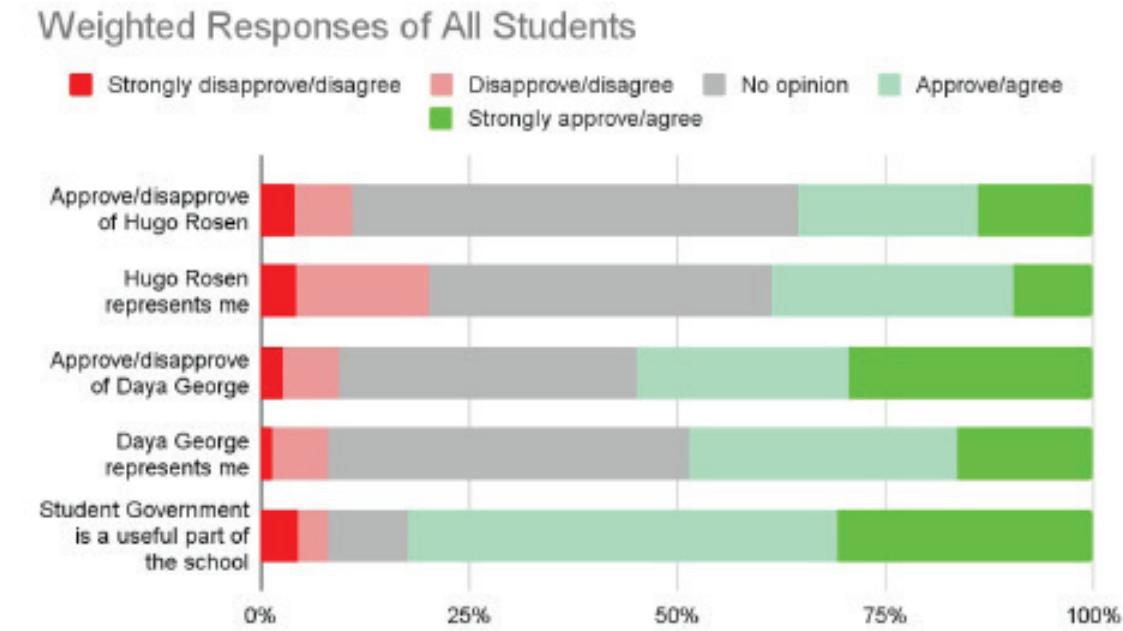


New Poll Reveals Student Indifference Towards the SGA

by David Sipos (2025)
Staff Writer

The Rookery has conducted its first-ever poll of student approval of the Student Government Association (SGA) and co-presidents Hugo Rosen (sophomore) and Daya George (junior). Rosen was first elected in October and George was elected as the sole president last year, then re-elected this year. The poll additionally surveyed student sentiment on the institution of the SGA as a whole. This was one area of broad agreement among students. Over 80% either agreed or strongly agreed when asked whether the SGA was a useful part of the school. Rosen cited this as evidence that the Walls SGA was more than a popularity contest, a label often applied to student governments at any school. Walls students “see the value of SGA as an outlet for them to be heard and represented,” Rosen argued. Firm and decisive views on parts of the SGA end there, however, as high percentages of students expressed no opinion on the performance of either president. Slightly more than half of students neither approved nor disapproved of Rosen, but he suggested this was temporary, expressing confidence that “no opinion” responses would drop as the year progresses and more students learn of “the people behind the actions” of the SGA. However, while Rosen conceded that communication and messaging can be improved, he



Credits: David Sipos

did not expect the SGA to “change anything fundamental about how we operate.” Rosen attributes the gap between his relatively high support among freshmen and sophomores (45% and 54% respectively) and his near-anonymity among seniors (88% holding no opinion) to his greater level of personal interaction with underclassmen. He identified his continuing goal as “[making] Walls a better school and [making] Walls a more enjoyable school.” He highlighted his plans to improve

the school Wi-Fi, which he expects to implement by January, an aim he had in his campaign, and to plan more events to bring together students, like the November Homecoming that he helped orchestrate. Rosen hopes that if he delivers on these goals “[his] ratings will reflect that.”

Continued on page 2



Credits: Jennifer Nehrer

“Room for improvement, but for now, I’m fine”: All students return to Walls amid pandemic

by Gabriel Kraemer (2023)
Senior Editor

There were long security lines, new Kids Ride Free cards, morning advisory meetings, and crowds waiting for class schedules — in other words, an average first day of school. But there were also clear differences: Everyone wore masks. All classes had assigned seats. The all-school assembly was on Microsoft Teams. On August 30th, School Without Walls and other DCPS high schools opened their doors

to all students for the first time in 18 months. Administrators have instituted a number of COVID-19 prevention protocols: DCPS is requiring random asymptomatic testing of 20 percent of enrolled students every week; all teachers and staff must be vaccinated; and masks are required on all school property. Consistent with updated Centers for Disease Control (CDC) school guidelines issued earlier this year, students must only be three feet apart in classrooms, though administrators have instructed teachers to remain at least six feet from students. If someone in a school building tests positive for coronavirus — as has already happened multiple times at Walls since the school year started — the entire school is notified, but only that individual must quarantine for 10 days, as

well as any narrowly-defined “close contacts.” There are technically none of these in a classroom: According to city guidelines, if students “are consistently wearing well-fitting masks,” they cannot be close contacts. This stands in stark contrast to last school year, when an entire classroom would have to quarantine if a single case was reported. Teachers upload classroom seating charts to Aspen, the DCPS grading portal, to support contact tracing efforts. Contact tracing gets more complicated when it comes to lunch, where there are no assigned seats; students must scan QR codes with cell phones during breakfast and lunch if they eat inside the school building and fill out a survey using their Microsoft account, Principal Sylvia Isaac said. Other schools, including Wilson High School, have also implemented the QR code policy. “The reopening of School Without Walls in-person learning is off to a good start,” said Principal Isaac, citing the club fair and the resumption of extracurricular athletics programs. “We have shared safety protocols with the school community and students are adhering to safety guidelines.” Students, however, are not all satisfied. “I’m a little nervous,” Sydney Horge, a junior at Walls, said of returning to school. “It depends [if] we’re in crowds in the hallways. Actually sitting in class, or outside at lunch, I’m not as nervous.” Some students raised concerns about people taking off their masks to eat and drink indoors outside the lunch period. “Some people are eating in class, or taking their masks off in the hallways,” said Malia Weedon, a Walls student. “It only takes one person to ruin it for those who are following [protocols].” Principal Isaac said that COVID cases have been limited, and that appropriate measures were taken. “[Walls] has reported two COVID cases between August and September,” she said.

Continued on page 3

Seniors Get Another Spirit Week

by Darya Fillipova (2025)
Staff Writer



Seniors on the terrace on Pajama Day
Credits: Ilan Ziv

After eighteen months of virtual learning, schools in D.C fully reopened on August 31, 2021. Before then, schools were open for hybrid learning, where students still received instruction from behind a screen, but in a classroom environment. This still was not as close to the “normal” that students wanted as online learning and COVID-19 restrictions limited school events like homecoming and spirit week. With everyone back in the school building, the Student Government Association (SGA) was looking for a way to kickstart school spirit. The week of November 1, the SGA led a school-wide spirit week. The themes included decades day, character day, twin day, and the week was topped off with a successful homecoming dance. On Decades day, people took advantage of fashion from every decade and showcased their best outfits for the 70s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s! Those who dressed from the 80s included a splash of color in their attire and those from the 2000s wore low rise jeans. On character day, students dressed up as a va-

riety of characters ranging from Velma (Scooby Doo) to Darth Vader. Sophomore Avajane Lei, who dressed up as Howl Pendragon (Howl’s Moving Castle), examines how, “some people were really creative and it was impressive to see their take on a specific character.” For twin day, Walls had a great variety of matching outfits either in pairs or in groups!

However, the following week, there was an unexpected spirit week for the class of 22’. The senior council initiated the idea of senior spirit week which began with pajama day, followed by anything but a backpack day, dress like a teacher day, and lastly, disney day. Students certainly enjoyed anything but a backpack day as the trend rose from TikTok and many were anticipating its arrival. Some items brought in for the occasion were a cooler, laundry basket, and flute case. For dress like a teacher day, very common options were Mr. Koplowitz, and Mr. Davis.

After speaking to some members of the class of 22’, it became clear that their essential idea for senior spirit week came from their desire to make up for lost time in high school. The pandemic made this year’s seniors leave in March of their sophomore year only to return in their final year of highschool. Transitioning from 10th to 12th grade caused seniors to lose a whole year of connections and lifelong memories. Ideally, this whole week was dedicated to, “kickstarting class engagement and senior spirit in general” says senior Ilan Ziv.

After the arrival of the freshman and sophmores, who never experienced in-person highschool, Walls was missing the “culture” that Ziv referenced. The senior class clearly, “carries the vibes” at Walls through homecoming, senior pranks, and pep rallies, all to fulfill their final year of high school. The class of 22’

felt as if it was their duty to do something unforgettable for their return back to school.

Next, Ilan Ziv, who represented the senior council, was asked the question: should seniors get their own spirit week every year? Although every highschool has their own traditions and special events relating to each grade level, Ziv made it clear that the goal of this year’s senior spirit week was not to create a tradition, but rather to maximize the class of 22’s senior experience. However, Ziv said that, “if seniors next year and the following years decide to continue senior spirit week, that would be great.” As the class of 23’ approaches their senior year, they will have opportunities to pick up where the class of 22’ left off with senior spirit week or to create their own unique events to make senior year memorable. Who knows, maybe the class of 22’ began an enjoyable tradition that will be a highlight of everyone’s senior year.



Dress Like a Teacher Day
Credits: Tatia Jahan

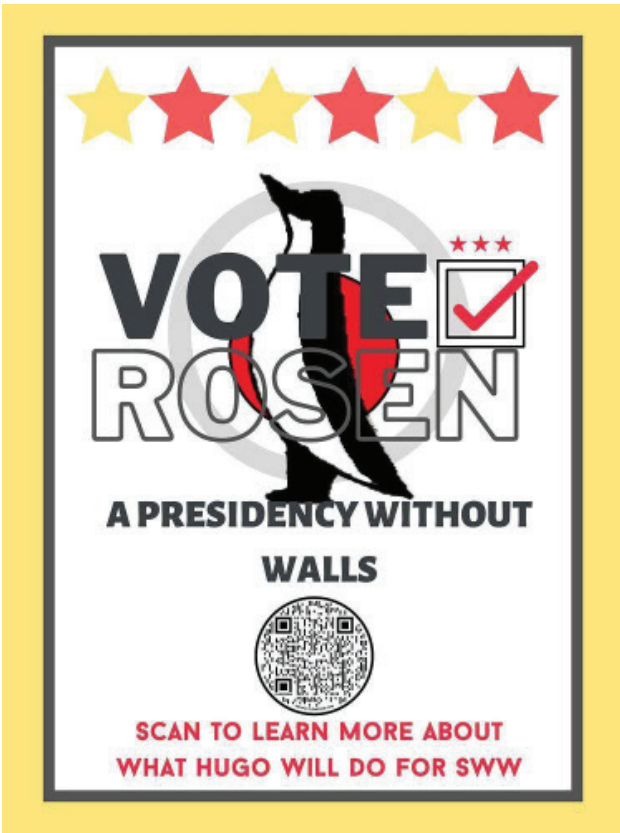
SGA Poll Continued

Although George saw stronger support than Rosen among the school as a whole, her fellow juniors were considerably indifferent towards her presidency. 42% of juniors expressed no opinion when asked whether George represented them. She ascribed this to virtual school for the entirety of last year, which hindered the formation of personal connections. “A lot of my peers haven’t been able to know me on a personal level” during virtual school, George said. “It makes sense that the class of 2023 is unfamiliar with my presidency.” As Rosen is unknown to seniors, George is anonymous in the eyes of freshmen, with 73% responding with no opinion to both poll questions. George expressed confidence that “as the freshmen continue at Walls and have more opportunities to engage with SGA, they’ll form more concrete opinions.” She polled stronger with seniors, which she says is due to their past engagement with the SGA and its leadership.

A key priority of George’s is to support the homeless population of DC using the SGA’s organizing and fundraising ability. She hopes that the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions will make it easier for the SGA to host events. In addition to being a moral and personal priority, George believes her goal aligns with that of many Walls students. ”Fighting hunger in homeless communities is an issue that many Walls students are passionate about,” George said.

Polls and Methods:

In the past several decades, public opinion polling has gone from a rarity that had a limited effect on the actions of leaders to an almost daily occurrence that can tear down or build up political campaigns. Firms dedicated entirely to polling are paid large sums of money to call thousands of voters, attempting to gauge their attitudes toward an issue or public figure.



Credits: Hugo Rosen

Out of thousands of calls to voters, only 6% responded in 2018 according to the Pew Research Center, down from 36% in 1996.

The Rookery is not a massive polling firm and the population that we surveyed, the 597 students of Walls, is much smaller than the entirety of the American population. Over two weeks, we sent out a few hundred emails to students’ personal emails, accessed through the directory of the Home and School Association (HSA) of Walls. This itself posed an initial challenge to conducting the poll. The HSA directory is incomplete and outdated, with many students simply absent from its lists and others not recording their personal emails. However, there were just enough students listing their emails to send 40 initial emails to members of each grade with a grade-specific link to a

Google Form.

The bulk of the responses came following this initial request, in addition to a reminder email. Emails were sent to 15 freshmen and sophomores to increase response rates. With 51 responses, around a quarter of students responded to the poll, significantly higher than the response rate of a national public opinion poll.

Despite this high response rate, the poll has a higher margin of error (MoE) than desired. MoE is a measurement of how accurate a survey of a sample is and how representative it is of the overall population. The nature of polling is that a small sample, even one that is a high percentage of the overall population, will always yield a high MoE. Due to reluctance to respond and the limited contact information available to us on the directory, achieving a desired MoE around 4% was simply not feasible. An intelligent consumer of information should take this poll and all others with a grain of salt, not just because of MoE but because of unforeseen and overlooked flaws in the process.

Here are the samples and margins of error:

Total ---- pop. 597 ---- n: 51 ---- MoE: 13%

Freshmen ---- pop. 156 ---- n: 11 ---- MoE: 29%
Sophomores ---- pop. 143 ---- n: 18 ---- MoE: 22%
Juniors ---- pop. 151 ---- n: 14 ---- MoE: 25%
Seniors ---- pop. 147 ---- n: 8 ---- MoE: 34%

For detailed results of the poll by grade, use the following link: bit.ly/3IgJYfD

Teacher Spotlight:
Autumn Wilson



Credits: Kaleidoscope Montessori Collaborative Website

by Jennifer Nehrer (2022)
Senior Editor

When all of School Without Walls’ French classes were left without a teacher for nearly the entire first advisory, parents, students, and staff were concerned that French students would entirely forget the language. To mitigate this crisis, SWW brought in a parent volunteer: Autumn Wilson.

After Ms. Wilson heard from her daughter, a

ninth grader at SWW taking French IV, that the school had lost both of its French teachers, she reached out to the administration about the opportunity to volunteer in the affected classes. The administration accepted Mrs. Wilson’s offer and she began volunteering at the school in the higher-level French classes on Oct. 18.

“I was really sad for all of the students who didn’t have the opportunity to learn or to advance in French,” Wilson said in an interview.

Apart from volunteering, Wilson walks and hosts dogs full time. In previous years this occupation was more of what she calls a “side hustle” while she taught young children at public charter and private montessori schools in the DC area, but this year she took a break from teaching to spend more time with her family and give her more free time for other activities (like volunteering at Walls).

Mrs. Wilson learned French in high school, but she felt that her curriculum didn’t prepare her enough for taking it at the college level. After taking another two years of the language in college, she embarked on a year abroad in Nice, France, to learn French in an immersive environment. “I ended that school year speaking more or less fluently,” Wilson said. Since that year in Nice, she has kept the French language a strong part of her life. She and her husband and children speak French at home.

After a few weeks at SWW, one of two new French teachers, Bouchaib Mifdal, took Wilson’s place starting Nov. 8.

Students Return To Walls
continued

“Administration followed DCPS COVID-19 protocols and letters [were] emailed to impacted individuals and close contacts in the school community.” One of the COVID cases at Walls was reported before students arrived at school, and one more case was reported to families after the interview with Principal Isaac was conducted.

Unlike teachers, eligible students are not required to be vaccinated, though Principal Isaac said that the school “continues to encourage families” to vaccinate students. Students age 12 or older must be fully vaccinated to participate in school athletics programs. Nearly 100 percent of respondents to a tentative poll conducted by the Walls Home and School Association in mid-September reported that their students were vaccinated, although the poll reached families representing less than half of the Walls student body.

Many students agreed that crowds in the hallways and at dismissal made for a less safe environment. Administrators could “stagger dismissal times slightly, or be a bit more clear on which routes to take between classes,” to help reduce some of the crowds, Weedon said. But mostly, students thought the COVID situation at Walls was sustainable. “I feel like there’s room for improvement, but for now, I’m fine,” Horge said. “Everyone’s been wearing masks, and people don’t really eat in class that much, so I’m good.”

“We haven’t had any COVID situations, except for one person that first week,” said Raphael Udemba, another Walls student. “So I’m pretty happy with what they’ve done.”

Teacher Spotlight:
Bouchaib Mifdal



Credits: Bouchaib Mifdal

by Jennifer Nehrer (2022)
Senior Editor

After two uncertain months of school, School Without Walls can finally welcome one of two incoming French teachers: Bouchaib Mifdal. Mr. Mifdal, who started at SWW on November 8th, grew up in Morocco where he taught French, English as a Second Language (ESL), and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). After moving to the United States, Mr. Mifdal also taught French to students in North Carolina before coming to SWW.

During his time at SWW, Mr. Mifdal will be teaching AP French, French IV, and French I, as well as supervising two Senior Project classes. He is “very excited to be part of the teaching team at SWW” and looks forward to “support[ing] students’ learning of French and enhanc[ing] their skills.”

Homecoming Returns in
2021

by Josie McCartney (2024)
Staff Writer

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, teenagers across the country have lost many traditional parts of the American high school experience, from everyday interaction with teachers and peers to iconic homecoming dances. Walls students didn’t have a homecoming dance last year, but this year, with a return to in person classes and athletics, the Walls Student Government Association organized an event on November 5.

The event was outdoors at the pavilion at the Fields at RFK. In addition to a DJ and dancing, there were games like cornhole, hopscotch, and multiple photo opportunities. The dance had homecoming royalty positions for each grade and was catered by Potbelly.

Daya George, the SGA president, said Walls administrators had been wary of holding an event. “Initially, the administration was opposed to hosting the dance this year due to COVID concerns,” she said. “They changed their minds after the student government [persuaded] them.”

George also noted the contributions of the Home and School Association to the event. “Student government would not have been able to host Homecoming without HSA funding or support,” she said. “We are super appreciative that they helped make this happen.” Unvaccinated attendees had to provide a negative COVID test no more than 72 hours before the dance, and masks were required, according to George. The dance was held outdoors at the RFK pavilion for COVID safety reasons as well.

Senior Jen Nehrer said that the mitigation measures taken lessened her concerns about the safety of the event. “I was definitely less worried about COVID knowing that it would be outside,” she said, adding that additional testing or vaccination requirements “eased my worries.”

“Even though we were outside, most people stayed masked,” Nehrer said. Sophomores elected Avajane Lei duke of the class of 2024. “Being [homecoming] duke for the sophomores was a really fun experience and was also great to see how my friends were willing to vote for me and just go along with it,” she said. “It was also really fun to have Alex Horowitz as the duchess since he ran and lost in the Wilson homecoming court.”

Lei explained that when she attended one of the SGA homecoming planning meetings, George and some of her friends encouraged her to run for duke and nominated her. “I liked that especially for the seniors, they didn’t do gender-specific [roles in the court] so two people out of anyone could win,” Nehrer said.

Lei said the event was a much-needed relief from school. “Being at homecoming was probably the most fun I’ve had in a while,” she said. “It was surreal to see all my friends dressed up and stress-free of schoolwork for just a few hours. Someone told me the pictures we took there looked like ‘kids being kids for the first time in 18 months,’ which is so true.”

Junior Gabriel Kraemer decided not to attend the dance after considering the freezing November weather. He said that SGA and administration “had said in the emails trying to get people to buy tickets that it was going to be very cold, and it didn’t sound that appealing to me if I was going to have to be outside the whole time.”



Credits: Scott Olson, Getty Images, via Breck Dumas, Fox Business

2021 Sees Surge in Union Activity

by David Sipos (2025)
Staff Writer

Disclaimer: This article was originally written during October, but has been updated as numerous strikes and victories for American labor movements continue.

Currently, thousands of workers and union members are on strike across the country in numbers rarely seen in American labor. The widespread strikes in recent months, primarily October, crown a highly successful year for the labor movement in the United States. Union membership and wage growth are both up, and workers everywhere have demanded reforms from their employers.

Republicans prove that Virginia is still a swing state

by Gabriel Kraemer (2023)
Senior Editor

Once a hotly-contested swing state, Virginia had voted more Democratic every passing year. No Republican presidential candidate had won the state since George W. Bush in 2004, and President Joe Biden defeated former president Donald Trump by more than 10 percentage points last year. Democrats gained unified control of Virginia’s government for the first time in more than 20 years in 2019. Many said Virginia was hardly a swing state anymore.

All of that fell flat on Nov. 2. when Republican businessman Glenn Youngkin narrowly defeated former Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe at the polls by about 2 percentage points. Youngkin, who has never before held elected office, focused the race on education, saying parents have a “fundamental right” to be involved in their students’ schooling. McAuliffe, in a Sept. 28 debate, told Youngkin he “do[esn’t] think parents should be telling schools what they should teach,” drawing further attacks from Youngkin. Youngkin also said he would ban teaching critical race theory if elected, drawing on national conservative opposition to the once-obscure academic theory about the present role of race and racism in society, and he attacked Democrats for their opposition to reopening schools last year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Virginia is one of just a few states that holds statewide elections in odd years, rather than in conjunction with federal presidential or congressional elections. Instead, Virginia’s governor is elected every four years in the year following a presidential election, making it an early test of a newly-elected presidential

In Iowa, 10,000 members of the United Auto Workers spent much of October and November on strike against John Deere, one of the largest producers of agricultural equipment. Workers argued that John Deere has seen record profits this year, yet no benefits had made it to them. John Deere employees held out for five weeks, voting down multiple unsatisfactory agreements before agreeing on significant pay raises, pensions for future workers, and bonuses designed to cut healthcare costs. An even larger strike was narrowly averted when the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), representing over 60,000 workers in the entertainment industry who work behind-the-scenes, like set or costume designers, announced a deal with employers to increase weekend hours and breaks between shifts. Many of the workers’ demands were not fully met by the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers who employ

party’s chances for the following year in the midterms.

In another quirk of the Virginia electoral system, governors are prohibited from serving consecutive terms. This means that McAuliffe couldn’t run for a second term in 2017, but could this year; and that incumbent Gov. Ralph Northam (D) could not run for reelection this cycle, but could potentially try to regain the office in 2025.

McAuliffe tried to connect Youngkin and his policies to Trump — who lost by a large margin in the state — in order to convince swing voters who voted for Biden perhaps reluctantly not to support Youngkin, but this strategy evidently was not enough for the Democrats to triumph. He highlighted Youngkin’s support for an “audit” of voting machines in the state, which he argued showed Youngkin’s support of Trump’s refusal to accept his loss in the 2020 presidential election. (Youngkin has said that Biden won the election legitimately, though he

them, particularly around wage hikes and the breaks between shifts. However, IATSE narrowly ratified the contract in October.

Numerous smaller strikes are going on across the country. 2,000 healthcare workers in Buffalo, New York, have been on strike since October 1st over safety, healthcare benefits, and wages. More than 20,000 healthcare workers with Kaiser Permanente in California forced wage hikes and greater safety regulations after threatening a strike.

Workers with the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM), employed by cereal producer Kellogg’s, have been on strike for two months now, fighting benefit cuts and outsourcing. Kellogg’s workers rejected a December agreement that they found insufficient, leading Kellogg’s to start seeking replacement workers. President Joe Biden expressed support for the striking workers, denouncing the company’s move. “Collective bargaining is an essential tool to protect the rights of workers that should be free from threats and intimidation from employers,” Biden said in a statement. BCTGM has also represented workers in a July strike against the Frito-Lay corporation over what sometimes became 84-hour workweeks, and a September strike against Nabisco, demanding shorter shifts, higher wages, and greater retirement benefits. Both strikes exacted concessions from the companies and new benefits for the workers.

One of the most impressive strikes has been in Alabama, among the workers of Warrior Met Coal. Miners for Warrior Met have been on strike since April 1st, arguing they made lots of concessions to keep the company from bank

Continued on page 5

did not say so until after the Republican primary ended.) McAuliffe also emphasized his support of Biden’s national economic agenda and touted his record from his previous term. Polls narrowed in the weeks leading up to Election Day, reaching very small margins that closely mirrored the actual results. According to the final FiveThirtyEight polling average for the race, Youngkin improved from a deficit of almost 8 percentage points in early August to a one-point lead on Nov. 2.

Democrats also lost several seats in the Virginia House of Delegates, narrowly losing control of the chamber.

The Virginia gubernatorial race status as one of the first competitive races after presidential elections traditionally makes it a test of the president’s popularity, success, and chances in congressional elections the following year, potentially foreshadowing Democratic challenges going into 2022.



Credits: Cliff Owen, AP Photo



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

Credits: UK Government

Despite signs of progress, absences and politics impede climate summit

by David Sipos (2025)
Staff Writer

As the impacts of climate change are worsening and becoming more visible, both individuals and world governments are increasingly realizing the severity of the threat. World leaders and diplomats representing nearly 200 members of the United Nations attempted to do their part by convening this month in Glasgow, Scotland for the 26th annual summit on climate, known as COP26 (COP stands for Conference of Parties). World governments have pledged varying levels of action on climate as scientists warn of the dangers of passing the global 1.5 °C warming threshold. Exceeding that warming target will likely set in the most severe and irreversible effects of climate change. UN members set updated goals, negotiated more specific agreements, and made new pledges, but insufficient commitments by the largest emitters and uncooperative nations have the world set to fall short of UN goals.

At the conclusion of COP26, negotiators struck a final deal aimed at staying within reach of the 1.5 °C goal. The new agreement contained

ruptcy and have yet to see restitution.

Union members for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) negotiated a bankruptcy contract that saw cuts to wages and benefits, which was to be temporary. The strike has stretched on for months, seeing minimal progress and several arrests, but Warrior Met workers have not backed down.

An attempt to unionize among Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama was an early indicator of the union activity to come. The Alabama effort garnered national attention and widespread coverage by the media. However, after fierce efforts by one of the largest employers in the country, the union vote failed. Recently, though, a member of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which oversees union activity, ordered a new vote, citing labor law violations by Amazon. The union enthusiasm has spread to New York, where workers for Amazon in Staten Island are collecting signatures to create a brand-new Amazon Labor Union. Workers withdrew their request after the NLRB asked for more signatures, but their effort is continuing.

A Starbucks in Buffalo, New York, made history in December by voting to unionize. The 27 employees voted 19-8 to form the first union at a Starbucks in the company's history. The Buffalo employees will join Workers United, a branch of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Although another Buffalo Starbucks rejected the union effort, it has already inspired others to file with the NLRB, not just in New York but in Arizona as well.

The union activity is indicative of a broader reexamination of labor in the United States nearing the end of the pandemic. Not only have employed workers exacted concessions, people entering or reentering the workforce have forced changes. A tight labor market and a continued hesitancy to return to work have compelled businesses to raise wages the most

language singling out fossil fuels, specifically coal, as the leading cause of climate change. This is a fact that has been known for decades. The agreement compels member nations to update their pledges to limit emissions, but, like in previous years, largely punts to COP27, which will be held next year in Egypt.

The summit was also hampered by the efforts of large emitters like India. India succeeded in changing the wording on coal use from “phase out” to “phase down.” China joined India in watering down the language. China is the largest greenhouse gas emitter and India is third, both relying heavily on coal and natural gas. Chinese president Xi Jinping was notably absent from the summit, instead sending a special envoy on climate and a diplomatic team. China has even stepped up their coal production in the past year, endangering climate goals. India set a target of 2070 for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, far later than the desired date of 2050.

China, however, struck a surprise deal with the United States to increase climate action. The agreement between the two countries, who have clashed with each other on issues going far beyond climate, would compel them to mutually accelerate decarbonization initiatives and investment.

Other large emitters remain off-track to keep warming below 1.5 °C include Iran and Russia, who have bizarrely made pledges far above what they are projected to emit. Russian leader Vladimir Putin was also absent from the summit and Iran is among only a few nations which have still not ratified the 2015 Paris Agreement.

World leaders also cut several smaller deals at COP26, reaching an agreement to end de-

in 35 years. In November, more workers voluntarily quit their jobs than ever before, with more than 3% of the workforce quitting. These resignations suggest that workers are more comfortable leaving their jobs if their employers do not sufficiently support them or accommodate their needs.

It remains to be seen if this reexamination of work will continue into 2022. The pandemic is drawing to a close, and its dissipation may resolve or intensify the recent labor activity. Regardless, it will continue to have broad ramifications for large companies, the economy, and the lives of American workers.

The Pandora Papers: Hidden Wealth in Plain Text

by Jennifer Nehrer (2022)
Senior Editor

On October 3, 2021, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) began to publish a series of leaked documents known as the “Pandora Papers.” The papers, found and reviewed by 14 sources and over 600 journalists from 117 countries, contain 11.9 million documents that amount to about 2.9 Terabytes of data. For perspective, that is about 2969.6 Gigabytes—or nearly 24 full ELi Tablets worth of storage (they can contain 128GB each).

The information released in the Pandora Papers contains damning evidence of money laundering, hidden wealth, and tax avoidance by 330 of the rich and powerful from over 90 countries and territories. Some notable examples included the family of Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta that is linked to 13 offshore companies and investments, the King of Jordan connected to a \$100 million spending spree via a “network of secretly-owned firms,” and ex-UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and his

forestation over the following decades. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that deforestation accounts for nearly a quarter of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. The agreement would direct several billion Euros to reduce the clearing of forests and devote funding to reforestation. In addition to leaders of more wealthy countries, presidents Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil and Joko Widodo of Indonesia, both of whom govern large, heavily forested countries that have been increasingly deforested to expand agricultural production, signed on to the agreement.

Another agreement seeks to reduce the emission of methane, a greenhouse gas that is considerably more potent than carbon dioxide but remains in the atmosphere for only a decade, making it an easier target for nations seeking to cut their emissions. Oil and natural gas, the latter a purportedly “cleaner” energy source, both emit methane. 105 countries signed the Global Methane Pledge, which seeks to reduce methane emissions by at least 30% by the end of the decade. Notably absent from the pledge were China, Russia, Australia, and India. Australia depends heavily on agriculture and livestock, another emitter of methane, and the others are the top three emitters of the gas in the world, due largely to their reliance on coal or natural gas.

Back in the US, regulators and politicians, including President Joe Biden, have prepared plans to cut emissions by 50% from 2005 levels by the end of the decade. The US is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases. After months of negotiations, Congress passed Biden's bipartisan infrastructure plan, which comprises nearly 600 billion in new spending.

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wife to an offshore firm that they bought in order to save \$361k on a property in Marylebone, London.

While many around the world have been mentioned in the Pandora Papers, a few noteworthy names have been left out. The wealthiest in the United States, including Bill Gates, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, do not appear in any of the leaked documents. According to experts interviewed by the Washington Post, this is because their tax rates are so low that they have no need to hide in offshore dealings.

Other files in the Pandora Papers implicate several locations in the United States and Central America as havens for offshore financial dealings. Among the most frequently used locations was the state of South Dakota, because of its relaxed banking laws. The prairie-ridden state specializes in a particular type of trust known as a “dynasty trust,” which is a legal way of storing money to save for generations without having to pay taxes on it.

This investigation has already sparked change. As of October 16, the Denver Art Museum has announced that it plans to return four Cambodian antique pieces that the Pandora Papers revealed had been sold to the museum by Douglas Latchford, who has been charged with trafficking looted artifacts from the Khmer Empire. Though the museum initially did not offer to return the pieces when Latchford was first indicted in 2019, the recent media pressure following the publishing of the Pandora Papers proved enough to drive them to return the pieces.

The Denver Art Museum story likely won't be the only consequence of the Pandora Papers. In this sea of nearly 12 million documents, many wrongs will come to light, and hopefully, be rectified.

COP26 continued

The bill includes around \$50 billion for responding to and resisting the effects of climate change. It also includes funding for improving electricity transmission, which will help renewable energy efforts, and some money for the construction of electric vehicle charging stations. The bill includes the REPLANT Act, which removes the cap on revenue for the Reforestation Trust Fund and allows for the planting of 1.2 billion trees over the following decade, which will further the summit's reforestation goals. However, greater funding initially present in Biden's American Jobs Plan was stripped by Republican negotiators reluctant to act on climate change. These climate provisions have been modified and placed in Biden's reconciliation package, which he has termed Build Back Better. While conservative Democratic Senators like Joe Manchin (WV) and Kyrsten Sinema (AZ) have whittled the initial package down to \$1.75 trillion from \$3.5 trillion, \$555 billion in clean energy and other decarbonization incentives has largely been preserved. Additionally, a methane emission fee is under negotiation. The reconciliation package has yet to pass, however, now held up primarily by Manchin.



Climate activist Greta Thunberg at the COP 26
Credits: Andrew Milligan, PA Images

from the neighboring Amhara region have been sent in to fight the Tigray soldiers, and although both sides deny it, there is evidence suggesting that Eritrean troops are also aiding the Ethiopian government in Tigray. By January 2021, 56,000 people had fled the fighting to neighboring Sudan. Thousands of people have died, and the UN suggests that there have been numerous war crimes, acts of sexual violence, and human rights abuses in the attacks on Tigray.

Joe Biden and his administration have been harsh towards Ahmed and the Ethiopian government, accusing them of large human rights violations and threatening to remove Ethiopia from a US trade pact. On one hand,

Although more nations are acting to limit emissions and avoid climate catastrophe, the planet remains dangerously off-track to avert 1.5 °C of warming. Environmental activists have decried the summit as a failure that will have little effect on climate change. Youth climate activist Greta Thunberg denounced COP26 as “a P.R. campaign.” She led thousands of protesters in Glasgow against what they see as inaction. Thunberg harshly characterized the summit as a “two-week-long celebration of business as usual and blah, blah, blah.” In the US, Democrats are nearing passage of their reconciliation bill and the climate provisions that come with it. Abroad, nations like China and Iran remain barriers to preventing the worst of climate change.

Conflict in Ethiopia Grows

by Carys Shepard (2023)
Staff Writer

On November 9th 2021, as usual, protests could be seen and heard in front of the White House. This protest in particular condemned the US's support of the Tigray People's Liberation (TPFL). Meanwhile, the details of this conflict remain vague to many DC residents and US citizens as a whole, much less the details of the US's involvement. Considering that the US is a major world power and often has a hand in international affairs, it is important for Americans to understand current international conflicts as well as the role that the US plays in them.

Tigray is a region in northern Ethiopia. Tigrayans form their own ethnic group, constituting about 6% of the Ethiopian population. The region is currently governed by the TPFL, a party originally founded in the 1970s with the

Biden does not seek to disrupt decades of a close US-Ethiopia relationship, on the other hand, Biden wants to support human rights around the world. Due to his actions, anti-US sentiment has been growing in Ethiopia. On November 5, 2021, there was a large rally in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The rally was organized by the government to consolidate support for Ahmed and fight against the TPLF. At the rally, citizens demanded that the US stop interfering in their affairs.

Many Ethiopians are well aware of their government's corruption. Almaz Haile, an Ethiopian woman, details how “they steal everything and move it to the Tigray region. I think 30 billion dollars they stole and put in every

aim of making Tigray its own country. Later, the TPLF joined the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of several ethnic political parties that had a major influence on Ethiopian politics. Thus, Tigray has had a large influence on Ethiopian national affairs.

In November 2020, the Tigray regional government launched a militaristic attack on Sero, an Ethiopian military base in response to actions by Ethiopia's prime minister, beginning a fierce, bloody conflict within Ethiopia that has only intensified this year.

In 2018, Abiy Ahmed rose to power in the EPRDF as Ethiopia's prime minister. He moved the country away from the ethnic divisions and corruption that prevailed in Ethiopia under the EPRDF by dissolving the EPRDF and forming a new group called the Prosperity Party. Ahmed also made peace with the Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki after decades of Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, winning him the Nobel Peace Prize. It was evident from the beginning that TPLF and Ahmed were not allies, as TPLF declined to join the Prosperity Party and Ahmed's government accused TPLF of causing ethnic violence.

After decades of electoral manipulation and marginalization of minor political parties by the EPRDF, Ethiopia intended to have its first truly democratic elections in the summer of 2020. However, Ahmed delayed the elections due to COVID-19. In defiance, the TPLF held its own regional elections, which they won, however Ahmed declared these elections to be invalid, causing the TPLF to launch its attack on the Ethiopian military base Sero.

In retaliation, Ahmed ordered a federal attack on the region, calling the attack by the TPLF a “treason that will never be forgotten.” Troops

bank outside Ethiopia.” Indeed, TPLF leaders stole 30 billion dollars donated to Ethiopia as humanitarian aid.

Given that the US is a major haven for asylum seekers, we may soon see an influx in Ethiopian refugees given the scale of the conflict. Although there isn't much discussion around this conflict set thousands of miles away, the US continues to be a major presence in African affairs. Protests continue downtown, including one last week on December 10th, 2021.

Credits: Hazim Elhag, UNHCR



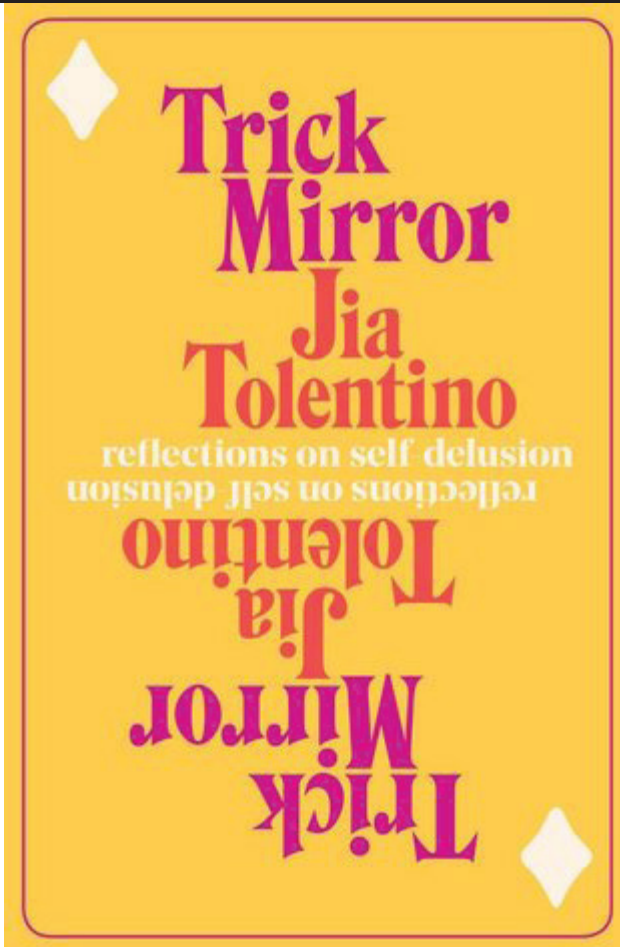
Trick Mirror Review

by Tess Buckley (2023)
Senior Editor

What do scams, drugs, the birth of the internet, and athleisure have in common? To Jia Tolentino, these are the cornerstones that define her generation's ethos. In her 2019 New York Times best selling essay collection, *Trick Mirror*, millennial Tolentino reflects on how not only she, but all of us, can be deluded by the promises of a more perfect life. With humor and keen insight, she explores niche topics, like the relationship between Sweetgreen and capitalism or YA books and feminism to cut through the illusions that we buy into. For me, she is like a cool older sister lending guidance to navigate the turbulent realities of the 21st century.

Tolentino is a Phillipina Canadian-American author, who was raised in an Evangelical Christian community in Houston, Texas. As a teen, she was on the reality TV show *Boys vs. Girls Puerto Rico* before attending the University of Virginia on a scholarship. Following her graduation from UVA with degrees in English and political theory and thought, she spent a year in the Peace Corps in Kyrgyzstan. She then went on to the University of Michigan to complete her MFA. She became a contributor at the blog *The Hairpin*, then an editor at the feminist blog *Jezebel*. She is currently a staff writer at *The New Yorker*.

Tolentino is an unlikely feminist. Her early years in the conservative megachurch of Houston, Texas could have stifled the development of her feminist mindset, but this was not so. She has retained her understanding of conservative American culture, while developing her liberal, feminist views.



Credits: Goodreads

While many of the essays in *Trick Mirror* explore social trends, some are deeply personal. In "Ecstasy", Tolentino details her experiences with religious ecstasy at her childhood church, as well as her experimentation with LSD and codeine. She is very open about her lifelong recreational drug use, beginning in highschool and continuing through the present. It may be surprising to some that a woman who is a self admitted "stoner" is so prolific in her writing, but for Tolentino's dedicated fanbase it further

demonstrates her authenticity.

Considering how Tolentino enjoys a good time, it may not be surprising that I recently met her the night before a music festival she was attending. She was in DC moderating a women in media panel and I spoke with her after the event. In person, she was just as witty and charismatic as she is on paper. She wore the coolest outfit ever: a bright green blazer and white leather boots, an ensemble which kind of blew my mind. She signed books, spoke to fans, and was generous with her time. Her patience and kindness cemented her role in my mind as a wise older sister.

Meeting her reminded me of why I value her critiques. They never feel condescending because she is one of us. She herself has bought into the illusions she rails against, and that is why I value her opinion. She makes me feel ok about my delusions.



Tolentino and the author
Credits: Tess Buckley



Credits: National Gallery of Art

A Winter in DC

by Carlotta Rother (2025)
Staff Writer

While winter may seem like no more than a time to hibernate, it is actually one of the busiest and most exciting times of year in D.C.. Our city offers so many exciting winter activities, and now is a perfect time to take full advantage of them. This guide will help you explore our city both inside and outside to make the most of the season.

One thing a person can do during the winter season is to visit one of the many ice rinks located in D.C.. It's a great way to have fun with friends, while also being COVID friendly and getting some exercise. There are a lot of local ice rinks to choose from; at the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden Ice Rink, you can not only ice skate, but also enjoy the sculptures featured around the rink and the museum café. Another great place for ice skating is at the Washington Harbor Ice Rink. It is right by Georgetown, so you can get food, do some shopping, and then hit the rink. I would recommend going ice skating at night if the hours permit since most of the locations have beautiful lights surrounding their rinks. DC's holiday market could be easily mistaken for the set of a Hallmark movie. Located down-

town, it is open every day from 12 pm to 8 pm. The market is a great place to go after school, with only a 15 minute train ride away from Walls! Since the market is located outside, it is another COVID safe activity and great for groups. Vendors offer art, clothes, jewelry, antiques, soap, candles, and more, making it a great way to support small businesses and get holiday gifts for family and friends. The market is a great way to spend time with friends after school, get a break from work, and embrace the holiday spirit.

One of the best artistic winter experiences in D.C. is the Washington Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker*. The Washington Ballet does a beautiful interpretation of the ballet which first debuted in St. Petersburg in 1892. The story is exciting, the costuming is extravagant, and the ballet itself is timeless. While some may say the ballet is overdone and boring, I have always found beauty in the dancers' beautiful lines and techniques. This is one of the costlier winter activities, with tickets selling upwards of \$50, however, if you have a dance background or appreciate the art it is well worth it.

One of the greatest perks of living in the nation's capital is having the National Christmas Tree in our backyard. The Christmas tree is only a 16-minute walk away from our school, and while the lighting occurred on Decem-

ber 2nd, the tree will still be accessible until January 1st, 2022. If you have a free evening, I would recommend going down to the mall, getting a bite to eat, and then enjoying the tree at night. It's a great way to bond with either your friends or family while feeling like a DC tourist- major bonus if you have guests visiting from out of town!

D.C. is having its annual light art installation every night from 6 PM to 10 PM during the month of December. Light Yards is held at the Anacostia River Waterfront, where there are huge Christmas trees up to 22 feet tall illuminated in every color. The yards have a ton of fun activities along with the lights, including over 20 eateries, shopping, and an ice skating rink. While there, I highly recommend checking out the 106 circular light rings that you can jump on.

This winter, Nationals Park is the place to be. Enchant D.C. puts on a beautiful event with shops, ice skating, and other winter fun. There are millions of lights placed carefully throughout the park making it beautiful and a bit mazelike. Vendors sell sweet and savory treats, warm drinks, and of course presents for your loved ones. Younger ones even have an opportunity to meet Santa!

Finally, if you aren't in the mood for going out and just want to have a fun night in with friends, get some cute matching pajamas, go home and make some winter treats while listening to Christmas music. After making treats, sit down, make a fire, and watch as many holiday movies as possible.

Whatever you do this winter, remember that it is the people you surround yourself with and not the activities which are most important. So be sure to spend lots of time with your loved ones, and consider these activities to be an extra boost!

The Rookery

Editors in Chief
Toni Jackson
Clara Shapiro Morton

Editors
Tess Buckley
Wesley Greene
Gabriel Kraemer
Jennifer Nehrer
Mikayla Wolf

Staff Writers
Ainhua Aron
Julius Cohen
Evie Corr
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Leah Levy
Josie McCartney
Carlotta Rother
Ellie Sanders
Carys Shepard
David Sipos
Katrina Tracy
Brady Woodhouse

Staff Advisor
Shakir Ghazi

Who are we?
The Rookery is an independent student newspaper of School Without Walls High School (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. These articles and more can be found online at swwrookery.com

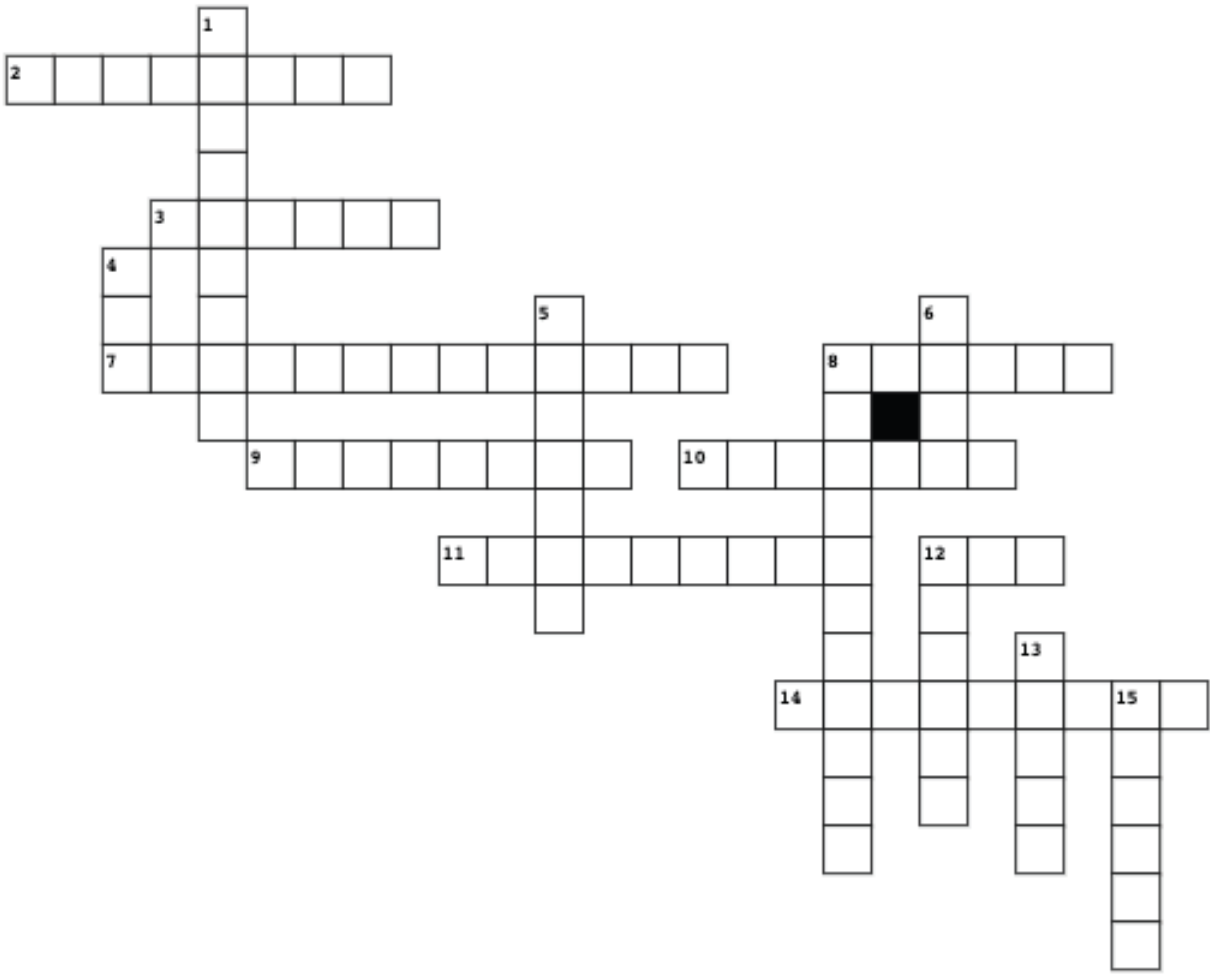
Our office is open to all students that would like to contribute to the paper every Monday morning at 8:30 in room 127. If you are interested in joining or submitting an article, art work, etc., please contact the editors-in-chief, Toni Jackson and Clara Shapiro Morton at theswwrookery@gmail.com. Our staff advisor is Shakir Ghazi, who can be reached at shakir.ghazi@k12.dc.gov.

Message from the editors in chief:
Thank you all for reading this edition of The Rookery and thank you to all of our writers for making this edition possible. To our editors and Mr. Ghazi, thank you for your consistent diligence and precision! We couldn't have done it without you all. This is our first year publishing both online and in print, and despite this, we've managed to come up with a wonderful December edition. We look forward to reporting on the rest of the year!

Best,
Clara Shapiro Morton and Toni Jackson

School Without Walls Crossword Puzzle

Created by Tess Buckley with Crossword Labs



Across

- 2. Don't copy and paste- we'll know!
- 3. \$8.99 coffee subscription
- 7. Chick-Fil-A location
- 8. Class missing a professor
- 9. Walls' favorite Penguin of Madagascar
- 10. Animal which lives in a Rookery
- 11. Mandatory class for sophomores
- 12. Not chipotle
- 14. The corner of legislature and G

Down

- 1. Mesopotamian epic
- 4. the senior's color they chose All too Well
- 5. The baseball team's favorite treat
- 6. Wake up and smell the bacon
- 8. Orange, blue and silver line station
- 12. Sophomore _____
- 13. Senior _____
- 15. Mandatory class for juniors

Sudoku

	8	4				3		
6					3		7	
		2				9		
		1	8		5			
2	6	3	7	1				5
							9	
	5	6	3			1	8	
	1			6			2	

Credits: sudoku.cool