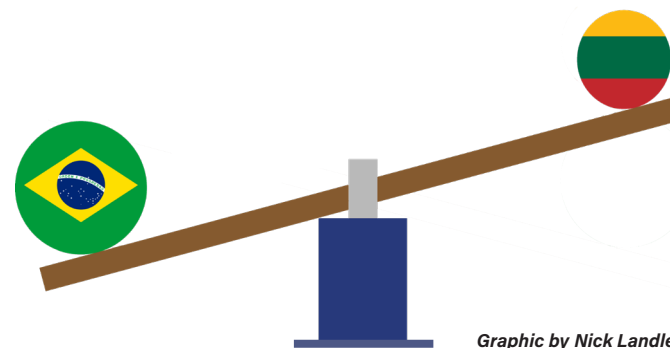# Immigration cultivates personal confusion with Brazilian identity

Graphic by Nick Landler

Sophia Bateman /
Staff Writer

Tan skin, dark hair and a curvy figure. The stereotypical Brazilian woman portrays a flawed generalization of what it means to be Brazilian. Brazil is a multicultural country, with its inhabitants originating from a diverse array of countries and nationalities.

My father is from England and my mother is from Brazil. Despite my unmistakable Eurocentric features, it came as a shock when I recently discovered that my mother's side of the family had immigrated from Lithuania to Brazil.

This past fall, my family and I traveled to Lithuania to visit our long-lost relatives who never moved to Brazil. Other than a shared last name and comparable facial features, I felt an utter disconnect from what was supposed to be my close family.

They told me stories about their hardships during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania and I heard about the traditions they celebrate within their culture, but I did not relate or connect to any of them.

All my life, I had undoubtedly identified myself as "half-Brazilian," and despite lacking a familial bond with the Lithuanian side of my family, this newfound information left me questioning whether I should even consider myself Brazilian.

Suddenly, people asking "Where are you from?" incited feelings of dread. I felt as if I was lying when I told people I was Brazilian. The more I looked in the mirror, the less I identified with the Brazilian culture I had grown to love.

Pão de queijo for breakfast, brigadeiros on birthdays, and cheering for São Paulo FC; the traditions tied to my Brazilian identity have been set in stone for years. So, how come one small realization changed the relationship to my identity?

The answer is one word: appearance. In a society defined by labels, "immigrant" is one that

> ❝ People asking 'Where are you from?' incited feelings of dread. ❞

carries many complexity-inducing traits. In a rudimentary sense, identity creates categories of in and out depending on your status as a member of a community. But for immigrants, the customs and celebrations they commemorate could starkly differ from their outward appearance.

As a Lithuanian Brazilian, I struggle with the fact that I do not entirely belong to either of these communities. My features are largely European, and I do not know the first thing about Lithuanian culture.

However, after further introspection, I began wondering why my appearance even mattered in terms of identifiers with which I label myself. Sure, you could say I do not look Brazilian, but that sparks the question of who gets to say who does and doesn't look a certain culture. The answer? No one. One quick Google search of Brazilian women images tells you all you need to know. Society's stereotypes of what each culture should look like are improbable and, quite

frankly, discriminatory.

From 1830 to 1959, the primary countries from which people immigrated to Brazil were Portugal, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, Lebanon, Syria and others, per the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics. This demonstrates that, although many people may see Brazil as a country with only one ethnic group, it truly is a multiethnic society.

According to Psychology Today, cultural background is one of the most substantial aspects influencing assimilation and community integration.

As an international school where much of our community has assimilated to various cultures across the globe, the issue of immigration within identity is one not discussed enough. We need to understand the implications of expecting people from certain places to look a particular way as these expectations create confusion and unnecessary complexity.

So, next time you find yourself assuming where someone is from based on their appearance, remember that immigration may play a factor in peoples' identities, especially at ASL.

Progress Reports

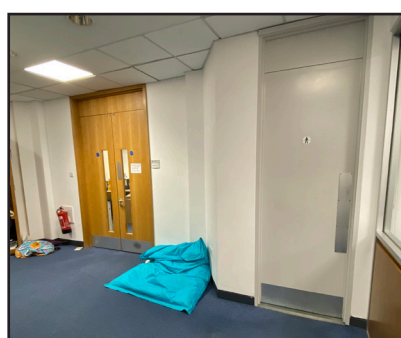The Editorial Board offers its fourth report of the school year.

Photo 1 by Cameron Spurr, Photo 2-6 by Daniel de Beer, Photo 7 by Eva Marriott-Fabre, Photo 8 by Mia George

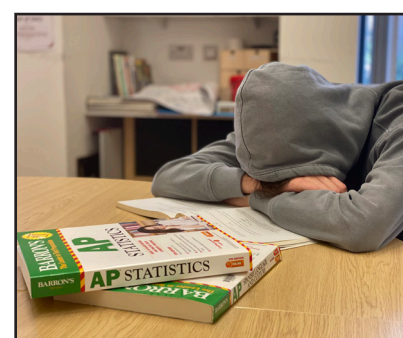**1** — **ASL Ofsted Report: (C-)** Requires Improvement. **Daniel de Beer**

2 — **Bottom-O: (D-)** Why am I seeing so many sophmores? **Sajah Ali**
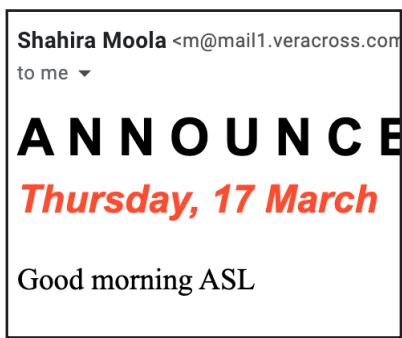
3 — **Weather: (A+)** Spring is finally here after long! **Gabrielle Meidar**
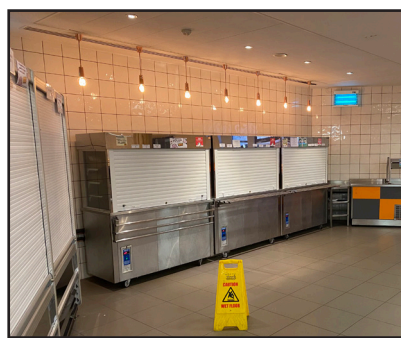
4 — **AP Season: (C)** Never been more stressed. The days of having free time are long gone. **Grace Hamilton**

5 — **Morning Announcements: (B+)** Very informative but way too long. **Maarya Shafqat Adil**
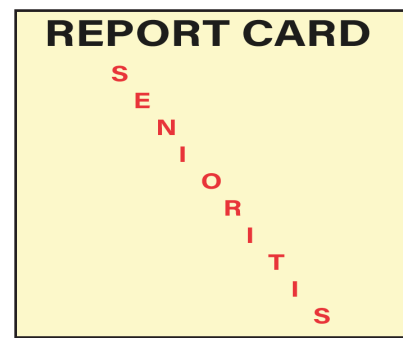
6 — **Cafeteria Food: (C+)** Recent lack of sandwich variety. **Eden Leavey**

7 — **(Alternative) Alternatives Week: (B)** Love the variety but trips could have been better. **Ella Podurgiel**

8 — **Quarter 3 Grades: (F)** I really should not have given in to senioritis. **Zainab Shafqat Adil**