

# FOCUS

## Footprint Issue

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*Each one of us has the potential to make a positive mark or footprint in this world. The Focus staff is interested in observing social patterns and controversies that deserve attention and response today. It is crucial to be aware of these social tendencies and ideas in order to find solutions and a voice when understanding and acting on our beliefs about them. We share our "footprint issue" with you, hoping to encourage positive activism in society and catalyze discussion and debate.*

-Julia and Jessica

## Stepping Foot in America -- Two Perspectives

By ALICE HU '17 AND TIFFANY WANG '17

On September 1st, a day I don't think I'll ever forget, I became a member of my sweet host family. I used to worry about the differences between Chinese and American culture, but in fact, all I see is the spark of Chinese culture here.

Part of my new experience here has included all of the sports. I have tennis and golf, sports I never learned when I was in China. I started to understand how to play field hockey, and I watched a couple of their games, which were very exciting for me. I also really admire



the people who do cross country when I see them running around the campus every day. I am doing my best to make sports and exercise a part of my life, which can be challenging sometimes but also interesting and fun.

The Mid-autumn Festival, or Moon Cake festival, fell on September 8th this year. On that day, the moon is always very round and bright, just like the moon cake. The most important thing on this holiday's to get together with your family, just like Thanksgiving. This year, to my surprise, my host family taught me how to make an American moon cake with strawberry jam inside. I was so excited to make mooncakes in America for the first time! They tasted like sweet cakes but still had the traditional Chinese pattern on the top. I felt so warm and a kind of family attachment. I really appreciate that the people here welcome me so I don't feel lonely or homesick at all. I cherish what I have and what my American experience will give me.

-Alice Hu

*The first scene was that maple-red roof and mottled stone house surrounded by trees which caught my eye. I still can see the traces of summer, the tennis girls wearing blue and white smiling at me... But I had no sense of what these totally new things meant. That's how this story begins.*

I first came to the United States in 2012, when I went to a boarding school in Connecticut for two years. After that, I came to FCS. There are a lot of differences between a boarding school and a day school. On the first day of FCS, I got a weird schedule. When I looked at "blocks" and "ABCDEF days," I did not know what to do. In my old school, we had periods, and a normal Monday through Friday schedule. We had to go to every meal on time, and check in with our "dorm parent" when we went back to our dorm after classes. We had a strict and tough dress code, which did not allow us to wear sneakers and sweatshirts to school. We had to wear collared shirts and a sweater to school every day.

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## Understanding Your Sexual Footprint

By JULIA STERN '15

I spent the first 11 years of my life as an uninhibited and somewhat unself-aware tomboy. In addition to inheriting all of my older brothers' clothing, I instinctively gravitated toward the boys at school, passed hours in forts I created from sticks, stones, and mud, rarely looked in the mirror to judge my appearance, and indifferently welcomed the scrapes and bruises that came with climbing trees, teaching myself to skateboard, and sliding into homeplate on my all-boys' Little League baseball team.

But just as pertinent as my preference for these conventionally "masculine" type traits, I too was uncomfortable with the assumed role of girls my age. I denied all suggestions to try feminine-looking apparel, refused to let my hair down from its ponytail, and at one point, insisted I be called "handsome" (if anything) after being completely embarrassed by the association with "pretty" or "beautiful."

Before I had even thought about gender as an idea or role in society, I had made a link between the feminin-

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## Carbon Footprint: What It Means and How You Can Change Your Choices

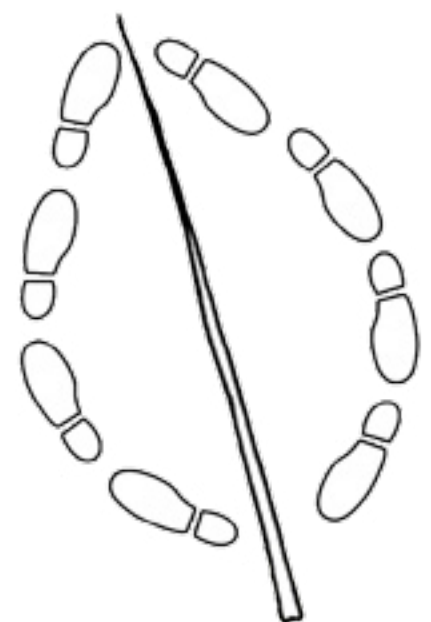
By AIDAN FITZSIMOMS '17 AND FARIA REHMAN '17

We've all heard of it -- the carbon footprint. Advertisers use the idea of working against it as a marketing spiel. It pops up when learning about the environment, and it's one of those demonic, dooming terms nature-lovers despise. But what exactly is the carbon footprint we hear about so much in the media?

Simply put, "carbon footprint" is a colloquial term for our personal and collective impacts on the environment and health of our planet. We spoke to John Gruber, a member of our faculty well-versed in the subject, about our community's carbon footprint. First, we wanted clarification of where the term comes from. Mr. Gruber told us, "Each one of us contributes to a certain amount of carbon dioxide release, which is driving the heat rise that we need to stop." Gruber worked this past year with the FCS Science Core Team on climate change, building on the work of renowned climatologist Lawrence Smith, who later came and presented to our very own community on the topic at hand. In our conversation with Mr. Gruber, he emphasized that environmental

changes depend on us. Our personal and small-community changes such as driving a car or failing to turn off lights can cause things like changes in rain patterns, and in an even grander scheme, the northern parts of the world growing hotter.

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ity, fragility, and vulnerability that I initially subconsciously, and later on deliberately, separated myself from. I was strong and tenacious, I climbed trees and wrestled in the mud, I couldn't have cared less about the mosquito bite scars that decorated my legs, I avoided wearing dresses at all costs, and not to mention, I had spent the first four or five years of my life expecting my penis to grow in- I was for all intents and purposes, one of the guys.

As a child, my sexual footprint was ambiguous. My status in my community, and society at large, was more about personal preferences and interests than about being conventionally male or female. My orientation was defined more by who I was, than what I was. I've been very fortunate to grow up in a community that fosters individual expression and withholds judgement during self-discovery. My eventual transition



I have been volunteering at the Philadelphia Zoo since 9th grade, and while I enjoy it, it wasn't always something I looked forward to. Some weekends I just wanted to hang out with my friends and not shovel goat poop and be asked by so many guests, "Where are the elephants?" (which have been gone since 2006). Now though, I can't imagine not going to the zoo. I love having my routine of buying my lunch at Wawa; seeing familiar faces of other volunteers, interns and staff members; getting my schedule for the day; and even hearing

## Is the Name of the Game Offensive?

By JOSH BENJET '16

Names are how we define people, places, and things. They are how we address each other and make specific references. Oftentimes, people are not afraid to speak out against mean names, especially slurs or demeaning terms, and will cause these names to be changed. But for many professional sports teams, this is not always the case.

Recent news stories highlight the demands made to change the National Football League's Washington Redskins' name. And this is not the first time that calls have been made to change offensive names. Native Americans have been protesting outside of Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians stadium for

from this seemingly boyish personality to that of which I embody these days occurred entirely organically, rather than being forced by societal expectations. When the time came that I opted for girls' clothes over those belonging to my brothers, and experimenting with different hairstyles, it was roused by none other than my changing preferences.

Messages of sexuality have been woven into the fabric of our society- they're on television, billboards, social media, and in various religious communities. Before understanding who we are as individuals, we are engrained with expectations about who we're supposed to be based on our biology. Wear this. Love this person. Act this way. But sexuality goes beyond the confines of our biological sex. It permeates all aspects of our lives, not solely regarding romantic relationships, but also how we receive and respond to everyday, outside influences.

Although rooted in how we see ourselves, sexuality and our sense of self is anything but fixed; it grows and changes as we gain exposure and experience. •

## FCS in Action: Natasha Guy

by NATASHA GUY '16

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Mr. Gruber touched on how planting trees traps carbon dioxide and deforestation releases the carbon dioxide into our environment, hence why our world's forests must be protected and preserved.

But how else can we, as individuals and as a community, better our environmental impact and reduce our carbon footprint? Individually, watching our water and electricity use, avoiding wasting water on long showers and excessive lawn watering, leaving lights on when they are not in use, and the like, is very important. From a different standpoint, by walking, biking, using public transport, or carpooling, we can cut back on the emissions we release into the air. Buying local also decreases the carbon emissions of transporting foreign goods. Even something as simple as using a reusable water bottle can be helpful for the environment and for us.

The cost is paid back, and by not using disposable plastic bottles, we aren't adding to the pile of plastic that cannot be reused to

all the zoo gossip- which there is always in abundance. At the various stations I'm assigned to I've learned about animals and conservation, from not eating Kit-Kats (palm oil in candy destroys orangutan habitats) to why goats have rectangular pupils. As an animal-lover, I care about the conservation message the zoo is sending, but even more than that, I love the community of everyone at the zoo. When I walk through the zoo in my uniform and ID badge, I always exchange a friendly nod with other workers. At the zoo, I am

Redskins is seen as a derogatory name, while a team called the Warriors might be deemed as not so offensive. This debate is further complicated by the fact that that different Native American tribes have different views. Schools like the Central Michigan Chippewas have permission from the Chippewas tribe to use the name. However, while the Florida State Seminoles have permission from one Seminole group to use the name and mascot, other Seminole groups have not had the same reaction.

Many are starting to take steps towards changing these names. The NCAA is putting pressure on teams to change offensive team names, and some have done

hold our food.

As a community, Friends' Central recently made a change that has drastically decreased our carbon footprint. The introduction of the iPads has made a huge dent in our consumption of paper. Although iPads still use power that adds to our carbon footprint, the battery being used is much better than if we were to waste extra paper, and, in addition to that, one can also buy a solar-powered charger which would immensely cut down the carbon footprint we're leaving behind by this new technology. Other teachers have also made a commitment to protecting the environment. For many years, Dr. Hanson has run a campus recycling service with her tenth grade Chemistry sections.

Overall, the little things we do every day can have the biggest impact on our environment. If we come together, our little actions add up, and we can preserve our environment for future generations to come. •

surrounded by bird-nerds who are all passionate about animal conservation, and I love being one of them. We bond over our excitement of lion cubs, and we mourn the loss of animals together. Though I don't see myself entering the field of zoology, my time at the zoo has been an unforgettable experience that will affect me even as I enter adulthood. •

so. The Washington Redskins have had their patents stripped by the United States patent office. A group of US Congress members has sent a letter to the NFL saying that these offensive names should be changed. While there has been some action, it is only a start. The next big step is to get rid of mascots such as the Atlanta Braves Chief "Noc-A-Homa," and the Cleveland Indians logo known as Chief "Wahoo." These serve as places to start and they could become a catalyst for change in the future.

But only time and more debate will tell what will really happen. •

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But at FCS, the dress code is much more relaxed, and students have more freedom. It seems like it's fantastic to have rules like this. However, since I was in boarding school, I had gotten used to strict rules. Suddenly I didn't know manage myself anymore.

The really nice thing is that all of the faculty and students at FCS are willing to help me with the transition. I got lost many

times, but I didn't worry about that. I know people around me are willing to help. When I don't know where I should go next, there are people there to guide me. When I don't know how to use Veracruz, there are people there to teach me. When I don't know how to sign up for sports, there are people there to show me. Thank you to the people who have helped me. I am still

The views on and care for

What country boasts the largest prison population? Is it India, Russia, North Korea, China, or perhaps Brazil? It may surprise you the United States of America, land of the free and home of the brave, is actually the prison capital of the world. In fact, according to the ACLU, the United States is home to 25% of the world's prison population, despite only having 5% of the world population. These statistics beg the question, why is this?

Believe it or not, the answer to this question is quite simple, the mass incarceration rate has been caused by the United States "War on Drugs." About half of all federal inmates are imprisoned for drug-related offences, with 1.55 million people arrested in 2012 alone for non-violent drug charges. Aside from the prison aspect, there are two additional viewpoints from which we can look at this issue, first from an economic angle, and also from

Sources: <https://www.aclu.org/safe-communities-fair-sentences/prison-crisis>, [http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc\\_Trends\\_](http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_Trends_), [http://www.drugpolicy.org/drug-war-statistics\\_in\\_Corrections\\_Fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.drugpolicy.org/drug-war-statistics_in_Corrections_Fact_sheet.pdf), <http://www.cato.org/publications/white-paper/budgetary-impact-ending-drug-prohibition>, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>, <http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412693-the-growth-and-increasing-cost-of-the-federal-prison-system.pdf>, <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9ResultsApps.htm#AppG>, [http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table\\_43.html](http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table_43.html), <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf>

## Concussed and Confused

By NATE GUERRA '16

Concussions have changed with more advanced medical research and knowledge about them and their impact. Even 10 years ago people could have very easily had a concussion and not been diagnosed or treated because there was very little awareness of them. There are many stories about people, now in their 40's or 50's, who were hit in the head and got back up and kept playing. Fun fact: It wasn't until 2009 that the National Football League, or the NFL, enacted strict guidelines and play protocols for concussions -- after about a century of its existence. Now where was I...?

After being diagnosed with four concussions (yes, you read that right) and three within a

trying to adapt to this brand new environment, but hopefully next year, when there are new students, I will be able to help them like you all helped me.

-Tiffany Wang

*Having taken the first step into the land of United States, we now begin to walk through our days here, with courage and dreams. Enjoy every moment that life brings us, and our time together!*



12-month span, I know more than I want to about them and have felt their effects. With each concussion, the likelihood of getting another increases. So, with each concussion I am given more and more restrictions on what I can do. The first three concussions I suffered healed and I was completely back to normal within four weeks, a typical recovery rate. The other rate can take many months and much therapy to heal completely. In this case, symptoms like headaches, weak balance and short term memory loss will linger for a while sometimes intensely. My impact test after my fourth concussion showed that I am in the first percentile for memory, meaning that if you put a 100 people in a

## Just Say No (To the War on Drugs)

By STEFAN SULTAN '15

a constitutional one Every year in the United States, the Federal Government spends over \$51,000,000,000. That means that ten percent of our annual deficit directly comes from the war on drugs, and that's not even factoring in the tax revenue the US would generate from the legalization of certain drugs. Some studies have shown that legalizing marijuana would pump in, at least, an additional 88 billion dollars. Considering the United States has been struggling with a large deficit in recent years, it makes little to no sense that we are spending billions of taxpayers dollars on this failed war on drugs. Furthermore, there are countless other ways we could be spending this money, such as education. On average, our government spends roughly \$12,000 per student every year; in comparison, it costs \$26,000 annually to incarcerate an inmate. That means for every one of the hundreds of thousands of inmates

we imprison for drug related offences, we could be sending two kids to school, in addition to spending a little bit more on each student.

Now if you still don't believe that the United States should reform its drug policies, consider this: African Americans account for both 13% of the population and 13% of drug users; however, they make up 34% of drug arrests and 45% of prisoners in state prisons for drug-related crimes. Looking at this statistic alone it is clear that the way in which our drug laws are carried out not only violate human rights, but constitutional rights. The equal protection clause of the 14th amendment states, "[No state shall] deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Since the way in which drug laws have been carried disproportionately affect African Americans, who account for a plurality of drug-related imprisonments

room, I would have the worst short term memory out of all of them.

But even with the worst symptoms, it gets better. After the healing process, which is a seemingly interminable struggle to stay home and do "nothing", there is the slow and gradual return to school. A really hard part of a concussion, for both the injured and the teachers, is that when you do return to school you look completely fine but internally are still in a lot of pain. I am incredibly thankful for Friends' Central teachers' and administrators' unbelievable accommodations. All the FCS Staff has been very understanding and helped me and other classmates with concussions ease back into school and

despite making up a minority of users, it should be clear that the way in which these laws have been carried out are unconstitutional and need immediate repeal or reform.

It is for reasons such as this that Mayor Michael Nutter recently signed a bill which will decriminalize small possession of marijuana. What this means is that anyone caught carrying under 30 grams of marijuana will be fined \$25. However, it is still a criminal offence to be in possession of over 30 grams. Of course, many proponents of harsh drug laws argue that that the decriminalization of marijuana will be detrimental to our society and will ultimately lead to the legalization of marijuana. However, continuing our draconian drug policies would be a complete and utter mistake. •

## Phoenix in the Phast Lane: Saoirse Hahn and Hannah Kaminsky

By ZOE GINSBERG '17

On the Varsity girls' tennis team this year, first doubles partners Hannah Kaminsky and Saoirse Hahn have dominated. Saoirse and Hannah are not only inspiring captains, but best friends. They have been on the Varsity team together since freshman year, so both girls know the ins and outs of the team. As Saoirse says, "The reason being friends off the court helps our game is that in high pressure situations, we know how to read each other and how to move forward. Most partners don't have that." As captains, both girls have influenced their teammates greatly; their excitement in practice and during matches brings the whole team together. Hannah says, "



We love the tennis team and are always excited for the season to come. There is no one else I'd have as my co-captain other than my best friend and partner in crime. We work well together and always have a blast doing so." Hannah and Saoirse have been playing side by side since 6th grade, and now that they are seniors they can't help but think about how quickly time has flown by. When I asked Saoirse how it felt to play with her best friend this season she said, "It's such an amazing experience to get to play a sport I love with someone I love and have so much fun with. I couldn't imagine a better way to finish off my tennis career at FCS."

Hannah and Saoirse are so far undefeated in the Friends Schools League, and the future looks bright as the two girls lead the team into the matches to come. As a member of the team, I can say that both Hannah and Saoirse have created a team spirit that future players will carry on in the years to come. Whether it is Saoirse's famous steam roller speech before each match, or Hannah's non-stop support and laughter, there is no doubt that the team will be losing two vital leaders and role models. Girls' Varsity ten-

## Artist in the Spotlight: Lior Wolf

by GRACE KAUFFMAN-ROSENGARTEN '16 AND ANNA SORENSEN

Since early In the year, senior Lior Wolf has been spending the first weeks of school rehearsing for this year's fall play -- the now-classic, epic drama, *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner. Lior is playing Louis, the loving but deserting boyfriend of his partner, Prior, who is dying of AIDS.

Lior has been acting since he was in elementary school. His brother liked to act and Lior wanted to do anything that his brother did, but once he grew out of that phase, he discovered he still liked acting. For him, acting has become "an outlet, but even more, a way to get away from the stress that so many Friends' Central students feel."

Lior also appreciates the community of the Friends' Central drama department, calling it "comfortable" and "full of good people." He thinks that the arts at Friends' Central are controversial because some people feel that Friends' Central doesn't see the arts as important; or at least that athletics are viewed as more important.

Lior doesn't necessarily agree, but he does sometimes feel that students are more

encouraged in their athletic pursuits than their academic ones. Still, he himself enjoys and benefits deeply from both the arts and the athletics and appreciates the importance of people stepping out of their comfort zones, whether that's a step into arts or athletics.

*Angels in America* is a play that deals with topics like relationships, race, sexuality, and religion, in the midst of a devastating disease, AIDS. It is exciting to see a play of this depth being performed by our Upper School! The cast -- inspired by Ms. Guerin's leadership -- is a group of truly dedicated actors who have devoted a great deal of time to understand the nature, challenging material of the play and to portray complex characters.

Congratulations to the entire cast on a fantastic show!•



## Making Your Social Media Footprint a Reflection of You

By TALIA ROSENBERG '17

As members of an environmentally conscious generation, we've all heard the term "carbon footprint." As students of Mr. Vernacchio, we've also heard the term "sexual footprint." One thing that we don't hear at Friends' Central is the term "social media footprint." If you have Facebook, Vine, Twitter, Instagram, etc. then you are familiar with today's social media. Social media allows you to create an image of yourself, and depending on what you post, that image is either good or bad. If you want to get a message out, it's easy to spread the word through social media. You can raise awareness for something important or maybe even just raise the views for your new song on YouTube. Either way, social media is a great way to

be discovered or discover others. On the other hand, disparaging messages or pictures where you do not appear to be in your prime are harmful on the internet; they make it easy for your reputation, on and off the web, to take a turn for the worse.

What kind of social footprint do you want to leave? Every time you put something on the internet or on a social media app, it is important to ask yourself that question. It's important to make sure that what you're doing is responsible and doesn't affect you or anyone else in a harmful way. The internet is both a tool and a harmful weapon in your social life. While it helps you to connect with friends and show them what you've been up to, it is dangerous. Even though you

may have certain intentions when posting online, once something is published, it is out of your control. People who view your content are free to judge it however they choose. In any mediated situation, you and your peers are leaving your social footprints.

The way that you present yourself on social media greatly affects what people think of you. If you aren't careful, the wrong text or wrong picture can be sent to the wrong person. The fact is, your social footprint, unlike the mark you leave in the dirt, cannot be filled so easily. Once something is on the internet, it's there to stay. That's why it's important that we are always conscious of what we put out into the world of social media. •

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