

Staff Editorial

Activism begins in the voting booths

In the past several years, young people have driven major movements for social and political change: we declared that Time’s Up, we showed up for the Women’s March in masses, and we led the protests in Ferguson and Baltimore. This week, we walked out and said #NeverAgain.

In the Republican primaries for the 2016 presidential election, we broke youth participation records in close to 20 states. In the Democratic primaries, almost two million of us voted for Bernie Sanders; he received more votes from young people than all of the other Republican and Democratic candidates received combined. The moment that Donald Trump was ultimately elected as president has been characterized as pivotal for many young people on both sides of the aisle.

We are not a politically apathetic generation. But, we are still not doing enough at the voting booths. In the 2016 presidential election, 46.1 percent of 18 to 29 year-olds voted, according to the United States Census Bureau. The Census Bureau also found that only 19.2 percent of 18 to 29 year-olds in the Illinois 9th Congressional District and only 19.7 percent of 18 to 29 year-olds in the Illinois 17th Congressional District vote.

One explanation for such low voter turnout, often spouted by Gen X-ers and Baby Boomers, is that young people are simply lazy. Older Americans presume that we do not care about the future of our country.

But, many of us do not vote because we are disillusioned by the unresponsiveness of American government. We are put off by the allegations of sexual assault, the corruption, and the disingenuousness of politicians. But we only enable the entrenchment of bad politics when we choose to sit out rather than actively oppose them.

There is also a misconception that an individual vote does not matter. The argument can be made that the electoral college, not individuals, determine presidential elections. But, local elections come down to close to one hundred votes. Local elections, for everyone from school board officers to state senators, also directly affect our lives in ways that federal elections do not. These are the officials who allocate spending for public schools, who pass or block gun control laws, and who draw borders of congressional districts. The most effective and continuous action often begins at the lowest level, and we get a say in the direction of that action.

According to state law, to vote, a person must be a United States citizen who has resided in Illinois for 30 days prior to Election Day. He or she must also be 18 by Election Day; a 17 year-old may vote in the primary election if he or she will be 18 by Election Day. In Illinois, a person can register to vote online, by mail, or in person. Students who are now applying or will soon apply for a driver’s license can also register to vote at the DMV. The primary election for local and state seats is on Mar. 20, and Early Voting is ongoing.

We have not only a right, but a duty to decide what changes we wish to see, and then to fight for those changes—both on the streets and in the voting booths.

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It’s 2018. Let me wear a tank top

by Mia Sherin



Sometimes, I sweat at badminton practice. Crazy, I know. It turns out it is actually an intense sport with conditioning. Not to say that I don’t sweat after immediately starting to run, but still. We work out.

Sometimes, now this is sort of a secret, the gyms are hot. Careful, don’t act too surprised. I guess you could say this combination of heat and running would make a normal human being sweat and be a little uncomfortable. Good investigating skills. You are correct.

For some reason, someone, probably a long time ago, decided that girls’ badminton players should not be allowed to wear tank tops.

Why? Oh, I don’t know. It probably has something to do with our messed up patriarchal society that believes shoulders are oh-so scandalous. But who knows? Maybe they’ve never worked out and don’t understand the sensation that we call armpit sweat.

So, I just have one request to the lord of the badminton rules. It’s 2018. Let me wear a tank top.

The official IHSA badminton rules have recently allowed “sleeveless” shirts, but still keep a strict ban on razorbacks and

spaghetti straps. This applies to team shirts at competitions, but not necessarily to practice attire. At New Trier, sleeveless shirts are still not allowed at practice.

As I have been recently injured, our head coach often has me sit out for parts of practice to rest. He has quickly come to realize that this “relaxation time” has turned into my “lobbying for allowing tank tops at practice” time. However, he very generously agreed to let me sit down and talk about this even more with him during the school day.

He is a saint, but has not surrendered in this battle. One could say it’s an even fight. Good (him), versus even more good (me).

“I know that it’s important to you guys specifically for comfort, and sometimes our gyms are hot, so I do understand it is a concern of yours. But on my list of priorities it is much lower,” he explained.

As former Athletic Director and head badminton coach Debbie Ofcky recently retired, this is his first year as head coach of the badminton team. So, it is understandable that he has many other new responsibilities on his plate.

Well, my question was, how much time out of his day does it take to decide, “Hey, I’m going to let them wear tank tops!” which he replied, “I want to put more thought and consideration into it.” Coach: 1. Mia: 0.

Just kidding. It looks something more like this. Society and

objectification of women: 10000. Mia and Coach and everyone else: 0.

With there being a new transition to two male coaches, he expressed his worry of the assumptions people might make if the rule were to be changed this year. “Inferences aren’t made when you have female coaches with female sports. I wouldn’t want an inference that we are there for anything other than bettering you guys as young ladies.”

While I do understand this point completely, I do wish that it could be seen from the other side. Are we any better than society if we entertain these worries?

It is clear that this is not a New Trier specific problem. Ruth Steinhouse, a sophomore badminton player at Evanston Township High School, had a memorable experience at this year’s tryouts. “When I was at badminton, I wore a tank top at tryouts, and at the end of the tryout my coach called me out in front of everyone to say that what I was wearing was not appropriate to wear to badminton,” she said.

She added, “She doesn’t want your ‘girls to fall out.’ Those were her words.”

If you agree with me that there is not a worthy justification for the ban on tank tops, help me change this rule. Not in four years, not next year, not at the end of the season. But tomorrow. Or even today.

It’s the small victories. Just ask my armpit sweat.

The struggles of being Jew-ish

by Michelle Yurovsky



I consider myself to be Jewish. My dad is a Russian Jewish immigrant who moved to the United States when he was thirteen years old. With them, he and his family brought their faith along.

My mom, on the other hand, was born in Mongolia. She was raised Buddhist.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Jewish faith, traditional Judaism maintains that a person is a Jew if his or her mother is Jewish, regardless of who his or her father is. It seems as though Judaism is more of a nationality than a religion, since a person is born into the faith.

Technically, under these laws, I am not considered Jewish.

Growing up, I never thought much about this. I thought that because I believe in G-d and practice, I was a part of the religion.

I went to temple and participated in Shabbat, which is the Jewish equivalent of Sabbath. Now, I am part of a Jewish youth group called BBYO (B’nai B’rith Youth Organization). The only requirement of BBYO is that an individual must be Jewish to join.

I consider myself to be Jewish, but apparently that doesn’t mean I am.

The older I get, the more doubt I have about how Jewish I really am. According to the historical laws of Judaism, I am not.

I am starting to realize how unfair this situation is for me. I have looked into what I would have to do to finally be able to say without any sort of doubt in my mind that I am 100 percent Jewish.

When I started researching conversion processes, I discovered something surprising. According to Judaism 101, “Judaism does not seek out converts, and actively discourages converts (because a person does not need to be a Jew to be righteous in G-d’s eyes).” I feel as though I am being discouraged for wanting to finally be able to be a valid Jew without having any questions asked.

What baffles me the most is that the religion dissuades conversion, while all of the Jewish matriarchs such as Ruth were also converts.

Then, when I decide to officially convert, according to the halakha, which is the Jewish law, a rabbi must make three intense attempts to dissuade the prospective convert from committing to the faith.

At first, when I read this I was utterly confused. But it soon became clear to me why this was a part of the process.

Jews have significantly more responsibilities than non-Jews. A non-Jewish person just has to follow the seven commandments to be considered a righteous person. Jews, on the other hand, have to follow 613 commandments that were given to us in the Torah.

Having Jewish children is a large part of the culture. Jews want to leave a lineage of future Jewish community members, and for that reason and many others I would like to raise my children to be Jewish. But, if I have children they will not be Jewish, because the mother determines her child’s faith.

Then the question came up: if one really wanted a Jewish family, why would one marry someone who is not? I thought to myself about my dad in particular. He tells me how he would prefer if he had Jewish grandkids, and if I married someone Jewish.

The problem is that with him marrying my Buddhist mother, there are extra steps that I have to go through to make this goal attainable. Thank G-d that he did or else I would not be here, but it creates obstacles that could have potentially been avoided.

On the topic of interfaith marriages, traditional Judaism does not permit them. The Torah even goes as far to state that the children of these families would be lost to Judaism. Although I have seen this to be true with some of my friends who are both Catholic and Jewish, I firmly believe this does not apply to all children of interfaith marriages.

Regardless of what religion you are born into, being a part of the religion is much more than just saying you are. For those who were born into the religion, they have the opportunity to continue their faith without any sort of question in regards to if they really are Jewish.

My attempt at officially converting will not be to prove to myself that I am Jewish. I believe I am Jewish and that I belong in the Jewish community. Rather, it is to prove to everyone else that I am in fact fully dedicated and I will do whatever it takes to show it.

I want to convert to Judaism so that my future children don’t have to worry about questioning their faith.