



TROUBLING EXPERIENCES Three times in his life, senior Keenan Peebles has experienced racism while walking on the street. It's had a profound experience on Peebles outlook on life. "I'm a person that likes things to be done not because of who I am, not because of what I look like, or the color of my skin, but rather than the content of my character," Peebles said. **PHOTO BY TAYLOR TINNES**

* IN his struggle

* **Keenan Peebles struggles with racism and the ability to connect with others**

By Emily Mann
Print Executive Editor

Senior **Keenan Peebles**, an African American, walks down the streets of St. Louis, in the park with his family, enjoying their time together. As thousands of people are walking around this event, Peebles recounts accidentally bumping into someone. "Hey n*****" is said from the stranger passing by. By the time he was able to turn around, the stranger was gone, but the comment was forever in his mind.

Mustering up all the self-control, self-respect, and self-awareness he has, he continues to walk, head held high, reminding himself over and over again "They don't know what they're saying, they've been raised in a house where they learned it is okay to say that. It's not them, it's what they've been taught."

"Racism is the absence of love. Racism is the idea, or the mentality, that you are superior to inferior races. That the people are anatomically and physiologically inferior to you, that they were created in a lesser magnitude or a lesser being of humanity; that they are socially, economically, physically, spiritually, and mentally lower. [Racism] comes from the lack of love for human beings people don't love each other, how can you hate a person that you don't even know?" Peebles said.

Peebles has been called a "n****r" on three separate occasions throughout his life, once in Chicago, once in Florida, and once in the situation above: all from people who he did not know. Though he is not easily offended, this word still evokes a feeling of extreme vexation. Despite this, because he has grown up in

a black home, he has been taught to deal with, and understand other people and their treatment.

"I have been told, 'Keenan you can't blame someone for being who they were taught to be,' parents can only produce what they are, so when I hear any other race say something that is ignorant to another race, I have sympathy for them, because I know they're only ignorant," Peebles said.

Peebles experiences the hindrances of racism, prejudice, and overall human hatred everyday throughout his life. Although he does not allow his race to become a handicap in his life, he has experienced situations in which this was unavoidable, and has fears and phobias as a result.

"I think that in moments there has been obvious racism, there's obvious prejudice, but I never want to think of my race always being a handicap, [some] people use their race and the history of their race as an excuse to justify certain behaviors, which is where I disagree with certain African Americans," Peebles said.

Peebles chooses to ignore his race when it comes to his abilities and level of acceptability in life and rather focus on who he is as a person, and feels this is how things should always be. As Peebles said "forget the color of your skin, if i were to cut you, we would all bleed red." Peebles does not see his pigment as an excuse, or a crutch, but instead relies on his other qualities to prove who he is as a person, refraining from his race defining who he is.

"I'm a person that likes things to be done not because of who I am, not because of what I look like, or the color of my skin, but rather than the content of my character," Peebles said.

Due to African Americans facing discrimination throughout history, Peebles mentioned the existence of



"I've experienced culture in different ways and have been able to travel and see what other cultures are like."

- Jack Pordea

Junior Jack Pordea, student who moved here from Romania wears a jersey representing his home country.

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quotas for minimum and maximum amounts of certain genders, races, sexualities, and ethnicities, which he says can sometimes be an impediment on his everyday life, and how he goes about things, and goes about bettering himself.

"I don't want to look good on paper I want to look good in person. Am I relatable? Am I touchable? Am I agreeable? Am I able to work with people?" Peebles said. "I don't want to be chosen because I'm black because the government requires you to have a certain amount of black people...I don't want to be statistically great I want to be characteristically great"

Furthermore, Peebles addresses how his race has created a barrier between himself and others of different races and ethnicities, and how this has been the most dramatic impact on his life.

"Race has so much isolated me from cultural exposure, and I'm not just talking about lack of exposure to caucasian culture: whether it be another ethnicity or another culture I find myself being very polarized when it comes to different discussions," Peebles said. "In some shape, form, or fashion, my race has caused me to be somewhat ignorant."

Because of this sense of isolation, it has pushed Peebles that much further into the depths of understanding humans and the way people see things, and communicate with one another. This has incentivized him to see other points of view, and see things outside of his set of his normal thought process.

"It is my day-to-day challenge to be able to be empathetic with people to see where they are coming from to see their point of view while expecting them to be empathetic with me," Peebles said. "I think as a person of the black community or black ethnicity, one of the biggest struggles is learning how to shape my life so it's not just all about black, it isn't just all about African-American. Things are much more relatable when I become much more empathetic," said Peebles.

Peebles believes this ignorance, this comfort in staying in our own ways, never accepting change or different ideas, leads to obliviousness to the affects our actions have on those around us and their feelings and lives. Even sometimes they become so unaware that they are blind to the image they portray of their self.

"In the African-American community the word n****r is thrown around like fleas on a dog. I use the analogy of fleas on a dog because it is absolutely horrendous [to use that word]. You can't expect people to treat you with respect if you don't have any respect for yourself," Peebles said.

On the other hand, Peebles explains sometimes this respect for oneself is sometimes too abundant, and expressed in the wrong ways and outlets: by not considering others feelings and opinions, and staying in one's ignorant, routine life.

"There is sort of a culture in our school, that conservative haughty sort of blindness to the issues to the world. If you don't think empathetically you won't recognize those issues. What [the confederate flag] means to you [is one thing], but that flag to me means something completely different. Everyday operations as a student just means being very vigilant," Peebles said.

In recognizing this, Peebles points out we as a society have become too okay with accepting how we are, and we don't work to improve ourselves in order to lessen the divide between people.

"Let us not try and be so angelic that we forget that being human makes us flawed. I have to really think about what comes out of my mouth because it can really be offensive and that's where that whole empathy thing comes from, because we have to empathize with people and learn to say 'I'm not going to disrespect the culture, I'm not going to disrupt the essence or the nucleus of who you are by saying offensive words,'" said Peebles.

This coincides with what people have been

Minorities in Missouri

83% Caucasian

12% African American

.6% American Indian

2% Asian

4% Hispanic/Latino

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



"In my case, the ability to travel and see the world and all of its diversity and how different the world really is."

- Talia

Thambyrajah

Junior Talia Thambyrajah with a Malaysian God. Her mother is caucasian and her father is Malaysian. In her hands is Ganesa, one of the gods the Hindu worship.

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taught, or what we believe, and refusing to ever change this idea or way of thought. Peebles explains these thoughts of racism, and hatred do not just spur up out of thin air, they do not manifest on a random occasion. They are something instilled over time.

"I can't be upset with [racists] because [they've] been taught to act like that and if [they're] racist then [their] parents must be racist and [their] grandparents must be racist because there's no way, there is no way someone can just wake up one day and say 'I'm going to be a racist,'" Peebles said.

Essentially, because Peebles is a minority and has faced discrimination, he has learned to value social skills, and the ability to empathize with others. He has also learned what huge impact differences between one another can have, and the importance to know the differences between cultures and people.

"A lot of fathers are missing from the black communities homes, [and] if no one knows that and they walk into a black house it's going to be a mental and emotional catastrophe," Peebles said. "When I moved out here to St. Charles, I was sort of bombarded, not necessarily by the educational or the academic rigor, but the social change that I had never experienced before in a school it really took me off guard."

Peebles believes one of the roots of disconnect and conflict between people of different races, genders, or ethnicities is that we do not fully understand one another.

"You need to be able to know how the culture works, how is the structure of the family built? What are the stereotypical things of a culture and so when I know those things I can stay away from them. How do things operate? How do things move?" said Peebles.

Even though Peebles tries his best to understand and learn about other people's cultures, he is constantly still running into differences and barriers everyday, even as he

attempts to intermingle, and make himself more aware.

Considering all of our differences, it is still not impossible to understand and accept one another. In fact, Peebles goes as far to say it may be easier than we would believe.

"For instance black people eat sweet potato pie and most white homes eat pumpkin pie. So there is an analogy to show that disconnect. The pies look basically the same, but they have such a difference in taste, and so that goes to show we are not as different as we think we are," Peebles said. "We have to learn how to make those connections and talk and discuss with people who have lived totally different lives than us."

In fact, Keenan refers to this difference that really isn't as large as we make it out to be, with the Greek term, agape, which means a brotherly love. Humans are failing to understand, and love each other, and this is the biggest reason we can not come together, skin tone, gender, sexuality, and religion aside: we are lacking that brotherly love.

"I think that we sometimes can get complacent with just being around our culture and I know people who are just fine with being around black people, or people that are just fine being around white people ... most people are okay with being with just their kind"

Peebles believes we need to see things different. That people need to go about life differently, and get out of their own bubble,

their own values, or even their own life.

"It is always good for people to open up their heart and open up their ears and say I need to stop listening with my ears and listen with their ears, I need to stop seeing with my eyes and see with their eyes I need to stop feeling with my heart and start feeling with yours and maybe what I'm doing is just slightly offensive," Peebles said.

Minorities in FHC

85% Caucasian

8% African American

.2% American Indian

2% Asian

3% Hispanic/Latino

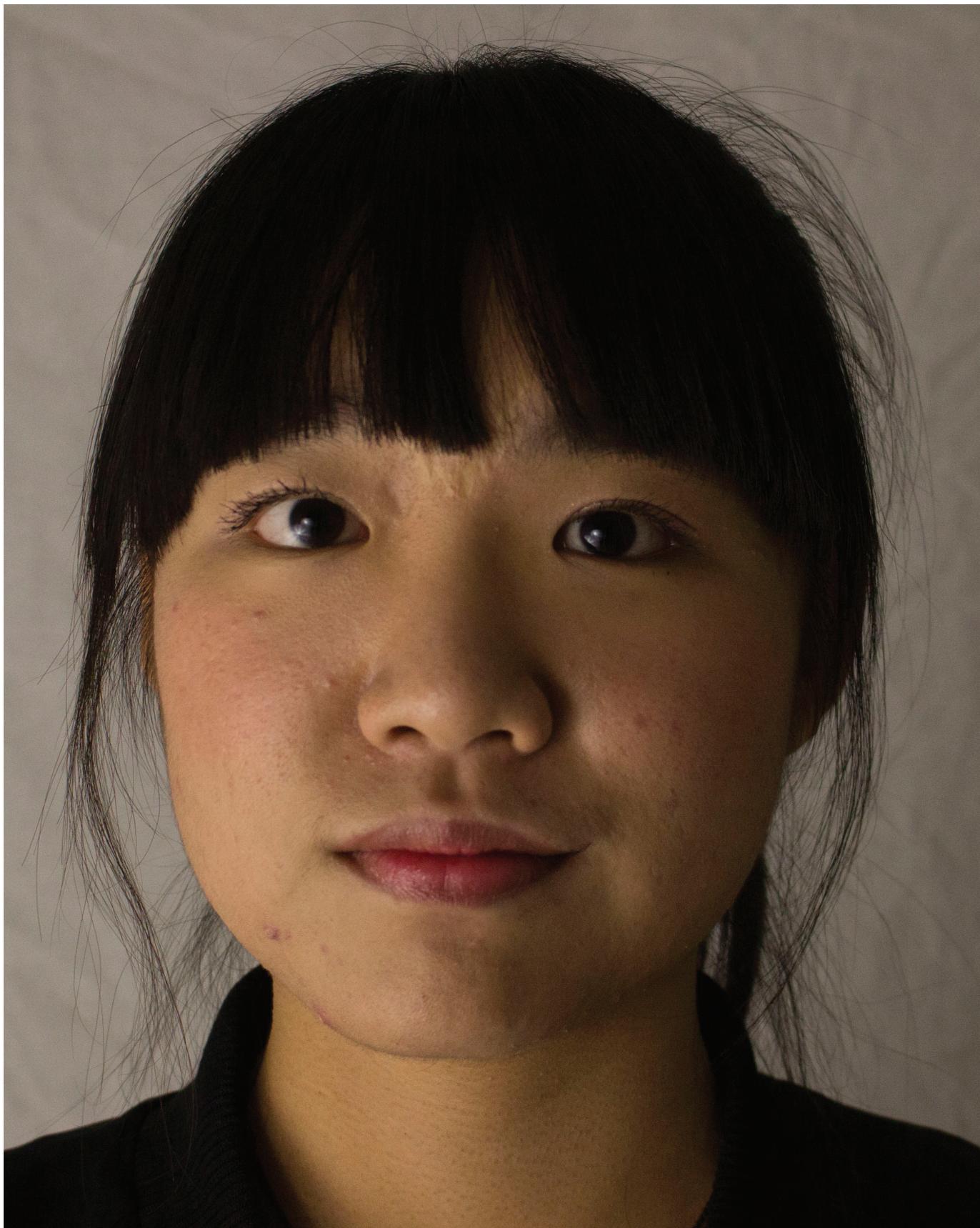
2% Multiple races

Source: FHC registrar



"I basically have to work twice as hard, you hear things that aren't necessary acceptable and you have to fight constantly to prove it wrong."
- Tatiana Hanna

Senior Tatiana Hanna I'm a female, I'm black, and I'm half bahamian making her a minority.



LANGUAGE BARRIER Upon moving to the United States from China, junior Siyi Wang experienced some adjustments to a country in which she didn't speak the language. "I had to go home and do all the practice in order to be able to talk to you guys and understand what the teachers are teaching in class," Wang said. **PHOTO BY TAYLOR TINNES**

* **iN** a new **place**

* **Siyi Wang**
overcame
a rough
start,
language
barrier
to see
her new
country as
a blessing

By **Skylar Laird**
Feature Editor

Confused and afraid, seventh grade **Siyi Wang** locks herself in a bathroom stall. Outside the restroom, she can hear dogs barking and a voice speaking over the intercom system - speaking in a language she can not yet understand, having just moved from China to America a few months prior. Unsure of what's happening, Wang remains hidden out of her fear of dogs, which she can still hear barking in the hallway, outside the restroom.

Once the police realize she's in there, and after failed attempts at explaining the situation due to the language barrier, Wang is brought out of hiding and down to the principal's office, where she sits, surrounded still by officers and trained canines, fearful that this is her fault, that she has done something seriously wrong to end up here. Finally, however, her worries are curbed by a mom who speaks Mandarin Chinese, Wang's native language, who explains the entire situation to the terrified new student: how this is a routine check by officers, how nothing serious has happened, how none of this has to do with her.

Four years later, a junior in high school, Wang recounts the experience in English so fluent it's difficult to tell there was ever a time she couldn't speak it; a trait almost

ironic in nature as she recalls first grappling with the language.

"It was scary because I didn't know much English back then, and it seemed like everyone was nice to me, but I just couldn't understand them," she said of her move. "[Learning English] was a real struggle; I had to go home and do all the practice in order to be able to talk to you guys and understand what the teachers are teaching in class."

There was more to the move than just a language difference, though; China and America vary in numerous ways, from class sizes to holidays to the very food people eat.

"I think one tradition that we have is different festivals," Wang said. "You guys have your festivals, like Independence Day, New Year's, or Christmas, almost equivalent to what we have, but we have just a few more since China's been around for so long. I never celebrated Thanksgiving or Halloween in China." She also pointed out a difference in cuisine. "Food is also so different," she said. "In China, it's not just Chinese food. It's actually very involved, and we have other food from other countries, but here almost everything from other countries is Americanized."

Even the schooling came as a sort of culture shock for Wang, who was used to a different sort of system.

"Starting [school] here was very different from China. Class is not as big here, and you get more time with teachers individually, and the classes



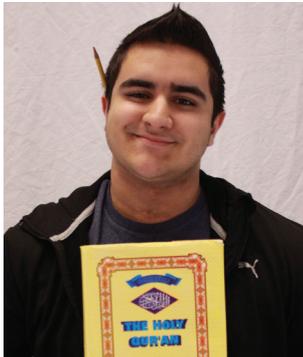
"I'm many different cultures. I'm Russian, Tangelin, Hawaiian, and I'm gay. so there are all these different subcultures within the culture that just kind of define me as a minority."

- Aleksandr Kisseloff

Junior Aleksandr Kisseloff holds a mirror and makeup brush in hair flaunts his skills in beauty.

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“I suppose a minority could be anyone who’s different from what people perceive as normal.”

- Adam Khan

Senior Adam Khan, carries the Quran, the central religious text of Islam.

Being a minority has never entirely defined who Khan is and the way he acted, but it has taken an influence on of the ways he lives his life.

“I talk about it all the time. It is not something I’m shy about. I’ll tell people I’m Afghani, Pakistani, Indian, German, Irish. I’m a mutt basically,” said Khan.

are much easier,” she explained.

Although each of these changes posed its own difficulties and need for adaptation, the biggest difference by far for Wang was going from a majority to a minority, which has had an impact on her day-to-day life.

“If I go out walking or shopping, people ... they treat you differently,” she said. “I don’t want to say it’s racist, but it’s almost like that. When I or my mom and I walk into a store or something like that, it’s like you can just feel the tone change.”

This tone change, however, did not carry into Wang’s social life at school, as she reported never really having been bullied for her ethnicity; the worst she has faced has been over-the-line humor.

“Sometimes people make jokes and they don’t really take into deep consideration how far they go as a joke,” she said. Asian stereotypes are the main culprit of these jokes, including jokes about her skills as a driver, having had people tell her that if she were to stop at a stop sign for too long no one would approach her because she’s an Asian driver. “It’s hurtful,” she said. “because it’s like saying because I’m Asian I’m scary or a bad driver.”

Despite not having been bullied for her ethnicity, however, making friends did not initially come too naturally for her due to her inability to understand English after first moving to America.

“[Making friends] was hard at first, but it’s also really funny because I make mistakes speaking English and they’ll correct me,”

she said.

Even after all the difficulties of such an enormous move, including struggles in communicating, new customs, and even being locked in a bathroom as dogs barked outside, Wang wouldn’t change her experience even if she could.

“I’m glad I moved here,” she said, “because I can experience two different countries and two different ethnicities at the same time.” She further explained: “In everyday life, if we’re discussing an event or situation, people ask me, ‘How is it different if you’re in China?’ or ‘How would you do this if you’re not thinking as an American this second?’”

Being a person of two different cultures, Wang said she was proud of both.

“[Being an American] is different than what I thought, but I’m proud that I’m here,” she said. “I thought people back in China would dislike me if I was an American, but they were fine, and my friends are really nice with me, and experiencing being an American is really cool.”

Being a minority, Wang has faced challenges most students never have, meaning not everyone can relate to her experiences. Her piece of advice for anyone who might not understand what she has done and been through is

simply to imagine what it’s been like for her.

“Try to put yourself in a situation where you move to another country, and be in the minority in that country, and think about how you talk and be with other people. It’s different,” she said.

Minorities in USA

77% Caucasian

13% African American

6% American Indian

2% Asian

18% Hispanic/Latino

2% Multiple races

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

* IN the minority

* **Khan, Hritzkowin, Thambyrajah share how being a member of a minority group has affected their lives**

By **Lukas Mendel**
Copy editor

The smaller number or part, especially a number that is less than fifty percent of the whole number. This is the general, basic definition that the word minority spurs from. A minority, though, is not just a word or a mere number, it is an embodiment of all people who represent cultures, religions, sexual orientations, or ethnicities that differ from the majority of others.

Being considered a minority will differ from place to place, as a black man is considered a minority here at school, but a white man would be considered a minority within the Middle East. What never changes, is the way people's vast differences works to define themselves and their experiences as an individual, for the good or bad. Being a minority especially can play a major part into the development of how one defines themselves.

Adam Khan, senior, would define himself as a minority because of his Muslim faith and being a child of mixed parents. Khan differs from the mass Christian and white population at school, but he says he has never been entirely defined by it.

"[Being a minority hasn't affected me]. Not too much no, there are jokes and they are from friends so it's always in jest, but I just have too much pride for anything to really affect me that much," said Khan.

Khan's pride in being a minority has affected him the most throughout his life, as personally being Muslim has not changed him as a person.

Olivia Hritzkowin, sophomore, defines herself as a minority being a member of the LGBT community and also being a woman. Hritzkowin feels strongly that her being a minority has played a major role in her development as a person and that it's influence has defined her.

"It has influenced me because I

feel discrimination because of it, every once in awhile not all the time, I think America is becoming a lot more accepting of it, but it has also influenced my home life," Hritzkowin said. "My parents and family have to deal with it and they don't relate to it. It has affected a lot of aspects."

The influence has been negative at times, and it took Hritzkowin time before she could truly feel proud of being who she was. She has definitely felt the negativity from others before because of who she is: a minority.

"I don't think I've lost any friends because of it, but I have had people stray away from me. I've had people at school call me names behind my back ...When I'm in the hallway I hear something about being gay ... I used to, like in freshman year and eighth grade, get really offended by it and it made me really upset and now I just say 'Yeah it's true.' I feel like it's something that I shouldn't be ashamed of," Hritzkowin said.

Talia Thambyrajah, junior, defines herself as a minority because of her ethnicity as a Malaysian and her deep cultural experiences. Thambyrajah feels that her cultural background has significantly defined the person she has become and is truly grateful she is allowed to experience it.

Thambyrajah greatly values diversity in not just herself, but in all people. People's diversity is what defines themselves as an individual and Thambyrajah thinks we should place more importance on it in our society. Her diversity has also brought her deep cultural experiences that she would otherwise never be able to experience if she was not a minority.

"Being culturally diverse has definitely changed my personal life and the way I perceive life," Thambyrajah said. "I just really value diversity a lot because I think it's really important. It is something that we don't value as people as much as we should."



"I would consider myself a minority because I am a in the LGBT community."

- Olivia Hritzkowin

sporting her rainbow patch representing the LGBT community. Hritzkowin feels strongly that her being a minority has played a major role in her development as a person and that it's influence has defined her.

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