

CLEARING THE AIR

STAFF EDITORIAL

Venice is drowning in water, California and Australia are on fire, famine ravages Yemen and our storms are getting stronger. The Earth is dying. She is losing her ice caps and her diverse ecosystems, and she's running out of clean air to breathe.

Since 1980, the U.S. alone has sustained 254 climate events where the overall damages and costs reached or exceeded \$1 billion, as reported by the National Centers for Environmental Information. As of Oct. 8, there have been 10 weather and climate disasters with losses exceeding \$1 billion each. That's over \$10 billion.

Americans tend to develop a harmful mindset that we are somehow immune to tragedy and suffering. We believe that floods won't ravage our towns and that we won't be at risk of fighting each other over water when it's scarce, because this is America. That isn't supposed to happen here.

Countries such as Yemen, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq have shown us the conflict and famine that comes with water scarcity. But it's hard for us to imagine a world where we don't have access to water or a safe environment.

Most Americans continue to eat meat or some kind of dairy product almost every day, despite the proven detrimental effects of the meat and dairy industries on the atmosphere. While talking about cow farts may just seem funny, in reality, the methane they release contributes to about a quarter of the gases damaging our atmosphere from livestock

farming, which already makes up about 18 percent of all gases contributing to global warming. Not funny.

On top of that, the amount of grain and water used to sustain the vast number of farm animals that Americans eat could be used to end world hunger. But for many of us, that doesn't matter too much when Chick-fil-A nuggets exist.

Choosing to live a more sustainable lifestyle (for example, going vegan) is a difficult transition, there is no question about that. Not only is it outside many of our comfort zones, but buying vegan food is also a financial investment that not everyone can afford. However, even one day without animal products, such as "meatless Mondays," benefits the environment tremendously.

Even if eating less meat or dairy is helpful, the idea that there is a one-size-fits-all solution to global warming is unreasonable. Not every person in the world has access to the same products or resources, and not everyone can sustain the most environmentally-friendly lifestyle. However, if we continue to believe that we, as individuals, cannot make a difference, then climate change will kill us.

In America, we live in a democracy that is controlled by the people, so we must use our power to pressure our legislators to push for environmental regulations. Just 100 corporations are responsible for 70% of all greenhouse gas emissions, as reported by the Guardian, and there need to be consequences for corporations that choose to endanger the Earth.

ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and Chevron are the biggest polluters, yet in the

U.S., regulations keep being rolled back, allowing these corporations more freedom to pollute as much as they please.

While we should pressure our representatives to restrict these polluters with federal regulations, one reason they are able to get away with their polluting is because of our demand for their resources and products. When we create the demand for more sustainable products, corporations will listen, and those that don't won't be able to thrive. We have control over more than we believe.

However, we have to choose to act. Our world is divided, with some of us refusing to sacrifice meaningless luxuries for the future of humanity and some of us taking action. There isn't a single meat that doesn't have a vegan alternative. Lush and other cosmetics companies are leading the way in environmentally-friendly, low waste hygiene and spa products. Even Ben and Jerry's has started producing dairy-free ice cream.

Hour-long showers don't matter. There's no reason to leave the faucet on when you're brushing your teeth. There's no reason to eat meat every day. There's no reason to leave the bathroom light on at night, wasting electricity that is generated by fossil fuels. There's no reason for us to hold on to habits that bring no real value into our lives and are contributing to the death of our planet.

We can save the earth—our home—but we can't wait. According to a 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which consists of 90 scientists in 40 countries, if we

cannot lower levels of global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the year 2040, the damage to our planet will be permanent. This means we must reduce carbon emissions worldwide by about 40 percent by 2030, only ten years from now.

This might seem impossible, but we are a society of inventors and problem-solvers. Technology can advance with sustainability. We can do this if we commit to trying.

So, we can't make excuses. We must write and call our legislators, encouraging them to enforce corporate greenhouse gas regulations and join worldwide efforts to reduce carbon emissions. We must campaign and vote for candidates who are committed to passing legislation that reverses global warming.

We can cut down on meat and dairy products, trying a Meatless Monday or a vegan meal once a week. We can recycle. Plant a tree, or two or three. Use environmentally-friendly light bulbs. Turn the lights off. Drive less when we can. Get some exercise and walk, cycle or skate somewhere, or make new friends on public transportation. Take shorter showers. Buy reusable containers. Buy more natural, non-toxic products. Avoid plastic bags. Educate others about what they can do. Protect the earth for everyone's sake, because we have the power.

Our earth hasn't been silent. She is sick with famine, her forests are on fire and she is drowning in rising ocean levels and floods. It's time we take the steps we must take to save our planet. It's time we start listening to her.

NOT LIKE THE OTHER GIRLS

NATASHA ARENDT | STAFF WRITER

you hate women so much, just date men." Everyone online assumes I'm a guy, and I like it better than way, lest I receive unwanted attention. The first reply was, "I could never date someone I respected."

I remember when I was younger, I would scorn makeup and skirts and dresses. I was better than that "stupid stuff," I was smarter than the girls who'd waste money on them. I wasn't obsessed with boy bands or the "Office," I hated pink, I hated emojis and I brought my 3DS to school instead of my phone.

I wasn't like other girls.

Who were the other girls, in my mind? They were the opposite of me: the fashion-obsessed, makeup-caked, catty things who bullied others and hated the outdoors. They were the ones who were always on Instagram or Snapchat with their pink iPhones in one manicured hand and a Starbucks drink in the other.

I know better now: they don't exist. Hobbies are fine, and makeup can be fun. Liking pumpkin spice doesn't make you "basic." Skirts on anyone can look attractive.

Some of the stereotypes have changed: put the Starbucks drink in a Hydro Flask, add a scrunchie,

Tumblr posts and hipster fashion and you've got definition of a "VSCO girl," according to Urban Dictionary.

I see others, women and men, fall into that misogynistic mindset. It's self-deprecating to think that other girls look better because they have longer hair or weigh less. Sometimes it's "unlike other women, I have morals" or "REAL men don't cry." Sometimes it's, "Why do women get offended at catcalls? They're compliments."

"Just treat each other as humans."

Sometimes it's your father telling you that you can't work at his store anymore because he knows his customers will harass you, because the creepy guy who visited the other day knows your face and work schedule now. Sometimes it's your mother telling you you have to wear a towel over your one-piece swimsuit when you're eight years old at Disney World, but you don't understand what she means

when she says, "People will look at you," not until years later, and you feel sick.

And it's not just those "other girls"—there's more being wedged into the gap between men and women. The internet is so useful for getting information and understanding what goes on in other people's heads, but it is also becoming a massive echochamber of harmful opinions and fake facts.

Guys don't have some secret leader-follower dynamic in their friend groups, and they don't constantly think about sex. Girls don't always "friendzone" guys who ask them out or expect their boyfriends to read their minds. When someone is upset, you don't solve the problem by turning to your friends or your phone and saying, "Women, am I right?" or "Why are men like this?"

Just treat each other as humans. We often discuss the opposite sex as if we were narrators on a nature documentary, observing another species. We've made progress toward gender equality, but we need to be careful with what we say and what we tolerate others saying, lest our hundreds of steps forward start turning into steps back.

NEGLECTED

RHEA PATEL | STAFF WRITER

was always so happy. I knew better, however, because she wouldn't have been a part of the program otherwise.

She was shy at first as well, so whenever I ate my lunch with her, we just ate in silence. Gradually, she started warming up to me and even occasionally asked what my favorite color was or how many siblings I had. The questions were always simple and never too inquisitive.

One day, out of the blue, she asked me, "What is your mom like?"

"My mom is wonderful," I said. "What is yours like?"

She replied in a sad tone, "I like my dad more."

I was curious, but I held in my questions and changed the conversation. As the weeks passed, Maria and I grew closer and closer, but I continued to wonder about her home life. I was back in the counselor's office several months after meeting Maria when my counselor finally told me a little bit

more about her.

She told me that her parents were in a custody fight at the moment over Maria and her brother. She told me that Maria's mother was neglectful, which is why she moved in with her dad. She told me that Maria had moved more times than the average American, even though she was just in first grade.

Everything started to piece together for me when Maria told me that she never wanted to go back to California. California was where her mom resided and where Maria used to live. Maria hated her mom so much that she was willing to never see her again.

As a fifth grader, this was incomprehensible to me. I was ignorant to the struggles of the world because my life was so good. I didn't know that children who face neglect are nine times more likely to be involved in criminal activity, according to the Childhelp organization. I didn't know that the U.S. has one of the worst

records for child neglect. I didn't even know what neglect fully meant.

On the last day of school, I went to say goodbye to Maria. We made a plan to exchange our parents' phone

"That day, my heart mourned the loss of a friend and sister."

numbers so we could continue to stay in touch. When I got to the hallway of crowded first graders, I looked around to find her. I spotted some of her friends and asked them where she was.

"She went back to California to stay with her mom," a little girl said before running away.

That day, my heart mourned the loss of a friend and sister. I was upset that she didn't tell me she was going.



You've seen it, you've heard it: "I'm not like other girls," "Girls are so much drama," "Girls are petty," "Girls are shallow." Girls' locker rooms vs. boys' locker rooms. The infamous Karens, Stacys and Lindas.

The memes, starting as jokes, poke at the differences between genders, revealing the flaws we need to work on and providing conversation starters that reveal the similarities between strangers on the Internet.

If you spend thirty minutes reading through comments or searching in posts, you'll see things starting to slide from lighthearted jokes to misogyny: "Women will cheat on you," "Women who make false accusations of rape should face jail time," "Women born after 1993 can't cook, and all they do is charge their phones, twerk and lie."

Once, in the anonymity of a comment section, I jokingly said, "if



I met her in fifth grade. I was a part of the "Big Brothers, Big Sisters" program in my elementary school. Through this program, my counselor paired up students from fifth grade who were chosen to participate with students in kindergarten through second grade who faced hardships in their lives.

We were in the counselor's office when I first saw the small Hispanic girl. She only came up to my hip. Her dark hair fell in messy waves in front of her face, and right beneath it, her eyes were wide with curiosity. The smile on her face showed off her crooked teeth.

"This is Maria, your little sister," I heard my counselor say to me.

When I first saw Maria, and even as I got to know her, I couldn't imagine her facing any hardships, because she

Positive Example

As a member of the Lady Hornet Soccer Team, I enjoyed the points expressed in your feature "Unfinished Battle" published Oct. 23. During the soccer season, I spent hours nearly every day with Coach [Nicole] Inman, and although she was going through a troubled time, she never lost spirit or showed any signs of self-pity or doubt; rather, she radiated with courageous faith and joy in the Lord. While I can nowhere near compare my troubles with my coach, her steadfastness in God through times of trouble and times of joy

encouraged me and my fellow teammates to exert all our effort in both soccer and daily lives outside of practice. Whether we know it or not, people often look up to and admire our actions, right and wrong. Challenge yourself to set a positive example in people's lives, as Coach Inman has done in mine, and it may play a role in affecting others' mindsets and actions. -Margaret Murray, 12

Extra Stresses

As a band student, I have to agree with your article "Hearts on Fire, Minds

on Ice," published in the Oct. 23 print issue. The article portrays the typical band student and what they go through very well. However, there was not much mention of how stressful being a competitive marching band student is. Many of these students are in multiple AP classes and have a very large caseload. They also "burn out," or start to give up in classes. Some students also threaten to drop out of band or school all together. Overall, the story is amazing and shows the upside of being in marching band. -Mackenzie Cook, 12

Class Changes

As a 12th grade student at Bryant High, I am all for the new and improved Buzz Time. Your article in the October paper refers to the students' and teachers' views on Buzz Time, the academic spectrum and the lighthearted pleasure of having a little time to wind down after three periods of class. Buzz Time is a good way for students to learn and connect with other students that they may not normally socialize with. I also feel that Buzz Time is a great way for students to connect with different teachers. This all started as a survey three or four

years ago and has turned into a great program. So, I am glad that I get to experience all these new and powerful classes for my last year of school. I couldn't be prouder. -De'La Moore, 12

PROSPECTIVE

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