

- EDUCATE WITH DIVERSE MEDIA
- NEPOTISM HAS CONSEQUENCES

# OPINION

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## Encourage more diversity in the teacher hiring process

by Cole van Miltenburg  
Editor-in-Chief



People naturally want to see themselves reflected in their role models. It's even more important that children are exposed to a diverse array of perspectives as they make their way through the public education system. LGHS and high schools around the country must make a conscious effort to increase the exposure of students to teachers

who come from diverse backgrounds.

If a kid sees people who look like them pursuing a wide range of academic and career fields, it can remove a mental block that previously prevented them from exploring such opportunities. This further fuels a cycle that promotes even more diversity in academic and workplace environments, because these kids become adults who serve as role models for the next generation. Diversity in the classroom doesn't only benefit students who are minorities or otherwise marginalized; all students grow from these perspectives and are less likely to embrace stereotypes and exhibit prejudice if they are exposed to them from an early age. Teachers are central figures of respect and authority in the lives of American youth; imagine the impact that faculty of color have on students from minority backgrounds, especially on those who live in homogenous communities where they have few adult role models that look like them.

A report from the Department of Education showed that only 18 percent of K-12 teachers in the US were of color during the 2011-2012 school year. This number was a bare improvement from over two decades earlier, when 13 percent of teachers came from minority backgrounds in the 1987-88 school year. Yet the 2014-15 school year was the first time that minority students represented a majority in America's public school system, meaning that in comparison, the growth rates for faculty of color are alarmingly low.

Los Gatos residents aren't known to be the most diverse group, at least from a racial standpoint. This is due to a variety of social and economic factors that are not under the control of a public school system like LGSUHS which draws its students from a set geographic

boundary. However, LGHS still has the power to expose students to diverse student and adult perspectives, and after multiple racist proposals last year, the school has made efforts to do so with staff training from Epoch Education, as well as Cultural Awareness Week. We must embrace diversity in a much larger context. The lack of student diversity at LGHS is understandable, but the lack of diverse faculty is much less so.

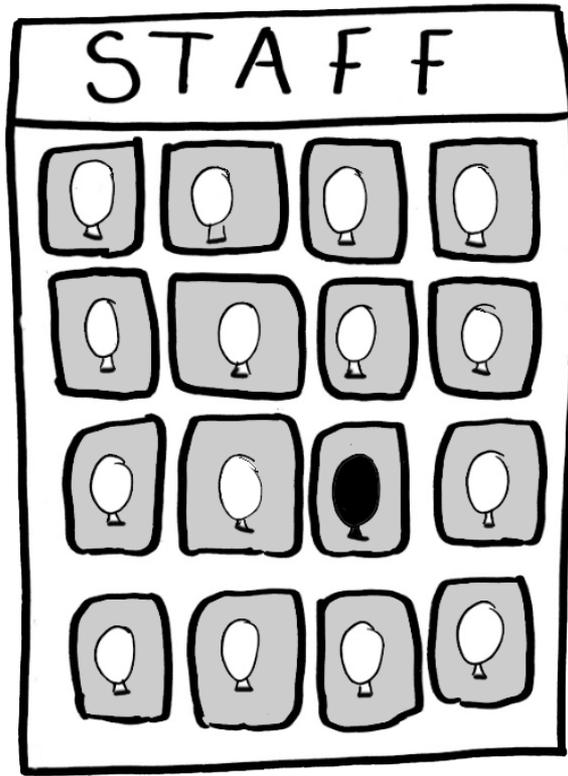
This being said, diversity is clearly one of many qualities that should be taken into account when hiring teachers. Japanese teacher **Ann Jordan** said that "first and foremost, students need to be taught by caring, competent teachers ... We're not looking for teachers who only fill the diversity checkbox." But she then elaborated, "For students of color, it can be really empowering to have the experience of being taught by somebody who shares their background. It just feels different."

Yet LGHS consistently lacks racially diverse teachers, with only 15 teachers, or about 14 percent of the 105 total teaching staff, coming from minority backgrounds in the 2016-17 school year. This shortfall could promote unhealthy ideas surrounding race that allow students to be susceptible to greater levels of bias and ignorance. As Jordan explained, exposure to diverse perspectives at LGHS is imperative since it "better prepares students to go into the world outside of Los Gatos, because that world is a different place demographically."

Coming from a mixed race and multicultural background, Jordan can point out shortcomings in the public education system when it comes to diversity. "The percentage of students that the government previously identified as 'minority' groups is becoming the majority in classrooms across the U.S. And while the percentage of 'minority' group teachers has also increased, they are still far underrepresented overall, compared to students," she noted. Jordan even recounted a couple of times when prospective faculty of color indicated that they felt unsure of coming to LGHS due to uncertainty over how they would be received by classes consisting of mostly white students. Experiences like these are unsettling and only prove a greater need for teachers of color to become commonplace at Los Gatos.

With Cultural Awareness Week having come to an end, it's important that we reflect upon diversity in every aspect of the word, whether in terms of race, culture, or other aspects of one's personal background. Children, especially those with a unique identity from their immediate community, deserve to grow up in an environment that accurately depicts the greater world rather than one which deemphasizes the value of diverse experiences. As Jordan put it, "hiring teachers that are not only excellent teachers, but also come from diverse backgrounds, enriches everybody."

(Sources: Center for American Progress, National Education Association, California Department of Education)



S. Linden

## Gibson denounces America's inaction on gun control

by Eden Gibson  
World Editor



The United States, a nation as pioneering as it is patriotic, is characterized by change. Throughout the course of American history, citizens have striven to right the country's past wrongs, adapted to economic and political turbulence, and fought to correct institutional oppression. For all of our flaws, we are far from a stagnant nation. Yet, when it comes to the topic of gun control, we uncharacteristically cling to 18th-century policies. Frankly put, the fight to uphold such flagrantly-outdated laws is killing our youth.

On Feb. 14, Nikolas Jacob Cruz opened fire on Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, killing 17 students and faculty. Despite his history of mental illness and severely erratic behavior, the 19-year-old still managed to acquire – and keep – seven guns, including an AK-47-style rifle and the AR-15 he used to slaughter his former classmates.

According to Vox, the United States suffers more than 32,000 gun-related deaths each year. Since the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre of 2012, the nation has experienced

more than 1,600 mass shootings – defined as an incident in which a shooter kills four or more people besides him or herself.

Events like the Parkland and Sandy Hook shootings are not normalities for other countries. When 28-year-old Martin Bryant fatally shot 35 individuals in an Australian café on April 28, 1996, the nation immediately enacted sweeping gun legislation, including a ban on automatic and semi-automatic rifles, the destruction of over 600,000 civilian-owned firearms, and extensive licensing requirements. Australia has not experienced another mass shooting in the 22 years since. Our nation's stark lack of gun regulation is a uniquely American flaw perpetuated by the fierce intransigence of Second Amendment loyalists.



Opponents of gun control may assert that the issues plaguing our country can be attributed to mental health crises, not the guns themselves. Yet while mental illness or familial trauma can certainly precipitate sporadic and violent behaviors, thorough background checks will ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not fall into the hands of individuals with dangerous tendencies.

Further, Second Amendment lobbyists frequently argue that

as American citizens, it is their prerogative to own a firearm. And while that may be the case under the Constitution, an inherent condition of our citizenry is the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – in that order. Owning a gun is undoubtedly a source of recreation for countless Americans. Yet a student's right to life – to an education free from the horrifically real threat of death – supercedes any citizen's entitlement to a gun. That's not to say that semi-automatic weapons are fruitless killing machines; many argue that guns provide viable methods of self-defense. But the current state of affairs is no longer acceptable. If our nation institutes more extensive background checks, responsible individuals can keep their guns once they pass the required assessments. But one undeniable truth still stands: life comes first.

Change is an imperative aspect of any nation's history. Had the United States not undergone the political and social transformations of centuries past, we would still be a country entirely dependent upon slave labor and systematic oppression. To refuse change now is to normalize the mass slaughter of our youth.

Technological advancements have soared, yet our firearm policies have failed to simultaneously adapt. We can no longer allow dangerously-antiquated laws to govern 21st-century weapons of mass destruction. Compliance is no longer an option; the time for deliberation has passed. Now is the time for action. (Sources: Naples Daily News, NBC, The Atlantic, Vox, Daily Mail, Gun Violence Archive)

## Teachers should include more diverse media in lessons

by Tatum Junkins  
Humor Editor



In a world full of people of different races, sexualities, genders, mental illnesses, and disabilities, it is essential to be knowledgeable about the experiences of those who are different than ourselves in order to reach a state of acceptance. I believe the best way to reach this point is to incorporate these topics into the English curriculum through

diverse books and/or media.

I feel we can expand the scope of the subjects we learn about. Issues we don't address, but that are equally important, are sexuality (anything in the LGBTQIA+ spectrum), gender (anywhere on the spectrum), mental illness, and disability. These are sensitive topics, and I understand why there might be fear surrounding the idea of introducing these ideas into our curriculum, but these ideas about identity might be more beneficial than we think.

By introducing books that center on these subjects into the English curriculum, students would learn through empathy, potentially helping them to discover more about themselves with regards to sexuality, gender, and mental illness.

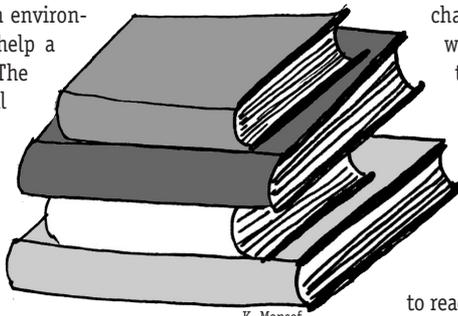
Sexuality and gender are extremely topical, considering that high school and college are places where self-discovery in these areas is extremely common. Reading books centering around a character who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or of a sexuality other than heterosexual would be powerful in creating an environment of acceptance. This could potentially help a student explore and discover their sexuality. The same goes for gender. Gender fluidity is still quite an ambiguous subject for most, and introducing this topic into our curriculum could help students learn about it.

Books about disability and mental illness are also essential to a well-rounded diverse curriculum. As a generation struggling with rising rates of depression and anxiety, it is extremely important that we open up a discussion about mental illness in order to aid students in identifying it in themselves and feeling comfortable about getting help if wanted or needed. Openly discussing mental health could also make students feel less alone in their experiences and create an even stronger, more understanding relationship between teachers and students. While I do understand that reading about mental illness can be triggering, I think

we can still incorporate books about this subject into the curriculum by way of books students have the option to read.

Although disability has always been common in society, we never read about it. I recently read a book with a deaf main character and what I learned about deafness was incredibly eye-opening. Reading about this subject will make those with a disability feel understood and will allow able-bodied people to be more aware and understanding. It will also teach students how to interact with those who possess a disability that affects conduct in social situations, such as deafness.

I understand that a lot of people don't like to read, so teachers could attempt to include these topics into assignments that include watching a video, listening to a podcast, and other types of media in order to reach students who communicate and learn best through those mediums. By incorporating more of these subjects into the English curriculum, I believe we could start very insightful, important discussions in the classroom that can easily translate into modern society and aid in forming a generation of educated, accepting youth.



K. Monsef