

THE PROWLER

Quince Orchard High School — 15800 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 — [@qohs_prowler](#)

An eventful year for MCPS so far

By JAY MOTIWALA
Editor-in-Chief

More than half of the 2021-2022 school year has already passed, and the first year in-person since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic has already been full of noteworthy occurrences for our school system. The transition from online learning back to in person was a tasking one for many people, and for some, this halfway point may glimmer like the light at the end of the tunnel.

On August 30, the first day of the 2021-2022 school year began, and it marked the first time that MCPS was engaging in a fully in-person learning model for about a year and a half. The mask-mandated start to the year had its bumps in the road, though it mostly went off without a hitch.

Until approximately two days later. On September 1, MCPS announced that schools would be closing early while kids were in school that day due to severe rain conditions that proved to be minimal.

The Covid-19 situation in schools was mostly contained throughout the

county. As the year went on, however, more and more empty chairs were in classrooms and more and more students were being called down to the office for being in close contact with a student who tested positive. The coronavirus surge came to a head during Winter Break, where MCPS saw its highest percentage of positive cases so far. During this time, a system was set in place where if a school had 5% or more of its student and staff population test positive for Covid-19, considerations would be in place for that school to enter virtual learning.

On January 5, a graphic was released that showed which schools had above a 5% positive threshold. The vast majority of schools were above 5%, including QO.

Before the updated graphic was released, eleven schools were announced to go to virtual learning. Although when the graphic was posted, MCPS released a statement that said that schools that reached the 5% threshold were not guaranteed to go virtual, and that they would commit to having school stay in-person. The decision that most

schools would remain in-person, even though many schools were above the 5% threshold, led to MCPS providing every single school with KN95 masks and Covid-19 testing kits in January, with schools instructed to have kids take two tests and report their results. Currently, 32 schools have gone into virtual learning in MCPS out of 209 schools.

Though virtual learning is not totally out of the question. Due to MCPS using up their snow days for the year, it was announced on February 2 that MCPS will consider certain snow days to be virtual instruction days. It is not a guarantee that all snow days will be virtual days; each day will be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Tragedy has struck MCPS as well. On January 21, a male student was shot on campus at Magruder High School during the school day, plunging the school into a lockdown spanning over three hours. The suspect was apprehended and the victim survived the incident—both were students who attended the school. The Monday after the incident, MCPS students joined together in solidarity to wear

Magruder's colors—blue, grey, and white—to show support.

In another upsetting instance, A senior named Jaylin Jones of Northwest High School was found dead on January 24, with the incident being investigated as a homicide.

Northwest principal Scott Smith wrote in a community message that Jones "had a large personality, infectious smile, and overall amazing spirit."

On February 3, bomb threats were made across the whole county by a previous MCPS student, stating in an Instagram live that "We are gonna gundown MCPS at 2 PM tomorrow (February 4)" and "We are also gonna bomb Wheaton High School." The posts were determined to be of a low threat level by MCPS and Montgomery County Police.

Overall, this school year has been full of events, yet the relative normality of being in person is something that students and staff members have seen as a certain positive.

JUNTOS misses out on 21st edition of MCPS Latin Dance Competition

By XAVIER SUGGS
Staff Writer

On November 22, hundreds of students, parents, and faculty packed into the music center at Strathmore to celebrate Latin culture with the 21st edition of the Latin Dance Competition. Gaithersburg ended up winning the Best in Show for the Senior Division, but missing in the crowd was one big omission...QO.

JUNTOS has been a dominant force in the Latin dance scene in MCPS since its inception in 2011. In the last Latin Dance Competition in 2019, QO won the Best in Show for the Senior Division. JUNTOS also came in first for the salsa dance competition.

Senior captain Emely Munoz-Ramos was just a sophomore that night and recalled the performance.

"It was packed," Munoz-Ramos said. "It was so exciting, though."

Members of JUNTOS expected to defend their crown this year, but unfortunately that wasn't the case. Munoz-Ramos explained that it was a miscommunication on the part of the organizers to the sponsors.

"The organizers for the Hispanic Heritage Fund, they decided that they were gonna have it and they didn't let

all of our sponsors know," Munoz Ramos added. "The teams found out through Instagram."

The organizers of the event decided to only invite a select number of schools to compete, QO being one of them. Although JUNTOS would have the chance to compete because they were invited, they chose not to attend as an act of solidarity with other schools who weren't invited.

"Our school, Einstein, Sherwood—a lot of other schools decided to pull out," Munoz-Ramos said. "If they're not gonna support all the schools, then we don't want to participate in that."

Although Munoz-Ramos felt that this year's competition was unfair, she said she still would've liked the chance to compete.

"It was super upsetting," Munoz-Ramos said. "It was just super disappointing that, after being in



everyone should have an equal opportunity to join." Duque said.

JUNTOS hasn't practiced since winter break due to the rise of Covid cases around the county and scheduling conflicts, but they are set to resume after Valentine's Day. "I'm just excited to see everyone again because I feel like I see them more during practice than I actually see them at school," Duque said. "We're all just there for the same thing, to dance." she added.

Luckily, JUNTOS has had other chances to perform this year.

During the Hispanic Heritage Assembly, they had a performance that made the crowd rocus. They also performed during the winter sports pep rally and are set to perform at the Minority Scholars Program retreat in March.

There will also be a couples Latin dance competition in the spring of 2022, so there's still hope that some of JUNTOS members will be able to compete later this year.

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The Midterms: halfway through and the report card isn't too spiffy for the Biden administration, according to the people

By *MAX HANDELMAN*
Staff Writer

The transition of presidential power between the current Biden administration and that of former President Donald Trump in early January, 2021 was by no means a smooth endeavor. Despite numerous recounts of electoral ballots, an overwhelming majority of the country's Republicans denied the legitimacy of Biden's election. Protesters lined the streets of Washington DC shouting chants like "Stop the steal" and carrying signs with vulgar slogans of defamation. This outcry would ultimately explode on January 6, 2021 when a mob fueled by Trump's violent rhetoric stormed the US capital, an event that would be remembered as an insurrection unseen in modern US history.

Needless to say, between the skyrocketing cases of the COVID Delta variant and rampant political unrest, Biden's presidency got off to a bit of a rocky start. Moreover, despite speculative optimism among Democratic supporters, the January 2022 midterms herald bad news for the Biden administration's approval rating from the general public. The data demonstrates that the early wounds of the administration have continued to fester and bubble over

the past two years, the public's dissent becoming increasingly bi-partisan around the country.

As it stands in the month of January 2022, President Biden's approval rating is the lowest it's ever been in his presidential career, with the majority of the nation disapproving of the administration in its entirety.

According to POLITICO's latest Morning Consult, a poll that periodically tracks national public opinion, 68% of all poll

"It's very difficult to rebuild trust once it's been lost. Restoring trust is a lot harder than maintaining it in the first place."

- Lindsay Wiley

respondents--regardless of race, gender, or political ideology--said that the country was "headed in the wrong direction" under the Biden administration. More specifically, American citizens are concerned about Biden's ability to handle two major issues: his response to the COVID-19 pandemic crises and the faltering economy.

A new report from the Pew Research Center has found that only a mere 28% of Americans find the country's economy to be in a good place. Instead, the average citizen and

policy critics are quite upset about the stark inflation of everyday commodities, with the majority of respondents, 89%, saying that grocery store food and gas prices are exorbitantly high compared to where they were just last year.

"Voters still remain very very concerned about inflation," said Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster and strategist in her column, "and while we're making progress, this is not nearly good enough and we have to do more."

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pew Research Center found that less than half of all Americans believe that Biden is able to safely and efficiently combat the virus within the US. This skepticism stems from a myriad of factors, ranging from the lack of available COVID tests around the country, poor management of the vaccine rollout, and the CDC's ever changing pandemic guidelines that have caused mass confusion around the country. It was only last month that the CDC cut the quarantine time in half from ten

to five days, a decision that was widely criticized as it was made around the same time that the extremely contagious Omicron variant began to spread like wildfire throughout the nation. This announcement is one of the latest in a series of communicative obscurity that's led to the crumbling of the public's trust in the CDC, with only 44% of the public believing the CDC's advice according to a report by Hart Research Associates.

"It's very difficult to rebuild trust once it's been lost," said Lindsay Wiley, a health law professor at UCLA. "Restoring trust is a lot harder than maintaining it in the first place."

While these numbers are grim, they haven't gone unrecognized. In an effort to combat the newly rising cases of the Omicron variant, the Biden administration has bought one billion at-home COVID tests, half a billion of which will be mailed directly to each household in America. Biden is also adamant in passing the Build Back Better Act, an ambitious plan to tackle climate change by creating large scale wind farms in the ocean, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in renewable energy.

However, while these are certainly steps in the right direction, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to drag on and civic discontent further divides the country, the Biden administration has a lot of work to do if it wishes to reunite the country.

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CONTACT US

Quince Orchard High School
15800 Quince Orchard Road,
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Phone: (301) 740-3600

Website: qohsjournalism.wordpress.com

Email: QOHSproowler@gmail.com

Twitter & Instagram: @qohs_prowler

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ABOUT

The Prowler is published six times a year by the students of Quince Orchard High School, and it has been continuously published since the 1988-89 school year. To become a staff member, students should take Journalism A & B with Ms. Cooley-Klein to qualify for the Newspaper Production class.

Relief ensues in our community as missing QO alumnus has been found

By *AVA GARZAN*
Staff Writer

Before she went missing, 18-year-old Tayra Vickenna Benfica '21 was last seen on January 22 at around 10:45 p.m. at her home on Triple Crown Road. Reports on the missing woman came out around a week after her disappearance, leaving residents in the Gaithersburg area fearing not only for her, but for their own lives and the lives of their children.

The Montgomery County Police Department reported Benfica as last seen wearing a fleece hoodie, camouflage leggings, tan boots, a baseball cap, and a backpack. Her phone being discovered in the neighboring Aberdeen Park in North Potomac, completely wiped clean of any trace of the missing woman. Police asked houses in the area for camera footage of outside their homes, though nothing seemed to have come up, as though she had never left at all.

"It's upsetting," said Senior Ruby Gonzalez, "people shouldn't ride these cases off as just another missing person, a person is still a person."

The parents of Benfica quickly turned to social media in finding their daughter, with missing person reports left on Facebook and the neighborhood discussion forum, Nextdoor—information was scarce on the internet, leaving much of the knowledge the public knows in the hands of this site. People on Nextdoor expressed their concern, like one user Hilary Giffin, who said, "This is a parent's worst nightmare, I hope and pray she will be found safe." Numerous comments such as that were written across the page, as no one knew any details and the question of foul play lingered in the minds of many.

However, a few weeks after the last sighting of Benfica, she was found safe and unharmed. Although we don't know the full story, many users on Nextdoor are speculating possibilities for her disappearance, with one writing "my guess is she probably

didn't want to be found."

The user Denyse Spence added, "Regardless that she has now been found, for those first initial hours/days, no information was available and every passing minute was critical. The parents and authorities did exactly what they should have done."

This highlights the impact of media coverage for missing person's reports. According to Beth Kassab of the Orlando Sentinel, "Media coverage and public interest help keep the victim's face out there, increasing the odds that someone—and all it takes is one—will come forward with needed information."

The Gaithersburg community was willing to help in any way they could to spread the word for Benfica's case, though many reports still don't make it onto the radar of the public. The Patch emphasized 13 newly reported people who went missing this past month in Maryland. Reporting any information you know to 911 about someone who went missing is crucial for a case.



VIEWPOINT

Texas synagogue shooting brings light to recent spike in antisemitism

By *MIA KAUFFMAN*
Staff Writer

It's Saturday morning. You are attending services in your synagogue, the place where you feel safe. Praying. Out of nowhere, you hear a strange voice ranting on a livestream, interrupting prayer. Strange. Suddenly, everything changes.

On Saturday, January 15, four hostages were held at gunpoint at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas. The gunman, Malik Faisal Akram, was a British man who flew over 5,000 miles to get to Beth Israel—his target.

Akram showed up at the Saturday morning service where he took four people hostage for around 11 hours. The four hostages were pleading for their life, hoping that eventually they could talk some sense into the gunman to let them go. They failed over and over again. When the gunman ordered the men to kneel, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker knew this could be one of their only chances of escaping. He thought fast

and grabbed a chair and chucked it at the gunman and the hostages ran for the door. Thankfully the hostages were able to escape—but not without risk.

What happened at Beth Israel is nothing new. The Jewish community has been dealing with antisemitism for centuries. Especially in recent years, acts of antisemitism have spiked and it seems like no one's talking about it.

According to NPR, one in four American Jews experienced antisemitism within this past year. And, as per Vox, antisemitic incidents nationwide have been at an all-time high in the past two years. The American Defamation League reported in their recent data that there were 2,257 antisemitic incidents reported from 2020-2021.

But those are only the reported ones. In an article in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Joel Schwitzer, the regional director of the American Jewish Committee in Dallas, explained that only "24% of American Jews report antisemitism." So if that is only the amount of reported cases, one can only imagine how many acts

of antisemitism happen on a daily basis to the average Jewish person.

After an armed man carrying an AR-15 and shouting antisemitic slurs interrupted services and killed 11 people in 2018 at the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, there was some support for Jewish community from the general public. #Strongerthanhate trended on Twitter and Instagram. Some turned to Facebook to change their profile picture to a filter that showed support of the Jewish community.

But the impacts of the hashtags and profile pictures were short-term. Evidently, they were not effective enough because shortly after the Tree of Life shooting, in 2019, there were shootings at two more synagogues, one in Miami and one in Poway, California.

So what can the Jewish community do now? We're at a standstill. Despite everything the Jewish people have been through—the mass extermination of six million Jewish people during the Holocaust, and the continuation of that hatred into present day—we still feel insecure. There is a sense of fear

amongst the community, between feeling pride in being Jewish, or even feeling safe going to services at synagogue, a place that is meant to always feel safe.

In 2019 the House of Representatives passed a bill that condemned antisemitism as a hate crime. As reported by CNN, the verbiage in the resolution goes as is: "Whereas anti-Semitism includes blaming Jews as Jews when things go wrong; calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or extremist view of religion; or making mendacious, de-humanizing, demonizing, or stereotyped allegations about Jews."

While the situation in Colleyville proved that this wouldn't solve antisemitism, the acknowledgment of it as a hate crime is the step in the right direction the Jewish people needed. Clearly, there is still work that needs to be done and it is important to continue to acknowledge that antisemitism is a huge issue and work to improve it.

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VIEWPOINT

'Don't say gay' bill in Florida harms students

By E. LEATH
Staff Writer

On January 20, Florida legislature passed the 'Don't Say Gay' bill, or the Parental Rights in Education bill. This bill was added onto the Parents' Bill of Rights that gives parents the right to information about a child's education, upbringing, and health care.

With this new bill in place, Florida schools are banned from having LGBTQ+ discussions in school and teachers would no longer need a student's consent to out them. In addition to that, this bill gives parents the ability to take action against schools that discuss LGBTQ+ topics.

The bill states that "School district personnel may not discourage or prohibit parental notification of an involvement in critical decisions affecting a student's mental, emotional, or physical health or

well-being." It is implied in the bill that if a student asks to go by a different name or set of pronouns, the teacher could tell the student's parents without the student's consent.

Outing someone to parents, friends, or strangers is never acceptable, and nobody should tell someone about their identity but the person involved. It shows a lack of respect when a person outs someone, and it should be kept in mind that someone might not be out because they are not ready to be out, or it might not be safe for them to come out to their family. In adding this to the bill, schools stop being safe places for students to be out and live authentically when there is always the potential of being outed by parents hanging over them.

The following addition states that "A school district may not encourage classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity in

primary grade levels or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students." Not allowing LGBTQ+ topics to be discussed in school takes away representation for students and takes out a part of history. Using the words 'age-appropriate' to set guidelines about these discussions is an easy way to have all discussions be shut down. Saying these topics are not appropriate for some ages places a stigma around the topic and makes it seem like something weird and not normal.

According to the bill, "A parent of a student may bring an action against a school district to obtain a declaratory judgment that a school district procedure or practice violates this paragraph and seek injunctive relief." Phrasing is key, and when you use something as broad and undefined as 'age-appropriate' to set the limitations, it is hard for a school

to defend itself because parents could argue that even the smallest talk at any grade level is not appropriate. This leaves schools defenseless and unable to have much-needed discussions about LGBTQ+ culture and history.

What might have first started as something ensuring parents are aware about their children's well-being has turned into an attack on LGBTQ+ people. Passing this bill negatively affects LGBTQ+ youth and their mental health because, without a safe place to have conversations about gender and identity, there is no awareness in schools and people are less tolerant. LGBTQ+ topics should not be taboo and the Florida Legislature should not have the power to regulate how these things are discussed and how LGBTQ+ people exist. This bill does more harm than good, and if it is kept in place Florida schools will not be a safe place for LGBTQ+ students to thrive and learn.

VIEWPOINT

Virtual learning shouldn't lead to the death of snow days

By MADDY RUBERY
Editor-in-Chief

For many, snow days can mean sledding with friends and drinking hot chocolate with family. Not only does it give time for winter-related activities, but gives children the opportunity to step back from school responsibilities and make lifelong memories. But with the newfound use of virtual learning, snow days may not be what they used to be.

In an announcement sent out by MCPS last Wednesday, February 2, the prospect of virtual learning during inclement weather is said to be

considered "for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year."

After COVID-19 shut down America's schools for over a year, students and teachers alike have experience with platforms such as Zoom and Google Meets, so transitioning to online learning for snow days should not be a problem, right?

"I disagree with making snow days virtual learning days because there would be [little] preparation for these days," said senior Ethan DeCastro. "With so little time to prepare, virtual lessons would become pointless lessons."

Instead of wasting teacher's time and resources, the break given by snow days should be taken advantage of for lesson planning, grading, and more.

DeCastro also explains the importance of personal learning opportunities through snow days, such as "shoveling snow and getting snow off the car." If stuck in their rooms all day staring at a computer screen, these skills will not be easily made. As a child, DeCastro says his typical snow day consisted of "catch[ing] up on sleep and homework," while also "shoveling the driveway of [his] elderly neighbor's

house to help."

Although online school proved to be majorly useful for preventing the spread of COVID during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, now that we are back to in-person learning, do we really need to incorporate it into our lives in replacement of snow days?

One or two days of weather cancellations should not have a lasting impact on the learning and development of students. Instead, students should be encouraged to go outside and make new memories.

Letters to the Editor

Do you have a letter you'd like to share with the QO community? Submit a letter to the editor to QOHSprowler@gmail.com, and you may be featured in a future issue! These were written by English 9 students for a Quarter 2 assignment.

LGBTQ+ stories should be represented in school literature

Should LGBTQ+ books be read in schools? Most parents don't want their children reading about LGBTQ+ stories in school because the topic of LGBTQ+ rights has become less about human rights and more about political standpoints, and is viewed as a subject too mature for children. However, some of the kids that parents are trying to shield this content from are LGBTQ themselves, and those who are straight and/or cisgender most likely know and/or are friends with someone who is a part of the LGBTQ community. Teaching them that being a part of the community is something that you can't know at a young age pushes the narrative that being LGBTQ is inappropriate. It is not inappropriate to love who you love, and if straight experiences and stories can be shared through books in schools, then LGBTQ experiences should be, too.

Representation in books and schools should not be restricted from students because there are always LGBTQ+ students in classrooms who

should never feel like being who they are is shameful. Also, reading those types of books can help students relate to other stories, which can be refreshing. As a bisexual (the B in LGBTQ), I was overjoyed to read *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz because not only could I relate to Aristotle and his struggle to come to terms with his sexuality, but it was also nice to see positive representation that wasn't stereotypical.

For my cishet (cisgender, heterosexual) classmates, it is even more essential to expose them to the LGBTQ+ community at a young age. It could change their perception of the LGBTQ+ community, decreasing the amount of taught and systemic homophobia. Cishets will have to interact with LGBTQ+ people at some point in their lives, so why not do it early and positively? If Aristotle was exposed to LGBTQ+ stories in school, maybe he wouldn't have seen his queerness as shameful.

- Anonymous 9th Grade Student

We shouldn't be afraid to tell stories about mental disorders

I believe having a main character with mental disorders in a story helps improve the story like in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon. I feel that main characters with mental disorders should be more commonly seen in books. This can help a story to be more interesting than it would have been, by having the main character act in different ways than what the reader would have anticipated. It causes the reader to try to understand the main character's point of view. This would also give more freedom to the writer, allowing them to come up with more interesting ideas for the story.

Another reason that it is a good idea to have a main character with a mental disorder is so that it can help bring awareness to that disorder. Having a mental disorder in your story can show people what it is and even how to identify it so that they can better understand people who do have it. Finally, it can help people

understand mental disorders and how these people may think so that they can be more accepted and understood.

I am aware that not all stories can incorporate mental disorders and that not all need to. Sometimes, it may be hard to understand why the main character would act a certain way. However, once the reader understands the character and their behaviors, they understand the disability better. If the writer can establish the character's ideals and show how they may have a different way of thinking and a different understanding process, the reader benefits as well as those who suffer from the mental disorder.

- Brandon Smith, 9th Grade Student





Cougar Crushes

By MADISON SHERMAN
Staff Writer

It's that time of year. Love is in the air. Chocolates, flowers, and teddy bears circulate while couples get engaged and share "I love yous." Valentine's Day isn't merely to celebrate your significant other; it is a time to appreciate the ones you love, especially with all the chaos in these past few months. So don't sob and grieve if you don't have a date. Alternatively, use it as an excuse to eat loads of chocolate all by your lonesome...just kidding! Spend the day as a way to cherish love for what it is: messy, vulnerable, accepting, and however else you may see it.

As a fun way to commemorate Valentine's Day, The Prowler has asked QO students who their teacher "crushes" are. I mean, who can deny our love for our staff, as they teach so passionately? Let's hear what students had to say.

One vote goes for Mr. Ryan Dimmick, QO's only male Spanish teacher. An anonymous Spanish student said, "My teacher crush is Mr. Dimmick because he is very athletic, and he's like younger and cool." Afterwards, she gushed, "I love a bilingual man."

Another crush is dedicated to Mr. Bryan Mack, a social studies teacher who moved to QO from Ridgeview Middle School, and has managed to catch the attention of his students. "My teacher crush is Mr. Mack because I really like the way he talks, and I like how he uses the military alphabet," said another anonymous student. Next, while smiling, she rejoiced, "When he gives us the

Nearpod codes, it just adds some extra spice, and he is very kind. Except... he doesn't remember my name."

We can't forget about the 'chemistry' in the science department. When asked who her teacher crush was, an AP Bio student exclaimed, "Definitely Mr. Lanham. He is the cutest person I've ever met. His soul is just pure of science and knowledge. If he could live in a world that's made up of science, and only science, he would in a heartbeat." Another AP Bio student had to agree. "Mr. Lanham. He wears the same thing every day, but it's so cute. He wears the bracelets that we make him, and he answers all of our questions. He also talks about his crows a lot, which is adorable."

Regarding the math department, students' love for the teachers is like dividing by zero...it can't be defined! One aggressive learner on the AP Calculus bus answered, "Mr. Jernigan! When he pushes around that red cart, he really grasps my heart. It really gets

me when he dreams about how we are failing calculus; it really shows he cares about us. There is no other option but to get those 5's, so I will get a 5 for Mr. Jernigan."

An Honors Precalculus student had another preference. "I have to go with Mrs. Stein because I really like how she teaches math, and she also really likes Megan Thee Stallion." Stein is a popular crush amongst students, as another Honors Precalc. student shared, "My teacher crush is Mrs.



Stein because even though she's screaming at us at the top of her lungs and ringing a cowbell in our faces, we all know she means well."

Q&A: Inside the Magruder shooting with MHS student

By SAM SMITH
Staff Writer

Content Notice: This article describes violent incidents.

The shooting at Magruder High School has been one of the most talked-about subjects throughout the county for about a couple of weeks now.

The details of the shooting are very harrowing and have many details the public deserves to know. First off, the shooter was a 17-year-old student, Steven Alston Jr., who had plans to settle a discrepancy in the boys bathroom with a fellow student. After the meet-up of the two students went south, Alston proceeded to point a 9 mm ghost gun at the head of the other 15-year-old student. Alston ended up opting not to go for the head shot, but instead to shoot him in the leg.

The victim was found minutes later after security issued a hallway sweep, which was when Magruder went into lockdown.

The specific details are very important to this story, but the actual human experience during the time makes it possible for the audience to truly understand the situation. This is why I chose to interview Magruder junior Sasha Balderrama to fill me in on what happened that day. (Responses have been edited slightly for clarity.)

Q: What were you doing before the incident?

A: I was in AP Lang and we were actually going over test answers.

Q: When did you first realize something was wrong?

A: Oh, oh, oh, when our principal actually came on to the announcements and sounded like he was going to cry, he was like out of breath, like he was running or something. He said we had to go into

lockdown and he sounded like he was going to cry. His breath was shaky. And that's when we knew something was wrong.

Q: Did you know who the shooter or the victim was?

A: No, I didn't. None of my friends knew him, either. I heard that he was new—like no one really knew him, because he was new.

Q: How did the teachers react? Or, more specifically, how did your teacher react?

A: Oh, she was really calm and she took it seriously. We went next to the walls and turned off the lights, like the normal procedure. Then she sat at her desk waiting for emails and so for like five hours, she was just at her computer receiving emails, but they never really told us anything. We had to find out ourselves. None of our teachers told us...it was a shooting. We had to look it up ourselves.

I got home at like 7:30 [PM], because the whole road was closed. We didn't get out until 6:30 [PM] and we went into lockdown at like 1 o'clock. Then it mellowed down: we didn't have to be against the wall for the whole time. We played cards and we even watched a movie, so it was fine afterwards.

Q: Can you give me examples of how students were reacting in your class?

A: Yeah but when we first found out, like [some] were on the verge of crying. I was fine, but everyone was reacting differently, so I can't speak for everybody. I knew I was fine; we were just really curious because no one really knew anything. Then we were just bored and people really needed to pee. This guy peed in a bottle in my classroom, in the corner, then we watched a movie. Then we were playing cards.

Q: Now, lastly, could you tell me what

was going through your head at the time?

A: During the lockdown, I was hungry because I didn't eat anything the whole day. When we first did the lockdown, I was really curious because I didn't know what was happening. They left us in the dark. First they said someone got stabbed, but then they found he got shot because of the gunshot wound.

I was actually really scared for my friends because they were right next to where the guy got shot. Everyone was texting me if I was fine, and I was like, "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine."

I passed the bathroom before it happened, and then you know how the shooter was in the building still? Well, he actually went into one of my friend's sister's classrooms and was sitting right in front of her, so I was really scared for her. They, like, busted into the room with all the guns pointed at them, so that was traumatic.

I just really wanted to go home. I also didn't really want to go to school the next week. Because it was just different. Monday we had no school and Tuesday was a half-day because counselors came in and talked to us, then we left. Then Wednesday was a regular day.

Q: Did anyone hear it?

A: That's why they thought it was a stabbing, because no one heard it.

Q: Now this may be a hard question to answer, but what do you think your school could have done better?

A: It's not really the school's fault because it's the government's fault with the gun control. I feel like the school couldn't really do anything other than handle it a bit better. Our principal said, "There's nothing to worry about," but the shooter was still in the building when he said that. Which led parents to believe that everything was safe, but then the news

was like, "Oh no, the shooter was inside the school."

The students didn't know [the shooter was inside the school] until the SWAT team came in and pointed guns at them. It took a long time for the police officers to come because they didn't come till way after.

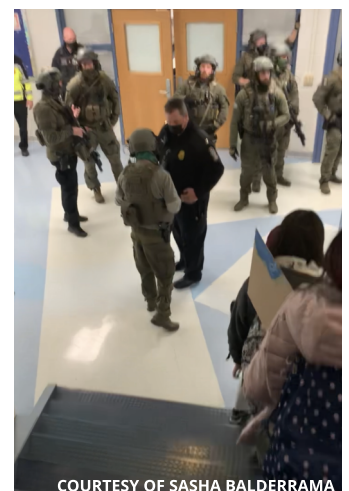
So I think we could've known more. People would think it would create panic, but if it was my sister in the room with the shooter, I would want to know.

Q: Does Izzy [her younger sister] go to Magruder?

A: She might next year. Yeah, she's a freshman next year.

Q: What are your views on gun control?

A: Well, I think the second amendment is really really outdated, and we don't really need it anymore. And I feel like we don't really need guns anymore. Even though people want them for like hunting and whatever, I think we should have stronger gun laws. But the amount of school shootings we have had this year, [and] last year school shootings were at an all-time high—oh my god, yeah, that's it. I don't even wanna get into it. I am still mad about it.



COURTESY OF SASHA BALDERRAMA
SWAT team making sure students get out safely at Magruder High School.

Black History Month



A closer look at the impact and achievements made by the black community

By GRACE GNAMOA & MADISON SHERMAN
Staff Writers

The story of Black History Month

It's important to note that the idea of Black History Month didn't first originate until 1915, and Black History Month didn't become official until 1976. In 1915, Carter G. Wilson, known as the "Father of Black History," created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. This became the starting point of the celebratory and honorable February month.

Nevertheless, it wasn't until 11 years later until Woodson introduced the first "Negro History Week," and it wasn't until 1976 that Texas A&M University Afro-American history professor Albert Broussard turned this week into a month-long celebration.

Below are five simple ways to honor Black History Month:

*Learn about noteworthy Black figures and their contributions

*Donate to charities that support anti-racism equity and equality and get involved in non-profit organizations, such as Black Lives Matter and the NAACP

*Purchase and share books by black authors

*Visit a Black or African American History Museum

*Appreciate the contributions Black people have made to society

We should always strive to support black owned businesses, as they deserve to receive the same publicity as white-owned businesses. If you ever feel like trying out a new place, whether it's to eat or shop, consider visiting one of these black-owned businesses in Montgomery County. (This list is from The MoCo Show.)

RESTAURANTS

- African Palace -
Gaithersburg
(301) 926-5244
- The Caribbean Flavor -
Germantown
(240) 477-8616
- York Castle Ice Cream -
Rockville
(301) 217-5840
- Black Lion Cafe -
Rockville
(240) 907-2994

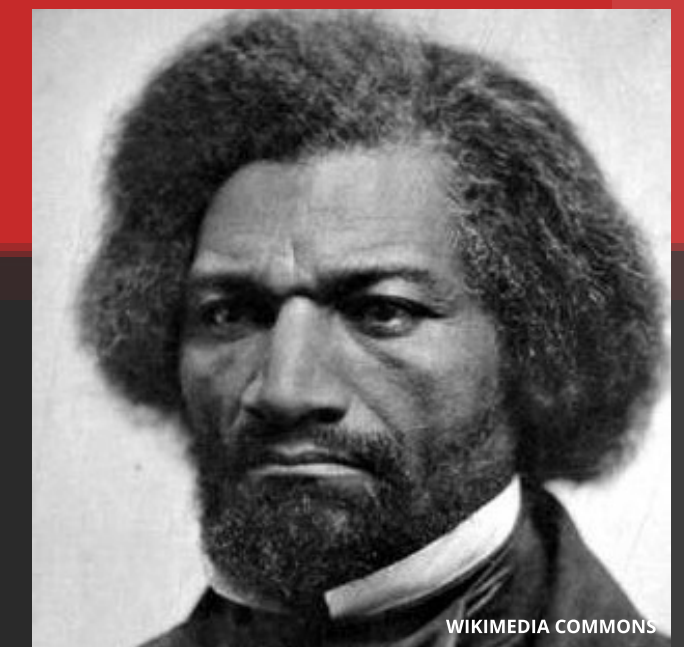
GOODS & SERVICES

Online Store: IG @beautyrocks_

- Image Creators -
Germantown
(301) 444-8153
- Bevan's Grooming -
Gaithersburg
(240) 408-2773
- Groomed by Haye -
Gaithersburg
(301) 355-8066

People may ask: Why February?

February is a notable month for black figures. Specifically, February is the birth month of two figures who are of great importance to the black past: U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, born February 12, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, born February 14.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Numerous notable genres of music contain African roots. What started off as a way for early slaves to communicate with one another transformed into music, and now every genre originating in America has black roots. Yet, black music isn't solely from the U.S black experience; it is from the global black experience. Stretching from all over the globe, popular genres of music today are from African descent, such as the blues and hip-hop in America, Ragga and Calypso in the Caribbean, Brit funk and acid jazz in the UK, and thousands more.

Did you know Black History Month accompanies a theme each year?

This year's theme is Black Health and Wellness, particularly looking at how American healthcare has undermined the black community and its achievement in modern medicine.

Pan African Flag

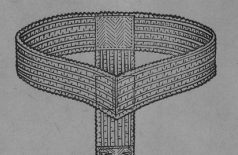
Red: the blood that unites all Black people and their ancestry

Black: all black people existing as a nation

Green: abundant natural wealth in Africa

Mary Keener invented the adjustable sanitary belt. Sadly, she wasn't able to profit off of her invention due to racial discrimination and ended up losing the patent rights to the product. The sanitary belt was a huge success and was used by many women in the 50s & 60s.

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WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Among many well-known black artists, Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) left a significant imprint on jazz and is considered one of its founding fathers. Armstrong was a musician, composer, and leading trumpeter.



Collation of the Generations

How what years we were born in affects how we ended up

By REESE OWENS
Staff Writer

Capricorn this, Gemini that, and what about an Aries? That's what everyone seems to be talking about these days- how somehow, in some way, the day of the month we were born on and the magical alignment of the stars affects how we act. But I have a different perspective, on a bigger scale—what about what generation you were born in? That sounds more realistic, doesn't it? In fact, it is; there is more research and fact-based knowledge that indicates that our generation affects us as a person.

Starting on the largest generation on the older end, is Generation X, more commonly known as the “latch-key” generation. This group is generally defined as being born in the years 1965-1980. Gen X is considered the smallest generation as a result of the “pill,” being introduced in 1960, as well as abortion being more available due to the ruling in Roe vs. Wade in 1973- out of every 10 Gen X babies conceived, 3 were aborted (Stanley K, Henshaw 2008).

Many Gen Xers look back at their childhood and realize how much trust their parents had in them. They got their label as the “latch-key” generation from often coming home to an empty house with less parental supervision, therefore using the latch key their parents gave them to get into the house while they were at work. More and more women were entering the workforce, leaving no parent at home. Diane Jamison (QO parent), born in 1965 with two parents who worked in the government, says, “I walked to and from school through woods on my own when I was only 8, then would go play in the

neighborhood in the dark after dinner. I had no cell phone for my parents to track me.”

This sense of independence blossomed throughout their work and school life, as Gen X went on to be more educated than their parents. They developed a heavy entrepreneurial sense of work and became very self reliant and flexible all while creating a strong work-life balance.

Evolving from the latchkey

order to do their job, their internet access should be a human right (Joseph Johnson, Statista 2021).

Millennials are believed to have grown up in a childhood where participation awards were given in every sport and were constantly praised and sheltered by their parents who did not experience this same overprotectiveness. Because of this, they believed from a young age, they were special and their confidence was extremely high- this attribute seems



generation comes the Millennials or Generation Y. Millennials were born in the years 1980-1996 and are considered to have grown up in the “Internet Age.” Apps such as Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and Snapchat were released when the younger end of Gen Y were pre-teens and teenagers. According to a Statista article on internet usage among Millennials, they “had the highest social media usage reach among adults in the United States with Facebook, YouTube and Instagram...”. Currently, Millennials believe that in

to shine through throughout their adulthood. Based on NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory) surveys, a sense of entitlement and narcissism increased among the age group considered to be Gen Y. Psychologist Jean Twenge even wrote a book in 2006 called Generation Me that focuses on unrealistic life expectations Millennials possess due to how they were raised.

On a more positive note, Millennials seem to seek more meaning behind their work and want to know the “why” behind what they

do. Even though they might have unrealistic expectations, they still hold themselves to a high standard.

Lastly, let's talk about our young adults and teens of society—Gen Z, defined as people born between 1997 and 2012. Gen Z bends more of the established ideas created by past generations such as sexuality, gender, body image, etc. The generation as a whole also tends to be more left-leaning politically, and due to participation in politics among Gen Z, protests have tripled between 2006 and 2020, according to the Washington Post.

Although Gen Z has been breaking more conservative standards among society, they struggle with more mental issues than any other generation. A study from the British National Health Service (NHS) shows between 1999 and 2017, the number of children below the age of 16 suffering from at least one mental disorder increased from 11.4% to 13.6%. Being referred to as the “Loneliest Generation,” according to the OECD PISA surveys, 15-year-olds in 2015 had a tougher time making friends at school than ten years before, due to intrusive parenting, heavy use of electronic devices, and concerns over academic performance and job prospects.

Other internalized stressors such as issues like gun control, police brutality and climate change have led to the increase level of pressure among Gen Z. Despite the many heavy burdens such a young generation endures, Gen Z is on track to be the best educated generation yet, and similar to Millennials look for more passion behind their work and care less about salaries and more about their purpose in life.

QO community reacts to criticism of Taylor Swift's songwriting

By HAILEY BAKER
Staff Writer

Taylor Swift is a name almost everybody knows. She has been in the music industry for nearly two decades, releasing her first album in 2006. Since then, Swift has released eight more albums, which have all done extraordinarily well and have altogether sold over 100 million copies.

Swift is notorious for writing from her personal experiences, with the lyrics of her songs sounding like they were pulled out of a page from her diary. “I think she's a fantastic songwriter,” junior Caroline Axley said. “Her writing is just so relatable, even if you've never been through a crazy breakup... You can just kind of feel it and put yourself in her [perspective].”

Swift has won a countless number of awards for her songwriting, receiving the prestigious Hal David Starlight Award in 2010, and the Songwriter Icon award from the National Music Publishers' Association in 2021.

No matter one's opinion of Swift's music, it is undeniable that she is an extremely established songwriter.

That's why when Damon Albarn, who is best known as the frontman and primary lyricist of the rock band “Blur” and as the co-founder, lead vocalist, instrumentalist, and primary songwriter of the band “Gorillaz,” criticized Swift's songwriting, he received major backlash from Swift's fans.

During an interview with the Los Angeles Times, on the topic of songwriting, interviewer Mikael Wood brought up Swift, saying that, even if she is not everyone's taste, she is an excellent songwriter. In response, Albarn made the false and demeaning claim that Swift does not write her own songs, as she has co-written many of them with popular songwriters such as Aaron Desner of the band “The National” and Jack Antonoff of the band “Bleachers.”

“She doesn't write her own songs,” Albarn said. “I know what co-writing is. Co-writing is very different to writing. I'm not hating on anybody, I'm just saying there's a big difference between a songwriter and a songwriter

who co-writes.”

Swift responded to Albarn's claims on Twitter, saying, “I write ALL of my own songs. Your hot take is completely false and SO damaging. You don't have to like my songs but it's really f****d up to try and discredit my writing. WOW.” Sarcastically, Swift also tweeted, “PS I wrote this song all by myself in case you were wondering.”

“I think that the statement was made without the proper knowledge of her career,” sophomore and member of QO's acapella choir, QOverture, Chase Pasekoff, said. “I think that [Taylor's] songwriting is something that really sets her apart from other artists, because she writes all of her songs.”

After hearing about Albarn's criticism, Antonoff, who has witnessed Swift's songwriting process first-hand, came rushing to her defense. “I've never met Damon Albarn and he's never been to my studio, but apparently he knows more than the rest of us about all those songs Taylor writes and brings in,” he posted on Twitter.

Desner, who has also worked

numerous times with Swift, also disagreed with Albarn's claims. “As someone who pressured the record of those around her... your statements could not be further from the truth,” Desner said to Albarn. “You are obviously completely clueless as to its actual writing and working process.”

During the beginning of Swift's career, she received similar criticism to Albarn's, with critics questioning how much of the songwriting process she actually takes part in. In response, Swift wrote the entirety of her third studio album, entitled “Speak Now,” by herself. This album performed exceptionally well, and was certified six times platinum, meaning it has sold over six million copies.

Since then, Swift has released over 15 more songs she wrote completely by herself.

“Taylor's career is based on the fact that she writes her own songs. She and only she can communicate her stories in a certain way that connects her fans through her music,” said sophomore Rush Mathai. “I really love her songwriting. It's literally like reading a story. It's artistic and creative.”



VIEWPOINT

Spotify isn't doing enough to combat COVID-19 misinformation

By FIONA FEINGOLD
Senior Staff Writer

Just two months ago, the world was obsessed with Spotify Wrapped, with listeners eager to see what music defined their 2021. Now? Spotify has attracted attention for different reasons.

In May 2020, the streaming service signed a contract with commentator Joe Rogan that is reportedly worth over \$100 million. The contract made Rogan's podcast, *The Joe Rogan Experience*, exclusive to Spotify.

Rogan has recently come under fire for his choice in podcast guests. Last December, Rogan featured doctors Peter McCullough and Robert Malone on his show. Both guests have been vocal in their distrust of the COVID-19 vaccine.

McCullough is a cardiologist who believes in numerous conspiracies regarding the virus: the pandemic was planned, early treatments were hidden from the public, the disease cannot be spread asymptotically, and so on. McCullough also said that you cannot contract COVID-19 twice, although this has been proven untrue and was even disputed by Rogan on the show.

However, Malone's feature on the podcast is largely what set off the public response against Rogan and Spotify. Malone, who helped develop the mRNA technology that made the COVID-19 vaccine possible, believes that Americans are "being

hypnotized" by public health officials such as Dr. Fauci and even drew comparisons between modern-day America and Nazi Germany. Malone has also referred to this phenomenon as "psychosis," although he has recently stopped using that term.

In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, epidemiologist Katrine Wallace denied Malone's claims. "These are fringe ideas not backed in science, and having it on a huge platform makes it seem there are two sides to this issue. And there are really not. The overwhelming evidence is the vaccine works, and it is safe," Wallace said.

Rogan claims that he is not "anti-vaxx," but his actions haven't shown that he is "pro-vaxx," either. On an April episode of his podcast, he said he did not understand the need for young people to get vaccinated, saying, "If you're like 21 years old, and you say to me, 'Should I get vaccinated?', I'll go, 'No.'"

This is especially dangerous after considering the risks unvaccinated young Americans face. According to a study from the Washington State Department of Health, unvaccinated adults between the ages of 12–34 were 3 times more likely to contract COVID-19 and 5 times more likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19 than their vaccinated counterparts.

While Rogan's remarks are troubling enough on their own, the fact that he has chosen to platform people who weaponize their medical degree in order to spread misinformation is even more

upsetting.

Although Spotify prohibits anything "that promotes dangerous false or dangerous deceptive content about COVID-19," Rogan did exactly that while facing no repercussions from the company. Spotify has promised to administer warnings on all podcast episodes that discuss the virus, as well as provide listeners with links to accurate COVID-19 information.

Daniel Ek, Spotify's CEO, has admitted that he disagrees with Rogan on many issues but refused to remove the episodes featuring McCullough and Malone, saying, "If we want even a shot at achieving our bold ambitions, it will mean having content on Spotify that many of us may not be proud to be associated with. Not anything goes, but there will be opinions, ideas, and beliefs that we disagree with strongly and even makes us angry or sad."

While this inclusivity sounds great in theory, anti-vaccine propaganda should not be held to the same standards as conflicting political views. If podcasters want to share political "hot takes," that is completely in their right, but they should not be allowed to spread medical misinformation without consequences.

On February 5, Rogan removed 70 of his podcast episodes and posted a video on Instagram apologizing for his use of racial slurs and offensive jokes. He has not removed any of his episodes relating to the pandemic. Ek has also promised to devote \$100

million (roughly the same amount as Rogan's contract) to the "licensing, development, and marketing of music...and audio content from historically marginalized groups," in a memo obtained by *Axios*.

In response to Spotify's licensing deal with Rogan, musicians Neil Young and Joni Mitchell have asked the company to pull their entire discographies from the platform. According to a *Billboard* article, this decision will cost them about 10% of their overall revenue. In addition, podcast host Brené Brown has announced that her Spotify-exclusive podcasts, *Unlocking Us* and *Dare to Lead*, will be on pause "until further notice."

Many consumers now find themselves in an uncomfortable position. They do not want to support a streaming service doing so little to fight misinformation, but they also don't have a lot of options. There's always Apple Music or Amazon Music, but neither company is known for being particularly ethical.

While I don't think listeners have to boycott the company, I do think that we need to keep putting pressure on Spotify. They only started putting COVID-19 advisory warnings on podcast episodes because of the backlash they received over platforming Rogan. If we continue to call the company out, they just might listen.

REVIEW

Is season two of Euphoria worth watching?

By GRACE GNAMO
Staff Writer

The HBO show *Euphoria*, loved by many teens and adolescents, aired the first episode from its second season on January 9.

The show takes place in Southern California, where we watch the show through the main character Rue Bennett's point of view.

In the first season, we see Rue navigate her struggles with sobriety and love life as she falls in love with another main character, Jules Vaughn. Throughout the first season, we see the characters struggle to figure out their sexuality, build up their self-esteem, and navigate life as teenagers.

So far, five episodes have been released and the storyline is all over the place. The only thing that has stayed consistent is Rue struggling with addiction. The season starts off on New Year's Eve where we see another main character, Cassie Howard, sitting in front of a wine and liquor store intoxicated. She gets picked up by her best friend's ex-boyfriend, Nate Jacobs. The two get even more drunk and start doing risky things behind their good friend, Maddie Perez's, back.

At the party, we are introduced to Elliot, who provides and takes drugs

with Rue. Rue starts to invite her girlfriend, Jules, over to Elliot's house, which sparks a connection between Jules and Elliot. Due to Rue being intoxicated or not even being there during their hangouts, Jules ends up cheating on Elliot.

So far, the season has been a struggle to keep up with. I have liked bits and pieces such as when we were shown the upbringing of Fez, the local drug dealer, and how his grandmother raised and taught him and his brother everything there is to know about running a drug cartel.

Like many watchers, I also really like the aesthetics and the outfits each character wears. The dim lighting, sunsets, and constant raining add to the gloomy story. There is much anticipation to see what new makeup look and outfit will be shown in each episode.

Many argue that the show is not appropriate for teenagers and the plot should've been set in college instead of high school. I completely agree, especially with the graphic scenes we see. I am not a big fan of seeing teen characters being sexualized, and I find it very unnecessary and uncomfortable. If the writers feel it is necessary to include graphic scenes, it would be much better to allude to it, or in this case, have the narrator explain what happens as the camera

pans off. I hope that in the future, writers for shows targeted towards adolescents stop sexualizing underaged characters.

Overall, I would give the show a five out of ten stars. The show definitely tugs on your heartstrings and has you wanting to know what happens next. However, this show is pretty heavy and graphic, so please watch with caution. You can watch season two of *Euphoria* on HBO Max.

Rating: 5/10



Official promotional poster



Super Bowl LVI: Rams vs. Bengals

By ADAM GOTKIN
Editor In-Chief

If I told you a year ago that the Bengals would be playing in Super Bowl LVI, you'd call me crazy. The team was a year removed from a 2-14 season and had just gone 4-11-1. There wasn't much hope in The Queen City. Enter Joe Burrow. The 2nd year quarterback out of LSU who had torn his ACL in the year prior almost single-handedly turned around the culture of a struggling franchise. Burrow led the Bengals to a 10-7 record in the regular season.

The Bengals beat the Raiders in the first round of the playoffs, their first playoff win since 1990. They weren't done then though, the Bengals then went to the top-seeded Titans and won on a walk-off field goal then

traveled to arrowhead to dethrone the reigning AFC champs, Kansas City Chiefs.

The Bengals opponents, Los Angeles Rams, had a different path to the big game. The Rams came into this season with a "win now" mentality. They spent big on a star QB Matt Stafford, and are paying top money on two of the best defensive players in the league, DT Aaron Donald and DB Jalen Ramsey. WR Cooper Kupp, a consistently good receiver, broke out and had one of the best statistical seasons for a wideout in the league's history.

The Rams playoff run started on a Monday night against their divisional rival Arizona Cardinals. The game, arguably the most anticipated out of the six wild card games, was a blowout in favor of the Rams. A week later, in Tampa Bay the Rams ended

the career of Tom Brady with a last-second field goal to send them to the NFC Championship. There, the Rams were able to beat the 49ers, something they couldn't do in either of the two regular-season matchups.

Storylines

QO vs. Damascus

This year's match up will feature alumni from Quince Orchard and Damascus High Schools. Zach Kerr, a defensive lineman and QO graduate, is in his first year with the Bengals, after jumping around between a number of NFL squads. On the Rams, Jake Funk, a Damascus graduate, is proving himself as a quality special teams player. Funk has fought through numerous ACL injuries and has been one of the best stories in the league this past year.

My Prediction

This is a very hard one to predict for me. The Rams match up very well against the Bengals, and with all things considered should win the game. Yet the Bengals just feel like the team of destiny. It feels like this is their year and because of that I just have to pick them. I've got to go with my heart even though my brain disagrees.

I have Bengals 27-Rams 24.

"In the end, I am going to go with Burrow to outplay Stafford... Burrow will drive the Bengals to a game-winning field goal by Evan McPherson.

From two wins two years ago to Super Bowl champs." - Pete Prisco, CBS Sports



Our staff's predictions

After strong season, QO Hockey ready for playoffs

By SAMMY KRIMSTEIN
Staff Writer

In its six years of existence, the Quince Orchard Hockey program has never been better. During its first few years as a team, QO struggled to compete with some of the elite hockey programs in the MSHL (Maryland Student Hockey League), winning just 30% of their games from 2016-2019. Now, the Cougars are one of the top teams in Montgomery County, having just finished the regular season with a record of 8-3, good enough to secure the 4th seed in the Montgomery County Conference Playoffs.

Going into the season, the Cougars knew they had the potential to be successful. They had established themselves as a threat in Montgomery County in the previous year, winning six of their nine regular season games, their victories coming against some of the county's top teams. QO's newfound success was a clear indication of what was to come for the program.

Looking to sustain and grow upon the success from last season, the Cougars took on a mindset of positivity, physical play, and most notably, playing hard.

"We always say if you aren't going hard, then just get off the ice," said senior captain Jack Mendelow.

On October 22, QO had their 2021-2022 season opener against the Woodrow Wilson Tigers (who play in the Montgomery County Conference despite being located in Washington D.C.). With high aspirations, they began the season just as they intended,

with a dominating 11-0 win, junior forward Josh Weitzman leading the way with seven of Quince Orchard's eleven goals in the game.

As the offense shone in game one, defense would take center stage in QO's second match against Upper Montgomery. After a scoreless first period, Upper Montgomery struck first in the early minutes of the second to make it 1-0. The Cougars quickly retaliated with two goals of their own to take the lead, and in a defensive battle, that was all they needed. Goalie and junior Jeremy Eager kept the score where it was, allowing just the one goal on 18 shots in the game, and they won by a score of 2-1.

After an impressive first two games, the Cougars followed that up the best way they could: with another win. And another. And another. In these three wins against the Northwest Jaguars, the Rockville/Magruder combined team, and the DC Stars, respectively, they outscored their opponents 28-7.

Through these first five games, the Cougars weren't just winning. They were proving that their success from last year was no fluke. Not only did they demonstrate their ability to overpower opponents offensively, but they also showed remarkable defensive prowess. For head coach Andy Katon, QO's defensive improvement from last year was a major key to their hot start.

"I think that we've played much better defense, which has helped us a lot," he explained. "And defense wins tournaments, wins championships."

Although happy with their 5-0

record through five games, QO's job was far from finished. If anything, it was just getting started. Their last six games had them facing off with all of the county's top teams, including Churchill, BCC, and Blair. Their first game of this stretch would be a match against Blair, who just like QO, was 5-0 heading into the game. Someone's winning streak was bound to end.

Less than three minutes into the first period, it was QO taking the early lead with a goal by junior Dylan Eyester, although it wouldn't be long until Blair responded with two goals of their own. Before the end of the first, Weitzman found the back of the net, and things were all tied up, 2-2. The game would stay competitive throughout, but Blair pulled away in the third period, winning the game 7-5, and handing the Cougars their first loss of the season.

QO followed the loss with two solid victories, though, coming back from a 4-2 first period deficit to beat Richard Montgomery 9-6, and handling Wootton in a 6-2 win. That put QO's record at 7-1 heading into their highly anticipated games against BCC and Churchill, two of the top teams in the league.

Although the Cougars were able to keep both games close, they dropped both of them: 3-1 to BCC and 4-2 to Churchill. Despite their impressive defensive efforts, QO's trouble staying out of the penalty box hurt them in both games. BCC and Churchill capitalized greatly off of penalties, as both scored goals on the powerplay.

Finally, Quince Orchard closed

out the regular season, with a 5-3 win against Walt Whitman. Weitzman had another three goals in that game (finishing the season with a league-leading 32 goals), with junior John Sherikjian and senior Michael Sinnott scoring as well. Still, penalties were an issue: QO spent 18 minutes in the box, giving up another goal on the powerplay. With playoffs coming up for the Cougars, Head Coach Katon acknowledged the need for more disciplined play.

"Even if it means playing a little bit less physical, picking your moments when you're going to hit somebody, it's that kind of thing," he said. "But we have to say the penalty box."

As the 4th seed in the Montgomery County Conference playoffs, QO was able to earn a first round bye. With their first playoff matchup now set, they have a chance of revenge against the team that dealt them their very first loss: Blair.

"That's a team we should really beat," said Katon, "so we'd like the opportunity to play them again."

As with many sports teams, QO Hockey is energized by strong team chemistry. The bonds and relationships formed between teammates have contributed to the team's success in the regular season.

"I think us being a family has helped us win big games," Weitzman said.

And that is exactly what the team hopes to do heading into playoffs: win big games. Their first playoff match will be today, February 11 at 9:00 PM against Blair.



Former Dolphins head coach Brian Flores sues the NFL for racism

By JAKE REVZAN
Staff Writer

Former Dolphins head coach Brian Flores is suing the Miami Dolphins and the rest of the NFL for racial discrimination involving the firing and their hiring process conducted against him. The class-action lawsuit directly involves the Denver Broncos and New York Giants as they both posed as potential landing spots for Flores.

Who is Brian Flores? Brian Flores is a black NFL coach who began his career back in 2004 as a part of the New England Patriots coaching staff. He played a significant role in the Patriots dynasty led by all-time greats Bill Belichick and Tom Brady, winning 5 Super Bowl rings.

After 15 years with the Patriots, Flores was hired as the Dolphins' head coach in 2019. Since 2006, the Dolphins have had just 2 winning seasons. Flores turned around the franchise and had two winning seasons in just three years with

Miami. (Keep in mind he did not have a great roster to work with.)

Flores's immediate success with the Dolphins made fans wonder why at the end of the 2020 season he was fired in the first place. Although the Dolphins didn't make the playoffs, the team was clearly headed in the right direction.

Flores claims that he was fired because of "poor collaboration." This claim about Flores involves a situation with the owner of the Dolphins and Flores back in 2019, Flores's first season with the team. Owner Stephen Ross allegedly told Flores he would receive a 100k bonus after every loss. Many believe this involved the "tank for Tua" trend. Coming out of Alabama, Tua Tagovailoa was the best draft prospect in 2019 and the Dolphins needed a franchise QB. The more they lost, the better their draft pick would be, resulting in a higher percent chance of drafting Tua.

Then, in 2020, Flores was told by the owner Stephen Ross to recruit a prominent quarterback, which is in

direct violation of the league's tampering rules. Ross then allegedly invited Flores onto his yacht, where the "prominent QB" conveniently was onboard, too. Flores immediately refused and left to comply with the league's rules and avoid suspension.

After refusing to tamper and purposefully lose games, Flores believes he was labeled as non-compliant and difficult to work with, which ultimately led to his firing. Flores claims that the team gave him the "angry black man" stereotype and made it difficult for him to have success.

After his firing, Flores scheduled an interview with the New York Giants to become their first black head coach. Many NFL fans believed that he was a perfect fit and the obvious choice. Instead, the Giants hired former Bills Offensive Coordinator Brian Daboll and discussed with third parties their decision, including Flores's former coach Bill Belichick.

This is where the lawsuit came into place. Three days before Flores's

interview with the Giants, Bill Belichick sent a congratulations text to Flores, thinking he received the job. In reality, Daboll, also named "Brian," was hired. This mistake by Belichick put the Giants in serious hot water.

Flores had to go through an extensive interview process for a job he knew he would not get. Flores claims that the Giants had no intent to consider Flores and that this interview was only conducted to comply with the Rooney Rule, an official rule of the NFL which teams must comply with. It states that all teams must interview a black coach during a head coaching vacancy. He now seeks increased black influence in the hiring/firing process to end the discrimination and racism that still takes place in the league today. "God has gifted me with a special talent to coach the game of football, but the need for change is bigger than my personal goals," Flores says.

QO Wrestling rallies after numerous COVID scares

By JAKE REVZAN
Staff Writer

With playoffs just around the corner, team captains senior Shaan Soni, senior Kaden Czarnecki, junior Jason Webber, and senior Ethan DeCastro look to keep their season alive and win states. Despite the numerous challenges caused by the ongoing pandemic, the team finished their season strong with a 9-8 record.

"Covid has affected our wrestling season in a variety of ways," senior Captain Shaan Soni said.

Over winter break, the team was forced to forfeit 10 matches as well as a tournament. In order to reschedule the tournament, the entire season's schedule had to be altered. "It has been a complete mess," says Soni. But the team has stayed resilient and continued to give it their all.

On top of the many schedule

changes, the team has not been able to practice normally for the past month and a half. "Usually we practice all together as a team, but now we have to split up into four groups that socially distance from each other," Soni says. This change has noticeably altered the season, since the team has not been able to bond with each other like in past years.

The wrestling team did not let COVID stop them from having a winning record. At the end of the day, Soni and the rest of the team are extremely happy and thankful for the season they have had.

On Monday, February 7, the boys hosted B-CC at home in their first playoff match. QO won 32-28 to advance to the 4A West Region semifinals. They played Urbana on Wednesday, but as of the publication deadline, the final score was unknown.



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Washington goes Commando Team officially rebrands to Commanders after two nameless years

By JAKE ZAIDERMAN
Senior Staff Writer

After a long 18-month process filled with pressure and controversy, after dropping the R**skin nickname two seasons ago, the Washington Football Team has finally chosen a new name: the Washington Commanders.

The name came with some mixed emotions from QO students. Senior Dean Arnold didn't like the name. "With a terrible end to their season, you would think they would want to woo their fans over," he said. "However, they brutally failed at this and once again used an utter bland name."

Senior Bennett Moore added his own thoughts on the new logo. "I believe that the new Washington Commanders logo is bland. I think they could've done something much better, especially with the time they had," he said.

However, Senior Gabri Santini gave a positive response to the uniforms. "Although I'm not a fan of the new name, I do like the style of their burgundy matte helmets."

There is at least one big-name player on the Commanders that disapproves of the name as well. That would be star edge rusher and last season's Defensive Rookie of the Year Chase Young. Back in November, Young did a video with USA Today where he graded the list of eight finalist names the Washington Football Team put out. He gave almost all of them an F, including the Commanders. Young actually gave the highest grade, a simple thumbs-up, to "the Washington Football Team."

Although right now the name, jerseys, and logos might not be a hit, they have to go on people eventually, right?

Back to the promised land Boys basketball tries to replicate 2017 success

By JAKE ZAIDERMAN
Senior Staff Writer

QO boys basketball is looking to get back to the state championship game for the first time since 2017. The Cougars, coached by math teacher Paul Foringer, are 9-4 overall and 5-2 in league play, good for second place in their division at the time of writing.

The team is led by senior captains Bobby Farone, Ryan Boswell, and Drew Heinrichs. Heinrichs, a four-year varsity player, leads the team in scoring, averaging 15 points per game, with sophomore Nick Goldberg right behind him in second place.

Senior Jake Czworka is optimistic about their season so far. "We had a strong start to our season starting 4-0. Now being 9-4, we have faced adversity multiple times," he said. "As we head into the second part of our

season, I expect us to win out as we face tough competitors like Blair and Northwest, and be poised to make a deep run in the postseason."

The Cougars haven't had much success since getting to the championship game five years ago. Since then, they have had three straight first-round exits, with two of them being at home. Outside the run in 2017, and last year being canceled due to Covid-19, the Cougars haven't been past the first round of the playoffs since the 2014-15 season. With that in the back of their minds, the players are hungrier than ever. So watch out for the boys in the postseason.



PIXABAY



What color is each subject, according to QO?

By HAYLEY ASAI
Staff Writer

QO students surprise everyone again by bringing their unique opinions to the viral debate concerning the colors assigned to each subject. The survey asked QO students to decide what colors they associated with each subject, following the popular online debate.

For math, the color blue is the clear winner, perhaps relating to how the blue is often used to represent data and facts in infographics.

QO students have decided that both English and World Studies should be represented by the color yellow, which could lead to confusion. The percentage

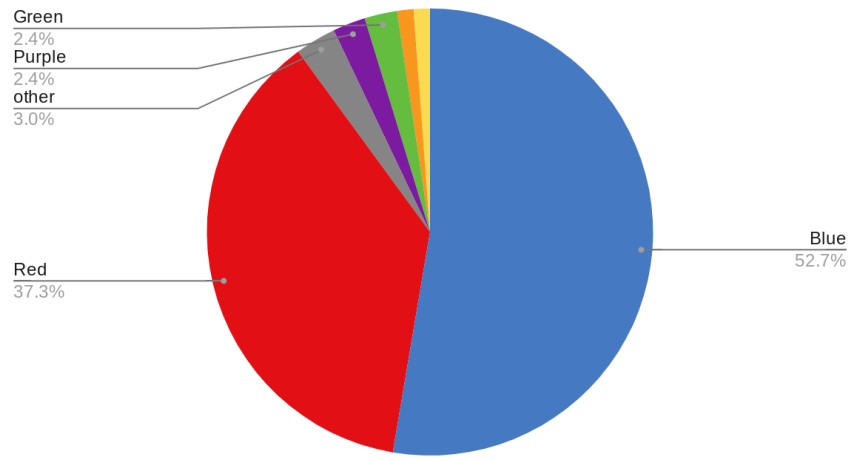
differences between the most popular and second most popular color is slightly larger for World Studies at 4%, which could lead to assuming the World Studies color is actually orange.

By far, the most unified decision was that science should be represented by the color green. This is no surprise due to science's strong relationship with nature, which is often characterized as green. Culturally, green has come to mean environmentally friendly.

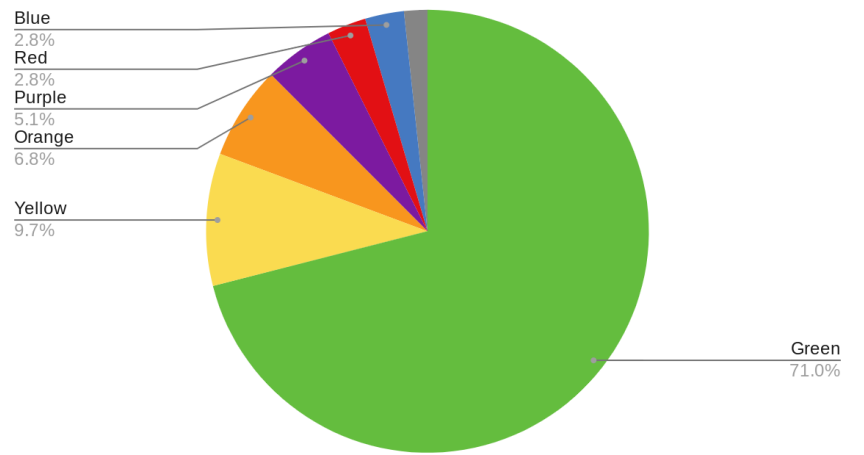
The most surprising response, however, was the strong agreement that World Languages were purple.

In conclusion, the results are in: math is blue, English is yellow, science is green, World studies is orange, and World languages are purple.

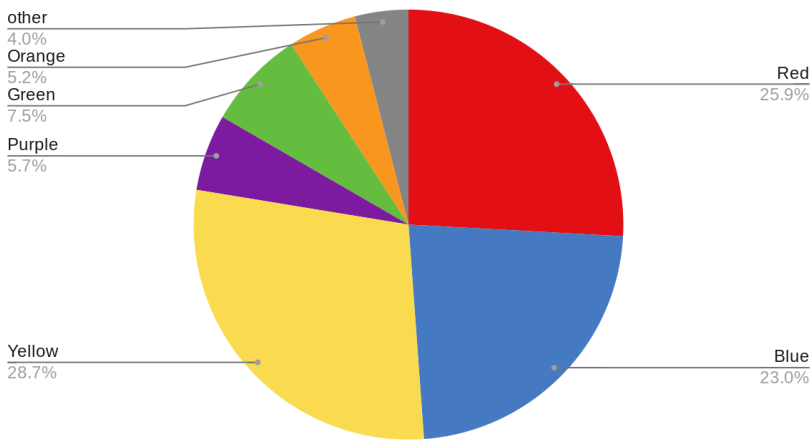
Math



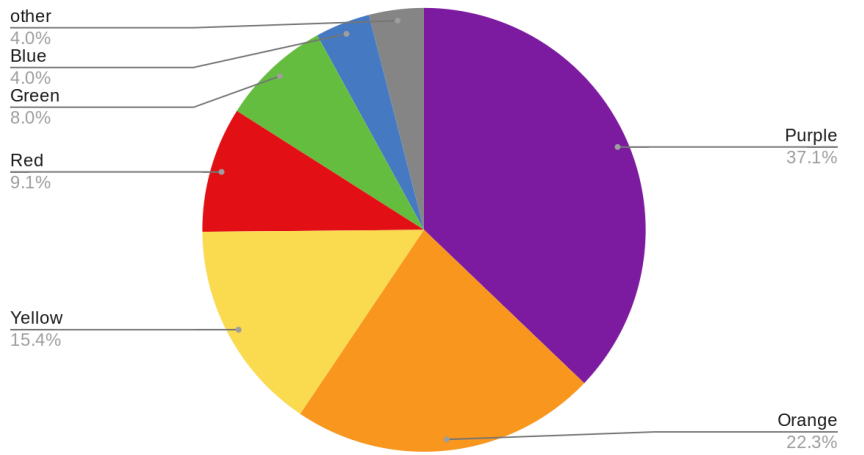
Science



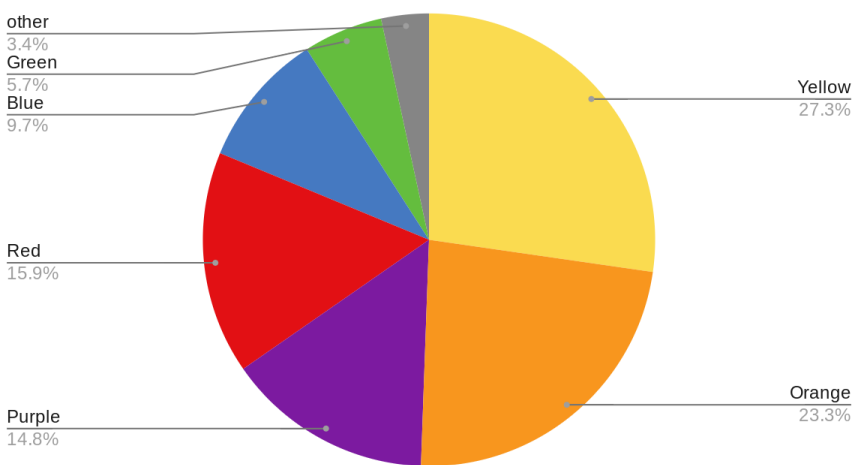
English



World Languages



Social Studies



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