

2026 Gorlok

Editorial Impromptu Articles

Editorial Impromptu: Students will receive a short editorial and develop a response. Participants will be allocated 9 minutes to divide between preparation and speech time. Speakers must speak for at least 5 minutes. Limited notes, prepared in the round, are permitted.

Before preparing your speech: make sure to choose ONE of the three articles in this document. These are excerpts from longer editorials. The longer versions can be found under the same author and title name by simply Googling the title.

Reminders: Please submit a link to your recording NO LATER THAN Monday, January 19. You are responsible for ensuring links are working properly and that you can be heard clearly. We recommend using YouTube and uploading the video as UNLISTED.

Only one submission per speaker is required. The same video will be used for both rounds and for finals should you advance.

Finally, HAVE FUN! We look forward to seeing what you have prepared for us.

They Were Ordinary Germans. We Are Ordinary Americans.
By Shalom Auslander

One summer day, years ago, I chanced upon the diary of a German soldier from the early 1940s in a flea market in New York City. It was a small notebook, filled with German writing. Though I don't speak German, I was able to make out the months — Februar, März, April — and the year. The black-and-white photographs of the soldier's life, tucked into the yellowing pages, were what interested me most.

To me, what was most notable was what I didn't find: There were no photos of death camps, or mass graves, or starving prisoners. I shook my head at what I saw as this man's almost pathological ability to compartmentalize the madness he likely played a role in and the quaint, pastoral life he led at the same time.

Most of my grandparents' families were murdered in the Holocaust. And so in my upbringing, there were no "ordinary" Germans, to borrow a phrase from the Holocaust historian Christopher Browning. They were all hateful, fascist murderers — fools who could be led by a fearmonger to commit atrocities he claimed were necessary and good. How the Germans came to be this way, no one could say. One thing was certain, though: We, thank goodness, were not like them.

We were Americans.
We weren't so easily fooled.
We were different.

But I miss those days.

I miss the comfort of believing Germans were different.
I miss believing that we Americans could never be led by a fearmonger to commit atrocities he claimed were necessary and good.
I miss believing we are not like them.

And I wonder if someday, at some distant flea market, a young man will chance upon an old iPhone from 2026, and scrolling through it — through pics of the owner's friends, vacations, festive dinners — will wonder how this unbothered American went about his normal life as the country was descending into fear-induced psychosis at the hands of an autocrat.

"Thank goodness," he will comfort himself, "we're not like *them*."

“We deserve wrinkles”: The Fight for Trans Youth is a Fight for a Future with Trans Elders in It
By Nova Bright

When I look in the mirror and notice a new gray hair, I don't panic. I smile. It reminds me, a trans woman, that I am growing. Growing older, growing wiser, growing into myself. It is a small, ordinary milestone. And it's a feeling that every trans young person deserves the chance to experience. But right now, that future is being put deliberately out of reach.

Just last month, the federal government introduced multiple efforts to restrict access to best-practice health care for transgender and nonbinary young people nationwide. These proposals are not isolated. They arrive amid a relentless drumbeat of anti-trans legislation that has defined this past year: bills introduced, debated, and passed over the objections of advocates, families, and every major medical association.

Against this backdrop, it is worth stating something plainly: Trans people deserve to exist. Not just quietly, not just in “safe spaces.” We deserve to exist on screen and on stage, in every classroom and boardroom. We deserve to exist on the playing field and at the podium. We deserve to exist in bathrooms, airports, and grocery store aisles without fear, and in doctors' offices with dignity. We deserve loving relationships, and we deserve to exist in solitude and peace.

Most importantly, trans people deserve to exist in old age. We deserve gray hair. We deserve wrinkles earned through decades of laughter. We deserve to be elders. And yet, that future remains out of reach for too many. Aging transgender adults remain rare: Research found that only about 0.26% of adults aged 65 and older in the U.S. identify as transgender, reflecting the historic invisibility of trans identities and the barriers older trans people have faced throughout their lives. That's why the fight for trans youth is a fight for trans elders.

Heated Rivalry matters in a sporting culture that still sidelines queer men.
By Joe Sheldon

Heated Rivalry, the HBO TV adaptation of the second book in Rachel Reid's Game Changers series, rounded out 2025 as a surprise, word-of-mouth success. It captures the relationship between Shane (Hudson Williams) and Ilya (Connor Storrie), two professional male hockey players, over the course of almost a decade. Along the way the pair negotiate their feelings for each other against the backdrop of internal conflict, homophobia and a manufactured public-facing rivalry.

Despite much stronger LGBTQ+ representation across women's sports, male professional leagues still frequently remain dogged by homophobia, both in the stands and the changing rooms. As a result, in the imaginaries of fans – the way that fans interpret their role and experiences in the complex social, economic and cultural life of sport – queer fans can so frequently feel “othered” (actively treated as alien to a social group).

Gay and bisexual players in these leagues certainly exist. German footballer Thomas Hitzlsperger, for example, made his sexuality public following his retirement. Moreover, in 2020, an anonymous gay Premier League player penned a public letter explaining his hesitancy to share his sexuality, describing his day-to-day existence as an “absolute nightmare”.

These experiences, and the lack of subsequent representation within professional male sporting spaces, can frequently lead to fans feeling excluded from this arena of social life. The lack of openly gay players may be both caused and exacerbated by the prejudice experienced by supporters, with one 2018 study of football supporters finding that 63% of LGBTQ+ fans experienced homophobia and transphobia at games.

Leagues and clubs have an imperative to ensure that the work of real cultural change is undertaken to begin this process, learning from the success of the show.