

# We Need To Talk

*A global, student-run newspaper*





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Zuriel Oduwole

# Current Events

edited by Barsha Parajuli

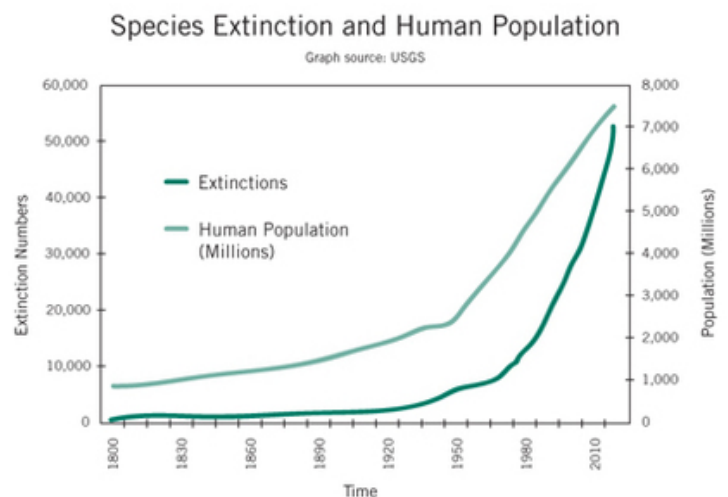
## Overpopulation Across the World

by Sanjana Mittal

Jacques Cousteau once said, “Overconsumption and overpopulation underlie every environmental problem we face today.”

In today’s world, overpopulation is often overlooked as people believe there are conflicts of greater significance occurring in the world. Overpopulation occurs primarily for the millions of people who are living in poor circumstances because the resources are not being distributed fairly throughout the globe. Although Thomas Malthus’ theory of resources increasing linearly while population increases exponentially is proven to be outdated and incorrect, overpopulation is still a huge conflict for the world. This is primarily because of three events that are a direct impact of it: the displacement and extinction of wildlife, the destruction humans provide for the environment, and the aggravation of global warming. According to EverythingConnects, “Compared to the natural background rate of one extinction per million species per year, we are now losing 30,000 species per year,

or three species per hour, which is faster than new species can evolve.” The graph below further explains the correlation between the extinction of species and the human population.



As the population continues to grow, wildlife will continue to die because the available space on Earth will continue to disappear. Natural resources such as arable land and fossil fuels are slowly depleting in quantity as well, creating a not so sustainable lifestyle for people around the world. While the numbers of people and pets rise, the wildlife surrounding them slowly starts to diminish.

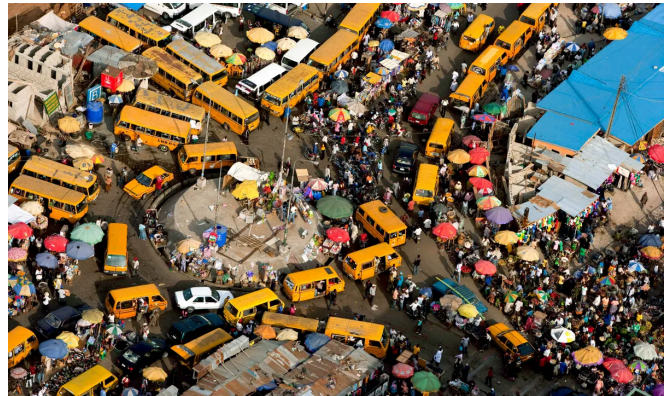
As the Population Media Center says, “The more there are of us, the less there is of everything else.” 96 to 98 percent of the mass of mammals on Earth is people, livestock, or our pets while the rest of mammals living on Earth only make up to two to four percent. Many people think differently when it comes to this situation as some do not see a conflict and are indifferent while others have strong opinions on the topic.



Although the population itself is constantly growing, the influence humankind has on the environment is vital when it comes to the destruction we make on the environment as well. Since people have a lifestyle where most of the things they see in their everyday life are manufactured, they grab the tendency to destroy the environment – whether it be unintentional – to fit their personal desires. An example would include taking trees down to create a building which will eventually become a CD shop.

Furthermore, overpopulation is a huge factor behind the rapid spread of any diseases and any potential pandemics. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic affected us globally and overpopulation is one of the reasons it is still a conflict in first world countries like America. Although social distancing and quarantining is crucial for the widespread pandemic to come to an end, the

overpopulated protests unfolding this year also caused COVID-19 to spread at a faster rate no matter how important the protest might be.



*Courtesy of The Guardian*

The crime rates also rise heavily as the population grows because the quantity and quality of resources and basic necessities such as water and food will decrease. People feel the need to fight and steal resources that we caused to go scarce in the first place. As Aisha Tariq of the Pakistan Times states, “It has been observed that the countries which have a balanced population, crime rate is very low in such regions.” This is primarily because the number of resources available directly correlates with the number of people who live in that specific area. As the number or people who live in a region increase, the number of resources available to use decrease.

Although it is pivotal to look at the effects of overpopulation, the causes are just as significant. One of the major causes of overpopulation is the falling mortality rate around the world. Recently, the number of reliable medical advancements began to rise as scientists and researchers are finding new ways to cure common diseases, keeping several more people alive than in the past. Overpopulation only recently became a conflict due to this reason. These medical

advancements also allow the birth rates to rise, keeping more babies alive globally.

When Malthus gave his theory, he must have not realized the improvements and advancements that will come in the near future, such as agricultural improvements and the understanding that more crops can give more nourishment at a smaller quantity. Crops also thrive for a longer time nowadays so more people can have more of the resources the agricultural industry provides.

Global warming is the average increase of global temperature on Earth caused by pollutants such as carbon dioxide. A human's lifestyle is based around manufactured materials that give them what they desire in life. As the number of humans grows, so do the number of demands for fossil fuels such as coal that is retrieved from under the Earth's surface. This gives off more carbon dioxide, which traps warm air.

Overpopulation, as small of a concern it might be for people now, is slowly starting to damage the planet. There is a chance for new advancements from creative minds, but with the number of negative effects of overpopulation, that risk might not be worth it. Although there is no clear way of stopping overpopulation, taking care of the environment you live in can help the world immensely.

# Covid Vaccine Progress

by Deeksha Chitale



Courtesy of NDTV.com

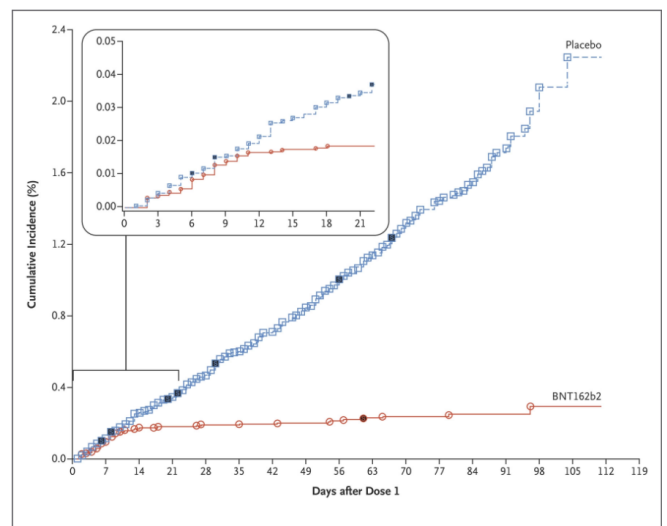
While the race to find safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines continues, scientists are slowly beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel. A number of vaccines have been authorized around the world, with many still undergoing clinical trials.

Discussions of a vaccine first emerged in April 2020, with some suggesting that life could be normal by the end of spring. Now, in 2021, vaccine developers who have already reported optimistic phase III trial results against COVID-19 estimate that together, they can make adequate doses for more than one-third of the global population by the end of 2021.

## Some promising vaccines

The **Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine**, sold under the brand name **Comirnaty**, is the first vaccine to have been cleared for regular use. Trials for the vaccine commenced in April 2020. By the end of November 2020, it had been tested on more than 40,000 people.

It showed efficacy rates of 95% and reported no serious safety concerns. The UK was the first country to authorize the emergency use of the vaccine, and by Dec. 20, more than 500,000 people had received the vaccine in Britain. Many countries, including Japan, the US, and the UK have pre-ordered doses from Pfizer.



Courtesy of MIT Technology Review

The **Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine** has been developed by the University of

Oxford in collaboration with AstraZeneca, a British pharmaceutical company. It is administered through intramuscular injection. While it faced criticism for its methods of testing, phase III trials concluded in November 2020 and on Jan. 4, 2021, a person was inoculated outside of clinical trials.

Covaxin is an inactivated virus based vaccine which is being developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and National Institute of Virology. All three phases of the trials were conducted on 23,000 volunteers across India. The Central Government is procuring more than 5 million doses.

### **The global scenario**

According to data collected by Bloomberg, over 39.7 million doses have been distributed in 51 countries as of Jan. 17, 2020.

In the US, 13.7 million shots have been given, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Over 20% of the Israeli population have so far received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, leading the world in vaccinations even as it faces high infection rates.

India is set to launch one of the world's biggest vaccination programs, primarily administering indigenous Covaxin and Pfizer's Comirnaty.

### **In conclusion**

We are seeing optimistic results of finally getting the pandemic under control, and hopefully, relief from the soaring economical and emotional stress that accompanied it.

However, it is not just the development of the vaccine that is an issue. It is also important that countries prepare and install the infrastructure required to safely store and administer the vaccine. This will require unprecedented planning and coordination on both the part of the government and its citizens. As of now, do your part - stay safe, wear a mask and practise social distancing.

# How Our Fragmented Psychiatric System is Failing At-Risk Communities

by Shrinidhi Thiruvengadam



*Courtesy of Bob Jagendorf*

## **Trigger Warning: Mental Illness**

According to Mental Health America, 1.2 million individuals living with mental illness sit in jail and prison each year. The states with less robust access to mental health care, including Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, Georgia, and Florida, are all within the top ten states for the highest overall rates for incarceration. For context, nearly 2.3 million individuals are incarcerated in the United States, meaning that nearly half of the United States' prison population live with some sort of mental illness; usually, their first involvement in the justice system typically begins with low-level offenses such as jaywalking, disorderly conduct, or trespassing. Conversely, the states who reportedly have the most access

to mental health care, including Maine, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Vermont have lower incarceration rates per 100k people.

Empirically, it is clear that there appears to be a stark correlation between a lack of quality psychiatric resources and incarceration rates, but how do we keep perpetuating a cycle of imprisonment for those who clearly lack the means to get help - and why do we keep adding fire to this systemic issue?

It is primarily imperative to understand the long-lasting implications of how mental health facilities have historically failed Black Americans, which largely exists as a



conflation of economic and social disparities and a lack of representation for Black Americans in the psychiatric field. In a recent article published by the Chicago Tribune, it was reported that suicide rates amongst Black Chicagoans have largely risen, even as the statewide average fell from 678 to 649 between January and June of 2019.

To resolve this prominent issue, a meeting with the Illinois Senate Human Services and Public Health committees was held to discuss topics of behavioral health and disparities in regards to mental health disorders. State Senator Mattie Hunter stated that “lack of access to [healthcare] treatment is harming Black communities, which often face more behavioral and mental health issues.” To combat such findings, the Chicago Department of Public Health announced a request of proposals that will reportedly “award more than \$6.5 million in grants to community-based mental health providers” as Black Chicagoans have expressed a heightened sense of anxiety, largely heralded by systemic inequities such as implicit bias in the workplace and healthcare inequality.

Moreover, the lack of representation for Black Chicagoans in the mental health care field only leads to an uptick in the resistance to see a therapist, as Brittany Owens of Clarity Clinic in the Loop stated, which negatively contributes to stigmas in the Black community about not seeing a psychiatrist. Experiencing both implicit and explicit bias from public health officials who are supposed to wholeheartedly support Black Chicagoans regardless of race worsens the initiating/developmental steps of reaching out to a psychiatrist.

The Black Mental Health Alliance makes it clear that mental illness symptoms can appear at any point in one’s life - for instance, some illnesses tend to develop earlier in life like bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and other personality disorders, while some illnesses are not limited to age like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and delirium. Thus, it is fundamental to include all ages in the discussion of how our criminal justice system treats people with mental illnesses.

So what are the most notable correlations between the incarceration of people with mental illnesses and people without mental illnesses? For one, people with mental illnesses are 9 times more likely to be incarcerated than hospitalized, and they are likely to stay in jail nearly four to eight times longer than someone without a mental illness for the same charge, according to Psycom.net. In Miami-Dade County, an urban community in the US with the largest percentage of people, roughly 9% of the population (210,000 people), have serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. Only 13% of these individuals receive care from the public mental health system.

Judge Steven Leifman of Miami-Dade County admits to the failure of the criminalization and subsequent exacerbation of the incarceration of individuals with mental illnesses. He notes that it completely shifts the intended aim of de-institutionalizing people to attempting to punish them in a “criminal justice” system that is entrenched with the implications of being denied housing and employment as

well as the social repercussions of having been incarcerated. He further drew attention to the cyclical nature of such arrests, as it is highly likely that releasing individuals from incarceration following a period of solitude only augments the chances that they will be arrested again, since adequate treatment was ultimately not provided.

Judge Leifman notes that budgeting plays a pivotal role in the allocation of mental health resources to people who are the most at-risk. Asserting that counties should not have to compromise over certain individual needs, Leifman claims that Florida will need to construct 10 new prisons in 10 years, with overall costs surmounting to \$2.5 billion. In an attempt to refrain from the corrupt criminal justice system, Judge Leifman founded the Criminal Mental Health Project (CMHP) in Miami-Dade county with the hopes of mitigating past fragmentation created as a result of this defective system. By aiming to utilize local, community-based treatment, the program's three main components (pre-arrest system, post-arrest diversion program, and competency restoration alternative program) assess the best ways to ensure that imprisonment amongst mentally ill individuals is paid the utmost attention to at all points in the process, whether it be through distributing the appropriate amounts of medication or connecting participants to the appropriate services (housing, Medicaid, etc.)

The pre-arrest system is ultimately the keystone of this process, as it draws attention to how police officers are taught about de-escalation and how to identify an individual with mental illness; more importantly, it attempts to provide officers

with the means of referring these individuals to areas where they can get the appropriate treatment without having to ever make an arrest. The latter of the two programs facilitate an environment of connection, engendering a system that can treat every individual on a personal, case-by-case basis that aptly evaluates the specifications of their treatment.



Mental Illness Policy further corroborates the sentiment that the nation's jails and prisons have largely become "de facto" psychiatric hospitals due to the lack of effective resources, and with the by-product of these restrictive institutions leaving many correctional officers wholly unprepared to appropriately treat these individuals. A critical part of understanding the mass incarceration of people with mental illnesses is that the reason for their arrest is typically at odds with the circumstances that they must be in following their arrest, with the vast majority of jail inmates with serious brain disorders having been arrested for misdemeanors such as trespassing. In fact, police officers frequently utilize disorderly conduct charges to arrest a mentally ill person when no other charge is

applicable - these charges are assigned at a rate of four more times than to non-mentally ill inmates.

Given the sheer lack of mental health care availability in marginalized communities, the family surrounding the individual with the mental disorder will sometimes turn in the person with pending criminal charges as opposed to sending them to a psychiatric facility, allowing them to gain treatment (albeit minimal) through incredibly unfortunate means. The conditions of the individuals only intensify in prisons, as having some sort of mental disorder makes them highly vulnerable to be harassed and/or abused by other inmates.

The paper *Mental Health for Prisoners: Identifying Barriers to Mental Health Treatment and Medication Continuity* further underscores that individuals with untreated mental health conditions may be at a higher risk for correctional rehabilitation treatment failure and future recidivism on release from prison. Authors Jennifer M. Reingle Gonzalez and Nadine M. Connell found that the rates of recidivism (or the tendency of a convicted criminal to re-offend) are between 50% and 230% higher for persons with mental health conditions than for those without mental health conditions. Amplifying psychiatric resources only proved to lessen these metrics, with the authors suggesting that specialized therapeutic communities, mental health courts, telemedicine, integrated family counseling, and cognitive-behavioral therapies should accompany pharmacotherapy.

The resolution is crystalline; if more emphasis is put on providing at-risk people

with abundant psychiatric resources, then we will witness a concrete reduction in the United States prison population. Drawing attention to the racial and classist disparities will help accumulate awareness towards an inequitable prison structure. By facilitating local programs and individualized treatment, we can ensure that the system no longer disproportionately convicts people whose very needs have been neglected.

# What Happened at the Capitol?

by Barsha Parajuli, Anna Hsu, & Rachel Lewis



Courtesy of NBC News

*TW: mentions of violence and suicide*

## Events Leading Up to Jan. 6

Leading up to the November 2020 election, President Donald Trump had often made unfounded claims saying that the large scale of mail-in ballots would lead to a “rigged election.” This was widely disputed by election officials, and even the FBI Director Christopher Wray. However, groups and individuals throughout the country still began to believe in these claims, particularly as conspiracy theories spread online.

The night of November 3rd, a right-wing Facebook group known as “Stop the Steal” immediately emerged when the polls showed Biden having a substantial lead. It was initially made of local tea party activists, QAnon supporters, and long time “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) supporters. They came together and started collecting what they believed as evidence on voter fraud, and began gaining momentum as a movement on Facebook.

Facebook took about two days to watch the group and shut it down, but in those two days Trump supporters were already united. They branched out to alternative social media platforms, such as MeWe, where they spoke without fear of moderation. Leaders emerged and made the group a more effective and credible movement - influential people such as Ali Alexander, a far-right personality who was a staffer for the John McCain 2008 presidential campaign and involved with the Black Conservatives Fund.

They continued to rally in key court cases looking into voter fraud in the election and towards days when the election could have been overturned but never did. Over time, the movement only grew at a phenomenally fast rate.

Near the end of 2020 when Trump had exhausted almost all of his legal options, the group focused their efforts on Jan. 6, when

Congress would officially certify Joe Biden as the next president of the United States. They joined online forums to discuss ticket prices to D.C. for transportation, hotel rooms, restaurants that they could gather at. They casually mentioned ways to get a weapon into D.C., and numerous Twitter threads are created.

In the two days leading up to the insurrection, the event that they were planning was discussed on the Internet openly, and even the words “occupying the Capitol” were repeated more than a hundred times amongst various Twitter threads. This insurrection was foreseen.



*Courtesy of WBUR*

### **Jan. 6 and Aftermath**

On Jan. 6, before noon, President Trump addressed a crowd of his supporters in front of The Ellipse in Washington, D.C., promoting his false claims that the November 2020 presidential election was stolen from him. Congress was originally assembled to finalize the count of Electoral College votes that would confirm President-elect Biden’s win over President Trump, with Vice President Mike Pence presiding over the count.

Thousands of Trump supporters were assembled in D.C., ready for a fight they believed was owed to them. Under the

President’s commands at approximately 1 p.m., they marched to the Capitol. “And we fight. We fight like hell. And if you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.” Shortly after, pipe bombs were discovered at both the Republican National Committee (RNC) and Democratic National Committee (DNC) buildings. Both were successfully dismantled.

As the rioters breached the Capitol building and law enforcement grew more desperate, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Capitol Police Chief Sund requested desperately needed reinforcements. In the coming hours, National Guard troops from D.C., Virginia, Maryland, and four other states are ordered to help secure the Capitol building and area around the Capitol.

After Capitol Police alerts were sent out at around 2:10 p.m., the House and the Senate began to lock down, temporarily halting the session. For several hours, many representatives and senators would remain huddled in lockdown circumstances. The session was resumed at 8 p.m., and Biden was declared the electoral college winner at 3:45 a.m. on Jan. 7.

President Trump posted a video on Twitter at 4:17 p.m. telling his supporters to “go home in peace” and “we love you” while not condemning or denouncing the violence. In stark contrast, President-elect Biden condemned the violence, calling it an insurrection, and encouraged the President to do the same. At 6:01 p.m., in part of a tweet, Trump told his supporters to “Remember this day forever!” Facebook and Twitter both permanently suspended the President’s social media accounts later that night, citing the previous encouragement of violence. This step was also taken with fears

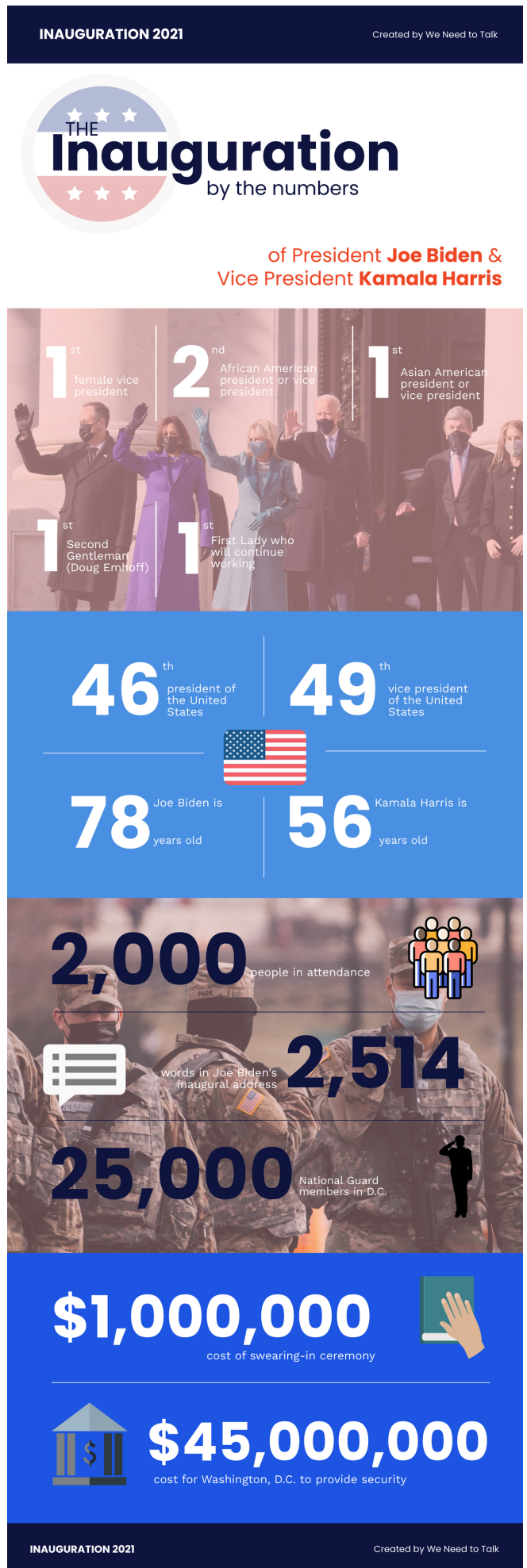
of further encouragement mounting. Subsequent video messages recorded by the President were shared via the White House social media accounts.

Five people died in the riots, including Officer Brian Sicknick after being hit in the head by a fire extinguisher thrown by a rioter. A second officer, Officer Howard Liebengood, died off-duty by suicide. The FBI and law enforcement are hunting throughout the country for those who participated in the riots. Some have turned themselves in, while others have been turned in through digital tips, often by family members and friends.

In the days that followed, many were outraged by two main things: the lack of security at the Capitol and the comparisons between the insurrection and the Black Lives Matter protests over the summer. Largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protests in D.C. were cleared out with tear gas and flashbangs by police over the summer for a Trump photo op. In comparison, Capitol police were severely understaffed prior to the Jan. 6 insurrection. Some are realizing a double standard: between the lack of security set up prior to the recent Capitol riots and the futile attempts to drive them out, law enforcement reacted in drastically different manners. Moving forward both with the new administration and further in the future, similar situations will have to be monitored closely to ensure that there are no racial motivations outlining law enforcement response.



Courtesy of The Indian Express





# Opinion

edited by Vishakha  
Singh

## Should Capital Punishment Be Banned?

by Ishika Jain

### **Trigger Warning: Death**

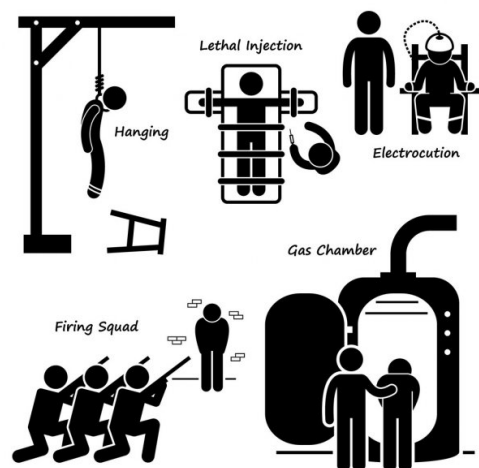
On July 14, 2020, Daniel Lewis Lee became the first inmate executed by the federal government since 2003. There are currently 52 other inmates on federal death row. 10 federal death row inmates have been executed since federal executions resumed in July 2020.

The recent executions in India took place in March 2020, when the four men convicted of the gangrape and murder.

Saudi Arabia has performed at least 158 executions in 2015, at least 154 in 2016, at least 146 in 2017, at least 149 in 2018, with possibly 184 executed in 2019.

Capital punishment or death penalty, is a state-sanctioned practice of killing someone as a punishment for a crime. Fifty-six countries retain capital punishment, by the end of 2019; 106 countries have completely abolished it de jure for all crimes; eight have

abolished it for ordinary crimes (while maintaining it for special circumstances such as war crimes), and 28 are abolitionist in practice. Although most nations have abolished capital punishment, over 60% of the world's population live in countries where the death penalty is retained, such as China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, as well as in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Sri Lanka.



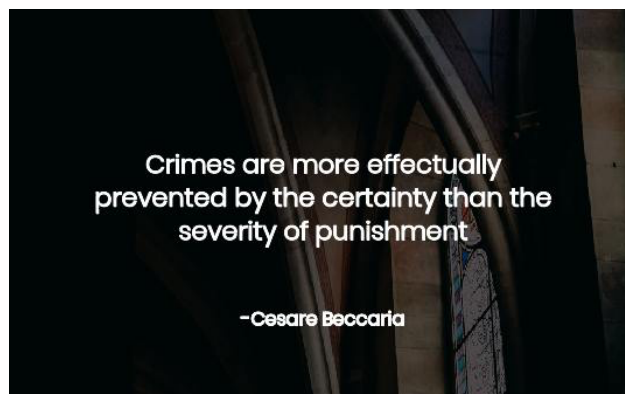
This is a very controversial subject both morally and politically and has been a topic

of debate since many years.

The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The term capital (lit. "of the head", derived via the Latin capitalis from caput, "head") describes execution by beheading, but executions are carried out by many methods such as hanging, shooting, lethal injection, stoning, electrocution and gassing.

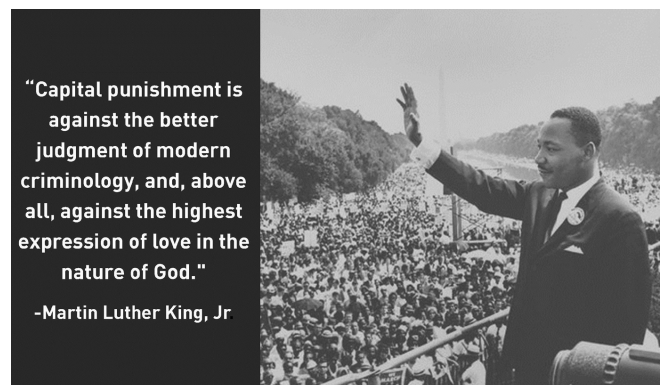
Crimes that are punishable by death vary depending on the jurisdiction, but commonly include serious offences against individuals such as murder, mass murder, aggravated cases of rape, child rape, child sexual abuse, terrorism, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide and offences against the state including attempting to overthrow government, treason, espionage, sedition, piracy, aircraft hijacking, drug trafficking, drug dealing and drug possession and in some cases acts of recidivism, aggravated robbery, and kidnapping.



Saudi Arabia has a very low rate of crimes because it imposes death penalty and severe punishments. Capital punishment for criminals can act as a deterrent. The most frightening thing for a human being is to lose their life; therefore, the death penalty could create a sense of fear among them and

prevent them from committing serious crimes in the distant future. But this claim has been repeatedly discredited, and there is no evidence that the death penalty is any more effective in reducing crime.

Death penalty breaches the most basic Human rights - Right to Life and Right to Live Free from Torture and Cruel Treatment. Every person should be given a second chance, a chance to improve, be a better person. Execution is the ultimate, irrevocable punishment and mistakes happen and a chance for reformation should be given.



There are cases of horrific crimes which are beyond the point of rehabilitation. For such cases, capital punishment not only creates a deserved punishment equivalent to the crime committed but also provides safety for the rest of society. It can provide families of victims with some closure/justice, which may help them to deal with their suffering. However, it could also be used to take revenge. It can also be used as a political tool. The authorities in some countries, for example Iran and Sudan, use the death penalty to punish political opponents. It does not provide a sense of safety and security but it displays the violent culture of a country.

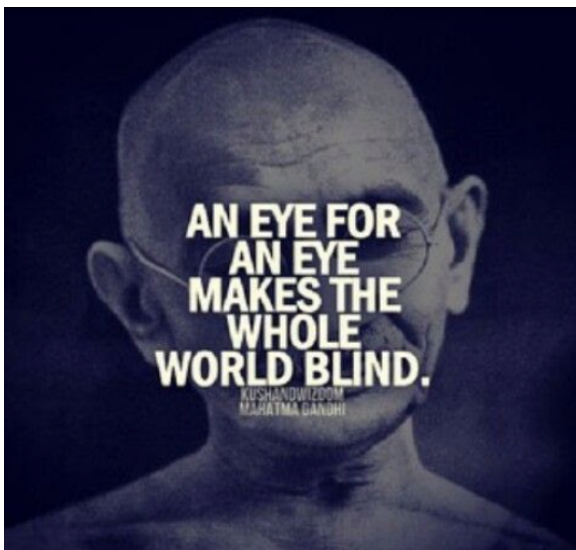
Death sentence as a punishment doesn't



really make us any different from the offenders. Only difference is, what they did was against the law and what we have done to them was by the law. Giving death in cases like rape, acid attacks, murders, etc is very easy on the lawbreaker.

Instead they should be given life imprisonment to suffer like they made the victim and their families suffer. For them, death is just an easy way out. It is discriminatory.

The weight of the death penalty is disproportionately carried by those with less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds or belonging to a racial, ethnic or religious minority. This includes having limited access to legal representation, for example, or being at greater disadvantage in their experience of the criminal justice system.



***"The death penalty is a symptom of a culture of violence, not a solution to it."***

In some countries death sentences are imposed as the mandatory punishment for certain offences, meaning that judges are not able to consider the circumstances of the crime or of the defendant before

sentencing.

There are so many things involved in the justice system and if anything goes wrong, it could lead to a miscarriage of justice/wrongful execution. It can result from non-disclosure of evidence by police or prosecution, fabrication of evidence, poor identification, overestimation of the evidential value of expert testimony, unreliable confessions due to police pressure or psychological instability and misdirection by a judge during trial.

There have been many wrongful executions in the past.

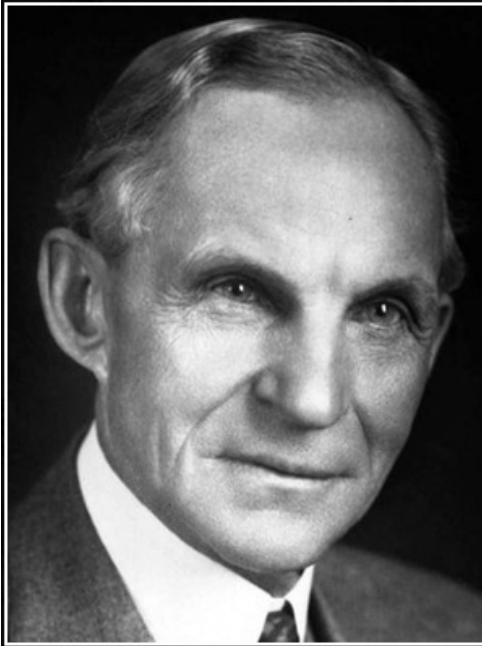
Numerous honest and innocent people have been beheaded.

The rate of wrongful convictions in the United States is estimated to be somewhere between 2 percent and 10 percent. That may sound low, but when applied to an estimated prison population of 2.3 million, the numbers become staggering. The United States has been the subject of more wrongful conviction research than any country in the world. The results are troubling.

From 1989 to 2017, more than 2100 were wrongfully convicted and subsequently released from prison because of evidence of their innocence.

Capital punishment is irreversible.

If the person is proved as innocent after the death penalty, there will be nothing left to be done. It happened in a significant number of cases; sparing the guilty and taking the life of an innocent one instead. The risk of



Capital punishment is as fundamentally wrong as a cure for crime as charity is wrong as a cure for poverty.

— *Henry Ford* —

AZ QUOTES

executing an innocent can never be eliminated.

Death penalty should be given only and only in rare of the rarest cases. Life imprisonment could also serve the purpose of the death penalty. Many people do not know that life imprisonment is not only for 7 or 14 years, it could actually be for life.

The idea of suffering is way more frightening than death with no pain, guilt, realisation of their fault.

# The Cost of Beauty

by Yedilsaac Degu



Since our childhoods we've been conditioned to believe that people are either beautiful or ugly. In all the media we've consumed, there has been a specific image fed to us on what is considered beautiful and what is not. We've seen it in the toys we played with and the cartoons we watch even today.

As we've grown up a bit more, we've slowly grasped the benefits of being considered beautiful by society. Understanding the halo effect and consequently, that those that are considered conventionally attractive gain more social capital than someone who is considered less conventionally attractive.

This raises the question of what is considered conventionally attractive.

What is the standard? There's no clear answer to that question, because the beauty standard shifts and changes through cultures and time.

However one thing is certain; the general consensus for what beauty is comes from marketing. The beauty industry upholds a set of features that a person must have to be perceived as attractive and emphasizes that in not having those features, you are inherently unattractive.

Nevertheless, capitalism has an answer! There are commodities provided at your nearest supermarket to help you fit into the standard! By doing this, the general public is conditioned to believe that beauty is an attainable goal that can be achieved through altering your appearance with the

commodities provided to you by these institutions.

Of course, fully achieving the beauty standard is a physical impossibility so the pursuit of doing so will never end and the beauty industry knows and capitalizes off of that.

The ideals of beauty have been constructed differently throughout the times, where different features go in and out of fashion every so often. This fact in itself is unsurprising, seeing as the industry is based on this phenomenon. However, promoting physical features that people are born and live with for their entire lives, as periodic trends, is detrimental to the individual consumer.

Another instance regarding how the ever-shifting standards of beauty is detrimental is how they reflect the power structure in society. Throughout western civilization and the modification of society up until current times, the beauty standard has been deeply rooted in Eurocentric features. The power structure since the beginning of colonialism up until current times have also been mostly Eurocentric. The parallels here are clear.

The Dove Global Beauty and Confidence report, which interviewed 10,500 women across 13 countries, found that 69% of women and 65% of young girls cite increasing pressure from mass media to reach the standard of beauty.

Additionally, around 85% of women and 79% of girls said that they opt out of important life activities when they don't feel attractive or feel good about how they look. Mass media as a tool of the capitalistic

institutions that run the beauty industry has made a considerable psychological impact on the thought processes and lives of young girls and women around the world.

The solution out of this problem is completely up to us. We should not feel as though beauty is synonymous with self-worth. We should not let companies capitalize off of our insecurities and profit off of our imperfections.

Shouldn't we decide what is perfect about our bodies and not society?



Those who do not live in our skin should not be able to dictate what is beautiful and what is not. It is not a universal and objective property, it is subjective and individual and everyone has it. Don't let a subtly worded commercial or advertisement tell you any different.

Challenge existing beauty norms. Save yourself the money.

# History

edited by  
Bruktawit Fisseha

## Women's Role in Literature

by Savyasachi Singh

Women's role in literature, just like every other professional field in society, has evolved through the ages. Fortunately, today we have come far from the objectification of women as mere 'sexual objects' to satisfy gods and men. It is obvious that women's rights were very limited, or even non-existent in many cases in history. In this time period, women were blamed for wars, destruction of towns and even the death of men. Sadly, these practices still prevail in certain communities.



The Medieval Ages saw a range of reactions to women's role in literature. In Europe, the Medieval Ages saw a range of reactions to women's role in literature. In Europe, Nuns wrote books in love of God, the role of women in Christianity, and following the instructions of the Catholic Church.



Literature was primarily composed of religious works along with some secular works.

The reason religious work was so prominent (and well preserved) is because clerics ran intellectual life; therefore, it was clerics who produced most of the writing. A good amount of secular works, at least those still preserved, were written by nobles and courtiers who provided accounts of life at court, histories, and even some translations. Notable works include *Lais of Marie de France*, *Memorias* by Leonor López de Córdoba and *The Alexiad* by Anna Comnenann.



In Japan, Feudalism

was on rise. Medieval Japanese literature continued the classical tradition of monogatari (court fiction) and waka poetry, which is court poetry from the 6th century to 14th century. Many female writers were noblewomen who were acclaimed poets with their own merits. However, much of their lives went unrecorded, hence the ambiguity surrounding their respective births and deaths. Notable works of Japanese writers include *Sacred Rites in Moonlight: Ben No Naishi Nikki*, *Personal Analogy of Kenreimon-in Ukyō no Daibu: Kenreimon-in Ukyō no Daibu Shū* and *String of Beads: Complete Poems of Princess Shikishi*.

It is no mystery that women did not have equal say in a family dispute, much more the voting rights and wage gap. Women's literature, although ignored and cursed, has brought about literary wonders and best selling novels, competing with their male counterparts, who were considered 'superior'. Infact, "Women's Literature" was considered a category of writing done by women. Though obviously this is true in a sense, many scholars find such a definition dominating.

What makes the history of women's writing so interesting is that in many ways it is a new area of study, something which was not given much attention. The tradition of women writing has been much ignored due to the inferior position women have held in male-dominated societies. It is still not unheard of to see literature classes or anthologies in which women are greatly outnumbered by male writers or even entirely absent.

Women's literature has categorized and created an area of study for a section of society marginalized by history, and to

explore through their writing their lives as they were while occupying such a unique sociopolitical space within their culture.

Of course, questions were raised to promote women's role in literature with development of ideas of Liberty and Equality. *Feminead* (1754) by John Duncombe, and *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain Who Have Been Celebrated for their Writing or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences* (1752) by George Ballard, are two important attempts to note women's contributions to literature. They were catalogs published in the 18th century and were written by men.

Surprisingly or rather unsurprisingly, women's literature was largely supported by women. The writers who put together a novel with their life experiences and thoughts were read by individuals with similar expected roles in society. *The Female Advocate: A Poem Occasioned by Reading Mr Duncombe's Feminead* (1774) by Mary Scott is a primary example. The poem was Scott's first publication and is notable because it praises other women writers publishing at the time, including children's writer Sarah Fielding and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, a writer whose political opinions eventually led to her being blacklisted after she published an inflammatory poem on her disagreement with the British Empire's involvement in the Napoleonic wars.

# Art

edited by Jyotsna  
Bisariya

## Social Commentary in Literature

by Abey Bekalu

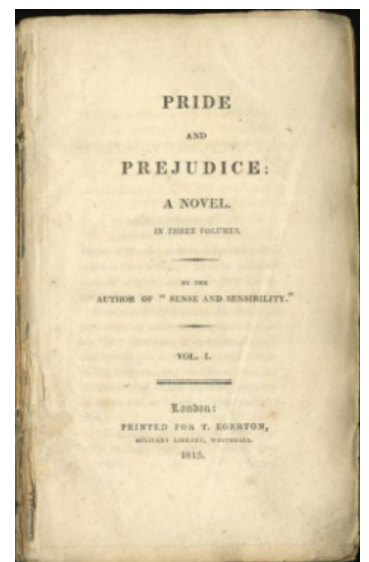
Authors love making social commentary in their craft.

There's no safer way to make a potentially controversial remark about a particular issue than drag a bunch of fictional people through the coals of it. It's like holding up a mirror to society, but not as direct. The deniers can still deny if they choose to do so. I love a story that takes a concept, puts it in an interesting plot, and makes a statement about life and society. It can be so refreshing to read.

If social commentary in fiction is to be talked about, an author that can be a perfect example is Jane Austen. Though the theme of her stories is usually romance, her plotlines are almost always laced with witty and mocking statements about the society she lived in. You've probably heard of "Pride and Prejudice" (1818). It's safe to say that it's probably her most famous novel. Beneath the timeless classic filled with deep and complex characters and an unforgettable plot, Jane Austen explores how the 19th century

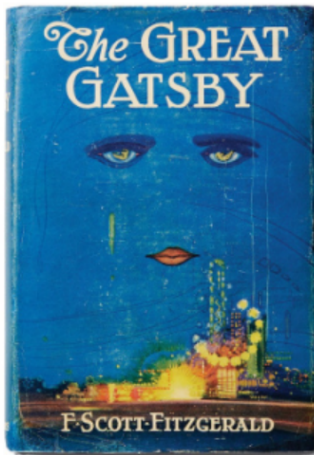
English society pushes women to depend on marriage in the pursuit of economic security and social standing. Despite being over 200 years old, it still creates quite an impact with the way it portrays class, status and gender differences.

Let's skip a hundred years later and look at "The Great Gatsby" (1925) by Scott F. Fitzgerald. Set in Long Island, New York, during the roaring 20s, this literary masterpiece tells the story of young millionaire Jay Gatsby and his obsession for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan.



"Pride and Prejudice" (1818) by Jane Austen, first edition cover

I know many high schoolers, especially those that live in the US, have been forced to read this book and might be a little skeptical about me saying it's an amazing book, but the book has so much to say about the sociology of class, status and wealth, and I find the way Fitzgerald looks at the American Dream in a somewhat cynical way extremely interesting.



"The Great Gatsby" (1925) by Scott F. Fitzgerald, first edition cover

Okay, let's come to more modern times. Authors still haven't stopped social commentary in their books.

Last month I read a novel by Hillary Jordan called "When She Woke" (2011). It follows

the theme of the classic novel "The Scarlet Letter," and it is set in a society where the skin of criminals is tinted different colors, depending on their crimes. This marking makes them subject to derision, physical attacks and even death threats. The story is pretty decent, the ending isn't as strong as the beginning, but the topics that can be exhibited by the premise are very fascinating. It can easily spark plenty of discussions on abortion, moral values, crime and punishment.



"When She Woke" (2011) by Hillary Jordan front cover

The most recent novel on social commentary

I can think of is "The Hate U Give" (2017) by Angie Thomas. If you haven't read the book, you HAD to have seen the movie. If you did neither, I'd suggest you go find a copy, because this was one of the most powerful pieces of literary fiction I have read since I started reading. I think it can have much more impact on the youth than all the classic novels because this is a story that is set in our current society, talking about police brutality and racial injustice. The story follows a teenage African-American girl called Starr, who recently witnessed her friend being killed by a policeman who stopped them on the road. The plot then progresses from this point on, raising strong questions about racism and racial differences, gang violence, class and human values.



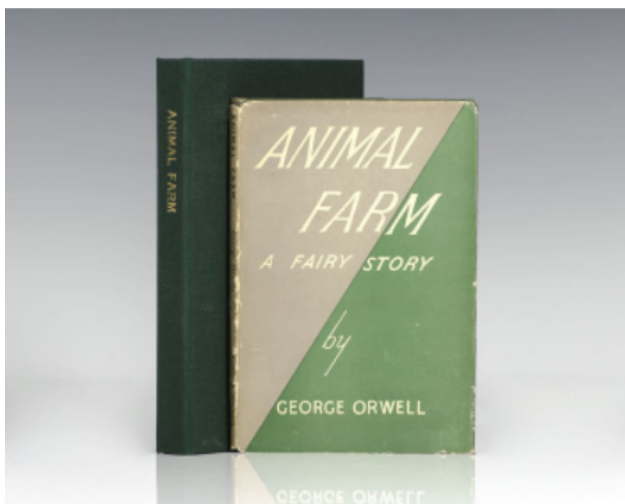
"The Hate U Give" (2017) by Angie Thomas, front cover

To be honest, writing a book with some strong perspectives and comments about society can be a risky move, especially for an author who has a lot to say in their stories. Backlash can be a bit severe, and it can be rough on the author to see the story they worked hard for being slandered by people they don't even know on the internet. It's amusing that some people don't even read the book they're so angry about. There's this mob mentality that they have, joining a group of people who are angry at a simple work of fiction simply because they don't agree with what they are saying. This pushes authors from not being able to properly express what they think for fear of uproar, and their works would rarely have the impact they were hoping they would. Or, authors would think



“Animal Farm” is an allegorical novel—which is a type of novel that can be interpreted to reveal hidden meanings—by George Orwell, published in 1945. The book tells the story of a group of farm animals who rebel against their human farmer, hoping to create a society where the animals can be equal, free, and happy. Ultimately, however, the rebellion is betrayed, and the farm ends up in a state as bad as it was before, under the dictatorship of a pig named Napoleon. It’s a pretty fascinating novel in itself, but things get even more interesting when you find out that the fable actually reflects events leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and then on into the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union. In a letter to Yvonne Davet, Orwell described “Animal Farm” as a satirical tale against Stalin, and in his essay “Why I Write” (1946), he wrote that “Animal Farm” was the first book in which he tried, with full consciousness of what he was doing, “to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.” The only thing more interesting than literature with commentary, is literature with allegorical commentary.

issues have been brought up in the past months, and it can be expected to fuel more authors to use their talents to write some more intriguing social commentary. A book can have quite an impact on its reader when done well, and it can be beneficial for many readers to be impacted by a good story after these dark times.



“Animal Farm” (1945) by George Orwell, first edition

Hopefully, more books can appear in the coming years, especially since 2020 was a rather volatile time in the United States and in the world. On top of that, so many social

# Lack of Diversity in Classical Music

by Chandrasnata Mohanty



Speaking about race in classical music is no exception. There's a unique, strange kind of slipperiness attached to the subject in this art form.

As a starting point, let's use a standard definition. Classical music is a Western musical tradition that uses a sophisticated and relatively standardized notation method, with rich examples and techniques for organizing and developing musical ideas.

Even if we try to escape from the weight of close associations to create a more dynamic identity by calling what we do "art music", let's be honest: we can't escape the historical paper trail.

"White" is a term that might sound fluid and unsubtle, but I think most people would

agree that it's hard to ignore the historical evidence that it has substance. The fact of the matter is that white is a reality today, and it's a term that has useful application. When racial diversity is mentioned in the classical music world, we all know that white is the status quo.

One might argue that the concept of race is a symptom of ignorance rather than the truth, that humans are so genetically similar that skin color is trivial; therefore, race shouldn't be applied to art, which reflects even more incredible realities. Race doesn't matter in art. Neither does it matter in life. We're all human and bleed red.

It sounds superficially friendly, but saying "race doesn't matter" is problematic. First, many people believe that race matters,

which has very real and terrible effects on many other people. Second, there are significant and beautiful ways in which different races and cultures approach life, which should be celebrated. Third, saying race doesn't matter doesn't actively advance the cause of making the idea of race obsolete. Fourth, racial diversity can be an indicator of how well an art form addresses common human experience.



We musicians reinforce each other's belief that we're engaged in a purely artistic pursuit. Our idealism is necessary to properly serve the great treasure of music that humanity is entitled to and which we are fortunate to play. The music itself powerfully embodies so much of the human condition. Then there's the beauty of the interpretive art, which goes from one extreme to another. On the one hand, it presupposes that we each have unique souls from all others, made from mysterious and elemental material, which we constantly try to reveal from beneath all the human dross. On the other hand, there is an entire range of human experience to explore, with all its flaws and virtues, from the most terrible to the most glorious. In either case, there is very little room for expressing much beyond our inner worlds. And can we claim authenticity for anything more than our interpretation?

We need to be high-minded about our art, but we can't hold it apart from the world. Classical music isn't a universal language. Different cultures and different times have their own musical languages. There's a difference in the scales and modes used, the harmonies, rhythms, ornaments, aesthetic values, the sonic idioms that become commonplace and recognizable, the cultural touchstones. It's difficult for some people to understand a particular language if they don't grow up listening to it. They may even find that the language doesn't truly capture the distinct juiciness of their emotions and thoughts. These aren't new ideas, yet the myth of universality is persistent. I think it's quite naive and may be dangerous.



Do we as a community sometimes behave like anyone who doesn't "get" classical music is lame or would understand it if only they were educated or improved in some way? The music might express the mystery of existence or some immortal truth if you know the language, not despite that vital aspect. It's just one musical way to approach an ultimate revelation or state of consciousness. To say otherwise would be like saying only one religion is the right one.

We also risk false inclusiveness and glossing over biases to operate from a position of

immunity. Why has classical music been divorced from general societal conversations about recognizing and overcoming problems concerning gender and race?

Debussy was entranced with Javanese gamelan music, and Ravel had an affection for jazz. I'm aware that many people since then have consciously and unconsciously allowed the music of other races and cultures to influence their compositions. I'm not attempting to take away from their accomplishments or the beauty of their creations. I revel in them. But we should acknowledge that in the context of classical music, these people are usually white. While some may know other musical languages and their native ones, others treat aspects of those languages as exotic elements rather than with a more matter of fact familiarity. Some might point out the success of one or another non-white composer, but the dearth makes them outliers and exotic.

# To Be Okay

by Vishakha Singh

Does anyone remember what it was like?  
To be carefree, to be happy,  
To not have any worries,  
To not overthink about who hates me?  
Am I the only one who doesn't understand myself  
When I say, when I lie  
That I'm okay, that I'm fine?  
It feels surreal to think,  
That there was a time,  
When I wasn't overthinking about life.  
I sometimes try to recall,  
When I would dance around,  
And sing aloud,  
And dream all day long.  
But all I see,  
Is a blurry memory.  
They say that it's okay  
To not be okay,  
Then is this what it feels like to be fine?  
Or is it just another session of my existential crisis...?  
'Cause I've been having quite a few lately.  
To the people who don't second guess themselves when they say they're fine,  
To the people who don't have to drag themselves to their desks,  
To the people who don't need to fake a smile throughout the day,  
And to the people who come back home and don't cry,  
Please tell me what it is like,  
To be okay, to be just fine.

## **Author's Note:**

In all fifteen years of my life, I have understood from books, music and a lot of my role-models (including my mom and dad), how important mental health is. But unfortunately, it is far too often overlooked even in modern society. I have seen some of my friends struggle too. I wrote this poem dedicating it to them and to those who are having a hard time, for any reason, big or small.

I wish to let them know that they are not alone. I want them to know that their emotions are valid and that it's okay to feel this way. To anyone struggling: I can't say anything from experience, but I can say that this will not last forever. Just hold on for a little longer, I promise it gets better.

# Spotlight

edited by Rachel  
Lewis

## Zuriel Oduwole

by Rachel Lewis

In 2012, a nine-year-old girl named Zuriel Oduwole submitted a short documentary to a national filmmaking competition. A decade later, now an adult, Oduwole has been listed as an influential person by Forbes, Business Insider, the New African Magazine, ELLE, and the New York Times. She's not a Gen Z social media influencer, but an activist for girls' education and climate change awareness.

Oduwole's curiosity about the history and culture of Africa led her to enter the National History Day documentary contest. She and her family visited Ghana in January 2012 so that she could learn more about its revolution and film scenes of its natural landscape and cultural landmarks. However, Oduwole's research was not simply a series of museum visits and reading old newspapers — she managed to snag interviews with two of its former presidents. Oduwole has since released two more documentaries about the development of African countries that have been shown in theaters in multiple countries around the world, including Nigeria, Japan, and the United Kingdom.



Oduwole's travels around the world to speak about the importance of education make it almost impossible for Oduwole herself to attend "normal" school. She and her siblings were enrolled in virtual school years before anyone knew of a microscopic virus called "COVID-19". This online system worked well for Oduwole, enabling her to learn two grades ahead and reach her senior year of high school by the time she was 15. Since 2017, Oduwole has focused on her advocacy for education for children around the world, especially young girls in Africa who don't have the same opportunities as boys. She spoke to a crowd of 30,000 in Paris about the disparities between boys' and girls'

opportunities for education in many African nations on Sep. 17. Two months later at COP23, a conference of world leaders negotiating a plan for international action on climate change, Oduwole gave a brief speech on the effects of climate change on schools in low-lying island countries like Fiji. Oduwole says that she aims to be an inspiration to young girls everywhere of what they can do with an education.





# Call to Action

Links and resources to learn more about global issues

**<https://www.darkisbeautiful.in/>**

The Dark is Beautiful campaign was launched by Kavitha Emmanuel in 2009 to combat colorism and the negative effects it has on women affected by it.

**<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19z2yQBQLzPCBN4I-Um24hAAHDppH9MMGw0PVF8iAdm0/mobilebasic>**

Find a complete set of resources to protest the abortion ban in Poland.  
Source: Impact

**<https://act.studentsagainstchildmarriage.org/a/biden-petition>**

Students against child marriage petition





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### **Lack of Diversity in Classical Music**

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<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/diversity-classical-music>

<https://www.insightintodiversity.com/diversity-will-save-classical-music-and-it-starts-with-music-education/>

*-These sources give in more insight on the topic and consist of diverse perspectives from like-minded on the issue.*

### **Zuriel Oduwole**

<https://thenativemag.com/communities/young-filmmaker-zuriel-oduwole-honoured-unesco-soft-power-conference/>