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We Need To Talk

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Table of Contents

Title	Page
Current Events03
Texas Abortion Law: What is the Next Step?.....	.03
Coronavirus Vaccines Mandates.....	.05
Spotlight07
Cynthia Yue: The UNA-USA Youth Observer.....	.07
Opinion09
Lil Nas X: Montero.....	.09
Art11
The United States of Attica.....	.11
Sources13

Current Events

Edited by Barsha Parajuli

Texas Abortion Law: What is the Next Step? by Grace Huang



Officially having gone into effect on September 1, 2021, the new Texas abortion law, named the Texas Heartbeat Act, banned abortion past six weeks of pregnancy. More specifically, the act banned abortion once cardiac activity can be detected, which occurs around six weeks into pregnancy. The law allows for no exception for rape or incest, or if the pregnant person is a teenager. The only way to escape the ban is if the pregnancy causes severe health concerns of the pregnant person and may lead to death or substantial damage to body functions.

With the passage of this law, many pregnant people seeking abortion services will no longer be offered the service, as healthcare providers will be extremely cautious about

the narrowly defined exceptions. The vast majority of pregnant people needing abortion will face severe trouble, and several populations are especially vulnerable.

First, doctors define the start of a pregnancy as the start date of the last menstrual period, but some people have irregular periods, and may not realize the possibility of being pregnant until after the six-week limit. Additionally, teenagers could be another vulnerable population, as the vast majority of teenagers did not plan to become pregnant and aren't prepared to become responsible parents. Furthermore, victims of rape or incest, if not aware of their pregnancy in time, will be forced to bear an unwanted child and face substantial consequences afterwards. Finally, another group of potential victims is the low-income population, where the birth of a child could worsen their financial situation and severely lower their living standards.

At this point, you may wonder: didn't the Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* establish the rights to abortion? Yes, but the true

answer to the question faces more complications. There are two roadblocks to challenging the constitutionality of this act: the unique implementation of the abortion law and the composition of the current Supreme Court.



In fact, Texas isn't the first state to attempt to pass laws restricting abortion, but they are all held up due to legality challenges hindering successful implementation. The Texas Heartbeat Act went around these court challenges by replacing the traditional execution by state officials with a novel form of enforcement by individuals. In the past, if an abortion law was to be challenged in the Supreme Court, a state official executing the law would be sued as the defendant, but the Texas Heartbeat Act prevented this case from happening - it is uniquely implemented by encouraging individuals to sue anyone who helped or encouraged a pregnant person to abort past six weeks, and the individual doesn't have to be related to this person. If successful, the plaintiff receives a \$10,000 reward, and all legal fees are paid for. As a result, it is very difficult to even bring this case to the Supreme Court, as a suitable defendant is not easily found.

On September 1, 2021, in a case challenging the Texas Heartbeat Act, the Supreme Court refused to strike it down for constitutionality concerns with a 5-4 vote. The current structure of the Supreme Court could be part

of the explanation, as it is dominated by Conservatives with a 6 to 3 majority. However, the Supreme Court did not settle the issue to completely reject further challenges, and future cases challenging the act can still be brought up to the Supreme Court, but that will be increasingly difficult. What is the future of this law and the population it affects? Lawsuit in itself is a lengthy and complicated process, not to mention the complexity of this issue at hand. What are the implications? Only time will tell.

Coronavirus Vaccines Mandates

by Deetya Adhikari



Since the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine became FDA approved, one would expect less resistance to becoming vaccinated. With three out of ten Americans still remaining unvaccinated, and 14% staunchly against the idea of taking the vaccine, this is not the case. Some of these Americans give explanations as to why they don't want to receive the vaccine, the major ones being that the vaccine is more dangerous than the virus itself and that their religion is opposed to it. Though both of these have been dispelled, people still find ways to disagree and refuse the shot, being major contributors to the ubiquity of COVID.

President Joe Biden has begun to appeal to states and private corporations to roll out vaccine mandates, as over a quarter of members of the workforce have yet to become vaccinated. Biden was originally reluctant to set any mandates, but seeing the exponential rate at which the Delta Variant has been spreading, he decided to take action. Though it will take weeks, months

even, for this to be implemented across the country, some companies have already begun to take initiative; some airlines have now started to require shots for their employees, such as American Airlines, Southwest, and Alaska Airlines, among a few others. Businesses have the power to raise the vaccination rates, and change the arc of the pandemic in the United States.

New York, once the Coronavirus hub, instituted the vaccine mandate for healthcare workers in late September with relative success - so much so that circa November, the governor of New York is planning on extending the mandate to encompass other professions as well. Tens of thousands of workers have gone out to receive their first dose; however, many others are losing their jobs, refusing to take the shots. A multitude of lawsuits have risen regarding the mandate, with the plaintiffs seeking an exemption from becoming vaccinated. On one hand, this increases the safety of nurses and doctors as well as the

patients themselves. On the other hand, if health care providers uphold the mandate and fire a great number of employees, then there could end up being staff shortages across hospitals. It appears that the industry can handle a limited amount of job losses; although, there is a real possibility for there to be a scarcity in healthcare workers if more people continue to disagree with the mandate, however unlikely.

In addition, the committee for the Centers for Disease Control has unanimously voted that the elderly and others at a high risk for severe infection are recommended to take a third booster dose of Pfizer, if they took the Pfizer vaccine originally. Since Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are awaiting FDA approval, this CDC recommendation only applies to Pfizer vaccines. According to the committee, “people 18 to 65 who work in a job or other setting where they are at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 should not yet be allowed to receive an extra Pfizer dose.” The issue with this counsel is that anti-vaxxers may use this to solidify their belief that the vaccine is hazardous to all. This information conflicts with Biden’s plan to roll out the booster shot plan, where most age groups are offered an extra dose of the vaccine. Providers are required to follow the instruction of the FDA and CDC, especially since the government temporarily bought the vaccines. It is critical that providers heed the CDC as we are at a crucial point in the pandemic, where things could go either way.

Spotlight

Edited by Paleesa Kapoor

Cynthia Yue: The UNA-USA Youth Observer

by Saranya Singh

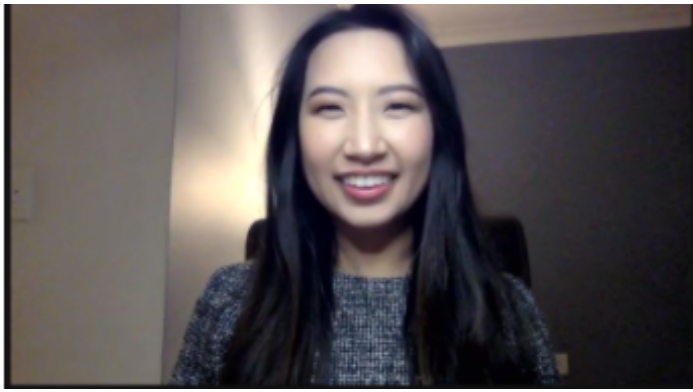


To many, the United Nations is a seemingly distant organization with little impact on our daily lives. This year's UNA-USA Youth Observer, Cynthia Yue, is trying to change that mentality.

Cynthia represents the voices of all the young people in the United States at the UN. From engaging with young people through listening tours to attending conferences and voicing issues important to America's youth, Cynthia's goal is to increase youth civic participation and make the UN more accessible to young people everywhere.

“We are elevating young people, and making them recognize how important they are as leaders in their community”

Cynthia first got involved with UNICEF at age 14, by starting the first UNICEF club in Tennessee. As she became more involved with UNICEF and UNA-USA, she developed a passion for civic engagement and making sure that young people had a say in the everyday policy decisions that affected them. Since then, she has grown more involved with politics, including working on advocacy for UNICEF, interning with the United States Senate, and attending the George Washington University.



"I grew up feeling like I didn't have a voice, and no one was listening because I was a woman, because I was a person of color, because I was young. My goal is to make people realize that they... deserve to be heard all the more because they are women, because they are people of color, and because they are young"

Cynthia's goal is to talk to and elevate young people. She takes inspiration from her youth as a first generation American, and her journey of finding her political voice. Now, she amplifies the voices of the youth who are so crucial to ensuring a successful future of the world. Most recently, she has completed a listening tour, where she attended virtual meetings with youth around the world, listening to the voices of young Americans in order to present their ideas, opinions, and civic efforts at the next UN General Assembly meeting.

"I heard all of you speak, I heard the issues that you care about, I heard the stories of what you are doing on an individual level"

Cynthia also works closely to accomplish the UN SDGs, a list of 17 goals that she describes as "everything that our world strives to achieve by 2030". From no poverty to partnerships, the SDGs are the UN's top priorities, and they cannot be achieved without young people. For example, SDG 13--climate action--is something that young people have already begun taking a lead on.

"I love that the SDGs are a set of ideals that our entire world, our global community can strive for, and I also love that there are things that we can do on a local level, to ensure that we are tackling every single SDG in one way or another"

From the SDGs, to the UNA, to the Youth Observer, the UN offers a wide variety of opportunities for young people to get involved. Whether you hop on a call to have your opinions sent to the Secretary General, or organize crucial community advocacy work, the UNA offers a platform for young people to make an impact. Most importantly, Cynthia says that in order to have your voice heard, "Never stop advocating". Whether it's to your small circle of family and friends, or the 2021-2022 UNA-USA Youth Observer, if you keep talking, someone will stop and listen.

"We, as women, need to stop apologizing for having opinions. We need to stop apologizing for having our thoughts, we need to stop apologizing for asking for the bare minimum, which is just a seat at the table"



Opinion

Edited by Sanjana Mittal

Lil Nas X: Montero

by Andrew Daly

Lil Nas X seems to be on top of the world lately. Ever since the 2019 release of the record-smashing hit “Old Town Road,” Nas proved his mastery of media and kept all eyes on himself. When he had the #1 charting song in America, he had the courage to come out to fully express himself in his music. He created a buzz this year when he created a custom Nike Air Max 97 with human blood inside, and later when he promoted his debut album, *Montero*, in a photoshoot where he was “pregnant” with his baby (the album). Due to controversial choices like these, along with the fact that he is a Black queer man, he is often the target of bigots and pundits in the “culture war.” Although Nas has been extremely vocal on social media about shrugging off criticisms like these, on *Montero* we finally get a look at what’s going on inside Lil Nas X’s head.

Turns out, it’s a lonely place.

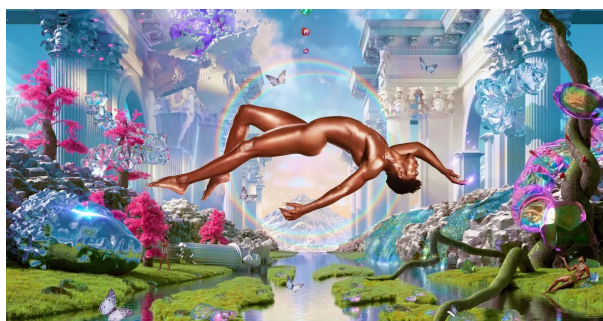
The first half of the album is Nas’ victory lap. It is a musical manifestation of the confidence shown in his public persona. The opening track, “Montero (Call Me By Your Name)”, is one of the best the album has to offer. It features infectious lead vocals and bright Spanish guitar laced throughout. Songs like the cheery “That’s What I Want”, the flirtatious “Scoop”, and the braggadocious track “Industry Baby” and “Dolla Sign Slime” show that Nas is truly capable of making a peppy banger. “Industry Baby” is another standout track, as Nas is rapping about his successes over a marching band beat with blaring horns. Jack Harlow lays a nice verse on the backend of this song as well, and his placement here makes sense seeing as both rappers are on the same path of being young rising stars.

With “Tales of Dominica”, Nas pivots to singing about self-doubt and growing up in a broken home, though the target audience for this oddly upbeat song is unclear. He does a much better job of expressing the anxiety and loneliness of his newfound fame on

“Void”, another standout where Nas sings over airy yet bleak strummed guitar. “Life After Salem” continues this theme as Nas touches on a dysfunctional relationship while singing over a heavy grunge rock instrumental. Despite this depressing direction on the back half, Nas ends the album on a positive note on the track “Am I Dreaming” with Miley Cyrus. As two LGBTQ artists who have matured in the public eye and faced criticism for expressing their sexuality, they discuss hardships they have faced and how they must go on and make sure no one forgets them.

The album does have some misses, where Nas falls into the same trap he fell into on his earlier project 7 EP. Some of the tracks are just basic. One example is “Lost in the Citadel”, where Nas’ tone is flat, his message is recycled, and the instrumental sounds out of place on the album. Additionally, “Don’t Want It” is a track that feels incomplete and interrupts the introspective themes on the backend of the album.

However, as a whole, this project is a solid debut for an artist that needs no introduction. A major theme of the project is metamorphosis, and Nas proves that he is truly coming into his own as his music becomes more personal and his sound becomes more fleshed-out. With Montero, Nas paves the way for himself and other queer artists to find their way and embrace who they are.





Art

Edited by Jyotsna Bisariya

The United States of Attica

by Heran Tetaka

Fifty years ago, in September of 1971, a revolution took place that would change the course of criminal justice in the American prison system as we know it. It would go down in history as the day that an act of desperation from the prisoners of Attica would serve as a wake up call about the conditions that prisoners all over America are subjected to. It is no secret that the conditions of prisons in the past were horrendous. Formerly incarcerated Tyrone Larkins spoke out about his experiences when he referred to Attica as “the roughest place I’ve ever seen in my life”. As a prisoner, you were stripped of your human rights and as a black prisoner, you never had any to begin with.



Attica Prison was infamously known as the most secure prison in New York, Wyoming. Consequently, it was also the most brutal. As a former convict of Attica Joseph Hayden expressed, “Attica was a stark place. You only had an hour a day of recreation and the rest of the time, it was something out of the 1870s.” Prisoners of Attica spent 14 hours a day in their cell and the rest in forced labor to support a country that, “for a disturbing number of minorities there”, had falsely incarcerated them.

Two-thirds of the population of the inmates at Attica were either African American or Hispanic. In contrast, all except one of the police officers were white. This led to tension and a power complex between the officers and the prisoners of Attica.

It was a day like any other when the riot at Attica broke out. Repressed feelings of injustice were strong among the inmates of Attica. A policeman was killed during the takeover, but according to the surviving prisoners, it was not intentional. Allegedly, the takeover wasn't planned. In the heat of the moment a few prisoners attacked a police



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Texas Abortion Law

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