

## **HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS HANDLE DAYS OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE?**

With the school year back in session, questions have arisen about how days of religious observance - holidays on which school is still open - should be handled.

The current system is that on days of religious observance, teachers cannot test or assign homework, go on field trips, or plan special activities.. However, some are frustrated with this system and believe it worsens an already complicated testing day schedule, leaving teachers with only a few days to assign tests and students with multiple exams and deadlines in the same time frame.

What is the best way that days of religious observance should be handled?

## **ARE DRESS CODES ETHICAL?**

Many employers and school districts implement dress codes to promote learning, safety, and a professional environment and image. However, these have recently become a subject of controversy, especially as many have noticed that women and girls tend to have more rules than men or boys. Examples include an inability to show their shoulders, and specific requirements for short and skirt lengths, which can lead administrators to actually measure their skirts. Supporters of dress codes claim that this is done to limit any distractions in the classroom or workplace. Is this ethical? Is this ethical to enforce upon minors?

### **Extension Questions**

- What if the dress codes impacted men and women to the same extent, with the exact same rules for each. (For example, if both boys and girls weren't allowed to wear tank tops in a certain class.) Is this ethical?
- Is there an extent to which a workplace or organization has the right to control things like clothing? How does this apply to religious clothing, like hijabs, or culturally specific things like afros? Is there a line?
- Cross country boys can run without shirts but girls can't?

## MODEL CONGRESS TERM LIMIT BILL

**Title of Bill:** A Bill to Institute Congressional Term Limits

**Preamble:** WHEREAS there is currently no limit on the number of terms congressional members may serve. WHEREAS the longest serving representative in the House has served 30 terms (60 years) and the longest serving senator has served 8 terms (48 years). WHEREAS in recent years, proposals to limit the terms of Federal officeholders have proved increasingly popular due to a recognition that serving for too long can lead to corruption and leave members out of touch with their constituencies.

**Section 1:** All members of both the House and Senate shall have their opportunity of re-election restricted by Congressional term limits.

**Section 2:** All members of the House shall serve a maximum of six terms. All members of the Senate shall serve a maximum of two terms.

**Subsection A:** These terms may be served consecutively or inconsecutively.

**Subsection B:** Terms served in one body of Congress do not impede an individual's ability to serve in another body.

**Subsection C:** All Congressional members currently serving and who have served at least six terms in the House or at least two terms in the Senate shall be ineligible to run for reelection.

**Section 3:** This bill shall go into effect on November 5th, 2024.

**Section 4:** All laws in conflict with this legislation are hereby declared null and void.

## SHOULD STANDARDIZED TESTING BE FREE?

Collegeboard is a not-for-profit organization that provides students easy access to taking aptitude tests, earning credit for rigorous courses, and connecting with colleges. However, taking the SAT or AP tests for these courses, which can greatly increase a students' chance of getting into college, cost significant amounts of money. Critics of this system claim that this discourages students of lower socioeconomic status from taking these tests and courses due to financial concerns – impacting the extent to which they challenge themselves academically, and potentially their admissions to a better college.

Collegeboard claims the money it makes goes towards providing fee waivers for some of these students, along with programs that “extend educational opportunities for all students.” But these fee waivers aren't available for AP exams, with only a \$35 reduction provided by college board, and Forbes recently reported that this only amounted to 10% of its revenues.

Should it be ethical for collegeboard to charge money for these tests?

Extension questions:

- If collegeboard was actually using 100% of these profits to go to fee waivers, would it be ethical?
- Is it ethical for college applications to cost money?
- Is it ethical for college admissions to cost money?

## HOW FAR SHOULD AFFIRMATIVE ACTION GO?

John is a Long Island high-school senior applying to highly competitive colleges. On the application, he is asked to list his race and ethnicity. Studies have shown that admissions officers, especially those of elite universities, treat applicants of different ethnicities and races somewhat differently – with those who are members of historically oppressed groups often receiving preferential treatment.

Three of John's grandparents are White; however, his grandfather on his mother's side is half Sioux. John's maternal grandfather passed away when John was 9, but, before then, he and John were close, and John enjoyed hearing stories of his grandfather's youth on a reservation. John is interested in his Sioux heritage but does not believe it has put him at any disadvantage in his life. John's guidance counselor has urged John to indicate that he is Native American on his college applications, because she believes it will improve his chances at getting into a top school. Should John indicate that he is part Native American on his application?

Extension:

- What if his grandfather was fully Native American?
- What if his father was fully Native American? – Is there a line between parent and grandparent?
- What if one grandparent on each side was half Native American? Fully Native American?
- What if this was flipped, and John was Native American, only having one grandparent who was half (or fully) caucasian? Is it ethical for him to list he is caucasian on his application?

## SHOULD WE LEGALIZE SUICIDE?

Nancy is 72 and has had liver cancer on and off for the past decade. Although she is receiving chemotherapy, surgery, and is participating in clinical trials, the cancer continues to spread throughout her body. Her doctors put her on the transplant list, however she will have to wait months for a viable liver. The treatments lead not only to a great deal of physical pain but also lead to a significant mental and emotional toll. She has requested assisted suicide, in order to have quick painless death. Doctors have a moral obligation to help their patients and do no harm.

Is it ethical for her doctor to fulfill her request, given that it is their medical responsibility to “do no harm”?

Does your opinion change for these patients?

- Bob is 64 and maintains a healthy physical lifestyle, however, he has struggled with depression his entire life. He was diagnosed at age 20, after several decades he has decided he wants end his life via assisted suicide.
- Alexa is 28, in good health and with no history of mental illness, however she wants to end her life by assisted suicide.

## **Forget Me Not**

Joan has been married to Roy for 60 years; they are both in their 80s and have three children and seven grandchildren. Roy, unfortunately, has developed Alzheimer's, and it has progressed to the point where he no longer recognizes his family, including Joan. Due to the severity of Roy's condition, Joan placed him in a nursing home. Roy settled into his new home and is well cared for; the doctors believe he may live several more years. Through this emotionally difficult time, Joan encountered an old friend of hers, Dennis, who has been supportive of Joan and her family. Dennis, after a few months, confessed his love for Joan, and Joan has started to realize her feelings for him as well. Her children want Joan to enjoy her final years and have indicated they are comfortable with her pursuing a relationship with Dennis. However, even though Joan recognizes that her marriage will never be the same, she still loves her husband and is deeply conflicted.

**What should Joan do?**

## **SHOULD WE CHANGE THE DRINKING AGE?**

Currently, the U.S. is one of 12 countries in the world with the highest drinking age of 21. In fact, “of the 190 countries, 61% have a drinking age of 18 or 19 years old.”

Those in favor of keeping the age at 21 argue that it has made the roads safer, and saved many lives. The CDC points to a study which finds a 16% median decline in motor vehicle crashes in states where the age was raised to 21. Another study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) estimates that the increase of the drinking age 2 saved 31,417 lives between the years of 1975 and 2016

Those in favor of lowering the age argue that because an 18-year-old is an adult by US law, who can vote and serve in the military, they should also be given the right to consume alcohol. Moreover, some say that prohibiting the sale of alcohol to 18 to 20-year-olds has the unintended effect of making alcohol more desirable because it is taboo and worsens the problem of binge drinking in college because students have not been exposed to responsible drinking.



## **Our Baby, My Body**

Tom and Melinda are a young married couple about to have a baby together. Recently, Melinda has been engaging in activities that Tom thinks are unnecessarily risky for the health of their future child such as going into work instead of working from home when coworkers are sick with COVID-19 seeing as COVID increases the risk of a preterm birth or stillbirth.

Tom believes that, since he is an equal partner in raising the child, he should have an equal say in how Melinda acts when it comes to the health of the child – just like all of the other decisions that they've made about how they are going to raise it. Melinda believes that, until the baby is born, it is her body, and she is free to do what she wants. As long as she is carrying their child, she says, her wants and desires will always outweigh Tom's because he is not the one that has to live with the pregnancy.

## THEATER REPRESENTATION

In 2018 Scarlett Johansson was cast to play a transgender man in the movie "Rub & Tub". Following the announcement of the role Johansson faced massive backlash from the LGBTQ+ community and ultimately decided to withdraw from the film. Many argued that because 84% of Americans learn about transgender people through television transgender roles need to be played by transgender actors. This issue has also arisen about minority roles, and if they need to be played by actors of the same race. Many movies and shows choose to cast white actors and actresses in minority roles, while at the same time, many actors and actresses of color are turned down for roles because of their race. For example, Angelina Jolie played a woman of Afro-Cuban descent and she darkened her skin and changed her hair for the role. At the same time, Zoe Kravitz was told she was not allowed to audition for the role of Catwoman because she looked "too urban". When minority actors and actresses are given a role they are often type cast, Salma Hayek said that executives told her she could only play roles like housekeepers or drug dealers because she is Mexican American.

Should movies and television shows be able to use any type of actor or actress to play a minority role? Should the appearance/look of an actor ever influence the type of roles they are cast in? Is typecasting ethical?

## **ADOPT V SHOP**

Kelly and Michael are looking to get a puppy this holiday season, and are weighing their options of where they should get it.

Many of their friends have recommended that they should adopt a pet from a shelter. By adopting a pet, they are saving an animal who could instead die or be stuck in a loveless environment for a long period of time. Moreover, by choosing to adopt rather than buy a pet from the store, they are choosing to not support puppy or kitten mills, which is what many stores use to breed the dogs and cats they sell. Store animals are bred in factory-style facilities meant to maximize profit, which leaves them to suffer poor conditions.

However, Kelly and Michael are also considering buying a dog. Although stores get pets by unethical means, the pets in the store already exist, and by buying a pet from the store they could be taking one animal out of that environment. Also, buying a dog- from a store or a breeder - will enable them to get the type of dog they have always wanted - a corgi - which they feel certain will work best for their family.

Should Kelly and Michael adopt or shop?

### **CASE EXTENSION**

Although Kelly and Michael love dogs, they are starting to reconsider whether it is ethical to own a pet at all.

On one hand, if they had a puppy, it would be well cared for in a healthy, happy home. All of its needs would be met and it would be safe and happy, which is a better lifestyle than what stray dogs face running around neighborhoods today.

However, when owning a pet, they are often kept in the house all day, fed the same food and taken to the same few places. Is this an ethical means of keeping an animal, or is this domestication conditioning them to be content with a subpar life? Are they being deprived of actually living?

Does this vary depending on the animal?

## **SHOULD NURSES BE ALLOWED TO STRIKE**

Recently more than 7,000 nurses at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx and Mount Sinai in Manhattan went on strike for 3 days before returning to work. They went on strike because there were not enough nurses at these hospitals which they believed put an unfair amount of workload on each nurse. The strike ended after the hospitals agreed to add more nurses and increase their pay. In response to this recent event, many people have raised questions over whether or not it should be allowed for nurses and doctors to go on strike. They argue that while these nurses are not working, patients are not receiving the proper care that they need. They also argue that because of this unnecessary risk that nurses are going against their ethical duty of helping others. Nurses have defended their actions by pointing out this is the only way to make hospitals listen to their requests. Nurses and hospitals in general have been incredibly overworked since COVID-19 began and the nurses wanted to make things easier. Should healthcare professionals be allowed to strike? If they cannot strike then how do they achieve better working conditions?

## SHOULD ALL BOOKS BE POLITICALLY CORRECT?

Recently, new editions of Roald Dahl's children's books including *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Matilda* have been edited to replace potentially offensive terminology or references with those that are more inclusive and modern. Examples of the changes include replacing the words "mothers" and "fathers" with "parents" and removing the description of certain characters as "fat".

These changes have been somewhat controversial. Some find it necessary to adjust this material so that it sets a good example for the new young generations that will come to read it. However, others are skeptical. Since Roald Dahl has passed away, they feel a change coming from someone other than the author could harm the integrity of the material, or give someone undeserving too much power in deciding what to change. Some question if this material should be kept around at all regardless of the change, and if instead it should be replaced with newer, more inclusive stories which wouldn't have to be changed. Others feel that this change isn't a viable solution, as the world has an abundance of potentially offensive material that children will have to learn to handle, and not every piece of material could possibly be censored.

Is it ethical to change the writing of pre-existing stories to adapt to modern times?  
If so, what should and shouldn't be changed? Who should make this decision?

### Extension questions:

- Does the audience that the material is meant for change the ethicality? (For kids vs For adults)
- Does it make a difference if the change is the use of a word vs an entire character description or plot point? Can some stories not be salvaged?
- Does the ethicality change if the author is still alive, and wishes to make changes to the story they wrote?
- Is changing these stories a disservice to the kids who would be reading them, leaving them less prepared for the world? Is not changing them a disservice to the parents?
- Is it beneficial for kids to view different perspectives even if they are prejudiced?
- If we start editing past works where do we draw the line?
  - Both in terms of what kinds of books are edited and the content that is edited (ex. Instead of just changes from mothers and fathers to parents should we change to guardians to accommodate children being raised by someone other than their parents)

## **IS CHIVALRY DEAD? (JANE X EGo WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH EVENT)**

Harris and Sarah met at work where they have the same kind of job. They are both in their 20's and have been with the company about a year. After they talk at a work party, Harris asks Sarah out on a date, and they go to a nice restaurant. They have a good time, and Sarah finds herself thinking she would like to go out with Harris again. When the bill comes, Harris suggests they split it. Inside, Sarah cringes. She says "sure" but decides she will probably not go on a date with Harris again.

Is there anything morally problematic about Sarah's expectation that Harris pay for dinner?

### **Extension Questions**

- Why are we programmed to expect this?
- Is all chivalry morally wrong? (eg. men holding the door open for women, men buying women flowers, etc.)
- Do your feelings change if Sarah asked Harris out?
- Does it matter if it is their first date or their 100th date?

## **SHOULD ALL AWARDS BE GENDER NEUTRAL? (JANE X EGo WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH EVENT)**

Recently, many award shows have changed to non-gendered categories, including the Grammys since 2012 and Independent Spirit Awards since 2023. This means instead of presenting an award as “Best Lead Actress/Actor,” it would be presented as “Best Lead Performance.”

Many claim that switching from gendered to non-gender categories will be inclusive, especially to those who do not identify as female or male. For example, nonbinary performer Emma Corrin won for Best Actress at the Golden Globes in “The Crown,” but it was hard to justify being nominated in female categories. Some stress the fact that the talent of performers is reduced to the idea of sex and gender. If everyone is in the same industry and all acting or singing, shouldn't everyone be judged together?

On the other hand, many performers have pointed out the fact that non-gendered categories would limit opportunity and recognition of performers. Many female nominees of the 29th Screen Actors Guild Awards, such as Angela Bassett (“Black Panther: Wakanda Forever”) and Jamie Lee Curtis (“Everything Everywhere All At Once”), vocalized their concern that non-gendered categories would put men in a distinct advantage. Some actors say that the idea would limit opportunities for actors and adding a non-gendered category would not be one of the ways for more opportunities.

### ***-Extension-***

At this year's Independent Spirit Awards, 8 of the 10 nominees of Best Lead Performance were women, while 7 of the 10 of Best Supporting Performance were male. Many people were excited that 8 of the 10 nominees were women in Best Lead Performance, but not too happy with 7 of the 10 nominees for Best Supporting Performance being male. Similarly, at this year's Brit Awards received backlash for all 5 nominees for Best Artist being male. While some argue that women deserve more representation because of being historically underrepresented, others see the different reactions as double standards in the acting industry.

### **Questions**

- Gendered categories are less inclusive, particularly of nonbinary actors. Gendered categories are more inclusive because they provide increased opportunities, especially for women who tend to get less screen time.
  - What do you think about these ideas?
  - What is the most inclusive approach?
  - Are there other goals besides, or in addition to, inclusivity that we should be considering?
- How would you satisfy those who want non-gendered categories and those who want to keep gendered categories? Isn't one award too little?

### **SHOULD SCHOOLS GIVE AWARDS?**

Most schools are inherently competitive. Students are constantly being evaluated - on tests, on papers, on participation. At the end of the year, the high school has a Senior Awards Ceremony and about 25% of the class gets recognized with an award (or two or three). The awards are not only for academic success but also for service, leadership, overcoming hardship, and other desirable traits. One interesting thing about this awards ceremony is that all seniors are supposed to attend even though most do not receive an award.

- Should our school present these (any) awards?
- Is there value in requiring non-winners to attend the ceremony?

### **SHOULD SCHOOLS HAVE HONOR SOCIETIES?**

Another way we recognize students is through our Honor Societies - National, World Language, Science, Music. These groups are supposed to honor not only academic (or musical) excellence but also excellence of character and service. But do they? Some complain that the standards are too low to get into these groups and that students need to do next to nothing to retain their membership.

- How do these organizations impact our school and students? Should they have a place at RHS?

### **SHOULD SCHOOLS NAME A VALEDICTORIAN**

Years ago, RHS stopped ranking students - except we still rank for the purpose of selecting a valedictorian and salutatorian. Sometimes the difference between the winners of these honors and their peers is just several hundredths of a point. To increase their GPAs, some students drop unweighted classes like band or orchestra even if they like them and avoid exploring subjects that interest them. On the other hand, school is fundamentally about academic success, and maybe we should recognize and celebrate our highest performers.

- Given that we do not rank students, should we name a valedictorian and salutatorian? How does this process affect our school?



## HOW SHOULD CLUBS CHOOSE OFFICERS?

The science team is deciding how to elect the captains for the next year. Some of the members are worried that having an election leads to a popularity contest rather than an election based on merit. On the other hand, there are concerns over unconscious (or even conscious) biases that come with having the teachers decide. Students fear that teachers will favor those that they are more familiar with and have previously taught. However, the teachers are wary of having an election because they have a pattern of students simply voting for their friends and creating a board that lacks work ethic and maturity.

What is the best manner of election when it comes to school clubs and leadership.

- Does it matter what if it's a club or a team or what specific organization it is?
- Is a club election different from an OCC election? why?
- What about a blind election (students read platforms without names attached)?

### EXTENSION

Roslyn High School used to have a rule that you could only be president of one club at a time. Many students today complain that board positions in all clubs are held by the same, small number of people and that it is hard to "beat out" this select few. Some argue that this gives more opportunity to other students who have a passion and involvement in the club yet hold no presidential positions. However, others claim that if the same people are continually assigned to board positions, then that must mean they are the most qualified. They argue that club positions should purely be merit based and equal distribution of positions will result in less effective board members.

Does this policy make clubs more fair? Should we reconsider this policy?

## SHOULD YOU DATE YOUR BEST FRIEND'S EX-BOYFRIEND?

JProm is coming up and Samantha and Isabel are deciding who they want as their date / plus one. Isabel wants to ask Nicholas to be her date because they have been friends for many years. However, there is a problem: Nicholas is Samantha's ex.

Nicholas and Samantha were dating back in 10th grade, but broke up during the summer leading into junior year. They broke up on good terms, and throughout their junior year Nicholas was still a part of Samantha and Isabel's friend group.

Isabel felt that it would be okay to ask Nicholas to be her date because all of them are still friends and had no grudges against each other. However, when Nicholas agreed to be Isabel's date, Samantha became angry at Isabel and said Isabel is such a bad friend.

- Should Samantha have the right to be angry with Isabel?
- Should Isabel have been allowed to ask Nicholas out to prom knowing that she was her best friend's ex?
- If Samantha and Nicholas ended on **bad terms**, should Isabel still be able to ask Nicholas to be her prom partner?
- Would it be okay if Samantha and Nicholas broke up for a **longer period of time**?
- Should you be allowed to be friends/date with a friend's ex? Or is that not loyal?
- Would it be any different if the genders were switched?

### GENERAL EXTENSION

Just recently, Brandon and Ellyn have started dating. They have known each other for quite some time and would always talk about their problems with each other. After a few weeks of dates and talking, they saw they have similar interests and lifestyles so they decided to date. However, Brandon is not too sure if he wants to date Ellyn because Ellyn was his best friend's (Robert) ex.

Brandon tries to justify his dating with Ellyn by pointing out that Robert and Ellyn dated and broke up (on good terms) for 3 years already. Robert is not too thrilled about Brandon dating Ellyn, so he now barely talks or hangs out with Brandon.

- Should Robert have reacted the way he did?
- Is it the same situation if the **genders** were swapped?
- Would it be different if they were still in **high school**?
- Would it be different if Robert and Ellyn were **divorcees**?