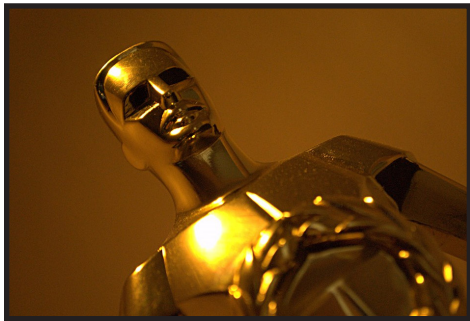


The Cistercian Informer

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Meet Mr. West

Ayden Kowalski, '21, who is our avid interviewer.

This year, two new science teachers joined Cistercian. One is Mr. West, who teaches junior and senior chemistry. The *Informer* caught up with him to learn a little bit about one of the newest members of the Hawks' nest.

How did you find your way to Cistercian?

So, this is actually kind of funny. In grad school, I was working for a Dr. Kroll who turns out to be the husband of Dr. Kroll here. And it was just about when the pandemic hit and everything kind of changed. We went to online school; we had a couple of weeks there where we didn't really know what we were doing. Around that time, I got an email from Dr. Kroll letting me know of a couple of openings at private schools in the area, this being one of them, and I had heard of Cistercian before because he had mentioned to us that, 'Oh, yes. My wife is head of science at an all boys' private school out in Irving.' And seeing that, I thought, let me go ahead and put my



Photo By Exodus

name in for this year because I've always loved teaching more than research when it came to grad school, per se. And after that, a few interviews and I got the call from Father Paul saying, "Hey, welcome aboard. We'd love to have you." Pretty happy to be here, I must say.

How does your experience in graduate school inform the style of your teaching?

So, and it goes to a little bit earlier than grad school as well, because in grad school I was a TA, mostly for Gen Chem at first and then later for P Chem, but I was constantly in the position of 'I've got these students who I relate a lot to having just been in their position, and they need to understand these concepts to get the grade, get the credit, and move on.' And so, my task was always to not just administer the labs, but do my

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The Need for a Third Party

Coby Scrudder, '21.

Last month's issue may have left you feeling like our system is flawed beyond repair. However, there are many concrete steps that can be taken to save our democracy. I think that there are five major steps that could be taken to achieve this goal, with some being easier to accomplish than others.

1. Remove political parties and the party-line vote from ballots - Currently, on the ballot, each candidate has what political party they represent next to their name. This allows a voter who knows nothing about each candidate to walk in and vote solely based off of the "D" or "R" next to the candidate's name. They don't even have to fill in every bubble—they can bubble in just one bubble and therefore vote party-line down the entire ballot. This system reinforces the idea that it is the party, not the candidate that matters. It allows voters to not have to do any research, and simply vote with their party. If we got rid of this, it would

force voters to do more research on candidates and to understand their policies, not just know which party they belong to. With multiple parties, this could mean that someone could vote for every political party based off of the candidates that they like, and that is how a representative democracy should function.

2. Redo Campaign Laws

Right now, with the way that laws are set up, it is harder to finance an independent than a main-party candidate. So called "sore-loser laws" prevent qualified candidates from running as independents or third-party candidates if they lose in a primary. These laws allow for the minority of voters that vote in a primary to stop a candidate who may have had large voter appeal across party lines. In addition to these hurdles, third-party candidates also face the problem of not having as strong of a backing as Republicans and Democrats. Both parties have their own think tanks and data analytics firms that only work for them, which disadvantages

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Meet Mr. West (Cont'd)

best using just a board and a marker to help them understand whatever it was in their lecture that perhaps they were missing.

But all this goes back to even further, when I was an undergrad. I, all the way back to Gen Chem, I was constantly helping students around me understand the concepts that we had covered in lecture. So, it wasn't really something I set out to do. Study groups just started to form. They were always asking me to, "Hey, would you come in and work some problems with us?" And it would end up being me with a group of five or six and I'm working on a little pocket whiteboard or some such. So, in a way, I've kind of been training for this.

A lot of what I do in lecture is really that same style of 'I have a grasp of this concept and you all would like to, so let me see if I can find a way to make this make sense.' And this has helped me refine methods, ways of presenting concepts that people tend to get more than others. It's helped me weed out bad teaching that I received, that left a lot of people confused. So, we would get something in lecture that would leave people behind, so to speak. And then we'd be in the study group

afterwards. They're like, "What was this about?" And in trying to work out how to best present it to them, I was working out more optimal ways to give people the concepts such that they can be understood because I really think chemistry doesn't have to be complex, but a lot of the ways it's taught makes it needlessly so.

I guess just through all this experience I've managed to find a pretty good balance between being technical enough for the material to matter, but understandable enough and relatable to the real world enough that people can understand it.

What drew you to chemistry itself?

I guess I was always good at it in school. There was just something very neat about the idea that from these very basic pieces, all the elements you find on a periodic table, we get biological life forms, we get all sorts of minerals and organic compounds that all have such wildly different properties. I just found the whole thing really fascinating.

And physics is neat too because it's even more fundamental to me. It's like going even simpler and seeing the beauty and complexity that can emerge from much more funda-

mental particles. Like at the very bottom, when you start looking into what they call the standard model of particle physics, we start to find that all reality, as we can perceive it anyway, is only composed of some 13, 14 different particles that can be plugged into specific classes. And it's merely the arrangement and combination that gives rise to all the complexity we see at the level of our own life or the level of galaxies and stars and whatnot.

Seeing all this chaos emerge from order and the order that forms from that chaos was very interesting to me. And then I stuck with it just really for an aptitude. It came down to it, I was going to college. I had to pick something and [if I had chosen] a music degree, as much as I would have loved to do it, my parents wouldn't have been happy with that. They said, "How are you going to make money with that?" Yeah. I'm not that good.

What instrument did you play?

Guitar. Still play it to this day. It's fun. I think there's a lot of value in having hobbies like that, that are not only creative, but also push you in some kind of technical way.

And then one thing I've heard is that you've described yourself as a gamer in class.

Yeah. I haven't described myself as that. My seniors have assigned that label to me.

Oh.

I suppose it's not wrong. I do play video [games].

Do you have any favorite franchises or individual games?

So, I would say favorite individual game's... shoot, so in terms of stuff that I actually play regularly, I've always been really big into fighting games. I have to say my favorite out of all of those is one called *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* from 1999. It's really old, but generally, [I play] fighting games, *Street Fighter*, *Tekken*. I'm trying to remember what else I really play, more obscure stuff. But if we're talking best of all time, that's a different question.

We'll leave it up to the readers to find this answer.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.



Photo By Fr. Lawrence
Emmanuel Barajas, '21, who chronicles these historical events.

Europe, c. 400 AD, saw vast hordes of migrating Germanic people, our ancestors, invade and sack the Western Romans. Next, the Britons, c. 900 AD, were invaded by Vikings hailing from Scandinavia. Then, the Native Americans, c. 1600 AD, were invaded by the English, the very descendants of the convoluted mix of Vikings and Britons. Finally, in Irving, c. 1970, the rising senior class invaded the senior hallway for the first time, expelling its former residents, the class of '70.

Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, it became a tradition for the rising senior class of Cistercian Preparatory School in Irving, Texas, to invade and expel the graduating senior class from the senior hallway. So, in the year 2020, it was time for the senior class of 2021 to follow the path laid out by its forefathers: to leave the classrooms inhabited by Forms I through VII with their charming little cubbies, nostalgic hallways, and oddly slanted roofs, and migrate down the stairs, as is ancient custom, to the senior classrooms to carry out the expulsion.

However, something happened then that the fates did not intend. The class of 2021 was disallowed this privilege by the most aggravating reason imaginable: COVID-19. The virus prevented

the class's naturally decreed mass migration. So, left without a home, the class of 2021 wandered around campus in search of a new classroom space.

And search they did, far and wide, until they found it: the library, home of the occasional middle school reader and the frequent high schooler trying to write an entire essay for Mr. Saliga during ten-minute break. It became the Promised Land for Senior-kind. Under the shrewd leadership of their beloved Form Master, Fr. Lawrence, and our valiant student body president, Michael Wilson, Form VIII triumphantly conquered the library, and officially dubbed it the Senior Compound.

Work had to be done to make this place a home. First, the Library was divided into two sections. One became the Library's Classroom—not to be confused with the Library Classroom—and the other became a comfortable lounge area used for intense gaming. The Library's Classroom has twenty-three desks and four white boards

along with a multi-thousand-dollar Microsoft Surface Hub to serve as a replacement for a projector, though the teachers have yet to extensively use this elegant and expensive piece of technology. Also, Fr. Lawrence has moved into his new den, known formerly as Mr. Graham's old office. And of course, the ping pong table is now found at the entrance of the library.

Now, many have asked about entering to behold the majesty and grandeur of the Senior Compound. I will say only what I have been told. Admittance into the Senior Compound is restricted to an elite group of people. The only requirement for students to enter is as follows: be a senior.

The senior class has adapted well to its new habitat. Although they do not have conventional classrooms or any room to store their books, and the seats in the library classroom are inexplicably far more uncomfortable than the typical Cistercian desk, the senior class is happy with its new residence.

The Senior Compound

The Need for a Third Party (Cont'd)

third parties even more. Even if they could somehow get funding, their chances of winning are very small because of their lack of resources.

3. No Party Primaries - One of the greatest fears of an elected official is the possibility of getting “primaried” (having someone who also belongs to their party run against them in an election). This fear keeps them in line with the party because often it is only the strongest supporters of the party who run in party primaries against politicians straying from the party line. This problem gets even worse when you consider how closed primaries kill off any hope of a moderate winning, since people from the other political party who might vote for him in the general election cannot do so in the closed primary election. One solution to this problem is having an open primary. What this would mean is that all of the candidates, regardless of political party, run against each other in the primary, and the top five then make it to the general election. In the current two-party system, this would allow for competition inside each party and it would also allow for moderate candidates to shine. This system, paired with the rank-based voting system, would drastically change how elections work, and would allow for greater, healthier competition in them.

4. Ranked-Based Voting - The current US voting system right now is plurality voting. What this means is that if a candidate gets more votes than any other candi-

date, they win the election. In a tight three-way race, this could mean that the winner gets 34% of the vote and wins. This system does not care that 66% of voters don't want that candidate, but only that they got the most votes. An alternative to this is rank based voting. This is a hard concept to grasp, so let me make an example. Let's say that three candidates, A, B, and C, are running against each other for Senate. When you vote, you mark that A is your first choice, B is your second, C is your third. If the first results come out and any candidate has more than 50% of the first votes, then they win. However, if no candidate has 50%, then the candidate with the lowest first place votes is eliminated. What happens to all the people that voted for them? Their vote goes to the second person on their ballot. This continues until one candidate has more than 50% of the vote and they win the election. This system helps to get rid of the feeling that you are “wasting a vote” if you vote for a third party. While this system would mark a huge change in the electoral system, it would help pave the way for third-party candidates.

5. No Winner-Takes-All System - In 1992, Ross Perot won the votes of 19 million Americans. But he won 0 electoral votes. This is because of the winner-takes-all systems that most states use in their presidential race. This means that if a candidate gets just one more vote in a state than another, they win every single electoral vote in that state. This makes absolutely no

sense. Two candidates could be only a few votes apart, and yet one of them gets all the votes and the other gets none. This is not how a democracy should work. While there are arguments to be made for the existence of the electoral college, the winner-takes-all system only exists to stifle third-party candidates and make it harder for them to actually make an impact. It is a system designed not for the good of the American People, but for the good of the Political Diarchy of America. I believe that a much better system would be to portion the electoral votes by the percentage of votes that each candidate got in that state. If a candidate gets 40% of the voters in a state, they should get 40% of the electoral votes. Otherwise the votes of that 40% do not matter at all and it is a tyranny of the majority. Thus, this would increase the viability of third parties in America as they could see actual results in the electoral college.

Going into this election, many would say that your vote for a third party candidate does not matter. Yet if you are voting, I would recommend that you vote for the candidate who fits with your beliefs, and not just settle for a main party candidate. If you can't vote, all that

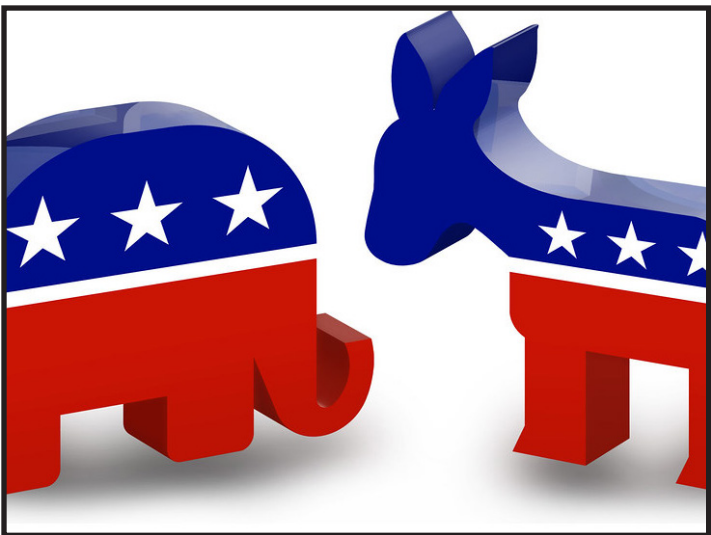


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we can do is educate ourselves on why we need third parties and what we want to see in American politics. While it may seem like it is impossible to change an entire system that is built to work against us, it has been done before. If you would like to learn more about this issue, I highly recommend the book *The Politics Industry* by Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter. It goes much more in depth than I could in this article, and is exceptional. As Winston Churchill is often attributed as saying, “Americans can always be trusted to do the right thing, once all other possibilities have been exhausted.” We have exhausted the two party system and have seen that it is a failure and I have hope that we will reform our system to make for a better and stronger America.

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

Is Democracy In Danger?

Saish Satyal, '21.

The 2020 Presidential election is being held in less than 30 days, and in a year where nothing can be for certain, I am sure of one thing: it is going to be an absolute disaster. The United States is not prepared to hold a proper election in these circumstances; our polling places are woefully understaffed, our mailing system is slow and crippled (in more ways than one), our local election clerks don't have the resources to manage the influx of ballots, our voters are either too scared to leave their houses or don't trust our voting systems, and, at the end of it all, we won't know who the next President of the United States will be until a week (or more) after

November 3rd. To make matters worse, the political discourse in this country hasn't exactly been peaceful or loving. No matter what candidate wins, a large portion of our country will likely fly into a rage. On September 23rd, President Trump refused to commit to a peaceful transition of power on the basis that there would be widespread voter fraud in the USA. In his own words, “We want to have -- get rid of the ballots and we'll have a very peaceful -- there won't be a transfer frankly, there'll be a continuation. The ballots are out of control.” We must make one thing clear before we proceed: the ballots are not out of control. The Brennan Center for Justice, using data from 3 separate elections, has calculated the rate of voter fraud at around 0.0027%. That

is not nearly enough to swing an election, even at state levels. Around the time of Trump's statement, The Atlantic leaked a story with the headline “The Election That Could Break America”, written by Barton Gellman. In it, he casually reveals a terrifying contingency plan that Trump's election team has been cooking up. On that same basis of widespread mail-in voter fraud, the President could ask the Republican-held state legislatures in key states to name their states' electors for Trump, even if the state actually goes for Biden. As per the Constitution, the highest law in the land, the President is decided by the Electors, not the people. Originally, the Electors were chosen by the members of state legislatures; while that practice is no longer in

effect due to the rise of the Populist movement and the passing of the 17th Amendment, legally, the state legislatures can still choose their Electors. This statement will sound extremely partisan, and that's because it is; we have continuously seen GOP Senators abandon their morals and fall in line with the Trump administration out of fear of reprisal. Their lowest moments have undoubtedly been in their complicity and their silence, such as their refusing to criticize their president on his mishandling of the pandemic or allowing him to make egregious statements with no refutation (like labeling NYC as an anarchist jurisdiction). The point being, it should come as a shock to no one if a blatant power grab such as that one

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Is Democracy In Danger? (Cont'd)

is met with silence.

Gellman's article details various constitutional crises that could happen as a result of delayed election results and a president who has no regard for convention or tradition. I will not go into detail about those crises, but I can say this: those crises will be met with some form of physical violence on the streets. The longer that the results are delayed or disputed, the angrier the American people will get. Democrats want everyone's vote to be tallied (perhaps not a terrible thing to want?), but that will take a long time. Due to a shortage of funding and staff (in part because of the pandemic), polling places are being shut down. Not only does this result in longer lines in person, but also mean that mail-in ballots are going to take EVEN longer to tally. This election will have the highest amount of mail-in ballots ever, and most people will be using the USPS for those ballots, an organization that hasn't been able to meet its time goals for the past 5 years. So, what we're going to be seeing is an underfunded and understaffed USPS delivering ballots to understaffed polling places which, in many states, won't be allowed to even BEGIN counting these paper ballots until November 3rd. Even in normal circumstances, the process of counting the mail-in ballots takes weeks. With such a large influx of ballots and such a shortage of workers, this process will take even longer. We also cannot forget the changes being made to the USPS by our Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy. Multiple large mail-sorting machines have been dismantled and will not be put back together, making the process of counting ballots all the more slow. It should also be noted that, in many states, ballots must arrive by Election Day as well; a ballot that was mailed well before November 3rd, but happens to arrive after will be discounted. Rather than change the rule to "ballots must be mailed by Election Day in order to be counted," it seems multiple states would rather just sit on their hands and let their current rules stand, right as the chronically-late USPS is getting its funding cut, its resources dismantled, and its upper management reorganized, along with its workers being put out of action due to health issues. This means that hundreds of thousands of potential voters will be disenfranchised because they did everything right and something out of their control caused their ballot to be late. These are breeding grounds

for a disaster and it seems that a disturbingly large portion of states aren't doing anything about it.

Now, if we look at the President's political strategy amidst all of this, we see that he's been continuing to undermine Republican faith in mail-in voting all this time. If Democrats want to count every ballot, they're going to have to take the time to do so. The American people are used to getting their results on Election Night. This year's process will become Election Week, whether we like it or not. The longer that time goes on without an undeclared winner, the longer conspiracy theories will begin to take root. As we know, the President is excellent at stoking fear and distrust among his supporters; they already don't trust the mail-in voting process, and you can be sure that the majority of mail-in ballots are going to be blue. This phenomenon is called the "blue shift" but it hasn't ever been enough to change the tide of a presidential election (though with so many mail-in ballots this year, that could change). In typical elections, Democrats tend to vote more by mail, and they will do so in even greater numbers in November. What will be a commanding lead for Republicans on Election Night will undoubtedly shrink (or in some cases, flip) such that a red state or county will turn blue after all the votes are tallied. That's not a conspiracy, that's how counting works. However, for a man who claimed that 3 million illegal immigrants voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, that won't matter. If Joe Biden wins due to a late, massive mail-in voting surge, violence is extremely likely to erupt across our nation. What better time for a leader to grab the reins, send federal agents to cities, and reinstitute "LAW AND ORDER" into Democrat-run cities?

Democrats will also have their fair share of problems with the voting process; mail-in voting is a complicated process and it seems that Republican legislators across the nation are making it harder for mail-in ballots to be counted. In Pennsylvania, your ballot can be discounted if you don't put it in an unmarked secrecy envelope, which you then put inside of a marked outer envelope. If a voter's signature is partially incomplete or they switch things up and sign at the wrong place, their ballot is immediately discounted. If a ballot is even postmarked wrong, it will not be counted. It does not matter if the worker understands what they mean or if it is a small mistake; those are



Photo From Wikimedia Commons

grounds for throwing away a ballot. A recent ruling is set to discount 100,000 votes in Pennsylvania on those grounds. Trump won that state by 44,000 votes. This would not be a problem with in-person voting because there are usually poll workers to help in the process, but that won't be as common this year. Apart from those ballots being thrown out, it should also be noted that Republicans are currently fighting in courts to stop common sense measures like "sending out ballots to every registered voter" or "allowing clerks to begin counting ballots before Election Day."

We haven't even gotten to mention the fact that polling places may try to use newer machines this year. In Georgia, a machine meltdown combined with a systematic shutting down of polling stations forced people who arrived fairly early to wait until 2AM to cast their ballot. In the Iowa Caucus, machine meltdowns led to a winner never officially being announced in the Democratic Primaries. We also haven't been able to mention that a ruling banning the RNC from hiring "poll watchers" from the 1980's expired in 2018. The RNC had to be banned from doing so because in 1980, they took armed volunteers (often sheriffs and off duty policemen) and had them patrol the polls and identify anyone that looked suspicious. It should come as a shock to no one that the "suspicious" people were the ones who happened to be born with melanin. Given that the ruling expired in 2018 (and no one thought to renew it), the RNC has recruited over 50,000 volunteers for 15 hotly contested states to watch the polls for suspicious behavior. As our own President said, "We're going to have sheriffs and we're going to have law enforcement and we're going to

have, hopefully, U.S. attorneys" to watch for voter fraud at the polls. Just a quick heads up, we have a name for this: it's called voter intimidation.

Things are going to get bad. This article hasn't even begun to delve into the constitutional crises and deadlines that ensue when you have an inane system such as the Electoral College. We've only barely touched on the violence that will ensue if the "blue shift" turns a previously red state into a blue one. That shift happened in the 2018 Arizona Senatorial election, and thus it can happen again. If you want to help in some way, be 16 and register to be a student poll worker. If you can't due to age restrictions or due to the reality of the pandemic, then all you can do is brace for impact.

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

We understand that not everyone may agree with the views expressed by the author, and that the article may provoke strong feelings and opinions regarding the upcoming election. However, we kindly ask that all readers respect the author's right to convey his views and opinions on the matter, which is at the heart of any newspaper.

New Oscars Guidelines

Ethan Ramchandani, '21, who hopes they will have a positive effect.

Recently, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences introduced a new set of criteria determining eligibility for the Best Picture category. These standards intend to promote inclusivity on the silver screen, and it comes as no surprise that they have divided the industry. However, what are these rules that have so many decrying the Oscars?

Beginning with the 96th Oscars, in 2024, films must satisfy one of 4 sets of rules: A, B, C, and D. The lengthy lists of criteria and explanations can be found on the Oscars' official website, what follows are just paraphrases. Standard A requires film creators to consider their cast's ethnic makeup and the agency characters from underrepresented groups have in the movie. Standard B concerns the crew: underrepresented persons must either fill two or more executive positions or compose at least a third of the general crew. Standards C and D, while important, influence less of the final

product, but provide opportunities to minorities. Most criticisms target standards A and B.

Opponents to these changes worry that the Academy is overstepping its bounds and using the prospect of a Best Picture award to control filmmakers' decisions. More reluctant proponents of these changes worry that they will encourage tokenism (the practice of doing something only to avoid criticism) to meet a quota instead of involving authentic representation. There are some common misconceptions, however. Some worry that several past nominees like *1917* and *The Irishman* would not qualify under these guidelines, but there is a way actually a way for them to stay eligible without changing anything on-screen. This can be done under standards C and D.

Standards C and D, which are not seen on screen, involve films meeting standards for paid apprenticeship, internship opportunities, and work opportunities in the film's marketing, distribution, and publicity teams for underrepresented groups. These will be enforced through random spot-checking and

interviewing executives working on the films. This idea is largely modeled after a concept the British Film Institute introduced and carried out in 2019. Unfortunately, a report from Clive Nwonka, a fellow in film studies at the London School of Economics, showed that the standards did little to aid the representation of ethnic minorities. Notably, ethnic representation on screen was outperforming representation behind the scenes. More films were falling under standards A and B than C and D.

Whether or not these standards work in favor or against racial equality, tokenism is rampant in film. An example of this idea is Finn in the *Star Wars* sequel trilogy. Many argue he had very little agency in the film, and his plot significance only diminished as the movies went on. For many this exemplifies the problem in film as a whole: executives will write in a character of



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color just to have them exist in the background of the plot, while white actors take the reins of the story. Though *Star Wars* is just one example, it remains a problem that needs to be addressed.

There are still a few years left before these standards take effect. Time will tell how they impact racial equity in film. Hopefully, directors will take this opportunity to further authentic representation and showcase their creativity while doing so.

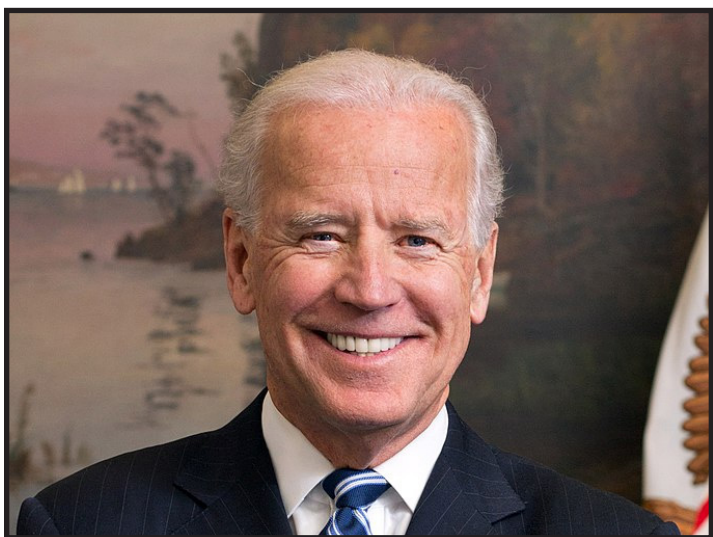


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Dominic Andrews, '21, who details out the former VP's policies.

The United States is entering one of the most tumultuous presidential elections in its history. For many, the United States is at a crossroads, with the fate of the nation at stake. With this election being more about electability than policy, taking a look at the policies of the candidates will provide a truer foundation on which we can form our opinions. Ironically, former Vice President Joe Biden's policies are rather unknown, as he is mostly known for not being President Trump. While this is obviously appealing to many, Joe Biden has also laid out a very broad, and vigorous agenda.

for the virus free, eliminating cost barriers for treatment, helping develop the vaccine, and making sure that there are enough supplies and personnel to effectively deal with the virus. On the economic side, he would ensure paid leave for all those affected by the pandemic and provide all necessary help for small businesses, families, and workers. Biden also pledges to allow the scientific community to guide policy to fight the virus effectively and ensure that, next time a pandemic hits the United States, we will be better prepared. It is, in short, spending whatever it takes to meet the needs of the country and saving as many lives as possible. This plan is very critical of President Trump's slow action and skepticism of the scientific commu-

Joe Biden's Plan

The most pressing thing for most Americans right now is Covid-19. Biden's plan is to use the federal government to face the threat head-on. Biden plans on making testing

nity.

Another major theme of Joe Biden's plan is re-growing the economy. The American middle class, Biden claims, is collapsing. While the upper class has reached its pre-2008 recession levels, the middle class has struggled to get close. To quote Biden, "it's not sufficient to build back, we have to build back better." For him, this means re-investing into America and building up American businesses. Doing this involves increasing federal spending by up to \$400 billion on US products, materials and services to ensure that these things are made in America. This also means cutting tax benefits to companies that reduce domestic jobs in favor of overseas jobs. On top of that his goal is to provide incentives to reinvigorate small businesses, and he wants to invest \$300 billion to research new technologies like electric vehicles, 5G networks, and AI. To help pay for this he would raise the corporate tax rate to 28%. As for climate change, he is proposing \$2 trillion dollars to combat it and plans to have the energy sector emissions free by 2035. Most nota-

ble is his plan for the federal minimum wage. His plan would raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$15 an hour. With Biden's endorsement, this higher minimum wage will become a staple for Democratic economic policies.

Education also plays a big role in Joe Biden's campaign. For K-12, Biden wants to triple the money that the federal government spends on lower-income schools, and also use it to raise teachers' pay. He also plans on making advanced courses like AP classes available to all students. For college, Biden wants to invest more into community colleges to better prepare students for life after school. The cornerstone is providing two years of community college tuition-free for students.

Joe Biden wants to restore and invigorate the United States. The means for that is using the force of the federal government to meet the needs of everybody. In an election where Joe Biden is known as not being Donald Trump it may come as a surprise to many that he has such a broad and vigorous plan for the future of America.

Americans Abroad

Maxwell Vaughan, '21, who sees a glorious future.

The United States National Team has stumbled upon a “golden generation” of players that might just be better than the Dempsey-Donovan-Bradley era of the late 2000s and early 2010s. Within the last couple months, young Americans have been accomplishing things in Europe that very few Americans have done before. It is only fitting that I share some of the recent success of our nation’s top players.

Dallas-native and FC Dallas Academy product Weston McKinnie just moved from Schalke to Juventus and is now playing alongside Cristiano Ronaldo. Despite only being in Turin for a couple weeks, he has impressed the coaches enough to earn a start in their first two Serie A matches. Recently, 19-year-old Konrad de la Fuente just became the first American to play for the Barcelona first team (he has spent the last two seasons with Barcelona’s B team). Gio Reyna, son of former national team star Claudio Reyna,

moved from NYCFC academy to Borussia Dortmund as a 16-year-old last year. Just recently, he scored his first ever Bundesliga goal and now should play a more prominent role in the team. To put this into perspective, this is a teenager who should be worrying about a math test like the rest of us. Instead, he’s scoring goals against some of the best competition in the world.

Ajax right back Sergino Dest is another example of Americans finding success in Europe. In the 2019-20 season, he was a mainstay in the Ajax starting 11, but with Barcelona letting Nelson Semedo leave, Dest is a likely candidate to replace him. He’s also been linked with other European giants like Bayern Munich. He’s still only 19 years old! Of course, I could not mention American success in Europe without mentioning American soccer’s superstar, Christian Pulisic. Since the Premier League’s restart, he has proved to be one of the most dangerous attackers in the league, netting three goals in his first five games back. He even proved he could perform against the best of the best, as he scored a goal and grabbed a flashy assist against

Liverpool. He’s still only 21 years old, and has time to develop. If he can stay away from injuries, he might be the best American to ever touch a soccer ball.

Sticking with the Premier League, USMNT shot-stopper Zack Steffen made his first start for Manchester City in the EFL Cup. He spent last season on loan at Fortuna Düsseldorf, but now he is back in England. Although he is supposed to be the backup to Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson, there is a possibility that Steffen gets more minutes throughout the season, especially considering the fact that Manchester City’s defense and goalkeeping looked shaky in their 5-2 loss to Leicester City.

In the Champions League, RB Leipzig’s Tyler Adams became the first American to score a goal at its quarterfinals. Consequently, he also became the first American to appear in the semi-finals of the Champions League since Demarcus



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Beasley made it with PSV Eindhoven in 2005.

In other, smaller news, left-back Antonee Robinson has transferred from Championship side Wigan Athletic to the newly promoted Fulham. Chris Richards, another product of the FC Dallas Academy, has made multiple appearances for Bayern Munich’s first team in summer friendlies. The 20 year old center back will probably not get much time with the first team this year, but with David Alaba and Jerome Boateng on the tail ends of their careers, Richards could be a replacement for either of them.

All in all, it is a very exciting time for US soccer. This is the most promising group of young players this nation has every seen.



Photo From Wikimedia Commons

Tarun Senthil-Kumar, '23, who lists a plethora of options.

This past summer, the Knicks were finally supposed to reach the Promised Land, but they failed miserably. The Knicks have been the laughingstock of the NBA for the past twenty years. After seasons of overpaying for aging stars and missing on draft picks, there is still hope for the Knicks to become title contenders again.

The first and most critical step of the Knicks’ rebuild is to force James Dolan to sell the team. Though possibly one of the worst owners of a professional franchise ever, Dolan has owned the Knicks since 1999. Since then, New York

Fixing The NY Knicks

has had 12 head coaches, 10 fifty-loss seasons, 7 last place finishes, and only 1 division title. The culture of the organization has been pathetic, especially Dolan’s disgraceful treat-

ment of team legends and fans such as Charles Oakley and Spike Lee. If New York truly wants to rebuild, then they must free themselves from the proverbial black cat that is James Dolan.

The second step the Knicks need to take is to find a new Head Coach. They did just that two months ago with the hiring of Tom Thibodeau. Thibodeau is the perfect man for the job as his coaching style, a no-nonsense and team-first attitude, is the embodiment of the 70’s and 90’s Knicks. The hiring of Thibodeau was great, but his success is contingent on the roster at his disposal.

The third step of the Knicks’ rebuild is to develop their young talent. Though their record may

not show it, the Knicks have many promising young players on their roster. However, their unstable rotation has denied some of these players enough minutes to develop. The young talented Knicks players include RJ Barrett, Mitchell Robinson, Kevin Knox, and Frank Ntilikina, while the young players they should offload for assets are Julius Randle, Bobby Portis, Dennis Smith Jr., and Elfrid Payton. New York is slotted at the eighth pick in this year’s draft. Undoubtedly, they should trade up and draft generational prospect LaMelo Ball, a 6’8” point guard who possesses the entire offensive package as well as the tools to become a great defender.

The fourth step of the Knicks’ rebuild is to complete the roster with more firepower and veteran presence. Contrary to popular opinion, New York does not need to trade for Devin Booker or sign Giannis Antetokounmpo. The Knicks have a recent history of trading their stars to clear cap space for future free agents that do not end up coming (Porzingis). Although New York is a “big market” they can still prioritize homegrown talent. In the

2020 offseason, they should target Serge Ibaka and Lauri Markkanen. In addition, the Knicks should resign Taj Gibson, Maurice Harkless, and Reggie Bullock to small deals. These five simple moves could make the Knicks contenders to make the playoffs in the East. In the 2021 offseason, they should target Jrue Holiday, a defensive guard with veteran leadership, via free agency. These moves would leave them with a starting five of Ball, Holiday, Barrett, Markkanen, and Robinson and a bench of Ntilikina, Bullock, Harkless, Gibson, and Ibaka at the beginning of the 2021 season.

The fifth and final step of the Knicks’ rebuild is to re-establish their brand. The Knicks need to swallow their pride to fix their shattered image. With this proposed young core, Madison Square Garden would sell out every game for the next ten years. Furthermore, the allure of playing under the bright lights and organ notes in front of countless celebrities every night would attract free agents again. All in all, the Knicks have the potential to become a powerhouse basketball franchise once again.

The English Premier League

Santiago Ramirez & Jakob Quarles, '22, who are excited to see what's next.

The 2019-20 Premier League season was one of the most exciting campaigns in recent memory. We will review the Premier League seasons of the top four teams.

Let's start off with the champions, Liverpool. Liverpool had an incredible year where they were by far the best team in the league, ending with 99 points and beating out the second place team by 18 points. They were outstanding all year, and left the rest of the league far behind as they dominated in attack with a consistently strong defense. On the surface, they have nothing to fix. The Reds have an elite attacking trio, the best back line and keeper in the league, great midfielders, and a world class manager in Jurgen Klopp. What more could they want?

However, this team lacks depth, especially on the offensive. Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane are a dream pair of wingers, but after them, there really aren't any options. Dejan Lovren is gone, so they could use another center back for the team, as only three remain. Currently, Thiago is still at Bayern, but if Liverpool can acquire him, he would be their best midfielder. Liverpool proved their quality all year, but Thiago is on a different level than their current midfielders. Captain Jordan Henderson had a great year, but to everyone's surprise, he won player of the year. Henderson was not the best performer on their team, let alone the entire league. Regardless, Liverpool will still be looked at as the team to beat. They have only signed Kostas Tsimikas for depth at left-back so far, and they could use reinforcements given the depth of Manchester City and Chelsea. Coupled with the fact that they are competing on multiple fronts, Liverpool will not be considered the clear favorites for the title this year, but the Reds' faithful should have high expectations for the upcoming season.

Second-place Manchester City will certainly be unsatisfied with their performance in the Premier League this season. Two-time reigning champions, the Sky Blues entered the year with sky high expectations. Manager Pep Guardiola reinforced his squad with the purchase of defensive midfielder Rodri and left-back Joao Cancelo. Additionally, superstar Kevin De Bruyne is returning from injury. However,

City looked second-best to Klopp's Liverpool. Defensive issues and injuries proved too difficult to overcome as City lost multiple games to lower-table clubs like Norwich City. They were out of the race for the title by the start of 2020. Despite that, City remained in contention for two prestigious cup competitions, the FA Cup and Champions League. However they disappointingly lost in both. Despite a relatively underwhelming season for City, their side is nearly weakness free on paper.

Regardless of that, Pep has started the year strong by already completing sales for Dutch center back Nathan Ake and Spanish youngster Ferran Torres. They also targeted six time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi, but were unable to land the Argentinian legend. This aggressive transfer strategy is nothing new from Guardiola, who has drawn criticism for spending too much money with lack of results, but City should still be considered co-favorites to win the Premier League next season along with Liverpool.

In third place came Manchester United, who had one of their wildest seasons in recent memory. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side started off horribly, with key players getting injured early and the Red Devils sitting in 14th place in October. Ole, however, continued to train his squad and picked up a few key draws and wins as 2020 came to a close and the transfer window approached. United lacked creativity, and star midfielder Paul Pogba wanted to leave. In the January transfer window, Manchester United solved their creativity problem and bought Portuguese midfielder Bruno Fernandes from Sporting CP. Fernandes instantly turned Manchester United around, becoming one of the best number ten's in the league and the hero of United fans everywhere. Anthony Martial and Mason Greenwood added goals in Marcus Rashford's absence, and Manchester United entered contention for the top 4.

Notable problems were team depth and Goalkeeper David De Gea, who had a disappointing year in goal. United's defense was great all year, with the key additions of new captain Harry Maguire and right-back Aaron Wan-Bissaka. The Red Devils defeated Leicester City on the final matchday to secure third place and a Champions League berth for the upcoming season, finishing the campaign strongly. Paul Pogba has chosen to stay given



Photo From Wikimedia Commons

the addition of Fernandes, and they signed Dutch midfielder Donny Van de Beek, a top young talent. Although it seems Manchester United will not sign young superstar Jadon Sancho this summer, there should be high expectations going into next year. Fans will be hoping they add a few more pieces to the squad before the window closes in order to keep up their good form.

Chelsea FC entered the Premier League campaign with a tall order ahead of them. Having finished the previous season in 3rd, the Blues sold club legend Eden Hazard to Real Madrid over the summer, and was unable to replace him due to a transfer ban placed on them by FIFA. This transfer ban seriously lowered fan expectations for them, especially entering the season under a new manager Frank Lampard, who had started his coaching career only one year earlier. American star Christian Pulisic began his first year in the Premier League after making the move from German club Borussia Dortmund. Expectations for his debut Chelsea season were massive. Many media outlets have a tendency to focus on him closely because of his status as one of the only American players to reach such success in Europe. Chelsea got off to a slow start, failing to win consecutive matches until 8 games into the season. During this time, Christian Pulisic struggled to get consistent minutes, and many pundits wrote him off as a bust, but he bounced back in a brilliant performance at Burnley, scoring a hattrick in the convincing win. This display gave Lampard faith in his abilities, and he remained a starter until an injury in January.

Chelsea held a strong position in fourth place for nearly the whole year, with inconsistency the

main reason for their inability to get beyond that spot. Despite that, challengers Manchester United and Leicester City provided competition for the heavily coveted fourth place. The race came down to the wire, with Chelsea clinching fourth place with a home win on the last day of the season. Despite this relatively successful season, there are many areas to improve the Chelsea squad. The team is defensively weak as a result of poor positioning, careless mistakes, and perhaps most of all very disappointing play from goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga, who (only one year before) had been bought as the most expensive goalkeeper ever. The club is already planning a replacement for Kepa, having bought French goalkeeper Edouard Mendy. Frank Lampard has already bolstered his attack heavily in this transfer window, adding winger Hakim Ziyech, German striker Timo Werner, and 21-year old midfield superstar Kai Havertz. This huge spending spree has come as a pleasant surprise to most fans, who look forward to the bright future that lies ahead for Chelsea. With all these improvements to the squad, they should definitely contend for the Premier League title next year and many years to come.

Distance Learning

Josef Novinski, '28, who has reflected on its pros and cons.

Hi, my name is Josef Novinski. Despite a lot of students returning to school, some are still at home for various reasons. There are definitely many benefits to studying online rather than coming to school, though there are also many downsides. I will cover these issues eventually, but let's start off with the positives.

Everyone hates waking up to an alarm clock, getting out of their pajamas, eating breakfast, and contemplating the horrors to come during the morning car ride. An on-line student does not have to worry about this, and that's pretty amazing. I appreciate the ability to keep my cozy pants on and make a fancier lunch than I can normally bring to school from the comfort of my own kitchen. Instead of sitting in a long car ride talking to my parents about what tests I have to take, I can run around my backyard and distract myself with time to spare. With the addition of Teams, I have the added benefit of not having to take assign-

ments down throughout the day. This leads to much less forgotten homework, and I think this system should be worked into the normal school system due to how convenient it is.

Though there are many upsides to studying online, there are also many problems ranging from slight inconveniences to potential day-ruiners. Initially, teachers talked about turning in assignments physically, such as notebooks. This concerned me because I did not know how to do so without being there. It ended up not being a problem, but it was certainly a stressful start to the year. Teachers have also gotten better about checking in on the online students, but at the beginning of on-campus school, I simply heard the lecture (and sometimes even not all of it) while being too scared to speak up. Speaking of online presentations, a lot of the teachers have given online students a single static image to look at while giving a lecture to the present students, which makes it hard to stay engaged and take notes. Even when the cameras are on, sometimes Teams lags and we still get a static image, which is

even worse when a teacher is writing on the board and all the words appear at once several minutes late. When a teacher tries to spur on an active class discussion, many on-campus classmates, devoid of microphones, are inaudible to distance learners. This is specifically worsened when a student asks a question and the teacher asks another student to answer it. Though these other issues can be somewhat remedied, not seeing friends is difficult. There are ways to communicate with people without being at school of course, but it usually doesn't work as well.

What has the school done to help these problems? For one, no one expects us to turn anything in physically, and the teachers have gotten a lot better about putting all the assignments on Teams. They've also put quiz reminders on Teams which is very helpful. They've also gotten better about asking online people if we have all the notes down



Photo From Wikimedia Commons

and understand a question, but there are still quite a few problems such as the static-image presentation and a lack of communication. I think it would be really helpful if the school made some sort of sanctioned group chat for each Form. Not only would it be helpful just as a general form of communication, but also for homework, quizzes, etc. It would also be a nice way to stay in touch

It is definitely important to focus on social distancing and safety protocols, but it's also important to focus on the people who are the most socially-distanced. I'm confident that we can rise to the challenge that 2020 has unfairly given us.



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It's been a long month. News time!

German soccer team thrashed 37-0 after socially distancing from opponent

Who knew that fielding only 7 players as a coronavirus precaution would end badly? I really want to know what the punishment for the losing team was after the game. I'm sure they had to run an absurd amount of laps around their field, perhaps one for each point that was scored on them. Even if their goalie had shown some level of competency, this team rarely moved the ball into their opponents' side of the field throughout the entire game.

Woman told officer "I have to poop

Garbage Guru

so bad" before high-speed chase

I'm not saying I'd get into a high speed chase with a police officer, though I understand her reasoning. Sometimes, when Mother Nature calls, you can't tell her you'll get back to her. Of course, in actuality, this story is far more complex. The woman, who was driving with an expired license, had warrants out for her arrest in that county. In addition to these charges, illegal substances were found in her vehicle. All things considered, I still think this was the best excuse to give to the police.

Goat jumps inside Douglas County Deputy Sheriff's vehicle, eats paperwork

Imagine this Deputy Sheriff returning to his captain's office, completely heartbroken and empty-handed. Asked where the paperwork is for the conviction of the murderer, which is crucial for the

DA's case, this Deputy Sheriff has to respond, "A goat ate the paperwork." If that's not a fireable offense, then I don't know what is.

Billion-dollar company Lululemon under fire for promoting 'resist capitalism' event

I have to say, the sentiment isn't entirely terrible. Of course, I have NO idea what "resist capitalism" means, because that can range from "ethical consumption" to "government limitations on corporations" to "violent overthrow of the current economic system." Not to mention, Lululemon is a capitalist corporation that sells \$80 leggings. By the way, their terrifying price tags aren't due to them paying their workers and not polluting the environment. No, they're just as focused on cost-cutting as the other companies. Do they want us to boycott them? How do I resist capitalism and why is Lululemon telling me how to do this?

Lincoln man pleads City Council to stop the use of the term "Boneless Chicken Wings"

I don't know how this man was able to restrain himself from jumping over the counter and throwing a fit. When I hear someone advocate for the ordering of "Boneless Chicken Wings," my heart dies. Those are not chicken wings, they are merely glorified chicken nuggets for people that don't have the necessary skills required to eat chicken off of a bone. Normally, I dislike the attitude that members of older generations often take when they say things like "Back in my day, things were far tougher," but when it comes to pre-sauced chicken nuggets, I couldn't agree more. Rather than being classified with that hideously incorrect name, I think it should be known as "Baby Food" on the menu of every establishment from now on. The current name gives far too much pride to those who eat little chunks of fried chicken. The first thing that our next president should do is sign an executive order forcing the name off of restaurant menus. Constitutionality does not matter, as I'm sure the SCOTUS feels strongly enough about this to rule in favor of my case.

Cistercian Brave Artists

“The Pen”

Ayden Kowalski, '21.

When I pick you up off your smooth, chestnut-colored bed,

And grasp you within my two fingers,

Alternating between holding you up to my lips

And plunging you into the ocean,

When I order you to dive into that uncharted infinity below,

Force you to run for me within that great white snowfield,

When I make you trace upon the seabed or frozen grasses

My exact commandments so that the very earth may know my mind,

Then I feel like I am truly a son of God.

I feel as if it were I who lay upon my back tracing the divine countenance upon the ceiling,

As if it were I who was imbued with the spark from the Creator to shine like Him,

To shimmer like Her, to reveal Her to the entire world,

To proclaim to the universe what Her, what His chosen people can accomplish.

I think then that She may choose me as an ambassador for Her people,

That I should set off in a golden chariot from this Canaan to sweep the entire arm of Sagittarius,

That I should dance among the stars in strange and foreign lands,

Telling women made of light of the beauties beneath our oceans and the fire signs of God in our skies,

Playing pieces of Mozart and reciting in somewhat slippery English some words of Kanye West.

Yes, I feel, with this little vial of ink, that I am transcendent,

That I belong not on this earth but on the spheres above,

On the skies beyond ours where the clouds turn to faraway candles and the blues fade to black,

Yes, there, that is where I shall live,

Beyond these mortal coils and outrages that encircle me now,

Beyond the pains of life, the pains of leaving it, of having it slip out of your hands like a serpent

And having to wrestle it to the ground in some vain attempt to control it for just a little while longer.

Like a bluebird I will be free, like a comet I shall streak across eternity, like a sailboat I shall ride

Her waves until She calls me back to my shore, where the Fishermen wait.

I let go of you for an instant,

Just an instant,

And then I am no longer a Michelangelo,

But a man, a boy, sitting in a lonely room,

Watching girls come and go

Whom I am scared to talk to.

I leave my body, seeing my vision fade before me;

I try to run and catch it, but just as I see my hand extend,

Just as I see my fingers stretch out to reach that fleeing flash of light,

It vanishes, and I am left alone.

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Short Story: “Untitled”

Ethan Ramchadani, ‘21.

The doors flew open with a bang as a hurried prince barreled down the hallway. He paused at the entrance and a deep breath punctuated his frenzy before he approached his father’s bed. Bordering the room were the royal guard and servants whispering amongst themselves as the prince knelt to the right of the bed. “Father-” he began but the grizzled monarch raised his hand to cut him off.

“My son, Hiro... a king,” the king remarked, “I can’t begin to tell you how proud I am.” He ended the sentence with a fit of coughs. A nurse poured a ladle of red colored liquid down his throat. Tears began to well in Hiro’s eyes as the king’s eyes began to glaze and he slipped out of consciousness. In an attempt to look strong, Hiro wiped the tears from his eyes and stood up. He began to hear the whispers of the crowd around him more clearly.

The garden that his father had commissioned was surprisingly tranquil, despite the lively birds. Hiro ambled through the garden, his thoughts like a muddy puddle. He could barely appreciate the beauty of the flowers his mother once planted. His gaze swayed towards a small, circular patio in the middle of the garden where he and his mother spent their last few moments together. His mind played a scene which he had tried so hard to forget.

A younger Hiro leaned on the shoulder of a properly dressed woman. Her blonde hair and blue eyes shined in the sunlight. “Mama, how come dad is king?”

“The royal family has been unrivaled for years,” she replied. At that time Hiro didn’t completely understand the meaning of her words. He brought attention to the fact that her answer didn’t clear up his question but she only gazed at the sky mumbling to herself. It was clear that his mother was not going to give him a straight answer. His mother continued to be lost in thought while Hiro drifted off to sleep. When he awoke, his mother was gone, the last time his mother would ever be seen.

Hiro blinked back to life after drifting off from the surfaced memory but was suddenly plunged into thought yet again when he realized the excuse his father gave him for the disappearance. “Your mother is an angel. She returned to God.” Pondering it now, Hiro’s heart dropped at the notion that he was so naïve to have believed the pathetic story at any age. He scolded himself for not asking his father what really happened to his mother before his passing.

The next day the prince left the castle for an excursion to the village. He donned a disguise to avoid any unnecessary attention. Dozens of people were bustling in the market streets as Hiro tried to weave his way through the crowd. News of the king’s death had spread like wildfire, and general street chatter seemed to focus on that topic. He tried not to pay attention to it but his thoughts only went from bad to worse as the only other thing he could think about was his other dead parent. The kingdom psychic’s stall was surrounded by a mass mob. It seems everyone was filled with doubt about the future of the kingdom after the monarch’s death. Hiro found his way through the crowd to the front where a gypsy was trying desperately to keep the kingdom’s people at bay.

“People,” the psychic said, “I can only answer one of your ques-

tions. One among you has a question that can change the fate of this kingdom.” Everyone murmured excitedly. The psychic lifted a finger and pointed at the hooded figure that was Hiro. “You, come inside, we shall speak in peace there.”

Long strands of beads hung from the top of the doorframe, veiling the room inside. The room itself was dimly lit and barely furnished. Two oversized stools served as chairs with a generic crystal ball between them. “Pay no attention to that. It isn’t real, but the people will believe anything they’re told if you stare at a glass ball for a minute,” the psychic said when he noticed Hiro’s attention swayed towards the glorified ornament. “So what do you wish to know?”

“What happened to my mom?” Hiro responded.

“Here.” The psychic handed Hiro an engraved coin. “This should help.” The engraving looked familiar to Hiro. He had seen it as part of a mural many times while touring the castle. Filled with excitement, Hiro didn’t even bother with his disguise and sprinted back to the castle. He surprised some passersby as he ran. He stopped for no one as he entered the castle and desperately tried to remember where he had seen the engraving before. He showed it to the servants around the castle until he finally got a solid lead.

The wall was a mural depicting the blessing of the first king of his family line. A priest held out his hand towards Hiro’s kneeling ancestor. The priest’s other hand held a prayer book which he held close to his side. Around the two figures was a gathering of people made up of knights, common people, and servants. The backdrop was of a church with stained glass windows. Suddenly, a feature of one of the designs on the priest’s robe popped out at Hiro. A small section of it was grooved in the same pattern as the engraved coin.

A low rumbling noise followed the wall as Hiro pushed it, revealing a dark staircase. He slowly descended being careful not to trip. The steps never seemed to end. As he progressed, he could hear a few second of screams of agony at random intervals. Finally light crept into his view. The room was a long hallway lined with cells. Almost all of them were filled with a body or someone close to becoming a body. Visibly afraid, Hiro ambled down the hallway. “Help meeeeeeee,” one of the prisoners held his hand out of his cell to try to stop Hiro. The prisoner struggled to hold himself up on the bars on the door.

“Wh-who are you?” Hiro asked anxiously as the prisoner continued to stumble around his cell.

“I’m just a squire. My loyalty lay with a rival king,” he steadied himself and Hiro got a better look at him. “Look at what they’ve done to me. I pose no threat, let me go please.” It was evident that the prisoner was eager to leave and was reduced to begging for his freedom. His body was lined with precise cuts at specific veins on his torso, arms, and legs. His clothes were tattered.

A younger Hiro wielding a play sword whacked a ragdoll dummy, his father supervising in the background. “This may be the last time I can be able to train with you,” his father said. “I will have kingly duties to deal with as your grandfather is winding down.” Hiro paid

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Short Story: “Untitled” (Cont’d)

little mind to his father’s words. “I want you to listen to me very closely,” his father said, taking up a stern voice. He took the wooden sword from Hiro’s hands. “This. This is not a toy. Never use this on an unarmed opponent and only use it for self defense. Do you understand?” Hiro gave a shy nod. “Good,” Hiro’s father said, as he walked away with the sword in hand.

Appalled by the inhumane conditions the squire was subjected to, Hiro backed away and continued to walk further down the hallway. At this point he picked up his pace from a walk to a jog. Again, he was stopped by one of the prisoners. “Sir! Sir, please. Help me. I was nothing more than a peasant. All I did was steal bread. Let me out. Let me out please,” he began to sob.

“Who put you here?” Hiro asked, ignoring his previous pleas.

“Some scary looking guards. Different than anything I’ve seen,” the thief replied.

A young Hiro sat on his mother’s lap in the throne room. A young man in dirty clothes knelt before the king. He was flanked on both sides by guards. “For your crimes of theft and deceit,” the king began. The thief was visibly anxious. He was clearly not looking forward to his punishment. “You are royally pardoned,” the king continued. This came as a surprise to everyone in the room, but no one was more relieved than the thief himself. The king turned towards Hiro and shot him a wink.

“None of this makes sense,” Hiro mumbled to himself. Did his father know about this? Did his father commission this? A common epithet that usually went with the king’s name was “the merciful.” Teisho the Merciful was his father’s name. There was no way any of this could be his doing. There was still plenty of ground left in the hallway and Hiro continued onwards, bracing himself for further horrors.

No matter how much Hiro braced himself, he couldn’t prepare himself for the final blow. In the furthest reach of the dungeon he found corpses. Not literal corpses, but people who were presumed dead for over a decade. In the eyes of the general public these people were as good as dead. A few of these people were easily recognizable and they were all political rivals. Rivals to the throne were few and far between and they always lost. They either lost all support through some exposed scandal or died from disease. It was evident from most of them being here that none of that was true.

His mother’s words struck him like a plague. It’s not a wonder that his family was unrivalled for years, everyone who wanted to try against the royal family was imprisoned here. “Hiro? Hiro, is that you?” a familiar voice called out to him. His vision swept over the dogpile of prisoners in the small cell until his gaze fell upon an old woman in the back. “Hiro! Son!” the woman came up to the barred door. Suddenly, everything clicked. His mother had found this place. His mother was thrown into this place.

He heard a chuckle from inside the darkness and the psychic emerged. “Your father wouldn’t have wanted you to find this,” he said, continuing to laugh.

“You knew about this?” Hiro asked angrily.

“Oh trust me, I know everything,” the psychic said, winking. “You should’ve cherished your ignorance while you could, but then again, if you never knew, you’d be living a lie.”

All of this was overstimulating for Hiro. The rage he was beginning to harbor from discovering this place was beginning to show and the psychic was doing nothing to help. It all became too much for Hiro and he lashed out. He grabbed the psychic by his neck with one hand and gritted his teeth. “You think this is funny?” he said.

“This must be such a hard time for you,” the psychic said sarcastically. The psychic could see the physical anger in Hiro’s eyes. “Let’s strike a deal, shall we?” the psychic offered.

“What do you want?” Hiro demanded, with flecks of spit showering the psychic’s face.

“Your father was sick and twisted and now you know that’s who he truly was. I can’t change history, but I can change your perception of him. He can return to being the role model you admired for your entire life. All it will cost you is the throne. What say you?” he said, conjuring a contract out of thin air. He handed Hiro a feather pen. Hiro took a final glance at his mother, who continued to implore Hiro to not sign the contract, but ignored her. A million thoughts were rushing through his head. Having the throne paled in comparison to having his role model back.

Hiro signed.

We highly encourage submitting your own art piece, regardless of medium, to be displayed in *The Cistercian Informer* for all to see. After all, it is a great way to share your hard work and talent with the entire school. Please contact Alex Smith, ‘21, or Mr. Laurange if you are interested!

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
AND POETRY FOUNDATION PRESENT**



Each year, the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts hosts the Poetry Out Loud competition for high schoolers across the United States.

This dynamic recitation competition gives students the opportunity to master public-speaking skills, learn about literary history, and even win prizes at the local, state, and national level, with the potential to earn up to \$20,000 in scholarship money!

If you are interested in participating in this event, please go to www.tinyurl.com/PoetryOutLoudCompetition to learn more about this amazing opportunity. You will be redirected to Cistercian's dedicated Poetry Out Loud Microsoft Team, which will have all the information you need to know.

Please contact Mr. Laurange if you have any questions!