

# When Words Fail, Music Speaks

Restored Holocaust instruments teach lessons in the modern day through Violins of Hope

**Khushi Kanchibotla & Emyr Ortiz**  
Staff Writers

The Holocaust and the Jewish struggle before, during, and after World War Two can sometimes seem distant and hard to relate to. Students often learn of this horrific time in history though history textbooks with size eight font or from worksheets that go over mere numbers and facts. However, this lesson from history was given new life for the students of American on January 30th. On that Thursday, Amer-

ican High got the chance to experience a different way of understanding the Jewish struggle: history carried on a musical note. On January 30th, Violins of Hope visited American High School. As a collection of restored string instruments that have survived the Holocaust, Violins of Hope has quite a history itself. “The violin maker started [the] collection, I believe, in the mid [90]s and has refurbished them in order to give [a] voice back to the voiceless,” informs Mrs. Smith, who spearheaded

the effort to get Violins of Hope on campus. The violin maker she is referring to is Amnon Weinstein, whose collection of over eighty string instruments is now world-famous and has toured around the globe. Fifty-one of these instruments are currently touring in the Bay Area, and a few of these violins were at American on the 30th for a presentation covering these historic instruments infused with the voices of the past. Of course, booking

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# Staff Writer: You

A look into the Journalism elective and the Eagle Era

**Liana Dong**  
Staff Writer

Fifth period with Mr. Savoie is a class with few boundaries. Do you want to write your monthly articles? Go for it—you’re going to need to do them sooner or later. If you want to in-

terview a teacher or administrator, take pictures, or eat candy from Mr. Savoie’s cabinets, go for that too. As a shared period with Yearbook, Journalism writes and publishes the Eagle Era, the school newspaper, every month in a reward-

ing process that allows us to meet new people, make new friends, and get out of our comfort zones. The process starts with monthly budget meetings, where staff writers, who are first-year Journalism students, present ideas

Media editor Beddingfield holds up a copy of the December Eagle Era. “Basically, this is so different from every other class, in my opinion, because you make it what it is,” she says. “If you want to know more about sports, you do a sports article and go into that. If you want to follow around the fall play, [you can do that]. You bring the story where you want to take it...It’s just a lot of exploring that you don’t usually get to do.”



for articles they want to write in the next month. After receiving their topics, each staff writer goes their own way for interviewing sources and creating an engaging story. As media editor in her second year of Journalism, Rebecca Beddingfield (11) recalls the process of writing articles the year before as something that she really enjoyed. “To be honest, the exciting part is getting the sources and interviewing them, but writing is artistic in its own way,” Beddingfield explains. “You’re not supposed to have a big opinion in the story [because] we’re a non-biased student-run organization, but the way that you formulate other people’s opinions is what makes the story. You relate a bunch of people who seem unrelated at the surface, and you put them all together. I feel like I love doing that...and [making] a cohesive start-to-finish kind of thing.” For staff writer Emyr Ortiz (10), who came into the class not knowing what to expect, Journalism is a rewarding experience that he has learned a lot from.

“One of my favorite memories was being able to talk to a reporter for ABC7 for one of my articles,” he says. “That was pretty cool because, at school, the most important people that you’ll ever talk to is the principal if you get in trouble, and that’s usually not what you want to do. Being able to go up to these people that you see on TV and having an excuse to say something to them and talk to them for twenty plus minutes—that’s pretty cool.” After the staff writers finish their rough drafts, the co-editors-in-chief and Mr. Savoie all offer suggestions on each article. “We check over the articles, [and] make sure [the staff writers] reach the deadline,” editor-in-chief Michelle Lee (12) says. “Then we edit over [and] leave suggestions, and then after that, we let them finalize the edits until the final deadline. We take the articles that are completed, and then we arrange them how we think they’d look best on the newspaper, like maybe some articles would fit better on the front page, and some articles have

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## EAGLE ERA

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### Our Mission Statement

We at the Eagle Era strive to be a reliable and compelling source of news for the members of the American High School community. We are dedicated to regularly providing students, staff, and the community beyond with newsworthy information accurately, truthfully, and objectively through printed issues, online articles, and social media posts. We hope to include a diverse range of content that impacts the readers of the Eagle Era in a unique yet creative manner. As a student-run newspaper, we aim not to reflect the values interests, and ideas of the staff alone, but of the AHS community as a whole.

# Letter From the Editor

Dear Eagles,

As February comes to an end, it's safe to say that we've had a busy month. In this month alone, we had ASB elections, International Week, more elections, and Valentine's Day. Outside of school, we had presidential debates, Black History Month, the Oscars, the spread of Coronavirus, and other events that aren't coming to mind at the moment. At the same time it's only the second month of 2020, it's also already the

second month of 2020. Is it just me or is time moving both slowly and quickly?

February tends to become the Tuesday of the year; not quite the dragging days of January nor the more eventful days of May and June. February is oftentimes reduced to the month that people simply want to get through (no offense to those with February birthdays—happy birthday), kind of like a Tuesday: the day that's not really a favorite day,

but it's not Monday, so it's not the least favorite day either. And I don't think this is a good mindset to have. Of course, I'm guilty of doing the same thing, so I'm not one to talk, but I recently read a note that said to "live every day as if it were your first." Not your last—your first. Look at everything as if it were your first time doing so. Is the sky particularly blue one day? Stop and look. Does that flower catch your eye? Stop and look. Don't lose

that wonder and happiness; turn your Tuesday vibes into a Friday one, and if Tuesday's already a good day for you, make it better.

Lastly, in a time where people are being susceptible to illnesses, whether it's the common cold here in Fremont or Coronavirus across the seas, take care of yourself, but also take care of others. It costs nothing to have an open mind.

**Michelle Lee**  
*Co-Editor-in-Chief*

With the start of the month, it's the start of election season. Here at American, students are working hard on their campaigns with ASB elections occurring earlier in the month followed by class council elections.

For many of the candidates, including those new to the school, being part of class council is an important way to create positive changes in the American High School community.

"I just wanted to impact the other kids at my school in some way. Then, I learned about student government and thought it would be a great opportunity to not only impact others but also have fun in the process," explained candidate Aditya Gupta (9).

As students hope to get more involved in class council and ASB at school, there is much to prepare for. While students are able to see the finished products of campaign season on social media and throughout campus, candidates have worked hard behind the scenes.

"There's a lot of planning before elections. First, you need to get the signatures and then get the letters of recommendation. Then you need to get your campaign photos, then edit [and] print them out at UPS. I got butcher paper from Amazon and a lot of paint from Michaels. It took really long, and I came early on Monday to set up," said ASB VP candidate Azaan Sharif (11).

While the campaigning process can be exhausting, candidates were able to use it as a way to express their creativity.

"I knew that I wanted to have more unique posters this year and have more fun with my elections because this is my last campaigning season. I asked Mr. Iglesias if I could have him on my poster and he said 'sure,' so that was cool. I also did research on Pinterest and different websites to see different campaign ideas and talked to my friends and bounced ideas off of them," explained ASB President candidate Bella Jiang (11).

Though the election

# The New Leaders

*AHS students vote for the ASB and Class Council Leaders*

**Aarya Vaidya**  
*Staff Writer*

process itself has flowed smoothly for most candidates, some of the candidates agree that there are ways the school can get more students to participate in the elections. What do candidates feel is the most effective way to get more involvement? It is more communication, according to Sharif. "Teachers can tell during FLEX about future meetings... [and] tell [students] about [election] packets just so they know more about what [elections] are about," suggested Sharif.

Some also feel that inclusivity during elections is something that students must work together for over the entire school year.

"To get students more involved, you need to build that community throughout the year and make them want to be involved at this school and be more aware. It's a gradual process...It involves the entire school atmosphere and environment," said Jiang.

Other candidates feel that there can be improvements to the voting procedures so that more students can get involved with elections.

"I think the election process is pretty good, except for the fact that voting only occurs during FLEX as it gives people [a smaller] time frame to cast their vote," explained Gupta.

While many students agree that it would be more convenient to have vot-

ing time outside of FLEX, ASB advisor Mr. Fulton explains that this had led to complications in the past.

"We have examples of when voting was open for two days at a time [where] candidates walk[ed] around and ask[ed] people to vote with their phone or with their laptops. It should be a private ballot, so we thought if we just did it during the FLEX period, each student would have two hours total where they could have some time to cast a vote and be more individual and private," explained Mr. Fulton.

With the elections coming to a close, Jiang emphasizes the importance of voting in elections.

"[It is important to be] voting for the right reasons and be aware of [candidates'] experience and what they want to do and how they behave, like their work ethic and what they have done for the school. I think a lot of people will just want to vote for their friends, but it's a lot more than that. It's about choosing a candidate that would fit the role well and actually work hard to improve this school," said Jiang.

With the election season coming to a close, there is much to look forward to in the next school year with ASB elects: President Bella Jiang, Vice-President Anusha Nayak, and Chief Justice Jeffrey Wei. In addition, each class can count on being led by their class councils.

## RESULTS

### Class of 2021:

President: Nicole Lai

Vice President: Shreya Patil

Senators: Benjamin Tarver, Veda Periwal

### Class of 2022:

President: Run-off between Samantha Leung and Samar Varma (results not yet announced at time of publication)

Vice President: Run-off between Jimmy Ying and Rishi Matkar (results not yet announced at time of publication)

Senators: Joshua Bascos, Harshini Karthikeyan

### Class of 2023:

President: Aditya Gupta

Vice President: Keren Skariah

Senators: Arjun Arora, Deeta Ganapathy



# When Words Fail, Music Speaks (cont.)

pieces of history is no simple task. In fact, just getting them to the Bay Area was an extensive process.

"Our executive director, [Patricia Moy], found out about it. Someone contacted her," says Andrea Polites, a member of the educational committee for Music at Khol Mansion, a program based in Burlingame that mostly organizes classical music events. "I'm not sure who contacted who first, but I'll tell you, it has been a couple of years in the making. We knew about it several years ago and have been preparing, and it was a big deal for our local community and our organization."

The effort to share these historic instruments at this scale took the cooperation and collaboration of a multitude of hands and organizations.

"There's the [Jewish Family and Children's Services] Holocaust Center-Music at Khol Mansion is the one that brought the whole thing to the Bay Area—and there [are] probably others if they're doing concerts all over the Bay Area," estimates Pam Matthews, another member of the Music at Khol Mansion educational committee.

It was through one of these other organizations that American High School's Ms. Smith first took note of Violins of Hope.

"Through [the organization] Facing History, I attended a workshop on race and racism. In October, when I went to that workshop, they had a flyer for Violins of Hope, and having taught the Holocaust as part of 10th grade literature...I have always been interested," explains Mrs. Smith. "And so when I looked into what they were I was excited about going to the workshop...and so by attending the workshop we were then eligible to apply to have the Violins of Hope performance come to American High School."

While schools can apply to have the Violins of Hope perform at their campus, it is a two-thousand dollar charge for the performance. Fortunately, the Jewish Family and Children's Ser-

vices Holocaust Center was willing to sponsor a few applicants so that they only had to pay a two hundred dollar charge. Out of all the schools that applied, only ten were selected, and, due to the work of Mrs. Smith and Ms. Wilkinson, American was one of the few who was able to host these vessels of the past. The lessons these violins carried would be able to be taught to the students of American.

The violins themselves are not the draw for students as much as the stories and lessons they carry. The instruments are powerful because of the history they represent.

"My feeling is [that] to understand what was actually lost by the Holocaust and any genocide, any war, any mass destruction, is to know what was in place before the war happened and before the genocide happened. So for the Jewish people who [were] sometimes being forced to leave, they had a very rich musical culture. Music was used in bringing cultures together, bringing families together," says Cookie Segelstein, who performed on the violins and was accompanied on the accordion by her husband Joshua Horowitz.

During the performance, which was open to students who signed up in advance, Segelstein told and played the stories of the Jewish people. More than this, she was able to express these stories and messages through the unique lens that music provides.

"Music is easier to talk about than specific events that happen. My feeling—my goal—is to not seclude experience but to globalize it for all genocides, all suffering, all acts of bullying [and] acts of callousness with other people suffering. I feel that it's not the story just of the Jewish people, but it's the story of the way people treat each other. My feeling is that the way to sensitize somebody to suffering is to give a personal story, but that personal story is not the only story. There [are] genocides happening all over the world, all the time, and the idea is [to] speak



out against injustice... That's my goal in my presenting these instruments."

Through the violins, Segelstein played traditional Jewish songs and spoke of the culture that was in place before the Holocaust. The fact that these instruments are so deeply intertwined with the culture that they were cared for and kept alive through one of the most horrific times in history makes for a deeply personal connection. Segelstein, as a child of Holocaust survivors, felt this connection when choosing an instrument.

"I came upon the Auschwitz violin, and, because my mother was there, I walked by it. I didn't want to play it. And then I came back and I tried it again...I thought it would be a little more difficult for me [to play it], but it's not. Just the fact that we play this historical music initially was difficult. So now it's really cool for me to have these instruments and have that history to play on."

Mrs. Smith, having worked with teenagers for eighteen years, provides her insight on these connections.

"This is an opportunity to be in the presence of artifacts that survived the Holocaust...This is an opportunity to connect in a very real way with the history that has powerful connections to modern society," says Ms. Smith. "It's a focus on music versus—for my class—the literature, the books, [and] the words that we tend to focus on. It's a way in which especial-

ly teenagers can connect."

Each and every violin on display has its own specific story related to the Holocaust. Seventy to eighty years ago, these violins were being played to save the lives of the players' as well as their audience. Now, these violins are on tour to share those stories and the horrors of the Holocaust.

"The one that prompted that the violin maker to begin collecting violins was one that had been brought to him in a horrible state of disrepair," narrates Smith. "And that the man who brought it to him explained that he had survived Auschwitz because they learned that he could play the violin. So, instead of being sent to the gas chambers, he was forced to play the violin as people were marched to the gas chambers."

Caught up in school work and tests, students don't find much time to pause and learn about the different, unique stories taking place all around them. So, when presented with the opportunity to hear such stories, students were quick to grab it.

Theatre 70 was filled with bright faces eagerly looking forward to the performance which was about to commence. Students received an email the day before informing them about the upcoming performance, and a few students also received a second email. This second email was for those who mentioned that they could play the violin. These students were allowed to stay after the performance

for a few minutes, getting a chance to hold and play these timeless instruments.

Among these students was junior Maria Aguirre who speaks about her experience playing the violin, saying, "[Violins of Hope taught me] that the Jewish people went through a lot, but they still had one thing that they turned to, which was music. It kept the hope alive." Archisha Datta (12), another student who was invited to play one of the violins, says, "I think it's important because it offers a perspective on how music is more than just writing notes for celebration; it's also an expression of human hope and survival, and it shows how there's an intersection between these two things that we wouldn't normally think to connect."

The students at the performance not only got the listen to the painfully woven stories of the Holocaust but also had the amazing opportunity to listen to these stories on instruments that lived through the tragedy.

History is a complex field, growing and expanding each and every second. The stories of the past are packed with emotion and intricacies, often making them difficult to express. However, when history is expressed through a different medium, in this case music, it becomes a little easier to comprehend and the notes ring a little louder. As Ms. Smith remembers, "According to Hans Christian Andersen, 'When words fail, music speaks.'"



# Ready, Set, Vote!

## *AHS hosts event to encourage students to register to vote*

**Aarya Vaidya**  
Staff Writer

On January 28th, upper-classmen students across campus got the opportunity to register to vote during their history and social science classes. The event, which was in partnership with the League of Women Voters, FUSD SURF Board E, the Youth Voter Movement, and GenUp, hoped to encourage students to get involved in politics by encouraging students to use their right to vote.

For Sage Remo (11), a

member of GenUp and a volunteer at the voter registration event, voting is something more students should take advantage of.

“To me, I think that it’s really important for people to vote because it is the right of American citizens. A lot of kids will think it’s not that big of a deal...I think it’s really important to be involved in politics because politics change and influence everything in our lives [and] how we live our lives—the things we buy, the places we go...



*Students at American registered to vote on campus and were able to leave the event with new perspectives on the role of voting. “[One takeaway from the event] was how students can encourage other people to vote. I thought that was pretty [interesting] because it brings the community together,” said Sarah Cheuy (12).*

## Staff Writer: You (cont.)

similar topics so we'd stick on them on another page.”

Along with publishing the Eagle Era every month, another aspect of the class is Humans of American, a social media project inspired by Humans of New York that tells the stories of the student body.

“My favorite part [of being a staff writer] was interviewing for Humans of American because it's so interesting getting the chance to meet a lot of new people around campus,” editor-in-chief Annie Liu (12) explains. “[They’re] people who you might not always have the chance to interact with otherwise, so it's really interesting to see all these people's stories. Interviewing in general for articles [helps] you open yourself up to so many different opportunities, different scenarios, different people doing different things.”

For Mr. Savoie, who serves as an advisor rather than a traditional teacher, Journalism is a class that he takes a hands-off approach on.

“I really try to facilitate what the editors want

to try to do [and] what the staffers want to try to do because it should be the students’ paper, not my paper,” he explains. “I think in classes like this, I get an opportunity to see people's personalities come out a little bit more because the loose structure to the class allows kids to focus on their strengths, and they can lean on each other for their weaknesses. They don't feel like they have to fit into a certain mold; they can find their own space in the class.”

Despite what its loose structure might imply, the class pushes students to grow and thrive.

“I came into Journalism relatively shy and [without] that much leadership experience,” Liu says. “Throughout the course of my first year as a staff writer, it really pushed me out of my comfort zone. I had to go to a board meeting for my first article, which was super scary, but it was things like this that really taught me [that] it's so important to step out of your comfort zone. You gain so much more from just overlooking your fears

and just going for it...this year, as editor-in-chief with Michelle, it's a different experience. It's less on the interviewing people side now; it's about how we keep a team motivated and productive as a whole, and I think that's also taught me a lot about leadership.”

With course registrations just around the corner, students with free elective space have a lot to consider.

“I know that I’m taking leadership, which I’m really looking forward to,” Bella Jiang (11) says. “I’m thinking about taking Journalism because I love writing and talking to others. I think it’s great for connecting better with our school community.”

For students with similar interests, Journalism can serve as a catalyst for growth and provide relief in a busy schedule. The class period’s relaxed structure means occasional potlucks, easy conversation, and a flexible agenda. If you’re interested, all of us at the Eagle Era welcome you to join our class for the next school year!

It affects our lifestyle entirely and our rights as human beings,” said Remo.

Students spent the first part of the event learning about the past inequalities of voting rights in the country, which impacted students’ views on voter registration.

“I think [the history presentation] was pretty interesting because it gave some background. It made me realize [for example] how women didn’t have voting rights [in the past]. It impacted me [to take] advantage of [voting] because then I have a say [in the government],” said Sarah Cheuy (12).

While the presentation did have a positive result, there were multiple difficulties for organizers, such as timing issues.

“We only had an hour because of the class time. [It was] even less than that because students had to go to their classrooms and then go back to the classroom, so we lost around 15 minutes. We only had 45 minutes to [complete the event],” explained Phoebe Urbano (12), a volunteer for the event and a member of GenUp.

Keeping students engaged and making sure that they followed instructions also proved to be challenging for those who were helping to organize the event.

“Most of the time [students] did [pay attention, but] there were definitely a couple of periods or groups of students that would talk a lot and not pay attention. They would often write down their own things, going faster than the presentation and not listening,” said Remo.

Despite some of the issues, volunteers were satisfied to see the results of the event.

“I think [the event] was successful. We met our goal of getting as many juniors and seniors registered [as we could],” said Remo.

The event led to an increase in the number of people registered to vote, especially compared to the other high schools at Fremont, which held a similar event. In fact, American High School had 884 students registered to vote.

“American had the most [registered] voters out of everyone else [at other schools in Fremont],” said Urbano proudly.



# To Spend or Not to Spend?

*How do students of the work-force budget their earnings?*

*"It's mostly minimum wage stuff, so if you're actually looking to get an actually good paying job, just start off [part-time] and then once you actually graduate, get an actual job. This is all just minimum wage stuff." Andy Zhang (11) said.*



**Weston Liang**  
Staff Writer

At some point, we have all considered or been told about getting a part-time job. Getting a job, even if it is part-time, allows you to earn some nice pocket money along with vital work experience for future careers and jobs.

"I started my first job at Party City as a cashier around the end of my junior year...to help my mom out with any extra stuff she needed to pay for, along with also buying food and extra necessities for my pets," responded Nitalia Camilosa (12).

Camilosa started working part-time for a pretty understandable reason: helping family. However, she ended up leaving the job due to a combination of large amounts of homework and badly timed work shifts. This is a problem that many student workers face. You could hate or love the job, but there will always be times where school work will overtake your ability to do job work.

"My advice would be to stay on top of your school work if you want to balance school and a job, even if that means finish-

ing some assignments early to get them out of the way," advised Camilosa.

Another common reason for students getting a job is the fact that they can now receive a paycheck of money from someone that is not their parents or relatives. However, the way the money is dealt with depends on person to person. An unemployed student will have a different money-spending plan than an employed student.

"The only time I ever spend my earnings is when I have tips, and it's just for food and stuff. Everything [else], like paychecks [for example], I just put in my bank account and save," answered Andy Zhang (11).

Zhang has been working at the boba store iTea for over a year now. It is clear that he only wants to spend his tip money on what is necessary to him. However, there are also other, more finance-heavy reasons for applying to jobs.

"I started working because I needed to pay off my marching band bills... the total cost of the season was about \$600, and I really did not want to [be unable] to pay my parents back, because that's a lot of money,"

explained Audrey Yu (11).

Yu is working as a tutor in Newark's P.E.L Learning Center. Her reason to work is less about getting pocket money and a bit more on paying back money owed to her parents. She does spend some of her earnings on typical things like food. That is not to say that she has no limits, though.

"I try to restrain myself from buying things by asking myself if I really need it. I try to be mindful of how much I am spending by thinking about how many hours I would have worked to buy something."

When planning to get a job, everyone's priorities are different. Some will find a job for the experience, while others will find a job for the money. If you expect to get more pocket money, it may be better to find a higher-paying job. If you just need work experience in order to move further into the workforce, find a job that can actually give you what you desire.

## What's the Big Deal About Summer Programs?

*Are summer programs just a quick way for institutions to make money under the pretense of getting students ready for college?*

**Shreya Daschoudhary**  
Staff Writer

For many students, summer vacation is a time to relax and have fun with friends and family. However, a considerable number choose a different path: instead of taking two months to recuperate from the constant stress of the school year, many students sign up for summer programs.

Summer program sessions can range from a few days to eight or nine weeks. During these programs, students have the chance to experience the life of a college student while also expanding their knowledge in an area of their choice. However, these opportunities do not come cheap; the costs of these programs can range from two to thirteen thousand dollars. These overwhelmingly high costs beg the question: are summer programs really worth investing time into?

There are a variety

of reasons that students choose to take part in a program in the first place. For instance, some are persuaded by their parents.

"There was the always-present parental pressure, which caused me to have to do some summer program whether I wanted to or not," says Subin Pradeep (11).

Friendships can play a part in a decision to attend.

"I also wanted to take a summer program because of the fact that many of my friends were going to take one as well. This factor really helped convince me to take a summer program, as I wanted to do the same things that my peers were doing," states Pradeep.

Others decide to partake because of personal motivations.

"As senior year gets closer and closer, I wanted to do more stuff that I could include in my [college ap-

*continued on 8*



After taking the PSAT, many sophomores and juniors are bombarded with both emails and letters from colleges persuading them to sign up for their programs. While the AI-created messages may seem like a cash-grab, the programs are actually helpful. "It is important to know that using your time to expand your knowledge instead of wasting your time can go a long way in helping you do better in life in general," says Pradeep.



# SOCIETY LOVES ME, SOCIETY LOVES M

Michelle Lee  
Editor-in-Chief

Nothing says “I love you” like a bouquet

Ah, yes. That wonderful time of the year. One could argue that it's the best time of the year. That one special day in February. Shelves decked in pink streamers, scattered boxes of chocolates, disturbingly cute cupid figures, and those beautiful red signs with my favorite words: For Sale.

February 15: the perfect day after Valentine's Day when all those 50-piece candy boxes go on sale for a dollar each. Gotta love capitalism. I mean, who doesn't want to spend a ridiculous amount of money on gifts just to prove that you still love your significant other? Everyone knows that if you don't, you will instantly perish and love will cease to exist and Cupid himself will descend from the heavens to smite you. Yeah, no one needs that obnoxious frilly Hallmark card that sings when you open it, but you have

to get something, right?

Anyways, who decided February 14 was the day to declare your undying love to each other and flaunt your relationship in single people's faces? (No, I am not bitter; that's just my 99% dark chocolate that I got for 50 cents.) Who sat down and said, “You know what would be great? Taking a holiday named after a Catholic martyr executed by ancient Romans and making it about romance. Nothing's more romantic than dying for a cause.” Bet the government loved that last line. And, of course, businesses and society jumped right into it. Another way to sell products and make more money? Yes, please.

Don't get me wrong. Sure, it's cute to get each other flowers. Sure, that giant teddy bear is adorable. Honestly, though, this can be done any other

day of the year. February 18, March 9, April 25, June 13—literally nothing is stopping you from doing sweet things on those days, other than society conditioning you to feel guilty about not doing something for Valentine's Day. Why should one specific day determine whether we're loved or not? Look what you've done. I'm preaching about conformity now, well done.

Well, who am I to tell you what to do? By all means, buy that \$30-dollar flower bouquet and those sugary \$40-dollar “sugar-free” chocolates. Not my fault if you go back and see the same things for a dollar apiece. You might as well do that instead—go shopping with your significant other the day after Valentine's day and then binge on all those sweets you bought while watching a cliché rom-com. I'd suggest making

this a holiday too, but we all know that businesses will market the heck out of that. You'll start seeing cards saying “Happy Day-After-Valentine's-Day Day” and Instagram influencers writing captions like “Be my un-Valentine?” “I need to pay two dollars for this discounted Valentine candy? Can I just give you a shoutout?”

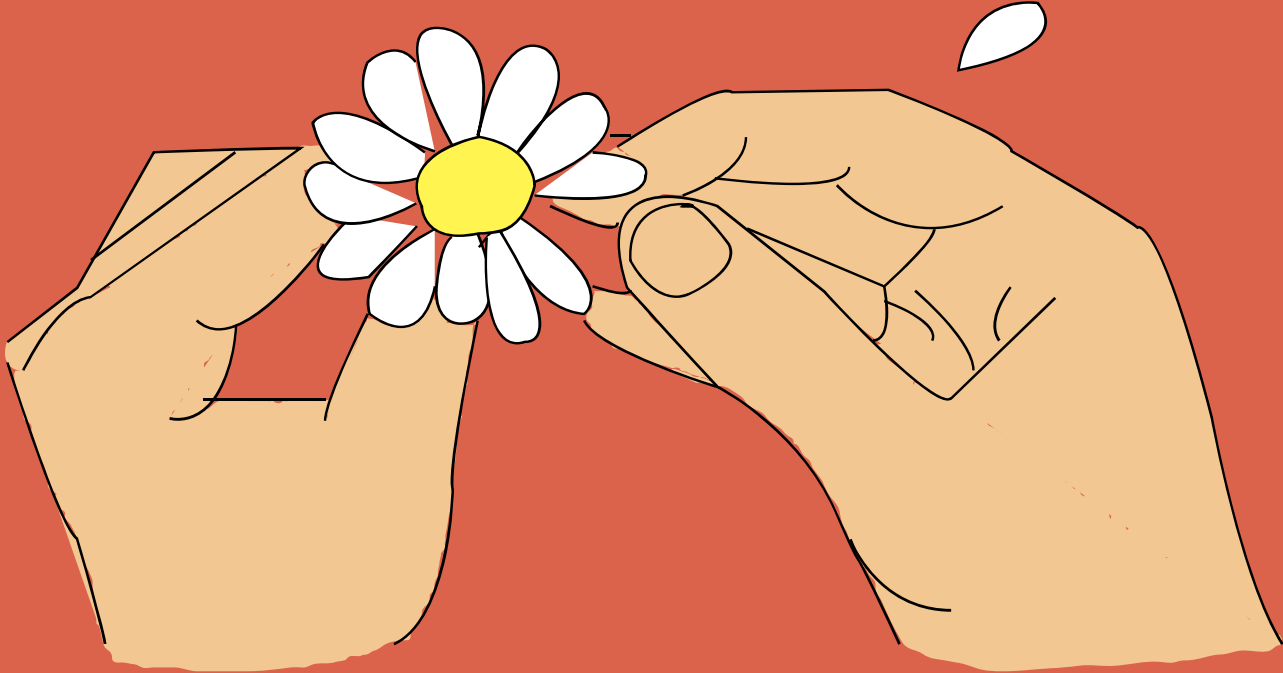
Gotta love capitalism. And they say romance is dead.

Disclaimer: This is a satirical piece on Valentine's Day. In reality, I'm a hopeless romantic that gushes over soulmate AUs and enemies-to-lovers storylines.

## TYSON NAVARRO-TRAN (11) AND KAELLA DE PANO (12)



K: “We met during the fall play.”  
T: “Yeah, she was the stage manager and I was the dumb Trissotin boy.”  
K: “My first impression [of him] was at callbacks. In my head, I was like, ‘I don't know where this guy came from, but whoa, he's cute.’ And he was also really good! I wasn't there for his initial audition because I had an appointment, so when he came back I was like, ‘Where did you come from?’”  
T: “I saw her and was like ‘okay, okay, she cute.’ Then, I just busted out with the ‘What? You've never played Tuber Simulator?’ And then [she] jumped in, and [I thought] ‘have I found my equal?’ And we just hit it off from there.”  
K: “Basically he referenced an internet meme and I finished it and he was like, ‘Oh my God.’”





IE NOT

uet of ten roses for forty dollars.



### AJ LAXA (12) AND JOHN WAGAS (12)

J: "I'd have to say one of my favorite [memories] is when we went to Castro; walking down the rainbow crosswalks with each other and going to this restaurant right straight in Castro, and we had mac and cheese together, which is one of [his] favorite dishes. Because we didn't have that much money, that was all we could afford, but it was amazing. And what made it so much better was just spending it with [him] in Castro and being able to be in that community that we feel so tied with because we are queer, and that really was a safe space for us. "

AJ: "I think for me, it would be going to Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk with my family and him, because he was able to bond with [my parents]. They don't like people who don't communicate with them, but John was really good at being able to talk to them freely, so it's nice that we were able to spend time with my family and also spend time together."



### ANGELLE MERCADO (10) AND JASON FINULIAR (10)

J: "My favorite thing about her? There's just too much to say. You can't pick one thing."

A: "That's a cover up."

J: "Just being around her!"

A: "I like how he listens to whatever I have to say. I think [our relationship] works because we're both open to communication. Personally, I have a problem with opening up to people. It's better for me if he comes up, like directly [to ask] what's wrong, and I think that's what makes sense."

Be Mine

Exploring relationships at American for Valentine's Day

Liana Dong  
Staff Writer

### HYACINTH CAJUCOM (11) AND DAMAN CHOPRA (11)

D: "I had a crush on her since freshman year, but I didn't know her name or anything. And then sophomore year, I had a class with her, so we started talking, and it started from there."

H: "He kept texting me, so I was like, 'Don't you have a girlfriend?'"

D: "I was single!"

H: "Well for me, my first impression of him was that he was one of the cool people that wouldn't really talk to a person like me, but throughout last year we got closer and it proved me wrong."

D: "My first impression of her was that she was really cute and I loved her eyes. I felt like I could never be her boyfriend, but I was wrong. Look at us now: eight months and still going!"





# COMMENTARY: Yes, I'm of Chinese Descent. No, I Don't Have Coronavirus

*PSA: Your fear of coronavirus isn't an excuse for racism or xenophobia.*

**Annie Liu**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

It's the hostile comments online that denounce an entire race. It's the baseless slurs thrown at innocent people who are already suffering in so much pain. It's the people who yell at Chinese immigrants who have long ago assimilated to the United States and tell them to go back to their country.

It's the fifth-grade student who takes one look at me and asks, "Are you Asian?" and widens his eyes in horror when I say yes. "Have—have you been to China?" he asks next, and I already know what's running through his head: coronavirus.

"No," I say flatly, and he sighs with relief just before proceeding to sneeze in my face without covering his mouth.

Talk about irony.

Recently, the rapid spread of coronavirus across the world has brought China to the forefront of headlines. Coupled with the excessive spread of misinformation and fear on the Internet, this epidemic has spawned a significant degree of mass hysteria.

I've seen more than enough comments online to know that anti-Chinese sentiments are prevalent. The Chinese deserve this disease. What do you expect from eating such strange food? And then the simple, low-effort comments: Ch-nk. Go back to your own country. Because of course, when so many people are suffering, the best move is to generalize an entire country—an entire race—and lump us all into being a scapegoat for your convenience.

Here's my question: Why is it that, upon hearing that citizens of China are suffering from such a deadly outbreak, the first response of many people is to further add on to the innocent citizens' suffering by making such utterly

unsympathetic, harsh, and completely racist comments? Is it not basic human decency to recognize when someone is already dealing with so much pain and to simply avoid adding more for them to handle?

I get it. A deadly virus that currently has no cure is terrifying, no doubt. People all over the world are scared. People want to be able to have a group to blame, because that gives them a place to take out their anger and fear. But here's a grand idea: **fear is not an excuse for racism or xenophobia.**

As an American citizen who has grown up in the U.S. all my life, it is extremely disappointing that in recent times, I'm often being thrown into the group that "doesn't belong," the group that needs to "go back to their country to avoid spreading the disease." It doesn't matter that I'm as American as anyone else—all of a sudden, my race is the only thing that matters about me. Xenophobia has spread like wildfire, and it stems from a place of ignorance and fear. Restaurant owners in Chinatowns across the country have reported declines in business and customers. According to CNN, a woman wearing a face mask in New York City was physically and verbally assaulted, while a man on a subway in Los Angeles called Chinese people "filthy," saying that "every disease [ever] has come from China." Aside from how blatantly untrue this is—the CDC estimates that 16,000 people have died due to the seasonal flu in the U.S. this year, but let's just ignore that for the sake of convenience, right?—the concept of "all Chinese people must have the virus" is just mind-boggling in its absurdity. Last time I checked, we aren't born with viruses encoded in our racial makeup.

Regardless of race, we're all equally susceptible to contracting the disease.

And what if I told you that attacking people of East Asian descent is not going to do any good in curbing the spread of the virus? Assaulting and blaming an entire race for the outbreak just makes no sense logically. Throwing people into a blanket statement is textbook racism, and it offers absolutely no benefit to anyone.

Stereotypes are dangerous because **they aren't true**—it's simply impossible to apply any sort of statement to a group of people as large as an entire race.

I'm not saying that everyone is attacking Asians. For the record, for every racist or ignorant comment, I've seen five supportive ones. But racism in any way is a threat to equality and acceptance, and we can do better than this.

It's okay to be afraid of

the virus. It's understandable to feel anxious about the rapid spread. What's not okay, though, is using those feelings as justification for racist and xenophobic behavior. Besides, I'm no doctor, but I'm guessing that washing your hands and being mindful of hygiene would probably be a lot more effective than being racist, right? Just a guess, though.

## What's the Big Deal About Summer Programs? (cont.)

plications]. [I also wanted to] gain more experience by being by myself in a college-like environment and navigating my own classes and passions," says Valeria Estrada (11). "The program I went to allowed me to do that, as I was able to travel to the East Coast by myself and live on campus for almost two months."

As for the benefits, there seem to be quite a few associated with attending one of these programs. "I'm applying for Girls Who Code Summer Immersion Program and Kode with Klossy summer program to learn more about programming since I'm thinking about majoring in computer science," says Aarthi Kannan (11). "These programs will help me gain some fundamental skills for a major in computer science, and it shows colleges that I tried different things outside of school in order to be more prepared for the career I want."

Estrada mentions that she had a beneficial experience as well. "When the program I went to popped up on my emails advertising itself as 'the best summer of my life,' I was a little bit skeptical. However, I truly believe it may well have been," she says. "I was able to take classes that I, for once, didn't feel pressured

to get an A in. I had time between classes to take care of myself and assess how I would do once I went to college. I got my own taste of independence and managed to meet a lot of very cool people and make a lot of fun memories."

Pradeep asserts that summer programs are in fact very advantageous to participate in.

"I would most definitely encourage underclassmen to take up the initiative of going to a summer program this summer, as there are numerous benefits for doing so. One of the biggest benefits that come with doing a summer program is the fact that it adds to the amount of experience that you have...Experience plays a major part in job and college applications, and it is important to build upon your experience whenever you can," he states. "Another benefit of summer programs is the many new connections that are formed along the process. For me personally, I made many new friends at the summer program I went to last summer, and many of those friendships were maintained throughout the school year. It's connections like these that will truly help us in the future, and so it is important to always be on the look-

out to build new ones."

Estrada agrees that the relationships forged during programs can be extremely valuable in the future.

"While I obviously wouldn't say it's a guarantee, I think [going to a summer program] can help me get into a good college. The experiences I had can help when writing about why I'm interested in that school if I choose to apply there. The connections I formed with my professors can come in handy when researching more about applying."

While the combination of high costs and the idea of having to do even more work after the school year ends makes the idea of attending a summer program unappealing to some, those who have actually attended one argue the opposite. They allow students to experience what college truly feels like, while also providing an educational experience.

"Overall, while some programs may be kind of pricey or very time[-intensive], I would recommend attending one, as it enhances your high school experience, and if it doesn't get you into the college of your dreams, at least you can say you had an amazing summer," says Estrada.



CHECK OUT

# HUMANS OF AHS



ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

## One Day Down, a Lot More to Go

*Feelings when waiting for college acceptances*

**Nydia Kuo**  
Staff Writer

Going into high school, all students know that junior year and the beginning of the senior year will be the busiest times of their high school careers. From the PSAT to the SAT and finally, to college essays, students work hard to ensure they can put together the best possible versions of themselves for the dreaded college applications. However, what comes after those applications are submitted? Waiting for college acceptances is a unique period of time that each student experiences differently.

After submitting the applications, Evelyn Lee (12) says that her stress leaves her, and she enjoys her days that are always filled with fun. Lee explains, "During the wait for college acceptances, I felt very relaxed and stress-free because I finally submitted the essays I worked on for so long." To Lee, the experience of waiting can be concluded in three

words: "overwhelming but worthwhile." There are many things in life that can be labeled as "once-in-a-lifetime," and this also includes waiting for college acceptances. Why not attempt to enjoy this experience as much as possible?

While there are some who have small worries during this time, there are also students that are actually excited and can't wait to start college, but that excitement dies when they have to decide where to send the applications. Josephina Yang (12) mentions how she sent approximately twelve college applications; they are mostly UC's and CSU's, but she also sent applications to University of Arizona, Arizona State, University of North Carolina, University of Southern California, and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. In Yang's opinion, "People should apply for backup colleges that they would most likely get into so that the stress of land-

ing a college won't be as bad." Aiming for the best colleges out there is definitely a goal to go after, but why add more stress if you think the chances of getting in are slim? Take this tip from Yang and also apply to a place you know you can get into, because it can greatly decrease stress.

Students either stress a lot during this time period or have their excitement build up as days pass, but as acceptances creep closer and closer, seniors are undoubtedly growing more and more eager to find out where they will be headed in the fall. At the end of the day, Malissa Abraham (12) believes that students should just go to a college that fits them, and she herself is not too worried. "Honestly, I feel like I should be feeling more nervous...but I'm not feeling much [of that]," she explains. "It's more of a whatever happens, happens, kind of thing for me. I just go with it."



*"Honestly, my goal for college is to continue figuring out who I am as a person and really making the best out of my youthful years. Of course, I still want to do well in school, but I think it's important to balance that with learning how to live a little."*

*-Malissa Abraham (12)*



# Black History

# Month

## Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin was a civil rights activist during the Civil Rights Movement in Montgomery, Alabama. Nine months before Rosa Parks' bus boycott, 15-year-old Colvin refused to give up her seat on the bus on March 2, 1955. She claimed her right to sit in her seat because she paid for it and, as a result, was arrested and put on probation. Her action inspired the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to use the situation to challenge segregation; due to Colvin's young age and her being pregnant, Rosa Parks was employed to initiate the movement.

## Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in 1820 and successfully escaped in 1849 to the North. She went on to become the most well-known "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, which was a network of people who offered help and shelter to those who had escaped from slavery in the South. Putting her life in jeopardy, Tubman was able to help hundreds of escaped slaves into new lives with their newfound freedom. Tubman was also a leading abolitionist before the Civil War and helped the Union during the war as a spy.

## Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. became a key leader in the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the United States. Originally a scholar and Baptist minister, King went on to lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and was a skilled orator who gave many influential speeches. His actions played a vital role in the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the ending of legal segregation of African-Americans. His work also earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

## Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali rose to fame as one of the greatest athletes of the twentieth century after winning Olympic gold in 1960 and becoming the world heavyweight boxing champion in 1964—a title he would go on to win two more times during the 1970s. After he was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1984, Ali turned to philanthropy and social activism, and his efforts earned him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005.

## Beyond the Surface of International Week

*How much work goes into making International Week possible?*

### Shreya Daschoudhary Staff Writer

Because of the teacher strikes last year, International Week is something only half the school has experienced. However, from its message to its organization, there are numerous things that make International Week unique.

"I think [International Week] was started to celebrate the diversity here on campus," says Activities Director Mr. Fulton. "Different schools call it different things, other schools in Fremont call it Multicultural Week."

Because International Week is unique in the sense that it celebrates a variety of cultures, there are also a lot of things that go into planning it and making sure it is successful.

"International Week is heavily club and class-council based," says ASB President Phoebe Urbano (12). "Cultural clubs get first priority on choosing their countries, followed by non-cultural clubs and class councils."

However, there's more to it than just deciding on a country to represent. According to Urbano, there are a number of committees that have to work together to make the event possible.

"Our Rallies Committee has been coming up with new ideas to engage more participation in our International Week Ral-

ly this year," she explains. "Our Publicity Committee spent the last two weeks working on a large map in front of SAC as well as digital flyers...The rest of Leadership has worked on flag decorations for the rotunda and rally, setting up tables in the rotunda every day, and selling tickets."

Club leaders play a pivotal role in helping set the event up for success as well.

"Club leaders usually have to plan a couple weeks ahead of International Week," says Janine Wang (11), the president of TSA. "[They have to decide], with their officer team, what country they want to represent, what food they want to sell, how much to sell it for, et cetera."

While those in leadership positions have a lot of responsibilities, normal members can get involved as well.

"During my sophomore year, I participated in API's International Week performance," says Aldwin Saguid (12). "This year, as a senior, I'm running JapAnime's booth for activities and selling food."

As many people know, International Week was unfortunately cancelled last year due to teacher strikes. However, instead of serving as a discouragement, students this year have used it as an opportunity to publicize International Week as



People mill around the rotunda as members of Computer Science First work quickly to set up their booth and get food ready to sell before customers arrive. "I think not a lot of people realize the amount of work that clubs have to do to make international week successful, but at the end of the week, seeing everyone enjoying the different cultures of food, the effort is all worth it," says Wang.

much as possible this year.

"We have half the school that knows what International Week is, and half the school who has no idea... So, our hope this year was just to try to communicate with everybody, the way it's organized," says Mr. Fulton. "So I [was] sending out some Loopmails, and we had social media posts about how you would have to purchase a ticket in order to get food... what kinds of things were actually happening, like what the rally was going to be on Friday, and how we just wanted everyone to wear cultural clothes."

While this year's International Week was a success, it was also even better than it had been in previous years.

"Many of the events and practices we did this year for International Week is the same as how we've done it previously. The game and activity booths and Olympic International Rally are new ideas that are unique to International Week this year," says Urbano. "Next year, I would like to see our next ASB President, Bella Jiang, encourage more engagement from staff and students who aren't typically involved in events like these. One thing that should definitely be integrated next year is making International Week mandatory for cultural clubs because International Week is the perfect way to showcase their culture, and they should

take that opportunity to display their pride in that."

International Week is one of the biggest events of the school year. From the food stalls to the activities to the rally at the end of the week, an immense amount of time and effort goes into ensuring that everything runs smoothly, and everyone is able to thoroughly enjoy this rare chance to learn about and experience other cultures through cuisine, games, and dances. "For people experiencing International Week for the first time, it doesn't hurt to spend a few minutes to walk around the rotunda and see what clubs are offering," says Saguid. "You may find something you like."



# Speaking Out About the Unspoken: *Mental Health*

*Mental health issues have slowly increased amongst teenagers as stressful situations become more common*

**Khushi Kanchibotla**  
Staff Writer

Juniors, it's grind time. It has been around a month since the second semester has started, giving students only two to two and a half months of studying for the AP tests. Unfortunately, along with this intense studying comes its two-in-one package deal: stress. Stress is something each and every student goes through. Since it's something everyone goes through, many think that it isn't that big of a deal. However, that is not the case with many students, even a few here at American High.

Stress is not the only issue that plagues students' minds; depression and anxiety all fall under the same family group of mental health issues. An anonymous source says, "I was diagnosed with clinical depression around freshmen year, but it has been going on since eighth grade. Things, like doing my homework, doing chores, or even playing video games, are harder to do because I want to do these things, but I can't find the enjoyment to do them."

There are many causes from which mental health issues stem from. Mrs. Ronnie Ward, American High's school psychologist, lists out a few.

"Number one, I have to blame it on social media because information, say bullying, can spread with a click," Mrs. Ward says. As a psychologist for 25 years, Mrs. Ward has worked with multiple students and continues to say, "The expectation to get into college, the things you have to do to gradu-



*Mrs. Ronnie Ward has been a school psychologist for twenty-five years and has worked at twenty-seven different schools in the Fremont Unified School District. She worked at American in 1996 and then switched to different schools, and this is her first year back at American. "Students need to be honest with themselves when they feel like they're not okay. Don't say you are okay. Be upfront and seek out."*

ate, the need to be part of a club, [the participation in] a sport also play a major role in adding stress on students' shoulders."

As new causes for mental illnesses arise, mental health issues in students also spike. Many people have recently begun to analyze this pattern, and, according to Medical News Today, Sarah Oswalt from the University of Texas at San Antonio led a study that researched the recent increase in mental illnesses. The study found the greatest increases in diagnoses of anxiety, depression, and panic attacks, specifically, treatments and diagnoses for anxiety rose by 5.6 percent between 2009 and 2015, those for depression by 3.2 percent, and those for panic attacks by 2.8 percent. These serious

psychiatric conditions — such as major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse disorder — start as early as the age of fourteen.

Mrs. Ward, when asked for an opinion as to why this increase is happening, replied with, "It's my first year back, and it's just amazing to me the access kids have to drugs. Coming to high school, you don't know what you are vaping. I was at the hospital and I saw my friend, who was a psychiatrist, and when I asked what she was doing there, she told me there was a 5150. When I asked her what she thought the main cause was, she said, 'Marijuana. They don't know what is in it.' A 5150 is when a student is a danger to themselves. The police are involved and the student is put on a three-day hold."

With these growing causes, students often find themselves at a dead end. Students sometimes may not have people to talk to, be it friends or family. Mrs. Ward says, "There are a lot of families that are broken families, where sometimes both parents are working so there is less parental support in the home. It's just that they are not available, hence the lack of support." Students may have a different outlook on the situation though. Abigail Cromie (11) explains, "[My parents] know that I've had a hard time, but they don't know the extremities of it. [I haven't opened up to them because] I'm just not close enough with them. I don't feel like I'm comfortable with telling them issues." Therapy is also a way to talk to someone, but it

may not work for everyone. "I think it was there for me to talk instead of getting help," Cromie continues, "Sometimes it's good to talk to someone who knows what you're talking about, but you are also talking to a stranger so it's harder to open up to them and tell them about your problems."

Nevertheless, therapy can be helpful too. Students facing these issues are welcome to talk to our school psychologist, counselors, teachers and also may try opening up to their parents. Friends are also another outlet for students to talk to.

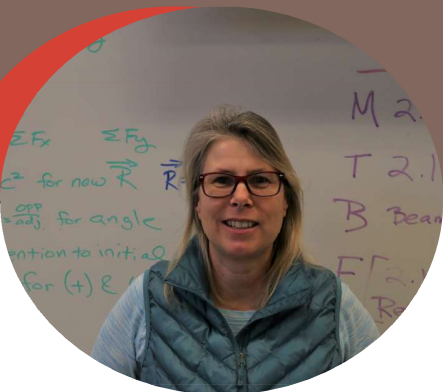
As Cromie says, "I feel like I definitely trust them a lot more and grew a lot closer to them. They have helped me a lot and comforted me. They are really empathetic."



# SHARING IS CARING

Teachers at American share their views on another part of the American experience: the relationships they've developed here

Emyr Ortiz  
Staff Writer



"We know everybody's kids, and we're watching everybody's kids grow up. And that's a big part of [school friendships] too...being able to see those changes. Ms. Baca's kids are ahead of mine, and then, Ms. Johnson's kids are behind mine, Mr. Benn's kids are about the same age as mine, [and] [Mr. Sharma's] daughter is just a little bit younger; just entered high school. So it's kind of cool, how we all share experiences." -Ms. Wheaton



"It's that ability to know that you can count on [Mr. Sharma] if there's something that you need—if there's an idea that you have you're not sure of, [or] something like that. If it's something where I can help him out—get a couple of copies, or something came up and he needs to go take a look at something, or an emergency happens, or he needs to use the restroom—I can just bounce over here [and help out], and same thing [with him]. I know he'll do what he can to help out. So, that's [what I appreciate the most]—the willingness to help and [the] desire to have that camaraderie." -Mr. Oviatt



"[At first, I took for granted] the relationships I made here in American. Now, I've come to realize that they're some of the best relationships I've had outside of the military. There are a lot of people that I respect here; there are a lot of people that I like and keep in contact with, [and] there are a lot of people I look forward to seeing every day. There's a lot of people that keep my mind mentally sharp. There are people here I respect very highly, and I am proud that they are not only my colleagues but also my friends. "Now I do understand why it's important to have these relationships here. Here's an example. Three years ago, my father passed away. People knew my father was sick; they knew I was having a tough time. When my father passed away, the support I received from the people here was indescribable. I had people who asked me if I was fine; I had people ask me if I needed anything, people who said 'I'll do this, I'll do that for you.' I felt taken care of. I felt very safe. And that [was] because of the relationships I have here at work. I don't think that by having them I've missed out on anything. In fact, by having these relationships I've become a better person." -Mr. Rojas



"I would say [my current relationship with Mr. Hashimoto] goes all the way back to the year before I was Activities director [which heads the Sports department]. There was a rally, and at that rally they had a space of time that needed to be filled. The students who were organizing asked Mr. Hashimoto to do a dance, and he went out to the middle of the gym, and he did a dance. I believe it was the Bernie. I thought that it was terrible, so I went out and I tried to help him out. And after that dance, he thought that I was trying to steal his spotlight, and I thought, 'How can I steal something that he never had?'" -Mr. Fulton



"It's good to have someone in your corner. It's good to have someone to talk to you about the struggles of...being far away from your family. Being a dad from thousands of miles away is really hard. And so, Mr. Hunt's made that easier by being a good friend, by being a good ear, by letting me talk to him about stuff. And also [by] being a distraction. He's a really happy person, and it's kind of cool. Sometimes, if I'm feeling down, he'll be happy and be able to be uplifting, which is good to have in your friends. If all your friends are sad and stuff, you're going to all be sad together, but if at least one or two of them are happy, it'll bring up the group. So sometimes we are able to do that for each other, kind of help each other, uplift each other and stuff. Being supportive." -Dr. Hernandez



"[I like how] no matter how cold it is, [Mr. Oviatt] always wears shirts [like it's] Key West. He's always got the Key West vibe here, [relaxed and comfortable], which is good because I've seen tense and really anxious teachers, and that makes the whole classroom anxious and the kids don't learn. It's just a cluster mess and stuff, but that's not the vibe that we have here. It's like, 'hey, let's relax, let's learn, have fun, [and] enjoy.'" -Mr. Sharma