

FOCUS

FCS STUDENT MAGAZINE
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**FRIENDS'
CENTRAL
SCHOOL**

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Check out the Quakefeed:
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Editors-in-Chief:

Eliza Caisse '18
Josh Weinstein '18
Julian Brenman '20

Layout Editor:

Josh Weinstein '18

Faculty Advisors:

Katie Dickerson
Thomas Soper

Writers:

Sydney Kaplan '18
Gia Matika '18
Evan Paszamant '18
Rishi Singh '18
Nir Netz '19
Vicky Liu '20
Lisa Green '20

Photographers:

Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19
Dorothy Babb '20
FCS Communications Office
Jay Gorodetzer





Comedy of Errors

A Job Well Done: President Amelia McDonnell Reminisces and Reflects

Spotlight

BY: JULIAN BRENMAN '20



For the past twelve months, Amelia McDonnell '18 has led the Upper School student body in her role as Student Council President with grace, eloquence, warmth, and passion. As the clock ticks to the rapidly approaching date when her presidency will draw to a close, she looks back on the experience, sharing insights and advice.

When asked how she has enjoyed serving in the role, she responds, "It's been really fun, definitely hard, but mostly fun. I would say I've learned how to compromise and how to be accountable for my mistakes but also how to laugh them off. I've learned how to delegate a little bit, but it's still a hard thing to do because part of you wants to do it all yourself sometimes! Being a spokesperson for a lot of people was really cool and so was getting to reach out to people who I wouldn't have normally reached out to. I didn't realize how big of a task it was, but I'm definitely glad I chose to run because I have grown as a person."

Though, from the outside, it may seem as though everything in regard to Amelia's presidency was perfectly smooth, she admits there were indeed incidents that proved to be a challenge, such as arranging refreshments for last June's end-of-year-picnic. She explains, "Last year, the final event was the end-of-year picnic. Unluckily, Food Club didn't exist anymore, and [in past years] we always relied on them for part of the food. We [the Student Council leaders] were like, 'We can make our own food.' Let's just say that didn't go very well! We were planning to cook 125 pounds of ground beef in my home kitchen the night before the event, until we came to our senses and realized that was unrealistic, so we just ordered hoagies, which turned out to be fine!" Amelia also mentions how her plan to make iPhone/iPad chargers available for circulation in the Blackburn Library didn't go as expected: "The chargers dwindled. At the beginning of the year, we had five, and now we have two. They are checked out and not returned. I wish [this idea] had worked better. With that being said, though, you can check out chargers from the library now, so I guess that's an accomplishment." Amelia reveals her biggest regret: "I regret not reaching out to more seniors to join council this year. Every year, seniors tend to drop out of council because it's senior year, you're so busy, and you don't want to wake up early. I wish that

hadn't happened this year, and I could have done a better job of preventing it."

Despite the bumps she's encountered in the road, Amelia remains proud of the change she's implemented and the progress she's made. She tells about how she reinvigorated the school dances: "I feel like we made dances more fun than they used to be. I feel like dances at Friends' Central have a better future after the Spring Fling because I think that went really well. It'd be great for the community and school spirit if we could keep having great dances." She attributes the success of Spring Fling to the "mocktails, snacks, and student-DJs." She adds, "We also had changed the location of the event to the Main Building. It made it feel like you were supposed to dance when you were there, and if you didn't want to dance, you could go to the lounge upstairs, play cards, or socialize in a different setting. It wasn't like 'if you didn't want to dance, you had to go home.' The actual dancing was more close-knit. It was more like two grades dancing together and not really separately." To her list of accomplishments, she adds, "The hot chocolate distribution ended up working really well!"

Amelia recalls a day that she claims "encapsulates" her time at Friends' Central. "I remember being at club fair this past October and seeing the whole school being so involved. It was a beautiful day; you could see all of the great displays. It just seemed very school-spirited. It was nice seeing everyone outside. It was cohesive, it was fun, we were dancing, listening to music...it just felt very Friends' Central-esque. That encapsulates my whole experience." It's fond memories such as those that make it especially difficult for Amelia to depart. She attests, "It's definitely really sad. We're doing a senior song for chorus, and when I heard one of the options, I started crying. It's very nostalgic because we also sang it in Middle School. I'm walking through the hallways trying to remember what it feels like so I can think back on it and really remember it as well as I can. Friends' Central is my home."

Amelia says that if she, now, a mature, insightful, and wise senior, could give advice to herself as a freshman, she would say the following: "Go to your teachers, and tell them what you're having problems with. Don't be afraid. Those teachers you're going to have great, great relationships and bonds with. They will be your mentors throughout high school." Speaking of advice, Amelia offers the following to her successor, President-Elect Nathan Levitties '19: "Don't be afraid to do things differently than past years. I think Student Council gets in a set of events and assemblies that are standard, and we don't really steer from those often. Not to say I'm not a big fan of our events, because I am." She continues by praising Nathan, exclaiming, "He'll be a great President because he has so much experience with events, assemblies, planning, etc. I'm most excited about his involvement with

meetings for business and how he hopes to use those to help make a big impact on the school community.”

Amelia concludes her final interview by reflecting on the classes she’s leaving behind: “The juniors are some of the most dedicated people I know. They’re always helping with school events, and I have a lot of faith in them. The sophomores are very, very, very school-spirited. They’re always the most numerous at events; they are super fun, energetic, and enthusiastic. The freshmen feel like my little babies. Especially considering that my brother is

in that Class, I feel like I’ve known them for a long time. They’re ambitious and talented freshmen. They’re not afraid to say their opinions.” Though Amelia will be leaving her post, she won’t be leaving the Main Line, as she will be continuing her studies next year at the prestigious Bryn Mawr College. At Bryn Mawr, she is open to studying “history, psychology, environmental science...basically anything that isn’t in the maths,” she proclaims. Her final comment to the School is as follows: “Thank you for making me the person you have made me.”

The New Face of Our School: Student President-Elect Nathan Levitties ’19

Spotlight

BY: JULIAN BRENMAN ’20



You’ve seen him happily wandering the halls, proudly sporting his Phoenix gear on the Varsity fields, and talking to many different members of the community on each of the 23 beautiful acres of our magnificent campus. Starting on April 28, however, you’ll see Nathan Levitties ’19 in a whole new light, as he will be entering office as Student Council President. Since it was announced that Nathan would take the helm of Student Council, he has been working tirelessly to prepare for what he hopes will be an “incredible” twelve months.

Nathan recalls what it was like on the day he learned he would take the helm of Student Council: “I was obviously ecstatic about the fact that I was voted president. I couldn’t hold that to myself. I had to tell Frankie.” While Nathan was rejoicing, he kept in mind the feelings of Kalila Jones ’19 and McKenna Blinman ’19, his presidential opponents. He shares, “I tried to be excited, while noticing that it wasn’t going to be fun for the other two. I wanted to focus on working together with Kalila and McKenna. I sent both of them texts, and I had conversations with the two of them, encouraging them to continue working to become Vice Presidents. I wanted to work with them, and I’m so happy I get to, because more recently, it was announced that they will both be Vice Presidents of Student Council, along with Anna Comstock ’19. I really value the opinions of Kalila and McKenna. I tried to push them to continue sharing their voices. I’m really happy they ended up doing so.”

In fact, Nathan admires Kalila and McKenna so much that he confesses he was nervous running against them. “I will

say, I was nervous, because Kalila and McKenna are both very qualified, very intelligent, and very dedicated to improving the School. I knew I had to paint the best picture of myself, based on what I’ve done in the community, and the goals I have going forward.”

This position will be a new one for Nathan, yet his desire to serve as President traces back almost four years. He explains, “When I joined Student Council in ninth grade is when I started focusing on being [Student Council] President. Seeing the strong influence that former [Student Council] Presidents had on the community had a big impact on me. I wanted to be like them. Therefore, I was a Student Council grade representative for two years. To me, that was a step towards the end goal, which at that point, was to be the President.” He reflects on what life has been like since the announcement of his appointment. “I’ve started to pay attention a little more to my actions, noticing that now there is more pressure on me to be the best person I can be, because I have all these eyes on me now. I’m trying to be the best role model I can for the underclassmen and show that even though I have this position, it doesn’t mean I’m really any different than the rest of the community.” He continues on a personal note, saying, “It’s a serious commitment. I’m going to have to think harder about my work habits. I don’t want to change what I enjoy just because I’m the President. I’m still going to be a three-season athlete, I’m still going to take the classes that I want to take, it’s just going to be a little more difficult to work around.”

Looking into the future, Nathan hopes to “take input from the wider community, rather than just Student Council, and try to use that to actually make the change.” He also hopes “to put a method in place to get input from the larger student body, rather than the sampling from Student Council, and applying that wider range of feedback to the decisions we as Student Council leaders make.” In terms of how he wishes to see the community change, Nathan explains, “I want to try to change the way we interact with each other to try to make it more empathetic and to be more open to hearing other students. We need to look past differences that we have and have conversations about that and to try to stay open and notice that we don’t all necessarily have the same beliefs, but

that doesn't mean we're not going to work well together. I'm hoping to foster that type of community feeling in the School." For those who may be apprehensive about the transition of leadership and new developments, Nathan assures, "I'm not trying to make any drastic changes, don't worry! My main goal is to take in more student input and to try to make more change based on that."

It is sometimes said that "leadership is a legacy." Nathan discusses his relationship with his soon-to-be-predecessor, President Amelia McDonnell '18: "Amelia and I have been pretty good friends all along. Having these past two years of experience working alongside Amelia, I've really gotten to know her as a great role model. I've gotten to witness the ways she runs the meetings, 'I've had a lot of conversations with her about ideas. This transition is going to be a change for both of us."

Though Nathan "deeply loves FCS," he admits there are times even he feels uncomfortable on campus. "One thing that I have been struggling with in this School is the fact that there have been multiple times where issues have come up in discussions, and I have had what I consider to be - although I don't know if it really is - an unpopular

belief on a specific issue. Maybe that's just in the given room, maybe that's just in the School, whatever. I've been afraid to share that because I've been worried that people would see me in a negative way. I'm hoping to have people be more open-minded and know that not everyone is going to have the same views throughout this community, and that's actually good! We have a diverse set of students, we have different opinions, we're looking at things from different lenses, and that's all valid. I hope people will be more open to hearing others' ideas and taking those into consideration. I want to tell everybody that you're not alone if you have an unpopular belief, and you should not be afraid to share the way you're feeling, even if you don't hear other people sharing it."

Concluding the interview with a positive bent, Nathan declares, "I'm really excited." The President-Elect is a self-proclaimed "hamburger-lover" who lives in Villanova and has a brother (Sam Levitties '17) who attends Colby College. Nathan encourages anybody and everybody to send him a message at nlevitties@friendscentral.org or to approach him around campus. "I am always available to talk," he promises.

Looking Back: A Senior's Reflection

Reflection

BY: RISHI SINGH '18



I haven't done the math, but I think it is safe to assume that I have spent more time throughout my Friends' Central experience in Shallcross Hall than any other building on campus. I don't find it to be a particularly special structure; it is not as regal as the Main Building, or home to as many helpful gadgets as the FCC; it does not have a Mary Lynne Jeschke who always has Hershey kisses on hand like the Language Building does, or as many thousands of books as the library. Still, between rehearsals, club meetings, meetings for worship, lunches, recesses, and art classes, Shallcross has secured a special place in my heart and become my very favorite building which parallels many aspects of my life at FCS. When I reflect on my time in high school, the memories that stand out to me are of ordinary moments that may not seem impactful, yet have unequivocally impacted me.

I remember the senseless laughter I have shared with friends in passing on our way to classes, stolen moments of quiet bliss beneath whichever tree in the oval offered the most shade during lunch, the chaotic world of nerves

and excitement that exists backstage before the start of a play, dramatic heart-to-hearts in my backyard with the girls who quickly became family, running through the Musée d'Orsay with newly-made friends on the French exchange, the late night facetime calls with my peers spent complaining about how much work we had left to do in an effort to procrastinate accomplishing said work.

I also think about the people who have had a profound effect on who I am. In my greatest moments of doubt in my academic abilities, I have had teachers who have supported and believed in me enough for both of us. Ms. K has been an exceptional grade dean, listening to us seniors, caring for us, and leading us to be better people by example. Finally, of course, there are my peers. I will never forget the people I have learned alongside, whom I have been so lucky to call friends, people who speak up for what they believe in and who are unafraid to challenge their own ignorance. I don't know if I will ever again come across a group of people with whom I can be myself so free, and ask questions so openly.

As I am sure is clear, I am trying very hard and very clumsily to say goodbye. As graduation looms, I find myself looking for distractions from the foreboding 'real world' and to conceal myself in the FCS bubble that I have spent so much time complaining about. Within or without, Friends' Central will always be a huge part of how I have grown up and the person I have become.

I know that it is easy to romanticize chapters of our lives as they come to a close, and I am in no way trying to speak on behalf of the experiences of anyone but myself. The bullet point version of my time in high school conveniently

excludes any stress or sadness or disappointment that I have felt, no matter how consumed by those emotions I was at one point. But time is a broken hourglass, my memories are grains of sand spread out, too vast to view collectively or objectively.

We are not a perfect institution, but my parting request, if it means anything, is that whoever is reading this will continue to contribute to our community and strive towards

the school that we have the potential to become. I am glad that Shallcross as we know it is leaving with my grade. Something better will take its place, as I hope each senior class to come is an improved version of its predecessor. Nevertheless, I'll always love that ordinary building for all of the laughter, love, friendship, and memories that it has given me. No goodbye can do it justice, and yet I can think of nothing else to say, so I will simply leave you with this: Thank you.

Preaching and Teaching: Ordained Teachers Share Their Experiences

Spotlight

BY: VICKY LIU '20



As students, we know our teachers best as educators. We are often oblivious to the other enthralling aspects of their lives which occupy the time during which they aren't in their offices grading our papers! An interesting phenomenon among our Upper School faculty is that there are a few teachers who are members of the clergy in their respective religions: Bill Darling, the Math Department Chair; John Gruber, science teacher; Al Vernacchio, English Department Chair and Sexuality Educator; and Jim Rosengarten, History Department Chair. While all of these gentlemen are spiritual leaders of some kind, their practices differ greatly from each other. As part of their duties, some guide themselves towards "divine illumination," while others reflect on the power of stillness to surroundings or witness couples enter the halls of marriage. One thing they all have in common, though, is a keen appreciation of life's beauty and a firm belief in and gratitude for both their work and faith.

Mr. Darling was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister in 1978 after his graduation from Princeton Seminary. He served two small parishes in Granville, a town in Northern New York, for three years. After that, he worked at a school in Connecticut for a year and served a Congregational parish as a part-time minister. In the mid '90s, however, Mr. Darling left the Presbyterian church and resigned his post to become a Quaker. He has been a Quaker ever since. He confesses that he was drawn to convert to Quakerism because of the unique style of worship it offers. "I know there's a divine presence that is helping me heal myself each day." The unique magnet of Quakerism, according to Mr. Darling, is that if you listen, God will speak to you. As George Fox said of Quakerism, "Christ came to teach his people himself." A priest or minister can't tell people what God wants, nor

does a priest or minister have a "holier" connection with the Lord than any other believer. Instead, in the Quaker religion, it is believed that each individual has his or her or their own connection to God.

While many would argue that there's no divinity in parabolas or two-column proofs, Mr. Darling explains that he finds ways to infuse his love of religion into his current profession. "Talking about [spirituality with students] has been a continuation of what I see as a minister. In many ways, I've continued my ministry in my years at the School." His background allows him to serve as a mentor and personally guide some of his students who are struggling. He summarizes, "Lots of our struggles are the spiritual struggles that are in each person." He then mentions how the Quaker ideology continues to affect the way he lives his daily life. "When I get distracted, I don't spend time [on my faith]. The connection gets weaker. When I spend the time, the connection gets strong. For Quakers, it's about getting rid of anything that distracts you." Mr. Darling believes his strength comes from the experience of his inner-Christ. He elaborates, "Spiritual presence is what gives me strength and grounding."

Another ordained Upper School faculty member is Mr. Gruber, a Zen Buddhist. In December 2014, he was named a Beginner Priest and now holds the title of Senior Priest, or a "Denkaï" in Zen. He talks about his practice: "Its center is about meditation. It helps us to be present and aware of things that happened in the inner and outer world, and to be mindful." He observes the overlaps between Zen Buddhism and Quakerism by mentioning that Quakerism and Zen both encourage people to keep their promises, to be honest, and to not deceive people. How-





ever, Zen has higher requirements on the maintaining of stillness. Mr. Gruber highlights, “When you’ve done this meditation a lot, you are not restricting moving. You are in a very soft posture like a rock and a mountain - perfectly present but very still, not sleeping.”

When asked about how religion influences him day-to-day, Mr. Gruber responds, “Every day when I wake up, there’s some work that I can do.” He believes that by being a Zen Buddhist, he gains a deep appreciation of the world. He continues, “We realize that life is fragile and time is finite. We most appreciate having conversations. How lucky we are to have the life we have.” Moreover, Mr. Gruber gains patience in the practices of inner peace. He expresses, “Things can be difficult in all of us in different times. [We should] not let difficulties throw us [but] persevere, be present, [and] not avoid or skip them.” He is also calm and faithful while encountering others’ difficulties. He shares, “It’s my practice to help relieve the suffering and navigate complicated things in people’s lives where we can. [We should all] be available for that.”

“I became [an officiant] in 2010, and I’m still doing it. I have married about 70 couples,” Mr. Vernacchio states about his side-career as an interfaith officiant working with an organization called Journeys Of The Heart. Mr. Vernacchio explains the title of the job as Interfaith Offici-

ant: “It’s not a traditionally ordained person but one who is certified to officiate at life-cycle events after special training. [Due to our being ‘interfaith’], we as officiants can do ceremonies regardless of the couple’s religion.” In addition to being an officiant at Journeys of the Heart, he is a client, as he used the agency when he got married.

Mr. Vernacchio reflects on his experience officiating weddings: “It’s really fun being part of a happy day with people.” In fact, Mr. Vernacchio has married many FCS alumni, and, English and Spanish Teacher Mr. Courtland Van Rooten! He shares that he is honored to be an interfaith officiant and he is convinced his work will give couples the opportunity to be their best selves and create a relationship that is going to make the world better. He declares, “The world is very troubled today. It can be hard to stay hopeful. Being able to serve as an officiant, hearing promises help me to be hopeful.” Besides, officiating helps him connect to his personal vows: “[The job helps me] remember the promise to my husband when I got married, and remember how special that is.” He believes a wedding can benefit all the people who attend: for those who are married, the wedding inspires them; for those who don’t married, they realize what is possible. Jim Rosengarten is also an interfaith officiant for Journeys of the Heart.

Another fact worth noting is that three-quarters of our ordained faculty are currently the department chairs of their respective academic departments and Mr. Gruber, the only one who isn’t currently a department chair, served as Science Department Chairman from 1996 to 2014! One student speculates, “Perhaps a higher power played a role in these teachers’ achievement of their high positions.” Or, just maybe, our teachers are multi-talented and thrive at what they do, whether it be chairing a science department or delivering a sermon.

Faith is like WiFi. It is invisible but it has the power to connect you to what you need. —unknown

Second-In-Command, Yet They’re First-Rate: Meet Our New Vice Presidents

Spotlight

BY: JULIAN BRENMAN ’20

On Monday, April 30th, three hard-working and well-qualified young women will officially assume the title of Vice President of the Friends’ Central Upper School Student Council. McKenna Blinman ’19, Anna Comstock ’19, and Kalila Jones ’19 will replace Matt Berger ’18, Morgan Crowley ’18, Carmella Saia ’18, and Alexandria Swinton ’18, as they leave their roles behind to pursue their senior projects. In their new positions, McKenna, Anna, and Kalila each will work closely with President-Elect Nathan Levitties ’19 to make the remainder of this school year, as well as most of the 2018-19 school year, a true success.

Prior to being selected to serve as Vice President, McKenna had initially hoped to helm Student Council as President. She shares how she has handled the new reality,

and explains how she reached this moment: “I wanted to be involved in student council since the beginning in a larger way. Nathan and I [sic] had talked about it, and we knew that it really would have been fine whoever got the presidency because we all work really well together. Our chemistry is still great.”

Kalila gives her perspective on her new role, as she too had originally aspired to be in the top job: “I knew that, even if I didn’t get to be the president, I at least had the opportunity through my platform to showcase myself to the community and to share my voice with the community. Those opportunities have made it all worth it.” She continues, “It’s an honor to work with these people - They’ve done all this work, they’ve been grade reps., etc.”

Anna, however has always strived to become the Vice President. She reveals, "I always knew I wanted to be the Vice President instead of President because even though I honor the President's role, I knew it wouldn't fit me. I'm more of a collaborator as opposed to an independent worker. I figured that as Vice President, I could really play that strength more than if I were in the head role. It's always how I've seen myself. I love that I got the role. I'm so excited to get things going!"

Unlike the President, whose duty is to oversee all operations relating to Student Council, each Vice President focuses on one specific aspect of operations. McKenna's primary responsibility will be event planning. She unveils her goals in the coming year: "One of my goals is to make events seem more fun. I think all of our events are amazing, if we can advertise them more professionally and make sure people know what opportunities are there for them and what will actually happen [at the events], they will come because they will know what's going on." She expounds, "I want to create a stronger sense of unity in the student body. By creating events that everyone wants to go to, we can create a space in the community where everyone is together, everyone is experiencing the same things and having the same fun... that will bring the community together more. There's a stigma against events that they're lame or not fun. I want to improve that." McKenna talks about her personal favorite Student Council event: "During our annual Coffee House, it's so good to be able to see all of the talents we have at school if people don't have time to do orchestra or chorus or other musical groups organized by the School. Whatever they want to showcase, we get to see it." McKenna pronounces that her first task in her new role will be to plan Screen on the Green, the upcoming Spring outdoor movie night.

The major components of Anna's role as Vice President will be planning, coordinating, and executing assemblies. She provides her ultimate vision in regard to improving assemblies: "What I've always dreamed about is an assembly where people can walk out and just be like, 'Wow! That really resonated with me.' That's my dream, that everyone can take something away from each assembly. To increase the number of powerful assemblies, maybe we'll start doing more interactive assemblies, where we take a topic and allow people to [reflect] about what's going on. Of course, we'll still have our amazing, fun, Minute to Win It assemblies that people are joyful about. I have a vision, though, of producing an assembly that people are going to remember all throughout high school. I'm not quite sure what that's going to be, yet. We still have time." Anna, who is a shameless "assembly adorer," states the following when asked what she doesn't like about assemblies: "I hate when they end!" Anna hopes to use her role as Vice President for Assembly Coordination to increase and improve our spirit as an institution. She notes, "I used to go to public school, so I have a sense of what school spirit was like there, and I agree with my fellow leaders that it could be improved here. One of the things I've been thinking about for a while as a way to boost school spirit is to create pep rally." Anna claims that a major improvement in school spirit will result in a more holistic, joyful experience for all students at Friends' Central.



Kalila will be the Vice President for Improvement of Student Life. She expresses her views about her new position: "I feel like my task is different; it's less concrete. I want to take a little bit of time, especially as this year is coming to an end, to evaluate where the School is and see how people receive the assemblies and events. I'm going to think of smaller-term ways to heal the community." She divulges her plans for her tenure: "I hope to make it so that community blocks aren't missed and that clubs aren't canceled. These little things have a big impact on how people see themselves in this community. "Another issue Jones says needs addressing is the dirty, hated "H-word" - homework. "We need to work on [reducing the amount of] homework on nights where there are School events," she asserts.

Our new Vice Presidents' talents are as numerous as the other facets of their lives. In addition to being a future Vice President, McKenna is an actress and participant in the renowned Ramen Appreciation Club. Anna, a member of the chorus, lends her time to the Service Committee. Kalila, who not only sings in the chorus, but also is a soprano in the a cappella group, the Spicetones, spends her spare time creating art. She has started a Fiber Arts Club at school and recently began selling her crochet creations, as well as other fun stuff, on her new website. All of our Vice Presidents are a part of Sister Circle and are sisters in real life! When asked about siblings, McKenna mentions Audrey, a current FCS eighth grader, Anna brings up her younger brother, Max, and her older sister, Olivia '17, and Kalila alludes to her younger brother, Kokayi '23. Kalila closes the interview best by exclaiming, "We all have titles, but at the end of the day, we're all working together as a team. With leadership, you need a team behind you. It's a challenge that I'm ready and eager for. We're going to take it one day at a time."

The **Focus** Guide to the Language of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

BY: GIA MATIKA '18

The world is a big place with people of many different identities, and while some may be less common than others, that doesn't make them any less valid or important. Labels can sometimes be restrictive or discouraging, but on the other side of the equation, they also allow people to give names to things that aren't easy to talk about, or to find people who feel the same so they know they're not alone. Consider this a nature guide of sorts, containing images of flags and definitions of some identities you may have run across or will in the future.

LGBTQIA+

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and more.

Queer

"Queer" was used as a derogatory term towards gay men in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some people still use it and see it as such, but as of the 1980's, the community has reclaimed it and now use it as a positive term to express someone who is not straight and/or cisgender.*

Gender Identity vs. Sexual Orientation

Gender and sexual orientation are NOT the same thing. Your gender identity is who you are, independent of anyone else or their opinions. Sexual orientation is who you love or desire, and reflects your relationship with another person, not just yourself.

Romantic Attraction vs. Sexual Attraction

Another word for attraction is desire. Sexual attraction is sexual desire, while romantic attraction (not as easy to quantify) is the desire to be romantic with someone. Romantic connection and intimate moments are what the person desires, not sex or physical closeness. Sexual attraction and romantic attraction sometimes match up, and sometimes don't. Someone could be bisexual, but homoromantic, meaning they feel sexual attraction to more than one gender but only desire to be romantically intimate with people of their same gender.



Heterosexual/Straight**
Attraction to other gender(s)



Gay
Attraction to the same gender



Lesbian
Attraction to the same gender



Bisexual
Attraction to people of the same gender and other genders



Pansexual
Attraction to all genders



Polysexual
Attraction to multiple genders



Asexual
No attraction to anyone.



Demisexual
Attraction after forming an emotional connection



Greysexual
Sometimes feels attraction, but not always



Aromantic
Someone who does not desire a romantic relationship



Demiromantic
Someone who desires a romantic relationship after an emotional connection has formed



Greyromantic
Sometimes desires a romantic relationship



Homoromantic
Desires a romantic relationship with people of the same gender



Biromantic
Desire for a romantic relationship with more than one gender



Panromantic
Desire for a romantic relationship with any gender

**Transgender**

Someone whose gender does not align with their biological sex

**Genderqueer**

Someone who is not cisgender.

**Nonbinary**

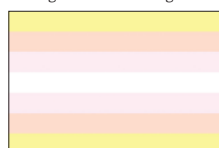
Someone who doesn't identify as male or female

**Agender**

Someone who doesn't identify as any gender

**Bigender**

Someone who identifies as more than one gender

**Pangender**

Someone who identifies as all genders

**Genderfluid**

Someone whose gender identity changes

**Demiboy**

Someone who identifies as partly male

**Demigirl**

Someone who identifies as partly female

**Intersex**

Someone whose biological sex doesn't fit the definition of male or female. They can be any gender or have any sexual/romantic orientation, but are often included in the community because they don't fit in with the gender binary.

The list I've compiled here is in no way complete. There are dozens of new sexual orientations and gender identity labels in the world, and while not all of them have names or flags, each and every one is important and valid. All these labels might be new to you, or seem extraneous, but ultimately they are just tools for us to express ourselves and to connect with others.

Pronouns are another really significant way to show respect to people you speak to or about, not just those who are genderqueer, but also people who are cisgender. People sometimes change their names, as well. Names are a significant piece of our identity, so while it might be tricky to relearn someone's name, it's important that you make an effort. They decided that this was the name they wanted, and it's nobody else's decision.

Everyone's self discovery is different; some people try out a different label every week, changing all through their lives. Some know right away and identify that way their entire lives. Some don't consider it until adulthood, and then realize they are actually something different. Some don't know until they try.

I think everyone should have the opportunity to explore this aspect of their lives. Try out different pronouns and see what it might be like. Society tries so hard to put everyone in two boxes, and it's unhealthy to try to fit into one of them when you might not belong there.

Here at Friends' Central, we have a pretty safe space for people to feel comfortable being who they are. We are lucky. Not everywhere are people as open-minded and respectful as they are here, and so it can be really hard to realize you might not fit in to the box that society says is correct, let alone tell others who you are. Hopefully, this guide will help in providing you with whatever language you need to express your identity truly and to acknowledge and respect the identities of others.

*Cisgender - Someone whose gender aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

**The heterosexual flag is actually just black and white stripes, but the one shown with the rainbow triangle symbolizes allyship.

Reflections On *The Mask You Live In*: What Does it Mean to "Be a Man"?

Reflection

BY: VICKY LIU '20

"He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it..."
—George Orwell

On March 2nd, 2018, all Friends' Central Upper School students and teachers gathered in the meeting room to watch *The Mask You Live In*, a film that explores the harmful effects of negative stereotypes about boys and men that are apparent in, and according to the movie, perpetuated by, American culture. After approximately two hours of viewing the movie, students were distributed into small reflection and discussion groups by gender and grade. In the discussion I attended, I heard a classmate praise, "While watching, there are so many things that I didn't realize. It's very eye-opening." Somebody else commented, "It makes me aware of how media affects our culture." An additional person observed, "As compared to other communities in America, FCS is good at [not

reinforcing] these [masculine stereotypes] although there are still struggles."

Starting at a young age, most males are taught to act in traditionally masculine ways by their parents, friends, elders, and the media. A classic example of a societal expectation of boys and men is the notion that they will neither cry nor express their vulnerable emotions. In addition, some boys are judged negatively if they wear pink. According to *The Mask You Live In*, boys and men are expected to wear a heavy "mask" everyday, a mask that hides their true emotions and identities, to meet people's expectations of what it means to be a macho man. Naim Saleem '19 shares his opinion on wearing metaphorical masks: "It's a natural occurrence. I feel that [traits that are not socially accepted] need to be hidden. I do think masks are necessary for guys to wear. [It's like] a hidden



secret. All guys know that we are wearing masks.” The movie claims that when guys carry masks to hide their vulnerable emotions, they feel secure. It goes on to assert that if boys and men don’t wear a mask, they are subject to questioning, teasing, and disapproval, which could lead to the end of a man’s macho reputation.

The film goes on to contend that, besides the intentional influence of masculine expectations from our friends and family, the media contributes tremendously to the propagation of negative and unrealistic expectations of men and boys. Standards of being a man are exaggerated by some movies and songs, which mislead boys to believe that only the boy or man with the best athletic abilities, highest economic successes, or most sexual activities represents the truest version of what it means to be a “strong” masculine figure. In order to shift social values to be more

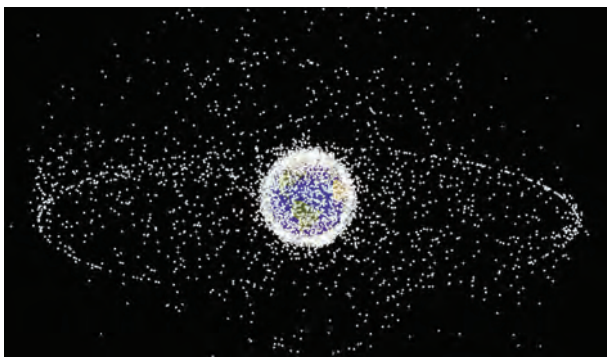
open-minded about what it can mean to be a “strong” man, the small group discussion in which I partook posed that we should increase our efforts in redefining the successes of both genders. As an extreme example, we could alter the way we view vulnerability and sensitivity. Instead of viewing these traits as a sign of weakness, we thought, “Why don’t we see them as a sign of strength?”

Although numbers cannot determine a fact, numbers can reflect a fact. The movie taught us that, “Boys in the U.S. are 30% more likely than girls to flunk or drop out of school. Compared to a girl the same age, a boy in late adolescence is seven times more likely to die by his own hand.” The movie suggests that negative stereotypes and unrealistic, exaggerated expectations of boys are the reasons for these jarring statistics.

In our School, there are two weekly clubs which discuss masculinity and femininity, Sister Circle for girls, and Brothers Square for boys. Noah Condiff ’19, one of Brothers Square’s leaders, shares, “We have a list of what is ‘hyper-masculinity’ and what is not. Also [we have] the good and bad for each column. For example, competing in sports is cool, but dominating conversation becomes toxic.” Referring to the movie *The Mask You Live In*, he mentions how boys are impacted by their athletic coaches, and how the role of a coach has almost grown into a fatherly role, in some situations. Noah elaborates, “The movie was great. It gives both questions and answers.”

Space Debris: The Importance of Not Littering in Space

BY: JOSH WEINSTEIN ’18



You may have heard about the Chinese Tiangong-1 space station that fell back to Earth on Sunday April 1st. According to *Space.com*, “the experimental space station was roughly the size of a school bus and weighed over nine tons.” The station was abandoned two years ago, and as a result did not have a controlled re-entry. Although the Tiangong-1 was the most recent significant human made spacecraft to fall to Earth, it was not the largest. In 2001, a Russian space station fell to Earth, weighing 140 tons, it was guided to burn up over the Pacific ocean. These large space stations are not the only debris that falls to Earth from space, in fact, human made space debris enters Earth’s atmosphere daily. While the vast majority of these

falling debris are burned up in Earth’s atmosphere, larger items can make it to the surface. Over 500,000 pieces of human made debris are tracked as they orbit the Earth. According to NASA, “over 20,000 of these pieces of debris are larger than the size of a softball.” While that might not sound like a threat, these items are traveling in their orbit at about 17,500 miles per hour and can pose a risk to satellites and spacecraft. NASA reported that many space shuttle windows were “damaged by tiny flecks of paint that were hurtling around the Earth at 17,500 mph.” They also stated that shuttles were eventually flown tail-first to take impacts from debris mostly on the engines and cargo bays, as these were not used in orbit or during descent.

In 1978, a scientist at NASA named Donald Kessler proposed the idea of the Kessler syndrome. *Space Safety Magazine* describes The Kessler syndrome as a “self-sustaining cascading collision of space debris in LEO [Low Earth Orbit].” In other words, it is a situation where the amount of human made space debris in orbit around the Earth becomes great enough that the objects will continue to collide over and over. These impacts would each generate more and more debris until it would become impossible to have satellites in Low Earth Orbit for hundreds of years. Every space mission, including satellite launches, can lead to an increase in space debris.

Tech

The amount of debris orbiting Earth right now could be enough to cause the Kessler syndrome, which is why it is important to limit the amount of debris being left in space. It would only take one large enough collision to cause the Kessler syndrome. The collision would release a significant amount of more debris, that would collide with each other or other debris, releasing more debris which would collide and so on. It could eventually get to the point that Low Earth Orbit, the area where the ISS orbits, would become impassable for generations.

This is why the work being done by private companies such as Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Elon Musk's SpaceX is so important. Both companies are developing rockets that can safely return to Earth and be reused. Often, rocket stages are left in Earth's orbit, but SpaceX has been able to get these stages to safely return to Earth. This greatly limits the amount of debris being left in space. SpaceX's latest high profile launch was of the Falcon Heavy,

which brought "Starman" in a Tesla Roadster into space. According to experts, "the Tesla will likely collide with an asteroid contributing to the problem of space debris." However, more consideration was put into the design of the rocket. The three rocket boosters all returned to Earth, with two of them landing successfully simultaneously side-by-side. The reusability of rockets not only limits the amount of debris being left in space, but it also saves huge amounts of money.

It is difficult to solve the problem of space debris, since it will continue to grow through collisions of existing debris, whether or not humans launch more spacecraft. But steps are being taken by NASA and private companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin to limit the amount the debris being left in space. My sources for this article were nasa.gov, space.com, wikipedia.org, spacesafetymagazine.com, and zdnet.com.

Review of *Reign of the Fallen*

BY: SYDNEY KAPLAN '18

***Reign of the Fallen*:** by Sarah Glenn Marsh
Genre: Fiction, Romance, Young Adult Fiction, Fantasy Fiction, Paranormal Fiction, LGBTQIA+ Fiction

Released in January 2018, *Reign of the Fallen* centers around the life of Odessa, a teenager in the fictional land of Karthia. Odessa is a necromancer, her job is to raise people from the dead. Along with her fellow necromancers, she routinely brings back Karthia's dead royalty. This book is great in quite a few ways. It has a strong female protagonist, LGBTQIA+ relationships, and subplots

with addiction and toxicity. The cast of characters and the world in which they live is fascinating and unique. Although more character development, description of the setting, and background (in all areas) would be nice, there is enough happening in this book to keep you invested. While Odessa makes many mistakes throughout her journey, we get to see her learn and grow, and I was rooting for her the whole way. This book is intense, creative, distinct, and memorable, and I loved reading it. And I *have* heard rumors of a sequel...? [I cannot confirm, but there have been whispers...].

Review



Distinguished Visiting Scientist

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FOCUS

Check out *Focus* by visiting fcsquakefeed.com, or stop by Main 23 during Community block on Tuesdays.