



An Interview with Dr. Fagan

By: Fatema Mun and Claudia Frankfurth

The following is an interview conducted with Dr. Fagan, in which he answered questions about the school, district, students, and himself.

Why did you decide to become a principal?

I decided pretty early in my career that I wanted to get into school administration. I started my teaching career at Ridley High School in Folsom PA and it was probably my second or third year I decided I wanted to get into becoming a school leader, so I started working on that. A few years later I became an assistant principal and I worked my way up from there. I think what enticed me most was that there were aspects of the classroom that I loved, specifically working with young people and teachers. I thought I would have even more opportunities doing that by being a principal.

What are some future plans for school? What should we look forward to?

We'll continue finding ways to increase student voice in our school and student representation in our building so that when students look around they see themselves reflect in our programs and in our school.

As a school district we can expect that in the next two to three years we'll be taking a close and serious look at start times. My guess is that within the next couple of years our start times will change at the high school. It would move back 45-60 minutes. I also expect that the school bell schedule will change pretty significantly. It's probably not gonna be a lock-step 8 periods. It will be much more flexible, and provide students the opportunity to come late, be early, provide possibility for internships during the school day, and increase opportunities for early graduation. So much of our life is dictated by every time that bell rings and I don't know if that should be the case. I don't know if our lives should be dictated by a bell. It should be dictated by what your needs are.

What advice do you have for seniors graduating this year?

They have been very well-prepared for the world that comes after this, better than they think. Some seniors express joy and excitement, while some express hesitancy and nervousness. It comes from not knowing what to expect next. No one really does, but our graduates have been very well prepared. This community works very closely together, and there has been a lot of care, concern, and guidance that has been provided that I don't think you even realize comes to fruition until after you graduate. I would say to those seniors: remind yourself you've been well-prepared. Use the resources that have been offered to you over the course of 12 years and pursue your passions. This world is becoming a more fluid, individualized world. High school graduates can dictate their paths more so than any generation before. If you're able to use these resources and use the supports around you, you could really design and follow the path that you want to design and follow. Decide who you want to be and pursue that passion. *(continued on page 6)*

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Students from Mr. Busby's Acc. Honors African Asian History class wrote opinion pieces about conflicts in the Middle East. The following articles are the winners of the op-ed contest.

Netflix vs Saudi Arabia: Free speech at what cost?

By: Anushka Raina

The recent drama that has unfolded on Netflix, a popular entertainment subscription group, was not revolving around one of their hit movies, Bird Box, but something to do with the company itself. Netflix recently pulled out an episode of "Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj" from Saudi Arabia in which comedian Hasan Minhaj calls out crown prince Mohammed bin Salman from the perspective of a Muslim concerned about Saudi Arabia's impact on Islam relating to the murder of Washington Posts columnist Jamal Khashoggi. This episode is no longer available on Netflix in Saudi Arabia. Think of "the first amendment" and then flip it!

In Saudi Arabia, there is an autocratic government and the right to 'free speech' is not among the basic human rights. The country is home to modern cities and technological advances yet the nation's government is anything but modernized. Life is fine for the rich Saudi male, but the rest of the population that does not fall into this category have minimal human rights. Women seem to be impacted the most among the population such as not being able to discuss their opinion and having segregated areas in public. Saudi Arabian women are also required, according to Islamic law, to fully cover their bodies by wearing an abaya which is a long black cloak while in public. If these conditions seem appropriate or humane, then all hope in humanity is lost.

Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman is, however, attempting to change Saudi Arabia into a more liberal country. Before he became crown prince in June of 2017, Saudi Arabia was under outrageous laws such as women not being permitted to drive. Women had to depend on chauffeurs and male relatives to travel anywhere by car. A year after he became crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman lifted the ban on female driving. This event sparked positive feedback among the women in Saudi Arabia and people were excited for more changes to come.

Fast forward to 2019, where the crown prince is

under heat for possible involvement in the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. Khashoggi often criticized the government of Saudi Arabia, particularly Mohammed Bin Salman. After Khashoggi's death, Netflix aired the episode, "Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj". The Saudi Arabian government took offense to the episode which linked the murder to the crown prince and twisted Netflix's arm to pull the episode off the air. This operation created lots of controversies and made people in Saudi Arabia realize that they do not even have the basic right, "the freedom of speech"!

People in Saudi Arabia need to rise together, march forward, and fight for their right to free speech which is a fundamental human right. The United Nations (U.N.) and the rest of the world should support the people of Saudi Arabia as they protest against their monarch. There should be protests held around the country by the Saudi citizens declaring that they want and deserve more freedom. Next, the U.N should petition and work with Saudi Arabia to help people get their basic privileges. If the petition does not succeed, then the next step should be to force sanctions against Saudi Arabia. As oil is a major export for Saudi Arabia and the life-line to their economy, the nations around the world should boycott the purchasing of oil from Saudi Arabia. This would have a severe impact on their economy and make Mohammed bin Salman question the approach he and his government have taken. In Hasan Minhaj's episode, he pointed out "MBS is not modernizing Saudi Arabia. The only thing he is modernizing is Saudi dictatorship". Mohammed bin Salman and the Saudi government should lead towards the path of complete liberalization instead of half-hearted gestures. Humans need to have the right to free speech and the right to freedom and as humans, we owe that much to the people of Saudi Arabia.

Unjustied Presence of US Troops in Syria

By: Jessica Greulich

The ongoing argument on the presence of United States troops in Syria is a debate involving many different perspectives, but President Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. troops is one that is justified and legitimate. The situation in Syria is a complicated mess of allies and resentment, with the US aiding the Kurdish Syrians against the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad, who is supported by Iran and Russia. Due to the inadequate justification of the presence of U.S. forces, the U.S. should follow through with the withdrawal of American troops in Syria.

U.S. forces should not even be in Syria; it was never formally authorized by Congress nor was it given permission by the Syrian government or the United Nations, thus going against international law. Our stay in Syria is completely illegal, and even if someone made the argument that the U.S. couldn't get permission from the Syrian government since we're on the side opposing them, this is only valid if the troops there are present to protect the civilians from mass killings, which was never directly indicated by the United States as their priority. In fact, the U.S. has killed hundreds of innocent civilians in Syria by their several thousand airstrikes and over 30,000 artillery rounds in Raqqa, leaving the city in ruins. The U.S. has other concerns in Syria, using their support of the Kurds as an excuse for their illegal involvement in the foreign civil war. It's no secret that there is resentment between the U.S., Turkey and Russia, and the tension between these countries can be seen playing out in the middle of the Syrian Civil War. One of U.S.'s reasons for staying in Syria was to oppose Russian as well as Iranian influence in the Middle East. Saying the U.S. is merely supporting and aiding a population that needs our help to stand up against the government in Syria is an inconsistent remark. The U.S. would constantly be involved in war if the criteria was to help a certain oppressed group of people.

Another major concern is the Islamic state, or ISIS, and what will happen after the

United States pulls their troops out from Syria. The ISIS territory has greatly decreased, existing on a more manageable level. It could be said that's due to the United States presence and their troops, but if that was their goal to come to Syria in the first place, then they have succeeded and have no other reason to stay. Saying that the U.S. pulling out of Syria is a victory for ISIS as well as Turkey and Russia is a ridiculous claim. Turkey, Russia, Syria, and Iran are all enemies of ISIS and can deal with this terrorist group without the unwanted assistance of the United States. Will those countries rejoice in America's removal of U.S. troops? For sure! But this should not be a concern for America compared to all the lives negatively affected by the actions of U.S. forces in Syria.

Having troops in Syria does not only present a problem to foreign affairs, but to the US as well. The situation in Syria is complicated, confusing, and an overall mess of "who vs who" and why. This dangerous area puts so many U.S. soldiers lives at unnecessary risk and digs us a deeper hole in our already poor relationship with foreign countries like Russia, Iran, and Turkey. Not to mention, if we pulled out our troops from Syria, it will greatly lower costs for the United States. The U.S. has spent over \$275 billion on Syria alone, either on military equipment, resources, or troops. Pulling troops out of Syria will not only lessen the millions of dollars being added onto our country's debt, but it will also allow the troops to come back home to their families and lives.

Overall, the United States troops were illegally staying in Syria to supposedly support the Kurdish while focusing on our country's own priorities with Russia, Turkey and ISIS. Rather than protecting the population from mass killings, the U.S. forces cause even more casualties of both innocent Syrians and Kurds, as well as their own soldiers who died in vain. The US should follow through with the withdrawal of troops from Syria for its unjustified and destructive presence in the ongoing foreign affairs in the Syrian Civil War.

The Iranian Mistake

Why Trump Shouldn't Have Pulled Out From The Iranian Nuclear Deal

By: Zach Agamalian

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Local News

WCASD Graduation Gowns

By: Fatema Mun

As graduation approaches for seniors, a big change has come to the graduation gowns in the district. Instead of distinct graduation gowns for boys and girls, there will now be three different gowns to choose from.

Dr. Scanlon, the superintendent of the school district, sent a letter on January 29th to explain the new change. This year, for the Class of 2019, there will be three gowns to choose from. In regards to East High School's colors, the choices are a red gown with yellow accents, a solid red gown, or a yellow gown. For Class of 2020, the school will work with juniors in order to create the best decision about the gowns. Before this final decision, however, the district said that they would only have one gown option for every graduate. Upset at the district's decision, one high school started a petition, claiming that they want to keep tradition and have two separate gowns. With over 1,000 signatures, the petition stirred up the gown controversy throughout the community. One person commented, "Tradition! Girls wear one of the schools colors and the boys wear the other. It has been this way for generations!"

In a response to an email to Dr. Scanlon, he explained some of the other issues people had with the gowns. These issues included the fact that the summer pictures seniors took in their gowns won't match with the actual graduation day pictures, and that people just did not like the new color choices.

He continues in the email to explain the purpose of the changes: "It's not so much the color of the gown that is the problem but what the color represents. The color of the gown has represented whether the graduate is a boy, or a girl, yet we don't designate 'boy diplomas' from 'girl diplomas'" Dr. Scanlon also explained that in the past, girls and boys were forced to choose gender-specific electives in middle school. Girls could only take Home Economics while boys could only take Shop class. Although this system has since long been removed, the district wanted to continue their progressive path towards the 21st century. Dr. Scanlon writes, "It's time

that our greatest celebration (Commencement) move into the 21st Century and represent the gender equality that exists with our programs."

In the end, whether it be tradition or progression, the graduation ceremony is a time where students get to celebrate their greatest achievements over the past 12 years. A student's graduation gown should not reflect their gender, but the choices that led to great accomplishments. With this decision, the school district is breaking barriers and ensuring that each student achieves their greatest potential, regardless of their gender.



East High Is Coming to East High!

By: Kayla Wadyko

From February 21st to the 23rd the whole auditorium will go dark. The curtains will gradually open, and the stage will fill with a cast of talented East students who are willing to share their gifts in the production of High School Musical. We welcome our fellow students to come watch as East High takes place at East High. The math ace, Gabriella (Kieran McCarney) and East High's basketball star, Troy Bolton (Karsten Neal) along with the brainiacs, jocks, actors, and the other varietal groups of students will unite together, staring in our favorite, classical, cliché musical where we are reminded of a very valuable, treasured life-lesson. "Do what makes you

happy – don’t worry about being disapproved by anyone.” Whether your dad, Coach Bolton (John Janik) has already planned your future or your friend, Chad Danforth (Kyle Puchalla) thinks it’s not cool enough. Because if it makes you happy that means it’s awesome!!

Kieran McCarney expresses her spirit and joy in performing as Gabriella. Theater has been her life since the age of four with her mom running different acting and singing programs. She has always enjoyed the theatrical environment and being able to perform in front of people. Taking on a major role as Gabriella is a lot of pressure for Kieran. Her own remedy for dealing with nerves and stage fright is talking to her mom. She says, “When I’m doubting myself, my mom reminds me that I was chosen to play this major role because people believed I could be it.” Whenever she doubts herself and worries about meeting everyone’s high expectations with her role, she goes to her mom. Talking to someone you love, who knows you inside and out, is always comforting when dealing with stress. Overcoming fears and troubles is the key to becoming successful.

Tickets are on sale now, so the High School Musical cast and I encourage you all to come out

and enjoy this play that explores the thrills of friendship, first love, and acceptance. “Stick to the Status Quo”, “Get’cha Head in the Game”, “Start of Something New” will all be featured, as well as some additional fun and catchy songs. Many thanks to our musical director Mrs. Werner, our choreographer Rose Dowlin, student volunteers, stage crew, the light/tech people, parents, and everyone else who has been helping to make our show a success over the past 3 months. The cast and crew are all very excited to entertain our friends and family with this magical production.



Dr. Fagan Interview (cont.)

By: Fatema Mun and Claudia Frankfurth

Any advice for freshman?

I think freshman year is the most critical year. It is important that 9th graders come in and realize they have a fresh start. They can hit that reset button in high school and become the person they realize they want to become. Some people realize that as a freshman, some people realize that a little later on. Freshman are in the position that they can build a really solid, good reputation for themselves. If you can do that you’re in a really great shape. If you dig a hole for yourself, if you don’t get good grades, if you don’t get involved in extracurriculars, or you don’t make good social choices, you’ve now created somewhat of a deficit that you have to work from. You can, but you’ve made it a little difficult for yourselves. So decide what you want high school to be like. Decide what you want to be three years from then and get after it. You do need to think about senior year because this goes by fast. Make the most of it.

What is one thing in the school that you are most proud of?

Our student body. That’s the most common question I get. Here, it’s the student body. I think that there is a tremendous amount of school pride. We are very diverse student body who treat each other pretty well, get along pretty well, and accept each other. For example, recently our autistic program joined the Bocce ball tournament with the Best Buddies program playing with them. Several staff members, the entire administration, and 175 students showed up. I was surprised seeing so many students. It was a really good turnout. It was a point of pride for me, a microcosm of what our school is really about, because they didn’t have to do that. They were there and they were cheering. All those kids were busy but they all showed up to the Bocce tournament.

What is your opinion on the best way for students in this school to achieve their full potential?

A lot of resources are offered at school and there are lots of course offerings out there. There are 25 varsity sports and many clubs. For those students who go out and pursue them and find out who they are can achieve their personal best. For the other students, to some extent it's a matter of deciding what you want to do and you go after them. We are here and waiting for you. We will even encourage you to do these things. We are reaching out to you, but you have to reach back and go for it. I think the students who take the long view of high school are the ones surprised in junior and senior year that, *oh boy I missed all*



these opportunities and now I feel awkward going after this. You need to get off your butt and go out. Make some connections and have some courage. Go be what you want to be.

If you had a podcast what would it be about?

If I had a podcast! That's a really tricky question. I think it would be about my adventures with my kids. I have two little ones and they are funny and smart and naughty sometimes. Some of them are very interesting and funny and I'm usually the victim of whatever's going on.

What was your experience going to prom like?

It was great. I went with my girlfriend at that time-we didn't last too much longer after that-I was fortunate to have had a pretty good social circle in high school. I don't know why I did this but at the time I was working at a tuxedo shop with a really good friend of mine and we decided we would wear the same tuxedo. And I don't know why, but we chose a houndstooth tuxedo jacket-like, who wears that? What was I thinking? I think that he actually wanted to wear a white tuxedo and I was like "no". So we wore the houndstooth. Just he and I. We were the only ones in the whole class who did that. But yeah, I think prom is one of those high school memories that sticks with you forever. It's a pleasant memory.

Who is your role model and why?

My role model was my grandfather on my father's side, I named my son after him, Jack. He passed some years ago but he was just a genuinely good human being, a really good guy, a family guy, always there for us at every holiday. He was a good soul. I had never heard him say anything cross. He was also weirdly patient. I would learn years later- he never bragged about himself- but he was a contract negotiator and apparently a really tough one. He was respected on both sides of the table and apparently someone who you wouldn't want to cross. I heard that and I was like 'really?' because he just seemed so nice and sweet to us. But he was a good man and I would say that was my role model.

What's your typical Starbucks order?

It is so boring. And my wife is always giving me a hard time for it! It's just a tall dark roast coffee. Everytime I order it she's like 'Really? That's it? All these options?'

What's a New Years Resolution you'd like to stick to?

Try to be more patient. I'm a Type A Personality in a high-profile job and I feel like I have a lot of expectation on me all the time and that can cause me to get things done and get after it. Sometimes I have to remind myself to be a little more patient as that's not something that comes naturally to me.

What's your favorite fast food restaurant?

Chick-fil-A, no hesitation, Chick-fil-A. I try to keep it once a month, but there have been occasions where my wife accuses me, correctly, of creating an errand that I have to go run that just happens to be by a Chick-fil-A.

For what in your life do you feel most grateful?

Good question. My family. For me, my family is #1 and my role here is #2. Those are my two top priorities in life, my family and my job.

What Is a Government Shutdown?

By: Alison Alexis

The most previous government shutdown was a national record, having gone on for 35 days. The previous record was 21 day shutdown during the Clinton administration. But what is a government shutdown? And what are the effects of one?

A government shutdown is when nonmandatory government organizations are closed because Congress is unable to pass appropriation bills (legislation that appropriates federal funds for specific federal departments, agencies and programs), or when the president refuses to sign those bills.

There have been many government shutdowns over the course of the United States' history. In 1980, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) was shut down after Congress was unable to pass appropriation bills for the FTC. The shutdown cost about \$700,000 and over 1,600 workers furloughed. From 1981-1986 during the Reagan Administration, there were three shutdowns that lasted from as little to half a day to a full day. Between 1995-1996 during Bill Clinton's presidency, there were two government shutdowns. The first one started on November 14th when Clinton vetoed a spending bill. This shutdown ended five days later on November 19th. The second shutdown started on December 16th and ended on the 6th of January. This second shutdown held the previous record for the longest government shutdown as it lasted 22 days. In 2013, during the Obama Administration, there was a government shutdown after the Republican led House of Representatives and the Democratic led Senate disagreed over political issues. This shutdown started on October 1st and ended just past midnight on October 17th. Recently, there have been two government shutdowns during President Trump's term. The first one lasted from the 20th to the 23rd of January in 2018 and the other which began on December 22nd of 2018 and has lasted into the new year.

As stated above, government shutdowns can occur for a wide range of reasons, but what happens during a government shutdown? The simple answer, the organizations and administrations



that do not receive money from the government close. These organizations include the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, Health and Human Services, National Parks, NASA, the National Institute of Health, the Smithsonian, and many more. Because these administrations are closed, an estimated 800,000 employees are not currently getting paid. Some organizations are recommending people barter for their rent and many are sharing their stories with the hashtag #ShutdownStories. The U.S. Coast Guard even recommended that people host garage sales, babysit, dog-walk, tutor, or work as mystery shoppers. They state, "Bankruptcy is a last option." Also, national parks are full of trash, many immigration cases have been postponed, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has had to suspend most of its food inspectors, FBI staffers have been furloughed, meaning national security is at risk, some airport terminals in Houston and Miami have been closed and it has been reported that a passenger in Atlanta managed to get a firearm through TSA earlier this month. Finally, the U.S. Geological Survey is unable to update water and earthquake data, posing danger to some U.S. states.

Even though the most recent government shutdown is over, there is a risk of another one occurring. And we can all agree that it is better if it did not occur. And if it does, the sooner it is over, the better.

The State of the Union Address

By: Alison Alexis

President Trump delivered the annual State of the Union Address on the fifth of February. Here are the highlights.

Trump began the address with simple yet meaningful words, “Millions of our fellow citizens are watching us now, gathered in this great chamber, hoping that we will govern not as two parties but as one nation.” He re enforces the fact that we are not two separate and divided parties, but one great nation with incredible potential. Trump also stated his hopes for America this year. He wants to make our communities safer, our culture and faith richer and deeper, and our middle class more successful.

After introducing a few important guests, Trump begins discussing the American economy. “We have created 5.3 million new jobs,” he states. He also mentions the pace at which the economy is growing, “Wages are rising at the fastest pace in decades..” He ends the conversation on the economy with a summary on unemployment, “African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American unemployment have all reached their lowest levels ever recorded. Unemployment for Americans with disabilities has also reached an all-time low.” Trump then begins to discuss the importance of bipartisan cooperation in the government. He states that if the two parties are to cooperate they must not be “war and investigation.”

Trump shifted the conversation to the topic of his views on the southern border. “Now, Republicans and Democrats must join forces again to confront an urgent national crisis,” he states, “Congress has 10 days left to pass a bill that will fund our government, protect our homeland, and secure our very dangerous southern border.” He claims that the “lawless state” of the southern border is a threat to American welfare.

Many female lawmakers wore white to this Address in support and remembrance of the Suffrage Movement. Trump also mentions the significance of these women, stating, “No one has benefited more from our thriving economy than women, who have filled 58 percent of the newly created jobs last year...And exactly one century after Congress passed the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote, we also have more women serving in Congress than at any time before.”

Trump then begins to discuss trade and international relations. “To build on our incredible economic success, one priority is paramount: reversing decades of calamitous trade policies.” He specifically talks about our relations with China, stating that he has much respect for the country, but their new tradedeal must protect American jobs, and reduce our trade deficit. ”

The next thing on Trump’s agenda was the protection of American security. He discusses America’s relations with many countries, including Russia, China, the Koreas, and Venezuela. He explains that the U.S. will be withdrawing from the INF treaty because of Russia’s many violations of the treaty. He then explains his opinion on the situation in North Korea. “Our hostages have come home, nuclear testing has stopped, and there has not been a missile launch in more than 15 months.” He then states, “If I had not been elected President of the United States, we would right now...be in a major war with North Korea.”

His final topic relating to international relations was the Middle East. He discusses America’s new approach in the region by saying, “Great nations do not fight endless wars.” He then discusses how ISIS occupies a significantly smaller region then when he took office, and how it is time to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan. Trump then moves the topic to anti-semitism, and discusses the recent anti-semitic attacks on Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue. “We must never ignore the vile poison of anti-Semitism, or those who spread its venomous creed. With one voice, we must confront this hatred anywhere and everywhere it occurs.”

Trump then begins to end the address about an hour later by asking us think of those who came before us, and unite as Americans to continue being the great nation we are. “Here tonight, we have legislators from across this magnificent republic...Together, we represent the most extraordinary nation in all of history...We must keep America first in our hearts...And we must always keep faith in America’s destiny that one nation, under God, must be the hope and the promise, and the light and the glory, among all the nations of the world...”

National Headlines

2019's Polar Vortex

By: Lane Aubert

The end of January and the beginning of February this year will be known for the dangerously cold weather that affected the Northeastern and Midwestern United States. As temperatures dipped below zero, areas became unsuitable for people to live in. There have been at least twenty-one people who have reportedly died because of the weather and many more resulting injuries. In Chicago, the temperature was as low as negative 45 degrees Fahrenheit, colder than Antarctica. Here in Pennsylvania, temperatures dropped to single digits and snow squalls ensued.

As this cold weather engulfed much of the country, many news sources used the term polar vortex to describe the situation. What is referred to as the polar vortex actually is spinning cold air above the North Pole. The bottom of the vortex, which is what edges south during winter, is called the polar front or polar jet stream. A strong jet stream keeps the polar air in the Arctic Circle, but if that jet stream is weakened, warm air will move north and cold air will move south. As the cold air migrates south, sub-freezing temperatures in America become common.

The polar vortex is not an uncommon weather pattern, but this year it seemed shockingly extreme. This year, the vortex split on January 2nd, causing the unfortunate weather about a month later. Some scientists have suggested that split of the polar vortex was caused by sudden stratospheric warming. There is some evidence that as the planet warms, the jet stream is becoming slower and wavier, or weaker.

The Oscars Controversy

By: Lane Aubert

This year's Oscars' nominations were announced on January 22nd. Although the list of nominees is filled with stars such as Lady Gaga, Emma Stone, and Christian Bale, many have criticisms for the choices made by the Academy.

Even before any nominations were announced this year, Kevin Hart stepped down from hosting the show in early December. The comedian's homophobic tweets from 2009 to 2011 resurfaced recently and prompted Hart to issue an official apology on social media. On Twitter, he also announced that he felt it was best to step down from being this year's host. As a result, the ninety-first Academy Awards will not have a formal host and will instead be hosted by numerous presenters. Another problem with this year's award show was the lack of women directors nominated for the directing category. Only one woman has won the award and a total of five have been nominated since the award show's start in 1929. With the #MeToo movement in motion and Greta Gerwig's nomination in 2018, there was hope that 2019 would be a better year for female directors. Unfortunately, no women have been nominated this year.

This year's "Best Picture" category includes *Black Panther*, *BlacKkKlansman*, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *The Favorite*, *Green Book*, *Roma*, *A Star is Born*, and *Vice*. Although it is nice to see the diversity of movies entering this category, there have been controversies surrounding two of the films. The first involves *Bohemian Rhapsody*, a biographical movie about Queen, a seventies British rock band. The movie's original director, Bryan Singer, has been accused of sexual assault and misconduct in multiple instances. He was fired and replaced by another director for a portion of the movie, although he is still credited as the director. In the case of *Green Book*, there have been two cases of disagreeable actions taken by those involved. During a panel discussion, Viggo Mortensen, who plays Tony Lip and is nominated for "Best Actor in a Leading Role", used a racial slur. He was quick to apologize and Mahershala Ali, his co-worker, did accept his apology but noted that it was not appropriate for Mortensen to say those words. In Mortensen's and Singer's cases, it leaves one to wonder if the Acad-

emy should evaluate movies based on just the movie itself or should they take into account the people behind it.

The story of Green Book has also been targeted for portraying its main character incorrectly. Green Book was a biopic about Dr. Don Shirley, an African American pianist that toured the segregated South of the sixties. The family of Dr. Shirley came out after the release of the movie to criticize the portrayal of the musician. Dr. Shirley's brother called the

movie a "symphony of lies" and the family has said that they weren't contacted in the making of the film. This unfortunate scenario is similar to Detainment, a live action short film also up for an Oscar this year. The family of the murdered two-year-old, whose death the film focuses on, was not contacted before the film was produced.

In brighter news, many other films and actors were nominated this year. Christian Bale, Bradley Cooper, Willem Dafoe, and Rami Malek are all nominated for "Best Actor in a Leading Role". Yalitza Aparicio, Glenn Close, Olivia Colman, Lady Gaga, and Melissa McCarthy have all been nominated for "Best Actress in a Leading Role". In the running for "Best Animated Feature Film" are popular movies such as Incredibles 2, Isle of the Dogs, Mirai, Ralph Breaks the Internet and Spider-man: Into the Spider-verse. The event is set to take place on February 28th, at 8 p.m.



Holidays

Single's Day *By: Cecilia Casteneda*

Saint Valentine, the saint of love, celebrated on February 14th of every single year. Couples go out and have a nice dinner or possibly others just staying home and watch a movie on this day. Two months before we are constantly reminded of this holiday because we start seeing teddy bears, letters, balloons, candy, and so many other things in the stores. It's great to see how much love exists but, what about the single people? Not many are informed about Singles Awareness Day. That's right! A day where single people celebrate themselves and their loved ones like friends and family. This holiday is in fact relatively new and people estimate it was first celebrated around 2005. Ironically, Singles Awareness Day spells SAD but, in fact most people aren't sad and instead go out with friends or just reflect upon themselves. Before single people used to celebrate this on February 14th but, it seemed as a self-pity. They changed the date to February 15th a day after Valentine's Day for singles to celebrate love in their own ways. How might you celebrate this you might ask? It wouldn't be a bad idea to go on a vacation to treat yourself but, if you'd rather stay home one could go to a game, have dinner with your friends, go shopping, get a massage, and so much more. Others, according to Days of Year, decide to go to Brazil for Carnival to get away from all the hearts and cheesy sayings. Brazil in fact in a very popular destination for those who celebrate Singles Awareness Day. Singles Awareness Day isn't to pity but, to celebrate! Before it was seen as a anti- Valentine's Day but, today more people celebrate this for themselves rather as a protest. The anti- Valentines Day wasn't to protest against love but, the commercializing of the holiday. Valentine's Day is much more relevant and not many people actually know that Singles Awareness Day exists. Those who know it exists don't exactly know the date. For those who didn't know, well now you know. So if you're single, this is a great opportunity for you to get yourselves pampered and just appreciate yourselves.. You should do that everyday, but on Singles Awareness Day you should do it with extra love. Call your friends for a day filled with love and happiness for all of you single people. Don't feel bad but, instead embrace it because you never know when you're Cupid's next target!

National Holidays *By: Gab Becker*

Pancake Day, Battery Day, and Near Miss Day are just some of the weird national days the US has, but where did they come from? Days of the year are randomly announced for various reasons as a special day for something, whether it ice cream or Star Wars. So what really is the reason for all this commotion about national days?

It all started in 1984 when President Ronald Reagan signed Proclamation 5119, loudly declaring July 17 National Ice Cream Day. Next came National Frozen Food Day. along with Catfish day. Since technically proclamations are a once and done kind of thing, ice cream day was only in the 1980's, but that didn't stop us! The road was paved for an onslaught of national days to come rolling in!

There are lots of reasons for why a national day is proclaimed. It could be marketing, fun, or even just to confuse others, but all in all, some people actually do celebrate them. Companies got into the action too, declaring Drive-Through Day and Star Wars Day, brought to you by Jack In The Box and Lucasfilm respectively. It was seen as a marketing tactic: they now had an excuse to push out more deals and get more publicity. Another reason for some of the national days is a man named John-Bryan Hopkins, the social media consultant from Foodimentary, purly for his blog. He simply didn't have anything to talk about on his account some days so he would whip up a national day and get the word out. So to some extent, most of these days were made up on the fly.

National holidays are fun, who can resist them? You can share a selfie on the day for it and can have an excuse to bring your children to work. They make life a little more interesting. While many of the days are not really official government holidays, you can't help but get a nice burger on National Burger Day sometimes. So have some fun with them, don't take life too seriously, and brag about your birthday being on National Thrift Shop Day.

New Year's Resolution

By: Gab Becker

As the beginning of the year starts it's like everyone has evolved over night. You see people in the gym that you've never seen before, that one couple is buying every known vegetable to human-kind, and somehow your friends room is clean. They've evolved and have taken on new names, but are still very similar to before. So where does all this new motivation come from? The one thing that gets people on their feet, a New Year's resolution.

A New Year's resolution is a goal that is given to oneself to better the upcoming year. Whether it be a diet, exercise, cleaning your room, or even just trying to eat some cereal before you run out the door, most of us have made one, so why do we abandon it only a month in?

To begin, kudos to anyone who is still moving along with your resolution, but realistically most of us have given up on ours. One of the reasons we may have stopped is because it doesn't blend into our lives seamlessly. While exercising more and eating healthier is a great thing to do for yourself, if it messes up your way of life it could make it more stressful and start to be seen as a negative thing. A busy worker with kids and a long job may think that adding on a little jogging couldn't hurt anyone, but with everything else going on around them, it would seem like a chore. It would disrupt routine and cause everything to lose its flow, especially when trying to figure out how to fit that morning job into the day with work, breakfast, and getting people to where they need to be. The same goes with eating healthier. While stocking up on veggies and fruits may seem like the right direction, it can get expensive fast. A person on a budget would have to cut corners in order to buy all ingredients they need for the low fat, low cholesterol, vegan smoothie they saw on Pinterest. It's just not right to stick something that is supposed to be fun and beneficial into a life that couldn't handle it, causing negative emotions towards the activity. So really if they stop working at it, it's for a valid reason.

The next possible reason for why we give up our resolutions so quickly is that it doesn't have to do with who we are on the inside. Getting healthy is a great thing to accomplish and can make a person feel really good about themselves, but if for the wrong reasons it make not be that beneficial.

Society tries to dictate on how we should look and is almost constantly saying that someone is too skinny, fat, short, tall, or weird. It never wants us to be happy. So if losing weight is for the purpose of impressing that guy or so more people will like your Instagram posts, the resolution is not really for you. If you want to lose weight for you, go ahead, we applaud you, but if it's for someone else, maybe it's not the right path. Setting up a resolution, or any goal for that matter, should be based on what you want and what you feel, not anyone else.

Valentine's Day Around the World

By: Alison Alexis

In the United States and many other countries around the world, the 14th of February marks a day filled with love, flowers, and chocolate, better known as Valentine's Day. Generally, people will exchange cards, candy, and flowers with their loved ones, and many young children may exchange cards and candy with their friends and classmates. There is also some religious association to Valentine's Day in the Anglican and Lutheran church.

Valentine's Day initially used to be a celebration of the Christian Saints under the line of Valentinus. The most important Saint was Saint Valentine, who was beheaded by the Roman emperor Claudius. At the time, the Claudius had banned marriage so his soldiers would be more focused. In response, Saint Valentine married people in secret. While Valentine was in prison, he began to fall for the jailer's blind daughter. It is said that his love was so strong that he healed her sight.

The holiday developed even more after a Pope attempted to ban a celebration he deemed "not in accordance with Christian values." The Pope changed the saint in charge of the festival from Lupercus to Saint Valentine, which caused many young Roman men to write letters and confess their love with the same romantic themes that Saint Valentine was known for. Over the following centuries in many European countries, people continued to exchange letters as a practice known as courting. Today the letters people used to exchange have been replaced with modern greeting cards.

In America and many other countries, people celebrate Valentine's Day by exchanging cards, candy, and flowers. Some people may even buy more expensive things for their significant other, such as jewelry or clothes. But other countries have other traditions. In Latin America, "Día del Amor y la Amistad" is a celebration of both love and friendship. It is celebrated in June because the 14th of February falls too close to Mardi Gras celebrations. Similarly, in China, Valentine's Day falls on the seventh of August this year, since the 14th of February occurs during Chinese New Year.

Many Asian countries have multiple celebrations as well as Valentine's Day. White Day, which is celebrated on the 14th of March by Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Vietnam and mainland China, is when men will give gifts to the women who gave them gifts on Valentine's Day. These gifts can be anything from white chocolate, white clothing, or jewelry. Normally these gifts are exchanged out of romantic interest, but they can also be given out of social obligation. In South Korea exclusively, there is also a holiday called Black Day. This holiday, which occurs on the 14th of April, is a celebration where people who did not receive anything on Valentine's Day or White Day gather and wear black clothes and eat jajangmyeon or other black colored food. A similar holiday is celebrated in China on the 11th of November, and is known as Singles Day.

So no matter where you are from or if you had a Valentine this year, there is a celebration out there for you. And in the words of Charles M. Schulz, "All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt."

Editors: Fatema Mun and Claudia Frankfurth
Advisor: Mr. Niedziejko
Writers: Lane Aubert, Alison Alexis, Gab Becker, Cecilia Casteneda, Claudia Frankfurth, Fatema Mun, Kayla Wadyko, Anushka Raina, Jessica Greulich, Zach Agamalian
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