Reflection of Hate Discussions

By Susanna Procario-Foley

Hate takes on many forms. Unfortunately, we are surrounded by expressions of hate through words, actions, and symbols. In 2012, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting left 26 adults and children dead. In 2016, a man opened fire inside a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, killing 49 people. In January 2018, two New Rochelle High School students were stabbed, one fatally. In February 2018, 17 students and staff members were killed when a shooter attacked Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. In November 2018, swastikas were found drawn in the boys’ locker room at NRHS. It is unacceptable that such signs of hate have been displayed at our school. Although the swastikas that were found probably reflect stupidity and carelessness and were not intended to be hurtful, drawing them was an act of hate nonetheless.

In response to this disgraceful event, the school’s administration organized two days during which classes would discuss the effects of hate. On January 9, 2019, social studies classes discussed hate symbols and on January 11, 2019, English classes talked about hate speech. During social studies classes on January 9th, students were shown a PowerPoint explaining the history and meaning of several hate symbols such as the swastika, noose, burning cross, and Confederate Flag. The swastika has an ugly history of anti-Semitism and one cannot view that symbol without thinking about the mass genocide of Jews. Likewise, the noose, burning flag, and Confederate Flag evoke memories of the lynching of and brutality towards blacks in the United States. When the conversation was opened up for students to share their thoughts, peers engaged in meaningful discussion about their knowledge on the topic and how seeing these symbols drawn on desks throughout their school careers has affected them. During English classes on January 11th, students were given two articles to read about the ‘n’ word. Classes then debated its use today and whether or not it is acceptable in certain contexts. This topic had the flexibility to go in many different directions. In Mr. Mackay’s AP Literature class, for example, we talked about how words get their power. We looked at the Rwandan genocide and noticed how people took ordinary words and turned them into invariants. This relates to how in high school, kids often exclaim “That’s so gay!” in order to hurt another person’s feelings. People tend to infuse hate into words and change their meanings.

Many students expressed that these discussions were valuable. The world is filled with hate, so it is important for students to have a constructive environment in which they can share their thoughts and insights about it. In general, we don’t talk about hate enough. But our silence gives hate more power. Senior Sofia Valerio offered her perspective on the January 9th and 11th discussions, saying, “I think it was a start to a conversation that we need to have as a school community.” I second that view. As a school, we would benefit from talking about hate more often. Hopefully, then, we can prevent hate from manifesting in our community.

Introducing the NRHS Jazz Band

By Daviel Schulman

If you walk through the House 4 hallways after school on Thursdays, you might hear the sound of rich, upbeat music coming from the band room. Who is making that music? It’s the new Jazz Band! The group includes alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, and baritone saxophone players as well as a trumpet and trombone section. The rhythm section consists of a piano, drum set, electric guitar, and double bass. The band normally begins meetings by practicing improvisation, taking turns playing solos along with the rhythm section. Improvisation is a difficult skill to master, but learning the music theory behind it is helpful. Although everyone in the club is relatively new to the art of jazz, each member improved quickly with the help of Mr. Cooper, the conductor and club advisor.

After improvising solos, the club members practice some of the pieces in their current repertoire: “Norwegian Wood” by The Beatles, “Port O’Call” by Michael Sweeney, “Caravan” by Duke Ellington, and “Leap Frog” by Les Brown. Each song is exciting to play and hear. Many members have written or improvised solos in the pieces, and they are able to practice privately with Mr. Cooper. All members get the opportunity to showcase their unique talents.

Of the new opportunity to experiment with jazz music, piano player Nora Shefferman, a sophomore, said, “I have never played jazz music before, but I remember listening to it and thinking that I would like to play it someday. Even though it is not what I am used to, I enjoy learning how to play the different pieces and to hear how all the different parts fit together.” Alto saxophone player Faith Cerbo, also a sophomore, added, “I hope to become better at improvising music. I also hope to learn jazz scales and ways to manipulate them within a piece. There is a lot of freedom within jazz music and it is important to embrace it.”

Club advisor/conductor Mr. Cooper commented, “Without a strong jazz program we are not fulfilling our mission statement of ‘embracing our rich diversity.’” He added “I hope that we can rebuild the program so that we can be in league with our neighboring school districts, and showcase a great American art form that reflects the diversity of the City of New Rochelle.” Everyone involved is committed to the new Jazz Band’s success. The NRHS Jazz Band will perform at the Springfest Instrumental concert on May 2 at 7:00pm in the Whitney Young Auditorium, and is hoping to book other performances to display its talent.
Be Cecilia Roe

In early October, PAVE Art classes took a field trip to the New York Botanical Gardens. Each student was asked to take pictures of flowers he or she saw during the trip, and each was given paper to make a botanical illustration of a flower of choice. Everybody also viewed a Georgia O’Keeffe show that was being displayed there, and was able to see her work along with the Hawaiian flowers that her work was based upon.

All of the PAVE students had a great time viewing the flowers and taking pictures of them. Throughout the month of October and early November, students traced over their botanical illustration with marker and used watercolor to paint them. The illustrations were hung up along the house four bridge for NRHS students to see. Inspired by Georgia O’Keeffe, the PAVE students then started to paint their flowers. They took the pictures of their flower and blew them up to the size of their canvases on Photoshop. After that, they printed out the images in the size of their canvases, one in black and white, and one in color. Then they traced the flower onto their canvases and did an underpainting of the flower in black and white acrylics. Once the underpaintings were done, the students glazed over the black and white underpaintings with colorful oil paints. The oil paints helped add dimension and made the flowers pop. These pieces were called triptychs which are a set of three related paintings. For the students the paintings of the flowers were close, closer, and closest. All the paintings were then connected and hung up in the gallery in House IV.

All of the paintings together showcased all the different flowers represented in the Botanical Gardens show. When seen together, these paintings really are astonishing. Overall the show was great and clearly exhibited all the hard work the PAVE students put into their art.

March for our Lives, One Year Later

By Jasmine Jimenez

With Valentine’s Day fast approaching, it’s time to look back at one of many tragic events in 2018. The Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting occurred February 14, 2018 in the city of Parkland, Florida. On a day meant to be filled with love, 17 were shot dead.

In 2018, the United States had approximately 307 mass shootings. A mass shooting is defined by the F.B.I. as the killing of three or more people in a public space. With 17 classmates and teachers dead, students decided it was enough. In the days after the incident, the March For Our Lives Organization was founded primarily by Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students. They are a group that demands change and is not afraid to fight for it. The name of this group itself, “March For Our Lives” has an impact on any one who hears it. On the established website their mission statement is, “Not one more. We cannot allow one more person to be killed by senseless gun violence. We cannot allow one more person to experience the pain of losing a loved one. We cannot allow one more family to wait for a call or text that never comes. We cannot allow the normalization of gun violence to continue. We must create a safe and compassionate nation for our youth to grow up in.”

The group is dedicated to do everything possible to ensure no other student has to feel the effect of gun violence in schools. They organized the March For Our Lives rally on March 24, 2018 in which millions of students and adults marched in cities throughout the United States, including Washington D.C. It was the largest protest against gun violence in history. Since the march, the students have been working on gun reform such as to criminalize semi-automatic weapons. The organization is proof that even young students can cause change by having their voices heard.

In December 2018, the Trump administration announced they will ban bump stocks, making them outlawed. Bump-stocks are a technology which when applied, allows typical firearms to become semi-automatic and fire rapidly. They are dangerous because they can quickly increase the number of bullets fired, and therefore the number of casualties. Currently, bump-stocks are legal can even be purchased online. Various weapons from the Las Vegas Shooting on October 1, 2017, were modified with these bump-stocks, and there were 58 casualties.

Although the March For Our Lives Organization is solely focused on making schools and public spaces safe again, there are still many who disagree and find their intentions unconstitutional. The NRA (National Rifle Association), is only one of many groups in the United States which are fighting against these efforts. According to CNN, in an emailed statement, the NRA said it is “disappointed” that the new rule doesn’t include an amnesty, which would have allowed people who bought the attachments when they were still considered legal, to keep them. However, the NRA is facing more backlash and criticism than ever. The rate of mass shootings, specifically school shootings, in the United States has gotten too frequent. The March For Our Lives Organization is a symbol of the power of young students demanding change.
AP Government Students Visit Washington, DC

By Lily Conroy

While most New Rochelle High School students were taking midterms, forty seniors taking AP US Government and Politics traveled to Washington, DC in a trip that’s been a mainstay of the course for years. Chaperoned by AP Gov teacher Ms. Minchin as well as social studies teachers Mr. Orlando and Mr. Kuklis, my classmates and I spent four days exploring historical and political landmarks such as the Supreme Court and Capitol buildings.

Despite its place in tradition, this year’s trip was a little different from the norm: for the first time, students traveled to the nation’s capital during a federal government shutdown. This year’s shutdown, the longest in American history, altered the trip’s agenda by closing the Smithsonian museums and the National Archives, where the Constitution is housed. However, the trip’s agenda was still packed with unique experiences. From getting reader’s cards at the Library of Congress to witnessing the changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery, every day was gratifying (though exhausting). One student said, “Despite having only four days, we were able to explore everything DC had to offer. Visiting the Capitol and Supreme Court was surreal. If I had the chance to go back, I would do it in a heartbeat.”

In addition to giving students access to tourist attractions in Washington, the trip also gave us a greater perspective on events we’ve learned about in our government class and earlier American history classes, and brought some increased gravity to these topics. A nighttime tour of national monuments let us witness how historical figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Franklin Roosevelt, and Thomas Jefferson are honored today, while a visit to the Holocaust Museum gave each of us an incredibly heightened sense of devastation about the realities of that period. After visiting the US Capitol, we were given the opportunity to visit US Representative Eliot Engel, who represents the district that includes New Rochelle. Representative Engel, a Democrat who sits on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, not only spoke to our classes about his role, but fielded our questions on topics from the government shutdown to foreign policy in Israel and Venezuela. This opportunity for face-time with a representative isn’t one we’d expected to get, and was an incredible chance to gain some greater understanding and confidence of the person representing our district.

On the last day of the trip, we visited the Newseum, which illustrates the role of journalism in United States history and around the world. The museum’s exhibits showed us the critical role that the media has played in events from the civil rights movement of the 1960s to September 11, 2001. Its discussion of the First Amendment, guaranteeing freedom of speech and of the press, among other key freedoms, as
Women’s March Held in NYC

By Maura Kelly-Yuoh

On January 19th, 2019, thousands of people gathered together in the streets of Washington, D.C. with the main goal of bringing awareness to the term: “Women’s rights are human rights.” This was the 3rd annual Women’s March on D.C., with sister marches in major cities worldwide, including New York City, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Sydney, and London. The Washington Post reports that around 665,324 to 735,978 people attended marches on that Saturday in 319 locations in the United States alone. It was also reported that every state but Arkansas and Louisiana hosted at least one march. The number of attendees is still surprising due to the number of locations hosting a march in 2019 decreased 20% from 2018.

I attended the Women’s March on NYC hosted by the Women’s March Alliance, and despite the slightly smaller number of attendees and protesters compared to the last two marches on NYC (~750,000 in 2017, ~200,000 in 2018, and ~10,000 in 2019), the spirit of empowerment was not lost on all of those marching for a change. The thousands in New York braved the bitterly cold weather, with a low of 32°, as the line-up began at 10:00 am at 77th St, W 72nd St & Columbus, and 72nd St & Central Park West.

The rally began at 11:00 and the march kicked off at around 11:35 am, ending at 2 pm. The marchers walked from the entry points of the march to 61st & Broadway, around Columbus Circle, to 44th St & 6th, a total of 1.7 miles! On that day, I found myself surrounded by amazing people including a large group called Women BUILD, who organized women and their families from NYC working in architecture, engineering, and construction. They all wore pink and white construction hats, with signs that read “Women Build.” Some even wore yellow caution tape as a sash that read “Caution Men Working Overhead.” Their main goal, as reported by The Architect’s Newspaper, was to highlight the essential contributions that women make everyday to their fields of work. They also sought out to encourage young people and women to pursue their dreams and goals to “grow up to be whatever they want to be.”

There were actually two marches on January 19th, due to an unprecedented amount of controversy. The Women’s March Alliance, the host and organizer of the Women’s March on NYC for the past two marches, and the Women’s March, Inc., organizer and founder of the first Women’s March on D.C. in January 2017 had debated in the months leading up to the date as to which group was the sole host of the 2019 March.

The Women’s March, Inc., had started the fire in March 13, 2018, when it was reported by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office that Women’s March, Inc. filed to have the name “Women’s March” trademarked. This caused immediate backlash from organizers of sister marches nationwide, including the Women’s March Alliance, as Women’s March, Inc. would have total control over all merchandise with “Women’s March” on it. This would also give the Women’s March, Inc. the power to establish all goals and messages that are linked to the term “Women’s March”. As reported by Refinery29, 14 independent organizations complained and filed for an extension of the trademark, and the debate continues. This, in addition to the unfavorable weather as well as a lack of public interest, could have contributed to the lower turnout in NYC in 2019.

As a result, there was a march on Columbus Circle hosted by Women’s March Alliance and a rally called the Unity Rally, at Foley Square about 3.5 miles from the march, hosted by the New York City Chapter of Women’s March, Inc. This rally was attended by about 1,500 people, beginning at 10 am and ending at 2 pm. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, U.S. Representative, attended both of these protests, and among other speakers, gave a rousing speech at the Unity Rally. She said, “I believe this moment and where we are right now is a resurgence from where the civil rights movement left off and we are here to carry the torch forward...Justice is about making sure that being polite is not the same thing as being quiet...we need to advance and fight for an America where all people are welcome and no people are left behind...” Other speakers at the Unity Rally were Agunda Okeyo, who directed Women’s March NYC, Joanne Smith, the founder of Girls for Gender Equality, a poet from the Girl Be Heard organization, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, and Staceyann Chin, an activist poet.

Attending the Women’s March on NYC really allows for the immenseness of the movement to resonate deeply. Being surrounded by thousands of the kindest and most passionate people all rallying around a single cause is truly amazing. Those who continue to march, no matter how small the number of attendees get, are proof that people around the globe care and are willing to fight for women’s right and gender equality.

The New Generation of Soccer in America

By Alex Streinger

Since 1916, the Copa America, a soccer event watched all over the world, has been aired. This event usually consists mostly of South American countries, but this year’s competition, for the first time, also included invitees from all around the world, with this year Japan and Qatar being invited. In 2016, the 100th year celebration of the first Copa America consisted of a surprise tournament in the United States, a tournament that many fans would consider the best of all time.

In the United States, soccer, or football (the way they call it everywhere but America) has been slowly rising up to become the most popular sport in the nation. The USMNT (United States Men National Team) failed to qualify for the most competitive sports tournament in the world, the World Cup. But the amount of talent that the United States team has, brought by the nation’s best young players, might just cause a different outcome when it comes to the 2022 World Cup, which will be played in Qatar. Because the United States players are the hosts and are automatically qualified to participate, this will mark their first appearance in the cup. However, just talking about the men’s team is unfair. The US women’s national team has been a powerhouse in women’s soccer for a long time. This year, the Women’s World Cup will take place and the United States team comes out as the favorite, as they won the previous World Cup in 2015, which marked their third World Cup win.

The Copa America coming to the US for the first time brings a sense of the competition and passion that soccer has had since its creation to the US. South American fans take over American stadiums such as the Metlife Stadium in New Jersey (also where the finals took place) to cheer for their home nations. Young players all around the world are intrigued by the Copa America, including in NRHS, where soccer has been the most popular sport for many years now. In NRHS, there have been so many players trying out for the team that a third team was created. The sport, which is depicted as “the beautiful game” all around the world, has taken over the country, and hopefully it can bring a bigger success to the men’s national team.
Editorial:
The Dangers of Honors Tracking

By Lily Conroy

There were nineteen students in my AP English Language and Composition class last year. Eight of them entered the New Rochelle school district’s full-day Kaleidoscope program in fourth grade, an accelerated program which enrolls thirty of the district’s hundreds of third-graders each year. Another five of my classmates took part in half-day Kaleidoscope at various elementary schools throughout the district. I entered the class knowing everyone in it. And as much as I’ve enjoyed going through many of my high school classes with a group of people I know, I’ve also often wondered why so many of the students in each of my advanced classes have been taking some form of accelerated coursework for up to nine years. Is it because a standardized test we took when we were eight was really such an accurate measure of our future academic achievement? Or is it because schools have been told that we’re smart, given challenging and interesting coursework, and had expectations placed on us by our teachers and each other that we’d continue to excel? I think it’s probably a combination of both, but the first factor on its own doesn’t seem enough of an explanation.

Historically, honors tracking has gone through methods more overt, and now less socially embraced, than its current iterations. At many high schools over the last several decades, students were assigned to three traditional tracks: college prep, general, or vocational. These tracks were assigned early in high school if not before, and essentially determined the courses that students could take throughout their four years as well as the expectations placed on their postgraduate outcomes. Over the last several years, some schools have relabeled this system so that college prep is the standard track and tracks such as honors and advanced placement are offered as accelerated alternatives. Other schools have moved away from a total tracking system entirely, believing it to be unnecessarily limiting. However, honors tracking has persisted in less obvious ways. One common example is the placement of eighth-grade students into either algebra or general math, which determines their trajectory through high school math and effectively bars those out tracked from taking calculus without some later acceleration. The New Rochelle school district has adopted this method, and is now beginning to introduce some high-performing seventh graders into the Algebra I course, further expediting their trajectory through high school math. Without a summer course or skipping a year of math, students not placed in algebra in middle school will take precalculus in senior year, while many selective colleges want to see math up to calculus on students’ transcripts.

For many, like the majority of my AP English class, honors tracking starts even earlier than middle school. Some schools give children IQ tests or other aptitude assessments as early as kindergarten and use these to determine early class placements, which then play into later placements. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, this form of ability grouping “[teaches] students that if the school does not identify them as capable in earlier grades, they should not expect to do well later.” While systems that separate elementary and middle school students based on their current level of classroom achievement may be helpful to students learning faster than their peers, they may also cause those students who are not placed in an accelerated setting to assume that they must be incapable of higher-level work and limit their own achievement, thereby involuntarily creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students not tracked early don’t take advanced classes later.

In addition to this, some honors tracking systems create clear social divisions between students who enter accelerated programs and those who do not. Many students who start high school on an honors track will continue this way throughout their four years, letting them form close relationships with the other students on the track but limiting the number of classmates they meet from outside of it. In many of the advanced classes I’ve taken in high school, the majority of my classmates have been people I’ve met before in elementary or middle school. Part of this is reassuring, especially for freshmen dreading the size and unfamiliarity of their new school. But this system can also be somewhat insulting. The ability of extracurricular activities and non-honors classes to make up for this stratification is limited, and the idea that I might never have crossed paths with a majority of my grade after four years is a little alarming. One school district in Vermont has begun to disassemble their own honors tracking program for similar reasons, stating that “The separation of students [in ninth grade] restricts social interactions and has increased the divide between the have and have nots and has had a noticeable adverse effect on school climate especially in terms of developing cohesive community that reflects the tenets of a democratic society.” Some students who have spent most of their academic lives in general-level courses but are prepared to take an advanced class may be deterred by a desire to stay with their friends in a familiar environment.

Proponents of a tracking system claim that its benefits for honors students are critical to these students’ development and allow them to arrive at their academic potential without major drawbacks for non-honors students. Many parents of honors tracked students have expressed concerns that eliminating or altering the tracking system will force students to remain in classes that are below their ability, prohibiting them from receiving the academic challenge that will prepare them for college academically. However, while honors tracked systems may benefit some students, they are certainly not the only way to give students varying levels of enrichment in the classroom, and they only help widen a socioeconomic gap that already stretches across all levels of education. Students who enter into accelerated classes early come disproportionately from affluent families, and their entrance into the honors track eases their academic and social transition into upper-level advanced classes and perhaps ultimately into more selective colleges.

Some school districts have looked to mitigate this problem by introducing a ‘differentiated instruction’ model, in which students in the same classroom perform different levels of work. One high school teacher in Alexandria, Virginia uses this model with his government classes, mixing AP and regular-level students together in the same classroom and teaching the AP course curriculum while giving a lighter workload to non-AP students. In his classes, many students who started out taking regular-level government liked the challenge of the course and the teaching style of an advanced class and ended up taking the course for AP credit. The efficacy of this model was echoed by Michigan State University researcher William Schmidt, who wrote a study profiled in the Hechinger Report arguing that “all students should be taught the same topics, and that more advanced students should be given the opportunity to go deeper with the material, instead of racing ahead…. While this model might not be effective in every course setting and certainly has drawbacks of its own, it seems like a possible option to mitigate some of the self-imposed limitations and social stratification that might derive from early honors tracking. At the very least, honors tracking should not be imposed on elementary-school students, who should be given the opportunity to establish themselves socially and academically in classrooms that are socioeconomic and intellectually diverse before entering into an isolating tracking system.