

## Writer of the Year

Throughout my time on the Gazette, the level at which I write has grown immensely; but none of that would have been possible without my peers and advisor. The Gazette is a place where all different students can come and share their views. It is a place where you learn through experience. And it is a place that thrives on the energy of my advisor Karl Grubaugh.

This year I truly got the opportunity to take on more complex and relevant stories. Rather than covering something with less depth, I was able to cover topics such as statutory rape, standing for the pledge, mass shootings, lockdowns and gun safety. Now, although this was fascinating to cover and discover more information about, it definitely took a toll. During the sadly never-ending gun debate, I covered a multitude of stories relating to shootings. It ended up enlightening me, but at the same time, it brought me sadness. This sadness came from all of the facts and quotes that resonated with me being a high school student. In order to find an escape from these stories that, yes I asked for, I wrote columns. These were my little sanctuary. A place to share my experiences, values or ideas. Although these did not include sources or in depth reporting, they were personal and they allowed me to have some freedom within the confines of a typical article. For me, I have to have a balance of these two, to keep me sane.

I will say that I could never replace what I learned from writing over the years and especially this year. Being able to interview experts who share their intellectual findings and opinions is extremely engaging. Finding the perfect lead, is frustrating but satisfying. And seeing your printed article is one of the most prideful experiences in a journalists career. The full process of writing and publishing an article within a publication is truly a feeling and experience that I couldn't replace.

# As seniors turn 18, couples with age differences might be at risk for statutory rape conviction

BY KATIE COLOGNA

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High school is a time for students to not only expand their education, but a time for them to learn lessons from their friendships, schoolwork and relationships.

But how hard should those lessons be? A slap on the wrist, a bad grade, a falling out with a friend – or maybe a conviction for statutory rape.

Students in sexual relationships – often seniors – can face this concern. If students are in a relationship where one of the partners turns 18 before the other and they are engaging in sexual activity, the older partner can be prosecuted – no matter their gender.

There is a misconception that only men can be prosecuted for statutory rape. That not true, and yet men are still the ones who are stereotyped as the ones who will get charged.

They're also often the ones who tend to get more tense about the subject when they turn 18.

"I think guys usually worry more because they are often labeled as the predator in those types of situations," said a senior girl who asked to remain anonymous and whose significant other is turning 18. "Many

times relationships consist of an older guy and a younger girl... (and that) age difference (can) be less than a year, like it is for (my boyfriend and I), or more substantial as it is with some older couples."

**First of all let me say that the law is the law, so there's no getting around it.**

– *Natalie Elkin, GBHS teacher*

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The statutory rape laws are different in different states. In California, statutory rape is sexual intercourse between an adult (anyone over 18) and a minor (anyone under 18).

This is because the legal age of consent in California is 18. Even if the minor thinks they are consenting, legally they are not.

Any third party can report the relationship as a crime if the one being reported is in a relationship with a minor and if both partners are sexually active.

"First of all let me say that the law is the law, so there's no getting around it," Advanced Placement psychology teacher and therapist Natalie Elkin said. "It's a risk that they will take, and they will risk conviction and they will risk being on the (sexual offender) registry and they will risk jobs and essentially everything. They will risk their future."

Many other states have enacted

the Romeo and Juliet laws, which are laws that modify the statutory rape laws for teens from 13 years of age to 19 years of age engaging in consensual sexual activity. The laws were created to protect relationships from ridicule when there is a minor age difference between the partners. These laws vary from state to state. Yet, in all states, same-sex relations were excluded from being protected.

In states such as Hawaii and Maine, the age difference that is allowed between a minor (at the age of 16) and an adult is five years. In California, Florida and North Dakota, where the age of consent is 18, there have been no modifica-

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# RAPE: Students talk about possibilities of statutory rape convictions

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tions. In these states, an adult in a sexual relationship of any kind with a minor is engaging in illegal activity.

"I think there should be (provisions to the law that make allowances for consensual relationships)," she said. "I think that more provisions like this should be made across the country so people in situations like us don't have to worry about it."

Statutory rape cases are often the result of complaints from the parents of the minor in the relationship, but there are ways to try prevent this from happening.

"If you're going to take the risk of being in jail, you have to take the risk to talk to the parents," Elkin said.

In California, under state Penal Code 261.5, an adult in a consensual relationship with a minor won't necessarily be forced to register on the sexual offenders list. The punishment for each conviction is different.

The can either be charged as a misdemeanor or as a felony.

If an adult is charged with a misdemeanor, the possible penalty is a fine of up to \$1,000 and either probation or a sentence of up to a year in county jail.

For a felony, however, the penalties are potentially much more severe. The adult can end up with as little as probation or as much as three years in prison. (If the adult is 21 or older and the minor was under 16, sentences can be much longer.) The possible fine can be as much as \$10,000.

"It comes with the trust," he said. "I can't imagine (my girlfriend's) parents ever wanting to do that to me, especially because they would understand that (the relationship has been) consensual all the way through. And I can't imagine ... my parents doing that to her."

The girlfriend said the criminalization of relationships where one of the partners is a minor is somewhat irrational.

"I don't think it should be labeled as a crime when we're both consenting individuals who make our own decisions, and neither of us expect things to change because of a birthday," she said. "In other cases such as non-consensual instances or an older individual taking advantage of someone who is, say, 13, I think that it is necessary."

Elkin explained that teens in relationships don't usually think about all the precautions or their actions because the frontal lobe of their brain simply hasn't fully developed, making it hard for them to make the best judgments.

Because of this, students neglect to think about how this could impact the two of them and only think about how it could affect the adult in the relationship.

"One person is taking the risk and the other person is not, so it's an incredibly discrepant situation where ... nothing happens to the minor (and) ... (the adult is) the only person taking the risk," Elkin said. "They carry all the risk – they're the only ones that will have any negative repercussions that will come about if anything happens."



# To pledge or not to pledge



Gazette photo/ KATIE COLOGNA

Gazette photo illustration/ SABINA MAHAVNI

◆As a result of a Supreme Court case decided in 1943, students in the United States have the right to respectfully decline to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## New controversy arises as students sit during the Pledge of Allegiance

BY KATIE COLOGNA  
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The recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance has been an ongoing tradition within the public school system. It has become an action to which students have become accustomed once class starts, but the Pledge of Allegiance is not mandatory.

If students want to remain sitting during the Pledge, they can do so, and a teacher legally cannot tell them to stand.

The reasoning behind this: West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (1943) ruled that it is unconstitutional to make a student stand for the Pledge because it violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments. This is due to the right for religious freedom and freedom of speech.

“People make this immediate judgment about somebody if they’re not standing, but it is the law,” Granite Bay High School Advanced Placement government teacher Jarrod Westberg said. “I understand why it’s the law. I understand why the courts ruled the way the courts have ruled, because our judges understand the constitution. Many people in the country do not.”

The portion of the Pledge of Allegiance that perhaps most often results in protest and controversy is the line “under God,” which was pushed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to be added to the Pledge in 1954 during the Cold War.

“I would say that (“under God” is) an expectation of a Christian God in that sense that here we are trying to fight communism and what not, right, but without there (being) any clear definition,” said IB World Religions and English teacher David Tastor. “Every world religion except for Buddhism believes that there is a god, that there is some greater force

bigger than us that we may or may not be dependent on.”

If the “under God” phrase is the only part that makes a student or teacher uncomfortable, the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that they can simply omit the words when reciting the Pledge without receiving disciplinary punishment.

What was once thought of as possible way to bring people together during the Cold War and focus the fight against communism has drastically changed in today’s society.

“The whole idea of pledging your allegiance ... is a big deal for our history, yes,” Westberg said. “It’s just today, it’s not something you would think is going to be a unifying issue.”

In September, a teacher in Michigan made sixth-grade student, Stone Chaney, stand during the Pledge and did so by forcing him out of his chair. What was his reasoning? Stone stopped standing for the Pledge in the second grade because he made a Pledge to his family and God, not to the flag.

“I struggle with the fact that a religious person, who’s only supposed to Pledge allegiance to God, is being required to Pledge allegiance to a flag, Tastor said.

“For me in studying religions, God is what you Pledge allegiance to, not a flag,” Tastor added. “So if it’s just simply a political connection, then there’s no need for the word ‘God.’ For the religious person who believes firmly in that aspect, I think that’s a conundrum that they have to solve.”

On the GBHS campus there are a number of students who don’t stand for the Pledge but many don’t have a particular reason.

Senior Divya Shetty hasn’t been standing for the Pledge for four

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# PLEDGE: Personal sentiments spark controversy among students

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years now.

"I don't think it's that important," Shetty said. "I understand it's meant to symbolize our loyalty for our country etcetera... but I find doing it every day unnecessary. It doesn't really have any value for us, it's not something I believe in I guess."

Shetty has always gotten neutral responses to sitting. She does receive the occasional question of why she doesn't stand, but nothing more.

Another aspect many people don't know about this law is that it not only includes teachers but

students as well.

Students do not have the right to tell fellow students or teachers to stand for the pledge.

In Westerberg's AP Government he had an instance recently where a student told the sitting student, Julia Colby, to stand for the pledge.

"I was doing my homework and I only had a little time left before we were going to take a major exam for that class and everybody was standing for the pledge but I was sitting down and a person (in the class) was coughing and saying excuse me and I just stayed sitting," senior Julia Colby said. "At the end

Westberg was saying that's illegal to do and you'll get in a lot of trouble."

According to Westberg this hasn't been a normal occasion in his class. Until recently.

"Here's the weird thing. So I've been teaching for 20 years and that was the first time seeing it in my class," Westberg said. "Not the first time seeing a kid not stand. So I connect that to what's been going on in the NFL (National Football League). I think people are making that connection because I have seen plenty of students in 20 years not stand. Never seen another student get mad."

Unlike Westberg, who teaches government, other teachers and students often aren't even aware of the law.

"I teach this stuff so it's different, but it freaks me out that we do not go into a process where we're teaching our teachers these things," Westberg said.

Rules that students and teachers likely aren't aware of are that a student can leave the room during the Pledge as long as they are not a disruption and the sitting participant cannot prevent others from standing for the pledge.

But not only do all of these rules apply to students, but

teachers as well. If a teacher objects the recitation of the Pledge, the school district does not have the authority to make the teacher recite it (*Russo v. Central School District No. 1* (2nd Cir. 1972) 469 F.2d 623).

With the political polarization in the country right now, this is one of the many dividing topics, but like everything else, there is a simple solution.

"I just wish people could hear each other out before the immediate knee jerk reaction. It's just so fast to jump on another person without knowing the law, without understanding the law."

The polarization will likely

continue. There is always going to be a divide between people's beliefs, but how that is handled could end the conflict.

"I also firmly do not believe that any teacher has the right to tell a kid to stand for that flag," Tastor said. "And that's a tough one because I get its symbolism (...) but the long lineage of family who has fought in this military and died in this American military and the flag symbolizes this stuff, but no one should be forced in a country that professes its freedom to anything. Anything."



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## Common app brings self-realization

“Write a profile of yourself in news or news feature style, as if you had interviewed yourself,” read the prompt for my last supplemental essay for George Washington University.

“Wow, they shouldn’t have given me such an easy one,” I said to myself after reading the prompt.

What was fortunately my last supplemental question was also the most dreaded of them all.

After two months of procrastination, it was finally time to sit down and plan. What was supposed to be a productive brainstorming session ended up being an egregious process with a less-than-perfect outcome, leaving me thinking: “Why is this so hard now, when I do it all the time?”

This essay should have been an opportunity for me to take time and reflect on myself – the good and the bad.

Instead, it ended up giving me the realization that even among the most intelligent and talented group of students, somehow we all tend to lose ourselves in our journey to the so called “real world.”

The journey that is supposed to prepare us for the real world has turned into a journey of getting the best grade-point average, highest test scores and the most extracurriculars and volunteer hours.

“**Every student should take pride in themselves.**”

I’m not saying the rigorous schedules that students have don’t prepare them, but it is the worst when you see a group of 20 kids apply to the same school that all have GPAs ranging from 3.8 to 4.6, that are active in sports and clubs, and have extracurriculars and internships – and only two or three get in.

I can also say that a majority of those students are either qualified or overqualified and should be a student at their desired school.

There are more than 500 of us, all competing to get to our goal – in that race, we have put ourselves in an unfair situation of comparing ourselves to everyone else.

This especially goes to every “average” or “college prep” student out there. I have never been a full Advanced Placement or CP student – I’ve always taken a mix of AP and CP classes – but I have seen the stigma around being a student who takes normal classes or might have a lower GPA.

It shouldn’t matter what class you are taking, what the person next to you in class got on a test or what college your classmate got into and you didn’t.

Every student should take pride in themselves. If they can say with every class, sport, activity or club that they tried their hardest, whether the outcome be achievement or downfall, at least they can know that they put their best effort and passion into it.

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## COMMENTARY



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### From strangers, to smiles, to friends

“The shortest distance between two people is a smile.”

My mom always said this to me when I was growing up, and she made it her mission to teach my sisters and me that none of us know how a stranger’s day is going, so when you have a chance to engage in the simple act of smiling – take it.

Recently I traveled to New York City. The city I will be moving to. The city where everyone is supposedly angry and alone.

So upon arriving, I made it my personal mission to try changing a few people’s days with the simple act of a smile.

I quickly found that the nasty stereotype that all New Yorkers don’t have the time of day for anyone else is – in fact – false.

Were there a few people that couldn’t be bothered? Yes, much like every other major city in America. But what I discovered, or rather validated from my mom’s lessons, is that people will genuinely smile back if you give them the opportunity. They might not be the first to smile, but they sure will reciprocate.

Tens of people a day smiled back at me, but all of those smiles were from random faces that I would likely never see again. Yet, there was one smile from a man (we’ll call him the “coffee man”) that made biggest impact on my life through the smallest actions.

What started as me grabbing a coffee before a lecture at the journalism convention I was attending turned into a twice day routine for three days where I developed a friendship with the “coffee man.”

I would begin my day by stopping at the coffee man’s Halal food truck to grab a small iced coffee with milk and sugar. My first time there, I smiled and made light conversation. The second time I went, the coffee man had a smile saying the sentence “iced coffee, milk and sugar?” Music to my ears. If you know me you know little things (like someone remembering my order) excite me. This was one of them.

One day in and I had proved the stereotype wrong. I had found a stranger. One who was appreciative of my smile and my desire to make his day. One who reciprocated the acts of kindness.

My last day of the convention was when I realized the impact the coffee man had made on my life. I went for my final coffee of the trip and told the coffee man that I would soon be heading back to California.

This was the turning point. In the last five minutes of speaking with my new-found friend, we discussed my plans for college, moving to New York, his travels back to his homeland and the promise to visit him at his little Halal food truck when we are both back in the city.

To most people, I probably didn’t gain anything significant, but in my eyes I learned plenty. I learned that if you give people the opportunity to share their happiness, they will.

And all that can be done ... with guess what? A smile.

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# Tensions escalate around gun presence on campus

## Recent lockdown imbued with additional meaning in light of Parkland shooting

BY KATIE COLOGNA

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In light of the recent school shooting that took place at Parkland High School in Florida, teachers, students, parents, brothers and sisters, whether affected directly or not, are all mourning the tragedy – trying to bring awareness to the issue.

Activism at Granite Bay High School has taken a turn – making students even more involved in the purpose. This is because the issue hit too close too home when, on Tuesday, Feb 27 at 2 p.m., GBHS went into a lockdown after a note was found by senior Jesse Altof in the boys’ bathroom. This note was a threat to “shoot up” the school.

What was a minor possibility at GBHS when the news broke of the Florida shootings turned into a reality, leaving students unsure about their safety.

“My experience at the lockdown was quite unexpected,” said senior Vyas Srinivasan. “I was feeling a little miserable, but as time went on it got even more frustrating and more frustrating. I went in tears.”

Principal Jennifer Leighton shared some insight on the details of the threat.

“The note was brought to us by two junior boys around 1:50,” Leighton said. “We went into lockdown between then and 2 p.m. The (sheriff’s deputy) had arrived by then, and then started the searching of the classrooms within 30 minutes. The rest was just them going from room to room while I was doing my best to communicate with teachers and with general emails out to parents, and also getting updates from officers and my assistant principals as they went along.”

Weeks before the GBHS lockdown, Oakmont High School, which is also part of the Roseville Joint Union High

School District, encountered a lockdown incident because of a gun on campus.

A student came onto the Oakmont campus with a loaded gun intending to sell it to a classmate.

“(My first thoughts were a) sense of urgency to get to the weapon and try and decrease any possibility of any incident happening with the weapon,” said Oakmont principal Robert Hasty. “At the same time I’m thinking about the safety of the students and my staff and everybody on this campus.”

At GBHS, many students wanted to talk about the Parkland shootings.

“I knew that my students wanted to talk (about the Parkland shooting), so we did,” said Advanced Placement Human Geography teacher Kathleen Angelone. “I asked them questions and they were responsive. We talked about

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# SHOOTINGS: A look into the unfortunate school shooting issue

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our plan' for our class."

"The shocking thing was after many students said the cause of these mass shootings is access, I asked them, 'How many of you know of someone who has a gun to which you feel you could gain access?' About 80-90 percent raised their hands."

At Oakmont, the student who brought the weapon on campus was trying to sell his grandfather's gun.

"(The OHS lockdown) was a reminder that there could be students on even this campus with guns on any given day, and that disturbs me greatly," Leighton said.

In order to challenge the government to re-evaluate laws, honor the lives lost in the Parkland shooting and vouch for their own safety, students across the country are uniting by conducting a walkout at 10 a.m. on March 14 for 17 minutes.

"No matter what the issue is, when there's activism with young people that

makes me happy because that says that prospective voter is going to pay attention in the future – and that's a great thing," AP Government teacher Jarrod Westberg said. "Obviously it's terrible because it's a tragedy, but that's why you have activism after a tragedy – because it hits home."

In the aftermath of the shooting, there has been a call to arm teachers to help protect students.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 424 in October. The new law states that the legislation would "delete the authority of a school district superintendent, his or her designee, or equivalent school authority to provide written permission for a person to possess a firearm within a school zone."

But that didn't stop politicians and the public from debating the issue.

"I've come down that there are two essential questions to this topic," social science teacher Dale Mortensen said.

"No. 1 is – can that option possibly save somebody's child's life? And the second essential question I found for this issue is – if there's an active shooter outside the door of your child's classroom, do you hope that teachers armed?"

"It's that simple for me. Not everybody will come up with the same answer as me for a variety of reasons. I personally, if there's an active shooter outside their classroom, I would hope that their teacher would be armed."

Social science teacher Jillyan McKinney has a different point of view.

"I do not think that this should be implemented," McKinney said of arming teachers. "There are so many social factors that come into play and need to be addressed. I am also very concerned that many people believe that this is our only option."

Health teacher John MacLeane said the issue is complex, so the response to the

debate is also complicated.

"Maybe," he said of arming teachers, "but only under certain conditions. And those conditions would be that that teacher is psychologically screened. No. 2, that teacher gets extensive training. If it was done that way, then I'm probably OK with it."

There are a number of issues and contributors to the issue of gun violence in schools – access to guns, mental health and family upbringing.

"We're dealing with young men," Advanced Placement psychology teacher and licensed therapist Natalie Elkin said. "The frontal lobe is not fully developed yet, which is impulse control. So if we have someone who is depressed and has a symptom of anger as a symptom of depression, they're feeling like nothing, they hate going to school because of the social environment for them, they have access to guns right there, they're playing violent

video games and they have no impulse control — you tell me isn't that the perfect recipe?"

Often, Elkin said, the media are quick to label the shooter as a "psychopath," without actual knowledge of mental and personality disorders.

"The moment (we label them) then we refuse to see that there is actually a human being in there," Elkin said. "They're not a monster. We can't apply that label of evil because it's such a black and white label. You're either evil or you're good. The moment we do that, we label them and put them in a separate category, separate from (ourselves)."

But in the end, this cocktail of contributions to school shootings is extremely complex. Complexity that is sad, in light of lives lost, but sadness that might bring progress.

"It breaks my heart that this is part of our culture," Angelone said. "I'm also hopeful, since many young people are protesting and demanding change."