

## National Uproar Over Common Core

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When the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were first implemented, the transition from separate state academic exams and standards to more federal education exams and standards proved difficult, costly and inconvenient to both students and teachers, according to Reason Magazine. Common Core originated as a way to unite the nation's education standards, but only if states wished to participate. However, Common Core was then promoted by the federal government as they issued release waivers from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policies and gave states a chance for grant money.

According to the Huffington Post, several states tried to back out of the program after realizing its defects. A substantial issue that arose was that computerized Common Core tests were often too difficult for kindergartners and other young students to comprehend. Many have little experience or knowledge in computer

usage. In addition, teachers were evaluated based on their students' grades on the standardized tests. Though this policy is more efficient in keeping quality teachers than securing jobs based on seniority, many teachers are at a disadvantage because their students are unprepared for computerized tests based on new, expensive textbooks that many schools cannot afford. Schools struggling and impoverished communities not only lack the resources to properly instruct their students according to

these demanding standards, but also have students falling behind because their circumstances and environment may make focusing on their studies difficult. Despite the popular view that students

were anxious and stressed from school work as they failed to grasp the concepts of Common Core. Students grew wary of the confusing and exceedingly long tests that had high expectations, according to Reason Magazine and the New York Times.

Now, however, Congress is weighing the idea of switching back to NCLB. This is appealing because by discontinuing NCLB waivers, some of the schools that adopted CCSS for the alleged advantages of these waivers will return to state standardized education with customized educational policies and tests for individual states.

All in all, though having a national standardized educational policy is appealing in theory, the standardized testing and expensive materials that come with CCSS are more detrimental than beneficial to students. The prospects of a new NCLB program may provide hope for the future education of today's youth, as the government should now know to consider students' varying needs and conditions to provide them with a better education.



learn at different paces, CCSS is unsuited for flexibility in the classroom due to its rigid academic standards. The implementation of CCSS was monitored and many elementary school stu-

dent

## 'Je Suis Charlie' Unifies World, Misrepresents Free Speech

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On Jan. 11, an unprecedented crowd of 3.7 million people surged the streets of France, arm in arm in a rally of unity. In what French officials deemed the largest demonstration in French history, thousands of posters and banners bore the words "Je Suis Charlie" (I am Charlie) in commemoration of the 12 people who were shot dead when masked gunmen attacked the editorial board of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. The terrorists,

who claimed they were avenging the Islamic prophet Muhammad, were angered by the magazine's cartoons ridiculing both the prophet and Islamic ideals. Though the public response to the massacre encompasses the global urgency to stand together in times of shock and violence, the incident also reminds us of the battle between free speech and disrespect.

To "be Charlie" honors the killed journalists but on a greater note, many forget that the slogan identifies with the core element of the freedom of ex-

pression. However, freedom of speech is not absolute. There will always be limits to what can be said and in what context.

The freedom of expression does include the right to criticize, but Charlie Hebdo's running series of derogatory cartoons comes off with anti-Muslim sentiment and even borders racist taunting.

Now there is no justification for the horrific act of violence and despite the gunmen's motives, it no doubt stands as one of the biggest atrocities in 21st century Europe. Yet, we need

to understand that those cartoons were still deeply hurtful to Muslim minority populations.

As journalists, this serves as a reminder that there is a fine line between being expressive and offensive. Though "Je suis Charlie" represents an international solidarity, it should not defend the magazine's right to free expression when its crude satire was also a form of inflammatory criticism. I, for one, am for free speech but I am not necessarily for Charlie Hebdo. **MOOR** graphic by SAMMIE CHEN



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## Brutality Behind Bars

ELTON HO  
Copy Editor

Throughout the history of the U.S. it appears there have always been certain unfortunate groups shunned by society, unable to participate in the freedoms that their country had promised them. It is easy to imagine that current society has already eliminated these injustices. However, one group remains neglected and confined by definition: prisoners.

Ironically, our relatively peaceful, prosperous and liberty-loving country has the highest incarceration rate of any nation in the world. Harsh sentences for relatively minor offenses have created an incarceration rate off the charts—5 to 10 times higher than any other founding member of NATO, according to the Prison Policy Initiative.

Not only is our imprisonment rate exorbitantly high, but our treatment of prisoners remains deplorable. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, many prisoners lack access to adequate health care, basic sanitation and protection from assault. Many face isolation, denied the ability to read or communicate with the outside world, while others remain in long-term solitary confinement.

There are no easy solutions to an issue of this caliber, but federal investigation and regulation, as well as education and rehabilitation programs can be some initial steps toward progress. Hopefully one day, prisoners will be finally be able to break off their chains and reclaim their rights.



## Revaluation for Our Generation

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When the current generation is brought up, words with negative connotations are often associated along with us, such as lazy and unintelligent. However, our current generation, also known as Generation Y, should be not associated with these labels.

According to the New York Times, 65.9 percent of high school graduates attend college, significantly lower than the 70.1 percent in 2009. Yet about 74 percent of recent graduates go on to enter the labor force. Stated by the Huffington Post, this ultimately shows that our generation is able to start businesses at a faster rate than ever before.

Older generations view Generation Y as lazy simply because of the availability of technology at our fingertips. We now have the Internet available to us, lessening the use of books for research. However, the ability to use resources effectively does not make us lazy, but rather productive. Our generation is simply using what is readily available to us and to our advantage.

Generation Y is the new force of people that are going to be the leaders of tomorrow's world. While our generation may be labeled the "Me Generation" or even the "Go Nowhere Generation," there is clearly more to our generation than what other people perceive us as.

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