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THE COLLEGIAN MAGAZINE

Spring 2017



Reaching Out to the Red

Political disconnects on and off the Hill could threaten the success of a resistance movement in Knox County. **14**

Letter from the Editors

Greetings, and welcome to the sixth issue of *The Collegian Magazine*!

Within these pages lies a familiar topic in 2017: the political arena. When our last issue was published, Donald Trump had just won the presidency and Republicans had taken over the House and the Senate. Now, the *Magazine* investigates the election's effects at home. In our feature story "Reaching Out to the Red," we take a look at the disconnect that comes from being an overwhelmingly-blue college in a heavily-red county and tell the stories of those leading the Trump resistance movement in the wake of the Democratic defeat.

As we highlight current participants in the resistance movement, we also take a look at one of the most controversial political prisoners — and a Kenyon alumnus. Committed to a 14-year sentence for demonstrations against the government, Leopoldo Lopez '93 '07 currently sits in Ramo Verde prison in his home country of Venezuela. "A Lord of Revolution" details López's journey from a roguishly charming freshman into one of the most famous political captives alive.

Journeying from Venezuela back to America, "Taking Aim: a New Perspective on Gun Violence" deals with the ever-present issue of guns in the U.S. The piece culminates in conversations with leading experts in the gun rights debate about why they have stopped treating gun violence as a criminal rights issue, and started treating it as a public health issue.

With Farr Hall being torn down this summer, the *Magazine* also takes a look back at Kenyon's original "Animal House" in "The House Atop A Hill." From Robert Lowell '4 to E.L. Doctorow '52, the men of Douglass House journeyed to Kenyon to study under John Crowe Ransom, the founder of *The Kenyon Review*. While some students went on to win Pulitzer Prizes and bring fame to Kenyon, their relationship with the college community was anything but civil.

As we look back at what Kenyon's lost, we also take a look at what's ahead. While Kenyon is a literary college steeped in tradition, it is undergoing efforts to transition to a digital age. In "Powering Up," the *Magazine* examines how technology might help or hinder Kenyon's reputation.

Rounding out this issue is a look at how artists spend their time off. The latest photo essay from Jack Zellweger, "Open Book," showcases Kenyon artists' personal notebooks. We've written about how breathtaking and fascinating they are, but you should really see them for yourself.

As always, this issue of the *Magazine* wouldn't be possible without our fantastic designers, copy editors, and photographer. We'd also like to thank our advisors, Bryan Burrough and Rachel Shaver, whose sage advice and assistance helped us to navigate any challenges. And thanks to you, dear reader, for your support. We hope you enjoy what we've put together for your reading pleasure.

Sincerely,



Julia Waldow



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Farr Hall's predecessor housed *Kenyon Review* poets that rejected, and were rejected by, the rest of campus.

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As Kenyon transforms to keep up with a technological age, it could be leaving its literary history behind.

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The House Atop the Hill

Before Farr Hall, a dormitory housed poets and social rejects who hated Middle Path and everything it stood for.

by Dan Nolan

Before poet Robert Lowell '40 wrote "Skunk Hour," E.L. Doctorow '52 wrote *Ragtime*, and Peter Taylor '40 wrote *A Woman of Means*, they all looked out at Middle Path through the same slanted windows of Douglass House.

A tiny, cramped house on the corner of Gaskin Avenue, Douglass House became Kenyon's early twentieth century literary haven, a place where the best young writers in America congregated to study under *Kenyon Review* founder John Crowe Ransom. Until its demolition in the 1960s to make way for Farr Hall, the house stood as a testament to Kenyon's commitment to scholarly and artistic achievements in literature.

But while the men of Douglass House later brought the College great literary prestige, the residents often rejected associating with the wider Kenyon community. Located faraway from the ivy-covered dormitories of South Campus, Douglass House became its own prideful entity, a space where Kenyon's literary greats shunned the rest of

the population. Over 50 years later, as the house's successor is set to be demolished, the *Magazine* examines Douglass House's legacy, as well as its rivalry with Kenyon in the 20th century.

Named after Kenyon's third president, David Bates Douglass, Douglass House was first used as a private residence for Douglass and his family in the early 1840s. Throughout its time overlooking Middle Path, the house served additional purposes, even functioning as a World War II infirmary for students of Kenyon's Army Pre-Meteorological Training Program. Its final tenant was Kenyon's librarian Edward C. Heintz and his family, who shared the space with the "College Cycle and Supply Company" before the house was demolished in 1965.

With its steep roof, intricate, wood-carved designs, and narrow, pointed windows, Douglass House was often described as a cross between a gingerbread house and a Gothic cathedral.

Despite this unconventional combination, the building's white siding and forest-green shutters gave the house a sense of comfort common to rural, small-town homes. Extending across the right side of the house was a long front porch where students most likely spent their summer nights watching Gambier's unassuming nightlife pass by. In the spring and summer, the thick foliage of maple trees obscured the entire right portion of the house, prompting residents to gravitate towards windows on the left side for a view of Middle Path.

Through these windows, students could have seen a downtown Gambier not too different from today's. The town was situated around the section on Middle Path where Farr Hall stands now, with a post office, a bank, two small grocery stores, a barbershop, a gas station, a bakery, and short-order diner. Transformed into a residence for students in 1938, Douglass House was the only dormitory in this area,



Left: Douglass House, once the home of prestigious literary minds like E.L. Doctorow and Robert Lowell, was knocked down in the 1960s to make room for Farr Hall. Above left: Lowell (left) and Peter Taylor (right) pose for a picture at Harvard, Lowell's alma-mater before Kenyon. Above right: Douglass House once stood facing a mostly-bare Middle Path. Photos courtesy of Greenslade Special Collections and Archives and Wikimedia Commons.

"Under that high gabled roof, we were all independents and meant to remain so."

far away from the others situated near Old Kenyon.

For the majority of its time, Douglass House gained a reputation as the house of the poets. It provided additional living quarters for transfer students who otherwise would have overflowed the regular dormitories. The majority of these students came to Kenyon specifically to study under Ransom, the first editor of the *Kenyon Review*, which got its start in 1939. Among these students was Lowell, who would go on to win Pulitzer Prizes in 1947 and 1974 and become the United States Poet Laureate from 1947 to 1948.

Lowell, a leader in the "confessional movement" of poetry, originally attended Harvard and took classes from Ransom at Vanderbilt, but quickly followed the professor to Kenyon after Ransom was offered a faculty position. A classics major, Lowell settled into the house with six other students, among them writers Taylor, Robie Macaulay '41, and Randall Jarrell, the latter of whom worked as a Ransom's assistant.

Ransom's students were not the only notable residents of Douglass House, however. Carl Djerassi '43, a significant contributor to the invention of birth control, spent his year at Kenyon living in Douglass House. He claimed that during his time there, he "fell in love with that small men's college in Gambier, Ohio." Doctorow, internationally recognized for his historical fiction, was housemates with another Pulitzer Prize-winning resident of Douglass House, James Wright '52. "We'd be walking across campus," Doctorow told a *Chicago Tribune* reporter in 2007, "and we'd see a pile of leaves and we'd kick at them and say, 'The leaves are fall-



ing! The leaves are falling!' It was our way of making fun of the bad poets on campus."

In 1955, Taylor, an acquaintance of Lowell's, penned a short personal essay for *The New Yorker* titled "A Sentimental Journey" that touches on some of his memories from living in Douglass House. In it, he cast himself and the other transfer students who filled the house's "mysterious corridors" as outcasts, ostracized by the bulk of Kenyon's student body.

In his personal essay, Taylor claims, "Generally speaking, we at Douglass House were reviled by the rest of the student body, all of whom lived in the vine-covered dormitories facing the campus, and by a certain proportion of the faculty. I am sure we were thought of as a group as closely knit as any other in the college. We were even considered a sort of fraternity. But we didn't see ourselves that way. We would have none of that. Under that high gabled roof, we were all independents and meant to remain so."

The hostility seemed to go both ways. According to Taylor, "Middle Path was the epitome of everything about Kenyon that we wanted no part of." From his window overlooking Middle Path, he would watch polo players return from the field on horseback, amateur flyers return from Kenyon's private airfield still donning their flight goggles, and fraternity members sing the same songs about Philander Chase that are still sung today in the First Year Sing.

The Douglass House men wanted no part of Kenyon's traditions or community. They did not even care about the beautiful countryside. They had come to campus for Ransom and the writing program, and they refused to

take part in much else.

Tensions between the house and the rest of campus were prominent enough to fuel multiple satirical *Collegian* articles. A 1938 issue includes an article titled "Rat Racing In Tub Upsets Poets Calm," which contained only 56 words:

"Douglass House was thrown into utter confusion early this week by a large vicious racing rat. This nasty creature raced all over the bath tub. The student body of Kenyon in a popular front vote gave thanks to the rat for disclosing the fact that Douglass House has a bath tub contrary to general college practise."

The *Collegian* was not generally a platform for humor writing, but when it came to Douglass House, its editors could not resist taking sharp jabs at the occupants of the small, gingerbread-Gothic house on Gaskin Avenue. In 1941, the paper was even forced to include the following:

"NOTICE: Any features appearing in the *Collegian* concerning Douglass House are not necessarily factual and should be interpreted as such. — the Editors."

Taylor's *New Yorker* essay ends with his return to Douglass House after an exhausting and disappointing trip to New York City. Back on campus, he finds a small party of the Douglass House men in his room, using his hot plate and sitting on his bed. Taylor's outrage is quickly muffled by his laughter, and a sudden sensation of relief comes over him.

To Taylor and his friends, Douglass House was home. And though Farr Hall will be torn down this summer, it will be replaced by houses — perhaps not too different from what Douglass House once was. ■



A Lord of Revolution

*by Allegra
Maldonado and
Grant Miner*

When Leopoldo López '93 H'07 arrived in Gambier in 1989, he was a young man with a penchant for mischief-making. During his freshman year, López bought a cheap, used motorcycle in Mount Vernon and zipped down Lewis Residence Hall atop his new ride. Rob Gluck '93, a friend and classmate of López, recalls that López, who had a passion for boxing, would organize matches in the Lewis lounge. López "brought people together," Gluck told the College in a 2014 lecture.

Twenty-eight years later, López has carried that fighting spirit into a larger, and much more contentious, ring. A leader in the opposition movement to Venezuela's socialist president, Nicolás Maduro, López is serving a 14-year jail sentence for political dissidence. López, the most prominent

of Venezuela's 114 political prisoners, was first arrested in 2014 for participating in a wave of protests across the country that left 44 dead. Maduro's government has shifted much of the blame onto López, accusing him of inciting violence via subliminal messages.

Years after the protests, López remains a polarizing figure. To most of the Kenyon community and America at large, he is a champion of democracy, and, as Gluck said, still "bringing people together." To his enemies, such as the state-run news organization teleSUR, he is a threat to democracy, fighting with words instead of gloves. From a precocious student to a controversial politician, López's journey has been fraught with acts of opposition that began right here on the Hill.

"They want us to surrender. But we cannot afford to surrender, for he who tires, loses."

The Kenyon Years

Before he was the face of a revolution, López became a face of Kenyon, featured in a series of videos filmed by the Office of Admissions to capture the "Kenyon experience" for posterity and prospective students.

"I like that it's very easy to be extremely active," a young López said in the film. "At the same time it's very easy to be extremely apathetic. The school can help you out, and students get very excited and involved."

Prior to taking to the streets of Venezuela, López was known for organizing campus protests. In 1990, he and a group of friends pulled the fire alarms of several Kenyon residence halls to protest America's invasion of Kuwait in the first Gulf War.

López also encouraged the Kenyon community to be more environmentally conscious. As a first year, he began Active Students Helping the Earth Survive (ASHES), an environmental organization that endured a few years after López graduated, but is now defunct.

A sociology major, López also took classes in economics, political science, and the Integrated Program in Humane Studies (IPHS). Although he was put on academic probation as a first year, López proved himself to be an adroit student. He graduated cum laude and was awarded the George Herbert Mead sociology and Richard F. Hettlinger IPHS awards. "He was an outstanding student," Professor of Religious Studies Royal Rhodes told the *Collegian* in 2014.

After Kenyon, López attended the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. Upon graduating in 1996 with a Masters of Public Policy, he would come home to a country embroiled in political and economic tensions.

Beginning a Movement

Before beginning his political career, López held a variety of positions at Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA), Venezuela's state oil company, and taught economics at Universidad Católica Andrés Bello. It wasn't until he co-founded Primero Justicia, a center right civil society (and later, in 2000, a full-blown political party) that his name became known in the Venezuelan political circuit. His big break came in 2000, when he was elected mayor of the

Municipality of Chacao, an administrative subdivision of Chacao and a middle class stronghold.

López received numerous awards during his mayoral run and gained increasing support in both his community and in Venezuela at large. It was because of this support that many think the legal attacks on López that followed his mayorship in 2008 were politically motivated. The initial charges were filed when a comptroller discovered López accepted a grant of \$12,000 that his mother had issued from PDVSA to Primero Justicia while he was still working there in 1998. While Primero Justicia was not a political party at the time, López was nevertheless banned from holding office from 2005-2008. Many, including the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, took exception to the Venezuelan government's ban in light of the technical, if not murky, legality of the grant.

López encouraged his supporters to take to the streets to show their dissatisfaction with the current political regime. When protests started, López was the leader of the Voluntad Popular, a centrist political party that is part of the Democratic Unity Roundtable Coalition (DUR). DUR was designed as a political coalition of different parties ranging from center right to left wing that has helped unify the opposition against Maduro's government.

In the midst of the 2014 Venezuelan protests, an escalation of

tensions led to widespread clashes between anti-government activist groups and government forces. In their initial months, the conflicts resulted in over 4,000 arrests and 43 deaths. Believing that López incited public violence, prosecutors issued a warrant for his arrest on February 14, 2014.

A video of López's arrest, and the rally that preceded it, was streamed at "A Fight For Freedom," a 2014 lecture sponsored by Kenyon's Study for the Center of American Democracy. In the shot, the streets are crowded with people, and there is little, if any, room to move. When López chants "Si se puede," the crowd chants with him.

López was eventually sentenced to nearly 14 years in Ramo Verde, a military base in Los Teques. "Our government wants to crush our aspirations and make us believe that this fight is hopeless," López said in a *New York Times* Op-Ed published just 15 days after his sentencing.. "They want us to surrender. But we cannot afford to surrender, for he who tires, loses."

Most, including an EU delegation to the trial and the United Nations, consider López's trial to have been unfair, in part because the defense was allowed only three hours to present its case. The prosecution was allowed 600. Franklin Nieves, a prosecutor in López's trial who fled to the U.S. after accusing the Maduro government of corruption,



Left: López raises his fist in solidarity during the 2014 protests in Venezuela.

Right: Lopez (right) dresses up as Poncherello from the NBC show *Chips* for Halloween during his time at Kenyon. Photos courtesy of the Greenslade Special Collections and Archives and the Reveille.



López (left) poses with his advisor, Professor of Religious Studies George McCarthy, at the Village Inn. Photo courtesy of Greenslade Special Collections and Archives.

called it a “farce” on CNN en Español and accused the government of fabricating the charges against López.

Even so, on February 16, 2017, a Venezuelan court upheld López’s 13-year-and-nine-month sentence, the maximum sentence for political dissidents. There is currently no release date in place.

Between a Martyr and a Political Opponent

In a country with the third-highest murder rate and the highest rate of inflation in the world, public opinion of the government is waning and faith in opposition leaders like López is on the rise; According to a Instituto Venezolano de Análisis de Datos (IVAD) poll, 59 percent of respondents answered “Yes” to the questions “Do you agree Leopoldo is innocent and remains in prison for political reasons?” and “Do you agree the government is transforming into a dictatorship?”

With faith in the government disappearing, López is becoming a symbol of strength. “He’s a voice for millions,” Adriana López Vermut, López’s brother, said in *Beyond Politics*, a video Mia Barnett ’15 produced for her American Studies senior exercise. Yet millions are taking up the mantle to be the voice for López. The #freeleopoldo hashtag, started by López’s

classmates at Kenyon, advocates for López’s release from Ramo Verde.

“Freeing Leo,” however, might be difficult to accomplish, according to Assistant Professor of Sociology Celso Villegas. Villegas says that López has gained “symbolic power” since his imprisonment, making it less likely for López to be released or even executed. If released, Villegas said, López would threaten the political hold of Maduro’s government. If executed, López would become a martyr, rallying support for the opposition. So López remains in prison, subjected to various punishments.

In *Beyond Politics*, López Vermut compares the treatment her brother faces to that of a “high-level terrorist.” During the instances in which López has been called to trial, government officials remove him from his cell in the middle of the night, close highways while they transport him in military-grade tanks, and keep him waiting for upwards of six hours in a “dungeon”-like cell before presenting him before the court. Hearings are lengthy, usually lasting from three to 10 hours.

Treatment is not much better inside the prison. In *Beyond Politics*, López Vermut describes a time when prison guards threw excrement and urine into her brother’s cell and suspended water and electricity so that he could not clean the mess. At any confidential meeting between López and his

lawyers, a prison guard remains inside. Because he is in solitary confinement, López is allowed outside of his cell for only one hour every day at 6 a.m., before any fellow prisoners are granted access to the yard.

López’s correspondences with people outside the prison are highly supervised. Visiting rights are restricted so that only immediate family — his wife, children, parents, and sisters — are allowed to meet with him. But visiting rights are sometimes suspended without explanation, and López’s family can be barred entrance for two to three weeks at a time.

“I’m waiting in Ramo Verde so that the director of the jail and the government can tell me why we can’t see Leopoldo and why he continues to be isolated,” López’s wife, Lilian Tintori, posted on Twitter in May 2015. “What is happening is a permanent violation of our human rights. Not just with my family, but with all of Venezuela.”

According to Human Rights Watch, prisoners in Ramo Verde awoken to the “alarm clock” of prison guards chanting “Chavez is alive, the fight continues!” — an attempt to demoralize the prisoners.

To many, López’s incarceration reveals Venezuela’s failure to uphold democratic principles. Jared Genser, López’s lawyer and founder of Freedom Now, an independent NGO that works to free prisoners of conscience (anyone imprisoned for political or religious views, sexuality, or race), told *U.S. News and World Report* that “only in an authoritarian regime does an opposition leader get a maximum prison sentence on completely false charges for exercising his rights to freedom of expression, opinion, and association.”

Professor of Sociology George McCarthy, who was López’s faculty advisor at Kenyon, views the Venezuelan government’s response to dissenting citizens as unethical. “If the government disagrees with him, I think the government should argue intelligently against his views,” McCarthy said, “but you don’t put a person in prison to shut them up. It’s not democratic.”

McCarthy hopes that, despite the cruelties inflicted upon him, López’s time spent in prison inspires him to more adamantly fight for his political cause. The propensity of political prisoners to gain strength during

“You don’t put a person in prison to shut them up. It’s not democratic.”

incarceration has been coined the “Mandela effect” — named for Nelson Mandela, a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary who served 27 years in prison. López Vermut has observed this type of behavior in her brother. “His face and his demeanor was very much who he is,” she said, describing a visit on the one-year anniversary of her brother’s imprisonment. “Being alone has allowed him time . . . to get spiritually strong and you can actually see it in him.”

Villegas recognizes that the “Mandela effect” materializes frequently in the stories told about opposition leaders. “There is an interesting trope among opposition leaders and there’s particular sorts of plot points in the story that map practically perfectly over the story that Leopoldo López’s sister will tell about him and the way perhaps he’s describing himself,” he said. Villegas referenced Benigno Aquino Jr., the Filipino opposition leader during the era of martial law, who was assassinated in 1983. Aquino’s assassination galvanized support for the opposition. Following Aquino’s death, his widow,

Corazon Aquino, took the mantle of opposition leader — a position that also embraced Tintori, López’s wife.

Since López’s imprisonment, Tintori has travelled around the world asking governments to more aggressively condemn human rights violations in Venezuela. In the U.S., Tintori met with former Vice President Joe Biden and the Trump administration. In a Tweet from February 15, President Donald Trump — posing with Tintori, Vice President Mike Pence, and Senator Marco Rubio — called for the Venezuelan government to release López “out of prison immediately.”

Not Such a Rosy Picture?

According to a report by Reuters, López won his district of Chacao, Caracas with 81 percent of the vote, serving two terms before he was 30 years old. In the rest of Venezuela, however, Lopez has evaded support. Kenyon and Harvard-educated, wealthy, and a direct descendant of Latin American independence hero Simon Bolivar’s sister and

Venezuela’s first president Cristobal Mendoza, López’s “blue blood” distances himself from the poor.

While most coverage of López in the U.S. paints him as a hero, there has been discussion about whether he truly lives up to his Bolivarian democratic pedigree. In 2002, López and his father were tied to the attempted coup of former Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. The coup occurred amid general strikes and protests both against PDVSA and for the existing Chavez government. These tensions came to a head when a group of business and military leaders took Chavez into custody and proclaimed a new government headed by Pedro Carmona. This announcement, dubbed the Carmona Decree, dissolved both the National Assembly and the Supreme Court, as well as the entirety of the 1999 constitution.

López’s father, Leopoldo López Gil, was at the ceremony in the presidential palace where the Decree was signed by a number of supporters. According to Roberto Lovato’s *Foreign Policy* article “The Making of Leopoldo López,” López Gil says he only signed

López, the direct descendant of Simón Bolívar’s sister, amassed a large following in Venezuela as part of the political opposition movement to President Nicolás Maduro. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



*“What is happening is
a permanent violation
of our human rights.*

*Not just with my
family, but with all of
Venezuela.”*

an attendance sheet, and that “none of us there signed any ‘decree.’” However, a video of Carmona signing the decree shows Daniel Romero, Carmona’s attorney general designate, calling attendees to “sign the decree that was just read in support of the process.”

Yet López promises that he had nothing to do with the coup itself. He did protest, but anti-government demonstrations ranged from nonviolent attempts to get Chavez to resign, to more extreme measures. Lopez expressed in numerous interviews his desire for a peaceful and ordered resignation and transfer of power, but also postulated the need for a post-coup transition government.

López’s family’s link to the coup, however, does little to boost his popularity among skeptics. The coup ultimately failed and is massively unpopular among Venezuelans. According to the leading Venezuelan poll organization Datanalisis, 90 percent of Venezuelans view the coup unfavorably.

López’s detainment of Ramón Rodríguez Chacín, Chavez’s Interior Minister, also remains controversial. López and Henrique Capriles Radonski (another founding member of Primero Justicia) arrived at Chacín’s home, accused him of causing the deaths of 19

protesters, and conducted a citizen’s arrest with the help of the Baruta police. The arrest was unsuccessful, as Capriles was the mayor of Baruta and unlikely to be jailed in the town he controlled. López later admitted that he thought the arrest was a mistake, but admitted to reporters on the scene that “President Carmona knows of this arrest,” indicating another possible collusion with the coup government.

López also isn’t immune to criticism here at Kenyon. In an Op-Ed published in the *Collegian* in September 2015, Isabella Bird-Muñoz ’18 criticized the campus’s unwavering support for the Venezuelan politician. She cites an article by Mark Weisbrot in *CounterPunch* that offers an on-the-ground look at the 2002 protests. While international coverage usually depicts these demonstrations as a populist “general strike,” Weisbrot reported that the tensions divided Caracas sharply. In the wealthy parts of Caracas — López’s seat of power — workers found themselves shut out while their employers protested. “In the western and poorer parts of the city,” he says, “everything was normal and people were doing their Christmas shopping.”

Although Bird-Muñoz confused the 2002 protests with those of 2014,

accounts of that period are not much different from those of the 2014 protests. The majority of López supporters in these rallies continues to be that of his first political constituency — the bastion of upper-middle-class liberals that appeals to sensibilities around the world.

Yet it is important to note that these claims against López are often refuted as circumstantial and, in light of criminal abuses of free speech by Maduro’s government, meaningless in the face of a bigger threat to democracy. However, regardless of these controversies, the ever-worsening economic and political tension in Venezuela means that a specific knowledge of the opposition — and what López and his comrades are fighting for — is becoming increasingly essential in Venezuela’s political climate.

With over 10 years left on his sentence, Lopez is far away from attending a reunion weekend back on the Hill. With support from around the globe — including the White House — against a regime that labels him a terrorist, the future of Lopez is unclear. But Lopez is a fighter, and fighters don’t quit in the final bout. He may be down, but he’s not out. ■



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Taking Aim

A New Perspective on Gun Violence

*by Jessica Gorovitz
with photos by
Jack Zellweger*

On an overcast March afternoon at the Brunskill Armory in Mount Vernon, customers stroll in to examine the new merchandise. Chattering excitedly, potential buyers move about the floor, eying the rows of guns sitting sideways on their shelves. Gold bullets line a glass case like soldiers standing at attention, while behind the register, a friendly labrador retriever keeps track of who enters and exits the storefront.

Chris Jones, the owner of Brunskill Armory, was given his first BB gun when he was about 10 years old. His passion for the sport began in his backyard, when he tried to shoot pellets in as tight a cluster as he could. "That's really what it boils down to for me. Marksmanship," he said.

Jones owns one of the approximately 52,000 gun stores in America. That's more than the number of Starbucks and McDonald's storefronts combined. Nearly 20 percent of Ohioans own a gun, and so far in 2017, there have been 213,984 background checks throughout the state, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Ohio's concealed carry bill (S.B. 199), signed into law in December, adds to increased gun usage in places like Knox County, permitting individuals with the proper identification and certification to carry a concealed handgun in certain public areas. These include college campuses, churches, the public part of an airport, and daycare centers, according to the Ohio Legislature's website.

While the majority of the bill remains steadfast in its commitment to end "gun-free zones," colleges could opt out of the provision that allowed concealed carry on their campuses. Kenyon College's Board of Trustees, for example, released a statement in March pledging to keep the campus a gun-free zone and uphold Kenyon's "longstanding ban of weapons on campus." Kenyon will also require concealed handgun licensees and active duty service members to secure their handguns in a locked motor vehicle while on College property.

“For many years, when people thought about how we should prevent violence, what they mostly thought about was what you might think of as a criminal justice perspective.”

Both locally and nationally, the debate over gun violence prevention is becoming a hot-button issue for gun rights and gun control advocates alike. Since the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut that killed 20 first graders and six administrators, gun violence prevention has gained traction as a movement. As conversations about the Second Amendment and gun laws take center stage, concerns over public safety and proper gun usage are becoming more widespread.

Concealed Carry and Ammo in a Place Called Home

The Sandy Hook shooting happened right after Jones decided to open his store, and he had to delay the opening because he was unable to stock his storefront. Brunskill Armory has been up and running for about three years since then. “I do [background checks] every day and they don’t bother me and they don’t bother my customers,” Jones said. “They’re very easy and they’re very quick.”

Jones’s store also oversees private sales between individuals by providing a background check on the individual who wants to purchase the gun. Jones said that he has seen an “increased interest in the last couple years” for these types of brokered transactions.

Much of the time, Brunskill Armory evaluates those who want to get a permit to conceal carry in Ohio. Jones supports concealed carry, but believes that “carrying [a gun] by itself doesn’t make it effective.” He thinks that continued training is what makes concealed carry helpful in the unlikely event that the person is present at an active shooter situation.

“Owning a gun is a big responsibility,” he said, and some people take that for granted. “If someone comes in and they don’t have the correct attitude toward safety, they don’t get a certificate [to conceal carry a gun].” At Brunskill Armory, Jones and his employees “make sure that they’re one, competent to carry in a safe manner, and two, know what they can and can’t do.” In the three years operating his store, Jones has only ever denied three customers a firearms purchase.

While some Kenyon students are concerned that there could be more guns around campus with the passage of S.B. 199, others are not concerned about the new law. Brooks McCoy ’19 grew up shooting rifles at summer camp and hunting with his friends

in South Carolina. While his family did not own guns, most of his friends did, and some of them had concealed carry permits.

“They’re given with the intent of someone who is trained being able to step in,” he said. “If you look at the type of people who go and do mass shootings, it’s not the people that have the concealed carry licenses. Those are the types of people that stop them.”

McCoy has never lived in a state where concealed carry is illegal and said he feels safer with the law in place.

McCoy is not the only student who views guns as a normal part of life, though. “I grew up seeing assault rifles here and there,” Tristan Biber ’17 said. A native of Switzerland, Biber remembers watching soldiers carrying guns while going to and from the army barracks or when riding on public transportation.

Guns played a big role in Biber’s life growing up. His great-grandfather was a sharpshooting champion in Switzerland, and his grandfather won awards in the Swiss Army. His family in Texas are avid hunters, and he goes skeet shooting with them at gatherings. Biber describes guns as having a “persistent” presence in his life before he joined the military. He now holds a leadership position in the Swiss Army, where he is required to use weapons during his service.

Even though Biber feels comfortable around guns, he had to undergo extensive training before he was allowed to use real ammunition. “Even in the Army, [we] weren’t allowed to touch live ammunition until about three weeks in,” he said. “There was such a lack of sense of humor about it, it was phenomenal.”

Similarly, Emily Margolin ’17, the daughter of a former FBI agent, said that in her house, “there was no casualness about handling a gun.” Both Margolin and Biber grew up in houses with weapons. In his room back home, Biber has an assault rifle.

But, Biber says, “it’s a club.” He cannot get ammunition unless he goes to a shooting range, and even then, he has to pick up the shells and return them to the vendor. Likewise, Margolin was taught that guns are something “to be used only by those who are trained to use them.”

Still, there are Americans who are not responsible gun owners and contribute to the over 33,000 deaths a year caused by guns. That’s 1.5 million people who have died from gun violence since 1968, or more Americans that

have died in every war fought by the U.S. and on 9/11 combined.

Public Usage to Public Health

For the public health community, gun usage is more than a casual hobby — it embodies a dangerous trend. For the past 30 years, public health researchers across the country have been working to reduce gun violence in the U.S. By approaching gun violence as a public health issue, officials have been able to zero in on trends and causes of gun deaths, which has allowed them to develop policies they believe would help reduce high rates of firearm-related deaths across America.

“For many years, when people thought about how we should prevent violence, what they mostly thought about was what you might think of as a criminal justice perspective,” Jon Vernick told the *Magazine* over the phone. Vernick is the co-director for the Center for Gun Policy and Research at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the deputy director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy. According to Vernick, error lies in solely punishing perpetrators of gun violence after an incident, rather than trying to prevent violence in the first place.

Vernick explained that gun-related incidents go beyond homicides and assaults. Every year “almost two thirds” of gun deaths are suicides, he said. Focusing on gun violence from a public health perspective allows researchers and policy makers like Vernick to look at the “overall societal harm that guns might be causing” and act accordingly.

This type of public health-focused approach enables researchers to see how gun violence affects the trauma ward of a hospital, in addition to how it affects individual victims. But most importantly, it allows them to focus on keeping “guns out of the hands of high risk people in the first place,” Vernick said. With this system in place, criminals, young children, and people who are a danger to themselves and others would not be able to possess weapons.

According to Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun violence prevention advocacy group, 92 percent of Americans support background checks for all gun sales. But that belief has been slow to translate into concrete national policies. While in office, Former President Barack Obama met consistent pushback from Congress on passing gun violence prevention



Chris Jones, the owner of Brunskill Armory in Mount Vernon, has been shooting guns since he was 10 years old.

“Freedom, autonomy, democracy, liberty — those are the most important and powerful words in the American lexicon.”

legislation. He eventually signed an executive order on the issue.

But in his first 60 days in office, President Donald Trump has reversed Obama’s efforts, signing a bill into law that rolled back legislation that made it more difficult for people with mental health issues to purchase a gun. The original legislation was passed in response to the Sandy Hook shooting.

To public health experts, progress requires a new type of outlook. “Humans think in frames, they don’t think in public health,” Joshua Horwitz told the *Magazine* over the phone. Horwitz is the CEO of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV), one of the most prominent organizations fighting gun violence on a national scale, and the executive director of The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence. He argues that individuals have to be able to “transcend the evidence” and reach people on an emotional level.

This message particularly resonates with Emma Welsh-Huggins ’17, the founder and president of Kenyon Students for Gun Sense (KSGS). When canvassing for Hillary Clinton in Ohio, she came across a voter who was torn on whether to vote for Clinton or Trump. Welsh-Huggins said, “Okay, what are your most important issues? What is going to be the deciding factor in how you vote in this election?” The woman told her that a woman’s right to choose was incredibly important, “but that she was afraid that Hillary Clinton was going to take away her guns.”

As the director of CSGV, Horwitz is familiar with that concern. “But,” he

said, “[Clinton] losing probably has very little to do with guns.”

Today, leaders of the gun violence prevention movement, like Horwitz, are beginning to succeed in transcending the evidence. “Public health is a pretty weak frame,” Horwitz said. “Getting out there and saying, ‘This is a public health issue and we need to do something about guns’ doesn’t influence the general public. Freedom, autonomy, democracy, liberty — those are the most important and powerful words in the American lexicon.”

The importance of this idea was demonstrated on January 5, 2016, when Obama declared that “our unalienable right to life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — those rights were stripped from college students in Blacksburg and Santa Barbara, and from high schoolers at Columbine, and from first graders in Newtown. First graders. And from every family who never imagined that their loved one would be taken from our lives by a bullet from a gun.”

James Margolin P’17, a former FBI agent who now serves as the chief public information officer for the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, agrees with Obama’s assessment. Margolin, like Obama, believes that common sense regulations like background checks to keep guns out of the hands of criminals are beneficial.

“I didn’t know a lot of law-enforcement people who thought it would be a good idea ... to have the populace have ... unfettered access to assault

weapons,” he said, “for the simple practical reason that you don’t want to go through a door and face a greater likelihood that someone on the other side is going to have something like that.”

This is a concern not only for law enforcement, but for teachers as well. At Kenyon, faculty have undergone active shooter trainings so they know what to do in the event that there is a shooter on campus. Community Advisors have also undergone two training sessions.

Concerns about safety permeate party lines, and are not unique to liberal institutions and law enforcement. Even 30 years ago, when he first started working at the FBI, Margolin says, “I never got the sense from my colleagues, many of whom are, you know, right of center politically ... that they were absolutists or extremists on gun policy.”

KSGS, a nonpartisan group, hopes to build on the national conversation and reach across party lines in a similar fashion. The organization is working to promote gun sense on campus and hosted a film screening this semester to convey policy information and engage students in conversations about gun violence. Next year, they plan to take a group to the shooting range in Mount Vernon to learn about gun safety.

Despite increased awareness and advocacy across the country, progress has been slow. “The fact that the entire country is not visibly alarmed by [the fact that 91 people die every day from gun violence] is mind blowing to me,” Welsh-Huggins said, “so why aren’t we treating gun violence like a disease?”

That is the million-dollar question that activists have been asking for 30 years. But finally, the voters are asking it, too. “I think it’s a much more high-profile issue [than it was before]. I think more people are talking about it, thinking about, scared of it,” Horwitz said. “You have these high-profile incidents, a much stronger movement, and I think that makes a really big difference.”

“I think this movement is going to be very strong for many years to come ... I think the American people fully understand that it’s possible for them, for those who want it, to have gun ownership, but at the same time, for us to make common-sense solutions,” he said.

Welsh-Huggins declared that “it’s time we start treating it like what it is. An epidemic.” ■



Reaching Out to the Red

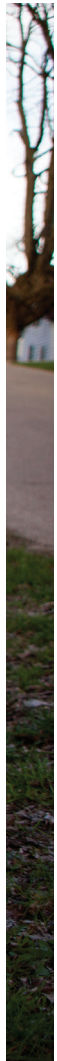
Since the 2016 election, Kenyon's students and professors have emerged as leaders in the local resistance movement to Donald Trump's presidency. But in a heavily-Republican county, political disconnects on and off the Hill could thwart any chance of success.

*by Frances Saux
and Julia Waldow
with photos by Jack
Zellweger*

It is midday Saturday in late March when the first cars begin pulling up to Mount Vernon's public square. Professor of Biology Joan Slonczewski and two Kenyon students are already standing on the grass beneath the Soldier's Monument, armed with signs that read, "Don't be a fart. Save the arts" and "Tax Breaks for the rich: No! Bad!" Soon, the group grows to about 40 sign-holders gathered in sections at the four corners of the square, facing out into the roundabout.

A weekly event founded shortly after President Donald Trump's election, Signs on the Square is just one of a number of local initiatives formed in response to the changing political landscape. In mid-November,

Slonczewski formed Gibbs Watch — the organization responsible for the protests — which tracks the actions of Congressman Bob Gibbs (R-OH) and has drawn over 450 Kenyon students and Knox County residents. Past and present students have created the Facebook group "Kenyon College Stands UP" to encourage the page's 477 members to call their representatives about any bills of concern. Organizations such as Kenyon's Crozier Center for Women, the Unified Citizens Action Network, and the Knox County Democratic Party have also tried to rally the local liberal/progressive population through meetings, protests, and "get out the vote" efforts.



“There’s a real misconception that everything that happens, happens on the presidential level.”

In a county where 66 percent of voters cast a ballot for Trump, Kenyon has emerged as a source of local democratic resistance movements. But political engagement at the local level has forced students to confront the community’s disconnect with its surroundings — and whether they are creating a true dialogue with the rest of Knox County remains to be seen.

Reagan Neviska ’17 remembers going into Mount Vernon with Kenyon friends shortly before the presidential election, when it was Trump signs, and not signs supporting the National Endowment for the Arts, that dominated public spaces. Neviska is from Fredericktown, a village in Knox County. Before her father started working for Kenyon’s Library and Information Services, she lived in Morrow County — “Knox County’s poorer neighbor,” she said. As both a Kenyon student and a Knox County resident, she has had to deal with misconceptions on both sides. Even as Kenyon becomes increasingly engaged in local politics, some people, including Neviska, believe the political divide between Kenyon students and Knox County residents will only get worse.

“A lot of my friends, and a lot of people at Kenyon, were like, ‘Who voted for Trump? Who would do this?’” Neviska said. Neviska identifies as liberal, but people she knows from home voted for Trump, and her family is conservative. “I’m imagining the majority of votes for Hillary [Clinton] came from out of Kenyon, or the Gambier area, where professors live ... [That’s] the reason why I feel like the divide between Kenyon and Knox County is growing.”

In certain parts of the local resistance movement to Trump’s election, Kenyon is overwhelmingly present. As the “Signs on the Square” protest wears on, people chat among themselves; many already know each other. Some, like George Breithaupt, a writer for the local news site Knox-Pages.com, were born and raised in the county. But most — about two-thirds, by Kenyon Chaplain Rachel Kessler’s ’04 estimate — are connected to Kenyon in some way.

“How can you not get involved?” Visiting Assistant Professor of Psychology Andrea White asks. She has been coming to the protests since they began.

Across the square, Gabby Bing ’19 stands with George Costanzo ’19. It is their first time at the event. “I’m just really interested in resisting locally and having conversations,” Bing says. “It feels like this is a lot more conducive to creating a dialogue.”

Within the bounds of Kenyon’s campus, people reacted strongly to Trump’s win. The week following the election, hundreds gathered in Peirce Dining Hall to vent their frustrations, and 142 administrators, faculty and staff signed a letter expressing their solidarity with any minority groups targeted by Trump’s administration.

For some students, though, Kenyon’s actions — especially the ones confined to the Hill — are more symbolic than effective. Emma Welsh-Huggins ’17, a former Hillary for Ohio fellow and a current organizer for the Knox County Democratic Party (KCDP), commends Kenyon’s championing of progressive views but doubts that a mostly liberal campus can position itself at the forefront of a national anti-Trump movement.

“I think that there are a lot of key actors at Kenyon that are part of [the resistance], but I don’t think that in any way a liberal arts college should or could be seen as one of the leading movements, especially [when] existing in a place like Knox County,” Welsh-Huggins said. She explained that Kenyon’s brand of liberalism is “of a different cohort” than surrounding liberals, making it more difficult for Kenyon to represent the interests of an entire party. “We are kind of in this liberal echo chamber here at Kenyon, and Knox County Democrats are very incredible in that they have to exist in an environment that in a lot of ways discounts their opinions because they are [in] a very heavily-red county,” she said.

Welsh-Huggins is used to conversing with local Democrats, helping to lead bi-monthly meetings for the KCDP in their Mount Vernon office on Monday nights. The crowd varies each session — on February 27, about a dozen people sat in the three rows of their meeting room. The walls were covered in “Ohio Together” posters, a large cut-out of Barack Obama, and Post-It notes of upcoming legislation. Most attendees were middle-aged or older; only one Kenyon student sat in the crowd.

Energy in the room was high. People responded to their neighbor’s comments with whoops, cheers, and calls of “yes!” Over the course of an hour and a half, they discussed topics ranging from religion to the environment to health care. “I don’t understand why health care is a bipartisan issue,” one woman chimed in. “We’re all affected by it.”

Adam Gilson, the chairman of the KCDP and publications director for Kenyon, began the session reminding attendees to run for local elections, despite the competition they would face from the Republicans. “We can’t run a campaign on being a Democrat cause that doesn’t take us too far in Knox County,” he said. “We can run on being decent humans, which we are.”

Gilson brought Donald Bovinett, a candidate for City Council, to the front of the room to present his platform. Bovinett never considered running for office before Trump’s win, but after November, he began a movement to get his name on the ballot. Gilson commended his example and said, “That’s the kind of story we need to see throughout Knox County and the country.”

Turning to Bovinett, he remarked, “It’s going to be a hard race.”

“Oh, I’m aware,” Bovinett responded.

Bovinett is not alone in turning to local government as a starting point for change. Professor Slonczewski, a poll worker for the Knox County Board of Elections, is used to pursuing politics on the community level. “There’s a real misconception that everything that happens, happens on the presidential level,” she said. “What [people] don’t understand is that it’s the local level where things happen.”

Slonczewski heads Gibbs Watch, the organization that follows the actions of Ohio’s 7th district — the northeastern section of the state —, with five other members from Mount Vernon, New Philadelphia, and Millersburg. The group has found success through phone calls and in-person chats with Congressman Gibbs, and their base continues to grow. Each week, members rally behind a “bill of the week” about anything from health care to education. Gibbs’ national office has even placed phone calls to Slonczewski.

Most recently, the group met with Gibbs at the Loudonville Public



Kenyon Chaplain Rachel Kessler '04 (middle) joins local Kenyon and Mount Vernon Democrats in protesting cuts to community and national programs during "Signs on the Square."

"This is a year in which you were vulnerable if you were a small liberal arts college in a rural, red state."

Library to advocate for climate control and to speak out against a repeal of the Affordable Care Act. "We were the first group that got a meeting with our congressman," Slonczewski said.

Gibbs could not meet all of the group's needs, she said, but "he did take notice."

A few years ago, getting a "Congressman Watch" off the ground was not feasible, Slonczewski said. She first attempted to build a movement after the 2012 election, but she found that there was little interest; nobody believed it could work. After Obama was elected, she said, "people thought, 'This is just how it is.'"

This time, when it came to Trump, she suspected her efforts would be more successful. "The election came out differently than most people expected," she said. "There are such profound concerns about the government that a lot of people have become interested in politics [who] were never interested before."

Like Gibbs Watch, the KCDP is attempting to attract more newcomers and young people to the forefront of the political movement. Before the election season, Bovinett told the *Magazine* by phone, it was rare to see a Kenyon student involved in county politics. "It wasn't that they weren't involved," he said, "but initially, we didn't see a lot of them coming to

town. Mount Vernon isn't known for its warm welcome of opposing ideologies, so it might not be the easiest place to go protest."

Recently though, Bovinett has seen this change. "During the election, and about a month or two before, I saw them become more and more active. We actually did have a group stop by," Bovinett said.

That group was United Citizens Action Network (UCAN), a non-partisan environmental and social justice advocacy group, as well as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Led by Kenyon students Matt Meyers '17, Zak Young '17, Emma Schurink '18, and Schuyler Stupica '19, UCAN is "devoted to unifying resistance efforts and amplifying the role of marginalized communities," according to Meyers. In the past couple months, the group has expanded its membership beyond the Hill, pairing up with Mount Vernon and Gambier residents Jacob Clark and Zachary Parker to protest hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in Wayne National Forest in southeastern Ohio.

UCAN's origins date back to the members' trip to Standing Rock in North Dakota to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline earlier this year. "We were not ready to get back to our 'normal lives' after standing up to big oil," Meyers said. "We wanted to keep assisting those exploited

by inhumane corporations however we could."

As a community-based organization, UCAN focuses much of its attention on the surrounding county. Recently, veterans held a fundraiser for the group, and UCAN hopes to address drug problems in Knox County through installing needle donation boxes in the area. Upon graduating from Kenyon this May, Meyers plans to stay in the area, focusing on local advocacy. "Spending summers here [has] connected me to Gambier and Knox County residents," Meyers said. "They have been some of our (UCAN's) biggest supporters and contributors."

But Bovinett is right to say that the largely conservative Mount Vernon can make it difficult for some students to want to engage off the Hill. And, according to Kenyon's Office of Admissions, the surrounding "red" county may dissuade students from coming to the Hill in the first place.

According to the *Collegian*, the College saw a 12.5 percent decrease in the number of submitted applications, compared to last year. Similar Midwestern colleges, like Oberlin and Grinnell, also noted drops. "This is a year in which you were vulnerable if you were a small liberal arts college in a rural, red state and you attract a significant portion

of your student body from the East Coast or West Coast, which would certainly be the case with Kenyon,” Vice President of Enrollment and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Diane Anci told the *Collegian*.

In the *Collegian* article “Political divide impacts Class of 2021 admissions” (April 13, 2017), Anci told reporters that high school guidance counselors from more liberal, coastal cities told Kenyon that students were “spooked” by political statements made in the areas surrounding Kenyon.

“We observed firsthand the divided nature of the country,” Anci said in the article, “as we were dealing with a fair amount of commentary on the number of Confederate flags that people were seeing around campus and the number of Trump signs.”

While Kenyon’s campus was on the Northern side of the Civil War, Knox County retains close ties with the Confederacy; Daniel Decatur Emmett, who composed the Confederate anthem “I Wish I Was In Dixie,” was from Knox County. Paired with the county’s mostly-homogenous racial representation — Knox County is 96.7 percent white, according to the United States Census Bureau — the area’s history could present an obstacle to students of underrepresented populations looking to pursue activism off the Hill.

Tamara Parson-Anderson ’93, another member of KCDB, knows



Above: Emma Welsh-Huggins '17, an organizer for the Knox County Democratic Party, glances over Post-It notes summarizing proposed legislation. Below: Owen Decatur, Renee Romano, and Professor of American Studies Peter Rutkoff demonstrate against President Donald Trump's proposed wall along the Mexican-American border and advocate for environmental protection.

this struggle firsthand. She grew up in one of the few black families in Knox County, and her family has lived here for seven generations.

Parson-Anderson’s participation in the political landscape runs deep; As a Kenyon student, she quickly became involved with the Kenyon Democrats, and during her freshman year, she met 1984 and 1988 presidential candidate Jesse Jackson when he came to campus in 1990. After graduating, Parson-Anderson remained in Knox County, where she continued to work on local political issues. But even after a lifetime in the area, her racial identity has presented an issue.

“As a black person,” Parson-Anderson said, “I’m fully aware of that

tension that exists between Mount Vernon people and people who look like me.”

Recently, at the cvs on Coshoc-ton Avenue, the woman who rung up Parson-Anderson asked her if she was a foreigner. “Those were the words she used,” Parson-Anderson said. “Are you a foreigner? I mean, it stunned me in a way.”

Parson-Anderson added that her kids hear racial slurs in high school but that teachers don’t take action. “You know, all of those things build up,” she said. “I mean, my husband and I have said we need to move. This is our home. We live in Gambier, actually, and we love our house ... But we don’t want to be surrounded by that. We don’t want to wake up every day to our neighbors with a Confederate flag hanging on their porch, which is what my mother [wakes up to], my mother who lives in Mount Vernon. It’s horrifying. It’s really hard.”

The first 10 days after Trump’s win, the Southern Poverty Law Center documented 867 bias-related incidents across the United States, over 300 of which targeted immigrants or Muslims. Fearing hate crimes, Kenyon’s Crozier Center for Women instituted its “buddy system,” through which anyone who worried about walking or driving in Gambier or Mount Vernon could request a “buddy” to accompany them.

“Everyone was feeling pretty tense and pretty anxious immediately post-election,” Wesley Davies ’17, one of the Crozier managers, said. “To be able to do something felt like a way of feeling a little bit less helpless, so it was a really good distraction from wallowing.” In an



Demonstrators at the “Signs on the Square” protests gather each week to make their voices heard amid a deeply-conservative county.



“You can only hear rhetoric you don’t agree with so many times.”

environment where some students worried about their safety, disengaging from the county — creating protections between Kenyon students and their environment — became a form of meaningful political action.

Davies set up the buddy system by creating a Google form and calendar where students could either sign up to be buddies or find a buddy of their own. Over 80 students and staff signed up to lend a hand, Davies said. They could not speak to the number of students who used the buddy system, because it is anonymous, but believed that “if it helped one person, it already succeeded.”

Even at the Signs on the Square protest, Slonczewski must school students about dealing with adverse reactions to their messages and beliefs—or even to their identities.

“Don’t engage,” she said. “Don’t reward hate speech. If they want to discuss the environment or the arts, that’s fine. Otherwise, ignore.”

The protest had worn on for about 15 minutes when the white van from the New Beginnings Ministries pulls up. Eleven people in blue T-shirts gather across the street from the square. They hold their own signs, large poster-boards criticizing abortion and praising Jesus.

“[We] can’t rely on government to take care of every whim we have. Look at the Kenyon College campus. It’s a godless country,” Jeff Cline, a church member who runs JC’s Autos in Mount Vernon, said to the *Magazine*.

New Beginnings, an Evangelical church in Coshocton County, which

neighbors Knox County, began responding to the “Signs” protests two weeks after they started. The group also pickets elsewhere, including Planned Parenthood in Columbus, Pastor Bill Dunfee explains.

Dunfee did not vote for Trump. He wrote Ted Cruz’s name into the ballot and thinks the verdict on the current president is still out.

“I’m sure as hell glad Hillary Clinton didn’t get it,” he said.

For most of the afternoon, the two groups stand on opposite sides of the street. Their respective messages — a rendition of “This Land is Your Land” on the “Signs” side, and a megaphone-enhanced lecture against evolution on Dunfee’s part — gather little response from the other.

It is only later that Costanzo, one of the Kenyon students present, decides to cross the street to speak with Dunfee. The pastor is polite, and the two shake hands.

“You can only do so much with standing and showing signs. What we’re really trying to do is forster a better connection,” Costanzo later told the *Magazine*. “I’m not going to lie. It’s a scary thing. Especially if you come from a background they don’t necessarily agree with.”

When Costanzo mentions to Dunfee that he is gay, he felt the tone of the conversation shift; it seemed like Dunfee no longer wanted to listen to what he had to say.

“This is wrong, homosexuality is wrong, we love you and pray for you’ and everything like that,” Costanzo recalled Dunfee saying. “I said, ‘I hope we can find an understanding

one day.”

Haley Shipley ’17, whose ancestors were some of the first settlers of Knox County, vividly remembers growing up with friends of different opinions than her own. The daughter of liberal parents, Shipley became “very politically outspoken” in high school as a way to rebel against her environment. “You can only hear rhetoric you don’t agree with so many times,” she said.

One of Shipley’s earliest forms of protest was wearing an Occupy Wall Street shirt to class. “It made a lot of people mad,” she said. “So then I just kept wearing it, like, all the time.” Her most vivid memory of political dissent, however, happened in her high school geography class. “It turned into a talk-about-whatever kind of class, and we had debates,” she said. “It would always be like, ‘Stand on this side of the room if you agree, and this side if you don’t,’ ... I remember doing that and always being the only person on one side of the room, compared to everybody else. It was a very eye-opening experience, being like, ‘Huh, no one else here agrees with my opinions on health care.’”

Now, at Kenyon, Shipley faces a different kind of distance from her peers. As a supporter of gun rights and someone with married friends, she called herself “too liberal for Knox County but too conservative for Kenyon.” Shipley voted for Clinton but felt frustrated with what she viewed as the student body’s inappropriate and belittling response to Knox County in the wake of

“I don’t think you can really understand where these people are coming from unless you make an effort to understand their circumstances.”

the election.

“Being on campus was really difficult ... afterwards, because I felt like there was an attitude of, ‘Oh, we lost because of white Trump supporters, like everyone in Knox County,’” Shipley said. “And it was like, ‘Yes, they did vote [for Trump] and I wish they didn’t vote that way, but there’s a lot of societal and psychological reasons behind them voting. You can’t go and fix us.’”

Sometimes, Kenyon’s intolerance toward conservative students becomes extreme. During the campus’s “Shock Your Mom” party in March, students broke into Saxon Justice’s ’17 room and vandalized his property. Justice is a Republican who voted for Trump, and his room in Old Kenyon has a “Make America Great Again” sign propped up against its window.

Justice explained that he came home Saturday evening to find his lock picked and his room in shambles. “Our beds were flipped, contents of drawers [were] thrown everywhere, shelves were cleared off, and food [was] thrown on the ground,” Justice told the *Magazine*. “Personally, I was rather upset at first but realized all the folks that did this wanted was a reaction so I didn’t make a big deal about it.”

This wasn’t the first time Justice’s personal space was compromised. After Trump was elected president, someone broke into Justice’s room and urinated on his roommate’s

belongings. “Our name signs are constantly torn off the door,” Justice said. “[In November,] notes were always pushed under the door that said ‘go away’ or ‘be on the right side of history.’”

While Justice admits that he is “fine” with the predominantly liberal attitude on campus, he finds the lack of respect for his views frustrating. “As of late, things appear to have gotten significantly worse, especially post-election,” he said. “The way people on campus constantly argue that Trump would overstep his boundaries but then commit acts like this is hypocritical,” he said.

Like Justice, Shipley views the student body’s attitude toward red voters as problematic. The day after the election, she explained, classmates in her seminar brainstormed ways to alter local beliefs. This attitude, she said, only helps to exacerbate disconnects between Kenyon and Knox County and further the stereotype that Kenyon students are elitist. Unless Kenyon students try to understand Knox County residents, she said, they cannot hope to engage in productive dialogue.

“So many of the things that we identify with as Knox Countians ... I mean, they’re generational,” she said. “They’re things that have come from even hundreds of years [ago]. There is this idea of heritage and following what your family does. And even following what your church does when your church is made up

of the same families that started it. I think [Knox County residents] have such different backgrounds and experiences than Kenyon students and I don’t think you can really understand where these people are coming from until you make an effort to understand their circumstances.”

Although Shipley did not vote for Trump, she understands why many of her neighbors did, and why his messages might resonate in an area like Knox County.

“I understand a lot of the argument that rural white America is being left behind in ... political discussions,” she said. “That’s something that I felt just in going to a school whose funding was so cut, and growing up in an environment where we didn’t have much to do or get much. When the recession hit, it hit really hard out here. And it still hasn’t really recovered because we lost factories and people lost jobs. I get where [voters] are coming from — here’s someone coming in and going. ‘It’s okay to be in your situation.’ ... It’s attractive.”

Perhaps there has always been a disconnect between Kenyon and Knox County. And as Parson-Anderson said, “There probably always will be, because of the nature of the culture here.”

The question, then, remains of successful the “blue” resistance will continue to be in the area, as Trump’s term wears on and the 2018 and 2020 elections creep forward. While it is too early to tell whether Kenyon’s current political activism will continue, some — including Eva Warren ’19 — see a bright future.

Warren, who hails from New York, is getting ready to launch her campaign for a seat on Village Council, the Gambier body that handles day-to-day life of the village. Elections are next November.

“I realized that ever since I was little, I had been talking this talk about political engagement and getting involved, and had really only paid lip service to it,” Warren said. After Trump’s election, she decided to run for local government in order to become a bridge between Kenyon students and the community.

“I think that having a person who looks like them in age, if nothing else, makes it a lot easier to get engaged on a local level,” she said. “I would love to be that person.” ■

Pastor Bill Dunfee speaks with George Costanzo ’19 about religion and homosexuality.





Open Book

Five students divulge their most personal creations.

*A photo essay by
Jack Zellweger*

Ellie Manos '18

"My family tells me it's dark, but I don't really think it's dark... I just added in the surroundings of where I was," Ellie Manos '18 reflected on this page of her notebook, drawn during a flight from Los Angeles to New York over spring break. "First, I put in the door and the exit sign, and then it became sort of plane-crashy."

Manos is an art major and plans on pursuing art after college. "I don't know what I will do if I'm not an artist," she said. "I'm just now being more proactive about figuring out my career path."





Olivia Lindsay '19

A performing artist by trade, Olivia Lindsay '19 is new to the visual arts, but turned to sketching to help her deal with the challenges college brought. "I got to college, and everything felt a little mindless compared with what I experienced in high school," she said. "Last year, I was quite sad at Kenyon, and I wasn't doing my homework. I was doing a lot of doodles because I was frustrated by the culture of Kenyon. I wrote Post-Its that were a little sarcastic sometimes and tr[ied] to make people think about why they do the things they do at college."



Sarah Nourie '17

Practice makes perfect. Sarah Nourie '17 can fill up an entire notebook every few weeks. "I've improved a lot since the beginning of the year," she said. "As I sketch more, I find myself able to sketch more realistically and more calmly. Rather than scribbling over messed up parts, I let things go." Nourie draws self-portraits, tiny houses she hopes to live in one day, and vignettes of moments she appreciates. "I've always found an escape in drawing. I can't really sit still at this point or do anything unless I'm drawing."

Nourie replays moments in her mind by putting them down on paper, capturing moments that may have otherwise gone unpreserved. She details the idea of the "commonplace," or an artistic space where anything goes. In her work, there are no categories or themes, and interesting thoughts and feelings run wild.



Powering Up

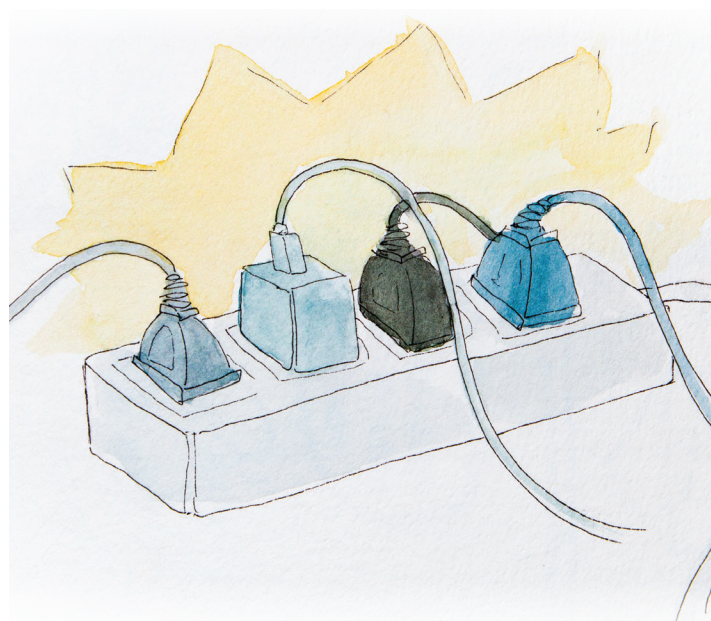
As Kenyon approaches its 200th anniversary, the Magazine examines how a traditionally literary campus is adjusting to the modern age.



*by Lydia White
with illustrations
from Anna Zinanti*



On March 24, 2017, the campus and parts of Mount Vernon faced an almost eight-hour blackout. The Political Science department, looking to fill Assistant Professor Jacqueline McAllister's place during her leave next year, had to reschedule its Skype interviews with potential candidates. Professor of Japanese Hideo Tomita suspended his midterm because he was unable to make copies of his exam. The library closed early and Kenyon students escaped to Mount Vernon in droves, carrying chargers and drained devices. Among them, Andrea Evans '19 and Ali Georgescu '19 took refuge at Panera Bread — one of many establishments that saw an increase in business and its light sockets monopolized by Kenyon students.



“When the digital stuff starts taking over then it’s no longer pedagogically useful.”

Kenyon may be a literary college in central Ohio, but like any other institution, it is wired and dependent on technology. Professors are integrating digital tools into their classrooms, and the Greenslade archivists are moving Kenyon’s physical records online. This year will also mark two new presences on campus: a smartphone app, Mobile ID, that will allow students to access buildings without their K-Cards, and a website, NetNutrition, that will streamline the process of informing students about allergens contained in food served at Peirce Dining Hall. In just two short years, Olin and Chalmers Library will be demolished, replaced by a new commons with basement bookshelves sealed by electronic locks. And this year will mark the first time in 161 years without the print edition of Kenyon’s yearbook, *The Reveille*, one of Kenyon’s oldest student-run publications.

Home to *The Kenyon Review* and the alma-mater of a number of successful authors, Kenyon has defined itself as a writers’ college. But as Kenyon approaches its 200th anniversary in 2024 and the College’s 2020 plan comes to fruition, Kenyon’s priorities may be shifting. As Kenyon transforms to keep up with a technological age, it must decide which parts of its history to maintain or discard.

When first years come to campus, they are told by upperclassmen not to use their phones on Middle Path — a longheld rule that allows for more face-to-face interactions. In an increasingly-digital age, however, this behavior becomes more and more

unusual. Now, phones are everywhere on Kenyon’s campus — and the College is taking notice.

Recently, the College has designed a new app, Mobile ID, to keep pace with Kenyon’s needs and the character of the age. The new app gives students the ability to access a door on campus by entering in a code, indicated by a sticker label on the door’s card reader, and swiping right on their smartphones. Supplementing the app, a website at kcard.kenyon.edu will allow students to check their K-Card balance, evaluate their spending history and disable their cards in the event they are missing. The website is now active, and Mobile ID will be released this month.

Spearheaded by the Library and Information Services (LBIS), Mobile ID was designed to give students an alternative to calling the Office of Campus Safety, as it is estimated that the department spends approximately 100 hours a month responding to calls from students locked outside their dorms. The office receives 12,000 to 13,000 total calls from students in any given year, according to Robert Hooper, the director of Campus Safety. “[Mobile ID] is a real convenience for students, and it makes the campus a little bit safer,” Ronald Griggs, the vice president of LBIS, said.

It is still unknown how the new app will be received on campus. When Kenyon’s identification card, the K-Card, was first introduced in 2007, it was not immediately welcomed. One opinion columnist for the *Collegian*, E.B. Debruin ’09, wrote an article titled, “Implementing K-Card will make Kenyon just like other, larger universities,” and staff writer Lucas Northern ’10 reported that some students were worried the K-Card would make the campus transactional and impersonal. Today, many students cannot imagine campus life without the K-Card, but it should be noted the K-Card almost caused Peirce Dining Hall to be moved to a card-reading system, which would have changed the day-to-day operations of Kenyon.

Following LBIS’s app, Peirce’s online service, NetNutrition, will be ready in fall 2017 after being beta-tested over the summer. According to AVI, the company with whom Kenyon contracts for food services, NetNutrition is user-friendly and allows students to easily filter Peirce dining options that contain milk, fish, wheat, eggs, soy, and gluten.

Garrett Shutler, a 2016 graduate from Heidelberg University, recently became part of the AVI staff. One of Shutler’s many responsibilities is printing allergen labels for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, but he explained that in an age of online marketing and social media, “there is not a lot of pen and paper stuff anymore; everything is moving online. And that’s eventually what [AVI] wants to do.” The paper labels will not disappear overnight, but AVI hopes the accessibility of NetNutrition will whittle down their necessity and render them obsolete. If fully implemented, Shutler explained, the new system with reduce time, costs, and materials for both AVI and Kenyon, as well as stress for students with allergies during the hectic times of the week.

Inside the classroom, digital tools are gaining increasing popularity, as well. Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies Laurie Finke sees technology as any other classroom tool — to be used when helpful. She is having her students experiment with a software called Omeka to produce online exhibits exploring the role of commodities in consumer culture. Although Omeka proves a valuable medium for presenting information, Finke admitted that the assignments “are murderous to grade.” While a paper takes 30 to 45 minutes to grade, the online exhibits require an hour to an hour and a half. Despite this, the payoffs are still valuable, according to Finke, as her students can be creative and expressive in thought, learn a new technology and show they can apply their knowledge to a format other than paper writing. In fact, Finke’s students end up writing more for their exhibit labels than they would if the project was assigned as a paper.

Finke is quick to note that quantity does not compensate for quality. “I don’t want the technology to take over,” she said. “I don’t want the students to get so caught up in ‘how do I do this’ that they don’t actually pay attention to what they’re writing.” Kenyon has a reputation for producing great writers in all majors, and Finke expressed she would rather have her students write something interesting than be overwhelmed with technology. “When the digital stuff starts taking over then it’s no longer pedagogically useful,” Finke said.

As technology becomes more and

“What’s a record look like in Facebook?”

more common across Kenyon’s departments, preserving materials can present a challenge. The staff of Greenslade Special Collections and Archives, home to Kenyon’s past, are trying to keep pace with the growing electronic age. By scanning the College’s physical records and moving them online, they want to increase the accessibility of the College’s history. Medieval manuscripts, college catalogues, and the letters of Charles P. McIlvaine and Philander Chase can be found at digital.kenyon.edu, as well as past *Collegian* issues and editions of the *Reveille*.

The number of physical records will be fewer in subsequent years, though, as the 2016 edition of the *Reveille* will be the last in its series and, as College Archivist Abigail Miller noted, student groups no longer submit as many physical records to the Archives. Yearbooks like the *Reveille* have been disappearing from college campuses across the country because of diminishing interest, from Johns Hopkins University’s yearbook *Hullabalo*, to those of Towson University, Wesleyan, and Purdue. Miller attributed this loss to social media, explaining, “everyone keeps their own records now.” An argument can be made that yearbooks are no longer useful for students in an age of social media, but they are “great records of the past” to archivists like Miller. The yearbook traces Kenyon’s history as far back as 1855. Its books are first-hand accounts that historians can harken back to when researching Kenyon.

At smaller colleges, yearbooks

have a greater staying power than at larger universities. And Kenyon is not only a small college, but also a college that revolves around its community. “When I came here, it was really interesting to me all the traditions and the small community feel,” Miller said. “And I think it’s a big part of why people continue to come back for Reunion Weekend and why people feel connected to the College many, many years on — more so than I think they do with larger institutions.” Miller has not visited her alma mater, University of Pittsburgh, since she graduated. “I don’t quite feel that pull to go back that I know many of the Kenyon alumni do,” she said.

The fear that there won’t be a physical record of each year at Kenyon is already reflected as students ponder the loss of the *Reveille*. “It is disappointing we won’t have a yearbook to commemorate our year,” Eva Buchanan-Cates ’19 said. “Signing the Matriculation book is cool, but in 30 years when I come back with my kids, all I’ll be able to show them is a signature. With a yearbook, my kids can look at pictures and ask me questions about people I’ve spent the last four years with. They can see what was in style and what was happening on campus.”

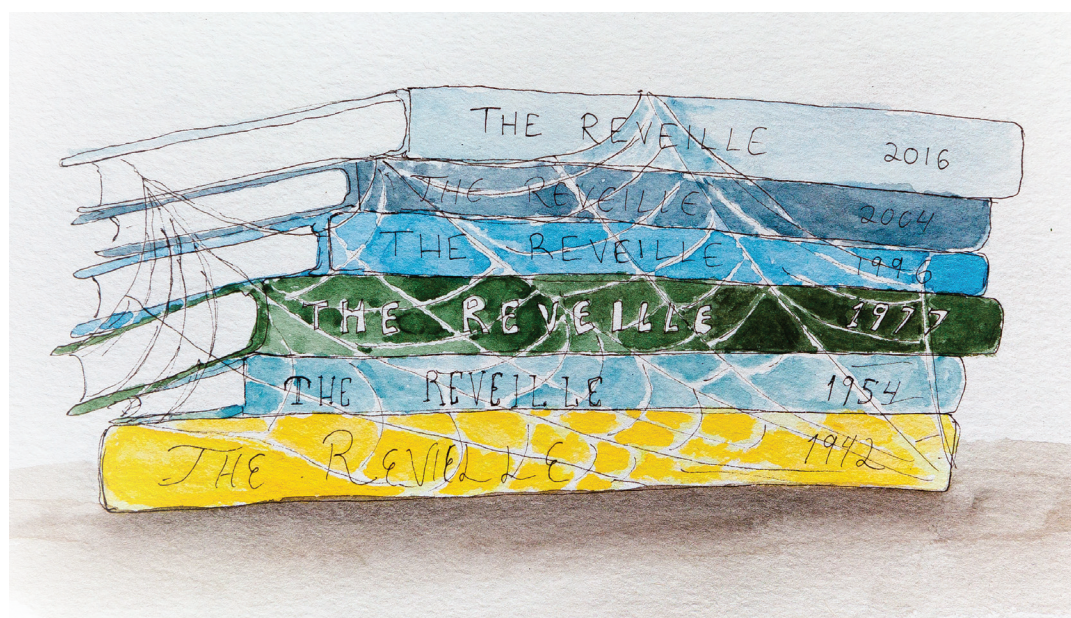
As colleges move away from yearbooks and students rely on social media as their primary means to record their memories, Griggs wonders, “What’s a record look like in Facebook?” A similar thought was expressed at Kenyon when email became its chief form of communication, he explained. “When the College started using email instead of written

memoranda, there was this thought [that] we’re going to lose all this history,” he said. “If you went back and looked at what was going on at Kenyon in 1950, there would be folders full of written memos that would describe what was going on.” However, unlike physical, typewritten memos, emails sent electronically cannot be easily archived because they contain sensitive information. LBIS is still struggling today to find a way of ensuring that information is private, but available for the next generation. “What does it look like for the College to preserve its history, while at the same time preserving the privacy of everyone involved?” Griggs asked.

Things might be changing or disappearing completely at Kenyon, but there are others that people refuse to give up. While some professors are using digital tools, others are content with a whiteboard and a textbook. And Kenyon is still a place where many students take traditions seriously. While some Kenyon students ignore the no-phone rule on Middle Path, others remain devoted to superstitions. It’s not unusual to do cartwheels to avoid stepping on the seal in Peirce or stick like glue to a friend through the Gates of the Hell.

Nostalgia is a big part of Kenyon, and its past plays a vital role in our understanding of the College. But as Kenyon moves forward, what was cherished in previous years may become obsolete. At its core, Kenyon is known as a literary college, yet its 2020 plan involves tearing down Olin and Chalmers Libraries and erecting a new commons to house the Career Development Office, the Registrar’s Office, and the Office of Academic Advising. Once easily accessible for research, books will be housed in the basement. At Kenyon, the very definition of a library is changing alongside the rest of campus.

As Kenyon progresses further into a digital age, faculty and students must decide what to keep as a fundamental part of the College and what to let go of and modernize. Griggs asserted, “Change in the world means that we have to change the way we behave in order to live successfully.” Kenyon must change to stay competitive as a liberal arts institution; however, as the College moves forward, it should remember to always look back to ensure it is not leaving anything valuable behind. ■



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