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By The Summer Interns

WACH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 WACH AMBASSADOR LEVEL MEMBERS

03 INTERNATIONAL YOUNG LEADERS CONFERENCE

04 INTERN OPINION PIECES

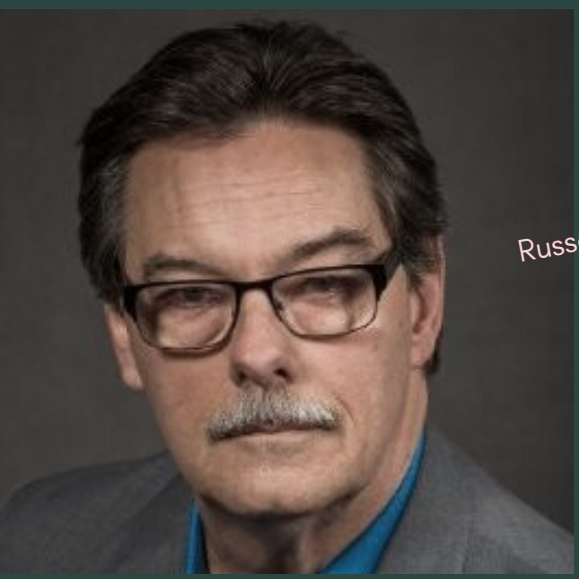
26 OTHER INTERN BIOS

27 PROGRAM SPONSORS

WACH AMBASSADOR LEVEL MEMBERS

Sait Onal

Nathaniel Gadsen



Russell W. Goodman

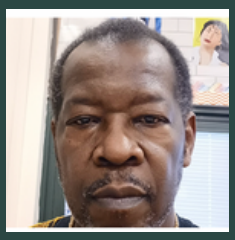
Lindsay Bowman

Dr. Oralia Garcia Dominic

Pat Gadsen

2022 INTERNATIONAL YOUNG LEADERS CONFERENCE PANELISTS

- GUN VIOLENCE & IT'S EFFECT ON YOUTH AND EDUCATION -



Pastor Eric Jackson

Aaron Chapin

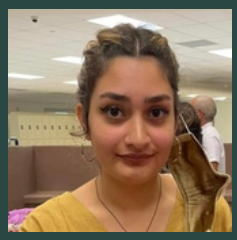
Jordan Forston

- COVID-19 & EDUCATION -

Eric Turman

Lindsay Bowman

Dr. Nirmal Joshi



Alanis Melendez

- SOCIAL INEQUALITY -

Chad Lassiter

Dr. Amber Sessoms

Cole Goodman

- REPERCUSSIONS OF RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE & OUR FUTURE -

Dr. Chris Dolan

THE WAR IN UKRAINE ISN'T OVER JUST BECAUSE IT'S NO LONGER ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEED

HANNAH ALVARNAZ

Hannah Alvarnaz is a senior at Lebanon Valley College. She is a double major in political science and global studies with a minor in social justice. Her advocacy primarily focuses on the intersection of global security and human rights. In her free time, she enjoys reading and listening to music. She also enjoys traveling and hopes to visit many more countries after her study abroad in London last fall.

Five months ago, social media timelines were filled with Ukrainian flags and posts describing the outrage that the American public felt about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Every news channel had breaking updates every hour of the horrors that the people of Ukraine were enduring. Flash forward to July 2022, and days or weeks fill the time between a new update on the war in Ukraine flashes on a phone screen.

Many Americans have pushed Ukraine to the back of their minds as their priorities shift to the price of gas or the latest celebrity news. However, the war has not ended simply because some of the American media no longer covers it every day.

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a large-scale invasion within Ukraine. Since then, nearly 3,000 civilians have died, and many more have been displaced from both their homes and their countries. Over the two months, updates on the situation in Ukraine were easily found and frequently at the top of the headlines. Many media outlets made promises to continue providing continuous information on Ukraine for as long as the war lasted. Large news sources such as CNN believed that viewer interest would remain high for months, allowing for broadcasts and on-the-ground coverage to continue.

However, as with almost all major global events, coverage faded as the American people, and the international community as a whole, turned their eyes away from Ukraine and back towards their daily lives. The physical distance between the United States and Ukraine has seemingly created distance from the conflict in the minds of many Americans.

Even Ukrainians are beginning to sense the disinterest of Americans as the war continues on and as media coverage dwindles. The Western aid that has been critical throughout the crisis is noticeably becoming less and less as time passes, allowing Russia to make advances further into the country.

This must change. We as Americans cannot disassociate ourselves from international conflicts simply because we do not live there, and therefore it seemingly does not affect us. Innocent people continue to die every day, even though the horrors are no longer being shown on every news channel. Bombs continue to destroy homes and local shops. Russian soldiers continue to torture the Ukrainians who have remained in their country.

Despite the current state of this tragedy, Americans have moved on, not realizing that the issues we have turned our attention to are largely the result of the war we have pushed out of our minds.

Instead of following the trend that social media and the never-ending news cycle has set – that breaking news is only relevant for a short time before fading away and seemingly coming to an end – we must work to stay aware of what is going on around us.

We must continue to fight on behalf of those who are suffering and cannot fight for themselves. Spread awareness. Donate to humanitarian organizations who are working to fulfill the basic needs of those most affected. Most importantly, listen. Listen to the stories that are still coming out of Ukraine.

Listen to the voices of those who are hurting. We cannot turn our backs on Ukraine during their time of need. This war is not over yet, even though it may no longer be on your social media feed.

IT'S EASY TO GET INFORMATION ONLINE, BUT HARDER THAN EVER TO FIND THE TRUTH

ARIYA BANDY

Ariya is 17 years old and a rising senior in high school. World Affairs are intertwined with every aspect of people's lives and she is interested in learning more about the world and being part of the important discussions surrounding it. She is particularly interested in ways to stay safe in the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways that different people learn about news. In the future, she hopes to continue discussing these topics and make a positive impact on the world!

Internet algorithms have come a long way, and they are incredibly effective in making our lives easier, but it is important to understand what they do and how they affect what we find on the internet, especially when it comes to news.

According to the World Economic Forum, more people are finding their news online than ever before. More people under 50 years old are checking the news online than people over that age, and 42% of Americans between the ages of 18-29 access their digital news from social media. In other words, we are becoming increasingly reliant, not only on news on the internet, but news that is easiest to find.

Internet algorithms are meant to push content to people based on when content was created and the viewer's interests according to Institute for Internet & the Just Society. This can be very helpful and entertaining in many ways, but while the internet can make it easier for us to learn about what is happening in the world, it is also easier for us to learn from a narrower perspective. We have more access to information than ever before, but we still need to make an active effort to find it.

I do think it is important to acknowledge the positives of internet algorithms. People today can easily find information and other content about topics in which they are interested. It is also easier than ever feel more connected. But there is so much content on the internet, it can also be overwhelming and problematic.

To start, people automatically see what they want to see. Since content is pushed out based on what people have shown interest and what has had higher engagement, especially from others with similar interests, recommended content will not have the diversity of a random search. This means people may see content that aligns with their opinions. The more we rely on recommended articles to inform us about what is happening in the world, the smaller the tunnel we are looking through.

This can lead to our society becoming more and more divided based on our having different "knowledge." The worst part is people will often be unaware of how different the news they may be seeing could be from someone else's, which is why it is important to understand what these algorithms do.

It is easier than ever to find information, but that does not mean it is easier than ever to find truth or the most diverse perspectives possible. According to MIT news, this can also be dangerous, particularly on social media with the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Content that may be interesting or entertaining may reach more people, and many times incorrect information circulates due to being sensationalized or "more exciting" than true stories.

Internet algorithms help us in many ways, but it is imperative that we understand the consequences of relying on them for news. The most important step, in my opinion, is to spread the word about how news gets to us. Within these discussions, encouraging people to actively look for more diverse news sources can help us make sure we are still being intentional in our searches for information.

Talking about new itself and what we find, not just with people who agree with us, but sharing and listening to different perspectives is crucial for learning. We will not agree on everything, but we shouldn't let laziness divide us.

Technology is becoming an increasingly prominent part of our lives, but we must control it. We must be intentional about where we look for information and not just accept the first thing we see. Technology is an extension of ourselves, so therefore we will always need to be conscious of how it impacts our lives and how we can use it as a tool and not as a force of self-destruction.

MUSLIMS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO ASSIMILATE TO BE GOOD AMERICANS

SARA FARHEEN

As the Pew Research Center reports, "Muslim Americans are a diverse and growing population, currently estimated at 3.45 million people of all ages ... The U.S. Muslim community is made up heavily of immigrants and the children of immigrants from around the world."

So, what exactly is a "Muslim" and why do so many Muslims choose to migrate to America? A Muslim is defined as an individual who practices the religion of Islam. Islam is a monotheistic faith with the fundamental belief being, "There is only one God, Allah, and Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) Is the Last Prophet of Allah."

America is a melting pot, consisting of various diverse communities and cultures, that gives its citizens and residents the right to life, liberty, and love as well as the right to freedom of religion. Some Muslim refugees migrate to America to escape prosecution, poverty, and famine, while the majority of the Muslims from all around the world migrate to America solely in search of freedom and a better future for themselves as well as their children.

The real problem, however, is that the majority of the Muslim Americans "assimilate" into the American culture and forget their identities and Muslim practices, in fear that they will not be accepted or will be targeted as "terrorists."

For instance, Muslims are obliged to pray five times a day, but many Muslims choose not to pray because they are in public and fear what others will think or say about them. The don't want to stand out, and so they "assimilate" into American culture.

But what exactly is “assimilation?”

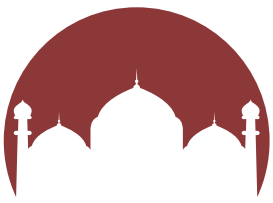
As defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary, “Assimilation refers to the process through which individuals and groups of differing heritages acquire the basic habits, attitudes, and modes of life of an embracing culture.” Is that not what the majority of the immigrants do in efforts of being “accepted” into America?

Dua’a Yaser Faquih, a young Muslim immigrant from Saudia Arabia, shared her experience of practicing Islam in America in a YouTube video, suggesting there may be another way to adjust to American life than just assimilate into the main culture.

It is important that Muslims and all immigrants who come to America not assimilate into American culture and forget their identities in an effort to become someone they were never meant to be.

It is important that individuals embrace their unique differences: their culture, their religion, their heritage, their traditions, everything that makes them, them. At the end of the day, it is our differences that make us YOUnique, and it is the love and kindness that we have towards each other that unite us.

Always stay true to yourself and spread kindness and smiles wherever you go! The world needs more of it! The world needs you!



FALSE CLAIMS OF ELECTION FRAUD AREN'T AN ANOMALY; THEY'RE THE NEW NORMAL

DANICA GULLICK

Danica Gullick is a 17-year old high school graduate. She plans to attend Muhlenberg College this fall. Her main interest in World Affairs is in human rights. She strives to raise awareness and be educated on the legality of injustice around the world. She plans to major in political science and become a political analyst and then run for office in the future.

In 2020, widespread claims of election fraud appeared more than in any election before. This was in part due to President Donald Trump telling America these claims were true, implying he did not actually lose the last election . A majority of the election fraud claims have been disproven, with only 475 cases of fraud among the 25 million votes cast in the six main states, Trump pointed to as fraudulent.

Midterms are fast approaching, and if there are any holding out hope that false election claims would stay in 2020, they would be disappointed. As a machine inspector in the Pennsylvania primary elections this May, I witnessed how voters will be approaching the polls this year. An astonishing amount of voters asked me questions about election fraud. Some were just curious about how the process worked, but others were doubtful that their votes even counted.

ABOLISH THE POLICE DOESN'T MEAN ALLOWING A LAWLESS SOCIETY

MAHEEN HAMZ

In our country, teaching is a tough job, and teachers deserve to make more money.

According to the National Education Association (NEA), the average starting salary for aa teacher in the United States is about $41,000. In Pennsylvania, it's a bit higher at $46,991. But considering the impact of teachers on our society, and the many roles they are called to play in the lives of children, teachers are grossly underpaid.

Many teachers work 50 hours each week and face incredible challenges, from managing large classes to making sure they meet state and federal guidelines for student achievement to now having to deal with protecting students from mass shootings.

These challenges are forcing good teachers out of the classrooms and deterring many from ever stepping into it.

American society is making a big mistake in undervaluing teachers. We need good teachers to educate responsible future citizens and to help youth reach their potential. But the poor salaries teachers earn is a real threat to democracy.

Studies show almost one third of teachers in this country have to work a second job to take care of their families. And many use their own money on school supplies to make up for the lack of quality materials in their classrooms. Add to that the fact that many teachers today have the added expense of student loans they incurred to get them through college. Many have no other choice but to leave the profession due to their inability to make enough money as teachers.

Studies also salary increases for teachers have not substantially improved in the past 25 years, but the responsibilities we put on teachers has quadrupled. If we want to get out of the current crisis of seeing so many great teachers walk out of the classroom, we will have to find a way to lessen their load, make them feel more valued and to pay them more for the important work they do.

Students in poor school districts need great teachers most of all. It is impossible to attract qualified teachers to these schools without ensuring they are paid fairly for their work.

Raising teacher pay will not only benefit schools and students, but the entire community. We must insist lawmakers provide more funding for teacher salaries in public schools, which will also cause salaries of teachers in all schools to increase.

We must make sure our teachers are fairly paid and that they get the respect they deserve in American society.

WHAT THE ABORTION DEBATE IS MISSING

CHLOE MEYER-GEHRKE

Chloe Meyer-Gehrke is a rising senior at Harrisburg Academy. She is interested in creative writing and journalism, both of which she hopes to pursue in college and beyond. In her freetime, she reads, writes, plays guitar, and figure skates.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, enslaved women in America chewed cotton root to induce abortions. It was a form of resistance; to give birth would be to deliver one more slave to their masters and to condemn their children to a life of slavery.

In the Middle Ages in Europe, the church exiled women for life if they received an abortion—unless the pregnancy was from a husband who has mistreated or left them, in which case their exile lasted only 10 years. The church saw abortion as a subversion of a husband's power over his wife, the refusal to bear his children.

In the centuries before British colonization of America, Native American women knew how to use herbs like black root and cedar root to end unwanted pregnancies. This was not a moral dilemma, but a personal decision between a pregnant woman and the other female members of her tribe.

In early America, a doctor could not definitively confirm a pregnancy until "quickening," an event in the fourth or fifth month, when the mother first felt the fetus move. Before this time, many women—often those who were unmarried, unable to support children, or afraid of the high maternal mortality rates of the time—used herbal remedies to "restore menstruation." This was common and unremarkable; a woman's reproductive health was a personal matter, one of her domestic responsibilities, between her and, in some cases, a midwife.

In 1969, Norma McCorvey got pregnant for a third time at age 21, a struggling waitress with a drug problem and the third consecutive woman in her family to get pregnant young and unmarried. She'd already given up her first two children for adoption, unprepared to be a responsible mother. Soon, a visit to a doctor became a visit to a lawyer, and then more lawyers, and before she knew it she was the iconic "Roe"—for Jane Roe, a pseudonym to protect her identity—of Roe v. Wade, the case that legalized abortion in America, though it was too late for her—she'd given birth while the case was in court and had given up a third child for adoption.

The modern American right would have us believe that abortion is an absolute ethical wrong, a religious sin, the hallmark of a morally bankrupt society, but the reality is nowhere near that simple. Abortion has existed in different forms for practically all of human history, and, at different times in this history and in different parts of the world, we've operated on radically different moral and religious systems. If a slave aborted her baby to save it from a life in slavery, was it wrong?

If a Native American woman took herbs her tribe had been using to induce abortions for centuries, was it wrong?

Banning abortion is not supported, as Supreme Court Justice Alito suggested in his recent opinion, supported by any kind of "tradition" or "history," at least not outside of today's conservative, Christian rhetoric. It also is not an absolute moral victory over sin and murder as "pro-life" Christians argue.

The abortion debate has lost track of reality. The moral discussions are not founded in facts and concrete truths that will support laws for all of society. There is no possible end to this debate; one side will always believe abortion is morally wrong, and the other will believe it is morally permissible; different people with different opinions that will never be compatible.

Instead, we should focus on facts. Thousands of women died from abortions the last time it was illegal in the United States. That's a fact. Once again, abortion will become a privilege for the wealthy when it can only be accessed by traveling across state lines.

We know that legal abortions are safe—safer, even, than childbirth. These are only the facts I know. Medical professionals—the ones who should have been front and center in this debate from the beginning—can tell us more.

As much as we would like our own philosophical outlooks to be fact, they aren't. Abortion in one context, culture, or moral system is seen as a neutral or even positive act, but seen as morally deplorable in another. These sorts of claims will always be subject to change, and relying on them over the harsh, messy realities of the world we live in and the women who seek—who need—abortions will only lead to idealized, unrealistic, and, ultimately, harmful outcomes.

We can and must prioritize living, breathing women over moral outrage and easy solutions.

FIRST GENERATION KIDS FACE BOTH CHALLENGES AND REWARDS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

PARI PATEL

My name is Pari Patel and currently attending Cumberland Valley high school. I am passionate about The world affairs as I'm really passionate about social issues and the media and current issues involving our society.Topics I am passionate and very interested about is gun control, Womens rights, education, how covid 19 has affected Us and our communities. I also enjoy spending time with my 2 year old dog max and I'm also learning to code.

My family immigrated to this country for a better life for themselves and for their children. Like many immigrant families, they also must support family members back home. Taking care of relatives here and in the native countries can present serious challenges for both immigrants and their children.

Being a first-generation American and a child of new immigrants can mean having to meet high expectations of parents who want you to succeed. And first-generation kids often find themselves caught between wanting to fit into American society and wanting to please their parents, who have different values. This can bring cultural differences that cause tensions between kids who grow up in America and their parents who are still connected to their native lands.

Studies show first-generation children can face bullying and discrimination in this country because of their different look, language and culture. And that can lead to depression.

An article in the Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health noted, "First generation immigrant adolescents experience higher rates of bullying and peer aggression compared to third generation and native counterparts.

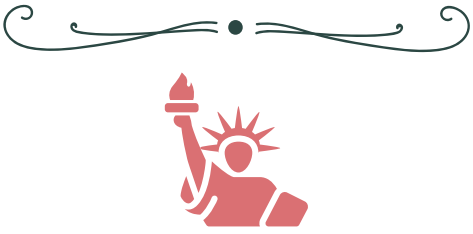
It also noted, "Refugee status and advanced parental age were associated with increased parent to child aggression among South East Asians. "

Many factors can contribute to whether first-generation Americans are accepted or face discrimination. But pressure. can also come from inside the home as well as from the outside. Many children of new immigrants also have to live up to their parents' expectations. They feel the pressure of parents wanting to live out their dreams in their children, often pushing them to be overachievers.

Officials in schools should be aware of the extra burdens children of immigrants face and ensure their mental and emotional health needs are being addressed. This is especially true now when so many factors from COVID-19 to gun violence are affecting all youth.

Despite the significant challenges for first-generation children, there also are benefits. First-generation children have to speak English as well as their parents' native tongue to be able to communicate at home and at school. This means first generation children have a foot in two worlds and identify with the cultures of at least two countries. They are better able to appreciate the diversity of American society.

Most of all, many children of new immigrants realize their parents have made incredible sacrifices, often working long hours and very hard jobs in this country to give them a better future. Hard-working immigrant parents deserve admiration and respect, and so do their children, who watch them struggle, overcome obstacles and succeed. They truly represent the best of the American story.



PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES SHOULD HELP PEOPLE, NOT HURT THEM

SURABI SHANMUGAM

Surabi Shanmugam is a rising senior at Cumberland Valley High School. She is interested in world affairs because she believes that learning about world affairs allows for a greater understanding of the world around us. She is most interested in affairs concerning the American healthcare system, and hopes to eventually pursue a career in healthcare.

Every day, my uncle wakes up, eats his breakfast, and takes his medication. One day, as he was taking his meds, he turned to me. Holding up his bottle of Jardiance, a name brand drug, he told me, "I pay $250 for this every month."

I remember pausing for a second, wondering why he was telling me this. Then, he held up his bottle of metformin, a generic drug, and told me, "I pay $4 for this every month."

Despite having done some research into how pharmaceutical companies tend to raise the prices of their drugs excessively in the United States, it was still shocking to see such a disparity between the two drugs, which actually serve very similar purposes.

My uncle is just one of thousands of Americans who feel the pressure of having to pay for their expensive name-brand drugs. The RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research institute, estimated in 2021 that Americans pay 2.56 times more for medication than other first-world countries. This disparity leads us to the main idea, if you will, of this piece: pharmaceutical companies should be more restricted in how they are allowed to price their drugs.

The United States has consistently seen increased spending every year on pharmaceuticals, not because Americans are getting sicker, but because drug prices continue rising. This kind of price gouging is completely legal in the United States.

While there are some pieces of new legislation that would combat the amount of gouging these companies take part in, such as the Schumer-Manchin bill compromise, for example, more can be done to keep prescription medications affordable for everyone. Pharmaceutical companies tend to manufacture drugs to turn over large profits. This mindset has made the pharmaceutical industry one of the most profitable in the United States.

This mindset has also caused Americans to suffer financially and physically. Consumers either go into debt trying to take their medicine, or stop taking necessary medicine in order to support themselves or their families.

When you really look at it, pharmaceutical companies make lots of money off of sick consumers.

And by lots, I mean billions. Every year.

After spending money on research and development, manufacturing, and other expenses, pharmaceutical companies are still left with an exorbitant amount of profit. The majority of this profit goes to advertising and lobbying. The amount of lobbying representatives for pharmaceutical companies do in Congress often slows down legislators and gives them reasons to avoid going after these companies. Many pharmaceutical companies hike the prices of their drugs either annually or biannually, even if the cost of drug manufacturing has not increased.

Preventing legislators from taking action against price gouging allows pharmaceutical companies to continue to increase their profits while draining Americans' pockets.

Knowing all of this information causes one – the "one" here being me, but perhaps you, as well, – to question why pharmaceutical companies are allowed to do this.

Why do we exist in a day and age where profits are valued more than human lives? The pharmaceutical industry was created to heal Americans, not hurt them.

STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN ABOUT THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF WOMEN IN HISTORY CLASS

KEERTHANA SONTYANA

My name is Keerthana Sontyana and I'm a rising 15 year old sophomore at Cumberland Valley Highschool. I took the opportunity for this internship because I enjoy seeing the bright and the dark of day to day worldly affairs. I think it's important for everyone to completely be able to understand everything that's going on around us because that knowledge benefits us in future instances. I'm an American but my parents are indian. I've grown up with my Indian community and was able to find this opportunity through that and my local school district. I'm also very appreciative of WACH and Ms. Joyce Davis because my mother founded POWER (a women entrepreneur organization), which allowed for me to understand how hard people are working there. In my free time I tend to be more on the creative side by engaging in arts and crafts, painting, drawing, and recently I've taken an interest in choreographing dances for upcoming events in my local indian community. I'm also known in my community as a singer and the daughter of a talented singer, my dad.

Old, important, history class-worthy men.

The schools in Pennsylvania only teach the average class about "essential figures" in history. Usually, we are taught about men who made great impacts and briefly overview the women in history, as if they side characters in the narrative, right?

We are taught from a young age that George Washington is our first president, but why not that Mary Seacole made a "British Hotel" in between the lines of the Crimean war as a nurse?

Pennsylvania should add a class in high schools to educate students on something they need to know, vital parts of history, women's history. We have to convince school boards that this is a class we need. Students are missing out on essential parts of their education by not learning about the Mary Seacoles of the world.

Having these kinds of classes could not only broaden a student's mind about the past but also educate them on something others haven't previously had the pleasure of learning about, women.

Yes, men have made many great accomplishments, they have succeeded, and brought much pride to most, but women have been repressed and still managed to make a statement with their whole lives ... sadly unrecognized.

It's time to recognize them, it's time to see them in the light they deserve, and it's about time that we pass down their stories to those willing to learn. Thank you!

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