

Editorial: Logan Paul's Apology is not Enough

December 31, 2017, Logan Paul, a now disgraced YouTuber, posted a video to the internet. The video contained footage of Logan Paul and members of his “#Logang” finding a body in Aokigahara, a Japanese forest and common destination for suicide attempts. The video zoomed in on the body of a man who had taken his life in the forest; the body was distended and purple, signs of a recent suicide. The group was allegedly walking off the marked path when they found the body. Paul's initial reaction was disbelief, but—as a YouTuber whose net worth is determined by how interesting his videos are—his excitement was palpable. Paul quickly began to laugh and make jokes in reference to the body, asking the body if he was “alive...or [messing] with us.” Paul only blurred the face of the man before releasing the footage to his millions of young viewers.

The former Vine star released an initial statement over Twitter apologizing for the video that YouTube failed to take down. “I have never faced criticism like this before,” Paul said. “I didn't do it for views. I get views.” This response has been labeled as ignorant and self promoting, as Paul finished his post with his hashtag #Logang4Life. The most troublesome aspect of the video is not the handling of the encounter itself, but rather Paul's thought process. Despite losing fans, almost 6,000 in one day, over the widely criticized post, some fans still believe Paul has done nothing wrong. Some even buy into his claim that the video was an attempt to “raise awareness for suicide and suicide prevention,” according to his initial apology.

In addition to backlash from his fan base and YouTube viewers alike, Paul faces serious criticism from celebrities who continue to weigh in on his controversial video. Game of

Thrones star Sophie Turner posted to her Twitter January 2, "@LoganPaul You're an idiot. You're not raising awareness. You're mocking. I can't believe how self-praising your 'apology' is. You don't deserve the success (views) you have. I pray to God you never have to experience anything like that man did." Other celebrities even tried to convince others to accept Logan Paul's apology: "Re: Logan Paul, something I always think about is when people make... ethical mistakes, as in, not illegal, should we really be trying to ruin their lives and end their career or accept the apology, personally make a choice to stop watching and move on," tweeted Chrissy Teigen. Breaking Bad's Aaron Paul even tweeted, "Dear @LoganPaul, How dare you! You disgust me... Suicide is not a joke. Go rot in hell." Members of the Youtube community were also quick to respond to the video. Andrea Russett tweeted "logan paul gotta go" on January 1 alongside Grayson Dolan who issued three separate tweets addressing Logan Paul eventually stating, "You're 22 there's no excuse."

Despite the growing distaste for Logan Paul and his video, his loyal fanbase, the #Logang, continues to defend his actions. One follower tweeted "Logan Paul is teaching young folks the dangers of suicide. Maybe stop dissing him? #LOGANG4LIFE." Others followed suit as in light of the incident Paul received many tweets of support. After his initial Twitter apology Paul posted a minute and 45 second video titled "So Sorry" which has since reached over 38 million views on his monetized account. In it he appears to be crying while he states "I've made a severe and continuous lapse in my judgement and I don't expect to be forgiven." Later in the video he also asks his fanbase to stop defending him and his mistakes.

The suicide forest video stayed up online for less than 24 hours before Logan Paul himself was forced to take it down due to backlash. Despite this short window of time, the video gained over 6 million views. Viewers expressed confusion and concern as YouTube guidelines specifically state that "it's

not okay to post violent or gory content that's primarily intended to be shocking, sensational, or disrespectful." Outrage follows YouTube's release of a "non-apology," their first statement online concerning the video consisted of a string of tweets, none of which contained an apology. Furthermore, YouTube has yet to delete or suspend Logan Paul's channel.

Logan Paul is just one of many YouTubers who has released offensive or controversial content on their channels. On YouTube Paul reaches just over 15 million subscribers most of whom are young individuals who could be strongly influenced by the content of his videos. YouTube is a popular platform for younger audiences to enjoy video submissions from their favorite personalities. The danger Logan Paul has brought to light is that these videos may contain footage which can be unhealthy for young viewers.

YouTubers like Logan Paul don't deserve to be a part of the YouTube community. His indecency and blatant disregard for the YouTube guidelines resulted in a toxic video with no educational or entertainment merit. YouTube should be a platform that encourages viewers to be creative and connect with the world, sharing experiences that prove to be valuable to others. Paul is an example of a YouTuber who's actions are counterintuitive to the central idea of the YouTube community. As students at Miramonte continue to use various media platforms and consume the content which is provided, personalities such as Paul prove harmful to these young viewers.

The Editorial Board voted 8-2 that Paul's actions warranted more severe consequences than were recieved.

Culture Appropriation Poisons the Music Industry

Culture appropriation in the music industry has been a problem for years, and it doesn't seem to be getting any better. Culture appropriation is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as, "the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture." Many extremely well known artists in the music industry are guilty of culture appropriation in different forms.

Cultural appropriation is present in the music video of Beyonce and Coldplay's song, "Hymn For The Weekend." Now don't get me wrong, I am in love with Queen Bey and Coldplay is one of my favorite bands of all time. I did however, fail to find the reason for them to shoot their music video for this song in Mumbai, India. The video features Chris Martin and Beyonce dressed as a Bollywood actress in many scenes around India. There are snippets of the Hindu Holi Festival of Colors. Although many of the true cultures and people of India were shown in the video, I think one thing above all marks this video as a case of culture appropriation; the song has no apparent association with Indian culture whatsoever, other than the music video. "When I first saw the 'Hymn for the Weekend' video, I thought the fact that it took place in India was irrelevant and odd because neither of the artists are Indian," sophomore Ella Say said. Another reason is that neither of the artists are Indian. Because there are no references to Indian culture in the lyrics of the song, and neither of the artists are of Indian decent, the music video for this song is a prime case of cultural appropriation.

Katy Perry has also faced great criticism throughout the years for cultural appropriation in her music videos and performances. First off, in Perry's music video for her song

“Dark Horse,” she was featured in various stereotypical Egyptian-esque costumes that were completely inaccurate representations of real Egyptian culture. The sets of her music video were supposed to look like the throne of Cleopatra and Egyptian royal historical figures, but the execution was extremely cliché and seen as offensive to many. Also, in one part of the video, a background dancer can be seen wearing the Arabic word for God on a pendant. A petition to remove the video from YouTube because of this offensive clip was started by Shazad Iqbal and signed by over 60,000 people. “Using the name of God in an irrelevant and distasteful manner would be considered inappropriate by any religion” Iqbal said. In addition, At the 2013 American Music Awards, Perry performed dressed as a Geisha and used many Asian cultural images to enhance the costume. Jezabel.com described Perry’s costume as “a mix between a kimono and a Chinese cheongsam.” It was also noted that the costume showed a lot of extra skin that was not characteristic for either of the garments it was modeled after. “Even in my intention to appreciate Japanese culture, I did wrong with a performance. And I didn’t know that I did it wrong until I heard people saying I did it wrong,” Perry said in an interview with DeRay McKesson, in an attempt to justify her costume and theme choice for her performance. Perry’s explanation defends herself, but it is not enough to excuse the offensive theme of her performance. She admitted to having no idea her display was offensive before being told so. The fact that making sure her methods for using aspects of different cultures were not offensive didn’t cross her mind at all before the damage had been done is extremely disappointing and a blatant example of cultural appropriation.

Justin Bieber’s inability to sing the Spanish lyrics of ‘Despacito’ live despite being featured on the recorded track is one more example of cultural appropriation in the music industry. Even further, Miley Cyrus supposedly making twerking famous during her 2013 VMA’s performance, even though the dance move existed in the African American Atlanta club scene

for years before is another infamous instance of cultural appropriation. I do not think the problem of stealing cultural symbols without the right intent, research, and care put in will ever go away. However, as our world becomes more aware and accepting to the vast variety of cultures it has to offer, it is important to to recognize the difference between culture appropriation and appreciation. Music has the power to reach millions of people in many different ways. If we start by being aware of cultural appropriation in the music we listen to in our community, it could lead to more care taken by people in all aspects of life.

The Miramonte “Food Chain” is Harmful to Underclassmen

It’s the first day of high school and the incoming freshman are nervously trying to find their classrooms. Little Eddy is an innocent freshman sitting at any regular lunch table with his other little friends until huge football player, Bruce, forces him up from his table to sit there with his other huge friends. While this may seem straight out of a Hollywood movie, “food-chaining” is a problem at Miramonte. Food-chaining is an ongoing “tradition” at Miramonte where upperclassmen take advantage of their age and make underclassmen do favors for them just because they are older. This often happens with sports and finding lunch tables a school.

This activity may sound appealing to upperclassmen because it represents a level of authority that has been earned, but to the younger folks of the school, it is rude and unwanted. “I got food-chained and it was embarrassing,” freshman Lucy

Marken said. "It was a bunch of upperclassmen in front of all my classmates. I had to sit next to the trashcan on the ground with the rest of my friends," Marken said.

Marken was a victim of the food-chaining around Miramonte. "I understand why upperclassmen do it though. It really is an on living tradition even though all freshman despise it," Marken said.

All of us went through freshman year. We all experienced the kids with facial hair towering over the younglings who just wanted to make it through the first day of school. Freshman are new to the school and need a welcome from the people they look up to, not an awful place to sit on the ground next to the trash can.

Upperclassmen often use food-chaining to their benefit. "The upperclassmen and I often use it in water polo for them to take the covers off or to move the goal cage, but nothing serious at all," junior Savannah Sherwood said. "I wouldn't say food-chaining is a problem at Miramonte, but it should be more monitored because I know how it felt when I was a freshman and I got kicked out of my table." As the tradition lives on, underclassmen should not have to suffer because it may appear as bullying. "Everybody is a freshman at some point, most everybody lives with it and the cycle shall live on," Sherwood said. In most high school sports, freshmen are often forced to do most of the setup and cleanup of equipment and any other business upperclassmen don't want to do.

The incoming sophomores are becoming more and more eager to branch away from their "freshman fears". "I have never been more excited to get promoted up a grade more in my life to get away from the food-chaining in practice mostly. I feel bad for the incoming freshman, but everyone does it so it seems okay," sophomore Sally Fellner said. "Life as a freshman was rough because all the hard work to please the upperclassmen was put onto our shoulders on top of school work." Being a freshman

should be the time to adjust to high school, not the time for upperclassmen to make them feel unwelcome. Fellner plays water polo and as she was food-chained as a freshman at practice, she is excited not to be the youngest and now have the privilege of food-chaining.

We all know how it feels to be a freshman and we all have heard of bullying. Although food-chaining is a tradition that “must live on” to most upperclassmen, the well being of little freshman is far more important.

Miramonte Needs to Kick its Drug Habit

Miramonte has long held a reputation as a school with a drug problem. On sites like GreatSchools and Niche, former students and parents have singled out the drug problem as a large part of the school’s homogenous social structure. On Urban Dictionary, Miramonte High School’s definition includes a warning: “Everyone smokes pot. Get used to it.”

In the California Healthy Kids Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education during the 2015-16 school year, 42 percent of Miramonte students admitted to having tried marijuana. While 42 may seem to be a shockingly high percentage, at least one student believes it to be underestimate. “Almost everybody I know has tried at least one drug,” an anonymous senior said. The student believes that 95 percent of the senior class has used illegal substances.

While the exact amount of students abusing illegal substances may be unknown, one thing is clear: the culture of illegal drug use is widespread at the school, as is the acceptance

among students.

The drug problem has existed for a long time in Lamorinda. In October 1998, Acalanes High School hosted a community forum to discuss the drug problem in response to a survey of students in Lamorinda and Walnut Creek. Among the 12th graders surveyed, 83 percent had tried at least one drug.

Marijuana is believed to be less harmful than other drugs, but it does not come without its share of consequences. According to a 2012 Duke University study, those who repeatedly use marijuana, if they begin in adolescence, permanently lose an average of eight IQ points by age 38.

One of the main reasons marijuana usage is rationalized is because it is not considered addictive. And while research from the Institute of Medicine has shown that only about nine percent of marijuana users develop an addiction, its impact on younger brains is far more troubling. Addiction rates for teens could be as high as 17 percent, with 30 percent developing a marijuana use disorder, according to drugabuse.gov. And these numbers may only increase. A 2015 study from the Charas Scientific laboratory in Denver concluded that the concentration of THC in marijuana has tripled since the early 1980s. Access to THC at an early age also increases the reward the brain receives for other, harder addictive substances, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

To make matters worse, marijuana users are also more susceptible to addiction to other drugs, especially when the surrounding social environment is infested with both talk of and consumption of drugs. Additionally, those who are exposed to marijuana are more likely to be offered harder drugs, according to NIDA.

The reason there are so many misconceptions about drug use among students is simple: no one told them the facts. Students

in the classes of 2018 and 2019 received drug education as a part of their P.E. curriculum. The education was abbreviated and only took a couple of days.

Starting this year, sophomores and freshmen will receive more extensive education on drugs in a new mandatory health class. Additionally, freshmen will discuss the subject in an innovative program called freshman seminar. Freshman seminars are small breakout groups that meet during academy to discuss relevant issues pertaining to the transition from middle school to high school. Administration recognizes that there is a dramatic increase in substance abuse junior year, and therefore finds it vital to educate underclassmen.

It's a sad fact that students pressure each other to try drugs. The vicious cycle creates a toxic social situation in which the drug-doing majority attempts to persuade the abstinent minority—both vocally and more subtly—by implying that in order to have a social life in Orinda, one must do drugs. It is deeply engrained in the social structure, so severely that those who elect to not do drugs feel socially constrained.

The problem is compounded by ignorant students, parents, teachers, and administrators. According to Orinda Police Officer Allison Kotchevar, parents are responsible for the actions of their children. "That's usually the path we go down—to hold the adults more responsible for what their kids are doing. Either when they're not around, not paying attention, or turning a blind eye," Kotchevar said. Many citizens of Orinda are at least partially aware of the situation; it is a popular subject on community websites such as Nextdoor and Lamorinda Families. The aforementioned anonymous senior's family has some knowledge about his drug use. "My parents are partially aware of my situation," he said. "They know I smoke marijuana but they have no knowledge of any other drugs I consume."

In the Miramonte student handbook, the school explicitly prohibits drug use and drug possession on campus, but the rules are difficult to enforce. Students have adapted to methods of partaking in illegal substances that are challenging to detect, such as vaping.

Students frequently vape and smoke marijuana during school, as evidenced by the pungent, burnt smell in and around the restrooms. Students also take dabs (enhanced THC) and consume other drugs in the parking lot before the school day begins. "My friend and I have both taken psychedelic mushrooms before school," the aforementioned anonymous senior said. Drug possession and use on school property has long been common at Miramonte. Students discuss exchange of drugs during passing periods and lunch. At football games, students all over the stands vape and smoke marijuana under their shirts.

Some of the school's preventative techniques are more passive than active. In the 2016-17 school year, the campus security guard had a reputation among students for letting them off the hook when they were caught under the influence at school. This year, there is no female security guard who checks on the girls' bathrooms. The precedent that students can get away with bringing and using drugs at school encourages more students to participate. Because high school is when most users start, it is crucial that the situation is taken under control. The school recognizes it as an issue, and is developing more ways to restrict it.

If the school elected to crack down on drug use on campus in a more aggressive manner, possibly in partnership with the police department, the community's stance on drugs might adopt a more serious tone. The casual nature in which the drug abuse is currently discussed only encourages more usage. Administration could ask the police to bring in drug-sniffing dogs to search the school and parking lot, which would greatly reduce the problem of illegal substances on campus. According to Officer Kotchevar, the Orinda police does not trigger

searches of the campus on their own. “[Searches] would be initiated by the school,” Kotchevar said. “We have never done any random car searches on campus. Again, it’s more up to the school to call us when they feel they need us.”

The school doesn’t involve the police unless there is a repeated offense. “We would prefer to handle [drug offenses] within-house. We prefer to work with our students and their families directly and provide intervention and education,” associate principal Jan Carlson said. Carlson said that administration is more focused on protecting the students and giving them the proper information rather than involving law enforcement. In terms of disciplinary decisions, administration follows the ed code, which is highlighted in the student handbook. There is always a suspension involved.

Perhaps administrators are hesitant to assertively combat the issue because they fear it will damage their relationship with the student body and the Miramonte community as a whole. “As students we’re all in this community together. We want to build a strong healthy community here,” Carlson said. Random drug searches send the message that administration does not trust the student body. But in order to improve the situation in the long run, drug searches may be the best option to reduce the problem on campus.

It’s clear that the standing rules are not effective. The resources are available. The methods of investigation exist. There are possible solutions. But until administration develops a more proactive solution, the cycle will continue and Miramonte will continue to be known as a stoner school.

The school year of the California Healthy Kids Survey data has been changed from 2016-17 to 2015-16 and further specifications were added from the print version.

An Open Letter to the Miramonte Community

June 7, 2017

To the greater Miramonte community,

I didn't want to write another article about feminism. I know some of you reading this will exit Safari on your phones right away, close the tab on your computer, lock your tablet and never think about this letter again. And that's your choice. But I don't type this standing behind an altar, preaching yet another sermon from above, trying to tell others how to live their lives or what to believe. This letter is my confession.

Recent events in my personal life and events in the greater community have forced me to initiate a serious examination of my own shortcomings. Two years ago, I saw for the first time a male coach—we'll call him Coach Jones*—come up behind one of my teammates and close friends and hug her in a supposedly "friendly" manner. Although Jones wasn't our coach, every girl on the team knew him for obvious reasons. From then on, I witnessed first hand this same coach touch girls, many of whom were my best friends, in a demeanor that some will claim was just "friendly." Despite these assurances from bystanders, the girls were clearly, and rightfully so, uncomfortable with these grazes of hand against arm or thigh. Some even went as far as to tell Jones to stop, or physically pull away, but this didn't hinder him. These interactions went on for an extended amount of time, with the passive acceptance from other student-athletes, parents, and coaches. I encouraged my friends to talk to the administration and had discussions with other coaches about this man's inappropriate behavior, asking

if anyone was doing anything about it.

But, in the end, I never told anyone who could make a difference. It wasn't until I got called down into the office myself to talk about what I had seen that I realized that for years an entire community of people was protecting a man who was very visibly making students uncomfortable. Because we were scared of taking initiative? Because we wanted to be polite? I don't know. Technically, he wasn't doing anything illegal. He was making comments and touching girls in a way that was just too intimate, too close for comfort. But the point is that these actions repeatedly put multiple students in a position of powerlessness and extreme discomfort. I don't think anyone could tell you why there was an unspoken agreement between all of these people that bound them to silence, myself included.

To address a series of incidents completely unrelated to the previous situation I've been discussing, I'd like to move on to a more personal story.** An acquaintance of mine approached me in class one day, somewhat upset and resigned. After much coaxing, she told me how a student named Rodney* had made yet another degrading comment to her. I can't tell you how many times this year she has come to me with the same complaint. And I always heard her out, profusely apologized for this treatment, and encouraged her to talk to a teacher because the comments were clearly very detrimental to her mental health and not appropriate in any context, let alone school. I told her to tell someone, pushing the responsibility back onto her to shoulder this burden alone.

I should have grabbed her arm and marched her down to the office when I heard about the first comment. Again after the second. And the third and fourth and every single time after that. I should have done the same thing after Coach Jones touched and spoke to my friends inappropriately. I had not one or two, but countless opportunities to stop this disgusting and degrading treatment. We all did. And we collectively

decided to abstain.

Now, this acquaintance told me about Rodney's most recent comment a few days after I had been called into the office to talk about Coach Jones, so I had been stewing over my role in the former situation for quite some time. I don't know if I did it out of some sort of guilt obligation or just a new awareness of the need to actually stand by these girls (which I had preached for years but didn't practice), but after hearing her story I knew I had to ensure that it was reported to the office. However, as I was talking to her about why she should report the egregious comments, she revealed a critically important detail that is the center of this second narrative. She didn't think anything was worth reporting because she felt like she deserved to be treated that way. If it was another girl, she said, she would have reported it, but he only targeted her so it didn't really matter.

I can tell you that this theme isn't uncommon among women and girls when it comes to their own personal comfort and safety. I have had the privilege of growing up in a community where at most I have only faced very small, subtle instances of sexism. But this gross injustice against these girls cannot be overlooked, or fade away without grave and considerable discussion of what this says about us as a community. We continue to teach women to be polite and to smile in the face of discomfort because that is what is courteous, that is what is expected. We don't empower girls to protect themselves. Instead we all stand by listlessly, confirming the idea that these instances aren't "a big deal" and should just be brushed aside or ignored. This isn't to say that it was the responsibility of any of these girls to report these events to a person of authority. Too often we focus on teaching girls how not to get harassed or abused or raped, instead of teaching those who could potentially become harassers, abusers, or rapists that these things are wrong. This was even evident at Post-Senior Day, when seniors listened to the story

of a brutal rape with a winding lead-up displaying all of the signs that should have told the victim that she was in danger. The retelling ended with one question: "How many opportunities did the victim have to save herself?"

This is the problem that plagues our culture here at Miramonte, in Lamorinda, and across the entire nation. We place all of the burden on the victims to protect themselves, and teach our daughters and sons to say *nothing* in defense of these people who are basically defenseless themselves. Our kids deserve better. I'm not telling you this because I think I'm superior or because I have illusions of being the savior of these women. This is coming from someone who stood by and let this treatment continue for a long time. All of us need to take a serious look at what we are teaching the young people of this world to do—and what not to do—when we remain silent and foster a culture like this.

Madison Alvarado

*Name changed

**I ask you not to speculate as to who the people in this anecdote are. They are kept anonymous to protect the victim, and by forming conjectures about the subjects of incidents such as this we are simply continuing the harmful narrative that punishes those in need instead of protecting them.

It Happens Here: Sexual Assault

*All interviewees for this article were Miramonte students who preferred to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity of this topic. All names have been changed to protect the privacy of those in question.**

In Orinda, the houses are nice and the police rarely see action outside of fender-benders and the occasional break-in. Orinda, we are told, is a safe place to live. But there is both a scope and a depth to the instances of serious violence that take place in our small, secure town. Here, as in the rest of the world, sexual assault is not confined to college dorm rooms or dark alleys; it is pervasive, stealthy, and rampant even in our own privileged community.

Several young women are breaking their silence. They came to *The Mirador* to tell their stories to their peers and to the community in the hopes that their honesty would start a discussion about the nature of rape, sexual assault, and harassment and encourage others to open up.

When Lindsey* was assaulted in the fall of this year, she was hanging out with friends after a Halloween party. "I was not okay," she said. "I had too much to drink for sure."

Lindsey and her friends were walking from the party to a nearby elementary school. Her male friend, Craig*, began holding her waist and touching her—in more than just a friendly way. When they first arrived at the school, both Lindsey and Craig were surrounded by their friends. But later, Lindsey found herself alone with Craig. "I don't really remember how he got me away, but he got me away. He started kissing me and... and then it escalated very quickly..." After nonconsensual oral sex occurred, "I told him to stop multiple

times and he said, 'No a little bit longer.' I pulled away again and he said, 'No keep going.' Finally, the last time I broke away it just stopped. Afterward, he kept talking about how we should date. 'We should do this again,' he said. I was not okay with it."

Christine* was studying with a friend, Matt*, when the situation occurred. The two were standing outside of her car near the library when they kissed briefly. Christine quickly pulled away and said, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that, I don't know why I did that." She thought this response to their unplanned kiss sent a clear message: she was not interested. "Once we got into the car though, he was really aggressive," she said. "He grabbed my face and wouldn't let go. I tried to pull my face away but he kept pulling my head forward. He was trying to get up my shirt. And he tried to grab the inside of my leg and move his hand up after I pushed his hand away from my chest. I couldn't get him off. I was trying to talk but I couldn't because he was so vicious. I elbowed him in the stomach to get him off. That's why I feel like it's my fault though," she added. "Because I kissed him outside of the car. And I think he took that kiss as way, way more than it was. He did eventually listen. I just had to be really forceful. He didn't have a good excuse. He just said, 'Oh sorry, you know guys just have hormones. We can't really control it.' and I said, "Girls want sex just as much as guys do, so that argument is invalid.'"

Christine confronted her attacker over text shortly after the incident. "You really did seem like a decent guy up until that point," she wrote. "I did not consent to that and you know that. You need to understand that you do not touch someone like that without them consenting. I don't care if you think it's a given because it's not. You need to learn that because otherwise every girl who you do that to will feel used, vandalized, and unsafe. I expect you to respond like a decent guy, because right now I have no idea how to feel about you or

what kind of person you are. So why don't you tell me why you thought it was okay."

Lindsey and Christine expressed guilt and shame over each incident. They were also concerned for their own reputations because of the stigmas surrounding female sexuality and sexual assault. "I would just be afraid to get a reputation that I slut myself around," Christine said. "People can twist stories and interpret it wrong."

Sarah* became friends with Mark* a few months before things changed. He confessed to liking her and asked her out; she was taken aback and not interested. Sarah declined his offer. "His reaction wasn't awesome," she said, "which made me feel bad. He kind of guilted me by saying, 'you're just like every girl that's blown me off.'" But Mark wanted to stay friends. "I wanted to make it up to him, even though I hadn't done anything wrong, I just didn't want to date him. I always felt like I had this debt to pay to him. I didn't want to be put in that category that he put me in with 'every other girl.'" After they had decided to still be friends, Mark and Sarah still hung out. She went to his house to watch a movie and she fell asleep. "I had made a point not to sit directly next to him (on the couch)," she said. "I fell asleep on my side of the couch and then I woke up and I was on his chest and lap. I just remember waking up there and saying, 'I did not fall asleep on top of you,' I said. 'Yeah, I moved you over,' he responded. I felt really taken advantage of."

Mark, however, continued to target her. According to Sarah, Mark committed sexual battery against her in the Miramonte weight room. Mark touched or "slapped" her without her consent in a sexually aggressive manner. "He slapped my butt in the weight room and like ran off and chuckled. I remember feeling pretty degraded and just frustrated. The fact that he just thought he could do that was disrespectful in my mind and a violation of my privacy," Sarah added. "I believe respect is give and take and I didn't deserve that at all and it was not

only embarrassing, but gross.” Sarah expressed her anger and frustration to her attacker with a pointed and simple: “It’s my f*cking body.”

Amy was visiting her sister in college on New Year’s Eve the night she was raped. Amy, her older sister, and her sister’s friend Mike* went out to frat parties together to celebrate the holiday. “He was super nice and he always talks about his sisters and how much he loves them,” Amy said. “He is training to be a police officer and he was actually on call that night so he wasn’t drinking. We were at this party and he was being super protective, so my sister and I felt really comfortable with him.” Mike gained Amy’s trust that night. “At the party, a group of guys came up to me and tried to ask me to come back to their frat with them, and Mike pulled me away from them and made sure that didn’t happen.” When the trio got back to her sister’s apartment, Amy’s sister went to bed and Mike and Amy stayed up watching TV. “I went into the kitchen to get water,” Amy said, “and I was leaning over the counter on my phone because it was plugged in. He came up behind me and I said, ‘What are you doing?’. He put his arms around my waist and pulled me towards him. So I pushed back and I said, ‘Get off of me’ and then he said, ‘Oh no, you’ve been flirting with me all night,’ and he pushed me back onto the counter. And I tried to get up one more time like halfway through and he slammed me to the ground and put his hand on my mouth. Once he was done I was crying on the floor and he got up, got dressed, and said, ‘Don’t tell your sister this, she won’t believe you. She knows how great of a guy I am.’”

Amy also was concerned about what others would think of her if they knew about her attack. “The reason I didn’t tell anyone for a long time was because I thought my friends would judge me. Now that just sounds stupid. I was afraid they would be like, ‘Oh, it’s your fault,’ or, ‘Oh, you’re very flirtatious you probably wanted it to happen,’ or something like that.”

Amy struggled with telling her story, especially to those

closest to the situation. "I didn't really talk to my sister after (the attack)," she said. "I felt a lot of guilt over it. My sister was basically dating him and I felt like if I told her she'd either not believe me or feel guilty about it because it was someone she knew and was comfortable with and let spend the night and all that." The shame, fear, and guilt Amy felt rendered her silent and confused. "The longer I waited to tell people, the more I got the feeling that people would think I was lying. I thought that they would want to know why I took so long to tell them. But it's not like I was going to run into the living room that morning and yell, 'Hey, he just did that to me. Also, a big part of me just wanted to pretend like it never happened— like it was just some terrible nightmare."

Lindsey and Amy did gain some insight regarding their own misconceptions of sexual assault. "Before this," Lindsey said, "I thought [a rapist] was a random creepy college guy who did that to girls at parties. I didn't think it could be someone that was my friend. I thought it took a certain kind of person to do that."

"A lot of people think this is something that happens with people you don't know and don't trust. Most of the time it's someone you've known for a while. When I think about what happened I remember thinking the whole night before that, 'he's protecting me, he's someone I can trust. He's being a good friend to me,'" Amy said.

In the aftermath of her assault, Lindsey has been able to focus her energy on trying to prevent this from happening again to someone else. "I've shared my story with so many people in fear that he's gonna do it again. If I've seen girls close to him, I've told them this story, just so that they know that this is what he's done to me because I don't want him to do it to them."

These stories aren't being brought to light because the

victims are being overdramatic about hookups they have come to regret. These are atrocities that have been festering under the surface of our seemingly privileged community and it is the time to confront the stigma and shattering illusions that our community has about sexual assault and rape. We, as a community of students, teachers, and parents, must first believe one another and support each other. Victims know that they are not alone. The conversation must stop revolving around what people should or shouldn't do to avoid these kinds of attacks, and instead focus on the actions of those who are committing these crimes. We should all know how to execute bystander intervention when we see or hear about these kinds of situations taking place in our community so that it can be stopped. We need stories like these to keep being published so that the silence can be broken. It is crucial that we have the difficult conversations surrounding sexual assault with both boys and girls. And we must support these young women who have been brave enough to tell their stories and reward their honesty with compassion, justice, and the utmost respect.

If you have a story you would like to share, please email mhsmirador@gmail.com.

An unedited version of this story was mistakenly posted in the news section .

Finding Common Ground is Essential

Mason, Ohio, is a suburb of Cincinnati located in the southwest of the Buckeye state. It was deemed to be the

seventh best place in America to live by Money Magazine in 2013. Its high school is attended by nearly 4,000 students, the largest in the state of Ohio.

Until this past summer, I lived in Mason for most of my life, when I moved to Orinda. Over the first several days of school, I realized the extent of the atmospheric differences between the two schools.

I consider myself to be relatively politically centrist, which is somewhat of a rarity both here and in southwest Ohio. In both areas, most tend to gravitate towards one end of the political spectrum.

At Mason High School, the vast majority of students were more conservative than I. And, in part with the conservative leanings, there was a more candid atmosphere. However, at Miramonte, there is more of an effort to be politically correct. And while it is wise to attempt not to offend everybody, the constant focus on political correctness and non-confrontationalism makes communication more difficult. Californians, in my experience, are not as direct as Ohioans. While there were still school policies against discrimination, there were more people who had less regard for hurt feelings at Mason High School—getting the point across was their primary goal.

These schools are polar political opposites. But at both schools, there is a certain closed-mindedness. Both student bodies fall primarily to one side of the political aisle, and are resistant to beliefs which do not match their own.

And this is a microcosm of the country as a whole. Many regions are dominated by one political ideology, and no matter what it is, people in that region are not accepting of other political beliefs. But in order to understand the divide—and eventually heal it—each side must listen to the other. No one has to agree with the other side, but merely shutting down the

opinion of others is counter-productive in an era in which political divisiveness is reaching the boiling point. In order to properly function as a society, everyone must respect the right of others to have a different political position. In a time of unprecedented political unrest, high school students at both Mason and Miramonte can help heal the divide by simply listening to students with differing opinions without creating an argument.

Trump Rallies Spread Nationwide

From Philadelphia, to Denver, to Los Angeles, and even to our own backyard in Oakland, the result of the national election caused an eruption of protests nationwide earlier this month. Millions of agitators exercised their First Amendment rights and came together to express their strong opinions on the policies and actions of Donald Trump during his presidential campaign. Many questions have risen as to the future of our country under a highly unorthodox politician: Why was there so much discontent over a fairly elected president? Is the electoral college outdated? And will there be further disunity in our country?

Although Hillary Clinton did win the popular election by over 3 million votes, over 62.5 million Americans voted for Trump. With such a large portion of our country's population supporting Trump, how was there so much discontent nationwide? The answer may be simpler than expected. With a radically new type of president in office, there will undoubtedly be unrest

in those who disagree with his policies, which is a pretty large club.

In addition, because Hillary numerically received more popular votes than Trump, many have argued about the strength of the electoral system over popular opinion. This phenomena has only happened 3 times in our country's history, most recently in 2000 with the election of George W. Bush. However, the US is not a direct democracy. Our founding fathers prided themselves in the fact that the masses could not directly control the future of our country, and therefore established the electoral college in 1787. So, there should not be issue over this 'flawed system' as many have come to claim this past election.

The election of 2016 and the years preceding it witnessed a stark polarization within the nation's politics. Republicans and Democrats seemingly can not agree, and even had completely opposite viewpoint on many issues. Having leaders with such ignorant opinions can have serious consequences. For example, because the viewpoint of many conservatives have on climate change, it is hard to organize a political and economic response to the problems facing our planet's future with the government's consensus split in half. With Trump's election, as well as a Republican majority in Congress, the trends of polarization will undoubtedly continue. Now, Democratic policies will be extremely difficult to implement with a tight republican grip on the nation's three branches of government.

Opinion: Not All Students Walked Out for the Same

Reasons

On November 10th, Miramonte students participated in a walk out protesting the president-elect Donald Trump after his surprising victory over Hillary Clinton. The rally was led by junior Jayne Latimer and assisted by senior Blake Sharp. Students assembled on the quad then moved to the streets of Orinda where they walked around OIS and back to school. After the protest many students neglected to come back to class, feeling the urge to rebel. "I left because I had a test to do and I did not study so when I heard that there was an opportunity to cut, I did," an anonymous sophomore student said. Another sophomore student said, "I went on the walk out because I hate school and I wanted to leave." Multiple students had the same response, which led me to believe that this walkout was not really a protest, but rather a get-out-of-class free pass. Some teachers encouraged students to protest their anger of president-elect Donald Trump and express opinions about something they truly believed in. If you acknowledge the consequences but decide to continue anyway, then protesting is an admirable endeavor when truly fighting for a cause. Simply joining this protest for the wrong reasons, as many students did, leads me to question some of my peers and how much they actually care about our country and our political system.

California **Ballot**
Propositions **Need** **to** **be**

Examined

While the focus this election cycle has been almost solely on the presidential race, Orindans and Californians alike will have far more to select than just one name this Tuesday. Among those choices are 17 California state ballot propositions. Following are some of the most consequential propositions:

Proposition 51: School Bonds. Funding for K-12 School and Community College Facilities. Initiative Statute

If passed, Proposition 51 would allocate nine billion dollars to developing and updating public school buildings, and provide more funds to charter and technical schools. Both the Democratic and Republican parties of California support the measure, as do most prominent elected officials in California.

But Governor Jerry Brown [opposes](#) it, saying that it “squanders money” that should be appropriated to schools in communities in more dire need.

A [UC Berkeley study](#) concluded that while state funding is necessary to keep schools safe, “Prop. 51 doesn’t achieve the best results...compared to other options.”

Proposition 51 would provide vast improvements to school infrastructure. But with a high price tag and questions about its fairness towards underprivileged schools, voters will have to choose between expensive improvements to school infrastructure or a delay in state funding. And in this case, it seems that help truly is necessary, even if it doesn’t imminently provide [enough](#) funding to fully complete the task. Proposition 51, while flawed, will vastly improve our educational infrastructure, and thus should be passed.

Proposition 58: English Proficiency. Multilingual Education. Initiative Statute

Prop 58 would loosen requirements of K-12 schools to teach class only in English, and aims to provide Spanish speakers with a more smooth transition to the American education system. Since 1998, non-English speakers have been required to take a one-year course on the English language. Prop 58 would repeal this requirement, and allow for bilingual instruction in schools.

Opponents claim that it deceives the public by removing the mandate that children be taught only English in public school, and opens the door to future schooling being almost solely in Spanish.

This is certainly a flawed proposition. But it does try to address the issue in our schooling system of isolating immigrant students, and with California's [large immigrant population](#), Prop 58 warrants a "yes" vote.

Proposition 62: Death Penalty. Initiative Statute/Proposition 66: Death Penalty. Procedures. Initiative Statute

Prop 62 argues for the repeal of the death penalty, which would prevent those who have committed murder from being subject to the death penalty, and thus make the harshest form of punishment a lifetime prison sentence.

There is another layer to this proposition, however. Prop 66 argues to retain the death penalty, but to reduce the maximum amount of time that a criminal may be on death row to five years, and to force inmates to work while on death row.

Only one of these propositions may be passed.

This is an issue that has split the nation for quite some time, with Republicans typically in favor of keeping the death penalty, and the Democrats in favor of abolishing it. This is an issue which is not easy to have a concrete opinion about. Is capital punishment justifiable for the crime of taking another's life? Or does it contradict the eighth amendment's

protection against “cruel and unusual punishment?”

However, most would agree that some change from the current system has to take place. And Prop 62, which would save a projected \$150 million annually in court and prison costs, is more efficient than Prop 66, which would not cut costs by any noticeable margin, according to the state’s bipartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office. And for that reason, Prop 62 seems to be the better long-term option for California and the state budget.

Proposition 63: Firearms. Ammunition Sales. Initiative Statute

This issue is one of the pillars of the 2016 Democratic Party platform. It would force prospective gun owners to first obtain a permit, and require that sellers perform background checks of customers in conjunction with the justice department. While it may slightly restrict Second Amendment privileges, it is crucial that firearms do not get into the hands of those who are dangerous or mentally unstable.

Guns used in the Aurora, Colorado movie theater shooting, the Orlando nightclub shooting, and many other mass shootings, were purchased in the days or weeks prior to the shooting. This amendment could help prevent these shootings from occurring in the future in California, and especially considering the proposition’s relatively minimal fiscal impact, that is certainly an occurrence worth averting.