



CIVITAS EXAMINER

By students, for students.

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Westlake Landfill and Cold Water Creek: The Legacy of Nuclear Contamination in St. Louis

BY NEIL DOSHI
ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY HIGH, 2029

Just outside St. Louis City limits, underneath an inconspicuous landfill, sits a large amount of nuclear waste left during the Manhattan Project, and an active underground fire spreading to said nuclear waste. This issue has already affected thousands of St. Louis residents across 21 ZIP codes, and residents in nearby neighborhoods report unusually high cancer rates. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the site a Superfund in August 1990. The designation places the site on the federal Superfund's National Priorities List, initiates investigations into the site's origins and extent, and makes it eligible for a federally supervised cleanup. The site's history begins in 1942, during the Manhattan Project, with a company called Mallinckrodt Chemical Works, which operated in downtown St. Louis. Mallinckrodt was a uranium processing site for the U.S. government from 1942 to 1945. This made St. Louis a major part of the



Westlake Landfill, where you can see the equipment used to extract gases from the landfill and burn it off

development of early nuclear weapons but also created a large amount of nuclear waste that had to be removed from the area. The waste was moved to temporary storage centers near the airport, but by 1973, officials had yet to find a permanent solution. The government's solution was to sell it to a company called the Cotter Corporation. The Cotter Corporation then hired contractors to illegally dump the waste, mixed with dirt, into the Westlake Landfill. In a 2017 documentary called "Atomic

Homefront," director Rebecca Cammisa assembled several former truckers and laborers who talked about the lack of oversight in the dumping of their waste and how they had no idea what was happening until after headlines broke. They recounted how they had full access to dump the radioactive material wherever they pleased inside the landfill and how they mainly trucked in at night when fewer people were working. Estimates indicate around 8,700 tons of

radioactive waste and about 39,000 tons of contaminated soil and debris were dumped into the landfill.

At the time this was happening, very little was understood about the long-term effects of radioactive exposure and the longevity of radioactive contamination. Scientists now understand that these radioactive contaminants can stick to soil, can travel along waterways, and can cause long-term health effects even in small amounts. The

SEE NUCLEAR, PAGE 10

From History to Hashtag: How Black Culture Became Mainstream

BY RAYYAH JACKSON
HAZELWOOD CENTRAL

For centuries, the N-word was one of the most degrading slurs in the English language. It was used during slavery, segregation, and the Jim Crow era to dehumanize Black Americans and reinforce a racial hierarchy. Today, however, many teenagers encounter the word in music, social media, online gaming, and everyday conversations without fully understanding its history. For

some, it has become just another piece of slang.

How did that happen? The answer extends far beyond rap music. The growing use of the N-word reflects a broader cultural shift in which African American language, music, and culture have become deeply embedded in mainstream American life. As Black cultural expression has spread through entertainment and digital media, many of its

Photo/Art by Camila Martinez Rivera



Art depicting popular AAVE surrounding a young black girl

SEE BLACK CULTURE, PAGE 10

Private Schools and Public Regulations

BY LUCY MIKOW
LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL, 2029

The Founding Fathers believed in providing a public education for all citizens of the United States. What they wanted was an accessible education for students to be able to make informed decisions and grow in knowledge. They understood that education provided to every American regarding the same fundamental principles was essential to the survival of the republic. This is why in the U.S., public schools receive so much attention and money through the federal and state

governments. School and education as a whole has remained so important and central to America. This access to schooling is so important which is why public schools were established, and they need the access to tools and money to fund 50 million students nationwide.

While public education stands as the backbone of a free society, private schools also account for a portion of the schooling provided in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Education, private schools

Why Gen Z's First Job Doesn't Look Like Anyone Else's

BY CHARLES GIRAUD
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, 2030

For generations, the American entry into the workforce followed a predictable script: take the job available, learn its rhythms, endure the hierarchy, and build from there. Work came through institutions. Gen Z is dismantling that arrangement entirely, and the consequences are reverberating across labor markets, public policy and the fundamental question of what it means to be an economic participant in a democracy.

The numbers mark a clear departure from everything that came before. More than half of Gen Z professionals now freelance, and an estimated 43% participate in the gig economy, more than any previous generation at the same life stage. These are not teenagers picking up weekend shifts. They are the leading edge of a structural transformation that economists, policymakers, and political institutions have barely begun to reckon with.

To understand why Gen Z

works differently, you have to understand what they walked into. Entry-level job postings dropped 29 percentage points from January 2024. Youth unemployment hit 10.8% in July 2025, roughly 2.5 times the national rate. Only 12% of recent Gen Z graduates had a job offer before commencement, which is three times lower than that of their millennial and Gen X peers. Those numbers do not reflect a rough patch. They reflect a labor market that began contracting before this generation ever gained a foothold.

Artificial intelligence accelerated that contraction from above. Unlike previous waves of automation that primarily displaced manual labor, AI is now disproportionately targeting office-based, analytical and entry-level work, precisely the jobs young workers have historically used to get started. Entry-level tech hiring fell 25% year over year in 2024. Employment for software developers ages 22 to 25 declined nearly 20% from its peak in late 2022, according to Stanford Digital



A young man works remotely from his apartment, a reality many Gen Z workers will encounter

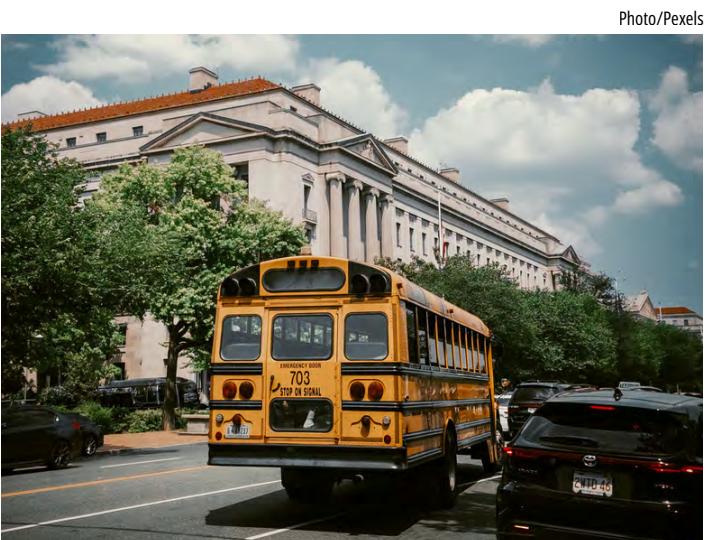
Economy Lab research. Nearly 9 in 10 graduates in the class of 2026 are concerned that AI could eliminate their entry-level role before they ever fill it. This is not a generation choosing independence because it sounds appealing.

It is a generation responding rationally to a market that closed traditional doors before they could even walk through them. What filled the gap was infrastructure. The number of Americans working full time as independents more than doubled between 2020 and 2024, rising from 13.6 million to 27.7 million and now representing 16.7% of the entire workforce. Platforms like Fiverr, Upwork, and Substack did

not create the desire for independent work. They lowered the cost of acting on it to near zero. For Gen Z, the gig economy is not an alternative to a career. In many cases, it is the only viable starting point that remains.

The gig economy is simultaneously a genuine expansion of economic opportunity and a mechanism for offloading institutional risk onto the individuals least equipped to absorb it. Workers classified as independent contractors lose access to minimum wage protections, overtime pay, unemployment insurance, and the right to organize. A typical construction worker in that classification loses as

SEE GEN Z, PAGE 10



A public school bus passes a government building

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The Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Domestic and Foreign Affairs

BY DWARAKA KUMAR
PARKWAY CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

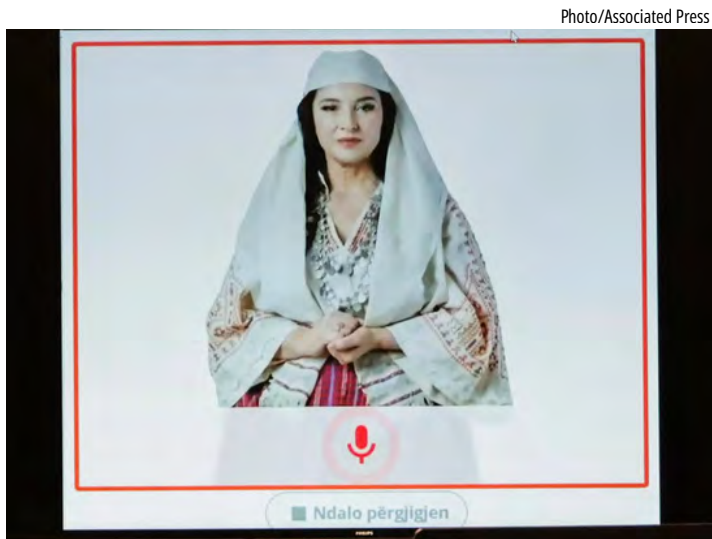
Recent news about the U.S’s interactions with Anthropic’s Fable 5 model is alarming. On June 12, 2026, the Trump administration cut off the model to “foreign nationals,” resulting in polarizing debate surrounding the AI industry and its potential in cybersecurity, economic development, and more importantly, foreign affairs. Although Anthropic immediately stopped the release and public use of Fable 5, the debate still remains; however, the debate is more multidimensional than the simple eye test.

When thinking about artificial intelligence, people tend to talk about its potential for cybersecurity and data analysis. The White House is one of the main beneficiaries of the potential of artificial intelligence. The administration specifically desires to accelerate artificial intelligence instead of restricting it, removing bureaucratic constraints as a result; it implicitly means that the U.S. uses AI innovation and security in its own departments, particularly the National Security Agency. This opinion has led to drastic improvements for the infrastructure necessary for the security agency to grow: AI identifies potential software breaks and general vulnerability detection. At the same time, the positive potential for artificial intelligence does not only lie with the United States.

Albania also has developed a national artificial intelligence plan to curb corruption, even having an artificially generated minister that has had some success in achieving this goal.

However, with the growing benefits come growing costs. Major costs. Coming back to recent news about Fable 5 and its ban, the U.S’s decision strained relations with European nations, particularly France and the United Kingdom. A former French minister even mentioned how the world should treat AI as we treated nuclear power; there are severe ramifications to it, particularly the threat of hacking. Many nations like China also thought this decision was nationalist and attempted to assert U.S. dominance over the AI sphere, which indicates that artificial intelligence has the potential to deteriorate foreign relations.

These major costs are not only regarding foreign debate: the growing environmental footprint and misinformation is also a key reason why artificial intelligence is a detriment to future relations. One prime example would be the disinformation that spread during the U.S’s initial attacks on Iran in March 2026; many influencers went online to post deepfakes of attacks in order to spin the narrative. These deepfakes and reels went viral, which further affected U.S. relations with other nations, thus proving that AI misinformation can also play



Albanian AI generated minister from Vlasov Sulaj per Albania Created an “A.I. Minister” to Curb Corruption. Then Its Developers Were Accused of Graft as published in the New York Times

a pivotal role in shaping foreign policy. Another example would be how some models mentioned in the book “Rewiring Democracy” unintentionally hallucinate state propaganda in their responses to individuals, undermining democracy as a result.

Finally, these major detriments may come with no consequence. As previously mentioned, the United States allows for free AI innovation since they are one of the primary beneficiaries of its development as an economic and political boost. However, this means that the hacking, misinformation, and other forms of illegal use are also widespread in the domestic sphere since AI regulations are minimal. Although the European Union’s AI Act exists and the U.K. has reinforced strong AI regulations, these measures still do not come close to regulating AI’s impact on foreign relations, particularly since the Trump administration banned Fable



As seen in Trump Administration Veers from the Rule of Law in Singling out Anthropic’s Latest Models published by the Cato Institute

5 from these nations. Thus, the ramifications are widespread and are yet to be mitigated.

In all industries, there is a balance. This balance comes in many forms, such as trade and manufacturing. However, this balance comes with regulation. Based on this principle, the AI industry is yet to find its balance, which is why the debate is so polarizing on an international scale. Yet, one idea is certain: measures must be taken to find a common ground, lest AI will be a detriment to society. ➡

“Twenty-One,” "Quiz Show," and the American Quality of Accountability

BY EMILY NGUYEN
LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL, 2026

Years before a thoughtful exposé by a certain Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein or Lyndon B. Johnson and the Gulf of Tonkin, Americans had already been lied to—by their televisions.

In 1958, NBC’s “Twenty-One,” and other popular high-stakes game shows, such as “The \$64,000 Question,” were discovered to be rigged. The public soon found out that contestants were coached by producers about how to act while on camera and how to best deliver answers to questions that were given in advance.

But, did these quiz show scandals rock the public’s trust?

Some viewers at home did not seem to mind the deceit. An unofficial poll by the Miami Herald showed that most Miamians wanted the quiz shows to return.

“Everything on TV is somewhat of a lie, but it’s still entertainment,” a viewer said to the Miami Herald.

When Robert Redford, director of “Quiz Show,” star of his own share of movies which provided political and social commentary including “All The President’s Men” and “The Candidate,” sat down with Bobbie Wygant, he was asked, “Why would they make a movie about [the quiz show scandals] in 1994?”

“It has so much to do with where we are today,” said



Barry Van Doren filming Twenty-One in 1957

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Gifted or Gated?

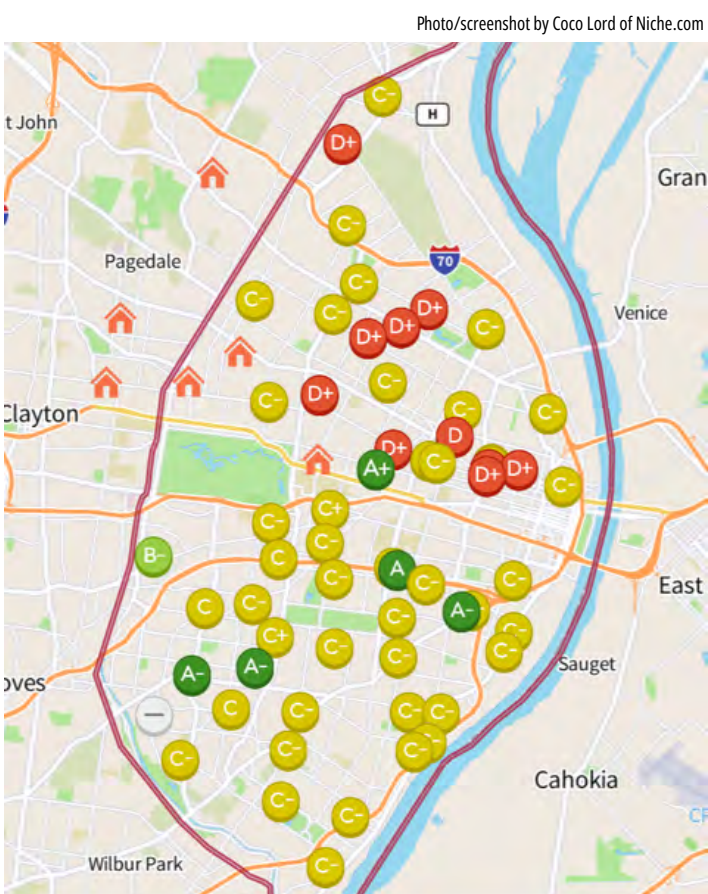
BY COCO LORD
METRO, 2028

In the Central West End neighborhood of St. Louis City— next to IKEA and across from a Planet Fitness— lies Metro Academic and Classical High School. Metro consistently ranks as one of the top public high schools in Missouri, with 99% of students showing proficiency in reading, and 89% showing proficiency in math, according to Niche. Two miles away— by way of Vandeventer and Page— sits Vashon High School, where only 12% of students are proficient in reading, and merely 5% are proficient in math.

Importantly, both Metro and Vashon belong to the same public school district: Saint Louis Public Schools.

Saint Louis Public Schools (more commonly known as SLPS) serves over 17,000 (mostly minority) St. Louis City area students across 68 schools. In January, the district caught national attention for losing full accreditation from the Missouri State Board of Education. This decision, while it may have come as a surprise to many, was certainly justified. For years, SLPS has struggled with internal corruption, constant leadership turnover, financial strain, and— most importantly for those 17,000 students— low academic performance and state test scores.

If one were to only look at schools like Metro or the Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience—two SLPS



A map by Niche.com depicting SLPS school ratings. Notably, ratings are much lower in North St. Louis

schools that routinely outrank prestigious suburban counterparts like Ladue or Clayton—it would be difficult to believe that, district-wide, SLPS averages just 23% proficiency in reading and 19% in math. This massive chasm is the direct result of a deep educational disparity built into the structure of SLPS itself.

The SLPS system is made up of a mix of magnet and neighborhood schools. Schools like Metro and Collegiate were magnet schools, designed to be elite and attract a diverse range of high performing students across the St. Louis area. While such design was occurring, traditional neighborhood schools— like Vashon or Sumner High

School— were largely left behind, causing them to absorb the effects of systemic disinvestment in their North City neighborhoods. Despite all of the good the creation of selective magnet schools has had for St. Louis, the investment into these few “high achieving” schools has caused concentrated poverty and fewer resources for others. As a student at Metro, it appears to me that SLPS leadership would rather shine a light on a few picture perfect schools than invest in the schools that have been left behind. Indeed, Metro and Collegiate are home to far more educational opportunities than any other city high schools. Metro boasts a prestigious International Baccalaureate

SEE GIFTED, PAGE 12

Mill Creek Valley: A Thriving Black Community Erased in the Name of Progress

BY SHAKTI KANNAN
FORT ZUMWALT WEST HIGH SCHOOL, 2028

In the late 1950s, 20,000 Black residents were forced to abandon their homes by the St. Louis government. This was Mill Creek Valley, one of the largest and most vibrant Black neighborhoods near downtown St. Louis. It was home to prominent figures like Josephine Baker and Scott Joplin. The community also encompassed over 800 successful businesses, 43 churches, and seven schools. It was an incredibly tight-knit community and one of the few areas where Black families could realistically buy homes at the time.

That changed in 1954, when St. Louis Mayor Raymond Tucker announced that Mill Creek Valley was to be demolished. He claimed that it was necessary for St. Louis's rebirth, promising that new developments in industry and transportation



Mill Creek Valley, pictured here when it was a thriving Black community

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Senate Bill 68: No More Phones?!

BY SREEHAN MANDHAPATI
PARKWAY WEST HIGH SCHOOL, 2028

The statewide phone ban in Missouri school changed school in a number of ways that I certainly never saw coming. When Missouri officially passed Senate Bill 68 in July 2025, most of us school kids—including myself—thought it would be nothing short of an absolute nightmare. Under the newly instituted legislation, all of the public and charter schools across the state of Missouri have been mandated to prohibit all cell phones, smartwatches, and devices of similar capacity during all school hours. This ban begins at the initial school bell up to the final bell, and it prevents texts during class, scrolls during lunch, and the checking of notifications during the school day.

For a generation of kids who were almost raised by the internet, smartphones, and devices, the change felt abrupt and severe.

More than halfway into the 2025-2026 school year, however, I can say that not everyone is still feeling the burn of having to go phone-free for most of their day. Some of the most interesting side-effects include better interaction in the lunch room and the ability for teachers to take phones away since students were not on them. Being without the comfort of scrolling through your phone, seeing a friend's

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Back to Square One: What Happened to Women’s Rights?

BY LEANNA J.D. HAYNES
HOME SCHOOL, 2028

Women’s rights have always been and continue to be an important social, economical, and political movement, especially in the United States. Although great accomplishments have been made throughout the course of the movement, one cannot help but wonder if some of those accomplishments are in the process of being undone. While women have more equality than ever before, the current political climate raises the concern: Are we moving forward or backward?

After the relentless efforts of women across America, women finally obtained the right to vote thanks to the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1920. Recently, however, the Trump Administration attempted to pass the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act. It would, in a nutshell, make it significantly harder for many people to vote by eliminating mail-in voting and online registration, on which 42 states currently rely. Voters would also be required to bring a form of a qualifying document to prove citizenship. This Act was originally proposed in 2024 and was passed by the House of Representatives in 2025, but not the Senate. The Act was then rebranded and expanded as the SAVE America Act 2026. This rebrand expanded to include strict voter photo mandates and to require citizens to re-verify their citizenship status in order to cast a ballot. Today, it has once again passed the House, and now Trump is heavily pressuring



A women's march that took place decades ago

the Senate to approve it. This is notably stalling other important bills such as the Housing Affordability Act, which would be able to help countless Americans.

“The House of Representatives passed the SAVE America Act, which would bar eligible voters from registering if they have documents that no longer match their name. If enacted, the law could disproportionately affect married women who have changed their last names and transgender people whose documents may not reflect their gender identity.” - ACLU

Supporters of the SAVE Act say that it would strengthen election security, but opponents, like me, are steadfast in our belief that it could create unnecessary barriers to voting. Regardless of one's position, the debate surely highlights ongoing concerns about equal access to the ballot box.

Another example of women's rights being pushed back is how, in the year 1960, the first contraceptive pill was made available. This was

an incredible feat as this gave women the power to take charge of their own bodies and engage in sexual activities as they pleased without worrying about getting pregnant when they were not ready, expanding opportunities for women in education and in the workforce. However, although the contraceptive pill still exists today, reproductive rights are heavily contested. Following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade in 2022, several states enacted laws that significantly restricted or banned abortion access. This could be considered a reversal because it forces women to have children when they're not ready, an opposite parallel to the prior statement. Additionally, Trump approved “defunding” Planned Parenthood while also attempting to take it further, which led to the recorded closing of approximately 60 clinics across 20 states, as well as the economic struggle of many others. This is a removal of body autonomy



A more recent women's march, demonstrating the recurrence of attacks on women's rights

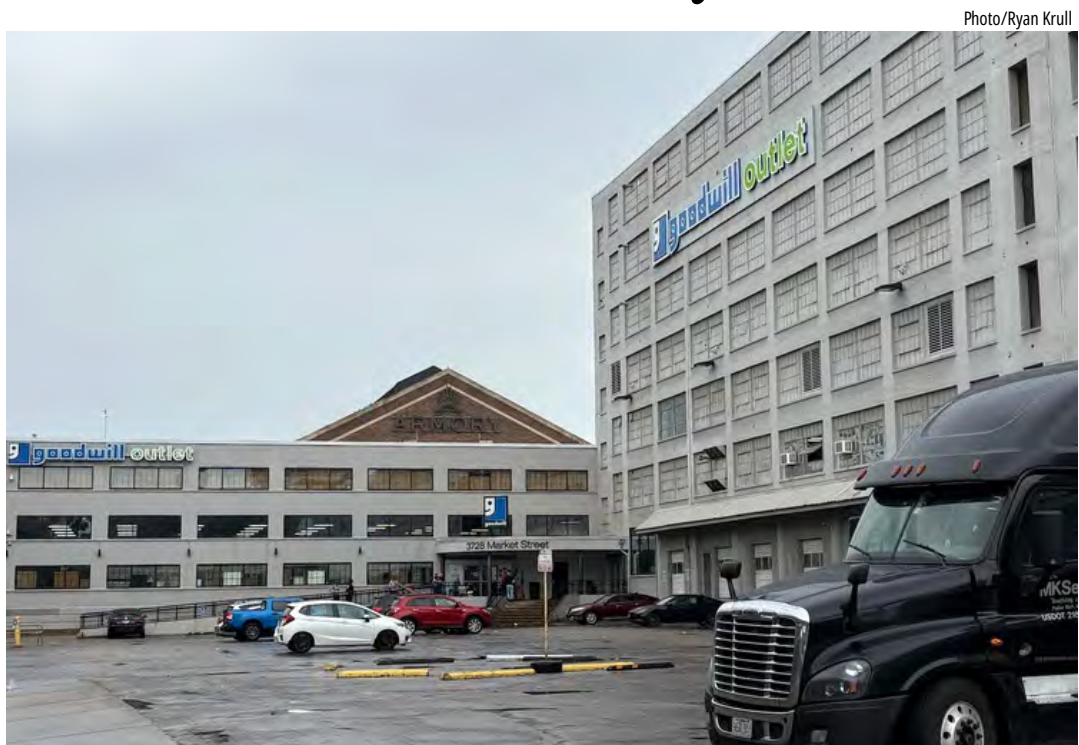
by giving pregnant women no option but to bear a child, even if it is not plausible for the mother economically, may interfere with future plans, or even could cause harm to the mother and/or baby. This is unconstitutional, as it infringes on the woman's rights to life and liberty as stated by the 14th amendment:

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Women's role in the workforce also demonstrates both progress and ongoing challenges. Since the 1800s, women have been fighting their way into the workforce. They worked their way up from the textile industry

during the Industrial Revolution, to the factories during the World Wars, to office jobs in the 1970s after the aforementioned contraceptive pill. After fighting tooth and nail to make their way into the workforce, they were paid almost 20% less than men. To put this into perspective, if a man gets paid 25 dollars an hour for eight hours, he makes 200 dollars in a day; however, a woman, who would be paid 20 dollars an hour, would only make 160 dollars for working the exact same hours as the man. On top of this, the infamous “glass ceiling” is known to keep women from moving up in companies due to the painfully persistent idea that women are inferior to men or undeserving of higher positions. Essentially, although women are in the workforce, they are not being treated fairly within it. Women are paid less for positions that do not exhibit their full potential and are stuck between a rock and a hard place. While opportunities for women have expanded dramatically,

The Controversial Armory Data Center



A photo by Ryan Krull of the potential site of a data center in St. Louis

BY BENJAMIN YATES
HOMESCHOOL, 2028

Even though the exact date is still unclear, the deadline for the construction of the controversial Armory Innovation Data Center is looming.

The data center will be constructed next door to the National Guard Armory proper, a vast, historic building which has served many purposes after its original one as a headquarters for the National Guard. Famously, it was once a concert venue which hosted the Grateful Dead in 1968, and also an indoor tennis club frequented by Jimmy Connors, who stayed at the top of the ranks in men’s tennis for more than five years, and Arthur Ashe, the first Black man selected for the Davis Cup team. In its

most recent incarnation, the Armory was reimagined as a massive, multi-purpose entertainment venue. It has recently been closed to the public due to lack of funding and will now be renovated into a luxury office space which will benefit greatly from the massive supply of computing power next door. The data center itself will be housed in a repurposed warehouse directly next to the Armory, previously owned by Goodwill, which encompasses 525,000 square feet. It will have an electrical grid consuming energy at a rate of 120 megajoules per second (megawatts)—enough to power upwards of 100,000 typical American homes. ChatGPT itself only requires 22 megawatts, meaning that the data center would be massively helpful for the tech companies using it for AI and

large databases.

But what about the effect it will have on the St. Louis community? Data centers often impact air quality because they use non-renewable energy sources. While the data center will be powered by only 50% fossil fuels, it will still have a deleterious effect on St. Louis’ air quality. Another concern is that of water use, which is a common point cited in anti-AI and anti-data center circles. The data center will have a closed-loop cooling system, meaning that instead of using large amounts of water to cool the servers and then getting new water once it evaporates away, it will use the same water over and over, waiting for it to cool between uses.

A point often used by supporters of the data center

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Small loans, big change: How Microfinance Is Reshaping Developing Economies

BY DARSH MAHAPATRA
PARKWAY WEST HIGH SCHOOL, 2028

To millions of entrepreneurs in developing nations, a small loan can mean the difference between a life in poverty and a life of opportunity. Microfinance is the distribution of small sums to people who traditionally lack access to conventional banking institutions. It has transformed into one of the most important development tools of recent decades, empowering individuals to launch businesses, increase employment and improve their lives. The microfinance movement began in Bangladesh in the 1970s, when economist Muhammad Yunus lent small amounts of money to poor villagers to aid them in purchasing fishing nets or raw materials. Upon this success, Yunus established a financial institution called Grameen Bank on the idea that lacking credit history or a large

amount of money should not be a barrier to improving one's economic situation. The model has since spread to various programs in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The need for these services is undeniable. Around 2.8 billion people worldwide live on \$2 or less per day, according to research published in the Academy of Management Perspectives, many of whom work in trades, small businesses and agriculture. Many of these individuals have a good idea for a viable business, Yunus says, but have no means of acquiring start-up capital from conventional banks no matter how modest the undertaking might be. Sub-Saharan Africa exemplifies this challenge: Many countries in the region suffer from an underdeveloped financial infrastructure. According to Microfinancing Partners in Africa, of the nine countries in the world in



Women in Africa are shown here selling goods at a marketplace

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Armenian Elections: What Do They Entail?

BY KIRILL KONDRATYUK
PARKWAY WEST HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

On June 7, 2026, Armenians headed to the polls to elect Armenia's parliament. Fighting for the seats were numerous parties, with two major competitors being Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, which holds pro-European and reformist views, and Samvel Karapetyan's Strong Armenia alliance, which is pro-Russian. Civil Contract ended up coming on top, winning 64 out of 105 seats, while Strong Armenia placed second with 29 seats. A third party, the Armenia Alliance, led by former president Robert Kocharyan, won 12 seats, and is also Russia-leaning, and has a much harsher position on Nagorno-Karabakh. To understand why this election was so important, we need to look a little bit into the past.

To understand what led to this election, we need to understand two events: the 2018 Armenian Revolution and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia has been a parliamentary republic since 2015. Between 1999 and 2018, Armenia was ruled by the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), described as a typical post-Soviet party of power lacking an ideology. Their rule was marked by the

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SPRING BONUS ISSUE

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Why the Best Fans in Baseball are Abandoning Their Team

BY COCO LORD
METRO HIGH SCHOOL, 2028

In 1992, former Pittsburgh Pirates manager, Jim Leyland, famously validated St. Louis Cardinals fans as the “best fans in baseball”. For years, this nickname rang true: the Cardinals were known for their tremendous home field advantage (something that is aided greatly by fans), and from 2006-2023 the Cards drew over 3 million fans to Busch Stadium each season.

Today, bored in my study hall, I did what any student of my academic caliber would do: watch baseball highlights on YouTube. As I watched JJ Wetherholt– the rookie infielder for the Cardinals– hit his third home run of the season into a cluster of empty seats, one thing became abundantly clear: the “best fans in baseball” are abandoning their team.

On April 14, 2026, Cardinals attendance hit its first major low of the season, selling only 17,901 tickets. For reference, Busch Stadium– where the Cardinals play– seats 46,000. This significant drop seems to be on track for the Cardinals, who only averaged roughly 27,700 in attendance



A screenshot of an empty Busch Stadium during a baseball game, captured by Coco Lord.

last season, record lows for the franchise. In fact, last season, the Cardinals had their lowest attendance in a non-pandemic year since 1997, and the largest one-year drop off in attendance in Major League Baseball history. This year is not looking much better for the Redbirds– who are following 3 years of missing the playoffs and in the midst of a major rebuild.

When comparing the St. Louis Cardinals attendance to teams such as the Los Angeles Angels or the Oakland

Athletics, both of which consistently average attendance well below that of the Cardinals, this drop off does not seem too significant. What makes this so significant, and makes the Cardinals so special in the case of low attendance, is just how quickly fans gave up on them. The Cardinals last made the playoffs in 2022, only four years ago, and while 2023 saw a devastating losing season, success was not too far in fans’ hindsight. However, this did not make a difference, as from 2023 to

2025, Cards attendance decreased by almost one million from 3,320,551 to only 2,250,007. The reason is simple: Cardinals fans are too used to winning. The St. Louis Cardinals have won 11 world series, and hold a historical winning record. Now, as the Cardinals work to rebuild and regain success– a not only normal, but common, occurrence in sports– fans don’t want to stick around anymore.

Really, St. Louis is the perfect city for such abandonment to occur. Our

baseball team is reflecting the crisis that is overwhelming our city. St. Louis has lost 65 percent of its population since 1950, and between 2020 and 2024, over 21,000 residents left the city. The population drop rate of St. Louis is higher than that of any other major US city. When they are not leaving, St. Louisians are sick of the perceived negatives of life in St. Louis. It is unsurprising that a city whose negatives are greatly emphasized has low patience with the fall off of a key

aspect of its positive reputation. St. Louis is in a position where it is entirely unable to have a winning season, and that is shining through to the Cardinals and driving away Cardinals fans. St. Louis, due to a history of degradation and disorganization, does not have the privilege of strong identity that New York or Chicago does, and when the glue of our identity performs subpar, it is difficult to stick with it.

This season, the Cardinals franchise has made strides to increase its attendance. They now offer tickets, starting at \$29, that come with unlimited food and drink, and have filled their home schedule with giveaway opportunities. In reality, though, it may take more than free t-shirts to win back the hearts of the best (and most irritable) fans in baseball. However, there is hope, for if history shows anything it’s that the Cardinals can make a comeback. Take the 2006 World Series, where the underdog Cardinals beat Jim Leyland and the Detroit Lions in 5 games– greatly assisted by the best fans in baseball. ←

Oil Lobbying Against Nuclear Energy

BY MINHA ARSHAD
JOHN BURROUGHS, 2029

Despite the many benefits of nuclear energy, there remains a large stigma against it in the minds of the public and our politicians. This attitude can be credited to oil corporations, such as BP, Shell, ARCO, and countless others. By demonizing the use of nuclear energy, oil companies find a way to make their resources more profitable and appear ethical and profitable.

This narrative, pushed by oil corporations, is largely false, as nuclear power offers many benefits. With no

carbon emissions, no dependence on weather, the capability to produce energy for 2 years without refueling, and being cheaper to operate than fossil fuels, over time, the pros of nuclear energy greatly outweigh those of fossil fuels.

Since Chernobyl in 1986, nuclear energy has become much safer due to measures such as increased staffing, increased identification of plant performance information, and the elimination of unstable graphite moderators. According to Stastica, fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas account for over

2,000 times more deaths per terawatt hour than nuclear energy.

Given these facts, how could there ever be doubt about using nuclear energy? As Rod Adams states in a Forbes article, “Oil would be worth a lot less if more of the world’s energy needs were provided by atomic fission.” And in the past 100 years, oil companies have certainly come to notice that. Back in 1969, the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) donated \$80,000 (about \$700,000 today) to create Friends of the Earth, an organization with anti-nuclear stances.

In the late 1980s, the construction of the Shoreham Nuclear Power Station by LILCO was underway. An ad targeting the construction of this station was produced with the slogan “SOLAR, NOT NUCLEAR.” While the ad claimed to be for the public interest, the ad was created by the oil heat industry, which represents numerous oil and energy companies across the nation.

Countless other anti-

Lebanon Escalating to a Deadly Crisis

BY SARP SAKIN
LADUE HIGH SCHOOL, 2029

While the world is occupied with looking at the conflict between Iran and the US, a new front of war in the Middle East starts, striking down a previous ceasefire that would only be able to last a year and a few months. Since the second of March of 2026, the conflict between Hezbollah, a shia militia group that is also a political organization, and Israel has resumed. The fighting between the two parties has caused a costly and deadly crisis inside Lebanon. The International Rescue Committee reports this as “one of the fastest displacement crises the country has faced” with over a million people in Lebanon being displaced as a result of this conflict. With the fighting in Lebanon being started again, the future of Lebanon remains uncertain with all the regional actors looking to see what the country will face in this conflict.

Lebanon’s history with other states in the Middle East is something that is a major factor in understanding the current

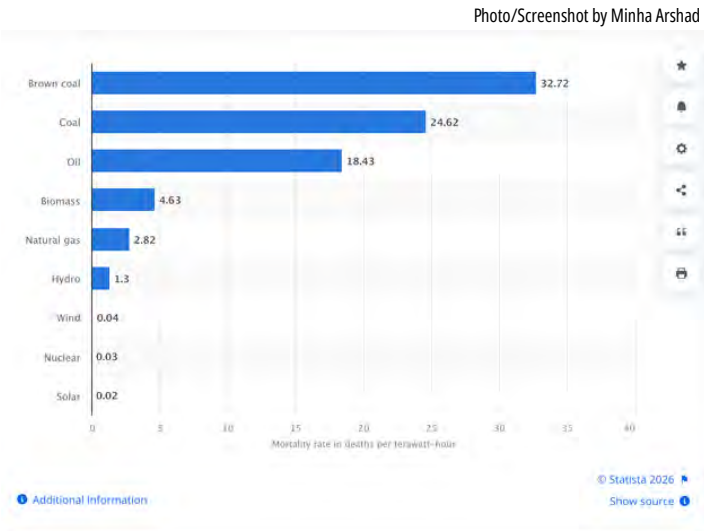
conflict. After being occupied by colonial powers in the first and second world war, Lebanon experienced its best economy it would ever see during the 1960s when tourism started to rise. When the country’s largest bank collapsed, it would stop the growth that Lebanon saw and lead it towards a more darker time. And soon after this, a large number of Palestinian refugees would arrive after the war in 1967.

As a result of this, Palestinian militias would organize and group in Lebanon, where they fled. With all of the factors after the economic collapse, tensions inside Lebanon would start to rise with the majority Christian government facing criticism

as matters in the region escalated. The Lebanese Civil War, which still can be seen today broke out in 1975 and lasted 15 years, ending in 1990. The Civil War would result in government reforms that better represent all groups of people, and the disarming of all the militia groups in Lebanon.

There was one exception to the disarmament, which was Hezbollah. There are a lot of possible reasons on why Hezbollah was able to keep their weapons. The main and widely spoken reason for this was that they identified themselves as a resistance organization and not as a militia. The Taif Agreement, treaty which was the resolution to the civil war,

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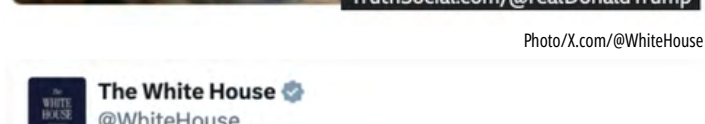


A Statista 2026 graphic depicts mortality rate in deaths per terawatt-hour of different energy sources





Photo/TruthSocial.com/@realDonaldTrump



Photo/X.com/@WhiteHouse



11:07 PM · May 2, 2025 · 111.1M Views

Top: An AI image of Donald Trump shared to his Truth Social page
Bottom: An AI image of Trump depicted as the Pope, shared via the White House's X account

Religion, Power, and Politics

BY LEANNA J.D. HAYNES
HOME SCHOOL NETWORK, 2028

Many people across the world today identify with an organized religion. While faith often serves as a source of personal meaning and community, history shows that religion has also played its part in politics. Between 1200 and 1450 and continuing into the early modern period, religion was frequently used by rulers across Afro-Eurasia to legitimize authority, unify populations, and conduct diplomacy. Although the global political landscape has widely changed since then with reformations, similar patterns can still be observed today in how religion is used as a tool of power.

During this period from 1200 to 1450, expanding networks such as the Silk Roads and Indian Ocean routes connected diverse populations through trade. As empires grew larger and more culturally complex, rulers searched for effective ways to maintain control. Religion, already deeply embedded in societies through belief systems such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism, became their not-so-hidden treasure.

While this may seem like it was a huge win for political leaders at that time, religion was often times used alongside coercion. One of the most common strategies was the use of divine legitimacy, or Divine Right. This concept posited that rulers were appointed by a higher power to represent

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

HAPPY EASTER TO ALL, INCLUDING CROOKED AND CORRUPT PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES THAT ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO INTERFERE WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2024, AND PUT ME IN PRISON, INCLUDING THOSE MANY PEOPLE THAT I COMPLETELY & TOTALLY DESPISE BECAUSE THEY WANT TO DESTROY AMERICA, A NOW FAILING NATION, LIKE "DERANGED" JACK SMITH, WHO IS EVIL AND "SICK," MRS. FANI "FAUNI" WADE, WHO SAID SHE HARDLY KNEW THE "SPECIAL" PROSECUTOR, ONLY TO FIND THAT HE SPENT YEARS "LOVING" HER, LONG BEFORE THE GEORGIA PERSECUTION OF PRESIDENT TRUMP BEGAN (AND THEREBY MAKING THE CASE AGAINST ME NULL, VOID, AND ILLEGAL!), AND LAZY ON VIOLENT CRIME ALVIN BRAGG WHO, WITH CROOKED JOE'S DOJ THUGS, UNFAIRLY WORKING IN THE D.A.'s OFFICE, ILLEGALLY INDICTED ME ON A CASE HE NEVER WANTED TO BRING AND VIRTUALLY ALL LEGAL SCHOLARS SAY IS A CASE THAT SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT, IS BREAKING THE LAW IN DOING SO (POMERANTZI!), WAS TURNED DOWN BY ALL OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES, AND IS NOT A CRIME. HAPPY EASTER EVERYONE!

Donald Trump's Easter message, posted on Truth Social (@realDonaldTrump/ TruthSocial)

them by ruling. For example, in Confucian China, this took place in the form of the Mandate of Heaven, while in Christian Europe, rulers claimed authority through God's will, and in the Mongol Empire, leaders invoked Heaven's favor. Across these regions, the message was clear: to challenge the ruler was to challenge divine authority itself. This belief strengthened loyalty and discouraged rebellion. It was, however, limited. Rulers in China could claim divine approval but risked losing it if disasters or instability suggested they had lost the Mandate of Heaven.

However, religion was not always used to create fear of opposition. In the Mughal Empire, Emperor Akbar took a different approach by promoting religious tolerance. He hosted inter-faith discussions and

incorporated diverse religious groups into his administration. Rather than demanding uniformity, Akbar used inclusivity to build trust and stability among his subjects, leading to loyalty due to free will. His rule demonstrates that religion could also be used to unify rather than divide.

Religion also functioned as a tool of diplomacy. For example, the Delhi Sultanate adopted policies that blended elements of Hinduism and Islam to appeal to its diverse population. Similarly, Mansa Musa strengthened Mali's global stance by embracing Islam. His famous pilgrimage to Mecca not only demonstrated personal devotion but also elevated Mali's prestige and formed stronger political and economic ties within the Islamic world, creating a larger connection and

expanding a cultural community. In the Ottoman Empire, the devshirme system forcibly recruited Christian boys and trained them for state service, ensuring loyalty to the Sultan.

In the following period between 1450 and 1750, powerful empires throughout Afro-Eurasia continued to rely on religion to justify rule and define state identity. Leaders like Suleiman the Magnificent publicly described themselves as divinely chosen, while Safavid rulers enforced religious orthodoxy to unify their empire. At the same time, pragmatic governance remained essential, as seen in the policies of Akbar and the administrative systems of the Ottomans.

These historical patterns give rise to important questions about the present. In modern politics, religion still plays a visible role in shaping identity, mobilizing supporters, and framing conflicts. In the United States, some political movements have drawn on ideas associated with Christian nationalism, blending religious identity with national identity in ways that influence policy and public opinion. Supporters of Donald Trump, for example, have framed political struggles in religious or moral terms, portraying leadership as part of a larger, almost providential mission.

Donald Trump himself has made several public statements and social media posts that blur the line

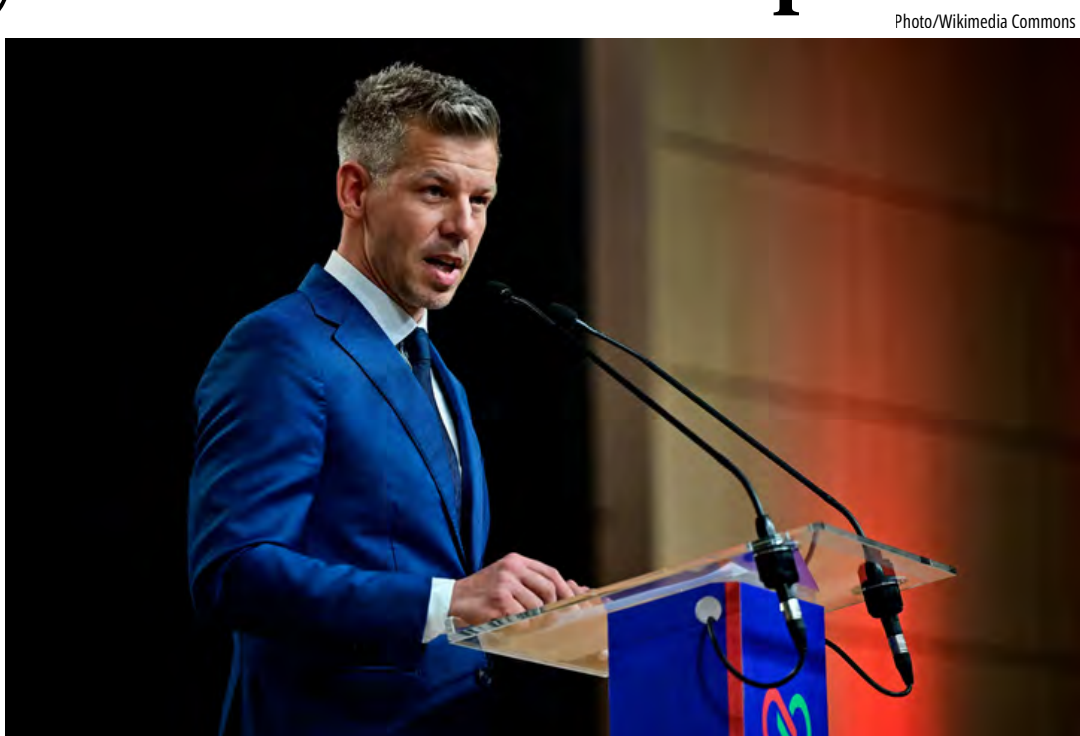
SEE RELIGION, PAGE 8

Hungarian Election Results and What They Could Mean for Europe

BY KIRILL KONDRATYUK
PARKWAY WEST HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

On April 12, 2026, Hungarians went to the polls to elect a new parliament. These elections were among the most tense in the country, as it was a choice between the right-wing incumbent Viktor Orbán and his main opponent, Péter Magyar. To many, it seemed like a choice between continuing Orbán's shift towards authoritarianism and Russia, or choosing Magyar's center-right and pro-European way. And when the preliminary results came in, it was revealed that Orbán lost, with his party, Fidesz, getting only 56 out of 199 seats, while Magyar's party, Tisza, won 137 out of 199 seats, which constitutes a supermajority. But before we can analyze how this election would affect Europe, we need to look back.

First, we need to know a little about Viktor Orbán. In 1988, he, along with 35 other students at the Lawyers' Special College of Social Sciences, founded the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), a liberal political movement in opposition to the then-communist government of Hungary. After communism collapsed in Hungary, he and his party would participate in elections. Initially, they did poorly, but in the 1998 elections, his party won the majority, and Orbán became prime minister, serving from 1998 to 2002. However, he



Prime Minister candidate Peter Magyar

would make a massive comeback in the 2010 elections, winning a supermajority in parliament, which allowed him to change Hungary's constitution. Since his return to power, Hungary has faced significant democratic backsliding, including weakened judicial independence, increased corruption, and government oversight of the media and press. In addition, Orbán and his party shifted further to the right, espousing Christian nationalism, along with anti-immigration rhetoric, anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, soft Euroscepticism, as well as opposition to liberal democracy.

Despite these factors, Fidesz still successfully won a supermajority of seats in 2014, 2018, and 2022. What made Hungary even more

problematic was its relations with Russia. Orbán has built a very close relationship with Vladimir Putin, and while he initially condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he later became infamous for blocking the EU from sending aid to Ukraine. In fact, in March 2026, a scandal broke out over Russia. It was revealed that Hungarian foreign minister Péter Szijjártó was leaking EU information to Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, including offering to send Ukraine's European Union accession document to Lavrov. The election campaign further demonstrated Orbán's pro-Russian leanings, as the posters included images of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, accusing him of attempting

to drag the country into war by sending weapons and troops, as well as accusing Magyar of being tied to Ukraine.

Now, we need to know who Péter Magyar is, since he is set to become the new prime minister and was Orbán's main opponent. Initially, Magyar was a member of Fidesz, but he left in 2024, in large part due to Katalin Novák, the president of Hungary, pardoning a man who was convicted for helping cover up child sexual abuse in a children's home. He would eventually join Tisza, a minor conservative political party that was mostly inactive. However, after Magyar joined, the party's popularity grew, with it becoming the main opposition to Orbán in the

SEE HUNGARY, PAGE 7

Iran: Subjugation or Liberation?

BY SARP SAKIN
LADUE HIGH SCHOOL, 2029

On the 28th of February, 2026, Israel and the United States began strikes and bombings into Iran. The first wave of strikes would go on to take many lives of Iranians, and specifically, be known for being the strike in which Ali Khamenei who was the Ayatollah would be killed. These strikes would escalate a major conflict between the two sides, dragging America into a vague war that was never voted on.

The US and Iran had a previous altercation during the June of 2025 in what would be known as the Twelve-Day War. In this war, the administration would go on to title an article called "Iran's Nuclear Facilities Have Been Obliterated" in the White House website after it had been concluded. And now, the US is at war with Iran with the main objective of regime change and other priorities such as crippling Iran's military, and its sovereignty.

And all of the details above now ask one question regarding the future of Iran. Will this coalition really bring democracy to the people of Iran? Or, will this result in another mass expenditure of military assets across the globe for a destabilized country?

To answer this question, it is important to acknowledge

SEE IRAN, PAGE 9

Why Inflation Hits Teenagers Harder Than You Think

BY ARIANA TOTAKHIL
LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

When most people hear "inflation", they probably think of Wall Street or gas prices. But for teenagers, it shows up in everyday moments that we might not even notice. Maybe you've been saving all month from your part-time job, only to realize that going out with friends costs more than it did last year. Things like movie tickets, snacks, or this generation's favorite "fun drinks" keep creeping up in price. Inflation does dominate news headlines, however, it also shapes the decisions that teenagers make each day in ways that most people don't really notice.

The impact goes beyond small purchases. Inflation can affect the ability to save for future goals like college or even personal independence. Suddenly, what used to feel affordable, whether it was school activities, sports, or outings with friends, now feel like calculated decisions. For many teens, that means making tough choices about how to spend limited money, which often comes at the expense of fun experiences or opportunities that help shape growth and social development.

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YOU'RE JUST ONE
STORY IN A SYSTEM
THAT DOESN'T STOP
FOR ANYONE

The World Doesn't Revolve Around You

BY RAYYAH JACKSON
HAZELWOOD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL,
Something I believe the world is missing is understanding.

Not surface-level understanding. Not the kind built from one interaction, one headline, or one moment. I mean real understanding. The kind that requires you to question your own perspective.

Because the truth is, most people do not.

We observe.
We assume.
We decide.

And then we move on.

Growing up, I was always told, “The world doesn’t revolve around you.”

At the time, that felt simple. Almost obvious.

But it is not just a personal lesson.

It is a political one.

Scientifically, humans are wired to center themselves.

It is called egocentric bias. The tendency to rely on our own perspective as the primary lens through which we interpret reality. Our brains prioritize what we experience because it is immediate. Because it is ours.

This is efficient for survival.

But dangerous for understanding.

Because when individuals operate this way, and then scale that mindset across entire populations, it begins to shape how societies function.

It shapes how we vote.
How we argue.
How we interpret leadership.
How we respond to conflict.

The Earth rotates at approximately 1,000 miles per hour. It orbits the sun at about 67,000 miles per hour. The solar system itself moves through the Milky Way at over 500,000 miles per hour.

None of this movement accounts for human opinion.

None of it centers on human experience.

And yet, politically and socially, we behave as if our perspective is sufficient to define reality.

Modern political systems do not operate around a single individual.

Yet public discourse often suggests they do.

Leaders are treated as if they are the sole cause of national success or failure. A president becomes the center of blame or praise, as if

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The Best They Could Do

UNDERSTANDING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES THROUGH HISTORY AND LOVE

BY LAWRENCE E.C. HAYNES
HOME SCHOOL NETWORK, 2029

For my English I class, I recently read *The Best We Could Do*, where the author Thi Bui shows how war, displacement, trauma, sacrifice, and resilience shaped her family relationships. Her graphic novel tells the story of her Vietnamese family forced to navigate generations of conflict, all while trying to build a safer future for their children. At its core, the book carries a powerful message that still applies today: people are often just doing the best they can with what they have at the time.

The story is mainly told from Thi’s perspective, though it occasionally shifts to reflect the experiences of others in her family. Her parents, Bo and Ma, play central roles, along with her siblings Quyen, Lan, Bich, Thao, and Tam. Another important figure is Travis, who is Thi’s husband. By focusing on her family’s history, she pieces together where she comes from and why her parents think and act the way they do.

The memoir begins with the birth of Thi’s son, Hien Bui-Stafford, which forces her to think about her own parents and what it really means to raise a child. The story then moves between past and present, showing Thi’s life in New York as a young adult and then back through her parents’ lives in Vietnam. As she learns more about her family’s past, she



Photo/Lawrence Haynes



Photo/Lawrence Haynes



Photo/Lawrence Haynes

Top (left): The cover of “The Best We Could Do” by Thi Bui
Top (right): Lawrence Haynes’ paternal grandparents, all their children, and grandchildren
Bottom: Lawrence Haynes’ maternal grandma, grandaunts, granduncle, their children, and grandchildren

begins to see her parents differently as people shaped by hardship, fear, and survival.

One of the most impactful themes of the book is how it portrays the lasting effects of war. The Vietnam War and earlier conflicts deeply affected Bo’s life, influencing

how he expresses emotion and interacts with his family. Bo’s trauma helps explain his emotional distance, showing how experiences of violence and instability can carry into the next generation.

Eventually, Thi and her family flee Vietnam by boat in search of safety. Their

journey is uncertain and dangerous, but it reflects the desperation of people trying to escape impossible conditions. After arriving in the United States, they struggle to adjust to a completely new environment, facing cultural

SEE IMMIGRANT, PAGE 9

included in green energy. U.S. Representative Troy Bladerson from central Ohio, supported this initiative and recognized natural gas as a “clean and green” energy source. The disinformation spread by the American Petroleum Institute propagated false facts surrounding fossil fuels, leading to our laws slanting towards the less ethical and environmentally unfriendly energy source.

One of the largest donors to anti-nuclear sentiment is The Empowerment Alliance (TEA), which spends millions of dollars on ads targeting voters in swing states. TEA is known for its relations with conservative politicians and fossil fuel companies, and the leader of TEA happens to be the head of Ariel Corporation, the largest producer of natural gas compressors. In the past, TEA executives have pushed the Ohio state senators, Mark Romanchuk and George Lang, to claim that natural gas is “clean energy”. In addition, TEA donated \$1.5 million to senatorial candidate Herschel Walker’s campaign in the 2022 Georgia Senate Race. It is no coincidence that Walker was also given direct donations by the owner of the oil company Midland Energy. TEA has shown time and

time again that they want to ensure that oil companies remain in power by impacting the decisions of our politicians and legislature.

Not only can nuclear energy provide the benefits of fossil fuels, but also over wind and solar energy, as nuclear energy can produce maximum power 93% of the time, which is 3% more than wind and solar energy. However, fossil fuel companies still get in the way of the nuclear vs renewable debate, as fossil fuel companies are also campaigning for renewable energy. The reason for this? Right now, renewables such as wind and solar are backed 1:1 by oil. So whenever the sun isn’t shining or it isn’t windy, the oil industry is still in demand. By promoting the use of fossil fuels to back wind and solar, the fossil fuel industry finds a loophole in which their resources can be seen as beneficial for the environment and necessary for the energy grid.

BP has tweeted, “Our natural gas is a smart partner to renewable energy,” and Shell has tweeted, “No sun? No wind? No problem, natural gas has it covered. See why #natgas is a great partner for renewable power sources.”

live, spend, and plan for the future. Ignoring them in economic conversations risks leaving a whole generation unprepared. By understanding how these economic pressures affect teenagers daily, we can see why even seemingly small price changes matter much more than most people think.

Tweets such as these, slogans, and the words of organizations funded by oil companies stick in our heads and in our laws. Nuclear energy could bring a clean and efficient power source to our country, but due to the heavy propaganda and lobbying from large oil corporations, the public opinion is slated to favor fossil fuels.

Hungary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

2024 European Parliament elections. In fact, Magyar eventually became the face of the opposition, replacing the traditional yet fragmented parties opposed to Orban. As a result, he and Orbán became fierce rivals, and during the 2026 campaign, Fidesz would make numerous smear attempts against Magyar, such as accusing him of selling out the country to Brussels and Ukraine. Nevertheless, Magyar would lead a decisive victory in the 2026 elections.

Now, we come back to the original question: what does this mean for Europe? First of all, Orbán’s defeat marks a major loss for both Russia and the United States. Orbán was a close ally not only of Putin but also of Donald Trump. In fact, Vice President JD Vance visited Hungary before the election in order to bolster support for Orbán. Additionally, Orbán’s defeat marks a win for the European Union, since they no longer need to fear Hungary blocking aid to Ukraine or other important decisions. Finally, many pundits believe that this may mark the beginning of the fall

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EMILY NGUYEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

of various right-wing populist movements, including Trumpism, which has strongly aligned itself with Orbán’s Hungary. And with this, I shall end this article. Hungary surely has more to come with the end of Orbán’s rule, and we would have to wait and see how it turns out.

World

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

decisions emerge from one isolated mind rather than from institutions, advisors, economic conditions, historical precedent, and public pressure.

This is a simplification.

And it is a reflection of egocentric thinking scaled to a societal level.

Because if individuals see themselves as the center of their own world, they are more likely to search for a single center in larger systems.

But political reality is not singular.

It is interconnected.

No administration functions independently of the people it represents.

Policies are influenced by public demand, economic realities, global relationships, and existing systems of power. Even the most visible decisions are shaped by factors that are not immediately seen.

Yet most people form conclusions based on limited information.

A speech.
A clip.
A headline.

And from that, they believe they understand the whole system.

This same pattern appears in how people interpret global conflict.

War is often discussed in simplified terms.

Sides are assigned.
Narratives are chosen.
Blame is directed.

But behind every conflict are layers of history, political interests, cultural tensions, and human experiences that cannot be understood from a distance.

Religion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

between religion and political image-making. In one instance, he remarked that he does not spend much time thinking about going to heaven, a comment that drew attention given his strong support among religious voters. In another widely spread Easter message, his use of combative and profane language stood in contrast to the traditionally reflective and sacred tone associated with the holiday. These moments highlight how religious symbolism can sometimes be used more as a political tool than as a reflection of personal piety.

More controversially, imagery and posts circulated by Trump or his supporters that depict him in Christ-like terms suggest a form of political messianism. While not always directly created by him, his amplification or acceptance of such imagery has raised concerns about the merging of religious reverence with political loyalty. This mirrors the broader pattern seen throughout history. Just as rulers once invoked divine



Photo/Wikimedia Commons



Photo/Wikimedia Commons

Top: A diverse group of people is shown, emphasizing the author's points about the vast network of lives surrounding your own
Bottom: A zoomed out photo of the Earth isymbolizes the author's points about everyone's small role in an interconnected world

Civilians become statistics.

Leaders become symbols.

Entire regions become reduced to a single narrative. And once again, complexity is replaced with something easier to process.

This tendency to simplify is not accidental.

It is cognitive.

The human brain is designed to reduce complexity because complexity requires effort. It requires time. It requires emotional capacity.

Understanding a person fully is difficult.

Understanding a political system is even more difficult.

Understanding global conflict is almost impossible without sustained attention and humility.

And most people do not engage at that level.

This is not only visible on a global scale.

It is visible in everyday interactions.

Zabrina, a 9th-grade Somali American student, described how easily people misinterpret her behavior. What others perceive as indifference is, in reality, the result of past experiences and emotional caution.

Her response illustrates a key principle.

Observed behavior is not equivalent to understood reality.

The same principle applies to politics.

Observed decisions are not equivalent to fully understood systems.

Darine's experience reinforces this.

After experiencing loss, she recognized how often people fail to understand the depth of someone else's situation. Even in moments of clear emotional weight, others can misinterpret or minimize what they do not personally feel.

This parallels how distant audiences interpret global events.

Without direct experience,

understanding remains incomplete.

Yet conclusions are still formed.

Wittany Irwin stated that understanding requires emotional depth.

That statement extends beyond individual relationships.

It applies to how societies interpret leadership, policy, and conflict.

Understanding requires the ability to hold multiple perspectives at once.

It requires acknowledging that one viewpoint is insufficient.

And it requires accepting that full understanding may not be possible.

But instead of engaging with complexity, people often default to certainty.

Certainty is easier. Certainty requires less effort. Certainty allows individuals to maintain the belief that their perspective is enough.

This creates a contradiction.

People claim to value truth.

But avoid the work required to approach it.

The world does not revolve around any individual.

Not socially.
Not politically.
Not scientifically.

And neither does power.

Power is distributed, influenced, and constantly shifting.

Leadership is not isolated.

It is reflective.

Reflective of public opinion.
Reflective of societal values.
Reflective of collective behavior.

So if leadership is a reflection of the people, and people are limited by their own perspective, then the system

itself reflects that limitation.

This raises a more uncomfortable question.

If the world feels divided, simplified, and misunderstood is that a failure of leadership or a reflection of us?

You are not the center of the world.

But you are part of the system that shapes it.

Your perspective is not the full picture.

But it contributes to how the picture is formed.

And the same applies to everyone else.

The world does not revolve around one person.

Not a leader.
Not a nation.
Not you.

It operates through interconnected systems that no single perspective can fully explain. Understanding that is not comfortable.

It removes certainty.

It challenges assumptions.

It forces you to question what you think you know.

But without that, nothing changes.

Because the problem is not just that people misunderstand each other.

t is that people believe their limited understanding is complete.

And maybe that is what the world is missing.

Not more information.
Not more opinions.

Just the willingness to admit

That what you see

It is not all there is. ➡

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casualties is because of the large areas that are being targeted by Israel's operation in the area. Israel had issued an evacuation for areas south of the Litani River when the conflict started again. The Litani River is in the southern region of Lebanon, and approximately 8 to 10 percent of Lebanon's land is south of the river. The geographical location of this river is a major factor in why the crisis in Lebanon is very brutal, with already over a million people being displaced.

An Arabic spokesperson for the Israeli Military said that bridges crossing the Litani River into southern Lebanon would be struck "to prevent the movement of reinforcements and means of combat" into southern Lebanon. Between March 13 and 22, the Israeli military said that it struck at least four bridges. These strikes by the IDF gathered controversy with Joseph Aoun, the current serving president of Lebanon, said the strikes were a "prelude to a ground invasion" and saw it as a "policy of collective punishment against civilians."

The raging war between Israel and Hezbollah has caused nothing but tragedies and destruction of innocent life. Residents inside Israel have also been harmed from the conflict, as Israeli media outlets report that at least 15 people in Israel as of March 23. With the war continuing on, it has become obvious that the Lebanese people are suffering the most from the consequences as catastrophic numbers of people are displaced, dead, and normal lives are halted.

It is important to recognize this war as it gets buried with everyone's eyes looking at Iran. And lastly, it is important to speak about the current crisis in Lebanon as over a million people are forced to leave their routine lives and be dragged out by this regional conflict. ➡

support. However, religion remains a powerful force because it speaks to identity, morality, and belonging, which make it an effective tool for leaders seeking legitimacy or unity.

In conclusion, religion has long been intertwined with political authority. From divine right in medieval empires to modern political rhetoric and identity, it has been used both to unite and to divide. While the methods and contexts have evolved, the underlying connection between belief and power persists. Understanding this history allows us to better analyze how religion continues to shape politics in the world today and to think critically about its role in the future. ➡

Lebanon

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

paved the way for Hezbollah to grow and remain as a regional actor in Lebanon.

Later on in 2004, the subject and issue of Hezbollah keeping their arms would be brought up in the United Nations. The United Nations Security Council would go on to pass Resolution 1559, calling for

Syria to leave Lebanon, a "free and fair electoral process", and most notably, the disarmament of all militias, including Hezbollah. As time would show us, the resolution was ignored and not complied by Hezbollah as they went on to keep their arms to what is now present day.

Lebanon would go on to see more conflict from that point by getting into engagements in various areas with various nations. Most notably, Israel would go on to conduct operations in southern Lebanon from 2023 all the way to present day, with the objective of neutralizing Hezbollah's power in the area. Other conflicts would also happen with two internal conflicts inside Lebanon during 2007 and 2008, along with the effects of the Syrian civil war onto them. With the information of Lebanon's history at hindsight, it is safe to say that Lebanon has been in conflict for a large amount of time ever since its establishment.

Hezbollah would go on to launch rockets at Israel on 2 March, first time it had ever attacked Israel since the ceasefire between the two in 2024. Hezbollah had stated

that it was to stop Israel's aggression towards seized Lebanese territories and saying that their actions were not because of the Iran war, but independent. Israel then would go on to respond back at Hezbollah in Lebanon with "precise and targeted" strikes of Hezbollah high ranking officials. The Israeli Military would also go on to say that they killed Hussein Makled, who served as the head of Hezbollah's intelligence headquarters.

The military fighting between Hezbollah and the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) inside southern Lebanon would go on to have horrible destructive effects for the people. A large amount of civilian losses also had happened in the 2024 war of Hezbollah and Israel with everlasting consequences. Public Health Ministry of Lebanon would report that over 3500 people were dead due to the conflict in the region and around 1.2 million people displaced. The United Nations described the last conflict between the two parties as "the largest wave of displacement Lebanon has seen in decades".

One of the main reasons that this conflict is escalating to such a war with these

Iran

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

the history of Iran from the past which placed us here. If you look and opinions currently, a new Republic of Iran, one that is aligned more with western ideals and civil equality is the popular one. And when Iran was under the rule of the monarchy with the Shah, it had fairly modern standards and had higher civil rights for people than it does now. Even though the monarchical Iran was more towards western ideals, it was also oppressive under the Shah with constant suppression of leftists ideas by the Shah's secret police force. That soon brought Iran to an Islamic revolution, transitioning the government to a theocratic one by a popular referendum in 1979.

Ever since Iran transitioned into the Islamic Republic of Iran, the relations of their state and the United States have been distant. For a long amount of time, Iran was isolated from the western world and had horrible relations with the US. And then the phrase which makes headlines today, Iran's nuclear program would catch eye in The White House. When Obama entered office, he would make a deal with Iran called the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) where Iran could develop nuclear energy with

inspections from international agencies and oversight. This would've been the closest where the US and Iran had diplomatic relations; Trump took office in 216, scrapping the JCPOA and putting embargos back on Iran.

While talking about the history between Iran and the United States, you also have to factor in the history of US intervention in foreign territories and wars. The United States does not have a good record when it pursues regime change. All of the operations and wars in Vietnam, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Korea are the fewer, more well known wars that the United States had pursued. History will also tell us to show that a lot of these states are very much destabilized and doing worse off than they were before the US had intervened.

Out of all of the nations that the United States pursued wars in, Iran had always stood out in the middle east. Even prior to this war, Iran and the United States were at conflict and both sides funded proxies in the region to further push their interests.

It is also important to note that Iran struck back at various US military bases, Israel, and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) to respond back at the strikes from the coalition. Iran has also blocked off the Strait of Hormuz to stop the flow of oil and natural gas. Judging off of Iran's early actions in this

war, it seems that Iran is trying to affect the economy that it has an influence over in the Middle East region to speak in a language of money. This response by Iran would soon come after the casualties that took place in Iran caused by the coalition.

After the initial wave of strikes that were seen to the command of the Iranian government, the war aimed at regime change found aiming bombs at the very civilians it claimed to liberate from the Iranian theocratic regime. On the same day that the war started, American bombs would strike an elementary school in Tehran, claiming the lives of more than a hundred children who were at school. The attack on a school was condemned by many organizations, UNESCO calling it "a grave violation of humanitarian law" and many other international figures condemning this attack. CBC and NPR would go on to conclude that the school was bombed due to a military complex near it, and was not a mistaken target by the precision airstrike.

Violations of international law and the scope of this war was unveiled further as the bombings went on with the war. According to the HRANA (Human Rights Activists News Agency) which is an US based organization, 1168 civilians and 194 children have died in the war so far as of the sixth of March. And just to add on, the airstrikes in Iran

have hit many buildings that do not have any government or military affiliation such as hospitals, homes, and sport complexes.

With all the information about Iran in mind, it is very imprudent to claim that this war is a liberation of the Iranians from the oppressive regime that ruled them ever since their revolution. And it is also very ignorant and repugnant to say that this war supports the cause of the Iranian people, when it already had killed over a thousand people in the first week alone. This war in Iran is one that is designed to destabilize and put Iran in the same state of affairs that Syria or Libya experienced.

Looking at the history of Iran from a retroserspective, the question of if Iran is being subjugated or liberated has an answer that leans towards a new regime in Iran that benefits the interests of America over the Iranian people.

And to conclude, it is also necessary to understand Iran and its foreign policy to nations around it. Iran has been neglected in the United States based on their identity and reputation, while the reputation that we blame them for is one that is shaped by the US. With all of this information, it is only right to let the Iranian people have a government that best represents them, not the United States, and establish communications along with diplomatic relations between the two states. ➡

Immigrant

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differences, economic challenges, and the lingering weight of their past. Their story is not one of instant success, but of gradual rebuilding.

This is where the novel becomes personal for me and connects strongly to immigrant families today. In an oral history interview with my paternal grandfather, I learned the stories of his father leaving Trinidad and Tobago to migrate to the United States and the struggles he faced to bring his wife and children here to be with him. My grandfather migrated here as a teenager. There was so much lost for him in leaving his home, his culture, and his friends to live in this new land. He persevered and here we are today.

My father is the first American-born person in our family. Without the struggles of immigration and my family doing the best they could do, there would be no me writing this article.

It also makes me think of my mom, who migrated here on her own to further her studies. Though the conditions were different, her transition was not without struggle. My maternal grandmother, grandaunts, granduncles, and uncles all migrated from Jamaica to Canada for a better life. My cousin Leo is the first Canadian-born person in our

family. All around me are stories of immigration, struggle, parents wanting more for their children, and all these stories are now inside of me, giving me a better understanding and appreciation for the journey and who we are as a family.

Many families around the world are still leaving their homes due to war, poverty, or instability, hoping to create better opportunities for their children. Like Thi's parents, they may seem strict, distant, or hard to understand, but often, those behaviors come from sacrifice and survival rather than lack of love. The phrase "the best we could do" becomes a way to understand that parenting does not happen under perfect conditions. It happens in the middle of struggle.

Ultimately, The Best We Could Do reminds readers that behind every family story is a history we may not fully see. By looking deeper, we can better understand the choices people make and the love that drives them. For immigrant families especially, survival itself is an act of care. Now I know that sometimes, doing the best you can is more powerful than doing everything perfectly. ➡

When Nine is Not Enough

BY GAVIN DUNCAN

WEBSTER GROVES, 2027



Gavin Duncan

Several weeks ago, we invited students to attend a Cardinal baseball game on us -- free of charge, if they wrote a short essay (approx 50 words) on what the American political system could learn from baseball. Here is the response that we received from Gavin Duncan, a junior at Webster Groves High School:

An example of a lesson that the American political system, and more specifically the U.S military, can learn from baseball is that defense is more important than offense. In baseball, an offense that scores runs is a necessity. You cannot win a game without scoring at least one run. However, arguably more important is the need for a strong defense over a strong offense. Without a strong defense, the other team will be able to score runs off of you at will, putting you in an arms race of runs. This was what we saw last Saturday as the Cardinals and Mariners each hit multiple home runs and ended with a final score of 11-9. This idea of a strong defense and a reserved offense directly applies to the U.S. political system and military in the form of what they should do. We as a nation should stop striving for a larger, more explosive military (offense) that is deployed to foreign nations all the time. Instead, we should use our military force, for the most part, for the defense of the nation, as

baseball shows us that that provides a better chance of winning.

Gavin's essay presents an interesting lens through which to look at current and past American foreign policy. As for the Cardinals, that game was an aberration for all of us. Their defense has been remarkable this season. The pitching might best be described as serviceable. But thanks to Gavin for the terrific insight!

Facilitating Honors Middle School Model UN

BY KAELEN FESLER

LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

During the past two Saturdays (May 2nd and May 9th, 2026) I was given the opportunity to serve as a first-time facilitator for the middle school Honors Model UN events held by Civitas. I supported student-led discussions by helping guide the conversation, encouraging teamwork, keeping students on track with our morning schedule, and making sure the group stayed focused on the assignment. The students were given a prompt that encouraged discussion about possible developments and resolutions to update the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) so it is more modern and inclusive. My goal was to create a safe and fun environment where every student participated in discussions and got the chance to share their ideas with the group.

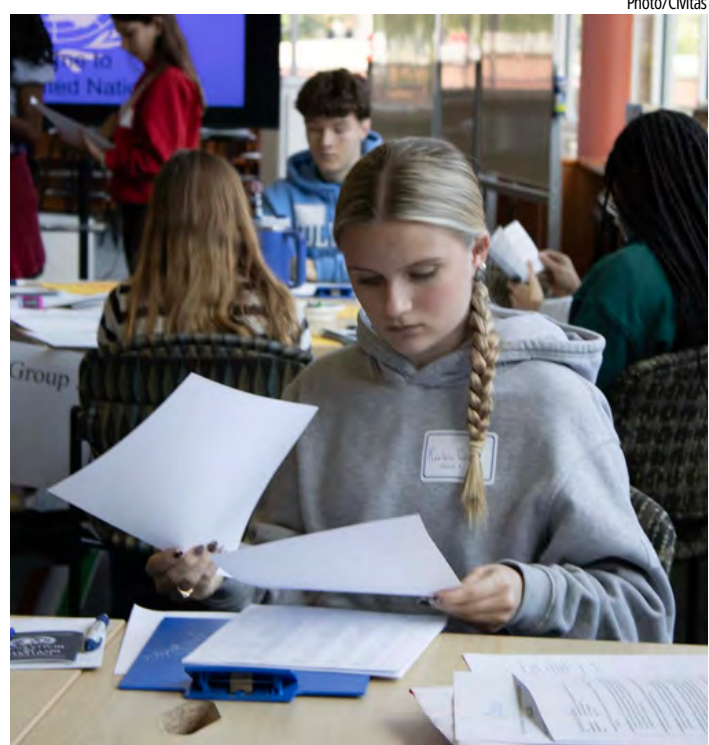
Across both weekends, I earned a lot about how my role as a leader can change



Photo/Civitas



Photo/Civitas



Photo/Civitas

Top: Kaelen (middle, gray sweatshirt) sits with a group of honors middle school model united nations students at the May 9th session

Middle: Honors middle school model united nations participants present their resolutions at the May 2nd session

Bottom: Kaelen works with students at the May 9th middle school model united nations session

from group-to-group. As a leader, my approach needed to be flexible and change depending on the energy and personalities of students in each group. While the structure of the activity stayed the same for both weekends, each group

required a different approach in how I guided discussion and encouraged participation. I gained experience as a leader because one of my groups needed me to come up with a more structured and hands-on way to facilitate their discussion, because they had a difficult time opening up and sharing their ideas with each other. I ended up helping them a lot, often by giving more suggestions and ideas than I had to for my other group, which had students who were very outgoing and formed a bond as a team quickly.

Overall, the experience was very rewarding. It was impressive to see how engaged and thoughtful students were when working as a team through the multifaceted topics that the UDHR covers on international human rights. The students I worked with are such bright individuals with incredible enthusiasm and passion for making the world a better place, and I cannot wait to see what amazing things they do as they cycle into high school the next few years and beyond. I am very grateful to be part of a program that provides young students early exposure to Model UN and civic discussions. These weekends showed me how valuable opportunities like Civitas are at this stage in their development for kids that truly do their best to participate and make the most out of their honors experience. The students I worked with are so fortunate to be involved with Civitas and Model UN, and I really wish I was aware of the many opportunities Civitas has to offer when I was their age. ➡

Why Financial Literacy Matters More Than Ever

BY KAELEN FESLER
LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

You cannot predict the future, but you can prepare for it. One of the best ways to prepare for the future is to understand and learn from the past. Looking at historical events like the Great Depression (1929-1939) and the Great Recession (2007-2009) helps us identify what went right, what went wrong, and how those lessons can help us make better financial decisions today.

The Great Depression began after the 1929 stock market crash and quickly became the worst economic crisis in American history. Around 9,000 banks failed during this time, causing many people to lose their savings because bank deposits were not yet insured. Unemployment reached about 25%, making it extremely difficult for millions of families to afford basic necessities. The millions of families who became financially devastated by the Depression demonstrate that the effects of a financial crisis extend far beyond Wall Street.

Nearly 80 years later, the Great Recession served as another reminder of how financial decisions can lead to widespread and devastating consequences. Many lenders approved risky mortgages to borrowers who could not afford them. Housing prices continued to skyrocket before



Financial literacy, as represented through a calculator, money, paper, and a pen.

they plummeted, causing the housing market to collapse, which contributed to another severe financial crisis. Like the Great Depression, millions of Americans lost their jobs and homes. During the 2008 Financial Crisis, the government stepped in to stabilize the economy. Although the causes of the Great Recession were different from those of the Great Depression, both crises revealed just how quickly financial instability can spread throughout a country, and even the world.

While these crises had different circumstances, they shared one very important lesson: financial decisions

matter. Even though the government, banks, and other large financial institutions played major roles in both events, individuals also played a role, and everyone ultimately dealt with the consequences. Millions of people took on mortgages that they could not afford, contributing to instability and increasing debt. Families struggled because many jobs were lost, debt accumulated, and many households had no savings or were unprepared for financial emergencies. We cannot know for sure when the next financial crisis or extreme recession will hit, but we can take steps to prepare

ourselves and survive when a crisis does occur. That is why financial literacy matters more than ever.

Financial literacy is often thought of as getting rich fast or investing in winning stocks, but this could not be further from the truth. Instead, financial literacy is about building financial stability. This means learning how to create a solid budget, saving for emergencies, understanding the long-term cost of debt, using credit responsibly, and beginning to invest for your future self. ←

Black Culture

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origins have become less visible. The N-word has traveled through many of those same channels, but unlike other expressions, it carries a history that cannot be separated from its meaning.

Linguists have long recognized African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as a legitimate dialect of English with its own grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Developed within Black communities over centuries, AAVE reflects a unique cultural and historical experience rather than incorrect English. Today, however, much of what is commonly labeled "Gen Z slang" or "TikTok language" originated in AAVE. Researchers argue that social media has helped popularize these expressions while disconnecting them from the communities that created them.

Words and phrases such as cap, no cap, finna, period, it's giving, bussin', and drip existed in Black communities long before they became viral online. As creators on platforms like TikTok adopted and shared them, many users began treating them as internet slang rather than recognizing their Black cultural origins.

Music has played an equally important role in this cultural diffusion. According to statistics compiled by HarlemBling, roughly one-quarter of global music listeners regularly listen to hip-hop or rap, with the genre especially popular among people ages 16 to 24. Although Black Americans consume rap at the highest rate per capita, White Americans make up the largest share of the genre's overall audience because of

their larger population.

As a result, millions of non-Black teenagers are exposed to Black language every day through music. Songs by artists such as Drake, Kendrick Lamar, Future, and Lil Baby regularly feature AAVE vocabulary and repeated uses of the N-word. Drake's 2024 diss track Family Matters, for example, has been streamed more than 190 million times on Spotify, illustrating how widely audiences across different backgrounds encounter the word in popular music.

Hearing a word repeatedly does not automatically cause someone to use it. However, psychologists have long argued that repeated exposure influences what people perceive as normal. In his dissertation examining African Americans' attitudes toward the N-word, Sylvester Baker applies Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory to explain how language is often learned through observation. Family members, peers, entertainment, and social media all shape the behaviors people imitate, particularly when those behaviors appear socially accepted. This helps explain why many teenagers who are not Black adopt expressions that originated in Black communities. Often, they are repeating language they hear regularly rather than intentionally trying to offend others.

The N-word, however, occupies a different category from other examples of AAVE. Unlike words such as drip or cap, the N-word carries centuries of racial violence. In Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word, legal scholar Randall Kennedy argues that while context can influence meaning, it cannot erase history. Former prosecutor Christopher Darden similarly

described it during the O. J. Simpson trial as "the filthiest, dirtiest, nastiest word in the English language."

Baker's research found that African American participants held differing opinions about whether Black people should reclaim the word among themselves. However, there was overwhelming agreement that non-Black people, particularly White people, should not use it because of its historical connection to slavery, segregation, and racism. A 2018 survey of students at a historically Black university reached a similar conclusion, with 76 percent saying it is never acceptable for non-Black people to use the word under any circumstances.

The mainstream popularity of Black language has also created a noticeable contradiction. For generations, Black Americans were criticized or discriminated against for speaking AAVE in schools, workplaces, and other public spaces. Today, many of those same expressions become fashionable when used by influencers, celebrities, or internet personalities who are not Black. NBC News reports that many phrases now associated with Gen Z culture originated in African American language, yet their origins are often overlooked as they spread across social media.

Language naturally evolves as cultures interact, and linguists generally agree that borrowing words between communities is not inherently problematic. The concern arises when the communities that created those expressions disappear from the story. As Black language becomes rebranded as internet slang, its cultural and historical roots become increasingly difficult for younger generations to recognize.

As Black language becomes rebranded as internet slang, its cultural and historical roots become increasingly difficult for younger generations to recognize.

This reflects a broader pattern throughout American history. Black music, fashion, dance, language, and style have repeatedly shaped mainstream culture while the communities that developed them received less recognition. The widespread adoption of AAVE is another example of that process, demonstrating how cultural influence can become so widespread that its origins fade from public memory. Understanding those origins matters because language carries history. Words reflect the experiences of the people who created and used them. While many expressions from AAVE have become part of everyday American speech, the N-word remains inseparable from the centuries of oppression that gave it meaning.

As Black culture continues to shape popular culture, remembering that history becomes increasingly important. Without historical context, a word once used to symbolize oppression risks being misunderstood as nothing more than another viral trend. ←

Nuclear

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victims of Cold Water Creek are grim illustrations of this. For a short while between moving the waste from the temporary storage to Westlake, Cotter Corp. left uncovered piles of the waste mixed in with soil near an upper section of Cold Water Creek. When the rain hit, the piles remained uncovered, and parts were washed into the creek. The contamination spread downstream and heavily affected residents who lived nearby. In the same documentary, Cammisa visited some residents who recounted the annual flooding of the creek, which would often seep into their homes. They also recounted the many family and friends they lost to cancer. Cammisa also visited one of the people who got cancer in the neighborhood while she was fighting stage 4 cancer. The cancer patient, Michelle Seger, and her sister recounted playing by and in the creek often as kids with their friends and neighbors. They, like the others interviewed, remember family and friends lost to cancer. The EPA has been involved in many town halls in the city about the issue but refused to say that the cancer hotspot was caused by the contaminated creek and refused interviews with the documentary. They have been working to excavate and track the pollutants, but investigations led to finding

more contaminants, both further downstream and further inland from the creek. These investigations have led to excavating parks and buying out homes deemed dangerous to live in. There is hope, however, as recent investigations have determined the cleanup efforts successful, as in a survey of buildings in the neighborhood, they found no traces of Manhattan Project-related contamination.

In 2010, another problem emerged at the landfill site, a growing subsurface smoldering event (SSE). An SSE is a flameless, high-heat chemical reaction that is slowly consuming the trash and debris in the area, producing a nauseating odor and toxic gas, both of which are affecting nearby residents. Nearby residents have also had complaints ranging from nosebleeds to lung and eye infections as well as higher chances of developing asthma and other chronic illnesses since the SSE began. To prevent the smoldering event from reaching the radioactive waste, crews installed heat extraction systems, monitoring probes, and an ethylene vinyl alcohol barrier. The EPA also recognized the urgency of the matter and pushed up its timeline for the excavation of the nuclear waste, with plans to start in late 2027. The clean-up is expected to take several years; however, due to the EPA's previous inaction, it remains a focus for nearby residents. ←

Gen Z

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much as \$19,526 per year in income and benefits compared with what they would earn as an employee. When AI eliminates the jobs that came with those protections and the work that replaces them offers none, that is not disruption. It is a quiet transfer of economic risk from institutions to individuals, with no democratic deliberation behind it.

That shift carries real civic weight. When an entire generation's economic existence falls outside the legal structure designed to protect workers, their relationship with those institutions weakens right along with it. And policymakers have not made it easier. On May 1, 2025, the Trump administration's Department of Labor announced it would no longer enforce the Biden-era worker classification rule, reverting to older guidance that gave on-demand platforms wider latitude in classifying workers as independent contractors. That policy reversal, the latest in a years-long back-and-forth between administrations, leaves millions of workers unable to predict their legal status, plan their finances, or trust that the system was built with them in mind.

The policy answer that has gained the most traction across party lines is a portable benefits model, and it deserves more attention than it typically gets. Rather than tying protections to a single employer, portable benefits would attach to the worker directly, traveling with them across clients, contracts, and platforms. A worker would accumulate health coverage, paid leave, and retirement contributions regardless of how many gigs they juggle or how often the

platforms change. Pennsylvania, Maryland, Georgia, Tennessee, and Utah have all launched portable benefits legislation or pilot programs. The details vary by state, but the core principle is consistent: security should follow the person, not the job title. That is not a radical idea. It is an adaptation of the social contract to match how work actually functions now. The stakes of getting this right extend beyond individual workers. Goldman Sachs Research estimates that if gig work, which is not fully captured by household surveys, were properly counted, the U.S. employment-to-population ratio would rise to roughly 65% from the officially reported 60%. That five-point gap shapes how monetary policy gets calibrated, how social spending gets targeted, and how clearly any government can see the economy it is supposed to govern. A measurement that misses 5% of the workforce is not a rounding error. It is a blind spot with real consequences.

Gen Z did not create the conditions they inherited. But a generation that entered a contracting labor market and watched AI compress its further in real time did not simply wait to be counted among the displaced. It built parallel infrastructure, redefined what professional experience looks like, and forced institutions, from employers to the Department of Labor, to renegotiate the terms of work. The question now is whether those new terms can be made durable and equitable enough to support the kind of economic stability a functioning democracy actually requires. Gen Z did not choose that question. But their financial lives, and increasingly their civic ones, will be shaped entirely by how it gets answered. ←

Should Trump Still Fund ICE?



Law enforcement officers are shown arresting two people

BY LAWRENCE E.C. HAYNES
HOME SCHOOL, 2029

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, is an agency that President Donald Trump is using to deport people who migrated to the United States or have foreign lineage. Trump is currently in around \$1.1 billion in debt, but still pays ICE \$11.3 billion per year. ICE has also illegally deported around 214 U.S. citizens, which is estimated to only be 1% of the amount of people deported by ICE, and that percentage is likely going to increase. The deportation of U.S. citizens goes against ICE’s own internal guidance, which

states, “As a matter of law, ICE cannot assert its civil immigration enforcement authority to arrest and/or detain a U.S. citizen”. A president who is over a billion dollars in debt typically should not be using over 77 times his debt towards an agency that brings no economic gain and carries out illegal actions. So far, the U.S. government has used about \$85 billion towards ICE. President Trump should start being more careful with the U.S. government’s money, as he is also using \$1.1 trillion towards the Pentagon, \$42.3 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, and

\$660 billion for Non-defense discretionary spending programs. President Trump and Former President Joe Biden contributed the highest amount of new debt per term in recent years due to sweeping pandemic-era relief packages and elevated ongoing federal spending. President Trump should postpone the funding of ICE, along with other agencies, until he is no longer in debt, because the U.S. government will likely not pay off its debt if it continues to fund the operations that are draining the U.S. government’s money. ⬅

Petrodollar

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large and now that Iran’s biggest customers are in the East, Iran could easily use the current situation to boost the use of the petroyuan. Having a competitor like the petroyuan would harm the petrodollar and this would spark harm to the dollar-denominated bond market. And that raises another question: how much would a shift away from the petrodollar harm the U.S. economy? While the petrodollar is only one part of the dollar-based global economy, with the decline of the petrodollar, countries that trade oil will have fewer USD reserves. This means foreign countries will have less incentive to buy U.S. bonds and without many countries servicing our debt, our \$39.31 trillion of debt becomes a much more urgent issue that doesn’t have appealing solutions. The first one is that the central bank could monetize the debt by printing dollars to cover it. But this will lead to high inflation, especially given our large amount of debt. Or, taxes could be raised to cover our debt, but of course, this would be faced with heavy backlash and increased



An offshore oil rig, one of the earliest steps in the process driving the oil/gas economy

difficulty for the U.S. government to fund programs. Another reason why the petrodollar is so critical to the U.S. economy is that it gives the dollar large amounts of demand. Without the petrodollar, the demand and value of the dollar would decrease. This depreciation of the dollar would give U.S. citizens much less global purchasing power, so the decline of the petrodollar and

the rise of the petroyuan are crucial to Americans. As global patterns are signaling the decline of the petrodollar and U.S. debt is at an all time high, the importance of trading oil with dollars is more prevalent than ever. But the looming issues of weaker ties with Saudi Arabia and the rise of the Petroyuan may lead to the end of an economic empire. ⬅

Mill Creek

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paving, and electrical grids. However, the city continuously denied them. So even though Mill Creek Valley residents built a thriving community despite years of municipal neglect, they were forced to leave. When the neighborhood was ultimately cleared, the consequences were immense. The most immediate consequence was the displacement of thousands of Black families, resulting in the erasure of an entire community. To make matters

worse, only half of those displaced were awarded any compensation or relocation assistance. Of the residents who received relocation assistance, many felt that the price they paid was higher than what they received. Ironically, those new developments failed to deliver many of the economic benefits that city leaders had promised. For years, the area became an unproductive wasteland, earning the nickname “Hiroshima Flats.” For many residents, the greatest loss wasn’t the land, but the community. Former

resident Vivian Gibson captures the loss best: “What we lost in the destruction of our Mill Creek Valley neighborhood was a community we relied on to survive.” Mill Creek Valley was a culturally rich and economically successful community, yet it was erased so quickly in the name of progress. If you would like to learn more, I recommend visiting the Missouri History Museum’s “Black Metropolis” exhibit or reading Vivian Gibson’s “The Last Children of Mill Creek.” ⬅

Twenty-One

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Redford. “We can be so numb, so cynical, and so shoulder-shrugging about major moral violations in our lives... Falls from grace from presidents to military people to political figures, religious leaders, and so it leaves us with this kind of eroded trust.” “A society that’s kinda awash in moral ambiguity is not a great place to be,” said Redford. “So how did we get there?” The question of “how did we get there?” isn’t so much of a surprise anymore. Retrospectively, we can cite Watergate and LBJ and of course, the quiz show scandals. In the present, we may turn to the proliferation of misinformation, the increasingly public incompetence of our elected officials, and Merriam-Webster’s 2024 word of the year, “polarization.” According to Pew Research Center, though “trust in government has been low for decades,” “just 17% of Americans now say they trust the government in Washington to do what is right “just about always” (2%) or “most of the time” (15%)” as of 2025. We see the modern, but long familiar, symptoms of this lack of trust in government and public institutions in the ways that people choose to not vote, and choose to not participate in an important check on government and a focus of “Quiz Show”—accountability. At the center of “Quiz Show” are fictional portrayals of the real-life “Twenty-One” contestants Herb Stempel and Charles Van Doren. “He was tall, thin, and WASPy, and I was this Bronx Jewish kid. It was as simple as that,” said Stempel to the Los Angeles Times, when they wrote about “Quiz Show,” the then-upcoming 1994 movie about Twenty-One, for which Stempel would be a whistleblower. Stempel, intelligent but nerdy, and in the eyes of producers, needed to be replaced to boost ratings, surrendered his title to Van Doren, well-educated, tall, and untouchable. Sparking a congressional investigation, Stempel exposed “Twenty-One” as rigged, and Van Doren, who initially denied the deception, as a liar. “See, I don’t think an adult of your intelligence ought to be commended for simply, at long last, telling the truth,” says one of the representatives presiding over the hearing when Van Doren admits to the rigging. In “Quiz Show,” Van Doren is held accountable. “Quiz Show” is not just a retelling of how we got “there,” it is a difficult, yet simple, prescription for how to fix a still-widening hole in the trust the American people have in our government. I don’t think accountability is a difficult idea to understand. But, I think we underestimate how much the accountability of many comes from our own accountability. This accountability looks like voting in as many elections as possible. Like reading the news everyday. Like starting or restarting an uncomfortable conversation. Like convincing yourself that change, which often starts with accountability, is truly and absolutely possible. ⬅

Armenian Elections

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A photo from Armenia's elections regulator confirms victory for PM's party in poll closely watched by Russia, as published by AP News

erosion of trust in government and corruption. But the stick that broke the camel’s back happened in March 2018. After winning the 2017 elections, RPA formed a government and aimed to nominate a new prime minister. However, after they nominated Serzh Sargsyan, president of Armenia from 2008 to 2018, protests broke out because Sargsyan had promised he would not seek to become the country’s leader again when he resigned. This sparked mass protests, as Armenians and the opposition saw it as an attempt to cling to power. The revolution was bloodless yet successful, and Sargsyan was forced to resign, putting Nikol Pashinyan as the acting prime minister. The following 2018 snap election would further cement Pashinyan, with his alliance winning 88 of the 132 seats. However, Pashinyan would soon face a challenge in the form of Nagorno-Karabakh. For context, Nagorno-Karabakh is a region located inside modern Azerbaijan with a majority Armenian population. In 1988, a war broke out, which led to the de facto independence of the region as Artsakh, and Armenia occupied the surrounding territories of Azerbaijan. For a long time, the war was a stalemate. But in 2020, Azerbaijan launched a massive offensive, eventually capturing the second-largest city in Nagorno-Karabakh, Shusha. This led to a ceasefire agreement with Armenia, ending with Azerbaijan regaining 72% of the territory it lost in the first war. This led to massive protests against Pashinyan, labeling him a “traitor.” However, the worst was yet to come. In 2023, Azerbaijan launched yet another offensive, preceded by a blockade of the Lachin corridor, the only land route connecting Armenia and Artsakh after the 2020 offensive. It led to the total dissolution of Artsakh and the flight of the 99% Armenians living there. This

again sparked protests calling for Pashinyan’s resignation, but just like the first time, they failed. Another important context for these elections is Russian pressure. Following the losses in Artsakh, many Armenians became disappointed in Russia, historically seen as a security guarantor, for failing to help Armenia despite the presence of its peacekeepers. In addition, since 2022, Pashinyan has pursued a more pro-European foreign policy, while depending on Russia for economic policy. Due to this noticeable pivot, Russia pursued a massive disinformation operation for the 2026 election, seeking to discredit Pashinyan and support pro-Russian parties. This included mimicking real European and Western news websites to publish disinformation, along with using AI to generate videos of actors from The Office to accuse Pashinyan of planning to start a war against Russia (as crazy as this sounds, this is true). In addition, Russia pursued economic coercion, saying that if Armenia chooses a Western pivot, it may no longer enjoy the economic perks of the Eurasian Economic Union, even calling for an immediate referendum on its membership. Despite all this pressure, Pashinyan’s Civil Contract still managed to win the elections. It seems that Armenians made a difficult but more pro-European choice. Additionally, since the loss of Artsakh in 2023, Pashinyan has pursued a more pragmatic, pro-peace policy, including peace with both Turkey and Azerbaijan, and in the 2026 campaign, he aims to continue it. In the end, it seems Armenia would pursue a more pro-Western trajectory, along with peace with both Turkey and Azerbaijan, though this future is not fixed, since internal division and polarization in Armenia are very real. What comes next for Armenia? We shall see. ⬅

The Fall of ‘Hippies’

BY LUX HENDRICKSON
EUREKA HIGH SCHOOL, 2027

Hippies. The word will probably evoke an image of teenagers and young adults who are dressed in loose clothes, bright colors, wearing tassels and drawn to protesting and drugs alike. It was a loosely related result of the Beat movement, which had core idols such as Jack Kerouac, John Cellon Holmes, and Allen Ginsberg. The movement was focused on intellectualism, a rejection of material goods, and a sort of restless distaste for how things are. Hippies descended to be more spiritual, following the development and popularization of LSD and marijuana. In cities such as New York’s Greenwich, and

Berkeley California were considered two of the starting points. The group was anti-war, anti-hate, music fans, and genuinely focused on living life to the fullest. As Timothy Leary once phrased it: “Turn on, tune in, drop out”. Though, the surplus of people knowing about the culture ended up disenfranchising it. Popular streets for the teenagers, like Haight- Ashbury, ended up having more standard Americans come and watch as if they were something inhuman. Even the word hippie was hardly what the young adults would call themselves, and was used as more of a negative term by Americans who aren’t a part of the

Hippies

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movement. Those in the movement referred to themselves as *freaks*, *heads*, *long hairs*, or even *lovechildren*. As more fame ended up shifting the familiar hotspots, some of the ‘hippies’ began to settle down in small groups called communes outside of cities.

In 1971, in Polanski, California, the view of the hippies shifted. Following the horrific Manson murders, Manson was convicted of first degree of murder in January, 1972 along with three of his members. Headlines bleared out “*Manson Guilty, Nixon Declares*,” and it quickly became one of the most sensationalized crime stories and was titled as an early American cult.

Although, that wasn’t the only reason for the hippie subculture to fizzle out. Another main factor was the ending of the Vietnam War after Nixon was elected, when troops started to be pulled out. Protesting the war was a large staple of the movement, but with that fading, there was less drive to stand out from the majority of Americans. Police brutality also hurt the movement, and as less protests were needed, the longhairs faded.

Though, this is all missing a very important term: counterculture. As Merriam Webster defines it, “A culture with values and mores that run counter to those of established society”. The Beat

movement falls within this, alongside the Hippies. Though... Did counterculture ever truly die, even if those movements have faded into obscurity? I don’t think it did. Instead, in 2026, there’s a new word for different fashion, different music, and even different politics. Alternative. It is the persistent genres of political rock and metal music, the goth category, the punks as seen with bands like Green Day. Those things aren’t new, having begun with 60’s counterculture, but they’re still around and have created a new basis for the current young generation. It’s no longer a strong movement like it was, now, it’s an established part of American society.



Even in STL, at music venues such as Mosh Mellow, the bands of teenagers will let out cheers for Palestinian freedom before playing their music.

In all, I think it would be a shame to have everyone assume 60’s counterculture has faded-- it has merely evolved, and it shines even more under modern-day monotony. ➡

Starmer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Parliament. After Burnham won his election in Makersfield, his constituency, it had become obvious that he was the favorite to win and enter the office.

While Labour is in an internal dispute, there have been other parties and individuals that are catching attention in the spotlight of the U.K.’s politics. Shifting over to the right of the political compass, there has been two new parties gaining recognition. Reform UK is a right-wing populist party, led by Nigel Farage. The party has policies which reflect its right-wing ideas and support. Some of Reform UK’s policies for the general election in 2024 consisted of reducing legal immigration, cutting

taxes, introducing “patriotic curriculum” in schools, leaving the European Convention on Human Rights, and many other ideas. Going even further to the right than Reform, we arrive at Restore Britain. Political scientists describe it as right-wing and ethno-nationalist. It is also considered to be radical right along with studies classifying it as far-right. The more extreme policies of Reform and Restore do not have a major influence on the current parliament. Reform only has eight seats and Restore only has one seat. While the presence of these two parties can be overwhelming when combined with the Conservative Party of the UK which is the main opposition party, they do not have a large amount of voice as mentioned above. Going back

to the YouGov poll that placed Burnham as the most popular, the same poll placed Farage as the third most popular politician. As the scales shift between different ideologies, the current Parliament has a majority held by Labour.

On a different front, we take a look at the Green Party. As a party sitting on the left of Labour, they also have gained much support and rose in popularity. Rather than attracting voters on the right, Greens has been becoming a choice for many of those who had voted for Labour previously. Zack Polanski, leader of the Green Party and a current member of Parliament, has been rising in popularity polls as Labour loses support. Greens have been attracting people as they pursue more left-wing policies rather than the right-

Photo/Wikimedia Commons



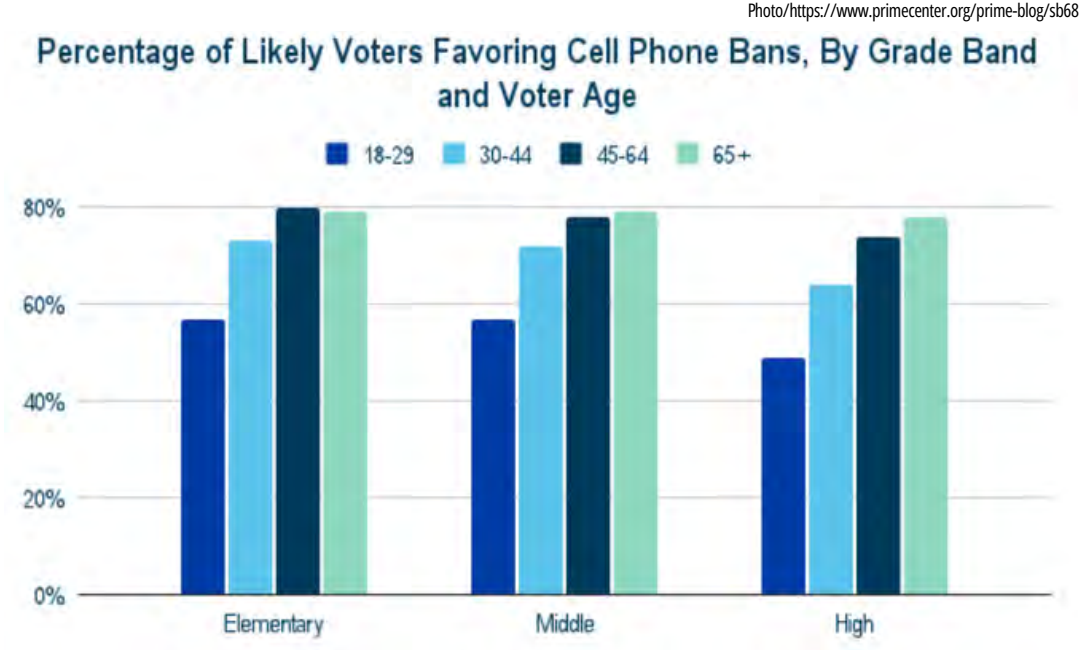
Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer at Number 10 Downing Street

Phones

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stories, or of course taking countless selfies during lunchtime and break times forced students to find an alternative way to occupy their time, conversation. Students at my school have become undeniably louder during lunchtime since the ban was enacted; it’s now difficult to even hear conversations amid the school crowd. Not only this but I’ve even experienced students having real, somewhat hesitant at first, face-to-face conversations! It has really solidified how much we have allowed ourselves to substitute interaction with communication through a screen. It turns out, spending more time interacting directly with people around you more than you would online is actually ideal.

No longer distracted during class it isn’t a secret to us that students have a difficult time focusing during class, due to cellphones it was practically an impossible task; teachers at my school previously had an immense difficulty. Constant distraction from a notification or text alert can make it incredibly hard to



A graphic created by Lucas Koch of survey results from elementary, middle, and high schoolers about cell phone bans in school

engage in a lecture. Without the phones, students are able to focus for longer periods of time, and lectures become more interesting through more participation.

The general attentiveness of our student body to be significantly more present, with more participants in classroom discussions than prior to the implementation of this law. This has only been mirrored in teachers and administrators', and has reportedly drastically decreased overall classroom management issues, distractions, and any technology related discipline or administrative issues. Improvements in mental health arguably is the most

surprising result of this bill has been the improvement of students' mental health, a topic that has been continuously discussed amongst our age group.

It has also long been associated with cyber-bullying and the pressures of comparing yourself with others.

While it does not put a stop to cyber-bullying and comparisons, by removing phones during the school day, it limits the daily exposure that students now experience with these negative aspects. The takeaway here is that while it may not seem obvious right away, this bill has come with some beneficial

consequences, which have benefited the lives of both students and teachers. A noticeable rise in communication between friends has taken place in the school’s cafeteria and classroom interactions have increased by leaps and bounds due to lack of device distraction. Students will have some difficulty adjusting in the first months but eventually they will be much more present and attentive during the class lessons, and it’s about time our school be a safer and more mentally healthy environment than ever before. ➡

Ukraine.” Besides aid, he even voted against a resolution condemning Russia’s illegal seizure of Crimea, along with the Russian kidnapping of Ukrainian children. Yes, you heard that right: he voted against condemning child trafficking. Supporters might use the defense that he is simply “anti-interventionist,” but this defense becomes weak considering he voted even against such symbolic resolutions as condemning an illegal annexation! Besides

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Gifted

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program and both schools have a tremendous amount of AP (advanced placement) classes available. According to US News and World Report, Collegiate has an AP participation rate of 84%, Metro has one of 100%, while Clyde C. Miller Career Academy, Vashon, and Sumner have participation rates of 27%, 16%, and 22% respectively.

The concept of selective magnet schools is not inherently flawed, both Metro and Collegiate have benefited countless students. The crisis stems from the gatekeeping cycle the system enforces. For example, in order to get into Metro, one must score above the 70th percentile on a standardized test, have a letter grade of “C” or better in all subjects, have two recommendations, and at least 90% attendance. There are two main issues present with this criteria– which is similar for Collegiate– the first being that students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly more likely to have poor attendance. According to the National Equity Atlas “Across all grade levels, Black students in high-poverty schools had a chronic absenteeism rate of 40 percent, nearly twice the rate of their counterparts in low-poverty schools (21 percent).” Of course, this would easily prevent a student from getting into a school like Metro or Collegiate, even if they were considered “smart enough” to get in. Not to mention that chronic absenteeism causes lower grades and test scores, something that will absolutely affect a student’s educational future.

The second issue is much more complex. There are two elementary schools in SLPS which are considered “gifted”:

wing policies that other parties have been chasing. While talking about the politics of the United Kingdom, it is important to keep in mind that before Labour, the Tories, a colloquial name for the Conservative Party, held power for the past 14 years before that. As a nation held so long by conservative rule, figures such as Starmer and Polanski seemed refreshing. The attraction for more left-wing policies increased even further after Brexit, the U.K. leaving the European Union, which was a process backed by conservative figures such as Farage. The Green Party platformed on providing affordable housing, transitioning to clean renewable energy, taxing the wealthy, expansion of public services, and the opposite of most policies supported by the conservative parties.

As Labour moves into officially having Burnham as the prime minister and leader, it is difficult to tell the fate of politics in the U.K. until then. The competency of Labour governing is still a question for a lot of people as Starmer’s mistakes and promises-not-kept. With Burnham being the seventh prime minister in the past decade, this also raises questions regarding parties such as Reform UK or Green Party coming in to contest the Parliament even further next election. As Starmer acts as the caretaker of the government, we will see how it will unfold. ➡

Wheeler Classical Junior Academy and Mallinckrodt Academy of Gifted Instruction. According to the SLPS website, both schools feed to McKinley for middle school. McKinley then creates a direct path to Metro or Collegiate. The issue is that in order to get into one of these elementary schools, a child must score at or above the 90th percentile on an IQ test. This system directly works against minority and impoverished students, who score an average of “6 points lower on an IQ test than their more affluent peers”, according to the Huffington Post. Additionally, both “gifted” schools are located in South City, making them geographically inaccessible to many families in North City– the very students who ultimately attend under-resourced schools like Vashon.

When students are denied the quality education they deserve due to geography or socioeconomic status, they are stripped of the ability to reach their full potential. Currently, this disproportionately affects Black students in North St. Louis, who continue to receive a vastly lower quality of education than their peers on the other side of the Delmar Divide. A school district cannot be called successful when its achievements are concentrated on two schools out of 68. Metro and Collegiate shouldn't be the rare exceptions to the rule of failure within SLPS, they should be a model for quality of education in every school in the city. Until resources, and opportunities are distributed appropriately, SLPS’s systemic divide will continue to leave St. Louis’s most vulnerable students behind. ➡

Need More Clicks?

BY BENJAMIN YATES
HOME SCHOOL, 2028

Need more clicks? Write an article about a new drug that causes cancer! While it's not entirely moral to do this just to increase views, it is a good strategy for surviving in the fast-paced world of internet-based news. Create an existential crisis for your readers and your article will immediately be read and shared. At the time of this writing, five different articles on the main page of CNN refer to medical topics. And yes, it's a good thing: if new breakthroughs could alter the care that people are receiving, they need to be informed about it without being burdened by reading a lengthy study. Life has been sped up and what we all need is short, snappy bites of information.

However, these reporters may not always be doing their job. Doctors and scientists bemoan the fact that their findings are constantly misrepresented by mainstream media. Think about how often you see a clickbait article announcing that someone has found a cure for cancer. When the original study is consulted, you invariably find that it only shows that a certain substance has been found to kill cancer cells in a petri dish. And this problem is not only present in tabloids and clickbait articles: PBS, a



Just a few examples of the sensationalized headlines the author refers to in the article.

highly respected news source, once published an article stating that coffee is no longer shown to cause cancer. In reality, both studies—the one linking coffee to cancer and the one unlinking it—were both tentative studies that established a correlation (not causation) between the two. This nuance was not mentioned in the article, meaning that readers could easily believe that coffee was at one point a known carcinogen and now suddenly was not. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/article/coffee-consumption-no-longer-linked-to-cancer/>

It would be easy to conclude that this is all an unfortunate error in communication. If a reporter is not knowledgeable in the complexities of study design and statistics, it would be easy for them to report inaccurately on what a study is actually showing. It is easier still to forget to provide important context—for example, an increase of 200% is alarming, but not so much if it is only an increase from 10 to 20 cases. But I

believe that there is something else going on, something that is not intentional or malicious, but rather an unfortunate result of today's click-based media economy. Too often, the blame for this misrepresentation is pinned solely on reporters for sensationalizing their stories and blowing legitimate findings far out of proportion. But I believe that the problem is two-fold, that reporters and scientists are equally culpable, and that both are incentivized to dramatize the stories they choose to tell the world.

Imagine that you are a scientist. You are running an experiment, knowing that if your hypothesis proves true, it would revolutionize your field, not to mention the fame you would attain. But unfortunately, it doesn't work. Your hypothesis fails. Your miracle cure turns out to be worthless black gunk. So you do what anyone would do—you run the experiment again, you tinker with the design, growing more and more obsessed. Eventually, gloriously, it does work—and you rush off to

report your findings. But what would have happened if your hypothesis had proven true from the beginning? You would have reported your findings all the same, without any of the necessary improvements to the experiment.

The infamous cold fusion experiments exemplify this phenomenon, which is known as “pathological science”. In 1989, Dr. Stanley Pons and Dr. Martin Fleischmann reported that their deuterium-containing lab equipment was mysteriously heating up. They ran a few tests and discovered that there was no possible explanation for the heat except a nuclear reaction. What they found fascinating was that this reaction had occurred at room temperature, and therefore was the long-awaited cold fusion—a potentially limitless source of clean nuclear energy. And so Pons and Fleischmann excitedly published their work. Equally excited, other scientists caught on and attempted to replicate the experiment. The results—no cold fusion was detected.

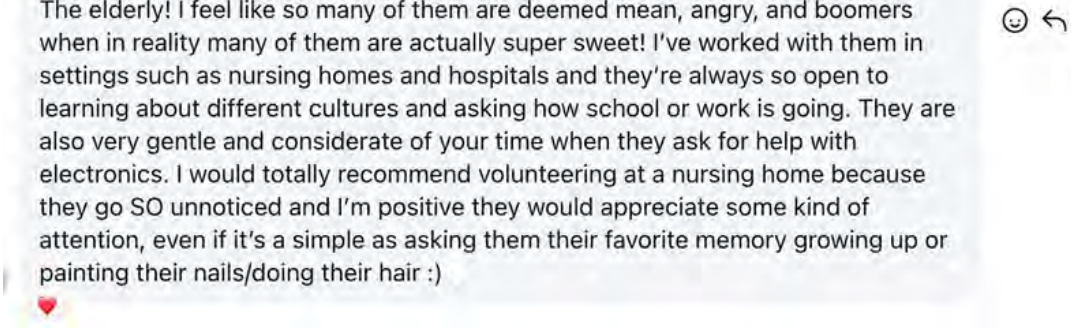
Kindness

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ignorance unfolds.” By learning about others, I hope to help people better understand and appreciate the communities around them.

Although the project only began on Jan. 14, 2026, I have already seen encouraging results. People who read my posts have started suggesting groups they believe deserve recognition, and others have shared that they learned something new about people in their own community. Seeing those conversations begin has been one of the most rewarding parts of the project.

Another moment that stands out was a donation to teachers and staff at Brown Elementary in the Hazelwood



A message received from a reader suggesting groups to highlight, reflecting growing engagement and care for their community, March 16, 2026.

School District. After receiving the cookies, the principal spoke with me and said the gesture meant a great deal to the staff. She said they appreciated being recognized and valued. Hearing that reinforced that the project was about more than just baked goods. It was about acknowledgment, visibility, and appreciation for people who are often overlooked.

The project has not only allowed me to educate

others; it has also taught me a great deal. Through each month's focus, I have learned more about community, kindness, and service. I have also faced challenges, including finding places that accept homemade donations, planning content consistently, and balancing the project with school and work responsibilities. Still, those challenges have helped me become more organized, more disciplined, and more aware of the effort required

to sustain long-term service work.

Looking ahead, my goal is not only to continue donating baked goods but also to encourage others to recognize people who are often overlooked in their own communities and to inspire small acts of generosity.

What began as a simple idea has grown into a project that continues to show me that even the smallest sprinkles of kindness can have the biggest impact.

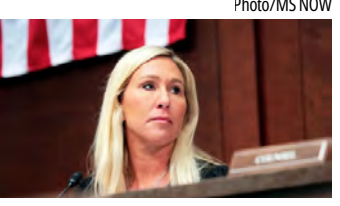
Right-wing

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this, Massie has questioned climate change, and after French President Macron voiced his desire for the US to rejoin the Paris Climate Accords, Massie called him “a socialist militarist globalist science-alarmist.” In addition, he consistently voted against disaster relief, supporting it only when Kentucky was hit. Oh, and he also supports laws allowing raw milk to be transported across state borders. For context, raw milk is linked to a higher risk of milk-borne disease because it is unpasteurized, and its claimed benefits lack evidence.

Now, while Massie, at least, is consistent in his positions as a libertarian, the second person is not. Marjorie Taylor Greene. Yes, you heard me right. This far-right politician is currently lauded by some people for “standing up to Trump.” What they forgot,

however, is that MTG has been one of the largest Trump supporters for quite some time, and the recent feud with Trump, involving his refusal to endorse her and her criticism of his dealings with Epstein Files and strikes on Iran, is very new. For quite some time, she has been one of Trump's greatest supporters. She promoted the false claim that the 2020 election was stolen and was even interested in serving as his Secretary of Homeland Security. But what MTG became most infamous for, practically speaking, was her sheer conspiracism and unpleasant behavior during her tenure in office. The list is long, but some highlights: In 2018, when Camp Fire was ravaging California, she suggested it was caused by space lasers controlled by the Rothschilds. In 2024, during the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, she claimed that the government can control the weather, implying the government used weather



Top: Marjorie Taylor Greene
Bottom: Thomas Massie

technology in order to get the hurricane into Republican-heavy voting districts. In addition, she claimed multiple shootings were false flags, from Las Vegas to Sandy Hook, even ending up harassing Parkland shooting survivor, David Hogg, and calling him “#littleHitler.” Add to this 9/11 trutherism, repeating Russian propaganda so much that it led to her getting the nickname “Moscow Marjorie” from former Republican congressman Ken Buck, and

her calls for violence against transgender congresswoman Sarah McBride, and you can clearly see the true face of MTG. So just because she now calls what Israel is doing genocide does not erase all the horrendous nonsense she said before and the multiple people she harassed. She remains a dangerous far-right figure, not an ally.

This by no means is a complete list of right-wing figures lauded for their recent critical position on Trump and Israel. There is also Joe Kent, former director of the National Counterterrorism Center, and former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, but the point remains. Just because these figures criticize Trump and Israel does not make them our allies in the struggle, since they still hold incredibly harmful political ideas, and being right on one thing does not erase being catastrophically wrong and harmful on others. I hope more people realize it soon.

Instead of deciding that they had simply gotten a false positive, or acknowledging that the experiment had several design flaws (which it did), they hunkered down and obsessively tried and retried their experiment, eventually becoming disgraced and mostly forgotten. Cold fusion, or at least this method of achieving it, is impossible. Yet somehow, it refused to die. A 1991 report found 600 scientists still working on it. https://undsci.berkeley.edu/lessons/pdfs/cold_fusion.pdf

This means that scientists are directly incentivized for publishing sensationalized studies, and that they are perfectly willing to hold on to disproven theories, even if only for more publicity. Also, many studies are paid for by the pharmaceutical companies making the drugs being tested. The more dramatic the story, the more it will benefit the corporation they are working for. This, again, perpetuates the cycle. As I said at the beginning, journalists will publish drastically overblown stories to get those all-valuable clicks. And now we can see that some scientists, incorruptible as they might seem, are still willing to publish overdramatic stories that pander to corporations.

Journalists and scientists will even play off of each other to push a story into big headlines. Let's not forget the infamous 1998 Lancet study that fraudulently linked the MMR vaccine to autism, which ended up being

repeated and overblown far beyond the original claims by major news sources. The paper was eventually retracted due to ethical concerns, overreliance on anecdotal evidence, and small sample size, but that has hardly lessened its influence. [Need more clicks? Write an article about a new drug that causes cancer! While it's not entirely moral to do this just to increase views, it is a good strategy for surviving in the fast-paced world of internet-based news. Create an existential crisis for your readers and your article will immediately be read and shared. At the time of this writing, five different articles on the main page of CNN refer to medical topics. And yes, it's a good thing: if new breakthroughs could alter the care that people are receiving, they need to be informed about it without being burdened by reading a lengthy study. Life has been sped up and what we all need is short, snappy bites of information.](#) People still won't let go of it, including, famously, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. This incident also shows how harmful clickbait science can be—some parents will refuse to vaccinate their children out of fear of autism, which has led to measles outbreaks across the country and the first U.S. deaths related to measles since 2015. 90% of the people affected by measles were not vaccinated. ➡

Financial Literacy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

These are all practical and essential skills that nearly every adult will need to have, yet most students graduate without ever truly learning them in school.

High schools should make practical personal finance education a higher priority for students. Students should graduate from high school with a clear understanding of basic budgeting, taxes, credit scores, insurance, loans, retirement accounts, and investing basics, as well as the consequences of debt. Learning about these topics should be an informative and useful experience for students, which would be different from the mandatory personal finance course required in Missouri. In this course, many students say that they left without learning essential and practical financial skills, and that the only thing they did was memorize financial formulas that they never end up using. This needs to change by making the required course more applicable to what students will actually be expected to do throughout their lives—not memorizing formulas that will never be used.

At the same time, families also need to make a shift by talking more openly with children about money, encouraging smart saving and spending habits, and teaching young kids about the difference between necessities and wants. Financial literacy should not begin only after graduation—or even in a high school classroom. Financial literacy should begin long before a person becomes an adult.

Nobody wakes up on their 18th birthday or the day after high school graduation and ust suddenly understands how to make smart financial decisions. Financial literacy is

learned over time. As someone who has had a job since I was fourteen, I have begun learning many of these skills myself. By managing my own paychecks, talking with family members, asking questions, and taking the initiative to do certain things such as opening a Schwab Teen Investor account, I have realized that financial literacy is something that needs to be practiced. It takes curiosity, patience, mistakes, and perseverance to keep learning and growing. I definitely do not know everything, but I do know that making an effort to learn about financial literacy and developing good extr financial habits at a young age will most certainly benefit me in the future.

So find someone you know that invests or has experience with financial literacy, and ask them to share what they've learned. Apply for a job if you're able to, open savings and investing accounts, ask questions, be curious and make an effort to learn something new. There are countless free resources online that help teach people about financial literacy, and even provide information about more specific topics such as details about a certain stock. Don't be afraid to take the step and start learning for your future, because it's never too late to start.

History shows that recessions, depressions, and economic crises are part of life. Markets dip and soar while panic comes and goes. We cannot predict or prevent these things, but we can choose to prepare ourselves financially. The greatest lesson from the Great Depression and the Great Recession is ensuring that future generations have the resources and skills necessary to make smart financial decisions when the next challenge arises. ➡

UPCOMING CIVITAS EVENTS



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Do you enjoy digging into a topic and sharing it with others? Are you interested in writing, photography, layout, or editing? We would love to have you join the student writers and contributors who make The Examiner happen!

Students choose their own topics, research and interview for their articles, write and edit their pieces, help compile photos and stories into a newspaper format, and then see their work in print each quarter. Whether you already have experience or just want to try something new, there's a place for you on The Examiner staff.

To get involved, scan The Examiner barcode below!



[HTTPS://CIVITAS-STL.COM/THE-CIVITAS-EXAMINER/](https://civitas-stl.com/the-civitas-examiner/)

UPCOMING EVENTS

As our school year begins, Civitas still has great opportunities to get involved. Get signed up at civitas-stl.com or by scanning the QR codes below the events!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026, 10:00 A.M TO 12:00 P.M.

Model UN Country Draft
at Crossroads School, 500 DeBaliviere, St. Louis



[CIVITAS-STL.COM/2026-2027-HIGH-SCHOOL-COUNTRY-DRAFT-SIGN-UP/](https://civitas-stl.com/2026-2027-high-school-country-draft-sign-up/)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THIS YEAR’S MODEL UN SESSIONS

November 21, 2026 - Model UN Session A

December 5, 2026 - Model UN Session B

December 12, 2026 - Model UN Session C

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16-18, 2026, TIME TBD

Washington University Model UN
please email gavinstephanie89@gmail.com if you’re interested in
joining the Civitas team

