



CHANNING

Skipping Out
Winter 2021



Skipping Out

Metamorphosis

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Cover work by *Celia Gomez*

ABOUT SKIPPING OUT

Skipping Out is a pupil-led magazine; it aims to give all students in the Senior School a voice and freedom to express their opinions, passions and interests.

Dear readers,

With the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic, we've been thinking a lot this term about change: the changes it has brought about, the things it hasn't changed, the changes we would like to see. In keeping with our theme this term, metamorphosis, we bring you a diverse range of articles that deal with these issues, from our investigation into the impact Covid has had on our film industry, to much needed reform in the UK prison system, to corruption in Lebanon, to society's obsession with female fertility. As a special treat, we have also included Grace Abraham's thought-provoking piece on white women's role in the advancement of white supremacy, an article which has been shortlisted for *The Guardian's* Young Hugo Award.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Happy reading!

If you would like to write for future issues of *Skipping Out*, please get in touch with Ms K Wilkinson.



Georgia McNeill



Freya Calder



Lorna
Goldman



Emily Mullen



Branwen Bainbridge



Irina Sofronie



Lilia Foster



Gabriella
Douglas-Kitsis



Charlotte Parrott



Grace
Abrahams



Celia Gomez

Do we really want to leave this legacy?

Georgia McNeill investigates the American College Legacy System



With our last year in the secondary education system approaching, many of us are wondering about university applications: What should I apply for? Where should I apply? Who should I apply as; how much should I reveal about myself?

Unfortunately, there are no simple answers. Like me, many others are considering applying to the United States and it is estimated by the Fulbright Commission that currently there are around 11,600 students from the UK enrolled at American universities. This application requires considering doing the SATs, and what with the college cheating scandal of 2019 - which consisted of rich parents paying tutors to sit their children's SATs for them, change their SAT scores or lie about their sporting achievements to win them a much coveted place - issues surrounding the American college application process have arisen.

One of the major conflicts in the application process is the American university legacy system. This is the consideration and admission of applicants called "legacies", students whose parents previously studied at the university or have another family connection to the university. This can lead to unfair acceptance rates, the exclusive encouragement of students from a high social class, and racism in applications.

At Harvard University, the acceptance rate for legacies is 33% compared with its overall average rate of 6%, and at private universities (a university not funded or operated by the government), 42% of admissions directors said that legacy status is a factor in admissions decisions. Many powerful American figures have taken part in this system, including John F. Kennedy and George W Bush. These politicians, in all likelihood, wouldn't have reached their levels of power without their college educations.

But why is the US legacy system a bad thing? Well, first of all, it can lead to a limited and exclusively wealthy student body, as their parents have likely donated through the years to give their children a better chance of acceptance. This is one of the reasons many colleges say the legacy system is necessary, as it provides fundraising, and, as a committee formed by Harvard

stated, getting rid of it could jeopardize the 'generous financial support that is essential to Harvard's position as a leading institution of higher learning'. So, what they seem to be arguing is that they have to let in rich, potentially vastly under-qualified students, people who have already benefited massively from a better class of high school education and lived a childhood of privilege, in order to enable them to offer places to poorer, more deserving students. Is this really the best way to manage this situation or is it a rather creative excuse for them to line their pockets?

The legacy system has also led to a decrease in international students, which has led to a lack of diversity and created a closed environment. This lack of diversity not only extends to foreign students but also to native people of colour. In 2014, Harvard was taken to federal court for allegedly discriminating against Asian Americans. The lawsuit stated that the admissions office gives lower average 'personal ratings' to applicants of Asian descent and therefore has led to a limited number of Asian Americans in the student body.

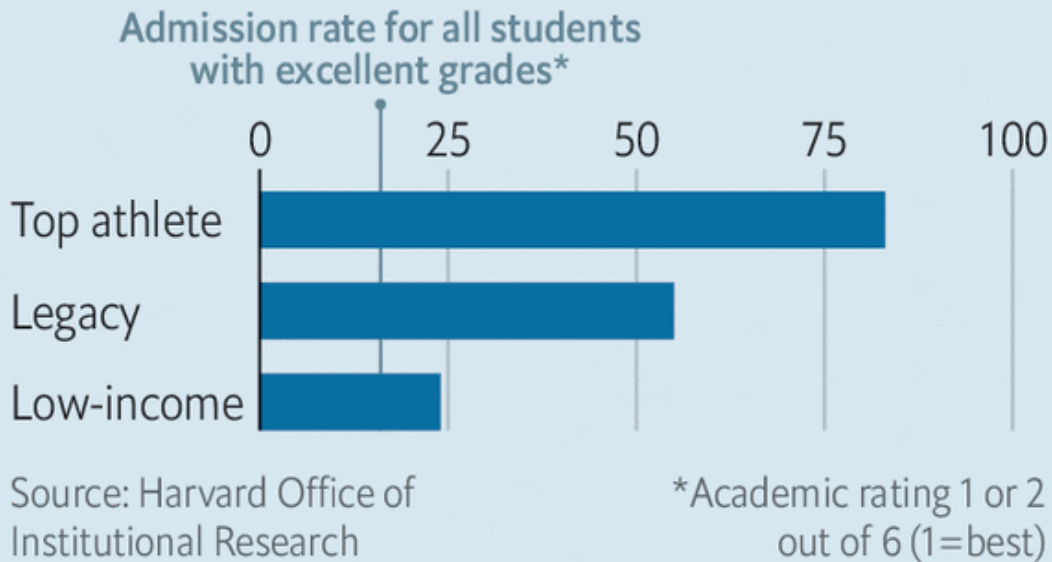
However, thanks to the Black Lives Matter movement, many of these policies are about to change; some colleges, sadly not all, have abandoned the legacy system after courts made them stop considering race in admissions, such as Texas A&M University as well as all Californian public universities, and in 2020, Mike Bloomberg (the former mayor of New York City) created a potential Higher Education Policy which hinted at limiting access to student aid in colleges that relied on legacy preferences.

We still have a long way to go though, as diversity efforts continue to lag with only 34% of colleges saying they have a specific program to recruit students of colour, as well as no clear end in sight for the corrupt and highly unfair legacy system.

Is this really the history that we want to leave behind? Why are we still living in a world where it matters more who your parents are rather than who you are yourself? How can we create a better legacy?

Thumbing the scales

United States, probability that a student with excellent grades* gets admitted into Harvard 2009-16, by group, %

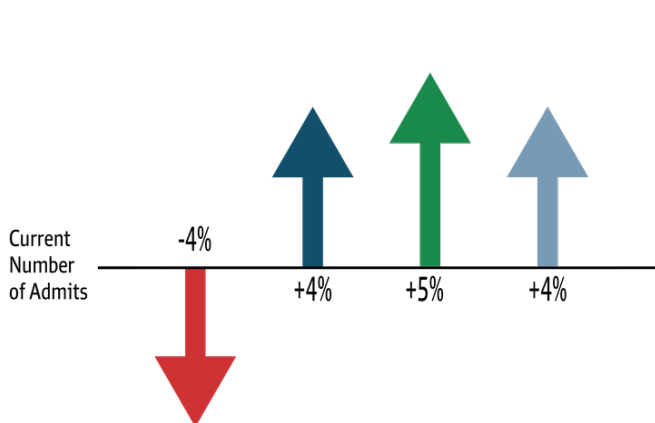


The Economist

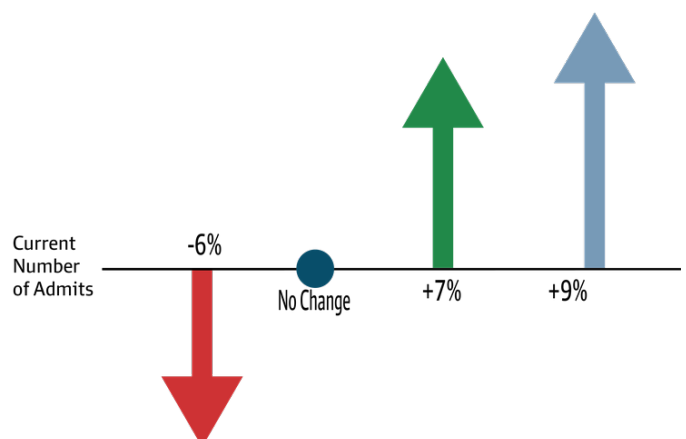
Counterfactuals from Arcidiacono's Working Papers



Legacy Preferences Eliminated



Athlete Preferences Eliminated

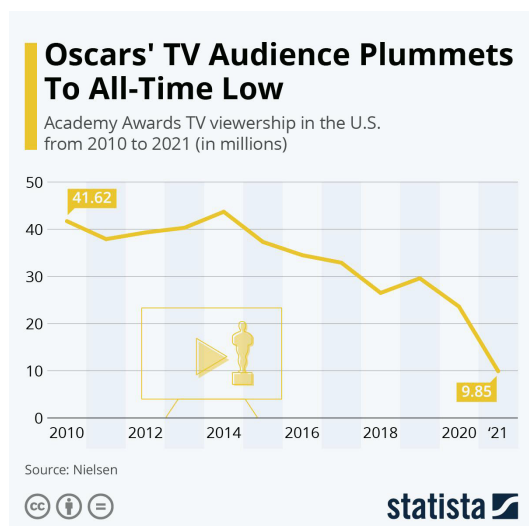


Did Covid-19 spell the death of the Film Industry?

Freya Calder investigates

It's no secret that the film industry is one of the businesses that has been hit the hardest by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only have cinemas throughout the world been closed for much of 2020 and some of 2021 due to lockdowns, but film production has also been affected by Lockdown and coronavirus cases on set. It may seem that the effect that the pandemic has had on the film industry is as unprecedented as the pandemic itself, but, on closer examination the opposite is true: the pandemic has simply exacerbated some of the problems facing the film industry that were already present and, in fact, seen as glaring issues by many industry insiders.

The Oscars



One illustrative example of this is the 2021 Academy Awards ceremony. The Oscars is just one of the award shows whose TV ratings have been declining in recent years, even before the pandemic. The last time the Oscars ceremony drew in more than 40 million viewers was 2014, and since then ratings for the ceremony have been declining steadily. The 2021 ceremony was a continuation of this trend but on a much more shocking scale - 9.85 million Americans watched the ceremony live, compared to 23.6 million in 2020, which was already the least watched televised ceremony ever. This is a roughly 56% drop in viewership.

How did that happen and should it be a concern? One theory suggests that lower audience viewership of specific ceremonies is due to fewer popular films being nominated for big awards. Nielsen ratings data confirms this, as it shows that more people watched ceremonies when commercially successful blockbuster films were nominated for awards. For example, 2019's ceremony featured popular nominees like *Black Panther*, *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *A Star Is Born* and

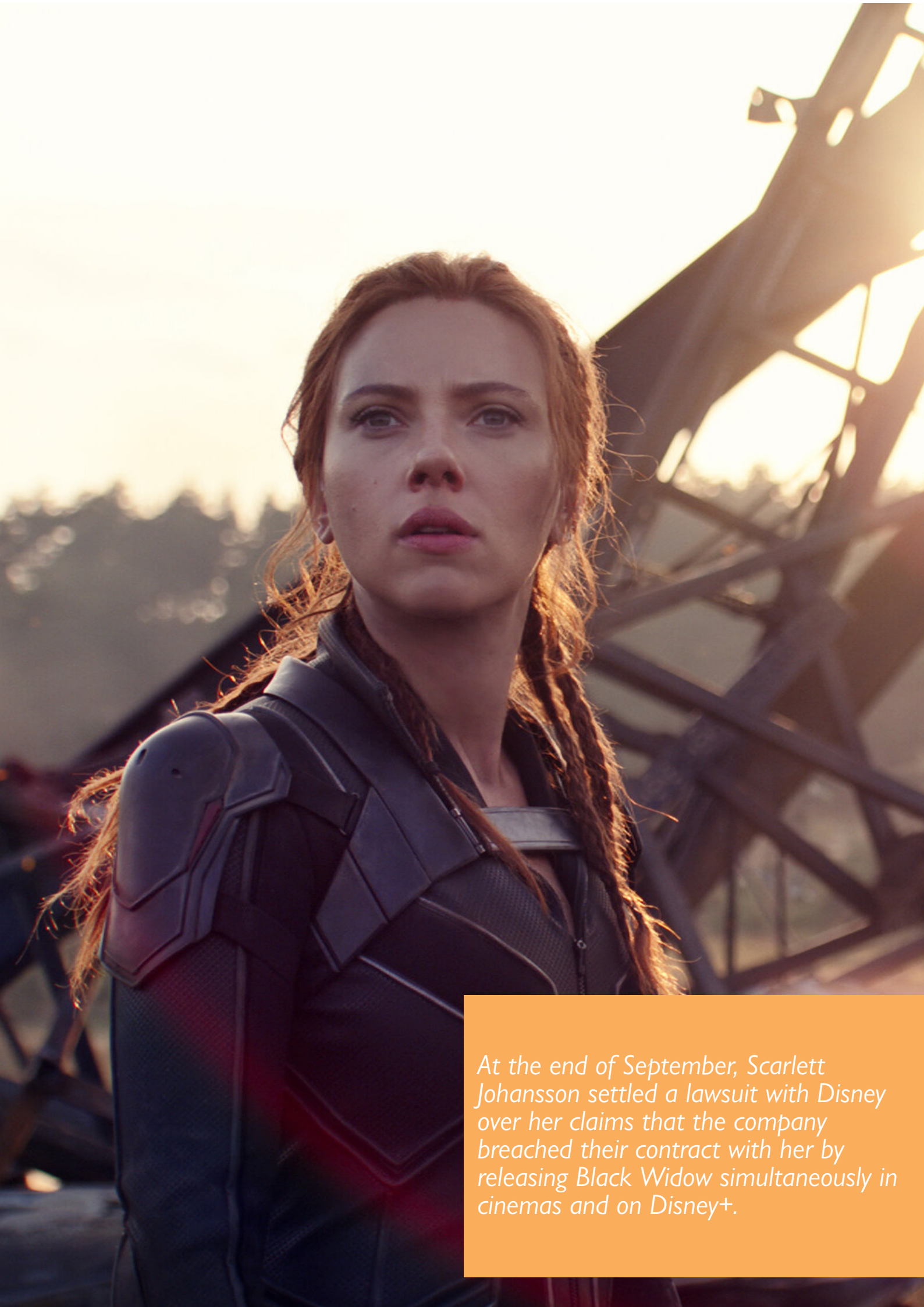
garnered 29.6 million viewers; 2010's ceremony a decade ago celebrated films like *Avatar* (the highest grossing film ever made at the time), *Inglorious Basterds*, *Up* and *The Hurt Locker* and managed to attract 41.6 million viewers. 2021's ceremony also fits this theory. Its Best Picture nominees were some of the least watched by the general public, as *Nomadland*, 2021's Best Picture winner, is the lowest grossing Best Picture winner in decades. This is due to the fact that the nominees, which weren't Netflix originals, were indie films with smaller advertising budgets, which were often only available to view at film festivals or in the handful of cinemas that were open when the public were still apprehensive about venturing out (despite the best efforts of Christopher Nolan). Additionally, audience awareness of the nominated films was low. A survey showed that audiences were less familiar with the nominated films than usual, with just 35% of those asked being aware of *Nomadland*. There is no indication, however, that the extremely low viewership of 2021 will continue into next year's ceremony. The reason that the only films available to be nominated for Best Picture were indies no one had heard of was because the major studios had been delaying their blockbusters and mid-budget Oscar bait films again and again until they thought that the public was ready to get back to the cinema, in order to maximise their profit from these expensive productions. From the summer of 2021, we have seen these studios begin to release their blockbusters again, even if in unconventional ways, including *Black Widow*, *No Time to Die* and *In The Heights*, with more to come before the end of the year. This glut of blockbusters will certainly factor into the 2022 Oscar nominations, and should hopefully coax in more viewers. However, if that doesn't work, the Academy may need to try something different. One of the reasons for the viewership spike in 2010 was that this was the first year ten films had been nominated for Best Picture instead of five since 1944. This enabled a greater range of films to be nominated and shook up the old formula which had been in place for 65 years. It could be that audiences are becoming bored of the same format of the Oscars year in, year out, so some radical changes could be needed.

Streaming

One of the biggest issues for the major film studios and cinema chains before the pandemic was how to compete with streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime. Some studios like Disney and Warner Bros. decided to try and beat them at their own game by launching their own streaming services. Others decided to go all in on franchises based on existing intellectual property, leading to a glut of uninspired remakes and sequels as well as a few spectacular disasters,



One of the biggest issues for the major film studios and cinema chains before the pandemic was how to compete with streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime. Some studios like Disney and Warner Bros. decided to try and beat them at their own game by launching their own streaming services.



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like Universal's *Dark Universe*, which crashed and burned. Unfortunately, cinema attendance has still been declining in recent years, as American box office sales peaked in 2002 and have been dropping ever since. This is not all the fault of streaming, but the convenience of having seemingly endless entertainment without having to get off the sofa certainly hasn't helped drive ticket sales.

The uncertainty of cinema attendance during the pandemic has caused some studios to get creative about exhibiting their films to the public. For example, Disney and Warner Bros. have popularised the idea of simultaneous premieres of their films in cinemas and on their streaming platforms (Disney+ and HBO Max, respectively). These simultaneous premieres have been controversial, as studios have committed to them in order to increase profit from their films and attract consumers to their streaming services, while others have argued that they will damage cinemas by limiting cinema attendance and ticket sales. There is worry that these simultaneous premieres, or even films going directly to in-house studio streaming services and bypassing cinemas altogether, will become the new normal.

This controversy has even extended to actors. At the end of September, Scarlett Johansson settled a lawsuit with Disney over her claims that the company breached their contract with her by releasing *Black Widow* simultaneously in cinemas and on Disney+. Johansson said that the decision meant that she lost revenue and that she was promised a theatrical exclusivity window before the film would be streamed or sold on DVD (this was traditionally 90 days). The lawsuit inspired heated discussion online when the news broke, with some arguing that Scarlett Johansson already has a net worth of \$165 million dollars and shouldn't need any more money from Disney, and others asking that if Disney could break the contracts of one of its biggest stars, what could it do to its workers who didn't have the resources for a legal battle against the mega-conglomerate? The lawsuit has now been settled, but, in my opinion, it signifies how new and controversial this practise of dual exhibition still is, and that it is not a perfect solution to the issues caused by exhibiting movies in a pandemic by any means.

However, there are signs that this practice could already be on

its way out, and that the fortunes of the film industry more generally are looking up, all thanks to the most recent (at time of writing) Marvel film, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*.

Shang-Chi was seen as an experiment by Disney when it was released in cinemas on September 3rd. Unlike *Black Widow*, it was released exclusively in cinemas, and this would enable Disney executives to see the state of moviegoing now the summer had ended. To them, it may have been a gamble, but it was a gamble that paid off, as *Shang-Chi* grossed \$414 million worldwide. This beat *Black Widow's* \$379 million worldwide gross and made *Shang-Chi* the highest grossing film of 2021 in the US and the seventh highest grossing film worldwide.

There are many factors that could have contributed to its success, especially over *Black Widow*: audiences feeling more comfortable going back to cinemas due to increased vaccination rates, or higher audience interest in the subject matter (such as its diversity in being the first Marvel film with a predominantly Asian cast). But the fact that it was released exclusively in cinemas initially almost certainly helped it to achieve a higher box office gross. This has made Disney feel more confident about theatrical releases, as its upcoming blockbusters like *Eternals* and its *West Side Story* remake will be released in cinemas with a 45 day exclusivity window before they can be moved to streaming and digital platforms.

Additionally, the last few months of 2021 are seeing the film release landscape look much more normal. We're seeing the release of some remakes (*West Side Story*), sequels (*Venom: Let There Be Carnage*, *No Time To Die*, *Halloween Kills*), Oscar hopefuls (*The French Dispatch*, *The Last Duel*) and aspiring franchise starters (*Dune*), alongside film festival releases, Netflix original Christmas films and everything else that would normally be released around this time of year without a pandemic in the way. It seems that the disruption caused by the pandemic has been something that the film industry at large has been able to weather. But will it actually try to find solutions to problems like declining awards show viewership and relevance, or the threat of streaming, that were plaguing the industry before the literal plague? It seems like we'll just have to wait and see.

Women or machines?

Lorna Goldman investigates society's obsession with women's fertility.



Why is a woman's fertility still such a defining part of womanhood? Used as an excuse for transphobia, as well as to belittle and condemn female birth control, society's obsession with women and their fertility sees no sign of slowing.

Women are not simply 'baby-making machines', and while child bearing is a beautiful and fulfilling process for a lot of women, it is certainly not a chapter that every woman wishes to pursue. Personally, my mother turned to sperm/egg donation so that she could have children at the age of 48 as a single parent, since her love and desire to have children was worth any circumstantial complications she may have faced as a consequence. However, this is most definitely not the case for all women and nor should it be.

An example of this could be Holly Brockwell, a 26 year old woman who campaigned arduously for four long years in 2016 to be granted her wish of female sterilisation surgery under the NHS. Not only were her wishes deemed 'irresponsible' and 'irrational' by the doctors who refused her, but they even offered her boyfriend a vasectomy instead as a more 'sensible offer'. After fighting her battle for four years, she was finally approved for the surgery; however, this still didn't mean it was plain sailing. She was flooded with vulgar backlash from both the public and the media, full of people questioning and insulting the decision Holly made about her own health. While on surface level it may appear that the issue people have is potentially with sterilisation surgery in general, a not so deep dive into similar surgeries for men concludes that this argument - at its root - stems from sexism. 15,000 men undergo vasectomies on the NHS every year and no one bats an eyelid. But the minute a woman - an educated and confident woman at that - makes a decision about her body that challenges these sexist ideas of what defines a woman, all hell breaks loose.

Speaking of 'what defines a woman', what does the Oxford Dictionary have to say? The Oxford Dictionary defines a woman as 'an adult female human being'. Pretty simple right? You might think so; however, society (as it does) tries to put us into boxes - endless categorical limits - until we find ourselves trying to conform to a dangerously specific (and abnormal) mould, of

what we deem as a 'true woman'. Is it what our bodies look like, what they're capable of? Or more about how we think, what we create and envision? Or perhaps it's the shared battle scars of womanhood, the fights we have fought? Unfortunately, in the eyes of some, it's a woman's 'function' - a word I don't believe even deserves to be suggested in such a context.

Not only does limiting a woman's potential to 'breeding' and 'populating' reinforce harmful stereotypes, but this mould also seeks to exclude a vast cohort of women who either don't want to or who can't uphold this expectation. By targeting both women who simply don't want to have children, as well as women whose infertility is not necessarily a choice, it is clear that this harmful perspective continues to fuel gender-based discrimination - including transphobia.

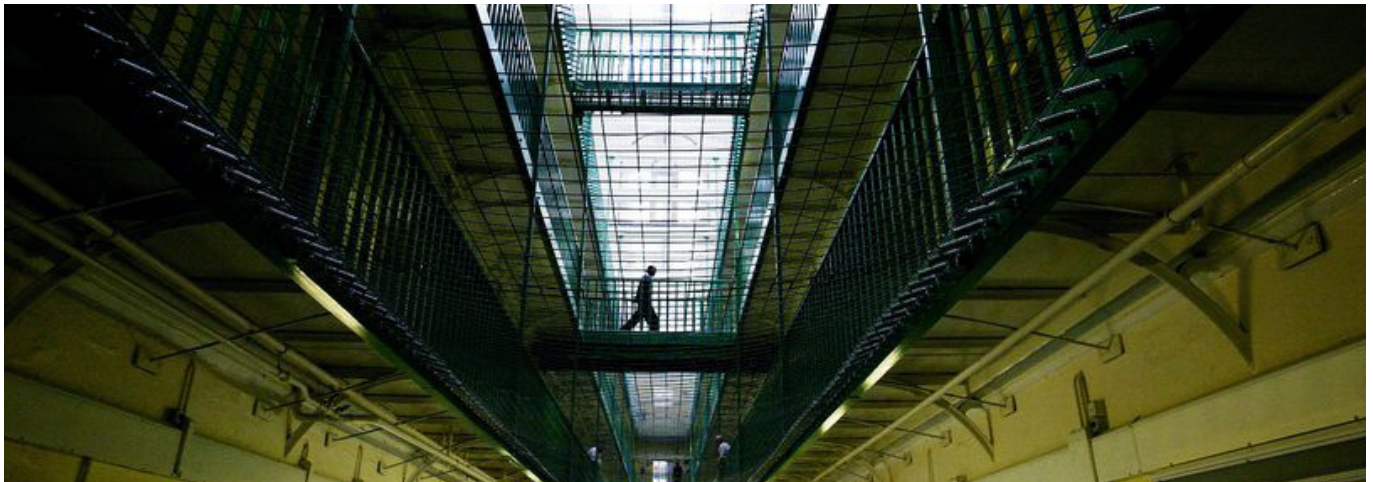
Since only a mere 3% of transgender people preserve their fertility before transitioning (often as a result of the lack of education and talk surrounding fertility in the trans community), most transgender people will risk their fertility when going through a hormonal transition. Therefore, when we perpetuate the idea that what makes a woman a true 'woman' is her ability to have her own children, we create a dangerous loophole for anti-trans rhetoric, until we get to the point where our 'female empowerment' begins to cause a rise in gender-based discrimination, rather than limiting it. As Carol Hay, an associate professor of Philosophy at the University of Massachusetts, says, 'the attempt to exclude trans women from the ranks of women, reinforces the dangerous idea that there is a right way to be female.'

Ultimately, it is clear that, as a society, we still lay such a heavy emphasis on women's fertility in regards to what truly defines us as women. It is because of this attitude and rhetoric that we continue to shove women into tiny boxes as a way of mechanically crafting who we can and who we cannot be, what we can and cannot do. But we are not machines - we are women, women with passion and drive, and with so much to contribute to this world, and we will not be relegated to what society deems as our purpose any longer.



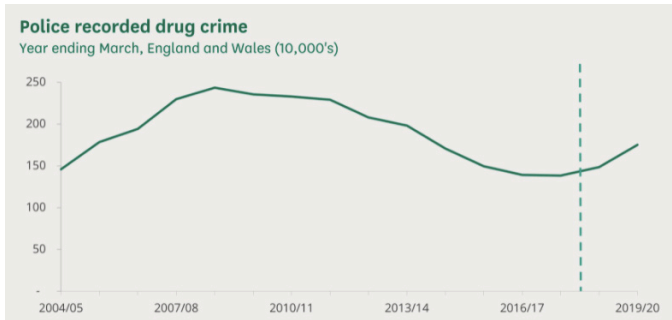
Why the UK prison system's approach to drug related crimes is counterintuitive

By Emily Mullen



In 2019-2020 there were a recorded 175,000 drug-related offences in the UK. According to the House of Commons Library, this is 13% higher than in the preceding year. Whilst crime rates in general have been increasing (perhaps due to Lockdown) across the UK, drug-related crimes have been increasing even before the Coronavirus Pandemic. What does it tell us when the current crackdown on drug-related offences is met with a persisting increase in the very same crime that it is trying to prevent? That the system is broken.

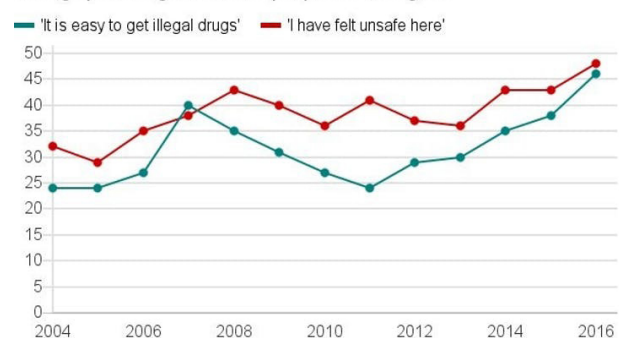
For these kinds of misdemeanours there are other potential options to prison, which I believe should be explored. In the cases of non-violent, drug-related crimes, perhaps imprisonment is not the most effective method of curing the ailment at its source. While I recognise that there are others affected by the crime, there are alternative options to imprisonment, such as community service and fines, to compensate society for the damage caused by the offence. These methods may allow for more time to be spent on the rehabilitation of the offender, something which I believe is key if we actually want to stop them from reoffending. In the UK, 60% of inmates go on to reoffend within 2 years of their release from prison, and two thirds of inmates are also drug users. I believe that these two facts correlate strongly. Those who are addicted to substances will seek to obtain them in any way possible, including through crime. So, if prison is not treating the addiction, the individual will continue to offend.



One of many concerns in the UK relating to drug crimes is the harsh penalties that these crimes can incur. For possession of marijuana you can serve up to five years in prison. Is this too harsh? Is it an efficient use of very crowded prison space to detain people who have not committed a crime which poses a major threat to the general public?

Danger and drugs in prisons

Average percentage of inmates per prison who agree:



Source: BBC analysis of HM Inspectorate of Prisons data

BBC



Despite the fact that the UK prison system claims to rehabilitate drug-using prisoners, the aforementioned statistics simply do not support this. Furthermore, if one is to take the discussion further than non-violent, drug related crimes, there is definitely an argument for the fact that all drug-using prisoners, including those who have committed violent crimes, are morally entitled to treatment for their addiction. It is the responsibility of the prison system not to simply cast aside individuals, but to abide by morals and to help them, regardless of whether their crime is violent or not. If the system continues to ignore the needs of prisoners, it cannot succeed in its aim of making society safer. Not only does there need to be more funding for drug addiction treatment services in prisons, but also there needs to be a much stronger effort on the part of individuals who make up the prison system to rehabilitate prisoners.

Obviously, none of this comes for free and a massive issue in the prison system at the moment is its chronic underfunding, but surely this is all worth it if our ultimate goal is to make society safer?

Take treatment, for example. In theory, prisoners addicted to much more hazardous substances, such as opioids, are offered a replacement drug, such as methadone. However, the next steps in further treatment, including psychosocial help, are actually not implemented in many prisons. There have been many incidents where inmates with a drug addiction have been offered methadone but no following steps have been taken. In fact, many prisoners' addictions have been worsened by the continued use of methadone and no alternative help; furthermore, methadone has even been used by prisoners to distribute among other inmates, or simply as a short-term alternative to opioids. This is not a solution. This is not addressing the drug-related problems of inmates at the source. This needs to change.

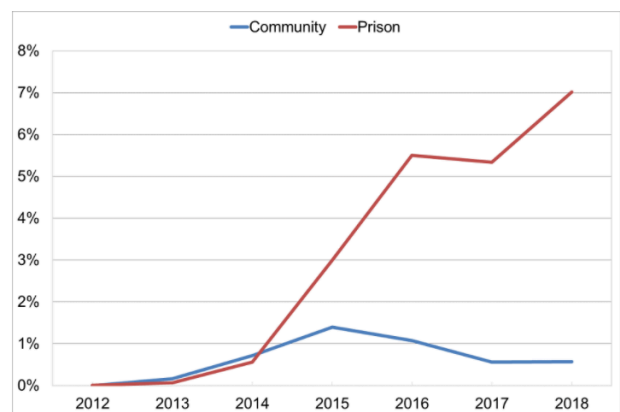


Figure 22: Proportion of people starting treatment in prison and the community in England reporting primary NPS use

There has to be more funding for treatment programs, alternative solutions offered to prescription of methadone, and a shift in attitude towards drug addicted prisoners; this refers particularly to those who have committed non-violent crimes. Societal attitudes towards rehabilitation have ameliorated over the last 100 years, but clearly not enough. Unless the treatment of these prisoners by guards and professionals in the prison system improves, nothing is going to change. Coming out of a Pandemic, societal issues are going to be highlighted. This means that now is the time to act for the greater good of all citizens and resolve the UK prison system's approach to drug related crimes once and for all.

The Silent Killer

Branwen Bainbridge and Irina Sofronie investigate medical negligence and society's refusal to address it



Medical negligence or malpractice is when care is provided which does not reach the prevailing standard of care within the medical community.

As time has progressed, advances in the medical field have cured all sorts of diseases. However, with advance comes the increasing threat of medical malpractice. There have been many attempts over the years to reduce the rates of medical negligence. And yet malpractice is the third leading cause of death in America.

250000 people died of medical mistakes in 2018, according to CNBC. According to Sky News, in 2018, 22,000 lives were claimed by the dark underbelly of the professions that are supposed to save and preserve lives. The NHS itself spent £1.8 billion on negligence claims from 2017-2018. You could argue that malpractice is everywhere, tarnishing both its integrity and its benefits. The multitude of reasons for medical negligence are complex; however, in this article we aim to address issues such as the frequency of drug abuse, sexism, racism and corruption around the concept of medical lawsuits.

Although medical negligence is due to many factors, one of the most prevalent issues is the severe drug abuse that has become so normalised in the industry. Due to the extreme stress associated with the medical industry, those who work within or around this field often resort to drugs and/or alcohol. If gone unnoticed, this can create a wide range of issues, from medical mishaps, to incomplete or incorrect paperwork, to corruption within the workplace after desperate attempts to cover up 'accidents' which are all too likely to occur.

In the US, one in ten physicians, and one in five nurses will develop a substance abuse disorder during their careers, and, in particular, narcotics addictions are 30 to 100 times more likely among physicians than the general population (stats from Medicine On Trial). A recent Harvard study with 500 practicing physicians and 504 medical students also revealed

shocking results: 59% of the physicians and 78% of the students stated that they had abused drugs at some time in their lives. The true pressure of the medical profession can be seen by the most horrifying statistic yet, that the USA loses the equivalent of seven medical school graduating classes each year to drug addiction, alcoholism and suicide. Suicide itself is, in fact, the second leading cause of death among doctors and physicians. Some argue that these substance dependencies and subsequent mental illnesses that are so prevalent in this community stem from the unnatural work hours medical students are expected to keep. Others argue that it is simply the stress of being responsible for the lives and welfare of others. We believe it must be a combination of these factors, as well as the inability of this profession to acknowledge that there is a problem.

Additionally, deep rooted sexism and gender bias in our society exacerbate negligence in the medical field. This is especially evident when dealing with women's health and conditions such as endometriosis, a condition resulting from the appearance of endometrial tissue outside the uterus and causing pelvic pain. One in ten women suffer from endometriosis, yet the average diagnosis time is seven to eight years. This is in part due to doctors discrediting serious issues as 'period pains' or being 'all in your head'. Branwen, one of the co-authors of this article, was told in response to worries about kidney pains that 'the pain will stop after you've given birth' when she was 15 years old.

Surely doctors should be discouraging teen pregnancy, not promoting it?

Women's health has long been ignored by doctors and physicians due to societal attitudes to health. Stereotypes perpetuate the belief that men are less aware of health problems than women and need to visit the doctor less; in contrast, women are seen as hypochondriacs and their issues are overlooked. A 2014 study found that women in emergency



rooms are far less likely to be classified as urgent care and have much longer waiting times to see a doctor, as well as being less likely to receive effective pain medication. In 2018, a woman called emergency services after experiencing pain so serious she 'thought she would die'; she was told that she'll 'definitely die one day, like everyone else'. After a five hour wait she died of a stroke and organ failure. If we want to see a change we need to start taking women's health seriously.

Racism in medicine is also a huge issue that often gets overlooked. Black women are four times more likely to die in childbirth than white women and report having more difficult experiences in hospital, as well as substandard antenatal care due to ill treatment from their doctors. Asian and biracial women also face a similar risk. Racial prejudice has been all too prevalent in hospitals and the Covid-19 pandemic only made these disparities clearer, with the death rate for minority groups in the UK being substantially higher than for their white counterparts. Racism and racial bias often leads to a delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis and failure to properly treat patients. As an example, people of colour with confirmed Covid-19 cases are less likely to receive chest x-rays and blood tests in hospitals, which can have potentially lethal consequences. Research is still evolving, but there is a clear disparity in the treatment of people of colour.

This shouldn't be happening. Healthcare is universal and everyone should have the right to adequate healthcare and support from the system that swears to protect us all. We shouldn't be tolerating this negligence any longer.

Interestingly, a driving factor of the inability of authorities to make a change in malpractice controversies, especially in America, is the way people often abuse their right to sue. A real example of this, although not linked to medical negligence, is the famous McDonalds hot coffee case. Stella Liebeck spilled

dangerously hot McDonalds' coffee on her lap while sitting in her car, sued them after they refused to pay her desired cash settlement, and received a \$3 million in compensation fees. While she did sustain third degree burns and there had been previous cases similar to this, \$3 million dollars is an outrageous amount of money to receive over a self-inflicted coffee spill, even if there were medical consequences. When it comes to lawsuits over medical negligence, the attempts to tackle this problem are exacerbated as many lawsuits are based on unfounded claims. When wracked by the grief from the death of a loved one, people will search for someone to blame and that blame inevitably falls to the medical professionals. A person might claim that there was more these doctors could have done, or that they failed at their jobs, when in reality they did all that was possible. Until the person accepts the tragedy that has befallen them, they may file a lawsuit on the grounds of medical negligence to get some sort of closure, even if there is no evidence. This is a real problem in America, as medical negligence lawyers have become adept over time at manipulating the story to help their client succeed, and since people know that there is a problem when it comes to malpractice, they will not discount a case even if it is clearly invalid and unsound. Therefore real medical negligence cases may feel the impact of this, being discounted due to the frequent manipulation of the system by those who are hungry for money.



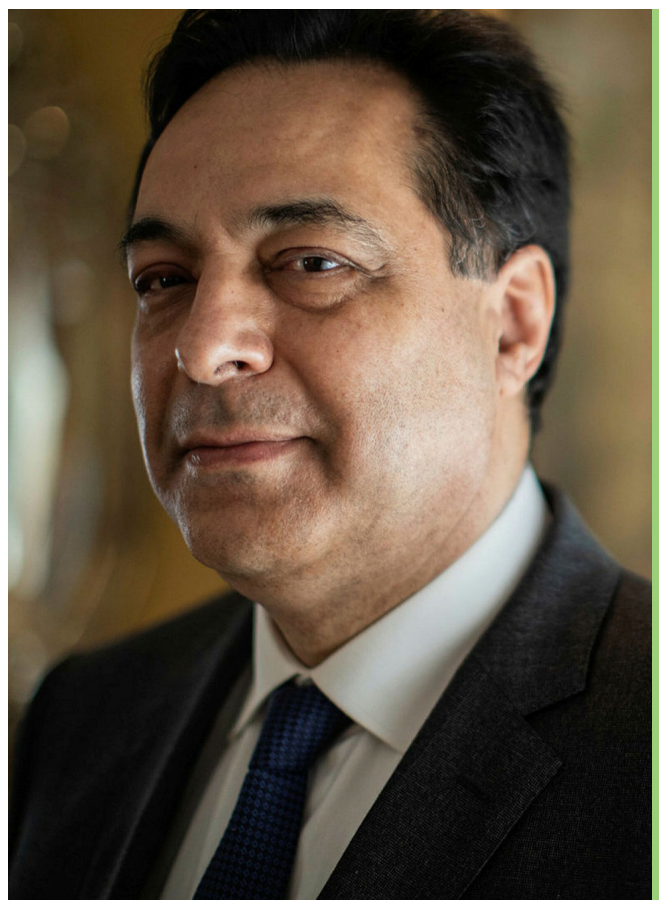
Additionally, just because someone wins a lawsuit and is granted a cash compensation, it doesn't mean the company or medical practice will change their ways. They are more likely to be relieved they have not faced greater consequences, such as losing their license. On top of this, many cases of malfeasance are not even brought to light, as the medical company prefers to pay a large compensation to the family of the victim in return for their silence, in order to avoid bringing controversy down on their own heads.

We cannot ignore the fact that the medical industry needs serious reform. But we can't see change until we acknowledge this problem in the first place. Sufficient healthcare for all is a human right, but societal prejudice and corruption all too often get in the way of that and go unnoticed.

In a time of rapid technological and medical advances, we as a society need to change our attitudes before any more lives are taken by the silent killer.

Corruption, confessionarism and current affairs in Lebanon

By Lilia Foster



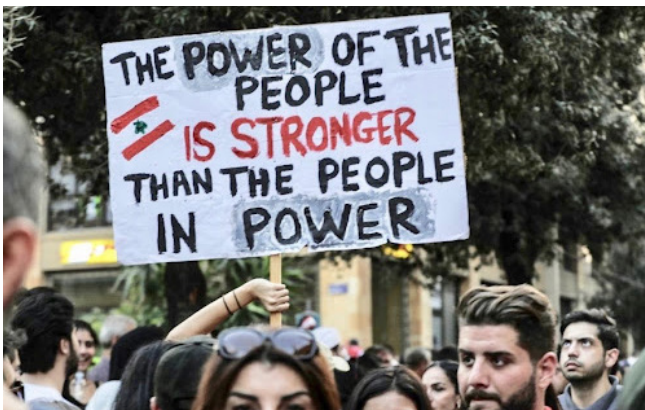
On 4 August 2020, the situation in Lebanon took a post-apocalyptic turn when 2,750 tonnes of Ammonium Nitrate stored in the Port of Beirut exploded. It was one of the worst non-nuclear explosions in history, with over 7000 killed or injured, 300,000, including 80,000 children, left homeless, and estimates for overall losses totalling around \$400 billion. Barely a week after the explosion, Prime Minister Hassan Diab announced the resignation of the entire government. The investigation promised by president Michael Aoun has been fruitless and farcical and is yet to yield any concrete findings despite evidence that the danger posed by the explosive materials was widely known at all levels of government. For the Lebanese population, this was simply another example of deep-rooted government corruption and negligence.

The country is in the throes of a financial collapse that the World Bank has called one of the worst globally since the mid 1800s. Since late 2019, the Lebanese pound has lost 90% of its value, and inflation has reached over 80%. Unsurprisingly, this has hit those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, especially the Syrian refugee population of 1.5 million, overwhelmingly hard, further widening existing financial disparities. The middle class has all but disappeared and recent events have triggered an exodus of highly educated and experienced professionals, so desperately needed for the

rebuilding of this country. Lebanon's once highly regarded banking sector is also in crisis. Unofficial capital controls have been introduced and ordinary account holders are unable to access their deposits, or what remains of them, save for very low weekly withdrawals.

The unsettled financial situation and subsequent contempt for the government can be traced back to the beginning of the country's governance by the current political class after the end of the Civil War in the early 1990s. Not only did these former warlords and wealthy businessmen set a precedent for the years of plundering of public funds and self-preservation in the time to come, but they also introduced an economic model that is to this day reliant on the tourism of a few summer months. In the face of regional wars and, more recently, the Pandemic deterring tourists, an economic nosedive of this kind could only be expected.

It is easy to see why the ordinary Lebanese would have trouble trusting a government that has been both responsible for this crisis and has done so little in the way of reparation. A new government has been appointed since the resignation of the old one, but it shows little promise. Many of the new officials have been named in the Pandora Papers, having funneled millions of dollars into off-shore tax havens while the population continues



to suffer. That Lebanon recently experienced a total electricity black-out of 24 hours, despite the hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign aid which have been provided to help rebuild the country's electricity provider, is yet another indicator of the scale of corruption and embezzlement of state funds. Countries like France (a staunch ally and former ruling force of the country), have offered economic aid on the condition that this corruption is tackled. While the prioritisation of reform

over quality of life is undoubtedly cruel, given Lebanon's track record regarding transparency in distribution of state funds, it is perhaps not an unreasonable demand.

But tensions in Lebanon's political system go far deeper than greed, dating back to the Civil War that spanned the 1970s and 80s. Maronite Christians constituted the upper echelons of society and occupied the most important posts in the Confessionalist government, a remainder of French colonial rule. The war pitted the Christian elite against the Lebanese National Movement, a front of leftists, various pan-Arab groups, and the majority of the Muslim population. But the war became part of a wider religious and regional conflict. Foreign powers intervened, interested in either quashing or advancing a particular group; Israel backed the Maronites because of the prominent Palestinian force fighting for the Left, while Syria sporadically supported both sides, fearing a confrontation with Israel in the event of a Lebanese National Movement victory. These interventions catalysed the descent of Lebanon into a brutal war-society, with militias engaging in smuggling and exploitation, and atrocities committed by both sides. Both sides were plunged into a complex entwinement of inter- and intra-communal conflicts, lacking a clearly-defined common enemy.

The War is now over, but divisions of this kind persist regardless, another factor deterring the provision of much needed foreign aid. The Shia Hezbollah Party has filled a political vacuum in peacetime. Its strong alignment with Iran, which has been subject to Western sanctions, has deterred Western provision of aid to Lebanon. On the other hand, traditionally Sunni countries, like Saudi Arabia, historically a valuable provider of aid to Lebanon, have been deterred by the strong Shia presence. Skirmishes between Hezbollah and Israel are also still common. However, in times of crisis, a fleeting unity emerges amongst the ordinary Lebanese. In the October 2019 protests and in the aftermath of the explosion, the population were able to come together against the political class in its entirety, irrespective of sectarian divides, but it did not take long for the government to once again sow the seeds of disunity. It seems, therefore, that this is only ostensibly a sectarian issue: the ruling class continues to mobilise sectarianism to deflect from class and economic disparities, the true dividing factors in society, in order to preclude class solidarity that transcends religious differences and to maintain their power.

The following question arises, then: how can this country - once known as the Switzerland of the Middle East - pull itself from the jaws of complete economic and social ruin? The situation in Lebanon is not simple, but what is clear is the urgent need for political reform. The population eagerly awaits the 2022 general elections in the hopes that some sort of change may be effected. Lebanon must ensure, however, that these elections are overseen by a truly independent election oversight body, but foreign governments should also put aside their own agendas and prioritise the ongoing human rights crisis. Whilst secularism seems like the best option due to the tensions that religious factions seem to exacerbate, in a country where divisions are so long-established, the journey will by no means be smooth.

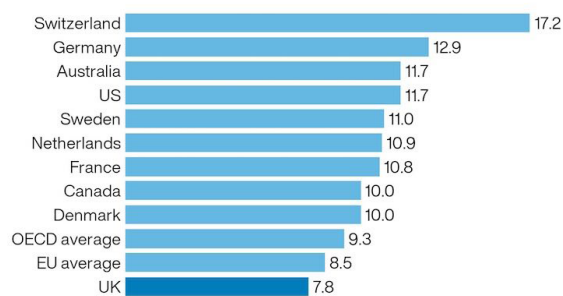
When will we start caring for our carers?

Gabriella Douglas-Kitsis argues that NHS nurses deserve higher pay.



“Clapping for our Carers” was an idea that the UK became very familiar with during the Coronavirus lockdowns that took place in 2020. It became almost a ritual that on Thursdays at 8PM British people would flock to their front doors and windows armed with pots, pans, and even musical instruments, to applaud the people working tirelessly to save the lives of those infected with the virus. The weekly applause played a role in bringing together communities and showing public appreciation for those working behind the front line to save the lives of those infected with the virus, but you can hardly pay bills in rounds of applause, can you?

Practising nurses per 1,000 population in 2017



PA graphic. Source: British Medical Journal

The nursing community has proved itself to be invaluable over the course of the Pandemic, but I feel that the nursing community has long been an essential part of the National Health Service. Nurses help to save the lives of others every day. They work in A&E, going from dealing with victims of car

accidents to those with broken limbs. They work in paediatric wards, caring for children ranging from infants to adolescents. They work in nursing homes, schools, outpatient clinics, patients' homes and provide care for entire communities. As well as this, their skill sets are incredible. As a frequent visitor to my hospital's paediatric ward, I have experienced this wide skill set firsthand, with nurses administering me with intravenous medication, monitoring my oxygen and nebulisers and caring for my general well-being, all whilst caring for multiple other children simultaneously.

So let's talk about nurses' actual salary; what is it? As of 2021, a typical NHS nursing salary is £33,383 (as estimated by the Royal College of Nursing). The starting wage for a nurse in the UK is around £24,000 per annum. For many people, this does not seem like sufficient pay for people who work so hard, particularly when we consider how many nurses work 12 hour shifts, in which they are hands-on caring for people at all times. Over the course of a week, a nurse will work, on average, 37.5 hours, often operating on a 3-on- 3-off schedule. This average number of hours per week amounts to nurses being paid between £10-£16 per hour (only £1-£7 over the National Minimum Wage). Nurses are the lowest paid among all healthcare professionals and their salaries have increased less over the years than in most other professions.

Why are nurses paid so much less when compared to doctors? The main reason often given is they spend much less time in education learning their trade. On average, it takes around 5



years and £200,000 to become a doctor. In contrast, training to become a nurse takes 3 years and costs £9,000. In this way, it makes sense for nurses to be paid less than doctors, as they have not trained for as long or received the same qualifications. But, as nurses are an integral part of the healthcare system, it doesn't seem right that their average wage is around £20,000 less than their superiors. Nurses work with doctors on wards and, in my personal experience, doctors often turn to a nurse in order to help with diagnosis and prescribing medication. Whilst this is not always the case, the medical opinion of nurses is often highly regarded by both patient and family, as the nurse is constantly available for assistance in a way that doctors are unable to be. A nurse is with a patient all day, whilst doctors visit periodically.

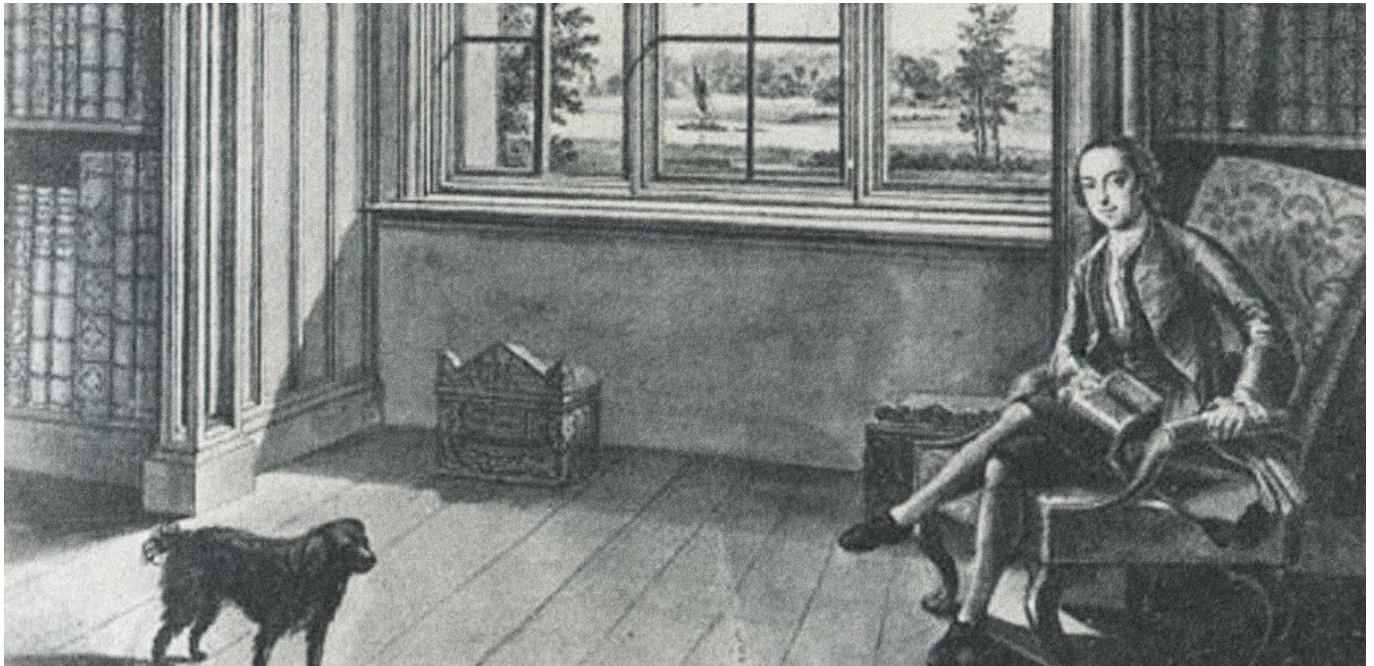
But why do nurses deserve to be paid much more than they already are? As discussed, the hospital and healthcare systems simply wouldn't function in the same way without them. They work around the clock, caring for patients medically whilst also doing slightly more trivial tasks, like bringing food and changing bedding. Nurses are never too far away, accessible immediately through the pressing of the help button by a patient's bed. Furthermore, they don't just work in hospitals: they also provide 24/7 care in nursing homes, caring for the elderly and their needs. In some cases they even live in the homes of people who need extra care. Here at Channing, we are lucky enough to have nurses at school, able to help if we are unwell whilst on site.

We can all agree that the Pandemic would have had further adverse effects if it wasn't for the nurses who worked in intensive care, A&E and on the Covid wards, all the while putting their own lives at risk and having to spend their time away from work alone so as to not endanger their loved ones. What's more, when the government announced early salary rises for doctors, teachers and police officers in 2020, nurses were not granted such privileges and subsequently had to wait until 2021. The pay rise received by nurses in 2021 was 3%, meaning that the average nurse received £1000, which can be argued is far less than deserved. As well as this, due to tax increases, the full value of said increase will not be met. The low pay also acts as somewhat of a deterrent to becoming a nurse. In accordance with a RCN survey with just under 42,000 respondents, one third of nurses are considering leaving the profession, with pay cited as the top reason. With staffing levels already at record lows, how will we cope if this happens?

Nurses are such an extremely valuable part of the National Health Service, and this has been particularly evident over the past year and a half. With one third of 42,000 nurses saying that they've considered quitting their job due to low pay, it is more important than ever that nurses are given the wages that their long hours and extensive knowledge deserves. With even Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister, acknowledging that their work was 'astonishing' whilst he was in hospital with the virus, it begs the question, when will we start caring for our carers?

Reconsidering Walpole

Charlotte Parrott explores how the cultural shift towards pragmatism in the Enlightenment period gave rise to the gothic novel



The development of gothic fiction happened during a time of logic and reason. This is what interests me most about the genre as the change in literary zeitgeist can be seen as a reaction to the contexts it existed in. During the Enlightenment period, figures such as Hume in his work *Four Dissertations*, were pioneering newly popular ideas of skepticism. In particular, attitudes within British politics and science were becoming increasingly pragmatic. This is the backdrop on which Horace Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto*, the first gothic novel. With themes such as the supernatural and characters which are often driven solely by emotion, Walpole subverts much of what it meant to exist during the British Enlightenment period.

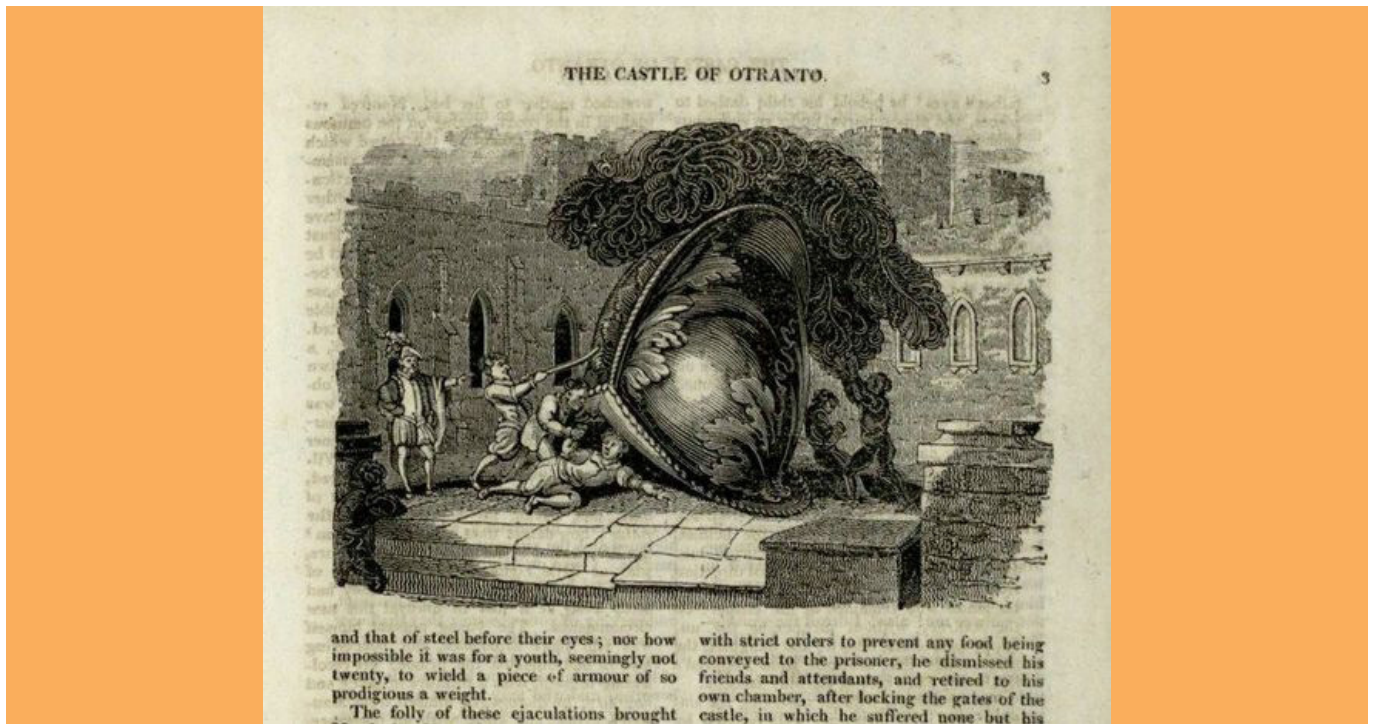
Despite being the son of Prime Minister Robert Walpole, he was best known for his journalism, working mostly on gossip columns and providing commentary on eighteenth century society. His contributions to this field are still a valuable source to historians today. It is clear that Walpole had ample first hand experience of high society, likely sharing social circles with many of the most influential figures of his time. His presence became controversial when his interest in the Medieval period led him to design Strawberry Hill, a mansion where he spent much of his life. His 'little gothic castle' became the most famous piece of architecture in Georgian England, widely consolidating Walpole's eccentricism with a caricature of the medieval gothic style. The design meant that Walpole became a pioneer of the gothic revival long before his novel was published. It is interesting to explore why he chose to disregard what his peers considered to be fashionable since he had built his career and reputation around popular culture.



Perhaps his rapidly developing world led him to seek refuge in a time of certainty, an explanation for why he chose to set his novel in the Middle Ages. In light of this, *The Castle Of Otranto* can be considered a work of escapism as Walpole adopts an affectionate and somewhat inaccurate view of Medieval England in order to create a world of melodrama. The medieval period was also a time of social stability; the feudal system went largely unquestioned in contrast to brewing social unrest and the heightened sense of radicalism present within Enlightenment politics. In the opening scene of the novel, Manfred, a member of the aristocracy, finds out that his son and heir, Conrad, has been killed by a falling helmet:

...he beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, a hundred times more large than any casque ever made for a human being, and shaded with a proportional quantity of black feathers.

Walpole establishes typical gothic tropes such as a fascination with the supernatural and an endorsement of extreme emotion. His narrative is focused primarily on the aristocracy, perhaps in reflection of the structure of Middle Ages society.



The hyperbolic language lends itself to a suggestion of paranormal activity while enhancing Manfred's loss. There is a sense of wonder and mystery as Walpole draws on elements of the unknown in order to challenge contemporary ideas of reason. He subverts the idea that everything in the universe can be explained with scientific research by reinforcing Manfred's helplessness in the face of death. He implies that it is not possible, or perhaps not necessary, for humans to be able to understand and control their environment. And, finally, Walpole allows Manfred, along with other characters, to revel in their sorrow; the rest of the plot would not be possible without the dramatic death of Conrad.

On the other hand, the novel is not entirely devoid of Enlightenment influence. Gothic elements of violence and gore, both of which are present in this scene, complement the eighteenth century fascination with biology. When Walpole describes 'the bleeding mangled remains of the young Prince', it is possible to draw connections between his graphic illustrations and his contemporaries' research into human anatomy and death. Emphasising this theme of adherence to literary convention, the novel draws on elements of the classical tragedy, something which would have been widely recognised and enjoyed by his readers. The death and haunting of the nobility is something which Walpole attributed to Shakespeare, who in turn was borrowing from the ancient Greeks. As he employed a form that was already well established within the literary canon, Walpole's work became more familiar and accessible to his audience.

Walpole's *The Castle Of Otranto* can be seen as a reaction against, as well as an echo of, the contexts in which it was written. The way in which he balanced Medieval theatrics with Enlightenment notions of scientific experimentation meant that he was able to draw on his audience's fondness for a time of romance while also appealing to their feelings of confidence in the present.



The Role of White Women in the Advancement of White Supremacy

By Grace Abrahams

On May 25th 2020, Amy Cooper, a white American woman, was asked by a black man to put her dog on a leash, as was required in the area of Central Park, New York that she was walking in. What ensued became viral footage in which Ms. Cooper called the police in an attempt to falsely accuse a black man of assault. The words she spoke in the video, which was released the same day as the murder of George Floyd, were, 'There's an African American man threatening my life.'

Amy Cooper, whose charges of filing a false report were dropped after she completed an 'education program' on racial identity, was fully aware of the implications of her claim. She understood her power in weaponizing the threat of law enforcement against a black man. In the wake of the massively publicized murders of Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, and Eric Garner by police forces, white Americans, like Amy Cooper, know that accusing a black man of a crime to the police can essentially be a death sentence. Her words harrowingly echoed those of many white women before her, women like 21-year-old Carolyn Bryant, whose claims about the 14-year-old Emmett Till harassing her in 1955 led to one of the most brutal and infamous racially motivated murders in American History.

The trope of a white 'damsel-in-distress' emphasises a purity and innocence in white women that endangers the lives of the people of colour around them who could fall victim to their claims. As Ruby Hamad posits in her 2019 book *White Tears Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Colour*, 'keeping this false image of impeccable white Womanhood alive, white masculinity was absolved of its terrible crimes and black sexuality could be demonised and mythologised.' By making accusations against people of colour, most commonly accusing black men of sexual harassment or assault, white women can weaponize their innocence, inciting violence, from white men, against people of colour. In terms of black sexuality, the archetype of a sexually violent, hyper-masculine black man as an imminent threat to the virginal innocence of white women is central to this aspect of the ideology.

This archetype of the violent hyper-sexual black man can be traced back to the early 20th Century with the release of the three hour silent film *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, which inspired the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan. Known as the most controversial film in US history, it featured white actors in black face stalking and sexually assaulting vulnerable white women before being 'brought to justice' by 'heroic' white men in KKK uniforms. Whilst being reprehensibly racist and incredibly damaging to American society, the film highlights how the protection of white women creates an excuse for which violence against black men can occur. In this way, white



Amy Cooper making a false report of assault after being asked to put her dog on a leash by a black man

women can be passive in their role in perpetuating white supremacy.

White supremacy relies on the continuation of 'pure' white bloodlines, meaning that the protection of white women as a tool for reproduction becomes an excuse for white male violence against perceived threats to the white nationalist doctrine of preserving and maintaining white superiority over other races. Therefore, the protection of white women becomes tantamount to conserving their political ideas. Dr André Brock, professor of Black Digital Culture at Georgia Tech, writes that, 'One of the things that has worked throughout American history is finding a way to project whiteness in need of defense or protection,' indicating that this pseudo-protection is both a protection of white supremacist thought and whiteness itself.

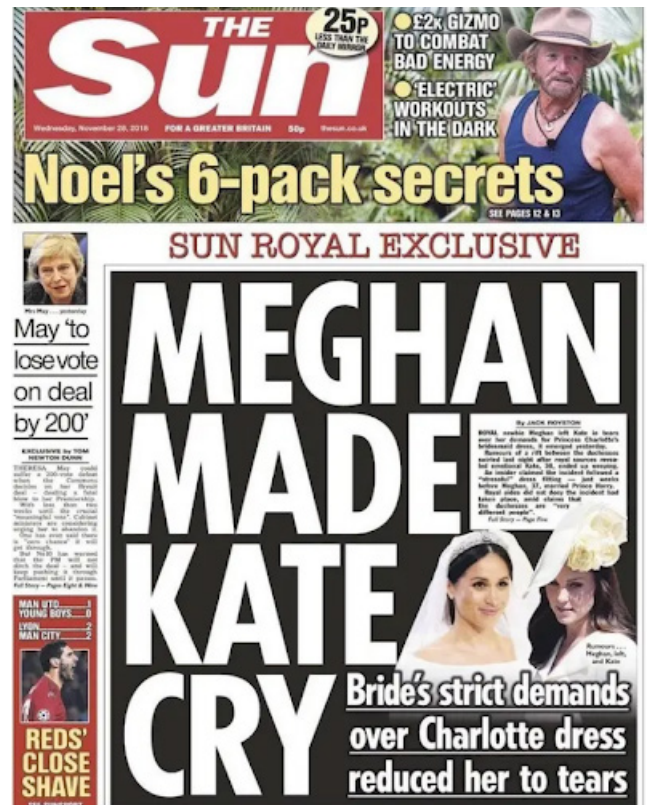
The term 'White Feminism' describes a form of feminism which focuses on the struggles of white women and ignores the additional oppression that women of colour face on top of misogyny, and, often, alongside it. Intersectionality refers to the idea that systems of oppression work cohesively and cannot be separated from one another. Therefore, the conversation around the centering of white women in feminism directly links to the ways in which white women can be used, or can use themselves, as a tool to subjugate women of colour. White Feminism can be linked back to white supremacy, rather than just racial ignorance, when it is considered that the rights of women of colour are left unprotected when feminist



movements focus only of the advancements of the rights of white women without addressing the oppressive dynamics within the feminist movement.

As an example, in 2018, the British press reported that, after a verbal altercation, Meghan Markle, then fiancé of Prince Harry, had left Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton in tears. In 2021, Meghan revealed that, in fact, it had been her who was made to cry by Kate. While neither party was at fault for the vicious, racist attacks launched at Meghan in the wake of this incident, and the vitriol of the press and public as a result of this claim, it demonstrated how the tears of a white woman, such as Kate, can be used as a pawn in the agenda of white supremacy, even through simple gossip columns.

All in all, despite the anti-feminist, patriarchal rhetoric of far-right white supremacist groups, white women are invaluable to the progression as white supremacy as they provide a vitally important defense for violent action and racist propaganda in the name of white superiority. The consequences of this are that white women, such as myself, cannot hide behind the oppression they experience for their gender in the face of accountability for how their own prejudices put people of colour at risk. Furthermore, the progression of feminism and women's liberation cannot occur without the understanding, from white women, of the power they hold within the ideology of white supremacy.



UK headline falsely reporting that Meghan Markle had made Kate Middleton cry



CHANNING

Channing
The Bank, Highgate
London N6 5HF

T: 020 8340 2328

info@channing.co.uk
www.channing.co.uk

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