

Connecting people through their stories to foster empathy, equity, and community collaboration.

# GIVING VOICE



January 2021



## A Note From Our Editor

Welcome to 2021!

While our writers for the January 2021 issue of *Giving Voice* will not remember “Y2K” (most were not born yet), I realized recently it was the last time that the dawning of a new year was so globally anticipated.



It was 1999—I was sixteen at the time, and I recall terrifying reports of what might happen when the clock struck midnight on January 1. The year 2000—or Y2K—brought with it a computer programming bug that many thought would wreak havoc on computer systems that only allowed two digits for recording a year (e.g., “99” instead of “1999”). Essentially, it would make the year 2000 indistinguishable from the year 1900. Without proper preparation, this programming glitch might bring down computer-based infrastructures globally... from power plants and banks, to government systems and more.

But it didn't. Yes, there were a few problems, but by and large life continued on smoothly. This didn't happen because the threat was not real—quite the contrary. Governments and businesses took the threat seriously, dedicating time and resources to solving the problem. As I watched the ball drop in New York City from the television, we sailed into 2000 without incident.

Two decades later, we enter into 2021—and instead of coordinated government efforts to tackle the issues we face, we are met with partisanship, misinformation, and fatigue. And just as nothing magical happened when the clock rolled over into 2000, nothing tangible has really changed in 2021.

But I find one other difference more interesting: while we entered 2000 with dread, we have entered 2021 with the intangible... hope.

Hope is a force that should never be underestimated. It drives us, provides direction, and gives us a reason to keep fighting. This type of motivation acknowledges reality while pushing us to strive for something better. In this issue of *Giving Voice*, you will read the words of young people who ask you to join them in tackling the issues we face in 2021. From worldwide food insecurity and environmental racism, to partisanship and representation, they remind us that 2021 can be a year of solutions.

As former First Lady Michelle Obama notes:

*“You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once, but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.”*

In that spirit, let us enter 2021 with hope and courage.  
Happy New Year!

Mae Gilliland Wright, PhD  
*Giving Voice* Editor-in-Chief

# GIVING VOICE

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Art by Sophie Liu

## Everyone has a little “I Want to Save the World” in them...

by Jenin Manna

I dragged my gaze down the list of t-shirt orders. After months of advertising to the student body, we only managed to sell twelve. I felt my shoulders sag involuntarily. The philanthropic nature of our club would not garner enough attention on its own—fundraising for UNICEF was going to be a lot harder than we thought.

UNICEF, or the United Nations Children’s Relief Fund, is a humanitarian aid organization geared towards improving the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children worldwide. I brought UNICEF to Dunlap High School, alongside my friend Anna Cai, because it was the most tangible means of fulfilling my child-like desire to “save the world.”

Selling t-shirts was our first course of action, and we made a grand total of fourteen dollars. I could feel our confidence wane. Nevertheless, we would not let a single unsuccessful fundraiser make us lose sight of UNICEF’s mission: to promote the rights and wellbeing of every child in everything we do. We concluded that our club was not yet well-established enough at our school. So, in an effort to garner recognition, we enlisted in the club fair in the middle of the school year.

I could feel my heart race as I spoke of our plans and goals for UNICEF club to the incoming freshmen and their parents. My nerves dissipated as I realized they were as excited about our club as we were. Midway through the evening, a man approached me alongside his wife. He listened as I relayed UNICEF’s mission to him, nodded and smiled periodically, and frequently



asked questions. At the conclusion of our exchange, he patted my shoulder amiably and disclosed to me, "I know all about UNICEF. I grew up in a refugee camp."

My jaw slackened and I gaped at him for a moment. "Th-that's... Wow," I spluttered.

For the rest of the evening, I could not shake the warm feeling that had settled in my chest from the encounter. My faith within our club was revitalized, and upon further inspection of UNICEF's website, I understood the value of those fourteen dollars we raised by selling t-shirts. Fourteen dollars could purchase 54 polio vaccines, 10,980 liters of clean water after an earthquake, and 343 pencils for displaced children. Our impact was not as small and insignificant as I initially thought.

Since our first t-shirt fundraiser, we have raised \$100 through Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF, \$450 worth of necklaces bearing UNICEF's logo, and \$200 through bake sales—and that is just to name a few. Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented, we have hosted frequent lectures discussing pertinent global issues, volunteered safely within the community, and made cards thanking healthcare workers.

As a new club taking flight, we expected to face some minor turbulence. Nevertheless, our determination in wanting to succeed allowed us to soar. UNICEF has done nothing but fuel my "I want to save the world" complex, and for that I am eternally grateful. ♦



## About Jenin Mannaa



Jenin Mannaa is a rising senior at Dunlap High School. Her stellar academic performance has granted her entrance to the National Honors Society at her school. Jenin has expressed her love for advocacy through her involvement on the Dunlap Speech Team as Junior and Senior Captain. Within speech, her primary goal has been expressing her identity as a Muslim American woman. Jenin attended IHSA State for Oratorical Declamation her junior year of high school. Within her speech team, she was also awarded Sophomore and Junior MVP. Jenin's passion for the arts is evident through her involvement in Stage 323, where she was inducted in the International Thespian Society. She has also been involved in Concert Choir, Women's Chorale, and Show Choir throughout her high school career. Moreover, her devotion to garnering support for ethnic minorities motivated Jenin to create Dunlap's UNICEF Club, which educates students about the tribulations of underprivileged individuals in impoverished countries. Within UNICEF, she leads fundraisers, and within the first few months of the club she raised approximately \$500. During her summers, Jenin has spent over 200 hours volunteering at the Unity-Point Methodist Hospital within the daycare or shadowing various doctors within Peoria.



## About Sophie Liu

Sophie Liu is a senior at Dunlap High School who has won numerous art prizes such as the Scholastic Art and Writing Gold Key Award and several honorable mentions. As someone who also values academics, business, and volunteering, she has participated in and led many activities in her community. Her volunteering contribution has awarded her the Gold President's Volunteer Service Award. She is one of the club leaders of her school's Interact Volunteering Club. During her summers, Liu has participated in several business camps such as Kelley Business's Young Women's Institute, where she has gained knowledge and experience in her passion. She also runs her own online art business where she creates commissioned art pieces and gains firsthand business experience. Liu plans to continue her love of business, volunteering, and art in college, where she will major in either Marketing or Business Analytics and minor in art.

# Guidelines for the Gold

by Anjali Yedavalli

The Academy Awards have always been simultaneously highly regarded and highly controversial. In 2015, the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite started [trending](#) after all 20 acting nominations were given to white actors and actresses. Coming off the heels of Black Lives Matter movements and talks of gender inequality, the public expressed their tiredness with the perpetual shutting-out of people of color and other marginalized groups.

Fast forward five years later, and the Academy has announced its new “diversity” guidelines for Best Picture as part of their [Academy Aperture 2025 initiative](#). The guidelines have four “standards,” and the film must meet at least two of these standards to qualify for Best Picture (each standard is a list of criteria and at least one of these criteria must be met for the overall standard to be met). Standard A is the most significant (and most talked about) of these standards, and it is summarized here:



At least one of the lead actors or significant supporting actors must be from an underrepresented minority group (Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American,

Indigenous/Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)



At least 30% of general cast/more minor roles must be in at least two of these underrepresented groups: Women, racial or ethnic group, LGBTQ+, those with disabilities



The storyline follows an underrepresented group.

Other standards cover topics like diversity in the creative team (director, writers, etc.), paid apprenticeships and opportunities that the film gave to people in marginalized communities, and diversity on the publicity/senior executive teams.

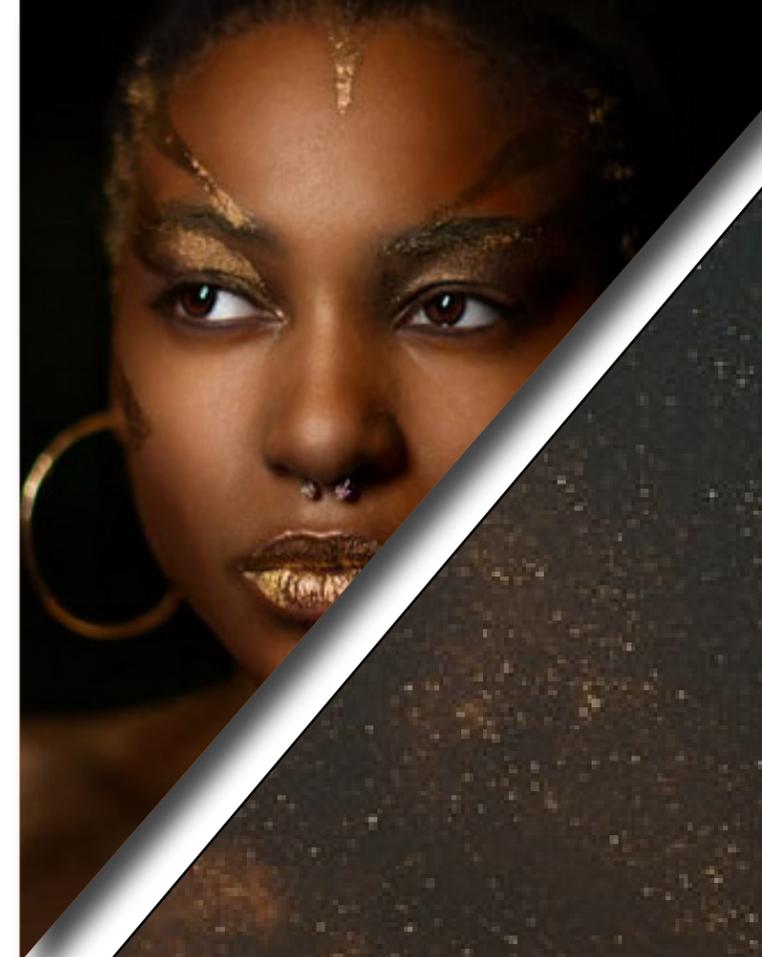
So—what does any of this even mean?

Many people have come out and criticized the Academy for attempting to “force” diversity onto films, noting that a movie like *1917* would not have qualified for Best Picture in 2020 under these guidelines. Others argue that meritocracy should continue to be upheld, and that guidelines like these only make it easier for less qualified people to be nominated. But it is hard to sympathize with such a train of thought when perfectly qualified individuals from minority groups are rarely nominated. For example, one notable snub from the 2020 Academy Awards includes a directing nomination for Greta Gerwig for *Little Women* (2019). Her nomination would mean being the odd one out, as Best Director is known to be a male-dominated category. Another snub was an acting nomination for Awkwafina in *The Farewell*, an Asian-American actress who, again, would’ve broken barriers, with Asian-Americans rarely receiving acting nominations. The fact that these two highly worthy individuals did not receive recognition for their work was enough to turn heads.

In practice, these rules only make the minimum of difference—and more action will likely be needed. With so much flexibility on each condition and a very broad definition of who qualifies as a marginalized group, most film productions will not be impacted. If you are having trouble picturing that, just think about it like this: A film with all white actors could still be nominated if their director was a woman and people of color on their executive team.

In other words, when watching the movie, you may not see that diversity represented at all. These rules mean well, but it’s hard to say if they’re really pushing the barrier, and many will argue that it is not the correct way to encourage diverse films.

Everyone wants the same thing: good films to be made with good actors and good stories. But when every group does not have the same starting point, everyone will not get to the finish line as easily. That is the real intention of rules like these, even if they are not completely effective. Rather than diminishing meritocracy, it ensures the bare minimum—the equity for marginalized groups in film, a form of representation that has been denied to them for so long. ♦



# About Anjali Yedavalli

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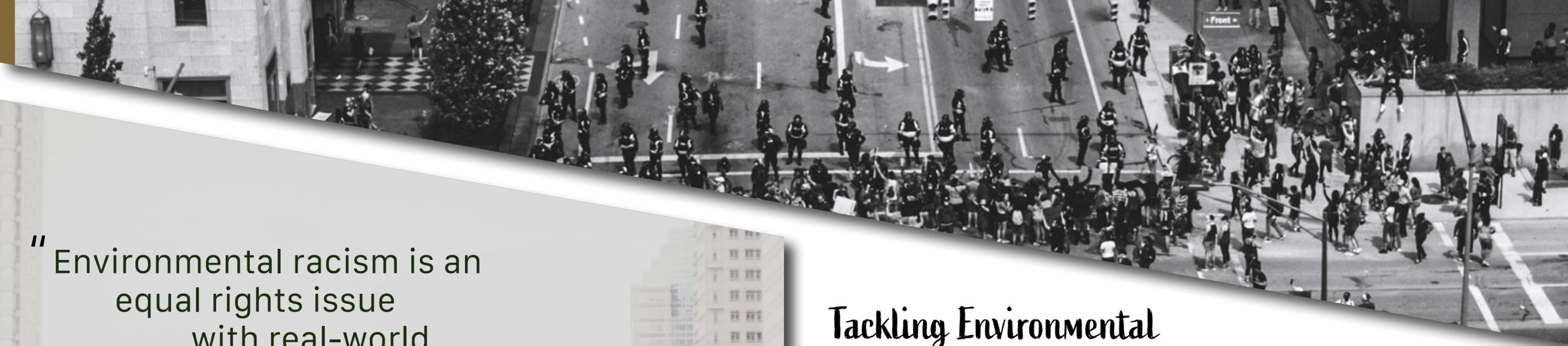


Anjali Yedavalli is a senior at Dunlap High School. Aside from taking academically rigorous classes, Anjali is involved in Speech Team (IHSA State qualifier in 2020), Student Council, UNICEF Club, the school plays, Jazz Choir, and is the Madrigal Queen of Dunlap's Madrigal choir. Anjali's main goal in the community is spreading passion for both academics and creativity. She has organized and led multiple public speaking workshops for middle school students and volunteered her time at North South Foundation, an organization dedicated to funding underprivileged children in India. In addition, she has joined and contributed to the Dunlap Young Musicians, a student-created music group that performs at senior homes on the holidays. She is also active in her Sunday School (Chinmaya Mission) and has helped write promotional songs and plays to help fundraise for the school. Last but not least, Anjali is a classically trained Bharatanatyam dancer of Mythili Dance Academy and has contributed to shows that have raised over \$500k for a variety of charities.

# BE AN ARTIST



# WORK TOGETHER



" Environmental racism is an equal rights issue with real-world **devastating** consequences."



## Tackling Environmental Racism: Part 2

by Kratika Tandon

You may recall that in the December issue of *Giving Voice* we published an article introducing the topic of environmental racism. It has been established that there is a disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on marginalized communities. This results in drastic health hazards and an increase in systemic racism. Now, let's discuss the causes and potential solutions.

First, problematic policies allow environmental racism to exist. We can see how this issue manifested itself in Flint, Michigan, where the Flint River served as a waste disposal site for over a century (National Resource Defense Council, Nov. 8, 2018). In 2013, the city switched from piping treated water in favor of a cheaper alternative: pumping corrosive water from the Flint River. For 18 months, this governmental policy poisoned over 9,000 children, resulting in the Flint water crisis.

We often incorrectly assume that an equal safety threshold applies to everyone. A 2016 University of Michigan study states that minority regions often bear the brunt of much of the country's toxic waste, proving that this

issue is one of race, not solely of economic disparity. While wealthier communities have the money and influence to organize effective opposition, marginalized communities usually have fewer means at their disposal.

People of color are 79% more likely to live in high pollution areas (2019 Proceedings of the National Academy of Science). These areas, in turn, suffer significantly higher rates of breathing issues in comparison to the rest of the city. Locally, Ryan Hidden of the Peoria Sierra Club discovered that predominantly Black neighborhoods are located next to the Edwards Coal Plant. The health of marginalized populations does not deserve to be jeopardized like this. Environmental racism is an equal rights issue with real-world devastating consequences. We can focus on two reasonable solutions: supporting equal policy and public outcry.

First, we need consistent and effective policy change. Drafting new legislation and taking it to DC is a major first step. According to congress.gov, the Environmental Justice Act introduced on October 27th, 2017 by Senator Cory Booker explicitly requires "federal agencies to address environmental justice." We must endorse government officials like Booker who prioritize this matter and throw our support behind bills that are being introduced.



Furthermore, we need to organize movements and make our voices heard. The city of Greeley, Colorado offers a good example of this. When an oil company opened up 24 fracking wells within 1,000 feet of an elementary school, reporters went to investigate. According to the Sierra Club's Environmental Law Program, the land next to Bella Romero Academy, a school with mostly low-income and Latinx students, was chosen as a major fracking site because residents did not have the resources to fight back. However, after protestors gathered, ensuing media coverage, and lawsuits, the company took a step back. This incident illustrates the results of what can happen if residents rise up in order to speak out.

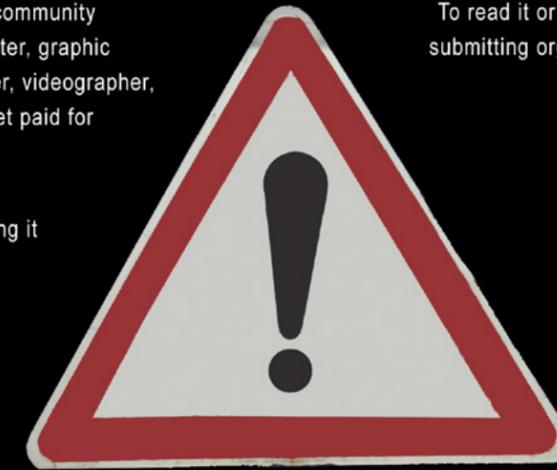
You may never have heard of environmental racism. It is a largely unrepresented issue with hazardous consequences. After examining the problem and identifying its causes, we can finally take some steps in the right direction. The Warren protests that I wrote about in the December 2020 issue of *Giving Voice* were among the first examples of marginalized populations fighting against environmental injustice, but they certainly will not be the last. Get involved with community advocacy groups. Stay aware when electing politicians to office. Raise your voice and fight to be heard. The right to live in an unpolluted environment belongs to all. ♦

# EXPRESS YOURSELF ...and get paid!

## Students!

We are connecting people through stories to foster empathy, equity, and community collaboration. If you are a writer, graphic designer, artist, photographer, videographer, poet or influencer you can get paid for what you love to do.

The first monthly issue premiered October 1. To read it or find more information about submitting original work or content for our consideration, please visit [www.bigpicturepeoria.org](http://www.bigpicturepeoria.org).



Big Picture Initiative is making it possible for students to be heard and seen through a digital magazine titled "Giving Voice."

Thanks to the kindness of Gilmore Foundation we are able to share student voices and mentor their legacy of giving lives on in "Giving Voice."



## About Kratika Tandon



Kratika Tandon is an incoming freshman at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is majoring in biology and graduating with a minor in environmental economics and policy. She graduated from Dunlap High School as class valedictorian. Tandon is incredibly passionate about sustainability. As such, she is interested in many different career paths that involve helping the environment. She is most interested in writing about the subjects of environmental issues, social justice, life during a pandemic, and racial equity. She is proficient in informative and expository writing as well as public speaking. Tandon was a part of her high school's speech team for four years. This past season, she competed in two events at the state championship tournament: original oratory and informative speaking. She wrote and perfected these speeches on her own, both tackling specific topics dealing with the environment. Tandon was also the president of her school's local Interact Club. She possesses great leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. She is participating with Giving Voice because she wants to use her voice and writing to inspire others and facilitate change.

# The Art of Doing ~ Nothing ~

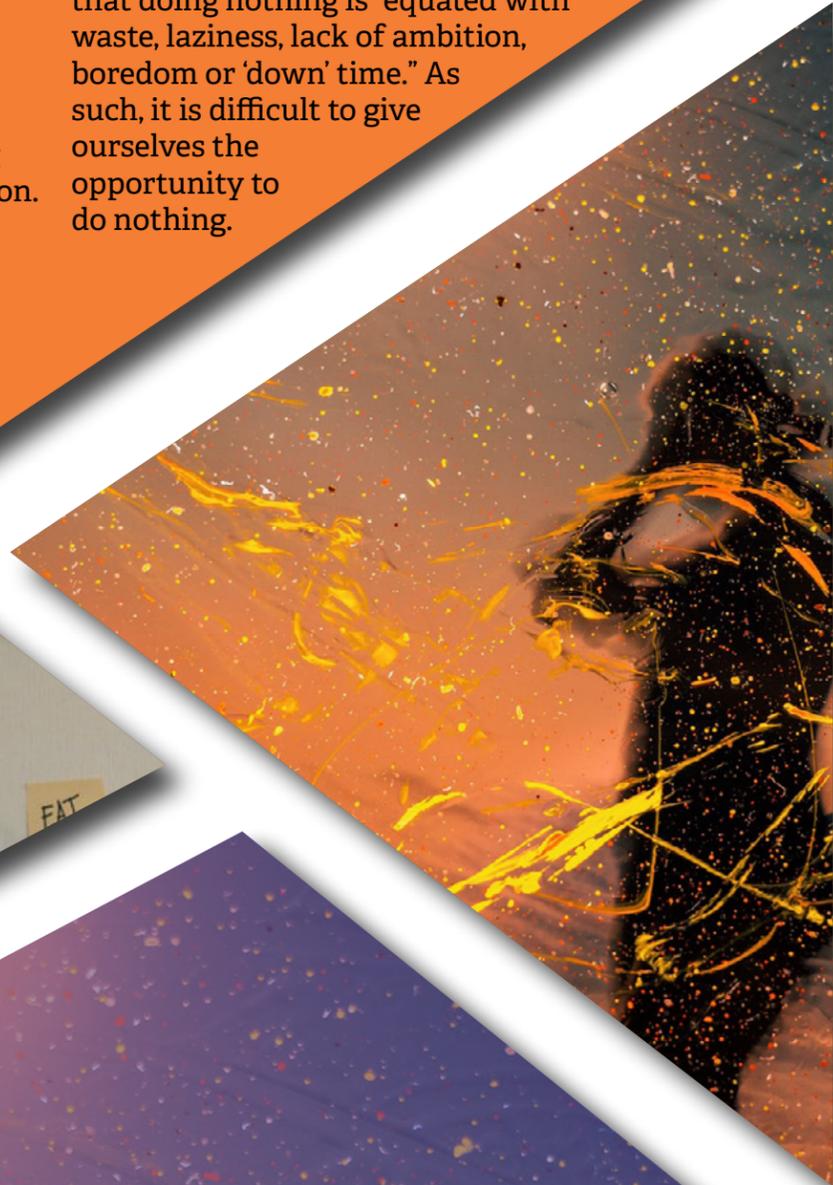
by Aasiyah Adnan

I can't write anymore. Well, yes, I can—I mean, I am writing this right now, but when it comes to fiction, I have nothing. The unmoving cursor at the top of my Notes page seems to laugh at me mockingly. No matter how hard I try, I feel like I have no creative juices left.

Like any self-respecting teenager, when I first discovered this problem, I immediately did some googling. I found that the answer, unexpectedly, is boredom. It may seem counterintuitive but being bored fosters imagination.

By allowing your mind to wander, you open the door to less obvious solutions—or in other words, creativity.

SCL Health points out that due to the prevalence of technology in our lives, we are connected all day, every day. Instead of giving ourselves a chance to get bored, we busy ourselves with some other diversions (in my case, endlessly scrolling on Instagram). Not only that, but the acceleration in human productivity due to the improvements in technology bolsters the idea that all time must be spent doing something. A *Live Science* article written by Simon Gottschalk states that doing nothing is “equated with waste, laziness, lack of ambition, boredom or ‘down’ time.” As such, it is difficult to give ourselves the opportunity to do nothing.



Art by Aryanne Westfall



However, the benefits are worth the initial discomfort. First and foremost, boredom helps foster creativity. Research done by Dr. Sandi Mann with the University of Central Lancashire found that “undertaking a boring task might help with coming up with a more creative outcome.” Boredom allows the mind to explore options instead of jumping to the first solution presented. It also serves as a check-in for emotions and mental wellbeing. Constant distractions in the way of work or entertainment mean we ignore important emotions or gut feelings. Allowing ourselves to do nothing gives us the ability to manage our mental and emotional states.

Boredom may seem to be the antithesis of productivity, but it helps to consider these breaks as a way to replenish our energy. A *New York Times* article by Tim Herrera states, “Your brain is a muscle and it gets tired, so running it nonstop without letting it rest hurts your ability to stay on task.” While it may seem wrong to pause for nothing, by giving ourselves the time to relax mentally, we are more prepared and able to tackle the work ahead.

Doing nothing is a mindful task. In order to value your time with your mind even more, a *New York Times* article by Olga Mecking says to “take conscious, considered time and energy to do activities like gazing out of a window or sitting motionless.” Other activities could be tasks such as showering, going on a walk, or meditating—anything that is generally mindless and allows for the mind to wander. The idea is to take the break we need to reflect and just be.

I’m not quite there yet to writing how I used to, and the blank screen of my Notes app continues to frustrate me. But I can feel the traces of plotlines forming and half-developed characters just waiting to meet me. When it comes to creativity and imagination, doing a little more of nothing might just be everything. ♦

## About Aasiyah Adnan



Aasiyah Adnan is a senior at Dunlap High School. She is dedicated to community involvement on multiple levels. At school, she is academically competitive in her classes, a cross country/track captain, varsity runner (IHSA State qualifier in 2018 and 2019), Madrigals performer, speech captain and varsity performer (IHSA State qualifier in 2020), Scholastic Bowl varsity player, and Best Buddies officer. Aasiyah is also the Dunlap Student Body President and a part of Twelve Eagles, a student group focused on bridging the gap between the student body and administration. She focuses on ensuring that the student voice is heard and has spoken out at school board meetings about student mental health. She is currently in the process of starting the Muslim Student Association at Dunlap, and she hosted the first Global World Hijab Day in recent memory last school year. In the community, Aasiyah is active in her local mosque and volunteers at the Sunday School. She has been a Girl Scout for twelve years and is currently working on her Gold Award project on Muslim representation and resources at Dunlap. Since January 2019, Aasiyah also volunteers weekly at Córdoba Health Care, a free specialty clinic in Peoria that provides care to the uninsured.



## About Aryanne Westfall

Aryanne “Ary” Westfall is a sophomore at Bradley University majoring in Animation and minoring in Theatre Arts. She is pursuing a career as a storyboard artist and enjoys creating graphic novels in her free time. As a member of the Digital Art Team, Westfall spends her time connecting with other artists and creating as much as she can.

# Supporting Central Illinois Businesses

by Trent Miles

Small businesses have suffered from being forced to close down suddenly and a lack of sales due to people staying home for safety. While this may be a temporary situation, some business owners will shut down permanently. Though one could debate how effective governmental responses have been, we can at least agree that, regardless, this aid can only go so far. We must remember that local neighborhoods and consumers need to step up and support small businesses.

Why support local? Small businesses are essential for our economy. They bring growth and innovation, provide jobs and build opportunities for entrepreneurship, and promote local economies, families, and neighborhoods. They know their customers by name; they are our neighbors and friends, and we care about them. They are what makes our cities unique and memorable. Most are feeling a financial strain right now and are worried about the future. If you need to buy something, try your local store first. If you still have an income, try ordering from your favorite local restaurant once a week.

I had the opportunity to talk to Julie Maag, owner of Rhythm Kitchen Music Café. When asked what we can do as community members to support small business, she expressed:

“1. It helps my small business when people buy gift cards. It’s a great way for us to receive money now during a crisis and potentially gets us recognition with new customers.

2. When people need to buy a gift, a meal, a coffee, a bakery item—they should think of their local small businesses and make the extra effort to support them over national chains. Chances are those small businesses have just a handful of people putting their heart and soul into their place and products every day.

3. Keep coming back! It’s those faces we see once a week or every other week that keep us going. Not just financially but emotionally, too! Knowing that our customers want us to survive keeps the energy to work as hard as we do positive. We will work to keep a beloved place open, not just for our families, but for our loyal customers.”



Art by Jamie Wunning



Small business owners enjoy what they do and they play a significant part in helping their local community. These small businesses do a lot to support those who live locally, from having a hometown feel to working hard to know their neighbors. They are risk-takers and innovators. Virtually every new technology, insight, and trend is birthed at businesses like these.

As Peoria community members, we want them to know that they are appreciated—because it’s hard out there right now, and they probably don’t hear it enough. We see them working to give their families, their business, and their communities everything that they’ve got.

There is hope when we come together and support each other and strive to make major improvements. Let’s help these small businesses survive the pandemic. ♦



## About Trent Miles



Trent Miles is a rising senior at Richwoods High School and has been working for Big Picture Initiative since May 2020. He is academically competitive and a well rounded student. Trent is the co-founder of his Richwood’s climate action club, Vice President of the Minority Academic Advancement Project, and a varsity tennis player. Outside of school, he is involved in Jack and Jill of America, where he served as the Central Region Teen Vice President in 2018. In his chapter he served as Vice President, Legislative Chair and Foundation Chair. Trent also runs his own environmental blog called “EnviroWrite,” which is a youth-run blog that seeks to innovate how we discuss and inform ourselves on environmental concerns. He has won 1st place in a Regional Best Hobby Exhibits competition and two Regional Alexander Pushkin writing competitions. He has contributed more than 800 hours of community service through various service projects including a winter wear drive, collecting toiletries, and even an educational African-American museum.



## About Jamie Wunning

Jamie Wunning, a junior attending Bradley University, has been an intern for Big Picture Initiative since April of 2020, and now serves as the art director for *Giving Voice*. She is a student in Bradley’s highly recognized Interactive Media department majoring in Animation with a minor in User Experience Design. As a member of Bradley’s Honor’s program, Jamie strives for academic excellence. Along with interning with Big Picture, Jamie is the media specialist at C.T. Gabbert Remodeling and Construction and is a graphic designer at UniqueeTees. She eagerly shares her talents with Ronald McDonald House and as a mentor to students attending Peoria High School and Lincoln Elementary School. At Bradley, Jamie serves as the President of Adventure Club, Digital Arts Team, and is the social media chair for Bradley’s NERF Club. She is also a member of the National Society for Leadership and Success, Bradley’s Basketball band, and Rock Climbing Club. Jamie is passionate about creating art for others in the form of animation, video editing, traditional art, photography, design, and any other way she can.

# A Walk Through Downtown Peoria on August 15, 2020

A Photo Series by Adeline Ferolo



The ADM plant located on the Illinois River

Highlights of light pink and faded blue streak across a watercolor sky. The warm air breezes down the empty streets. Peoria's Warehouse District is sparsely populated, as it is nicknamed for its empty industrial buildings. Every two to three blocks you will find pockets of developed areas housing restaurants and shops. People sit outside enjoying their last taste of summer. While photographing this area, I noticed a sense of hope and bliss even in a year ridden with anxiety. As you look at these images and read commentary about the context, I hope a similar feeling is communicated.



Industrial Building located on SW Adams St.



A Horseback Riding Session off Adams Street

Turning the corner at Casa De Arte, a local Mexican restaurant, art gallery, and lounge, the above-pictured scene glides into my point of view. While an ethanol production plant might seem underwhelming, I was entranced by the reflection of the setting sun on the metal facade. By tweaking the color and highlights in editing software, I attempted to create a softer image, highlighting the setting sun on this summer night.





Boy With the Blue Car

This series of images was unexpected. I never imagined that I would see a horse among the desolate Warehouse District alleyways. After asking for permission to snap photos, I attempted to take a mixture of both posed and candid images. The man in the yellow shirt (who brought the horse) is part of an organization called the River City Rough Riders, which connects younger kids from the west side of Peoria with the lifestyle of farming. The Rough Riders have a ranch located near Hanna City, a village about 10 miles west of Peoria. After stumbling upon this situation and looking through the photos, I think the juxtaposition between the horse and the urban environment is an interesting combination.

Although this photo was captured by mistake, it's my favorite in this series. While fixing the exposure levels to capture a shot of the car, a little boy ran through the frame. I thought nothing of it at the time—yet while reviewing the photos I noticed this shot. The blurred motion of the boy running in the foreground contrasting with the in-focus car in the background immediately captivated me. Specifically, the blur of the boy captures his energy and youth. While the other images in this series are aesthetically appealing, this picture provokes an emotional reaction (at least for me!).

I hope these images help you reflect on pockets of happiness from a stressful year as we prepare for change in 2021. Looking back on these photos, I feel comforted by this blissful summer night, even though it occurred during a stressful week. Sometimes moments like this remind us to recenter and take a breath before moving forward. ♦

*“recenter and take a breath”*

# About Adeline Ferolo



Stories, arguably, are the most underrated form of currency that floods the digital world, through highlighted Instagram posts and viral YouTube videos. As a rising senior at Richwoods High School, Adeline Ferolo aims to express herself and the issues closest to her authentically through engaging, storytelling, and other mediums. She is a competitively academic student. Her interests range across many creative outlets—as an active writer for the Richwoods Shield, the monthly school newspaper, and as a contributor to the youth-led blog EnviroWrite, which explores rising environmental concerns. Recently she has discovered her passion for the medium of film after attending the National High School Institute summer program at Northwestern University, where she had previously studied creative-intensive subjects ranging from sustainable architecture to graphic design. Within the past year, she has focused her efforts on exploring the visual medium in both her academic and personal life, opting to create experimental videos for class projects and continuing to explore different aspects of the visual language.

# Student creators Wanted

## Big Picture Peoria

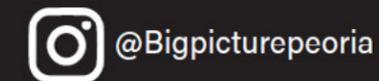
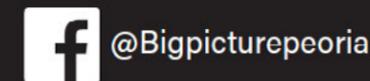
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# Psychology in Politics: Why Partisanship is so Extreme in 2020

by Emma Baumgartel

During the months before the election this year, we saw a COVID-19 virus spike so extreme that hospitals were overwhelmed, and a new wave of shutdowns began. As we entered November, it became clear how polarized our nation had become over health and safety issues—problems that have basic moral foundations. It made me wonder why people become so divided over these issues when they seem generally to agree on moral philosophies such as the care and conservation of humanity.

When COVID-19 first became known in March, it seemed as though every person, no matter their political affiliation, had similar priorities: to learn about the virus and how to prevent its spread. However, as the election drew near, things shifted. Conflicts arose over whether measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing should be followed. All the while, cases were steadily increasing, and more and more people were contracting serious cases of the virus across the nation.

The election revealed how truly split U.S. citizens are over the issue of a deadly virus and illuminated how divided our country can become over problems with basic moral foundations. For most people, protecting the elderly and other high-risk populations would be considered a moral incentive. However, partisan divide has diminished the concern for people that are at high risk. Multiple social psychology studies have been done to investigate why political polarization has grown so extreme in the past few years, even over issues with humanitarian principles. One study conducted by Walter and Redlawsk, published in *Political Psychology*, found that both Republican and Democrat participants displayed more negativity if a moral code was connected to a political party that opposed their own. This shows that moral issues, which normally should have a larger consensus, become compromised purely due to extreme partisanship.

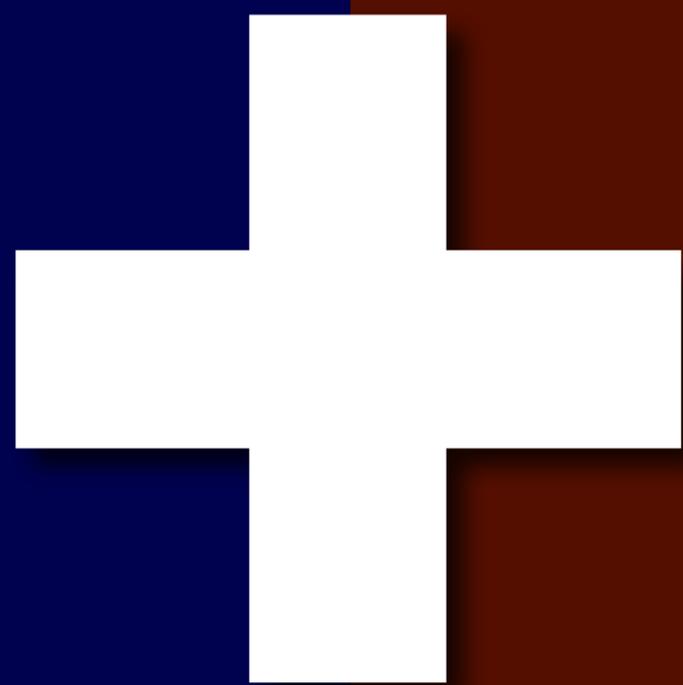
It is imperative that our country is able to heal from this divide and begin to agree despite political differences. This is especially true over issues with moral foundations. As insurmountable as the political divide seems right now, there is hope for more cooperation in the future. Though many believe creating a more proportional voting system will solve many of these issues, there are ways citizens can start to repair conflicts between themselves on an individual level. It is important that individuals begin to focus less on party loyalty and more on humanitarian concerns. This shift in focus begins with cultivating empathy. Though it may sound cliché, respectful listening towards those of an opposing group is invaluable. When two people are able to hear the other's personal reasons for their beliefs, less partisanship is involved and the person listening is able to see the other as an individual—not just part of a political system. Some effective strategies for building empathy between opposing sides involve not interrupting while the opposition is speaking, avoiding anger, and verbally acknowledging points made by the opposition. [Click here](#) to learn more about using empathy during conflicts over politics and COVID-19.

Cultivating empathy for the opposition will hopefully lead to more ethical thinking and less of a “party-first” attitude. Though collective action between parties seems incredibly challenging right now, it is my biggest hope for the New Year that people on both sides listen, empathize with others, and reflect on their own beliefs to form a more cooperative nation. ♦



## About Emma Baumgartel

Emma Baumgartel is an incoming senior at Lake Forest College in Illinois, majoring in Psychology with a minor in English Writing. Baumgartel previously attended Richwoods High School. She has always enjoyed writing—especially about current events and psychology—and believes in advocating for the truth. At Lake Forest, Emma was a writing tutor as well as an editor for *Inter-text*, LF's social science journal. Next semester, Baumgartel plans on joining the college newspaper to gain more writing experience. After graduation, Emma is planning on continuing to submit articles to online publications, as well as a blog on [Medium.com](#). She also hopes to land a professional content writing or marketing role.



# A GLANCE INTO DIET CULTURE

by Elizabeth Setti

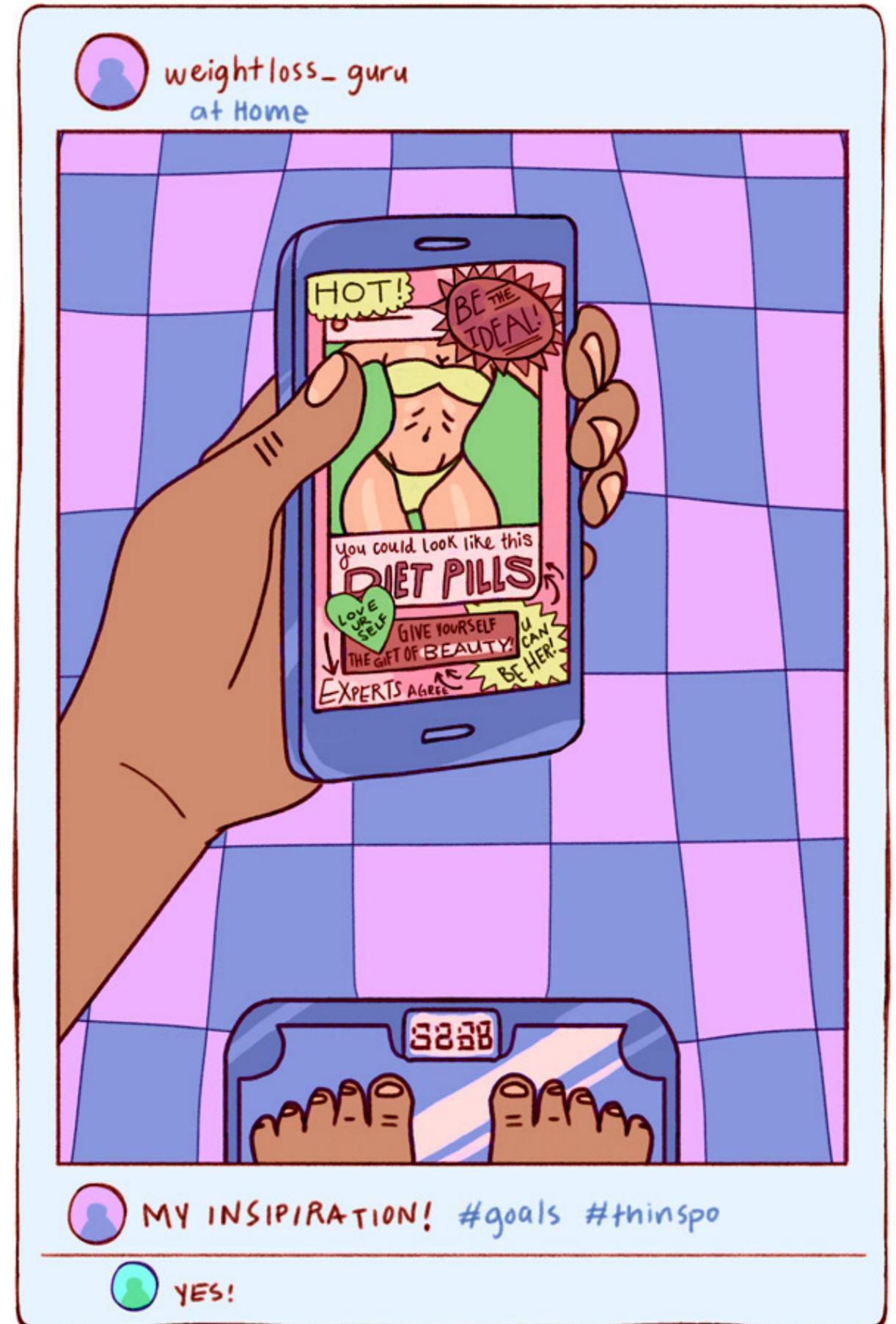
Diet culture is a discrete, hidden, and normalized system that simultaneously is a global cause for eating disorders and encourages a toxic body image. Simply put, diet culture praises thinness and promotes products that promise the “ideal body,” when in reality it is a way to profit off insecurities. It encourages us to worship unattainable figures. In turn, those promoting this system demote every other body type.

Diet culture primarily reaches audiences through social media. Popular influencers advertising detox teas, fad diets, juice cleanses, and more, ensuring their followers will lose body fat or drop ten pounds in a week. As a society we have normalized this dangerous behavior by constantly commenting on one another’s appearances.

We also buy into these diets and products that are unsustainable, fostering a disordered relationship with food.

I personally tried the 1200-calorie diet, ultimately leading to a diagnosis of Anorexia-Nervosa and a relentless battle with my relationship with food. Scientifically, eating under such restrictions leads to weight loss by burning more calories than you consume. However, eating only 1200 calories is dangerously low for anyone over the age of four; and losing weight should be done in a wholesome way. I lost twenty pounds, but I also lost so much of my personality and ability to view food in a healthy way. Diet culture persuaded me to think that food had to be the enemy if I wanted to be thin. Once I lost the weight, I mistakenly believed I could finally feel confident.

“ENCOURAGES A TOXIC BODY IMAGE”



We often associate health and beauty with thinness, and anything beyond that is considered unideal. Diet culture promotes the concept of worth being correlated with physical appearance, leading to many to be victims of self-hate and constantly struggling with how they look. As social media grows, diet culture and the industry as a whole becomes more successful by profiting off of viewer insecurities. In 2019, market research estimated that the diet business made 72 billion dollars—a 4 percent increase from 2018, and predicted to grow.

The “ideal body type” refashions itself overtime, similar to clothing trends, resulting in the desire for humans to alter their appearance in some way in order to fit in. *U.S News & World Reports* states that “95 percent of diets fail people,” meaning it is not just user error—fad diets are made to be constricting and not sustainable. Once people regain the weight they initially hoped to lose, they abandon the diet and begin the next one advertised.

Poor body image is all too ordinary among every age and gender, because all demographics are being targeted. The only way to solve this issue is to begin to love our bodies and not attempt to reshape them with regulated dieting and absurd products. In doing so, you lose only money and happiness. Diet culture is a silent downfall of society, needing urgent change to prevent further damage.

To read more about the complexity of this topic visit [nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://nationaleatingdisorders.org). ♦

## About Elizabeth Setti

Elizabeth Setti is a junior at Richwoods High School in the International Baccalaureate program. Setti plays volleyball for both Richwoods and Central Illinois Elite Volleyball Club, where she has the opportunity to travel throughout the Midwest and compete at high levels. She is the editor (and previously a writer) for the sports section of “Richwoods Shield,” her school’s newspaper. Setti serves on the student leadership team and Noble Knights, and is a member of her school’s science club. She was recently diagnosed with Anorexia-Nervosa, which she developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. She feels it is important to share her story and spread awareness about eating disorders. As such, Setti created a blog called “A Hidden Addiction,” where she tells her story and her journey to recovery.



## About Cailyn Talamonti

Cailyn Talamonti (Manhattan, IL) is a senior at Bradley University. In May 2021, Talamonti will be graduating with a major in Animation and a minor in Graphic Design. She currently works as a freelance artist and designer, creating content for local bands, companies, and others. One day, she wants to be a webcomic artist. Her work is available at [cailyntalamonti.com](http://cailyntalamonti.com).





# Nuclear Energy: The Silent Solution

by Izaak Garcia

Climate change is a dilemma that has been debated on for decades, prompting opinions and perspectives from people all over the world. Scientists and climate change activists alike have discussed solutions to this great problem. In order to solve any problem, one must know how it is caused—and more importantly, how it began. Over the 4.5 billion years of Earth's existence in our solar system, global temperature has fluctuated greatly. This is mostly due to Earth's ever-changing environment, including events like ice ages. The Earth's temperature has never remained stable... so how do we know that global warming is a real threat, and not just a warm front (the opposite of an ice age)?

Carbon dioxide (or CO<sub>2</sub>) is naturally released by plants and animals all the time, and this kind of CO<sub>2</sub> leaves a distinct trace that can be identified by chemists. The reason why this is so valuable is because the CO<sub>2</sub> released by burning fossil fuels traps heat—and is the main contributing factor to the CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere. As CO<sub>2</sub> levels increase, the gas outputs heat into the atmosphere, trapping it there and causing the global temperature to rise. This is our dilemma, and it is destroying our planet. But what if there was a way not only to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, but create a clean and efficient source of energy? The solution is nuclear energy—not only is it cost effective, but it could power human functions for eras to come.

The core concept of nuclear energy lies inside of uranium fuel, consisting of small, ceramic pellets that—when bound together—are inserted into a nuclear reactor. One pellet, according to Hitachi Global, contains the same amount of energy as one ton of coal, and can provide up to “five years of heat for power generation.” Not only efficient, uranium is also

abundant on Earth. This means that access to the supplies needed to create power is neither difficult nor costly. Unlike other sources of renewable energy like solar or wind, nuclear energy can be created on command, and is available at any time of the year, no matter the conditions.

Now, let's address the elephant in the room: Is nuclear energy safe? According to the World Nuclear Association, in the past 60 years accidents at power plants were extremely low, with only 3 major nuclear reactor incidents occurring. The standard the nuclear industry holds for safety is one of the highest in the nation. Nuclear energy is the forefront of modern technology, and learning to understand, not fear it, will put humanity one step closer to a clean and efficient future. ♦



“the forefront  
of modern  
technology”

## About Izaak Garcia



Izaak Garcia is currently a senior at Richwoods High School, enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program. After high school, Garcia plans to study Computer Science. He has played soccer with FC Peoria and Richwoods for over a decade combined. Garcia has also played tennis for 4 years, securing a spot on both junior varsity and varsity teams. Along with this, he has competed with the Richwoods Worldwide Youth Science and Engineering team for Biology and Computer Science for 2 years and earned multiple awards for the school. Garcia is also heavily involved with the arts. As a multi-instrumentalist, he has played the saxophone for 8 years and piano for 2 years. During his junior year of high school, he was involved in theater at Richwoods as stage crew and manager. He helped with two total productions and was being trained to be stage manager for senior year before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted school. Outside of school activities, Garcia is involved in Jack and Jill of America (an organization for young African American men and women to serve the community). He served as his chapter's treasurer during his freshman year of high school. Along with Jack and Jill of America, he enjoys coding, learning new coding languages, and video games.

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*Photography*



*Graphic Design*



*Writing*

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# The Facts Report

By Gabe Gross, Downtown Peoria, Illinois

Big Picture is trying to install more public art in Peoria. They are trying to "change the face of Peoria" there was a mural viewing in downtown Peoria on Saturday October 10th. The artists pieces were enlarged and put up on a big warehouse. The artists were recognized, and some of Big Picture staff including Mark Misselhorn, and Doug and Eileen Leung, spoke about the organization's work.

Artists and their families and friends gathered to congratulate Big Picture and the artists themselves. Big Picture put up these murals to display more public art, and to make Peoria a vibrant art city.

Lori, one of the artists that has made one of the murals said "Big Picture approached me, and other artists to submit work for consideration." She also said "Field Notes" is the name of my art. A friend of mine took the photo and I liked the color of all the blooming plants in the foreground."



Big Picture wants to have more street festivals. One, to bring people out to be creative. Two, to put up more public art. Three, to inspire younger people and to get them doing art. If young kids don't have access to art, Big Picture will provide this for them. Also, students can contact Big Picture and put their art on Big Picture's magazine. Lastly, Big Picture is trying to publicize artists work, and project their organization to Peoria.



## About Gabe Gross



Gabriel Gross is a 7th grader at St. Thomas Catholic School of Peoria where he serves as Student Council Secretary. He plays many sports, including basketball, baseball, tennis, and soccer. Gross enjoys drawing, creating comics, playing ping pong, hiking, video games, and traveling. He kept busy in 2020 outdoors with fellow artists and neighbors, filming a movie, and creating pop-up street art. In spare moments, he can be found playing fetch with neighborhood dogs. Gross plans to apply to the International Baccalaureate program at Richwoods High School. Some of his future interests are studying history, teaching, and coaching youth sports.

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