



THE COLUMN

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Editor-In-Chief: Silas Rodriguez

WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL WHSAD!

WHAT NOW?

Written by: **Mehki Brown**

Senior year is one that means many things for students. For most it's a beginning to the next journey of their lives. However the pandemic for most has, effectively, put things on hold and cancelled many plans. It has become a year of uncertainty for many students as the road ahead remains unclear. So as students prepare to go into the next phase of their life the big question that persists is, what now? To see how students feel, Mehki Brown interviewed seniors Janet Martinez and Martina Rojo as well as 2020 WHSAD graduate, Benito Montalvo.

- 1. What were some things you had planned for senior year that have now been halted due to the uncertainty of COVID-19?

Martina: My plan was to have a great volleyball season. I have been playing volleyball since freshman year, and I can't have my last moment on the court.



Senior
Martina Rojo

Janet: The plans I've had for senior year that have now been halted due to Covid 19 is creating many memories for the beginning of the school year since it's my last year of high school.

- 2. With the feeling of chaos and uncertainty, how do you feel the college process will be different for you?

Martina: The college process will be different because we might not have the same events that help us for our college process.

Janet: I feel that the college process will be different for me is, without letter grades or standardized testing, I must find new ways to impress colleges I want to go

- 3. What have you learned during this pandemic/quarantine that, you feel, can help you in the future when things are uncertain?

Martina: Something I learned is how to adjust to a different environment of learning. From going to school and having 45 minutes classes to being at home and having 25 minutes classes it was a very huge difference.

Janet: The things I learned during the pandemic and quarantine that I feel that can help me in the future is taking care and focusing more on myself. I developed to take things lightly and to not rush things, because you can find out that any moment can be turned into an opportunity.



Senior
Janet Martinez

- 4. Many students have tried on programs like SYEP for employment after school. With the pandemic still putting a stop to things, what plans do you have to remain employed after school?

Martina: I never got a chance to work with SYEP,

I do work with my aunt and her company.

Janet: The plans I have to remain employed after school is to search up for jobs and evaluate my resume.

5. Over the past 3 years of High School, students have joined after school clubs and have worked jobs to build up their resume. With all of this uncertainty, what will you do to help continue building your resume?

Martina: I understand that it will be hard to build up a resume in this situation, but having time and dedication will help us get what we need.

Janet: What I will do to help continue building my resume is help my community and help those in need. I can also do similar activities I did at school at home.

6. What plans did you, or still have, after high school?

Martina: I planned to go away to college, or go live on my own, finding a job and be able to go to school. Focused on being more independent.

Janet: My plans I have after high school is to get my bachelors degree in interior design and after that I would like to start my own business.

7. How has the pandemic affected your post high school plans such as vacations, work, traveling, etc.?

Martina: This pandemic affected many plans, mostly because we had to stay home to be safe. And even now, we still have to practice social distancing when going out.

Janet: The pandemic has affected my high school plans and is not being able to continue working so I can save more money for college. And building up more skills for me to learn so I can use them when I go to college

Alumni

1. Are you going to college?

Benito: Yes, I will be attending the University At Buffalo and majoring in architecture.

2. When everything first happened, with the Coronavirus, how did that affect your college process?

Benito: Honestly due to Covid, the process of choosing which school to go to was a lot harder. With the fear of going outside and contracting the virus, I became very wary of whether or not I should attend a school in the city or a school upstate. Luckily I made the right choice and decided to attend UB.



3. With COVID-19, how do you think your first year of college will be for you?

Benito: Due to Covid there's a lot of things that have been limited, but the university is trying everything they can to keep everyone sane in these trying times. I am attending the campus in person, but you are able to have fully remote classes which is great for those who are far. With rules like no one can enter other people's halls/rooms and making masks/social distancing mandatory, University At Buffalo's intention is to make campus life safe and reduce the infection rate of COVID-19. Even with these new rules that are implemented, I am trying to my best to enjoy my time here and stay safe. To give myself a sense of normalcy I occupy myself with my hobbies such as drawing, I go outside to meet new people and make new friends, and also keep in contact with old ones to catch up. It helps a lot when you have people to communicate with even if you can't see them in person. All of these sudden changes made because of the virus were very confusing at first, but it made me wary of something. If I am able to go through this, then I am able to push through anything. Don't forget to wear a mask guys.

Handling Stress

Written by: **Deselle Thompson**

As we emerge from our quarantine burrows drained, confused or maybe a little eager, we face new challenges of getting back to normal, having grown out of touch with the familiar. For some, it may feel that after months of self isolation, we must miraculously fall back into an old norm/mindset, when we have already adapted to something new. It can also be a bit difficult to navigate this new forest of hybrid/remote learning. This 2020-2021 school year will be uncharted territory for teachers and students alike. Now more than ever, I think it'd be the most valuable to plan a regular routine/schedule and learn some self help tips. Stress is definitely in the air for everyone, so I'll try to share some ways to minimize it. Most of what I'm going to talk about are things that have worked for me, but I've also included input from friends to vary the options. Hopefully, everyone gets something out of this.

Making a schedule is the best way to keep activities/responsibilities organized. This way, you won't have to worry about any conflicting responsibilities, or not having enough time to complete them. I recommend getting a small planner that's small enough to carry around, but can also fit everything you need to know. I find it easier to remember something when you physically write it down, but planners are also just my own personal preference. Other options would be to use your phone calendar and set alarms, or use an Excel or Google spreadsheet. If you sync your calendar to Google Classroom, it will show all your assignments and alert you about due dates. Each month, you should write down all your plans and update them as you go through the weeks. Once you plan out your general activities, and what you're doing each day, specify times. This mainly goes for activities you can set your own time for, like homework or freetime. Not all activities have to be 2 hours long and you don't have to study everyday.

You also need to take days off. Designate one day a week where you do nothing, preferably a day on the weekend, and put it in your schedule. Treat this day as a mental reset. The past week is just that. Never let bad vibes carry over. Another useful tip is to wake up early. I know some of you may be skeptical about that, but hear me out. There is a lot of time between dawn and dusk and I feel like morning people win at everything for a reason. Consider doing your work in the morning so you can work at your peak. You're the most alert at the start of your day, so if you're working on something really important, this will generate the best results.

Everyone has their own way to de-stress and knows what works for them. Some do embroidery/cross stitching, others draw, and some just vibe with their favorite shows. Music is another great de-stresser and I think we can all relate to using it at some point. Listening to Lofi hip hop beats on Youtube can be very soothing. Or, if you're a Pop Smoke and Rico Nasty kind of listener, aggressive music can prove to be effective as well. For those who like to be more active, working out, playing sports, punching bags, or just dancing for fun are great too. For more ideas, I recommend origami, coloring books, baking, redecorating your space, or reading. Whatever works for you. Again, this is all based on what you prefer to do in your freetime. These were just suggestions.

Allow yourself to exist. There's a lot that our brains do to cause us unnecessary stress. Try to remember that most of your situations in high school are temporary so don't feel too bad when something doesn't work out. Allow yourself to make mistakes because that's the only way to get better. Welcome failure as a learning experience not the end of time as we know it. Nine times out of ten someone has experienced the same or worse. Remember that people oftentimes can't be bothered with thinking about you in a negative way because they are too busy worrying about how they're being perceived themselves. We're all just trying to survive and live our own lives.

Summer Bridge Program Interviews

Written by: **Mahalia Sainteloi**

Britney Caryl, Freshman

Did you have difficulties making your design? If so can you describe them?

While I was working on my build for the Summer Build Project I did encounter some difficulties/challenges. I found it really hard to stick with one idea, so I kept on changing it. I went back and forth with what design I wanted to use. I later found a good one that I could use.

In what ways can your design be used in the real world?

My design can be used in the real world as inspirations for interior designers who would like to work on modernizing a home.

What was your inspiration?

My inspiration for my design came from Archdaily.com. I just searched for modern design ideas that I liked and used them. I wanted to create a modern house with plants, grass, and trees around it (like an oriental tone).

Have you had any prior experience designing?

I never really had any experience with designing. This would be considered my first time doing something like this.

Tell me about your experience with the program. What is your takeaway?

Overall I think that the program went really well and it was lots of fun. I really enjoyed attending the meets. It helped me to get to know more about the school, the staff members, and the incoming students. I also learned a little about what programs were offered at the school. My takeaway from the program was how nice everyone was. I would really love to get to know more about the teachers, etc.

Sheena Luke

Did you have difficulties making your design? If so can you describe them?

One difficulty I had was the fact that I didn't use a single reference while building. This proved to be a challenge for me. This is because, with no reference, my ideas kept on changing which meant I spent even more time on the actual building structure. This gave me less time to add extras such as furniture and things like the greenhouse. Another difficulty was at the start of my build since I hadn't written down the correct dimensions so later while building, I realized the building wasn't symmetrical but by then, I couldn't do anything about it since I was too far into the build.

In what ways can your design be used in the real world?

My design can be used in the real world as a place of residence. It is a modern luxury apartment build which is quite fitting to the rise of modern architecture in the world today.

What was your inspiration?

I didn't really have an inspiration, but I wanted to build this because of a Youtube video I saw years ago that somewhat still dwelled at the back of my mind. This is where I got the blurred image of what I had wanted to build.

Have you had any prior experience designing?

Before this project, I had 0 experience designing: however, it had been a hobby of mine to watch Minecraft videos which often included YouTubers building huge and complex structures. This is the main reason I already knew how to operate the software, 'Minecraft,' to work on my build.

Tell me about your experience with the program. What is your takeaway?

I believe the program was very beneficial. It left me with multiple programs that I can look into for my future such as the "Pratts Young Scholars Program" or the "Ace Mentor Program". It also provided me with an overview of what I can look forward to while attending WHSAD. Overall, I'm very grateful for the opportunity.

Deshawn, Gould, Freshman

1. I had a lot of difficulties with the project. Some of those difficulties were getting enough resources to start planting and building the greenhouse. I had to get different types of seeds such as watermelon seeds, pumpkins seeds, beetroot seeds, carrots, and wheat seeds. Then I had to get enough blocks to build the greenhouse. I had to know the perimeter and the diameter of the area so I would have correct measurements.

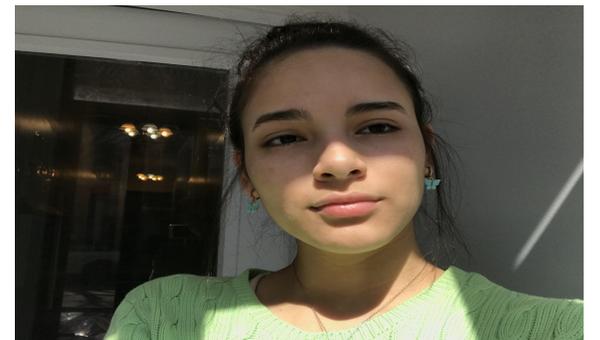


2. My design can be used in the real world by helping the earth with natural resources. In this world where pollution is rising my greenhouses would enable communities to take control of their natural food supply. It would lessen the need for genetically modified food which are not healthy for consumption and help us grow foods eaten on a daily basis in a healthier way.

3. The persons who inspired me were Charles Lucien Bonaparte and my mother who has always encouraged healthy eating habits. She always stresses the importance of eating vegetables and fruits.

4. Yes, I made other designs before. I made a mansion and a roller coaster in the past.

5. My experience with the program was fantastic. I learned a lot of new basic words I say every day but with a different meaning. My takeaway was a new understanding in things that was difficult for me before, and I am grateful for the help from all my teachers.



Nataly Hurtado

Did you have difficulties making your design? If so can you describe them?

I did not have any difficulties making my design other than finding the perfect place to build it or the materials that I should use.

In what ways can your design be used in the real world?

My design could be used as a camping house in the woods, like a little peaceful place to relax and connect to nature.

What was your inspiration?

I was inspired by creating a very cozy one person wooden modern house, something far away from the city and the noise, so I built my project right next to a lake in the forest.

Have you had any prior experience designing?

Yes, I've built a couple different buildings (on Minecraft, roblox etc..) before. Also I used to assist in an art program, we used to make mini models of famous buildings and I think that's when I realized that I actually liked designing.

Tell about your experience with the program. What is your takeaway?

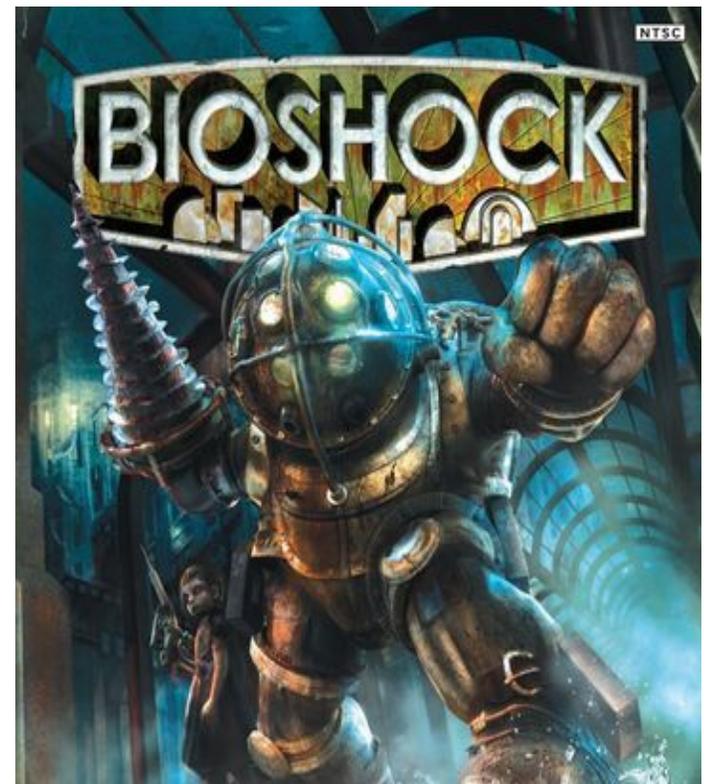
My experience with the Summer Bridge Program was very nice, I got to learn a lot of stuff like new words, a lot about architecture like famous buildings and how they are made, as well as famous architects and designers. I got to meet a lot of people. Everyone was very nice to me and also about the school and the building. I feel a lot more comfortable and safer now that I know a little bit more about the teachers and how the system works.

How Bioshock proved video games can be more than entertainment

Written by Silas Rodriguez

While the video game industry is at an all time high, some people still resist the idea of their legitimacy as a form of art. In many ways I understand why some would say this. The most popular video games seem, on the surface, to be mindless shooters and beat em ups. However there has been a trend since the 2000's to make games "cinematic", in the sense that they could finally start telling compelling stories with fleshed out characters. As technology has gotten better with every generation, so has the storytelling to the point where now it feels like we're partaking in playable movies. Games like "Metal Gear Solid" and the "Red Dead Redemption" series have garnered critical acclaim for their incredible and deep narratives. However, while great, the push for this experience doesn't make games stand out from other forms of entertainment as much anymore. Take "God of War"(2018) for example. The game puts you in control of a God as he and his son cut their way through the mythical lands of Norse mythology taking on other gods and monsters alike. However at its core it's a story about how a distant father and son deal with the loss of a loved one. Those fantastical elements while cool, aren't the crux of the narrative. The point is that it's an experience that could be had elsewhere. If you take the plot and the fantasy elements and switch it around a bit, that story could be told many different ways in various forms of media whether it's movies, books, comics, T.V, etc.

That brings me to the center of this essay, 2007's "Bioshock". Bioshock is a horror lite first person shooter that puts you in the shoes of a faceless and silent protagonist named Jack whom after his plane crashes in the ocean, finds a lighthouse that leads him to an underwater city named "Rapture" built in the style of 1950's America, that is in the midst of a power struggle between two warring industrialists. Said power struggle has pushed the city to the brink of total failure as it has been overrun by criminals with superpowers. There is a lot more to it but for now that's the basic plot. What makes Bioshock stand out as opposed to games like the aforementioned "God of war", is that its narrative is something that can only be told within the confines of a videogame. And the fact that it cleverly uses its medium to make a commentary on it. There are many games that choose to tell their narrative in unorthodox ways, yet Bioshock stands among them as probably the most successful commercially and critically. The game doesn't focus really on the protagonist but rather the world around him. The world of Bioshock is too vast to truly expand upon, but everything from the symbolism, to the artistic elements and design are absolutely engrossing. This game is incredibly dense thematically and visually. So much so I could not possibly do it justice within this essay. So instead I'm going to discuss how this game's unique form of storytelling not only got me to think about how I viewed myself, but also how I write stories.



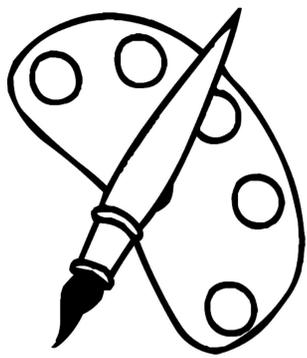
To understand why I feel that way, you first have to understand possibly the best part of this game, and who I believe to be one of the most fascinating antagonists in video game history, Andrew Ryan. Ryan is the ultimate capitalist and is based on real world figure and founder of objectivism, Ayn Rand. Essentially Andrew Ryan was a man who felt chained down by society. A true objectivist who felt that the world was filled with "parasites" trying to take what he earned. In the opening of the game while traveling to his underwater city he proudly proclaims in a pre-recorded message, "Is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow? 'No!' says the man in Washington, 'It belongs to the poor.' 'No!' says the man in the Vatican, 'It belongs to God.' 'No!' says the man in Moscow, 'It belongs to everyone.' I rejected those answers; instead, I chose something different. I chose the impossible. I chose... Rapture, a city where the artist would not fear the censor, where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality, where the great would not be constrained by the small! And with the sweat of your brow, Rapture can become your city as well."

Andrew Ryan built the city of Rapture with its pillars of Art, Science and Industry being completely unregulated. And his commitment to that proves to be the city's downfall. At what point do we accept that we have failed? One of many questions posed to us in the game. And the first one that made me reflect on our world and the dangers of absolute control. See one thing I loved about this is that the game lets you get into the psychology of its characters and many more by leaving audio tapes from them scattered throughout. It makes sense because while the game itself is linear and scripted, your character is always alone and, more importantly, silent, so you get to fill the shoes of the protagonist and are allowed to formulate your own opinions throughout the story. In other words this game essentially tells its story from a 2nd person perspective. There was never a scene where Andrew Ryan spoke to a character about his philosophy and where a protagonist interacts with him. He's talking to you, and you are allowed to formulate your own feelings regardless and not play as a character with their own thoughts. The game never takes away control, it just allows you to exist in this world and it's all the better for it. You can look online and find tons of videos of people giving their analysis on what they feel this perspective adds to the game and means. However one thing that is generally agreed upon by the players is the meaning behind the incredible plot twist and how said 2nd person perspective changes the meanings behind it.



To keep it as simple as possible in the final confrontation with Andrew Ryan, it is revealed that you are a sleeper agent who is being mind controlled by your guide, a common trope in games, to kill Andrew Ryan. In the end he actually uses said mind control that he patented to force your player to kill him. A bit of poetic justice to be killed by the product of his hypocrisy being that his city was founded on freedom and he was killed by someone whose freedom he helped take away. It's important to say this is one of the only times control is ever taken away from you for an extended period of time and the only true cutscene in the game aside from the ending wrap up. It's also important they do take away control from the player because in Andrew Ryan's last words he says that the difference between a man and a slave is that a man chooses and a slave obeys. This is where that perspective really comes into play because in most video games you are given a linear path to follow. No matter what you do or how you do it nothing changes and more so, you are forced to a scripted path. This game at first felt different. There was no scripted character and you felt like you had control, even allowed to make decisions during the game. But when it's revealed that your actions were technically never yours, it adds an interesting element that no movie, show, or book could possibly replicate. While it is very meta and on the nose, it's still what makes this game stand above the rest in regards to its narrative. Maybe it's a commentary on the people who play games and their willingness to be controlled inside and outside the game, whether it's by a fictional character or real leader. That even when we've been told we have no control we still take orders anyway

Though it may seem pretentious to some it got me to think about my real world, something most games don't. Mostly when I play a game I enjoy the narrative and that is it. But rarely does a piece of entertainment get me to apply its themes to my world. I started to question whether we really did have free will. When I started to question free will is when I realized why the antagonist is so good. I actually not only sympathized with him but, in some cases, agreed with parts of his extremist philosophy. One of the things we learn about Andrew Ryan is that he believes altruism is the greatest evil in the history of mankind. One that impedes the freedom of everybody including himself when he created his own city. While that may be a stretch, from a cynical point of view there is much merit to this statement. What happened to the free will of those Americans drafted into a war? Or those some Japanese Americans who were put into internment camps by their own government? Why should we be asked to give our money away to those who did not earn it via taxation? Probably the most obvious examples of liberties being taken under the guise of altruism. Now while as I said the villain's perspective on these might be too harsh and in no way would I be calling anyone a slave for following the law. Though like any good piece of art, it got me to think and that's far more than I can say for most video games. I don't have the answers to these questions but I shall pose one more. Are freedoms actually freedoms if they are not absolute? And if not, what is it being sold here in America? For now though I leave you with a quote from the late great George Carlin to bring it all home: "They call it the American dream because you have to be sleeping to believe it."



Student Artist Showcase: Elijah Roman



Elijah Roman is a senior here at WHSAD and is the subject of this artist showcase. Elijah is a multifaceted artist who is not only a talented drawer, but also for a time used to make custom sneakers as a side business. The piece to the left are a pair of Nike Cortez he hand painted, inspired by the rap group “Tribe Called Quest’s” 1992 album, “The Low End Theory”. Using a mix of acrylic paint and softener he is able to stick long lasting designs to all his shoes that won’t ever feel rough or come off. While he has many other shoe designs, he considers this to be one of his favorites.



As mentioned, he is also great at drawing. The piece on the bottom left is something he had sketched up after listening to Queen. He had drawn the image by wanting to replicate someone who looks as though they could be from that era of 80’s which you can see from the hairstyle to the jacket. When I asked him why he loves to make art, he said, “I feel like art is something I can do to vent what I feel and what I think and can show my creativity in different ways. Commonly, I like to draw and sketch different personalities and people in unique ways to create characters I can relate to.”



To the right are another pair he’s proud of. A pair of Nike Cortez he modified to represent his home borough of Queens. Looking closely you can see all the Queens neighborhoods handwritten on the shoes. After talking for awhile, he seemed very passionate about his work and although the pandemic may have put his shoes business on hold he still draws everyday. So I asked him where he hoped his art would take him and he said, “I hope to take my talents to a level in which I can create my own story with these characters and create a unique environment to build off them. To draw and write my own story as either a comic or manga.”



To be apart of the student artist showcase email either koestner@whsad.org or silas.rodriquez@whsadstudents.org to have your talents featured in a future issue of The Column.