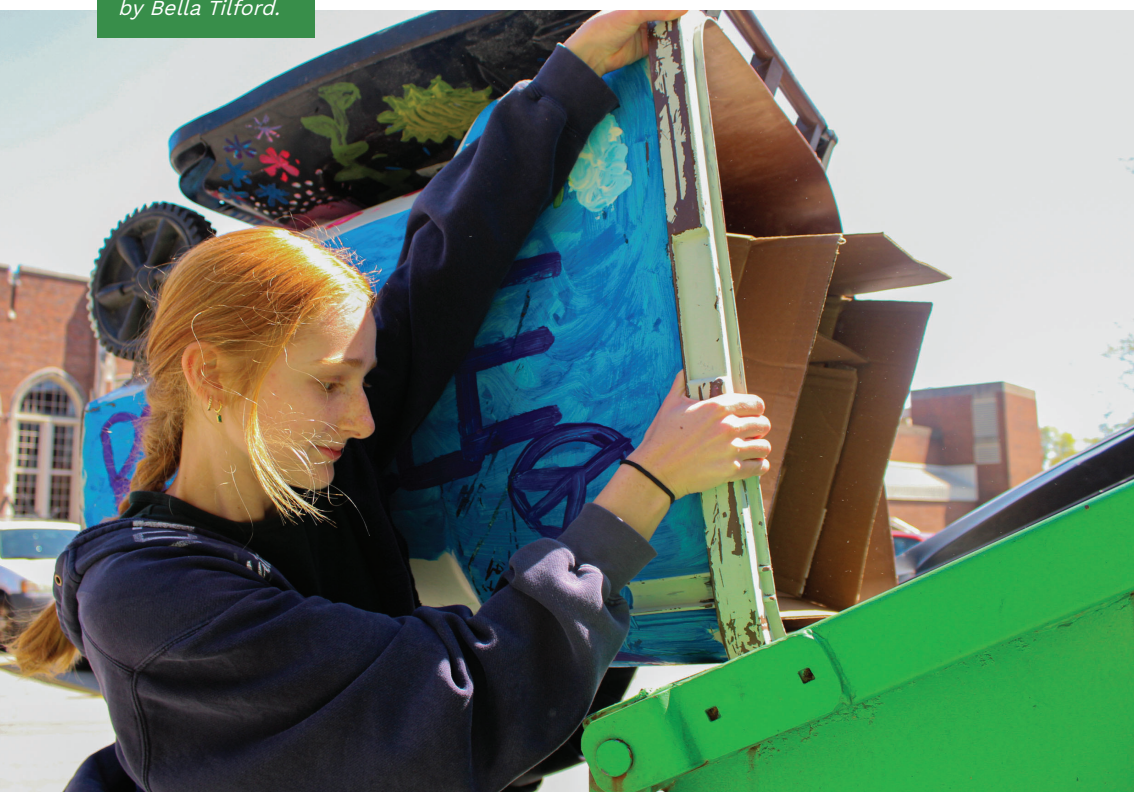
The issues that JCPS experiences are not isolated. There are bigger issues at play that complicate recycling both in Louisville and nationwide.

Infrastructure Issues

For years, the United States relied on exports of recyclables to China. At the time this agreement was created, it was mutually beneficial. China needed raw materials to fuel their growing industries, and we needed to get rid of our junk. In fact, in 2016 alone, the United States exported about 16 million tons of papers, metals, and plastics out to China. However, this would quickly prove to be unsustainable. According to a 2020 report by the Columbia Climate School, due to recycling contamination, only around 30% of this could actually be recycled and used, causing heavy pollution within China. In 2018, China implemented a new policy that limited the import of many recyclable items, effectively shutting down the main route for waste out of the United States.

Student Involvement:

Jaci Baker-Green, 17, co-president of duPont Manual High School's Environmental Club, empties a school recycling bin on March 12. Photo illustration by Bella Tilford.





Due to America's continued reliance on China, the domestic recycling industry was not fully developed. As soon as the trash started to pile up, the shortcomings of America's recycling infrastructure began to show. The inability to properly process things on a national level applied pressure to city governments. Unless local recycling plants could afford the increased inflow of materials, they would simply shut down. Recycling struggled. Not only did it have to be profitable, but it had to be profitable under higher pressure than ever before. To

stay in business, making money became the number one priority. Transporting and processing materials is costly, and can often lead to fees placed on citizens to make up for lost profit.

For example, in Louisville, recycling can get tricky for those outside of our Urban Services District (USD). The USD extends to the old city limits, which were from before the merging of the city of Louisville and Jefferson County. When they merged in 2003, the outer county didn't want to pay the increased taxes that covered urban services, so the recycling

stayed within the old limits. The interior area, now called the USD, has access to recycling provided by the city. Those living outside the USD, however, have to sign up to have recycling and pay an extra fee alongside it. Moreover, some apartment complexes don't even have recycling bins, meaning that to recycle, residents have to make the trip to their nearest drop-off station, if they even know it exists.

The Struggle Of Individuals

The responsibility of overseeing recycling and other sustainability



If it feels difficult, and you don't want to do it, it's easy to say, 'One person's not going to make a difference anyway.'

- Karen Maynard, public education supervisor, Public Work Solid Waste Division

efforts is commonly hefted onto the citizen, the individual, the consumer, rather than the corporations. We are taught to make all these changes in our personal lives, or to go out of our way and altruistically tackle this problem. Instead of everyone forming a more united front against the issue, responsibility keeps getting passed around.

"Some people don't want to learn more. Some people just want to throw their trash away and be done with it," Maynard said.

The growing popularity of environmental clubs is a prime example of the burden that faces us as the next generation. Though there are those that are ready to take action, this responsibility being placed on the individual doesn't necessarily mean that everyone is ready to carry it. Not everyone is distinctly aware of the real impacts. Even if they are, when it comes to global issues, one's own actions can seem insignificant in the face of a growing population.

"It can be hard. And that comes pretty much with any behavior that is in some way for sustainability and for the environment. If it feels difficult, and you don't want to do it, it's easy to say, 'One person's not going to make a difference anyway,'" Maynard said.

Even when companies do end up taking on some responsibility that is typically placed on individuals, it doesn't come without conditions. Take the current trend toward green commerce, for

example. Though the companies themselves are actually using recycled materials, the consumer is still required to actually buy those products. The choice, and ergo the responsibility, falls back on us.

The renewable quality of products is also frequently utilized in marketing campaigns. The bare minimum of ecological conservation or awareness — as these renewable products are more often than not still produced in factories that use fossil fuels and exude greenhouse gasses — is touted as a selling point. Because of this, to many, it seems that if cleaning up our planet isn't profitable for companies, it won't be done.

People trying to be more conscious about recycling can be dissuaded from taking time to buy certain products or to organize their trash because of the extra effort and layer of complication. Additionally, many citizens are concerned that even if they put in the conscious effort to recycle that it still won't pay off.

This brings up another concern that citizens may have: If they're putting in all this effort, how much of what we throw away is actually recycled? According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, over half of it isn't. In 2018, the United States produced over 292 million tons of solid waste. Of that waste, 48.2% of it was plastics, metals, glass, and paper or paperboard. That's around 140.9 million tons of recyclable material. Only 69.1

million of that was actually recycled. Obviously they're not just tossing it away for no reason, so what's happening to that missing 71.8 million tons?

This is where profitability comes into play again. Distance and material type both impact shipping costs.

Plastics are tricky in this regard. Though they're relatively cheap to process and move, they can just as easily get contaminated with incompatible plastic types or residual food waste. Companies won't buy them unless they're relatively "pure," so those contaminated loads have to be dumped. While single-stream recycling makes the process much easier for consumers, and makes people more likely to recycle as a result, all the materials being collected together increases the chances of contamination drastically.

The point? Recycling is a balancing act between convenience of participation with the efficiency of the recycling process. Despite the fact that education about the issue is extremely important, making it appear too complicated can prevent people from even trying to participate. On the other hand, too much simplicity leads to problems for the recycling plants.

Still, Maynard urges people to contribute where they can.

"It's participating — it's only making that system more worthwhile. Because the trucks are coming, no matter what," she said.

In the face of all this, the issue can seem insurmountable. However, as youth set to inherit the planet, we can't afford to stay complacent. So then, what's the next step?

What Can We Do?

The first step toward a solution is education.

Both staying informed and informing others are ways in which one can contribute. Irwin believes this is especially important in regards to younger students.

"We start with the elementary schools so that they can carry that knowledge to middle and high school. It's more difficult to get the middle and high schoolers involved," Irwin said.

Diane Moon, public education coordinator for Louisville's Solid

Waste Management, agrees with his sentiment, and brought up another important point.

"When we do events, we do try and talk to younger people because they are actually the ones who can influence their adults," Moon said.

It's important to realize that there are people trying to make changes. The technology of recycling plants is advancing all the time. The efficiency of the process improves alongside the technology. On the legal side of things, there are constant efforts with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) bills. EPRs essentially force companies to be fully responsible for the entire lifetime of a product, including its

disposal. Whether it be through financial aid or operational responsibility, the ideal plan would be to lessen the burden on buyers as a whole. These improvements, however, won't just fix things on their own. More efficient recycling plants still require us to recycle, and bills don't pass without support. This is yet another thing we can't take for granted and just expect to happen. The importance of participation, even in the smallest ways, cannot be overstated.

Nicholas Neagle, a senior at the J. Graham Brown School, is a member of the school's environmental club. At Brown, a group of students alongside Gray

One Man's Trash: Tyrone Mishaw, a member of the Louisville Metro Solid Waste Collection team, smiles wide on March 18 at the Pop-Up Drop-Off Waste Disposal Event. "It's good to be a trash man. If there's one thing you should let the readers know, it's that it's good to be a trash man," Mishaw said. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*



Keeping Things Light: Crystal Edison, a member of the Louisville Metro Solid Waste Collection team, laughs at a coworker's joke at the Pop-Up Drop-Off Waste Disposal Event on March 18. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*



When we do events, we do try and talk to younger people because they are actually the ones who can influence their adults.

- Diane Moon, public education coordinator, Louisville Solid Waste Management

Throw It Out: Mike Whittaker dumps a broken trash can into a dump truck during the Pop-Up Drop-Off Waste Disposal Event on March 18. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*

have taken it upon themselves to make the school a more environmentally friendly place. Not only do they take care of the recycling, but they also organize events and promote involvement from all ages of students. From making trash art to putting together the school-wide Earth Day celebration, they want to encourage students to be more conscious of what they throw away.

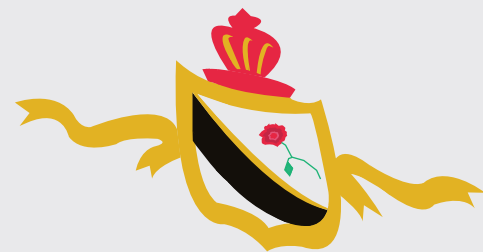
The Brown School is a K-12 school, giving the message an even wider reach. Neagle sees this as essential.

“Having these options, this availability of ways you can help, really allows environmentalism to grow and expand and reach new generations,” he said.

The issue can seem monumental, and its components are parts of life that people don't normally take into consideration. Despite all this, there are those like Neagle that are taking action. It's a heavy weight to have to carry, but not one that should be carried alone. Anyone can help. No matter how small one's choices may seem, no change can be made without effort. Getting involved, being informed, and even just making sure to recycle your papers are all great steps forward. They're steps that youth need to take if we want what's best for the planet that's being left to us. Though the pressure of all this may feel crushing, the only way to lighten the burden is to work together. •



The Pageant PARADOX



Despite pageantry's problematic history, the industry can look toward programs like the Derby Royal Court for ways to improve.

writing by KENDALL GELLER • design by LIN TRAN



When I look for representations of feminism in society, I look toward people spearheading female equality movements, like Malala Yousafzai, or authority figures that are trying to pass pro-women legislation, such as U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The last place I look for manifestations of feminism is in the world of beauty pageants. To me, pageants seem to be in direct opposition to the concept of feminism: women in sparkling tiaras and pristinely-ironed sashes, judged for their looks and not their character. Since the first pageant was held nearly 100 years ago, women's opportunities within society have expanded, celebration of diversity within America has grown, and the concept of what women can be has drastically shifted. This

leaves many wondering whether or not pageantry still reflects the ideals of our current time, or if it should even exist at all.

I was one of those people. But weighing the validity of my original views against reality has led me to many eye-opening realizations about the world of pageantry.

In order to best understand and be able to unpack today's pageant industry, it is important to understand some of its history. In 1921, New Jersey hosted the Atlantic City's Inner Beauty Contest, a "bathing suit beauty review" where contestants were judged on their physique and cosmetic ability. This contest went on to become what is known as Miss America today and is widely recognized as the first beauty pageant in the United States. By the 1930s, the number of beauty contests in America had

risen exponentially, fueled mainly by the emergence of the cosmetic industry and mainstream media. These pageants celebrated conventional feminine beauty and attributes, rating contestants on things such as hair, skin, muscle tone, and general appearance. In the 1930s, Miss America officials solidified rule #7 of the handbook: "Contestants must be of good health and of the white race." Even after the rule's removal in 1940, pageantry remained dominated by white and wealthy women. In fact, despite being granted access to the pageant 40 years prior, no black women won Miss America until 1984.

In modern times, pageantry is still majority white women, yet the industry has started to learn from its history and adapt to fit present-day standards in a variety of ways.



Pretty In Pink: Lauren Carter hands Kendall Geller, 16, a souvenir during JusticeFest at the Convention Center on Feb. 25. Photo by Anna Burzynski.

In attempts to keep up with the ever-increasingly progressive views regarding women today, many pageants have incorporated talent and speaking portions, and require service projects and academic prerequisites. Many current pageant queens feel that these changes have been successful and that modern pageants judge them holistically, as well as granting them invaluable opportunities to build their skills and confidence.

Aileen Conner (18), a pageant contestant from Lexington, Kentucky, has seen both sides of the pageant world. Her parents enrolled her in a pageant once when she was a baby. As her family watched the five- and six-year-old rounds compete, the whole ordeal seemed wrong. Many competitions have a talent section where the contestants perform something like a song or a dance, but in the one Conner

entered, the judges scored the young girls in categories like “best smile” and “best hair.”

“That would crush my self-confidence at six,” Conner said. “They didn’t even say anything. They didn’t ask them any questions, they just all looked at them — and I was like, “That’s kind of weird.””

The pageant Conner entered was a photogenic competition, and out of seven girls, the judges ranked Conner in sixth place. Her parents became concerned that this idea of being “less than” would stick with her, and decided that this short-lived experience would mark the end of Conner’s pageant days.

That is until just last year, when she decided to give competing another try. Conner’s decision to reenter the pageant world after her negative experience as a child initially confused me. I have read articles and blogs about young women

growing up in the industry, having competed in pageants since they were toddlers, only to break out of the system once they grew up and realized its flaws. It seemed to me as if Conner had gone in the wrong order.

However, Conner says that as the pageant world changed, she was intrigued by the newfound emphasis placed on qualities other than cosmetic beauty. She decided to try again, and, because of her participation in pageants, she believes that has grown as a person.

“You have to be well-spoken because the highest graded category is interview at 30%, and then it’s talent,” Conner said, in reference to one of the pageants she entered.

As part of her participation in pageants, Connor created the service project Elder Tunes, which introduces music into the healthcare plans of those with



dementia to help with memory and recognition.

"I've grown up with music since I was like five," Conner said. "And then after seeing my grandma go through dementia, I started doing more research on it and then found that music was kind of a way to connect with her even though she has no memory."

Another pageant contestant, Emma Hackworth (18), has been doing pageants since she was eight years old. Hackworth, like Connor, believes pageants have benefited her as well as helping her become more prepared for a future career.

"I've noticed that I'm 10 times more comfortable in a room talking with adults because I've been doing that since I was eight and I'm really comfortable with putting myself out there like that," Hackworth said.

She started competing in the Miss America system when

she was 14, beginning with Miss Clark County. Since then, she has been competing in preliminary competitions for Miss Kentucky's Teen and is preparing to participate in its main event.

Hackworth believes that the Miss America system looks for well-spoken, qualified individuals that will represent their organization well.

"I think that's something that's so good about the Miss America system is that these women aren't just paraded on stage as objects," she said. "They're showcased in talent and in their intelligence and it's such an important factor."

Not only does the pageant encourage skill-building and growth, but the participants themselves create an environment that Hackworth appreciates.

"I find it so empowering to be surrounded by women who are doing so much in the community and who are passionate about service and about giving back to others," Hackworth said.

Despite this positive change seen in many modern pageants, not all of them have made the switch away from physical beauty. Miss USA, the other main pageant system in the United States, differs from Miss America in that it doesn't include a talent portion.

"The Miss USA system is a lot more focused on the modeling aspect," Hackworth said, "because they don't have a talent portion. So it's really just going on stage in a gown and modeling."

Even Miss America only recently made changes to the way their pageants were run.

"I mean, we used to have swimsuit competitions and that was wild. That was crazy. Like, they just got rid of that like a few years ago," Conner said.

Additionally, here in Kentucky, the Miss Kentucky Teen USA pageant has a scoring category

titled "Lifestyle and Fitness," where contestants are scored based on their physical ability to perform a fitness routine. According to the scoresheet, the category exists to "determine the level of fitness of the contestant and to obtain a glimpse into her daily routine and lifestyle."

Within the fitness category, judges compile scores using factors such as "dynamic presence and attractiveness" and "sense of confidence and self-assurance." While daily routine and lifestyle can be a component of determining somebody's well-roundedness, I find it problematic that physical fitness is what the judges use to determine it. Things like this support my original assumption: a core part of many of these pageants remain grounded in a contestant's physique and presence, their ability to look pretty in a gown, be photogenic, or perform a fitness routine.

Furthermore, apart from the progress made as many pageants turn away from external beauty as a core factor, the industry continues to be rooted in the past as it remains largely wealthy and white.

Multiple factors create the exclusionary nature of pageants toward women of color. From lack of exposure, encouragement, or lack of role models, women of color, especially black women, have historically made and still make up a disproportionately lower number of pageant queens within America compared to those that are white. Including the 1984 winner, who later had her title taken away because of a media scandal, there have been 12 black women crowned Miss America in total. In the Miss USA system, 81% of all winners have been Caucasian. Moreover, only one Hispanic American and two Asian Americans have won the Miss USA crown.

Even current participants acknowledge this shortcoming.

“I think if anything, I would love to see more representation or a little bit more diversity in the pageant industry,” Conner said.

This lack of representation not only affects the participants but the audience as well. Many proponents of modern pageants put forth the idea that pageantry portrays strong and accomplished women that little kids can look up to. But what if some little kids don't see themselves up on stage? What if the lack of diversity leads them to believe that they don't belong on stage? It is not possible to achieve the goal of selecting ideal role models for everyone without a variety of races and cultures represented. Although pageantry as a whole has seen improvements in overall diversity, the pageant scene is not representative of the diverse nature of our nation.



First Place: Aileen Conner, 18, holds a trophy after the Miss Monticello's Teen pageant at Wayne County Middle School on Nov. 19. *Photo courtesy of Aileen Conner.*

Though many queens have had individual positive experiences, many of these changes in the pageant industry are still only small steps toward progress. Not only are the changes not representative of all pageants but there is still a large lack of equity in those that are entering and winning these pageants. And ultimately, a core factor is still the contestants' aesthetic beauty.

To take a new angle on pageantry, one Louisville “pageant” has removed beauty as a factor altogether.

The Derby Royal Court is a program that chooses five college-age women in Kentucky to serve as “princesses” during the months leading up to the Kentucky Derby. During this time, the princesses attend over 70 Kentucky Derby Festival events, ranging from press releases to balls and galas.

When I first heard of the Derby Royal Court, I imagined five girls sporting tiaras and sashes, trying to bulk up their resumes for whatever Miss America pageant they participate in next. I saw red carpet photos on Instagram and assumed that's all there was to it. However, there is much more than meets the eye.

“The Derby Princess program is not a pageant,” Joanne Hurst said. “Beauty has nothing to do with it. So, you know, it's completely different.”

Hurst is the vice president of The Fillies, the organization that runs the court and is in charge of the application process. Similar to other pageants, to become a princess, applicants must fulfill GPA and other academic requirements, as well as involvement in various extracurricular activities. After people apply online, Hurst reviews the applicants to make sure they have met all of the criteria. Then, there are several

rounds of interviews and a panel of judges that score the prospective princesses. This might sound just like a regular pageant. However, that is all there is. There are no runways, no fitness categories, no talent contests, no preliminary competitions, and most of all, no emphasis on beauty.

“We want to develop young women that are independent, that are service-oriented, that are willing to, you know, stand up and take a stand for something,” Hurst said. “I think that's more important to me than a fancy dress.”

For current princess Hayley Benson (21), this means showing other girls of color that it is possible to succeed in STEM. Benson is a junior at the University of Louisville on a pre-med track and has always been passionate about making healthcare accessible to all.

“Representation matters. Having more minority nurses and doctors, especially in advancing leadership roles, matters,” Benson said.

The court gives women a platform to speak out on issues that matter to them. While traditional pageants that require participants to create service projects as part of the criteria may do the same, the court chooses princesses based on what they stand for and what they are already doing for their communities. This allows the program to highlight service-oriented individuals that genuinely care about helping the world around them. This isn't to say that pageant contestants are ill-intentioned or disingenuous, but the Royal Court's selection process is more geared toward choosing women that possess these qualities before they even join the court.

Furthermore, not only is it the duty of the princesses to



Posed To Perfection: Hayley Benson poses in the Speed Art Museum on Feb. 22. *Photo illustration by Anna Burzynski.*

speak up for members of their community, it is their duty to inspire them. For the princesses, their main audience takes the form of younger girls.

“You know, every girl’s dream is just like, to be a princess,” Valerie Tran (22), current Royal Court Princess, said.

Tran is a student at the University of Louisville studying industrial engineering. On the court, she hopes to redefine the word “princess” for some young girls, to transform it from the delicate, feminine portrayal often seen in the media, to something more empowering.

“Because society pushes a lot of misogynistic standards onto us. So I think it’s kind of a breath of fresh air, really,” Tran said.

While Tran and Benson have never participated in pageants, some individuals on the court already have pageant experience, but according to past princess Molly Sullivan (23), her pageant

experience didn’t help much with her role on the court.

“Every once in a while, I would help a girl with her makeup or her hair if we had something big we were going to,” Sullivan said. “But that was kind of the only role that any of my pageantry played into any of this.”

The court and its organizers refute suggestions that it is essentially a pageant, and while it may be said that the gowns and tiaras and sashes reinforce gender roles and traditional forms of femininity, their emphasis on representation and de-emphasis on beauty is something that the pageant industry can learn from.

What I didn’t expect when I first heard of the Derby princesses was that they were real people. I didn’t expect that, underneath the ballgowns and diamonds, there were bright, young women trying to make a difference in their communities. They are far from the image inspired by their

title. They are driven, full-time students on track to becoming doctors, lawyers, and engineers. The court not only looks for this determination but encourages it. They make strong women even stronger, and even though the princesses spend most of their time in dresses and tiaras, that is not all that they are.

When I started working on this piece, I figured that I would be writing a critique of pageant culture and how it fails to keep up with changing beauty standards and evolving ideas on the concept of “beauty” itself. What I didn’t consider, however, is that the one that failed to keep up might’ve been me. As highlighted by contests like the Derby Royal Court, pageantry can adapt, celebrating and fostering women’s present growth and future success. Though pageantry still has a long way to go, it is becoming more than the waving of hands and picture perfect smiles. •

H I D D E N

Have you ever wondered about the history hidden behind Louisville's famous landmarks? writing by EMERSON JONES • design by BLAKE SINCLAIR



Just off of Dixie Highway lies what is claimed to be one of the most haunted places in America: Waverly Hills Sanatorium. Beginning as the one-room “Waverley School” in the 1880s, the building became a sanatorium during the height of the tuberculosis outbreak. Over the course of its time as a sanatorium, Waverly Hills lost an estimated 50,000 patients. It was shut down by the state in 1981.

Today, it has become a popular stop on many Louisville ghost tours, and some visitors claim to have seen the spirits of past patients there. The 500-foot-long “body chute” and room 502 – the room in which a nurse allegedly committed suicide – are some of the most “haunted” parts of the sanatorium.



Birds Eye: Waverly Hills Sanatorium on April 2. *Photo by Blake Sinclair.*

HERITAGE



Louisville Slugger Field is a recognizable place to many Louisville residents. However, many are unaware that the spot where the stadium now lies used to be a warehouse for Brinly-Hardy, a lawn tool company that is still open today.

Although this is not inherently fascinating, there is something interesting about Louisville Slugger Field's history: the stadium retains much of the original features of the historic building's facade, including the arched entrance of the train shed where trains once unloaded materials intended for the warehouse. The unique historic features of the stadium help transport modern fans back to the "glory days of baseball" and serve as a visual reminder of the rich history that remains alive around us.



From Above: Louisville Slugger Field on April 2. *Photo by Blake Sinclair.*

HAALT!



One writer stops to examine JROTC, a high school program with fans and critics, and explores the complex views that exist on each side. writing by LILY CASHMAN • design by SILAS MAYS

Formation: Fern Creek's drill team, a national title holder in the Mixed Arms Division, practices for an upcoming competition in Fern Creek's gym on Feb. 24. *Photo by Erica Fields.*

I'm sure many of us have seen it, either at school or a fair: the red pull-up bar with men in military uniforms standing beside it. At my high school, duPont Manual, the Marines typically come once a year and set up in the cafeteria. Then, students take turns testing their own ability, seeing how many pull-ups they can do, as their friends cheer them on.

The days that the Marines are in the lunchroom are my only real connection with the military. But at many schools across the country and within our city, seeing camouflage uniforms weekly isn't a strange occurrence. This is a result of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), a widespread program that acts similarly to other school branches like theater or STEM; however, JROTC is focused on the military.

When we pitched a story centered on JROTC earlier this year, confusion filled the On The Record classroom. Similar to my experience, many of my fellow staff members were outsiders to the program.

It sounded a little something like this: "That's that one military program right?" "I have a potential source!" "Isn't it controversial?"

My mind felt as scattered as the thoughts in the room around me. I searched for any part of the topic to grasp onto. I searched to make a connection, to know something, anything, to no avail. I knew nothing about JROTC except that it was surrounded by debate.

That lack of awareness, the feeling of being completely blind on a topic, sparked an interest within me. As a journalist, I am supposed to know about the aspects of people's lives that affect my community. So as I sat in that room, with not even a glimpse

into the subject, I knew I wanted to take the story on. I wanted to shed light on the controversies of JROTC. Are JROTC programs justifiable in America's high schools? Do the students within JROTC truly benefit?

Where It All Began

The mission statement of JROTC is to motivate young people to be better citizens. On the surface level, that sounds good — of course we want the next generation to be aware and conscious of the world around them. But, like many things in life, what we see on the surface isn't always the full picture.

The National Defense Act of 1916 first introduced JROTC to American schools. It was small at first, with only a few "units" of students across the country, and experienced minimal growth for more than 50 years. This was mainly due to a lack of funding and support from the Department of Defense (DoD). The DoD didn't see the need for a military program within high schools because it was already supporting the thriving military, so for many decades, JROTC was stagnant.

It wasn't until the 1970s, after the Vietnam War and the end of America's draft, that people turned their attention to JROTC. All of a sudden, the program took off. From the creation in 1916 with only 6 units, to the early 2000s with 1,420, there was a spike in the number of schools that created programs, in the amount of funding they received, and in the number of students that participated. Today, the DoD allocates around \$400 million yearly to the program.

Now, what does this prove? Well, for one, it shows that JROTC became a way to make up for lost numbers. Without the draft

in place, there was no longer a steady flow of people joining the military, and America needed a way to work around that. As a result, they looked to America's youth. JROTC was a way to teach kids about the military and get them excited about it.

The cadets, as the students are called, are taught by ex-military officers. These instructors are required to have at least 20 years of active service, at least be working towards a two-year associate degree — which is noted by many to be less than traditional educators must get — and be certified by the Army JROTC, as well as fulfill any extra district requirements imposed by the local board of education.

These instructors then enter classrooms, where they teach leadership skills, order, and discipline, all in the context of militaristic values. The cadets are first taught how to obey their leaders. Then, they are taught how to lead, how to take charge of a group, and how to stand their ground.

According to US News and World Report, high school students in JROTC score higher on standardized tests and get better grades. Additionally, they have lower average dropout rates and are less likely to skip school. However, others ask: at what expense?

During my research, I saw many articles, both the ones advocating for JROTC and those that are critical of it. While JROTC claims to be strictly focused on the character development of its students, its history shows that recruitment, no matter how much they hide it behind marketing, is a part of the program's purpose.

Seeing For Myself

When I first started the process of writing this story, I wanted to



They are seeing camouflage and khaki uniforms far more frequently than they're seeing college counselors.

- Seth Kershner, writer

understand from my perspective what the program looked like, because as an outsider, I felt distant from what I was reading online. I found my way into JROTC when I came across a WLKY article from 2019, reading, "Fern Creek JROTC drill team wins 20th national championship in mixed arm division."

Wow, I thought to myself. 20 national titles can't be an easy feat.

Fern Creek High School (FCHS), located in the southeast part of Louisville, is home to one of the most decorated JROTC programs in the country, yet I didn't even know it existed.

I promptly reached out to First Sergeant Jay Foote, the drill team instructor at FCHS, who allowed Erica Fields, a staff photographer, and me to watch Fern Creek's drill team practice on Feb. 24 after school. As we walked through the wooden doors of the school's small gym, I tried to keep myself from feeling overwhelmed, though that's easier said than done, considering I was walking into a room of unknown people holding rifles — fake ones, but intimidating nonetheless. I watched the team run through one of the routines they perform in competitions.

"Leathernecks, how do we do things?" Senior Drill Commander Lance Bridge called out.

"Together, sir!" the group responded immediately.

All at once, they started marching in place. Their black, shiny shoes lifted at the same time, their legs creating identical angles in the air. When all 26 of their feet hit the ground, it sounded like one.

Bridge continued calling out commands, few of which I understood. However, the cadets never hesitated. In response to his calls, rifles were thrown into the air, spinning multiple times before landing swiftly back in their hands. On other commands, their formation would shift, creating new lines on the gym floor.

Every movement had a precise attentiveness to detail. From the direction of their toes to the tilt of their head — it was all purposeful.

"You're anklng way too much," one cadet called out mid-step.

It surprised me the way they bluntly called out corrections to each other as they went. It seemed harsh, almost rude, to call out a peer, but they didn't perceive it that way. They were just chasing perfection, and any chance they got to get one step closer to that goal, they were going to take it.

"Halt!" Bridge shouted out.

With the same precision they began with, they stopped. For a brief moment, they froze, chins lifted, eyes locked on the empty bleachers before them.

Then, they fell out of formation.

Almost instantly, they returned to work. Some started practicing throws, others working through individual steps. A few broke off into a group and one cadet led them through a section of the routine, counting loudly as she went.

Foote stood in the background, a constant presence among the cadets. He has helped lead this group of young people to recent success. However, his path to reaching this point is far from ordinary. Perhaps his past

experiences are what have helped the team achieve the most.

During Foote's childhood, his father was on active duty in the military. As a result, Foote said, he and his father never truly formed a fulfilling relationship. Foote had built up anger toward those in the military due to his personal experience, and, while he didn't have much of a plan coming out of high school, it surely didn't involve enlisting.

"My dad was in the military. I remember very little of my dad," Foote said. "It was always my mom. So I had no interest."

His high school had a decently sized JROTC program, and once a week, the program leaders, as they do in many JROTC schools, asked cadets to dress in their full uniform as a way to represent their commitment to the program and to show that they hold themselves to a high standard.

It was on those days that Foote took out his anger on the group. Like a scene straight out of a movie, he would take a peeled orange from his lunch, chuck it across the courtyard, aiming straight for the cadets, and watch as it splattered juice all over their uniforms.

"This is going to be embarrassing, but ... I picked on those kids all the time," Foote said. "I didn't have any idea of what that unit did. I saw them do things at pep rallies ... but I had my own tunnel vision."

One day, just months before Foote graduated high school, he walked past a recruitment office. Through the window, he caught a glimpse of a camouflage-painted face. The words "Do You Dare?" jumped out at him, and the question sparked something inside him. Despite his previous resistance, that poster inspired him, so he walked through the front door and signed the recruitment papers. Foote was going to enter recruitment training.

While in the military, Foote's instructors instilled discipline and responsibility in Foote. For the first time, he had authority figures to look up to, and in that environment, Foote thrived. This form of character building is one of the common benefits people credit to JROTC programs. JROTC gives students expectations that they must uphold, and many teenagers feel that they need that structure in order to succeed.

The military instructors Foote looked up to in recruitment training inspired him to continue his mentorship. Five years ago, Foote applied for a position at FCHS. Unbeknownst to him when he got the job, he walked into one of the best drill teams in the country.

"I didn't learn about the reputation 'til after I got here," Foote said. "And I thought well, it's too late now, but I surely don't want it to end on my watch."

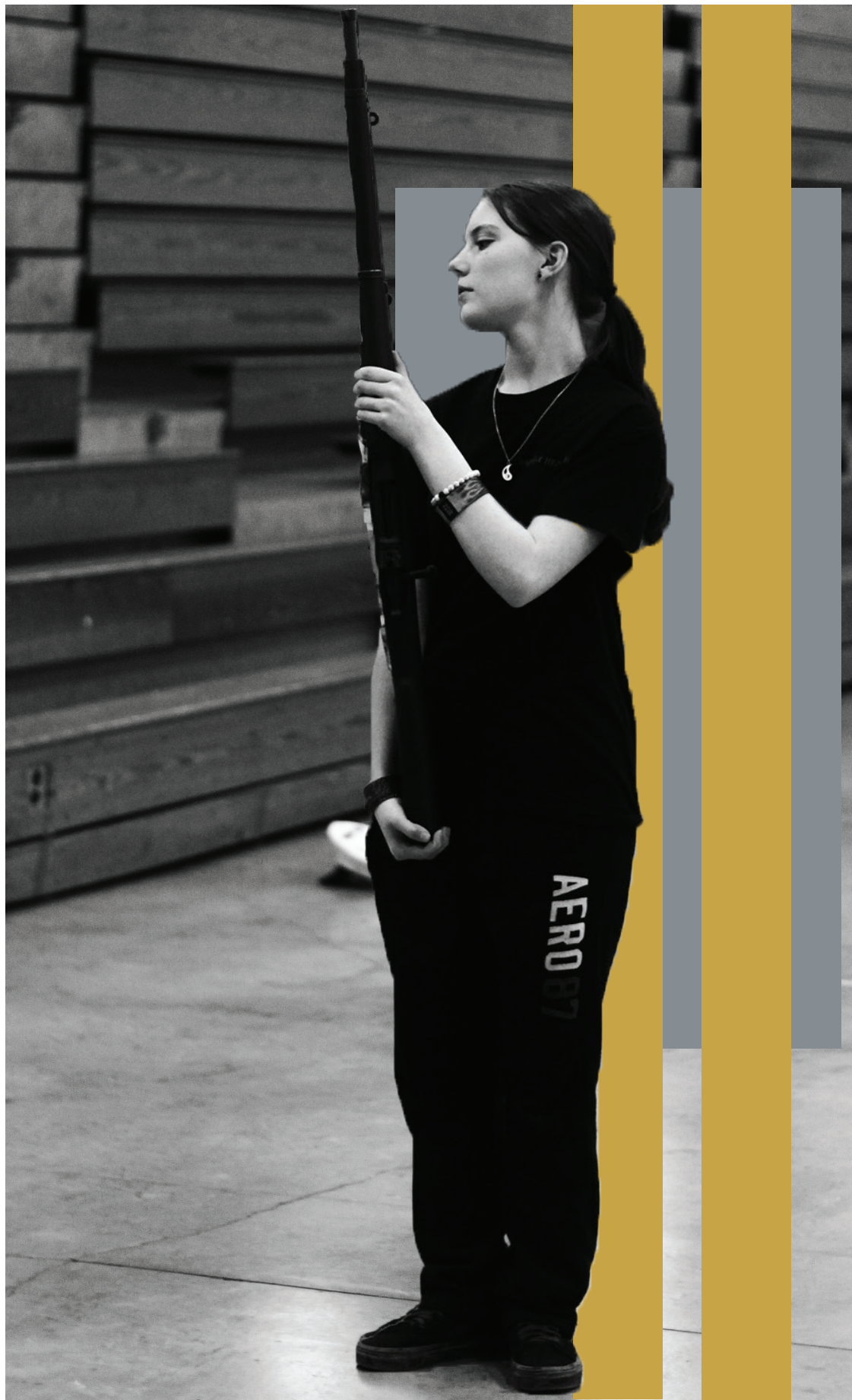
He didn't let the program go downhill. Not when they won the national championship in 2018 and 2019. Not when they were confined to tiny boxes on a computer screen. And not when they came back from the pandemic with record-low numbers and almost zero experience.

The program at FCHS upholds the mission of JROTC. The kids work hard and are motivated. Their instructor, Foote, went from someone who despised JROTC as a kid to someone who wants nothing more than to see his cadets be successful in life.

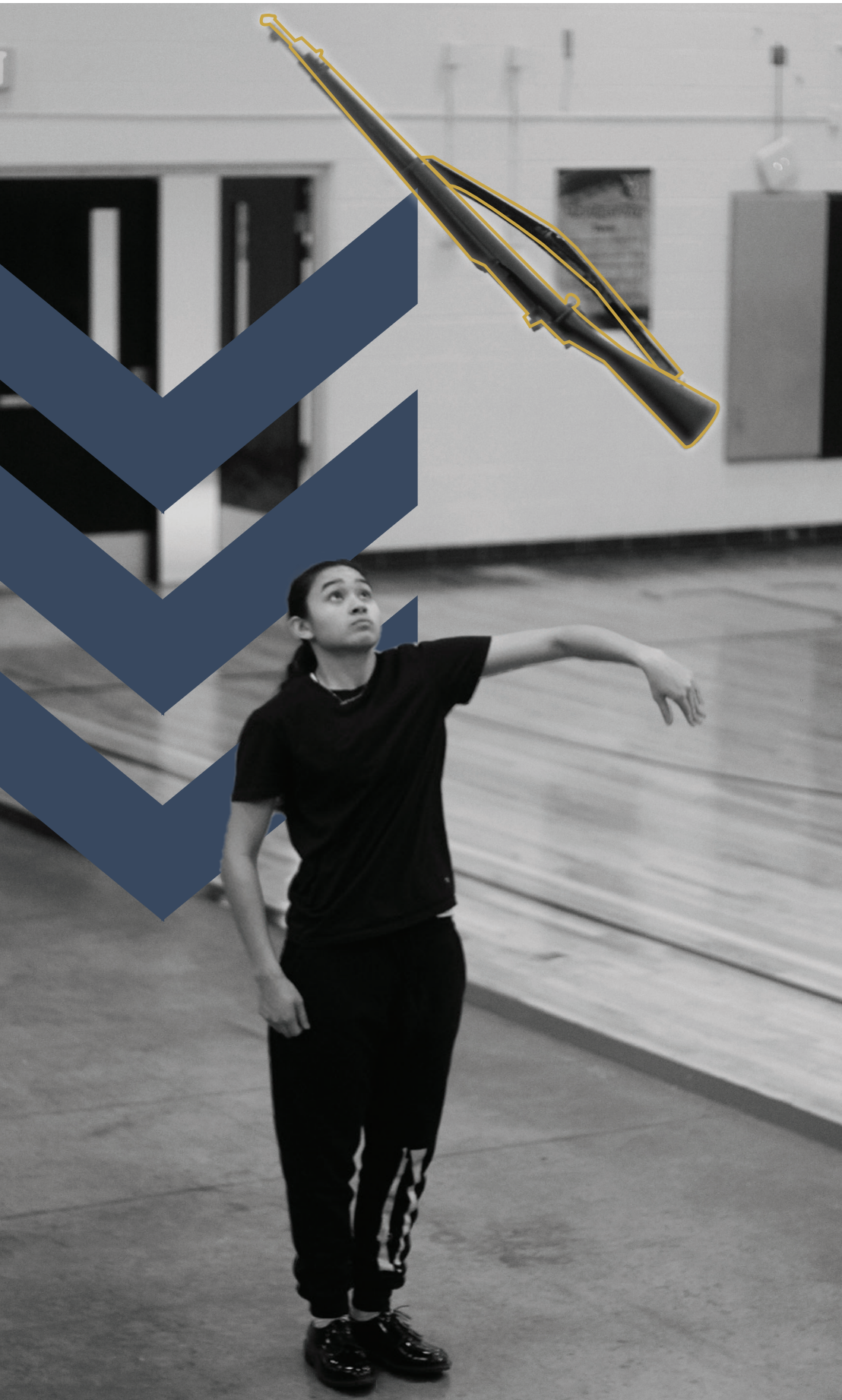
Different Views

While FCHS's program opened my eyes to the positive experiences that JROTC offers, I couldn't turn a blind eye to the other views of the program.

So I reached out to Mike Baker, a New York Times writer who has published numerous anti-JROTC articles focused on the various controversies that



Stand Tall: Abigail Thornsberry, 15, practices formations during a drill team practice in Fern Creek's gym on Feb. 24. *Photo by Erica Fields. Photo illustration by Silas Mays.*



Spinning: Yesenia Babauta, 15, practices throwing her rifle in preparation for the drill team's group routine in Fern Creek's gym on Feb. 24. *Photo by Erica Fields. Photo illustration by Silas Mays.*

surround the program. Baker pointed me in the direction of researcher and writer Seth Kershner, who has spent the past decade uncovering the hidden intricacies of JROTC programs. His main focus is on how much the U.S. military depends on recruiting, and more specifically, how much of that recruiting is targeted at students, especially those that are minorities.

"It is true that JROTC is not technically a recruiting program," Kershner said. However, "it's an adjunct to recruiting, it's sort of assist recruiting. And that's why it's valued. That's why it gets \$400 million of Pentagon funding every year."

Tabitha Halter, a member of Louisville Male High School's (LMHS) JROTC program in the 2000s experienced the JROTC program's "assist recruiting" firsthand. She was never truly interested in going to the military or very passionate about JROTC, but she did it because she assumed the class would be an easy A. She states that she often saw recruiters at the school talking to the cadets about their options to enter the military. Their "sales pitch" tended to reflect the advantages those in JROTC get.

"It was the same spiel every time. They really push the fact that if you do a four-year ROTC program, you will join the military as an officer making more money than everybody else who didn't," Halter said.

Going through four years of the JROTC program makes it so cadets can enter the military at higher ranks, meaning they are paid more and receive benefits. In addition, the military provides scholarships to get them through college after retiring from active duty. Because Halter didn't want to join the military, she didn't have any interest in these benefits. However, she believes that less-privileged members of the program have a harder time passing

up these financial opportunities and that recruiters use this knowledge to their advantage.

“They targeted the poor kids and the kids with strong military families,” Halter said. “They knew that we were going to be the easiest group to be able to slide into that recruiting process.”

Once, after she scored the highest in her class in a shooting drill, her teacher pulled her aside.

“He looked at me, and his verbatim words were ‘Why the hell are you not going to the military?’” she said, remembering him describing how much the military could do for her. “They would tell me, ‘You can be anything you want to be with marksmanship like yours, knowledge like yours. You could do anything that you wanted to do.’”

During her senior year, Halter transferred from LMHS to Shawnee High School. There, she noticed that recruiters were more common. Because Shawnee is located in an impoverished part of town, this experience acted as evidence to her that the recruiting process is targeted toward lower-income students.

Today, there are more than 1,700 high schools with JROTC programs around the country, and they enroll around 500,000 students. 40% of these schools are inner-city schools with at least 50% of their population being minority groups. Furthermore, according to the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization, public high schools with JROTC programs enroll 29.4% of African American students, a number almost double the percent of African American students in all public high schools across the country, at 14.9%. Many ask, is this really a coincidence?

To some degree, it becomes hard to criticize JROTC because the military is technically helping disadvantaged groups by giving them an opportunity to go to college or get a career right out of high

school that they may not have had otherwise. However, at the same time, many argue that this defense ignores the real issue of poverty in America, and avoids truly improving the educational experience for those in inner-city areas. Additionally, Halter believes that this focus on military recruitment within low-income schools perpetuates the idea that impoverished students have no better post-secondary options than joining the military.

Along with focusing its efforts on minority students, JROTC also monopolizes a lot of students’ time. To graduate, cadets must complete between 120 to 180 hours of dedicated time to JROTC each year. To achieve this, cadets replace spots on their schedules that otherwise would have been used for classes like art, music, foreign language, or other career preparatory courses.

“Military culture, and structures are being emphasized over the traditional educational programs,” Kershner said.

While Kershner believes that some select people may have a positive experience in the program, he also believes that there are other ways to teach the same values of leadership, order, and discipline.

“Why do we need the military to be a container for those values?” Kershner said. “Why do we need the military to deliver those lessons? That’s the part that really doesn’t make sense.”

By diving into a full military education at a young age, the cadets may feel like the military is the only path for them. According to the Pentagon, recent years have shown that 44% of all military soldiers were students in JROTC programs.

“Students have access to more information about military careers than they do about other opportunities after high school,” Kershner said. “They are seeing camouflage and khaki uniforms far more frequently than they’re seeing college counselors.”



Coaching: First Sergeant Jay Foote leads the drill team’s national routine practice in Fern Creek’s gym on Feb. 24. *Photo by Erica Fields. Photo illustration by Silas Mays.*

To that end, there isn’t one clear-cut answer to this complex debate. While the successes of JROTC are evident in the cadets’ experiences at FCHS, not all cadets have positive experiences. This leads us back to some core questions. Can the militaristic style of teaching within JROTC, develop students’ character at one school, but be taken to an extreme at another? Do the positive effects of the program balance out its systematic issues, such as the targeting of minorities or the funneling of cadets into the military pipeline?

The faulty history that laid the foundation of this program cannot be reversed, yet action can still be taken. Organizations should never sit stagnant, but always be improving and advancing with the times.

“There just need to be more eyes on these programs,” Kershner said. “They’ve gone unsupervised and unregulated for far too long.” •



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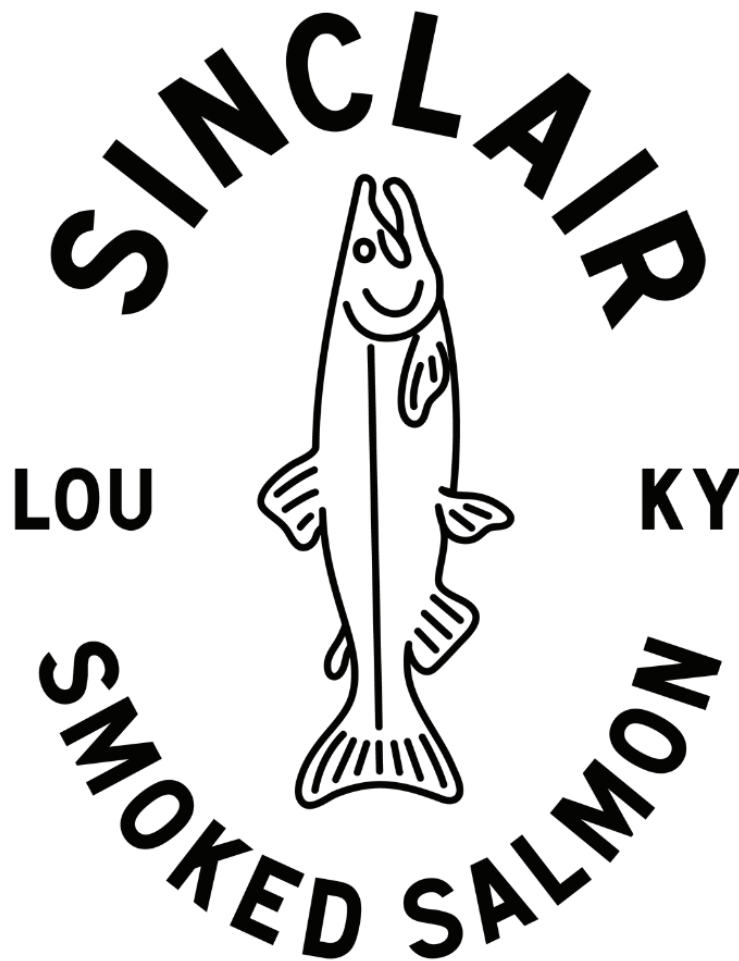
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