

BEYOND THE BUBBLE

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FREEDOM



COVER BY PURGAN

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THEME CONCEPT BY SANGHALI

FROM THE EDITOR

Hello and welcome to the third edition of "Beyond the Bubble"!

No issue would be complete without explaining how and why we chose the theme, and I think it's fair to say that none could be more relevant than the topic of this one: freedom.

For us as students, on a simple level – the prospect of the summer holidays is that light of relief and relaxation at the end of the tunnel of hard work and academia, just within our reach. It explains why some of us wanted to write about interesting and new ways we could use the summer holidays to our benefit. For us, the fact that it is a time free from the constraints of the school day mean that in itself, it is 'freedom'. For others of us, however, there are many other current events that directly impact on people's freedom to speak, even the ability to voice their actual opinion on something without a 'cancel culture mentality' coming down hard on them, or even worse. That's why within this edition we've reflected on all the different definitions of freedom and discussed all types of it- whether it be freedom of speech, freedom to your own body or simply freedom from school.

This is my first edition of "Beyond the Bubble" acting as the editor, and I hope you enjoy reading it just as much as I have enjoyed working with the rest of the team to create it. Within this edition, there's a wide variety of opinion, and I think its important to remember the quote "I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it"- everyone has the right to their own voice.

I hope you enjoy reading!

Sanchali Greelan

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Sun's Out!

by Shruti Murali and Abhina Jeyabalan

The summer season provides the perfect opportunity to prioritise spending time with friends and family. Whether it be enjoying outdoor activities or simply sharing a meal together, it is important to spend quality time with the people close to you. One way you can take advantage of the sunny days and warm evening is by gathering your loved ones, packing a picnic basket filled with delicious treats and going to your local park; you can enjoy by having a leisurely day basking in the sun, by playing games or simply relishing each other's company. Or maybe, attend one of the summer festivals or funfairs that take place across the country. There are a variety of music festivals, food fairs and cultural celebrations that last for weeks. However, if you would prefer something that wouldn't require you going out, try hosting a barbecue. It would be exciting to plan and to decorate your garden so that you can then enjoy a memorable outdoor feast.

Summer invites us to explore hobbies and learn new skills. Embracing something new during this relaxed season can be exciting and can allow us to develop our abilities and spark creativity. The longer and slower days can feel a bit boring, but they give us the opportunity to learn many new skills, some which can be helpful in the future and others that are just for enjoyment. This can include cooking, coding, writing, learning a new language or teaching yourself how to play an instrument. In the holidays, we have plenty of time to explore creatively. Take in the beauty of nature and capture it through photography or sketching. You could even try and attend a class and can surround yourself with fellow artists, strengthening inspiration and growth. Also, engage yourself with painting, writing, or music to let creativity flourish.

This summer will be a great opportunity to catch up on books you've always wanted to read. It is the perfect time to get yourself a drink, get in your comfiest clothes and spend time reading a book at home. If you need a change of atmosphere, it is a great time to go visit your nearest library and get lost in a heart-pounding thriller or a captivating fantasy.

Summer's a great way to reward yourself after a hardworking school year. It is important for you to relax and enjoy your break. So how do you relax? There are many things that you can do: go visit your friends, go on holiday or even stay at home and binge-watch your favourite show. Taking a walk during the summer weather is one of the best ways to relax and take in the nature while listening to music.

During the hot summer days, taking up a personal project will be a great way to spend your time. Take this as your chance to start a journal, set a goal and start working towards it. You could even go big and take up a personal project of your own such as redecorating your room or building something new. The list is endless. So, take this summer to start something you've always wanted to do and do it!



Using Freedom of Speech the Right Way

by Mahum Qadeer

In a world where information is spread at an unparalleled rate, freedom of speech is one of the most important rights in our modern democratic society. Freedom of speech was embraced by the UN in 1948 as the 'universal declaration of human rights', and it gives us the power to encourage change and foster progress. However, this ability is its own double-edged sword, considering the numerous people harnessing their power in corrupt ways.

Freedom of speech, as a pillar of democratic societies, provides a platform for individuals to express their opinions, share ideas, and participate in public discussion. It serves as a catalyst for progress, enabling societies to challenge norms, question authority, and drive social, political, and cultural transformation. However, like any power, it must be wielded with responsibility to avoid the potential pitfalls that arise from its misuse.



One crucial aspect of using freedom of speech wisely is embracing the principle of respect. While it is essential to engage in debates and express opposing opinions, it is equally important to do so in a manner that respects the dignity and humanity of others. Disagreements and subjective opinions should not be an excuse to slander and vilify.

moreover, responsible use of freedom of speech involves recognising the potential consequences of our words. Public figures, influencers, and individuals with significant platforms have a particular responsibility to wield their influence in a manner that promotes positive change rather than hatred. This can also include anyone with influence, such as parents, older siblings, or teachers.

Spreading misinformation, hate speech, or inciting violence can have far-reaching effects and can cause a generation of hate and distrust. By choosing our words carefully, we can contribute to a healthier society and promote an inclusive society.

Another thing to consider is educating ourselves on the issues we discuss; it is true that we can have opinions on anything, but it is vital to research and examine different narratives of the given topic.

Lastly, it is also important to understand the extents and limitations of our freedom of speech. While the right to express our thoughts and opinions is protected, it needs to be balanced to also ensure our right to not be harassed or discriminated against- we need to individually be responsible as to what we say and do with our right. Recognising the boundaries of what is considered hateful and what is a justified opinion, maintains a well-functioning society full of freedom and empathy.



STEM: Science, Torture, Engineering, Maths?

by Warda Khan

In a world obsessed with STEM careers, where people can't help but dream of their children being the next Einstein or Zuckerberg, the pressure to follow under your parent's footsteps can feel like being trapped in a virtual reality headset. Though some may willingly enjoy it, for others, the letters 'STEM' often provoke anxiety, cold sweats, and flashbacks to year 7 chemistry disasters. Despite this, some people still don't understand why it is crucial for a young adult to be able to freely choose their own career path. In fact, many school-leavers could never even dream of being liberated from STEM-prison, let alone be able to pursue any field they wished! So why should we make sure the next generation is happy with the career they're going into? This article intends to explore that question, as well as suggest alternatives to STEM-related careers that are just as important to modern society!

When young people have the freedom to pave their own path, they can align their work with their true selves. Their authenticity will reflect on their contributions to society, especially if they know they're good at what they do. Many know from a young age that their heart belongs with the world of creative expression: in painting, writing, or performing. With the passion they have for the arts, literature, or theatre, they can flourish at what they do best. This mindset allows us to create a professional identity that can express out unique talents, interests, and personality. Besides, who needs formulas or algorithms when you can make masterpieces with just a paintbrush or pencil?

Choosing your own career also allows us to embark on a journey of personal growth and development. We can explore new skills, expand our knowledge and challenge ourselves in ways that resonate with our individual ambitions.

This continuous learning and self-improvement not only enhance our professional capabilities but also enriches our lives as a whole. By doing this, we can unleash our creative potential. Doing what we love, we can think outside the box – exploring unconventional ideas and bringing innovative solutions to the table. This type of work ethic is the exact thing that leads to breakthroughs, advancements, and positive impacts in industry.

As well as the above, when we are not coerced into a specific career path, we are more likely to find long-term career satisfaction. We can explore different opportunities, switch occupations if necessary and adapt to changing circumstances much better. We gain the flexibility that suits ourselves in achieving a healthy work-life balance. This allows us to prioritise personal commitments, family time and holidays without feeling trapped in a demanding profession that neglects our well-being and mental health. Finding this balance allows us to lead a more fulfilling and satisfactory life.

While the STEM field can be fantastic for some, we shouldn't pretend that they're everyone's cup of tea. I mean, who enjoys long nights calculating the circumference of a black hole or debugging impossible code more cryptic than ancient hieroglyphics? We should embrace the fact that we're not all destined to be laboratory prodigies or computer whizzes. I mean, have you ever considered that maybe you're destined to be a professional chocolate taster? A shopping centre Santa Claus? A theme-park architect? Remember, it's not about conforming to society's narrow definition of success, it's about discovering what works for you and setting yourself up for a fulfilling professional life. So unshackle yourself from the STEM rollercoaster and take a dive into the wonderful uncharted territory of alternative career paths.





Transgender athletes in sport - brilliant or buffoonery?

By Mohammad Malik

A new, widely disputed topic which has arisen in recent years is the freedom for transgender athletes to compete professionally in sport without extra stipulations – the problem usually coming forth in female categories. Many people would say that having transgender athletes compete is fair, progressive, and good. However, I disagree. It is undermining to the countless hours of effort that athletes that identify with the gender assigned to them at birth put in, just to be outperformed by someone with a predisposed physiological advantage.

Unfair advantage or simply better?

There is no doubt that there are physical differences between males and females. Muscle mass, bone density, and testosterone levels all inherently give male athletes the edge when it comes to sports. Transgender women who have undergone male puberty will have these same biological advantages yet will compete against cisgender women who biologically would not have had access to these advantages.

Naysayers would assert that genetic advantages already exist in sport. For example, people of Kenyan heritage are known to be gifted long-distance runners. While this is true, the skill gap of people at the apex of their respective sport while being assigned the same gender at birth is much smaller than the difference between people who are assigned different genders at birth. Transgender female athletes who are the winning athletes while competing as female often would not even be in the top 100 of competitors if they were to compete with the sex they were assigned with at birth.



Case Study.

Avi Silverberg, (while identifying as female) joined a girl's powerlifting competition in Canada and broke the record by lifting far more than anyone else. She bench-pressed nearly 370 lbs, beating out the previous record (ironically held by another transgender athlete) by nearly 100 lbs. Avi said that she was 'only doing this to question the rules that let competitors join based on how they identify rather than their physical traits'. That being said, ask yourself the following question: is it really fair when someone can identify as female and break records which many dedicate years of their life to achieve? Methinks not.



The way forward.

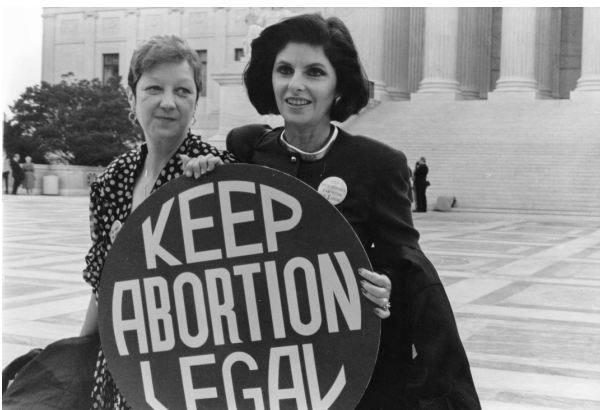
The logical solution to this problem in order to make all parties happy would to create a separate category specifically for transgender athletes to compete in. With this mechanism in place, the athletes would still be able to compete, while still upholding competitive integrity for other athletes who feel they are at natural disadvantage. Everyone will be able to take part, without sacrificing the morals, ethics, and fun for anyone.



Living in a dystopia: the policing of women's bodies and abortion

by Sanchali Sreelan

Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" details a society in which women of the Republic of Gilead, a puritanical and oppressive state, are assigned to act as 'handmaids' to higher ranking members of society, with the sole purpose of being impregnated and carrying on the bloodline- whether they be willing or not. It's a chilling story, detailing the extent of patriarchal oppression, a twisted sort of reproductive slavery and the policing of women's bodies; but look close enough and the resemblance between this dystopia and our world is almost uncanny. In fact, there's no need to look 'close'- the truth seems glaringly obvious, staring up through the pages of the book and reflected in news channels on television screens across the world. A world in which people are being forced into having children they do not want to have, not too distant a cry from the treatment of the women in Atwood's novel.



I'm talking, of course, on the subject of abortion. A procedure that culminates in the termination of a pregnancy that finds itself in the middle of many ethical and religious debates, especially with the overturning of Roe v Wade in the US in June 2022. Now, people who wish to seek to end a pregnancy in the US find themselves no longer constitutionally protected in their rights to receive an abortion. Around 30% of women seeking a safe abortion must travel out of state simply to have access to the procedure, as is the situation in Illinois according to recent figure. The issue, however, is not just one in the USA: even in the UK, abortion remains a crime. On the basis of religious ideologies regarding the start of life, people are being denied access to safe abortion- and that is the crux of the matter.

It is to politicise a medical procedure like abortion aids to strip women of their rights and their power, forcing them to rely on others- more often than not, men. It is no secret that pregnancy is a long and arduous process, leading around 36% of young mothers to drop out of education and those already in a state of financial instability having to leave the only source of income they have. Studies show that children born into poverty cannot get out, continuing the vicious cycle in which the underprivileged are trampled on in a desperate struggle for progress. This isn't a matter for those in power, though: Supreme Court Justice John Roberts explicitly said during the court ruling to "put the data aside", suggesting that such a vital part of healthcare is now being restricted on the basis of personal ideologies and the idea that a pulsing ball of cells is capable of having lived. But it is worth asking whether this pulsing ball of cells that many religious believers so fondly call a 'child' deserves to be born into a life in which they may be resented, in which they will undoubtedly suffer and in which their life and the life of their mother is not at all guaranteed?

It is at this point where the opposition will cry out 'adoption!', as if dumping a child into a underfunded, overcrowded and broken system is any kind of solution to the problem. Once again, these children find themselves growing up in a society in which they are shunned and oftentimes left unprotected, neglected by the foster care system and in many cases in a situation in which they are vulnerable and pregnant. The cycle continues, all because access to safe abortion is so restricted that someone in the US may find themselves travelling across many state borders in order to receive the medical attention they have every right to receive. A woman may even resort to killing her own baby after it is born- after it is a real, breathing, tangible thing- such as the story of the New Mexican teen who murdered her baby shortly after giving birth in a toilet because she was out of options.

The increase in the policing of women's bodies shows clearly that this is no longer something speculative, horrifying features of some far-away fiction. These what-ifs are not distant at all- in fact, they're being answered right now, in our places of government and in our hospitals. It'd be difficult to argue otherwise, just like one user took to Twitter to say one, startlingly apt statement: "Welcome to The Handmaid's Tale."



The UK Democracy is a construct: (are we really free?)

by Aarianna Malick and Suhaani Mal

When someone asks you about the constitution within the United Kingdom, our initial thought would probably be that we live in a stable, fair democracy. After all, the UK has significant global influence and does boast itself as a beacon for democracy. But have we ever sat back and thought of what a democracy truly means? And if the nation we live in today is actually one?

The claim that the state of our proudly British patriotic society obtains essential elements of democracy, upholding respect for human rights and fundamental freedom may seem sincere, though the aspects of our modern-day conflicts reflects an entirely different world.

democracy

(noun)

The belief in freedom and equality between people, or a system of government based on this belief, in which power is either held by elected representatives or directly by the people themselves. (as defined by the Cambridge University Press & Assessment)

Public participation is vital for a democracy to thrive. However, the UK has seen a decline in citizen engagement and influence over political decision-making. Trust in political institutions has eroded due to a perceived lack of accountability, with politicians seemingly detached from the concerns of ordinary citizens. The Brexit referendum, although a demonstration of 'direct democracy', has also exposed deep divisions within the nation and highlighted the challenged of balancing popular will with parliamentary sovereignty.



The noticeable shift in the UK'S political landscape raises concerns about the clear emergence of a dystopian reality, drawing parallels between the UK democracy and the reminiscence of a dystopian novel, such as 1984 by George Orwell, or The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins.

Political parties are often heavily influenced by close relationships between its politicians and wealthy corporate entities. This inevitably distorts decisions making in their favour and eliminates equal representation. Moneyed interests create an imbalance of power, and heavily disadvantage ordinary citizens, who tend to make up majority of the population. This is often why we see so many prevalent issues in Britain today that affect our daily lives, such as the strikes amongst teachers, nurses and train drivers. By what democracy is defined to be, we wouldn't really think these overworked, underpaid individuals felt they were holding much power.

The UK's democracy, once regarded as a model for others, is now facing challenges that threaten its legitimacy. Concentrated power, erosion of civil liberties, diminishing citizen voice, and economic disparities have contributed to the devaluation of freedom. It is crucial for the UK to address these issues and restore the core principles of democracy: accountability, transparency, public participation, and protection of individual liberties. Only by doing so can the UK reinvigorate its democracy, ensuring that freedom can be cherished and valued by all.

To begin with there are basic constitutional faults in the electoral system, one of the key ways that the public can communicate into the House of Commons. The UK's first past the post system (FPTP) is largely disproportionate and favours larger parties leading to a significant disparity between the share of votes received and the parliamentary seats won. Consequently, smaller parties, despite receiving substantial voter support, are consistently marginalised. This suppresses diverse viewpoints and consequently weakens our democracy. Furthermore, the unelected House of Lords, which holds significant legislative power, proves how power is not concentrated in peoples participation, as the very definition of democracy suggests. There is no better example of an undemocratic institution.

Freedom of speech and expression, a cornerstone of any democratic society, has experienced a concerning erosion in the UK. Increasingly, we witness limitations on free speech under the guise of combating 'hate speech' or protecting national security. Censorship and surveillance measures have expanded, creating an atmosphere of self-censorship and inhibiting open discourse. These restrictions on civil liberties are not only detrimental to individual freedom but also hinder the health functioning of a democratic society.