**DEFINING THE 18%**

A graphical depiction of the racial makeup of the school, county, state and nation.

**MILL VALLEY**

Each year, every public school in Kansas must publish basic information about its student body, including the breakdown of certain racial groups. The school’s percent of non-white students has increased by almost 10% since the school opened in 2000.

**OUTSIDE THE VALLEY**

Results from the 2019 census of different racial groups show Mill Valley closely mirrors the state of Kansas in these areas.

**JOHNSON COUNTY**

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**LETTER FROM THE EDITORS**

**Hey Mill Valley!**

Welcome to issue five of the JagWire! Unlike the other issues we have produced, this issue is a special edition paper that revolves around the central theme of racial diversity at the school. Since its opening in 2000, Mill Valley has slowly become more racially diverse. Racial diversity at the school is something that no one can control, but we felt it was important to bring light to the different cultures and races that make up 18% of our school.

Race is a factor that defines who we are. No matter what race someone is, we believe that being open to learning about other races and cultures is important and something worth discussing.

By sharing students’ personal experiences with racism, to cultural differences, our goal is to dive into the matter of diversity at the school in a way that is meaningful and eye-opening for all of our readers.

We hope the collection of stories in this special edition of the paper will give you insight into the lives and experiences of Mill Valley’s 18%.

**Your editors,**

Jagwire
Tatum Elliott

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**JOHNSON COUNTY**

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**EDITORIAL POLICY**

We value your opinions. If you wish to submit a column or a letter to the editor to the JagWire, you can do so by handing it in to a member of the staff or to the print journalism room (C101). Additionally, you may email any member of the staff with opinions, as well as tweet to @millvalleynews. Anonymous content will not be accepted. Please understand that we have the right to edit all copy that runs in this publication.
PIONEERING POLITICIANS

The portrayal and representation of minorities in the confines of modern day politics

Sharice Davids gives her victory speech after winning the state’s third congressional district race Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2018, at her watch party in Olathe, Kansas.

TANNER SMITH
assistant editor

Imagine looking up at your community leaders, at your representatives or even looking at the president and seeing someone who doesn’t look like you. Think of how discouraging that would be, and how throughout your entire life you would see politics dominated by people who don’t look like you, don’t talk like you, don’t think like you and don’t have the same priorities as you. That is what people of color face every day.

History teacher Aaron Cox sees the fact that elected officials in the U.S. do not represent the country’s demographics as a major problem that needs fixing.

“When you look at politics … and at our demographics, there’s a lot of categories that are underrepresented,” Cox said. “It’s no secret that most politicians are white and they’re male.”

While, according to Vox, Congress is the most diverse it has ever been, it is only 22% non-white compared to 39% of the total population that is non-white. Although Kansas has also improved in terms of representation with the election of Sharice Davids, the other five congressional representatives are white, leaving the majority of the state without minority representation in Congress.

In addition to Cox, junior Adam White feels that government organizations are not sufficiently representing people of color.

“I think from both a numerical standpoint as well as a power representation standpoint, neither metric is fulfilled by the amount of representation within government for underrepresented minority groups,” White said. “Congress … doesn’t represent a lot of the interests of minority groups.”

Senior Tripp Starr feels that the lack of diversity in the political realm discourages people of color from being involved in politics.

“It’s kind of disappointing,” Starr said. “You want to see people in the light that look like you, especially in the political realm because it has some deeper meaning.”

While not perfect, Cox feels that Congress and other government organizations are becoming more inclusive.

“When we look at the demographics, there’s more diversity,” Cox said. “Congress is more diverse now than it has ever been, so I think we’re trending in the right direction.”

While White concedes that representation in Congress has gotten better, he still feels there’s a lot that needs to be improved, especially in the realm of voting rights.

“I improved as a relative term,” White said. “Since, you know, our good old days in the late 1700s, when literally everybody was a white straight male, I think it’s fair to say that we’ve added in a couple of people of color to Congress, but we still have a lot of room to grow.”

This increased representation that White and Cox argue for is meant to increase minorities’ influence in Congress.

“They need [a voice],” Cox said. “You’re not going to have a voice if you’re not represented … and you have to have that representation with people that are similar to you.”

The solution to the problem for Cox is to get the younger generations involved through government or civics classes.

“I think we need more involvement,” Cox said. “We want a younger generation to get involved, and I think that starts with education … getting kids interested in politics and teaching them how to get involved … will start to increase the diversity of the people running for public policy.”

Despite recent improvements, Congress still remains largely white; with 25% of members are minorities.

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source: Pew Research

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of NY
Rep. Ayanna Pressley of MA
Rep. Rashida Tlaib of MI
Rep. Ilhan Omar of MN
The representation of minorities in entertainment media is crucial. According to UCLA Researchers, people of color make up:

- 39.4% of the U.S. population
- 21.5% of broadcast TV leading actors
- 19.8% of film leading actors
- 12.6% of film directors
- 7.8% of film writers
- 5% of Oscar nominees

**Q&A with senior Anna Paden**

Drama department member answers questions on diversity in entertainment.

JagWire: Do you make an effort to seek out television or movies where you can see people like yourself?

Anna Paden: Representation is important. If you don’t see yourself represented in the media, then you have ideals of people who don’t look like you who you can’t relate to, so then you don’t know where you fit in the world.

JW: How do you feel about the entertainment industry’s attitude toward diversity?

AP: There is such a huge disparity, but I feel that we are in a black Renaissance where we are being seen in these places of power like directing and producing. We are coming. We are getting toward better places, but we still have a long way to go.

JW: What should white people do in order to be more accepting of minorities?

AP: Listen to us. Just listen to our stories and listen to our ideas because they’re extremely valuable and they have meaning. There’s a huge audience that has been untapped that you can complete. You can access it; you just have to listen.

**Success in minority characters**

Highlighting minority characters seen in recent entertainment releases:

- **Bong Joon-ho**: South Korean director. His film “Parasite” was nominated for Best Foreign Film in the Academy Awards and won Best Foreign Film at the Golden Globes. He was nominated for Best Director at the Golden Globes.

- **Jordan Peele**: African American director. His 2017 film “Get Out” features race relations and was nominated for three Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay. He won Best Original Screenplay.

- **Beyoncé**: African American singer. All 12 songs in her 2016 album “Lemonade” cracked the Billboard Top 100. She starred as a voice actress in Disney’s reboot of “The Lion King”. Nominated for 70 Grammy awards and has won 34.

**Efforts are being made to increase diversity in entertainment**

Source: Deadline, Grammys

- The highest-grossing films last year, on average, featured casts composed of 31–40% minorities.
- The number of minority leading actors in TV shows has quadrupled since 2011.
- 28 of 2019’s top 100 films featured minorities in leading roles.

**Make a SPLASH at the City of Shawnee! 2020 Summer Aquatic Center Positions**

The Shawnee Parks and Recreation Department is looking for energetic individuals wanting to join our team next summer. We are hiring NOW for the 2020 pool season! Cashier, Lifeguard and Swim Instructor positions are open to individuals ages 15 and older. Concession attendant requires a minimum age of 16.

**Shawnee Sharks Coaching Staff**
- Pool Manager
- Lifeguards
- Swim Instructors
- Concession Attendant
- Cashier Attendant

*The City of Shawnee is an Equal Opportunity Employer.*

**Source:** Deadline, Grammys
RACISM
IT’S STILL A PROBLEM
How racism continues to impact the lives of minorities in the community

Morgan is no stranger to the notorious history class situation that countless black students experience throughout their education: the room full of non-black students that inevitably turn toward the single black student when it’s time to discuss the Civil War or the civil rights movement. While Morgan doesn’t blame others for this reaction, he sheds light on why this kind of occurrence creates an unpleasant environment.

“A lot of people will turn around and look at me or turn toward me,” Morgan said. “It’s extremely uncomfortable for me. It’s just a lot of eyes on you for something that you can’t really control.”

A stereotype often tied to black people is that they are inherently more violent than white people. Morgan thinks this ill-founded stereotype is misunderstood when people only look at shallow statistics and don’t address underlying causes behind those issues.

 “[The stereotype] that all black people are ghetto... irks me a little bit, because there are a lot of black people who don’t act ghetto. No one wants to act ghetto; it’s the situation that they’re in,” Morgan said. “A lot of people don’t grow up in great places … in order to cope with that, they get into violence. And it’s not the right thing to do, but it’s the only thing they know.”

Going to a school with a primarily white staff has limited the number of adults in Morgan’s life that are fully capable of understanding race-related aspects of his life.

“It’s a little bit hard, because when you’re trying to explain a situation that you’re going through, or something that’s happened to you in school, or maybe someone’s saying something,” Morgan said. “It’s hard for them to put themselves in your shoes, and vice versa.”

Morgan
An elderly, white man approached the baseball field concession stand. He stopped to stare at sophomore Drew Morgan who was busy preparing a large order of Icees. After finishing his task, Morgan greeted the man and apologized for the wait.

“You’re lucky your people are allowed to work here,” the man said.

Ignoring the comment, Morgan asked again if he could help the man.

“Back in my time, your people wouldn’t even be allowed to be in this certain section,” the man said.

Not wanting to lose his job, Morgan replied that he couldn’t help the man if that’s all he was going to say; without another word, the man walked away.

This blatant racism wasn’t the first time Morgan’s African American ancestry played a role in how people treated him. Adopted into a white family, the color of his skin began shaping his world before he even understood what race was.

“I remember when I was growing up ... a lot of people would stop and stare at my family in public, and it was something that I didn’t understand at the time,” Morgan said. “[I thought], ‘Why are they staring at me?’ I was just staring at my parents.”

While Morgan recollects the discomfort that dominated these moments, he recognizes that it’s natural for people to do a double-take when they notice his family’s dynamic. Race grew to be a larger aspect of his identity upon entering grade school, and not always in a positive way; Morgan often felt disconnected from his white peers who didn’t share the same race-related experiences that had become increasingly prevalent.

He feels these problems have been partially alleviated since he started high school. The increased diversity allowed him to find students who are “really vocal about how they feel about being black, how they feel about how they’re treated.”

An African American student’s experience with racism

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Experiences of racism through the form of racist language and slurs are reflected on

STEVEN CURTO

While sitting through another day of AV Production Fundamentals last year, junior Beth Desta got into a heated argument with a boy sitting next to her in class. Desta doesn’t remember what instigated the conflict. What she does vividly recall, though, is the boy’s response.

“He disagreed with me. He just looked at me in the eyes and called me the n-word,” Desta said.

According to Desta, the use of racial slurs, including the n-word, is commonplace at Mill Valley. In her experience, white students callously use the word while joking with their friends or singing popular songs; however, they lack an understanding of the racist roots of the word and don’t receive consequences for its usage.

While Desta described principal Tobie Waldeck as extremely upset about the incident, the student who called her the n-word to her face received one day of in-school suspension, which she perceived as a sign from the school that “the administration doesn’t really care.”

Sophomore Ryan Lucas shares Desta’s disappointment in the response to the use of racial slurs at school. After a student in Lucas’s World History class called her the n-word and Lucas reported it, the student received a three-hour detention. To Lucas, the punishment was inadequate.

“With all the history of that word, with slavery and Jim Crow and all of that, it should have been a lot more than just a three-hour detention,” Lucas said.

Desta has the same sentiments as Lucas regarding the inconsistency and lack of severity in the school’s punishments for racial slurs. She references a black student who received a punishment of two days of out-of-school suspension; the student who called Desta the n-word received only one day of out-of-school suspension, and Lucas’s received zero days of out-of-school suspension.

“I just don’t think they handle it seriously enough when it comes to non-black people saying the n-word. A black kid got suspended for even longer for saying it,” Desta said.

Waldeck, on the other hand, believes that he and other administrators are concerned about the issue of racial harassment.

“Everybody should be able to come here to school, work and be comfortable regardless of race or religion,” Waldeck said. “Students either need to report it to an adult, or they’re going to have to deal with it themselves internally. We do take it very seriously.”

The school’s official policy, found in the student handbook, indicates that any reported racial harassment incidents are addressed as “serious disciplinary infractions.” The policy also says that all racial harassment allegations will be “thoroughly investigated and resolved in a prompt and equitable manner.”

Waldeck says he evaluates every occurrence of racial harassment on a case-by-case basis. He takes into account interviews with students and witnesses as well as physical evidence of the incident. Ultimately, he says, he decides upon a resolution based on “what is best for the student that is the victim, and also what is best for the person that actually did it.”

What Waldeck, Lucas and Desta can all agree on, though, is that racist attitudes affects her.

“Everybody should be able to come here to school, work and be comfortable regardless of race or religion.”

Desta wanted to transfer. Even though she was concerned about the issue of racial harassment, Desta believed that despite the prevalence of racist language at Mill Valley, the school hasn’t taken enough steps to raise awareness about the issue; to her, that’s something that needs to change.

“There definitely needs to be some type of awareness. It should be common knowledge not to use the n-word,” Lucas said. “I don’t understand why it’s not, especially with all the history behind it.”

Racial slurs and derogatory remarks have a long-lasting impact on people of all different races and can lead to increased tension within society. This demeaning language creates a prejudiced environment that can make individuals feel uncomfortable.

Jordyn Harris

Ben Wieland

A V PRODUCTION FUN

February 6, 2020

JagWire
STUCK ON STEREOTYPES

Though they can be taken as jokes, stereotypes are discriminatory and harmful.

Since moving from Puerto Rico to the U.S. when she was four years old, English teacher Coral Brignoni has been unable to escape the racial stereotypes tied to her race. She may have been born a U.S. citizen, but her dark hair and skin color have influenced how the world perceives her.

“I have Bollywood, only eat curry, am an IT expert and know every other Indian person.”

Brignoni feels that spreading and reinforcing this kind of inaccurate stereotype can put a negative lens over how people view each other.

“Stereotypes lead human beings to make assumptions about other people,” Brignoni said. “So that would be my biggest caution, not a specific stereotype or phrase, but more so just being aware of how stereotypes can influence your thinking about other people and how far off-base they actually can be.”

These kinds of stereotypes are exacerbat ed even within school; freshman Gabby Delpleash has witnessed school faculty make comments that perpetuates inaccurate assumptions.

“Today specifically, one of my teachers innuend ed that black people couldn’t swim,” Delpleash said.

Brignoni uses her class as an opportunity to open the floor to discuss these kinds of stereotypes. She’s come to the conclusion, after years of teaching, that people’s natural tendencies to judge often evolves into the harmful negativity that feeds malicious behavior.

“It’s a natural inclination for us to want to categorize people, but unfortunately stereotypes have gotten so out of hand that most of them have become negative,” Brignoni said. “And we talked about it in class quite a bit. They started to try and come up with these kinds of stereotypes. They’ve heard, and none of them were really very nice.”

However, stereotypes don’t always result in hateful comments. Junior Manoj Turaga and his friends commonly joke about being him being a “tech savvy Indian” – a stereotype often associated with his race, but one that accurately describes his own talents. Under these circumstances, he doesn’t see the harm in joking about the stereotype.

“I don’t think it’s bad; I like to take a joke. And certainly, I’m a different kind of person than most people in the world. I don’t get offended by things at all,” Turaga said. “Certainly, the things that people say to me, some people will get offended [from]. And I’m not the person to judge whether it’s racism or this stuff is okay; that’s up the person [she comments are directed at].”

Turaga notes that these comments are differently when they come from strangers, though he recognizes that people don’t always have harmful intentions when joking about stereotypes.

“It is kind of weird, but they usually mean no harm. I don’t mean any harm whenever I do things [like that], and I hope that’s the case with them too,” Turaga said.

“Stereotypes lead human beings to make assumptions about other people, and not always have harmful intentions when joking about stereotypes.”

For instance, he has seen stereotypes represent misinformation.

“I’m surprised [by] how many people don’t realize that Puerto Rico is a Commonwealth of the United States, meaning that I am a born citizen,” Brignoni said. “Whereas some people will sometimes be like, ‘Do you have a green card to be in America?’ and I’m like NO.”

Many minorities like Turaga exchange joking stereotypes as lighthearted fun, and others like Brignoni opt not to use them at all.

“You can make a heck of a lot of funny jokes, without stereotyping somebody or at the expense of someone else’s culture,” Brignoni said.
Fear of Muslims is becoming more prevalent among modern American society

WHEN SOPHOMORE DEEMA RASHID moved to America, she felt alienated and left out by an imaginary idea, something that separated her from everyone else. She felt isolated and alone because she was different, because she wasn’t from the US and because she didn’t look like everyone else. This racial prejudice has become increasingly common in society today and has opened the gate for Muslims to be portrayed as dangerous and ‘terrorists’ by the media.

Islamophobia can manifest itself in many forms, from blatant discrimination and hatred or jokes made without a second thought. Rashid was born in Iraq and feels that her race has been consistently leveraged against her in jokes and comments. These jokes, according to Rashid, become more common after something happens in the news that can be tied back to her race.

On Jan. 3, Iranian revolutionary leader Qasem Soleimani was assassinated by a US airstrike, which directly led to fostering Islamophobia in America and increased the jokes and comments that Rashid gets.

“I’ve seen a lot more of it recently.” University of Kansas law professor Raj Bhala is a prominent figure in the fight against Islamophobia. Bhala’s speaks out about how stereotypes manifest into hatred. As these stereotypes plant fear and insecurity in our minds, we begin to lose any empathy for entire groups of people; in society’s eyes, they have become a plague to be cured of and a threat to be rid of. This, according to Bhala in an email, is how Islamophobia becomes real.

“Islamophobia is borne of a lack of empathy,” Bhala said. “A lack of empathy is caused by a lack of understanding, which, in turn, leads to prejudice.”

Sharia law is a form of religious Islamic law in which a lot of Islamophobia is directed at. State legislatures, including Kansas, have enacted anti-Sharia laws that perpetuate Islamophobia.

According to Bhala, the proliferation of anti-Sharia laws in Kansas in recent years is founded in ignorance of the debt that is owed to those who have been subject to discrimination in the past.

“These bills are based on ignorance,” Bhala said in a 2011 interview with columnist Bill Lummus. “The American legal system—many specific concepts in it—owes a debt, either direct or indirect, to the Shari’a. We have imported some concepts or some debates into our legal system that also are found in the Shari’a’s, and the Shari’a long predates English law from which our system more directly comes.”

Bhala compares this analysis to what it would be like to discern the kinship of your ancestors and trying to disassociate from your race and religion; it would be analogous.

“It’s like banishing the blood of your great-great-great-great-great-grandparents from your veins. You can’t do it,” Bhala said. “It’s intellectually ignorant and disingenuous to do that… it’s absolutely thoughtless [to adopt such laws].”

To Bhala, the most effective way to combat this discrimination and build empathy is to stay educated on social issues and befriend people without worrying about race or religion.

“Comprehensive education about comparative religions, comparative constitutional law, and comparative legal systems are some of the ways, as well as people-to-people exchanges, to build empathy,” Bhala said.

Rashid believes that this feeling of resentment and hatred is often fostered from stereotypes that people hear and learn from others and that the only way that they know how to express that feeling is through jokes.

“A lot of the time, people are worried about stereotypes and don’t know how to deal with that except using words,” Rashid said.

When people don’t know how to take out feelings of distrust, the immediate reaction is lashing out with words, slurs and jokes.

At three years old, sophomore Deema Rashid moved from Iraq to the United States. She has grown up in Kansas and moved around a lot, but her culture is present in her life.

“I moved to Monticello Trails in eighth grade, and I didn’t really feel like I fit in,” Rashid said. “Everyone would give me weird looks. They were like I fit in,” Rashid said. “After time it passed and became offensive.”

Rashid said, “They get annoying after a while because they just aren’t necessary. They don’t mean anything, but they keep coming back every time.”

Rashid said, “I have been getting a lot of jokes,” according to Bhala, the immediate reaction is lashing out with words, slurs and jokes.

“I don’t know why [jokes] were targeted at me, and then I realized it was because of my race.”

Rashid moved, and the realization that it was over something she couldn’t change came as a shock.

“At first, I didn’t really know why it was targeted at me and then I realized it was because of my race and I couldn’t really tell what to do about it,” Rashid said. “After time it passed by and became less common… but I’ve seen a lot more of it recently.”
Racism is an issue that many think has been solved. Slavery, segregation, and so many other racist policies have been abolished and programs like affirmative action are pushing us one step closer toward complete equality. Despite this seemingly growing acceptance of other races and cultures, America, including Mill Valley, still has work to do in regard to racial equality and that starts with being understanding of other cultures.

Whether it is backlash from events such as 9/11 or the prevalence of racist memes on social media, teenagers are becoming increasingly exposed to racist opinions. Tweets from President Donald Trump telling four congresswomen of color to “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came” lead many to have an unfair bias toward people of color.

These circumstances make it crucial that people think before they speak and are willing to change their behavior if it offends someone else. One way to increase awareness of these issues is to learn about the problems other races and cultures face and work toward understanding.

While Mill Valley is generally accepting of other cultures, accepting is completely different from understanding. By understanding someone else’s culture, you understand why they are who they are, how they learned what they learned and better understand who they want to be. This can be accomplished by listening to others stories and by resisting the urge to support racist posts on social media. While we cannot change the racial diversity at our school, taking the time to learn about different cultures will not only allow us to be more understanding, but it will also broaden our views of the diversity all around us.

Whether it is race, culture, disability, gender, religion or anything else that makes people different, understanding the history and importance of their beliefs not only helps you to better connect with them, but also to reduce racism whether it be in person or online.

In the modern educational environment, 40% to 50% of handicapped students are left out from various school organizations and activities from field trips to graduation programs. Worse yet, students of color with disabilities face a greater number of obstacles impeding their ability to succeed socially and academically in school. The idea of including ethnic individuals in special education proposes the benefits of school districts appropriately addressing education disparities and improving the academic outcomes for children of color with disabilities.

Currently, many handicapped children of color experience a segregated education system; in 2014, students of color with disabilities, including 17% of black students and 21% of Asian students, were placed in the regular classroom, on average, less than 40% of the school day. In 2015, only 3% of black and Hispanic 12th grade students with disabilities achieved proficiency in reading, while practically none achieved proficiency in math.

The thought of integrating disabled students of color into the regular classroom often evokes feelings of both hope and anxiety. An initial step towards educational equality is pairing students with disabilities with their peers.

The idea of including ethnic individuals in special education programs benefits the school districts addressing education disparities and improving the academic outcomes for children of color with disabilities.

Because handicapped students of color are more frequently forgotten by many schools, this practice has reflected immensely over their cognitive skills. In 2015, only 3% of black and Hispanic 12th grade students with disabilities achieved proficiency in reading, while practically none achieved proficiency in math.

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Inclusive education for handicapped students of color is deeply rooted in social justice movements to end discrimination towards individuals with disabilities. As such, students, parents, and educators will benefit immensely from more validated practices that support the integration of ethnic students with disabilities into the regular classroom.
Alongside her family, freshman Sophia Chang went on a vacation to Taiwan. | Submitted by Sophia Chang

Over the summer, junior Courtney Mahugu took a trip to Kenya with her family. | Submitted by Courtney Mahugu

Along with her brother, junior Ashleen Toor visited Punjab, India when she was three years old. | Submitted by Ashleen Toor

Alongside her family, freshman Sophia Chang went on a vacation to Taiwan. | Submitted by Sophia Chang

For his first birthday, freshman Amit Kaushal visited his family in Punjab, India. | Submitted by Amit Kaushal

THE TOORS

Junior Ashleen Toor speaks Punjabi with her family

The first words she said as a child weren’t in English; it was in Punjabi. Her parents immigrated to the U.S. to open opportunities for her and her siblings. While her parents left their native country, they passed the Indian culture to their children. Even as a first generation U.S. citizen in her family, junior Ashleen Toor’s life at home closely resembles her parents’ native Indian culture.

While she speaks English at school, growing up, Punjabi has been Toor’s primary language. Being able to speak Punjabi has opened doors for Toor to communicate in the native language when she travels back to India.

“I can communicate with people from my culture and people who I live with,” Toor said. “It’s a good thing to know because whenever we visit India, it’s really helpful to know.”

In addition to teaching her children how to speak Punjabi, Toor’s mother, Kirendeep Kaur has maintained their native Indian culture. As a first generation U.S. citizen in her family, junior Ashleen Toor’s life at Indian community. Even as a first generation Indian culture actually is,” Kaur said.

Despite there being over 400 families at her temple, families share a close relationship on the basis of their religion and language.

“We’re really close knit,” Toor said. “We all come together on the basis that we’re all Sikh and we all speak Punjabi, so that’s what we all relate to.”

While the community at her temple has allowed Toor to connect with people of her culture, traveling to India has enabled Toor to appreciate her Indian culture.

“I love [the culture]. When we go there, I love seeing the culture, the art, the music, the clothing,” Toor said. “Everything makes me feel really proud of my heritage.”

THE MAHUGUS

Junior Courtney Mahugu’s parents are from Kenya

High school in America is a one of a kind experience. Experiencing it for herself and for her parents is something junior Courtney Mahugu has been doing for the past three years. Mahugu’s parents both immigrated to America from small villages in Kenya and are learning about American culture through Mahugu as well as keeping their own African culture alive.

“My parents went to high school in Kenya… they really don’t understand what it’s like to be an American Teenager… so life is challenging a little because I have to explain a lot of things,” Mahugu said.

Mahugu’s dad, Francis Nuthu, tries to keep his African culture alive in his house through one of his favorite things: food.

“I try to maintain the African culture through food, music and language…” Nuthu said. “African cuisine is diverse and delicious.”

According to Mahugu, the authentic dishes that her mother makes at home requires spices that are not commonly found in the U.S.

“We cook only Kenyan food in my house… so there’s a lot of spices involved,” Mahugu said. “Although you can buy those spices in America, there’s a lot of spices… that are easier to get in Kenya.”

In addition to the food of her culture, the Mahugus connect with people that share their African culture through their church, Prince of Peace, once a month.

“It’s a Mass where there’s a lot of singing and there’s African garments everywhere,” Mahugu said. “Everyone’s wearing whatever country they’re from and singing songs from their country. I get to hang out with kids who understand what it’s to be Kenyan.”

Mahugu enjoys attending church because of the variety of style.

“Everyone’s hair looks different… everybody’s got a style going on,” Mahugu said.

For his first birthday, freshman Amit Kaushal visited his family in Punjab, India. | Submitted by Amit Kaushal

Alongside her family, freshman Sophia Chang went on a vacation to Taiwan. | Submitted by Sophia Chang

In a wedding tradition, junior Ashleen Toor makes a rangoli. | Submitted by Ashleen Toor

Along with her brother, junior Ashleen Toor visited Punjab, India when she was three years old. | Submitted by Ashleen Toor

With her family, junior Courtney Mahugu visited the Nairobi Animal Orphanage during her trip to Kenya. | Submitted by Courtney Mahugu

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Growing up as a first-generation U.S. citizen has opened freshman Sophia Chang to two different cultures. Her parents had immigrated to Kaohsiung, Taiwan and with them, they brought the Taiwan culture to their family through food.

Inspired by the food in Taiwan, Sophia’s father Scott Chang opened the restaurant Blue Koi to serve traditional Taiwanese dishes.

“It really was a dream of our family to own a business,” Scott said. “We grew up loving the food in Taiwan.”

Blue Koi serves a variety of dishes including authentic noodles and dumplings. Chang believes that traditional food is a significant part of her culture.

“I just like eating Asian food; that’s the biggest thing for me,” Sophia said. Since food is an important component of her culture, traveling to Taiwan allowed Sophia to taste unique street foods found only in Taiwan and connect with her extended family.

“We always visit mom’s family, and we usually take two weeks to do that,” Sophia said. “They take us everywhere to go to eat a lot of food.” For Scott, being able to take his children to his native hometown of Taiwan is a worthwhile experience.

“It’s kind of like your parents’ homeland, so it almost feels like you are coming home,” Scott said. While Sophia is not able to speak Mandarin very fluently with them, she is able to comprehend what they are saying by listening.

“Although I can’t communicate very fluently with them, I still understand things that they’re saying because I’m more of a listener,” Sophia said.

While traveling to her parent’s home town allows her to connect with her culture, Sophia also has outlets to connect with her Asian culture in the community. When she was a child, Sophia attended a Chinese school where her mom was an instructor.

Even though she no longer attends Chinese school, Sophia feels that the community there provided her a meaningful connection with others similar to her.

“I think that the connection, the relationship with other like-minded Chinese, is the most valuable,” Sophia said.

The differences between American and Indian cultures also have been applied to Kaushal’s life in other ways, like his friendships. Kaushal feels more connected to the friends in his community because of the culture they share.

“I feel like with the friends in that community I can relate to them more since we have the same background,” Kaushal said. “We can crack jokes here and there about our culture.”

The temple the Kaushals attend is a place where Kaushal feels really connected with his culture. That is where they celebrate many Hindu holidays, including the most significant, Diwali.

“Our most important holiday is Diwali, the festival of lights,” Kaushal said. “It signifies good always wins against evil. We go to our temple and we light candles representing light and goodness.”

The Kaushals also celebrate American and Christian holidays, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, but for family purposes rather than religious reasons. Kirana’s reason for this was simple.

“We celebrate both and there’s nothing wrong with that because we are living here, and now we’re mostly American,” Kirana said.

Kaushal believes attending services at his temple, his mother’s cooking and speaking Punjabi has helped him embrace and keep his culture alive, which he hopes to continue to do.

“I want to pass it down to my kids and I want my kids to pass down to their kids because I want to keep it going,” Kaushal said. “My parents kept it alive and that’s what I want to do too because it’s my roots.”
ROOTED RECIPE

Senior Nico Gatapia makes a traditional Filipino dish with his grandmother’s recipe

Kaldereta, a traditional Filipino stew, makes senior Nico Gatapia feel closer to his culture. Nico’s family uses recipes passed down through family members from the Philippines.

“I get to experience my family’s culture without visiting the Philippines,” Gatapia said. “Food is the only thing that connects me with my family’s culture. I feel sad for people who don’t have access to authentic ethnic cuisine.”

According to Nico’s father, Ramulus Gatapia, he started teaching Nico to cook so he would be able to take care of himself and connect to his Filipino history.

“I CAN EXPERIENCE MY FAMILY’S CULTURE WITHOUT HAVING TO VISIT THE PHILIPPINES.”

senior nico gatapia

MAKING A MASTERPIECE

Nico Gatapia shares his family’s recipe for a batch of Kaldereta from the Philippines

GROCERY LIST

7 lbs. beef roast, 1.5 inch chunks
2 diced tomatoes
3 diced onions
5 medium potatoes, rough cut
5 bay leaves
1 tbsp. kosher salt
1 tbsp. whole black peppercorns
2 “glugs” of soy sauce
2 lbs. carrots, cut 1 inch chunks
2 large bell peppers, cut 1 inch
1 can black olives, drained
1/4 C white cooking wine

DIRECTIONS

1. Brown beef in oil. Add water if not cooking fast enough.
2. Add white cooking wine, onion, tomato and bay leaves.
3. Continue to cook for 5 minutes.
4. Add salt, peppercorns, soy sauce, tomatoes, sauce and water.
5. Add salt and soy sauce to taste.
6. Add half of the bell pepper chunks so the flavor will absorb.
7. Add one-inch chunks of potatoes and carrots.
8. Add bell pepper and olives just before serving.

Kaldereta, a traditional stew in the Philippines, consists of meats and vegetables.

ATTENTION SENIORS!

Booster Club Scholarships Now Available

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REQUIREMENTS

• Your parent/guardian must be a Booster Club Member as of Dec 19, 2019
• You must plan to attend a 2 or 4 year university, vocational or technical school
• You must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA

Applications will be available Monday, February 3 and are due in the MVHS office Friday, April 3 by 3:00pm. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
We Asked You

HOW CAN MILL VALLEY BE MORE INCLUSIVE OF STUDENTS OF COLOR?

“HAVE A MORE DIVERSE STAFF”
“CREATE CLUBS FOR DIFFERENT CULTURES AT OUR SCHOOL”
“ACKNOWLEDGE BLACK HISTORY MONTH”
“CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS DIVERSITY WITHOUT FORCING IT”

“ENSURE A FRIENDLY AND ACCEPTING ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE”
“LEARN MORE ABOUT DIFFERENT CULTURES IN HISTORY CLASSES”
“TEACHERS SHOULD BE MORE AWARE AND RESPONSIVE TO RACIST COMMENTS”

*anonymous responses from student survey