

THE STEGNER YOUNG SCHOLARS' WRITING INSTITUTE

Our Voices

Issue No. 6, June 2014



A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS BY
SALT LAKE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS

What is the Stegner Young Scholars' Writing Institute?

Dear Reader,

You may wonder, "What is the Stegner Young Scholars' Writing Institute?" This page provides information explaining our work and goals. The Salt Lake City School District and the University of Utah co-sponsor the annual Stegner Young Scholars' Writing Institute (The Stegner Institute) each June. This publication, Our Voices Magazine, is an annual collection of the essays written by Stegner Institute students. The life of Wallace Stegner provides inspiration for the work done through the Stegner Institute: Wallace Stegner is a distinguished writer, past residence of Salt Lake and alumnus of East High School.

The purpose of The Stegner Institute is to instruct and encourage student writers to find strength in their voice as a persuasive writer and commit their arguments to paper using evidence, logic and examples to support their claims. A secondary purpose is to allow teachers of writing to collaboratively hone their teaching skills. To accomplish these goals, The Stegner Institute invites high school students and secondary English Language Arts teachers from the district to discover the power of writing during a two-week writing institute on The University of Utah campus.

For the 10 days of The Stegner Institute, students and teachers are immersed in writing workshops for four hours each day. During the first week, students select a topic of personal interest and research their topic, which includes investigating their topic from different perspectives. During the second week, students focus on supporting their claims with relevant evidence and revising their writing. The end product is a well-supported and researched argumentative essay that is polished and ready for publication.



In this collection you will encounter many tender and thought-provoking beliefs and arguments. The positions, opinions, and conclusions in these essays represent the authors' point of view and are not endorsed by the district, the Stegner Institute faculty, or the University of Utah. If you read an essay that disturbs you, we encourage you to stop reading it and/or discuss it with a parent, teacher or friend. Both the student author and the Stegner Institute faculty have tried to ensure that the information in the essays is accurate and that the writing is polished. Please remember that these are essays written by developing authors and thinkers, and are published with minimal editing. Publishing student writing encourages the reluctant writer, strengthens students' self confidence, rewards interest and careful revisions as well as provides young writers with the opportunity to refine their thinking and express their opinions to a wider audience.

The Stegner Institute is made possible by generous support from the district, The University of Utah, The Salt Lake Foundation, And the East High Alumni. To learn about how you can support The Stegner Institute, please contact Michael Williams- Director of Development and External Relations, at Michael.Williams@slcschools.org.

Sincerely,

Monica Ferguson (U of U) and Laura Scarpulla (district) , Co-Directors of the Stegner Institute

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OUR VOICES celebrates SLCSD students as developing writers. Students selected, researched, drafted and revised their way through topics of personal importance. The context for this experience was the Stegner Young Scholars' Writing Institute, honoring Wallace Stegner as a distinguished writer, past resident of SLC and student of East High.

***The publication of this magazine is made possible by a grant from The East High Foundation and the Salt Lake Education Foundation.**

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We shouldn't deport immigrants if their child is a U.S Citizen

This Is My Voice



Kimberly Cruz
Science Center

Could you imagine being separated from your family at a young age? Children have been sent to foster care and been separated from their parents because they have been deported to their own country. Immigrant parents shouldn't get deported to their own country if their child is born in the U.S. because children have been sent to foster care and in the past we let immigrants come to the U.S.

Children have been sent to foster care because their parents have been deported "Thousands of children stuck in foster care after parents deported" (Genna Jackson, 2011). This is a problem because the children end up being alone, and they're not going to be right next to their parents. The children would get depressed and sad because of being separated from their parents; also when the children are getting sent to foster care, their parents either have been deported or detained.

In the past we let immigrants come to the U.S. A quote from Emma Lazarus says, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddle masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refused of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless tempest-tost, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door." This is a problem because the Statue of Liberty is sending a message to everyone that we are the land of free. It is saying that it is a freedom country and that we should let immigrants can come to the U.S. America's philosophy has always welcomed anyone who wanted a better life, and since the Statue of Liberty is sending out the message, then why are we still



deporting people today? Why are they separating families? The Statue of Liberty is welcoming all the immigrants that are coming to the U.S. However, there are those who

believe that we should enforce our immigration laws.

Many believe that our immigration laws are valuable because they protect Americans from danger. Stated in the website www.news-week.org, I.C.E. says that 74% of parents are being deported because they have committed a crime. I disagree with this because the data from www.immigrationpolicy.org on March 28, 2014 explains that within I.C.E.'s own statistics reveal that the crimes committed by these are mostly minor offenses. 23% are very serious crimes rated a level 3. They have also been deporting people without regard for their legal rights, and this is important to me because they are deporting immigrants for the smallest things, not the big ones, and are separating families.

For all the reasons above, we should stop sending children to foster care after their parents have been deported and let immigrants stay in the U.S. This topic would influence the future because we would stop separating families and sending children to foster care and just let people in. I care about this because at my age it would be really hard to see my family be separated, so no child should have to go through that. So what do you think? Should we stop separating families? Or have children struggle in life?

Text About This

This Is My Voice



**Hannah Brook
Highland**

Imagine that you are driving down the road and your phone rings. Everyone has experienced this. Would you pick it up or wait to pull over to answer it? Most of us teens would not think to pull over. Licensed teenagers should not be allowed to have their phones while driving because teenagers do not have enough driving experience, and studies show that humans cannot multi-task safely while driving.

Teenagers are new to the driving experience and probably have not suffered the consequences of a risky collision yet. "The biggest rate of crashes was computed for driving experience after licensure" (Anne T. McCartt, 2003). Teens may think that a collision could not happen to them. Unfortunately, they happen to everyone. A classmate of a family friend, Erika Knell, was a ski racer who was training for the 2011 Olympics. While heading eastbound on I-80, outside of Park City, Utah, her phone had fallen off of her seat. As she reached down to pick it up, she lost control of the wheel, causing her car to flip over. She also was not wearing a seat belt, and later died from the traumatic injuries. She was only 17. Any teenager like Erika, a responsible driver, can easily get distracted like this. The use of cellular devices and driving are clearly a dangerous pair.

"People can't multi-task, and when they say they can, they are deluding themselves" (pbworks.com). Hu-

mans cannot do two things at once according to John Hamilton, who explains that the human brain can only shift focus between two different things. It is simply impossible to do two things at the same time. Text messaging while walking is a significant area for concern. The dangers of multitasking have hit the streets as people are becoming involved in more accidents while walking as they text or use mobile phones. Furthermore, if we can't walk and text at the same time without some impairment, who really thinks they can text and drive and be perfectly fine? Though

drivers reported using cell phones while driving, spending an average of 4.5 minutes per call. Cell phone distraction is thought to be the cause of nearly 80% of automobile accidents and 65% of near-accidents (Robert D. Foss, 2009). I encountered my own experience, standing near the corner of a main intersection on a busy Wednesday from 5:00-6:00 pm. I observed 32 drivers with a cellphone either up to their ear or being held against the steering wheel. More than half of the number I counted were teenagers, and two teen drivers had a car full of distracting friends. One



the brain can shift from one task to another in seconds, the brain cannot physically watch or do two things at the exact same time.

While some people say that the law has already restricted phone use while driving, more needs to be done. The percentage of phone use has only gone down by one percent since the law passed. As of October 2009, seven U.S. states banned driving while talking on a handheld cell phone. Years later, use was 65 percent lower than expected after the ban. Later, studies revealed that approximately one-half of interviewed

of those cars with distracted teens as passengers did an illegal U-turn while on their phone. Clearly not enough has been done.

Unquestionably, teenagers should not be allowed to have their phones while driving. If we do not make stricter laws, distracted driving will continue to cause deaths in America and the percentage of teens using their phones will keep rising. We do not want any more loved ones, like Erika, losing their bright futures over a silly text message or phone call. So think next time you hear that ring...is it worth it?

The World Cup: who does it benefit?

This Is My Voice



Joanna Rodriguez
Science Center

Another four years have passed since the last World Cup. Once again you'll be able to see classic games and visit new countries. Normally, you don't think about the native people rioting in the streets demanding to stop the games from happening or the children having to be forced to work to build new stadiums that are supposed to be built by a certain deadline. To many sport spectators it means a month long excitement, and a new world champion; still some people that live in the hosting country might not be happy about the World Cup, and who can blame them? Hosting a world cup event has no clear economic benefit because arenas that are built are rarely used after an event and the country's gross domestic product (GDP) has no great impact from hosting the games.

With fourteen billion dollars invested into the World Cup, it's no wonder people are rioting against the games, claiming that instead of funding goods and services that'll help the public, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) officials use countries and cities that don't have the correct infrastructure and renovate massive stadiums without investing in public services. According to University of Michigan sports economist Stefan Symanski, "It's about claiming credit. They want to build their name take the credit for everything they can. Farming it out to nations that have to spend a lot of money actually turns out to be in

their interests." This means that FIFA officials have been building arenas to get their company known and have little or no interest in helping out the people who are suffering. Rio de Janeiro is a city in Brazil that lacks adequate health care and education. Instead of spending money on health care or education, Brazil is spending millions of dollars to build stadiums that don't help the people. Past World Cup hosting countries have experienced negative effects with stadiums built. In Japan, Korea, and South Africa they struggle with wasteful buildings that take up land that could be used by citizens. These "white elephants" are used for show during the events and are abandoned after the games are done. They do not hold a purpose after the games are over, and it's sad to think that the money could have been spent to build hospitals or schools that are greatly needed.

While the World Cup brings in much excitement for a month, it's certain that hosting such a large event has no long term financial benefit. According to an article titled, "South Africa's World Cup warning to Brazil" by Matt Egan, "South Africa's economy has not been able to overcome its structural problems--before or after the World Cup-- including income inequality that has triggered labor strikes in the country's big mining sector." In other words, the World Cup hasn't influenced the work force into helping their employees, and South Africa is a nation with problems that haven't found any solutions. The World Cup brought pride to South Africa, but it continues to struggle with its economy, and its GDP has gone down. There have been reports conducted by the Moody's rating agency showing that the impacts of sporting events have been brief and

limited. The World Cup is a temporary factor to improving a country's financial problems, and after the games are over the economy will go back to how it was before or even worsen.

There are many that argue that the World Cup attracts tourism and this puts money into the economy of a country. In fact, in the 2010 World Cup a portion of the money earned was spent to build a state of the art rail system in Johannesburg and to make highway improvements. The rail system seemed to be an improvement, but South African citizens have negatively expressed their feelings towards the rail because of its high rates and negative impact on the environment. Imaan Milanza who lives outside Nelspruit South Africa states, "They lied to us." Their lives were not improved from the railroads being built. There is no doubt that the World Cup brings joy to many soccer fanatics. As a result of this, many people do not realize what is happening inside a country; building railroads and stadiums isn't going to help families that can barely survive.

In conclusion, the World Cup has no clear economic benefit and takes land from the public. In the future if FIFA officials stopped building and renovating new stadiums, the money that would be put into the arenas could build schools and clinics. Imagine giving a child an opportunity to get an education because they made a school nearby or supporting a family that is struggling by giving them a part of land where they can grow crops. When you are watching the World Cup, or any sporting event, remember that miles beyond the stadium lights people are trying to live another day. Educate yourself about what the hosting country is like in both economic and social standard.

Schools Against Suicide

This Is My Voice



Analisa Uribe
Science Center

Did you know that suicide is the second leading cause of death for children ages 10-17 in the state of Utah? As a student, I have had to personally deal with the fact that suicide is a horrible thing. My father took his own life when I was nine years old. Although he wasn't a child

between the ages of 10-17, he was an important part of my family, and the pain of his loss was indescribable. The loss of any family member due to suicide is just as horrific for any family but especially with children, because generally speaking most of these tragic events could be prevented. Suicide prevention programs should be put into Salt Lake City high schools because students will become more comfortable about sharing suicidal thoughts and information in a safe school setting, the current yearly schoolwide bullying assemblies only touch the

surface of the topic of suicide, and the prevention program would also bring attention to those students who aren't aware of suicide issues in their own school.

First of all, if there was a suicide prevention program in place, those students who have suicidal thoughts and/or tendencies would feel more comfortable sharing that information in a school counselor's office because they would know that there is a qualified individual who is able to help the student(s) with their situation. According to the Utah Department of Health, in an aver-



age class size of thirty students, 8 of those students will have reported feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Where are those students going to report those feelings? The answer is the school counselor. The job of a school counselor is to provide a safe environment to allow students to share information that could possibly be troubling them. In 2013 the Utah Legislature passed HB 154, "Which requires school districts and charter schools to implement a youth suicide prevention program for students in grades 7 - 12 (Utah State Office of Education)." Teachers are required to watch a training video (www.uen.org) to become qualified for suicide prevention. If more students knew that their teachers are qualified, then more students would feel more comfortable sharing personal information regarding their thoughts on suicide and/or their situation.

Schools, in an attempt to prevent bullying and its effects, often leave out how to help those students who have or are currently being bullied and are possibly thinking about ending their own life. The annual programs and assemblies only talk about the prevention of bullying, not the prevention of suicide for those students who have or who are being bullied. Many schools in the SLCS D district have taken students to see the anti-bullying movie "Bully" or have held schoolwide anti-harassment assemblies to prevent those situations school wide. As stated in rogerebert.com, a popular movie review site, "One of the themes in Lee Hirsch's documentary is how many parents and teachers have no idea what's really happening in the secret society of children in their

care. Many bullied children are reluctant to tell anyone what's happening to them. Are they embarrassed or scared?" In the movie "Bully" it talks about the worst case scenarios for some of the victims in the documentary: suicide. The documentary then goes on to talk about ways that the parents, students, and staff members of the schools of those victims go on to take steps to make sure that the school is on a track to preventing and stopping bullying. As a result of the "Bully" movie bringing to light the effects of bullying on students in a school setting, some other causes of suicide have been left in the dark. In a list of over twenty of the most common factors of suicide taken from www.suicide.org/suicide-causes, bullying just begins to scratch the surface of what factors can lead to someone taking their own life.

In addition to the reasons above, how much do peers know about a student's personal thoughts, feelings, and mental health? Students today aren't aware that suicide can happen in their own school. Today, high school students have a good idea of what is going on socially. But do they know what is going on emotionally with their friends? In the four years I have been at my school, there hasn't been a suicide of a student. I had only ever heard about it on the news or online. According to the Utah Department of Health, "An average of 22 Utahns ages 15-19 die from suicide each year." I wouldn't have known about the loss of any of those lives unless I had looked it up or seen it on the news. The reality is that it can happen anywhere. Even in your own school.

On the other hand, some believe that suicide prevention begins

with the parents. It is the parents' job to show their child that they are loved and are important to their family and friends. The thought of even taking their own life needs to be taken out of the child's head by their parents. It's understandable to see why the parents would be responsible for their own child in this situation. With that said, students spend more time at school during the day than they do at home, and most parents work during the day and usually don't come home till after five o'clock in the evening. As much as a parent can try, they can't do everything; their child's school has to help play a part in this as well. Wouldn't it make sense that the teachers have better understanding of how the students are feeling based on their school performance?

In summary, a suicide prevention program should be put into Salt Lake City high schools because students will become more comfortable about sharing suicidal thoughts and information in a safe school setting with a qualified individual, and the yearly school-wide bullying assemblies only touch the surface of the topic of suicide. The prevention program would also bring attention to those students who aren't aware that suicide issues happen in their own school and are not just something they would see on the news. By putting these programs into action we can decrease the number of students who lose their lives to suicide each year. I have lost a family member to suicide and have had a friend almost take their own life. Are you going to stand in the way of a potential life-saving opportunity?

More Urban Forests, Please

This Is My Voice



Ian Chapline
Open Classroom

You may not know it, but you are surrounded by urban forests. Sometimes called “green spaces.” Urban forests are any wooded area that is located in a city (like large parks). In a broader sense, this includes trees in parking lots, trees that might line streets. Salt Lake City should invest more in the creation of urban forests because they clean the environment by purifying our air and water, improve living conditions, save energy, and generate annual revenue.

In today’s world of heightened environmental concerns and questions, it is becoming increasingly more important that people and cities alike maintain a certain level of vigilance about their environmental impact. Urban forests help to clean the environment in a city by purifying the air by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; if planted in the right spot, urban forests can clean the water in an area as well. By planting more urban forests, Salt Lake City can reduce the amount of negative impact it has on the environment. A survey done by the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) found that planting

just one hundred trees can remove two tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air annually. That same survey found that in the U.S. urban forests have been found to remove a total of about 800,000 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year. Trees, like other plants, remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release oxygen through the process of photosynthesis.

Urban forests purify polluted water; they intercept rainfall, absorbing it into the roots and soil, and cleanse the water of any pollutants. They also absorb any water runoff from sprinklers and garden hoses (nslcity.org). Due to the fact that cities in general have so many impermeable surfaces, water and other liquids can build up rather than being absorbed into the ground. Rain water is a prime example of this. As rain falls and moves along pavement or gutters, it can easily become contaminated by pollutants like gasoline or spilled motor oil. This same water may find its way into small above ground streams and waterways and has a chance to get into tap water or even drinking water if it is not filtered and treated properly in a water treatment facility (epa.gov). This can also happen to water that might flow out of a garden hose or even the sprinklers in someone’s yard; the water flows over

pavement or surfaces with harmful chemicals or other substances on them (like the aforementioned gasoline or motor oil), and become contaminated.

As the environment around an urban forest becomes more clean and sustainable, the property value of the area also increases. A cleaner environment means a better space, and a better space means more people want to spend more time around that area. If an urban forest (or even just trees) is planted near or on the property of a residential space such as an apartment building, the value of that property immediately increases. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), trees that are planted in the right spots around a building can reduce energy costs by 15%-20%, in both the winter and summer months. They will provide shade in the summer, which can diminish the cost of air cooling and conditioning by 30%. This isn’t just applicable for places like apartment buildings. Continuing with the theme of summer months and shade, trees planted in parking lots can keep parked cars anywhere from 5-10 degrees cooler. In the colder months, trees planted strategically can reduce heating costs by 2-8% by blocking wind and the other elements. Furthermore, the amount of effort that you need to put into the creation

of urban forests depends on your resources, money, and available space which can dictate how large the urban forest actually is and how much it will cost. One study done by USEPA (the United States Environmental Protection Agency) found that every dollar spent on the planting, nurturing, and care of a tree planted in an urban forest actually yielded \$1.50-\$3.00 for every dollar invested. On average, the annual cost to maintain an individual tree within an urban forest ranges from \$15-\$65, with net annual benefits ranging from \$30-\$90/tree. All of that is on top of the money urban forests bring in through saving energy and improving property value.

There is the argument, however,

that the creation of more urban forests would use space that could otherwise be used for houses and business buildings and that there are more immediate projects that need attention, such as creating jobs or taking care of the large homeless population. These are valid points, but an urban forest doesn't need a space all its own. Trees can be planted near a building or around its perimeter and still have the same effect on the environment, if not a better one because it will be saving energy as well as purifying the environment. Furthermore, the large-scale environmental effects that urban forests have are mostly long term (though there are measurable immediate effects like conservation

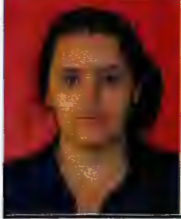
of energy). So, as an urban forest is growing, Salt Lake City and its citizens will be free to tackle larger projects that require more attention or effort.

To conclude, Salt Lake City should invest more in the creation of urban forests: they clean our air, purify our water, and make money. In the long run, the planting of urban forests is just as important as other endeavors deemed more immediate. I want to be able to breathe fresh air when I go out and not to have to worry about toxins entering my lungs. Support the creation of more urban forests in Salt Lake City; we'll all benefit from it.



KEEPING OUR WILDERNESS WILD

This Is My Voice



Emma Hanson
Science Center

In 2012 Governor Gary Herbert signed HB 148, the Transfer of Public Lands Act. This bill would demand that millions of acres of public land currently controlled by the federal government be turned over to the Utah state government by 2015. These lands include all of Utah's national forests, the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and many more public wildlife and wilderness areas. The federal government should remain in control of Utah's public lands because it has the most expansive vision and the better record of success in managing lands for conservation and public use. The Utah state government is more likely to sell or lease land for commercial use; it would be against the Utah constitution to take control of the lands; and these wilderness areas don't just belong to Utah, they need to be accessible to people from all over the world.

The state government's past actions have made it clear they have no qualms about allowing extractive industries to exploit mineral, oil, and gas resources in beautiful wilderness areas. "Extractive industries" describes any operation that takes raw materials out of the land, including

open pit mining, fracking, the production of oil from tar sands, and other environmentally destructive processes. One example of a wildlife area already owned by the state government is Lake Canyon. Lake Canyon is near the Strawberry River in Duchesne County, it was originally bought by the state for the lake, which is used to shelter brood populations of native cutthroat trout. Ac-

sold are examples of how there is no guarantee that state-controlled wilderness areas will remain open to the public and be kept pristine.

Not only has the state shown it won't protect the wilderness lands it already owns, but it is also willing to defy Utah's constitution to acquire more public lands. Article Three, Section Two of the Utah State Constitution states, "The



cording to an article in the Salt Lake Tribune by Brian Maffly, part of the Lake Canyon wildlife area will be auctioned off on June 25th of this year. "Bill Barrett Corp. and Berry Petroleum have already sunk numerous wells along the bottom of Lake Canyon, and Berry is proposing to drill more wells to the west in the Avintaquin Canyon Wildlife Management Area, which includes Lake Canyon," wrote Maffly. In short, the oil wells drilled in Lake Canyon and those planned to be built when it is

people inhabiting this State do affirm and declare that they forever disclaim all right and title to the unappropriated public lands lying within the boundaries hereof." Any attempt to take over federal lands in Utah, therefore, directly violates the constitution. This fact has been pointed out to the state government by the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel. In reference to HB 148, they wrote that "any attempt by Utah in the future to enforce the requirement, have [sic]

a high probability of being declared unconstitutional.” Ken Ivory, the chief sponsor of HB 148, argues that states west of Colorado were treated differently than eastern states in that the federal government retained control of a much higher percentage of their lands. Ivory and his supporters believe that the federal government promised to “relinquish title” to those lands and failed to keep that promise. It seems clear, however, that any effort by the state government to take control of public lands would be unconstitutional.

We also have to remember the wider effect Utah’s public lands have and how many people from all around the world come to visit them each year. Utah’s public lands belong not only to Utah but to everyone. Keeping them under federal control ensures they remain open to the public. Utah is home to five of the most breathtaking national forests in the country, including Manti-La Sal National Forest and Ashley National Forest. According to a study done by the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program, run by the U.S. Forest Service, there were over 173 million recreation visits to national forests between 2005 and 2009. In that same time frame, the American public made an additional 300 million visits to scenic byways and other travel routes near national forest lands. These people were not just Americans visiting the forests in their own states; they were people from all over the world. Each person who has camped in a national forest or hiked across Utah’s desert remembers that experience of being amidst the grandeur of nature and knows the significance and importance of conservation in

Utah. If the state gained control of Utah’s national forests, there is no guarantee that those forests will be preserved and remain open to the public.

The main argument for transferring Utah’s public lands to the state is that it could help fund education. It’s true that Utah spends the least amount of money per pupil in the country on education—just above \$6,000 according to Education Week’s Andrew Ujifusa and Michele McNeil. Some land inside Utah is already managed for the benefit of public schools and institutions in the state. In recent years, aggressive management of this land has generated significant revenues. The School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) has generated \$1.3 billion in revenue since 1994. As the SITLA website explains, “Trust lands are parcels of land managed ... for the exclusive benefit of state institutions or beneficiaries, as designated by Congress. Because these lands are held in trust, they differ greatly from public lands, and are more akin to private lands. Only about 6% of the state’s acreage is set aside as trust lands to generate revenue for beneficiaries, primarily public schools.” Proponents of state control for all public lands have argued that we could model the profits generated by SITLA for all public land if only the state were allowed to make all the decisions.

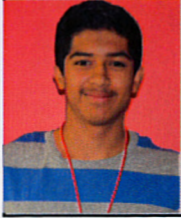
There are two points of concern relative to this claim. First, selling off lands, or bleeding them of resources, is not a long-term fix for Utah’s education funding challenges. We can’t sell land every time we need to spend more on education. There isn’t enough wild land left

in Utah for that to be sustainable, let alone the fact that it is morally wrong to destroy the beautiful land we should be working to conserve. Second, Utah is more reluctant than any other state in the west to tax its existing extractive industries. As revealed in a report by Headwaters Economics, Utah had the lowest effective tax on oil and natural gas production—coming in at 3.3% compared to states like Wyoming whose tax rate is 11.4%. These percentages demonstrate that instead of encouraging more extractive industry in Utah, we need to institute more up-to-date taxation of the existing industry. It’s clear there is a need for more education funding in Utah, but that need does not overtake the need for conservation in Utah. Taking control of federal lands is not the most effective way of raising money for education.

In summation, Utah’s public lands should remain under the federal government’s control because we need wild places. Camping on red rock and hiking through national forests means something—spiritually and psychologically—not just to Utahns but to thousands of others who visit Utah each year. Such experiences have a profound effect, causing people—no matter where they grew up—to care about these landscapes, desire their protection, and learn to value the interconnections of life in all its forms. If we allow our lands to be torn apart by industry, or closed to the public, or ruined for short-term gain, future generations will not be able to experience the beauty and transformative power of the natural world. We owe it to our children to look into the future with the longest possible lens.

MONEY PROBLEMS IN HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

This Is My Voice



Javier Argueta
Marroquin
Highland

My name is Javier Argueta. I go to Highland High School, and I am about to be a junior. I participate in wrestling and soccer, and it has come to me that the schools do not split the money equally so every sport and club can get all the equipment they need. Schools should give equal money to all sports so they can all get what they need and still keep it fair with all other sports and clubs in the school. I believe that the school and the school district do not give equal amounts of money to all sports and clubs in the school. Last season for soccer we did not have a lot of new things. We never got new equipment, and when I saw football and basketball they had so many new things. I'm not saying give us the same amount of money that football gets; I'm saying, give us the right amount of money so we can get everything we need for the season.

It has come to me that the school doesn't split the money equally so every sport and club can get all the equipment they need. I asked my counselor, and she told me, "Football and basketball are attractions for people. They get more money than others because they can get the money back by selling tickets

and food in football games. They are the ones that feed the school. They pay for mostly everything. They help every other sport and school. If they don't make enough money, then all other clubs in the school don't get a lot of money." That is not fair to all other sports. If other sports had a chance to make more people go and watch them, they could probably make the money they need for the season. Yes, all sports fundraise, but that's not enough. If they got more help from the school, they would have less time fundraising, and that equals more practice time.

All other sports always have to use what they got last season. My friend that was in football at Highland told me that when he was in football they did get a lot of money and that money goes to them and everyone else in school. But the thing that makes the money difficult to divide is that the school needs books and new things. When they do that they start giving more to all sports, but if we had to get everything in the same time the school will not have enough money for the year. There are a lot of things the school has to pay for, but the school does not pay for the teacher—that is the school district's job. And therefore, I believe all sports and clubs should get a good amount of money to get all the equipment they need and to have the school districts pay for the books.

Why does high school judge sports by how good they are?

All high school sports are

judged by their historical and present performance. In Highland we can see that it is a rugby school. They get everything, like new bags, uniforms, warm-ups, equipment. They are not even a team at Highland. They are a club. Highland soccer was always being judged by the problems we have had with other schools, like fighting. When that happened this year, our coach told us that we had to do community service, and we lost a large amount of money, which cost us lots of equipment and players. He told us that our next season is counting on our fundraisers. Therefore, I believe the school should not take away any money from sports because that will affect the new team for next year, and all new people have to face what the team did last season. Mostly every team in all schools will be in fights. If football gets in fights, they don't take money away from them; they will just get mad at them and keep on playing. It's not fair that smaller teams get the worst consequences, and football and basketball get small consequences.

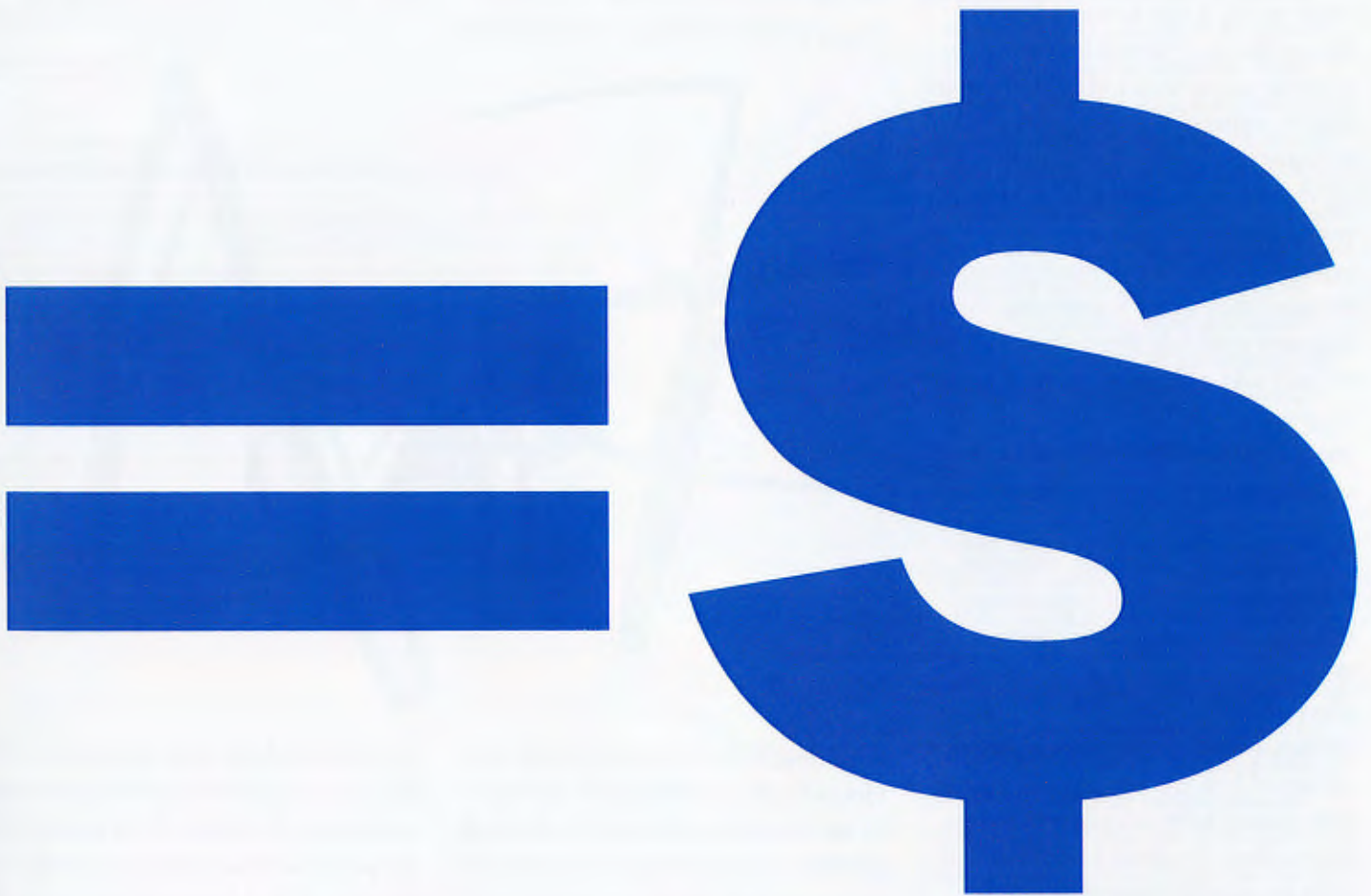
High school sports have turned into small businesses. I think it is involved in certain sports, like in soccer and girls' basketball. They don't get as much money as men's soccer and men's basketball. My soccer coach in Highland is also the girls' soccer coach and he told me, "I can tell by men's soccer and women's soccer that they give more money to male

sports than women's sports. They give less to my girls' soccer team than men's soccer team because not a lot of people like watching girls' sports. I think that sports in high school are turning into a business." They sure are turning into a business. I don't know if everyone knows this, but the school who wins region or state gets more money for that certain sport so they can be ready for next season. I believe that's why the school gives more money to football and basketball because if they win they can get a lot of money

for that sport. High school sports should not turn into businesses because that is taking away what sports teach students: to be hard-working, to influence themselves to have good grades in school, to show team work, to show inspiration in the sport, and to have fun. I, myself, think high school has turned into a company to make money for the school to make it better. Therefore I believe sports shouldn't be turned into a business with money in high school.

In conclusion, money in high

school should be divided in what all sports and clubs need for the season. This will influence the future by keeping everything equal and fair in all sports and clubs and school. I care a lot about this concern because I, myself, am in a sport in high school, and last season we did not have enough equipment to make it a good season. In the end I want everything to be equal and fair to all sports and for us to get new equipment to practice with and to make our school champions.



Take Fine Arts Classes!

This Is My Voice



Sarah Hansen
West High

Imagine a world where expression was demolished. A world where creativity was looked down upon, and there was only science and math. A world without the fine arts. That world is not a world I would like to live in. I would like to live in a world where in schools student are able to express themselves, and have a better academic education because of the fine arts. In our world today many student are taking mostly science, English, and math classes because they don't know what the fine arts could do for them. Students should take a fine arts class because they would get better grades, their parents will be able to be more involved, and it provides a luxury that students didn't know they had.

Fine arts can help improve a student's grade. An experiment done by Don Showalter showed that students who took a fine art class obtained A's and B's while the students who didn't take any art class obtained low C's and high D's. Fine arts classes help students discipline themselves. Students learn from art how to manage their time and to understand different concepts better. For example, music helps students in their math class by understanding and seeing patterns and beats.

In fact, when taking a fine arts class you use the right side of your brain. The right side of the brain helps with "recognizing faces, expressing emotions, music, reading emotions, color, images, intuition, and creativity," says Kendra Cherry, a psychosocial rehabilitation specialist for children. When taking classes other than fine arts classes such as math or English, you use the left side of your brain. The left side of the brain helps with "language, logic, critical thinking, numbers, and



reasoning," Kendra Cherry also says. However, fine art students are able to use both sides of their brain in all of their classes. Using both sides of the brain helps students focus and understand things better, and help them obtain better grades.

Fine arts is not only to help students, but their parents too.

Parents are not able to help their student with some of their homework because they are not able to get a good grasp on what the homework is. With fine arts parents are able to be more involved in their child's education. Every child does not learn things the same way. Although, when a student takes a fine arts class, they obtain a set of skills that they use in other classes. This helps parents because now they are able get some type of understand-

ing on how their student learns, and they can help their student with their academic education. Art is not only for parents to help their students, but also to see their student's progress. "Artwork is a tangible medium through which parents can see their child's progress in school," says a statement from the study of Fine

Arts in schools done by the University of Michigan. Parents can't really see their child's progress in school through regular mediums such as report cards and parent-teacher conferences. However with fine art, parents are able to see their student's progress. For example, a parent can look at a student's math homework and see that their child is under-standing math. On the other hand the parents are not able to see how long it took the student to progress. With art a student can draw a picture, sing, dance, and so on, and a parent is able to become more involved. When parents become more involved, it helps with communication between parent and student.



The fine arts is a luxury for students. Luxury is in the eye of the beholder. A luxury to someone could be a cellphone. While a luxury to someone else could be food. However, to everyone the fine arts is a luxury for expression. NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said:

We must focus on educating the

whole child. Students should be exposed to abroad and rich curriculum that includes not only math and reading, but courses and clubs that focus on dance, music, art, theater and other creative disciplines. The arts are important. They enrich our lives. They have always offered ways to learn and express ideas.

The fine arts help to educate the student in many ways to help with creativity and expression. Expression as a student helps the student to be more active in home and in school.

In contrast to how participating in a fine arts class can help students, "Students get too passionate about their art classes and completely neglect their core classes,"

says Nadia Abramson, University School of NSU. When a student gets bored, they start to do things that distract themselves and others from the lesson being taught, such as tapping their pencil to the beat of a song or doodling in the borders of their notebook. However, this shows that the student is not fo-

cused on the lesson because of the teacher. A teacher should make their class a class that catches and keeps the attention of the students and a class the students want to participate more in. Fine art classes help students be more active in all of their classes. For example, a student taking a world civilizations class would write their notes in a way that reflects a music class they are taking.

Secondly, people have said that art classes may not help students when they apply to college or a university. In the United States of America the majority of the colleges and universities are looking for students who have taken a fine arts class or what course a student would like to take at their school. For example, the Arizona State University is looking for "one year of high school fine arts or three-credit college fine arts course". At the Salt Lake Community College certain courses that a student takes requires some type of fine arts class. For example, if a student wanted to major in International Studies or Foreign Language they would need a film and culture class.

Participating in a fine arts class helps with a student's school life and home life. Students who don't participate in any fine arts class will have a struggle with comprehension, organization, and different concepts. Everyone in my family who has taken a fine arts class was able to understand things quicker and has obtained higher grades than the family member who didn't take any type of fine arts class. Take a fine arts class and the future will be bigger and better than what you thought it could be.

The Purple Haze = Great Art Craze

This Is My Voice



Saffron Peroy
Highland

In the 60s drugs became a big influence on art and music. During that era drugs were more accessible in America for anyone to use. Drugs affected the music and art in the 60s because they helped create new genres in both mediums.

If musicians hadn't tried drugs they wouldn't have branched out and we wouldn't have the music we have today. Musicians have been inspired by drugs as we see in this quote: "Inspired by the use of mind altering drugs, Psychedelic rock broke with traditional rock and laid the roots for the experimental rock genres of the seventies and eighties" (crescentok.com). The 60s style of music was highly influenced by drugs: "Without the use of hallucinogenic drugs by musicians, this style of music would not have existed" (blogs.longwood.edu). If this style of music didn't exist, the music we have today wouldn't exist. Drugs brought musicians to try different musical styles and different types of instruments. According to blogs.longwood.edu, "The 1960s psychedelic era induced changes in both the sound and lyrical content of music, which consequently shaped the future of rock music." These changes shaped the style that we are familiar with today:

"Psychedelic music evolved in the 60s as an off shoot of rock and roll adding eastern influences, including sitars, and other instruments." (crescentok.com). If they hadn't tried different instruments like sitars we wouldn't have as wide of a variety of instruments in our music today. If musicians didn't try drugs we wouldn't have people with a wide range of music. "The Byrds effortlessly flew like a feathered Learjet through Dylan-esque musings, inner galactic Psychedelic, and Cosmic American Music soundscapes that helped bring country music to a wider audience." (allaboutthesixties.blogspot.com). Musicians widened their music which widened their audiences.

If artists hadn't used drugs we wouldn't have the art we have today: "LSD and its subsequent popularity as an agent that produces altered states of consciousness was at the core of the psychedelic Art movement"



(arthistory.net). This quote shows that artists who had taken drugs started to create new art. Artists like Andy Warhol who took the drug Obetrol (also known as Adderall) and was inspired to create the Oxidation series. The Oxidation series is when Andy Warhol had people come urinate on his art work that he had primed with copper-based paint, the acid in the urine turned the copper green which Andy liked. "Victor was Andy's ghost pisser on the Oxidations. He would come to the Factory to urinate on canvases that had already been primed with a copper-based paint by Andy or Ronnie



Curtrone, a second ghost pissier. There were boys who'd come to lunch and drink too much wine, and find it funny or even flattering to be asked to help Andy 'paint'." (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andy_Warhol).

Andy's drug use gave him a unique idea like having people urinate on his art, Andy Warhol's pop art is still used today in society. Pop art is everywhere in our culture today; as we see in this quote: "The imagery of Andy Warhol is still affected to the extent that a large American music fashion retailer is dedicated to selling Warhol items. Adorning the bodies of today's youth are Warhol icons showing Marilyn Monroe, skulls and guns. Image of Warhol conception can be seen on skateboards, watches and footwear." (www.the-influences.com/andy-warhol-influences.html). Andy has been a huge influence in the world today, "There is little doubt that his influence is still being felt by many today and that his artistic visions will persist for generations to come." (www.the-influence.com/andy-warhol-influences.html). Andy has helped the world of art discover new styles.

In contrast, not all artists need drugs as an influence on their work, both in the 60s and today. For example, Frank Zappa was a drug-free and popular artist in the 60s. However, the work created today without drug influence is not as "out there" or crazy as what was created under the influence. So, society benefited through this and it evolved into the styles we use today. "Throughout the decade it became increasingly clear that there had been a profound change in the culture of the art world" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andy_Warhol). Despite all the negative perspectives on drug use, without it the artists of the 60s wouldn't have gone out as they did and we wouldn't have as broad of an art culture.

Clearly art wouldn't have been profoundly changed without drugs. Art is still changing today. Artists look to the past as they stretch their work into the future. Since drugs changed the way artists looked at things, they also changed the way we today look at things. I love art and music. It's an important part of my life. And I appreciate the creative, hallucinogenic expression that came out of the 60s. So, as Jimi Hendrix sang, "Purple haze was in my brain, lately things don't seem the same, actin' funny but I don't know why 'scuse me while I kiss the sky."

EARTHQUAKE IN UTAH

This Is My Voice



Kayley Laureano
West High

There are many natural disasters in our world. We just can't stop nature from being nature. It's just something that is part of our lives. Utah is our home, and it contains one of the largest earthquake faults in the country--the Wasatch Fault. When you went to school, there were always those earthquake drills you had to practice. It's all for an earthquake, that may or may not happen, but if it does it will change our lives drastically. Therefore, families should be more aware and prepare for a possible earthquake in Utah. It may sound like a hassle, but it's better to know what is going on and be safer, prevent less damages when the time comes, and save money along the way.

Families should prepare for an earthquake, so that they could know that they are safe, know what will be happening, and take immediate action when the time comes. According to Utah Seismic Safety Commission (ASSC), 90% of our population in Utah are in active earthquake zones. In just Salt Lake County, we have a population of 1.064 million. Looking at The Great Utah Shakeout website we only have 315,368 participants. That is not even half of the population that is

participating. What makes matters worse is that this county is a very hazardous zone for earthquakes. You may think that only a series of small earthquakes happen in Utah, but one of these "small" earthquakes could end up being a 7.5 earthquake. You and your family will not know what hit them and will not know what to do. So if an earthquake were to happen go through this procedure: drop to the floor, take cover under a desk or table, and hold on to it until the shaking stops (drop, cover and hold on!). This is just one method, looking online or asking around for other safe ways will help your family and gain awareness that easily.

When an earthquake strikes, it does more than damaging homes and buildings. In fact, if there were to be an earthquake, the city would be dealing with other damages caused by the earthquake. First, as ASSC states, these other damages could be fires created by the earthquake, dam failures, liquefaction and other hazardous problems. Second, there is also a possibility of having no water, food and electricity for weeks. A woman who survived a 2010 Chilean Earthquake states, "I realized at that moment that, although Chile is a seismic country, we are very unprepared to endure a situation like this: cellphones did not work, we had no portable radios available nor even a torchlight!" She shared this story to tell others about her experience. She also said that many people are still scared even after the quake. If a situation like

this happened in Utah, you may call for help but there's a strong chance that a response team won't come immediately. You and your family need to prepare to go through the first 72 hours. You can do this by having a pre-made plan to meet up somewhere and have a three-day supply of all needs necessary to survive these few days. So your water, food, and medicine should always be stocked up. Then if possible, check if anywhere in the neighborhood if someone needs help.

The earthquake threat in Utah has estimated 18 to 35 billion dollars lost due to physical and economic damages. One example of damages was during the Canterbury Earthquake in New Zealand. A woman observed and said, "Thousands of homes were damaged, and about 3000 buildings are no longer safe and are being demolished. Many beautiful heritage buildings have been destroyed." She is one of many who saw buildings being demolished and saw several houses abandoned due to being "unsafe." In this earthquake damages cost up to 4 billion New Zealand dollars. If families in Utah were to prepare now, tremendous money could be saved. Depending on where you live, your house may be unstable to support an earthquake. Thinking that the insurance will cover you is not great thinking. This is because if the earthquake were to happen, some insurance policies will not cover the damage, unless of course, you get a separate earthquake insurance

policy. I'm not telling you to get one, although it would be great for you. Your family and yourself can save money by helping your home become more earthquake safe and have plenty of saved money. This is because when the time comes, bank operations may be disrupted so it will give you small access to cash, ATMs, or online banking. So securing furniture and having copies of important documents should be necessary. We may not be able to stop an earthquake, but we can prevent greater damage.

However, there are many who can disagree to this matter. Many people believe that this earthquake will never happen in their lifetime. The Great Utah Shakeout explains that several Utah residents do not even regard the fact that an earthquake could happen at any time and moment. This is because usually the earthquakes that happen in Utah are so small that we don't even feel them. So some of us as citizens in Utah disagree about preparing for an earthquake. I'm am going to tell you why this is wrong and incorrect to do. Now, if you look at the data that the University of Utah Seismograph Station provides, having a tremendous earthquake in Utah is 1 in 450 to 1 in 1,600 in your lifetime. This statistic is also the same for an annual risk of heart disease. But unlike heart disease, our risk only grows higher and higher by each year. This is just a statistic in the Salt Lake City segment of the Wasatch fault. If the earthquake were to happen in one of the 30 active faults in

the Wasatch Front, the annual likelihood would be 1 in 200. Therefore, it shouldn't hurt to prepare even if it may not occur. Your stubbornness could cost you and your family, and I wouldn't like to say "I told you so."

To conclude, awareness and preparation for earthquakes in Utah will keep families physically and mentally ready. Having little stuff done for an earthquake such as having supplies and having a plan

will lessen your risk and increase chances of having a safe future for your family. As someone who has loving family and friends, I want to see them safe, protected and to keep making wonderful memories as we come and go. So go research, make a plan, practice drills, find ways to help yourself and your loved ones!



Individual Responsibility: Choice or Duty?

This Is My Voice



Danielle Purcell
Highland

Seven weeks into pregnancy, your heart started to beat. Six or eight weeks after birth, you started to smile. At six to seven months, you start to find yourself. It doesn't take very long for you to start to explore the possibilities of this great, big, scary world we all call home. Social events start to become a must and we learn to define ourselves with words. However, our words are not the only things that define us. The ways we act, and the way we talk, also show others who we are and who we could become. Everything we do, or don't do, is our responsibility. Yet many children learn from a young age to put the blame on someone else instead of taking responsibility for themselves. Why? Because we didn't exactly know what responsibility was, or how it worked. A google definition clearly states that responsibility is "the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something." Responsibility is not a choice. We are responsible for everything that we do and don't do. It is our duty as individuals, to take responsibility for our actions and to accept the consequences that follow because no matter what our parents teach us while we're young, it is our duty as we become adults to decide whether to follow their

counsel or not. It is our duty to learn for ourselves that we will have good and bad consequences and we can't continue to blame everyone else for the bad consequences if we choose to do something bad. It is our duty to be responsible.

First of all, we learn our first, basic lessons at home with our parents. However, we are not robots. Our parents don't type a command into our brains for us to do right away. Although we are taught to be obedient, we need to be responsible for everything we do, good and bad. Parents in a public setting may look at a child and say, "His parents taught him well." On the other hand, some adults will see a rowdy group of kids and say, "Where are their parents?" Although the key word is 'parent', you can only wonder about the child. Parents really do want the best for their children, but unless the children understand that and want the same things, it won't matter what the parents have planned because your kids will work toward something else. In Harriet Cabelly's article "How to Stop Being a Victim and Start Creating Your Life," she illustrates a scenario in which the parent is doing too much for her child saying, "The more I do for my child, the better parent I am." Is that true? If so, what are you teaching your children? Well, you aren't teaching them much that will be of use to them. They learn how to depend and rely on their parents. However, when the parents are no longer there, what will happen? When someone needs something and then loses that thing, it can prove

to be unpleasant.

Secondly, we all will have good and bad experiences in our lives and it's up to us what we will learn from the consequences resulting from those experiences. A bad experience could be just that, 'a bad experience,' or it could be a lesson. The same goes for the good experiences. If you are having a good experience, then you probably can learn something from the positive consequences that follow. The difference is what you learn. In a bad experience, you learn a harder lesson such as respect, endurance, or perseverance. In good experiences, you learn to relax, be happy, to love, and enjoy life. Although we aren't always aware of it, there is a lesson to be learned with every problem we face. Whether it be at school or while driving there are things to learn, but we must be aware of the problems. In Harriet Cabelly's article, she says, "I'm aware of it; I work at it. I know where it comes from; therefore that explains it but it certainly does not excuse it." Being aware of a problem alone will not fix it. Talking about a problem will not make it right. People go for years without fixing what needs to be fixed because all they do is complain about how bad things turned out. However, it is only fair to blame yourself. For example, getting a promotion at work versus not getting the promotion can't exactly be blamed on anyone but yourself. If you didn't get it, you should blame yourself. If you did get the promotion, you should also blame yourself because YOU did or didn't get that promotion. Period.

It is true that parents are primarily responsible for teaching their children in the home, but they can only teach them about responsibility. Firstly, no one can force responsibility onto another person's shoulders. When we do that, we are actually only placing blame. We may think that we're helping others to be responsible, but we are really only condemning them for the things that they need to realize on their own. Also, one of the most common misconceptions is that no one can blame, but that everyone should be put to blame. As evidence, Paulo

Maxwell once said, "The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take total responsibility for our attitudes. That's the day we truly grow up." So many people say that they're going to do these amazing things, and they have an amazing plan but they aren't very motivated and they're not very responsible. Then when they get out of high school and realize that they aren't getting anywhere, they blame it on their bad upbringing. Taking responsibility and accepting the consequences will get you where you want to go.

In contrast, some may say that

that, as adults, parents are already responsible for their own actions, like holding down a job and providing for their families. They may be able to handle all of that, but if we continue to blame and criticize them for 'not teaching their children right,' it is unjust. For example, if you are a mother with your first child and you aren't exactly sure how to raise them to be good, who will you ask? Will you ask your best friend who has no experience with her own children? Or will you ask your mother who raised you and taught you what you know today? Obviously, there is no



Coelho said, "It is always easier to blame others. You can spend your entire life blaming the world, but your successes and failures are your own responsibility." As humans, it's easier and almost natural to put the blame on someone else's shoulders. However, if you continue to blame everyone, it will be so much harder for you when you have to accept responsibility. Eventually, everyone has to accept responsibility for themselves. It won't be any easier for you if you decide that everyone else is to blame because once you accept responsibility, there will be no one else to blame but yourself. John C.

the parents teach their children how to live their lives and so it should go to say that the parents must take responsibility for their children's actions. This statement could be true, but only until a certain age. While you are young, you make decisions only because you're parents tell you to or because you're curious. When you're younger than eight years old, you aren't aware of the consequences or maybe even the choices you're making. It is unfair for us to say that young children should be held responsible for all their actions, but it is also unfair to throw all of the blame onto their parents. We forget

quick and easy answer. Parents work so hard to cloth you, feed you, and house you. They have probably been thrown under the bus (metaphorically speaking) multiple times by numerous people when they were your age. Throwing them under more buses will not make you or anyone else any stronger. Also, when parents throw themselves under for their child, it doesn't make them better parents, it makes their children rely on them too much, for too long.

Gender - Varient People Need Healthcare Too.

This Is My Voice

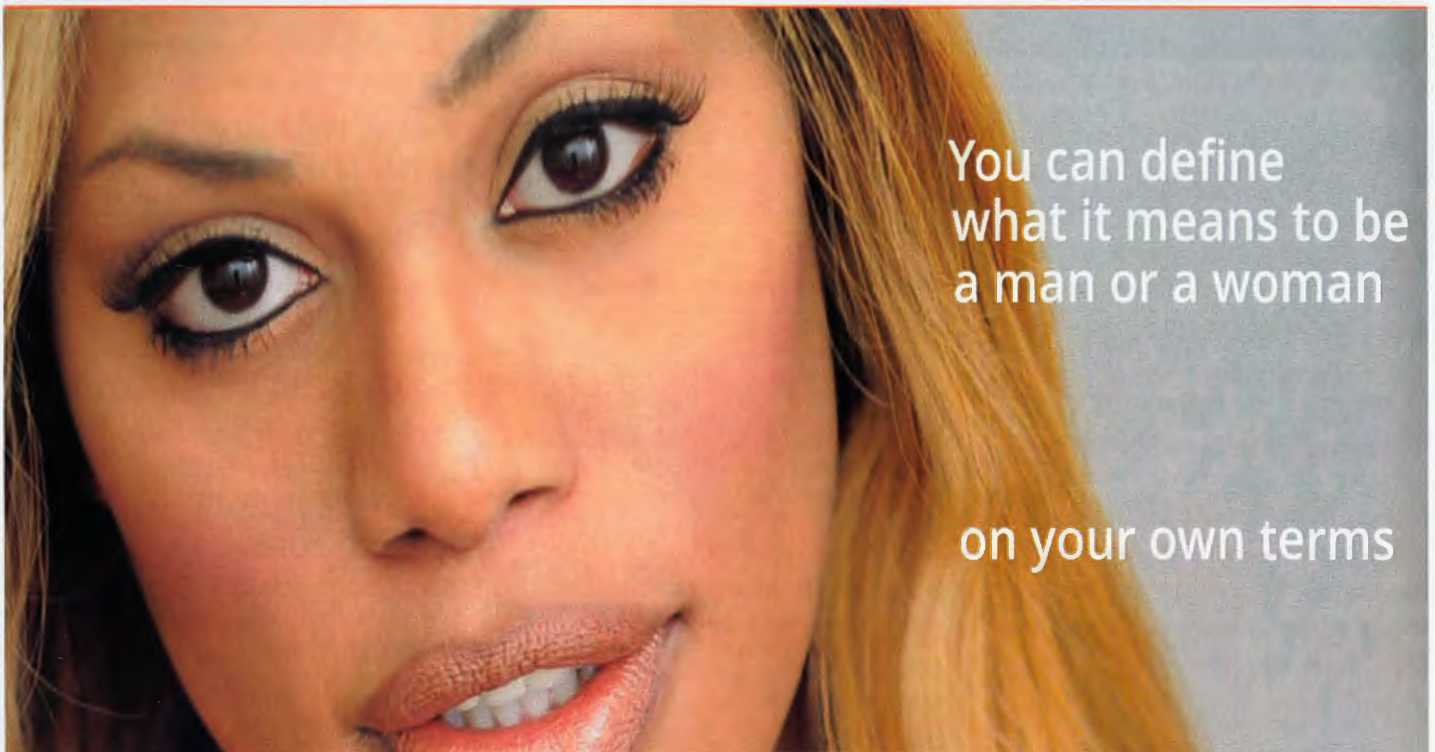


Preston Langlois
Open Classroom

“It is an awful thing to be betrayed by your body. And it’s lonely, because you feel you can’t talk about it. You feel it’s something between you and the body. You feel it’s a battle you will never win . . . and yet you fight it day after day, and it wears you down. Even if you try to ignore it, the energy it takes to ignore it will exhaust you.” (David Levithan). Sex and gender are completely different

things: sex is something you are assigned at birth; gender is the sex you feel that you identify with. For example, someone whose sex is male could feel that their gender is female; someone like that is transgender, meaning they identify as something other than their sex. Gender variant persons (someone who identifies by something other than their birth gender) are a large part of our society and deserve access to physical and emotional treatment without denial. Hazing is a huge problem for gender variants, and they cannot find treatment for the wounds that are inflicted; they can be denied or ignored by insurance companies and cannot do anything about it.

Thousands of transgender people face discrimination every day from their peers, their families; and sometimes hazing or teasing can go too far. It can cause huge emotional problems and, in some cases, death. Laverne Cox, a famous transgender woman, spoke out on this at a conference called Creating Change in 2014: “Some days I wake up, and I’m that fourteen-year-old kid in Mobile, Alabama who was bullied. Some days I wake up, and I’m that kid who’s being chased home from school practically every day by groups of kids who wanted to beat me up because I did not act the way that people who are assigned male at birth are supposed to act.”



You can define
what it means to be
a man or a woman

on your own terms



But, this case is not the only one; there are many like it. Data collected since 2009 shows that over 1,000 gender-variant persons have been killed because of the way they identify. Seventy of those murders were in the US; the only countries with more killings are Brazil with 452, and Mexico with 106. Forty-one percent of gender-variant people have attempted suicide, and 80% of those affected by domestic violence due to their gender identities have tried to take their own life. That's much more than any other type of the population, meaning that transgender people are some of the most harassed, emotionally and physically hurt people in the entire world yet also one of the most disregarded and overlooked identities.

One of the reasons there are so many deaths is that transgender people can be denied insurance because of the way they identify. While general health care access in America is a problem by itself, it is especially complicated for and unaccepting of transgender people. There are 700,000 transgender people in the US alone, which is almost 200,000 more people than the entire population of Wyoming. In total, throughout the world there are 18,667,000 gender variant persons, which is,

obviously, a very large number. While it's not quite as large as some other types of sexual identities, it's still a fair amount of people--enough people to consider gender variant people a significant part of the population, enough, it seems, to merit legal recognition. However, almost no action has been taken by Congress or other high authority members of the U.S. government to change laws to give transgender people access to health care or insurance. This may be due to ignorance, transphobia, or simply not being aware of the topic. Transgender people have much higher numbers of job loss and job fragility, making insurance a hard thing to come by. Even when care specifically for transgender persons is available, they can be turned down by the provider, or doctor, so doctors should be taught how to care for transgender people, and insurance providers shouldn't be able to turn them down just because of prejudice or the cost of transgender specific care.

Some people say that conforming to birth gender is easy and completely normal and that you should have no other gender identity; after all, what you're born with is what you get, and that's how you should act, how you should iden-

tify, right? Well, no. Not for some people. According to several national and statewide surveys, about 3.4 percent of American citizens consider themselves a different gender than the one they were born with, which, in context, is quite a large number--approximately 700,000. Many people don't feel comfortable with the body they were born in and wish to change their gender, so it's not entirely normal to conform to your birth gender.

Concluding, gender-variant people should have equal access to healthcare options. Someday, doctors should understand and know how to work with non-conforming gender identities. Hundreds of transgender people die every year because of refusal from doctors and insurance agencies, simply due to the way they identify. How would you feel if you were denied what you see as a regular civil right just because of how you think? What if you died from something preventable that no one would treat you for? Gender-variant people deserve to be treated like everyone else; whether it's health care, insurance, or acceptance, everyone should be treated equally, regardless of gender identity.

Marijuana should be legal because it helps people in pain.

This Is My Voice



Danielle Murphy
Highland High

In the marijuana or cannabis plant there are two main chemicals: Cannabidiol (CBD) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). The CBD makes you feel like you are hungry or want to sleep; it is the part that makes you feel down. THC is the part of the plant that makes you feel 'high' or 'stoned'. What most people don't know are that the amazing effects of both of these chemicals found in the marijuana plant can save someone from some terrifying things like epilepsy, or even cancer. Medical marijuana should be legal on a federal level because it helps children with epilepsy and can null the effects of chemotherapy as well as reduce cancerous cells in the body. How they work on people is amazing and could save lives if it were legal in the United States?

Epileptic children have a disorder that interrupts neuron activity flow to the brain, causing seizures. A child throws themselves on the ground, becoming unresponsive and not knowing what to do; silently the child is jerking back and forth in a way that terrifies the parent. The mother can do nothing until the epileptic seizure passes. One way

to stop the seizures for a patient of epilepsy is marijuana; in the form of an oil, vaporizer, or pill, it can help this disorder. An article published in Tampa Bay Times tells us that children with severe epilepsy have shown a 50 to 100 percent reduction in seizures while using a cannabis form. Furthermore, children who have this terrifying disorder have been saved by this drug. At the age of five, Charlotte Figi was having about 300 seizures a week and couldn't walk or speak. Two years later the child walks, talks and "can even eat chili in the car," Charlotte's mother, Paige Figi says, sounding

amazed at something seemingly so simple. So, within two years Charlotte is nearly completely seizure free. In many states the drug is still illegal in any form, and parents will have to leave their homes, jobs, and loved ones behind in order to get a medicine that will save their suffering child.

When a cancer patient is undergoing chemotherapy on a weekly basis, some of the main symptoms are nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite. All of these symptoms can be nullified by the CBD chemical in marijuana. People with cancer go through chemotherapy once or





twice a week, possibly even more considering their condition. If there is a way to help these patients through and have an alternative to the painful process of chemotherapy, then why wouldn't the federal government make it legal? Joseph Casias has a form of sinus cancer that was causing him an extreme amount of pain: continuous nose bleeds, extreme back pain, and long migraines. "Liquid morphine, Vicodin, Lortab. I had to take pills around the clock and they didn't always help." Joseph shares. He tells us that his oncologist, or cancer doctor, told him that marijuana might help; "And it did," he says. In addition, marijuana can also be used as an alternative to chemotherapy; the THC in the cannabis plant can actually make the cancerous cells auto-digest. This means the cancer cells in lung cancer, leukemia, and

cervical cancer can actually remove themselves from the victim's body if the patient is ingesting cannabis (The University of Arkansas).

Marijuana users who are heavily addicted and use it every day can go through heavy withdrawal symptoms: wanting more of the drug itself, headaches, sometimes even depression. However if the person who is taking it for a medical reason--migraines, cancer, or even epilepsy-- then they would have to keep taking it as prescribed by a doctor and stop getting the prescriptions when they are done. People will see it as medicine, not something that can get them stoned. The biggest argument against legalization is the fact that it is a gateway drug. It is true that about one in six people who start with marijuana as a young adult go on to do harder drugs like cocaine (drugabuse.gov).

However, it is true that when a state legalizes marijuana for medical or recreational purposes, the use of marijuana in minors reduces exponentially (news.mic.com).

Medical marijuana should be legal on a federal level because it can help children with epilepsy and can null the effects of chemotherapy as well as reduce cancerous cells in the body. In the future if we federally legalize the use of medical marijuana then we will find that we are saving many lives and many patients that need help. Currently these families do not have the means in their state to get the medicine for the ones they love. Help find a cure. Help little Charlotte and other kids like her. Help the scared family whose father has cancer. Help the people who need help. Legalize medical marijuana.

DREAMERS

This Is My Voice



**Darinka
Bocanegra
Science Center**

The DREAM Act or the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act allows current, former and future undocumented high school graduates and GED recipients a pathway to U.S citizenship through college or the armed

services. There's an estimated 2.1 million undocumented students that would benefit from the DREAM Act. All states should support the DREAM Act, because the rate of undocumented students dropping out of high school would decrease, college educations would become possible, and the DREAM Act would benefit this country economically.

The Urban Institute estimates that one-fifth to one-sixth of undocumented immigrant students drop out of high school every year. The DREAM Act would strongly encourage undocumented students to stay

in school until they graduate. Many undocumented students drop out of high school because they don't know if they will be able to pursue a higher education due to their illegal status. The DREAM Act would reduce the dropout rate for undocumented students because they will see a brighter future; they would know that they have the opportunity to enroll in college. Undocumented students who drop out of high school are forced to work illegally. Working for other people or day laborers, are two of the few jobs that undocumented students



can have. The DREAM Act would help undocumented students not fall into this path by pushing them to stay in school. It will also show these students that they are capable of going to college and getting jobs that will pay them more for their hard work.

There is no federal or state law that denies the admission of undocumented students to college. Institutional policies on admitting undocumented students vary. According to the College Board, many four-year state colleges in Virginia and many other colleges require applicants to submit proof of citizenship or legal residency and refuse admission to students without documentation. This can be a big discouragement to many undocumented students because they don't have something to work hard toward. If the DREAM Act was passed, students who apply and meet all the requirements wouldn't have to worry about being unable to enroll because they would receive U.S. citizenship.

Not only will the DREAM Act benefit undocumented students, but it will also benefit the United States. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan has stated that "passing the DREAM Act will allow these young people to live up to their fullest potential and contribute to the economic growth of our country." If the United States helps undocumented students who are pursuing a higher education, our economy would improve because they would stay in the USA paying taxes; they would earn higher wages and would work in higher-paying jobs. This means that they would be able to pay for their education and they

would start new businesses in the U.S.

Many people that are against the DREAM Act may argue that these undocumented students have already broken the law by entering the U.S. illegally; they also believe that undocumented students shouldn't be able to become U.S. citizens. The people that qualified for the DREAM Act are students who came before the age of 16, and in most cases it wasn't their decision to immigrate to the United States. Citizens of the United States need to understand that many of these undocumented students just want to have a better life; they want to have opportunities that would help them better themselves. If these students graduate from high school it means that they really want to become better and we should not deny this opportunity to these young undocumented students.

In conclusion, all states should support the DREAM Act because the rate of undocumented students dropping out of high school would decrease, college would be possible by allowing them to enroll, and the DREAM Act would benefit this country economically. If the DREAM Act was passed many of these undocumented students would be great contributors to the U.S. economy and they would show many undocumented teens that it is possible for them to go to college and have a better life. Many of the undocumented teens that have dropped out of high school fall into bad paths such as gangs and illegal activities because they don't have the opportunity to go to college because they aren't documented students. The DREAM Act would also reward the hard work and the

struggles that their parents went through just to give their children a better life. How would you feel if your child was denied college just because they weren't documented students?

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Hip-Hop Music: GOOD OR NAH?

This Is My Voice



Nathan
Darmiento
Science Center

"All the stuff I say in my rhymes I say because of how I grew up. So instead of going to a psychiatrist, I got a kids' group that deals with the problems a younger generation is going through." These are the words of one of hip-hop's greatest poets, Tupac Shakur. Even though he had a hard life growing up, he still managed to be extremely successful and inspirational. Hip-hop music affects teenagers in a positive way because it helps a lot of teenagers through hard times in their lives, and it is a form of expression. One of California's famous rappers, Kendrick Lamar, knows a lot about substance abuse and bad friends. His album of the year, "Good Kid, M.A.A.D City," tells a story of peerpressure, crime, Compton, and California's gangs. His song "The Art of Peer Pressure" lets teens know that he doesn't drink alcohol, smoke marijuana and doesn't involve himself in gang violence normally. However, sometimes because he is with his friends that do take part in such activities, he participates occasionally as a result of peer pressure. Peer pressure doesn't only

exist in the music industry though. According to an article off of the Global Post, "seventy percent of high school students have had at least one alcoholic beverage, and they are often with their friends when they drink." This is exactly what Kendrick Lamar was rapping about; teens drink when they are with friends because they are peer pressured into it.

Hip-hop music helps teens through difficult times in their lives. Grammy-award winning artist Macklemore is definitely one of hip-hop's more successful rappers. However, he once was addicted to drugs and alcohol as a teen. "I wanted to get clean. I knew that my highest potential, the place that I was most spiritual, the place that I was the most rich in terms of my life, and my livelihood, and my art and my creativity, was when I was sober," says Macklemore in an interview with MTV. According to Muir Wood Facilities, approximately 1.5 million American teens could be considered chemically dependent or addicted in 2009. Knowing that they aren't the only ones going through this and that a really successful artist was also in their shoes at one point, can be reassuring information for teens. They hear that there is hope for everyone to rid themselves from their addictions, and that is exactly the kind of inspiration that helps them reach

their goals. Macklemore's story and lyrics tell a tale of how he changed his life for the better and inspires teens at the same time.

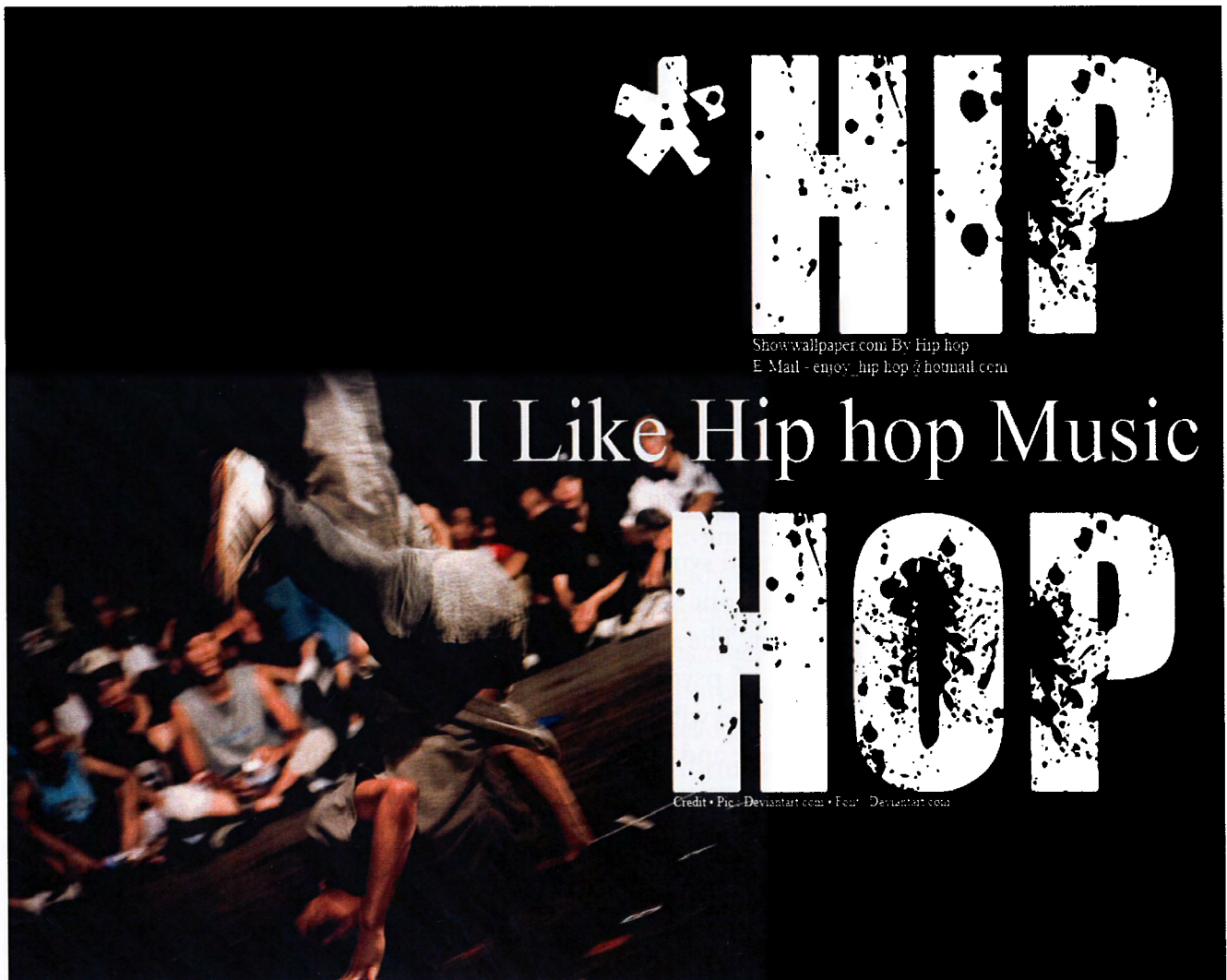
In addition to hip-hop music helping teens through hard times, it also is a way of expressing yourself. For a lot of rappers this is the way that they express their emotions because of the way they lived before becoming famous or of the things they have seen. "This the song I wrote if I died//I was in the 50 mile doin '95, beatin the p**** like it aint got 9 lives// and I'm h****/Mix C**** and some b*****//Cause you only live once// (Joey Bada\$\$, Cypher League). These are a couple of verses from Joey Bada\$\$' Death of YOLO. In this song he talks about before he started rapping he used to live the philosophy of "YOLO," which means "You Only Live Once" and that people should do whatever they want to do, whether it is good or bad. "All it took was patience and now I'm on the stations//Luckily I made it before my life was taken//... Little did they know that I was bout to meet my maker//Til an angel came down and told me my time was later// What he is talking about in this verse is that he almost died from living the YOLO lifestyle. The message he is trying to get across to teens in this song is that living that way of life has

really bad consequences, but most people don't think about those consequences. However, there are people out there that believe that there are hip-hop songs that have negative lyrics and messages. They think that hip-hop is sexist and misogynistic. A study conducted by Gretchen Cundiff found that "respondents consider the legitimation of violence against women the most offensive theme in rap/hip-hop songs." The way parents are acting towards hip-hop music today is the same way they acted about jazz music in the 1920s. A study by the Global Post found

that there is not an exact correlation between hip-hop music and violence or sexist thoughts/acts with teens. They found that there are other factors influencing teens: peer pressure from friends or ideas they get from home. Also, "some hip-hop aficionados argue that the music can encourage critical thinking about societal issues." So, not only does hip-hop music not make teens act sexist, but it encourages them to think critically and about societal issues.

To conclude, hip-hop music affects teens in a positive way. If more parents allow their teens

to listen to hip-hop, then teens won't feel lonely about their substance abuse, and they will be able to think twice when they get peer pressured or want to live the YOLO way of life. This topic is important to me because I listen to hip-hop music on a daily basis, and it helps me in my life. So going back to the wise words of Tupac, "During your life, never stop dreaming. No one can take away your dreams"



Take time and save a life!

This Is My Voice

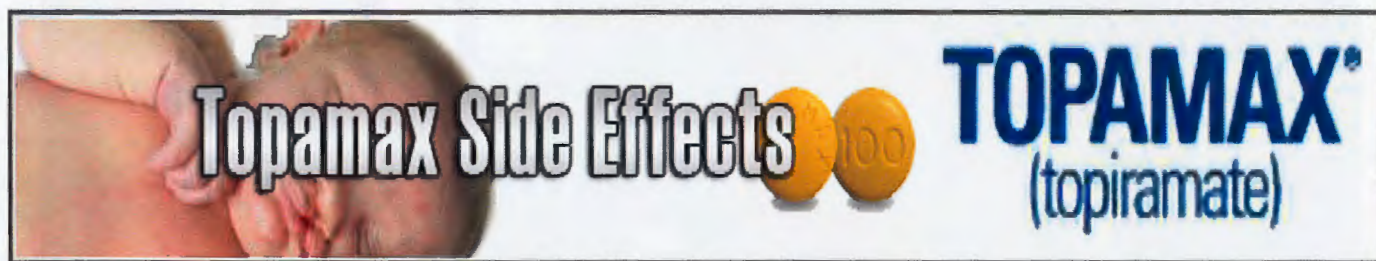


O'ron Mayer
East High

"There's some data to suggest that the average patient gets to speak between 12 and 15 seconds before the physician interrupts them," Shore says. "And that makes you feel like the person is not listening." Isn't that the worst feeling in the world? When the person who is supposed to be helping you treats you like a tod-

ders, two of which are varieties of anti-depressants and a medication called Topiramate. Topiramate is used for migraines and epilepsy, but doctors also commonly prescribe it to people for weight loss. Topiramate has many negative side effects but continues to be prescribed due to the beneficial outcomes. There have been many reports of people being negatively affected. We know of the author of a medical report named Tanvir Singh. He documented a thirty-four year old woman who was prescribed Topiramate. Three days after being prescribed it, she reported having

risk as it can easily be mistaken for decompensation of a patient's mental health. Also, another drug that has negative side effects are anti-depressants. The page www.helpguide.org/mental/medications_depression.htm states that anti-depressants can actually cause an increase in depression instead of a decrease, especially in young adults and teenagers, which puts them at risk of suicidal thoughts. In addition, this page states that anti-depressants can cause dizziness and increase the risks of falls which can lead to broken bones, and possibly death, in people who are over the age of



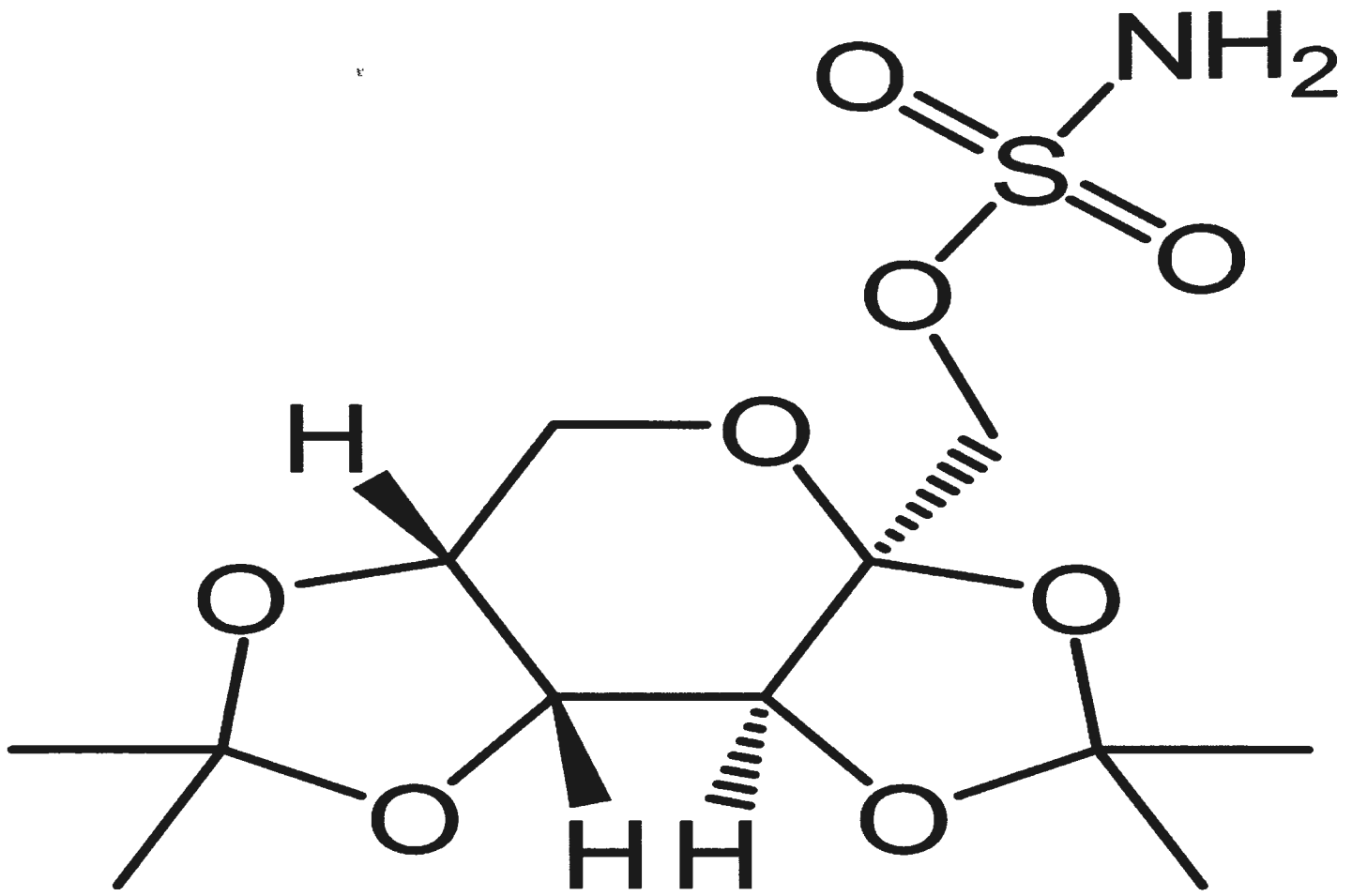
der. They believe that they know everything about you, and they can prescribe you proper medication just from a couple of words. Doctors need to be more careful and take time to listen to their patients before prescribing medicine because it can cause many negative side effects in people of all ages and ruin families.

Negative side effects can be caused from many different

paranoid symptoms and feeling as if everyone was trying to get rid of her. The woman had shown signs of psychosis, meaning someone with delusions, hallucinations, and loss of motivation (eppic.org.au/phases-psychosis). Within a few days of being off of the drug she had returned to normal. The report stated that though it is a very rare side effect, clinicians should be aware of this

sixty-five. This is wrong because people's lives are being damaged from their prescriptions, and doctors are too busy to recognize how many people they may be hurting.

Families can be ruined from depression, which is a side effect that occurs from Topiramate and anti-depressants. Looking at someone else's personal experience on <http://boards.dailymail>.



co.uk/ shows that a family has many problems related to someone struggling with depression. Even worse, doctors can induce the depression because they did not take caution about the effects that could happen to the patient. It is also as important to explain the effects thoroughly to the patient before prescribing the medication. In life changes are common, but when someone you love changes, it is miserable trying to start a relationship again. It is not reasonable for someone to go through that much emotional pain due to their prescription, especially when they have already been struggling. No one should have to go through suicidal

thoughts or worry about someone being suicidal. Instead they should be able to live a happy life and enjoy their family.

People might say if doctors spend more time examining patients we will be using too much money for irrelevant resources when it is already proven that the medication can be beneficial. While this is true, ultimately it is more important to protect everyone, instead of just the people who were fortunate enough to have positive effects. Money should not be stopping doctors from saving patients. We need to worry about each person who is being affected, not only is the patient crucial, but their

family and friends are also just as important. No matter what, it is more crucial to save lives than to lose one.

In conclusion, doctors need to be more careful when prescribing medication. If doctors and the FDA do not take precaution, we can lose more innocent lives than we already have. I have lost family literally and emotionally due to physicians not being dedicated to their job and their patients. I do not want to have to see another person lose someone from their life or, even worse, watch someone lose their life. Take charge and take time to prevent innocent people from losing their existence.

Porn: Does it affect the family?

This Is My Voice



Karalyn Pedersen
Highland

Imagine a drug so powerful it can destroy a family simply by distorting a man's perception of his wife or vice versa. Pornography can become an addiction. It causes individual problems in relationships and distorts the person's view on what real love is. Pornography can affect both men and women. It can also cause problems with a marriage and within the family. Pornography is extremely accessible for both men and women who grow up with the access to the Internet. Some say that pornography manipulates a person's mind and controls their thoughts. Some people may know that pornography is bad, but that never stops a person from getting addicted to it.

Many times pornography causes problems in relationships. Data from AAMFT.org states the following: Seventy-five to eighty-five percent of porn web browsers are men, and nearly twelve million people suffer from sexual addiction in the United States. Pornography can affect their mood, behavior, and how

they close themselves off from their family as well as friends. "An enormous amount of the most sexually explicit material available, as well as much of the material that is somewhat less sexually explicit, is material that we would classify as degrading, the term we use to encompass the undeniably linked characteristics of degradation, subordination and humiliation...material that, although not violent, depicts people, usually women, as existing solely for the sexual satisfaction of others..." This is important to me because both men and as well as women are being accused by looking at pornography. Most people just aren't happy, but because of their pornography addiction they turn to it instead of their loved ones. Most of all porn addiction can change individuals' prospects of how they live their life.

Addictions are a leading cause of divorce. In avvo.com, Jeff Adrian Bittle states "Currently, I have seen addiction to pornography increase as a reason stated for a divorce." This is important because it explains the reasoning that addiction is so difficult for the family. In today's society a very high number of marriages end in divorce. It is very different to keep communication and love alive with all the pressures around families. When a loved one is ad-

dicted to pornography, this is an added challenge for the family.

"The Internet is transforming the experience of growing up in America. It is also transforming the job of being a parent in America. The Internet brings the world--the good the bad and the ugly--to the American family doorstep. It brings the ruins of ancient Athens to the door step, but it also brings the red light district of Bangkok," (Third Way Culture Project). The way the Third Way Culture Project words this is that what we do on the Internet or even on the computer will come back to you in a good, bad, or an ugly way. Stated on the website alcoholismtreatment-california.com "Before, teenagers who were blocked from pornography had to find secret ways to purchase and hide pornographic materials, but today people do not have to leave the house or their bedrooms to purchase pornography and conceal explicit materials." This is important to me because I am young, and based on this evidence the problem is going to grow and traumatically affect my generation. My generation will do or look at anything they can look at. Also my generation does not use their brains to full capacity. By my generation not using their brains to the full capacity, they risk themselves get-

ting addicted to pornography.

We all have to mold our own choices in this life. Because of this we have the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” (Declaration.) We don’t have the right to hurt others as we find ways to be happy. Pornography has ruined a lot of lives. How can we say that looking at pornography is not dangerous? Looking at pornography can lead to sexual thoughts. When, an individual keeps looking at pornography they have to lie to hide their natural desires. After individuals

look at their first image, they start looking at more images of them until they are overwhelmed with the feeling they get from it.

In conclusion many individuals look at pornography to make them feel good about themselves and many people think that it is okay. Unfortunately, it is a recurring issue for many people today. People simply think that pornography is okay to do, but in many ways it truly is not okay to look at pornography. Many individuals are affected by the ways it destroys the family and other

relationships. This topic is truly personal for me because when I was younger my dad would lock himself in my parent’s room and look at pornography. He also divorced my mom because his addiction was so strong that he only lied about every bit of it. He also had such an addiction that he didn’t stop looking at it. About three years ago he came back from prison. So yes, pornography does in fact destroy a family and many relationships.



Commercial Farms: Making Starvation a Reality

This Is My Voice



Cassidy Hermann
West High

Imagine a world without food. Our planet that we have lived on for so many lifetimes will be a desolate, empty void. It would be nothing more than a place that used to sustain life but no longer does so. It is a very terrifying and difficult thing to imagine such a hypothetical situation. Although it may be terrifying, it is becoming more and more realistic as time goes on. Industrial farms are making these imaginations a reality. It's time to do something about it before it becomes too late. We need to move from an industrial model of farming to a more sustainable model of farming because large-scale farms destroy the soil and also prevent biodiversity through monocropping.

First of all, large-scale farms in today's world destroy the soil due to the constant pesticides that are used on the crops. A study conducted by Phillip Barak (PhD in Soil Science from the Hebrew University of Jeru-

salem) found that 30 years of using commercial fertilizers had the same effect on the soil acidity as 750 years of acid rain. In other words, the use of commercial fertilizer puts the same amount of acidity in the soil in a drastically shorter amount of time as does acid rain. If people around the world keep using these chemically produced fertilizers, eventually, the acidity in the soil will become so great

that the land will not be able to be used for farming purposes. A sustainable farming method will allow the use of fertilizers that will not harm the soil. This will allow the soil that we depend on so much for food to become usable for much longer than if we use the commercial fertilizers that are most commonly used today. We must use a more sustainable method of fertilizing our farms or the soil that is needed for food



will be unusable, causing serious food shortages.

Second, if we have more small-scale sustainable farms, it will allow for a lot more biodiversity than the large-scale farms that rely on monocropping. Monocropping is the practice in which only one variety of produce is grown in a very large area year after year. For example, if a company plants an abundance of one specific type of crop in a single area every year, eventually the soil that that crop was planted on will become desolate due to the amount of pesticides that will be needed, as well as the nutrients that will be taken from the soil as a result of planting the same crop each year. If the farms had more biodiversity, commercial fertilizers would not be needed and we could use a more sustainable fertilizer, such as compost. This would prevent the nutrient depletion of the soil. The GRACE Food Program (a foundation created to educate people about agriculture) says that if you plant only one crop in a large area, the crop develops vulnerability to insects, weeds, fungi, and other pests. Once the pest is introduced and spread to the crops, it becomes unrelenting. As a result, the excessive amount of pests requires an intensive amount of different pesticides to get rid of the pests. The Department of Agriculture of the Oregon State University has done many studies on this same issue to come to the conclusion that crop rotation will

“enhance the resilience of your farm.” Another solution to this issue, apart from growing more biodiverse foods, would be having many small-scale farms that allow for better crop rotation. Because of the crop rotation and biodiversity, small farms won’t require the constant exposure to chemical substances to the soil. If farmers change what crop they grow each year, the pests that ate whatever crop they had last year will come back wanting more of that specific crop. Because the crop will be different, these pests will eventually starve to death. This will prevent an over-abundance of pests and will require fewer pesticides to control the amount of unwanted organisms in your farm.

In contrast, some defend commercial farming techniques by saying that genetically modified foods allow for less allergic reactions than naturally growing foods. The process of genetically modifying these foods is taking DNA from one organism and inserting the DNA into a different organism in order to apply the benefits from the old plant to the new plant. The fact that people think natural foods cause more allergic reactions is a common misconception formed by people who believe that genetically modifying crops fixes all of the problems that are presented when growing food. However, a survey done by York Nutritional Laboratory in 1999 showed allergic reactions due to soy increased

50 percent that year. Interestingly enough, that was the same year that companies started increasing their genetically modified soy. When the companies were using more natural methods of farming, the allergic reactions due to their crops was actually a lot less than when they started using a more unnatural method of farming. With natural farming, it is easy to stay away from foods that you’re allergic to because, unlike genetically modified foods, there is no crossing of DNA. In short, growing foods naturally actually results in less allergic reactions than if we genetically alter crops to become more “perfect.”

In conclusion, the more sustainable methods we use in farming, the fewer issues we will have in the future because the soil will be preserved and we will have a lot more biodiversity. If we keep allowing commercial farms to dump harmful substances into the soil, the soil will become desolate and unusable. Since I was about 10 years old, my stepdad has been growing food naturally for a living. I know how much healthier his soil is and how much better his food tastes, to the point where it gets hard to eat the commercial produce because it isn’t nearly as good as the fresh produce he grows on his farms. We must move to a more natural form of farming or, eventually, we will live in a world where food is scarce and where starvation is imminent.

Child Abuse, Is Enough Being Done?

This Is My Voice



Omar Rico
Science Center

"I remember my mom saying ...You get what you deserve, you little b****. I'm only 6, when after my beating I'm placed in hot water for 30 mins, because of all the blood. Then they would dry me off, pour alcohol all over me, and tell me not to scream. If I did, well, I'd get beat again. After this they would put a robe on me and take me deep in the woods, remove the robe, and tie me to the tree naked because the boogiemans doesn't like clothes. I always would pray that GOD would help me and I always got free". This is a quote from childhelp.org taken from a story written by Nona. She eventually was educated and helped through programs specifically meant for child abuse, but she still lives with the trauma. Child abuse prevention lessons should be taught in schools and not just be kept for programs because abuse is a significant problem and lessons would likely decrease the amount of child abuse that goes on. These lessons can also help kids to speak up for themselves, so stories like Nona's will not have to be experienced and written.

Child abuse is a significant problem. In the U.S alone an incident of child abuse is reported on average every 10 seconds. There are 3 mil-

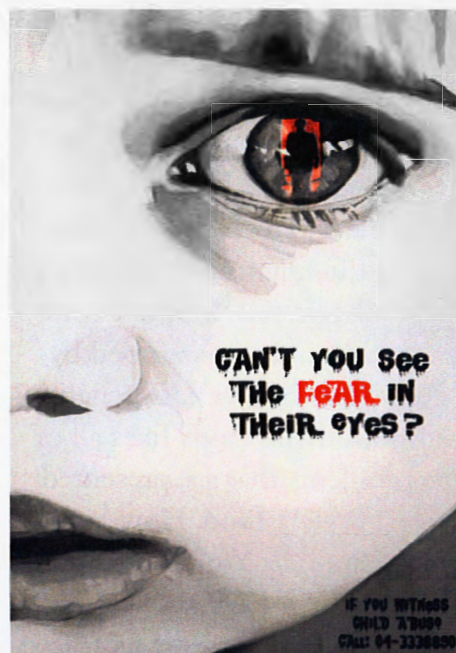
lion reports of child abuse per year involving more than 6 million children. Also, each day about 5 children die from neglect and/or abuse. Out of all the children that get abused 30% will grow up to abuse their own children (childhelp.org). If we don't help kids that get abused by their own parents, then it will be like a never ending cycle. A child's parents abuses them; they grow up to abuse their own children, then their children abuse their children, and so on and so forth. Utah has the eighth highest number of substantiated child abuse cases in the U.S (prevent-childabuseutah.org). If citizens of Utah do not do anything about these child abuse problems, the numbers can only become greater.

If the lessons are taught on child abuse to kids in schools, we can decrease the amount of child abuse and increase the number of children being helped. If we use these programs to raise awareness, the num-

bers for incidents being reported will rise. This will give us an accurate number of kids that are really at danger.

Equally important, when children get abused, they often do not like to tell someone because they may feel very uncomfortable explaining what happened or feel that they shouldn't talk about because it's pointless and no one cares. There are programs like Prevent Child Abuse Utah, Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools, Child Speak Up Be Safe for Athletes, and Child Speak Up Be Safe for Educators that will help teach kids that they are not alone and that it is alright to speak up about it. With this help they will eventually learn to deal with the trauma they've experienced, learn steps to help themselves and others, also learn how to feel more comfortable talking about what is wrong. These programs are very helpful, but they can only do so much to help. That is why we need to have these lessons in schools so they can help educate kids more on how to help others as well as themselves.

On the other hand some people say that some kids are too young to learn and understand this kind of subject. They may say that this is too delicate of a subject to teach to young kids. I say that when we teach the younger kids we don't have to go into very much detail, but we can give them numbers to call, steps to take, and ways to speak up for themselves. These steps and ways can include knowing who to



trust and who not to trust—like accepting things from strangers. They will also need to know whether or not to trust someone who is close to them, someone who is supposed to be there so they can trust like family. When we teach the older kids, we can be a tad more explicit. If we educate older kids on how to help and one day they run into a situation that involves a child being abused they will know what to do, how to deal with it, and whom to call. Also

opponents may say that there is not enough information about the topic to be taught as its own class. If we can combine this with a class such as health, we can fit it into the lessons on minimal days. It doesn't have to be a separate class as long as it is taught more than just once a year.

To conclude, child abuse prevention lessons can help people become more aware of what's going on so they know what to do and what steps to take so they can help

in a situation that involves a child being abused. Teaching lessons to prevent child abuse can help many kids who need it. A report of child abuse is taken every 10 seconds. At this moment a report of a child being abused has been taken. What will you do to help stop this? Would you want your own child or family being abused? Think about it: What if it was one of your family members?



This Is My Voice



Alexa Balderrama
Highland

"Marriage should be between a spouse and a spouse, not a gender and a gender." -Hendrick Hertzberg. When two people love each other and want to spend the rest of their lives together, they

should be able to marry each other. Marriage is not about gender; it's about love. Some people believe that when gay marriage is legalized, then others will want to start marrying their dogs or maybe even their cars; that is certainly not true. When women were given the right to vote we didn't go on and let hamsters vote. How is this different? Gay marriage should be legalized in the state of Utah because it would increase adoption for children in foster homes or in need of

a proper home, legalizing it would not affect any other person other than the married couple, and finally it should be legal simply because it makes sense. People cannot change their sexual orientation; if they love someone they should be allowed to spend the rest of their lives with that person.

Imagine all those children in need of adoption and waiting for someone to love them and give them a loving home. Since gay couples cannot naturally reproduce



they are more likely to adopt a child. Lifelong Adoption says that an estimated two million LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender) people are interested in adopting. That is a lot of hopeful couples waiting to raise a child together. Two million children are waiting to be adopted. People are concerned that if a child grows up in a gay household, it “makes” him/her gay. Children living with homosexual parents do not differ from children raised with heterosexual parents; because the children have two parents who love and care for them just like any other family. Adoption Handbook says that in the year 2000 there were a reported 10,700 children adopted by gay couples in New York when that state legalized it. Legalizing gay marriage without a doubt will increase adoption for children in need of a loving home. A study called the National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study confirmed that children living with lesbian families had a high level in education and had fewer social problems, rule-breaking, or aggressive behavior. It should not matter whether a child is raised in a same-sex house, as long as they are happy, loved, and have two parents.

How does a gay couple walking down the street affect you and your loved ones? The answer is simply that it doesn't affect anybody in any way possible. People like to think that when it is legalized and children see a gay couple, they'll automatically think that they've seen something inappropriate. The truth is that it's going

to teach children that there are different types of families. It will also teach children that it's absolutely okay to love whoever you love no matter what gender they are. Being gay really will not affect other people's personal lives; some people like to think it will but I don't see it affecting anybody. Love is not supposed to be a bad thing; it's supposed to be that one thing that brings everybody together. Seeing a gay couple in love is really no different than seeing a straight couple in love.

Love is love. The meaning behind these three words is greater than any law stating that two people cannot love each other and be happy. One cannot simply change their sexual orientation. Some people even do a specific therapy that supposedly makes you straight, but the therapy was proven by psychiatrist Dr. L. Spitzer to cause suicidal thoughts. My question is why would somebody want to change who they find attractive? People should not have to change who they are and be unhappy just because society says so. Think back to when the United States thought slavery was the right thing to do. The country thought that because black people were different, they should be punished. Then later on we realized that it was wrong to punish people of color for something they cannot choose to be. We do not choose our sexual orientation any more than we choose our height or eye color. People should not be punished for being born with a different sexual preference than most people.

A lot of Christians believe that being gay is a sin because it says many negative things about gay marriage in the Bible. For example the Bible states that it is a sin for man to love another man. Leviticus 18:22 reads, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it [is] abomination.” (Bible). This passage from the Bible is morally wrong. God makes no mistakes. He wouldn't have made gay people if he didn't want them on this earth. Why would the creator create a man that loves another man? Many people believe that God loves all his children, whether they're different or not. If this is true, then why do religious people dislike the gay community?

The Declaration of Independence clearly states that everybody has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is supposed to be true for all people in the United States, even gay people. They have the right to be happy, and if that means to get married to a person of the same gender then so be it. As I've stated before, gay rights should be legalized because it will increase adoptions, it will not affect anybody in a negative way, and it's the right thing to do. The gay community should be free to love and marry whoever they love because in the end it's all the same love.

TUNA!

This Is My Voice



Zola McDonald
Open Classroom

"By choosing a path for fisheries that safeguards the ocean food web, we are making a choice for our own sustainability." -Pam Growman. Did you know that 80% of the world's fished Bluefin tuna is consumed by Japan? The over-exploitation of the Bluefin tuna fish should be taken into consideration by the Japanese fisheries because of the negative effects this action has on the marine ecosystem and because the current demand for the fish is unsustainable.

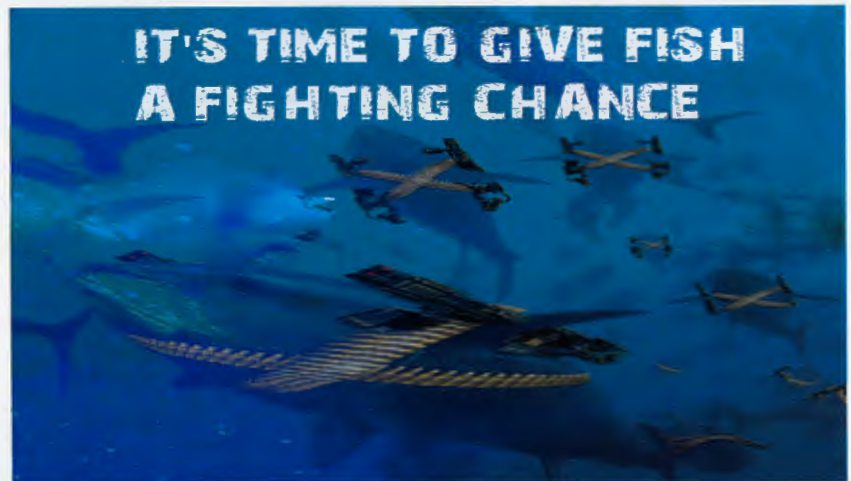
The world's natural resources are negatively affected by the abuse and over fishing of Bluefin tuna fish. In a 2010 article entitled, "A Japanese Over-Fishing Crisis: From Bluefin Tuna to Sashimi," the author states that, "If Southern Bluefin tuna becomes extinct because of over-fishing, it will impact the environment, other organisms and humans." Because of this evidence, people should pay attention to this issue because smaller carnivores on a lower trophic level than the Bluefin tuna could over-populate. In view of this fact, there would not be tuna to feed on them. Consequently, the over-population of the smaller carnivores could lead them into "exceeding their capacity level" (SaveTheFish SaveTheWorld). The capacity level refers to the number of organisms an environment is able to support endlessly. People should care if the Bluefin tuna becomes extinct because it could alter the marine food web. Sharks that consume the tuna will

need to substitute other marine animals into their diet, which could result in more endangered species. Equally important, if the Bluefin tuna goes extinct, the fisheries are going to have to find another source of fish to sell frequently in their business. With the Bluefin tuna gone, what new fish will become a target? This pattern of over-fishing species will repeat, which could also lead into a never ending cycle of seeking fish with a high profit margin.

Additionally, if these fishing practices continue, there will not be any fish left. Fishwatch.gov expresses, "As sushi and sashimi markets developed in the 1970's and 1980's, the demand and prices for the Bluefin tuna soared. Fisheries expanded, fishing pressure increased dramatically, and, in an all too familiar scenario, the Western Atlantic

issue. However, if there are not any fish, there are not any jobs. A SaveOurSeas.com article verbalizes that "3/4 of the world's fish stocks are being harvested faster than they are reproduced." It also imparts, "Ninety percent of all large predatory fish—including tuna, sharks, swordfish, cod and halibut—are gone. Scientists predict that if current trends continue, world food fisheries could collapse entirely by 2050." It is supply and demand in reverse. There will be no job market for people in the fishing industry if we continue our fishing practices because of the depletion of our supply of fish. Therefore, protecting the Bluefin tuna fish is important and is in everyone's best interest.

Without a doubt, the Japanese fishing industry should seriously contemplate their fishing quotas. If they

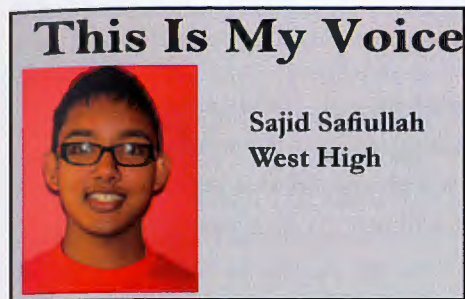


Bluefin tuna population plummeted." The fishing industry should pay attention to the effects that over-fishing has on the industry as a whole because they are destroying the species they are so dependent on.

Some people believe that the fisherman's livelihood is a more important than any effects of over-fishing. There is no doubt that is an important

don't, then no one will be able to enjoy Bluefin tuna swimming alive in our oceans, or in your sushi roll. It's depressing to think about how our eating habits are destroying whole ecosystems. So the next time you pry open a can of tuna, or order a 5 dollar Spicy Tuna, stop and think. "Why did I choose to eat this? Did a life really need to be taken just to satisfy my stomach?"

Free Lunch for All!



According to the Federal Education Budget Program, of the 31 million students who received five billion meals during the 2013-14 school years, 62 percent were free of charge, 8 percent were reduced price, and the other 30 percent were paid. All students should be getting free lunch at West High school, regardless of how much money their parents have. This will decrease segregation among students. It will help families save money for college tuition and help parents who make enough money to be just above the poverty line.

First of all, those who qualify won't feel self-conscious about getting free lunch. They will stop worrying about their lunch payments. According to care2.com, "The existing free/reduced lunch system seems to wind up reinforcing a class divide amongst students. Kids who bring a lunch are considered well-to-do, while those who wait in a cafeteria line are considered poorer" (Kevin Mathews, 2013). In addition to this, students will be able to socialize with their friends better and will not feel left out. If students don't have friends, they will feel isolated.

Second of all, students who qualify for free lunches could save their money for school and other needs. Isn't that a good idea? According to debate.org, "Parents and students should save their money for school

and important stuff." This would be better for parents and students. The leftover money can be used to pay for food and other essential things that are important at home. In addition, parents have to fill out paperwork that asks about their income which should be private information. This would be a good idea, because parents won't have to write how much they earn. It will remain private instead of the school seeing it.

Third, parents are paying taxes and bills for food, clothing, and education. In an interview, one person said, "People make enough money just above the poverty line." This disqualifies them from getting free lunch. Paying for lunch everyday becomes a financial burden on parents. They can save hundreds of dollars per child if they get free lunch from school.

I interviewed my brother who disagrees with me. He said, "It will cost the school too much money, there are too many dietary complications, and if people can afford to buy their own lunch then taxpayer money should not go towards feeding them." He is right in some ways. He is right about the dietary problems. However, this problem can be addressed by working with the school district and the parents of the children with dietary problems. I feel that the dietary problem should not interfere with the free lunch issue. My brother also mentioned that "schools have a budget shortage. The way schools spend their money has a lot of problems, and the primary focus should be to improve the class." I understand his viewpoint. But the question remains, how will the students concentrate in class if they don't eat a healthy lunch? This is why

the school should improve free lunch. The budget shortage can be improved by channeling money from other sources through proper planning and fundraising. There are some cities such as Nashville who are getting money through a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, known as the Community Eligibility Provision (watchdog.org).

In conclusion, I believe that school lunch should be free for all students because it will help families who cannot afford to pay. Free lunch will decrease segregation, and leftover money will be saved. Everyone will enjoy free lunch and will learn better and concentrate on getting a better education. Ultimately, better academic achievements from students will have a positive impact on the school's reputation. Are you willing to make the school better or not?

Free Lunch For All



Casual Racism Normalizes Discrimination

This Is My Voice



Samah Safiullah
West High

Urban Dictionary, an online slang/lingo dictionary that is often used by teenagers, refers to casual racism as “the art of being slightly racist in a casual fashion. It’s when one doesn’t really hate people of another color but still laughs at jokes at their expense.” Many people would take a glance at the term “casual racism” and immediately state that “racism is racism, and it is never ‘casual.’” However true this is, racism is an extremely complex topic and has ingrained itself in American society in several ways. When a person refers to casual racism, they are most likely referring to racial slurs used in school and work environments, such as “nigga/er,” paki, chink, spic, etc. They are also talking about jokes that are made that tend to make a spectacle of certain minorities. The main issue with the casualness of this racism is that it normalizes discrimination and isolation of students of color. This is the type of racism that needs to be targeted upmost and first. High schools need to take action in order to educate and create awareness on

discrimination, casual racism, and anti-blackness amongst teens in Salt Lake City, because using racial slurs and jokes casually dehumanizes minorities and excludes them from high school environments.

Unfortunately, our country has a blood-soaked history and an

ongoing epidemic of violence and discrimination against minorities, which is so widespread and accepted that it will not go away any time soon. However, there are ways to attack it head on. History and social studies classes, such as sociology, can



educate and create dialogue about the history of slurs and why they are wrong. Kaitlin Bradley, a student from Highland High School, points out that “I have heard slurs and jokes thrown around every day at school. This isn’t a problem you can fix immediately. But I believe that we can start with education.” These classes should be used to our advantage. Teachers need to create discourse in order to decrease the tolerance and acceptance of slurs and jokes amongst students. Neal A Lester, a professor at Arizona State University, was the first to create a college level class on the n-word. He speaks about the importance of critical attention to the evolution of language in today’s society. When asked how he would have a course on only a word, he mentioned, “It was clear to me that the course, both in its conception and in how it unfolded, was much bigger than a word. It starts with a word, but it becomes about other ideas and realities that go beyond words.” It is clear that the discussion in these classes will not only be focused on the word, but on the repercussion it has on our lives and society.

Teachers should specifically talk about the n-word and how casually it is used amongst non-Black people. Teachers need to first educate about the n-word usage amongst students who aren’t Black, since this seems to be the most commonly used slur. If people began to learn just how oppressive the history of the word was, they would begin to resist using it. We can begin with talking about how

the n-word came from the Spanish or Portuguese word for black, “Negro.” The word has been used since the 17th century as a derogatory term. This was turned into a slur when referring to Africans as “Black” became negative. It was used when these slaves were beaten, chained, spit on, whipped in the fields, lynched, and other horrific incidents. This was when the word turned into a tool of oppression. White slave masters would scream the word in order to unleash their anger and violence upon slaves, and it was used to enforce that Blacks were subservient to Whites. “This anger wasn’t an example of hating slaves solely to hate slaves, though. Slave-holders were dependent on slave labor, so their anger was fed by the fragility of their livelihoods” (Learning the “N-word, Adam Cherry). The word was used to remind slaves that their bodies and selves were worth nothing except for being slaves and serving their owners. According to Frederick Douglass, the word was used to deem an entire race worthless, and to break them down so much that they were stripped of any identity at all. “Their Eyes Were Watching God” (Zora Neale Hurston, 1937) shows that even those oppressed by the term “nigger” used it to denigrate members of their own race. Hurston points out how in-fighting only leads to more feelings of worthlessness within the black community. These feelings of worthlessness create the stage for slave-holders and whites to make African-Americans completely subservient.” The history

of the word is complex and painful, but it can be understood that it was always used in a damaging way and never positively. The word was used to oppress an entire race of people. It will be important for teachers to focus on novels and literary pieces written by African-American authors in order to receive a variety of points of view on the word.

Students should create clubs that are safe places for discourse on discrimination, racism, and other bigoted issues in high schools. This will allow peers to share and educate others about their experiences. Most high schools allow students to direct their own clubs as long as they have an approved teacher or faculty adviser to monitor the meetings. I have started a student directed “Religious Tolerance” club at Highland High School which allows students to come in once a week and speak about any topic. This allows peers to discuss racist and discriminatory encounters they have had, and to educate others on the harmful effects that racist jokes and slurs have. Often, there are psychological and physiological repercussions that come along with being called derogatory insults and names. “Guyl and associates found that diastolic blood pressure reactivity to a speech stressor was enhanced among individuals who had experienced discrimination. Supportive of Krieger and Sidney’s findings, Bowen-Reid and Harrell reported an inverse relationship between discrimination and cardiovascular activity” (Am J Public Health, 2003)

This shows that students of color suffer much from more stress and are even physiologically harmed by this simple name calling. Many African-American students claim to have a special place for anxiety and pain when being called that word, and it causes mental distress and unrest (Learning the N-word, Adam Cherry). Having a safe area in which peers can relate to each other can be comforting and empowering to students who don't have a voice in the school environment.

When non-Black students are asked about their justification for using slurs such as the n-word, a few common arguments come up. The first and most common argument is that in America, we all have freedom of speech and to not allow students to use the word would be unconstitutional. While it can be agreed that everyone in America has freedom of speech and can say what they want, that doesn't mean that they should. Citizens should realize that language is our main way of communication, and every word that we use has a weight and meaning. Our discourse will end up shaping the reality around us. We can all say what we want, but at the end of the day there will be consequences toward racist and prejudice language. "At some level, there has to be some self-critique and critical awareness and sensitivity to difference. Just because someone else is doing it doesn't mean that I do it even if and when I surely can" (Neal A Lester, Arizona State

University) When people use the word, they will be criticized and should not protest against it. The weight of the n-word is so heavy and loaded, that people should expect ramifications when they use it. If a person uses the n-word, other people also have the freedom of speech to argue with them. Schools should be creating awareness on this topic, not prohibiting the word. However, hopefully people will be more educated and fewer students will be using the word.

Many students claim that "my school doesn't have an issue of racism or anti-blackness." The people who claim this are blissfully unaware of their surroundings and probably blinded by their own privileges. America as a society is racist, not just high schools. To say that one has never witnessed racism in their school is quite ignorant. Racism has become an institutionalized system, and everyone is affected by it. Casual racism and institutionalized racism can be linked back to each other. We can look toward examples of discrimination in the criminal justice system. "The police stop Blacks and Latinos at rates that are much higher than whites. In New York City, where people of color make up about half of the population, 80% of the NYPD stops were of Blacks and Latinos. When Whites were stopped, only 8% were frisked. When Blacks and Latinos are stopped 85% were frisked according to information provided by the NYPD. The same is true most other places as well. In a California study, the ACLU

found Blacks are three times more likely to be stopped than Whites (Bill Quigley, Huffington Post). Although a person may not notice racism in their school, it is a fact that it is presently deep-rooted in our schools and systems in American society.

Racism is not an easy discussion, and to even bring it up to peers or coworkers can be uncomfortable and extremely sensitive. It may be hard to talk about, but it is important to speak about. Keeping issues like discrimination and anti-blackness silent will only allow them to grow and embed themselves into American society even more. Unless students and teachers begin to stand up and voice their opinions, minorities will continue to be harassed in school and called derogatory names, and when they grow up, this prejudice will lead to job discrimination, unfairness in the criminal justice system, and endless other issues. Teachers need to teach their students about the history of racism, discourse should be led in schools specifically on slurs and their impact on people, and students themselves need to speak out to each other in order to start a change. Once high schools start taking these actions, the future for minority youths in America will be much brighter.

I Now Pronounce You Husband and Husband/ Wife and Wife

This Is My Voice



**Moica Mejia
Highland**

"I know, up on top you are seeing great sights, but down here at the bottom us, too, should have rights." Dr Seuss. Proponents argue that same-sex couples should have access to the same marriage benefits and public acknowledgment enjoyed by heterosexual couples and that prohibiting gay marriage is unconstitutional discrimination; Seuss believed that we all need and deserve the same right, no matter what sexual orientation you have or skin color.

Same-sex couples should have access to the same benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples. "My thoughts on gay marriage are that everyone has the right to love and be loved, and that's the position I take." -Nick Jonas. Gay couples are just as capable and successful adoptive parents as heterosexual couples. Someone's sexuality or sexual preference has no impact on their ability to be a good parent or citizen. They are committed just the same as a heterosexual couple. More children in the adopting homes will be able to have a new place to be with loving parents. same-sex marriage should be legalized.

Same-sex marriage is a civil right. "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of

the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property" (U.S. Constitution, Article XIV). As the amendment says, no person should be deprived the liberty to get married without their sexual orientation getting in the way, and to make a family and adopt kids. Marriage is a civil matter, not a church affair. Those who want church weddings can have them, but marriage is a matter of civil law. And since it is unconstitutional to deny equal civil rights to citizens, it is unconstitutional to deny to homosexual couples the right to marry.

Gay marriage can bring financial gain to the state and local government. Forbes magazine says, "One thing is abundantly clear: Legalizing same-sex marriages would mean a windfall for the wedding industry." Weddings are a \$70 billion-a-year business. States and local governments benefit from marriage licenses. Venues get booked and paid for, while hotels, restaurants and retail outlets also see sales rise. Even vacation spots get a nice dose of business from the honeymooning couple. Same-sex marriage

should be legalized because it's a win-win situation for both sides.

Some people say adopting for homosexuals isn't right because kids need a mother and a father figure to grow up and have a normal life. Gay couples are capable of raising a child, and this shouldn't be one of the reasons same-sex marriage isn't legalized in all states yet.

I definitely disagree with that because the kids of now-a-days have many friends with parents that are the same sex and have no problem with it; a kid needs loving parents, not a mom and a dad, to be happy.

To sum it up: legalizing gay marriage would bring a lot of benefits to the community, by being able to adopt kids and bring financial gain to state and local government. I care because it makes people feel better about themselves and not get discriminated anymore. If this country is free and meant to be equal and have equal rights for everyone, we should let them have the same right just like everyone else.



Spark the Youth

This Is My Voice



Isaac Jones
Science Center

“Creativity is seeing what everyone else has seen, and thinking what no one else has thought.”--Albert Einstein. Obstacles and challenges throughout life are inevitable. However, when we make creativity a habit, we continue to learn new, resourceful ways of solving problems in our artwork and in life. There is no doubt that there needs to be more fine arts programs for youth that are at risk of jeopardizing their future because fine arts give students the chance to develop critical thinking skills and it gives the participants better social skills. We need to immerse youth in a productive activity that can last their entire lifetime.

First, the youth participants will develop a deeper thought process if they are involved in a fine arts program. According to artination.org, “Through art children learn that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.” Also, it allows the youth participants to use critical thinking rather than getting the right answer. We can allow these kids to let them think for themselves and give them the chance to interpret what they personally see instead of what someone else sees. The pros of youth becoming better critical thinkers will allow them better opportunities in life and give them a chance to let their thoughts run wild.

It has been proven that youth

in these programs also develop better social skills. A foundation called the Arts Education Partnership did a study on 4th and 6th graders in New Jersey comparing students who participated in fine arts programs to those who didn't. The study found that students reported significantly improved attitudes relating towards self-expression, trust, self-acceptance, and acceptance of others. Also, the benefit of being able to communicate with other people and collaborate is an invaluable skill that can be used in different scenarios. To be able to teach these youth through art and boost their self-confidence will help prepare them for what's ahead in life.

In contrast to what I previously stated, people sometimes believe youth who participate in these programs aren't really gaining any skills from the programs. They also believe that there needs to be more of an emphasis on STEM education. However, just because we put more of an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics doesn't mean that we can overlook fine arts. In recent studies it has been proven through new brain research that music and art not only improve skills in math and reading, but they promote creativity, personality adjustments, and self-worth (CAPE). Also, if you look at countries such as Japan, Hungary, and the Netherlands, they rank consistently higher among math and science test scores

because art is required in all of their schools. Even though STEM is this country's priority, there needs to be a joint effort to help youth in any way possible. Fine arts need to be included in students' academic options because of its clear benefits in so many areas.

As you can see we need fine arts programs for youth that are at risk of jeopardizing their futures so they can become better critical thinkers and develop better social skills. In a short amount of time youth will develop skills that they can use for the rest of their lives, but ultimately these programs are trying to save children from harming themselves by making poor decisions. A family member who was heading down the wrong path joined an art program that ended up changing his entire life. It let him



explore his own creativity and allowed him to show things he wouldn't verbally say. We need to give the youth the chance to show who they are without any restraints; let them out of their handcuffs, and let their creativity run wild.

Non Lethal Weapons

This Is My Voice



Tevin Lawler
East High

How do you feel about guns? How do you feel about the millions of people who die by them in a year? What if there was a way to prevent this? Well there is a solution: non-lethal weapons. I believe that non-lethal Weapons such as tasers and phasers are better than lethal weapons and should replace them. Non-lethal weapons are better because they don't kill; instead

odds of suspect injury by almost 70 percent. Also tasers used by the RCSD and by the Seattle police department had no effect on suspect injury. So this shows that non-lethal weapons do work when it comes to defending yourself. This also shows that if you are shot with a non-lethal weapon, it will not kill you. If we use non-lethal weapons instead of lethal ones, more lives will be saved. And when the next crazy person decides to kill a bunch of people, non-lethal weapons will be there to protect us.

If we replace non-lethal weapons, we can stop tragic events of innocent people being killed.

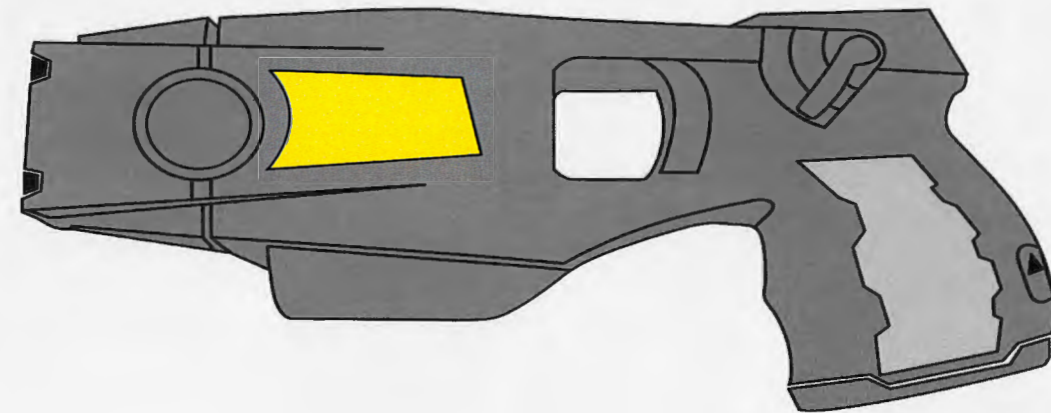
can replace lethal weapons and prevent tragedies like this. Hopefully we can change before more innocent people are killed.

If we replace lethal weapons it wouldn't affect the way we live, but some people will disagree. Some people will say we don't have the right to take their guns and that the second amendment prevents that. But the second amendment says that people in America have the rights to bear arms. Replacing the weapons doesn't mean we are vandalizing your rights. I understand that some sports and hobbies will be compromised, but I assure you everything will feel the same.

You would get a better sensation out of target shooting and hunting then you would with lethal weapons. It can also open up new sports and other activities throughout the world.

Having non-lethal weapons is the only way we can save ourselves and others. If we do this, then we will be

creating a better world for our children. If we have non-lethal weapons instead of lethal weapons we could stop street violence in the world. We can achieve this goal, and when we do countless lives young and old around the world will be saved.



they stun or maim the target for a minimum amount of time. This will help military soldiers and officers of the law to not have to make the daunting decision to take another person's life.

By replacing lethal weapons we will be creating safer communities. According to www.nij.gov, the use of pepper spray decreased the

According to www.huffingtonpost.com, a six-year-old girl from Detroit was shot and killed with an AK-47 during a carjacking committed by two 15 year olds. Another report tells of a girl named Kadejah Davis who was completing her homework when she was struck by a bullet aimed through the front door of her house. We

Where Were You When We Needed You Most?

This Is My Voice



Zerina Ocanovic
Science Center

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success” (Henry Ford). The United States is the essential plumbing to the world-- carrying important information, values, priorities, and challenges. With that, we need to open our pipelines of technological communications and networks to help our own society. The United States should have a set standard to equalize the amount of media coverage given to all foreign countries because millions of people currently living in the U.S. have ties to other countries, and with modern technology we have no excuses for not reporting worldwide events to the public.



Many individuals living in the U.S. are from other countries, which should give them the right to be informed or receive media coverage on what is happening in their home country. According to the Census Bureau, in 2009 “the U.S. immigrant population was 38,517,234 (12.5%) of the US total population.” In early May of 2014, rain levels reached a record high amount in southeastern Europe. Two months of rain came pouring down in two days, flooding Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and parts of Croatia. No knowledge or coverage was given to the United States population. Individuals from those countries had lost homes, families were broke, and people were left swimming in the chaos and the actual remnants of their lives. Three days after the disaster, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) posted an article telling the world of the flood but excluding many important details. However, when comparing this to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, news spread within hours of the occurrence. In comparison, the only news regarding the flooding in Bosnia was through the help of user’s Facebook reports. Without the immediate posts on Facebook, the death toll would have been higher than the reported casualties. Facebook was created to connect families/friends for social purposes, but in this case, Facebook did a better job than any other media source in providing up-to-the-minute information. This clearly shows that the media is not doing their job. People need to know and be informed about what is happening in their home countries and to their loved ones regardless of where in the world they may call “home.”

Today we have reporters located all over the world, and with modern technology there are no excuses for not reporting on important events. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has estimated there to be 30,367 total licensed broadcast outlets (AM/FM/TV) in the United States. That includes 4728 AM stations, 6613 commercial FM stations and 3989 educational/non-profit FM stations. While all these networks are in the U.S., there are thousands more outside of the country. The United States is given and exposed to many sources to be able to report on news stories including: phones, social networks, emails, and websites. For example, CNN has a site for the public to send in their own stories or reports. However, even with this unlimited amount of sources, networks in the United States make decisions everyday as to which stories to report and which ones to ignore. No matter what the severity of the circumstance is in any foreign country, networks, news reporters and stations should be considerate and have an obligation to forward specific news reports to the public. It can make a difference to individuals who otherwise would have never been informed on the situation. Keeping information and not acknowledging all world issues is unethical.

Opposing views believe the United States should not have an obligation to report on other countries because we have our own news here to be concerned over. However, while knowing and being informed on what is happening in the U.S., we report on other non-important information. For example, journalists attract more readers, viewers,

and listeners if they include some element of celebrity coverage. Americans and popular culture today enjoy news pertaining to celebrities, never getting bored of commenting on fame mayhem and “may even prefer it to pondering more pressing matters” (CNN, Phil Rosenbaum). With this, if networks in the U.S. are able to publish stories on irrelevant information, they can spare some room to speak on events occurring in foreign countries.

In conclusion, the United States should have a set standard to equalize the amount of media coverage given to all foreign countries. If the United States were to broadcast information pertaining to all nations outside of the U.S., individuals from around the world would form a closer bond and would have more compassion for one another. When floods in Bosnia reached 4 meters in height, I lost all contact with my family members there. I was left wondering if they were alive. I was left clueless. I could have been at ease with myself along with thousands of others if news networks in the United States looked at the countless emails and Facebook posts sent to them regarding the floods. A few weeks have now passed, and the damage has been done. My family’s house was demolished, covered in mud, and now lost in our memories. “The news media, imperfect as they are, constitute the central nervous system of our society and communications infrastructure for the culture” (Poynter, Jay Harris). I understand that the news media is “imperfect” but that does not excuse the fact that they chose to ignore my family and my country when I needed them the most.

Can They Suffer?

This Is My Voice



Samantha Krejchi
Highland

"The question is not can they reason. Nor, can they talk. But, can they suffer?" This famous question was asked by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 1700s. I believe that the answer to Bentham's question is undoubtedly yes; animals can suffer. Unfortunately, they cannot talk, which is why we must talk for them to keep them safe. Testing medicines on animals should be made illegal in the U.S.

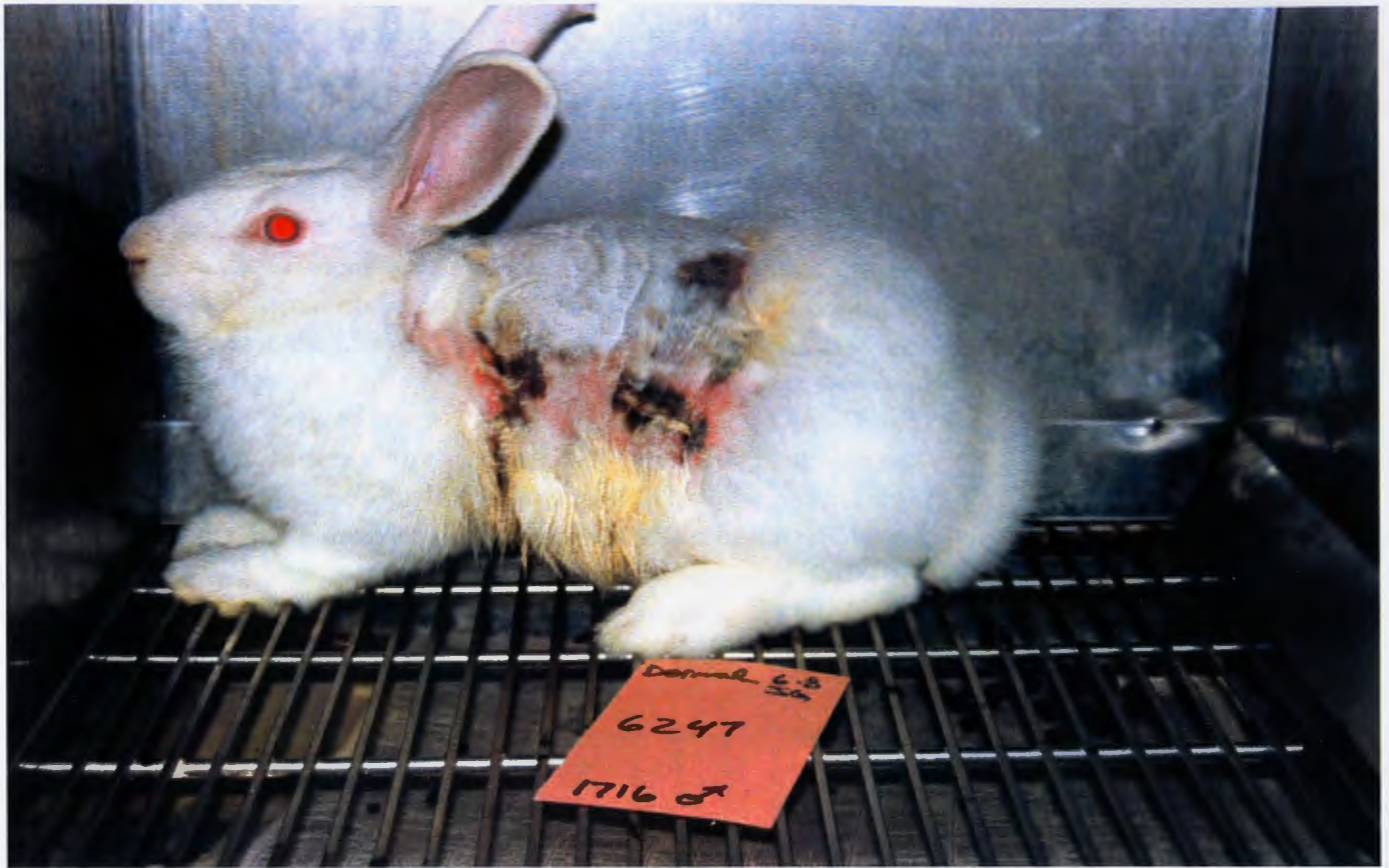
because drugs that pass animal tests are not valid for humans and animal tests are cruel and inhumane.

Drugs that pass animal tests are not valid for humans. Animals are very different from human beings, and the tests do not reliably predict results in humans, making animals poor test subjects. In the 1950s a sleeping pill was released after being tested on many pregnant rodents and caused an epidemic: "the sleeping pill thalidomide, [which] caused 10,000 babies to be born with severe deformities, was tested on animals prior to its commercial release" (procon.org). They had been testing the pill on several pregnant rodents and their offspring had only come out deformed

with high doses of the medication. They thought that since it was only high doses that affected them that it would not make a difference, but they didn't realize they had people's lives in their hands. According to neurologist Aysha Akhtar, "over 100 stroke drugs that were effective when tested on animals have failed in humans, and over 85 HIV vaccines failed in humans after working well in non-human primates." Animals have a very different DNA from humans, causing them to react differently than we would to certain medicines. Obviously drugs that have been passed in animal testing should still be considered questionable towards humans.

Animal tests are cruel and inhumane. It is apparent that the reason scientists test on animals is because they are unsure of the product. Most experiments, though, are flawed and waste the lives of many innocent and voiceless animals. According to Humane Society International, animals used in experiments are commonly subjected to force feeding, forced inhalation, prolonged periods of physical restraint, the infliction of burns and other wounds to study the healing process, the infliction of pain to study its effects and remedies, and "killing by carbon dioxide asphyxiation, neck-breaking, decapitation, or other means," (procon.org). Put yourself in these animals' positions; can you imagine being





tied down and burned with no way of protecting yourself? Then after they are done using your body like you're nothing, they break your neck and throw you in the garbage. No one deserves to be put through such a nightmare. If people could have a little empathy they would realize how serious this issue is. Animals can suffer like humans do, whether we want to acknowledge it or not. Though many research centers would deny any abuse of their test subjects, there is proof that it does indefinitely occur. At a research center in Louisiana some of the primates housed there were put through such psychological trauma, they were tearing chunks out their own arms and legs. There was also video footage of baby chimps being torn

away from their mothers forcibly. It would be completely horrifying to be put in such an awful scenario, so how could you support continuation of testing?

Some people may say that religious traditions put humans as a higher priority than animals. The BBC found that Muslim, Jewish and Christian teachings allow for experimenting on animals, as long as there is no unnecessary pain inflicted. That concept would be respectable if that rule was being followed. As stated above, researchers were found purposely inflicting pain to study how the animals would react, and that is completely unnecessary. Another religious tradition is that we should be merciful to animals, and animal tests are anything but merciful. Anyone can agree that it is not morally acceptable to make

another living being suffer through something like these poor animals are forced to suffer through.

Testing medicine on animals should be made illegal in the U.S. because drugs that pass animal tests are not valid for humans and animal tests are cruel and inhumane. If these tests are not stopped abruptly, more incidences similar to the thalidomide disaster will occur with unknown results. These defenseless animals are tormented, and I ask you to put yourself in their position, to be abused for something that you could never understand. Open your eyes and recognize that you can do something about it: stop buying drugs from companies that test on animals!

Sprouting a New Consciousness

This Is My Voice



Kaleieha Tuitupou
Science Center

“When it is understood that one loses joy and happiness in the attempt to possess them, the essence of natural farming will be realized. The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.” Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution*

Urban farming, or the practice of growing food/plants in an urban setting, can change people’s lives for the better. Personally, I have experienced this change. I was a part of the non-profit organization Real Food Rising located in Salt Lake City, Utah. Working at an urban farm taught me how to grow and care for a variety of plants. But it also taught me important life skills like respect, communication, responsibility, initiative, and commitment. This developing urban farm helped me participate with the people in my community in order to give others fresh, healthy produce. Salt Lake City needs to create more urban farms because they provide localized economic growth, they support the environment, and they build strong communities.

Having more urban farms in Salt Lake City could create a huge

and positive economic impact. Urban farms encourage communities to buy local crops. This creates more money for the community to use for social programs or support for younger generations. For example, “Food from the Hood” (a student-owned community garden in LA, California) used 25% of their proceeds toward a scholarship fund for youth in South Central, Los Angeles. They’ve raised \$250,000 for their community youth to go to college (Adam James, 2012). By

for education programs, charities, low-income neighborhood support, etc. The more urban farms created the more money there is to help Salt Lake City by assisting the existing society, creating a stable future for our youth, or possibly improving city conditions.

Along with boosting our economy, urban farms clean the environment. Mia Lehrer and Maya Dunne argue that “urban farms introduce green space to an urban environment.” This means that



using urban farms we could improve the lives of many people within Salt Lake City. The money raised could be created into a scholarship fund like what they did in “Food from the Hood.” It could also be used

urban farms introduce plants into a city setting which decreases the amount of pollution that gets into the air. Since urban farms help clean polluted air, Utah could benefit a great deal because of our poor air

quality. Between 2013 and 2014, Utah had 31 red air days. These are days where the air has a high concentration of pollutants which could cause major health consequences for sensitive groups, including people with asthma or lung disease (Utah Historical Summary of Winter Air Quality). If we introduce more urban farms to Salt Lake City, the plant growth would take CO₂ out of the air, which could potentially reduce the amount of red air days. In addition to clean air, urban farms contribute to recycling. For example, the Salt Lake City non-profit organization Real Food Rising uses wasted vegetables and fruits to create compost for their urban farm. The purpose of this is to keep waste out of landfills. Urban farms are a great way to improve the environment while also building up communities.

Urban farms support the environment and they also develop people and neighborhoods. The Deseret News report that having urban farms and community gardens helps youth get involved in their neighborhoods and helps them build life skills. Urban farms help gather people together so they can work toward a common goal. Real Food Rising is a great example of this. The local program brings together youth and adults in order to build up an urban farm. Furthermore, the youth gain job skills like filling out applications, being in an interview, being on-time, and working hard during the job. They also participate in their communities by donating food they grew and volunteering at local food pantries and soup kitchens. Urban farms form bonds between the people in different neighborhoods so they can overcome challenges they

may face. These urban farms are not for creating more challenges.

There are many good points made against the idea of urban farming. Some people say urban farming is going to be a financial burden. There has to be a lot of investment for urban farms to function. People then ask where the funding will come from and if it will come out of their paychecks. Moreover, people believe there is not enough space for urban farms in the city and creating space would require way too much effort. These statements are true: finding money and space is going to be a big challenge in making urban farms. However, it is not impossible. According to an article by Special Assistant for Energy Policy at the Center for American Progress, Adam James, "These urban farms have a fantastic return on investment, with every \$1.00 invested in a community garden generating \$6.00 worth of vegetables." Urban farms rapidly recover the cost spent to build them. The more money and effort put into an urban farm, the more an urban farm will produce for a community. In addition, urban farms can be any size. They do not have to be huge acres of land; they can be a simple lot transformed into a garden. So, there is plenty of space in a city to create an urban farm. There are window spaces, rooftops, alleyways, and abandoned lots to construct a green space. Why waste land when you can utilize it and make it something effective and beautiful?

Urban farms can transform Salt Lake City into a lively and refreshing place. This future will be filled with pride for local produce, a cleaner environment, and people



will be enabled to share ideas and teach each other the skills they have learned. I have seen this happen on a small scale at Real Food Rising. If I had not gone to the program I would have never learned how to make a patch of land into a healthy garden. I would have never met all the wonderful people who live close to home. Now, because of the experience I have new friends and skills. I've also become motivated to get to know more new people, start my own garden, and stay involved in service. I encourage you, my reader, to start urban farming now. Join in on a local urban farm/community garden. Take a chance and design your own green space whether its two acres of land or a small tomato plant in your window sill. As Tom Ziglar said, "Change starts with you, but it doesn't start until you do."

Sex Trafficking In Utah Is A Bigger Problem Than You Think...

This Is My Voice



Laurent Ortiz
East High

Here in Utah, it's gorgeous for its big green mountains, and it is known for its fry sauce. But it's not all great. There's a plague that the whole world is diseased by; it's called sex trafficking (prostitution), and the average age of entry into prostitution is thirteen years [<http://www.rapeis.org>]. This plague is everywhere, even here in Utah, and it's a huge industry. We can minimize this disease in our state, and hopefully everywhere else, by having the police spend more time in investigating sex trafficking cases as well as helping the victims. This change in Utah can be the antidote for this terrible plague.

The enforcement in our state needs to focus on two things: identifying and helping victims, and identifying and punishing traffickers [A CALL FOR REFORM, Lenora C. Cabb]. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, between December 2007 and September 2013, the center received 275 calls that originated in Utah reporting human trafficking. Sixty-one of those calls were in 2013 alone. Scary right? Well if Utah police can do a better job in prostitution cases by arresting traffickers and negotiating with them to spill out information, then those numbers will decrease.

In society, police are known to

be protective, understanding, and most of all, helpful when you need it. Sadly, the "helping" part isn't exactly very true in cases of sex trafficking; instead their presence to victims is threatening. Jennifer is a survivor of domestic minor sex trafficking. She says, on behalf of many victims, "For the most part she's been abused or molested, so when she's surrounded by a bunch of cops. . .it could be very. . .earth-shattering, and very uncomfortable, especially the whole process of the strip-searching. . .nobody wants to be in jail, nobody wants to be incarcerated, but she wants to be treated with respect." This is a point-of-view from a real sex trafficking victim. Not only are we arresting buyers, but also the victims. Also, law enforcement has to change their ways of arresting both buyers and victims for the better of our community by having the victims in high quality shelters and not put in jails. This will help the victims as well as having fewer prostitutes on the streets since the police are just arresting buyers and not the prostitutes.

Shelters for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) victims are lacking identification methods, causing DMST victims to be identified as a juvenile delinquent. It is very important that these shelters are trained on how to identify victims of DMST, because currently one identifier can identify a young person as a victim of sex trafficking, while another identifier will identify the same young person as a traunt. This is due to identifiers in shelter not receiving the right training. One run away youth shelter

identified 57% of their clients in 2006 as DMST victims after identifiers received training [www.sharedhope.org]. All shelters need to train their identifiers to reduce the percentage of victims mistaken as delinquents.

Some people believe prostitution should be legalized because they are making a profit and they know what they are doing. It's true that they know what they are doing with their body. I don't believe that this logic is true because most victims are being forced into prostitution by their traffickers (pimps) and the money that they earn goes to the traffickers. A sex trafficker or brothel owner can earn from three to ten thousand dollars for each trafficked individual [www.heinonline.org].

Therefore, police in Utah should investigate prostitution and help victims by doing a better job at arresting traffickers, arrest only the traffickers and help the victims, and improve identification methods in shelters for victims. This could change the future of Utah by having more criminals behind bars and fewer victims, making Utah a better state. Jon Edward, law student, said "I was surprised that Utah has a D for a grade. I would have thought that Utah would be taking better care of kids." This subject is extremely important to me and should be for everyone else that loves Utah, because it shows how much citizens of Utah care about what is happening in our community. So if you truly love Utah, you will help and support our law enforcement with new changes on sex trafficking to make Utah a better, safer place.

We Only Have One Earth Don't Destroy It.

“Don't worry, Earth will survive climate change...*We won't*”

-Neil de Grasse Tyson

We have been so concerned with 'saving the earth'; why not save ourselves?

Climate change is human caused and will eventually affect everyone and everything on our planet because people do not want to recognize and accept its existence.

This Is My Voice



Escha Barth
Open Classroom

To start with, climate change is human caused. 97 percent of scientists agree that climate change is happening and 95 percent of scientists believe that humans are the dominant cause (Smithsonian magazine). Since the start of the industrial revolution and even more since the mid-20th century, humans have relentlessly burned wood, coal, oil, and natural gas with little to no consideration for the environment and, in the long run, people. Humans continue to use these harmful non-sustainable resources, even when we have access to an energy supply that can provide more energy than we could possibly use: the sun. We have taken advantage of these natural resources for so long that humans are uncomfortable with change. We reject and don't always understand that change is a necessity. This is a main reason why people have a hard time understanding that global warming is human-caused and that changes need to be made by everyone to slow it down.

Second, climate change is

currently affecting our planet and will continue. We are facing loss of glaciers and ice sheets, accelerated sea level rise, and longer, more intense heat waves. In fact, National Geographic explains:

After the ocean, ice is the biggest water reservoir on the planet. There are more than five million cubic miles of it, and no one really knows how long it would take to melt it all...but if we burn all the earth's supply of coal, oil, and gas, adding some five trillion more tons of carbon to the atmosphere, we'll create a very hot planet, with an average temperature of perhaps 80 degrees Fahrenheit instead of the current 58. Large swaths of [earth] might become too hot for humans, and it



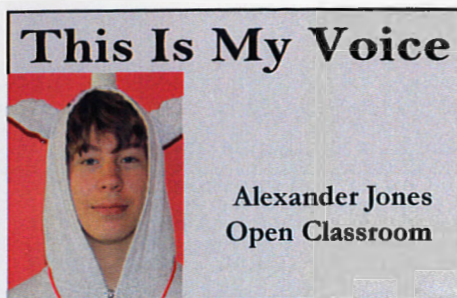
would likely be ice free for the first time in more than 30 million years.

Our carbon emissions are heating the planet and ice is going to melt if we don't take action. Climate change won't stop on its own. We, as humans, have a moral duty to fix what we have done wrong and protect our future.

Some might argue that record snowfall disproves global warming. Snow is cold, so that must mean that the planet isn't warming, right? Wrong. Global warming causes more moisture in the air, which leads to more extreme precipitation. According to nasa.gov, global warming refers to surface temperature increases, while climate change includes global warming and everything else that increasing greenhouse gas amounts will affect. People misinterpret the various signs of climate change, and their false logic contributes to the argument against climate change.

In conclusion, climate change is human caused and will eventually affect everyone and everything on our planet. The effects of our carelessness will become undeniably evident in the near future, and every day we move farther and farther away from the clean world we once had. Our way of life is harmful and not practical and will backfire. Action is essential.

Instead of walking to P.E., let's run, jump, and roll!



Have you ever wanted to climb a wall, but didn't know how? That's why parkour should be taught in schools in the Salt Lake City school district. Parkour is the act of get-

academically, it's a good physical workout for those who wish to be healthier, and it has become a fun, popular pastime, you can do with friends. Let's jump in!

Parkour is a useful activity for brain exercises to help you with school work and social life, because the obstacles you overcome physically will help raise your self-confidence and you will have a stronger will. People these days have low self-esteem because they think that

that. Any kind of moving can show an increase in the strength of your brain, it can be done anywhere, at any time. Don't do parkour to get in shape; do it to be happy. Parkour can increase your level of positivity, just as much as any other form of moving. And being positive can encourage you to be more invested in school and actually DO their work. However, it requires at least a sliver of imagination. And it's free! Famous free runner/parkourest,



ting from one place to another as efficiently as possible. This Includes running, jumping, rolling, etc. It can train the mind both mentally and

they're fat, stupid, lazy, etc. However, those who do parkour are always upbeat and in a fantastic mood (www.cdc.gov). And they don't think like

Brian Orosco, said "The world is my playground." Parkour is an act of creating a "playground" out of the architecture around you.

The physical workout that parkour brings to you is harder than you would think. Many parkour gyms, such as Tempest Free running, consider parkour a sport nationwide. So it could count for physical education. It also trains the muscles, to be

neither were we. Set small goals and build upon them." Parkour, as well as any other form of exercise, can actually help maintain the strength of your bones and even make them stronger.

As well as the architecture for

time we do." Never giving up is the path to passion. And sometimes we need friends to help us find the way.

On the other hand, parkour can be very dangerous. Even failing a single vault can result in a horrible accident or even death. It's harder than it looks and requires the person to put forth a lot of effort and time. It can also influence bad behavior towards people, by creating a new form of escape after committing a crime. It can also count as an act of defacement of property. Though these are valid points, they can apply to every other sport, as well. We would have to remove every other sport from the SLC School District, too. David Carradine said "If you cannot be a poet, be the poem." If you can't be the one who found parkour, be someone who supports and/or learns the art.

Once again, Parkour should be taught in schools for physical, mental, and even social benefits. It can train you in many different ways.

I understand it's dangerous,

but so are gymnastics, track, and cheerleading, which all can be taught in schools. Parkour is just a mix of the three. It's growing more and more popular each day, so why don't we just start teaching it in school? I hope to see a change in the classes, to be able to have parkour as one of them. I have been passionate about parkour ever since my best friend moved away in the third grade. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to run, climb, jump, and then roll!



able to withstand more. This could be useful for when students have to write an essay or do some other physical activity. Everyone knows that to exercise, you have to move SOME part of your body. Parkour is a very effective workout that actually trains one muscle for each different movement. Legs for running, arms for climbing, feet for jumping, and hands for vaulting. Eight-time Mr. Olympia, Lee Haney, said "Exercise to stimulate, not to annihilate. The world wasn't formed in a day, and

it, Parkour has grown ever more popular since it was originated in the 1980's. There are at least 15 different parkour gyms in the US. These gyms, as well as parkour, can have a lot of effect on the social lives of those who use parkour. This can lead to creating new, fun memories to look back upon. In the near future, it can also relieve stress. It helps people feel more open to show their true self to their friends. Confucius said "Our greatest glory isn't never falling, but in getting up every

Whose Choice Is It?

This Is My Voice



Ashley Medina
Science Center

In Utah a woman under the age of 18 isn't allowed to have an abortion without written permission from at least one parent; in addition, that one parent is informed of the

abortion 72 hours before it takes place. One teen who was forced to notify a parent under Utah's parental notice law was kicked out of her home when her parents learned of her pregnancy. Her mother took the girl's money that she had been saving for the abortion; she then threatened to disown her as her daughter if she went through with the abortion. When the teen called the clinic to cancel her appointment, she was living in a friend's car. Utah's parental

notice law ruined her relationship with her mother and left her homeless with an unwanted pregnancy. This experience is sadly far from unique. Abortion laws for minors in Utah are unfair because the decision to have an abortion should be the woman's choice, most teens who don't want to involve their parents in the decision have good reasons for doing so, and ordering teens to involve their parents puts the teen's health at risk.



It is a woman's right to decide what to do with her body and her future. According to Planned Parenthood's website:

Utah requires that one of your parents give permission for your abortion, and separately that one parent be told of your decision 72 hours before the abortion takes place. A judge can excuse you from the first requirement (permission), but not the second (that a parent be told). You can be excused from the second requirement if you have only one parent and that parent has abused you, and your doctor reports that abuse to the appropriate authorities. You can also be excused from this requirement if your parent has failed to take responsibility for your care.

These laws are making it impossible for it to be the choice of the teenager; it is the choice of the parents and the government. The parents are the people who are making the choice, so they're the ones to give the permission for the minor's abortion. For the minor to be excused from getting permission it's either a judge's choice or a doctor's and a judge's choice. Having these laws altered so that parents don't need to be informed or give permission gives these teenagers a better chance at having a future that they want and plan for themselves.

Teenagers who choose not to involve their family in their decision for abortion are most likely afraid of both the response and consequences given by their parents. According to a study done by Stanley K. Henshaw and Kathryn Kost in 1992 at the Guttmacher Institute titled "Parental Involvement in Minors' Abortion Decisions," 22% of teens who

don't want to involve their parents fear they will be kicked out of their homes. Teenagers with one or both parents who abuse drugs or alcohol make up 14% of pregnant teenagers that don't choose to involve their parents. Twelve percent don't live with either one of their parents, and 8% have had at least one parent who had physically abused them. Many teens rightfully believe that they would be in harm's way if they were to tell their parents. These young women are making the conscious and mature decision to protect themselves, and the law is jeopardizing their decision to keep themselves safe and to make a future that they have prepared for. Making it the choice of the teenagers keeps them safer and prevents what could potentially be a more hostile environment.

Ordering the involvement of a parent in the decision of an abortion jeopardizes the health of teens. The longer a woman waits to have an abortion the greater the chances are of that woman's death. According to a study done in 2014 done by the Guttmacher Institute, "The risk of death associated with abortion increases with the length of pregnancy, from one death for every one million abortions at or before eight weeks to one per 29,000 at 16-20 weeks—and one per 11,000 at 21 weeks or later." Young women may wait because they are afraid to inform their parents of their pregnancy, let alone that they are not ready to have a baby and want to make the decision for an abortion. Being already terrified and anxious they put off telling their parents, extending the length of their pregnancy which increases the probability of health

risks during the abortion operation.

Opposing views claim that these minors aren't mature enough to make decisions for themselves and that they're, in fact, in harm's way if a judge can pardon them from getting permission from their parents to have an abortion. However, these young women are capable of knowing whether or not they have the ability to carry a baby and how their parents will react to their pregnancy or their choice for an abortion. Admittedly, a judge can grant a waiver if they believe the woman needs it, but going to court to speak in front of a judge isn't always the best alternative. Having to turn to strangers and tell them about their personal lives causes extraordinary anxiety and fear, and many teens are too afraid to even make going to court a real alternative.

Ultimately, Utah's abortion laws are unfair to minors. Young women are not given the opportunity to choose for themselves involving their bodies and their futures. These current abortion laws are leading to unwanted children, broken families, and even homelessness. As a young woman in this state I should be given the right to an abortion and be trusted to choose what is best for myself and my future. We should support the idea that minors can make decisions on their own. With these existing laws in action, whose choice is it? Whose choice should it be?

PALESTINIAN – ISRAELI CONFLICT

This Is My Voice



**Helena Haddadi
Highland**

Between the countries of Israel and Jordan lies a piece of land which belongs to no country. This unofficial piece of land is referred to as the West Bank due to its western proximity in relation to Jordan, but is also known as the occupied territory due to its illegal occupation by Israel. These three regions combined are also home to the Palestinians, a people who have no official representation as a country and are being exiled from their own land. Within these regions, tension exists between the Israelis and the Palestinians due to a devastating past. This ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict can be alleviated through the establishment and recognition of a Palestinian state in the occupied territory.

In October of 1915, the British and the Palestinians signed the McMahon-Hussein Agreement, which the Palestinians accepted as a guarantee that a Palestinian state would be given to them at the end of World War I. The McMahon Agreement and the Churchill White Paper both described the British government's intentions in terms of giving the Palestinians and the Jews a state but never directly promised anything. Around the same time was written the Balfour Declaration in November

of 1917 to Lord Rothschild, the head of an influential American-Jewish family. The Balfour Declaration stated: "His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." The latter

an official Jewish state, the Palestinian people await the day when they will be recognized. The 1930 Passfield White Paper even said of the equal acknowledgement of the two opposing parties: "The paper claims that the British did intend to fulfill their obligations to both Arabs and Jews, and would resolve any conflicts that might surface as a result of their respective needs." Great Britain was



part referred to the Arabs in Palestine. This document acknowledged both the Jewish and the Palestinian people, and this is how the conflict should be dealt with in the present day, with the recognition of both parties. Each of these three documents leaned towards the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and so when Israel became a country in 1948, this feat was accomplished. However, this action only dealt with half of the situation. As there is now

constantly shady about their intentions, and their promises of granting rights to both parties went unfollowed. The British seemed to feel entitled to decide the fate of a country in partnership with its king. At the time of the First World War, Jordan, then Transjordan, had been planning on giving Palestine to its people. In later years, King Hussein of Jordan had made measures to do the same. But before this was able to happen, a war occurred.

Jump to 1967 and the Arab-Israeli war. Up until this point, the area that is now the occupied territory belonged to Jordan. It was during this war that the West Bank became occupied as Israel took control, and thus began the illegal settlements in Palestine by the Israelis. Now these are the conflicts that have surfaced, and they are not being dealt with as the British guaranteed in documents. Attention is being given to neither the Palestinians being pushed out of their homeland nor the Israelis breaking the settlement policies. Why do the Israelis need more land if they have already a country by which they are being recognized? Even as Israelis claim settlements illegally, the Palestinians are being squelched, and there has been no intention shown that recognizes them as a people. This has been a problem since the 1948 crisis known as Al-Naqba, which translated from the Arabic, means “calamity”, “catastrophe”, or “disgrace.” This calamity was the mass exodus of over seven hundred thousand Palestinians from their homes by the newly arriving Israelis. Such terrors occurred then and again in 1967 when the West Bank was seized; finally in 1989, Jordan severed ties with that small occupied territory. The living conditions now in the West Bank differ intensely when comparing the illegal Israeli residents and the oppressed Palestinians. For example, a Palestinian lacks the rights to vote and to own land and is essentially a refugee in what was once his or her home. As of 2013, 42% of the West Bank consists of illegal Israeli settlements, with approximately 350,000 Jewish residents. What needs to happen is a stop to this illegal settlement. Jews in the Middle East cannot say that they have no place to go, for they have

Israel. The story is dissimilar from the standpoint of a Palestinian, for as we speak, Palestine is a nation that is on its way to nonexistence due to oppression by those settling it illegally. The Arabs of Palestine deserve representation just as the Jews of Israel do, so the establishment of a Palestinian country in the West Bank is what must happen.

Peace can be difficult, but is always worth it. In the heat of a crisis such as the one at hand, such a prospect may seem entirely unattainable and not worth the toil. Peace-fighting groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the PLO throw rocks and act violently towards the Israelis, which is no better than how the Israelis acted towards the Palestinians at one point. Until both sides, Palestinians included, can be peaceful, peace will grow farther and farther out of reach. Many argue that Palestine and Israel could not guarantee a safe border, but this is narrow-minded. If anything, a border would bring neutrality and might even suggest peace. Peace talks have proved to blow things out of proportion for these impassioned peoples, but that fervor can be instead directed towards the love in place of the hate of one’s neighbor. Another matter concerning the Israelis is the fact that the region that is now encompassed by Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank did also belong to them. The Jews and the Arabs both are entitled to this land, for these two groups, as separately as they may identify, resided here. A way needs to be formulated in which Arabs and Jews may live as friends, side

by side in the area which everybody calls home. This can be done, and the best way to make it happen is to give Palestine statehood.

Humanity has been progressing for some time, and with each group that makes heard their qualms, another arises and must be dealt with. The Palestinians are no different, and just like those before them who suffered and those who will suffer long after, they deserve the most basic of human rights: recognition, equality, and freedom in the face of the rest of the planet. The occupation of the West Bank needs to come to a halt, for it violates settlement law and oppresses those who had been residing in the region originally. Al-Naqba, like many terrible events that could ever fall upon a people, needs to have reparations made in its wake. The closure for the Arabs of Palestine can be granted through making Palestine a country. Although a history of violence may seem too daunting



to put to an end, it can be done. I stand and speak for those who still have sorrow due to their withering homeland. After all, shalom and salaam are the same word!

We Need Stronger Gun Laws

This Is My Voice



Huy Huynh
West High

During World War I, 116,516 American soldiers died in order to protect the world's peace (civilwar.org). Does that number scare you? I have something even scarier than that. Every year in the U.S, more than 100,000 people are shot and more than 50,000 of them die because of

national anthem. Our lives could be threatened at any place and by any people because of the freedom to use guns. With all the reasons above, the gun laws should be restricted specifically by always having a background check for anyone who wants to purchase gun, prohibiting people from lending guns to the others by reinforcing fingerprint technology on all guns, and shutting down the gun black market.

Background checking must be executed more sophisticatedly. People with mental illnesses must be prohibited from buying guns. A single flaw

massacre from happening. People with mental illness are more likely to lose self-control. Seung-Hui Cho was diagnosed with severe anxiety disorder as well as major depressive disorder, but he could still buy a gun from a local gun store. According to the spreadsheet of Mother Jones, a political left-wing American magazine, many shooters showed signs of mental illness, but in only two cases was there a prior diagnosis. The lack of gun laws has allowed these people with guns to kill innocent people easily. In order to prevent sad things like this from happening, we have to



gun violence. With that rate, in less than three years, the number of people that die because of gun violence will equal the number of soldiers that died during World War I. Ironically, in this case, our people don't die for any glorious goal; they don't die under the enemies' weapon; they die because of the people who live in the same country and sing the same

in the gun law system has created tragic consequences. On April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech Institute and State University, Seung-Hui Cho, a senior at Virginia Tech, killed 32 people and wounded 17 others. It was the second-deadliest act of mass murder at a U.S school campus in American history. The saddest thing about it is that we could have prevented the

set up a stronger background check, especially for people with mental illnesses.

In addition to the background checking, we also have to ban people from lending their guns to others by reinforcing fingerprint technology on all guns. If we had had fingerprint technology, the Sandy Hook massacre would have never happened.

On December 14, 2012, twenty-year-old Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members in a mass murder at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. Adam's mom was a gun collector. She trained her son how to use guns from when he was a little boy and continued even as he got older. What was the result? Adam shot his mom in the head, took her gun, and created a massacre. Yet people might think it isn't that serious to let their friends borrow their guns, but how can they guarantee their friends won't do anything bad with their guns? While the recent laws can't make sure that people will stop lending their guns to their friends, other physical actions such as reinforcing fingerprinting on all guns have to be made. We must require a fingerprint scanner for all guns so only the legitimate owner of the weapon can use it. When that's executed, there won't be a second Adam Lanza in our society.

Last but not least, we have to prohibit the operation of any black market. "In a 2004 survey of 1,400 inmates incarcerated for crimes committed with a handgun, only 11 percent reported having purchased their weapon through a licensed dealer" (Chicago Tribune). Where did the other 89 percent of inmates get their weapons? Black markets. One of the best ways to stop black markets is to track and shut down every illegal gun selling website on the internet. According to the Hunffington Post, investigators found out that there are about 4,000 illegal websites that offer gun for sale. More seriously, the investigators found that many gun sellers on their websites agreed 82 percent of the time to sell guns to a purchaser who admitted they probably couldn't pass a background

check. With that many illegal black market websites, who can make sure that guns will not fall into the hands of the wrong person? After all, when that happens, who can make sure that nobody will be harmed by that

and somebody drew a gun." Let's be honest to ourselves and our society, the right to bear arms is threatening our society everywhere and every hour. It's time for us to do something.



person? Shutting down black markets will stop guns from falling into the hands of bad guys. A good way to prevent something bad from happening is to stop the source. Once we get it under control, less people will be harmed by gun violence.

Critics say, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." It's true that people are the ones who control the guns, so weapons don't directly kill people. But, you can't hurt masses of people with your bare hands. However, with guns, more people will be involved. Guns give people the power to commit a crime. Hemenway a Harvard researcher once said about the effect of gun laws, "We expected pretty brave and wonderful things, but most of the things that were presented were little more than escalating arguments. It wasn't like this is a good guy and this is a bad guy. It's two people who got into an argument

In conclusion, the gun laws should be restricted. If the laws don't change, gun massacres will just keep happening and will take away our family and friends. It will happen so often that our society will gradually get used to it. Then, every day when people wake up, they will look at the news and nonchalantly say, "Well, somebody was killed yesterday because of a gun." It would feel like nothing happened to us. Can't we see those kinds of massacres are tearing our society away from each other? Can't we see it is making us become more and more apathetic? We can't just sit here idle, while out there, the lives of our children, our friends, and our family are being threatened every day. That can't be the life we choose to live. Either restrict the gun laws or let it restrict our lives; you make your choice.

Animal Abuse in Slaughterhouses: COWS

This Is My Voice



Hannah Hartman
Highland

Would you like to be boiled in a vat of water alive? Have body parts torn from your body with no pain-killers? Dragged, bulldozed? Crowded in disease ridden pens with your own feces as the exact floor that you stand on? It is the truth that is hidden from the public, but happens every day to millions of animals raised to feed people. Additionally, too many animals are not even used for food. There is a large variety of different animals that are abused and treated in horrific ways, but I am going to focus on cows. Slaughterhouses that abuse cows should be shut down because it is inhumane and cruel, and the conditions that the animals live in makes them sick and therefore unhealthy to eat.

The ways that cows are treated in slaughterhouses is inhumane and cruel. According to Peta.org, "Most cows receive inadequate veterinary care, and as a result, many die from infection and injury. Every winter, cattle freeze to death in states such as Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota. And every summer, cows collapse from heat stroke in states such as Texas and Arizona." These are just some examples of ways that cows are treated so poorly in these

factories. This is an important quote because it shows that the cows are dying in the conditions that they live in. Cows are put in large pens

When I interviewed my mother, Ali Hartman, she told me that if cows are sick when they are killed, they might have disease particles



called feedlots and they are fed corn to create fatter and cheaper cows. The feedlots are extremely crowded and disease spreads quickly. Also, inhumane slaughter houses should be shut down because the conditions that the cows live in and the constant pain and fear makes them sick, thus, unhealthy to eat.

Another reason why slaughterhouses should be shut down is that eating sick animals is not healthy for human consumption.

spread around in the meat that they produce. By eating the disease particles, a person could obtain that disease and come to be indubitably sick. Some of the cows have E. coli or mad cow disease, which affects your brain. According to Peta.org;

Cattle raised for food are also regularly dosed with drugs such as antibiotics to make them grow faster and keep them alive in these miserable conditions. Instead of taking sick cattle to visit a veteri-

narian, many feedlot owners simply give the animals even higher doses of human-grade antibiotics in an attempt to keep them alive long enough to make it to the slaughterhouse.

This proves that there are loads of chemicals that are used for the animals to stay alive and to speed up their growth. They are fed large doses of Zilmax and Optaflexx, which are drugs for human use, but are also used for cows to enhance the speed of their growth so there is more beef per cow. These chemicals in these amounts are not good for human consumption. It is also just common sense to not eat chemicals! If this doesn't gross you out, then reread.

Other people might say that it is too expensive to run a facility that is perfect and does not have any ani-

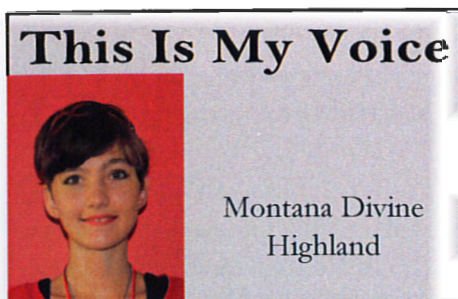
mals that are abused. Many people don't believe that the animals are being abused. This is a valid argument, but if everyone opened their eyes and realized what was happening to the animals and didn't buy that meat, the demand for meat that was collected from abused animals would go down, and there would be no more animals that are abused in slaughterhouses. They might also say that the animals are calm when they are killed just as long as they walk back and forth in lines to their death. They might also say that the animals are not in pain because they are stunned so they won't feel anything. This may seem true, but on occasion the stun gun misses, and the cow endures the full amount of pain. They know that they are walking to their death; they are not stupid animals. They can hear and

smell the death of their fellow cow friends. While these are both valid arguments, I have enough evidence to knock them out of the playing field.

In conclusion, slaughterhouses that abuse cows should be shut down. If this happens, cows and other animals will no longer be abused and all animals that are eaten will be treated humanely until their death. These poor, innocent cows are abused until they die, they live in harsh conditions and are ripped from their family and friends. Every day, cows are abused and treated inhumanely. What will you do to stop the madness?



Home School: Is it better?



Picture this: you're a student going through public school but because your age level does not match your grade level (because you are way too smart) other students decide you're open game. They start picking on you and harassing you because you're smarter than they. Too smart for your own good. You start thinking that you're no good, that no one likes you; you grow depressed, wanting no friends and no help. You end up slacking on your school work, and your grades take a plunge for the worse. Some older students walk up to you and tell you they'll accept you if you make some changes in your life, if you change who you are. You start skipping class and hiding out in locker rooms to do drugs and drink alcohol with your newfound "friends." You pull away from your parents because you don't feel that they love you anymore.

Now picture this: you're a student going through homeschool, and you're doing work that is on your level. There are no students who think that you are open game to be picked on and harassed. Your mom is teaching you, and she's egging you on because she thinks that you are doing a fantastic job on your work. You're happy and content because you have people who like you and don't want you to change who you are. You have places you can go to if you need a little 'away time' or time to be

by yourself to do some school work. You don't have a teacher breathing down your back telling you to pick up the pace because you are running out of time. You can take as much time as you need to understand the homework and to get it done. While all of this is happening, it's pulling you closer to your family and not exposing you to that fear of depression that results in doing drugs and drinking alcohol, ruining your body.

Homeschool is in more ways than not a lot better suited for children going through school, whether they are way ahead of their game—meaning that they are more advanced than their age level—or perhaps even a bit behind their age level; although public school can be good for children, home school is better because it is safer, forges healthier and stronger relationships between family members, and is academically fitter for the student(s).

Going to a public school can mean lots of things. Peer pressure, bullying, violence, drugs, alcohol, and skipping class are just a few of these things. At times students are offered drugs by peers and told that these drugs will help them forget about some of the things on their mind and that they will be considered cool if they take them. Students are always under pressure to do things, such as to get their work done as fast as they can, whether or not they finish because they have a deadline. If they do not complete the work beforehand, they are in danger of failing a subject. In the end this leads to more stress on the students, which can help push them off the frail bridge that they are leaning over and into a river of depression. Younger students are bullied

by older students at times because of their skin color, because of their age and grade level, and for other things as well such as their religion and what not. This too can help push the students farther and farther into the flowing river of depression that they are already waist deep in. Dr. Brian D. Ray, who has spent his entire career researching and studying home school and its effects on children, said in a research paper that homeschool "provides a safer environment for children and youth, because of physical violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and improper and unhealthy sexuality associated with institutional schools." Homeschooled students and their parents agree with Dr. Ray that homeschool would be the better way to go about getting an education than going to a public school, because to do the latter can lead to issues for the student as well as the parents and other members of the family. Equally important, these temptations can be very harmful to children in public schools. Homeschool can reduce some of the issues that are brought on by public school. Some say students that are homeschooled are not exposed to everything that public schooled children are because home has a sense of peace, safety, and serenity that every child needs.

In addition to homeschool being safer than public and, yet again, better for students, it also helps to forge healthier and stronger relationships between family members: namely, the parent teaching and the child or children being taught. Public school children do not spend much time with their parents because they are locked away in a learning institute for 40 hours a week or eight hours a

day. When they are released they want to get away as fast as they possibly can and have fun with friends which causes even less family time, causing relationships to weaken. While homeschool is protecting children from the harm that public school can inflict, such as bullying and peer pressure, it is also bringing the family closer together resulting in healthier and stronger relationships. Mrs. Kate Tsubata, a mother of three children, all of which she has put through homeschool, says, "It created strong bonds that were made possible by direct interaction and involvement" in her children's educations.

While homeschool both provides a more sheltered environment and deepens relationships between a parent and a child, it also does yet another thing for students. It helps them academically. Attending public school, children do not get enough attention that is needed in order to learn and understand the concept that a teacher is trying to put in their heads. On top of this, there are approximately 30 children to one teacher. Clearly, one teacher cannot have enough time to help all the students in the short time of class. At the end of the allotted time some students will still have unanswered questions and will feel like it was a waste of their time.

The point is, students are not developing at the same level because their questions are going unanswered. This will ensure a student receives a low grade that they feel they did not deserve for all the hard work that they put into studying and trying to understand what it was they were studying. In homeschool there are no unanswered questions. There's plenty of time ensuring better grades. Dr. Lawrence Ruder, a professor at the University of Maryland, surveyed over 20,000 students both homeschooled and public schooled; his research

found that the average homeschooled student will score about 30% higher on state tests than students in public school. Dr. Ruder believes that this is because students through homeschool are getting the attention that they need in order to learn everything that they need to. They get the attention because they are one student who is being taught by one teacher, not a classroom full of children all needing help at the same time and with only one teacher there to teach them.

Although homeschool has so much to offer, there are those who would object to the idea of it. These people say that homeschool limits social life for children, and because of these "limitations" they do not interact with people outside their family. They end up building walls and shutting themselves away from the world, developing depression. It cannot be denied that this may be true for some, but that is only because of how a child or children are taught and where they are allowed to go by their parents. If they are shut up in their house and never allowed to go anywhere, then yes, this is true. Children will become depressed and shut themselves away, for it is what they think is right because their parents are the ones that have done this. The student would feel as though going out in the world would be wrong or unhealthy in some way. Homeschool does not limit the social life of children. The parents do. Yes, it is true that there are some things that homeschooled students would not be able to do such as the after-school programs at public schools. But if children are allowed to venture out and travel around to places like

fire departments, hospitals, museums, parks, etc., then they can interact with other people and get involved with things. Another way that homeschool will help a student is by not confining them to one place for an allotted time frame. They are not locked behind doors and gates.

Ultimately homeschool is not only safer, it not only forges healthier and stronger relationships, and is not



just academically fit for students; it helps them in every way possible. I am not saying that every child should be homeschooled, because it is not for everyone. What I am saying though, is that homeschool can help children in many ways, especially the ways that they need the help. It can unleash the child's full potential and help them to achieve more in their life. It can open up so many doors that have been locked because of public school. I know that this is true because I was a homeschooled student for four years. While I may not have enjoyed it at times and it was not what I pictured it to be, I have a better understanding of myself and of my education than when I started. I felt the relationship with my family forging just like I felt the other changes, with both my family and myself. I consider homeschool to be the better choice for an education. Now it is your turn to decide.

Decriminalize the Pot

This Is My Voice



Samarah Perez
Highland

The famous Jamaican singer, and song writer, Bob Marley once said, "Herb is the healing of a nation..." Marijuana has been around for thousands of years, and in the 17th century the United States government actually encouraged the production of it. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the influx of Mexican immigrants also came the influx of fear and misunderstanding associated with the plant itself (at this point most of the U.S.'s marijuana was being imported from Mexico). In the 1930s, a campaign was conducted by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics (now the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs) which sought to portray marijuana as an addictive substance that would lead users into addiction. An article from narconon.org further explains: "In the 1950s it was an accessory of the beat generation; in the 1960s it was used by college students and "hippies" and became a symbol of rebellion against authority." (History of Marijuana) These are just a few of the events that led to the prohibition of marijuana. Utah should decriminalize marijuana because of its many medical uses as well as the plentiful commercial

uses that accompany it.

The medical uses connected to the marijuana plant are astronomical. In 1972, the U.S. Congress wrongly placed marijuana in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act because they considered it to have "no accepted medical use." Since then, 22 of 50 U.S. states, including Washington D.C., have legalized the medical use of marijuana. Just a few of these uses include treatment of: nausea and vomiting, anorexia and cachexia, multiple sclerosis, pain, asthma, glaucoma, migraines, epilepsy, and psychiatric symptoms. The Americans for Safe Access (ASA) communications consultant Hilary McQuie stated in a July 27, 2003 article in the San Francisco Chronicle that "...since the passage of California's Compassionate Use Act of 1996, more than 1,500 physicians statewide have recommended medical cannabis to their patients. But over 80 percent of medical cannabis recommendations have come from 10 doctors. Many of the others that have made recommendations will only agree to do so if the patient has a terminal illness, despite the widespread understanding that marijuana is also effective in treating many non-terminal illnesses." As one can see, this is problematic in that many doctors will only prescribe the use of medical marijuana to their patients if they are terminally ill even though it is known to them that it can be used to treat non-terminal disease or illnesses. This means that doc-

tors today are not doing everything they can to preserve the life of patients but instead are being driven by local laws and even personal beliefs to determine the way that a patient is treated rather than what is genuinely needed by the patient. Personal beliefs have no place in a hospital room, especially when the life of another person is being placed into one's hands. With the decriminalization of marijuana, we will be one step closer to personal, proper treatment of any and all diseases. And with that we will be more wholesome and compassionate as a nation.

As explained above, marijuana, or cannabis as it is more properly called, has many medical uses, but aside from those it also has a wide variety of everyday uses. A couple of words that are important to know when describing the plant are efficacious, which means capable of having the desired result or effect; effective as a means, measure, remedy, etc.; and versatile, which is having or capable of many uses. Did you know that there are an estimated 50,000 uses of the plant itself? Some of them are paper, food for animals and humans, rope, clothes, soap, sails, shoes, plastics, explosives, paint, sealant, methanol, gasoline, fibers for various fuels, auto bodies, lubricants, oils for various uses such as on furniture, varnish, ointments, lacquer, and even salad dressings. Hemp production first began in central Asia and was first brought

to America in 1606. In 1611 it grew to be one of the leading industrial crops, but since then U.S. legislation has made hemp production illegal. With all of its many resourceful uses, it really is a wonder why hemp, of all things, is illegal. One of the reasons that hemp has been prohibited is because of the confusion between industrial hemp and marijuana. One of the factors is the visual similarity between the many varieties of plants and the fact that many people do not know that you cannot actually get “stoned” off of hemp. According to Ray Hansen, author of the web article “Industrial Hemp” from AgMRC, “Canada and the European Union maintain this distinction by strictly regulating the THC levels of industrial hemp, requiring it to be less than 0.3 percent, compared to THC levels of between 3 to 30 percent in marijuana.” A lot of people do not even know that hemp production is illegal in the U.S. because hemp products are still being sold in U.S. stores. Canada alone is one of the leading exporters of hemp products, and while the United States will not support the production of hemp, we are still in the process of providing hemp to United States citizens. Statistics from AgMRC.org stated that in 2007 the United States took up a whopping 59% of all total products exported to other countries from Canada. That means that there is a huge supply and demand rate for hemp products in the U.S. which leads to the point that tax payer’s dollars are being used to import hemp products when it would be much more

cost efficient to do the production ourselves. The Hemp Industries Association (HIA) estimated that the retail value of North American hemp food, vitamin and body care products was in the range of \$156 to \$171 million in 2012. When clothing, auto parts, building materials, and other nonfood or body care products are included, the HIA estimates that the total retail value of U.S. hemp products is about \$500 million. With the huge debt that our forefathers and former presidents have left us with. Hemp may be the answer to getting us out of debt and making us a truly free people. Mathematically speaking, hemp production alone could bring us out of our debt in as little as 6-7 years if all the money made was used for that purpose. Not to mention many job opportunities would open up with the production of a new material, again bringing in more money for our country that we have for so long been taught to “pledge allegiance” to.

When discussing marijuana and the decriminalization of it, the first thing that may come to people’s minds is prohibition and how the lives of everyone were affected by it. Many people believe that since marijuana has been classified as a drug that the legalization of it will immediately affect crime rates and other things of that nature. In an article by Susan Ferries on alternet.org, a CJCJ researcher by the name of Mike Males found that “arrests for youths for the largest single drug category, marijuana, fell by 9,000 to a level not seen since before the 1980s imple-

mentation of the ‘war on drugs.’” He also stated “I think it was pretty courageous not to put an age limit on it. Arresting and putting low-level juvenile offenders into the criminal-justice system pulls many kids deeper into trouble rather than turning them around.” In Colorado, homicides went down from 17 to 8 (a 53% drop), automobile break-ins from 2,317 to 1,477 (down 36%), and sexual assaults from 110 to 95 (down 14%). Overall violent and property crimes dropped more than 10% (allgov.com). As research has shown and continues to show, marijuana will not make crime rates go up but will instead change numbers, lives, and statistics for the better of everyone.

As you can see, marijuana should be decriminalized in Utah because of its many medical and conventional uses. If our nation fails to do this, people will continue to wither away from improper medical treatment, and our jails will continue to fill up with innocent people bearing the repercussions of owning a plant. The reason I feel so deeply about this topic is because my father was diagnosed with epilepsy about three years ago. Since then cannabis has greatly helped him in his everyday life as he wakes up in the morning and goes to bed at night. Dear people, if after all of this, you still do not want marijuana decriminalized, then my call to you is to at least properly educate yourselves.

Protect Tennessee Walking Horses

This Is My Voice



**Anthea Deneris
East High**

In the early 20th century, a breed of horse possessing a unique high-stepping, ambling gait was established and soon came to be known as the Tennessee Walking Horse. The breed quickly began to flourish, popular with the public not only because of its smooth and distinctive gait but also its placid and willing disposition. However, as their following plateaued during the 1950s, unethical owners and trainers began to employ cruel and inhumane techniques to enhance their horses' natural, prized ambling gait in order to be awarded higher scores in shows and to draw the adoration and attention of the crowds back. As a preventive action to stop the abuse which had become so prevalent in the Tennessee Walking Horse industry, Congress passed the Horse Protection Act (HPA) in 1970; over forty years later, due to insufficient funding, enforcement, and disciplinary actions, the abuse still hasn't been eradicated in the industry. Existing legislation has repeatedly been shown to be inadequate in preventing the maltreatment of these horses and needs to provide for more effective regulation of shows and disciplinary actions against offenders.

The abusive training methods originally prohibited by the Horse Protection Act are known as "soring," which is the practice of forcing a horse to perform an artificial and exaggerated

ed gait by means of inflicting pain on its front legs or hooves. The specific motion achieved by soring was soon labeled as the "big lick," where horses snapped their front legs up as soon as they hit the ground and reached high into the air with them. Soon after its introduction the big lick became the ideal and most rewarded movement in performance but not without great cost to the horses who performed it. "Pressure shoeing," described by Donna Benefield, the Vice President of the International Walking Horse Association, is a new and hard-to-detect method of soring achieved by filing down a horse's hoof until blood begins to pool on the surface. A shoe is then banded across the hoof and tightened so much so as to cause intense pressure and trigger the sensitive nerve endings in the sole. However, the most common technique, and the first invented, for soring involves rubbing caustic chemicals into a horse's forelegs and wrapping them in plastic for up to 48 hours while the chemicals leach into the skin, blistering and burning it. Chemical soring is still a common practice. In 2012 the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) tested 190 horses for foreign substances at the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration, the largest annual Walking Horse show, and 145 were found positive, an appalling seventy-six percent.

Soring was soon accompanied by another harmful technique intended to emphasize a horse's gait even more, and two "action devices" began to make their first appearances in the show rings. The first were "stacks," or "stacked shoes," weighing up to fifteen pounds and designed to elevate a

horse's front hooves up to four inches above the ground; the second were chains, which were wrapped around a horse's forelegs to cause irritation during movement. Stacked shoes elevate a horse's leg in an unnatural way and cause irregular angulation of the leg and hoof. Horses monitored by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) while wearing stacks less severe than those regularly used in shows exhibited inflammation in the area of the flexor tendon, which is located in the lower joint of a horse's leg. Chains were implemented originally to increase irritation during movement to skin already damaged by chemicals. The ache of the chains sliding across raw flesh during movement would force a horse to react with distress, retracting its legs quickly and thrusting them out dramatically in an effort to escape the pain. Up until recently it was thought that chains alone had no damaging effect, but the AVMA issued a statement that six-ounce chains, the allowed weight in shows as specified by the Tennessee Walking Horse Association regulations, "will start to cause hair loss without the use of chemical irritants."

The current protections provided by the Horse Protection Act are not adequate and must be improved, as they are clearly ineffective at preventing abuse. From 1986-2012, 9,777 HPA violations were cited by the USDA, and 4,350 were repeat offenses. In 2013, Ed Whitfield introduced HB 1518 the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act. It addresses problems that have raged within the Tennessee Walking Horse industry for over sixty years and confronts the problems associated with action devices and the

lenient penalties originally provided by the Horse Protection Act. HB 1518 would increase disciplinary action for soring by increasing HPA violation penalties from \$3,000 to \$5,000 and terms of imprisonment from up to one year to three years. Whitfield's Act would also ban action devices, an amendment supported by the USDA, the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the AVMA, and the American Association of Equine Practitioners. The PAST Act would ensure that regulatory requirements are adapted by the USDA to train, license, and qualify individuals to be able to detect and diagnose sore horses at shows and "prohibits issuing a license to any person unless such person is free from conflicts of interest," ending the problem of corrupt self-regulation. In 2014 a twin bill, HB 4098, was introduced by Congressman Marsha Blackburn as an alternative to the PAST Act, but its amendments would make many soring methods harder to detect by making physical inspections no longer routine at shows; rather, soring would be identified "through objective, science-based methods and protocols" instead of manual checks. However, soring techniques have evolved, and taking a swab of a horse's leg will not detect pressure shoeing. Blackburn's bill would not ban action devices and would initiate the creation of a horse industry organization (HIO), which would include veterinarians and "industry experts" recruited from states with the highest prevalence of soring. Keith Dane, the Humane Society's Vice President of Equine Protection commented on Blackburn's bill: "Basically, it codifies putting the fox in charge of the henhouse." As has been proven, the industry is not capable of self-policing.

Many issues with the preservation of soring and the culture

surrounding it stem from within the industry and are accepted at even the highest levels of authority. The 2012 Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration board of judges had 112 HPA violations distributed among the seven of them. While the Tennessee Walking Horse industry supports self-regulation as a method to prevent further abuses from occurring, according to the AVMA and USDA, "Violation detection rates are consistently five to ten times higher when the USDA is present at shows to inspect, compared with shows where the industry self-polices." The reason for the discrepancy between these numbers is not that the industry polices itself better than the USDA, but that it fails to report

industry is, at worst, purposely concealing the amount of soring and permitting sored horses to compete and, at best, is completely incompetent, the fact that they have demonstrated over and over again that they are not capable of self-regulation indicates that the government must intervene to interrupt the culture of animal abuse that has festered for decades.

A large stepping gait was originally trained through patience and effort, and though it was never nearly as high as today's competitors' big lick, the 1943 and 1949 National Grand Champions Black Angel and Midnight Merry exemplified the gait that could be trained through patience and wasn't forced by soring or artificial devices.



almost all violations. For example, of the 145 horses identified by the USDA as having foreign substances on their legs, the Tennessee Walking Horse industry only reported having tested two horses as positive. When it is shown that the Tennessee Walking Horse

Their performances show that soring, abuse, and action devices aren't necessary to train a big moving show horse; they serve only to develop an artificial gait that doesn't truly represent the breed but the avaricious people behind it.

Choose Books, Not Movies.

This Is My Voice



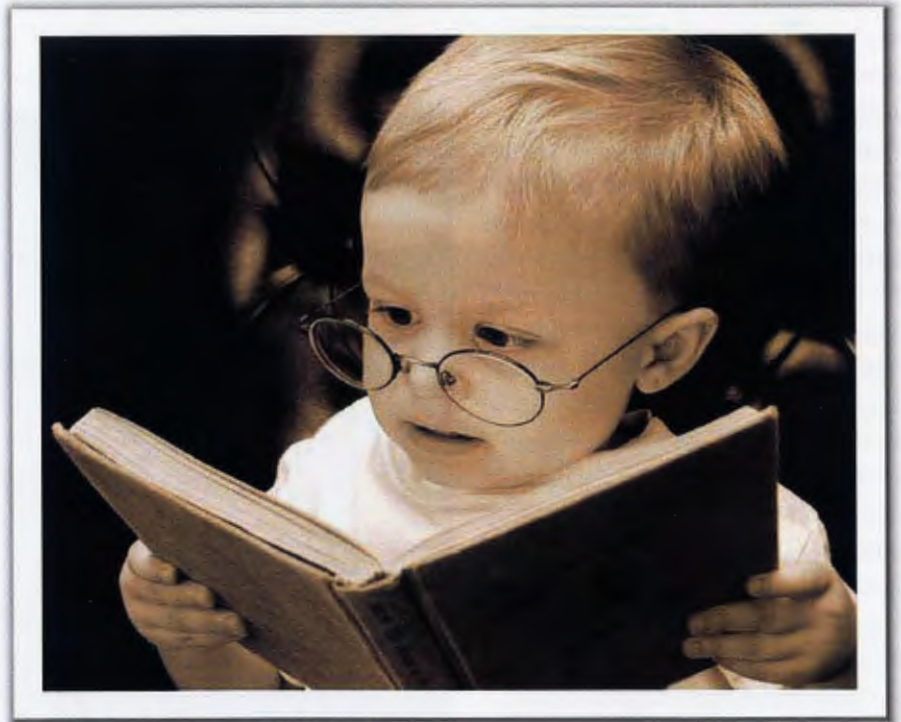
**Hannah Dimock
Open Classroom**

At this point in time, almost anyone you ask possesses a TV and uses it often. Owning a TV and watching it are not bad things, but TV certainly doesn't improve your brain. Reading, however, can greatly improve the thinking process. There are so many good reasons to read a book as opposed to watching a movie. Think about the Percy Jackson and the Olympians books compared to the movies, or the Harry Potter books and their brilliant writing compared to the similarly good but not as great movies. People should read books more often than they watch movies because reading stimulates the brain much more than TV does, those who read more are generally much better in literary subjects and tend to learn more overall, and there is more detail and originality in a book.

When reading, brain activity largely increases, whereas watching TV or a movie does not improve your brain. According to Jennifer Warner, children who watch TV at young ages do not show any improvement, but it's not harmful to their development either. "Contrary to marketing claims and some parents' perception that television viewing is beneficial to children's brain

development, no evidence of such benefit was found," says Marie Evans Schmidt, a researcher at Harvard Medical School. So, brain development is not increased when watching TV (<http://www.mychamplainvalley.com/content/webmd/parentingtoddler/story/d/story/tv-before-age-2-wont-boost-babys-brain/15984/rZiUj9FCZkycPZLotS3jug>). Some

is usually in use when paying close attention to a task", says Natalie Phillips, who lead the project. There is also an increase in different parts of the brain when reading for enjoyment (<http://www.futurity.org/mri-reveals-brain's-response-to-reading/>). This means that reading requires multiple functions of the brain. A big part of this is thinking



researchers at Stanford asked people to read a book while inside an MRI machine; studying the activity of the brain, they came up with some surprising information. When you are paying close attention to what you are reading, blood flow to the brain greatly increases, but even more important "it's not only in the 'executive function' area, which

about a book after reading. We can see from this study that it takes more concentration, more imagination, and more interest to read; watching TV does not improve the brain, so reading is actually better for your brain than TV is.

Reading not only stimulates your brain more than TV would, but it increases literary skill. Most people

don't realize it, but when reading, we do notice the structure, remember vocabulary, and figure out where certain punctuation is necessary. This is helpful to more than your reading skills, but to writing skills as well. Most of the greatest writers read as much as they write if not more. As Leki stated in 1993, "Biology professors learn to write articles the way biology professors do by reading articles that biology professors have written." While Leki spoke only of biology professors, this is true for many different authors and writing types. From my experience, authors read the same genres of books that they write, whether that's newspaper articles or sci-fi novels. The reason they are so good at writing is that they have read so many different books in the style that they write, and are able to realize what doesn't sound quite right or what a specifically good method is. That proves that reading is more than a brilliant form of entertainment. This is so important because writing is an important skill to have, whether you plan on pursuing a literary career or not. Any job you ever have will require some form of writing. Yes, you have to write a resume and fill out an application to get a job. If writing is important, reading must be too, considering the fact that it improves writing.

Another point worth considering is the amount of detail in a book and the originality of the story. Due to the limited time of movies, they are often lacking many of the original details of the book version and are not exactly true to the author, while a book is absolutely original and can be as long, as detailed, and as complicated as the author in-

tends it to be. I'm sure most readers know a bookworm, and have gotten caught up in a conversation about the differences between a book and the movie development of it. You will find that those who have read the book will almost always prefer it over the movie. People who read a lot are often very attached to books; to these people the quality of the movie will very much depend on how well it follows the storyline of the original book. As Stephen King said, "Books and movies are like apples and oranges. They are both fruit, but taste completely different." I believe books have more flavor. Details develop the story, and where in a movie you will get to see a setting, the imagery in a book can more fully explain what that scene feels like to the character or looks like in their eyes opposed to just the background in the movie. So to avoid getting caught in an argument with a bookworm, (which you don't want to be involved in, trust me) or miss important factors of the story line, I suggest you read the book!

Some may bring up the point that not many people have enough time to read long books when they can just watch the movie within a couple hours. While movies are much shorter than most books and contain more information within that short amount of time, it is worth reading the book as well for a few reasons. First of all, you can stop reading whenever you want and continue whenever you want. Whatever time you do have, you can spend reading, whether that's just at home or while waiting for food at a restaurant. Sure, you can almost watch a movie anywhere now with iPads and such, but you have to pay

quite a bit for an iPad; everyone has free access to books at any library. Secondly, the book is worth that time. I realize that many movies are great and very interesting, but books, as stated above, have much more detail included, and can further complete or engage a reader on some occasions. If the book is a better product, and has more detail, why would you watch a movie because it doesn't take as much time? That's like going to Liberty Park to ride the tiny Ferris-wheel because it takes less time, instead of going to Lagoon to ride the massive one as well as so many other rides. It just doesn't make sense.

In conclusion, books are obviously much better for your brain than movies, and they help people learn how to read and write. If more people could read, the majority of the population would be better readers and writers, and those are two of the most valuable skills you could possibly have at your disposal. When I was a tiny child, my parents read to me, and I don't see many others reading to their children these days. Instead they watch TV. What would we be without books? Writing is one of the most ancient and effective forms of communication to date. Any book has at least some possibility of being published, and even if that doesn't happen, most books are read at some point, published or not. Movies are generally developed only from the most important or popular books or events. If we lost our ability to read, even in a technological world, we would no longer be who we are as humans. So, next time you have some spare time on your hands, will you watch a movie or read a book?

Fashion is a Lifestyle.

This Is My Voice



Riley Wolfe
Open Classroom

"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street. Fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening." -Coco Chanel. Fashion has an influence in our daily lives. Even if it's just that woman walking down the street, that adver-

tisement you saw, or even the thought you just had, we see it and feel it every day. It also contributes to our style and the way we think. Fashion throughout history has had a positive impact on our lives

because it has raised self-confidence and self-esteem, it has helped us connect to others in the world, and it has allowed for self-expression.

Fashion over time has raised self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, it became more socially

acceptable for women to wear shorts during World War II, which introduced fabric rationing and forced women to take on more masculine jobs (pbs.org). Women put on shorts in protest because they wanted to prove that they could do "men's" work. So they started doing more masculine jobs. The businesses didn't really object because all of the male workers were at war. So women started to work in the manufacturing business. After the war was over, federal and local policies replaced men with women. This raised their self-confidence by showing them

people using nonverbal communication, which is where no words are spoken or written, but where silent messages are sent. It's just like how the Romans wore togas, sandals, and chitons. Romans got all of those things from the Italians and made them their own. Their influence was so great that just before the fall of the Roman Empire, the Greeks had adopted the fashion. Clothes are influenced by so many things, such as how the Greeks influenced their clothes from the Romans and how the Romans influenced their clothing from the Italians. It is so interesting

how a few styles can go all over the world. Another instance of a bridge is that eye-liner wasn't popular until the corpse of King Tutankhamun was discovered in 1922; bridges of fashion are connecting



they can do a "man's" job and that the government was even supporting them. This is how fashion has a positive impact and raises self-confidence and self-esteem.

Fashion helps us connect to others by making bridges to other

us all over the world by emulating their style and way of life.

Fashion is more than clothes and accessories. Fashion is a lifestyle. The definition of fashion in the dictionary is a manner of doing something. It is art, the mind, and ideas.

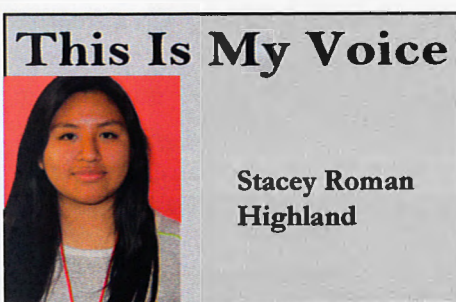
People use fashion to express themselves every day. The way you talk or think or the way you dress is fashion. Fashion is the most powerful art there is. It is movement, design and architecture all in one. It shows the world who we are and who we'd like to be. It lets people present themselves in many different ways and lets people be who they are and who they want to be. In the past it was a way to know someone's social rank. In the Middle Ages (which started around 300AD) the nobility wore red, peasants wore brown and gray, and merchants wore green. The way you were dressed defined your social status and what you did for work. This is a way of self-expression and shows us that fashion is positive.

Despite the many great aspects of fashion, still some people say fashion is detrimental because

it is only for wealthy, selfish people. However, designers are coming out with more affordable lines of clothes every day, meaning more people can access high fashion. There are also thrift shops, which cater to those who are more interested in recycling or vintage clothing. Others can also say fashion can cause eating disorders (mayoclinic.org). This usually happens because they look at a size zero models in a magazine or they see that really pretty dress in the window but it is only a size two. But fashion is not specific to certain sizes. Designers design clothing for a full range of sizes. Though it is true some retailers only stock unhealthy sizes, like the retail company Abercrombie and Fitch, fashion designers are not the people who determine what sizes the retailers stock.

In conclusion, through time, fashion has had a marvelous influence on society. Fashion is a way of thinking and is a form of art. If we think of it in a positive way, it will have more of a positive impact in the future by bringing about a more positive attitude and thoughts of yourself. It is necessary to have positive thoughts about yourself and others. It can help you have confidence and make others have a more positive, healthy environment. "Fashion is a statement not a style. Fashion does not have to be worn casually nor outside the runway. Fashion is fit for all sizes for all people of all ages. Fashion is an art of personal self-expression, not an excuse to be pretty, popular and charismatic."-unknown author. Don't change to fit the fashion, change the fashion to fit you!

Smartphones for Elementary Kids



Smartphones are being used more often than it seems. Adults use them for work. Teens use them for school and friends. Well what about elementary kids? What reason do they have to use one? It can be the same reasons as teens, but the difference is maturity and age. Elementary kids should be able to handle a simple call and text cell phone not smartphones, because the difference between the two is that smartphones are connected to the internet and

have more options than a regular cell phone. Elementary aged kids should not have smart phones because they are a distraction from being social, they're expensive, and they are unnecessary to have.

In today's generation we see young kids spending more time on their smartphones than they do with their friends/family. Science and technology editor Victoria Woolaston states that the average person checks their phone 110 times a day. Elementary kids have more time on their hands than the average teenager and adult, which means they look at their phone more than the average person. Therefore smart phones are a distraction, to the point where kids may find these small devices more entertaining than their friends

and family. People depend on these devices so much that instead of talking to someone in person, they spend time texting or even talking to someone across the world instead of those people near to them. Connecting with people online has become easier, but what about connecting offline to those around you? If kids become more comfortable talking online, they will have trouble interacting with others offline and not be able to go a second without checking their phone. Kids need to learn social skills early that will help them in their lives, and smart phones prevent them for learning valuable social skills. Not only are smartphones distracting, but they are also expensive.

Kids tend to lose their favorite toy, break them, or even want the

new latest toy. Smartphones are basically a toy to them but cost 10 times more than the average toy. For example smartphones' price range is from 100 dollars to over 500 dollars, not to mention the monthly phone plan. Journalist Sadie Whitelocks reports, "The Intelligence Group conducted 800 online interviews with youngsters across the U.S. in a bid to learn more about the habits and behaviors of the digitally-oriented 'Generation Z.' One third of those surveyed said they owned a mobile phone, while 28 percent had a computer tablet--up from just 5 percent two years ago (2011)." This article was published in 2013, so imagine how much can change in just one year.

much money. The money could be spent for school, games, clothes, or anything a kid could use that's not a smartphone. Smartphones are a great privilege that shouldn't be treated as a toy, and kids need to mature more to understand the use of smartphones.

Finally, smartphones are not necessary for elementary-aged kids because the only difference between a smartphone and a regular cell phone is the internet one can take anywhere, and a kid doesn't need internet wherever they go. There is no other reason to have a smartphone besides to call or text. If a kid wants a phone it's because they want to fit in and have a phone like

need it, but they want it. They may not understand how unnecessary and harmful it can be to have a smartphone, but they just want it to fit in with everyone else.

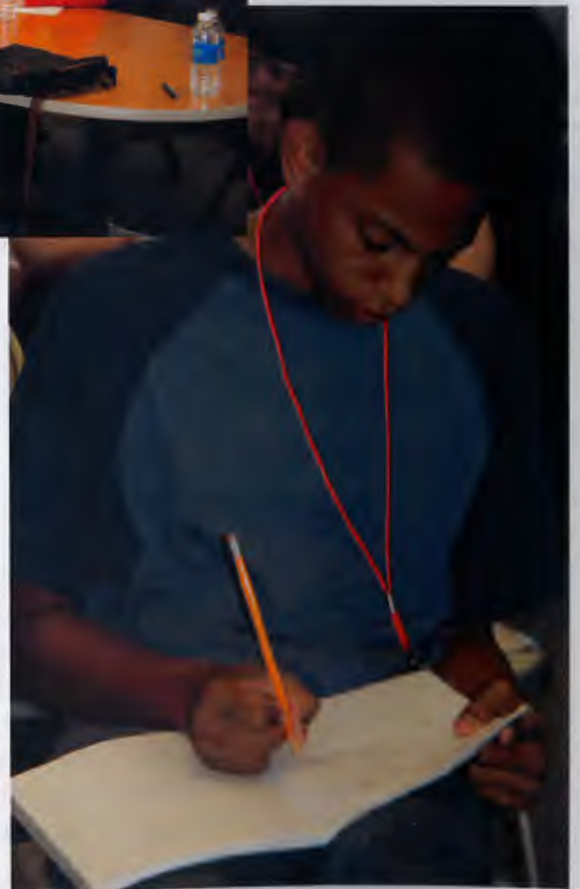
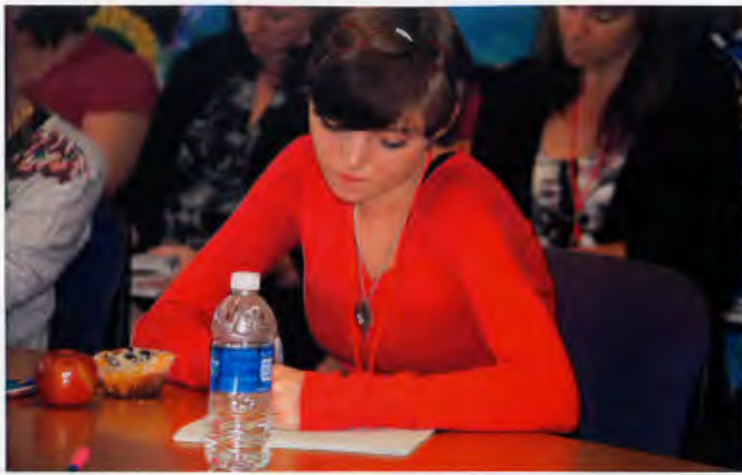
Some argue that it's understandable for a child to have a phone. Phones are a way of connecting a child to worried parents and calling in case of emergencies. This is especially true for kids who have parents working constantly. However, they do not need the smartphones of today. They can be perfectly safe with a regular cell phone that has calling and texting. Smartphones comes with games, application, and internet-- everything that a kid doesn't need. The only thing a kid needs on their phone is the ability to call and text. Kids should be able to have a phone, just not smartphones that have more than needed for emergencies and safety.

In conclusion elementary-aged kids should not have smartphones. These smart devices are simply an unnecessary addicting toy to them. If every elementary kid has a smartphone, imagine recess as a quiet boring hour while all the kids are staring at the bright screen. There may even be fights about who has the better smartphone and who doesn't. I've watched my two young cousins battling over their moms' smartphone, to the point where they are crying and hitting each other. It's terrible to see how they react over this addicting device at such a young age. If kids can just wait until they're older and more mature to know the use of a smartphone, their behavior will change for the better. Until there is a change, kids will continue getting bullied and hurt because they don't have the phone that they "need."



Another thing to consider is how much money parents had to spend to satisfy their children. Companies like Samsung and Apple come out with new smartphones each year, and one can see how many people would throw out their recent phone for the newest one on Black Friday. With the money parents spend on smartphones for their kids, imagine what they could be buying with that

everyone else. Journalist Anita Brayer says, "It's sad that children nowadays get bullied for not 'keeping up with the Joneses,' but it's true. Statistics show that almost 90% of teenagers own a cell phone." These are teenagers alone; well what about kids in elementary? Most kids look up to their older sibling and see they have a smartphone, and then as well want a smartphone themselves. They don't



What's your gas mileage?

This Is My Voice



Ashley Maxfield
East High

"Americans want not only energy independence but also to find ways to break the linkage between energy use and environmental harm, from local air pollution to global warming" (Gus Speth). The United States government needs to initiate a minimum average gas mileage for the registry of passenger vehicles because removing less efficient vehicles from the road would decrease environmental emission pollution, increase human health, and result in more energy-related economic independence.

Pulling less efficient vehicles off the highway would result in fewer national vehicle emissions. With the required average gas mileage of new vehicles climbing due to the current requirements of Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE), we must now concentrate on replacing 'gas guzzling' older vehicles with more efficient models. The average gas mileage should be 15 miles per gallon, or higher, for any passenger vehicle to pass inspection. If one vehicle is pulled off the highway that is less efficient than 15mpg, and the consumer replaced it with a vehicle able to travel 30 mpg, there would be a difference of CO₂ emissions of over 367 grams per mile driven (fuelconomy.gov). According to the New York Times, the average vehicle is driven 165,000

miles in its lifetime. This means over a single vehicle's lifetime, a 30mpg vehicle produces 60,555 kilograms less in CO₂ emissions than a 15mpg vehicle! Due to the fact that on-road vehicles are the largest single source of air pollution, think of what would change if we took action and implemented a required gas mileage for all vehicles on the road. The environmental impact of this change would be enormous largely because CO₂ is a greenhouse gas; thus, when less CO₂



is produced and released, the anthropogenic causes of global warming and climate change could be dramatically reduced. A vehicle also produces acidic emissions that can gather to form acid rain. Acid rain is rain with a pH level between 4.2-4.4, rather than the normal 5.6ph level of rain. When this rain falls it cannot damage human skin but can destroy ecosystems, especially marine or aquatic ones. Changing the

pH of a lake can kill every organism within its waters. If our vehicles are causing such environmental damage, why is this issue only being addressed with new vehicles that come to the market?

There is no doubt that cleaner air equates to better health; thus, polluted air equates to decreased health. When diesel fuel is burned, it releases 40 toxic air contaminants, as well as other harmful pollutants, including benzene, arsenic and formaldehyde—contami-

nants known or suspected to cause cancer (Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment). When we breathe in these toxic contaminants, miniscule particles travel down our esophagus and into our lungs, and they begin to cause major damage. They can become lodged in the soft tissue in our lungs and from there migrate into our bloodstream. This air pollution can result in many and

various health complications besides cancer, including asthma, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory diseases. It has also been linked to other health problems. We are not only harming ourselves by our actions, but also children even before their birth through their circulatory exchange with their mothers. As Congresswoman Louis Slaughter said, "We have children coming into this world already polluted, at the same time we don't know what the effects of that pollution will be on their mental and physical development." Worldwide, and especially in the United States, we spend trillions of dollars treating cancer, asthma and respiratory diseases each year. Instead of spending so much on treatment, we should stop the initial development of these diseases. Simply, we need to stop polluting!

In 2013, about 134.51 billion gallons of gasoline were used in the United States, and around 40% of the petroleum consumed was imported (Environmental Protection Agency). If we mandated more fuel-efficient vehicles, our dependence on foreign fuel would largely decrease. If we bought fuel from inside the United States rather than importing it, we would keep the money inside our economy, benefiting from our gasoline usage rather than putting money into international markets. This would cause substantial internal economic stimulus as shown by the Fuel Freedom Foundation, "Every dollar spent on gasoline at the pump generates 40 cents of economic activity because most of that dollar goes to pay foreign producers. Domestically produced fuels, on the other hand, benefit from the multiplier effect with each dollar spent generating an estimated three dollars in economic activity." With our current economic

unpredictability and immense debt accumulation, we have been presented with this opportunity to bring ourselves to an independent, efficient economic position. As a country we would collectively save billions of dollars each year, and each individual would save as well. The extra money spent on purchasing a more efficient vehicle is an investment that would repay its owner hundreds of times over, in ways ranging from monetary value to health enhancements.

There are individuals who believe that initiating a mandatory minimum fuel mileage requirement would only benefit the privileged in

citizen in their daily activities. In the end, the rich can only purchase and use so many vehicles. With more fuel efficient vehicles, families would also save on monthly gas, contributing to long-term savings. In addition, if families still struggle with purchasing a new vehicle, the US government currently allows a \$7,500 tax credit for the purchase of some qualifying electric and hybrid vehicles. This tax credit lowers hybrid and electric vehicle costs for models such as the Chevy Volt to under \$32,000, the average passenger vehicle cost, permitting for a more attainable purchase.

As you can see, the United States government should initiate a mini-



society because they are the only ones able to buy newer, more efficient vehicles. This is largely due to average cost of new vehicles at \$32,000. This leads to the idea that only the rich can afford to save the planet. Although this is a valid point, if a specific fuel mileage is required, this would give vehicle companies incentive to produce cheaper and more fuel efficient vehicles. With cheaper, more efficient vehicles, everyone would be able to fulfill their duty as a pollution-aware

person. The minimum average gas mileage for the registry of passenger vehicles. If we choose instead to ignore the issue, we will be left with an unhealthy population and an environmentally-damaged planet. This is the time to start making decisions to turn our fate around so our children, and their future, are not affected by our poor decisions now! Through our actions today we affect the future. Will you make your contribution constructive or destructive?

ATTENTION SHOPPERS,

This Is My Voice



Tyrell Floyd
Science Center

Have you ever wondered what the word “organic” really means? The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) defines the term organic as “food that is produced using sustainable agricultural production practices,” such as compost. Food that is not organic is referred to as conventional. Organic meat, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones, such as GMO’s (Genetically Modified Organisms). In addition, organic farms (also referred to as sustainable farms) usually treat their animals with more care than conventional farms. Conventional farms are permitted to use artificial pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and sewage sludge. When it comes to organic foods, only about four percent of Americans will buy them. Many say that “organic food is too expensive” and that “they can’t tell the difference.” In some respects this is true. Organic produce is too expensive, and according to a recent study conducted by the Annals of Internal Medicine, there really isn’t a measurable difference in taste and there isn’t much of a difference in the levels of vitamins and minerals such as phosphorous and calcium, when comparing these two types of food. For these reasons, the average American often decides not to buy organic food. I am here to argue that organic food is dif-

ferent than conventional food in that they are healthier for animals, humans, and the local economy.

We all know the mantra “treat others the way you want to be treated,” but have you ever wondered if that rule applies to things rather than people? The way that farmers treat their animals on organic farms is considerably better than the way that conventional farms treat their animals.

ferent than conventional food in that they are healthier for animals, humans, and the local economy. nests, or do anything that is natural and important to them. Most won’t even feel the sun on their backs or breathe fresh air until the day they are loaded onto trucks bound for slaughter.” This quote is just a brief description of how animals on conventional farms are treated, and it should make you feel, as I did, uncomfortable concerning the treatment of animals in conventional farms.



An article written by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) titled “Factory Farming: Cruelty to animals” states that in conventional farms “animals are crammed by the thousands into filthy, windowless sheds and confined to wire cages, gestation crates, barren dirt lots, and other cruel confinement systems. These animals will never raise their families, root around in the soil, build

On the contrary, some might say that just because the word “organic” is posted on a food item, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the animals were treated well, it just means that they weren’t fed things that used artificial pesticides and treated with GMO.s. In some cases this is true, but there are websites such as farmerspal.com where you can find local farms that do treat their animals well and as close to

ATTENTION SHOPPERS

the way that nature intended them to be treated. The Florida Agricultural Mechanical University claims, "An organic livestock producer must create and maintain living conditions that accommodate natural behavior and health of the animal. The living conditions must include access to outdoors, shade, shelter, fresh air, direct sunlight suitable to the species, and access to pasture for ruminants." This statement represents the rules for how sustainable farms are conducted and can help strengthen the trust between farmer and buyer. When compared to conventional methods, you can see that sustainable farms are copiously more suitable for animals. As the topic is food, the thought has likely crossed your mind about why conventional produce supposedly pales in comparison with organic produce.

Unlike conventional food, organic food is not treated with pesticides. As stated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "Out of the twenty-five most commonly used pesticides, five are toxic to the nervous system, eighteen are harmful to the skin, eyes and lungs, about half are composed of cancer-causing chemicals, seventeen cause genetic damage, ten are harmful to reproductive organs, and six disrupt normal functions of hormones." This study clearly shows the hazards of conventional food.

Contradictory to this evidence, others may say that the solution to the present pesticides is to wash the produce before you consume it, but the USDA, specifies that "of the top twelve most commonly eaten produce, up to ninety percent was contaminated by pesticides, even after

washing and peeling." Even though organic produce significantly reduces your pesticide and chemical intake, you should still wash your produce (Sonya Lunder, a senior analyst with the Environmental Working Group). This evidence supports the idea that conventional produce is unhealthier than sustainable produce. But it's not just health that people worry about. People are concerned for the well-being of the economy.

Buying organic edibles supports the growth of your local economy. Chism, and Levins stated in "Farm spending and local selling: How do they match up?" that "sustainable farms support local economies by providing jobs for members of the community and purchasing supplies from local businesses." Organic food is not filled with preservatives, which means it isn't suitable for international shipping. The farmers' best option is to sell their produce locally. As a result of selling their food locally, more money will be available for the use of the community.

However, some may argue, as stated by Cassandra Potts, a local grocery shopper, that they don't buy organic foods because they are too expensive. According to Melissa White Pillsbury, she is correct. Melissa stated, "The mean cost of organic items surveyed was 68 percent higher than non-organic." This evidence might lead you to think that buying conventional food is better because it is cheaper; that is not the case. The reason that organic food is highly priced is because there aren't as many organic farms when compared to the amount of conventional farms. This means that the organic farmers are

forced to increase the price of their products. If we were to buy more from organic farms, the competition would increase, resulting in a decrease in the price of organic produce (Food & Water Watch. Factory farm nation: How America turned its livestock farms into factories). This evidence shows that buying organic food is better for the local economy, because if we were to buy more organic food the price for organic food would decline and the profits of our local economy would increase.

Conclusively, organic food is advantageous to conventionally managed food. Organic food is beneficial for animals because they are treated with respect and provided a genuine living space to thrive. Organic produce is not treated with pesticides, meaning that it is much healthier for us humans as well as animals. Also, the purchase of organic food aids the growth of your local economy by providing jobs and by putting money into the community. In the future if people are to buy more organic food, the prices would decrease, more animals would be beaming with joy, and humans would be healthier. Buying organic food is important to me because I am a vegetarian and I take seriously the treatment of animals and believe that they should be given as much care as humans. I also want to ensure a healthier future and stronger economy for the human race. Are you going to be a bystander to the millions of animals who are being physically and emotionally abused? Do you care about your health? Do you care about your economy? If so, buy organic.



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