

How Bolivia’s Past Leaves Potential for its Future

Manuela Silva (2021)
Staff Writer

President Evo Morales was elected to lead Bolivia in 2006. In doing so, he became the first indigenous person to rule Bolivia, whose population is two-thirds indigenous. Throughout his years as president, he used leftist measures to nationalize many industries, including the gas and oil industries.

Unlike the United States, Bolivia has five year presidential term limits, but in 2009 Morales altered the Constitution, which called for elections in early 2009, allowing him to stay in power until 2014 when he ran for a third term. While the Constitution only allows for two terms, Morales called for a referendum in 2016 asking Bolivians to let him run for a fourth term, and although they rejected it, the left-leaning Supreme Court favored Morales and let him run for president for a fourth term.



Former President Evo Morales (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

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Gen Z: Humor and “Difficult Situations”

Adam Burch (2021)
Senior Editor

The likeliest reason why so many of us care so little about politics is that modern politicians make us sad, hurt us deep down in ways that are hard even to name, much less talk about.

- David Foster Wallace

We’ve always used humor to deal with discomfort, but sometimes it just doesn’t work.

At its most basic level, humor usually plays on some disconnect between the expected and the real. We react with laughter, instead of discomfort, fear or anger, because the difference doesn’t really matter - whether they entered a liquor-serving establishment, or hit their head on a pole, for example, it’s hard to be too upset by someone walking into a bar.

Political humor is different. It plays on that same gap between what we expect and what we get, but this time, what we get, and what we expect, matters. And political humor, it seems, is changing.

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Candidates are Leaving the Democratic Race

Gabriel Kraemer (2023)
Staff Writer

As the new year began, former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, author and spiritual advisor Marianne Williamson, and Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.) dropped out of the race for the 2020 Democratic Presidential nomination.

All three had been struggling in national and early-state polls, and none had qualified for the seventh Democratic presidential debate on January 14th in Des Moines, Iowa.

Castro struggled to gain traction since his entering the race last year and had not qualified for any debate since October. After stating he would drop out of the race if he did not qualify for the November debate, he remained in the race despite decreasing polling and lack of attention and fundraising until

this month.

Castro’s campaign released a video announcing that he would leave the race on January 2nd. “I have determined that it simply isn’t our time,” Castro said in the video. “To all who have been inspired by our campaign, especially our young people, keep reaching for your dreams and keep fighting for what you believe in.”

Castro was the only Latino candidate in the race, and advocated for the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to decrease its debate qualification criteria to allow a more diverse group of candidates to qualify. Every participant of the December debate, along with Booker, signed on to a letter to the DNC requesting the change. DNC Chairman Tom Perez repeatedly rejected calls to lessen the debate standards.

Williamson, who dropped out of

the race on January 10th, laid off all of her campaign staff a week earlier due to financial concerns. Despite stating that she would remain in the race with an all-volunteer campaign, she dropped out only eight days later. In addition to financial concerns, her polling had remained in the low single digits for the entirety of her campaign and had less than a month before the Iowa caucuses, the first primary or caucus in the country.

Williamson, who has never held public office (although she ran as an independent for California’s 33rd Congressional District in 2014), ran an unusual campaign. She gained attention after the first two debates, the only ones she qualified for, where she made multiple statements about the “power of love” and the “hate” of Donald Trump’s presidency.

“If you think any of this wonki-

ness [policy positions on the response to the Flint, Michigan water crisis] is going to deal with the dark, psychic force of collectivized hatred that this president is bringing up in this country, then I’m afraid the Democrats are going to see some very dark days,” Williamson said in the July debate.

In contrast, many were surprised that Booker did not gain more traction in the race. Booker had emphasized hope in the face of the Trump presidency. Booker, who is African American, was another advocate for lessening the DNC’s qualification rules in favor of a more diverse debate stage. He had pointed to his experience as mayor of Newark, New Jersey, which has a predominantly black population, and as a senator during his campaign.

However, the senator did not gain as much attention as many of the other candidates

in the race and failed to qualify for the December or January debates. He dropped out on January 13th due to lack of financial resources and the Iowa caucuses drawing closer. In addition, he would have been forced to stop campaigning because he will act as a juror in the impeachment trial of President Trump.

These three candidates’ departures followed Senator Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Montana Governor Steve Bullock, and former U.S. Representative Joe Sestak (D-Pa.) dropping out of the race in early December. However, the field remains large with twelve candidates still running, including two who entered the race in November (former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick).

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The World Is Burning

Clara Shapiro Morton (2022)
Staff Writer

We've all heard the statistics. The warnings. Sometime around 2050 is the point of no return. But what has just started to become clear is that climate change is no longer a threat of the future, but a crisis we are going through right now.

The dire consequences of human neglect towards the environment are showing themselves in the form of natural disasters. Droughts, hurricanes and the like are becoming much more frequent and powerful, wiping out towns, destroying houses, and killing livestock.

Australia is the most prominent recent example of the increase in severity of the natural disasters. The drought season occurs every year accompanied by bushfires. The country takes preventative measures, of course, such as controlled burning of sections of the forest so that the fires will not spread, but according to the country's Bureau of Meteorology, Australia is experiencing one of the worst droughts in decades. A December heatwave broke national records, averaging about 115 degrees Fahrenheit. The extreme dryness and colossal winds are catalysts for the bushfires, allowing them to bypass the preventative measures taken by the Australian government. In total, the fires

have burned across 17.9 million acres of land, more than what was burned during the Amazon rainforest fires.

At least 28 people, including some volunteer firefighters, have been killed in the raging fires but the animals have suffered far more. The University of Sydney estimates that millions have died and the number of animals affected could be as high as a billion. Larger mammals such as kangaroos, wombats and koalas cannot outrun the fires, and burn or choke on the smoke, while smaller animals hide to escape the flames but cannot survive once their habitat has been ruined. Koalas are functionally extinct in Australia. There has been talk of introducing them in New Zealand to prevent full extinction.

Fortunately, another raging natural disaster has swooped in to try and put an end to this one. Heavy rain and thunderstorms have hit parts of Australia's East Coast and put out large amounts of the fire. However, the charcoaled areas have been left vulnerable to flooding. Locals have been advised to stay inside, as multiple states are on flood watch.

The Australian bushfires were devastating in so many ways. But hopefully, they can also act as a wake-up call to the world—so that we realize our situation and how much worse it is going to get.

Humans of School Without Walls

Katrina Tracy (2023)
Staff Writer

In talking about climate change, the possible solutions always have a time frame—we will have this done by 2020, 2025, 2030. However, time just keeps rolling, and with climate change, we just don't have the time. Promises are made, broken and ignored by people and the government. We interviewed one person from each grade level at walls, asking the question; "What is the biggest challenge the next generation will have to face?". Unsurprisingly, all the answers were about climate change.

Freshman Atticus Tarleton said that the biggest challenge the next generation will have to face is "Surviving until the next generation. The earth is going to get wrecked." Putting it into blunt terms, he is not wrong. Similarly Ryan Nock, senior, answered with "Apocalyptic conditions. The world will be over around then." Undeniably true, apocalyptic conditions are already starting—with the melting of ice at the poles—and will probably keep on going strong unless we do something. Junior Samir Bhojwani stated it the most simply, with the two words "Climate change" as his answer. Despite the use of adjectives with negative and terrifying connotations by Atticus and Ryan, Samir perhaps knew that "climate change"

was enough to spark fear in the people's hearts, and was something for the next generation to watch out for. Finally, tenth grader Ella Osdoba warns the next generation to be aware of "The fact that the world is ending because we messed it up". Unfortunately true, we will be handing over a world tainted with pollution to the next generation. However, more people should be like Ella, aware of the impact that their own lives have caused. Some still do not acknowledge climate change, to the rest of us' sorrow.

In all, the students of School Without Walls have spoken, the next generation's biggest challenge will be climate change and dealing with its repercussions. According to conservation.org, "Seventeen of the 18 warmest years have occurred since 2000" and if that doesn't worry you, it should. If you want to alleviate the problem and hopefully be a part of the solution, recycle more, try not to waste paper and other resources, and buy a reusable water bottle. Be a part of the solution so that the next generation does not have to.

Proposed Bus Cuts

Noa Schleifer (2021)
Senior Editor

According to a recent report by WMATA, 22 Metrobus lines were put up for elimination due to low ridership, redundancy, or inefficiency. These changes could affect people throughout DC, and residents have already spoken out against the eliminations at Metro's monthly meeting. Residents of the Glover Park and Cathedral Heights neighborhoods discussed the lack of options for public transportation in those areas. The senior class president of Duke Ellington School for the Arts, Sydney Forrester Wilson, also testified, saying, "Eliminating the bus routes will have a significant negative impact on our school community." The D1, D2, and D6 bus routes are the only ways for students at Duke Ellington to access the Dupont Circle Metro station and other transportation options. The school is in Glover Park, which is roughly two miles from both the Tenleytown and Dupont Circle Metro stations, which puts students in a difficult position. Students and residents of the area rely on these bus routes to access other public transportation, because Metro does not reach this part of the city. As Forrester Wilson put it, "There's no alternative but to take the bus."

WMATA has cited low ridership, redundancy, and lack of efficiency as the reason for most of the bus route eliminations. Additionally, many routes, including the the M4, G2, E6, and 54 are being folded into other routes and combined for increased efficiency, according to Metro. The underlying cause for all these changes is WMATA's new budget, and overall adjustments to these new parameters. The bus route cuts seem counterintuitive in some respects, because Metro wants to improve bus service and was looking to institute more widespread bus lanes in the DMV region.

The cuts also come with other adjustments proposed by Metro including fare hikes, which would bring base rush hour fare to \$2.40. Metro is also proposing reductions to early morning bus service (from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m.). Metro trains would continue to run trains later, including until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights, while the top train fare at rush hour would increase to \$7. They proposed a flat weekend train fare of \$2, and a bus fare increased by 25 cents for people who pay with cash or load money onto their cards, and a pilot program that would give a fare discount to 2,500 low-income people. These budget inquiries are being discussed at hearings being held until early February. DC bus routes proposed for elimination:

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Bolivia and Morales Continued

All over the countries' central city of La Paz, there is visible "No" and "Si" graffiti—referring to the division of the city over whether Morales should be allowed to run, which in turn reflects how divided the country has become.

Morales' base when he ran in 2006 was largely indigenous. However, as he spent more time in office, disagreements over how to use land and his seeming grab for power led him to slowly begin to lose the support that he had previously relied on so heavily. Many in the country who had initially supported him were now marching in the streets against him.

Bolivia's governmental structure and electoral organization varies from that of the United States. In Bolivia, a president must have a definite vote majority, or 40% of the vote and a 10% difference between themselves and the next candidate to win the election. If neither is the case, the two highest polling candidates are sent to a second round of votes. On October 20, 2019, after 80% of the vote had been tallied, everyone was sure of a second round, and the votes stopped being tallied. The next day, the polls showed Morales to have a 10.5% advantage over his closest competitor. People quickly grew suspicious, and protests

erupted across the country. Morales urged the protestors to wait for the Organization of American States' audit of the election to see if there had been any fraud as the protestors claimed, but nobody waited.

Schools were closed for weeks, and the protests stopped many major cities for days on end. Finally when the OAS audit was released, it backed the protestors in establishing that there had indeed been election fraud and they called for new elections. By the time this audit was released, though Morales agreed to new elections, the country had gone through enough and wanted him gone. Previous Morales supporters and those who worked for Morales were quick to realize the gravity of the situation and stepped down, and finally, the military renounced their support for Morales. Similar to other previous supporters of Morales, the military suggested in a public statement that Morales resign in order to bring peace to the country. A military coup is when the armed forces of a country illegally put themselves in power and in control of a country. In Bolivia, the armed forces are not in power now that Evo Morales has resigned, rather, there is an interim government that is trying to stabilize the country before the May elec-

tions.

It is not to say that the transition to an interim government after Morales fled the country was a smooth one. Many citizens of La Paz recount stories of "Una Noche de Terror", or a "night of terror", in which supporters of Morales' socialist party marched down and incited violence in the very streets in which they had just ensured their future freedom. Additionally, just because Morales has fled the country does not mean he is not involved in local affairs. He has helped his party choose a new candidate to present in the elections and has stayed active on social media.

In the end, with democratic and fair elections coming in 2020, Bolivia has won. Bolivia's youth largely led the protests and mobilizations against Morales. As Bolivia heads into a new election season, it has demonstrated not just to itself but to the world that it is a country where the youth are listening and intend on deciding their own futures, rather than have an autocrat make decisions for them.

Gen Z Continued

The vicious, often blatantly false caricaturing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--symptomatic of some other deep psychosocial malady, I'm sure, that we don't have time to diagnose here--has given way to something far more subtle, cynical, and sad. Our political humor is defeatist now, not aggressive, and our irreverence seems forced somehow.

This shift in humor is partially a reaction to the stiflingly toxic, self-assured Internet of the early 2010s--we don't want to come across like one of those people. But it's also a reaction to what's happening in the real world, in the "real America". A removed, unconcerned attitude about the abysmal state of our country feels like a solid defense. Poke fun at the government, sure, but don't let your anger or fear or disgust show. That would be too much like caring, and caring hurts.

The College Admissions Process Benefits the Rich

Maggie Modovsky (2020)
Staff Writer

It is no secret that high school seniors are under an incredible amount of stress. College applications are the golden ticket that guarantees this population of fresh adults a future in higher education. However, in the United States, the application system is not as easy as promised by the vibrant pamphlets gracing the mailboxes of possible applicants. College applications, for all the noise made about socioeconomic diversity, are inherently limited to the upper classes, consequently leaving a large portion of potential applicants discouraged from applying to college.

As the years have progressed, the application process for college has become increasingly comprehensive and selective. What was once just an essay regarding “Why this school?” has turned into a bloodbath of extracurriculars and academic interests. Columbia University, for example, is a prestigious Ivy League school in New York. The application, via The Common Application, asks questions such as “List all of the lectures/concerts/events you have attended in the past year.” While some are fortunate enough to be able to sufficiently answer this question, it should be obvious to admissions offices that not all students are able to attend these kinds of things. The presence of questions such as these limit “completed” answers to only the upper-class applicants.

In addition to the exclusive essay prompts, the application process alone is remarkably expensive. The average college charges around \$80 for the ap-

plication, not even including the fees to send test scores. Most students apply to roughly ten schools, adding up to a total of \$800. A student only attends one university once they make their decision, so all of the leftover money is essentially wasted. The price alone is enough to deter an applicant without the financial support of their parents.

While it can be argued that these schools have such limiting and comprehensive processes because they want “the best of the best” attending their school, the best are hidden among those who are unable to attend four lectures a week while running the student council. There is no reason why an essay limited to a certain economic class should be a required element of an application. Similarly, the fee for the application can be justified as a sign of how serious an applicant is about the school. However, one can have a university be their dream school that they would certainly attend if admitted, while still not having the funds for such an expensive application.

College is the foundation of young adults’ careers and should not be so discriminatory towards applicants of a lower economic class. For the American education system to truly be equal, there should be either a lower or eliminated application fee. Additionally, questions on the application should be able to be answered by anyone regardless of financial or social opportunity.

Bus Routes Continued

- Routes 30N and 30S (between Friendship Heights and Southeast (Wisconsin Avenue Northwest/Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest/Southeast) and Route 34: Service in Northwest would be replaced by Routes 31 and 33, service in Southeast would be replaced during off-peak hours by routes 32 and 36
- Route 37 (Wisconsin Avenue)
- Route 54 (14th Street Northwest): most stops replaced by Route 59
- Routes A4 and W5: replaced by Routes W4 and A8
- Routes B8 and B9
- Route D1 (Glover Park-Franklin Square)
- Route D2 (Glover Park-DuPont Circle): folded into G2
- Route D5 (MacArthur Boulevard-Georgetown)
- Route E6 (Chevy Chase): folded into M4
- Route G2 (P Street-LeDroit Park): folded into D2
- Route M4 (Nebraska Avenue NW): folded into E6

- Route V1 (Benning Heights-M Street)
- Route X1, Route X3 (Benning Road): Some additional rush hour trips would be added on the X2
- *Note: all changes are proposed for this summer

Astros Cheating Scandal Spirals Out of Control

Tillman Lanyi (2020)
Senior Editor

In November 2019, The Athletic published an article accusing the Houston Astros of operating an illegal electronic sign-stealing system in 2017 and 2018. In the article, former Astros pitcher Mike Fiers described a camera in center field used to relay footage of the opposing team’s catcher to an Astros employee in the clubhouse, who banged a trash can to inform Astros hitters of the upcoming pitch.

Public efforts to evaluate the claims took off quickly after The Athletic’s article was published. In particular, a popular YouTube sports channel called Jomboy Media posted a two-minute video of a 2017 Astros home game. Loud banging sounds are audible in the video whenever the opposing catcher signalled for a changeup; the video convinced many that the allegations were true and inspired other members of the general public to investigate for themselves.

Although sign-stealing is a generally accepted practice in baseball, using technology to do so is considered unfair and strictly prohibited. In 2017, when the Boston Red Sox were caught using an Apple Watch to steal signs, MLB issued a slap on the wrist but warned that future instances would be met with major consequences. In mid-January, MLB fined the Astros \$5 million, forfeited their first- and second-round draft picks in 2020 and 2021, and suspended manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow for the entire 2020 season. Hinch and Luhnow were both fired by Astros owner

Jim Crane the next day.

Some already speculated about an Astros sign-stealing operation well before Fiers’ allegations appeared in The Athletic. The subject of Jomboy Media’s video, then-White Sox reliever Danny Farquhar, noticed the banging noise during the incident and suspected the Astros were stealing his signs. The Los Angeles Dodgers, Red Sox, and New York Yankees all accused the Astros of stealing their signs during playoffs in 2017, 2018 and 2019. And the Washington Nationals, due to rumors, devised a signing system too complex for the Astros to decipher in the 2019 World Series.

Over the last few months, the extent and absurdity of the scandal has increased to levels far beyond anyone’s wildest prior expectations. Just days after the MLB report, Red Sox manager Alex Cora, who served as bench coach for the 2017 Astros, and New York Mets manager Carlos Beltrán, who played on the 2017 Astros, were let go by their respective teams after being mentioned in the report. Next, a Twitter account claiming to belong to Beltrán’s niece has issued statements confirming several of the allegations against the Astros. However, some evidence suggests the account is actually operated in secret by a current or former Astros player; Beltrán’s own family has denied that the tweeting niece exists. And, in a similar vein, a Twitter account passionately defending Astros pitcher Justin Verlander’s legacy is suspected to be a “burner” account operated by Verlander himself.

Additional incriminating evidence could potentially reveal itself soon. Specifically, some

individuals, including Beltrán’s supposed niece, have begun to accuse Astros players, including 2017 AL MVP José Altuve and 2019 AL MVP finalist Alex Bregman, of wearing electronic buzzers under their uniforms to receive the opponent’s signs. Public attempts to uncover information about the scandal found several photographs showing strange bulges or pieces of tape on the chest areas of Astros players like Altuve and Bregman, and Cincinnati Reds pitcher Trevor Bauer claims to have firsthand accounts from “multiple parties” of a buzzer system in place. Altuve’s adamant refusal to allow his teammates to rip off his jersey after Houston’s 2019 ALCS victory appears very suspicious in light of this evidence.

The cheating scandal sheds new light on a great deal of recent MLB history. Primarily, Houston’s 2017 World Series victory over Los Angeles will always be viewed in the context of the cheating scandal. Although MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred has announced that the Astros will retain their World Series title, the Dodgers argue that it should be stripped away, and the controversy has sparked debate about the extent to which the Astros ought to be punished for the cheating scheme.

Similarly, the Astros’ 2019 ALCS victory over the Yankees now comes under scrutiny. Houston won the Series on a walk-off home run by José Altuve. Now, the evidence strongly suggests that Altuve was informed of the incoming pitch, a 2-1 slider from Aroldis Chapman, through the buzzer system. This revelation irreparably mars

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Photo by Michal Balog on Unsplash

Nationals Making Moves to Repeat in 2020

Wesley Greene (2023)
Staff Writer

After a World Series championship in 2019, the Washington Nationals have quickly made it a priority to repeat in 2020. The underdog Nationals rose to the top in 2019 from wild card team to World Series champions with successful starting pitching and a consistent offense. 2020 will definitely look different, but the Nationals have made moves this offseason to make a second run for the World Series.

The backbone of last year's team was a reliable and strong starting pitching lineup with Max Scherzer, Steven Strasburg and Patrick Corbin sitting in the spotlight. It looked as though the Nats would lose Strasburg this year when he opted out of his contract, but after some sly negotiating he was signed to a seven-year deal worth \$245 million, an imperative move to maintain the dominant starting pitching lineup.

The Nationals have struggled with a reliable bullpen for a couple of years now, so it was a priority this offseason to mend the lineup of relievers. The Nats were able to get by last year with successful starting pitching but they will need to strengthen their arsenal of relief pitchers if they want to make another run to the top. To do this, they have signed Will Harris for three years and brought back Daniel Hudson for two years with the hope

that they will provide a cushion for a strong starting lineup. Will Harris has a low career ERA and should be able to provide consistent relief for the dominant starting pitching.

With MVP candidate and star third baseman Anthony Rendon gone, the third base slot could be seen as a weak spot for the Nats, but the signing of Starlin Castro to a two-year, \$12 million deal and the re-signing of Asdrubal Cabrera may provide a glimmer of hope. Starlin Castro could give the team the offensive boost they need this coming season. These versatile infielders will likely rotate in and out of the third base spot, trying to make up for the lost prosperity that comes with Rendon's absence. First baseman Eric Thames signed a one-year, \$4 million contract that will help round out the Nationals infield. Thames could also assist the offense with his power bat. For the catching position, Yan Gomes has been re-signed to platoon with veteran Kurt Suzuki at the plate. The infield will be very different without Rendon, but the Nationals have made moves to ensure that the infield will be able to support the rest of the team offensively and defensively.

In order to prove that 2019's World Series championship was no fluke, the Nats have kept around the successful starting pitchers, strengthened the bullpen, and added to the infield to replace Rendon. It is inevitable that the offense will see

a decline with Rendon gone but Thames and Castro have been added to the lineup for just that reason. Some may think that the coming season will be a challenge for the Nats, but with solid starting pitching and new additions around the horn, the Washington Nationals look to hold on to their World Series championship for years to come.



Luka Dončić (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Wizards Find New Talent

Oliver Anderson (2023)
Staff Writer

Through the hard schedule and the tragic injuries of late, the Washington Wizards have been surprising the world. The fire began with the signing of defensive guard Gary Payton II. Payton, whose nickname, "The Mitten," is derived from his father's, "The Glove," was signed to the Wizards on December 23rd, before a road win against the New York Knicks, where Payton dropped 10 points with 6 steals. Payton became an essential leader in this category, as he had 3 of these 6-steal games in his first ten games as a Wizard. Payton would later be signed to a full one-year contract.

Following this victory, the Wizards won three difficult home games including surprising wins versus Boston, Miami, and Denver, led by recent signees including Jordan McRae and

Ish Smith along with Troy Brown Jr., a NBA sophomore. Injuries to key players such as Thomas Bryant, John Wall, Bradley Beal, Davis Bertans, and Mortiz Wagner gave these three new players the perfect opportunity to shine. And shine they did, combining for 53 points against Miami, 68 against Denver, and 61 versus Boston.

In the aftermath of this, the Wizards now struggle to stay afloat, as their team gets healthier. Because of the so called "losing culture," that Bradley Beal had many words about after a hard loss on the road against Chicago, the Wizards have fallen to the 12th seed in the East, now outside of the playoff picture for foreseeable the rest of the season. The Wizards' future hopes rely on the return of star guard John Wall next season, along with the development of younger players such as Rui Hachimura, Isaac Bonga, and Troy Brown Jr.



Giannis Antetokounmpo (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

NBA Looks Overseas to Find its Superstars

Caedmon Kollmer-Dorsey (2020)
Staff Writer

The NBA is in need of a new alpha dog and, for the first time ever, he may not be from the United States. Basketball is a strong-link sport, meaning that having just one great player is way better than having a whole team of competent players. Whoever has the best guy on the court usually wins. As such, the league is almost always dominated by a few superstars who trade titles back and forth until others come along and knock them off their perch. This is why we think of the 90s as the Jordan era, the 80s as the Bird and Magic era, the 60s as the Wilt and Russell era, and the 70s not at all.

For the last decade, LeBron James has been the league's alpha dog. Before 2019, he competed in 8 straight Finals, won 3 titles, and got 4 MVP awards in the process. But now, at age 35, his dominance seems to be ending. Though he is still the crucial player for the Lakers, the LeBron of "The Block" and "The Heatles" is gone. Thanks to Kawhi Leonard, he's no longer even the best basketball player in his own city. So who will rule when the king leaves the throne?

One of the things that makes this era of the NBA unprecedented is the game's global reach. The game that started with some peach baskets in Springfield, Massachusetts now has an audience from Shanghai to Riga. In 1996, 1 in 20 NBA players were from outside the US; by 2019, that number had exploded to almost 1 in 4. The NBA's new foreign contingent has quickly made an impact and even produced the MVP Dirk Nowitzki (born in Würzburg, Germany). Up to the present, however, foreign countries have not produced a generation-defining superstar. That might not be true anymore. Giannis Antetokounmpo was born in Athens, Greece as the child of Nigerian immigrants, and Luka Dončić was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Both have the potential to dominate this decade.

Giannis is the "Greek Freak", the undisputed king of the Eastern Conference, and the reigning MVP from the Milwaukee Bucks. Dončić is like if Larry Bird had a 3-point game, a scoring and rebounding machine leading what were formerly Nowitzki's Dallas Mavericks. They are 25 and 20 years old, respectively. Kawhi Leonard, the best American player, is already

28 and in the height of his prime. There is a good chance that by the mid-2020s, neither of the NBA's two best players will be American. This is great for basketball in general and the NBA specifically.

Of all the major American sports, basketball has the most potential to become a global game, like soccer is. Hockey is climate-dependent, football is too violent, and baseball stopped spreading when the US stopped its heavy occupation of Latin-American countries. The coming reign of Luka and Giannis will (hopefully) not only provide basketball fans with a Bird-vs-Magic style rivalry for the 21st century, but also build basketball's fan base around the globe. What better way to expand basketball's reach in Europe than to provide two Europeans with the constant media attention and pop-culture appeal that NBA superstardom entails?

The NBA worries constantly about how to beat the NFL, America's most popular sports league, in the domestic market. They should be thinking about world domination.

Spring Sports Preview

Bella Moore (2023)
Staff Writer

Winter is coming to an end and with that will come spring sports. Kip Smith, the athletics director, believes that Walls has seen a pretty good winter season. While basketball hasn't had a lot of wins, they are definitely making improvements! Indoor track has grown in numbers and talent, which can be seen in their many successes in their meets. Outdoor track will start in the spring, along with more meets, and hopefully more victories. Swimming is halfway done and the team is working hard.

Baseball and softball start in February, with their goal being to get to championships and defeat their biggest rival, Wilson. Last year, the school had to discontinue the softball team because of lack of participation, so at the moment, softball is in a rebuilding phase. Boys lacrosse is also in this stage, but Mr. Smith says the team has a couple of seniors leading it, and will compete. The girls lacrosse team is looking for coaches, but hopefully the school will get that sorted out before their season starts. Flag football is returning with a good number of athletes. Last

year they were a touchdown away from championships, so the goal for them is for them is to win this year. Ultimate frisbee is seeing more numbers than in the past, and their skill is getting better, so the plan is to split the group into two teams, varsity and novice. Smith hopes to see them compete in DC state and Maryland tournaments. Tennis is also looking quite strong, they have several experienced seniors leading them including Kai Goodall and Rhajzon Rankins, who have placed very high in the DC tennis championships.

Last, but certainly not least, golf will be starting in the spring, and they are beginning to move outside DCIAA. School Without Walls is not known for its sports, and it can be difficult to be a student athlete and a student at our rigorous school, but still we hope to see a lot of successes in the future.

Horoscopes

Alejandro Jorge (2020)
Staff Writer

Aquarius: Happy birthday! Start 2020 off right and take the time to meet new people aside from your usual bunch.

Pisces: You've made a recent change in your life. While you may have qualms about it, rest assured that change is good and that you've made the right choice.

Aries: A brilliant idea has taken hold in your mind, but you must put in work to make it happen. It will be worth it.

Taurus: A side project of yours is gaining traction. Keep putting in dedication and it will continue to blossom.

Gemini: Renewable energy is valuable in many ways. Take the time to take care of yourself; you work best when you're well.

Cancer: Keeping thoughts inside removes any chance they have of changing the world. Make effort to get heard this year.

Leo: To best maintain your current streak of unstoppable, keep making time to care for those you care for. Support your loved ones and they will support you.

Virgo: You enjoy maintaining control over every aspect of your life, but that can get exhausting. Let things take care of themselves.

Libra: This year, take time to carefully measure the repercussions of what you do. Make the best choices you can.

Scorpio: Complete control over every aspect of your life is impossible, but remember to assert your will in what matters most.

Sagittarius: Lemonade helps with everything for a short time, but the best cure for everything is care from others and yourself.

Capricorn: You've met someone excellent! Take the time to ensure your new relationship is well-built; it will be worth it.

In Defense of *Cats*

Toni Jackson (2022)
Staff Writer

Cats, of course, is a film of nightmares. The feature of the movie most commonly talked of is the abominable cats, specifically the cats' human facial features and human bodies. While the cats look disgusting, the movie is filled with fun, even if you're mainly laughing at the film instead of with it. My biggest tip for any questionable movie is to go in knowing what you're watching. I walked into *Cats* expecting a trash fire, and instead got a trash fire with cute costumes and celebrity cameos (yes, that is Taylor Swift). Others went into the film expecting a good movie that wouldn't give them a headache, and they received quite the opposite. Indeed I walked out of *Cats* with a headache, but the thoughts that roamed my mind only made *Cats* more intriguing. Thoughts such as: how did they convince two serious, critically acclaimed actors (Judi Dench and Ian McKellen) to be in this movie? Why are some of the cats naked and some of them have official uniforms? Do I even want these questions answered, or are the questions why I like this movie?

The film's main problem is the gigantic tonal shifts that don't work. Maybe it is the nature of

such a camp Broadway musical such as *Cats*, but the slower more dismal parts of the film were a complete drag. This is mainly due to the fact that while the more upbeat songs were flashy and active, slower songs only kept the camera focused on one person. This is very common and it is understandable why this is done, but it doesn't work when there is a solid 30 minutes straight of it. It especially doesn't help when I can't focus on Grizabella singing *Memory* because I can't stop thinking about Jason Derulo belting "MILK!!!" The choreography in the film is wonderful, and could have been considered for many awards if the film was taken more seriously amongst literally anyone. I have never been more viscerally happy as during the dance sequence in *Skimbleshanks'* song. That single sequence made me consider seeing *Cats* a second time simply to watch those five minutes. Not to mention many of the cast are professional dancers for different ballet companies including Francesca Hayward (Victoria), Robert Fairchild (Munkustrap), and Steven McRae (*Skimbleshanks*). These abilities definitely show, and it is a huge strength to the movie. The set design is also fantastic and had the potential to really transport you into the world, again, if it weren't for the fact that the cats looked like

freakish monstrosities.

This movie had a budget of \$95,000,000, and an additional \$115,000,000 was spent on marketing in order to salvage public reaction to the movie after the trailer came out. The day of its release, the film only made \$6,500,000 (worldwide, not just in the U.S.). To be fair, maybe it wasn't the smartest idea to release *Cats* on the same day as *Star Wars*, one of the biggest blockbusters ever made, but the audience for *Cats* is already a niche audience so it was mainly a marketing blunder on the studio's part. To make things worse, Universal removed *Cats* from any awards considerations. Academy voters aren't required to watch every film nominated, but at least give *Cats* a chance to win something! The movie has already been released, so you can't erase *Cats* from history. On the plus side, *Cats* is most definitely the newest cult film along with many other movies that are either bad or extremely camp (in *Cats'* case both). Alamo Drafthouses in New York and California have already had numerous special screenings of *Cats* just for those who want to sing along with fellow viewers who have seen the movie multiple times already. Personally, I cannot wait until *Cats* has midnight screenings across the US. This film is amazingly bad, and I love all of it.

Rooted

I was born in a greenhouse
Without fear of freezing to death
Because glass walls and a thermostat kept us safe.

But outside there are no glass walls or thermostats.
Just you against the world.
So when I was thrown into the tangled maze of forest outside,
Naturally I curled up and shivered,
Weeping tears, hot and salty like the ocean spray of home.

For months I lay belly up
drenched in dirt and tears.
The expanse of sky pressed on my chest so I couldn't breathe.
How I longed for a glass dome and a thermostat.

But soon
the tears soaked back into my skin
and watered the thirsty seeds inside me.
The dirt became a life source
Where I spread my fingers like roots.
Life exploded from seeds.

I arched my back, opening my chest to the brightness of real sunshine,
Gasping for light,
reaching for the sky.

- Ashley Cheung (2020)

An Interview With Mr. Ackerman

Indigo Domenici-Mills (2023)
Staff Writer

This week, I interviewed Mr. Ackerman, one of the most stylish teachers at School Without Walls. Mr. Ackerman has been teaching at Walls for seventeen years and has taught classes like AP World history and AP Human Geography, among others. Before teaching at Walls, Mr. Ackerman served as a supervisor and administrator at several law firms.

Mr. Ackerman became a history teacher because of his knowledge of subjects ranging from economics to law. This diverse spread of knowledge gave him the ability to become a history teacher. Mr. Ackerman's Pre-AP World History class focuses on the Ancient, Classical, and Post-Classical eras. Mr. Ackerman stated that one of the best things about Pre-AP World History is that it teaches students about a world older than three hundred years and wider than America.

While he argues that the curriculum for Pre-AP world history is quite solid, Mr. Ackerman believes that the curriculum can still be improved. For example, without a solid base in European history, Mr. Ackerman believes that students could leave World History without knowledge of from where certain practices and values of our own country come. This problem recurs, because sometimes U.S. History teachers believe this foundational content was covered in World History, while World History teachers believe U.S. History teachers will cover these topics. While European History is a separate course, adding more European History content to World History could help students understand where some of the roots of American society come from, knowledge that could better prepare students for AP U.S. History.

Mr. Ackerman has been a pillar of the Walls community for years. When I asked Mr. Ackerman what his favorite thing about the school was, he said that the students were the best part of Walls. Outside of school, Mr. Ackerman enjoys playing bridge and arranging flowers for his church. He also spends time with friends and goes on drives.

All About Ethiopian Food

Liya Johnson (2023)
Staff Writer

As an Ethiopian, I have been eating Ethiopian food for basically my whole life. So when I was asked to write a food review, I thought, why not this?

Here comes a general review of Ethiopian food.

The main food that is in almost every Ethiopian meal is injera, a flatbread that is made with teff, a grain grown only in Ethiopia. Injera is laid out on a plate, and is meant to be eaten with various sauces (by itself, it has a more sour taste). Some sauces are spicy and have meat and look like stew, some are more liquid-like, and some are in between. Some people will like one better than another, like me. One popular sauce is dorowet,

a spicy sauce with chicken and boiled eggs. Another is kitfu, which is ground raw beef combined with butter and spices. And there is siga wet, another spicy sauce with pieces of beef and potato. More spices, vegetables, and cheese can be added. All of this is put on top of the injera in separate groups.

The way to eat injera is to use your hand (preferably your right one) to rip a piece of injera off and use it to scoop or wrap the sauce. Once the sauce is wrapped in the injera, use your fingers to eat it. There's not one way you're supposed to do it, but this is how almost everyone does it. This is the way to get a perfect bite of injera and sauce, but you can still just dip your piece into it as a beginner. Traditionally, injera is meant to be eaten with others, everyone sharing from one large

plate. Also, in Ethiopian culture, when eating with others you can be fed by an elder-- this is called a gursha.

You can also use your piece of injera to wrap more than one sauce. You can dip your "wrap" in a spice or in cheese if you wish.

Other than injera, there are still many Ethiopian foods out there. This is just the main Ethiopian food. Try it out sometime and see if you like it!



Injera (Source: Liya Johnson)

Relationship Goals

Erin O'Neill (2022)
Staff Writer



Upperclassman Advice: Time Management Skills

Minnie Koppenheffer (2021)
Staff Writer

As we begin the second semester of this school year, some students may struggle with managing their schedules, between clubs, sports, homework, and studying. With overwhelming amounts of schoolwork and commitments to extracurriculars, how do successful Walls students manage?

You should “keep a planner on at all times to write homework, events, and other plans,” according to Walls junior and GW student Jade Gregoire. It may seem intuitive, but many students neglect to write down assignments and disregard the planner we’re given at the beginning of the school year - which are grave mistakes. Even if it’s simply typing a reminder into your phone, recording important tasks can ensure that you’ll be prepared for your classes and activities.

Edgar Ventura, a junior at Walls, advises busy students to keep their things organized. “You don’t want to be wasting

time looking for an assignment because of your messy binder.” No, it’s not necessary to Marie Kondo the entirety of your belongings, but filing away old papers can lighten your load - physically and mentally.

However, it’s sometimes difficult to even find the motivation to do your work. Senior Francesca Gastaldo recommends “setting a designated time and place to do homework.” Having an afternoon routine and regularity within your schedule can form productive habits, for the whole school year.

If you feel like you don’t have enough time to even get to all of your assignments, Brendan Klein, a senior at Walls, suggests “seeing if there are any spare moments you having during transitions between activities where you can work on or think about your homework.” Students with crowded schedules should use every moment to their advantage. By using these strategies, many Walls students are able to get through all of their coursework and activities, and can be academically successful and less stressed.

Club Spotlight: The Breakfast Club

Paola Milbank (2022)
Staff Writer

It’s not the movie -- it’s an actual club! This hard-boiled group of breakfast enthusiasts meets every Friday in Mr. Ghazi’s room and enjoys a meal together before school begins. You might say it helps their school days go over easy. They have treats such as pancakes and waffles, courtesy of Mr. Ghazi’s mini-kitchen. The food is supplied by the members, and if someone forgets, they just order Panera.

Clearly, these people don’t waffle about their interest in breakfast. Just like the real Breakfast Club, this group has five members who attend regularly, with a few more coming on occasion. Though it’s a close-knit group, they’ve managed to scramble up the club scene. Other clubs may do sports, crafts, or dances, but the breakfast club is better than all the others.

Members find this club to be a great way to begin their day. Clara Shapiro-Morton, a regular, says it’s a “nice environment to sit around and have a healthy

breakfast since not that many people have good, warm breakfast in the mornings. And you can make sure you’re not late for school while having a good warm breakfast with nice people.” She isn’t wrong. This seems like a perfect way to end the school week, especially one that’s stressful. Students really need grit--and grit!--to get through the week, and it’s important to have a place to take a break and enjoy food and friends. “It’s my favorite club,” Clara shares. Though, if you show up late, you’re toast.

Winter Formal Review

Lilly Shaw
Staff Writer

The components of a good dance are a complex design, an assortment of snacks, as well as entertaining music. To me, this dance was spectacular on all counts! Good job, Class of 2020!

When I first walked onto the dance floor, a few tables were laid out with a variety of chips, bottled water, and soda. Additionally, there were strings of white pom-poms hanging from the ceiling as I entered the dance floor. Towards the front of the dance floor, the area in front of the DJ was lit in an glowing and wintery way.

Speaking of the DJ, he played relatively popular songs, often playing throwback songs to fully entertain everybody. Most people enthusiastically listened to the songs and danced for hours on end!

The decorations were pretty, and perfect for many good poses for the photo book. From the mood and decorations available, it was a very enjoyable dance overall. Our special thanks to class of 2020 for putting on such an amazing dance!

Just Mercy

Movie Review

Becca Anderson (2021)
Staff Writer

Just Mercy, in the vein of movies like *Marshall* and *On the Basis of Sex*, attempts to illustrate the efforts and achievements of civil rights activists by focusing on a snippets of their career. With a stellar cast, powerful soundtrack, and poignant message, *Just Mercy* does just that.

Just Mercy, directed by Destin Daniel Cretton opened with a limited release last December.

Starring Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx, and Brie Larson, the film is based on the life of Bryan Stevenson, an African-American lawyer who has dedicated his life to helping protect the poor and minorities from the inequality of the criminal justice system. The movie focuses on the retrial of Walter McMillian, a former Death Row inmate who was convicted of murder in 1988 and immediately issued a death sentence. His case was picked up by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), an organization founded by Stevenson in 1989 that provides attorneys to those who may have been wrongly accused of a crime. The movie depicts the struggle of getting to the truth of what happened during McMillian’s original trial, the struggle of proving his innocence and what happened on the night of the murder, all while Bryan Stevenson grapples with his new publicity and the dangers of being a black man in Alabama.

While Michael B. Jordan (Stevenson) and Brie Lar-

son (who portrayed Eva Ansley, Operations Director of EJI) delivered strong performances, they paled in comparison to the performances of Jamie Foxx, Rob Morgan, Tim Blake Nelson, and O’Shea Jackson Jr., who all played prisoners, most on Death Row. Perhaps it was the intensity of the roles, or the emotional range required to depict someone who spends day after day waiting for their death, but Foxx and Morgan’s performances were incredibly powerful--they were the ones talked about as I walked out of the theater. Rob Morgan (who played Herbert Richardson, a war veteran on Death Row), in particular, had an extremely moving scene that was so enrapturing that you could hear a pin drop in the theater; it felt like everyone was holding their breath. Jamie Foxx, as always, completely transforms into the characters he plays--to the point that you forget that he is Jamie Foxx at all. He spectacularly showed the quiet intensity of a man who knows he is innocent but has no faith in the system that has never been on his side.

Overall, almost every character felt grounded and realistic, which is crucial in a movie where actors are portraying real people. Perhaps the only problem with Larson’s portrayal of Ansley was the slightly exaggerated Southern accent that she used--it felt more like a caricature of a Southern woman than a real person.

Just Mercy is a very smart movie--it knows how to get its point across without dragging it out or overdramatizing

any incident. Its message is very cut and dry--the criminal justice system is and was racist and biased--and the simplicity of this message makes the incidents of the film that much more impactful. The stories chosen to be depicted in this movie are poignant: focusing on specific people humanizes the thousands of people affected by the criminal justice system. By choosing cases that Stevenson dealt with near the beginning of his career, the viewer experiences the horrors of the system alongside Stevenson. We are presented with two different cases throughout the movie: one that goes the way we would hope it would in this situation (McMillian’s), and one that does not (Richardson’s). This removes the façade that sometimes falls over these types of historical flicks- the idea that everything was sunshine and roses and ended up okay in the end. Many of the issues in these types of movies still have prevalence and are being debated today- especially the death penalty- and *Just Mercy* does an excellent job of highlighting that.

Parasite

Movie Review

Minnie Koppenheffer (2021)
Staff Writer

The endless struggle caused by the class disparity in modern metropolises meets a satirically fairy-tale-like storyline in director Bong Joon-ho’s “*Parasite*.” Bong, acclaimed for his previous works such as “*Snowpiercer*” and “*the Host*,” has found show-stopping success in his latest work “*Parasite*,” which won the Palme d’Or at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival.

The film follows the impoverished Kim family whose lives become entangled with those of the extremely wealthy Park household after the Kims’ son Ki-woo gets a job as a tutor for the Parks daughter. He and the rest of his family members establish themselves as essential employees working for the Parks --all without the Kims’ knowledge that they are related. Once the two families’ lives become intertwined, the movie shocks viewers with twists and turns that highlight issues surrounding social inequality in modern society--from the rage of the oppressed and poverty-stricken to the ignorance and blindness of upper-class citizens.

“*Parasite*” critiques the faults and struggles of both the rich and the poor, and leaves the viewer questioning their position in society in respect to others’ lives - making it a must-see this winter.

Astros Continued

the classic moment and Houston’s 2019 AL championship.

The scandal also puts the Washington Nationals’ 2019 World Series title in a new context. Although the Nationals’ 2019 season was rich with its own narratives, there is reason to believe that historians may focus more on their defeat of the Astros in spite of the sign-stealing system. Remarkably, Washington won all four games played in Houston, where the operation was exclusively located. And if the Astros had won the 2019 World Series, it’s possible that Manfred would have been forced to take additional action to prevent a cheating team from retaining two World Series titles in the last three seasons. Classic franchise history may be swept under the rug while the rest of baseball focuses on Houston’s morally convenient loss.

The scariest part of the whole affair is the uncertainty about where it could go next. There are largely unsubstantiated rumors of a worst-case scenario for baseball, in which most MLB teams have been operating electronic sign-stealing systems similar to Houston’s. Given the extent to which the Astros scandal has already harmed the legitimacy of the sport, such a scenario could spell doom for MLB, an organization already facing declining popularity. The Astros sign-stealing scheme has already established itself as a crucial piece of baseball history, and only time will tell what kind of long-term effects it will have on the sport.

