

THE CORTILE

2021



VOL. XXI

» THE WORLD AROUND US

» OUR LIFE ONLINE

» CREATIVE WRITING

» THE ARTS

» ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

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Head's Corner

BY ERIC MAYER

As many cities and countries begin to open up and are in various stages of vaccinating their citizens, Italy has once again opened to tourism from America and many other nations. At least half of Italy has been vaccinated, and, as we look toward the fall, those rates will increase substantially.

In our latest issue, we set the stage by looking back at events in the U.S., including the political upheaval and social unrest of 2020, and examine whether internet culture is driving America to extremes. Alumni and student articles add perspective on social justice matters, with analyses of George Floyd's murder and the rise of hate crimes against Asian-Americans. In addition to various views from students and teachers about the pandemic, there is also advice for teens on responsible social media use and an update on a longstanding service project in the Congo run by Dr. Helen Pope.

As in every edition of *The Cortile*, our creative writing section stands apart. Creative Writing teacher Moira Egan's students' work is showcased, as is the

school's only student-run literary and artistic magazine, INK. We also get a glimpse into what students are streaming online, and we feature some of our own special online events we held throughout the year (please see the digital version for online events: ssssrome.it/cortile-2021). Our *Arts* section provides a selection of student video performances, digital photography, and art. And in *Departments*, we highlight the latest news of The Lyceum and our City of Rome course.

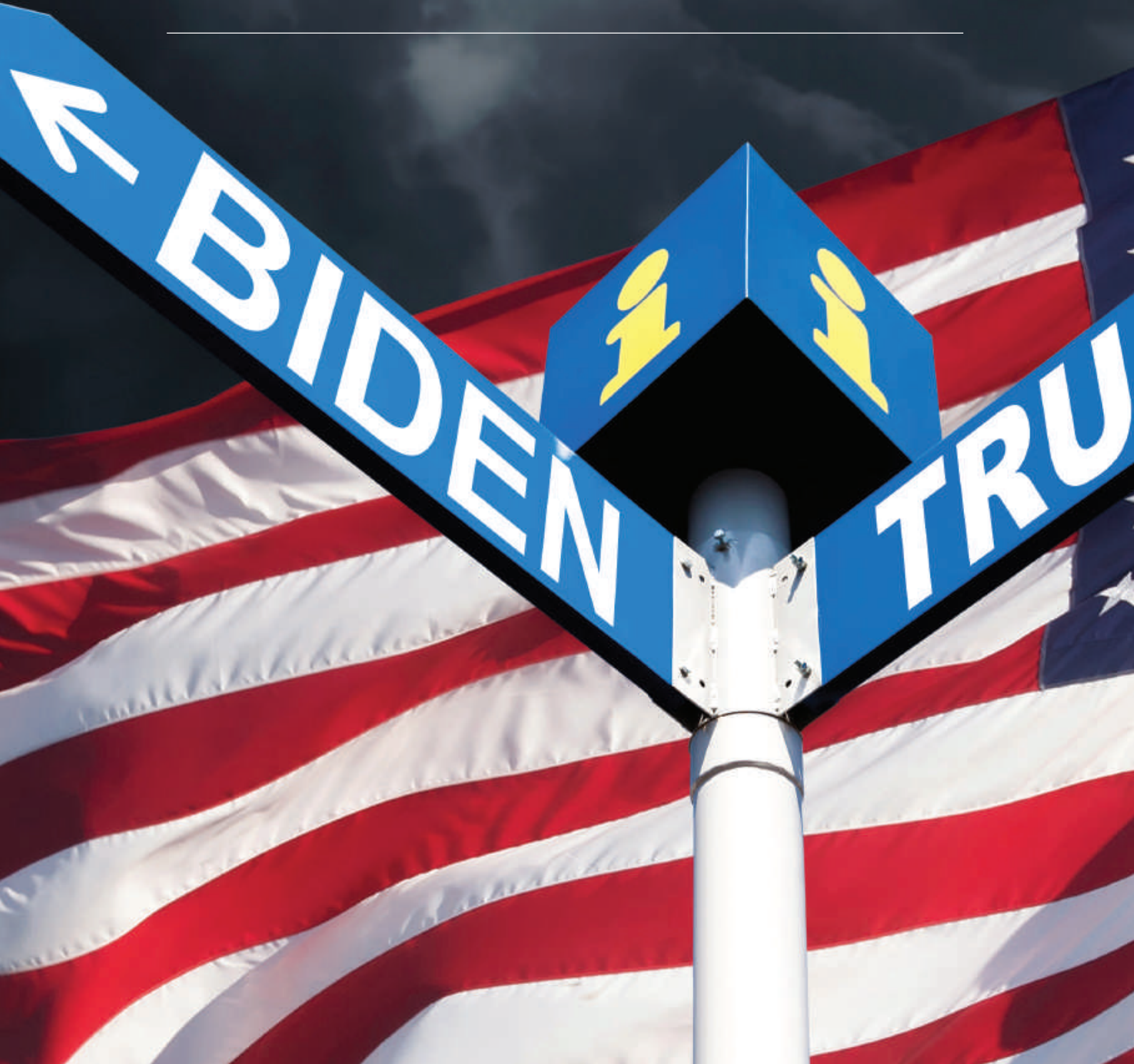
Completing this issue is the School's Annual Report and our Alumni Spotlight series, which is nothing short of spectacular. Six amazing interviews with St. Stephen's alumni show inspiring innovators and creators who are blazing new trails and making an incredible impact all over the world.

In these unprecedented times, St. Stephen's students, alumni, guest contributors, and teachers continue to excel and shine in countless ways. I hope you'll join us for this wonderful edition of *The Cortile*.

Eric Mayer, Head of School

PART I:

The World Around Us



Revenge of the Fringe

BY GUEST CONTRIBUTOR, FORMER JEN HOLLIS -
FORMER TEACHER OF IB HISTORY,
ST. STEPHEN'S SCHOOL

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IS INTERNET CULTURE DRIVING
AMERICA TO EXTREMES?

In December of 2020, historians in *The Washington Post* weighed in on whether 2020 was the worst year ever. Materially, the answer is clear: even in a year of tumult, we live in an era of superabundance. Since the turn of the last century, Americans have added decades to our lifespans, easy-to-source food to our tables, and secured health outcomes that, even in a bad year, remain better than anything our ancestors enjoyed.

If we look back about one hundred years, we see the Spanish Flu sweep a world riven by political turmoil, the second industrial revolution, and a cataclysmic war. That pandemic brought a fatality rate many times that of the coronavirus, taking the lives of mostly teenagers and young adults with its cytokine storms. Even by the metrics of the near past, it's safe to say that 2020 wasn't the worst year for humankind, anywhere.

Yet, we don't experience life as statistics. As Author Will Self noted, "doctors say in medicine there are no such things as statistics, only individuals," and individually, 2020 was a terrible year. For many, personal losses made it their worst. For all, it was a march of crises. Some—those connected to the climate crisis in particular—are ongoing. Others, like the Black Lives Matter movement, are crises of flux in MLK's 'long arc...toward justice.' Still others, the pandemic and the violent attack on the Capitol following Trump's defeat, are more immediate. But was accident-prone 2020 really a matter of bad luck?

It's worth wondering, where these crises aren't linked by kind, how they might nonetheless be connected, and arguably worsened, by the new environment in which they unfolded. I do not mean the natural landscapes or the local communities where they lived, but rather our new digital society, which, though only a few decades old, encroaches year by year on those physical societies and has begun not only to reflect our lived experiences but to shape and drive them. So is it making our real world worse?



A CHANGING CIVIL SOCIETY

To grapple with this question, we first dial back to the year 2000; that's when Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam published his seminal work on civil society theory, *Bowling Alone*. According to the theory, 'civil society'—that layer of society made up of people's informal networks, things like neighbourhood associations, bowling leagues, sports clubs, and community centres—acts to mediate between the microcosms of our households and the organized superstructures of governments and private businesses that act on us as citizens and consumers. The interpersonal relationships we form when we meet up in our local communities around shared endeavours build social trust. These relationships reinforce norms, mediate our views, broaden our horizons, and strengthen our participative democracy. According to Putnam, however, since the arrival of television, Americans have begun to spend much less time talking to our neighbours at block parties and much more on our couches, passively consuming media. What, he asked, might this decline cost us?

When *Bowling Alone* was published, we were only at the start of the 'digital revolution,' which starry-eyed utopians promised would strengthen our societies and deliver vast knowledge to the masses. Twenty years in, we find ourselves, perhaps, in the 'Gilded Age' of this revolution—attempting to reign in the consequences of new technologies as they reshape economies and societies in real-time while worrying about the effects on human brains of corporatized media with little regulation and growing monopolistic power. Do the conditions and imperatives of our new digital society add to our ancient social problems?

FIRE AND DISEASE

In February, a report from the Lancet Commission concluded that Americans had seen 40% more fatalities due to the coronavirus than would have occurred given a coordinated approach to public health. By laying the blame squarely at the feet of former President Trump's bigotry, the editorialists overlooked the networks which facilitated the spread of disinformation. Contra to the free knowledge utopia internet boosters

prophesied, during the pandemic, digital platforms actively pushed on users a flattened out theoretical free-for-all. For instance, inaccurate medical information pinged directly onto the screens of millions of Trump's followers in tweets. University of Washington researchers showed that on Amazon, of the top ten book results returned to customers searching for vaccine information, eight were authored by fringe anti-vaxxers. They concluded that medical misinformation was widespread and boosted all over the shopping site. The same study also showed that users rarely searched beyond the top ten results.

Fans of the digital society might respond that, on the whole, the internet also makes solid, peer-reviewed information widely available to a broad audience. Perhaps. However, it is difficult to discount how, in the places where users spend most of their time, consensus and spurious theories are promoted as equally credible. Far from passive consumption, disinformation is pushed into the way of users by algorithms that select content with no societal imperative beyond keeping eyes on screens as long as humanly possible. As frightening as this is with our current health crisis, the

proliferation of unscientific theories becomes more terrifying still in light of the global climate crisis, where any hope of mitigation will require deep understanding and a broad consensus incompatible with the business imperative of holding users' attention.

ELECTION CRISIS AND ATTEMPTED COUP

But, it might be countered, America's coronavirus disaster was down to Trump. A good leader would have guided better outcomes. Before agreeing to that, we should note the role of digital society in choosing our leadership. In Trump's case, a senate intelligence investigation concluded that Russia and Wikileaks cooperated to help secure his 2016 victory using digital media, namely by hacking, then leaking, democratic party e-mails. This, in addition to the well-documented work of a virtual army of Russian users who, deploying with fake accounts, sewed dissent and circulated disinformation via social media ahead of the election. How instrumental they were in Trump's victory is unclear. What isn't is the fact that, in the digital society, barriers once posed by physical geographies and

the requirements of transparency in publishing have evaporated by design. Direct, anonymous, and open to the world, social media platforms, Wikileaks, and fake news sites gave Putin's team access to the hearts and minds of American voters on par with, or beyond, what their own local leaders, neighbours, and papers could manage. This access is a new feature of our political landscape, and it didn't disappear with the election. Once in office, Trump used social media to speak misinformation directly to millions of followers, whether to tell them the coronavirus would end spontaneously or to retweet a comparison of mask-wearing to "slavery," or following his election, to insist on vast election fraud and his own victory against all truth and evidence.

In the digital society, Trump's disinformation disseminated uncritically through fansites was bolstered by extremist groups and evinced on fake news outlets. This is critical because the counterargument to these critiques tends to be that social media is nothing but a neutral purveyor of information—no guiltier than the old telephone lines were for words spoken across them. However, in a broad study, researchers at Princeton found that Facebook directed its users to

untrustworthy news sites more than twice as often as it did to valid ones. Studies of YouTube by the Anti-Defamation League determined that auto cueing of videos determines at least sixty percent of the content viewed on the site. And for nearly a quarter of YouTube viewers, that content includes videos from extremist 'alternative' channels touting QAnon theories, white supremacist ideologies, and other extremist content. The appropriate analogy, then, would have digital platforms work more like a landline in your house that rang ten times a day—six of the times it would be the company calling to tell you something it guessed you wanted to hear, and a quarter of the calls would try to convince you of something outright crazy.

Ultimately, rather than bringing disparate people together on the basis of shared activities and common interests, as with Putnam's bowling clubs, AI and algorithms, operating for profit on the basis of keeping our attention fixed on screens as long as possible, actively push users into contact with the most extreme and provocative versions of their views or interests. The de facto guide them into contact with fringe believers who share their beliefs. This organizing principle

was undoubtedly helpful to Donald Trump who, after losing the 2020 election by an overwhelming margin, was nonetheless able to galvanize a dispersed collective of followers, hammer them with an alternative reality, in turn, supported by unreliable websites and news outlets, and subsequently direct them from the four corners to converge on the capital, where they made a deadly attempt to overthrow the government.

POLICE VIOLENCE AND THE BLACK LIVES MATTERS PROTESTS

In some ways, the Black Lives Matter protests show us the flipside of social media. Though horrendous (and some argue unethical) to watch, videos of racist violence and police killings of Black citizens have forced American society to confront the anti-Black structures built into their country from its inception. Furthermore, social media has helped activists to organize demonstrations, increase visibility for marginalized communities, and find affirmation for realities that have long been aggressively ignored. Inasmuch as traditional civil society worked to promote norms and consensus, those norms and consensus were often racist, sexist, and discriminatory beyond. At its best, social media can work to undo those norms.

However, even there, it is not without its shortcomings. In the BLM movement, for instance, questions arose with the advent of the ‘defund the police’ hashtag. The slogan blew up in online discourse but empirically did not represent the perspective of the Black community in real life, where Gallup polls carried out in August of 2020 showed that eighty-one percent of Black respondents (and eighty-six percent of the population overall) wanted to see the same or increased police presence in their neighbourhoods. Adding to the dissonance, house majority whip, James Clyburn—a democratic veteran and long-time activist in the Black community of his home state—speculated that the slogan had hurt democratic candidates at the polls. It is worth noting, in this, that strong, bipartisan support for police reform existed due largely to the work of BLM activists. The slogan, however galvanizing on social media

it was, transferred into real life, was so unpopular that the right was able to weaponize it to their advantage.

Though perhaps a small example, this dispute is arguably emblematic of the problem with social media activism. The reductive, trending, extreme nature of a hashtag, however understandable in light of videos of police violence and murder, does not translate well into practical social change. Video clips and slogans, divorced from any deep history or education, upset viewers justly but also lead them to easy attribution errors. In this case, the idea that the police are the cause, rather than a terrible effect, of systemic, anti-Black racism. It is simpler to overlook the vast structures undergirding systemic anti-Blackness. Reforming the school-to-prison pipeline, historical discrimination in housing, in higher education, in the job market, and in the judicial system (far beyond policing) will take much more than a hashtag and shell game with public funds. And yet, real redress and reform requires on-the-ground work over time, pressure, campaigns, and consulting with communities themselves, not just progressive activists.

This brings us to the universal problem of social media activism: though well-intended, it is still fed through algorithms that favour provocation, punchy slogans,

the drama of conflict, call-outs, and cancel culture. Its attention spans are short and thirsty. Reality is nuanced and complex to change. And the modes are poorly received by the audience activists need to persuade. In offline society, forty percent of Americans report being harassed online—shamed, threatened, or even doxed. Sixty percent report witnessing such behaviour. While much of that is down to trolling, the modes of activism online are too often not experienced as enlightenment but as harassment and alienation. As satisfying as calling out does feel, public humiliation is a poor tool of real persuasion. Worse, such methods have no practical effect on actually bad actors. The powerful racists, sexists, and bigots of the world revel more than progressives themselves in this model, correctly deducing that call out and cancel culture will never work on them, and operate, primarily, as a circular firing squad for the woke.

This isn’t the fault of activists. It is prescribed by the business model. The deep goal on social media is not social change but attention-getting and attention-keeping. The great victory for users is going viral, but it is a victory with no reward. The work of educating people, building intimacy, showing humility, mustering generosity might profit society but doesn’t make online platforms money; thus, virtual community members in these profit machines masquerading as communities will always be pushed away from deep relationship-building towards its opposite: the provocation, the simple statement, the harsh judgment. Regardless of intent, when the goal is only approval, and not persuasion, when idealism is used to score points without pragmatism, the result is unlikely to be more than self-congratulation.

If this seems like a screed against technology, it is not. The role of technology in human thriving has been great. This is about nothing more than the sly colonization of civil society by digital businesses, professing to bring us closer while building a world where everything that binds us together is cast into doubt, and the relationships that have brought us through are undermined for likes. Without intervention, that world could become the worst yet.

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IN SOME WAYS, THE BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS SHOW US THE FLIPSIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA. THOUGH HORRENDOUS (AND SOME ARGUE UNETHICAL) TO WATCH, VIDEOS OF RACIST VIOLENCE AND POLICE KILLINGS OF BLACK CITIZENS HAVE FORCED AMERICAN SOCIETY TO CONFRONT THE ANTI-BLACK STRUCTURES BUILT INTO THEIR COUNTRY FROM ITS INCEPTION.



STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE - BY TATIANA LIMA '15

In the evening hours of February 26, 2012, seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was returning to his father's fiancée's home in Sanford, Florida from a nearby convenience store when he was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a member of the community watch unit, who thought Trayvon represented a threat to the neighborhood. Zimmerman was eventually tried but acquitted of the murder. In response to his acquittal, three black women – Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi said “enough” and started on the path of creating a movement they would later call #BlackLivesMatter (BLM).

The hashtag quickly grew in popularity. People demanded justice for those who were unfairly profiled and murdered due to their race. The names of victims of police brutality--Tamir Rice, Tanisha Anderson, Mya Hall, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, and countless others--soon sparked discussions around the epidemic of police brutality in the United States. While this grassroots movement gained ground, Black men and women continued to suffer injustice in the hands of police officers.

The real collision happened in May 2020, despite the strides made by the #BlackLivesMatter movement, when George Floyd was murdered by a white Minneapolis police officer. There were many reasons for this, one being that the murder was recorded and it was shocking and gruesome. His last words: “I can’t

breathe” installed a feeling of anguish and heartbreak among many. Another reason George Floyd’s death had such a dramatic impact on the public consciousness is because it occurred in the middle of a pandemic when people were at home, often with little to do, facing skyrocketing unemployment rates. The murder of George Floyd was ‘the last straw’ for many who were already tired and disillusioned with race relations in America. To make matters worse, the social and economic inequality that has plagued lower and middle class Americans for decades was only being worsened by the pandemic. The horrifying 9-minute video of Floyd’s murder at the hands of a police officer simply for using a counterfeit \$20 dollar bill incensed an already discontent American public. Many decided to take to the streets to protest police brutality, and surprisingly enough of the protesters were very racially diverse.

On the day they are born, Black people are involuntarily recruited for the fight against racial injustice. After George Floyd’s death, suddenly many White Americans joined the cause. A sense of unfairness vibrated throughout America and led to one of the most racially diverse protests in the country.

The role social media played was also crucial – George Floyd’s death led to many demonstrations across the world. George Floyd’s death prompted protests and discrimination in their own society and culture.

The background of the rise of BLM in England, France, and Belgium is similar to its rise in the U.S. Xenophobia and racism are inheritances of self-labelled ‘progressive’ countries. These behaviors date back to colonial empires, times when European colonists took and spread their racist ideologies wherever they traveled. Colonialism was not just about exploiting people that couldn’t defend themselves but also making a profit from overworking them. It is said global capitalism began with the trade of cotton, tobacco and sugar and all three relied on a tremendous exploitation of the colonized population. Centuries after colonization and the abolition of slavery, the effects are still felt to this day. This is one of the reasons why, when the murder of George Floyd occurred, many people in such European

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**"I CONTINUE
TO BE
SURPRISED AT
HOW LITTLE
BLACK LIVES
MATTER...
OUR LIVES
MATTER."**

PATRISSE CULLORS,
FOUNDING MEMBER, BLM





JUSTICE FOR
GEORGE FLOYD

countries felt the need to protest and open up the conversation. Their leaders were condemning what was occurring in the US, while at the same time ignoring what was happening in their own country, and this hypocrisy outraged people.

The countries outside the US that were impacted the most by the murder and subsequent BLM movement were countries that have seen their own issues of systemic discrimination. Countries such as Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Denmark, Holland, Israel, Sudan, Canada, South Africa, Brazil, New Zealand, and Australia still have their own work to do to set the stage for candid dialogue around the treatment of minorities.

In the UK, protestors reacted to George Floyd's death by gathering in Trafalgar Square to kneel in solidarity. In Germany, Ireland, and Poland, crowds assembled outside the US Embassy. In Poland, people left signs and flowers paying their respects to George Floyd at the US Consulate General. There was a protest in Warsaw with thousands of people, as well as protesters kneeling outside the US Embassy with their fists raised. In Denmark, thousands joined a peaceful march against police brutality. They walked from the US Embassy to the Danish Parliament building and took a knee in solidarity with all protesters around the world.

Similarly, an estimated 10,000 people gathered in Dam Square in the Netherlands in solidarity with the fight against police brutality and the murder of George Floyd. Graffiti artists sprayed Floyd's portrait on the Berlin Wall. In New Zealand, approximately 2000 people marched to the US Embassy in Auckland, another 500 gathered in Christchurch, and a vigil was held at the Parliament building in Wellington. The reason some gathered in Christchurch was to also bring to light what happened in March 2019 – a white supremacist killed 51 people in mosques in the area.

Floyd's death prompted citizens around the world to reckon with their own histories of racism and discrimination towards minorities. For Canadians, the death of George Floyd resurfaced the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, who fell from her balcony and died as police were

investigating a domestic incident in her building. Protesters used their voices as an attempt to secure justice for her as well as Floyd. In the UK, Floyd's death brought back memories of unjust deaths that had occurred in the country. A large group of demonstrators went to Hyde Park and marched from there to Victoria Station, holding up signs demanding justice for many people like Belly Mujinga, a railway worker that died after being spat on by a man claiming to have coronavirus. Many other signs were being held for kids that were bullied and killed due to their religion. In France, Floyd's death prompted citizens to call for justice for many deaths caused by racist police throughout the years. The most recent public death was Adama Traoré so his name was used to represent all victims. He was a 24-year-old black man who shared his last words with George Floyd – "I can't breathe". The protests ranged from peaceful kneeling and raised fists to torched scooters, reports of arson and tear gas used by police. In Italy, protests in Milan and Rome gathered peacefully, with many chanting "I can't breathe" and kneeling as a sign of protest along with squeezing their necks using their hands symbolizing what Derek Chauvin did to George Floyd. In Brazil, Brazilians came together and walked to the square in the state government building to protest the government of President Bolsonaro as well as the crimes committed against people of color in the favelas. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. As far away as Tel Aviv, hundreds of people reacted to Floyd's death by exclaiming their discontentment with the treatment of police towards people of color. In Sudan, Floyd's death fell near the anniversary of the 2019 clash between citizens and security forces that led to the deaths of 241 people in Khartoum following pro-democracy protests. To commemorate the anniversary of this horrific event and show their solidarity with protesters in the U.S., Sudanese marched peacefully to bring attention to all unjust deaths caused by police. Floyd's death sent shockwaves as far as Australia where Floyd's death prompted national reflection on the fact that over 400 Indigenous Australians died in police custody since 1991 with no consequences for the police officers. In 2015, similar to Adama and George, David Dungay – an Aboriginal man – said "I

can't breathe" 12 times while police were restraining him.

The death of George Floyd was a catalyst that sparked protests and social unrest around the world in the middle of a pandemic. It is unsurprising that a global health crisis and the ensuing economic crisis provided the backdrop for the overwhelming international response to Floyd's death. In a June 2020 interview with the BBC, Frank Leon Roberts, an activist who teaches a course on the Black Lives Matter movement at New York University, explained that "history changes when you have an unexpected convergence of forces." Floyd's death occurred during a time of stay at home orders, store closures, and the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression. As Roberts noted, "you have a situation where the entire country is on lockdown, and more people are inside watching TV... more people are being forced to pay attention - they're less able to look away, less distracted." Indeed, finally, the world paid attention.

The goal for many of the international protests was to raise awareness and apply pressure on governments to stop discriminating and start treating their citizens equally. George Floyd wasn't just George Floyd. He was Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Adama Traoré, Trayvon Martin, Atatiana Jefferson; he was everyone that has lost their life due to unfair police brutality, anyone that has been discriminated against, he was every person of color in the world and that is the reason why the fight isn't and won't be over for a long time.

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On May 25th, 2020, George Floyd was arrested and killed by Minneapolis Police after being accused of stealing from a store. Outrage followed when footage of the arrest revealed one of the officers--Derek Chauvin--placing his knee on Floyd's neck during the arrest for eight minutes and forty-six seconds and ignoring Floyd's desperate pleas of "I can't breathe... I can't breathe..."

Protests erupted around the country, and demonstrations against police brutality occurred throughout the world in response to Floyd's death. Petitions and calls to have all four officers responsible for his death were immediately followed by peaceful demonstrations. However, those protests quickly escalated into countless weeks of civil unrest that wreaked havoc across major American cities, impacting lives, devastating businesses, and destroying buildings.



So what has come of last summer's endless period of strife and turmoil? The protests revealed that perhaps for the first time in U.S. history, the moment had come for a national reckoning with the country's past. They brought closer scrutiny of the bastions and strongholds of systemic racism and the countless ways it manifests. They also brought to the world's attention the far-too-frequent instances of violence inflicted upon minority communities by the very people hired to protect and serve everyone. It seems only natural that after so many well-documented instances of this type of injustice, people would eventually wake up and begin raising their voices against a system that continues to oppress.

Derek Chauvin, the lead officer in Floyd's arrest, was unanimously convicted of murder by a jury in Minneapolis. His conviction represents a seldom-seen outcome in police brutality cases. It



Opinion: George Floyd's Killing and the Black Lives Matter Protests Against Police Brutality

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE - BY SOFIA GHILAS '21



perhaps paves the way for not only the three other officers, in this case, to be held accountable, but for countless others who in recent weeks have been involved in fatal shootings of black and brown people. While the jury is still out on whether convictions of police officers will become the new status quo, one thing is certain:

the Black Lives Matter Movement has become a worldwide call-to-action against police brutality. Thanks, particularly to the ubiquity of social media and video, the movement's mission has found a place in mainstream discourse. Some have even likened the groundswell of support for the BLM movement to the Civil Rights

Movement. Though some may rail against its message, BLM has succeeded in shining a light on a system overdue for significant change. We are once again reminded that enough people banding together can bring forth change, and perhaps most importantly, that the people will always be heard, no matter how drastic things seem.

Opinion: The Rise of Anti-Asian Sentiment

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE - BY LIXUAN DU '23

After the recent fatal shooting of six women of Asian descent in Atlanta, Georgia, last month, there is increasing alarm about the proliferation of anti-Asian racist memes, posts, and other online activities that may have set the stage for real-life violence.



Asian Americans make up around five and a half percent of the U.S. population. And though anti-Asian racism has always existed, the COVID-19 pandemic is believed to be the leading cause behind this spike in anti-Asian sentiment. From online racist posts to real-life hate crimes, the situation of Asians in the Western world (especially in the U.S.) is getting worse and, increasingly, out of control. Asian people are threatened by verbal harassment, workplace discrimination or refusals of service, physical assaults, and many others.

Being a minority group with different cultures and physical aspects, hate and dislike cannot be avoided. In the past, hate and dislike mainly happened online, but recently, while hate speech and racist behavior online increased, it also set the stage for real-life violence.

The virus was first identified in December 2019 in China, with the first outbreak occurring in Wuhan. Though it is not known precisely where the first case originated--China has speculated that it may have originated somewhere else--many people believe the virus started in China.

As Covid-19 began to spread at the beginning of 2020, former U.S. President Trump attacked China and politicized it, referring to it as the “China virus.” Conspiracy theories abounded. Many said it came from a wet market; others claimed it had been produced in a lab. Asians became the new “boogymen,” viewed as carriers and spreaders of the virus. Within weeks and months of this official vitriol, the situation of Asians in the West, especially in the U.S., worsened: racist attacks online increased in severity; Asians were threatened with verbal abuse on the street; harassed in the workplace, discriminated against, refused service, and assaulted physically. And now, Asians have increasingly become the victims of deadly violence.

So, who’s to blame for this surge in anti-Asian rhetoric? Some have directly blamed former President Trump for appealing to Americans’ fear of “the other” as he continually accused China as the source of America’s woes. As Trump stirred the pot, the world witnessed his ability to appeal to the mob mentality of his supporter base, inciting them to violence on January 6, 2021. Trump successfully tapped into a



fear of the other that has always existed in America and exists, on a certain level, in all of us. Trump is the first U.S. President to tap into this innate fear and use it to cause emotional and physical harm against Asians and other groups, such as the Democrats, who he accused of “stealing” the 2020 election.

Some say that Asians are easy targets for these kinds of attacks because they historically have responded with quiet dignity in the face of microaggressions and anti-Asian comments. Spreading awareness is essential for stopping violence. When people become aware of the situation, they can make sure that their actions do not contribute to the spread of hate and even participate actively in helping to stop it.

I can understand that people are frustrated and very sad about the pandemic and all the number of cases and deaths and want to release the pain and anger on someone, but that is not the reason for violence. First, thinking only about the facts, though the first outbreak of the virus was in China, its origin is still unknown; because of globalization and the convenience of traveling, the actual first case could have come from anywhere. Second, the virus first spread to the Asian countries and then to the rest of the world, so while the Western countries are experiencing the full blast virus, countries in Asia have already contained it. It is not as if the virus only affects a particular group of people.

Being Asian and living in Europe, I have experienced discrimination because of my race. Learning about the violence happening to Asians in the U.S. makes me feel sad and angry. We are also victims of the pandemic; we also experienced loved

ones dying because of the virus; in front of the virus, all races are equal, but why do Asians have to become a punching bag? Is it because we were able to contain it before other countries were able to? That is simply because we were affected before you did. Or is it because the world needs someone to blame, and we were just in front of the muzzle?

Not enough is being done to stop the hate and violence, and more action should be taken by the government. Not just because right now, people should focus on getting everyone vaccinated and putting somewhat of an end to this pandemic, but more importantly, making people understand that these actions should not be done to anyone. COVID-19 is killing so many people; we should be grateful that we are alive during this pandemic, and we should see how valuable life is and not hurt and kill even more people because of incorrect beliefs.

If you do not want to be treated a certain way, you should not treat others in that way, a concept that the Chinese philosopher Confucius taught. We should all keep this in mind before doing anything that could harm someone else.

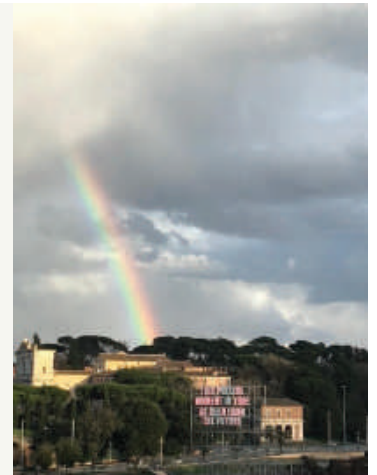


Bloom Where You Are Planted: How and Why We Persisted During Covid

BY ERIC MAYER, HEAD OF SCHOOL

“

“They won’t let you board the plane?” I responded on my mobile phone, rubbing sleepy sand out of my eyes. It was 6 AM on a Sunday in February 2020, and half of our school was at the airport – or soon to be -- for Spring Trips, heading out to destinations like Oman and Morocco (the other trips had gotten out the day before). So began my intimate relationship with the virus. Though we had been tracking the virus for weeks prior, that moment is the moment it all really began for me. (And, yes, those trip participants literally pulled their bags off the airline conveyor belts, redialed the rental van, and returned, despondent, to their homes in Rome.)



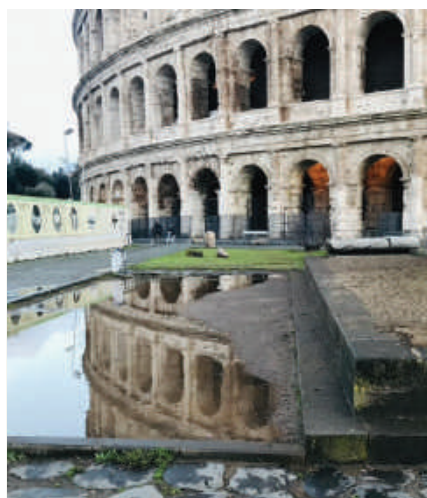
What follows is a response to requests which have suggested that current friends of the school, and future generations, may be interested in how we managed the COVID-19 pandemic at St. Stephen’s. It is written without pretense and shared because it’s a story worth telling. Thus far, I think it’s mostly a hopeful story because it illustrates the power of collective decision-making, the extraordinary dedication not only of our employees but also of our families and students, and a country that I believe has managed the crisis reasonably well..

"IS THIS JUST A SNOW DAY?"

In early March 2020, Italy closed schools abruptly. I called a hasty assembly in the chapel and told students to take their essential belongings from their lockers and head home. Students were generally giddy, reminding me of my own childhood at the news of a snow day. Many of them were smiling and high-fiving, which didn’t thrill me, but also seemed perfectly

natural. None of us knew what was coming.

We took one day off and then began teaching remotely. We remained in that mode for the balance of the spring semester, unable to return to in-person teaching. During that time, we made a number of important decisions, some short-term and some long-term.



The deserted Coliseum after a rainstorm
(Photo: Mayer)

"THE SENIORS DESERVE A GRADUATION"

As we watched the semester ebb away on zoom, the all-important question of graduation arose. Usually scheduled for the last Friday in May, all of us were sick at the prospect of mailing seniors their high school diploma. Already the seniors had their senior spring, their prom, their spring sports, and their faculty/senior dinner pulled out from under them, but to end in such an impersonal way -- receiving a diploma in the mail -- seemed unacceptable.

We set to work. Because we have for years taught English for free to the local police and Carabinieri, we have many friendly and helpful contacts. We pitched the idea to them since it would be those officers responding if there was a neighborhood complaint, and we managed to find an elegant solution: individual students would come on six-minute rotations, accompanied by no more than two guests, and would process up the chapel steps, in the chapel doors,



down a red runway carpet, and to a formal dais where they would receive their diploma. In addition, we presented them a framed piece of original artwork (painted by one of our teachers), a typed advisor letter, which was read aloud by their advisor, and a small potted bonsai given to parents in recognition of all their hard work and love.

It took two full days to get everyone through, and we had to do the exercise on zoom for boarding students who had been sent home -- but we had 100% participation, which illustrates how much this event meant to everyone involved. Hearteningly, there were still the tears on the cheeks of parents and the few of us who could be present; there was still Mr. Trythall's beautiful (recorded) playing of the processional piano theme. Interestingly, several parents -- who had older students graduate years earlier in our traditional ceremony -- noted that they preferred this ceremony: "it was just much more personal."



"WILL WE BE ABLE TO REOPEN IN THE FALL?"

While teachers were busy teaching and students were busy learning that spring, this was the question on the minds of senior administrators and trustees. Would it be safe to reopen? Should we close for a semester or a year? What if we chose to reopen, but half of our families withdrew, perhaps for financial reasons? Could we even dream of reopening boarding?

Collectively, we spent hundreds of hours on these questions. We scenario-planned for catastrophic circumstances, as well as moderate and best cases. We made educated guesses about the future and continued to refine those as new information emerged globally.

"YES"

Through sound financial management in the past, the Board had created financial reserves. We determined that even in the most catastrophic circumstances, we could and would keep the School operating. What's more, to close for a semester or a year would force all of our students into other schooling options, effectively shuttering St. Stephen's permanently.

"WE NEED DOCTORS TO INFORM STRATEGY"

Once it was clear that we could afford to reopen -- even with the possibility of massive attrition -- we set to work on strategy. As an educator, it was clear that I did not possess the community health knowledge to make intelligent decisions. I formed a four-doctor Medical Advisory Team, in part because I wanted a difference of opinion; it didn't feel fair or wise to place all of that responsibility on one medical professional. We met with the team weekly throughout the summer and monthly in the fall to review our decisions and proposals. There was occasional disagreement, but generally strong consensus, giving us confidence in our decisions. I assured the doctors that

I wanted their honest opinions; I would be the one to make decisions if there was disagreement. I think that freed them up, to be completely frank, leading to more strategic outcomes.

“WE NEED MORE COUNSELING RESOURCES”

As we spent spring 2020 attending webinars, talking to other educators, and reading, one statistic caught my attention: “1 in 3 students will return to school with social/emotional problems from the pandemic”. While that was speculative, it felt true in my bones. With the Board’s support, I created a position entitled Community Wellness Counselor, who would attend to the needs of not just students, but also employees and parents. In addition to our existing school counselors, Katherine Young (who was awarded this position) has done a masterful job offering everything from yoga and mindfulness to stress management and breathing to regular counseling sessions and webinars for parents.



“WHAT ABOUT THE ACADEMIC OFFERING?”

We also knew that we would need a different educational product for fall 2020. We expected to have what I called an “accordion year” where the campus

would open and close periodically, driven by the local health situation. We needed a unified pedagogy that would work equally well in-person and remotely. Department chairs and other academic leaders spent the late spring and summer developing teaching techniques, researching apps, and creating structures that allowed us academic flexibility but with the assurance of excellence. We rolled that out in September and continue to draw on that planning wisdom.



“WHAT ABOUT BOARDING?”



No single aspect of the school has been as thorny as residential life. With 18 returning senior boarders, we knew it would be catastrophic for their educational journeys to re-open the school without a residential program. Those seniors (and the younger boarders, as well) were depending on us, and if we could make it happen, we needed to do so. It felt to me like something of a moral imperative.

We prepared for this decision by logging lots of time with educational leaders from around the world, including the US-based Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), which was suddenly catapulted into a position of global prominence. With research data and a collection of anecdotal experiences from other schools, we agreed to open the boarding program but with serious changes: to reduce risk, students would live in singles, which necessitated us renting an entire hotel on the Aventine hill for the seniors; students would be clustered in family groups, with whom they would dine and socialize, such that if one student became ill, only that family group would quarantine, not the entire residential program; programming would be reduced to outdoor activities or family group activities, and meals would take place with reduced density in the dining room.

In addition, we knew that the existing single-room infirmary would be insufficient. We made the radical decision to relocate a host of administrative offices to create a 6-bed infirmary, where ill students could be housed before returning home or to hospital if needed. To staff the facility, we hired an additional nurse to live in a newly-built faculty apartment within the facility.

“WE’VE GOT TO TEST ON-SITE”



One of the themes emerging from educational institutions by late summer was the concept of early detection. It struck me as an unavoidable truth: the disease is pernicious because asymptomatic transmission is a primary vector, and there’s just no solution but frequent testing. I knew we couldn’t ask families to test offsite, as there just wasn’t testing capacity in Rome at that time, and that fact further narrowed the decision: we would have to test on-site. Supplies of testing swabs were limited and expensive, but I didn’t see a responsible alternative.

When I announced the decision in September that faculty, staff, and students would all be tested regularly, there was mixed reaction. Some families asked to opt out, viewing

my decision as alarmist. “No other schools are doing this.” Opinions were mixed amongst employees as well. We proceeded, making rare exceptions for physiological anomalies, even though Italian law did not protect our decision. I knew both families and employees could challenge this plan, but I just could not responsibly defend any other position. Thankfully, we had 99% participation in both cohorts (100% now).

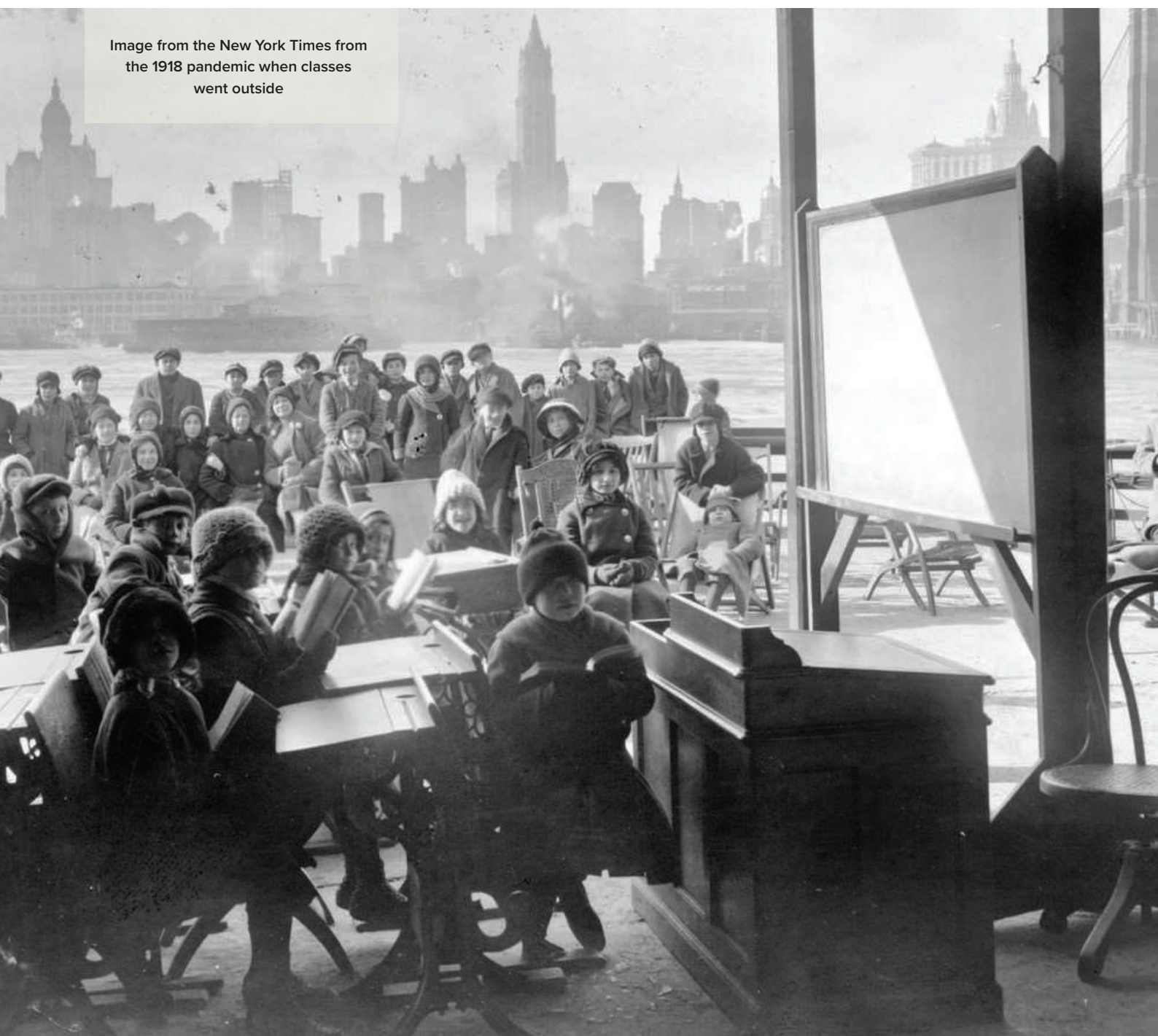
Writing this piece in February 2021, as the pandemic rages throughout Europe and America, that decision seems a bare minimum for operating a school. In fact, we’ve increased our testing in response to a minor outbreak in our dormitory last November; our residential staff and students are now tested twice a week, with day faculty and day students tested once a week. The school covers the staffing costs, and families pay only for the test itself (now down to about \$5 per test).

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Image from the New York Times from the 1918 pandemic when classes went outside

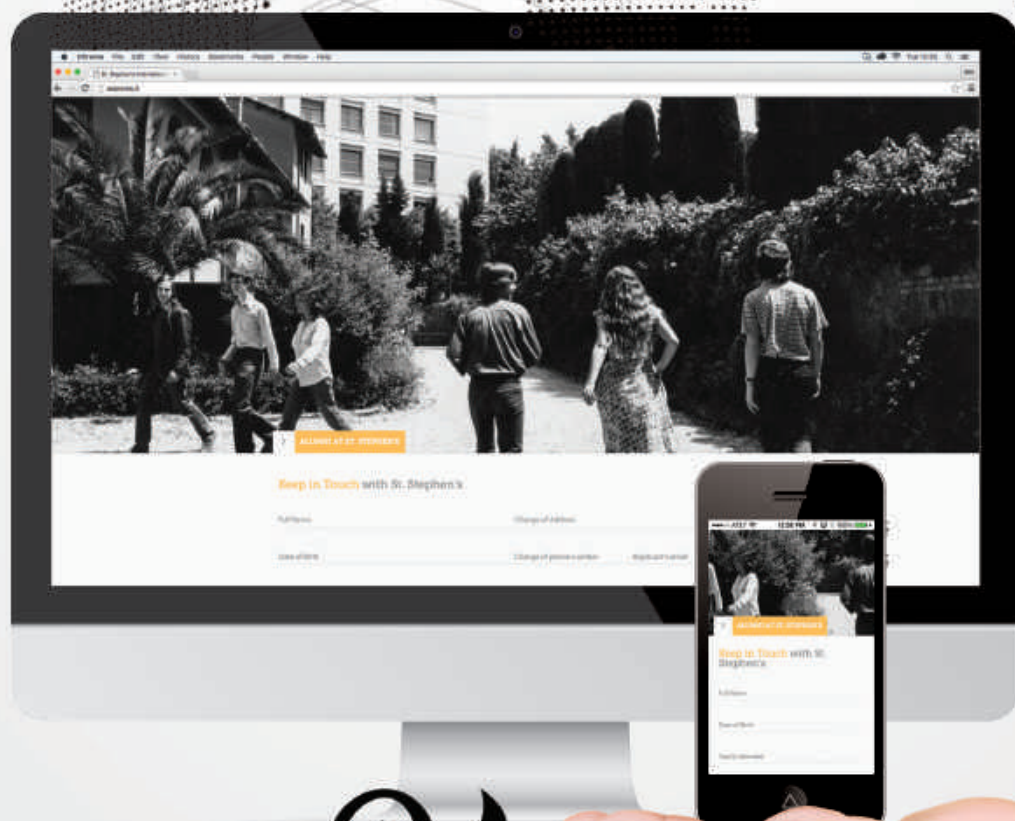


“SERIOUSLY, WE’VE GOT TO OPEN THE WINDOWS? IN JANUARY?”

We knew winter would be our toughest season. Modeling suggested a powerful second wave was coming, and a cold Roman winter, while hardly frosty, would present problems. As continued evidence pointed to airborne transmission as far more problematic than fomite (surface) transmission, we explored air purification equipment for classrooms. The problem with those portable units is that they’re only functional if windows are closed, and both the decree and common sense told us that windows needed to be open. To normalize this frigid plan, I referenced how prior generations had educated children during pandemics — outside with lots of warm clothing. And so all of us are here in layers, with gloves and hats sometimes.

AND NOW, THE VARIANTS

We now have a global race between vaccine deployment and the spread of these more contagious variants. Hopefully, we come out on the winning side of that challenge. In the meantime, we will keep prioritizing creativity, rigorous precautions, and a love for learning here at St. Stephen’s.



Keep in Touch

It's never been easier to keep in touch with St. Stephen's alumni community. Simply update your details on our home page at www.sssrome.it

www.sssrome.it/keep-in-touch

Reopening After a School Closure and Lessons Learned from the Pandemic

BY VITTORIA GIUSTI '22, NATALIE EDWARDS '14 -
CITY OF ROME I, CORE 9 TEACHER AND ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICE



DATELINE: 25 JANUARY, 2020

On January 18th, St. Stephen's students and teachers returned to the classroom for the first time since late October. At 8 am on Monday, a line of excited students wound its way down Via Aventina, each student waiting their turn for morning temperature checks. All around them, teachers weaved in and out of the line, stopping to greet groups of students and remark on how surreal it felt to be back.

This return to the classroom looks and feels like the first day of school. Just like September, all teachers and students are masked; arrows indicate traffic flow directions through the school's central cortiles and down each hallway.



Standing in the Cortile, one can hear snippets of the City of Rome class, Inge Weustink introducing the new unit on "Sustainable Cultural Heritage," and the beginning of an IB Environmental Systems and Society class, Jan Claus Di Blasio explaining the difference between climate and weather. During classes, when the Cortile's benches stand empty, voices continue to fill this open space, as each classroom door and all windows remain open throughout the day, facilitating the constant circulation of fresh air. Every so often, a stray student or teacher emerges from a classroom, bundled in a puffy coat, wool scarf, and knit hat. Just before lunchtime, a gregarious, energetic group of Latin I students rushes through the Cortile, hurrying to make it in time for the

departure of their field trip to decipher ancient Latin inscriptions at the Aventine Hill churches of Santa Prisca and Santa Sabina.

Caught up in the euphoria and relief of the first day back in school (albeit at 50% capacity), it is easy to forget the confusion and pain of late October 2020 when the latest nationwide school closure was announced.

Back in late October, few felt the impact of the shift to remote learning (first 50%, then 75%, then, two weeks later, 100%) more acutely than grade eleven boarder Vittoria Giusti. In her short essay, "Reflections on the Strength and Resilience of an SSS Boarding Student," she writes:

Again all at once... I was forced to pack up (I would say books and notebooks more than anything else) and go home to Naples; again, everything seems finished; we only meet online, now I don't feel motivated to finish projects.

I regard Vesuvio from my windows; it seems to me real patient, resistant to any pandemic.

I am no longer angry, like in March, but just tired.

I read in the newspaper that getting used to distance learning benefits me and prepares me for university studies. Indeed this is good news! But will it be true? I think so, but my current problem is getting my life back.

Now the school is going to reopen ... well ... half of it ... so no more lessons in pajamas and food all day.

I try again, I resist. Maybe Vesuvio will help me!

To stay sane in this pandemic, we have each had to find our Vesuvio, our anchor, during a time of constant uncertainty. Personally, I cling to nonfiction books. Reading biographies of artists, writers, and the occasional U.S. president, I am reminded that others, shouldered with far greater responsibilities than my own, have conquered adversity and, in the best cases, become wise in the process.

Now that we are back together in the

same building, we return to our daily rituals and begin the work of rebuilding our routines, but we are not the same people we were in March and not even the same people we were in October. In the words of one of my students (who joined the St. Stephen's community this September), over the course of these past three months, we have learned how to wait. And, in moments like the morning of January 18th, we savor each hour, having learned never to take a school day for granted.

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I AM NO LONGER ANGRY, LIKE IN MARCH, BUT JUST TIRED. I READ IN THE NEWSPAPER THAT GETTING USED TO DISTANCE LEARNING BENEFITS ME AND PREPARES ME FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES. INDEED THIS IS GOOD NEWS! BUT WILL IT BE TRUE? I THINK SO, BUT MY CURRENT PROBLEM IS GETTING MY LIFE BACK.





At War With an Invisible Enemy

BY XARA AL SAID '23

The Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the most challenging issues the world has collectively faced in recent history. We are essentially waging war against a silent enemy—one who has no national borders, knows no social bounds, political systems, nor cultural norms or values. This silent enemy of ours has inflicted harm on whoever crosses its path, upending life as we have come to know it, surreptitiously taking lives, decimating industries, and destabilizing the world economy.



As in any war, this enemy has left its imprint on our daily lives. How we spent our time and what we once took for granted—school and work schedules, activities, relationships, family ties, responsibilities, and our leisure time—have all been drastically altered. If we have been fortunate enough to escape our enemy’s silent battalions and their life-threatening campaigns, if anything, we have been left with a distorted view of time. After numerous lockdowns and restrictions that have trapped us in our homes, we rely on Zoom, the Internet, and social media for our sustenance and to get us through the day as we crave some semblance of our previous lives.

What we all want to know is not only the impact this will have on our mental health in the long term but how we will climb out of the rut we currently face with our mundane day-to-day routines. On the flip side of this mundanity is the inability to make plans. We don’t know if we will be out of lockdown, if schools will reopen fully, or if we will be free to travel. There is still so much uncertainty a year and some months after we went to war, and there are no set dates to look forward to because our silent enemy still has the upper hand in many countries.

The monotony most students cannot wait to escape looks something like this routine: wake up, join Zoom classes,

watch a movie or a TV show, go to sleep, do the same thing again the next day and the day after that. Without any defining activities that distinguish one day from another, time seems to have come to a standstill. It’s easy to lose track of time or remember what day it is. The lack of distinction between school/work hours and downtime has caused less urgency to participate and pay attention. Staring at a screen for more than eight or ten hours a day has become the norm, whereas before, this is what one did during a few hours of downtime.

As many of us continue to wrestle with our imposed routines, we have also seen our sleep schedules severely impacted. Not having to wake up early in the mornings to attend school physically has led to many of us staying up later than usual. Studies show that an irregular sleep schedule can throw off the body’s circadian rhythm, making you feel out of sync. It can also lead to days feeling shorter or longer.

One of the ways I combat some of these challenges is to find a balance. I manage my days, and particularly, screen fatigue, by exercising, listening to music, reading a book, or immersing myself in some other activity. I found concentrating during online school quite tricky, and I also felt that the lack of engagement and face-to-face teaching affected how much I absorbed and learned. To improve my

learning, I designated a place in my room for school work and a place for leisure time. I do all my homework and classes at my desk and spend my free time on my bed or outside. This has helped to create a professional space while working from home.

This pandemic has changed the way we live our lives in so many different ways. As we continue to develop new coping skills, at the end of this extended battle we’re in, it will be just as crucial to take stock of what we feel and how we feel in order to provide the best ways to address our mental outlook and wellbeing. In the end, the adjustment back to “normal” may be jarring, and we need to make sure that we keep trying to improve our overall health after the coronavirus has been laid to rest.



The Disproportional Impact of Covid on Black Americans

BY TANESHA ALEXANDER - ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN,
EAP TEACHER, AND DEI REPRESENTATIVE

Last year, as we watched the United States attempt to tackle the Covid-19 virus with mixed messages from the former President, spotty stay-at-home orders, at will mask-wearing, and widespread Covid testing, we observed a great divide between those catching the virus and recovering and those catching the virus and dying.

Statistics revealed African American and Latinx communities were disproportionately succumbing to the virus for various reasons. Some of those reasons include having employment that does not allow for remote work, not having access to the internet or resources for smart working, and finally having to work jobs that white Americans would prefer not to undertake in the middle of a pandemic. In an ironic twist, the very jobs which African Americans and Latinx workers undertook are the exact jobs that are keeping food on American tables, package delivery on time, and the American economy from tanking. Unfortunately, service sector jobs that, in most cases, require direct contact between workers and those they serve are exposing black and brown people directly to the virus.

Unequal access to healthcare coupled with disparities in care received poses another threat to black and brown populations in the United States. Unlike Italy, the United States does not have universal health care, and the high prices of hospital visits discourage uninsured Americans from approaching hospitals for care except in dire emergencies. Even when black and brown individuals do visit hospitals, the services they receive are too often unequal to those offered to white Americans. Black and brown populations are dying at record numbers while in the hospital with Covid-19. The reason for this is unknown, but many believe it is due

to overt racism within the hospital system as well as misdiagnosing. In December 2020, Dr. Susan Moore's video recounting her harrowing experience as a black patient at the Indiana University Health Clinic went viral. According to Dr. Moore, "I put forth, and I maintain, if I were white, I wouldn't have to go through that," explaining that her complaints of pain were met with suspicion and, ultimately, disregard (Hill). According to Dr. Uché Blackstock, a Yahoo News medical contributor and CEO of Advancing Health Equity, "it's well documented that Black patients' pain is undertreated...And I think that this is of course what happens in a society that devalues Black lives and Black bodies" (Hill).

Many African American men and women went to the hospital with Covid-19 symptoms but were sent home with diagnoses such as the flu, but ultimately within days, these individuals died of Covid-19 complications. "A 2016 study from the University of Virginia found that Black Americans are "systematically undertreated" for pain compared with white Americans and also found that half of a sample of white medical students and residents harbored false beliefs about Black Americans' pain tolerance, such as the false notion that Black people have thicker skin than white people. The study found that the participants who held those beliefs made treatment recommendations that were less accurate than those who didn't" (Hill).

The viral pandemic has revealed the racial disparities between those who are white and privileged and those who are not. In an op-ed published February 1st in the Washington Post, Blackstock and her sister, Dr. Oni Blackstock, noted that early data reveals that white Americans are being vaccinated at higher rates than Black Americans, despite the fact that Black Americans are dying at higher rates. Researchers have attributed the vaccine disparity to Black Americans' skepticism toward medical institutions (Hill). The pandemic has been raging for almost a year and the numbers of infected black and brown men and women continue to be almost double those of the white population. We must ask ourselves more difficult questions when it comes to systematic racism: why are black and brown people living in the United States always negatively impacted in times of national distress? And how can the medical profession gain the trust of black and brown populations after years of abuse, exploitation, and lies?

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Teens and Bullying

BY EMMA JANSEN '24

Bullying occurs a lot more than one would expect. Injuries, abuses, humiliations, threats, teachers offended while the class videotapes them, kids kicked, teenagers arrested for serious acts against peers.

BUT WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?
AND WHAT DOES BULLYING MEAN?

Whether physical, verbal, or cyber, bullying is repetitive, intentional aggression aimed to activate an asymmetry or imbalance of power between the bully and the victim.

There are many reasons as to why a person may bully someone else. They may do it for popularity and power, or peer pressure pushes them into doing it. There are cases where bullying is caused by abusive homes and how their parents treat the bullies themselves, which can make them take out their frustration and anger on the people who surround them, not least those who appear weak or vulnerable.

I came across a piece written in 2018 by Alessandro D'Avenia, an Italian author and journalist who defines bullies as teens without perfume and a sense of purpose. A solid definition, but at the same time, sadly very appropriate, actual, and highly evocative. In his article, Avenia compares aggressors to the main character of Patrick Süskind's bestseller, *Perfume*. The book tells the story of a young orphan, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, who was abandoned by his mother in a market. Jean-Baptiste was "born without love and was therefore devoid of any odor." (Avenia, *Corriere della Sera*, 2018). However, he was gifted with a unique sense of smell, and his dream was to find the perfect perfume to win people's hearts. And to make it happen, he is ready to do anything, even to kill twenty-four beautiful girls.

Every bully has different reasons for pursuing a specific behaviour or action, but I would tend to agree with Avenia that the common denominator is lack of love, which leads to a lack of identity. "For this reason, like the leading perfumer, they become violent and "seductive" in order to be considered and loved" (Avenia, *Corriere della Sera*, 2018).

CYBER BULLYING



Rumors



Discredit



Insults



Racist



Threats



Punishing



Hacking



Impersonate



Always

HOW TO TACKLE THIS ISSUE? WHAT ARE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS?

There are no easy answers to such complex phenomena. However, it is important to create awareness and leverage on positive values and create the right conditions where the victims feel safe to open up. Indeed, this is the other side of the coin: very often, the victims feel ashamed or scared, so they choose not to say anything. Sometimes parents are blind to the signs of bullying. However, there are many clues a parent, or another adult, or even a friend can pick up and realise that someone is having problems

and is trying to avoid them. A child might refuse to go to school and make up crazy excuses; they might start doing badly in school due to stress and anxiety, they may become more isolated from others and become depressed. These are just a few of the many signs a parent or a teacher, a classmate, or a friend can look for and acknowledge the fact that a student, a friend, or their own child is feeling bad and ashamed due to being a victim of bullying and the tough times that someone could be going through.

Although there may be some compassion towards a bully due to their own circumstances as their actions may well be a cry for help, certain behaviour cannot be tolerated or accepted either in schools or at home. Very often, their actions can lead to grave consequences for the victims.

If you notice someone being bullied, you are a witness of wrongdoing taking place right in front of you. In these situations, there are two types of people: those who choose to ignore the problem and pretend as if nothing had happened, and those who step up and choose to try and help

and correct the situation. It is not only the important part of rectifying the problem and the rough times of the victim, but they can also help the bully to mend their ways and understand their errors and own behaviour. Those who choose to ignore the situation are just as much in the wrong as are the oppressors. It is, of course, difficult and scary to try and step into such situations. It is vital that schools, in particular, offer a way and an outlet for reporting, discussing, and having openness and awareness around the issue of bullying.





A Social Media Guide for Teens

BY SOFIA GHILAS '21

The use of social media has become an inevitability of modern-day life. Whether you're following your school's Facebook account, chatting with your family on Whatsapp, or sending your friends pictures on Instagram.

Many great things come from social media, like the ease of communication, the rapid spread of information, and how it can act as a channel for positivity and benefaction. However, despite all the wonderful things that social media has brought us, it would be unwise not to recognize the potential hazards that can be found lurking online. Being aware of them is essential to navigating social media in a safe and secure way.

If I were explaining such things to a younger sibling, I would tell them to avoid doing any of these three things. First of all, I would advise them not to share anything they wouldn't want someone to see. It may sound broad, but once something is on the internet, it is there forever, and taking the post down usually does not resolve the issue. A good rule to go by is that if you wouldn't want your

mother or father to see whatever you are sharing, it is probably not a good idea to post it.

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The second thing I would advise them to avoid is to limit interaction with someone if you don't actually know them in real life. This is because, on social media, anyone can pretend to be someone they're not, and use this fact to gain your trust, and then pursue whatever malevolent intentions they could be hiding. Of course, not everyone on social media is out to do you harm. There is a difference between contributing to an online discussion with other people and allowing someone you

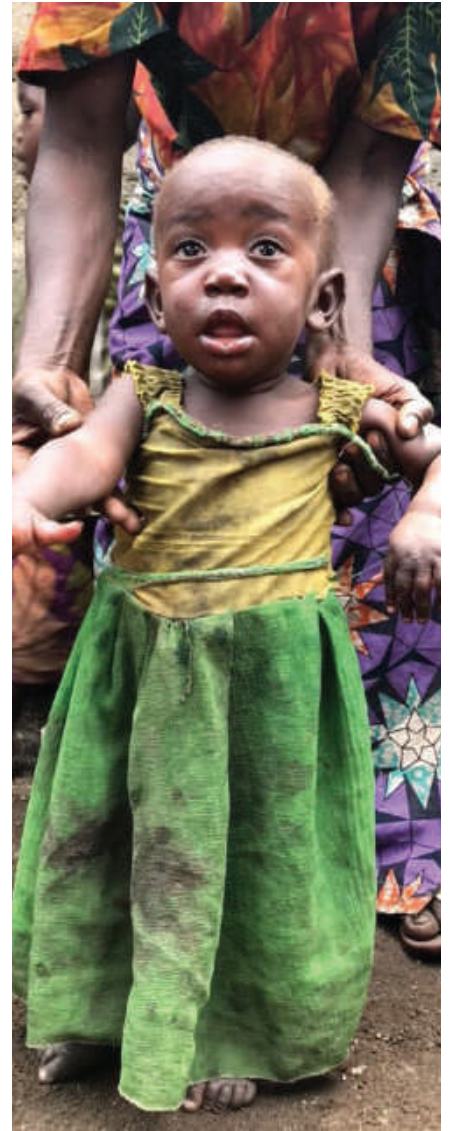
don't know to message you and giving away your personal information. But, of course, it is always better to be safe rather than to be sorry.

The third thing I would highlight is never to use the same password for everything, especially if it is a very easy password to guess. This is because if anyone cracks the password, they instantly have access to all of your accounts across all social media and can then do whatever they wish with them, including using them to find out your personal information. To avoid this, it is best to use different, complex passwords for each piece of social media you utilize.

I would also give them some general advice to always be mindful of what they say, as it can easily be taken out of context in the future, to disregard people who lash out for attention since they would be giving them exactly what they want. Finally, I would suggest using a private account for whatever piece of social media they are using to better filter who has access to their posts and general information.

In the Spirit of Service

BY DR. HELEN POPE - FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE LYCEUM, CLASSICS DEPARTMENT CHAIR
AND TEACHER OF LATIN, ST. STEPHEN'S SCHOOL



“

“THE BEST WAY TO NOT FEEL HOPELESS IS TO GET UP AND DO SOMETHING. DON'T WAIT FOR GOOD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO YOU. IF YOU GO OUT AND MAKE SOME GOOD THINGS HAPPEN, YOU WILL FILL THE WORLD WITH HOPE; YOU WILL FILL YOURSELF WITH HOPE.”

BARAK OBAMA



It all began at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Rwandan Genocide in Arusha, Tanzania.

I had taken a group of St. Stephen's students on a school trip to Tanzania in 2008. We had visited a variety of different communities - women's groups, schools, HIV/AIDS centres, a Masai village; but the highlight of the trip was to be a full day at the International Criminal Tribunal in Arusha, which was then engaged in prosecuting some of the key génocidaires of the 1994 Rwanda genocide, in which nearly one million people were slaughtered.

What would it be like to sit in this court in the presence of men who had directed such a massacre? How would we react to the actual proceedings? What effect would it have on us? What an extraordinary experience this would be for our students. But it was not to be. Upon arrival, I was told that the court was not sitting that day due to unforeseen circumstances. I was devastated. But what happened after that was to have a greater impact on my life, and I believe the lives of some of our students than I could have imagined. I set up a meeting

with the official spokesperson for the Tribunal, and we all went inside. He explained the formation of the Tribunal, the way it operated; he told us about the people involved, both prosecutors and prosecuted. It was fascinating, and we were impressed. While the Tribunal had had many foreign visitors, no international high school students had yet made the journey to Arusha, and so the spokesperson, in his turn, was impressed by us! He then uttered the words which were to have such an impact on the direction of my life, and which



would mean the involvement of the whole St. Stephen's community, first in Rwanda and then in DRC. "If you want to know about the genocide, you should take your students to Rwanda!"

The following year I made an investigatory trip to Rwanda and found a volunteer programme that was safe and suitable for our students. And so, in the summer of 2010, four Senior girls came with me to Rwanda, and for two weeks, we worked with over 200 preschool children. It was a wonderful, incredible, and mind-blowing experience. Our students were exposed to a life completely different from the lives they knew: they embraced the challenge with enthusiasm and immersed themselves fully into it. They learned a great deal - about the genocide, about poverty, about village life, about

living with very little, about suffering and joy, about each other, about themselves. For them, it was a life-changing experience.

Since then, I have led seven more groups of students from St. Stephen's to volunteer for two weeks at a school south of the capital Kigali. The students worked hard, getting up around 6.30, leaving home soon after 7 am, walking a couple of kilometres to the school, teaching classes with 40 students in them, playing with the children at break, talking about various issues with the teachers, giving special English tutorials in the evenings before dinner, and then having a two-hour discussion session after dinner about all aspects of life in Rwanda. During that time, as a school community, we raised money for particular needs. Each year we raised funds to buy goats for needy local families and presented them with great ceremony at the end of our stay. We provided money to build a safety wall at the end of the open playground, and we funded the construction of an open-air auditorium for the school.

But this was just the beginning of what was to become a more momentous journey, for in my first year in Rwanda, by pure chance, I crossed the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo, and there I entered a world very different from that of Rwanda, more desperate, more shocking and certainly more unknown.

Rwanda had suffered an unimaginable horror in the genocide, but that was sixteen years earlier, and the country was recovering. What I had not known was that the genocide did not end – it moved across the border into DRC. Nearly two million refugees fled across the border in 1994, hunted Tutsis but also Hutu génocidaires. Massacres of both Hutu and Tutsi continued but in DRC. Already existing tribal conflicts were further ignited. Several foreign powers, perhaps as many as fourteen, moved in to take advantage, especially of the mineral-rich east. Two Congo Wars ensued (1996-7, 1998 to 2003) in which thousands were killed, maimed, raped, orphaned, millions were displaced. It is one of the most under-reported conflicts in the world, and DR Congo now has more internally displaced people than almost any country on earth, and more than six

million people have died. I was taken to visit some of those child victims on the outskirts of Goma. They were living in a small wooden hut with a dirt floor and drafty canvas walls. This simple orphanage was run by Kizungu Hubert, a man whose selflessness, gentleness and goodwill positively radiated from his face. Every child there had experienced unimaginable horrors - mothers raped, fathers killed by armed groups.



Mbavu

Her mother was a nurse in a village. Militiamen came to rob the clinic and violently raped her in front of the patients. The only means of taking her to hospital in Goma was by bicycle, and she died on the way. Two months after her death, an armed group came at night to Mbavu's father to ask for medicines and money. When they found that he had neither, they killed him.





Kizungu was doing everything he could for the children, but the orphanage had no outside help. I had to do something, and I was confident I could rely on the St. Stephen's community to help.

And so, back in Rome, we began to raise money to support these children. Over the years, St. Stephen's community – students, teachers, parents, trustees, friends – has donated funds to build a new house, install a water tank providing safe water, pay school fees, build a bathroom and kitchen, and establish a playground. Each year I visited Kizungu and the children, and each year I saw how their lives were improving thanks to our support. And each year, Kizungu, to show his gratitude, made a special trip to Rwanda to visit our St. Stephen's students and to thank them personally for the support the community had given.

But my journey deeper into the Congo was to continue, and the deeper I went, the more horror I saw.

In 2010 I had also visited the island of Idjwi on Lake Kivu, often referred to as 'the forgotten island,' outside the conflict zone, but also forgotten by the government and humanitarian agencies.

Idjwi has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world. Infant, child, and maternal mortality rates are alarmingly high. Malaria and malnutrition are among the biggest causes of death on the island, and extreme protein deficiency is very high among children and pregnant women, causing severe health problems. What I saw on Idjwi shocked me even more than what I had seen on the outskirts of Goma, and so here too, I thought, St. Stephen's could make a difference. The driving force behind our Idjwi Poultry for Protein project was a 9th-grade student, Christian Rosolino, who, throughout his four years at St. Stephen's, which included two volunteer trips to Rwanda, worked tirelessly to raise funds to improve the health of the local people. With the money raised, we were able to buy land, build a poultry house, buy chickens and guinea fowl (to protect the chickens from predators), plant trees and shrubs, and give free eggs to those most in need, especially pregnant women and sick children. Through this project,

“

MY JOURNEY FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL IN ARUSHA TO THE PYGMY COMMUNITIES OF IDJWI HAS BEEN AS JOURNEYS SHOULD BE - DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING, BUT ALSO ENORMOUSLY ENRICHING, FULL OF LEARNING, OF NEW EXPERIENCES, OF WONDERFUL HUMAN CONTACT, OF SHARING, OF A MORE PROFOUND AND MUCH BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF OTHER PEOPLE, A JOURNEY OF RECEIVING AND ALSO ONE OF GIVING.

St. Stephen's has literally saved lives. Beatrice, a young pygmy girl, was so malnourished that she could not stand up. Her mother came to the poultry farm and asked for eggs: "My child was at death's door," said her mother, "but since she began to eat eggs from the poultry farm, her weight has increased, and she is healed. We thank all who support the poultry farm and save lives."

Contact with the indigenous pygmy population on Idjwi took me deeper into the Congo. DR Congo is the second most food-insecure country in the world. It is difficult for the majority of Congolese to obtain adequate food, but for the pygmies on Idjwi, it is virtually impossible. Like many indigenous peoples, they have been driven off their land, discriminated against, excluded, and denied their rights. They now live in desperate conditions – oppressed, marginalized, and in extreme poverty. Interviews conducted with a group of pygmy families in February this year revealed that almost every family had lost at least one child to malnutrition or disease.

A Harvard medical study carried out in 2015 found that 'more than half the households sometimes do not have enough to eat, and half of the children receive no more than one meal a day.' A Canadian study (2016) stated: "They have virtually no food and often only eat three times per week. Their children are malnourished, and we saw evidence of kwashiorkor, a life-threatening form of protein deficiency, and marasmus, a form of severe malnutrition."

The pygmies have little or no income; they cannot afford to buy food, and they cannot afford agricultural tools to grow their own food. Without adequate sustenance, they become weak, sick, and are unable to earn any income. It is a vicious circle.

And so, our challenge now is to break that circle. In just over a decade, the St. Stephen's community has given life and hope to hundreds of suffering people in eastern Congo. This is our biggest challenge to date and one with perhaps the most far-reaching consequences. The plan is to buy several acres of land on Idjwi (the pygmies are not permitted to own land) and to provide agricultural training and seeds so that they may grow their own food. With this project, we aim to support a minority group that has suffered cruel discrimination and injustice. Our goals are to alleviate their desperate hunger and malnutrition, increase their ability to work, enable their children to go to school (they often do not attend school because they are too weak from hunger to walk the distance).

Further, we hope to break down barriers between the Pygmies and the majority Bantou with whom they work to restore their dignity and provide food security. In the process, this plan will help the environment and climate change by promoting green farming and reforestation.

My journey from the International Criminal Tribunal in Arusha to the pygmy communities of Idjwi has been as journeys should be - difficult and challenging, but also enormously enriching, full of learning, of new experiences, of wonderful human contact, of sharing, of a more profound and much broader understanding of

other people, a journey of receiving and also one of giving. I am proud to have taken many of St. Stephen's students and some of the faculty with me on at least part of this journey and to have involved the entire St. Stephen's community in a range of issues and activities which are fundamental to the school's philosophy. Together we have made a very real, very positive difference to hundreds of people in Rwanda and DRC, and we have understood that we could achieve this without difficulty.

The people in eastern Congo have suffered decades of conflict, neglect by the far-away government in Kinshasa, major outbreaks of deadly Ebola, and now of Covid-19. Their story goes largely untold. But we have already made a positive difference to many of them, and now we have the opportunity to make a difference to many more. In this challenging time when we have all felt helpless, we can follow the words of Barack Obama, "We can make some good things happen. We can help to fill the world with hope." It's not really so difficult!

Even a small donation to these different projects can make a difference. Thank you for your support!

The Tchukudu Kids:

<https://www.tchukudukids.org/>

Supporting the people of Idjwi Island:

<http://supportingidjwiisland.com/>

Website built with the help of Gary Beberman, a former St. Stephen's teacher

Buy the eBook:

<https://www.meaningfulpaths.com/product/idjwi-island-charity-ebook/>

TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED:

\$45,000

(land, training, agricultural equipment, seeds, supervisor's house on the land)

PART II:

Our Life Online

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a black smartphone. The phone's screen is black and displays the word "NETFLIX" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window with natural light streaming in, creating a soft, airy atmosphere. The person's fingers are visible at the edges of the phone, holding it steadily.

NETFLIX

Film Review: Judas and the Black Messiah

BY LUCA VANDERSON '22

IMDB RATING: **7.6**



“

‘YOU CAN KILL A REVOLUTIONARY, BUT YOU CAN NEVER KILL THE REVOLUTION.’

Words from the great activist for black rights, Fred Hampton was the chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party from 1966 to 1969.



while posing as a member. The title itself represents the two main characters. William O’Neal is seen as the traitor or ‘Judas’ while Hampton is depicted as the ‘Black Messiah’ or Jesus Christ. It has already been nominated for 5 Academy Awards, one of them for best picture.

Directed and co-written by Shaka King, the film was released during Black History Month this year and is seen as a gift in remembrance of the black activist. King’s writing beautifully comes to life with the help of his actors and actresses. He takes a compelling story and not only turns it into a masterpiece, but is able to implement a message through scenes depicting Hampton speaking to the people.

The chairman was a charismatic, devoted leader who used words to spread his ideology and King executes this perfectly in the screenplay. He also describes O’Neal’s infiltration accurately by taking events that the party faced and placing them in the film which is an opportunity for some to learn more about the role of the BPP and their fight for racial equality in America. A man who brought all kinds of people together, a man who fought

against discrimination, and a man who through grand speeches and wise words, wrote history.

William O’Neal is played by Lakeith Stanfield, who shows a remarkable resemblance with the protagonist, and Fred Hampton is played by the talented British actor Daniel Kaluuya, who captures the attention of the audience with his outstanding performance. Watching the film, Kaluuya’s accent is spot on, and he is seen as the reincarnation of the memory of Hampton. In one particular scene where he’s talking to a large group of people, he brings energy and confidence into his character.

Personal Rating: 8.9

Personally, the enjoyment came from the convincing acting. The main actors’ engagement and accuracy are absolutely mesmerizing. *Judas and the Black Messiah* will not just be known as one of the greatest films of all time, but one of the greatest lessons humankind will ever learn. The fight against racial discrimination is not over.

Tragedically, he was assassinated on December 4th, 1969 by a tactical unit of the Chicago Police Department. This biographical film sheds light on the life of Hampton, his involvement with the Black Panthers, and William O’Neal’s infiltration in the party. It brilliantly presents a great revolutionist who spoke for the unheard black community and someone who managed to bring together groups with different ideologies in order to spread peace and unity. The film explores racial equality, radical politics and anti-capitalism. It’s also suggested for ages 16 and above for coarse language and violence.

As tension rises between the Black Panther Party and the FBI, William O’Neal is recruited to infiltrate and gather information on Fred Hampton

Film Review: What We Started

BY MATTEO SCARFINI '24



“

WHAT WE STARTED ON NETFLIX IS A BEAUTIFUL DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC THAT FOLLOWS ITS ORIGINS FROM THE EARLY 1970S UNTIL TODAY. THE FILM EXPLORES THE GENRE THROUGH INTERVIEWS WITH DJs AND MUSIC PRODUCERS.

Electronic music was an experiment that essentially pushed the boundaries of technology and sound. This new genre produced different mixed and blended sounds amplified through speakers that effectively changed our moods, how we felt, and what we thought.

The two main protagonists, Carl Cox and Martin Garrix--two successful music producers-- take us back in time to Detroit, which was known for soul and R&B music, or the Motown Sound. In the 70s, artists started fusing technology with different instruments in the Motor City. They produced this new sound, called Techno--a “genre of electronic dance music characterized by a repetitive four on the floor beat.” Created and

used primarily by DJs initially, techno steadily grew in popularity in the US and eventually expanded to the UK, becoming a worldwide sound.

The film also documents the club scene, which is the backdrop for where most techno is played. While some of the positive aspects of music and clubs are highlighted as places for creative expression, the documentary also explores the murkier side of nightclubs and the drug scene they promote. Testimonials of those who have used drugs in the clubs advise others not to fall for their lure.

The contrast between the main two protagonists of the movie is striking in that it creates a strong narrative arc that paints a continual picture of the history of the genre. Carl Cox has been a famous DJ for over 40 years and has played worldwide, whereas Martin Garrix’s career,

on the other hand, started a few years ago at age 16. Garrix’s hit track, *Animals*, was a huge success, which he says is largely due to technology. Recounting his experience at “Ultra,” one of the world’s largest techno festivals, he says that you do not need any musical knowledge to become a successful producer nowadays; you only need a laptop and your creativity.

I would say that the theme of this documentary is creativity and believing in yourself because electronic music does not require musical theory; it’s, as Garrix says, technology and your musical mind.

I chose this documentary because I wanted to learn more about the dance music industry and how it has changed over the past 60 years. This film is recommended for anyone with similar interests and curiosity about electronic music.



Film Review: Seaspiracy

BY GUSTAV FRANKLIN '21

SEASPIRACY

“

THE NEWLY RELEASED NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY, *SEASPIRACY*, EXPLORES THE DAMAGE THE FISHING INDUSTRY IS CAUSING THE BLUE PLANET.

A young filmmaker, Ali Tabrizi, sets out to record all the evidence of abuse and harm being perpetrated throughout the fishing industry he can find across the world. Each place he visits with his wife Lucy Tabrizi, the film's co-director, he uncovers more and more shocking evidence of ocean life eradication.

Taiji, a small fishing town in the south of Japan, is the first place that leaves the audience disturbed. Ali films a gruesome scene of dolphins being slaughtered as their pod is driven close to shore. With the sea red from their blood, only a few survive to be transported to water parks for entertainment. As there is high demand for bluefin tuna, the fishermen reduce the dolphin population to decrease the consumption of smaller fish, such as herring or mackerel, leaving an abundant amount of bluefin tuna.

There, dolphins are being slaughtered to reduce the consumption of smaller

fish, such as herring or mackerel, to gain an advantage for bluefin tuna. Ali films a horrific scene where a pod of dolphins has been driven close to shore, and only a few have been saved. The sea was red from their blood. Later in the documentary, Ali films a similar scene on the Faroe Islands, where pilot whales were slaughtered for their meat.

Overfishing is the main problem that is addressed in the documentary. Although Ali finds solid evidence to support his cause, there are too many factors for the audience to consider when trying to understand what to do about it. The most compelling proof Ali finds is in a direct interview with the Plastic Pollution Coalition, where Jackie Nuñez states that the way to solve the problem is to "eliminate, or really, really reduce your intake of ... of fish." At this point, the film takes a hard turn to an investigation, as Ali declares it's time to "follow the money."

There are many things I like about this documentary, one of them being that Ali always keeps you hooked with unexpected twists and turns, new statistics, and new people he interviews. However, there is a lot of information to process, so you may have to pause the video a few times to digest everything he lays out. For example, he reveals that several well-known associations such as the Marine Stewardship Council and the Earth Island Institute, are duplicitous in their marketing which could surprise the audience since many of these organisations claim that they prioritise sustainability.

Ali leaves us with a single statement which is to "stop eating fish." The documentary, in my opinion, has successfully changed my mind on what to eat and which organizations to trust. I would recommend anyone who has the time to sit and watch this documentary and reflect on its impact



Film Review: The Perks of Being a Wallflower

BY ANITA D'ALISERA '21

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

the
perks of being a
wallflower

STEPHEN CHBOSKY



“

THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER IS A COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA FILM DIRECTED BY STEPHEN CHBOSKY, STARRING GLOBALLY KNOWN ACTORS LOGAN LERMAN, EMMA WATSON, AND EZRA MILLER, AND WAS RELEASED IN 2012.

This film tells the story of Charlie, a high school freshman, who writes a letter to an unnamed friend about his experiences and tribulations of his first year of high school. The protagonist suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and has to balance this with the average aspects of surviving freshman year, such as socialization, maintaining good grades, and overall enjoying the experience. He learns new things about himself and high school by meeting some friends along the way who help him with his struggles.

Charlie, portrayed by Logan Lerman, is a shy teenager whose only wish is to find happiness and create good memories. He loves to read and spend time with family. Sam, short for Samantha, portrayed by Emma Watson, is a high school senior,

who's best friend is her stepbrother Patrick, also a senior, portrayed by Ezra Miller. These two characters are dynamic and love to spend time with friends. They are both part of the drama club and enjoy parties and fun experiences. Sam and Patrick are free-spirited and are not affected by other people's judgments. They both help Charlie step out of his comfort zone and quickly become his best friends. They teach him things about high school and teenage experiences. This friendship is reassuring throughout the movie, as it's comforting to see how age or grade, in friendships, truly does not matter. It matters how the individuals feel around each other.

What I enjoyed most about this movie is the feeling it gives you after finishing it. You feel new and excited to experience fun things with your friends. The film's

soundtrack is also beautiful and lifts your mood; some songs included, which I loved, were *Heroes* by David Bowie and *Come on Eileen* by Dexys Midnight Runners. This movie is mostly known for its beautiful quote, "We accept the love we think we deserve." It is authentic and depicts real-life situations that are likely to happen during a teenager's high school experience. It includes diversity, and by the finale, you feel like an improved version of yourself.

I recommend this film to anyone who enjoys coming-of-age movies, as well as someone who may feel alone and is in high school. The film may help and will definitely give you comfort. I have watched it multiple times, and by the end, I always feel this special sensation inside of me. It's an extraordinary movie.

Gone With the Wind: A Film Review for Our Times

BY BENEDETTA BOSCO '22



“

I SAW THIS FILM FOR THE FIRST TIME THREE YEARS AGO, AND IT IS ONE OF THOSE MOVIES THAT YOU CANNOT ONLY WATCH; YOU HAVE TO THINK AND READ AND WRITE ABOUT IT TO UNDERSTAND IT AND ITS IMPACT ON YOU.

Set in Georgia, the film (and book) cover the American Civil War (1861-65) and the Reconstruction Era (1865-77) through the eyes of Scarlett O'Hara, the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner, following her as she grows and changes throughout the years.

The movie opens with the words, *"There was a land of cavaliers and cotton fields called the Old South...here in this pretty world, gallantry took its last bow..."* emblazoned across the screen in an elegant yet antiquated script. It sets the scene of the era, but it is nothing more than a nod to the glamorization and romanticization of what the 'old south' stood for.

And this is problematic in ways that are still pertinent to today's cinema and television in that it reduces African

Americans to roles of servitude and perpetuates stereotypes that have been ingrained in the culture throughout American history.

Let's consider the following: the African American characters in the film, who are slaves, are unflatteringly depicted as loyal, docile, and attached to their white overseers. For example, Oscar Polk plays an unquestioning and faithful valet; Butterfly McQueen plays Prissy, represented as hysterical and dishonest. Though Hattie McDaniel was the first African American female to win an Oscar for her portrayal in the film--a historic moment for Black Americans, she could only receive this acknowledgment for a role that promoted her servitude and obedience. At this level, the movie is disturbing because it whitewashes the massive, crushing, and obscene reality of slavery, portraying the white overseers as "kind" and "decent" to those to whom they denied freedom and fundamental human rights.

This historical revisionism damages the film. At the same time, however, it is also interesting to compare and contrast this period with others in history where people profited off atrocities and injustices of the marginalized and oppressed.

That said, it is still hard to understand the film's actual position. Because while it does give a voice to those opinions that existed (then and now) which defend the ways of a decadent 'old south,' it also dramatically changes tone in the second half, bringing about a sort of punishment

to those characters that had for so long lived off of the death and torture of others. Each of the characters (overseers) falls victim to misery, madness, injury, and death that crosses generations. This could be interpreted as attempting to create a narrative of balance in an almost Biblical/Old Testament-y way.

Despite the massive problems stated above, the film displays certain elements which are hard to step away from and ignore (however, I am not separating the good from the bad, this film will hopefully continue to age worse and worse).

What stands out to me, and what I feel I need to acknowledge, is the character of Scarlett, keeping in mind that this should not be her story. And the fact that it is, unfortunately, speaks clearly to our society's tendency to whitewash historical periods and events.

We follow Scarlett over the course of fifteen plus years, and in terms of femininity represented on screen, what we get to see is drastically different from most films produced at the time, and perhaps, still unrivaled to this day. Her character is extraordinarily crafted to fit all and zero archetypes at the same time. She is never trapped and never confined, heroine and anti-heroine at once. I switched between hating and loving her every ten minutes, in a good way. Scarlett captures the audience from the very first minute the camera's gaze lands on her. She's rosy-cheeked and flanked by two doting admirers. She continues to string us along throughout until the very last



minute when we watch her dark silhouette standing starkly against the sunset as she grows more and more distant and the iconic orchestral theme sweeps across the landscape.

I think a significant part of Scarlett's place in cinematic history is due to the excellent casting of Vivien Leigh, whose fascinating and heartbreaking life reveals a kindred spirit to that of Scarlett in more ways than one (even Scarlett's description in the original book seems a word for word description of Leigh). Leigh immerses herself into the character and gradually exposes every facet of her complex identity and femininity, transforming and evolving before the audience's eyes. Scarlett's character, as described in an article, was that of "daughter, sister, flirt, wife, midwife, mother, widow, nurse, killer, farmer, scavenger, business owner, socialite and — most importantly— survivor." That

gives you an idea of how much Leigh was able to say and show through her character, and how much she shined in comparison to the often flat and demeaning female characters in movies of the time. As I said before, the problem is that (historically) this is not Scarlett's story; it should be instead that of Mammy, Pork, and Prissy.

As for Rhett Butler, I never really liked him (but then again I hardly liked any male characters in the film). But his character's influence on cinema and storytelling is abundantly clear, paving the way for many more "wisecracking but reluctant American outlaw hero[es]" to come (*Star Wars*, *Casablanca*, *Die Hard*, etc.).

The production, artistic direction, and costumes are and will forever be gorgeous and overwhelming in a way that echoes the decadence of the story. I can't help but be in awe of this film's technical

masterpiece and how things like costumes/prop/set design, score, etc., make this film a meaningful piece of visual and auditory art. There are at least ten shots I can think of that are absolutely unforgettable and monumental. Each costume is a masterpiece, accompanying every character throughout their arcs and acting as valuable markers of the passage of time: Scarlett's early gowns are exquisite and explosive with childish frills, sporting the full hoop skirts and V-necklines of the 1860s, while the second half of the movie sees tighter, more vertical styles in richer and gaudier fabrics that reflect Scarlett and Rhett's materialistic and baroque relationship.

After having seen the film several times and read sources about it over the years, I am finally able to gather my very scattered and contradictory thoughts about it: no, the (absurdly worded) "pretty world [...] of knights and their ladies fair" is not "gone with the wind"; It is not "no more than a dream remembered"... the cruelty and horrific remnants of that world are still with us today, spectres of humanity's penchant for destruction and war, still affecting millions and millions of people and reincarnating into different versions of itself as history continues to repeat itself.

That being said, the movie does need to be seen, just as it needs to be criticized. It should definitely be discussed in more depth as a part of film history and American history in general but never excused, as I read once "*Gone With the Wind* tells us more about 1939 — and the years after — than about the 1860s."



PART III:

A Selection of Creative Writing

BY MOIRA EGAN, TEACHER OF CREATIVE WRITING

You've probably seen that meme: a child in a big armchair, cozily reading a book. All around her head are thought bubbles full of knights and dragons, maps and mountains, ships and seas. And below, the caption: "Reading Takes You Places."

Harare 2002

(After “Elephants”
by Carol Ann Duffy)

JULIET BEL, GRADE 12



When I was a kid
I imagined that when I was born
I was not delivered by a stork
but by the trunk of an elephant.

I could all but feel the rough skin
wrapped so gently around me,
the soft swaying of a trunk,
the thuds of giant feet on the
Zimbabwe plains.

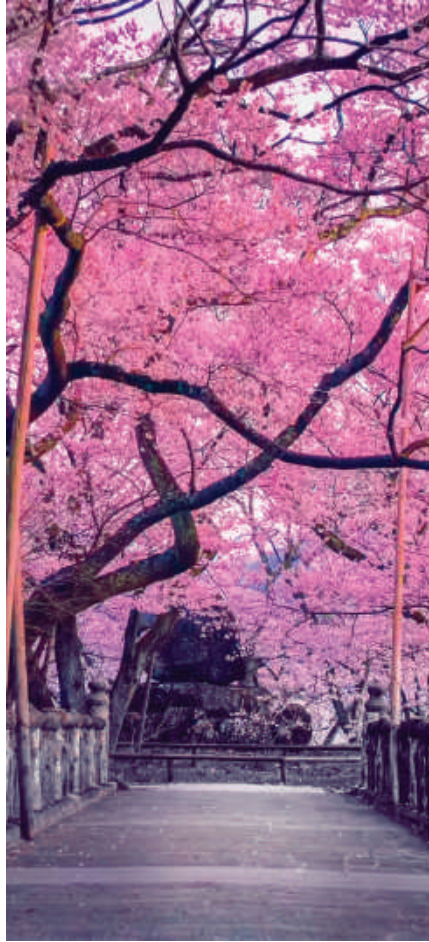
I imagined they found me
in a tree by where they would
bathe,
their skin still slick with the water
walking over fences and fields.

I used to imagine that when they
found someone they trusted
to take their strange charge,
they gave me an elephant's
funeral.

I imagined they covered me
in a loving tomb
of palm fronds and foliage,
a baby no longer theirs.

Sakura

EMMA CARDILLO, GRADE 10

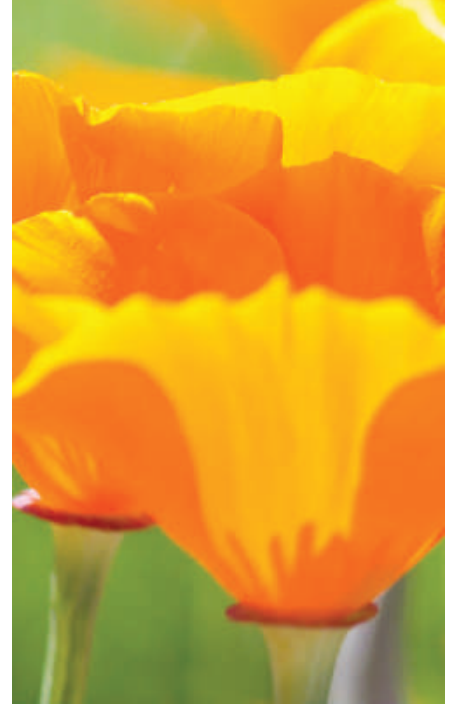


Change glides in,
incising a slit
into the chilly navy sky.
The bead of luminescence
slides through the night carpet.

Little twigs checkered into
their own delicacy.
April mornings curtain the light
onto blush petals.
Slowly,
they slip open:
overflowing with pigmented
hope,
rich with the sweet scents of
spring.
Enchanted by the charm of the
sun,
their cocooned little skirts open
up,
unveiling their champagne color.

An orange flower

ILARIA CHEN, GRADE 11



I wish you could smell
the orange flower
when the clouds turn cold
It licks off the moonlight
weight on its petals
and sips the nutrients of gloom
dusts the bugs who too
napped for four sun cycles
and drooled all over its abundant
face

Two echoes away
dozens of honeybees
carrying baskets on their backs
fly around in the black-blue fog
Their wings circadian
and their senses hone

Six minutes in
the sky is painted with gold
dust and rain
An orange flower bathes
in juice and sings
to the brim

Venetian spirit

EMMA CARDILLO, GRADE 10



The month has come,
hence the days to party have begun.
Here we know it as a festival with crazy spaces,
in ancient Venice it was a time of hiding faces.
As they did, we'll walk streets with high spirits
and glide through the city with twirls and pivots.
Without any knowledge of who is who;
cluelessly roaming, not discerning what's false and
what's true,
we'll talk and perceive with our eyes
until the ecstatic party spirit dies.
Like in the city of water, a silhouette enters:
pitch black, creeping the streets he ventures.
A bird like mask meant to scare away illness,
disease in the air should have been trapped in utter
stillness.
His pointed beak stabs the livelihood of the festival,
shutting out our speech now barely perceptible.
His heavy mask made him a monster,
black hat, eerie presence...they called him the plague
doctor.
A figure like that was meant to kill evil,
push away mad spirits and all that was lethal.
But today our life is not so;
bodies drop dead, we come and we go.
A plague just like that of great Venice,
a catastrophe splitting society, to our people a menace.
The difference between now and then,
is the hanging shadow of ruthless death.

Innigkeit

AMELI DE SCHEPPER VON THUNGEN-REICHENBACH, GRADE 9



Where shall I go,
Sway,
Stomp, when I feel utterly lost.
How do I move,
Speak,
Think without having your hand in mine?
I am lost.

My world was flat, you have now made it a
Rhombicosidodecahedron.
You drive me insane yet I do not know how I feel.
I have nothing but rage and confusion coiling in my veins,
My veins, how could I forget?
You have turned my veins into demanding vessels,
They siphon out all common sense,
They simply yearn for you.

I am dancing in a field of daffodils,
The golden flowers follow my every move,
Longing to join my feeling of movement, of merriment.
They eye me but I do not care.
I am at sea. I am in the garden's koi pond.
I am swimming between red koi,
As they zip past me, surrounding me as if I were drowning in
a fire,
Their black dots threaten the love, the red.
I cannot breathe, yet it is breathtaking, and I can't stop staring.
They lure me, as English roses do to gardeners.
You are my red carnation and my anemone,
And all I ask of you
Is to give me a jonquil.



@Dr.faust

ILARIA CHEN, GRADE 11

*f you, @Dr.faust, could become anyone,
who would you become?*

I would become I myself,
for what is the need to become
someone else?
I @Dr.faust am the favorited
son, the sun of my people
and the song of their hearts. I,
@Dr.faust, am the one on
your screen, your eyes mine
and mine benign like the color
of a lit skyline- is that not enough?
I @Dr.faust am the persona
of the Mona Lisa, I am the mirror
of beauty, desire, lust: Roma.
I am the only face
you face every day, the one
you love, the one you like,
swipe-right, excited.
I, yours, mine, I
am the one to blow you
kisses at night, I
am your messenger
from the skies,
I, yours, my
hair, lips, intertwined,
I, your
likes,
I!
...
Is that not enough?
Watch my likes grow
like twines by night,
watch my people
gift me gifts delighted
at my hiss of thanks
and no more;
watch my persona
fly like a kite
bit by a dog,
watch my hair, lips,
intertwine like vines:
loss of foresight.
Watch, hear the applause
of mine and taste the grace
I behold, for I, and only I,
Authorize.

*@Dr.faust am I.
Enough!*



Ceres

PHOEBE CIOCCA, GRADE 10

I follow the aisle
you etched between
the green.
The pavement is soft,
trampled flowers
that I'll trample again
to find you.
The wispy grass
strokes my hands
as I brush through it,
as it grazed yours
and scratched
and hacked.
True blades,
they cut you down.
Your trail ends here.
where you left me
for below.
You won't come up
again
til the moon faces me
thrice more.
By then the flowers
will regrow.



May

PHOEBE CIOCCA, GRADE 10

You're centered in their frame
pearled gates opened
for you
float
like children's bubbles

pop

before I reach.
And you soar above cotton
meadows
that tickle my ankle they call
me down.

We watch you dance
with honeyed rays.
The sky in all its lenience
drapes you in its
cape.

I lie amongst white petals
cushioned in the green.

Your laughter
reaches out,
hoists me in the dream.

But as I bow
to warmth
in this celestial ceremony

winds draw clouded curtains.

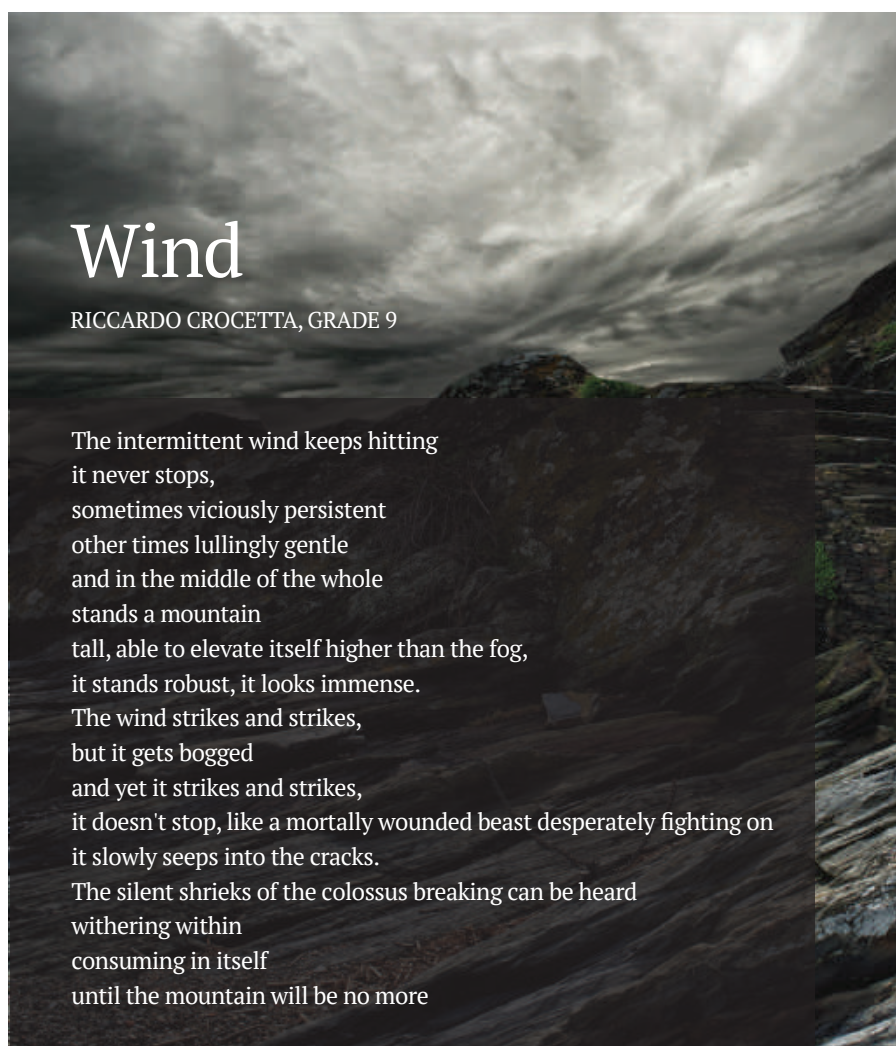
Your only trace
a rosy blemish on my
skin.



Sea

RICCARDO CROCETTA, GRADE 9

The water violently beats the tall body of the rocky wall,
expanding with a scream
retracting with a whisper.
Again and again, every time more abrasive
again and again, overflowing
an exhibit as violent as death
that seems to turn the scene into something alive
from numb to absolute
from perished to blossoming.



Wind

RICCARDO CROCETTA, GRADE 9

The intermittent wind keeps hitting
it never stops,
sometimes viciously persistent
other times lullingly gentle
and in the middle of the whole
stands a mountain
tall, able to elevate itself higher than the fog,
it stands robust, it looks immense.
The wind strikes and strikes,
but it gets bogged
and yet it strikes and strikes,
it doesn't stop, like a mortally wounded beast desperately fighting on
it slowly seeps into the cracks.
The silent shrieks of the colossus breaking can be heard
withering within
consuming in itself
until the mountain will be no more



春晓

BY LIXUAN DU, GRADE 9

【唐】孟浩然

春眠不觉晓，处处闻啼鸟。
夜来风雨声，花落知多少。

Spring Morning

Spring. Waken to an already bright day. All around. Tweet, tweet, the birds sing as they play.

Rain. Last night's drizzle with the gentle breeze. How many fragrant flowers did the wind seize?

(The original Chinese version of the poem was written by the poet Meng Haoran during the Tang Dynasty.)



The End

BY LIXUAN DU, GRADE 9

Deafening roar softened by song
from aeons ago

Moon frozen and oath torn apart
Timid rhino fret and turns to stone

Feared zero has come.

Comfort, Discomfort, Danger all gone
Boredom, Annoyance nowhere to be found

The time has come
What used to be fiction is now reality*
Our beating heart is slowing down

Bang.

This is the End

Heaving

BY TATIANA KNEALE, GRADE 11

I'll go to the gym once or twice in a week,
spare two hours each time
from the greater half I spend asleep.

Run, then stretch, then on to the floor.
My face, fire-red in the morbid mirror.

Let the oppressive blue plastic mattresses
be the judge of me.
I can feel the heat of their gaze,
from my head to my foot, upon me.

Those stacked up so orderly,
like the tiers of the birthday cake
that I ate,
that's still seared in my memory.

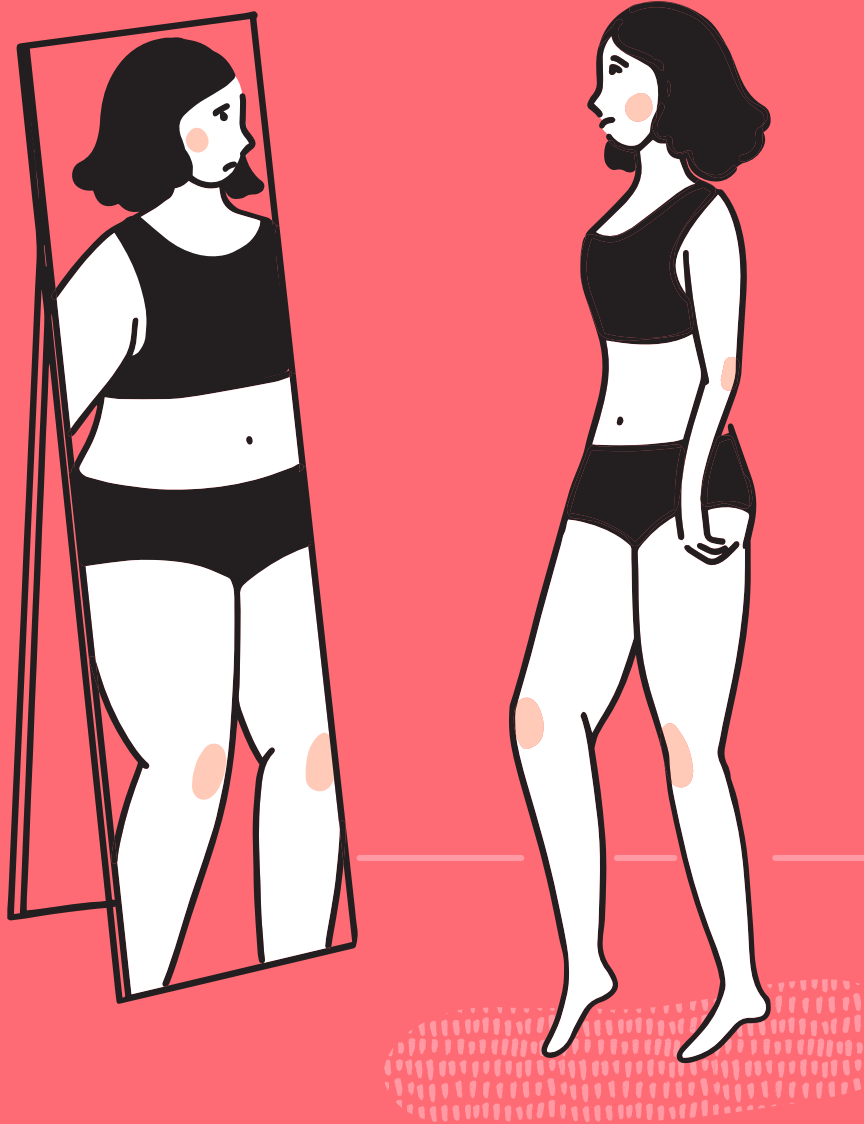
I was three.

But it still makes its home on me.
In the great beefy bulges of fat
that fester on in my arms, in my thoughts,
and on these bones I'd happily break
if it would take some of the weight
off this vessel I've been restricted to all my life,
In which I'll likely die.

Tell me, will they bury me?
The friends who mocked my physiognomy,
peeled back every layer
of hope I'd kept as a shield
to my unforgiving insecurities.
Am I likely to forget that humiliation?

Not quite.

But I wonder what they can see as right
in their nit-picking austerity
They might even think they're helping me.
But it isn't very comforting.
And the pillowed-out bulge of my stomach
is not soft
as it ought to be.



Sterile

TATIANA KNEALE, GRADE 11

I like things neat.

Carefully, I keep,
every object I own in order.

Under the surveillance
of two unrested eyes,
I keep trained, a world,
in rhythm and time,
entirely mine.

The books that line my shelves,
from left to right,
in colour and kind,
and alphabetised,
are my domain.

Why the cushions
on the couch
in my living room
must be fluffed
three times a day,
I'll never know.

But, that the crude
clump of laundry,
freshly washed and folded
in my living room, however new,
will never do,

is an absolute truth.

The dawn of every day
sees the creation
of fresh new rituals
for me to pursue:

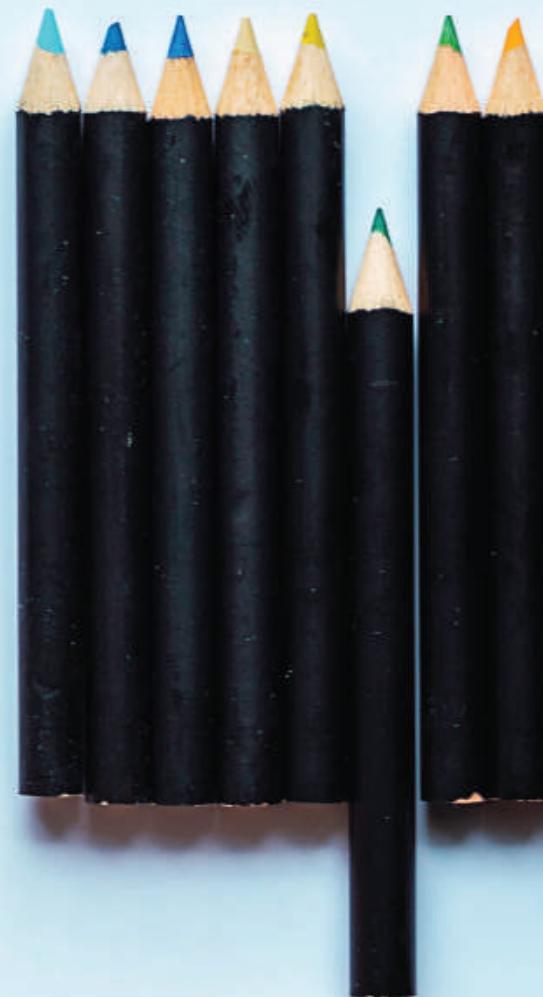
take a ruler to the roses,
so their stems might
stand straight too.

Clandestine, I crawl
in the wake of an habitual ideal,
which, to chase, is to feel.

So I will continue to.
To divide up my food,
by colour, cradling
every bit of control I can foster.

I, the imposter,
will keep spotless,
a world, that listlessly,
Tirelessly, faultlessly,

Will forever be lost to me.



Greens

BY ASIA MAGRONE, GRADE 9



I stand upon the unwoven grass,
a juniper-colored grass
that hugs my bare feet
the rain soaks the ground on which I stand
the holy water bathes my hair
the gray above is clear, all the clouds have sought shelter
in my mind

I sit in the growing grass
an olive-toned grass
the wind travels in between the naked branches
It hides in between the blooming daisies
the sounds wrap a blanket around my shivering heart
the tune of the wind and the melody of the grass

I lay underneath the tall grass
a grass covered in an emerald shine
a grass that is now warm
It whispers sweet words in my ears sweet words
and whilst the sun kisses my cheeks
the world spins as I fall asleep
In the grass that grows.

Fields

BY ASIA MAGRONE, GRADE 9



The footsteps were many countless puddles left behind
in the soil beneath.

A summer's day of despair, they would call it,
With the hot humid air floating alongside the clouds.
Until, all at once, the inhalation of such air
Crushes the lungs Without leaving room for any feeling
of mere excitement

For a sunny summer day.

And the feet dive into the earth once again,
The worms and bugs whine for help,
Their shrills deafening
And their fainting heartbeat a distant echo.

Your summer slippers remain dark, with the blood of the
bugs.

But You don't look behind.

You look at the lady dancing in the field.

She looks splendid with her braided hair, almost unreal.

Barefoot she sways, humming a familiar sound.

Her white dress drapes on the ground as she come closer,
Her aura emits a vibrant sunshine of warmth

she welcomes you in her arms

As a mother holds her baby, she holds your head on her
chest

And fills your eyes with sleep

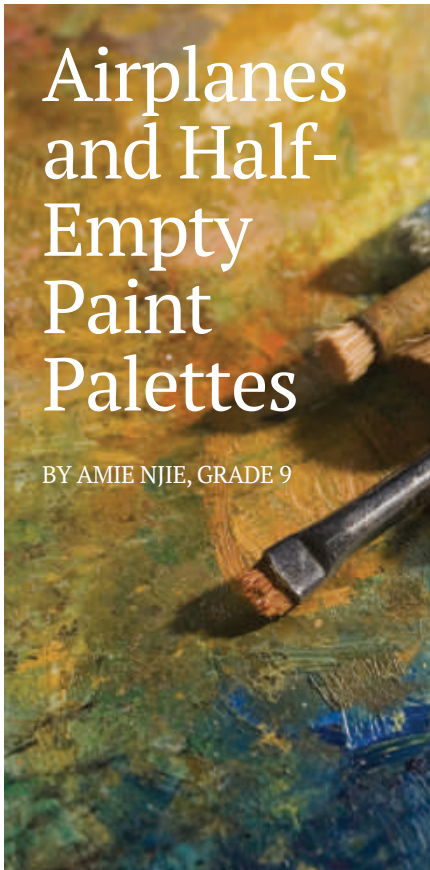
As she becomes a part of your soul, forever within your
skin.

For the time has come

For you to dance in the field

Airplanes and Half- Empty Paint Palettes

BY AMIE NJIE, GRADE 9



It was raining
The day you left.
You leave behind three half-empty
Paint palettes--
Or are they half full?
From those same palettes you
used
To make those paintings--
Telling stories that only
Made sense in your head.
I'll paint like you did
Under this roof--
Just a little different.
I wash away the
Reds
And the
Blues
That coated your hands too -
once.
Your walls are now bare,
Everything gone--
Not even a single hair
Not even a single tear
Drop, drop, dro
You're starting a new life now.
And so am I;
We have both turned a page.
Though it's no longer
The same book.

Vile World

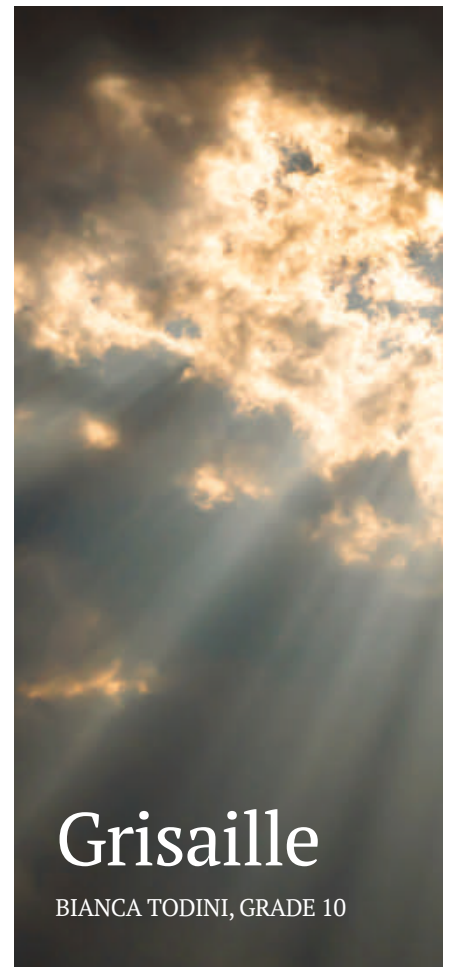
BY AMIE NJIE, GRADE 9



A vile perfume fills the air.
Many cannot smell it.
Many do not seek it.
It is the smell of greed
the smell of hatred
There!
upon men's lips.
Carelessly unleashed
upon the world.
A vile *splash!* of paint
coats
the ballroom walls
where dead dancers dance
a song full of life;
shattering criticism
a lion, ready to *pounce!*
A vile color fills your eyes
the color of lies
the color of judgment
as the ghost in the corner
tells you he loves you.
A vile order
from that voice in your head
shakes you awake
for the second time
or is it the ninth?
For this is the world we live in
A
vile
Vile
world.

Grisaille

BIANCA TODINI, GRADE 10



Graphite sky,
fog of pepper light
sprinkling the silver sea.
Tendrils of iron clouds
blending into the graphite.
Swirling charcoal.

The Sun emerges
dripping in silver;
chrome drops
sloshing and melting
rippling the surface.
Molten metal.

The Sun rises higher.
Now shining gold.
Its silver skin shed into the sea,
bright light breaking the graphite.

Charcoal crumbling into dust,
smog inhaling the sky and
exhaling it up into the clouds.
Revealing its blue beneath.
Now delicate and unexposed,
as the morning light dances off its
clean face.

1878

BY SOFIA TAGUCHI SLETTEHAUGH, GRADE 9

My heart flutters like a butterfly, though I mustn't show it
Your hands atop my crinoline, as we dance to the violins
The crescendos and diminuendos guiding our steps
Mauve and maroon-dressed guests won't take my eyes off of you
Every memorized move, every word left unspoken

Though the night makes my head whirl, your eyes hold me close
Fierce, passionate heat as we glide on our feet
No matter what occurred a day or night ago
Music carries us into the next spin or step
This moment so precious, I will wish it to repeat

The chandelier glimmers, and illuminates the crowded hall
My skirts made of muslin, skillfully crafted by artisans
I get lost in the bottomless blue of your gaze
Never will you fail to entrance me with your charm
Must not be a dream, for my eyes are wide open

Pain from a petticoat or high heel will not stagger me
Your redolence like honey, reminds me of a fleur de lis
When one dance feels like eternity cut too short
Please don't forget me as the stars leave the sky
I will remember this feeling, of when our hands meet
Though after we bow, it is turned bittersweet.

Inspired by Por Una Cabeza by Carlos Gardel and Clockwork Angel by Cassandra Clare

7

BY ASIA MAGRONE, GRADE 9

Pieces of a puzzle that don't seem to fit,
A life from birth to death preserved with every stitch.
When a path that is winding and broken gets chosen,
There are two fluffy gloves that keep your heart unfrozen.
All when a soul fears nothing, not even death,
A melody can be made with only one breath.
When emptiness is filled with the joy of the past,
A red box isn't what'll make happiness last.
While something like coffee is always around,
Only when you smell it can memories be found.
When an item so basic can make your eyes sting,
A flat piece of plastic can be worth as much as a ring.
As children we receive tiny things with tiny faces,
We hang onto them as we discover many new places.
See, our lives are not defined by the objects we find when cleaning,
But they serve a purpose because our memories give them meaning.





BY NATALIE SILVER, GRADE 11

A spirited girl in Renaissance Florence upends a contest to design the city's greatest monument, in a female reimagining of architectural history, in which rivalry, beauty, ingenuity, and a little blue notebook, are at the forefront.

Fiammetta is the 17-year-old daughter of a renowned Florence artist, Lorenzo Ghiberti. She longs to break into the all-male world of artisans, apprentices and architects who are transforming Florence into the most beautiful city in the world.

Brunelleschi, a 22-year-old architect, has already made a name for himself. But to qualify for the history books needs to score the biggest commission Florence will ever see: The Duomo.

Giorgio, a teenaged boy who works as an apprentice for Donatello, becomes Fiammetta's accidental best friend and loyal sidekick, as they battle with the Florentine establishment.

Donatello, an already well-established artist in his 20s, and former apprentice of Ghiberti, is friends with everyone, and runs a workshop where everyone hangs out.

The Blue Notebook - Wooden Sword Fight

INT - Ghiberti Household - DAY

Fiammetta quietly walks through the corridor. She gets to the living room, and finds Vittorio and Tommaso dueling each other with their wooden swords. Tommaso spots Fiammetta, and stops fighting Vittorio.

TOMMASO
Fiammetta!

Fiammetta winces

TOMMASO (CONT'D)
(In a posh voice)
I challenge you to a duel!

FIAMMETTA
Fine. Sir Vittorio, I require your sword.

VITTORIO
Of course, your fireness.

Vittorio hands Fiammetta his sword, and then sits down on the ground near the spot of the duel. Fiammetta and Tommaso are standing across from each other, preparing themselves for battle.

VITTORIO (CONT'D)

In the arena we have Fiammetta,
wooooo, versus Tommaso, boooo!

TOMMASO
Hey.

VITTORIO
I mean wooo as well! Okay duelers
ready?

FIAMMETTA
Ready.

TOMMASO
Even readyer.

VITTORIO
On your marks, get set, duel!
The two start circling each other. Tommaso lunges first.

VITTORIO
Tommaso makes the first move, and...
misses. Fiammetta moves out of the way just in time.

Fiammetta makes the next move, but OH! Tommaso blocks her attack with his sword. Fiammetta's sword goes flying out of her hand. She is defenseless! Tommaso takes one stab, straight through her! Tommaso wins!

Tommaso's sword is tucked in between Fiammetta's arm and side. She pulls it out, starts stumbling backwards, and pretends to die.

TOMMASO
Wooooooohooo!

Fiammetta is still on the ground, trying to be as still as possible. Vittorio, concerned, goes over to make sure she is not actually dead. He stands next to her head and looks down. Nothing

VITTORIO
Fiammetta?

FIAMMETTA
BOO!

Fiammetta abruptly sits up.

VITTORIO
AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!

Both Fiammetta and Tommaso start laughing hysterically.

VITTORIO
It's not funny! Stop laughing.

They don't stop. Vittorio, annoyed, goes to sit and sulk on the sofa.

FIAMMETTA
Thank you sir Tommaso, I had a splendid duel.

They shake hands.

TOMMASO
As did I, Lady Fiammetta.

FIAMMETTA
I really must be off now, good day
to you both.

VITTORIO
(*Quick, and still mad*)
Bye.

Fiammetta walks out of the living room, and eventually into her room.

The Blue Notebook - Therapy Session

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - AFTERNOON

Giorgio walks into the workshop, having finished his lunch break, and finds Donatello reclining on a sofachair. Donatello is frustrated. There are only the two of them in the workshop today. Giovanni is busy planning his wedding.

GIORGIO
What's wrong?

Giorgio takes off his bag, leaving it on the nearby table.

DONATELLO
I don't want to go to the wedding tomorrow.

GIORGIO
What?

DONATELLO

Well of course I want to go to the wedding, and I'm definitely going, after all, its Giovanni, though I still don't know how he managed to find a wife, and I'm probably going to be bawling my eyes out the whole time, --

Giorgio pulls up a chair, and sits down.

DONATELLO (CONT'D)

But, Filippo is going to be there, and I do not want to see him.

GIORGIO
Who?

DONATELLO
Brunelleschi.

Giorgio chuckles.

DONATELLO

I know it's been a month, but I'm still mad! And I'm still not over him! He had no right to break up with me, only I can do that!

GIORGIO

You were together? Like together together?

DONATELLO

Yeah, on and off for about two years, how did you not know this? Anyway, I was always the one who broke up with him, but it was only ever for short breaks. I thought we were destined to be together. I mean sure, we got on each other's nerves, and it probably was a toxic relationship, but it was our toxic relationship!

He would critique my work, because he thinks he is superior to everyone, which he is, but not the point, then I would criticise his stupid hair that's always so poofy and perfect...

You know, a while ago, back when we were teenagers, which was only a couple of years ago, so not actually that long ago, anyway, we would play the most amazing pranks on our friends. One time we made this guy think he was another person. It was Filippo's idea, and it was hilarious. The guy actually believed he had turned into someone else. And then he had the audacity to break up with me!

Did our trip to Rome mean nothing to him? And you know what the worst part is? The reason he broke up with me is because he started to like someone else, a girl of all people! And a month later I'm still lying here wallowing in self pity. I suppose I deserve it for breaking up with him so many times.

GIORGIO
Fiammetta.

DONATELLO
What?

GIORGIO
The girl, the one he broke up with you for, it's Fia.

Donatello sits up.

DONATELLO
What! No, it can't be Fia, I mean do they even know each other?

GIORGIO
Sort of.

DONATELLO
Anyway, even if he did like Fia, there is no way she could like him back right?

GIORGIO
No... She hates him...

Donatello lies back down.

DONATELLO
That was not a very convincing answer. I feel like you are not telling me something.

GIORGIO
Uh.. You know, I probably should get back to work, paint to mix, wood to paint, other stuff that I can't think of that also involves paint...

Giorgio gets up and starts walking backwards out of the room.

GIORGIO (CONT'D)
Yeah. Bye!

Giorgio walks out of the room.



PART IV:

Departments

New Initiatives at the Lyceum Take Off During the Pandemic

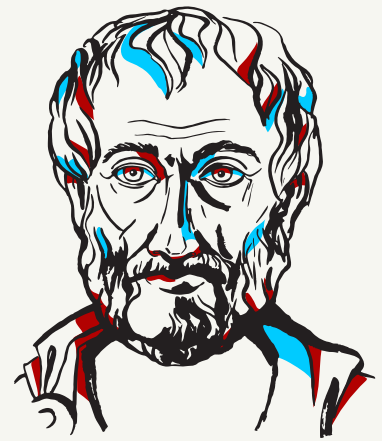
BY INGE WEUSTINK - DIRECTOR OF THE LYCEUM, CLASSICS TEACHER

“

ALL MEN BY NATURE DESIRE TO KNOW."

(ARISTOTLE, *METAPHYSICS* 1.980A22).

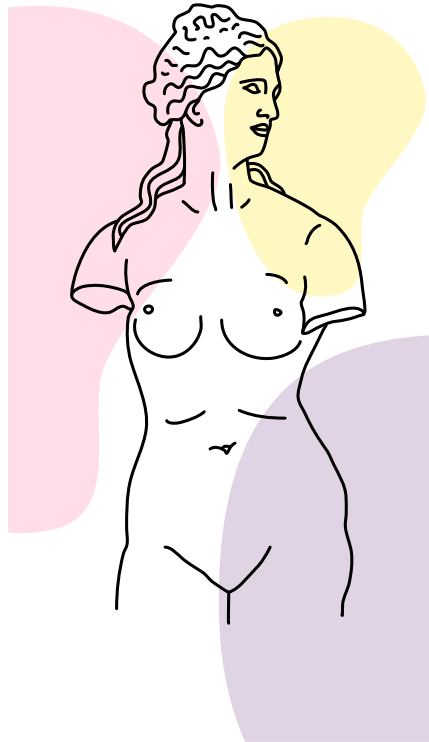
Nevermore than during the last seventeen months did these words from Aristotle ring true for me. We are so fortunate that through the Lyceum, we are able to create special opportunities for our students to learn about the ancient world, whether it's through weekend trips and lectures or by inviting scholars, writers, and poets who through their workshops, lectures and readings enhance our classes and broaden our students' horizons.



Our students are curious, ask questions, and want to learn. That is something that I already knew, but it's something that became even more clear to me when the pandemic broke out, and we had to take all of our teaching and co-curricular activities online. It has not always been easy, but what I am heartened and amazed by is the fact that our students show up, all of them, to our Zoom classes, where they enthusiastically participate in the course material.

HERE IS A ROUND-UP OF OUR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2019

In September 2019, with the launch of the revised Grade 9/10 curriculum, the Classics Department launched the Classical Languages Program (CLP), an initiative offering a choice of Arabic, Classical Greek, or Latin to Grade 9 students—many of whom will take their language of choice into Grade 10 or even all the way through their IB program. These languages not only reflect our



location in the Mediterranean Basin, more importantly, as highly organized and logical (much like math), these languages sharpen the mind, cultivate mental alertness, create keener attention

to detail, develop critical thinking, and enhance problem-solving abilities, making studying other languages and subjects much easier as students progress through their academic careers.

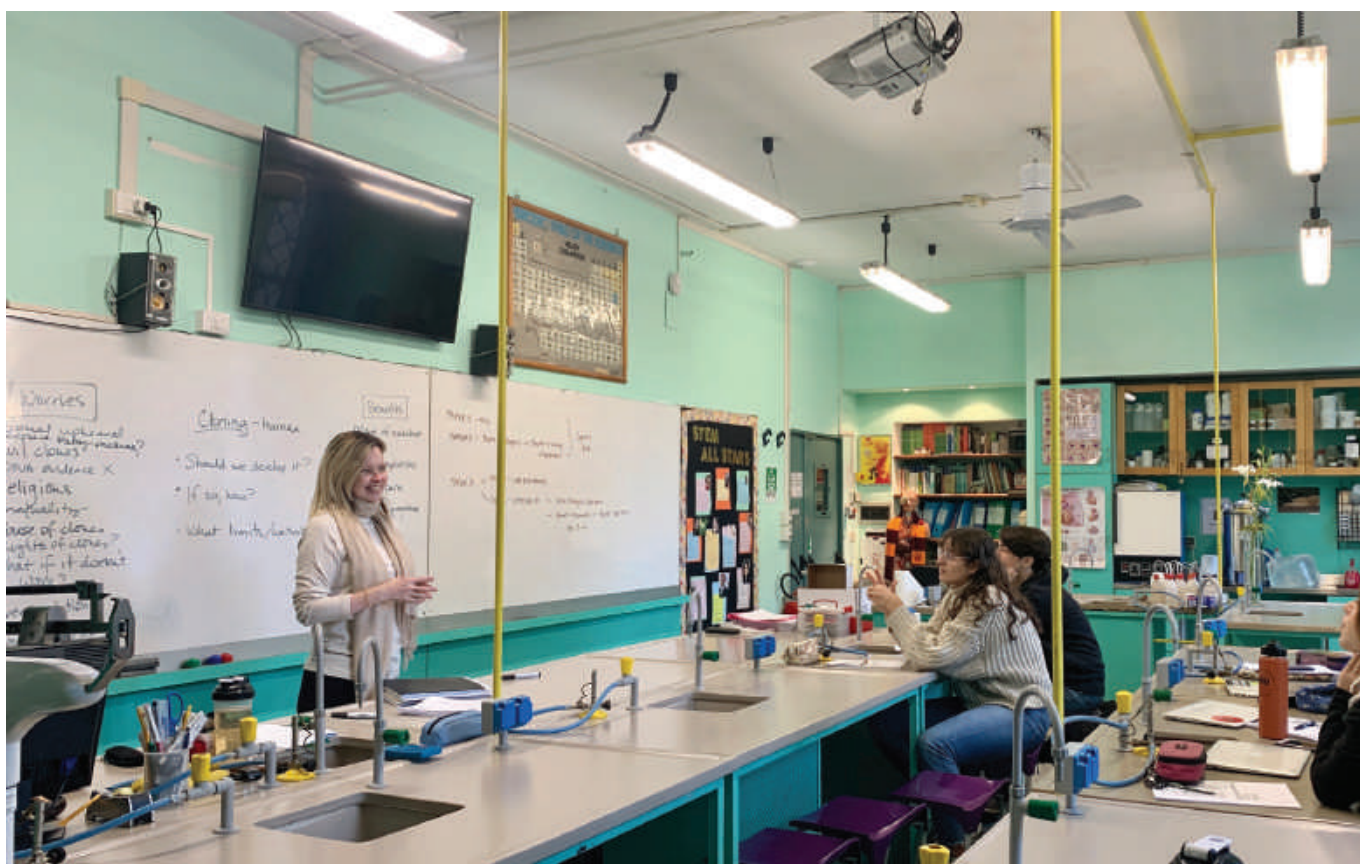
The majority of our freshmen take Latin, and they find our methodology of teaching Latin as an “active language” engaging and even fun. Students read, write, and listen to Latin and do short Latin composition exercises. As they are developing their reading skills, they are also learning about etymology and Roman culture.

The students who chose Classical Greek are drawn to the course because of the different alphabet and the importance of the Greek language in fields like science, medicine, and philosophy.

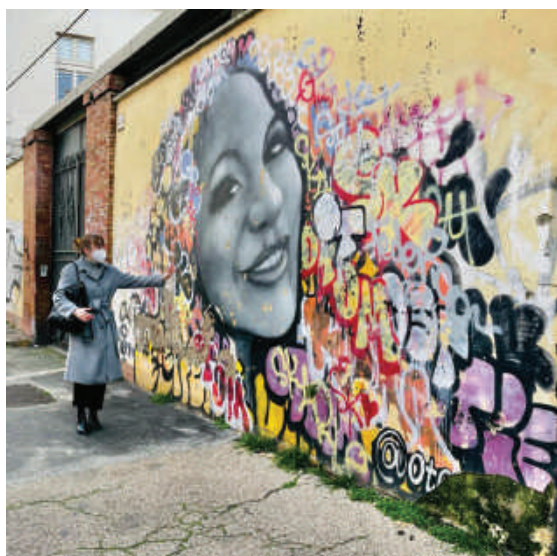
Arabic is growing in popularity, a testimony to the fact that our students like to be challenged and are curious to learn about Arabic culture, which they understand is largely responsible for transmitting knowledge from antiquity through the Middle Ages to our own times.

In February 2020, the Lyceum partnered with Creative Writing teacher Moira Egan and the English department to bring UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and young poet Ella Duffy to campus as Writers in Residence. Many of our students study the work of these two poets, and it was a unique experience for them to be able to meet and interact with such special guests. It certainly brought their studies to life. Carol Ann and Ella visited classes, spoke to the whole student body at Morning Meeting, and met with the Embrace Club, the school's student-led LGBTQ+ organization. During their poetry reading event in the final evening of their residence, the auditorium was packed with students, teachers, parents, and community members for what proved to be a very engaging reading of their works.





Also, in February 2020, Dr. Abby Jaques (Interdisciplinary Research Fellow at Stanford University's Center for Ethics in Society) took up the David N. Redden Lyceum Fellow in Residence. As a philosopher working on ethics and artificial intelligence, Dr. Jaques was the perfect visiting scholar for our 2019-20 school-wide theme, artificial intelligence. Dr. Jaques led workshops in the grade 9 Core classes and grade 11 TOK classes, met with the Biology 2 and 3 classes, and worked with the students in the iLab. She also met with all of our students for a Q&A session at Morning Meeting and held a public lecture for parents and the wider community on the final evening of her residency.



As classes went online again in early March 2020, we found many creative ways for our students to do co-curricular activities learning. For example, in the Sustainable Cultural Heritage unit for our City of Rome 1 classes, the students are tasked with researching lesser-known or forgotten Roman sites across Rome and making a video about their history. During lockdown, they had to stay close to home and find sites in their immediate neighborhood, which in some cases, have nothing of historical importance; however, being the creative, tenacious St. Stephen's students they are, they managed to produce informative and entertaining videos, including interviews with their neighbours and submitted proposals for repurposing dilapidated or underused buildings or sites to offer the local community something that they felt was missing. Among some of the more creative proposals was the suggestion to add a skateboard ramp next to a piazza where the fountain is used by skateboarders, thus causing damage to the monument. Another proposal was creating a farmers market next to the Ostia Castle in a disused parcel of land.



Earlier this year, we were fortunate to resume our Parent Tour program with small groups. Parent and alumni participants appreciated the opportunity to learn from our faculty about the two Jesuit churches Sant'Ignazio and il Gesù, the Keats and Shelley House, Campus Martius (Field of Mars), Fori Imperiali, Rome's ancient theatres, street art, and industrial heritage in Testaccio and Ostiense, the Banksy exhibition at the Chiosstro del Bramante and the Capitoline Hill. Many of the participants describe these outings with fellow community members as a beacon of hope in challenging times.

This academic year, our collaboration with the American University of Rome (AUR) expanded into an extraordinary partnership between the Lyceum and the archaeology and classics department at AUR: the Aventinus Minor Project (AMP). This partnership between St Stephen's, AUR and the Istituto Santa Margherita home for the elderly (the AMP site, right above the SSS sports courts) is designed as a community archaeology project for the benefit of all of our students, AUR undergraduates in archaeology and classics, people living on the Aventine (including the elderly at the Istituto Santa Margherita) and anyone who would like to be part of it (parents, alumni, etc.).

Exploring the Aventine Hill right next to St Stephen's, something that has not ever been attempted systematically, will engage students in classics, history, science, math, technology, art, and modern languages to gain critical knowledge of archaeology, including the methodology of excavating and archaeological drawing, hard sciences, including archaeobotany and other interdisciplinary fields such as zooarchaeology, 3D laser scanning, and printing, archival studies, record keeping, iconography, cartography, topography, and



photography. In short, it is a pathbreaking, state-of-the-art archaeological excavation.

The excitement generated by this project is clear, judging from the high number of participants in the Aventinus Minor Project summer course that was held online in July 2020 and the number of donors and volunteers supporting the project.

This spring, students in their City of Rome 1 classes were the first to participate, as they studied the history and archaeology of the Aventine Hill with an AUR intern who was involved in the first phase of the AMP, bibliographical and topographical research, last summer.

We are looking forward to the end of the pandemic when we will continue to expand all of the Lyceum program offerings and really kick the Aventinus Minor Project into high gear. In the meantime, I look forward to sharing with you again very soon.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

A presto!

Before you turn the page, the Lyceum is entirely donor-funded.

We are truly grateful to the Lyceum Founding Donors and all of our donors and volunteers for their continued generosity. To date, we've raised \$313,000 toward our goal of \$650,000 to endow the Lyceum Programs Fund permanently. To renew your support, make a new gift or participate in our community programs, please contact Allison Kemmis-Price at

allison.kemmis-price@ssssrome.it



Exploring the New City of Rome 2 Class

BY DR. REBECCA RAYNOR - ART HISTORY, DR. PAUL TREHERNE - HISTORY

“

BETWEEN 1400 AND 1700, ROME WAS REBORN AS A GLOBAL CITY, CAPITAL OF A GROWING WORLD 'EMPIRE,' SO TO SPEAK, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE ANTIQUITY. THE CITY TODAY OWES MUCH OF ITS HISTORICAL APPEAL, ITS MOST EYE-CATCHING ARTWORKS, AND MONUMENTS, TO THIS, THE EARLY MODERN ERA (C. 1400-1700 CE).

This year, Dr Rebecca Raynor and I have had the privilege of rolling out a brand new history course at St Stephen's. 'City of Rome 2' is conceived as the second part in a two-year sequence, from grades 9 to 10, covering the Ancient and Early Modern periods. It has replaced the old 'Roman Topography' and 'Med-Ren' classes familiar to St. Stephen's students for decades. This course, the fruit of years of planning by the Classics and History departments, gives St Stephen's students the unique opportunity of exploring their native or adopted city up close, first hand, and in a fresh perspective.

Through four units, each a single marking period long, we approach Ancient and Early Modern Rome in context, using the methods and concepts of Geography, Economics, History, and Art History. The units correspond to the four subjects students will select among for group 3 of the IB (note: we do not offer IB Geography at SSS, but Environmental Systems and Society). Students are assessed using standards-based criteria modeled on those used by the IB. Students engage in individual and collaborative learning activities, such as mapping, material culture analysis, source criticism, mock trials, and essay writing. Each marking period has one summative project, which students undertake in steps through formative work and feedback. The aim is to develop research skills, critical analysis, and argumentation from evidence, all invaluable to success in the IB.

The choice of Early Modern Rome is well suited to developing these skills because, quite simply, it is embarrassingly rich in sources. Our landmarks include the artistic monuments of the Renaissance and Baroque as well as the new scientific and geographical horizons that mark the advent of our modern world. We embark on a journey into that world through field trips that approach the city as our textbook and laboratory. The richness of Early Modern Rome is never an end in itself but a vehicle for acquiring new skills, knowledge, and understanding.

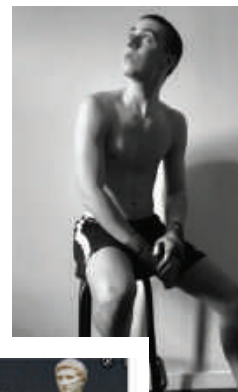
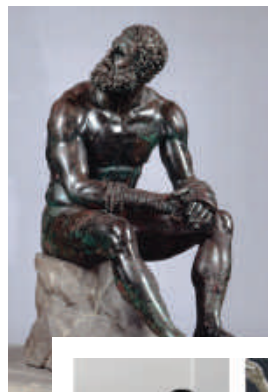
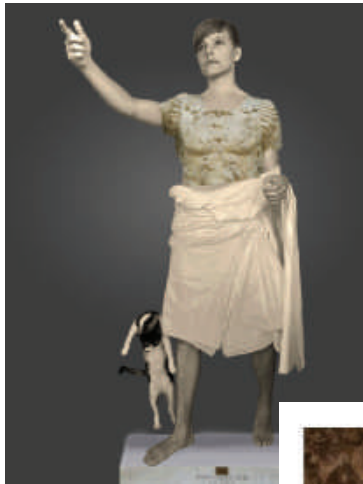
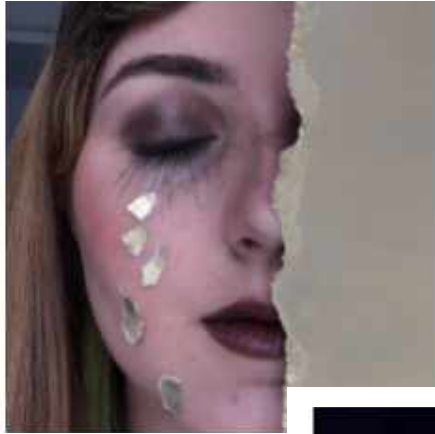
We also set out to approach the city and its wider history from a fresh perspective, or rather multiple perspectives, through the eyes of such figures as the sixteenth-century Muslim traveler Leo the African or the painter Artemisia Gentileschi; the seventeenth-century convert Queen Christina of Sweden or the mystic and holy woman Saint Teresa of Avila. Students develop a more nuanced and critical awareness of how the city, its history, and identity, have been shaped through an encounter with the non-Roman world by people of diverse backgrounds, continents, and religions. In this age, Romans also began to engage self-consciously with the many traces of the city's ancient past visible around them - drawing inspiration but also framing their experiences in dialogue with that past, with lasting implications for the city we live in today.

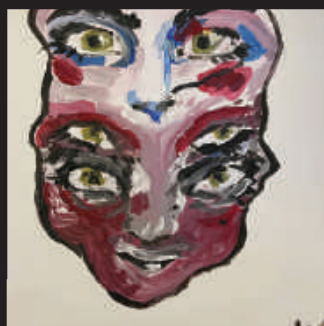
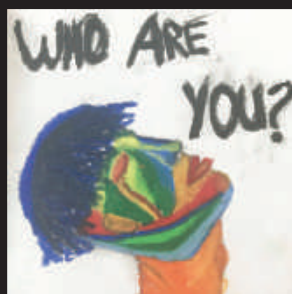


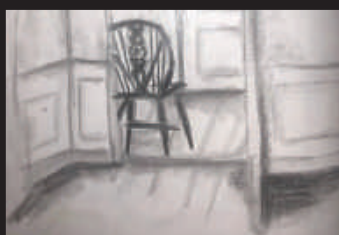
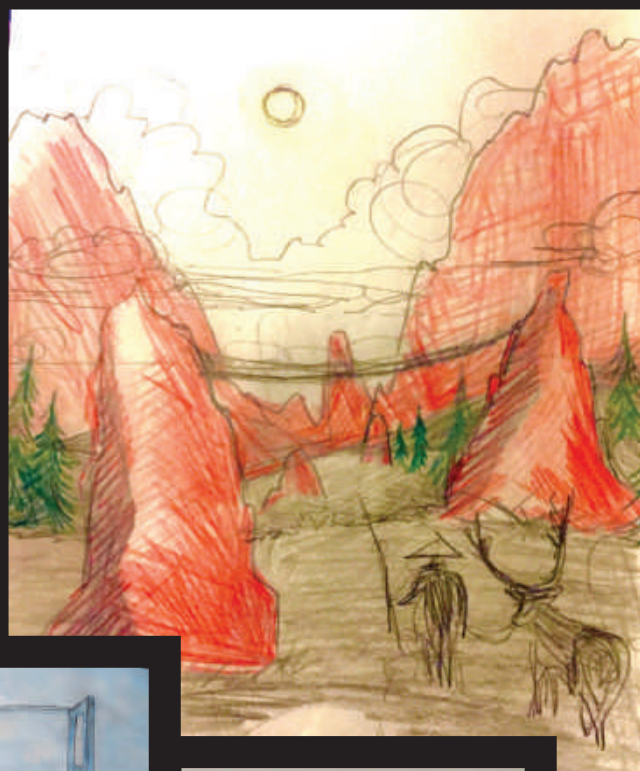
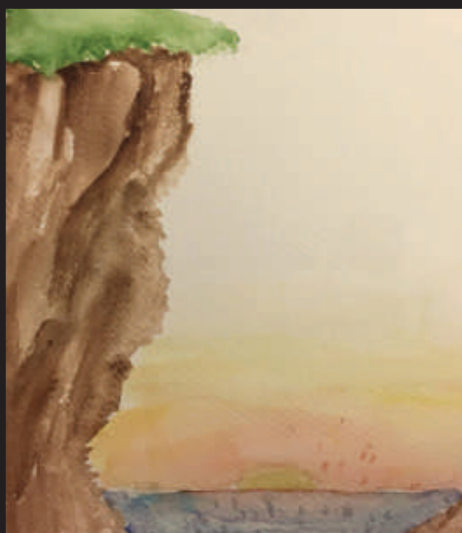
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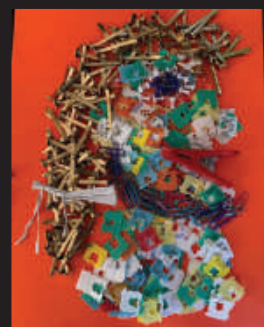
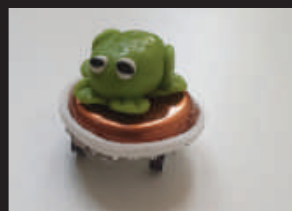
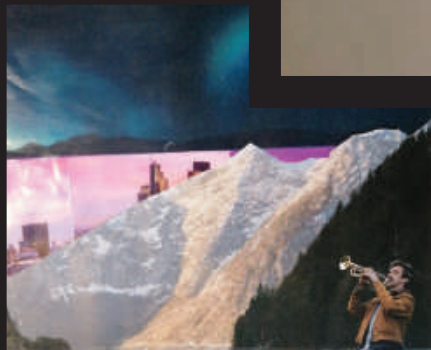
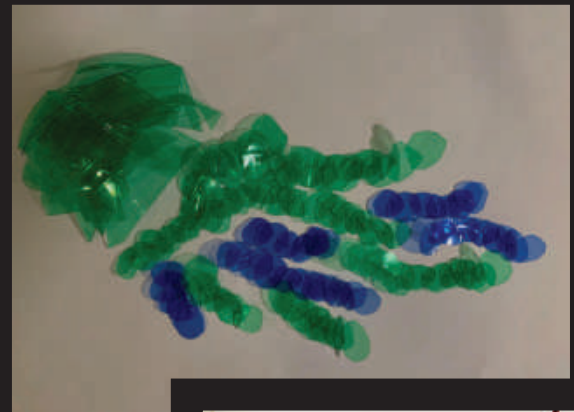
The Arts

This year our students have embraced the digital world, moving their drama and art shows online. Not merely adapting but transforming their artistic practice, discovering new ways to interpret and challenge the world around them, from recreating famous artistic masterpieces in their kitchens to building digital photography profiles around everyday objects found in their living rooms and outside their bedroom windows.

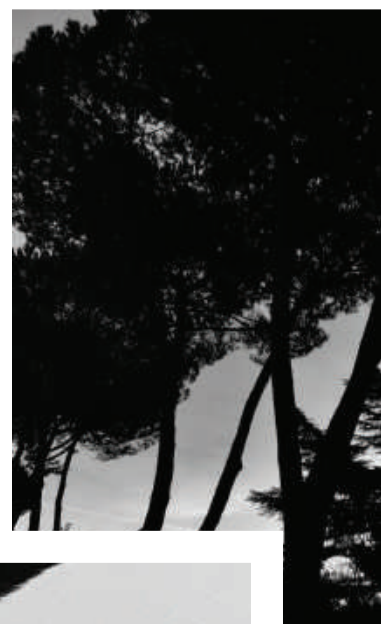
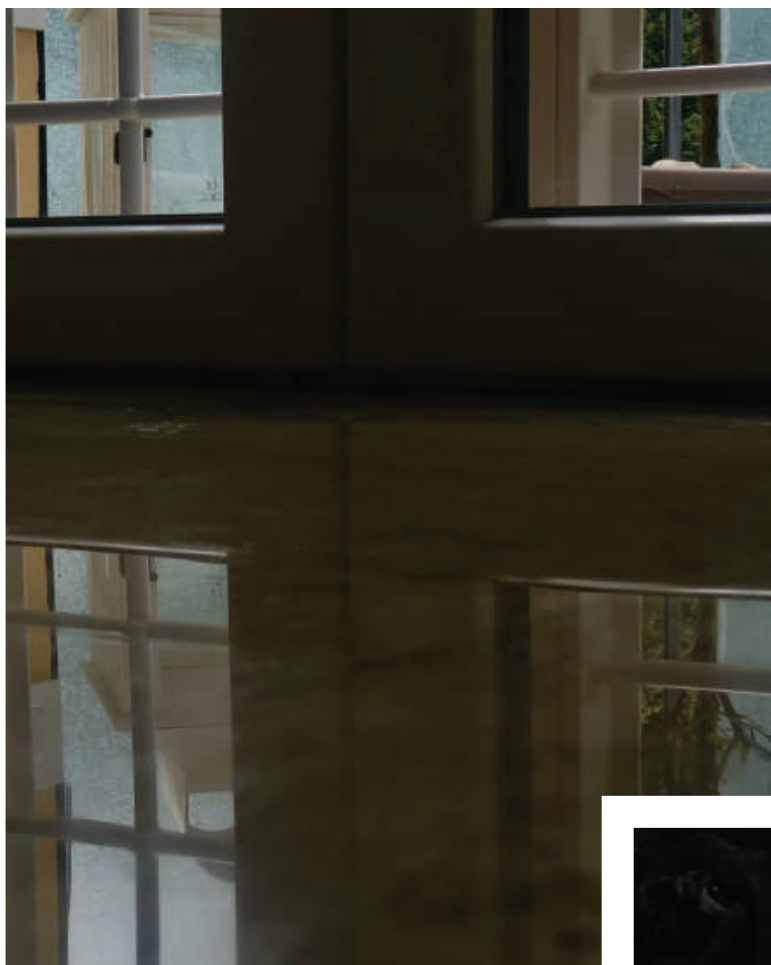


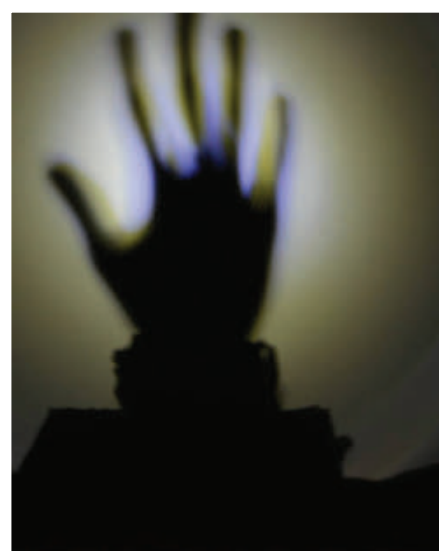
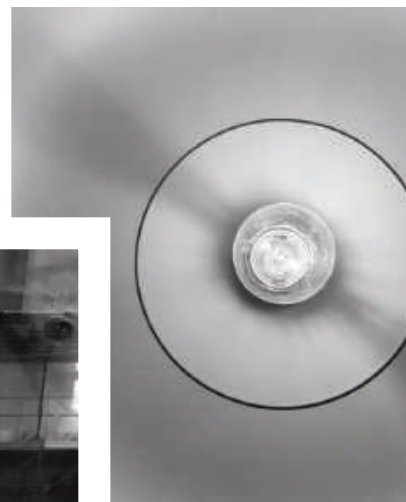
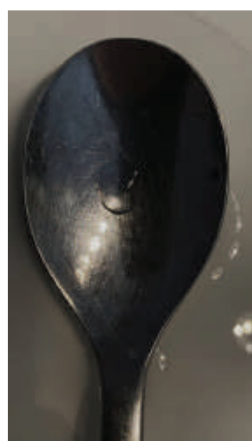














PART VI:

Alumni

Alumni Serve as Our Healthy Campus Team

BY ERIC MAYER - HEAD OF SCHOOL



With Italy's many COVID restrictions, we've needed additional staff to greet and temperature check arriving students, walk the campus for compliance, assist classes if the teacher is working remotely but the students are here, and various other activities to keep us safe. To our great fortune, four alumni came forward to help us for the year: Michael Alonzi (2013), Tatiana Lima (2015), David Rosales (2016), and Alessandro Cosmo (2017). We asked about the experience, and they had this to say...

DAVID

What's different being here now from when you were a student?

A lot has changed in SS since I left and for the better! Being on the 'other side' really puts things into perspective, especially as students and teachers form this tight-knit community. I definitely underestimated how much hard work goes on behind the scenes in order to ensure students have a profound, safe, and educational environment. Perhaps the biggest difference is the sense of accomplishment by giving back to this community that in turn gave me so much!

How would you describe the experience of trying to keep the campus safe?

The experience is challenging but very rewarding. What's most important to me in keeping the campus safe is transmitting a sense of integrity and respect in regards to other members of the community. We all have to do our part to ensure everyone is safe and the school can remain open. The notable level of maturity and respect in the student community is reflected by their altruism and mindfulness for every other member of the school.

What's it been like to call your former teachers by their first name?

Definitely weird. It has taken me a while to adjust and call my former teachers and staff by their first name!

Any other observations?

I would like to give a shout-out to all of the members of faculty and staff, for working tirelessly during these uncertain times!

ALESSANDRO

What's different being here now from when you were a student?

Well obviously when I was a student here, there was no concern about social distancing, masks, or hand sanitizer... but one of the first things I noticed was fashion changes, and I must admit I felt a bit outdated (I'm 21 years old...). The most popular shoes in school used to be Stan Smiths and Vans, but now I'm seeing many more Off Whites, Air Force 1s, and Jordans... Besides that, the renovated cortile and outdoor classroom are beautiful new additions to campus that uphold and add to SSS's style and atmosphere.

How would you describe the experience of trying to keep the campus safe?

Telling kids to maintain a social distance from each other and keeping their masks on is tough... because I can totally understand their frustration. By now, kids know the drill (with the occasional exception), but in enforcing the COVID regulations, you can't help but feel a bit like the bad guy. Of course, these rules are crucial and allow the students to actually be in school... but it is also tough to tell them that they can't play calcetto or sit in groups at lunch and that they must take exams with a mask on. My time as a student at SSS was very different, and while these kids are lucky enough to be in this great school, what is supposed to be a "spensierato" time in your life has been drastically changed.

What's it been like to call your former teachers by their first name?

Still working on it... in my mind, Ms. El-Taha's full name is Ms. El-Taha El-Taha, and Mr. Mayer's is Mr. Mayer Mayer ... but I'll get there.

Any other observations?

This pandemic is really tough on both students and teachers... I see both sides...but I think the efforts that teachers have made in "going online" are a big deal. Teaching online is incredibly difficult. Keeping a class engaged is one thing, but doing it through a screen is even tougher! We are getting through this, and I really do feel that SSS's teachers' and administrators' 'can-do' attitude is a huge part of what will get us through this.

MICHAEL

What's different being here now from when you were a student?

St. Stephens has changed a lot yet at the same time remains very familiar. Back when I was a student, I was oblivious to all the work that goes into making sure the school functions as best it can. Being on the other side has allowed me to develop an appreciation of the immense efforts the staff and faculty make in ensuring students have an enjoyable but safe space to grow and develop the person they want to be. The relevant introduction of subjects like robotics and AI shows how SSS has adapted to the times to continuously best place students in their future studies and careers. I empathize with the students and how they have and are having to cope with all the changes to day-to-day life brought about by COVID-19. However, I praise their resilience in adapting as best they can and making the most of their time here.

How would you describe the experience of trying to keep the campus safe?

Initially, it was hard work, as changing a culture and habits tends to necessitate persistence and

perseverance. What the Healthy Happy Campus team has tried to do is encourage safe practices both inside and outside of the school. We don't want to reprimand anyone; we're just doing our best to keep everyone and their families safe and to help keep the school open. Most kids have adapted well, and continuously adhere to the guidelines, and for that, I want to take this opportunity to commend them.

What's it been like to call your former teachers by their first name?

It definitely took some getting used to!

Oftentimes I instinctively call them by the names I did back when I was a student and have to catch myself. That being said, it has been great to get to know the faculty on a more personal level.

TATIANA

What's different being here now from when you were a student?

It's interesting to see the backbone of the school - how things work from behind the scenes. As a student, I had an idea of how things worked through speaking to staff but it was 10% of what really happens in the background. As a student, the only thing you need to worry about is yourself and going to class. Coming back as an employee during a pandemic is definitely interesting; there's a lot of crisis management. I'm glad to have been able to learn from those around me how to be good on my feet! There's a lot more that happens than I had imagined, so grateful for the amazing people that work here.

How would you describe the experience of trying to keep the campus safe?

Fascinating, to say the least. Some parts can be very frustrating - it's not exactly nice to be the person on campus that is always telling people off. We are the annoying people on campus, and I understand the sentiment students can have towards us. What is very gratifying, though, is seeing the improvement of the students since we have started doing the work. In the beginning, we had to be very demanding to all of them about distancing, masks, and cafeteria seating, but now it has gotten much better! Our presence now leads to the students checking whether they are respecting the rules or not, and that makes me very happy and proud.

What's it been like to call your former teachers by their first name?

Very weird! Thankfully it's been quite a few years since I left, and I have seen some teachers throughout that time. Still, the adaptation process is long and strange!! I am still working on it, as I have to actively try to call them by their first name, whereas their last name just falls off the tongue. I'm getting there!

THE ST. STEPHEN'S HEALTHY CAMPUS TEAM



Nicola Formichetti '96

FASHION DESIGNER / STYLIST / CREATIVE DIRECTOR



Natalie: Where are you from, and what brought you to Rome?

Nicola: I am Italian-Japanese. I was born in Japan and brought up between Japan and Italy. I attended elementary school in Japan, and then my parents decided that my brother and I should go to Italy for high school, so I spent four years in Rome, boarding, and they were the best years of my life.

Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

I had an amazing time. It was like a dream scenario: it was my first time being away from home, being a boarder, and I felt independent, but I also had my friends around me all the time; it was just wonderful. Also, in the middle of Rome, the school's location amongst history, art, and architecture was incredible. [St. Stephen's] is where I learned my skills, where I discovered my love of art, music, and fashion. With the school, I visited churches, and I discovered Caravaggio; we would go to outdoor concerts at Circo Massimo. On the weekends, my favorite place to be was the Porta Portese flea market. I didn't have any money, so I would go to those super cheap vintage clothing [stands] and repurpose and style what I found, [mostly] vintage clothes mixed with random stuff; basically, what I do today is what I was doing on the weekend in Rome in the flea market.

I was a good student. I was kind of doing everything. Every day after school, I played the piano in the chapel; sometimes, I would play the piano for the theater or the chorus. I was also on the running team; we would run at Circo Massimo, [beneath] the Foro Romano, which was insane! I would say that I was an all-around good student, and then I made trouble on the weekends.

After Rome, what came next?

I had no idea what I wanted to do; I was just living in the moment. My passions were art, fashion, and music. When you're applying to [schools], you have to say what you want to be in the future, and I remember thinking, "I have no idea, can I just stay here forever?" I liked traveling, so I put "hotel management" and other just random stuff. The only thing I knew was that I loved reading magazines. In Rome, there were a few places where you could buy international fashion and music magazines like The Face, I.D., and Dazed + Confused, and that was my bible. I used to read those magazines and then buy clothes in Porta Portese to copy the looks from the magazines. [I decided that] the music and fashion scene in London looked appealing to me, so I found a school in London and I thought, okay, I'm going to pretend to study architecture. I just wanted to be in London; it didn't matter how I got there.

You began your career in fashion as an editor and creative director at various magazines, including V Magazine, Vogue Hommes Japan, Dazed + Confused Another Magazine, and FREE Magazine; how did your experiences as a creative director for different magazines prepare you to become the artistic director of Diesel and, currently, the Creative Fashion Director of Uniqlo?

I became a creative director already in high school. The school told me to be good at everything all around and to trust my instincts, to get inspired by the people around me and the great thing about St. Stephen's was that I was around people from all over the world: that was so stimulating. The art, the music, it was all so exciting. In Rome, I learned how to trust my instincts, so when I moved to London, it didn't matter what I did. I went with the flow, I met people, one thing led to another, I started working in a store in London, and there were many people there from Dazed + Confused magazine so I went to Dazed and I started learning about magazines, photoshoots, and styling--it was like going to school in a way. Still today, I am a student, I'm interested in everything. So, I started as an intern at Dazed; I became a fashion editor, then fashion director, and, seven or eight years later, I was the creative director of the whole magazine. While I was doing that in London, I also started doing Vogue Hommes Japan, and then, ten years later, decided to move from London to New York, where I started doing V Magazine and other magazines. While I was doing magazines, I was offered design work. I was already consulting with high fashion and streetwear brands in Italy. Then a company called Mugler (the Thierry Mugler company) approached me to become the creative director in Paris because of the work I had done in magazines and with [Lady] Gaga, and that led to [becoming the Artistic Director at] Diesel, and then I did Uniqlo. I love doing different things within the fashion and music and entertainment world, so anything goes, really; I always try to make

myself a student of life. That's the key. I've been in the business for twenty years now, so I could say that I know everything, but no, you can always learn new things and try to do better and better.

In other interviews, you have explained that social media and sites such as Tumblr are frequent sources of inspiration for you. What role does technology currently play in your creative process?

I'm not afraid to try new things and incorporate them into my work. I've always done that, even in the MySpace Era. I remember doing casting on MySpace when I was working with Alexander McQueen, and we wanted to cast "cool kids," and I said, "let's go to MySpace, find a cool band, and find the followers." Today that feels so normal, but at that time, no one did that. For me, technology has always been very useful. So I did casting on MySpace, and then Facebook came along, and then Tumblr was an incredible source of inspiration. Social media completely opened up my possibilities of meeting people and collaborating, and I still use it. Now [I use] Instagram and TikTok. There's always a diss at the beginning from the industry. Today it's like, of course, you need to work with TikTokers, but there's been a bit of elitism in the industry. They try not to open the door to everybody. I'm always the punk who says, "no, let's work with the TikTokers, let's work with the Instagrammers," there was a time when no one

wanted to touch influencers. When I did my first Mugler show, we opened up backstage with cameras everywhere, we worked with Twitter, and at that time, people were like, “why are you doing that? Why are you opening up your backstage, showing people?” It feels normal today, but at that time, it wasn’t. For me, social media [has always been] a tool to make [my work] more exciting and approachable. I have a love and hate relationship with it, of course, because sometimes it controls you. The Instagram feed is pretty amazing; when I am researching particular things, everything comes up because the algorithm knows what I like. [That being said,] I don’t forget to go off-grid [sometimes] because that time is just as necessary: reading a book, sketching, writing, copying magazines, researching, ripping things up, putting them on the wall, sometimes, for me, that’s more powerful because sometimes you make beautiful mistakes where I put two images together, and it creates a sparkle in my brain that can help me come up with other ideas. When you do that digitally, it’s useful and easy, but it’s harder to create emotions. Social media is great, but the real world is also important. You have to research to know what’s around and what’s happening in the world, but you have to have your own voice. You have to make your own decisions to create [new] things, and that’s why I need my offline time: for meditation, for chilling, for dreaming, for daydreaming, reading books, writing, all of it.

You have your own label, Nicopanda, a gender-neutral high concept streetwear brand; you are currently the Fashion Director for Lady Gaga, a Creative Consultant for Haus of Gaga/Haus Labs, and the Creative Fashion, Director for Uniqlo. How do you balance all these roles? Also, what is the difference between being a fashion designer and a creative director?

I treat it all the same. I always try to put everything into what I do; I’ll do anything creative or fashion-related if I like the project. Even with a title like “fashion designer,” you could say that fashion designers need to be able to sew and draw. And yet today, that’s changing too because unless you’re doing insane couture pattern cutting and things like that, a fashion designer is almost a creative director, its someone who can step back, look at the overall vision, and delegate and, for me, that’s the same when I do a magazine as it is when I’m working with Gaga. For me, it’s about the overall image and visuals, and that’s true if I’m working on a music video or the red carpet, or a photoshoot. I wish there were a name for it--the closest is “creative director.” I always want to try new things; you can throw anything at me, and I’ll try to make it work. It’s like being in school; you just go with it, there are things you like and things you don’t, but you don’t know until you try, so I go with the flow; I try everything.

Winston Churchill is credited with saying, “never let a good crisis go to waste.” How do you see or how would you like to see the fashion world evolving after the pandemic?

It kind of had to happen. The pandemic was awful, and we moaned a little bit [at the beginning], but then we were like, “OK, what are we gonna do now?” [This experience] made me realize that I only want to do things that I love doing. You step back; you see the entire world and your existence, and you have a lot of time to think about stuff when you’re alone at home, and this whole thing made me think, I don’t want to waste time anymore, I want to do purely things that I love that feel good for me. I [actually] started doing that just before the pandemic because, a couple of years earlier, I was going crazy; I was traveling so much to Italy, Japan, London, New York, back to back, constantly traveling, and I did that for ten years; I was kind of burned out, and in the end, I was like, what am I doing? I was still doing stuff that I loved, but I had to keep up and do better, and I was thinking too much about making money. I lost the point of the whole thing: I am alive. In a way, the pandemic made me rethink everything.

Two months before the pandemic started, I decided to move to L.A. because I wanted to be a bit more chill, a bit farther away from everything, and just take it a little slower, only do projects that I love doing and that are good for my soul. I feel like that is [also] how the fashion industry is going to evolve. What are we doing fashion for? I am all for making new and incredible things, but to make things for the sake of making things, just to make money? I think that’s going to disappear. It’s better to have fewer things that are good, [that share] important messages or add something new and thought-

provoking rather than just making stuff for the sake of it. I [also] love the idea of repurposing and restyling, which I've always loved but even more so today. Why can't we take old things and reimagine them, make them new? I think there will be more and more things like that. In a way, it was great this happened to shake things up; it was a detox. I think the same goes with every industry; it had to happen because we were just going crazy before: more and more and more, product, product, product, content, content, content, and it was just insane so, in a way, this crisis made us realize, okay, let's calm down. I'm not saying "be boring"; we can still be exciting and innovative while producing fewer things.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far, either personally or professionally?

I can very truthfully say that I love what I'm doing, and I have no regrets; I want to keep doing what I am doing and make it better. Professionally, I don't know; I've won awards; I created the meat dress [for Lady Gaga for the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards], which was insane [because] overnight, something that I created became global news. It was strange, but I suppose you can call it an achievement. For me, I always try to make things better and better; probably, on my last day on earth, I will still be making new things. Never look back.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

At the end of the day, it needs to be fun for me, and it needs to give joy to me and others; it's about love so when I can feel that, that brings me joy, and now, when I don't, I just walk away from it. It's also important to surround yourself with people you love and just have fun, be positive, and enjoy what you're doing. It's very simple.

Has it been a straight path for you, or do you feel you have been tested along the way to achieving your goals? Can you talk about what some of those challenges have been and how you've surmounted them?

I believe that everything happens for a reason; everything is a test to make you better, good things and bad things, especially the bad things. My path has been zig-zag, backward, flip, backward, flip, front, and back. It was never ever a straight path. The only straight path is probably my vision; I think that needs to be very straight. Whatever you want to do, your goal needs to be very clear, not what you're actually doing but the feel of it; [for example,] "I want to create things that I love" or "I want to shift the world," that needs to be clear and then forget about it, go with the flow, go anywhere, because if you have your vision--the goal--straight then everything else is just its own way of getting there, it's, [all] just mistakes and achievements. I think I always knew this, but when I started working, every time something bad happened, I used to get [discouraged], and now I look at the bad things and ask, "what am I supposed to learn?" If you shift your mentality, everything is like a game, and it's fun: "OK, something crazy happened, but it's there for me to learn something from it."

Professionally, my work is all about collaboration, and I don't always get the same responses from others, but the only thing you can do is try your best and surround yourself with people that are in tune with you. Today there's the whole social media "cancel culture," negative comments, and even if you try not to look at comments or people's opinions, that's challenging even for me today because you're doing your best. You want everyone to appreciate it, but that's impossible. I have learned not to care too much about what other people think because, in the

end, you need to be happy-- there are always different opinions, and people can take things in different ways. Listen to people you trust and surround yourself with good people.

Do you have any advice that you would like to share with the next generation of St. Stephen's graduates?

I had no idea what I wanted to do; I liked everything. Just enjoy it; you have learned so much from school, remember where you're coming from, try not to lose yourself and try not to please other people, even your parents; I mean, "thank you," but at the end of the day, it's your life.

If you feel blocked and you have no idea what you want to do, maybe it's time to daydream, have time for yourself, do sports, walk around, read manga, create "me time." College seems so important when you're a senior, but it's just a stepping stone to go somewhere else; it's great for meeting people and learning [new] things, but it's not all about where you go to college, that's just to please whoever so, I know it's difficult but try to go inside and ask, "what do I really want to do? What feels good? Do I want to stay in Italy? Where in the U.S. or Europe or Asia do I want to go?" Or, if you're burned out-- which many people are in senior year--just go traveling, right now that is more difficult but try to be yourself because it only gets better, really, you will open up your world and make mistakes; make mistakes all the time because that's how you learn: I make mistakes constantly, and I am pretty successful so you can make mistakes and still do well. You can learn to make mistakes with style.

More

You can learn more about Nicola and his work by visiting his website: [Studio Formichetti](https://www.studioformichetti.com).

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A V E N U E
O F T H E
A M E R I C A S

THE
WALL
STREET
JOURNAL

Margherita Stancati '03

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORTER



Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

I had a great time at St. Stephen's; it was probably one of the most formative experiences of my life, and that set me on the path to do what I am doing today. [St. Stephen's] played a key role in shaping my interest in the world and my curiosity both in terms of my studies but also my professional career. The key was the teachers who really inspired the students, like Mr. Ullman, who shaped multiple generations of St. Stephen's students and made us interested in, for example, the Middle East, and that's one of the things I focused on in my life and career. I think that [interest] stems from the Islamic studies [course] we had with him. We also went on a field trip to Istanbul, which was very memorable; others went on a trip to Syria, all things that were possible when I was a student but that are now hard to imagine. And of course, the students: it was great to grow up with such a diverse group of people. I feel incredibly privileged for getting to spend four years at St. Stephen's.

After you graduated from St. Stephen's in 2003, what came next?

I graduated, and I went to Oxford in September, I did a degree in history and politics, and then I stayed on for an MPhil, which is between a master's and a Ph.D., in middle eastern studies. I focused on Iran at the time. Then I took a year off and spent much of that time in Iran. I started working for The Wall Street Journal in Rome for a year in 2009 as the news assistant of the correspondent in Rome. Before then, I had limited experience in journalism; I was still trying to figure out what I wanted to do; I was exploring different career interests.

In October 2010, I moved to New Delhi with The Wall Street Journal. I was mainly in charge of our online blog in India; I was both writing and editing for the blog. I did that until early 2013. Then I became a correspondent in Afghanistan. I was in Kabul from the beginning of 2013 to the end of 2015, and that was probably one of the most defining experiences of my career so far because it was so intense but also rewarding. In Kabul, there is no separation between work and life. You literally live in the office. I worked with two colleagues from the international staff and two Afghan reporters. Our social life and our work life were one and the same thing. Life in Kabul became increasingly dangerous while I was there, but it was also incredibly inspiring to meet and report on people who wanted a better future for themselves and their country. I obviously covered the ongoing war, as well as early attempts to start the peace process and also the social repercussions of a conflict that has been going on for decades. I did a lot of work on women and gender inequality in Afghanistan, and on the very slow progress

being made in the years since the US intervention. I wrote about Afghan widows and Afghanistan's first female pilot, a very inspiring story that turned dark because she was receiving death threats from members of her extended family who were unhappy with her career choice. Afghanistan was and still is a place where foreign powers vie for influence and that extremists can exploit - and that's partly what continues to make it so interesting and relevant globally.

In late 2015 I moved to the Middle East, where I mostly covered Saudi Arabia; I was based initially in Dubai and then in Beirut, but I also rented a room in Riyadh. At that time, Saudi Arabia was going through a period of profound change, both political and social. The rise of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was key to that change. He pushed social reform - for instance by lifting the ban on women driving - but also cracked down on real or perceived dissent. Many female activists who had campaigned for the right to drive were among those arrested. Just as he was allowing women to drive, he didn't want the women who pushed for that right to speak about it. My time covering Saudi Arabia also coincided with the killing of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi [in 2018], who became a symbol of the Saudi government's repression of dissent.

While I mostly covered Saudi Arabia, I occasionally reported from other countries in the Middle East. I had a few memorable trips to Iraq, including during the liberation of the city of Mosul from the Islamic State. I remember the busloads of women coming out of Mosul during the military offensive wearing the full ISIS abaya - with double face veils and black gloves - and discarding their black gowns as soon as they stepped off the

bus. They accumulated in a big black pile outside the camp for displaced people. I was so touched I actually picked up a couple of veils and gloves to remind myself of what they went through and how liberating it must have been for them.

I moved back to Italy in late 2018, a couple of months before my son was born. I wanted to have the baby here.

Has it been a straight path for you, or do you feel you have been tested along the way to achieving the goals you've set for yourself?

It's a good question. I never knew what was going to happen. After I graduated from university, there was this great sense of uncertainty. I think almost everyone has that after university. Up to that point, everything is a straight path, but very little prepares you for what happens next. A lot of it is down to luck. But it's also about raising your hand at the right moment and not being afraid to pursue what you think you would enjoy. I never assumed a career in journalism was something I could actually do. I tried to make the most of the opportunity. After I spent a year in Rome at The Wall Street Journal, essentially as an intern, I was lucky enough to find a job for the Journal in India. I've been blessed to have this career path, but in a sector like journalism, you never really know what's going to happen next, and that's part of what makes it great.

One big challenge has been that I work in some of the toughest countries in the world to be a woman, such as Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. That means you have to work harder to be taken seriously. Although not as hard as local women, since Western women are sometimes treated as honorary men. And being a woman has the advantage of being able to access a world that is off-limits to men: the world of women.

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ONE BIG CHALLENGE HAS BEEN THAT I WORK IN SOME OF THE TOUGHEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD TO BE A WOMAN, SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND AFGHANISTAN. THAT MEANS YOU HAVE TO WORK HARDER TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.



You have written several articles for The Wall Street Journal on how COVID-19 is changing the way we work, from Italian women dropping out of the workforce to the phenomenon of foreigners moving to Italy to work here remotely. Do you think COVID will have a lasting impact on the way we work?

I think the pandemic will have a long-lasting impact in ways we can't predict. But I think one of those impacts will be on the way we work. For instance, I think there will be more flexibility in terms of where we work. There are benefits to being in an office, and I think people will go back, but there will be more flexibility in general; lots of jobs we thought had to be done in person are now being done remotely.

The pandemic is also an opportunity to press the reset button. It has made some flaws that were already there more obvious. One example is women dropping out of the workforce during the pandemic. Women in Italy are often on temporary contracts, meaning they don't have the same kind of stability and protection that people on full-time contracts have. With schools intermittently closed, the burden of childcare has fallen much more on women than on men. There aren't enough affordable nurseries in Italy to allow working moms to continue working.

I hope the pandemic will be an opportunity to fix some of these structural flaws. A big priority should be to make Italy an attractive place for young people not simply by creating jobs but also by making the country more dynamic. Young Italians shouldn't be forced to leave their country to have a fulfilling career.

Any advice to graduates of St Stephen's, those who will be graduating this year, facing this climate of uncertainty that you've been describing in Europe and Italy in general?

My advice is to do what you like to do, don't assume that because a particular career path seems out of reach that you can't do it. If you enjoy something, you are likely to be good at it, too. Don't be scared to raise your hand and to ask people for advice. For potential future journalists, curiosity and empathy are important. It also helps to be a little subversive - don't be shy to question those in positions of authority. That's something I've learned on the job, and that didn't entirely come naturally: I was quite shy as a child.

Thank you so much for speaking with me today; this has been fascinating.

Thank you.

A portrait of Galen Druke, a man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light blue button-down shirt. He is standing against a dark background with a subtle spotlight effect on his head and shoulders. His hands are clasped in front of him.

Galen Druke '08

HOST AND PRODUCER AT *FIVETHIRTYEIGHT*

Where are you from, and what brought you to Rome?

I am from different places in New York state; I was born in the city, grew up in the suburbs, and later moved to a rural part of Upstate New York. What brought me to Rome is a bit of an odd story. I found the school on Google. I was an imaginative child, and my dad and stepmother were getting a divorce, and I wanted to escape, so my imagination led me to search for boarding schools in all different kinds of places. I was 16, but my dad told me if you apply and visit, and do it all on your own and prove to us that you're grown up enough to do this, then you can do it. I visited St. Stephen's by myself, I got in, decided to go, and it was one of the best decisions of my life.

Why was it one of the best decisions?

Coming from a rural town in Upstate New York, attending St. Stephen's allowed me to grow up, have different experiences, and meet all kinds of people before going to college. Because of St. Stephen's, the process of growing into myself and feeling more confident, more like an adult, had already begun before I got to college. For most people, freshman year is a time of experimentation and trying new things, trying to figure out who you are when you are no longer tethered to your parents, and I felt like I had already started that process.

What are some of your fondest memories of being at St. Stephen's?

There are a lot of memories; I loved my time at St. Stephen's. First and foremost: the community feels like a family; people are friends across all grades; as a senior, some of my best friends were sophomores, and they are still my close friends

today. It's a place that immediately felt like home even though I'm not Italian, had never lived in boarding, had never even attended a private school, [but] it felt comfortable right away.

For spring trips, I went to Jordan, a trip led by Lesley Murphy, my favorite teacher. We slept in the Wadi Rum desert, gazed at the stars, and danced to Jordanian music; it was a cool experience.

To my point about Lesley Murphy being my favorite teacher, I had her as an English teacher, and that was my favorite class; she was one of the first people in my life who said you're a good writer and you should pursue this--which is adjacent to what I ended up doing in my life. Having somebody tell you that and have confidence in you while you're doing school work, that is meaningful and [created] this incredible relationship which meant a lot to me. [Lesley] encouraged everyone to have different perspectives, take risks in their writing and do unique writing projects. And it goes back to having confidence in myself by the time I started college.

After St. Stephen's, what came next?

I went to Johns Hopkins University for undergrad. I was interested in international studies--which was part of the reason I went to Rome in the first place--, and that continued to be the case throughout college. I majored in international studies, and I ended up double majoring in Italian studies. I returned to Rome the first two summers of college; the first summer, I did an internship at the World Food Program, and the second summer, I studied at La Sapienza. Both summers, I stayed with former St. Stephen's students. So, although I left Rome, St. Stephen's continued to have an impact on my studies and my friendships (and it still does

to this day). I started off wanting to be a diplomat and ultimately decided that was not for me, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. So I iterated, tried different things, thought of pursuing academia, and finally ended up interning for the local NPR affiliate in Baltimore. I liked it enough to decide to try it.

So, did you continue at NPR after that first internship?

Not exactly. I didn't have a full-time job for almost a year after I graduated. I decided that I wanted to be a journalist in 2012, and that was a difficult market to break into; it still is, particularly in the audio world. In 2012, podcasts had not [yet] taken off, and public radio and NPR specifically were historically places where you have to wait forever to get the job you want because there are so few jobs and so many people trying to do them.

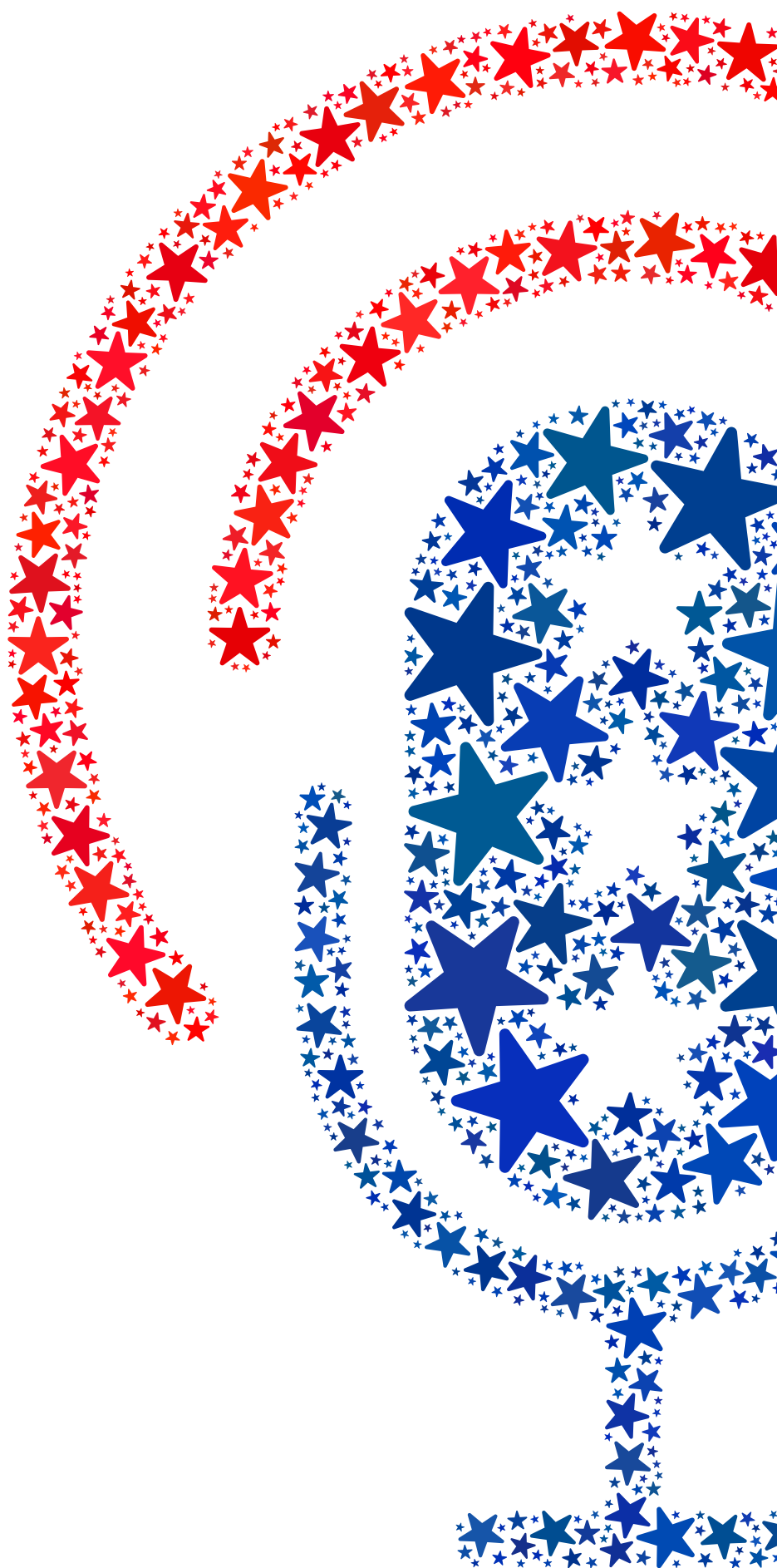
I moved back to New York City without a job. I moved in with the parent of one of my classmates from St. Stephen's, an empty nester who told me when you graduate from college, if you don't have a job lined up, come and stay with me and you can figure it out here in New York City, it's the best place to discover how to chart your life forward. I ended up interning and freelancing at WNYC, the NPR affiliate, and applying to probably hundreds of jobs and, most of the time, failing. One day, my boss's boss at WNYC said to me, if you stay in New York, you're going to end up fetching coffee and being frustrated with your lack of upward mobility for a long time. You should leave New York and try to work at an NPR affiliate elsewhere. So I started applying to different public radio gigs all over the country, and I ended up moving to Wisconsin, where I had been hired to create a statewide news magazine program. I was 22, and I was excited to have

a job but hesitant about moving to a place where I knew no one. It worked out. I spent two and a half years there, and I learned a lot. Honestly, spending a lot of time on the East Coast, it's good to get away and experience the politics of other states, particularly a swing state whose state-level political conflicts have, in many ways, become national conflicts. There's a lot to Wisconsin, it's a beautiful place with friendly people and good food, but after two and a half years, I decided that I wanted something different, and so, again, I took a risk, quit my job, and moved back to New York without a job.

And then what happened?

While I was in Wisconsin, *This American Life* had published *Serial*, making the whole podcasting and audio industry explode. There were suddenly more people making audio than just the public radio stations, and there were many more opportunities. I also had a lot more experience because I had spent two and a half years making audio in Wisconsin, so I had a lot more success freelancing when I moved back to New York after being in Wisconsin than before I had left. My boss's boss was right. I reported on all kinds of things, I even did a series on artists trying to make it in New York City, I did some campaign reporting, and ultimately started freelancing at *FiveThirtyEight*, which was launching a politics podcast. That is what got me on the path to what is now my job, hosting [and producing] the *FiveThirtyEight* politics podcast and covering national elections.

So, I listen to a lot of podcasts, including *FiveThirtyEight*. You interview a lot of politicians for your show, and you're quite a direct interviewer. I wonder, are there any questions you find hard to ask?





By nature, I am a peacemaker. I am a middle child, and, in many ways, when I was younger, before I went to St. Stephen's, I was a naturally shy person. If you want anyone to bring you out of your shell, ask Italians. My time at St. Stephen's went a long way in teaching me how to be more confrontational.

It can feel awkward, but it's our job in journalism to be confrontational and hold people accountable and ask difficult questions.

Politicians are usually bad interviews; they stick to talking points that are well-rehearsed and somewhat empty; if you want to have a meaningful conversation with a politician, you have to get them off their talking points and, often, the only way you can do that is by asking questions they're not expecting: blunt questions, diving straight into the conflict of the day even if it can sometimes be uncomfortable, you have to embrace that as a journalist because that's your job. And, eventually, you get used to the adrenaline, and it can be fun. As journalists, we work for the companies we work for, but we also play a broader role in society. There's a reason we're protected under the First Amendment; we have a duty to our fellow citizens to get answers for them and hold public officials accountable. If it weren't uncomfortable, I wouldn't be doing my job.

You've talked on the podcast recently about the danger of polarization in the U.S. Congress and the problem of "cult of personality politics;" in your opinion, are these two phenomena linked?

I think they can be, but a cult of personality can exist without severe partisanship: think of Reagan and JFK; they relied on a politics that was very much built on their personalities, during a less polarized period in the U.S. If you form a cult of personality around a deeply polarizing person, the result can be increased polarization, and that's what we've seen in America, and that's what we saw with Trump. I think that, in many ways, symbols and personalities have become important determinations of voting behavior. [However], you can't solve political issues through force of personality alone. Our American system--both our presidential system and our media ecosystem--is set up in such a way that it creates an environment where the way you win elections is, in many ways, by creating a cult of personality. This happened with Obama. Biden is an exception, but there was so much antipathy for Trump that Biden didn't need the cult of personality. In a parliamentary system, the leader of a party within a parliament is the person who becomes the Prime Minister. The entire country does not vote for one person who becomes a vessel for everyone's hopes and dreams. We are uniquely set up

to create a politics that is based on personality cults. That can be dangerous. At the same time, we have lots of examples throughout history of people being able to do good through the force of their personality, think of people like Nelson Mandela or Gandhi, a lot of our heroes. If people believe in you because of your charisma and how you're able to inspire them, you can do good things (and can also do terrible things, of course).

What do you consider your greatest achievement or one of your most significant accomplishments?

First and foremost, the relationships that I have in my life. I've worked hard, I'm an ambitious person, and throughout my 20s, I worked to get a foothold in a career that I found exciting and challenging. I've found it rewarding to make a place for myself in this industry, but, at the same time, no job is ever going to console you when you're down; your job's not going to go out to dinner with you or go to your birthday party or give you the feeling of belonging and community that you get from the relationships that you build along the way. So, first and foremost, having a lot of close friendships, many from my time at St. Stephen's, from college, and from the journalism industry itself, is the most fulfilling part of my life and maybe even my most significant achievement.



When it comes to my work in journalism, hosting the *FiveThirtyEight* politics podcast during a tough 2020 election and being honest and clear-eyed about the challenges we were facing as a nation and the uncertainties of the election was an achievement. During election week, I slept maybe 15 hours over five days. I was delirious by the end, but getting through the 2020 election feels like an achievement.

I am also proud of the long-form work I have done and my work in narrative journalism, and the series I have worked on. One of my focuses has been democratic structures and how systems shape outcomes in American politics. Two series in particular that I worked on were one on gerrymandering and another on how we set up our primary system in America; both of those can lead to undemocratic and dissatisfying outcomes. Understanding how our systems shape our politics is important to me.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

I like learning new things and going out into the world and talking to all kinds of people and getting all different perspectives, especially from regular people, not just politicians. I enjoy meeting people where they are and understanding their experiences, their understanding of American politics, their wishes, their fears,

and their thoughts. As a journalist, you get to meet and interact with people that you might not ever meet in the normal course of your life, and that's a privilege.

Also, I love learning new things. I loved school. Journalism as a career is, in some ways, the closest you can get to the work that you do in college other than being an academic. [In journalism], you are faced with a set of questions, uncertainties, or challenges. You get to go out into the world and find answers, talk to people and read everything from academic journals to chatrooms to understand the world and then synthesize that information so that your audience can have a better understanding of the world.

What are some of the most important lessons from your professional experience that you would like to share with the next generation of St. Stephen's graduates?

When you go to school in Rome, you can feel like you're already an adult; you have so many experiences that kids your age don't have, and you get to meet different kinds of people from all over the world, but it's essential to keep in mind that this is still only one perspective. There are a lot of other perspectives and experiences out there waiting for you to interact with them.

The time that I spent in Wisconsin, a very different place from Rome, was just as eye-opening as the time I spent in the center of Rome. Embrace uncomfortable situations that make you question your assumptions and your experiences.

Also, I can't speak so much to Italy, but at least in America, many of the hierarchies that have shaped who has power and who has opportunities are being questioned and are starting to break down. In that environment, people with power can feel threatened and awkward, but it's an important thing to embrace and appreciate as it creates opportunities for all kinds of people. Frankly, even as someone who got to go to St. Stephen's--which is a privilege in its own right--I have had opportunities because of the way the hierarchy has broken down and the way that the internet, social media, and all these new forms of media have created openings for new voices. When I couldn't find a job for a year after college, I started my own podcast, and that sounds like a trope now because everyone has their podcast. Still, back then, it was a little rarer, and that's a large part of the reason Wisconsin Public Radio hired me as a producer to start creating a brand new show even though I had never had a full-time job in journalism before. The way the world is changing can be scary for some people, but it can also be exciting.

Listen to the *FiveThirtyEight* podcast on your favorite streaming platform or directly on [their website](#)

Diva Tommei '02

INVESTMENT DIRECTOR, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ICT AT ENEA TEACH



Photo credits: Ilaria Magliocchetti

Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

My period at St. Stephen's was one of the fondest times of my life; it was extremely enriching and stimulating; I never felt like I was putting my brain at rest; I was always thinking and trying to understand things. It's an environment in which I thrived easily both in terms of the people that I met as well as the teachers I had.

I had wonderful friends, people I am still in contact with, and I even work with some of them. The relationships kept going; that's how you know that they were worth something from the beginning. St. Stephen's was also scientifically speaking, very stimulating; I still remember some of my physics, chemistry, and calculus lectures as if they were yesterday; it almost felt more like philosophy than actual science because [the teachers] taught you how to think of and see the world; [they gave us] a tool rather than a specific equation, it went beyond that.

After St. Stephen's, what came next?

I felt that St. Stephen's was a rather protected environment so I decided to attend a large public university, [a place where] you kind of had to figure out a way to get things done for you: I went to La Sapienza to study Biotechnology.

You have a Ph.D. in Bioinformatics from Cambridge; in 2015, you founded Solenica, a company based in San Diego that created "CAIA" a "natural lighting robot" that brings real sunlight into one's home, you're an entrepreneur, you have been listed on Forbes 50 "Top women in tech," and you're the former director for Italy of EIT Digital. You are currently the Investment

Director for Information Technologies at ENEA Tech. After years as an entrepreneur, working in the private sector, what has it been like to move to the public sector?

Moving from private to public is a world of difference; [the two sectors offer] two lenses through which you can look at impact: you can try and have an impact as an entrepreneur with your vision, trying to implement that vision through a company, or you can try to have an impact on the systems that give structure to society, and that deliver, in theory, impact but that impact is usually not state of the art technologically speaking. [The public sector] is always lagging a little behind. In a way, I think of myself as coming from the public sector because when you do research in academia, you're always following grants, writing up reports, trying to get money, and that's a lot more public than it is private. When I started my career as an entrepreneur, that's what I was trying to get away from, to get a breath of fresh air and have a feeling of control that I didn't feel I had in the public sector, but the private sector has a whole other set of challenges: it's very hard to try to make it alongside thousands of other entrepreneurs without anything supporting you.

I am in the public sector now, and it's a constant battle between trying to do things efficiently and productively and meet your goals while having to also carry out redundant and non-meaningful activities that you just have to do because that's what the process entails and you have to follow it. I think it's possible to find a sweet spot where you can navigate a complex system with the energy and determination you would have as an entrepreneur. If you instead sit down and go at the speed that the system comfortably allows, then you're not doing anybody any favors, including yourself.

What does your current position as the Investment Director for Information Technology at ENEA Tech entail?

ENEA Tech is a real experiment for Italy; it's what in America or an Anglo-Saxon cultural innovation paradigm you would call a "funding agency"; its money that the state puts in a fund that is managed privately but invests directly into companies ie, startups that have a very high tech potential, or it creates startups out of universities that are working on a specific technology. Investing directly, that's the key. In this way, we are actively selecting something that we think strategically aligns with the development and growth of the country, and so far, this hasn't really happened for Italy; it's always been indirect investments like funds of funds. The relationship between the entity that invests and the company that gets invested in has never historically been very direct, and that adds layers of administration and bureaucracy that are not helpful in an innovative environment in which you want companies to thrive. So that's the very big difference and huge responsibility that each of the four directors of ENEA Tech feels on our shoulders. The four of us are all quite similar in terms of our profiles: we are relatively young, we have very international experiences, and this is not what you expect to see in Italy normally when you think of someone taking leadership of something this big; it's quite an innovative recipe. We will see!

According to the ENEA Tech website, "ENEA Tech manages the Technology Transfer Fund of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, a 500-million-euro fund for investments in innovative technologies of strategic national interest on a global scale."

Yes, it's a 500 million euro fund that will be worth over one billion by the end of 2035.

ENE Tech invests in medical technology and green energy, and the circular economy, among other things. As a history teacher, I have to ask, does Enea Teach also invest in smaller, less technologically savvy sectors such as the cultural field, for example?

There are four verticals in ENEA Tech, which are four investment areas defined for each of the directors: healthcare, the green, and circular economy, deep tech, and information technology. My area is information technology. Information technology is a very transversal sector because it involves data, computational power, and connectivity, very large platforms from which you can build in any direction. You can pick any field, really, you can look at climate tech, you can look at health tech or digitalization of old infrastructure, you can do so many things. One way that I've strategically chosen to align the investment sectors I am interested in is by making sure we also focus on two of Italy's greatest assets: its cultural and educational [fields]. Edtech encompasses many of the technologies and the new platforms that will enable Italy's historical and cultural to be more widely distributed but [investing in Edtech] is not just a question of distributing information more widely; it is also important, through technology, to make sense of human processes that start with knowing what has happened in the past. It is important for us to know what we are a part of, and technology should help us maintain a state of awareness of the present as well as the past. History, for example, helps us learn from what has been done in the past, and it also helps us contextualize who we are and gives us an identity. By being a part of the present and, [at the same time], knowing the past, we can project a different future. Technology can help us streamline this process and make it a circular one where that's a constant feedback loop that you can activate in a virtuous way, giving you more and more knowledge, more and more data, and helping you adapt better.

Virtual reality, augmented reality, and new digital platforms will help us. Think of Wikipedia: it's so simple, it's "web 1.0", it's not web 5.0--the emotional web that will happen only through virtual reality--no, we are talking about static pages that are hyperlinked, enabling you to move from one page to another easily but how much has that project enriched our lives as a whole? A huge amount. That's an example of a very straightforward technological advance, and, [in my job], I try to think, how much can we do and how much of an impact can we have if we use technology to build upon that experience? This is one of the areas that I will focus on as an Investment Director.

As the Investment Director, something you would do, for example, would be to find an educational technology start-up that the fund could invest in?

Yes, that's one example.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far?

I don't think I have one yet. If we're just talking about me and my personal life, I consider not giving up on my startup, not giving up after years of hardship, and seeing it through, as a successful achievement for me because it showed me who I am; I didn't know that I had it in me.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

I get to have face time with a number of entrepreneurs, wannabe entrepreneurs, professors, and researchers, and I get to speak to brilliant minds that are the most accomplished in certain fields. And it's not just one way; they tell me all that they want to do, all that they know, and I am blown away, and then my experience kicks in, and I can give something to them that they don't already have: it's a synergy

sharing of experiences that makes them better through my experience. I love that I can save them some time by telling them what they should be thinking about or what has happened to me, [thereby] enrich[ing] their experience directly through mine. I think that's the basis of "giving back" to your community. If everybody did a little bit of this, the entire ecosystem in Italy would thrive at a much faster pace. I love that reciprocity; the fact that I get to support and stimulate incredible minds is fantastic.

Why is it important to have more women in technology and, in particular, in artificial intelligence?

I never know how to answer this question; to me, it's obvious that there should be more women [in technology] because it's a win-win for everyone. We can have two different conversations in answering this question: one is about the right to participate; women have a right to be there, have a voice, and be represented. And that's absolutely true. On the other hand, what I see a lot of is, looking at this through the lens of productivity, involving women makes you make more money because diversity increases productivity. That's a very economical discussion [which argues that] you should do it not because it's fair but because it helps you generate more revenue. I don't know about this argument because even though it's true, it's true because of a more fundamental principle: the world is split in half, and both halves should always be represented and have an equal voice; that's the only way to have a discussion that enriches everyone. Yes, having more women in board seats makes it better for everyone because you're diversifying the perspectives in the room, and therefore you are adding value through difference, but I feel like the people who make the productivity argument do so because they are not ready to say that it should be done for the other reason.

Has it been a straight path for you, or do you feel you have been tested along the way to achieving the goals you've set for yourself? Can you talk about what some of those challenges have been and how you've surmounted them?

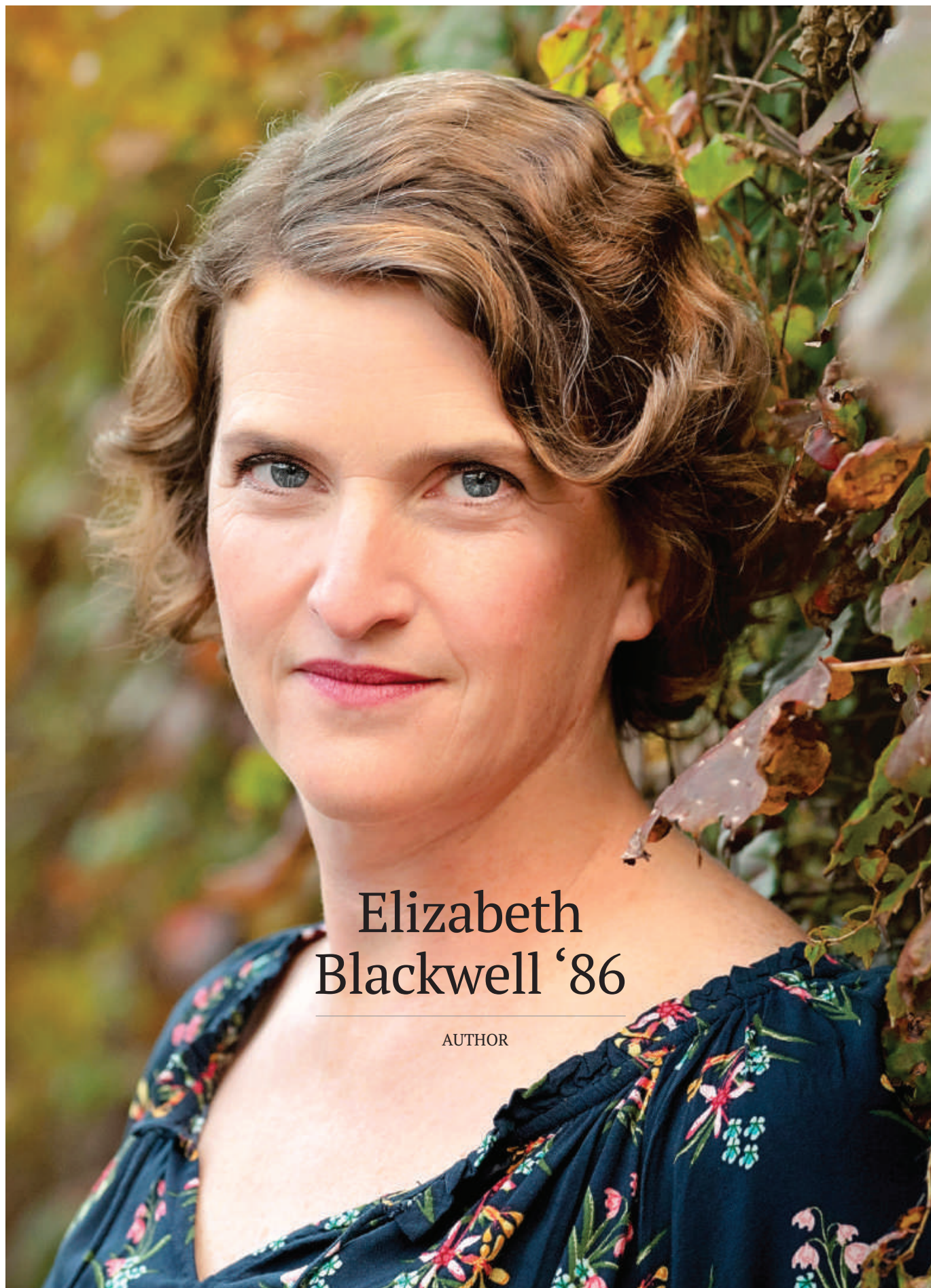
Most of the things I have done in the past ten years, since 2011 onwards, could be best characterized as “jumping in the dark,” having no data to support my decisions, only very strong instincts. The first time this happened was when I had to decide whether to go on as a postdoc—I had three offers from important research institutions in London—or try becoming an entrepreneur, something I had not studied for. I went to NASA for four months and did a deep dive into what it meant to be a tech entrepreneur, but I didn't have any more experience than that so, when I had to decide, I tried to put myself in front of a decision; that helps me a lot when I have to choose something that's very important, and I don't have the tools already in my belt to know what to do. For example, when this happened, my instinct was, “I really want to try and see if I can make this start-up work,” but, on the other hand, I knew that because I had done a Ph.D. my next step would be to do a postdoc and then pursue an academic career, so I interviewed for post-doc positions, I got three offer letters, and then I put them in front of me, and I weighed them against this completely new, untested path of becoming an entrepreneur through this startup [which became “Solenica”]. Once I had it laid out in front of me, my instinct was so strong I couldn't say “it's something else,” I realized there were no other variables, I had all my variables in front of me, and I had a very strong feeling for one of them. And that's how I knew. This is very personal, it's how I work: I have to put myself in the position of actually making a decision, not in theory making a decision, thinking “I could do interviews and pursue this career,” but I needed to have it in front of me as an opportunity that I rejected. That [process] helps me make hard decisions.

What are some of the most important lessons from your professional experience that you would like to share with the next generation of St. Stephen's graduates?

I think in the long run, what I've seen is that you're always going to have a social context in which you are integrated and those people are going to share their opinions about what they think you should be doing, and that's certainly something you need to take into account, but it cannot be the decision-maker. You have to be your own decision-maker; what I just shared is what I do [to make a difficult decision]; you have to do whatever it takes in order to put yourself in the condition to make a decision, not have others make it for you because, no matter the outcome, you will regret that choice and that's a certainty you don't want in your life.

You need to be able to make your own decisions. That means different things for different people; it applies individually in a very different way for each one of us. My best advice is to never give in to pressure and always have a strong opinion of who you are and know that you can make your own decisions and whatever the decision might be, even if it's wrong, it will help you make a different decision in the future. Letting others make decisions for you is never the winning strategy, no matter who it is: your mom, your dad, it doesn't matter; it's just you and the rest of the world, and you are more important because it's your life, you get to live it, you get to make the decisions. This seems very obvious, but it's really not. When you're confronted with potentially life-altering decisions or situations that are not aligned with “what you should be doing,” then this comes out, and giving in is not the right answer. This is the best advice I can give, based on my experience.





Elizabeth Blackwell '86

AUTHOR

Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

St. Stephen's truly felt like a community to me beyond just being a school. It was more than just a place to learn certain academic subjects; you were encouraged to figure yourself out as a person. There were plenty of eccentric students and faculty, and that was celebrated; you weren't expected to fit a particular mold. I liked the fact that people came in with all different backgrounds because meeting other students with interesting life experiences was part of the education and, being a small school, you really did get to know people.

My mother was one of the librarians. I remember when she was considering taking the job, I begged her not to. My mom and I got along great, but the idea of my mother being in my school felt so embarrassing to me. She took the job anyway, and I realized it was a bonus to have her there; I would hit her up for money if people were going for gelato after school, and she gave me the gossip from the faculty meetings. It made the school, even more a part of my family.

Another highlight for me was the theater program. At a larger school, I don't think I ever would have had the nerve to try out for drama performances, but it was truly one of the greatest experiences, and it built my self-confidence. Theater introduced me to a different crew of people, friends who I would not have met otherwise. As you can imagine, anyone who is interested in drama tends to be an interesting, creative person. St. Stephen's really encourages you to try new things, and for me, drama was a highlight.

Your books have received rave reviews from Publishers Weekly, the Historical Novel Society,

Booklist, and People magazine and you have been praised for your ability to seamlessly weave historic events into your stories; when you were a student at St. Stephen's did you imagine you would one day become a successful author?

Absolutely not; that's why it's so funny to look back now. I was always a big reader but being an author sounded so fancy and specialized. I didn't know anyone who wrote fiction. I thought you had to be a super brilliant, super intellectual, very sophisticated person, you had to know people in publishing in New York, and you had to be really connected. I never put together the idea that here are these books I love to read, and there were real people who wrote them, most of whom were living totally regular lives. It felt to me like a totally separate world, and even in college, I had no idea what career I was going to have. My parents said, "major in the classes you love and, you'll figure it out." The classes I loved were history classes (which was true at St. Stephen's as well). [When I graduated] I decided to try publishing. I worked about five years at an academic publisher, doing nit-picky work, editing other people's writing, and fixing the grammar and it was during that time, in my 20s, that, in the back of my head, I started saying: it would be cool to write a book someday, I wonder if I'll ever get up the nerve to do that? How do you even do that? And then, in my late 20s, when I was working as a journalist, I went to a friend's wedding, and I sat next to a woman in her late twenties who I didn't know, and she told me that she had just published a book. [It was a book] about a single girl living in the city. She didn't look particularly glamorous, she looked like a normal person, and that's when I said, well, she doesn't have any better connections than I do, she just did

the work of writing the book and if she can do it, maybe I can too. Sometimes that's all it takes is to meet one other person that makes a profession accessible.

Another thing that pushed me to start writing was that I had my daughter, my first child, and I decided that I wanted only to work part-time. I had more time to myself, and I thought, if I do not at least try this, then I never will, and I will always be angry at myself if I don't at least attempt to write. There was something about being home with a baby, no offense, but a lot of it was really boring, so when I was with her, and she couldn't talk, I would be thinking of story ideas. Never would I have thought that I would be at my most creative with a baby in the house, but there was something about that change in lifestyle that prompted me to say, now is your moment, go for it, but it took years to get anything published. I did not tell anyone that I wrote fiction until I was close to having a publishing contract in my mid-thirties, so it took a while.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

The freedom is the best and the worst part. I can choose what I want to write about; if I develop a particular interest in a certain time period, I have the excuse to read all about it, follow where my interest goes, and come up with my own stories, and that's amazing, I never take that part of it for granted. The downside is, it's all on me; if I'm not feeling creative, I have to struggle through that too.

You write historical fiction and your books often take place in early 20th century Europe or North America; what initially drew you to the genre of historical fiction and to this period in Western history in particular?

Any time a society changes dramatically in a condensed amount of time is fertile ground for story ideas. I love writing about the 1910s, the 1920s; [for example,] if you take something as simple as women's hair and outfits, they went from centuries of long hair tied up to chopped almost overnight, same with skirts--ankles covered for centuries and then, suddenly, "here are my knees!" Now, that's a superficial example, but you can follow that change throughout society and look at women's changing roles in public life, changing political ideas, communism, etc. If you're trying to craft a storyline that requires dramatic events, there is a lot to choose from within that period. Another more practical answer is, publishing is still a business, and anyone who writes fiction acknowledges that and there are limited time periods where books really sell and [there's also] reader preference; the further you go back in history, the harder it is to get a historical book published because most readers want to read about a world that's somewhat familiar. There are thousands of books set in WWII, and they keep coming out because there is a huge public interest in that period.

Your most recent book, *Red Mistress*, about an undercover Soviet agent living in Paris, was published in July. *Red Mistress* explores the life of Nadia Shulkina, the daughter of former Russian aristocrats who, faced with the Russian Revolution, find herself wrest from a life of comfort and forced into a world of constant uncertainty, a reality she eventually embraces through a convenient marriage, several affairs, and an adventurous career as a spy. What inspired you to tell Nadia's story?

In all my years studying history--I focused on European history in

college--- I had never really studied the Russian Revolution other than in a general survey course in college. I am fascinated by any dramatic change, and it was this gap in my knowledge; my question was, how did it happen? How did Russia go from a fully autocratic [state led by a] czar to Lenin controlling this enormous country within a few months? I didn't think I would write a book about it because that seemed insane; I didn't know enough about it, [I thought] you had to be a Russian scholar to do that. [At the time,] I was planning a book that had a cast of international characters, and one of my characters was going to be Russian, and I needed a backstory for her. I decided to read some Russian Revolution books, and a book that happened to be at my library was a history of two wealthy Russian families and what had happened to them over the course of the nineteenth century. This book sparked [my interest in] the idea of what happens when you have been raised to a life of privilege, and you lose everything because that's what happened to these rich families. [I also wondered,] what would make you sympathize with someone who was very privileged and then lost everything? And that became Nadia. People under extraordinary circumstances either crumble or rise to the occasion as best they can, and you never quite know until you're tested. I liked that idea of someone who had never been tested, someone who is forced to reinvent herself over and over because she had to do what she had to do to survive and, once I decided she would be my book, the other characters fell away. I thought a book set totally in Russia would be too dismal to be perfectly honest, and I wanted there to be some sense of adventure, so I thought, I am in this time period, a lot of Russians immigrated to France, why not take her to Paris? Who wouldn't want to go to Paris in the 1920s? And that again is the fun part of my job.

So, speaking of reinventing oneself, COVID has pushed all of us indoors. Many of us were not previously accustomed to spending all this time inside, and I keep seeing news stories that say people are reading more. Bloomsbury, the UK publisher, experienced a 60% increase in profits between February and August, and that's just one statistic that suggests reading has increased as a result of the pandemic. Have your reading habits changed as a result of the pandemic?

Yes, and I think probably similar to a lot of other people, in the first few months, I found reading really hard, and that astounded me because reading was always my escape; when I was stressed or worried, I would lose myself in a book, but I was not able to do that. Now, I think that's very normal. I've talked to many other people, and there was just this level of constant anxiety and stress that made it hard for my brain to concentrate on anything too long, so, like many people, I was guilty of the phone scroll, constantly checking the news, and when I did read, I went for literary candy: easy read mysteries, I went back to Agatha Christie, I reread some of my favorite books, I read romance novels--which is not what I usually read, but sometimes it hit the mark--and I started reading a lot of non-fiction. I found that reading about a real event made it easier to get into [the story] as opposed to fiction, where I had to imagine all these new characters. I jumped genres a lot, and I would say, six months in, I have gotten back to reading more of an assortment.

What do you consider your greatest achievement (personally or professionally)?

Honestly, getting my first book published... I know that I'm supposed to say, "my children," but it's really, really hard to get any

book published. I went through so much rejection to get there. I don't think people realize how much work it takes before the book makes it onto your shelf-- years and years and years. There were dozens of times when I almost gave up, but something would make me keep trying. It doesn't matter how many books you have published, each new book is its own hurdle; it certainly gets easier, but I am proud of how persistent I was. My younger self would have given up much sooner under rejection, but I kept going, and that was my proudest moment.

Has it been a straight path for you, or do you feel you have been tested along the way to achieving the goals you've set for yourself? Can you talk about what some of those challenges have been and how you've surmounted them?

It was definitely not a straight path although, now, with enough perspective, I can look back and see that it was a path, it was just a winding path from studying history at St. Stephen's to studying history in college, taking challenging courses that taught me how to write and I picking up skills along the way even when I did not know what I was going to use them for. So, yes, it was definitely winding in the sense that there were years when I didn't have that goal in front of me, so I did meander a lot, and that was fine.

What are some of the most important lessons from your professional experience that you would like to share with the next generation of St. Stephen's graduates?

It's okay not to know what you want to do, and I know people hate



hearing that because when you're young you want to know how to be successful by doing X, Y and Z, but I know so many people that are in careers that have nothing to do with what they studied in school or have pursued careers that are related in a way that you wouldn't expect. [I also] know people who've gone back to school to study completely different [subjects]

from what they studied when they were teenagers so I think it's absolutely fine for your path to wander or to get lost in the woods for a while. Better to try new things than to be stuck in one place.

To learn more about Elizabeth and her historical fiction books, visit her [website](#).

Rachel Sadoff '15

MA CANDIDATE IN PUBLIC HEALTH AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



Where are you from, and what brought you to Rome?

I'm an American citizen from D.C., but I grew up in three other countries before coming to Rome: Switzerland, Nepal, and Thailand. We moved to Rome from Bangkok because my dad became General Counsel at the International Development of Law Organization near the Vatican, a job that he really enjoyed.

Can you describe your experience at St. Stephen's? What are some of your fondest memories of that time?

My experience changed every year with new people, starting the IB program, taking on the Extended Essay. Still, there were specific episodes I loved; some of those were the trips in the spring and fall. I loved Val d'Orcia with Mrs. Young--it was a wonderful opportunity to engage with different aspects of Italian culture--and the Transylvania trip in my junior year. Transylvania was my first exposure to Eastern European culture, and now that I plan to pursue Tuberculosis policy, that experience was significant because Eastern Europe is a hotspot for both TB and drug-resistant TB. It was also a wonderful opportunity to get to know fellow students in a more relaxed environment while facing unusual, travel-related challenges together. I enjoyed concerts, football tournaments, watching my friends thrive in dance and theater, and getting to know the faculty--I learned as much from them as people as I did from the content, and that has stuck with me more than the formulas and technical details I learned. Those were some of my favorite parts of being at St. Stephen's.

After Rome, what came next?

I moved directly to the U.S. to start my studies at Harvard. There were funny moments of culture shock. St. Stephen's has a very high sense of fashion that I did not find here, so that was strange, and I had to drop some slang that I had picked up; you know, "dai" sounds a lot like "die," and that took a lot of explaining! I stayed here for two years and then took two years off, and in that time came back to Rome in May of 2018. I remember attending a fundraiser concert for Dr. Pope's work in Rwanda. It was really sweet to see how that structure and tradition remained accessible so many years later because it was always so wonderful for me as a student.

You mentioned that you took a two-year break from your studies at Harvard; why did you decide to do this, and what did you learn during your time away from university?

I decided I needed time off for professional and personal reasons. Academically, my interests were everywhere as a freshman and sophomore: I studied war movies, environmental policy, propaganda from WWII, medical ethics--it was so much fun, and it really was one of the best parts about being at a liberal arts college. But after two years, I didn't have any stronger of a sense of what I would be doing after college. I decided that I would need to work in the fields that I was intellectually interested in to get a sense of what I wanted career-wise. For example, I was interested in criminal justice, so I thought, "I should work in that," and it turned out to be a really informative experience because the work was so heartbreaking. Now I understand that criminal justice is very interesting in the classroom, but I am too sensitive to work in that field.

On a personal level, Harvard is a very intense academic environment, and given how scattered I was

in my academic approach to the school, I was missing out on a lot of opportunities that I wish I had capitalized on. There were all kinds of fellowships and grant programs; I would watch these deadlines for trips and conferences fly by, and because I didn't know what I wanted from among them all, I knew I wasn't taking full advantage of those opportunities.

I assumed I would just take one semester off, but it swelled into four because every semester, I learned more about myself and what kinds of jobs I did and didn't want. I wanted a plan when I got back to college and, sure enough, by the end, I settled enthusiastically on global health. I learned more about myself with each passing semester because at this age, you learn so much about yourself every year, and to have the freedom to explore different kinds of careers and cities helped me mature much more quickly than I think I would have in a college environment.

You are graduating in just over a month! While at Harvard, you studied History & Literature, Global Health & Health Policy, and Italian. In September, you will be starting a Master's in Public Health at Columbia. Given your curiosity and diverse interests, it must have been challenging to decide where to focus; why are you passionate about public health policy?

As a funny anecdote, I will say it started in 2018 when I woke up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat with the vivid realization that there are not enough doctors! I don't know what the nightmare was about, but it got me thinking. I realized that public health is a thread through all of my scattered interests: it's where the climate crisis intersects with human rights and the economy, why I was so enthusiastic about zombies--really though! There's a lot of literature on this; I was surprised to learn that zombies allow

us to consider victims of disease as dangerous disease vectors rather than objects of pity, and they have been called a politically correct way of channeling fears of refugee waves. I also found that I kept writing papers about the Black Plague in different classes. Systemic health issues were also a key driving factor in all the inequities that I saw growing up in different places. So, after that terrifying night, I realized public health was at the root of all the discrete things that I loved.

Harvard doesn't offer a public health major, so I had to scramble to find other ways to engage with health once I got back here. Fortunately, there are a lot of student organizations, incredible faculty, and a minor in Global Health & Health Policy, so I signed up for that immediately. The other beautiful thing about liberal arts is that my major in History & Literature has allowed me to take a lot of global health courses because it meets the department's criteria: a lot of it's in the past, and there are plenty of documents!

Going back to why I am passionate about public health and global health: it's such a large-scale human rights issue that we have the expertise and money to mitigate, and by addressing global health inequities and structural violence, the chain reactions can create an incredible upward spiral in the economy, education, women's rights, and the environment. I love thinking of it as a field that you can approach in a hundred different ways: as a science communicator, a hard scientist, a medical doctor. Public health can have such a disproportionate impact on international development, and it's not only fascinating and moving, but there are so many different ways to contribute to the field. I, for one, am a humanities major who is scared of numbers but, because I can do a fair bit of communication and coding, I can contribute to the Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics at the Harvard School of Public Health.



They work on disease modeling and put out unsettling but incredibly important predictions--and I can help! I am not totally sure how I am going to tangibly get into the field, but that's so much of the beauty for me.

The last thing that really cemented my passion for global health was when I got dengue hemorrhagic fever in the winter of 2019. I had terrible eye pain because dengue makes your eyes swell, internal hemorrhaging for about eight weeks, and I felt like my health was out of my control. I appreciated how privileged I was compared to the demographics that usually get dengue fever and I couldn't help but think how unfair it all was, especially because the treatment for dengue is basically hydration and rest. So reflecting on where I was privileged enough to be in the hierarchy of disease response was just as distressing as the symptoms, and that confirmed my decision.

At Harvard, you are the Head of Communications for the "Effective Altruism" organization-- what does "effective altruism" mean, and why is it important in 2021?

This is one of my favorite topics. Effective Altruism is a global socio-political-philosophical movement that has the motto "doing good, better." It's about taking a very utilitarian and arguably overly-quantitative approach to the world's most pressing issues, including factory farming, artificial intelligence (and its existential risks), and global health and development, which is what brought me in, and I love it. I think it is important because it gives a lens through which we can consider how we respond to different kinds of crises and risks at an international and local level. In the context of global health and development, it's made me more comfortable addressing questions like, "are we measuring variables

that actually indicate successful interventions? How far do chain reactions go? And are we respecting cultural taboos or imposing our values onto others because we think it will improve public health?" It's important to question the base assumptions of different kinds of humanitarian interventions, and I find it a supportive, challenging, engaging, and flexible model and organization through which to do so.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far?

My senior thesis, which I turned in in March. It's about a controversy that influenced the diplomatic landscape of chemical weapons disarmament negotiations during the Cold War; it's a little bit about health, but it's a lot about international relations, damaging political rhetoric, and ethnocentricity. It was 18,000 words with 15,000 words of footnotes--this is a thing in

my family: we are cursed with too many footnotes. It's always tough to find your place in the existing scholarship, and then a way to contribute, especially as an undergraduate. Figuring that out, and then making a long, complex, compelling, and sensitive argument was tough, so I would say that was my greatest achievement.

What are some of your other non-academic passions?

They have changed during quarantine. Before COVID--I've heard this expressed as "BC"-- so, BC, I did a lot of improv theater at the college; I found it to be a good stress outlet and a good way to keep my mind engaged, think about how humor is structured, and connect with people casually. I loved improv. I am still very passionate about film and music, just as I was at St. Stephen's. When I was in high school, I started a student organization for video production called "Cineasti," which isn't a word, but I thought it was at the time. When I was trying to think of a name, I Google-translated "filmmakers," and "cineasti" was somehow the first result. People who spoke Italian in my social circle said, "that was so creative," and I said, "haha, doesn't it just mean filmmakers? ...Doesn't it?" I'm not making movies or music very much anymore, but I am still passionately appreciating it.

I've also been doing a lot more mentorship; I'm a student mentor with the Harvard Global Health Institute and I do one-on-ones with Effective Altruism fellows from different countries. One of my other passions is teaching, like English and SAT prep.

Would you say those activities have increased during COVID?

Yes, because I have found that these activities are relatively easy

to do virtually and they're a really good way to feel fulfilled over Zoom.

Has it been a straight path for you, or do you feel you have been tested along the way to achieving the goals you've set for yourself? Can you talk about what some of those challenges have been and how you've surmounted them?

I think everyone is tested in different ways, and sometimes it's our fault, and sometimes it's circumstantial. I would say I've had a combination. One of the most difficult things that I've struggled with personally is balancing my ambition in specific areas with my appreciation for holistic balance. When I was at St. Stephen's, for example, I was part of an international program for long-distance runners, and I had to run before school and after school in Villa Borghese by myself. It was lonely, but I was getting really good. However, because of my commitment to and ambition in long-distance running, I was missing parties and other kinds of celebrations, I was losing points on quizzes, and eating terribly--ironically enough. I eventually burned out and with some reflection switched my sport to football; I became the St. Stephen's girl's goalie and went to a couple of tournaments with them. I made a video about that running program which was cathartic, and I wrote my Harvard admissions essay about it. The struggle to balance holistic well-being with ambition was a big reason why I took time off. I realized I was wholeheartedly committing myself to classes and programs that I thought I was good at rather than ones that felt right or fulfilling. That extra space gave me a better sense of balance when considering what career I wanted.

I also moved around a lot as a kid. Both of my parents--I am so proud of them---have had incredible jobs

all over the world, but that brought with it a lot of emotional challenges growing up, and to this day Italy is the last time that I've lived in the same place for three years. Since then, I've lived in any given city for between three months and two years at a time. Every time you move, you face new challenges and you're tested in different ways. To be fair, a lot of this has been voluntary on my part: I've learned that it would be easier if I tried not to connect with each city I lived in because saying goodbye would be less hard, but I do my best to immerse anyway because I learn more about people, relationships, and human nature when I do, and the goodbyes are terrible, but the memories are all the more sweet, so that's been another test of sorts.

Professionally, being a humanities major in a relatively scientific field is another little test I have forced myself into!

What are some of the most important lessons from your experience that you would like to share with the next generation of St. Stephen's graduates?

Be brave. Talk to people outside your circle, outside your echo chamber, outside your school. Join activities that you may think you are unqualified for but will teach you new things about yourself and the world. Don't shy away from challenging discussions. All of this comes down to courage, and people--especially St. Stephen's students--are more courageous than they may realize. There are things about Rome and the IB program that have tested their limits and may have scared or inspired them. St. Stephen's is made up of a really strong group of people, so I would say: take that courage you have fostered in that environment and use it to propel you into things you love, and you will discover surprising, confusing, and thrilling parts of the world around you.



PART VII:

Development

Summary of Volunteers & Donors 2019-20

ALLISON KEMIS-PRICE, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

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In a year unlike any other, the St. Stephen's School community was remarkably quick to respond to the challenges and uncertainties created by the Covid-19 crisis.

Our faculty transformed their curricula to meet the new demands of online learning. Students showed resilience as they adjusted to these new virtual learning spaces and staff found new ways to connect with one another while working from home. Despite these challenging circumstances, we launched a new program (the Aventinus Minor Project archaeological dig) and continued with innovations in our iLab.



EXTRAORDINARY GENEROSITY

Through the extraordinary generosity of our community, we exceeded our goal of raising \$400,000 for the Trustee Challenge. These donations were used to keep our Signature Programs running, to purchase health and safety equipment, and to make critical upgrades on campus, including increasing our internet capacity.

We also found a few moments to express our uniqueness, including a virtual version of our annual Student Talent Show and some fantastic Zoom alumni events.

By viewing <https://assets.sssrome.it/8817a20081f7dd475a5bcf2a60c53e06> you will find a roundup of our accomplishments from the year like no other.

This report is the result of a collaborative effort, and I give many thanks to colleagues, Inge Weustink, Moira Egan, Elizabeth Di Cataldo, and Simona Monaco, and to trustees, Harvey Stone and Deborah Packer Mumm, for their invaluable contributions.

With sincerest gratitude,

Allison Kemmis-Price, Director of Development

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds raised and pledged in Fiscal Year 2019-20

\$407,424.12

New funds raised for the School, including cash donations and philanthropic grants.

Number of gifts

277

Number of donors

136

Largest donation

\$50,000

Largest pledge

\$60,000

The value of the

St. Stephen's Endowment increased 10.10% to

\$12,375,814.51



LE CROCIATE

Benedetto XVI
16-17 aprile 2007
CROCIATA PER LA PACE



THE CORTILE 2021

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