

Staff Editorial

Accepting our responsibility to combat climate change

In December of 2017, the government reduced the size of two national monuments, Bear's Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, by two million acres, opening this now unprotected land up to oil drilling. Yet by 2030, California has promised that half the state's electricity will be powered by renewable sources.

In April of 2017, 120 million acres of protected waters near Alaska were opened up for exploration of potential fossil fuel sites by an executive order. Yet in March of this year, this order was overturned by Judge Sharon Gleason of the District of Alaska.

When it comes to protecting the planet, it seems as if we're bouncing between progression and regression. While new laws were being made under the Obama administration protecting more natural spaces, now statutes even as far back as from the 1850's are being overturned.

You've probably heard people say that climate change shouldn't be a political matter. True, but that's not enough. The Earth itself shouldn't be a political matter. It's time for us to take the situation into our own hands to save our planet.

Regardless of whether or not you believe in science (that's a whole other conversation) and thus believe in climate change (which shouldn't even be associated with the word 'believe'), the disregard for protected lands and the continuing increase of fossil fuels is happening right before our eyes, and you can see it anywhere from the national parks to coral reefs to the disappearance of native plant species in our own backyards.

The idea of reversing climate change can be extremely daunting. But looking at the issues popping up within our own communities can make a solution seem simpler, or at least more urgent.

Of course drastic measures need to be taken by governments and large corporations to reduce the impact of climate change on a massive scale--but there are many ways in which us students can help. Mainly, we can support our parks by visiting them and voting for those who believe in protecting these lands.

On April 19 in honor of Earth Day (April 22), Environmental Club held a beach clean up at Gillson Park. This may not seem like the solution to climate change, but it is a big part of it. The answer of how to save the Earth may not require confusing calculus equations and crazy chemical equilibriums. It could simply entail everybody putting in a bit more effort than they may want to and doing their part.

There are so many little things that we can do everyday to help the natural areas around us, such as the Scandinavian trend of 'plogging.' This hybrid activity involves going on a run while picking up trash you happen to pass by. Doesn't seem like enough? Join a trail restoration group to bring back native plant species to the area (for more information, check out the "Friends of the Green Bay Trail").

From composting to opting for paper bags to buying second-hand clothing to biking outside instead of driving to Soul Cycle, these small behaviors add up and will push us towards the progress side of the continuum of saving the Earth and preserving our natural spaces.

No matter where you stand on the political spectrum, a cleaner local beach devoid of plastic debris should sound pretty nice. By taking the little bit of extra time to pick up trash or do other activities that are good for the Earth, you're helping yourself as much as you are helping the planet. Saving the Earth is an effort that we all must make together. Our blue planet can't just be protected by blue voters.



Liebovich

Don't go to the "best" college



by Danielle Kurensky

At New Trier, it seems we are all striving for the best, from taking the highest level classes to feeling the need to score high on the ACT.

So when the time to begin thinking about college rolls around, it is assumed that you should apply to lots of reach schools and try to go to the "best" school you can get into.

But there's a major flaw with this mindset. First and foremost, how we academically rank schools is not representative of the education they provide.

Sure, one school might have a better test average and another could have more research opportunities, but what does that actually tell you?

While test scores could give you a general estimate of the school academically, beyond that, it's kind of useless. Just like a student's academic ability cannot be summed up from one test they took on a Saturday, the college's ability cannot be described by the average of these numbers.

Colleges have countless academic resources, but it's up to

you to use them. The results of your college experience are what you make of your time there, not just where you are. No matter how many opportunities a school has, you are going to have to work to get them.

Beyond our flawed academic ranking, another big factor is our perception of the school. These perceptions, which largely come from our environment, are often just so widespread that they are taken as fact, but they're often far from the truth.

A couple of months ago I was looking through the Fiske Guide to College (aka the college bible) and I was surprised it said University of Wisconsin and University of Illinois are on par academically. If you had asked me before without a doubt I would have answered that Wisconsin is the better school. I'm sure part of that is due to half of my family going there, but another part of it is due to how we as a community view both colleges.

Since U of I is our state school, there is an increase in the acceptance rate for New Trier Students. This isn't a unique situation, that is how state schools work. If you have around 50% of students from within the state, there will be a lower acceptance rate for out-of-state students.

Somehow though, this gets misconstrued to thinking it's not

as good of a school. The element of exclusivity for people who have gotten in decreases, and then we view it as a worse school.

In reality though, U of I is a fantastic school and I know countless people who, due to the perception, weren't excited about going, but once they're there, they absolutely love it.

Finally, these rankings don't take into account countless other factors that can affect a college experience.

Though academics are a considerable part of the college experience, they aren't everything. You are going to be living in that environment for the next four years of your life, so it should be a good social and cultural fit as well.

While one school might be higher ranked on some list, if it isn't a good environment for you, you're not likely to succeed there.

So to seniors who are still deciding where to attend and juniors beginning to make lists of where to apply, take the extra time to stop and consider where your perceptions come from.

If we take the time to think through how we rank schools--many times without thinking--we'll be able to challenge these thoughts. By doing this we can start to remove some of the pressure involved in the college process.

Welcome to this social media world



by Alyssa Pak

In what Bradley Cooper calls "this modern world," one of our primary reactions to a major event is often to take to social media. In the wake of one of the most recent global tragedies, the burning of Notre Dame, many people used social platforms like Instagram and Twitter to publish their condolences.

What some noticed though is that a lot of people were using this as a reason to post pictures of themselves from their vacations in Paris. This isn't a bad thing per se, especially because the whole point of social media is so that we can share quite literally anything we feel like sharing (within reasonable bounds obviously).

But, the thing is that it almost seems a little less genuine when the photo has been carefully VSCO'd with the person in the foreground posing in front of Notre Dame. In that case, is it more about the person wanting to promote a certain image of themselves, or is it about the loss of the structure?

One baffling Twitter post that caused a lot of controversy was a girl who uploaded photos of the burning Notre Dame with the caption, "notre dame on fire is the most aesthetically pleasing visual i've ever seen" and

commented the filters that she used to edit the photos with.

Does she have the "right" to post this? Absolutely. But when I think of the word "aesthetic," I think of a cute restaurant with trendy string lights not a historic building burning down. And I guess that brings up the question, what are we supposed to put on social media then?

I think that this is an issue that comes up quite a bit. Is it okay to post those pretty photos from a vacation to Hawaii for Earth Day with a caption about "saving the Earth" if it doesn't help solve global warming in any way? However nice it is, I believe that choosing to recycle whenever you can is infinitely more meaningful than a quick post about how beautiful our planet is, especially since vacations and tourism are contributors to climate change.

On Twitter, the Auschwitz Memorial recently made a request for people to stop taking "cute" photos of themselves at the grounds, e.g. using the train tracks that transported people to their deaths as a balance beam. A lot of these photos make appearances on Instagram and Facebook, and then we're left wondering why we can't just appreciate the historical significance without making it about ourselves.

But at the same time, I also know that social media operates the same way we do. Just like in real life, we craft an image of ourselves on social media that we want other people to see. If you post too many solos, you're labeled as a narcissist,

and if you constantly speak up on social issues, you're labeled a SJW (social justice warrior).

As shallow as it may sound, we want people to believe that we're not totally self-absorbed and that we do care about climate change, LGBTQ+ rights, and overseas issues without being "preachy," regardless of whether we do actually care or not. Social media is the perfect place to do just that.

In our everyday lives, it might take us a while, but eventually we can spot when someone is being fake and when someone is being genuine by their actions, as opposed to what they say. This applies to social media as well.

People can post whatever they want, and it isn't my place to judge or criticize. We've all probably been guilty of reciting our parents' opinions on a certain issue to make ourselves seem more educated, and yes, I'm talking about politics.

We like to craft an image of ourselves to present to the public, and this has just been blown up by the rise of the internet. So despite any strong feelings that we have towards posts that might highlight a lack of authenticity, we all try to participate in this to a certain degree, whether it be in reality or through Instagram.

While people posting photos in front of Notre Dame certainly contributes to the façade that social media insinuates, that's also simply another perpetuation of the façade we work to create in our everyday lives.

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