

INFLUENCERS' INFLUENCE

The case known
around the worldby Izzy Ungs
of *The Gleaner*

Young, nomadic, and carefree. Traveling cross-country with her fiancé, Gabby Petito painted her social media platform into a picture-perfect life. She posted almost every day until around mid-August. Then the posts came to a harsh stop.

June 2021. Petito and her fiancé, Brian Laundrie, planned a four-month-long national parks trip out west. Prior to departing on their trip, the couple had been living with Laundrie's parents for over a year. Throughout their journey, Petito was very active on her social media. In July, the couple posted about their visits to Duncan, Colorado, and Monroe, Utah.

The beginning of August appeared to be

normal, at least on their social media accounts. Then, on Aug. 12, the police department of Moab, Utah, received a call from a bystander, reporting a "domestic dispute" between Petito and Laundrie. The caller reported Laundrie slapping Petito, chasing her down the sidewalk while trying to hit her, followed by quickly getting in their car. Obviously, this kind of behavior was not reflected on Petito's picture-perfect Instagram.

Aug. 24, 2021. The last day Gabby Petito was reportedly seen alive. However, Petito's mother spoke to her on the phone on the 25th and reported her tone was rather cheery and excited. Days later, on Sept. 1, Laundrie was seen returning to their home in Florida by himself.

The search for Petito was on. As soon as all eyes turned to Laundrie, he was suddenly reported missing. With the whole



Instagram famous

Petito had a large following on social media. Many teenagers envied her posts about the cross country adventure she embarked on before her disappearance.

world working to uncover this horrifying case, the FBI was determined to find Petito, dead or alive.

On Sept. 19, a body was found in Grand Teton National Park, and days later, the body was identified as Petito. Nearly a month later, after a long, drawn-out search for Laundrie, his body was found at the

Carlton Reserve in Florida.

Although Gabby's story was widely discussed, the abuse that she experienced is far from rare. Cases similar to hers, which highlight physical and emotional abuse, are more normal than we can imagine.

Despite the horrific tragedy Petito and her family endured, we can

take what happened in this situation and become more aware. It is crucial to remind ourselves that social media cannot always serve as a mask for our suffering. We have to come face-to-face with the difficulties of life and relationships, regardless of the difficulties, in order to avoid a negative outcome.

Cancel culture: Does it do more harm than good?

by Lilah Takes
of *The Gleaner*

Ellen Degeneres. Piers Morgan. James Charles. Chrissy Teigen. David Dobrik. Sienna Mae Gomez: All of these celebrities have been canceled. According to Merriam-Webster, cancel culture is, "The practice or tendency of engaging in mass canceling as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure."

The original purpose of cancel culture was to suppress hateful or violent views and to hold those people accountable. However, the Internet has pushed cancel culture to another level. The new level involves spouting hate back, ruining the individual's chances of a job or higher education, and oftentimes reinforcing that



The harm of cancel culture illustrated by Gabrielle Staidl, '23

individual's hateful views about society or a particular group of people.

Is this the best way to handle injustice or offensive and harmful behavior?

Mr. Nathaniel Gee shares his thoughts on cancel culture and how we can hold others accountable in a more healthy and positive manner.

"The actual act of it [cancel culture] is one that doesn't create healing. True transformational change — healing — comes about from confronting others but does not come about from removing or forcing. Ultimately, you don't heal from it [cancel culture], but you isolate and divide. Putting individuals in a

social prison doesn't create growth but separation."

Holding others accountable and encouraging healing can be taught and positively enforced.

Mr. Tim Berning, said, "We can hold people accountable through education and actually confronting people on it, face-to-face, and just talking to

someone about it."

Not only does cancel culture isolate people, but it causes damage to their mental health.

Claire Walker, '22, said, "When people get canceled and lose all of their money, friends, and livelihood, that can really destroy people's lives. It's important to know what people did is wrong, but to also allow them to grow from it. Second chances are super important."

Similarly, Mr. Berning touched on the importance of forgiveness and the mental toll cancel culture has on others.

"It's hard because life is all about forgiveness.... You wonder why people today have so many challenges facing mental health. I would blame cancel culture for a part of that," said Berning.

Although cancel culture may have started with good intentions, it has evolved into a toxic movement, especially on social media. It's important to educate others: sitting down, having a conversation with a positive intention, is how people will learn and grow.

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