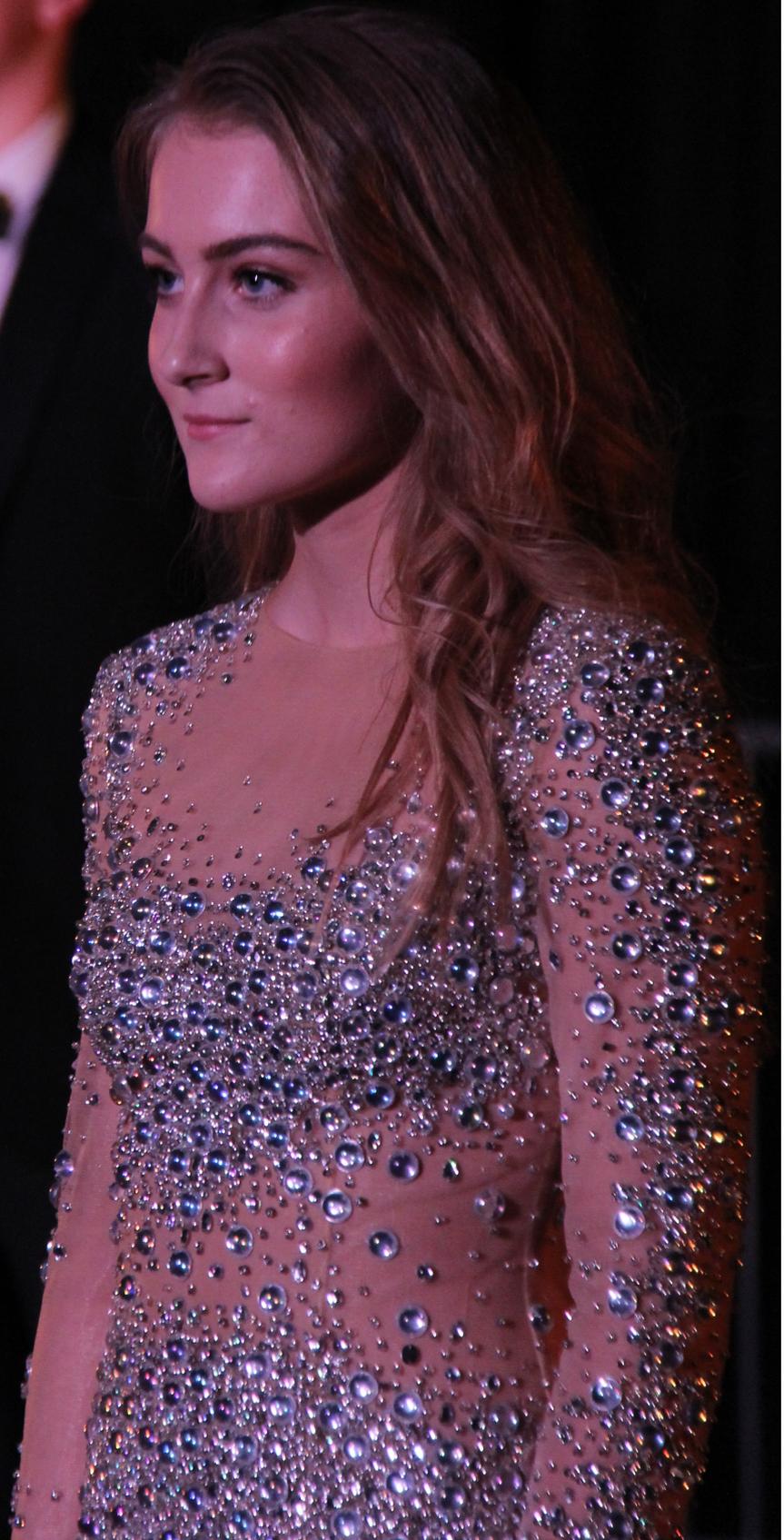




by the pupils, for the pupils
April 2016



THIS ISSUE

- 4 Riddle Me This
- 5 In the News
- 6 Teenage Socialist
- 7 Top 10 April Fool's Day Pranks
- 8 Serene Says: Exam Stress (Again)
- 9 The Sweet Truth: Should Sugary Products be Taxed More?
- 10 Ask Prab
- 11 World Book Day Speech
- 12 Junior Doctors' Strike
- 13 Diverse Issues
- 14 Are the genders treated equally in Islam?
- 15 Oscars 2016
- 16 Easter: Prophet or Profit?

Editorial Team

Leanne Potter, and Mary Osborne – Chief editors of this issue

The editors:

Serene Dholakia
Mary Osborne
Jasmine Parker
Kaneeka Kapur
Ellen Blaine
Prab Grewal
Sarah Turner

Leanne Potter
Maya Patel
Sudit Roy
Lili Mephram
Shiven Arora
Ayrton Patel
Ethan Teo

Vivek Bulsara
Rohan Magdani
Ronil Magdani
Kaylan Raja
Lucy Taylor
Yuvraj Singh
Kaylan Raja

With thanks to Mr Kidd, Mr Hunt and Mrs Kendall, and all of our guest writers.
Also massive thanks to Mrs Hunt for letting us use her office and her computer to edit.

Editors' Notes



The term is ending, the season is changing, and the Peacock is back with another edition. Lots of new members have joined the editing team this term, and we're delighted to present an edition jam-packed with fresh writers!

Mary Osborne

“No winter lasts forever;
no spring skips its turn”

Hal Borland

Cover photo from Fashion Show

Last Week's Answer: A COFFIN

Riddle Me This...

POOR PEOPLE HAVE IT.
RICH PEOPLE WANT IT.
IF YOU EAT IT, YOU DIE.

WHAT IS IT?

Come and see Mr Kidd for the answer!

In the news...



The European Union has recently been holding discussions with Turkey regarding their relationship and the migrant crisis. Turkey, a country through which millions of migrants travel to Greece with hopes of going to Northern Europe, wants to gain membership of the EU and full access for its citizens across the EU's visa-free zone. The EU feels that, because so many migrants use Turkey to gain access to Europe, Turkey should take the migrants who don't qualify for asylum in Europe on top of the 2.5 million migrants they are currently giving refuge to. \$3.3 billion worth of aid hangs in balance of the decision that is yet to be made.

On the subject of the European Union, the UK still has to make a decision on the status their membership within the EU. David Cameron, after two days of intensive talks with EU leaders in Brussels, has recently agreed to a package of changes. These include changes made to benefits that migrants can receive: during "exceptional" levels of migration, migrants' work benefits are limited for their first four years. Also, some limits have been imposed on their free movement within the EU, involving the denial of automatic free movement to people outside of the EU who marry an EU citizen. This is in hope of tackling 'fake' marriages.

In entertainment news, the Academy Awards have passed, but not without controversy – to read more see our article on page (page 15). This month has also seen the deaths of two fantastic artists: Harper Lee, most famously known for writing "To Kill a Mockingbird", and George Martin, the "fifth" Beatle. Harper Lee passed away in her sleep on February 19th and Martin on the 8th March.

On a sweeter note, the biscuit factory that creates the nation's favourite biscuits (such as 'Bourbons' and 'Custard Creams') which was flooded at the end of 2015 is back in full production. Britain has felt the full effects of this tragedy in what was being called by many the "biscuit crisis of 2016."

Leanne Potter



Teenage Socialist



What is going on in America?

Let's start with the basics: America has two main parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. It is hard to place these parties on the political scale if you judge it from a British perspective. The Democrats are strictly speaking the left-wing party but, compared to us, they are very middle ground. The Republicans are the right-wing party; although they are far from being the most right-wing party in America, they are most similar to UKIP in Britain, a party many view as pretty extreme. What I'm trying to get across here is that once you cross to the West, there is a dramatic swerve to the right.

Politics in America is very same-y. A significant percentage of American voters (mainly from the Southern states) are "traditional" – I say "traditional", but I mean homophobic, racist, trigger-happy xenophobes who profess to be fundamentally Christian. Many of them are called the Tea Party voters. When you take this into account, it's easy to understand why past presidents have been so vanilla (with one notable exception). White, heterosexual, Christian men win. If you had asked someone ten years ago what kind of person didn't win, they would've told you black people, left wingers, women, atheists, homosexuals... The list goes on.

All that changed in the 2008 election when a black man narrowly beat a woman to be the Democrat's candidate, and then won presidency against a white, heterosexual, Christian man. Things changed. The change continued: the military's homophobic policies were repealed; pay equality laws were passed to help the victim prosecute; further laws were put down to protect against hate crimes; the Supreme Court legalised gay marriage. Things were advancing.

Now, these things happened under Obama. In January 2017, however, his term comes to an end and there'll be another president.

Because America is such a big country, the results are announced state by state, and so the election has been going on since late 2015. Once enough state results have been revealed, the two parties pronounce their presidential candidate. That day draws ever closer, with the candidates being announced in July.

On the Democrat side, the two main possibilities are Hillary Clinton ("A WOMAN?" a Texan farmer shouts) and Bernie Sanders, an atheist socialist (the Texan has now fainted). Hillary is spending most of her time spouting the socialist message and expressing her passion for bringing about

equality. Bernie, who inspired #feelthebern, is your classic socialist, calling for further limits on Wall Street, universal healthcare and a higher minimum wage. As a leftie, I suppose I should be in love with one of these two – honestly, I'm neither "feeling the Bern" nor cheerleading for Clinton. I find Clinton fake, mainly due to the fact she only started spouting Bernie-like things when she saw how well he was doing. And Sanders, oh dear – while he has the right ideas, he's far too isolationist to achieve anything. Overall, I think Hillary will win but I certainly won't be cheering.

For a country that is traditionally conservative, it's pretty mind-blowing for two of the leading people to be waving the red flag.

On the flip side, with the good ol' Republicans, things are getting just a touch crazy. We have Marco Rubio: to put it bluntly, it doesn't take too much of a stretch of the imagination to see him in an SS uniform. Anti-abortion, anti-tax, anti-immigration, anti-free healthcare... It's hard to see what he actually is positive about. A lot of Republican politicians are extreme, but Rubio takes the biscuit. Then there's Ted Cruz, who is your classic Republican; "traditional", in the-less-than-positive sense. For this reason, he has always struck me as the most likely Republican candidate – he is safe, wealthy and predictable.

The real firecracker in this election is, however, Donald Trump. Everyday there is another bit of controversy from this businessman, and he embraces it; he is America's Nigel Farage. Famous for his verging-on-incestuous comments about his daughter, his constant sexism and frankly impractical policies, Trump has always been seen as the idiot who's there for the ride. However, Donald Trump is now doing really, really well: just like with Bernie Sanders, people are choosing more extreme options. Other politicians might suggest tighter immigration control, whilst Donald Trump suggests building a big wall between the US and Mexico. Other politicians suggest that maybe immigrants cause crime, whilst Donald Trump outright calls Mexicans rapists. He's a nutter, and he's winning in the Republican race.

The political sphere of America, and America in general, is shifting; the status quo is becoming out-of-date. This election will give an idea of which way things are going: a lurch to the liberal left, or fascism round two.

By Mary Osborne



Top 10 April Fool's Day Pranks

As we all know, April Fool's Day is coming up shortly on the 1st of April. Many people are planning pranks, jokes and much more to catch their friends and family out all around the world. This is a day that has been celebrated ever since the Roman times. While some people are planning the usual switch of the sugar and salt, cling film over the toilet seat or a plastic bug in somebody's drink, there are much better sneaky pranks out there! If you are stuck for ideas, here is a list of the top 10 April Fool's Day pranks going round at the minute.

I'm watching you. Put smiley faces or googly eyes on every item in the fridge, wait for somebody to open the fridge and surprise! April Fool's Day!

The classic - Vaseline on the doorknobs. When somebody is sleeping, sneak into their room and put Vaseline all over the door handle. When they come to open the door, it will take 5-10 minutes instead of 5 seconds!

Put cling film between the door frames at head height to ensure a family member has the perfect start to the day!

Cut out bugs out of black paper, and stick inside somebody's lampshade! When somebody turns on the light, they will get an unexpected surprise!

Make somebody "Toffee apples!" Cover onions in caramel and put a lolly stick in the bottom of it. Give it to someone as a "present" and wait for their reaction...

Put blue or green food colouring in milk, so when somebody tries to make a cup of tea, they will get a nasty shock.

In the night, put mayonnaise in somebody's toothpaste so they get 'mayonnaiseminty' flavoured toothpaste in the morning. Not exactly a fresh start to the day!

Stick an air horn behind the doors so when somebody tries to open the door, it makes a really loud noise and scares them!

Cup some water in your hand and pretend to sneeze on the back of someone's head!

Place a tub of water on the top of an ajar door, so when somebody opens the door to go into the room, the water falls onto their head and they get completely soaked!

Serene Says

Exam Stress (Again)

Another article about exam stress, how unexpected (I hear you cry)! Students are stressed, teachers are stressed, and parents are stressed too. This can only mean that exam season is nearly here; it's like the perverse brother of the Christmas countdown. Whilst I can be a complete hypocrite and give you advice on how to deal with exam stress, see: every spring edition of the Peacock ever, I decided to give my realistic point of view on the forthcoming entry to hell.

Personally, I am not stressed. You may take that in the sense that I have revision under control, that I have a beautiful revision timetable with colour co-ordinated highlighters for each subject. That's wrong. The truth is my mental state has gone beyond the point of stress into an abyss of numbness. Whilst you may not have purchased an aesthetically pleasing set of colourful pens and completed an immaculate set of notes - it does not matter, as long as you are doing some form of work that benefits you in the long term. Not everyone revises in the same way, and that is okay.

I cannot work for long periods of time - whether that is my short attention span, or my sheer laziness I don't know. Keeping this in mind, I have become aware that I don't have time to fight this habit, I have to embrace it. Of course, that doesn't mean I'm giving myself permission to read one page of a textbook followed by a two hour nap I truly deserve. It means that when I revise I work for shorter, concentrated periods with regular breaks rather than longer periods; I know I cannot keep a sustained level of focus for too long. Considering what works best for you is very important.

I cannot cram. Every time I've tried to cram it's

always ended with my face against the textbook hoping I'll absorb all the information somehow. Many of my friends can cram and get good marks (a trait I am very jealous of), but I am not the same. I know that I need to pace myself, maybe some of you are the same, even if your friends haven't started revising yet it may be best for you to start sooner.

Whatever I put forward from my own experiences does not change the fact we are going to be stressed. I'd love to suggest being mindful and meditating will help your anxieties, but in reality it may not help. The build up to exams has been telegraphed early: from the start of Year 10 the significance of GCSEs has been ingrained in our minds. Thinking practically about why I'm stressed and what I can do about it is far more constructive than lying in bed, wrapped up in my blanket, thinking about how stressed I am and falling into a black hole of misery about my hopeless future.

What motivates me most is having incentives and things to look forward to, I am all about the 'Treat yo' self' lifestyle. I have planned to do many things when my exams have finished, it's not wrong to reward yourself for getting through such a stressful period.

Exams are important, but they're not worth losing your sanity over. It's going to be tough, but we can do it, good luck to everyone doing exams in the coming months.

Soyez Sage!

Serene Dholakia

The Sweet Truth: Should Sugary Products be Taxed More?

Lately, doctors are thinking of new ways to fight obesity in the UK. One way to do this is for people to have a much smaller intake of sugar. This could be achieved by levying a tax on sugary products: they want to implement a 20% tax, with the hope that through this taxation, they can reduce the number of obese people in the UK – which currently stands at 67% of men and 57% of women.

I believe that the government should tax sugary products more because too much sugar can lead to obesity. Obesity can cause many horrible diseases such as type 2 diabetes and some cancers. To live a healthy life, sugar has to be taken in moderation.

This concept of putting a tax on sugary products isn't putting an end to our consumption of sugar, but forces us to think what sort of products we should buy while shopping. If we reduce the intake of sugar for a small child, they are less likely to suffer diseases caused by a high intake of sugar when they're older. Many people die from their poor diets, causing a lot of pressure on the

NHS and their doctors. There are 70,000 deaths annually because of obesity in the UK.

Other countries, like Mexico, have begun to experiment with this new idea of a sugar tax, and public health experts have said it has had a great impact and made people buy fewer sugary products. In Mexico, sugar is taxed at 10% and has caused a massive change to people's diets. Taxing sugary foods by 20% would make our diets even healthier and better. Your teeth can also be damaged if it is taken in excess. Bacteria flourish in a sugar-laden mouth and this can soon cause plaque and then turn into cavities. Furthermore,

processed sugar only gives 'empty calories' as it provides no nutritional benefit.

Taxing natural sugar won't be good as products like yoghurt which contain a fair amount of sugar have benefits as well. Yoghurt provides calcium which strengthens your bones and helps your heart, muscles and nerves function properly. However some low-fat yoghurts contain added processed sugar. Fruit juices also contain quite a bit of sugar: they do have nutritional benefits as they give you the vitamins you need from different fruits.

On balance, it is a good idea to tax products high in sugar as it will mean that people can live

much healthier lives.

I disagree that they should tax it by 20% as it is too much for now; we haven't even tried this new idea in the UK yet. 20% tax could add up to a lot of money, especially for less wealthy families. I think that a tax of 10% would be a good start for us and would encourage the UK to eat more healthily for life.

Shiven Arora

"I think that a tax would encourage the UK to eat healthily"



Ask Prab



Apple Versus FBI

The entire world has been captivated with the recent legal battles between Apple (a tech giant with a market worth of \$535 billion) and the FBI. Obviously the FBI have the support of the government - and thus a lot of the courts - but with so much disturbance in the industry by concerned consumers, this battle has become very heated and taken precedence in the news. The issues raised are starting to extend beyond those of the San Bernardino incident; people are questioning if their rights as a consumer and their privacy are overridden by national interests.

The context of this particular case is regarding the San Bernardino terrorist attack on 3rd December 2015. The FBI managed to recover an iPhone 5C (an Apple product), from the terrorists and was looking to retrieve information from the phone in the hope of finding fellow conspirators and the source of their extremism. However, like many devices today, the phone's data is encrypted. Logically, the FBI looked to Apple to assist them in decrypting the phone's data, for what they claim is a "matter of national security". However, the legal cases have been centred around Apple stating that they are unable (partly false) and unwilling to help recover information from the device.

Several companies and individuals have come forward, claiming that they could "crack" the phone's security and retrieve the necessary data. Most famously, Anti-virus software creator, John McAfee, says that he is willing to help, for free. As a member of the tech community and a creator of protection

software, he has received a backlash for this: he is claiming that he could bypass security systems similar to those that he himself created, causing some uncertainty about his claims and, possibly, those of his products.

The reason why many are sceptical about the possibility of hacking into the phone, is to do with Apple's complex encryption system. Apple devices use a unique 256 character code to encrypt a lot of its data, which is completely inaccessible to anything - apart from that particular device. As Apple does not record which device has which key during its manufacturing process, this key is basically impossible to obtain. The device is still essential to retrieving information as, in short, the device can see what "comes out" after being decrypted. The only way to get the device to see the un-coded data is to have its passcode; a passcode is not uncommon on devices but the way it is set on Apple devices is what causes the FBI a problem.

This is where Apple could help. Apple have enabled (by default) that the device wipes all of its data after 10 failed attempts, and also it has not created any way to bypass this security measure. An analogy of this could be explained with a bank. Let's say you are trying to access the bank vault's contents, but you don't know the combination. However inside a locked door, there is someone who will willingly open the vault if you can open that locked door. The keys to the door are on a wall however, there are a million of them. After using 10 keys, there is a chance that the alarm could sound, getting you arrested.

Therefore, you can spend years upon years trying to crack the 256 digit vault code, or alternatively you could attempt to open the locked door (with the chance of failing). Apple could step in and help by allowing you to try multiple keys at once, quickening the process of trying each of the million keys.

At the moment the FBI is requesting that Apple should create a failsafe which could be exploited to access information on the locked devices. The problem with this is that hackers and people with malicious intent could also abuse this same flaw to access our own sensitive data; the issue of privacy and data protection is therefore introduced which is a very slippery slope, regardless of which stance you take.

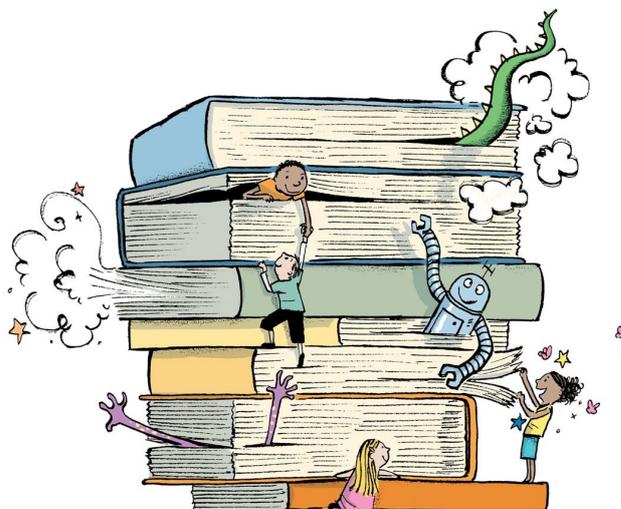
Personally, I believe that tech companies should in fact help government agencies in tracking serious crime, like the San Bernardino terror attack. However, they should not have to compromise their own resources and products for the retrieval of information on encrypted devices. I agree with Apple's standpoint (despite them neglecting their other options apart from creating a "backdoor"), although I cannot agree with how they have dealt with the court case and their refusal to follow court orders.

As of now, Apple is currently pleading to congress to be uninvolved with the phones as they believe it is a violation of their consumers' rights. With news consistently arising about another data base being hacked, or another consumer-base's sensitive data being leaked, this recent issue should hopefully lead to a more universal solution to the flaws in the slow progression to an online singularity for the human race. I.E. a comprehensive solution to the issue of cyber security.

Prabhjot Grewal



World Book Day Speech



Hello! I am Harry James from Prep and I am here to talk to you about books.

I want to start by quoting Jane Austen:

“The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.”

Books are an essential part of our everyday life. We use them in class to study or research a topic; we use them to entertain ourselves; to escape our reality, and to get a deeper understanding of the human condition. They teach us important lessons about ourselves and help us empathise with our fellow human beings.

Our library is an essential part of our school, giving us the chance to explore our world and history, and expand our minds. Most of us come here on a daily basis. We pick up new books and always learn new things.

The fact that we have a library this big suggests that books are a very important part of our education. Books are influential. As we can see from our librarians, some people even devote their lives to them.

In around 1450, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press, therefore reducing the price of books and making them more widely available. But stories have been around long before Gutenberg. There is evidence of stories being told in caves by primitive hunters.

Reading is an amazing skill and we ought to be grateful to our parents and teachers who helped us to acquire it.

We should celebrate books not just today, World Book Day, but every day of the year. The best way to celebrate books is to read them.

Thank you for listening.

Harry James

The National Health Service (NHS) was created in 1948. At the time the concept was considered as hugely ambitious; a plan to provide a good free healthcare service to all. The proposal was to set up a collection of hospitals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, opticians and dentists and provide services that would be free to everyone. Since then, the NHS has undergone many changes in structure – this has included making decisions about the NHS services to be provided, service-commissioning and the manner in which money is spent. It has been recognised that one of the most important aspects of providing good medical care is the quality of our doctors, as the NHS is ultimately dependent on its doctors. However, are they paid too little? Recently, there have been many discussions between the NHS and doctors about their pay, hours and working conditions, particularly in relation to the terms relating to junior doctors.



Junior doctors argue that they work too much for too little pay. Their leaders are objecting to the prospect of a new contract being proposed by the Government which will contain many elements such as their pay package being curbed. In addition, it is proposed that their hours of working will be increased and they will be required to work even more unsociable hours with no remuneration for this. Therefore, junior doctors see this as a deterioration in

The Junior Doctors' Strike

their overall package and quality of living. The proposal removes any guaranteed pay increases which are linked to time in the job, as these could be scrapped and replaced with a system linked to progression through set training stages. The British Medical Association (BMA) argues that this approach would affect people who take time out to have a baby. They are also concerned that some doctors will end up being paid less and that the restrictions on the number of hours being worked by doctors are not strong enough.

What is a strike? A strike is a withdrawal of labour organised by a body of employees as a form of protest, typically in an attempt to gain a concession or concessions from their employer. Despite many discussions between the doctors and the Government, they have been unable to reach an agreement, resulting in further strikes. The Doctors are trying to prove a point – that the NHS needs them a lot. They are protesting because they say they are not capable of working so many hours; they will not be able to treat patients at their full potential, when tired.

In my opinion, both the NHS and the doctors need to work together to resolve this dispute as soon as possible for the benefit of patients. The Government is trying to resolve this problem by seeking to negotiate further with doctors about the proposed changes. Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, states that the Government must, "do whatever it deems necessary to end uncertainty for the service and to make sure that a new contract is in place which is as close as possible to the final position." A recent Yougov survey, about the reason why this disagreement is unresolved, suggested that the public were blaming the Government (45%), the BMA (12%), while 30% blamed both. This concludes that the government is to blame, and should do something quickly to resolve this dispute.

By Ronil Magdani

Diverse Issues



My Sexuality Isn't My Personality

Of course I dress well, I didn't spend all of that time in the closet for nothing.

Being a lesbian in today's society is the most socially-accepted it has ever been, but this does not mean we don't face discrimination and hardships in our daily lives. Just because gay marriage is legal does not mean homophobia is over- it's like saying racism does not exist because slavery has ended. So, what is the lesbian agenda: is there a secret plan to drill lesbianism into the society through "Orange is The New Black" and Sue Perkins?

People use stereotypes in order to view other people in their simplest terms. This is incredibly insulting to many people for many different reasons, and stereotypes are something everyone needs to fight against. Many times I have heard, 'Who's the man in the relationship?'- I do hate to break it to you, but that's definitely not how a lesbian relationship works. 'Do you fancy every girl you see?' No, lesbians are not eerie female predators. Finally, we cannot forget the infamous, 'You're a lesbian? I know a someone who's a lesbian, maybe you know her, you two should get together!' It takes all the willpower in me to refrain from saying, 'You're an imbecile? Wait, I know someone else who's an imbecile too! I bet you two know each other, you should get together!'

Apart from stereotypes, one of the most irritating issues I witness is when a lesbian couple is out in public and many people stand there spectating as if it's the sweetest thing to happen on this desolate planet. For example, a lesbian couple goes to Asda. In the background people are commenting and pointing, 'Aw! That's so cute! Look, they're holding hands!' We don't need this running commentary of our lives, this isn't a David Attenborough documentary. You wouldn't narrate the lives of a heterosexual couple like this, so why do it with us?

However, we may also hear the comment, 'Oh, they're just gal-pals!' Of course, lesbian couples don't actually exist; we are merely two females who are very close

friends. You think you saw pictures of a lesbian wedding? You're wrong, you simply saw two very close 'gal-pals' celebrating their friendship - the ultimate 'friendship-goals' right there.

Before openly wanting to express themselves, many people decide to 'come out' to their loved ones. However, there's always an odd fascination with this idea, many people absent-mindedly interrogate you about when or if you have dropped the, 'G-bomb' to the important people in your life. Many LGBTQ+ people have heard, 'Have you told them? How did you do it? What did they say?' or, 'Why haven't you told them yet? How do you think they'll react?' This is none of their business; I'm not your gay friend, you can't just peek into my life occasionally. I am a person, not a bundle of gossip.

Despite all of this, I know this fact does not define who I am or change me as a person; I am more than my sexuality, as is everyone who is a part of the LGBTQ+ community. And so I leave you with this quotation from Marge Simpson, "Just because you're a lesbian, doesn't mean you're less of a bein'."

By Anonymous



ARE GENDERS TREATED EQUALLY IN ISLAM?

The statement 'women and men are treated equally within Islam' is controversial. Some people would agree with this statement as Islam's sayings are not biased towards one gender.

Proof of this is in the story of Adam and Eve. Islam believes that both Adam and Eve were guilty of eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge, and that both have been forgiven by Allah. However, Christians believe that Eve tempted Adam into eating from the tree of knowledge, so Eve, the woman, is blamed.

Another piece of evidence is that in the time of Muhammad (PBUH), Islamic people were more forward thinking and treated women fairly, but at the same time in countries like China and India, women were treated like no more than children or slaves. In fact, the first Muslim was a woman, Khadija, the wife of Muhammad (PBUH)

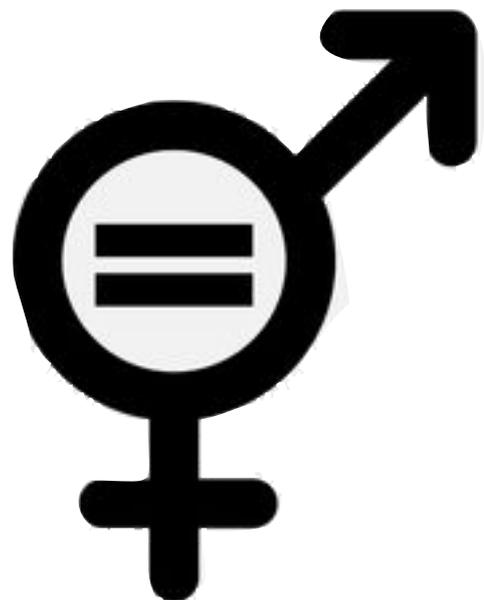
However, others would disagree for a variety of different reasons. In Muhammad's last speech, standing on the Mount of Mercy, he spoke out against discrimination and inequality but he used the more masculine words of 'brotherhood' and 'mankind', which some people might think suggests he was being prejudiced towards women. However, it could also be argued that this was just a reflection of the language used at the time and that he was actually referring to humankind when he used words like mankind.

In some Islamic countries, acid attacks and honour killings are carried out if a woman has dressed 'immodestly' or brought 'dishonour' to her husband's family. This seems to be a practice that is tolerated, but is it a religious thing? Most people recognise that such actions are cultural rather than based in religion. That said, the Quran does actually command men to beat their wives and send them to another room, if a wife has not obeyed her husband (but I also know that the Bible says that women should be silent in the churches). What I can conclude then, is that just because Islam seems to allow this to happen in

particular circumstances, it does not mean that every Muslim husband beats his wife. Especially as Muhammad (PBUH) reminds us that "Paradise lies at the feet of your Mother". In other words, women should be held in high esteem.

In my opinion, I do think that women and men are treated equally within Islam. I think that Muhammad (PBUH), in his last speech, was summing up Islam as a community rather than being unfair to women, which is what Islam is – a community. Also, acid attacks and honour killings occur in many countries (whether Islamic or not), so it is arguably a more cultural affair. Equality and harmony is what drew people to Islam when it was first established, so it should remain the core value.

By Kaylan Raja





Oscars 2016

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In this case, only three spring to mind – ‘Oscars so White’. A quick scan of the photograph of all the 2016 Oscar nominees at the annual luncheon, three weeks before the main event, left me in no doubt that the film industry has a problem – a pretty big one at that. It has been dubbed a ‘diversity’ issue, an ‘inclusivity’ issue, and even a ‘socio-economic’ issue. Admittedly, all of these labels do the job just fine, but I cannot help feeling that they tiptoe around the crux of the problem slightly – being white, male and straight are still the surest bet for obtaining a ‘golden ticket’ to Hollywood stardom.

That said, the distinct lack of non-white nominees this year – and the ‘leapfrogging’ over critically acclaimed performances by Idris Elba and Will Smith to reach such a list – is indicative of a wider issue. When we look at the performances that have been nominated for Oscars in years gone by, it is just as illuminating. There have been thirty such nominations for best actor/actress respectively (twenty for black actors and ten for actresses). However, some of the commonalities between such nomination-worthy performances are horrifying: nine of the ten black actresses were nominated for playing characters that were homeless or on the brink; all played female characters in poverty; seven played characters with absent fathers, husbands or boyfriends; half were victims of rape. The statistics for black male actor nominees do not make for much easier reading with fifteen of the twenty nominations being awarded to characters that engaged in violent or criminal behaviour. The shortcut to becoming a black Academy Award winner seems abundantly clear: play a character who is oppressed, thrown into chains, and violently or sexually assaulted. The back catalogue of black Oscar nominees says a lot about the roles that society is comfortable casting black people in, both on and off screen.

In this way, the lack of diversity amongst the Oscar nominations is a ‘symptom’, rather than the ‘disease’ itself. In the same year that Lupita Nyong’o was honoured for her performance in *12 Years a Slave*, the phrase ‘black lives matter’ stormed Twitter. This was in response to the shooting of 17 year old African American Trayvon Martin by a white police officer (who was acquitted of murder and manslaughter charges). The undercurrent of racial tension and prejudicial treatment within the last few years has not been restricted to the streets of America. Even though this year’s BAFTA nominations were more diverse, applause should remain hushed as Britain is reported to have an estimated 23% hourly wage gap between black and white university graduates. Even film stars cannot escape such pay inequality: only twelve actors/actresses are said to repeatedly rake in more than fifteen million dollars per film. Whilst four of the dozen are women (including Jennifer Lawrence and Sandra Bullock), and two are black (Dwayne Johnson and Denzel Washington), there are no black women on the list. Put simply, if this were on a Venn diagram, the intersection would be left empty.

The only positive thing to come out of this year’s controversy is that the issue of ingrained racism in the film industry has been thrown into the ‘spotlight’. It is time for Hollywood to come to terms with its addiction to recognising (occasionally mediocre) performances by white actors at the expense of their black counterparts. Actors like Charlotte Rampling (who said the diversity row is ‘racist to white people’) have tried ‘denial’, whereas boycotters of the ceremony like Jada Pinkett Smith have tried ‘anger’, and so maybe now we are finally on the road to recovery.

Orla Horan

Easter: Prophet or Profit?

Nominally, Easter is Christ's victory over death and all that followed him would truly be granted eternal life. Because of his resurrection, there was no way to believe he was not the Son of God and that death could be conquered.

Easter did not always denote Christ's resurrection from the dead, in fact it actually originated from the Pagan celebration of birth and revitalisation. It was celebrated in early Spring to honour the Goddess Eostre. Today, the meaning of Easter, for millions of Christians, is that of honouring and recognizing Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Conversely, Easter is over-commercialised as shops try to make Easter a bigger event each year to allow for large profit margins. Easter was supposed to be about the resurrection of Jesus not about chocolate eggs. What is really bad, however, is the effect that the average amount of Easter eggs can have. The average eleven-year-old boy can have 2,000 calories a day, but by consuming five Easter eggs it can go up to 10,000. This would result in several pounds being put on within one week. Easter has lost its distinctive quality because of the early release of Easter eggs, food, drink and other essentials. Tesco had put up their Easter eggs by 1st January.

My opinion is that Easter should be a low-key holiday that is more about relaxation or going

to Church than buying expensive products and having all night-parties. Many people who are not Christian, or even religiously-inclined, celebrate Easter.

I feel that Britain is particularly guilty of chocolate consumption; over Easter, England rises to the fourth biggest consumer of chocolate. Easter is being over-commercialised every year and it is increasingly getting worse. In 2014 - 2015, sales went up 8.6 %. In fact it has become so bad that many Christians do not know when Jesus actually resurrected. There are 13,064,000 Christians in the UK and only 1, 000,000 actually worship on a regular basis.

Overall, I feel that Easter has now become too concerned with money and the "Easter Bunny" and that if they dialled it down, maybe they could engage a few more people and actually help society. It would also benefit people in terms of finance and their weight issues around festival periods. People should spend time with their family more, or go to Church more, or generally just have a good time without the Easter eggs, and rabbits.

I leave you with a quotation from Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy:

If you want to be happy, be.

By Yuvraj Singh

