



## Here's to a year of risk-taking, mess-making and self-discovery

**Liam Knox**  
Opinion Editor

Achievement: that singular attainment of glory, the validation of talent and diligence, the subject of our peers' coveted admiration. But what qualifies as achievement? Does it need to have a title? A numerical ranking? A name engraved in bronze?

At North, our admiration is, for the most part, partitioned into packages and shipped off to specific groups: the select few who win the race to nowhere and come out holding an Ivy League diploma and a doctorate or two; the hard workers who claim their stake in the

acquisition of knowledge through diligence and can be counted upon no matter what; and those who devote themselves to the service of those who need their time and energy far more than they themselves do. At North, there is a culture of praise for each and every one of these traits and accomplishments, as there should be.

However, there is a fourth category of students that is often overlooked. In some circles, they are called troublemakers, rabble-rousers and miscreants. I call them individuals. And we all have something to learn from them.

They're not the future bureaucrats or white-collar workers of

this country. They are the artists, writers, journalists, ACLU lawyers, activists. Their skill sets cannot be measured by their GPA or by how many clubs they form. They can only be evaluated by risk-taking, and passion, and a craving for knowledge that goes beyond the attainment of a specific goal. They are wide-eyed and dizzy in the pursuit of learning everything, and they possess a heartfelt desire to understand and not just comply. The questions they ask sound a little different, maybe: instead of asking "what are the rules I need to know to avoid conflict?" they might ask "who made these rules? What was their motivation? How

will they affect us?" This attitude is not gratuitously provocative, but derives from an innate and insatiable curiosity. However, when the rules conflict with something they believe in, they do not bend to the whims of a greater power—the structural integrity of their Individualism is too sturdy for that. Henry David Thoreau once said, and I'm paraphrasing, that if a rule is unjust, it is one's duty to break it. How can one determine his responsibility in the workings of his life if he allows others to make the decisions for him, never pausing to ask questions and understand?

Some students get great grades. Some fail classes because they can't focus in the industrial-era teaching style most of this country still uses. Others know that their experiences can teach them far more than any textbook or lecture about life and how to make the best of the short time allotted to us, and treat class time as merely supplementary to their attainment of knowledge. Any way it goes, I would like to pose to you the controversial hypoth-

esis that it doesn't matter — that each one of these hypothetical students may or may not possess inquisitiveness and adventurousness: the two qualities that make for true learning.

This is not to take away from qualities like hard work and respect—admirable traits, no doubt—and it is no fault of our own that our upbringing and education have thus far shown that success and admiration are best achieved through compliance. The purpose of this column is, however, to serve as a much-needed voice for those who will not squeeze themselves into a box, an effort to broaden the horizons of what we value and who we look up to at this school. And, much more importantly, it is a challenge to you, my fellow inmates, to become the individuals simmering inside each one of us, to use the sharp edge of our imaginations to file away the steel cages of our expectations. It is the most powerful tool we possess as human beings. To neglect it is to become complacent. To hone it is to embrace one's full potential.

## Foreign correspondents deserve greater protection

**Bushra Hasan**  
Editor-in-Chief

A journalist finally touches down in Libya to cover the developing civil war. Excited? Adaptable? Open-minded? But of course. Insured? Equipped? Informed? Not so much.

Nicole Tung, a freelance conflict photographer and friend of the late James Foley, like many aspiring journalists of her kind, entered the field knowing little to nothing about reporting in a foreign country, especially in an area of political strife. These journalists step off Western planes expecting to play by the same rules as they did in their home country, but the reality is that the game is entirely different.

Tung entered her first assignments in a foreign country without a flak jacket, a medical kit or insurance. At a press conference on foreign reporting hosted by the Columbia Journalism school, Nicole said her editors never even asked if she had these essentials.

The chief problem with freelance journalism abroad is that the foreign correspondence system has no safety nets for journalists and no feasible way to get them back if they are harmed. Phil Balboni, CEO and co-founder of GlobalPost, spent years fighting for Foley's release, and he says he has "seen major international organizations walk away from their freelance writers" (*journalism.columbia.edu*). The case is not that news organizations can't put down the money—the investigation ran into the millions

to search for Foley—but that no preventative or educational measures have been taken thus far to stop journalists from running into these situations in the first place. The news organizations and governments are to blame for not covering their

troversty behind governments and news agencies negotiating with terrorists: according to *New York Times* foreign correspondent Rukmini Callimachi, European countries often pay ransoms to release journalists, and "[American] citizens are doomed by the policy that Europe holds" (*journalism.columbia.edu*). The United States does not support negotiating with terrorists, because the government cannot let these belligerent groups have their way, but the real problem is that news agencies could have avoided the capture of their journalists if they had instructed the reporters beforehand about safety in a foreign country.

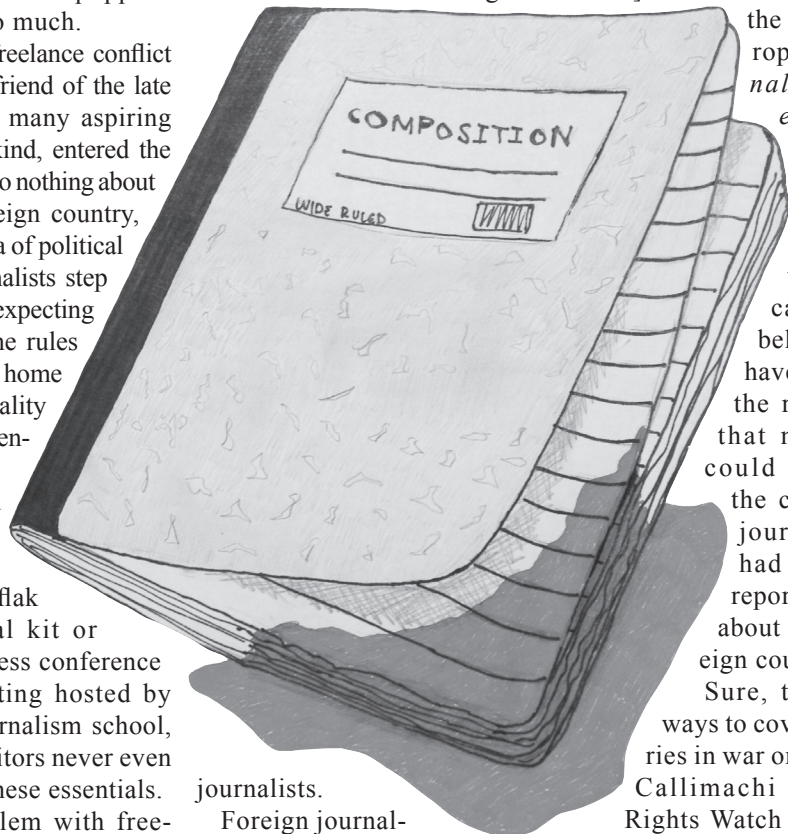
Sure, there are other ways to cover different stories in war or conflict zones. Callimachi was a Human Rights Watch reporter barred from entering a conflict zone, and, rather than wait around for a story to be given to her, she waited on the border of newly-captured jihadist areas and interviewed refugees. She had the makings of a great story without the threat of belligerent organizations.

But for certain hard news stories, the best journalism comes from the heart of the conflict zone. And that valuable work can't be done safely without proper training.

journalists.

Foreign journalism can't just be about what the news organization needs. Foreign journalists play a crucial part in our ability to get information from conflict areas, and they risk their lives to cover the countries they work in. The hands-off approach to missing journalists is not the way to go. Organizations have to start getting involved with the way journalists conduct themselves in a foreign country so that they have the utmost protection.

That's not to defend the con-



Provided by Jaqueline Li

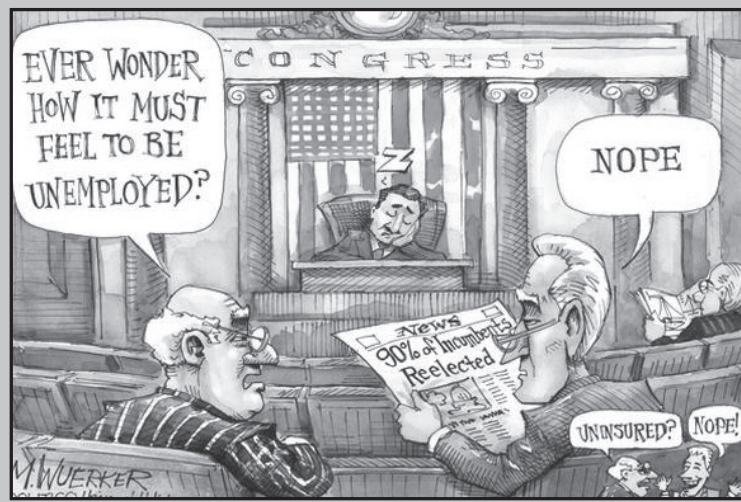
## Washington's real problem: no one cares

**Hannah Mitlak**  
Copy Editor

As the midterm elections approach, Americans are reminded about the fundamental issue with their nation today: the inability to get anything done. But of course, the natural tendency is not to blame oneself, but rather to find a

vote has little-to-no impact on the outcome.

Even more concerning, and embarrassing, than the election turnout is the generally 20 to 30 percent lower turnout for midterm elections. And these candidates, our Senators and Representatives, not only are elected directly from our vote but in many



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scapegoat. And here, like the assumed fallacy in a mathematical proof, we arrive at our contradiction.

The real irony in blaming Congress or the President or anyone else the news stations will name drop is that these officials, either directly or otherwise, are elected by the people.

But even the word "elected" is almost contradictory. Not even because of the lie that we tell ourselves about Presidential elections, known as the Electoral College, but rather because of who turns out to vote.

And by that I mean almost no one. For the big guy, the President, a steady 60 to 70 percent of eligible voters show up at the polls. This number is disappointing at first, but then a little more disappointing when you consider what percentage of the 60 knows that, because of the aforementioned device dreamed up by elitists in 1781, their

ways have more power to affect an average American life than the President. Legislation in most cases influences domestic life while the executive powers are limited to mostly foreign policy and special emergency situations. Of course, all these issues are related, but in short, you can't blame as much on Obama as you'd like to.

This brings us to the infamous gridlock. Our Congress has been the least effective legislative body of its kind since the first midterm of Obama's presidency. The politics are ugly, and the amount of legislation both written and passed is at an unprecedented low. From shut downs to Dr. Seuss, this Congress has tried its best to do absolutely nothing.

It just makes one wonder what magic could happen if we had voters who were willing to do more than complain.