



The Company We Keep

a QuarantZine

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Editor's Note

by **Nooneh Gyurjyan** • junior

Welcome to the first edition of *The Company We Keep: A Quaranzine*.

My intention with this mini-magazine was to document this pandemic in a way that goes beyond typical news stories, a way that doesn't focus on all the horrible and distressing news and instead allows for a community, Hoover's community, to share their experiences and thoughts with each other.

We are fortunate that we live in an age of technology that allows us to connect with each other beyond the physical realm. Just because we can't physically be at Hoover, it does not mean that we can't maintain the sense of community we once had, and this zine is just one of the many ways to stay connected with each other.



In times like this, we often turn to creative outlets like art and writing to distract ourselves from our pressing realities. Our hobbies are relief from this nightmare we're living in, and we all have our own coping mechanisms. For some, it may be painting; for others, photography; and for some, standing barefoot in the wind to soak up negative ions.

Spending so much time isolated at home with our families, we've lost the personal contact with our teachers and classmates we once had. We forget that our teachers are human too, and that they are experiencing the same stress and confusion of quarantine. Eventually, on some unforeseeable date, this will all be over and we'll share our stories in person. But for now, we'll have to make do with this.

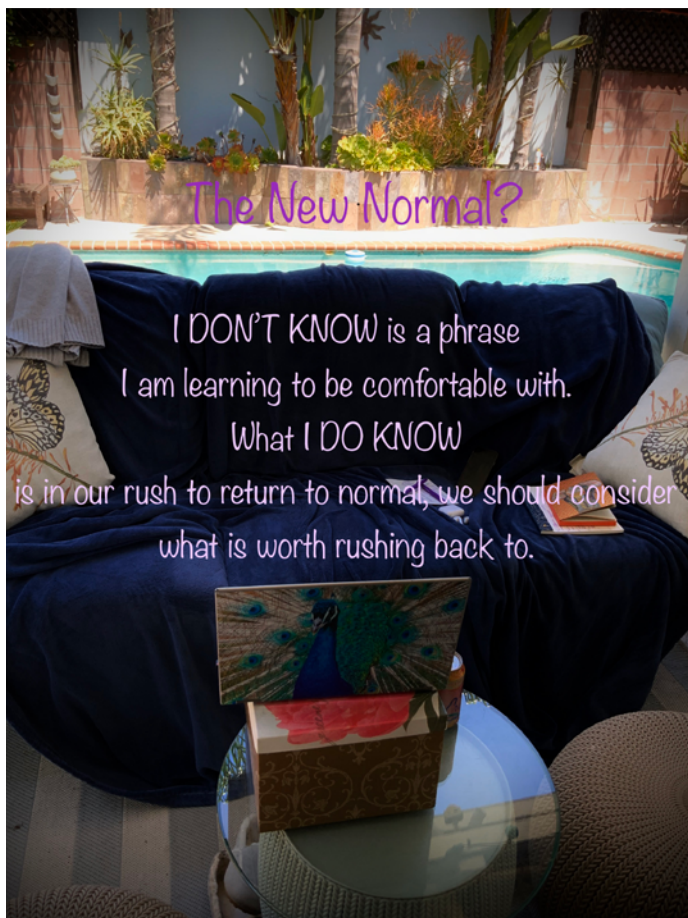
I thank all of you for your contributions, and I hope you enjoy this delightful collection of paintings and portraits and stories from some of our Hoover staff and students.

The New Normal

by **Dr. Jennifer Earl** • principal

What is normal anymore? What will normal be "after this is over"? When will this be over? Will we ever be able to gather together again?

The questions are endless. As a leader, I have had to become comfortable with the phrase "I Don't Know." So this leads me to think about what "I DO KNOW." I do know that there are endless opportunities for learning and reflection during this time. So what is it we are learning that we should apply in the future? What is it that we honestly miss and should return to? I hope we will all take time to ask ourselves these kinds of questions during this time.





Symbol of Education

written by **Homa Javidan** • teacher

The photo of my class represents who I am and what I value. I am a teacher who misses her students, colleagues and, in general, the human interaction. My class is a symbol of Education, in which I value. The word Education has such a profound meaning that it does not limit itself to only academics. In this class, it is through Education that we can experience humanity, mutual understanding, empathy, coping with our internal and external conflicts, and finding resolutions to overcome problems and celebrate our triumphs. Although I am trying to deliver these through remote learning, it is still not the same.

photos by **Jasmine Felix** ■ junior

Santa Monica is a place we're all familiar with. Bright lights, busy lines, the smell of churros. To see it now so abandoned, so dead, it struck a feeling in me that I couldn't describe through words. So I took a photo. I took a photo with hopes of creating a common place for us to feel that feeling. For some, that feeling may come when they see their favorite restaurant closed. For others, that feeling may come when they see the usually packed malls now empty. For me, that feeling came when I realized Santa Monica Pier had lost its culture.





photo by Jasmine Felix

Family Flan

by **Sona Ovasapyan** ■ junior



"Family Flan! Spending more time with my family, walking to get the ingredients along with groceries and cooperating in the kitchen, then enjoying meals and desserts together."

Sona's Flan Recipe



Ingredients

- 1 cup white sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 can (14 oz) sweetened condensed milk
- 1 can (12 oz) evaporated milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- Preheat oven to 350° F (175° C)
- In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, melt sugar until liquified and golden in color.
- Carefully pour hot syrup into a 9-inch round glass baking dish, turning the dish to evenly coat the bottom and sides. Set aside.
- In a large bowl, beat eggs. Beat in condensed milk, evaporated milk and vanilla until smooth. Pour egg mixture into baking dish. Cover with aluminum foil.
- Bake in preheated oven for 60 minutes.
- To serve, carefully invert on serving plate with edges when completely cool.

Superman & Me

written by **Kathy Angers** • teacher

As American history plays out through this pandemic, these difficult times will reveal the true character of our nation and of individuals; the pandemic will also provide opportunity to build character. I look forward to seeing the outcome thereof.

I wonder what your generation will say about the pandemic when you're my age, when you have children and grandchildren. How will all of you describe these times? What will be your narrative?

When the pandemic hit, I found myself revisiting those stories of The Great Depression and World War II that my grandmother and mother recounted: The adjustments they made to their daily lives, and the core values and beliefs that motivated those behaviors.

Then the autobiographical narrative, "Superman and Me," popped in my head. Each generation has its hero or heroes who embody the values and beliefs of their culture. Good 'ol Superman stood for "truth, justice and the American way." I think Superman's way still resonates today, which gives me hope for an outcome that puts us on an upward trajectory despite all the loss and suffering.

Using technology for distance learning serves its purpose, but it can never replicate the human experience of being in the classroom. My heart aches at the thought of students (and teachers) sitting in front of a screen for hours on end. Technology

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fails when the focus is on the technology more than the learning. To illustrate with an analogy, distance-learning via technology is like learning a lesson via graphic organizers. It's not about the technology and it's not about the graphic organizer. The focus should be on the content of the learning, and that content hopefully turns into knowledge, and in the best case scenario, that knowledge becomes wisdom and is applied to life.



photos by **Kristen Marashlian** ▪ freshman

During this time of quarantine, most people are unable to go outside. Each of these pictures of nature and the outside world represent the beauty that nature has to offer that we take for granted most of the time. I'm hoping that everyone will be more mindful of our surroundings when this quarantine ends.



photos by **Jasmine Felix** ■ junior



*"I'm insecure,
I like photography,
and we're stuck in
quarantine.
I combined the three
and did a photoshoot
with myself for some
distraction
and self-care."*





photos by Jasmine Felix



painting by **Demi Sedrakyan** • sophomore

I have been working on this painting for some time and I've had an idea of what I wanted her to say the world. Looking at her now, this piece reflects how I, and many of my friends, feel. At sea, all alone, yet hopeful and passionate about reaching the other side. While we may not see the light at the end of the tunnel right now, we must stay hopeful and this painting is a reminder to do so.

Negative Ions

written by **Juliana Acevedo** • junior

I used to write a lot. I really don't anymore, but quarantine and this zine have given me the time and inspiration to start again.

I didn't realize how much I took the outdoors for granted before COVID. All of a sudden, once the shelter-in-place and store closures and lock-downs started, I found myself restless and itching for freedom in any way, shape or form I could get it. Running helps, though it's hard to breathe when you're sprinting a mile with a mask on. And sitting in my backyard sunbathing is nice, although with this heat wave the sun becomes unbearable after fifteen minutes and I'll burn and get heat exhaustion if I stay out any longer.

One night last week, after watching some TV shows with my family, my sister got a text from her co-worker saying something along the lines of "We're experiencing record breaking Santa Ana winds in Southern California right now, so go outside and get some negative ions." Supposedly, the negative ions in the wind can help ease anxiety and depression and help uplift your mood, so we did what any other bored family stuck in quarantine would do, and we went outside to soak up some ions. It's not like we had anything else to do! So at 10 P.M. on an 80-degree night, my family of five and my two dogs left our house and stood on the sidewalk to feel the cool breeze. It was one

of the most magical and cinematic moments of my life. We didn't care if we looked stupid, we didn't care who was around watching, we didn't even care if the ions actually made you happy or not. All that mattered in that moment was that we were together, and we were at peace, barefoot on a weeknight with our arms stretched to the sky, the breeze in our hair, trying to make out the few stars and constellations one can in the Los Angeles night sky. Venus was, by far, the biggest and the brightest.

After that night, I've continued to go outside and bask in the moonlight and wind whenever

*"All that mattered
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I can, whether my family joins me or not. I just pop in my headphones, put on "The Great Gig in the Sky" by Pink Floyd, and just allow myself to feel. And for those few moments, I can pretend I'm not myself, but instead a character in a movie or a book that feels so far away I can barely reach her. When

else will I be able to do this? When else will I be able to disconnect from myself like I'm able to right now? It's freeing, and it's something that keeps me grounded and makes me feel like the world isn't so awful after all. I've never been more grateful for wind and moonlight.

mural and painting by **Mary Jane Berberian** ▪ senior



"My mural is guided towards Hoover staff and students. It was a mural created as a sense of unity for the students to bond over it. My second piece is connected to the student athletes at Hoover. I used my own friends as my reference. Reason being, she is Hoover's favorite supporter and dedicated athlete as well: Lix Gbazanchian."



Berberian's portrait of Liz Ghazanchian

A Word From Our Teachers

article by **Nooneh Gyurjyan** ■ junior

It's been a difficult time for all of us; a period of uncertainty that no one could have ever anticipated. However, during this time of instability, there's one thing that has remained constant: education. A pandemic is not enough to stop us from continuing our schooling, especially as high schoolers, during the years of our formative education that matter the most.

In late March, our Hoover staff and administration set up an impromptu switch to completely online education, speedily coming up with solutions that the shift to online school has prompted: students without access to computers have been granted loans of school chrome books, those who relied on school for their meals are still able to receive food via a pickup service in front of Hoover.

Teachers and administrators have done their best to retain the sense of normalcy we've all lost amid Hoover closing down for the rest of the semester. Being caught up in the whirlwind of these sudden changes, we shouldn't forget that our own Hoover teachers are feeling the same way.

"I have to admit that some days I feel overwhelmed by what is going on in the world," AP English teacher Carrie Van Ackeren, who has been teaching at Hoover for 20 years, said. **"There have been a few days where I felt really depressed. I miss my sister and**

my parents. I miss my students and my co-workers,"

"People my age have been dying of coronavirus who have no previous health problems and that's scary. Sometimes I think too much about it and I don't sleep well," teacher Dave Huber, who has headed Hoover's Drama Department for 13 years said. **"I'm working harder, I'm sleeping less, and I'm stuck inside. It's not a good situation."**

When asked how she's coping with social isolation, first year Hoover art teacher Evelyn Olvera said **"It honestly depends on what day of the week it is. On Monday mornings, I find myself to be full of energy. By the time Friday hits, it feels like I had just experienced the longest week of my life."**

As drastic as the shift was, teachers and students are already thoroughly familiar with online tools like Google Classroom which nearly all teachers have been using in class for years. The difficulty was shifting every single aspect of normal in-person schooling online.

"The transition to online learning was smoother for us than if we had not been using those online tools," Van Ackeren said. She mentions she was worried that in the switch to online work, student engagement would decrease, but found herself impressed that 98% of her students were participating in the daily check-ins she posts on Google Classroom. **"I didn't make up that statistic,**

I actually did the math," she added.

Even for subjects like art, the shift to online wasn't too tedious.

"I love combining technology and the arts, so the transition to teaching painting and drawing online has not been too challenging," said Olvera.

She is brainstorming alternative methods, as far as allowing her students the option of completing a reading or writing assignment instead, due to limited resources. She is currently in the process of curating an innovative **"end-of-the-year online gallery"** with her fine art students, an event to surely look forward to.

"Creation out of chaos!" said photography teacher Allison Stewart, who is continuing to assign her photo students weekly projects. Stewart believes that the challenges presented to her students through online classes are opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving, valuable lessons that students will carry as they move forward.

For Hoover's drama classes, however, the change has not been so simple. With Hoover's closure, their play "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night time," which the advanced Drama class had been preparing since December and would have opened early May, has been canceled.

"I am working very hard to create, basically, a new class so my kids continue to learn. I'm getting very stressed so they don't have to," Huber said.

Despite the challenges, Huber mentioned excitement about a new project that his advanced class is working on: a theater piece based on interviews of a variety of people on their feelings about the coronavirus, the economy, and being socially isolated for months.

Van Ackeren said that through Google Classroom, she now hears from every single student, and that she feels **"more connected to my students as individuals, and I like that."** Even with the help of useful resources that have made online learning possible, Van Ackeren thinks that **"being part of a community is an essential component of education,"** and that **"Zoom, Google Hangouts and other video calling apps can imitate this experience, but they can't replicate it."**

"I suppose the silver lining to all this is seeing how amazing Hoover students are at continuing to be diligent and responsible despite all that is happening," said Olvera.

"I hope that when we get back to normal as a country, our school will take the best practices from this experience and integrate them into our teaching in the future," Van Ackeren said.

There are still a lot of uncertainties and challenges ahead of us, but by the end of this semester, teachers and students will have made it through a difficult ordeal together, and will hopefully return with new ideas and experiences for the 2020-2021 school year this August.

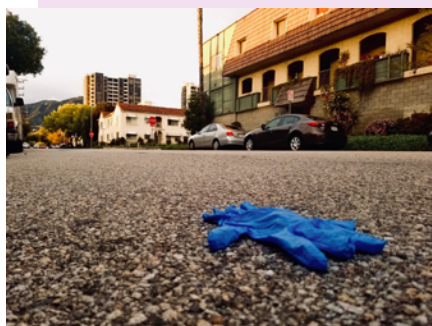
photos by **Noemi Mesropian** ▪ sophomore

Even as death rates increase and hospitals run short on supplies, people litter. A new type of litter has shown up on the streets: disposable surgical masks and plastic gloves. Doctors have to reuse their own masks, somehow, while people just toss them on the ground. I thought:



this is something to record. I decided that I wanted to raise awareness of this by posting a picture of every plastic glove or mask I see. After years of smog, the air quality is finally improving; we shouldn't ruin that fresh breath of air with the sight of a dirty mask on the ground.





Dreams of Going Outside

poem by **Sebastian Guzman** ▪ junior

With Netflix on repeat
We've been stuck in our same seats
Trying to be free
After one month of quarantine

We are living through history
Where our future remains a mystery
There are no more malls
Only late-night Zoom calls

With kids learning online
And parents making wine their new shrine
We are all in a mess
Waiting for Dr. Fauci to say "Yes!"

A "Yes!" to the soon-to-be brides
And a "Yes!" for those who dream of going outside
A "Yes!" for the small businesses
And a "Yes!" for gatherings on future Christmases

But most importantly, to all the health care employees,
From the doctors to the nurses,
Who worked all day, some without pay,
We give thanks, during a time where home is the best place to stay

Stay Well, Hoover

written by **Melany Melikian** • teacher

Quarantine has brought about more silence than I'm used to. As a proud teacher, my classroom is made up of noise, laughter, welcome interruptions, stories, complaints, and warm greetings from teenagers who brighten up my days and keep me busy in the best way possible. Silence often brings about thoughts we usually push aside, feelings we rather ignore, and realizations that wouldn't have otherwise arrived.

I can't say I'm having an easy time. I'm not enjoying being away from my classroom, from my students. Most of my days are filled with worry about my family members, colleagues, students and their families. I have dealt with anxiety and fear during this unusually isolated time. I miss my six-month-old nephew, my sister, parents, and friends. I miss my job and my daily distractions. I am grieving for my seniors who will not have the typical senior year. I am heartbroken by the loss of our family dog who was my best friend of fourteen years. I worry about my grandmother and miss visiting her. Despite all of these intrusive thoughts and feelings, I work hard to stay positive and productive. I don't do well with the unknown, never have.

I write this so that our students know that adults are having a hard time, too. We seem

like we have it together and all figured out, but we are struggling just like some of you. We understand you, and we're here. I can't wait to be on campus again. I miss my Hoover family, and I've learned that absence really does make the heart grow fonder. I have grown to appreciate my daily environment and the incredible souls that help lift my spirits and inspire me every day. **Stay well, Hoover.**

"Silence often brings about thoughts we usually push aside, feelings we rather ignore, and realizations that wouldn't have otherwise arrived."