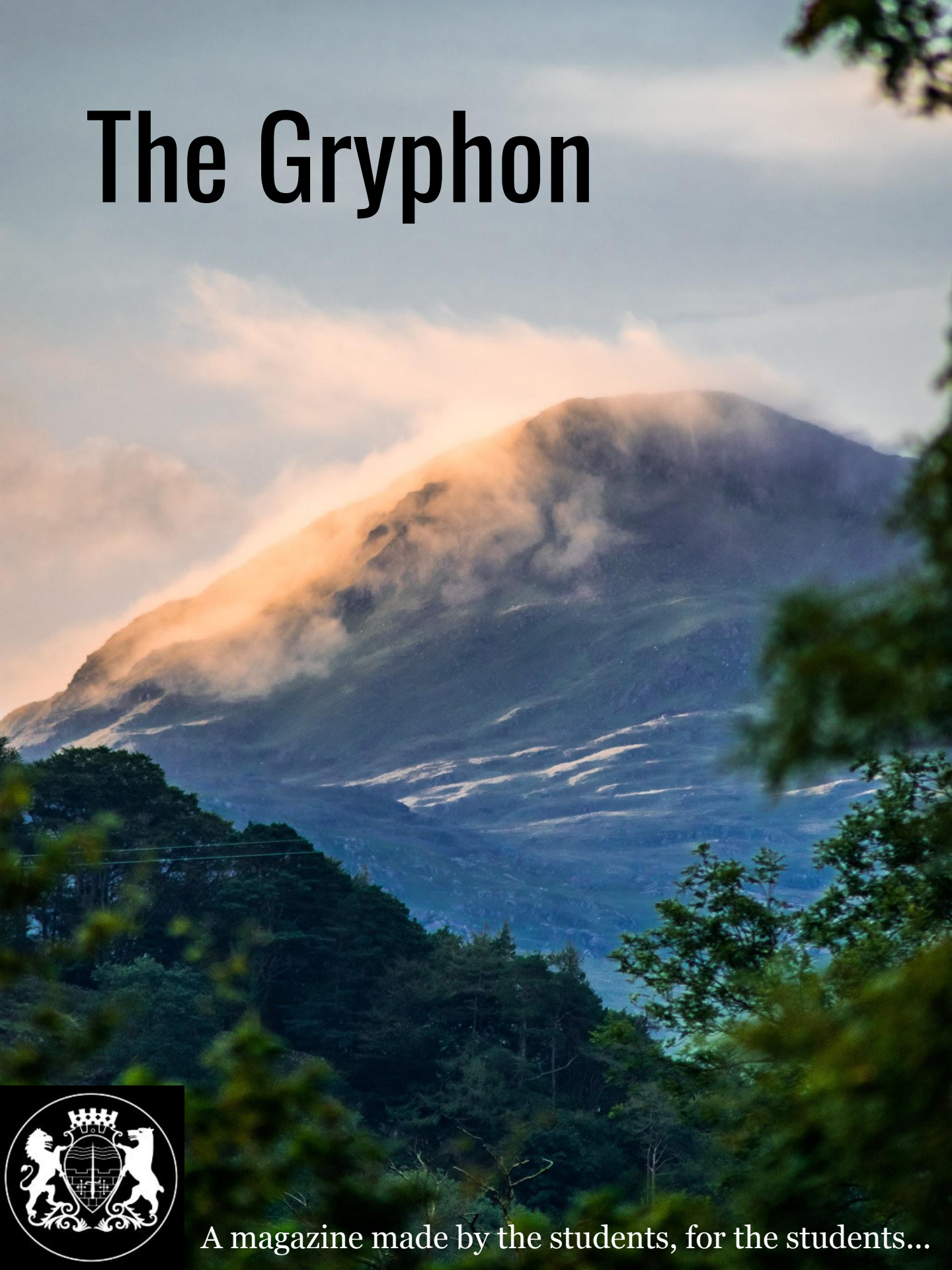
The Gryphon



A magazine made by the students, for the students...

Beechen Cliff

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Cover photo by Otto Posth- Year 13

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Black History Month

Georgie Charlesworth

Every October since 1987, Black History Month has been celebrated in the UK. It is a celebration and a reminder of all that black people both today, and their ancestors have endured and overcome. It is a declaration and a representation of African American and African European strength.

The theme for Black History Month 2021 in the UK is “Proud to Be”. I think as we approach October it is imperative that we recognise not only their struggles but also the great successes of Black People and highlight the huge contribution to history that the education system leaves out of the syllabus.

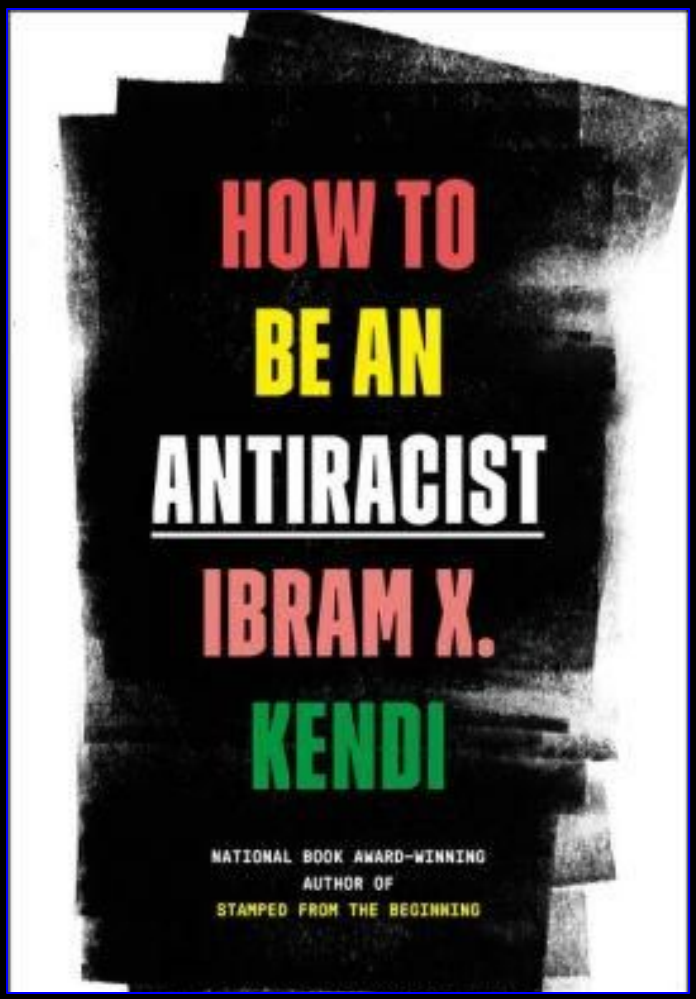
Lavinya Stennet, the founder of the Black Curriculum, is campaigning for Education Secretary Nadhim Zahari to make it compulsory in schools to learn about the pioneers, inventors and icons that black people are in British History. The transatlantic slave trade and the US civil rights movement, are pretty much the only black history taught in UK schools, and as fundamental as it is that we all understand the immense harm that black people endured less than 200 years ago, there is a plethora of positive black history that is completely ignored when we are taught about the history of Britain. For example, Mary Seacole, who was born and brought up in Jamaica but came to England in 1854. She asked the War Office if she could go and help the wounded soldiers fighting in the Crimean War, but they didn’t let her. Mary then raised the money herself, went to Ukraine, and looked after the British soldiers who had been injured. She did so much for the soldiers of this country, yet many people don’t even know her name - but we have heard of Florence Nightingale, it is important that we know about Mary Seacole and show the same appreciation for her incredible dedication and selflessness.

Michael Gove made changes to the secondary school curriculum, making the teaching of black history optional. Unfortunately, this meant that only up to 11% of GCSE students are studying modules that refer to black people’s contribution to Britain. There are 59 GCSE history modules available across three large exam boards, of which only 5 mention the history of black people in Britain. No modules for the GCSE syllabus in Edexcel, the most popular exam board, mentions black people in Britain. This number is alarmingly low, it shouldn’t be that we only take an interest in black history in the light of horrific events such as the murder of George Floyd in 2020, or when the Black Lives Matter movement is trending on social media. Black rights and black history are not a trend to readinto when it suits people, it is crucial that we teach the important history and that it is instilled in the curriculum not as an option, but as an elemental part of secondary school education in Britain.

Mary Seacole

Black History Month

I think that the best way we can celebrate black history month as a school and within the Beechen community is by focusing on making long-lasting changes, not temporary efforts for the next four weeks or so. There are so many ways we can achieve this, for example supporting black-owned businesses regularly; learning about important black figures; reading books by black authors; supporting and learning about black women, and many more. I will include a list of useful resources at the bottom of the page, and also names of black people who made history in Britain but who you may not have heard of... And should get to know!



Websites with resources to help:

https://theblackcurriculum.com
https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk
https://blacklivesmatters.carrd.co

Books to read to educate yourself:

"Why I Am No Longer Talking to White People About Race" - Reni Eddo-Lodge
"How to Be An Antiracist" - Ibram X Kendi
"Women, Race and Class" - Angela Davis
"White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism" - Robin DiAngelo

Films/ series to watch to educate yourself:

"13th"
"When They See Us"
"The Hate U Give"
"Malcolm X"

Black names to remember! :

Queen Charlotte (Britain's first black Queen? Many historians believe she had African ancestry).
Ignatius Sancho (Writer, composer and Britain's first black voter)
Margaret Busby (Britain's first black female publisher)
Diane Abbot (Britain's first black female MP)
Olaudah Equiano (best-selling African writer and abolitionist)
Garrett Morgan (Inventor of the Traffic Light)
Lewis Latimer (Inventor of the Carbon Light Bulb Filament)
Mary Seacole (Nursed injured soldiers in the Crimean War)

The Muppets Show

Toby Hawkins

We seem to have The Muppets running the show in Britain at the moment. Boris Johnson and his shiny, new, yet equally incompetent, Cabinet are the Muppets in question.

Many of us will have known this for some time, however, it has never appeared to seem so clear.

Whilst speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, Boris Johnson, our Prime Minister, our representative on the world stage, chose not to quote previous great leaders, nor great scientists and nor great philosophers. In front of representatives from 193 countries at possibly the most prestigious gathering of world leaders we have, Mr Johnson chose to quote Kermit the Frog. 'It's not easy being green' was the phrase the Prime Minister chose to base his speech about climate change, one of the most important challenges we will face in this century, on.

When international leadership is needed most, and when Britain would have otherwise been at the forefront, our international stature and our ability to offer leadership is in tatters.

The ruination of Britain's role in the world is a trend that has persistently developed under Boris Johnson and that is purely because of his, his government's and his party's actions regarding the UK's foreign agenda.

On the 29th of September 2020, a day which may well have been forgotten, the Conservatives passed the Internal Markets Bill, a bill which was famed for having the ability to break international law. This is a crystal-clear example of the degradation of Britain's role in the world, and it has only gone downhill from there.

This government has cut our international aid budget from 0.7% to a mere 0.5% of GDP. 0.7%, in practice, was a small amount, whilst 0.5% must seem like an insult to all those nations that we, that the Tories, had previously promised to help.

When international leadership was needed regarding Afghanistan, the Tory foreign secretary was on holiday. Examples such as these, though not directly comparable, remain a demonstration of our international weakness caused by this government.

We now hear that a free trade deal with the US, once our closest ally, is no longer imminent. When Johnson met the President, Biden said 'we're going to talk a little bit about trade today' and that 'we're going to have to work that through'. Joe Biden also chose not to contradict Obama's statement that the UK would be at 'the back of the queue' for a post-Brexit trade deal. Once again, we are reminded that, as a result of Johnson and the Conservatives actions, Britain is no longer an important voice in the world and that with every day, week, month and year that he remains in office, our international power and prestige are declining.

Where will this end?

The full article can be read at https://westenglandbylines.co.uk/the-muppets-show/

Track Records - Mr Anstey

George Nunn

As a member of the Gryphon team, it's my duty to ask the important questions and give the people what they want to know. So, in a piece of stand-out journalism, I've plagiarised the BBC's Desert Island Discs and applied it to our very own teachers here at Beechen Cliff. This issue, I interviewed our Head of Geography, Mr Anstey and history teacher and local legend, Mr Sayers, and delved into their Track Records. Tracks range from Stevie Wonder and The Clash to Taylor Swift and Bob Dylan.

George - An artist or song you're obsessed with at the moment.

Mr Anstey - *Wolf Alice/The National/Ben Howard*

G - One artist or song you discovered as a child or student that is still just as good today.

A - *Blur/Bob Dylan*

"Both are still favourites today. A few Blur favourites are Song 2, The Universal, End of a Century, Tender, You're so great, This is a low, No distance left to run and To the End. A few Dylan favourites are Every Grain of Sand, Blind Willie McTell, Like a Rolling Stone, Tangled up in Blue, Not Dark Yet, Shelter from the storm. Check out the album Blood on the Tracks. Perfection."

G - Fitting with this issue's theme of Black History, your favourite black artist or group.

A - *Jurassic 5*

"Check out '*Concrete Schoolyard*' off the Jurassic 5 EP or their album *Quality control*"

G - A song you want to be played at your funeral

A - "*Sunchyme*" - *Dario G*

"Because I would like my funeral to be a celebration rather than a sorrowful affair. I like to think I would be remembered as a happy person and this bonafide 90s banger should bring a smile to people's faces."

G - Your 'guilty pleasure' artist or song.

A - *Taylor Swift*

"Too many awesome songs to narrow down a favourite."

G - The best band/artist you've ever seen live.

A - *Rage Against the Machine/ Jurassic 5/ Taylor Swift*

"Three, each for different reasons.

Rage Against the Machine, Leeds festival 2000. Zach de la Rocha had the crowd in the palm of his hand. Tom Morello's guitar… just WOW.

Jurassic 5, Leeds Uni 2003. Four of the tightest MCs out there. But they also looked like they were genuinely really enjoying themselves.

Taylor Swift, The Red Tour, The O2. For the pop spectacle. Never been to a gig quite like it."

G - What lyric would you get as a tattoo?

A - ***"Stay true, stay strong, and when it's tough, carry on. Don't let the weight of life bury you. Though you have your doubt, it'll all pan out, so stay true, stay strong, and carry on."***

I wouldn't… But I like the sentiment of this lyric from 'Carry On' by Our Atlantic Roots.

Why? A simple reminder that though life is hard it is important not to get bogged down by negativity. Things don't always turn out as badly as we think they will, and developing resilience gets us further than worrying ever can.

Track Records - Mr Sayers

George Nunn

George - An artist or song you're obsessed with at the moment.

Mr Sayers - *The Reytons*

"A bunch of ne'er do wells from Sheffield who resemble the Arctic Monkeys when they were good (mainly the first album). Spikey, angular and angry."

G - Your favourite artist from your teenage years.

S - *The Clash*

"They were referred to as 'the only band that matters' and for me that was bang on. Constantly changing, incorporating punk, rock, reggae and hip-hop. The best songwriting duo since Lennon and McCartney. I still listen to them on a daily basis and have everything they did on vinyl."

G - Fitting with this issue's theme of Black History, your favourite black artist or group.

S - *Stevie Wonder*

"I like old school hip hop and rap (when it had something interesting to say and bands like Public Enemy, NWA, Sugarhill Gang and Grandmaster Flash were writing about their lives and were concerned with more than showing off wealth) and am a big reggae fan - Black Uhuru, Burning Spear, Misty in Roots which were always played between the old punk acts gigs. However, Stevie Wonder was always on in my house when I was growing up and he remains 'the master blaster. His albums Innervisions, Talking Book and Songs in the Key of Life are among the best ever made"

G - A song you want to be played at your funeral

S - "*Tank Park Salute*" - *Billy Bragg*
"Atmosphere" - Joy Division

"There won't be a dry eye in the house. Then raise the spirits with Happy Talk by Captain Sensible."

G - Your 'guilty pleasure' artist or song.

S - *'Wichita Lineman' - Glen Campbell*

"I'm not a believer in 'guilty pleasure' songs - everyone's entitled to like what they like and shouldn't be judged for their taste. I suppose the song I love that is at odds with what I usually listen to is "Wichita Lineman' by Glen Campbell."

G - The best band/artist you've ever seen live.

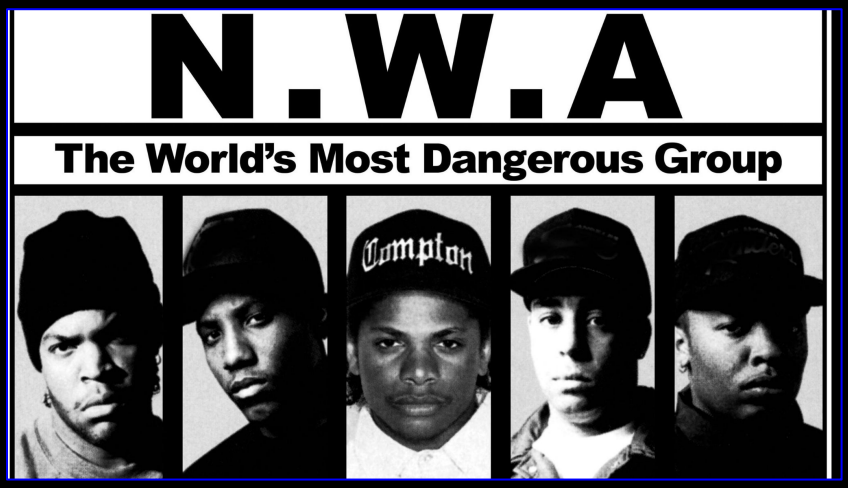
S - *The Clash/ Frank Turner/ Oasis*

Depends where and when. (I know this is not helpful). *The Clash* at the Hammersmith Palais, *Oasis* at Cardiff, *Frank Turner* at the Bath Pavilion all stand out.

G - What lyric would you get as a tattoo?

S - ***"Be more kind"***

"This Frank Turner lyric says it all in these days of anti-social media and keyboard opinions."



Black History Month #2

Kael Honeyman

It is my utmost pleasure to introduce myself as one of the Equalities Prefects here at Beechen Cliff. I am Kael Honeyman, and within this section I would like to speak about how the significance of Black History speaks a loud and brave message that I think should be considered by all.

Something that I think is important to contemplate is that our actions have consequences that can span centuries, and ideas are the most powerful things humankind has.

The poet and writer Suli Breaks wrote:

"You're never aware that mountains don't move themselves
Tectonic plates make them shift
That all it took was a staff to part the Red Sea
All it took was a bus to Montgomery
A single woman who refused to give up her seat"

This verse really speaks to how much I believe the actions of anyone, even if society deems them unworthy of consideration in what they may have to say, can move metaphorical mountains. Let's delve into what these lines mean, and reflect on history that I hope you are familiar with.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was forged from just one woman, sitting on one seat, on one bus on one day in 1955, and her name was **Rosa Parks**. You probably know the story. She sat in the section segregated for black people. As white section was full, a white man demanded that he have her seat, and the bus driver echoed this. They told her that because of the colour of her skin, her words were worth no consideration when she said "No.". They were wrong.

The Women's Political Council, led by **Jo Ann Robinson**, saw this as a turn for opportunity. 4 days later, the bus business lost 40,000 customers.

The Leaders of the civil rights movement banded together to resolve the issues of unfair bus policy. Soon this would transform into a push to end all segregation that would be spearheaded by one man and in 10 years time, he would deliver a speech

about a dream he had. In August 1963, **Martin Luther King Jr.** gave a speech that by now has become a thesis for modern day values in Britain and America, perhaps the most important aspect of this speech being that we are all created equal.

2 years after the speech, across the pond from the waves of change in America, the UK Parliament decided to create the **Race Relations Act 1965**. This law states that you cannot refuse something to someone based on their race. Over the years laws on such matters were updated and changed until 2010 when we combined the issues into a singular thesis. It is against British values to incite hatred based on race and as such the law reflects it. **The Equalities Act of 2010** states this loud and clear, and so far our society has been the most fair and equal it has ever been in UK history.

If you are unfamiliar with the mentioned people and laws, this month is the perfect time to learn.

You may have read this brief recount of civil rights and thought to yourself "that's only one example" or "it's too late for me to be part of change". Are you sure? Consider the 25th of May last year. That was one man, George Floyd. You personally must have been affected by the movement caused - a movement caused by people just like you. The tectonic plates of society are still among us, people like you. My message to you is to be a part of history. Be the change you want to see in society; it all starts with you.

Introduction to your Mental Health Prefects

Giulia Casonato & Charley Taylor

Hi guys, this is Giulia Casonato and Charley Taylor, your mental health senior prefects for this year. We wanted to introduce ourselves and say a bit about what we can offer to you guys as well as the different opportunities that are available for both upper and lower school students in terms of your mental health support and wellbeing at school.

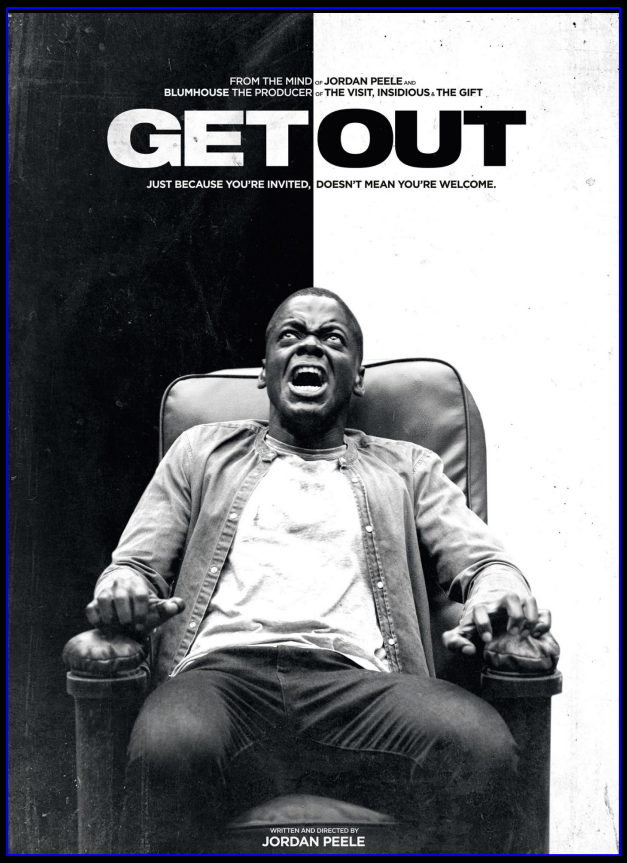
Here at Beechen, prefects have helped to provide a voice for students in need, and act as a bridge between students and teachers/members of the mental health staff for the last 4 years. The results have been amazing with more and more people every year feeling increasingly comfortable in approaching for help and expressing their feelings and needs.

Alongside Tara Gretton, who provides solution based therapy and Mrs Ingram, who is the Sixth Form pastoral officer and mental health champion, we can invite you to 1 to 1 support or group sessions to talk about how you're feeling and offer general help. We can even just be there for you to chat about anything else that's on your mind. The school has provided us with the opportunity to get professional solution focused therapy training so that we can offer you the best guidance and advice.

The reason why we think our role holds such importance is because we understand how intimidating or discouraging it can feel to speak to an older member of staff who may not be able empathise with the struggles that young people face at this age. So by offering support from older students we hope to make you feel more at ease by speaking to someone who could be your mate.

Black Cinema

Louix Sparkes



In the last few years, a spotlight has been shone on the ever-present issue of racial inequality that plagues the institutions and culture of both the US and the UK. Though overt and outspoken racism has become unacceptable in the day to day, subtle and more sinister bigotry still pervades. However, with this spotlight has also come the emergence of many new black creators who are releasing projects with nuanced discussion on an issue that isn't just black and white. In honour of Black History Month in Britain, we will discuss some prevalent creators; as well as what their media represents for the global discourse.

First up is Jordan Peele - actor, comedian and most importantly for the topic at hand, filmmaker. With his directorial debut arriving in 2017, the critically acclaimed 'Get Out', Peele managed to not only make a horror film for all audiences to be thrilled by but, subtextually was a critique on Obama era white liberals that claim to hate racism outwardly while benefiting from a system that continues its legacy. His follow up works follow on and further explore topics such as the duality of the nation following the 2016 election and most recently, the cyclical nature of violence against black men and how their rage manifests in 'Candy Man', a reboot/sequel to the original which also discussed similar topics. Both Peele and director - Nia Dacosta deeply pick apart themes of gentrification of poorer areas as well as police brutality through an artist's degradation and rebirth as the classic movie villain. Alongside these systematic issues, the personal issue of black guilt over abandoning their roots by moving up through the class system is addressed; mostly perpetuated by the white characters who attempt to alienate and ostracize our protagonist when he breaks the homogenous mould of their ilk. If you are at all interested in any of these topics we suggest keeping an eye out for future projects by Jordan Peele.

The next topic is not an individual, but the achievement of a project: that project being Black Panther. It is hard to deny its cultural impact, being the highest-grossing black orientated film of all time at 1.344 billion dollars worldwide and winning 114 awards. A lot of people anticipated this film and so many kids were finally presented with a hero that not only could they aspire to be like but, also identify with fundamentally.

Black Cinema

Obviously, as a mainstream Marvel flick, it could not delve into the topics Peele could with his mature rating; yet Black Panther still manages to involve the dangers of radicalisation over a worthy cause. The charismatic portrayal of the villain Killmonger by Michael B Jordan exemplifies just how someone's suffering at the hand of oppression can lead to their goals shifting from dismantling the prejudiced hierarchy to merely replacing it with one that benefits themselves. If you want a more easily accessible story to get familiar with some of the debate that is ongoing in the spheres of black intellectualism, this is a fun adventure to get you started. Even if you are too young for this to yet be relevant to how you see the world, the motto made famous by Spider-Man: "with great power comes great responsibility"; is now reverberated by a new generation of Marvel fans.

Finally, 'Moonlight', a saga detailing the life of a black youth struggling with both his troubled home life and repressed homosexuality. While in recent years openly gay characters have become more prevalent in media, it is rare for them to be free to express their love like heterosexual couples are allowed to. Furthermore, the film directly confronts the stigma within the black community of black men being allowed to be gay at all. Director Barry Jenkins and screenplay writer Tarrell Alvin McCraney clearly aren't afraid to be controversial on

all fronts, but it has paid off seeing it win the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture in 2016, along with another 221 awards. Through the protagonist, Chiron, we receive an honest depiction of struggles of the careful balancing act of your natural inclinations vs avoiding discovery at the risk of almost certain alienation; the three-act structure allows for clear points of evolution to be explored throughout his life. A film that suits both our month in question and pride, Moonlight is certainly worth a watch.

Having reached the end of our exploration we leave you with this: As we arrive at Black history month, we arrive at a time to educate ourselves about the past and hour that has influenced the present but this is not a time just for recalling painful memories; instead, we can also celebrate a group of people who have had a profound impact on all aspects of our culture. So if you want to watch these films or discover work from their bibliographies or just take the time to explore the plentiful art that has been produced over the years.

Beechen Cliff VS SGS College Filton

Bebe Waddell, photos by Harvey Vellacott

As their second game in the RFU ACE league and the first home game for Beechen Cliff 1st, there were high expectations for our boys playing against SGS College Filton. Off to an incredible start, Max Ashton scored our first try within minutes of the game starting. What followed was two more outstanding tries from the efforts of Tommy Mclean and Will Jeanes, and as consequence to Filton collapsing a maul, Beechen won a penalty try. Tom Bieneman's impressive 4/4 conversions finalised Beechens half time lead to 28-0, where Beechen had the majority of first half possession.

With players being subbed on and off, Beechen was off to a strong start in the second half, still leading 28-0. With tensions high and a yellow card being handed out to one of our players for being offside, Beechen was struggling as Filton made an aggressive comeback. Scoring three tries and following up with 3/3 conversions, Filton was worrying not only the spectators, but our boys, causing mistakes to be made. Such as another yellow card for collapsing the maul, resulting in a penalty try to Filton. Filton, however missed one of the conversions, evening the score to 28-26. As the match was nearing an end all players were becoming tired, some began dropping due to muscle soreness. It was good to see sportsmanship from both teams, as they helped stretch rival players whilst waiting on the arrival of the physio. The final few minutes of the game were what could only be described as intense. Filton managed to score a three point drop goal, finalising the ending score to 28-29 to SGS College Filton. A special mention to Ruben Solomon Gardener as chosen man of the match.

A disappointing end result but an amazing effort from our boys, and a good game of rugby to watch. I encourage every student and member of staff, if possible, to come along and watch

Beechen Cliff's 1st team's next home match on October 6th 2021!

And as a finish to this match report a final message from one of Beechen Cliff's Captains Harvey Matthews:

'In the last few games, we've shown glimpses of the Beechen style of play that we've been developing in training. Last week (22/9/21), we had quality possession and control of the game for a good period, only to then let the result slip. This was bitterly disappointing for us, especially in front of our superb home support. Hence, we have been addressing these issues in our review sessions. This week, there is a good mood in the camp and the boys are ready to put in a faultless performance. Thanks for everyone's support. Up the Beech!'

Beechen Cliff

We would like to give
huge thanks to anybody
who contributed to this
issue of the Gryphon.

If you would like to be a part of our
next issue then please get in touch
with Barty Roberts at
5Roberts.Bart@beechencliff.org.uk
We cannot wait to hear from you!