

PLATANOS COLLEGE



KS4 NEWSLETTER



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EDITOR'S WELCOME

BY JENNEL KORANTENG

Welcome to this Well-Being Special Edition of the KS4 Platanos College KS4 Pupil Newsletter. Within these pages we cover lots of current events, social issues and historic stories.

Wellbeing is a critical aspect of our lives as young people, so in this Edition we explore issues such as crime, politics and Mental Health.

In addition, we cover a range of other topics such as Philosophy, sports, social media, animation, gender equality and inspirational people.

We appreciate the time that you take in reading this Newsletter, and we also hope that the topics we have chosen to write about can inspire, inform and entertain you.



In line with our WellBeing Special, here are some quotes to inspire you.

Editor-In-Chief
Jennell Koranteng



"It doesn't have to take over your life, it doesn't have to define you as a person, it's just important that you ask for help. It's not a sign of weakness."

– Demi Lovato



"Everyone experiences a version of anxiety or worry in their lives, and maybe we go through it in a different or more intense way for longer periods of time, but there's nothing wrong with you."

– Emma Stone



"I found that with depression, one of the most important things you could realize is that you're not alone. You're not the first to go through it; you're not going to be the last to go through it."

– Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson



"We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies."

– Martin Luther King, Jr

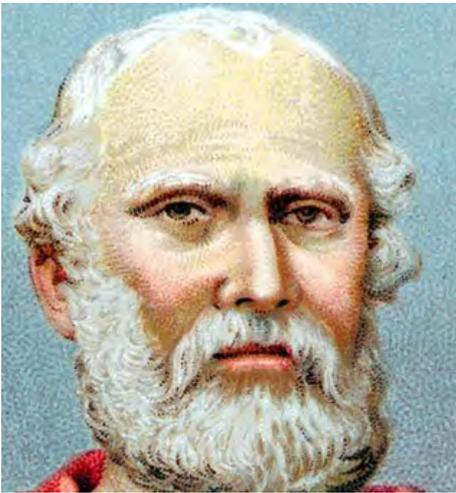


learning lounge

WHY IS PHILOSOPHY IMPORTANT?

BY SEBASTIAN UJKA ROCA

Did you know that the study of Philosophy is all about how human beings try to understand the fundamentals of human life and experience? This can include existence, value and reason.



Plato – Ancient Greek Philosopher

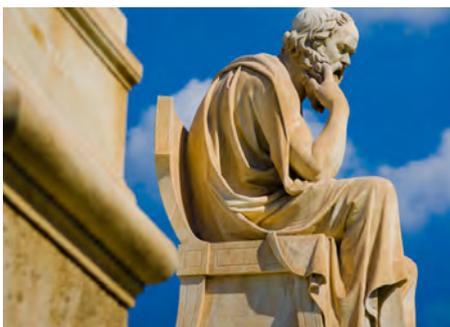
The study of Philosophy can benefit us in lots of different ways. For instance, it can help us to learn how to think clearly, ask effective and probing questions and understand other people's points of view. Instead of just accepting things as they are, Philosophy teaches us to search deeper and think for ourselves. This can then be really helpful in our everyday lives, from making better decisions to understanding why we believe what we do.

Philosophy can also help our communication skills, since we



can learn to develop strong arguments and justify our reasonings.

Philosophers have been around for centuries, asking the big questions that we may all have pondered at one point of our lives, but never really stopped to consider too deeply. For instance, *'what is the meaning of life?'* *'Is there a universal moral truth?'* *'Do we genuinely have free will?'* *'Is there life after death?'* Some of the most famous philosophers include Plato,



who wrote about justice and the ideal society, and Kant, who focused on morals and duty. Their works might seem complicated at first, but they clearly ponder timeless questions that have an impact on how we view our existence and reality as human beings. Even modern laws and governments are sometimes based on ideas that came from these original thinkers.

Philosophers don't always agree with each other, but that's part of what makes their work so interesting—they ask hard questions and never stop searching for the answers.

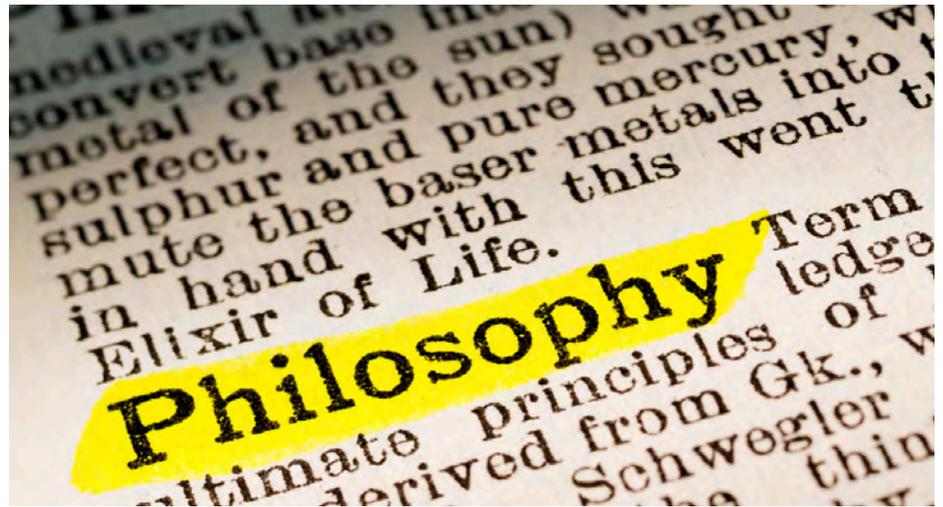


Immanuel Kant

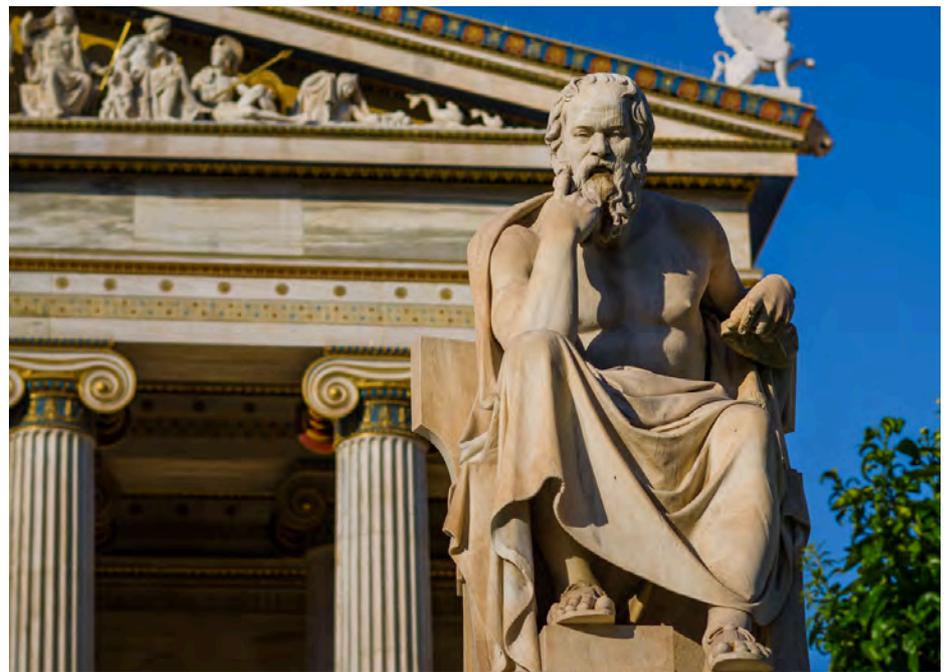
Over the years, the academic study of Philosophy has seen a slow decline, with subjects such as Business and Technology being preferred for offering 'real-world value'. This shift is partly due to the belief that



Philosophy is too abstract and therefore does not lead directly to jobs. It could also be argued that in the age of social media, immediate access to content and instant gratification, fewer of us dedicate time to slow, deep thinking, as many of us would rather scroll on our phones than reflect on complex ideas about life, truth and existence.



However, did you know that according to TheConversation, a study of 600,000 university students in the USA found that those who study Philosophy score higher in verbal and logical reasoning than students of any other Major? They also tend to show more curious and open-minded natures. Arguably, those with such skills are not only better thinkers, but also better at distinguishing between good and bad information. This in turn, makes them more able to support democratic processes and socio-political issues.



So, would you consider studying Philosophy at university? After all, what is more important that the study of human existence?





THE DEVASTATION OF GAZA

BY JENNEL KORANTENG



We are all aware of the devastating toll of the deadly attacks in Gaza. According to ABC News, over a 2 year period to October 2025, over 67,000 people in Gaza were killed.

Whilst there has been conflict in the region for many decades, the more recent 2 year Hamas-Israel conflict commenced on 7th October 2023, after Hamas launched a surprise coordinated attack on Israel. According to the Israel Ministry of Defense, 2,000 people were killed in the period to October 6th 2025, including 900 civilians during the Hamas attack on 7th October 2023. Furthermore, over 20,000 IDF soldiers were injured. In the same 2 year period in Gaza, over 169,600 people were injured, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.



Those living in Gaza have been affected on a colossal scale, with those left behind suffering from poor physical and mental health, as well as starvation and displacement. Everyday challenges include finding food and even medical aid because of the lack of hospitals due to all the bombing. The effects of the constant bombardment of attacks has been utterly devastating and catastrophic, including the loss of schools, hospitals and homes, leaving Palestinians helpless. Did you know that over 80,000 tons of bombs have been dropped on Gaza? The historic bomb dropping in the major cities of London, Hamburg and Dresden combined is still less than the ones in Gaza.

Gaza has struggled with medical care, with doctors having to use the minimal resources that are left. Furthermore, they have battled with unsanitary conditions that cause further risk to life. Did you know that 9/10 people in Gaza have been forcibly displaced? They have been forced to move to areas where life is not sustainable.

Back in September, the leaders of over 20 major aid agencies asked for urgent help, after a UN commission stated that genocide was taking place.

Releasing a collective statement, the aid agencies declared that "What we

are witnessing in Gaza is not only an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, but what the UN Commission of Inquiry has now concluded is a genocide... The inhumanity of the situation in Gaza is unconscionable. As humanitarian leaders, we have borne direct witness to the horrifying deaths and suffering of the people of Gaza. Our warnings have gone unheeded and thousands more lives are still at stake."



The Gaza Strip

Popular celebrities such as Dua Lipa (who has spoken up about Gaza), and Bella and Gigi Hadid (who are of Palestinian heritage), donated \$1 million (£785,000) to Palestinian charities. Kehlani, showed support and representation in one of her music videos, and The Weeknd, donated \$2



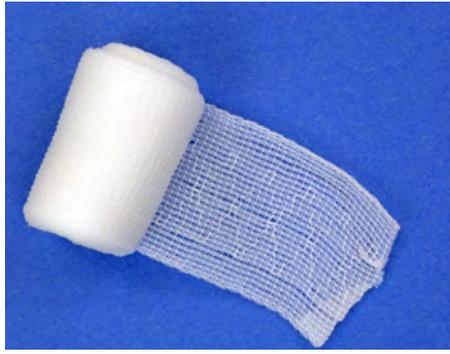


million (£1,487,000) to aid Gaza. Florence Pugh, Janelle Monae, Mark Ruffalo and many other well-known names have also supported Gaza.

Here are two facts about Palestine: Did you know that if you had travelled to Gaza before bombing started again, you would notice this annoying buzzing sound? That is the sound of Israeli drones, also known as ‘Zanana’ according to Palestinians. It’s been going on for 2 decades, and sadly those who have lived there for a long time wouldn’t have even noticed the consistent buzzing in the sky as it blended into the background, especially newer generations. Did you also know that the word ‘gauze’, which is a thin, soft medical device for wound dressings, originated from Gaza? In most languages, gauze is translated into gaza!

Back in October, President Trump claimed success for arranging an end to the war. This includes a ceasefire, withdrawal of Israeli military, release of hostages from the October 7th attacks, release of Palestinian prisoners and an increase in humanitarian aid. Trump believes that *“everybody is happy, and I think it’s going to stay that way”*. He stated that *“I’m good at solving wars. I’m good at making peace.”* Is the US President right? Will the ceasefire last? Can Palestinians have a life free of the constant threat of war?

Only time will tell.





COMIC VS MOVIE ADAPTATIONS

BY PRINCE ADONIS HAMILTON BARROZO

The Fantastic Four, Batman and Superman: these are just 3 examples of comic books that have been turned into movies. But, why do Directors choose to change key plot events and character design for the sake of Big Screen adaptations?



The differences between comics and movies vary from being very subtle to very noticeable, and can be made for better or worse. All we know as consumers is that decisions are made during planning, filming and post production, that lead to the final products that we end up seeing.

But why are these changes made in the first place? Directors often make changes to original comic scripts and ideas so that the movies we love align with modern day society and audiences. Sometimes, old comics just don't fit in with today's social standards, leading to many significant changes.



For example, Harley Quinn from The Suicide Squad was written in the comics to be a sidekick character and love interest for the Joker; she was often presented as the 'damsel in distress.' But she was eventually re-worked as an independent woman who could fight for herself. Unlike her predecessor, Quinn did not merely follow the misogynistic ideology that she needs a man to save her; instead she proved that women can be just as independent as men, reflecting the ideals of gender equality and inclusion of the 21st century.



Another example is The Fantastic Four (2015) movie, in which Victor Von Doom is seen teaming up with other characters, in contrast to the original comic version in which he doesn't even like them. Furthermore, in the more recent movie adaptation, the film is set in a futuristic world, unlike the comics which are set in contemporary times. Perhaps these choices are made to reflect the need for teamwork and collaboration in an ever-changing world.



We can also see greater diversity of representation with characters like Spiderman. An example of this is the main character of the popular well-known animated film Into the Spiderverse (2018), in which the main protagonist, Miles Morales, is a black teenager. This reflects the growing desire of audiences to see diversity on their screens, whilst also highlighting the social issues we have witnessed globally that havemade us all more aware of the need for inclusion in mainstream media. For instance, in recent years, these concerns have been highlighted through the BLM Movement; indeed, all of the actors playing Spiderman since its conception in 1962 have been white, so the introduction of a black protagonist is a significant one.

In the end, Directors make changes to original versions of texts for different reasons and often, these are informed by what's going on in contemporary society. So, next time you watch a movie that has been adapted from an original comic script, ask yourself what changes you notice and why.



INTERVIEW WITH MS FLETCHER-THOMAS

BY DANAIT DAVID

We interviewed the Director of Learning for Art, Ms Fletcher-Thomas, about her career to date.



Ms Fletcher-Thomas on her Graduation Day

Why did you become a teacher?

“Teaching allows me to create an environment where I can help pupils thrive in a subject I'm passionate about. I became a teacher because helping and nurturing others is something that I enjoy and is natural to me. I like being able to support pupils' growth, develop new skills and perspectives and simply just have a belief in themselves. Building positive relationships, creating a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere, and being someone pupils know they can rely on, is also a valuable part of the role.”



How did you get into teaching?

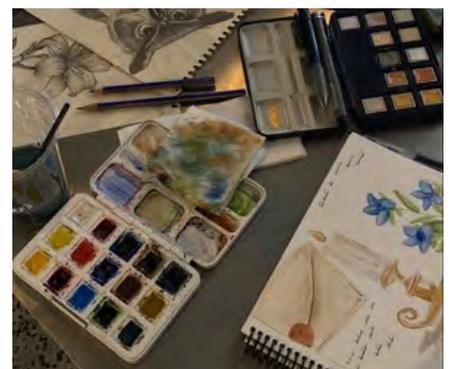
“Initially, I was creating graphic designs for an Estate Agency. I wasn't enjoying how restrictive the work was; I had to design to the company's needs and abandon my own style. I knew I wanted to teach, but I wasn't always sure what subject I would specialise in. However, I remember really enjoying Graphic Design at school and decided to share my enthusiasm for Art and Design with children. I then studied and trained to teach before formally becoming a teacher.”

What do you most enjoy about teaching?

“I enjoy that I am playing a key part in another person's future, both academically and in their personal growth. There are many pupils who go on to study an Art - related subject or work in the Art industry. It signifies that we leave a lasting impression on pupils, not just in their memory, but in their overall life journey, shaping their confidence.”

Will you be organising any trips this year?

“Trips will most definitely be introduced to KS3 and KS4 within the Art Department. It's extremely valuable for pupils to have subject related experience outside of the classroom. Being able to apply or see what you're learning in school will help pupils deepen their understanding and connect classroom learning to real - world contexts.”





Would you have liked to attend Platanos College as a pupil?

“I would definitely have enjoyed coming here as a pupil! The school is so diverse and reflective of how multi-cultural London really is.”



What advice would you give any of our pupils who would like to pursue a career in Education?

“If there's an opportunity to spend time working with young people, take it. It may be volunteering at a nursery or helping at a Youth Club. You'll learn a lot about yourself and get a sense of how you'd work in a similar environment. Teaching is largely about understanding people; once you've got that down, you're on the right track.”



What are the challenges of your role?

“Like most jobs, there are certainly challenges. One of them is meeting everyone's needs. There are many different personalities and abilities to support. We all learn differently, and finding the right strategy to help each pupil can be tricky. However, diversity is something I value, so though it can be challenging, it's a challenge I enjoy.”



What do you do in your free time ?

“In my free time, I enjoy spending time with friends and family. Whenever I get a chance to travel, I do! Even if it's a short weekend trip, I like being able to experience different cultures.”

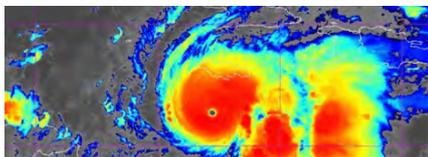




DEVASTATION HITS PARADISE

BY NEFETARI DALE

Back in October, Hurricane Melissa caused devastation in parts of the Caribbean and South America. Jamaica was one of the hardest-hit areas, especially the Southern and Western parts of the island, including Westmorland, Handover, St Elizabeth and St James. Wind speeds grew up to a shocking 185 mph, with a record gust of 252mph being reached!



The damage has been catastrophic; it is estimated that more than a million people have been affected and by November 4th, there were 75 confirmed deaths. According to the British Red Cross, "90,000 households have been displaced, and more than 190,000 buildings damaged." Furthermore, costs of damages are estimated to be \$48 billion. Most places were left without electricity, clean water or telephone services. Some areas also suffered from a significant amount of landslides and homes under water. In some places, the roads have been cut off; this means that emergency services cannot get through to people who need them. Everyday life has been destroyed: hospitals have been damaged and children are not able to attend school.



Athlete, Asafa Powell described the devastation as a "world war, where somebody drops a bomb", which demonstrates the sheer hell being faced by citizens of the country. He went on to say "To see people, your people, struggling like that - never in a million years we thought Jamaica would have ever been like this and like I said, driving through it, it looked like somebody dropped a bomb on that side of Jamaica...Everyone is trying to help, you know, with whatever little they can help with."



But what does the future hold for Jamaica? Well, according to BBC Science Focus, the future potentially looks bleak. Although evidence does not suggest hurricanes are happening more frequently than they were 40 years ago when detailed satellite records began, there is evidence that they're becoming more and more intense and destructive due to climate change and rising global temperatures.



Only time will tell how hurricanes will continue to affect Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean in future.

"I want to thank everyone who donated to the appeal, it shows the generosity of our community and will mean a lot for the families impacted. There were lots of donations and we are grateful for every single one of them."

– **Prefect Mariana Afonso Moura**





DO YOU WANT A CAREER IN ANIMATION?

BY KAMIL LAYNE

Have you ever considered a career in Animation? Well, now is the time to really think about it, as the industry is expected to grow and offer endless opportunities in the future. According to 6WResearch, the animation market was \$39 billion in 2024; by 2031 however, it is expected to exceed \$98 billion.

There are a number of growth factors that are affecting the expansion of the Industry, including:

- The demands for animated explainer videos in marketing campaigns and corporate training
- The increased reliance on animated content by streaming services like Netflix and YouTube
- Expansion of the Gaming Industry
- Increasing demand for CGI and immersive experiences
- The use of animation in education and e-learning



As technology advances, animators can now specialise in various fields such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality and artificial intelligence.



Animating can be used in things you see everyday! Next time you're watching television or playing your favourite game, take a moment to consider how animation is at work.

Despite the potential career opportunities for Animators, there is however a dark side to the Industry. Did you know that hundreds of animating companies expect their workers to animate late at night, extending their shifts without adding more money to their pay? For example, Mappa, a Japanese animation studio - who animated some of the fan favourite anime series most of you know and love, such as Jujutsu Kaisen, and Chainsaw Man - allegedly pay workers low wages for long hours. In fact, it has

been reported that some employees have been hospitalised due to extreme stress.





Many animators have even received death threats when the animation they produce is not seem to be up to the fans' standards. In 2023, Jujutsu Kaisen was one such animator, due to a decision to put one character in a school girl's uniform.



It's important to take time to appreciate the hard work that is done by animators, as they don't always get as much credit as they ought to. Animating takes time; in fact, the most common animation style is done frame-by-frame, meaning that animators have to draw every frame and pixel to keep audiences entertained.



If you would like to consider a career in animation, here are some top tips:

1) Consider what area of animation you would like to specialise in: 2D Animation (used in cartoons and motion graphics); 3D Animation (used in cinema, gaming and architecture); Motion Graphics (used in adverts and social media); Visual Effects.



2) Develop your skills using the right software: Adobe After Effects & Premiere Pro; Autodesk Maya & Blender; ZBrush



3) Look for the right type of work experience and collaborative projects



4) Bear in mind the challenges of the Animation Industry - it is a highly Competitive Industry - the work is very intense and there are very tight deadlines.



With all of the above in mind, do you think that Animation could be the career for you?





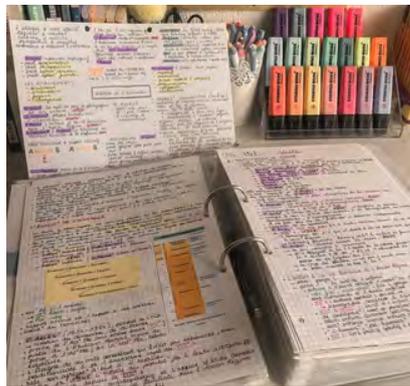
INTERVIEW WITH A PAST PUPIL

BY LANAYA WARREN

We interviewed Zahara Warren, who left Platanos College at the end of last academic year.

What was your favourite year whilst at Platanos College?

“My favourite time was when I was in Year 11.”



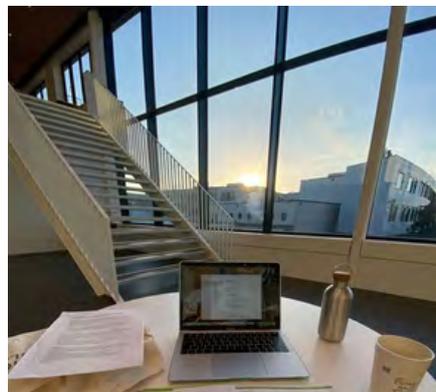
Why was Year 11 your favourite time?

“GCSE times were my favourite because everyone became close during that time, and we had more freedom as we were about to leave the school.”



How did Platanos College help you to prepare for your GCSEs ?

“The school provided us with early morning revision sessions; these were really helpful and some of the sessions were actually fun to be in!”



What are you studying now?

“I'm doing Animal Care and Veterinary Nursing.”



Why did you choose those subjects?

“I chose these subjects as I love working with animals.”

What are your aspirations and career goals for the future?

“I am not really sure yet; but I definitely want to work with animals!”

What advice would you give to our current pupils in Year 11 who are preparing for their GCSE examinations?

“I would advise pupils to revise a lot - especially in the subjects you struggle with the most. It's important not to put off revising subjects just because you don't like them. I would advise taking 1-2 hours to practise the subjects that you find hard, because these are the ones that require more time and work.”



wellbeing special

HOW CAN MUSIC HELP YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING?

BY DAVID MATIAS

For many of us teens, music is more than just background noise; it's an important part of our daily lives. Whether we're listening to our favourite songs, learning an instrument or singing karaoke with friends, music has a large impact on how we as young people think, feel and grow.

One of the clearest benefits of music to young people is the way it helps us cope with our emotions. Young people - especially teenagers - tend to go through a lot of changes (hormonal, social and changing pressures at school). Consequently, they often find themselves having to deal with seemingly insurmountable stress from schoolwork, exams and even friendships.

Music gives those who are stressed out a way to convey feelings that can be difficult to express. A favourite song or playlist can lift our mood, help us feel calmer and give us motivation when we need it most. Playing or even writing music also gives

young people a creative outlet to process emotions in a healthy way, instead of allowing the pressures of teen life to pile up and stress to become all-consuming.

Music, for some, can also support learning. Many

studies have shown that practising or even just listening to music can sharpen our memory, help us focus and help with problem-solving skills. Music trains the brain to recognise patterns, thereby helping to improve attention levels. This effect is even further boosted for those pupils who take part in music practice, which they often find helps them stay disciplined, since learning an instrument or preparing for a performance require regular practice and patience.



Another impactful benefit of music is the social effect it has. Playing in a school band, singing in a choir or even just sharing music tastes and songs with friends can bring people closer together. Working as a group teaches teamwork and communication, while also giving young people a sense of belonging. These shared experiences can boost confidence and help pupils build long-lasting friendships.



Overall, it is evident that music plays a powerful role in shaping the lives and wellbeing of young people. It doesn't just make us more content in the moment, but it also helps us to develop emotionally, academically and socially. Schools that encourage music are giving pupils more than just a skill; they're giving them a necessary tool to handle challenges, connect with others and enjoy life more fully.



In 2024, Youth Music surveyed 2100 young people, 83% of whom stated that they had listened to music in the previous week. Furthermore, 71% said that music was a large component of who they are, and 68% even agreed that they couldn't live without music. Moreover, 7/10 respondents said music enabled them to connect with others.



INTERVIEW WITH MS SCULLY

BY FADUMO ADDE

Mental Health is one of those topics that is increasingly being spoken about in schools and on social media. All of us have mental health and it is important that we know how to protect it as young people and throughout our lives.

We decided to interview Ms Scully, who is a Mental Health Advisor within Platanos College.



Ms Scully on her Graduation Day

What does Mental Health mean to you?

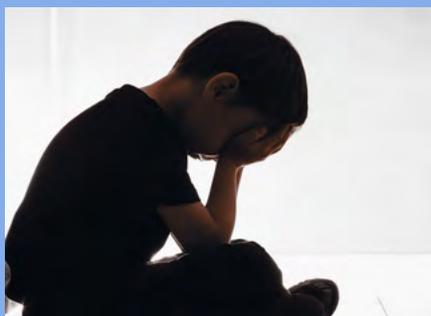
“Mental Health to me is about how we think, feel and act in our everyday lives. It's not just about being happy all the time; it's about how we cope with the stress that rises above us everyday. This also relates to others and it's about what decisions we make. This includes everything, from feeling content and emotionally stable to how we handle anxiety, depression and the

challenges that face us everyday in life. Mental Health is also an ongoing process, so it's just as important to keep our physical health healthy too. It's something that we have to actively care for and maintain continuously on a day to day basis!”



Why is looking after our Mental Health so important?

“So, I personally think and believe that looking after our Mental Health is important because it affects every aspect of our lives. When our Mental Health is in a good place, we can handle stress a lot better! We have healthy relationships and make better decisions.



However, when we are struggling, we are less productive; neglecting our mental health, can lead to so much anxiety or even physical symptoms. Mental health plays such a huge role in how we experience the world, so it's crucial to nurture it in the same way that we look after our physical health as well.”



What do you think are the biggest threats to Mental Health?

“For me, I feel that there are a number of factors that can affect young people's Mental Health. But right now, most prevalent has got to be social media.”



Some people don't believe that social media is the biggest threat that young people face today. Don't you think that this is more down to the age of the young person?

"I feel that the constant comparison, the online bullying and the pressure to maintain a certain image can have quite a toll on young people. Comments stick more onto young people and they take them on more emotionally. Another impact could be academic stress as for example Year 11s right now - they're in their most important year and everyday is the most important.



However, it's also about that expectation that you put on yourself - not even about what parents or teachers say - but the expectations that you put on yourself to succeed. That added pressure of wanting to succeed can take a big toll on stress. Do you want to go to college? Do you want to stay in the Sixth Form? Do you want to go to a Further Education college? Do you want to do an apprenticeship? There are so many questions that you may ask yourself that could



really just stress you out in general. The number of possibilities can seem endless and this can add onto your stress.

Now more than ever, it's important to get the nation talking about student mental health



I also believe that there is a level of stress in social isolation - the feeling of not fitting in or struggling, the fear of missing out and having peer pressure from relationships, stress with your friends and more. Equally, family issues if there's something going at home then potentially that can make your stress get even worse."



But don't you think that young people should just brush off negative comments or block trolls online?

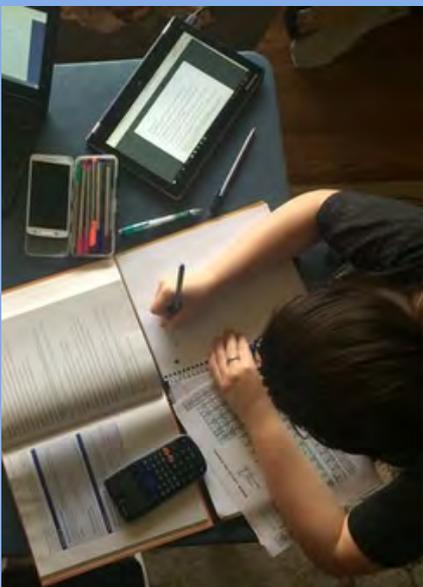
"Not everybody's going to have a deflective shield that those silly comments can just bounce off of."





I think ultimately depends on how sensitive you are as well . But for me personally, I think the biggest factor would be academic stress.

“I think it is different between the ages. For example, my daughters are just starting Sixth Form; back in July they would have had the most academically stressful time because obviously they were doing GCSEs. But now they are thriving because that academic stress has been lifted. However, there is also the stress of fitting into a new Sixth Form - so that could also be a factor too.”



Once I was so stressed off that I actually cut off all my hair - but then, I don't really care what my hair looks like as my appearance isn't that big of a deal to me!

“My daughter did the same exact thing! But this links to self-image. For me, that's why social media plays such a big part because there's that need to be looking aesthetically better - even though people on social are just faking it to make it. And due to that, someone might feel pressured to do the same thing. There have even been instances where people who are naturally black and beautiful have bleached their skin to have lighter skin. Social media can harm young people's self-image and affect their health and lives.”



What can we as young people do to protect our mental health?

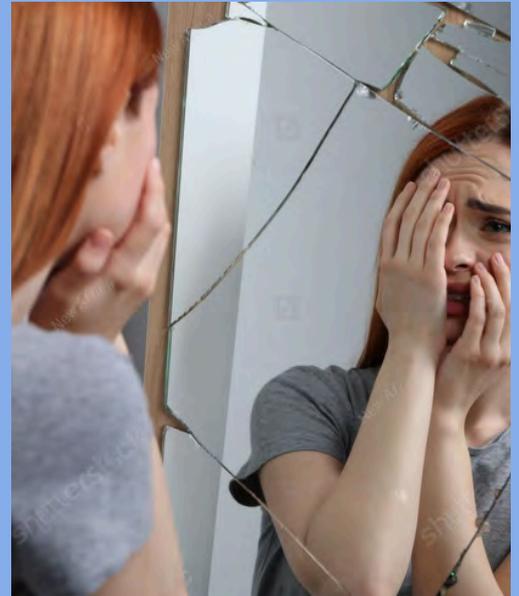
“There are a number of things we can do to protect our Mental Health. Obviously, taking care of our physical health is so important. The two both go hand in hand when it comes to taking care of them, because without one, the other fall apart. You have to wear two shoes to walk. Reaching out for support is the biggest thing you can do.”





What's your message for people dealing with mental health.

“You are not alone. Don't ever feel you are in a situation where you're backed up into a corner and there's no one to help you. If you do feel you've hit rock bottom, there's only one direction - and that goes up! My biggest piece of advice is to please go and seek help because you are never alone and there is always someone to help you! Make sure you help yourself before you start helping someone else because if you're on an airplane and the oxygen falls down, you are told to put your oxygen mask on first before you can start helping others. The same goes for Mental Health!”



How does Platanos College help young people with mental health in school.

“We can signpost and refer to support organisations. One of the things that I've created is a mental health wellbeing board downstairs in the heart space. Where pupils can have access to support apps that they can use.




40% of students suffer from a mental illness

33% of students have an anxiety disorder

Pupils can also speak to any member of staff that they trust or feel comfortable with. As I said there's a number of things that can support pupils who are struggling with their Mental Health and wellbeing.”



EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH

Mental Health and “Social” Media

THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

BY PARNIYAN ZARIFI

Have you ever felt so stressed before an exam that you couldn't control your anxiety? Or maybe you've felt a rush of worry about a loved one? The thing is, these are both situations that we've all been in, and yet many of us struggle to manage our worries. That's why it's important to find simple ways to de-stress.



One way to deal with these feelings is to pause and take a moment to clear your mind; this can have a huge impact on your mental health. Mindfulness is something that can benefit all of us. It originates from Buddhist traditions and people have practised it for over 2500 years. But what exactly is it?

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing on the present instead of letting your mind take over your emotions. It means that you are aware of simple things, like your breathing and the way your body feels.



A simple way of practising mindfulness could be by closing your eyes before a test and trying to take slow, deep breaths. When people practice mindfulness, they often feel calmer and more settled. This can help us all to focus better in class. Overall, mindfulness is a way to improve wellbeing and enable us to face daily challenges.

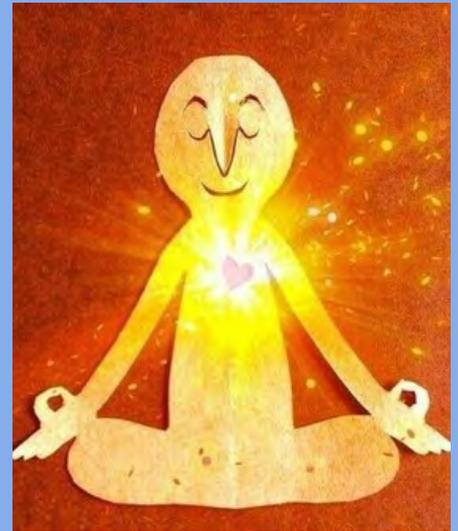
But mindfulness also goes way beyond the classroom; we can use it in sports and – in the years to come – in the workplace. According to MIND, mindfulness has vast-ranging benefits that can help us in all stages of life:

- Helps us to be more self-aware
- Enables us to feel calmer and less stressed
- Enables us to choose how to respond to our thoughts and feelings
- Helps us to cope with difficult or unhelpful thoughts

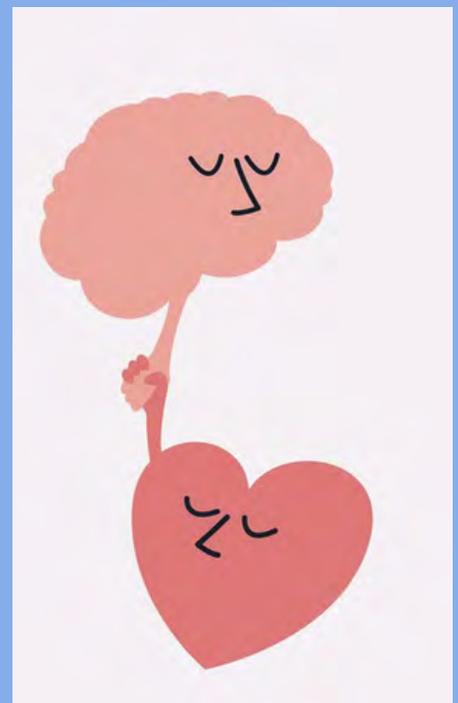
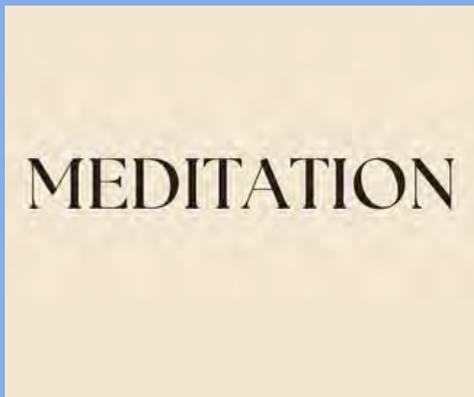
- Encourages us to be kinder towards ourselves



Meditation is similar to mindfulness and is the tool we use to achieve a mindful state; it is used to relax your body while trying to focus your mind. A simple way to meditate is to sit down somewhere like your room, close your eyes whilst taking deep breaths and try to focus on the breath itself. According to VeryWellHealth, the benefits of meditation are vast: reducing stress, boosting immunity, improving health and sleep, improving attention span and making people more compassionate.

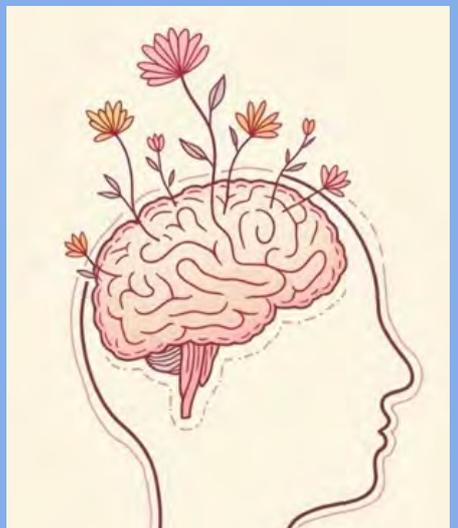
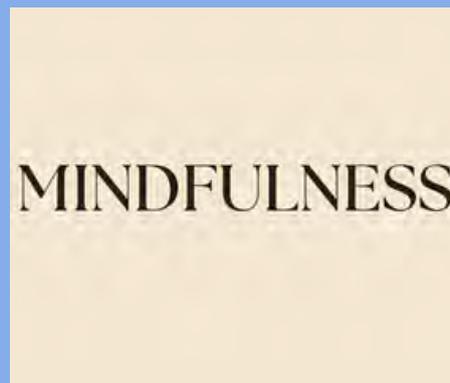


this often, you can spot patterns of mistakes as well as learn from them, so they don't tend to happen in the future. As young people, we can benefit from reflecting because it helps us to improve not only our school work, but also consider who we are and who we want to be in life.



Another practice that we can all get into that complements mindfulness and meditation is reflection; this is when you think about the choices you have previously made, and consider how to learn from them. One way to reflect is to write down the things that went well and the things that need improvement. By doing

In conclusion, meditation, mindfulness and reflection are ways of improving our mental well being. By doing these, we can improve our mental health and gradually make significant changes to our lives.



THE BENEFITS OF BOXING

BY NILSON SERNA

Have you ever tried boxing? According to Our Sporting Life, the sport is most popular amongst 16 to 24 year olds; just under 9% of this category take part in boxing at least once a month.

As a boxer myself, I do it 3 times a week. I believe that boxing is more than just a hobby; it helps with co-ordination, movement, memory, discipline and reaction times. But how can boxing benefit *you*?

Firstly, boxing helps young people feel more confident. As we practise and improve, we start to believe we can achieve hard goals. This helps us develop a more resilient attitude in all aspects of school and life, because we truly see that improvement comes from effort and sticking at things.

Secondly, boxing is a full-body workout. It makes your arms, legs and core stronger, while also helping to improve stamina and coordination.. Many boxers feel stronger and more focused after training as it provides them with energy.

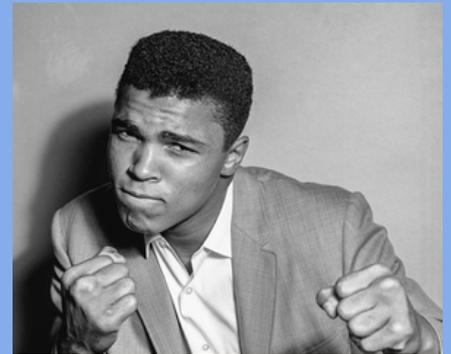
However, boxing requires both commitment and self-control. Young boxers learn to stick to a routine and listen to their coach. This discipline in turn, helps them be more responsible and self-reliant.



Furthermore, it might sound contradictory, but boxing is a brilliant way to calm down stress and anger. Training helps us to clear our minds and remain focused. It can help improve mood and reduce anxiety, helping us to manage our emotions and stress.

Muhammad Ali is one of the most famous and looked up to boxers in history. He was known not only for his exceptional skills in the ring, but also for his bravery. Ali won the Heavyweight World Title three times and became a world wide hero both in and outside sport. He stood up for what he believed in, even

when it was hard, including refusing to fight in the Vietnam war on moral grounds. He stayed true to what he believed in throughout his life.



Ali inspires young people to be brave and keep going. He showed that success comes from hard work and believing you can achieve big if you just trust in yourself. His story helps young boxers to chase their dreams so they never give up - even when things get hard.

“Whatever the challenge was, however unattainable the goal may have seemed, I never let anyone talk me out of believing in myself.”

– Muhammed Ali

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN FIND STRENGTH AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH MUAY THAI

BY ERICA MADUMBA

About 3 years ago, I had no idea what Muay Thai was. My journey started with a simple Google search for ‘types of self defence’, which brought back memories of practising boxing when I was younger. I wanted to find a form of self defence to develop a useful skill so I could feel more confident about myself. At 5 foot tall, I’m not exactly an intimidating-looking person; I worried that I might be perceived by strangers as potentially vulnerable, and wanted to find a way of feeling more confident in my ability to defend myself, should the need arise.



My search led me to Muay Thai, and within a week, I was taking a class with a trainer named James Toomey. He had over 15 years of experience and was a former WBC champion: I just knew I was in expert hands! If you’ve watched shows like Cobra Kai, then you might think I was ready for tournaments in just

a few months. Well, that’s not how it works; I wasn’t Daniel LaRusso, and James definitely wasn’t Mr Miyagi! Muay Thai is a long process; but I was ready to learn.

After a couple of months, I was definitely improving; my technique and kicks were getting better. The first few classes showed me just how out of shape I was, so James had us doing strength and conditioning at the end of every session. In just 5-6 months, I went from gassing out (becoming extremely tired) within a mere 2 minutes, to sparring 6 rounds non-stop with my other classmates.

But the benefits were not restricted to just the physical side of Muay Thai. My mindset changed too. Instead of just lying in bed all day and being lazy, I started lifting weights (I’ll admit that I ate a bunch of junk food afterwards). My parents saw how serious I was when I asked for Fairtex gloves instead of the latest game for my PS5. Now I practise almost every day; it’s become a fun hobby, whilst also helping me to improve my confidence, co-ordination and stamina. Imagining the bag is someone who annoys me makes the punches hit a little

harder, I have to admit!



Growing up, the safety advice for us as young children was always to be careful, don’t walk alone and only go somewhere with someone you trust. While this is meant to keep us safe, it can feel unfair. It’s sad that we live in a world where many young people have to worry about what can happen to them. It’s not fair that we live in a world that can be unsafe for us as young people. Knowing that I have martial arts skills, helps me to feel I could be better prepared to protect myself should I need to. That’s why I encourage you to try some form of self defence. You never know when it might be useful, and for me, it’s given me so much more confidence. Try it – you never know, it could change your life!

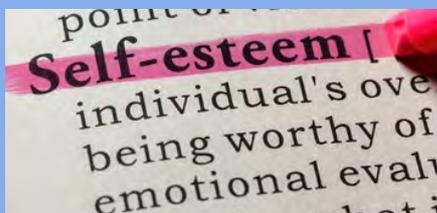


THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF ESTEEM

BY ADESHEWA ADEBAYO

Self-esteem is something that we should all have – and yet, it’s often the aspect of our characters that we struggle with. Maintaining physical health is something that we are all encouraged to do, but what about our internal selves, in particular our self-esteem? Do we actually look after ourselves? How much do we believe in ourselves? Do we truly love ourselves?

According to MIND, self-esteem is *“how we value and perceive ourselves. It’s based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can feel difficult to change. We might also think of this as self-confidence.”* Low self-esteem often causes us to doubt our own abilities, making us constantly question whether we are good enough, and leads to worry about what others think. This can lead to a fear of failure. Actually, failure is a critical experience that challenges us to learn from our mistakes and constantly evolve.



Of course, there is a difference between confidence and arrogance; whilst the latter can make us show off and brag about ourselves, confidence is one of the most essential psychological resources for human beings and is a highly positive factor in life. I say this because it's hard to achieve and move forward without this inner confidence growing somewhere. It’s not the end of the world if it’s hidden, but helping your self-confidence to gradually come to the forefront, can bring great rewards.



The biggest enemies to one’s self-esteem are fear and insecurity. It cannot be denied that whilst some of us seem to have been born exuding confidence, many of us struggle with low self-esteem.

So, if you are someone who this applies to, what can you do to improve your self-esteem? Here are some top tips....



- Engage in positive self-talk
- Celebrate small wins
- Avoid comparison
- Set realistic goals
- Surround yourself with supportive people

To conclude, self-esteem plays a significant role in shaping our self-perception and influencing our beliefs about what we can achieve. It can lift us, helping us to feel confident and encouraging us to bounce back from mistakes. But when it’s low, it can hold us back, and we start doubting our own abilities. Consequently, we end up missing opportunities out of sheer fear and insecurity.

Next time you feel insecure, remind yourself that everyone feels like this at some point in their lives; feel the fear and do it anyway!

ARE INFLUENCERS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE FOR US AS YOUNG PEOPLE?

BY BENJAMIN ADEGOKE

We all know that in today's world, social media and Influencers play a powerful role in shaping our behaviour, sense of self and even our inner-most thoughts. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow Influencers to spread their messages quickly to millions of followers. Consequently, Influencers can have an even bigger impact on young people's minds than teachers, our friends or even our own parents and carers can.

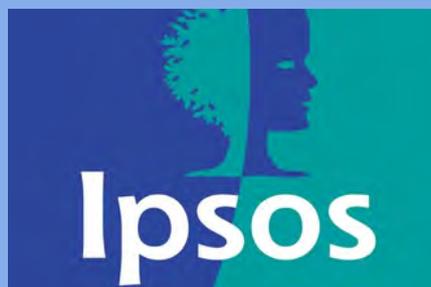
One way in which Influencers can adversely affect us is in showing off ideal standards of success, beauty and everyday life. This in turn, can make us feel like our own lives are lacking in some way. Did you know that a study conducted by Current Psychology found that if an Influencer seems to be more likeable, this can have a significant effect on young people's behaviour?



You may also have seen on platforms like Instagram that many Influencers have posts that say #AD. This means that



they are promoting products and services that they have somehow benefitted from; for instance, an Influencer might promote a certain hotel, but this may be because the hotel has gifted them a free, all-expenses paid tropical holiday in return for a few IG posts. Is this really fair and genuine? Can we trust reviews that Influencers have directly and personally benefitted from? Teenagers might also adopt a materialistic outlook or feel pressured to buy items promoted by their favourite celebrities and Influencers.



According to an IPSOS survey conducted in March 2025, half of 16-34 year olds trust information they receive from online Influencers. Not only does this mean that fake news

and misinformation can spread more widely, but it also means that there has been a significant rise in young people wishing to acquire the lifestyles of Influencers themselves, rejecting more traditional career goals.

Despite these negatives however, Influencers can have a positive effect on young people too. They often promote authenticity and self-care, and raise awareness of key social issues. They can also act as real-life role models and help young people to feel supported.

Perhaps the most useful thing we can do as young people who are consuming and using social media, is to develop our media literacy; this means we can think critically about the social media we are using and can learnt to tell the difference between an Influencer's very highly crafted social image, and the reality. Afterall, we want to be inspired by Influencers, not to just mindlessly imitate them.



HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH EXAM PRESSURE?

BY INES ABREU FERREIRA

The KS4 Pupil Newsletter's motto is 'Written for pupils, by pupils.' Therefore, we naturally cover topics that are pertinent to us as Year 10 and 11 pupils. For instance, we often discuss exam pressure in the run up to GCSEs. This is for good reason! Did you know that an overwhelming majority of pupils experience exam pressure? A recent survey showed that 85% of UK students report anxiety related to exams. This can severely impact young people's wellbeing and our ability to learn.

The best way to ease your nerves about your upcoming exams is communicating with teachers about the importance of the exams you're taking; this can help to help calm any worries you may have in your mind. Staff are there to support you and provide you with revision guides, so that you're on the right track with what you're revising.

The main thing to remember is that **you are not alone**. Everyone feels nerves at some point and all your peers are probably feeling the same pressures – even it doesn't always seem so!

What you should focus on



before exams are the variables that you *can* control. This can really help you to be as prepared as possible for your exams.

One of the variables that can help you prepare is starting to revise ahead of time or as soon as possible; you can create a revision timetable to fit your schedule and set targets for things you want to achieve. For example, a good target to set is to revise a specific topic that you're least confident in.

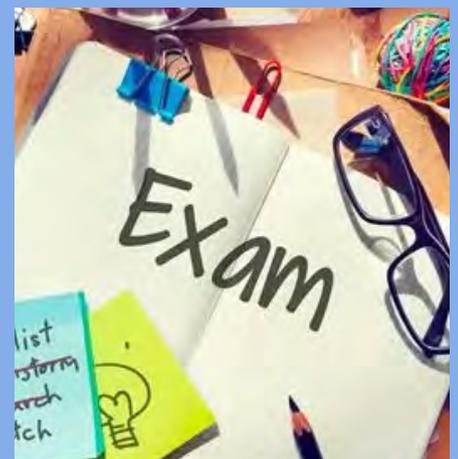
Another thing that can also prepare you and help ease the nerves that come with opening that exam, is doing practice papers as revision; this can help you to get used to the format of the questions you'll get. With any luck, depending on the subject, you may get a question very similar to them in your actual final exam! You can even time



yourself whilst doing the practice papers so that you get used to the pressure for when you do the real thing.

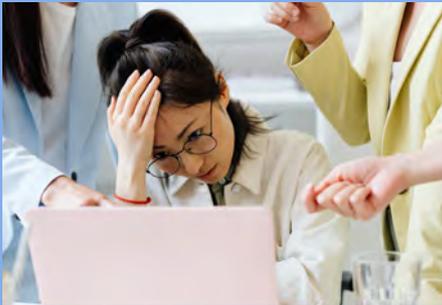
A very important aspect of doing well in exams is the ability to concentrate. This means making sure you have eaten enough before exams as your body and brain need fuel to function properly and to the best of their ability. It is also critical to get a good night's sleep before the exams, as anxiety often leads to trouble sleeping. You need a well-rested mind and body for the day of your exam.

Once you've finished the exams, some nervousness might settle in about not doing the best you could have done. However, it's great to remind yourself that exams are just one small part of life. Take the time to relax, decompress, put away any revision or study notes and take a well-deserved rest.



ARE WE AT RISK OF PEER PRESSURE?

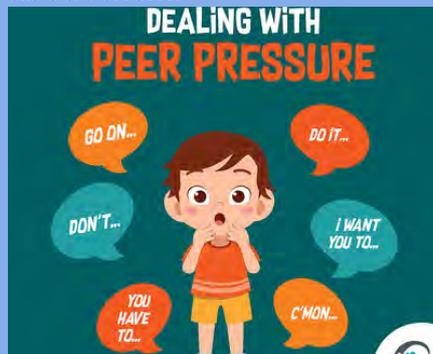
BY LANAYA WARREN



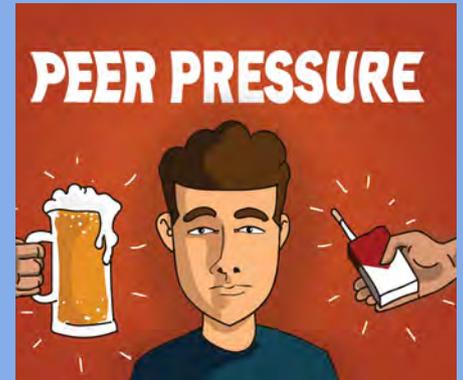
Peer pressure is something that every teenager has dealt with at some point in their lives; it's when you are influenced by others to do something, whether it's positive or negative. It could be something as simple as being persuaded to listen to new music or buy the latest pair of trainers. Although peer pressure is often negative, it can have multiple positive effects, from things such as encouragement to do classwork, join a club or work out. This can help push young people into bettering themselves physically and mentally, and can strengthen bonds and relationships. This kind of peer pressure can be used to motivate rather than cause harm like negative peer pressure does.

Sometimes however, peer pressure can lead us to do things that are contrary to our character and not in our best interests. The strange thing about peer pressure is that you usually aren't aware of the effects of negative peer pressure until it's too late.

One of the biggest factors when it comes to peer pressure is that it eventually leads the pressured individual to go against their own values, often making the person change themselves completely to fit in with their peers. Consequently, this could cause a decline in their Mental Health and can even lead to an increasing distance from those who genuinely care about them.



MentallyHealthySchools states that *"Peer pressure does have some positive aspects - for example, conforming to safe and healthy behaviour and peers influencing academic achievement. Negative peer pressure is often related to influencing bullying behaviours, drinking alcohol, drug use and negative body image, all of which are harmful to a child or young person's wellbeing. The effects of such behaviours can decrease self-confidence, self-worth and distance from family members and friends."*



Peer pressure can cause people to lose track of who they actually are because they spend so much time trying to fit in. They might change their style, their opinions and even the way they talk, just to be accepted. After a while, it gets confusing because you don't even know if people like the real you or just the version you created to please them.



THE LINGERING EFFECTS OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH

BY BRIANNA MINOTT-GORDON



according to Young Minds, in 2023, 1 in every 5 children and young people (aged 8-25) had a Mental Health issue? Furthermore, there was a significant rise of 10% in referrals of children and young people to emergency Mental Healthcare Services between 2023 and 2024.

Mental Health is linked to our state of wellbeing and includes how we think, talk, act and behave. Having positive Mental Health involves feeling optimistic about yourself and having the coping mechanisms to effectively deal with the stresses we all feel everyday.

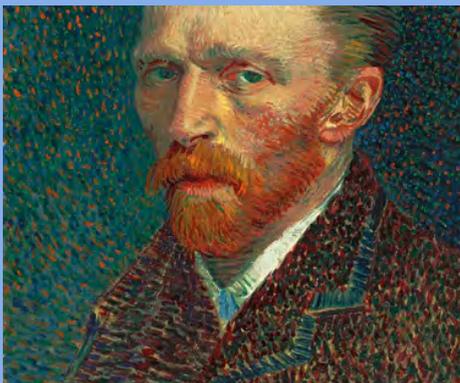
In contrast, having poor Mental Health can cause us to have daily struggles that can ruin our day, leading us to feel stressed, anxious and depressed.

Poor Mental Health significantly affects young people's lives, leading to struggles and difficulties in various aspects of their lives: school, relationships self-esteem. Did you know that



Even more worrying is that 32.8% of 17-24 year olds have attempted to self-harm at some point in their lives. Moreover, this percentage increases to 69.5% of young people who are thought to have a mental health condition.

A number of famous figures have had mental health issues:



Vincent Van Gogh

Vincent Van Gogh suffered from a combination of mental and physical health issues; these were made worse by malnutrition and alcohol abuse. Van Gogh suffered with manic episodes which eventually led to depression and his suicide 1890.

Lady Gaga has opened up about her struggles with mental health, which include PTSD, psychosis and dissociation.



Lady Gaga



Selena Gomez



Justin Bieber

Zayn Malik revealed that he suffered from anxiety, saying that *"For me to pretend that I didn't have anxiety would be fake. I speak about it so that people understand that it doesn't matter what level of success you have, where you're from, who you are, what sex you are, what you do - you can still experience these things."*

Demi Lovato opened up about her eating disorder and self-harm: *"There were some times where my emotions were just so built up, I didn't know what to do."*

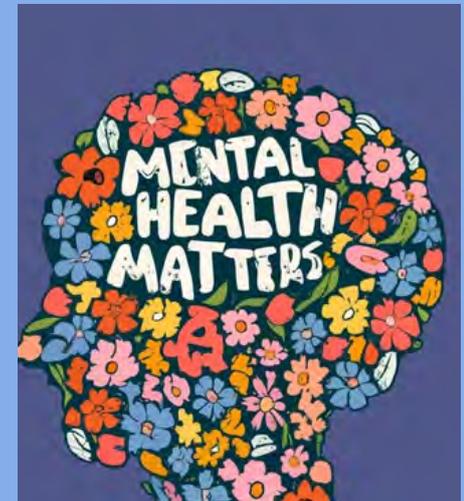
One of the issues about Mental Health is the stigma that it's associated with. For instance, it's easy for the public to believe that people with a Mental Health issues may seem scary or intimidating. Someone with Mental Health issues may also be labelled as weak rather than being recognised for the illness they have. It is therefore important that we support one another and help



Zayn Malik

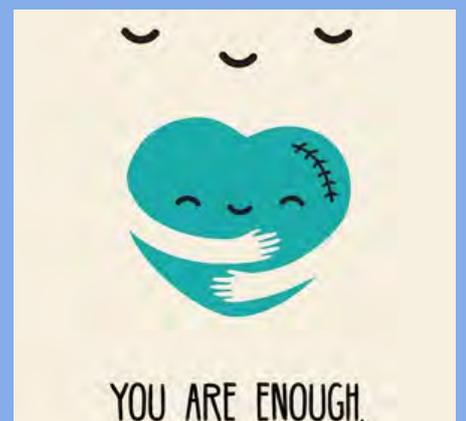


Demi Lovato



Selena Gomez once took 3 months off social media due to anxiety, panic attacks and depression, stating that *"I had everything and I was absolutely broken inside."*

Justin Bieber coped with depression by no longer doing meet and greets with his fans, saying that *"The pressure of meeting people's expectations of what I'm supposed to be is so much for me to handle and a lot on my shoulders."*



each other to get the help that is needed; the stigma around Mental Health needs to stop.

In conclusion, Mental Health is a critical component of overall health, and everyone should feel safe and able to take responsibility to protect their own Mental Health. As a growing public health challenge, Mental Health requires us as a society to be understanding, informed and supportive. After all, the goal of Mental Health is not just the absence or disappearance of illness, but a state of wellbeing that allows us as individuals to be our true selves, fulfil our potential and form positive and healthy relationships with ourselves and our own sense of self.

If you feel you need support with your Mental Health, you can speak to a trusted adult in school or the Safeguarding team. You can also turn to the following:

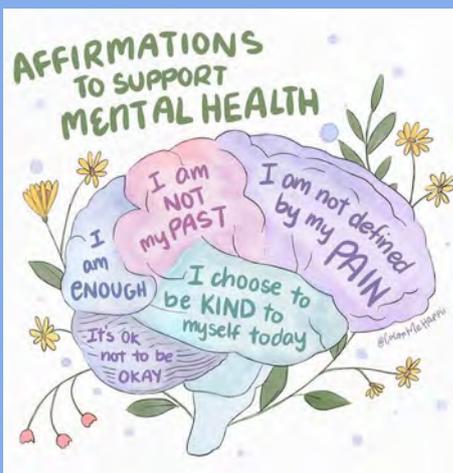


Text SHOUT to 85258 to contact the Shout textline

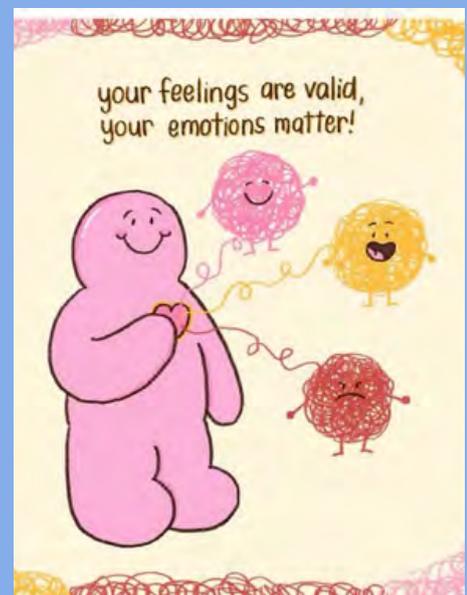


Call HOPELINE247 on 0800 068 4141 or the NHS on 111 and select option 2

Remember, Mental Health is a serious matter – we all have the right to have positive and healthy Mental Health.



Contact Childline by using 1-2-1 chat or calling 0800 1111





crime & conspiracy

THE SHOCKING MURDER OF IRYANA ZARUTSKA

BY JUSTAS MATVEJEVAS

The world was horrified when, back in the Summer, grainy train footage of young refugee Iryna Zarutskia made headline news. But why? Tragically, on 22nd August 2025, Zarutskia was brutally attacked on a North Carolina train. This was caught on CCTV footage, which revealed the 23 year old Ukrainian minding her own business, when she was suddenly stabbed by a stranger and left to bleed to death.

Initially, footage appeared to show Zarutskia seeming to be confused; however, the harsh reality of what had occurred soon became evident.

Her attacker, 35 year old Decarlos Brown Jr, calmly left the train as Zarutskia's life slipped away. One of the most shocking revelations of the footage was that no bystanders appeared to come to Zarutskia's aid. This raised questions among the public, who were appalled by the seeming lack of care from fellow human beings.

Charlotte Mayor, Vi Lyles described the killing as "senseless and tragic", stating that "Like so many of



23 year old Iryana Zarutskia

you, I'm heartbroken – and I've been thinking hard about what safety really looks like in our city. I remain committed to doing all we can to protect our residents and ensure Charlotte is a place where everyone feels safe."



Charlotte Mayor, Vi Lyles

A key criticism that arose from the case was that the killer had a string of previous convictions, including for armed robbery; many asked why someone with such an appalling record of crime was free in the first place.



Attorney General, Pamela Bondi



US Transportation Secretary, Sean Duffy



Decarlos Brown Jr



In fact, Pamela Bondi, the Attorney General, stated that the perpetrator would *"never again see the light of day as a free man"*. She went on to criticise local government policies, arguing that the *"horrific murder is a direct result of failed soft-on-crime policies that put criminals before innocent people."*



Tragically, Zarutska was only in the USA as a result of her family fleeing the war in Ukraine in 2022.



This view was supported by Sean Duffy the US Transportation Secretary, who said *"If mayors can't keep their trains and buses safe, they don't deserve the taxpayers' money."*



Her obituary stated that she had *"quickly embraced her new life in the United States"*. It is tragic and horrifying that having already had to escape violence and danger in her home country, a young woman ended up having her life cruelly taken away in the very country that was meant to provide her with safe refuge.



Zarutska's murder has ignited debate amongst the public about the safety of women, violence against women, Mental Health services, the punishment of criminals and safety on public transport.





THE STORY OF QUEENA PHU

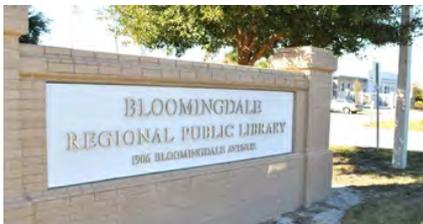
BY SAGAL KHALIF

Some crimes are simply too horrific to comprehend. Sometimes, a victim is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, going about their everyday business, when somebody decides to disrupt their life in the most evil of ways. This article delves into the tragic and shocking case of Queena Phu.



Phu was an 18 year old Vietnamese American student at a High School in Tampa, Florida. She had succeeded in achieving a full scholarship to the University of Florida and had her whole life ahead of her.

However, in April 2008, her life drastically changed when she got attacked while returning some books at Bloomingdale Regional Library.



On the 24th April 2008, Phu was dropping off some books at the library whilst on a phone call with her friend. Her friend later recalled that Phu mentioned a man sitting on the bench outside the library. The friends' friendly chat was abruptly interrupted by the sound of Phu's screams, before the call was suddenly ended.

Horrified, Phu's friend quickly called for help. But what had happened? 16 year old Kendrick Morris – the young man sitting on the bench – had brutally attacked Phu for no reason whatsoever. The attack left Phu with serious and life-long injuries; in fact, she completely lost the ability to walk, talk, see and eat by herself. She had severe brain injuries and has required physical, occupational and speech therapy in the years since the attack.



After the attack, outrage was felt by the local community.

Phu even got support from people all over the world. Her neighbours, local businesses and volunteers set up fundraisers and donated money to her family to cover Phu's extensive medical bills.

'Join Queena Foundation' is an official website that was created by Phu's family and teaches people around the world about her story and shows her recovery journey over time. Through this, Phu and her family are able to spread awareness and inspire anyone who has survived violent crime.

The perpetrator, Morris, was arrested soon after the incident; due to the heinous nature of the crime, he was tried as an adult, even though he was a minor. Consequently, he was sentenced to life in prison.

This case raised a lot of awareness about how young people can still be tried as an adult depending on how serious their crime is. It also shows how the court is able to choose a sentence based on the severity of the crime and the impact it has on the victim, rather than based on age.

Queena Phu's story shows us the power of resilience and strength in the face of adversity – especially for victims of violent crime.



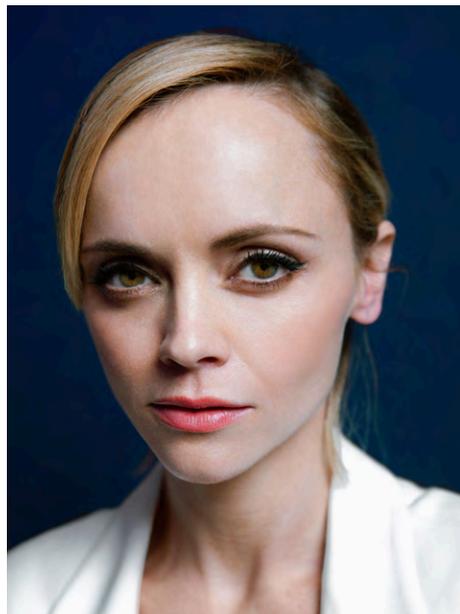
THE KILLING OF CHARLIE KIRK

BY IVY MORRISON

We all know that for many years, the USA has faced problems with regards gun violence. According to the CDC, (the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention), a whopping 132 people die from a firearm-related injury every single day. Back on 10th September 2025, the world was left reeling at the killing of Charlie Kirk, an outspoken but controversial figure.

Whilst in the middle of a heated debate with one of the students at his Talk at Utah Valley University, a single shot was fired, causing a crowd frenzy while police and security rushed towards Kirk.

Suspicion quickly fell on Tyler Robinson, a 22 year old who became the prime suspect after confessing to his roommate. Robinson's trial is due to take place in 2026, and will no doubt attract global coverage, especially because he may be facing the death penalty.



Cristina Ricci



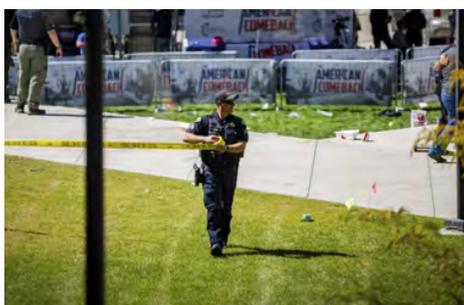
Kirk was a vocal supporter of gun ownership, stating that *"We must also be real. We must be honest with the population. Having an armed citizenry comes with a price, and that is part of liberty...I think it's worth to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year so that we can have the Second Amendment to protect our other God-given rights."*

At 12:30pm Kirk arrived at Timpanogos regional hospital in Orem, where he received emergency care for 2 hours. Shortly afterwards, US President Donald Trump - whom Kirk was a great advocate of - announced Kirk's death at 2:40pm.

But who was Charlie Kirk and why was he such a controversial figure? Kirk entered the world of politics at an early age; he discussed and debated a range of issues, including gun rights, climate change and religious beliefs. He is also considered to be largely responsible for the increase in young voters who voted for Trump in the US Presidential Elections.



The infamous Charlie Kirk





Tyler Robinson

Following his death, former US President Joe Biden said that there is “no place in our country for this kind of violence”, and Barack Obama declared the killing a “despicable act”.



However, Trump accused the “radical left” of causing “political violence [that has] hurt too many innocent people”.

Some celebrities were criticised for their comments on Kirk’s death. For instance, actress Amanda Siegfried stated “You can’t invite violence to the dinner table and be shocked when it starts eating.” Furthermore, Cristina Ricci argued: “Not to speak ill of the



dead or anything, BUT... Things to remember about Charlie Kirk: He said it was a mistake to pass the Civil Rights Act in 1964. He called MLK Jr. ‘awful’ and said he was ‘not a good person’. He said gay ‘pride is a sin’. He said the 2nd amendment is worth the cost of ‘some gun deaths.’”



Ricci’s post reminded the public that Kirk had stated that protecting American rights to bear arms was worth gun deaths in the USA. It is also significant that Kirk was murdered whilst debating gun laws – in fact, the last thing he is reported as saying before shots were fired is “Counting or not counting gang violence?” when asked about mass shootings in the USA.



Amanda Siegfried

There is no doubt that Kirk was a divisive figure; however, surely this does not ever justify any form of physical violence against someone who has controversial political views?





84,900 women were killed worldwide in 2023

women's aid
until women & children are safe
www.womensaid.org.uk



There are 207.2 million child brides under 15



34.58% men believe domestic violence can be justified



51,500 women were killed by a partner or family member

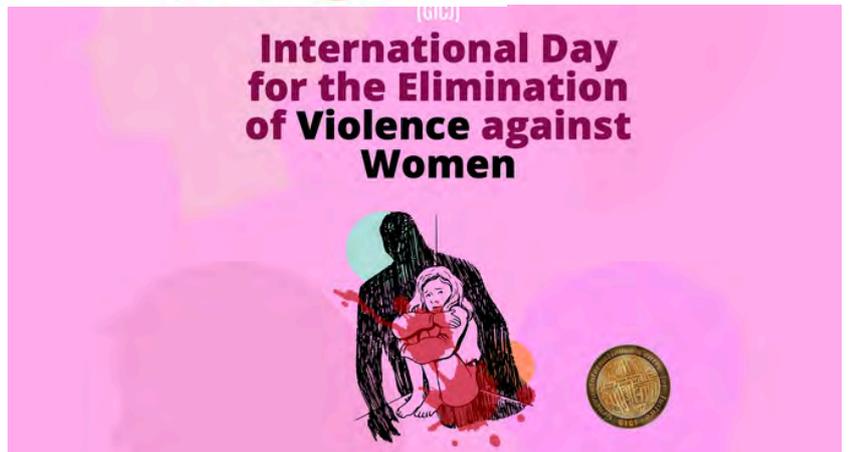
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The highest form of violence against women is femicide (the murder of a woman because of her gender)

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Data from Statista (based on 2023 data)





office of opinion

PALESTINE ACTION – THE RIGHT TO PROTEST?

BY EYAD ABDELWASI

You may well have heard of Palestine Action, a pro Palestine Protest group that was established in 2020 and that states its objective as being “committed to ending global participation in Israel’s genocidal and apartheid regime”. The group’s popularity has been growing, with many British citizens taking part in protests.

However, earlier this year, the UK government declared Palestine Action a terrorist group, which means that Palestine Action is considered to be in the same category as organisations like Hama, Al Qaeda and ISIS.



Richard Barnard, Founder of Palestine Action

Back in August, the BBC reported that Home Secretary Yvette Cooper defended the Government’s decision to declare Palestine Action a proscribed group; this means that they have been identified

as committing or participating in terrorist acts or encouraging terrorism. Cooper states that Palestine Action has been “involved in violent attacks” and has caused “major criminal damage against national security infrastructure”.



Huda Ammori, co-Founder of Palestine Action

She went on to argue that: “There may be people who are objecting to proscription who don’t know the full nature of this organisation, because of court restrictions on reporting while serious prosecutions are under way.” Part of the reason for labelling Palestine Action as a terrorist group is because of the events of 20 th June this year, when members of the organisation broke into RAF Brize Norton, which is the largest secured military air base in the UK. Protestors used repurposed fire extinguishers to spray red paint into the engines of two Air craft, consequently causing an

estimated £5.1 million in damages.

On September 6th, 857 people were arrested at a Palestine Action protest and back in October, The Westminster Magistrates’ Court was informed that 2000 people would be facing charges. Once a group is proscribed, it is an offence to be part of the organisation, support them through arranged meetings or even wear clothing in public that shows support of the group.

In response, Palestine Action took to X to state: “The real crime here is not red paint being sprayed on these warplanes, but the war crimes that have been enabled with those planes because of the UK government’s complicity in Israel’s genocide.”





Furthermore, Sacha Deshmukh, the Chief Executive of Amnesty International, condemned the decision of the UK government, stating that *“We have long criticised UK terrorism law for being excessively broad and vaguely worded and a threat to freedom of expression. These arrests demonstrate that our concerns were justified.”*



Sacha Deshmukh, Chief Executive of Amnesty UK

Many protestors against the government’s decision to declare Palestine Action a terrorist organisation have been seen holding placards that state *“I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action.”*



Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper

Despite the government’s decision, the co-Founder of Palestine Action, Huda Ammori has been successful in appealing this, with lawyers arguing that property damage alone is not a terrorist act. Ammori stated that *“Our fundamental freedoms as citizens of this country are at stake – not just for those of us who have been directly affected and gagged by the ban.”*



The case of Palestine Action highlights the issue of Freedom of Speech and the right to protest in the UK; where do you stand on this matter?





THE UGLY SIDE OF RACISM IN SPORTS

BY LEONARDO AUGUSTO

Have you ever wondered why some athletes have different opportunities and experiences compared with others, even if they're just as successful in their field? Even though we are now in the 21st century, the ugly face of racism still rears its head far too commonly in games and matches. Indeed, how can we even use the word 'game' in sports if athletes have to face prejudice and racism based on the colour of their skin?

Alarming, tons of athletes from different backgrounds report experiencing racial discrimination throughout their careers. Shocking! According to recent BBC data, approximately 61.5% of athletes have encountered racism. This discrimination manifests itself in various forms, including biased treatment from fans, coaches and teammates. Inevitably, this can cause athletes to have decreased motivation, Mental Health issues and potentially feeling they have no choice but to leave the career they love and have worked all their lives to build.



Paul Pogba

Let's take Brazilian Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior, who has constantly faced racist abuse from rival fans in Spain. In 2023, Brazil passed the Vinicius Jr. Law, whose aim is to combat racism in sports. Vinicius Junior stated, *"I was a victim of xenophobia and racism... But none of that started yesterday."* He also said that *"It wasn't the first time, or the second, or the third. Racism is normal in La Liga.... " The competition thinks it's normal, the [Spanish Football] Federation does too,*



Vinicius Junior

and opponents encourage it. I'm so sorry. The championship that once belonged to Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, Cristiano and Messi today belongs to racists."

This surely shows that even for world-class footballers, there remains distrust in the very organisations that should be protecting them. In order to counter racism in football, Vinicius contributes to anti-racism initiatives and charities; in fact, he has been named a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for his charity work in education in Brazil.

Similarly, footballer Paul Pogba has suffered instances of racist abuse. The Monaco player stated that *"My ancestors and my parents suffered for my generation to be free today, to work, to take the bus, to play football. Racist insults are ignorance and can only make me stronger and motivate me to fight for the next generation."*

Footballer Wilfried Zaha has also endured repeated instances of racism, stating that *"I don't know if we're animals to them or whatever. Why are you saying these things"*



Wilfred Zaha





Alexander Mattison

right next to your five-year-old kid? And then, when you leave, what, you're back to being a normal dad, working a normal job? People mask this stuff." He raises the important point that those who make unacceptable racist comments then go back to their normal, everyday lives where they may act in a respectful manner. Yet underneath, they harbour horrifying prejudices.



And it is not just football that has suffered from racism. NFL Running Back Alexander Mattison was subjected to racist slurs from the sidelines and was even sent death threats and racist abuse on social media. In response, the NFL stated that it "strongly condemns" the racist comments, which are "completely unacceptable in the NFL or anywhere else."

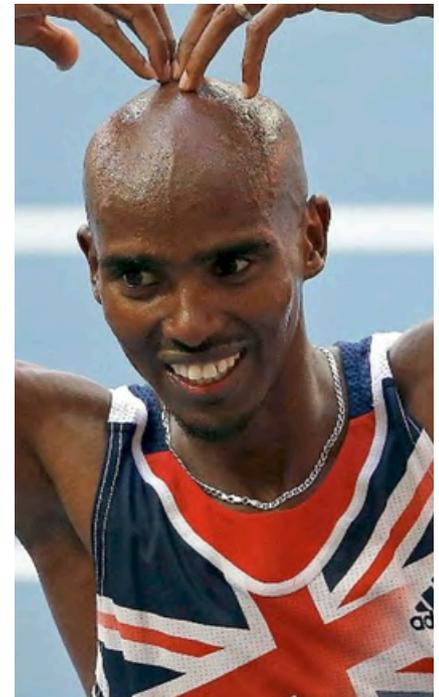


Bukayo Saka

It is important to remember the wise words of Nelson Mandela, who stated that "Sports has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does". Mandela's words serve to highlight the transformative power of sports. However the shadow of racism continues to destroy this potential.



As fans and young people of today's society, we really need to address racism; we can do this by listening to the athletes who speak out and supporting the teams and organisations that are actively trying to promote diversity and inclusion in sports. After all, sports should unite, not divide us.



Mo Farah



Marcus Rashford



EQUALITY DENIED: THE COST OF GENDER INEQUALITY

BY GRACE SAUCE MOINA

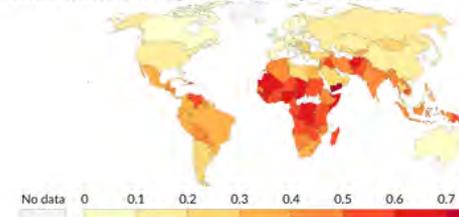


Gender inequality is the unequal treatment and distribution of resources and opportunities based on gender. Historically and in today's society, gender inequality typically affects women and girls; however, it also impacts transgender and gender-diverse individuals.

Gender inequality stems from the 'norms' that exist within a society, its cultural expectations and the discrimination faced by minority groups. Gender inequality manifests itself as lack of political representation, economic opportunities and access to fundamental aspects of society such as Education and Healthcare. Furthermore, gender inequality can lead to people being more vulnerable to violence.

Gender Inequality Index, 2023

This index covers three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic. Scores are between 0-1 and higher values indicate higher inequalities.



Data source: UNDP, Human Development Reports (2023)

The Gender Inequality Index is a tool used by the United Nations to measure these factors country's development. It is recognised that globally, gender disparities have reduced in Education, however, they still exist when it comes to finances and health and safety. Achieving full gender parity is a slow process; in fact, the World Economic Forum estimates that it will take over a century to close the remaining gap.



According to UN Report that was published just before International Women's Day 2025, in nearly 25% of countries, women's rights have reduced. Moreover, globally women have 64% of the rights of their male counterparts. Shockingly, the report also reveals that a woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes by someone in their family or a partner. Furthermore, Only 26% of seats on Parliaments across the world are held by women; in fact, female Heads of State have only ever existed in 87 countries.



Surely, these startling facts show just how necessary it is for there to be an improvement in gender equality in Policy-making, Education and economic empowerment for women across the globe?





Here are some of the main ways in which gender inequality manifests itself:

Workplace:

- Pay gaps
- Limited career advancement for women and mothers

Violence:

- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by and victims of gender-based violence.



Education:

- Girls facing barriers to attending school.

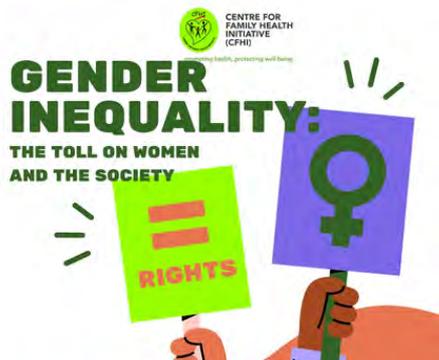
Health:

- Barriers to health information and services for women; this can be due to discriminatory treatment and even factors like lower literacy levels



Politics:

- Fewer women in leading government roles, resulting in lack of female voice in key decision making

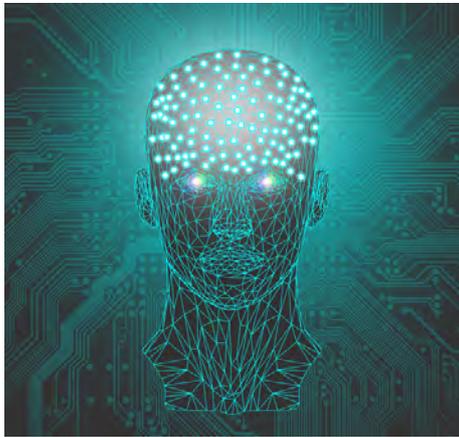




IS AI MANIPULATING US?

BY PRINCE ADONIS HAMILTON BARROZO

We all know that the world is changing and that AI is having a massive impact on the media texts that we consume every day. For example, a simple search for anything online will show that AI is now embedded into how we acquire the knowledge that we rely on to make sense of the world and inform ourselves about it.



However, is AI reliable as a source of information? It is important to realise that when searching for information online, AI will often provide a prompt that comes from websites like Reddit and Wikipedia, which we all know don't always have the most reliable or accurate information. This is where the AI has flaws; it's simply not always trustworthy as the information collected may be false or misleading.



AI also has the potential to be dangerous. Not only can it cause the spreading of misinformation and disinformation, but AI generated content can enable criminals and scammers to sell fake products.



Furthermore, AI raises serious issues about the credibility and authenticity of artists' work, including writers and musicians. Did you know that works of art can be created by AI generated images originating from a human being typing out a prompt? Imagine a world where creativity and originality are stifled because we can no longer distinguish between what is real and what isn't!

Moreover, complex AI systems like Sora AI generate videos that get millions of views as they look very realistic and

convincing. These bamboozling videos are designed to be shocking to gain more audience viewership and reactions. Examples include monkeys ringing on doorbells but getting swept away by strong gusts of wind, and cats scaring off giant predators with a slap.

Even more dangerous when it comes to the world of AI, is the sinister concern of Deepfake videos and full AI videos that can't be differentiated from reality. Both of these can manipulate us into thinking that the information we see online is real. This can affect people on a personal level, where fake news has been created about them; this can therefore harm their employment, family and lives. On a wider scale, AI can be used to manipulate us into believing political stories that are not true; if politicians' words and images can be adapted to seem real, this could potentially cause global chaos and even wars.

In conclusion, AI, whilst a growing part of our modern day world and lives, is potentially dangerous, misleading and manipulative.



ChatGPT



Sora



SHOULD DONALD TRUMP RECEIVE THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE?

BY GREGORIO MORREIA

It is well known that the current US President Donald Trump would love to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In fact, Trump certainly believes that he deserves it. Having helped to broker a deal between Russia and Ukraine, as well as agreements between Israel and several Arab nations, Trump is fully convinced that he is the most worthy candidate for a Nobel Peace Prize. Indeed, he has publicly stated that his *“proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier.”*

Unfortunately for Trump, the 2025 prize went to the Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, who had been prohibited from running for President by the national courts. Muchado told BBC Mundo about her admiration for Trump, stating *“how grateful the Venezuelan people are for what he’s doing, not only in the Americas, but around the world for peace, for freedom, for democracy”*.

The White House has also been vocal in promoting Trump as a worthy recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, with its Communications Director Steven Cheung stating *“The Nobel Peace Prize is*

illegitimate if President Trump – the ultimate peace president – is denied his rightful recognition of bringing harmony across the world.”



According to Newsweek, a number of countries have nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize, including Rwanda, Israel, Gabon, Azerbaijan and Cambodia. The Pakistani government stated that Trump should be recognised for his *“decisive diplomatic intervention and pivotal leadership.”* Similarly, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet has argued that Trump’s

“consistent pursuit of peace through diplomacy aligns perfectly with Alfred Nobel’s vision, honouring those who have made outstanding contributions to international fraternity and the advancement of peace.”

However, given the controversy surrounding Trump and the fact that he has been caught up in a number of scandals and investigations, many feel that it is unlikely that he would ever be recognised for such a prestigious award. Indeed, Trump himself believes that the Peace Prize will continue to elude him, complaining that *“They will never give me a Nobel Peace Prize... I deserve it, but they will never give it to me.”*

So, do you agree with Trump? Is he deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize? And do you believe that no matter what he does, he will never receive this much longed for award?



María Corina Machado



SEXISM IN SPORTS

BY HENRI RODRIGUES

Sexism is a constant problem in Sport - and it doesn't always come in the form of unequal pay. It can come in many different ways, including objectification, lack of recognition, sexual harassment and discrimination.



Did you know that only 4-5% of sports media coverage is dedicated to women's sports, whereas 95-96% of coverage is focused on men's sports? Furthermore, the highest-paid male footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, earns around £3.3 million per week, whereas the highest-paid women's footballer Sam Kerr, earns only around £7,700 per week. The difference shows that Ronaldo earns an astonishing 430 times more per week than Sam Kerr! Is this fair?



For many years, the USWNT (United States Women's National Team) has been more successful than the US men's team, having won three World Cups (1999, 2015, and 2019). The women also have a total of 7 Olympic medals (5 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze), whereas the Men's team has a total of 0 medals. Despite this success, they were paid less and had to train in inferior facilities compared to the men.



On 8th March 2019, the USWNT players filed a gender discrimination lawsuit against the USSF (United States Soccer Federation). As part of their case, they referred to the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The women argued that whilst they generated more revenue and achieved better outcomes than the men, they were being paid less.

Megan Rapinoe, the USWNT Captain argued, *"We've proven our worth for years - we're the best in the world and yet we're still fighting for equal pay"*. Furthermore, her teammate Carli Lloyd, stated, *"If I were a male soccer player, I would be making millions more. That's the reality."*

However, in 2020, Judge Ronald Gary Klausner dismissed the team's equal pay claim. Why? He concluded that the differences came from separate CBAs (Collective Bargaining Agreements), as opposed to from direct discrimination. However, he did permit the improvement of the women's training facilities. Discouraged, the team appealed. Nonetheless, they still lost in court.



In 2020, former US President Joe Biden sent a warning to the USSF, saying, "To USWNT: Don't give up this fight. This is not over yet. And to U.S. Soccer: equal pay, now. Or else when I'm president, you can go elsewhere for World Cup funding." This gave the women a huge boost as a few months after this, Joe Biden did end up becoming President. However, the USSF argued that women had 'less



Rapinoe stated that "This is a huge win for us, for women's sports, and for women in general. But it's also a win for men's sports because everyone deserves fair treatment."



Megan Rapinoe



responsibility' and 'fewer physical demands' than men. In protest, they wore their kits inside out to hide the USSF logo. This resulted in wide-spread criticism of and pressure on the USSF, which caused the President of the Federation Carlos Cordeiro, to resign.

So, what does this case tell us? It demonstrates the discrepancy that still exists between men and women's sports. However, it also shows that that athletes can use public opinion, legal processes and sponsors to bring about change.



Federation Carlos Codeiro

Finally, in February 2022, the USWNT and the USSF reached a \$24 million settlement. A commitment was made so that the men's and women's teams would receive equal pay for all competitions. Additionally, more parity was set in terms of working conditions. After the settlement, Megan





DOES TIKTOK MAKE YOU OVERSPEND?

BY LANAYA WARREN

We all know that social media can have a massive impact on us as young people and the decisions we make - especially when it comes to Influencers who make us feel like unnecessary items are impossible to live without.



show off online? This can cause feelings of insecurity and make us feel pressure to aspire for similar lifestyles by owning the types of products that we see our favourite Influencers possessing. The need to 'keep up' encourages us to buy products that we don't actually need, resulting in over-consumption, mass waste and empty pockets.



As a result, this shapes the way we communicate, think and behave. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook are not only for connecting with others, but also exists as major influences in today's society. Whilst they allow users to share their lives and opinions, these platforms have also transformed into marketing spaces that subtly influence consumer behaviour and share various ads that may make people feel a sense of urgency to buy a product - whether it be a Labubu or a Stanley Cup.

Furthermore, social media's algorithms are designed to keep users engaged, which means that we are constantly exposed to new products and trends. Features like 'Shop Now' buttons, Influencer discount codes and viral product reviews, make buying quick and easy. This instant gratification promotes impulsive buying behaviour, often leading to overconsumption and waste.



Another factor is the issue of comparison that social media creates. Who hasn't looked at social media and compared their lives to the seemingly perfect lifestyles that others





The continuous cycle of trends also ensures that people always feel the need to buy the 'next big thing,' thereby fuelling a never-ending pattern of consumerism.



Similarly, when Zendaya promoted Louis Vuitton's 'Timeless Elegance' range, sales rocketed by 25%. Another notable collaboration is that of famous basketball star LeBron James and Nike, which resulted in an increase in basketball shoe sales. These are just three examples of celebrities using social media to endorse products – that they in return get for free – to encourage the rest of us to buy them. The question is - would they be happy to promote such products, if they weren't getting freebies in return, as well as their substantial pay cheque?

latest trends. So next time you feel the need for that 'must have' item, ask yourself if you're being manipulated by social media marketing? After all, the planet – and your pocket – will thank you for thinking twice.

This in return causes immense damage to the environment and could ultimately result in the products increasing in price during every wave of popularity. An example of this is when the stuffed toys Labubus went viral on social media apps like Instagram and TikTok which led to the prices of them skyrocketing up to \$80 per box.



In conclusion, social media has become a dictator to modern day society and has caused many people to view overconsumption as a positive thing - as long as it keeps them up to date and relevant with the





DO YOU THINK WE STILL NEED A MONARCHY IN THE UK?

BY ILYAS ABDULHAFIZ

In recent years and months, there has been lots of controversy when it comes to the Monarchy. From Prince Harry effectively renouncing his royal duties, to Royal Titles being removed from the former Prince Andrew, the British Royal Family has been surrounded by scandal. So, how has this affected the public's view of the Royal Family?

Some argue that the Monarchy is relevant due to the fact that in a fast-changing world, it offers a sense of tradition and identity. Furthermore, members of the Royal Family are Patrons of hundreds of charities, and are therefore able to use their platform to raise awareness of a range of issues, from Mental Health to climate change.



However, an alternative argument is that the Monarchy is outdated in a



modern democracy. Indeed, many critics argue that an unelected King or Queen is the antithesis of what democracy is all about. Moreover, in a multi-cultural society, people question the colonial history of the British Monarchy.

Perhaps the British public's views of the Monarchy differ, depending on your age. Younger generations tend to be less fond of the Monarchy than their parents and grandparents; indeed, this demographic tends to view the Royal Family as outdated. In contrast, older Brits often feel pride in royal traditions and see the Royal Family as symbolic of their nation's history.



According to the Evening Standard, the Sovereign Grant (which pays for the Royal Family's duties), is set to increase from £86.3 million in 2024-25 to £132 million in 2025-26. However, the income that the UK gains from the Monarchy is undeniable. In 2022 for example, the UK Monarchy brought in £67.5 billion.

So, is money an adequate reason for the Monarchy to remain a core British Institution? Or do we need to change with the times?

Arguably, the future of the British Monarchy is uncertain - not because it's collapsing, but because the world around it is rapidly transforming. The public is now questioning the value of inherited privilege; furthermore, there is an expectation of transparency from public institutions. Therefore, arguably the Royal Family needs to evolve in order to survive. The Royal Family is a mirror that reflects our values as a society. As these values change, so too does the Monarchy need to respond. What do *you* think the future will hold for the Royal Family?



SHOULD STRIKING BE BANNED?

BY YUNUS HUSSAIN

In the UK, workers are permitted to strike. It is not uncommon for workers such as NHS staff, teachers and rail workers to strike due for different reasons: wages, working conditions and job security. As we know from studying An Inspector Calls at the start of Year 10, Unions were set up to protect workers from unscrupulous employers who would otherwise exploit them. However, in the modern day, are Union strikes too disruptive and potentially dangerous?



2025 was no stranger to strike action. Back in February, Elizabeth Line workers went on strike, demanding better pay. In June, Birmingham Refuse workers struck over pay and conditions. This of course, happened in the summer, when rubbish gets smelly very quickly, attracting vermin such as rats.

Also in June, Amazon workers went on strike over working conditions and pay. Planned strike action by doctors in November was heavily criticised by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting, who stated that Unions were "causing pain to patients". Indeed, many patients would agree with Streeting. Back in July, the BBC reported that a 58 year old named Peter Plant who was suffering from cancer, had had his surgery cancelled. Plant was left fuming at the cancellation, which was a direct result of planned strike action, saying



Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting

"Resident doctors do not care that delaying operations like mine are very likely a death sentence...I'm absolutely angry and frustrated. It is not just about me, it's about our whole family." Similarly, Hassnain Shahid's three-year-old daughter required urgent

lung surgery for a rare condition called Congenital Pulmonary Airway Malformation. However, his child's operation was also delayed. Shahid stated *"It's been an emotional rollercoaster and it's very frustrating for us."*



An area that could affect us as pupils is strikes by staff working in Education. After the announcement of the Government Budget in November, the largest Teaching Union, the NEU, warned of future strikes over funding in schools. Daniel Kebede, the General



Secretary for the NEU, stated that *"This isn't about percentages... It's about the teacher who avoids drinking water because the staff toilet has been broken for months. It's about children learning in their coats because the heating can't be switched on. It's about the teaching assistant doing the work of three people because the other two posts were cut."* However, the Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has stated that *"any move towards industrial action by teaching unions would be indefensible"*.



Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson

There is no doubt that striking causes much disruption to the economy, due to lost revenue. Furthermore, striking negatively affects the public, such as when tube strikes results in overcrowding on and endless queues for buses.

When teachers strike, parents are left scrambling for childcare or find their own working commitments affected as a result. Furthermore, pupils are forced to work online, which means they don't necessarily get all the help they could receive face-to-face in the classroom.



So, whilst striking is a way of protecting and advocating for workers' rights, there is no doubt that strikes can also have a potentially devastating effect on people of all ages. So, should strikes be allowed to continue? What do you think?



Daniel Kebede, the General Secretary for the NEU





WHAT HAPPENED TO “GLORY GLORY MAN UNITED?”

BY MOHAMMAD HASAN

Manchester United - a renowned English football club, founded in 1878 and recognised as one of the biggest in the world. This club has won a multitude of trophies, such as 20 English League titles, 3 Champions Leagues, 1 Europa League, 13 FA Cups and 6 League Cups.

Many of these trophies were won under the guidance of a particular manager called Sir Alex Ferguson. He brought greatness to Man United and managed it from 1986-2013. He also managed many Man United legends like Cristiano Ronaldo and David Beckham. There is no doubt that Ferguson is considered one of the most successful managers of all time.



Sir Alex Ferguson, Manager from 1986-2013 the most successful manager for Man U

After Sir Alex Ferguson retired as manager, many of the team players either retired or left the club. Since then, the Club has faced a management crisis. They initially signed David Moyes after the 2012- 2013 season. This new season did not go as planned and so they sacked Moyes in 2014. After that, Man United legend Ryan Giggs was appointed as interim manager.



2015-2016 Manager Louis Van Gaal

In the 2015-2016 season, Louis Van Gaal was the new Manchester United manager, resulting in an FA Cup Final win. Nonetheless, Van Gaal was sacked due to his poor management in 2016.

Next to follow was Jose Mourinho, who took over in the 2016-2017 season; he led the team to victory in the Carabao Cup, Europa League and the FA Community Shield. In mid 2018-19 however, got sacked due to poor performances.



2016-2017 Manager Jose Mourinho

In the second half of the 2018-19 season, former Man United player Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was the manager. He managed the team for 3 years and didn't manage to win a single trophy. However, he was considered a good manager, achieving 3rd place in the Premier League in his first season and 2nd place in his second. In 2021, poor performances led to him following in the same direction as his predecessors and he was -



2018-2019 Manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer





yes, you guessed it – sacked. Ralph Rangnick became the Man United interim manager after this, but then in 2022, he too was fired.



2022-2023 Manager Erik Ten Hag

During the 2022-2023 season, Erik Ten Hag was the new manager. He won the Carabao Cup and achieved 3rd place in the League – a success for a team that had had to get used to a lot of losses! However, at the beginning of the 2024/2025 season, Man United returned to poor form again and eventually sacked Ten Hag.



Late 2024 Manager Ruben Amorim

In late 2024, Man United signed Ruben Amorim as manager and at the end of 2025, the team had what was probably the worst Premier League results, being placed



2022 Manager Ralph Rangnick

15th (just 3 places away from relegation!). They also lost the Europa League Final. This was one of the worst seasons a Man United fan like myself and many other Platanos College pupils could experience.



So, where are we now? Well, in the current season 2025-2026, Man United are still playing poorly with 7 games, 4 losses, 2 wins and 1 draw. This truly shows that after the magical days of Sir Alex Ferguson, Manchester United has had a long-standing problem with managers. Many would argue that the fundamental problem is the owners – the Glazer family – who have failed to appoint competent football directors. Consequently, the team has suffered from ineffective managerial appointments and failed player transfers.



Who knows if Man U can ever get back to great form and their former glory days?





inspiration station

EPIC ELITE ATHLETES!

BY NICOLE LEANOS MOSQUERA

As part of this Edition's Inspiration Station section, we will be taking a look at 4 icons of Sport.



Michael Jeff Jordan was born 17th February 1963. He is commonly known as MJ and is a former Basketball star. Jordan's legacy is in part due to his sheer tenacity; during his 2009 Basketball Hall of Fame acceptance speech, he famously stated, *"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my*



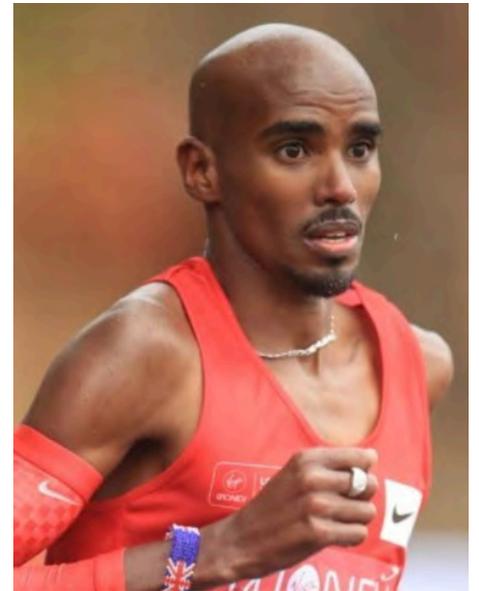
life. And that is why I succeed". Jordan's message clearly teaches us that failure is a fundamental part of success and that perseverance through setbacks is key to achieving your goals. Sounds familiar? Well, at Platanos College we all know that Attitude Determines Altitude!



Simone Arianne Biles Owens was born on 14th March 1997. As a famous American artistic gymnast, Biles has achieved 11 Olympic medals and 30 World Championship medals; in fact, she is the most decorated gymnast in history. During the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Biles sparked a global mental health conversation by not participating due to having



'Twisties' which is a mental block where gymnasts lose their sense of body position in the air, thereby posing a significant injury risk. Whilst criticised by some, many praised Biles for empowering others to prioritise their own mental well-being. In fact, fellow gymnast Jordan Chiles - who herself suffered from suicidal thoughts - expressed gratitude towards Biles for enabling her to develop as an athlete and supporting her during her own struggles.



Sir Mohamed Muktar Jama Farah (originally named Hussein Abdi Kahin) was born on 23rd March 1983 and is a Somali-British former long distance runner. He is considered to be one of the greatest runners of all time and has won ten global



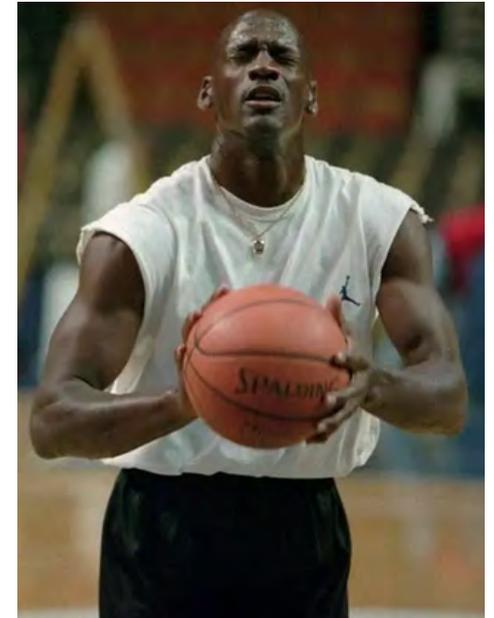
championship gold medals (four Olympic and six World titles). This makes him the most successful male track distance runner in the history of the sport and he is also the most successful British track athlete in modern Olympic Games history. Farah inspires others through his unbreakable spirit and dedication to training. Amongst his most famous quotes are *"Don't dream of winning, train for it!"* and *"I've shown that if you dream and are willing to work hard, you can achieve your dreams"*.



So, what can you take away from these incredible athletes? In Radcliffe's words *"Never set limits, go after your dreams, don't be afraid to push the boundaries. And laugh a lot-it's good for you!"*.



manageable parts and using mental exercises to stay focused. She views running as crucial for her mental well-being, as well as her physical health, believing that age can actually enhance a runner's mental ability and endurance. Did you know that in the 2003 London Marathon, she set the women's marathon world record of 2:15:25? This was a record that she held for an incredible 16 years! After retiring from competitive running in 2015, she became a BBC commentator, a Nike ambassador and launched a podcast, Paula's Marton Run Club, to support the running community. She teaches us to see sport as fun, not just competitive.



Paula Jane Radcliffe is a British former long-distance runner. She is a three-time winner of the London Marathon, three-time New York Marathon champion and the 2002 Chicago Marathon winner. She demonstrates outstanding endurance, as well as strong mental fortitude. Radcliffe uses mental training techniques and strategies like breaking down runs into smaller,





25 YEARS ON: REMEMBERING DAMILOLA TAYLOR

BY INDIGO-ROSE EGUNDEBI

27th November 2025 marked the 25th anniversary of the killing of Damilola Taylor. Who was Damilola and why was his death so shocking?

On 27th November 2000, 10 year old Damilola was returning home from Peckham Library, when he was fatally stabbed with a broken bottle. An artery in his left thigh was severed. The young boy managed to stagger to a stairwell on the North Peckham Estate, but then collapsed and tragically died.



10 year old Damilola Taylor

Tony Blair the Prime Minister at the time, stated that his death was “Utterly heart-breaking”, and the nation mourned the death of the young boy.

Damilola was born in Lagos, Nigeria, and his family had only recently moved to the UK. His parents Richard and Gloria were seeking better opportunities for their children when they made the decision to move to the



Damilola Taylor's parents, Richard and Gloria Taylor

UK. However, instead, Damilola – who wanted to be a doctor when he grew up – was brutally murdered.

The perpetrators were two brothers called Ricky and Danny Freddie, who were only aged 12 and 13 at the time. 6 years after their terrible crime, they were convicted of Damilola's manslaughter on 9th August 2006. Mr Justice Goldring sentenced the brothers to eight years in youth custody.



Following the loss of their son, Richard and Gloria established the Damilola Taylor Trust, whose aim is to help disadvantaged young people and provide them with opportunities that enable them to stay safe.

In the 25 years since Damilola's death, the Trust has run mentoring schemes for young Londoners, hosted annual awards to celebrate youth achievement, worked with schools, charities and youth organisations and run campaigns on youth violence, as well as Mental Health and how to stay safe.

Damilola's brother, Tunde, says that *"Everything we do, every young person we reach, is part of Damilola's legacy...every anniversary is hard for the family, but this one is poignant because we are also celebrating the work the trust has been doing in his name. His legacy of hope."*



Tony Blair, Former Prime Minister



Has violent crime involving young people decreased since the killing of Damilola, a quarter of a century ago? Well, according to the Office of National Statistics, in the year ending March 2025, it is reported that police recorded 53,000 offences that involved knives or sharp instruments in England and Wales.

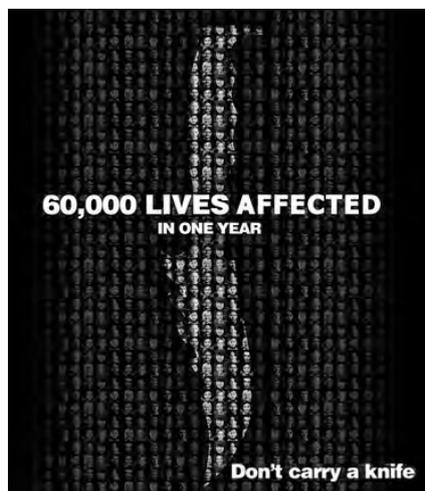


This figure was actually 1.2% lower than in 2023-24 and 3.8% lower than in 2019-20. Furthermore, The Metropolitan Police have stated that in the 12 months to August 2025, London saw a drop of 7%, to 1,154 knife crime offences compared with the year before. Nonetheless, young people are still disproportionately represented, not only as victims, but also as perpetrators.



Experts believe there are certain related factors that make it harder to prevent young violence:

- Deprivation and inequality:
- Cuts to youth services
- School exclusions
- Social media arguments that escalate
- County lines exploitation (when young people are groomed to transport drugs across the UK)
- Trauma and mental health



It is therefore clear that a lot still needs to be done to address these key factors when it comes to tackling violence perpetrated by and affecting young people.

25 years on from the killing of Damilola, have we truly moved on as a society when it comes to tackling such crimes? Richard Taylor once stated that he wishes his son's name "*to be a symbol of greatness, not sorrow.*" It is for this reason and the Damilola Taylor Trust that we chose to place this article in Inspiration Station. Perhaps if we as a society can tackle the issues around crime and young people, innocent lives can be saved. There is no doubt that Damilola's name and legacy live on.



Richard Taylor, Damilola's Father





REMEMBERING DIOGO JOTA

BY DAVID ABREU

Back in July, the football world was shocked at the news of the untimely passing of Diogo Jota. Jota, the Number 20 Forward for Liverpool, was aged just 28 when he was killed in a tragic accident on 3rd July 2025 in Zamora, Spain.

The tragedy occurred when Jota lost control control of his Lamborghini Urus SUV on the motorway, causing it to slide and flip over. As a consequence, both Jota and his younger brother Andre Silva (aged 25), were killed.

But why was Jota so admired in his short life? The former Liverpool Forward was born in Porto, Portugal, and had achieved 149 goals in his career. He played for many clubs including Paços Ferreira Porto, Atletico Madrid and Wolverhampton. During his career he helped his team to win several Premier Leagues, a UEFA Nations League and also the FA Cup. Some people considered him to be the best Portuguese Striker, second only to Cristiano Ronaldo.



The Portuguese Football Federation stated *"Much more than an amazing player, Diogo Jota was an extraordinary person, respected by all team-mates and opponents, someone with an infectious joy and a reference in the community itself."*



According to the Porto Club President Andre Villas-Boas, *"This is a moment of profound dismay for the entire Porto fanbase and for all Portuguese people...Two young men tragically lost their lives, two men who represented FC Porto in an exemplary manner and who will be remembered not only for their football but also for their personal and human qualities."*



Although the loss of Jota and his brother was felt across the footballing world, there is no doubt that their deaths were more acutely felt by their family. In fact, Jota had only just married his childhood sweetheart and the mother to his 3 children, less than 2 weeks prior to the tragedy. In his final social media post, Jota had stated *"A day we will never forget. Indeed, the real tragedy was that Jota and his family were ready to start the next chapter of their lives together; yet the future they had hoped for together was ripped away from them."*

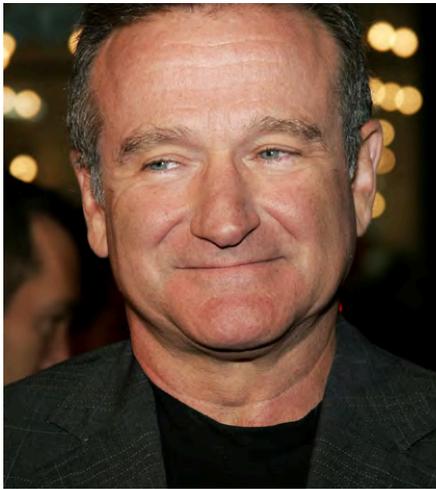


Porto Club President Andre Villas-Boas



REMEMBERING ROBIN WILLIAMS

BY BASMA HAGOS



after his death, stating that *“Mr. Williams generously gave his time to raise awareness and funds for St. Jude and for our patients battling childhood cancer...His humor brought bright smiles and laughter to our patients and families and his generosity deeply touched the hearts of all who knew him.”* Furthermore, according to GoodGoodGood, he helped raise over \$80 million for homelessness charities.

There is no doubt that Williams used his fame to do good for others. For instance, did you know that whenever he worked on a new movie, he would insist that homeless people had to also be hired to do work on set that they too could be paid for?

Robin Williams may not be a name you recognise, but you will most likely recognise his face or even just his voice if you’ve watched the Disney animation movie Aladdin. Williams’s quick wit and ability to convey raw emotion on screen drew in audiences around the world. Even now, 11 years after his death, Robin Williams still inspires millions.

Did you know that aside from starring in big Blockbuster movies like Mrs Doubtfire and Hook, Williams was well known for his generosity of spirit and immense kindness. He would frequently visit children’s hospitals, wearing colourful costumes to entertain and make poorly children laugh; he showed them that they could find joy even in the most heartbreaking of times. He was a face of St Jude Children’s Research Hospital, which released a statement



Williams helped to change the lives of many people through his generosity and thoughtfulness.

However, beneath the surface, he struggled with his own dark thoughts and worries. He struggled with addiction and depression for years. In 2009, it was revealed that he was suffering from Parkinson’s. However, it was only later discovered that his actual diagnosis was that of Lewy Body Dementia, a brain disease that affects memory, thought-processes and movement.





Williams struggled with his illness and on 11th August 2014, he tragically took his own life. After his death, his wife called the disease " *the terrorist inside my husband's brain*", saying that " *we as a culture don't have the vocabulary to discuss brain disease in the way we do about depression. Depression is a symptom of LBD and it's not about psychology – it's rooted in neurology. His brain was falling apart.*"

Cameron Brooke Stanley was a 7 year old fighting cancer when he met Williams on the set of Patch Adams. He said that Williams " *was such a real person so when, even off the set when we weren't filming, he was just trying to hang out with the kids and trying to make us forget that we were sick... Not just when the cameras are on, when they're off, he just wants to be someone's friend, like a best friend. He wants to make someone laugh that's sad. He was just so wonderful.*"

Williams's legacy goes much further than what we see on screen; he not only brought great joy through the medium of film, but also had a genuine humanity that touched those around him.





INSPIRATIONAL BLACK PEOPLE YOU MIGHT NEVER HAVE HEARD OF

BY JENNEL KORANTENG

In October, schools across the country celebrated Black History Month. This year's theme was *Standing Firm in Power and Pride!*

Black History Month is a special anniversary that celebrates the achievements and contributions that black people have made and continue to make. This annual commemorative month started in the USA in the 1920s, and was first celebrated in the UK in 1987.

We all know the names of famous Black people such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. It is important that we learn about their contributions from a young age. However, what about other less well known Black people who have helped to change history? This article looks at 5 such individuals.

The Father of Black History Month himself, Carter G. Woodson, was a Historian, journalist and an author. At first, he originally named it, 'Negro History Week' and it was during a week in February in consideration for the Former President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, an advocate for African American Civil Rights. Woodson aimed to educate Historians and people in general about Black people's lives and accomplishments.



Two different photos of Carter G. Woodson



Akyaaba Addai-Sebo, a Ghanaian analyst and Journalist, founded Black History Month in the UK. He travelled to the US after fulfilling his education around 1970; he took part in the 'Negro History Week' which then turned into Black History Month. He soon travelled to England where he collaborated with members of the Black activist community. Addai-Sebo wanted the UK government to acknowledge the contributions of people of colour, including Africans, Asians and Caribbeans. US Black History Month is one inspiration for this, but another happened during an incident where he worked – according to OurHistory, BlackHistoryMonth, a female worker of Addai-Sebo arrived to work looking dejected; he wanted to know the reason why she felt this way so he asked her, only to get the response that when she was putting her seven year old son to bed,



Akyaaba Addai-Sebo





he asked her: "Mum, why can't I be white?" That was when Addai-Sebo realised the UK needs more education when it comes to recognising the lives and work of Black people.



Alice Allison Dunnigan was the first African American woman to work in the White House as a journalist. As Dunnigan was growing up, she had her sights set on writing and always aspired to be a journalist. She was the only Black, female reporter at that time. Additionally, she was a part of the Senate and House of Representatives



Alice Allison Dunnigan

Shirley Chilshom was a pioneer for African Americans carrying major roles in the government. She was the first Black woman to be elected for Congress and the first woman to run for Presidential nomination. She battled countless attacks of racial discrimination and sexism, yet she still fought for her rights along with everyone else's. According to BlackHistoryDatabase, when she was a part of the Democratic leadership, she used to attend meetings with former President Carter.

However, she stopped attending these meetings because she felt as if she was excluded. One staff member mentioned that, "She would come back furious because they would consider her invisible." Chisholm was the founder of the National Women's Political Caucus and supported the Equal Rights Amendment. Later she retired from Congress but remained a professor at Mount Holyoke College. She later got the invitation to become a US ambassador for Jamaica but refused because of her poor health. When talking about her legacy, she said, "I want to be remembered as a woman who dared to be a catalyst of change."



Shirley Chisholm

Jane Bolin was the first Black woman to graduate from Yale Law School and the first Black woman to become a judge. She aspired to achieve a career in Law and was top of her class. On July 22, 1939, the Mayor of New York City selected Bolin to be a Judge and served in their court for 40 years.



Jane Bolin





cacophony of colours

THE FAMILY PORTRAIT

BY HAFSAH ABDORAHMAN

A hollow shriek echoed, swerving through my thoughts and dragging back my consciousness to a blurred figure wailing over me. After adjusting to the light, I realised where I was.

The hospital.



Doctors came to my assistance, desperate to make me feel reassured when all I wanted was some silence. Scanning the room, I saw my mother and certain memories came back but...I felt like a hole, as if not everything was pieced together as it should be.

My mother filled me in, emotionally revealing what had happened to my friend...



Hours later, I was discharged with minor physical injuries. But my mind was another matter. Feeling dead the whole journey home, I was numb. My legs controlled me. I was completely unaware of my actions – as though I was nothing more than a painting. My misguided anger towards my mother helped my painting come together; it made me feel better.



Later that day, the front door swung open letting my friends in. The commotion gradually intensified. But I felt offended...why didn't seem upset about our friend's death? I was drowning in the black waves of despair.



Myself, Noor, Agnes and Astrid had been the last survivors. We had also been friends since Reception. We had been adopted by my mum, because all four of our parents had disappeared. It was our mother who had saved us and we had grown up as family.



We then moved to a small neighbourhood. I was always the creative one, constantly outside in the forest enjoying nature, painting or writing in my diary. Noor was





the kindest of us all and an animal lover who was always with her horses. Agnes and Astrid were the funny unbreakable duo who were always found side by side.



Our deceased friend lastly was closest to me; while I painted, she made great stories from them and published.

Now I didn't know who to trust. One thing was for sure: this was no accident.



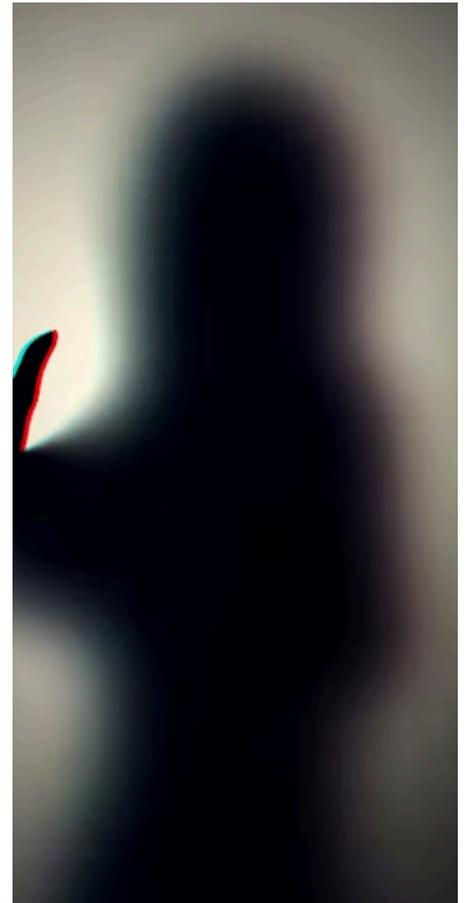
Distrusting of all of them, I read a murder mystery story to help me determine how to find clues to help me figure out who the betrayer was. I zoned out into a graphic book I had once read that was quite gruesome; perhaps it

contained some clues that could help me work this mystery out.

Before I knew it, time had passed and I suddenly heard a thud then ringing in my ears. I had had another blackout.



Waking up confused in a bed, I found my mother watching over me. She scared me. My body turned numb again. Could she have poisoned me? My brain started scrambling to connect the dots. Using my painting as an excuse to get away from her, I went off to finish my painting. I had this sense that if I could just complete the painting, it





could help me piece together this puzzle.

Immersed in my painting, I suddenly thought I saw a shadow behind me. I instinctively turned around, almost getting whiplash as a result; yet there was nothing there. Still, I didn't feel safe...



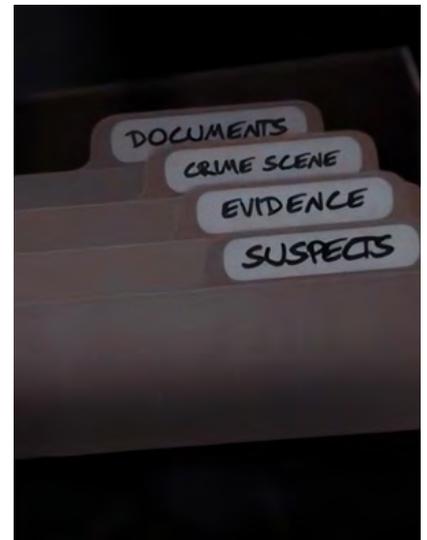
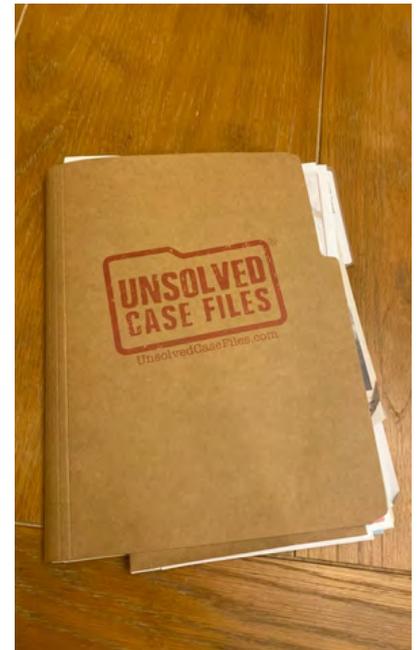
I decided to explore the house and venture down the hall to the basement. My first time walking down the hall was as terrifying as I had always imagined. I had to use a candle light as the light switches down the hall weren't working. There were paintings of my ancestors on the wall, except the oldest deceased family members were 40 years older than me and the youngest was my age. Something felt odd about the painting, but I just couldn't work out what exactly was wrong. This was a large portrait of people I don't remember. Some had similar features to my friends. My mothers stories about how we had all been adopted from different families just weren't adding up.

All of a sudden, I had the sense that someone – some kind of ominous presence – was nearby. I ran as fast I could to the crypt and hid for a while. Realising I was consumed with paranoia, I knew I couldn't trust anyone. I decided to start filling out the bulletin board that was in our basement, covering it with clues. Everything was starting to come together...

But before I could piece the fragments of my mind together, I was knocked unconscious by another blackout.

I woke up again to the light flickering and something around my neck. Someone was trying to kill me. As I struggled against my assailant, my eye caught view of the bulletin board, which had been ripped to pieces. Struggling to escape the rope that burned through my skin, I heard the thunderous roar of a lightning bolt and the light inside the basement suddenly stopped flickering. I had always feared the dark. As I closed my eyes, I felt the full force punch in my stomach. This was my final blackout.

Months later, the police investigating my murder came to the conclusion that our family line had an unspoken murderous tradition....





WHEN THE LEAVES FALL

BY ASMA MOHAMMED ALI



Leaves turn brown
Darkness lasts
Warmness grows
Regard disappears
Leaves turn brown
Love is cold
People are scared
Trees become barren
Leaves turn brown
Ice creeps in
Fog thickens
Warmth fades away
Leaves turn brown
Safety threatened
Youth become vulnerable
Leaves fall
Memories watched through
a glazed window
People grow anxious leaving
their homes
As holidays are celebrated,
Nature mourns.





A ALMA DE PORTUGAL THE SOUL OF PORTUGAL

BY SAMUEL CANDIDO



Do berco em Guimaraes a
vastidao do mar,
Portugal se ergueu, pronto
para lutar. Com D. Afonso, a
independencia nasceu,
E um reino forte, todos os
dias, cresceu.

Nos mares nunca dantes
navegados, Os herois
partiram, destemidos e
corajosos Cabral, Gama,
Magalhaes, nomes de gloria,
Em busca de terras,
escrevendo a historia.

De imperio a republica, a
nacao resistiu, Em cada
mudanca, um novo desafio.
Com fado e dancas, o povo
se uniu, Portugal eterno,
que nunca se viu.



From the cradle in
Guimaraes to the vastness of
the sea, Portugal rose, ready
to fight. With D. Afonso,
independence was born,
And a strong kingdom,
everyday grew.

In seas never sailed before,
The heroes departed,
fearless and brave
Cabral, Gama, Magellan,
names of glory, Seeking
lands, writing the story.

From empire to republic, the
nation stood strong,
In each change, a new
challenge along. With fado
and dancing, people united,
Portugal eternal, which is
never seen.





community corner

GANG VIOLENCE IN LONDON

BY T-JHON SIMMS WRIGHT



Gang Violence is one of the most destructive and deadly aspects of living in London, and we in South London are not immune to this. Many would argue that gang violence has been a rising problem over the past few years, affecting many young people's lives.

According to the Metropolitan Police, in England and Wales knife crime increased by 54% between 2016 and 2023. Additionally, they discovered that the knife crime rate was 165 per 100, 000 people in 2023. This was the highest rate recorded by the Met Police. According to the Ben Kinsella Trust that campaigns to tackle knife crime, by June 2025, there were 51,527 knife related offences.



One shocking story is that of Jermaine Goupall, a 15-year-old from Croydon who attended St Joseph's College. He was described as a talented Mathematician who had dreams of becoming an architect.

However, his future was brutally cut short on 8th August 2017, when he was out with some of his friends. At around 11 pm, he and his friends were ambushed by a group of masked youths. They were reportedly carrying knives and even a machete. Jermaine was chased down Georgia Road, which was close to his home.



He was stabbed in his thigh multiple times, causing massive bleeding. Just before midnight, Jermaine was tragically declared dead at the scene.



Jermaine Goupall

The killers were part of the CRO gang and believed Jermaine was part of a rival gang, CR7. Online (mostly on YouTube and Snapchat) the CRO gang members had posted videos taunting the rival gang, which was critical evidence presented in court. During the court case, it was revealed that Jermaine was not involved in the rival gang.

After Jermaine's death and the conviction of 4 perpetrators, his family campaigned against knife crime, and the case sparked debates about drill music, which many argue can affect young people's lives and influence them to commit violent acts. Jermaine's story shows that whether they're in a gang or not, young people can become victims of gang violence.

Mayor Sadiq Khan has stated that *"One murder on our streets is one too many. We're never going to be able to arrest our way out of this*



problem. Prevention and early intervention are key."

In November, the BBC interviewed Kamari Johnson, whose son was killed in May 2024. Johnson states that *"We need to educate young people, there's no safe place to stab, and they need to see how it affects people if they've made those choices."*

According to data from the Met Police, in 2025 the lowest number of teenage murders in more than a decade was recorded. This was down a third compared with the record in 2021, when 30 teenagers were brutally murdered.

In fact, Mayor Sadiq Khan's Violence Reduction Unit has stated that between August 2024-August 2025, there was a 13% reduction in hospital admissions of those under the age of 25 who had suffered knife injuries in London.

Gang violence isn't a joke; it's a national threat.

Facts from The Ben Kinsella Trust

More than 1 in 3 young people don't feel safe in the area they live.

2% of young people have carried a knife

36% of young people don't feel safe walking on the streets

25% of young people know someone who has carried a knife

2/3 of young people feel nervous about knife crime in their area



Live Safe has some useful contacts to help if you're worried about knife crime

- The Ben Kinsella Trust – one of the leading anti-knife crime charities in the UK, helping to create a society where no one suffers the loss of a life to knife crime.
- Childline - offers a safe and secure place for you to talk.
- The Mix - has advice on what to do if you feel you need to carry a knife.
- No Knives Better Lives - provides practical support and information on the effects of knife crime.



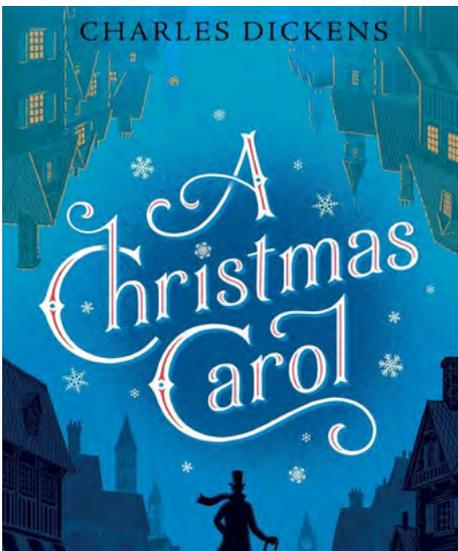


UNWRAPPING THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

BY GRACE SAUCE MOINA AND NICOLE LEANOS MOSQUERA

As we are now fully into the swing of the festive period, we thought you'd be interested in learning more about the history of Christmas. While the Christian celebration of Christmas commemorates the nativity of Jesus Christ on December 25th, its celebration incorporates pre-Christian midwinter rituals and festivals like the Roman Saturnalia, which includes feasting and merrymaking. The celebration grew in the medieval period, before being given a new lease of life in the Victorian era.

As you may be aware from reading A Christmas Carol in English lessons, it was Queen Victoria's husband Albert who helped to introduce many modern traditions to this country, such as the giving of Christmas cards and gifts, as well as the decorating of Christmas trees.



Did you know that The term 'Christmas' comes from 'Cristes maesse' (Christ's Mass). This refers to the Christian worship service that honours Christ's birth. The December 25th date was established in the 4th century; it is thought that this was done to potentially 'Christianise' the existing pagan midwinter festivals and the Roman holiday that honoured the Unconquered Sun. The Roman festival of Saturnalia existed as a celebration of the winter solstice and was transformed into the modern Christian holiday of Christmas due to its popularity. Over time, the celebration evolved from religious ceremonies to a more widely celebrated cultural event.

During the Medieval Era, the Church played a significant role, with the festivities spanning the full 12 days from Christmas Eve to Epiphany.

During the Victorian era in the 1800s, many of the modern traditions that we see today

were established and developed. Introduced to England in the 19th century, Christmas trees originated in 16th-century Germany, where they were decorated with fruit and nuts. In the late 1840s, confectioner Tom Smith created the Christmas cracker by developing it from sweet wrapped in paper that includes jokes, hats and small gifts.



By the 1880s, Christmas cards were extremely popular, with the technological developments in colour printing and the introduction of a halfpenny postage rate, contributing further to this popularity.

During this period - as evidenced in the celebrations of families like Scrooge's nephew and the Cratchits - Christmas Day feasts became popular.

So, this Christmas, what celebrations and traditions will you be indulging in, or seeing across shops and high streets in our local area?



'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY!

BY SORAIA ALVES

Christmas is just around the corner, so we thought we'd reflect on what this tradition is all about in different nations!



Did you know that Christmas is a holiday celebration that is celebrated worldwide across over 160 countries, by two billion people? Across the world, different countries celebrate the festive season with their own unique traditions, celebrations and even decorations.

Christians consider the birth of Christ to be a very important event in their calendars, and even begin to celebrate his birth four Sundays before Christmas day. This is known as advent, which is when preparations take place before the arrival of the final advent day, Christmas day! This is usually marked through the usage of an Advent wreath with 5 candles - four smaller

ones surrounding a larger one in the middle - to symbolise each of the four Sundays in Advent before Christmas Day.

On top of this, nativities are held in churches and schools to show the story of Christ's birth, lights and candles are put up as a reminder that Jesus is the light of the world, carols are sung to celebrate the occasion and bring joy and hope to the special day and midnight masses are held on Christmas Eve to welcome Christmas day.

Over time, the traditions that we know and recognise today, started to form around Christmas, like the use of Christmas Trees which originated from Germany. and Santa Claus, who originated from a generous Christian Bishop Called Saint Nicholas from Turkey.





However, Christmas isn't just celebrated by Christians; it's also celebrated by many who do not necessarily follow the religion. In these cases, people focus on secular traditions like family gatherings, Christmas dinner, festive decorations and gift giving. Rather than it being because of its religious significance, people celebrate Christmas through cultural or traditional means to cherish memories and enjoy spending quality time with family and friends.

We hope that this article serves as an informational piece on Christmas traditions as we approach the upcoming holiday season. All of us on the KS4 Pupil Newsletter team wish you a very merry Christmas!

In Ghana, the Christmas celebration starts on the 20th December and ends during the first week of January. This occurs during the same as Ghana's end-of-year cocoa harvest festival. Due to there being over 66 languages, there are many ways of celebrating Christmas! Church services contain Nativity Plays, drumming and dancing!

In Ecuador, Christmas starts on December 16th. Nine nights lead up to Christmas as they represent the nine months that Mary was pregnant for 'El Pase del Niño Viajero' (The Passage Of The Travelling Child), a special celebration that contains the figure of Baby Jesus being carried through the streets, with lots of music, dancing and singing.

In Jamaica, an event called the Grand Market occurs on Christmas Eve. Around 6pm is when the event becomes more lively, with people coming to gather together and celebrate. The streets turn into a marketplace for festive decorations, jewellery, toys and more.

In Vietnam, Christmas Eve is more important than Christmas Day as it's not recognised as an official public holiday. In Hồ Chí Minh City, people like to visit the city centre to celebrate and take pictures of the decorations! In their Churches, they often have nativity plays and traditional ornaments. Churches celebrate with ringing bells and the colour red to symbolise Jesus.

E ku odun, e ku iye'dun

Maligayang Pasko

¡Feliz Navidad!

عيد ميلاد مجيد

শুভ বড়দিন

Chúc mừng Giáng sinh!

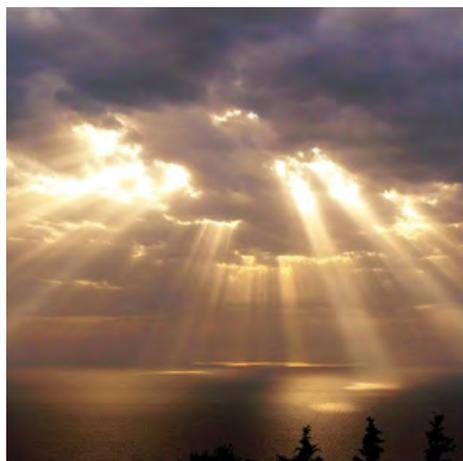
Счастливого Рождества!

圣诞快乐

Afishapa



THE LIGHT WITHIN YOU



A spark inside softly glows

Through ups and downs it
always grows

Kindness feeds it, keeps hope
nearby

Helps you grow as time flies by



Your heart is vital but your mind
is too

So never let it take over you

Embrace it close and keep it
near

Your inner light outshines your
fear.



Each step you take, it shines
anew

A quiet strength that lives for
you

So keep it close and let it thrive

When our light shines we come
alive



So trust that light you hold
inside

It will forever be your eternal
guide.

