

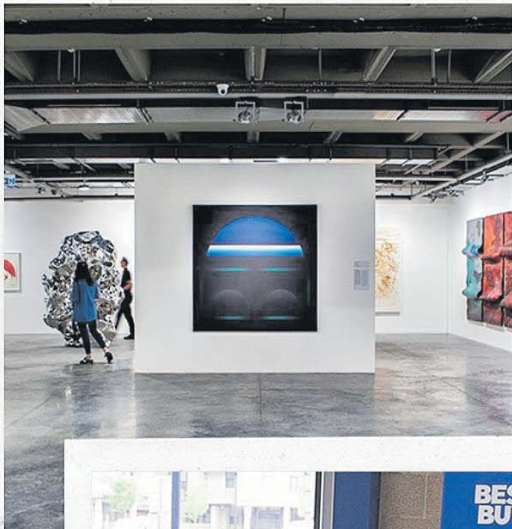
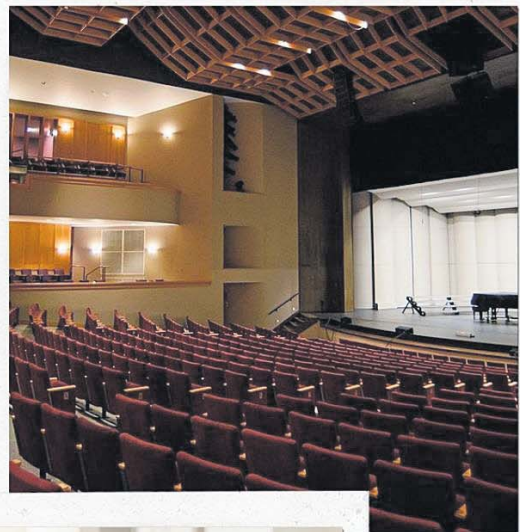
TEENTIMES

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!



October 2021 VOL. 11 NO. 4

The
St. Maarten
We Would
like To See
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LU hosts successful Upcycle Project Fair

Leaning Unlimited (LU) Preparatory School held a very successful Upcycle Project Fair on Friday last, in which the creativity and forethought of its middle school and grade 8 students were on full display.

Upcycling involves reusing an item in such a way that its value is increased. It's the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, and useless or unwanted products into new materials or products of better quality, or even for better environmental value. The Upcycling Fair is planned to encourage students and the community to find ways to reduce the amount of garbage thrown into landfills.

The main goal of this project is to inspire students to "use what you've got", as well as move away from the constant buying new things and spending money. "We need to make full use of the resources we already have, rather than using them once and discarding them," middle school coordinator Preeti Notani said. Notani is also LU's Head of Science.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only Grade 8 participated this year. Grades 6 and 7 received the opportunity to visit the event accompanied by their teachers. Parents did not attend the fair, but pictures can be viewed on the following

link: <https://lupscience.weebly.com/grade-8-physical-science.html>

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents for their constant support. Any further questions regarding upcycling projects, please do not hesitate to email me at pnotani@luschool.com," Notani said.

She also explained that this year's Upcycle Fair was recorded by Culture Department Head Clara Reyes and her team, and will become part of the Constitution Day Presentation. "One of the highlights of the presentation to them was that LU and Mrs. Notani strongly believe that we can promote our nation and build it strongly if every citizen believes in the 3 R's: Reforestation, Recycling and Reuse," Notani said.

The winners

1st prize: Plastic bag baskets, coasters, and plant pallets

Xenia Ahlup
Lilou Mouyal

Sanya Jandial

2nd prize: Guitar shelf from recycled guitar, table made from old ladder and license plate

Noor Yousef
Nathan Wijesiriwardana
Martin Seeman
Ipek Uysal

3rd prize: Jeans upcycling
Luna Miceli
Savannah Ortega

3rd prize: Bird feeder and fly trapper from plastic

Justin Zhuo
Kavish Punjabi
Lucien Altier
Guo Jun He

Special mention: Award for best participation

Michel Jaron
Gaston Gautrot
Anne Kingma
Seybian Ortega



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is a publication of

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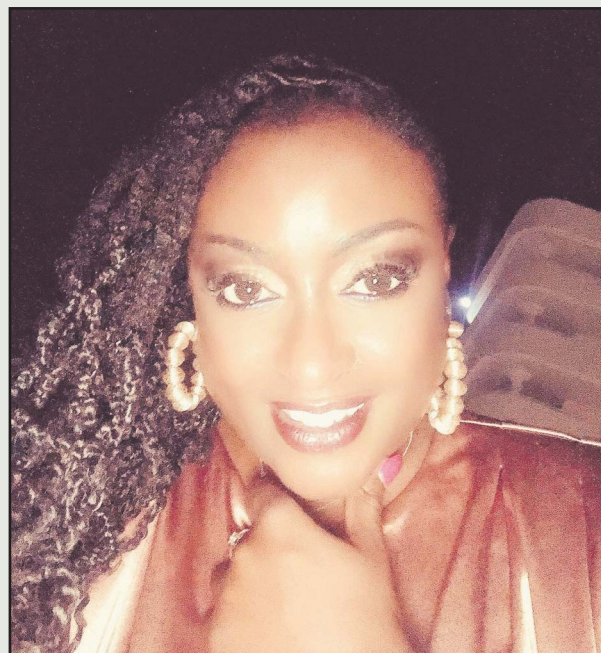
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Get to know CBA'S new director

By Mary-Jean Acevedo



Charlotte Brookson Academy (CBA) has a new principal – Tatiana Arrindell. Her service to her country and community is well known. However, taking on this new title is a different kind of challenge and a new chapter in her life, so we wanted to hear from Ms. Arrindell about this new move at CBA.

1. What encouraged you to pursue a career in the education field?

I never dreamt I would have ever pursued a career in education, although I have always been drawn to working with the youth. Even when I was working while studying in Holland, the employment agency where I worked as a consultant was uniquely stationed in a school. Most of our clients were mainly students looking for side jobs while they were going to school full time.

My love for Charlotte

Brookson Academy of the Performance Arts started when I was looking for a high school for my eldest daughter to attend. She was only in 5th grade, but I had already attended their open house and info sessions. I was convinced this was the perfect institution of learning for my daughter, Shakainah Pompier-Arrindell (Teen Queen 2017-2019). I fell in love with their method of learning using the combination of academics and performing arts.

After Shakainah was enrolled, I quickly got involved on the PTA Board, first as a board member then as vice president. While serving on the PTA Board for some years, I was approached by the founder of CBA, Ms. Augusty, to become a member of the Charlotte Brookson Academy of the Performance Arts school board, which I was honoured to accept – that is when I became vice president of the

school board.

After serving some five years as VP on the school board, my passion and love for CBA only grew deeper and I kept feeling unsettled, like there was more I should be doing to bring CBA to the next level. I prayed about it and I told my Heavenly Father that if it was His will that He would open the door. After the last director resigned, the board discussed my interest in the position as interim director while we looked for a permanent director. After six months of hard work as interim director, the board then offered me the position of director.

I say all that to say this: sometimes we pursue our studies in an area, but our love and passion can take us in a totally different direction; and that may be where you find your most fulfilment. Being the director is not easy, but when you love what you do, it will never feel like work. Love brought me to CBA and passion brought me to the educational sector.

2. Did you ever think that you would be a principal?

Never in my wildest dream would I have ever thought or imagined that I would be a principal today, but I can honestly say that it's the best job I've had to date. From PTA mom of three (Geanah, Omari and Shakainah) to director – who says hard work and living a life of service doesn't pay off?

3. What is the most rewarding experience thus far in your career?

Wow, there have been so many already! I would just have to kinda bundle them

all together and say that the way I have been accepted by the students and teachers has been the most rewarding ever. I could never choose just one, like, for instance, students coming to my office to check up on me and asking if I've eaten; or while I was sick, teachers bringing homemade remedies.

I've seen students that were too scared to perform, blow away their fellow students with their talents and watch them cheer that student on like it was Usher on stage. Students passing their exams and thanking me for believing in them when they didn't believe in themselves. My entire experience has been rewarding thus far. I love my CBA family!

4. What are your hopes for the youth of tomorrow?

My hope for the youth of tomorrow is that they will know their worth and find their purpose.

So many of our youth today are struggling with depression and other emotional issues, because they don't see the light that each of them brings to the world or even a room. If only they could see themselves through my eyes, they would see how beautiful they are and with endless potential. Know your worth and if anyone tells you differently, disregard because they're definitely not talking to you!

5. What advice would you give to students who want to pursue a career in this field?

You've got to have a passion for it. Sure you can obtain any type of degree in education, but if your heart is not fully engaged in making

a difference in each and every life that is enrolled in your school or class, then please choose a different profession.

Teaching is more than just about teaching a subject. You are dealing with young human lives that will need you to be very flexible at times. Sometimes as a teacher or director, you will need to be a nurse, a counsellor, a disciplinarian or just a listening ear.

A career in this field takes a special kind of love and dedication. I would like to take this time to say special thank you to my kindergarten teacher – Teacher Clara Nicolas-Curiel. We still have contact after 37 years and I can call on her if I ever need a shoulder or a listening ear.

6. What are your aspirations for this school year and beyond?

I have two main short-term aspirations for CBA: (1) to make CBA the number 1 school of the performance arts on St. Maarten and in the region; (2) to finally get us our own building – a place we can call home!

Charlotte Brookson Academy of the Performance Arts will once again live up to its name and become the beacon where performance arts and academics will go hand in hand. I would like to leave you with one of my favourite quotes by Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."



Featuring

The St. Maarten we would like to see

SXM – ATTRACTIONS GALORE

By Yuleissy Sanchez

St. Maarten is a small island that caters to tourism. We are mostly known for our outstanding event called Carnival and our lovely beaches; but what else does this island offer other than a festival and sand?

Well, this island has a variety of restaurants, gift shops, a theatre, zip line and provides an introductory tour around the island for new comers. As I sit here listing different attractions and activities, I'm beginning to realize that St. Maarten doesn't have many upbeat or happening places. Regardless of our size, it would be nice if we could enjoy places like a water park that would not only attract locals, but also tourists.

Waterparks appeal to families who want quality recreation time in an extremely safe environment. After all, waterparks are the safest place to have fun in the water compared to oceans, rivers, lakes and even swimming pools. Thus, parents would also feel more confident about taking their kids to a waterpark. We should invest in other recreational places like other theme parks, and widen our options for teenage hangout spots to allow them to be comfortable socializing or even completing homework there.

We mentioned theme- and water-parks, but why not add a roller-skating rink around here. You may relate to me when I say that this will be an easy and fun way to create memories, learn a new skill and get some exercise in! In today's generation, we tend to mostly be stuck to our phones, and most of us don't get as much physical activity as we should. Hence how roller-skating is a perfect way to change that.

It's also a fun way to socialize with friends and family, or make new friends who share your interest in skating. Invite your friends to join you at a skating event, plan a skating party for your special occasions, or plan a group event for your church youth, kickball team, or fellow PTA members. Think about how these exciting attractions will draw in new visitors regularly, urge you to spend time with your friends and family and add a new thrilling feel to our island.

SXM – FOR ALL TO ENJOY

By Cecilly Nicholas

I would love for St. Maarten to develop into a place that all ages can enjoy. Not only for the younger generation, but the older generation as well. I am hoping in the upcoming years there will be a new state of the arts theatre that can be utilized by young locals in order to showcase their hidden talents.

Hopefully, there will be new enhancements in the Philipsburg area that would make people actually want to come to St. Maarten and enjoy their duty free shopping. I would also like St. Maarten to become a place where many would want to return to, after pursuing their studies overseas. I'm hoping St. Maarten becomes a place where jobs are made available and living here would be more up to standard than how it is now.

There are many things to be done, but much assistance is needed by our generation itself. I do believe we have what it takes to make St. Maarten a place to be enjoyed by all. St. Maarten is formally known as the melting pot of the Caribbean because there are many different nationalities occupying the island.

I would also love for our history to be preserved in a way that it will never be forgotten. Currently, not much is being done to preserve the history of St. Maarten, thus, I do believe in the upcoming years, we should have a proper history museum that showcases all the history of St. Maarten. Hopefully, in the years to come, St. Maarten can truly develop into a place that we are happy to call home.



THE REAL O' SWEET ST. MARTIN'S LAND

By Rohan Goswami

There is no doubt that St. Maarten is a paradise; but like any other place, it has its flaws. In my opinion, the typical "Caribbean" mind-set on certain things needs to change. Before bringing about changes in the island's physical infrastructure, I believe we should require change in the very base of society – our mind-set; in particular, the mind-set of the youth, given that they will become the future of the nation.

Beginning with social issues and controversy, I would like to make the controversial statement that St. Martiners have a mode of thinking that can be seen as ages old. Discrimination, bullying, assault, and straight-up unnecessary politics are brought up, due to this very primitive form of thinking. One such example can be seen as the teens tend to have a very closeminded view of LGBTQ+ rights, sexual health, as well as the effects of teenage drug abuse.

When I come back, I would like to

see drastic improvement in these things. In order for such a thing to happen, it is crucial that we look at the education and government systems. I believe more can be done to educate students about the above topics and in turn mitigate the effects of issues stemming from them.

Second, I would like to see a change in the way people perceive the island itself. Locals and people from other Caribbean islands tend to have an idea that once they achieve their diploma, they want to go and give their services

to a country that is already overflowing with those very services. Now there is nothing wrong with preference, but it just seems to make more sense to come back to your rock, where you started, and offer your services back to your island, making it as good or even better than the "first world" country that you plan to live in.

Note that this article is in no way meant for perfection, but instead suggests a better chance at excellence and for us to become the real Sweet St. Martin's Land.

CHANGING TIMES

By Evelyne Ilceus

This creative piece is written about how I imagine the future to be for teens. It's a short story written specifically from the perspective of a troubled teen, to highlight some of the resources that troubled teens should be able to access, and alternative ways of "disciplining" children who are acting out.

Changing Times

Bzzzzzzzz...Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

"Wake up, Sam. You're going to miss the bus," says Sam's sister.

"What time is it?"

"It's eight and school starts in an hour, get up!"

"Okay fine." Sam rolls out of bed and starts getting ready for school.

"It's 9:00," her sister yells!

"I'm almost done," Sam shouts back! After a few more minutes, Sam is finally ready and heads downstairs for breakfast.

"Where are your books?"

"We have lockers now, remember?" Sam replies jokingly while grabbing her breakfast and rushing towards the bus stop. As Sam enters the school, she immediately notices a group of students across the room pointing towards her and talking in whispers.

"What's going on here, let me in the secret too," Sam sturdily says.

"We're just talking about the little situation that happened with you at home," answers one of the girls.

"What do you guys know about my home life?" Sam retorts with tension in her voice.

"Just about everything, thanks to the scene your mom and step dad created in front of the school this..."

Sam doesn't wait for her to finish her sentence before she punches her square in the face. Principal Tom rushes towards and scene and separates the girls before the situation gets worse.

"Sam, Clarise, follow me to the office now," the principal commands the girls angrily.

The girls follow the principal to the office and take a seat in his bright red cushioned chairs.

"Sam, Clarise, why were you guys fighting?" Principal Tom asks.

"Lately, my mom and stepdad have been fighting a lot and I've been getting beatings by my step dad since Saturday. I found out that Clarise was gossiping about my home situation and lost control of my emotions," Sam explains.

"Clarise, is everything Sam said true?" Principal Tom questions.

"Yes, sir," Clarise quietly answers.

"Why are you behaving like this?" Principal Tom questions again.

"Because, it's the only way that I know to cope with what I'm going through."

"I will sign both of you guys up to attend weekly group therapy sessions at the Teens Talk Spot in Simpson Bay."

"So, we're not getting detention?" both girls ask confusingly.

"Yes, girls; based on what you guys have shared with me, it is clear that these sessions will benefit you guys more than punishment."

"Now go and join your first-period classes; remember you finish 2:30 every day this year."



IDEAL TEENAGE LIFE IN SXM

By Henny Ramchandani

What is my ideal teenage life in Sint Maarten? My ideal teenage life in Sint Maarten consists of going to theme parks full of roller coasters, having different types of fairs to choose from, going to a huge mall with my friends and having more exciting things to do, rather than going to the same places like town and Simpson Bay.

This is my ideal teenage life on Sint Maarten, because it's so exciting to do these types of things and be able to have the opportunity to do so. Other places around the world offer these things and I envy them. There are better stores to shop at; better variety, such as going to concerts, when it comes to things to do with friends. Many teenagers want to experience these things before they grow older because, again, this is an ideal age to live life.

One main reason many of us teenagers are ready to leave Sint Maarten so soon is because other places around the world offer more. I want Sint Maarten to be a place where I don't always feel bored, where the thought of leaving here seems exciting. In other words, I want Sint Maarten to offer more and be a place everyone wants to stay in. Sint Maarten is already a great place, we have beautiful beaches and the island is overall a really nice place. Sint Maarten just lacks different fun things teenagers would love to do. I want to see different theme parks, experience more events, go to more restaurants, and generally have more fun things to do, because that is what makes up a teenager's ideal life – having fun.



"2:30?" Sam asks in a surprised tone.

"Yes. We can only have a maximum of five hours of instructions due to the implementation of the instruction law policy."

If you read between the lines of this short piece, you will understand what I would like to see in a future St. Maarten.

The St. Maarten we would like to see

SMALL IN SIZE, STRONG IN HOPE

By Diya Sachdev

As I was stepping out of the airport, nostalgia struck me. The fresh, tropical breeze hit my face. Some things never do change, but some things do, and that, too, for the better. The hill's vegetation looks so bright as it gleams in the sun. Irma and the COVID-19 pandemic, our biggest crises to date, seem to have left no trace of their impact on the island.

Tourists have returned to the island, bringing back our economy to where it once was. Billboards advertise newly built resorts whose services would make you feel like royalty. Newly built attractions, such as water parks and escape rooms, catch my eye. The youth must now be in such a lucky place; they have every child's dream right outside their doorstep.

As if this wasn't heart-warming enough, flyers announcing match days for numerous sports engulf bulletin boards and walls. Gyms and sports academies tower over you. They are fully equipped with the best of supplies and coaches who train every child as if they were future Olympic stars. Every kid is now given an opportunity to take on a sport that piques their interest, hopefully giving them an escape from all their academic workload.

There are now even more service and creative clubs favouring the youth, the future of our island, giving them the opportunity to express and show the world that this is what St. Maarten can do. Our size may be small, but our hope is strong!



MY DREAM ISLAND

St. Maarten, the friendly island – well, at least that's what they call it – a lovely island with two sides and two cultures that are always able to unite as one; an island where immigrants are shunned, particularly those who are less privileged; even when there is no change, an island that praises the system's members. Is this a place we adore? Yes, at all times and in all circumstances.

My fantasy St. Maarten is an island that offers regional, local and worldwide opportunities (for many young people, CSEC is their final destination); an island that inspires future optimism; an island that is willing to put in the effort to make the future a better place; an island that will rectify the mistakes of its parliamentarians. When seated in Parliament Meetings, representatives who respect one another and use proper grammar.

An island where the cost of living is equal to the amount of money earned by a single person – on the island, there is a lot of poverty. Why don't we have a shelter for the homeless? An island where the law is the law; and it is enforced whether they are family or strangers; an island where the rich and poor are not separated; an island where the government helps the less fortunate.

An island where people can turn to one of their neighbours in times of need; a government that doesn't fall over so often; a government whose promises are as evident as daylight; a better government that isn't selfish but cares about the well-being of its citizens; a government that proudly accepts its roles and responsibilities. My fantasy of St. Maarten is an island that respects the people and treats them fairly; an island that has a better education system for those who aren't academically qualified; a better education system for those who do not speak English; an island that aims for betterment.

A system that does not help young people is failing the next generation. Why don't we offer assistance to the youths? My fantasy can go on and on, but I will stop it here. Whoever is reading, please reach out to a youth member to help support them. Change is required. It is a need.

MY IDEAL DAY ON ST. MAARTEN

By Diya Rajpal

My ideal day is simple, yet well scheduled. I'd be up just before the crack of dawn and head to the community gym. I would then follow a mildly strenuous work-out and get back home just in time to watch the sunrise. At this time, I'd make a mental note of today's tasks while feeling refreshed and appreciative to see another day.

After a well-balanced breakfast, I would then ride my bike to school on the narrow bicycle path. The warm breeze flying through my hair as I ride, makes it the perfect mode of transportation. This ideal day would abide by a new school system, allowing students to do school work only in school.

I'd attend all my classes and then go to the food court for lunch. There is a long menu with many options, but I'd settle for a hamburger and orange juice while all my friends would get their own tray filled with delicious food. We would sit and pass the time chitchatting about the main highlights of our day.

At the end of the school day, my friends and I would head to one of the popular pubs to spend the rest of the evening, where we would socialize with other peers, play games at the arcade, or talk to counsellors if needed. If we don't spend the day there, we would play soccer or swim at the sports centre, occasionally trying a new sport.

We would end the day watching a movie at the cinema where we would be able to choose from a large variety of popcorn flavours: caramel, cheesy, buttery, etc. When I arrive home at the end of the day, I'd take a warm shower and brush my teeth followed by a calming hour of reading my current novel.

Ending my perfect day with soothing music playing in my headphones, I'd close my eyes and drift into a deep slumber, thinking it was all just a dream.





IDEAL CHANGE OF MIND-SET

By Antonet Espinosa

“Enjoy yourself, these are your best years” are words we teenagers have all heard from time to time coming from parents, grandparents, teachers, family and friends. But what is so great about these years, is something that I often ask myself. I am already exhausted now, and life often feels like a routine; but it gets worse? What others consider the “best” years of their life as a teenager are often overrated, as our struggles add a sense of intensity to our lifestyle.

When I think about ideal, I think about perfect. This is indeed something that requires a lot of changes as a teenager’s life is complicated when society and family have implemented so many standards to keep up with. We need to have perfect grades, be positively involved in the community, and keep up with domestic responsibilities. The ideal life as a teenager varies from person to person as we all have different descriptions and goals.

In St. Maarten, the ideal life of a teenager should include ample time to pursue what we really want and not to follow the choices that were unanimously made for us. I believe that every day should involve “me time” and not just running from school, to homework, to our extracurricular activities, among other responsibilities. The pressure of society would not exist and we’d all be able to fit in easily.

I would love to be able to go out at different times without worrying about an overdue assignment and be able to attend the beach picnic and barbecue outing with friends at any time. It would be great if teenagers would be allowed more independence and not have to rely so much on our parents. It would be desirable to be able to drive ourselves around and not have to constantly wait on our parents’ availability, as they have many other priorities already.

However, I believe that living on the island already gives us a sense of advantage in comparison to other countries. Though we have our limitations and our lives already seem overwhelming, we do have a lot to be grateful for. We live in a community that is resourceful and we look out for each other. In Sint Maarten, it does undoubtedly take a village to raise us, as we do get tons of support. It is important for us to change our mind-set and appreciate the opportunities we have to grow; we also have the privilege to attend school while participating in some extracurricular activities.

At the moment, these factors are considered chores as we all struggle and push ourselves to attend and do our very best as is expected of us. A life without responsibilities and with the freedom to live carefree would be ideal. It only takes a change in mind-set to realize that perfection is impossible. As teens, we have a lot to be grateful for and with some slight adjustments, we’ll be living a teenage dream.



SXM AT ITS BEST

By Lavisha Dadlani

Change can be a very touchy subject for some. People who are too comfortable with their lifestyle may find the slightest new editions difficult to incorporate and appreciate. Teenagers nowadays are constantly faced with new changes and for the most part have taken them in stride, even though they have become numb to the idea of them. When asked to picture our ideal island, my imagination runs wild with the endless possibilities our island has potential to cater to.

Having influences from countries like America, as well as some plans derived from the fictional world of television and film, makes me excited to see what the future may entail for us. Landing in a fully operational, modernized airport is one of the most practical yet desirable editions. Having an airport to be proud of on a popular tourist destination is a definite must have. Equipped with the latest technology and cosy lounging areas will make for a smooth boarding and disembarking experience for everyone to enjoy. Being welcomed with clean roads and pollution-free streets will add an extra oomph to the wow factor of Sint Maarten.



Driving on what seems like familiar streets, but now lined with houses of a similar design, will create a unifying community feeling. Tall commercial buildings have been erected, adding to the business aura of the town; while glass accented buildings bring the modern touch to our tropical home. The streets continue to be bustling with tourists, but this time with a significant number of locals mixed in. Teenagers are seen socializing at a study lounge while others make their way to casual hangout spots and unwind for the day.

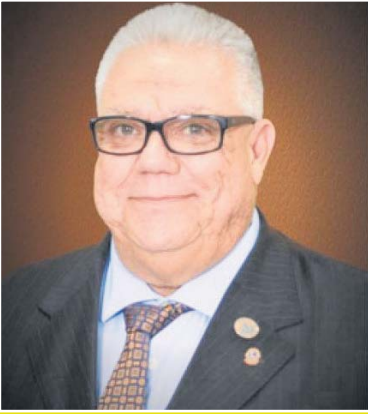
Your car comes to a halt right outside the island’s most popular place – the mall. Filled with brands from all around the globe, this once coveted plaza is finally being appreciated by everyone. A pattern of bright green recycle bins have been noticed throughout the island accompanied by signs indicating the penalty fine for possessing plastic-ware or bags. All these small additions imply that Sint Maarten is on an eco-friendly path.

We all have our own unique visions of what our friendly island will look like one day. In the eyes of a teenager, my ideal Sint Maarten would encompass new businesses and architecture to highlight a trendy yet environment-conscious lifestyle. We should make use of the available technology as well as create leisure venues for every age to enjoy. Keeping in mind that this is just a mere creation of my imagination, we should still work towards these advancements as I believe that Sint Maarten must be at its best for the people to be at their best!

Future

MP Buncamper and his cannabis tolerance policy

By Haila Forde



The legalization of cannabis is no longer a mere whisper; it is a hot topic in many conversations and discussions amongst youths, parents, politicians and advocates. It is legalized in many US territories as well as a few Caribbean countries. Member of Parliament (MP) Claudius A. Buncamper is the only local politician thus far that has not been scared to publicly voice his preference for eventual legalization and has come up with a tolerance initiative for cannabis.

If young people were to have a say, eight out of 10 are for the legalization of cannabis. Youth are not out of touch as many may think, they are aware of the benefits to the economy and they are aware that eventual legalization will be underpinned in law which must be adhered to. But young people hold strong opinions about the subject that almost always leans towards supporting full legalization (see related story).

MP Buncamper was approached by Teen Times for some insight into his initiative:

Can you give us a brief summary of this initiative and the thought process behind it?

Cannabis and hemp are two huge markets that can bring in a sustainable amount of revenue for the country through taxation, and will create a whole new line of business in the country for local businesses. The second aspect of this is that our jails are filled with youngsters who were caught with weed. They received a police record, which is a burden for a job,

as it kept them from completing their education as they were put out of school.

Who/What inspired this initiative?

In speaking to my kids and some other entities that have been trying to get this done, I decided to approach it from the benches of parliament through the minister. I started with the tolerance policy for the personal usage and growth of cannabis as it is in the Netherlands. Eventually, I hope to move on to full legalization like in other countries in the world.

What is the purpose and what do you hope to achieve?

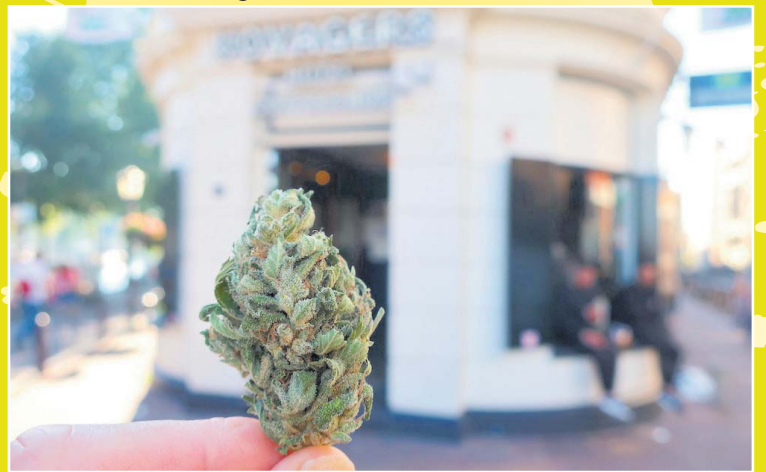
The purpose is two-fold: keep youngsters out of jail and in school; second, create a new pillar for the economy of St. Maarten. What is also very important is that we accept the facts that cannabis is widely used on the island for recreational purposes as well as for medicinal and meditation purposes.

Has the initiative been approved by Parliament? If so, what date will it be announced?

No. Parliament didn't approve the tolerance policy as this is something that must be done by the Attorney General upon the request of the Minister of Justice. Presently, there's a work group in place headed by the Ministry of Justice and VSA in particular. They are dealing with the various aspects of the tolerance policy. The timeframe for this to be done isn't clear, but I must say that the Minister of Justice has shown her support for the request.

What measures will be put in place to prevent minors from accessing the drug?

That is something that will be regulated in the tolerance policy. An age must be set just like we presently have for drinking; 18 years to buy and drink. It must be clear that the distribution of cannabis will also need to be looked at just like in the Netherlands, for example, the coffee shops. Otherwise, the whole tolerance policy will have some serious issues for the sale of



the cannabis, as that too must be part and parcel of the deal. At the moment, we haven't reached the part of legalizing the usage and sale of the drug. The tolerance policy will be created to cover this.

Will a certain amount be legalized? If so, how much?

The tolerance policy doesn't mean that it has become a legal substance and thus dealing in the matter is illegal. A maximum of five grams or five plants at home is what's tolerated presently in the Netherlands and that's what we are also proposing to be the norm here.

What measures would be put in place if an individual is caught with an amount that surpasses the legalized amount?

They will be prosecuted for trafficking in narcotics.

How will this drug be given out? Will it be prescribed to persons that only need it for medical purposes?

The medicinal aspect can be done by prescription as is presently happening. Sales of the cannabis will be through the coffee shops, which must be licensed. These will be addressed in the tolerance policy and/or the hemp law, which will be copied from the Aruba and/or Curaçao module.

How do you plan to curb the abuse of this drug in the community?

Awareness is the most practical way to curb abuse, but please note

that the abuse presently is already there among youngsters when it comes to alcohol and substance abuse. Proper awareness and, if needed, education campaigns will be critical. Also, the health aspect will be looked at and an overall evaluation of what's best.

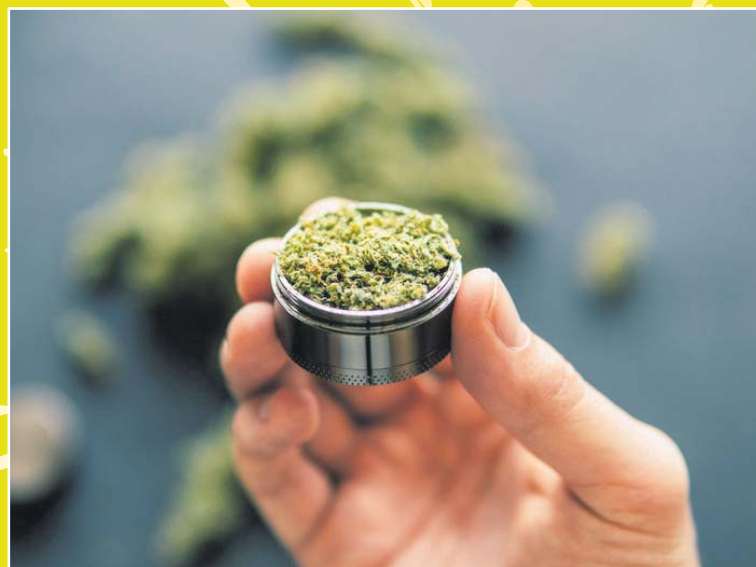
What measures should schools take for students who will misuse and abuse it?

The rules of the schools remain intact. If someone is caught using cannabis in school, he/she will be suspended. If it occurs again, the student will be expelled or prosecuted, as the illegal usage of cannabis in prohibited locations which is punishable by law.

Will discussions be held with the medical, police, education departments, to identify risks and side effects?

There's a taskforce in place. It has all of the above-mentioned entities in place, and more, to review the various health-, education-, justice-risks, as well as angles that this tolerance policy can bring with it. A proper structure needs to be put in place that's workable for all under the new norms of our society. It's being used widely on the island, and we shouldn't try to deny it by not approving a controllable tolerance policy for the country.

Let us know your thoughts on this topic through our Instagram page @teentimes



DOES LEGALIZING WEED HURT KIDS?

The evidence so far leans towards a “no”.

The biggest outcry you hear on St. Maarten when the legalization of weed comes up is: “Oh my God – the children!” But really and truly, such emotional outbursts and the “more kids will use weed” arguments are not based in fact. In fact, studies have shown the opposite – that teens tend to use weed less when it is legalized.

MP Claudius Buncamper has tabled a tolerance initiative to allow certain amounts of weed in personal possession for personal use. That would be a great start on the road to full legalization and we applaud this move. The MP can rest assured that young people and young adults will support this initiative loudly.

Looking in the Caribbean, Bermuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis and the U.S. Virgin Islands have all either approved or enacted legislation to decriminalize the use of small amounts of marijuana.

In the US, 17 states have now legalized recreational marijuana, and more are on their way. In 2020, some 68 percent of U.S. residents supported legalization – the highest count yet in a rising trend – but many are still against it. The opposition argues that legalizing marijuana hurts kids and teens, largely by increasing their access to cannabis and leading more to smoke; but the science suggests this isn't the case.

“We found if anything, teen marijuana is actually going down in states that legalized for recreational purposes,” says Mark Anderson, an economist at Montana State University who studies teen marijuana use.

Anderson's team analysed survey data from more than 1.4 million high school students. They found that after a state made recreational weed legal, teenagers had an eight percent decrease in the odds of using pot in the past 30 days and a nine percent decrease in frequent



use, according to a 2019 study published in *JAMA Pediatrics*.

“Street-level dealers are being replaced by dispensaries and establishments that require proof of age,” Anderson suggests as a possible reason for the decline.

“Recreational marijuana laws are relatively new,” Anderson says. That being said, “So far, the literature that's been published on recreational marijuana laws that seems to be statistically rigorous is not suggesting that there's been an increase.”

To be fair, however, there are dangers with any drug, so we can't act as if it's all heavenly on high (get it?). Increased teen marijuana use isn't the only potential problem. In some places that have legalized weed, kids go to the hospital more often because of run-ins with pot, although these medical emergencies are still uncommon.

Cannabis – whether ingested accidentally or smoked on purpose – is much riskier to kids and teens than it is to adults. Use during adolescence can lead to permanent problems with memory



and learning. It can cause difficulty thinking and problem-solving, trouble paying attention, and impaired coordination, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In those at high risk, it may trigger psychosis. Despite common misconceptions, addiction is also a concern.

Legalization isn't a simple issue. And researchers won't understand the true impact of it until we have more data available. With more and more states and Caribbean islands slated to legalize marijuana over the next several years, getting that data will be easier and easier.

Future

END THE HATE; CHANGE THE CULTURE

By Saphira Cantave

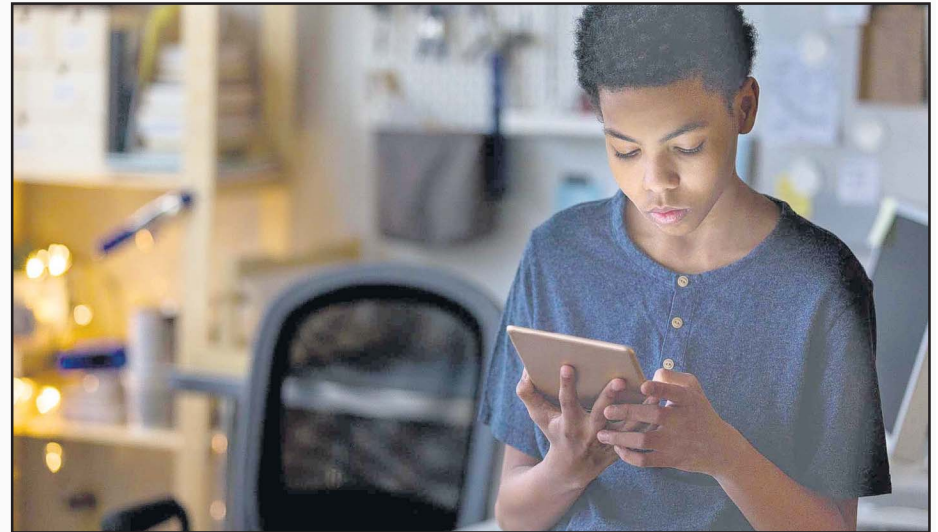
Bullying in school was believed to be a normal part of school life growing up, and was considered a harmless joke. However, nothing about bullying is normal or harmless.

Why do people bully? According to research, children who are more likely to be bullies have characteristics that include being short tempered, disobedient, aggressive and impulsive. Bullying may occur for a variety of reasons, which differ depending on the bully. Some children who bully may lack parental attention and support, whilst others use bullying to fulfil their desire to feel

strong or popular.

Others may have been bullied at school or at home and see bullying as a means to reclaim control and feel empowered. While some youngsters are more forceful and dominant by nature, these characteristics may not necessarily result in bullying behaviour. Bullying is frequently seen as based on hostility. Rather than treating the symptoms, parents and educators must address the underlying issue in order to change these bad habits.

Growing up as a victim of bullying was difficult. My life was a jumble of wanting to please people, suffering with my mental



health, trying to fit in, and trying to love myself. I created a poem to explain how I felt in order to cope with my feelings: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never break me" – something my teachers reminded me of and reassured me, even as I cried from all the hurt. But those same words have also torn me. With tears in my eyes and suicide on my mind, these words will forever haunt me."

I always wondered, why me? Am I that ugly? Am I unloved? These were the questions that plagued me as I grew older.

People do not realize the impact that being bullied can have on oneself. Being bullied may have a negative impact on a child's self-esteem, friendships, school and future. Bullied students

frequently suffer from despair, low self-esteem, shyness, loneliness, physical ailments, and threats or attempts at self-harm which may last a lifetime. Because of bullying, some children miss school, get lower grades, or even drop out entirely. Verbal and cyber bullying can be equally as damaging as physical bullying.

There are many ways in which bullying can be prevented. When adults respond swiftly and continuously to bullying conduct, the bully learns that such behaviour is not acceptable. Rather than simply stating it's not okay, teachers and parents should hold the bully accountable by making them face consequences – according to research, this can help to reduce bullying behaviour

over time. Parents, teachers and other community members may help children avoid bullying by talking about it, providing a safe school atmosphere, and developing a community-wide bullying prevention strategy.

Bullying may be avoided in several ways. We can put an end to bullying by sticking up for others, not spreading rumours, and notifying a responsible adult. It only takes one principled person to bring about change. It is normal to be hesitant about speaking up for oneself, but it's crucial to realize that bullying is wrong and that an adult should be informed of the problem in order to fix it. Bullying is never acceptable. Let us put a stop to the hatred, help change the culture, and make the world a better place.





Do dress codes and school rules play a role in students' learning?

By Cecilly Nicholas

It is self-evident that rules are employed on a daily basis to maintain law and order. Rules are utilized at school, at home, at work and elsewhere because without them, the environment would not function correctly, and the world would be in complete chaos. School rules are in place to ensure that schools run smoothly and that pupils are able to maintain discipline. But do the restrictions in place in schools have an impact on children's learning?

Times have changed significantly over the years, and the majority of school rules are no longer relevant in today's culture. Students, particularly teens, enjoy keeping up with current trends across the world. Every adolescent has their own distinct style that distinguishes them from their peers. School policies prohibiting male students from growing their hair out and female students from dyeing their hair do not allow them to stand out from the crowd.

Stereotypes such as coloured hair and long hair on boys making them appear "unprofessional" are so obsolete. Why is it that anything done by the younger generation is assigned a stereotyped term such as "ghetto"? Not only do school policies affect pupils, but they also have a financial impact on parents. Some schools have severe uniform policies; students are not permitted to wear coloured or white shoes, and finding shoes that are all black is strenuous. Some parents are unable to

afford school shoes for their children, and the majority of children wear shoes that have been passed down from a family member.

We all know that the cost of living in St. Maarten is extremely high, and the minimum wage is extremely low; therefore, parents are now forced to purchase shoes based on school rules rather than what they can afford. Parents also struggle to keep their kids' haircuts up to date; the average boy requires a haircut every two weeks. Can parents afford to take their sons to the barbershop every week to cut their hair because they are not permitted to grow it out? School rules that do not allow boys to grow their hair may also impact their self-esteem. Some boys would not feel comfortable having to wear a professional business cut.

If a child has breached one



of the rules, some schools prevent them from attending class. If the regulations are not obeyed, students may be subject to suspension. The well-being of students should be the school's main priority; how do school rules impact students' education? Students should be able to learn in an environment where they are able to be their true selves without being penalized.

Compared to former generations, this generation is very outspoken and unique in its own way; and there

are many ways in which students would want to express themselves. Physical appearance plays a major role, in that teenagers feel the need to change their appearance to their own liking in order to feel confident. Schools should consider carefully reviewing their rules to see how they have adverse effects on students and parents, and why students should be denied an education if the rules are broken.

Does the number of piercings, the length or colour of hair, or the shoe colour have an impact

on a student's development or learning? Although it is understandable that regulations are a part of our daily lives for valid reasons, kids should not be missing out on their opportunities to learn due to breaking rules that derive from a mere dress code or stylistic choice. The main priority of all schools should be creating a safe environment where students are allowed to learn effectively without jeopardizing their education.



BEST, WORST PLACES IN THE WORLD TO BE A GIRL

Gender inequality starts at an early age. It sits on the shoulders of young women in sub-Saharan Africa, where it can take more than an hour just to get drinking water, where in over two-thirds of households, women are responsible for this chore, and where girls younger than 15 are twice as likely to carry the responsibility as boys the same age. Where does that leave time for basic schooling when basic survival is more important?

This inequality follows young women as they are pressured into families, sometimes in places with no child marriage laws and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. And when spousal abuse happens in her home, how can a woman stop the violence if her culture treats it as a normal part of a relationship with a man? Where does that leave time for secondary education or jobs?

In least-developed countries particularly, infrastructure to advance women's basic human rights is weak, partly because women are seen as the bottom of the social ecosystem and partly

because of a shifting population of mostly women and children refugees. Women in some countries hardly ever see the opportunity to go to school, make an income, or own land. Domestic violence and violent crimes against women are often not classified as crimes at all, and take low priority when they are.

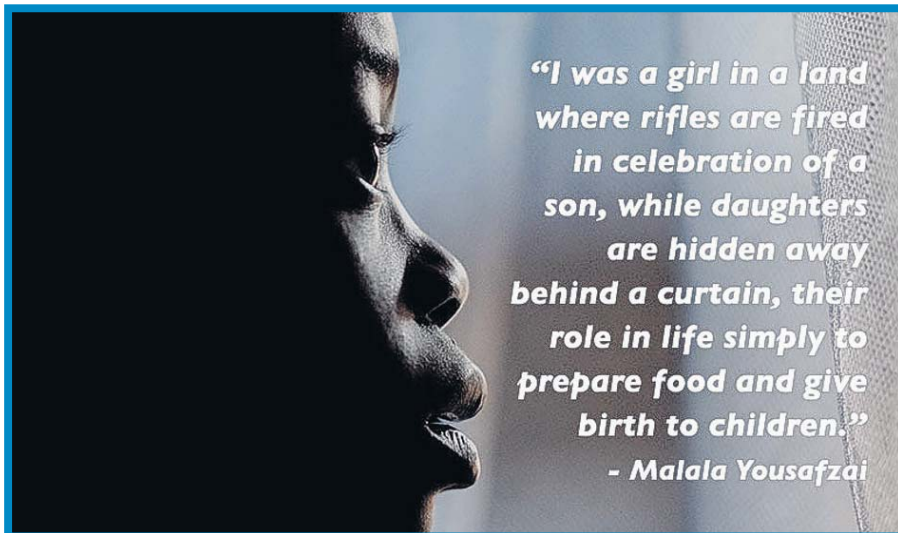
The worst places: Chad, Guinea, and Niger are among the poorest countries in the world and are the worst for females. Although basic laws may exist that are meant to protect women in some respects, family and religious code often override those provisions. In Chad, 29% of young women are married by the age of 15. In Guinea, 96% of women between the ages of 15 and 45 have undergone female genital mutilation. In Mali and Niger, more than 50% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 have had three

or more children, and a majority of these women were married before the age of 15.

The best places in the world for girls are highly developed nations. By 2006, some 84% of 19-year-old women in Canada had a high school diploma, and the percentage of women with children under three years old who were employed rose from 27.6% in 1976 to 64.4% in 2009. In Norway, although men made more on average than women

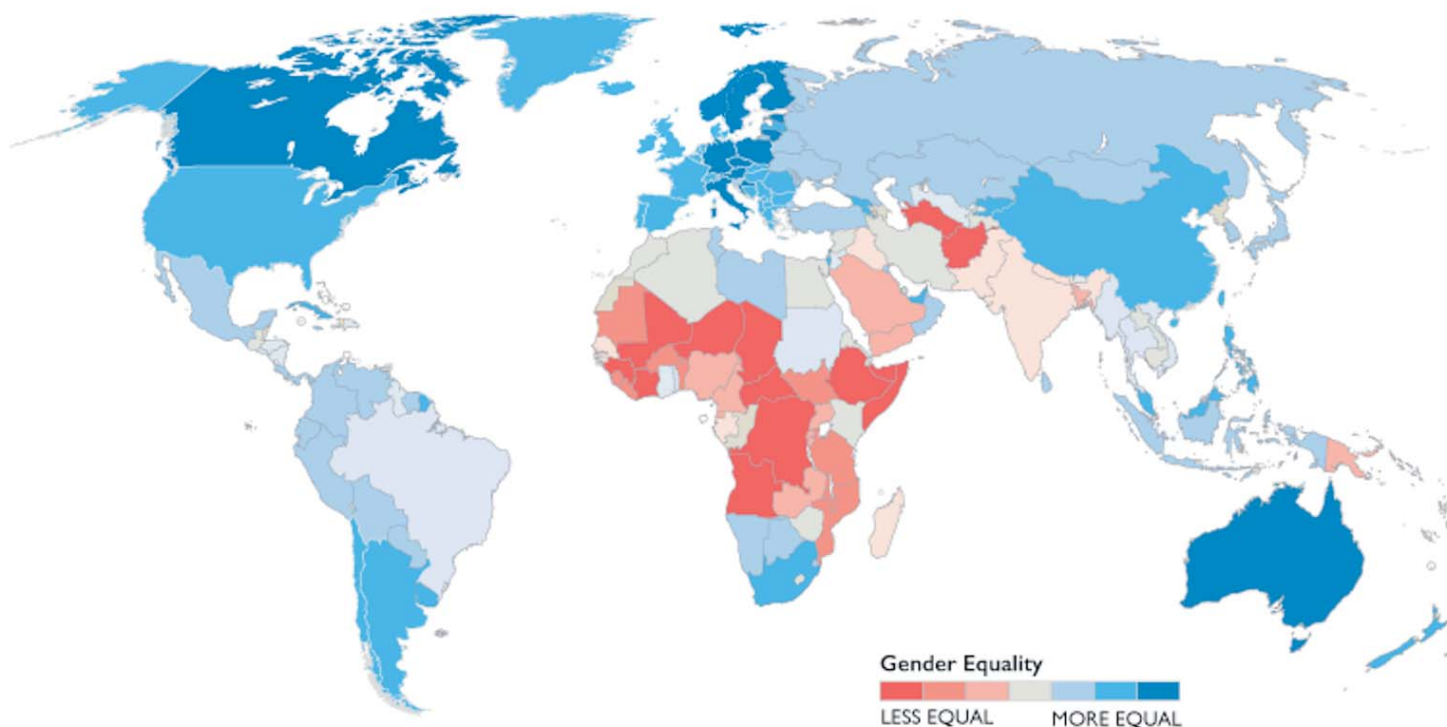
"I was a girl in a land where rifles are fired in celebration of a son, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain, their role in life simply to prepare food and give birth to children."

- Malala Yousafzai



Global Gender Equality

The best and worst places in the world to be a girl.



The Ten Best Countries for Girls

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Canada | 6. Austria |
| 2. Norway | 7. Lithuania |
| 3. Croatia | 8. Estonia |
| 4. Iceland | 9. Poland |
| 5. Australia | 10. Singapore |

The Ten Worst Countries for Girls

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Chad | 6. DR Congo |
| 2. Guinea | 7. Ethiopia |
| 3. Niger | 8. Mali |
| 4. Somalia | 9. Angola |
| 5. Afghanistan | 10. Central African Republic |

* United States ranked 45th overall

Sources: United Nations *The World's Women 2015*. See "Methodology" below to see how the rankings were calculated.



THE DAY OF A GIRL-CHILD

By Diya Rajpal

The thought of not being able to get a high-ranking job only because of your gender, or being looked at as just a baby-making machine, whose sole purpose is to breed and nurture her offspring, is infuriating, especially in today's society. Keeping this in mind, the United Nations declared October 11 as International Girls' Day. On this day, females are able to amplify their voices to spread awareness on daily struggles they face in society. This gives women a sense of empowerment as gender inequality is slowly dissipating.

The root of gender inequality stems from differences in biology, psychology, or cultural norms prevalent in today's society. The biggest hurdle that women must overcome is the patriarchy. The patriarchy does not allow women to have the same opportunities as men, since their experience, education and abilities are disregarded by society. Millions of girls around the world are denied an education as it is considered a waste of time and money. There is no use for further study or a degree to become the "perfect" housewife, is there? Despite their hopes and dreams, they are married off early and treated as a burden that must be gotten rid of as soon as possible.

Daughters are seen this way in many countries because of societal pressures. There is a lot of controversy surrounding having a girl-child for various reasons. Those reasons,



according to multiple studies, are that boys are able to carry on the family name; boys are the breadwinners of the family; and there is no need to pay dowry when married. According to past instances, many people have had gender motivated abortions or have even gone as far as abandoning their new-born baby girl. Girls are generally put to a higher standard than boys from the moment they are born. There is a saying that goes: "Boys will be boys", indicating that any bad or inappropriate behaviour is natural and isn't their fault. It is important for society to also start holding men accountable, so that women start feeling comfortable speaking out against more problems.

This year, 2021, International Day of the Girl-child is themed "Digital Generation: Our Generation." This is our present generation, the digital era, in which modern-age technology is widespread. Due to COVID-19, schools were forced in this technology-saturated society, to switch to an alternative way of teaching – online learning. This new way of learning has caused many girls around the world to not receive an education for the past year. According to research, more men than women are able to gain access to the internet. Hence, the goal this year

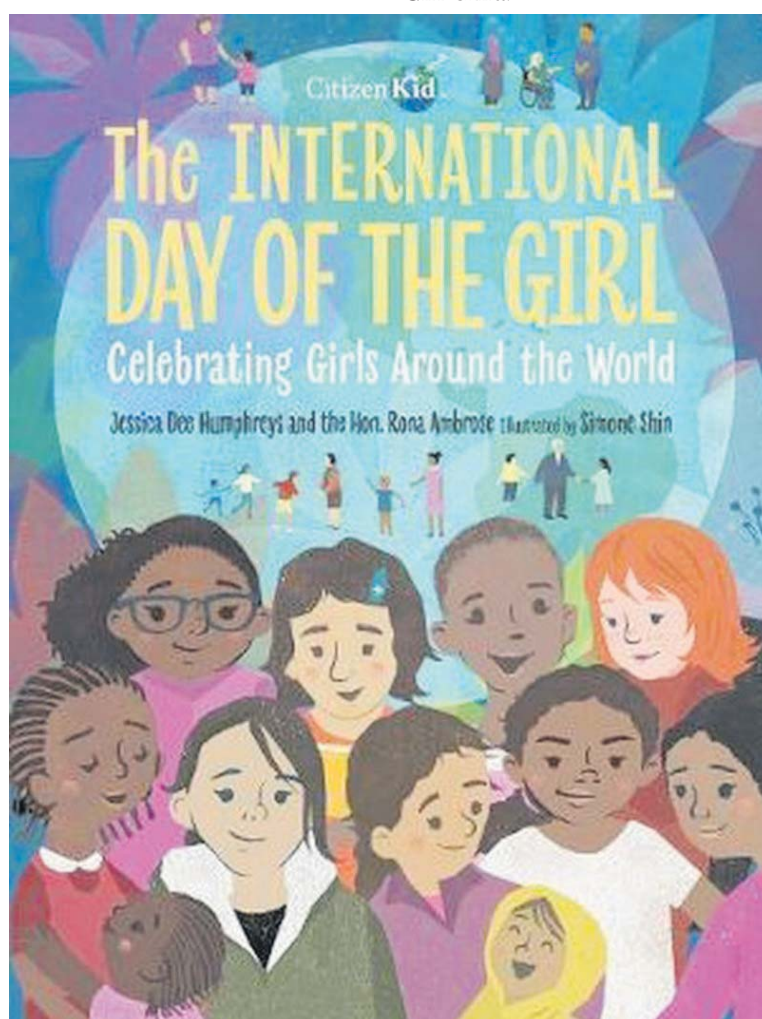
is to close gendered digital access to allow more girls around the world to safely access these platforms and enhance their skills.

The day of the girl-child

highlights every unique experience faced by girls and strives for gender equality by promoting girls' rights. On this day, girls are able to stand together and truly discover the power they hold. This is a small step in the right direction to tackle even larger problems at hand. Together, as equals, men and women can bring about a positive change in the environment to resolve issues, such as to minimize climate change, promote global sustainability and prevent diseases with the help of enhanced medical technology.

Every month, but especially this month, lift a woman up and use your voice to bring about the change you deserve. Let Elizabeth Anderson, the first qualified female doctor; or Malala Yousafzai, who despite getting shot, fought for her right to receive an education, be an inspiration to us all. Women are resilient and more than capable of changing the misogynistic views of some individuals.

Happy International Day of the Girl-child!





Flickr/ Kara Newhouse

Save a girl-child in India

A girl-child is considered to be a blessing. She can be a mother, a daughter, a friend, and so on, and yet she is not respected. She is abused both mentally and physically, and there are a lot of crimes that are committed against the girl-child.

Below is a speech which helps in understanding the crimes committed against the girl-child, an initiative that could be taken to save a girl-child, and why it is important to save a girl-child.

"Today, I am going to talk about the important topic of saving a girl-child in India. What does 'saving' imply here? Does that mean they are in danger? The answer is yes. India is a country where on one hand, everybody with devotion in their hearts worship goddesses; and on another hand, various crimes are committed against a girl-child, like female foeticide, no equal rights, eve-teasing, child marriage, rape, and the list goes on.

"As we know, a girl-child is a

blessing. She plays many roles in her life. She could be a daughter, a wife, a sister, a friend, and so on. She is considered to be the pillar that runs the home; and yet she is not given the respect she deserves.

"There are many societies in India where gender discrimination still exists to this date. People in these societies are uneducated and they do not consider girls to be equal to boys. In these societies, women's rights are naturally a mere joke; and gender discrimination and oppression are at their peak.

"In India, female foeticide is a worrying practice where a girl-child is killed even before she is born – that is the reason why finding the sex of a child before birth is banned in India. Even if the girl-child is lucky enough and allowed to be born in such societies, she has to fight for her survival where a lot of discrimination is done against her. She is oppressed and not provided with proper nutrition compared to her male siblings. She is not given any opportunity to attend school; instead, she is forced to do housework. This cycle

of oppression will continue as long as these uneducated people are not removed from society.

"Female foeticide, child marriage, no women's rights, and rapes are the crimes committed against girls and women. According to a report by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), India recorded 88 rape cases every day in 2019. The security of women and girl-children is a series of questions which doesn't seem to have a definite answer but only excuses.

"So the next question that eventually comes to everyone's mind is how a girl-child can be saved. The government of India is also concerned with girls' safety and the declining child sex ratio, and has launched various schemes like Beti Bachao Beti padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Balika Samridhi Yojana, and national schemes of incentives to girls for secondary education.

"The primary aim of all these schemes is to ensure a girl-child is provided with an opportunity to get an education; to prevent selective

gender-based abortions, as they are vastly committed in remote villages; to ensure the survival of a girl-child and provide security to her life when she is an infant; and to provide a girl-child a healthy and secure environment to live and grow.

"I want to conclude my speech by saying that Dr. BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian constitution once said: 'I measure the progress of the community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.'

"We have to take small steps and protect the girl-child when she is born. After her birth, it should be ensured that she is provided with proper nutrition and education so that she realizes her dreams. By celebrating, protecting, and educating the girl-child, we empower her. Last but not least, we should remember that a country that empowers women empowers every individual."

(Source Vedantu.com)





2021 Top 7 Halloween movies/series on Netflix

By Chamalia Van Heynegeen

Halloween isn't a day; it's a season. And there's no better way to keep the thrills, chills and scares coming than to cosy up with good a Halloween movie. If you have Netflix, the work is done for you. These Halloween movies on Netflix have all the flavours of scares you can need. Happy Halloween!

There's Someone Inside Your House (2021)

There's Someone Inside Your House is the latest horror offered on Netflix, and is an adaptation of Stephanie Perkins' 2017 novel of the same name. Throughout the movie, a group of misfit teens are stalked by a killer who wears a mask bearing the face of each of their victims.

Intrusion (2021)

Intrusion is about a woman who moves to a small town with her husband, but is rattled when she is targeted for a home invasion, which forces the husband to kill the invader in an act of self-defence.

Hubie Halloween (2021)

Despite his devotion to his hometown of Salem, and its Halloween celebration, Hubie Dubois is a figure of mockery for kids and adults alike. But this year, something is going bump in the night, and it's up to Hubie to save Halloween.

Escape The Undertaker (2021)

The Netflix Halloween special "Escape The Undertaker" stars

the famous retired professional wrestler, The Undertaker, and takes place in his haunted mansion where he uses his infamous powerful urn to "torture" the record-breaking WWE team, The New Day, within his halls. It's then up to the audience to make choices for the team, and try to get them out of the haunted mansion alive.

Nightbook (2021)

Nightbook is about a boy named Alex, who loves everything-horror and is obsessed with writing scary stories. He was encountered by a Witch (Ritter) who threatens to kill him unless he uses a talent that would please her enough to do otherwise. Later on, she is imprisoned by an evil young witch in her contemporary New York City apartment and it is left in the hands of Alex to save her.

Night Teeth (2021)

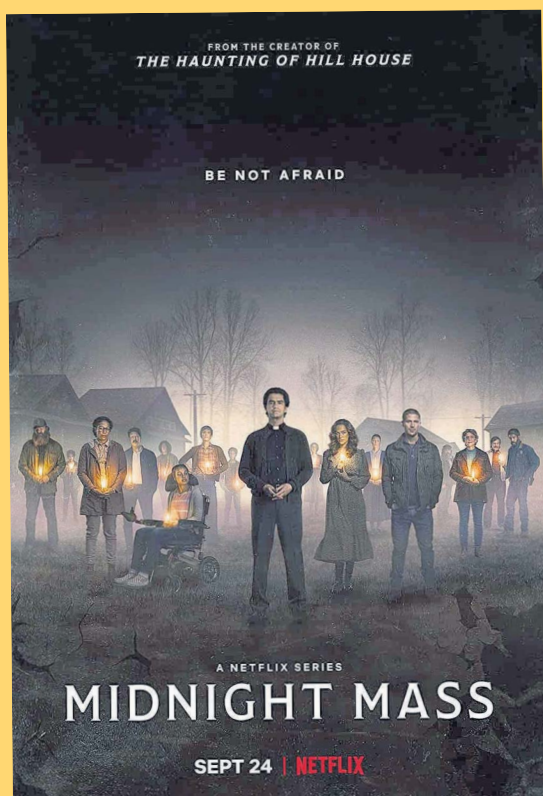
This new thriller is about a student, who takes up a job chauffeuring and picks up two mysterious women, who lead him into a night of hell, as he dives into the world of underground crime.

Luna Park (Series 2021)

Luna Park is a young and vibrant series targeted at no specific audience. The story revolves around two sisters, and their story is interwoven with the figments of the imagination conjured by the park and its elements.

Midnight Mass (Series 2021)

Midnight Mass is the latest limited series from Mike Flanagan, who is also known for his Netflix horror anthology series. It follows a haunted young man who returns to his village after being released from prison. His arrival coincides with that of a charismatic priest, who has good news to share with the island. This isolated and dying village soon becomes overwhelmed with religious fervour as miracles start happening around them. But what is behind them?



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