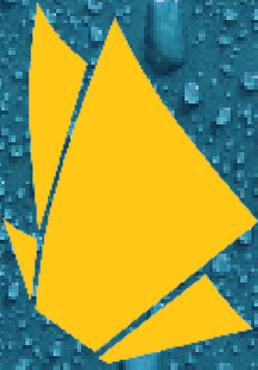


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ARTICLES:

ENVIRONMENTAL

REDUCE REDUCE REDUE (PG2)

THE DARK SIDE OF EVs (PG3)

OZONE LAYER SHRINKING (PG4)

“CONTROLLED BURNS” (PG5)

HOW IS FASHION KILLING OUR PLANET (PG6)

PROCESSED FOOD (PG7)

THE REALITY OF TOBACCO AND CIGARETTES (PG8)

SOCIAL

WHY IS KNOWLEDGE BANNED FROM SCHOOLS? (PG9)

OVER-RELIANCE ON AIs (PG 10)

REFUND THE POLITCE (PG 11)

POISON? OR MEDICINE? BEHIND CANS (PG12)

REDUCE REDUCE REDUE

by Jayden Lim (University High School)

With global warming getting worse and worse the world is finally beginning to take action on how to prevent it before it becomes irreversible. With companies making more water bottles made out of cardboard boxes and car manufacturers switching to electric vehicles, these steps are creating a better future. But even if people are willing to drink box water and drive electric vehicles on the road, climate change will still be a critical problem if other major issues that affect the climate do not change. One of the biggest problems is the usage of plastic utensils, cups and bottles, leading to drastic amounts of landfill waste.

The amount of plastic utensils the world uses is absurd. According to the Plastic Pollution Coalition, more than 561 billion individual plastic utensils are used by Americans every year. Plastic utensils greatly impact

the environment, but it can be reduced in a couple of ways. For starters, every time you pick up some food from any restaurant and they ask “Do you need utensils with that?”, ask yourself, do you really need those utensils? Assuming that you are eating back at your home, there should be no reason why you are using plastic utensils. It does not make any sense to use plastic utensils or any sort of plastic cups when you are at home because you have perfectly beautiful metal and reusable utensils waiting in the kitchen. Yet, a person still uses plastic utensils at home because it’s “more convenient” and they are too lazy to wash their utensils. Obviously, plastic utensils would be ideal when you are eating at the park or somewhere other than your home, but that can still be easily fixed. Simply just bring your own reusable utensils, and do not say that’s absurd when elementary kids bring their own utensils to lunch everyday at school. If a little child can do it, so can you.

Furthermore, the entire human population can drastically improve the environment by reducing the usage of plastic bottles and cups. Plastic bottles are also one of the largest factors that impacts climate change, but again, it can be reduced. In fact, a company known as boxed water is already attempting to reduce climate change. With their box being 92% renewable, being 100% recyclable and reducing their carbon footprint by 36% is a big step in helping the environment. Now I am not saying that everyone has to drink from this company specifically, but if water companies were to focus on something similar like the boxed water company, climate change can drastically be reduced. Even with plastic utensils and water bottles being one of the biggest factors, there are still others to help the environment. Beach cleaning or reducing any sorts of plastic can truly help, and if you think that’s inconvenient for you, wait to watch how inconvenient it will be when the planet is on fire.



THE DARK SIDE OF EVs

by Neil Hwang (Fairmont School)

Electric Cars are supposed to be eco friendly, however the production of the vehicles are more hazardous than they were supposed to be. The negative impact of EV's range from greenhouse gas emissions to having shorter driving ranges compared to gasoline cars.

Electric vehicles travel less distances than gasoline cars. The average gasoline car can travel 30 miles on just one single gallon of gas. The electric car can travel at least 100 miles on just one charge, but the charging ports for the vehicles currently are small in number. So it is dangerous to travel long distances in electric vehicles for now. Also, the prices for the electric vehicles are too pricey compared to normal gasoline cars. The average cost of an electric car is \$61,488 while the average cost of a gasoline car is \$48,681. The cost to replace an EV battery ranges from \$4,000 to \$20,000.

The lowest cost for a gasoline vehicle is \$15,000 to \$20,000. People can easily purchase a normal vehicle at the cost of replacing a battery for EVs.

Most of the charging ports for EVs come from power plants, which are basically fossil fuels, which defeats the whole purpose of these vehicles. Additionally, the batteries used for the cars are made using nickel, lithium, and cobalt, which all produce pollution in different ways. For example, lithium harms the soil, which eventually causes air contamination. The materials mined for the production of the cars produce as much greenhouse emissions. Many studies have shown that the production of EV batteries results in higher carbon pollution than gasoline cars.

As stated before, finding a charging port can be difficult, but

charging the electric vehicle takes a mass amount of time. The time to charge a gas vehicle is 2-3 minutes, but the time to charge an EV can take hours. Although people are finding easier and faster charging technology, for now, owners are trying not to travel long distances. To add on with the environmental issues, the manufacture of the vehicles takes more gas pollution than a gas powered vehicle. However, there are positive factors in terms of EVs as well. Some of these are using less energy to travel.

Electric vehicles are one of the most controversial topics in the world, but there are some positive and negative aspects. If scientists are able to correct these negative mistakes in the future, then these would be our choice for efficient traveling in the future. They will be a great change to society, and open up more jobs as well.



OZONE LAYER SHRINKING

by Peter Kim (Crean Lutheran High School)

Ever since a hole in the ozone layer was discovered in the late 1970s, scientists have realized that the environment is seriously at risk. The ozone layer is a layer of the Earth's atmosphere which traps dangerous ultra violet (UV) light from the sun and prevents it from reaching Earth. UV light causes many adverse effects, such as an elevated risk of skin cancer and cataracts, and harm to plant life. The ozone layer protects people from these harmful effects. The ozone hole is an area where the ozone layer has thinned away, allowing more dangerous UV light to pass through the atmosphere. Substances that deplete the ozone layer are found in refrigeration, air conditioning, and fire extinguishers. The good news from recent studies is that the ozone hole is really closing.

The world was alarmed when the ozone hole was discovered. As a result, the Montreal Protocol, which was an agreement to gradually phase out the manufacturing

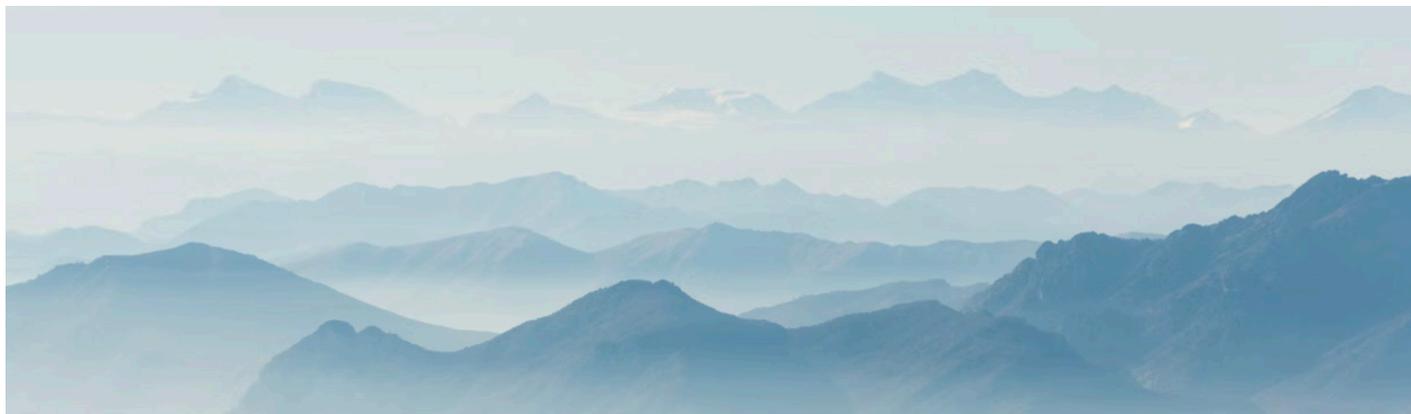
of compounds that deplete the ozone layer, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), was signed by the international community in 1987. This agreement has brought about great success in lowering atmospheric concentrations of ozone-depleting chemicals. Since it went into effect, the Montreal Protocol has phased out over 98 percent of the world's use of substances that deplete the ozone layer. The ozone hole was at its largest in September 2000, when it reached 28.4 million square kilometers. By 2022 the hole has been reduced to 23.2 million square kilometers. Thus, during the past few decades, the ozone hole has been steadily closing.

The shrinking of the ozone hole is evidence of the efficiency of the Montreal Protocol and the strength of global collaboration. The ozone hole has gotten smaller as a result of the Protocol's success in lowering the concentration of ozone-depleting compounds in the atmosphere. Despite the success of the Protocol, it is crucial to remember that the

ozone hole is unlikely to close up completely until about 2070.

According to a recent NASA study, the ozone hole above Antarctica has decreased in size by an average of 1.3 million square miles since 2000. The study tracked the size of the hole using information from NASA satellites and ground-based measurements. The study also discovered that since 2000, there has been a 20% decline in the depth of the ozone hole, a measurement of the amount of ozone in the atmosphere.

In conclusion, the ozone hole's closing is a good development and evidence of the effectiveness of global cooperation. The ozone layer's hole has shrunk as a result of the Montreal Protocol's success in lowering the number of ozone-depleting compounds in the atmosphere. To fully maintain the ozone layer, there is still work to be done, hence the entire community must continue to collaborate in order to do so.



“CONTROLLED BURNS”

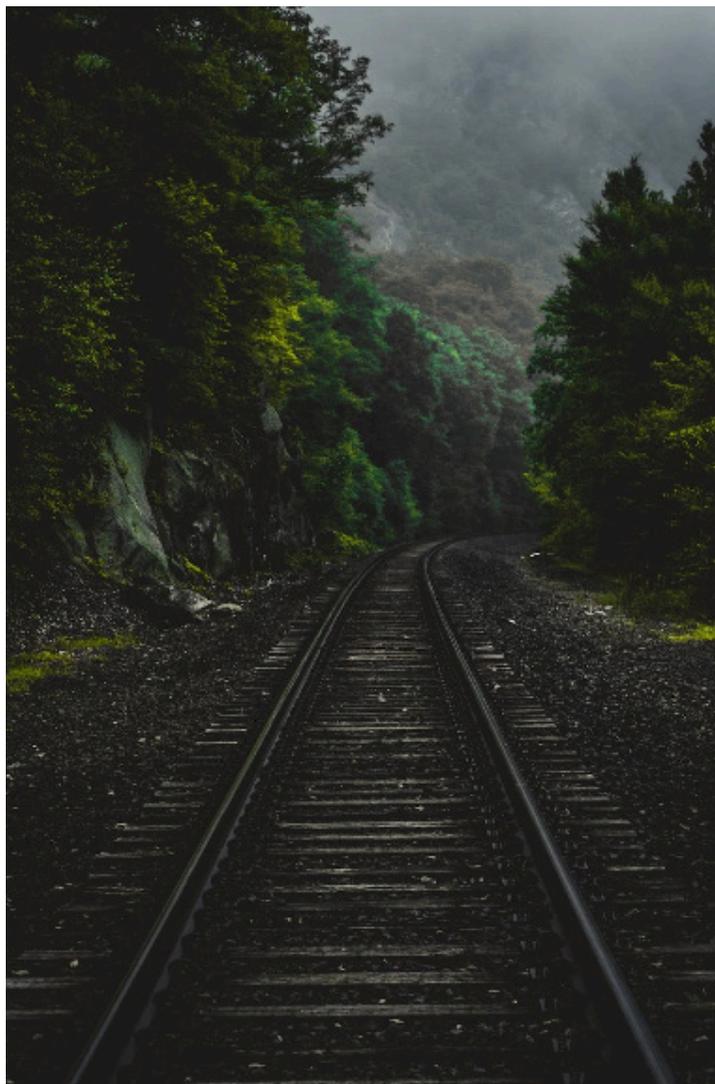
by **Cherry Dawon Shin (Northwood High School)**

February 2023, the media and news were filled with concern about the Ohio Train Derailment. The environmental concerns from this incident still persist: residents near the chemical spill zone were worried, and thousands of animals died due to the toxins. This incident was not only tragic due to its negative environmental impacts but how the history of toxic derailments goes back decades.

50 out of 150 train cars with hazardous chemicals derailed while heading from Pennsylvania to Illinois. Though there were no deaths reported, a huge fire spread right between the border of Ohio and Pennsylvania. Officials and authorities decided to burn the rest of the chemical cargo. Though residents in the area evacuated, toxic chemicals such as vinyl chloride were released into the air and the soil nearby, which are capable of causing symptoms of dizziness and even various types of cancer. Exposure to these chemicals and hazardous atmospheres can impact the health of the residents both short-term and long-term. The purposefully burned chemicals added more to this volume of

severe environmental impacts.

The lingering harm to wildlife in Ohio is also a huge problem. Affecting more than 7 miles of streams, thousands of fish were killed due to the



chemical toxins. This also affects residents in the area as Ohio uses fish to determine how clean the water is. The upper stretch of the Ohio River lost the functioning ecosystem due to the decomposition of the smaller organisms that bigger fish feed off. An endangered species in Ohio called

hellbenders that live near the streams, may also be impacted by the toxic chemicals.

The “controlled burns” of the chemicals were done due to the risk of explosions. The

officials made sure to evacuate the residents several times before they decided to burn the chemicals. Though they were able to evacuate the residents, they weren’t able to save the thousands of animals that died from the burn. I believe this decision should have been made not only after making sure of the residents’ safety but the ecosystem near them including the air, animals, soil, etc. In addition, the Ohio Train Derailment should make policymakers consider the importance of safety when transporting hazardous materials across borders. We should not be blaming other political parties in the media, or find out who’s at fault, but rather find solutions for

residents to be safe and healthy through the lingering effects of the derailment. This should also raise awareness of the dangers of offshore spills in addition to oil spills in oceans, and find ways to prevent these from happening in the future. , race, or age, should be made. way.

HOW IS FASHION KILLING OUR PLANET?

by Calvin Pang (Arnold O Beckman High School)

Cotton. Polyester. Silk. These materials and many more are what make up the clothes on our backs. One could almost say that clothes are essential to human society and life. However, if we stopped to think about what happens when producing our clothes, we might become a bit more hesitant when deciding to shop for more clothes that we don't necessarily need.

The Facts

Due to the excess demand for clothes, companies are trying to keep up by mass-producing clothes which significantly increases its environmental impact. To put into perspective how much waste is created from the fashion industry, presented below are many shocking facts.

- 92 million tons of textile waste is produced every year
- The total global emissions made by the fashion industry will increase by 50% by the year 2030
- On average, US consumers throw out over 80 pounds of clothes every year
- An article of clothing averages at about seven to ten times being worn, showing a decrease of 35% over the past 15 years
- Because of the under-wearing and failure to recycle clothes, around \$500 billion is lost
- The fashion industry alone is responsible for 20% of waste water around the world

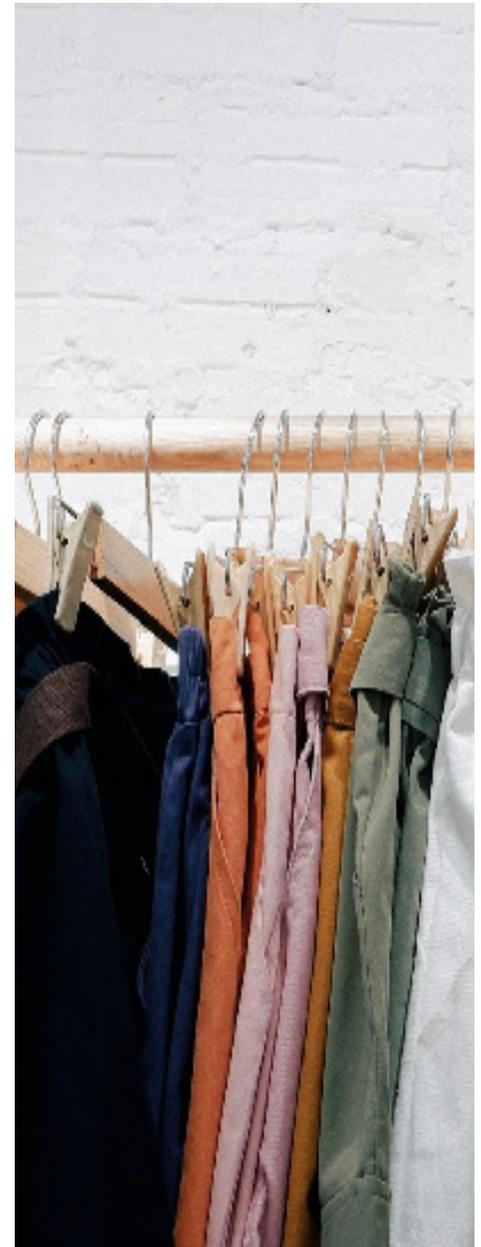
- For every one kilogram of cotton, a staggering 20,000 liters of water is required
- 10% of the microplastics in the ocean can be traced back to textile factories
- 2.6 million tons of returned clothes ended up in landfills in the US alone
- Due to the new culture of fast fashion, twice the amount of clothes are being produced than in the year 2000

How to help

There are many ways any average person can help to decrease the amount of waste created by the fashion industry. For starters, one can simply increase the amount of times they wear a piece of clothing. By buying clothes based on quality over quantity, the clothes' lifespan and customers' satisfaction both last longer. Additionally, by going just a step further, simply by looking at what materials the clothes are made of and choosing eco-friendly material can make a difference. Materials such as organic cotton, linen, etc. have a significantly smaller carbon footprint than other common materials. Lastly, if there are clothes that one doesn't like to wear anymore, instead of just throwing them out and putting more waste in landfills and the ocean, they can donate them to organizations that either distribute them out to those in need or sell them at lower prices.

Conclusion

All in all, the common trend of buying whatever clothes they want at the moment is essentially killing our planet. On top of this, by not disposing of these clothes properly, it adds to the already growing waste problem globally. Even the small action of looking at what materials the clothes are made of can have a huge impact.



PROCESSED FOOD

by Kayla Park (Irvine High School)

Processed foods have been invented by Nicholas Appert who invented the technique of hermetic bottling in 1809. This was used to preserve food for the French troops. This contributed to the future of preserving food. Processed foods have been around for centuries and have done well to keep our food fresh and edible. However, as humanity has evolved, our processed foods have been evolving as well. Processed foods are now considered unhealthy in a way because we have learned that salt, and other sorts of flavorful herbs, can be added to our foods. Processed foods have ultimately increased our levels of sodium intake which can also increase the levels of heart diseases, diabetes, and high blood pressures.

Since processed foods have come into our lives, it's been helping us not worry about the food expiring overnight. The food's lifetime

is prolonged because salt helps preserve our food, industries put in a large amount of sodium to appeal to the ease and laziness. But, because of the large amount of sodium being added in our food, this also means that we're also ingesting more sodium than the recommended amount. Because of the high amount of sodium intake, we now have a large obese epidemic in the US. This makes half of the population in the US have heart diseases. And because we have such a large obese epidemic in the US, this can fill and crowd the neighboring hospital because of the heart diseases and respiratory troubles.

Because processed foods have such high sugar and sodium levels, it is generally unhealthy to the human population and can lower our life span. However, we can be healthy while also continuing to eat the chips and candies of our favorite flavors. Majority

of people often don't check the nutritional facts behind the snacks we buy. By checking the nutritional facts behind the packaged snacks can help you realize how much sugar and sodium is in 1 singular bag. This can ultimately help us keep eating our sodium and sugars at a healthy level. Additionally, checking nutritional facts isn't the only solution to keeping our sodium and sugar intakes, but eating our daily vegetables and working out can help lower our chances of getting any serious health issues. Overall, cutting off processed foods entirely can be an ultimate way of having to keep your sodium and sugar levels at a good percentage. But, in reality you don't have to cut off processed foods, but keeping up a daily exercise and eating our healthy vegetables can help us keep away from serious, sometimes fatal, health issues.



THE REALITY OF TOBACCO AND CIGARETTES

by Neil Hwang (Fairmont School)

When people think of pollution, people most likely think of greenhouse gas emissions. Citizens are getting tricked into believing that cigarettes and tobacco aren't related to pollution at all. The tobacco industries are lying to society, and cigarettes are actually a big problem regarding pollution. The Big Tobacco industries filter cigarettes using microplastics, but in reality, the microplastics contaminate our soil and water. The industry doesn't want people to realize that their products are a huge part of environmental destruction and human health dangers.

Tobacco industries make about six trillion cigarettes per year, and as a result, cigarettes are one of the most littered items on the planet. Microplastics are extremely small pieces of plastic particles that end up in many negative aspects of the environment. The plastic itself has a long

time to decompose, and during that time, it can cause mass damage to the environment. Microplastics can have a toxic effect on fish and other marine life. Some of these are reducing the amount of food, delaying growth, causing abnormal behavior, and can cause oxidative damage. The chemicals are hazardous, and once these get into the human body, they can possibly lead to cancer, chronic inflammation, or other severe illnesses. Each tobacco filter is made with 15,000 strands of microplastic fibers. This is a lot for the environment because this isn't the only reality it has to face. There is also global warming, greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, chemical usage, and deforestation.

Aside from microplastics, tobacco butts also contain dangerous chemicals, such as arsenic and lead. Yet, the tobacco industries disregard the fact that it's their products

that endanger the life of our environment. Industries try to blame other environmental issues, but in reality, it is one of the most dangerous topics of environmental pollution. Also, tobacco affects air pollution as well. When an individual smokes, methane, carbon dioxide, and other poisonous chemicals are released into the air. These chemicals, combined with greenhouse gas pollutants constantly ruin the atmosphere and eventually, lead to our own demise.

So the cigarette industry has come up with a solution, or not really. They came up with e-cigarettes which are even more hazardous. It's like how the car industry is getting big with electric vehicles, instead of gasoline-powered ones. Many of the electric cigarettes that are smoked are usually littered, and e-cigarettes aren't biodegradable. Even e-cigarettes, the so-called solution that the smoking industry came up with, contain microplastics. The increased amount of microplastics travels through winds, storms, and water. Even everyday drinking water can contain small amounts of microplastics.

Cigarettes themselves are a horrendous choice to make. This is because the large amounts of microplastics exposed to the environment are affecting people's health negatively, and even more, the environmental effects are worse.



WHY IS KNOWLEDGE BANNED FROM SCHOOLS?

by Calvin Pang (Arnold O Beckman High School)



In the past 2 years, thousands of books have been banned from schools across the United States. This has been seen as a blatant violation of the First Amendment, which protects citizens from censorship by the government. Although the banning of books can legally be done by individuals and organizations, it still borders on being immoral and is frowned upon by many students and teachers. It also acts as a filter that protects young children from explicit content that can psychologically harm them.

Parents have the largest influence on the challenges to ban books. They may be allowed to control what their own children read, but it becomes unfair to restrict what books are available to other people as well. Additionally, the books that are getting frequently challenged are ones that allow students to understand how the world works and their place in it. For example, the novel *The Great Gatsby* is required to read in some schools and provides insightful social commentary, but it is still challenged often for its sensitive content.

Lastly, books act as a creative space for children who are developing at rapid rates. By banning books, it could potentially stunt their growth in empathy and social-emotional development. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, which is frequently challenged for religious concerns about witchcraft, has been proven to improve attitudes towards immigrants, homosexuals, and refugees. This elucidates that books, especially narrative fiction, help readers understand their peers and raise social abilities.

Conversely, there are also lots of arguments for the banning of books. As previously mentioned, parents should have the right to decide what material their children are exposed to and when. Secondly, children, especially those of younger ages, should not be exposed to sex, violence, drug use, or other inappropriate topics in school or public libraries. There are numerous studies that prove that the use of graphic material by students indicates negative psychological effects.

These include more casual sex partners and having sex at younger ages. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics has found that exposure to violence in media, including books, can make kids act more aggressively and desensitize them to violence.

In my opinion, it is properly justified as to why some books should be banned from younger students, but there is an excessive amount of challenges against books that are very educational. At a certain age, students should be presented with all perspectives and opinions, allowing them to think for themselves and develop a sense of individuality. There may be many concerns about the amount of influence books can have on students. However, if they are older, then they can decide whether they agree with the idea or not.

OVER-RELIANCE ON AIs

by **Cherry Dawon Shin (Northwood High School)**

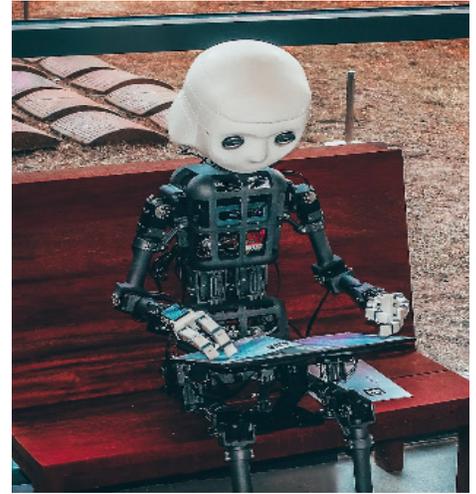
Especially after COVID-19, AIs became essential to boost productivity and track the spread of COVID-19. Virtual classrooms, virtual meetings, virtual games, virtual programs, and virtual communities are all powered by AIs. In addition, everyone has phones we rely on for every minute of our life that AIs also power: it's a lie if none of us used Siri, google maps, google search, easily accessible entertainment, personalized services in social media, weather apps, auto-correct or proofreading when we write emails to our teachers.

We also rely on these AIs in a broader term. Navigation through the global positioning systems also known as GPS for road, underground, and air, deep sea oil exploration in reduced costs to find oil and gas to power our electricity are just a few of the examples where we depend on AIs to power our lives. However, these AIs depend on the humans who created and trained them. They intrude on our privacy due to their uncontrollable desire for data. Wrong predictions can even lead to life-threatening events such as oil spills. Our reliance on them for predicting the future hinders societal advancement, creativity, and decision making. If this technology falls into the wrong hands, for example, cybercriminals, it threatens our safety. We should never let policing be handled automated,

and protect our jobs and security from these man made creatures.

Nevertheless, we have to admit: there are definitely a lot of benefits we receive from these creations as well. One recent example is ChatGPT, which is an artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI. Even though it was only released 5 months ago, they're already assisting our public health and education. According to the National Library of Medicine, ChatGPT has the "potential to support individuals and communities in making informed decisions about their health" through the ability to generate human-like text quickly. It even illustrates the potential for medical education and research through virtual patient simulations, critiques of doctor and patient simulations, summaries of research articles, and more. It is also capable of providing useful tools and proofreading our drafts. ChatGPT can provide you with essay outlines, research, learning, and practice support and suggestions. However, these devices contain racist and corrupt ideas that may impact us negatively as well.

Every text and every book has a bias, and these AIs are able to replicate human bias from the sources they retrieve from and have the capability to release racist output. We shouldn't rely on these AIs for education or



medical advice, as they wouldn't be reliable sources for students without any expertise that can easily be swayed by AIs that they believe are superior. We do not know how these generated writings and texts may be used, such as in essays such as plagiarism, or to the public who do not have any knowledge of this area of the field. We must stop relying on these AIs, but rely on humans with expertise and the capacity to make logical processes.

REFUND THE POLICE

by Keith Jung (Crean Lutheran High School)

Tyre Nichols beat to death by 5 police officers in front of his own home, George Floyd choked to death on the street for 11 minutes by a white police officer, Christopher Lee Mercurio shot and killed for trespassing and unarmed assault of a police officer. Police have for too long been killing and getting away with horrific crimes so much so that they have become infamous in the US whether it is a matter of racism or incompetence police need to be held to a higher standard. However, the deficiency of the police does not mean the removal of police through defunding them, rather it should be more training and protocol to change and reform the police, to make them efficient and real officers of the law.

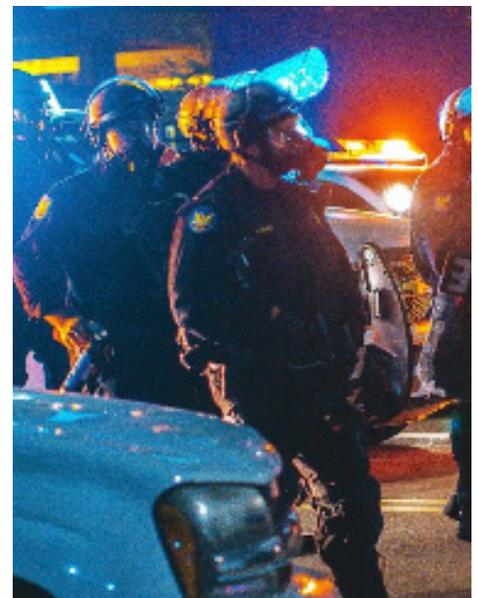
Police have an infamous history in America, with public opinion generally regarding them as “untrustworthy” and “dislikable.” In a survey done by the Pew Research Center American opinion of police hold that “More than eight-in-ten officers (86%) say their department does not have enough police to adequately patrol their community. By contrast, a majority of the public (57%) wants no change in the size of the local police force. About a third of the public (34%) want more officers in their local area, and 8% favor fewer officers” (Morin et al 1). 8% is a deceptively large number, considering the large

population of America, this is exacerbated by the even larger percent of Americans who don't want an increase in police directly conflicting with the opinions of the overwhelming majority of police. This is no surprise with the history of the police, with America being placed 10th in police brutality, “the USA listed here as the country with the most brutal police force particularly after 9/11” (Hajra 1). In a world full of militaristic dictatorships one of the most progressive and civilized democracies in the world is placed 10th in police violence. This represents the sheer scale of just how much police brutality that the United States incur. Undoubtedly, change is needed evident by the current state of the police riddled with corruption, abuse of power, and general public disinterest.

Reform is a long and complicated process which cannot be all addressed in this article, however key principles that should be set as a target are the main focuses of the reform that will be explained. Officer pay is the first step to reform, increasing officer's wages will cut corruption in the department to a minimal level as corruption will not be as tempting with a higher wage. Corruption in the police force is possibly the most dangerous type of corruption as it will likely involve dealings with criminals and can threaten the livelihoods of civilians.

However, more importantly should be the teaching of ethics and training to different responses such as those who are mentally unstable or dealing with children. Many instances of accidents and lack of training have been present in the media where the police could have easily avoided a terrible situation with the implementation of different response training and ethics.

The state of the police is not perfect currently, however the value of their continued existence and efficiency is vital in the role of modern society. The defunding of the police would only make matters worse with more crime and continued corruption and brutality continuing, however reforming the police into a better structured organization will make deterrence of crime more efficient in America but also prevent the horrific injustice and abuse of power that police are infamous for today.



POISON? OR MEDICINE

by Keith Jung (Crean Lutheran High School)



Nowadays, many teenagers and adults drink energy drinks primarily for a boost of energy drinks. Other people drink it for different reasons such as going along with their peers, for better athletic performance, etc. However, the substances in energy drinks that cause a short boost of energy can harm people if they drink too much, especially children. That is why drinking energy drinks may have some downfalls, so in my opinion, the consumption of energy drinks should be restricted.

Firstly, energy drinks have excessive caffeine, sugar, and vitamin B that could lead to serious health problems. Drinking excessive amounts of caffeine can lead to higher blood pressure. Then, it can lead to anxiety, insomnia, and in severe cases, heart disease. High sugar levels can also lead to diabetes and obesity. However, caffeine is proven to improve the physical performance of adults and research shows that the vitamin B found in energy drinks could help with heart disease while

the B12 could keep one's blood cells healthy.

Adding on to that, energy drinks can not only have effects on physical health but also mental health. Energy drinks can result in negative mental health because they can be the cause of addiction, nervousness, insomnia, anxiety, and more. According to a survey, adults who drink more than 400 mg show these symptoms, but if one drinks less than 400 mg of energy drinks, they can have some positive effects such as giving short-term boosts to both mood and performance, proving that only drinking large amounts can lead to negative effects.

Last but not least, as mentioned earlier, energy drinks can have effects on children. Energy drinks can have up to 500 mg of caffeine per can; In comparison, a can of Coke has 45 mg of caffeine, and a cup of coffee is twice the amount. 100 mg of caffeine is the maximum amount of caffeine a child can drink and it is proven that any

more than that is harmful to them. But, according to a survey, 94% of children already know the negative effects energy drinks can have on them.

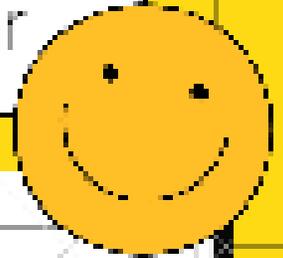
In conclusion, energy drinks can have positive and negative physical and mental effects on children. It is proven that children between the ages of 12-18 should drink less than 100 mg of energy drinks and, in my opinion, we should make this a strict law. Because the negative effects outweigh the positive effects and the positive effects only appear when drinking certain amounts, there should be a strict law in order to make people only drink certain amounts. Therefore, children should only drink 100 mg or less and adults should drink 400 mg at most to prevent the negative effects of energy drinks.

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