



What the Cheer Team Wants American High School to Know

...what competition cheer does, why cheer should be considered a sport, and why the cheer team is no longer hosting Homecoming.

Jessica Le
Staff Writer

For many students at American High, their first introduction to the cheer team is through the annual World's Finest Chocolate fundraiser—stacks of chocolate bars sold for the economical price of \$1 each. After that, the cheer team performs a routine at Homecoming and multiple other games.

And that's it?

Not really. "There is no such thing as a cheer season," says Varsity Competition cheerleader Savvy Giang (12). Instead, cheer is year-long, tiring, and strenuous—not something many know. So, what is cheer really like at American High School?

"I think what cheer tries to do is good. As

far as sports cheer, their purpose is to try to get the crowd involved and they're supposed to be cheering for all the different games going on. And

they do a lot of cheers that are meant to pump up the crowd and things like that. I don't think—not that it's their fault—I don't think it's successful just because

people don't seem to pay attention to the cheerleaders," states Activities Director Tony Anderson.

"For instance, there's lots of games where they're

doing cheers where they want the crowd to shout back things and it's just silent. So, I know we have a good cheer team. I know that they're really good competitively and everything, but I don't know if their purpose on campus is as good as it should be. And it's not their fault. It's more of the fault of people just not paying attention to them."

With that, Mr. Anderson is striving to involve cheer into more activities with Leadership. "Not even just with the school, but just in general. For cheer, the purpose is supposed to be to represent the school and we should have them more involved in rallies. I always compare my experience growing up with

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Savvy Giang (middle top) next to Sarah Lewis (right top) with Pooja Mujumdar (bottom right on left, holding Lewis' ankle) at Competition Cheer Nationals.

PC: USA Nationals

A WIN IS A WIN

EXPLORING WHAT'S BEING DONE TO PROMOTE RACIAL AWARENESS AT AMERICAN AND THE OPINIONS THAT DRIVE IT

Ananya Balaji
Staff Writer

The brutal killing of George Floyd in 2020 and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement feel a part of a distant past. We all remember how BLM posts and stories inundated our feeds and conversations that summer. However, the impacts of the BLM movement on our curriculum are in their nascence.

A part of this impact begins in American High School's unglamorous

room 520. In contrast to the dull aura from the poor lighting and barren walls of the room, there is an exciting conversation going on about racism, featuring events you've probably never heard of: the racist origins of education in America itself, how our education in California has been overtly negligent of

the experiences of people of color, court cases that occurred right in the Bay Area regarding school seg-

regation, and much more. But there's a catch: only three American students chose to come and give it

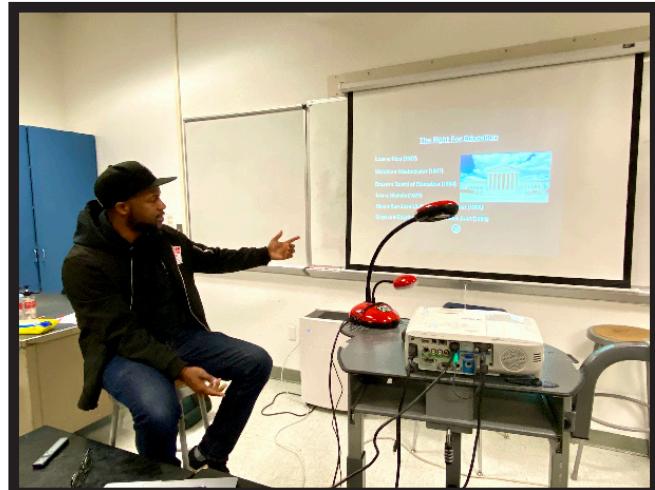
a listen, despite all the activism we saw online when BLM was at its peak.

On October 25th, the first of a series of workshops on "history, activism, and social justice" by Tyson Amir, "freedom fighter,

educator, author, activist, emcee, and poet" began at American. But getting these workshops here was a process that began much before October.

Mrs. Sharma, assistant principal, explains, "Last year, our AHS community was negatively impacted by various kinds of hate. And many of them were directed towards the African American population. So we as a school wanted to move forward in a positive way. We went looking

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PC: Ananya Balaji

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Letters from the Editors

Japneet Kaur
Design Editor

Hey Eagles!

I hope you all had a restful break and took some time off to relax and unwind. While it feels like it's been the longest year ever, I also can't believe we've already reached our first break. In a few weeks, it'll be winter, and the semester will already be over. I know I'm really trying to cherish all the little moments, because at this time next year, I'll be sitting in my dorm room at college (probably finishing up a paper at the last minute).

It's taken a lot of hard work and effort but we're back with our second issue of the *Eagle Era*! Our staff writers have worked extra hard this month to get all their interviews completed, articles written, and pictures taken before going off to their well-deserved Thanksgiving break. Despite the shorter time frame, however, they've really done

an amazing job adapting to the journalistic process and it has been really rewarding to watch them getting into the flow of things.

This month, alongside our monthly articles and reports, the staff writers have also branched out with new projects and ideas. We have infographics ranging from music to conspiracy theories and enlightening comics that really showcase the many talents of our wonderful staff writers. They've also been hard at work recording podcast segments (which you can check out on Spotify at *The Beak Speaks*) and getting their interviews done for our wonderful Instagram, @humansofamamerican.

We have a wide range of interesting topics filling up this month's issue, from AHS's new Tyson Amir curriculum to a feature of our school's wonderful cheer time. We also cover broader news like Elon Musk's Twitter takeover and Kanye West's decline over the years. Speaking of music, make sure to check out our centerspread, featuring the eras of the leg-

endary Taylor Swift and how our favorite platform, Tiktok, has affected today's music.

As the stress of school continues to build up with the rush of submitting college applications and finals just around the corner, I hope you all can find some time for yourselves and allow yourselves to relax for a little. Enjoy your favorite snacks, watch your favorite movies, read the newspaper, and spend some time with family and friends. Happy (late) Thanksgiving, Eagles!

Sorren Chaudhury
Broadcast Editor

Welcome back fellow Eagles,

I hope you've rested well over your Thanksgiving Break. I wished we at the *Eagle Era* could, but the end of the month always happens, so we keep working.

That being said, the staff has worked extra hard for this month's issue. We don't necessarily want to work over break so we have to do much more in less time, which has always proved to be quite

the challenge. As this is my third year with the *Eagle Era*, (yay!) I always get scared at this time of the year. Most of us don't realize how quick we need to work until we're in the middle of the rush, and it gets even more stressful with UC applications due at the end of the month. That being said, I am very proud of what our staff has accomplished so far.

Our staff has been amazing this year (sorry to brag). There have been so many great ideas and concepts floating around the Journalism room that I've been surprised by how invested we have been already. It's only our second month publishing this year and our staff has thought of so many things we could do as a team. For me, it's amazing to hear their perspectives and see where this paper is going already. To all my staffers and fellow editors reading this right now,

thanks for being so passionate, and I'm really grateful to be working with you all. Whether or not you're part of our wonderful *Eagle Era* staff, November is a weird and stressful time for everyone.

The year is starting to end, and with that the strange dread that comes with the change of seasons. College applications are due (sorry fellow seniors) and everything kind of becomes bleak. Everything starts to die off and with that, goes people's motivations.

That being said, I hope you can still find ways to bring yourself joy during the next couple months. I know California doesn't really get cold, but you can always pretend it does and make yourself a big bowl of soup to "warm up." It can be hard to avoid seasonal depression with the weather change and the stress of school, but make sure to take care of yourself however you can. Take a nap, do a face mask, make yourself good food, spend time with friends.

Have a great December and finals week Eagles, and please remember to sleep. At the end of it all, we get another break and proper rest.

"Stay hip and fresh!"

Opinion: If Shakespeare Was A Science Major

...he definitely wouldn't have had time to write all those plays. So if you want to be a science major, why should you be forced to read them?

Reva Gokhale
Staff Writer

English is the only subject that students are required to study all four years of high school. While it's important to have a firm grasp on America's most widely-spoken language, though, doesn't this seem a little excessive? Most students in this generation, especially at our school, are driven towards STEM fields where knowing what the green light represents to Gatsby is little more than a remnant of academic trauma. A chemist will never have to define assonance. And software engineers are seldom found in the classics section analyzing Oscar Wilde's rhetoric.

As a potential English major, I feel that I could ask the same question of mathematics: why must I study derivation when I will never find myself tak-

ing time out of my day to measure the rate at which some cylindrical container fills up with sand until reaching its maximum height of 54 feet? Where am I going to find 54-foot cylindrical containers? Why would I want to fill them with sand? But the last thing I want to do is pit

SOFTWARE ENGINEERS ARE SELDOM FOUND IN THE CLASSICS SECTION ANALYZING OSCAR WILDE'S RHETORIC.

two academic fields against each other; and I think the answers to my accusations will lead us to a better understanding of the incredible importance of a high school English class. You see, STEM's obvious defense is that math trains our minds to think smart-

er. We learn to trace our steps and analyze complex abstractions. For some reason, though, that same work occurs in an English class and the importance of the subject is still overlooked. When we write essays, we are taught how to credit others for their work and instructed to guide our audience through logical connections towards a bigger meaning. When we read books, we practice empathy by understanding the characters' experiences; we piece together the dictation in poetry to untangle the simple questions posed within. A sincere study of

FOR SOME REASON, THOUGH, THAT SAME WORK OCCURS IN AN ENGLISH CLASS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT IS STILL OVERLOOKED.

the English language and culture requires more intellect than people give it credit for. To understand the written word, to work within its grammar, necessitates a deep understanding of syntax and society. Tell me anyone can do that.

And I'll say it before someone else can claim otherwise: it is a regrettable product of multiple systems of oppression that the humanities are so derided. Masculinity prides itself on being unconcerned with depth of thought; masculinity reviles the feminine romanticism so evident in art and literature. And as a result, society upholds only the fields it has deemed objective and profitable enough to be taken seriously. Sorry, Shakespeare. No wonder people speculate that you weren't a real man.

English challenges students to care about history and human emotion, two things that can

seem laughably irrelevant in the fast-paced, technologized world of today. But what was that thing Professor Keating said from *Dead Poets Society*?

"And medicine, law, business, engineering—these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty,

SOCIETY UPHOLDS ONLY THE FIELDS IT HAS DEEMED OBJECTIVE AND PROFITABLE ENOUGH TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

romance, love—these are what we stay alive for."

Because if Shakespeare had been a science major, the world would have been deprived of the most timeless pieces of art ever made. So if you're going to be a science major, the least you can do is peruse them.

Opinion: why you should stop trying to BeReal

Our paradoxical approach to authenticity and how to actually be real.

Ananya Balaji
Staff Writer

lower case letters. Oh so *natural*. Look how much more authentic they look compared to those ghastly capital letters ruining the beginning of your texts! And yet, to get this “authentic” look, you had to go turn off auto-capitalization in Settings. Why does the default configuration of your phone look less natural than the (literally) calculated lower case setting? Why does what’s actually authentic seem less natural than the authenticity we construct?

The answer: we don’t really know what authenticity means. But this isn’t necessarily just our fault; there’s a defect with the way we’re designed.

According to an article put out by the *Scientific American*, “people report feeling most authentic when their behavior conforms to a specific pattern of qualities: namely, when they are extroverted, emotionally sta-

ble, conscientious, intellectual and agreeable.” And what’s worse is there are dangers to not following this “specific pattern”; research has proven that people are “viewed as less than fully human when they fail to conform to societal conventions.” Ironically, we seem less human when we exist as our raw human selves. Conformity very quickly becomes a seductive proposition, and this harms the way we conceive authenticity.

Moving to a more cultural perspective, there’s a unique definition to authenticity in America that appears to align with the psychological parameters of authentic living. But this, too, becomes a phony upon closer examination.

In their book, *Real Phonies: Cultures of Authenticity in Post World War II America*, Abigail Cheever refers to the attitudes endorsed by *Rebel Without A Cause* and explains, “That attitude, ‘a modest degree of contempt’ for the rewards of middle class life, is the crucial component of how mid-century American culture imagined individuals to retain a

sense of authenticity. The idea that one has disdain for aspects of one’s cultural milieu implies that one maintains a distance from that milieu even as he enjoys its benefits.”

The paragon of this sentiment is one you may be receiving a notification from right now: BeReal. This app perfectly exemplifies our subscription as a community to a false sense of authenticity. The phoniness lies not far below the deceptive appellation of BeReal; frequently, we hear of people staging their photos to look better, retaking it to make sure everyone’s eyes are open this time, snoozing their notification to take a photo until a more aesthetic opportunity presents itself. It’s almost as if we as humans have defeated the entire spirit of authentic living in an ironic effort to be authentic.

It is worth noting the vast benefits of authenticity, based on research. One study found that “people who scored higher on a measure of authentic living reported greater happiness, more positive emotions, and higher self-

esteem than people who reported being less authentic.”

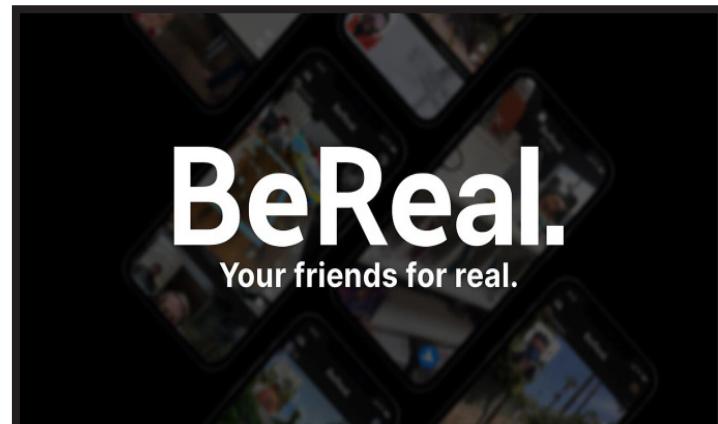
So for those of us who are more tempted by these benefits than that of conformity, there’s an obvious question: how do we *actually* be real?

It’s simple: stop trying to be. The only catch? What it looks like to not conform and truly be authentic is a much less shimmery picture than what we imagine. As the article puts it, “authentic people behave in line with their unique values and qualities even if those idiosyncrasies may conflict with social conventions or other external influences.” And given the omnipresent threat of failing to meet soci-

etal expectations, this can be a scary path to embark on.

We all have desires and aspirations, and doing things that can make people dislike or even hate and dehumanize us can appear both frightening and pointless.

Still, if we can all accept that, ideally, a world where everyone is themselves is a world that is more happy and thriving, maybe we all can take this brave step forward in our personal lives for the greater good of us all. Though cliched, it seems like it’s time for us as a world to ask ourselves and each other, “Why fit in when you were born to stand out?”



PC: BeReal

The Titan of Twitter

Looking into Elon Musk’s control over Twitter and the effects of his policies

Kelly Wang
Staff Writer

On the fateful day, October 27, entrepreneurship titan—Elon Musk—concluded his long ongoing deal to purchase Twitter for a whopping 44 million dollars. From this day onwards, conflicting views towards Musk’s control of Twitter began to arise, questioning if Elon Musk’s new controversial policies will affect this platform in a positive or negative way.

“Making [Twitter] private, especially in the hands of someone like Musk, reduces the accountability behind the actions of the company,” worries Pranav Sreejayan, a senior at American High and an active Twitter user, “which is especially bad due to the power it holds in the modern day.”

Still, Musk enters the scene confidently with a platform-changing plan. Twitter Blue. As with many other media platforms, this service is considered an “upgrade” in Twitter users’ experience. The well-known blue checkmark, an implication of one’s verification, is now an authentic-

ity that a user could buy. For a fee of \$7.99 per month, a Twitter user does not necessarily need to be notably of public interest to obtain a blue checkmark. This change garnered much outrage, many people questioning the possibility of its success.

Navya Seth, a senior at American High, shares, “I think that putting something that was initially free behind a paywall is a terrible idea, business or otherwise.”

Strongly arguing for this perspective, Tanvee Priyadarshan, a senior at American High, states, “paying 8 bucks for a little checkmark next to your name when it used to be free is so stupid, no one is going to be on board with putting a price against something that used to be gifted.” This checkmark plan, she believes, is a main factor behind the hundreds of layoffs in Twitter’s company. “I think,” she writes in an Instagram message, “he wanted to make some changes (the whole 8 dollar subscription mainly) and in trying to make it work, he got a little carried away. That’s probably the one thing in this entire

scenario that isn’t laughable.”

The deal initially started on April 14 this year. After a trial over Musk’s refusal to follow through with this deal, Musk finally closed his purchase in October. He proudly declared his motives behind this purchase, claiming to “try to help humanity, whom I love.”

“I THINK THAT PUTTING SOMETHING THAT WAS INITIALLY FREE BEHIND A PAY-WALL IS A TERRIBLE IDEA, BUSINESS OR OTHERWISE.”

Free speech was a main desire Musk hoped to advance through his securing of Twitter, deeming himself as a “free speech absolutist” wanting a platform to support it. But doubts emerged towards whether he will be able to ensure this objective.

Musk “kept suspending people for even making minor jokes about him, and the whole ‘free speech’ people

were waiting for was...being able to spam slurs?” Priyadarshan wonders. “He silenced parody (free speech), but allowed bigotry instead.”

Just like Priyadarshan states, promptly following Musk’s takeover of Twitter, surges of hateful speech, starting from curse words to disrespectful messages, began appearing; more than 1,000 accounts were removed for improper conduct. 50,000 tweets were flagged for the use of the “n-word” slur—many coming from “inauthentic” accounts.

When asked about her view on these actions, Seth answers, “I don’t see a clear plan for moderating Twitter or fixing the problems that led to its criticism.” She adds, “I also disagree with the ideas about free speech absolutism because that just never works in practice and in a business.”

As social media becomes a larger part of our life, users of famous network platforms are gradually becoming a majority of young adults, adolescents. Many students utilize these social platforms for entertainment purposes or even to spread small businesses and ideas they may have. With

all these changes occurring, vast amounts of users may see their online environment change—students especially, “because Twitter is a [main] part of our information diets,” Seth notes.

“Seeing that [Musk’s] new policy on verified accounts is that they will be given preference over non Twitter Blue users, I think that many student voices will be silenced, or less heard,” Sreejayan comments. “Most students do not have the resources or investment in Twitter to pay for it, meaning that they probably won’t have it anyways.”

Although some voices may be suppressed, more and more wrongful ones arise to the top under Musk’s ideals of free speech, before properly dealt with. Offensive language, false news, and many misleading ideas are spread around, floating among accounts and messages. These words and ideas are not just lost. They are taken and read by thousands.

In Twitter’s current state, students “will probably not have a great time,” Sreejayan concludes.

Student Lunch

Investigating the Closed Campus Lunch Conundrum

Why we don't have an open campus lunch at American and why we should have it

Ella Yam, Shaylan Gangoo
Staff Writer, Guest Writer

School lunch is more than a break for students. It is the period students are able to get nutritional value, socialize with friends without risking a reprimand, and take a break from the rigorous demands and workload of school. It is even a time in some schools to physically get off campus, allowing students to get a change of scenery, buy the food they like, and recoup for the rest of the school day. But our school does not allow open campus lunch.

The closed campus lunch policy was first implemented in our school for a legitimate reason. Mr. Anderson, a math teacher at American, explains "In the 80s and 90s, [the policy] had to do with somebody getting stabbed across the street and gang activity that used to happen around

here. The school used to be a lot rougher than it is now. My understanding is they just never changed it back."

Now, gang activity is not a prominent problem at AHS anymore. In an Eagle Era article, The History of Violence at AHS, Mr. Musto stated that "We don't see students showing up in colors and getting into disputes with other gang members based on gang allegiances" like it was in Fremont ten years ago.

Every other school in FUSD has open campus lunch, like Mission San Jose and Washington High School. Tiana Lever, a junior, states "I don't understand why we're the only school in the district that doesn't have open campus lunch. All the schools in the district have it so it would be fair that we do as well."

Campus supervisors Ms. Belinda and Ms. Angie, the people who monitor students during lunch, both support the idea of open campus lunch, with restrictions.

Ms. Angie explains AHS

is "a lot different now and it's not as severe compared to the 90s with gangs." When asked if she believes all schools in our district should be uniform in our lunch policy, she said "Yes, every school has fights, if they have fights and they're still open campus, I think we should be open campus." Ms. Belinda states. "Maybe one day of the week should be sufficient just to give kids a break to eat something different outside of

home, lunch, or school lunch."

To many students, open lunch is necessary. Mya Anderson, a sophomore, argues that having open lunch will give students with dietary restrictions and students who don't eat during lunch a variety of options.

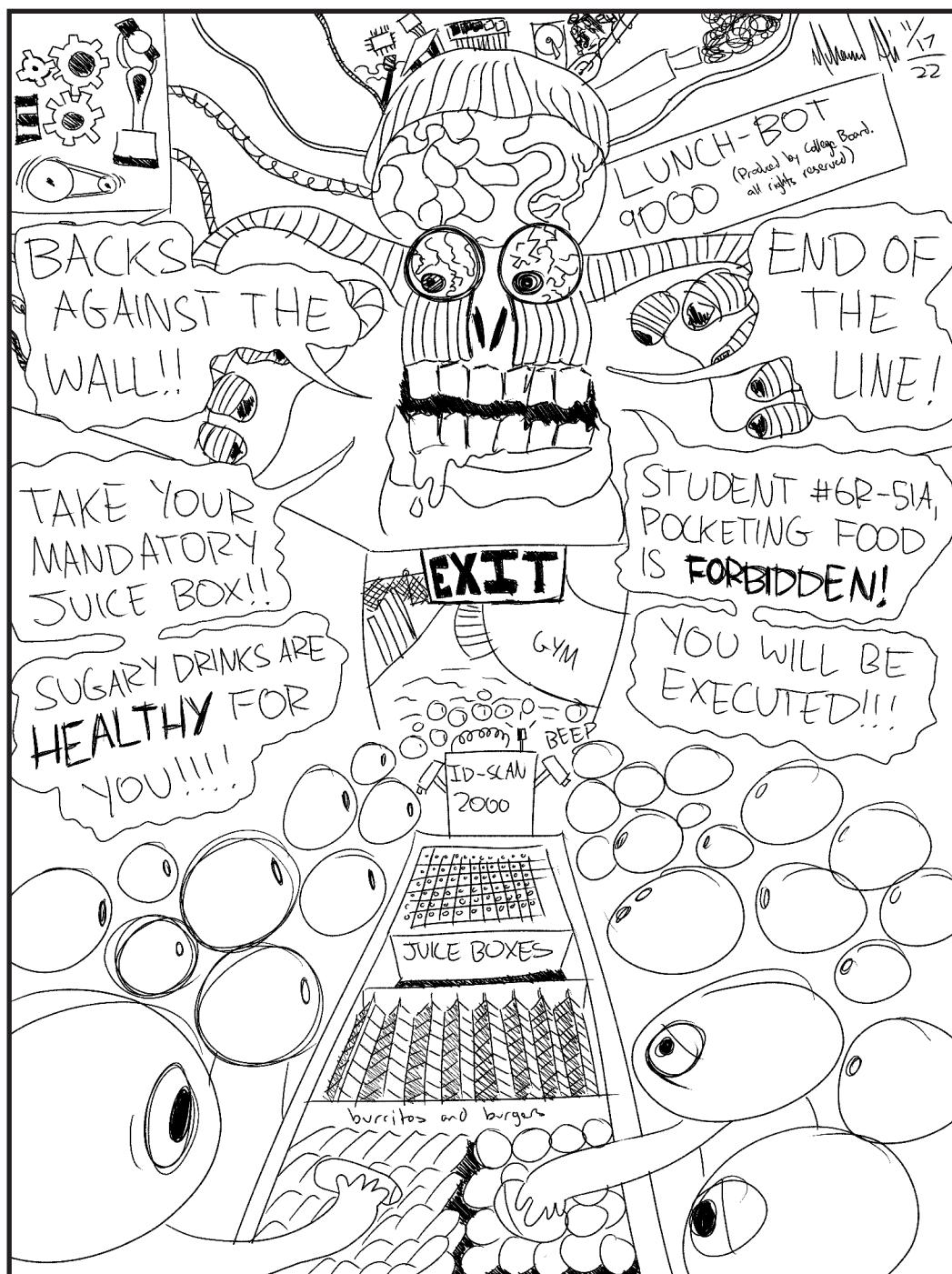
She explains, "A lot of people are just not eating because they don't bring food with them or they don't like school food. Students will more likely get the nutrition

Some argue this closed lunch policy is best for our school because it keeps students safe and avoids possible problems an open lunch policy can cause. Mrs. Thorsen, an AHS English teacher, shares her disapproval of open campus lunch. "It's not exactly gang violence that's the problem. My personal feelings towards it are I think it increases massive amounts of attendance issues because students come



Inside the AHS campus, the lunch lines are far too long and the struggle of overpopulation leads students crammed into one campus without being able to leave.

PC: Ella Yam



Muhammad Ali, Staff Writer

that they need if lunch was open since they'll be more likely to get food that they actually enjoy eating, especially the students with restrictions on their diet."

Zubair Sharifi, a senior, states his disapproval for having closed campus lunch. "I don't like it. All the schools are open and our school is meant to be open. We're next to T4 or next to the liquor store. I'd only say seniors and maybe juniors

"IT WOULD BE GREAT FOR US STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO TAKE A BREATHER AND GO OFF CAMPUS FOR LUNCH."

because seniors have cars and have the privilege to drive." Robby Yue, a junior, shares their opinion by explaining "There are some food establishments nearby" and that if lunch was open, students "won't have to be stuck bringing lunch all the time or getting school lunch. It would be great for us students to be able to take a breather and go off campus for lunch."

late to come back from lunch or don't come back from lunch at all. And there are also safety concerns. The school is technically responsible for students from the moment they leave their house in the morning until they get home in the afternoon. There's a liability that it's a little nerve wrecking."

Mr. Ku, a math teacher at AHS, also shares the same concern with safety and attendance issues. "We have campus security. We have teachers. But [outside] there's no one. Which would be okay on their own time, but during school hours, they should be somewhere at school. A 30-minute lunch is not enough time."

The major question is if students are responsible enough to be back on time and if the area around school is safe enough. Ms. Angie believes "the upperclassmen might be the ones responsible enough. If you guys just go down the street over here, go to Jack in the Box or KFC, I think you guys are safe. If anything, there should be a contract that students can sign at the beginning of the year for open lunch and if they get in trouble then they can't leave or some type of referral as a consequence for students who come back late."

Student Life

Scared into silence or willingly quiet?

A look at whether TAs have the freedom to speak up about what they witness

Jasleen Sandhu
Staff Writer

Office TAs have been a convenient way for the front office to distribute missed FLEX slips, notices for students, detentions, and more. However, what these students do when they are not “on duty” is unknown; as are the parameters of what they can and cannot disclose to the general student population.

Zubair Sharifi (12) has been an office TA at American for the past few months. “I didn’t know I would be given a contract to sign once I became an office TA, but I totally understand why they would make us do that. For the safety of other students and confidentiality, I had no problem signing it. I was just surprised that no one told me I would get something to sign,”

Sharifi shared, recalling the beginning of the job.

Though TAs have to sign a contract guaranteeing their silence regarding students and their affairs, to many students, it is unclear whether TAs can or can not disclose what they may have heard faculty say or seen them do.

Ms. Chase, one of the attendance clerks, stated, “Students should not ever repeat what they overhear or see. We all have that [rule], and most schools are like that, but the district office is especially [strict about it]; there’s confidentiality everywhere. And with just about any company you work at, you really don’t want to repeat things you hear or see to anyone else because that’s just kind of like gossip...So basically, you want to keep quiet, especially students, because they can hear about somebody

they know, but we hope they keep it to themselves.”

While both office TAs and teacher TAs have to sign contracts to keep student confidentiality, there are different forms that

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each party has to sign.

“I know there’s an office TA contract, and then just a regular TA contract, but I think the office TA contract has stuff about not disclosing personal information about the principal or students’ information. Office TAs know a lot of

things about people at the school, while as a TA in a classroom, I just know stuff about 30 kids in my class,” voices Sofia Martinez (12), who is currently a TA for US history teacher Ms. Nauß.

There are instances on campus where a student does something wrong, and people feel that their punishment was unfair or that their penalty didn’t balance with whatever they had done. In situations like that, office TAs know more than any other student, so divulging what they have seen or heard can be tricky.

It is difficult to determine whether the TAs should be in trouble for disclosing information, especially when they are just trying to make their peers aware of potential injustice. When things like that happen, Ms. Chase says, “There’s just not enough details, or there are a lot of details that aren’t published

anywhere.” So if people feel that someone did not get what they deserved, that might not exactly be true.

“And again, it’s up to that TA. Whether or not they have said anything, I think the consequences depend

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on the situation...There aren’t a lot of times where TAs don’t say anything because they know they’ll lose their job as a TA if they go against their contract.”

Sharifi included: “Being an office TA is very nice, and I highly recommend it. I haven’t dealt with anything I didn’t like, and the office people are very friendly and kind.”

The Voluntariness of Volunteering

Do the students and staff at American High feel that mandatory service hours are still needed?

Patrick Tan
Staff Writer

From serving the needy at soup kitchens to cleaning public locations, opportunities to volunteer can be found in a variety of shapes and forms. At many high schools, including American High, service hours are even a requirement to graduate. Mandated volunteering has been shown to increase student involvement within their community as well as teach students life skills that aren’t always learned in educational settings. However, some argue otherwise, stating that volunteer hours take away from their time to do other work and prefer that they stay as the name implies, voluntary. Is there value in the 20-40 hours, or is its only purpose to serve as a graduation requirement?

Ms. Luong, an English teacher at American High says, “I had to do community service for middle school and high school. It forced me to outreach and see what communities or organizations needed help.

I did something different every year that [hours were] required. So it was good exposure to farms around the area and [different] student-level organizations.”

She also notes her experience as the advisor of AHS Interact Club, an international organization that focuses on leadership development as well as involvement in the community through volunteering opportunities.

“I don’t think it’s a negative thing that [volunteer hours] are mandatory. [It’s] one of the best ways to motivate students to do it. What Interact does is give incentives, [for example] if

you go to this event, there’s a chance you can win this prize. [Even] just exposing people to what the mission is or what they’re fundraising for helps students get a sense of why they’re doing this.”

However, she thinks that, “students are pretty busy with extracurriculars. But the 20 hours is just enough for students to have to engage with something and maybe surprise themselves with their involvement and enjoyment. [Overall], removing it would be detrimental. If they removed the requirement, students would then just halt altogether and so much of our community service, especial-

ly as I’ve seen through Interact, is done through students.”

Are the benefits of mandatory service hours seen on our campus though? Edward Liu (12) volunteered at a local elementary school to teach math to fourth through sixth-grade students.

He says, “Since I was always in front of the class and talking, I was able to become more confident when doing things in front of a lot of people. At the beginning of the year, I was nervous. But I started to give more and more presentations, [and then] the nervousness started turning into excitement [and I] became excited to teach.”

Although Edward finds service hours to be rewarding, he believes that the requirement debate should be approached more holistically. “Some people have lots of afterschool activities and are busy. Others have work, and motivation levels of students [should be considered].” But with schedules in mind, while, “considering it wouldn’t hurt, [deciding] off of it would be too tedious.”

The advantages of doing required service hours are further agreed upon by

Aryel Zhang (12). “Service hours are understandable because it helps organizations and you can get people to know about their passions,” explains Aryel.

Ranjith Saravanan (11) and Lesley Usher (12), on the other hand, disagree. “Service hours are pretty good; [they] engage [people] in extracurricular activities but they should be optional.” Ranjith reasons.

Lesley adds on, mentioning the experience of some seniors who were not able to complete the requirements until recently due to the pandemic. “I get the point of them, but they should be optional because when people wait until their senior year, then they’re so forced and pressured to do it they can’t focus on anything else.” That being said, the three all agreed that they would continue to volunteer even if there was no requirement, just not as much.

Regardless of whether they should be a graduation requirement or not, it is agreed upon that community service is a great way to give back while also encouraging self-improvement.



Teen volunteers restore and preserve the natural beauty of Fremont by removing weeds and keeping necessary plants healthy.
PC: Patch.com

Mi



Taylor Swift

BRAHMANI VELAGAPUDI STAFF WRITER

ERAS

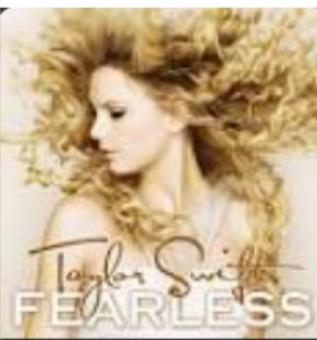


Debut (2006)

Titled after her own name, Debut was Taylor's very first album. It's an album known for its country sound and teenage angst.

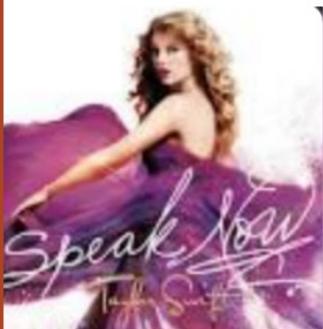
Fearless (2008)

Fearless is an album about a teenager who struggles with strong feelings.



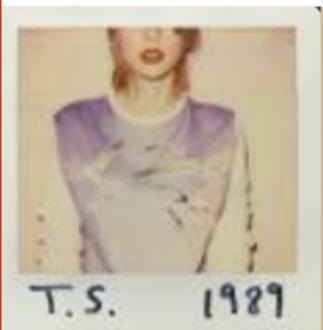
Speak Now (2010)

Speak Now is a 'growing' album. After rumors about her never writing any of her own songs in this album Swift refused to work with anyone else and wrote every song on the album herself. It's the stem of her storytelling songs.



Red (2012)

Red is an album portraying a plethora of heartbroken emotions. "Happy, free, confused and lonely at the same time" - 22. Swift mentioned it was the only album she'd dedicated to one specific heartbreak.



1989 (2014)

1989 was her official step-down from country roots into a more synth pop era. It's an album that represents maturing in an industry where everyone is trying to shoot you down.

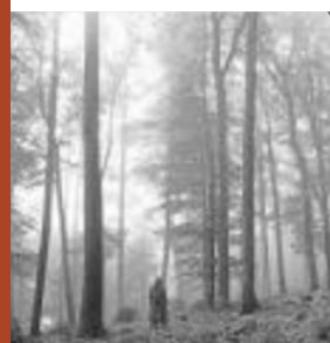


Reputation (2017)

People consider her 'rep era' her badass era where she drops her naivete, but at its core it's actually an album about learning to be satisfied with the person you are instead of trying to fit into the shallow, carefully crafted boxes people have drawn for you

Lover (2019)

Lover is very much an album celebrating love and the better parts of it. While some of Swift's songs focus heavily on the darker parts of falling in love and the act of being in love, Lover talks about the comfort that comes with it.

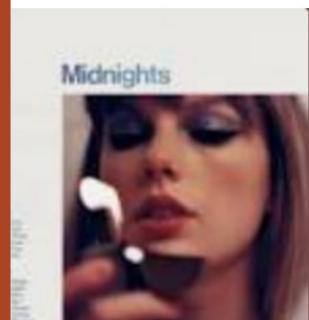


Folklore (2020)

The songs in Folklore are a mixture of folk-pop that is telling a story about the people in her life or stories she's made up in her head. It's one of the more lyrical albums with less instrumental prowess and more lyrical masterpieces.

Evermore (2020)

Evermore, often considered the sister album to Folklore, has many of the same themes as Folklore with the same haunting quality to the verses. It delves into the concept of 'could have been'.



Midnights (2022)

Midnights, her newest synth pop album, has broken records on Spotify for the most streams in a day. The album is about what keeps you up at night, the insecurities that plague you and looking back on the past and feeling proud of yourself for being where you are. It's a celebration album and unlike the albums of the past which were written for her fans this album is written for herself. The album has a nostalgic taste to it as it uses tracks and samples from her past songs to give a 'look where I was and look where I am now' feel.



Opinion: Tiktokification: It's a Bad Habit

In the wake of Steve Lacy's struggle with his fanbase, TikTok's relationship with modern music is called into question

Vincent Nghiem
Staff Writer

Steve Lacy is pretty mad. He's seeing red. Dark Red, even.

His autumn tour for his 2022 album *Gemini Rights* has been fraught with, shall we say, incidents. From a notorious camera-flinging fiasco to a more viral moment during which, in response to a fan yelling at him to "say hi to my mom," he bluntly responded, "Can you be quiet?", the lovely Lacy hasn't exactly been living the luxurious life on tour.

But considering that Steve Lacy's audiences have consistently disappointed him by only singing along to the viral snippets of his songs and not bothering to explore the rest of his discography, who can blame him?

Steve Lacy is the most prominent artist to have channeled his frustrations at being stuck "N-Side" this conundrum of perform-

ing for a "TikTok crowd."

We wish we knew the solution to this. But the issue of the TikTokification of modern music requires a little more digging.

While TikTok can help significantly increase an artist's fanbase, having a song go viral on TikTok not only poisons the artist's relationships between their work and between their fanbase but also endangers the music industry as a whole, normalizing the popularity of viral, catchy, trend-riding sounds rather than music of true artistic talent and integrity.

Nowadays, it's normal to witness TikTok songs scaling the charts, even expected. But it wasn't always like this. The age of TikTok virality arguably began with Doja Cat's hot-pink 2019 hit, "Say So," but this song was by no means as intentionally geared towards achieving virality as most TikTok songs are today. In fact, virality only helped to propel Doja Cat's already promising career further, with her success only continuing to skyrocket from that point.

And so, when a select handful of Steve Lacy's songs began



Steve Lacy croons to his audience as he strums songs as part of his tour for his recently released album, *Gemini Rights*.

PC: The Washington Post

circulating on TikTok (despite being an already well-established artist and talent with a devoted fanbase), his self-proclaimed fanbase increased dramatically as well. However, this fanbase came to know songs like "Bad Habit" as "TikTok songs" before "Steve Lacy songs."

This became clear during Lacy's autumn tour, which saw these new fans coming to concerts and only singing along to the viral snippets of his songs. Steve's resentful reaction to this unfortunate turnout has made it evident that TikTokification can often embitter an artist against their fanbase. And if Steve Lacy, among other artists, is letting the ignorance of his newly expanded fanbase sour the atmosphere of his concerts hinder his own creative expression, we should reconsider just how impactful the role of social media is in today's music industry. In other words, pure art is made solely for the purpose of self-expression; but is there any purpose in creating it when your audience isn't receptive to it?

Because we are the new generation that ultimately consumes this popular music, we have a choice in refusing to tolerate the proliferation of passable music in the industry and instead embracing music that isn't simply trying to go viral. This benefits artists just as much, if not more; we can make a choice to ensure that artists who put genuine effort and passion into their work gain the recognition they deserve.

Music is getting famous for the wrong reasons. And if we want our generation's culture to be remembered, we must prove that art that does rightfully deserve popularity and the Internet's constant, overwhelming demand for it can indeed coexist.

Kanye West's Career Going South

Delving into student opinions on the well-known artist Kanye West

Tejal Prabhu
Staff Writer

Graduation. Donda. Yezus. Kanye West has been a popular American rapper since the early 2000s, rising to fame through hit albums that are still played regularly today. Yet, the rapper's decline began in early 2021, when his marriage of six years came to an abrupt and very public end. Since then Ye has involved himself in multiple controversies, changing many people's perception of him for the worse. While some have begun to boycott his music, no longer fans, others continue to listen with the mindset that an artist's work should be separated from the artist themselves.

Rohit Isukapalli (12) expresses his viewpoint on the situation, choosing to follow the latter option of disregarding Kanye's controversies when it is in rela-

tion to his music. He claims, "Even though I don't support Kanye's tweets, I still listen to his music pretty often. I just stopped paying attention to his controversies and only focused on his songs. Like, even though what he's said online has been harmful, he's done a lot of great things for the music industry. He seems like a smart businessman."

He also discusses his personal connection to the artist's music, one of his motivations for continuing to listen to it. "His music is meaningful to me because I've been listening to him since I was pretty young. I've grown up with songs like 'Gold Digger' and 'Runaway.' Plus, my family usually plays his music during gatherings or parties. So, even though it's sad to see one of my childhood idols go down this path, I'm still going to play his music because of what it represents to me in my life."

On the contrary, some students believe that the two aspects of Ye's career, controversies and music, are not mutually exclusive—you can't support one without indirectly supporting the other.

Aditya Kataria (12) delves more into this idea, stating that "Kanye's music shouldn't be separated from his controversies because of how harmful the things he has said are. He's indirectly spreading the message that: because a famous person is doing something, you can do it too. This contributes to anti-Semitism because that's the nature of what Kanye has been tweeting about on platforms where he has a lot of influence. He's rich and famous, so it appears he thinks there aren't consequences to what he does. Personally, I think he deserves to lose his platform entirely because he's using it for the incorrect purposes. If people keep listening to his

music, it will be impossible for him to realize the seriousness of what he's done."

Mehek Bhatnager (12) expresses a similar perspective, but also discusses the effects of another group Kanye has indirectly targeted—women. She states "Kanye gained a lot of attention through his Instagram posts attacking his ex-wife [Kim Kardashian], and I feel like these posts are reason enough to stop listening to his music. It just shows how, even though Kim is so rich and famous, because she's a woman, some people didn't take her side when Kanye harassed her over the internet. Her personal texts were shared and she was publicly humiliated, yet a lot of people are blaming Kim Kardashian and saying that she betrayed Kanye in some way. And he keeps perpetuating this false narrative and not really taking responsibility for his own actions. Because of that reason, I feel like

not listening to his music would be a smarter choice because then his influence will decrease and he won't be able to attack any other groups like this."

As for the students who will continue to listen to Kanye, Aditya Kataria hopes that they will practice introspection and recognize the consequences of their choice. He advises other students to "Look past his music and instead look at his own actions. If you still continue to support his actions, maybe look at yourself. Look at why you believe that his actions are correct and take some time to reflect and talk with other people who have different viewpoints. But before that, don't say things like 'he made Graduation, he's so great.' Recognize his flaws and do what feels right after that."

A Win is a Win cont.

for an organization that would have the expertise that would help empower our students. So the district has an African American Parent Council, and they recommended FSMEI (Freedom Soul Media Educational Initiatives). And it was determined that this curriculum fit the needs of our student population."

Understanding the goal of this program suggests that the lack of attendance at these workshops may not be such a concern. Mrs. Sharma, assistant principal, explains that "We want students to have access during the day to attend the facilitated forums and share circumstances they have experienced." She goes on to say, "The alignment we want is to allow for more critically important conversations to be held with students. It is strictly voluntary. We will never tell students that they have to attend the sessions." It can be interpreted that American is aiming to achieve accessibility rather than prolif-

eration of this curriculum.

But there's a bigger story to be told on how our education is changing more broadly to be anti-racist.

In summer of 2020, the FUSD Board of Education revised its Philosophy on Equity to include more overt and direct attention given to the commitment of our district to "eradicate institutional racism of any kind." Many more changes followed with similar changes to verbiage and content to reflect a new focus on racism. This policy was later supported in a statement by the Fremont Unified District Teachers Association.

Beyond what administration is doing, there is a desire expressed by students to further these reforms to our curriculum.

Shreya Duvvuri (11) notes the importance of this sort of curriculum, specifically in American. "Even within our own communities of color, like the Indian community for example, I hear a lot of Indian boys being racially insensitive. I hear the n-word being passed around in the

rotunda like it's nothing. And I think this education is really important because people know they're not supposed to be doing these things, but it doesn't really hit them. You learn about the history of racism or the history of Native Americans when the colonizers came, and suddenly, it has a much bigger impact, it has a lot of weight to it."

But when it comes to

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OF ANY KIND."**

what's not voluntary, that is, our mandated school curriculum, the goals seem to be a bit more broad. For nearly two years, students, teachers, and administrators have worked to diversify our core novels to be more racially diverse.

Ms. Wilkinson, who

teaches English 10 Honors and AP Language and Composition, explains how, "At the high school level specifically, we had one author that was not white, and through the course of the work that we did, we looked at the existing protocols, and it's not where we want it to be. But it's certainly an improvement in terms of providing novels that are not as centric on one experience."

Ms. Wilkinson adds that the goal of this diversification is instilling the understanding "that my experience may not be the same as somebody else's, but there is commonality. That commonality and understanding—I think that's part of what can help dismantle racism, or any of the -isms."

However, there are some concerns on the narrative of POC being oppressed, whether on social media or in history education, leading to certain attitudes in the present. An anonymous junior argues, "You're not a victim of what your ancestors faced hundreds of years ago. I'm not saying

you don't have problems or anything, but I'm kind of sick of the victim culture. Like, can you stop like using stuff that happened 100 or 200 years ago, and relaying it back to you? It just doesn't make any sense."

She adds, "I think it just leads to a sad life, to be frank. And I don't think that type of a mindset is necessary at a school like American, which is so diverse." She elaborates on her concerns of reverse racism being instilled through this curriculum. "I just don't like it when people are like "white people should be dead" or things like that. Is it even justified for us, because we haven't faced any of [the racism]? It kind of makes it as if you're doing what they did to people of color in the past."

Despite the myriad of approaches and opinions in the discourse on race at American, there is one consensus: progress is being made, and everyone agrees that it should continue to be made. And while we should avoid complacency, maybe that consensus itself is a win worth celebrating.



What the Cheer Team Wants American High School to Know cont.

the things I see on TV and I always saw how cheer is more involved in rallies and things like that. We do not really do that here because our rallies are not really focused on sports either. I'm trying to work on that."

As the school's Activities Director, Mr. Anderson is not the main lead in charge of overseeing athletics, but he does play a role in the intersection between sports and activities, such as with the events planned by the Leadership athletics committee. So, does Mr. Anderson consider cheer to be a sport? Kind of.

"Whenever I talk to cheerleaders about it, they say that they don't consider game cheer a sport. They've considered their competition team more sports-like... And so I mean, they're competing. So I guess it is a sport? I don't know."

Varsity Competition cheerleader Sarah Lewis (12) believes differently.

"Some people don't [think cheer is a sport], but I feel like they just don't understand what we do because they only see the sideline cheer. They never see our competition team," she says.

Next to Lewis on the bench is Pooja Mujumdar (12), another Varsity Competition cheerleader who adds in her opinion. "Competition is a whole other level. If you think of cheerleaders, you just think, 'Go eagles!' and pom poms. I wouldn't think that's a sport either. But if you actually go to the competitions, and you see everybody doing [the routines], it's definitely gotta be a sport. It's draining."

Coach Matison Hall, one of the leads for the Varsity Cheer Team, explains why cheer is considered a sport. "Actually, cheer has been a sanctioned sport in California since 2015! The physical and mental strength it takes to perfect a routine and perform it takes time and effort, and our team stays focused and works hard.

Last year, our competition team had an undefeated season and took home the gold at USA Nationals."

"Students don't know the amount of time we spend practicing," Mujumdar adds. "You wouldn't think cheer takes nine-hour practices."

Coach Hall can contribute to this. "Our comp team practices three days a week in the fall, and two days a week after the winter holiday. In September, most of our comp team days are for choreographing their competitive routine."

For Lewis, the hardest part of cheer is not physical-related. "It's running through routines, how it's really mental. Because you have to be confident if something messes up. You have to ignore that and keep on going."

Anvita Halur (12), another cheerleader on the Varsity Competition cheer, states something similar. "It's difficult when the team is having an off day because it's not really a great environment. If someone's not feeling well mentally or physically, it affects the whole team and it just creates an off mood. It's not like the vibe you want to create at cheer."

But there's also the

demand for cheer that gets to Mujumdar. "Definitely doing the routines on repeat [is hard]. The routines are two minutes and thirty seconds. It's not that much time, but doing so much in that little time [gets to you]. It's insane—lifting people into the air [and maintaining that] gets really difficult."

Coach Matison Hall does have advice, though. "I think for me personally, I often find myself telling the team to be kind and stay in the moment. It sounds like very general advice, but through all of the hours they spend together, kindness and mindfulness bring a lot more fun and make the long season fly by."

The best part of cheer?

"Stunt team—just pushing each other with hard stunts. And bonding, of course," Lewis laughs.

But also, to be proud of yourself. "The adrenaline of being able to go up on the mat and perform with your teammates and just being able to show off what you've worked so hard for," Giang smiles. "It's worth it."

Cheer is expensive—crazy expensive, which is why cheer must fundraise to pay for the expenses.

"We just sell a whole bunch of chocolate be-

cause we have to fundraise to get to Nationals with the flights and the hotels and everything. Even registration fees for the competition. It's about \$12,000 for the first Nationals and then \$11,000 for the other Nationals. So it's a lot to fundraise," Mujumdar states.

The cheer team's biggest fundraiser each year is the annual school Homecoming. This year, however, the cheer team was not the host for Homecoming. It was ASB Leadership.

"In the past, before I took over as Activities Director, and I don't know how long back before then, [cheer] used to plan the Homecoming Dance. And so, they would get the profits and everything from it. When I took over, I talked to Ms. Barrington and she brought it to my attention that they've been wanting to remove [Homecoming]

from the cheer team for a while because it wasn't really fair to others since cheer counts as a sports team for a club. And it's not really fair because this is a school event where no other sports team or club gets to host something that's an actual school event. It's not just their event. And so, the idea was that it should come back to being an ASB

event, not just one club event that [cheer] will get the proceeds from," says Mr. Anderson.

Cheer is an integral part of American High School—with out it, the school's spirit would not be the same.

"Cheer at AHS is bringing a positive spirit to the sidelines and the school. Our program focuses a lot on good sportsmanship, positive energy, and being supportive. We come to all local football games, some senior nights when invited, and all home basketball games (both Girl's and Boy's basketball). Our team promotes good sportsmanship on the sidelines with spirited chants and respect for all players. We love getting to support everyone at AHS," states Coach Hall.

"We represent our school proudly and are excited to be a part of such a great environment."

Halur looks off to the side in concentration. "I didn't really know that I wanted to do cheer. It's kind of just something I tried out for." Then, she smiles. "And I was surprised that I made it and it kind of just became a part of my life after that."



Anvita Halur strikes a pose for the final Competition sequence.

PC: USA Nationals

The Gaming Addiction

A deeper insight considering if the negative views towards gaming hold a credible basis and what gaming addiction truly is.

Kelly Wang
Staff Writer

For generations, gaming has been a staple of entertainment, dating back to the oldest versions of Mario to the modern day hit, League of Legends. Teens, largely high school students, are specific targets for these gaming companies. As an increasing trend in teen gaming began to emerge, this form of entertain-

TEENS, LARGELY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, ARE SPECIFIC TARGETS FOR THESE GAMING COMPANIES.

ment also gradually grew to be seen in a negative light; adults—parents, teachers, relatives—view this trend as addiction, many even denouncing the idea of games.

But some, from their own experiences, hold a different perspective on the negativity towards gaming.

Mr. Elam, a history teacher, has been “fighting the fight for 10 years about the values of gaming.”

“I have been having that conversation with parents since I was a junior in high school that ‘it’s okay for people to have hobbies; not every hobby is becoming a doctor and that’s okay.’ I have spent hundreds of hours of my life doing pitches and explaining ‘Hey, your child is incredibly gifted at this particular game and has the potential to make hundreds of hundreds of thousands of dollars doing it or at the very least getting a scholarship for college doing it.’”

He continues, noting, “There is a stigma in this particular community

that if the thing that you spend all of your time doing isn’t going to get you into UC Berkeley, then it’s a bad thing and it’s pathetic and disgusting and childish. People have that mentality.”

But, there are some guardians that are supportive of their children’s positive viewpoint on gaming—either being part of the gaming community itself or acknowledging the legitimacy of it. When asked about his parents’ reaction towards his choice of professional gaming, Roman X. Fanto (12), captain of the Esports club provides a confident reply.

“They don’t have a lot of problems with [gaming],” he says. “They’ve put some restrictions like ‘do homework and do that,’ but they think it’s more positive on my mental health and my life. Why would they take that away from you?”

Gaming plays an important role in many students’ lives, teaching life lessons school or parents never could.

Many students in gaming “are collaborating with a team, and it’s not like they were going to be on the football team; this is their only team environment for a long time. They are incredibly quiet, not very confident, but they’re

really good at this game. They’re building confidence in their communication skills, in a team environment where you are developing communication skills and critical thinking skills,” Mr. Elam strongly believes. “Maybe you’re even getting money out of it.”

But not all teachers view gaming as a positive activity.

Ms. Sanfacon, a health teacher at American High

“THERE IS A STIGMA IN THIS PARTICULAR COMMUNITY THAT IF THE THING THAT YOU SPEND ALL OF YOUR TIME DOING ISN’T GOING TO GET YOU INTO UC BERKELEY, THEN IT’S A BAD THING.”

School states, the nature of gaming “is positive and negative.” But to her, “There is so much violence and a lot of this violence against women. They’re hyper sexualized and all this kind of stuff.”

“The violence is prolific,” she adds. “It’s really prolific among teenagers and to the point where they’re staying

up all night and not getting any of their schoolwork done. They’re not developing personal friendships the way that you would normally, where you can go out with someone and do something with them, because now it’s all online.” According to “the American Psychiatric Association in the DSM, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, it’s a gaming addiction.”

From a student perspective, Roman X. Fanto confides, “Especially during quarantine, I saw that a lot. We’re just on the computer all the time. And it would hurt their physical health, and it would make them unsociable.”

There is no exemption to the possibility of gaming addiction—a very possible mental disorder in teens. “I think that like most things in life—social media or alcohol or sugar—video gaming can be absolutely addictive,” Mr. Elam warns.

But as with any addiction, there are always many different precautions that must be considered to make gaming a safe hobby. Though, what must students pay close attention to? Three members of the AHS Esports club take from their own personal experiences to

give their own insight.

Thinking back to his own habits, Edward Lim (11), a member of the Esports club, recalls, “I try to get schoolwork done at school, and I take time in class to do work while learning. So I just multi-task at school and spend my time at home doing something for the Esports club or working on a project if I need to.”

“I usually do a couple of my homework at home and school. If it’s something big that I can’t finish at school then I’ll bring it home and designate a certain amount of time to do it,” William Tin (11) agrees.

Turning his attention away from school-related cares, Jimmy Ho (11) sees another aspect of life as also important during gaming, “hygiene.” He stresses, “If it starts affecting your hygiene, for example, you should really consider stopping gaming.”

There is a line between positive and negative gaming. And to avoid crossing that line into addictive gaming, “Striking that balance of personal life and gaming—personal things that you need to do and gaming things that you want to do” is very important, Lim concludes, “It’s want versus need.”



Gaming has become a large part of teen’s daily lives now. But there are still many stereotypes regarding negativity or positivity surrounding it. Sometimes, it is hard to discern truth behind them.

PC: Kelly Wang



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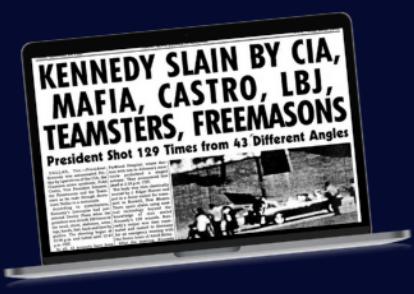
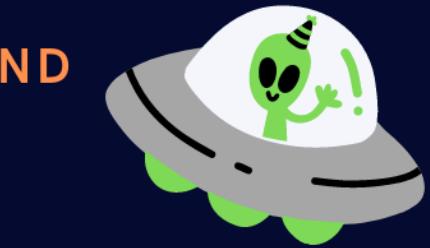
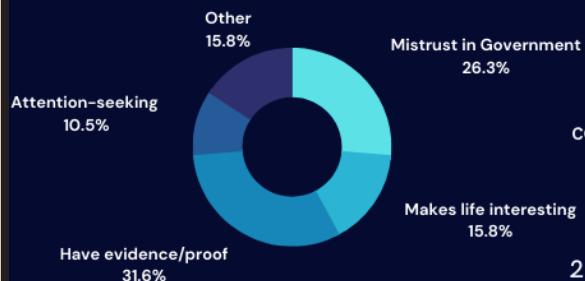


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AMERICAN HIGH AND Conspiracy Theories

THE CIA ASSASSINATED JFK! THE MOON LANDING WAS STAGED!

Conspiracy theories have their roots deep throughout history, from the belief of Nero intentionally burning down Rome to Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor, being the Antichrist.



Why do people believe conspiracy theories?

The reasoning for believing conspiracy theories varies according to surveyed students. The most popular reasons, though, are a mistrust in the government with 26.3% agreeing and believers having some sort of proof at 31.6%.



What causes people to stay as theory believers?

According to an article from Louisiana State University, motivated reasoning is the primary factor for believing conspiracy theories. Within motivated reasoning, there are three processes:

Confirmation bias: one seeks information that proves their beliefs while avoiding information that says otherwise.

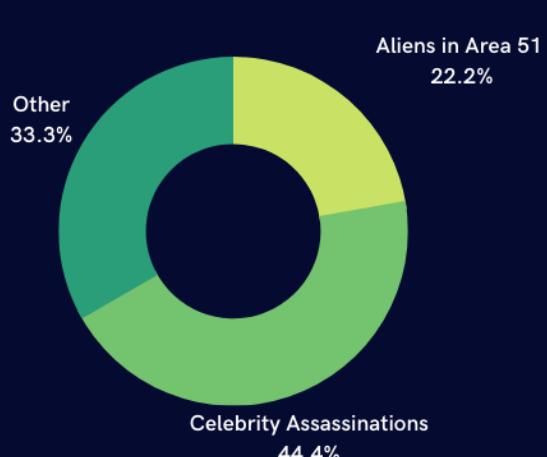
Disconfirmation bias: believers spend more time intentionally arguing against opposite viewpoints.

Attitude-congruence bias: people will view arguments supporting theirs as stronger

Do students at AHS believe in conspiracy theories?



Of the students who do not believe in conspiracy theories, **84%** of them say that such beliefs have no backing and proof and are illogical.



As for the impact that conspiracy theories have in AHS:

- **55%** say little to no impact
- **10%** say a relatively small impact
- **25%** say a decently large impact
- **10%** say a relatively large impact

Patrick Tan, Staff Writer

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