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THE ECHO

THE WINTER ISSUE

EDITORIAL:

THE WAR ON CHRISTMAS

We hear a lot about freedom in America. We talk about defending it on the Fourth of July, during election season, on Veteran's Day. But all of this rests on the assumption that we already have freedom; that all the institutions we live under, though they might need minor changes, are good at their core.

But is that even true? How can people meaningfully be considered free when subjected to hierarchical structures in every sphere of life? At our workplaces, our homes, and our schools, we live under constant implicit threat of violence, whether by arrest, eviction, or inability to afford the basic necessities of life. And though this particular brand of violence is as American as apple pie, it also destroys some of the pieces of culture that we cherish most.

Take Christmas, for instance. Much has already been made of the conflict between the "true meaning of Christmas" and the consumer culture that the popular idea of Christmas is filtered through. But the hierarchy that defines our world erodes the holiday at a much deeper level: it destroys the subjective experience of reality that allows for the spirituality, family, and community that Christmas is supposed to be about.

To understand why that is, we first need to know what a hierarchical society even is. Basically, it's any society that tends to organize people vertically, with some people being above others in terms of power and status. Examples of hierarchy include, but are not limited to, the hierarchy between teachers and students, owners and workers, white and black, and men and women. Of course, in any society, some hierarchy is necessary or even good: doctors should have more power in the medical realm than the totally unqualified. But most isn't, and that unjustified hierarchy can have disastrous social effects.

Turning a music festival, for example, into a music competition isn't necessary for anyone to enjoy it. And in restructuring into a hierarchy with winners and losers, the music has to be broken down into smaller parts and judged based on certain checkboxes -- dynamics, tone, lyricism -- instead of simply being experienced by the audience. Over time, through exposure to this type of ranking system, the judges, musicians, and audience are all conditioned to hear a hundred different notes instead of one song, to think of music as a complicated but dead piece of machinery, rather than a life-changing experience that belongs to whoever hears it.



So many things operate like this: job interviews, college applications, art shows. And as we experience this systematic breaking down of our subjective experiences over and over again, we devalue them. We're told every day that we shouldn't focus on our unique, individualized consciousnesses, so we listen. We start to think of the world at large, as well as ourselves and our fellow human beings, in the same way as the music: as nothing more than complex configurations of cold, lifeless matter.

This view of the world does not mesh well with the values of spirituality or togetherness that we associate so closely with Christmastime, or any other holiday with an emphasis on faith and family. By devaluing our subjective experiences, we've slowly become more and more incapable of experiencing a sense of religious awe and familial togetherness. And without those, we lose more than just Christmas: we lose a piece of our humanity.

By Michael Tessene



TIKTOK: MORE THAN JUST JOKES

In a world full of constant information and stimuli, young people regularly try to find new ways to express themselves and find ways to relate to the world. Enter TikTok.

TikTok is an app used to share short videos of skits, dancing, lip-syncing, and everything in between.

Although the now-deceased app Vine will always hold a special place in the hearts of many, TikTok now reigns supreme in the funny video department.

"TikTok allows teens to express themselves and their weird, crazy, hectic, and funny lives. It allows students to relate to other students all around the world," says Luis Medina, junior.

It allows people to "use their freedom of speech," according to Jeremy Bokata, senior.

This generation seems to particularly lonely and is constantly searching for ways to relate to people.

In a world that is always changing, TikTok "lets teenagers feel welcomed and normalized with the way they live their lives," says Medina.

TikTok's focus may be entertainment, but many in the spotlight try to use their presence on the platform to empower teens.

"I feel like a lot of 'TikTok influencers' tend to have the message to 'be positive' and 'spread love,' but they also get a lot of hate," says Macy Wirtz, sophomore.

TikTok can be a confidence booster for people. It allows them to "shoot their shot" without fear of retribution.

Serena Palacios, a senior, believes that "TikTok can be empowering for people who are scared to say something in person, but they build enough confidence to post it on the app."

Medina explains that "[TikTok] can also enable you to feel empowered to look good and try to look nice for yourself so you can make TikToks."

Despite the positive aspects of the app, TikTok can be a dark place at times. It has minimal moderation, leading to some controversial jokes to be shared.

"While [the controversial TikToks] may seem funny, the underlying messages aren't good," Palacios notes.

Although the jokes can go too far at times, they "allow the topics to be mentioned and noticed without causing tension on the platform, so it enables teenagers to practice responding to other perspectives in a respectful manner," Medina says.



Overall, if a joke is funny or not, “it has a lot to do with who is making it and if it’s clear that there’s a joking intent behind it,” Wirtz explains.

TikTok also struggles with inclusion at times.

“The majority of popular TikTokers are white, which can make others feel belittled and not valued or respected because of the lack of diversity,” Medina explains.

TikTok, despite its flaws, has become a way for teens to grow closer to their friends.

“[TokTok] became the topic of most of our conversations now about an idea we had or something funny we saw,” Palacios explains.

Bokata agrees, saying, “I have grown closer to my friends because we enjoy and seek the same contents of entertainment.”

While TikTok is not perfect, it remains a space where teens can feel comfortable expressing their ideas, themselves, and relating to the people around them.

By Molly Sweeney



SUSTAINABLE BAG AND INDULGENCES

As the cultural consciousness shifts towards acceptance of the scientific fact of human-caused climate change, it is paramount that we do not lose sight of the reality: our personal relation to this crisis is miniscule in comparison to the institutional polluters of governments and companies.

Companies such as Patagonia and Lush rely on their reputations as environmentally conscious to sell products, yet neglect to recognize that they are

still a part of the problem.

This type of branding, known as “greenwashing,” does several destructive things. Firstly, it allows for further religion of corporation that is increasingly replacing institutions with ones centered on consumerism. Secondly, this worship of brand allows for increased guilt-free consumption. It is the rich who have the resources to more easily combat climate change, but in buying these

highly-priced “green” commodities, can convince themselves that they are doing enough to save the environment.

In the late middle ages, the rich within the Christendom of the Roman Catholic Church could give money to the clergy to reduce the guilt from their sins and the resulting purgatory they would face before being allowed to enter heaven. Today, as in the late middle ages, the wealthy are encouraged to buy their way out of guilt. With the predominant gospel now being science, one can escape the moral purgatory of environmental destruction through a similar form of indulgences (i.e. buying “sustainably-sourced” meat or Patagonia’s

\$279.00 jacket). Some tell themselves, “This bag is made from 100% recycled plastic bags and it cost me 50 dollars. In buying it, I relinquish guilt for the current climate crisis.”

Instead of looking at the environmental impact on a personal level, one should look at a societal level. This means that instead of blaming each other for limiting or maximizing our miniscule personal impact, we must instead look to the corporations and governments which have the power to make real effective change on a global scale. Shifting our frame of reference requires us to participate in revolutionary, not personal, change.

By Isaac Gewirth, Guest Contributor



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A REASON TO HOPE

The year of 2019 has been a culmination of the last decade. Our economy has experienced unprecedented growth, yet levels of inequality have skyrocketed. We crave change and desire hope, yet live in a world of gridlock and fear. We are more connected than ever, yet feel more alone. We're often told that the world is in the best place it's been in human history, yet we feel worse about it than we have in decades.

A long time from now, when we look back at the previous 10 years, we will see this as the decade in which we lost hope. Let's see if we can gain it back in the 2020s.

The first signs of what this decade would become can be seen in the 2008 election of Barack Obama. Obama ran a campaign based on the promise of hope and change, and was elected on that premise. When he failed to change the country, Americans lost hope in the ability to create change via the moderate, conciliatory dialogue that Obama advocated for.

Some of the first major signs of this discontent within the U.S. were the populist Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party movements at the beginning of the decade. These forces provided a small taste of the increasing desperation of modern mass movements.

In this decade, we saw Bernie Sanders, a far-left self-declared Socialist nearly win the Democratic nomination while championing a bunch of previ-

ously fringe policies. We saw Donald Trump win the Republican nomination and then the Presidency because he promised to change the status quo. He, like his political rival Sanders, presented himself as a voice for those who felt marginalized. Like Sanders, he tapped into the fears instead of the hopes of millions of Americans about their future and their children's future. Unlike Sanders, however, Trump used racism and xenophobia to spread this fear and advance his agenda.

This does not negate the issues his supporters are facing, though. If you tell someone who feels secure about their future that immigrants are going to take all of their jobs it won't work. When people are scared they act defensive. If they believe they don't have enough of something then anyone else who has it becomes a threat. When people are scared they can unfortunately turn towards racism and xenophobia, anti-semitism and islamophobia.

While bigotry is clearly not a rational or justified response, the underlying issues that lead to this hatred must be addressed. Just as millions of Americans would not want to completely revamp our healthcare system if it was working for them; would not want radical solutions to college debt if they were not crippled by it; would not call themselves socialists if they thought capitalism was working for them, so too would millions of Americans not want to close the borders if they did not feel that their jobs were insecure.

While it is easy to look at the decade and see

what has not changed, it is also important to recognize the remarkable progress we have made over the course of this decade.

Over the course of just a few years, over 100 million Americans changed their mind on same sex marriage, leading to its legalization. LGBTQ+ rights, particularly for the transgender community, have made substantial progress. The MeToo movement, Black Lives Matter movement, and student walkouts over gun violence and climate change have led to substantive discussion on issues that were not on the table until recently. Awareness of our nation's racial problems has risen dramatically, as has a political consensus towards ending the war on drugs.

2019 has been dominated by news stories about Brexit and government shutdowns, about the

Mueller report and impeachment process, about wildfires and housing shortages, about climate strikes and teacher strikes, about the siege on Hong Kong's freedoms, about trade wars and worsening relations with China, about internet privacy and tech monopolies. It has been a tumultuous year, but there is reason for hope.

People are more engaged and more energized than any other point in the last 30 years. People are paying attention and actively participating in our political process. In 2017 when the women's march became the largest in American history, cynical pundits said that they will march today, but they won't care a year from then. Well, a year later, in an era of low-turnout elections, more American's voted in the 2018 midterms than any midterm election since World War I. If that's not hope, I don't know what is.

By Aaron Lyubansky



HOLIDAY

Holiday treats don't always have to be difficult! With just a few simple ingredients you can make a reindeer that people will love.

You will need:

12 mini pretzels, broken in half

12 fun-size candy bars (such as Snickers, Milky Way, etc.)

12 miniature marshmallows, cut in half

Black cake decorating gel

12 mini M&M's (red if you want to make Rudolph!)

Step 1: Unwrap your candy bar and take your pretzels and gently break them in half.

Step 2: Stick the pretzel that you broke in half on both sides of the candy bar to make antlers.

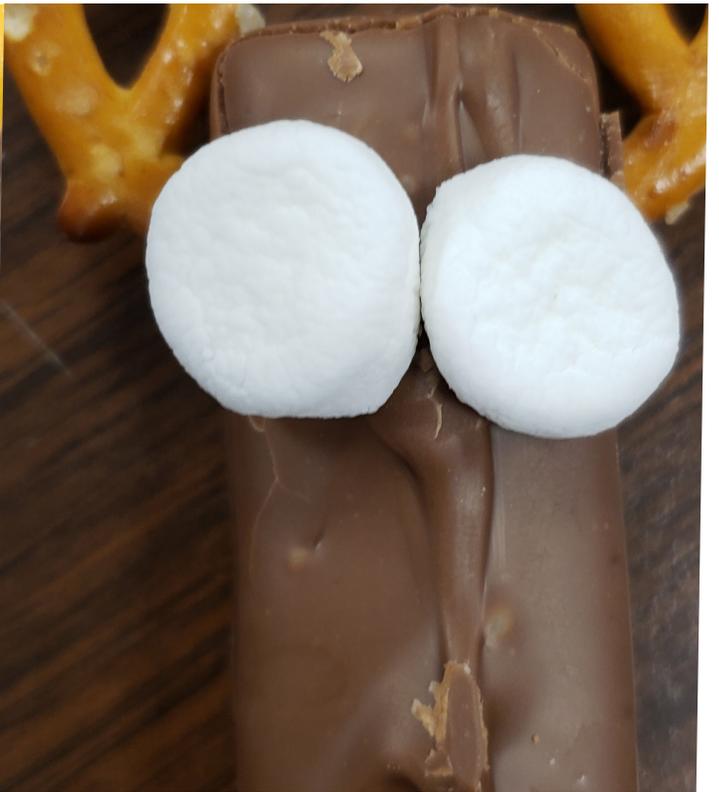
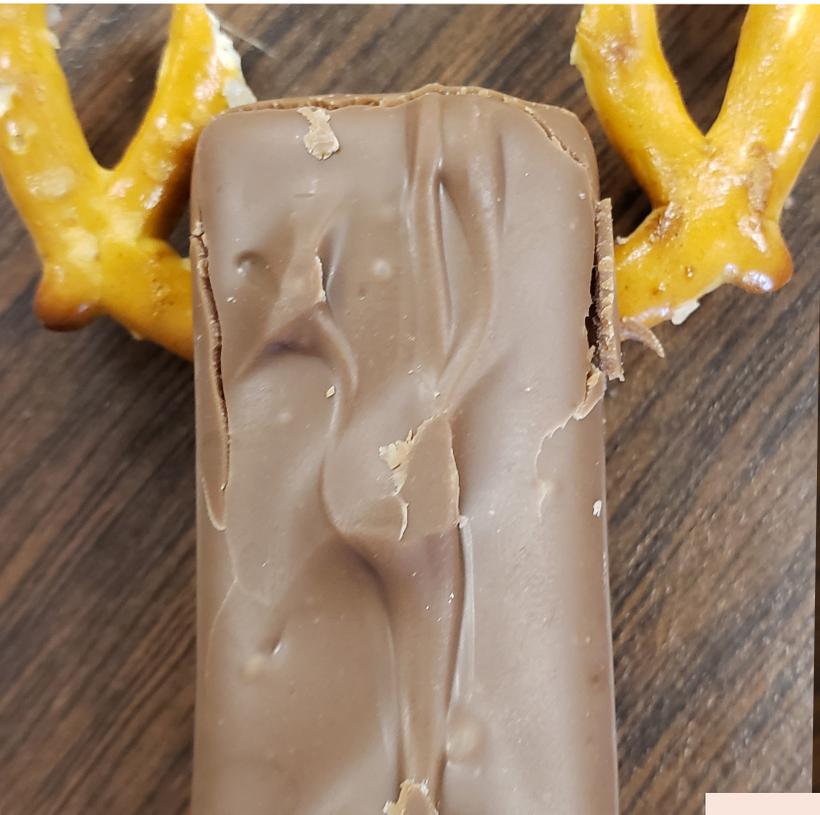
Step 3: Stick the sticky side of the mini-marshmallow on the candy bar to make eyes. Then, make two dots on the marshmallows with black decorating gel to make the pupils.

Step 4: Again with the black decorating gel, put a dot below the eyes to make a nose. Stick the mini M&M on this dot.

Step 5: Enjoy!

By Tyra Holycross





**Effortless
reindeer treats**



As the colder months approach, a wide variety of winter holidays are on the horizon. Though these holidays all happen during the same season, each is special and deserves a closer look.

Three Kings Day is a Christian holiday that celebrates the three wise men who followed a star across the desert for twelve days to present baby Jesus with gifts.

Senior Hugo Becerril explains how his family celebrates the holiday: "The whole family gets together. Whoever is hosting is also has to acquire the rosca de reyes [a type of bread in which tiny plastic babies are hidden]. Everyone gets a turn to cut the bread; whoever gets a baby has to bring a dish for everyone to share."

Traditionally, Becerril's family has "three presents [that] are brought to the children to represent the three wise men of old giving baby Jesus the three gifts."

Hanukkah also celebrates events from the distant past, celebrating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean Revolt.

Senior Stav Kramer celebrates Hanukkah "by lighting the candles every night with my family, as well as eating a big dinner. We eat a lot of fried foods to symbolize the oil that burned for 8 days."

"A tradition for this holiday is lighting the candles on the menorah. Every day you light an additional candle until all eight candles are lit. We also play dreidel which is a game with a top and chocolate coins that all kids play on the holiday," Kramer explains.

A more modern winter holiday, Kwanzaa is a week-long celebration held mainly in the United States to honor African heritage and African-American culture. It is observed from December 26 to January 1, culminating in gift-giving and a feast.

Student interventionist Eric Morrow celebrates by decorating his home, but what he loves most about Kwanzaa is how "it speaks of harmony and celebrations of others."

The last holiday on this list is Christmas. Christmas is an annual celebration commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, observed on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration throughout the world.

Senior Juan Maldonado celebrate by "cooking a specialty dish my mom makes every year, with chicken and potatoes and carrots. It's hard to describe how delicious it is."

Every year, Maldonado and his family "set up a tree, do some prayers. We get some candy, we eat it and watch shows. [Then we] sleep, wake up and open presents at 6am, go back to sleep or play with the stuff we got."

These are some of the holidays of the season and some ways a few people celebrate.

By Trevor Morgan

HIGH HOPES FOR WINTER SPORTS SEASONS

Boys Basketball

The team as a whole has a good feeling about this upcoming season and has some lofty goals.

Senior Bryson Tatum says, "We've trained hard and everyone is on the same page: being locked in to get a state title, which is a goal."

Training has prepared the team as they work toward these goals. "This year we will be more fast as a team as well as more athletic," says senior Chris Cross.

Girls Basketball

The girls basketball team will focus on rebuilding this season, as they've lost many key players to graduation.

"I feel like this season will be better than last season in so many ways," says sophomore Sariah Townsend-Cooper.

Senior Raevyn Russell agrees. "The team will be younger, but I still feel it will be a good vibe and just a new beginning for everyone."

Wrestling

This year's Tiger wrestlers are looking forward to this season, despite losing long-time head coach Charles Trabaris.

Johnathan Ball, junior, explains that new head coach Amalio Diego-Juan is "not new to us. He was assistant coach last year. We know how he is and how hard he's going to work us.

"[Our] goals are to have every body work hard, win as many matches as we can, and get as far as we can," says Ball. Like basketball, these wrestlers have their eye on a big prize: "Team state."

Winter Cheer

Team structure is the key for this year's competition cheer team. Whereas all cheerleaders were together for football season, this season they are split into three groups: Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Competition.

For Mikiyah Lucas, even though there are now three different teams, "We will work more as a group than against each other."

Allison Perez agrees, saying that this year's team is all about being leaders, not followers.

Boys Swimming and Diving

Improving individually and becoming better as a team this season are the two major goals for boys swimming and diving.

Sophomore Zack Menard says, "I'm very excited about this upcoming year because everybody is improving their personal best."

Some things have changed but the team will still push. "This season we will work hard to be competitive," says Menard.

By Natosha Williams

SENIOR EARLY GRADS PLAN FOR THEIR FUTURES

Every year, seniors have the option to graduate early once they have all of their requirements for graduation completed. This year's Class of 2020 has whopping 47 students planning to graduate in December, all for a variety of reasons and with a variety of emotions.

"I feel excited about graduating early and getting a head start on my life," says Alarea Jackson.

Even though students have worked hard to graduate early, some still have mixed emotions. Tionna Winn says, "I'm kind of nervous because now I have to really get ready to become a young adult," says Tionna Winn.

No matter how they feel about leaving, early grads are heading the right direction for their futures.

Jackson says, "After December I will be starting college. I have decided to go to Furman University in Greenville, SC and I plan to double major in Biology and Chemistry and becoming an Anesthesiologist."

Some will just take a break during the winter. Winn says, "I'll be attending college in the fall to major in Business management/administration."

The Class of 2020 Senior Early Grads have a plan under their hat. The Echo team wishes them nothing but the best!

By Natosha Williams

ENTERTAINMENT

POP 5

Pop Culture Phenomena of 2019

1. VSCO girls

Poking fun at VSCO girls became popular this year. Cries to "save the turtles!" and loudly "sksksksk"-ing filled the hallways as TikTok culture became mainstream.

2. "Old Town Road"

Early this year, it became impossible to escape Lil Nas X. "Old Town Road" proved to be the most viral song this year by far, becoming the number one single in America for 17 weeks.

3. Storming Area 51

"Storm Area 51, They Can't Stop All of Us" was the catchphrase of the plan to storm Area 51 on September 20th. Although the plan eventually lost attention, 2 million people signed up to "Naruto run" and it was truly a moment of national unity.

4. Periodt

Another way to say "that's final," "periodt" became mainstream this year due to the influence of viral twitter. Oneliddoflack's captioned tweet had 1.9 million views, 130,000 likes, and 51,000 retweets in less than six months.

5. AirPods

Many scoffed at airpods when they came out, saying that they looked cringy. Now you can't walk down the hallways (anywhere, for that matter) without seeing them!

By Molly Sweeney

QUIZ

THE HOLIDAY MEAL YOU PREPARE WILL DECIDE A WINTER ACTIVITY FOR YOU TO DO

1. Choose an appetizer
 - a. Veggies and dip
 - b. Buffalo chicken dip
 - c. Pigs in a blanket
 - d. Deviled eggs

2. Choose another appetizer
 - a. Fruit salad
 - b. Cowboy nachos
 - c. Mozzarella sticks
 - d. Chips and guacamole

3. Choose an entree
 - a. Butternut squash ravioli
 - b. Mac n cheese
 - c. Turkey
 - d. Ham

4. Choose a side
 - a. Salad
 - b. Rolls
 - c. Mashed potatoes
 - d. Green bean casserole

5. Choose another side
 - a. Roasted carrots
 - b. Stuffing
 - c. Corn bread
 - d. Sweet potatoes

6. Choose a dessert
 - a. Apple pie
 - b. Chocolate eggnog dip
 - c. Flan
 - d. Peppermint bark



If you got mostly A's...

Go ice skating! For you the holidays are not the time to sit around and do nothing! Grab some friends or relatives and find an ice rink near you to burn off some of that restless energy you have!

If you got mostly B's...

You should make some creative holiday cookies! Whatever you're celebrating, now is the time to break out that colorful icing and go crazy with the sprinkles! Right now, less is definitely not more!

If you got mostly C's....

Settle down, watch holiday movies, drink hot chocolate! It's cold outside, so what better way to spend your time than inside, as cozy as possible?

If you got mostly D's...

The holidays are your time to shine, so go to a holiday party! You've been working hard lately, so it's time to relax. Spend time with friends and be social; school can wait!

By Molly Sweeney

WINTER HOROSCOPES

SANTA VS SCROOGE

Aries (March 21 - April 29)

Unleash your inner adventurer and have some fun in the snow; you might just find a hidden treasure.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

No matter how cold it may get or how much ice is in your veins, your determination to warm another's heart will help you forge a new path.

Gemini (May 21 - June 21)

Time to shine! Use your wit in a good old-fashioned snowball fight and be guaranteed victory!

Cancer (June 22 - July 22)

Even though snow may be your opposite, let your strong, loving, and protective sides show to help warm the room after a cold day in the snow.

Leo (July 23 - August 23)

'Tis the season for creativity and letting loose, so don't be afraid to take control this snowy season and let your warm side help melt some ice.

Virgo (August 24 - September 22)

The holiday season is a time of giving but remember to take a step back and to focus on you.

Libra (September 23 - October 23)

Go outside and let your hidden romantic side show. Frost, snow, and ice make the perfect mix.

Scorpio (October 24 - November 22)

When spending time outside let your feisty nature show. Then one by one people will have no choice but to acknowledge your passionate side.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

Don't let the snow this season take away even one second of your freedom. Go outside and run rampant with your friends in the cold and snow!

Capricorn (December 22 - January 20)

Don't let your ambition hide under a pile of snow. Whether you're determined to find the best present for that special someone or to have the best holiday party, you're sure to succeed!

Aquarius (January 21 - February 18)

Remember not to focus solely on yourself this season. Be prepared because you might find yourself handing out a jacket to someone in need.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Let your imagination run wild this season. Remember the joy you felt as a child during this time of year and you'll have the best holiday yet!

Aries (March 21 - April 29)

When looking for your treasure, don't trust anyone because odds are it will be stolen.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

When helping people with your warm heart they will not be as nice as you were to them. This year to save you some tears don't give your heart to anyone, even if they may seem special.

Gemini (May 21 - June 21)

All is not fair in love and war, so suit up and prepare to cheat your way to victory. Those cookie decorating competitions won't win themselves.

Cancer (June 22 - July 22)

The snow will freeze your warm heart and make you numb after receiving appalling news. Beware!

Leo (July 23 - August 23)

Congrats? While letting your warmer side show, someone hit you with ice. Now is not the time to be trusting!

Libra (September 23 - October 23)

Might want to brace for a long and drawn out cold season! Keep ready and prepare. You will soon feel like life hit you in the face with an ice ball.

Scorpio (October 24 - November 22)

Don't fear the snow---use it! Go outside and show your dark side by destroying everyone in a sled race.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

The snow will make you feel stuck this year; your holiday season will be one of monotony and boredom.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 20)

While you spent all that time getting the perfect gift for people they got you...socks. Well, those that even remembered...

Aquarius (January 21 - February 18)

All those people you helped are destined to betray you. You may come in to the season with good intentions but remember, the only person you can trust is yourself.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Remember your hate for the cold this season and let your inner scrooge out to run rampant as you destroy winter cheer!

By Trevor Morgan