

Best of the Best

Print News, Online News and Broadcast

Broadcast Story



Ally Tauber
McKinney High School

Broadcast Talent

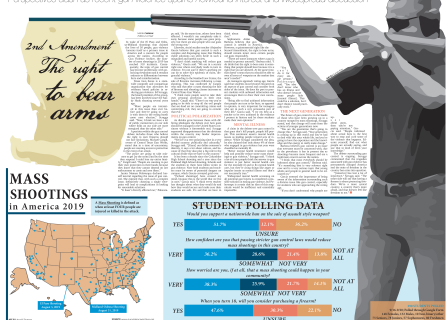


Grant Johnson
Prosper High School

Print News Portfolio

Gun control triggers heated debates

Perspectives clash as recent gun violence sparks newfound interest and widespread discussion




CLIMATE CHANGE

Living with weather events make discussion on the increasing global weather

REAL

VERDICT

FACTORS



70% of Americans believe global warming is happening
NEUTRAL
16% of Americans think global warming is happening
FAKE
14% of Americans do not believe global warming is happening

Source: Gallup
Survey Dates: Jan. 12-15, 2009
Margin of Error: ±3 percentage points

Believe global warming is happening
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Believe global warming is not happening
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Don't know
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Prolonged shutdown impacts student

L. Quaffa, J. Furley-John and L. Brown, impacts senior (catholics). A. Martinez, home life

[illegible]

UNITED

Shall we overcome

Diversity outreach and awareness generates cultural proficiency curriculum for students and teachers

The Pyramid of Hate

As we have seen, racism and sexism are not isolated, unrelated phenomena. They are intertwined and often overlap. This is reflected in the Pyramid of Hate, which shows how these prejudices can build upon each other to create a hierarchy of oppression.

The Pyramid of Hate illustrates the hierarchy of oppression, with the most visible forms of discrimination at the top and the most complex, intersecting forms at the bottom.

The Four Types of Oppression

Oppression is not a single phenomenon, but a complex system of power and control. It can be categorized into four main types, each with its own unique characteristics and effects on society.

- 1. Biological Oppression**
This form of oppression is based on the perceived biological differences between groups. It often leads to the dehumanization of the oppressed group and the justification of violence against them.
- 2. Institutionalized Oppression**
This type of oppression is embedded in the laws, policies, and procedures of a society. It is often the most insidious form of oppression, as it is difficult to challenge and change.
- 3. Internalized Oppression**
This form of oppression occurs when members of the oppressed group internalize the negative stereotypes and beliefs about themselves. This can lead to self-hatred and a loss of self-worth.
- 4. Intersectional Oppression**
This type of oppression recognizes that individuals can experience multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously. For example, a Black woman may experience both racism and sexism, which can create a unique and compounded form of oppression.

Toxic Masculinity

Societal stigma surrounding stereotypical male behavior challenges the definition of masculinity

[illegible]

Marisa Salazar
James Bowie High School

Print News Objective Writing

a piece of the puzzle

Growing demand strains foster care while support systems strive to give children a place to fit in

BY MOLLY KYLES AND ANNA GRACE JONES
editors-in-chief

It starts with a child. Somewhere, some place, a child has to be removed from their family, like a puzzle piece pulled away from the whole. They are sent to a new home with the hope of security and love, but the pieces don't quite match up. They'll join the thousands of other lonely puzzle pieces seeking the perfect fit that many will never find. But even when cycling through temporary homes, kind and forgiving arms can show a child they deserve love and a future.

It takes a village, from foster parents to case workers to therapists to nonprofits, to give displaced children a reliable support system, and even then, the results are often far from perfect. According to the Children's Bureau, 687,000 children were in the public foster care system in 2018. In a constant state of change and distrust, the system can offer children a place, and show them they are the missing piece to the puzzle.

"Every child is different, so every child needs something different," therapeutic foster care therapist Maya Mason said. "Nothing in foster care is black and white. [There are] multiple levels and multiple people trying to work together to get this going right. There's a lot of people that are trying to make this system better and make this system work, and no one person can do that."

Separate from regular foster care is the division therapeutic foster care, or TFC. Therapists like Mason provide children with emotional support

and healing necessary for a successful future.

"All of our kids in therapeutic foster care start in regular foster care. They're taken for multiple reasons: abuse, medical neglect, nutritional neglect, emotional neglect, drugs, or because they aren't going to school or they're out on the streets. Usually there's something going on within the family unit that is the initial reason for why they're brought in," Mason said. "At that point, if they begin to have behavioral issues or severe emotional issues that can't be dealt with in a regular outpatient therapeutic setting, regular foster parents can handle them. Then, they come to therapeutic foster care."

If the support system for regular foster children is multileveled, then TFC is a fortress. Licensed Master Social Workers like Mason work with program directors, case managers and highly trained foster parents.

"The foster parents are trained annually, and they do a lot of front end training to even be able to become therapeutic foster care parents," Mason said. "They attend therapy, their medications are monitored by our agency and our doctor. There is 24 hour on call crisis [care] for these kids. If there's an issue, the parents have extra support from us. [TFC] has bigger and better trained staff to handle those kids with severe behavioral and emotional issues."

As a result of all these moving pieces, the puzzle is not perfect. The strain of a continuous flow of children into the cycle results in many foster parents giving up on the system entirely. This

overwhelming reality is complemented by the 30-60% of 200,000 licensed foster homes that code their position each year.

"It's a very overworked and underpaid occupation," Mason said. "Therefore, you get people who don't always care, and there's a huge turnover. Turnover is a problem because then the kids have not only have changed homes and lost their families, but now they're losing other supports continuously. That's very hard for the kids, but unfortunately, because we're overworked and underpaid, that's just kind of one of the things that happens."

The workload, when looked at from afar, seems to be a big picture issue that requires big picture solutions. As a result the state creates laws to apply to its entirety, but they fail to acknowledge the individuals behind it.

"General laws and rules that are for the entire system that aren't looking at the child individually are a problem," Mason said. "The state continues to put laws in place, like that all siblings should be together or other laws like that, which are great in some cases, but every child should be looked at individually, and it causes problems for those kids that maybe shouldn't be placed with their siblings."

With only the big picture in mind, the individual pieces of the puzzle are overlooked, and therapists like Mason feel children can be pushed into spaces and homes in which they do not fit.

See PUZZLE on page 14

How you can help

Becoming a foster home isn't right for every family, but that doesn't mean there aren't other ways to help



1 Encourage a Case Worker

For the Sale of One asks volunteers to commit to pray for, send messages to, and take goodies to a case worker in Arkansas or Texas in order to encourage them. Volunteers are required to spend about 3 hours a month and make at least a year-long commitment to being an encourager.

2 Donate money or supplies

Organizations like CASA and For the Sale of One focus efforts on supporting case workers, foster children and parents, and one way to support their mission in doing so is to donate directly to these organizations via their websites: casatekarkana.org and forthesaleofone.com



3 Parent's Night Out

To take some stress off of foster parents, For the Sale of One offers free childcare once a month and watches foster children on a Friday night. Volunteers are responsible for caring for children, feeding them, cleaning the room after them and treating their parents with respect.



4 Work the Blessing Boutique

Volunteers can sort clothing donations and organize them in For the Sale of One's charity shop. The Blessing Boutique is open every third Tuesday from 3-7 pm and every Friday from 9 am-1 pm. Every 2-4 months, the Blessing Boutique is open on a Saturday to allow foster families additional shopping time.



photo: iStockphoto by J. Jones

"It kinda catches [other people] off guard to hear that I'm adopted. I've kind of always known. I gathered it because I'm brown and my parents are white. All around my house they had pictures of us as little kids dressed up in the traditional Vietnamese clothes. They kinda kept the culture and I kinda put pieces together. I'm so glad I got adopted. I was always the first one to be like 'Yes, I'm adopted.' Because I always thought that was cool, coming from another country and then coming here."



Joseph Asher

"My sister is also adopted, so we were able to talk over that when we were little. We'd be able to talk about certain things like Asian skin and Asian hair and how we look different. [My church] went to SEAT (Service in Faith and Technology), and it's like a Third World country simulator for two days, so you go in and experience what it's like to live in a third world country. It's pretty eye-opening. I did go back to China when I was in eighth grade, and I visited an orphanage where I was. It's crazy how because even though their country has advanced, it's not America."



Kaii Schroepfer

"I grew up being abused by my uncle for four years, and I knew nothing about my parents. I had to go through that abuse to start to learn I am today. Adoption saved the security of what I needed when I was abused because that's all in my life were so irresponsible. I was given a new name, place to stay and a family, and this means everything to me. As I grew up, my parents made an important decision not to hide this story. They wanted me to remember that I am adopted, and, although I wasn't born [with my adoptive parents], [my adoptive mom] always used to say that I was born in her heart."



Allie Graves

"My husband and I tried for several years to have a child, and we were not able to. We thought about all the different options out there: fertility treatments, surrogacy and everything. Our choice was to adopt. We've always been completely 100% honest with [our son about his adoption]. [If I had any advice for adoptive parents, it would be to] take each moment and write down things that you're thinking and things that you're feeling. There's a lot of stuff that happened in the craziness that our life was in those first eight weeks or so that I didn't write down, and I wish I would have."



Megan Martin

Anna Grace Jones, Molly Kyles Texas High School

Print News Subjective Writing

AIISD unity act has opposite effect

District must explain details of school changes plan clearly; East Austin bears brunt of closures

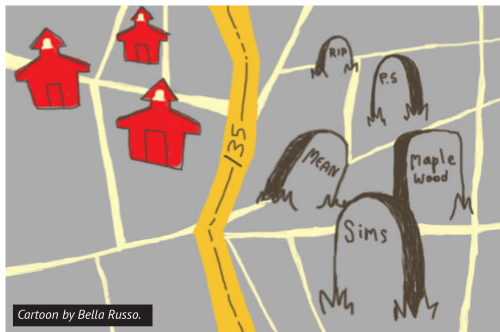
Austin is known far and wide for its funky small businesses, hippie residents and enviable live music scene. It's why we all love Austin so much, but unfortunately, it's also why the city is expanding so rapidly and putting the city's original residents at risk. As economically advantaged, predominantly white residents move to the more affluent parts of Austin, subsequently raising property taxes in the area, socioeconomically disadvantaged families, mostly from minority ethnic groups, are forced out of urban areas. This migration further enforces the already intense segregation in Austin at the I-35 line. According to a dot map provided by *The Austin American-Statesman*, there is a stark divide between the white population and the black/Hispanic populations on either side of I-35. This is due to the City of Austin Plan of 1928, which deliberately segregated the Austin population by pushing black families east of I-35.

Segregation in Austin housing leads to segregation in Austin schools. The kids who are zoned to schools in east Austin have historically received a lower-quality education than kids who are zoned to schools in west Austin due to the economic imbalance between families in the two regions. The best teachers, the best parent booster organizations, and the best facilities are designated to west Austin while the schools on the east side are forced to fend for themselves, thus perpetuating the cycle of poorer kids staying poor because they don't receive the education they need.

In an attempt to remedy the cycle that has plagued our city for so long, AISD has launched a new initiative called School Changes.

"These school changes will include a variety of updates to accommodate more equitable programming and learning environments that will support students across the district to be successful in college, career and life," reads the initiative announcement on the AISD website.

This AISD initiative is well-meaning, but



Cartoon by Bella Russo.

it has not been executed effectively to this point. Granted, it is difficult to launch such a huge initiative that will ameliorate the entrenched problems that have plagued our city and our district for generations.

The lack of a clear explanation from the district about the roots of this initiative, however, makes it appear as if the district lacks empathy. Some community members were not even aware until recently that their neighborhood schools were closing. Since the initial shock, the board has realized that their first attempts at unveiling the plan were lacking. KUT reported that at a campus community meeting at Webb Elementary School on Sept. 25, district leaders conveyed that exact message to the community members who had come to learn about the School Changes plan.

"We did not do a good job of communicating

this to the communities," AISD Operations Officer Matias Segura told Webb parents when they shared that they found out about the proposed school closures from local news reports.

"We are very, very sorry for the hurt we caused. We are committed to improving. We are listening so we can improve."

The frustrating experience of the Webb parents can be replicated by anybody who visits the AISD website trying to learn about the plan. The information currently available on the AISD website is more about public relations than it is about conveying specific, helpful information about important topics in the district. The online description of this process is difficult to read and understand, even for a student who has spent all their years of education in AISD. People want to know what exactly this process will look like for themselves and for their schools, but the information provided to the general public is

very vague.

One part of the plan that is not vague is the plan to shut down 12 schools and relocate the students over a span of multiple years. The list of schools includes 10 elementary schools and two middle schools, seven of which are on the east side of I-35 and three of which are close to I-35.

By closing down so many elementary schools on the east side of Austin, the district is not setting up young children in those neighborhoods for success. Education will become harder to access, and that weak start in life will impede those children's potential to succeed. Education should be equitable and accessible across the district, and we believe that the shuttering of six elementary schools on the east side overlooks this principle and disadvantages an entire socioeconomic group in Austin.

None of the schools AISD has selected to close are in the northwest area of Austin. In the face of this situation, many parents at the schools that are deriding the new plan "racist." On the other hand, some parents at higher-performing schools are concerned that their students will be sent to lower-performing schools under the rezoning of the district. Many of these parents voiced their concerns at the first meeting about School Changes at Bedichek Middle School.

These comments have received much backlash from AISD parents at the so-called "underperforming" schools. An east Austin education advocacy group called PRIDE of the Eastside held a mock game show called "Who wants to be an anti-racist?" prior to an AISD board meeting.

"How we judge a school to be failing or not is quite flawed given the inherent inequities based in testing, school discipline, PTA fundraising, teacher experience and turnover, etc.," Emily Sawyer, a Martin Middle School parent, told the *Statesman*. "If all of these parts of the system put your black and brown and socioeconomically disadvantaged kids at a disadvantage, then there is something wrong with the system, not the kids."

Samantha Powers McCallum High School

Print News Photo/Art



Kacey Stegall
Van Alstyne High School

Print News Design



Holland Rainwater Texas High School

Online News Portfolio

Moo-ving forward

The Paul family starts their farm in the middle of the city

Andrea Plascencia, Staff Writer | December 3, 2019



Andrea Plascencia

Andrea Plascencia Lewisville High School

[Story 1](#) [Story 2](#) [Story 3](#) [Story 4](#) [Story 5](#)

Online News Package

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Shop with a Cop and Firefighter

Police, fire department host annual shopping event



[Gallery](#) | 89 Photos

Photo by Kaitlyn Rogers

Police officer Alan Bailey shops with a child during the annual Shop with a Cop and Firefighter event Dec. 3 at Target.

Asaad Malik
Texas High School

Online News Objective Writing



Junior Dakota Newfield holds a football and poses for a photo. He first developed an interest in football during sixth grade. "When I found out that my dad played I really started to develop an interest, especially when I started watching the NFL," Newfield said.

Arisha Hirji

A legacy fulfilled

Arisha Hirji, Reporter

November 18, 2019

He stood watching his three siblings as tears streamed down their faces. Feeling helpless, his emotions swirled and made his stomach churn. All he wanted was to understand why everyone was crying. All he wanted to do was see his dad.

Junior Dakota Neufield was six when his dad suddenly passed away from stomach cancer. Despite having to grow up without his father, he keeps his dad — an all-district high school football player who received an offer to play at the University of Tulsa — in mind, and he hopes to pursue the goals that his dad accomplished with football. Dakota has been playing football since the spring semester of his sophomore year.



Arisha Hirji
Hebron High School

Online News Subjective Writing

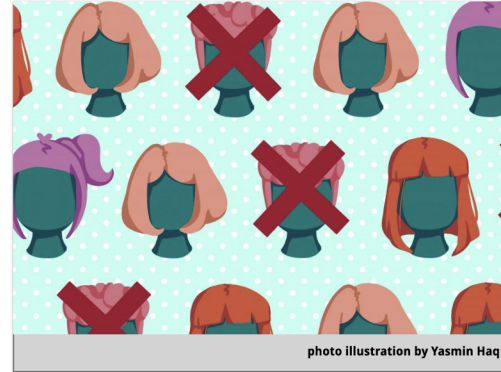
Cut short

Yasmin Haq, Editor-In-Chief | December 11, 2019



My hair shuffles off in chunks as the scissors slide through it with utmost precision for what feels like hours. The barber finally turns my chair around. I fumble for my glasses and peer into the mirror. I purse my lips together, holding back a grin from consuming my face. I feel free — all that hair weighing me down is gone. Staring back at me is someone new. Someone happy. As I shrug off the remaining strands of hair from my neck and shoulders, I lock eyes with my mother standing in the doorway of Supercuts. My excitement is extinguished by an impending sense of dread as I see the fire in her eyes and the scream about to leave her lips.

The car door closes, and my mother's fury is unleashed. What was I trying to do? Become a boy? According to her, I have resisted her when it came to appearances my entire life. I try to purposefully look bad just to make her upset. How could I have done this? Did I even see myself? My eyes fill with tears.



Yasmin Haq
Hebron High School

Online News Photo/Art



Emily Cruz
Duncanville High School

Online News Design

COVID-19 Coverage



TCC Classes Adapt To Campus Closure

March 21, 2020
Sembree Yeary, Staff Writer

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Sarah Akande, Sports Editor
March 18, 2020

Personalities



Justin Crawford: Head in the Game

Ryland Mallett, Brinley Koenig
Legacy High School