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By The Summer Interns

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THE WORLD MUST DO MORE TO STOP GENDER APARTHEID IMPACTING THE LIVES OF MILLIONS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AROUND THE WORLD

CONNOR JOYCE

Hello, my name is Connor Joyce. A Gettysburg College student double majoring in Emerging Threats in National Security and Political Science, as well as History and Peace & Justice Studies. I am an intern with the World Affairs Council as well as the Potomac Institute for Public Policies, Terrorism Studies Division. My particular interests are foreign policy, space policy, economic trends, and political trends.

The international community at large has failed to address one of the most critical human issues of our time, gender apartheid. Gender apartheid is the process of social and economic discrimination against individuals based on their gender.

Women across the world have suffered under the affliction of discrimination for centuries and the modern era is no different.

In America, females from all backgrounds have legal protections under the 19th Amendment for voting and carry equal civil rights to their male counterparts. Domestically, an argument for gender equality can be made concerning reproductive rights and equal pay, "on average, women working full time, year-round are paid 83.7% of what men are paid."

However, beyond our nation's territorial borders, gender apartheid is a significant issue in that impacts millions of women and girls.

Globally, over 50% of females are discriminated against attaining employment. Biased legal statutes in “104 counties” restrict “2.75 billion women worldwide” from pursuing careers in the industry, energy, mining, and agriculture sectors.

Eighteen of these nations legally allow males to prevent their spouses from working. In addition, “123 countries” are void of any sexual harassment laws in education, and in 59 countries, sexual harassment in the workplace is legal.

Beyond devastating gender discrimination in the workplace, 15 nations legally mandate women to “obey” their husband’s commands. Twenty nations protect rapists from legal action if they marry their female victims in a process called “marry your rapist.”

The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund estimates that approximately “650 million girls and women alive today were married as children.”
The World Health Organization also estimates that over “230 million girls and women” have suffered from genital mutilation across 30 nations.

Resisting change, countless countries around the world are publicly “waging a ‘war on women’ to punish defiance.”

Protests around Iran have met harsh government violence following the cruel murder of Mahas Amini for not wearing a hijab. In the Iranian human rights protests, officials have arrested more than “22,000” dissenters and killed more than “500 people.”

Human rights activist and author Yasmine Mohammed has detailed her own experience, stating that forcibly wearing a niqab “… suppresses your humanity entirely. It’s like a portable sensory deprivation chamber, and you are no longer connected to humanity. You can’t see properly. You can’t hear properly. You can’t speak properly … You’re no longer part of this world …”

Globally, females must be given the freedom to wear or not wear niqabs, hijabs, burkas, chadors, and dupattas without repercussions from others. Discrimination begins when the freedom to choose when and what to wear is taken away and instead mandated.

The act of honor killings is also prevalent throughout the world. Under the Taliban rule, Afghanistan has reinitiated stoning females to death as a form of honor killing. In Pakistan alone, hundreds of females are murdered a year by family members in honor killings.

Demonstrating the widespread brutality of this form of gender apartheid, the United Nations estimates that 5,000 women and girls are murdered each year from honor killings.

In America, the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that "23-27 honor killings" occur per year, and 91% of honor killing victims are claimed to be murdered for being "too Westernized."

Global gender apartheid should be as concerning as the genocides of Uyghurs in China, the Rohingya in Myanmar, and Christians in Nigeria.

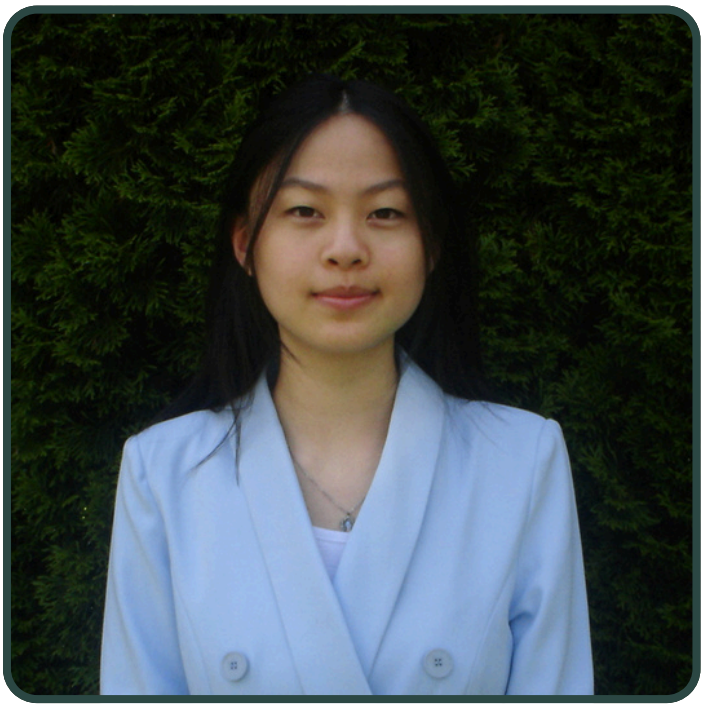
Just as the crisis above, gender apartheid also violates the egalitarian principles outlined in not only the U.S. Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, but, also the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights... Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms... without distinction of any kind ... [including] sex ..."

It is imperative that nations around the world work to make gender discrimination an international crime that extends beyond the International Criminal Court's Rome Statute. As countries around the world act on liberal governing principles, it is crucial not to spread myths and misinformation on what amounts to gender apartheid.

No matter citizenship, race, religion, sex, or theology, every person deserves equitable human rights and should not be judged solely on their unique biological or character traits.

U.S. SCHOOLS NEED TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

LIA ALMER



Hello, I am Lia Almer. I am a rising junior at Northern Lebanon High School. I participated in this internship to further explore my interests in journalism and political science. At school, I enjoy playing tennis and participating in Model UN, FBLA, and Spanish Club. In the future, I hope to pursue a career in journalism or foreign service.

On my first day of seventh grade, I entered my Spanish teacher Señora De Mackiewicz's classroom for the very first time. Adorned with posters, maps, and trinkets reflecting the culture and geography of Latin America, her room was different from any classroom my peers or I had experienced.

"Buenos Dias, clase!" She bellowed the same greeting every morning, enthusiastically conversing with students in Spanish. While many responded to her with confused looks at first, by the end of the semester, we could execute basic greetings and conversation in Spanish.

Fast forward almost four years later, and I am gearing up to take AP Spanish, an advanced, college-level language course. In spite of all the years I spent studying Spanish, when I try to hold a conversation in Spanish with my native-speaking friends, I often find myself lost and wondering if I will ever be fluent in Spanish.

Across U.S. public schools, second languages are typically taught for only one class period of the school day, not allowing for a sufficient amount of exposure to their target language. With this method of only offering second language as limited elective courses in middle or high school, the culture of learning languages in America is deprioritized, contributing to a lack of multilingualism in the United States.

In contrast, many other countries begin teaching second languages such as English to students much earlier in elementary school or even before. Nations such as Taiwan place a heavy emphasis on teaching English to students throughout their education.

English cram schools have become popular businesses across the island, with up to 70% of Taiwanese students attending private English cram schools. At these after-school programs, Taiwanese students are able to continue practicing and learning English outside of the schoolwork that their public school would assign.

Alexander Almer, a teacher at an English cram school located in Miaoli, Taiwan, reflects upon the differences between language learning in the US versus abroad. Alex emphasizes the cultural differences in Taiwanese education that prioritize tutoring and cram schools, stating, “The cram school system is very deep-rooted in Taiwan. One of the sources is a kind of positive peer pressure to provide the best opportunities for your kid and to have them learn as many things as possible.

The system is deeply-rooted enough,” he said, “that parents see it as a need and it is seen as a disservice to your kid to not send them to cram school.”

This system allows Taiwan’s next generation much more exposure to the English language, yielding a cultural shift towards English/Mandarin bilingualism, which can be seen in the Taiwanese Bilingual 2030 Policy. Originally passed in 2018, the policy strives to bolster Taiwan’s future workforce and economy through bilingualism.

Almer argues that the strength of Taiwan’s English education is based on the importance placed on learning English, as well as the extra time Taiwanese youth spend exposed to English. That is thanks to the rise of cram schools.

However, Almer says, “A weakness is that generally, language education does not focus on communicative ability and mostly on reading, writing, and grammar. This leads to students who can do well on tests but who after 16 years of study cannot really hold a conversation (I’ve seen this many times personally).”

Taiwan may want to focus more on their teaching of oratory English skills.

In the U.S. education system, we can use the experiences of other nations to improve our system. The United States should work to provide more opportunities for language exposure and more study than just one class period. Also, representation and the celebration of cultural diversity is integral to promoting multilingualism across the United States.

If U.S. schools prioritize language learning, students are much more likely to stay motivated and remain consistent in their language studies when the cross-cultural benefits for their careers and social engagement in society are highlighted.

American schools should improve their systems of foreign language education by increasing opportunities and the amount of time allocated for foreign language education.

DAUPHIN COUNTY PRISON IS IN SERIOUS NEED OF OVERHAUL

MARY GABRIELE

Hello! I'm Mary Gabriele, a college intern at the World Affairs Council of Harrisburg. I study Global Studies at Temple University with a focus on security. I have interned at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and Human Rights International Corner in Rome. I am passionate about WACH's mission and am very honored to be an intern this summer.

An article published in PennLive regarding the Love in Action Rally brought to light the horrible conditions of Dauphin County Prison (DCP). More people should be talking about reform of Dauphin County Prison. Most people get to walk out of prison after serving their time. 8-year-old Christopher Phy, 36-year-old Michael Butler, and 33-year-old Justin Cofield, among too many others, did not. Dauphin County Prison is in a crisis that needs to be addressed.

These prisoners live in unsafe, disturbing conditions. The power was cut off for two weeks in one part of the jail. Living in prison without electricity is unimaginable torture. Prisoners were stripped of their clothing, leaving them with just a t-shirt and underwear.

DCP's facilities are in tremendous need of an overhaul. A 2023 inspection of DCP found over 10 cockroaches on the floor of the jail's kitchen. The kitchen was highly unsanitary with debris lining the floor.

The inspection also noted that inmates were not getting their allotted 2 hours a day of physical exercise.

Prisons should be a place of personal growth and learning for inmates. Yes, they should be held responsible for their crimes, but prisons should aim to build a person up, not tear them down. The prisoners who were mistreated will eventually return to our community angry and frustrated. This could have violent implications. We, as a community, should not stand for the mistreatment of prisoners in the Dauphin County Prisons. They are human just like everyone else.

PARENTS AND TEACHERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MONITOR THE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE OF CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE

NAOMI LIMANN

Hello, my name is Naomi Limann and I am a rising junior at Blair Academy, where I discovered my passion for human rights and international affairs.

A prominent memory from 6th grade was my burning desire for a phone.

It seemed like every kid my age had one, connecting them to entertainment and social validation. I constantly argued with my parents about the unfairness of being at a disadvantage in staying connected with my friends and accessing popular media because my parents wouldn't let me have a phone.

Now, my youngest sister is following the same course- but she's even younger than I was. She's entering fourth grade, and her top concerns are clothes, makeup, and getting a phone. While makeup and clothes are common interests for a growing girl, I was shocked to learn that some fourth graders already own phones.

This reminded me of a TikTok trend where young girls, dubbed "Sephora kids," flock to Sephora for high-end skincare and makeup created for older consumers.. Parija Kavilanz wrote in CNN about tweens buying pricey skincare brands hyped by influencers. One mother celebrated her daughter's 12th birthday at Sephora, noting that makeup is an "aspirational brand" to

tweens, similar to the Stanley Tumblers craze. These products are status symbols, even if the kids don't know how to use them.

Using my 9-year-old sister as a portal to the elementary world, I interviewed her to get her first-hand perspective on this situation. She mentioned that some of her friends complained about being pressured to wear makeup and being instructed by others on how to apply it correctly. When I asked if she felt pressured to wear makeup, she replied, "Kind of."

She thinks she won't fit in if she doesn't talk about makeup, Lululemon, and Stanley cups—expensive products expensive products promoted by social media influencers.

Next, I sought insights from Gina Petruzzelli, my 14-year-old sister's former teacher at a local middle school. Interviewing my sister's 8th-grade science teacher offered valuable observations on the impact of social media on middle school students.

Petruzzelli has seen a significant change in how students communicate, with many struggling to interact face-to-face. Students spend more time online, which she thinks contributes to feelings of anxiety and insecurity. Others develop feelings of superiority due to online success. However, many students are becoming socially awkward and unaware, she says, "redefining what adolescence looks like."

Regarding materialism, I believe social media accelerates kids' desires to appear "cool." Academic performance is also negatively affected by increased internet use, prompting some parents to impose limits.

I agree with Petruzzelli that parents and educators need to enforce strict phone usage rules. Petruzzelli shared that her school has implemented an "Off and Away" policy for phones, resulting in improved academic performance and fewer behavioral issues.

From these discussions, I believe high-end products are fueled by social media influencers. The online marketing site Emplifi defines an influencer as "a user on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry." These are people who have access to a large audience and can persuade thousands of people through their social media interactions.

Influencing on social media has become a business. Many influencers are solely focused on their personal brand, which often involves encouraging children to purchase unnecessary—and sometimes dangerous—products.

Children, including my younger sister and her peers, look up to influencers and are frequently exposed to content that is inappropriate for their age group.

At a time when children struggle to differentiate fact from fiction, the presence of social media influencers makes adult guidance and monitoring more important than ever.

The fact that young children are going around wearing adult-styled clothing, using makeup, and looking like teenagers is dangerously bizarre. It reflects the lack of monitoring of children's media consumption and the huge impact of social media on youth.

I agreed with Petruzzelli that addressing this issue requires efforts from both teachers and parents. It is their responsibility to limit phone and social media usage, even if it sparks complaints. The lack of such enforcement has dramatically altered how young children interact, think, and behave.

While we cannot solely blame influencers or parents for these changes, it is clear that the ripple effects of social media demand our immediate attention. To prevent further damage to the social and cognitive development of children, we must take decisive action now, halting this epidemic before it worsens.

THE WORLD NEEDS TO DEMAND A CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

HUMZA HASAN

We need a ceasefire in Palestine right now. The fighting is causing too much pain and suffering for Palestinians. Homes and hospitals are being bombed, and people have nowhere to go.

A ceasefire would stop the violence and allow help to reach the Palestinians. A ceasefire would allow people to get food, water, and medicines.

It would also make a way for leaders to talk and make sure they can get to a peaceful resolve. If the fighting does not stop the situation would get worse and more people will die.

Most people will agree that what Russia is doing to Ukraine is a horrible thing, but what Israel is doing to Palestine is 10 times worse. Yet we help the people that are committing a war crime. The world needs to come together and demand a ceasefire now to stop the suffering and work towards a better future for the Palestinians.

POLITICAL CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

MADDIE GRAF

Maddie Graf, a sophomore studying International Affairs at George Washington University, is passionate about international development, climate activism, and women's rights. She gained interest through the Institute of International Economic Policy and is excited about the WACH summer internship to explore local community dynamics related to global issues.

In our tangled political landscape, it is increasingly important to harbor a healthy skepticism about the world around us. However, the misinformed conspiracy theories that have become emboldened by modern day social platforms takes this apprehension too far.

Blindly subscribing to political conspiracy theories ultimately creates a deep-rooted disbelief in our country that allows no room for positive growth and improvement in the future. It is dangerous to the democratic ideals that the United States was built upon.

Conspiracy theories are not a new phenomenon in American politics. Between Sen. Joseph McCarthy's sprawling Communist accusations in the 1950s to suspicions of the Illuminati in the nation's early days, political conspiracy theorists have long offered their notions that certain things are not as they seem. Some modern conspiracy theories sound so extremely far from reality, so why do they continue to attract thousands of devout followers?

Social psychology academics offer a few explanations. Many conspiracy theories make use of “cognitive heuristics,” or shortcuts in our general ways of thinking that allow us to simplify and more immediately come to a conclusion. These heuristics are usually rational and are used as tools to make our life easier – but in this situation, conspiracy theories hijack our tendencies to believe things that we see repeatedly or our tendencies to seek patterns in daily life to persuade us.

Even more influential is the effect of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear upon the mind. Psychologists stress that when a person feels unsure or vulnerable or threatened by what they see happening in their political climate, they are more prone to turn to conspiracy theories as a way to “regain control.” Given this explanation, the current uptrend of political conspiracy theories on social media comes as no surprise; with all the unrest in the world, there is no shortage of sources of apprehension and fear.

Fear is a part of the human experience, and one that is not exclusive to one political party or ideology. However, it is when conspiracy theorists capitalize on panic that this fear can become weaponized against our democracy.

An important observation when looking into conspiracy theories is the type of language used to promote them on social media. Conspiracy theorists tend to use short and succinct assertions that have an undertone of authority and sometimes aggression. Conspiracy theorists use what linguists call “monologic” language; they present their views as absolute fact and don’t address any challenges to their way of thinking. It allows them to silence other voices that could potentially point out flaws or blatant misinformation. This is un-democratic.

This epidemic of misinformation poses a serious concern to democracy as it can emboldens extemists. The insurrection on January 6th is a perfect example of the potential consequences of this. One can almost sympathize with the protestors – they had wholeheartedly believed that there was a mass conspiracy that undermined the election. They felt on some level so incredibly scared of their lack of control in the situation that it led them to near hysteria. There must be a way that we can curb harmful and authoritarian conspiracy theories on social media before they take root.

Freedom of speech is a precious commodity to our democracy – so even when "speech" includes non-factual conspiracies online, it deserves to be protected. So instead of restricting what people are allowed to post on social media, I think there is a stronger argument for building a resistance to misinformation among viewers.

Research shows that the best defense against misinformation is implementing preventative measures. Sander van der Linden, professor of Social Psychology in Society at Cambridge, compares political conspiracies to a potent virus, and lessons in critical thinking as a vaccine that should be given to the masses.

In a recent study, he showed people how social media manipulates their thinking. It resulted in their being more critical about the information they came across afterwards. Education can help combat misinformation. We should better understand how our minds are wired to take shortcuts and how our emotions can make us more susceptible to misinformation.

While there may be corruption within the American political system, accepting political conspiracy theories harms our nation. It creates a deep sense of distrust in our country's foundations, which does nothing to help build a better future.

We have a duty to continue working to improve our democracy and we can't let rampant online misinformation stop us to that end.

FOOD BANKS DESPERATELY NEED DONATIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF MILLIONS OF HUNGRY AMERICANS

SELINA XU

My name is Selina Xu, and I am a rising junior at Cumberland Valley High School. I joined WACH as an intern this summer to enhance my understanding of important international issues. My favorite topics discussed this summer included international business, food insecurity, and climate change!

As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), food insecurity refers to the reduced quality of someone's diet and the inaccessibility of nutritious and plentiful food.

In 2022, 17 million U.S. households suffered food insecurity, according to the USDA. These families relied on food assistance programs or food pantries to fulfill their dietary needs. Many of the 17 million households experience real hunger. Others may eat food that is not nutritious or adequate for good health.

Whatever the reason, lack of food is a burden for millions of people living in the United States. Those living in poverty struggle to provide proper nourishment for themselves and their families. Impoverished communities do not have the means or resources to afford the food they need to sustain themselves.

Even if food is affordable, it isn't always healthy. Many fast-food restaurants or convenience stores offer low-cost options to customers. However, the food often does not provide proper nutrition.

Sometimes, there are no available options for healthy food in many areas. The long-distance some people face to get to a grocery store or supermarket means they live in what are called "food deserts," where access to nutritious food is difficult.

People who are unemployed also may face food insecurity. Without a steady income, families do not have the money to buy food that is often expensive. This is also true for people in marginalized communities and minorities, who may be more susceptible to food insecurity due to racial and ethnic discrimination.

These communities can find it hard to find jobs or homes in areas near supermarkets due to prejudice and inequity, making it even harder for them to properly sustain themselves.

Dealing with food insecurity will require a comprehensive approach to address the many factors contributing to the problem in our society.

There is no time to waste to find a solution to food insecurity, and food pantries and food banks can provide immediate help. They offer free, nutritious, food to anyone who needs it. Food pantries often are located in churches or nonprofit buildings, and they rely on food banks to keep their shelves stocked.

Food banks are storage-like facilities that collect donations from individuals, grocery stores, and other organizations. They transport these items to food pantries and other meal programs, which then provide the food to needy families.

Many food banks desperately need more donations. In an interview with Fox News, Central Pennsylvania Food Bank CEO Joe Arthur said food banks are struggling to meet the high demand. He is asking the community for help.

Donating to local pantries, starting fundraisers, hosting food drives, and volunteering at food banks are all solutions to help relieve families of hunger. One donation can make an incredible difference in another person's life.

The best solution to tackle food insecurity is for the community to come together and help neighbors in need, starting with a donation to a local food bank.

HUMAN BEINGS MUST EMBRACE AI WITHOUT FEARING IT WILL REPLACE THEM

MOHAMED ABDOU

Mohamed Abdou is a rising junior in software engineering at Shippensburg University. Originally from Niger, a developing country, I've nourished an interest in technology as a tool to develop the economy in poor countries. I'm also an ambassador for climate change and mental health issues.

"AI and humans are both knowledge producers, just like the sculptor and painter are both artists, but they will be forever, in my mind, be distinct and separated," says James Brusseau, a philosophy professor at Pace University who also teaches AI ethics at the University of Trento in Italy. "One will never be better than the other so much as they will just be different."

Brusseau was speaking on CNBC's "Make It," show, but his statement emphasizes the mutual connection between two intelligent entities and why AI will never replace humans entirely.

Although the future of our society is uncertain, many experts agree it is unlikely AI ever will be able to replace large numbers of humans in the workforce. We are living in where technological improvements are greater than ever before and scientists

are still struggling to accurately predict its impact. They are seriously debating whether there ever will be completely automated systems that don't need human direction and intelligence.

That is because unlike machines, humans are intuitive, emotionally intelligent and physically adaptable. That's what set us apart from artificial intelligence. Humans will use their intelligence for innovation and specialization, while AI will take over the boring, automated tasks. But that's where the concerns arise.

Shifting to a society of specialized workers will increase competition for skilled labor, but many argue such workers will be increasingly hard to find. This stems from failures in the education system, corruption in governments here and abroad and increasing lack of personal ethical standards. Even here, AI could be the solution.

In education, AI will enhance the learning experience to fit each individual student needs, and therefore narrowing achievement and under-skilled labor gaps. In other areas, such as healthcare, it will assist medical professionals in diagnosis and data processing, leading to more accurate treatment.

It is possible that skilled professionals may face the biggest threat from AI because it will be capable of accumulating more knowledge and using it more accurately and more quickly.

Regardless of who will replace what, it is crucial to develop high ethical standards for the use of AI. Its increasing use will impact people in profound ways.

There must be transparency and commitment to use AI to serve the common good. And we must train people in how to effectively use it and embrace the significant technological advances that are now a reality.

With sufficient safeguards, AI could reach its best potential -- to empower human beings and not replace them.

WE CAN ONLY MANAGE CLIMATE CHANGE IF WE ACKNOWLEDGE ITS DEVASTATING IMPACT ON POOR PEOPLE

RAIYAN BAKSHI

Hi, I'm Raiyan Bakshi, a junior at Cumberland Valley High School! I try my best in academics, taking the most rigorous classes I can, along with putting my best effort into my extracurriculars. My passions are video creation, writing, and learning! In my free time, I like hiking and enjoying nature, reading about the news, discussing situations going on in the world, and volunteering at my local hospital.

Flint, Michigan: It's a place many Americans associate with one thing in particular, poisoned water.

In 2015, the water in Flint was found to have extraordinarily toxic levels of lead well beyond EPA acceptable limits. Many in this community, which is predominantly Black, became sick from the poisoned water and 12 died, due to a failure in U.S. infrastructure in providing a basic human right -- access to clean water.

This is not an isolated case, however. The communities living in the infamous stretch of 85 miles filled with many petrochemical plants and oil refineries known as "Cancer Alley," who are also predominantly Black, have around 50x the likelihood of cancer compared to the average American.

On a global scale, studies show that less developed countries & communities often experiencing the worst effects of climate change are the ones that contribute to it the least. It's a cruel irony.

While the fight against climate change is definitely a fight to protect our planet, it's also a fight for justice, a fight for every human having the right to enjoy our planet.

Many people, including some environmental advocates, seem to forget the latter when discussing climate change.

Climate change affects each one of us, but the extent varies. There are many factors that influence its impact, but a significant one is where we live.

People in a wealthier environment are less likely to notice the effects of climate change as much as those living in poor communities. A simple example is air conditioning: a commodity that many people often take for granted. Yet, there are communities who do not have access to what we consider basic commodities.

These same disadvantaged communities have heightened levels of hospitalizations for heat strokes and other environmental-related diseases. Compounding the problem, many of the hospitals in these communities are the least funded & least equipped and able to handle these influxes of patients.

Affluent people do not experience the same level of environmental struggles the less wealthy face, causing many to doubt the severity of climate change's destruction around the world.

People who do not live in underprivileged communities do not see the grief of a Latina mother in Kettleman city where miscarriage rates soar from hazardous waste facilities. They don't see the sorrow of a cancer-ravaged Navajo family that regularly drank uranium contaminated water.

The rich do not see people in impoverished Birmingham communities disproportionately dying from high levels of toxins inhaled from the nearby mills. They do not see the eyes of a child in Miami filled with tears as her family is forced to leave their home destroyed from flooding.

There are so many stories like these that the impact on poor communities does not even make the news.

The first step is educating the public that climate change is real and devastating. It is causing immense suffering to people in the United States and to poor people around the world. The first step is for people to accept the reality of climate change. Only then can we take action to stop it.

WE HAVE TO STOP LETTING BULLIES OFF THE HOOK

ANISH KOKA

It was a sunny morning. I had just finished the second period when I got called into the principal's office. I walked across the hall and took a quick right as I turned onwards to the principal office. I was almost in tears as a subtle but ever-present rage built up inside me. I headed inside and immediately saw my bully.

He often forced me to do his homework saying that he would beat me up if I didn't. I would spend a lot longer doing my homework and often couldn't do my own. I realized that this couldn't go on and let the principal know about the situation.

Peering over at the angry look of my bully, I hoped and prayed that the bully would be put to justice before he could do anything to my going forward.

The principal started off by asking the bully some questions such as how he knew me and if there was something that he needed to tell me. For 20 minutes I heard the bully talking about how it was all just a joke and that he thought he was just playing around. We ended up apologizing to each other. He bullied me for two more months before he moved to a new school. Nothing was solved.

This is a recurring problem in school systems throughout the United States. As more and more restrictions to punishments to suspension and detention are coming, more and more students are being let off the hook.

This actually promotes the behavior, making it apparent to the bully that he or she can get away with the behavior. Over time the behavior will continue and be considered normal.

Over 66% of teachers are reporting more and more misbehavior as time goes on and students go undisciplined. The problem is too few teachers or faculty are qualified or trained to properly deal with disciplining students.

One solution is to make it known throughout the school that bullying will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences for the behavior. There should be regular warnings about bullying at school assemblies, morning announcements, and events. This will not only unite the whole school but could help prevent bullying.

It is important to support teachers and encourage them to insist on proper behavior in school. Teachers must be clear and consistent in their instructions and discipline. As children grow, many find it important to fit in with their peers. But a positive environment will ensure most students behave and discourage troublemakers.

It is crucial for teachers to properly address bullying with firm discipline. But the punishment should fit the crime, no more and no less.

It is important for teachers to not be swayed by the bully's excuses for his behavior. Emotion should not be involved in the process. The bully might say, "It was just a joke," or, "I didn't mean any harm." But the authority should be unmoved. If the principal gets affected by the words of the student, the student will see he can manipulate the situation and get away with bad behavior.

After the punishment is given out, the principal should have an honest discussion with everyone involved about what happened and let them talk through their feelings. This could allow the problem to be fully resolved. The teacher should explain to the bully why his actions were wrong and why he was punished. The bully just might learn valuable life lessons about respecting others.

Hopefully, American schools will start to take bullying seriously. Schools should be a safe environment for everyone to learn, free from the threat of bullies.

BREAKING THE CYCLE: ADDRESSING HARRISBURG'S HIDDEN HEALTH CRISIS

CECE GEIGEL

In the heart of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, and Dauphin County, residents are grappling with a silent, pervasive crisis: health disparities. These disparities manifest in the shadows, unnoticed and unaddressed, leaving many individuals suffering from preventable diseases and conditions.

This issue is not just a local concern; it reflects a broader, global challenge. Addressing these disparities in Harrisburg can serve as a model for tackling similar issues worldwide, making local action a crucial step toward resolving this global problem. One of the most concerning elements of this crisis is the prevalent lack of awareness among Harrisburg residents regarding the underlying causes contributing to their health issues.

Many individuals fail to understand why they suffer from certain diseases, often attributing their ailments to 'bad luck' rather than recognizing the systemic issues—such as economic and educational inequities and a lack of resources—that contribute to their health problems. This lack of knowledge is a significant barrier to seeking appropriate medical care and preventive measures.

Furthermore, neglecting medical treatment exacerbates this crisis. In Harrisburg, many individuals delay visiting a doctor until their conditions worsen. This neglect often results from financial constraints, limited access to healthcare facilities, and socioeconomic pressures that force individuals to prioritize immediate survival needs over long-term health. As a result, preventable and manageable conditions escalate into serious health crises.

Food insecurity and financial instability are core factors behind these health disparities. In many Harrisburg neighborhoods, access to nutritious food is limited, leading to diets high in processed foods and low in essential nutrients. Low-income families often rely on highly processed foods due to their lower cost, increasing their risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Financial insecurity further exacerbates the situation, as individuals struggling to make ends meet cannot afford healthcare services, medications, or transportation to medical appointments.

Poverty and inadequate healthcare create a vicious cycle affecting every demographic, from children to the elderly. Children in low-income families face nutritional deficiencies and limited access to preventive healthcare, setting the stage for lifelong health problems. Elderly residents, who may already be battling multiple health issues, find it increasingly difficult to navigate the healthcare system or afford necessary treatments. The impact of these health disparities extends beyond physical health, affecting mental well-being and overall quality of life. Stress and anxiety stemming from financial hardship and poor health create additional burdens and perpetuate the cycle of illness and poverty. Many individuals facing these circumstances wrongly believe the problem is their fault. However, the system in which they are placed is inherently flawed and fails to support their well-being, perpetuating inherited disparities and inequities.

It is crucial to recognize that Harrisburg's health disparities are not unique. Communities worldwide face similar challenges, but this should not diminish the urgency to act locally. Solutions must be multi-faceted, addressing both immediate healthcare needs and the underlying social determinants of health. Increasing public awareness, improving access to
nutritious food, expanding healthcare services, and addressing financial barriers are essential steps in combating these disparities.

Community leaders, policymakers, and healthcare providers must collaborate to create and implement effective interventions. Educational campaigns can empower residents with knowledge about disease prevention and management. Initiatives to improve food security, such as community gardens and food banks, can provide healthier dietary options. Expanding Medicaid and other assistance programs can make healthcare more accessible and affordable for those in need.

Harrisburg, like every other place in the world, is profoundly affected by health disparities. However, the power to change this narrative lies within the community. By acknowledging the problem and taking collective action, we can create a healthier, more equitable future for all residents of Dauphin County.

It's time for Harrisburg to break the cycle of neglect and address the health disparities that have been ignored for too long. The well-being of our community depends on it.

HONESTY IS BADLY NEEDED IN GLOBAL HEALTH

YOLANDA MWITA

In today's interconnected world, the need for transparency and honesty in global health policy is more pressing than ever. The recent global health crises from the COVID-19 pandemic to emerging threats like climate-induced health issues demonstrate that effective solutions hinge on open communication and trust.

Transparency in international health policy is not merely an ethical choice but a practical necessity that impacts our ability to respond to crises, combat misinformation, address inequities, and improve innovation.

Early in the COVID-19 outbreak, the lack of clear and timely information severely delayed and prevented global response efforts. Many countries struggled with inadequate data about the virus's spread, severity, and preventive measures, which led to delays in implementing effective interventions. Had there been more transparency from the outset, the global community might have acted more swiftly, potentially reducing the pandemic's impact.

Transparency is also essential for combating misinformation. In an age where false information can spread as rapidly as the diseases themselves, accurate and timely data is crucial. When governments and health organizations share information openly, they empower the public to make informed decisions and build trust in health interventions. For instance, during the pandemic, misinformation about vaccines led to vaccine hesitancy, complicating efforts to achieve widespread immunization.

Honesty in global health policy also necessitates addressing health inequities. Health disparities are often rooted in historical injustices and current inequalities. Honest acknowledgment of these disparities is vital for developing effective policies that address the needs of underserved and marginalized populations. Transparent reporting on health outcomes and resource distribution helps to identify inequities, ensuring that interventions are equitable and resources are allocated where they are most needed.

Government officials and medical professionals who guide our global health policy are required to have transparency in the relationships between governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Global health initiatives often involve complex partnerships, and these collaborations must be built on trust and clear communication.

Corruption, conflicts of interest, and lack of accountability can derail health programs and waste resources. Transparent practices ensure that all stakeholders are working toward common goals and that resources are used effectively.

Open access to research data and findings accelerates scientific discovery and enhances collaborative problem-solving. When data is shared openly, researchers around the world can build on each other's work, leading to faster and more effective solutions.

The path to greater transparency and honesty in global health policy is fraught with challenges. It requires a cultural shift toward openness within governments and organizations.

Governments and health organizations must prioritize public health over political or economic interests, and they must be willing to hold the urgent call for transparency and honesty in global health policy reflects a fundamental need for trust, equity, and effectiveness in addressing health challenges. As we move forward, those in responsible healthcare positions should embrace these principles to ensure global health policies are robust, transparent, and responsive to the needs of all people.

Only through openness and integrity can we build a healthier, more equitable world for future generations.

JOE BIDEN DROPPING OUT OF THE ELECTION

DARIL LASLOUDJI

Joe Biden's dropping out of the presidential race at the age of 81 could set a precedent for elections to come. When is a person too old to serve in public office?

The Republican candidate Donald Trump is 78 years old. Many say he is also showing signs of age and lack of mental acuity.

Clearly, many people have concerns over the age of candidates seeking the highest office in the land. When is someone too old to be the leader of the most powerful country in the world? Will other nations be able to take advantage of a president who is too old?

Many voters agreed with Biden's decision to pass the torch to Vice President Kamala Harris. It should be a lesson to all politicians that they need to know when it's time to retire and let younger generations step into power.

With health problems increasing as you age, Biden was wise not to risk a succession crisis in the United States at such a pivotal moment. He is to be respected for doing so.

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