

The Cistercian Informer

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Newsline

IN NEST: Winter Coffeehouse

"Winter Vibes" abounded at the annual Winter Coffeehouse



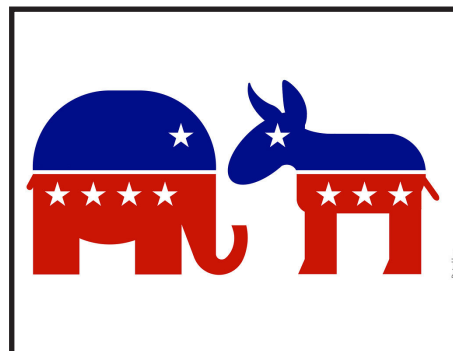
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Standardization is killing our Education System.



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Election year is upon us, and the field of candidates is narrowing down



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Many good NBA athletes hope to be named MVP this year



IN ARTS: Rise of Skywalker Review

The Skywalker Saga came to an end, but was it a good one?



The Toxicity of Social Media

Alex Smith, '21

This article is an editorial, and the views expressed within are those of the author and not necessarily those of Cistercian or The Cistercian Informer.

Have you ever thought about how much of your life is dedicated to social media? Don't just consider how much time you spend on certain applications, but also how much thought you dedicate to them. Can you even sit at home for a while and let your mind wander without a burning sense of anxiety creeping in, urging you to check your phone? In my own life, I have frequently felt chained to these alternate, virtual realities. At times, it is hard to find peace and freedom.

Each morning we all wake up to go to school, which is a massive social arena. Because Cistercian is a small school, it is intimate. I value the interactions I have with friends, classmates, and teachers, but there is no doubt that some days those seven and a half hours can be rather strenuous. Each afternoon, we go home and enter completely new social platforms on Instagram, Snapchat, or whatever



one you might use. Doesn't that feel like you're never given a break or some time just to be alone with your thoughts? Instead, we're concerned with what other people are doing. It's not natural. Instead of having real experiences in our lives, we need the cool things we do to be seen by all our friends. That can ruin the purpose of the things you

do. Moments in my own life have been entirely ruined by social media. For instance, have you noticed that when people are at concerts, they're filming every minute of the show? Do you need everyone to know where you are? It seems some people have lost the ability to be in the moment and have a real...

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The Uighur Slaughter

Ethan Ramchandani, '21

Xi Jinping has been perpetuating Mao Zedong's "war on religion" started half a century ago. Jinping fears all religions challenge the legitimacy of the CCP. While this targets every creed, leaked documents from the CCP to major news outlets in the United States outline the harassment that the party enacts on believers. Among other things, Jinping's administration has been burning holy texts, rewriting parts of the Bible, and banning religious expression for minors. However, none of these compare to the plights of the Uighur and other Muslims in the country.

Xi's distaste for religious life can be traced back to 2015 when he encouraged religious life not to interfere with secular life. This includes forbidding Muslim daycares, Mosques, and other religious institutions/organizations from teaching the faith in an effort to prevent it from spreading. Further than that, the government has restricted the

display of Arab characters in general, opting to replace them with Mandarin symbols. Stores that prepare meat to Muslim standards are not allowed to have the word "Halal" on the storefront. With the mass closing or destruction of mosques, believers are being forced to worship in government made mosques that proudly display the Chinese flag more than any other religious symbol. Xi's administration is only second to Mao Zedong in the oppression of the Muslim faith.

Documents confirmed about one million Uighur Muslims have been arrested, but there is reason to believe that the number may be up to three million. Chinese officials have stated that these camps are not punishment, but rather a preventative effort for future terrorism. The biggest problem with this excuse is that there has not been a major terrorist attack in the area for years now. These 're-education' camps are just arbitrary imprisonment and torture.

NBC was given access to...

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BY THE NUMBERS



Hours of Sleep of a Student during Finals

4

Number of People in the Senior Class

38

Number of People in the Junior Class

47

Decibels Registered during Venite Adoremus

46,290

Number of Impeached Presidents

3

Number of Random Relatives in Town over Break

2 MANY

Final Response To The Bubble

James Corrigan, '24

The purpose of Ethan Ramchandani’s article was to raise awareness of the lack of diversity that contributes to a reaffirmation of a Cistercian student’s viewpoints. This reaffirmation causes students to reject other opinions, and it can cause problems within the student body. As someone with a minority viewpoint, I have encountered this phenomenon already.

The response to The Bubble begins by stating that we should not factor racial and ethnic diversity when evaluating the intellectual community of the school, which I entirely agree with. However, there are five main ideas that the writers bring up that I disagree with. The writers claim that Ethan believes that racial diversity determines political beliefs. The original article never says this; in fact, it says the contrary: “The school’s low diversity should not be seen as part of the problem, because it is not. It is just a factor contributing to the viewpoints of the majority of the student body.” Race does not decide viewpoints, but it does contribute to how we learn. Teachers College Columbia has released a study about diversity, saying that exposure leads to improved cognitive skills, they also noted that 96% of major employers said that it is important for

employees to be comfortable with working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. When the writers mention the application process, which Ramchandani never mentions, they say that race should not be a factor. I agree with this; however, I believe that it is not the application process that is flawed, but the number of races/ethnicities that are willing to apply.

The next subject the writers mention is their opinion about Cistercian’s view on non-Catholic religions. They state that the “shared faith allows for a more unified student body,” I am and have been raised a Catholic my whole life. Yet, I have never thought that my form is less unified because of a Protestant, Hindu, atheist, or whatever other religions I have encountered within Cistercian. The next point brought up is that students encounter religions though history classes; the one flaw with this argument is that studying a religion is not the same as actually meeting a practicing member of the religion.

The writers then bring up exposure to opinion. Speaking as a student, most teachers do a great job of exposing multiple viewpoints and sides of an argument. Mr. Joseph had in-class debates, which made many students start thinking about their own views on things like tariffs, or isolationism versus interventionism; classes like these increase

exposure to acceptance of particular viewpoints. This does not mean that all students accept the rivaling opinion. I do not deny that students are exposed to many ideas, but there are students who do not accept viewpoints purely because they are different. Reading the Communist Manifesto is getting exposed to a viewpoint that I am almost positive no one at Cistercian agrees with.

The next point is that since Ethan’s article exists, even minority opinions are widely discussed. Speaking as someone with a minority opinion, if I mention a controversial opinion in a conversation, I usually have to justify myself for having my opinion; whereas, if someone says a majority opinion, no one will question it, and people are more likely to listen. Also, Ethan published his article in a student-run newspaper, not one run by the school administration.

The last idea brought up is that Ethan “is addressing a problem that does not exist.” Just to clarify, diversity is beneficial to the school, and Ethan never said that we should favor a racial minority over another. The problem that Ethan is addressing is that students hear opinions, but certain students refuse to listen to them. The Cistercian environment is always open to hearing different opinions; however, some students dismiss ideas too quickly just for being different.



The Garbage Guru, who reads too much garbage

Greensboro Man Creates Dating App Where He’s The Only Guy Allowed

“The biggest problem with the other apps is that my face is not featured prominently,” he said. On this app, that problem is solved. It doesn’t matter how or where you swipe. You will only be able to match with Aaron Smith, 31, of North Carolina. He recruited a software developing buddy of his to create the app, but so far, it’s been a complete failure. Mr. Smith said that as of this moment, his mom is still the only woman that regularly calls him. If you would like to download the app and make a friend, it’s called Singularity. I wouldn’t recommend it since this is

Garbage Guru

an all-boys school, and this man is 31 in North Carolina, but I have no jurisdiction in your homes.

Biden, in Democratic debate, says you have to ‘keep punching’ to address domestic violence.

I used to have high hopes for Joe Biden. Yet recently, everything he does that makes headlines hits me like a punch in the gut. He unveiled a new tour bus in Iowa with the phrase “No Malarkey” on the side. That’s a very far cry away from the “Yes We Can” coalition that he’s trying to recreate. Recently, on a campaign stop where his wife was speaking, she put her hands out, AND HE LEANED FORWARD TO NIBBLE ON THEM. (There’s a video, and it’s bizarre). It wasn’t THAT bad, but it goes to show Mr. Biden needs to learn his boundaries. In an Iowa town hall, a potential voter addressed Joe Biden and repeated false claims about Hunter Biden’s involvement in Ukraine and questioned Joe’s fitness to run as

president. In response, Joe Biden (understandably) got angry, and instead of laying down the facts and dismissing the attack on his health, he challenged the man to a push-up contest. He also accidentally addressed this heavy-set man as “Fat.” Not only that, in another town hall, he told a Hispanic immigration advocate to “go vote for Trump” when questioned on Obama’s immigration record. I think Joe Biden may be full of malarkey.

Papa John’s founder eats more than 40 pizzas in 30 days. The verdict: It tastes different.

I don’t even care that much about Papa John since he’s obscenely wealthy and was rightly fired for being racist. I do care that he has eaten more than 40 pizzas in a month. I mean, that’s not healthy. Is he eating only pizza? Are his organs shutting down? Is that why he looked weirdly “wet” in a recent interview? And I assure you that “wet” is the only way to describe his look in this interview.

Winter Coffeehouse

Preston Barron, '20, who has forgotten how to long snap

There are many fun and memorable events here at Cistercian, but Coffeehouse is arguably the calmest and most stress-free out of all of them. At Coffeehouse, Cistercian students get the chance to unwind and watch/listen to other Cistercian students perform in multiple ways. Performances range from stand-up comedy (a new personal favorite of mine) to musical numbers (the majority of performances). Keeping coffeehouse judgment-free, fun, and most importantly, “chill,” has always been the goal of the Art Board, but it all starts with good preparation.

The day before Coffeehouse, the Art Board (the presidents of which are Joel Kattady and me) clears the cafeteria and sets up chairs. The next day, starting at around 10 in the morning, the entire Art Board meets at Cistercian to get the real work done. Setting up for Coffeehouse includes creating the stage up front, putting up the stage lights, setting up the sound system

and speakers (and making sure they actually work!), laying down the carpets, getting the food in order, and making sure the room has a “good vibe.” Since this last Coffeehouse was Christmas- themed, getting the what Joel and I call “winter vibes” included hanging up string lights that shined a nice, mellow blue and white color. This, along with many other subtle decorations and little things, really tied the cafeteria together, transforming it into a whole different place altogether. Rather than the busy Cistercian cafeteria, this room was now a place to enjoy the arts in a nice, calm, and beautiful environment (very much like a proper coffeehouse should be).

With all of the setup and decoration completed, the only thing left to worry about was the food and drinks, a job that is taken care of by wonderful and generous Cistercian mothers (specifically Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Ardemagni). As the name implies, coffee is served at Coffeehouse, but many other foods and beverages are as well. Hot chocolate is a popular and favorite beverage that is served, and churros and kolaches are popular foods that are served. With setup and food all

taken care of, all that was left to do was wait for the night to start at 7.

Winter Coffeehouse 2019 was special for a multitude of reasons. To start, this was undoubtedly the most full Coffeehouse

Cistercian has ever had. There were over 100 people at Coffeehouse this year, and it seemed as though every single chair was filled, possibly even leaving some without proper seating! The night was also filled with several incredible, memorable acts. Kicking off the entire event was the dark and hilarious stand-up act of Thomas Leahy and Michael Wilson. The two juniors’ act very much set the comedic tone of the night, and several other funny acts followed theirs, such as John Lesage’s bad poem, “Lesage at the Calc Test” and an act full of improv games (led by Mrs. Magill). The night was also full of several incredible musical acts though, led strongly by the senior class. Seniors Patrick Geary, Joel Kattady, Davis Jackson, Alex Banul,

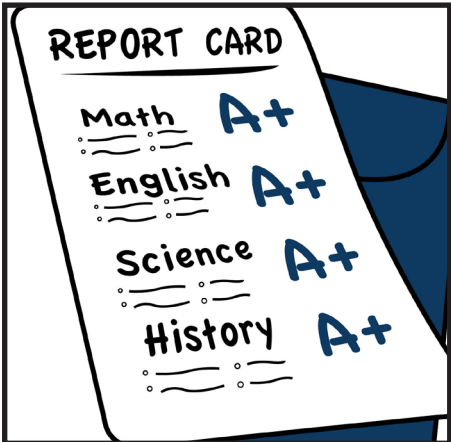
and Ethan Barhydt all took turns showing off their musical talent. Because of the abundance of acts, this was certainly one of the most diverse Coffeehouses up to date. Although this Coffeehouse only had 17 acts total, they were all unique and fun in their own ways.

For anyone who hasn’t ever been to a Coffeehouse, I strongly recommend coming to one. The intimate environment, free admission and food, talented performers, fun performances, and “vibes” make it a next to nothing experience that is truly a pleasure to be a part of. There aren’t any other Cistercian events that can capture the Coffeehouse experience, so with it only coming around twice every school year, it’s not something you want to miss.



Photo By Janelle Dougherty

Informer Rates: Christmas Break



WAITING FOR REPORT CARDS

We don’t know of a single time that these things haven’t caused strife and division at home. But (apparently) they’re “necessary” and grades “can’t be abolished.” Luckily, they were sent out on Christmas eve this year, which allowed for a few days of fun before these ruined the rest of your break.

Annoyance



Stress



Fun



GOING ON A SKI TRIP

Nothing says Cistercian student like going on an expensive Ski Trip over Christmas break. For some, sliding down a steep icy mountain at breakneck speeds is the only way to properly spend Christmas. These trips are generally fun, unless you’ve been dragged along by people you don’t like.

Annoyance



Stress



Fun



WATCHING CHRISTMAS MOVIES

There are many good Christmas movies which are almost always able to provide passing entertainment at certain times of the year. But then, you realize that you have watched the usual classics every year for the past 16 year, and then most of the fun is gone. Yet you do it anyway, because you don’t have anything better to do at 3pm on Christmas day.

Annoyance



Stress



Fun



Social Media (Cont'd)

...experience.

Again, think about how much of your life is dedicated to social media. I know it's an obvious point, but most things online aren't very real. The motives behind each post are, most of the time, flawed. For example, people post about awareness all the time, but they're exploiting sad situations to make themselves seem righteous. When people are commenting, posting, taking selfies, or texting, they're thinking about it so much that it makes it unnatural and forced. It's almost like everyone out there is a digital marketer with one goal: to make themselves look great. But that's not real; none of it is.

It's hard to accept, but the human brain is best without social media. All the thought dedicated to it is too much. On some platforms, namely Snapchat, people are spending countless time sending selfies back and forth with one another. Many teenage boys and girls will judge how the other person looks, but social media can never fully define a person. No angle, lighting, or filter could ever sum up who

someone truly is. Compare it to a day of normal life where you interact in genuine conversation and see people's beautiful, real faces. Life is grand, and social media takes life, warps it, and makes it overwhelming. Once you understand how flawed social media is, you begin to become disgusted with it.

Last April, I deleted Snapchat for good because I wasn't able to sit next to my phone without feeling like I had to check the app every five minutes. It ruined things like listening to music, playing guitar or even something as straight forward as watching TV. For a few days, I was in the greatest mood because I wasn't distracted by social media. I was able just to sit down and focus on what was in front of me. I saw beauty in things I had often ignored. Think of a time when there wasn't a phone in our pocket. When we were driven to school, instead of starting the day by delving into our Instagram feeds, we were forced to look out the window and daydream. Maybe you listened to the radio and hoped for your favorite song to come on next. It is not healthy that

whenever we are bored, we turn to our phones. That's just giving up. You're not only training your brain to throw in the towel and shut down, but you're also ignoring what's right in front of you.

Being able to ignore social media for a while, and be in the moment and simply live is a great thing.

Life can be best compared to a journey down a river. It can be cold, out of control, and demanding, but at the end, it's all worth it. You should be able to look back on your life when it's almost over and be grateful for all of it. You should be able to look back on your experiences and be satisfied with them, comfortable that everything happened for a reason.

The truth is these applications can become just like parasites. Once more, think about how much thought you devote to them. Social media platforms inhibit your brain



Photo By Lynconf Games

and urge you to go on them so often. I bet that it's hard for most of us to go an hour without checking social media, and that's not something we should be comfortable with. Do Instagram and Snapchat (or whatever else) even make you satisfied? I know that I never really feel that way. Many of us just become consumed in a state of judgment, where we are always judging ourselves and judging others based on what we see online. Is that how you want to live? We should all be able to take a break once in a while and live purely in the moment. It is indeed the case that social media has become a rather toxic presence in our lives.

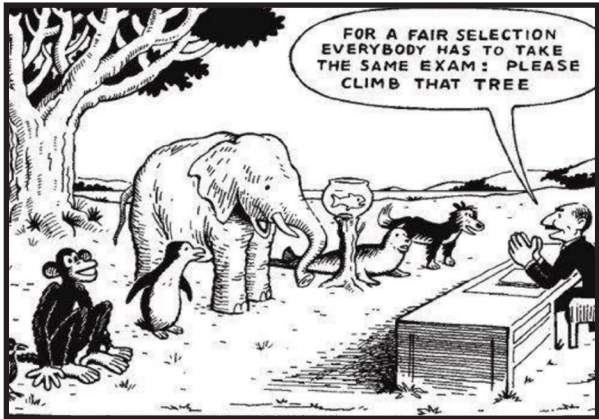


Photo By Kate Wilson

Saish Satyal , '21

The views expressed within this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of Cistercian or The Cistercian Informer.

Often, as they frantically scribble down their Math homework at 2 AM, unsure of whether or not it will be taken up the next day, many students wonder what the purpose of their education is anyway. When struggling through a reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the crushing futility of all of their work seems to hit them like a truck. After their graduation in early May, most of the knowledge acquired in school will be utterly useless to them. So, what is the point of putting in the blood, sweat, and tears now, especially if they aren't planning on going to a top school? In fact, what is the point of going to school and slogging through those mind-numbingly boring classes if a lot of that information won't be used later in life? What

is the point of paying attention to Macbeth or remembering why Robert E. Lee joined the Confederacy if I'm planning to go into a STEM-related profession? Why should I care about the two different ways of finding a derivative if I'm planning on becoming a History major?

These kinds of questions often arise with no answer as many students are raised amid the crumbling ruins of an education system that has been destroyed by standardized testing. Rather than educating its students about the society that they live in and teaching them to think critically about the world around them, our education system has been warped into a terrifying machine that emphasizes the value of high test scores and GPAs while severely neglecting the moral and social importance of the lessons that it teaches. The purpose of education is to create upstanding members of society who can critically think about the world around them and develop solutions to the problems that may face them. High schools have changed from places where students can grow and become upstanding members of society into meat grinders that take students and turn them into a bland set of

The Flaws of Education

test scores, GPAs, and extracurriculars to be served up to strangers on a college admissions board. As a result of this change, the mindset of students has turned into something a bit more cynical as well. A student that does a plurality of clubs and extracurriculars isn't someone who enjoys doing many things. He's now someone attempting to pad his resumé for colleges. Suddenly, extracurriculars aren't things that take a student's mind off of school. They're just another thing to worry about. Community service has become a great example of this new, cutthroat mindset in students. It is no longer a way to give back to the community; it has become another opportunity for students to win awards and gain recognition.

Students aren't just complaining that their homework is hard or that school is boring. That has been the complaint of every generation that has had to attend a learning institution. Students today are acutely aware of the burning world around them, and yet they are continuously taught their daily material like everything is fine, and their future is assured. They are learning essentially the same material as classes that graduated ten years before them, even with the grand changes in the world during the last ten years. The challenge falls on

teachers to create a curriculum for their students that instructs them on how to deal with this ever-changing world. A teacher should be someone who shapes the mind of their pupils, not a drone that must get better test scores for their students, lest they are fired. Cistercian is privileged to have an all-honors curriculum in which our teachers are handed the reigns, but all across the country, that isn't the case. AP students aren't in their classes to learn US History, but because it will look good on their resumé. This kind of standardization especially cripples our humanities courses since classes that are supposed to inspire critical thinking are now reduced to lists of facts for students to memorize.

Both teachers and students are victims of the monstrosity called the American education system. It seems hopeless since standardized teaching has a certain logic to it, especially when measuring intelligence. Yet, there are newer problems that pop up every day, and it is the job of teachers to instruct students on how to deal with those problems. This is the challenge of being an educator, and it's a challenge that gets harder every year. Yet, American educators must face it if we are to make sure that our students are truly educated, not just crammed full of useless knowledge.

The Democratic Field

*Evan O'Suilleabhain, '21,
who plans to create his
own Party one day*

The Democratic primaries are heating up, and with so many candidates still vying over who will face Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, it can be hard to distinguish between them. After all, aren't they all just different sides of the same communist coin? So, in keeping with the logical and rational tradition of the Cistercian order, let's take a purely objective, unbiased look at the field of Democratic candidates.

Joe Biden

After the failure of Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, establishment Democrats began the search for another out-of-touch boomer to carry on her mantle. Lo and behold, former Vice President Joe Biden entered the mix. He represents a regression to the Obama years. One thing Biden has going for him is that he is by far the most senile candidate, except for perhaps Trump himself. The man can barely form a sentence and new gaffes happen daily. A memorable quote came from when Biden responded "We need to keep punch-

ing at it" — to a question about ending violence against women.

Mike Bloomberg

Former mayor of New York City Mike Bloomberg entered the race long after the others. Since his campaign announcement in late November, he has advertised relentlessly and offered \$6,000 per month to anyone willing to canvass for him. He can afford to do this because he is a billionaire. This tactic of throwing a bunch of money at voters and hoping they will listen is interesting, and only time will tell if it works.

Andrew Yang

Tech entrepreneur Andrew Yang, although it appears unlikely that he will actually win the nomination, has certainly made a splash in the primaries. His main platform is the Freedom Dividend, or Universal Basic Income (UBI). This involves giving one thousand dollars, to all citizens over 18 every month. The idea sounds appealing at first glance, but it has been criticized by both sides of the political spectrum for being too radical, not radical enough, or simply unsustainable.

Pete Buttigieg

This mayor of South Bend, is vanilla personified. Despite his absolute refusal to challenge the status quo or

put forth any noteworthy ideas, he is leading the polls in Iowa and New Hampshire. His main appeals are his youth (he's only 37) as well as his perceived "smartness." Mayor Pete speaks eight languages and has a degree from Harvard. This doesn't correlate to political savvy, as his Douglass Plan was a catastrophe that was strongly criticized by the people it was supposed to help.

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren has established herself firmly as the "second-most" progressive candidate. When you look at the competition, this isn't really saying much. Warren made a name for herself by having lots of plans, which mostly emphasize ending corruption in D.C. and strengthening our democracy. Her vague diction veils a wholly unremarkable platform which is inextricably tied to big money and establishment Democrats, despite her insistence that it is not. She has also been criticized for her moderate stance on Medicare and her right-wing stance on the military.

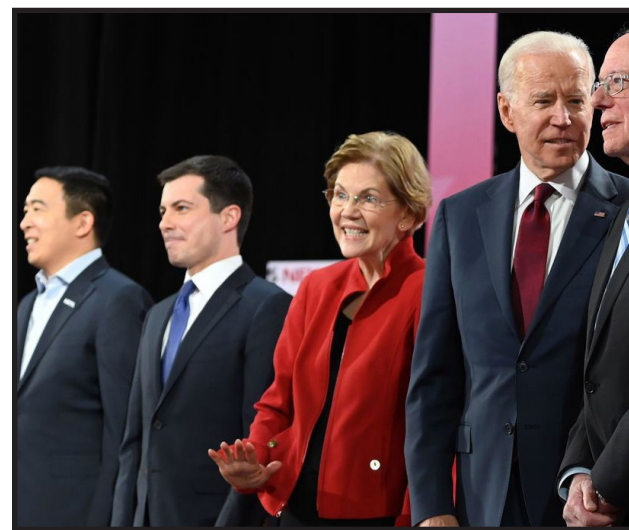


Photo By Robyn Beck

Bernie Sanders

Bernie Sanders is the oldest candidate running, but his policies have evidently struck a chord with many young voters. These policies, which include debt relief for college students, eliminating for-profit prisons, rolling back the United States' inflated military budget, providing healthcare for over 30 million uninsured Americans, and tackling climate change, are overwhelmingly popular among the youth. He has also consistently upheld anti-billionaire sentiment, which most other candidates have recoiled from because they are either funded by billionaires or are themselves billionaires. His campaign is a step to the left for American politics, and whether voters like it remains to be seen.



Photo By Amnesty Finland

...three of these facilities, where they found barely furnished dorms and barren classrooms. The re-education of the "students" entails shopkeeping, animal husbandry, e-commerce, and other subjects in that vein. Among more serious things, watching an illegal religious video or wearing religious clothing (more specifically, Muslim religious clothing) can warrant time in these camps. To end a term, the 'prisoners' must pass exams to prove their 'de-radicalization' which just means denouncing their religion, heritage, and identity. Accounts from people who have had family members detained reveal that contact in and out of the camps is restricted.

Some who have managed to escape these persecutions have

of three times. Each of those three times, Chinese officials had her in an electric chair, singing songs praising China, and renouncing her faith as second to the CCP. In between arrests, she had been blacklisted, and her documents had been seized. "Police would check my card and approve every step I take," she recounted as she spoke about the black dot on her ID card that went off every time she tried to use a pharmacy, hospital, or even bus. The conditions of her detainment, according to her testimony, were deplorable. She saw nine women alone die during her time there.

China has not only been persecuting Muslims, but spiritual practitioners of a meditation called Falun Gong. They receive the same treatment as their Muslim prisoners'

Uighur Slaughter (Cont'd)

detailed abuse by those in charge of the 're-education' camps making what was revealed to NBC to be a sort of front. One woman testified in front of US politicians that she had been detained a total

counterparts and have been the subject of multiple hidden cam videos of their awful conditions. Many are overweight and dying due to torture, yet the party covers it up by claiming these deaths were natural. These practitioners are being persecuted for the same reasons that the Muslims are. The CCP sees its organization as a threat to the government's power.

As media coverage slowly grows, people online and on social media are beginning to compare China's treatment of the Muslim population to Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jewish population, with most going as far as to call this a second Holocaust. A picture of a starving prisoner in one of these camps got leaked by his family member and is now circulating the internet. This picture has sparked a lot of online buzz and inciting the anger of the public.

The international community recently responded as the issue finally was discussed at the UN. However, the decision was split. Fifty-four countries, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, defended China's imprisonment of Uighur

Muslims far outnumbering the 23 condemnations from countries like the USA, Britain, France, Germany, and Sweden. Belarus went so far as to call the accusations against China as baseless due to a lack of evidence. China herself defended the camps by citing they have been beneficial to the region.

The majority support in the UN likely stems from the fact that China is a financial beneficiary of many Eurasian and African countries. China is responsible for funding the infrastructure and thus facilitating the growth of these nations. In a sense, China is likely buying these countries off.

The persecutions in China are tragic and have been sparking protests across America as people try to make the government aware of these atrocities. They want to discover a way to help the people who have been harmed by these despicable camps, but find that the US government is not doing enough to solve the problem. One can only hope that the governments around the world, including the USA, will step in and that we will see a swift end to the suffering of Muslims and Falun Gong practitioners in China.

The NBA MVP

*Nate Stecklein, '23,
who is a big fan of the NBA*

Now that we are about a quarter way through the NBA season, we can start to get an idea of what teams will make the playoffs and what teams will be hoping for a good pick in the draft. Similarly, We can begin to see which players are headed for All-Star weekend and which players are headed to the trading block or will have an extra-long free agency this year. Among the All-Star caliber players, some stand out for being not only better statistically but also for having a more significant impact on their team and the league as a whole. These next-level players are all attempting to acquire the coveted Maurice Podoloff MVP Award and bring their respective teams a championship.

At this point in the season, it appears that Giannis Antetokounmpo is the leader in the MVP race. So far, he has been averaging 31.7 points per game (ppg), 13.2 rebounds per game (rpg), and 5.5 assists per game (apg), all while

shooting an efficient 56% from the field. Antetokounmpo has also been putting up some impressive numbers defensively, averaging 1.4 steals and 1.4 blocks per game. These active stats have lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 20-3 record and the top-ranked spot in the Eastern Conference.

The next player on the MVP list is the Mavericks' very own, Luka Dončić. Despite being only 20, he has been putting up some insane stats, and has become very famous in a very short time span. He is currently averaging a very solid 30 ppg, 10.1 rpg, 9.2 apg, and 1.1 spg. The only real problem with his statistics is his poor efficiency. He has been turning the ball over about 4 times per game. He has also been only shooting 32.7 % from 3. While this isn't terrible, a guard of his caliber should be shooting more efficiently. The main reason for Luka's turnovers is his recent switch to point guard and his acceptance of a more ball-dominant role. Luka's impact has been reflected in the Mavericks record. At this time last year, they were 12-11, and this year they have improved to 16-7.

Third on the MVP list is "The King," LeBron James. Despite

being 36 years old, LeBron is averaging the stats of a player in their prime with 25.9 ppg, 6.8 rpg, and 10.8 apg. Not only is LeBron far older than any of the other candidates, but he is also playing point guard full time for the first time in his career.

James is aided by superstar power forward Anthony "The Brow" Davis, who is an MVP candidate in his own right. Davis has been averaging 27.7 ppg, 9 rpg, 3.3 apg, and a dominant 2.7 bpg. This extraordinary duo is helped by other veterans and has a strong bench that includes players like Alex Caruso, Kyle Kuzma, and Rajon Rondo. This mix of tried and true superstars and solid role players have given the Lakers the number one ranked team in the league and an excellent record of 21-3 for this season.

For the past few years, when talking about the league MVP, it has been impossible not to mention James Harden, and this year is no different. Harden has been putting up an insane 38 ppg. He has also

been averaging 7.5 apg and 6 rpg. On the defensive, Harden has been averaging 2 spg. The Rockets are currently ranked 5th in the Western Conference with a record of 15-8. The only criticisms on Harden's performance this year is that he flops and seemingly gets every call no matter how close it is to going the other way.

Those are my top five MVP candidates at this point in the season. In order, I have them as Giannis Antetokounmpo, Luka Dončić, LeBron James, Anthony Davis, and James Harden. However, there is still a lot of time for the list to change. It has been a dynamite season so far, and it will be exciting to see who makes it all the way to being named the MVP of the season.



Photo By Nick Arley



Photo By Hosam Mohamed

Maxwell Vaughan, '21

In the last few months, European soccer has been polluted with racist incidents. In a mid-November match between Ukrainian teams Shakhtar Donetsk and Dynamo Kiev, Kiev supporters racially abused Brazilian midfielder Taison. In response, an anger-filled Taison showed the Kiev supporters his middle finger and punted the ball into the stands. Then, Taison, a 31-year-old grown man, left the field in tears. He was then brought back on to the field, given a red card, and sent off. Now, Americans would scoff at the behavior of the Kiev fans, and probably call for action

Racism in European Soccer

against them, but the Ukrainian Football Association had a different reaction. Instead, they decided to give Taison a one-match ban and also made Dynamo Kiev play a match behind closed doors. It seems obvious that the ban is uncalled for, and that the punishment for Dynamo Kiev is worrisomely small.

Despite this, it is easy for one to think that this only happens in backward Eastern European countries that Americans only recognize as the bad guys from spy movies. However, incidents like this occur often in countries we consider to be more similar to the US in culture. In fact, some of the worst incidents have happened in the fine country of Italy. It is no doubt that Italians have a passion for soccer, but recently, that passion has crossed the line from poking fun at the opposition's players to spreading racial hate. In early November, Verona supporters directed monkey chants at Brescia forward Mario Balotelli, an Italian born to Ghanaian immigrants. Similar to Taison, punted the ball into the stands and threatened to leave the match. However, his teammates convinced him to play on, and in perfect poetic justice, he scored in

the 85th minute. What makes this situation sadder is the response from the Verona executives. Instead of condemning the actions of their own fans, they refused to admit that it happened, despite claims from a monitor sent by the Italian Football Federation stating that he heard racial abuse from around 15 fans.

Unfortunately, these incidents do not stop there. The day before the Balotelli incident, during a match between Roma and Napoli, Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly received racial abuse from Roma supporters. In September, Inter Milan striker Romelu Lukaku endured monkey chants while taking a penalty against Cagliari. However, racism in Italy might extend further than just a small percentage of soccer hooligans. Italian sports tabloid Corriere dello Sport released an edition around Black Friday. Rightly so, the biggest letters on the page read "Black Friday." Of course, the designer of the front page decided to include a picture of two well-known soccer players in Italy. However, he decided to put Roma defender Chris Smalling and Inter striker Romelu Lukaku on the cover. Both of these players are clearly of

African descent. While maybe it was not intentional, the front page of this newspaper was racist. The fact that many people from Corielle dello Sport saw the page, looked it over, and didn't say anything about how it could clearly be conceived to be racist, is astounding.

So, how do these incidents continue to occur? Well, first off, it is not easy to find people to blame when they can easily hide in a crowd of up to 70,000 people. Second, action against clubs and their fans is only allowed from the federation that runs the competition. For example, UEFA, the governing body for all of European soccer, can only punish clubs or countries that play in their competitions, like the Champions League or Nations League. However, it seems that a lot of these incidents do not occur in continent-wide competitions, rather in league matches. Therefore, it is up to each country's individual federation to decide on punishment, and many of these federations (specifically the Italian FA) seem very prone to inaction towards these incidents, whereas UEFA is very aggressive and often calls for action on behalf of the federations.

The Rise of Skywalker

Ayden Kowalski, '21,
who is Kit Fisto's great nephew

WARNING: SPOILERS FOLLOW

The Rise of Skywalker is very hard to review, as I ultimately have very mixed feelings about it. While often enjoyable, it's a movie that fundamentally fails to depict the characters the Sequel Trilogy has introduced us to and crams too much into its runtime. It is a film that succeeds in bringing its trilogy to an end, not in a satisfying way.

Like many ineffective blockbusters, the problem lies in the story. The tale that they devised is one that does not fit in a single movie. The plot contains, among other things, the return of the presumed dead Emperor Palpatine, a quest across three new locales, the reveal that Rey is Palpatine's granddaughter, the death of Leia, the redemption of Kylo Ren, the defeat of Palpatine, a kiss between Rey and Kylo, the building of Rey's lightsaber, and Rey taking the Skywalker name. Since the movie must cover all these plot points, the characters do not have time to share their per-

spectives on their situations in a way that makes us truly feel for them. In addition, the movie must contradict several of *The Last Jedi*'s decisions in order for the characters to advance the plot. For example, Kylo seeks Palpatine out for reasons that are never adequately explained and are illogical considering he wanted to kill the past in *The Last Jedi*.

Rey is the center of all my conflicting emotions about this film. After seeing *The Last Jedi*, I came to accept the revelation that her parents were nameless drunkards, as it made her character a new player in the galactic game whom I could follow after this trilogy wrapped up. She was not carrying on a legacy, but affecting the universe unencumbered by anything in her bloodline. Unfortunately, this movie rejects this choice and makes Rey a Palpatine. While this is interesting, it is something that does not make sense in the broader narrative of this trilogy, as Rey already dealt with her issues with her family history in *The Last Jedi*. Additionally, her love story is also a non-sequitur from *The Last Jedi*, as the kiss she shares with Kylo does not have any grounding from either their previously ambiguous relationship or from anything

new within this film. At the very end of the film, right as Rey drew out her golden lightsaber and took the Skywalker name, I felt bereft, as a character I had spent years with was now just as alien to me as when her story began.

Of course, there were moments and characters I enjoyed in this film. The action was crisp and exciting, even if it was predictable. The visual presentation of the film was also striking, especially in scenes such as the rescue mission on the Star Destroyer, where the shades of black on screen seem almost watery surrounded by enchanting blue light. Many of the new characters were also fun, with Poe's old flame Zorii Bliss and the cute alien mechanic Babu Frick being standouts. Finally, although nobody besides me in the audience reacted that strongly, I was glad to see Harrison Ford return one more time to the role of Han Solo to break through to his son's true morality from beyond the grave. Perhaps the moment would have been more potent in a better movie that really earned it, as in this movie, it felt like an attempt to



Photo By Disney

replicate the crowd-stirring cameos of *Avengers: Endgame*.

The Rise of Skywalker is a poorly constructed emergency landing for a franchise that failed to live up to expectations, leaving the stories of compelling characters like Rey and Kylo Ren with a terrible conclusion. One could easily envision a better ending for this new incarnation of Star Wars if Disney and Lucasfilm had put the quality and integrity of the trilogy first, perhaps even making it a four-movie series to more fully develop the characters or maybe delaying the film's production so that a better resolution could be found. But, alas, it was not meant to be, and so we must instead try to focus on the good and enjoy this film as best we can.

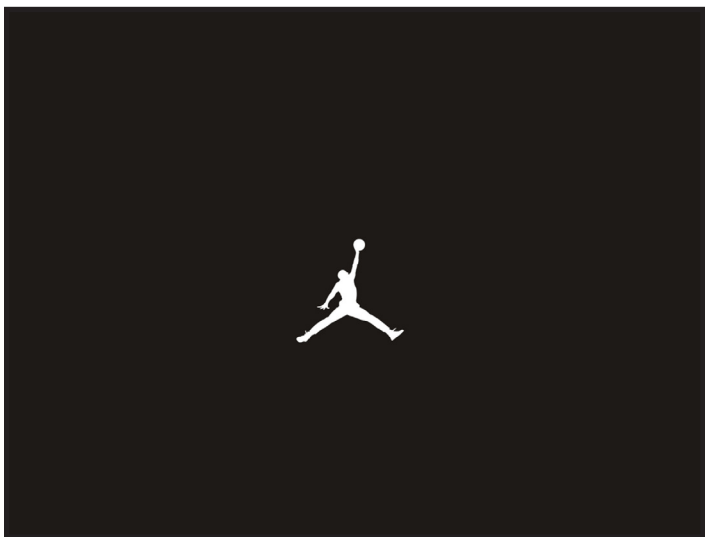


Photo By Ziarekenya Smith

Cole Burke and Tarun Senthil Kumar, '23, who wish that more people wore Crocs

The Sneaker Game

the markets. The wonderful thing about the shoe industry is that there is a market for everyone, young or old. There are the run-of-the-mill shoes, the performance lines, basketball sneakers, and

growing in popularity more than ever before, street sneakers.

Of all of the influencers and designers in the history of sneaker culture, the most notable is Michael Jordan. His first shoe was released in 1985 and has stood the test of time. The globally renown Jordan One kicked off the sneaker movement on and off the court. Thirty-four years later, the Jordan line hasn't stopped coming out with new, innovative sneakers. However, MJ's line would not have garnered such national acclaim without Nike's best designer, Tinker Hatfield. Tinker has been collaborating with Michael to create the most iconic sneakers on the market, including the Jordan 1 through the Jordan 15. The shoe itself, however, was not Jordan's sole

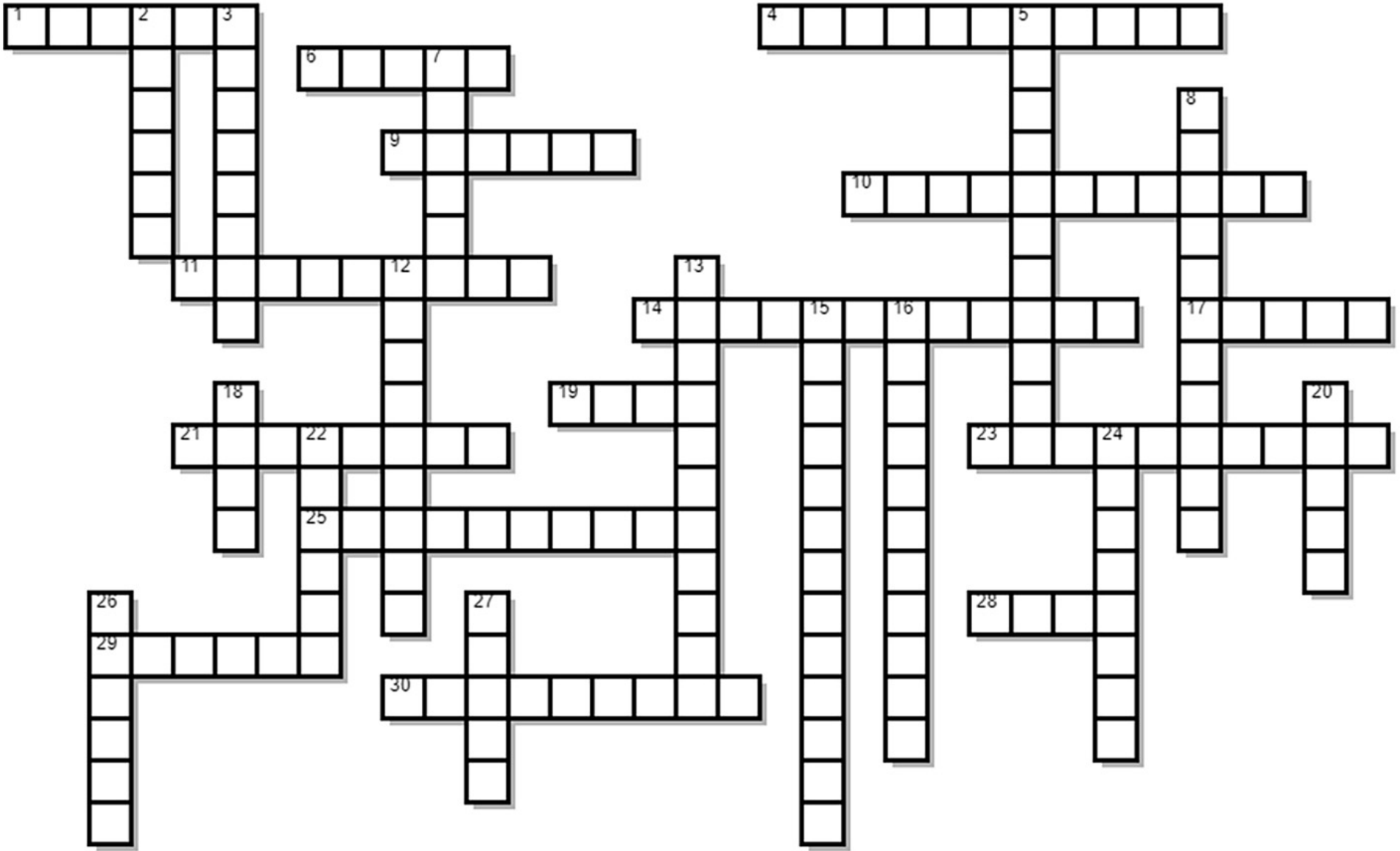
lasting mark on the sneaker game. Nike signed him as one of their first endorsed athletes. Previously, other brands had tried their hand at signing big name athletes such as Converse with Larry Bird, but none quite as culturally impactful as the Nike and Jordan partnership. Since this monumental signing by Phil Knight and his crew at Nike, the sneaker game has never been the same.

Inspired by how successful the Nike and Michael Jordan partnership was, other mainstream shoe companies started making some money moves. Today, sneaker powerhouses such as Nike, Adidas, Under Armour, and even Puma feature star athletes to sport their new models in front of national audiences. LeBron James, who recently signed a lifetime contract with Nike, is still going strong with his 17th signature shoe. Nike's basketball roster also includes Kevin Durant (12 models), and reigning NBA MVP, Giannis Antetokounmpo (1 model). However, Nike boasts numerous casual sneaker lines on their shelves, the most iconic of these being the Air Force and Air Max lines. Adidas, initially a soccer brand, has now

firmly planted its flag on the sneaker moon. Apart from their signature sports stars such as Lionel Messi and James Harden, they also partner with hip-hop legend Kanye West. With Ye's genius and creativity at their side, Adidas has managed to bless our feet with the iconic Yeezy line. Similar to Nike's revolutionary Air Max cushioning, Adidas introduced Boost technology to their shoes in 2013, and recently enlisted the collaboration of mogul Pharrell Williams to put the street market on notice with NMD's.

Another aspect of sneaker culture is the "industry within the industry:" the resale movement. Sneaker hustlers have made fortunes off buying popular shoes during the sale and reselling them for a much higher price. Conventions such as Sneaker Con were even started to celebrate this movement and create a large scale marketplace for vendors to do business in. Important culturally constructive things like these are a testament to the endless roles sneakers could continue to play in our society. What the future holds is unknown; however, sneaker history has taught us that the industry will evolve, for better or for worse.

Mega Crossword



ACROSS

1 - A warehouse giant that sells cheap hot dogs and water bottles

4 - Commonly referred to as the leading cause of stress for Gen-Z

6 - The Class of 2021 received these on December 20th

9 - This man traps Frosty in a greenhouse

10 - This Oscar winning actor was in *National Treasure*

11 - Donald Trump has been ____ by the House

14 - Fr. Philips’ favorite movie

17 - Inventor of AC current

19 - This avian creature is native to the forests of Cistercian

21 - Designers are baffled by picking the best ____ for windows in homes

23 - This Kids Choice Award winning actor was in *Night at the Museum*

25 - This popular strategy board game is just guessing randomly on a grid

28 - Texas needs more of this in the winter

29 - This superhero is going to be played by the main vampire in *Twilight*

30 - Rey’s last name in the most recent Star Wars movie

DOWN

This current year has two of these - 2

This state seemed liked they never played football the peach bowl - 3

Remember to check this often - 5

His heart was two sizes too small - 7

One of the most successful consoles in history, but Xbox has better UI - 8

Donald Trump has not been ____ by the Senate - 12

The writer of this year’s Upper School drama - 13

Presidential candidate who held fundraisers in a wine cave - 15

A major source of stress for students over Christmas Break - 16

This Mavs player is one of the best in the league and is from Europe - 18

_____ my eggo - 20

The last name of the woman who is replacing Jackson on the \$20 bill - 22

Disney is really trying to milk this franchise - 24

The fairy king of the forest - 26

This spice is used as a substitute to say time as a pun in the kitchen - 27