

THE HUCKLEBERRY

The COVID-19 Report



IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARC

THE COVID
CHRONICLES: EP. 1

NEW REALITIES

MY QUARANTEN
JOURNEY

THE ART OF WINDOW
DRESSING

VALIDATING MEMES

AS OF JANUARY 21ST,
2021

Welcome!

Welcome to HuckleBerry's Student-Created Newspaper! The articles in this newspaper are written by students in our High School Journalism class, and are intended for a High School audience. The views expressed here are from our students! We are practicing fact-checking, story-telling, and other aspects of Journalism, while exploring the ideas and issues that are on the minds of our students.

We hope you enjoy!

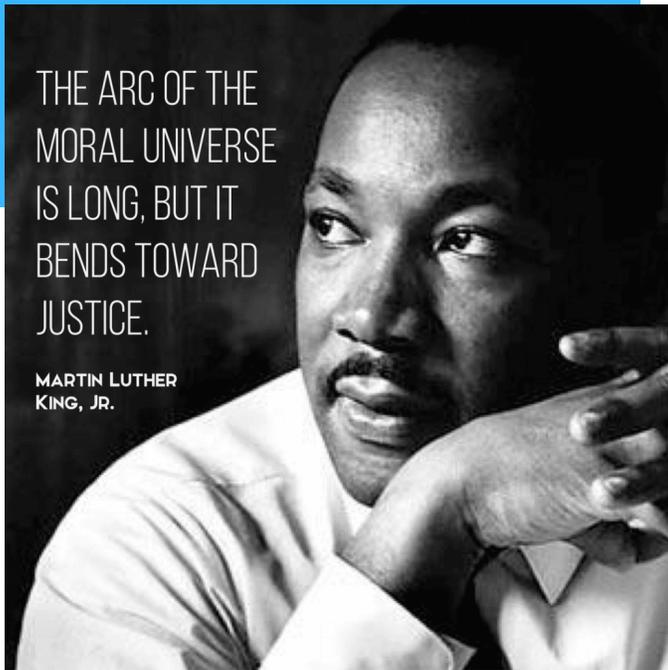
Meet The Staff

Ronan Berger	Bailei Johnson
Cora Burch	Maya Turin
Bella Horn	Holden Wilbur

Advisor: Stephanie Berry

THE ARC OF THE
MORAL UNIVERSE
IS LONG, BUT IT
BENDS TOWARD
JUSTICE.

MARTIN LUTHER
KING, JR.



The Arc appears in each issue of The Huckleberry as a show of support for marginalized communities, featuring a story about the community in question.

By Cora Burch

This issue of The Huckleberry, The Arc will be focusing on LGBTQ+ rights. Because it is also currently Black History Month, this piece will be a crossover between the two topics, focusing on a LGBTQ+ person who made a difference during the Civil Rights Era: Bayard Rustin.

Born on March 17 of 1912 in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Bayard Rustin grew up strongly opposed to racial segregation. As a teen, Rustin “refused to sit in the segregated section of the cinema”. He attended the City College of New York, and went on to join the civil rights movement. He was “a leading activist” in the 1940s and ‘50s, “helping to initiate a 1947 Freedom Ride to challenge... racial segregation,” and, through all of this, he was proudly gay.

Homosexuality during this time period was greatly frowned upon, homophobia that often

turned violent pushing many people into the closet, yet Rustin chose— after being arrested and then outed —to be completely open about his sexuality. But according to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, criticism over his sexuality “led Rustin to have a more background role in the Civil Rights Movement.” Because he didn’t want his sexuality to negatively affect the movement, “Rustin’s efforts are not widely known”.

Rustin was incredibly influential during the civil rights movement, working alongside John Lewis with organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He also worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King as an advisor, and came up with the idea to march on Washington. In the 1970s and ‘80s, Rustin became a powerful voice in the LGBTQ+ movement as well.

Opinionated, brave and influential, Bayard Rustin has impacted the civil rights movement to a great extent, a strong figure in the fight for both equality and LGBTQ+ rights. “He felt that injustice everywhere should not be tolerated and must be protested,” and in his fight for equality, Rustin has undeniably curved the arc of the moral universe closer to justice.

“

We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers –
Bayard Rustin

EPISODE 1: THE BEGINNING - MARCH

By Ronan Berger

I still remember the day we were asked to leave.

Serving greasy Domino's pizza to eager fourth-graders as a part of Friday's Pizza Week, I had not a care in the world except to eat the leftover slices that no one ordered-it was the only reason I "faithfully" volunteered. Earlier today, we were notified about someone getting sick from a new disease? Eh, whatever, who cares? It's not that big of a deal, I remember naively thinking to myself. Then, Boom! My Mom's 2016 Mazda CX-5 slid into a parking spot out of the corner of my eye, two hours early. Interesting, what's this about?, I ponder, as I lazily dump triangle-shaped cholesterol onto paper plates. My Mom rushed out of the car to retrieve me. "Ronan, it's time to leave. Stephanie contacted all the parents; two people were infected across the street at Henry Mayo." "Really?", I replied, bewildered at why this demanded such an anxious response to leave. Little did I know how much of a dilemma would ensue, like nearly all of us.

As my Mom dragged me into the car whilst I mourned over the forgotten Domino's pizza with a regret unexplainable to man, I was still wondering why this whole COVID thing was such a big deal. The rest of that day was pretty normal; I went home, did some homework, had soccer practice, played some video



The Covid Chronicles: A Review of A Teenager's Experience Of The 21st Century Black Plague

Disclaimer: some of this information may or may not be factual. Some of the situations have been warped so that the story flows easily. I've tried my best to keep my facts straight, but I can't make any guarantees. The quotes are likely rough estimates of what I think that person said, which might be a good thing? I don't know. Well, uh, anyways, enjoy my satiric version of events. It's not meant to be taken seriously, and its purpose is to be offensive and humorous while telling a story.

games, ate dinner, and went to bed. The standard procedure. Saturday morning, like any other. Don't remember what was for breakfast, but I do remember what was on CBSN at 10 AM: Over 10,000 cases of this COVID-thing worldwide in 3 days? Who cares, not my problem. People are panic-buying toilet paper faster than Germany's economic collapse after WW1? Let them, see if I care. *We just went to Costco last week.*

I had little to no care for the global plague; I was certain it would be of absolutely no concern to me. Mom walked in with a solemn look on her face. As I devoured whatever-it-was I had for breakfast, she requested my attention.

“Ronan, there’s something I need to tell you.”

“Hmm?” I said, non-committedly.

“School’s been canceled due to COVID. You’ll have a four-week spring break.” Mom replied distastefully.

“Oh,” I said between bites of whatever-it-was. “That sucks.”

...

In all seriousness, I didn’t give a crap about classes being canceled. On the contrary, I was delighted at the prospect of an increased break. More free time, fewer restrictions, and most importantly, less of a workload! What’s not to love? Ah, how I wish my pathetically unsophisticated goals of self-fulfillment were as simple as they were nearly a year ago.

To Be Continued:
stay tuned for the next
issue to read Episode 2!

“

I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and to incur my own abhorrence.

– Frederick Douglass



The only way to right wrongs is to shine the light of truth upon them.

- Ida B. Wells

Lyuba Rozenbaum has been working with special needs adults, ages 18-22, for 15 years. Because everything is online, her work has become more challenging, and communicating with her students has become difficult over Zoom. She used to do many social activities with her students like going out into public places and having her students socialize which isn't possible anymore. For some of her students, this is their last year to learn these important life skills. And now the process has been slowed down. For them, she says "This was their last opportunity."

Rozenbaum's students have varying opinions about having to stay home. Some of her students enjoy the idea of staying at home, but others don't and would prefer to do in-person activities. Because Rozenbaum can't do all the regular activities she used to do with the students, she had to create a whole new library of activities that can keep them busy, but sometimes this still isn't enough. The current stay-at-home situation is forcing parents to be more involved in their child's education. She used to only see parents once a year, but now she sees them constantly since the learning is over Zoom and a lot of the time the kids need help.

Half of the students Rozenbaum works with are low-functioning autistic and they need a lot of assistance with the activities. "The parents are now observing and it's forcing them to be more involved," she says. Kids who are not in Special Education are usually capable of doing work independently, whereas her students need much more attention and care. They can't pick things up as fast over the computer and it's a big struggle for them. She says she isn't personally struggling to teach them as much now as she was before, but all of this is very time-consuming. Creating all the material for them requires time and money and that all has to be recreated every week. Many things are not even possible to teach over the computer. "In the beginning, it was really really difficult," Rosenbaum says. "All the stuff I've been doing for 14.5 years isn't possible to do anymore! Nobody was ready for this change."

Rosembaum enjoys working with her students a lot, whether it is in person or over Zoom. She said that even though teaching online has been hard for her she's finally adjusting to the change and hopefully so are her students. Rosenbaum is hoping that even though her students are even more challenged than before, they can still learn well.

2020 has been my first year homeschooling. My life before quarantine was very different than it is now. This time last year I was in my second semester of seventh grade, in a traditional school at the second school I've ever been to in my life. At my junior high we had seven classes every day, which made me very busy having lots of homework including soccer practice. Last year I was on four different soccer teams having practice five days a week plus games. Fast forwarding to today, I have switched to homeschooling, have very little homework, and soccer practice only some days of the week. During quarantine I started a new school, learned more about my community, and got to see quarantine from my little brother's prospective.

When quarantine first started I thought everything had changed for the worse. I couldn't go to soccer practice, I had to always stay home, and couldn't see any of my good friends. The virus affected my community from places going out of business and nothing being on the shelves in the stores. Personally when quarantine first started nobody really knew what was happening and much of the food was out of stock. But this has made me and my family more prepared.

Right now I am not sure how life is going to return but, I hope to go to school safely and for me and my family to be healthy.

I wasn't sure if my little brother and I experienced quarantine the same or different so I asked him some questions. Here is what he said about being in quarantine:

MY QUARANTINE JOURNEY

By Bailei Johnson

- "Well, I like online school because we get to stay home but, in in-person school I get to play with my friends."
- "I play soccer and we have to stay six part away and we don't have any games."
- "Yes because I couldn't exercise as much as I used to."
- "My mindset is that I think that quarantine has brought me and my family together."
- "I don't think it will return to how it used to be but I want to return without wearing masks and in person."

I learned that quarantine has affected him by not being able to play soccer, not going to school, and not seeing his friend. How I experienced quarantine was similar but different because I still got to talk to my friends even though I was only able to go to soccer some days a week. And under quarantine, my family and I started some new things we haven't done before such as movie nights, cooking more foods, and more activities.



Each of you, as an individual, must pick your own goals. Listen to others, but do not become a blind follower.

- Thurgood Marshall

THE ART OF WINDOW DRESSING

By Bella Horn

On Friday, March 13th, 2020, I remember sitting on the floor of a classroom, back against the wall, while my teacher calmly laid out the “worst case scenarios” of the coronavirus pandemic. It was the third time that week I’d heard one such proclamation; since Monday, each teacher had taken it upon themselves to somberly state “the facts”: as young high school students, we should be worrying more about older people and those who were immune compromised instead of ourselves, and should focus on hand washing and other sanitation. We were told that once the virus reached our city limits, things would be affected for 2-4 weeks before we could carry on with our lives as normal: an extended spring break.

An hour or so after I’d received Friday’s Classroom Covid Briefing, news spread around the grounds that the first confirmed coronavirus patient in our town had been checked into the hospital across the street. I went home early, not necessarily out of concern for my health, but because I was unenthused about going to play rehearsal and enjoyed having an excuse handed to me. The idea of giving up a social opportunity or a goodbye in favor of going home seems so foreign to me now.

In the safety of the car, I thought about the rapid timeline of this whole ordeal. The word “coronavirus” had entered my brain in December of 2019, when my family still attended Christmas parties and boarded planes without a second thought. The word entered conversation in mid February. News conversation. Adult conversation. Nothing that applied to us kids. On March 12th I’d walked from school to the CVS with a group of 10 friends. We caused scenes in the aisles and picked through fully stocked shelves. We ran back laughing in the rain, and then sprawled all over an empty classroom, drying our wet shoes in front of an air heater and lamenting about ex-boyfriends and college. There was no talk of coronavirus or sanitation now that adults were out of the room. We offered each other sips of our drinks through the same straws.

Now, not even 24 hours later, I was headed home for two weeks of never-been-done-before quarantine. It was odd. A little bit worrisome. A little bit exciting. Hopefully too many people wouldn’t get sick and there wouldn’t be too many deaths. Hopefully homework would be called off. Maybe I could finally learn how to make friendship bracelets and catch up on Project Runway.

It wasn't until the two weeks had long passed and the country was entering its second month of lockdown that I realized this was not just an extended vacation, and that my life would be forever altered by the events of this sobering chapter. I hate to say that this realization didn't stem from my own experiences of being home—since Day 1 I had been perfectly satisfied as long as I'm living in the moment, focused on moving from one activity to the next—or from looking at the numbers of cases and deaths. During this process, I very quickly desensitized myself to statistics, unconsciously and as a coping mechanism. My realizations of how life-changing this pandemic would be came from observing the people around me giving up on selflessness. Sometime in May, I had a woman with two college degrees explain to me that, “at this point we just have to go on with our lives.”

“What constitutes ‘our lives’?” I remember asking myself.

Is it the physical space in which we work and learn and interact? Is it attending Christmas parties, getting on planes, and sharing straws with friends? Is it whether or not we're at home or out on the town? No. External life, our circumstances, are things that adapt and evolve based on our internal life: the ways in which we grow, change, and mature as people. The internal life is the most important type of life, the type that can never truly be altered or hindered by external circumstances. It's what allows us to find peace within relative difficulty, if we so let it. It's where the true essence of ourselves and the

real fabric of our lives lies. Everything else is window dressing.

If there's anything I've learned throughout the slow and agonizing progression of this cultural reset, it's that divides are forming: not just between people of different political beliefs, races, and religions, but between those who value the internal over the external, and those who value the opposite. Pre-pandemic, it was easy, enjoyable, and all too common to live off window dressing and only occasionally dip into the internal life; to be so caught up in one's physical routine of school, work, and social events that emotional and spiritual growth took a backseat. The status quo has now been changed. The previous way of life is now tangibly dangerous and life-threatening. It is almost impossible to put one's stock in the same things without endangering others. In many ways, the only thing we have that is safe is our internal life. And it is the people who have failed to make this crucial transition from the old way to the new that have taught me more over the last 10 months than anything or anyone else. What is it that makes us so rigidly attached to the accouterments of our lives? What is so terrifying about giving up the material things and simply being alone with our inner selves? I've found that when we strip away the window dressing, a feeling of emotional nakedness sets in: a sense of vulnerability that forces even the most staunch Americans to examine their own bias and values. This type of forced presence often makes individuals aware of their own startling selfishness, as well as prejudices and ulterior motives they'd

ever acknowledged. No person wants to feel wrong or corrupt, or to admit their own flaws. This is why we fear giving up external life; it's not the physical stuff and nonsense that we cling to, but the mask it provides. Any series of fluff and filler that distracts us from the yawning truth inside: we still have growing left to do. Our internal life needs us and we need it.

So when a woman told me that despite the pandemic we just “had to go on with our lives”, I nodded and agreed with her. Yes of course, we needed to go on living and experiencing. The irony was that she and I meant two completely different things. She spoke of her life as a series of physical occasions, peppered with hugs and meals. I spoke of my life as what was growing and changing within me: the new passions and motivations I felt, the love I shared with others.

I know now that an ideal external life is a privilege and not a right, and that these circumstances should be valued but not counted upon for happiness or fulfillment. What is truly necessary to make our experience exciting and fulfilling lives inside of us, once we've braved the hills and valleys of our own imperfection of course. Our lives can never truly be put on hold, they trek on despite the sacrifice and discomfort of this harrowing time, we have enough to get by.



**You may write me down
in history with your
bitter, twisted lines. You
may trod me in the very
dirt, but still, like dust, I'll
rise.**

- Maya Angelou

VALIDATING MEMES

By Holden Wilbur

First I wanted to validate the recovery rate for the Covid virus. According to Jason Oke, Senior Statistician at the University of Oxford, About 99.0% of people who catch Covid survive. Although the number in the meme isn't extremely far from the truth, it still means that around 100 in 10,000 people will die, instead of 3 in 10,000 like the meme says. There are also many unseen factors at play such as:

- Not everyone gets tested
- 30% of Covid death counts may not be classified properly (cidrap.umn.edu)

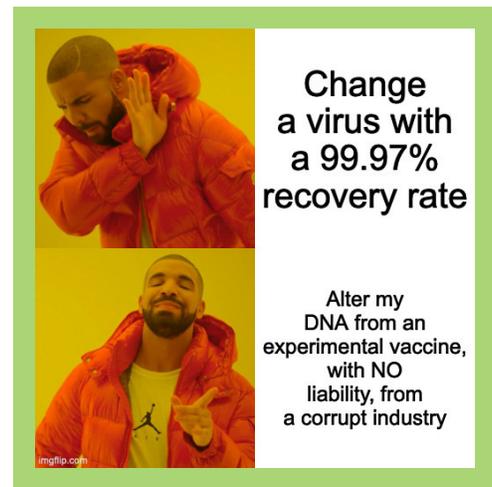
So while the first part of this meme is inaccurate, it is not extremely far from what scientists believe to be true.

The 2nd part of the meme addresses the validity of new vaccines and vaccine companies:

The first statement says that the vaccine modifies your DNA, which is a thing people assume from all vaccines, but that is not the case. According to health.harvard.edu which words it well, after injecting the vaccine into your body, *"mRNA enters human cells and instructs them to produce the "spike" protein found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus. Soon after a cell makes the spike protein, the cell breaks down the mRNA into harmless pieces. At no point does the mRNA enter the cell's nucleus, which is where our genetic material (DNA) lives."*

This disproves the first statement of the meme, but it still does not mean that nothing can go wrong just because it doesn't "alter DNA".

The second statement in the box says that there is no liability, which is true. There is no liability because the US government has granted Pfizer and Moderna immunity from liability.



This is true for ALL vaccine makers. They are all immune to any damage they cause.

Basically, we can't sue these companies if there are any side-effects. You can't sue vaccine companies, even if something goes terribly wrong. This makes this portion of the meme true.

The last statement is classifying the entire vaccine industry as "corrupt". This is the hardest statement to validate in this meme. The vaccine industry has long been known to make hasty vaccines that they did not necessarily make for the greater good, just for profit. We know that vaccines can have negative side effects, such as death, and some people believe that autism is partially caused by vaccines, although that is not scientifically proven. The industry has done some fishy things recently, such as the HPV Vaccine which was developed quickly and then caused terrible side effects such as miscarriage. But the industry also made the world safer with vaccines for diseases such as polio, measles, and rubella. Now, the industry returns when the world needed it most, coming in the time of need for the quickly produced CoronaVirus vaccine that took under a year to complete, which is a great feat. Many people are concerned about the Covid vaccine, as it seemed to be quite rushed, but that's the risk we all take when taking vaccines.

AS OF JANUARY 21ST, 2021

By Cora Burch

Yesterday,
when the drama was over,
I asked for a copy of the year in color,
the way it should have been,
the way my family and I
grinned
back in 2015,
back when my baby cousins were born,
held proud beneath the setting sun of a
a kinder wing of politics.

This is the way of things,
the way we shine until darkness falls again because
darkness always comes at sundown,
the way we drown in the most
beautiful of springs,
kings and queens overthrown when
the strings of fate are cut
short before our very eyes,
the way we try to ignore
the darkening sky.

I ask myself each day
why did it take so long,
why did only the harming of a
white monument make people call it
monumental, black casualties
addressed casually,
women's rights a debate,
the LGBTQ a coup—
but they forgot it was a coup
on a government of hate.

Were there not perfect enough examples,
not good enough samples
to get people on their feet screaming,
no flawless comparison between how
gun-bearing men are treated,
no Charlottesville KKK to
get people to say “okay, that's enough”?
I want George Floyd's life to be worth more
than twenty dollars.

In my fantasies I see
something named justice that
can't be called a memory,
a balanced scale in heaven that has
always sat crooked in one direction,
a dreamstate where
all guns are obliterated from our fates,
Pandora's box sealed shut
like we were protecting Aurora.

In this world I grew,
there were girls who
still knew innocence,
LGBTQ who pushed through and
found acceptance,
and no one died of a disease
too awful to be set aside.
Children played games in the street,
tag and hide and seek,
weathered out the
fictive storm together—
because pandemics didn't happen
in real life.

In this world I've built,
a bright young woman holds office,
democracy rebuilt under her hands,
a realistic promise of justice
chorused throughout the nation.
She does not allow girls
to be called inappropriate,
trans boys to be called female,
African-Americans criminals or
Latinx children murderers.

I hope that one day soon,
everyone knows that
those things aren't okay.

A dream where love floods our
poisoned rivers,
fills the cracks and fissures of hate with
unconditional acceptance,
drowning out the walls that segregate.
A dream where “future” is not defined
by fire, ice, and storms.

I want to comfort my little cousins,
tell them that this will all end soon,
that one day people will be loving but this
once-in-a-blue-moon year
has made even living difficult.

It sprung upon us fast,
March 13th,
a Friday when we were still in school,
a time when
we thought we would outlast
the pandemic across the sea.
I watched as my friends began going home to
obey a new set of rules,
we obeyed and learned to be alone,
learned to cope, to
have hope when we're
this far from finding the keystone.

School year slowed to a stop,
a time I thought I'd spend
before the backdrop of a
musical theater production
canceled like everything else,
canceled like the voices for change that
pushed hard against injustice
brought on because some just don't trust,
brought on because although
slavery and segregation have ended,
Dred Scott is still pending at the
feet of the courts.

Things are no longer the same, we
no longer take the trains,
break the chains that keep us inside or
fall behind on sanitization,
safety, and
health.

Haven't gotten sick in a year now,
this new pattern beneficial but
ironically sickening,
case rises quickening.
The initial scare's dawn is over but
seriousness isn't coming from the people in power
and
I still cower at night.

It can feel the shell of control
cracking beneath my skin,
feel the need to hug my
extended kin,
the ones outside of this
cramped bubble of safety,
want to be reckless and
bravely cross that
border wall before death,
take off that that
mask that
lets me take a breath.

One day we'll get out,
I whisper to myself at night,
and it is all I can do to not
curl up tight and cry.

Outside of our bubble,
rain patters on the concrete,
a strong beat lulling us into a dream,
keeping us from
tears and screams.

Sometimes closing eyes is
simpler than seeing light,
seeing what's right and
acting upon it on the
path toward "alright."
It's midnight now and
we can barely see our hands,
clinging to a cliff above the wasteland.

We find peace in our simplicity,
puzzles on card tables our felicity,
and that's what we wish this could be.

The rain falls harder
as we fall deeper into this
pit of repetition,
lost ambition,
mission circled down the drain.
We no longer pause to notice that
it's 9:00 PM
and because we have nothing to do but
sleep,
time for bed.

**Eat.
Sleep.
Repeat.**

**We are lost and searching,
yearning for landmarks that
tell us where to turn,
when to adjourn this
horror show,
deeply concerned but
there's no trace of help,
no staircase out from this hellscape,
stuck inside a line of caution tape while
outside,
people shout our names.**

**A stack of stones is lodged in my throat.
*I don't want to talk about it.***

**I want to rewind time,
replay the events of every
tomorrow or yesterday that
made my life special,
memorize every laugh and grin
until every when and win
becomes now, and within.**

**I never knew 2020
before she shook my hand but
I wish I'd just stopped wishing;
my life was plenty and
I still took things for granted,
kept thinking about my cousins,
all younger by
at least seven years of innocence,
thought in my naivety
I might see them again
this past summer,
thought even if something bad happened
we could comfort each other,
took for granted that
I even got to meet them twice,
forgetting gravity in my fantasy,
not looking up as the ball dropped
heavy and fast.
Things like this happen
—it is the way of things.**



**Our lives begin to end
the date we become
silent about things that
matter.**

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.