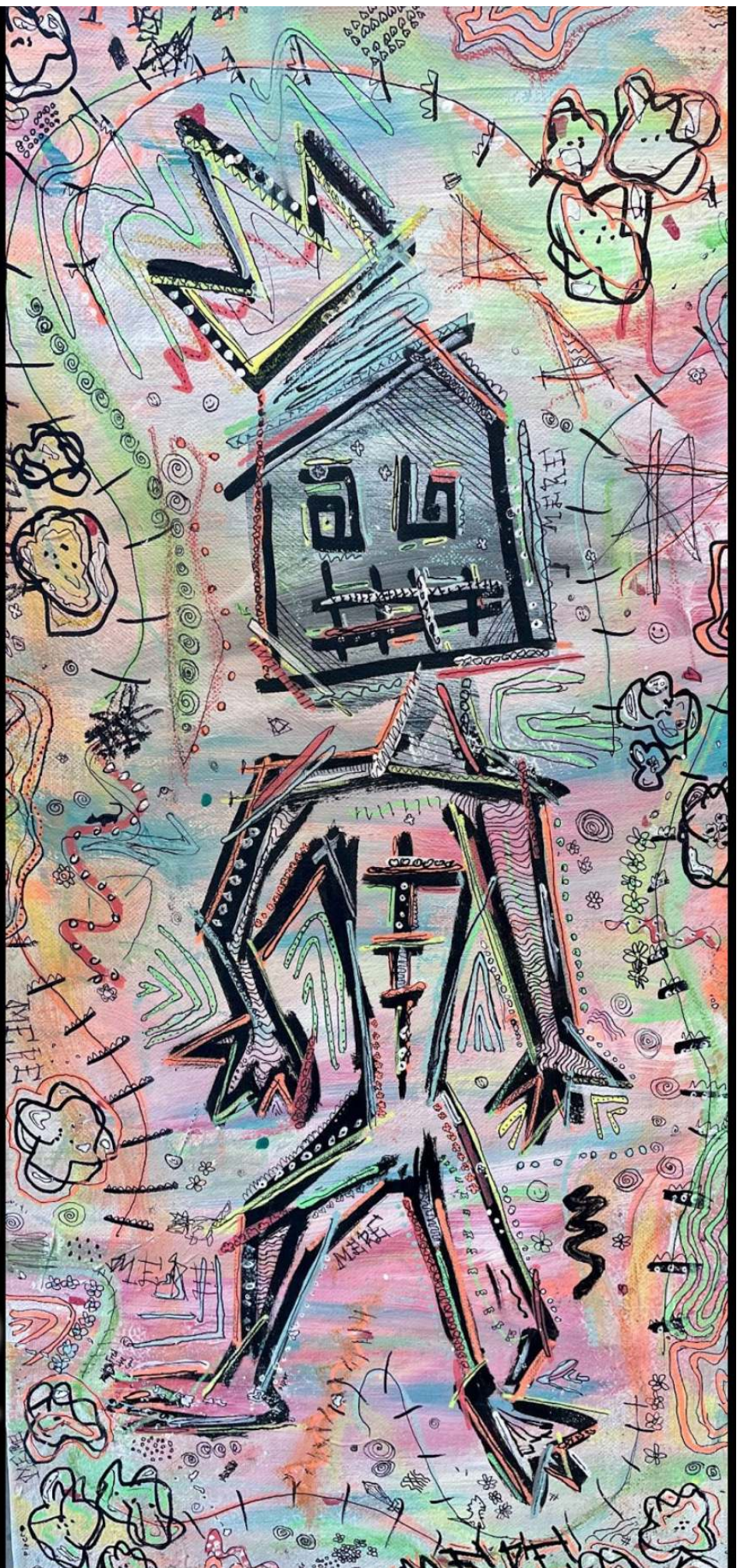


# CONCRETE





# *URSA*

The Stratton Mountain School Literary Magazine

2021

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*Ursa* would like to thank all of the artists and writers in the SMS community and their teachers and coaches for encouraging them. We would like to thank the administrators, particularly Alex Lehmann, for supporting this initiative.

COVER DESIGN: Sofia De Bitetto '23

FRONT COVER ART: Meredith Powers '25

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*Ursa 2021 Dedication...*

The Students and Faculty of SMS are honored to dedicate this issue of *Ursa* to Mary Mangiacotti.

Mary is a person with deep empathy, a tangible passion for teaching English, and an overwhelming commitment to helping every individual student be the best, most capable learner and person they can be. Mary is a master in the classroom, though her engagement with her students extends well beyond. Many students have enjoyed time in Mary's home and in her personal life as she volunteered to take them to the airport, to work on an assignment, to develop a college essay or to help prepare for a test. Many of our international students have found a home away from home under the Mangiacotti's roof. Other times, Mary reached out to students simply because she detected that someone could use a warm, home cooked meal and a caring touch. Mary always has an abundance of love to share, and we all benefited from her desire to help and support those around her.

Mary's willingness to tap into her personal experiences helped to model the types of expressiveness and honesty she seeks from her students. Whether talking about her love of music or a challenging grammatical concept, Mary's passion, commitment and care for her students has always been a clear priority in her role as an educator. Her job was not constrained by the boundaries of her day time hours. Rather, she was all in, all of the time, and her students are richer for their shared experiences.

Such passion for her students and commitment to excellence is not easily replaced. We will remember Mary for her incredible skills as a teacher and her deep connections as an adult role model in her students' lives.

We have all been fortunate to be able to engage with Mary in our various capacities during the past decade at Stratton Mountain School, and we wish her great fortune in all of her future endeavors. Mary has decided to retire after decades as one of the most committed, compassionate and capable teachers with whom any of us, students and faculty alike, have had the pleasure to work, and we will remember her role here with great fondness.

We are all thankful for having had the opportunity to work with and learn from Mrs. Mangiacotti.

With Warm Regards and the best wishes for the future,

Alex Lehmann

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A PENCIL'S PURPOSE - Caroline Collins '25

The purpose of a pencil might seem small  
But for pencils like me, it isn't at all.  
For writing, the mark that we leave on the earth  
Is a freedom we give, it is our whole worth.

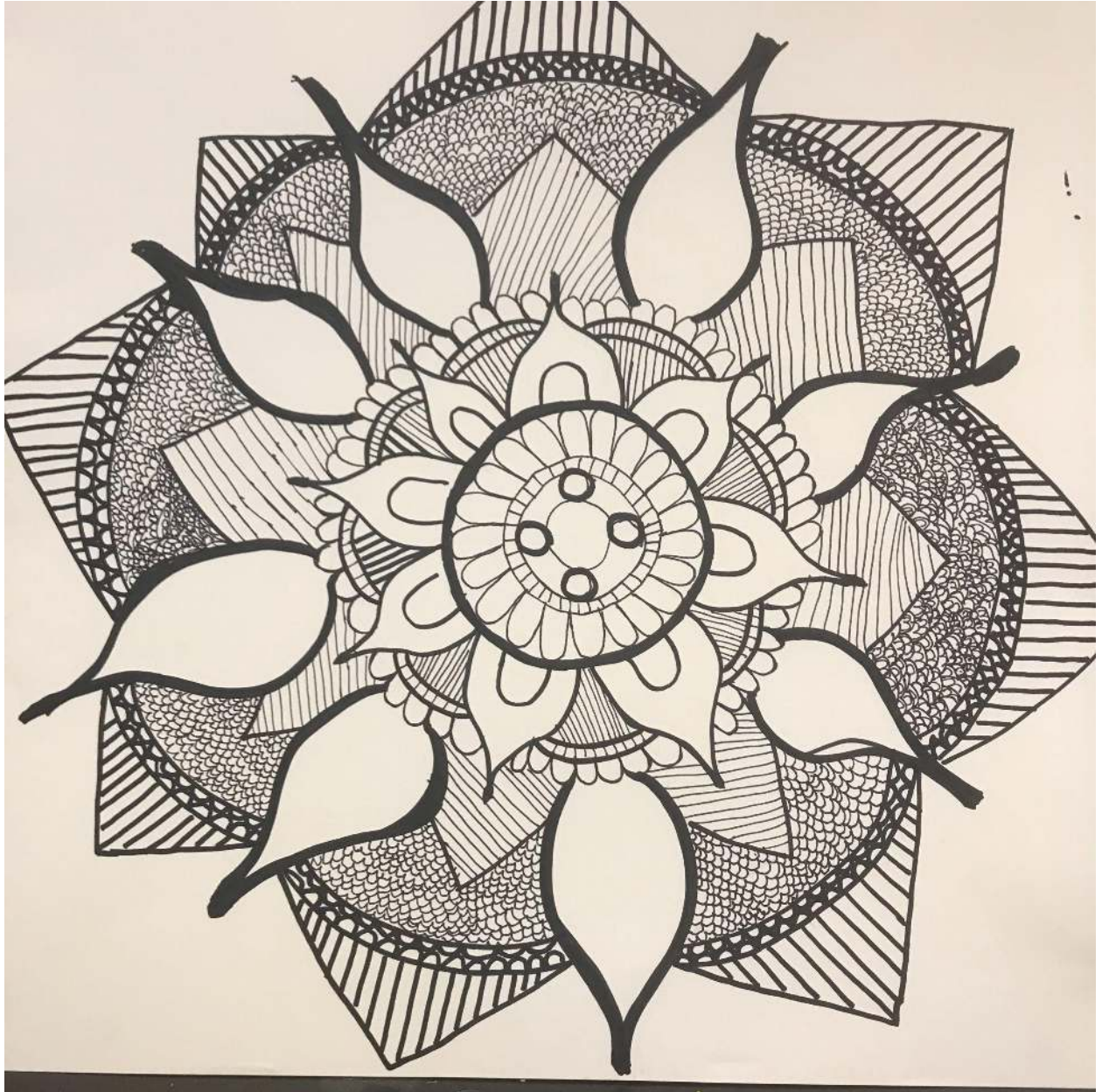
So when I was first picked out for usage to write,  
My graphite all sharpened, my paint new and bright.  
Now that was the happiest I've been all my life,  
A shiny new pencil, sharp as a knife.

My lead covered miles of paper with grey,  
New marks are left on new pages every day.  
With each page I covered my heart swelled with glee,  
But for living such a life, there was a great fee.

The more I was used to it, the shorter I became.  
I grew older each day, and my use was to blame.  
But that is our purpose, unfortunately,  
And I would write until I was as short as can be.

And so now I am old, not surprising to see.  
My eraser is gone, my stature stubby.  
And as my paint chips, I know my times running out,  
But even on my last day, I know I can't pout.

For my legacy lies, right before me,  
In the pages I filled, clear to see.  
And as long as those pages remain, so do I,  
Though I may pass on, my words will never die.



MANDALA -- Jayden Brumm '25

## INVISIBLE - Ainsley Goodman '25

They all used to nod and agree with everything that I said and did. You might even say I was their queen and they were my minions. I'm not sure I actually meant for it to be that way. Being an IT girl was a role that came naturally to me. I can't recall when it happened, but my earliest memories always had me at the center of attention. I guess I never even realized how they followed me and mirrored everything I said and every outfit I wore. They say you never realize what you have until it's gone. Boy, whoever THEY are, they got that one right. I feel like I was a bright star in the sky and in one senseless moment, every shred of light was extinguished. Everything will forever be different after the accident. I don't even know that popular girl any more. How could I? I'm virtually invisible now, as if I never existed in the first place.

I can still hear the brakes screeching. It was only outdone by the sound of glass breaking all around me. It happened so quickly. One minute I was talking to my mother about what was for dinner and begging her to get a second piercing in my ear. And then, "Boom!" The colorful world I knew turned black. Fiery red and orange burned around me. The smell was the most offensive odor possible--burnt flesh, rubber and gasoline rolled into one. It makes my entire body shudder just thinking about it. I don't think I even had the chance to yell out, but even if I had, you never would have heard it over my mother's screams. We were hit head on by a drunk driver. The car was totaled, bent beyond recognition. It's a wonder that we were pulled out of the wreckage alive. Well, mostly alive.

I think the sounds of my mother's sobs made me lose consciousness. Either that or the burns and the pain from my extensive injuries made me slide into a kind of comatose state. Maybe the mind has a way of making us lose large pieces of awful events so that we won't replay them too much in our heads. I remember the initial screech and the burning. God, was it hot. My next memory was waking up in the hospital. I thought it was shortly after the accident, but I'm told I was asleep for days. When I woke up, I could not feel my legs and my face felt like someone had lit it on fire and rubbed broken glass all over it. I was barely able to see because my entire head was bandaged. What was left of my hair was charred and caked with blood. "What happened? Where am I?" I asked, or really yelled.



My father was by my side. “You have been in an accident, Brandy. You’re in the hospital.”

“Where is mom? Is she okay?” I begged.

“She’s okay, Brandy. I promise. She broke her arm, but she will be fine,” he said.

I struggled to get out of bed, but I was not able to move. That’s when the pain started to tear through the parts of my body I could feel. My father called in the doctor to explain what had happened and to attempt to calm me. The calm part wasn’t on my agenda. It’s funny how doctors describe things sometimes. He spoke to me as if I was not in the room, like the accident had happened to someone else. I’m right here. It happened to me!

“You shattered your right leg. We managed to rebuild it with several rods and pins, but you will likely need some further surgeries if you are to walk again. And the burns. You sustained 2nd and 3rd degree burns over 30 percent of your body. The ones on your face are the most severe. You will need skin grafts, more surgeries,” he said.

I stopped listening. I couldn’t process what he was saying. It felt like he was reading a food label with no compassion whatsoever. My father covered his face and attempted to hide his tears. That’s when I knew I was not leaving the hospital any time soon.

IF I wanted to walk again? Burns all over my face? I was a crippled monster.

I wish I could describe the kind of anger I felt in that moment and in the days and months that followed. I stopped talking. I refused all visitors. I know this is something my parents did not want to hear, but during that period, I wished that I had died in the accident. I prayed that infection would overcome my body or that surgical complications would bring eternal sleep. That’s when the therapists started visiting, in spite of my fierce protests. I did not want to talk about it. I just wanted to be left alone. I wanted to be invisible.

The doctor did not lie. There were more surgeries. Thirteen of them to be exact. They were brutal and painful. The therapists kept coming and trying to talk to me about the accident. I kept refusing to answer until they took me to group therapy. I didn’t talk at first, but I did start to listen. I was finally surrounded by other burn victims and people who had been in serious accidents. At least I felt like they understood. Slowly, I started to feel like I wanted to live again. Six months after the accident, I was able to go home. My “friends” stopped trying to contact me. After all, I no longer resembled the IT girl they had idolized. I think I frightened little children with my new face. Let’s be real. I could barely stand my own reflection in the mirror. The girl

staring back at me repulsed me, but my therapist slowly helped me find the new me. My parents allowed my former friends to come to visit since I was not allowed to go to school. They mostly gawked at me. Some asked if it hurt. Those visits, the reality that my friends really weren't my friends hurt far more than my injuries from the accident. My face may have been burned beyond recognition, but my inner person--my thoughts, feelings and dreams--they had not melted. Other than my parents and therapist, no one else seemed to care about my inner self.

I don't know how the fates align or don't align for horrible accidents to happen. How could I be so fortunate for so many years and in one moment, because I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, have everything stripped from me? If you haven't figured it out by now, I'm still pretty angry. My therapist says it's an important phase to go through after a tragic accident. I'm sure she's right, but I'm not sure I'm angry at the accident or the person who hit us. I'm angry at everything and everyone who made me feel important before the accident for all the wrong reasons. Why did they do that? Why did I play that superficial game? What was wrong with me? They admired me for qualities that were meaningless and I went right along with the charade. When you took away the cool clothes, the flowy hair, the glossy lips, they never really liked anything that was truly about me.

I may not have died that day, but a part of me most certainly did. That popular girl? She died in that crash. Life as I knew it died in that wreckage. It has been one year, 365 long days since I lost who I was. I don't know how to be the kid that limps and looks different. I don't really want to be that girl. That's what keeps me angry, but I'm working on it. I'm working on trying to accept my life now. I know they whisper about me. I know they feel sorry for me, but I don't need their pity. I need to discover the new Brandy, the one who accepts that happy endings sometimes look a bit deformed.

COLLEGE ESSAY - Sage Freeman '21

The heavy weight of weeks filled with nervous anticipation presses my bare feet into ground covered in what feels like shards of broken glass from bottles thrown into the ocean. With each faltering step, the weight of my scuba tank throws me off balance. I feel myself listening to the side but miraculously manage to stay upright. Warm water seeps into the ankles of my slightly oversized wetsuit and slowly travels up my body. Stepping out of my comfort zone and into the ocean, this water forms a protective shield, and my pent-up anxiety begins to dissipate. As the water reaches my hips, I am suddenly weightless. My taut legs relax, and I slip back into the water as if absorbed into a soft bed after a long day. The water surrounding me, the color of artificial blue toothpaste, stretches all the way to the horizon. Sporadically dispersed dense blueberry field patches, similar to the one in my backyard but located over reefs, unfold into the color of a deep, clear night sky.

With my first inhalation, I experience a salty, choking sensation that causes my heart rate to skyrocket, and my original worries to return. Just as I do at the start line of a ski race, I take a few deep breaths to calm my nerves and refocus my mind. When racing, I remind myself: *I am strong. I can do this. I am ready.* My discomfort is the ocean's way of reminding me that I am a small part of this universe and that as a human being, I am vulnerable in the ocean.

I am thrilled with this new experience but, at the same time, filled with the sadness of knowing what lies in the depths. Descending below water level, I am met with the visible effects of human-induced climate change on the aquatic systems. The juxtaposition of my excitement to dive and the tension of the pollution in the water rages in my head.

The metallic twinge of the dry air hits my tongue through the unwieldy and bulky regulator mouthpiece, and brings me back to the taste of my jacket zipper in my mouth when I was a young child sledding with my brothers in the cold winters of Vermont. I am able to see both above and below water, seeing two completely different worlds at the same time. This new sensation is a transition period. I'm leaving the familiarities of life above water while succumbing to the pull of the ocean floor on my feet, fueled by my desire to learn and gain new experiences. What started as a terrifying feeling is instead a liberating sensation.

As soon as my entire head is underwater, the noises from the world above vanish, and I am left with the quiet and peace of the ocean. All I can hear are the Darth Vader-like noises of

my breathing and the loud cracking sound similar to that of a frozen pond shifting in the winter. Being underwater is a time to be with myself without the constant sounds of the terrestrial world. I enjoy the company of others, though I also need time to be alone, and this time underwater revives me. I welcome the break from the hum of electricity, the noise of people's voices, and the tapping of keys on a computer. Although peace meets my ears, my eyes widen with alarm. In this secluded and rarely traveled area, the ocean floor is covered with plastic bottles, packaging, and straws. The coral lacks color, an effect I know all too well to mean the reefs are experiencing bleaching. Bleaching will cause fish to lose their habitat and biodiversity to decrease. A concern for the marine environment circulates through my body and I feel a call to action. Through knowledge and action, I have the power to create change.

UNTITLED POEM - Durham Jones '23

As asked a question in class,  
He begins to ponder.

He is confused,  
He tries, but doesn't know what to think.  
He taps his foot on the carpet in his room as he peers outside the window,  
But the bare, still, leafless, November trees,  
And the dark, cloudy, gray sky says nothing.

He thinks to himself,  
He focuses his mind in an instant.  
He peers still above the white painted window frame, at the dark gray wall.  
But catches himself and looks down at the screen  
of his bright glowing ipad,  
He unmutes his mic, but the words don't come out.

As he ponders,  
Another question is asked.



SIX WORD MEMOIRS -- A MATCHING GAME WITH THE Class of '25

**The following members of the Class of '25 each wrote their own memoir... in 6 words:**

Abby Kelleher, Luke De Bitetto, Blake Siebrecht, Meredith Powers, Maya Hammett, Merritt Loring, Micah Bruner, Addie Dennes, Jayden Brumm, Brayden Goodman, Caroline Collins, Lizzie Cardella, Tomas Holscher, Ainsley Goodman, Thomas Dooley, Kate Donellan.

**Read the 6-word memoirs that follow and try to guess who wrote each one!**

Focus. Think. Ski fast. Have fun.

It's just me and the hill.

Rock bottom? Hey, I like climbing.

I am strong, positive and happy.



UNTITLED PIECE - Lauryn Socha '21

Can I go pet that dog?

Skiing. Academics. Racing. Competition. Family. Traveling.

Resilience. Perseverance. Dedication. Enthusiasm. Passion. Powder.

Wake up; school. Go home; school.



UNTITLED PIECE - Lauryn Socha '21

Friends make skateboarding and snowboarding fun!

Athletic. Determined. Passionate. Respectful. Dignified. Pleasurable.

Snowboarder. Kind. Athletic. Skateboarder. Intelligent Student.

Life is short and so am I.



UNTITLED PIECE - Lauryn Socha '21

I wander to find my way.

I can't remember what just happened.

Ambition. Goals. Consistency. Grit. Focus. Happiness.

Determination is crucial to achieving success.

## STARTING GATE - Ainsley Goodman '25

When I entered the world, milestones were not my thing. Had early childhood been a race, I would have come in last place. I was late to do many things, whether it came to lifting my head, turning over, even walking. I was a twin, but nothing about us seemed to be alike at all. My twin brother started to run while I was still crawling. He spoke in full sentences and I barely spoke a word. Physical therapists, occupational therapists, sensory gyms and speech therapists were a regular rotation in my early years. The therapy routine was matched with big terms like Early Intervention, Committee on Preschool Special Education, 504 Plans and countless evaluations and tests disguised as games. I kind of knew they were looking for something, but I did not know what. Doctors called me “low tone,” “a W sitter,” “selectively mute.” My parents must have been scared, but for me, any sense of difference was my sense of normal. So I worked hard, sometimes without even realizing how hard I worked. I walked stairs in our New York City apartment building, I swung on bars in the sensory gym, I practiced saying words with speech therapists. I spoke, but only on cue.

That was my original starting gate. I didn't know it at the time. Starting gates scare a lot of people. Not me. They excite me. Yes, they also make me nervous. I'm a hard worker, but I'm not a superhero! The starting gate shows me how far I've come and it invites me to dream of the places I can go. I began skiing when I was three years old. Having low muscle tone made it difficult to turn and stop, but there was something about being outside and gliding on the snow that made me truly happy. Of course I never said that out loud because I was too scared to say much at all.

When you're a quiet kid, a lot of people underestimate you. It's not that I don't want to talk; I just have this desperate fear of saying the wrong thing. All that underestimating has secretly motivated me to push myself. It helped me become a girl who liked to race on her skis. When I was about 11 years old, a light switch came on and I began to fight to become a ski racer. Anyone can race on skis. Being a ski racer is something different. It's an identity. It's MY identity.

Being a ski racer means I'm willing to take risks on the hill, risks that I'm too scared or too quiet to take off the mountain. It means I love speed that can lead to crashes and injuries. Looking at me and knowing how quiet I am you would never think that I'm willing to tear down a race course. I enjoy being unexpected like that. I live for the sound of my edges cutting through



ice and freezing air whipping in my face. I enjoy the surprise ruts and wind shifts that challenge me along a course. Feeling the snow through my skis is freeing, it's almost my way of talking. When I'm in between gates, I make my skis scream.

When I push out of the starting gate it's just me and the hill. All the other noise, all of the people who tell me I can't or won't, they all melt away. My inner voice is king. She tells me to go faster, to push, to apply more pressure, to match the rhythm of a beating drum in my head. Swoosh, click, scrape, boom, boom, boom. That's my music and the rhythm I hear while on course. There is nothing I do that requires me to be as present and as focused as ski racing.

Some people mistakenly believe that ski racing is about winning. That couldn't be further from the truth. I like winning but that is not why I race. Often, ski racing is losing by hundredths or thousandths of seconds or not even finishing at all. Those tough moments, the moments that make most people want to quit, they drive me to keep showing up and leaving everything I have on the hill. It requires me to acknowledge where I went wrong and to make a daily commitment to brave the cold and push, even when I'd rather not leave the warmth of my bed. Sometimes my hard work may show in the race results, but more often than not, it doesn't. But I know I'm improving, I know I'm growing stronger. I know because I see it in my mind. The mountain is the one place I feel most truly myself. It's the one place that isn't about getting a perfect score. It's about giving my all and forcing my body to give more than I thought possible. I have so much more to learn about myself and I know with everything I have that ski racing will continue to be my teacher.



NATURAL REFLECTIONS - Lauryn Socha '21

DANCE OF DIRT - Simon Baron '23

Dirt, rocks, more dirt.

Speed rushes at me like a bullet straight from the barrel.

I am constantly thinking, moving, changing course.

My friends ride ahead and behind in a mad race not unlike a circus

The different colorful outfits and bikes complete the look.

We all ride hard and fast taking part in the Dance of Dirt.

Tempting fate, launching from jump to landing, again and again,

the air brings freedom, floating above the struggle of life

This moment is ours and ours alone.

Now the trail switches and we follow suit.

From fast to slow,

from dirt to rock.

Now we must be smarter, choose the right line.

The Dance of Dirt continues,

a contest with fate.

In a state of constant peril filled with the rush of joy and adrenaline.

The fun does not end until we wish it so, or the dirt wins.

The bike gives us the freedom to conquer the terrain and become the masters of something,

We are the ones in charge here, we make the decisions and must face those consequences.

The Dance of Dirt if only it could last forever, but it does end as all things must  
but not without a finale.

We ride fast and finish strong, sending the last jump for one last rush of freedom.

We have bested fate today, and tomorrow we ride once more.

#### A DAY AT ARAINN MOHR - Thomas Dooley '25

I love being at SMS. I love the snow, I love my comrades, I love the school and everyone who teaches us. But from time to time, I do think back to another wonderful place in my life, Arainn Mohr.

If you Google Arainn Mohr, you will learn that it is a wild and untamed island off the west coast of Ireland. But that is not exactly where my happy memories lie. Arainn Mohr is also the formal name of our family farm, but the farm is in fact an hour's drive from Brisbane city, a home away from home beautifully created by my grandfather and named after his family ties back to his homeland. We call it, simply, "the farm".

The farm means family. My Dad's family is very close. Two sisters and two brothers. Their parents (my Nanny and Da) adore having their children, and their grandchildren, around them at every possible opportunity. We all congregate at the farm, for holidays, birthdays, and weekends. There are nine grandkids in total, and we are all around the same age. This is a delicious recipe for mischief.

This place is even more special now since we lost Nanny. Her presence continues to grow there despite her loss. We see her in the rose bushes she planted alongside the front of the farmhouse; the ivy that grows heavier each year over the meditation garden; the donkey that she so longed for but missed its birth by 2 weeks, no longer a sweet colt but an irritable and snappy teenager.

The noise of everyone competing to be heard as they chatter, the meals constantly being prepared in the sprawling farmhouse kitchen; everyone's pet dogs enjoying their sudden freedom from the big smoke but being berated for chasing the guinea fowl; the vaguely irritating Irish ballads being played too loudly on repeat by Da in the background; the crack of the soft drink cans being popped as the cousins sneak them from the back fridge to guzzle in the garden. I feel at home at the farm and it amazes me how the feeling never gets old.

When I am busy, I barely think of my life back home, but it is different when time slows down. These are those moments in the dark when I cannot quite get to sleep or staring out the van window on a long road trip to competition. It is then that I start longing for family, so to prevent myself from getting morose/gloomy, I like to relive a "day on the farm".

There is no "typical" day on the farm. I have a lucky dip of great memories to retrieve that easily represent my life at Arainn Mohr. I never know which ones I will pick, but here are a few.

The farm isn't all fun and games. We work hard throughout the long sunny days. Take for example herding the cattle. We spend 30 minutes or so rounding the cows up. After that we must remove all the ticks from them. The calves have to be deballed, dehorned and branded. The air is musty, and you can feel the dust go up your nostrils.

Not a nibble from the fish, but it has been so much fun paddling around the edges of the dam and inspecting the eagle's nest on the tiny man made island in the centre of this body of water. Suddenly you hear a commotion from the farmhouse and look up to see the parents rushing around, closing up the sliding doors and yelling to the littler kids. You peer to see your father rearing a gun to his shoulder as his stealthy walks down the pathway towards the villas that sit alongside the farmhouse. And then you spot the red belly-blacks, both of them easily two metres and instantly distinguishable by their glossy black colouration and its crimson red sides. The most venomous of all Australian snakes. They are entwined on the lawn, right outside on the lush green lawn of the very first villa where the littlest cousins sleep. These two snakes are so engaged in their reproductive act that they are completely unaware that their predator, my father, is approaching. But the snap of a twig under his foot gives him away, and the male snake suddenly gives way, turning to face my father, and charges. Dad pulls the trigger, once, twice, three times, and the snake darts for the undergrowth bordering the nearby open carport. Dad had



been stumbling backwards in sheer terror, but now gives chase into the garage, and spies the glossy head peeking from behind a barrel in the corner....

If I was older, now is that time of the day that I would twist the top off a bottle of beer and sink into one of the deck chairs on the outdoor patio with Da and all the parents. Across the dam, the kangaroos appear, nibbling at green shoots for their supper. The parents perform their ritual count of their numbers. But for now, I have something even better planned. My cousins and I know Da's damper recipe by heart. Damper is an Australian soda bread, and its history lies in that it was prepared by early settlers, swagmen, drovers, and stockmen. The best part of Damper is that it is cooked over an open fire, and we have a rustic pit at the farm perfect for this. Da makes us erect a billycan over the fire, and we brew up a pot of tea while the damper cooks. Sausages are threaded onto sticks. The cousins and I get dangerously close to the flames. We always burn the damper, and the tea leaves from the billy get caught in my teeth, but for some reason, the bread and the cuppa taste great.

Arainn Mohr is the memory that you can draw comfort from, wherever in the world you are. It is a special place that will hold your heart forever. It is a special place to be free and enjoy just being yourself, but also, to enjoy being part of your special family, no matter how far apart you may be.



DOG PORTRAIT - Lizzie Cardella '25



UNTITLED PIECE - Anonymous



PAIN CAVE - Micah Bruner '25

Off in the distance there is a cave  
It races toward you  
And then stops

You linger at its entrance  
Poking your head in  
Then dashing back out.

It is intimidating  
But there is a prize in its depths

You've been here before  
But it doesn't get any easier

You know you don't have a choice

So you dive in  
There is no going back  
For as long as you can last

It burns and bashes  
The walls cave in  
You are enveloped in darkness

But then a crack opens up  
and the sun pokes through

It's the warmest sun ever

The race is over.

## HOW SLAVE IS MADE A MAN - Sophie Davis '24

Slavery in America has left its racist imprint on the nation. To this day, some whites continue to perpetuate a negative bias against Black Americans. In his autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Douglass describes the injustice he endured as a slave in Maryland during the 1830's. After his escape to freedom, he became a national leader in the abolition movement, educating Americans about the dehumanizing methods whites use to keep slaves in chains. Douglass' narrative demonstrates how slave owners use ignorance and fear to maintain their power.

In order to remain in control, slave owners in America withhold an important piece of a slave's identity and prevent them from accessing knowledge. While whites celebrate their birthdays, "slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs" (12). By keeping a slave from knowing his birthday, a slave owner strips him of his identity. From birth, a slave is treated like an animal that cannot think for himself, dependent on his master for everything. In this way, whites instill low self-worth in their slaves so they will not have the confidence to contemplate a life of their own. Moreover, Hugh Auld, a slave owner, prevents his wife Sophia from teaching Douglass to read, explaining that "if [one] teaches . . . [a] n---r how to read, there [will] be no keeping him" (27). Slave owners believe that a slave's access to education will result in opening his mind to the greater world and to different ideas about slavery. By creating an environment where slaves are not given the opportunity to create opinions for themselves, the slave owners lower the risk of slaves learning of the greater world and as a result not working as effectively or worse, seeking freedom. Keeping slaves uneducated is a carefully thought out method to continue their dehumanization.

Just as slave owners use ignorance to hold onto their power, they also use fear of violent punishment and death. Frederick would often watch his masters abuse the slaves where "no words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, [would be able] to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose" (5). From a young age, slaves would watch as the masters relentlessly whipped their victims, often to get the point across that they were the ones with power. Such terrifying and graphic scenes made it clear to the other slaves that they would never want to be on the other end of the whipping. The fear that Frederick and other slaves felt living with such violence instilled a deep fear that would motivate them to work hard and give the masters no reason to act violently toward them. Furthermore, many slave owners were not above going past whipping,

with one saying that “if one slave refused to be corrected, and escaped with his life, the other slaves would soon copy the example; [resulting in] the freedom of the slaves, and the enslavement of the whites” (20). After Frederick watched as another slave was shot and killed right in front of his eyes, he realized how easy it was for the owners to get away with murder because of the power they held. No matter what the situation was, the whites would always be given the benefit of the doubt. This was done strategically so that no slaves would speak out for the fear that they would end up dead. Killing a slave was inherently for show to demonstrate the whites had no limits and expected to be feared.

Although the slave owners believed their system was unbreachable, Frederick Douglass defied their ways of maintaining power and was able to resist. After being complacent for the majority of the time he was enslaved, Douglass began to have feelings of rebellion, saying that “you have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall now see how a slave was made a man” (57). This impactful statement was made after Douglass successfully fought a ‘slave breaker.’ Although Douglass was born into slavery, he was born human. The environment he grew up in turned him into a human with the mindset of a slave. The slaveholders spent much of their energy preventing the slaves from finding out they could be real humans and that whites are not as untouchable as they seem. Douglass’ courage from winning this altercation with his master was one of the strongest weapons he had. However, becoming literate is clearly the catalyst for his rebellion. Douglass verified the slaveholders’ worst fears by saying that “the more [he] read, the more [he] was led to abhor and detest [his] enslavers. [He] could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers” (35). What makes the slaveholders so depraved is the way they denied humans basic rights and punished the slaves so harshly for trying to get what they were denied. The owners robbed every slave of experiencing life, and Douglass finally came to understand what they were doing and their motives. Douglass freed himself only by utilizing what the enslavers took away from him at birth. Without his ability to fight back and his success in learning to read and write, he would not have been able to resist the way he did and create an example to the other slaves. With his resistance, he proved that freedom was attainable. Slave owners realize they will lose control if their slaves become independent thinkers and learn about conflicting perspectives on slavery. They also realize that slaves have no voice, and such a life breeds discontent. Therefore, the only way to prevent rebellion is to instill fear. Once Douglass breaks the cycle, learning to read and fighting Covey, he takes back his power.

Douglass' narrative demonstrates that a person's courage to resist can bring hope and freedom and can change the world forever.



UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH - Fin Bailey '23

PERSONAL ESSAY - Micah Bruner '25

I was born and grew up in Montana until the age of 8. My mom was a professor of sociology at Montana State University, and my dad co-ran a business that sold sustainable building materials. My mom was studying Latino immigration to Montana. She was connected with many families, some of which were undocumented. I was friends with some of the kids, but other than that, Montana was a very white, conservative place. My mom also did work with the local food bank, so from a young age I was exposed to inequality.

When I was six, my mom had a sabbatical year coming up so my family moved to Mexico for the year. There, I was immersed in a very different culture, and learned to speak



almost-fluent Spanish (which I slowly lost due to lack of practice). This experience, along with others, gave me a view of the world that not many other kids had. I come from a place of great privilege, but more importantly, I understand that and recognise how lucky I am.

When I was 8 we moved to Amherst, MA, which was a lot more diverse than Montana. My mom had gotten a job at Amherst college, in the sociology and American studies department. I made friends of all different races and ethnicities. At school, we were taught a lot about racism, and what we could do to be better. Common themes were acceptance, empathy and kindness. Soon, I was immersed in the competitive ski community. I had skied my whole life, but hadn't raced until 4th grade. Everyone that I knew in skiing was white. It didn't even occur to me at the time. It just seemed normal. Still, these ideas stayed relatively out of my mind until this school year. I was 9 years old, it wasn't my concern.

My parents wanted me to understand my privilege and the inequalities in the world. They wanted me to have empathy and accept everyone. I grew up with these values. I slowly began to connect my two worlds of skiing and school. Skiing is very expensive and isn't accessible to most people. There is so much talent that we don't know about simply because those people are not exposed to or can't afford the sport.

It wasn't until last summer that I had made the decision to come to SMS. One of the first things I noticed was how little diversity there was here. I wasn't surprised, it was just an observation. Then, came the USSA diversity webinar. I watched with my whole family. It was incredibly powerful and moving. I recognised not only how much lack of diversity there is in winter sports, but also how much flat-out racism there is. Sometimes it is on purpose, but more often than not it is unintentional. That doesn't make it any less harmful. It shows that stereotypes and judgements are there. After the webinar, I really began to consider those issues. Until then, the issue barely even occurred to me. It's important to note that I am only now looking back on my past experiences and how they have shaped me, as well as my thoughts.

I started to notice things here at SMS, too. It began when I heard a white student use the N-word while talking to another white student. It was shocking. It was unheard of at any of my other schools for this to happen. I was at a loss for words. I didn't know what to do. I knew I should stand up and say something, but I stayed silent. This happened multiple times. I heard a student either use the N-word or say something incredibly racist, and I did nothing. Looking back, I am very frustrated that I didn't do anything about it.

The second thing that bothered me was that we didn't have an MLK day off. Then I thought we might at least take the day to learn about MLK. The day passed without a word on it. It just didn't seem right. Those experiences this year lead me to write this essay. It is easy to turn a blind eye to it, and that is what happens with some of the kids here. I think this happens because racism doesn't obviously affect them at all. Those kids who said awful things aren't bad people, they are simply uneducated on the topic of racism. SMS is a great place with good intentions, but racism is just not usually in the conversation. I've talked with other kids who have been very uncomfortable and shocked by some things that have happened but none of us knew how to speak up. If we all recognize this and unite, it will be so much easier to fix than if we stay quiet and separate. I want this essay to get that ball rolling.

#### MAKING SKI RACING MORE ACCESSIBLE - Ainsley Goodman '25

Ski racing is anything but cheap. In fact, it is one of the most expensive sports out there, perhaps only second to competitive horseback riding. To even enter a ski race, you have to have a lot of expensive equipment and pay for coaching and camps to gain experience. Whether you attend a ski academy, participate in a recreational weekend program, or go to ski camps, the cost for entry has made ski racing inaccessible to many athletes. This is unfortunate because ski racing has the ability to teach young people self discipline, responsibility and how to take calculated risks. If allowed to become a sport of only the wealthy, ski racing will suffer because the most talented athletes might not be able to participate.

Imagine this. The next Mikaela Shiffrin is out there somewhere. She is lucky to live somewhat close to a mountain, but her family has limited money to pay for ski equipment and coaching. Fortunately, her school has access to discount season tickets so she develops a passion for skiing. She loves to ski fast and seems to have some natural ability to make aggressive turns, but she cannot afford multiple pairs of race skis and poles, a GS suit, guards or a hard-ear helmet, not to mention tuning supplies. Even if she could, her parents do not have the money to enroll her in a program that would enable her to train in gates and study technique with a

certified coach. Scholarships for such programs exist, but her parents do not have the time to help her apply because they are busy working to put food on the table. They are unable to fit ski racing in the family budget, and therefore, her talent goes unnoticed and we will never truly know if she could indeed be the next Mikaela. Ski racing is simply too hard to access when you do not have very significant means. The entry point is too high for many people to afford, and it is dividing the sport.

As a ski racer myself, I have been fortunate to spend several years in a weekend program, to participate in race camps all over the country and now, to attend a ski academy. I could never have gotten to where I am today without my parents' support. I am lucky, but the sport is unforgiving to those who are not well-off financially, and that is tragic and unfair. We would not stand for racial or ethnic barriers in ski racing so it should also be unacceptable to have financial barriers. The playing field must be leveled.

While scholarships to ski academies and camps are helpful tools, they are not enough to make ski racing more widely accessible. We need to target younger skiers and teach them to ski early. Programs like JISP (Junior Instructional Snowsports Program) in Vermont help to expose younger skiers to the sport of skiing by giving kids half days of school during the winter and discounted passes. To attract kids to racing, however, we need broad measures nationally to delay the amount of equipment allowed for competition. For example, U10s and U12s should not be allowed to race in GS suits or have multiple pairs of skis. A single pair of slalom skis would allow young racers to develop their technique and perform both slalom and giant slalom turns. Most importantly, more kids would be exposed to the sport because they would not need to spend as much money to participate in it. More gear does not make for a better ski racer. Time on snow and good instruction have the biggest impact on young racers.

Organizations that oversee ski racing like the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association and state alpine racing associations like Vermont's VARA need to join together and establish unified rules that will discourage specialized equipment until later on in racing. These rules must be enforced so all racers comply. Those who violate the rules should face suspension from competition. Focus should be placed on teaching techniques and building young racers into strong technical skiers who embrace how fun competition can be. If ski racing becomes a sport of the elite, it will lose its mass appeal. All skiers may not be of equal ability, but everyone deserves the chance to learn how to race. Money should not decide this battle.



UNTITLED PIECE -Lauryn Socha '21



BROKEN PROMISES - Lauryn Socha '21

COLLEGE ESSAY - Bobby Stevenish '21

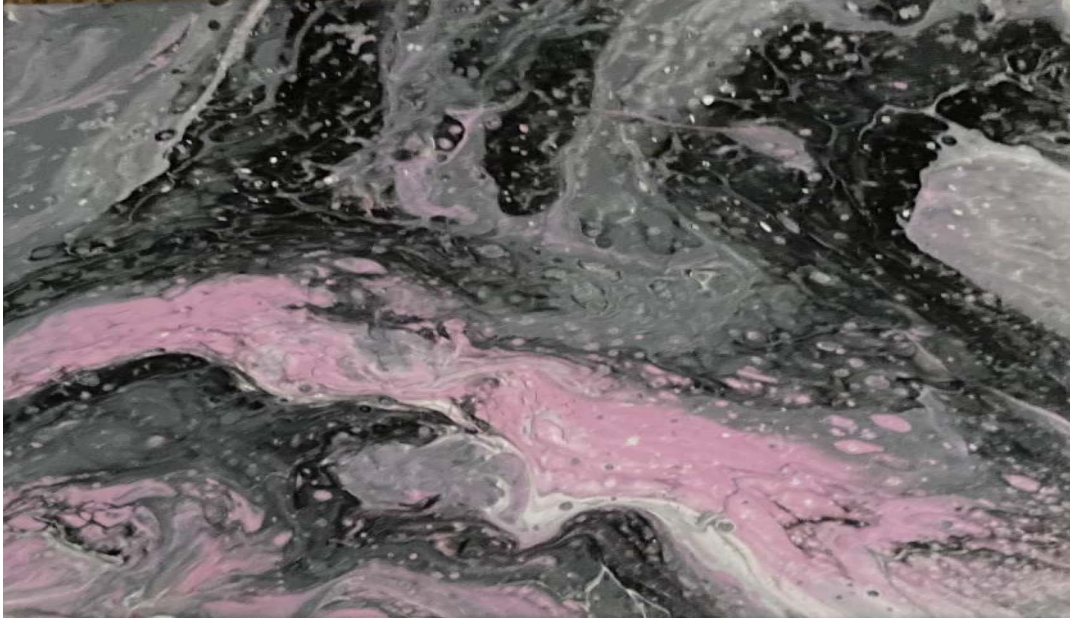
Following our fishing in the morning, my friend and I went to a local pizza shop in Concord, MA. Paying for my food, I heard a woman pull in behind me and roll down her window. Without hesitation, she exclaimed, "You might as well put a Swastika next to that Trump sticker. Get out of my town you racist pig." Never in my life would I have thought I would be accused of supporting the Nazis. To me, the word Nazi has always represented the cruel behavior of Hitler and his regime, who murdered innocent people based on their religion, color of their skin, sexual orientation or physical disabilities. I had always assumed others thought the same: that unequivocally, Nazis represent the evils of mankind. I did not know how to react. Obviously, that is not something people hear regularly. More than anything though, I was simply upset, not necessarily about being harassed and politically pigeonholed, but about the fact that people within our country who have differing political views cannot have healthy debate that, in the end, will benefit both people. For a long time, the Republican Party was known for being the group

that forged the path to the freedom of slaves. However today, some Americans are more likely to believe the party has the opposite motives. Politically speaking, the country has become so polarized that a young man like myself, who takes active action against racist, homophobic, or sexist views, can be verbally harrassed simply due to the fact that I, or Others support conservative ideals. In my mind, this is egregiously problematic, and it paints a view of behavior in the country that should not be a reality. Americans should always be proud of their views, and more crucially, express their views in ways that promote respect.

Debate in the classroom is my favorite type of discussion. Not only does this interaction increase my knowledge regarding the world of politics and ideas, but it also allows me to voice my opinion, ideally in a way that is non-argumentative. With that being said, it is not often that we participate in debates. Most of the time it is the teacher and maybe a few others voicing their opinions all in agreement with each other, while I sit quietly worried to cause tension within the classroom. No matter the situation or people in the room, disagreement in life is essential, and rather than trying to imbue another person with your ideas, having the healthy debate is unquestionably more beneficial. Everybody is always learning, taking in their surroundings and possibly new ideas of those people around them, and I know from experience that these debates and conversations regarding disagreements always result in my learning more than I ever thought I would, a process that has allowed me to see more than just my side of the matter.

This year, as a senior, I decided to run for vice president of the student body along with a classmate who ran for president. The entire process of drafting a speech, creating signs, and actively promoting people to vote for us was a real joy. More than anything, running for this position allowed me to voice my opinion to the entire student body, in a way that, hopefully, corrected some people's views of who I really am, and what I stand for as a young conservative. In today's political climate, especially living in a state like Vermont where the political views are heavily liberal, I know that my views and opinions are often misunderstood. I want to bridge this gap, which is, more specifically, the stereotypes and misconceptions of really what I believe in as a Republican.





UNTITLED COMPILATION - Riley Christopher '26



## WHEN THEIR PATHS CROSS - Addison Dennes '25

She's leaving the house. Her blonde hair flows over her shoulder as she gathers her outerwear, although most of it would be stashed in her locker for the day anyway. Putting on shoes, zipping up her jacket, it all seems so much harder when she's already being weighed down - both internally and externally. Stepping onto the bus, she wonders how far she would make it if she started running and didn't look back. The doors close behind her with a bang, and she walks down the aisle. To her peers, she's just a slightly deranged girl glaring at them. She tries to remove herself even further from reality, hoping that if she lives in her fictitious world long enough, she won't be able to separate imagination from her physical existence.

He's running from his problems. Well, at the moment, he's walking. An ominous cloud follows him wherever he goes - escape is virtually impossible. He pushes brown, almost chestnut-colored hair away from his eyes to look behind him, and then forward, legs moving without thought. But the problems - they're all inside, maybe too small for the world or too big for just one person to handle, he couldn't tell the difference. He's thinking about what the others on the street must be wondering. Wondering why a boy with a backpack too heavy for him is walking in a monotonous way towards the one place that practically every other teenager is trying to get as far away from as possible.

The bus stops. She's not ready to get off yet, but everyone else is. And jumping off the black steps, she sees him. And although she can see him attempting to hide them, she sees the bruises, the ones that he's trying to cover up on his forearms and left eye. He notices her stare and begins to dance frivolously. The problems might seem internal to him, but they're far too noticeable to be childish. She laughs and runs over, covering up real feelings and pasting on superficiality. There's no point in making him relive those memories. They're already ingrained in his mind and on his skin.

"Theo, what the hell is going on here?"

"Well, um, I wanted to show the world some of my new dance moves. Duh." He tries to dance more enthusiastically. She strolls right past him as though she were too embarrassed to look at him for a moment longer. She pauses for a moment, allowing him to regain his balance to join her, and the two head inside. A steady stream of uneager students push them further into the

school, but she has to fight through to get to her locker. He trails in her wake, attempting small talk. “So did you study for the test in Chem?”

“Yeah, and it still doesn’t make any sense.” The warning bell rings.

“Seriously, May? I can’t physically carry you through that class!”

“You can’t even carry your own backpack, and I think I can handle it.” Her comeback evidently hit home, so he chuckles and concedes. It’s been their joke for years. “Well, I gotta get to Spanish, but I’ll see you later, okay?”

They break into opposite directions. He’s thinking about what his latest grades are, but she’s just thinking about him. It’s difficult for her, being so deep in love. What she’s missing is the bigger picture, that before she can have this amount of compassion for others, she needs to understand the importance of loving herself first. But oblivious to this, she heads to her first class.

And now that the unbearable level of boredom has reached him in class, he’s thinking about how much she means to him. It’s difficult for him, caring for someone in such a way that he could drop everything to be in their presence. They both know what the other is going through, but he knows something that she doesn’t. That is what’s so complicated, having to live with a secret that’s such a big part of him. He wants to tell her. He needs to tell her. But he’s worried that if he does, nothing will ever be the same again. She’ll see him as a different person. But it’s as though keeping it to himself does so much more harm than sharing it with the world. It’s eating up every inch of his mental health, so he tries to focus on his work instead. That’s why his grades aren’t struggling. It’s just internal.

Midday comes around, and they meet again. Small talk carries the conversation once again, nothing that could trigger a larger problem than the ones they already have. After crafting lunches consisting of apples and practically nothing else, the two sit at a table slightly separated from the others. She’s thinking about how her other ‘friends’ probably wanted to discuss boys or lacrosse or hair or makeup. To them, problems like these might seem too difficult to deal with, but they’re all just so ridiculously self-obsessed that it must seem like too much to ask for them to open their eyes to see a larger world than the immediate bubble that they’re in. If she forced herself to be in close enough proximity to them to be able to listen in on it, her thoughts would just become too much to keep to herself and she’d just start screaming until she lost her voice, but she never had one anyway when it came to social justice.

He's under the radar of the many social groups that reign the school, and he likes it that way. She doesn't mind, but even if she did it's not like she could put herself in such a position to say something. But sports or grades or hair or makeup don't occupy his mind. He's still trying to come up with the words that he'll have to say to her as if it were a perfectly orchestrated performance.

By the end of the day, everyone's socially and emotionally drained and just can't wait to leave this hell-hole. So is she, but she knows that if she doesn't tell him now, she never will. She thinks about what she needs to do. Walk up to him, touch his arm, and try to get him to stop so that she can say what she needs to. Everything needs to be perfect for her. But even if it isn't, what could really go wrong?

He's ready as well, but he can tell that she's going to say something first. Does she already know? If she did, why wouldn't she bring it up sooner?

"Theo," her throat dries up and her vocal cords feel as though they're being ripped out of her. "Can you hold up for a second?"

He pauses his lively walk to look back at her. Upon noticing her anxious glances around and shuffling feet, he knows what she's going to say. But he can't, he can't do or say anything because he knows that it could tear her into a million different pieces, fragments of memories being closely examined and then scattered into endless space. "Yeah?"

"Look, I know that what I'm going to say might ruin everything."

Stop, stop, stop. He's trying to tell her something that he can barely admit to himself, but as these things tend to happen, all common sense is a forgotten skill. He's starting to walk again, with her on his side. "May--"

"Please, just hear me out. Over these past few years, I've made unforgettable memories with you. And I know what you've been through, and you know what I'm struggling with. Your kindness is what's helped me through this. I know that I've made some unforgivable mistakes, and those are things that no matter how hard I try, I will never be able to take back. But please, Theo, I'm in love with you and we both know it." She's shaking by this point, almost in tears because as she sees his face, dread fills inside of her. What is he supposed to say to that? It's not fair to tell her now, so he protects her. He stops, turns to her, and begins to speak.

"May, our friendship means so much to me, more than anything. But I can't--"

"That's unfair, Theo. I think that we need to be more than that--"

“Please let me finish. Your friendship means so much to me, but it’s too complicated right now with my family and money issues-”

“I’ve skipped school for you! I left my boyfriend for you! Those aren’t things that we can take back.”

No one speaks for a moment, but that’s when it hits. “You left Zach for me? I thought that you both made the decision to split up.”

“Well, we both had our reasons. He never had time for me, and I couldn’t ever give him my full attention. I mean, there were other issues as well but out of all of those things, the most important one was that you never left my mind once while I was with him.”

“May, I thought you knew.”

“Knew what?”

“Didn’t I make it obvious enough? May, I’m in love with him. I always have been.”

## COMPETITION - Blake Siebrecht ‘25

### Competition

Both mental and physical

Can either make you feel great

Or tear you down

From competing with your friends

To the olympics for your sport

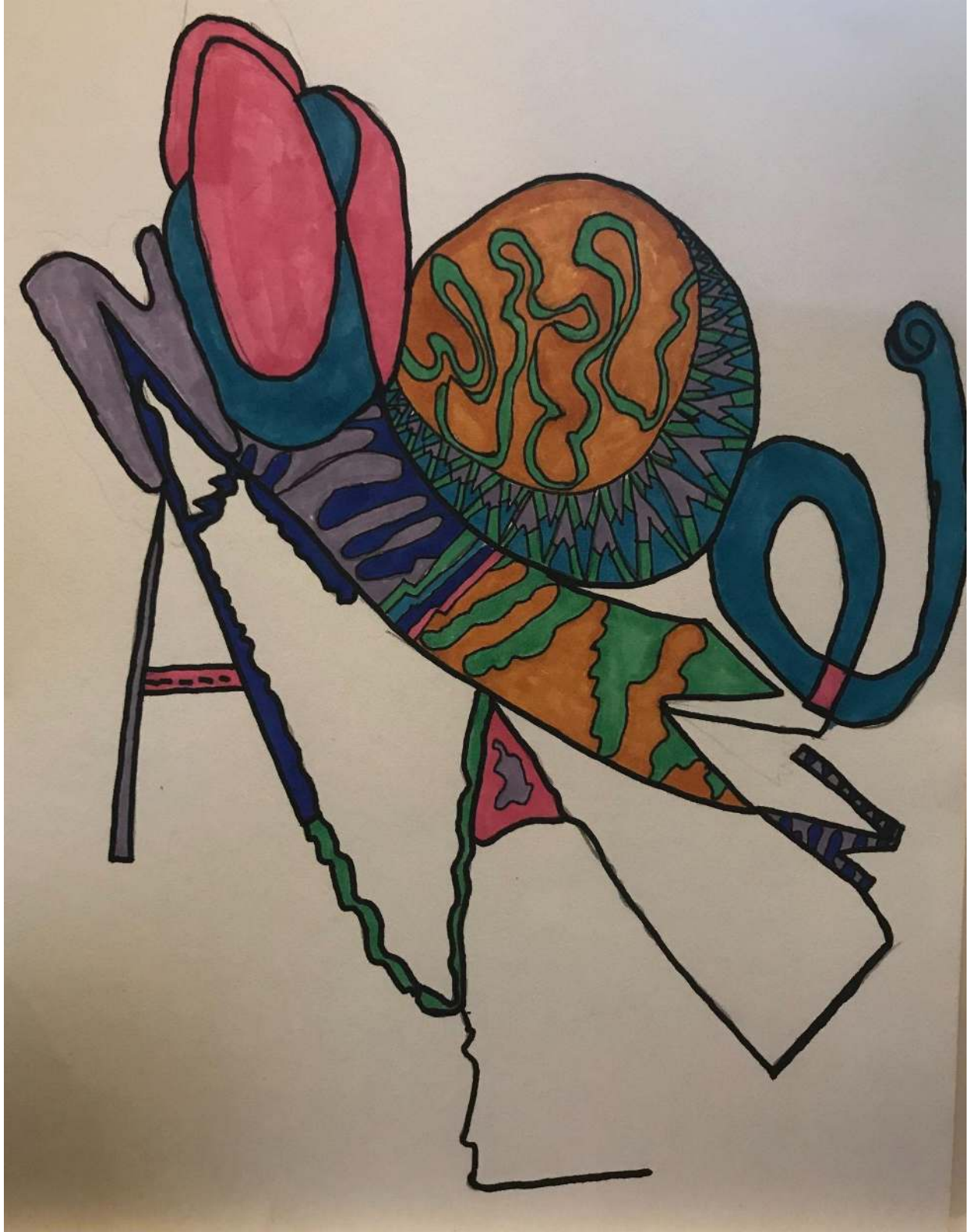
From first place on the podium

To getting last place

Is not all about winning

It's about giving it all you had

And having fun



ABSTRACT NAME - Noah Avallone '25

BISON - Asher Baron '25

“Uuuuuh,” Nathan complained.

Nathan slowly woke up in his family’s little house near Yellowstone. The sun blinded him as he opened his eyes. It was a beautiful sunrise so as soon as he saw it, he shot up and peered out his window to watch it. He saw a bison in the distance. That is beautiful. I would take a photo if we could afford a camera. He went down their very short hallway to peek into his parents’ room which wasn't that hard because they had no doors. He dodged whiskey bottles and crushed up beer cans, trying not to make too much noise. He hated when he made his dad mad. They were both sleeping still. He looked down to the floor and spotted the one electronic thing in the house: the clock, which was solar powered, said it was already 9:30. His parents had a long day the day before so they must be sleepy. I could probably go catch a look at the bison grazing before it’s time for breakfast.

As Nathan walked out the door, he took a second to inhale deeply and breathe in the fresh air. He loved the outdoors; they just made him happy. He smelled a faint smell of skunk. But he smelled that every morning.

He started walking to the hill about a quarter of a mile from his house where it is beautiful to watch the bison. He walked past the garden with tons of different plants. Nathan loved the bison’s big necks and all their fur. It made him want to hug one of them just to feel how soft they are. But he knew he couldn't because the bison got really angry easily. The only time he was within ten feet of a bison was when they were hunting and one snuck up on them by accident. It scared them a ton. As he approached the hill he got the same feeling; he always got the sheer joy of being by himself with his thoughts and watching the elegant bison roam around.

What if I was like every normal kid, going to school, worrying about grades and not living off the land hunting and gardening to get our food. I will never get a job because I can't read a single word but I love my life and all the surprises that I’ve had, he realized.

As he thought and thought, he lost track of time. Hours had passed until he saw the bison start to slowly go out of vision. Why go so early? Usually you're here till noon. He did not know how much time had passed. Sad about how short he could sit on his hill, he started following them; this was the first time he had ever gone farther than that hill.

He walked and walked and the bison never seemed to stop, so Nathan just kept on walking with them. How much farther can you guys go? You must take a break eventually. We

have been going for hours. I am so thirsty and my legs feel like boulders that I have to pick up each step. He went over rolling hills and eventually he got to this mountain. By looking at this mountain it brought him back to reality. I have been gone for way too long. I can't even see my hill. He looked up to the sky to see the time by the sun and realized it was about to set. Oh no! I was supposed to help dad today. My parents are going to kill me. He turned around and started walking back. He had been traveling down hill so he realized it would take a while to get back.

As he was walking back, it was almost dark, and having had no water or food all day had finally taken a toll. I am going to die out here, and my parents will think I ran away. He got lightheaded and sat down to take a rest. At least that was his plan. His eyelids felt heavy and finally he could not resist sleeping any longer and as soon as he lay down, he fell right to sleep.

He dreamt of waking up and going out to sit on his hill to watch the bison. He felt pure joy again at being alone with his thoughts. But then there was a rude awakening. The sun hit his eyes and brought him to his harsh reality. He was alone, lost, and confused.

As he slowly stood up his legs felt like rusty gears trying to turn. They barely moved, they were so sore from all the walking he did.

“Owww, this stinks,” he moaned

As he got walking again he realized that he would walk past the bison because they always moved this way from morning to afternoon. Why are there always bison, it's like there is a never ending stream of bison moving in the same direction.

He started walking back again with his stomach grumbling. I must be close. He recalled yesterday sitting on the hill for a couple of hours, which meant he was walking for at least 6 hours. Then he had walked back at least two hours so hopefully he will be home to eat lunch if he is fast.

Everystep felt like he was picking up a five hundred pound weight. His legs were so tired. He realized how big of a mistake he made. But he realized he was almost there. You can do it, just a little longer. And just then he thought that he saw the bison coming towards him. They were so elegant; he wanted to feel one and this would be his only chance. It felt like a good idea until he got close to them. They were so big. He felt very intimidated. He realized he would never be brave enough... one of those could easily trample or ram into him to death. He decided to give them a wide berth.



But then he saw one of the bison limping. What's that? He looked closely and saw that the bison had a wire around its leg. It was so tight it was giving it a very bad cut. He decided he would help him. He went over and bent down. He realized the bison was towering over him. He started untangling the wire. It was really hard because the bison kept on moving. He got it mostly untied, but he just needed to get the wire out of the cut. Easy buddy. It was deep in the bison's skin. Just as he went to pull, the bison got really upset. Nathan ran away not wanting to get rammed. But the bison wasn't done. It came running at him. He put his hands up to protect himself, but in one second he learned that that was not a good idea. The bison went right through his arm. He could feel the bone snap like someone taking a bite of a carrot. The bison knocked him over and then he fell. He looked up to see the bison was gone.

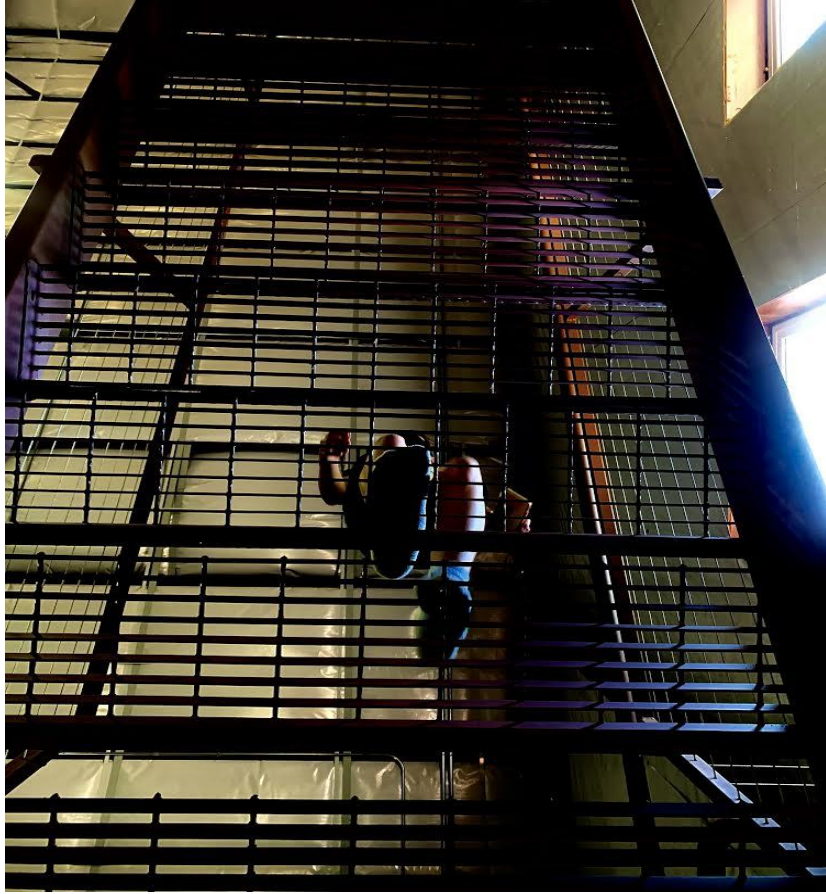
As he slowly tried to stand up by putting his weight in his arm, a sharp pain vibrated through his arm. He tried again to get up, this time on his other arm. He got up. He looked down. That is for sure broken. My parents are going to kill me. He slowly walked back, crying.

Why do I like bison? They hurt me and scare me, so why do they intrigue me? Maybe because I envy them. Because they have free lives, where I always get bossed around. Maybe because no one will mess with them because of their size. All I know is that I really like them and I wish I was one.

As he pondered, he kept on walking. Until he found his hill. My hill. I'm back. Yes. Forgetting how sore his legs were, he sprinted up the hill and back to his hill. He stormed inside his house and yelled for his parents.

"I'm home."

When he got to their room they were lying there motionless.



UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH - Wyatt Teaford '23



UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH - Fin Bailey '23

## FLAT TIRE - Jude Fidel '24

The brakes squeak as he navigates through the winding highway. The left headlight maintains a dull, flickering glow. The driver has hardly sufficient light to see where he is going. Surrounding him, Arizona's tall, red-stained cliffs and craggy buttes loom over the desert, lacking hue from the darkness. He hasn't passed a single sign of civilization for miles, only the old route signs that show up every mile or so. The moonlit cacti cast tall shadows across the road. The driver becomes confused, as he sees what appears to be a man standing on the side of the road. He rubs his eyes and looks again. This time he is closer, and notices the man holding his thumb up. All the hitchhikers he has ever seen have been on popular routes. Here, there is no civilized land for miles no matter which direction one heads in. The odds of finding a hitchhiker anywhere in the surrounding area are extremely low. The poor guy must've been walking for days; no one drops a stranger off in the middle of the desert, at least not anyone he knew.

The driver slows the car to a halt and rolls the creaky window down. The hitchhiker is a pale middle-aged man with a scruffy beard and dark, wispy hair. He is carrying almost nothing except a small red cloth bag, which he has slung around his shoulder. He isn't hesitant to walk up to the window of the car. The driver rolls down the window and starts to interrogate the unusual man, but barely gets a response. The hitchhiker tugs at the car door, which the man quickly locks, realizing he probably shouldn't let this man in unless he knows the man is harmless. The hitchhiker says no words but whistles quietly to himself.

Then the hitchhiker suddenly asks, "Headed west?"

The driver scrambles through his glove compartment and pulls out a map. He is, in fact, headed directly west. He looks back up for the hitchhiker only to see the surrounding dunes and cliffs. The hitchhiker is gone. After a good five minutes of trying to contemplate what he had seen, the driver restarts his car and continues west.

After another two hours or so, the driver nears a small gas station, with neon lights that artificially brighten the surrounding area of desert. Relieved, he pulls up right next to the pump

and starts to refill his tank. He then makes his way over to the small convenience store. He heaves open the heavy metal door which thuds behind him. The cashier is slumped against the wall, fast asleep, barely hanging on to his smoldering cigarette. The man makes his way to the drink aisle, where the hitchhiker stands, browsing the small selection of beverages.

The man is shocked. He can't recall a single car passing him in either direction on his drive since he met the hitchhiker, and not a single car is parked outside of the convenience store except his. The hitchhiker is clutching something tightly in his back pocket and doesn't let go as he paces up and down the aisle whistling the same tune as before. The man quickly grabs a bag of chips and an iced tea, and walks over to the cashier, trying to not draw attention to himself. The cashier is entirely motionless, and is unresponsive to the man.

"Hello?" No response still. "You ok?" Nothing. He reaches out and feels the cashier's wrist. No pulse. He takes the drink and snacks and quickly leaves the store, panicked. He looks back at the store as he gets in his car, to see the hitchhiker standing inside, smirking at him. He pulls back onto the highway and slams on the gas.

He drives for many hours, through the morning and afternoon, too scared to stop. He drives until he is famished, at which point he pulls over at a small diner. There are few people eating inside. He enters and orders a plate of pancakes, devours them, and leaves the second he pays.

He drives into the final night of his journey before reaching the coast. Just as he reclines his seat and turns on the radio, beginning to relax, he feels his car slow and then hears a quiet hissing noise. He gets out of the car and runs to the back to check things out. He has a flat, and he is in the middle of nowhere, late at night. He pulls his spare out from under the hood and anxiously starts changing the tire, holding his flashlight in one hand as he works quickly with the other. The hitchhiker whistles to himself as he approaches.



UNTITLED PIECE - Sofia Debitetto '23

PERSONAL ESSAY - Addie Dennes '25

Personal growth and self-development are two mentalities that are almost too often promised to oneself, and yet, in most cases, end up staying unfulfilled. As a student-athlete who always strives to be at the top, whether in training or class, I have always told myself that in order to be successful, I have to create a goal, stick to a plan, and make every effort possible in order to attain all of my hopes and dreams about one opportunity or aspect of my life that I am focused on. If I do not meet my goal, I spend days analyzing, evaluating, and trying to find my mistakes. Then I think more realistically, make a new goal, set a new standard for myself. Simple, right? Making almost identical goals over and over has put me in a constant state of panic and anxiety. There's a voice that lives in my head, repeating the question, "what if I'm not good enough?". I used to think that these thoughts, these unattainable goals, were sources of my motivation, but in reality, all they have done, and all I feel like they will ever do, is hold me back.

My coaches and teachers have always taught me about the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset, but before quarantine, I never really understood what that meant.

I thought that a fixed mindset was telling yourself that you have to stay exactly where you were in terms of social status, rankings, or grades. To me, it didn't sound so bad, and after my season of constant DNFs and screwups, I was scared that I would go nowhere but downhill. On the other hand, a growth mindset sounded like a more open-minded way of accepting the fact that you are failing. Even as a twelve-year-old, I was scared of change. I viewed it as a monster, something that could ravage through something as trivial as a friend group and destroy it. Feeling in control had always been a huge issue for me, and if there was at least one element of my life that I could command, I didn't want to give it up.

By the end of the 19-20 season, I was struggling with myself and my standing, and it was evident that I had multiple self-destructive tendencies. At the end of almost every race, I would be so upset with myself that it would be almost impossible to think positively about any part of my run. When I failed a test, I spent absurd amounts of time thinking about what I could have done differently that day. I wished that I had a time machine, something that would let me go back in time and fix my mistakes. Although it may seem like a cool idea, it kept me from living in the present. My coaches and teachers noticed these habits but didn't say much, so I thought that the way I was dealing with defeat and stress was normal. In March, the final council rankings came out. I knew that I wasn't going to meet my season goal, but I still did what I had done with every other unmet target. I put all of my time and energy into figuring out where I had gone wrong. However, my ranking still allowed me to attend State's. Although I didn't have the best start number, I was still determined to try my best, and, hopefully, make it to Easterns. I was doing well for the first few days, but on the last day, I made an irreversible mistake that caused me to lose the opportunity to advance in the competition season. This was the last straw. I had been thrown into a vicious cycle of failure, and every missed chance was just another reason to scrutinize every part of myself.

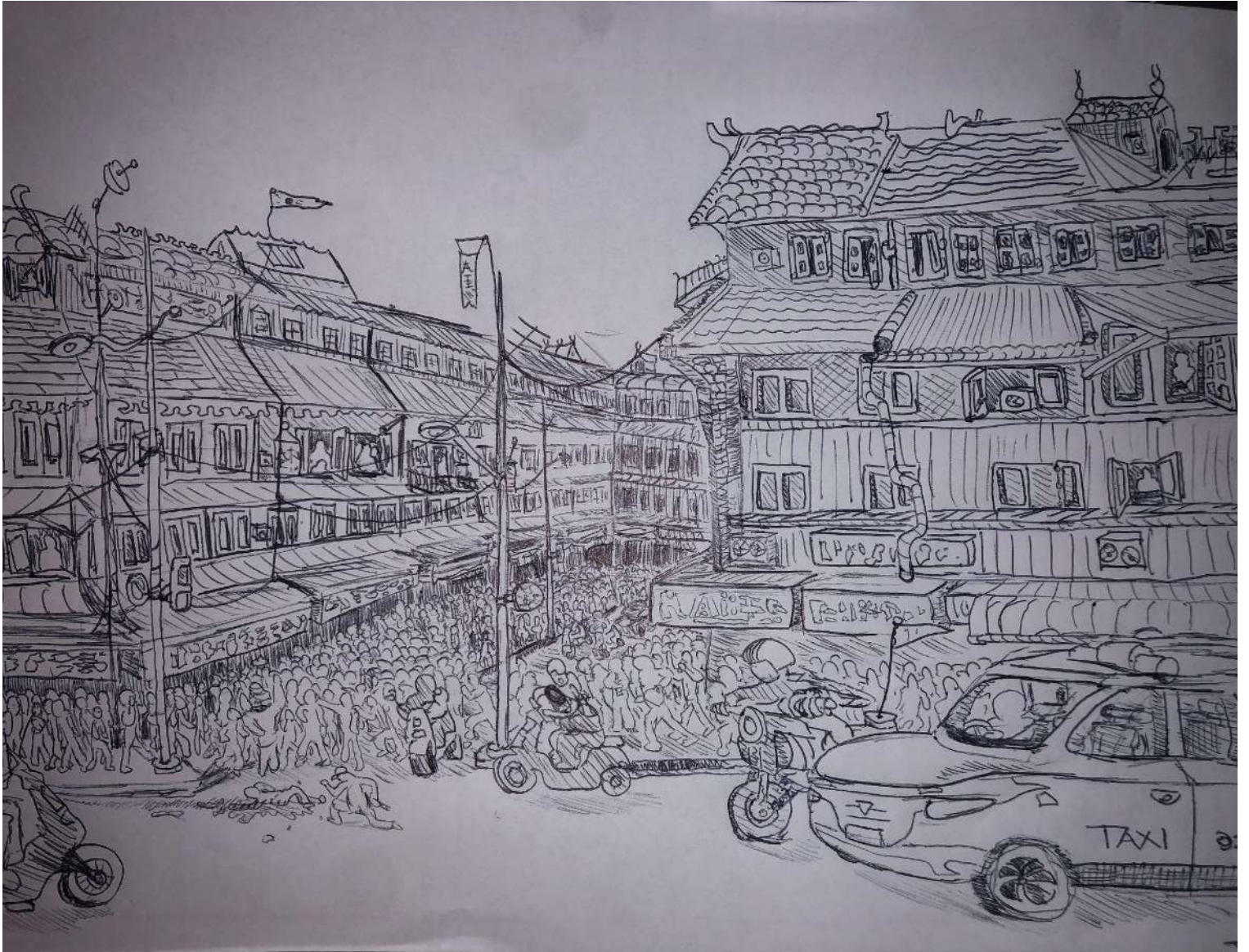
When Covid-19 spread to the East Coast back in March and we were all forced into quarantine, I still had this mentality. Although the next advancement in the competition season was canceled and I didn't miss any racing, it was still clear that I wasn't where I had wanted to be. Race season was over and I wouldn't be able to get back on snow for nine months. Online school began, and along with the millions of other kids, I lost the little motivation I had. I hated myself. As the only seventh-grader attending SMS in the spring, I barely had any social interaction with kids my age. I had hit a low point, and I didn't know how to reach out for help.

However, the one thing that I knew how to do was work for my future. My coaches told me that since I had nowhere to go and nothing to do over quarantine, I could train. I began to take exercise and nutrition seriously, and concentrating on smaller, more attainable, goals taught me that smaller achievements matter as well. Whether it was sprinting to the summit, finishing a weight-lifting session, or even waking up in the morning, each little victory helped me love myself for who I was, not who I had always wanted to be. I decided that in order to be at my physical peak, I had to work on myself mentally as well. Creating better habits for school and skiing was incredibly important, and over the months of self-isolation, I began to develop as an individual. I had learned to become my own person.

I did everything I could to prepare myself for the coming season, and although it didn't feel like I was changing, I was truly a much more positive and open-minded person than before. And the best part? I was no longer scared of it either. I learned that change could be a beautiful and life-shaping experience, and sometimes, it could be a wonderful thing as well. Coming back to school in the fall was easier than imagined, and it was evident that my training from the summer paid off. September and October contained some of the best memories I've ever made, and for the first time in my life, I truly felt wanted. I felt that my friends and family were ready to support me on my new journey. I began to do well in school once again, and the newer, healthier habits I had created for myself guided me to the success that I had wanted to achieve in the years before.

Now, ski season has started, and although I still occasionally have low-points and over-analyzations, I have learned to take a step back and reprioritize, and then figure out how I can become better. Self-development has been my key to success and understanding my emotions has saved my life. I have learned to accept myself for who I am, and as a result, I am truly a much more positive and open-minded student, athlete, daughter, and friend.





UNTITLED DRAWING - Jai Hunter '21



BASQUIAT PIECE - Fili Keszti '25





UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH - Benji Richards '23

