dpr

davis political review

our campus, our conversation.

ISSUE NO. 2

WAR &
DISARMAMENT

masthead

masthead

Staff Writers

Ali Janku

Alma Rodriguez

Ana Cristina Garrido

Andrew Wooler

Ankita Bhat

Antione Menager

Armin Nouri

Brandon Jetter

Brandon Dimapasoc

Chloe Craig

Claire Adams

Dalton Barthauer

Dan Daskal

Dennis Liang

Devapriya Roy

Diedra Bradley

Don Congjuico

Dylan Chicorel

Eli Elster

Jenean Docter

Joseph Harrington

Kymberley Chu

Lei Otsuka

Manasa Gogineni

Mariah Nibert

Mark Godges

Max Rothschild

Michael Wheeler

Mora Ognian

Naidelyn Buenrostro

Nayzak Wali-Ali

Priyal Thakral

Rose Wang

Ryan Mickle

Serena Uppal

Shelby Salyer

davis political review

Letter from the Editor

For scholars, thinkers and intellectuals,

Each one of us has a story to tell to the world. We are all made up of fragments reflecting the events we have experienced in our lives - stories we have thought about and pondered upon day and night. When I joined Davis Political Review three years ago, I had a place where my thoughts found a way to become words. Since then, Davis Political Review has challenged itself in every manner of speaking. Our team has worked tirelessly to bring our best possible self to the rest of the Davis student community and remade ourselves into what you can see today.

This year marks the second year of the Davis Political Review Annual Publication. In many ways, the second try is even harder than the first. This is where we hope to reach beyond what we achieved previously. We hope to get rid of redundancies, and to not become set in one simple mold. Instead, we want to bring something new, something exciting and something everyone wants to read about.

When I chose the theme of this year's publication - War and Disarmament, I was aware of the many layers that come attached to such a topic. As many point out, the youth cannot help but exude a certain idealism. I wanted to deliberately pursue this idealism because I am a firm believer of understanding the hardships that underlay our lens of the world. My team responded with great enthusiasm, and so these wonderful thinkers and writers, creative designers and perceptive editors worked together to bring this theme to life.

In this publication, we have hoped to enlighten our readership in newer and profound ways to think about war. Every story here is capable of opening new doors to your thoughts and making you peel away a different layer. We seek to shed light on the angles that are forgotten, to enhance our abilities to follow trends and create a vision of the world in a greater way. Our writers have demonstrated a wonderful ability to think out of the ordinary, to follow the dots in this world of constant headlines and stay true to their opinions.

When you read ahead, keep your mind open to their stories. Davis Political Review prides itself in the ability of allowing each voice to go forward without hindrances. We believe that our writers are capable of molding their intuitions, their ideas and their passions into something concrete. We hope after you are finished, you find yourself holding a new dimension of thought.

Davis Political Review remains a proud emissary of individuality and observation, layered with factual observance of the world around us. We hope this second issue of the Annual Publication can cater to your thirst about wars within and without.

Thank you,
Ayesha Ishtiaq

Greater Opportunity

Teacher Mentorship

Economic Advantages

EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE

Access to Resources

Well Funded Schools

THE AMERICAN ~~DREAM~~ REALITY

Naidelyn Buenrostro

"Education is the way up." Education is a right, but it is evident that the system recognizes it as a privilege. The education system has been perceived as being the leader in providing a path towards upward social mobility, giving the impression that students of all backgrounds are able to achieve their dreams. Students from various backgrounds attend school with the American Dream embedded in their minds. At a young age, students dream that they can and will be someone they aspire to be but as students get older, that dream slowly begins to fade away. The American Dream was founded on the principle that opportunity in a society that promotes upward social mobility through hard work is not only an attainable success, but also a freedom. Leaders repeatedly convey the idea that the United States is the leading country in providing all individuals with equal opportunities in order to succeed. This message has been the blueprint and the foundation for everyone to follow. It has projected the notion that individuals do not need to come from a certain background to attain success. The belief that all individuals are equal and can attain success at the same rate is simply false. Students that at-

Poverty

Low-income Communities

Segregated Schools

Lack of Support

High Cost College Tuition
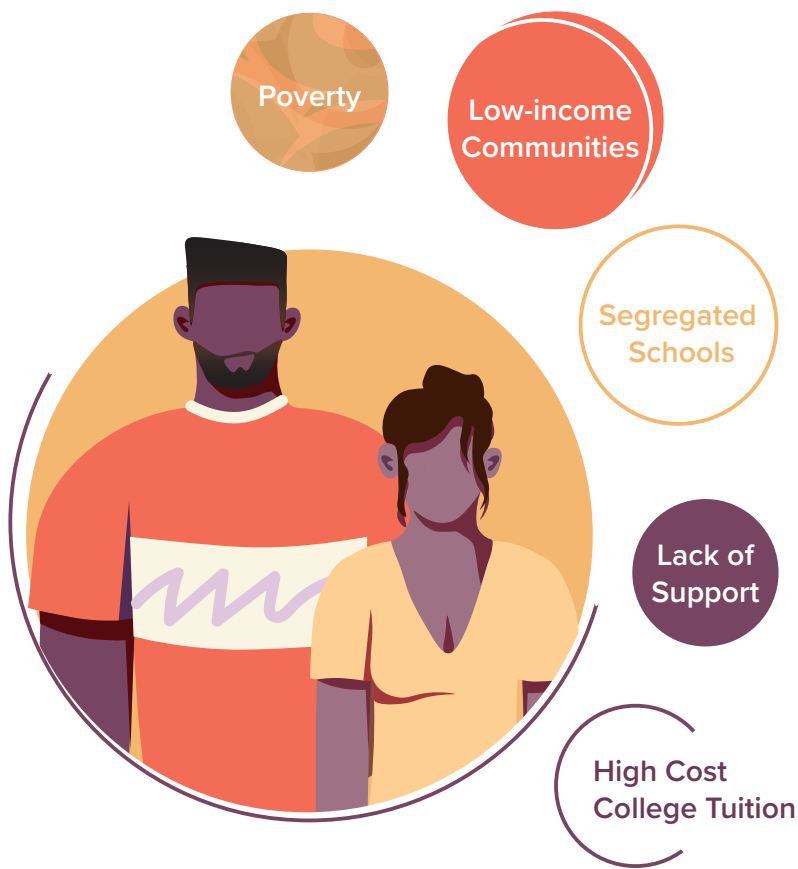
Design by Meredith Bradley

tend underfunded and underserved schools are expected to achieve the same success as students who attend extremely well-funded and well-served schools. Black, Latinx, and Native students are the most affected by the policies and practices put in place that create a continuing cycle, which is difficult to break.

Students do not put much thought about the school they attend when they are young. They see no differences, they see no inequality. That begins to change as students get older and realize their reality, leading them towards paths that will impact their life. The student from a low-income community, one of the brightest in their class, might not attend a four-year institution or will struggle along the way, while the student from a privileged background will attend a four-year institution and likely be suc-

cessful after.

The vast majority of Black, Latinx, and Native students face the American Reality. The American Reality: the false narratives and discriminatory policies, carried through insensible generations, which implement inequality and provide a lack of resources for underrepresented groups, thus creating barriers to attain success and reach upward social mobility.

Systemic racism in education has led to a lack of representation in higher education institutions, leading to the inequalities and disparities of attaining upward social mobility in America.

One of the first cases that led to the desegregation of schools was the 1947 case of *Mendez v. Westminster*. In *Mendez v. Westminster*, nine year-

old Sylvia Mendez was denied from public schools that were "only for whites" in California because she was of Mexican descent and was forced to go to "Schools for Mexicans." The case was taken up to the U.S. District Court and ruled in favor of Mendez. The school district later challenged the ruling and took it to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit; the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the ruling held in the U.S. District Court. A few months later, Governor Earl Warren signed a bill to end school segregation, but this did not end segregation. It would be later that segregation would end. Years after *Mendez v. Westminster*, it set precedent for *Brown v. Board*. This case was brought to the U.S. Supreme Court to challenge and end segregation nationally; the case argued by civil rights champion, Thurgood Marshall. A historical event that comes to mind as being the first step in "ending racism" in the United States was the 1954 landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. In *Brown v. Board*, the United States Supreme Court ruled in a 9-0, unanimous decision that "separate but equal" legislation is a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Thus, this Supreme Court decision led to the desegregation of schools, allowing students of all backgrounds to attend school together. Or so, it laid out the idea. Over 60 years ago, racial segregation in the United States was made illegal yet, despite the intent of making progressive steps towards equality and representation, schools still practice it. Today, the number of segregated schools have doubled since 1996,

where approximately 66 percent of Black, Latinx, and Native students students attend segregated schools. The reason behind these staggering numbers has largely been due to the fact that similar to redlining, many school districts after *Brown v. Board* ensured that Black, Latinx, and Native students were not to be integrated into their schools; forming their own district with predominantly white students and keeping Black, Latinx, and Native students out of the school system. As a result of this idea, schools began to implement loopholes around the *Brown v. Board* decision to keep certain students away from being integrated and also keeping the adequate resources. All of which the *Brown v. Board* decision intended to stop. States began to pass legislation that supposedly included "equal and diverse standards" in all schools.

Some states proceeded to enact and carry out "progressive" legislation, whereas other states disregarded any efforts to be inclusive. Several states, such as in the South, avoided the practice of integration by passing legislation that kept segregation alive in schools, despite the Supreme Court's ruling. Alabama is an example of how it was able to continue the racist policies and preserve segregated schools. Section 256 of Alabama's constitution states, "separate schools shall be provided for white and colored children." After the *Brown v. Board* decision, Alabama created an amendment that eliminated its responsibility to guarantee state funding to public education, of which many Black students attend. In the af-

termath of *Brown v. Board*, many right-wing conservatives began to witness the near end of the Jim Crow era and the rise of the Civil Rights Movement; as the fight for equality rose, right-wing conservatives were worried about the progressive path the United States was heading towards, leading them to carry out the creation of neo-segregated schools. Alabama and various states began to create private schools, which did not have to integrate due to the fact that the federal government could only enforce desegregation within public schools. Alabama has one of the nation's most segregated education systems. In 2018, according to the Equal Justice Initiative approximately 90 percent of Black students attended 75 of Alabama's "failing schools". To this day, Alabama has not removed the racist language from their constitution. Alabama and other states have carried out a system that oppresses Black, Latinx, and Native students and has created barriers. It is a continuous cycle that has prevented students from achieving and attending a higher education institution.

Gene McAdoo, a student at UCLA, describes what segregation has prevented Black, Latinx, and Native students from obtaining.

"Segregation is something that was normalized and has become [embedded] in the United States. [It] has still impacted a lot of things in our society, today. "
He continued stating, "Integration is not only about students from different backgrounds coming together,

but also having adequate resources, sharing experiences, better teachers and better programs. Getting rid of segregation allows people to share the same set of values so that when [Black, Latinx, and Native students] get to college it's not a culture shock."

Systemic racism has largely affected the educational opportunities of Black, Latinx, and Native students. Due to the continuing practice of segregation, it has not allowed students to equally achieve. The resources are part of students' quality education, without the adequate resources, students cannot achieve the same as affluent and privileged students. If students are not exposed to different environments and are not receiving adequate resources and support, students will overlook their potential and lose motivation to pursue a higher education. The system has continuously questioned if Black, Latinx, and Native students are deserving of receiving a quality education.

While some states refused to make education accessible, some states welcomed changes in the education system. California was one of the first states to implement inclusive legislation that made sure all students were receiving an equal opportunity. The California Master Plan was established in 1960 when the state called for education reform; making it accessible for students to afford a higher education and for students from disadvantaged and underrepresented communities to seek the opportunity to enroll in higher education institutions. The California Master Plan

laid out the "development, expansion, and integration of the facilities, curriculum, and standards of higher education, in junior colleges [now Community Colleges], state colleges [now CSU], UC and other institutions of higher education in the state, to meet [its] needs during the next ten years and thereafter."

California Supreme Court Justice, Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar, shared his views on the education system. Justice Cuéllar was born in Mexico, came to the United States and attained degrees from Harvard University, Yale Law School and Stanford University. He has shared his story and inspired many to pursue their goals. Among all the achievements Justice Cuéllar has received, he worked for the Obama Administration and served as a co-chair in the Equity and Excellence Commission.

Justice Cuéllar stated, "I have always believed that California can lead the way, we did an extraordinary thing with that Master Plan, we showed the country that it was possible to scale up institutions to educate millions of people from diverse backgrounds. But, over time we have come to realize that reforms are needed and innovations are key."

There ought to be an effective response in the state's education system and expansion of the California Master Plan.

During the early to mid-1960s, California was at its peak in terms of higher education and economic growth; students from all backgrounds began to attend the University of California, California State University, and California Community College system. However, it began to decline in the late early 1970s when Governor Reagan, a Republican, used his "cut, squeeze and trim" philosophy, and California's education system took a turn. Reagan cut state funding in all higher education institutions and raised the tuition, making it difficult for Black, Latinx, and Native students to afford and attend a university because he believed that the state should not be spending on students' intellectual curiosity. Reagan was not the first and only governor to digress California's education system. In the 1970s, Democratic governor Jerry Brown made "lower your expectations" the mantra, which further digressed the education system in California. A couple years later, California strayed away from the promises to students and passed Proposition 13 in 1978, which cut off the education system from a source of funding. In 1988, Proposition 98 passed; it outlined that there was a minimum funding for K-12 schools and very little for the UC and CSU system, allowing tuition to increase dramatically. Under Pete Wilson, Proposition 209 was enacted and prohibited state institutions from considering race, ethnicity and sex in university admissions, public employment etcetera; this was the end of affirmative action in the state.

California too, has its history of enacting discriminatory policies. There has to be a significant amount of change and legislative action. It cannot continue to leave behind historically marginalized students.Without substantial change, Black, Latinx, and Native students will continue to be left behind. The system keeps them out of higher education institutions, causing there to be less and less representation.

Black, Latinx, and Native students are the most marginalized students in the education system. Racial segregation is illegal, but the practice is still very much present today. States are still practicing Jim Crow era laws. In *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein explains the practice of redlining and describes the racial segregation that exists through the practice of "defacto segregation." Numbers play a significant role in the United States, not just money but zip codes too. For instance, neighborhoods that are along the freeways or separated by railroads are segregated; Black, Latinx, and Native students are already segregated right off the bat. Where they live determines the future education they will receive. According to recent studies, Black, Latinx, and Native students face poverty six times more than their white peers as a result of redlining. Students from low-income neighborhoods attend schools that lack the necessary and adequate resources to cater to students. Schools that are in low-income communities are often underfunded, whereas affluent schools receive immensely more funding and have the resources necessary for students to attain a higher education. In certain school

districts, schools that serve low-income students receive approximately $23 billion less than affluent schools. School district lines are not that far off from each other to determine which school students will attend. The district line can be less than a mile away or even a block away from one house to another and yet, determines the quality of education the student will receive.

Susana Lopez, a student at UC Davis, describes the high school she attended and the obstacles she faces being a student of color at a four-year institution.

Lopez states, "We had outdated tables; the sink didn't work, so we never really did any real science labs; the ceiling tiles would fall off; teachers tried their best but they didn't have the resources; our school was really outdated."

Lopez explains that students at her school did not have the adequate resources needed in order to perform the standards or objectives that were planned by the state for students to learn. According to studies, students that are located within cities tend to have less funding, whereas schools that are located in the suburbs have more resources and are able to provide funding for the schools because of the small amount of students they cater to; and the majority being white students attending these schools.

Lopez emphasizes, "We were trying to make [it] happen for us, but we weren't really there yet, we had the bare necessities."

By Lopez's school is a Jack in the Box, across is a motel and seconds away is the freeway. Students enter the school seeing murals painted with encouraging messages on the walls as they walk down the hallways and go to their classrooms. Inside the classrooms, there are some that have chalkboards; the gym has not been remodeled in years; the grass in the quad is semi-dry, surrounded by some benches. Not too far away from her high school, is a school that is approximately ten minutes away from her. The difference...money. To paint the picture, the school ten minutes away from Lopez's school is known for having hit TV shows and movies filmed on campus such as *She's All That, Beverly Hills, 90210* and *Bruce Almighty*. Surrounding this school is a nearby park, a church, a private school and is five minutes away from the mall. This high school has not one but two gyms, a quad area with a fountain and five computer labs. The difference in the interior and exterior of both campuses, along with the resources and funding is astonishing. According to a study by EdBuild, Black, Latinx, and Native students are enrolled in overpopulated and underfunded school districts, which has a pivotal role in a student's performance.

Cuéllar stated, "Access to high quality teachers, support for teachers who have a great many students, often many in areas of concentrated poverty, lack of infrastructure and lack of access to technology that is needed." He continued, saying that there has to be support in order to "improve

circumstances at home for kids who are in different home situations, [such as] access to affordable housing and education funding models that are going to work for different students." Studies by the National Center for Education Statistics show that students "living in poverty during early childhood is associated with lower-than-average academic performance that begins in kindergarten and extends through high school, leading to lower-than-average school completion." This creates a disproportionate and unequal playing field for Black, Latinx, and Native students.

Kenny Vargas, a student at UC Davis, illustrates the everyday challenges he faced growing up in South Central Los Angeles. He explained the environment that he grew up in and the effect it had on him growing up in the projects and not attending an affluent school.

Vargas explains, "At a young age, my parents told me to go to school, to get out of poverty. My elementary school was in the heart of the projects. I saw a lot of people die, I got beat up a couple times, I got chased a couple of times. [Teachers] did not really care about their students, they tried but they gave up quickly."

Vargas described that students in his school were likely to "get into bad things" because there was an absence of guidance and support from the faculty.

A large percentage of Black, Latinx, and Native students come from low-income backgrounds. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, the students that live in low-income neighborhoods are: 65 percent Black; 62 percent American Indian; 62 percent Hispanic/Latinx. Oftentimes, students that live in these neighborhoods and attend school with little support and resources drop out early from school, work or attend a higher education institution and do not finish. Studies also infer that Black, Latinx, and Native students that live in low-income families are five times more likely to drop out.

Vargas states, "We were stuck in poverty and I wanted to work. After a couple years of taking care of my family, I got tired of [working] so I went to school."

Students that are primarily located in poor urban districts and rural areas attend schools that fail to serve disadvantaged students, causing students to endure the most educational setbacks. One setback that students located in these areas face is an economic disadvantage. Low-income families make an average of less than $25,000 a year; this income leaves the family with little to provide for certain resources than those who are affluent and able to provide for their children. A student who comes from an affluent background has resources such as tutoring, sufficient technology, books, school supplies, etcetera. Whereas, a student from a low-income background may have some necessary supplies, but not all that a student from an affluent background

does. As a result, low-income children grow in an environment where work is constant, and a lack of education is being received in school, leading students to put a pause to college.

If students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not pursue a higher education, studies show that they will make an income of approximately $35,000 whereas students that finish attending a higher education institution will make approximately $90,000. Research shows that affirmative action assists in promoting social mobil-

> **"'Segregation is something that was normalized and has become [embedded] in the United States. [It] has still impacted a lot of things in our society, today.'"**

ity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Affirmative action is significant for a plethora of reasons. For one, it would allow and open opportunities for historically marginalized groups.

Cuéllar explained, "We see a different trajectory in the lives of kids who are in specific areas, often areas that are bounded by literally just a few blocks, that have concentrated poverty, higher crime, fewer opportunities for mentorship and for role models."

This is a continuous cycle that illustrates what Black, Latinx and Native students have to overcome. They are already put into a system that puts them at a disadvantage, therefore

pre-determining the school and quality of education they will receive.

He continued stating, "The many problems that we have providing broader economic mobility are often problems that require schools and universities to work in more innovative ways. So we have to redouble our efforts to make sure that we have a welcoming environment for people from all backgrounds and that we find the right mix of funding, role models, support in and outside of schools that will give people the shot at improving their futures."

Support and encouragement are significant when it comes to a student's success. It is what allows students to be engaged and be curious about the world around them. Unfortunately, the schools and districts that most Black, Latinx, and Native students are enrolled in are severely underfunded. Without the necessary resources to address the continuing issues, improvement is hardly likely to be seen soon. Lack of representation and the discrimination has kept opportunities away. Bryan Cendejas, a student at UC Berkeley, addressed one of the challenges he faced that changed his perspective of school and how he later discovered higher education.

He stated, "I stopped believing in myself [when] my middle school teacher told me to ditch better if I didn't want to be in her class; simply for asking too many questions in class. I wanted to learn. So, I felt like if she didn't want to help me, there was something wrong with me."

According to the No Child Left Behind Act, states were to ensure all students would have access to "highly qualified teachers." However, Black, Latinx, and Native students frequently have less experienced and less qualified teachers than their affluent peers. Reports from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights has shown that Black, Hispanic/Latinx and Native American students are enrolled in schools with higher concentrations of less experienced teachers than students from affluent backgrounds. There is little support being given to Black, Latinx, and Native students, as some ignore the potential in students. Cendejas further expressed, "I gave up because I thought I was dumb, I thought I was a student that couldn't learn. I [later] learned about college when I was maybe 17, [when] I started working around a lot of white people."

The environment students are exposed to creates a response that determines the direction they may head towards. Obstacles are set into place, and Black, Latinx, and Native students face this time and time again because of the inadequate responses and lack of support from those who are supposed to help ensure students succeed equally. Their intellectualism and ambition is often questioned; sometimes it puts a halt to their dreams and causes them to settle. This shouldn't be the case; students' intellectualism and ambition should not be questioned, it should be encouraged.

While the federal and state governments are responsible for the education system, school districts play a large role in determining the quality of education students receive. In the 1974 case, *Milliken v. Bradley*, the courts ruled that schools do not have to integrate or have racial balance in schools, so long as the district lines were not drawn with racist intent. Due to this decision, schools were able to escape the process of desegregation and busing. Under this ruling, it became possible for school districts to redraw lines and allowed schools to take action during their admissions process. Some schools in the United States have begun seceeding. School district secession is the practice of schools breaking off from the large district that they were a part of and creating their own smaller district. On average, large schools districts range from approximately 10,500 students

"'I felt like if she didn't want to help me, there was something wrong with me.'"

to about 600,000 students. Whereas, smaller districts can have as little as 1,500 students. Such schools that practice this, have made the assertion that they take this action in order to obtain more control over the funding and distribution of school resources, asserting local control; cities are capable of self-funding and self-governing schools.

But the idea of local control is not merely about having more control of schools but rather, the resistance to school integration. When schools create a system through this process, they have a significant amount of knowledge and motive as to who they are targeting. The lines that are being drawn create borders along socioeconomic differences; this practice has a large economic and racial motive. When the school(s) disassociate themselves from the large district, it is now small, which allows them to draw their district lines and determine the type of students that are allowed to attend that specific school. Through this process, school districts are more likely to have less Black, Latinx, and Native students. Now, schools that stay in the large school district typically have more Black, Latinx, and Native students, thus receiving little funding because the district (and the state) have to provide for a large amount of students, faculty, resources, and more. For instance, in South San Antonio, Texas, the school district receives approximately less than $8,500 per student, whereas the school district in Doss, Texas receives approximately $50,000 per student. In the United States, approximately 60 percent of schools have seceded, isolating Black, Latinx, and Native students from attending well-funded schools. The political and legal decisions of the past and present have allowed and made it easier for schools to secede, and is one of the reasons why segregation still exists today.

Schools emphasize the importance of diversity and how it has "stepped up" to ensure all students are achieving their full potential and given the education they deserve. However,

studies show that Black, Latinx, and Native students are at a disadvantage, facing a plethora of barriers to overcome. Affirmative action was created under the Kennedy administration with the intent to give students from underrepresented communities the equal opportunity to increase representation in all areas, especially in higher education. Due to this policy, underrepresented groups enrolled in higher education and other areas in high numbers and while many saw this as a step forward, others argued that it was racial discrimination to favor certain backgrounds.

In 1978, the Supreme Court took the case, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* which dealt with the issue of affirmative action. A white male student was denied admission to the UC Davis Medical School because 16 of the 100 seats were reserved for minorities under affirmative action, and Bakke argued that he was denied based on race. The court ruled in favor of Bakke and made the assertion that institutions cannot use racial quotas as part of the admission process but can use race as one of the several factors in the admissions process.

This opened the floodgates for universities to weaken the enrollment of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups in the United States. In a report by Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, white students make up 64 percent in selective public colleges. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are less than 1 percent of American Indian/

Alaska Native students; 7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander students; 14 percent Black students; and 18 percent Hispanic/Latinx students enrolled. The *Bakke* decision allowed society to believe that racism was over and that affirmative action was no longer needed because the issue of racism was "resolved." However, it revealed that racism was indeed very present, showing that fewer underrepresented groups were being represented in a plethora of areas.

From the moment students of color step foot on a college campus, they are constantly reminded why they do not belong. When really, they do belong.

UC Davis student, Aliyah Kleckley expressed, "Lack of diversity, it sucks. You feel lonely, not a closeness of community."

Black, Latinx, and Native students that attend four-year institutions often see a lack of representation when they are immersed into a new environment. Universities boast about the diversity on their campus, showing the pamphlets of students from various backgrounds. While the universities' intent is to allow students to see themselves at a four-year institution, they should acknowledge the lack of representation and address the racism that occurs on campus.

McAdoo states, "If [racism] is not addressed then it will persist. It does not matter if it seems as though the problem is over, if there is still a problem and if it is left unaddressed the problem is going to continue to grow."

For too long, the education system

has taught Black, Latinx, and Native students that their culture is inferior and has allowed whites to believe that they are superior. As the U.S. became more multicultural and multiracial, it established an education system that left behind and ignored students' cultures and backgrounds. So, when it established an education system, they made sure that non-white students were able to learn enough about the country and be "Americanized" but not allow them to learn too much or recieve a quality education; this prevented Black, Latinx, and Native students from being able to succeed.

As time went by, Black, Latinx, and Native students saw and witnessed the injustice and fought for their right to be allowed in schools that banned them. And so, when they do break the cycle and attend higher education institutions, they experience culture shock, and racist and xenophobic messages when they arrive on campus.

In 1879, Carlisle was established to force Native Americans to assimilate. By the mid 1970s, the government shut down boarding schools like Carlisle but took little action to help Natives after. Over 50 years ago, James Meredith became the first Black student to attend Ole Miss, but many did not welcome his presence on campus. During that time, Latinx students were also not very well accepted or welcomed to attend higher education institutions. The fight that Black, Latinx, and Native students fought for, still continues today. Despite the time that has passed, discrimination is

still very present in many campuses across the United States.

About two years ago at Duke University , Latinx students were told that their presence was not welcomed as their painting was vandalized. In response to that action, the students painted a statement that read, "They tried to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds." In 2014, Black students were targeted at the University of Missouri when white students spread cotton balls by the Black Culture Center. This and other incidents, led students to protest against racism that occured on campus, went on a hunger strike, and later led to the football team announcing that it wouldn't play or attend practice until the university president resigned, in which he did. Last year at the University of Arizona, the university president used offensive comments towards Native American students. The students spoke out against the language and demanded accountability from him as he negatively impacted the Native American community on campus. At Yale, students formed the "March of Resilience" in response to the lack of acknowledgement about the racism that occurs on campus. And now with COVID-19, classes have resumed online, further revealing the inequalities that students from disadvantaged backgrounds face. With online classes, Zoom has been the new classroom, and has allowed people behind the screen to feel more powerful to use hateful, racist and discriminatory language.

The lack of action and acknowl-

edgement from universities has led to students taking action to change the campus environment, mainly because students have reached a breaking point. It is significant that students fight for change and take action, but universities are responsible for the culture they create and allow. They cannot continue to ignore; they have to take part in making substantial change. The response of some universities has had little effect on changing the campus climate. It is more than simply writing a statement of the event or stating that there is an "ongoing investigation" with little details to inform students of what is to happen next. Situations like this affect Black, Latinx, and Native students.

Cendejas states, "It's a different story we have to [face]. There is no community, there is a feeling of alienation from everyone else."

Black, Latinx, and Native students are affected emotionally and mentally by the experiences they face; they experience discrimination, racism , microaggressions, etc. The experience for Black, Latinx, and Native students in universities is much different, as they have to carry psychological and emotional stress and manage academia. Without having more Black, Latinx, and Native students attending at a plethora of higher education institutions, they face a constant battle to prove their worth everyday. Universities must meet and respond to the needs of Black, Latinx, and Native students.

Cuéllar explained, "[There has to be]

support once students get to college because it's not just a question of getting to college, it's a question of staying in college and succeeding in college,"

He continued saying, "we've seen greater recognition in the last few decades that universities need to have a mission and that mission is to make sure that students who have parents that have never been to college or come from diverse backgrounds find that those universities are there for them too and that means not only academic support but it also means helping them navigate the social environment."

It is significant to address that once students attend a higher education institution, the universities must also meet their needs.

Racism and discrimination is embedd- in the US's system. It has prevented minorities from succeeding since its inception. It was never made to serve minorties, only to keep them out. The system has to be dismantled. If not, this cycle of inequality and injustice will continue.
Cendejas states, "[White people] don't understand. They think it's us doing something wrong, when really it's not. They find a way to blame it on us, not on the system."

Cendejas further expressed,
"The system is not serving [Black, Latinx, and Native people]. It's unfortunate, it's sad that change is not coming soon, until [Black, Latinx, and Native people] sacrifice and make

[that] change. Like always, it's us."

The United States often filters its history as being heroic and standing for what is right, reminding Americans of how far the country has moved forward from the past. Sometimes people forget who fought for a better America and are still fighting for a just and equal system.

When it seems as though the United States is attempting to progress, it digresses when ineffective leadership takes over. In 2018, then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, abandoned Obama-era education guidelines which helped promote equity and equality in schools. Under Betsy DeVos, the Department of Education is digressing the progress that past generations have long fought for. DeVos has proposed redirecting funding to the private system; she has repeatedly refused to protect all students; eliminated "unnecessary" guidelines, and has made workforce cuts in the Department of Education, one of the most important ones-- the Office for Civil Rights. There are people in positions of power that fail to acknowledge the wrongdoings and the racist policies set into practice; somehow they infer that it is the problem of Black, Latinx, and Native people and Black, Latinx, and Native people are to blame for not being able to achieve. McAdoo explains, "A lot of the failure begins when people do not acknowledge the legacy of racism. Segregation was really normalized in the 20th century and a lot of people do not realize or believe that we still live in a very racist and segregated society."

There is still a system of dominance in place and it has become normalized in the United States. Racial laws, policies and regulations have prevented Black, Latinx, and Native students from achieving and climbing up the ladder. Today, it has become more transparent than ever that there is a government set in place that has lacked addressing the issues and needs for Black, Latinx, and Native students. Under the Trump administration, the public has heard the claims and rhetoric used to attack minorities. The Trump administration lacks the understanding of what Black, Latinx, and Native students face; it is out of touch with the realities Black, Latinx, and Native students face and it is undoing the significant role of the Department of Education and Black, Latinx, and Native students are suffering.

McAdoo further states, "Today's issue[s] in society ties to segregation, and is why white people maintain dominance."

If the people in charge that are supposed to serve the public are not allowing change towards an equal and equitable society, the cycle will continue. With the policies put in place, it has prevented Black, Latinx, and Native students from attaining a higher education; without a higher education there are less Black, Latinx, and Native students represented in the professional workforce; without Black, Latinx, and Native students in various professional fields, there is a lack of guidance for Black, Latinx, and Native students and lack of relatability; when students face this, they question their

ability and their potential. This and more creates a continuing cycle that keeps students away from achieving their full potential and aspirations.

There must be significant, meaningful change. Black, Latinx, and Native students should not be barred from a quality education nor should they be questioned if they deserve it. Black, Latinx, and Native students should not question their belonging, their presence or their intellectualism of whether or not they are fit to achieve. The American Reality stands in the way of their success; everyone is deserving of fulfilling their dreams. Be proud of diversity, welcome it; embrace cultures, races, ethnicities, etcetera and promote an equal and just system so future generations do not have to endure to break the cycle of injustice and inequality.

Kleckley expressed, "I'm here for a reason. I'm lucky to be here, so I should keep fighting to be here."

She is not the only one that feels this way. Black, Latinx, and Native students are fighting everyday. They are hustling and running a marathon with a relentless mentality to break the cycle and barriers set in place. It is time that there be an equal and just system and equitable education--it's been long overdue.
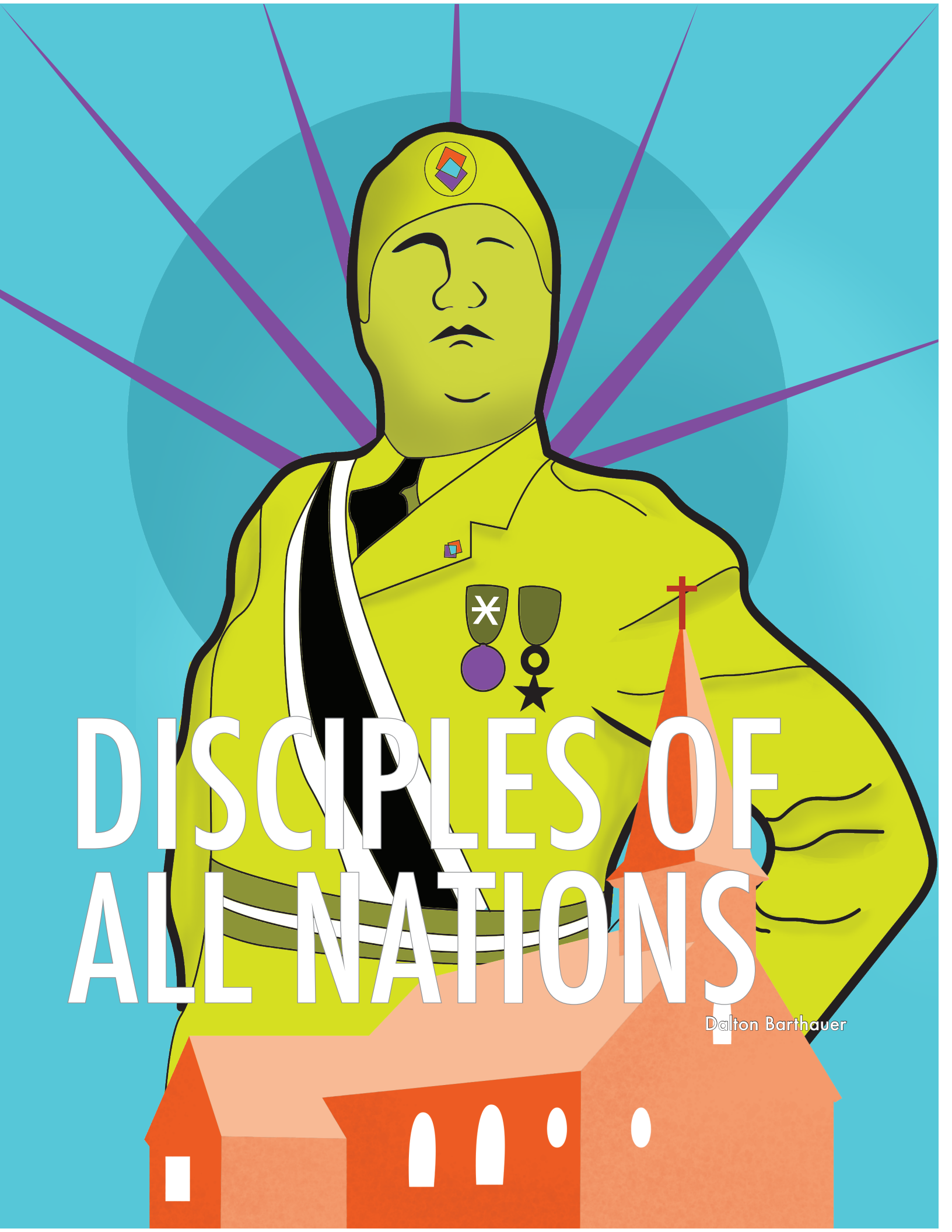
"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'"
- Matthew 28: 18-20, NIV

Is there room for God in countries where the government is the almighty power? If so, how do Christians spread their faith to every country, thus fulfilling the "Great Commission", without running afoul of authorities who are suspicious of their intentions? Throughout history, this conundrum has played out a multitude of ways; oftentimes, not in favor of the Church. In the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and many other countries, the Church was not tolerated as an equal. At best, it was subjugated to be used as a propaganda tool for the regime, and at worst it could potentially challenge the state and was attacked. However, time has proven the resiliency of these religions.

Recent decades have seen autocratic governments become much more willing to allow for the existence of churches. Are dictators simply becoming more benevolent, or have they perhaps learned from the startling resilience of churches in countries like Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union?

"In a given view of the world, there are certain categories or assumptions that structure the way people receive information," says Professor Dickinson, a UC Davis history professor* who has researched Christian men's organizations and East Germany. "Information gets filtered in ways that are consistent with these assumptions, and information that isn't consistent often doesn't get recognized. Authoritarian regimes can use this deliberately: they can not allow certain information or spin it."

In an increasingly connected world characterized by communication of peoples from across the globe, religion can be a means for authoritarian regimes to create these "filters" for their citizens. "Authoritarian regimes can form important alliances with religious organizations. In those countries, a relationship with a church has as much to do with national identity as it is about religion," says Dickinson. "It's not really a question about faith, but it is a question about religion." The ability of the Church to survive persecution serves as evidence of its enduring popularity among segments of society, and authoritarian regimes see more utility for religious tolerance even to the point of an alliance.

In Russia, Vladimir Putin's tenure as leader has stretched into its third decade, his grip on power a product of political manipulation of the media and arresting oligarchs that dare to challenge him. The result is widespread pro-Putin propaganda and a political landscape devoid of rivals, which has led to skyrocketing popularity.

"Views of Putin really depend on what generation you ask," says Germann, a first generation American from Moscow who prefers the name Gary. "People aren't suffering, and Putin is really well liked in Russia even among the younger generation. And Putin has done good things for Russia."

While this overall support of Putin might seem strange to those in the West, he stabilized the economic turmoil of the 1990s and is at least superficially trying to reassert the country's history as a global power. These facts supersede the authoritarian nature of the current government. Seeking in part to reassert Russia as a global power as a means to increase this domestic support, Putin has found an unexpected ally in local religion. The Russian Orthodox Church's roots are deep in Russian society, wielding considerable political influence throughout Russia's history, and its membership has a nationalistic sentiment with as much as 80 percent of Russians considering themselves Orthodox.

As described by Gary, "a lot of Russians claim that they are Orthodox, but so few actually attend that it's really just part of who they are as Russians." In his relentless pursuit of popularity, Putin has looked to the Orthodox Church as a rallying cry for Russian nationalism. The Russian leader reg-

ularly uses Christian language in his speeches, implying ,with the Church's full support, that his incursions into Syria will protect Christian values and Christian communities there, and referencing the West's supposed "debauchery" in media and acceptance of homosexual lifestyles.

"It kind of has this divinity aspect that God has given him this role of leadership," says Gary. "That isn't to say that he actually uses the teachings in how he rules; it's just kind of part of the culture that he's adapted."

The Russian Orthodox Church has enthusiastically embraced their role in the Putin era, as Gary explains: "on a government level, the Church has a theological effect on Putin's values. Traditional marriage, family oriented, morality, are all Putin using theology from the Church. Very conservative and traditional."

In 2013, shortly into his third official term as president of Russia, Putin signed the "Gay Propaganda Law." This law prohibited the "promotion" of the homosexual lifestyle by banning any images of homosexuality in Russian media or the distribution of "pro-homosexual propaganda" for the stated reason of protecting Russian children and family values. The Church has also seen material benefits from this relationship: around 25,000 churches that were destroyed under the Soviet regime have been rebuilt under Putin.

However, Putin's warm embrace of the Russian Orthodox Church does not extend a free hand to Christians of other denominations in Russia. When Gary visited St. Petersburg in 2017 on a mission trip, the government kept a close eye on him. "There are still very strict restrictions on Christians as to what they can do there. You can't go out and talk about your faith outside of your square building or have signs or anything. In Moscow, we had a 'minder' who would keep an eye on us and see what we were doing."

While the Russian government uses religious language to secure its hold domestically, countries such as China use the mere existence of Christian communities to project an international image of harmony. China's relationship with Christianity is much more complicated. The first Christian contact with China was via Jesuit missionaries who came to spread their faith in Imperial China. Their arrival was initially viewed as a positive way to develop relations and trade ties with nations like Britain and Italy.

"Those missionaries were superior to China's own peasants because they come from the West" says Yuejun, a UC Davis student from Shanghai. "This means trading with the Western nations. So, the government funded the building of some churches in exchange for Western trade and support. But, based on the modern view, those missionaries are bad because most unequal treaties were signed with the interaction with the missionaries: for example, the Treaty of Nanking."

The Treaty of Nanking ended the First Opium War, severely damaging Chinese sovereignty. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain as a Crown Colony, Chinese tariffs were forcibly lowered, Chinese ports were forced to give British merchants extraterritorial privileges and the government had to pay crippling reparations. Missionaries supported the drafting of this treaty, as it forced the Chinese government to allow missionaries to spread their faith through the whole of China. Due to the political roles that these early missionaries played in exploiting China, the Communist revolution removed accommodations made for Christians.

Despite the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) hostility to religion, Mao did not force Christianity out when he seized power in 1949. On the other hand,, Yuejun explains how even from the beginning Christianity faltered under the heavy scrutiny of the CCP's 'Three-Self Patriotic Movement.' "When Mao founded the People's Republic of China, he decided that Christianity can stay, but it must follow three principles; it must be spread by ourselves, it must be modified by ourselves and the priests must be chosen by ourselves." Under Mao, the Church experienced government persecution and mass purges of Christians. As time passed, the opening of China to the world saw indigenous Christian communities sprout, albeit under heavy restriction.

Today, the People's Republic of China maintains three centralized, government approved institutions: the Protestant Three-Self Church, the China Christian Council and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Church.

According to Yuejun, China's indig-

enous Catholic community shares many similarities to its Western counterparts. "There is a huge Catholic Cathedral in the heart of Shanghai called St. Ignatius Cathedral, located right at the center of a very popular region and the seat of the Bishop of Shanghai."

The Patriotic Catholic Church is not recognized by the Holy See as its entire clergy is selected and approved by the CCP, and the People's Republic of China has not maintained any diplomatic relations with the Vatican City since its founding. Protestants, mostly located in rural regions, also have the tacit approval of the government. . However, this does not mean that China's recognition of Christianity is without its suspicions. Most strikingly, Yuejan asserts that the Chinese are wary of the Church's history and possibility of being an agent of foreign influence.

"Christianity has disciples, but it is not popular. As I learned more about Christianity, I would ask, 'okay, what happened with this crusade? A schism, a schism again? The church is above the country? Why is this king [Henry IV] kneeling at the Popes door? In the end, we remember that this is a communist land; and the people will rule it, not the Church.'"

However, China's visible Christian community is coupled with an invisible one. Underground churches have sprung up throughout China's history, and even today it is not uncommon for people who attend these church meetings to be arrested and detained without trial. The recent years under Xi Jinping have seen a rise in anti-re-

ligious rhetoric particularly aimed at Christians, a new wave of arrests of religious clergy and a new law banning anyone under the age of 18 from entering a church. It seems that China's battle against perceived foreign influence has reared its head once more.

Not every authoritarian country has had such a cynical relationship with the Church. In these countries, Christians can play an immensely positive role in their respective societies both materially and beyond the physical.

"... there is an opportunity for an exchange of cultural values from spiritual to political, and it is on this common ground that God has found a place in authoritarian systems."

While powerful countries like China have the capacity to regulate the lives of their people, there are many countries where the regime is unable to provide primary education. Cambodia has never known democracy; years of absolutist monarchy were interrupted by several hundred years of French colonization, only to be replaced by the sadistic reign of the Khmer Rouge government under Pol Pot. After a brutal genocide that killed 1.5 million, Vietnam invaded to topple the Khmer Rouge government, installing the Cambodian People's Party to lead the country. This tumultuous history has had a profound effect on the in-

stitutions that govern Cambodia. Infrastructure in Cambodia lags behind most of its neighbors, and the government struggles to provide education and development for the country's 15 million inhabitants.

Christian organizations do considerable work to help the people of Cambodia. When Khmer Rouge atrocities drove tens of thousands of refugees into Thailand, non-profit Christian organizations were eager to provide food and basic medical care to them. In 1991, the refugees returned as the UN launched a mission to restore Cambodia to a functioning status, and missionary organizations offered their assistance. Since then, Christian missionaries have tackled everything from education to the building of roads and housing tracts to simple tourism functions for no monetary gain in return. The government appears truly grateful to those who would help rebuild their country and grants more privileges to foreign visitors than the average Cambodian citizen to foster this foreign presence.

Yet the opening of the country did not mean the opening of politics. Cambodia's government has largely shifted away from the strict economic centralization of traditional communism, adopting neoliberal economic practices and even the façade of democracy. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranks Cambodia 162nd out of 180 countries, making Cambodia one of the most politically corrupt nations in the world. Prime Minister Hun Sen has been in power since 1985 and has many allegations

of human rights abuses against him, and his Cambodian People's Party dominates domestic politics through rigged elections and near exclusive control of the media, currently holding all but four seats in the parliament.

"In Cambodia, they have a concept called ksy," explains Urijah, director of a prominent Christian mission organization in Poipet, Cambodia. "It literally means 'rope' but is better described as 'pull.' For example, Poipet is a border crossing infamous for scams. There's a tourist company here who has a lot of ksy, so they have an arrangement with the government so that they are the only ones able to sell things like bus tickets, for instance. So it's not like there's this terrible, massive oppression, but it is really corrupt."

However, Urijah contends that the daily lives of Cambodians are largely independent of what goes on in the realms of high politics, far from being managed by a totalitarian system. "There is really minimal government involvement in day to day life. People don't pay taxes, you don't need permits to build things…in many ways, the government is incredibly lax. And I am totally unrestricted in the sharing of my faith. In that way, this is the most open place I've ever been."

However, this also means the people receive little aid from the government. "People here want the government to do more," says Urijah. "Especially in areas like education, quality healthcare, infrastructure- even things like

collecting garbage- and fighting corruption. Because of the importance of ksy, those who are poor don't have any opportunity. A lot of kids have to work to help support their families."

Despite these issues, however, Urijah sees the current government as a means for good, should they choose it for themselves. "First off, I am pro-reform, not exchange. I am supportive of the current government, and I don't think it's our place, as foreigners, to decide what kind of government Cambodia should have. I think they've had enough of that. With that, there are some overall frustrations. While education is a focus for us, it's not our job, it's the government's."

"'The teaching of God is reasonable,' says Yuejun. 'He tells people to love, not to hate, to do things for charity, to do things for the good… to love people, not to hate, to do things for the poor.'"

Therefore, missionaries with the Cambodian government provide basic education for Cambodian children, teaching subjects such as English that can assist the entire country in an increasingly globalized economy. Their efforts have paid off, as the percentage of literate adults has risen by more than 30 percent in the last 20years.

According to Urijah, organizations

such as his do so free of charge and do so to prevent corruption by not accepting money. "We have to be careful, as a non-profit, not to take money [from the government], but at the same time we don't want to be handling education and building roads while they keep the money they had earmarked for that."

Yet despite all these difficulties, Urijah maintains a gratefulness in having the opportunity to help the people of Cambodia. "Missions are dumb outside of the presence of God, and I believe I feel his love for the people of this nation. I, myself, have a love for these people that I've never known before. I'm on their side, and I'm for these people."

Indeed, there are two recurring commonalities in all cases that are quite striking: the understanding of Christianity even from cultures where there is not much of a Christian presence and overwhelmingly positive attitudes regarding the Church.

"The teaching of God is reasonable," says Yuejun. "He tells people to love, not to hate, to do things for charity, to do things for the good…to love people, not to hate, to do things for the poor."

"Russia is a really tough place to grow up in," says Gary, "both due to the elements and just societally. I think the message of Christianity gives people hope."

This understanding of other viewpoints comes as a surprise when

authoritarian regimes are viewed with a Western bias. It is a profound example of the better nature of the human condition and a far cry from the intolerant attitudes of generations past between church and state. In this air of mutual respect, there is an opportunity for an exchange of cultural values from spiritual to political, and it is on this common ground that God has found a place in authoritarian systems.

FOREVER WARS

Brandon Jetter

The Trump Administration's announcement this past February that it had signed a peace agreement with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan came as a shock to many -- and rightfully so. The plan, which called for a total withdrawal of US and NATO troops within 14 months if Taliban militants uphold their end of the deal, marks the end of the longest war in United States history.

In its entirety, the United States has spent nearly two decades, 18 years to be precise, engaged in armed conflict in Afghanistan. A war so long that it spanned three different presidential administrations. A war so long that by the end of its run, for the first time in American history, the U.S. military was actively recruiting soldiers born after it initially began. All things considered, it's not a surprise that the War in Afghanistan has become synonymous with the concept of forever wars, the idea that the American military has become stuck in perpetual foreign conflicts that are producing diminishing returns and inflicting suffering on both sides.

American forces are now spread out, quite literally, across the planet. In 2017, *the New York Times* reported that some 240,000 active-duty and reserve American troops were distributed among 172 different countries and territories. Military casualties have not been isolated to the Middle East either. Over the last two decades, Americans have died everywhere, from remote deserts in Niger to islands in the southern Philippines. The American public has grown widely disillusioned

with these wars, yet both parties remain steadfast in their embrace of American foreign policy exceptionalism.

Born out of its post-WWII status as a global military superpower, the foreign policy of the modern United States has a long history of bipartisan domestic allegiance. Early on, Dwight D. Eisenhower's defeat of the Republican Party's William Taft-led isolationist wing in 1952 led to the abandonment of isolationist foreign policy. The Democratic Party, meanwhile, took a staunch anti-communist approach in the 1950s and '60s, supporting wars in Korea and Vietnam, before the dovish side of the party took over following the successful nomination bid of George McGovern in 1972.

McGovern had previously lost the nomination at the highly controversial 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. There, a starkly divided Democratic Party searched for a viable candidate after incumbent President and advocate of the Vietnam War, Lyndon B. Johnson, opted not to run. McGovern, along with several other anti-war candidates (most notably Euguene McCarthy), won the majority of voters, but lost out on the candidacy to Hubert Humphrey, who was seen as Johnson's favorite . In the subsequent chaos, protests and riots broke out all across the city of Chicago and anti-war protestors decried the nomination, seeing it as an establishment-rigged   endorsement of American imperialism.

Four years later, in the ensuing polit-

ical atmosphere that arose from McGovern's victory in '72, a number of Democrats began to reject the growing influence of the New Left. Opposed to the non-interventionism and anti-Zionism advocated by the young activist wing of the Democratic Party, they migrated out of their once leftist circles and into the Republican Party, where they developed the ideological strain that soon became known as neoconservatism.

With its support of humanitarian interventionism and the promotion of democratic values abroad, the neoconservative movement immediately found itself at home in conservative intellectual circles of the Cold War era. Consequently, advocates of the ideology were able to rapidly take over think tanks and publications like the American Enterprise Institute and *Commentary Magazine*, transforming those institutions into public forums for their ideology. Before long, neoconservatism became a mainstay ideology in establishment Republican politics.

Yet while the neoconservative movement gained a great degree of institutional power during the advent of the Cold War (in particular among the Reagan administration), it still managed to come into conflict with other strains of conservatism. In particular, neocons clashed with advocates of paleoconservatism: a traditionalist, isolationist ideology that had grown out of the anti-imperialist Old Right of decades prior. Due in part to its inherently populist nature, paleoconservatism never quite gained the political

clout of its rival intellectual.

It did, however, give the movement a scare.

In 1992, the paleoconservative firebrand Pat Buchanan launched a primary campaign against incumbent Republican President George H.W. Bush. Running to the right of Bush, one of insurgent Buchanan's chief criticisms of the president was his decision to engage in the Gulf War. Buchanan accused Bush and the neoconservative movement of dual loyalty, controversially claiming that the Gulf War was the product of pro-Israeli political influence in Washington (a statement many critics labelled as anti-Semitic), before ultimately dropping out and endorsing Bush at the 1992 Republican National Convention.

Despite the loss, paleoconservatism nevertheless became the bastion of the anti-war right. Ron Paul's popular but unsuccessful attempts at securing the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 and 2012 were built out of a coalition of Libertarians and paleoconservatives, many of whom shared ideological agreement in their opposition to American military interventionism. This same political coalition would reunite behind Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential campaign. Trump, despite possessing significantly less right-leaning economic views than Paul, utilized a similar populist opposition to US military intervention which challenged the Republican mainstream and propelled him into the presidency. In fact, it was theorized that Trump's victories in the key Rust

Belt states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin were partially related to the high human cost of war faced by these communities.

Trump's occasional attempts at deviating from standard American foreign policy, however, have placed

"'There's still a difference in the framework of the media and the actual neoconservative establishment, the latter of which still backs Trump.'"

him in the crosshairs of some of the most prominent pro-war Republicans. In particular, Republican opposition to President Trump was most pronounced amongst avowed neoconservatives. Virtually all of the 2016 "Never Trump" coalition was made up of prominent members of the movement, with many Bush-era ideologues such as Max Boot, Jennifer Rubin, and Rick Wilson coming to the media forefront to denounce Trump. These figures have since become media fixtures as a sort of class of "respectable Republicans," whose opposition to brash behavior of President Trump has propelled them to regular cable television appearances. The inclusion of these figures into the mainstream media presence has further enabled the normalcy of favoring an interventionist foreign policy, as it has created the illusion of a left-right agreement on the position. It's also led to a number of neoconservatives re-aligning

themselves within the liberal interventionist wing of the Democratic Party.

"You have to trace it to 2016, when there was a hysterical backlash to Trump among the Republican intelligencia," said Michael Tracey, a New York-based independent journalist who has covered the evolution of the neoconservative movement extensively. "The most high profile neoconservatives reacted viscerally against Trump and therefore sought to more formally insinuate themselves into the Democratic Party, in hopes of creating a coalition to back Hillary Clinton."

Tracey, however, also noted that after the election, the neoconservative opposition to Trump became more based on rhetoric, as the president increasingly began to back the status quo of American policy. This, he said, led to the current disconnect between neoconservative media figures, many of whom have personal or financial motivations for opposing Trump, and the actual harbingers of the movement's power.

"There's been an embrace of anti-Trump neoconservatives in the popular Democratic media world, which is always looking for Republicans opposed to the president," said Tracey. "But their opposition to Trump is superficial and based on rhetoric. They don't see the president's commentary as aligning with what they see as upholding American hegemony."

Indeed Trump has increasingly capitulated to the pressure of the political

establishment, lining his administration with the very same neoconservatives he once railed against. While he has, at times, been far less antagonistic than both his recent Republican and Democratic predecessors - meeting diplomatically with Kim Jung Un, calling for a withdrawal of American forces in Syria and generally avoiding new military entanglements (even backing down despite fears of a sudden escalation with Iran) - the goal of his foreign policy is often murky. He appointed - then fired - perhaps the world's most famous neoconservative: John Bolton. Bolton has since routinely called for the toppling of the Maduro regime in Venezuela, and amid bipartisan pressure, partially rolled back his initial Syrian troop withdrawal.

"The slight deviations that Trump does have with regard to rhetoric hasn't resulted in any sort of meaningful shift," argued Tracey. "There's still a difference in the framework of the media and the actual neoconservative establishment, the latter of which still backs Trump."

Tracey noted that a number of prominent think tanks, such as the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, have largely supported Trump's positions towards countries like Iran and Israel.

So while the President's general instinct seems to be against entangling the United States in dangerous foreign affairs, the lack of right-wing anti-war voices in the Republican establishment has forced him to line his cabinet with neoconservative hawks. Trump's more aggressive policy actions have thus also gone largely unchecked, even by members of the rival party that have otherwise latched onto every other opportunity possible to oust him.

It is worth noting that the Democratic Party, once fashioned as the anti-war foil to the interventionist policies of the most recent Bush administration, has become increasingly pro-war itself. As recently as the 2008 election, Democrats were campaigning on promises of shutting down Guantanamo Bay and increasing diplomatic relations with historical foes. Upon entering the office, however, then-President Barack Obama almost immediately turned his back on his policy proposals: ultimately keeping Guantanamo Bay open, escalating the war in Afghanistan, vastly increasing the use of drone warfare (especially when compared to his predecessors), as well as ordering the killing of several American citizens abroad. Not to mention bypassing congressional approval to take military action in Libya, in addition to expanding U.S. troop presence in countless other conflicts.

But just as quickly as the Democratic establishment's opinion on foreign policy has transformed, so have the views of its most ardent supporters. As early as 2012, polling data revealed that 53 percent of liberal Democrats, in addition to 67 percent of moderate or conservative Democrats, supported the US's continued operation of Guantanamo Bay. 77 percent of liberal Democrats also supported the continued use of drone warfare. Even since the departure of President Obama, the increasingly interventionist political tendencies of the Democratic Party have fully trickled down to its voters. In 2019, The Intercept reported data obtained from Politico showing that, despite a plurality of Americans supporting Trump's Syria withdrawal (49 percent approval to 37 percent disapproval), the action was wildly unpopular with Clinton voters, with just 26 percent of those surveyed supporting the action (59 percent opposed). Among Trump voters, 76 percent supported withdrawal, with just 14 percent opposing.

The marriage of the Democratic Party with a liberal interventionist foreign policy has spread well beyond just voter tendencies. A number of political advocacy and special interest groups have arisen in the aftermath of the 2016 election, calling for bipartisan support of a more aggressive American foreign policy, especially with regard to Russia. While outlets such as *the New York Times* reported as early as 2014 that neoconservative-Democratic intellectual circles were beginning to coalesce, the actual union did not begin to grow in prominence until after Trump's election. The Alliance for Securing Democracy, for example, was founded in 2017 by Laura Rosenberger, a former Obama administration national security official, and Jaime Fly, who had previously worked in the Bush administration. Proponents of the group claim it represents a coordinated effort to organize against supposed Russian interference in American elections, while critics like
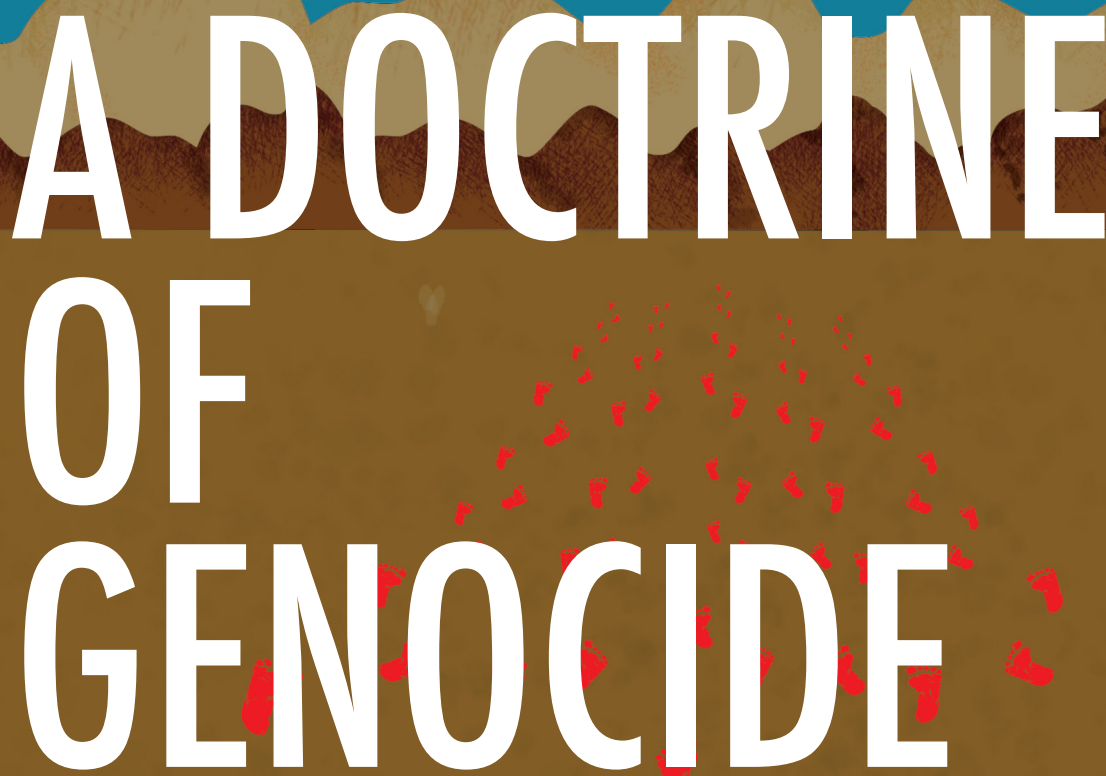
journalist Glenn Greenwald assert that it is evidence of an ever-growing alliance between neoconservatives and the Democratic establishment.

The legacy of Trump on the GOP's foreign policy stance is yet to be determined. Most likely, it will lead to a more prominent ideological divide among the next generation of conservative political figures, pitting less hawkish candidates like Matt Gaetz or Josh Hawley against strongman figures like Tom Cotton, who may strive for a more syncretic form of Trumpism; calling for strong nationalism at home while promoting militarism abroad. Others, like Nicki Haley or Mitt Romney, may call for a return to the neoconservative status quo altogether.

The future of the Democratic Party and its outlook is similarly blurry as well. The entanglement of jingoist policy advocates in the Democratic establishment has led to the normalization of an interventionist foreign policy and evaporated what remains of the left-wing anti-war movement. Current Democratic frontrunner Joe Biden still views Iran as an existential threat to American and Israeli geopolitical interests, maintaining use of force as an appropriate possible deterrent to growing Iranian influence in the Middle East. On the other hand, Bernie Sanders, who has focused much of his campaign on domestic issues, has pushed back at the status quo, going as far as publishing a personal op-ed in Foreign Affairs calling for an end to what he called America's "endless wars" in the Middle East.

All things considered, radical changes in American foreign policy are unlikely to arrive in the near future. The increasingly populist flavor of America's domestic politics is likely to result in a number of future politicians abandoning the existential war narrative of the Bush years, but a total departure from the status quo seems improbable. Instead, they may opt for a more nuanced version of the Trump approach, continuing the implementation of U.S. influence abroad while simultaneously decrying attempts at overstretching American military forces. At the same time, there is the possibility that military action will continue abroad, albeit with much less transparency and a greater degree of subtlety, as was largely the case during the Obama years. Such a possibility is perhaps the most likely result, should American politics see a return to normalcy in the post-Trump years, whenever they may come.

A DOCTRINE OF GENOCIDE

Ayesha Ishtiaq

In 1915, thousands of Armenian children left bloody footprints in the burning Syrian desert as part of the death marches ordered by the Ottoman Empire. By 1945, the German sky was dark with smoke from chambers full of gassed Jewish bodies. Thirty years later, babies were smashed against the Chankiri Tree in the Cambodian Killing Fields under the atrocious policies of Khymer Rouge. Rwanda, in 1994, was littered with thousands of rotting Tutsi bodies. Twenty years later in 2014, Northern Iraq echoed with the screams of Yazidi women and children watching the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant pile men in mass graves, and shoot them to death.

Today, denialism has risen as a legitimate form of neglecting these events. It is not an event that a small, unknown group embarked on; rather, entire states went out of their way to remove the memory of this bloodshed.

To trace the trajectory of genocide, it is crucial to begin at the turn of the century, going back to Eastern Anatolia in 1914. Dr. Houri Berberian, the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies at the University of California, Irvine, gave an enlightening lecture at UC Davis on Thursday, February 13, 2020. Among her insights, when talking about the Armenians, she greatly emphasized the importance of recognizing "the significance of knowing the place of less studied people." Armenians have long felt that brunt of isolation and elimination from history. In many ways, they are ideal for the study of how violence has trekked across time and history.

The Armenian genocide was the first genocide of the 20th century that came about through careful planning and strategy, targeted towards the Armenians living in modern-day Turkey. In 1915, thousands of Armenians were pushed into the vacuum of extinction. The backbone of this genocide was the Ottoman desire for Turkification, solidified by the growing Turkish nationalism during the Balkan conflicts. For many years under the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians, among other religious minorities, faced legalized obstacles towards their expression of identity. Marked as 'infidels' by the Muslim-majority Ottoman Empire, they paid extra taxes and faced a multitiude of daily challenges. The argument that justified the eventual crucifixion, hanging, raping and killing of millions of Armenians was only this; Armenians were a threat to the Turkish identity. Additionally, the fact

they were a Christian religious group only increased their 'threat'. The Ottoman Empire feared they could side with other Christian powers and work towards weakening the Muslim influence in the region. As the Ottoman Empire faced its downfall, measures were taken to ensure their survival and the expression of Muslim might intensified. This manifested in the genocide of the Armenians.

The Armenian genocide echoed widely the orthodox idea of expelling any racial minorities for not conforming with one unified race and thus removing an entire group's existence, such as the Armenians. This ideology gave birth to an intricate system allowing the genocide to be successful. Beginning with the Tehcir Law, confiscation of Armenian property and their subsequent deportation was legally authorized. The forced conscription of the Armenian men, separating them from their families, eventually followed. These families were then forced to embark on death marches meant to eliminate a majority of the population before reaching a destination. Those that survived, only did so to be put in one of the twenty five concentration camps built by Talat Pasha on Turkey's borders with Iraq and Syria.

The years of this genocide saw the Black Sea floating with bodies of women and children put on boats and left to drown. As a result, the Euphrates river accumulated so many dead bodies that its current, warped by the bones piled across the riverbed, deviated from its natural flow for miles. There is a certain abhorrence in an ideology that can create enough human bodies to bend even nature. This genocide of the Armenians was held together by themes of extreme nationalism, elimination, mass incarceration, and death. These themes continue to progress well into the current decade, a hundred years later.

Madeleine Albright in *Fascism: A Warning* wrote: "Fascism tends to take hold in a step by step manner rather than by making one giant leap." The Ottoman orchestration of the Armenian genocide was only step one. Today, these steps have become strides as country after country competes in this horrific ideology.

No event occurs in isolation in world affairs. It was Adolf Hitler who said: "who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" in the Obersalzberg speech, before embarking on the Polish invasion. It is crucial to understand the connectivity of these events and the circulation of ideas that transcend their time, giving birth to one atrocity after another. The novelty of ideas and the passage of violence under the conditions of anarchy have led to the establishment of a governed and legalized form of genocide. Armenia in many ways was a mold for the Holocaust, which eventually pivoted the century into legally orchestrating sophisticated ways of race elimination. Today, these events have allowed leaders all over the world to confidently implement their personalized agendas. From Saddam Hussein to Xi Jingping, the dots of genocide can be connected.

As of 2017, China has embarked on its own form of elimination. Officials in the Xinjiang region have formulated what *The New York Times* dubs a "chillingly bureaucratic guide" for the round up of ethnic Uyghur Muslims. It is this authorized use of state machinery that has always inked the doctrine of genocide. As China embarks on leaving global politics with another massive dent of humanitarian crimes, the world watches in silence. The ruthless tactics of incarceration, targeted policies of anti-Islamic rhetoric, and the prevalence of the ideology that puts one race as superior to the other is a skeleton used countless times before. With the Armenians, the Ottoman Empire's might in the region overrode any intervention. Today, China as an economic and military power, has the reigns to undermine any international scrutiny.

Currently 're-education' camps in Xinjiang are hosting a vast majority of Uyghur Muslims who are being subjected to vile atrocities. Sources have reported cases of forced abortions, sterilization, and torture of Uyghur women. The intent here has been to eliminate the spread of Islam. Similar to Turkification, these camps are to promote Sinicization—the process of bringing non-Chinese cultures within that of the Han Chinese society. The U.N. reported at least 1 million ethnic Muslims, particularly the Uyghurs, held in these 're-education' camps in August 2018.

This is how the ideology that killed thousands of Armenians began. Here it is, once more, in China. The sheer

potential state leaders possess that leads them to draft plans on the legalized murder of another race is evident. China is on its way in following previous fascist leaders that embarked on the systematic purge of state officials, hidden kidnappings, and the indoctrination of the masses. Leaked reports have covered instances of surveillance, purge directives, and mass crackdowns on the Islamic presence. It is difficult to trace the exact repercussions, but so far, all reports point to one general fact: the Uyghurs are becoming this century's Armenians.

Currently Myanmar, China, Syria, and many other countries are engaged in the widespread, religiously justified mass extermination of other ethnicities. Sex trafficking is rampant and the slave trade continues to grow in the folds of these atrocities. Our ground is soaking with blood. The collective conscience of the world is burdened with the countless abductions and indoctrinations. The ideology Xi Jinping seems to follow is undeniably similar to that of every previous fascist leader. He wants what they all wanted: the elimination of any force that presents a threat to the inherent ideology of nationalism. The Muslims are kept under pervasive surveillance, forced into labor camps or prison cells, and pressured to give up their identities. The ideology of a systematic purge has been taking root in China since Xi Jinping's tenure. However, the international community is stuck in a headlock, because China has veto powers in any propositions by the U.N. The country has found ways to dodge in-

ternational scrutiny through strict censorship and its status as an economic overlord. Most of the U.S population continues to be unaware and in denial of the persecution implemented by the Chinese government due to their own economic dependence on the country. It is clear that trade takes precedence over human life, whether it is of goods or of captured slaves.

"Genocide has shown the world the length the human mind is able to go to in generating a doctrine as revolting as state sponsored mass murder."

Almost every developed country today hosts millions of refugees, descendants of genocide and war crimes, and yet, there are still many that refuse to acknowledge what took place. The Armenian genocide continues to live on today because Turkey has allowed it to be a writhing, continued memory with no chance of healing. The country can legally incarcerate any Turkish citizen that calls what occurred with the Armenians 'a genocide.'

As the Ottoman's created a bleeding red carpet in Syria because of national identity, Turkey, a hundred years later, refuses to let it dry by continuing the tradition of elimination in the form of Article 301. The premise of Article 301 in Turkey's penal code criminalizes all forms of expression that could be an insult of Turkish identity, culture, and

the government. If found guilty of insulting the 'Turkishness' of the state, one can be imprisoned for up to three years. Not only does this article violate a citizen's individual freedom of expression, but Article 301 also allows the state to revoke legitimate recognitions of events such as the Armenian genocide if it would portray the Ottoman Empire as an inhumane political entity.

Over a century has passed since the Syrian desert hosted mass graves. Again and again, the horrifying reality of how states can authorize and justify the annihilation of a race have erupted in the time since the Armenian genocide. By 2014, the internet could relay grotesque video footage of the Yazidi beheadings performed by ISIL, bringing their terrifying reality to the world. More often than not, the Yazidi people were given the ultimatum of conversion to Islam or execution. The end result was the Tigris river flowing with the blood of escapees, villages razed to the ground, and the entire male population massacred in mass graves. The women and children were abducted, with young girls placed in slave trade immediately.

The talk of the 21st century has been revolving around world peace. Sadly, the last two decades have seen atrocities of vast extent; while we assume it was the 20th century which marked the beginning and the end. Although, progressive movements all around have toppled autocratic regimes, with a rise in constitutionalism, freedom of self, and public agency. But none of these changes occurred in a vacu-

um. They occurred upon a backdrop of revolutions and mass graves. Yet, the violence, the creation of extremism, the killings, and the purges are all placed under the umbrella of the past without acknowledging their implications on modernity.

The world is dotted with a pattern of killings, some widely known, while others receive a blind eye. No one case takes precedence over the other. There is no measurement of how many casualties make one event more horrific than the other. War, everywhere, has refused millions of people their right to history. The systematic denial of their destruction haunts generation after generation. The world has been thinking of mass graves as something of the past, something that an international condemnation will fix. But today, right now, more and more blood is pooling. Armenia is still alive today. It gave root to further evil, evil that is more organized and capable of finding ways around legalities. The Ottoman Empire fell and the Nazis were put on trials, and yet, the mass burials did not stop. They continue today, filled with haunting cries, silent stories, and the massacres of innocent lives all rotting away into nothingness. Genocide has shown the world the lengths the human mind is able to go to in generating a doctrine as revolting as state sponsored mass murder. The world faces a collective fundamental challenge in creating a framework where all citizens of the world can proudly uphold decency and integrity for one another.

STAND WITH HONG KONG

Design by Meredith Bradley

THE ISSUE OF HONG KONG:

YOUTH POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND POLITICAL OPPRESSION

Kymberley Chu

Disclaimer: This editorial article comes from an outsider viewpoint. I attempted to navigate understanding Hong Kong's complex situation through interviewing multiple perspectives on defining democracy, political authority, and justice.

What are the five demands? Why are Hong Kong's youth political activists rallying? Why should we care about political activism outside of the United States?

Within a Chinese totalitarian context, the five demands include the withdrawal of extradition bills, the establishment of an independent inquiry on police brutality, universal suffrage, withdrawal of the government term "riot," and unconditional release of im-

prisoned political activists. These five demands reflect how Hong Kong and other autonomous regions/countries can improve in their pursuit of democracy, equity, justice, and human rights. It is the antithesis of what the totalitarian Chinese government desires.

Youth political activists in Hong Kong are not a homogenous group, instead, they come from various economic and social backgrounds. Former postdoctoral scholar Dr. Lam-Knott Sonia

of National University Singapore, argues that political activism in Hong Kong emerged as youth expressed frustration at the poor progress of social issue legislation bills. In contemporary times, Hong Kong's Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR) has prioritized economic reforms over social reforms. As a result, both mainland Chinese government officials and Hong Kong police see political activism as a disruption to Hong Kong's economic growth. Acts of po-

litical activism, such as mass rallies, have been met with police brutality including physical assault and spraying tear gas onto protesters. The HKSAR's police forces utilize these methods of brutality to exert dominance and fear among Hong Kongers in order to prevent widespread political activism from happening.

Specifically, *The New York Times* reported that Hong Kong's Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) is limited in conducting transparent and independent judicial investigations of police violations. Foreign experts stepped down from the IPCC due to their inability to conduct police narrative verifications and subpoena witnesses. Despite the demand for launching an independent inquiry, the IPCC fails to address this demand adequately. Instead, the IPCC provides limited accountability and reflects the conservative authority of not favoring political activism.

The alleged acts of police brutality such as the systematic firing of tear gas at unarmed activists and the beating of arrested political activists eerily resemble philosopher Michel Foucault's panopticon. These acts not only demand order and provoke fear, but also aim to form the "model citizens" of Hong Kong. By utilizing repressive techniques such as physical torture and surveillance, HKSAR aims to form "model citizens" who internalize norms of obedience, submission, and social control. Overall, this police brutality not only acts as social control techniques, but also enforces the political stability and legitimate hegemo-

ny of HKSAR, who is in collaboration with the Chinese government.

Hong Kong's complex situation not only remains localized but also has travelled across oceans in terms of solidarity and support. Across the Pacific Ocean, the University of California, Davis is home to the UC Davis Students Solidarity with the Hong Kong club (also known as Davis4HK or HKPASS). Three groups of Hong Kong activists were merged together into Davis4HK between October 14 to 15, 2019. This group of political activists supports the five demands and the democratic movement in Hong Kong. They run petitions, manage fundraisers, organize peaceful rallies, and share social media messages advocating for the five demands. Davis4HK club members include both domestic American students and Hong Kongers who have participated in movements such as the 2014 Umbrella Movement.

Despite the abundance of student support for the Davis4HK club, there have been acts of harassment and violence initiated against the liberal activists. Chinese nationalist protesters yelled vulgarities at the Davis4HK group. In fact, the *Sacramento Bee* reported an alleged incident where a Chinese nationalist student aggressively ripped down an HK democratic flag in the middle of the UC Davis Quad.

The fight for Hong Kong is not only limited to Hong Kongers or in the cosmopolitan areas of Hong Kong. Rather, various student activists have

established chapters or student advocacy groups around the world that engage in protesting for the five demands. Winnie, head representative for Davis4HK, informed Davis Political Review that the UCD group conducts boycott petitions, political legislation petitions, and public rallies to advocate for the five demands while standing in solidarity with arrested and repressed political activists.

One of the recurring reasons American undergraduate students participate in the Davis4HK club is because its advocacy activities "represents the movement of self autonomy and anti-colonialism," according to an American undergraduate student majoring in Chinese studies. This student also highlighted marginalized groups, such as the Uyghurs, who have been erased from their cultural history due to China pursuing monolithic nationalism.

Davis4HK representatives Steve and Gabe share the same intensity and passion for Hong Kong activism. Steve is a local Hong Konger who has participated in pro-democratic rallies before the formation of Davis4HK. In fact, he first witnessed police brutality on the streets of Hong Kong during the 2014 Umbrella Movement. He saw the police firing a couple of rubber bullets into a young protester without warning. This anecdote inspired Steve to participate in more democratic rallies to demand government accountability and transparency over its socioeconomic policies.

When asked about the different opin-

ions existing about Hong Kong, both Gabe and Steve encountered Chinese nationalists who opposed student activism. Both were worried but not surprised about international Chinese students with conservative, nationalist viewpoints who conducted aggressive acts on-campus such as ripping down Davis4HK posters.

On the other hand, Gabe and Steve received support from pro-democratic Hong Kong supporters in the community of Davis. Gabe elaborated that their supporters from university and from town were willing to engage in intellectual debates about democracy, sign petitions, and participate in town halls with congressman John Garamendi.

Interestingly, Chinese nationalist conservative and pro-democratic Hong Kong interviewees were interested in addressing the socioeconomic inequalities of Hong Kong despite conflicting political ideologies and intellectual viewpoints. Despite the narrative of conflicting binaries, Xiaoming and Yu reflected concerns about the influence of British colonialism and American imperialism in Hong Kong's activism. Xiaoming, a political science student, advocated for a Hong Kong local-contextualized version of social justice while attaining democracy and social equality through what the Hong Kong people want rather than adhering to American-centric values.

On the other hand, Yu not only emphasized reading different mediums about Hong Kong, but also urged the public to read and learn more about the mainland Chinese conservative viewpoint on Hong Kong. Yu commented "The One China Policy is a response to colonialism and Western imperialism, it is an answer to both Hong Kong and Macau." Yu believed that there are different ways of interpreting political situations such as Hong Kong in the political binary: embracing the Western mindset versus embracing the Chinese mindset. He advocated for the One China Policy towards Hong Kong because he was worried about separating China and disrupting political unity in internal politics. Yu also stated that Hong Kong's economic inequality can be attributed to British colonialism during the Opium War era. Yu supported the Chinese government's One China approach because it could stabilize Hong Kong's economy to strengthen its growth after British colonial occupation. He also insisted that Hong Kong prior to British colonialism, was territorially part of the Qing Dynasty.

"I couldn't focus my thoughts and concentrate on my studies," said Winnie, Davis4HK head representative. "I didn't know what I could do to help the victims and improve the situation of my hometown. I felt guilty, helpless and depressed." Winnie however became motivated and determined to advocate for Hong Kong's democracy as she met other UCD students from Hong Kong. Winnie overcame helplessness by engaging in rallies, cooperating with other student organizations, and passed a bipartisan-supported ASUCD resolution on condemning the censorship of pro-Hong Kong campus activities.

Together with Winnie, Steve and other supportive student activists, they desired to challenge the elitist-perceived and anarchic governmental system while promoting democracy to improve social reforms in Hong Kong. Winnie commented in an email interview, "Even though we are from background, we share the same value and goal—supporting Hong Kong and other communities fighting against authoritarianism and speaking up for free speech and human rights. The diverse demography allows us to share experiences, think from different perspectives and learn from each other."

Overall, the situation in Hong Kong is not just limited to itself only. Hong Kong is also a reflection of what other democratic countries need to work on. The goals of democracy and social justice are almost universal among international-minded citizens. In fact, Davis4HK activists, coming from different geographical communities and cultures, strongly desired political reforms and police accountability in the case of Hong Kong.

Winnie concludes, "Erosion of freedom, censorship, police brutality, suspicious disappearance of people, collusion between the government and the gangs, and ignorance of the government towards the terrors and citizens' lives, are happening in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is not the only place facing the threat of authoritarian rule. Police brutality, erosion of freedom and human rights are happening in many places in the world."

BOLSONARO: A NEW NORMAL

Anna Gorski

Design by Cozette Ellis

Brazil has long been a country stereotyped by its flourishing nature, lavish atmosphere and beautiful people. However, the stereotypes that put Brazil on a pedestal are the same ones that keep it in a cage. Brazil has survived political and economic crises for multiple centuries. Currently, Brazil is crumbling under a new far right extremist president, following 16 years of democratic socialism. Extreme poverty has been reintroduced to the country after it was eradicated for 10 years. There are 17 police-caused deaths every day and 75 percent of those killed are young black men. Brazil is a land of remarkable contradictions as well as one of continued loyalty to hypocrisy. How does an outwardly beautiful country such as Brazil fall so far from its throne?

To understand Brazil today, one must take its complex history into account. Brazil declared its independence in 1822 and developed into one of the first and largest monarchies in the western hemisphere. As it is with monarchical and royal power, there exists a long history of royal favors and politeness that has become embedded in Brazilian culture, dependent on the exploitation of poor and black citizens. In contrast to the exuberant royal customs and rapidly expanding economy, slaves had life expectancies of 20 years and revolts within their communities were extremely common. Brazil was one the last countries in the world to ban their slave trade in 1850, with slavery itself only being abolished in 1888. The slow decomposition of the monarchy led to a century of political instability, in which the volatile fight for political power embedded itself permanently into the newly forming government. Nationalism took hold of the Brazilian government during the early 19th century; the Second World War saw an influx of far-right groups sympathizing with Germany. During the 1960s, Brazil's military dictatorship suffocated the country through

a massive curtailing of civil liberties and media censorship. Due to Brazil's history of deep-rooted political instability, its economy has suffered and today it exists as one of the most unequal countries in the world. In 1985, the military dictatorship was overthrown and many vowed never to let an extremist right-wing government take control again. In 2018, Brazil's first far-right extremist president in over 30 years was elected: Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro's rise to power is a part of a much larger worldwide shift towards right extremism, seen with other major figures including Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Duterte and Boris Johnson. However, it is impossible to compare centuries-old western democracies to young southern democracies like Brazil. Younger democracies like Brazil, who have relatively recent histories of dictatorship, are statistically more susceptible to be violently brought back into oppressive regimes, which they have so recently freed themselves of. What is more terrifying is not the idea that Brazil could be violently brought to a dictatorship, but the fact that it is slowly and progressively becoming one.

José Pérez Meléndez, a history professor at UC Davis currently studying and writing about Brazilian History, points to 2013 as the year that everything changed for Brazil. According to Dr. Meléndez, because Brazil is a poor economy, the 2008 depression that hit the United States only trickled down into the Brazilian economy in 2011. This led to a hike in commodi-

ty costs that hit Brazilians across the board, but especially the lower class. In 2013, there was a 45 cent in Brazilian dollar increase in bus fares, and a massive citizen-led protest ensued throughout the country. The anger, however, is justified: one of the government's main justifications for the multibillion-dollar world cup event in 2014 was a promise of improved transport infrastructure for the millions of low income Brazilians that use the subway and the bus system every day. Unfortunately, these projects never came to realization and the government had to hike transportations costs to offset balances elsewhere, consequently targeting Brazilians with the least amount of money to spare. In percentage terms, a 45 cent increase in bus fare for low income workers makes transport take up just as much space in the family budget as food. Alongside the busfare protests, millions of Brazilians took to the streets to protest a string of corruption scandals implicating politicians, especially rich ones, across the political spectrum.

The Lava Jato (The Car Wash) investigation, in which a small car wash business in São Paulo was discovered to be the center of a massive money laundering operation, landed several politicians in prison, most notably ex-president and former beloved national treasure, Lula da Silva. As prosecutors unveiled bribery schemes and secret campaign finance funds, totaling over 10 billion U.S. dollars, the country was caught up in a polarizing political crisis. In 2016, then President Dilma Rousseff, a longtime activist,

friend of Lula da Silva, and first female Brazilian president , was charged and impeached by a determined and growing right-wing group in congress for administrative misconduct for wrongly allocating funds. The political factions within the Brazilian government working to take Dilma out of power took advantage of popular dissatisfaction with the government and used her as a scapegoat. Lula's demoralizing imprisonment and Dilma's impeachments led to an overwhelming loss of faith in the Brazilian government. Public trust in the democratic socialist regime was obliterated, setting the current political field ablaze and open for a more ideological, militant type of politics. There was a growing movement against the left and each new scandal added more fuel to the anti-socialist resentments forming. Economic hardship, corruption scandals, and a lack of government accountability paved the way for an anti-system message, which Bolsonaro's brand of polarizing populism lit up. Bolsonaro is not the cause of popular anger but its effect, effectively occupying the vacancy of a burning throne and imploding political order.

What kind of phenomenon is it that Brazil, with its traumatic history, would champion the election of someone who has publicly labeled the dictatorship as a "very good period"? A country must be in an excessively vulnerable position to allow an authoritarian take over, which for Brazil was created and exacerbated by the political scandals of Brazil's prior ruling party, the The "Partida Trabalhista", a work-

er's party advocating for a socialist democracy. It is argued that many Brazilians were tired of the corruption of the PT party, causing a complete distrust in the democratic socialist ideals that had been working in Brazil for decades. Bolsonaro was able to ride this wave of popular discontent into a new political era where the dominant popular sentiment is anger at the political class. Economic fallout and unemployment in recent years created national backlash against income redistribution and affirmative action policies helping poor and black Brazilians that were introduced by former more liberal administrations. The middle class, affected by the recession of 2008, found no consolation within their current political system and needed to find somewhere to project their frustrations. Simple enough, Bolsonaro found a way to take vulnerable Brazilians and turn their anger on the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised and blame the social programs they needed as the reason why the economy was failing. Through a mastery of social presence, Bolsonaro was able to attach every wrong in Brazil to the PT party and all hope of a stronger, more capitalist future to his brand.

Bolsonaro and the movement supporting him crave violence and civil conflict in lieu of dialogue and elections because they are angry, but Bolsonaro views these as the necessary conditions to justify a return of dictatorship-era repression. The Bolsonaro movement rose to power by capitalizing on the scandals of the left party and their supposed "righteous-ness" in the face of corrupt socialism. Ironically, the Bolsonaro movement now seeks to prove that they themselves are also not limited by the law, shutting down any agency deemed unnecessary by Bolsonaro's standards. Globo TV, Brazil's longest living and widely watched television network in Brazil, saw its funding slashed because Bolsonaro didn't like the way the news network portrayed him. The Bolsonaro powers defy court orders, ignore police investigations and defy all other institutions, in the exact same way that the military dictatorship did 30 years ago. The methods Bolsonaro and his team are using are as terrifying as they are familiar.

Even the election cycle of Bolsonaro's campaign was an aberration. Bolsonaro's seemingly innocuous rise to stardom served as a surprise for many. For 30 years, Bolsonaro was a bottom-tier congressman relegated to the fringes of political life advocating for a return to the U.S.-supported military dictatorship, the same regime that ruled the country with torture and murder until 1985. As an obscure congressman whose extremist policy proposals seemed well beyond what was assumed to be acceptable in Brazil's political liberal mainstream, his current position of power is a shock not only to the Brazilian left, but to intellectuals around the world. Bolsonaro ran an extreme campaign, filled with homophobia, sexism and populism, landing himself in the driver's seat of one of the world's largest and most vulnerable democracies. Very similar to Trump and his revival of deep-rooted national racism, the silent majority is blamed for bringing Bolsonaro into office. Unfortunately, Bolsonaro garnered votes not only from the silent far right, but from the center leaning majority of the electorate. Bolsonaro's appeal beyond the extreme right underlines a deeper transformation in Brazilian politics and global politics as a whole, as many countries are finding themselves with right leaning leaders after years of center-left control.

The right took control of a specifically vulnerable economic income bracket in Brazil. After 2013, a growing resentment within the middle class was bubbling against the broken government and the social programs that never seemed to actually help the country grow. Much like the U.S., Brazil is separated into very wealthy states and very poor states, with many of the rich states consisting of middle class citizens who all voted for Bolsonaro. Just like the U.S., the middle class in Brazil felt forgotten, even abused, watching as the corrupt and rich flaunted their wealth while the *favelas* (lower-income neighborhoods) grew increasingly more dangerous and gang-controlled. The socialist stronghold that controlled the country for almost two decades in Brazil was fractured beyond repair and dissatisfaction with their programs was growing from the class that paid for its empty promises. Bolsonaro saw this gap and stepped in. He gained media attention through a range of shockingly bigoted comments against the nation's racial minorities and its indigenous population before and during the 2018 election. Virtually overnight, Bolsonaro and

his far-right party (PSL), which barely existed the year before, enjoyed an unprecedented rise to power. In months, a previously unknown and anti-democratic party became the second-most represented group in Congress.

Analyzing this phenomenon from a comparative politics perspective, it is quite possible that Brazil is simply too young of a democracy to have been able to remain stable. It is theorized by renowned political scientist Samuel P. Huntington that the younger a democracy is, the more likely it is to fail. Brazil has only worked as a true democracy since 1988, making it a young adult at only 32 years old. Additionally, it is impossible to study why certain events conspire in other countries without taking their culture into account. Using analysis of cultural norms is mostly theoretical and should not be solely used to explain political phenomena, but understanding Brazilian culture is a very important requirement to be able to understand Brazilian politics. The idea that societal changes develop top to down, from within the government to the people, is deeply ingrained in Brazilian culture. There is a strong reliance on the government to enact order that then trickles down to the masses, an attitude that has stuck around since the beginning of time. Brazilian politics are deeply rooted in a strong central government that originated from a strong monarchy and solidified with each fascist government after it. Brazilian political culture is one that is incessantly reliant and oftentimes over trusting. Because of its roots in monarchical "favors" and nepotism, Brazilian culture today is still characterized by a feeling that is somewhat comparable to the hypocrisy of the "southern politeness" of the United States; favors are constantly traded not only in the political sphere, but in the social sphere where many feel that if they offer a superficial politeness onto another person, they deserve it back. Brazil is a society that was also heavily founded on slaves, and this idea that some people are meant to serve others is still excessive in daily Brazilian life as seen through the huge national wage gap.

On a personal level, Brazilians are also a group of people who have certain characteristics that may allot for their democracy to be unstable. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda writes in his critically acclaimed book, *Roots of Brazil*, that a "Brazilian" is someone characterized by his or her "cordiality." The Brazilian persona, stereotyped in music and film, is laid back and loves to enjoy the "good life." Unfortunately, the political implications of these traits create a class of people who do not historically confront conflict. This stereotype of Brazilians as empathetic, open and hospitable people serves as the country's greatest strength as well as its greatest weakness. The Brazilian president during and after WWII, Getúlio Vargas, was a fascist that was able to capitalize on this Brazilian sentiment, taking advantage of the trusting nature of his people to further institutionalize authoritarianism in the citizens of Brazil. Brazilians have been almost taught for centuries to not only respect but rely on the government, with social programs in the north being the only source of income for some families for generations. Unlike the U.S., which saw two major wars fought within its own border to protect freedoms, Brazil never had to fight for its own freedom, and was established as a monarchy from the beginning. Brazil lacks the great "freedom" and anti-government ideals that many Americans take for granted. Brazilian historical support for powerful leaders and inability to rise against authority is exemplified in the rampant political corruption that went unscathed for decades in Brazil, preceding Bolsonaro's rise to power. It is quite possible that the Brazilian public is once again being swept off their feet by a populist leader who can promise change through a stronger government.

There is no right answer to explain why Brazil is experiencing the political and cultural climate it is today. There are still questions to be answered, some will take decades to be solved and some will go on unanswered forever. There is without a doubt, a global trend towards far-right extremism, but the question lies in whether this is a current political fad that will be replaced with another one, or if this is the state that our world is developing into. Is Bolsonaro a phenomenon, or is he the new normal?

Design by Meredith Bradley
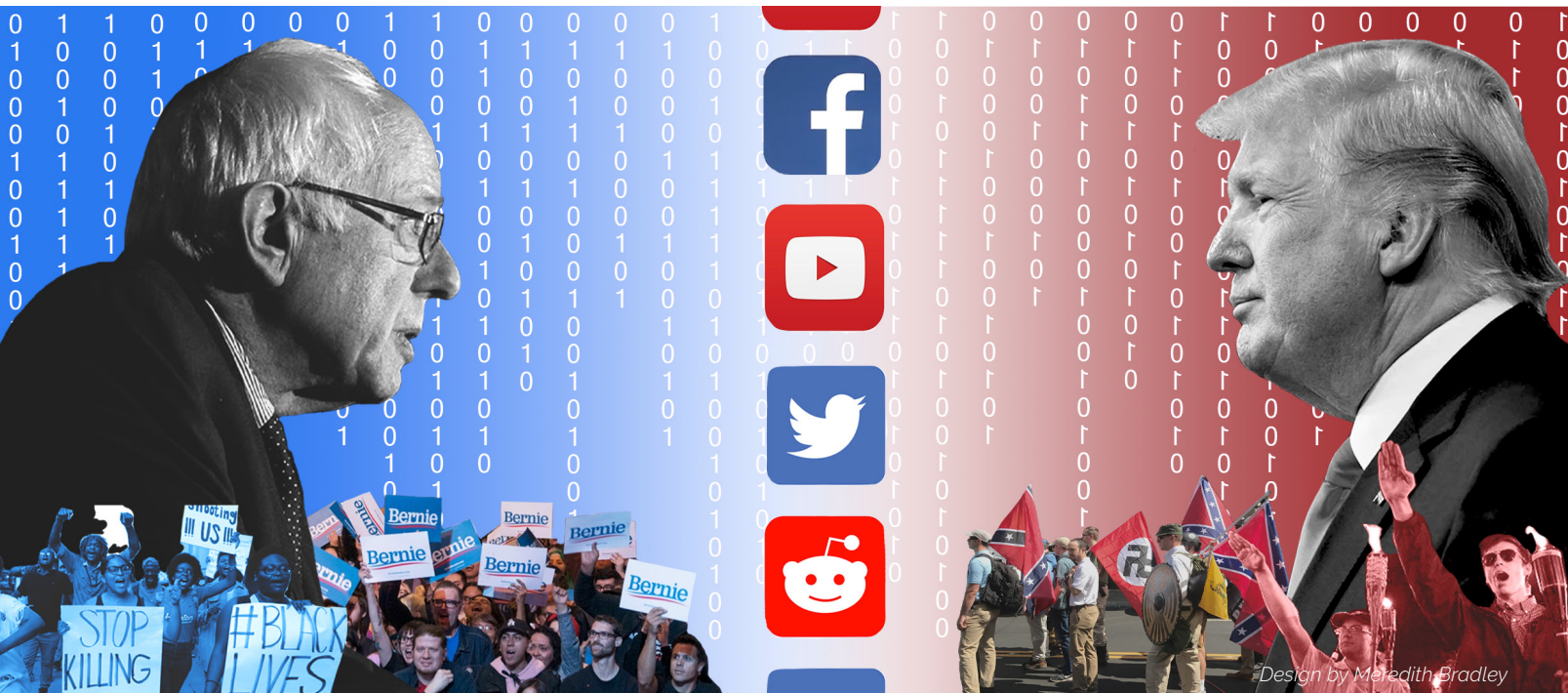
ALGORITHMS:

THE ENABLING WEAPON OF CONFIRMATION BIAS

Lei Otsuka

Media has a powerful history in the United States, beginning with the newspapers in colonial times, funded by political parties wanting favorable press coverage. Later, when the penny press was invented, the cost of newspaper production was lowered, allowing them to no longer be tied to their financial obligations. What followed was the age of sensationalism, as newspapers tried to grab the attention of readers through large, shocking headlines and personal interest stories. As professionalism grew in the journalism field, the role of the press as "watchdogs" of the government became prominent,

and journalists became educators for their readers, investigating political and corporate stories to uncover any wrongdoings. The influence of investigative journalism is exemplified in the years following the Washington Post's coverage of the Watergate scandal, which exposed the transgressions of the Nixon administration and led to President Nixon's resignation. Newspapers during this era enjoyed high profits, and journalists were seen as vital protectors of democracy.

Today, the internet has dramatically changed the media landscape. This

new age provides instantaneous connection to others and ease of access to information that is incomparable to the past. Free information is idealized in democracies because in theory, it gives all citizens a robust understanding of prevalent issues and makes them informed voters through better education. In practice, the 24 hour news cycle and its desire for profit, as well as the audience's inclination to find news aligning with their beliefs rather than factual reporting, has created a cauldron of misinformation.

Perhaps the most illuminating example of the dangers of the internet

in recent history was the Unite the Right rally in August 2017. The white supremacist and neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, turned violent when a driver rammed his car into a group of protestors, killing one and injuring several others. It was later realized that many of these protestors had organized through conversations on social media, making the internet an accessory to the violence by bringing harmful like-minded voices closer together.

So how exactly have acts of violent political extremism like Charlottesville been influenced by social media? Answering the question broadly requires looking into the algorithms that determine what comes up on a user's feed. As the internet has grown to contain an near infinite amount of data, an algorithm can help sift through that to bring forth a curated, relevant set determined through commonly searched data of individual users. Admittedly, it is difficult to gather data on exactly how each algorithm works, but researchers have studied algorithms by simulating their behavior. Social scientists have emulated algorithmic behavior in their research through close observation of user behavior and suggested content on each user's feed. They can do this by assuming that algorithms do in fact recommend content that is similar to ideological beliefs and measuring individuals before and after exposure to information that aligns with a certain ideology. Another method that is more popular (and complex) is directly observing the behavior us-

ing massive datasets of information shared on social media like Facebook or Twitter and creating latent space models, a type of model often used in neuroscience to study neural fields. Using this model of social media data, researchers can study relationships between users and the information

shared and observe how the algorithm impacts users.

For social scientists and social media companies alike, these patterns have recently become significant points of interests. Two contrasting schools of thought emerge from the research work. The first formulates that social media increases interconnectedness, thus exposing users to more diverse views that they otherwise would not have been exposed to in the offline world. Those who support this view argue that social media usage reduces political extremism since the diverse viewpoints that the users are exposed to online will overall result in a more moderate ideology.

The countering idea conceptualizes

social media as an echo chamber. Echo chambers are a metaphor used in media and communication theory to describe the phenomenon that occurs when one's beliefs and ideologies are reinforced in a system with others of similar beliefs and ideologies. Since social media companies profit from keeping users on their app, their algorithms are curated to bring new content that the user will want to see. This in turn creates a stream of content on the user's feed that simply confirms the beliefs that the user holds, creating individual echo chambers. By agreeing with the user's views, the echo chamber validates their opinion, regardless of whether they are factual. This weaponizes the user's feed, creating a potential to lead to further extremist views, which ultimately leads to further extremism if the user holds such views.

Being a relatively new area of study, there is a lack of empirical research data in support for advancing these theories. Research so far suggests that while algorithms do in fact have an impact on extremism, there is only a significant effect on users with specific ideologies. For instance, a study by Benjamin Warner at the University of Kansas randomly sorted participants into four different exposures: liberal, conservative, moderate and a mixture of all three. The participants were exposed to different content about Iran based on which group they were assigned to, and the results concluded that exposure to polarized content led to more extremism in the conservative case, had no effect in

the mixed and liberal condition and actually reduced extremism in the moderate case.

For social media companies, the Charlottesville riot led to the realization that their utopian message of connecting users anywhere had an alarming offline reality, which consequently birthed policies online to censor hate-speech, and other content relating to violent extremism was implemented.

Some attempts at countering extremism have been made. Yet, in the United States, efforts to demilitarize social media fall victim to the civil liberties guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Free speech and expression are both protected by the First Amendment, but there have been noticeable restrictions on speech throughout the history of the US Supreme Court, such as on language with an intent to incite illegal action. The internet has brought on a wave of new obstacles for the freedom of expression, and the Supreme Court and Congress have battled with its regulation since 1990. This battle is best characterized by the Court striking down the Communication and Decency Act in 1996 and the Child Online Protection Act in 2004. The complication of enforcement arises with regulating expression on the internet; it becomes unclear who should be held accountable for the language used when users are never formally required to identify themselves while conversing.

Social media companies have used counter-message campaigns that directly oppose the extremist ideologies promoted or corrective messages immediately following untruthful messages to curb the effects of extremist content. These attempts have mostly been initiated in mainstream social media platforms such as Youtube and Facebook, and research shows that the campaigns have been largely ineffective due to the sheer outnumbering by the extremist content available online.

When looking at the social media activity of people who were involved with acts of political extremism, such as shootings or violent rallies, it is particularly noticeable that these users are more active on unconventional social networking sites that have not partaken in such regulatory policies.

"Having biases is human nature, but allowing such biases to create disillusionment is not."

For instance, those involved in the attacks at the mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019 and later the El Paso shooting in August 2019, were active on 8Chan, an online messaging board. The site became notoriously known for its "/pol/" board that hosted the views of many white-supremasist and neo-Nazi users who embraced the site's incredibly lax regulations, which only restricts copyrighted material and child pornography. 8Chan itself had its protections taken away by its host, Cloudflare, but the site has since resurfaced under several new names, such as 8kun and infinitechan. Its users have also dispersed to other networking sites, such as reddit, Discord and Telegram, a messaging app that sends heavily encrypted messages that self-destruct.

The white supremacy rally at Charlottesville was popularized by users on Gab, a right-leaning social media application that had similar regulatory policies as 8chan. A closer look into the users on Gab found that Gab users were often banned from other social media platforms. Since Gab was much less moderated than other social media platforms, researchers concluded that the domains within Gab that are unpopular in a global scope created a right-leaning echo chamber.

Since less mainstream sites are the main culprits in the promotion of extremist ideologies, it is likely that action on their part would have a stronger effect in countering political extremism. Following the El Paso shooting, several heads of states called for increased regulation of such social media sites, but the allure of these sites is centered exactly around their lack of regulation of speech, almost to the point of the dark web. It then becomes difficult to remain optimistic about the possibility of regulation in the future.

Jonathan Taplin, director emeritus of the Annenberg Innovation Lab at the University of Southern California, cites a revision of the 1996 Commu-

nications Decency Act as a possible deterrent for extremist language on less mainstream social media. Section 230 of the act is a provision that protects social media companies from liability of the speech promoted on their platform. Taplin argues that since these companies are "active intermediaries" that alter information by presenting different content to each user, they should not be shielded from legal responsibility from the consequences of speech expressed on their platforms.

Further difficulties arise when attempts are made to shut down these sites. When Cloudfare retracted its support as a host for the 8Chan, it made a statement acknowledging doubts about the site remaining offline for long, since the information age allows sites to find new hosts easily and respawn on the internet in a matter of days.

In the spirit of demilitarization, finding a solution for the problem that is likely correlated with the rising number of connections and attacks by extremists globally would be ideal. While Taplin brings up feasible options, the unfortunate truth of the matter is that there has not yet been enough research done to find an adequate method to curb the growth of extremism via social media on a global or national level while the use of social media has continued to grow, especially during election season. The internet has been wielded as a tool for political campaigns since the early 2000s, with Democratic contender Howard Dean first* using the medium in 2004 to reach out to voters for fundraising efforts. The 2016 presidential election illustrated the unprecedented powerful effects of social media to interfere with elections. During the 2020 Democratic primaries, candidates have poured a lot of money into social media advertising, with Bloomberg spending an estimated $63 million on Facebook alone. Combined with misinformation that can easily rampage social media, political campaigns pose a real threat in upcoming elections since they can easily manipulate users through targeted advertisements to echo perspectives that agree with biases.

While it is unknown what wide scale actions can currently be taken, users can be mindful of the content that is shown on their feed on an individual level. Having biases is human nature, but allowing such biases to create disillusionment is not. Understanding the effects social media algorithms can have and holding responsibility to seek the truth, rather than what we want as the truth, is the most effective way to be mindful consumers of the data presented on social media.
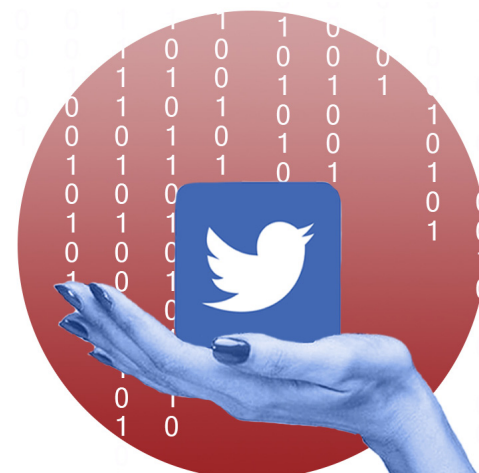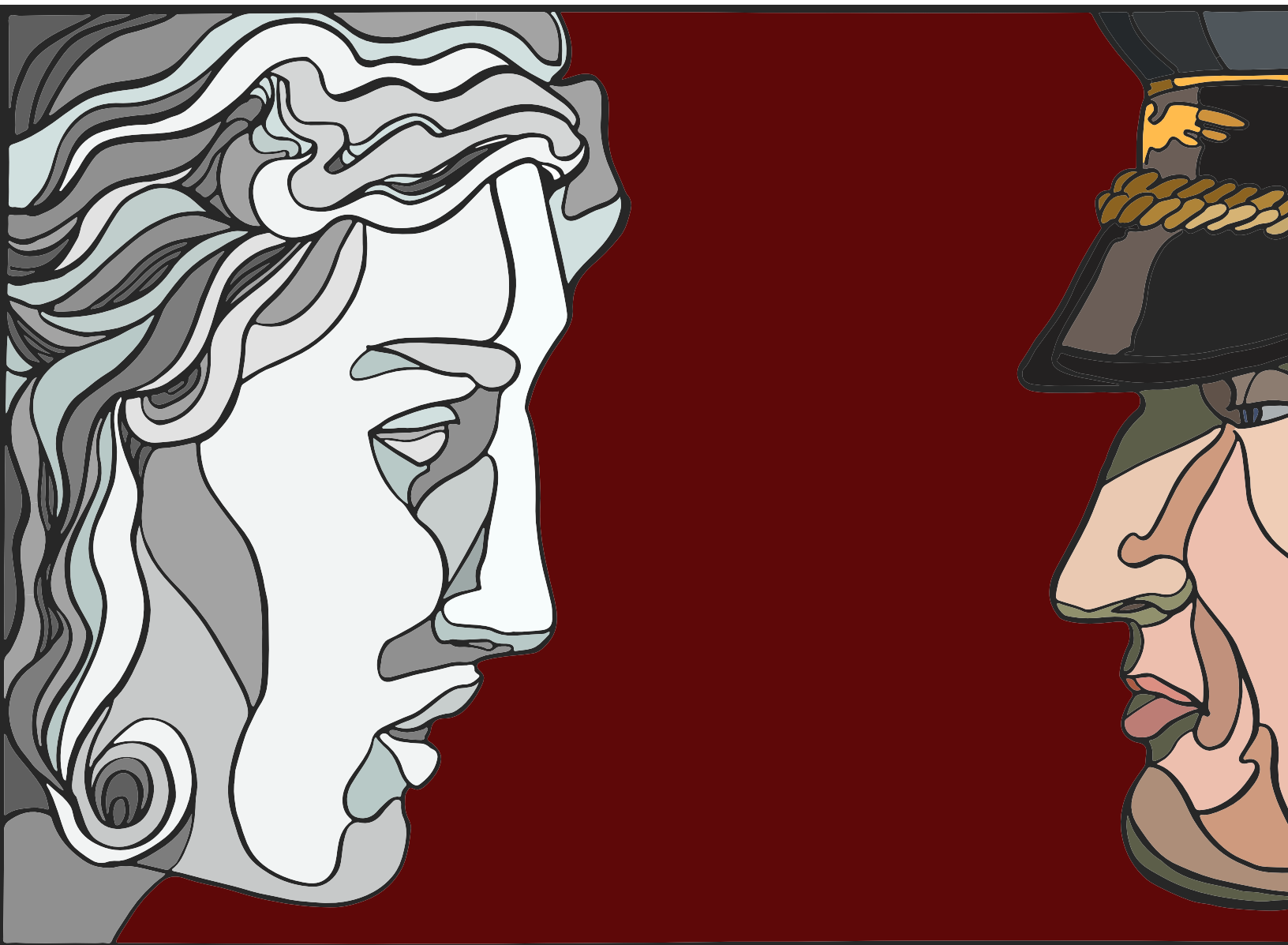
CULTURAL DESTRUCTION:
A WARTIME PHENOMENA

Devapriya Roy

CE 2020

Design by Cozette Ellis

Cultural heritage has power. Physical aspects of culture, whether it be monuments, shrines, paintings, or cathedrals are entwined with our daily lives. It becomes a constant, reassuring, and everlasting presence; a tangible mark of something that binds people together. The modern era, dating back to the early 20th century, saw the invention of some of the most powerful weapons known to man. However, this progression was a double-edged sword. Millions of people may have been mobilized, and the economies of countries around the world may have grown, but these weapons ushered in an age of wide-scale wartime cultural destruction that would have been unthinkable in the past.

Often thought of as a collateral damage of war, cultural destruction persists. But is it truly collateral damage? The sites that suffer such destruction are valued hubs of art or architecture in a community, pillars that provide a source of pride and unity for people. When a site like this is decimated, it can have devastating impacts on the morale of a community. Intentional cultural destruction has been made into a tool of oppression by perpetrators. Despite international laws and conventions prohibiting the destruction of cultural sites during armed conflicts, perpetrators disregard these laws and unflinchingly wipe out centuries of history from their victims.

Cultural Destruction in the Third Reich

T*he Rape of Europa*, a 2006 documentary directed by Richard Berge and Bonni Cohen, tells the tale of cultural destruction in the Third Reich during World War II. The Nazis engaged in the systematic theft and destruction of thousands of historic and valuable European works of art. Art that had been treasured tenets of European societies were destroyed if deemed "un-Germanic" or "inferior." When word reached France that the Nazis were slowly making their way to invade the nation, the Louvre was essentially packed into boxes. Hundreds of volunteers composed of French citizens gathered to help pack up coveted art from the museum. Bearing great risk, citizens helped in its transport to castles in the countryside, where works remained largely undamaged until the conclusion of the war. Even in such a dire situation, people were united in the mission of getting these paintings and sculptures to safety, driving the point that cultural heritage has more power than people might think.

Poland was also victim to much plundering, looting, and destruction at the hands of Nazis, who intended to obliterate their Slavic cultural heritage, which they considered "degenerate." The Warsaw Royal Castle, home of Polish kings for six centuries, and the seat of Parliament was considered a "national historic treasure." When Nazi Germany invaded Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, they leveled historic buildings and deployed special fire units to burn down Polish libraries. Then, in a move of deliberate and targeted cultural destruction, Adolf Hitler personally ordered the shelling of Royal Castle, stating that "as long as the Royal Castle stands, Poland is not yet lost."

Poles held a deep patriotic attachment to the castle, and as long as it stood, hope persevered. So, bores were drilled into the foundation of the Royal Castle to create a "permanent threat." Years went by and Poles grew tired of the oppression they faced under the Nazi regime, which resulted in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The Germans crushed the uprising, killing 200,000 Poles and detonating the dynamite charges in the Castle's base. The Royal Castle was destroyed, and

the spirit of the Polish people was completely crushed. Nazi Destruction units then came in to raze Warsaw street by street. However, decades later, the Warsaw Royal Castle was rebuilt, because simply put, "Poles could not live without [it]."

But one of the most subtly powerful demonstrations of the devastating impact of cultural destruction was in Krakow, Poland during this time. Ironically, the city made it through the war, unscathed, as it was classified by the Nazis as having Germanic roots. Nazis coveted a number of art masterpieces located in Krakow, which they systematically looted. The St. Mary's Church altar was victim to such looting. The altar featured beautiful figures, finishing, and distinct faces, the German artist who had created the work centuries ago was seen as a genius in the eyes of the Nazis. The altar was to be sent back to the German Fatherland, echoing the sentiments that Germanic art should not be in the hands of an "alien race." Citizens in Krakow dismantled the altar and hid it in the countryside, but the Nazis tracked it down and shipped it to Berlin. However, the Poles had become so accustomed to having the Altar in their life that they could not "find the way to their prayer" without it, said cultural historian Maria Osterwa Czekaj in The Rape of Europa.

Post-World War II International Legal Structures & Cultural Destruction

The sustained cultural destruction that had become all too commonplace in the early 20th century resulted in the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Later in 1977, protocols were added to the 1949 Geneva Conventions to strengthen the aforementioned protections. Article 53 of these additional protections expressly prohibited "any acts of hostility directed against the historic monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples." The international legal structures enacted in the post-WWII era supposedly made the targeting of cultural sites a war crime, yet tales of cultural destruction continue to echo across the world. As wars ravage countries, cultural heritage sites that stood for centuries continue to crumble.

Known as the "Pearl of the Adriatic," the Old City of Dubrovnik in Croatia stood proud. Dating back to the 7th century, the city carved an important place for itself in the Slavic world as a major sea power. The Old Town of Dubrovnik was classified as a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization—or UNESCO—World Heritage site in 1979. And yet, the city suffered substantial damage in the early 1990's during the Siege of Dubrovnik as part of the Yugoslav Wars, with over two-thirds of the Old City hit with projectiles. In the same year, the Vijecnica—or City Hall—in Sarajevo, which was built in the late 1800s in the style of historic Islamic designs, burned down during the Siege of Sarajevo. The destruction of the City Hall also took with it nearly two million books.

Similarly, the Old City of Aleppo in Syria, with centuries of history and heritage at its core, would become the site of one of the 21st century's foremost acts of cultural destruction. Despite being classified as a World Heritage site in 1986, the Battle of Aleppo saw countless medieval buildings in the cities razed to the ground between 2012 and 2016. The Temple of Bel, also in Syria, was located in the ancient and holy city of Palmyra. The temple dated back to the first century but was obliterated by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—or ISIS—in 2015, after having stood for almost 2,000 years.

Cultural Rights are Human Rights

The destruction that occurred in both Dubrovnik and Aleppo shows that perpetrators target sites with specific nefarious agendas, despite prohibition by international law. Karima Bennoune, United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and Professor of Law at the University of California, Davis, spoke about this general narrative that cultural destruction is the collateral damage to war, and how that idea fits in with intentional cultural destruction. "At times, cultural heritage is destroyed as a secondary effect of ongoing military hostilities, but often, this destruction is deliberately targeted," said Bennoune. Bennoune continued that recent years have seen a growing trend emerge of perpetrators videotaping themselves destroying cultural heritage while providingThe a justification. This kind of cultural heritage destruction is truly a "threat to

the framework of cultural rights and heritage protection."

The extensive cultural destruction that has occurred internationally during the last hundred years also brings about the conversation of human rights, and how this kind of destruction impinges on them. Individuals and nations must support the notion of universal heritage—the idea that cultural heritage belongs to us all, regardless of location—because the right to freely participate in and enjoy cultural life are central global tenets in propagating the idea of human rights.

So why aren't cultural rights seen as integral to the conversation of human rights as others? "Cultural rights are integral to the human experience," said Bennoune. "They serve critical vehicles for enabling the enjoyment of other human rights." Cultural rights can be used to "promote other human rights" ranging from the freedom of expression, to the freedom of religion. What's more, cultural rights are essential in meeting the United Nations' sustainable development goals of the 2030 agenda and "dealing with broader social issues such as extremism, hatred, discrimination, and poverty." Cultural rights must be treated as an important piece of the human rights narrative. "It was no accident that these rights were included in the founding document of human rights law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," said Bennoune.

The Way Forward

In the face of international cultural destruction, what is the way forward? Bennoune said that oftentimes, a partnership is needed between grassroots efforts and international mechanisms for conservation and protection of cultural heritage to succeed. It is critical to provide international backing and "technical know-how" for individuals who are acting as "local cultural heritage defenders" to ensure they have the resources to "operate freely."

"As wars ravage countries, cultural heritage sites that stood for centuries continue to crumble."

Javier Ors Ausín, Program Manager at the World Monuments Fund (WMF) spoke about their mission of preserving cultural heritage sites around the world through advocacy, education, training, fieldwork, and grant-making. "In cultural heritage, just like in many other fields, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution or formula that can be applied to respond to these types of issues," said Ausín. "That said, we live in an era of multilateral reactions and, in my opinion, an effective response should emerge from a bottom-up movement, and include a diverse group of voices and backgrounds, locally and internationally." This allows actors to gain a complete perspective of issues and possible solutions, because "built cultural heritage is about politics and identity, not just architecture." To expound on the importance of local politics, Ausín spoke about various heritage sites in Yemen, which have been affected by civil war, and ones in Iraq which have been affected by the Islamic State. The WMF's approach, in these countries, is to work alongside local governments and religious groups to "facilitate discussions with a diverse group of local and international experts." This allows for an "inclusive exchange of knowledge" that effectively responds to the needs of the local community and that of the global community as well. In order to prevent cultural destruction and conserve heritage in its aftermath, international and local advocacy efforts are critical, along with action from local stakeholders and international actors. Cultural destruction is a multifaceted issue, so people must be educated in the importance of cultural heritage in order to act. Cultural heritage is not just carved stone or paint on canvas, it is an incredibly vital part of humanity, and it must be protected.

THE WAR ON EXISTENCE:
GUN VIOLENCE AND THE NRA

Shelby Salyer
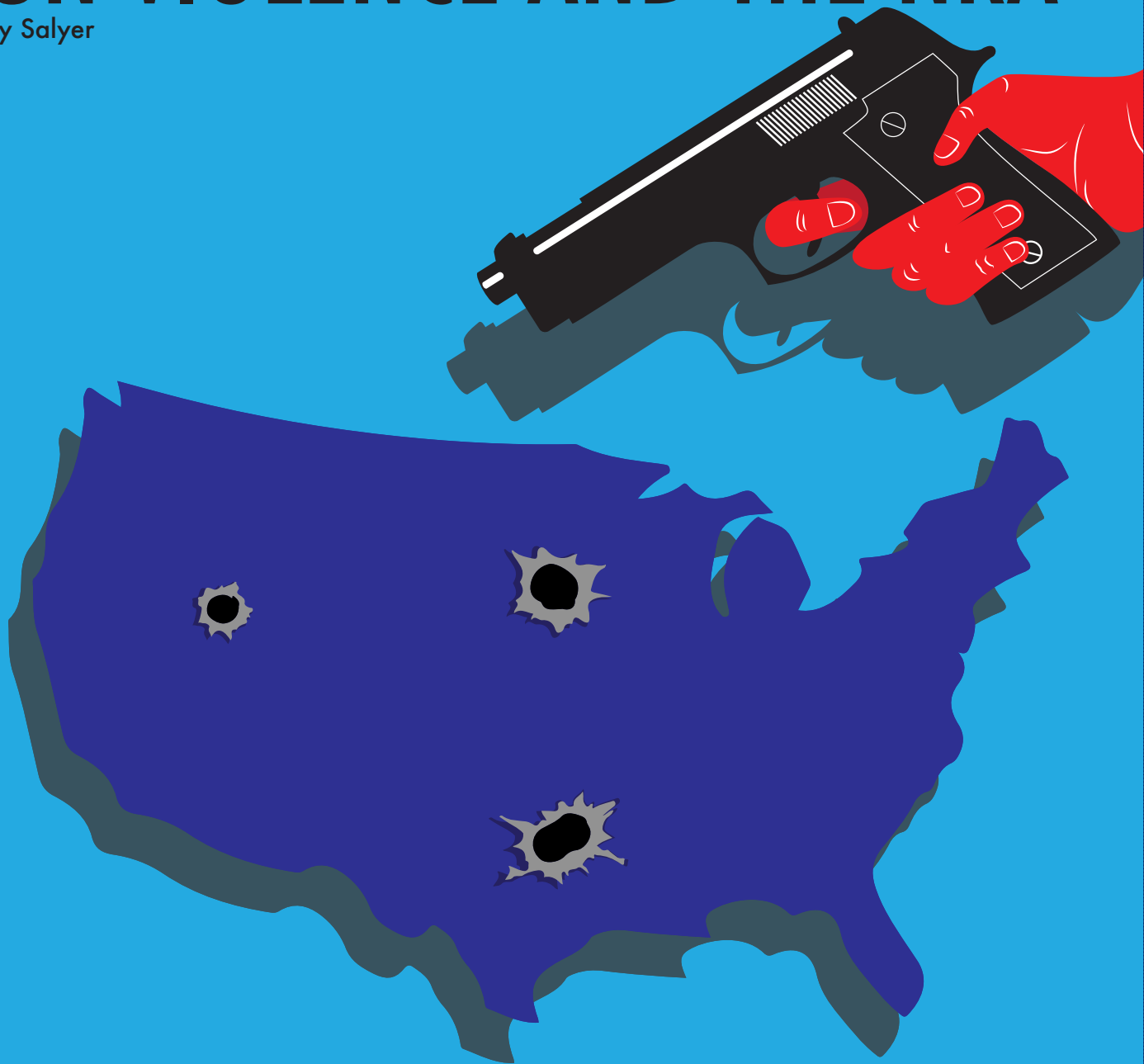
The National Rifle Association (NRA) is one of the most powerful political lobbyists in the United States. As gun violence in the United States rises to newfound levels, the motives and goals of the NRA become questionable at best and sinister at worst.

While the violent crime rate in the U.S. has declined, gun-related deaths-especially suicides- continue to rise. Individuals in the United States, mainly children and young adults, face an exceptionally high risk of gun deaths compared to the same age groups in other high-income countries. In the U.S., the firearm homicide rate for children under 15 is over 16 times higher than in 25 other industrialized countries combined, and gunshot wounds are a more common cause of death than all "natural" causes of death combined.

Gun violence is a uniquely American problem. The death rate per 100,000 people due to gun violence is four times higher in the United States than it is in Syria and Yemen - two countries currently at war. U.S. schools are referred to as "war zones" by publications and media, as school and public shootings continue to rise. Students no longer feel safe in spaces that are meant to facilitate learning and growth because they live in constant fear of gun violence.

NRA media outlets claim that the push for gun control and negative perception of the NRA with regards to mass shootings are solely caused by media bias, especially progressive or liberal bias. In the wake of a recent

mass shooting, the NRA, with the help of alt-right media outlets, played the victim, hoping to push the deregulation of guns and gun ownership. The NRA consistently claims that it is represented inaccurately by the media, but simultaneously refuses to engage with journalists to set the record otherwise. After multiple attempts to reach out to the NRA for comments, Billy McLaughlin, digital director of the Office of the NRA Vice President, finally provided insight into issues regarding gun control and the NRA. McLaughlin asserts that the "gun control lobby, funded primarily by Michael Bloomberg, certain politicians and their cheerleaders in the mainstream media constantly lie and try to portray the NRA as a horrible organization". He further added that it is a "gross understatement" to call "mainstream media biased and misinformed."

In 2019, there were more mass shootings in the U.S. than there are days in the calendar year. Americans feel increasingly unsafe as the NRA pushes for loosened gun-control. According to the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, survey respondents do not believe that regular citizens should be allowed to bring guns in restaurants, college campuses and other public spaces by a margin of 9-1. Contrary to the trend in gun violence and public opinion regarding gun control, the NRA continues to push for decreased gun control and policies that increase gun sales. It has been found that states with more gun control laws have lower levels of firearm homicide and firearm suicide, even after controlling for poverty,

unemployment, education, race, college education and population density. Most adults and non-NRA affiliated gun owners favor gun control laws.

The NRA spent a record $9.6 million for lobbying in 2019, even as its annual income dropped. Out of the 382 mass shootings that occurred in the United States in 2017, only around 10-15 occurred in areas where NRA's congressional funding was low. The $28 billion U.S. firearm industry funds and pushes the NRA to lobby for freezes in federal funding for gun control research, and pushes for the financial interests of the firearm industry over the interests of the U.S. populace. The gun violence epidemic in the United States is a uniquely American problem due to the NRA's skillful control over the gun-control narrative and its lobbying capacity. The NRA has repeatedly blocked common-sense legislation on local, state and federal levels for decades.

The NRA has been producing media and marketing designed to increase ownership and sales of firearms. In 2017, the NRA successfully blocked a proposed assault weapons ban by claiming that it threatened gun owners' Second Amendment rights, despite the fact that the gun death rate in the U.S. peaked that year. McLaughlin claims that "Anti-Second Amendment" legislators are trying to ban "commonly owned" semi-automatic weapons and that a ban on these weapons poses a "massive threat to law-abiding gun owners across America." McLaughlin stated that the weapons are "often used for

home defense" and that "Americans will be less safe" if legislators ban semi-automatic weapons.

As the NRA's platform becomes more polarizing with regards to gun control and political affiliation, gun owners associated with the NRA are more likely to vote for right-wing candidates that will legislate against gun control. McLaughlin claimed that "one of the biggest lies about the NRA is that we are this "big scary gun lobby", further stating that the NRA Institute for Legislative Action has a "strong team of lobbyists" who are "working hard to ensure we elect legislators who protect the Second Amendment." Outside of the proven power and influence of NRA lobbying, NRA members ,according to McLaughlin, "work hard to ensure the U.S. Congress and legislatures across America have pro-gun lawmakers."

As the NRA declines, its messages have become more aggressive, right-wing and polarizing, effectively creating a new voting block out of gun owners. In 1972, gun owners were only 11 percent more likely than non-gun owners to vote for a Republican candidate. As of 2016, that number rose to 30%. If only gun owners voted in the 2016 election, Donald Trump would win every state except Vermont. If only non-gun owners voted, Hillary Clinton would win every state except for West Virginia, and possibly Wyoming. According to McLaughlin, the NRA tells its members that "every single NRA member and gun owner in America must vote" and must do so by visiting "NRAILA.

org, because we provide updates on legislation every step of the way...NRA members and gun owners must visit NRAPVF.org to find out which candidates are endorsed and how they are rated."

The increasingly polarized platforms of the NRA and its television outlet, NRATV, are cloaked in sexism, racism and misinformation. McLaughlin and the NRA effectively create an in-group out-group dynamic between NRA and non-NRA members, calling those who advocate for gun control "anti-gunners" who "don't know how the current process works." McLaughlin further claims that "deceit is at the backbone of our [the NRA] adversaries' weak movement." NRATV

"Students no longer feel safe in spaces that are meant to facilitate learning and growth because they live in constant fear of gun violence."

has perpetuated hateful rhetoric on a number of its shows and programs, supporting and advocating for racism, transphobia and sexual assault - calling the #MeToo movement a "vehicle for political purpose." NRATV also defended conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who espoused that men are being turned into "second rate women." Additionally, in September of 2018, an image of Thomas & Friends characters wearing Ku Klux Klan hoods was shown by Dana Loesch on NRATV in an attempt to threaten and

attack the show for making its cast of characters more diverse.

The gun violence crisis in the U.S. cannot be discussed without looking at the demographic that commits the most mass shootings: young white men with the financial means to access guns - usually legally. Furthermore, the spread of white nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment and laws that ease access to guns are thought to be fueling the unprecedented amount of gun violence and mass shootings in the U.S. According to a 2014 study conducted by Professor Eric Madfis at the University of Washington, Tacoma, mass shootings are correlated with "white male grievance culture." The "triple privileges of white heterosexual masculinity" makes unexepected losses and downward mobility more painfully shameful, which can cause a "cumulative act of violence" to attone for "subordinated masculinity."

There is an inextricable link between misogyny, racism and gun violence: women in the U.S. are 21 times more likely to die from gun violence than women in other high-income countries. Over half of the mass shootings in the U.S. are linked to domestic violence, and the majority of men that kill an intimate partner have a history of domestic violence. "Incels", or "involuntary celibates", are an online subculture that expresses violent, vengeful and misogynistic ideas towards women. "Incel" subcultures are also known for virulent racism. Based on media reports, shooters are increasingly identifying with or as "in-

cels", and many failed shooting plots are "incel" related.

As hate crimes and gun violence grow in the U.S., a link between the NRA's polarizing platforms and gun violence seems more plausible. McLaughlin elevates the status of NRA members to heroes who "fight in every part of this country for our right to defend ourselves, our loved ones and our communities." The NRA and its members continue to contribute to the gun death epidemic in the U.S. Members are radicalized by the concept of being part of a "grassroots army of patriots" ready to defend the messages of the NRA at any cost "before it is too late."

Knowing the link between aggressive firearm sales, NRA lobbying, and gun violence, the NRA is purposefully ignoring the lives of human beings in favor of increasing profit, revitalizing their dying institution and elevating the firearm industry. The firearm industry's thirst for profits and the NRA's need for continued lobbying power and relevancy continues to polarize the gun violence crisis in the United States. NRA misinformation campaigns, corporate greed and the prioritization of profits over human lives not only allows mass shootings to happen - it makes them profitable. As long as the firearm industry supports the NRA, the NRA will continue to use its platform to create increasingly polarized right-wing content that motivates race and gender-based gun violence.

Gun control saves lives. The NRA's control on legislative bodies and fire-arm violence research is a war on existence. Lawmakers must legislate gun control policies that ensure that children can stay safe in schools and the U.S. populace can stay safe at home and in public. The NRA's war on gun control is also a war on existence. Sales and memberships are more important to the NRA and the firearm industry than human lives. Lawmakers and politicians must stop accepting congressional funding from the NRA in exchange for enactment of policies that put human existence at risk. Greater transparency in the U.S. government and platforms of contact and reporting must be established to allow individuals to hold their elected officials accountable.