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## Thurston

Continued from Page 1A

al headlines. Once "self-pity oriented," he now writes often for others and from an optimistic viewpoint.

"I wrote a poem before the shootings called 'Rejection Legend' that was about how everything seemed to be going the wrong way for me," he says. "Right after the shootings, I wrote a poem called 'Memory Scrapbook' for my mom, describing all the things she remembers me doing."

Despite a considerable age difference, I feel a need to defer to Chalan and Jenny during our discussion. After all, what are appropriate questions to ask a couple of kids who endured such a traumatic event?

"I can understand the confusion, because adults want to know why [school shootings] are happening and where they're coming from," Jenny says. "It isn't something that you wake up one day and it happens. It's something that happens after years and years of building up in a person."

At one point, I make it clear that if a question seems insensitive, it can go unanswered. Then, "Do either one of you know Kip?" escapes my lips.

"Nope," Chalan states, even more succinctly than his one-word response looks.

Jenny gives a muffled, mumbled "Uh-uh."

I feel stupid at my weak attempt to perhaps solve the puzzle of "Who is Kip?" and why he is accused of committing such a

heinous act. Chalan eventually elaborates on the subject in more general terms.

"Everyone is pointing out that it's R-rated movies, or guns, or video games, and it's just ridiculous," he asserts. "The question that people need to answer to help solve school shootings is, 'What makes students or kids unable to depict what's real and what's not?' It's obviously something that happened to them in their lives that led them on a very emotional, unstable relationship with themselves."

Lines from Chalan's poem "Aging Youth" offer further imagery to his concise opinion: "Innocence untouched soil of evil / Anger and danger the unknown devil / to their pure thought of recreation."

Both students admit that they unload a ton of frustration through their writing.

"For me, poetry usually comes when I'm in a bad mood, because I can come up with so many more creative words," Jenny laughs. "I can just turn to this paper and write what I'm feeling. But my anger is not necessarily directed at anyone."

As The Paragon's editor, though, Jenny sees a lot of material that one year ago would not have seemed questionable in its purpose. Now, she seeks advice from her adviser, Saylor Smith, whenever doubts arise.

"Normally, I would have just shrugged it off as someone being in a bad mood, but now, I think twice," Jenny admits. "You see

more kids in high school talking about 'Can it happen here?' or 'Is there anyone here we need to be worried about?'"

Overall, interactions between students at Thurston have improved, Chalan says. Maybe it's a "we're all in this together" attitude. Maybe it's an "us against the world" stance. One aspect that definitely needs change, he figures, is the school's curriculum and preparation for society's ills.

"The only thing they're worried about is filling us up with knowledge that isn't going to be required in later life," he says, voicing an awareness beyond his years. "I wish they would teach us some kind of morality class, and it should probably start in middle school."

As I leave Thurston's campus, notes in hand, a story to write, reality hits. No matter how far one goes professionally as a journalist, never will he or she be able to capture in words the feelings and emotions of kids scarred by such tragic events as the one that took place on May 21, 1998.

Yes, we reporters are like vultures, picking at remains, thinking that our intentions are pure. In truth, we should just stop and listen to the Jenny Hucks and Chalan Moons of society, the teenagers.

"Mind games end the madness," Jenny writes in "Twisted," a poem she composed in February. "Washed away by the red / craziness dwells on sanity / and all the voices in my head."

Now the interview is over.

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