

The Vantage Point

Your Own
Voice

DECEMBER 2020
ISSUE 1

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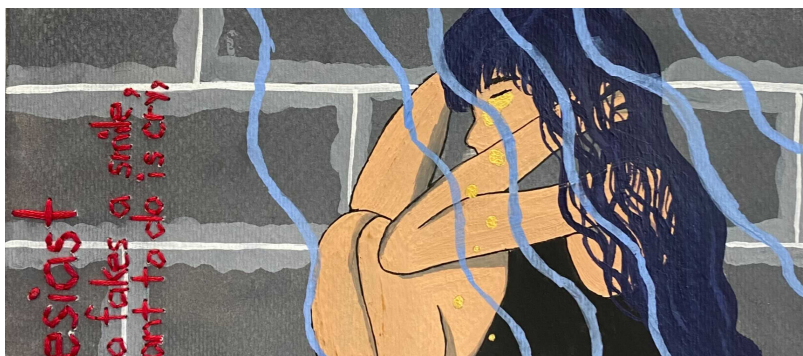
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EDITOR'S NOTE

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THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE MAGAZINE

We wanted to start the first issue of The Vantage Point with something that would reflect our purpose – building a platform that would provide an opportunity for you to share your voices. We firmly believe that each and every person who walks through our school's corridors has a voice, there only needs to be a place to use it. And so, for our first issue, we decided to focus on free speech and identity. Who are we? What is our voice? How does the world perceive the idea of having your own mind, opinion, voice, and actually utilizing it to go against the accepted flow of life? We do not want to tell you what is right and what is wrong. We want to prompt you to decide this for yourself... and, how can one measure right or wrong in the first place?..We are bringing you articles to expand your knowledge on what free speech is, pieces to question your own stance on the extent to which you may be "a sheep", and a story to delight you accompanied by thought-provoking poetry.



Editor's Note

You can find a music playlist and, of course, your own responses on how you perceive identity. We are elated that you are about to embark on this adventure with us.

Creating this issue was a pure excitement, and we hope that reading and experiencing what is within each page will incite you to reach a new discovery or thought.

Elizabeth Chernyak

*Elizabeth
Chernyak*



IDENTITY...DON'T BE SHEEP!

By Cynthia Aung

Edited by Jessica Kerisna

Who are you? Who am I?

Does identity matter if all you are is what others require you to be? What is the significance of identity when you are what others require you to be- the stereotypical and unconventional you.

In our society no one is truly happy. Unrealistic standards distort our reality and perception of ourselves. Insecurity and doubt is inescapable. The glass screens of our devices reflect off all that we are not... I'm sure you know all this all too well. To answer the question above I am Cynthia Aung and I find it quite ironic of me to be writing this since 'Cynthia' is not my birth name- alien to my identity.

What does it mean to be a sheep? When you are called sheep you are typically referred to as someone who is easily influenced by the action and opinions, and beliefs of others out of fear of not fitting in.

From larger instances like being peer pressured into actions you're reluctant doing, to smaller instances like daily decisions.

Let's face it. Everyone has acted sheepishly multiple times in their life. It's inevitable. Following the crowd is a human instinct. We feel the need to surround ourselves with others when lonely. We were made to interact with one another which made us vulnerable to the desire to blend in.

"The one who follows the crowd will usually get no further than the crowd. The one who walks alone, is more likely to find himself in places no one has ever been before." - Albert Einstein

But, there is a fine line *between yearning to belong and becoming sheepish.*

Identity makes you who you are; belonging to a group should co-exist with that. The two are not meant to excuse each other. Contrasting identities brings individuals together; unique bonds and new ideas are formed. Just imagine a homogenous population. 7 billion of the same personality. Divergence makes us unique and gives us individuality, plus, scientifically speaking- 7 billion of the same person can cause everyone to be infected by the same disease and possibly have humankind wiped out; if the world had the same people we would have been dead from Covid months ago).

Separate your identity from stereotypes. Simply because your identity is stereotyped, you are in no way obliged to follow those rules or act a certain type of way for the pleasure and entertainment of others. There is a 'perfect male', 'perfect female' and 'perfect human' gender mold that we feel a need to fit into.

This is where the terms such as 'toxic masculinity' has risen. Due to the standards such as; 'masculine', 'apathetic' and 'man of the house' that has been put upon males, many struggle to express themselves and find themselves trying to fit into the stereotype set for them.

A fellow friend of mine commented:

"I struggled with my identity when moving from place to place. I come from Australia. Living in Singapore as someone who lived in Australia most of my life gave me a culture shock. It was surprising how diverse and unique everyone was. Society has standards for men to be strong and apathetic. That affected me whenever I was feeling down and someone said man up. I feel the need to belong with others and start conversations to avoid loneliness. This has made me do some sheepish things in the past."

These stereotypical gender roles and unrealistic standards leaves an effect on today's society, more so to adolescents in search of their true identity. Moreover, countless numbers of people have attempted to break the misconceptions and expectations.

Take renowned artist Harry Styles for example; the first male in vogue in feminine clothing. Although I can argue that clothing has no gender, the clothing that he and several other feminine dressed men wear is often criticized by many for not dressing as the typically assigned clothing. I find it inspiring that there are people like him that are encouraging others to differentiate themselves from what is expected of them. I hope that this article has opened your eyes and will help you find who you truly are without the restrictions of expectations on you.

Fun Fact:

Scientifically speaking- 7 billion of the same person can cause everyone to be infected by the same disease and possibly have humankind wiped out; if the world had the same people we would have been dead from Covid months ago.

SILENCE

By Adelin Conanan



Silence.

That is what we are expected to do. Be silent. Be quiet, be still, be obedient, be similar, be normal. Always, we are told what to do, not what we can do. Over us, the looming age and experience are held. Without them we are nothing. Without them the expectation is to listen. To learn. To obey.

Never are we told to question or inquire. Dare or be unique. To them we are lost and ignorant, too young to know the world and yet the weight on our shoulders has become too much to bear! A voice! We have a voice! We need a voice! We have so much and yet-

All we are told to do is be silent.

But we are not silent. We are not compliant. Like a tidal wave we do not stop, we will not be blocked or put inside of a gilded cage until our time has come. Clipped are our wings and yet we are expected to fly! Under such a mountain of pressure, how do the old expect the young to take over?

We do not learn in silence. We are loud, proud, unique, rebellious; none of that can be held off until we've come of age!

By Ishnaa Goenka
Edited by Arshia Sharma

Thinking Like The Colour 'Grey'

Binary thinking, or 'black and white' thinking is where one sees a topic as good or bad, right or wrong, all or nothing. Instead, if we think like the colour 'grey' which is a mix of black and white, this can allow us to take multiple perspectives into consideration as not everything can be simplified into two things. Thinking grey can improve our mindset and sometimes we don't realize the negative effects that a simplified approach of thinking has on us.

As humans, we are groomed to instinctively think in this black and white way; it's our natural way of thinking to resort to. This type of thinking is simple, clear, and doesn't require more energy as we are able to simplify topics. Simplifying certain things into black and white is alright, and sometimes even necessary to do!

However, categorizing our entire world perspective and basing all of our opinions in this way can lead us to be close-minded and nuanced. Plus, having a complex way of thinking can lead to many more opportunities for learning and personal growth.

As teenagers and young adults, we are encouraged to think black and white. As young kids, our brains are not developed enough to 'think grey'. Established systems, like institutes and schools, further encourage black and white thinking.

This can be seen when we look at complex historical events and wars, which are taught to us in this way rather than helping to understand the reasons that would allow a more complex perspective. Even as we get older, we stick to this simplistic, two-side way of thinking. One of the most popular examples of this is superhero movies where there is a clear hero who is 'good' and a villain who is 'bad'. Captain America: Civil War showed viewers perspectives from both sides which encourages us to consider different stances on the same matter. Despite this, the overall notion is still good and evil; black and white. One can argue that what he did was necessary in his view; as his point of overpopulation remains hugely important in our world today.

You don't need to immediately choose a side, but acknowledging the other perspective (whether you agree with it or not) is an incredibly valuable skill and way of thinking.

Another huge problem with black or white thinking is our ignorance of the endless possibilities. An example that we can look into, is paper vs plastic. A simple explanation can be that plastic never degenerates. While that is correct, using paper means cutting trees and more carbon emission in shipment due to the paper's higher mass. Additionally, it uses huge quantities of water in its production. Without an in-depth understanding of the issue, preferring one over the other as 'environmentally friendly', is wrong and extremely parochial. The media we consume is also filled with 'black and white' thinking. This kind of simplification is often used as clickbait headlines. Media companies take one point, and make the headlines sound like facts, whereas they could actually be opinions.

"Black and white" thinking makes us see things as too simple instead of how they are - extremely complex with different layers! This makes how we think about things damaging and incorrect, as we try to categorize everything into two categories of black and white. We sometimes forget that the world is highly complex with systems and effects that cannot be understood by most. People who think in this rigid way tend to make less progress than others. They come off as ignorant, as they don't seem to even listen to context that may reshape events.

Thinking black or white instead of looking at things from multiple perspectives, damages our perception and discourages us from being open-minded.

So how should we even go about 'thinking grey'? This sort of thinking is practiced and improved over time as we should challenge other people's, and our own views. We should rethink why we have a certain view or opinion, and what some other possible perspectives could be. The important thing to remember is that one can still have a preference for one side, but be open to listening to the other side and understanding that there are valid reasons from the other perspective. Realizing that one had been thinking "black and white" and switching perspectives after confronting this kind of thinking is okay, and it can be the path to lead us towards progress.

FREE SPEECH CRISIS: NON-FICTION OR MYTH?

By Tanha Azam Chowdhury

Edited by Muskaan Duneja

Free speech is an essential principle that supports an individual to be able to share their thoughts and express their opinions and ideas without fear of government interference, or retaliation of any sorts.

Though I strongly believe that freedom of speech is so immensely significant in today's society and especially during this global pandemic that we are fighting against, I wonder if there is an extent to which it can be abused.

On August 24th of 2020, BBC News had reported information about a man who had lost

While it is helpful having social media platforms to speak aloud your inner thoughts and express your opinion to the general public, it may be utilised in a harmful manner when put under the wrong influence. Free speech is as important as it is dangerous. It may lead to both intriguing and constructive conversation or in some unfortunate cases, free speech could be manipulated into creating chaos and mayhem amongst society.

The extent of ingenuity responsible for cultivating charismatic conversation about sensitive topics through free speech may prove to be difficult to many individuals. I think that this is because we are simply just so different from one another. We can't expect to always get along and think in the same manner for recognition of the fact that we are a community.



his wife to the Covid-19 virus, because he believed that the virus was a hoax. The couple said that they had read dozens of articles on Facebook accounts claiming that the virus was in fact, not real and was merely a form of distraction sanctioned by the government to confuse the masses. However, when the couple fell ill to the virus, the man took to Facebook to let out a personal statement that went viral overnight that basically explained that he had been terribly misled by the web of deception woven online. In May, a BBC team had tracked misleading information about the virus and had found shocking results online that linked to multiple assaults, arsons and death. The volume of deceit formed online by various sites were responsible for putting multiple lives in danger of falling sick to the fast-spreading virus.

A community of people often fighting for the same cause and truth. Free speech might either be difficult to attain or easier to achieve; depending on where one lives around the globe. I think that free speech is a privilege to many but, it varies from different countries and their policies. Some areas deny the complete existence of free speech. It is important to recognise that privilege if you are able to possess it.

However, I think that free speech is always going to have a price tag attached to it, as I believe that no matter how well composed the debate may seem to an individual, free speech may often open up to become that of a mythical folklore known as Pandora's box. Although, we continue to hope for the better, I leave it up to you to decide the truth for yourselves. Do you think the free speech crisis is a myth or is it the constant reality we are living?

DO WE REALLY HAVE FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

By Tanisha Chandrasekaran
Edited by Darius Fleischmann

Freedom of speech. Freedom is something we all desire, but how much freedom do we really need?

Freedom of speech has a universal definition. It is defined as the “freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” by the UN. However, people’s understanding of it does differ across the world. Is there such a thing as absolute freedom of speech? Free speech could be defined as a theory according to which, through language, writing, or pictures, people must have the freedom to hold and convey ideas on any platform and on a variety of subjects, from politics to religion, economics to history, without fear of consequence or punishment. Despite this vague and broad concept, freedom of speech is rarely considered as a right that grants protection to everything that can be uttered. For example, US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Holmes, proclaimed long ago that “the most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing a panic”. This sentence expresses one of the most important aspects of free speech thinking and ruling globally; freedom of speech is limited, it does not cover all kinds of speech.

This raises questions about how far to protect and how far to restrict speech. Someone who says something prohibited is not just saying something seen as uncomfortable, but something that is illegal. They break the law, and could face civil liability or criminal prosecution.

So, distinguishing free and unprotected speech means drawing a line between speech that can be punished and speech that may not be punished, between speech that can be used to bring someone to prison or speech that can take their money away, between speech that can be excluded from public discourse and that which cannot. It is not a matter of identifying good or bad ideas, respectful or impolite speech, but rather of distinguishing lawful from unlawful speech, with the related good or bad consequences.



Today in the 21st Century, it is not only a matter of free speech in the physical world, but free speech online should also be considered. The Internet allows anyone to share their voice and perspective around the world, as well as hear others’ speech. It has greater potential than ordinary media. The internet is far more widespread and gives people the capability to interact. Internet speech can facilitate action much more effectively than traditional media. In this way it is an intensification of the problems that come with free speech. Using free speech adversely by spreading fake news, expressing hate speech, etc. can have a significant negative impact on online users. It is in view of this that digital citizens like us should use our freedom of speech properly.

Many communities, big and small, lack freedom of speech today. We should be grateful for our privileges and how we are free to express ourselves, within communities such as our school. We have the power to create change by speaking out and expressing ourselves, and so it is our duty to respect it. Freedom of speech is not a license to abuse, but a responsibility for us to use.

POETRY

By Muskaan Duneja
Edited by

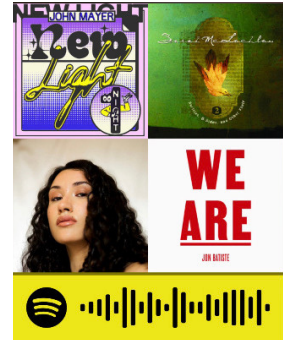
Drown in your freedom

Synchronised hearts screaming the ordinary,
Frightened of the sharp whispers in their eyes,
Trapped inside the shadows of expectations,
Hiding behind the bitter conventional walls.
Let the soft hues of your words take over,
Sweeping away the black and white world;
Let your crackling blood flood their minds,
Lining their veins with zealous fireworks;
Let the gracious wind swirling in your soul,
Spread through the rigid norms of humanity;
Let the spark gleaming through your eyes,
Inspire them to drown in their own freedom.

PLAYLIST

A playlist of songs that matches the theme of the poem

1. Blackbird - Sarah McLachlan
2. New Light - John Mayer
3. Butterfly - Cleo Sol
4. WE ARE - Jon Batiste
5. All Your Love - Jakob Ogawa
6. Geronimo - Sheppard
7. Advice - Kehlani
8. HEAVEN - Troye Sivan ft. Betty Who
9. Youth - Shawn Mendes ft. Khalid
10. Just the Way I'm Built - Altitude Music



YOUR VOICE - IDENTITY

Quotes from survey

"Identity is what defines you, how people define you when you ignore society's norms and standards. When you focus on yourself and think 'this is who I am'. It's definitely not easy, many feel judged and ridiculed for being themselves, and the characteristics that once shaped you get replaced by what you think people expect. Identity is so much more than a dictionary definition, it's a state of being your complete sense of self, and it's heartbreaking when people have to put on a mask to feel accepted by their surrounding community. Not many people that get pushed down manage to get up again, they may not have that motivation inside of the support from others, but on a planet which 7.8 billion humans inhabit it's crucial to have acceptance for others cultures and pasts, important to know that you yourself can't form your own identity without the help from others. Being alone in a crowd isn't what builds you." anonymous

"I think identity is someone's cultural beliefs and who they are, everybody's identity is different, it is just like personalities." anonymous

"Yes, I do think that some people struggle to fully express their identity because they are shy." Rehaan Dehia 6.2

"I think identity is important because it makes everyone different and gives a different perspective to things." anonymous

"Identity is important because it separates people from just being humans. It gives them personality and let's them be who they want to be and not be just like everyone else." anonymous

"Yes, because otherwise everyone would be the same and life would be boring." Pien 6.5

"Identity is what makes a person unique, if identity doesn't exist, people will all be the same." anonymous

"I think that some people are scared that other people might judge them or make fun of them." anonymous

"Self-image is a powerful thing, the belief of what kind of person you are. Identity is a state of comfort and security, something you can rely on when you feel lost or concealed. It helps to make decisions in complex and mind-numbing circumstances, and tells you how to behave when things may not go your way. Having a strong sense of identity is in ways desirable, not something we can all say from the top of our heads. It's not easy to find your 'true' identity and I guess that's why having an identity is so treasured and significant, being able to fully express your identity is something many people struggle to do against what we have come to call normal. The pressure we get put under is so extreme for some and they gradually give in to their society's expectations, not managing to escape the prison they have created and falling deeper into the belly of the beast." anonymous

THE TEAM



We are very excited about starting the new school magazine! None of this of course would be possible without the amazing team, and thus, to introduce everyone:

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF – Elizabeth Chernyak

TECH – Sam Poder

MANAGING EDITOR – Maryam Adrianto

PHOTOGRAPHER – Nicholas Macheroux-Keedle

WRITERS – Adelin Grace Conanan

- Aamina Akmal
- Arshia Sharma
- Cynthia Aung
- Darius Fleischmann
- Federica Pivetti
- Ishnaa Goenka
- Jessica Kerisna
- Muskaan Duneja
- Tanha Azam Chowdhury
- Tanisha Chandrasekaran

ART AND DESIGN DEPARTMENT – Ginny Chan

- Reisya Anindita Anugerah Sandi
- Sohalia Mathur

Special thank you to Ms. Rimmer for supporting this initiative!

We are infinitely thankful for each reader and are looking forward to sharing YOUR voice with every publication.

If you have any questions or would like to submit your own writing piece, artwork, or ideas, you can contact us by email at contact@vantage-point.online

We look forward to hearing from you!