

# It's Time to Make the Ivy Turn Legal

In 2000, the Orinda City Council banned left turns on Ivy Drive between the hours of 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. on school days. In 2011, the Council banned turning left onto Southwaite Court and U-turns in front of Southwaite Court on school days between the hours of 7 a.m. and 8 a.m., after residents complained about drivers using Southwaite Court as a way to get around the prohibition on turning left on Ivy.

During the meetings at which these decisions were made, no representatives of Miramonte were present to offer commentary.

According to members of the Council, speeding was a major problem on Ivy prior to the no-left law. Naturally, prohibiting any driving on that street was the obvious solution to a speeding problem.

Keeping in mind this implementation of laws that directly targets Miramonte students, take into consideration some characteristics of Orinda. While a strong correlation is not guaranteed between quality of public education and nearby property values, Orinda's pricey housing and well-regarded school system seems to fit the bill. Among United States towns with homes priced \$800,000 and up, Orinda ranks 7th in education quality according to Forbes. Despite the pricey properties, families continue to make the decision to raise their children in Orinda, often for the sake of the fantastic schools.

When a neighborhood of Orinda families files complaints about the Miramonte students that use their street as a route to school, it sounds like a "not in my backyard" situation. They move to Orinda because the hard work of Miramonte students has created an impressive reputation for the town, but as soon as

the same students need a shortcut to get to class on time, the students become the enemies.

Not only is the law insulting to the dedicated students who benefit the town every day, it is unreasonable. If the problem was, as the Council members said, dangerous driving on Ivy Drive, perhaps the Orinda Police Department could simply enforce the speed limit that already existed. Would it really be that much different for the entirety of the OPD to wait at intersections and monitor the stop signs than to spend their mornings just past the left turn? It is impractical to implement a new law every time the police do a poor job of enforcing the current law.

It is clear that students will find ways around the extraneous law, as they did with Southwaite Court until 2011, and continue to do with Altamount Drive and other residential side streets. Even if the Council makes it illegal for students to get to school any way other than Moraga Way, they have done nothing to address the problem of dangerous driving; they have only pushed the problem into another neighborhood.

If Miramonte is any part of the reason you moved your family to Orinda, then allow Miramonte students to drive on the public roads in front of your home. We won't run over your children or crash into your house. All we want is to get to school so we can continue working to keep your property values high. You're welcome.

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## **Cinco De Mayo: Why Kids NEED**

# to Respect It

Yesterday was Cinco De Mayo, and a few students purposefully wore Red, White and Blue and American Flag attire to school. The students did this because five years ago, students from a high school in Morgan Hill who did this and were sent home because the Latino kids felt offended and reported the students to the administration. The case made its way to the Supreme Court who sided with the students who were sent home, which allows these Miramonte students to don their Red White and Blue and American Flags, despite the offensiveness of their actions.

When I heard that these students were going to do this I immediately told them that they shouldn't do it; it's inappropriate and offensive. What was their response? No one cares Christian. What country is this Christian? It's America Christian. We speak English here Christian. Mexicans don't celebrate this day Christian. It's not a real holiday Christian.

Cinco De Mayo is a holiday that commemorates the Mexican army's unlikely victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. More than that, this is day where Mexicans come together and celebrate their culture in America. Mexican culture is very prevalent in the United States, and particularly in California (as of 2014, 39 percent of California's population is Hispanic).

Although these few students are legally allowed to flaunt their red, white, and blue, their decision to do so is offensive and disgusting. I understand that "no one here is Mexican," but the fact is, six percent of Orinda residents are Hispanic (according to a 2013 report from city-data.com). That's not no one. The fact that at least one person is offended by this should tell them this is wrong and that they shouldn't do it. America is diverse – just because you speak

Spanish doesn't make you less of an American. Hispanics celebrate Cinco De Mayo; it's a representation of their culture in "The Land of the Free." So why would kids wear these colors on a day that's not theirs?

The worst part is about all of this? No one I have spoken with seems to have a problem with these students' actions And that is what angers me most. That I am the only one that is speaking up for a culture that is not adequately represented in Orinda, and I'm not even Mexican.

This is another example of privileged Orinda kids getting away with a cultural atrocity again. And no one seems to care.

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## **Challenge Day Would Bring Needed Connection to Miramonte Students**

After all of the recent incidents among the Miramonte student body, it has evident that we are disconnected. Miramonte needs to bring back Challenge Day. The mission of the day is to provide youth and their community's incentive to connect and love one another through this program. Five years ago, Miramonte used to host Challenge Day; however, we no longer have it.

The Miramonte student body is very disconnected. Our cliques, reputation, and academics seclude us. Often, we are known by what we do rather than who we are as people. Of course, there will always be cliques, mean girls, jocks and your usual stereotypical groups in high school, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have a chance to get to know one another better.

Challenge day would allow us to get to know different peers from all grades and get to know our teachers better as well. Although it's hard and takes effort to make new relationships, it's important to have relationships outside your normal social circle. You might find out that you have more things in common with them than you realized.

There is a lack of community at Miramonte, especially within each grade. Everyone has their cliques established and, although some of us do take the time and effort to get to know other people outside our groups, it's not very common. You have the water polo cult, a team we all mock because we are jealous of their incredible bond that we will never get to experience because they are beyond intimidating. They are not alone. There are also the public speakers, a class that isn't ordinary. Everyone is highly intellectual and welcoming to students in the class, but they still have their inner circle because many compete together at competitions outside of school. These aren't the only groups within the school that form their own social cliques but their closeness is very visible. All these groups contribute so much to Miramonte and strengthen the brand of the school. Miramonte has amazing programs, yet they also can have a negative effect toward contributing to the exclusivity of the school community. It's logical that social groups are formed with people who have similar interests, but groups are so concrete that people often find it weird for others to hang out with people outside their typical friend group.

Hosting a Challenge Day would allow us to break down barriers and bring the student body closer. However, it shouldn't just be a day where students and teachers open up about their hardships and challenges and then simply go back to school the next day pretending nothing happened. That ruins the point of having a Challenge Day, which was an issue Miramonte had to deal with when they hosted the Day in previous years. Instead of it being a one day event, Challenge Day could continue

throughout the year by having small group meetups and other activities through the school that will allow everyone to stay connected rather than having a “one and done” day. Although people are concerned about having teachers stimulate the conversations and be involved in them, it makes the day and the activities more personal and fulfilling. There would be no point in hosting a Challenge Day if the relationships people built that day weren't continued. Although many students do and can continue those friendships on their own, the school could enforce the importance of those relationships by having activities relating to the Challenge day throughout the year.

Miramonte doesn't give us the opportunity to do things like this, except for the Senior OPI Trip, where they get to escape the salmon-colored walls for a week to hike in Olympic National Park and build bonds with their fellow classmates and teachers. Trips like OPI allow students and teachers to break down the barriers among each other. Let's be honest: the majority of people go on the OPI trip to experience getting to know their classmates better because everyone returns back excited about the new tight-knit friendships they made. Although it is all very “kumbaya” at times, that is just what you need. Unfortunately, not everyone can participate in the Senior OPI trip, and that is another reason why we should bring back Challenge Day. Students should be given more opportunities to experience similar things, and the school should encourage it as well.

The majority of people want to expand their social circles and get to know other classmates, but they are too scared to leave their comfort zones of hanging out with the same people that they've known for years and not have to endure that awkward beginning stage of a new friendship. However, such an awkward stage can also be wonderful because the experience of getting to know someone new is exciting and different each time. So why doesn't Miramonte support this? Are administrators not

aware of the disconnect amid the student body? By ignoring this important reality at the school, that disconnect will only result in a larger separation between the students.

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## **New Lockdown Policy Heads in Right Direction**

The intruder scare last month that put Miramonte on lockdown during lunch showed some weaknesses in our intruder alert system. Students were instructed to go to their 4th period class, which widely did not occur. The Miramonte administration decided they needed a new way to account for students and staff during a lockdown, and so the school tried out a new system two weeks ago.

In this recent drill, each student was informed over the loudspeaker at the start of the drill to use a nearby device, such as a phone or ipad, to follow a link they should have received on their school loop stating their name, grade, and location. Most students opened the email, opened the link, followed the instructions on the Google doc, then sat silently in their class waiting for the drill to end. Unfortunately, some students either did not have access to a device or just point blank refused to fill out the form.

I think that this was a good idea, and a system definitely needs to be put in place because lockdowns are a serious occurrence that are happening all too often around the country these days. Some protocol has to be put in place before a real threat to our student body occurs.

The only downfall I see with this system is the technology piece. Relying on technology always comes with a risk of

crashing, glitches, the wrong link being sent, or people taking too long to fill out the doc. Maybe some people don't have a phone to use, and won't be accounted for. Many students may fear being in a bathroom alone, or diving into the nearest unlocked classroom to find that they are the only person in the room and don't have a device to fill out the doc.

No system will be flawless, and I think a couple more trial runs could be helpful. This new system seems to be a success and should continue to be implemented. There are always glitches in technology, but you have to trust peoples common sense in the time of emergencies.

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## **Cyberbullying Gone Too Far at Saratoga High**

On Sept. 12, 2012, 15-year-old Audrie Pott fatally hanged herself a week after being sexually assaulted and photographed by three classmates at a party. The photographs were spread on social media and by instant messaging. Two of the boys were sentenced to 30 days in Juvenile Hall to be served on weekends, and the third was to serve 45 days consecutively.

It was only just before a civil trial set for this April that the three boys agreed to apologize in front of a court, support a petition to give Audrie an honorary diploma, give 10 presentations on sexual assault, pay a combined \$950,000, and agree to be filmed in a documentary.

These boys got off with light sentences. It is understandable that these 16-year-old's sentences would not be as long as an adult's, but people have been sentenced to longer times for recording and distributing films illegally online, which

cannot even be measured against a crime that actively harms another human being.

The justice system failed Audrie Pott. The boys not only got off with light sentences considering they sexually assaulted her, spread information on the assault, and also kick started cyberbullying that ultimately led Pott to her death. Also, the other students who knew about and helped distribute pictures of the crime by social media and messaging did not face punishment, let alone prosecution. It was this additional harassment that could have led Pott to the point she felt her only option was to take her own life.

People who experience trauma like sexual assault can get through it, though it is still difficult, when they are in a supporting environment. Unfortunately this was not Pott's case at all. Her schoolmates tortured her over the incident, leading her to suicide. Although it can never be determined conclusively why Pott took her life, it is likely she would not have committed suicide if her classmates had not bullied her. This means that the cyberbullies are also at fault for her death.

Pott reported being harassed at school in the week that followed the incident. This is no doubt because of the pictures and knowledge everyone but her seemed to have from that night. She posted on social media that "she has a reputation for a night she didn't even remember." Would this, or her death, have occurred if pictures of the assault had not been so easily spread around her peers?

It is impossible to say, but it is obvious that those pictures, and knowledge of what happened at that party (spread easily by technology) aggravated what was already a difficult situation to be in. Being sexually assaulted while intoxicated, drawn on, and photographed must be a humiliating and painful situation, but it was made worse when everyone else knew about it with a few taps on a cellphone screen.

Her death was not only caused by the one assault, but by the harassment and insensitivity of her peers. In the week that followed the party, Pott experienced what many victims of sexual assault often do; shame and being blamed for a crime they could not control. However, only the boys were tried for the assault and death of Audrie Pott, which although they should have received more time (because a month and a half total in juvenile hall is a pitiful amount for a crime like this), they are not the only ones to blame for her death.

Technology makes the spread of information lightning fast, and in this case, it combined with a gross misuse of it committed by not just the perpetrators of the assault, but also everyone else who was in possession of photos or messages about what happened that night. Teenagers are often portrayed as reckless, and in this instance it is absolutely true. Using technology to hurt others (cyberbullying) led someone to suicide.

However, this is a relatively new issue, and lawmakers are struggling to handle it. They make laws after the fact for crimes they did not see coming, and there is debate over how harsh to make them. Lawmakers need to catch up, and gain a better understanding of how technology actually affects teenagers. There need to be laws to regulate cyberbullying of this nature, and stop it as soon as it begins.

In Pott's case, unregulated misuse of technology led to a girl's death. It seems the best way to stop that would have been a timely investigation and prosecution of perpetrators. The students of Saratoga High School were treating the sexual assault of Pott as a joke, and when there are no repercussions for this form of harassment, it allows others to continue the chain of ignorance and bullying.

Sexual assault is a serious issue, and Pott should not have been bullied to death because she was a victim. Adults need to get a reality check and decide whether or not they want to

allow cyberbullying to continue unchecked, because kids can be cruel, and they will not stop on their own.

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## Surprise Releases: Is This New Music Strategy Working?

With the current age of the internet, the music industries are looking for new and inventive ways to sell records. Lately, it seems albums leaking weeks before they are supposed to come out have been a regular event. Torrent sites like Limewire, PirateBay and uTorrent have made a business out of getting leaks of albums. So, it seems artists nowadays have to get creative with album releases. Enter the newest trend in the music industry: Surprise Releases.

A surprise release is an album, mixtape or project that comes out on the internet without any prior announcements. The recent trend of surprise releases started when Beyonce's self titled fifth album was released onto iTunes, selling 617,000 copies in its first week alone. With people seeing the success Beyonce had, many other artists started to follow, the most notable being Drake's *If You're Reading This It's Too Late* (which went Gold in three days).

Another trend similar to surprise releases are releases that dropped with little notice, to build up hype over word of mouth in a short period of time. For example, Kendrick Lamar announced his third LP *To Pimp A Butterfly* on Instagram, then released it a week earlier than expected. As of writing this, Tyler, The Creator announced his fourth album *Cherry Bomb*, and on Monday, April 13 it released at #1 on the iTunes top 100 Charts.

So it seems this strategy is working. With bigger and bigger names announcing surprise albums (Kanye announced his next album *So Help Me God* will be a surprise release, and Frank Ocean's third album will come out early July), it seems this strategy will be here to stay. But should it stay?

Honestly, surprise album announcements are really cool when a huge name does it, like when Drake did it, or when Kanye is going to do it. But when more and more people start to do it, there's going to be no more hype around albums. A key component to surprise albums is that the artist is so secretive about the project that he or she will not talk about anything music related at all, or even stay off of social media. Frank Ocean's announcement of his new album was the first major announcement from him in years. Many fans just wanted to know if he was alive, let alone doing music.

The best part of albums coming out is hype. I remember when Jay-Z's *The Black Album* was announced as Jay-Z's last album, so he was going to put his all in this one album. Now this is interesting, this idea of Jay-Z's last album got people talking. Is he going to top *The Blueprint*? Is he going out with a bang? Is the album going to have features?

I also take into account what people are saying about the albums, whether this is coming from a review or from a blog. When a surprise release happens, all I see is the news that an album was released, not the opinions on the albums. The only opinions I see online are super fans calling it "The Hottest Release of the Year!", but *why* is this "The Hottest Release of the Year!". When a huge artist has a surprise release, I automatically get it because it's new songs from an artist that I love, but what if it turns out to be trash? I just wasted \$11.99 on an album I'll never listen to again.

Overall, I do like this new trend. It's innovative and it's working for the artists. But after a while, this trend might come off as annoying or stale. So for now, i'll just keep

refreshing the iTunes main page, hopefully seeing Kanye's new album.

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## **Morning Practice Offers Negative Consequences**

The Miramonte swim team requires swimmers to attend morning practice once a week for both JV and Varsity. Practice starts at 5:15 a.m., requiring swimmers to wake up hours before they normally do for school.

Even though morning practice is required, many swimmers don't attend, in hopes of getting a few more hours of sleep. Those students who do attend morning practice are losing at least two hours of vital sleep, and attending two swim practices that day.

"It's hard to get up at 5:00 in the morning and get in the pool, but it's also very rewarding after it's over," junior Elise Anthenien said.

Waking up early for morning practice makes swimmers tired for the rest of the day. Many swimmers are exhausted during class, and therefore are not learning the material very well.

Occasionally, there is a morning practice on the day of a swim meet. Normally, it is best to rest the day of a race, but morning practice makes swimmers tired, and may not swim their fastest at the meet later that day.

The Miramonte track team is now having morning practice twice a week. Unlike swimming's practice, track morning practice is

optional. Despite not being required, about 20 people go to each practice. "It is good because you get extra fitness, but it's bad because it disrupts sleep which is important for running in general, and for our academic performance," junior track team member Natalie Adey said.

Morning sports practices distract students from their studies. Not only are they tired and unfocused during school, but they are tired while doing their homework, and therefore, may not complete everything they need to get done.

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## **Fresh Off the Boat's Attention to Detail Makes it Special**

*Fresh Off the Boat* is a new 30 minute comedy show about a Chinese family that moves from Washington DC to Orlando, Florida. It airs every Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. on ABC. After seeing trailers and previews of the show I was initially skeptical. Being half Chinese myself, I was concerned that the show would be written and developed by caucasians who would draw their humor only from common stereotypes about Asians, therefore making the show racist and inaccurate.

I decided to watch the first two episodes, "Pilot" and "Home Sweet Home-School" with relatively low expectations. After 60 minutes of essentially non-stop laughter, I can genuinely say that *Fresh off the Boat* is both hilarious and accurate. The show is based off the 2013 memoir by Eddie Huang, which details his struggles growing up as a Chinese-American. The

show stars Randall Park as Louis Huang, the father of the Huang family and owner of the Cattleman's Ranch steakhouse, Constance Wu as Jessica Huang the aggressive and frugal mother, and Hudson Yang as Eddie Huang, a sixth grader who must adapt to a new school.

Huang has recently spoken out against the show, calling it an "artificial representation of Asian American lives." He furthered that the show has gotten so far from the truth that he doesn't recognize his life anymore. I, personally, beg to differ. While the show may deviate from Huang's actual experiences, I still find it an accurate representation of Asian-American culture and daily life.

My father is relatively Americanized, so I do not experience the more "traditional" lifestyle that many Chinese American children lead. I have, however, visited the homes of relatives on that side of the family and gotten a look into their lives and heard stories of their lives growing up. Many of the happenings in *Fresh Off the Boat* are incredibly similar to stories that have happened on my father's side of the family.

For example, the fourth episode, "Success Perm," captures the essence of Chinese values, both important and ridiculous. Jessica's sister and her family pay the Huangs a visit, and the get-together degenerates into a competition of who is the more successful daughter. The episode is titled "Success Perm" because the fathers of these families get perms before meeting, as curly hair is rare among Asians. I can personally say that this is incredibly true, and curly hair is highly celebrated among Chinese families. When I was younger I had very curly hair, and to this day still hear stories from some of my great aunts who remembered "how so very cute" I was when my hair was curly. I laughed so hard during this scene, mainly because it was the first time someone poked fun at the Chinese culture and it was actually 100 percent accurate, and about something that someone of the heritage wouldn't necessarily understand.

Another plot line from "Success Perm" is a competition between Jessica and her sister to impress their mother by finding a better bargain. The two go back and forth reading off their sale prices, but the mother is not impressed until Jessica's sister states that she got a dress for free (that she stole from Jessica). This is another Chinese value that I can say firsthand is true. Just recently, my grandmother started a competition between my aunt and second cousin to see who could be more frugal. This blew up in her face when my aunt bought her a cheap smartphone that I can't even figure out how to download apps on. The concept of being frugal and saving as much money as possible is probably a lesser known Chinese credo that Fresh Off the Boat effectively captures.

My favorite instance comes from the episode "Persistent Romeo." Jessica watches a special on the nightly news about sexual harassment, and urges Louis to give a seminar at the family restaurant about identifying and reporting such actions. Throughout the episode, Jessica tells everyone she meets about sexual harassment, complete with anecdotes of victims and alarming statistics. This translates directly to a recent story involving my grandmother. She calls my father completely out of the blue one week night, and rather than check in and ask about the family, she immediately warns him of an app that criminals use to take pictures of people's house keys and develop copies to rob houses with. The inclusion of the so-called "Chinese Paranoia" is yet another example of the show's ability to accurately portray Chinese-American culture.

This past week's episode "Very Superstitious" shed some light on another aspect of Chinese culture. Some Chinese people are terrified of things they believe to bring bad luck, especially the infamous number four. The Chinese word for four sounds incredibly similar to the word for death, so Chinese people tend to avoid anything with a number four on it.

While I do understand why Huang may be offended by the show, I

still believe that the show is authentic in its own right. It doesn't revert to overused stereotypes, and uses situations and jokes that only someone of the culture can really understand. What is really important about the show is its ability to poke fun at certain aspects of the Chinese culture as well as capture the essence of what makes the Chinese culture special. The show places an emphasis on hard work and commitment to each other, the core values of the Chinese culture. The constant reinforcement of these concepts along with some mockery of the more obscure beliefs makes this show worth watching for people of all ethnicities.

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## **Cafeteria Food Is Falling Down in the Health Department**

The cafeteria food at Miramonte is mediocre at best, and overpriced. The reason it is so unappetizing is the government regulations that call for making the cafeteria food more healthier. However, it has had adverse effects, such as impacting performance in the classroom. In addition, it should not be the government's job to dictate what kids do and do not eat.

First, let's start with the taste, quality, and selection of Miramonte's food. Four out of five days of the week, the food is not very appetizing. They have also had pretty much the same options all the way through my four years here. If that's not enough, they are attempting to make everything healthier but the school's idea of healthy is beyond questionable. They give us pizza on wheat bread. If healthy is what the school

is looking for, then offer a better selection of fresh fruits and vegetables (I personally love steamed broccoli, but I haven't seen much of it). Don't kill a pizza.

It's not only the pizza; it's other small things: wheat bread on sandwiches, not having condiments when you receive your meal, or the chips fully baked. Although some of the things we eat are unhealthy, it should be the students' choice to make that decision. It is not fair to the people who can control their diet to have to suffer. Also, the food choices students make at school are not what lead to obesity; it is their choices outside of school. There are only two times during the school day when students can eat cafeteria food, but at home they can eat as much and as often as they want.

High school is all about teaching teenagers to make adult decisions so when we go out into the real world we can live without depending on administrators for everything. And taking away food we like is not teaching us anything; it's only adding to the bad habits because more students are likely to eat what they can't get at school. Taking our foods away—or using wheat bread—is only sweeping our bad habits under the rug. Those bad habits will only pile up.

If the schools want healthy food, then they should take the initiative to go 100 percent. Instead of slapping a piece of meat on wheat bread and calling it a healthy meal, offer us grilled chicken, or organically grown food (good for the environment too). Instead of frying everything, maybe boiling it is a better alternative. Putting something on wheat bread does not differ from using white bread. Granted, wheat has less carbs, but that's one small area in the food pyramid. There is so much more the school is neglecting that could offer us a proper meal, and it would help our performance in the classroom when students have had full and good meals.

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# Measles Makes a Sudden Comeback

The recent measles outbreak began at Disneyland in Orange County in mid-December 2014, when at least 40 people who were working or visiting contracted measles. Now measles has spread to at least half a dozen states, and some cases have been reported in Canada and Mexico. In 2000, measles cases dropped to less than 1 percent of the US population, and the virus was on the verge of extinction in the US, but the reason it has come back 15 years later has to do with the anti-vaccination movement.

Some anti-vaccine proponents believe that people don't need vaccines to protect themselves, or their children, and that if anyone ever contracts the disease, they can just deal with it, and let the body heal itself. Some also claim that vaccines are too dangerous, believing they contain harmful chemicals. However, these claims are both scientifically and medically false.

With two doses of the MMR vaccine, preventing measles is more than 97 percent effective. Without vaccinations, the human body cannot fight off viruses and diseases such as measles, and as for the claims that vaccines are somehow more harmful to us than a virus that killed millions of people less than a century ago, are utterly insane, and are also false. Measles is highly preventable with vaccinations.

The anti-vaccination movement is as old as the first vaccines themselves, but then look what happened when the world used vaccines for polio, measles, influenza, hepatitis A and B, mumps, smallpox, diphtheria, rubella, etc. Need we go on?

Most people are worried that with the rise of the anti-vaccination movement, and the increase of measles cases, that the effects of "herd immunity" will end. Herd immunity is used to describe how as more people in the population are vaccinated against viruses and diseases, such as measles, then the risk of an outbreak is sharply lowered. The number of measles cases is now at about 156 cases, and the epicenter for the outbreak is easily traced back to Southern California, more specifically the area around Los Angeles.

The measles outbreak has led to debate over the topic of vaccinations, but this is a problem, not a solution. The solution is to face the facts, and make it a point that this isn't a debate, it shouldn't be, and to call this a debate is just plain wrong. Measles is highly preventable with vaccinations. That is all that needs to be said about the measles outbreak, and the media firestorm about it. Trust the experts, not some celebrity with absurd ideas.