

**5** **PARENTS IN THE HALLWAYS**  
Seeing their parents in school  
is the norm for these students

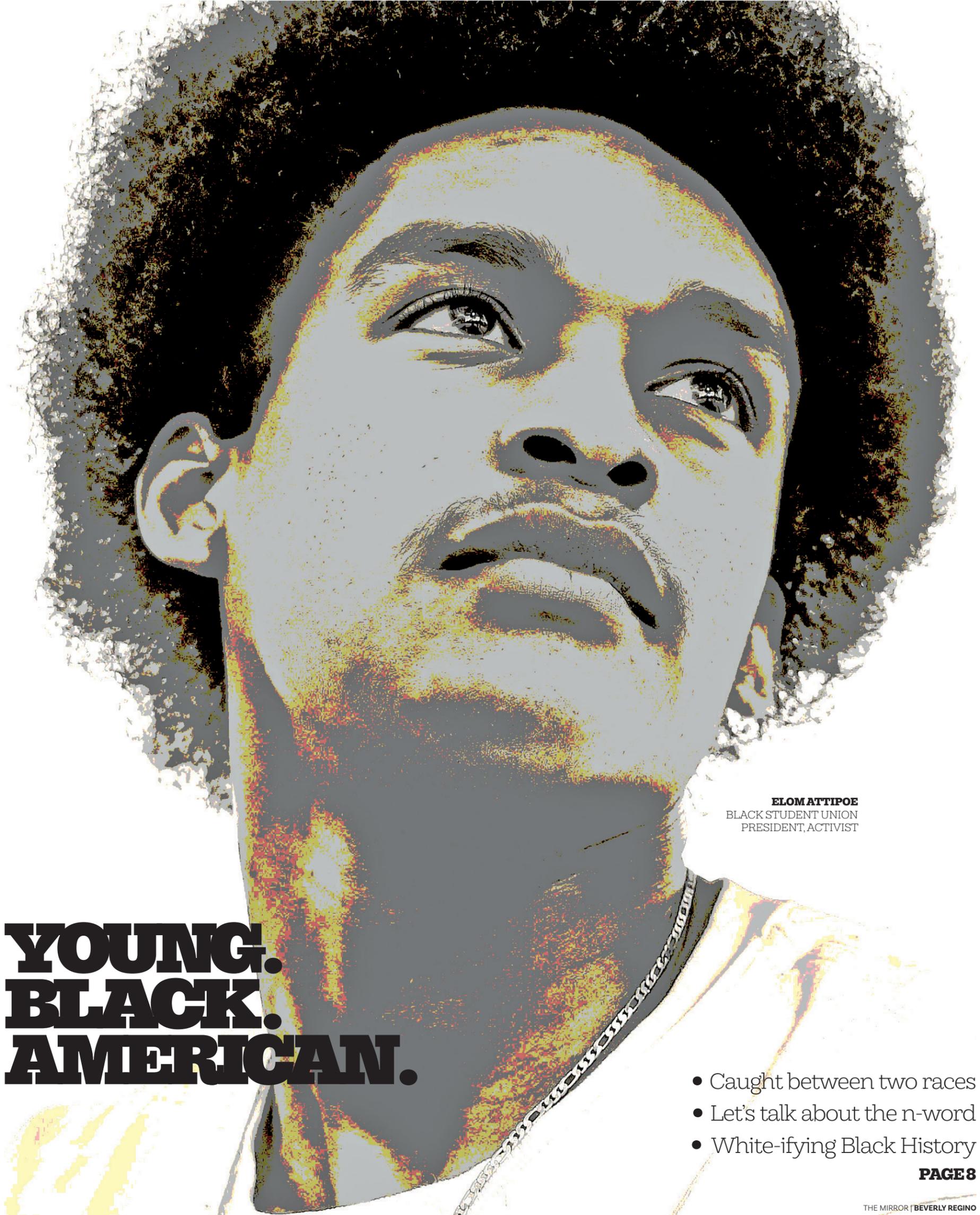
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# the MIRROR

FEBRUARY 2022 | Van Nuys High School | Van Nuys, California

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**ELOM ATTIPOE**  
BLACK STUDENT UNION  
PRESIDENT, ACTIVIST

**YOUNG.  
BLACK.  
AMERICAN.**

- Caught between two races
- Let's talk about the n-word
- White-ifying Black History

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THE MIRROR | BEVERLY REGINO

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## Living at the intersection of two races

Being biracial means sometimes feeling like I don't fit in anywhere  
**By Isabella Thomas**



**AT A CROSSROADS** Isabella Thomas struggles to define herself in a mixup of black and white.  
 PHOTO: THE MIRROR | BEVERLY REGINO

PHOTOILLUSTRATION: THE MIRROR | ANGELA PROCA

**T**oo white for the Black kids and too Black for the white.”

I remember listening to these Earl Sweatshirt lyrics a few years back and thinking I really related to them.

As a biracial person, I have always felt out of place in life.

I grew up surrounded by one culture more than the other. My dad, a Black man, has lived in Los Angeles since he was nine years old. The majority of his family lives in Chicago so we rarely get to see them.

My mom's side of the family — who are white — are all over the map, but despite that, I find that I talk to them more than my dad's side.

In August, my family and I visited my Black family in Chicago.

I was so excited to see them. Many of them I'd either never met or don't remember.

As excited as I was, I was also incredibly nervous. Would I fit in? What would they think? I don't talk like they do. I don't eat the same foods as they do. I don't have the same hobbies. I don't shop at the same stores.

I had never really noticed how disconnected I was with my Black side until fairly recently. I used to be contempt in my own skin. Growing up surrounded by different races and cultures allowed for me to learn more about other people than myself. I started to realize everyone around me knew exactly who and what they were, while I grew up ignorant to my own identity.

During the pandemic, I had noticed that a lot of my hair was dead and I did not know why. I did hours of research on Google, TikTok and countless other hair care websites to learn about hair types and different hair products I should and should not be using. My mom did an amazing job using proper products when I was a child, but as I grew up and it became my responsibility, I didn't know where to start.

Being biracial means having a lifelong identity crisis. It means being called the n-word by white people. It means being called “whitewashed” by Black people. It means not truly knowing where I fit in. I am told that I am Black, society labels me as Black, but I don't always feel Black.

When applying for college and filling out forms, I am always told to put “Black” first and then if, given the option for a second choice, I put white. But sometimes, I feel more white. I don't even know how, I just know that I don't always feel Black. There are days when I wish I was fully Black or fully white, just so that I can have a clear label.

My dad was surrounded by a lot of white people while he was growing up and from preschool to middle school, I found myself in that same situation. The difference between us was that he and everyone else knew that at the end of the day, he was Black.

His mom died shortly after he graduated college and I never got to meet her. She was a single mom and the way he speaks of her, I always wish I had known her. The closest person besides my dad who could give me guidance is out of reach.

My dad has never gotten any DNA tests despite my attempts at persuading him to. I have come to realize that my constant badgering was because it was a chance to know who I was. I felt that a DNA test

would finally be the thing to tell me who I am and who I should be and maybe then I would have a sense of security.

In 2020, while people protested and fought for justice, I sat on my phone and watched. I felt guilty for not being out and speaking up. In the past, I had felt like my voice didn't matter as much. I felt like it didn't have as much power as a voice like my dad's. I felt like no one would want to listen to someone who is only half Black.

I have come to learn that it doesn't matter. Despite my lighter shade, I have family who are one broken tail light away from being another name on a cardboard sign. I think about my 92-year-old uncle, Teddy, who was in his 30s when segregation was still around. The idea that he, or any other family member could be next, terrifies me.

Even though I am torn between two races, no matter how draining it can be, I know my family has and will always accept me.

Despite what society makes me think and what people may call me, at the end of the day, I am still Isabella Thomas, a person who doesn't need to check any boxes.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN VOICES

**How can schools create a more inclusive environment for Black people?**



By taking the things that kids say about microaggressions or other racist comments seriously. Administrators should take them as seriously as they take having phones in the class and other insignificant rules.  
**OCEAN THREATS**



Schools can make a more inclusive environment by teaching about African American History as well as discussing the morals that are relevant to this day, such as what it means to touch a Black person's hair.  
**JAIREE GRANT**



A more inclusive environment can be created by schools acknowledging things that make us as a community uncomfortable and actually make an effort to get rid of the causes that make us feel that discomfort.  
**DJAEDA HALL**



Incorporating Black history throughout the whole of US history and treating it as a vital part of history instead of briefly making it a small unit and cutting topics out would help Black students feel more important.  
**LAVARRA HENRY**



Stop trying to coddle the white children when teaching Black history because all it does is dilute our history and lessen the severity of our issues.  
**SAMARA AUGUSTINE**



The only time Black history is mentioned in the education system is in relation to the most traumatic events. I feel that more positive enlargement about Black history would help Black students feel safer and more appreciated.  
**JAYA DARRINGTON**

**NEWS BRIEFS**  
what you should know right now...

**STUDENTS JOIN BD3 ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Juniors Ava Boris and Abigail Lee have Board District 3's Student Advisory Council following LAUSD's redistricting switching the school out of Board District 6. The Student Advisory Council meets on a monthly basis to give students the opportunity to serve as ambassadors for their school by sharing their feedback and opinions on matters being considered by the Board of Education. Boris and Lee hope to support students in the school district by advocating for policies that promote equal access to education for all students.

**MAGNET PROGRAM HONORED AGAIN**

Van Nuys High School has been named a National Magnet School of Distinction by the Magnet Schools of America for the sixth year in a row. Magnet Coordinators Ms. Dawn Brown and Ms. Fanny Araña will be recognized and receive a National Magnet School of Distinction Merit award on behalf of the school on April 18 to 22 during the Magnet Schools of America's 39th National Conference in Nevada. Distinctions are only given to schools that display the highest level of excellence in curriculum innovation, raising academic achievement, promoting diversity and creating strong family and community partnerships.

**PAPER WINS SILVER FOR THIRD TIME**

The *Mirror* won a Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) Silver Crown on Jan. 18 for its newspaper issues from last year. The Crown Awards honor top student publications to engage, connect and inspire student journalists. "We are extremely grateful for winning a third Silver Crown in a row," Executive Editor and Print Editor-in-Chief Ani Tutunjan said. "Producing newspapers virtually was challenging but proved to be rewarding."

**DONATE SUPPLIES TO THE NEEDY**

The Disadvantaged Youth Aid and Community Relief Club are organizing a school supply drive through March 4 to donate materials to low-income students. Requested items include pencils, notebooks, backpacks and other school materials. Donated materials must be new and in their original packaging. Drop off boxes are located in most classrooms. Some teachers may allow their students to earn extra credit points for donating items.

**SERVICE-COLLEGE CASH**

California Governor Gavin Newsom and Chief Service Officer Josh Fryday have launched the #CaliforniansForAll College Corps offering college students \$10,000 toward their education starting the Fall 2022 semester if they complete 450 hours of public service. The program will provide up to 6,500 college students with public service opportunities in areas of need like climate change, covid-19 recovery and K-12 education. If a student finishes one year of service, they will receive \$10,000 while also gaining academic credit for their work.

**BD3 REP CAMPUS VISIT**

Scott Schmerelson, the local area's new school board representative after redistricting took effect in January, will take his first official tour of the campus on March 1. The school, previously in District 6 but now in District 3, had been represented by Board President Kelly Gonez until boundary lines were redrawn last year.

# A change in pace: The SAT goes digital

By ANGELINA GEVORGYAN & ANGELICA VENTURINA

THE MIRROR NEWS/FEATURES EDITORS

The College Board announced last month that it will drastically revamp the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) beginning in 2023 for international students and in 2024 for U.S. students.

These changes come after the University of California Board of Regents unanimously decided in May of 2020 to stop requiring the SAT and American College Testing (ACT) as a portion of students' admissions applications.

One of the most notable changes is that the SAT will be taken digitally on a tablet or laptop.

On test day, students will be able to use their own electronic device, a school issued device or a device provided by the College Board. If internet or power issues cause a student to lose connectivity to the test as they are taking it, the digital SAT has been designed to ensure that the student will not lose their work or time when they reconnect.

The College Board states that this change will make the SAT more flexible, as educators and students will receive their scores within days rather than weeks. The organization also claims that the testing process will be more secure. The new digital format will allow each student to be given a unique test form, making it practically impossible for individuals to cheat and share answers.

Although she acknowledges the benefits the new digital arrangement may provide, College Counselor Ms. Mary Charlton worries that there are still security concerns with the new format.

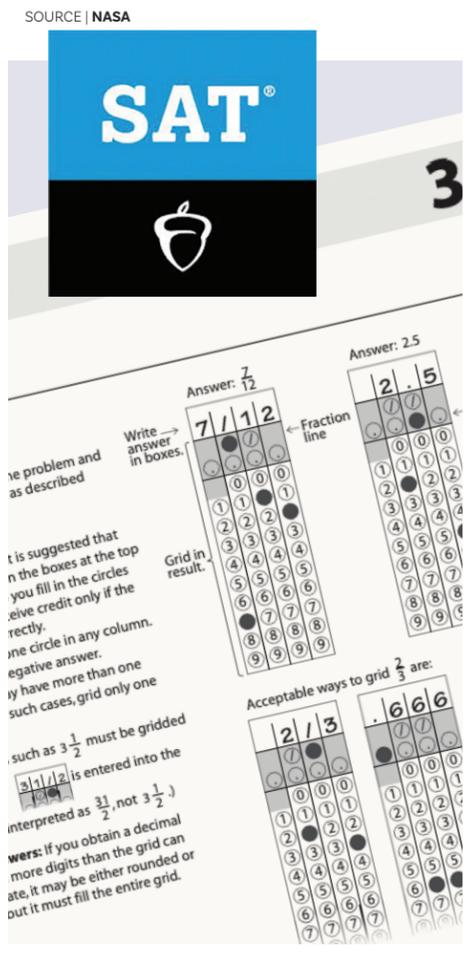
"The good news is that yes, people will have their scores back more quickly," she said. "But I think that the College Board is being really optimistic to think that it won't be hacked somehow. We just have to wait and see."

Like Ms. Charlton, freshman Kai Smyres also feels that the new format comes with flaws. Cheating will be a drawback that can't be avoided — no matter how secure the digital format may be.

"Personally I do not believe that it will be 'uncheatable', as anything marketed as such will get cheated within the year," Smyres said.

The SAT will also be shorter, about two hours instead of three, and will allow more time for each question.

The reading passages will be shorter, with one question related to each, reflecting a more extensive range of topics that embody



**REINVENTION** SAT takers currently use a hard copy to bubble-in answers, as shown on the instructions for a practice test. The College Board plans a major overhaul, taking the test completely digital in the U.S. beginning in 2024.

the literary works students read in college. Another modification to the test is that calculators will be allowed during the entire mathematics section. Students will have the option to bring their own calculator or utilize the graphing calculator built into the testing app.

SAT results will also be used to connect them to resources and information regarding workforce, training programs, local two-year colleges and career options.

However, many prominent features of the SAT will remain the same.

The test will still be scored on a 1600-point scale and still be administered in a school or testing center with a proctor present. It will also continue to measure students' understanding and knowledge of skills they learned in high school.

Students and educators will continue to have access to free practice resources provided by Khan Academy, and can still keep track of their educational growth and progress over time through the SAT Suite of Assessments: the Preliminary Scholastic

Assessment Test (PSAT) 8/9 establishes a readiness baseline, the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT / NMQST) and Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) 10 allow a check-in on student progress and the SAT connects students to scholarships and the College Board National Recognition Programs.

The new format of the SAT was first tested in Nov. of last year. According to the College Board, 80 percent of students who participated in the trial run found the new digital arrangement to be less stressful than the current format, and 100 percent of educators reported having a positive experience.

Freshman Katherine Aquino is strongly against the idea of the SAT going digital, and would rather have the computerized format be an optional alternative instead of a mandatory implementation.

"I think we should be allowed to choose," she said. "Some people may be used to traditional tests, and personally, when I take tests online, I tend to do worse."

Ms. Charlton feels that this digital format will further prevent colleges and universities from considering students' SAT scores during the admission process.

"Because of the pandemic, a lot of students did not have easy access to tests, so a lot of schools and universities backed down and said the submission of SAT scores was optional and not needed for admission purposes," Ms. Charlton said. "Now, another curveball has been tossed out to the Institutions of Higher Learning with the announcement that the SAT is going digital. The institutions are not going to reinstate testing scores as part of their admission process because they are so unsure of what the validity and reliability of this new SAT is going to be."

Smyres recognizes that he has never taken an SAT before and is therefore unaware of what it is like completing it on paper. But although he is unable to compare the new format to the old, he foresees numerous potential issues which may result from the digital set up.

"It could be better, for people with horrid handwriting like me," he said. "But it could be worse, with slower calculators, loading speeds and general bugginess that can and will happen."

Despite his skepticism towards certain aspects of the new arrangement, he appreciates the College Board's attempt to technologically advance its testing procedures.

"It sounds like they are modernizing for the digital age, which is good," Smyres said.

## Acadec team advances to state championships

By ANGELINA GEVORGYAN  
THE MIRROR NEWS/FEATURES EDITOR

The Academic Decathlon (AcaDec) team placed second in LAUSD's 41st annual regional competition, scoring 34,917.67 out of 60,000 points, qualifying them for the state competition beginning March 1.

The competition took place over the course of several weeks in January and February.

Students participated in an essay-writing event on Jan. 15, a speech and interview event on Jan. 29 and an objective testing

competition on Feb. 5. The theme of this year's competition is "Water: A Most Essential Resource," testing students in the subjects of literature, art, music, social studies, science, mathematics, economics, essay, interview and speech.

In addition to winning second place, the team earned 29 individual awards.

Mathias Kuchimpos won seven gold medals in overall score, literature, essay, art, music, social studies and science and a silver medal in economics.

He received the 1st place scholarship of \$1,500 for earn-

**ACADEC REGIONAL RESULTS**

| SCHOOL              | SCORE     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| 1) Grover Cleveland | 37,221.67 |
| 2) Van Nuys         | 34,917.67 |
| 3) Bell             | 34,650.00 |
| 4) SOCES            | 33,142.33 |
| 5) Valley Academy   | 33,099.67 |

ing the highest total score in LAUSD.

"It feels great to know that my work has paid off I'm going to take some time off to take a break and get back to the grind," Kuchimpos said.

Andranik Aboyan won six

medals in overall score, literature, art, interview, speech, and social studies.

He was the 2nd place scholarship winner, receiving \$1,000.

"It's great seeing your name pop up that many times when I won the medals," Aboyan said. "It also feels great getting some money, I mean who wouldn't want some money?"

Other medal winners include team captains Ava Boris and Gwen Singer, Carol Ortiz, Siv Nair, Sarah Khamlue, Arnsi Ventura, Ashley Andrade, Shandi Blanco and Leeza Dangazeeyan.

## High hopes for LAUSD's new superintendent



**FRESH FROM FLORIDA** New LAUSD Superintendent Alberto Carvalho is hailed by supporters as having turned around Miami schools.

COURTESY | LAUSD

**By ANI TUTUNJYAN**

THE MIRROR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**A**lberto Carvalho, leader of the Miami-Dade public school system in Florida, officially stepped into his new leadership role at LAUSD, the nation's second-largest school district on Feb. 14. He replaces Austin Beutner, who announced he would not seek renewal of his three-year contract, which ended in July 2021. The School Board unanimously offered the new superintendent the position late last year. Carvalho is hailed by supporters as having turned around the performance of Miami's failing schools by focusing on testing and making data-driven decisions.

Under Carvalho's leadership, the Miami-Dade graduation rate rose from 58 percent to 93.1 percent. Notably, he increased the graduation rate among Black and Hispanic students from 14 to 57 percent for Black students and 14 to 68 percent for Hispanic students between 2006 to 2009. This awarded the district \$500,000 in scholarships from the 2012 Broad Prize for Urban Education.

He also expanded choice options to more than 1,000 offerings that include bilingual programs, fine and performing arts, biotechnology, engineering, robotics, aviation, forensic sciences.

Carvalho has received recognitions for his work including Florida's 2014 Superintendent of the Year, the 2014 National Superintendent of the Year, the 2016 winner of the Harold W. McGraw Prize in Education, the 2018 National Urban Superintendent of the Year and the 2019 National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) Superintendent of the Year Award.

CREATIVE COMMONS | ADRIEN FACELINA

## GRAD PACKS GO ON SALE

Graduation packages are officially on sale through April 1. The Wolf package contains a cap, gown and tassel, a graduation medallion, four graduation tickets, a yearbook, a memory tassel, a black tassel frame, a diploma plaque, an official graduation announcement and 25 traditional graduate name cards for \$280. The Crimson package contains a cap, gown and tassel, a graduation medallion, four graduation tickets, a yearbook and a memory tassel for \$170. The Graduate package contains a cap, gown and tassel, a graduation medallion, four graduation tickets and a memory tassel for \$65. Order online at the Mood Grad Services website or at the student store. An initial \$65 deposit is required for all packages, and after placing an original order, all payments must be made with the student store only. Package orders can be upgraded until April 1 but cannot be downsized.



# California kids could be calling their own shots when it comes to getting vaccines

**By ANGELICA VENTURINA & ANGELINA GEVORGYAN**

THE MIRROR NEWSFEATURES EDITORS

**P**loddng down the hallway from her bedroom, she could only hear the loud thumping of her heartbeat. With a deep breath, she lowered her head, took a step forward and entered the living room, where her mother was washing dishes in the small kitchen.

When she met her mother's gaze from where she was standing, she immediately looked back down at the floor. The thumping of her heartbeat seemed to be getting only louder in her ears. Clutching the hem of her shirt, she muttered her next words.

"Mom, I was wondering if you could take me to get the vaccine this week."

The sound of her heart thumping got even louder in her ears. Her mother clicked her tongue and shook her head disapprovingly.

"You're asking again? I told you already, the answer is no."

A suffocating quietness filled the room, except for the sound of the faucet handle turning off and her mother wiping her hands down with a towel.

"I'm telling your father to not take you, so don't bother asking him either."

Unable to say anything else, she could only stand there in silence. She could only wait for another opportunity to ask to get vaccinated, only to be shot down like she always did.

That was one of the many times junior Sofia Kiremijian had asked her mother permission to get vaccinated in May of 2021. As she became more desperate, she went from asking, to relentless pleading, to weeping. Yet that didn't make her mother any less opposed to the idea.

While some teens with anti-vax parents might be choosing to stay unvaccinated, there are also teens like Kiremijian who aren't. Like many kids with anti-vax parents, Kiremijian was denied the choice of receiving the covid-19 vaccine and, despite how much she begged and cried, her parents outright refused to give her consent to get it.

The introduction of Senate Bill 866 would do exactly what Kiremijian wanted for herself and many other kids with anti-vax parents — the option to get vaccinated without parental permission.

SB 866, introduced on Jan. 20, is a bill written by California State Senator Scott Wiener that would allow minors 12 and older to get any vaccine approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, without requiring their parent or guardian's consent or

THE MIRROR | ISABELLA THOMAS



**NO PARENT PERMISSION** Children 12 and older may be able to get vaccinated, including the covid-19 vaccine, without parental consent or knowledge if SB 866 is passed.

knowledge. It extends to not only the covid-19 vaccine, but other vaccines like the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, the Hepatitis B vaccine and the measles vaccine.

The bill builds upon existing California law, which gives minors 12 and older access to a variety of reproductive healthcare including abortions, birth control and medical diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and drug and alcohol-related disorders.

If the bill is passed by both the Senate and Assembly, then signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, it could go into effect starting Jan. 1, 2023.

Kiremijian hopes this bill passes. After months of failed attempts to persuade her parents to get her vaccinated, she is fed up.

"At the age of 12 and older, you should be allowed to make decisions about your own body," Kiremijian said. "Parents don't own their kids. Making medical decisions for them is crazy in my opinion because it's your body, your choice."

Junior Leeza Dangazyan also agrees with the notion that parents shouldn't be in control of every aspect of their child's health. To her, the bill is a way for kids to finally make their own medical choices without having to deal with the intervention of their parents.



At the age of 12 and older, you should be able to make decisions about your own body."

**SOFIA KIREMIJIAN**  
STUDENT ACTIVIST

"The bill definitely gives younger people more autonomy over themselves and their healthcare, and I think by age 12, people are capable of making that choice," Dangazyan said.

Bella Kepler, a parent of a student who is currently a junior, is opposed to such a law.

"I feel that this bill should increase the age of the child that is making the decision of getting vaccinated because 12 is too young of an age to make such a decision," she said. "If the minimum age was higher then it would make more sense."

According to her, parents should have every right to decide whether or not their child should get the vaccine.

"It is up to the parents whether or not they get their child vaccinated, since the health of the child is in the hands of their parents," Kepler said. "Their choices should be respected by schools."

On the other hand, junior Marcela Aguirre Aguilar disagrees with the idea that the bill is silencing parents, and feels that parents shouldn't be enforcing their opinions on their children about the vaccine in the first place.

"Parents are pushing their agenda onto their kids instead of letting them think themselves," Aguirre said. "By allowing kids to get vaccinated without parental permission, we as a community can get a step closer to normality."

Junior Rayana Yasin, who is pro-vax and got the vaccine on her own accord, thinks that parents who are wary of the bill should first discuss the vaccine with their child consider their perspective.

"Even if the parents' intentions are to look out for their child's well-being, they should still consider what would make their children feel safer," Yasin said. "The vaccine is a way to keep their children safe. Even though parents do play a role for children that can't make decisions for themselves, I think they should talk to their children about what their opinion is for the vaccine."

Despite the fact that she is in favor of the bill, as it gives teenagers a voice, she doesn't want parents' feelings to simply be set aside either.

"Parents' opinions should not be dismissed," she said. "Their decision really counts."

In the past, potential vaccine laws have incited intense protests in Sacramento, like in 2019 when demonstrators stormed the Capitol against a bill to get rid of exemptions for childhood vaccinations. In January, following the announcement of SB 866, an anti-vax protester threw a menstrual cup full of blood at lawmakers.

Ani Chaglosian, who has worked with Wiener's office to advocate for the bill, has received numerous hate messages on Instagram, as well as death threats after being interviewed for a Los Angeles Times article about the bill and her support for it.

Miscommunication and misinformation about the covid-19 vaccine and anti-vax hostility are the cause of such responses, according to Chaglosian.

"Anti-vax parents don't think it's just us wanting to get vaccines, they think it's us trying to take away power from them and their kids to give to the state," she said. "The power is simply going to the child, a power that should already exist."

# Bring your parents to school day, everyday

By **ALLISON ANTONIO**  
THE MIRROR STAFF

**M**ost students would run the other way if they saw their parents in the hallway during school out of embarrassment. Well there's no escape route for these students. There are at least eight students enrolled whose parents are teachers at this school. Some perks of going to school with your parents are hanging out in their room during a hot lunch period or easy commutes to school. However, there are also perils. Here's what it's like to be children/students and parent/teachers at the same school.

Parent: **Mr. Roman Tovar**  
Student: **Nicole Tovar**

**What do your interactions at school look like?**

**(N.T.)** Occasionally, I see my dad in the halls or just walking on campus. We really don't see each other much until after school.  
**(R.T.)** I usually contact her right when school ends. Every once in a while during the day, I'll send her a funny meme or she'll contact me about a good grade. As a junior, she mostly hangs out with her friends but sometimes she'll hang out with me for wrestling.

**How does your treatment of one another at school differ from at home?**

**(N.T.)** Sometimes we joke around. He would tell me that I can't call him dad at school but I don't really listen.  
**(R.T.)** We can't be as affectionate as we want because of a school environment.

**Are you losing a sense of independence by attending and working at the same school?**

**(N.T.)** I feel like I am my own person. I do a lot of performing arts stuff, I'm a team captain so I do have a sense of independence here.

**Has spending so much time in the same environment brought you closer?**

**(N.T.)** Yeah, I'd say so.  
**(R.T.)** We went through a particularly rough last year and a half. My wife passed away and then covid-19 happened. Since Nicole and I are in such close proximity, that really helped. She's always here and I'm always here for her.

**How does attending and working at the same school affect your schedules?**

**(N.T.)** We both have a lot of extracurricular activities and this makes it easier. For example, I could tell him when I need a ride to Girl Scouts after his wrestling practice.  
**(R.T.)** Just thinking about her going to a different school stresses me out. The drive to and from school is easier.

**Did you ever imagine you would attend and work at the same school? How did your expectations compare to your current reality?**

**(N.T.)** From as early as I can remember, I was expecting to attend Van Nuys. I've been on campus since I was a toddler so I'm familiar and comfortable with the environment. Like my dad said, I'm involved in a lot of things so I couldn't have imagined it going any other way. I'm happy here. This is a good school with good teachers and overall, I've had a good high school experience so far.

Parent: **Ms. Diana Fuhrman**  
Students: **Aiden Chin & Bryce Chin**

**How do you guys interact throughout the school day?**

**(B.C.)** The only time I really see her is when she drives us to school and when I go to my chemistry class because her class is close to it.  
**(D.F.)** I sneak up behind them when they're walking to class.  
**(A.C.)** Yeah, the only time I see her is when she drives us here and then drives us home.

**How do you maintain professionalism?**

**(D.F.)** I don't have them in any of my classes. It's just integrity. If the kids and the parents are truthful then there won't be any favoritism. They'll just be treated like any other student so I think that's what's been happening around the campus.  
**(A.C.)** It also doesn't really matter because we're in tenth grade and all of our friends are in tenth grade so they don't have her as a teacher yet so they don't really care.  
**(B.C.)** I can see why students that don't have their parents here would get mad. I think having a parent here is an advantage.

**How does your treatment of one another at school differ from at home?**

**(D.F.)** I'm a lot more cuddly and friendly with them at home. Here, I just try to pretend that I don't even know who they are, especially when there are a lot of kids around. I just act like they're normal students and if a student says hi to me then I say hi to them.

**Are you losing a sense of independence by attending and working at the same school?**

**(D.F.)** Their dad and I don't helicopter parent them.

**Has spending so much time in the same environment brought you closer?**

**(B.C.)** Not particularly. Yeah, not really.  
**(A.C.)** We don't really talk like I said so there's no more interactions then there would be at our home so it's pretty much the same.  
**(D.F.)** We interact a lot more at home.

**How do you imagine your graduation will impact your lives?**

**(D.F.)** I think once they graduate and they're out of the house then it would very different for us. I would say that right around the time they graduate I would be retiring. It's just been very convenient for me to drive them here and be able to see all their games. I always wanted to be able to do that.  
**(A.C.)** We've still got two more years, but I don't think it'll affect us much. The only thing that would really change is just us driving ourselves when we start going to college. Yeah, that's pretty much it.

Parent: **SFC(R) Jorge Martinez**  
Student: **Tristan Martinez**

**How often do you interact at school?**

**(J.M.)** I feel like whenever anything goes down I have someone to talk to or if I'm hungry then I can eat my food here. It's more like having a sidekick at school.  
**(T.M.)** The way I look at it, I feel like he's well protected here cause I'm here. If any emergencies arise then they don't need to call home cause I'll be there in a split second to find out what's going on.

**What's it like going to school together?**

**(J.M.)** Not everyone can say that my son or daughter goes to my work. A few of the folks here have their teenagers come here so it's a privilege and it's something you don't see very often. I never helicopter parent any of them and they loved coming here because it's fun. It's a good thing for us and it's worked so far for the past nine years.  
**(T.M.)** If anything it's more like a plus than a negative. If you're a teacher and you have a student that can go to high school then it's more like a benefit of being a teacher to have your child come here.

**How does your treatment of one another at school differ from at home?**

**(J.M.)** There's a time and place. Here at school, he would never call me dad in front of the teachers or his friends and classmates. He'll call me Sergeant Martinez or Sergeant because that's my title.  
**(T.M.)** It's not really different. Sometimes at home, I'll call him Sergeant Martinez by accident.

**Has spending so much time in the same environment brought you closer?**

**(J.M.)** In a way because there's lessons learned everyday. It's almost an hour and 10 minute drive here from home and vice versa. We have enough time to bond, dispute or just have conversations about life in general. Overall, we have learned so much from each other and it was the same thing with my other kids. They trust me and they can come to me any time so that kind of helps and bonds us.  
**(T.M.)** I have like a partner in crime at school rather than my dad.

**How do you imagine your graduation will impact your lives?**

**(J.M.)** I'm ready for all my kids to seek their own lives. It's just a part of nature.  
**(T.M.)** I've got one word, freedom. That's how I would describe it.



THE MIRROR | PHOTOS BY BEVERLY REGINO

**CAMPUS LIFE BRIEFS**  
what you should know right now...

**CELEBRATE DIVERSITY**

ASB is sponsoring the first Multicultural Day since 2020. Over 30 clubs and organizations will be selling prepackaged goodies during an extended lunch on Friday, March 11 on the Quad. Cultural performances will take place on the main stage.

**DEPARTURES**

The school will be losing two key faculty members. Mr. Dan Levy, Athletic Director and Title I Coordinator, has taken an assistant principal position at North Hollywood High, while Ms. Dora Lopez, Ninth Grade Academy Coordinator, is becoming a new assistant principal at San Fernando High. Mr. Levy has been on staff since 2007, while Ms. Lopez has been here since 2013. Mr. Dion Coley will be interim Athletic Director, while Title I Coordinator and Ninth Grade Academy Coordinator remain unfilled.

**NEW ARRIVALS**

New physics teacher Ms. Jana Ponec and tech support Ricardo Joaquin joined the staff this fall semester. Ms. Ponec received her master's degree in biophysics and chemical physics from University Olomouc in the Czech Republic and taught math and science at Sepulveda Middle School for 17 years. An alumni who graduated five years ago, Joaquin returns to where he learned to perfect his craft. The tech support position had been vacant since Oct. 15 when staff was required to be covid-19 vaccinated.

**ARRIVALS PART 2 A-G**

Counselor Ms. Malissa Vanegas and English teacher Ms. Nancy Navarrete are each expecting a baby within the next several months. Ms. Vanegas will welcome her first child on March 22, baby girl Mylah Rayne. Ms. Navarrete will be having her second child, a baby boy, on May 15. Although her son's name is currently undetermined, Ms. Navarrete plans for it to be Italian and to begin with the letter A in order to complement her daughter's name Alessandra Beatriz.

**GRIEF SUPPORT**

Students who have experienced a loss can join the peer grief support group every Tuesday led by Performing Arts Magnet Coordinator Ms. Fanny Araña and Restorative Justice Teacher Ms. Emilie Hill. The group provides a safe space for students to connect with others who understand grief. Topics of discussion include healthy coping mechanisms and sharing personal experiences with grief. Interested students can email Ms. Hill at emilie.hille@lausd.net for details on the time and location.

**ARTWORK WINS LAUSD AWARD**

Senior Jersey Vargas won LAUSD's annual Magnet Schools of America (MSA) poster contest by designing a digital illustration that represented one or more of the "five pillars" of MSA which are diversity; innovative curriculum and professional development; academic excellence; high quality instructional systems and family and community partnerships. Her illustration displaying innovative curriculum will compete in MSA's national competition in April.

# TOP DOG

## The *tails* of a professional Pomeranian breeder

By ANGELINA GEVORGYAN  
THE MIRROR STAFF

**L**ining the walls of Special Education teacher Ms. Karin Byrne's classroom are ornamental picture frames displaying images of dainty Pomeranians of varying hues, ranging from pure white to chromatic scarlet.

Upon first glance, most people would be oblivious to the fact that these delicate, wide-eyed dogs are in actuality prize-winning champions.

Ms. Byrne is the current director of Fire and Ice Pomeranians, her own dog kennel, through which she breeds and exhibits American Kennel Club (AKC) Grand Champion and Champion colored Pomeranians. The AKC is a registry of purebred dog pedigrees within the United States that sanctions and promotes events for purebred canines like the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, the National Dog show and the AKC National Championship.

Byrne and her prized Pomeranians have participated in numerous dog shows and received an assortment of awards. Most notable of these victories was awarded to Winter Blossom, an elegant white Pomeranian who was named Grand Champion at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. Equally prestigious and memorable are the triumphs of her black Pomeranian Queen of Sheba and orange Pomeranians Major Jackson and Angie who were named Champions.

PHOTOS COURTESY | MS. KARIN BYRNE



**PUPPY LOVE** Ms. Byrne doesn't just breed dogs, she also loves them as companions and shares that love with her students.

Since her youth, Ms. Byrne always exhibited a love for dogs and often went to dog shows to observe the various breeds being presented. When she was growing up, her family had a Great Pyrenees, a robust and thick-coated dog infamous for its great size, in addition to furry Samoyeds.

As a young girl someone remarked to her how wonderful it would be if her dogs' genetic lineage traced back to that of champions. Although this remark seemed peculiar at the time, it remained in the back of her mind as she matured and progressed through a career in the field of law.

As an attorney, she had little time for recreation. However, when Ms. Byrne became a teacher, she found herself having much more time to become involved with pastimes and personal projects, like raising dogs.

By this time in her life, she had downsized to Pomeranians and was looking after one dog in particular that had special needs.

"I wanted to prove that any dog could be a champion, and I somehow got him to be one," Ms. Byrne said.

She decided to adopt another Pomeranian to keep her new champion company.

Soon, Byrne made the executive decision to breed the two dogs to produce puppies, officially embarking on the endeavor of dog breeding without initially intending to.

As a former science teacher, Byrne's scientific enthusiasm and curiosity translated smoothly into dog breeding. She was captivated by the genetic possibilities. One of her primary objectives was to identify a way in which she could eradicate the problems her first champion possessed from his lineage.

"It really was a study of genetics for me," she said.

"Breeding the dogs was a way of setting up a program to see what tendencies are genetic and what are more environmental. It's kind of an experimental study to see what traits pass on."

With an advanced knowledge of which genetic traits will carry down through the bloodlines of Pomeranians, Byrne breeds her dogs to eliminate negative traits. In an effort to raise the best examples of the breed. However, she also attempts to incorporate genetic drift into the equation, an advantageous mechanism of evolution in which changes in the frequencies of genes passed from one generation to another occur as a result of randomized yet conscientious breeding.

Lamentably, she describes dog breeding as a dying sport, but says that members of the AKC community are making a great effort to get more individuals involved in dog breeding and exhibiting.

"We have to pass the baton at a certain point in everything," she said. "You have to bring up the next people that come along, otherwise it fades black."

For anyone interested in raising show dogs, Ms. Byrne advises them to attend AKC Meet the Breeds events where they can speak to professional breeders and learn about the hundreds of different dog breeds.

"Find out what a breed's genetic problems may be [and] find out what you have to do to maintain them," she said. "Learn about their personality and find out if that's the kind of dog for you—if it fits in with you and your lifestyle."

The AKC also offers programs for children between the ages of nine and 18 like Junior Showmanship, in which participants observe a Junior Showmanship competition in person, then sign up for classes at their local AKC club, where they are eventually offered the opportunity to compete in a competition to show their dog.

With all of her years of experience, Ms. Byrne believes that a dog breeder must devote an immense level of commitment to the occupation. After all, she has dedicated the past 22 years to working with her Pomeranians, which are often regarded as the "heartbreak breed" due to their considerably high mortality rates during birth.

"My first time breeding, the puppies didn't make it," she said. "I think I cried for a month. So many don't make it and you have to be able to live with that."

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Despite this, she says a successfully delivered litter of puppies makes this emotional rollercoaster fulfilling and worthwhile.

"There's nothing like new life," she said. "There isn't a greater high."

Her average day taking care of her dogs consists primarily of maintaining their hygiene. After waking up at 5:30 a.m. she goes about cleaning the dogs' living quarters, cooking chicken and green beans — which she combines with dog kibble — to feed them in the morning and evening and maintaining each dog's nails and fur.

She never takes her Pomeranians to the dog park. Being as protective as she is, Byrne fears that they could be attacked and harmed by other dogs running free, an occurrence that she herself has witnessed on multiple occasions.

Another reason she doesn't go to dog parks is to avoid exposing her dogs to diseases. But, she has a way to give them plenty of exercise that is equally effective.

"I have dog treadmills, and I take my dogs for walks one at a time," she said. "Dog parks are not for the little ones. If I had an Irish Setter or a Golden Retriever, I might be saying something different."

Although dog breeding and exhibiting is not exactly considered a team sport, Ms. Byrne has worked with teams of individuals in the past with whom she still remains in contact today. In cases of emergency, she and other breeders in the area often assume responsibility and take care of each other's dogs.

While her colleagues may have a different perspective, Ms. Byrne is a strong believer that the show circuit can be very strenuous and demanding for an animal to be a part of for an extended period.

"Getting on a plane everyday and flying somewhere where the dog is asked to do incredible things all at once, realistically is too hard," she said. "They don't know they're a champion. They don't know they're the number one dog in the world. They just think they're a dog and all they want is love."

Her philosophy is that she only keep a single Pomeranian engaged in renowned competitions for a maximum of two years before she finds them a comfortable and loving home.



"I try to give them a championship and then get them home," she said.

"I had friends with the number one dogs in the country and it's very hard on the dogs. I think it's great for the breeders and their egos but at the end of the day I don't know if that's a life for a dog."

Ms. Byrne is highly particular about finding forever homes for her Pomeranians, and searches for individuals who have the time and devotion for a new family member. As a result, she refuses to sell her dogs to agents, brokers, kennels and other organizations of the sort.

"I don't want my dog to be one of 40. I want to sell them to someone where they'll be one of one and I'll know that they're going to be a family member and the love of someone's life."

Carefully considering each dog's character, she meticulously examines the hobbies, lifestyle and personality of a person looking to adopt one of her Pomeranians so she can determine whether or not they have the capacity to commit to taking care of the dog. She also finds out if the two will be compatible and a good fit for one another.

"Home is much more important to me than making money on the dog because they are a creature I put on the planet and spent a lot of time raising. I try to make sure that they are happy wherever they go, and I have been very fortunate to find a lot of good homes."

And while larger kennels in the country and throughout the world may be far more lucrative, as they employ numerous workers and veterinarians to take care of their dogs, Ms. Byrne shows no interest in industrializing Fire and Ice Pomeranians. She believes such commercialized kennels often possess little to no

true relationship with their dogs. Throughout this process, she constantly finds herself becoming attached to the dogs she breeds and looks after.

"It's not good, but at ten- to 12-weeks old, you've pretty much developed a bond with the dog so it's very hard to sell them. It never gets any easier. I always tell everybody, you still have a piece of my heart with the dog."

Once she finds them forever homes, she actively remains in contact.

"People send me pictures of them with the dogs, especially around the holidays, and that makes me feel really good because then I know they've got a good home, a good life and somebody who loves them. To make somebody's life better is a really good feeling. I think that's why teachers come to teaching, because ultimately we get that feeling of accomplishment."

She seeks to integrate her passion into her career as a teacher through occasionally bringing her Pomeranians to school for her students to meet and interact with.

"Because they don't necessarily develop relationships like other kids do, my students don't bond as easily. So it's really important for them to learn to bond to something and have the responsibility of taking care of something besides themselves."

On such noteworthy days, she explains how to maintain Pomeranians' hygiene and cleanliness by demonstrating how to brush their teeth, trim their tails and cut their nails.

"I show my students how to groom them and how to take care of them. It's important because they have know one day when buying a dog that they cannot just take it back to the pound if they get tired of caring for it. It's a responsibility."

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**MOST VALUABLE PUP** Ms. Byrne thoroughly researches to make sure she breeds dogs that are the best of the best.

Byrne has hand-raised countless Pomeranians over the years. Although she usually names her puppies based on their physical appearance or personal characteristics, Byrne has cycled through a multitude of diverse and glamorous names such as that of the fashion designers "Dior" and "Versace", and then switched over to the names of well-known emperors and empresses. Nowadays, her name choices are simpler and straightforward.

"If I see somebody's name that I like, for example a student's name on the attendance sheets, I've got a name for a dog," Ms. Byrne said.

After taking care of Pomeranians for so long, Ms. Byrne has determined that through spending time with dogs, she can identify character traits she values in not only her canine companions but also in other people.

"When the chips are down, dogs are really loyal. If you look at what bonds you to other people and animals, you can recognize certain traits, like loyalty, as something that is important to you. I think through these relationships there are some life lessons that can be learned about what you want your future to look like and what you really like as a person."

Despite the fact that Ms. Byrne gives away the majority of the Pomeranians she breeds, every so often an unbreakable bond is established between her and a specific dog. It's a bond so enduring, in fact, that Ms. Byrne keeps the dog herself. This was the case for Winter Blossom, Major Jackson and Angie, who are Ms. Byrne's best companions.

Major Jackson has a special place in her heart.

"The first Pomeranian I bred and made a champion was Major Jackson," she said. "He's still with me, and he's the love of my life."

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Before the covid-19 pandemic, Ms. Byrne was severely ill. Major Jackson unflatteringly remained by her side and watched over her.

"Some say dogs can sense when you're sick, and I think he knew how bad it was," she said. "Pomeranians usually follow you everywhere, but he literally would not leave my side. People ask me whether I'm going to move on from him and I tell them no. He is my heart dog, and he will be there to the end."

She regards the Pomeranians as one the primary factors to her recovery. They gave her a purpose and motivation to get back on her feet.

"My dogs really helped me get better because they gave me a reason to go on. I had to get better because I had these dogs to take care of."

Her dogs also made the covid-19 quarantine easier to get through.

Ms. Byrne thoroughly believes that having an animal companion, whether it be a playful puppy, an affectionate cat, a sociable bird or a temperate lizard, makes life more well-rounded and joyful. She enthusiastically recommends adopting an animal.

"It definitely adds something to your life because there's nothing like that kind of love — someone that's there for you even if it's a lousy morning, someone that's there for you at night after a rough day, somebody who,

# A CURRICULUM WITH ONLY FRAGMENTS OF BLACK HISTORY

Students and teachers want to be taught and teach history that integrates Black voices every step of the way

By ANI TUTUNJYAN

THE MIRROR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

States across the country are trying to ban books about race. Proposed bills target Black authors such as Toni Morrison, most notably known for “Beloved,” and Nikole Hannah-Jones, developer of The New York Times “The 1619 Project.”

Bans aren’t just going after books that talk about racism but also books that express the Black experience.

“Banning access to information doesn’t work because people, especially young people, will always find a way around it and if you have the entire internet at your disposal, what good is banning a book in a class?” AP U.S. History (APUSH) teacher Ms. Aditi Doshi said. “I think it’s really important to frame texts that can be problematic with their use of language or their reference to material that could be disturbing or traumatic to some students. If we frame those texts appropriately, they allow us to place

ourselves inside the minds and inside the shoes of people who lived in this era that we don’t have a reference point for.”

Black history is often taught in condensed form, being just a chapter in a U.S. history book and almost always only about slavery. Nothing more is required by the curriculum.

“Reconstruction is actually a standard that California has to teach, which, yeah, that’s great, but the textbook has one paragraph on it when it might actually need a whole chapter,” U.S. history teacher Mr. Robert Docter said. “That’s what’s frustrating because an accurate look at U.S. history is Black History. It’s not a category in itself; it should be interwoven throughout the entire history of the country, rather than being a unit, and you get a test on it, and then it’s done.”

Ms. Doshi also believes that Black history shouldn’t be taught as just one unit.

“As a teacher and a student of American history, Black history and American history are one in the same,” Ms. Doshi said. “They are synonymous you cannot understand narrative or themes or connections throughout American history without understanding Black history.”

She thinks teaching anything less is a silencing of Black voices.

“If you’re truly trying to understand American history accurately, black history has to be incorporated every step of the way, in every historical era, in every

time period in every major theme, and this is not just limited to the topics that we traditionally associate with history, like example slavery or the civil rights movement,” she said. “We have to understand that African Americans have been president America since the country’s founding since the first slave ships landed in 1619, and if we remove both people’s voices and their stories from the curriculum, that means that we are erasing them from a history that they were actually part of.”

Black students are tired of only being taught about the pain and suffering of Black people.

“A lot of people when they talk about black history, it’s just Black struggle. There’s more to Black people than us struggling,” Samara Augustine said. “Everyone was raving about ‘The Hate U Give’ and yes that’s a great book, great movie but why is it all just struggle? It’s all movies show, it’s all the media shows.”

“I’ve only ever seen one movie come even a little bit close to actually talking about black successes in a black struggle and that movie was ‘Hidden Figures,’” Djaeda Hall said. And even in that movie, the woman was still struggling, not only because she was a woman, but also because she was Black.”

And even when teaching about Black struggle, the lessons often fail to capture just how bad it was.

“In school, they would just say they made

them [slaves] pick cotton but I learned on TikTok that white owners also used to eat slaves and do other cruel stuff to them.” Brianna Fenders said. “We never learn about these things in school. They just say, oh, it’s [slavery] bad and move on.”

Students want to learn more about Black empowerment and current issues, not just slavery.

“I have one teacher who teaches us about current popular Black figures and also the Black LGBT community and he teaches it in an empowering way,” Devin Brown said. “He’s the only teacher that I’ve really seen do that. I think that should be part of the curriculum, and we should learn from what he’s doing. The curriculum should require teaching more Black figures, historical and present, rather than just being optional.”

Ms. Doshi believes teachers are responsible for making up for the content the curriculum lacks.

“I’d say that that’s a constant struggle probably for most AP history teachers, but especially for APUSH where the curriculum is so wide and there is so much to cover. The College Board framework is actually quite frustrating because it de-emphasizes aspects of Black history that I think personally deserved more importance and more time and that in an honors US history class we would absolutely delve into more detail,” Ms. Doshi said. “So I think as a teacher, you have to realize that the APUSH framework is inherently limited, that it does not encompass all of the people or themes that make up like history, and that if you’re going to teach

American history, it’s your responsibility as a teacher to acquire that knowledge on your own and then bring it into the classroom.”

In the early 1900s, African American leaders such as Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. Du Bois began the Black Freedom movement which was the beginning of the long Civil Rights movement.

The College Board framework only has a brief reference to the framework without any mentions of the figures involved in it. If students are to learn about these individuals from their textbooks, it is typically a short-paragraph description of each.

“My teacher hasn’t gone over anything related to Black History Month and February is almost done,” Nathan Harkless said. “It’s not just the curriculum to blame.”

“Some teachers treat Black history as something they just have to teach because it’s part of the curriculum and they want to get it out of the way and skim through it,” Brown said.

“Some teachers would just go into a topic relevant to Black history they thought was important then decide that’s all you need,” Mohanna Finnikin said. “But there’s way more than just that one topic we’re talking about.”

Mr. Docter tries to find a balance between meeting the standards while also teaching history he deems valuable by providing a diverse amount.

“My job is to teach those standards by the state of California, that’s what I’m hired to do. What’s great about teaching history is you can bring in a lot of topics that still fit those standards,” he said. “I’m able to fit in a lot of things that I personally find interesting and important, that also fit those standards.”

Teaching or learning Black history doesn’t

have to be comfortable.

“The more we try to sugarcoat things, the less that’s getting done, because we can try to explain it in the simplest of terms, but that will never get the point across,” Augustine said. “We got to make them uncomfortable. There’s no other way to get the point across because we’ve been sugarcoating all of our struggles, all of our history and where are we right now? We’ve barely made progress.”

“A little discomfort is nothing like what we go through on a daily basis. When I walk out of the house I think that if I get angry or if I make a mistake or if I get pulled over, I could die,” Elom Attipoe said. “So some discomfort for non-Black people to learn about our history and I don’t have to worry about dying every day, it’s a trade-off I’m willing to make.”

Mr. Docter agrees that his lessons should challenge his students’ ways of thinking and get them out of their comfort zone.

“Learning anything is a sense of discomfort. Learning is when you’re experiencing something that is different than what you’ve been introduced to,” Mr. Docter said. “That would include Black history too, but learning, in general, should do that.”

California is adjusting the curriculum to include more thorough and empowering Black history by being the first state to require students to complete an ethnic studies course to graduate high school. While African American history isn’t the only course to choose from, it’s an option students have when trying to learn more than the history taught in regular history classes.

## BLACK HISTORY IS MORE THAN WHAT’S IN THE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

By ELOM ATTİPOE

THE MIRROR STAFF

When Black History Month begins, non-Black people often think of only two people: Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks.

And if you were to ask them what they associate with the two civil rights figures you’ll often only hear “I have a dream” for MLK and “sat in the front of the bus” for Rosa Parks.

While MLK advocated for nonviolent protests, he was also a strong critic of the white moderate for their passive acceptance of racial inequality and was against the Vietnam War and other forms of militarism.

This isn’t common knowledge for most people because schools teach us Black history written by white Americans.

The US history curriculum frames slavery as something that happened a long time ago and racism as something that has been eradicated.

That’s because teaching sugarcoated Black history makes white people more comfortable in the fact that their ancestors were oppressors and that they continue to perpetuate this oppression by not speaking up or fighting for equity.

Teachers who do not go beyond teaching basic Black history are part of the problem. Teachers are responsible for progressing the younger generation beyond the mistakes of the past and that means actually acknowledging them. Education shouldn’t be American propaganda, it should teach students real facts.

We are forced to listen to non-Black teachers tiptoe around the word “Black” when referring to us and try to describe an experience they know nothing about. They’ll recite the same out-of-context MLK quotes about nonviolence out of a textbook from 2004 and think they’re the second coming of MLK.

They expect every Black student to drop to their knees and say “thank you so much for verbalizing my own oppression to me because I lack the cerebrum and vocabulary to explain something that happens to me on a daily basis.”

When it comes to the surface-level topics, teachers are usually able to

explain them well enough, but when it comes to the more complex roots of our oppression, they are unable to understand.

They are speaking about an experience that I and every Black person have known since our first breath and will know till our last. We sit in class listening to teachers word vomit misinformation about the Black experience in America.

Black history shouldn’t exclusively be talked about in the month of February, nor should it exclusively focus on our oppression and subsequent trauma.

When we hyper fixate on only this part of our history, it becomes all we are known for.

We are much more than our enslavement. We are artists, musicians, writers, poets and athletes.

Black people are left to correct white ignorance but are quickly shut down by white fragility.

“How dare you! I’m not racist. It’s because of Black people like you, there’s division in this country.”

So while you may have not been taught this at school, here are some systemic issues harming Black people that need to be addressed.

In Los Angeles, 1.2 million people live near toxic waste facilities, 90 percent of whom are people of color.

Living near these facilities causes a high risk for cancer, birth defects, developmental disabilities and other physical and mental health challenges.

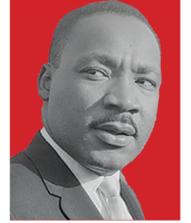
African Americans are 5.9 times more likely to be incarcerated compared to white people and we make up 50 percent of the miscarriages of justice, in which people are convicted of crimes they did not commit. This statistic doesn’t include Black people assigned to a public defender with an overload of cases, who convince them to take plea deals for a shorter sentence.

We also need to combat racism in the medical field. According to a 2016 study by the Association of American Medical Colleges, 40 percent of first- and second-year medical students thought that Black skin was thicker than white skin.

Black history is American history and should be treated as such.

We need to teach the good, the bad and the ugly.

SOURCE | CREATIVE COMMONS



A WHITEWASHED HISTORY

The curriculum of black history that mentions only Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., top, and Rosa Parks censors the struggle of Black people.



## WHAT IS A MICROAGGRESSION?

Microaggressions are everyday verbal and nonverbal slights or insults that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes toward marginalized groups whether intentional or unintentional. They can make a snide at someone’s race, gender or sexuality. A common racial microaggression used by non-Black people is “I’m not racist. I have Black friends.” Having a Black friend, neighbor or relative does not disqualify a person from being racist. Being a gender or sexual minority also does not mean you’re safe from making racist remarks. Racial oppression is different from other types of oppression. People should still be educating themselves about racial discrimination but not trying to insert themselves into conversations about race they do not understand to feign sympathy.

TEACHERS NEED TO DO MORE Black Student Union board members

Samara Augustine, Trace Hernandez, Lavarra Henry, Java Darrington and Elom Attipoe (L to R) want teachers to make a greater effort to teach the Black history missing from books.

# GROWING UP BLACK MEANS GROWING UP FAST

By **ELOM ATTIPOE**  
THE MIRROR STAFF

**L**ook! It's your dad, Elom." "Your dad finally came back!" I flipped through my notebook, searched through my bag, doing anything I could ignore them, hoping they would stop.

They didn't. They continued to make jokes.

They were laughing about the fact that my seventh grade substitute teacher was a tall Black man with a thick African accent, apparently finding a resemblance between us.

It went from jokes to insulting my skin color, hair texture, and ethnic features to calling me slurs. Most of the class joined in. No one stood up for me.

Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. I ran into the hallway sobbing. A few of my teachers came out of their classrooms and tried to calm me down but I was inconsolable.

I felt like I wasn't only crying over this moment. I cried for every microaggression, joke, comment and slur ever said to me.

Everything just came out at once. People who I thought were my friends treated me badly.

The teachers didn't contact my parents so they could comfort me or even inform them of what had happened. Instead, they made me spend the rest of the day at school in class with the kids who attacked my Blackness — a characteristic I cannot change.

After a couple of days, I built up the courage to report this incident. I sat down with the dean and he asked me to explain the incident so I did.

The dean kept making excuses for the students' actions: "They made a mistake, it happens to the best of us," "You should have said something to an adult as it was happening."

He was more worried about the reputation of the other students and the school than my feelings. He made it seem like it was my fault that it happened to me.

Being one out of only four Black kids at the school with no one to turn to, I listened him and never brought it up again.

Just because I didn't talk about it, doesn't mean it didn't affect me.

While I'd experienced microaggressions for almost my whole life, being dismissed like my feelings and experiences were invalid opened my eyes to how little America cares about Black people.

We don't get to experience a childhood. We are forced to deal with microaggressions, casual racism and classmates with different "opinions" we have to respect.

But it's much more than insensitive comments.

We are forced to face the daily reality that we can die at the hands of the police just because an officer had a bad day.

We are forced to face the fact that we can go to jail for the rest of our lives for a crime we didn't commit because we "fit the description."

We are forced to live in the conditions that 400 years of oppression and brutality have imposed on us.

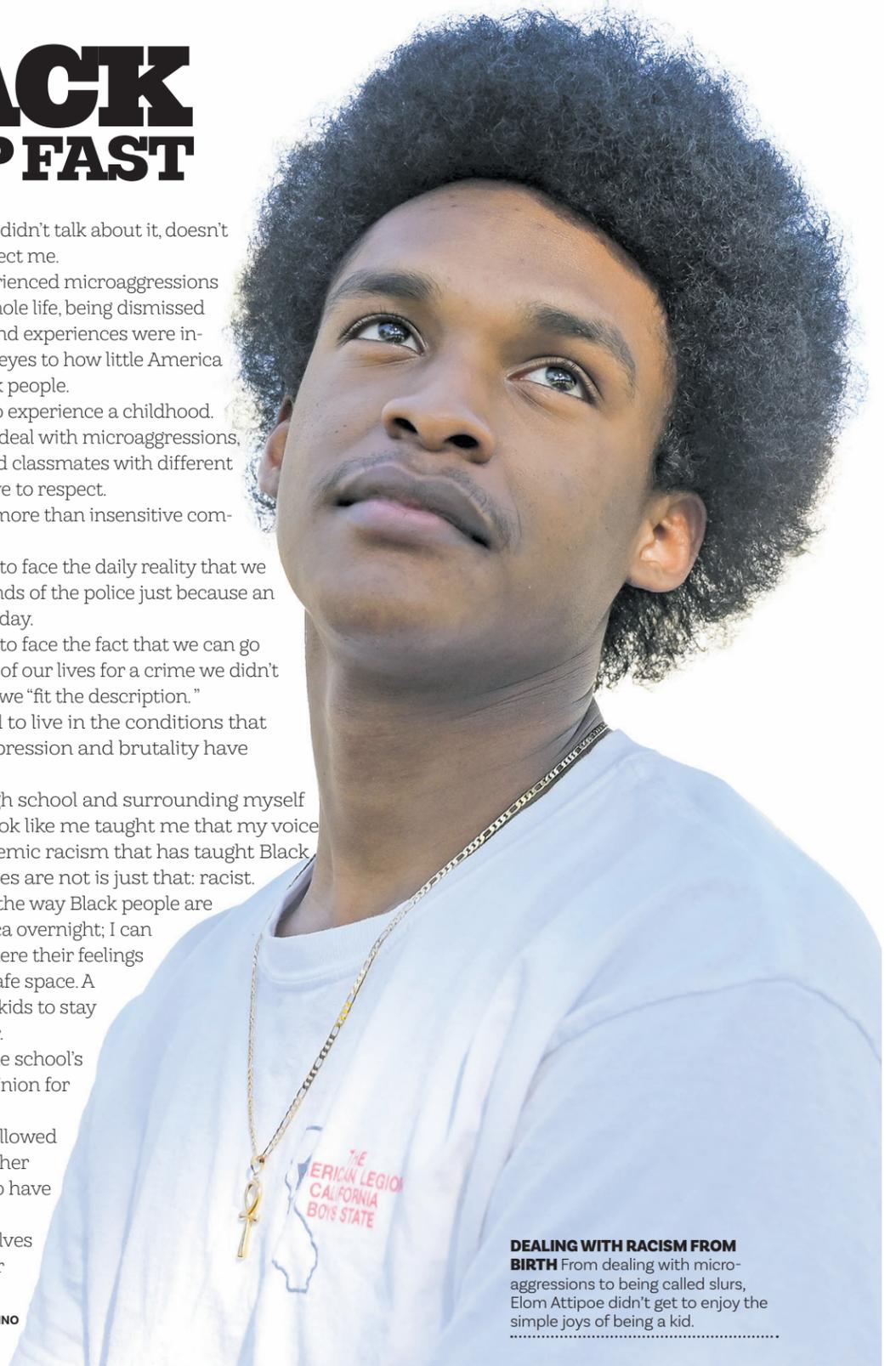
Coming to high school and surrounding myself with kids who look like me taught me that my voice is valid. The systemic racism that has taught Black people their voices are not is just that: racist.

I can't change the way Black people are treated in America overnight; I can create a place where their feelings are validated. A safe space. A chance for Black kids to stay kids a little longer.

I cofounded the school's Black Student's Union for just that.

The club has allowed me, along with other Black students, to have a space to be our true authentic selves and celebrate our culture.

THE MIRROR | BEVERLY REGINO



**DEALING WITH RACISM FROM BIRTH** From dealing with microaggressions to being called slurs, Elom Attipoe didn't get to enjoy the simple joys of being a kid.

## Dear nonblack people, STOP saying the N-WORD. It's not hard.

By **FATIAH LAWAL**  
CONTRIBUTOR

**C**an I get the n-word pass?" Black people have been asked this at least once in their life, occasionally by complete strangers.

When I first moved to the U.S. from Africa, I heard the n-word being thrown around often whether it was in music, shows or real life.

I had no idea what it signified, nor did I know its history or intent.

When my nonblack "friends" or classmates demanded an n-word pass, I would easily grant it because I thought it was just another word.

It wasn't until an older white person called me the n-word in an aggressive tone that I realized it wasn't just another word.

The n-word was derived from the term "negro," meaning "black" in Spanish and Portuguese. The word was used to describe African people

THE MIRROR | ISABELLA THOMAS



**YOU DON'T HAVE PERMISSION** Only Black people can use the n-word, even if you hear it ten times in a rap song, says Fatiah Lawal.

who were forcibly brought to the Americas as slaves.

Negro eventually evolved into the n-word we know today—which white slave owners used to dehumanize Black slaves.

Black people have come to reclaim the word and transform it into a

term of endearment reserved for other Black people. The reclaiming of the word has also made it mainstream because of its frequent appearances in Black artists' songs and Black producers' shows.

You might hear the n-word ten times in just one of your favorite rap songs but you still can't say it — even if you're just singing along.

There are over a million words in the English language. Remove this one word from your vocabulary.

When non-Black folks use the n-word, it violates the space we — Black people — have created for ourselves.

Growing up in the "hood" or "ghetto" neighborhoods or surrounded primarily by Black people is still not an excuse for using the word. No matter how many times you hear your Black friends saying it, doesn't mean you can.

This applies to Hispanics and Asians. Oftentimes other racial minorities think it's okay for them to

use the word just because they're not white. Saying the n-word as a non-Black minority is just as disdainful, even if your ancestors weren't slave owners.

And just because ONLY Black people can say the n-word, doesn't mean they have any obligation to.

In the internet age of the 21st century, it's not hard to educate yourself.

Watch videos or read articles about the history of the n-word or listen to Black people share their experiences with racism to understand why it's so much more than just a word and why it really is that deep.



THE MIRROR | BEVERLY REGINO

theMIRROR  
 VOLUME 109 | ISSUE 2

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**DISTRIBUTION** Copies are free to students, faculty and staff and are available in Room 112, Second Floor, Main Building. Digital issues are available at [yumpu.com](http://yumpu.com).

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Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the Editorial Board. Letters to the Editor may be delivered to Room 112 or mailed to *The Mirror*, 6535 Cedros Ave, Van Nuys, CA 91411. Letters must be signed and may be edited for space and to conform to *The Mirror* style and format.

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**MEMBERSHIPS** National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA), Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA), Southern California Journalism Educators Association (SCJEA) and Los Angeles Press Club.

**AWARDS** 2021-22 and 2020-21 NSPA Pacemaker Award Winner; 2021-22 and 2020-21 CSPA Silver Crown winner; 2020-21 and 2019-2020 SCJEA First Place All-Star; 2020-21 LA Press Club First Place High School Newspaper.

**EDITORIAL**

# Billionaires are evil people, and you'll NEVER be one

**R**otterdam is dismantling a bridge. It's not to help any of its Dutch residents. In fact, the deconstruction only benefits one man: Jeff Bezos.

He wants his 417-foot length, \$500 million superyacht, Y721, to pass through for a summer vacation and the historic architecture is just too inconvenient.

Society is often forced to bend to the whims of the ultrawealthy who have so much money to spend and yet they'd still promptly kill someone if it meant they could have more.

Billionaires have become a new sort of deity in our society.

Worshippers are convinced that if they work hard enough they'll be just as rich too.

But people like Jeff Bezos, Amazon.com billionaire, Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook billionaire and Elon Musk, Tesla billionaire, didn't work day and night and magically make a million dollars; they already came from already-wealthy upbringings.

Jeff Bezos went to Princeton and got a \$300,000 investment from his parents to start Amazon. Zuckerberg went to Harvard. Elon Musk inherited money that his father made from an emerald mine during the apartheid era in South Africa. They started off far better than most Americans.

And their generational wealth isn't the only reason they're that rich. They've grown their wealth off exploitation, corruption and hoarding of resources.

Billionaires pay their workers far less than what their labor produces and pocket the profits.

Bezos spent millions to stop workers in Alabama from unionizing. A drop in the bucket to him.

The average Amazon worker gets paid \$12 to \$48 per hour while Bezos gets paid \$8.6 mil-

lion per hour. But who's delivering your Prime packages? Bezos or a minimum-wage worker?

During the pandemic, when people were losing jobs and living off a measly \$2000 stimulus check that didn't cover rent or being forced to work under harsh, dangerous circumstances and putting themselves at risk of contracting covid-19, which resulted in the highest unemployment rate in years, billionaires' wealth grew by 62 percent.

Even if become a billionaire could be ethical, what's the reason to have all that money? You've accumulated enough resources for you and your family to live financially stable for generations, hundreds of times over.

The excess money these billionaires have could pay to remedy so many societal issues. Hunger, homelessness, healthcare, infrastructure could all be fixed, and they would still have millions left over.

So many Americans are plagued by the fantasy of the American Dream, thinking they can make it if they just work hard enough, while judging those who are poor as just lazy and looking for someone to blame their failures on.

They'll tell you to pull yourself by your bootstraps, quit wasting your time and money on that \$2 coffee, work your way out of poverty and you'll succeed.

You can work super hard at your job to get that promotion but all you'll be doing is feeding more wealth into the pockets of a billionaire who doesn't care about you enough to pay you a livable wage.

And remember, capitalists *own* capital. Worshipping Elon Musk doesn't make you a capitalist if you don't even make enough to live on your own.



# PRO

## Bring back the backpack searches. They will make students feel safer



SHAAN BHATIA

**A** father's frantic text to his son read, "stay hidden or play dead if there is an active shooter." Another exchange between siblings read, "my teacher died...he's sitting in the doorway."

Screenshots of these messages were later posted to Twitter after the 2018 shooting that occurred on the campus of Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

This incident was one of 1,316 school shootings that have occurred since 1970. For the past 50 years, students across the US go to school with the fear that they may never come back.

Despite numerous failed bills in Congress concerning gun violence in schools, California students finally have hope that we could finally see an end to active shooter situations plaguing schools.

Senate Bill 906, introduced by Senator Anthony Portantino (D-La Cañada-Flintridge) on Feb. 2, has multiple components that may help prevent school shootings before the first bullet is fired.

Senator Portantino's proposition came as a result of the Michigan school shooting where 15-year-old Ethan Crumbley brought a gun he received as a present from his parents to school.

Despite numerous warning signs and numerous meetings with school officials, Crumbley was able to hide his gun in his backpack. He later used that same gun to kill four students and injure seven others.

Part of the bill requires that when a threat of violence is made against a school, the proper authorities be notified, and, with the help of law enforcement, a student's on-campus property can be searched for weapons.

I support the implementation of this bill into schools across California. As a student, I want to learn in an environment that is safe. As an individual, I want to be part of a community that doesn't have me looking over my shoulder constantly in fear of discharge from a weapon. Unfortunately, it's hard to feel this way in an environment that neglects the safety of students.

In the past, when threats of violence have been made against Van Nuys High School in posts alluding to arson or school shootings, the school did the bare minimum to ensure the safety of students on campus. Emails were sent out to students, parents and faculty in an attempt to reassure the community that school was a safe place and that there would be a presence of law enforcement on campus.

On both occasions, one quick look around the campus confirmed that the promise of a law enforcement presence

was an outright lie. I vividly remember that on both days, I arrived at school fearing for my safety. Both days, the school felt abandoned. Student attendance was just half of what it was the day prior. School district officials were just treating the situation just like another day.

Senate Bill 906 gives me hope. This bill is an actual preventative measure rather than a measure to reduce fatalities. Rather than having drastic drops in attendance, or worse, having students hide in classrooms during an active shooter situation, students can actually learn in an environment where they feel safe.

According to data provided by the Sandy Hook Promise organization, 77 percent of active shooters spent a week or longer planning their attack. Guns used in those incidents were taken from the home, a friend or a relative 68 percent of the time.

There is a misconception that this proposal brings back random searches, but school authorities will need probable cause to search personal belongings on campus.

It is ignorant of anyone, regardless of their political stances or privacy beliefs, to refuse to support this bill.

I will gladly give up some of my own personal privacy if it means we can ensure the safety of more than 2,000 other individuals on campus.

Passing this bill won't eliminate active shooter situations in school, but it is the first step towards recreating a safer environment.

*Bhatia is Editor-in-Chief of vnhsmirror.com.*

# CON

## Backpack searches are not the solution to ending school shootings



ANI TUTUNJYAN

**T**hree years ago I was selected for a random backpack search. I started panicking.

Did a knife and bag of cocaine suddenly appear in my bag? Did my water bottle magically get replaced with vodka instead of water?

Of course none of those things happened because I had neither a knife, cocaine nor vodka in my backpack but I was scared nonetheless.

I, along with the other students in my class chosen for the search, were lined up outside the class and had to hand our backpacks over to the administrator conducting the search.

My heart was beating out of my chest as I stood against the wall waiting for my turn.

The administrator looked through my bag and once he was satisfied with its contents, I was free to go.

I didn't get in trouble because I didn't have anything illegal with me and most people getting searched don't either, but it didn't make the experience any less terrifying.

Now, backpack searches may make a return with the proposal of a new gun safety bill.

*Introduced by State Sen. Anthony Portantino (D-*

La Cañada Flintridge), SB 906 would require school administrators to collect information from parents about guns stored at home and would mandate backpack, locker and car searches if there is a credible threat or danger of mass casualty.

The proposed legislation comes after Michigan school shooting suspect Ethan Crumbley raised suspicions among teachers but was allowed to return to class without his backpack searched. Hours later, he used a gun he brought with him to allegedly kill four students.

While preventing school shootings should be a priority, mandating backpack searches is not the best way to do it.

Searches that can only be conducted with valid reasoning are often abused.

An example of this abuse is probable cause. If a police officer pulls you over for a traffic stop, and decides they have a justifiable reason to search your vehicle they can.

Officers tend to target people of color, specifically Black men, when trying to search vehicles. A Black man posted a video to social media of an officer trying to find probable cause by asking him whether he has any illegal drugs or weapons in his car. After the man answered no to all the questions, the officer tried to get him to consent to searching his vehicle. After denying consent, the cop decided to call a K-9. Officers can easily mimic a K-9 barking sound to grant them access to searching vehicles.

Probable causes aren't the only example of people in power taking advantage of laws passed in vulnerable times.

The USA PATRIOT Act, passed to deter terrorist attacks following 9/11, allowed for the collection of phone records and other personal internet searches to be collected and reviewed by the government. If your searches raised suspicion, the government would monitor everything you searched.

This particular bill was also used to target a group that "fit the description": Brown people.

School politics operates just like real-life politics.

If the legislation is passed, school officials will be able to use the mandate to search backpacks for reasons other than gun threats and target Black and Hispanic students much like police officers do.

Criminalizing students administrators think "fit the description" is harmful to students' trust and self-image.

Schools should be a safe space for all students and that means finding a way to prevent school shootings that won't discriminate any individual.

*Tutunjyan is the Executive Editor and Editor-in-Chief.*



**TO SEARCH OR NOT TO SEARCH?** One state legislator wants to bring searches back to school campuses after they were outlawed several years ago.

# From the sidelines to the **STAGE**

By **ANGELICA VENTURINA, EMMA SALEHI & VANNESSA MACHADO**  
THE MIRROR STAFF

**E**very time he looked around, his heart beat a bit faster and his palms got even sweeter.

A group of people clad in button-down shirts and dress pants whisked past him, lugging heavy camera equipment and props, shouting words that sounded disjointed under all the noise.

Actors sitting in director's chairs rambled to themselves, as makeup artists leaned in to pat their faces down with cosmetics and adjust their hair.

His eyes drifted towards people reading off stapled scripts, quickly flipping through them as they recited lines at rapid-speed.

In that moment, seven-year-old Jude Strubel felt overwhelmed, yet captivated by what he saw. He knew he was destined for the performing arts.

When he was in the first grade, his mother would frequently take him to mostly low-budget movie and television sets, at independent studios like Metamorphic Productions and even well-known, like Sony Pictures Studios.

Some of the places he went to included the set of independent family comedy-drama "Quality Problems" and the set of American neo-noir crime thriller film "Dragged Across Concrete."

Along the way, he encountered famous actors like Christopher Lloyd, Vince Vaughn and Wanda Sykes.

On the set of the science fiction drama "For All Mankind," where Strubel's mother worked as a script supervisor, he would tag along as she did her day-to-day tasks. He observed as she supervised all aspects related to the continuity of the show, from communicating with actors and people in the makeup and hair departments, to working closely with the script writer and director ensuring production went smoothly.

His mother would also let him run around with her while she did quick errands for her and her coworkers on set, like picking up food from restaurants or clothes from the cleaners. Other times, he'd occasionally be assigned as an extra in the background of scenes if the director needed one. When he had nothing to do, he would lounge around while waiting for her to finish her work.

Being behind the scenes and some-



THE MIRROR | ISABELLA THOMAS

**CENTER STAGE** From playing the ukulele to playing Wayne Hopkins, Jude is working his way to the top.

"I have trouble being creative when given a blank canvas, but with lighting, the director tells you the mood they want and lighting they want," Strubel said. "I enjoy those parameters."

One of Strubel's favorite performative genres is improvisation. He currently runs the ComedySportz team at school, a student-run improv team.

The team partakes in diverse types of improv games in which students play against each other for points. Their sole purpose is to improve their improvisation skills. A few examples include "Pass the Mic," where participants have to make a rap up on the spot, "Slow-mo Olympics," where someone narrates a mundane routine dramatically in slow motion and "Hey Waiter," a pun game where players make up puns as fast as possible to rack up points.

"You kind of just take preparation and throw it out the window," Strubel said. "According to the ideology of improv, whatever they give you is what you have to work with. It has really helped me as a person with just rolling with the punches."

Although the improv matches were online during the past year due to the pandemic, Strubel now anticipates the chance to do them in-person. This May, another match will take place.

Strubel discovered his newest passion on a trip he took with his family to Hawaii in winter of 2016. Watching a ukulele performance in the town of Hilo, he fell in love with everything the fretted instrument had to offer.

Ten years from now, Strubel hopes to be involved in the arts, perhaps working as a composer, stage manager or producer for movies and television shows. Soon, he'd like to work on a creative project related to the technical aspects of stage production, such as lighting design.

He dreams of attending UC San Diego or New York University, where he can participate in an arts and sciences program and further expand his knowledge in the field.

"It is definitely the dream for me and I am going to keep trying very aggressively," Strubel said. "I'm going to do it until I physically cannot do it."

times in front of the camera opened an entirely new world for Strubel. He was completely absorbed in the chaos and creativity that went into making such films and shows.

"Being in that professional setting, I saw the actors doing their performances and just seeing the intensity surrounding them, their emotions seemed so real," he said.

But like all acting, it was an illusion. "When the director would call cut, they would all begin laughing and talking when they had just been crying," he said. "That's when I knew I wanted to do that."

At the age of seven, Strubel had decided that acting was his life's calling.

Right now he's studying acting, dancing and stage lighting as a student in the Performing Arts Magnet.

Strubel has performed in a number of shows at school, playing roles like Ted in "Peter and the Starcatcher" and Wayne Hopkins in "Puffs, or Seven Increasingly Eventful Years at a Certain School of Magic and Magic." He looks forward to playing vice principal Douglas in the upcoming musical comedy and play,



**I felt excited that I got to finally experience working in a classroom with new people"**

**JUDE STRUBEL**  
PERFORMER

"The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," currently in rehearsals.

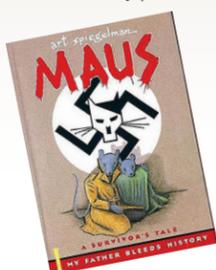
From the time he spent working with other actors and crew members, he gained valuable lessons about cooperation, such as how to communicate effectively and coordinate when brainstorming ideas.

"When you're working with people that closely and for a long amount of time, you really learn how to make connections because there's a lot going on and everyone's doing their own thing," he said.

Aside from performing, he's also had the opportunity to manage and direct the lighting for some of the school showcases.

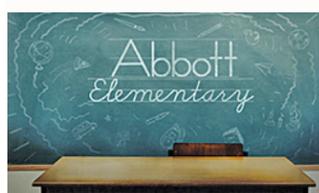
## read this

Sick of sugar-coated novels? Pick up a copy "Maus" that explores the deep psychological scars of Holocaust survivors depicted as Jewish mice and nazis as cats banned in Tennessee schools for nudity (in mouses).



## watch this

Missing the old off-beat 2000s sitcom? "Abbott Elementary" is a new mockumentary sitcom about passionate teachers and a slightly tone-deaf principal in an underfunded Philadelphia public school.



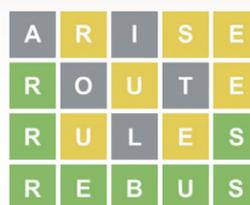
## listen to this

Nothing cuts deeper than the sadomasochistic reflection of Mitski's turbulent relationship with herself, her fans and her own music in her new upbeat synth-pop album "Laurel Hell."



## play this

Forget crosswords, toss out scrabble and your other word searches because a name game is in town. Guess five-letter words within six attempts by playing Wordle on [www.nytimes.com/games/wordle](http://www.nytimes.com/games/wordle).



## eat this

Craving chicken nuggets? Skip McD's. The maker of Impossible Burger has you covered. Like the real thing, but better because they're 100 percent plant-based. Juicy, breaded, easy-to-make and tastes like chicken. Get Impossible Nuggets at Trader Joe's.



THE MIRROR | PHOTOS BY BEVERLY REGINO

## Self-made student producer breaks into the business on his own terms



**THE PRODUCER** Bacchus, above, was finally able to afford a professional-grade setup (right and below right), including a keyboard, drum pad and audio interface.

By **GABRIEL CASTILLO**  
THE MIRROR STAFF

**A**s a child, Justin Isaiah Bacchus had dreams of becoming a guitarist, influenced by rock and alternative music his family played at home.

When he began to explore music for himself, he expanded his taste to DJ and producer artists like Madlib, J Dilla, Nujabes and Pete Rock. Their music inspired him to change his path toward music's more technical aspect.

"Their music really spoke to my soul and when I first heard them I thought to myself 'that's what I want to make, that's the sound I want to achieve,'" Bacchus said.

It was right before entering high school that Bacchus decided he wanted to become a music producer and capture the essence of the artists that inspired him in the first place.

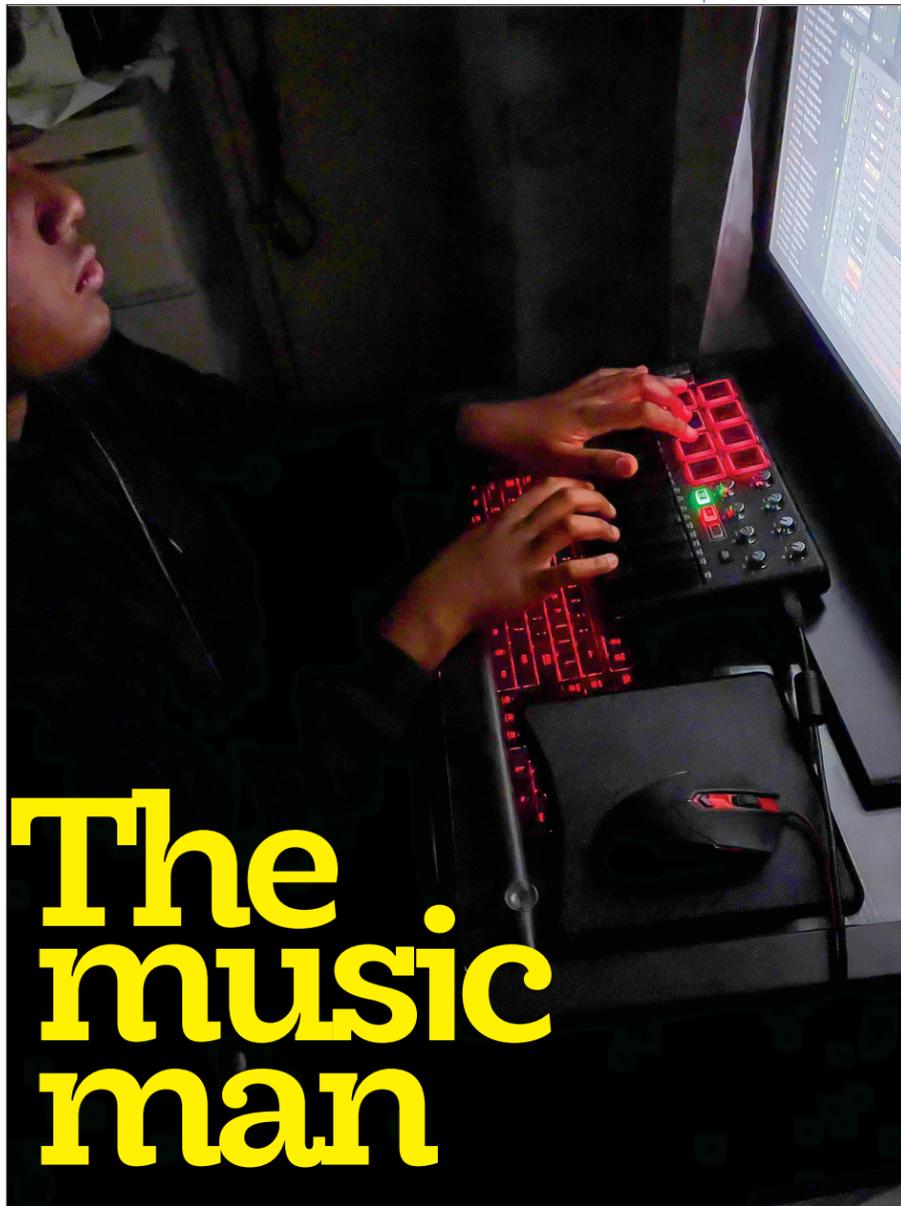
Coming from a low income background, the start was rocky and slow.

"I could not afford music lessons, being taught music or any equipment. I had to be self taught in pretty much everything or learn from others like me," he said. "It wasn't until I got a job that I got more equipment like a keyboard, a drum pad and audio interfaces which really aided my workflow."

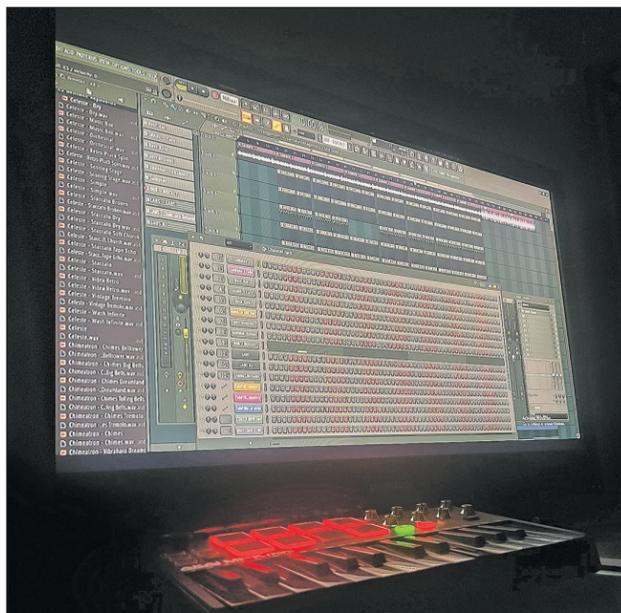
His current setup consists of his MIDI keyboard, where he plays sounds generated on his computer, two drum machines, an AKAI MPC3000 and a Roland TR-808. He switches between using Ableton and FL Studio for his digital audio workstations.

Finally breaking the financial barrier, Bacchus spends any free time he has perfecting his craft. He listens to music, looking for samples and working with local artists as part of producing his own music.

He primarily makes instrumentals to listen to, but he does produce for a local rapper called "YWM", and collaborated on his album "MacClay" which dropped in December.



# The music man



He released a solo album in 2020 and has 12 released singles.

While Bacchus sees money to be made, the main reason he wants to make music is because he is truly passionate about it and hopes to genuinely connect with listeners on a deeper level.

"I enjoy every second of making music, even with all the painstaking work sometimes and how nothing can go right sometimes, it's worth it in the end because this is what I love doing," he said.

To him, he sees producing as a legitimate career path and the future is bright. He hopes to build up his career by col-

laborating with more artists and earning a degree in a field that will aid him in his career. He'll work hard to achieve all that.

"It's a very competitive and hard profession to get into because there's so many people making beats on the internet that it's hard to get recognition," he said. "But if you know how to market and play your cards right you can find success in it."

And while years have passed since first listening, Madlib lives on to be one of his favorite artists.

Bacchus's music can be found by the name Justin Isaiah on Spotify and Apple Music.

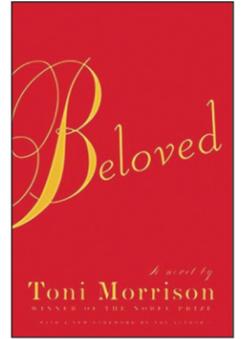
**"I could not afford music lessons, being taught music or any equipment. I had to be self taught in pretty much everything or learn from others like me"**

**JUSTIN ISAIAH BACCHUS**  
MUSIC PRODUCER

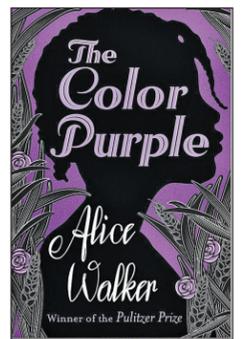
### BANNED BOOKS

## Black history told by Black people

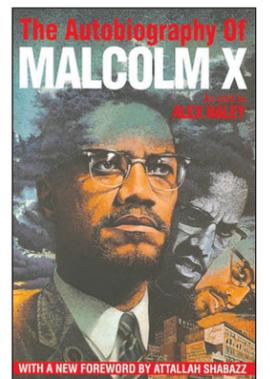
Learn about Black history not taught in schools by reading these nonfiction, historical fiction and autobiographical novels that are being banned in classrooms across the country.



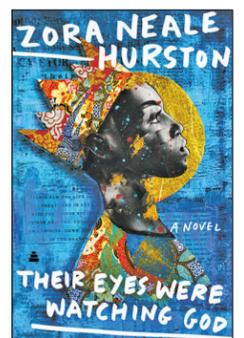
**Beloved by Toni Morrison** This psychological horror story set after the Civil War follows a formerly enslaved family. Margaret kills her young daughter to prevent her return to slavery and is haunted by an evil spirit as a result.



**The Color Purple by Alice Walker** The Color Purple is narrated by Celie, an African American adolescent who grows up in rural Georgia writing letters to God detailing her resistance to the suffocating self-concept that others have imposed on her.



**The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X** The Black activist and religious leader's first-person story reveals his personal philosophy as he addresses the Black experience and challenges conventional civil rights protests.



**Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston** A liberating tale about a Black woman's self-discovery as she navigates her life, searching for the meaning of love, meaning of life and meaning of her own identity. Zora Neale Hurston's influential novel deals with the topics of liberation of racial history and liberation of patriarchal norms.

## A&E BRIEFS

what you should know right now...

**SPELLING BEE MUSICAL** "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" musical is preparing to hit the stage with cast members meeting with the new music teacher Ms. Rowell to learn harmonies and solos as well as dance teachers Ms. Hula and Ms. Partida to learn choreography. The matinee is March 25 followed by five more shows over two weeks.

**RETHINKING SOCIAL MEDIA** Senior Emily "Emi" Kim is making her mark on the big screens after being interviewed by CBS News about her role in the "LOG OFF" movement, a teen-led nonprofit organization aimed at rethinking social media. Kim shared her concerns with CBS about creating a safe social media experience and discrimination against the online LGBTQ+ community.

**VIRTUAL CAMPUS** The school will get a 360° photoshoot of every nook and cranny that meets the eye on March 19. The photoshoot is meant to be a 3D replication of the school, similar to the format of Google Maps, to give incoming students a look what what it feels like to walk through the halls. Users will be able to go into every room and visit the campus with the touch of a button.

**FAD or FAB? WIRED HEADPHONES** Just a few years ago it seemed that the wireless age of AirPods and Beats by Dre were taking over. Now we're going back to basics, opting out of the wireless life whether it be for practicality or aesthetics. As lines between tech and fashion blur, everyone from Bella Hadid to Lily Rose Depp are plugging their wires back in. Though the question remains: fab or fad? To us, it's totally fab.

# Going where few female athletes have gone before...

THE MIRROR | ISABELLA THOMAS

She's not only a female football player but also an all-around athlete

By **SAMANTHA RAMOS**  
THE MIRROR STAFF

**B**efore the final game home of the season against Sylmar High, she is getting prepared.

Alone in the bathroom, she drops her gear on the floor.

She looks at herself in the mirror. The game is about to start.

She pulls on her girdle, her pants, her shoulder pads and her #7 jersey.

She grabs her helmet and her mouth-guard and heads for the field, where she prepares for kickoff.

The referee blows the whistle. She sticks her hand up, and as it drops to her side, she sprints and kicks the football down the field.

Even today, when women can do everything a man can do, it is still a rarity for a girl to play football. Unless the girl is Kaella Chin.

But Chin doesn't just play football. In fact, she plays almost every sport imaginable.

She considers soccer to be her sport of choice, but she is also on the girls varsity basketball team, track and field team and girls varsity volleyball team.

Chin may be an overachiever, but so was her mother, science teacher Ms. Dianne Fuhrman, who graduated from Van Nuys High. Ms. Fuhrman was on the tennis and track teams. It was here she was introduced to weightlifting, eventually being inducted into the Weightlifting Hall of Fame. Her father is also a weightlifter.

Being athletes themselves, her parents encouraged Chin and her two younger brothers to participate in sports.

"They did sports when they were growing up and they thought that their kids should have an active outlet," Chin said.

When she was five, Chin began to play on the same t-ball team as her brothers.

"It was constantly a competition," she said. "I constantly wanted to beat them because of the stereotype that girls can't be on the same level," Chin said.

She only played t-ball for a season before she realized that she didn't like playing baseball and decided to change sports.

With her parents' support, she began to play soccer a year later. During her off-season, she tried basketball, but she knew that she wanted to continue playing soccer, which she did all through elementary and middle school with a club team.

She didn't compete for the Wolves soccer team because her club team wouldn't let her.

That changed this year — her senior



THE MIRROR | BEVERLY REGINO

year. As an integral member of the Wolves soccer team, Chin scored an astounding 20 goals for the season. The girls team ended the season with a 3-14-2 record.

After covid cut into in-person sports over the last two years, she found herself with a lot of pent-up energy, so she went out for football, basketball and track and field too. She easily made each of the teams.

She ended up joining the football team as they were already well into their season, but she ended up being more than just a benchwarmer. Lucky for Chin, the boys took her in and made her feel comfortable. They supported her and helped her out.

"It was kind of weird coming into a team where the players are already so tight, but I'm thankful for them, for accepting me coming in so late," Chin said.

While she originally qualified as the team's kicker, she was surprised when the coach gave her the opportunity to play many different positions. She was a corner back, safety and wide receiver.



THE MIRROR | ISABELLA THOMAS

"Because the team was so small I ended up playing a lot of different positions," Chin said.

After the football season ended, she went out for basketball. Her brothers Bryce and Aiden were her inspirations.

"They've always played basketball so I've just always watched them and I kind of wanted to try out a different sport which is why I took on basketball"

Not only has she fallen in love with hoops, but she has also excelled. Chin has been player of the week in multiple games,

**LEADING LADY** On top of basketball, soccer and football, Kaella Chin still finds time to stay on top of school work and hang out with friends.

as the girls finished their season with a 11-5 record, barely missing the playoffs.

"I kind of knew some of the girls on the team and now they're one of my closest friends. It's also really really fun and the environment inside the gym while you're playing is so hyped up which makes it an amazing experience."

Sports are important for Chin, but they are not the only activity she participates in at school. She is also on ASB, where she helped plan the 2022 Homecoming, which was cancelled because of covid. She is currently helping to plan the 2022 prom and other important senior events.

Although she has a jam-packed schedule, she still enjoys it.

"Its a lot but it keeps me busy which is what I like. I'm someone that has to keep going and keep doing stuff," Chin said.

Although she likes being super active and getting involved with the school, she also makes sure she makes time to be a teenager.

What little free time she does have, she likes to spend surfing, hanging out with friends and going to thrift stores.

Chin still isn't sure where she wants to go to college, but she does know that she wants to become a professional soccer player. As a fallback, she wants to get her degree in business.

She still has plenty of time to make up her mind.

## SEASON RECAP

**BOYS BASKETBALL** What a spectacular performance from the boys this season. The Wolves ended their regular season with five straight wins, racking up a total of 17 wins this season in 24 games. The team went 7-2 when competing against teams in the league and placed second in Division 1. The boys placed one spot behind the Kennedy Cougars who have gone 8-0 when playing in league.

On the court, the Wolves biggest weakness has been their inconsistency in the first half. When the boys start of the game slow they end up having to play even harder to not

only catch up to their opponents, but make an additional effort outscore them by the end of the second half. In their games against the Jordan Panthers, the boys failure to get things going in the first quarter of the game saw them try and keep up with their opponents. They inevitably lost that game 51-59. When the team plays with poise, making accurate passes and good shot selections, the team obviates their opponents by double digits time and time again.

Entering playoffs as the sixth seed team in the 2022 CIF LA City Section Boy's Basketball Championship, the boys had a first round bye. In their first playoff matchup against the Carson Colts, the Wolves outscored their opponents by 20 points, leading

to a win of 80-60. In the quarterfinals the team went on to beat the Legacy Tigers, 60-34, allowing the Wolves to advance to the Semifinals.

With one of the best coaches in LAUSD, seemingly unbreakable team chemistry and great play on both ends of the courts, this team has proven time and time again that they are a force to be reckoned with.

**GIRLS BASKETBALL** After the pandemic cost the girls their 2020-21 season, the lady Wolves returned to the court this 2021-22 season. Before their season started, assumptions were made that the team's one year hiatus would equate to a lack of team chemistry, poor shot selection and more turnovers than in past years.

As the season progressed the girl's proved they were a cohesive unit, efficient on both ends of the court.

When watching the games, the girls play with intensity and passion which is what sets them apart from their other competitors. On offense, accurate passing, great spacing and excellent awareness of where one another are on the court allows the girls to control the tempo of the game. Where the girls really excel is on the defense end. With an average of 23 steals, three blocks and 20 defensive rebounds, the girls rarely give the opposing team an opportunity to score.

While the girls decimated almost all of their opponents by double digits in their 11 wins on the

season, the girl's weaknesses really shine through when you examine their performance during their five losses on the season. Their biggest problem? Poor shot selection. The girls have shot an average of 31 percent from the field during the season, which has caused the team to struggle when playing against teams with great defense.

Despite a strong showing during the regular season, the girl's basketball 2021-22 season ended in heartbreak after a first round playoff exit after losing to the Garfield Bulldogs 36-58 in the CIF LA City Girl's Basketball Championships. A tough break because they were good enough to get farther.

— **By SHAAN BHATIA**

By **ANTONY NEPEYVODA**  
THE MIRROR SPORTS EDITOR

**S**tanding at 6'1, you can't miss him with his signature hairstyle that makes him an inch or two taller.

The team captain and star player of the boy's basketball team, #11 Andrew Angulo has been on a roll this season, scoring an average of 25 points per game and leading his team to 7 wins in the league out of 9 total games played.

Angulo wasn't always such a baller.

In fact, he tried playing multiple sports before finally landing on basketball.

"Soccer was my first sport and then I got into baseball, but then I didn't do baseball for long."

A chance meeting with his neighbor introduced him to basketball which he knew very little about at the time.

"One of my neighbors I was really close with. He was about 17 and I was around 11. I saw him when he was on the way to go play basketball. When I saw him I asked him to teach me how to play because I didn't even know how."

After playing basketball for the first time, he knew that he wanted to learn more about the sport so he could play better.

"I just started watching videos YouTube about basketball moves and NBA players because I thought it was really cool."

His love of basketball grew

from watching NBA games with his dad. Of course, living in L.A., their favorite team was the L.A. Lakers. He drew inspiration from the late Kobe Bryant.

Bryant was his favorite player because he admired his work ethic and his player mentality.

When he heard the news of Bryant's death he was in shock.

"I didn't really believe it. I thought it was fake news until more people started posting about it. It was the first time in a long time I shed a tear.

He found himself hooked on hoops. He had been bitten with the basketball bug. To satisfy his obsession, he joined a variety of teams.

"I started playing at a church league, after that I played for my middle school team, and then the owner of my gym had his own travel team and he got me onto the team."

Joining a travel team, also known as an Amateur Athletic Union team, gave Angulo the much more experience that he would have gotten from playing just for a school team.

"I played with [gym owner's] travel team until I was in eighth grade — about two years. After that, I got on another travel team and that was where I met Coach [Evan] Porter. Coach Porter brought me here.

Angulo decided to attend Van Nuys because he already had a relationship with Coach Porter.

"I started basketball here in JV in ninth grade, but got moved up



**TOP SHOT** Captain and top scorer Andrew Angulo sinks a basket in a home game against the Panorama Pythons. Van Nuys won 00-00 and finished 7-2 in league play..

to Varsity in tenth and stayed on the team since then."

Coach Porter moved Angulo to Varsity because he knew he could hold his own against tougher competition.

This has been Angulo's year to shine. He has led the team to one victory after another. In this season's first match, the Wolves beat San Fernando 54-47, then beat, Hawthorne 61-37, then Sylmar the first time 68-51, and on and on, losing only two games to Kennedy 61-52 and Sylmar in their rematch 53-52.

One school got the better of him, and he will never forget his blunder.

"The worst basketball moment I experienced this year was when I missed the shot to tie the game against Sylmar."

The final score was 53-52; in the last minute of the game the score was 53-50, with Sylmar in the lead. A Sylmar player fouled one of the Van Nuys players, so Angulo was lined

up to shoot the three free throws he needed to tie the game.

He sunk the first shot. The crowd roared. He missed the second shot and the crowd gasped. The score was 53-51. Had he made it would have sent the game into overtime. So much pressure. He sank the last free throw. Sylmar squeaked by one point.

Everybody makes mistakes, but Angulo wasn't deterred. He just vowed to play better the next game. After one more game, the team remained undefeated, and won a berth in League playoffs..

"It's our first playoff game this week [week of Feb. 14] so we just got to play hard, especially on defense, because the defense

is what's gonna win the game," Angulo said. "Before the game, I've just got to talk to my team and make sure we're all ready. We've got to win the game."

Pep talks are the way a team captain builds trust with his team. But basketball is not a one-man sport and the Wolves don't rely on a single player for their wins. It takes chemistry.

"We have pretty good chemistry. We've all been playing together since last May. This whole time we haven't stopped playing," He said. "So we've all grown as a team and as individuals. Everyone's game has gotten better whether it's on defense or offense, everyone's gotten better at something."

To play his best, Angulo swears by two pregame rituals. He wears his signature varsity basketball sweater for good luck. He also eats a plate of chicken and beef combo with all-rice katsu chicken and barbeque beef at Ono's Hawaiian BBQ on Sepulveda Blvd. His routine helps calm his nerves.

Being a top-tier athlete requires lots of work in and out of school. Running helps improve his cardio for when he has to keep the pressure going all game long. He also has become a workout fanatic.

"I go to the gym for about two hours after practice everyday. I just go and run two-mile runs every other day. Also, I use the treadmill at the gym."

Quarantine gave Andrew time to develop a new pastime. Weight lifting is what he set his mind to.

"At the end of 2020 I started lifting and I wasn't taking it seriously," he said. "I was just doing it to get bigger and keep in shape."

But at the beginning of 2021, something felt different for him. He was hooked by the personal challenge that weightlifting offers.

"I love the pain that makes you keep pushing yourself. I just love that feeling where you want to stop but you just keep pushing"

No matter what happens in the playoffs, Angulo is planning to continue his basketball career. His plans are to play on a junior college team after he graduates, and then get a scholarship to a division one school.

His dream is to one day play for the UCLA Bruins.

**BIG BALLER** Captain Andrew Angulo says this year's varsity group has great chemistry. "We've all been playing since last May. We've all grown as a team and as individuals."

Averaging 25 points per game and steering the Wolves to the playoffs, varsity basketball team Captain **Andrew Angulo** proves why he is...

# Leader of the PACK

