

Bullying is real; it hurts society, and takes lives

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Bullying is not a typical conversation topic. However, it can be what starts the tragic events like the recent suicide of Tyler Clementi, freshman at Rutgers University. When bullying is not addressed or stopped, larger, more devastating circumstances can occur.

Another incident of suicide due to bullying occurred Jan. 14, when Phoebe Prince hung herself. Prince moved from Ireland to Massachusetts "with the promise of a new life." Fifteen years old, she entered her new high school and was greeted as the "Irish slut" by a group of girls. No longer able to take the insults and the remarks, she resorted to suicide.

In addition to Prince and Clementi, in the past few months notable suicides have occurred that were directly related to bullying: Asher Brown, 13, Seth Walsh, 13, Justin Aaberg, 15, and Billy Lucas, 15. All committed suicide due to being bullied and harassed

for their sexual orientation.

Something needs to be done. Lincoln High School in Portland is being recognized for an anti-bullying system which was implemented in 2003. Their slogan is "Tame it, name it, claim it," which encourages students to tame their emotions, realize that bullying does not match Lincoln's value system and then maintaining vigilance about bullying throughout the school. Lincoln is a prime example of what needs to occur in schools across America. Lincoln's bullying rates are recorded to have decreased 50 percent in the last two years.

Bullying is a current crisis and needs to stop. Everyone, whether as individuals or as part of families and communities, need to follow Lincoln's example by identifying bullying, speaking up and acting to emancipate children from the bonds of bullying.

Untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide according to

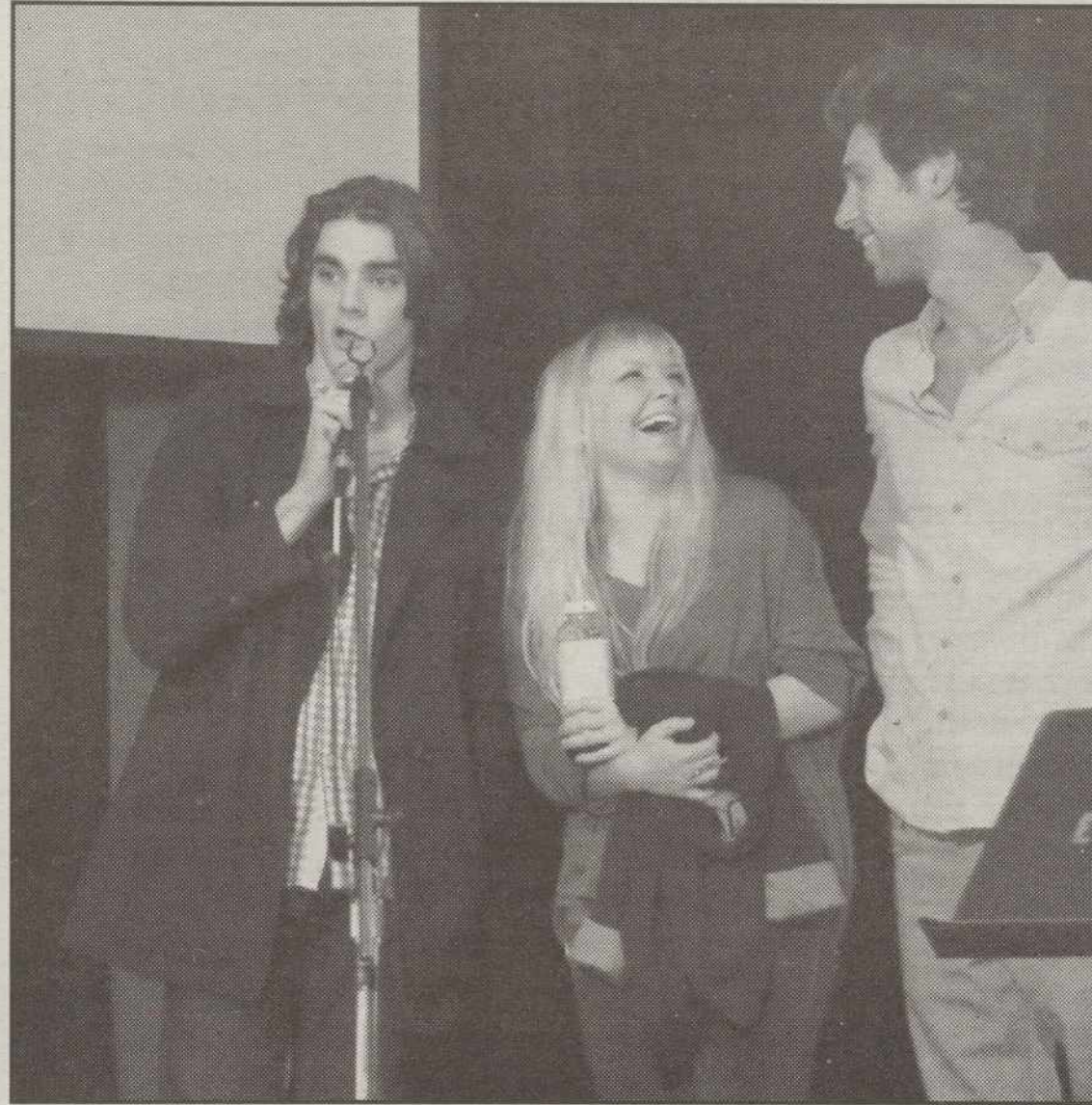


Photo by Alex Houston
TV stars RJ Mitte, "Breaking Bad," Lindsey Haun, "True Blood," and Austin Reed, "Days of our Lives," speak about their personal childhood experience of being bullied. Bullying affects many students and has been known to ruin and even end lives.

suicide.org. Suicide.org is a non-profit organization that works to prevent suicide, create awareness, and support those who struggle with thoughts of suicide. A study published in *Child Development* magazine indicates that students who

are bullied may be at a greater risk for developing antisocial behavior and depression.

Bullying occurs everywhere and West Linn is no exception.

"Even though I see so much bullying, it sickens

me to see someone bullied. I still sometimes feel so down about myself because of what bullies tell me that I go on to bully someone else I see as lower," an anonymous student said. "By bullying I mean I am calling them names like stupid because they don't have as good grades as me... It really is a chain reaction that when I get bullied I end up bullying someone else... even though I am against bullying and I am a hypocrite in this aspect I do see myself bullying others for this reason."

The most common targets of bullying are "kids who are different. Non-conformist. Kids who look different. Kids who act different. Kids that express themselves," the anonymous student said. "It's sad, really."

While bullying and intolerance may be ongoing, I believe that its effects and impacts can be reduced if we would all be more aware of what we say and do, and how it might impact others. Peace.



ELISE'S SOAPBOX

SOCIALISM: THE AMERICAN WAY

In early October, Gene Cranick of South Fulton, Tenn., called 911 to report that his house was on fire. He was a law-abiding citizen, a taxpayer, and at the time, someone in great need of emergency help. The fire department came, but only because someone else's house was on fire. They merely watched as Cranick's house burned to the ground.

Cranick's situation was ignored because of a strange policy about fire aid in the town. Everyone in South Fulton had to pay a \$75 surcharge in order to receive service from the town's firefighters. This means that if you don't pay the fee, even if you pay your taxes, you don't get emergency care if your house ever caught fire.

When the fire department came to the Cranicks' house, they were ordered *not* to extinguish the flames because the family forgot to pay the surcharge. The Cranicks lost their home, all their possessions and four pets, all because of a "pay-to-spray" policy.

Here's how the fire department is supposed to work: taxpayers fund it and everyone benefits from it. The fire department is a public program. It's government-run. If a government is supposed to protect people's rights—



Art by Eta Santoro

including those of life and property—this would mean that emergency care is a right. A fire department is a right, and that's why it's government-run.

In the fire department, the government owns the equipment and pays the firefighters' salaries. The program is funded by the people of the community, and it's non-profit. This makes a fire department, by definition, that one word that strikes fear into the hearts of so many.

Socialist.

Some look at that word and think of Marx or Lenin, people who had an idea that sounds good but is basically ineffective. Some look at

that word and think of scary anti-American things; they picture a society where everything is government-run and the people are taken out of the equation. The people that think that are mistaking socialism for communism, socialism's distant cousin.

Then there are people like me, who look at that word and picture public programs already in existence. They're non-profit organizations owned by the community as a whole, through the government and not by one group of people. These are—don't be afraid when you read this word again—socialist programs.

Socialism exists in

America, for the better. Ideally, it's not implemented so the government can control your life, but rather to improve the quality of life. When everyone has access to something, be it water or an education or a nice park with pretty trees, either from the public or private sector, the quality of life tends to increase. And it also circles back to peoples' rights: if the government is making sure everyone can have life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness, it is doing its job.

Just think of all the things in our lives that we may take for granted that wouldn't exist without socialism: police departments, public schools, roads and highways, unemployment insurance, the post office, NASA. The list goes on and on. They're all non-profit, taxpayer funded programs that the community owns and uses for the better: socialism.

You know the scene from Monty Python's "Life Of Brian" where the leader of the resistance asks "What have the Romans ever done for us?" There's your answer. Socialism.

Socialism was supposed to save the day for the Cranick family. Instead, they were denied their right to property by the government

that was supposed to protect them. A fire department ordered *not* to put out a fire is a tragic circumstance by any moral and ethical standard. It is made worse by the fact that the fire department denied service to someone because of \$75. Shouldn't the standard be "save lives and property first, ask for money later?"

If the fire department was running for the people, not for the money, if the South Fulton fire department was being a socialist program, just like it should, the Cranicks would still have a house.

When you hear the word socialism, don't be scared of it. Take comfort in it. Socialism is not supposed to be a scary buzz-word. Socialism is this wonderful school you attend. Socialism makes it safe to walk the streets at night. Socialism provides clean water to drink and roads to drive on. Socialism keeps our food safe and gives our unemployed a safety net. Socialism is how you send letters. Socialism takes us to the moon and defends us from hostile countries. Socialism is the backbone of our lives.

Socialism puts out fires wherever they happen. And when it doesn't, it's not socialist. It's un-American.