

2026 Newberry Knockout **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 Tuesday, March 3. 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.

Article 1

'Heated Rivalry' Is Gay Culture's Next Frontier by Jim Downs

"Heated Rivalry" has become a breakout hit. The hockey drama — adapted from an erotic romance novel for the Canadian streaming service Crave — just ended its first season on HBO Max and has left gay men crying at watch parties that feel more like 19th-century religious revivals.

If you want to understand why this show has become our community's equivalent of a cultural earthquake, the answer is that watching a gay couple be mildly boring and in love is still radical.

Culture has not kept up with queer people, despite major political strides, legal victories (including marriage equality) and growing social acceptance. Stories and art explicitly about queer life are being made, but they rarely find a wide gay audience. They're not typically embraced the way "Heated Rivalry" has been.

For years, queer representation in mainstream culture was driven by a political imperative. We needed to be palatable, monogamous and mortgage-ready to be tolerated. You could see this impulse in "Will & Grace," where queerness was domesticated through friendship and slapstick, and later in "Modern Family," where the suburban gay couple were beloved precisely because they reassured straight viewers that nothing about them was too strange, too erotic or too much. A lot of what is being produced about gay men, even now, replicates a straight world in rainbow colors.

Maybe what we ache for now is not culture built to serve a political end but a focus on the intimate — someone on top of us, breaking down in tears as he confesses his love. What is turning us on is not the thrill of naked bodies but the shock of being emotionally known. That is what some of us have been missing.

We do not need more stories to prove that we exist. We need stories that capture how we live — in the touch, the embrace, the everyday if boring intimacies that were never meant to be translated. Our next frontier is not mere acceptance but depth.

Article 2

'There Are No Heroes Coming to Save Us': BlackHistory Without the Hero Worship By Bettina Love

Black History Month is becoming more precious and precarious than in any other moment in recent memory. Since 2021, conservative lawmakers have introduced legislation banning books on Black history and restricting how America's children understand the past, present, and future of racism in this country. These tactics are not new, but they impede, delay, and discourage teachers from teaching Black history.

There was a time when white segregationists said that teaching *The Negro in Our History* by Black historian Carter G. Woodson, was "antiklan;" today, conservative lawmakers call it "woke." And the same logic still applies: Erase Black history, then replace it with a myth that paints white people as nonviolent. Next, affirm the lie that slavery, discrimination, inequality, and dispossession are results of unfortunate events beyond anyone's control. Lastly, portray state-sanctioned violence with lies that Black people were not ready for the responsibility of freedom, so white people had to intervene for Black people's own good.

When Black erasure and the fabrication of white saviorism meet, the kneejerk response doesn't evolve beyond the instinct to cram Black history into a month of flashcards where countless celebrated figures are revered as individual legends with unstoppable qualities rendering them immortal. This pedagogical trauma response makes Black history less about community and solidarity and more about a portrayal of bigger-than-life personalities who get reduced to phrases like "I Have a Dream" or a single monumental action like Rosa Parks refusing to sit at the back of the bus.

As American cities are forced into a police state where ICE agents have "absolute immunity," we need to teach community, solidarity, and the strategies of nonviolent civil disobedience and mutual-aid funds because there are no heroes coming to save us. It's just us, and we are enough. And Black History Month seems like an ideal time to start teaching this.

Article 3
America Needs More Jimmy Carters by Editorial Board

“There’s no predicting history’s verdict. Up to now, Jimmy Carter, who died on Sunday at age 100 in Plains, Ga., has been judged to be a middle-of-the-pack president, his one term in office remembered for circumstances and events that simply overwhelmed him: the seizure in Iran of 52 American hostages, the bungled attempt to rescue them, the gasoline lines, inflation, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Yet he is also considered one of America’s greatest ex-presidents, for using the residual star power of his office to help his successors and his country as a peacemaker, backstage diplomat, human rights champion, monitor of free elections and advocate for the homeless while finding time to write poetry and, by his own example, providing the best possible case for traditional religious values.

His life offers countless lessons for leaders everywhere.

As this board observed in 1994, compared with Mr. Carter, most former presidents struggled to use their stature for the common weal. Most wrote memoirs. Some disappeared into private life; some set up foundations; some went around collecting large sums for speaking. Mr. Carter took risks and played crucial roles as an honest broker in nuclear talks with North Korea and in civil conflicts on the continent of Africa and in the Middle East.

He described his second career as “waging peace.” That work remains far from finished, and it remains for those who admired Mr. Carter to continue.”