

## Walls Reacts to Tabling of “Vote16” Bill

Penelope Leibovich (2019)  
Staff Writer

On November 13th, 2018, the DC city council indefinitely delayed action on the “Vote16” bill that would lower the DC voting age to 16. The bill was first proposed by city councilmember Charles Allen, but was ultimately tabled in a 7-6 vote.

The bill is nearly identical to other passed legislation in Hyattsville, Greenbelt, and Takoma Park, but with one major difference: these Maryland cities only allow voting on a local and state level. However, since DC is not a state and is part of the federal government, it would have become the first jurisdiction in the nation were 16 year olds could vote in the presidential elections.

School Without Walls senior Greta Jelen was one of the original youth leaders to initiate a campaign. She worked with councilmember Allen and youth leaders from other DC schools (one from each ward) on organizing town halls, community forums,

media campaigns, generating press, and, most importantly, lobbying the other city council members to co-sponsor the bill.

There has been an especially strong push for an increased teen voice in politics since the 2018 Parkland shooting led to a sharp increase in youth activism. This activism could lead to youth voting rights

and would be imperative to increase voting equity in DC.

Says Jelen, “wards 7 and 8 are the areas in the city with the highest minority demographic and the highest number of youth, and with a turn out of less than 10% of the District vote. This is a clear issue of under representation based on economic status and

allowing the enormous and passionate youth population in these areas to vote would do a lot to help.”

There is no doubt that this passionate youth population exists. But many question if young people really want to have the right to vote. Senior Niamh Nolan says “What’s the rush? Who feels the need to be voting right now? In two

years we will hopefully be smarter, more active, and care more so why rush it?”

Junior Lily Cason believes it is more situational, “I think some 16-year-olds are ready for the responsibility of voting and some are not. That being said, I think this statement can be applied to 18-year-olds as well. I think the benefits outweigh the costs when it comes to Vote16 because getting young people in the habit of voting, especially while they are still living at home (and it is relatively convenient), is crucial to social change.”

Lastly senior Nico Frank was strongly in favor of the proposal: “I think that Vote16 was an important proposal as it attempted to give a voice to youth who have become politically active in many ways yet their rights have not reflected this. I see no problem with allowing teens to vote and I believe that it will force politicians to consider what teens have to say as they will actually have a vote to back up their opinions.”



## Cyntoia Brown Granted Clemency

Noa Schleifer (2021)  
Staff Writer

In what many have hailed as a massive victory, Cyntoia Brown was granted clemency on January 8th by then Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam.

Brown was serving a life sentence for the 2004 killing of Johnny Mitchell Allen, who allegedly raped her multiple times while she was trapped in a sex-trafficking ring at age 16. At the time, prosecutors claimed that she shot Allen, took his money, and fled the scene. They argued that these acts did not qualify as self-defense, but constituted a robbery.

Brown said that she was not only scared by Allen’s behavior, but took money out of fear of re-

turning to her pimp without any. Brown was tried as an adult and sentenced to life in prison for murder and robbery. Over the past decade, Brown’s conviction and sentence have roused outrage across the country,

including from celebrities, such as Rihanna and Kim Kardashian West.

Additionally, a documentary about her case, called “Me Facing Life: Cyntoia’s Story,” led to criminal justice reforms re-

garding juvenile sentencing in Tennessee. The documentary brought new light to Brown’s case and revealed new details not taken into account in the original hearings.

Her case has also

affected the way sex trafficking victims are treated within the Tennessee justice system, especially those who are minors. Since her conviction, Brown has been in prison all of her adult life. Her advocates have said that she has transformed herself during her time spend there.

She received her associate’s degree from Lipscomb University in 2015, and apparently has been a model inmate. She is working with the Tennessee Juvenile Justice System to mentor troubled youth and counsel youth in prison. Brown will be on parole starting on August 7, after serving 15 years in prison. Her release will allow her to rebuild her life and get a second chance after being sentenced to life as.



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# D.C. City Council Passes Metro Fare Evasion Bill

Emilia Bebic (2020)  
Editor

Recently, a proposal to decriminalize Metro fare evasion was passed by the D.C. Council in an 11 to 2 vote. Though the bill needs to be voted on again to be solidified as law, chances are high that it will pass given the current voting ratio. Presently, fare evasion is considered a crime and can result in fines of up to \$300 dollars or up to 10 days in jail. The bill proposes lowering the status of fare evasion to a civil infraction with a \$50 penalty, which would not appear on a criminal record.

The council members who voted in favor of the legislation cited issues surrounding the increased and prejudiced enforcement witnessed over recent years as the motivation for their support. The bill was initially introduced in 2017 and cited statistics from a Washington law report that found that 91% of citations for fare evasion were issued to African-Americans. In addition, enforcement of penalties for fare evasion has risen rapidly, with an

increase from 4,000 citations, warnings, or arrests in 2013 to 15,000 in 2017. According to Ward 6 Council member Charles Allen, the enforcement of penalties for fare evasion “is endemic of a systemic issue” and “decriminalizing is an appropriate and necessary way of trying to get at the problems.”

The Council’s decision, however, has not been without its critics, including Chairman of the Metro Board and Ward 2 Council member Jack Evans, and

Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, the two dissenters of the bill. Skeptics have expressed concern over potential revenue loss for the Metro system, which is already notoriously plagued by financial issues. In fact, Metro estimated that losses due to fare evasion could total almost \$25 million every year.

Some also believe that the initiative sets a negative precedent for the enforcement of civil laws. Mendelson and Evans have both argued that fare eva-

sion constitutes theft, and therefore should continue being considered as a crime.

Some students at School Without Walls echoed the sentiments of the Council members in support of the bill. “It’s good because it allows people who may not be able to afford to pay the fare to still seek employment,” stated one student. “If it was listed as an offense on their criminal record, it may interfere with future job opportunities.” Another student proclaimed the law

to be “the best thing ever” for similar reasons.

It is, however, important to consider that the decision does not impact students directly. Elementary, middle, and high schoolers in the District receive free access to Metro through the School Transit Subsidy Program. As a result of this, it is unlikely that fare evasion is a major issue among D.C.’s students, which begs the question: where is fare evasion coming from?

Though data is significantly skewed by disproportionate enforcement, it does suggest that low income individuals who are unable to afford fares are the most likely perpetrators. Although the bill will decrease the punishment for fare evasion, it has little bearing on the prevention of the act itself. If D.C. were to provide a similar transit subsidy for low income adults as it does for all of its students, the city could build a safety net, decreasing fare evasion at its root. In the meantime, it remains to be seen how the decriminalization will impact the Metro system and the city itself.



Washington, DC Metro (Photo Credits: Wikimedia Commons)

## Confusion over Walls’ Admissions Policy Frustrates Prospective Families

Noa Schleifer (2021)  
Staff Writer

After a new attempt to change the admissions policy at School Without Walls, in order to diversify and expand the student body, DCPS officials have had to apologize to over 200 families who thought their children were eligible to attend this school. Normally, the Walls admissions process requires that prospective students have a 3.0 grade point average or

many students do not score as high in PARCC testing, so a new program was rolled out in conjunction as well.

It would have allowed the students ranked top 15% at their middle schools to apply, regardless of their PARCC scores. This strategy would have allowed for students from any DC middle school to apply, even though at some schools only 1 percent of students pass the PARCC exam. It would have opened applications to

rules, never documented the changes or published them on the DCPS website that describes the citywide school lottery. 226 families whose students hoped to apply and get into Walls received letters explaining that they no longer qualify, because the pilot program was not rolled out, and their students had not scored high enough on PARCC.

This leaves School Without Walls in the same position as it has been in



Photo by Ian Parker on Unsplash

above to apply and take the admissions test.

This year, school officials announced that students would also need to have at least earned a passing grade on their PARCC or an equivalent standardized test in middle school.

Under this new rule, fewer students would have been able to apply, because

many students who originally were not able to apply to attend School Without Walls, and led to more expansion and diversity of the student body.

Parents and students were told about the new pilot program at enrollment fairs and school events through the fall, but in a violation of city

the past, albeit with even more requirements for prospective students.

The pilot program to expand access to Walls will be delayed for a year, and will allow for students from schools throughout DC to be able to apply without confusion or disappointment.

## An Uncommon Cafe Review

Alexis Mundle (2021)  
Staff Writer

Located on 1800 G St, An Uncommon Cafe is a good option for those who do not know what to have for lunch or just looking for something new. The buffet is a straight shot from school, making it very easy to find, and has quick service which is perfect if you’re ever in a time crunch.

The hot bar typically has a selection of Ameri-

is fairly decent to say the least, especially considering that it is not by any means a classy high end restaurant. I feel that nine times out of ten, the traditionally American options taste better than the “Chinese” food.

Luckily there are other options as well; the salad bar, located right when you walk in, is nothing super special but always seems to be well kept and freshly stocked. The same can be said about the soup selection which is generally an option of Sweet and Sour soup and Chicken Noodle, which are both mediocre at best.

Being that this is a buffet, pricing is by the pound, which can become a problem if you aren’t careful. However, if you play your cards right, you are able to walk away spending no more than five dollar but if you are in the position to spend eight to ten dollars on lunch a day, I say go for it.

**All the food at the hot bar is fairly decent to say the least, especially considering that it is not by any means a classy high end restaurant**

canized Chinese food on one end, some sort of fried protein, such as fish or chicken, on the other, and a few different vegetable sides to choose from. All the food at the hot bar

# US Recognizes Venezuelan Opposition Leader as President

Caedmon Dorsey (2020)  
Staff Writer

In recent weeks, the United States, along with many other nations, has recognized Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó as president due to claims that Nicolás Maduro, the current president, is a dictator and responsible for Venezuela's economic crisis.

The South American nation has suffered an economic crisis since 2014, leading to severe shortages in food and medicine. The opposition places the blame for this on the government's expansive social policies, as well as what they claim is authoritarianism.

The opposition boycotted last year's national election, claiming it was rigged. President Maduro's government suffered losses but held power in an election that was declared fair by international observers, including the African Union and the Jimmy Carter Center. Others, however, claimed the government inflated voter turnout. Juan Guaidó, purportedly cheated out of victory, did not participate.

Many international observers have claimed that the Venezuelan government has been autocratic since the election of Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chávez in 1998.

Chávez was a popular president whose "Bolivarian Revolution" transformed the Venezuelan Government. Between 1998 and his death in 2013, the GDP per capita more than tripled while poverty fell from 70% to around 20%. New social programs built over 2 million homes while the government expanded education and health care.

These programs were mainly funded by petroleum sales by the Venezuelan state oil company. When oil prices were high in the 2000s and early 2010s, these social programs were well funded.

The world's average price per barrel of oil fell by almost 50% in late 2013. This huge decrease in the price of oil led to a dramatic decline in the amount of funding available for the social programs that kept the Venezuelan economy afloat. This led to shortages in key products especially food and medicine.

As a result of the

ensuing protests, the government cracked down on demonstrations leading to charges of authoritarianism. Maduro, taking over from Chávez after his death in 2013, lacked the same popularity as the late president and did not enjoy the same support from the start.

The cycle of shortages, protests, and crackdown was worsened by the Trump administration's sanctions in 2017. The ban on doing business with the US administered a death blow to the Venezuelan oil industry, denying a key

source of revenue to the government. The government has responded to this by alleging that the US is carrying out economic warfare against it.

Critics of the Trump administration, both in Venezuela and internationally, have raised concerns about increased US involvement in Latin America. US leaders including Senator Marco Rubio and National Security Advisor John Bolton have discussed having US companies take over the Venezuelan oil fields.

The United States has been involved in regime change in many Latin American nations with "unfriendly" governments including Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Chile, and Venezuela in 2002.

Is the US support for Guaidó an effort to restore democracy to Venezuela or is it, as skeptics claim, another cynical attempt to take oil? The world will find out in the coming months.



Photo by Andrés Gerlotti on Unsplash

## The Confusing Situation for American Troops in Syria

Brendan Klein (2020)  
Staff Writer

Last December, President Donald Trump announced that "after historic victories against ISIS, it's time to bring our great young people home!" Trump released a video shortly after, explaining that he made the decision to stop more young people from dying at the hands of ISIS. Trump's plan was to withdraw 2,000 US troops from Syria, in the span of about one month.

However, a month after the tweet, a member of ISIS detonated a bomb in the Aleppo Governate of Syria, killing 16 people, including 4 US soldiers. Many in the government and media criticized Trump for the role his withdrawal order may have played in encouraging the attack.

Two major figures resigned almost immediately after Trump released his decision. Jim Mattis, the former U.S. Secretary of Defense, submitted his letter of resignation the day after the tweet was sent. He requested that copies of the letter be distributed around the Pentagon. In the letter, Mattis explained that withdrawal from Syria would disturb America's "comprehensive network of allian-

es", and that Trump should find a more like-minded Secretary of Defense. Mattis had been viewed in high esteem by members of both parties, and the dignity and authority he brought to his position is hard to replicate.

The other major figure to resign was Obama-era diplomat Brett McGurk, who had been retained by the Trump administration as the special presidential envoy for the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS. McGurk, who had planned to leave this month, resigned just a day after Mattis did. McGurk had not been warned about the President's decision, and in an email to colleagues expressed concern that "[the withdrawal order] left our coalition partners confused and our fighting partners bewildered."

After meeting with Lieutenant General Paul LaCamera, head of US forces fighting ISIS in Syria, Trump extended the timeline for leaving to four months. The timeline may go even further, based on comments made by national security advisor John R. Bolton. On January 6th, Bolton explained that certain goals would have to be reached before removing US troops from the region. Among these were the

actual defeat of ISIS, and protection from Turkey for US-allied Kurdish fighters.

The protection of Kurdish fighters and civilians is an important factor for US decisions in Syria. The Kurds fought bravely with US troops and were safe under American protection. However, the removal of US troops places them in danger. Secretary Bolton planned to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to demand he promise protection to the Kurdish people, until Erdogan cancelled the meeting moments before it began.

The disparity between the plans and intentions described by Trump and those described by Bolton, make it unclear whether the US will fully remove troops from a region prone to violence and instability. In the meantime, US allies, especially those in NATO, are left to puzzle together the pieces left on the table.

## Immigration Debate Continues after Shut-

Adam Burch (2021)  
Editor

As the government comes back online from the longest shutdown in US history, the border security debate is getting personal for many Americans. Public opinion in the country is still divided over President Trump's proposal for a wall on the Mexican border, but most media sources cited reduced support for the barrier as one of the main reasons for Trump's apparent back down.

To many critics on the right, Trump appears to be playing a weak hand when it comes to the border. A disorganized White House, where aides' authority is often undermined dramatically, has crippled the administration's ability to whip votes in Congress.

Some attribute this less to disorganization and more to Trump's declining poll numbers, but his approval only fell (according to a FiveThirtyEight aggregate of public polling) by about two percentage points over the course of the shutdown, and his support with registered Republicans remains strong, though not exceptional. In an effort to corral Republican votes, the President tried to bolster

support for the wall with slogans of his own design, like "build a wall and crime will fall," an idea contradicted by objective studies.

Trump's campaign rhetoric of demanding a wall made of "solid concrete from ground to 32 feet up" has changed, seemingly trivially, to a "steel, see-through, high-visibility" fence. This shift accompanies the trend of prominent GOP members recasting the wall as a metaphor for heightened border security - an interpretation Trump, at press time, steadfastly rejected.

Some pundits believe that the time is ripe for a bipartisan agreement for more stringent border control, without the wall that many, including the editorial board of the New York Times, have called "a monument to white supremacy." Such an agreement, it is believed, would help Democrats avoid the label of obstructionists, while sticking Trump (who may grow desperate for a lasting deal) with a clear loss. Such an agreement, however, would likely alienate minority voters, an important factor for many prospective Democratic presidential candidates.

## Can a New Football League Survive?

Adam Burch (2021)  
Editor

NFL	AAF
Kickoffs start every possession.	No kickoffs; teams can give their opponents a first down on the 25-yard line or, in a replacement for the onside kick, try to convert a 4th-and-12 from their own 28-yard line.
Teams can kick a PAT or go for 2 after touchdowns.	Teams must attempt a 2-point conversion.
40-second play clock, starting when officials spot the ball	35-second play clock, starting as soon as the play is whistled dead
Teams have two challenges each half.	Teams can challenge plays, but, in addition, a "Sky Judge" with an aerial camera bank can overturn any egregious mistakes on their own initiative.

Some of the major differences between the NFL and AAF

On Saturday, February 9th, the inaugural game of a new football league, the AAF, was played. If you've never heard of it, you're not alone. The Alliance of American Football (AAF) is a spring football league made of only eight teams. Though one would expect it to be of little importance, it's still not entirely clear what role it will play in the coming years.

The AAF's first

weekend featured all eight teams playing, and despite some blowouts, ratings were kept relatively high by excitement and the league's marketing.

Still, some thought that the real test would be the second week: without the hype of Opening Day, would people still watch? The answer, so far, has been yes: Sunday received more viewers than an National Hockey League game, for

example, and other games had similarly high viewership.

Still, it's hard for the AAF to avoid the grim specter of other new pro leagues before it. The Xtreme Football League, for example, had high ratings for its first game, but soon flamed out, completing only one season before bankruptcy. To find out the AAF's ultimate fate, you'll have to wait a while.

## ESports Club Spotlight

Rami Chiaviello (2020)  
Contributor

The School Without Walls eSports club is a club dedicated to promoting and partaking in online competitive video gaming, which is affectionately known as eSports. The eSports club meets every Friday after school in Mr. Bulluck's room and is currently 35 members strong!

A typical eSports club meeting begins with announcements regarding gaming news and/or various club endeavors. After these announcements, members get right to competing.

The eSports club supports a wide variety of video games, such as League of Legends, Super Smash Bros Ultimate, Fortnite, and Overwatch, just to name a few. Every Friday, members of different backgrounds and ages meet up to compete in these video games.

One of the main goals of the SWW eSports club is to help high-schoolers get involved in eSports competitions. Last school year, seven Walls students competed in a continental

wide League of Legends tournament. Ultimately, the SWW team placed 6th out of a total of 50 participating teams.

Currently, the club is hosting its first ever annual Super Smash Bros Spring Championship Season, a tourney consisting of 30 contestants, fighting to be crowned the champion after a twelve week regular season and postseason. First, second, and third place winners will receive Amazon gift card prizes.

But perhaps the most important feature of this club is that anyone, regardless of their skill level or devotion to gaming, can join. We are always looking for people, both new players and old, to get a taste of real competitions. If you're ever interested in seeing what we do here, feel free to stop by Mr. Bulluck's room, Friday after school.

## Missed the Grammys? Here's a Recap!

Maddie Engen (2021)  
Staff Writer

This year, the winner of Record of the Year, Best Rap/Sung Performance, Best Music Video, and Song of the Year was Donald Glover and Ludwig Goransson's "This is America" against a number of promising tracks such as "God's Plan" by Drake, "All The Stars" by Kendrick Lamar and SZA, and "Rockstar" by Post Malone featuring 21 Savage.

Album of the Year was "Golden Hour" by Kacey Musgraves, a country album recorded in 2017 and listed fourth on the US Billboard 200. This came as a surprise to many who expected more mainstream albums such as Drake's "Scorpion" or the Black Panther soundtrack to win.

Best New Artist went to Dua Lipa known best for her hits "New Rules," "IDGAF," and "Blow Your Mind (Mwah)."

Best Pop Solo Performance was "Joanne (Where Do You Think You're Goin'?)" by Lady Gaga against the seemingly more popular songs "Havana" by Camila Cabello and "God Is A Woman" by Ariana

Grande.

Best Pop Vocal Album was "Sweetener" by Ariana Grande, pulling through against Taylor Swift's "Reputation" and Shawn Mendes's self-titled album.

The winner of the Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media was "The Greatest Showman" starring Hugh Jackman. The film's soundtrack faced intense competition against the Call Me By Your Name, Deadpool 2, Lady Bird, and Stranger Things soundtracks.

Similarly, the title of Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media was Ludwig Goransson's Black Panther which won against Blade Runner 2049, Coco, The Shape of Water, and Star Wars: The Last Jedi.

Non-Classical Producer of the Year was Pharrell Williams who produced albums with stars such as Ariana Grande, Migos, and Justin Timberlake.

Perhaps one of the most controversial awards was the Best Rap Album which was "Invasion of Privacy" by Cardi B. Many argue that "Swimming" should have won in the honor of the late Mac Miller or,

if not that, "Astroworld" by Travis Scott.

The winners of Best Rap Performance were split between "King's Dead" by Kendrick Lamar, Jay Rock, Future, and James Blake, and "Bubblin" by Anderson .Paak.

Both of these performances faced strong competition from Drake's hit song, "Nice For What," Cardi B's "Be Careful," and Travis Scott, Drake, Big Hawk, and Swae Lee's ever-popular "Sicko Mode."

However, Drake's "God's Plan" did win Best Rap Song overall.

As usual, the Grammys were a big hit with viewership totals clocking in at an impressive 17.95 and plenty of chatter around America and the world the next day.

## Ethics Club Spotlight

Washington Ross (2020)  
Editor

Can't get enough of The Good Place? Maybe you should join Ethics. Ethics Club is where ethical dilemmas that are found or could be found in the real world are discussed and analyzed with the goal of finding the right course of action.

Topics vary from gun control and gerrymandering to dumping on someone after they forgave you for cheating. To help analyze the situations, the club also learns about different ethical theories. Through tackling these ethical issues, members also learn about subjects such as politics and science.

Each year members from the club also participate in a regional competition with different schools from the DC region.

However, this is not your ordinary debate. The pressure is off. While normal debaters would stand up, in Ethics participants get to sit while they deliver their arguments. While in normal debates you have to disagree, in Ethics it is acceptable to agree. If you want to improve your argumen-

tative skills in a low-stress environment, Ethics is for you. When asked what they like about Ethics, members responded:

**"It was wonderful to discuss the topics and incorporate different viewpoints into the conversation."**

**-Brionna Wiggins, 2019**

**"It helped me work on being more confident when speaking in front of people."**

**-Greer Marshall, 2020**

On Saturday, February 9th, three teams from Walls competed in the regional "Ethics Bowl". One of the three teams passed on to semi-finals, although Walls did not have the pleasure of winning in the end. However, much to the delight of the teams, a fellow DCPS school won: Banneker.

Ethics Club meets Wednesday mornings in room 330, Ms. Sylvia's room.

## New and Improved Rice Crispy Treats Recipe

Penelope Leibovich (2019)  
Staff Writer

Adapted from Smitten Kitchen

**Ingredients:**  
4 ounces unsalted butter, plus extra for the pan  
1 10-ounce bag marshmallows  
Heaping 1/4 teaspoon coarse sea salt  
6 cups crispy rice cereal (about half a 12-ounce box)

**Steps:**  
Butter (or coat with non-stick spray) an 8-inch square cake pan with 2-inch sides.

In a large pot, melt butter over medium-low heat. It will melt, then foam, then turn clear golden and finally start to turn brown and smell nutty. Stir frequently, scraping up any bits from the bottom as you do. Don't take your eyes off the pot. While you may be impatient for it to start browning, the period between the time the butter begins to take on color and the point where it burns is often less than a minute.

As soon as the butter takes on a nutty color, turn the heat off and stir in the marshmallows. The heat from the melted butter should be enough to melt them, but if it is not, turn it back on low until the marshmallows are smooth.

Remove the pot from the stove and stir in the salt and cereal together. Quickly spread into pan.

## Horoscopes

Sagittarius (11/22 - 12/21): You will get an A on a test.  
Capricorn (12/22 - 1/19): You will fall out of a boat.  
Aquarius (1/20 - 2/18): You will rescue capricorn after they fall out of a boat.  
Pisces (2/19 - 3/20): A butterfly will land on your nose.  
Aries (3/21 - 4/19): You will reconnect with an old friend.  
Taurus (4/20 - 5/20): You will find \$20 on the ground.  
Gemini (5/21 - 6/20): You will adopt a kitten or puppy.  
Cancer (6/21 - 7/22): You will take up a new hobby.  
Leo (7/23 - 8/22): You will make a new friend.  
Virgo (8/23 - 9/22): You will eat the most delicious food in the world.  
Libra (9/23 - 10/22): Your favorite song will play first after you click "shuffle" on your playlist.  
Scorpio (10/23 - 11/21): You will make a work of art.

# George H.W. Bush's Complicated Legacy

Nick Cassol-Pawson (2021)  
Staff Writer

On November 30, the 41st President, George Herbert Walker Bush, passed away at the age of 94 from vascular Parkinsonism. On December 6, he was laid to rest at the George Bush Presidential Library, between the graves of his wife Barbara and his daughter Robin.

Bush had a long career serving the United States as a pilot in World War II, a House Representative, Nixon's UN ambassador, Ford's CIA director, Reagan's Vice-President, and eventually as the President (1989-1993).

As President of the United States, Bush accomplished a significant number of important achievements. Among these were the US victory in the first Gulf War and the numerous climate and civil rights policies he signed. However, he will also be remembered for his strained relationship with the African-American community

and the misdeeds he committed to protect himself.

In August of 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, a small, oil-rich country in the Middle East. After its invasion, the world worried that Iraq would invade Saudi Arabia as well, which was a major exporter of oil to the United States, so Bush deployed 500,000 troops to help protect it.

He also made a large coalition of NATO allies and Middle Eastern countries to oppose Iraq. Bush told Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait or be attacked by the American military.

When Iraqi forces did not retreat, Bush ordered Operation Desert Storm, a major, crippling attack on the Iraqi military, consisting of bombings and eventually a ground invasion of Kuwait.

Within four days of the ground invasion, which occurred in February of 1991, the United States declared Kuwait liberated from Iraq.

The series of events from Iraq's invasion of

Kuwait to Operation Desert Storm are known as the First Gulf War. A ceasefire was negotiated, ending the war, which is considered to be one of George H. W. Bush's best foreign policy initiatives, due to the speed with which it was completed and the minimal loss of American life, with only 148 soldiers killed.

Although Bush had many positive achievements, it is also important to not gloss over the negative parts of his legacy, as much of the media has been doing since his death.

On the 1988 presidential campaign trail, there was an ad about an African-American man named Willie Horton, who fled a Massachusetts prison program and raped a white woman, that was aired by a political action committee related to the Bush campaign.

Although Bush never endorsed the ad, it painted his opponent, Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, in a bad light, as it made it appear that Dukakis

was allowing felons to roam free throughout the state. The ad used scare tactics based on racism to make it appear as though, if Dukakis was to be elected President, unruly African-Americans would roam freely and commit crimes against white people.

It took Bush almost a month to condemn the ad, which was enough time to sway voters towards him. This ad is an example of Bush's failure to condemn racism. Bush also committed war crimes during the First Gulf War, due to his orders to drop almost 90,000 tonnes of bombs on Iraq and Kuwait, many of which caused civilian casualties, which the administration knew would happen.

Although President George H. W. Bush had many excellent achievements over the course of his life, it is also important to not forget the negative events that occurred throughout his political career, whether or not they were perpetrated by him.

## Earth Rights International Club Spotlight

Manuela Silva (2021)  
Staff Writer

If you are looking for a club to join in 2019, look no further than the new Earth Rights International Club. By working with the organization and being based on a pre-existing establishment, the club hopes to fundraise and learn about the different cases that the lawyers have taken on. They plan to do this by working closely with the nonprofit

organization did. Different from many law firms or nonprofit organizations, Earth Rights International lawyers focus on defending earth and land rights, by holding corporate and extractive industries accountable for their actions, with a focus particularly on American companies working outside of the United States. The most intriguing case so far dealt with when the organization's lawyers helped Mayans near the

how they contaminated the rivers and the surrounding land with their extraction methods.

Earth Rights International started when two young law students who were passionate about human rights, worked with the local communities to stop the human rights abuses that were due to a big corporate pipeline that kept growing and harming the surrounding native communities. While the club



Photo by niko photos on Unsplash

to learn about their plans for the future, and what role they can play as high school students.

In the first meeting, a representative came to speak to the club about many different people that the lawyers from the organization had taken on, and a little bit about what the

Peruvian Amazon fight the U.S. petroleum company Oxy. After bringing this company to American courts rather than Peruvian ones, ERI lawyers managed to reach a settlement with Occidental Petroleum where they promise to provide aid to the communities that were injured because of

doesn't yet have set meeting dates, the club leaders are clearly passionate and readily intertwined with the objectives and goals of the main organization itself, making the SWW Earth Rights International club very promising. Be on the lookout for more information in the future!

## Latino Culture Club Spotlight

Minh Nguyen (2021)  
Staff Writer

The Latino culture club is a club focused on fighting against the stereotypes of Latino culture, while also exploring its traditions. The club meets on Thursday mornings in Mr. Bulluck's room. The co-founders are Blanca Morales and Edgar Ventura. In the past, they have held a discussion on the significance of day of the dead costumes.

In the future, the club plans to celebrate Latino holidays such as "El Tres Magos" (Three Kings Day) on January 6th. It is considered to be similar to Christmas, where people give gifts and enjoy traditional foods. Along with that, they plan to do potlucks with different foods from different countries and events where club members can learn to cook traditional foods.

When asked about the members of the Latino Culture club, Blanca responded: "I would like for the club members to be open-minded and understand that the media and news play a big role in everyday life for people... But other than that, I would like everyone to have fun and enjoy the beauty that is present in the Latino community and culture." If you are interested in the club, you can contact Blanca Morales at [blancamorales235@gmail.com](mailto:blancamorales235@gmail.com).

# The Case for Reforming Standardized Testing

Adam Soltani (2021)  
Staff Writer

Bubbling in the answer to the last few questions is not foreign for many students. In fact, to students, this is the kind of stress standardized testing puts them under. From the PARCC to the SAT, it means success or failure in school. We always hear the phrases like “if you don’t do well on the SAT, then you won’t get into a good college” or “they will look at your PARCC scores, so you have to do well on them.”

The SAT is a test that is supposed to measure how much you have learned in high school. Yet for all students, from the “best” student to “worst” student, you have to start studying months, if not, years before the test is administered, if you want to do well. For lots of high schoolers, spending a perfectly good day inside with a textbook 4 inches thick is unfortunately commonplace.

The dependence college places on the SAT and ACT in its process for choosing applicants creates pressure on students, parents, teachers, and schools. Furthermore, College board, along with other testing companies, are all businesses that profit off of the stress and fear of students,

who are determined to get the highest score they can. You don’t need to look far to see people with multiple test-prep books and tutors.

Sadly, these are not the only ones students have to take, as PARCC is a yearly test that is supposed to assess what students learn in the areas of Math and English. School districts are pressured to administer these tests, leading them to base the curriculum on the questions that will show up on them.

Approximately 78 percent of schools consider

standardized test scores important, to the point where they are evaluated in conjunction with your transcripts, meaning that these Standardized tests have everything to do with how “good” of a student you are. This is why in class we hear more about test-taking strategies than actual content; we are literally being taught to the test.

Another key issue is that these tests increase the stress of everyone involved. The American Psychological Associations (APA) surveyed teens ages 13 to 17

living in the United States to understand how teens experience stress and the impact that stress has on their lives. In this survey, 83 percent of teens cited school as a source of stress and 69 percent cited, that “getting into a good college or deciding what to do after high school,” is the main cause of their stress.

This has bad effects on student health, as in the same survey 36 percent of the teens reported feeling nervous or anxious, 31 percent reported feeling overwhelmed, and 30 percent

reported feeling depressed or sad as a result of stress. The findings suggest that many teens are experiencing symptoms of stress in their daily lives, and Standardized testing is a contributor to it, as it plays a large role in being successful in school.

Simply put, standardized testing puts schools and its students in a box, dictating how they should think, how they should learn, how they should teach, and if they don’t follow its rules then we will be considered failures. In other words, tests do not accommodate the multiple ways of student learning and thinking. This reality bleeds into our daily assignments, tests, and projects.

School is supposed to be a means of furthering our education for the sake of learning, not to temporarily occupy our brains with useless facts and test-taking strategies that we will forget after a standardized test. Frederick J. Kelly, the man who invented multiple choice based standardized testing once said that “these tests are too crude to be used and should be abandoned.”



Photo by Ben Mullins on Unsplash

## SOTU Review: Trump Pulls Some Pages From Bipartisan Playbook, But Toes The Line On Key Issues

Adam Burch (2021)  
Editor

In his State of the Union address on Monday, the fifth, President Trump delivered a largely-conventional pitch to voters and legislators, asking for unity in an atmosphere still marked by the government shutdown. But he remained deeply entrenched on abortion and border security, two of the most divisive issues in modern politics.

The State of the Union this year was delayed by the government shutdown; in the first major partisan faceoff of 2019, Democratic Speaker Pelosi refused Trump access to the House chamber during the shutdown, delaying the speech until a deal was reached for temporary funding. Shortly after such a measure was agreed upon, the pair scheduled a new date for the State of the Union.

The President’s typical extemporaneous speaking style, most agree, is popular with his base, to whom it appears unrestrict-

ed.

However, to moderate voters who don’t support him, it can appear unpresidential and unprepared. Trump’s shift in strategy reflects the unique nature of the State of the Union, which is constitutionally required, considered by many to be an opportunity for the President to address the whole nation and set a legislative agenda for the year.

Trump’s words, mostly read off of teleprompters, were far more polished than usual; in closing, he declared, “this is the time to search for the tallest summit, and set our sights on the brightest star.” Still, his speaking style, with intermittent repetition and self-promotion, was often intact.

Throughout the speech, Trump expressed support for uncontroversial policies. He promised that his budget would include 500 million dollars for pediatric cancer research over the next decade, as well as enough (unspecified) funding to “eliminate the

HIV epidemic in the United States within 10 years.”

He trumpeted the bipartisan First Step Act, praised his administration’s handling of the economy, and promised that his next priority would be to “low-

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**However, to moderate voters who don’t support him, it can appear unpresidential and unprepared**

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er the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs and to protect patients with pre-existing conditions.”

Of course, some of his claims clashed with fact - Trump’s penchant for exaggerating statis-

tics and warping historical context is well-publicized, as is his opposition to the Affordable Care Act’s price controls and protections of people with pre-existing conditions. Still, Trump opened and closed his speech by calling upon Congress to come together, putting parties aside to “win for our country.”

Despite his gestures of reconciliation, Trump’s discussion of late-term abortion and his proposed border wall proved to be divisive. With statistics that ranged from true to misconstrued to false, Trump made his (by now well-developed) case that a wall along the American border with Mexico would improve security and save American lives.

He also railed against late-term abortion, seizing especially on a quote by a Democratic governor that Republicans have interpreted to signify support of infanticide. Public opinion does not favor Trump on these issues: according to 538, one-third of Republicans and 60% of independents (as well as 75% of

Democrats) believe abortion should be legal in “most or all” cases.

Less than three percent of voters are undecided on the subject, leaving Trump with few minds to change. The numbers are slightly better on Trump’s border wall with regard to his base: according to Pew Research Center, 82% of Republicans support “substantially expanding” the existing border barriers.

Still, 58% of Americans oppose such an expansion, and only two percent of voters have not made up their minds. Trump’s continued entrenchment on the right may be a strategic decision or an honest expression of his beliefs, but either way, it doesn’t appear likely to help his bid for re-election.

# Bohemian Rhapsody Review: Attempting to Replicate the History of Legendary Rock n Roll Band Queen

Alexis Mundle (2021)  
Staff Writer

Queen is one of, if not the most, legendary band in all of music history. In the past, Queen has flipped the Rock 'n' Roll genre on its head to create masterpieces with varying degrees of success. What many people don't know is that this band has a rich history.

Queen's former frontman, Freddie Mercury, was well known for his colorful personal life but little about the band's other members, Brian May, Roger Taylor, and John Deacon, is commonly known.

The people behind the movie *Bohemian Rhapsody* say that although the film mostly surrounds Mercury's life, they aimed to create a biopic portraying all four members of the band's journeys to stardom. But after watching the film, it feels more like a watered-down retelling of Mercury's story garnished with miniscule tidbits regarding the rest of the band. This isn't necessarily a bad thing but the marketing team should have advertised *Bohemian Rhapsody* as what it is, solely a

Freddie Mercury biopic, not a Queen one.

*Bohemian Rhapsody* is an adequate film about an epic quartet that deserve a far better theatrical tribute. The film could have been stronger, as the directing feels pedestrian in comparison to the outstanding job directors of biopics such as *I, Tonya* and *Malcolm X*, have done in the recent past.

It also contains many inaccurate details concerning the life of all the band members that led many die-hard Queen fans to leave theaters feeling slightly irritated or disappointed.

Such inaccuracies included the way the band originally met; the way Freddie met the love of his life, Mary Austin; how Mercury met his late partner, Jim Hutton; Freddie's AIDS diagnosis; and the overall chronology of the band's history, to name a few. I understand that no biopic is one hundred percent accurate, but I feel there were too many inaccuracies to overlook.

I know that so far I've only said negatives about the film, but the film is still worth seeing for it's



Photo by Greyson Joralemon on Unsplash

a great way to introduce, or in some cases reintroduce, yourself to the band and its wonderful music.

It also handles Freddie Mercury's sexuality well (as well as a PG-13 movie can) and does not straightwash him like many of Queen's followers previously worried when trailers first surfaced for the movie. The piece was visually outstanding, with the set for 'Live Aid' at Wembley Stadium being particularly impressive. I also commend

the film's costume, hair, and makeup designers as the characters' looks were accurate and on point.

Gwilym Lee's resemblance to Brian May in the film is especially uncanny. The only minor error with the costuming was Mercury's eye colour being deep brown in real life and being light blue in the film. I only found it odd that Malek didn't wear coloured contacts for the role of Mercury because Malek wore both a pair of prosthetic teeth

and a prosthetic nose for the role. Plus there was a frequent use of close-ups on Malek's eyes which made me constantly question why the team didn't spring for brown contacts.

To conclude, *Bohemian Rhapsody* may have a considerable amount of flaws, but it's still worth your time because of the many positive aspects of the film.

## No Interesting Movies this Year? Watch these Great Movies from 2018!

Toni Jackson (2022)  
Staff Writer

### A Star Is Born - 5/5

*A Star is Born* was so heartfelt I either was smiling or crying the entire time through. Jack (Bradley Cooper) is a musician who is struggling with drug and alcohol abuse. Ally (Lady Gaga) is a working class singer who rises to stardom when she and Jack cross paths. The entire cast has amazing chemistry. Even the supporting characters feel like they've known the main characters their entire life. This movie is definitely for those who enjoy dramas with high stakes. The second act was a little stale, but it definitely picks back up and doesn't fail to keep your interest. Even the more boring parts of the movie still were intriguing and kept you focused on what was happening on screen. Some dislike this film because it's already been remade three times (1937, 1954, and 1976), but for me, the fact that it's a remake adds to the beauty of the film. Each version somewhat accurately re-

flects how Hollywood was at the time that the film was made, and each version is equally tragic. The previous movies aren't required viewing in order to understand the 2018 film, but it definitely adds to the awe factor seeing the similarities in the main characters' lives despite the different time periods.

### Eighth Grade - 4.5/5

Though almost everyone reading this is in or has finished high school, *Eighth Grade* is a must watch for all. Written and directed by comedian Bo Burnham, the film shows a 13 year old, Kayla, who is about to enter high school. Kayla suffers from social anxiety and struggles to fit-in before she starts 9th grade. The film overall is extremely relatable which is what makes it so valuable. Generation Z's (people born ~1995-2012) technological upbringing has both positive and negative effects, which the movie shows perfectly from Kayla's anxiety over possible friendships to her making motivational videos on Youtube.

### RBG - 4/5

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is the prime example of perseverance, and that is what makes this documentary so notable. If you don't know who Ruth Bader Ginsburg (aka the Notorious RBG) is, she is the second woman ever to serve on the Supreme Court. Justice Ginsburg is currently 85 and still on the supreme court vowing to retire only when she dies. The documentary showcases all of her adversities as a female lawyer during the 20th century. The film also shows all of the cases Ginsburg has taken on and changed history for good; most of which impact us today including the 1971 *Reed v. Reed* case which ruled that men cannot be preferred to females. Ginsburg is someone all of us should be aware of, especially considering how long she has practiced law even before women were accepted in that profession.

## Two Seasons

Washington Ross (2020)  
Editor

Auburn trees, pumpkins on every door.  
The sweet smell of spices decors the very wind.  
The remains of halloweens still along the road,  
But the seasons seem not to fit the time of year.

Instead of barren branches bearing snow,  
Wilting leaves hold the frozen flakes.  
Flying with the flurries are whisks of leaves,  
Twirling in tiny tornadoes of mischief and laughter.

Icy streets pave upon piles of warm confetti,  
Grass not even gone when snow comes to bury it.  
Here comes the convergence of two once different times,  
Giving the once mundane seasons a whole new life.

## The Concrete Forest

Washington Ross (2020)  
Editor

The concrete forest, planned in every way,  
Is brought alive in the fierce thunderstorm.  
The potted trees, the asphalt roads,  
Become wild mangroves in flowing streams.

The calm and orderly palaces no more,  
Now they become mountains and cliffs in the storm.  
A violent wind blows forth and round,  
Ripping through those fragile black umbrellas.

Not even the controlled and orderly city,  
It cannot be saved from wild and ferocious nature.

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Who are we?

The Rookery is an independent student newspaper of School Without Walls High School ([www.swwhs.org](http://www.swwhs.org)), located in Washington D.C. The Rookery works to serve as the voice of the School Without Walls community and report on accurate and newsworthy stories that pertain to the SWW community. We print every other week and release during Advisory. The Rookery is located in room 127. Our advisor is Shakir Ghazi, who can be reached at [shakir.ghazi@dc.gov](mailto:shakir.ghazi@dc.gov).

Our office is open to all students that would like to contribute to the paper every Wednesday after school at 3:30. If you are interested in joining or submitting an article, art work, etc., please contact

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# What's Killing Democracy?

Adam Burch (2021)  
Editor

With the clear majority of the world's countries now identifying as democracies, it's easy to forget that democracy's future is still very much undecided. Democracy is far from the natural order of things, far from Paleolithic hierarchy or neo-dystopian oligarchy. And democracy isn't doing too well right now.

Authoritarianism, as the news has been telling everyone who'll listen for a few years, is on the rise. Far-right politicians in America, Brazil, and Europe have been enjoying success at the ballot boxes, which is a legitimate cause for concern. Even more worrying are the increasing number of ballot boxes never filled, whether due to violence, voter suppression, election delays, or other tricks in the autocratic playbook. Taken all together, the question "what's killing democracy?" has never been more important.

In some cases, de-

mocracy is being subverted through quasi-legitimate measures. For example, Nigerian elections were recently delayed for the third consecutive election cycle, and Israel passed, according to the process laid out in its constitution, an amendment harshly curtailing the rights of non-Jewish citizens. In many places, democracy was never established as strongly as it seemed.

In 20th-century Latin America, for example, dictatorships thrived under American protection and approval, while fledgling democracies that threatened American corporations found themselves on the wrong end of coups d'etat. Though most of Latin America is now officially democratic, decades-old backroom gun-barrel deals continue to haunt the region.

Where democracy has so long been a tool of the oppressor, a nominal exercise in freedom that results in the same distribution of wealth, liberty and power, it's no wonder that the democratic spirit

is repressed, and no wonder that more people aren't agitating for a more representative government. Where the same few families have ruled for decades, under the titles of King or President or Generalissimo, it's no wonder many are not outraged at reports of election fraud.

People create democracies, and people can destroy them. It only takes a little erosion of safeguards, a little corruption in the upper echelons, a little mishandling of ballots, for already-embittered people to lose their taste for democracy, to reject it as another sweet-smelling tool of imprisonment.

Maybe some more American interposition would help, but maybe the only way to have trust in a democracy is to have it built from the ground up, without foreign interference or approval. Either way, the next year will be as crucial to the future of democracy as every other year has been.

# What's the GW Program Really

Washington Ross (2020)  
Editor

For those sophomores applying to the GW Dual Enrollment Program, here's an idea of what the GW program is like.

First of all, there's more freedom than Walls. You get to decide what classes you take and when. You can take a variety of classes that you would not be able to take at Walls, such as Astronomy, Arabic, and Philosophy. You can take classes as early as 8 in the morning or as late as 8 at night.

If you struggle in a certain subject, such as science, you can decide between taking a higher level course or an easier course.

That being said, there are certain classes you have to take to fulfill your high school requirements, such as US History and a math class, and you must take courses to fulfill certain GW requirements.

The GW program also requires that you be more independent. If you need help in a subject, you have to seek it out. That means going to office hours, tutoring, or asking a friend in the class. Professors will not usually make the first move if they see you are struggling, especially in larger classes.

Just because you are a GW student, you are still a part of Walls. You can still hang out with your Walls friends and remain

connected through clubs and sports at Walls. You can also arrange your schedule to have Walls lunch (even both lunches).

The program also requires that you know yourself. Given all the choices you have, you need to know how you work best. You'll have a lot of freedom, but it's up to you on how to use that freedom.

**“Understand yourself for everyone has different strengths. Know yours and use them.”**  
-Steven Guo,

# Hidden Stars

Washington Ross (2020)  
Editor

That bare black blanket that I once knew,  
Turns out to be dusted with twinkling speks.  
At first all I noticed was the flamboyant moon.  
But I guess there's more than just that glowing crest.

At times the sky seems blank, a simply black shade,  
But then the violet tints are made clear.  
Realize the mystic feeling the hidden clouds made,  
The distant stellar wonders, they must be near.

Await the parting and the clouds reveal,  
Miniscule lights hidden in plain sight.  
And a man stands above watching your ordeal.

Align the sparkles and figures you see,  
A hidden nighttime majesty.