

The Reckoner

of Marc Garneau C.I.



FEBRUARY 2022

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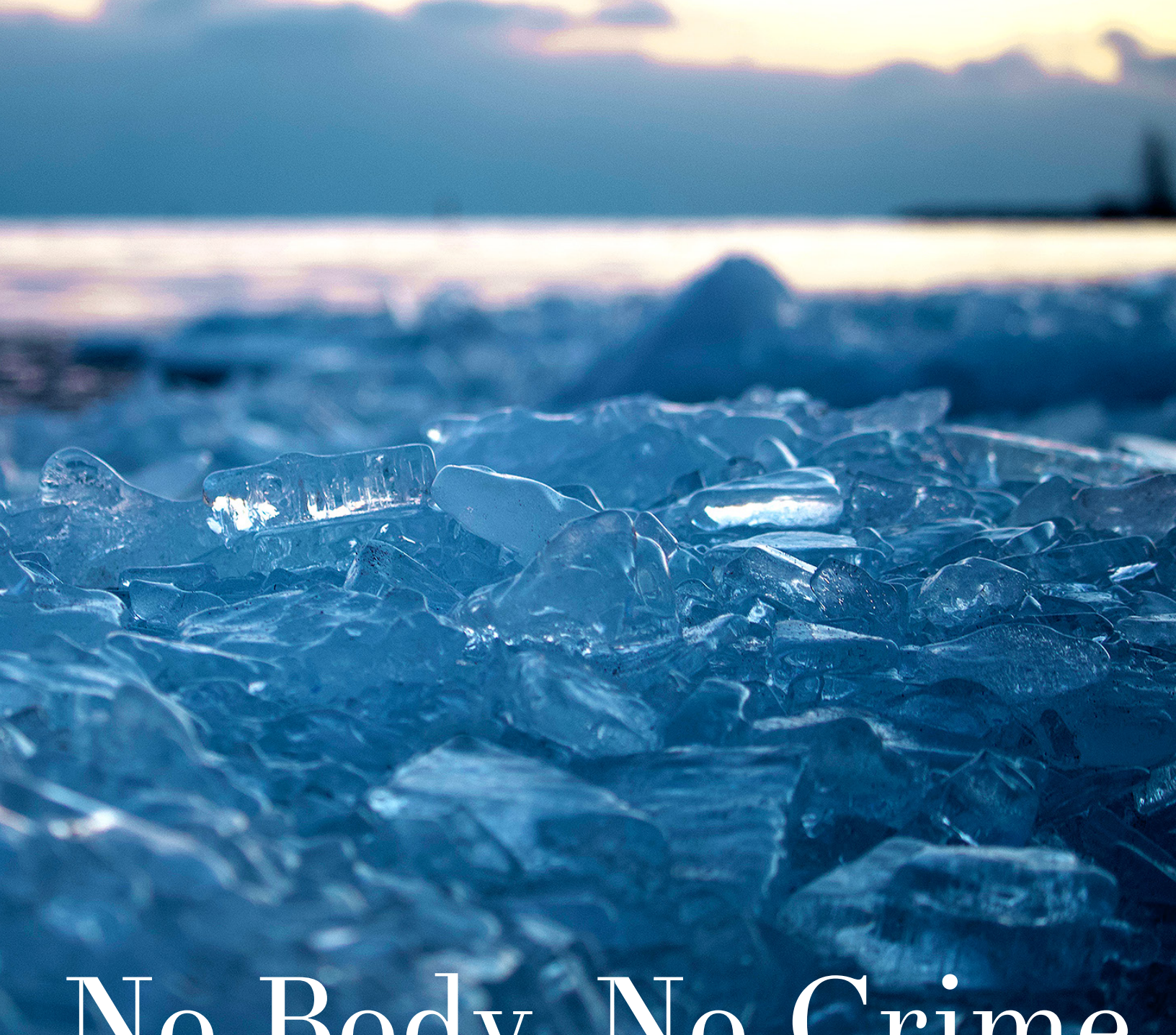
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REFLECTIONS IN ICE

As you may have noticed over the years, dear readers, news articles in The Reckoner are typically paired with photographs, whereas our Life pieces are accompanied mostly by illustrations. This year, we wanted to try something different. In January, we asked you to submit your stories, poems, and photographs, in an effort to unite two forms that are too often separated in our newspaper: creative writing and photography. One winning poem and one winning photograph have been chosen, and they have been printed jointly below. The theme of this multimedia contest was "Reflections in Ice."

Photograph: Nikolas Zahariadis





No Body, No Crime

by SAMAYA SADIQ

Your blood on my hands
Your body in the lake
Your perfume in the air

Gloves wrap around my fingers
Goosebumps dance across my skin
The crispness of winter slices through the air

Spiraling confusion
Moonlight mixed with betrayal
A sudden stop of time

You haunt the bottom of the frozen lake
My actions reflect the emotions on your face
Your piercing gaze finds no guilt

A power no greater
The pleasure of knowledge
Acceptance of no emotions

Lakes drown out voices
Lakes wash off fingerprints
Lakes don't kiss and tell

NEWS BOARD

A board to keep the student body informed about their school and local community.

Scottie Barnes' Spectacular Performance in the Toronto Raptors vs. Washington Wizards Game

by SAM LI

Shaquille O'Neal, the retired four-time NBA champion, would definitely have been proud of 6'10" Scottie Barnes' performance against the Washington Wizards. The once-supreme paint beast has griped about the lacking influence of traditional big men for a decade now, but after 40 minutes of play, the 4th overall pick out of Florida State was starting to show future all-star potential with his tenacious defense and jaw-dropping paint presence.

Barnes and the Toronto Raptors played a road game against the Wizards on 21 January at Capital One Arena. The game was the second in NBA history where two Japanese players faced each other: Toronto's Yuta Watanabe and Washington's Rui Hachimura.

The first quarter got off to a slow start as the Raptors trailed by as much as double digits. However, as the second quarter began, the Raptors took advantage of 9 Wizard turnovers and scored 18 points off of them. With 1:36 remaining and the Raptors trailing by 2, Barnes' steal secured Toronto the ball. After running back following an empty offensive possession, Barnes not only had court vision to read the incoming pass into the post by Wizard number 26, Spencer Dwinwiddee, but he also hustled knowing their transition defense wasn't set so that if

the pass came through, it could lead to an open 3 in the opposite corner.

With this quick game reset and steal, Pascal Siakam finished the play with a layup. The Raptors entered halftime with a 55-54 lead.



Illustration: Zoe Cheng

With both teams neck to neck early in the third, Barnes led the team with 10 points and demonstrated his versatility perfectly—not only was he a dominant inside scorer, but he also showed off his range and exceptional ball handling. 5 seconds down on the shot clock with Raptor possession at 8:03, Barnes drove straight into the post, but instead of bullying his defender down low, he pulled back with quick hesitation and shot a smooth elbow jumper. It was the farthest field goal he had made up to that point in the game. The Raptors finished the quarter with a 22-6 point run.

Early in the fourth, the Raptors

held the score at 95-77. However, Washington outscored Toronto and limited the team to 29% shooting; the Raptors blew their 18-point lead late in the game. With 1:10 left, Wizard Montrezl Harrells' dunk tied the game at 102. Fred VanVleet's tie-breaking three gave the Raptors the much needed advantage, and they were able to scrape the win, with the final score being 109-105.

Rookie Scottie Barnes had a career-high night of 27 points, eight rebounds and one assist. VanVleet scored 21 and 12 assists, and Siakam also scored 21 points. Toronto coach Nick Nurse used a nine-player rotation, whereas in previous games against the Miami Heat and Dallas Mavericks, the Raptors had had a tight seven-player rotation.

Wizards' star player, Bradley Beal, talked about Barnes' performance in a post-game interview: "Tonight, he looked like a star. He was making jump hooks all night. He was breaking us down. He wasn't doing anything crazy. He kept his game simple." With Scottie Barnes' pure dominance and drive, the entire nation has high expectations for the Raptors rookie. ■

Works Cited

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The Delayed Return to In-Person Learning

by ZAHRA AHMED

What was a highly anticipated two-week winter break for all students across the province roughly pivoted to a five-week gap before in-person learning resumed on 19 January.

As students concluded 2021, the return date to school was set for 3 January. However, over a week and a half into the break, the Government of Ontario announced its postponement for both virtual and in-person students to 5 January. The extra two-day window was for school districts to prepare for additional public health measures; the COVID-19 screener for schools and daycares required updating, and schools were to provide three-ply cloth masks to students and put a pause on high-contact indoor sports and some extracurricular activities.

Following the announcement, an email was sent to all families from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) on 30 December, notifying that the Ministry of Education will no longer be collecting COVID-19 case numbers from schools. Whereas in the past year, the school community received updates whenever there was an active case in the building, cases will now be tracked through student absences. Families will only be notified once a school hits a 30% absence rate above standard attendance—and only then will closures be considered. Students and teachers directly in contact with the COVID-19 case

will receive a notification.

When asked about her thoughts after finding out COVID cases will no longer be counted, Sarah Hira, a Grade 11 student attending in-person schooling, said, “Not reporting the active cases in schools allows the virus to stay hidden when it spreads. That is a risk to everyone, and not just students. No one really knows how safe our school is, and how safe the people going there are. As members of the school

community, we deserve to know—it gives us a sense of security.”

As the number of Omicron cases and hospitalizations continued to rise throughout the break, students and teachers anxiously waited on news regarding the plan back to school. Tweets of leaked decisions regarding postponed in-person learning circulated through social media platforms, but the final statement was released by the provincial government on



Photograph: Angela Xu

3 January. All schools were to move to remote learning from 5 January to 17 January. As soon as the transition was announced, Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute administrators sent out a school-wide email reaching out to students who required devices to engage in virtual education; students who were in need of a Chromebook or internet access were asked to complete the Google Form as soon as possible.

In emails to families, the TDSB emphasized how it prioritizes students' mental health as the unprecedented challenges continue to come with the pandemic. In addition to school-provided resources, they shared more support links on their website. "I appreciate how TDSB made an effort to recognize our mental health and well-being; however, I think the decision to go virtual should have been announced earlier. It wasn't a complete surprise because it was foreseeable, but knowing that we were going virtual would have given us more peace of mind," says Raneem Alturk, Grade 12 student.

On 5 January, students stepped foot into the new year of learning online, and continued virtual learning for around two weeks. The return to in-person learning for students in school boards across the province was then confirmed to be on 17 January.

In the email following the announcement, the TDSB addressed a few updates concerning secondary evaluations and end-of-semester classes. As the move between in-person and virtual learning took place close to the end of the semester, they

stated, "Final marks will not be negatively affected by the final evaluations (final performance tasks, interviews, etc.). Marks will reflect work done up until December 17, 2021." Teachers would continue assigning work and giving feedback; however, the work "will only be taken into consideration for Semester 1 final marks if it improves the student's mark." Additionally, students were given the opportunity to complete the semester virtually. The TDSB stated, "We know that some families and students will choose not to return to in-person learning for a period of time for a variety of reasons." Students who chose to remain virtual until 1 February did not need to inform the school, as they would be expected to log in everyday and attend class virtually.

Grade 11 student Kainat Fatima said, "It made me feel secure in a sense because everything I've been working hard for over the semester won't go down. But on the other hand, it stressed me out a bit more because we've never gotten to experience a proper finals season, and we're graduating next year."

Amid the preparation for the return to school, on 16 January, Environment Canada issued a snowfall warning for the City of Toronto. Given the forecast, TDSB informed families that the snowfall might impact student and staff safety with respect to commute and school bus operations. As per the TDSB's Severe Weather Procedure, the board assessed the weather situation and made the decision at 6 am to close in-person schooling

and extend remote learning for one more day.

Recognizing how the last-minute change of plans was difficult for many families, as well as the continued efforts for cleanup following the major snowstorm, the Director of Education, Colleen Russell-Rawlins, communicated that both live and virtual learning were to close for the next day, 18 January.

TDSB students finally made their return to school on 19 January. Regular safety protocols were in place; students were required to complete a self-screening before entering the school, follow social distancing measures, and always wear a mask. During the morning announcements, it was advised for students to spread out in the building during lunch. All sports and extracurricular activities were put on a pause; many transitioned back to virtual meetings. According to the Principal, Mr. Di Felice, approximately 300 students have decided to stay virtual, while 1 500 students have made their return to school.

When asked how it felt to return to school, Grade 11 student Omar Memon said, "School did feel empty, which is understandable as many people would want to stay away from crowds at this time. But school has never, and I don't think ever will, feel like a ghost town. The staff and teachers at MGCI have done a great deal to keep the environment as fun as possible, so huge props to them."

As in-person and virtual students conclude their first semester, spirits and hopes are high for the semester to come. ■

MGCI Debate Delivers at Queen's High School Debating Championship

by ANNE LIU

From 22 to 23 January, Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute's Debate Club attended the Queen's High Schools Debating Championship. Five teams were sent on behalf of the school, consisting of students from Grade 9 to Grade 12.

Due to limited availability, along with great interest in the tournament, tryouts were held on 17 December to determine which teams would represent the school. A total of nine teams tried out, judged by 2021 MGCI Debate Club president and executive Akil Huang and Conner Lee, respectively. In the end, five teams were chosen and began preparing for the tournament.

While the debaters attended their weekly debate practices,



Illustration: Zoe Cheng

they also began practicing specifically for this competition two weeks in advance. They went through several topics—ranging from economic issues to those of international relations—and debated many rounds to familiarize themselves with the themes likely to be discussed at Queen's.

Finally, the long-awaited day of the tournament came. On the morning of, the attending MGCI teams joined a voice call as a final get-together before the tournament. They briefly went over the tournament's logistics, passed on last minute tips, and pumped each other up. The tournament was about to begin.

Teams were randomly slotted in the first round of the tournament. When asked about his thoughts before the first round, Grade 10 student Jeremy Dai said, "I feel a little nervous. But, at the same time it will just be an enjoyable experience, so I'm not too stressed out. I'm excited!" Following the first round, MGCI teams pushed forward in the competition, with each round featuring different topics and other teams of the same calibre. By the end of the second day, all teams had debated in at least five rounds and collected helpful feedback from judges, along with points contributing to team rankings along the way.

The event also included a free seminar about improving debate preparation skills guided by semi-finalist in the World Universities Debating Championship, Naomi Panovka. Many of MGCI's club members attended this seminar, taking notes and learning from her talk to improve in future rounds.

The day wrapped up with the awards ceremony on Sunday evening. A special highlight from the MGCI teams that attended was the team GM LM, consisting of Grade 12 students Taira Mehta and Larissa Long, that placed ninth among 240 teams.

When reflecting on the experience as a whole, Grade 9 student Oriana Zhou said, "Overall, I thought that the tournament was fun, even though some parts were quite challenging." Through the challenges, it was generally a positive and helpful experience for members of the MGCI Debate Club.

"I am incredibly proud of how our debaters performed at this tournament," said club president Larissa Long. "It was a challenging and highly competitive two days, and it was incredible watching them apply the skills we had practiced throughout the year, and reap the results of it. Many of these debaters have a lot of potential, and I look forward to seeing them at future tournaments." This is the third debate tournament MGCI has attended this school year, and the club is planning on making its mark at more competitions throughout 2022, such as the Western Spring High School Tournament coming up in late February. ■

pillow talk

by ANGELINA WANG

I quickly turn on the hairdryer. I can no longer tell if someone is still yelling behind all the noise, or if it's only the electrifying blow humming in my ears. When I'm done, I'm also done crying, but I glare at the person in the mirror—nice poofy hair ruined by the red and bloated face behind it—and a wave of fluster and regret ends all the sulking. What was the point of all that emotion?

The walls seem to lean in as the days get colder. I draw the blinds, and as my fingers twist the slats together, over an unrelieved view that vacates for an unbounded pitch black every night, I become more alone. Just me with the clutter of mismatched furniture. I wonder if it even matters, to close the blinds—on such tranquil nights, living universes away from a life of a teen drama—not a soul will see me anyways. Plus, I hate waking up to a dark room.

I'm aware that nothing particularly momentous, nor exciting, is happening tomorrow, but I pretend I am in anticipation of the plans I've made in my head during the last minute, knowing that tomorrow can't possibly be more dull than today. I ritually turn off the lights and roll into bed.

I have plans for myself tomorrow, but tonight is all my own.

I've set up this little roleplay, night after night. It's insane how it begins subconsciously every time. As if between me and the wall, there's someone there listening, all my thoughts begin to flow out my lips in low whispers. And after a good 20 minutes of talking, I wish I had written it all down. And as if my blood pumps inanity instead of air, I say,

"...it's really good to have someone here..I don't think I've ever sat down with anyone and talked like this..."

"...I've never said any of this to anybody, but you know me—I hate keeping secrets, they just get wound up inside me and eat me away..."

A board for imaginative self-expression through written and visual content.

THE BOARD

"...and I know that sometimes I sound like a complete lunatic—but I've always thought it's better to sound crazy to others, than to be crazy within..."

"...it's so good that you're here..."

"..but you know what's funny? I've had this same conversation with myself over and over and over, hoping one day I'll get to say it to a friend, someone like you, someone other than myself..."

"...but you know what else is funny? That's what I'm doing right now, and it's so, so sad that you aren't actually here..."

Oh it's so very funny. Whatever it was that kept my words flowing halted so the tears would have their turn, again.

It was probably a page ripped out of a journal. I put it back on the bus seat where I found it.

I actually didn't even know what bus I'm on, just that I'm heading south of the city. I was ditching home tonight for the first time.

My face stung from all the crying, and the cold air stung it even more when I stepped off the bus.

It seemed like a nice neighborhood; there was a school, a busy intersection of traffic, and the main street was still bright and bustling. The streetlights looked like big, blinking circles, the colour of CDs, as I squinted behind my watery eyes. I turned the corner and headed in the direction of a smaller street that diverged into a leaden landscape.

The holiday lights were still up on some of the houses, but all else was dark.

So it stood out well.

There was a little window to the side of a house that had its light on, blinds undrawn, and there stood the silhouette of a girl getting ready for bed. I rubbed my eyes and she was still there. I couldn't

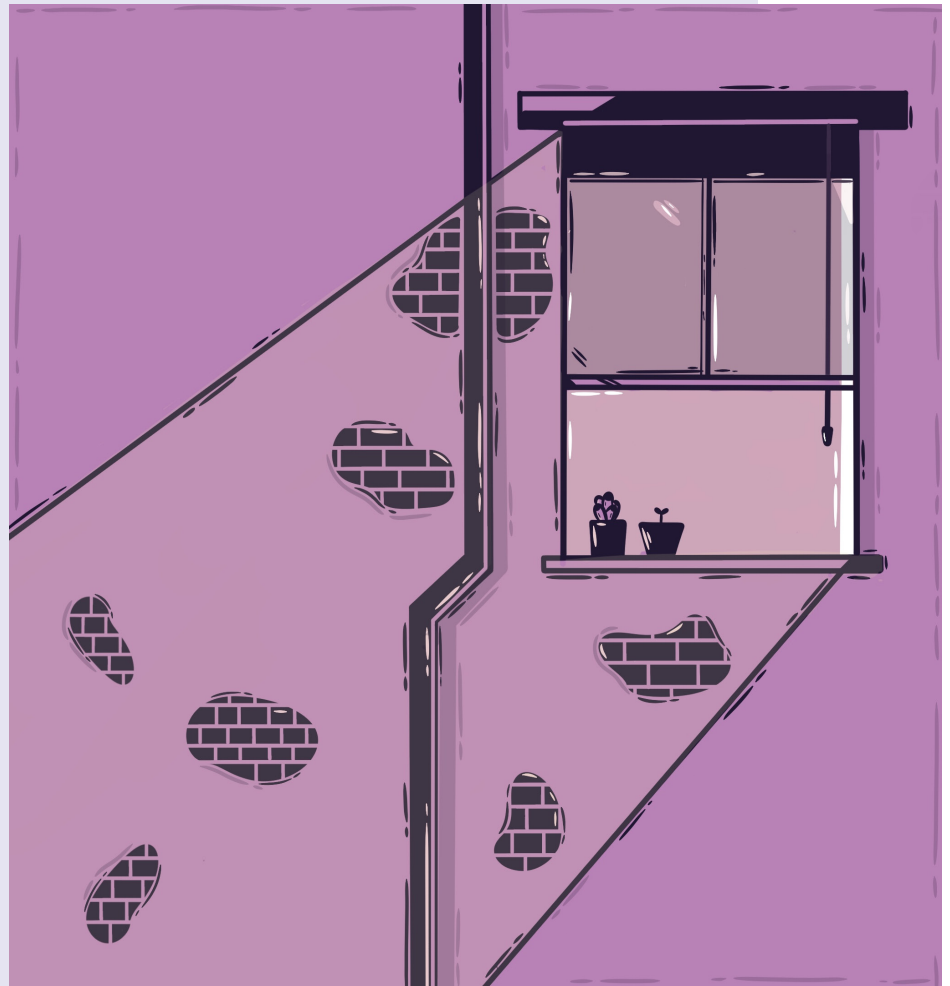


Illustration: Grace Zhu

even see her clearly but the sight of her made my streaming tears melt even more.

I clearly didn't know what I was doing, but I grappled my way over the garbage bin, held on to the gutters, and pulled myself up to a little section of the roof that lay right in front.

Like a lunatic, I gave a gentle knock on her window. ■

Ruins

by JAVERIA SAJID

As the sun begins to peek
from behind a dark veil,
sparrows sing a mourning
song.
Air nips at my numb nose,
my breath dancing in the air.

Oak beams tumble down
crashing, lifting dust into the
air.
Rot sequesters in my mind.
Each smudge of dirt a stain.
Never to be removed
as paint keeps chipping.

They lie in wake of a
never-ending issue.
Reveling in disputes and rages.
Lost in mindless, irrational
arguments,
holding clocks that never let
time pass.

Beetles grow stagnant in wait
of what will never come.
The lady wails in despair as it
all comes down.
What was once renowned,
now forgotten.

Never will I bask in its glory.

First loves and nights by the
fireplace,
dancing in the kitchen at mid-
night.
Spilled glasses and drunk ad-
vances,
shattered mirrors raining
down.

Memories haunt empty walls
Leaving only the dust sticking
to the soles of my boots.



Illustration: Ivy Liu

Summer's Day

by SAM LI and JERRY HONG

The looming skyscrapers around him seem to hoist the clouds up as if they would come crashing down like meteorites otherwise, their smooth windows beaming rays from the sun down towards him. As the tempo of life slows to an andante of molasses, he smells the vibrant city air—animated and rousing, almost honeyed, and florid. The golden wheat fragrances from the bread shop next door waft into his home and blossom in his mind.

He grips the front-door knob in his hand, savouring the rough texture as he turns it. The cars outside are engaged in a tussle of sound, horns cutting through the air like a knife through butter. The trees rustle, each leaf adding a note to the collective symphony the tree becomes. He is then drawn to people talking. What complexity each human life holds and with what beauty

that complexity is shown through conversation.

As he leisurely sips his French press, dark and rich, layered with a thin sheet of creamy oat milk, he tastes the only standing anchor that keeps the normality of his day. He feels the vibrant life that flourishes around him; the crowd, the atmosphere, and animated chatter, everything was so perfect.

He leaves his apartment, and looks back. He lives on the fourth floor of a small rectangular prism, sandwiched between two other towering giants. Both are residential, and the bottom floors are part of a shopping center. The large wooden door is painted a dull green and the walls are brick. The rest of the mall has a more modern feel, but this building had a hunting shop on the first floor and he liked its rustic atmosphere. He turns around

and continues his walk.

He sees the baker coming out of the bakery next door, dumping used aluminum foil from a tray into his trash bins. He wonders how many sales the baker has made this past week. Has the rise in price of grain and related commodities been treating him well? Has his new cookie recipe with cardamom worked out? Perhaps no one has noticed, but they will taste a similar cookie and realize how much of a difference it made.

Around the corner, he sees the chipper feral pigeon that has sat by the same exact lamp every morning at the same time for the past 496 days. They conduct their usual meet-up routine with a light peck and as he continues down the sidewalk, he sees old friends catching up, new friends in the making, and enlightening chatter between businessmen brisk on their

walk to their next location for monetary gain.

In the distance, he notices teenage bikers racing past one another with ease, laughing at one another's form and posture. Even from afar, he feels the speed, the rise and falls of the path, the chance to go over grass, mud or road... the freedom he always craved. He would forever envy such a privilege of absolute autonomy, the independence to travel the world without concern of money, the liberty to just relax and forget about reality.

The city has so many faces, that until you slow down, grip all the hedge stones, grace all the meandering esplanades and come to terms with all its emotions, you have no idea where you live. He loved the city with every fiber of his being, because for every thief



Illustration: Sonia Ravindran

amongst the crowd, there their hearts. He loved are a thousand other men the city, for it was what with gleaming lights in made him who he is. ■

incompetence

by AKSHAYA VARAKUNAN

keep your dreams close and your
discomfort closer
so close that it seeps into your
mind—

you don't notice when it crosses
the line
between a driving force and suf-
focation

the fear of disappointment is the
most terrifying:
to let others down is to let your-
self down
the love for disappointment is the

most terrifying:
until when will you be okay with
things staying this way?

we are all consumed by a raging
greed
for the world to be better, and yet
I lose my mind when I put my
mind
in a world where there is nothing
to greed for

sentence numbs itself to keep
itself together

unable to bear the fact that 24
hours are not enough
not enough to save the whole
world,
but still enough to save some-
thing

this incompetence of mine, the
knowledge that I know nothing
is what allows me to wake up in
the morning
in this infinite world, there must
be something
to keep waking up for



Illustration: Colleen Chang

All the Various Colours

by HATEEM FATIMA

All the various colours of nail polishes I have.

Blue, green, yellow, pink; you name it; I'll probably have one shade of it, if not more.

I'm not really sure when one became two, and two became three, and all of sudden three became twenty. I guess somewhere along the way, the numbers became blurry.

It used to take only ten minutes to apply nail polish on both hands.

But once again, I'm not sure when ten minutes became thirty, and thirty minutes became forty-five.

I just know that each time I did my nails, more and more intricate designs were displayed.

I wanted the design to look fun. The colours to look pretty. And most importantly,



Illustration: Hiba Mulla

to cover my bare nail with something new. Something fresh.

Because every time my nails are bare, they chip.

They break.

And I have to start all over again. Wait for them to grow; a process that sometimes takes a whole month for me.

In its own way, that carefully painted pattern was protecting me.

But I'm fully aware that despite all the likes it gets, it's not ideal. I know.

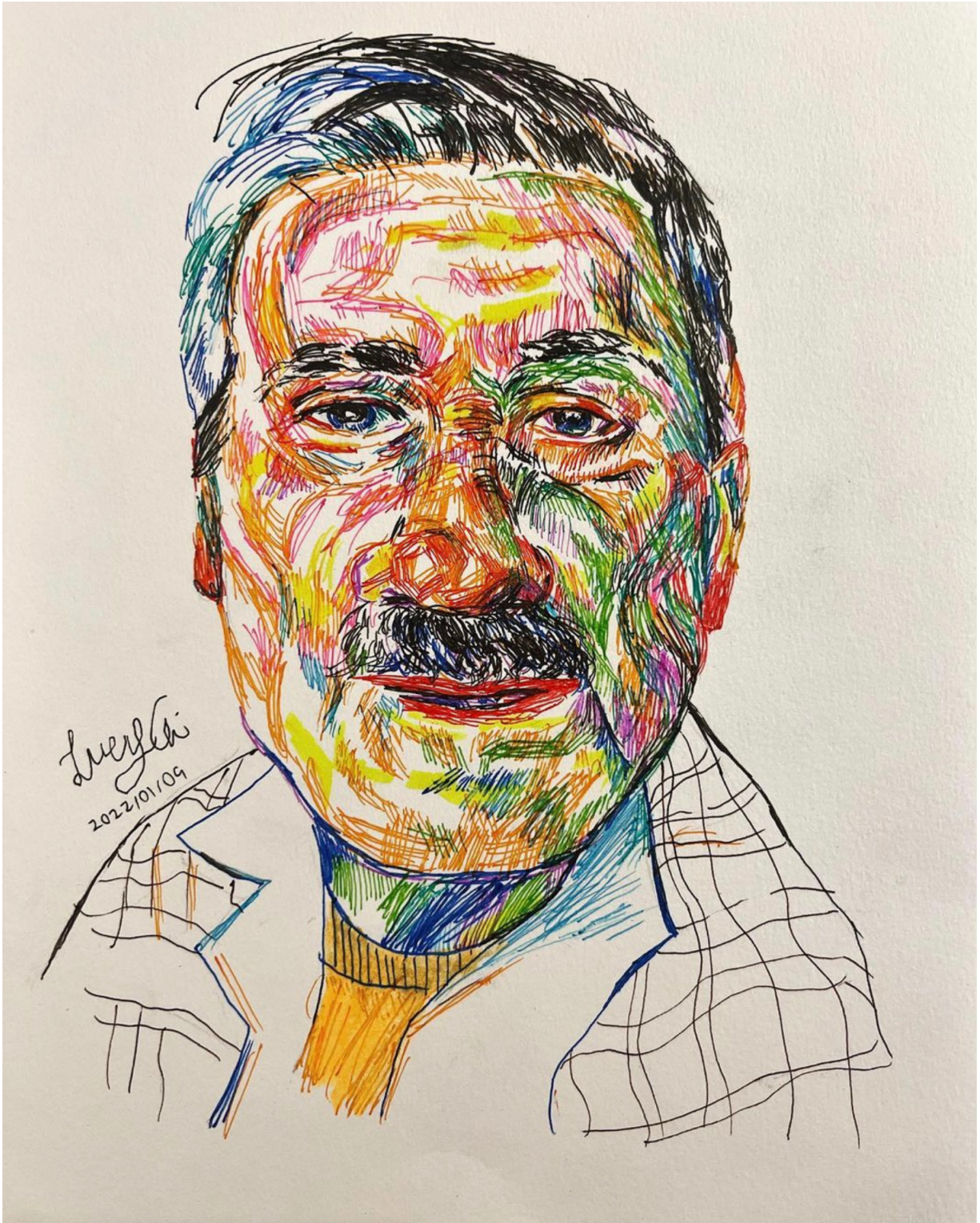
I know nail polishes are full of chemicals. And I know those chemicals can seep into my nail bed. And I know they can cause more harm than good for my nails.

I know that after a while nail polish chips off. And I know that it ruins the look of your pretty design.

I know I'd have to take care of my nails even more so than without the polish. I know.

But despite that all, every once in a while, I can't help but gloss over my nails with one of my various bright, shiny, and appealing colours. ■

mixed feelings
Lucy Qi



The heart
Oriana Zhou





Afternoon
Donna Zhang

EDITORIAL BOARD

A board that amplifies student voices through supported opinions.

Inequality, Aid, and Coal: Tales of Climate Hypocrisy

by ANTHONY CHEN

If you don't believe that climate change exists, don't read any further.

That wasn't some bold political statement. I was originally going to cover the abundant evidence from atmospheric measurements and millennia-old ice cores which prove that humanity has affected Earth's climate. I was then going to explain how it all started when we first began using fossil fuels at scale during the Industrial Revolution [1]. I also wanted to explore the patchwork of international law concerning climate change, from the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change—first to acknowledge climate change—to the Glasgow Climate Pact just signed in November 2021 [2]. I even found a cutting-edge in-browser climate model that would show how anthropogenic effects far outweighed natural climate change and demonstrate the impacts of various climate policies [3]. However, I eventually realised that many readers wouldn't want to read two thousand words about the structure of the UN and another two on global wind currents, JavaScript does not ordinarily run in .pdfs, and The Reckoner has a strict word limit on editorials [4].

Instead, let me take you to Kiribati (pronounced Kiri-bass). It's an archipelago of islands in the central Pacific that you've probably never heard of. There are just over 100,000 people there, and climate change is a daily reality for all of them. Agriculture is a primary source of income, and rising sea levels have been destroying their freshwater supply and crops. As a result, many residents are famous activists, often confronting oil executives at conferences [5]. But the executives aren't worried one bit. Even if we stopped using all fossil fuels to-

morrow, Kiribati will be completely underwater in a few decades—and when was the last time a stateless refugee was invited to a climate conference?

The average Canadian has the same carbon footprint as 40 Kiribatians, yet Canada won't be the one that will be entirely underwater in decades. Such is the reality of climate change. Pacific island countries are the most threatened by climate change, even though they emit the least carbon both in total and per capita [6]. Other regions of the world are similar. Africa is running out of water during a population boom, and Southeast Asia is battered by typhoon after typhoon [7]. Meanwhile,

the Middle East is warming twice as fast as the global average, and some areas will soon be too hot for humans to survive in the future [8]. Countries in those regions—barring oil-rich ones with more funds to deal with climate change—are affected the most despite contributing only a fraction of our impact to climate change [6].

It gets worse. Not only are first world countries currently emitting more greenhouse gases, they have also historically emitted far more greenhouse gases than other countries [9]. While some might say that we need to focus on the current picture of carbon emissions, the fact remains: every atom of carbon released into the atmosphere has affected the



Illustration: Akshaya Varakunan

global climate, even if it didn't show up on the UN's latest annual emissions report. Now that developed countries have emitted many times their "fair share" of emissions, many developing countries are demanding "climate reparations" for their lost economic opportunities before committing to any reduction in emissions—effectively holding the entire world hostage [10]. However, if everyone wants developing countries to invest titanic sums in reducing emissions and no one wants to foot the bill, what are they to do? Why should they reduce emissions if they benefit more from continuing to develop and emit?

Like every other developed country, Canada agreed to the Rio formula in 1992 that stipulated "common and differentiated responsibilities" in climate action [2]. We like the "common" part—"we're all in this together" is a common refrain—but not so much the "responsibility" part. You may recall Trump facing global condemnation for withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement because he felt it was unfair to the US—it's worth noting here that America makes up less than 5% of the global population but uses over 25% of the world's resources [11]. But you may not have realised that it was only the latest event in a long history of developed countries agreeing to targets with multi-year deadlines that they later won't meet. Clinton agreed to the Kyoto Protocol in 1998, before Bush withdrew in 2001. Its deadline was 2012. If you think Canada was any better, we withdrew right before the deadline because we didn't want to pay the financial penalty for missing our targets [12].

We outsource our production and disposal to developing countries, then inevitably attack them for the resultant pollution [18]. They mine the rare earth metals in our smartphones, produce them for a fraction of the cost, and later allow us to dispose of the toxic e-waste by dumping it in their lands [13]. Why don't we do that in our homes and watch our emissions rise? Perhaps you already know the answer. We're worried about our future, and third-world residents aren't. That's because they don't have a future. They don't even have a present.

"So what," I hear you say. "Big deal. It's unfair, but we'll give them aid and they can develop sustainably."

If you think that, I have bad news. Recently, rich countries completely missed a 2009 pledge to provide \$100 billion to poor and vulnerable countries by 2020. \$100 billion was estimated as the bare minimum that poor countries needed to adapt to climate change, to say nothing of reducing emissions. By various independent estimates, the developed world scraped up anywhere from 1% to 23% of that—Canada contributing far less than our fair share based on historic emissions, current emissions, population, and relative wealth. Now, the same \$100 billion funding goal has been set for 2022 [14]. Do you think we'll succeed?

At the COP26 climate conference, the British conference president boldly proclaimed that "We [should] leave [coal] in the past where it belongs," to much applause [15]. That was easy for him to say because the UK is a developed country and doesn't need coal—it was even the first to announce a phase-out schedule for coal in 2015. Like him, you might also think that we should abandon coal as quickly as possible. In our comfortable and modern lives, coal seems a relic of the past. The millions of coal labourers and electricity-less citizens of India would disagree. "If there is coal, then we live. If there isn't any coal, then we don't," a coal scavenger observed in an interview with the Associated Press [16]. The loose pieces of coal they scavenge and sell every day are a promise of industry and further development, similar to how it heralded progress for Britain in the Industrial Revolution when Britain produced and used the most coal in the world. To us, coal is the past. But for the citizens of India—as well as for many in other developing countries—coal is the future. Their future [17].

The point of this article is not to make readers feel guilty about their privilege of living in a developed country, but to present an accurate picture of today's global inequalities and stir them to action. Our governments implore developing countries to cut emissions when we should be leading by example and reducing our disproportionate carbon emissions. We hardly are. But if enough people demand change, the companies and governments—including ours—most responsible for climate change can be brought in line with domestic law and international treaties. And if that

happens, the resulting emissions reduction would be far greater than could be effected by any amount of condemnations directed at developing countries for daring to emit emissions and develop—and better yet, the post-reduction situation would be far more equal than the world is now. Only then can we bandage the wounds of climate change and look past the shared struggles—to an uncertain future.

In the meantime, I'm trying to stay mindful of contradictions. Contradictions like when the most anticipated climate conference ever also has the largest carbon footprint. Contradictions like promoting global coal bans when billions rely on it for electricity. Contradictions like countries that should be reducing their emissions forcing developing countries to do so instead. ■

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Terrors of Taking TTC

by PAUL SHUR

Carrying heavy hearts laden with homework and fear of tests, many students arrive at school each day dreading what's to come. These same people are the ones who, from Monday to Friday, at 2:44 pm sharp, sit upright in their seats with eyes glued to the second-hand of the clock, waiting for the bell to ring. And when it does, the blissful feeling of freedom that had been restrained for the past five hours breaks free of its shackles. Textbooks are slammed shut, chairs haphazardly stacked, and a mad dash to the door ensues. The silent hallways erupt with laughter and cheers, as a mob of students leap down the stairs and spill onto the sunlit parking lot.

But for a select few students who have no choice but to take the bus home, the ordeal is far from over. In this article, I will be arguing on behalf of my fellow public-transit-takers on why the true terror of going to and leaving school does not lie in the destination, but rather in the journey.

Many people have a glorified view of taking the bus; some see it as a gallant display of independence, while others treat it as excess socialization time with their friends. I myself once had these same thoughts, until the cruel clutches of reality yanked my head out of the clouds. In truth, the bus ride home is a route filled with dangers and discomfort. This is due to two main reasons; the sheer volume of people, and the horrible structure of public transit.

I feel like a lot of people underestimate the number of people that depend on the TTC to get home. Indeed, in the beginning, waiting for the bus isn't so bad; people are sparsely spread out along the sidewalk and minding their own business. But this is just the calm before the storm.

As soon as the red and blue headlights of the bus turn the corner, eyes that had been glued to phone screens shoot up with lightning speed. Then without warning, a suffocating wave of bodies surges forward, funneling towards the spots where the bus doors open. The air fills with sounds of chat-

ter and unzipping bags as people reach for their Presto cards.

A loud PSSCHHHHHH rises above the din, and the bus slowly rumbles to a stop. Accompanied by a flashing display of lights, the black-framed doors swing open ominously. Instantly, all hell breaks loose. The civilized mannerism which our ancestors toiled tirelessly to establish is tossed out the window as students use whatever is at their disposal to board. Flailing hands grab onto bags, straps, and seats—anything within reach. People push, shove, and jostle each other trying to make space for themselves; the bus almost becomes a jigsaw puzzle as students do whatever it takes to become a fitting piece.

Just when you think things have slightly calmed down, the driver revs the engine and the bus lurches forward. This is where the poor structure

of the bus presents itself. At the very back, students surprised by the sudden movement either trip down the stairs or hit their heads on the incredibly low ceiling while those in the front, terrified of crossing the forbidden white line, struggle to maintain balance. Worst is the middle of the bus, which one must swim through in order to get off. Sandwiched between dozens of people with no path of escape, it's not uncommon to wonder what on earth happened to social distancing during COVID times.

Eventually, the bus arrives at your stop and you hastily jump off onto the pavement that never seemed more beautiful. Taking deep breaths, you silently congratulate yourself for surviving such a journey when a sudden thought stops you in your tracks—you'll have to bus home again tomorrow. ■



Illustration: Helen Sun

The Rings We Reject

by ANGELINA WANG

Bulky hard-plastic binders, chunky zip-up cloth binders, and flimsy binders that yearn to slice your hand open have a lot in common. They are a waste of space, they never fit in your bag when you need them to, and they leave both your lifetime's work and sanity hanging by a few half-centimeters of seriously frail material.

Binders are for binding paper in the most “versatile” and “user friendly” way. Yet their versatility merely ranges from providing a fine layout for viewing documents during business conferences and group presentations, to...nothing else [1]. Besides this, user manuals that utilize binders and are created for frequent references are designed to be rummaged and generally have stronger paper & other features. They can also just be called books. For all it's worth, my student experience has taught me that no soul has the effort to bind every single sheet of paper with plastic just to pierce it with metal rings and bind it all with heftier plastic. We want to study, not create some literary artifact.

“User friendly” is quite a stretch. As students who delve into class material through long, sleepless nights and galvanizing, meteoric days, every snap of the irking metal clamps harmonizes with the snapping of a cranial nerve, and every shut commences the shutting down of something in our own bodies. Every widening hole in our pitiful paper is an irremediable hole in our dignity and routine. Every provoking (not ASMR) ripping sound rips away at our spirit.

The 21st century is nothing short of an innovation-filled technological revolution. Binders, on the other hand, are nothing short of an insult to our evolution. In the year 1854, patents for loose-leaf paper preceded those for 2- and 3-ringed binders, and since then, the only development seen has been the addition of pockets and the increasing environmental issue of disposing of vinyl [2]. Speaking of which, vinyl, like binders, is a relatively ‘ancient’ creation, but unlike binders, we appreciate its continued flourishing in the market, as it adds value in a nostalgic manner.

The worst part is, binders are made to join and secure, but they ultimately constrain and confine. They give us no choice to carry them around, regardless of the amount of paper being bound. They force us to use hole punchers, which are also neither pleasant nor sleek office utensils. Do you carry a binder for each subject? Jam-pack them all into one? What if you don't want to carry all the material with you? No problem! Flip through, thrust open the clamps, remove the stuff no longer needed, buy another binder, stick those papers in, shove it in your closet. We are being hustled by the retailers, and we pretend this invasive species helps us with organization and productivity.

At this point, you are probably asking, “Then what

do you use?!?!?!?”

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce some simple, underrated, and surprisingly effective office supplies that you, as a student, can put to use. 1) Paper clips: sit down for a moment and evaluate the amount of material you carry to and from the hellhole day after day - the amount of material you actually need is probably a whole lot less than the entire course (see? binders are a bad influence on you). Select the material required for the near future, and sort them if necessary. Use small paper clips for small piles, and large paper clips for the stuff you no longer need. Store the necessary materials in... 2) folders! and store the unnecessary materials in 3) file holders at home! This is just one of likely countless organizational methods that are superior to the physically and mentally ravaging binders.

In short, as students, binders are responsible for nothing but utter deception and the tearing apart of everything.

We can do better. ■

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Illustration: Max Lu

Peeling a Scab: Pandemic Restrictions

by DEREK CHEN

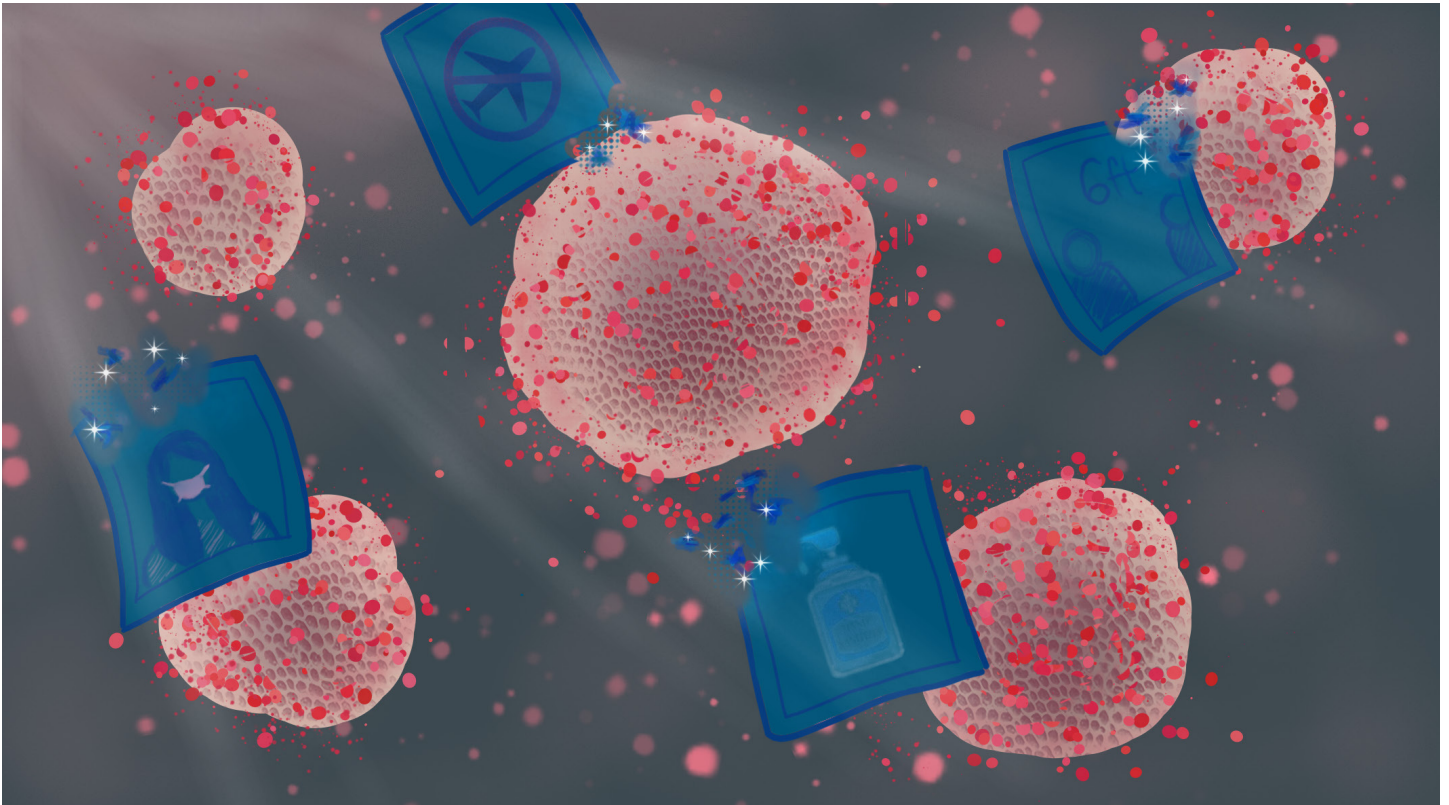


Illustration: Samara Rahman

If you've scraped your knee as a little kid before, you know that it will turn into a scab. It usually starts itching after a few days. You've probably been told not to peel the scab, too. Now, from here, two different kinds of memories branch off. One is of the strict parent who gives a stinging slap to your hand whenever it inches closer to the scab. The other is of the lenient parent who lets you keep picking and peeling until the warm blood from the revived wound streams down your fingers. This childish situation seems somewhat similar to what we are put through in the pandemic.

The strict parent is the governments of countries like China, putting an iron grip on everyone, "slapping" in the form of firm curfews, sudden lockdowns, and stringent rules. However, these restrictions severely damage the economy, create paranoia, and separate people.

The lenient parent is like the Canadian government, keeping a loose watch over travellers and implementing restrictions far too late. But the wound of the pandemic bleeds as its growing scab is repeatedly torn off by loose restrictions that continue to allow travel and gatherings, which spread the virus. Both choices hurt, and neither is ideal, but it is an undeniable truth that the government needs to become more strict and timely towards limiting the spread of the pandemic.

The numbers have hardened us. The media blares large numbers at us and people with lives and legacies, happy families and cherished memories just turn into digits on a webpage. Rarely do we think about the suffering of those 30 000 people who died in Canada during this pandemic. These people don't just fade away into nothing. COVID-19 causes inflam-

mation and the release of mucus in the lungs, which makes it harder and harder to breathe. Even as the condition of the patient deteriorates, visits can only be brief, and when it is hopeless, some families give consent to turn off the machines, which are the only things keeping the patient alive. The agony has been described as anything from the sensation of thousands of bees stinging inside the chest to being smothered [1]. Many suffocate.

Along with patients, front-line workers have been suffering from this pandemic. Many of them live isolated, fearing that they will contract COVID-19 and pass it on to their families. They hear the stories of people like Bob Waldron, a personal support worker in Montreal who suffered from PTSD after losing his father to the virus he passed on to his whole family [2]. A Statistics Canada survey found that 7

in 10 health care workers felt their mental health was worsening over the duration of the pandemic [3].

As more and more cases emerge like bubbles in a Coke, it is clear that the government needs to take more actions to limit the spread of COVID-19. The pandemic won't just stop if we put restrictions in place, but doing nothing means more people die from COVID-19 and more unbearable days for front-line workers to endure. Ontario needs more restrictions invoked in a more timely manner. We are always a few steps behind. The government of Ontario lifted restrictions in October, only to then be clobbered by the Omicron variant. Understaffed, under-equipped hospitals are now overwhelmed by another variant that we had plenty of time to prepare for.

The periodic peaks and upward trend of COVID-19 cases are obvious and simple. The first wave of the pandemic in Ontario saw a peak of 40 cases in one day province-wide. This was outrageous at the time. The second wave, which countless predictions had warned would be worse than the first, and which Canada had more than enough time to prepare for, saw a massive reopening. Instead of even an attempt to lock down, we were caught completely off guard. The surge in cases skyrocketed to nearly 2 500 in one day. Another reopening later, the third wave set a new record: over 4 800 cases in one day [4]. Wave after wave, we were unprepared. And now, despite innumerable warnings of the Omicron variant being by far the most formidable variant we will have faced, it has caught us, once again, off guard. The Omicron variant is catapulting cases to more than 18 000 in a single day (which is likely an underestimate), and experts are once again telling us that the frantically instated restrictions are "too late" as hospitals are overflow-

ing and ambulances are frequently unavailable during life-threatening emergencies [5][6][7].

Right when the scab is almost done its job, we peel it away, and the wound is revived.

And it gets exceedingly worse every time. This repeated cycle of loosening restrictions and unpreparedness provokes a genuine question: Is Ontario's government collectively any smarter than a 5 year old who can't resist the urge to pick at a scab?

The government can't continue putting in place restrictions only after the situation evolves out of control, or we will always be too late. It ignored the warnings before the second wave, the third wave, and now the fourth wave. What resulted was the overflowing of hospitals, countless preventable deaths, and a grimly embarrassing display of our government's inability to learn from past mistakes. The government needs to listen to predictions and take action before the situation becomes dire. Restrictions must tighten, and they must tighten earlier, in order to prevent the damage that could be caused.

As more variants emerge, restrictions on the movement and gathering of people are becoming the best option. Protection from vaccines is dropping. The most widely administered Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine used to have an 80% chance of avoiding infection. With Omicron, that figure has dropped to 33% [8]. Cloth masks can barely block the new variant, which is 4-8 times more infectious than the previous record-holder [9]. As more, even stronger variants emerge, the most effective strategy will be restrictions on travel and gatherings. Restrictions damage the economy, and separate people in a time when they need the most support, but in such a pandemic there is no way to salvage everything. Sacrifices must be made. If restrictions can spare

healthcare workers from one more day of trauma and reunite one more parent and child, then the sacrifice of another lockdown is worth it. Economies can heal, and separated people can heal. However, trauma lingers, and death is permanent.

We are already seeing our losses mount from the Omicron variant. Experts have already told us that restrictions are too late, once again. It's time our government learns from its countless mistakes, the thousands of preventable deaths it has caused. When the next wave inevitably heads our way, we must have stricter restrictions, and they need to be in place before the situation worsens. It's time we leave the scab on. We've peeled and bled and peeled and bled, and now we're bleeding again. We need to make a commitment to not pick at it again. It does itch painfully, but we will realise that picking at it will make us bleed even more painfully. So let's endure that persistent itch, so that we will leave fewer scars. ■

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Why the COVID-19 Vaccine Should Be Mandated

by CHANG CHANG LI

Throughout history, humans have always faced plights of sickness. The Bubonic Plague, Smallpox, Polio—all of which have seen millions of deaths across the world. In past cases, humanity had to suffer and endure the havoc of disease, but in recent decades we have been graced and protected by

a feat of modern medicine: vaccines.

No more would millions of people have to die from the wrath of plagues and pandemics. No more would society be crippled and dismantled by the devastating casualties brought upon us by disease. No more would the diseases of the past, that have haunted humans for

centuries, take lives within society. Now, we are once again faced with a disease that has taken the lives of millions of people worldwide, but suddenly the very technology that has saved humanity countless times in history is shunned by a sizable portion of our population.

We see in our media the

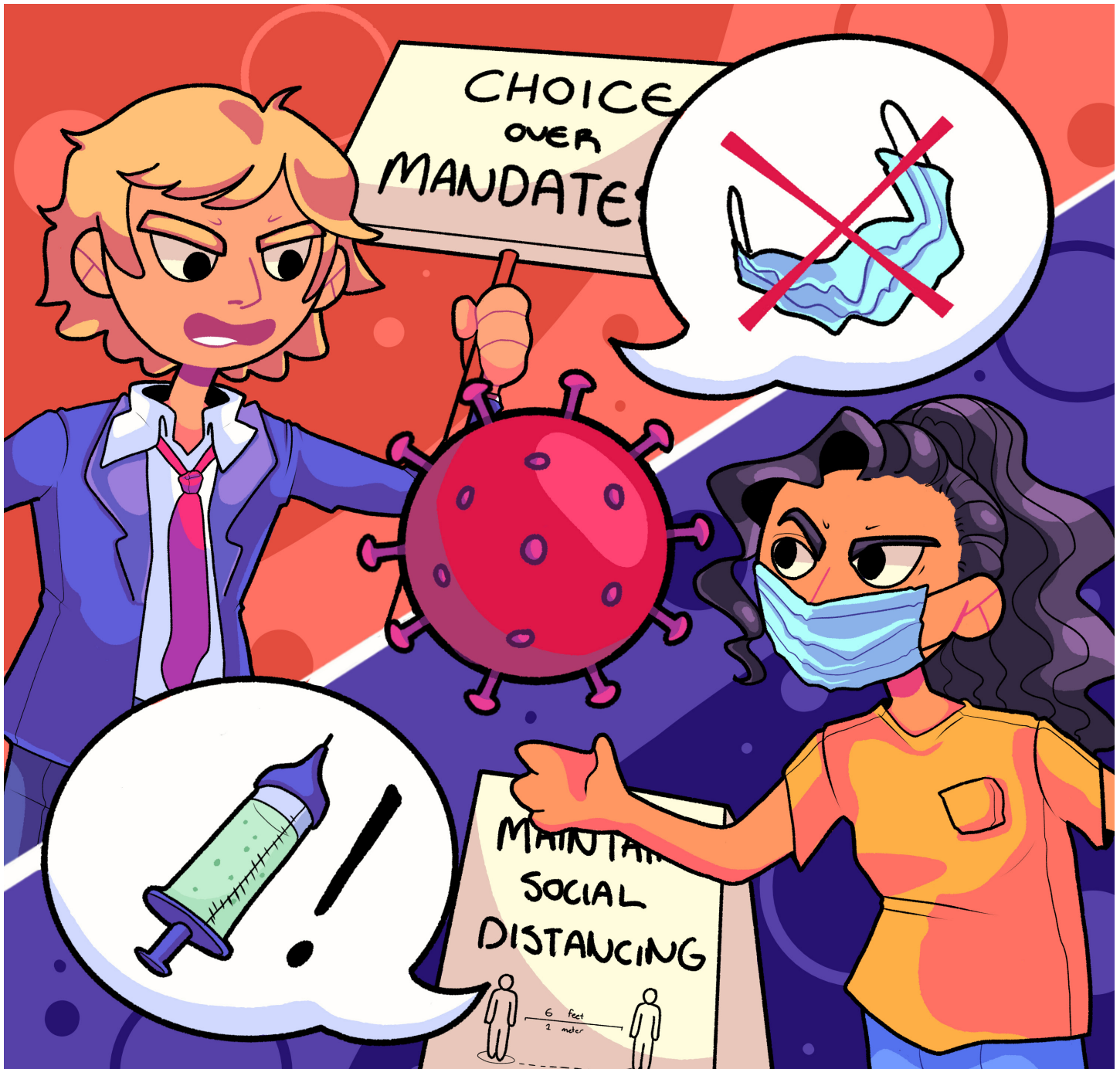


Illustration: Ajita Kanthathasan

voices of conservative and skeptic figures who discredit and slander the credibility of our vaccines and medicine for the sake of “personal freedom” and “safety”, but none of these claims are based on any sort of truth and lack basic forethought. What has been spouted by many media figures and politicians through this pandemic haven’t been facts. They have been harmful and malicious lies that have fooled and deceived many within our society.

The COVID-19 vaccine is undoubtedly one of the safest and most effective vaccines in medical history, and any sort of rejection of this notion is unfounded, which I will prove today. The pandemic has already taken the lives of too many within the world, and the only true way to prevent and minimize the harm this illness has brought to the world is through the efforts of vaccination. At some point, the misinformation that has infested our society can no longer be tolerated. At this point, a vaccine mandate is the only true way to save lives and aid in a return to normalcy within our society. Although controversial as a policy, those who reject it simply do not understand or are misinformed on what a mandate would impose, which is what I would like to explain within this article.

Now the first important question, before even determining whether the COVID vaccine should be mandated, is whether or not these vaccines are safe and efficient for human consumption, and the answer to that question is an undeniable, “Yes.”

Peer-reviewed studies around the world along with institutional trials by every major country have all reached the same conclusion, the vaccine is not only very safe, but also very effective at combating COVID-19. The Pfizer and Bio-tech vaccine, for one, is roughly 95% effective against the virus and has shown very few cases in which people have been directly harmed by the vaccine. Even in these cases, there is no reason to be scared of such side effects, as what could potentially happen to you is so unlikely that it is unreasonable to even consider it. With those odds, you

may as well never walk because you could slip or fall, or never eat because you may choke and suffocate.

Everyone, excluding those who have been suggested otherwise by medical professionals, has no reason to not take a COVID-19 vaccine due to the unprecedented and extreme amount of supervision, analysis, and regulation implemented by the countries of the world.

Furthermore, there is no reason to be against such a vaccine mandate as many vaccines are already mandated across the world. In our school systems, we require children to get vaccinated against many viruses in the interest of keeping kids safe. What difference does one more vaccine make? Most sensible citizens are aware of how safe and effective all these vaccines are, but in reality, many are torn on whether or not vaccination is serious enough of a matter to mandate them for all able recipients. But if you dig deeper, this hesitancy about more extreme policies is simply based on irrationalities that have been spouted by conservative media.

Many may say that such a mandate would be a violation of personal freedom and bodily autonomy, but such a view is simply selfish. Sure, you should have a decision on what you do with your body, but not when you are endangering others around you. Studies from the University of Oxford have shown that those who are vaccinated are less likely to transmit COVID-19, and so when you are walking around unvaccinated, you are increasing the chance of those around you contracting COVID-19, some of whom may have autoimmune diseases that make such a virus possibly deadly.

You may have the right to bodily autonomy, but what trumps that is the right to safety and health, and the right that citizens have to be able to walk on the streets their money has paved without fear of falling ill. Sure, a mandate may limit your freedom in some areas, but it is in place to restore the right for people to live in a safe and functional society.

Now, why is such a mandate even necessary? Many may think that those who are vaccinated are

protected and those who aren’t are simply taking their own risk, but many fail to mention how this affects the underrepresented, those who are unable to take the vaccine because of health conditions.

There are millions of people across the world who are unable to take the vaccine due to previous health conditions or because of their age. Is it fair to endanger these groups of people and thrust a serious and sometimes debilitating virus at them? No, and that is where the concept of herd immunity comes into play.

Currently, the percentage of Canadians vaccinated for COVID-19 is nowhere close to the threshold necessary for herd immunity. What is herd immunity? Well, herd immunity is when the population of vaccinated people is large enough to the point where the unvaccinated population is unable or incredibly unlikely to contract a virus. With COVID-19, this would allow people who are sensitive to the virus the ability to continue a normal life again and live without fear of contracting the virus. Whether it’s someone’s grandmother or their relative with a rare illness, everyone knows someone who is especially prone to this virus and in the interests of everyone around us, it is important to reach the threshold of herd immunity to keep people safe.

It has come to the point in the pandemic at which something has to change and more drastic measures have to be taken. For the sake of everyone in our society and in the interests of moving past this stage in a time dominated by COVID-19, a vaccine mandate must be enacted. No more should people have to suffer and lose their lives due to the virus when the solution is right in front of our eyes. In the interests of people, in the interests of the economy, and the interests of the nation as a whole, a vaccine mandate is necessary to preserve the health of our nation. ■

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