DO THE BARE MINIMUM

by: Anna Olson

It's now been over a month into our pandemic-ridden school year and I am so sick of everyone being sick.

Vaccines have been available for those 12 and older for months, but with only 55% of Americans getting the shots that could end COVID-19, it took just weeks to once again make masks mandatory for students.

Many students at Arapahoe are agitated with that decision, disagreeing with the mandate, but as cases continue to rise and more children are being hospitalized with the virus, masks are our best defense.

My older sister has already received not one, not two, but three emails stating that she has been exposed to the virus. I have received one myself.

COVID isn't going anywhere. In fact, there are almost 2,000 new cases every week in Colorado alone.

Personally, I don't have an issue wearing a mask at school or while playing sports. Some students say masks can be itchy or cause acne, or are just an overall nuisance, but anyone who doesn't face any sort of harsh medical condition that prevents them from wearing one should just deal with it.

Orders from Tri-County Health say to wear your mask over your nose and mouth – not below your chin. If you need a break, take a step outside. And teachers should be enforcing it. No one should get away with putting others in danger so easily and without repercussions.

I don't want COVID to continue to define my life. I only had one real year of middle school. Juniors have yet to have a normal high school experience and still might not get one if people continue to refuse to do their part. Heck, my class might not even get to have a non-COVID related high school year, either. There is no reason why this disease has lingered through the country for two years now besides people not following the scientific advice presented to them. Get the vaccine. Wear your mask. It's not that hard. Do the bare minimum.

FAKE FAN SYNDROME

by: Ruby Harris

Some may say gatekeeping is a given part of pop culture in this day and age; others find it problematic. What do I think? Honestly, I don't know. See the issue is I am guilty of gatekeeping myself. As much as I want to criticize the toxic community it creates amongst fans who should be united under the love for something similar, I can't help falling into the trap of a minor superiority complex.

What is gatekeeping? It's when someone takes it upon themselves to decide whether or not someone is worthy of liking something. And while this mostly applies to music, it can also seep into the film world as well as any other aspect of pop culture. I have experienced gatekeeping mostly through Tik Tok, where fans fight ardently for their place amongst fans of an artist or creative.

During the early stages of the pandemic I went through a major Tyler, the Creator phase (that had been brewing for about a year). I found myself judging the tastes of random people on the internet who didn't know the deep cuts from "Wolf" or "Goblin". I held myself high above the "Flower Boy" fans who'd favorite songs were " See You Again" and "Boredom". And even though I enjoyed those same songs, I felt like those

who liked only those songs were less of a fan than I was. Tyler the Creator is a huge artist with millions of fans. Why should I be criticizing the radio listeners and those who just wanted to dip a toe into his music. It's so strange because people just want to enjoy music. It doesn't matter if you know the one big hit or all of the deep cuts.

I understand the feeling of wanting to be closer to a creative. To feel like you belong and are worthy of being a fan, I felt superior over the people who don't listen to the unreleased Gambino songs or the deep cuts off of "Are You Experienced?". It does something for your ego to know that you have a rightful stake in something.

This issue also extends to a generational level. I feel for the young people who have to have 3 songs on hand when they wear a band t-shirt just in case some middle aged man decides to confront them on their fashion choice. It's a Pink Floyd t-shirt, it's not going to cause society to collapse. I've gone out into public wearing my "Rumors" shirt being scared that some man might approach me and ask me to rattle off their deepest cuts to prove I'm qualified enough to wear the t-shirt. After I went through my Zeppelin phase I would see shirts with the band's name in the hallway thinking they have never listened to any other song besides "Stairway to Heaven '' in their life. And they probably haven't but WHO CARES?

The way that this culture keeps perpetuating itself and developing into different forms makes it worse and worse. But the fact that I am guilty of this as well makes me think introspectively. I'm no music connoisseur who's had years of experience listening and cultivating some amazing knowledge of every artist ever therefore setting me higher above everyone else.

I hold no superiority over someone who has different music tastes than I do. And I hate that I am acting better than someone else for that very reason. You're not a fake fan for liking the one popular song of an artist. It's popular for a reason. It doesn't detract from your value that you like a

movie a lot of other people like. That is what art is there for: to enjoy. People put their art into the world so that it can be witnessed, listened to, and seen not to be guarded by a bunch of unqualified teens on the internet. All that being said, gatekeeping won't go away overnight and it might keep going in this generational, cyclical direction. What I am saying is this: it's okay to like what you like and it's not as okay to hate on other people for what they like. It's all there to be enjoyed, so enjoy it.

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