
Sumus Leones

Honoring Black History Month

BY: LILY WILLIAMS AND FOLA JACKSON, JUNIORS



“Black History Month is an intentional time to carve out space for people’s stories and history that often are left out in the larger story of history.”

- Kena Allison

Black history month is a national time to honor the past and current achievements and contributions Black people have made in the world. There are many examples of Black excellence here in the Latin community, and it was honored this month, on Valentine’s Day, in the ‘Celebrating 50 Years of Hip-Hop’ assembly. The assembly was a student and faculty collaboration under the direction of the Upper School biology teacher Ms. Allison. The event featured a hip-hop style fashion show, dance and singing, an art display, and the famous DJ Doug E. Fresh, who played various hip hop hits. The assembly displayed Black music and artistic influences and resonated with many people.

In previous years, while there were Black History Month Assemblies, there had not been anything of this scope, so science teacher Ms. Allison made it her mission to take the lead and organize it.

“I thought we were at a unique time where we were celebrating 50 years of hip hop,” noted Ms. Allison, “and I think I wanted it to be a celebration for our first upper school [Black History Month assembly] back from the pandemic.”

Math department chair Mr. Love, who walked in the fashion show, praised the presentation as being, “a great ode to black history and black culture.” He appreciated that it was student-driven because he says, “students and the youth being the center of it is like, what we’re trying to do, we’re trying to build black futures. And so I thought that it was lit.”

Engaging youth in various aspects of Black culture was indeed one of the main goals of this assembly. Tenth grader Curtis Steve says the presentation “made [him] feel really good... showing [the school] cares.”

The theme seemed to resonate with other students such as TJ Chandler, also a sophomore, who adds, “it taught me some things I didn’t even know about myself.”

Overall, the students’ enthusiastic responses highlight the impact of this event, with many expressing newfound knowledge and appreciation.



Post assembly, a lot of students expressed a desire for more cultural events like this one. Like Mr. Love put it, the event was, “a space where we can regularly celebrate black culture... not just once a year during Black History Month.” He continues “it’s important for people, not just black people, but all people to know that. Black culture is an integral part of who we are. What we are.”

The Latin community is made up of so many different groups, and events like this help more groups to be recognized. Doing so “goes back to being intentional... if culture we think holds value and importance, then we’ve got to make space for it,” Ms. Allison affirms.

On the question of how we can bring more culture into our schools? School social worker Ms. Foster replies, “don’t be afraid...I think we should be elevating everything and anything that is here. Let’s love all.”

Spring Sports Are Around the Corner

BY: NOAH RATZMAN

WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY FRANCISCO BLANCO, EIGHTH GRADERS

Winter is just ending, which means spring sports are starting. There are several spring sports options for students to join. There are a handful of coaches who are returning for another season with some new faces. Some sports will have more people trying out than others. Many of the returning coaches reflected about their excitement for the upcoming season and the hard work ahead of them.

Mr. Starnes, the former Latin teacher at Second Street, who now teaches Civics at the Cooper Campus, will be returning as a coach for ultimate frisbee, except for the Upper School! Starnes has moved up to coaching Upper Schoolers alongside Upper School English teacher, Mr. Hultgren. Meanwhile Ms. Barlev and Mr. Elbert will be coaching the middle school in ultimate frisbee. Mr. Starnes had some things to say about the middle school frisbee team, despite leaving to coach the high school. Starnes thinks that Middle School is important to build up fundamental skills as a player. According to Mr. Elbert, tryouts will be the week before spring break.

“The main goal of Middle School Ultimate is to build a solid foundation of skills. Every year we have had new students on the team and it has been a joy to see the welcoming spirit of returning players. Ultimate relies heavily on what’s called the Spirit of the Game.” Starnes also talks about how since there are tons of kids trying out, it is hard to make a decision because they can only take 18 or so.

“We always have a lot of kids trying out each year. It is difficult having to cut students from the team

simply because we don’t have the transportation means to get more than 18 kids to the games.” said Starnes. Both middle school and varsity frisbee have tryouts the week of March 11th.

There has also been a change in coaches for baseball. Mr. Staten, the previous coach for the middle school team, has decided to take a season off. Ms. D’Angelo and Ms. David will coach Upper School softball. Varsity Girls Softball team tryouts started last week.

The Middle School baseball team will have a new head coach. According to 8th grader Paul Boone who has played for the team in 6th and 7th grade, the middle school boys baseball team will be coached by Coach Rafi. Paul talks about how the baseball team found a coach. “My mom asked a teacher at my brother’s school to see if he was eligible to coach. He unfortunately wasn’t able to, but they recommended someone else, who ended up being Rafi,” said Paul. Middle school baseball has tryouts the week of March 11th.

Coach Cooper, the coach for the High School baseball team, will be returning for his 3rd year as a coach. Coach Cooper looks forward to winning Latin’s third PCSAA championship in a row, as a coach.

“I expect nothing less than a third league championship in a row,” says Cooper. “We have a good team. We have a championship team. I can’t wait to go out and prove it on the field! Come out and support your Lions as we go for a three-peat!”

Coach Cooper also expects to see a lot of familiar faces, coming back to play this spring season. Cooper also knows and looks forward to seeing some of the freshmen from last year's Middle School team try out and play for the team.

"We return our two captains, [junior] Ben Blier and [sophomore] Tate Meier," says Cooper.

"I have no doubt they will make a huge impact on the squad and earn once again their role as captains. However, next year may be our largest freshman class of players yet looking at the middle school level. Big things are certainly ahead for Latin Baseball."

Lastly, Coach Cooper speaks about what he thinks will be the biggest challenge for this upcoming season's team. "The hardest challenge will be staying close-knit as teammates. We are a new program but we're aiming for higher goals. We must not lose sight of each other. We're all here to make each other better. We'll face some tough teams as well as teams we expect to beat. We must stay together no matter what happens to be successful!"

Freshman, Raine Montgomery-Vielmo, says there will be a new coach for this year's varsity lacrosse team.

"Janee Phillips (Coach Phillips) is this year's varsity girls lacrosse head coach. The assistant coaches are Coach Kiki and Coach Torrence," said Raine, who also played in middle school. Lacrosse tryouts were the first week in March.

In other news, Mr. Green decided not to coach Middle School track and field this season.

"I was the coach last year, but Latin teacher Mr. Berger is taking the reins this year," noted Green, who is enjoying spending more time at home with his young children. The middle school team will have tryouts starting the week of March 11th.

The coach for the Varsity outdoor track and field team this season will be Mr. Callum. The season for the Varsity track and field team will start on March 4th. Coach Callum expects to win the charter league outdoor championship title.

Coach Callum said, "A big expectation for us this spring is to win the charter league outdoor championship title, and I have several athletes who qualify for the state meet."

Coach Callum also speaks about how he wants to encourage students to participate in sports. "I think participating in sports plays a major role in your middle or high school career. It is super important. It's something bigger than yourself, and it allows you to build great relationships with people you never thought you would be with or around," said Callum.

Brian OG Takes the Stage

BY: ARI RATZMAN, SIXTH GRADE



As many people know, there have been several new musicians raised at our own Washington Latin.

Brian OG is a new musical artist and rapper at Latin's upper school. Also known as Brian Guzman, he is a senior who writes bilingual rap songs and publishes them on several platforms.

He has written five songs, featuring Junior Wyatt Mitchell in one. Also known as "Wyatt M," Mitchell is a rapper in his own right, and a DJ and jazz musician, and provides technical support on the school musical. Mitchell is Brian OG's producer and has been featured in "Blowing up my Phone." Brian's songs are: "Blowing Up My Phone," released on December 7; "Falling For You," released on January 18; "Excuses," "Turned Your Back on Me," and "Shake It," all released on Valentine's Day, some of which he performed at the Black History Month

assembly.

Brian plays guitar, alto saxophone, drums, and piano in the jazz band. He has 2,000 monthly listeners on all his platforms including Apple Music and Spotify.

"Being at Latin influences my career because it is a home of mine and I am proud to represent it," said Brian. "I take constructive criticism from many artists around the school and it helps me improve my craft."

Many artists have inspired Brian, he explained how listening to artists like SAINT JHN, J.I the Prince of N.Y. They helped him find the musical style and showed his interest in music. Brian began to rap during quarantine.

"I started listening to a ton of music and would often write bars on any of my interests or situations in which I was, which led to inspiring my raps and my music." Brian shared. In late 2023 Brian began his official music career by dropping, "Blowing Up My Phone."

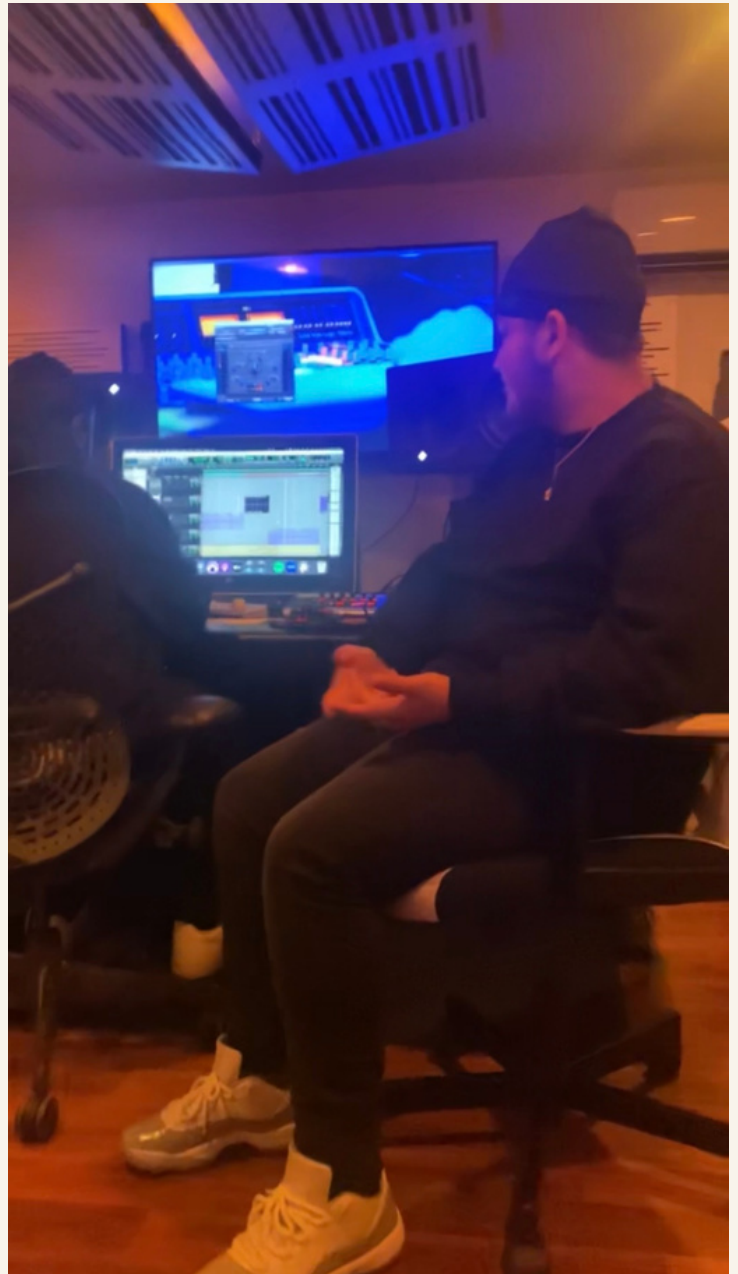
Arts department chair Ms. VerCammen has been teaching Brian in jazz band since eighth grade, she shared how much he has grown in the last four years. "Brian came to me with very very little knowledge of melody or rhythm," remembers Ms. VerCammen. "But he was a natural drummer." Brian later picked up several other jazz instruments with the help of 2022 graduate Jonah Spiva.

Brian OG and Wyatt M are hardly the only music producers, lyricists, and vocalists to start their careers at Latin. Ms. VerCammen shared some other

students from Latin and their careers, “Theo Ammon [2017] is in LA right now, he is a full-time musician,” lists Ms. VerCammen. “Shelby Griffith [2019] is a full-time professional musician in New Orleans, and Eowyn Sherrer [2017] is a musician in New York City. Kayla Griffith [2015] left in her freshman year [to go to Duke Ellington], but she is now writing for Cocomelon and Little Angel on Netflix. Harris Marcks and Mitch Shapiro [2018] do small bands on the side, playing every once in a while. Ned Yarsky [2017] now teaches lessons and gigs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Miles Pulford [2022] is playing in Purdue in their jazz band.” Other Washington Latin musical artists include 2014 graduate Brandi Clarke, who now performs gigs as Brandin St. Clair, and 2020 graduate Owen Fox-Whelpton, who performs on Instagram, Spotify, and Apple Music.

Brian shared how he wanted his music to impact his peers, “My music makes people feel excited and in a great mood. I want it to set an example to people that if you can dream of something, just do it and it’ll come with time to success.”

Dylan Park, a senior at Latin, shared how he connects to Brian and Wyatt’s musical collaborations, “I view [the] music as a testament to anyone who wants to follow their dreams. His music has an underlying message of managing the chaos and distractions amidst a hectic senior year, as the song *Blowing Up My Phone* communicates.”



Politics in the Classroom

BY: MADELINE SICKEL AND ALICE PITTARD, JUNIORS

There is a saying that goes: “Never discuss politics or religion in polite company.” Is this applicable for schools?

Politics can be quite divisive, so does such potential for controversy belong in our classrooms? And should teachers incorporate their personal political beliefs into their lessons?

For Mr. Bhuvu, the upper school history department chair, “Teaching history IS a political act,” so he incorporates his own political beliefs “every day in [his] selection of what we talk about and how we talk about it.”

Similarly, Ms. Feist, an upper school English and film studies teacher, is open to sharing her own political opinions with her classes. She explained that, “I think I don’t keep my political beliefs secret, but I also try to point out other sides and points of view when we’re talking about a hot topic.”

Upper school English teacher Mr. Sheehan agreed, saying, “that his ‘political’ beliefs in justice and equity infuse everything [he does].”

An important point for Mr. Bhuvu is that teachers “need to say what they believe, how they reached those beliefs, and most importantly that the students don’t need to believe what they do.”

Ms. Feist agrees, saying, “the teacher has to be cautious because we’re in a position of power or authority and it’s not our job to wield that power into changing everybody [so that they] believe all of what I believe. I take seriously my responsibility to present a diversity of viewpoints and to honor

students who disagree with me as well.”

However, stepping out of the Latin bubble, teachers talking about their political beliefs can be less acceptable. Ms. Feist commented, “I feel like at Washington Latin the teachers have freedom in a lot of things—politics is one of them, but also in book selection. Even when books can be controversial or potentially banned in other places. We just don’t have those same fears.”

Mr. Sheehan added that, “teachers should help students to develop the critical thinking skills to come to be good citizens themselves, and that overt teaching of [their] own political beliefs could make that more difficult.”

He noted, “I try not to be one sided when analyzing political rhetoric, but I do not hold back when I see logical fallacies or inconsistencies.”

And even if he tries not to teach his own politics, he believes that discussing current events is important: “If we are going to build the thoughtful, flexible thinkers that we claim to aim for, we must talk about the issues that are important today even if (especially if) those issues are emotionally charged.”

In this he agrees with Mr. Bhuvu, who thinks, “It’s important to tie content to the present-day, but that does not always have to do with politics.”

Not every student agrees, however. Arto Briscoe, a junior, said he doesn’t see teachers show their own politics very often. He also thinks “it’s not necessary to a student’s learning.”



A Season for Regrowth

BY: AITANA CAMPONOVO, JUNIOR



After an incredible win at the DCSAA State Championships last year, Washington Latin is now known for having one of the largest wrestling programs in the city. Last year, all 10 people from Latin placed top three in the podium.

This season, however, was one of “rebuilding,” as Mr. Torrence, the head wrestling coach, puts it.

Mr. Torrence has been coaching wrestling for 25 years this year, and it is his eighth year coaching for WLPCS. He takes special pride in the diversity of the team in a male dominated sport: there are only three women who are wrestling coaches in DC, and two of them belong to WLPCS. Not only that, but there are several girls who wrestle on the team, two of which do not go to school at Latin.

An overwhelming majority of the wrestling team this season has been freshmen and sophomores. Mr. Torrence, known for his bubbly personality and intrinsic love for the sport, has been a crucial figure in sparking their interest for the team.

“I try to recruit every person I talk to, period,” Mr. Torrence says. Though he says this playfully, he means every word.

Junior and team captain Zander Perry, began his wrestling journey three years ago. He remembers the push-up competitions from his freshman Physics class.

“I had done 50 in a row, and Torrence was like ‘you need to be on the wrestling team’...After that,” he explains, “he kept on asking me every day.”

Though the prospect of wrestling was exciting, Zander learned it is a brutal sport at its core.

“Some people just don’t expect the practice to be that hard,” he continues, “you’re drilling taking another person down; it’s basically an organized fight.”

Watching yourself grow stronger throughout the season is rewarding. However, wrestling is more mental than it is physical. Mr. Torrence feeds his team one constant reminder: at the end of the day, a wrestling match boils down to who wants it more.

Sophomore and co-captain Preston Olander has been in the sport since he was five.

His approach to wrestling is this, “If you’re gonna do it, you’ve gotta do it all the way...If you’re gonna do it halfway don’t even try to join.”

Preston is known in the team for his high wrestling IQ and plentiful experience: when he was just a freshman, he took first place on the podium in the State Championships.

Julia Hallam, a junior and one of the two team



managers, remarks on the wrestling team’s growth the last three years.

“I’ve seen it grow a lot,” she starts. In her freshman year, “it started off as a small team and they didn’t really win a ton...it would just be pin after pin,” however, “last year, during our sophomore year, we won States, and our team grew a lot because we had a lot of good freshmen,” and soon enough, “we started growing in numbers.”

It is an exciting time for the Washington Latin wrestling community. From here on out, there is only room for the team to get even stronger.

Next year, Leah Bleimehl, the other team manager of the Wrestling Team, explains that, “we are definitely planning on hyping up the intensity” with “longer practices, more passion,” and developing “more experience” with the new players from this year.

Banned Books at Latin

BY: AMAL BUBA, JUNIOR AND MIRA SOSKIS, SOPHOMORE

According to PEN America, a nonprofit organization that raises awareness for freedom of expression in literature, as of 2023 there have been, “3,362 book bans affecting 1,557 unique titles.” Many of these bans are from Florida, but they have been taking place across the country. In the U.S, the most contentious and widely challenged books often contain discussions of race, sexuality, or gender identity.

At Washington Latin, the teachers and administration often encourage the teaching of books considered controversial. These titles include *The Outsiders*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *A Raisin in The Sun*, *The Memoir of Frederick Douglass*, *Maus*, *Kindred*, and *Dear Martin*. According to Dr. Peale, a 7th grade English teacher, although these books can be challenging to read, they “offer important lessons for students to think about and learn from.”

In the graphic novel *Maus*, Art Spiegelman tells the story of how his parents survived the Holocaust. His book has been banned in several school districts - not necessarily because of the topic, but because it includes profanity, which the school districts believed to be “inappropriate.” *Maus* was also criticized for an instance of nudity during a scene in which Spiegelman reflects on his mother’s suicide. Spiegelman, however, believed that his mother’s death was a vital moment to capture, especially because it was so closely linked to the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust.

English teacher Mr. Sheenan feels the novel is beneficial to students. “It’s important to understand some of the worst things humanity has to offer in order to encourage us to strive for the best.”

Although *Maus* wasn’t chosen by Mr. Sheehan, it was a book that was especially picked due to the way it communicated with students.

“I think that graphic novels are more accessible to a lot of kids,” Mr. Sheehan noted. “[*Maus*] says some important and different things about dehumanization because the characters are all animals.” Mr. Sheehan stated that he is prepared to have difficult conversations, like the ones that *Maus* sparks, with his students. “If students were to feel uncomfortable, at Latin we try to seek the conversation of why we feel uncomfortable.”

He notes that in his class, people say, “‘I can’t believe this happened or I never knew this’ or be really emotional about it. It feels really good because that’s the point of this book. The book is supposed to inform people about what happened.”

Dr. Peale had similar views on book bannings. She teaches multiple controversial books, however one in particular *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is part of the banned books in many places in the U.S, due to its sensitive topics. Dr. Peale believes that there are many strong lessons behind this book, “There are many lessons from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Two of the most important lessons is that we learn more about people when we see things from their perspective, and that we should love and protect those things or people that do good things for other people.”

In regards to students in her classroom who may feel uncomfortable while reading the text, Dr. Peale expresses her understanding, “I think some students might feel uncomfortable, but we try to teach these

books in a supportive environment, and support students as we are reading the books, but we think it's important to teach the books." Ms. Peale also adds that she would allow a student to opt out of reading, "after a conversation with them so we can find a book that they are more comfortable with."

Though teachers make the final decisions in teaching these texts, students weighed in on the challenges and importance of reading banned books.

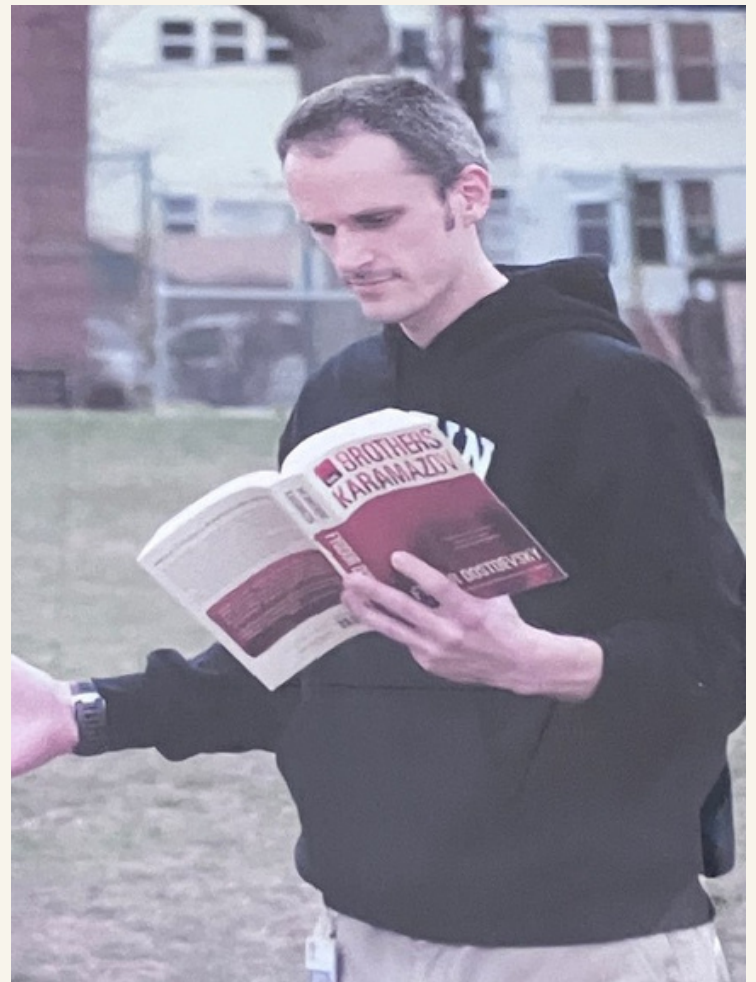
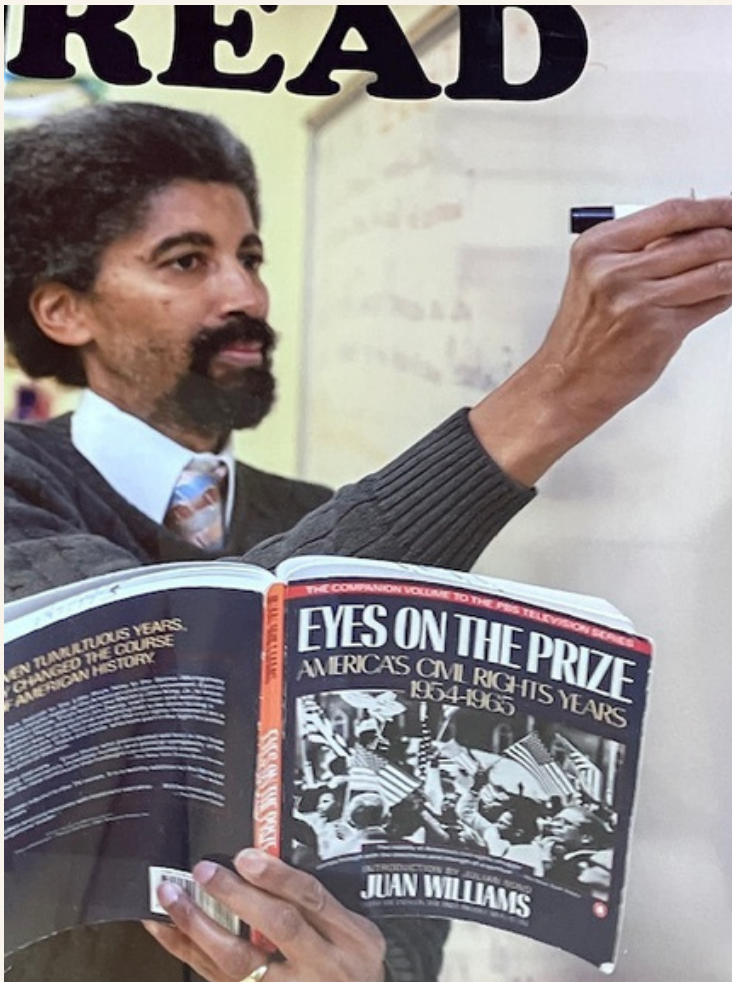
Sophomore Jonah Cohen, who is reading *Maus*, shares his opinion towards the book and book bans in general.

"It's important to read difficult books because it's

very important to understand the past," says Jonah. "It's important to understand the circumstances that led to this kind of stuff happening. And it's just important to learn about very, very heavy topics because if you shelter yourself all your life, you're kind of gonna be blind to important issues."

Middle school students agreed that they appreciated the trust the school took in giving them books that were banned elsewhere.

"Banning books is wrong because books are knowledge and knowledge is everybody's birthright," reflected seventh grader Liam Pittard, who is reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



Study Abroad Programs

BY: LUCIA CLAIRE AND CATE SHEPHERD, JUNIORS

Study abroad programs spark interest in many high school students because of the opportunities they offer and the new adventures that they reveal, so to no surprise many Washington Latin students have taken steps to study abroad. While Latin offers spring travel opportunities, these students found programs to further their knowledge of themselves and the world around them through longer periods of time of study. A few places some Latin students have traveled to so far include Morocco, Italy, Japan, and many more. A few students were willing to share their experiences with the newspaper, and all agreed that their programs had their benefits and challenges.

Travel is known to be beneficial to a person's academic and personal growth because it pushes them to go out of their comfort zone by being immersed in a different culture, language, and place.

For Ollie Patterson, a junior who studied abroad in Rabat, Morocco all of last summer, he found a “new appreciation for North and West African indigenous culture, fluency in Arabic, and confidence in [his] ability to adapt to change.” He enrolled in the program hoping “to improve [his] Arabic for future job opportunities” and “learn more about how to live independently and navigate school and life completely on [his] own.” After a full summer in Morocco, he returned to the states with confidence in his ability to “succeed independently regardless of circumstance.”



Similarly, senior Kai McFadgion appreciated her newfound independence in her year-long study abroad in Recanati, Italy, with AFS Intercultural Programs. She attributed her travel in Italy as a time when she “learned more things about [herself] and how to be independent.” While she left the States with the intention to “take away some of the Italian culture and proficiency in the language” as well as “strong relationships” she took away “way more than [she] thought [she] would.”



Junior Aitana Camponovo had a similar experience of growth through her semester program in Japan with Ayusa. She mentioned that she became “more independent” and “more extroverted” through her travel, “making new connections with people at school [and in her] neighborhood.”

Junior Will Batkin, who studied for 6 weeks over the summer in Morocco through the NSLI-Y program, was challenged with “very intensive” language education, “being immersed in an Arabic speaking country with an Arabic speaking family” as well as “four hours of [Arabic] class a day.” He left with the intention to “expand [his] knowledge of Arabic and learn more about how other people live around the world.” He accomplished this goal, with much thanks to his host family who “helped [him] learn more about how people in Morocco live” getting to not just “watch from the outside, but because [he] was part of the family.”

While each person’s experience was exciting and challenging in different ways, they all had to learn to adapt to a new place, language, and culture. But they were up for the challenge. Ollie mentioned that “no one in [his] host family except for [his] brother spoke English,” so he was “challenged to actually put the

skills [he] was learning to use.” For Aitana, “cultural differences” in her school were challenging to adjust to, but over time she adapted. A struggle for Will was the weather in Morocco, “reaching 100 degrees most days.” And Kai mentioned that “sometimes it was hard to have some personal space” in her host family.

Despite the challenges, overall, each person said they enjoyed the experience and found it to be very beneficial to their personal growth. One common theme between everyone who studied abroad was their love that their experience fostered for their respective countries’ cultures and people. They each learned so much that can be implemented in their everyday lives, and created memories to last for years.



Detention

BY: NICK KEMPF, JUNIOR

Several months ago, families started receiving weekly alerts whenever their student was out of uniform or tardy to 3 or more classes a week. This was the beginning of a new directive from the school to decrease the large number of tardies and uniform violations that were occurring. Ms. Kovach said the hope was that, “These emails would spark conversations between you and your guardians about our school’s expectations in furtherance of our core belief about seeking the conversation.”

More recently, however, the school cracked down on these infractions even more by implementing new detention policies. These stated that students who accrue 3 or more uniform violations in a week will serve an hour of detention after school on Monday of the following week, and those who are tardy to three or more classes in a week will serve an hour of detention after school on Tuesday the following week.

Detention will, “occur in small groups led by a Washington Latin faculty member. You will complete a restorative writing assignment encouraging reflection and affirming the importance of these policies. Afterwards, you will silently work on homework or missing assignments for their classes,” according to Ms. Kovach, Interim Director of the Upper School.

Many teachers, such as Ms. Spiegel, have expressed their support for the school’s actions. She says, “Ms. Pettiford and other US administrators worked hard to have clear expectations and outcomes for students, and I love that.”

Some students, such as junior Maeve Marchand, support the policies, saying, “I think it’s a good idea for tardiness because people at Latin generally seem to be late to things.”

However, a majority of students expressed their dismay about the new policies because they are worried about getting detention.

Junior Ehren Pyburn said, “As a person who’s gotten many tardy and uniform emails, I do not want to go to detention.”

Ms. Kovach said that “these policies may not be received well, but the hope is there is an understanding and I hope everyone that has expressed questions and dissatisfaction has been heard out by members of faculty.”

According to her, the point of the policies was not punishment.

“Tardiness and uniform are two things very controllable by students. Despite this, students are still struggling to be in uniform and on time. I want people to be in classes to learn and be present. The goal is getting kids in classes on time to maximize learning.”

Despite the aversion towards the new policies, some students are starting to recognize the positives. Senior Tyler Davis says, “The following week after my detention, I definitely started tracking if I was late and was more aware of the time. I’m glad it made me more aware of the time.”

The school hopes that these policies can bring down the number of tardies and uniform violations, and demonstrate the importance of promptness and routine, so that we can get to a point where detention may not be needed.

Washington D.C. Crime is on the Rise

BY: GISELLE NORQUIST AND KINLEY SLAKEY, FRESHMEN

It is no secret that the home of Washington Latin, our nation's capital, has seen a groundbreaking uprise in crime. CNN reports that while many major cities saw a drop in violent crimes, Washington DC suffered a 39% increase in 2023. Additionally, Metropolitan Police statistics show there have already been 84 carjackings in the city in 2024, 52% of which involved firearms. Of the 20 ensuing arrests, 55% involved juveniles.

The New Republic wrote an article claiming that the District has been affected by several changes in recent years, which in turn has affected the method of addressing crime. In recent weeks a new Twitter account and campaign has raised \$100,000 dollars to petition for the removal of Ward 6 councilman, Charles Allen. A similar recall effort is underway against Ward 1 councilwoman Brienne Nadeau. Both are accused of voting for a council bill that moved police funding by \$15 million, and working to change the DC criminal code, a decision that was overruled by President Biden.

Crime impacts the lives of everyone in DC, including students and faculty attending Washington Latin. Data from the 2021 National Youth Risk Behavior survey, show that DC's youths are more exposed to crime than many areas around the country. The Latin community including faculty, parents of students, and the kids themselves shared their perspectives on how crime in the district has affected both their personal and school or work lives.

Seventh grade Latin teacher, Dr. Bonner, admitted that his neighborhood has not been hugely impacted by the increased crime. He said, "I'm sure that my feelings about the rising rates reflect where I live as much as any other factor, and my general sense of security tells you that I live in one of the safest areas of the Northwest quadrant. I suspect that I would give you a very different answer about raising my children here if I lived in many other parts of the District."

A few Latin students shared some of their own experiences as victims of criminal acts. Senior Eamonn McAloon talked about his own experience in DC, including him tightening his car tires, since it's common for them to get taken.

Additionally, crime throughout DC continues to scare and impact its teens. During a school orchestrated ice skating night for ninth graders, Freshman Annie Paterson's purse got taken, causing her to reflect on the city and its lack of control over crime, "I was disappointed in DC, and its people," she said. Additionally, Freshman Kayode Elion's shoes were taken from the same local ice rink.

Another student, Junior, Alice Pittard, experienced a shooting close to her Eastern Market home during the day, "I heard the gunshots," she says. Alice and her younger brother were at home, but she did and thought nothing much of it, only later did her mom find out a shooting occurred on her block.

Who Should Win the Oscars?

BY: BY JUNE WALSH AND ALICE BIRKENHEAD, EIGHTH GRADE

The Oscars are a night of celebration, conflict, controversy, and accomplishment. The Oscars are taking place on Sunday, March 10th at 7pm through 10pm in Los Angeles, California. This award show is an essential part of the illustrious film industry, and is described as “film’s biggest night.” Oscars are the most coveted award given to an actor and are sought after by anyone in the industry.

The most anticipated award is Best Picture; the most notable nominations are *Barbie*, *Oppenheimer*, *Past Lives*, *Maestro*, *The Holdovers*, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, and *Poor Things*. Although there are many movies nominated, some people think that other movies were unfairly left out. Ms. Toews, the 8th grade English teacher and college counselor, says, “I think *All Of Us Strangers* should have been nominated.”

Similarly, 8th grade Student Support Case Manager Ms. Breitman agrees, noting that the leads were also robbed of nominations and adding, “*Paul Mescal* is my special friend.”

One of the most talked about films nominated for best picture is *Barbie*. In addition to the movie being loved, there are also elements of it that are nominated. Students and teachers alike had lots of opinions about *Barbie*’s nominations, or lack thereof.

Freshman and *Barbie*-super-fan Johnie Thomas says that she is “very angry” about the fact that *Barbie* received so few nominations. Eighth grader Gio Rogers, also a *Barbie* super fan, says that, “*Barbie World*” by Nicki Minaj and Ice Spice should have

been nominated for Best Song.” Gio then proceeded to start singing a rendition of “*Barbie World*,” which deserved its own award show category.

8th grader Avery Park says that she “liked the costumes for *Barbie*.”

Barbie was the one of, if not the most acclaimed movie of 2023. It broke box office records, along with any other record you can think of, and an Oscar would only add to its accolade.

Many people also like *Oppenheimer*, *Barbie*’s infamous competitor, including the seventh grade math teacher Ms. Sisson, who says “*Oppenheimer* is my favorite movie. That should win.” Mr. Kolb, fifth grade math teacher Ms. Kolb’s husband and Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Actors member, agrees that *Oppenheimer* should win best picture.

Two people with contrasting opinions are those of Ms. Feist, the film studies and English teacher, and Ms. Toews, the eighth grade English teacher and college counselor.

Ms. Feist thinks that, “*Killers of the Flower Moon* should win best picture.”

Contradicting that, Ms. Toews thinks that, “it was long and slightly problematic.”

This year’s Oscars bring historical events, such as Lily Gladstone being nominated for Best Actress for her acting in *Killers of the Flower Moon*. Lily Gladstone is the first Native American woman to

ever be nominated for an Oscar. Many are confident that she will win, which would be a huge step for diversity and inclusion in the film industry. Another new addition to the Oscar ballot is going to be the casting director award. This award will begin to be awarded in two years.

Former casting director Juliet Taylor says, “I think it is just great that in two years casting directors will have their own category.”

But how are the nominations and winners decided? It all starts with the nominations which are decided by their peers. For example actors vote for actors and actresses vote for actresses. The motion picture academy votes for the winners. The members of the academy have to go through multiple security checks leading up to the voting making it a very secure process.

While some are very passionate about the Oscars, many really don't care. The new eighth grade theater teacher Mr. Diamondidis says, “I have not seen any of these movies,” when the list of nominations for best picture were read to him. He is not alone; many people have not seen any of these movies.

When Lincoln Fonseca, a seventh grader, was asked what movie should win best picture he said, “I think that I should win the best picture.”

All in all, the Oscars are an extremely integral part of the movie industry, and are an exciting current event that many are eagerly awaiting.

Editorial:

Do We Need Standardized Testing?

BY: MILA APPELBAUM, EIGHTH GRADE

While standardized testing is important, many people feel that the tests are unfair and worthless. People hate standardized tests, think they're exhausting, worthless, unnecessary and too much pressure. At Washington Latin, we take multiple standardized tests in a year. The middle school takes the MAP test three times a year and the PARCC (now called the CAPE) each May. Additionally, this year, eighth graders are taking the NAEP. With three separate tests occurring so frequently, it puts too much stress on students and teachers.

Standardized tests are overdone and add too much pressure, but they are important, and even enforced by the government.

"NAEP is something the federal government made us do," said Ms. Barroso, the Director of the middle school and a former history teacher at Latin. "Our school didn't control that and (the government) has schools do that so they can gather information for their department of education. The PARCC test [is] so that the District [of Columbia] can gather information about the quality of all the schools."

However, the school chooses to do assessments like MAP, so they can measure students' growth during the course of a year, and intervene if help is needed in specific areas for specific students.

Ms. Barroso added that, "We realized we wanted [the MAP] in the middle [of the year] because that can help us make a change and intervene while there is still time to make a change. There's a number of

people whose MAP scores went down (since the last testing) and we were like, what's going on here and it's good that we saw that in January and not waited until May because now we can look at our teaching and our instruction." She continued, saying that, "Standardized tests are made to be a benchmark, it's a way to look at the growth students are making in comparison to different things. It's basically to give a bird's eye view of growth."

However, Standardized testing does have a lot of problems, like giving many students stress and anxiety.

Eighth grader Nora Paxon stated that, "I feel like standardized testing is unnecessary and puts a lot of pressure and stress on kids especially based on how clumped together it is. A lot of kids have testing anxiety which prevents them from being able to do well in tests that have a short amount of time or tests that just prevent them from doing well because they are stressed."

The school does try to make these tests less stressful through positive messaging and scheduling.

"When we do MAP, we think about how we schedule it because there are some folks who want students to do MAP all in one day, [we] try to split it up," added Ms. Barroso. "When we have something like PARCC we talk with teachers about the messaging we give to kids about these tests as much as possible. Can we change the messaging so it's not this high stakes nerve-wracking thing but it's so that

you can be in tune with your own learning.”

“Latin also offers accommodations like a scribe or speech-to-text options or verbal dictation for students who need directions repeated or read aloud,” said Mr. Byrd, the eighth grade history teacher. While the tests are stressful, students with learning disabilities have access to support on these tests.

“There are also noise cancellation headphones available for students who can get overstimulated by things around them. For those students that can get overwhelmed, Latin allows students to take small breaks in between their test taking to refocus themselves and to gather their thoughts.”

Another reason why many students don’t like standardized testing, is that many people feel like it doesn’t actually test what they are learning. The tests sometimes don’t correspond with the lessons, and as a result students have material not at their level.

“There are so many factors that go into how students are assessed and students may not give their best effort on a standardized test and it could misconstrue the student’s profile. Some students are great test takers. Furthermore, students learn and express their understanding in different ways so the test results may not be an accurate representation of what a student is capable of.” Said Mr. Byrd.

“All these tests are useless if they are not aligned with what people are supposed to be teaching,” said Ms. Barroso. “That’s where some of the tension can happen, our school doesn’t create the MAP test or PARCC but supposedly they are created to be in alignment with the curriculum, but every now and then there isn’t that alignment and then we are like there’s a problem here and then we either have to change the curriculum or the test.”

“I don’t believe it should be used to evaluate students’ skills and intelligence level,” agreed Mr. Byrd.

Standardized testing is important, but it is definitely overused, especially at the end of the year when we have finals and other assignments in addition to the tests.

“Especially at the end of the year, when you’re trying to finalize grades and end the year strong, you have all of these tests which are extra pressures weighing on your mind, and I just feel like there is a better way to do it,” added Nora.

Overall, standardized tests are necessary for some things, but the school should try to have fewer of them, and try to spread them out more at the end of the school year.