



The state of education is a shameful embarrassment

MAC High first to offer St. Maarten history and geography as subjects

The Methodist Agogic Center (MAC) High School is the first high-school on St. Maarten to offer St. Maarten history and geography as an option in its curriculum. Specifically touching on the Caribbean and St. Maarten-based topics, the school teaches in-depth history of the country, as well as the different geographical structures and phenomena that are around this region.

After talking to a few students who chose history, it was understood that they have been learning about aspects such as the different progressions of the industrial cycle of St. Maarten and the Caribbean, the colonization timeline of the island, and the history of the people of St. Maarten.

In relation to the geography students, they

are touching on topics such as the different landforms and natural systems of the earth such as plate tectonics and weathering, various mapping skills consisting of lines of latitude and longitude, scales and gradients along with the structures of the earth including volcanoes and mountains. These topics are all normally taught in geography, however, the majority of the focus now is on the Caribbean and how these different elements work and have had an effect in the region.



Being located in the Caribbean, it's a good thing that we as residents

should be taught more about the history and structure of our own lands, and it is encouraged that other schools also add these choices to their curriculums making for a more unified region.

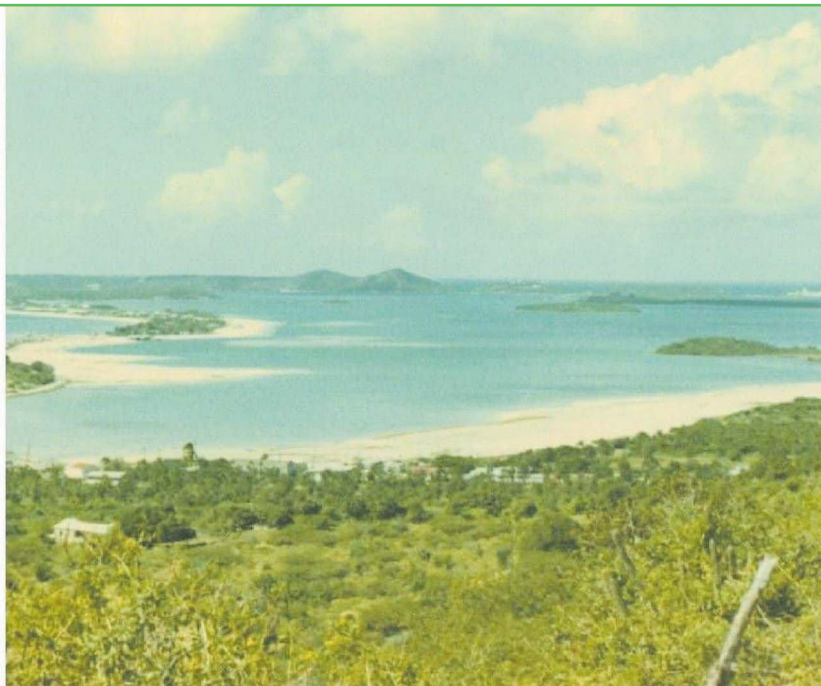
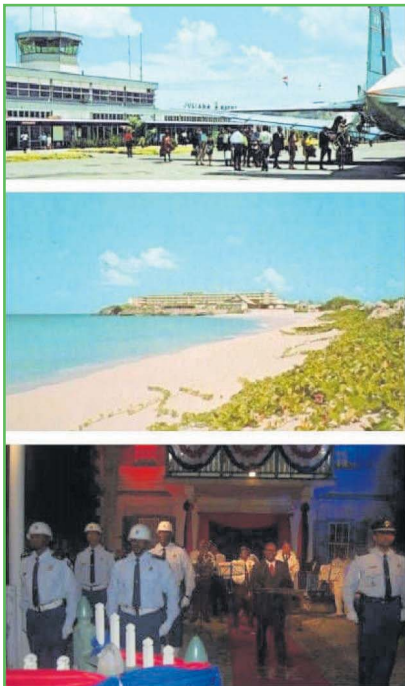
In June 2021, *Teen Times* submitted a request to Parliament to facilitate the inclusion of St. Maarten history in the secondary school curriculum. *Teen Times* believes that adding the country's history to the

school curriculum is a priority for young people.

"For far too long we have sat back and watched our young people inundated with this history of Europe and, in some schools, of the United States. While we believe this is also necessary and do not want to diminish the importance of global history, only in very limited instances on the primary school level is anything about St. Maarten's history actually taught.

"Our students therefore lack valuable knowledge of their history as compared to their peers in the wider Caribbean, in particular on the secondary school level," said *Teen Times*.

The group suggested that some schools can host a pilot project whereby the curriculum's implementation could be assessed, and emphasized that any implementation should include thorough planning, teacher training, and project monitoring and assessment.



A woman with dark hair in a ponytail and glasses is sitting at a wooden desk, working on a laptop. She is wearing a light blue shirt. The laptop screen displays a technical drawing or architectural plan. To her right, there is a large roll of white paper, possibly a blueprint, and a black desk lamp. The scene is lit by natural light from a window in the background.

Why not sell/privatize USM?

BY HAILA FORDE

When are we going to get serious about the University of St. Martin? Thirty three (33) years in existence and we still have a very limited institution of higher learning burdened by financial issues and no real aspects for revenue generation. In addition to that, as a country, we do not even have legislation for higher education and in USM's case, it isn't even in a position to take advantage of such legislation due to lack of funding in a country that is always cash-strapped and, with the other pressing issues in education, apparently will never make USM a priority.

So why not sell or privatize USM? We (*Teen Times*) know for a fact that the government of St. Maarten over the years (perhaps, not this current government) has been presented with plans from various entities regarding a takeover of USM which could finally deliver upon the potential its founders intended in 1989. Every proposal has been left by

the wayside due to political short-sightedness and this ridiculous notion of protecting people at USM, who more than likely would have to go in a takeover/privatization effort.

All due respect is owed to these folks, we would never say that they have not made their contributions, but it has been three decades. It is time to look at alternatives for our supposedly highest institution of learning in the country. We keep hiring brilliant directors for USM who we are sure have terrific ideas for the growth and development of the institution, but we handicap them with the same level of resources (or less) resulting in stagnation.

The recently released state of education report noted that a complicating factor, especially for secondary education, is that the University of St. Martin does not offer a variety of educational programmes to prepare teachers. *"The focus is on a training programme for primary education and a secondary education certificate for persons qualified in certain subjects. This is an issue of scale. As a result, teachers take online courses once they have been hired to broaden their skill set while not meeting the required qualifications. In-service training of teachers is, according to some schools, generally too costly and recruiting teachers from abroad may be problematic due to lengthy immigration procedures, short contracts, and low salaries. Several stakeholders expressed their desire for USM to broaden its teacher training programme and to expand its internships with a view to delivering teaching graduates who already have some hands-on*

experience."

Young people would add that USM does not offer anything to prepare them for a "new world", so they won't even consider the school when looking at tertiary education. In the past the idea of a public university anywhere was meant to keep tuition costs in a range where every citizen could afford to attend. But, even these kind of institutions received enough aid from the government to still offer a wide variety of accredited courses with recognized Bachelors and Master's Degree programmes.

But by the 1990s, this low-tuition approach was no longer working as effectively as it had been. Recessions were coming more often and funding for public universities were being reduced or eliminated altogether. So in that regard, St. Maarten is on pace. Unable or unwilling to increase revenue and facing ever-growing costs in other areas viewed as "bigger priorities" public universities were left with little choice, but to privatize and jack up their tuition and fees, in agreement with governments. As privatized institutions or branches of established institutions, universities had the option of taking advantage of institutional financial aid to keep the schools accessible, affordable and meet the financial needs of their students. The so-called, need-based financial aid.

Why are we not considering letting go of USM and let an established entity such as the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) or others assume control?

What are we waiting on and what would be we losing? How much longer will we allow USM to tread water before it goes belly-up? And, then what?

The principal aim of any higher education institution is to offer students first-class education and assist them in developing new skills that would enhance their career opportunities. The first step in making sure that universities are working towards achieving that aim is getting ensuring that they are reputable and accredited.

Universities are accredited through external verification by peer reviewers, usually by an accreditation body or agency. These accrediting agencies set evaluation criteria and common standards to which they believe all higher education institutions should adhere. They establish associations to carry out the accreditation programmes that universities enter into voluntarily. The accrediting body then conducts peer evaluations, reviews the university's curriculum, and assesses whether the common standards are met, and if they do, that institution gets accredited.

An educational institution that is awarded accreditation has the following characteristics:

It has a clearly defined mission.

It has all the resources to achieve its mission.

It has evolved with the changes in academic standards.

It has maintained a quality reputation.

We can maybe check one of those boxes for USM. Our aim should be to ensure that educational

programmes at USM have attained a level of performance in multiple areas that meets or exceeds minimum standards that were developed by experts in the field. While this does not ensure that every graduating student will become a successful professional, it does guarantee that the student has demonstrated a certain set of skills and abilities that are required by the accreditation standards.

Coupled with and perhaps contributing to St. Maarten's failing education system is the presence of a university that has been simply found to be wanting. Many people over the years have fought the good fight for USM, including the present management and directorate. But after 33 years, St. Maarten's best and brightest deserves better. They should be able to stay here at home to attend a reputable institution of higher learning.

They should be able to see the plans of a multi-story campus building with dorm rooms that can house students from around the Caribbean come to fruition. They should not be deprived of such an institution simply because it's not politically prudent for whomever is in government. In the Caribbean, St. Maarten is way behind academically, intellectually, and creatively, all of these aspects can be addressed if we get serious about USM and finally have mature discussions with third parties about a takeover. Sure, there will be changes. People will have to go. But, that is a small price to pay for the empowerment of your young people and future of your country.



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Why You Never See “EDUCATION” That Actually Works

BY CHIRAG RAMCHANDANI

For much of human existence, it is believed that education is the key to success. Essential aspects, such as reading, writing, and studying, have all contributed to the widespread notion that education is the only source of the required tools for survival. Despite significant breakthroughs, a substantial portion of our educational system still operates on the archaic paradigm of incentives and punishment. This type of education takes the fun out of learning and shrinks it to simply just studying to appease the system.

It has long been assumed that the traditional classroom technique is the only way to effectively teach our children; this includes having a teacher speak in front of a group of students about a wide range of fundamental subjects like Math, Science, and English. Nowadays, as everyone has various objectives, hobbies, and professional trajectories, many young students feel compelled to take classes to which they are indifferent. Additionally, people are becoming increasingly interested in learning more real-life skills, which are often not taught in the classroom.

It is frequently said that there are several distinct and diverse sectors of the education system in St. Maarten, as well as multiple institutes that provide them, but the fundamental question that emerges is: “Are the youth of St. Maarten genuinely learning through the so-called ‘diverse education system’?”

In the school year 2021-2022, numerous students underperformed and failed due to being unable to meet the set requirements in order to be



promoted to the next standard/class, the majority of whom were secondary or high school students. As a result, an online survey was administered to those students, in which they were interviewed and questioned about their impressions of the country’s education system and the primary cause for their prior performance.

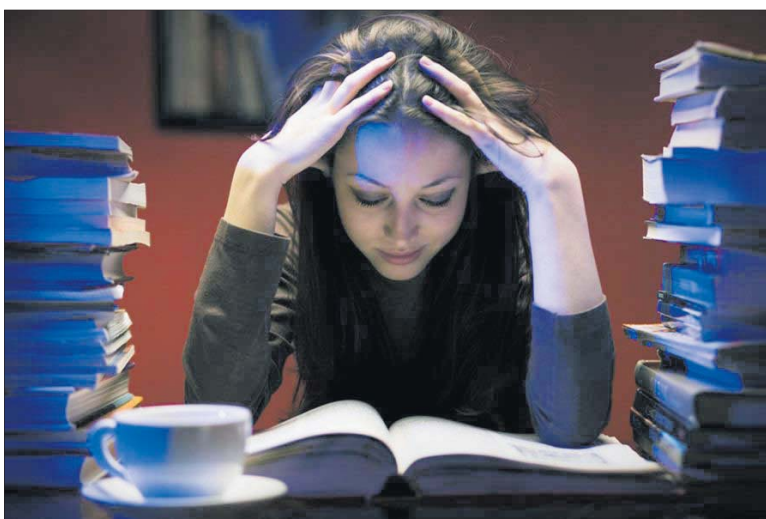
Although there were some positive responses, the majority of the responses to the questionnaire were negative. Moreover, the majority of students believe that their outcome was a result of an antiquated education system along with legacy teaching techniques; therefore, hindering them from showing interest in learning any new topic or even revising previously “taught” ones. As mentioned by one student, “It’s the same stuff that they’ve been teaching for years, but it does not help you with most of the things that occur after high school.” Some other students also believe that not enough sources to make learning

“fun” are being provided by their educational institute. Another student exclaimed, “Some teachers don’t show interest in the subject that they teach ... It’s like they are ‘teaching’ just for their salary!”

A few students believe that it is

not only the education system that is to blame, but also the pressure and expectations that come from their teachers and parents. Parents frequently generalize the concept of success depending on how others perform. Apart from academics, children are hampered by increased expectations in a variety of areas of personal interests, such as sports and the arts. As a result, without regard for a student’s overall development, parents continue to push the boundaries, resulting in stress, disappointment and even anxiety.

In this day and age, where a grade may make or break a person’s life, there is an urgent need to address the concerns of the style of teaching in relation to academic stress. The nation’s youth must work as a team to perform deeper analyses and larger investigations in order to highlight the challenges and propose appropriate solutions to alleviate the severe burden on students.



Feature

Ashma Berkel: Making people smile

By Lavisha Dadlani

Every community has a few individuals who tend to go above and beyond to make a difference in their society, spread positivity and always radiate happiness. Ashma Berkel is one such lady who has touched the lives of many and continues to constantly make an impact on the island. Her involvement in many noteworthy organizations makes her an excellent role model, especially for our youth. An interview with Ms. Berkel further explains why she and her good deeds deserve to be recognized.

1. What organizations are you a part of (brief synopsis of each) and for how long now?

I am part of several organizations namely:

- *Workers Institute for Organized Labor (WIFOL):* This is one of the biggest union representation on the Dutch side of the island, but remains an advocate for workers' rights. I was previously a board member and later carried to the portfolio of Secretary of Finance and Cooperatives for eight years.
- *Caribbean Institute for Social Education Foundation Board (CIFSEF):* I've been part of this foundation for 13 years as a Certified Hospitality and Computer Skills Trainer and Project Coordinator.
- I was recently appointed as *Special Olympics St. Maarten Liaison Coordinator.*
- Member supporter of *Soroptimist International French St. Martin*, two years Champion of women's rights worldwide.
- Lastly, Founder and President of *Leaders for Change (LFC)*- for five years- which is a place where leaders come together to discuss prime issues within our communities and find ways to address them by seeking funding and executing projects. We aim to reach the most vulnerable persons within our communities.

2. How did you get into volunteering?

This stems from a little child. I always wanted to share everything with anyone who wanted it. This never left me and being given the opportunity to work in places where I was able to see the vulnerable situations within our communities, opened my eyes even more to reach as many people as possible by doing one kind thing that would put a smile on someone's face.

3. What is/are your role(s) in them? Why do you think your role(s) is/are a good fit for you?

In most of my functions I carry the role of project manager or team leader. I believe that is because of my ability to communicate effectively with my team and beneficiaries as well as to listen to the needs of the people. Initiating, executing and a successful closure of any project is very important to me as this determines the success scale of the project.

4. What are some projects

the organizations host or take part in annually/ frequently?

CIFSEF/LFC: Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, we were forced to shift our day-to-day activities and focus on ways we can better assist our communities to be prepared for the labour market when it booms back, but also immediately provide assistance to families with basic needs such as food parcels, hygiene kits, clothing distribution, and assistance with filing of documentation for support. The biggest demand is the food parcels and snack bags distribution. The need always grows every time we go out as more individuals and families are identified.

We do our best to execute projects on a monthly basis, but we depend on donations and funding to make this possible. **Any monetary donations can only be given once provided with a bank account number upon request from Ms. Ashma. But, preferable food/ clothing items can be dropped off at the WIFOL building (Pond Fill Road 89, Phillipsburg), making sure that they are addressed to CIFSEF, WIFOL or Leaders for Change to avoid mix-ups. Gift vouchers for stores like groceries are also accepted.*

We also participate in SXM Doet. We submitted projects to enhance our institution in order to better serve our communities and meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

5. What is your main purpose in taking part in community service and/or volunteer projects?

My main purpose is to put a smile on someone's face and to remind the country that together we can eradicate poverty, no person should go to sleep hungry.

6. What is your favorite part about being a member of these groups and volunteering?

I could say listening to the stories of our beneficiaries of where they were and how they got to where they are today. But honestly, just taking time to show them that there are people who care and want to help and letting them know that they are special no matter the circumstance.

7. Describe an experience during volunteering that has stuck with you.

I have 2 recent experiences to tell:

- Back in December, we did a major distribution in collaboration with the Ministry of VSA and Cay Bay Community Council and whilst we were in one of the projects a little boy ran up to me out of nowhere with the biggest smile thanking us for giving him his first Christmas present, as his Mother could not afford to buy one at the time. His little arms squeezed my neck so tight I could feel his love and he did not want to let go.

- Last week, I was delivering some desserts and meals to a homeless group of men and unfortunately I was down to one food bag. I then met a guy who explained to me that he and his friends normally get food during the week but, on the weekend they are on their own. So I explained to him who I am and the work I do. He was so

happy that I took time to talk to him before offering him the meal which he gladly accepted. In my presence, he shared that one meal with all his friends and they were grateful to have something to eat after two days of nothing.

8. What would you say to encourage young people to take part in these organizations (CIFSEF, WIFOL) or other volunteer groups in general?

I encourage you to always give back as we never know where we may end up in life and it truly is a joy to be a giver. It only takes *one* person to make a difference.

9. Who or what is your motivation in staying consistent with the work you do?

My biggest motivation is my children as they are also involved with the work I do. Even when I am tired they remind me that the man up the road and the little boy are waiting for you today. My kids pray for the homeless and always ask God to bless them; this alone is my fuel to keep on going.

10. What causes are you most passionate about?

I am an advocate of women's rights; I truly believe in gender equality. I am also a champion on workers' rights. And, as a humanitarian and volunteer at heart, giving to the most vulnerable groups such as: rough sleepers, homeless community, single parent household, troubled children, abused women and families facing difficulties, is definitely a major one.

11. What skills do you notice you have gained after being a volunteer for 15 years?

I would say patience, humbleness, and humility.

12. What kind of characteristics do your organization look for in new volunteers/ members?

We look for people who are humble, have a leader mentality, willing to learn new things, open to new experience and a giver at heart.

13. How can any interested readers join CIFSEF or WIFOL?

They are welcome to reach out to me via "Whatsapp" or email whereby I will schedule a meeting so more information can be shared before making a decision.

Ms. Ashma added, "Many people approach us about the work the team does and want to be part of the organization but, when hit with the reality of the difficult situations and challenges that some people are experiencing, it surpasses the level for them to cope. So, we encourage people to give in any form that *you* feel comfortable doing and make sure that at the end of the day *you* love what you do."

From reading this article, it is evident that Ashma Berkel is selfless and stays devoted to giving the less fortunate a reason to smile, even in the toughest of situations. Instilling her values in her children and members, Ms. Berkel definitely plays a huge role in influencing the mentality and way of living for many. We all should adopt some ways of her ways of doing and thinking to efficiently fulfill our roles in bettering our communities; as Ashma says, "it only takes *one* person to make a difference."



Internationalization: St. Dominic Drama Competition

BY DIYA RAJPAL

(This event took place a few months ago, but due to publishing issues it is being published now).

Earlier this year, St. Dominic High School hosted a drama competition for its students. The winners will travel to Italy for the internationalization project—a project that aims to put St. Maarten on the map!

Internationalization projects facilitate collaboration internationally and locally by allowing people from all over the world to share cultures and experience lives in each other's shoes. The goal of the international policy at St. Dominic High is to promote a global education so that today's youth can begin to value cultural diversity. Additionally, exposing students and teachers to education in many regions of the globe to further encourage a cross-curriculum education system.

This year, the planning and organization was led by Ms. Sinatra Rouse along with 3 IB students and additional volunteers. The event was on Friday, March 18, in which three teams participated. The students were tasked with creating a drama show that depicts bullying in hopes of preventing that type of behavior. The winners will link with peers in Italy as well as exchange and explore cultures, languages and ideas.

Below an interview with the winning team demonstrating their experience.

1. What does internationalization mean to you?

We, the winners of the Drama competition - Jaëda and Dustin, are so happy to be involved in the internationalization project. Internationalization to us means making people worldwide aware of our values and ideas. It is important since we are two students from a small island and

we get the chance to broadcast our talents to others while also learning and gaining experiences from them.

2. What do you think about the theme of the drama competition and what is your standpoint on bullying?

We think that the theme is very important so that we can bring awareness to how bullying affects the youth and its consequences. We think bullying is very immoral because you don't know what's happening in someone's life and this could affect them so greatly that it could lead to self harm.

3. How did you come up with your drama act?

When we knew we got selected to participate we were very excited and decided to make our drama act unique. Instead of a bigger person being the bully, we decided to make the smaller person the bully because we think bullying comes in all forms.

4. What do you know about the opportunities you will be given in Italy?

We will record a video of our drama act and present it to peers from Italy. Since our act is unique we think they will be shocked as well as understand that bullying can look like anything. Hopefully, they can also gain more knowledge on the topic. We hope to learn more about their culture and history and get to see the beauty in their way of life.

5. Would you like to take up more opportunities in internationalization projects in the future?

We would love to take part in future projects like this and would definitely take up any opportunities given to us. We also encourage others to take part in these projects since it's important for St. Maarten to share our culture with various countries.

6. What is one international project you would



like to see in the future?

We would love to collaborate with the country of Guyana since it is our second home town and thus exchange cultural experience with them. We would love to gain knowledge about their lifestyle

and community as well as share our own cultural norms. We would discuss some cultural dishes and historical sites in St. Maarten as we think that it is a prominent part of our culture.



Future

SHOULD ST. MAARTEN LOWER THE LEGAL DRIVING AGE TO 16?

By Ivan Wu

Teenagers in St. Maarten should be given the rights to obtaining a driver's licence at the age of 16. At this age, these "young adults" attend various activities which may be obligatory for school, small jobs, extracurricular activities, volunteering at an organization or even for important personal concerns.

Teenagers will, therefore, need a mode of transport to arrive at the destinations of these activities. They would either need to ask their parents for a ride, catch a bus or plan ahead on which transport will be available to arrive at that destination. On certain occasions, parents may not have the time or display the eagerness to give you a ride. It can also be argued that the buses on St. Maarten have very general stops causing passengers to walk to their main destination which may lead to parents or even the child expressing a sense of discomfort when taking this public transport. These are only a fraction of the reasons



why a teenager may not be able to attend a compulsory event which may be likely to cause inevitable and unfavorable outcomes.

Moreover, teenagers being allowed

to drive at an earlier age than 18 will increase their independence in this world as relying on other people will not always be their main options. This may sound very appealing to the majority, but alas there are disadvantages to this idea - where some are fatal.

According to the Highway Safety Association (in the US), teenage drivers are 1.6 times more likely to end up in a vehicle accident. Additionally, the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) released an article which stated that roughly 2,400 teens aged 13-19 in the US were killed in crashes plus a staggering estimate of 258,000 teens received treatment in emergency rooms for injuries sustained in motor vehicle accidents. These figures suggest the

irresponsible and reckless driving of teens. On the contrary, this does not only mean that adults do not end up in fatal accidents caused by reckless and irresponsible driving!

This suggestion, once accompanied with the appropriate rules and regulations, has potential in becoming an asset for the St. Maarten youth.

Resources

https://www.cdc.gov/transportationsafety/teen_drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving>

<https://www.hg.org/legal-articles/the-dangers-of-teenage-driving-29727>



Do schools have a safe place for students to go?

by Saheli Kirpalani & Lavina Ramchandani

Back in the days, a guidance counselor used to work mostly in secondary schools assisting students with scheduling their classes and making decisions about their future plans. However, today's school counselors are taught to identify mental health concerns in adolescents before a crisis arises as well as have a wide range of responsibilities. There were quite a few complaints from our youth about their experiences with school counselors on St. Maarten, therefore a survey was created and sent to several students from various schools to find out the truth of what is happening in our schools. The responses received are quite shocking!

the various forms through which anxiety, stress, and depression can manifest in a student's well being, and what the healthy ways to deal with their emotions are. If schools can incorporate extra academic classes, they should definitely work towards increasing the effort that is put into implementing a space where students can feel safe, valid, seen, and heard. It is essential for teachers to establish a personal and trustworthy connection with the students in order to take a step into creating a safe learning environment. Hence, we implore school authorities to take a deeper look into ways in which they can create a safer environment for their students.



Schools are supposed to provide safe spaces for their students to go to in times of need, whether that be a trusted adult, school counselor, or simply a safe and friendly environment for students to express themselves truthfully. Currently, there is a global mental health crisis happening, and it is therefore more important for schools to be a safe haven for students that need help and a place where they can feel seen now more than ever. However, according to the responses of a survey done with students from various schools on the island, there is a lack of sufficient counseling available in their institutions.

Approximately 50 per cent of the responses stated that students had a bad experience with a counselor in their school due to lack of confidentiality or unprofessional treatment in regards to privacy. Many students also expressed that there are not many places for young children and students to go in the country when they are in need of professional help or they simply lack access to these resources. Nevertheless, students took this opportunity to suggest several solutions to this issue. The most common response was that all schools in the country should employ a mental health professional that specializes in the field of child psychology, and each party should sign a contract to ensure that a breach of confidentiality does not take place. Furthermore, the majority of the students agreed that a mental health class should be implemented in all schools, especially secondary schools.

There are so many external and internal factors that can affect students' mental health, especially with the presence of social media in the forefront of most of their daily lives. Therefore, it is extremely important to spread awareness on

How to nurture a child's mental health



Do you believe lockers/ storage space are required for fourth and fifth formers?

BY LAVINA RAMCHANDANI

Some people agree, while others disagree. I strongly believe that fourth and fifth formers require lockers/storage space. Students carry a large number of heavy textbooks and notebooks, SBAs, and other important papers/documents/folders, phones, laptops, or cash on a daily basis. As a high school student, I observed, experienced, and understood this personally. Keeping the new generation in mind, I feel that lockers/storage space would definitely be beneficial and an added source of comfort and security.

Carrying heavy textbooks and laptops may be harsh on your health. Carrying these heavy books in your backpack and walking to classes with that large load could cause complications for the students. This can result in major concerns such as neck and back discomfort, as well as poor

posture. Giving students a safe place to keep their belongings when they are not in use would assist to decrease their backload and relieve some of these health risks. Being rid of constant aches and pains will also allow pupils to concentrate better on their schoolwork.

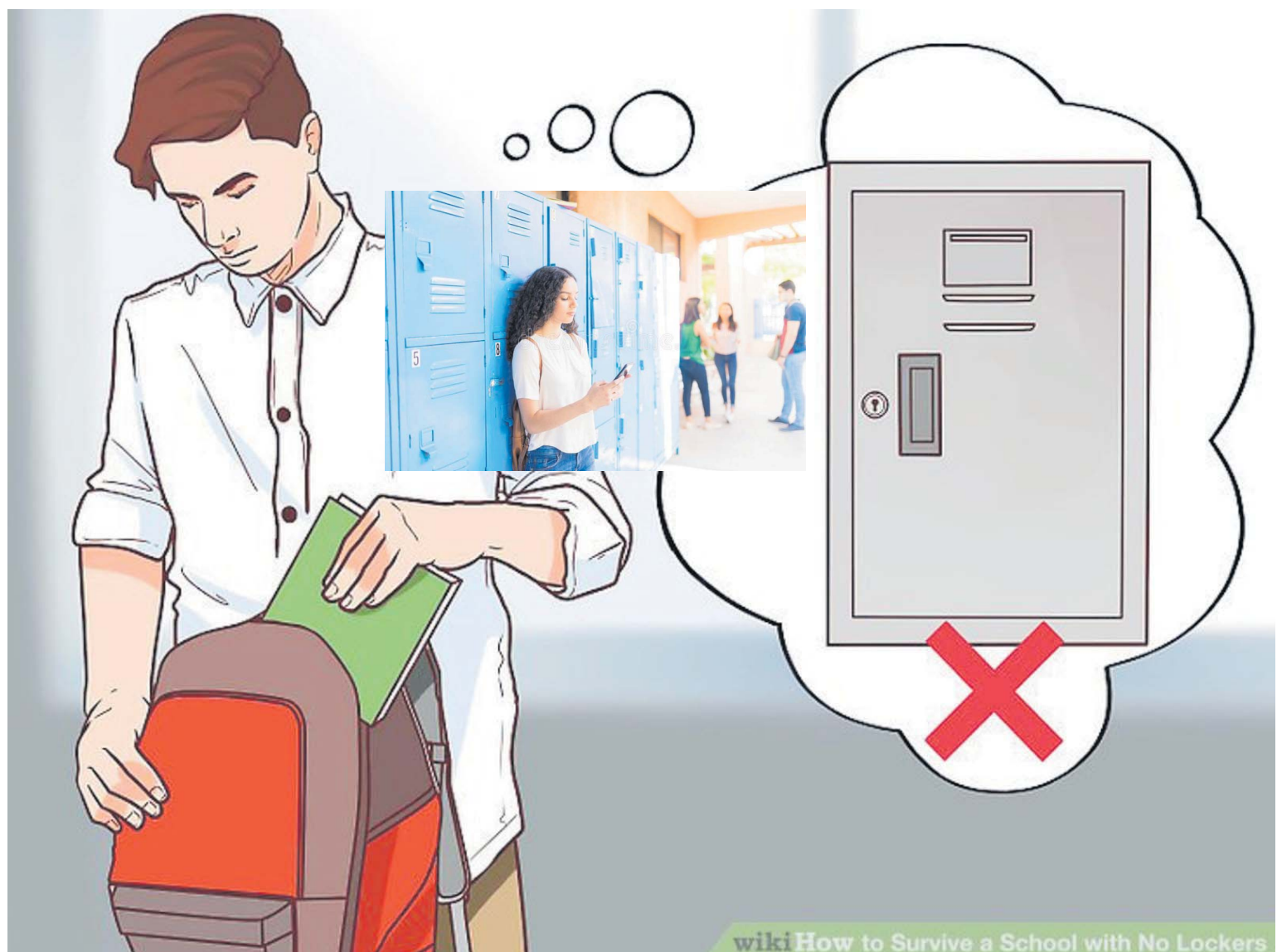
Another plus point of school lockers for the fourth and fifth formers is that they boost students' security. Students are increasingly bringing their gadgets to school to study as a result of the fairly new adoption of e-textbooks. Students cannot always keep an eye on their belongings, considering the periods when they are in PE/ gym classes, for example, when their personal items are vulnerable to theft. As a result, having a school locker decreases the risk of student items being damaged or stolen. It also provides parents and children with the



assurance that valuable belongings will be carefully stored throughout the school day eliminating any complications or worries of it being stolen.

To summarize, not only are school lockers helpful, but there are also very few convincing reasons against their use. A situation where the pros do outweigh the

cons, helps in showing that the students' health, privacy and convenience is in the forefront of the school's priorities.



HOTTEST Summer ever

By Pavitra Sachdev

From soaring temperatures to heatwaves, Europe has not had a pleasant summer, and this summer is officially holding the record for the hottest summer yet! But, what led to the heat becoming so intolerable?

Europe holds a fair share in the emission of greenhouse gases globally which is a primary factor of climate change. Climate change is the term given to the variations of average weather conditions over an extended period of time. Although, climate change does have some natural factors, such as fluctuations in greenhouse gases in their natural state, the main leading cause of climate change would be human

activity. To be more specific, the amount of greenhouse gases mankind has released into the atmosphere over time.

In June 2022, Europe began experiencing heat waves. The most severe heat wave struck Pinhão, Portugal, on July 14 reaching a whopping temperature of 47°C/116.6°F. Around mid-July, another heat wave occurred towards the northern region of the United Kingdom with temperatures over 40°C/104°F. France and Spain were also struck with another devastating heatwave in August with temperatures of 38°C/100.4°F. These heat waves, unfortunately, took



the lives and homes of innocent people across the continent. It also had a massive impact on the continent's tourism.

Europe is known as one of the most scenic destinations in the world; famous for its natural beauty and unique architecture. One of its most recognizable tourist activities would be: canal cruises. Canal cruising is a delightful journey via small canoes floating through the towns of Europe. However,

due to the peaks in temperature this summer, many of these canals, alongside other water bodies, have dried up. As a result, the economy was faced with a rather alarming situation.

Fortunately at this moment, the temperatures are decreasing steadily. However, this record can be broken again seeing how irresponsibly climate change is being handled. If this pattern continues,

not only will Europe be affected, but also many other countries across the globe. In the worst case scenario, it can also cause health problems to come about in the public. The European Union and several European country governments aim to reduce their carbon footprint in the near future by limiting the amount of gas emissions and plan on leaning more towards eco-friendly methods. One organization in particular, known as Climate Action



THE TOXIC masculinity CRISIS

By Bishakha Khatri

“Man up,” they said. Falling in love? That’s weak. Trusting women. That’s dangerous. Physical strength, mental toughness, sexual prowess, and hard work are the rigid boundaries defining what we call “toxic masculinity”. Toxic masculinity doesn’t grant you permission to feel anything other than angry. It is selfish and seeks to make other people feel less based on toxic sense and self-importance.

Today, the idea of toxic masculinity is so widespread and encouraged through social media platforms as a lifestyle. Recently, Andrew Tate, an American-British internet personality and former professional

kickboxer, was labeled “the king of toxic masculinity”. In his view, it is feminine to express emotion, and therefore, he encourages his male audience to dismiss serious mental health conditions to maintain their masculinity. He places value in conformity to his personal view of the ideal male form; judging success based on the ability to attract women. Persons who fail to succeed are belittled and considered “not manly enough”. In brief, his understanding of masculinity views the female agency as a threat that needs to be eliminated.

The effect his content has had on boys is indisputable. Tate’s

views on manhood have led impressionable and insecure boys and men to believe that they are superior to women. He is not empowering young men, he is persuading them that if they show emotion, they are weak, if they do not have girlfriends, they are failures, and if they do not receive female obedience, they are not adequately reaping the benefits of manhood.

What does it really mean to “man up”? How can you truly overcome toxic masculinity? When you admit you have wounds that need to be healed, ghosts that need to be confronted, and work to be done to become better men, you are breaking free

of the ideas and actions that have been deeply embedded in our minds as toxic masculinity. Maybe that’s what it truly means to “man up”.

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Future

Studying Abroad: Visa rejection rates rise in Canada & USA

BY LAVISHA DADLANI & BISHAKHA KHATRI

Are you in your last year of high school and looking to further your studies abroad, perhaps in Canada or the United States of America? Unfortunately, the two most favoured destinations to study abroad have increased visa rejection rates. This article will explain why international students are increasingly being rejected for visas.

Whether one gets accepted into a top-notch US university or is still awaiting their confirmation letter, international students around the globe share a collective eagerness in receiving the green light for their US student visa. Unfortunately, many students have had their dreams of studying in the United States come to a halt or completely changed due to the rising number of student visa rejections.

Looking back to pre-covid processes, the waiting time for a student visa application interview was around 10 days. Currently, this waiting period has become five times longer, averaging to about 49 days (varying from country to country) according to *icef Monitor*. This backlog is being experienced due to the embassies being closed in the beginning months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every student receives a reason for rejection, whereas under the previous US administration students were rejected for reasons of residency requirements, meaning that their choice of housing indicated that they may choose to stay in the US for further studies or work. However, more recently consular officials are making judgments based on the students' intentions to return home to their parents.

Canada is seen as a favoured education destination due to its friendly immigration policies, but that is no longer the case due

to an increasing number of students having their visas rejected or delayed. Pre-COVID-19, Canada's visa refusal rate, was 15 per cent, which has now climbed to 41 per cent, more than double the previous percentage. Student visas are now taking up to three months; thrice the amount since pre-COVID-19 times.

Students, despite having good academic records, are now being rejected not once, but multiple times. The increased rejection rates of visas are due to: limited spaces in colleges caused by an increased rate of applications, post-COVID-19 backlog, and fraud documentation. For some countries, racial biases are also said to play a role in the high visa rejection rates.

When applying for your student visas, having proper documents, financial proof, and justifications for selecting the university of acceptance, and establishing ties to your homeland would put you in a better position for acceptance for these student visas; therefore, preventing you from being part of those high rejection rates!

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The High Rate of Visa Rejection Becomes a Hindrance for International Students in Canada



Roe v. Wade Overturned vs Adoption and Foster Care

By: Jessica Su

As of June 24, 2022, *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned following the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*.

Roe v. Wade, established in 1973, has constitutionally protected the right to abortion for nearly half a century. While many people viewed *Roe v. Wade* as the case that "legalized abortion," its purpose is to change the way states can regulate abortion. It has redefined abortion as an act covered by constitutional rights of privacy.

Furthermore, this suppression of rights in an attempt to outlaw all abortions will not have the desired effect that the court intended. Abortion was regarded as a strategy for family planning where pregnancies occur when the parent is capable of fully supporting a family. Now women no longer have the option of reversing a deed, whether intentional or not, which will lead to consequences on both the mother and child(ren) as the proper finance, care and attention will be insufficient. Despite the court's ruling, women will continue to seek and desire abortions whether for medical or personal reasons, or even the trauma of sexual assault. This has led



to the discussion concerning foster care and adoption.

Despite their differences, both systems share a common link, the child's placement. A child enters the foster care system when he/she is determined by the state that he/she is living in an unsafe or negligent setting, whereas adoption grants the adoptive parent(s) complete legal custody and rights to the child. Children are often placed in foster care until they can be reunited with their biological family or placed in a permanent adoptive home.

The issue stems from those who believe that "a fetus has rights" while also condemning children to

be placed in foster care or adoption, for which they have no choice. Many anti-abortion activists are also unwilling to care for these children, instead claiming that they may not adopt or foster, but others will.

The consequences of the *Roe v. Wade* ruling are already being noticed. Before the court's decision, over 400,000 children were in foster care in the US on any given day, yet people's mindset of "someone else will certainly foster/adopt a child" will only increase the number of children in these systems. Already experts predict an increase in teen births, higher rates of childhood poverty, and lower female labor-force participation,

although the magnitude of these changes is uncertain. If nothing is done to address this situation, many children will suffer.

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Overturned

Notable Women in STEM

BY LAVISHA DADLANI

By now, many of us have become accustomed to hearing the term STEM, which is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. You may have also heard of all the great financial benefits that follow obtaining a degree in any of these fields. However, do you actually know what STEM is? It is way more than just a catchy acronym. STEM education integrates concepts that are usually taught as separate subjects in different classes and emphasizes the application of knowledge to real-life situations. Now, you are wondering why we chose to highlight women in STEM in particular.

Well, the achievements of these women show that the mature expression of sophisticated human capacities depends upon a complex interaction between biological endowment and cultural and educational opportunity (that is, nature and nurture), and is not due to any innate differences between the sexes. Despite many individuals in their time not being supportive of women's involvement in STEM, these women have fought against all odds and truly exhibit that success is the best revenge. Their achievements and hard work paved the way for many generations of women to follow in their footsteps. Moreover, today well over half of all college graduates are women.

Here, we highlight some pioneering women in STEM, who significantly made an impact on the world and defied gender gaps.

1. Marie Skłodowska Curie

Education: Marie Curie jumped at the chance to study at a university in France after her sister offered it to her. In 1891, she relocated to France and began studying physics and mathematics at Sorbonne University in Paris.

Achievements: In 1903, she received the Nobel Prize in Physics, and in 1911, she received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. She was the first woman to hold a post as a professor at the University of Paris, taking up her husband's position as Professor of General Physics in Sorbonne, Paris, after his untimely death in 1906. She was also named director of the Curie Laboratory at the University of Paris' Radium Institute, which was formed in 1914. The findings of Marie Curie are in the science of radioactivity.

2. Rosalind Franklin

Education: Rosalind Franklin went to a private school close to her house when she was a child. She was then moved to Lindores School for Ladies at the age of nine. In the year 1931, Rosalind Franklin was 11 years old and enrolled at St. Paul's Girl's School, one of the few institutions in the country to offer science as a subject to girls. She graduated from high school in 1938 to pursue her study at the University of Cambridge. She majored in Natural Sciences at the university, and sat her final examinations, graduating with second honours after three years at the institution.

Achievements: Many people remember Rosalind Franklin for her discoveries into the structure of DNA, coal, graphite, and viruses. Despite her efforts, she was not acknowledged in the realm of science and hence did not get an award. This is because her well-deserved credit was snatched away from her by her male colleagues, who were shown Photo 51, a crucial image for deciphering DNA structure, that Rosalind Franklin took. The image was shown to them without Franklin's knowledge. Despite this, only her male colleagues James Watson, Francis Crick, and Maurice Wilkins were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1962 for their work.

3. Katherine Johnson

Education: Katherine Johnson breezed through her lessons and passed eighth grade at the tender age of 10, thanks to her exceptional aptitude for mathematics. She went to West Virginia High School, after which she transferred to West Virginia State College to pursue her studies, majoring in mathematics and French.

Achievements: In the year 1999, she was named Outstanding



Alumnus of West Virginia State College. On November 24, 2015, Barack Obama presented her with a presidential medal. The Silvery Snoopy Award was given to her in recognition of her efforts at NASA. Katherine Johnson's mathematical expertise assisted NASA's first crewed mission to arrive on the moon in 1969, paving the path for women of colour in STEM professions.

4. Tu YouYou:

Education: Tu YouYou attended private schools for her education, but was forced to take a two-year sabbatical after being afflicted with tuberculosis. Her recuperation inspired her to seek a profession in medicine. After graduating from Ningbo High School in 1951, she took and passed an admission test that permitted her to enroll in the Department of Pharmacology at Peking University Medical School.

Achievements: In 2015, she became the first Chinese woman to win the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Despite living in a society that discouraged women from pursuing STEM careers, she was able to save millions of lives in South America, Africa, South China, and Southeast Asia after finding and utilizing artemisinin and dihydroartemisinin to cure malaria.

5. Kalpana Chawla:

Education: Kalpana Chawla attended the Tagore Baal Niketan Senior Secondary School in Karnal, India, in her early years. She then graduated from Punjab Engineering College with a Bachelor's Degree in aeronautical engineering. In 1988, she moved to the United States, where she got a Master's Degree from the University of Texas and a Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering from the University of Colorado.

Achievements: She was the first Indian woman in space and the first Indian-American astronaut. She first flew into space as a mission specialist and principal robotic arm operator aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1997. She started working as vice president of Oversight Methods, Inc. at NASA Ames Research Center in 1988, where she undertook CFD research on Vertical/Short Takeoff and Landing ideas. Kalpana had Commercial Pilot licences for single and multi-engine aircraft, seaplanes, and gliders, as well as a Certified Flight Instructor rating for airplanes and gliders. In March 1995, Kalpana Chawla joined the NASA Astronaut Corps and was chosen for her first trip in 1996. Kalpana Chawla tragically perished in the Space Shuttle Columbia accident on February 1, 2003, when the shuttle destroyed over Texas. She received the Congressional Space Medal of Honor, the NASA Space Flight Medal, and the NASA Distinguished Service Medal after her death.

Technology Takeover

By Jonathan Sang

I am writing this to bring across my vision and thoughts about changing the school system to a technological one. Through this article, I will discuss both the pros and cons to this idea to generate a well-rounded point of view.

The majority of us students walk around their schools every day with a bag of “bricks” on our back. I propose a solution to this inconvenient and unhealthy issue, which is to adopt a more advanced and technical type of school system. More specifically, using e-books to study and take notes, replacing the physical books we read and taking notes with online programmes of the school's choice.

Now, let's take a look at the pros and cons at hand. Some pros:

Students will carry lighter bags.

Teachers will not have to struggle to read handwriting.

It will be easier for students to take notes and safely store important information in files or USB drives.

Another benefit is that laptops are easily portable, so you can work from anywhere, as long as you have an Internet connection. You can even hand in assignments from home.

The cons of this idea include:

Every student may not be able to afford a digital device.

If/when the electricity goes off, the unavailability of the internet will hinder productivity.

Looking at a screen for a long, continuous amount of time can damage your eyes in the long term.

And lastly, some people actually prefer having a physical book.

In the end, it can be said that



this idea really has its good and bad qualities, but living in the 21st century where technology

is becoming more prominent by the day, this idea should be given some thought and hopefully

implemented in hopes of enhancing our youth's learning experiences.

The Coding Corner:

Did you Know?

Did you know that there are approximately 700 different programming languages, which is more than the number of languages spoken in the United States and the entire continent of South America combined?!

Some programming languages are more widely used, such as Python, Java, and HTML, while others, such as Elixir, F#, and Kotlin, are utilized in highly particular scenarios. The good news for coders is that after you've mastered the larger ones, the more specialized languages become second



Future

Halle Bailey 'in awe' at response to Little Mermaid

"She looks like me!"

Little Mermaid star Halle Bailey has said she is "in awe" of the reaction to the film's trailer, which was released to the public on 10 September during Disney's D23 fan expo.

Bailey, who plays Ariel in a live action remake of Disney's successful 1989 animation, was responding to a Brazilian tweet captioned: "Compilation of the reaction of Black children seeing Halle Bailey as Ariel in The Little Mermaid". Bailey posted a message in response saying: "People have been sending these reactions to me all weekend and I'm in truly in awe ... this means the world to me."

Variety reported that the trailer had recorded 104 million views globally, without specifying the time period; this compares with the 355 million in 24 hours for *Spider-Man: No Way Home* in 2021, and 127 million in 24 hours for the live action *Beauty and the Beast* in 2016.

Bailey was cast in the role in 2019, triggering a backlash against her suitability for the part, which was largely characterised as racist. The trailer itself appears to have become a target for internet trolls. After it collected 1.5 million "dislikes" in two days, YouTube has disabled the thumbs-down "dislike" button, while dozens of comments below it are parodying a positive response by citing dialogue from other films.

Bailey touched on the culture war and representation issues surrounding the film in a recent interview with *Variety*, in which she mentioned the reaction from her grandparents to her presence in the film: "It was an inspiring and beautiful thing to hear their words of encouragement, telling me, 'You don't understand what this is doing for us, for our community, for all the little Black and brown girls who are going to see themselves in you.'"

Most people were thrilled about the teaser, praising its sumptuous visuals and Bailey's stunning vocals in a snippet of "Part of Your World." Most people, that is, except racists, who promptly took to social media to pee in their diapers about a Black woman being cast as a mermaid.

Almost immediately, a slew of very normal and well-adjusted adults took to social media using the hashtag #notmyariel to complain about

Bailey's casting and Disney being overly "woke."

#notmyariel @DisneyStudios Any reason why everything has to be black? are you starting to realize people are fed up and frankly bored? You do realize this is doing the opposite with racism yeah? I bet you that the Hercules actor and meg will be black? #gowokegobroke," read one representative tweet, confusingly attaching a photo of future *Snow White* star Rachel Zegler (who is, quite famously, not Black) as "proof" of this phenomenon. Another tweet showing someone using AI to turn Bailey's skin white also went viral. Noted transphobe and arbiter of great judgment Matt Walsh also got involved, writing on Twitter, "Hollywood changes traditionally white characters into Black while claiming that the reverse would be 'black erasure.'" What this tells us is that, by their own admission, they are engaged in white erasure. It's just that we aren't supposed to notice or complain.

The whiny tweets (which, it should be noted, happen pretty much every time a person of colour is cast in a franchise) carried more than a whiff of absurdity, with its implicit suggestion that there's some sort of sanctity involved in the casting of a busty teenage mezzo soprano fish with no legs. Some, however, tried to make the "argument" that because *The Little Mermaid* is based on a Danish fairy tale — specifically, Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Mermaid* — to not cast a Danish-looking (i.e., white) woman would represent a deviation from the source material. Of course, the original version of the story involves Ariel cutting out her tongue in exchange for feet that bleed constantly when she's on land, and ends with her dissolving into sea foam after she considers stabbing Prince



Eric and his new wife to death; in the Andersen story, she also has green skin. So by arguing for the need for historical accuracy — again, we're talking about a story about a mermaid who is best friends with a talking flounder — racists are once again showing their colours.

Luckily, the backlash doesn't appear to be diminishing the happiness of young Black girls, who have been posting incredibly poignant reaction videos to the teaser trailer on TikTok. Given that there's only been one Black Disney princess in history (Tiana from *Princess and the Frog*), the sheer joy of young Black girls at seeing a young woman who looks just like them up on screen is a powerful counterbalance to all of the infuriating online hate.

The *Little Mermaid* is due to be released in the US on 26 May 2023.

